

Potomac Torah Study Center
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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.

“Eikev” appears only five times in the Torah – always in connection with Avraham Avinu. What made Avraham so special to God? Avraham worked out by himself the belief that there had to be one God – nothing else made sense to this brilliant man. He trusted messages from God and followed them with neither complaint nor question. God promised Avraham two things – children and a special land. When God asked Avraham to sacrifice his only son, Avraham did not delay to obey. In Eikev, Moshe’s language frequently echoes back to the Akeidah – a message that the people were to look to Avraham as an example of how to behave to receive God’s blessings upon entering the land.

Now that it was time to enter the land that God had promised to Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov, Moshe reminded the people that everything they had or would gain in the future was a gift from God. To remember this lesson, the people should emulate Avraham: become a model nation (Goy Kadosh) devoted to God’s mitzvot, and emulate Avraham’s chesed. By following God’s mitzvot and Avraham’s example, the people would earn God’s blessings. Failure to follow God’s mitzvot, however, would bring punishment. Indeed, Eikev reaches a climax with chapter two of the Shema (11:13-21) – the reward for following God’s mitzvot and the punishment for failing to do so.

One of the specific mitzvot in Eikev is the requirement to recite Birchat HaMazon (8:10, to thank God for providing our food). Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva of Chovevei Torah, discusses another mitzvah from the parsha, mezuzah. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks focuses on the meaning of “Shema,” to listen and absorb a message. (The first two paragraphs of the Shema, the paragraphs in a mezuzah, come from the end of Vaetchanan and from Eikev.) Since the Shema is the most central prayer/message in our religion, the section of the Torah that we started last Shabbat and conclude this Shabbat may be the most profound lesson of our religion. Listen, really listen, and absorb the message of the Shema. Focus on Moshe’s lessons here. Emulate Avraham with emunah (true faith), follow God’s mitzvot, practice chesed (kindness to others), and love the special, wonderful land that God gave to our people. Herein we have what may be the core of our religion.

Shabbat Eikev this year is the 91st anniversary of the Hebron massacre, in which thousands of Arabs tried to wipe out all the Jews of the city. Each year in his Eikev issue of Likutei Torah, Saadia Greenberg recalls the miracle that saved his great grandfather from the massacre. I have attached (to the electronic version of my posting) the detailed story of the massacre that Saadia’s father researched and preserved. I urge everyone to read the seven page story, because it brings to life the connection of a group of our people to the land of Israel. The Hebron massacre vividly demonstrates the depth to which some Jews nearly a hundred years ago practiced Moshe’s message in Eikev.

My beloved Rebbe, Leonard Cahan, z"l, also had a deep love of Israel. Rabbi Cahan’s parents retired to Israel, and his sister and brother-in-law raised their family in Israel. Rabbi Cahan traveled frequently to Israel, brought back many books, art, and other religious items to make them available to his congregants. His love of Israel, a key message of Eikev, came through and inspired generations of his friends and congregants.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlema for Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Eli ben Hanina, Yoram HaKohen ben Shoshana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Milda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers. Note: Beth Sholom has additional names, including coronavirus victims, on a Tehillim list.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Parshas Eikev: All Included
by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 2019

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya for a Mishebarach!]

In Parshas Eikev, Moshe Rabbeinu tell the Jews a fundamental command, “And now, Israel, what does Hashem, your G-d, demand of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d” (Chapter 10, verse 12).

All one has to do is fear Hashem and walk in His ways. Is that true? Is that really all Hashem asks of us? Shouldn’t we also keep the rest of the Torah?

A few decades ago, Rav Moshe Feinstein was informed about a man who, after staying in the city during the week, would take the latest bus to the Catskill Mountains on Friday, arriving very close to the beginning of Shabbos. Rav Moshe remarked to him that he should be careful to take an earlier bus. The man did not listen. The next week, the bus was delayed during the trip, and he was stranded in a motel along the way for the entire Shabbos.

A student of Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt”l told him of this incident, and then remarked, “Rav Moshe performed a “mofeis” – a miracle!

Rav Yaakov responded, “If so, than I too performed a miracle! Once, before shul, I went to visit an ill congregant in his home. He was a diabetic, and his bedside nurse was about to give him an insulin injection. I noticed that he was a “goses” and near death, and the halacha forbids touching a person in such a state. I did not allow the nurse to give the injection.

On the way back from shul, the man was comatose, and they were waiting for an ambulance to take him to the hospital. The doctor later informed the family that had the nurse given him the insulin, he would have died!”

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt”l would quote Rav Chaim Volozhiner, the saintly student of the Gaon of Vilna, and founder of the famous “Volozhin Yeshiva,” who answered this question. When a doctor takes blood from a patient, he can see much of what is going on in his or her body. He can tell if you have too much or too little cholesterol, platelets, blood sugar, and creatinine. Even some genetic diseases may show up as well. A blood test is a tube-size synopsis of a patient’s entire body.

The same is with a person’s neshama. Every person’s neshama is a part of Hashem Himself. Hashem puts all of the components necessary to serve Him, into the neshama of every living being. Wisdom, willpower, good inclination, heart, and many more attributes are all built into our neshama. Sometimes, we may need to dig a little to find them, but they are there. A neshama is a miniature combination of all the components of the greatness of Hashem which man must utilize to serve Him.

One piece however, does not come in the package – Yiras Shomayim – Fear of Hashem. That is something we have to work on our entire life. Thus, Moshe Rabbeinu tells the Jews, “What does Hashem your G-d want from you?” He already gave you everything else. You have to work to gain one more attribute, “Only to fear Hashem, your G-d.”

Good Shabbos!

Eikev: Mezuzot: Divine Protection or Human Perfection?

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2020

The mitzvah of mezuzah appears at the end of this week's parasha in what we know of as the second paragraph of Shema: “And you shall write them (these words) on the doorposts of your house and of your gates.” (Deut. 11:20). This verse also appears earlier in the first paragraph of Shema (6:9), and it is these two sections of the Torah that are written in the mezuzah.

But what is the purpose of the mezuzah? Is it to remember God, or is to serve as some type of spiritual or even magical protection of the house? The idea of mezuzah as having protective properties is never stated in the Torah. To the contrary, the Torah juxtaposes the mitzvah of mezuzah with that of tefillin and of constant Torah study. The message is clear: learn Torah at all times, when you go to sleep and when you rise, when you sit in your house and when you go on a journey, and even when you are not actively learning Torah – have concrete reminders of God all around you so that you will think of God and God's Torah.

Nevertheless, given that the mezuzah is placed on the doorframe, just as was the blood of the Pascal sacrifice, it was perhaps inevitable that it would be associated with powers of protection, for this is exactly how the Pascal blood functioned: “When the Lord sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not let the destroyer come into your houses to strike you.” (Ex, 12:23)

We can of course draw many distinctions between the two cases. The blood was that of a sacrifice, and there is no suggestion that it had protective powers per se; it is God who sees the blood, not the blood which operates on its own power. Nevertheless, the parallel to the blood of the original Pascal lamb, and the fact that the mezuzah was holy words written on a parchment, could easily suggest to the religious imagination of the masses that the mezuzah functions like a kemiayah, a magical amulet, and through its “power” the house is protected.

We thus find practices going back hundreds of years to write the names of angels on the backside of the mezuzah – a type of practice associated with charms and kemiyas. And this idea, or at least some form of it, is alive and well even today. It is common that when something bad happens in someone's house, they will have their mezuzot checked. Clearly, this is not just any other mitzvah for these people, but something with protective powers.

This approach to mezuzah is alluded to in the Gemara Menachot (33b). Rava had stated that the mezuzah needs to be placed in the outermost handbreadth of the doorframe, and the Gemara asks why. One explanation the Gemara gives is psychological and religious: so that a person encounters the mezuzah as soon as she steps into the doorframe. This is in keeping with the simple goal in the Torah – to keep God and Torah foremost in our minds.

The other explanation, however, is more magical and metaphysical: “So that it will guard the entire house,” starting from the very beginning of the doorframe. This explanation – which is given in only one word in the Aramaic – reflects an understanding of the mezuzah as having kemiayah-like protective powers. Rashi even adds that the mezuzah will protect the house against demons, a standard function of kemiyyot.

Not surprisingly, Rambam, the supreme rationalist, comes out strongly against this type of approach to the mitzvah of mezuzah:

... But those who write inside the mezuzah the names of angels or holy names or a verse or seals, such people are in the category of those who have no portion in the World to Come. For these idiots, it is not enough for them that they have negated a positive mitzvah [by invalidating the mezuzah], but they have turned an important mitzvah – that is, the unification of God's name and the love of God and the worship of God – and made it like it were a kemiayah whose function

is to serve their personal needs, as they tend to think in their foolish thoughts that this a thing that affords them benefit in meaningless worldly things. Laws of Mezuzah 5:4

In line with this anti-protective-amulet attitude, when Rambam explains the significance of mezuzah, he focuses on the first explanation given in the Gemara, and the importance of what regularly encountering the mezuzah does for our religious frame of mind:

[Through its observance,] whenever a person enters or leaves [the house], he will encounter the unity of the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, and remember his love for Him. Thus, he will awake from his sleep and his obsession with the vanities of time, and recognize that there is nothing which lasts for eternity except the knowledge of the Creator of the world. This will motivate him to regain full awareness and follow the paths of the upright. Laws of Mezuzah 6:13

After explaining the religious function of the mezuzah, Rambam elaborates on how the mezuzah, together with tfillin and tzitzit, work together to serve as regular, constant reminders of God:

Whoever wears tefillin on his head and arm, wears tzitzit on his garment, and has a mezuzah on his entrance, can be assured that he will not sin, because he has many reminders. And these reminders are the true angels who will prevent him from sinning, as [Psalms 34:8] states: "The angel of God camps around those who fear Him and protects them."

In this passage, Rambam takes the “angels” that some people want to invoke with the kemyah-like powers of the mezuzah, and turns them into the concrete mitzvot that serve as reminders to do God’s will and not to sin. If anything protects a person, Rambam would say, it is not some magical power of the mezuzah, but the impact that it has on a person’s religious psyche.

Rambam was not the first to have reworked the idea of “angels” and the protection-powers of the mezuzah. For right after the Gemara mentions “that the mezuzah will protect the house,” the Gemara continues with the following homily:

R. Hanina said, Come and see how the character of the Holy One, blessed be He, differs from that [of men] of flesh and blood. When it comes to flesh and blood, the king dwells within, and his servants keep guard on him from without; but with the Holy One, blessed be He, it is not so, for it is His servants that dwell within and He keeps guard over them from without; as it is said, "The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." (Ps. 121:6)

For R. Hanina, it is not the mezuzah which protects through some magical powers, but it is God who protects. And it is not the house which is magically protected, but the person who does the mitzvot. The focus on God as the One who affords protection is repeated three times in quick succession: “He keeps guard... The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade.” The mezuzah, which is on the right hand of the one who enters the house, does not protect the house. It is rather God who protects the right hand of the one who does the mitzvot.

I believe that this type of reworking is not uncommon in the Gemara. Certainly, there were Jewish religious practices that existed outside the Rabbinic sphere of influence, and archeology and ancient texts attest to the extensive use of and belief in magical amulets at the time of Hazal. It only stands to reason that the amulet function of mezuzot that Rambam so derides was already an extensive phenomenon at the time of Chazal. So how did Hazal deal with this? Our Gemara is the answer – first and foremost, by ignoring it. Hazal deal with mezuzah through a halakhic lens, not through a magical or metaphysical lens. The best way to rob superstitions of their power is to ignore them. The other way that Chazal neutralized this approach was by subtly reworking it. In one word they allude to this power – “so that it protects the house,” and then immediately (re-)frame this as God’s protection of the people (who keep the mitzvah).

But that doesn’t mean that this belief just disappeared. Popular practices and beliefs are exceedingly difficult to change. And, ironically, because the Gemara gave voice to this understanding, it brought it into the rabbinic literature. To have ignored it completely would have been the best way to have made it disappear. By citing this attitude, even if only in one word, and even if only to debate or reframe it, the Gemara unintentionally raised its status and made it a part of the discourse.

In the age of the coronavirus, these two possibilities – divine protection or a shaping of our consciousness – take on special relevance. Our first move months ago in responding to the coronavirus was to make sure that we and those closest to us were safe. It was to do everything we could to bring protection – Divine or otherwise – to our homes. But what came after that? Have we remained in that state, or have we passed through the doorframe of our house, crossed our threshold, and gone out and engaged the larger world? Have the events, tragedies, and actions that have taken place these last few months – those reminders on our figurative doorposts – heightened our awareness of God, of people who are suffering and of our duty to make the world a better place? It is easy to remain indoors and to focus on our own protection. But the true message of the mezuzah calls upon us to remember, reflect, and engage.

Shabbat Shalom!

Listen, Really Listen

by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Some 20 or so years ago, with the help from the Ashdown Foundation, I initiated a conference at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, on the future of Jewish peoplehood. I feared the deepening divisions between secular and ultra-orthodox in Israel, between the various denominations in the Diaspora, and between Israel and the Diaspora themselves.

It was a glittering array of Jewry's brightest minds: academics from 16 different countries representing all the shadings of Jewish identity. There were professors from Harvard, Yale and Princeton as well as most of Israel's universities. It was a scintillating success, and at the same time, a total failure.

Halfway through the second day, I turned to my wife Elaine and said, "The speaking is brilliant. The listening is non-existent." Eventually I could bear it no longer. "Let's leave," I said to her. I could not handle yet more skilled presentations from minds that were parti pris, lucid, coherent, but totally closed to ideas that lay outside the radius of their preconceptions. Far from being a set of solutions to the divisions within Jewry, the conference perfectly epitomized the problem.

We decided to travel south to Arad, to meet for the first time the great (and very secular) novelist Amos Oz. I mentioned this to a friend. He winced. "What," he asked, "do you hope to achieve? Do you really want to convert him?" "No," I replied, "I want to do something much more important. I want to listen to him."

And so it was. For two hours we sat in Amos's book-lined basement study at the edge of the desert, and listened. Out of that meeting came, I believe, a genuine friendship. He stayed secular. I stayed religious. But something magical, transformative, happened nonetheless. We listened to one another.

I cannot speak for Amos, but I can for myself. I felt the presence of a deep mind, a feeling intellect, a master of language – Amos is one of the few people I know incapable of uttering a boring sentence – and one who has wrestled in his own way with what it means to be a Jew. Since then I have had a public dialogue with him, and another with his daughter Fania Oz-Salzberger. But it began with an act of sustained, focused listening.

Shema is one of the key words of the book of Devarim, where it appears no less than 92 times. It is, in fact, one of the key words of Judaism as a whole. It is central to the two passages that form the first two paragraphs of the prayer we call the Shema,¹ one in last week's parsha, the other in this week's.

What is more: it is untranslatable. It means many things: to hear, to listen, to pay attention, to understand, to internalize and to respond. It is the closest biblical Hebrew comes to a verb that means "to obey."

In general, when you encounter a word in any language that is untranslatable into your own, you are close to the beating pulse of that culture. To understand an untranslatable word, you have to be prepared to move out of your comfort zone and enter a mindset that is significantly different from yours.

At the most basic level, Shema represents that aspect of Judaism that was most radical in its day: that G d cannot be seen. He can only be heard. Time and again Moses warns against making or worshipping any physical representation of the Divine. It is a theme that runs through the Bible. Moses insistently reminds the people that at Mount Sinai: "The L rd spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice."² Even when Moses

mentions seeing, he is really talking about listening. A classic example occurs in the opening verses of next week's parsha:

See [re'eh], I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse – the blessing if you listen [tishme'u] to the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you do not listen [lo tishme'u] to the commands of the Lord your God.3

This affects our most basic metaphors of knowing. To this day, in English, virtually all our words for understanding or intellect are governed by the metaphor of sight. We speak of insight, hindsight, foresight, vision and imagination. We speak of people being perceptive, of making an observation, of adopting a perspective. We say, "it appears that." When we understand something, we say, "I see."⁴ This entire linguistic constellation is the legacy of the philosophers of ancient Greece, the supreme example in all history of a visual culture.

Judaism, by contrast, is a culture of the ear more than the eye. As Rabbi David Cohen, the disciple of Rav Kook known as 'the Nazirite', pointed out in his book, *Kol ha-Nevuah*, the Babylonian Talmud consistently uses the metaphor of hearing. So when a proof is brought, it says *Ta shma*, 'Come and hear.' When it speaks of inference it says, *Shema mina*, 'Hear from this.' When someone disagrees with an argument, it says *Lo shemiyah leih*, 'he could not hear it.' When it draws a conclusion it says, *Mashma*, 'from this it can be heard.' Maimonides calls the oral tradition, *Mipi hashemua*, 'from the mouth of that which was heard.' In Western culture understanding is a form of seeing. In Judaism it is a form of listening.

What Moses is telling us throughout *Devarim* is that God does not seek blind obedience. The fact that there is no word for 'obedience' in biblical Hebrew, in a religion of 613 commands, is stunning in itself (modern Hebrew had to borrow a verb, *letzayet*, from Aramaic). He wants us to listen, not just with our ears but with the deepest resources of our minds. If God had simply sought obedience, He would have created robots, not human beings with a will of their own. Indeed if He had simply sought obedience, He would have been content with the company of angels, who constantly sing God's praises and always do His will.

God, in making human beings "in His image," was creating otherness. And the bridge between self and other is conversation: speaking and listening. When we speak, we tell others who and what we are. But when we listen, we allow others to tell us who they are. This is the supremely revelatory moment. And if we can't listen to other people, then we certainly can't listen to God, whose otherness is not relative but absolute.

Hence the urgency behind Moses' double emphasis in this week's parsha, the opening line of the second paragraph of the *Shema*: "If you indeed heed [shamo'a tishme'u] my commands with which I charge you today, to love the Lord your God and worship Him with all your heart and with all your soul."⁵ A more forceful translation might be: "If you listen – and I mean really listen."

One can almost imagine the Israelites saying to Moses, "OK. Enough already. We hear you," and Moses replying, "No you don't. You simply don't understand what is happening here. The Creator of the entire universe is taking a personal interest in your welfare and destiny: you, the smallest of all nations and by no means the most righteous. Have you any idea of what that means?" Perhaps we still don't.

Listening to another human being, let alone God, is an act of opening ourselves up to a mind radically other than our own. This takes courage. To listen is to make myself vulnerable. My deepest certainties may be shaken by entering into the mind of one who thinks quite differently about the world. But it is essential to our humanity. It is the antidote to narcissism: the belief that we are the centre of the universe. It is also the antidote to the fundamentalist mindset characterized by the late Professor Bernard Lewis as, "I'm right; you're wrong; go to hell."⁶

Listening is a profoundly spiritual act. It can also be painful. It is comfortable not to have to listen, not to be challenged, not to be moved outside our comfort zone. Nowadays, courtesy of Google filters, Facebook friends, and the precise targeting of individuals made possible by the social media, it is easy to live in an echo-chamber in which we only get to hear the voices of those who share our views. But, as I said in a TED lecture last year, "It's the people not like us who make us grow."

Hence the life-changing idea: *Listening is the greatest gift we can give to another human being*. To be listened to, to be heard, is to know that someone else takes me seriously. That is a redemptive act.

Twenty years ago I sat in a lecture hall in a university in Jerusalem and listened to a series of great minds not listening to one another. I concluded that the divisions in the Jewish world were not about to heal, and would never heal until we understood the deep spiritual truth in Moses' challenge: "If you listen – and I mean, really listen."

FOOTNOTES:

1. Technically, reciting the Shema is not an act of prayer at all. It is a fundamentally different type of action: it is an act of Talmud Torah, of learning Torah (see Menahot 99b). In prayer, we speak to G d. In study we listen to G d.
 2. Deuteronomy 4: 12.
 3. Deuteronomy 11:26-28.
 4. See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, 1980.
 5. Deuteronomy 11:13.
 6. Bernard Lewis, "I'm right; you're wrong; go to hell," *The Atlantic*, May 2003.
- * Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth from 1991 to 2013.

Parshas Eikev -- The Best Investment

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine © 2014 Teach 613

One of the famous verses in the Torah is the one in which Moshe says, "All that Hashem asks of you is to fear Him and do His mitzvos." The Talmud asks: Is fear of Hashem really so small an expectation?

Rav Shimon Schwab observes that the Hebrew word for ask, "Shoeil," can also be translated as "to borrow." Thus Rav Schwab suggests that the connotation of this word actually explains why Moshe viewed this request as such a small expectation. "All Hashem is asking of you is a loan, so to speak." You make the effort to do the mitzvah now, and Hashem will repay you exponentially in the future.

Take for example the story of Avraham. The medrash (Tanna Divei Eliyahu Rabbah 12) tells us that in the merit of Avraham's feeding the angel-guests, Hashem provided food for his descendants in the desert. Imagine... Avraham fed 3 guests with generosity, and Hashem repaid him by feeding an estimated 3 million people for 40 years. Indeed, "All that Hashem asks of you..." It is such a good investment that it is like it is "no big deal."

As simple as the concept of investment and reward is, it is not so simple to implement. There is a famous study that was done in the 1970s called The Marshmallow Test in which children (ages 4-6) were given a marshmallow and were told that they could eat it now, or they could wait fifteen minutes and they would get two. The study, with the fascinating video footage it created, made clear that no matter how great the reward is, delayed gratification is quite a challenge.

Even more fascinating is that over decades a trend was observed that those children who were able to delay gratification to attain a greater reward did better academically than those who could not. It is argued that this simple test can foretell success better than IQ or math scores. Apparently a child that has a predisposition to investing wisely will carry over that tendency to study habits and other responsible choices. As one commentator put it: In modern America where instant gratification is King, and patience is scarcer than ever, the inability to delay and invest emotionally in a better future has caused rising credit card debt and the mortgage meltdown. In the question of sacrificing today for a better tomorrow, waiting is almost always better.

Even if a person does not have a predisposition to wait and to invest, these are skills that one can develop. By practicing with small life-opportunities one can develop the capacity to invest by sacrificing an immediate gratification for an exponentially greater reward in the future.

To Moshe who saw the treasure houses of reward, the decision was clear. "All that Hashem asks is that you fear Him and do His mitzvos." The reward is so worth it. It is like a short term loan that will be paid exponentially.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos.

Why Didn't the Israelites Pray for Moses? – Thoughts for Parashat Ekev

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel*

In last week's Torah portion, Va-et-hanan, we read of Moses' plea to the Almighty to let him enter the Promised Land. With consummate humility and piety, Moses prayed that God would allow him the satisfaction of completing his mission as leader of the Israelites. He had devoted forty difficult years in the wilderness, in the hope of bringing the people of Israel into the land of milk and honey. In spite of Moses' heartfelt prayer, the Almighty did not rescind His verdict that Moses was not to enter the Promised Land. God told him to ascend the mountain and look at the land in the distance--that was as close as Moses would get to his goal.

A question arises: why do we hear nothing at all about the Israelites' reaction to God's decree? Why didn't they pray on behalf of their faithful leader? Why didn't they announce to God that they themselves would not enter the Promised Land unless Moses were allowed to enter with them? Why was there no expression of loyalty to or empathy with Moses?

After all that Moses had done for them, it would seem obvious that the people of Israel would have sought God's mercy and kindness to their leader and teacher. But there is no record of their concern at all.

Perhaps this week's Torah portion, Ekev, offers a hint of an answer. Moses reminds the Israelites that during their forty years in the wilderness God provided them with Manna from heaven; He provided them with clothing that didn't wear out; He protected their feet from swelling. In short, the Israelites did not have to worry about their day to day provisions. In a certain sense, then, they grew complacent. Their material needs were provided to them miraculously. While this was certainly a good thing for them, it also had a downside. They became so self-satisfied, that their ability to empathize about the needs of others was diminished. A Judeo-Spanish proverb has it that one with a full stomach does not understand the pain of the one who is hungry.

The Israelites had wandered for forty years. They were anxious to get into the Promised Land. Their focus was on their own needs. They didn't think much about the feelings of Moses. After all, if God judged that Moses should not enter the Land, then so be it. They didn't have time or interest to create a stir: they wanted to move forward, with or without Moses didn't really matter very much.

The Torah may be teaching us--by the silence of the Israelites--something very deep (and troubling) about human nature. It wasn't that the Israelites were bad people. No, they were simply "normal" people who wanted to get on with their lives. They "used" Moses as long as he was available. When he could no longer deliver them goods and services, they turned their thoughts to the next leader and to their future journeys. When God told Moses he would not enter the Promised Land, the Israelites offered no resistance, no prayers, no solace to Moses. In their eyes, he had become a "lame duck".

While the behavior of the Israelites was "normal", it nevertheless should raise questions in our own minds. If we were in their situation, would we have shown empathy for Moses? Would we have joined him in praying to God? Would we have made a clear demonstration of loyalty and appreciation?

In our modern society, one of the common complaints is that people are expendable. Loyalty and devotion are made subservient to utilitarian concerns and "market forces". People are used--and then discarded.

The behavior of the Israelites--as so much of modern behavior--is "normal". Yet, our task isn't to be satisfied with being "normal". We need to strive for true righteousness. True righteousness requires us to be sensitive, compassionate, loyal, appreciative.

* Jewishideas.org.

Parshas Eikev

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

As Moshe continues his farewell speech to his beloved nation, he stresses the depth of Hashem's love for us. He tells us that all Hashem asks of us is to revere Him and love Him, walk in His ways, serve Him and keep His mitzvos for our own good, that we should benefit and receive the reward He wishes to bestow upon us. (Devarim 10:12-13, Rash'i ibid., Ramban ibid.)

Rash'i (ibid.) noting the context within which Moshe mentions this, tells us that this message is not only of the depth of Hashem's love, but also of the depth of Hashem's commitment to us. Moshe had just finished exhorting the nation for the sin of the Golden Calf. He explained how Hashem wanted to destroy them and how he had pleaded to Hashem on their behalf for forty days and nights. Moshe then continues and says "And now, Israel, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you but to revere Hashem, your G-d, etc." Moshe was saying to the nation "And now" after all that you have done, Hashem still has great compassion and love for you. After all that you have sinned before Him, what does Hashem ask of you? Just to revere Him and serve Him. Despite all the damage we have done, all Hashem asks is that we return to our relationship with Him.

This Rash'i, while certainly inspiring, is rather difficult to understand. How can we possibly say that after committing grave sins we don't need to do anything more than serve Hashem appropriately as if nothing had happened? After the sin of the Golden Calf, worshiping an idol less than a month and half after receiving the Ten Commandments directly from G-d, can we really just go back as if nothing has happened? Surely, there must be more that we need to do to repair our relationship than simply to say we're sorry and move on.

Upon reflection, though, this Rash'i is teaching us a profound insight into our relationship with Hashem and our observance of Torah and mitzvos. Moshe delineates here five specific elements in our service of Hashem. He says we must revere Him, walk in His ways, love Him, serve Him and keep His mitzvos. Serving Hashem and keeping His mitzvos are the last two elements that Moshe listed. There are three other elements which come first. We must revere Hashem, walk in His ways and love Him.

The Mesillas Yesharim, in his introduction, explains what each of these elements are. Reverence of G-d means to recognize His Majesty and stand before Him with the awe with which one approaches a king. To walk in His ways means to recognize His goodness and to emulate His ways and to develop our character to live a noble life that reflects G-d's greatness. Loving G-d means to recognize G-d as our Creator who believes in us and loves us as a parent, and to love Him and care to make Him proud as we do with our parents.

Moshe then is telling us here that what Hashem asks of us is not just what we do, but more so Hashem is asking us how we do what we do. We must first recognize Hashem as the One possessing the Ultimate Goodness, Who lovingly created us. Then, from within this context, we are enjoined to serve Him and keep His mitzvos. Our responsibility is not simply to daven, keep Shabbos, eat kosher and be careful of how we treat others. Rather, our responsibility is to stand in awe of the great privilege bestowed upon us to speak directly to our Creator and to be allowed to praise Him and to ask for our needs. Our responsibility is to recognize that our loving Creator joyously remembers the first Shabbos when the world He made for us was complete and has invited us to join in that celebration. Our responsibility is to recognize that we are His subjects living in His world, and may only eat the items which He allows us. Our responsibility is to recognize that other people are Hashem's precious children and must be treated with the ultimate dignity and respect.

It is our attitude towards Torah and mitzvos which restores and maintains our relationship with Hashem. It is not what we do that matters, as much as how we do.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

A Search for Truth

by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

There was once a man who lived in Alabama who woke up one Sunday morning with a Desire to know Truth.

He got up, took a shower, got dressed, made himself some coffee, and was about to go out into the world to seek Truth when he got an emergency call from his office. It turned out one of his clients at the health insurance firm he worked in had run into some issues with the hospital he was staying in. The hospital wanted to charge the client a price that he felt was an overcharge and he didn't have the money. So the man went into the office and spent the morning sorting things out with the hospital. By the late afternoon, the man had come to a good understanding between all the parties and his client was satisfied. He thought he would then start his search but his Desire had abated. So the man went back home, had dinner, and went to sleep.

The next day, the man woke up and his Desire to know Truth had been rekindled. He told his wife he was leaving to seek Truth. His wife said, "Great, but first please unload the dishwasher and order some more oatmeal from Amazon. I think we're running low and I have to get the kids ready for school." The man did so and afterwards, his Desire had gone away once more.

The next morning his Desire returned and he was determined to follow through and find Truth once and for all. So before his wife woke up, he got dressed and started walking outside to begin his search. All of a sudden, lightning struck the ground in front of him. He looked up and the heavens had parted to reveal an ethereal light. From the light the man heard a voice saying, "Behold, I am the Lord, where are you going?"

The man, a little flustered, said, "Lord, I am off to seek Truth". The Lord replied, "Oh, ok. But before you do would you mind discussing this Talmudic passage with me? It's quite difficult and I thought if I had someone to discuss it with, I'd understand it better." The man agreed and spent the next 15 minutes in learned discussion until the Lord said, "Ah, thanks. I think I get it now. Much obliged." The sky then returned to normal and the man was ready to continue his journey but his Desire had gone away. So he walked around a few more minutes just to get some exercise and went back home.

* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL

Rabbi Yaacov Huli: Author of the Me'am Lo'ez

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel*

Rabbi Yaacov Huli (1689-1732) was born and raised in Jerusalem, where he received an excellent rabbinic education. When he went to Istanbul in 1714, his profound and expansive rabbinic knowledge won him the respect of the great scholars of that city. Rabbi Yehudah Rosanes, chief rabbi of the community and a world-renowned scholar, appointed the young Rabbi Huli to his rabbinical court. When Rabbi Rosanes died some years later, it was Yaacov Huli who compiled and edited his master's classic commentary on Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, known as Mishneh leMelekh.

Rabbi Huli was disturbed by the low level of Jewish instruction available to the working class and the poor. If they had no access to the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic texts, how were they to be fully observant Jews? How were they to know what the Torah required of them? The proliferation of scholarly rabbinic texts in Hebrew did nothing to improve the spiritual condition of those whose academic training was deficient.

Rabbi Huli conceived the idea of producing a comprehensive work in Judeo-Spanish for the benefit of the Sephardic public. Entitled Me'am Lo'ez, it was framed as a commentary on the Torah. The first volume, published in 1730, dealt with the Book of Genesis. In this work, Rabbi Huli provided classic rabbinic interpretations and commentaries on the biblical verses. Laws and customs, rabbinic homilies, and ethical lessons were interspersed throughout the work. The book was written in a popular, engaging style. Indeed, Rabbi Huli worried that it would be used merely for entertainment rather than for serious Torah study. As a work in the vernacular, it was available to a wide audience. It was written in a language and style which they could understand, appreciate, and enjoy. The Me'am Lo'ez was something of an encyclopedia of biblical and rabbinic learning, so that those who studied it derived a wide array of information and inspiration.

Rabbi Huli intended to publish similar volumes for all the books of the Torah. He did complete Genesis and much of Exodus. After his untimely death at the age of forty-three, other rabbis continued the work in the spirit of Rabbi Huli, completing the Five Books of Moses and other biblical books as well.

The Me'am Lo'ez was an immediate success. It went into numerous editions and was read enthusiastically by a large

audience. Rabbi Huli had constructed the work so that people would be able to study the weekly Torah portion from it. The book was used in this manner by families and study groups, and in synagogues.....

Rabbi Huli did not think of the Me'am Lo'ez as an original work. Rather, he viewed himself as a compiler of many and diverse classic Jewish sources. He was pleased to be a popularizer, bringing comprehensive knowledge to the public in a lucid and pleasant style. But his approach was indeed original. It was he who decided what material to include and what to exclude; how to present it in a lively manner; how to capture the interest of his readers and speak to their everyday needs. In many ways, the Me'am Lo'ez mirrored the spiritual life of the Judeo-Spanish speaking world of the time....

The Me'am Lo'ez appealed to the masses because it was sympathetic to the poor and downtrodden. Rabbi Huli drew on traditional sources which extolled humility and honest labor. Rabbi Huli explained that there was no shame in working for an honest living. One should not think it beneath his dignity to work at a craft or any other honest occupation, and should not attempt to live in a style beyond his means (Genesis 12:4). When our forefather Jacob prayed, he asked only for bread and clothing, not for any luxuries. Truly pious people did not seek superfluous things, but were happy with the basic necessities which God provided them (Genesis 28:22).

God created Adam from dust, not from gold (Genesis 1:1). He created a vast universe. One who looks at the sky at night and contemplates the countless stars cannot help but be overwhelmed by the grandeur and power of God. He is humbled by his own smallness in the universe. This feeling of humility leads one to serve God with devotion and purity (Genesis 2:7).

A facet of humility is that one should not try to show off his piety and righteousness. On the contrary, one should walk humbly with God, keeping his piety as private as possible. Rabbi Huli reminded his readers that one is allowed to bow only in designated places during the silent devotion, the Amidah. To bow more frequently would be a sign of presumptuousness and false piety. One should not do things which will make him appear to be more pious than other worshippers (Genesis 12:4).

The work of Rabbi Huli reflected the midrashic/kabbalist view of life which then predominated among the Sephardim in Moslem lands. Philosophic inquiry was no longer a vital part of the intellectual life of the community. The emphasis was on an absolute commitment to observing the halakhah in all its details. Kabbalah was recognized to have inestimable value and was a necessary ingredient in religious life. The willing acceptance of God's decrees with equanimity was encouraged, engendering a relative passivity. The predominant worldview emphasized loyalty to rabbis and the rabbinic tradition. The messianic hope was expressed longingly, wishfully.

(NOTE: Rabbi Huli's last name is sometimes presented as Culi, rather than Huli. But the name Huli is the correct way the name was pronounced by Sephardim. Indeed, Rabbi Huli himself alluded to his name when he entitled his work Me'am Lo'ez, drawn from Psalm 114. The word "lo'ez" refers to a foreign language, in this case Ladino. Toward the end of the Psalm, the verse reads: milifnei adon HULI arets, milifnei Elo-kei YAACOV, a clear allusion to his own name, Yaacov Huli.)

* Jewishideas.org. Excerpts from Rabbi Marc D. Angel's book, Voices in Exile, pp. 103-110. *Me'am Lo'ez* is available in English as the ***Torah Anthology*** – a source that I have used countless times as a source for insights on the Torah, pasook by pasook, for the past quarter century.

Rav Kook Torah Ekev: Animals Served First!*

The Torah promises that if we observe the mitzvot and sincerely love God, we will enjoy timely rain and bountiful crops:

"I will give plants in your field for your animals; and you will eat and be satiated." (Deut. 11:15)

Rav Abba Aricha, the celebrated third-century scholar, called attention to the order of the verse: first the animals eat, and only then the people. He learned from here that one should not eat before first placing food before one's animals.

Why is this? Should not people eat first, since they are more important? Are not humans 'the crown of creation'?

Rav Kook explained that this Talmudic rule of etiquette contains several moral lessons:

- Given our central place in the universe, we have a responsibility to look after all creatures.
- Our food (and in the case of the farmer, also his livelihood) is supplied by cows, chickens, and so on. We should feed these animals first as an expression of the fundamental gratitude we should feel toward these creatures which provide us with our basic needs.
- If we lack food for a short time, we may comfort ourselves with spiritual or intellectual pursuits. This is an integral aspect of the human soul, which is not sustained “by bread alone.” Animals, however, have no such alternate outlets when they are pained by hunger. Therefore, it is logical to deal with the animal’s hunger first.
- In purely physical aspects, animals are superior to humans. Is there a human being who is stronger than a bear, faster than a horse, more agile than a cat? Our superiority over animals lies exclusively in the spiritual realms: in our intelligence and our higher aspirations. Therefore, when it comes to physical sustenance, animals take precedence to humans, and by right are served first.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, p. 180.)

*Our feline bosses, Mimi Katz Fisher and Musetta Katz Fisher, sponsored Rav Kook’s Devar this Shabbas as a reminder to their servants to provide prompt service at their restaurants.

Powerful Insights on Eikev from the Lubavitch Rebbe

Compiled by Mordechai Rubin*

Hearing vs. Seeing

In Vaetchanan, Moses pleads that he might “see the good land.” But in Eikev, G d says “because you hearken to (literally: ‘hear’) these judgments.” “Seeing” describes the vision of the supernatural that G d confers in moments of grace. “Hearing” refers to the more distant, less lucid perception of the spiritual, to which man can aspire by his own efforts.

Seeing something is clearer and more forceful than hearing about it. Nonetheless, this force and clarity are due to what is seen rather than to the person who sees it. It is the object which is clearly defined; and the man who sees it may still be unaffected by it. But if he has made the effort to hear about something, he has already aroused his feelings and made himself sensitive to what he is about to hear.

This is true, too, of the difference between Vaetchanan and Eikev. Although the “vision” which Moses sought from G d was a greater revelation than the “hearkening” which the Israelites could achieve by themselves, it was less inward—it would have come to man from outside instead of mounting within him.

The Importance of the “Unimportant”

Our Sages note that the word eikev can mean “heel,” and explain that this is a reference to mitzvot which a person “tramples with his heel,” i.e., those mitzvot which are not obviously important, but rather are inconspicuously embedded into the fabric of our lives. Keeping these mitzvot warrants G d’s bountiful blessings.

When a person observes mitzvot that are obviously important, his commitment is not necessarily that internalized. The importance of the mitzvot does not allow him to ignore them. As such, his observance is not that involving an undertaking for him. He is doing what he is expected to do.

When, however, a person observes mitzvot that can be “trampled with our heels,” he shows an extra measure of devotion. By nature, these mitzvot would be ignored; there is no natural tendency pushing him to observe them. Their observance requires him to summon up an extra measure of commitment that enables him to go beyond his natural inclination.

Making this additional effort evokes an extra measure of Divine favor and brings the manifold blessings the Torah mentions.

The Era of Redemption

Our Rabbis teach that the opening phrase of our Torah reading Vihaya eikev tishmaon — “It shall come to pass when you heed....” alludes to our present era, ikvasa demeshicha, the time when Mashiach’s approaching footsteps can be heard. When we observe the Torah and its mitzvot in ikvasa demeshicha, the commentaries explain, G d will keep the promises mentioned in the Torah and bring the Redemption.

Implied is that there is something unique about our observance that will precipitate the Redemption. The unique quality of our generation is hinted at by the word eikev which also means “heel” in Hebrew. When you want to enter an extremely cold swimming pool, which is the easiest limb to put in first? The feet.

Although the feet lack the sensitivity of the more refined limbs of the body, they respond more readily to our will. Similarly, although our generation may lack some of the spiritual refinement of the previous generation, like the heel, we are able to show a deeper commitment to fulfilling G d’s will.

The Power of a Blessing

This week's Torah reading contains the verses: “What does G d, your L rd, ask of you? Only to fear G d . . . to walk in His ways and to love Him.” Our sages interpret the quote non-literally, noting that the Hebrew word *nn*, translated as “what,” resembles the word *nnn*, meaning one hundred. This is the source for the injunction for each person to recite one hundred blessings every day.

On the surface, the simple meaning of the verse and our sages’ rendering of it are worlds apart. When looking deeper, however, we can appreciate our sages are simply providing a vehicle for us to internalize and apply the charge communicated by the verse in our daily lives.

To fear and love G d and follow His paths are noble virtues. How can a person make these virtues actual factors in his life, and not merely ideals to which he is striving? By reciting one hundred blessings a day. All the blessings we recite are intended to make the awareness of G d part of our operative consciousness, and in this way spur our love and fear of Him.

* © Chabad 2020.

An Insight on Parshat Eikev: Leaders and Followers

By Rabbi M. Wisnefsky*

[Moses said to the Jewish people,] “**G-d said to me, 'arise, descend quickly from here, for your people have become corrupt....'**” (Devarim 9:12)

When G-d told Moses to descend, He not only meant that he should ascend the mountain; He also meant that on account of the people's misdeeds, Moses would have to descend from the exalted level of Divine consciousness to which he had ascended when he received the Torah directly from G-d.

Moses clearly did not participate in the people's misdeed. Moreover, he could not even be faulted for not protesting their actions, since he was not there. Nonetheless, he was adversely affected by their sin, because the nature of the bond between a true Jewish leader and his flock is such that when they ascend, he ascends too, and when they fall, he falls too.

We are all leaders, since we all have people whom we can influence. From this incident with Moses, we see how entwined our own personal success in life is with the success of those whom we can influence. The surest way to promote our own spiritual growth is by promoting the spiritual progress of others.

– **Kehot's Daily Wisdom #2**

* **An Insight from the Rebbe.**

Gut Shabbos,
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

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The Hebron Massacre of 1929: A Recently Revealed Letter of a Survivor

by Meyer Greenberg

The massacre of the Jews of Hebron in 1929 put an end to the ancient Jewish community at the burial site of the patriarchs. The riots which erupted throughout the country were an organized Arab attack against the entire Zionist enterprise with the aim of preventing the eventual establishment of a Jewish state. They were the most violent eruption until that time in the conflict that has been termed "one long war between Arabs and Jews comparable to the Hundred Years War in medieval Europe."^[1]

Unlike other parts of the country, where Jews resisted with force, the Hebron community reflected the mind set of the pre modern Jew, conditioned by almost 2,000 years of Jewish powerlessness. The reaction of the local leadership to the impending attack was to turn to the authorities -- the British appointed governor and the Arab notables -- for protection, which, when it arrived, was much too late.

The events in Hebron and my grandparents' miraculous rescue are vividly described in a letter written by my grandfather nine days later to my mother, Blanche Greenberg.

In 1907, the peak year of Jewish immigration into the United States, my maternal grandfather, Aharon Reuven Bernzweig, his wife Breine Zuch Bernzweig, and their six children left Stanislaw, Galicia (then Austrian Poland), and settled in New York City. Twenty years later, in 1927, after their children were grown and they had accumulated a modest capital, they were in a position to fulfill the dream of many traditional Jews to spend their retirement years in Eretz Hakodesh, the Holy Land.

Late in the spring of 1929, my grandparents travelled to the United States in order to attend my brother's bar mitzvah. Upon their return they decided to escape the heat of a Tel Aviv summer by vacationing in Hebron. Five days later the riots broke out.

Zeide Bernzweig's health was affected by the Hebron ordeal, and he died of a heart attack in 1936. Baba Breine continued to live at 16 Bialik Street in Tel Aviv until her death in 1945. That is where I would visit and spend Shabbat in 1937 38, when I studied at Hebrew University.

Aharon and Breine Bernzweig were buried on the Mount of Olives. In the summer of 1967, after the reunification of Jerusalem, my wife and I found and restored their desecrated graves.

While members of the family knew that Zeide had written a letter about Hebron, we were not familiar with the actual text. I found the original in my parents' papers after their death. The Yiddish is closely written on ten pages and is difficult to read. I am therefore greatly indebted to Helen G. Meyrowitz, who deciphered the text and prepared the initial translation, which I have revised and edited.

While preparing the letter for publication, I found clarifying and corroborating information in the testimonies of other eyewitnesses, preserved in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. From the survivor documents I was able to identify others who were in the group of 33 who shared the same hiding place, as well as the names of the Arabs who saved their lives.

MEGILLAT HEBRON

With the help of God, Monday, Torah portion Shoftim V'shotrim, 5689 [September 2, 1929], Tel Aviv, may it be built up and firmly established, speedily in our days, Amen.

My dear children, may you live and be well.

Even before I begin writing, my hand is already shaking, my head swims, and every limb is trembling. I am unable to get control of myself, because the cries are still ringing in my ears. It is one week today since we came back from the bitter tragedy. Each day I want to write to you, but when I sit down to write, all my limbs start to quiver and tears pour from my eyes, so I have to stop. Today for the first time I was able to pull myself together, with all my strength, with superhuman effort. I got up at dawn and sat down to write. I hadn't started yet, but even before I could begin, my pen was already soaked with tears. Although it seems that I am writing this letter with ink, you should know that it is not ink, but

tears.

Now, let me get to the point. I don't really know where to start and where to finish, because my blood is still churning inside me. But I will begin my Megillah of Hebron. Children, as you already know from my earlier letter, Mama, may she live and be well, had been feeling very weak, ever since we came back from our trip to America. Moving to a new apartment and all the hard work involved added to it. The apartment wasn't finished and there was endless aggravation because the work was not being done to her liking. On top of everything else, she couldn't bear the terribly hot weather. It was awful; the perspiring was beyond human endurance. She lay in bed all day because she was too weak to walk about. I kept begging Mama, may she live and be well, with tears in my eyes, that we needed a change of climate. It was impossible to convince her because she didn't want to abandon the house and leave it hefker. Finally she realized that she had no choice and she agreed. She did not want to go by herself, only with me. So we left home and went to the country to Hebron.[2]

We arrived on Sunday, August 18th. There we went to a guest house, where we got a very nice room and came to an agreement on the charges. We paid for one month in advance, since we planned to stay for several months, until after all the holidays, when it would be cooler.[3]

From the very beginning, things did not go well. Although the air was very good and the weather cool, and Mama, may she be well, did not perspire any more, she caught a severe cold and had to stay in bed. In addition, there were swarms of biting mosquitoes. We had no choice but to hope that things would get better. Unfortunately, things don't always turn out the way we would like, and no one knows what the future holds.

Ever since we arrived in Hebron, we had heard talk of disturbances in Jerusalem, that Arabs and Jews were fighting. We didn't have any specific details, but there were rumors in the air, so we were not in a happy state of mind. But what could we do about it?

On Friday, the 23rd, we heard that things had gotten worse in Jerusalem. Everyone became very uneasy and walked about without a head. We had forebodings that something terrible was about to happen but what, exactly, we did not know. I was fearful and kept questioning the local people, who had lived there for generations. They assured me that in Hebron there could never be a pogrom, because as many times as there had been trouble elsewhere in Eretz Israel, Hebron had remained quiet. The local population had always lived very peacefully with the Arabs.

But my heart told me that the situation was serious. Hebron alone, without the surrounding villages, has a population of 24,000. Including the villages, there are 60,000 people. Of what significance is the Jewish community there, a mere 100 families?[4] What could we do to protect ourselves? We could only comfort ourselves with the hope that God, blessed be He, would have mercy, and the troubles would run their course quietly.

Friday afternoon the situation worsened. We heard that on the street Arabs had already beaten several Jews with clubs. Next we heard that all the Jewish stores had closed. The atmosphere was explosive. Everybody was afraid to go out into the street, and we locked ourselves in our rooms. Things looked really bad. What should we do? "No one could go out, and no one could come in "[Joshua 6.1]; everybody was fearful. By now the local Jews too were saying that the situation was serious.

Suddenly, just one hour before candle lighting, pandemonium broke loose. Window panes were smashed on all sides. In our building, they broke every window and began throwing large stones inside. We hid ourselves. They were breaking windows in all the Jewish homes. Now we were in deathly fear. As we were blessing the Shabbes candles, we heard that in the Yeshiva one young man had been killed. It was bitter, the beginning of a slaughter.

In the meantime, mounted policemen arrived, and all became still outside. We thought that our salvation had come. All through the night the police patrolled the streets. But it seemed that they were having problems. You can understand that I walked the floor all the night terribly worried, with my heart in my mouth. On Shabbes morning, we saw that the situation was getting worse. Cars kept racing back and forth through the streets. They were filled with Arabs armed with long iron bars, long knives, and axes. The Arabs kept screaming that they were going to Jerusalem to slaughter all the Jews. Soon many Jews gathered in our house. We held a meeting and talked over the situation, but couldn't think of anything we could do to protect ourselves, since none of us had any weapons. Many of the people remained in our house, because by then it was too dangerous to try to go home.

Now let me tell you about the massacre. Right after eight o'clock in the morning we heard screams. Arabs had begun breaking into Jewish homes. The screams pierced the heart of the heavens. We didn't know what to do. Our house

had two floors. We were downstairs and a doctor lived on the second floor.[5] We figured that we would be safe in the doctor's apartment, but how could we get up there? The stairs were on the outside of the building, but it wasn't safe to go out. So we chopped through the ceiling and that way we climbed up to the doctor's house. Well, after being there only a little while, we realized that we were still in danger because by that time the Arabs had almost reached our house. They were going from door to door, slaughtering everyone who was inside. The screams and the moans were terrible. People were crying Help! Help! But what could we do? There were thirty three of us. Soon, soon, all of us would be lost.[6]

Just then, God, blessed be He, in His great mercy, sent us an Arab who lived in back of our house. He insisted that we come down from the doctor's apartment and enter his house through the back door. He took us to his cellar, a large room without windows to the outside. We all went in, while he, together with several Arab women, stood outside near the door.[7] As we lay there on the floor, we heard the screams as Arabs were slaughtering Jews. It was unbearable. As for us, we felt that the danger was so great that we had no chance of coming out alive. Each one of us said his vidui [his confession in anticipation of death]. At any moment we could be slaughtered, for double edged swords were already at out throats. We had not even the slightest hope of remaining alive. We just begged that it should already be done and over.

Five times the Arabs stormed our house with axes, and all the while those wild murderers kept screaming at the Arabs who were standing guard to hand over the Jews. They, in turn, shouted back that they had not hidden any Jews and knew nothing. They begged the attackers not to destroy their homes.

We heard everything. In addition, the little children in our group kept crying. We were in deadly fear that the murderers outside would hear them.[8]

As for me, I was already 99 percent in the next world. All the time that we were in the Arab's house, I lay there on the floor in terrible pain [from a heart attack].[9] It just happened that there were two doctors in the house. They sat near me and they saved my life.[10]

Well, I cannot continue describing the destruction any longer. It took several hours to us it seemed like years until all became quiet outside. We still lay there, waiting for the Angel of Death to finish with us as quickly as possible.

But God heard our prayers. Suddenly, the door opened, and the police walked in. They had been told that we were hidden there. They demanded that we go along with them, and they would take us to a safe place. We were afraid to go, because we thought they themselves might slaughter us. Eventually, they succeeded in convincing us that they had our good in mind. Since we couldn't walk there, they brought automobiles and took us, under police guard, to the police station, which was in a safe location.[11]

When we reached the police station, there was acted out a real life dance of the devils, for the police had brought together those who were still alive, the surviving remnant. During the earlier confusion, naturally, no one could have known what was happening to anyone else, but there in the police station, everyone first discovered whom he had lost. As people told each other about their misfortunes and how many casualties they had suffered, there burst out a terrible cry, everyone shrieking and crying at the same time. It was unbearable. Blessed God, give us strength! It was beyond human endurance. Three women went out of their minds right there.

In short, we were in the police station three days and three nights. We couldn't eat and we couldn't sleep. We lay on the ground in filth, just listening to the crying and the groaning.[12] Finally, God, blessed be He, had mercy on us and [on Monday night] the police again transferred us to Jerusalem. There we stayed in the Nathan Straus Health Center for two days and two nights, and on Wednesday we came back to Tel Aviv.[13]

I am writing you only about our troubles. I don't have the strength to write about the additional troubles of the whole Jewish community. That you will surely read in the American newspapers. It is very tragic, but everything is from God.

Now I will tell you the total number of people who were slaughtered in Hebron. As of today, there are 63 holy martyrs. While we were still there, 58 were buried in a common grave, 51 males and 7 females; up to today, there are 5 more martyrs from among the wounded. Of the wounded, 49 are in serious condition, and 17 slightly wounded. Who knows how many more fatalities there will be? The Yeshiva suffered 23 killed and 17 wounded. Eight of the dead and 14 of the wounded from the Yeshiva are American boys. Gevald! Twenty three living Torah scrolls were burned! May the heavens open and avenge us.

All the houses of study with their Torah scrolls and holy books were burned; everything in them was destroyed. All the homes were plundered; not even a straw was left!

We ourselves were left practically naked and barefoot. Since we had planned to stay there a few months, we had taken along all our clothes. Mama, may she live and be well, was left with only the one dress she was wearing and I, too, had only what I was wearing. They even took my talis and tefilin. Before Shabbes, I gave the money that I had brought along to the innkeeper for safekeeping. The Arabs took that money too, quite a large amount.

To make matters worse, the situation in the entire country is very bad, and no one is paying his debts. I have notes for several thousand dollars. Last week, notes for \$750 came due, but no one paid. Who knows what will happen in the future? God forbid that we shouldn't be ruined altogether.[14] We're trying to keep our heads above water while we keep hearing that here things are bad and there things are bad. May God, blessed be He, have mercy and help all the Jews, including us, that we should at least be well and be able to bear up under these trials. We Jews have had enough troubles!

I have no patience to write about family matters because my hand is still trembling.

Just one thing, my dear children, may you live and be well, I ask of you that you put away this letter for the generations. Each year, at an agreed upon day, you should all meet and give thanks and praise to God, blessed be He, who saved your parents from this great catastrophe, and each one of you should make a generous contribution to charity. The miracle took place on Shabbes, Torah portion Ekev, the 18th day of the month of Av, 5689 [August 24, 1929], in Hebron.

Your father, who wishes you the best, writing to you through tears.

Aharon [Aharon Reuven Bernzweig]
[(Wife) Breine Zuch Bernzweig]

APPENDIX 1: STATISTICAL SUMMARY

Total number of Jewish residents in Hebron: 750 800

Jews present in Hebron at the time (including visitors): 550 estimated

Residents not present: 250 300

Yeshiva students and staff away between terms

People visiting or working elsewhere

Killed in the riots: 67

Yeshiva students and staff: 24

Buried in mass grave: 59

Wounded and survived: 53

Survived and uninjured: (assembled in police station after the riots): 430

Saved by Arabs: 280 300

Saved in other ways: (hiding, homes not reached, lay among bodies of dead and wounded): 130 estimated

Arabs who saved Jews: 25 estimated

Arabs who participated in attacks and plunder: thousands

APPENDIX 2

Hadassah's Dr. Kitayin Testifies:

"At about 11:00 A.M. on Friday, while I was at work [in the Health Clinic], the nurse, Shoshana Bat Haim, was told by one of the frequenters of the dispensary, Rashad Sa'ad, 18 years old and a government official, that preparations were being made to kill Jews in Hebron. The nurse called me and reported the matter. I answered, 'Tell him that these days one doesn't ordinarily murder people.'

At the same time an Arab guide named Bakri came into the dispensary. When the nurse requested two piasters for the medicine, he replied that he would put out her eyes that day. The nurse called me and told me what the Arab had said, and I chased him out of the building. After a few minutes another guide came in and begged me to forgive the man. I forgave him and he came in for the medicine."

After 10:00 on Saturday morning, when the slaughter had ceased, Dr. Kitayin was sought out and taken to the Police Station to tend the wounded. Together with them were others who were not wounded but "whose faces and clothes were full of blood. They told me that they had lain near the dead and had been saved by being thought dead." Shortly afterward the wounded and the corpses were moved to the government Health Office. (Kitayin Statement, op. cit., Annex 72.)

There Dr. Kitayin worked without stop for 36 hours until Sunday evening, when ambulances arrived from Hadassah to transport the wounded to Jerusalem. Assisting Kitayin were the local Jewish medical staff, Dr. Elkanah and the Hadassah nurse. Toward evening on Saturday they were joined by a surgeon, Dr. John MacQueen, the Government Medical Officer from Jerusalem, his assistant and two nurses. Together they operated upon and treated about 20 of the 60 wounded. (Letter from Dr. Kitayin to the Palestine Zionist Executive dated September 25, 1929, in C.Z.A., S25/4601, and Oded Avissar, p. 418.)

Notes:

[1] For the significance of the riots see Naomi W. Cohen, *The Year after the Riots: American Responses to the Palestine Crisis of 1929-30*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988; and Aaron S. Klieman, ed. *The Rise of Israel -- The Turn toward Violence 1920-1929*, New York and London: Garland Publishers, 1987, p. 12.

[2] In those days Hebron in the south and Safed in the north were favorite summer vacation sites for the traditional Jewish community. Hebron, 3,000 feet above sea level, is 19 miles south of Jerusalem.

[3] The guest house was called Eshel Avraham, the Tamarisk Tree of Abraham, a classical Jewish symbol of hospitality. It was operated by Haim Shneerson and was one of five or more small family run lodgings for visitors. Students at the Hebron Yeshiva were housed with private families. See Statement of Yehuda Leib Shneerson, son of Haim Shneerson, Central Zionist Archives (hereinafter C.Z.A.), 1929 Riots, Notes on Hebron, File S25/4601, Annex 16. Eshel Avraham was the first hotel in Hebron and was located in one of five buildings constructed by the two grandfathers of Yehuda Leib Shneerson during the period of Turkish rule over Palestine. Hard times forced them to sell the buildings to Arabs. On the main floor there were four rooms and a synagogue. See Yehuda Leib Shneerson, *Hoy Hebron, Hebron!* (Hebrew), Tel Aviv, Yair Publishers, 1980, p.23.

[4] The entire Jewish community of Hebron numbered between 750 and 800. Included in these figures are about 200 students and staff of Yeshivat Hebron Kenesset Israel. In 1924, Rabbi Moses Mordecai Epstein had transplanted 150 students and faculty en masse from Slobodka in Lithuania to Hebron. Rabbi Epstein was notable also for his interest in the building up of Palestine. While at the Volozhin Yeshiva in the 1880s he encouraged the Hovevei Zion group organized

by the students, and he himself was a member of the Hovevei Zion delegation which purchased the land for the settlement of Hadera in 1891.

A population figure of 20,000 Moslems and 800 Jews in the town of Hebron is given in the memorandum of the Palestine Zionist Executive, prepared by Mordecai Eliash and dated October 14, 1929, for the government Commission of Enquiry into the 1929 Riots, C.Z.A., S25/4601. The census of 1931, however, lists 17,531 Moslems in the urban area and 50,100 in the rural portion of the Hebron sub district.

[5] In his disposition after the riots he identified himself as Dr. Zwi Kitayin, Hadassah physician at Hebron. C.Z.A., S25/4601, Annex 72. Later he changed the spelling of his name to Kitain.

The Hadassah Clinic was housed in a building erected in 1909 by a Bagdadi Jew, Joseph Avraham Shalom, and the Sasson family for the Hesed Le'Avraham Hospital. Subsequently the structure was taken over by the Hadassah organization and called Beit Hadassah.

The clinic in Hebron is listed in the November 1919 report of the American Zionist Medical Unit (A.Z.M.U.), set up in 1918 by Hadassah and the American Zionist Organization. The A.Z.M.U. maintained hospitals in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Safed and Tiberias, as well as clinics in many towns and settlements. In 1921 the name was changed to Hadassah Medical Organization (H.M.O.). C.Z.A., Hadassah 1920 22, S30/2513.

Dr. Kitayin, in his statement, described the atmosphere of threats and danger on the eve of the riots and his work in caring for the wounded in the days that followed. See Appendix 2.

[6] Only five minutes before the mob reached the guest house, the Arab landlord "knocked and said to us: "Come out of here at once and go to my house. There you'll be safer." Statements of Shneerson and Kitayin, op. cit., Annexes 16 and 72.

The number of people who took refuge with him is verified by Dr. Kitayin. op. cit., S25/4601.

The known members of the group are the family of Haim Shneerson and his son Yehuda Leib, Dr. Zwi Kitayin, his wife Rivka and their two children, Gavriel and Elisheva, Dr. Leib Levit and Aharon Reuven and Breine Bernzweig. About half of the 33 were children.

[7] The name of the Arab was Haj Eissa El Kourdieh, who is included prominently in the three lists of Arabs identified shortly after the massacre as those who saved the lives of Jews. He lived in the same courtyard as the guest house and was its landlord. One of the women was his wife, Imm Mahmoud.

The most reliable of the lists, dated January 20, 1930, was attested to by the rabbis of the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities, Yaakov Yosef Slonim and Meir Franco. It includes 19 rescuers and 270 rescued. Since the list underestimates the number in my grandfather's group by nine, we would estimate the total number of Jews saved by Arabs as 280 to 300. The number of Arab rescuers should also be increased by at least four or six to compensate for the omission of women from the list.

The other lists are unsigned and undated. The shorter of the two, naming 17 Arabs but omitting numbers for Jews, is entitled "Arabs of Hebron who behaved well towards Jews." This is apparently an earlier compilation that is referred to in a letter from Mordecai Eliash to the chairman of the Palestine Zionist Executive, Colonel Frederick H. Kisch, dated November 13, 1929, which states, "I attach a list of Arabs of Hebron who behaved well towards Jews."

The third list, which credits 32 Arabs with saving over 444 Jews, appears exaggerated. Only 430 Jews were alive and whole when assembled to the police station, and that number included a substantial number whose homes were not reached by the attackers, others who hid and were not discovered, and those who were overlooked as they lay among the bodies of the dead and wounded. See C.Z.A., The Riots in Palestine, August 1929, Arabs Who Assisted Jews, S25/3409 and List of Jews Protected by Moslems in Hebron, S25/4472.

[8] Other survivors add details: During the attacks two Arab women sat in front of the door and ground on millstones, whose shrill whine, together with the women's screams, helped to drown out the sounds of the crying children inside. Earlier, Imm Mahmoud handed her 10 year old son to the group as a hostage, to reassure them that she would not give them up. The mother coached the boy. When she would call out to him, "Are there any Jews inside with you?" he was to answer, "No, there are no Jews here. They all ran away."

The people inside heard one of the attackers shout out, "Today is a day that is holy to Mohammed. Anyone who does not kill Jews is a sinner." Dr. Kitayin and Shneerson, op. cit., Annexes 72 and 16. Oral interview wth Mrs. Rivka Kitain Mellor and her daughter, Mrs. Elisheva Greidinger, on August 24, 1989.

Edward Robbin, who went to Hebron three weeks later "with a convoy of refugees returning to their homes to bring the remnants of their possessions to Jerusalem," describes meeting a woman whom we recognize as Imm Mahmoud. "Opposite the Slonim house in front of what had been a hotel, a crowd of Jews had gathered about an Arab woman. To each one that approached they repeated the story of how she had saved twenty three [sic] people by bringing them into her house. People looked at the thin worn face of the Arab woman with awe." The Menorah Journal, XVII, 3 (December 1929), p.304.

[9] I remember hearing at the time that he suffered a heart attack.

[10] The second doctor was Dr. Leib Levit, the government veterinary surgeon in Hebron. Statement of Dr. Levit, C.Z.A., S25/4601, Annex 32.

[11] Eyewitness accounts report that police with rifles controlled the streets on Friday night. On Saturday morning, however, they were sent out armed only with clubs and quickly lost control of the mobs. Only when the police commander R.O. Cafferata himself was attacked did he order the police to be rearmed with rifles. They returned, fired shots into the air and the rioting immediately stopped. Op. cit., S25/4601, Statements of Rabbi Feivel Epstein of the Hebron Yeshiva, Annex 28; Yehoshua Hason, Annex 40; Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Slonim, Annex 6; Kitayin, Annex 72, and Shneerson, Annex 16.

[12] The rescued sat and slept on the floor, soaked with the blood of the wounded who had lain there earlier. For two days the British did not supply them with food. Only on Monday were they able to purchase half burned pitta and grapes. The police made no effort to clean the room until they heard that people were coming from Jerusalem to evacuate the women and children. Oded Avissar, ed., Sefer Hebron (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1970), p. 419.

The police station was in the Romano House, a spacious building with dozens of rooms that was constructed by a Jew from Istanbul in the 1860's. During World War I the Turkish authorities confiscated the building. When the British took over the country they used the structure as a police station, courthouse and prison.

[13] [On Sunday night] "Crowds gathered at the [Hadassah] Hospital [on Straus Street] and waited for the wounded to be brought from Hebron. The [British] authorities ordered that they be transported in the dead of night when the streets would be empty. The next night the women and children refugees [and the elderly] were transported in buses. They brought them to the new Straus [Health Center] building....(This then would be the opening of the new building)....

As the buses stopped, a muffled hysterical crying, shouting, screaming. Half crazed women leaped from the autos, clutching their children tightly and moaning....

One little old woman had jumped out of the auto and started to run about silently among the crowd searching and whispering, "My children, have you seen my children?" Robbin, op. cit., p. 299.

[14] My grandfather had invested his capital in mortgages and construction loans, especially in Bnai Brak, which was being developed in those years.

By Bryna & Paul Epstein of Rehovot, Israel, Dvora & Nathan Liebster, and Saadia & Lily Greenberg
in loving memory of Saadia, Bryna, & Dvora's great grandparents, Aharon Reuven and Breine Bernzweig, on the 91st anniversary of their miraculous deliverance, b'Chasdei Hashem, during the Hebron massacre on Shabbat Parashat Eikev, 18 Menachem Av 5689 (August 24, 1929).

Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah
on Parashat Hashavuah
via the Internet

Volume 26, Issue 40

Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The Politics of Memory

In Eikev Moses sets out a political doctrine of such wisdom that it can never become redundant or obsolete. He does it by way of a pointed contrast between the ideal to which Israel is called, and the danger with which it is faced. This is the ideal:

Observe the commands of the Lord your God, walking in His ways and revering Him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land – a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. When you have eaten and are satisfied, bless the Lord your God for the good land He has given you. (Deut. 8:6–10)

And this is the danger: Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe His commands, His laws, and His decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.... You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms His covenant, which He swore to your forefathers, as it is today. (Deut. 8:11–17)

The two passages follow directly on from one another. They are linked by the phrase "when you have eaten and are satisfied," and the contrast between them is a fugue between the verbs "to remember" and "to forget."

Good things, says Moses, will happen to you. Everything, however, will depend on how you respond. Either you will eat and be satisfied

By Gilla & Harold Saltzman
on the occasion of
the fourth yahrzeit of Gilla's father,
הָרָב טוֹבִיה בֶן אַבְרָהָם יִעָקָב ע'ה
(Rabbi Tobias Rothenberg) on ט' באב

By Bryna & Paul Epstein of Rehovot, Israel, Dvora & Nathan Liebster, and Saadia & Lily Greenberg
in loving memory of Saadia, Bryna, & Dvora's great grandparents, Aharon Reuven and Breine Bernzweig, on the 91st anniversary of their miraculous deliverance, b'Chasdei Hashem, during the Hebron massacre on Shabbat Parashat Eikev, 18 Menachem Av 5689 (August 24, 1929).
The text of the letter of Aharon Reuven Bernzweig describing their experiences and deliverance may be read at: www.hebron1929.info.

Shabbat Parashat Ekev

5780 B'H

and bless God, remembering that all things come from Him – or you will eat and be satisfied and forget to whom you owe all this. You will think it comes entirely from your own efforts: "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." Although this may seem a small difference, it will, says Moses, make all the difference. This alone will turn your future as a nation in its own land.

Moses' argument is brilliant and counter-intuitive. You may think, he says, that the hard times are behind you. You have wandered for forty years without a home. There were times when you had no water, no food. You were exposed to the elements. You were attacked by your enemies. You may think this was the test of your strength. It was not. The real challenge is not poverty but affluence, not slavery but freedom, not homelessness but home.

Many nations have been lifted to great heights when they faced difficulty and danger. They fought battles and won. They came through crises – droughts, plagues, recessions, defeats – and were toughened by them. When times are hard, people grow. They bury their differences. There is a sense of community and solidarity, of neighbours and strangers pulling together. Many people who have lived through a war know this.

The real test of a nation is not if it can survive a crisis but if it can survive the lack of a crisis. Can it stay strong during times of ease and plenty, power and prestige? That is the challenge that has defeated every civilisation known to history. Let it not, says Moses, defeat you.

Moses' foresight was little less than stunning. The pages of history are littered with the relics of nations that seemed impregnable in their day, but which eventually declined and fell and lapsed into oblivion – and always for the reason Moses prophetically foresaw. They forgot.^[1] Memories fade. People lose sight of the values they once fought for – justice, equality, independence, freedom. The nation, its early battles over, becomes strong. Some of its members grow rich. They become lax, self-indulgent, over-sophisticated, decadent. They lose their sense of social solidarity. They no longer feel it their duty to care for the poor, the weak, the marginal, the losers. They begin to feel that such wealth and position as they have is theirs by right. The bonds of fraternity and

collective responsibility begin to fray. The less well-off feel an acute sense of injustice. The scene is set for either revolution or conquest. Societies succumb to external pressures when they have long been weakened by internal decay. That was the danger Moses foresaw and about which he warned.

His analysis has proved true time and again, and it has been restated by several great analysts of the human condition. In the fourteenth century, the Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) argued that when a civilisation becomes great, its elites get used to luxury and comfort, and the people as a whole lose what he called their asabiyah, their social solidarity. The people then become prey to a conquering enemy, less civilised than they are but more cohesive and driven.

The Italian political philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) described a similar cycle: People, he said, "first sense what is necessary, then consider what is useful, next attend to comfort, later delight in pleasures, soon grow dissolute in luxury, and finally go mad squandering their estates."^[2] Affluence begets decadence.

In the twentieth century few said it better than Bertrand Russell in his History of Western Philosophy. He believed that the two great peaks of civilisation were reached in ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy, but he was honest enough to see that the very features that made them great contained the seeds of their own demise:

What had happened in the great age of Greece happened again in Renaissance Italy: traditional moral restraints disappeared, because they were seen to be associated with superstition; the liberation from fetters made individuals energetic and creative, producing a rare fluorescence of genius; but the anarchy and treachery which inevitably resulted from the decay of morals made Italians collectively impotent, and they fell, like the Greeks, under the domination of nations less civilised than themselves but not so destitute of social cohesion.^[3]

Moses, however, did more than prophesy and warn. He also taught how the danger could be

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avoided, and here too his insight is as relevant now as it was then. He spoke of the vital significance of memory for the moral health of a society.

Throughout history there have been many attempts to ground ethics in universal attributes of humanity. Some, like Immanuel Kant, based it on reason. Others based it on duty. Bentham rooted it in consequences (“the greatest happiness for the greatest number”)[4]. David Hume attributed it to certain basic emotions: sympathy, empathy, compassion. Adam Smith predicated it on the capacity to stand back from situations and judge them with detachment (“the impartial spectator”). Each of these has its virtues, but none has proved fail-safe.

Judaism took, and takes, a different view. The guardian of conscience is memory. Time and again the verb *zachor*, “remember,” resonates through Moses’ speeches in Deuteronomy:

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt... therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Shabbat day. (Deut. 5:15)

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years... (Deut. 8:2)

Remember this and never forget how you provoked the Lord your God to anger in the desert... (Deut. 9:7)

Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam along the way after you came out of Egypt. (Deut. 24:9)

Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. (Deut. 25:17)

Remember the days of old, consider the years of ages past. (Deut. 32:7)

As Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi notes in his great treatise, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, “Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people.”[5] Civilisations begin to die when they forget. Israel was commanded never to forget.

In an eloquent passage, the American scholar Jacob Neusner once wrote:

Civilisation hangs suspended, from generation to generation, by the gossamer strand of memory. If only one cohort of mothers and fathers fails to convey to its children what it has learned from its parents, then the great chain of learning and wisdom snaps. If the guardians of human knowledge stumble only one time, in their fall collapses the whole edifice of knowledge and understanding.[6]

The politics of free societies depends on the handing on of memory. That was Moses’ insight, and it speaks to us with undiminished power today.

[1] For a recent study of this idea applied to contemporary politics, see David Andress, *Cultural Dementia: How the West Has Lost Its History and*

Risks Losing Everything Else (London: Head of Zeus, 2018).

[2] Giambattista Vico, *New Science: Principles of the New Science Concerning the Common Nature of Nations* (London: Penguin, 1999), 489.

[3] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004), 6.

[4] The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham: A Comment on the Commentaries and A Fragment on Government, ed. James Henderson Burns and Herbert Lionel Adolphus Hart (London: Athlone Press, 1977), 393.

[5] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 11.

[6] Jacob Neusner, *Conservative, American, and Jewish* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, 1993), 35.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

“Not by bread alone does a human being live, but rather by that which comes forth from the Lord’s mouth does a human being live.” (Deuteronomy 8:3)

How does the Bible view “life,” that span of time that every individual desperately wishes to preserve and to lengthen, but which is rarely properly utilized? The sad truth is that no one is quite certain how best to use whatever time he/she may be given or to what purpose to dedicate it. How best to “spend” one’s life is the question of questions, and one who lives without asking and answering that question runs the risk of leaving this world without ever having lived at all.

Apparently the Almighty came to the conclusion that the newly freed Israelites were not yet ready to enter the Promised Land; they required an educational “training” period of forty years – a complete generation – in the desert no-man’s-land. They were to experience a kind of “trial by heat and by cold,” with lessons to be learned by a strange mixture of divine bounty mixed together with human uncertainty:

You shall remember the entire journey on which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the desert in order to afflict you, to test you to know that which is in your heart; will you keep His commandments or not? He will afflict you and He will make you hungry; He will provide you with the manna to eat which neither you nor your ancestors experienced previously in order to teach you that not by bread alone does a human being live but rather by that which comes forth from the Lord’s mouth does the human being live. (Deut. 8:1–3)

This major desert experience of the manna was a kind of “timeout” from the Garden of Eden punishment that “by the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.” On the one hand, God was the beneficent Provider of food, a food which the Israelites only had to gather rather than to manufacture, with every individual receiving precisely what he needed each day; on the other hand, the Israelites had neither the

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discomfiture nor the exhilaration which is derived from the competition, the ingenuity, the sickness unto death of failure and the dizzying satisfaction of success, which accompany the backbreaking tension-producing dedication to the market place or the agricultural farm. What was the significance of the manna? Which lesson did it convey?

The most ancient (and I believe, authentic) versions of the rabbinically accepted Aramaic translation of the biblical text, *Targum Onkelos*, translates the last words of the verse we have just cited: “Not by bread alone does the human being exist but rather by that which comes forth from God’s mouth does a human being live.” *Targum* differentiates between the bread necessary for human existence, and the word of God essential to human life.

“Existence” is physical subsistence; “life” is essence, the word of God, the life of spirit, of intellect, of sensitivity, of love.

For a clearer explanation of *Targum*’s intent, let us study the second mishna in the seventh chapter of *Tractate Shabbat*, where the mishna provides us with the list of the thirty-nine prohibited physical activities on the Sabbath (*melakhot*). The *Midrash* generally assumes that the source of these prohibited activities is the list of very constructive acts involved in the building of the Tabernacle to God, the *Mishkan* (Ex. 31:13). Whichever creative acts were involved in the construction of the Tabernacle were prohibited on the Sabbath. However, one of the prohibited activities of this mishna is “baking,” and in the construction of the *Mishkan* the dye extracts of the plants had to be “boiled” in order to color the fabrics used to beautify the Sanctuary. So why does the mishna list “baking” rather than “boiling”?

The *Talmud* explains the discrepancy by saying that the mishna wished to highlight the procedures in bread manufacture; and indeed when looking at the prohibited acts from this perspective, the entire mishna assumes a wholly different focus. First it prohibits bread manufacture, then clothing manufacture, then leather manufacture, and finally acts of building. In effect, the mishna is teaching that the search for food, clothing, and shelter – so central to physical existence and nutritional subsistence – is to be eschewed on the Sabbath day. The days of the week are for physical existence; the Sabbath is for spiritual and intellectual life! And existence and life are the two most crucial elements in our human sojourn in this world.

The truth is that animals, no less than humans, also require food, clothing (protection from the elements), and shelter. What makes the human being uniquely human is that which goes beyond physical existence: the spiritual spark of God within him/her, the soul, the heart, and the mind of the human being, which enables him/her to think, to give, to communicate with the other, to love, to repair, and to create.

Most human beings spend their lives working for their physical existence, amassing commodities and the ultimate commodity (money), and collecting objects and things. In the desert they were freed from this pursuit, with the exception of the little time it would take to gather the manna – and no one could take more than his/her needed portion. They could spend the great majority of their time receiving – and pondering over – God’s words, God’s desire that we share with those less fortunate, God’s gift of family and friendship and community and love. The Sabbath day prohibits physical work but stresses family togetherness, Torah study, communal prayer, time-out for God, meditation, and nature walks; the Sabbath is a day of life, not mere existence!

The desert experience was a kind of eternal Sabbath, a taste of a more perfect world, when we learn to do without material extras but would hopefully begin to understand that the real purpose of human life would be to live by God’s words. And in that more perfect world, we would hopefully learn that the necessities for our existence – just as our existence itself – is fundamentally a gift from God, and that the ultimate purpose of our existence is to link ourselves to life, to God, to His will, and to His eternity. On the Sabbath, we sanctify wine, we bless the halla bread, we use the table of food as a means for songs of praise to God and words of Torah, and we link existence to essence, subsistence to God.

No wonder, then, that the Hebrew word “hayyim” (life) is always in the plural, because there can be no meaningful human life devoid of loving relationships with others. The two letter “yud’s” (or two yids, Jews) in the center of the word are the shortened form of expressing God’s name, while the outer Hebrew letters “het” and “mem” form the Hebrew word “hom” (warmth); love, sensitivity, and caring are central for meaningful human activity on earth. I have never met an individual on his deathbed who regrets the hours he didn’t spend in the office – but most individuals on their deathbed regret the hours they didn’t spend with family and close friends. People are not remembered for the structures they erected; they are always thought about for the lives they have touched and the human situations they have helped.

Rabbi Yitzhak of Berditchev once saw a person running to and fro, as if he were “chasing his own tail.” “Where and why are you running?” he asked. “I am running to make a living,” came the reply. “Just make sure that in the process, you don’t lose your life,” remarked the wise rabbi.

The Person in the Parsha **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

Discipline and Suffering

As a parent, grandparent, and psychologist, I am often considered to be something of an

expert on parenting and child-rearing. In that capacity, I have frequently been asked to review or give an opinion about any of the plethora of books on the subject of raising one’s children.

Like in any genre, there are better books and worse books in this category. What I have noticed is that many of them fail to include a chapter on one of the most important components of child rearing: discipline. With few exceptions, the most that these books contain on the subject of discipline is a chapter on “setting limits.”

In my opinion, and certainly in my experience, discipline is an essential component of all parenting and teaching relationships. And discipline is not just about “setting limits.” It is also about “setting goals.”

My reading on the subject of dealing with children, whether as a parent or as a teacher, has taught me of the importance of setting clear and achievable goals and objectives for children to reach, and then to show recognition of the achievement of those goals.

My experience as a parent myself, as a teacher for many years, and as a psychotherapist for much of my adult life, has borne out the wisdom of these two steps: Firstly, lay out the expectations that you have of the child and clearly define the nature of the task at hand. Secondly, when the child has accomplished the task, even if not totally successfully, give him or her feedback and recognition, whether in the form of a verbal compliment or a nonverbal gesture.

Discipline does not just involve “setting limits.” Indeed, saying “no” and issuing restrictive commands may not at all be what discipline is about. Rather, it involves “setting goals.” It is about extending a challenge, with the implicit confidence that sends that child the message, “You can do it!”

This, to me, is the essence of discipline. It is not synonymous with punishment. It is synonymous with learning and personal growth.

And this is what I think is meant by the passage in this week’s Torah reading, Parshat Ekev, “Bear in mind that the Lord your God disciplines you just as a man disciplines his son.” (Deuteronomy 8:5)

The Torah has much to say, even if the parenting books don’t, about discipline. It takes for granted that parents will discipline their children, and that teachers will discipline their students. After all, that is why students are called disciples.

The Torah insists, moreover, that the Almighty, too, disciplines us. And He does so in much the same way as successful parents do. He sets clear expectations for us, and He shows us His

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favor when we meet those expectations and His disfavor when we fail to do so. The Lord really is a Father in this sense.

It is no wonder then, that the book of Proverbs cautions us to “heed the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the instruction of your mother.” Notice: first discipline, and then instruction. First “mussar,” and Torah only afterwards.

As usual, there is an even deeper message in the word that the Torah uses for discipline. The root “YSR” is the root of both “discipline” and “suffering.”

Judaism teaches us that there is a meaning to our suffering. Sometimes that meaning is obvious to us; more typically though, the meaning eludes us, and we desperately search for it.

But one thing is clear. We learn through discipline, and we also learn through suffering.

The words of Victor Frankl, the psychologist and Auschwitz survivor, who certainly knew a thing or two about suffering, are very instructive here:

” . . . On the biological plane, as we know, pain is a meaningful watcher and warden. In the psycho-spiritual realm it has a similar function. Suffering is intended to guard man from apathy, from psychic rigor mortis. As long as we suffer we remain psychically alive. In fact, we mature in suffering, grow because of it – it makes us richer and stronger.”

It is through the processes of discipline and suffering that we develop and are transformed. Both processes are painful, sometimes profoundly so. But through both, we widen our horizons, enhance our spirits, and attain a deeper understanding of our life’s purpose.

Discipline and suffering: important to us all as individuals, as part of the Jewish people, and as mortal humans, struggling to cope and, ultimately, to grow.

Dvar Torah

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Musicians are luckier than Rabbis. That was a point of view presented to me in a conversation I recently had with an international recording artist who has had hits right around the world. “You see,” he said, “when I give my performances and thousands of people come, they come to hear the same thing again and again. In fact,” he said, “when I introduce a new tune that they’re not familiar with, sometimes they’re disappointed because they want to hear their old favourites. But,” he said, “when you give a sermon, if you rehash anything that you’ve given before, your Kehilla – your community will give you the thumbs down.”

Rashi, however, disagrees. In parashat Eikav we have the well known second paragraph of the Shema which commences with the word 'v'haya im shemoa tishmau' – 'and it shall come to pass when you hear what you have heard before.' Rashi tells us that from here we learn how crucially important it is to regularly go over our Torah material so that we internalise its values and they should never leave us.

That is why in the first paragraph of the Shema the mitzvah of teaching Torah is 'v'shinantam levanacha' – 'v'shinantam' meaning 'teach by rote' – the double 'nun' in the middle of the word is a symbol of the repetitive nature of what we hear and what we study. And indeed that's the background to the concept of having a 'parashat hashavua'. In ancient times there were two different customs. One was a triennial system through which the Torah portions were broken up into smaller portions that covered a whole three year period. But the second custom became the pre-eminent one and is kept to this day – an annual cycle. Even though the weekly portions are longer, we recognise that we have to remind ourselves of the Torah content at least once a year.

We have that same idea expressed every time we complete a 'masachet' – a tractate of the Talmud. The event is called a 'Hadran', through which we make a statement saying we've now completed this masachet – we're not just going to put it on a shelf and forget about it, but rather 'hadran' – we will return to it, we will go over its material again and again. The concluding mitzvah of the Torah, mitzvah number 613 is 'v'atah kitvu lachem et hashira hazot'. Its a mitzvah to write the Torah – and the way that its put to us is: 'and now you must write this melody'. The Torah is just like a great piece of music and we should hear it again, and again, and again!

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Daniel Stein

Start Small

"The entire mitzvah that I am commanding you today you should keep to do it" (Devarim 8:1). Rashi cites the Medrash which derives from the word "entire," that one who begins a mitzvah should be careful to complete it, because the credit for a mitzvah is not awarded or assigned until it is concluded. For this reason, even though Moshe was the primary impetus in returning Yosef's bones to Eretz Yisrael, the pasuk (Yehoshua 24:32) attributes all of the credit for the mitzvah to the entirety of the Jewish people, since they were the ones who oversaw and facilitated its completion. In fact, the Steipler Gaon (Birchas Peretz) notes that the numerical value of the phrase from this pasuk, "mitzavcha ha'yom tishimrun" - "commanding you today you should keep to do it," is analogous to the value of the words "maschil be'mitzvah omrim lo gemor" - "one who begins a mitzvah is encouraged to complete it."

The Gemara (Sotah 13b) adds that one who begins a mitzvah without completing it not only forfeits any potential credit for the mitzvah, but also places themselves in spiritual danger and risks losing the confidence of their family and community. Rav Binyamin of Zolishitz (Turei Zahav) compares it to a broken shidduch which can transform feelings of affection and excitement into animosity and disappointment, where the heightened anticipation itself only intensifies and deepens the frustration when the relationship is dissolved. Similarly, when one embarks upon an ambitious spiritual mission to come close to Hashem, as set of infectious expectations are generated not only by the person himself, but by his family and group of supporters. If the mitzvah is subsequently abandoned, everyone around him might become disheartened and confused, which can lead them to begin to doubt his abilities and convictions in other areas as well.

Moreover, the Medrash tells us that at the end of the sixth day of creation, Hashem was in the midst of fashioning additional human beings, however, He was interrupted by the onset of Shabbos. It was those truncated human beings, with souls but no bodies, that ultimately became the sheidim, or spiritual demons. The Alter of Kelm derives from here, that it is specifically our aborted or unfinished projects which can produce demons of regret that haunt a person throughout the rest of his life. Similarly, the pasuk states, "Beware of ascending the mountain or touching its edge, for whoever touches the mountain shall surely die" (Shemos 19:12). The Kotzker Rebbe creatively interprets the pasuk as follows: Beware of embarking upon bold ventures, such as climbing a mountain, if you suspect that you will might only be able to touch its edge. For if you come up short, if you will only be able to touch the mountain but not ascend to the top, there can be toxic and damaging consequences.

The hallmark of tzaddikim and great people, is that they follow through with their plans. The pasuk states in connection with Avraham, "and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived in the land of Canaan" (Breishis 12:5). Once we are told that Avraham arrived safely in the land of Canaan, why does the Torah bother to inform us that Avraham initially set out for the land of Canaan? The Chafetz Chaim claims that this pasuk must be contrasted with an almost identical pasuk earlier in the Torah, where the pasuk states in connection with Terach, "and they set out together etc. for the land of Canaan, but they came to Charan and they settled there" (Breishis 11:31). Both Terach and Avraham initially hoped to take a spiritual pilgrimage to the land of Canaan, because they both aspired to come close to Hashem. However, it was only Avraham who followed through with his plans, who achieved his goals, whereas Terach got stuck and settled somewhere along the way.

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Therefore, instead of conjuring up excessively elaborate and ambitious plans for spiritual growth that will undoubtedly prove difficult to achieve, it is preferable to have more realistic religious goals and checkpoints even if they might be less sensational and glamorous. Indeed, the path of authentic avodas Hashem is paved with lots of more modest accomplishments that can only be traversed by taking small steps.

Parshas Eikev begins "vehaya eikev tishmaun" - "And it will be if you will heed these laws" (Devarim 7:12). The word "eikev" - "if" can also refer to the "heel" of the foot. Therefore, Rashi comments that the Torah here is stressing the significance of the weak or little mitzvos that we regularly trample upon with our heel. Rav Asher Weiss (Minchas Asher) emphasizes that of course there are no "little" mitzvos, because all positive commandments are equally important and sublime as the Mishnah (Avos 2:1) describes. The only "little" mitzvos are those mitzvos that we choose to devalue or disregard, (see also the Rambam's commentary to Avos). Unfortunately, we tend to emphasize and concentrate disproportionately upon the occasional or spectacular mitzvos, such as blowing the shofar, shaking the lulav, eating matzah, or celebrating a siyum, while neglecting or discounting the daily mitzvos, which are regularly available and more easily attainable. However, in truth, it is the cumulative effect of many smaller achievements, such as davening, learning Torah daily, tzedakah, and chesed that are the backbone of substantial and sustained spiritual growth.

This is perhaps highlighted by the fact, that the parsha that we read on Shabbos Shuva, the Shabbos in between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, is invariably the shortest keriyas haTorah of any Shabbos throughout the entire year. On those years when Yom Kippur falls out during the week, on Shabbos Shuva we read Parshas Vayeilech, the shortest parsha in the Torah, which has only 30 pesukim. During those years that Yom Kippur coincides with Shabbos, we read Parshas Haazinu on Shabbos Shuva, the third shortest parsha in the Torah, which consists of only 52 pesukim. However, during the years that Parshas Haazinu is read on Shabbos Shuva, Parshas Vayeilech is read the preceding Shabbos together with Parshas Nitzavim which together total 70 pesukim. On Shabbos Shuva, not only is the keriyas haTorah remarkably short, but the Haftorah is also taken from the books of Trei Asar, the Twelve Prophets, which is a collection of the shortest books in all of Tanach (see Bava Basra 14b).

On Shabbos Shuva, during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, when we are standing in judgement before the Almighty, and one mitzvah has the potential to alter our verdict for the coming year, why don't we choose to read a Torah

portion that is little bit more ambitious and impressive in order to demonstrate our dedication to the mitzvos and learning Torah? It seems a bit odd if not ill advised to look for an easy way out during the most sensitive time of the entire year. However, Rav Pam suggests that these selections are deliberate, and they are instructing us that the most effective way to undertake a process of true teshuvah and real change is by choosing realistic and attainable goals. Only through reviving our commitment and appreciation for small accomplishments and the daily mitzvos that perhaps we trampled upon throughout the previous year, can we accomplish all of the great things we hope to achieve.

OTS Dvar Torah

Redemption depends upon both the individual and the collective

Elana Goldscheider

Parshat Ekev begins by declaring “And if you obey these rules”... you shall receive a reward. Many commentators wondered why the Torah uses the word ekev instead of the word im, which appears much more often in the text.

Rashi mentions that the word ekev refers to akev, a person’s heel. The Torah wishes to stress the importance of observing the commandments that seem less important to us, like the dirt a person’s heel kicks up while walking. This conveys a simple message to us: matters that appear trifling may be rather important. In fact, we only receive our reward by observing the “heel” commandments.

Alternatively, ekev could be interpreted as a pursuer, as in a woman running in high heels to attain a specific goal. People receive their true rewards not just for observing the commandments, but also for do so eagerly. Our yearning to perform commandments reflects an enthusiasm that translates into a higher level of observance of the commandments.

Just like the heel, which is part of our bodies, the word ekev relates to the period of redemption that will occur at the end of days. This period of redemption will arrive when we are committed to listening to the words of the Torah, which guide us down the path of living an ethical life, in accordance with the will of Hashem.

The heel may also remind us of our forefather Jacob, who was grasping his brother’s heel when he was born. Some time later, Jacob received another name: Israel. The name Jacob refers to us as individuals: husbands, fathers, brothers and sons. However, each time the Torah refers to him by the name Israel, it creates far-reaching implications to the development of the Jewish people.

From this vantage point, “If you listen” is analogous with “Hear O Israel,” the paragraph

we read just a week ago. “Hear O Israel” refers to our responsibility, as part of the Jewish people, to observe the commandments and proclaim our faith in Hashem. The words “And if you obey these rules...” serve as a reminder that our responsibility isn’t just communal. Rather, each of us, as individuals, must revisit our personal relationships with Hashem.

Sometimes, it’s easier to observe the commandments of the Torah as part of the nation, since the Torah is seen as a public proclamation. The challenge is to display and internalize a profound resolve even when we are alone. For the period of redemption to arrive, it isn’t enough for people to connect to Hashem as a nation. We also need to ensure that each of us, just like our forefather Jacob, yearns to fully observe even the smallest of commandments quietly, modestly, and without great fanfare.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

Within and Beyond You

For if you keep all these commandments which I command you to do them, to love HASHEM, your G-d, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave to Him, then HASHEM will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will possess nations greater and stronger than you. (Devarim 11:22-23)

and to cleave to Him: Is it possible to say this? Is G-d not “a consuming fire” (Devarim 4:24)? Rather, it means: Cleave to the disciples and the Sages, and I will consider it as though you cleave to Me. — Rashi

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Breishis 2:24)

I once heard an interesting Klutz Kasha – a set up question from Rabbi Avigdor Miller ztl. He first pointed out that there are two places in the Torah where there is a requirement for Dveikus – Utter Attachment.

One place, mentioned above is the requirement to cleave (U’L’Davka Vo)) to HASHEM. The other place is way back in the Book of Breishis. By the original husband and wife, and every subsequent couple the man is told to leave his mother and father and cleave (davek) to his wife.

Rabbi Miller asks how it is possible to have a dual or split loyalty. That would not be considered cleaving to be attached in two places. A person can have two eight hour jobs. It’s a long day but each part of that day has its time boundary, its limitations. How can one have two jobs that are 24/7 and still not be divided in his loyalties??!

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Now, anyone who has been to more than one Sheva Brochos, celebrating the new marriage of Jewish couple, has heard this idea at least once. Your patience please, because it helps reveal the answer to this question.

The word for man in Loshon HaKodesh – The Holy Language of Hebrew is “ISH” - Aleph – Yud – Shin. The word for woman is “ISHA” – Aleph- Shin- Heh. The two letters they have in common is Aleph and Shin. That spells the word AISH – Fire!

The two remaining letter that they each have distinct from the other is a Yud by the man and a Heh by the woman. The Yud and the Heh are the two essential letters of the name of HASHEM.

I saw that the brother of the Gra writes in a Sefer that the word KESUBA, the “marriage contract”, so to speak, has to be written Malei – full with a Vuv and a Heh because with the Yud and the Heh from the man and the woman and the Kesuba the name of HASHEM is complete Yud and Heh and Vuv and Heh.

The Talmud states if there is peace between the husband and wife then the Shechina- the Divine Presence rests between them but if there is not then there is a consuming fire. Armed with this bundle of information we can easily understand the answer to the question and appreciate it’s not a real question.

The way that a husband and wife cleave together is by cleaving to HASHEM and the way that they cleave to HASHEM is by cleaving to each other. First a person has to be married to HASHEM before they can marry another person.

One must first be wedded to the firm and immutable constant of the universe before he or she can hope to be bonded to another person. They are actually two souls bonded. Two bodies cannot hope to withstand the test of time, riding the bronco of life “through thick and thin”. Only two souls with a prior commitment to HASHEM can hope to remain attached 5, 10, 20, and 50 years later.

The strongest glue is not Crazy or Super or Gorilla Glue. No, the ultimate glue, I’ll give you a clue, is within and beyond you!

Bar Ilan University: Dvar Torah

“You shall consign the images of their gods to the fire”

By Raphael Stern!*

The Torah repeatedly commands us to wipe out idolatry. One such command occurs in this week’s reading: “You shall consign the images of their gods to the fire; you shall not covet the silver and gold on them and keep it for ourselves, lest you be ensnared thereby; for that is abhorrent to the Lord your G-d” (Deut.

* Rabbi Raphael Stern teaches at the Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies.

7:25). This passage concerns idols made by gentiles, and even though the pagan peoples may have been defeated by the Israelites, the idols themselves must also be destroyed. The reason for this is explained in the *midrash* (Genesis Rabbah, *Va-Yehi*, 96.5):

Another reason why Jacob did not wish to be buried in Egypt was they should not make him an object of idolatrous worship; for just as idolaters will be punished, so will their deities too be punished, as it says, *And against all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgments* (Ex. 12:12). You find similarly in the case of Daniel. When he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, what is said? *Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel and commanded that they should offer an offering and sweet odors unto him* (Dan. 2:46). He indeed commanded that they should offer to him, but Daniel declined it, saying, Just as idolaters will be punished, so will their gods be punished.

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, prostrated himself before Daniel and wished to make offerings and sacrifices to him, but Daniel refused because the Holy One, blessed be He, exacts punishment not only from idolaters, but also from the idols themselves. Thus, in the plagues against Egypt, the Holy One, blessed be He, smote not only the Egyptians but also the gods of Egypt, even striking them first: "Because rain does not fall in Egypt, rather the Nile rises and irrigates the land, and the Egyptians [on this account] worshipped the Nile, therefore, G-d first smote their deity and afterwards smote them" (Rashi on Ex. 7:17).

Punishing the object of idolatry is not only given to the hands of the Holy One, blessed be He, but also made incumbent upon us in the commandment to destroy idolatry and consign it idols to the fire, as explained in the above-cited verse from this week's reading. Daniel, knowing that the Holy One, blessed be He, punishes not only idolaters but also that which they worship, did not consent to Nebuchadnezzar making him offerings and sacrifices.

Notwithstanding his refusal, the very fact that Nebuchadnezzar viewed Daniel as a deity and bowed down to him—albeit contrary to Daniel's wishes—caused Daniel not to fall into the fiery furnace, in contrast to his fellows Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who went into the furnace and emerged unscathed. An explanation of this is given in *Sanhedrin* 93a:

Our Rabbis taught: Three were involved in that conspiracy [to keep Daniel out of the furnace]: The Holy One, blessed be He, Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "Let Daniel depart hence, lest it be said that they were delivered through his merit." Daniel said: "Let me go from here, that I be not a fulfilment of 'You shall consign the images of their gods to the fire.'" Whilst Nebuchadnezzar said: "Let Daniel depart, lest people say he [Nebuchadnezzar] has burnt his god in fire." And whence do we know that he

worshipped him?—From the verse, *Then King Nebuchadnezzar prostrated himself and paid homage to Daniel* (Dan. 2:46).

In other words, Daniel feared that if he were to enter the fiery furnace he might not be saved, since he deserved punishment, for the Holy One, blessed be He, punishes "that which is worshipped." Even though Daniel surely did not wish for Nebuchadnezzar to see him as an object of pagan worship, he feared for himself. It seems that Daniel feared unnecessarily, since that which he feared was against Nebuchadnezzar's desires, but in the *midrash*, Daniel's fears are presented as being well-founded (Numbers Rabbah, *Naso* 13.4):

For what reason was Daniel saved from the lions? Because he offered prayer to the Holy One, blessed be He... Why was he not cast into the furnace? Because he was Nebuchadnezzar's god, as it is written, *The king...worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an offering and sweet odors unto him* (Dan. 2:46). Another explanation is that he would have been burned; for it is written, *The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire* (Deut. 8:25). For this reason the Holy One, blessed be He, put it into the heart of Darius not to cast him into the fiery furnace, in order to make known His power.

Even though Daniel was delivered from the lions' den, had he been thrown into the fiery furnace he would not have been saved, since Nebuchadnezzar had made a god of him, and the law is that gods be burned in the fire.

One might wonder why Daniel should have been punished. After all, he surely did not want Nebuchadnezzar to make him the object of pagan worship. Just as he merited being saved from the lions' den, why should his merits not have stood him in good stead to save him from the fiery furnace?

The answer, as pointed out above, is that the Holy One, blessed be He, also exacts punishment from that which is worshipped, even though it is surely not to blame for being worshipped. The Holy One, blessed be He, exacts punishment from whomever or whatever leads a person into error, albeit through no fault of its own. This is explained in *Tractate Semahot*, chapter 8:

Homiletical exegetes would say: "Tear down their altars," but what sin did the trees and stones commit? Rather, since a person committed an offense through them, Scripture therefore said to tear down their altars. Arguing by inference from minor to major, if it says "you shall tear down their altars" when trees and stones—which have no merits nor points to their discredit and which can be said to be neither good nor bad—cause a person to commit an offense, how all the more so a person, when he causes his fellow to sin and leads him from the path of life to the path of death. Similarly, "you shall kill the woman and the beast" (Lev. 20:16). While the woman sinned, how did the animal sin? Rather, since

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a human being committed an offense through the animal, Scripture says "and the beast," lest the beast walk through the market and people say: There goes the beast on account of which so-and-so was killed.

Now let us return to Daniel. Surely he would not have been punished, for he himself prevented Nebuchadnezzar from making him offerings and sacrifices. However, had Daniel been thrown into the fiery furnace, he would not have merited miraculous deliverance since ultimately Nebuchadnezzar perceived him as the object of pagan worship and bowed down to him. That being the case, he did not merit the name of Heaven being sanctified through him and being saved from the fire; this was by way of punishment being exacted from the object of pagan worship.

We add one more reason for this, based on *Sefer Hassidim*:

If gentiles should happen to call a Jew by the name of one of their gods, he should not let them call him that; for it is said (Ezekiel 28:3): "Yes, you are wiser than Daniel." You are wiser than Daniel, spelled *Daniel*, without a *yod*, since Daniel protested to Nebuchadnezzar against making him into a god but did not protest against his calling him *Belteshazzar*, as his gods were called. (*Sefer Hassidim*, Margaliyot ed., par. 194)

The argument made against Daniel is that he allowed Nebuchadnezzar to change his name to that of a god (*Belteshazzar*), and therefore he was punished by having the letter *yod* removed from his name. One could say that in order for the Lord's name to be sanctified by the miracle of being delivered from the fiery furnace, the person must have a perfectly clean slate. But Daniel, who did not oppose Nebuchadnezzar calling him by the name of a deity, was not privileged to sanctify the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, by emerging unscathed from the furnace. Therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He, caused Daniel not to be placed in that position. *Translated by Rachel Rowen*



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subject: Rabbi Zweig on the Parsha - The Spice Of Life

Parshas Eikev

The Spice Of Life

"You shall place these words of Mine upon your heart..." (11:18) In the second portion of the Krias Shema, we find the instruction to constantly contemplate and internalize the Torah and its precepts. The Talmud interprets the word "vesamtem" – "you shall place" as "vesam tam" – "a perfect elixir"; the Torah is the ideal cure for the "yetzer hara" – "evil inclination". The following analogy is offered by the Talmud: A father educating his child finds it necessary to strike him. The father then instructs his child to place a compress on the inflicted wound, saying to his son "As long as the compress is in place, you may eat and drink what you desire, you may bathe with hot or cold water, and you need not fear that your wounds will become infected. However, if you remove the compress, your health is at risk." Similarly, Hashem says "My son, I created the evil inclination and I created the Torah as its 'tavlin' – 'antidote'" 1

We generally understand that Hashem created the Torah for man to follow, with the yetzer hara as the obstacle which man must overcome in his pursuit of Torah study and adherence. However, from the aforementioned passage in the Talmud, we see that this perception is not entirely correct. The Sages of the Talmud describe the Torah as a "tavlin" – literally, "condiment" or "spice" used to enhance the flavor of the main course. It would appear that the primary creation is the yetzer hara, with the Torah being the necessary but secondary creation. This notion is substantiated by the parable given in

the Talmud; the child's punishment, which is analogous to the yetzer hara, is a necessary facet of his education, while the compress serves as the counterbalance or antidote which prevents the beating from having a negative consequence. How do we understand the idea that the Torah is merely the spice that enhances the yetzer hara's natural flavors?

The Talmud states that the yetzer hara threatens to overpower a person every day and kill him.2 What function of the yetzer hara makes its existence necessary?

Hashem created man with an enormous potential for accomplishment. Man's overwhelming awareness of his capabilities, coupled with the fear that he may not be able to live up to his potential, leads him on a path of self-destruction. Man indulges in behaviors which either block out the awareness of his capabilities, or demean him to the extent that he can rationalize that the expectations of him are unfounded.

The part within us which makes us aware of our potential is the yetzer hara. Left unharnessed, this awareness develops into man's most destructive force, the destruction he wreaks upon himself. The Torah is the tool through which we can actualize and develop our potential. Without the yetzer hara making us aware of our potential, the Torah's capacity to actualize and develop that potential would not be utilized. Our Sages therefore confer upon the yetzer hara the significance of being Hashem's primary creation for without the aspirations of what he can become man's potential would be wasted.

1.Kiddushin 30b 2.ibid

Trivial Matters

"This shall be the reward when you listen..." (7:12)

The simple interpretation of the verse is that if we observe the ordinances of Hashem, we will be rewarded and He will love us. However, Rashi interprets the verse midrashically. The word "eikev" means "heel". The verse is referring specifically to those mitzvos which we trample underfoot, for we perceive them to be less important.1 The Mizrachi questions the need for Rashi's interpretation, especially since the Midrash apparently contradicts the simple interpretation. The simple interpretation implies that the verse refers to all ordinances. Rashi limits the verse to only those which we perceive as less important.2

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos warns us to be as meticulous in our observance of the less important mitzvos as we are in the more important mitzvos, for we do not know on what basis we are being rewarded.3 If it is possible to distinguish between less important and more important mitzvos, why, in fact, are we not rewarded more for those which are more important?

The stronger the relationship you have with a person, the more at ease you are with asking him to do something which is relatively trivial. However, in a relationship which is not so strong, you tend to limit requests to matters of significance. For example, a person would not think twice about waking up a mere acquaintance at two o' clock in the morning for medical assistance, but the same person would find it inconceivable to wake up the acquaintance asking for a pint of ice cream. On the other extreme, a woman will have no problem with asking her husband to buy her a pint of ice cream at two o' clock in the morning.

We are naturally more meticulous with those precepts which we perceive to be more fundamental, for example belief in Hashem and honoring one's parents. Moreover, for those precepts which Hashem commands us to observe, in which we do not perceive any major fundamental principles, it is possible to approach them with less enthusiasm. However, it is with these very mitzvos that we show our commitment and express our love for Hashem. The stronger the relationship, the more apt one is to acquiesce to a seemingly trivial request. Therefore, our observance of "themitzvos kalos", the less serious mitzvos, is the yardstick for our relationship with Hashem.

With this, we can understand what the Mishna in Pirkei Avos is teaching us. We do not know on what basis we are rewarded for observance of the precepts, whether it is the gravity of the precept or the reflection of commitment and love in adherence of the precept. The Midrash understands

that these are the precepts which the verse is alluding to, for the verse is referring to those mitzvos for which we are rewarded with Hashem's love. This must be because those mitzvos express our love for Hashem. This, the Midrash explains, must be the mitzvos which are perceived to be less important, for our observance of them truly expresses our love for Hashem. 1.7:12 2.ibid. 3.Avos 2:1

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>

reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com

subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Home Weekly Parsha EKEV

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The word that this week's Torah reading derives its name from is Ekev. There are many subtle nuances that exist within this short three letter Hebrew word. Our teacher Rashi uses a midrashic interpretation that connects the word to the Hebrew noun which refers to the heel of a person. He indicates that there are important considerations in Torah and life that people somehow step upon with their heel without understanding the importance and ramification of so doing.

Most commentators interpret the word to mean a causative issue. It indicates that because a person does or does not do certain actions and behaviors, immense consequences flow from that seemingly unimportant decision. We are all aware that the Torah views the events of personal and national life to be one of cause and effect. Nothing happens in a vacuum or at random and it is human behavior that sets the stage for all later events, even events that will occur centuries or millennia down the line. This lends importance to every act or omission of an act that a human being performs. And thus, the interpretation of Rashi falls in line with the general interpretation of the word Ekev.

We are being taught that there is nothing in life that should be considered completely unworthy of contemplation. Every situation, no matter how minor we may deem it to be, or inconsequential is a matter of importance and contains within it ramifications that we are unaware of but are present. The course of life is always mysterious, surprising, unexpected, and basically inexplicable. No one in our world today would have expected it to look the way it does just six months ago. We had all made plans for our immediate and long-range future. All those plans have been dashed by the dreaded coronavirus and its consequences. And yet, as we stand dazed and confused by what has struck us, deep down we are aware that there is a cause that has activated this situation. I am not speaking about an immediate direct cause – the escape of the virus from the Wuhan Chinese laboratory.

That is only a superficial cause that answers little and explains even less. Rather, there is a deep-seated cause within human society of the early 21st century that has provoked this reaction to the behavior, agendas and thought processes of modern civilization. If the cause is to be searched for in our attitudes and behavior, then that requires contemplation and rational thought instead of preconceived utopian ideas. It requires a sense of humility and a return to the basic values of human life as represented to us by the Torah and taught to us by Moshe our revered teacher

Human civilization needs a little less hubris, less arrogance, more minimal expectations of life, and a realization that even though man may have many great ideas, it is the will of the Lord so to speak that will eventually prevail one way or another.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion JEWISH PRIVILEGE

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

Anti-Semitism is an old and pernicious disease, for which much of mankind has never found an adequate antidote or cure. It reappears in every generation, and almost in

every clime and country. However, like many other deadly viruses, it constantly mutates, assuming different ideologies, slogans, and activities in each different instance. But its goal is always the same – to demonize the Jewish people, and to discredit the people, its Torah, and its achievements. The anti-Semites never realize that in so doing, they are really harming themselves to a great extent. The calls for boycotting products from Israel would paralyze the technological computer world, as well as the everyday lives of billions of people on the face of this globe.

Anti-Semitism, like many other highly contagious diseases, is not easily contained. It eventually reaches far beyond the Jewish world, and its victims are not restricted to members of the Jewish people alone. One simply can see the consequences of World War II and Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia, and the rest of Europe generally. The Jews, naturally, suffered greatly from these murderous anti-Semites. But in terms of sheer numbers and damage done to societies and long-standing empires, it was the non-Jewish world that really experienced the whirlwind that anti-Semitism first ignited and brought about. The current, modern world is very reluctant to learn anything from the past, even the immediate past. We are witness to a new spate and spike of anti-Semitism throughout the world, even in those countries that proclaim themselves to be tolerant and democratic.

The new anti-Semitism has developed from several mistaken economic and social theories and premises, advanced by the progressive left. It originates in the idea that somehow income inequality is evil per se, and must, somehow, be corrected to have a more fair and just society. History shows us that income inequality began with Cain and Abel and has always existed,

George Orwell in his famous book Animal Farm pointed out that all pigs were equal, but that there were some pigs that were to be more than equal. The drive to income equality and its correction always creates a ruling class that itself becomes the paragon of income inequality and ruthless power. The idea of taking from the rich by taxes or confiscation, to distribute wealth amongst the poor, has a romantic and appealing note to it. But it never has worked out that way in the annals of human history. Just ask the people of Venezuela how they are doing now that they have theoretically equalized everyone's income. The search for the cause of income inequality leads people to believe and foster a reverse, but just as evil racism that is called white privilege. If certain people do not seem to be successful in life, it must be because they are victims – someone else has done this to them, and they are not responsible for their own condition or status. The theory is that all people who are of the Caucasian race are, by definition, inescapable racists, who benefit solely because they are white. Therefore, white privilege must be destroyed, so that everyone can be equally unsuccessful in life. But now, this dangerous theory has morphed into a more specific enemy – the Jews. Jews appear, on the surface at least, to be more successful and affluent than other competing ethnic groups in Western society and the only reason that this occurs must be because there is Jewish privilege. There are too many Jews in elite universities, corporate board rooms, sports leagues, financial institutions, medicine, and high positions in the economic structure of the country, etc. By succeeding in these areas, Jews have automatically made other victims – those who do not gain admittance to these institutions.

Once again, in the name of fairness and justice, the anti-Semites wish to destroy Jewish privilege as a means of persecuting and destroying the Jewish people itself. By raising the bugaboo of Jewish privilege, they also intend to shame Jews themselves into feeling guilt over any form of their achievements or success. The world is viewed as being a zero-sum game, but rather, that any group or individual that is successful must have achieved that success at the expense of others.

This is one of the most dangerous and subversive lies being peddled today by the progressive left and its allies in the media and academia. There is no such thing as Jewish privilege. There is only Jewish difference, and that has been the main contribution of the Jewish people to society over the ages – the right and benefit of being different.

Shabbat Shalom

Berel Wein

from: Rabbi Sacks <info@rabbisacks.org>

subject: Covenant and Conversation

The Covenant and the Love (Eikev 5780)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

An interesting phrase appears at the end of last week's parsha and at the beginning of this week's, and they are the only places where it appears in the Torah. The phrase is ha-brit veva-chessed (Deuteronomy 7:9) or in this week's parsha, et ha-brit ve-et ha-chessed (Deut. 7:12).

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping the brit and the chessed to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments. (Deut. 7:9)

If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep the brit and the chessed with you, as He swore to your ancestors. (Deut. 7:12)

The phrase is strange. The relationship between God and Israel is defined by brit, covenant. That, essentially, is the content of the Torah. What then is added by the word chessed?

The translators have a problem with it. The Jewish Publication Society's translation of the opening verse of our parsha is: "And if you do obey these rules and observe them carefully, the Lord your God will maintain faithfully for you the covenant that He made on oath with your fathers." This translates chessed as "faithfully" and takes it as a qualification of the verb "maintain" or "keep". This is a very stretched translation.

A non-Jewish translation, the New International Version, translates ha-brit veva-chessed as "covenant of love." This is a very Christian translation. The covenant entered into between the Israelites and God was a covenant of law, not just of love.

Aryeh Kaplan, in The Living Torah, got it right when he translated it as "God your Lord will keep the covenant and love with which He made an oath to your fathers." Not "covenant of love" but "covenant and love." But still: what is the covenant, and what is the love that is distinct from the covenant?

This might seem a minor matter were it not for the fact that this phrase, which is rare in Tanach, makes an appearance at key moments of Jewish history. For example, it figures in King Solomon's great prayer at the consecration of the Temple in Jerusalem:

"Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in Heaven above or on Earth below—You who keep the covenant and love with Your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way." (1 Kings 8:23)

When, after the Babylonian exile, the nation gathered around Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem and renewed the covenant, they said:

"Now therefore, our God, the great God, mighty and awesome, who keeps His covenant and love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in Your eyes—the hardship that has come on us, on our kings and leaders, on our Priests and Prophets, on our ancestors and all Your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today. (Neh. 9:32)

At these critical moments, when Moses renewed the covenant on the banks of the Jordan, when Solomon dedicated the Temple, and the people in Ezra and Nehemiah's time rededicated themselves, they took care to define the relationship between God and the people as one of brit and chessed, covenant and love. It seems that both are necessary, or they would not have used this language on these three defining occasions many centuries apart. What then is the meaning of chessed? Significantly, Maimonides dedicates the penultimate chapter of The Guide for the Perplexed to the analysis of three words: chessed, tzedakah and mishpat. On chessed he says:

In our Commentary on Pirkei Avot (5:7) we have explained the expression chessed as denoting excess. It is especially used of extraordinary kindness. Loving-kindness is practised in two ways: first, we show kindness to those who have no claim whatever upon us; secondly, we are kind to those to whom it is due, in a greater measure than is due to them ... The very act of creation is an act of God's loving-kindness: "I have said, 'The universe is built in loving-kindness'" (Ps. 89:3)...[1]

The difference between the three terms is that I am legally entitled to mishpat. I am morally entitled to tzedakah. But to chessed, I am not entitled at all. When someone acts toward me in chessed, that is an act of pure grace. I have done nothing to deserve it.

Maimonides notes, citing the phrase from Psalms that "The universe is built in lovingkindness," that creation was an act of pure chessed. No one ever creates something because it deserves to be created. Creations do not exist before they are created.

We can define this in human terms more precisely. The book of Ruth is known as the work, par excellence, of chessed: "Rabbi Zeira said, 'This book does not have anything in it concerned with impurity or purity, forbidden or permitted. Why then was it written? To teach us the greatness of the reward for acts of chessed.'" [2]

There are two key scenes in the book. The first occurs when Naomi, bereaved of her husband and two sons, decides to return to Israel. She says to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me..." She was telling them that they had no further obligations toward her. They had been married to her sons, but now they are widows. Naomi has no other sons. Being Moabite women, they will be strangers in Israel: they have no reason to go there. You owe me nothing, she is saying. You have been kind, you have been good daughters-in-law, but now we must go our separate ways.

The second speech occurs when Ruth has gone to gather grain in the field of Boaz, who treats her with great care and consideration. She asks him: "Why have I found such recognition in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" The two key words here are "recognition" and "foreigner." "Recognition" means that you have behaved toward me as if you had obligations to me. But "I am a foreigner." The word used here is not "stranger," i.e. a resident alien to whom certain duties are owed. It means, a complete outsider. Ruth is saying to Boaz, you do not owe me anything.

That is what makes Ruth the supreme book of chessed, that is, of good done to another who has no claim whatsoever upon you. What Ruth does for Naomi, and what Boaz does for Ruth, are not mishpat or tzedakah. They are pure chessed.

Now let us return to the question with which we began. Why did Moses, and Solomon, and Nehemiah define the relationship between the Jewish people and God not in terms of a single concept, covenant, but added to it a second idea, namely chessed, meaning an act of love.

Covenant is essentially reciprocal. Two people or entities pledge themselves to one another, each committing to a responsibility. This is how it was defined by God at Mount Sinai: "Now if you obey me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession, for all the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5). If you are My people, I will be your God. If you serve me, I will bless you. Every covenant has an if-then quality to it. Therefore, every covenant is inherently vulnerable. That is what Moses emphasised throughout Devarim. Don't take the land or its blessings for granted. If you do well, things will go well, but if you do badly, great dangers lie in store.

That is covenant. Chessed, in contrast, has no if-then quality. It is given out of the goodness of the giver, regardless of the worth of the recipient. When Moses, Solomon and Nehemiah referred to chessed in addition to the covenant, they were making an implicit request of God of the most fundamental significance. Even if we fail to honour the covenant, please God be gracious to us, for You are good even when we are not, and You do good even when we do not deserve it, when we have no claim on You whatsoever – ki le-olam chasdo, for His chessed is eternal.

The verses in our parsha sound conditional: "If you pay attention to these laws ... then the Lord your God will keep the brit and the chessed ..." This suggests that we will be shown chessed if we deserve it, but if not, not. But it isn't so. At the end of the curses in Bechukotai, God says: "Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them: I am the Lord their God."

God will never break the covenant, even if we do, because of His chessed. Tanach describes the relationship between God and Israel in two primary ways: like a husband and wife, and like a parent and a child. Between husband and wife there can be a divorce. Between parent and child there cannot be. They may be estranged, but the parent is still their parent and the child is still their child. Marriage is a covenant; parenthood is not. Do not forsake us, we say to God, because whatever we have done, You are our

worship other gods. And the L-rd's anger will blaze forth against you, and He will promptly wipe you out.

In light of the critical problem of intermarriage, which hovers above 70% among the non-Orthodox in the United States today, I would like to share with you the following letter to a woman who is contemplating intermarriage.

Dear Jennifer (fictitious name),

I deeply appreciate your candid reply to my letter. As you know, I regard you highly and always consider your opinions very seriously. I am engaging in this exchange of letters not to badger you, but to help sharpen both your and my perception of the very vital issue of Jewish in-marriage, and the future of Jewish life in America.

I know you love "Paul" very dearly, and everything I have heard about him indicates that he is a wonderful person. I truly believe you when you write that you feel that you must marry him because you believe that he is your "soul mate," and that his presence in your life leaves you greatly fulfilled. The fact that he happens to be a non-Jew is terribly disappointing to you as well, but you feel that your personal happiness must come first. I appreciate what you are saying. In fact, I am prepared to acknowledge that you and Paul can probably live together and be deliriously happy in marriage, despite your different faiths.

If my last sentence surprised you, allow me to explain.

The truth of the matter is, that most American Jews today are not very Jewish. In fact, they are very much like the average American non-Jew. That is because, while we hardly realize it, 99 44/100 percent of our daily lives are not very Jewish. In fact, much of our lives are pretty Christian! The average Jew in America knows who was the mother of Jesus, but has no clue as to who was the mother of Moses. No, it wasn't Miriam (she was his sister). It was Jocheved! The average Jewish child in America can sing the words to "Deck the Halls" but doesn't have an idea of what Maoz Tzur (the Chanukah hymn) is! In effect, the differences between Jew and gentile in America have really diminished to the point of them being inconsequential.

That is why I believe that there is really no truly compelling reason why both Jews and non-Jews shouldn't seek out the most socially acceptable "soulmate" for themselves, irrespective of faith.

Furthermore, I don't believe that the slightly higher rate of divorces that intermarried couples experience makes a big difference, after all, more than a third of all marriages in America end in divorce anyway. Neither do I feel that because six million Jews died in the Holocaust, you or anyone else has an obligation to marry Jewish in order to perpetuate the Jewish people. If one is positively moved to perpetuate the Jewish people in light of the Holocaust, fine. Otherwise, it's important for every person to do what's best for themselves.

Yes, it's true that the "melting pot" that our grandparents prayed for in America has turned into a "meltdown" for Jewish life. But, those are cosmic issues of Jewish continuity and Jewish survival, and it's unreasonable for anyone to expect that those issues should play a decisive role in our choice of individual mates. We have to live our lives as best we can, and let the "cosmic powers" work out the cosmic issues.

I do, however, believe that there is one compelling reason why a Jew might choose not to intermarry.

You see, throughout human history, the Jewish people have been at the forefront of working toward what we Jews call "Tikun Olam" (seeking to perfect the world). Our Torah (sometimes called the Old Testament) introduced many revolutionary ideas into the world, and we, the Jewish people, so to speak, are "chosen" to be a "light unto the nations," "ambassadors" so to speak, to bring these ideas into the broad marketplace and to popularize them in the general society.

It was our Torah that first introduced the revolutionary concepts of "Love thy neighbor as thyself," care for the orphan, the widow, the infirm, the stranger. Our Torah mentions "love of the stranger" 36 times, more than any other mitzvah mentioned in the Torah! It was our Torah that first introduced to the world the concept of not causing undue pain to animals, and, yes, even the

concept of conservation. It's our Torah that says that a person must "work" the land and "guard" the land, that the land must lay fallow one year in seven to regenerate itself. It's our Torah that says that even in times of war, one may not cut down a fruit-bearing tree, even when Jewish soldiers' lives are at stake. It is also forbidden to divert the waterworks of the city under siege. It's our Torah that, says that even in times of battle, soldiers must carry a spade with them in order to properly dispose of their bodily wastes. In effect, we Jews were the first members of the Sierra Club, we were the first movers-and-shakers to save the whales and preserve the Darter Snail.

Despite the enormous challenges, we Jews have successfully transmitted these beautiful and revolutionary ideas to the nations of the world, not by force or jihad, but through the power of intellectual persuasion and personal modeling. In fact, it was our Torah that proclaimed for the first time "Thou shalt not murder." And, although Hammurabi recorded the exact same words 300 years earlier in his Babylonian code, its meaning for the ancient Babylonians was entirely different. According to Hammurabi's code, if I killed my neighbor's son, my neighbor had the right to kill my son. If I raped my neighbor's daughter, my neighbor could rape my daughter, or take my daughter as a concubine. If I killed my neighbor's slave, I could give my neighbor fifteen camels and we'd be even.

For Hammurabi, human life was regarded simply as chattel, property. Therefore, if I caused my neighbor to suffer a loss of his property, then I had to restore it, or suffer a similar loss myself.

Three hundred years after Hammurabi, the Torah also declared, "Thou shalt not murder"—the words were exactly the same, but the intention and implementation were light-years apart. Our Torah boldly maintains that every person is responsible for his/her own actions, for his/her own sin or crime. The Torah insists that a third person, such as an innocent son, cannot be punished for a crime that another person committed! In fact, our Torah enlightened the world with the idea of the concept of the "sanctity of human life"—that a murderer who takes a human life, has committed a crime against what the ancients called "G-d," and what sociologists today call "society." That's why murder indictments today are usually in the form of the "State of California vs John Doe," because the whole world has adopted our view of what "Thou shall not murder" means, and subscribes to the Jewish idea of the sanctity of human life.

I could go on citing hundreds, perhaps thousands, of revolutionary ideas that Jewish tradition has introduced into this world that Western society has adopted. The Jewish people have worked assiduously to perfect the world, and while the world is not yet perfect, we can proudly look upon Jewish history as one unending series of ethical and moral triumphs and accomplishments. And, perhaps even more remarkably, the Jews did not enlighten the world by forcing their beliefs on others through crusades and holy wars. Jews did not say "Kiss the Jewish star or we'll chop off your head!" We did it by modeling. And, while we still have a long way to go, we can be extremely proud of what we've accomplished.

Yes, Jennifer you can live happily-ever-after with Paul. But, if you choose to marry him, you will no longer be part of this incredible legacy which has worked so effectively to spiritually purify and enlighten the world.

You might say "big deal," that is your choice. Well, truthfully, I and many of my fellow Jews feel that it is indeed a "big deal." In fact, it's the most important thing that we can do with our lives—"to enlighten the world under the rule of the Almighty."

We know that even when Jews marry other Jews, it is very difficult to live the kind of committed life which will bring honor to the Jewish people and to G-d. There are "zillions" of in-married Jews who have no idea of what the Divine mission is for the Jewish people. They might remain nominal Jews, but their impact on the world will be negligible. It is very likely that only a small number of Jewish "fanatics" – those who devote their lives passionately to preserve and transmit this Divine message, are going to continue to make a difference in this world. Unfortunately, for those who are not married to Jews, the chances of promoting those ideas and ideals, no matter how noble their intentions, are virtually nil.

And, so, in the final analysis, you need to realize that the choice you are making is not only a decision to live your life with a particular wonderful man, who happens not to be Jewish. The choice you are making now is the choice of being part of one of the greatest legacies, an unbroken legacy, of, perhaps, 150 generations of Jews who preceded you, who fought to preserve their values and ideals, and, in many instances, put their lives on the line to keep the chain of this Divine mission alive. It is this determination that has allowed us today the privilege of living in an enlightened environment that has adopted so many of those ancient Jewish traditions and incorporated them into their own value system.

Jennifer, I want you to know that I will always respect you and value our very special friendship. But, if you choose to marry Paul and he does not convert, know that you will have effectively cut yourself off from 3,300 years of the most glorious and enlightened tradition, a tradition which has been single-mindedly dedicated to the sacred mission of teaching the world the idea of the sanctity of human life and “perfecting the world under the rule of the Almighty.”

All I can ask now, is that you consider these words and thoughts and make an informed decision.

Dear Reader,

There are hundreds of thousands of intermarried Jews in the US, and many more Jews who are presently contemplating intermarriage, who need to hear this message. Help us share it with them. But, do it pleasantly and gently. *This year, the joyous festival of Tu b'Av, the fifteenth of Av, is celebrated on Tuesday night and Wednesday, August 4th and 5th, 2020. Happy Tu b'Av. May you be blessed.*

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Author.aspx/1199>

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis chiefrabbi.org

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah: Eikev

A change in the order provides a major lesson for all time!

A change in the order presents us with a crucially important lesson for life. Last Shabbat, Parshat Va'etchanan, we read the first paragraph of the Shema which is so very well known to us. In it we have the important mitzvah of **שְׁנָנָתֶם לְבָנֶךָ וּבָרֶת בְּם** – we must teach Torah to our children. A bit later in the same paragraph, we're given the Mitzvah of Teffillin – **וְקִרְשָׁתֶם לְאֹתָה עַל יָדֶךָ**. Now in the second paragraph of Shema which we will be reading in Parshat Eikev this coming Shabbat, we have, yet again, the mitzvah of tefillin – **וְלִמְדָתָם אֹתָם אֶת בְּנֵיכֶם לְדִבָּר בְּם** and that is followed by **וְשָׁרָתֶם לְאֹתָה עַל זְכֶם**. First Teffillin and then Talmud Torah.

So my question is this: Why is it that in the first paragraph, the teaching of Torah precedes the mitzvah of Teffillin, whereas in the second paragraph, first, we have the mitzvah of Teffillin followed by the mitzvah to teach Torah.

Now we know of course that the first paragraph of the Shema is in the singular. It therefore, addresses each and every one of us in our own individual capacities. The second paragraph is in the plural, indicating that we fulfil the mitzvot of Hashem as an integral part of Am Yisrael as a collective, with a responsibility to all of Am Yisrael.

Allow me therefore to suggest the following: When a child is born, the parents immediately have the mitzvah of **שְׁנָנָתֶם לְבָנֶךָ** – to teach Torah to their child. To instil within the heart and the mind of that child an appreciation of Torah values and eventually as suggested by the first paragraph, the child will grow up. As girls reach the age of 12 and boys reach the age of 13 when they put on Teffillin, they become members of the adult community of Am Yisrael and they embrace fresh responsibilities. But that's not the end of the story.

The second paragraph of the Shema picks it up from there. First of all, Teffillin and after that, yet again, Talmud Torah. Indicating that as an adult, the study of Torah must always continue.

ס' הַמְּחִינָה וְאֶרְךָ יָמָנוּ וּבָהּ – נִזְהָרָה יָמָם וְלִילָה – that the words of Torah are our lives and they are the length of our days' – they are there to inspire and to guide us throughout our lives. Let no one therefore think, God forbid, that there comes a time in one's life when one 'graduates' from Torah study, or from a commitment to keep the law of Hashem. Quite the contrary: Talmud Torah needs to be a part of our lives both as children and thereafter, throughout our entire existence. And thanks to Torah, we have the keys to a meaningful life filled with joy and happiness always.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha - Parshas Eikev :: Letting Go

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

In this week's portion Moshe talks about what was perhaps the most traumatic moment of his career. After spending 40 days and nights on the highest level of spiritual elevation, he returned from Mount Sinai to a scene that filled him with horror. At the foot of the mountain the Jews were reveling around a golden calf.

Naturally Moshe was appalled. Here he was, holding the luchos (tablets), a G-d-given immortal gift, and he faced a nation plunged into an act of idolatry. He smashes the luchos.

But if we analyze the narrative there is an interesting word that Moshe inserts as he describes his actions on that day. "I descended from the mountain and the two tablet were in my hands. Then I saw and behold! You had sinned unto G-d; you made yourselves a molten calf. So I grasped the two luchos and I threw them from my two hands and smashed them in front of your eyes" (Deuteronomy 9:15-17).

Moshe was holding the tablets when descending the mountain. Why did he clutch them before throwing them from his hands? Weren't they already in his hands?

Shouldn't the verse tell us "Then I saw and behold! You had sinned and you made yourselves a molten calf. So I threw the tablets from my two hands and smashed them in front of your eyes." Why, and in what way did he grasp them?

A friend of mine told me a story about his great grandfather, a brilliant sage and revered tzadik. Whenever he saw one of his children commit an action that was harmful to their physical or spiritual well-being he would stop them. But this sage knew that stopping a child is not enough. The youngster would need a punishment too, whether it be potch (Yiddish for slap), reprimand, lecture, or the withholding of privileges.

But when a potch or harsh rebuke was due, the rabbi would not give it immediately. He would jot the transgression down in a small notebook and at the end of the week he would approach the young offender. After giving the child a hug and embrace, he reminded the child of the incident and explained to the child that his actions were wrong.

"I should have punished you immediately when I saw you commit your act," he would say, "but honestly, I was angry then, and my punishment may have been one spurred by anger, not admonition. Now, however, that occurrence is in the past and I am calm. Now I can mete your punishment with a clear head. And you will know that it is given from love, not anger."

He then proceeded to punish the child in a way that fit the misdeed. Moshe was upset. But he did not want to throw the luchos down in rage. He therefore grabbed them and held them tight before hurling them. Moshe, in his narrative tells us that he seized the luchos before breaking them. He wanted to send a clear message to the revelers below. That the mussar (ethical reprove) that he was affording with this action was not born out of irrational behavior or in anger.

Before smashing the luchos Moshe embraced them, just as a father hugging a child that he would soon admonish. Because Moshe wanted to tell us that before we let loose, we have to hold tight.

Good Shabbos!

Dedicated in memory of Roslyn Usdan (Chaya Raizel Bas Reb Yosef Nechemia) by Burt & Lois Usdan and family

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Rabbi M. Kamenetzky is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

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The Point of the Land of Israel (Ekev)

Ben-Tzion Spitz

Every great person has first learned how to obey, whom to obey, and when to obey. - William Arthur Ward

The Torah repeatedly declares the primacy of the Land of Israel. The whole purpose of the Exodus from Egypt was to bring the Jewish nation to that land "flowing with milk and honey." The Land of Israel is an inheritance to the Children of Israel, from the days of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The whole focus, the whole goal of Israel's journey through the desert is to eventually get to the Promised Land. The entire book of Deuteronomy revolves around preparing the people for their entry into the land.

Therefore, it may seem counterintuitive and even shocking, that with such definitive historical, legal, and textual centrality that the Land of Israel has for the people of Israel, that the connection between land and people is conditional.

Deuteronomy 8:1 states:

"You shall faithfully observe all the Instruction that I enjoin upon you today, that you may thrive and increase and be able to possess the land that the Lord promised on oath to your fathers."

The Meshech Chochma on that verse reads the statement as conditional. If you observe the commandments, then you will possess the land. If you don't observe the commandments, you won't possess the land. This is not an original statement, as the Torah in various places states this unequivocally. Not only will we not possess the land, but we will be kicked out of the land for lack of obeying God's laws.

What is noteworthy about the Meshech Chochma's analysis is his statement that not only will we not possess the land if we don't follow God's directives, but that the entire purpose, the entire reason why the Children of Israel were given the Land of Israel, was exclusively to follow God's commands. Once we stop following God's commands our very reason for having the land disappears. That deal is nullified, broken, revoked.

The Meshech Chochma takes this understanding a step further. One might have thought that if the deal of possession of the land is void, then all of the "strings," all of the responsibilities and commandments which were placed on Israel would likewise be voided. That we would be absolved of further wrongdoing. However, that conclusion would be wrong, especially in the area of idol worship. We are still liable. The covenant is not broken, despite our "treason." God holds us accountable regarding His commandments, even if we don't think we are.

The Meshech Chochma brings as proof the fact that the prior inhabitants of Israel were expelled, in part, because of their idolatrous practices, and all of humanity, since the time of Noah, had already been warned and commanded to refrain from idolatry.

May we become worthy of possessing the land of Israel.

Dedication - To the 15th of Av, one of the happiest days of the year in ancient times.

Shabbat Shalom

Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.

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Rabbi Yakov Haber

The Fruits of Eretz Yisrael: Outer and Inner Dimensions

Parashas Eikev, perhaps more than any other single parasha in Chumash Devarim extolls the spiritual and physical blessings of the Holy Land. "A land flowing with milk and honey" (11:10), "a land in which you will not eat bread sparingly, nothing will be lacking in it, whose stones are iron and from its mountains you will hew copper" (8:9), "a land upon which Hashem's eyes rest from the beginning of the year until the end of the year" (11:12). Here, we would like to focus on one of the most famous aspects of Eretz Yisrael, its acclaimed fruits, specifically the "seven species".

"**אֶרֶץ חֶתֶה וְשָׁעַרְתָּה וְגַן וְתָאָה וּרְמֹן, אֶרֶץ זִית שָׁמֶן וּבָשָׁן**" - A land of wheat and barley and vine and fig and pomegranate, a land of oil-producing olives and honey" (8:8). Why are specifically these species enumerated in praise of the land? Why does the word "eretz" appear twice at specific locations dividing the list of seven into two groups of five and two respectively?

Several commentaries indicate that these fruits provide basic, important nourishment (see Ibn Ezra and Abravanel quoting the Greek physician Galen).^[1] Seforim adds that the two groups of five and two preceded by the word "eretz" are divided into the nutritive fruits and the ma'adanei melech, the royal delicacies of olive oil and date-honey. R' Eliyahu of Vilna in Aderes Eliyahu similarly notes the division into two groups and, on a pshat level, states that the first lists mazon, food; the second comprises items which are a hybrid of both food and drink.^[2]

The Gemara (Berachos 41b) concludes that the fruits are listed in order of importance with an emphasis being placed on the proximity of each fruit to the word eretz. This leads to the following list in order of importance: wheat, olives, barley, dates, grapes, figs and pomegranates. Sheim MiShmuel (Haggada shel Pesach) directs us to two Talmudic passages indicating the interrelationship between wheat-product (Berachos 40a) and olive oil (Menachos 85b) consumption and the acquisition of wisdom. Since Eretz Yisrael is known as a land most conducive to the acquisition of wisdom (Bereishis Rabba 16:4), whose very air induces wisdom - **אוֹירָה דָאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִחְכִּים**(Bava Basra 158b), the agricultural products most directly connected to wisdom are considered the most important.^[3]

Bach (Orach Chaim 208) and Chasam Sofer^[4] remarkably write that consumption of the fruits of Eretz Yisrael induce sanctity into those eating them. Based on this concept, Bach justifies the view that in the bracha mei'ein shalosh we recite "**וְנִאֵל מִפְרִיה וְנִשְׁבַּע מִטוּבָה**" - and may we eat of its fruits and be satiated from its goodness". Several Rishonim (see Tur 208) struck out this phrase as it appears to focus on the importance of the physical side of land, something that Chazal seem to diminish by assuming that clearly Moshe Rabbeinu did not pray to enter the Promised Land **לְאָכֹל מִפְרִיה וְלִשְׁבַּע מִטוּבָה**(Sota 14a)! How can we then pray to Hashem for precisely that! Bach explains that even the fruits themselves of the Holy Land generate sanctity and are worthy of praying that we merit to partake of them. (Although Bach does not address the question from Moshe Rabbeinu, presumably Chazal understood that Moshe was praying for directly spiritual activities - the mitzvos dependent on the land.) Bach's actual words are extremely revealing both as to the benefits of partaking of the even the physical bounty of the land, but also the great danger in defiling its sanctity: The sanctity of the land which emanates from the sanctity of the upper (supernal) Land also permeates its fruits which are nourished from the sanctity of the Divine Presence which dwells in the midst of the land. Therefore He adjures (Bamidbar 35:34) "Do not contaminate the land in which you dwell which I dwell in, for I am Hashem Who dwells among the

Children of Israel.' He states that if you do contaminate the land, impurity will also be drawn into its fruits which nourish from it when the Divine presence has been removed from the land... What follows then is I will remove my Presence from bnei Yisrael whom until now have been "heichal Hashem"... for the Divine presence was literally dwelling among them... Therefore it is understandable that we say the sanctity of the Shechina and from Its purity and we are satiated from Its goodness.[5]

R' Yaakov Zvi Mecklenburg in his HaKesav v'HaKabbala opines that the division of the seven species of fruits into two groups splits them into fruits in their original form and products which are pressed from the original fruits (olive oil and date honey). Conceptually, perhaps one of the messages in this division is that Hashem is conveying to us two aspects of His Providence over His people in the land, one without (or minimal) human involvement and one with a significant amount of human endeavor. Hashem grants both salvation and success, the former without human effort, the latter with.[6] To be sure, some agricultural labor must be invested into growing fruits as well, but the product is consumed as is. With olive oil and date honey, the final product itself only emerges after human involvement. This then is directly parallel to verses immediately following ours. "Lest you eat and be satiated ... and your heart will grow arrogant, and you will forget Hashem, your G-d... and you will state in your heart 'My might and the strength my hand have amassed for me this great wealth.' And you shall remember that it is Hashem, your G-d, who has granted you the strength to amass wealth..." (8:12,14,17-18). In partaking of Divine blessing anywhere in the world, even of the sanctified fruits of the Holy Land, even if produced with much human effort, one must always recall that ultimately all of this great bounty is meant to bring us closer to the Almighty by being recipients of His kindness and not chas v'shalom to cause distance.

A final thought on the division of the fruits into two groups: I heard from Rav Mendel Farber shlit'a, a longtime Rebbe at Yeshiva Darchei Noam where I have been privileged to teach for the last thirteen years, that the difference between the two sub-lists of fruits is that the first represents the apparent, the external fruit itself, the second denotes the inner dimension, the extract inside. This helps explain why the spies only took grapes, figs and pomegranates as samples of the fruits of the land (Bamidbar 13:23) and not olives and dates. The Torah's description of olives and dates in our parasha as olive oil and date-honey represents their inner essence. Thus, the spies only looked at the outer surface of the Holy Land they entered, and therefore returned with a negative report. Had they looked beneath the surface, they would have fallen in love with the land and returned with a positive, even excitedly gushing report of its physical and spiritual beauty. Moshe Rabbeinu knowing this truth, asks Hashem "Let me pass over and see the land" (Devarim 3:25). Kli Yakar explains that the physical part of his request was denied - he was not permitted entry. But the spiritual aspect of his request - to see the land - was granted. Indeed, Moshe's looking at the land allowed him to see its inner quality, a land infused with the Divine presence and partake, even if from a distance, of its supernal pleasure.

May Hashem grant us the ability to always partake of the sanctified, physical bounty of the Holy Land, to avail ourselves of all of the land's spiritual and physical blessings and to create the opportunities to do so. When the world situation does not allow us to enjoy those blessings, may we increase our longing for the Coveted Land's abundant gifts. More importantly, may we always appreciate the "Land upon which Hashem's eyes rest" constantly.

[1] Much has been written about the health benefits of olives, grapes, dates, pomegranates and figs, but many other fruits also have significant health benefits. The particular nutritive advantage - if there is one according to current nutritional knowledge - of these fruits over others, intuitively true and taken for granted by at least some of the commentaries, remains a fascinating topic of research.

[2] See there that on an deeper level the five and two division is directly parallel to the hatavas hamenorah, the cleaning out of the menorah in the mikdash, which was divided into cleaning five receptacles of oil and then the

remaining two later. Also see there where the Gaon analyzes each fruit in the list kabbalistically.

[3] See Maharsha (Horayos 13b) and Pardes Yosef (Eikev 8:8) who explain based on this concept why olive oil and date honey are mentioned rather than olives and dates.

[4] See Seifer Eretz Yisrael b'Mishnas HaChasam Sofeir (2:52 ff.).

[5] Fascinatingly, the Bach's words concerning the fruits of Eretz Yisrael are directly parallel to Ramban's understanding of the mann in the desert (see his comments to Shemos 16:6). This directly follows from the thesis that the midbar experience supernaturally gave a foretaste of what would be happening in Eretz Yisrael in a more hidden way. This can be generalized to Torah study, parnassa, and Providence in general. See Mann and Parnassa and The Mishkan, Har Sinai, Torah and Eretz Yisrael for further elaborations on these themes.

[6] Also see Sukkos: Two Types of Divine Providence.

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from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael <parsha@torahinaction.com>

subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Eikev

עקב פרשת תש"פ

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ועתה ישראל מה ד' אלקיון שאיל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ד' אלקיון

And now, Yisrael, what is Hashem, your G-d, asking of you, other than to fear Hashem, your G-d. (10:12)

In his commentary to *Sefer Shemos* (3:22) Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, distinguishes between various meanings for the word *sho'ail*, to borrow/to ask. His rule is: When the word *sho'ail* is followed by the word *mei'eis*, from, it means to request, as it says (*Shemos* 3:22), *V'sho'alah ishah mishchentah*, "Each woman shall request from her neighbor." When the word *sho'ail* is followed by the word *mei'im*, with, it means to borrow, as in (*Shemos* 22:13), *V'chi yishal ish mei'im reieihu*, "If a man shall borrow from his fellow." The reason for this is that, when one borrows an object, he does not become its owner. Ownership is retained by the object's physical owner. Thus, the owner who lends an object will "come along with it" (so to speak) and he is still *imach*, "with you."

With this idea in mind (*imach* implies that the owner comes along with the object), Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, homiletically renders the above *pasuk* which addresses *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven. Why does the Torah write, *Mah Hashem... sho'ail mei imach*, "What does Hashem wish (to borrow) (request) from you?" What is the meaning of Hashem "borrowing" our *yiraas Shomayim*? It should rather have said, *Mah Hashem sho'ail mei itach*, "What does Hashem request of you?"

Rav Schwab cites *Chazal* (*Niddah* 16b) who teach, "Everything is in the hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven." Everyone must expend his own effort and toil to achieve *yiraas Shomayim*. There are no "free tickets," no easy way. Nonetheless, in our *tefillos*, prayers, we implore Hashem, *V'yacheid levaveinu l'ahavah u'l'yirah es Shemecha*, "Unify our hearts to love and to fear Your Name." If we ask for it, it means that this is a way of achieving it. Apparently, this *tefillah* implies that *yiraas Shomayim* can be had for the asking, even without expending our own effort.

Initially, one must do it himself. He must toil to achieve *yiraas Shomayim*. After one has acquired a modicum of *yiraas Shomayim* by virtue of his own exertion, however, we pray to Hashem that He "borrow" this *yiraas Shomayim* and "repay" it with interest. We know that achieving the optimum level of fearfulness is beyond our ability. Thus, we ask for Heavenly assistance, knowing full well that unless we achieve the first rung, we will not be able to climb the ladder on our own.

Yiraas Shomayim means *yiraas ha'romemus*, fear of awe. A person is awestruck with fear of the greatness of Hashem; thus, he diligently does

everything possible to uphold the *mitzvos* and everything that Hashem asks of us. It is a constant *mitzvah*, because Hashem is constantly with us; otherwise we would not exist. *Shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid*, “I set Hashem before me always (*Tehillim* 16:8) is a halachic imperative which enjoins us to act appropriately all of the time, regardless where and in what circumstances, we find ourselves. *Horav Moshe Soloveitchik*, zl, would not stand *Shemoneh Esrai* a minute longer in public than when he recited it in private. He saw this practiced by his father, *Horav Chaim Soloveitchik*, zl. *Rav Chaim* dressed in public as he dressed in private. One's behavior must be consistent, because one always stands before Hashem.

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, taught, “Man's very essence is directed solely to the goal of recognizing the Creator and, consequently, not only his soul is bound together with the Master of the Universe, but even his body and his entire existence are rooted in the great purpose for which he is intended.” (*Rav Gifter*, Rabbi Yechiel Spero). I can attest that these emotions were evident in the *Rosh Yeshivah*'s total demeanor. He once wrote, “If man finds his Creator, he has found everything.” This was not a mere aphorism; this was the way the *rosh yeshivah* lived his life.

Horav Aryeh Levin, zl, the *Tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, was wont to say, “A person who is truly reverent in his fear of Heaven is one who lies awake at night worrying, ‘What have I done today to relieve the suffering of a Jew made wretched by his troubles?’” *Rav Aryeh* had an uncanny ability to relate to the entire social and religious gamut of Jewry. He had feelings for them all and was acutely aware that what caused one to be on the outskirts of religion was usually circumstances in his life that were often beyond his control. He saw through the cloud of ambiguity which others refused to penetrate; thus, he was able to reach out to love and be loved by all. He saw Hashem in each and every Jew. To achieve such a spiritual plateau, one must truly be a *yarei Shomayim*.

Horav Avraham Kalmanovitz, zl, was one of the leaders of the *Vaad Hatzalah*, Relief and Rescue. Following World War II, he worked feverishly to save Jews, both physically and spiritually. He was instrumental in the spiritual reclamation of Moroccan Jewry which was falling prey to the heresy preached by the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*. (This was a Paris-based secular Jewish organization founded in 1860 by the French statesman Adolphe Cremieux to safeguard the human rights of Jews around the world. In North Africa, they attempted to secularize the Jewish legal and educational systems, attempting to alienate Jews from the Orthodox way of life.) This motivated *Rav Kalmanovitz*'s clarion call for help. “Save Moroccan Jewry,” he cried to anyone who would listen. He travelled to *Eretz Yisrael* and called a meeting of the *gedolim*, Torah leaders, and implored them to help: “Give me someone who speaks their language, who is a scholar, righteous and G-d-fearing, who can turn the tide of assimilation.” The Torah leaders chose a young man, *Horav Rapahel Abo*, zl, and charged him with the mission.

Rav Raphael spoke with his revered *Rebbe*, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of Porat Yosef, *Horav Ezra Attiyah*, zl, and asked his advice. The *Rosh Yeshivah* not only agreed, but gave him *tzedakah*, charitable funds, to ease the burden of starting up the program. *Rav Raphael* left his young wife in Yerushalayim as he trail-blazed the spiritual wasteland that was Morocco at the time. After searching for a suitable community in which to establish a *yeshivah*, he arrived in a city which had a sizeable Jewish community that seemed interested. Indeed, the *rosh ha'kahal*, *Reb Moshe Yifrach*, a distinguished man of means, even agreed to join in the endeavor. His presence would surely turn the tables in *Rav Abo*'s favor.

At the very last minute, *Reb Moshe* called that something had come up. He could not attend the meeting. “But I need you,” the young *Rav* asserted. “If you do not attend, it will all be in vain. The *kahal* respects you. Your attendance is critical to our success.” “I am very sorry. My son is ill and I just picked up medicine at the pharmacy. I do not want to be late in giving him the medicine,” was *Reb Moshe*'s reply. “Please, I beg of you, without your presence, everything that we had planned will be a waste. Your son will be well. Hashem will see to his cure. I assure you!”

The plea emanating from *Rav Raphael*'s pure heart moved *Reb Moshe*. (*Rav Raphael* was all of thirty years old at the time.) *Rav Raphael* spoke passionately to the crowded *shul*, where a standing-room only crowd had gathered to listen. Undoubtedly, *Reb Moshe Yifrach*'s presence would make a difference. Suddenly, the doors burst open, and the pharmacist came running in, pushing himself through the crowd. As soon as he saw *Reb Moshe*, he fell on him and asked, “Where are the pills?” “What pills?” *Reb Moshe* asked. “The ones that I gave you.” “Here, in my pocket.” When the pharmacist saw the jar of pills, he all but fainted.

“You have no idea how lucky you are,” the pharmacist cried out. “When I finished my day's work, I reviewed the pharmacy receipts and prescriptions. I suddenly realized, to my horror, that I had given you the wrong medicine. The pills had somehow been exchanged and placed in the wrong container. The pills that I sold you would have killed your son. Hashem looked after you!”

At that moment, the entire congregation gazed at *Rav Abo*, knowing full well that it was his perseverance in demanding that *Reb Moshe* attend the meeting that had saved the day. It did not take long for the Moroccan community to learn that they had a *tzaddik* living in their midst. *Rav Abo*'s deep-rooted commitment to Hashem set the foundation for the *Otzar HaTorah* educational network to grow in Morocco.

לומידות אומה את בניםם לבר בם

You shall teach them to your children to discuss them. (11:19)

The *Bnei Yissachar*, *Horav Tzvi Elimelech Shapiro*, zl, cites (*Takanos Tamchin D'Oraisa*) *Chazal* (*Bava Basra* 21a) who credit Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Gamla with being the innovator of universal Torah education for all children. He was concerned for orphans who had no parent to teach them Torah. He set up Torah teachers in every province and district so that all children, regardless of parents or financial ability, would be availed Torah instruction. *Chazal* laud him for having ensured that the Jewish People would not forget the Torah. In the *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh De'ah* 245:7, it is ruled that communal monies may be used to provide Torah instruction for all children, to the point that members of the community may be taxed to fulfill this responsibility.

The *Bnei Yissachar* observes that while one fulfills the Biblical injunction of *V'limadetem osam es bneichem* by teaching Torah to one's own child, he does not execute the Rabbinic command unless he provides for the instruction of **all** children – rich or poor. He adds that once Rabbi Yehoshua enacted his decree concerning universal Torah education, it underscored the Biblical *mitzvah* to the point that unless one provides Torah education for all children, he does not fulfill his personal Biblical *mitzvah* of *V'limadetem osam es bneichem*. Torah education that does not reach all aspects of the Jewish community is deficient in fulfilling the *mitzvah*.

This idea is based upon a ruling made by the *Pri Megadim* in his *pesichah*, preface, to *Orach Chaim* (3:78) where he states that if *Chazal* have added *chumros*, stringencies – which they feel enhances the *mitzvah* – one is not *yonsei*, does not fulfill his Biblical obligation unless he follows the Rabbinic enhancements. By adding their Rabbinic stringencies to the Biblical commandment, *Chazal* have altered the criteria from Biblical fulfillment, since the Torah commands us to follow Rabbinic interpretation. Therefore, since Rabbi Yehoshua *ben Gamla* entered his innovation into the *mitzvah*'s criteria, one must see to it that all children study Torah. Otherwise, he has not fulfilled the Biblical command of *V'limadetam*.

Horav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, zl, concurs that the *mitzvah* of *V'limadetam* demands universal education in order to fulfill (even) the Biblical command, but for a different reason. He quotes *Ramban* in his commentary in *Devarim* 33:14 concerning the *pasuk*, *Torah tzivah lanu Moshe, morashah Kehillas Yaakov*, “The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov.” *Ramban* observes the Torah choice of the word *kehillas*, congregation, over *bais*, house (*bais Yaakov*), or *zera*, seed/children (of Yaakov). He suggests this alludes to the Torah's inclusion of not merely those born to Jewish parents, but all Jews, every Jew who joins the Jewish nation, accepting its *mitzvos* and living according to its

traditions. Torah is the inheritance of all those who enter under the *halachic* rubric of Judaism. Torah for the *kahal*, congregation, includes converts. With this in mind, *Rav Teichtal* posits that if Torah is the possession of the congregation, it should be the responsibility of each and every Jew to see to it that every member of the Jewish *kahal* have access to it, even if he has no father to teach him. How is this achieved? How do we see to it that every member of the *kehilla* receives a Jewish education? We follow Rabbi Yehoshua *ben Gamla*'s precedent. He showed us the way by providing Torah teachers in every Jewish community. It is insufficient to reach out only to individuals, since the Torah is a "group" inheritance, not an individual bequest. Thus, it behooves us to think outside of our self-proclaimed "box", and view all Jewish children as being part of our extended family, because – when all is said and done – they are.

ולמדו את בנים לדבר בם

You shall teach them to your children to discuss them. (11:19)

The Torah provides a unique criterion for teaching Torah to one's children. They should be able to discuss Torah; or, alternatively, when they speak, Torah should emerge from their mouths. Speech is the communication or expression of thoughts. An individual who speaks Torah thinks Torah. One's cognitive dynamic should be shaped by Torah, so that when he expresses an opinion, a comment, it is Torah-based, the expression of a Torah mind. Thus, *Rashi* explains, as soon as a child is able to speak, his father should teach him Torah, so that it will be his "language" of communication. Therefore, everything which the child will eventually learn: *halachah*, *mussar/ethics*, *hashkafah*, philosophy/outlook/perspective, will all be the tools of his manner of expression. The Torah's language is eternal. It speaks the language of the past, present and future. We just have to listen.

What does one do in a situation in which the parents have exhausted every method, every avenue, of educating their child, all to no success. The child either simply refuses, or he is unable to grasp/retain the material, resulting in frustration, depression, friction. The following vignette is illuminating as well as inspiring. An eighth grade student in a prominent Torah institution was doing poorly. Regardless of the motivator, he remained unmotivated. Nothing turned him on to learning. He had no desire to learn, and, as a result, he was lazy and uncaring. His parents were outstanding people and incredible parents. They would stop at nothing, spare no expense, to somehow light a fire under their son, to arouse him to the beauty of Torah. They knew fully well that if one does not learn, he will soon fall into a bind and eventually dislike learning and everything associated with it. Religious observance often suffers as a consequence of the negativity that ensues. This was eighth grade. Which *yeshivah* would accept him as a student?

Time passed, and one day the *rebbe* who had made some serious attempts at inspiring the boy to learn, noticed a *yeshivah* boy *davening Shemoneh Esrai* in the corner of the *shul*. The *kavanah*, concentration, and devotion on this *bachur*'s face was evident and moving. It was obvious that he was really into the *davening*, expressing himself with unusual feeling. The *rebbe* asked someone who this *bachur* was. The response floored him, "Oh, he is that boy that everyone had given up on. Something occurred, a sudden transformation; he was accepted into an excellent *yeshivah* where he has been learning nonstop and growing into an exceptional *ben Torah*."

The *rebbe* was flabbergasted. How could this be the very same boy who was essentially just taking up a seat in his classroom? He had tried everything to motivate him to learn, all to no avail. What happened? He decided to speak to the parents. He went to their house and conveyed his surprise. "First of all, *mazel tov* on your son's *aliyah*, advancement, in Torah. I am so happy for you and for him. How did you do it? When we finished the school year, I was certain that public school was his next place. What happened?" the *rebbe* asked.

The father slowly began to speak, "Truthfully, when school closed for the semester we were in a quandary. We knew that our son must go to *yeshivah*, but, with his dismal record of achievement and dispirited attitude toward learning, no mainstream institution would consider him for enrollment. We felt that we had exhausted every avenue of endeavor. We had tried

everything and spoken to everyone. Then it dawned on me: We had a 'third' partner in our son. We should not have to shoulder all of the responsibility. *Hashem Yisborach* is a one-third *shutaf*, partner. We decided that very night we would open a *Sefer Tehillim* and pour out our hearts to our other Partner. We had done our share in caring for our son; now, we would turn to Him to do His share!

"Within a very short period of time, we began to notice a change in our son's habits, his attitude. He began to *daven* with fervor and concentration. Learning occupied every free moment. This was a new child, not the boy that we had known, but the boy for whom we had prayed. He was accepted into a *yeshivah* based solely on merit, not on mercy. We realized that while we had *davened* to Hashem often, we never spoke to Him as a *shutaf* in 'our' son's development."

How true this is. What would be so strange if we were to express our feelings to our Father in Heaven in such a manner; talking to Him as our partner in our child? "Avinu, Av HaRachaman, Our Father, our compassionate Father; this child with which You have blessed us is actually less ours than Yours. You are truly our Partner in his life. You created his *neshamah*, soul. You formed him and breathed into him the breath of life. You raised him, strengthened him and maintained his health. Please do Your share and help him along spiritually, so that we will all share in his *nachas*. Thank You, Hashem!"

Va'ani Tefillah

הטוב כי לא כל רחמייך והmerciful כי לא תמי סדייך – HaTov ki lo chalu Rachamecha, v'ha'Meracheim ki lo samu Chasadecha. The Beneficent One, for Your compassions were never exhausted; and the Compassionate One for Your kindnesses never ended.

Few people have both: compassion; and the wherewithal to provide for those for whom they care. Some are compassionate, but lack the funds or ability to help. Others have no shortage of material assets, but lack the emotion to empathize with the needs of those whom they could help – if they would feel like it. Hashem's compassion is never exhausted, and His ability to bestow kindness has no parameters.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, explains that a father, regardless of his extraordinary love and compassion for his child, will eventually age and have physical limitations placed on his ability to provide. As a result, he must settle for lesser goals concerning his children. It is not that he does not want, he is simply not able. Hashem neither ages, nor does He have any limitations whatsoever. He is always there for His children, and for this we thank Him profusely.

**ל"י ננתן אריה בן זאב ז"ל – ים ה"א ז"ח אב – תרנ.צ.ב.ה.
ל"י ניקותיאל בן דבורה ז"ל – ים ה"א ז' אב – תרנ.צ.ב.ה.**

By the Feigenbaum family

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>
to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

The Basics of Birkas Hagomeil

Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff

Since parsha Eikev includes many references to brochos thanking Hashem for all His kindness, it is certainly an appropriate week to study:

Question #1: "I recently underwent some surgery. At what point in my recovery do I recite birkas hagomeil?"

Question #2: "May I recite birkas hagomeil if I will not be able to get to shul for kri'as haTorah?"

Answer:

There are two mitzvos related to thanking Hashem for deliverance from perilous circumstances. In Parshas Tzav, the Torah describes an offering brought in the Mishkan, or the Beis Hamikdash, called the korban todah.

There is also a brocha, called birkas hagomeil, which is recited when someone has been saved from a dangerous situation. The Rosh (Brachos 9:3) and the Tur (Orach Chayim 219) explain that this brocha was instituted as a replacement for the korban

todah that we can no longer bring, since, unfortunately, our Beis Hamikdash lies in ruin. Thus, understanding the circumstances and the laws of the korban todah and of birkas hagomeil is really one combined topic.

Tehillim on Salvation

The Gemara derives many of the laws of birkas hagomeil from a chapter of Tehillim, Psalm 107. There, Dovid Hamelech describes four different types of treacherous predicaments in which a person would pray to Hashem for salvation. Several times, the Psalm repeats the following passage, Vayitzaku el Hashem batzar lahem, mimetzukoseihem yatzileim, when they were in distress, they cried out to Hashem asking Him to deliver them from their straits. Hashem hears the supplicants' prayers and redeems them from calamity, whereupon they recognize Hashem's role and sing shira to acknowledge His deliverance. The passage reflecting this thanks, Yodu lashem chasdo venifle'osav livnei adam, they give thanks to Hashem for His kindness and His wondrous deeds for mankind, is recited four times in the Psalm, each time expressing the emotions of someone desiring to tell others of his appreciation. The four types of salvation mentioned in the verse are: a wayfarer who traversed a desert, a captive who was freed, someone who recovered from illness, and a seafarer who returned safely to land.

Based on this chapter of Tehillim, the Gemara declares, arba'ah tzerichim lehodos: yordei hayam, holchei midbaros, umi shehayah choleh venisra'pe, umi shehayah chavush beveis ha'asurim veyatz -- four people are required to recite birkas hagomeil: those who traveled by sea, those who journeyed through the desert, someone who was ill and recovered and someone who was captured and gained release (Brachos 54b). (Several commentators provide reasons why the Gemara lists the four in a different order than does the verse, a topic that we will forgo due to limited space.) The Tur (Orach Chayim 219) mentions an interesting method for remembering the four cases, taken from our daily shmoneh esrei prayer: vechol hachayim yoducha selah, explaining that the word chayim has four letters, ches, yud, yud and mem, which allude to chavush, yissurim, yam and midbar, meaning captive, the sufferings of illness, sea, and desert -- the four types of travail mentioned by the verse and the Gemara. (It is noteworthy that when the Aruch Hashulchan [219:5] quotes this, he has the ches represent "choli," illness [rather than chavush, captive], which means that he would explain the yud of yissurim to mean the sufferings of captivity.)

Rav Hai Gaon notes that these four calamities fall under two categories: two of them, traveling by sea and through the desert, are situations to which a person voluntarily subjected himself, whereas the other two, illness and captivity, are involuntary (quoted by Shu't Chasam Sofer, Orach Chayim #51). Thus, we see that one bensches goomeil after surviving either of these types of dangers, regardless of whether it was within his control or not.

Some commentaries note that the Rambam cites the Gemara passage, arbaah tzerichim lehodos, four people are required to thank Hashem, only in the context of birkas hagomeil and not regarding the laws of korban todah. This implies that, in his opinion, korban todah is always a voluntary offering, notwithstanding the fact that Chazal required those who were saved to recite birkas hagomeil (Sefer Hamafteiach).

However, both Rashi and the Rashbam, in their respective commentaries to Vayikra 7:12, explain that the "four people" are all required to bring a korban todah upon being saved. As I noted above, the Rosh states that since, unfortunately, we cannot offer a korban todah, birkas hagomeil was substituted.

A Minyan

When the Gemara (Brachos 54b) teaches the laws of birkas hagomeil, it records two interesting details: (1) that birkas hagomeil should be recited in the presence of a minyan and (2) that it should be recited in the presence of two talmidei chachamim.

No Minyan

Is a minyan essential for birkas hagomeil, as it is for some other brachos, such as sheva brachos? In other words, must someone who cannot join a minyan to recite birkas hagomeil forgo the brocha?

The Tur contends that the presence of a minyan and two talmidei chachamim is not a requirement to recite birkas hagomeil, but only the preferred way. In other words, someone who cannot easily assemble a minyan or talmidei chachamim may, nevertheless, recite birkas hagomeil. The Beis Yosef disagrees regarding the requirement of a minyan, feeling that one should not recite birkas hagomeil without a minyan present. However, he rules that if someone errantly recited birkas hagomeil without a minyan, he should not recite it again, but should try to find a minyan and recite the text of the brocha without Hashem's Name, to avoid a brocha levatalah, reciting a blessing in vain (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 219:3). The Mishnah Berurah follows an approach closer to that of the Tur, ruling that someone unable to assemble a minyan may recite birkas hagomeil without a minyan. However, he adds that someone in a place where there is no minyan should wait up to thirty days to see if he will have the opportunity to bensch goomeil in the presence of a minyan. If he has already waited thirty days, he should recite the birkas hagomeil without a minyan and not wait longer.

When Do We Recite Birkas Hagomeil?

The prevalent custom is to recite birkas hagomeil during or after kri'as haTorah (Hagahos Maimaniyos 10:6). The Orchot Chayim understands that this custom is based on convenience, because kri'as haTorah also requires a minyan (quoted by Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim 219). The Chasam Sofer presents an alternative reason for reciting birkas hagomeil during or after kri'as haTorah. He cites sources that explain that kri'as haTorah serves as a substitute for offering korbanos, and therefore reciting birkas hagomeil at the time of kri'as hatorah is a better substitute for the korban todah that we cannot offer (Shu't Chasam Sofer, Orach Chayim #51).

Do We Count the Talmidei Chachamim?

I quoted above the Gemara that states that one should recite birkas hagomeil in the presence of a minyan and two talmidei chachamim. The Gemara discusses whether this means that birkas hagomeil should be recited in the presence of a minyan plus two talmidei chachamim, for a total of twelve people, or whether the minyan should include two talmidei chachamim. The Rambam (Hilchos Brachos 10:8) and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 219:3) rule that the minyan includes the talmidei chachamim, whereas the Pri Megadim rules that the requirement is a minyan plus the talmidei chachamim. Notwithstanding the Pri Megadim's objections, the Biur Halacha concludes, according to the Shulchan Aruch, that one needs only a minyan including the talmidei chachamim.

No Talmid Chacham to be Found

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 219:3) then adds that if someone is in a place where it is uncommon to find talmidei chachamim, he may recite birkas hagomeil in the presence of a minyan, even without any talmidei chachamim present.

Time Limits

Is there a time limit within which one must recite birkas hagomeil? Indeed, many early authorities contend that one must recite birkas hagomeil within a certain number of days after surviving the calamity. The Beis Yosef (Orach Chayim 219) quotes a dispute among rishonim, the Rambam holding that one should recite birkas hagomeil within three days, the Rashba, five days, and the Tur implying that there is no time limit. The Shulchan Aruch (219:6) concludes that one should preferably not wait more than three days to recite birkas hagomeil, but someone who waited longer may still recite it, and there is no time limit. Based on this conclusion, the Magen Avraham (219:6) rules that someone released from captivity after kri'as haTorah on Monday should not wait until Thursday, the next kri'as haTorah, to recite birkas hagomeil, since this is already the fourth day from when he was saved. It is preferred that he bensch goomeil earlier, even though he will do so without kri'as haTorah. As I mentioned above, the Mishnah Berurah permits bensching goomeil even after thirty days, although he prefers a delay of no longer than three days.

What about at night?

May one bensch goomeil at night? If bensching goomeil is a replacement for the korban todah, and all korbanos in the Beis Hamikdash could be offered only during the day, may we recite the birkas hagomeil at night? This question is addressed by the Chasam Sofer in an interesting responsum (Shu't Chasam Sofer Orach Chayim #51). The Chasam Sofer's case concerned Chacham Shabtai Elchanan, who was the rov of the community of Trieste. This city is currently in northeastern Italy, but, at the time of the Chasam Sofer, it was part of the Austrian Empire, which also ruled the Chasam Sofer's city of Pressburg. (Today, Pressburg is called Bratislava and is the capital of Slovakia.)

Rav Elchanan had returned from a sea voyage, and his community, grateful for their rav's safe arrival, greeted him with a joyous celebration on the evening of his homecoming. At this gathering, Rav Elchanan recited the birkas hagomeil in front of the large congregation.

One well-known local scholar, Rav Yitzchak Goiten, took issue with Rav Elchanan's reciting the birkas hagomeil at night, contending that since the mitzvah of birkas hagomeil is a substitute for the korban todah, it cannot be performed at night, as korbanos cannot be offered at night. Furthermore, he was upset that Rav Elchanan had not followed the accepted practice of reciting birkas hagomeil at kri'as haTorah.

This question was then addressed to the Chasam Sofer: which of the eminent scholars of Trieste was correct?

The Chasam Sofer explains that although birkas hagomeil substitutes for the korban todah, this does not mean that it shares all the laws of the korban. The idea is that since we cannot offer a korban todah today, our best option is to substitute the public recital of birkas hagomeil.

The Chasam Sofer noted that the gathering of the people to celebrate their rav's safe return was indeed the appropriate time to recite birkas hagomeil. In this situation, the Chasam Sofer would have recited birkas hagomeil in front of the assembled community, but he would have explained why he did so in order that people would continue to recite birkas hagomeil at kri'as haTorah, as is the minhag klal Yisroel. Ten or Ten plus One?

There is a dispute among the authorities whether the individual reciting the brocha is counted as part of the minyan or if we require a minyan besides him (Raanach, quoted by Rabbi Akiva Eiger to 219:3). Most authorities rule that we can count the person reciting the brocha as one of the minyan (Mishnah Berurah 219:6). Shaar Hatziyun rallies proof to this conclusion, since it says that one should recite the brocha during kri'as haTorah, and no one says that one can do this only when there is an eleventh person attending the kri'as haTorah.

Stand up and Thank

The Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah, 10:8) requires that a person stand up when he recites birkas hagomeil. The Kesef Mishneh, the commentary on the Rambam written by Rav Yosef Karo -- the author of the Beis Yosef and the Shulchan Aruch -- notes that he is unaware of any source that requires one to stand when reciting this brocha, and he therefore omits this halacha in Shulchan Aruch.

The Bach disagrees, feeling that there is an allusion to this practice in Tehillim 107, the chapter that includes the sources for this brocha, but other commentators dispute this allusion (Elyah Rabbah 219:3). The Elyah Rabbah then presents a different reason why one should stand, explaining that birkas hagomeil is a form of Hallel, which must be recited standing.

Still other authorities present different reasons for the Rambam's ruling that one must stand for birkas hagomeil. The Chasam Sofer explains that this is because of kavod hatzibur, the respect due an assembled community of at least ten people. Yet another approach (Nahar Shalom 219:1) is that since birkas hagomeil replaces the korban todah, it is similar to shmoneh esrei, which is said standing and which is similarly bimkom korban (Brachos 26b).

The Rama does not mention any requirement that birkas hagomeil be recited while standing, implying that he agrees with the Shulchan Aruch's decision, but the Bach and other later authorities require one to stand when reciting the brocha. The later authorities conclude that one should recite the brocha while standing, but that bedei'evid, after the fact, one who recited the brocha while sitting fulfilled his obligation and should not repeat the brocha (Mishnah Berurah 219:4).

Only these four?

If someone survived a different type of danger, such as an accident or armed robbery, does he recite birkas hagomeil? Or was birkas hagomeil instituted only for the four specific dangers mentioned by the pasuk and the Gemara?

We find a dispute among rishonim regarding this question. The Orchos Chayim quotes an opinion that one should bensch gomeil after going beneath a leaning wall or over a dangerous bridge, but he disagrees, contending that one recites birkas hagomeil only after surviving one of the four calamitous situations mentioned in the Gemara. On the other hand, others conclude that one should recite birkas hagomeil after surviving any dangerous situation (Shu"t Rivash # 337). The Rivash contends that the four circumstances mentioned by Tehillim and the Gemara are instances in which it is common to be exposed to life-threatening danger and, therefore, they automatically generate a requirement to recite birkas hagomeil. However, someone who survived an attacked by a wild ox or bandits certainly should recite birkas hagomeil, although it is not one of the four cases. Furthermore, the Rivash notes, since Chazal instituted that the person who was saved and his children and grandchildren recite a brocha (she'oso li/le'avi neis bamokom hazeh, see Brochos 54a and Brachos Maharam) when seeing the place where the miracle occurred, certainly one should recite a brocha of thanks over the salvation itself!

The Shulchan Aruch quotes both sides of the dispute, but implies that one should follow the Rivash, and this is also the conclusion of the Taz and the later authorities (Mishnah Berurah; Aruch Hashulchan). Therefore, contemporary custom is to recite birkas hagomeil after surviving any potentially life-threatening situation.

Before going on to the next subtopic, I want to note that a different rishon presents a diametrically opposed position from that of the Rivash, contending that even one who traveled by sea or desert does not recite birkas hagomeil unless he experienced a miracle. This approach is based on the words of the pesukim in Tehillim 107 that form the basis for birkas hagomeil (Rabbeinu Manoach, Hilchos Tefillah 10:8, quoting Raavad). (In halachic conclusion, the Biur Halacha writes that one recites birkas hagomeil even if there was no difficulty on the sea voyage or the desert journey, notwithstanding the verses of Tehillim.)

How Sick?

How ill must a person have been to require that he recite birkas hagomeil upon his recovery? I am aware of three opinions among the rishonim concerning this question.

- (1) Some hold that one recites birkas hagomeil even for an ailment as minor as a headache or stomach ache (Aruch).
- (2) Others contend that one recites birkas hagomeil only if he was ill enough to be bedridden, even when he was not dangerously ill (Ramban, Toras Ha'adam, page 49; Hagahos Maimoniyus, Brachos 10:6, quoting Rabbeinu Yosef).
- (3) A third approach holds that one should recite birkas hagomeil only if the illness was potentially life threatening (Rama).

The prevalent practice of Sefardim, following the Shulchan Aruch, is according to the second approach -- reciting birkas hagomeil after recovery from any illness that made the person bedridden. The prevalent Ashkenazic practice is to recite birkas hagomeil only when the illness was life threatening, notwithstanding the fact that the Bach, who was a well-respected Ashkenazic authority, concurs with the second approach.

How Recuperated?

At what point do we assume that the person is recuperated enough that he can recite the birkas hagomeil for surviving his travail? The poskim rule that he does not recite birkas hagomeil until he is able to walk well on his own (Elyah Rabbah; Mishnah Berurah).

Chronic illness

The halachic authorities rule that someone suffering from a chronic ailment who had a life threatening flareup recites birkas hagomeil upon recovery from the flareup, even though he still needs to deal with the ailment that caused the serious problem (Tur).

Conclusion

Rav Hirsch (Commentary to Tehillim 100:1) notes that the root of the word for thanks is the same as that for viduy, confession and admitting wrongdoing. All kinds of salvation should elicit in us deep feelings of gratitude for what Hashem has done for us in the past and does in the present. This is why it can be both an acknowledgement of guilt and thanks.

We often cry out to Hashem in crisis, sigh in relief when the crisis passes, but fail to thank Him adequately for the salvation. Our thanks to Hashem should match the intensity of our pleas. Birkas hagomeil gives us a concrete brocha to awaken our thanks for deliverance. And even in our daily lives, when, hopefully, we do not encounter dangers that meet the criteria of saying birkas hagomeil, we should still fill our hearts with thanks, focus these thoughts during our recital of mizmor lesodah, az yashir, modim or at some other appropriate point in our prayer.

Parshas Eikev: Mosheh's Shiur, Part II

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. MOSHEH'S "SHIUR" CONTINUES...

As noted in the last two shiurim, Sefer D'varim is made up of three sections:

Chapters 1-11: Historical Recitation and Exhortation

Chapters 12-26: Laws

Chapters 27-33: Covenant and Blessing

In last week's shiur, we discussed the three lessons (and one significant interruption) which comprise the bulk of Parashat Va'et'hanan and form the first half of the "exhortative" component of Mosheh Rabbenu's speech. In that presentation, I argued that those three lessons are an integrated and "spiralizing" educational experience, culminating in a description of the ideal relationship with God. As we will soon discover, the "shiur" (instruction) which commences near the beginning of Parashat Va'et'hanan (D'varim 4:1) does not conclude with the climactic statement "Sh'ma Yisra'el" which "headlines" the final lesson; indeed, the shiur continues until the end of Parashat Ekev (11:21).

In order to understand the rest of Mosheh's "shiur", we will build on last week's presentation. First, a brief recap is in order.

II. A BRIEF RECAP

In last week's discussion, I suggested that each new component of Mosheh's "shiur" is marked by the introductory phrase "Sh'ma Yisra'el" (or "Yisra'el Sh'ma").

This phrase, found (in inverted form) at 4:1, introduces the first lesson: The nature of God and His incorporeality.

The same phrase, at 5:1, introduces the repetition of the Decalogue and, significantly, the story behind Mosheh's assuming the role of lawgiver. These two lessons are intertwined and somewhat interdependent, as each utilizes the national experience at Sinai as the foundation for the lesson.

"Sh'ma Yisra'el" appears a final time (in Va'et'hanan), at 6:4, in introducing our ideal relationship with God – "You shall love Hashem your God...".

In analyzing these three lessons, we noted the strange interruption (4:41-49) of the narrative of Mosheh's designation of the three (not-yet-functional) cities of refuge on the East Bank. I suggested that the basic lesson of the "Arei Miklat" – that intent plays a critical role in the performance of Mitzvot – was a valuable insight into the "inner workings" of the Torah. Mosheh, as the consummate teacher, interrupted his lesson to demonstrate a law which exemplifies the value of intent and attitude as vehicles for moral perfection. Last week's discussion gave the impression that the "famous" "Sh'ma Yisra'el" (6:4) was the beginning of the final lesson in Mosheh's "shiur". As we will see further on, there are some more lessons that make up this "shiur" - and they take us nearly to the end of Parashat Ekev.

III. THE STRUCTURE OF OUR PARASHA

Parashat Ekev is made up of four distinct sections:

- 1) 7:12-8:20 – the "Ekev" section (another interruption between lessons)
- 2) 9:1-10:11 – the fourth lesson
- 3) 10:12-11:12 – the fifth lesson
- 4) 11:13-21 is a summary of the lessons (this section, along with the "epilogue" of our Parashah, 11:22-25 will not be addressed in this discussion.)

Although we will devote some space to the fourth and fifth lessons – including an explanation of how these divisions are evidenced in the text – the focus of this presentation will be on the "Ekev" interruption which begins our Parashah.

EVIDENCE FOR THE DIVISIONS

The division charted above could certainly be challenged – it does not break down by chapters or by Parashiot (paragraphs) – what evidence is there for the existence of this structure?

The easiest component to identify is the fourth lesson. Just as the first three lessons (in Parashat Va'Et'hanan) began with "Sh'ma Yisra'el" (or "Yisra'el Sh'ma"), so does the fourth lesson: "Sh'ma Yisra'el..."

The fifth (and final) lesson in this series is also relatively easy to identify. Recall that the first lesson, beginning in D'varim 4:1, was introduced with the phrase "V'Atah Yisra'el Sh'ma..." – "And now, Yisra'el, pay heed..." The introductory phrase, "V'atah Yisra'el", is only found in two places in the Torah – at the beginning of Chapter 4 in D'varim and at D'varim 10:12. Although the word "Sh'ma" is missing (an omission which will be explained anon), this phrase which is otherwise a hapax legomenon [unmatched phrase in the T'nakh] seems to be a clear indicator of a new lesson being introduced.

IV. LESSONS FOUR AND FIVE

Before demonstrating the rest of the "structure", a word about these two lessons. It isn't merely the introductory phrases which indicate the beginning of a new lesson and, therefore, a separate component in the Parashah. The content and context of each section is independent in such a way as to be a clearly marked-off unit. Let's examine them together:

The unit beginning with 9:1 is a rather long speech (40 verses, several of which are extraordinary long) which is Mosheh's retelling of the sin of the Golden Calf and its aftermath. Although it includes two tangential verses (10:8-9) about the separation and sanctification of the Levi'im (marked off by the introductory "Ba'it Hahee", compare 10:8 with 10:1), this is a part and parcel of the Golden Calf episode as it is the loyalty of the Levi'im which earned them their holy status (see Sh'mot 32:26).

Why is this unit here; i.e. what is Mosheh's purpose in relating this heinous crime within the context of this "shiur"?

In last week's shiur, I suggested that the entire purpose of Mosheh's shiur was to act as "shadchan" (matchmaker) between the B'nei Yisra'el and HaKadosh Barukh Hu. This is, quintessentially, the job of a Rabbi – to bring his students closer to God. As such, Mosheh began with a lesson about the nature of the Divine, using the Sinai experience to point out what their parents saw and what they did not see (physical images etc.). The second lesson justified Mosheh's role as lawgiver. The third lesson describes the ideal relationship between the people and God (loving God etc.). Consider what's "missing" from the formula: If I am interested in entering into a relationship with someone, be it a business partnership, an educational endeavor or what have you, I need to know several things. I must know as much as possible about the potential partner (lesson #1); I'll need to know the medium of the relationship (lesson #2 – Torah [given via Mosheh] is the medium of our relationship with God) and the ideal of that relationship (lesson #3). There is, of course, one more piece to the puzzle: Who am I? For me to successfully relate to another, I need to know something about my own nature, tendencies, strengths and weaknesses etc.; this knowledge is as critical (if not more so) than my knowledge about the potential partner. Similarly, the people had been informed about God – but needed to be reminded about how they had previously behaved in their relationship with God. Therefore, Mosheh must incorporate the story of the Golden Calf into his "shiur" which is aimed at bringing the B'nei Yisra'el into a full and complete relationship with God.

The final lesson is also a clear and independent unit. Although the opening formula lacks the familiar keyword "Sh'ma", there is good reason for that omission. Unlike the first four lessons, in which Mosheh is instructing them with information which is indispensable for the success of their national mission, the final lesson turns that instruction on its head and puts the B'nei Yisra'el in the "driver's seat". Now, instead of Mosheh telling them what they must do, he is inviting them to move beyond that which is demanded and commanded: "And now, Yisra'el, what does Hashem your God ask of you, but to fear Hashem your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve Hashem your God with all your heart and with all your soul, To keep the commandments of Hashem, and His statutes, which I command you this day for your good?... Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked... You shall fear Hashem your God; Him shall you serve, and to Him shall you hold fast, and swear by His Name." (D'varim 10:12-20)

Until now, the B'nei Yisra'el were given prescriptions and proscriptions – commands and limitations. Although there had been allusions to a greater picture, that had never been laid out in such idealistic detail, nor presented as a challenge in place of a command. This fifth lesson is, indeed, a culmination of the "shiur", as it goes beyond the ideal relationship outlined in the third lesson ("Sh'ma...V'Ahavta..."). More than the command to internalize our love for God completely ("...with all of your heart..."), this final lesson invites us to rise above our base natures ("...circumcise the foreskin of your heart...") in terminology that is otherwise reserved for eschatological visions (e.g. D'varim 30:6; Yechezqe'el 36:26).

Although this final lesson includes the three verses about the Land (11:10-12), we will examine these from another perspective at the end of this presentation.

V. THE "EKEV" INTERRUPTION

As noted above, the first part of our Parashah (7:12-8:20) is something of an interruption – and its identity as an independent and complete section is quite easy to see.

As we have discussed in earlier shiurim, the Torah utilizes all sorts of allusions, complicated structures and literary techniques to impart its messages. It is fundamental to the methodology of our classical interpretive tradition that uncommon words, especially when appearing in significant locations within a given text, have been deliberately placed there by the Author in order to catch our attention. This methodology is particularly helpful when that uncommon word shows up in a seemingly unrelated context – it is often the case that the Torah is creating an association between the two cases in order to create an "information interface" between the two. In Halakhic exegesis, this methodology is known as "Gezerah Shavah"; however, our Rabbis did not limit its use to that discipline (see e.g. Beresheet Rabbah 44:14; Sh'mot Rabbah 9:7).

The second word (and key word) of our Parashah is an extremely rare one in the Torah. The word Ekev, commonly translated as "on account of" or "since", appears in only five locations in the Humash. Not only does our Parashah begin with an uncommon word – but one of the other four occurrences of that word comes at 8:20 – "...Ekev lo Tish'm'un..." Taking into account the common style of "bookending" which the Torah employs (see our discussion on Parashiot Matot-Mas'ei) and the use of this all-too-rare word at both bookends, it is fairly clear that 7:12-8:20 have the potential of being an independent and self-contained unit.

As mentioned, this "structural analysis" only leaves us with a potentially unified section; we have yet to prove that the content and theme fit that bill.

VI. ANALYZING THE "EKEV" SECTION

Note that the Ekev section is broken up into three "open" paragraphs ("parashiot p'tuhot" – you can see this if you follow with a Tanakh, such as Koren, which breaks up paragraphs where there are "parashah" breaks):

7:12-26 – "v'Haya Ekev Tish'm'un..."

8:1-18 – "Kol haMitzvah..."

8:19-20 – "v'Haya Im Shakhoah Tishkah..."

The final mini-paragraph serves an obvious purpose. All of the blessings which are promised in the first 33 verses of this section will be reversed if the people do the opposite of the stated condition: "v'Haya Ekev Tish'm'un...". If you obey the Mitzvot, God will grant you security in the Land, success in conquest etc. The final two verses leave us without a "pareve" middle ground – if we forget God and do not listen ("...Ekev LO Tish'm'un...") then we will be destroyed.

What are we to make of the first two paragraphs, these 33 verses of condition and blessing?

In order to understand the impact of the "Ekev message" – and the reason it is divided into two separate parashiot – let's take a careful look at the two sections.

Although both 7:12-26 and 8:1-18 promise us a successful entry into the Land and no lack of material bounty if we obey God and remember His kindnesses, the focus is slightly different in each section.

The first section begins with "v'Hayah Ekev Tish'm'un eit haMishpatim ha'Eleh..." – "If you heed these Mishpatim...". However one chooses to translate the various words for Law – "Eduyot", "Hukkim" etc., "Mishpatim" almost certainly belong to the realm of civil law and social interaction (e.g. Sh'mot 21:1).

Conversely, the second section declares its emphasis right away: "Kol haMitzvah..." Although the word "Mitzvah" is usually considered a generic term for all commandments, in the context of the first third of D'varim it seems to take on a unique meaning: Those actions which reflect and enhance our close relationship with God. (See, e.g. D'varim 6:1, 11:22 – see also 30:11)

In the first section, we are told to remember the Exodus – that is, the very fact of our miraculous exit from Egypt.

In the second section, we are also told to remember the Exodus – but here, again, the emphasis shifts. We are told to remember: "Remember the long way that Hashem your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his Mitzvot. He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of Hashem. The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years...then do not exalt yourself, forgetting Hashem your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good." (8:2-16)

As opposed to the actual liberation that we are told to recall in the first section, it is the fact of God sustaining us throughout the desert for forty years which is the topic of remembrance in the second section.

Finally, note how the Land is described in each paragraph.

In the first section, the emphasis is on the conquerability of the Land:

"Moreover, Hashem your God will send the pestilence against them, until even the survivors and the fugitives are destroyed. Have no dread of them, for Hashem your God, who is present with you, is a great and awesome God. Hashem your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to make a quick end of them, otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for you. But Hashem your God will give them over to you, and throw them into great panic, until they are destroyed. He will hand their kings over to you and you shall blot out their name from under heaven; no one will be able to stand against you, until you have destroyed them." (7:20-24)

Contradictorily, the second paragraph ignores the military concerns regarding the Land and instead describes its beauty and bounty: "For Hashem your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless Hashem your God for the good land that he has given you." (8:7-10)

The three salient differences between these sections can be summed up in this chart:

Section – Laws – The Land – Remembrance

7:12-26 – Mishpatim – Conquerable – Exodus

8:1-18 – Mitzvot – Beautiful, Sustaining – 40 years in the desert

VII. THE AVRAHAM CONNECTION

As mentioned above, the keyword "Ekev" is extremely rare in the Torah. Understanding the implications of its use here will help us make sense of the entire Ekev section.

Besides the two occurrences here and one (which will be discussed below) in Bamidbar, the only two instances of "Ekev" in the Torah are found within the Avraham narratives.

When Avraham demonstrates his complete devotion to God on Mount Moriah, he was given the most complete blessing of his life: The angel of Hashem called to Avraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I have sworn, says Hashem: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because ("Ekev") you have obeyed My voice." (B'resheet 22:15-18)

Later on, when Yitzhak considers following in his father's footsteps and descending to Egypt to escape the famine plaguing K'na'an, we are told:

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that had occurred in the days of Avraham. And Yitzhak went to Gerar, to King Abimelech of the Philistines. Hashem appeared to Yitzhak and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; settle in the land that I shall show you. Reside in this land as an alien, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these

lands, and I will fulfill the oath that I swore to your father Avraham. I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and will give to your offspring all these lands; and all the nations of the earth shall gain blessing for themselves through your offspring, because ("Ekev") Avraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." (B'resheet 26:1-5). It must certainly be clear to all members of Mosheh Rabbenu's audience that this rare word, opening and closing this section of his "shir", is intended to create an Avraham-association for us. But what is that association? Given these two selections, we would assume that Avraham's greatness lay chiefly in his total obedience to God and the spiritual heights he achieved. The scene at the Akeda is nothing if not the quintessence of devotional worship.

We are, however, provided another perspective of Avraham's stature which gives us a broader view of his greatness:

Hashem said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of Hashem by doing righteousness and justice; so that Hashem may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." (B'resheet 18:17-19)

As much as Avraham is a devotional worshipper, he is (perhaps even more) a man whose very soul speaks of righteousness, whose being is bound up with the pursuit of justice. Witness his negotiations with God regarding the fate of the evil cities of S'dom (ibid. 18:23-32).

The "Ekev" section in our Parashah is placed here to remind us of the dual nature of Avraham's distinction: Lonely Man of Faith and Civic Man of Justice. (Avraham's reputation is not only based on his success in both of these areas of moral growth – but also his ability to synthesize them into one persona.)

Subsequent to teaching us about our ideal relationship with God (at the end of Parashat Va'et'hanan) and prior to reminding us of our potential for infidelity (9:1-10:11), Mosheh Rabbenu interjects a lesson which is grounded in our awareness of our earliest roots and the spiritual and ethical heights which our first Patriarch scaled.

Before addressing the dual messages of the "Ekev" section, we should briefly examine the one remaining occurrence of "Ekev" in the Torah:

"...nevertheless, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Hashem, none of the people who have seen My glory and the signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested Me these ten times and have not obeyed My voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their ancestors; none of those who despised Me shall see it. But My servant Kaleb, because ("Ekev") he has a different spirit and has followed Me wholeheartedly, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it." (Bamidbar 14:21-24)

As we see throughout the story of the scouts, Kaleb was willing to stand up to their derogation of the Land and publicly face his ten blasphemous colleagues. This is very much in the spirit of Avraham, who is called "Avram ha'Ivri" (B'resheet 14:13). He is given that name specifically within the context of his war against the four kings and our Rabbis explain the meaning as follows: The entire world was one one side (*Ever*) of the river and he was on the other side. (B'resheet Rabbah 42:8 – see also Yehoshua 24:2). In other words, it was Avraham's willingness to stand up against anyone and everyone to defend and promote monotheism and its attendant value system which earned him the title "Ivri".

This is exactly the spirit which moved Kaleb to stand up to the ten detractors of Eretz Yisra'e. The Torah uses the key word "Ekev" in his praise to link him to the valor of Avraham. [Might there be a connection here with Kaleb's visit to Hevron and the Rabbinic tradition that he went to pray at Avraham's tomb?]

VIII. MISHPATIM AND MITZVOT

We can now revisit our "Ekev" section and explain the two separate paragraphs and their significant differences.

Perhaps the most telling distinction between "Mishpatim" and "Mitzvot" lies in their very nature. Whereas a Mitzvah (in the context of this part of Sefer D'varim) is an act which is part of a life-long process of spiritual development and sensitivity, a Mishpat is purely utilitarian and designed to promote the common weal.

It is abundantly clear why we must not steal, kill etc. and why we must pay workers on time, return lost items and so on. The extent to which a society is governed by these norms correlates closely to its material, social and spiritual well-being.

On the other hand, a person who engages in diligent Torah study, prays with great focus and generally observes those Mitzvot which fall under the rubric of "Ahavat Hashem" (Love of God), finds that the development of that relationship is a slow, arduous process. Each act of devotion is not an end in and of itself; it is rather a building block towards a closer relationship with haKadosh Barukh Hu. In much the same spirit, we can distinguish between the two "remembrances" in this section. The matter of the Exodus itself, although performed with great wonders and portents, was essentially a utilitarian act. God desired to bring the people out of slavery and into their own Land – and that is exactly what He did.

Conversely, the Mahn (which is the object of remembrance in the second paragraph) was not a purely pragmatic "gift". The manner in which the B'nei Yisra'el were sustained throughout their desert sojourn was designed to enhance their awareness of the Ribono Shel Olam on an ongoing basis: "In order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but that man may live on anything that Hashem decrees." (D'varim 8:3)

Note that the first paragraph promises us that if we (1) Remember the Exodus and (2) observe the Mishpatim, we will be successful in (3) Conquering the Land. The focus here is purely pragmatic, following the lead of Avraham's "social-justice" agenda. (Keep in mind that it is within the context of war that Avraham earns his title of "Ivri".)

In the second paragraph, we are told that if we (1a) Remember the Mahn and (2a) observe the Mitzvot, we will (3) enjoy a beautiful and sustaining Land. Here, the focus is on the personal development of a relationship, the ongoing process of becoming more aware of God's role in our lives and the beauty and bounty of His Land.

IX. POSTSCRIPT

After completing his shiur, Mosheh adds three verses which describe the Land in even more glowing terms than those found in the "Ekev" section:

"For the land, which you enter to possess, is not as the land of Egypt, from where you came out, where you sowed your seed, and watered it with your foot, as a garden of vegetables; But the land, which you are going over to possess, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinks water from the rain of the skies; A land which Hashem your God cares for; the eyes of Hashem your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." (11:10-12)

Beyond the pragmatic promise of conquest, beyond even the aesthetic beauty and bounty of the Land, we are given an even more powerful insight into the special place which God has reserved for His people. All of these blessings, including the development of an ideal relationship with God as outlined in Mosheh Rabbeinu's "shiur", are only possible in that Land which God always watches, "from the beginning of the year to the end of the year."

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PARSHAT EKEV

Who 'stops' the rain?

According to Parshat Ekev (and what we recite every day in the second 'parshia' of 'kriyat shema'), the answer is God Himself. To better appreciate the Biblical significance of rain ['matar'], this week's shiur discusses the correlation between Divine Providence and the climate of the Land of Israel.

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of Parshat Ekev, the land of Israel receives what appears to be a very positive assessment:

"For the Lord your God is bringing you into a **good** land... a land of wheat and barley (...the 7 species) ...a land which lacks nothing..." (8:7-9).

Yet, later in the Parsha, the Torah describes the land of Egypt as much better:

"For the land which you are about to conquer is **not like the land of Egypt**, from which you have come, where when you planted your field you watered it with your foot... The Land which you are about to conquer, a land of hills and valleys, receives its water from the rains (**matar**) of the heavens" (11:10-11).

So which land is better, and on what do we base this comparison? To answer this question, we take a closer look at various other instances where the Torah compares the Lands of Israel to the Land of Egypt.

THE FIRST 'FAUCET'

We begin our study with the Torah's 'strange' description of how one would water his field in the land of Egypt:

"For [your] land is **not** like the land of Egypt... where you planted your field and **watered it with your foot**" (see 11:10).

For some reason, Egypt is described as a land that 'you water with your feet'? To appreciate this rather strange depiction, and how it forms the basis of Egypt's comparison to the land of Israel, we must review a few basic facts of world history.

In ancient times, civilizations developed along major rivers, as they provided not only a means of transportation, but also the necessary water for agriculture and consumption.

If was for this reason that Egypt (developing along the Nile) and Mesopotamia (developing along the Tigris and Euphrates) became two of the greatest centers of ancient civilization.

To enhance their agriculture, the Egyptians developed a sophisticated irrigation system by digging ditches from the Nile to their fields. Using this system to water his field, an Egyptian would open his local irrigation ditch by simply kicking away the dirt **'with his foot'**. To 'turn off' the water supply, he would use his foot once again to move the dirt to close the ditch. [Consider this the first 'faucet' system.]

This background explains why the Torah describes Egypt as a land 'watered by your feet' (see 11:10). In contrast, the Torah describes the land of Israel as:

"The land that you are going now to inherit is a land of **hills & valleys**, which drinks from the **rains of Heaven**" (11:11).

In contrast to Egypt, Israel lacks a mighty river such as the Nile to provide it with a consistent supply of water. Instead, the agriculture in the Land of Israel is totally dependent on **rainfall**. Therefore, when it **does** rain, the fields are watered 'automatically'; however, when it does **not** rain, nothing will grow for the crops will dry out.

[It should be noted that even though Israel does have a river, the Jordan - but it is located some 300 meters **below** sea level (in the Jordan Valley), and thus not very helpful to water the fields. In modern times, Israel has basically 'solved' this problem by pumping up the water from the Kinneret into a national water carrier.]

Hence, even though the land of Israel may have a slight advantage over Egypt when it does rain [see Rashi 11:10], from an agricultural perspective the land of Egypt has a clear advantage [see Ramban 11:10]. Furthermore, any responsible family provider would obviously prefer the 'secure' option - to establish his home in Egypt, instead of opting for the 'risky' Israeli alternative.

So why is the Torah going out of its way to tell us that Egypt is better than Israel, especially in the same Parsha where the Torah first tells us how Israel is a 'great' land, missing nothing! (See 8:9!) Furthermore, why would Moshe Rabbeinu mention this point to Bnei Yisrael specifically at this time, as they prepare to enter their land.

To answer these questions, we must re-examine these psukim in their wider context.

THREE PARSHIOT RELATING TO THE FEAR OF GOD

Using a Tanach Koren (or similar Chumash), take a look at the psukim that we have just quoted (i.e. 11:10-12), noting how these three psukim form their own 'parshia'. Note however how this short 'parshia' begins with the word 'ki' - 'for' or 'because' - which obviously connects it thematically to the previous parshia:10:12-11:9. Therefore, we must first consider the theme of this preceding 'parshia' and then see how it relates to our topic.

Let's begin by taking a quick look at the opening psukim of that 'parshia', noting how it introduces its theme very explicitly:

"And now, O Israel, what is it that God demands of you? It is to **fear** ('yir'a') the Lord your God, to walk in his ways and to love Him... Keep, therefore, this entire 'mitzva'... that you should conquer the Land..." (see 10:12-14).

As you continue to read this parshia (thru 11:9), you'll also notice how this topic or the 'fear of God' continues, as it is emphasized over and over again.

Hence, the theme of our short 'parshia' (11:10-12), where the Torah compares the land of Israel to Egypt, must somehow be related to the theme of **Yir'at Hashem** (fearing God). But what does the water source of a country have to do with the fear of God?

To answer this question, we must read the Torah's conclusion of this comparison (in the final pasuk of our 'parshia'):

"It is a land which the Lord your God **looks after** ('doresh otah'), on which Hashem always keeps His eye, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (11:12).

This pasuk informs us that God Himself takes direct control over the rain that falls in the Land of Israel! In contrast to Egypt where the water supply from the Nile is basically **constant**, the water supply in Israel is **sporadic**, and hence more clearly a vehicle of God's will. Considering that one's survival in the Land of Israel is dependent on rain, and the rain itself is dependent on God's will, then to survive in the land of Israel, one must depend on God - a dependence which should have a direct affect on one's level of **Yir'at Hashem**!

WHO STOPPED THE RAIN?

In this manner, the Land of Israel is not better than Egypt, rather it is **different** - for its agriculture is more clearly dependent on the abundance of rain. A good rainy season will bring plenty, while a lack of rain will yield drought and famine. Hence, living in a land with this type of 'touchy' rainy season, dependent on God's will, should reinforce one's fear of God.

The next 'parshia' [i.e. ve-haya im shamo'a...] (11:13-21), the second parshia of daily 'kriyat shema' not only supports this theme, it forms its logical conclusion:

"If you obey the commandments... I will grant the rain (matar) for your land in season... then you shall eat and be satisfied..."

Be careful, lest you be lured after other gods... for Hashem

will be angry ... and He will shut up the skies and there will be no rain (matar)..." (see 11:13-16).

Thus, according to Sefer Devarim, the matar that falls in the land of Israel acts not only as a 'barometer' of Am Yisrael's faithfulness to God, but also serves as a vehicle of divine retribution. God will use this matar to 'communicate' with His nation. Rainfall, at the proper time, becomes a sign that is pleased with our 'national behavior', while drought (i.e. holding back the matar) becomes a sign of divine anger.

So which land is better? The answer simply depends on what one is looking for in life. An individual striving for a closer relationship with God would obviously prefer the Land of Israel, while an individual wary of such direct dependence on God would obviously opt for the more secure life in Egypt ['chutz la-aretz'].

To support this interpretation, we will now show how the connection between matar and Divine Providence had already emerged as a Biblical theme back in Sefer Breishit.

BACK TO AVRAHAM AVINU

At the onset of our national history, we find a very similar comparison between the lands of Egypt and Israel.

Recall, that when God first chose Avraham Avinu, commanding him to uproot his family from Mesopotamia and travel to the land of Canaan (see 12:1-3), his nephew Lot was consistently mentioned as Avraham's 'travel partner' (see 12:4-6 & 13:1-2). As Avraham was childless and Lot had lost his father, it would only be logical for Avraham to assume that Lot would become his successor. Nevertheless, after their return from a trip to Egypt, a quarrel broke out between them, which ultimately led to Lot's 'rejection' from Avraham's 'chosen family'.

One could suggest that the Torah's description of these events relates directly to this Biblical theme of matar. To show how, let's begin with the Torah's description of that quarrel:

"And Avraham said to Lot, let there not be a quarrel between us... if you go to the **right** [=south], I'll go to the left [=north] (& vice versa)..." (see Breishit 13:8-9).

[Note that Avraham suggested that Lot choose either North or South (13:8-9), not East or West as is often assumed! See Targum Unkelos which translates right & left as 'south' or 'north' (see also Seforno). Throughout Chumash 'yemin' always refers to the south, kedem - east, etc.]

In other words, Avraham Avinu, standing in Bet El (see 13:3), is offering Lot a choice between the mountain ranges of 'Yehuda' (to the south) or the hills of the 'Shomron' (to the north). To our surprise, Lot chooses neither option! Instead, Lot prefers to divorce himself from Avraham Avinu altogether, choosing the Jordan Valley instead. Note, however, the connection between Lot's decision to 'go east' and his most recent experience in Egypt:

"Then Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the whole plain of Jordan, for it was all well watered (by the Jordan River)... just like the Garden of the Lord, **like the land of Egypt...**" (13:10-12).

After his brief visit to Egypt (as described at the end of chapter 12), it seems as though Lot could no longer endure the hard life in the 'hills and valleys' of the Land of Israel. Instead, Lot opts for a more secure lifestyle along the banks of the Jordan River, similar to the secure lifestyle in Egypt by the banks of the Nile River.

[Note especially how the Torah (in the above pasuk) connects between this river valley and the 'Garden of the Lord', i.e. Gan Eden (for it was set along four rivers, see Breishit 2:9-14).]

Lot departs towards Sdom for the 'good life', while Avraham Avinu remains in Bet El, at the heart of the Land of Israel (see 13:14-16, see also previous TSC shiur on Matot / Mas'e).

Rashi, commenting on Breishit 13:11, quotes a Midrash which arrives at a very similar thematic conclusion:

"Va-yisa Lot mi-kedem... [Lot traveled from kedem] - He

traveled **away** from He who began the Creation ('kadmono shel olam'), saying, I can no longer endure being with Avraham nor with his God" ("iy efshi, lo be-Avraham, ve-lo be-Elokav").

As Rashi alludes to, this quarrel between Avraham and Lot stemmed from a conflict between two opposite lifestyles:

- * A life striving for a dependence (and hence a relationship) with God (=Avraham Avinu);
- * A life where man prefers to be independent of God (=Lot).

The path chosen by Avraham Avinu leads to 'Bet El' - the house of God, while the path chosen by Lot leads to 'Sdom' - the city of corruption (see 13:12-13).

BACK TO THE CREATION

This Biblical theme of matar is so fundamental, that it actually begins at the time of Creation! Recall how the Gan Eden narrative (i.e. Breishit 2:4-3:24) opens with a very peculiar statement in regard to matar:

"These are the generations of Heavens and Earth from their Creation... And no shrub of the field had yet grown in the land and no grains had yet sprouted, because Hashem had not yet sent rain (matar) on the land, nor was there **man** to work the field..." (Breishit 2:4-5).

It is rather amazing how this entire account of Creation begins with a statement that nothing could grow without matar or man!

Furthermore, this very statement is rather odd, for it appears to contradict what was stated earlier (in the first account of Creation [= 'perek aleph'] which implies that water was just about everywhere (see 1:2,6,9 etc.).

Finally, this very statement that man is needed for vegetation to grow seems to contradict what we see in nature. As we all know shrubs and trees (and especially weeds) seem to grow very nicely even without man's help. Yet, according to this opening pasuk of the second account of Creation - nothing could grow without this combination of matar and **man**.

Nonetheless, Chumash emphasizes in this opening statement that both man and matar are key factors in the forthcoming story of creation. To appreciate why, we must first very briefly review our conclusions in regard to the comparison between the two accounts in Sefer Breishit.

The first account [perek aleph] focused on God's creation of all 'nature' in seven days. God's Name - 'Elokim' - reflected its key point that all **powers** of nature - that appear to stem from the powers of various gods - are truly the Creation of One God. To remind ourselves of this key point, we are commanded to refrain from all creativity once every seven days. ['olam ha-teva']

In contrast, the second account [perek bet] - focused on the special relationship between man and his Creator, as reflected in its special environment - Gan Eden - created by God for man to work and keep. In that environment, man is responsible to follow God's laws, and His Name ['shem Havaya'] reflects His presence and involvement ['olam ha-hitgalut].

[See TSC shiur on Parshat Breishit.]

Therefore, this opening pasuk - emphasizing the relationship between matar and man - must relate in some manner to the special relationship between man and God.

The Midrash (quoted by Rashi), bothered by this peculiarity, offers a very profound interpretation, explaining this connection:

"Ki lo himtit... And why had it not yet rained? ... because "adam ayin a'avod et ha-adama", for man had not yet been created to work the field, and thus no one had yet recognized the significance of rain. And when man was created and recognized their importance, **he prayed for rain**. Then the rain fell and the trees and the grass grew..." (see Rashi 2:5).

This interpretation reflects the very same theme that emerged in our discussion of matar in Parshat Ekev. According to this Rashi,

God created man towards the purpose that he recognize God and His Creations. From this perspective, matar emerges as a vehicle to facilitate that recognition.

The reason for this may stem from the very meaning of the word matar. Note that matar does not mean only 'rain'. Rather, the 'shoresh' - 'lehamtir' - relates to anything that falls from heaven to earth. Rain is the classic example; but even 'bread' or 'fire', when they fall from heaven, are described by the Bible as matar.

[In regard to bread, see Breishit 19:24 re: the story of Sodom, "Ve-Hashem **himtir** al Sedom gofrit va-eish min ha-shamayim". In relation to fire coming from heaven, see Shmot 16:4 re: the manna: "hineni **mamtir** lachem lechem min ha-shamayim".]

When man contemplates Creation, there may appear to be an unbridgeable gap between 'heaven' and 'earth'. Man must overcome that gap, raising his goals from the 'earthly' to the 'heavenly'. In this context, matar - a physical proof that something in heaven can come down to earth - may symbolize man's potential (and purpose) to bridge that gap in the opposite direction, i.e. from 'earthly' to 'heavenly'.

Hence, Biblical matar emerges as more than just a type of water, but more so as a symbol of a potential connection between the heavens and earth, and hence between God and man.

In the special spiritual environment created by the climate of the Land of Israel, as described in Parshat Ekev, matar serves as a vehicle by which Am Yisrael can perfect their relationship with God. Even though other lands may carry a better potential for prosperity, the Land of Israel becomes an 'ideal' environment for the growth of this spiritual environment,

shabbat shalom,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN:

A. Relate the famous Midrash Chazal of 'ein mayim ela Torah' [- the true water is really the Torah] to the above shiur.

B. Note how the word matar appears in relation to the Flood in Breishit 7:4-5. Based on the above shiur and our shiur on 'perek aleph & bet' (on Parshat Breishit), attempt to explain why.

C. In the psukim by Lot, the Nile and Jordan rivers are compared to the rivers of Gan Eden.

1. Does this indicate that there may be a positive aspect to the supply of water by a River?
2. Why should a river be appropriate for Gan Eden, while rain is more appropriate for Eretz Yisrael?
3. Relate this to Zecharaya 14:7-9 & Yechezkel 47:1-12!

D. Throughout the time period of the Shoftim, and even during the time period of the First Monarchy, many Israelites worshipped the 'Ba'al' - the Canaanite rain god.

1. Relate the nature of this transgression to the above shiur.
2. Relate this to the mishnayot of Masechet Ta'anit, which requires national fast days should rain not fall in sufficient quantities early in the rainy season.
3. Relate to Kings I 17:1 & 18:21 and context of perek 18!

E. In last week's shiur we noted that the 'mitzva' section of the main speech includes 'mitzvot' given originally during Ma'amat Har Sinai, as well as 'tachachot' added in the 40th year by Moshe Rabbeinu.

1. Show textually why from 8:1 till 10:11 must be an 'addition' of the 40th year, while 6:4-7:26 is most likely 'original'! Prove your answer. Use Shmot 23:20-33 in your proof!
2. 10:12-11:21. Would you say that these parshiot are also 'additions' or originals, or possibly a combination. Support your answer, and relate it to the above shiur!

F. The story of chet ha-egel is repeated in chap 9.

1. In what context is this story now being brought down.

Relate to 9:4-6, and especially to 'ki am ksheh oref ata' (9:6).

Relate also to 9:7

2. What other examples of this behavior are cited in this perek?
3. Based on this observation, explain why the story about chet ha-egel is broken up in the middle by psukim 9:22-23, and later by 10:6-9.
4. What is the primary theme of this short 'tachacha'?

G. Read 9:25-29 carefully. Is this simply a review of Moshe's request that God invoke His 'midot ha-rachamim' after the incident of chet ha-egel, or do you find a theme from 'chet ha-meraglim' as well? Support your answer by comparing Shmot chapter 34:1-9 and Bamidbar 14:11-25.

Based on the context of chapter 9, can you explain why?