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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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his 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 archives.

Our parsha opens with Moshe telling B'Nai Yisrael:

> *"Eikev you listen to and observe these laws, Hashem will grant you the covenant and kindness that He promised to your ancestors."* Devarim 7:12.

The parsha continues that Hashem will then love you, bless you, multiply you, bless your children, and the fruit of the land . . .(7:13). Rabbi David Fohrman and his scholars at alephbeta.org observe that the promises in this section of our parsha mirror the promises that Hashem gives to Avraham after the Akeidah (Bereishis 22:15-18) – the first of the three previous times that the Torah uses the word "eikev." Indeed, each of the five times that we encounter "eikev" in the Torah, there is a link to Avraham Avinu. As we read the parsha this week, the intent of the Torah is that we realize and ponder a connection to Avraham.

In our parsha, Moshe tells B'Nai Yisrael that by following the mitzvot and emulating Avraham Avinu, we shall receive blessings of children and plenty in the land (Israel) that Hashem promises to our Avot. Hashem's promise to Avraham comes after the Akeidah, when Avraham shows that he is willing to sacrifice his only, beloved son, Yitzhak, when Hashem tells him to do so. Rabbi Fohrman deduces that Avraham learns from the Akeidah that the blessing of many children and descendants is a tool – that the large family is not a consumption good but a tool to use to create a nation to be an example to other nations. B'Nai Yisrael receive these blessings to be an example to teach other nations to observe *tzedek u'mishpat* – righteousness and justice. We are to inspire other nations to practice these qualities, and *chesed* – kindness – to make the world a better place. Moshe reminds the people as they prepare to enter and take over the land to practice the teachings of Hashem and Avraham to continue to merit the blessings of the land and other gifts from Hashem.

Moshe reminds us that Hashem sends us these blessings not because we deserve them, but because of the evil of other nations. To continue meriting the blessings, we must remember to thank Hashem, the source of all our blessings. An important part of thanking Hashem is always to recite Birchat HaMazon. Rav Kook, in his Dvar Torah (below), goes over the four blessings in Birchat and shows the source in the Talmud of each of them (Moshe, Yehoshua, David, Shomo, and the sages of Yavneh).

Another way we remember that our blessings come from Hashem is to look at the mezuzah on each door and gate of our homes. Each mezuzah has a parchment that includes the second paragraph of the Shema – rewards for following the mitzvot and punishments for not doing so (11:13-21).

A famous Rashi on the opening of the parsha says that "eikev" means "heel" – a reminder that near a river (Nile or Jordan), one can move the sand or dirt away to let water flow to irrigate crops. In contrast, in a mountainous area, Hashem waters crops by sending rain in season. When Avraham and Lot cannot live together in peace, Avraham tells Lot

to select the land to his right or left (north or south). Lot, thinking of Egypt and the ease of growing near a river, instead chooses to go east, to the other side of the Jordan River – despite that area meaning Sodom, the home of evil people. Avraham wants a close, daily relationship with Hashem and therefore chooses to live in the high country. Lot, however, prefers an easy life despite contact with evil neighbors. Avraham spends most of his life looking for people to inform about Hashem, the one and true God. Lot, rather than influencing his neighbors for good, opens himself to learning evil from the people of Sodom. Moshe alludes to Avraham to remind B'Nai Yisrael to choose Hashem's path and to stay away from socializing with idolatrous nations.

Moshe reminds B'Nai Yisrael of Hashem's promise to give a good land to them, up to the gates of their enemies. Thousands of years later, our enemies are still at our gates and always seek to go past the gates to harm our people all over the world. B'Nai Yisrael always look for ways to protect our people. The death penalty for the synagogue murderer in Pittsburgh this week reminds us of the work of our enemies, as do the constant attacks in Israel. Hashem protects us from worse attacks behind the scenes – otherwise such a small nation could not survive for 3500 years.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, was in elementary school during World War II, and he became an adult during the 1950s, when many colleges and graduate schools had quotas on Jewish students. Rabbi Cahan observed anti-Semitism first hand much more than I did, including having high school thugs throwing raw eggs and even more disgusting objects at him while he walked to services in Potomac, MD on Yom Kippur. The lessons of Eikev are forever – something we must learn, relearn all the time, and teach to our children and grandchildren. The lessons of Eikev are forever – something we must learn, relearn all the time, and teach to our children and grandchildren.

Shabbat Shalom,

Alan & Hannah

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Arye Don ben Tzivia, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Sarah Feige bat Chaya, Sharon bat Sarah, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Eikev: Everything

By Rabbi Label Lam © 5767

> *He afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you the Manna that you did not know nor did your forefathers know in order to make you know that not by bread alone does man live but on all that emanates from the mouth of HASHEM does man live.* (Devarim 8:3)

What is added by the word "all"? How does it add flavor to the Manna or the meaning of the verse?

We say daily the following words in our morning prayers, *"Blessed is He Who spoke and the world came to be!"* Let us cogitate on that point. The whole world is actually a manifestation of the speech of The Almighty. We are absolutely dependent, in the fullest sense of the word, upon HASHEM's existence and not at all the other way around. The entirety of existence is founded on the will of G-d expressed by His words. 'And Elochim said, *"Let there be light and there was light!"'* Everything else devolves and evolves from further detailed verbiage. It's words almost all the way!

I am reminded of an absurdly bad joke a literature professor told my freshman year in college. A swami sitting cross legged in his cave responds ever so briefly to the question of his disciple before returning to his meditative silence. The dialogue goes like this: "On what does the world rest master?" He responds, "On the back of an elephant!" The student leaves and returns in wonderment seven years later. "On what does that elephant rest master?" "On the back of another elephant, my son!" He returns again seven years later asks the same question and gets the same answer and again a few more times. Now he returns and finds the swami very old and frail and the student says, "You must tell me the secret! We may not have another chance!" "Alright" the swami answers, "If you must know. It's elephants all the way!"

Of course it is silly and the ultimate in absurdity. How can it be elephants all the way? Intuitively and empirically we know it cannot be so! Anyone who has even a rudimentary understanding of the periodic table of elements knows that everything in the universe that we perceive including us are made up of a jumbled mass of the same stuff -- the same protons, neutrons, quarks and whatnots, with electrons, whirling at varied valences and with differing densities in the nucleus. From hydrogen to uranium, from gas to liquid to the most solid it's all the same -- packaged and ordered differently. When any atom is split open, as we came to know in the 20th century, an ocean of densely packed sublime energy is suddenly released. That mysterious "energy" is at the heart of all that exists. It's that simple! The famous British physicist Stephen Hawkings once asked, "What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe?"

It is told that Rabbi Yisrael Salanter ztl., the father of the Mussar Movement, was sitting in a hotel lobby in France. He was served a glass of water. Afterward the waiter presented him with a bill for an enormous sum, let's say 50 francs. Reb Yisrael asked the waiter if perhaps he had made a mistake because all he had was a glass of water and not an entire meal. The waiter went on to explain that it was no mistake, "Rabinner, you are not paying for the glass of water alone. No! You are paying also for the magnificent scenery, the beautiful decorations, and the musicians in the background. You are paying for the ambiance!" Reb Yisrael paid the bill, left a tip, and went back to his room where he wrote to his students in Russia, "Now I understand why when we drink a glass of water we say, *"Shehokol N'hiyah B'dvaro"* "That all comes about though His speech!" "We are not blessing for the water alone. We are making a blessing on **everything!"**

https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5772-eikev/

Inclusion Doesn't Happen by Accident *

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2014, 2023

[The note at the end explains why I am posting this Dvar Torah this week]

The lighting of the menorah opens our parasha:

> *"Command the Children of Israel and they shall take to you pure olive oil, beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn tamid, constantly."* (Shemot 27:20)

The placement of these verses is curious, as the more appropriate place would have been in last week's parasha, together with the making of the menorah. The verse also stresses not just the lighting of the menorah, but the donating of the oil for that sake. In this way, it echoes last week's parasha that opens with a command to donate various items to the making of the Tabernacle.

These opening verses may be addressing a deep challenge in the sacrificial service. For while everyone donated to the Mishkan, only the kohanim were able to actually perform the service on a daily basis. This special role of the kohanim is, in fact, the emphasis of our parasha. It is why they require special clothes, it is why they will undergo a sanctification and

initiation ceremony – so that they, and no one else – will be dedicated to the service in the Temple. What, then, of the people's involvement?

The answer, the Torah is saying, is that those opportunities do exist. Don't overlook them or minimize their importance, we are being told. Even before we start talking about the kohanim, here is a way that everyone can participate on an ongoing basis. Donate the oil for the menorah. The donations in Terumah were a one-time deal, and anyway, it is usually the rich that make those types of donations. But going forward, you can donate the oil for the menorah on any given day. You can also be a part of the daily Temple service.

This idea is reflected in our Shabbat davening, where we have a special blessing, a mishebeirach, for *hanosnim ner la'maor,* those that pay the electric bill, that donate to the day-to-day upkeep and running of the synagogue. It is a blessing for those who are *oskim b'tzarchei tzibbur be'emunah,* who volunteer their time to stuff envelopes, to set up the tables for se'udah Shlishit, to organize the bikkur cholim committees and to do the shemira for those who have recently died. It is a blessing for those who for those whose quiet work keeps the lights on, day after day.

Read this way, the giving of the oil is a way for people otherwise excluded to be able to contribute, a way that is often undervalued. It is an important message to us to ensure that everyone can contribute and participate in some way and to make sure that these opportunities are always available. And to make sure that these contributions and these people are given the recognition that they truly deserve.

Hazal, however, took it further. For although the verses demand that the menorah be lit by Aharon and his sons, the Gemara tells us that the *"lighting of the menorah is not a priestly service"* (Yoma 24b) and Rambam, following this to its logical conclusion rules that *"lighting the menorah can be done by non-kohanim." (Laws of Entering the Sanctuary* 9:7). So this, unlike the rest of the service of the Temple, is, at least in theory, more accessible to every individual.

This, then, would explain why this service appears before the making of the priestly garments, whereas the daily sacrifices and the burning of the incense appear afterwards. Those latter two require kohanim, kohanim who are wearing the right garments, who have undergone the sanctification ceremony. That's a lot of barriers. The lighting of the menorah, in contrast, can be done by anyone, man or woman, dressed in any way and in whatever circumstance.

What is signified by the lighting of the menorah? Light immediately suggests illumination in the metaphoric sense: knowledge, wisdom and understanding. The Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 36:3) puts it plainly: light helps you see where you are going. The lighting of the Menorah, for the midrash, represents the learning of Torah. Torah illuminates for us how to live our lives, how to avoid stumbling and sinning, how to serve God as best as we can.

The Midrash goes further. Light can also symbolize a mitzvah, and as such,

"Whoever performs a mitzvah is as if he has lit a light before God and given life to his soul."

Doing mitzvot in a connected way fills us with meaning, animates us, gives us religious sustenance.

Torah connects us to God and to the wisdom of our tradition, gives us direction, makes our life of mitzvot one of depth and meaning. It can, it must, be accessible to all. The mishna in Avot tells us that the crown of the priesthood is only for Aharon's descendants, but the crown of the Torah is sitting and waiting for anyone to take. But is this really true? The menorah, in theory, could be lit by anyone, but in practice, only the kohanim ever did it. The Torah, in theory, can be learned by anyone, but in practice, many have been excluded. Until very recently, women were the most obvious of those excluded from serious Torah study, but today, exclusions persist in more subtle, and sometimes invisible, ways.

Those with learning and developmental disabilities are excluded from the vast majority of Jewish schools and synagogues. Sometimes they are actively rejected, told that they do not "fit in" or will impact the image of the school in a negative way. Other times, the rejection is more by omission than commission. There are not sufficient structures and professionally trained staff to make the school or the shul a feasible option.

Left to their own devices, parents try to homeschool these children in Torah, but what resources are available to them?

For many people, the texts of Torah learning are themselves the biggest obstacles. They are dense, difficult, often unpunctuated, and written in a foreign language. Where are the Torah graphic novels? Where are the books of halakha, mishna and Gemara that communicate the depth of our tradition with illustrations and stories, that can be absorbed by those with little or no Hebrew reading skills? Such resources would bring light to all: special education is good education.

For the physically disabled the story is not much better. While we are generally good at building ramps, how often is it that we have the resources available so that the blind or the deaf can learn Torah equally with those blessed with hearing and sight? How many synagogues have braille siddurim? How many lectures make signing or closed captioning available? The Talmud tells us that although a blind person does not directly benefit from light, she still makes the blessing, *"Who has created the luminaries,"* because she benefits indirectly – a person with sight can see and help guide her. But have we done this? How much do those of us with sight share the benefits of our light? How much do we make sure that the light of the menorah is available to all?

We are doing somewhat better in these issues than we had in the past. Many schools are becoming more invested in ensuring that every child receives a Jewish education, and are working at developing special education programs, although there still is a far way to go. I was pleasantly surprised to discover at a JOFA conference a few years ago that signing was available, and that during my lecture, multiple signers were signing at breakneck speed (I tend to talk fast).

But even the best intentioned among us need to be reminded of this constantly. A few years ago, when the yeshiva ran its biannual week-long program on the rabbi and people with disabilities, we video-recorded the sessions but failed to make closed-captioning available, nor did we have any signers present during the week itself. I sometimes feel that I speak a good game, but have not fully internalized the sensitivity and vigilance that is required, that will make providing such access natural and second nature.

In the opening verse of the parasha, the word tamid, constantly, stands out. It is a word that occurs twice more in our parasha, by two other Temple services: the offering of the daily communal sacrifices and the burning of the incense. The message is clear: serving God requires daily dedication and consistency. We cannot build a holy community, a place for God to dwell among us, without daily dedication. When we first learn new halakhot, the details and the attention they demand can overwhelm us, but then they become second nature, they become a self-perpetuating tamid. So, too, our daily dedication must include not just the performance of the mitzvot, but also the lighting of the menorah, making the Torah available to all. The details will overwhelm us at first, but if we attend to them tamid, they will become a tamid that becomes natural. And we will have made for ourselves a community wherein God can truly dwell.

Shabbat shalom!

Note: Yeshivat Chovevei Torah presents **Celebrating Disabilities Pride Month & Tu B'Av with Torah**, a special focus on inclusion in our religion. In honor of this event, YCT presents a reader with appropriate articles by several prominent authors. You may find and download (if you wish) this volume at: https://yctorah.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Disablities-Inclusion-Torah-Reader.pdf
This article is one of the selections reprinted in this reader. The original reference for the article is:

https://library.yctorah.org/2014/02/inclusion-doesnt-happen-by-accident/

Eternal Torah: Thoughts for Parashat Ekev

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

> *"And I took hold of the two tables and cast them out of my two hands, and broke them before your eyes"* (Devarim 9:17)

In this week's parasha, Moses recounts the episode when he came down the mountain with the tablets of stone and found the Israelites worshiping a golden calf. He cast the tablets to the earth and shattered them.

A Hasidic gloss on this episode notes that the stone was smashed to pieces…but the letters floated in the air. Moses could destroy the physical tablets but their spiritual power endured.

This interpretation harks back to the Talmudic description of the death of Rabbi Hanina ben Teradyon, who was executed by the Romans (Avoda Zara 17b). During the Hadrianic persecutions, it was forbidden to teach Torah in public; but Rabbi Hanina ben Teradyon continued to gather large crowds to impart the teachings of Torah. He was arrested and condemned to death. The Romans wrapped him in a Torah scroll and set him and the scroll on fire. But before he succumbed to the flames, Rabbi Hanina called out: *"the parchment is on fire but the letters are floating in the air."* It was — and is — impossible to destroy the spirit and meaning of Torah.

Over the centuries, and including our own time, the Torah has been subjected to vilification, desecration, and even threats of physical burnings. The enemies of Torah do not realize that the Torah will long outlast their evil. Any act against Torah is, in fact, against the best interest of humanity.

A source of anti-Jewish hatred, I believe, is the deep-seated feeling that Jews represent the ideals of Torah. The haters resent Jews who symbolize — knowingly or unknowingly — the commitment to righteousness, morality, respect for God and for fellow human beings. The haters of Jews — consciously or subconsciously — are also haters of God. They don't want to be held morally accountable to God. But whatever they do to Jews or to the Torah, the spirit of Torah will endure.

The great Victorian writer, Matthew Arnold, wrote appreciatively of the eternal message of the Bible and of the religious genius of ancient Israel. He believed that Israel taught the world the ultimate value of righteousness. That teaching, wrote Arnold, was essential to humanity for all time. In his book *Literature and Dogma*, he asserted: "As long as the world lasts, all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration, as to the people who have had the sense for righteousness most glowing and strongest; and in hearing and reading the words Israel has uttered for us, carers for conduct will find a glow and force they could find nowhere else."

Arnold stressed the central role of righteousness in the teachings of the Bible. The Hebrew prophets left an impressive spiritual legacy, "and foresaw and foretold this inevitable triumph of righteousness."

The spirit of our Bible and biblical tradition is a source of eternal optimism for humanity. As bad as things sometimes seem, righteousness will ultimately prevail. Humanity will learn the virtue and happiness of living righteously, honestly, respectfully.

As the prophet Amos taught: *"Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine for bread nor a thirst for water — but for hearing the words of the Lord"* (8:11).

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website jewishideas.org or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.

https://www.jewishideas.org/node/3145

When Bigger is Better

By Rabbi Haskel Lookstein *

Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo has penned a powerful critique that justifies a vigorous response. The critique: Establishment synagogues are on the way out. Most are "religiously sterile and spiritually empty." God has abandoned them and moved to smaller unconventional locations where people are thinking about Him and searching for Him.

I can't comment on God's interest in these unconventional minyanim in places I know little about, but I know something about large, mainstream synagogues, having spent eight decades in one of them, Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun on the Upper East Side of Manhattan — known usually as KJ. I worry about a trend toward "smaller is better," whether in the form of informal minyanim, specialized services such as partnership minyanim, or what is becoming increasingly prevalent: the breaking up of a large congregation into smaller davening groups.

On the other hand, I also worry about Rabbi Cardozo's critique — somewhat justified in my opinion — about the religious sterility and spiritual emptiness in large synagogues and, for that matter, in many of the smaller venues as well. I will divide my response to Rabbi Cardozo into three parts. First, I will offer an analysis of what the large, establishment synagogue offers that smaller minyanim do not. Second, I will discuss the shortcomings of the small or breakaway services. Third, I will present the deficiencies in the large synagogue service and how one might correct them. In all of this, I am indebted to Rabbi Cardozo for raising very important questions and critiques, and getting me sufficiently exorcized so that I had to organize my thoughts on a subject of passionate concern to me and offer them to the reading public for, hopefully, the endorsement of many and, inevitably, the objections of some. I hope to learn as much from the latter as from the former.

I

What does the large, establishment synagogue provide that smaller minyanim do not? First, a large congregation fulfills the principle first enunciated in Proverbs, 14:28 "B'rov am hadrat Melekh" — A large gathering is a glory to the King. Objectively, there is strength in numbers; there is a greater sense of Kiddush haShem; we feel we are part of something much bigger and more important than ourselves. The halakha tells us that although one might prefer to make Kiddush for oneself, when one is in a group, it is a greater mitzvah to have one recite it for everybody. The reason: *B'rov am hadrat Melekh*. On Purim, there is a specific ruling that it is preferable to hear the Megilla in a large gathering rather than in a smaller one, because of pirsum haNes — the publicizing of the miracle. One might extrapolate from this that, in general, the larger the congregation, the greater the service of God.

But the advantages of size go far beyond the objective ones. We are a people who pride ourselves on community. We do not advocate a Robinson Crusoe existence. We want to share in the experience of the larger community. We do not seek to be poresh min haTsibbur — to divorce ourselves from the community. When we pray in a large congregation, we share all the joys and celebrations of fellow congregants. We mourn with them, and we are reminded to go and comfort them; we are made aware of the concerns of Kelal Yisrael — the entire community of Israel.

We live in the Galut, but at KJ, the holiest moment of the service is when the rabbi reads with special gravitas the prayer for the soldiers of Israel preceded by the announcement of the names of the M.I.A's, and then the announcement of the names and ages of the American soldiers who were killed that week fighting for our country. We follow that with a prayer for the well-being and safety of the members of the American armed forces. Subsequently, at a different point in the service, the rabbi reads the Prayer for the Government of Israel — with a partial, embellished translation — and then a brief English prayer for the leaders of the United States of America. These readings are done without a sound in the sanctuary. We all know that this is the deepest concern of the community. It is consciousness-raising for all of us, that in our prayers we are deeply involved in the security and well-being of our brothers and sisters in Medinat Yisrael and our fellow citizens in the United States of America.

During the reading of the Torah, we celebrate engagements, weddings, and significant milestones in the lives of men and women in the congregation. We make a Mi Shebeirakh (special blessing) for each; then we sing an appropriate song — a different one for each kind of simha; and then the rabbi congratulates each celebrant. This all takes time, but this is what creates community and joy and mutual love among us. Rabbi Isaac Luria, the mystic and pietist of sixteenth-century Safed, taught that before every morning's prayer one should say, *"I am now preparing to fulfill the mitzvah of love thy neighbor as thyself."* Prayer in our large synagogue is formulated and structured to fulfill that mitzvah. But there is something else that happens in the large, establishment synagogue.

We summon our members to the task of building the institutions without which Kelal Yisrael cannot thrive. There would be no eruv in Manhattan but for the large, establishment synagogues who paid to build it and who contribute to maintain it.

Similarly, when we had a Midtown Board of Kashruth, it was maintained by the same synagogues. The original mikveh and those which have been added are supported through the large synagogues. There would never have been a Ramaz without KJ, or a Manhattan Day School without the large West Side synagogues. Yeshiva Day Schools across the country have been created and are sustained by major synagogues in their communities. The needs of the community are conveyed to the worshippers in large synagogues. Massive rallies for Soviet Jews in the 1970s and 1980s were promoted through these synagogues. United Jewish Appeal and Israel Bonds reach the religious community — of all denominations — through them. Appeals for Passover relief (for Met Council) bring a response. When Hurricane Sandy struck, we made an appeal at KJ, and we were able to give massive aid to two communities in Brooklyn and Long Island because we could reach people in shul who had a sense of communal responsibility.

In short, the large establishment synagogue is more than a place where many people come to pray; it is more than b'rov am; it is a place where a community is created and nurtured, where we all celebrate our semahot, where, inevitably, we also mourn our losses, where we are aroused to meet the needs of the Jewish community here and in Israel, to build and support institutions and further causes that are vital to the community, to identify with the struggles of the Jewish people in Israel and in America, and to learn from scholars in the congregation and outside of it. All of this and much more is not only a fulfillment of *"b'rav am"* — bringing glory to God — but it also provides vibrancy and great meaning to the life of every member of the community.

II

Now, let us turn to the purpose and function of smaller minyanim and analyze their shortcomings. These minyanim usually focus on the needs of worshippers. Sometimes, those needs are for an important, individual expression, as in the case of partnership minyanim, where women have more of an active role in the ritual. More often, the need is for a "no-nonsense davening" — short, to-the-point — usually with a full Kiddush following (time is not much of a factor there!) — less talking, no sermon (or a greatly reduced one); no celebrations (which take time); no appeals; and no announcements of a communal nature. It is a davening and a Torah reading with no frills and it fulfills a real need — do it right; do it fast; have a nice Kiddush; enjoy the camaraderie of a select group and go home with a big chunk of the day left. This is the standard hashkama minyan. It follows the Israeli pattern, where there is only one day "off" and when, therefore, leisure time is at a premium. In Israel, however, the communal functions are served in other ways, and, therefore, many feel that there is less of a need for a congregation — although this absence of community and congregation is actually a very serious problem, one that is beyond the scope of this article.

Sometimes, this small minyan is not hashkama. Sometimes it begins an hour before the main minyan, or a half-hour after the main minyan starts, or it is a break-away in another place. The common denominator is that they are a substitute for the main service of a community synagogue, and they fulfill the needs of a certain group of worshippers. Aside from all that is missing in these small minyanim, there is a fundamental flaw here from a Jewish perspective. The small minyan is ultimately all about the participant — call it "all about me" — my needs, my convenience, my time, my davening comfort, my Kiddush, my camaraderie. It should be remembered, however, that Judaism is not concerned primarily with "my" needs, but rather with "my" mitzvoth, my obligations, my duties to serve God, to enhance the community, to love others like myself, which means, among other things, to celebrate with others, mourn with others, visit the sick, support the needy, and respond to communal causes. None of these plays a major role in the smaller, needs-oriented, minyan. Worshippers in the smaller minyanim are not in shul for an Israel Bonds Appeal; they don't hear an impassioned plea for the personal philanthropy to help sustain friends of theirs who might be seated next to them and who used to be generous donors, but who now need the community's support; and, for the most part, they do not respond in the manner in which the congregants in the main service do. And if there were a rally for Israel, they wouldn't hear our fervent call to action. They are out of touch because they simply are not there. It is sad, but true. In the Rambam's term, they are, unintentionally, *poresh min haTsibbur* — separated from the efforts, experiences, joys, and struggles of the community. It is terribly sad that they are not full participants in the community's life.

Consider: Why should one care if it takes another 30 to 45 minutes to hear a bar mitzvah boy read the Torah and listen to the rabbi's speech to him; or listen to the Mi Shebeirakh for a hatan v'kalla; or hear a berakha, sing a song, and listen to a pulpit announcement on the occasion of the birthday of a 90-year-old man who never misses a daily minyan? Shouldn't the whole congregational family celebrate such moments? The worshippers in the small, high-speed, minyanim miss all of this. In fact, to some extent, they want to miss it. That's a good part of why they are not in the main service. They have no

patience for all that “stuff.” Is it really right to get through davening in one to two hours rather than two to three hours and miss these communal joys? They are not the joys of some individual. They are our semahot, the semahot of the community. They are our past, our present, and our future, too!

I was recently worshipping in a large, established synagogue with more than 500 member families. They have four or five minyanim in addition to the main service. Each service fills a unique need of the participants. The main service, of course, suffers in attendance because of all the options. There was an outstanding woman scholar on that Shabbat who spoke after the conclusion of the main service. I looked around and saw fewer than 100 listeners. Everyone else had long ago enjoyed Kiddush and left for home. I thought to myself, what a shame! The shul provided for its members a gifted scholar, a role model for women and teenage girls, and only a fraction of the congregation benefited from her exceptional discourse. Such is part of the cost of each going his or her own way and losing the sense of belonging to a community.

III

Finally, a word about Rabbi Cardozo’s critique that the services in large establishment synagogues are “religiously sterile and spiritually empty.” Although his critique may be somewhat overstated, there is no doubt that large congregations need to recognize that *tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis* — times change, and we (must) change with them. In my father, Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein’s — z”tl — day, the Shabbat morning service ran from 9:00 to 12:00 sharp. The sermon was 30 minutes long. Nobody moved until after the benediction that coincided with the 12 gongs on the clock in the nunnery next door. Well, the nunnery is long gone and the clock left with it — and so did the attention span of the congregation. We now try to end by 11:30 — and when I’m not there the service somehow ends by around 11:15! The sermon lasts 10 to 15 minutes. The cantor knows that the age of cantorial virtuosity is essentially over, and he davens beautifully as a ba’al tefilla with a major emphasis on congregational participation. We have to streamline the service even more, recognizing the lower P.Q. (patience quotient) of twenty-first-century adults and children, but without sacrificing the family nature of a davening community.

We should continue to focus on welcoming beginners in our community; in fact we have a Learners’ service and Intermediate minyan for just that purpose. This effort not only supports those who are new to traditional Jewish prayer; it also energizes the entire congregation. It keeps us new and fresh and reminds us that, in a way, we are all beginners. That alone should dispel the “religiously sterile and spiritually empty” feeling that Rabbi Cardozo finds in the large congregations. Five hundred participants in a Friday Night Shabbat Across America davening and dinner can provide inspiration, too! That also is the natural task and opportunity of the large mainstream synagogue.

There is, of course, more that we need to do. From my perspective, however, the most important task is to keep the congregation together and emphasize that prayer in shul is not an exercise in meeting our own individual needs; it should be an effort to meet the needs of our total community and to reinforce our duties and obligations toward Kelal Yisrael. That will not only bring glory to God; it will also provide holiness to our lives.

* Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun. Rabbi Lookstein is one of the outstanding Modern Orthodox rabbis of the American Jewish community. This article appears in issue 19 of *Conversations,* the journal of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

https://www.jewishideas.org/hear-o-israel-thoughts-parashat-va-et-hanan-july-24-2010

Eikev -- The Best Investment

By Rabbi Mordechai Rhine * © 2014

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.

* Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

Rabbi Rhine is on summer vacation for some weeks. During this time, with his blessing, I am posting some of his outstanding archived Devrei Torah. To find more of Rabbi Rhine's Devrei Torah, go to Teach613.org and search by parsha.

http://www.teach613.org/parshas-eikev-the-best-investment/

Parshas Eikev

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2020

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., Ramba"n 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.

* Rosh Kollel, Savannah Kollel; Congregation B’Brith Jacob, Savannah, GA. Until recently, Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Note: Has just moved from Bethesda to Savannah this week and will not have Internet service until next week. In the meantime, I am running a Dvar Torah from his archives.

Eikev

By Rabbi Herzl Hefter *

[Rabbi Hefter did not send a Devar Torah this week. Watch for future Devrei Torah from Rabbi Hefter in this spot.]

* Founder and dean of the Har’el Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. Rabbi Hefter is a graduate of Yeshiva University and was ordained at Yeshivat Har Etzion. For more of his writings, see www.har-el.org. To support the Beit Midrash, as we do, send donations to America Friends of Beit Midrash Har’el, 66 Cherry Lane, Teaneck, NJ 07666.

Eikev

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

]Rabbi Ovadia has been out of the country for the past few weeks. The Devrei Torah that he sent me are the same ones that I ran last year. Hopefully I'll have new insights from Rabbi Ovadia to share very soon.[

* Torah VeAhava. Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan)Potomac, MD(and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school(. **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets** . The Sefaria articles usually include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats.

Shavuon Devarim

by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

The undefeated Japanese samurai swordsman Miyamoto Musashi once said, "some men speak from their mouths, but the wise speak from their heels."

This is a mystical samurai way of saying that wise words have a depth to them. They don't just stop at the mouth but have roots all the way down to our conduits of the earth we call our heels.

One might call this style of speaking, a "heeling process." This heel speaking style need not stop at words. We could "heel-act," "heel-sing," "heel-eat," and "heel-parent."

Indeed if only all that we do can extend from the crowns of our heads to the depth of our heels, what would the world be like? It would be a magical world full of heels.

Is this what our Parsha of Eikev teaches us when God says *"Eikev listen to what I have to say."* Eikev means heel in Hebrew. So God is telling us to not only listen but heel-listen.

May we and all our loved ones be heeled.

Shabbat Shalom!

* Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation, Remuera)Auckland(, New Zealand. Formerly Rabbi, Congregation Knesseth Israel)Birmingham, AL(.

Rav Kook Torah
Eikev: Four Blessings After Eating

The Torah does not specify the exact text of Birkat Hamazon, the blessing recited after eating a meal. The Talmud, however, informs us that it comprises four blessings, authored over a period of a thousand years:

- *Moses composed the first blessing)"the One Who provides sustenance for the entire world"(when the manna fell in the desert.*

- *Joshua composed the second blessing)"For the Land"(when the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel.*

- *David and Solomon composed the third blessing)"the One Who rebuilds Jerusalem"(. David, who established Jerusalem as his capital, wrote, "Your people Israel and Your city Jerusalem."*

And Solomon, who built the Temple, added, "The great and holy Temple."

- *The Sages of Yavneh1 composed the final blessing)"The good King and Benefactor"(to commemorate the miracle that occurred with the dead of the city of Beitar. These Jews were killed by the Romans during the failed Bar Kochba revolt of 135 C.E. For months, the Roman authorities refused to let them be buried, but miraculously, their bodies did not rot.*

The Order of the Blessings

Is there a pattern to the order of these four blessings? Rav Kook explained that the blessings follow a clear progression: from the needs of the individual to those of the nation; and from our physical needs to our spiritual aspirations.2

The very acting of eating contains a certain spiritual danger. Over-indulgence in gastronomic pleasures can lower one's goals to the pursuit of sensual gratification and physical enjoyment. The Torah therefore provided a remedy -- a special prayer to be recited after the meal. Birkat Hamazon is *"a ladder resting on the ground yet reaching the Heavens,"* a spiritual act that enables us to raise ourselves from petty, self-absorbed materialism to lofty spiritual aspirations.

In order to attain this higher awareness, we must climb the 'ladder' step by step:

- *The first rung of the ladder relates to our own personal physical welfare.*
- *On the next rung, we express our concern for the physical welfare of the nation.*
- *On the third rung, we focus on the spiritual well-being of the nation.*
- *Lastly, we aspire to be a "light unto the nations," a holy people who influence and uplift all who were created in God's image.*

This progression is accurately reflected in the blessings of Birkat Hamazon. First, we recite the blessing of "Who sustains the world," composed when the manna fell. This prayer corresponds to the physical needs of each individual, just as the manna-bread sustained each Israelite in the barren desert. The manna also provided loftier benefits, as it spiritually uplifted all who witnessed this miracle. But its primary function was to provide for each individual's physical needs.

The second level — concern for the physical welfare of the entire nation — is the subject of the second blessing, "For the Land." When Joshua led the people into their own land, the Land of Israel, he set the stage for the establishment of a nation with all of the usual national assets: security and defense, self-government, agriculture, economy, natural resources, and so on.

Concern for the spiritual well-being of the Jewish people is the theme of the third blessing, which deals with the spiritual center of the Jewish people: Jerusalem. King David composed the first part, *"For Your people Israel and Your city Jerusalem,"* expressing our prayers for the spiritual state and unity of the Jewish people.

King Solomon added, *"For the great holy Temple."* This reflects the highest goal: the spiritual elevation of all humanity. When dedicating the Temple, Solomon prayed that this holy building — *"a house of prayer for all nations"* — would ensure *"that all the peoples of the world will know that God is the Lord, there is no other"*)I Kings 8:60(.

In this way, Birkat Hamazon bestows profound spiritual value to our private meals — a prayer that guides us, step by step, to a holier world.

The Promise of Beitar

One might become discouraged, however, when faced with the bitter reality of the exile and the current state of the Jewish people. Therefore, the rabbis of Yavneh, following the destruction of the Temple and the failed Bar Kochba revolt, composed the final blessing, *"The good King and Benefactor."*

With the fall of the great city of Beitar, the last hopes for Jewish independence were crushed for thousands of years. Nonetheless, the Sages saw tremendous significance in the fact that the dead did not decompose, and were eventually given a proper burial. This was a Heavenly sign that even if the nation of Israel appears to be lifeless, struck down by the sword of our enemies, we nonetheless retain our spiritual essence, like an inner fire smoldering imperceptibly inside a black piece of coal, cool to the touch. We are confident that we will yet attain our highest aspirations, despite the many years we may have to wait. Just as those who sleep in the dust will return to life in the appointed hour, so too, the Jewish people will rise to national greatness in the end of days.

)Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from *Ein Eyah* vol. II, p. 218.(

FOOTNOTES:

1 Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai transferred the Sanhedrin from Jerusalem to Yavneh after Jerusalem's destruction at the hand of the Romans in 70 C.E.

2 A similar progression may be found in the requests of the Amidah prayer.

https://www.ravkooktorah.org/EKEV61.htm

Eikev: To Lead is to Listen (5774, 5781)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

"If only you would listen to these laws…")Deut. 7:12(. These words with which our parsha begins contain a verb that is a fundamental motif of the book of Devarim. The verb is sh-m-a. It occurred in last week's parsha in the most famous line of the whole of Judaism, Shema Yisrael. It occurs later in this week's parsha in the second paragraph of the Shema, *"It shall be if you surely listen]shamoa tishme'u["*)Deut. 11:13(. In fact, this verb appears no less than 92 times in Devarim as a whole.

We often miss the significance of this word because of what I call the fallacy of translatability: the assumption that one language is fully translatable into another. We hear a word translated from one language to another and assume that it means the same in both. But often it doesn't. Languages are only partially translatable into one another.]1[The key terms of one civilisation are often not fully reproducible in another. The Greek word megalopsychos, for example, Aristotle's "great-souled man" who is great and knows he is, and carries himself with aristocratic pride, is untranslatable into a moral system like Judaism in which humility is a virtue. The English word "tact" has no precise equivalent in Hebrew. And so on.

This is particularly so in the case of the Hebrew verb sh-m-a. Listen, for example, to the various ways the opening words of this week's parsha have been translated into English:

If you hearken to these precepts…

If you completely obey these laws…

If you pay attention to these laws…

If you heed these ordinances…

Because ye hear these judgments…

There is no single English word that means to hear, to listen, to heed, to pay attention to, and to obey. Sh-m-a also means "to understand," as in the story of the tower of Babel, when God says, *"Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand]yishme'u[each other"*)Gen. 11:7(.

As I have argued elsewhere, one of the most striking facts about the Torah is that, although it contains 613 commands, it

does not contain a word that means *"to obey."* When such a word was needed in modern Hebrew, the verb le-tzayet was borrowed from Aramaic. The verb used by the Torah in place of "to obey" is sh-m-a. This is of the highest possible significance. It means that blind obedience is not a virtue in Judaism. God wants us to understand the laws He has commanded us. He wants us to reflect on why this law, not that. He wants us to listen, to reflect, to seek to understand, to internalise and to respond. He wants us to become a listening people.

Ancient Greece was a visual culture, a culture of art, architecture, theatre and spectacle. For the Greeks generally, and Plato specifically, knowing was a form of seeing. Judaism, as Freud pointed out in Moses and Monotheism,]2[is a non-visual culture. We worship a God who cannot be seen; and making sacred images, icons, is absolutely forbidden. In Judaism we do not see God; we hear God. Knowing is a form of listening. Ironically, Freud himself, deeply ambivalent though he was about Judaism, invented the listening cure in psychoanalysis: listening as therapy.]3[

It follows that in Judaism listening is a deeply spiritual act. To listen to God is to be open to God. That is what Moses is saying throughout Devarim: *"If only you would listen."* So it is with leadership – indeed with all forms of interpersonal relationship. Often the greatest gift we can give someone is to listen to them.

Viktor Frankl, who survived Auschwitz and went on to create a new form of psychotherapy based *on "man's search for meaning,"* once told the story of a patient of his who phoned him in the middle of the night to tell him, calmly, that she was about to commit suicide. He kept her on the phone for two hours, giving her every conceivable reason to live. Eventually she said that she had changed her mind and would not end her life. When he next saw the woman he asked her which of his many reasons had persuaded her to change her mind. "None," she replied. "Why then did you decide not to commit suicide?" She replied that the fact that someone was prepared to listen to her for two hours in the middle of the night convinced her that life was worth living after all.]4[

As Chief Rabbi I was involved in resolving a number of highly intractable agunah cases, situations in which a husband was unwilling to give his wife a get so that she could remarry. We resolved all these cases not by legal devices but by the simple act of listening: deep listening, in which we were able to convince both sides that we had heard their pain and their sense of injustice. This took many hours of total concentration and a principled absence of judgment and direction. Eventually our listening absorbed the acrimony and the two sides were able to resolve their differences together. Listening is intensely therapeutic.

Before I became Chief Rabbi, I was head of our rabbinical training seminary, Jews' College. There in the 1980s we ran one of the most advanced practical rabbinics programmes ever devised. It included a three-year programme in counselling. The professionals we recruited to run the course told us that they had one precondition. We had to agree to take all the participants away to an enclosed location for two days. Only those who were willing to do this would be admitted to the course. We did not know in advance what the counsellors were planning to do, but we soon discovered. They planned to teach us the method pioneered by Carl Rogers known as 'non-directive' or 'person-centred' therapy. This involves active listening and reflective questioning, but no guidance on the part of the therapist.

As the nature of the method became clear, the Rabbis began to object. It seemed to oppose everything they stood for. To be a Rabbi is to teach, to direct, to tell people what to do. The tension between the counsellors and the Rabbis grew almost to the point of crisis, so much so that we had to stop the course for an hour while we sought some way of reconciling what the counsellors were doing with what the Torah seemed to be saying. That is when we began to reflect, for the first time as a group, on the spiritual dimension of listening, of Shema Yisrael.

The deep truth behind person-centred therapy is that listening is the key virtue of the religious life. That is what Moses was saying throughout Devarim. If we want God to listen to us, we have to be prepared to listen to Him. And if we learn to listen to Him, then we eventually learn to listen to our fellow humans: the silent cry of the lonely, the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, the people in existential pain.

When God appeared to King Solomon in a dream and asked him what he would like to be given, Solomon replied: *lev shome'a,* literally *"a listening heart"* to judge the people)1 Kings 3:9(. The choice of words is significant. Solomon's wisdom lay, at least in part, in his ability to listen, to hear the emotion behind the words, to sense what was being left unsaid as well as what was said. It is common to find leaders who speak, very rare to find leaders who listen. But listening

often makes the difference.

Listening matters in a moral environment as insistent on human dignity as Judaism. The very act of listening is a form of respect. To illustrate this, I would like to share a story with you. The royal family in Britain is known always to arrive on time and depart on time. I will never forget the occasion -– her aides told me that they had never witnessed it before – when the Queen stayed for two hours longer than her scheduled departure time. The day was 27 January 2005, the occasion, the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The Queen had invited survivors to a reception at St James' Palace. Each had a story to tell, and the Queen took the time to listen to every one of them. One after another came up to me and said, "Sixty years ago I did not know whether tomorrow I would be alive, and here I am talking to the Queen." That act of listening was one of the most royal acts of graciousness I have ever witnessed. Listening is a profound affirmation of the humanity of the other.

In the encounter at the Burning Bush, when God summoned Moses to be a leader, Moses replied, "I am not a man of words, not yesterday, not the day before, not from the first time You spoke to Your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue")Ex. 4:10(. Why would God choose a man who found it difficult to speak to lead the Jewish people? Perhaps because one who cannot speak learns how to listen.

A leader is one who knows how to listen: to the unspoken cry of others and to the still, small voice of God.
FOOTNOTE:

]1[Robert Frost said: "Poetry is what gets lost in translation." Cervantes compared translation to the other side of a tapestry. At best we see a rough outline of the pattern we know exists on the other side, but it lacks definition and is full of loose threads.

]2[Vintage, 1955

]3[Anna O.)Bertha Pappenheim(famously described Freudian psychoanalysis as "the talking cure," but it is in fact a listening cure. Only through the active listening of the analyst can there be the therapeutic or cathartic talking of the patient.

]4[Anna Redsand, Viktor Frankl: A Life Worth Living, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006, 113-14.

Around the Shabbat Table:

]1[Will this concept of listening enhance the way you recite the Shema?

]2[How do you think our leaders of today could benefit from greater listening?

]3[How can you develop your capacity for listening, both in listening to God and to other people?

https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/eikev/to-lead-is-to-listen/

Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

Can You Bribe G d?

By Yossi Ives * © Chabad 2023

Contradictory Verses

At first blush, the answer seems to be a resounding no! Indeed, we read in the portion of Eikev: *"For the L rd, your G d … will show no favor, nor will He take a bribe."*1

What does the verse even mean? How would one "bribe" the Creator anyway? G d is an infinite being who, by definition, lacks for nothing. Moreover, is it not blindingly obvious that the only truly Perfect Being would not stoop to lowly bribery? Does this really need to be said?

And if, indeed, G d would never accept a bribe, how do we make sense of the verse*, "He will take a bribe from a wicked man's bosom,"* 2 which becomes even more troublesome when we read the Midrashic commentary:

> *What is the bribe that the Holy One Blessed Is He takes from the wicked in this life? Repentance and good deeds. The Holy One Blessed Is He said to Israel: "My children, return while the gates of repentance remain open, because I accept bribes in your earthly life. By contrast, once I sit in judgement when you reach the next life, I do not accept bribes…"*

So, yes bribes or no bribes?

Repentance Is Bribery, in a Good Way

Of course, we could answer – as do several commentators3 – that accepting repentance for a sin is not really a bribe.

It is true, as Maimonides explains,4 that no number of good deeds will wipe away a bad one. If a person commits both bad and good deeds, they don't cancel each other out. Rather, reward will accrue for the good deed, and punishment for the bad ones.

That is true for regular good deeds. Repentance, though, is not just a good deed. By regretting and apologizing for one's misdeeds, they are cleansed and washed away.

If G d were to use the person's mitzvot in order to overlook his or her aveirot)sins(, that would indeed be a form of bribery. But accepting repentance is very different, because through teshuva the aveirot cease to exist – the bad deeds are undone, not merely compensated for by good deeds.

According to this logic, then, G d does not take bribes in the form of good deeds, and the reason He accepts repentance is because it isn't, in fact, a bribe.

If this was supposed to clear things up, it has not. If repentance is not considered a bribe, why does the Midrash call it so? In which way is accepting repentance *"taking bribes from a wicked man"*? And if repentance is a form of bribery, how can we reconcile that with the verse that G d *"takes no bribes"*? It seems we are right back to where we started!

Getting to the Heart of Bribery

The Rebbe offers a truly stunning insight to resolve this conundrum. What, exactly, is a bribe? If one steals money and then repays it in full, he has not "bribed" the victim, but repaired the breach he caused. Bribery, then, is when the criminal pays a relatively small sum to relevant parties in order to be let off the hook for a much larger amount that he must rightfully surrender.

There is something very special and unique about repentance, that even a modest effort on our part has a far greater impact than it should have by right. The power of teshuva is such, the Rebbe explains, that it can secure forgiveness and erasure of our sins even if merely a token repentance is done.

Repentance is called a "bribe" because we can earn more credit from it than we genuinely deserve. G d revealed to us that he is "susceptible" to repentance, and that he finds it quite "irresistible." Such is G d's proclivity towards repentance that even a less-than-total repentance has the capability to wash away our sins before His eyes.

It would be reasonable to expect that in order for forgiveness to be granted, the repentance should be as enthusiastic and as fulsome as the sin itself. If people are not entirely sincere in their renunciation of the wrongdoing, or are not completely committed to never repeating those acts, why should they be granted full atonement?

G d is very much aware of the reality that we say we are sorry, but then go on to repeat the misdeed. We say we regret committing the sin, but how truly sorry are we? If it cannot be said that we are truly a changed person, why should our expression of remorse be taken seriously? Are words alone not cheap?

Yet the mystery of teshuva is that even imperfect repentance is considered repentance – and the sin is treated as if it never happened. As long as the person fulfilled the requirements of teshuva under Jewish law – an admission of guilt, a decision to desist from the sin, and a request for forgiveness – Divine clemency is total.

It is in this sense that repentance is considered a "bribe": A little bit of repentance gets you a lot of atonement. Imperfect repentance can still get you perfect forgiveness.

But how is this fair? Shouldn't the atonement be commensurate with the penitence?

Indeed, it would appear that many times repentance is not fully sincere, given how often we return to the very wrongdoing we foreswore. But that is how it seems from a human perspective. To our minds, how can the person truly mean their regret if they repeat the offense the next day?

However, the Almighty Who sees into the depths of our character knows that when we express our remorse it comes from the soul. Despite whatever may happen later, at that moment of regret we truly meant it.

This secret of teshuva reveals a mystery of the soul: for all our missteps and bungling errors, we are at heart pure and holy. Regardless of our mistakes and reversals, our truest self wants to do the right thing. It is when we sin that we are "faking it," impersonating a sinner for some foolish reason. When we achieve moments of clarity and choose the good path, it is then that we are being true to our real self.

Adapted from *Likutei Sichot,* vol. 34, Parshat Eikev II.

FOOTNOTES:

1 Deuteronomy 10:17.

2. Proverbs 17:23. The simple meaning is that a corrupt person is willing to accept a bribe from a criminal to pervert the course of justice. Here the Midrash homiletically interprets this as referring to Great Judge of All Things as willing to accept a bribe from the wicked.

3. Midrash Shmuel, Tzeida Ladarech, Derech Chaim – to Avot end of chapter 4.

4. Commentary to the Mishna, Tractate Avot end of chapter 4.

* Rabbi of Cong. Ahavas Yisrael, Pomona, N.Y., and founder and Chief Executive of Tag International Development, a charitable organization that focuses on sharing Israeli expertise with developing countries.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5193395/jewish/Can-You-Bribe-Gd.htm

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Eikev: Put On Clothes that Never Wear Out!

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

Clothes that Never Wear Out

You shall observe the commandments, rules, and ordinances that I command you today.)Deut. 7:11(

We are taught that during the 40 years that the Jewish people traversed the desert, their clothes not only never wore out; they grew with them, and the Clouds of Glory cleaned them.

Allegorically, our “clothes” are our means of self-expression: thought, speech, and action.

The clothes that we weave for ourselves, by pursuing purely mundane or selfish ends wear out all too quickly and can be outgrown; the clothes we weave “under the Clouds of Glory,” i.e., by studying the Torah, praying, or performing G-d’s other commandments, never tatter, and grow with us.

— from *Daily Wisdom* 3

Gut Shabbos,
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
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Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Power of Gratitude

In the early 1990s, one of the great medical research exercises of modern times took place. It became known as the Nun Study. Some seven hundred American nuns, all members of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States, agreed to allow their records to be accessed by a research team investigating the process of ageing and Alzheimer's Disease. At the start of the study the participants were aged between 75 and 102.[1]

What gave this study its unusual longitudinal scope is that sixty years earlier the very same nuns had been asked by their Mother Superior to write a brief autobiographical account of their life and their reasons for entering the convent. These documents were now analysed by the researchers using a specially devised coding system to register, among other things, positive and negative emotions. By annually assessing the nuns' current state of health, the researchers were able to test whether their emotional state in 1930 had affected their health some sixty years later. Because they had all lived a very similar lifestyle during these six decades, they formed an ideal group for testing hypotheses about the relationship between emotional attitudes and health.

The results, published in 2001, were startling. [2] The more positive emotions – such as contentment, gratitude, happiness, love and hope – the nuns expressed in their autobiographical notes, the more likely they were to be alive and well sixty years later. The difference was as much as seven years in life expectancy. So remarkable was this finding that it has led, since then, to a new field of gratitude research, as well as a deepening understanding of the impact of emotions on physical health.

What medicine now knows about individuals, Moses knew hundreds of years ago about nations. Gratitude – hakarat ha-tov – is at the heart of what he has to say about the Israelites and their future in the Promised Land. Gratitude had not been their strong point in the desert. They complained about lack of food and water, about the manna and the lack of meat and vegetables, about the dangers they faced from the Egyptians as they were leaving and about the inhabitants of the land they were about to enter. They lacked thankfulness during the difficult times. A greater danger still, said Moses, would be a lack of gratitude during the good times. This is what he warned:

> When you have eaten and been satisfied, and have built fine houses and lived in them, when your herds and flocks have grown abundant, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have has multiplied, your heart may become proud, forgetting the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery… You might be tempted to say to yourself, 'My power, the strength of my own hand, have brought me this great wealth.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the power to do great things, upholding the covenant that He swore to your ancestors… Deut. 8:12-18

The worst thing that could happen to them, warned Moses, would be that they forgot how they came to the land, how God had promised it to their ancestors, and had taken them from slavery to freedom, sustaining them during the forty years in the wilderness. This was a revolutionary idea: that the nation's history be engraved on people's souls, that it was to be re-enacted in the annual cycle of festivals, and that the nation, as a nation, should never attribute its achievements to itself – "my power and the might of my own hand" – but should always ascribe its victories, indeed its very existence, to something higher than itself: to God. This is a dominant theme of Deuteronomy, and it echoes throughout the book time and again.

Since the publication of the Nun Study and the flurry of further research it inspired, we now know of the multiple effects of developing an attitude of gratitude. It improves physical health and immunity against disease. Grateful people are more likely to take regular exercise and go for regular medical check-ups. Thankfulness reduces toxic emotions such as resentment, frustration and regret and makes depression less likely. It helps people avoid over-reacting to negative experiences by seeking revenge. It even tends to make people sleep better. It enhances self-respect, making it less likely that you will envy others for their achievements or success. Grateful people tend to have better relationships. Saying "thank you" enhances friendships and elicits better performance from employees. It is also a major factor in strengthening resilience. One study of Vietnam War Veterans found that those with higher levels of gratitude suffered lower incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Remembering the many things we have to be thankful for helps us survive painful experiences, from losing a job to bereavement. [3]

Jewish prayer is an ongoing seminar in gratitude. Birkat ha-Shachar, 'the Dawn Blessings' said at the start of morning prayers each day, form a litany of thanksgiving for life itself: for the human body, the physical world, land to stand on and eyes to see with. The first words we say each morning – Modeh Ani, "I thank you" – mean that we begin each day by giving thanks.

Gratitude also lies behind a fascinating feature of the Amidah. When the leader of prayer repeats the Amidah aloud, we are silent other than for the responses of Kedushah, and saying Amen after each blessing, with one exception. When the leader says the words Modim anachnu lach, "We give thanks to You," the congregation says a parallel passage known as Modim de-Rabbanan. For every other blessing of the Amidah, it is sufficient to assent to the words of the leader by saying Amen. The one exception is Modim, "We give thanks." Rabbi Elijah Spira (1660–1712) in his work Eliyahu Rabbah,[4] explains that when it comes to saying thank you, we cannot delegate this away to someone else to do it on our behalf. Thanks must come directly from us.

Part of the essence of gratitude is that it recognises that we are not the sole authors of what is good in our lives. The egoist, says Andre Comte-Sponville, "is ungrateful because he doesn't like to acknowledge his debt to others and gratitude is this acknowledgement."[5] La Rochefoucald put it more bluntly: "Pride refuses to owe, self-love to pay."[6] Thankfulness has an inner connection with humility. It recognises that what we are and what we have is due to others, and above all to God. Comte-Sponville adds: "Those who are incapable of gratitude live in vain; they can never be satisfied, fulfilled or happy: they do not live, they get ready to live, as Seneca puts it."[7]

Though you don't have to be religious to be grateful, there is something about belief in God as creator of the universe, shaper of history

and author of the laws of life that directs and facilitates our gratitude. It is hard to feel grateful to a universe that came into existence for no reason and is blind to us and our fate. It is precisely our faith in a personal God that gives force and focus to our thanks.

It is no coincidence that the United States, founded by Puritans – Calvinists steeped in the Hebrew Bible – should have a day known as Thanksgiving, recognising the presence of God in American history. On 3rd October 1863, at the height of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln issued a Thanksgiving proclamation, thanking God that though the nation was at war with itself, there were still blessings for which both sides could express gratitude: a fruitful harvest, no foreign invasion, and so on. He continued:

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy… I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States… to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

What might such a declaration made today – in Israel, or the United States, or indeed anywhere – do to heal the wounds that so divide nations today? Thanksgiving is as important to societies as it is to individuals. It protects us from resentments and the arrogance of power. It reminds us of how dependent we are on others and on a Force greater than ourselves. As with individuals so with nations: thanksgiving is essential to happiness and health.

[5786]

[1] See Robert Emmons, Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007.
[2] Deborah D. Danner, David A. Snowdon, and Wallace V. Friesen, "Positive Emotions in Early Life and Longevity: Findings from the Nun Study", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 80.5 (2001), pp. 804-13.
[3] Much of the material in this paragraph is to be found in articles published in Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life @ http://greatergood.berkeley.edu.
[4] Eliyahu Rabbah, Orach Chayyim 127:1.
[5] André Comte-Sponville, A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues: The Uses of Philosophy in Everyday Life, New York: Holt, 2001, p. 133.
[6] Ibid., p. 135.
[7] Ibid., p. 137.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"And now Israel what does the Lord Your God ask of you, only to revere the Lord your God and to walk in all of His ways, and to love Him and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. To observe the commandments of the Lord and His statutes for your good…" (Deuteronomy 10:11-13)

Is that all? Or, in the words of the Sages of the Talmud, "And is that such a small matter to accomplish?" (B.T. Berakhot 33b)

How can the Torah express such a difficult request in such an offhand manner?

A significant experience at the beginning of my teaching career intensifies the question. Decades ago, when teaching Talmud at the James Striar School of Yeshiva University for those without previous yeshiva background, the star of the class was a brilliant young man from Montreal who progressed from barely being able to read the words in Aramaic to real proficiency in analyzing a difficult Tosafot (super-commentary). At the end of the year, he decided to leave both Yeshiva University as well his newly found Torah observance!

His explanation has remained imprinted in my consciousness all these years: "As a non-religious Jew, I would get up each morning asking myself how I wished to spend the day; as a religious Jew, I must get up each morning asking myself how God wants me to spend the day. The pressure is simply too intense for me to take…"

I was sorely disappointed – but I did understand his tension. Indeed, he got it. He understood that true religious devotion is more than praying at certain times each day and subscribing to specific do's and don'ts; true religious devotion means dedicating every moment to a higher ideal, to answering a Divine call whose message you can never be certain that you correctly discern. Although it may very well be fulfilling, it is also difficult and even pressurizing to be a sincerely religious Jew.

So how can the Bible query "What does the Lord your God ask of you but only… to love Him and serve (Him)… with all your heart and with all your soul"?? But only?!

And how can that be "Letov lakh" – "for your good"?

This question may be linked to a curious comparison made by the text of our Torah reading between the land of Egypt and the land of Israel – within the context of a lyrical exposition of the grandeur of the Holy Land and the luscious quality of its fruit:

"For the land which you are coming to inherit is not like the land of Egypt which you left, where you (merely) seeded your seed and watered with your feet a garden of vegetation (the water came naturally from the overflow of the Nile River); the land which you are crossing there to inherit is a land of mountains and valleys, (making you dependent upon) heavenly rains to drink water; it is a land which the Lord your God constantly investigates, the eyes of the Lord your God being upon it from the beginning of the year until end-year" (Deuteronomy 11:10,11).

Is, then, the fact that Israel does not have a ready and plentiful source of water as has Egypt, that the land of Israel is dependent upon the rains of Divine grace which come as a result of the Jewish people's moral and ethical standing, that agricultural activity is a much more arduous and precarious a task than it is in Egypt, a reason for praising Israel? It seems to me that Egypt is a far better option if we were to be given the choice!

It is fascinating to note that in both of the issues we have raised thus far, the Torah, which is the source of our responsibilities towards God, and the land of Israel, which is the medium through which our nation will flourish and impart the message of ethical monotheism to the world, are both uniquely called morasha, or heritage, by the Bible (Exodus 6:8; Deuteronomy 33:4).

Yerusha is the usual term for inheritance; morasha is translated as heritage. The Jerusalem Talmud explains that an inheritance is often received through no expenditure of effort on the part of the recipient; a morasha, on the other hand, implies intense exertion, physical and/or emotional input, commitment and even sacrifice on the part of the recipient.

The verb form of morasha, l'horish, also means to conquer, and conquest implies struggle and even sacrifice. At the same time, the basic verb form around which morasha is built is vav, resh shin, almost the very same letters as shin, yud, resh (yud and vav are virtually interchangeable in Hebrew) – which spells shir, or song. And the Midrashic Sages already noted the linguistic comparison between morasha and m'orasa, fiancée, or beloved.

All of this leads us to one inescapable conclusion: those objects, ideals and people for which we have labored intensively and sacrificed unsparingly are the very ones we love the most and value above all others.

The Mishnah in Avot teaches, "In accordance with the pain is the reward;" my teacher and mentor Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik teaches, "In accordance with the pain is the sanctity." We learn from the word morasha that "in accordance with the pain is the love."

Note the experiences which in retrospect give the most satisfaction and which everyone loves to recount are rarely the days of lazy relaxation we spend on vacation, but more usually the sacrifices during periods of poverty or the battles in time of war. Ask any parent about the special love he/she has for the one child who needed the most care and commitment because of a serious illness or accident and you immediately understand the inextricable connection between conquest and song, commitment and love, intensive effort and emotional gratification. A life without ideals or people for whom one would gladly sacrifice is a life not worth living; a life devoid of emotional commitments is a life which has merely passed one by but which has never been truly lived.

Erich Siegel was wrong that “to love means never to having to say you’re sorry”; but it is correct to say that one who is loved need not say thank you to the one who has sacrificed, expended effort, on his/her behalf. Jacobs’s 14 years of hard work for Rachel were “as only a few days” because of his great love for her, attests the Bible. A husband who has the privilege of easing the pain of his beloved wife, if but for a few moments, is grateful for the privilege. And our commitment to God – with all our heart, soul and might- is a small thing to ask as long as it is an expression of our mutual love.

In the final analysis, it is certainly for our good, because it gives ultimate meaning, purpose and eternity to our finite lives.

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, Eikev, "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 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 containing the Hebrew letters yud-samach-resh 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 warder. 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

How not to confuse your children

Do we sometimes unfairly confuse our children? It is possible, for example, that at school, a child is given direction and inspiration but that child comes home to find that the family values and what is practised at home are incompatible with what has been taught at school.

The Torah gives us instruction in this regard. In Parshat Eikev the famous second paragraph of the Shema gives us the mitzvah to educate our children: “Velimadtem otam et bneichem ledaber bam,” – “And you (plural) must teach your children to speak these words of Torah.” (Devarim 11:19.)

This mitzvah is in the plural, Chazal explain, in order to teach us that as communities we must build, we must fund and we must run outstanding Jewish schools.

Then the Torah continues: “beshivtecha beveitecha uvelechtecha baderech uveshochbecha uvekumecha,” in the singular – you must speak these words of Torah, “when you are sitting in your home, when you are on the way, when you get up and when you lie down.”

The sefer Menachem Tzion teaches us that from here we learn that what children are taught in school needs to be matched by the home environment. So when we are sitting at home, when we are engaged in our daily pursuits, when we are also on our way outside of our home when we’re at work, when we, are on a family vacation, when we get up, when we lie down and at all times, we should be living a true and authentic Torah way of life, just as the children have been taught about when they are in school.

Now fascinatingly just after this, the Torah reverts back to speaking in the plural,

"lema'an yirbu yemeichem viymei veneichem," – "in order that your (plural) days and the days of your descendants may be increased." (Devarim 11:21)

What we therefore find is that a holistic approach to Jewish education, getting it right both at school and in our homes, will be the ultimate guarantor for the continuity of the Jewish people.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel
Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

Jewish Attitude To Doctors

When we think about promises of reward in the Torah for good behavior and keeping the Mitzvot-commandments, most Jews think of the words of the Shema, whose second paragraph is in this week's Parsha (Deuteronomy 11:13-21). These words promise physical wealth, including proper rain, yielding great crops for food and animals. Great prosperity. For those of us who cannot relate, it would be as if each deserving Jew would be given at least one Bitcoin directly by God (rain and crops were the Bitcoin of its time). But earlier in the Parsha, God pledges another physical reward for proper Jewish behavior and practice: good health. God promises that He will remove any sickness experienced in Egypt (Deuteronomy 7:25). This is not the first time God made such a commitment. After the Jews left Egypt, God made a similar promise at Marah (Exodus 15:26). This promise presents the thinking, believing and observant Jews with a dilemma.

If believing Jews trust that events and many experiences in their lives come directly from God, including sickness as a punishment for sin, then what right does man have to interfere with the desires of God (to help a person suffering through sickness), and take away that malady and pain? It is for this reason that many religions forbid physicians from treating the ill (Christian Scientists, for example). The Rabbis discuss this issue and marshal sources on both sides of this moral question. On the one hand, it is very clear in traditional Jewish thought, that sickness comes directly from God, often as a reaction to immoral actions by man (see chapter on "How Much God, How Much Us"). King David said that God, not doctors, protects an individual from sickness and keeps a person alive (Psalms 41:2-3), and each weekday, traditional Jews pray to God three times, as the ultimate Doctor/Healer, to remove all sicknesses (Blessing #8 in the Shmoneh Esreh). How, then, are doctors ever allowed to step in and heal in Jewish thought? Where is the logic? This essential issue may put all observant Jewish doctors out of business and disappoint almost all Jewish mothers.

The Philosophical Issue: Why Are Doctors Allowed to Heal? - We begin with the Talmud, which states: since the Torah itself discusses paying doctor bills as part of restitution for damages, the Talmud cites this verse as "permission" for doctors to heal (Exodus 21:19, Berachot 60a). But how does it work philosophically? Since God knows that doctors exist can heal in society, when He brings sickness upon an individual, God *wants* that doctor to administer medicine and heal the patient. Therefore, if a person contracts an illness that would normally take three weeks to heal without medicine, and the doctor can eliminate the malady in a week, then God intentionally wanted the person to be ill for a week, not three weeks. In this way, the physician partners with God in healing human beings. But even as the doctor prescribes treatment, Jews believe that the healing still comes from God – through the doctor (Chovat Halevavot, Shaar Revii, chapter 4).

This idea, however, although agreed upon in normative Judaism by most Jewish thinkers, is not necessarily the ideal. Nachmanides, himself a physician, believes that. Ideally, if people were on a higher spiritual plane, doctors would be unnecessary, as Jews would go only to prophets to heal diseases that came about because of spiritual imperfections. Alas, as people are no longer on that lofty plane today, continues Nachmanides, they are allowed to go to doctors and should go to heal themselves (Nachmanides commentary to Leviticus 26:11). Turei Zahav echoes this approach and stresses that all the healing comes from God, but He works through the natural means of doctors (Taz commentary on Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 336:1). A 20th century-leading Rabbi also stressed this idea, writing that a person may not rely on a miracle from God to be healed without medicine, since almost no one today is on such a high spiritual level. Rather, a Jew should rely on the healing of a doctor in today's non-perfect immoral world (Taz commentary on Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 336:1).

And yet, based on this idea, not all commentaries believe that doctors must treat all maladies. Ibn Ezra, for instance, wrote that this practice of going to doctors rather than directly to God applies only to external illnesses that can be seen on one's body. Internal illness is still the realm of God since the inner core of the person remains only in the spiritual realm (Ibn Ezra and Rabbeinu Bechaye commentaries to Exodus 21:19). In a similar vein, Tosafot writes that man's realm and the ability of doctors to heal are limited to damage to the body that came from another human being. However, an illness that came directly from God (and not man) must be healed directly by God and not through a doctor (Tosafot commentary on Bava Kama 85a "*Shenitnah*"). Rabbi Yitzchak Arama (fifteenth century) states that even while the doctor is administering medicine and treatment, a Jew is obligated to direct his or her thoughts and prayers to God, who is doing the healing (Akeidat Yitzchak commentary, Vayishlach, Gate 26). Needless to say, the normative Jewish view today is that a Jew turns to a doctor to heal every illness, even though Jewish thought still believes that all healing ultimately comes from God. After citing these other views, Rabbi Moses Feinstein of the 20th century repeats (Responsa, Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 3:90) the normative Jewish viewpoint explained above regarding how doctors work in tandem with God: God is fully aware of man's most modern capabilities to heal when He brings the sickness to an individual, and God wants man to use the full range of medical knowledge of the 21st century to heal each sickness as quickly as possible.

The Obligation of a Doctor to Heal in Judaism - After establishing that a doctor is *allowed* to heal, even though all sickness and healing ultimately come from God, how do we know that a doctor is *obligated* to do so if he or she has the knowledge required to help sick people? In addition to the verse cited above that doctors' bills must be paid, there is a general obligation upon every Jew to help anyone in trouble. Thus, one verse prohibits a Jew from standing by and doing nothing when someone's life is in danger, and another verse obligates a person to return any lost object that once belonged to someone. (In Judaism this is an obligation, not a mere good deed [Leviticus 19:16, Deuteronomy 22:2]). This obligation to help anyone in danger was codified into Jewish law (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 426:1), and it requires a Jew to help anyone in a life-threatening situation or even in ordinary trouble. Thus, doctors would be obligated to heal any sick person based on this general obligation, since they have the knowledge to save people who are in trouble - i.e., who are ill.

However, the specific obligation of doctors to heal is also mentioned overtly. In his commentary on the Mishna, Maimonides, who was also a physician, writes that a doctor is obligated to heal any sick person if he or she can, as this is a requirement that falls under the obligation of "returning a lost object," reasoning that a person's health was lost and the doctor returns it to the patient (Maimonides, commentary to the Mishna, Nedarim 4:4). For this and other reasons, the Code of Jewish law states that once the permission is given to doctors to heal, as discussed above, it is now a Mitzvah-commandment to do so (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 336:1). Taz explains how the Shulchan Aruch can say that a doctor has permission to heal and then also say it is an obligation. He reiterates that in the ideal world, doctors would be unnecessary, but now that they are needed because people are on a lower moral level and cannot rely solely on God, the doctors are obligated to heal, since that is what God currently desires (Taz commentary on Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 336:1).

However, there are some caveats in Jewish law regarding what kind of doctors are allowed to heal, which practices are allowed, which are forbidden, etc. Shulchan Aruch lists some of these (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 336:1-2).

A doctor must be a recognized expert in medicine to practice, or what we would today call a licensed practitioner. He or she may not treat a patient if a doctor with more knowledge and experience is present to heal the patient more effectively. If a doctor does not yield to the best physician present and decides to heal a very sick patient anyway, that doctor may be guilty of murder if the patient dies. If an unlicensed physician treats someone without obtaining the permission of a Jewish court of Rabbis (which is equivalent to a license), that doctor is obligated to pay all the damages a patient may suffer needlessly as a result of the doctor's negligent treatment. However, if a licensed doctor makes an unintended error, he or she cannot be sued, but God will punish that person. According to Jewish law, a doctor may *not* take an exorbitant fee for services, claiming that it pays in part for all the years of training or for the extensive knowledge that he or she has accumulated. If, to save money, the person who damaged another individual says that he will heal the injured party himself, or that he knows a doctor that will give his services without charge, we do not listen to this person who did the damage, but, rather, bring in a paid doctor to heal the injured party (Maimonides, Hilchot Chovel Umazik 2:18, Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 420:21).

One very strange and misunderstood Mishnaic statement is indeed unusual but understanding it will shed further light on the proper behavior of doctors. The Mishna states (Mishna Kiddushin 4:14) that "the best doctors are in hell" or "the best doctors should go to hell." What does this statement signify, especially in light of the previous sources stating that a doctor who saves a life is fulfilling a Torah commandment, and the well-known Jewish concept that he who saves a single life is as if he saved an entire world (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5)? Many explanations have been offered for this difficult statement. Rashi and Tosafot Yom Tov explain (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5) that this refers to doctors who are so proficient medically that they are unafraid of any sickness and even of death and believe that their skills can succeed no matter what God desires as the outcome. They also do not treat the poor who are ill. Unfortunately, we also see doctors today with similar egos, who feel that they are invincible in the operating room. Rabbeinu Nissim believes that this statement refers to doctors who either are not licensed or who have a license but are just not careful in how they deal with patients, and many die due to their negligence (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5). Rabbi Yosef Chaim from Bagdad, who lived in the 1800s, believes that this statement refers to incompetent doctors who are afraid to try powerful, effective medicine in difficult cases, since there is a risk involved with treating illnesses aggressively and properly. All of these explanations describe doctors that do not behave medically in a proper "Jewish" manner (Ben Yehoyada commentary on Kiddushin 4:14).

Obligation In Judaism to Seek A Doctor For Healing - There is a general prohibition in Jewish law, which is the very last ruling in all of the Shulchan Aruch, that a Jew is forbidden to place himself or herself in any dangerous situation (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 427:10). This would prohibit any Jew who is sick from neglecting his or her health by not seeking a physician for treatment. The Talmud says that Shabbat may be violated when someone is bitten by a snake and may call upon a doctor from a different city (who has to violate the Shabbat prohibition not to travel outside a city for more than 2000 cubits) (Yoma 83b). A doctor is integral to and necessary for every Jewish community to exist and thrive. The Talmud lists ten components of communal life that are necessary before a Talmud scholar is permitted to move there. Among these, including a synagogue, teacher, and public bathroom, is the need for a doctor in each community (Sanhedrin 17b). Maimonides codifies this Talmudic passage but changes the order of the ten components and places the doctor first, indicating that this is the most crucial aspect needed for any Jewish community, even before a synagogue and teacher (Maimonides, Hilchot Deot 4:23) (since these do not save lives daily.)

Maimonides declares that a Jew cannot live his or her life in a Jewish manner and worship God properly if he or she is ill (Maimonides, Hilchot Deot 4:23). The obligation to heal oneself is so fundamental that if we suspect that someone does not want to be healed, we can even prevent this person from receiving monies dedicated to his healing. Thus, if a person who was injured tells the person who injured him to pay him the doctor's fees directly and then he will heal himself without a doctor, Jewish law says that the person who did the damage need not pay him this money for healing, as we suspect that he may never actually heal himself, which is forbidden (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 420:21). Therefore, we see that it is obligation for any person who is injured or sick to attempt to heal himself or herself. Similarly, Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg ruled in the twentieth century that anyone who is injured or ill must go to a doctor to be healed since not going to a doctor will place the person in real danger (Responsa Tzitz Eliezer 11:14, no. 3).

*** This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

Fertility of Mankind and Fruitfulness of Soil - Rabbanit Amira Raanan

The portion of Ekev begins: "And it shall come to pass, because you harken to these laws, and keep, and do them, that the Lord your God shall keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore unto your fathers.

And He will love you, and bless you, and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your land, your corn and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore unto your fathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle." (Devarim 7: 12-14)

The Parsha highlights the blessings that will come to those who worship God and observe His mitzvot. A great many of these blessings relate to fertility and fruitfulness: "Reish Lakish in the name of Bar Kapparah said: '… the word "stop" [atzira] is used both in reference to a woman's womb, as is written – "God stopped every womb…", as well as in reference to rains, as is written – "…and He shall stop the heavens". The word "birth" is also used in reference to both women and rains. As is written of childbearing – "And she conceived and gave birth to a son" (Bereshit 30:23); and as is written of rain – "For as the rains come down… and the earth shall be watered, and it shall birth and blossom" (Yeshayahu 55:10). The concept of "remembrance" [pekida] – is used in reference to women and to rains. Of a woman it is written – "And God remembered Sarah" (Bereshit 21:1); of rains it is written – "You remembered the earth, and watered her, greatly enriching her, with the river of God that is full of water" (Tehillim 65:1).

These examples illustrate how Reish Lakish applies the human concepts of "remembrance" and "birth" – which relate to human fertility and productiveness – to the soil and its fruitfulness. Much like a woman, who has intercourse with her husband and then conceives and bears a child, so too the soil is penetrated by the rains, and is then remembered and bears the fruit of the earth.

Another example of this can be found in the words of Rabi Abahu and Rabi Yehuda (Ta'anit 6): Rabi Abahu said – What does the term revi'ah ["impregnation"] mean? It refers to something that penetrates the soil and impregnates it, as is the opinion of Rav Yehuda: The rains are like the spouse of the soil, as is written – "For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, except it water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, and give seed to the one who sows and bread to the eater" (Yeshayahu 55:10).

It follows then that it is the rain that fertilizes the soil, penetrating it like a husband would his wife. As to fertility, both that of the soil as well as that of mankind – this is induced by the forces of Nature. In Nature, both the woman and the soil are impregnated, resulting in the bearing of fruit. However, there is yet another sphere of fruitfulness – one which transcends Nature and is contingent upon living a Torah life and observing the mitzvot.

On this super-natural level, the fruitfulness of soil and man relies upon the blessing of God rather than the laws of Nature: If you shall observe My statutes, you will be blessed with the fruits of the soil and the fruits of the womb.

The Talmud Yerushalmi mentions a wonderful midrash in the tractate of Ta'anit (Chapter 1, Halacha 4) that connects rains and the interpersonal relations between husband and wife: Rabi Abahu saw in his dream that in times of drought one has to ask a person by the name of Pantekaka to pray and then the rains will come. Rabi Abahu sent for Pantekaka [to find out who he is] and had him brought to him. He [Rabi Abahu] asked him: What is your trade? He answered – I commit five transgressions each day: I am responsible for decorating the house of prostitution and hiring the singers and the dancers; I bring their garments to the bath house; clap my hands and dance for them; and chime the bells before them. He [Rabi Abahu] answered him: And what good did you do [to grant you worthy of praying on behalf of the public]? He answered: Once a man [namely, I] decorated the house of prostitution. And a woman came and stood crying behind the pillar. I then said to her: What troubles you? She answered: The husband of this woman [namely, my husband] has been locked away [in the prison house], and she [namely, I] wishes to see what can be done to set him free [from the prison house, hinting to him that she wished to sell her body to the house of prostitution in order to earn enough money to set him free.] [Now Pantekaka tells Rabi Abahu as follows:] I sold my bed and my canopy and I gave her the money I got for these, and I said to her: Take this and go free your husband so that you sin not. I said to him [Rabi Abahu said to Pantekaka]: Indeed, worthy are you of offering prayer and being answered!

Why was the prayer of that brothel-keeper greater than the prayer of our Sages? What lay hidden in his deed that made him more worthy than the greatest scholars of Israel? The midrash describes a situation in which a woman is compelled to sell herself to prostitution. In fact, the woman intended to use her "vessel of productivity" – her body – in a manner which is adulterated, by choosing to deviate from the natural course of reproduction. However, the brothel-keeper chooses to save her from this sin and gives her the money to set her husband free from captivity. The money he gives her is not from the earnings of the house of prostitution; rather, it is money that is clean and void of sin – the proceeds of the sale of his personal property: his bed and linen. The minute the woman can redeem her husband in a manner that is unadulterated, she is also able to realize Nature's course of fruitfulness, one that is also in keeping with Torah Law. When the woman returns to her husband, the rains can come down as well.

Engaging in pristine procreation leads to fruitfulness of soil. As is written: "And it shall come to pass, because you harken to these laws…He will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your land…there shall not be male or female barren among you…"

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org
Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky
Kabbolas Ol Mitzvos

In Parshah Eikev, we have the second half - or second third, if you will - of the daily kerias Shema. The last paragraph is really a distinct point, i.e. remembering the redemption from Mitzrayim, but the first two paragraphs have many striking similarities and distinctions. First of all, they seem to us to be somewhat repetitious. The Mishna (Berachos 2:2) explains the content and order of these two paragraphs as follows:

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha said: why, in the mitzva of the recitation of Shema, did the portion of Shema precede that of Vehaya im shamoa? This is so that one will first accept upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven, the awareness of G-d and G-d's unity, and only then accept upon himself the yoke of the mitzvot, which appears in the paragraph of Vehaya im shamoa.

If the point is to do the mitzvos, and a person is ready to do them, should that not suffice? If a person accepts upon himself the yoke of heaven, does that not automatically mean that he will accept the yoke of mitzvos? After all, aren't they almost synonymous? If a person is willing to do what Hashem commands us to do because he is the ultimate King, then isn't he perforce going to perform the mitzvos?

Additionally, the reward and punishment aspect which is included in this second paragraph is markedly different then the first paragraph. In the first paragraph we speak of total faith and commitment to Hashem even at the price of giving up one's life or possessions. There does not seem to be any indication of reward, and even possibly the contrary: one may end up losing everything because of one's faith in Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Why does this change so drastically in the second paragraph? We also are puzzled by the offering of these rewards and punishments. We know that the Mishna (Avos 1:3) exhorts us to obey Hashem the way a servant would, regardless of reward. There are places where the Torah indicates rewards and punishments, but those are seen primarily as indicators of when we are performing well as opposed to when we are straying. They are a type of positive and negative reinforcement; they are symptoms and signs, but not the purpose. In this paragraph, where we express our core commitment to observing mitzvos , why is the aspect of reward and punishment included?

Let us understand the distinction between these two commitments. The difference between the "yoke of heaven" versus the "yoke of mitzvos" is as follows: The yoke of heaven implies that Hashem's will is the dominant will in the universe, and a command of His must be accepted as such. It means that we don't need to feel or think that the mitzvos are in any way of use, help, or benefit in any way to anyone, neither physically nor even spiritually. The yoke of heaven simply implies that His orders ought to be obeyed as such, period.

But the yoke of mitzvos is a very different type of obligation. True, if one does not accept the yoke of heaven then one really cannot accept the yoke of mitzvos. We need to realize, however, that just as the mitzvos are obligatory because Hashem gave them to us, it is equally true that they also are there to perfect the world. Hashem put us in this world with a mandate, and that mandate is "lovdo olshamra" - to work the garden and to guard against harm. Adam was put into this world in order to develop the world. Hashem has chosen to make us the ones who either bring out the best in the world, or destroy it. The reward and punishment mentioned in this parshah are not merely a feedback mechanism or a reinforcement to spur us to do what's right, rather they are our core understanding of what we're accomplishing. We are the messenger of the Divine to accomplish this.

This is most strongly expressed by Rabbeinu Bchaya (Devarim 27, 26): "Cursed be he who will not uphold the words of this Torah." This includes all the commandments in the Torah. The meaning of the verse is: a person must acknowledge all the commandments of the Torah as true and emanating from God; he may not exclude a single one of them from his acceptance as such by denying that it is of value to body and soul. He must not view a single commandment as superfluous and meaningless. This is the meaning of אשר לא יקים לעשות אותם. He must be convinced in his heart that all the commandments are worthwhile observing seeing they are all full of meaning to people engaged in studying them.

Thus, our reading of kerias Shema twice a day affirms the following two core aspects of our belief. One is that the world of mitzvos is mandated by Hashem. We do not have the discretion to choose our own mitzvos or deny them. We are obligated to do them whether we understand their meaning or not. The second core belief, expressed in the second part of kerias Shema, is that all of those mitzvos that are mandated by Hashem, and done as such, are activities that bring out the good in the world. They are not whims, chas veshalom, nor are they meaningless commandments; rather they are the core of what nourishes the world. And we must believe that when we do what is good and right, the world blossoms, while refraining from doing so, or do things that are bad or evil, destroys the world. This is complete emuna: both ohl malchus shamaim and ol mitzvos.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

Even More Mitzvos

And it will be, if you hearken to My commandments that I command you this day to love HASHEM, your G-d, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give the rain of your land at its time, the early rain and the latter rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil. (Devarim 11:13-14)

to love HASHEM: You should not say: "I will learn in order to become rich," [or] "in order to be referred to as 'Rabbi,'" [or] "in order that I receive a reward." Rather, whatever you do, do out of love [for G-d], and ultimately, the honor will come. – Rashi

This is a little troublesome. In the second paragraph of Shema which is posted on every doorway in Jewish homes and which we recite at least twice daily, I detect what seems like a huge contradiction. We are told "to love HASHEM", and Rashi explains this means not to serve HASHEM for any ulterior motive or reward but rather out of pure love and then the goodness will come. That's great! If that's all the Torah had demanded then, admittedly it would be very challenging but everything would be clear.

In the very next verse and verses the Torah spells out the earthly rewards that will come about as a result of serving HASHEM with love. Have you noticed the problem yet? Why is a reward offered as a contingency for serving HASHEM out of love, and not for a reward? It sounds a little distracting to say the least. Is it a test? Maybe! The Ramchal writes in Mesilas Yesharim that "all matters of this world are tests for a person". Certainly, the Torah is not inviting us to engage with a pure motive in order that we should invite a test. That can't be the intention here. So, what is?

Another problem is that the sages tell us, "There is no reward for Mitzvos in this world!" We have to understand what this means. It does not mean to say that there is no benefit for performing Mitzvos in this life. There are uncountable benefits. What it means is that this earthy world does not have an equivalent currency to exchange for the value of even a single incidental Mitzvah.

The Mishne in Pirke' Avos states explicitly, "One whiff of the next world is beyond all of this world!" Rabbi Dessler explains that if one could capsulize all the pleasures experienced by all the people from the beginning of time until the end of time, it would still not equal one trace of the delights of the next world. There is no scale. We haven't got enough pizza, or mouths, or beds, or sunsets, or musical notes to approximate one small hint of what that ultimate pleasure is. So, what's the answer?

The Rambam writes in Hilchos Teshuva that the Torah is telling us that the physical attainments promised in this second paragraph of Shema are not presented as a reward. Again, a Mishne Pirke' Avos tells us, "The reward of a Mitzvah is a Mitzvah". When somebody does a Mitzvah, we have a custom to bless them, "Tizku L'Mitzvos! – You should merit Mitzvos!" The biggest result of doing a Mitzvah in this world is the opportunity to do another Mitzvah. The seeming reward spoken about here is not a payoff. It is a paving of the way to be able to do more Mitzvos unimpeded. The real reward is something unfathomable in the context of this physical setting.

Maybe now we can appreciate the nature of what is being offered. I heard this idea recently from a seasoned-mature Talmud Chochom, a Rabbi Goldberg. Let us appreciate how precise is the language of the Torah. We are promised that for serving HASHEM with love, "you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil." This is not a cohesive and consistent grouping. Grain is a raw product. Wine and oil are finished products. Why are they listed together? He explained that grain can be stored for a long time as a raw product. Once it is processed into bread then it perishes quickly. Grapes which become wine and olives that are used to make oil in their raw form tend to spoil. They can only be safeguarded for long periods of time as finished products. This blessing offered by the Torah is not a settlement in this world with grain, wine, and oil. We are being granted the peace of mind, the security, and the surety that we can remain dedicated to meriting even more Mitzvos!

Mizrachi Dvar Torah

Rav Doron Perz

An Embassy of the Land of Israel

What is the purpose of a shul/synagogue in the Diaspora, especially today?

The Kli Yakar says that in the second paragraph of the Shema, in this week's parasha, we are told that long life is promised to the Jewish people only in the Land of Israel. So much so, that Rav Yochanan when he visited Babylon asked (Berachot 8), how can it be that there are elderly people in the Diaspora if long life is only promised in the Land of Israel? The Gemara there answers that since people get up early and go to shul, they get long life. The Kli Yakar says that the Gemara didn't answer the question! He says from here you see that the land of a shul in chutz la'aretz is the Land of Israel – it is like being in the Land of Israel! The Maharsha similiarly explains the Gemara that says that all the shuls and learning centers will come to Israel in the future, because the shuls are already part of Israel.

How can we explain this? Embassies! Every embassy, in every country around the world, even though it is geographically not in its homeland, it is considered extraterritorial. So it seems that a shul in the Diaspora is a spiritual embassy, just as the State of Israel has diplomatic, political embassies, every shul is a mini-Eretz Yisrael.

How relevant this is today. So much of antisemitism is about anti-Zionism, severing the connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. A shul needs to be exactly the thing that brings them together – when you walk into a shul, you should feel a part of Eretz Yisrael and the State of Israel. It should feel like an embassy. It should be connected to what happens in Israel, should be praying for Israel, people should be visiting Israel, the leadership and the membership should all be deeply connected to Israel.

Every single one of us in chutz la'aretz, all our leadership, and every shul is indeed a spiritual embassy of the Land of Israel, fighting the battles of Israel and standing up for everything that the State of Israel and the Jewish people stand for today.

Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's
Derashot Ledorot

Making Hay Out of Religion*

One of the great paradoxes of human nature is the meeting of opposites, the fact that two conditions which are contrary to each other in the extreme can produce the same effects. How frequently are we amused to find the Vatican and the Kremlin toeing, with characteristic dogmatism, the same line; occasionally we are astonished at the coincidence of view of The Wall Street Journal and the Daily Worker. Both extreme Right and extreme Left are alike in condemning the liberal center, and in demanding blind obedience of their followers. Both were equally hostile, for instance, to the Marshall Plan.

In the same vein, we find that affluence and plenty often produce the same results as do adversity and poverty. It is no secret that indigence breeds immorality and corruption. In the Middle Ages, the Black Plague and universal poverty combined to cause the greatest crime wave in the recorded history of Europe. Murder, violence, and theft were the immediate results of pestilence and destitution. In our own day, starvation and privation are bound to unleash the tidal waves of immorality and degeneracy whether in Nablus of Arab Palestine or in Harlem of enlightened New York. Sociologists usually blame low standards of morality on low standards of living.

But the astounding fact is that there are people who would behave immorally and irreligiously and unethically when they earn $200 a week, whereas they did not do so when they barely eked out a living at $25 a week. Somehow, prosperity will sometimes produce worse effects than will poverty. The recent basketball scandals have shown that boys from wealthy homes are not necessarily immune to the temptation of the fixer. Today, when America is enjoying comparatively high prosperity, the record for narcotics, sports scandals, and government bribery is as black as ever. It is a well-established phenomenon that the nouveau riche, the man who has suddenly become wealthy, leaves his house of worship and forgets his religion. Even political immorality is practiced by the extremely wealthy. There are some millionaires who are known sympathizers of American Communism, an "ism" which usually preys only on the poor and dejected.

This principle or paradox was already formulated in the Torah and explained by our Sages. In today's sidra we read, "And you shall eat and be satisfied…take heed and beware lest your heart be deceived and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them" (Deuteronomy 8:10-11). And the Rabbis of the

Midrash (Sifri, 43:17) infer from the sequence of the texts that there is a refinite relationship between satiety, eating until you're full, and idolatry – namely, that it is only out of satisfaction and satiety that one takes to idolatry. Was not the Tower of Babel, the symbol of rebellion against God, built during a period of affluence? Did not the wickedness of Sodom flourish among a wealthy people? And, in our own time, was not Berlin, the city which admitted only wealthy "schutz-juden," the center of assimilation? Only when people are satisfied and content with themselves do they go hunting for other gods, whether the money god or the entertainment god or the god whose first commandment is "Thou shalt keep up with the Joneses."

Well, we can understand that satiety and contentment would result in laxity of morals and religion. After a heavy gluttonous meal, one's metabolism rate drops, one's pulse and respiration go down and energy is sparse. One feels lazy, and if he forgets his Grace after Meals, or skips a mitzva or two, or commits a sin or two, it is a result of negligence and indolence rather than rebellion against God. Why then do the Rabbis insist that eating to satisfaction is the precursor of the worst of all sins, idolatry?

Idolatry, no matter what kind – ancient or modern – is easier than true religion. And because it is easier to practice, success is more readily attainable in idolatry than in monotheism. First of all, it requires less mental exertion. True religion is more abstract, more difficult conceptually than belief in a tangible idol. The invisible is harder on the intellect than the visible. Thus, idolatry is less emotionally taxing than Judaism. It is easier to offer your overt devotions to or embrace a slab of concrete or a totem pole or a Rembrandt or a moneybag or a rabbit's foot than it is to fall in love with an unknown God whom your senses cannot even detect. And idolatry places fewer restrictions upon your behavior than does our religion. The creed of Moloch or Baal never demanded strict Sabbath observance. The religion of the moneybag certainly places no restrictions on corrupt business practices. And the faith in the sacred cow of science requires ethical conduct of no one. All sources indicate that idolatry has frequently sanctioned murder, immorality, and downright degeneracy.

Why do normal people fall prey to the curse of idolatry? Why do they succumb to this opiate of easy living? Let us read the verse preceding the one we have previously quoted: "And I will give grass in your fields for your animals and you shall eat and be satisfied," and then, "beware of worshipping other gods." Certainly! If a person is satisfied with eating the grass reserved for his cattle, if that individual is satisfied to thrive on straw and hay, then certainly his goals are so low that he will be satisfied with the easily attainable idolatry. If this person's noblest goals are not as high as the stars in heaven, but as low as hay in the field, and if he is satisfied with this grass, then this individual's loftiest aims and ambitions in his entire religious life will be not the dedication to one God in heaven but the worship of a dozen cheap clay and wooden statues. "I will give grass in your fields for your animals and you shall eat and be satisfied." The danger of idolatry rears its ugly head when people's aims are level with the ground, when they strive for straw and are content with their success in obtaining it.

The great American ideal is "success." But "success" can apply as well to a well-executed murder as to the amassing of a fortune. I have two friends who intended to accelerate their reading this summer. One decided to read ten important novels published during the past year. The other friend was less ambitious and selected three best-sellers for his summer reading list. By today, I hear, the second fellow has well completed his list of three books. He is by all American standards a success. The first fellow finished only eight of the ten books he had set out to read. Again by American standards, he is a dismal failure. Yet who has accomplished more? Is success really a measure of achievement? Is it really necessary for a meaningful life? In this same vein, idolatry is easier to succeed in than Judaism. It all depends on what your original goal is. "I will give grass in your fields for your animals and you shall eat and be satisfied." People who are satisfied with straw are ripe for idol worship.

Look around you in your places of business and in the streets, and you will meet the typical American Jew of 1951. How high are his goals? Doesn't he seem to think that an insignificant check to a charity is the summum bonum of Jewish life? Isn't this person satisfied with a Sunday school education for his children? Isn't this person's highest religious ideal to visit the synagogue on the High Holy Days? Isn't this person's standard for kashrut two sets of dishes in the home and one set all over the rest of the world? In short, our typical American Jew is often satisfied with straw. A bellyful of hay is sufficient to pacify this person's spiritual hunger, and a thimbleful of ersatz-religion satisfies his cultural requirements. "I will give grass in your fields for your animals and you shall eat and be satisfied." He is unfortunately satisfied with the grass for his cattle, and that means that he is prepared to bow and kneel to the next idol. What the American Jew needs is not a face-lift but a lifting of his level of vision. He must learn to aim higher.

One of the reasons that the Talmud (Bava Metzia 30b) gives for the destruction of the Temple is that the people did not act lifnim mishurat hadin, they only did what was legally expected of them, and no more. They followed the letter of the law, but failed to rise to the spirit of the law. This view of the Talmud was given a modern slant in plain English when Senator Fulbright, commenting on the sad state of American political morals, said that it was "setting a low level" for our national development if "our only goal for official conduct is that it be legal instead of illegal." Indeed, he was expressing the popular fear that our country, the sanctuary of democracy, is endangered because its sights are as high as the din, the strict Constitutional law, and not lifnim mishurat hadin, the spirit of the law, the unwritten moral code. A diet of hay and straw is bad for the spiritual health of our nation. We must raise our sights.

Y. L. Peretz, the famous Yiddish and Hebrew writer, has immortalized the type of Jew whose goals were no higher than "grass in your fields for your animals," the animal's straw, in his story "Bontche Schweig." When Bontche died, he was tried by the divine tribunal, and the heavenly court decided that he merited any reward he would choose. Bontche could not believe it. "Takeh? Really?" he asked in wonder. He was reassured. When Bontche announced his decision, the court and angels looked down, a little ashamed, and the prosecutor laughed. For Bontche had answered, "Well, if it is so, I would like to have every day, for breakfast, a hot roll and fresh butter."

In the same way, a leader who prods his people on to higher goals and loftier ambition is a leader who loves his people. And, conversely, the leader who lulls his people into complacency and self-satisfaction is a traitor. Some of the most laudatory and flattering of epithets were bestowed upon Israel by Balaam, the gentile prophet. Oh, how he praised us! Just compare what he told the Jews to the sermons that Isaiah preached at them. Balaam told them that God saw no sin or evil in them; Isaiah said that they were repulsive to God and rebellious sons. Balaam told them that glory would be theirs without a struggle; Isaiah warned of impending doom if they would not mend their ways. But who would you say loved Israel more? Certainly, the strict and critical Isaiah! For he set higher and finer goals for his people – goals more difficult to achieve, if success was at all humanly possible. He demanded of them exertion and initiative, while Balaam told them that they could rest on their laurels, that they were successful and nothing else of great import was worth striving for. Balaam was not a friend – he was a bitter enemy. The leader who loves his people will give them not a pat on the back, but a shot in the arm. He will teach them that if they can digest and be satisfied with hay and straw, then they are bound to wind up prostrating themselves before pagan idols.

Our good friend, ex-Ambassador James G. McDonald, warns us in his recent book that "the spiritual future of Israel is not without danger." We can keep our aims low and become another banana republic on the shore of the blue Mediterranean, or we can press forward towards the mark, the prize of our high calling. Success is assured to us if we will be content with hay; but the rewards will be greater if our ideals will be loftier.

Today we welcome the month of Elul. During this month, reserved for penitence and introspection, we will reevaluate and possibly reset our present standards and ideals. We can make them as low as the grass upon the fields for the cattle, or as high as the stars in the infinite heavens above. Which shall it be?

*Excerpted from Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's Derashot Ledorot: A Commentary for the Ages – Deuteronomy, co-published by OU Press and Maggid Books *August 25, 1951*

BS"D

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from: The **Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust** <info@rabbisacks.org> subject: Covenant and Conversation COVENANT & CONVERSATION Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

The Spirituality of Listening EIKEV Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

It is one of the most important words in Judaism, and also one of the least understood. Its two most famous occurrences are in last week's parsha and this week's: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4), and "It shall come to pass if you surely listen to My commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul" (Deut. 11:13) – the openings of the first and second paragraphs of the Shema. It also appears in the first line of the parsha: "It shall come to pass, if you listen to these laws" (Deut. 7:12).

The word, of course, is shema. I have argued elsewhere[1] that it is fundamentally untranslatable into English since it means so many things: to hear, to listen, to pay attention, to understand, to internalise, to respond, to obey. It is one of the motif-words of the book of Devarim, where it appears no less than 92 times – more than in any other book of the Torah. Time and again in the last month of his life Moses told the people, Shema: listen, heed, pay attention. Hear what I am saying. Hear what God is saying. Listen to what he wants from us. If you would only listen … Judaism is a religion of listening. This is one of its most original contributions to civilisation.

The twin foundations on which Western culture was built were ancient Greece and ancient Israel. They could not have been more different. Greece was a profoundly visual culture. Its greatest achievements had to do with the eye, with seeing. It produced some of the greatest art, sculpture, and architecture the world has ever seen. Its most characteristic group events – theatrical performances and the Olympic games – were spectacles: performances that were watched. Plato thought of knowledge as a kind of depth vision, seeing beneath the surface to the true form of things.

This idea – that knowing is seeing – remains the dominant metaphor in the West even today. We speak of insight, foresight, and hindsight. We offer an observation. We adopt a perspective. We illustrate. We illuminate. We shed light on an issue. When we understand something, we say, "I see."[2]

Judaism offered a radical alternative. It is faith in a God we cannot see, a God who cannot be represented visually. The very act of making a graven image – a visual symbol – is a form of idolatry. As Moses reminded the people in last week's parsha, when the Israelites had a direct encounter with God at Mount Sinai, "You heard the sound of words, but saw no image; there was only a voice." (Deut. 4:12). God communicates in sounds, not sights. He speaks. He commands. He calls. That is why the supreme religious act is shema. When God speaks, we listen. When He commands, we try to obey.

Rabbi David Cohen (1887–1972), known as the Nazirite, a disciple of Rav Kook and the father of R. Shear-Yashuv Cohen, Chief Rabbi of Haifa, pointed out that in the Babylonian Talmud all the metaphors of understanding are based not on seeing but on hearing. Ta shema, "come and hear." Ka mashma lan, "It teaches us this." Shema mina, "Infer from this." Lo shemiyah lei, "He did not agree." A traditional teaching is called shamaytta, "that which was heard." And so on.[3] All of these are variations on the word shema.[4]

This may seem like a small difference, but it is in fact a huge one. For the Greeks, the ideal form of knowledge involved detachment. There is the one who sees, the subject, and there is that which is seen, the object, and they belong to two different realms. A person who looks at a painting or a sculpture or a play in a theatre or the Olympic games is not an active part of the art or the drama or the athletic competition. They are acting as a spectator, not a participant.

Speaking and listening are not forms of detachment. They are forms of engagement. They create a relationship. The Hebrew word for knowledge, da'at, implies involvement, closeness, intimacy. "And Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and gave birth" (Gen. 4:1). That is knowing in the Hebrew sense, not the Greek. We can enter into a relationship with God, even though He is infinite and we are finite, because we are linked by words. In revelation, God speaks to us. In prayer, we speak to God. If you want to understand any relationship, between husband and wife, or parent and child, or employer and employee, pay close attention to how they speak and listen to one another. Ignore everything else.

The Greeks taught us the forms of knowledge that come from observing and inferring, namely science and philosophy. The first scientists and the first philosophers came from Greece from the sixth to the fourth centuries BCE. But not everything can be understood by seeing and appearances alone. There is a powerful story about this told in the first book of Samuel. Saul, Israel's first king, looked the part. He was tall. "From his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people," (1 Sam. 9:2, 1 Sam. 10:23). He was the image of a king. But morally, temperamentally, he was not a leader at all; he was a follower.

God then told Samuel to anoint another king in his place, and told him it would be one of the children of Jesse. Samuel went to Jesse and was struck by the appearance of one of his sons, Eliab. He thought he must be the one God meant. But God said to him, "Do not be impressed by his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. God does not see as people do. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

Jews and Judaism taught that we cannot see God, but we can hear Him and He hears us. It is through the word – speaking and listening – that we can have an intimate relationship with God as our parent, our partner, our sovereign, the One who loves us and whom we love. We cannot demonstrate God scientifically. We cannot prove God logically. These are Greek, not Jewish, modes of thought. I believe that from a Jewish perspective, trying to prove the existence of God logically or scientifically is a mistaken enterprise.[5] God is not an object but a subject. The Jewish mode is to relate to God in intimacy and love, as well as awe and reverence.

One fascinating modern example came from a Jew who, for much of his life, was estranged from Judaism, namely Sigmund Freud. He called psychoanalysis the "speaking cure", but it is better described as the "listening cure."[6] It is based on the fact that active listening is in itself therapeutic. It was only after the spread of psychoanalysis, especially in America, that the phrase "I hear you" came into the English language as a way of communicating empathy.[7]

There is something profoundly spiritual about listening. It is the most effective form of conflict resolution I know. Many things can create conflict, but what sustains it is the feeling on the part of at least one of the parties that they have not been heard. They have not been listened to. We have not "heard their pain". There has been a failure of empathy. That is why the use of force – or for that matter, boycotts – to resolve conflict is so profoundly self-defeating. It may suppress it for a while, but it will return, often more intense than before. Job, who has suffered unjustly, is unmoved by the arguments of his comforters. It is not that he insists on being right: what he wants is to be heard. Not by accident does justice presuppose the rule of audi alteram partem, "Hear the other side."

Listening lies at the very heart of relationship. It means that we are open to the other, that we respect them, that their perceptions and feelings matter to us. We give them permission to be honest, even if this means making ourselves vulnerable in so doing. A good parent listens to their child. A good employer listens to their workers. A good company listens to its customers or clients. A good leader listens to those they are leading. Listening does not mean agreeing but it does mean caring. Listening is the climate in which love and respect grow.

In Judaism we believe that our relationship with God is an ongoing tutorial in our relationships with other people. How can we expect God to listen to us if we fail to listen to our spouse, our children, or those affected by our work? And how can we expect to encounter God if we have not learned to listen. On Mount Horeb, God taught Elijah that He was not in the whirlwind, the earthquake or the fire, but in the kol demamah dakah, the "still, small voice" (I Kings 19:12) that I define as a voice you can only hear if you are listening. Crowds are moved by great speakers, but lives are changed by great listeners. Whether between us and God or us and other people, listening is the prelude to love.[8]

[1] See Covenant & Conversation on Mishpatim: "Doing and Hearing." [2] See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By, University of Chicago Press, 1980. [3] This appears in the opening pages of his work, Kol Nevuah. [4] To be sure, the Zohar uses a visual term, ta chazi, "Come and see." There is a broad kinship between Jewish mysticism and Platonic or neo-Platonic thought. For both, knowing is a form of depth-seeing. [5] Indeed, many of the great medieval Jewish philosophers did just that. They did so under the influence of neo-Platonic and neo-Aristotelian thought, itself mediated by the great philosophers of Islam. The exception was Judah Halevi in The Kuzari. [6] See Adam Philips, Equals, London, Faber and Faber, 2002, xii. See also Salman Akhtar, Listening to Others: Developmental and Clinical Aspects of Empathy and Attunement. Lanham: Jason Aronson, 2007. [7] Note that there is a difference between empathy and sympathy. Saying "I hear you" is a way of indicating – sincerely or otherwise – that I take note of your feelings, not that I necessarily agree with them or you. [8] For more on the theme of listening, see above, Covenant & Conversation on parshat Bereishit, "The Art of Listening," and on parshat Bamidbar, "The Sound of Silence."

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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 EIKEV Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

The parsha this week ties together the observance of the Torah commandments, especially the warnings against paganism and idolatry, with the earthly blessings of longevity and prosperity. Over the ages this has caused great philosophic debate and discussion, for this cause and effect relationship is not always apparent in the national or personal lives of the Jewish people.

Many commentators hasten to add that these promises refer to biblical times when the Divine Spirit was palpably present amongst the Jewish community and the spirit of prophecy was also prevalent in the Land of Israel. This means that it was applicable to First Temple times only, for in Second Temple times the spirit of prophecy was absent in the Jewish commonwealth. Perhaps this is an insight as to why the rabbis attributed the destruction of the First Temple primarily to idolatry – a fulfillment of the cause-and-effect system of justice as outlined in this week's parsha – while the demise of the Second Temple was attributed to social dispute and baseless hatred, an issue never specifically mentioned in this week's Torah presentation.

It appears that different equations, moral gauges and causes affected the Jewish commonwealth's spiritual status during Second Temple times than were present in First Temple times when prophecy and Divine Spirit were current and abundantly visible. In any event, it is apparent that the direct cause and effect relationship between observance of God's commandments and blessings and prosperity and disobedience causing punishment and disaster has not always been evident in the annals of Jewish history, especially in our long years of exile and persecution. The very fact that the Torah this week makes this cause-and-effect relationship so patently clear, and repeats itself many times, raises the age-old problem of why the righteous suffer and the wicked are rewarded, in this world at least. This basic faith dilemma has its biblical origins in the book of Iyov where the problem is raised but basically left unanswered.

Over the long Jewish exile with its attendant difficulties and pogroms this gnawing problem of faith has always accompanied us in every generation and circumstance. The events of the Holocaust, almost unimaginable in its numbers and horror, has certainly been a test of faith for many Jews, even for those who themselves were spared that actual experience. Yet the faith of Israel is that somehow in the unfathomable system of God's justice, all will be set right.

This is the main message of this week. It informs us that our actions have consequences and that there is a guiding hand to Jewish and world history and events that will eventually reveal itself. So our task remains, as it always was – to fulfill God's commandments and to behave morally and justly. The whole system of God's justice, opaque as it may seem to us to be, is simply to remind us of our potential and greatness, of the importance of our behavior in the grand scheme of things, and to reinforce our sense of destiny as individuals and as a people.

Shabat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <chanan@ravkooktorah.org> date: Aug 3, 2023, 1:43 AM subject: Rav Kook on Eikev: Blessings Over Bread and Torah

Rav Kook Torah Eikev: Blessings Over Bread and Torah

Bread and Torah Two Blessings from the Torah Most blessings are of rabbinical origin. There are, however, two exceptions to this rule — blessings that are derived directly from the Torah itself. The first is Birkat Hamazon, recited after meals; the second is the blessing said before learning Torah.

The obligation to bless God after eating bread is stated explicitly: "When you eat and are satisfied, you must bless the Lord your God..." (Deut. 8:10).

The Sages derived the blessing before studying Torah from the verse, "When I proclaim God's name [or: when I read God's teaching], praise our God for His greatness" (Deut. 32:3).

These two blessings differ not only in the source for our feelings of gratitude — one is for physical nourishment, the other for spiritual sustenance — but also in when they are said.

Why is Birkat Hamazon recited after the meal, while the blessing for Torah study is recited before studying?

Two Benefits of Food We derive two benefits from food. The first is our enjoyment from the act of eating, especially if the food is tasty. This is a fleeting pleasure, but it nonetheless deserves to be acknowledged. The primary benefit from eating, however, is the sustenance it gives our bodies, enabling us to continue living. This primary benefit reflects the nutritional value of the food, regardless of its taste.

Our recognition of the principal benefit of eating should take place after the meal, when the body digests and absorbs the food. Since Birkat Hamazon expresses our gratitude for physical sustenance, its logical place is at the end of the meal.

Parenthetically, there are also blessings that are reciting before eating. These blessings are in recognition of our pleasure in the act of eating itself. We acknowledge this secondary benefit of eating with rabbinically-ordained blessings.

Two Benefits of Torah Study Torah study also provides us with two benefits. The first is the knowledge acquired in practical areas of Halachah, enabling us to live our lives according to the Torah's wisdom.

The second benefit lies in the very act of learning Torah. Torah study in itself is a tremendous gift, even if it does not provide any practical applications. When we learn Torah, the soul is elevated as our minds absorb the sublime word of God.

Which benefit is greater? The Sages taught that the unique sanctity of the Torah itself is higher than all deeds that come from its study: "One who studies Torah for its own sake is raised and uplifted above all actions" (Avot 6:1). The benefit of practical knowledge is important, but is only a secondary gain.

Therefore, we recite the blessing over Torah before studying. If the blessing was meant to acknowledge the practical benefit of how to perform mitzvot, then it would be said afterwards, since this Halachic knowledge is gained as a result of Torah study. But the blessing over Torah refers to the principal gift of Torah study. When we bless God before studying, we acknowledge the spiritual elevation that we enjoy in the very act of contemplating God's Torah.

Now we can understand why the source in the Torah for this blessing reads, "When I proclaim God's name." Why does the verse refer to the Torah as "God's name"? This blessing requires that we recognize the sublime inner essence of the Torah as "God's name." With awareness of this truth, Torah study can enlighten and uplift us "above all actions."

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 307-309; adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 103 on Berachot 20.)

From: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net> reply-to: info@theyeshiva.net date: Aug 3, 2023, 8:45 PM subject: Why Israel Must

Reclaim Its Soul Now - Essay by Rabbi YY

Why Israel Must Reclaim Its Soul Now The Split In Israel: Hatikvah Vs. Bentching On August 24, 1929 (on the **18th day of the Hebrew month of Av**), the Hebron Massacre claimed the lives of 67 Jews. They were axed to death. Since that black day, nine decades later, Jews have not known a day of peace in the Holy Land.

Today, deep rifts have opened in Israeli society. The split between the Right and the Left is growing. But a nation that has existed for four millennia has one advantage: perspective.

Let us attempt to gain perspective, as we embark on a journey through biblical thought, Talmudic wisdom, Zionist doctrine, and the facts on the ground.

Grace After Meals

In Deuteronomy, in this week's Torah portion (Eikev), the Torah instructs us to bless G-d after eating a satiating meal. "You will eat and you will be satisfied and you will bless your G-d for the wonderful land that He gave you[1]."

Thus was invented the ritual of "benching" (Yiddish for blessing), or "grace after meals," recited after every meal of bread, and consisting of a number of sections, or blessings. In the first blessing, we express gratitude for the resources G-d created in the world to nourish His creatures. The second blessing is a thank you for the beautiful land that He gave the Jewish people. In the third, we give thanks and pray for Jerusalem. These three blessings were fashioned to echo the biblical injunction "You will eat and you will be satisfied and you will bless your G-d for the wonderful land that He gave you," linking gratitude for a meal with gratitude for the soil which produced the meal[2].

Yet there is a strange law associated with this ritual. The Talmud states[3] that the second blessing, in which we express our gratefulness for the land, must include a few words about the Covenant G-d made with the first Jew, Abraham. In this Covenant, recorded in Genesis, G-d promised Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan as an inheritance to his descendants (the circumcision of every Jewish male baby represents this Covenant). What is more, in this blessing we must also make mention of the Torah, the divine constitution for the Jewish people, which promises -- scores of times -- the land of Canaan to the Jews.

In other words, the sages are suggesting, it is necessary not only to thank G-d for the beautiful land itself, but we also must articulate the source for our rights for this land: the Abrahamic Covenant and the Torah. Hence, the standard version of the grace after meals: "We offer thanks to You, Lord our G-d, for having given us as a heritage to our ancestors a precious, good and spacious land… for your Covenant which you have sealed in our flesh, and for Your Torah which You have taught us."

Benching Vs. Hatikvah

The Talmud is so emphatic about the inclusion of these two concepts -- the Covenant and the Torah -- that it states[4]: "Whoever did not mention the Covenant and the Torah in the blessing for the land (the second blessing in the grace after meals) did not fulfill his obligation." This person must repeat his grace after meals.

This seems strange. The Torah merely states, "You will eat and you will be satisfied and you will bless your G-d for the wonderful land that He gave you." The Torah just wants us to express appreciation for the land. Period. Why the absolute necessity to mention the Abrahamic Covenant and the Torah? What is wrong with a simple offering of thanks for a beautiful national homeland?

In fact, the Israeli national anthem, adorning countless Jewish functions over the past 75 years, does just that. It speaks of "The 2,000-year-old Jewish hope to be a free people in its land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem." It makes no mention of G-d's Covenant with Abraham or the Torah as the moral grounds for establishing the modern State of Israel.

Similarly, the signers of the Israeli Declaration of Independence, drawn up in May 1948, made no mention of G-d or Torah. After much debate, it was agreed upon to insert the ambiguous phrase "The Rock of Israel (Tzur Yisrael)," to be interpreted as one desired. "Placing our trust in the Rock of Israel, we set our hand and testimony to this Declaration, here on the soil of the Homeland, in the city of Tel Aviv, on this day, the eve of the Sabbath, 5 Iyar 5708, 14 May 1948."

This seems like a rational approach. Why mix religion and statehood? For a democracy to flourish, liberal pluralism must be maintained. Church and state need to be separated. Introducing biblical notions into the Zionist endeavor would only undermine Israel's success as a liberal democracy.

Nachman Syrkin, the preeminent theorist of Zionist socialism, once remarked: "Religion is the major impediment confronting the Jewish nation on the road to culture, science, and freedom."

Torah Vs. the UN

Yet the Talmudic rabbis, 1,800 years ago, apparently understood something about the Jewish psyche and Middle Eastern politics that eluded many of the founders of modern Israel.

The contemporary political conversation has many of us convinced that if Israel would withdraw to its pre-1967 borders, Palestinians will at last make peace with the Jewish state. Hence, the praise in the world and Israeli media for the Gaza evacuation in August 2005: It is a step in the right direction, the beginning of the end of Israeli occupation, and the first mile in the road toward reconciliation and co-existence.

Yet these hopes totally insult Palestinians by making a mockery of their explicitly stated dreams and beliefs. Their words, repeated by their leaders time and time again, leave no room for doubt. "All of Palestine belongs to us," is the Palestinian message. Palestinian leader Abu Mazan said that the Gaza departure was the beginning of a process that would result in all of the Arab refugees returning to their homes of pre-1948.

That is why there was no peace before the 1967 war, a time of no Jewish settlements and no settlers. Gaza belonged to Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem to Jordan, and the Golan Heights to Syria. Why did six Arab countries decide to invade and exterminate Israel? Because, in their belief, the entire Zionist entity is illegal. All of Israel rests on occupied Arab land. According to the Koran, Jews have no right to establish a self-governed homeland on Islamic soil.

This is why following the Gaza evacuation in August 2005, till today, Israel did not enjoy a day of serenity from the new residents of Gaza. Instead of showing the slightest appreciation for Israel ceding all of Gaza, tens of thousands of rockets have been launched with the intent to murder as many Jewish civilians as possible.

Have you heard any Muslim leader suggest that Jews are not, by their very existence on Middle Eastern soil, occupying land that does not belong to them?

Only when Israel ceases to exist will the occupation cease. This is why ceding Gaza and even all of the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem to Palestinians will not bring

about peace. Peace will not come about by Israel giving away territory. Peace will arrive when responsible Arab leaders will reform Palestinian culture so as to not see the Jew as the "devil" and Israel as the "enemy of Allah." Peace will come when the world, instead of pressuring Israel to cede territory, pressures Palestinian educators and parents to teach tolerance, respect, and civil morality. Till that day comes, Israel's giving away of land will only intoxicate Palestinians with the hope that their agenda of freeing all of Palestine from the Zionist enemy is doable.

The UN and the State Department are apparently not daunted by the "minor" detail that half of the eventual "Palestine" is controlled by the terrorist group Hamas, which clearly states its objective to exterminate all of Israel.

Whose Home Is It?

Yet here is what makes this apparently straightforward idea so complicated. If Muslims in Detroit would begin blowing up busses or pizza shops and demanding a Palestinian State in Michigan, no one would question America's right to eliminate the terrorists and not cede even an inch of land to them. When an enemy wishes to destroy you, you must eliminate it. The reason Israel is treated so differently is because many see Israel as a "partner in crime:" Some Palestinians may be terrorists but Israel, too, shares in the guilt. It is an occupying state.

No one doubts that Michigan belongs to the United States. Hence, their right to fight for it and squelch any attempt to seize it. However in the case of Israel, the matter is about the question, does Israel have a right to defend itself while dwelling on stolen property?

Where exactly does Israel draw the line and declare, "From here on we are legal?" And based on which moral grounds can these lines be drawn?

The distinction between post-1967 Israel and pre-1967 Israel is artificial and mythical. The Arabs say that all of Israel is occupied. We must confront the painful truth: If the Jews living in Gaza, West Bank, and Eastern Jerusalem are occupiers, then the Jews living in Tel-Aviv, Yaffa, Haifa, and Rosh Pinah are the same occupiers. Many a city in pre-1967 Israel used to be Arab settlements, now occupied by Israel.

According to Arab doctrine, Jews, especially European Jews, are a foreign implant, outsiders who have colonized and occupied native Arab land since 1948. All the reasonable arguments in the world and all the UN resolutions combined will not change the belief that Jews are thieves, occupying the land of millions of displaced Arabs. Is it fair that because the Europeans were guilt-ridden after the Holocaust and were kind enough to give the Jews a slice of the Middle East, the Arabs have to pay the price and suffer?

The Moral Foundation

Here lies one of the greatest failures of secular Zionism. Its philosophy did not possess the tools to instill within its children the moral foundations for calling Israel a Jewish homeland.

If the Jewish people's connection to the soil between Jordan and the Mediterranean stems merely from Theodore Herzl's Zionist dream to give displaced and exiled Jews a national identity, endorsed by the 1917 Balfour Declaration and the 1947 United Nations' partition plan, their connection to the land remains fragile and ambiguous. When Palestinians scream "You are stealing our land," and the international community thunders, "Stop the occupation," we have lost the argument.

Yet the critical point is missing. For 3300 years, Jews breathed and lived with the conviction that the Creator of the world designated one piece of earth for them. Even in the most hellish moments of Jewish exile, the people of the Book clung to their faith that one day they would return to their Divinely promised land. The only reason Jews returned from Odessa, Vilna, and Warsaw to Israel was because of their passion and belief that the Creator of heaven and earth chose to give His Holy Land to the children of Abraham Isaac, and Jacob, as stated hundreds of times in the Bible. There are three billion people in the world who believe in the Bible, who live with the Bible, and who quote the Bible. Secular Zionists should not have been afraid to bequeath this tradition and faith to their children, for this, and only this, is the moral justification for a Jewish presence in the Holy Land -- in Jerusalem, Hebron, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Gaza all the same.

Paradoxically, it seems the world is waiting for this. Not only the Christian and Islamic world, who view the Bible as the definition of truth. Even the secular world, seems to respect Jews who respect themselves and their faith. The world is waiting for Israel to treat the Land the way Israel should be treated, as G-d's personal gift to the Jewish people.

Blessing or Curse?

That is why the sages said that "Whoever did not mention the Covenant and the Torah in the blessing for the land did not fulfill his obligation." If our sense of gratitude and connection to the land is based on the divine Covenant with Abraham and the Torah, it will remain passionate, morally inspired, and eternal. If not, our loyalty to our homeland hangs on a thread.

The Talmudic sages keenly grasped that if the thankfulness of the Jew for the Land of Israel is not based on the covenant G-d crafted with Abraham some 3,700 years ago, and on the Torah, the 3,300-year-old blueprint for Jewish existence, we might one day feel unappreciative -- rather than grateful – for the homeland flowing with milk and honey. We might feel compelled to rid ourselves of it.

The Sun and the Moon

The Talmud states[5], "Moses is the face of the sun; Joshua is the face of the moon." What is the symbolism behind this poetic statement?

One explanation might be this:

Moses represents Torah; Joshua embodies the Land of Israel. Moses gave us the Torah; Joshua gave us Israel.

The light of the moon is beautiful, soothing, and romantic. Moonlight has inspired many an imagination and a heart. Yet the glow of the moon is merely a reflection of the sun. As long as the moon reflects the sun's glow, it casts upon the earth its own unique poetic luminescence; if the moon is separated from its source of light – as is the case in a lunar eclipse -- it becomes a large chunk of dark and rocky matter.

The relationship between Moses, the face of the Torah, and Joshua, the face of Jewish statehood, is that of the sun and the moon. As long as Israel reflects Torah – its faith, its dreams, and its passions -- it is hard to find something more beautiful and inspiring. When Israel, however, ceases to see itself as a reflection of the Torah, but rather as a secular national homeland for Jews, a member of the United Nations, it loses much of its inner glow and beauty. Its very identity and future are put into question.

Every nation needs a soul. Even Israel. And the soul of the Jewish people for 4,000 years has been the Torah.

We cannot afford to lose our soul now. If we get it, the world will get it.

[1] Deuteronomy 7:10. [2] Thus, the first three blessings are biblically required. In the city of Yabneh, around 100 CE, the sages added a fourth blessing, thanking G-d for His kindness during the times of exile following the Roman destruction of Jerusalem (Talmud Berachos 48b). [3] Talmud ibid. [4] Talmud ibid. 49a. [5] Bava Basra 75b.

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Ending Gracefully: Birkat HaMazon

By **Eliezer Meir Saidel** - 17 Av 5783 – August 4, 2023 0

Eliezer Meir Saidel (emsaidel@gmail.com) is Managing Director of research institute Machon Lechem Hapanim www.machonlechemhapanim.org and owner of the Jewish Baking Center www.jewishbakingcenter.com which researches and bakes traditional Jewish historical and contemporary bread. His sefer "Meir Panim" is the first book dedicated entirely to the subject of the Lechem Hapanim.

Home in Alon Shvut Photo Credit: Asher Schwartz The Arizal (Rabbi Isaac Luria) explains the true essence of food. On the one hand, you have the physical food – the skin, flesh, bones, seeds, crust, etc. These are physical manifestations. Just like our bodies are physical manifestations but are only an outer shell for the neshama, so too are the physical manifestations of the food an outer shell for a spiritual essence that exists in every food we eat. The food exists only because Hashem created it, not only during the six days of Creation but every day. A grape grows on Hashem's command, as does a wheat kernel. Every food embodies both the physical shell and the spiritual essence. When we eat food, it nourishes both parts of us, the physical nourishing the physical and the spiritual nourishing the spiritual. We cannot exist with only one part of the equation. We need both to feed our physical bodies and our spiritual neshama. To bring out the spiritual essence, we recite blessings, asking permission before and thanking Hashem after eating food.

"And you shall eat and be satisfied and you shall bless the L-rd your G-d for the good earth He has given you" (Devarim 8:10).

Birkat HaMazon (Grace After Meals) is the only blessing we are obligated to recite D'Oraita, from the Torah, after eating at least a kezayit of bread. (Some opinions say this also applies to Birkat HaTorah (the blessings recited before and after reading the Torah.)

The text we have for Birkat HaMazon today is a cumulative effort. The Gemara says that Moshe Rabbeinu instituted the first blessing, "HaZan," when we first received the mann. Yehoshua added the second bracha, "HaAretz," when we entered Eretz Yisrael. Upon becoming king and making Jerusalem his capital, David HaMelech added "Al Yisrael Amecha Ve'Al Yerushalaim Irecha." Shlomo HaMelech added, "Al HaBayit Ha'Gadol Veha'Kadosh" after the Beit HaMikdash was built. In Yavneh, they added

"HaTov Veha'Meitiv" in memory of those killed in Beitar. In the centuries that followed, addenda for Shabbat, Festivals, Rosh Chodesh, the series of passages beginning with HaRachaman, prefaces for weddings, brit milah, etc., were also added according to different customs.

The first to fulfill the mitzvah of Birkat HaMazon, according to our Sages, was Avraham Avinu. In Be'er Sheva, Avraham established an inn in order to spread Hashem's message in the world and make converts. When a hungry traveler was offered a free meal, he would willingly accept. After the meal, Avraham asked the guest to thank Hashem for the food. If he refused, he had to pay the full cost of the meal. It is not hard to figure out which option most chose. This prompted them to ask, "Who is this G-d you speak of?" and Avraham would explain: "The Creator of heaven and earth, the One who is responsible for the rain that makes the seed grow into our food." Sarah Imeinu would similarly teach the women. The text of Birkat HaMazon before Moshe Rabbeinu was different, but the essence was the same – thanking G-d for the food you had just eaten.

The Sages and commentators go to great lengths to emphasize the importance and awesome power of Birkat HaMazon.

Birkat HaMazon is one of the few mitzvot directly from the Torah that we have the privilege of fulfilling every day, sometimes more than once a day.

In the entire Birkat HaMazon, there is not one occurrence of the Hebrew letter "peh" at the end of a word. The reason it is absent (Rokeach 337, Tashbetz 315) is that the angels of destruction have names ending with this letter (Af, Shetzef, Ketzef, Anaf, Za'af, Negef, Reshef). According to the Mateh Moshe, the angel of death has no control over a person while he/she is saying Birkat HaMazon.

Someone who fulfills the mitzvah of Birkat HaMazon the correct way merits longevity (R' Haim Palachi, Kol HaChaim) and good health (Maor VaShemesh).

The Sefer Hachinuch adds that someone who observes the mitzvah of Birkat HaMazon the correct way will merit livelihood with honor their entire life (from the verse in Proverbs 10:22).

The Maharsha says that providing a livelihood for a person is as difficult for Hashem as splitting the Red Sea because we all have prosecuting angels in Heaven and they pop up when Hashem wants to heap His abundance on us and they provide myriad reasons why He should not do so. Birkat HaMazon neutralizes these prosecutors.

The correct way of reciting Birkat HaMazon is:

sitting down suitably attired without distractions with awe and reverence reading it from a written text saying it aloud with joy and singing The Chassid Ya'avetz criticizes all those who invest lots of time and effort in preparing and eating/enjoying the food but not in saying Birkat HaMazon with the reverence it deserves.

With promises like that – guaranteed longevity, excellent health, livelihood and wealth – who wouldn't want to bend over backward to fulfill this mitzvah the correct way as often as we possibly can? All it requires is for us to disconnect from everything else for seven minutes a day – no cell phones, no thoughts about anything except reading and singing Birkat HaMazon out loud with joy and in true appreciation for the meal we just ate

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https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/heavenly-protection/2023/08/03/

Heavenly Protection

By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser - 17 Av 5783 – August 3, 2023 0

You will eat and you will be satisfied, and bless Hashem your G-d for the good Land that He gave you." (Devarim 8:10)

This is the source in the Torah of the positive mitzvah to recite the Grace After Meals. Birchas HaMazon contains four blessings, though only three are Torah-mandated. The Talmud (Brachos 48b) expounds that the first blessing thanks Hashem for our sustenance; the second is the blessing of the land of our inheritance; and the third blessing refers to the rebuilding of Yerushalayim.

The fourth blessing is hatov v'hameitiv, thanking Hashem who is good and does good to all, and it was instituted by our sages in Yavneh to commemorate the miracle of the martyrs of Beitar.

The Talmud (Gittin 57a) relates that the people of Beitar joined Bar Kochba in rebelling against Roman rule 60 years after the destruction of the Second Temple. They were killed by the armies of Hadrian, and their bodies were not buried; instead, they were piled to form a wall around Hadrian's large vineyard, which measured 18 mil by 18 mil (approximately 11.5 miles). The sages teach that their blood fertilized the fields for seven years.

The Talmud asks: The people of the city were righteous – why were they punished? Rav Yosef says it was because they did not mourn the destruction of the Temple. In the Talmud Yerushalmi (Taanis 4:5), Rav Yose adds that the people lit lights, indicating unseemly festivities.

Several years later, when the slain of Beitar received a proper burial – one of the six joyous events on the 15th of Av – this blessing was instituted to thank Hashem for the fact that the corpses had not decomposed in all that time and were ultimately buried appropriately.

The question is asked: The death of the people of Beitar was a tragedy, and now they at least merited to be buried. Why do we make a blessing?

The Shvilei Pinchas explains that the essence of the miracle was to demonstrate the incredible hashgacha (Divine Providence). Although the people had to be punished, nevertheless Hashem guarded the corpses and they did not decay despite their years-long exposure to the elements.

What is the connection of this blessing to Birchas HaMazon? The Baal HaTurim says it is a mussar haskel – a lesson in ethical and spiritual conduct. The Torah warns the Jewish People (Devarim 11:15-16), lest they be led astray and forget Hashem when they "eat and are satisfied," i.e., when they are living securely and enjoying all of their physical comforts. Even here, in the recitation of the Grace After Meals – after one is sated and content – one recalls Beitar so as not to forget Hashem.

The Meshech Chachmah comments that this is a blessing to counter despair as we await the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. It evokes hope and faith in the future, that He who is good and bestows good will fulfill His promise and "will forever bestow upon us grace, kindness, and mercy; relief, salvation and success; blessing and deliverance; consolation, livelihood and sustenance; compassion, life, peace, and all goodness."

When Rav Yaakov Shapiro of Bnei Brak became seriously ill, he and his wife resolved that when he recuperated, they would dedicate themselves to the mitzvah of bikur cholim. Although Rav Yaakov did not merit to recover, his wife Rivka remained true to their commitment.

One day, Rivka was shocked to find a letter from a lawyer in her mail. A woman, Nadrina, claimed that Rivka owed her 30,000 shekel in backpay. A court date had been set, but Rivka had no money for lawyers. Moreover, Rivka asserted that no such woman had ever worked for her. Although her children wanted to accompany her to court, she declined their offers, but she finally agreed to allow her friend Bracha to be there with her.

The day before the scheduled court case, Bikur Cholim called to ask if Rivka could stay with a little girl whose family members were not available to stay the night in the Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center.

The hospital was not far from the courthouse, so Rivka spent the entire night in the Medical Center attending to the little girl. When the little girl's grandmother came to take her place, she urged Rivka to allow her son, Yitzchak, to take her back home to Bnei Brak.

"It's not necessary," said Rivka, "I have to go to the court right now and it will only take about ten minutes to get there." Rivka began to explain the odd predicament in which she found herself. At that point, Yitzchak interjected that he would take her to the courthouse and help her straighten out the matter.

They met Bracha in the lobby and as they rode up to the courtroom, Yitzchak took the lead. He said he would go into the courtroom by himself, and only after about seven minutes had elapsed should Bracha come in. "You, Mrs. Shapiro," he said, "should only come in when I come out to get you."

Court started promptly. The judge asked if the plaintiff was present and Nadrina, standing next to her lawyer, raised her hand.
"Where is the defendant, Rivka Shapiro?" asked the judge.
Yitzchak said, "She was delayed a moment, but she is coming in right now."
Bracha entered, on cue, as she had been instructed by Yitzchak.
"Do you recognize her?" the judge asked the plaintiff.
"Of course," said Nadrina. "I worked for her for ten years. How would I not recognize her?"
The judge asked Bracha to produce her identification. "It says here Bracha Levy," said the judge, and he began to laugh.
Yitzchak then went to the back of the courtroom and opened the door for Rivka, who produced her identification.
"It seems to me that you worked for the lady for ten years, but you don't even know how this woman looks," said the judge.
The case was over before it began.

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from: **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky** <rmk@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: drasha@torah.org date: Aug 3, 2023, 11:51 AM subject: Drasha - Killer Torah **Drasha By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**
Parshas Eikev Killer Torah This week's portion is called Ekev. Simply translated, Ekev means,"if". The Torah promises its bounty of blessing upon the Jewish nation. Hashem will watch you, love you, bless your children and your flocks — in addition to five other verses all filled with various blessings. There is one caveat, however. These blessing are only bestowed with one condition — "Ekev tishmaoon," if you shall listen to the word of Hashem and fulfill his commandments. Rashi, who usually concentrates on the simple explanations and clarifies nuances in Hebrew terminology, deviates from his norm. In his only commentary to the opening line of the portion, he translates the word Ekev in an entirely different light. He explains that the word ekev translates as heel. Thus, he explains the verse homiletically. "If you will observe Mitzvos that are ordinarily trampled on by the heel of your foot," then the blessings of Hashem shall follow. Many commentaries pose the following question: Rashi's usual modus operandi is to first explain a verse in its pashut p'shat, simple explanation. That achieved, he then proceeds to expound the verse in a Midrashic light. In this case, Rashi uses only a Midrashic explanation. Why? Rav Eliyahu Lopian raised funds for his Yeshiva in England. He once visited one of England's wealthiest Jews. The man was known to contribute to any Yeshiva or Rabbi who asked. The man himself, however, was not the least bit observant. Other than his adoration of Rabbis and support of Yeshivos, the philanthropist had hardly a connection with anything Jewish. Rabbi Lopian went to visit the man out of respect, but decided not ask him for a contribution. Upon arriving at the opulent mansion, Rav Lopian was greeted warmly, offered hot tea, and was shown to a place in the man's living room. Rabbi Lopian got to the point quickly. "I see that you are not an observant Jew. However, your magnanimity to Yeshivos and Rabbis is remarkable. Tell me, please, why?" The man settled back and began his tale. "My parents were very wealthy and equally religious. I was very rebellious. They wanted me to go to the Chofetz Chaim's Yeshiva in Radin. I was not in the least bit interested, but I agreed to take an examination. I failed with flying colors and was ever the more happy for that. But I had one request. It was getting late and I had to sleep over. I asked if I could sleep in the dormitory for the evening. The Rabbi who had interviewed me did not know how to respond. I think he was afraid to have me in the Yeshiva even for a night and I could not blame him! He consulted with the Chofetz Chaim. "The Chofetz Chaim explained to us both, 'a boy that cannot be in the dorm for a year cannot be there for a night. But that does not mean he cannot stay in my home.' "The Chofetz Chaim took me to his home. He fed me as if I was the most important visitor in the world. He made a bed for me and made sure I went to sleep. A few hours later, in the middle of the night, I heard the door of the tiny room open. The old man was muttering. 'Oy, it's too cold in here. What will I do?' With that he took off his jacket and put it on top of me and tucked it in. It may not have been the most spiritual act he ever did, but I will tell you one thing. That jacket still gives me warmth whenever I see old Rabbis! Perhaps Rashi is not expostulating. He is telling us the secret of spiritual survival. He is relating the formula that may be the secret to the Jew's existence and continuity. It's the small things that merit the blessings. It's the Mitzvos we tend to forget. Those we trample with our heel. There are certain Mitzvos that anyone who prides himself as a Jew would not forgo. Yom Kippur and Passover are high on the list. Mezuzah and Kosher rank quite high, too. But there are too many others that get trampled. Rashi explains the verse by stating that if the little Mitzvos are ignored, it will not take long before the major Mitzvos join the little ones on their trek to oblivion. The Torah promises us the bounty of its blessing if we observe the mitzvos. But Rashi gives us a lesson in assuring continuity. Rashi is telling us the Poshut P'shat (the simple meaning)! Don't tread on the little Mitzvos. Watch the Mitzvos that everyone tends to forget. If those heel commandments will be considered important, then all the Mitzvos will ultimately be observed. That's not allegorical discourse. That's the fact! The above story, related by Rabbi Y. Rottenberg, was printed in Shaarei Armon – on the Yomin Noraim (c) 1993 Tvuna Pub. Israel
Dedicated by B. David & Shani Schreiber Good Shabbos!

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from: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com> date: Aug 3, 2023, 10:19 PM subject: **Rabbi Reisman's Weekly Chumash Shiur Rabbi Yisroel Reisman – Parshas Eikev 5783**
1 – Topic – Yerushalayim
As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Eikev and I speak to you from the center of HKB"H's universe right here in Yerushalayim in Yeshivas Ohr Sameach which this year also has nearly 50 young men from Torah Vodaath 11th and 12th graders who came with their Menahel Rabbi Efraim Glassman to spend a few weeks here in Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh.
Since Parshas Eikev is much about Eretz Yisrael, I would like to share with you a thought that is very appropriate for Eretz Yisrael. I would like to do it by teaching you a little bit of Nach. This Nach is from the beginning of Malachi and it is actually the Haftorah of Parshas Toldos. We have all read the Haftorah of Parshas Toldos which talks about the love Hashem has for Yaakov as opposed to HKB"H's relationship with Eisav. However, if you read the Haftorah, there are some difficulties as I would like to explain. Hashem says to Malachi the Navi, 1:2 (אָהַבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר יְרוָר), G-d says to the Jewish people I love you. (וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמֶּה אֲהַבְתָּנוּ). Klal Yisrael asks, in what way are we able to see the love of HKB"H. HKB"H says contrast Yaakov with Eisav. He says 1:3 (וְאֶת-עֵשָׂו שָׂנֵאתִי). I have a hatred for Eisav. (וָאָשִׂים אֶת-הָרָיו שְׁמָמָה). I made his mountains destroyed and desolate. (וְאֶת-נַחֲלָתוֹ לְתַנּוֹת מִדְבָּר). His land has turned into a place of desert serpents. You see what happened to Eisav.
I don't understand, the same thing happened to Eretz Yisrael. Eretz Yisrael at the time of the Churban also turned into a desolate place. Har Habayis turned into a place that (שועלים הלכו בו). The same descriptions are used there. How do we say to Klal Yisrael that I love you and I have a hatred for Eisav? 1:2 (הֲלוֹא-אָח עֵשָׂו לְיַעֲקֹב נְאֻם-יְרוָר, וָאֹהַב אֶת-יַעֲקֹב). How do you know that? (וְאֶת-עֵשָׂו, שָׂנֵאתִי; וָאָשִׂים אֶת-הָרָיו שְׁמָמָה). His mountains are desolate. The Harei Eretz Yisrael were also made desolate, as we say in the additions to the Tefillah on Tisha B'av. So what is the Nevua here I love you as opposed to Eisav? Eisav has a Churban, what do you mean, Klal Yisrael has a Churban too? What is Pshat in Malachi's Nevua?
The answer is that you have to know who Malachi was and at what time he said this Nevua. Chaggai, Zecharia and Malachi were the final Neviim. They were Neviim at the beginning of Bayis Sheini just when the Bayis was being built. At that time Klal Yisrael was returning to Eretz Yisrael. The Nevua of Malachi is not just (וְאֶת-עֵשָׂו שָׂנֵאתִי; וָאָשִׂים אֶת-הָרָיו שְׁמָמָה, וְאֶת-נַחֲלָתוֹ לְתַנּוֹת מִדְבָּר), it continued. 1:4 (כִּי-תֹאמַר אֱדוֹם), when Edom says (רֻשַּׁשְׁנוּ) we have been destroyed, (וְנָשׁוּב וְנִבְנֶה חֳרָבוֹת) and we will go back and rebuild the ruin. (כֹּה אָמַר יְרוָר צְבָקוֹת, הֵמָּה יִבְנוּ וַאֲנִי אֶהֱרוֹס). HKB"H says to Edom it will not be, you will never rebuild. In that way, we have to look around. Says Malachi, look Klal Yisrael is returning, Klal Yisrael is coming back. The message of (עֵשָׂו, שָׂנֵאתִי) and (אָהַבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם) is not that Klal Yisrael didn't have Churbanos. Klal

Yisrael had terrible Churbanos. The Churban in the Holocaust was unparalleled for any other nation in the world. The fact that there were Churbanos for Eisav proves nothing. The proof is says Malachi because Eisav says (רֻשַּׁשְנוּ) we have been knocked down and we will rebuild again. In history it has not happened that a nation is destroyed, a nation is chased out of its land, a nation is gone and gone for a long period of time and it comes back, it returned. Says Malachi to the people of his generation, 1:5 (וְעֵינֵיכֶם, תִּרְאֶינָה). You will see with your own eyes. (וְאַתֶּם תֹּאמְרוּ), and you will say (יִגְדַּל יְרוָר, מֵעַל לִגְבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל). You will see with your own eyes and say Hashem is great (מֵעַל לִגְבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל), on the boundaries of Eretz Yisrael. This is what Malachi is saying to the people of his time. Hear it, (אֲהַבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר יְרוָר). Now if Malachi could say this after a 70 year Galus, what should we be saying when we see Eretz Yisrael after a Galus of 20 centuries? What should we say, the unlikely event of Klal Yisrael returning. It has never happened. It hasn't happened that a nation has gone and has come back. L'havdil, the Indians are not coming back and rebuilding an Indian civilization here in this country. No such thing is happening in any place in the world. (אֲהַבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר יְרוָר). You walk around Eretz Yisrael and you see what there is to see. It is just absolutely incredible.

I have the Zechus to be here with my grandson. He asked me to go for a walk. I said wait, I have to give a Shiur on the phone. I will take him for a walk. I will take him for a walk to show him what Meah Shearim looks like on a Thursday night. An army of Bnei Torah, an army of Ohavei Hashem and Yir'ai Hashem, incredible. It hasn't existed.

Here in Yerushalayim I have found a print of Kol Kisvei Chofetz Chaim that was put out I believe that it was published in 1990. It has something that I have never seen before. It has a collection of letters from the Chofetz Chaim. The letters are sorted by topic. They have letters about the Chofetz Chaim's desire to come to Eretz Yisrael. They got a letter from two families that the Chofetz Chaim corresponded with. The first part of the story when he wanted to come and his wife became ill two days before they left is known and it is in the biography of the Chofetz Chaim.

There is another letter. In the biography of the Chofetz Chaim it says that the Chofetz Chaim considered going again 3 or 4 years after his wife's illness. It doesn't say why he didn't go. Here, there is a letter from the Chofetz Chaim where he writes that the poverty and hunger in Yerushalayim is so great that it is impossible to go to Yerushalayim even if I can get there. It is a place of terrible poverty. Yerushalayim is place where people don't have what to eat. When you read that as I did sitting here in a Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael, which is one of many, with plenty of food three times a day. There is leftovers, there is plenty of food. The Beracha that Yerushalayim has. A person sitting here has to stop and think (אֲהַבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר יְרוָר). This is what HKB"H is saying. (וְעֵינֵיכֶם, תִּרְאֶינָה), your eyes will see. (וְאַתֶּם תֹּאמְרוּ), and you should say, (יִגְדַּל יְרוָר, מֵעַל לִגְבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל). This is the sense of a person who is here in Eretz Yisrael. This is a way of cheating and getting you to learn six Pesukim of Malachi, and at the same time having a proper appreciation of Artzeinu Hakedosha.

2 – Topic – Yerushalayim

(Ed. Note: Ayin Parshas Re'eh 5781). I often mention that Monday is Yom Yerushalayim for us. We say a Yom that talks about Yerushalayim. Unfortunately most Jews, even Frum Jews read the Yom without any idea of what they are saying. But we know when we say (יְפֵה נוף מְשׂוש כָּל הָאָרֶץ), the beautiful city that gives joy to the whole land and we talk about the description of Yerushalayim in the Yom, we have a feeling, a longing for Yerushalayim.

I would like to add a Nekuda. (יְפֵה נוף) means the beautiful city. The Gemara Darshuns in Rosh Hashana 26a (3 lines from the bottom) says (יְפֵה נוֹף) that (נוֹף) also means Kallah so that it is a bride. (כשהלכתי לתחום קן נשרייא היו קורין לכלה נינפי). In certain places they would call a Kallah Ninfi. (יְפֵה נוֹף) the beautiful Kallah. So the Gemara is saying poetically that Yerushalayim is the Kallah of the Jewish people. What does that mean that Yerushalayim is the Kallah? It is a nice thing to say, but people and people are a pair not people and a city.

We find another Kallah. We find that Shabbos is considered a Kallah to Klal Yisrael. Shabbos Kodesh is considered a Kallah. How is Shabbos a Kallah to Klal Yisrael? So there, we do find in Chazal that Shabbos complained that every day of the week has a pair, has a second day which is its mate so to speak and me Shabbos is the odd man out as I am number seven and I have no match. HKB"H said Klal Yisrael is going to be your Zivug, is going to be your match. What does that mean that the days of the week are a Zivug or a match, a bride or groom to each other?

Let me explain what it really means. I have seen this explanation in the name of the GR"A. The six days of the week are mates. He says what are the pairs of days, it is not Sunday and Monday as a pair, Tuesday and Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. No. He says it goes as follows. Sunday Hashem separated the heaven from the earth. On Monday HKB"H separated the water, the Mayim Tachtonim and the Mayim Elyonim and created the oceans and the seas and the rivers. On the third day HKB"H created the vegetation, the trees, everything that grows.

Now those three days each created a certain potential. There is a heaven, there is an earth. So what if there is a heaven and there is an earth? What does that do? On Wednesday, the fourth day, Hashem created the Zivug for Sunday. So that Sunday Hashem created the heavens which is a certain potential and on Wednesday Hashem created the heavenly body, the sun, the moon, the stars, all of which serve as a purpose for mankind, for human beings. On the second day Hashem created the ocean. There is a lot of potential in the body of ocean. The Zug for day 2 is day 5, on the 5th day Hashem created the fish, all the creatures that live in the water, and the birds which we understand are created from a combination of Aretz and Mayim. Which the Baalei Machshava explain that on the third day Hashem created the habitable land, the vegetation, the trees and the Zug to that is the 6th day. So that, the first goes with the fourth, the second day with the fifth, the third day with the sixth. Human beings and animals were created on the sixth day who benefit from the vegetation and the growth of that which is created on the third day. So each of the first three days is potential and it has a Zivug, it has a match.

Now the words of Chazal make a lot of sense. When Chazal tell us that Shabbos complained I have no Zivug, what does Shabbos need a Shidduch, why does Shabbos need Shidduchim? This is because Shabbos is Malei potential, it is full of potential. So Shabbos said who is going to make use of my potential? So Hashem said your Kallah is the Jewish people. The Jewish people are going to make the most of Shabbos. That is the Zivug. Not every Jew makes use of that potential. Not every husband and wife have the awareness to take the potential they give each other and make it positive. But intelligent people do. And so too, thinking people take the Shabbos Kodesh not as a day of Cholent and sleeping, and reading the newspaper over and over. They take it as a day of Kedusha, a day to go to the Beis Medrash, a day to Daven a Geshmake Davening, a day to spend time with friends and people who need the friendship of a Shabbos Kodesh.

The same thing is true about Yerushalayim. Eretz Yisrael is Malei potential. It has a closeness to heaven. It has a sense of Kedusha. Somebody comes here and wants, the Davening is a different Davening, the learning is a different kind of learning. The walking in the streets, a person who walks the streets of Yerushalayim and takes a moment to look around to see and appreciate where he is walking, it brings him closer to Shamayim, it brings him closer to heaven. Eretz Yisrael is in space what Shabbos is in time. Eretz Yisrael is the place where a person can be connected to Shamayim. It is our challenge. Just like Shabbos is the day to connect to HKB"H, we spend more time in Shul, we spend more time learning, we spend more time doing Mitzvos. So too, visiting or living in Eretz Yisrael is in space what Shabbos is in time. It is the potential. It is the ability to come here and to connect to the Ribbono Shel Olam, to feel the Kedusha, to walk in the streets and look at the Lichtige faces of Yidden in Eretz Yisrael. Millions of Yidden Boruch Hashem in Eretz Yisrael. All types of Yidden in Eretz Yisrael. They are certainly tremendous Mevakshei Hashem in the neighborhoods where I

am Zoche to stay. Tremendous Mevakshei Hashem. You come here, you have to make use of it.
Does everyone use the Shabbos? No! Some people are going to come to the day of judgement and Hashem will say okay you were working all week. What happened to Shabbos? You are not going to know what to say. G-d is going to say all week you spent 7 – 10 hours traveling and working. You were off that amount of time on Shabbos. Why didn't you use those hours for me? The person's mouth will hang open and so sadly he won't know what to say. What did he do with his Shabbos? How can he explain what he did with his Shabbos?
Hashem will put him in a Gehinnom. The Gehinnom will be that he will be in a place that is full of Ruchnios and he will have to sit at the table and read the same Yated over and over and over. Like a fool. His Neshama is going to cry. Rachmana Litz'lon. That is what you want to be? That is what you use Shabbos for?
The same thing is true about Yerushalayim. You come to Eretz Yisrael and that is what you use Yerushalayim for? You are coming to Yerushalayim to go boating, to go jeeping, to go funning and eating? That is what you use Yerushalayim for? Yerushalayim is a place of great Kedusha. Admire Eretz Yisrael. Admire the army of G-d fearing Jews that are here. What a beautiful thing.
When the state was established in '48, people complained to Ben Gurion that he is giving control to the Orthodox over certain things in the country. Ben Gurion famously wrote to them three words. Chakei Od Dor. Wait one more generation. He was sure that one generation later Rachmana Litz'lon that the Chareidim would be gone, they would all be part of the society of this country. Look what happened. Baruch Hashem we have grown, we spread, we flourished, we have Yeshivos. You go out and you see armies of people. Chakei Od Dor. Now the same people are saying Chakei Od Dor, wait one more generation and the Frum are going to be the majority of Eretz Yisrael. They are so scared that in their mind such a thing could happen. Chakei Od Dor. We have to go see it and appreciate it. We have to befriend those here who are not Yir'ai Hashem, who are not fortunate enough that they had the training to be Yir'ai Hashem or the Yeitzer Hora not to be. We have to see the beauty of the land that we are in.
So the Navi calls out to you, the Navi Malachi was 2,400 years ago. He calls out to you and he says to you (וְעֵינֵיכֶם, תִּרְאֶינָה). You will see with your own eyes. (וְאַתֶּם תֹּאמְרוּ יִגְדַּל יְרוָר, מֵעַל לִגְבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל). Look at the Gadlus Hashem and feel (אָהַבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר יְרוָר).
I have to tell you that Eretz Yisrael is more beautiful than ever. Yerushalayim is more beautiful than ever. Taking Seforim and learning here, besides the regular Limudim, learning other Limudim here, everything is just so Geshmak.
And so, prepare for that day. You will come to Eretz Yisrael, someday you will come by Yemos Hamashiach. You don't want them to park you in jeeps. Moshiach will come and will say, go where you went. Why are you going in a jeep, Moshiach is here? Moshe Rabbeinu will be giving Shiur. No, you have to go in a jeep. Go into a Beis Medrash. Join me and have an absolutely wonderful Shabbos Kodesh, just like we prepare for our spouse the Heilige Shabbos, we should prepare for our spouse the Heilige Eretz Yisrael, all of us together B'karov. A Gutten Shabbos!

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from: **Rabbi Kaganof**f <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Aug 1, 2023, 10:32 AM subject: Sheva Berachos

Sheva Berachos

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Is it yours? The wedding ceremony begins with two berachos recited by the mesadar kiddushin. Should he tell the chosson to have in mind to fulfill these berachos?
Question #2: Wine on top or bottom? Which is the first of the sheva berachos?
Question #3: Is this deliberate inconsistency? Some of the sheva berachos begin with the words Boruch Attah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam and others don't. Some of them end with Boruch Attah Hashem and a closing, whereas others don't. Is there any rhyme or reason to this seeming chaos?
Introduction: The time in between the Three Weeks and the Yamim Noraim is a popular time to schedule weddings. We find a source for the recitation of sheva berachos in a discussion in Mesechta Kallah. In parshas Chayei Sarah, the Torah discusses the trip that Eliezer takes to find a wife for Yitzchok. Shortly before Rivkah leaves to marry Yitzchok, the Torah mentions that her family blesses her (Bereishis 24:60). In reference to this posuk, we find the following passage at the beginning of Mesechta Kallah: "Where is a source in the Torah for the blessings [which we call the 'sheva berachos'] given to the bride: And they blessed Rivkah." The Mesechta Kallah retorts, "Did Rivkah's family use a cup [of wine when they blessed her]?" Since they did not, this verse is not a source for sheva berachos, but only an allusion to the mitzvah. In conclusion, the Mesechta Kallah and the Gemara (Kesubos 7b) derive the mitzvah of sheva berachos from other pesukim.
Erusin and nesuin There are two stages to a Jewish wedding, and each has its appropriate berachos. The first stage, kiddushin or erusin (not to be confused with the Modern Hebrew word erusin, which means "engagement"), is when the chosson places the wedding ring on the kallah's finger. The second step, nesuin, focuses on the chupah, the kesubah, the sheva berachos and the yichud that takes place immediately after the chupah. In Talmudic times, these two stages were conducted separately – often as much as a year apart. Today, they are conducted as one long ceremony. Each of the two stages has its own berachos, which I will discuss shortly. Birkos erusin Prior to the chosson explaining to the witnesses why he is placing a ring on the kallah's finger, two berachos are recited, borei peri hagafen and the beracha called birkas erusin. They are said by the mesader kiddushin -- the rosh yeshivah, rav or other talmid chacham -- who is "performing the ceremony," as people say in English, or, more accurately, the one who is responsible to make sure that everything is done according to correct halachic practice. According to the Rambam's opinion, the birkas erusin is a birkas hamitzvah, a beracha recited before fulfilling a mitzvah, and that, therefore, it should be recited by the chosson (Shu"t Harambam, quoted by Shu"t Noda Beyehudah Tinyana, Even Ha'ezer, #1). A second approach is that, although the birkas erusin is a birkas hamitzvah,the mesader kiddushin recites the beracha, rather than the chosson, to avoid embarrassing a chosson who does not know the beracha by heart (Even Ha'ezer, Taz 34:1; Beis Shmuel, 34:2). Remember that, in earlier days, there were no printed works, and berachos were recited from memory. Thus, many chassanim would not know, by heart, the somewhat complicated and uncommon beracha that is recited before the erusin. Therefore, the mesader kiddushin is motzi the chosson with the beracha, and the chosson, also, should have in mind to be included in the birkas erusin (Shu"t Noda Beyehudah ad loc.). A third approach disagrees, concluding that the birkas erusin is not a birkas hamitzvah and that, therefore, there is no need for the mesader kiddushin to be motzi the chosson when reciting this beracha (Shu"t Har Tzvi, Orach Chayim #44, quoting many earlier sources). Who drinks the wine? When the mesader kiddushin recites the beracha on the cup of wine, he gives the cup (usually via the parents) to the chosson and kallah, who sip from the cup. Since we may not drink or eat without first reciting a beracha (Berachos 35a), the chosson and kallah should be included in the beracha hagafen of the mesader kiddushin. Thus, we can examine our opening question: The wedding ceremony begins with two berachos recited by the mesader kiddushin. Should he tell the chosson to have in mind to fulfill these berachos? The answer is that he should tell both the chosson and the kallah to have in mind to fulfill their requirement to recite hagafen. Whether he should also tell the chosson to have in mind to fulfill birkas erusin is disputed.
Text of birkas erusin The Gemara (Kesubos 7b) records a dispute regarding the text of birkas erusin. The first opinion cites the following text: Baruch Attah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam asher kideshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al ha'arayos, ve'asar lanu es ha'arusos, ve'hitir lanu es hanesuos lanu al yedei chupah vekiddushin. The second opinion, that of Rav Acha the son of Rava, contends that we add to the above text a conclusion, baruch Attah Hashem mekadeish amo Yisrael al yedei chupah vekiddushin. The first opinion rules that this beracha does not require a concluding part, just as berachos prior to performing mitzvos and prior to eating are berachos structured simply, without any conclusion. Rav Acha the son of Rava disagrees, contending that birkas erusin should be treated like the beracha of Kiddush, which has a concluding beracha, Baruch Attah Hashem mekadeish hashabbos. Why does Rav Acha the

son of Rava compare birkas erusin to the beracha of Kiddush? This topic is a subject of dispute. Rashi explains that mentioning the sancitity of the Jewish people, mekadeish amo Yisrael al yedei chupah vekiddushin, is similar in concept to mentioning the sanctity of Shabbos, and therefore this beracha has the added mention of Hashem's Name at the end. Tosafos explains that both these berachos, Kiddush and birkas erusin, contain multiple themes and, therefore, require a closing beracha also. Birkas nisuin Birkas nisuin is another way of referring to what we usually call the "sheva berachos." These berachos are recited as part of the wedding ceremony, or, more accurately, as part of the nisuin, second part of that program. The sheva berachos are also recited at banquets held in honor of the newly married couple. Six or seven Although we are accustomed to referring to this series of berachos as "sheva berachos," people are surprised to discover that this term is of relatively late origin. This is because the Gemara cites a dispute as to how many berachos are recited. When we look at the wording of the berachos, we see that two of them, Asher yatzar es ha'adam, and Yotzeir ha'adam, begin with almost identical statements. The Gemara cites a dispute whether we should, indeed, recite both of these berachos, or just the longer one, Asher yatzar es ha'adam. The dispute concerns whether the way man and woman were originally created should require one beracha or two. According to the opinion that this requires only one beracha, there is no beracha Yotzeir ha'adam and, therefore, there are less than seven berachos. Out of order Since we recite both berachos, Asher yatzar es ha'adam, and Yotzeir ha'adam, we have six berachos, plus the beracha on wine, for a total of seven (that is why we call it sheva berachos). Under the chupah, the first of the seven berachos recited is the beracha on the wine. However, when sheva berachos is recited after a meal celebrated in honor of the new couple, the hagafen is recited after the other berachos. Why is the order changed? The Beis Shmuel (62:2) explains that hagafen should really be recited first, as it is during the wedding ceremony, because it is recited more frequently, and the rule is tadir ushe'eino tadir, tadir kodem, that which is recited more frequently comes first (Mishnah Zevachim 89a). However, when reciting hagafen after the celebratory meal, someone might think we recite a beracha over wine only because of the bensching, and not because of the nuptials. In order to clarify that the wine is brought, also, because of the wedding celebration, we postpone its beracha until the end of the sheva berachos. Where's the wine? When sheva berachos are recited at the end of a meal, the prevalent custom is to bring three kosos, and fill two of them to the top with wine. One of the filled kosos is held by the person leading the bensching while the second is left on the table until bensching is completed, and then held by each of the honorees who recite the berachos. When those six berachos have been recited, the person who led the bensching recites the berachaof hagafen, pours a bit from his kos into the empty cup, and drinks the majority of the wine in his kos. The wine from the sheva berachos kos and the small amount of wine that was poured into the third kos are then mixed together, and the wine in the two kosos is presented to the chosson and the kallah to drink (Aruch Hashulchan, Even Ha'ezer 62:18). Some poskim recommend that the honoree leading the bensching hold the kos to be used for the sheva berachos while reciting the prayer dvei hoseir, which is inserted before bensching at a sheva berachos meal, and, then, put that kos down and pick up the first kos for bensching (Taz, Even Ha'ezer 62:7). I have never seen anyone follow this practice (see Derisha, Even Ha'ezer 62:4 who disagrees with the Taz's practice). According to a third opinion, the second kos should not be filled until after bensching is completed (Magen Avraham 147:11 and Be'er Heiteiv, Even Ha'ezer 62:11).

According to all three approaches we have mentioned, bensching is recited over one kos, and sheva berachos over a different cup. Why do we use two different kosos? Why not use the same goblet for both bensching and sheva berachos? The poskim dispute this issue: The Gemara (Pesachim 102b) teaches that if someone bensches and recites Kiddush at the same time, he should not recite both blessings over the same cup. Rather, he should recite Kiddush holding one cup of wine and bensch while holding a different one. The Gemara asks why we take two different cups, and answers that we do not "bundle mitzvos together." Using the same kos for both mitzvos implies that we view these mitzvos as a burden, rather than respecting each mitzvah with its own goblet of wine.

However, when Yom Tov falls on a Sunday, we recite Kiddush of Yom Tov and Havdalah of Shabbos over the same goblet. This is not considered bundling mitzvos together, since Kiddush and Havdalah are considered one topic (Pesachim 102b).

Are birkas nisuin and bensching considered one topic, or two? This is a dispute discussed in Tosafos (Pesachim 102b s.v. she'ein), in which the first opinion views bensching and sheva berachos over the same cup as bundling mitzvos together, and therefore separate kosos need to be used for bensching and sheva berachos. Rabbeinu Meshulam, however, maintains that this is not considered bundling mitzvossince, without bensching, we do not recite sheva berachos. According to Rabbeinu Meshulam, we fill one goblet with wine and hand it to the person leading the bensching. When he finishes bensching, he hands the kos to the honoree who recites the first of the sheva berachos, who hands it to the next honoree to recite the next beracha, and so on. Eventually, the kos returns to the person who led the bensching, who holds the kos while reciting borei peri hagafen.

The Shulchan Aruch (Even Ha'ezer 62:9) quotes both opinions and observes that custom is to use only one cup for both bensching and sheva berachos, following Rabbeinu Meshulam, which apparently was the prevalent practice among Sefardim at the time of the Shulchan Aruch. The Rema notes that the custom among Ashkenazim is to use two different goblets. The Chida (Shu"t Yosef Ometz #47) notes that, although at the time of the Shulchan Aruch, the custom among Sefardim was to recite the sheva berachos on the same goblet as the bensching, in the Chida's day, a separate goblet was used for sheva berachos. Other Sefardic authors of the last several hundred years (see Otzar Haposkim 62:9:53) record two customs, some following Rabbeinu Meshulam (following Shulchan Aruch) and others using separate cups for the two mitzvos (following Chida).

Inconsistent berachos At this point, let us look at our third opening question. "Some of the sheva berachos begin with the words Boruch Attah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam, and others don't. Some of them end with Boruch Attah Hashem and a closing, whereas others don't. Is there a rhyme or reason to this seeming chaos?"

The structures of the six birkas nisuin appear to be inconsistent. The first two, Sheha'kol bara lichvodo, "that everything was created in His Honor," and Yotzeir ha'adam, "the Creator of man," are structured the same way as our berachos before eating food and most of our berachos before performing mitzvos: we recite the words Boruch Attah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam and then the short closing of the beracha (sheha'kol bara lichvodo or yotzeir ha'adam). However, the third and the sixth berachos both begin with the words Boruch Attah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam and also have closings: Boruch Attah Hashem yotzeir ha'adam and Boruch Attah Hashem mesamayach chosson im hakallah, respectively. To make matters more confusing, the fourth and fifth berachos that begin with the words sos tasis and samayach tesamach do not begin with Boruch Attah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam, but conclude with Boruch Attah Hashem, similar to the structure of the berachos of the shemoneh esrei. So we are faced with an obvious question: Why does this series of berachos contain such a potpourri of beracha structures? Among the rishonim, we find several answers to this question. Tosafos (Kesubos 8a s.v. shehakol) explains that, indeed, most of the berachos should have only an ending and no beginning beracha, as we have in the shemoneh esrei. However, since two of the berachos, Sheha'kol bara lichvodo and Yotzeir ha'adam are so small, not providing them with a full beracha would make them almost unnoticeable. Similarly, the beracha Asher yatzar, whose theme is so similar to the beracha before it, Yotzeir ha'adam, would appear to be a continuation of that beracha, if it did not begin with the words Boruch Attah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam. Furthermore, Rabbeinu Chananel explains that, since the recital of the beracha Yotzeir ha'adam, itself, was the subject of a dispute, to emphasize that it is a beracha by itself, it includes the full statement Boruch Attah Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam. Tosafos explains further that the beracha Asher bara, the last of the berachos, is sometimes the only beracha that is recited. For example, when there are no new participants, called panim chadashos, this beracha is recited, notwithstanding that the others of the sheva berachos are not. For this reason, it is treated as a full, independent beracha, with both a full beginning and an ending. Rashi presents a more detailed approach. He notes that although all these berachos are recited together, as if they are one unit, most of them are really different berachos on different aspects of the simcha. For example, Sheha'kol bara lichvodo, "that everything was created in His Honor," is really a beracha on the beauty of having so many people joining together to celebrate a mitzvah, and should have been recited as soon as one saw all the assembled people. However, since the other berachos are recited over wine, the independent beracha of Sheka'kol bara lichvodo is included with the other

berachos, so that everyone should focus on it. This is similar to the berachos of Havdalah -- which include a beracha on the fragrance and a beracha on the candle -- each of which is, really, a separate beracha that we combine together on the cup of wine in order to focus on all the berachos at one time. Wrong order If someone recited the berachos out of order, he should not repeat a beracha, but should recite the skipped beracha and then proceed to recite the remaining berachos that have, as yet, not been said. Similarly, if the honoree began saying the wrong beracha, and already recited Hashem's Name, he should complete the beracha he has begun, the omitted beracha should then be said, followed by the remaining berachos. If someone began reciting either the beracha of Sos tasis or Samayach tesamach, which do not begin with Hashem's Name, out of order, and has not yet recited Hashem's Name which appears at the end of the beracha, he should stop and recite the correct beracha, in the usual order (Amudei Apiryon, page 76).

Conclusion Above, I quoted Rashi's explanation that the beracha, Shehakol bara lich'vodo, is really for the gathering of the people and not directly associated to the wedding that is taking place. The Hafla'ah (Kesubos 8a) offers a different approach, which makes the beracha directly relevant to the nuptials. Hashem created His entire world for His Honor, and the last of his Creation was man. Man is, of course, imperfect until he is married, which is the celebration of the wedding. Thus, sheva berachos celebrates the completion of Hashem's Creation!

Pshuto Shel Mikra in Ekev Inbox

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PSHUTO SHEL MIKRA From the Teachings of **Rav Yehuda Copperman zt"l**

PARSHAT EKEV

Lashon Tzivui vs. Lashon Sippur — Imperative Form vs. Narrative Form

וּלְעָבְדוֹ בְּכָל לְבַבְכֶם

And to serve Him with all of your heart (Devarim 11:13)

The Source for the Mitzvah of Tefillah Anyone who is asked the question, "What is the source for the mitzvah of tefillah in the Torah?" will probably respond by quoting three words from our Parsha (11:13), "וּלְעָבְדוֹ בְּכָל לְבַבְכֶם— and to serve Him with all your heart," adding the comment of the Sifrei (Devarim, siman 41): "This refers to tefillah." To support this teaching we would cite the words of the Gemara in Masechet Taanit (2a), "איזו היא עבודה שבלב? זו תפילה — what is 'avodah of the heart'? This is tefillah." However, when we consult the words of the Rambam in this matter, we will see that while the abovementioned sources may give us the definition of the mitzvah, they do not constitute a Torah commandment to fulfill the mitzvah.

The Rambam (Hilchot Tefillah 1:1) says: It is a positive mitzvah from the Torah to pray every day,[1] as it says (Shemot 23:25), "וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֵת ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם — You shall serve Hashem, your God." Through tradition we have learned that the "avodah" here refers to tefillah, as it says, "וּלְעָבְדוֹ בְּכָל לְבַבְכֶם," and the Chachamim explained (Taanit 2a) that this refers to tefillah.

Rav Yosef Karo, in his peirush Kesef Mishneh, asks a question: Why did the Rambam not write that the source of the mitzvah is from the words " וּלְעָבְדוֹ בְּכָל לְבַבְכֶם," which explicitly refers to the mitzvah of tefillah? In other words, the question is, why did the Rambam mention the pasuk of "וַעֲבַדְתֶּם," which does not refer explicitly to tefillah, and then bring another pasuk that clarifies that the avodah here is in the heart, i.e., tefillah, when he could have simply just brought the pasuk of "וּלְעָבְדוֹ בְּכָל לְבַבְכֶם" itself, which would have told us everything?

The Kesef Mishneh answers:

The reason is because the pasuk of "וּלְעָבְדוֹ" is not a mitzvah — a commandment, but rather sippur devarim — a narration; " וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמֹעַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ … לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם וּלְעָבְדוֹ … וְנָתַתִּי מְטַר אַרְצְכֶם … — If you will listen … to love Hashem your God and to serve Him … and I will provide rain for your land … "

The fundamental principle we are being taught here is that a mitzvah of the Torah can only be derived from a pasuk that is phrased as a commandment. This is something that Rambam has set forth in the eighth of the fourteen shorashim with which he prefaced his Sefer HaMitzvot: It is not possible to introduce a commandment [that is to say, a positive mitzvah] within a pasuk of narrative … and similarly, a prohibition will not appear within a narrative.

The Sefer HaChinuch In a similar vein, the Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah 3) takes great care in explaining to us how to read the pasuk regarding the prohibition of Gid Hanasheh (Bereishit 32:33), " עַל כֵּן לֹא יֹאכְלוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת גִּיד הַנָּשֶׁה … עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה — Therefore, B'nei Yisrael shall not eat the gid hanasheh … until this day." These are his words:

Not to eat from the gid hanasheh, as it says "therefore, B'nei Yisrael shall not eat the gid hanasheh." These words "לֹא יֹאכְלוּ— they shall not eat" were not said as a narrative, as if to say that since this episode happened to the father, the children refrain from eating the gid; rather, they are Hashem's commandment that it not be eaten.

The Sefer HaChinuch asserts, regarding the source of the mitzvah in Torah SheBichtav, that these words are a commandment[2] and not a narration.[3] [4]

Faithful to his approach, the Sefer HaChinuch writes regarding the mitzvah of Milah:

Parshat Lech Lecha contains one mitzvah, namely, the mitzvah of milah, as it says (Bereishit 17:10), " זֹאת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּ בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין זַרְעֲךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ הִמּוֹל לָכֶם כָּל זָכָר — this is My covenant that you shall uphold between Me and you and your descendants after you, every male among you shall be circumcised," and [this mitzvah] was repeated in Parshat Tazria (Vayikra 12:3), " וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ — and on the eighth day the flesh of his orlah shall be circumcised." Many mitzvot are repeated in numerous places in the Torah, each time for a purpose, as our Chachamim, z"l, have explained them.

The Chinuch has taken pains to distance us from the misconception that the source for the mitzvah of milah is from Parshat Tazria ("after Matan Torah"), and not from Parshat Lech Lecha ("before Matan Torah"). This is simply not so! Parshat Tazria is not "after Matan Torah," but rather "after Parshat Yitro." Similarly, Parshat Lech Lecha is not "before Matan Torah," it is simply "before Parshat Yitro." Both of these parshiyot are part of Matan Torah, and both were transmitted, in the words of the Ramban in his introduction to Bereishit, "from Hashem's 'Mouth' to Moshe's ear." It is indeed true that the background to Parshat Lech Lecha is historical in nature, and therefore we could not learn the mitzvah of milah from the (narrative) pasuk (Bereishit 17:23), "וַיָּמָל אֶת בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתָם — and he [Avraham] circumcised the flesh of their orlah." Nevertheless, an expression of Tzivui will obligate, even if the background is one of sippur, in the same way that an expression of sippur within a halachic section of the Torah (for example, "וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת — and they offered burnt-offerings," at the end of Parshat Mishpatim, 24:5) does not result in a mitzvah. We should note that there are numerous pesukim in that section of Parshat Lech Lecha that contain commands regarding milah. The Sefer HaChinuch clearly chose pasuk 10 as his source, since it is the first pasuk in that section that contains a commandment.

Building the Beit Hamikdash Based on this principle, the Kesef Mishneh similarly explains why the Rambam (Hilchot Beit HaBechirah 1:1) derived the mitzvah of building the Beit Hamikdash from the pasuk "וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ — they shall make Me a Mikdash" (Shemot 25:8), which was written within the context of the making the Mishkan in the desert, and not from the pasuk " וְהָיָה הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם בּוֹ לְשַׁכֵּן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם — it shall be the place that Hashem your God shall choose to cause His Name to dwell there" (Devarim 12:11), which refers explicitly to the Beit Hamikdash in Eretz Yisrael. In fact, the Sefer Mitzvot Gadol (mitzvat aseh 163) mentions this second pasuk as the source for this particular mitzvah! However, the Rambam did not quote the pasuk in Devarim, since it is not written in the form of a commandment but rather describes the Beit Hamikdash as the setting for the bringing of korbanot. The Rambam quotes the pasuk in Shemot, which is stated as a commandment.[5]

A similar idea is found in the peirush of the Ritva to Masechet Yoma (24b), explaining how the Gemara states that lighting the Menorah is not considered an Avodah of the Mikdash, and even a non Kohen is qualified to light. This seems difficult in light of what is said clearly in the pasuk (Bamidbar 8:2) " דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ אֶת הַנֵּרֹת — speak to Aharon, and say to him, 'when you kindle the lights'"!

To this the Ritva answers:

It is possible to suggest that it is for this reason the Torah did not express this as a commandment, i.e., "Speak to Aharon and he will kindle the lights," in order to teach us that it is not an Avodah for which a non Kohen would incur liability if he performed it.

We find this idea discussed among the Acharonim as well. Thus, for example, Rav Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk, author of the Meshech Chochmah (Shemot 40:2), writes that the correct source for the halachah that building the Beit Hamikdash must be done by day and not by night (Masechet Shevuot 15b) is the pasuk "בְּיוֹם הֻחַדֵּשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן … תָּקִים אֶת מִשְׁכַּן אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד — on the day of the first month … you shall set up the Mishkan" (Shemot, ibid.) and not the pasuk " וּבְיוֹם

הָקִים אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן — and on the day the Mishkan was set up" (Bamidbar 9:15), as the first pasuk is written in the form of tzivui, while the second pasuk is written in the form of sippur.

From all these examples we can see clearly that the way the Torah chooses to write something determines whether it obligates on a d'oraita level. Pesukim are deemed to be mitzvot only if they are written as commandments.

[1] This is as opposed to the opinion of the Ramban, who does not count the mitzvah of tefillah in the list of the Taryag. [2] [Reflected in the translation of the words "lo yochlu" as "shall not eat."] [3] [In which case, the words "lo yochlu" would translate as "will not eat."] [4] In our humble opinion, it may still be possible to explain the words "lo yochlu" as a narrative on the level of pshat, while the halachah explains it as a commandment, so that there is not necessarily a contradiction between the two peirushim. [5] See, however, Rashi's comments to that pasuk (s.v. v'hayah); "Build for yourselves a Beit Hamikdash in Yerushalayim." Nonetheless, it appears that Rashi's intent is not to emphasize the mitzvah of building, but rather the place where it should be built, i.e., Yerushalayim.

Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klalgovoah.org> Unsubscribe Thu, Aug 3, 7:00 PM (5 hours ago) to me

Parashas Eikev • August 4th • 17 Av 5783

Pirkei Avos: Chapter 4.

Daf Yomi - Friday: Bavli: Gittin 80 • Yerushalmi: Kilayim 20 • Mishnah Yomis: Beitzah 4:2-3. The siyum on Masechta Beitzah is next Thursday, Mazal Tov! The next Masechta is Rosh Hashanah • Oraysa: Rosh Hashanah 25a & 25b

Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rebbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well!

Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh Elul is next Shabbos Parashas Re'eh.

EIKEV: If you follow Hashem's commandments, He will display his love for you and bless you • Do not be afraid of the nations • The nations of Canaan will be uprooted little by little to save you from the peril of wild animals • Do not be enticed by idols; destroy them completely • Remember these forty years • Remember the Mann - and that it is not food but Hashem's word that sustains man • Hashem's chastisements are those of a loving father • Hashem is bringing you to a good land especially blessed with the Shivas Haminim • Bircas Hamazon • Don't forget Hashem when you prosper; recognize that everything is from Hashem • If you follow idols, Hashem will utterly destroy you • The great nations will be destroyed because of their wickedness and not due to your righteousness • Remember how you constantly provoked Hashem these past forty years (for example, at Taveira, Massah, Kivros HaTaavah and Kadeish Barnei'a) • When I witnessed the idol worship of the Eigel, I shattered the Luchos • Only through intense prayer were you spared from Hashem's wrath • The Second Luchos • "Now Israel, what is it that G-d demands of you..." • Everything belongs to Hashem, yet He delights only in you, the offspring of the forefathers • Love and fear Hashem with all your hearts • All of you saw Hashem's miracles with your own eyes • If you will listen to Hashem, the land will flourish; otherwise you will suffer (V'haya Im Shamoa) • If you will carefully heed the words of Hashem, you will triumph!

Haftarah: The haftarah begins with lamenting Hashem's apparent abandonment of His nation, forgetting His chosen people. The pesukim continue to explain that Hashem never forsakes His nation and ultimately happiness and joy will return to Zion. (Yeshaya 49:15-51:3)

Parashas Eikev: 111 Pesukim • 6 Obligations • 2 Prohibitions

1) Do not derive benefit from adornments of avodah zarah. 2) Do not derive benefit from avodah zarah or its accessories and do not bring them into your property. 3) Recite Bircas Hamazon after a 'filling' meal. 4) Love the Ger. 5) Fear G-d. 6) Serve G-d through Tefillah and praise. 7) Attach yourself to Torah scholars and benefit them. 8) When swearing to an oath or promise, do so in Hashem's name.

Mitzvah Highlight: Through davening we inculcate within ourselves a recognition of Hashem's existence and His benevolence in providing for us. This recognition, in and of itself, brings about blessing (Sefer HaChinuch).

כִּי תֹאמַר בִּלְבָבְךָ רַבִּים הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה מִמֶּנִּי אֵיכָה אוּכַל לְהוֹרִישָׁם: לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם זָכֹר תִּזְכֹּר אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לְפַרְעֹה וּלְכָל־מִצְרָיִם

"Perhaps you will say in your heart, 'These nations are more numerous than I; how will I be able to drive them out?' Do not fear them, you shall remember what Hashem did to Pharaoh and Mitzrayim" (Devarim 7:17-18)

The importance of believing in Hashem and not fearing our enemies is a basic tenet of faith. As is recalling the miraculous redemption from Mitzrayim. Why does the Torah command this here specifically in response to those questioning the nation's ability to conquer the land?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains that in essence one would think that having experienced so many great miracles in Mitzrayim, as well as in the desert, the nation's faith in Hashem would be strong. Yet in truth, without internalizing the miracles, man's nature is to be weak in faith, to the extent that even a witness to the miracles will question Hashem's future actions. To this end, the Torah implores a person to work on his faith by remembering Hashem and recalling the great miracles we saw in Mitzrayim. This will internalize his faith in Hashem to the point where no adversary can make him feel threatened. While it may be true that there are no atheists in a foxhole, true believers may not be present either. True emunah and bitachon come from a person training himself to recognize Hashem and His total control overall.

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 slaugher 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 Statment 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 takan 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, Yaacov 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 Yaacov 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 grandfrather 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).

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 "spiraling" 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'eit 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 Rebbi – 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, Yehezqe'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 it's 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 occurences 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)

Contradistinctively, 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 occurences 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 “shiur”, is intended to create an Avraham-assocation 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 Kalev, 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, Kalev 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 Kalev 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 Kalev'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 Ribbono 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 pragrmatic, 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 Rabbenu'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 waterthe 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't 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 translate 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'ei).

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 (see1:2,6,9 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 himtir...' 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 Sedom, "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 others 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

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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'amad Har Sinai, as well as 'tochachot' 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 'tochacha'?

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?