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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) at www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.

Hamas continues to manipulate the media while pretending to negotiate with Israel. Hersh Polin Goldberg, cousin of very close friends of ours and a U.S. citizen, remains a captive. Concerns are increasing that fewer than half of the hostages may still be alive. We continue our prayers for the hostages and all our people stuck in Gaza. May Hashem enable us and our people in Israel to wipe out the evil of Hamas, protect us from violence by Hezbollah and other anti-Semites around the world, and restore peace for our people quickly and successfully.

Late in the final weeks of his life, Moshe addresses B'Nai Yisrael outside Jericho as the people prepare to enter and conquer the land that Hashem had promised to Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov. Thirty-eight years earlier, the generation of the Exodus had rejected the opportunity to enter the land. The new generation, having grown up in the desert, enthusiastically anticipate leaving the Midbar – where Hashem takes care of all their needs – and moving on to normal lives where they will be responsible for planting and raising crops, feeding cattle, building homes, and creating yeshivot to teach their children. Once they cross into Canaan, God will relate to them as a shepherd – nudging them from behind and protecting them through natural (instead of obvious) ways.

Moshe warns the people that Hashem is the source of all their blessings and that they must always remember that all the benefits they will receive in the land come from Hashem. To choose one example, in Eikev, we find the mitzvah of Birchat HaMazon, thanking Hashem for providing food. The food in Israel comes from Hashem, who makes the land fertile and brings rain in season – not automatically by moving the boundaries around a river to irrigate nearby crop land.

God provides the blessings of Israel to B'Nai Yisrael – not because the Jews are exceptional in any way, but because the Canaanite nations are evil, and because He promised the land to our Avot. Should the people forget that the land and its benefits are gifts from Hashem, the land will vomit them from the land into exile.

The Torah uses "eikev" five times – and each time there is a connection to Avraham. (Rabbi Yitz Etshalom's Dvar Torah, attached by email, discusses the connection. Since I have discussed this connection in previous years, I shall not do so again this time.) Avraham appeared in history after a series of generations in which God realized that man is inherently evil. God therefore tried a new model, to find a special person to create a family, then a nation, dedicated to Hashem's values. Over time, this special nation should guide the other nations of the world in the ways of Hashem and thereby inspire other people and other nations to perform mitzvot. Eventually, devoted people will work on tikkun olam – finding ways to make the world a better place.

Rabbi David Fohrman and his scholars at alephbeta.org turn to Micah's three steps to being a good person. These steps are to be just (fair); ahavat chesed (embody kindness); and be humble (walk modestly with Hashem – be tolerant with

others). Micah's three steps describe Avraham's attributes very well, and they are consistent with the lessons from other prophets.

Eikev also reminds us that there are no small mitzvot in the Torah. We cannot tell which of the 613 mitzvot God considers smaller than any others. Rather, we must be careful not to trample on any mitzvah with our heel ("eikev"). Rabbi Mordechai Rhine uses this concept to remind us that small gestures, such as bringing flowers to make Shabbat more beautiful, can open the way to finding more blessings. Rabbi Yehoshua Singer observes that none of us can understand all the aspects of any issue or mitzvah. We should therefore be open to listening and understanding others so we can continue to learn from them. Rabbi Haim Ovadia summarizes this point by stating that there is only one Derekh (path) to living a Torah life. The Derekh of the Torah is the path, not the destination. We should focus on our actions all the time, not just on some ultimate goal. Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander reminds us that we are responsible to bring our traditions and values into the public domain, hopefully to influence others positively to make the world a better place – as Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov did during their times.

The past ten months have seen an explosion of evil, especially since the vicious attack by Hamas on October 7. Since then, our enemies have activated an explosion of anti-Semitism all over the world. Anti-Semitism, especially with respect to Israel, dominates much of the discussion, even taking a huge role in the political sphere in the United States. Our enemies post hate messages on the Internet and on walls and gates of schools and synagogues. Many of our people are afraid to identify as Jewish in schools and on the streets in once safe neighborhoods. We should not be silent against these threats, and we should support those who stand up for proper values in our communities, schools, universities, and countries. Moshe warned us to work to improve the world. His message seems more important now than at any time in the past eighty years.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, lived a life of chesed and mishpat – kindness and justice. He had very close connections to Israel, and his parents and sister lived in Israel for much of their lives. Rabbi Cahan grew up during World War II and experienced anti-Semitism first hand numerous times. He would have been horrified at the explosiion of anti-Semitism in recent times and would have urged us all to increase our mitzvot and be vocal in our opposition to hatred. May we all teach our children and grandchildren the evils of hatred – and may we leave a better world for them as they become adults.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

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 Hersh ben Perel Chana (Hersh Polin, hostage to terrorists in Gaza); Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (badly wounded in battle in Gaza but slowly recovering), Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Chai Frumel bat Leah, Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sarah Feige bat Chaya, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom

Hannah & Alan

Parshat Ekev: Two Arks, One Journey

By Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander * © 5784 (2024)
President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

This week's parsha is dedicated to the memory of Robert M. Beren, z"l, whose generosity and vision left an indelible mark on the global Jewish community and on Ohr Torah Stone in particular. His legacy lives on and will continue to shape our world far into the future.

Dedicated in memory of Israel's murdered and fallen, the refuah shlayma of the wounded, the return of those being held hostage in Gaza, and the safety of our brave IDF soldiers.

When Moshe recounts the revelation at Mt. Sinai in this week's parsha, he mentions crafting an ark for the new, second set of tablets after the shattering of the originals)Devarim 10:1-2(. This raises some questions: Was this a new, second ark? Was it a temporary structure to transport the second luchot from Sinai, or did it serve a more permanent purpose? If it was just a temporary carrying case for the second luchot, why mention it? If permanent, what was its role, given that the Mishkan already had an ark?

Rashi)Devarim 10:1(, building off of Yerushalmi Sotah 8:3, states that there were, in fact, two sacred arks – one mentioned in this week's parsha made out of wood, which housed the first, shattered tablets; and the golden ark for the second set. Each ark and its particular contents served its own role in emblematically offering guidance to the Jewish people. While the golden ark was housed within the inner sanctum of the Mishkan, the kodesh hakodashim, the ark made of wood was reserved for unique occasions. When the Jewish people would go out to battle, they would leave behind the golden ark, but bring along the wooden ark, to demonstrate the presence of the divine even in the midst of the people's most trying moments.

These two arks highlight two components of the Jewish experience. On the one hand, there is the golden ark that remains within the private domain with the second set of luchot, which remained intact. This ark represents the sense of permanence that we yearn for and wish to achieve in our private domain. We have a responsibility to ensure that our Jewish experience, like the second set of luchot, is complete and whole, unwavering, un-surrendering, uncompromisingly golden.

Yet it is also our responsibility to bring the ark of the covenant into the public domain, to engage our tradition with society and to bring our values into the public square – especially in times of conflict or polarization whether in Israel or the Diaspora. This wooden ark, revealed in this week's parsha, with its shattered tablets, reflects the fact that there are challenges and sometimes even setbacks in how we bring the Torah and Jewish values into the public domain, just as there were setbacks at Sinai. Yet, we continue to do all that we can to forge a path forward.

Robert M. Beren, whose first yahrzeit will be observed next week, embodied the dual messages of both arks. Throughout his life he supported institutions that made sure that the "golden ark" of uncompromised learning was at the highest intellectual and spiritual level possible. Yet he also dedicated his time and resources to make sure that Judaism made an impact in the public thoroughfare, mirroring the role of the wooden ark . He wanted to ensure that the ark of God was not just found in the Holy of Holies, but could engage society in the public thoroughfare. May Mr. Beren's memory continue to be blessed by the amazing work of his family and by institutions like ours who are committed to this legacy.

* Ohr Torah Stone is a modern Orthodox group of 32 institutions and programs. Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founding Director, and Rabbi Dr. Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva. For more information or to support Ohr Torah Stone, contact ohrtorahstone@otsyny.org or 212-935-8672. Donations to 49 West 45th Street #701, New York, NY 10036.

Eikev: The Rosh Yeshiva Responds – Laying Tefillin for Chinukh **

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah **

> *"and you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes."* (Devarim 11:18).

QUESTION — CALIFORNIA

For numerous reasons, I daven at home before going into school, but then I put on tefillin at school again for chinukh reasons. I should say a berakhah, right?

ANSWER

If there is *hefseik of siluk hada'at* or you go into a place where you cannot be wearing your tefillin — i.e., the bathroom (although, whether that is really true with today's bathrooms is a different question) — then you say another berakhah. If you were to take them off, go into the car, go straight to school and into the room where people are davening and put them on again, then you would not say another berakhah. I am assuming that that is not the case. So, yes, you make a berakhah again.

* Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, Bronx, NY.

** This question is taken from a WhatsApp group in which Rabbi Linzer responds to halakhic questions from rabbis and community members.

https://library.yctorah.org/2024/08/ryrekev/

Ekev

By Dr. Kenneth Prager *

I am reminded of a Jewish joke when reading parashat Ekev, chapter 9, verses 4-6.

It goes like this: Rabbi Goldberg, who never knew Jake, is officiating at his funeral. "Could someone please say something nice about Jake?" the Rabbi asks. His request is met with silence. He repeats it, and once again, silence. He repeats his request a third time, fairly pleading with those assembled. Finally, a man at the back of the shul shouts out: "His brother was worse."

In pasuk daled Moshe says to Am Yisrael:

> *And when the LORD your God has thrust them from your path, say not to yourselves, "The LORD has enabled us to possess this land because of our virtues;" it is rather because of the wickedness of those nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you.*

The Israelites are not to suppose that they are morally superior to the Canaanites and for this reason they have the merit of possessing the land.

Lest there be any misunderstanding by the Jewish people on this point, Moshe elaborates:

> *It is not because of your virtues and your rectitude that you will be able to possess their country; but it is because of their wickedness that the LORD your God is dispossessing those nations before you, and in order to fulfill the oath that the LORD made to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

Moshe repeats this important, if not disheartening, fact yet a third time:

> *Know, then, that it is not for any virtue of yours that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess; for you are a stiff-necked people.*

Rashi states that both statements were true: Am Yisrael was not righteous and the Canaanites were evil, and despite the lack of moral merit, the Jews would emerge victorious in their conquest of the land, but only because God made an oath to their forefathers. The Ramban states that it was only the Dor Hamidbar, the desert generation, that was unrighteous, in view of their many rebellions against God, not Israel in general. *"… here he reproves that particular generation that has been rebellious against the Eternal from the day they were in the wilderness."*

The Ramban cites Devarim 7:8 as proof of God's love for Bnei Yisrael:

> *but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn to your fathers, has the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Paro king of Miżrayim.*

So on the one hand, God has declared His love for Bnei Yisrael, and on the other hand he reproves them for lacking any righteousness at a critical juncture in their history — as they are about to enter the Promised Land and risk their lives fighting the Canaanites.

Can you imagine, lehavdil, General Dwight Eisenhower speaking to the Allied Troops as they were about to land on the beaches of Normandy saying: *"Just so you know, it's not because of your moral superiority that I have faith that you'll emerge victorious, but it's because of the greater moral perfidy of the Nazis."* Not exactly an uplifting pep talk.

Would it have been so bad if Bnei Yisrael had entered the battles in Canaan thinking that they were ethically superior to the Canaanites and that their inheritance of the land was not only a fulfillment of a Divine promise to their forefathers but morally justified as well? I think the answer may lie in pasuk 6:

> *Know, then, that it is not for any virtue of yours that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess; for you are a stiff-necked people.*

What, exactly does עַם־קְשֵׁה־עֹרֶף mean?

Stiff-necked means stubborn, rebellious, unwilling to admit errors of behavior, as the Ramban explains on Devarim 10:16:

> *Cut away, therefore, the thickening about your hearts and stiffen your necks no more.*

Stiff-necked people do not take orders from superiors, not even at times from God, and certainly not from commanding officers in battle. If the Israelites are to prevail in battle, it is precisely this fatal flaw that must be addressed prior to their entering Canaan and engaging in battle. Moshe is addressing this persistent character flaw of God's chosen people by repeating in three successive sentences that they are not to think of themselves as righteous, because if they enter Canaan as an overconfident, self-righteous, arrogant army, they are doomed to defeat. Only if they obey the orders of their generals and keep the laws of the Torah, will they emerge victorious, and God's promise to their forefathers be realized.

* Chair of the YCT Board or Directors, pulmonologist and Professor of Clinical Medicine at Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, and Director of Medical Ethics and Chairman of the Medical Ethics Committee of Columbia University Medical Center.

https://library.yctorah.org/2024/08/ekev5784/

Yearning: Thoughts for Parashat Eikev

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Some years ago, I attended Shabbat morning services at a synagogue that was having a "Carlebach Shabbat." A group of "Carlebachians" led the services and sang many of the prayers to music composed by the late Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach.

I happened to be sitting next to one of the organizers of this Shabbat event, and I asked him: what does a "Carlebach Shabbat" service provide, that seems to be lacking in the "regular" synagogue service? He pondered for a few moments and then answered in one word: "Yearning."

I have been pondering this response ever since.

Yearning: a desire to come closer to God, a desire to transcend ourselves, a desire to let our souls be moved by the music so that we might reach a higher level of awareness. Yearning: an awareness that we ache to feel God's presence. Yearning: a recognition that something is profoundly lacking in a world of routine, materialism, technological gadgetry.

In last week's Torah portion and this week's Torah portion, we are instructed to love God with all our hearts and souls i.e. to have a sense of yearning for God. Ramban explains that "hearts" refers to our desires/emotions; "souls" refers to our minds/intelligence. We are taught, therefore, that proper service of God entails a full commitment of our emotions and our reason, our hearts and our minds.

If we tilt too far to the side of emotion, we run the risk of falling into a pseudo-religious experience that is akin to superstition and primitive religion. If we tilt too far to the side of intellect, we run the risk of sapping our religious experience of warmth and personal meaning.

Yearning for God requires us to maintain a delicate balance – allowing our emotions to flow, while allowing our intellects to maintain integrity.

This week's Torah portion informs us of a serious obstacle to spiritual health: thinking *that "my strength, and the power of my hands, have achieved this victory."* The human ego can be its own worst enemy. The more people succeed in worldly matters, the more they attribute their success to their own talents; the more highly they think of themselves, the less they may think of God. They lose the sense of spiritual yearning. They become self-satisfied and content. They luxuriate in their material success, not realizing that in the process they undermine their own souls. They set the wrong values for themselves and for their families. Nothing is more antithetical to genuine religious experience than complacency and self-satisfaction.

Yearning: the power to love God with all our hearts and all our souls; the power to overcome our egotism; the power to maintain spiritual focus; the humility to live our lives in constant striving to experience God's presence. It is not easy to attain the highest levels of spiritual growth: this requires a deep and abiding sense of yearning.

We yearn to be able to yearn sincerely, with full heart, soul and mind.

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

The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during and since 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 during its current fund raising period. Thank you.

https://www.jewishideas.org/node/3267

Remembering My Father: Thoughts on Parashat Eikev, August 8, 2009

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

The first word of this week's Parasha is "vehaya" – and it will be. The great 18th century Moroccan Jewish sage, Rabbi Hayyim Benattar, notes in his commentary Or ha-Hayyim that this word implies happiness. He would interpret the first verse of the Parasha to mean: if you will be careful in keeping these ordinances [of the Torah] and you will observe and fulfill them – then you will be happy! God will fulfill His covenant and compassion as He promised to your ancestors. In elaborating on this theme, Rabbi Benattar stresses that our observance and study of Torah should be marked by a spirit of joy.

These comments are especially meaningful to me this week, since our family is observing the anniversary of the passing of our father, Victor B. Angel, who died eighteen years ago on Ab 17. My parents, of blessed memory, epitomized the observance of Judaism in a spirit of full-hearted happiness. We were raised to feel that Judaism was a great gift, offering us an optimistic and joyous way of life. God was viewed as a loving, compassionate Parent, not as an angry Power just waiting to punish us for the slightest mistake.

My father was well-known for his kindliness, friendliness and great sense of humor. He always seemed to have a joke, pun or bon mot to cheer everyone up. He was in his best form on Shabbat. My mother, Rachel Angel, always prepared elaborate Shabbat meals. Our Shabbat table was surrounded by family and friends. Invariably my father would crack a joke. Equally as invariably, my mother would respond: *"Now Shabbat has officially arrived!"* Indeed, Shabbat was such a beautiful day – a genuine day of celebration – I could hardly imagine how anyone would want to live without observing and enjoying Shabbat.

My father was among the first to arrive at synagogue on Shabbat morning. He loved the prayers and didn't want to miss even one minute of the service. He taught us the meaning of Shabbat not through his words, but by his actions. He didn't tell us to come to synagogue – he brought us to synagogue. He didn't tell us to chant the service along with the Hazzan and congregation – he did so himself and set the example for us. He didn't tell us to value Shabbat – he demonstrated how much he valued Shabbat, and this enthusiasm was conveyed to us.

The natural, happy observance of Judaism characterized the lives of my parents, grandparents, and much of our extended family. "Serve the Lord with joy" expressed their philosophy.

For my parents, and the civilization of which they were part (the religious Judeo-Spanish Sephardic world), God was best served with a spirit of happiness, love of God and humanity. It is especially important to reclaim this spirit of Judaism today. We need to do so not only for our own sake, but for the sake of our children and grandchildren – and the generations to come.

***The Angel for Shabbat column is presented as a service of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals (jewishideas.org). Please share this column with your relatives and friends. Permission is granted to reprint this column for distribution in your synagogues.

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

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https://www.jewishideas.org/remembering-my-father-thoughts-parashat-eikev-august-8-2009

Eikev: Planting with Flowers

By Rabbi Mordechai Rhine * © 2014

Little things count. That is the message of the blessings described in this week's Torah portion. The blessing that G-d will *"love you, bless you, multiply you, and save you planting flowersfrom illness,"* is granted to you, *"If you will observe the nuances of the mitzvos."*

Traditional commentaries explain the observance of *"the nuances of the mitzvos"* is in addition to the basic requirements. *"If you will pay attention to detail,"* the Torah is telling us, then G-d will pay attention to the details of our needs.

There is however a different, illuminating perspective which those starting out in observance might find helpful.

Sometimes addressing all aspects of a mitzvah may be overwhelming. Even if one person may be ready for a mitzvah, but their spouse, children, or roommate, might not be ready to appreciate or to accommodate. The Talmud describes the emotion of being overwhelmed by a goal with regard to Torah study. And the Talmud offers simple advice.

The Talmud states:

The fool says, *"Who can learn all of Torah? The laws of damages alone are 30 chapters." But the wise person says, "I will learn two laws today, and two laws tomorrow. One day I will learn it all."*

The Talmud doesn't explain how learning two laws a day will enable a person to learn it all. Mathematically it may not make sense. But experience shows that the strategy does work. If a person chooses "a point of least resistance" and succeeds with it, they have opened themselves up to additional opportunities of optimism and success. All we have to do is start with some little thing.

Consider a person who studied about Shabbos, and really wants to bring its warmth and meaning into their home. It doesn't take much to decide to recite Kiddush and experience a Shabbos meal by oneself. But how does one attempt to share the beauty of Shabbos with family members, if they choose to be unmotivated?

One solution is to pay attention to little things: like flowers.

Although buying flowers for Shabbos is not a requirement according to tradition and Halacha, it is definitely a powerful "little thing" that opens the door to attitude change and future success. Flowers send a message that Shabbos is special. Such "little things" can be most pleasant gestures, and they open the door to countless blessings.

The simple message of the Torah is that if in addition to basic observance you will pay attention to detail, then you will merit great blessings. But perhaps the Torah is also saying, *"Even if you are not observing everything- Pay attention to 'little things'."* Because little things change the direction of life. With time the fruit of your flowers will blossom.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos.

Rabbi Rhine is on vacation, so I am reprinting a Dvar Torah from his archives: https://www.teach613.org/parshas-eikev-planting-with-flowers/

Eikev – Flexible but Firm

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2022

As Moshe continues his final speech to the Jewish nation, he reassures us that Hashem's protection will be with us as we enter Israel. Though we will be facing great and mighty nations in the land of Canaan, we need not fear or worry, for G-d will be leading the battle, removing all our enemies from before us.

Moshe cautions us that this could lead us to inappropriate haughtiness. We might feel that it was our righteousness which led Hashem to fight on our behalf. Especially as these nations were known to be evil and immoral, it stands to reason that G-d is removing them and bringing us into His holy land because of our worthiness. Moshe tells us that while these nations would be destroyed for their wickedness, it was only due to the promise Hashem made to our forefathers that He was bringing us to replace these nations in His holy land.

Moshe concludes his warning by saying he has proof that it could not possibly be our own righteousness that would bring us to G-d's holy land. His proof? We are a stiff-necked nation.)Devarim 9:1-6(

The Sforno)Devarim 9:6(explains that the essence of stubbornness is to follow my own will and my own intention even when others provide clear reasons why my intentions are wrong or even detrimental. Stubbornness means failing to properly consider the ideas and thoughts of others. No human being can ever truly understand all sides of an issue on their own. There will always be elements or consequences that one fails to realize. It is only when I am willing to listen to other people, to really hear them out and consider their ideas and thoughts, that I can reach true clarity on an issue. Therefore, one who is stubborn can never attain true righteousness or purity of heart. He will always fall short in his understanding of himself, of the situations he faces and of what it is that G-d truly wants of him in any given situation.

The Sforno gives us a great insight into how we must approach life, in general. In order to achieve greatness, we must look beyond our own ideas. We must open our ears and our minds to what others have to say and incorporate their thoughts suggestions and ideas into our own lives and our own way of thinking.

I believe, though, that there is another lesson here, as well. The Sforno's reason for considering what others have to say is not because my ideas and thoughts are wrong. It is only because other people have perspectives and knowledge that I don't. I do have valuable ideas and thoughts, as well. In fact, the Sforno's lesson applies to them, as well. My own ideas and perspectives are just as critical for them as theirs are for me. I need to open my mind to hear and consider what others say, but I still need to think and decide for myself. My ideas still have bearing, and the correct approach may incorporate both of our thoughts.

A friend of mine was asked an unusual question last week. A congregant came home on Shabbos to find an earthworm crawling along the burning hot asphalt of his driveway. He assumed the earthworm was burning and possibly even dehydrating from the heat, and wanted to know if it was permissible to violate the Rabbinic laws of muktzeh to move the earthworm to the grass, and if there was any comparison to saving a human life.)The laws of muktzeh prohibit handling insects on Shabbos.(

My friend asked a noted Torah scholar who discussed at length whether the laws of muktzeh would be waived here.)Amongst other considerations, it is hard to tell whether or not an earthworm is actually in a state of distress, as one could tell with many other animals.(He, therefore, felt that it would not be allowed to move the earthworm. However, he didn't stop there. He said that his attitude would be to turn to Hashem and say, *"I wish I could get involved and help this earthworm, but there seem to be Halachic reasons why I should not. Hashem, I'm asking You -- the One Who is Merciful on all of His creations-- to step in and see to it that this earthworm will be OK."* Even when there is more to consider, that doesn't mean we are wrong.

* Savannah Kollel; Congregation B'nai Brith Jacob, Savannah, GA. Until recently, Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Rabbi Singer will become Rosh Kollel next year.

Eikev

by Rabbi Herzl Hefter *****

]Rabbi Hefter did not send in a Dvar Torah for Eikev. Watch this space for his future Devrei Torah[

* 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.

Ekev - Restoring Leadership

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

The Derekh. It is very important to be on it. If, God forbid, someone is off it, his parents will be the talk of town. Not, God forbid, publicly. Behind closed doors, by the)kosher(water cooler, in hushed conversations during the Torah reading in shul: "have you heard? So and so's)son; daughter; the whole mishpuche(is OTD - Off The Derekh." The Derekh is the path. The path of Torah and Mitzvot. There is only one Derekh! To each faction, that is. The Waze of Torah are multiple, but they all lead to the gates of the World to Come, so just make sure your seat is secure. There may have been shortcuts, traffic jams, bending some legal corners, and stopped vehicles]i.e. baffled believers[on roadsides, but if you never lose your faith, or if you have lost and found it, you will be OK. Or so we believe.

The truth is that the Derekh of Torah is not about ping-ponging from the road to your smartphone, looking to spend as little time as possible on the road before hearing that bugle of the Messiah, the harbinger of redemption, declaring: *"you have arrived at your destination."* The Derekh of Torah is not about the destination; it is about the path. It is the road trip we plan with the best travel book in hand, looking for scenic roots and byways, hikes and lakes. We want to enjoy every moment of that road trip, and we definitely should, because YOLO.

In Parashat Ekev)Deut. 18:12(, Moshe tells the Israelites that God does not ask too much of them:

> *Now, Israel, what is it tat God is asking of you?]not much[just revere God, walk in His paths, love Him, and serve God with all your heart and might.*

The Talmudic sages were perplexed by Moshe's statement and asked)Berakhot 33:2(: *"Is this a small feat?"* Their answer is no less perplexing: *"Yes! for Moshe it was a small feat!"* How can Moshe, the greatest leader our nation ever had, speak to the people from his perspective without considering where they are coming from?

The answer is Customer Experience. The feeling that Moshe conveys to the people is that of a satisfied customer, and when you feel like that, it is easy and genuine to tell others to try and enjoy as well. Instead of looking at the Torah as a legal codex which must be obeyed to avoid punishment and merit eternal bliss, one should look at it as a product with divine origin, a system geared to improve the human experience to near perfection. When this is how one perceives the Torah, he reveres God. The reverence is not fear of punishment or loss of future reward, but rather a concern about losing the beneficial experience. Inter-personal relationships, especially between parents and children, can be either based on the fear of punishment, or on the reverence which stems from love. When one side loves the other so deeply, it is afraid of acting disrespectfully or apathetically and thereby losing that wonderful connection.

When that feeling is present, the rest follows naturally. One loves God, walks in his path, and serves Him, but unlike human relationship, it seems that here only one side benefits, since God is immutable. The truth is that while the observant person is the direct benefactor, the circles of positive impact reach much further and influence his family, his

community, nation, and eventually the whole world. And that brings us back to the OTD problem. If the path is so wonderful, if on the scenic by-way of our lives we ware able to experience many great things thanks to the observance of Torah and Mitzvot, how come so many people veer off the Derekh?

In many conversations with parents, educators and rabbis, the most common theme is faith. Numerous courses, retreats, lectures, books, and workshops try to restore or create belief in the tenets of Judaism. They attempt to answer theological questions such as divine justice, life after death, and evolution versus creation. While all these are very important, there is a very important element which is ignored or overlooked by most parties involved. It is not because they think it is does not merit attention, but rather because they believe that most people who are off the Derekh or not on it yet would not care about it before their theological questions are answered. I beg)as is my Minhag(to differ.

Consumer Experience

What is missing, for millions of Jewish users, is a positive experience with that product called Judaism, and specifically with its practical aspect. The greatness of Judaism is that it is not an abstract system of beliefs reserved only for the elite, nor is it a set of rituals meant for isolated groups of hermits, ascetics, and fakirs. Judaism is a path for everyday life. It reminds and helps us to be more sensitive, more aware, better friends, spouses, and parents. It teaches us to give charity, to help someone find a job, to return a lost object, to find our spirituality, and to appreciate the power of repentance. To get the full value, the Torah promises again and again, especially in the book of Deuteronomy, faith alone is not enough. Observance is needed. And it is there where we have a problem. Our customer service needs an upgrade.

I'll explain. It is important for people to observe Mitzvot, and that includes OTD's. They still feel guilt and remorse when they depart from their religious education, and I have heard from many of them that they feel a jolt of familiar joy when once in a while they follow a familiar ritual. What went wrong is that the feeling of importance is not reciprocal and thus

consumer experience is hurt. We all feel that Halakha is important to us, but we also want to feel that we are important to Halakha. We want to know that if we, as consumers, are not satisfied with the product, the seller or his representative will fix the problem, and if they cannot we will be entitled to return the product. In our analogy, the original product, the Torah, obviously cannot be changed, but there is a wide field of authority given to the representatives, and we would like them to use it, and to show us that our needs, concerns, and the things which might push people off the Derekh, are recognized and addressed.

Many of these representatives, our rabbis and poskim, are trying to do the best, but most of them say that they will address concerns only privately and only when they are brought to their attention. Indeed, there is a proliferation of private rulings, just for this person, at this time and place, and under these circumstances. Even halakhic works are prefaced with the warning that the rulings presented in them are not to be followed without consultating with the reader's rabbi. The truth is that for every person who asks the rabbi a question, there hundreds if not thousands who do not ask. They do not ask because they are ashamed or embarrassed, they don't know of any rabbi whose ruling will solve their problem, or they simply give up. My estimate, based on correspondence with my readers and from the many FB pages which deal with halakhic questions, is that at least seventy-five percent of observant Jews have a serious problem with a certain aspect of Halakha. Their solution is either to suffer quietly, slowly drift away from observance, or forego that specific law. That last approach is more common then what people believe, and it puts a heavy burden of guilt on the observant person, who usually hides it form his or her immediate family and friends.

It is incumbent upon the rabbis to deal less with questions of theology and philosophy)though they are no doubt necessary(, to get out of the comfort zone of "personal rulings," and to move beyond publishing theoretical halakhic musings which cannot be relied on in practice. Let the rabbis consider the option of following the commandment of the Torah, presented few verses after the verse mentioned above)ibid. 17-18(:

> *For God… is great, mighty, and revered. He will not give preferential treatment and will not accept bribe. He upholds justice for orphans and widows and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothes.*

God's might is in His ability to hear the plight of the weaker layers of society, those who are usually pushed aside or

stepped on by the system. The warning of Deuteronomy, and the call to follow God's pathways in caring for orphans and widows, was unfortunately ignored already in biblical times, as the prophet Isaiah demands and laments)1:17 and 23(:

> *Learn well, seek justice, rectify corruption, provide justice for the orphan, and defend the widow… your leaders… do not provide justice to the orphan and the plight of the widow does not reach them…*

Let our religious and lay leaders rise to the task, fight for solutions for all Jews, at any level of observance, even if they do not explicitly ask for those solutions. Let them understand that the Jewish world is stratified and that each stratum has its own weaknesses and stress, so that one size does not fit all. Let us all follow the paths of God and become, in the words of Psalms)68:6(:

A father to the orphan and a defender to the widow, God who dwells in His Holy Abode!

Shabbat Shalom.

* Torah VeAhava. Until recently, Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan)Potomac, MD(. Faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school(. **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.

Devrei Torah from Rabbi Ovadia this year come from an unpublished draft of his forthcoming book on Tanach, which Rabbi Ovadia has generously shared with our readers. Rabbi Ovadia reserves all copyright protections for this material.

Eikev: Find Value in Something Unpopular

By Rabbi Moshe Rube *

Have you heard of Onkelos?

He lived around 2000 years ago in the Roman Empire and converted to Judaism. He wrote the Aramaic translation of the Bible that we see at the side of our Stone Chumash Hebrew Text.

How did he come to convert? He writes that he got the idea from his uncle, who served as his business mentor.

His uncle told him to find a product that did not have much popularity and was looked down on. Such a product would be cheap at first. Eventually, the price would go up)as people's tastes tend to be fickle(, and Onkelos would have the market cornered.

Onkelos listened and realised that the most undervalued commodity on the market was Judaism and the Jewish community. They had a quality and power in their midst that, although at that time the world did not see them as valuable)to say the least(, would in time be treasured and seen for their inherent value.

As our portion of Eikev states, we need to listen to "Eikev" which in Hebrew means "heels." Our Sages explain that the most valuable things in our world can be found in what human beings do not value yet and tend to crush under their heels.

You never know what treasures you will find that others don't see.

Shabbat Shalom.

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

Rav Kook Torah
Ekev: Animals Served First!

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

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

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

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

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

- Given our central place in the universe, we have a responsibility to look after all creatures.

- Our food)and in the case of the farmer, also his livelihood(is supplied by cows, chickens, and so on. We should feed these animals first as an expression of the fundamental gratitude we should feel toward these creatures which provide us with our basic needs.

- If we lack food for a short time, we may comfort ourselves with spiritual or intellectual pursuits. This is an integral aspect of the human soul, which is not sustained "by bread alone." Animals, however, have no such alternate outlets when they are pained by hunger. Therefore, it is logical to deal with the animal's hunger first.

- In purely physical aspects, animals are superior to humans. Is there a human being who is stronger than a bear, faster than a horse, more agile than a cat? Our superiority over animals lies exclusively in the spiritual realms: in our intelligence and our higher aspirations. Therefore, when it comes to physical sustenance, animals take precedence to humans, and by right are served first.

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

https://www.ravkooktorah.org/EKEV60.htm

Eikev: Geography and Destiny)5467(

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

The Torah is a work of wondrous depth and subtlety, so much so that we can easily miss some of its most profound intimations. There is a fine example in this week's sedra. It concerns the character of the land of Israel. Ultimately, however, it is a haunting glimpse into the nature of Jewish destiny itself, then and now.

If we were to ask ourselves what picture we have of the promised land, from the beginning of the exodus until now, the answer is simple. Israel is the land *"flowing with milk and honey."*)Incidentally, the mid-20th century scholar R. Reuven Margoliot, once pointed out that when the land of Israel is praised in the Torah, it is always in terms of its vegetation, never in terms of its animal products. Why then is there an apparent exception in the case of the most famous phrase of all, the land *"flowing with milk and honey"*? The honey referred to, he notes, is not from bees but from the date palm. On

that, many commentators concur. Margoliot's radical suggestion relates to "milk." We know from many texts that Israel was famed for its grapes and wine. But the biblical yayyin, "wine," standardly refers to red wine. Chalav – the word we translate as "milk" – says Margoliot, means white wine, and is called chalav because of its milky appearance(.

Even the spies, despite their gloomy report, cannot deny its fruitfulness: *"We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit.*" Early in this week's sedra Moses delivers a magnificent poem to this effect: *"For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land -- a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey, a land where bread will not be scarce, and you will lack nothing."* Thus far the promised land conjured up in our imagination is indeed a land of promise, another Eden, an earthly paradise. However, as the lawyers say: always read the small print.

It comes several chapters later and is fateful in its implications. For the first time in forty years, Moses uses a quite different tone when speaking about the land of Israel:

> *The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.*

The point is made briefly, almost in passing, yet it makes all the difference. It is indeed a fine land, but . . . It is not like other fine lands. Civilisation began when human beings first turned from hunting and gathering to agriculture and the domestication of animals. This led to the first concentrations of population, the birth of cities, then city states, then nations and empires. The Torah sketches this process in broad outlines. It began in Mesopotamia, in the fertile plain between the Tigris and Euphrates, and then in Egypt, in the Nile delta. These were ideal places for the development of agriculture because water was supplied by rivers, and irrigation was a simple matter of making ditches and channels. Water, on which crops depended, was reliable)the one danger in the low-lying lands of Mesopotamia was of floods – hence the presence of flood narratives, not only in the Torah but in all literatures of that place and time(.

The land of Israel, says Moses, is not like that. It is not a fertile plain. It is a land of hills and valleys. It depends on rain – and rain in the Middle East, then and now, is unpredictable. Suddenly, in this discordant note, we recall a whole series of earlier episodes in the book of Bereishit in which we read the words, *"and there was a famine in the land."* This led, first Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob and his children, into a series of journeys and exiles)the Book of Ruth begins with another famine, which forces Elimelech and his family to the land of Moab(. Life in Israel will never be as stable, permanent and secure as it is elsewhere. Those who live there are vulnerable, if to nothing else, then to periodic drought. They will exist in a permanent state of insecurity, never knowing in advance whether the seeds they plant will grow or not. Israel is the land of promise, but it will always depend on He-who-promises.

Is geography destiny? Judah Halevi thought so. He writes, in The Kuzari:

> *We do not find in the Bible, "If you keep this law, I will bring you after death into beautiful gardens and great pleasures." On the contrary, it is said, "You shall be my chosen people, and I will be a God unto you, who will guide you . . . You shall remain in the country which forms a stepping-stone to this degree, i.e. the Holy Land. Its fertility or barrenness, its happiness or misfortune, depend upon the divine influence which your conduct will merit, whilst the rest of the world will continue its natural course. For if the Divine Presence is among you, you will perceive by the fertility of your country, by the regularity with which your rainfalls appear in their due seasons, by your victories over your enemies in spite of your inferior numbers, that your affairs are not managed by simple laws of nature, but by the divine will. You will also see that drought, death, and wild beasts pursue you as a result of disobedience, although the whole world lives in peace. This shows you that your concerns are arranged by a higher power than mere nature."*

Unpacking this in non-mystical terms, we can say that the character of a country – its topography and climate – affects the kind of society people build, and hence the culture and ethos that emerge. In Mesopotamia and Egypt, the most powerful reality was the regularity of nature, the succession of the seasons which seemed to mirror the slow revolution of the stars. The cultures to which both places gave rise was cosmological and their sense of time cyclical. The universe seemed to be ruled by the heavenly bodies whose hierarchy and order was replicated in the hierarchy and order of life on earth. This is the mindset of the world of myth.

Israel, by contrast, was a land without regularities. There was no guarantee that next year would be like this, or this year like last; no certainty that the rain would fall and the earth yield its crops or the trees their fruit. Thus in Israel a new sense of time was born – the time we call historical. Those who lived, or live, in Israel exist in a state of radical contingency. They can never take the future for granted. They depend on something other than nature)even Ben-Gurion knew this. He once said: *"In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles"(.* To put it at its simplest: in Egypt, where the source of life was the Nile, you looked down. In Israel, where the source of life is rain, you had no choice but to look up.

This is a theme we have met before. In the course of the first war the Israelites had to fight for themselves, against Amalek, we read:

> *As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites prevailed, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites prevailed.*

On this, the Mishnah comments:

> *Did the hands of Moses make or break war? Rather, the text implies that whenever the Israelites looked up and dedicated their hearts to their father in heaven, they prevailed, but otherwise they fell.*

Israel – the land *"that drinks rain from heaven"* – is a place whose inhabitants would be ever mindful of their dependence on the fact that *"the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end."* It is the place where you have to look up to survive.

And so it was. Israel's existence as a nation in its land was never secure. Its greatest moment, under King Solomon, did not last. Immediately after his death, the people split into two kingdoms, neither of which could, or did, sustain their independence for long.

Israel is by its very nature a vulnerable place, a strategic location at the meeting point of three continents, always at the mercy of surrounding empires but never the basis of an empire itself. Thus were the terms of the covenant – and the prophetic interpretation of history – set from the outset. Israel would have to depend on exceptional strength on the part of its inhabitants. It was never big enough to sustain a large population. The Prophets knew that the very existence of Israel as a sovereign nation was predicated on a people lifted to greatness by a sense of mission and high ideals.

Every individual would count. Therefore every individual had to feel part of the whole, respected and given the means of a dignified life. Injustice, gross inequality, or a failure of concern for the weak and marginal, would endanger society at its very roots. There was no margin for error or discontent. Without indomitable courage based on the knowledge that God was with them, they would fall prey to larger powers. When the Prophet Zechariah said, *"Not by strength nor by might but by My spirit, says the Lord,"* he was formulating an axiom of Jewish history. There neither was nor would be a time when Israel could rely on numbers, or vast tracts of territory, or easily defensible borders. So it was then. So it is now.

We do not live in an age of Prophets. Yet Israel exists today in the same circumstances as those which gave birth to the Prophets. As I write these words, the state is 59 years old. But it is also more than three thousand years old. The terms of its existence have not changed. Israel always longed for security but rarely found it. Neither its climate nor its geography

were made for an easy life. That is the nature of Jewish faith – not security but the courage to live with insecurity, knowing that life is a battle, but that if we do justice and practice compassion, if we honour great and small, the powerful and the powerless alike, if our eyes do not look down to the earth and its seductions but to heaven and its challenges, this small, vulnerable people is capable of great, even astonishing, achievements.

When Moses told the Israelites the full story about the land, he was telling them – whether or not they understood it at the time – that it was a place where, not just wheat and barley, but the human spirit also, grew. It was the land where people were lifted beyond themselves because, time and again, they would have to believe in something and someone beyond themselves. Not accidentally but essentially, by its climate, topography and location, Israel is the holy land, the place where, merely to survive, the human eye must turn to heaven and the human ear to heaven's call.

* 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. Footnotes are not available for this Dvar Torah.

https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/eikev/geography-and-destiny/

The Little Moses in You

By Yossy Goldman * © Chabad 2024

How will we be judged when we get to the Heavenly Court? Will the criteria be objective or subjective? Is there one rule of thumb for everyone, or will we be judged by our own personal strengths and struggles?

Life is very confusing. Even following the Torah is not always a simple matter.

"Thou shalt not steal," it is written. Of course not. But never? What about a parent who needs life-saving medicine for his or her child and the only way to get it is by robbing the pharmacy? Is it still forbidden?

Or what about the commandment to distance ourselves from falsehood? May we never tell a lie? What if a Nazi asks if you're Jewish and lying may save your life?

Even when it comes to smaller things, our Sages teach that to keep the peace, certain small white lies may sometimes be permissible.

Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky,1 who founded the Zionist Revisionist movement and was Menachem Begin's ideological mentor, was attending a cocktail party. As the story goes, he complimented one of the women on her appearance. The woman was rather frank and responded to Jabotinsky, who was not a particularly handsome fellow, *"I wish I could say the same for you, Mr. Jabotinsky."*

"Why not?" asked Jabotinsky. *"Do what I do. Tell a lie."*

Whether it's about being honest, or painfully honest, life is not always simple. And doing the right thing is not always as straightforward as we may think.

Let's examine an interesting dialogue in this week's Torah portion, in which Moses continues addressing his people prior to his demise. He tells them that G d's expectations of them are not beyond their capabilities.

> *"And now, Israel, what does the L rd your G d request of you? Only to fear Him, and to follow His ways..."* 2

The Talmud famously asks 3 *"Is fearing G d a small thing?"* People have been striving to achieve that level of piety for

millennia and, when they do, it is no small feat. What does Moses mean when he says*, "What does G d ask of you)already(?"* How can he minimize the matter of being a G d-fearing Jew?

And the Talmud answers, *"Yes. For Moses, to be G d-fearing is a small matter."* For a man of his spiritual stature, to be G d-fearing is a very modest accomplishment. He had achieved so much more in his relationship with G d.

Now, let me ask you. Are you satisfied with the Talmud's answer? What kind of answer is it? Was Moses talking to himself? Did he not appreciate that he was talking to his people, ordinary mortals of far lesser spiritual stature? For such people, being G d-fearing is not a simple matter at all. It is extremely challenging. Did the great prophet not know his audience?

I think we can find some insight here by consulting the Tanya4, where Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the Alter Rebbe, asks this very question.

And this is his profound answer: In every Jewish soul there exists a spark of Moses. And in every generation, there is a Moses who imparts that inspiration to the people of his time. And when we consider that spark of Moses inside us, when we look at the essence of G dliness in the deep recesses of our core, then we will realize that to be G d-fearing is *but "a small thing."* And it is to that little piece of Moses inside every Jew that Moses was directing his remarks. If we only scrape the surface of our inner self, we will discover layers and layers of spirituality and connectedness within us. And it's there for the taking.

So, yes, life can often be confusing; and doing the right thing may not always seem simple. But we can do it, because we have boundless potential. The sky is not the limit. By virtue of that little spark of Moses within us, we can reach the infinite. Never mind being G d-fearing. We can be so bound up with G d that there are, literally, no limits, no constraints, and no ceilings whatsoever.

At the end of the day, we will all be judged fairly and fittingly, according to our own strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures. We will all be evaluated by our own personal talents, faculties, gifts, and potential — developed or dormant.

But one thing is for sure. We have a lot more potential than we can even imagine. We can be G d-fearing individuals and so much more. We can come to love and appreciate the truths of Judaism and its traditions. We can enjoy a meaningful spiritual relationship with G d. We can achieve the world, and beyond.

Because inside us all is a little Moses. And for Moses it is but a small thing.

FOOTNOTES:

1. 1880 – 1940.

2. Deuteronomy 10:12.

3. Berachot 33b

4. Chapter 42.

* Rabbi Emeritus of the Sydenham Shul in Johannesburg, South Africa and president of the South African Rabbinical Association.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5600618/jewish/The-Little-Moses-in-You.htm

Eikev: The Consuming Fire

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

The Consuming Fire

This Shabbat marks the 80th yahrzeit of the Rebbe's father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, of blessed memory.

> *You must know today that it is G-d, your G-d, who passes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you. You will drive them out or destroy them quickly, as G-d spoke to you.*)Deut. 9:3(

The imagery of G-d as consuming fire in this verse can be understood as follows: Fire ascends; flames look as if they are trying to break loose of whatever they are burning. It is only the burning matter that keeps the flames anchored, whereas once it has been consumed, the flame dies out.

Similarly, since G-d is non-corporeal, it is not “natural” for Him to be revealed in our physical world. What enables G-d to be miraculously revealed in our world is the performance of the commandments, all of which involve some form of physical matter. The commandments act as the agent of combustion. By consuming the materiality of physical matter, revealing its Divine element, the Divine flame can burn – and continue to burn.

Furthermore, just as a thick tree produces a bigger fire than a small wick, the more commandments we perform, the more we refine and elevate the materiality of the physical world. This enables a bigger, brighter, and warmer flame of Divinity to blaze in our lives, manifest as enthusiastic love and awe of G-d and passionate devotion to our Divine mission.

— from *Daily Wisdom 3* *

May G-d grant resounding victory and peace in the Holy Land.

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

* A Chasidic insight by the Rebbe on parshat Ma'sei, selected from our *Daily Wisdom,* by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky.

Chapters of psalms to recite for Israel to prevail over Hamas and for the release of remaining hostages. Recite these psalms daily – to download:

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Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah via the Internet

Sponsored 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 95th anniversary of their miraculous deliverance, b'Chasdei Hashem, during the Hebron massacre on Shabbat Parashat Eikev, 18 Menachem Av 5689 (August 24, 1929). An abridged version of the letter is attached. The full text of the letter of Aharon Reuven Bernzweig describing their experiences and deliverance may be read at: www.hebron1929.info.

Volume 30, Issue 45 **Shabbat Parashat Ekev** **5784 B"H**

Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Spirituality of Listening

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,

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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."

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

How Secure Are We in Israel?

"And it shall come to pass because you hearken to these laws, safeguarding and keeping 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…in the land which He swore unto your fathers to give you." (Deuteronomy 7:12–13)

How secure can world Jewry – and the citizens of Israel – feel about the future of the Jewish State? Have we returned to Israel for good, or is this "third commonwealth" only a possible opportunity, its long-term stability dependent on the moral, ethical, and spiritual commitment of its residents?

In this week's portion of Ekev we find two passages which seem to contradict each other concerning this issue. The first passage, which opens this week's portion, we've quoted above. The words speak for themselves; our entire relationship to the land depends on our keeping the biblical laws. In fact, the opening word of the portion, "ekev," is a conditional term (the desired goal will result "because of," "ekev"), underscoring the theme of qualification. No "affirmative action" gestures here! If the Israelites break the law, they will pay the price of not inheriting the land. If they keep the law, then God will bless them in the land which He promised our fathers. The keeping of the commandments may be compared to mortgage payments; default on the mortgage and the property gets taken away.

However, the Bible goes on to teach: "Not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart did you go to possess their land; but it was because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drove them out before you" (Deut. 9:5).

Here the Almighty is presenting a different slant on our right to the land; it has less to do with our worthiness, and more to do with our neighbors 'lack of worthiness. We are being judged in comparison to the nations around us rather than in the absolute terms of our own conduct.

To reconcile these passages, the Or HaChayyim HaKadosh distinguishes between two stages in the redemptive process: entering the Land of Israel is the first, and remaining there for good is the second. Our initial entry into the land comes about as a result of the evil of the other nations rather than our own righteousness, as well as God's promise to the Patriarchs. But whether or not we remain on the land, whether a particular "return" will become the anticipated redemption or a mere passing episode, depends solely upon our ethical, moral, and spiritual conduct, as indicated by the initial verse of our Torah reading.

There is also an alternate (and more comforting) way to orchestrate these verses, as Rabbi Chayyim Ibn Attar continues to explain. Initially, when the Almighty makes His covenantal guarantee that the descendants of Abraham will inherit the promised land, He stipulates that as soon as the Canaanites demonstrate totally unacceptable moral behavior, "in the fourth generation, they [the Israelites] will return here" (Gen. 15:16). Then the biblical text continues to outline the ultimate boundaries of Israel (the ten nations): "In that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham saying, 'Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates'" (15:18).

Hence the holy Or HaChayyim suggests that whether or not we prove ourselves worthy, God promises that he will take us out of Egypt and out of every enslavement and bring us to Israel as our homeland. That is unconditional, if only because without a homeland we will not be able to maintain God's promise of our eternity. But how much of the Promised Land comes into our possession – whether or not we get to inherit the full boundaries from the Nile

to the Euphrates – depends upon our actions and morality. And what is clear from the second interpretation of the Or HaChayyim, but not necessarily from the first, is that our ability – or worthiness – to remain on Israeli soil is not an "all-or-nothing" situation; if we are partially good, we have a good chance of remaining on a goodly portion of Israel.

This second interpretation is much more optimistic and heartening for us today; but it also teaches us that if we are forced to give up parts of the land, we may be receiving an important message from Above that our ethical behavior is not what it ought to be – especially in terms of how we behave amongst ourselves. It is because of His compassionate righteousness that the Almighty initially chose Abraham (Gen. 18:19) and because of Israel's lack thereof that our Holy Temple was destroyed (Is. 1).

Let me add the following, taught by my revered teacher and mentor, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, which will distinguish between the two losses of Temple and the two returns. Twice the Torah outlines the exile and disasters that await the Jewish people if we stray from the path, first in Leviticus and then again in Deuteronomy. But at least in Leviticus, God closes His awesome words with a promise:

And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them, because I am the Lord their God. I will remember for them the covenant of their forbears whom I took out of the land of Egypt before the eyes of the nations, to be for them a God. (Lev. 26:44–45)

However, the second description of exile and disasters concludes rather matter-of-factly, in the midst of the tragic occurrences, devoid of hope or optimism: "These are the words of the covenant which God commanded Moses" (Deut. 28:69), with no reference to returning the Israelites to the land. Why the difference between the two "warnings"?

According to Nahmanides (Lev. 26:16), each disaster description refers to and prophesies the destruction of one of the Temples. Following the destruction of the First Temple, God promised a return, and a fairly swift one at that – after only seventy years of Babylonian-Persian servitude (586 BCE–515 BCE). Following the destruction of the Second Temple, the exile will be much longer and more severe. However, adds Nahmanides, the second group of warnings does not really conclude until one complete chapter later: "And it shall come to pass, after all these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse [as outlined in chapter 28], that you shall return to the Lord your God and hearken to His voice" (Deut. 30:1–2).

In other words, after the first destruction, God guaranteed that He would effectuate deliverance no matter what. After the second destruction there would also be a deliverance, but it would be dependent upon our doing teshuva, upon our repentance, upon our religio-ethical actions! There is still one important silver lining in the cloud. At least according to Maimonides, this act of repentance is not a commandment but is rather a guarantee. God promises that we will repent and then we will be redeemed. Obviously, the sooner we repent the sooner will come the redemption, but the Almighty guarantees that redemption will arrive!

How illustrative of all this is the Hebrew calendar! Following Tisha B'Av, the memorial of the destruction of the Temple, come seven Sabbaths in which we read prophetic portions (haftarot) of consolation. This is followed by the Torah reading of Nitzavim, which we have just cited (Deut. 30), the portion which calls us to repentance (teshuva) – which falls on the Sabbath preceding Rosh HaShana, the first of our Ten Days of Repentance culminating in Yom Kippur, the day of forgiveness and redemption.

Hence we are being primed to move from the destruction of the three Sabbaths preceding Tisha B'Av – which feature a prophetic recording of the loss of our Temple – on to consolation. However, the ultimate consolation will only come if we repent, if we enter the Rosh HaShana period properly and thereby become worthy of redemption!

May we learn to take our Bible – and our calendar readings – very seriously.

Rabbi Dr. Norman J. Lamm's Derashot Ledorot

Foundation of Faith: Chapter 4, Verse 1

Ben Zoma says: Who is wise? He who learns from every person. As is stated (Ps. 119:99): "From all my teachers I have grown wise, for Your testimonials are my meditation." Who is strong? He who controls his passions. As is stated (Pr. 16:32): "Better one who is slow to anger than one with might, one who rules his spirit than the captor of a city." Who is rich? He who is satisfied with his lot. As is stated (Ps. 128:2): "If you eat of toil of your hands, fortunate are you, and good is to you"; "fortunate are you" in this world, "and good is to you" in the World to Come. Who is honorable? He who honors his fellows. As is stated (I Sam. 2:30): "For to those who honor me, I accord honor; those who despise me shall be demeaned."

Inspirational Judaism - The Mishnah gives us a series of definitions by the renowned Ben Zoma. However, surprisingly, the Gemara, Kiddushin 49b, gives us completely different answers, and does not even mention our Mishnah. The Talmud discusses the interesting question of the man who marries a woman conditionally. What is the law, the Gemara asks, if a man marries a woman "al tenai she'ani ḥakham, on condition that I am a wise man"? What is the definition of ḥakham so that we may decide whether or not a valid marriage has been contracted? The answer is that it is sufficient that he be kol shesho'alin oto devar ḥokhmah bekhol makom, one who can conduct himself intelligently in any field of discourse. Note that all that the Gemara requires is that he be bright; no mention is made of Ben Zoma's definition of the wise man as one who retains the capacity to learn from everyone. The next case is the one who marries a woman al menat she'ani gibbor, on condition that I am a strong man. Here the definition is kol sheḥaveirav mityarin mimenu mipnei gevurato, he must be such that his friends fear him because of his power and influence. Again, there is no mention of the Mishnah's definition of strength interpreted as self-control. Finally, if a man marries a woman al menat she'ani ashir, on condition that I am rich, the marriage is valid if he is one of those kol shebenei iro mekhabdin oto mipnei oshro, whose townsfolk respect him because of his wealth – and not merely one who is satisfied with what he has.
How do we account for these changing definitions? The answer that R. Barukh HaLevi Epstein, the renowned author of Torah Temimah, gives is that the Gemara speaks of the act of marriage, an act which is essentially a kinyan, a contract freely arrived at by two people who must mutually agree upon the proposal. In such a case, we must estimate the understanding that the man and woman probably had at the time they came to an agreement. As a contract, we must consider only their interpretation, their understanding, and their values. The Mishnah gives us the values of Ben Zoma. He gave us the standards that became the ideal of Judaism. The Gemara's criterion goes by the count of most people; the Mishnah's criterion goes by the people who count most.

It is also possible to suggest that the Talmud offers the halakhic, legal, answer, while the Mishneh in Avot offers an aggadic, inspirational and aspirational, answer. The Rav, R. Joseph Soloveitchik, zt"l, observed that Halakhah alone is minimal Judaism, the quintessential but basic requirements of Jewish life. Avot inspires us and challenges us to expand our characters, our vision, and our spiritual capacities.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, in his God in Search of Man (p. 336), wrote, Halacha represents the

strength to shape one's life according to a fixed pattern; it is a form-giving force. Agada is the expression of man's ceaseless striving which often defies all limitations. Halacha is the rationalization and schematization of living; it defines, specifies, sets measure and limit, placing life into an exact system. Agada deals with man's ineffable relations to God, to other men, and to the world. Halacha deals with details, with each commandment separately; agada deals with the whole of life, with the totality of religious life. Halacha deals with the law; agada with the meaning of the law. Halacha deals with subjects that can be expressed literally; agada introduces us to a realm which lies beyond the range of expression. Halacha teaches us how to perform common acts; agada tells us how to participate in the eternal drama. Halacha gives us knowledge; agada gives us aspiration.

Kibbush HaYetzer - R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik explained that the Mishnah's statement, "Who is strong? He who controls his passions" is a minimalist, not a maximalist position. The higher achievement is not the suppression (kibbush) but the sanctification (kiddush) of the yetzer.

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Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Why did the rebbe ask for a cigar? In Parshat Eikev, we are told how Hashem is continuously concerned about the land of Israel (Devarim 11:12): "mereishit hashanah ad acharit shanah," – "from the beginning of the year until the end of the year."

The Imrei Emet, one of the great rebbes of Gur, would teach that from here we learn how we should always know that Hashem is not just looking at the land of Israel – Hashem is looking at the entire world, at ourselves. Therefore we should be mindful of his presence wherever we are, and at all times.

It so happened that one of the Chassidim of the Imrei Emet came to him and told him, "I'm going to Paris and I'll be there for a day or two on business. I've never been to Paris before. Please, rebbe, give me your bracha."

The rebbe gave him his bracha and he also added, "Please do me a favour. When you're in Paris, please buy me a cigar."

The Chassid felt very privileged to be able to buy a cigar for the rebbe, although he had never heard of the rebbe ever smoking. He went to Paris, he had an excellent day in which things went wonderfully, and he did great business. But as his train began to move out of Paris, suddenly he remembered, "Oy vey! I forgot to buy the cigar for the rebbe."

A fellow traveller saw how crestfallen he looked and asked, "What's the matter?" The man explained, and the traveller said, "Don't worry! This train will be stopping at Brussels and I know that on the platform you will be able to buy a cigar." And that's exactly what happened.

When the Chassid came back to the rebbe, he presented him with a beautiful cigar.

"Where did you get this from?" the rebbe asked.

"To be honest," replied the Chassid, "I forgot in Paris but this is from Brussels and it's top quality." But he noticed that the rebbe was disappointed. "Rebbe," he asked, " why are you disappointed?"

The rebbe replied, "I didn't ask you for a cigar because I'm interested in cigars. I asked you for a cigar so that when in Paris you would remember that you've got a rebbe."

And so too, taught the rebbe, wherever we are and under whatever circumstances we are operating, we should be mindful of the fact that we have a guard. Hashem looks down with concern upon us, wanting to shower his blessings within our lives 'mereishit hashanah ad acharit shanah' – from the beginning to the end of every single year. If we internalise this very lesson and are mindful of the presence of Hashem in our lives, that will certainly transform everything that we do.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

"God is in the details"

Rabbi Gal and Talya Ben Meir

This week's portion of Ekev is well liked by rabbis and public speakers due to two well-known topics which appear in it and which can be easily talked about and elaborated upon without much preparation. In fact, there are a number of Torah portions that lend themselves to popular interpretations and debates and, as such, are known to be the "dream-portions" of any rabbi who teaches young students or prepares boys for their Bar Mitzvah sermons. Such sermons are usually comprised of select commentaries on the weekly parsha, which are most suitable in terms of the message they convey and the relevance they may have to the Bar Mitzvah boy, in terms of "coming of age" and other aspects of life.

On the one hand, as a rabbi attempting to write a few words about the portion of Ekev, I am very much tempted to write about a topic or verse in which most people are less versed, and thereby impress readers with a novel idea or an original thought.

On the other hand, I also know that one of the most important things to remember as a shaliach is that it is not always necessary to reinvent the wheel; rather, it is oftentimes much wiser to revert to well-known and well-liked ideas and lessons with which people readily identify.

I will therefore discuss the two most celebrated themes in this week's parsha, and try to connect these to the world of emissary work through my experience as a rabbi who was fortunate enough to embark on an educational shlichut in both the United States and Canada.

The first idea I would like to elaborate upon relates to the name of the parsha – Ekev. According to Rashi, this word serves as a reminder to observe even those mitzvot that are perceived as being "less important" and are thus easily forgotten, or "trampled upon with one's heel [the Hebrew word "akev "meaning ankle is reminiscent of "ekev"]". I think this message reverberates with everybody, and can be easily connected to daily life. Let me give a few examples.

If you, in your capacity as shlichim, happen to be visiting the home of one of the members of your community, you will easily be able to take the ideas presented here and share with your hosts. You can always praise them for the great pains they have taken in making the visit/the meal as perfect as it was to "the very last detail".

If you are addressing the community in honor of a Bar Mitzva boy, you can always highlight the fact that coming of "mitzvah age" means being committed to the observance of all the mitzvot, even those that are less prominent, much like that one tiny spice that makes or breaks the gourmet dish.

Let me add that even tiny actions, which hardly require any effort on our part, such as saying hello to people with a smile, might ultimately impact the success of our emissary work.

The role of shlichim is to be sensitive to the general mood of the people with whom they are directly involved, whether it is in the school where he or she work as educators, or in the community where he serves in a rabbinical position. The shaliach must always be vigilant, aware of the changes that take place throughout the shlichut period, even when the events in question are trivial – for example, when a new Sefer Torah is brought in, when there is a family celebration or loss. This simply means to be there for the community members, hands on, even at regular lifetime moments, when it is hardly expected of us to notice the subtle changes that take place.

The second important theme in our parsha relates to arrogance and pride, qualities which make us forget our Torah, and blind our eyes to the fact that God is the one who ultimately empowers us, enabling us to succeed. It is customary, when elaborating upon this notion, to mention the State of Israel and the Israelis who were fortunate enough to build their homes in the new homeland and make aliya, and warn them against becoming arrogant and forgetting that He had made it all possible. However, in my view, the shaliach should never talk ill of those who live in Israel, nor get into a heated debate about the real estate market in Israel. Here, then, is a completely new paradigm, which (to my great dismay) I did not find in the writings of the Rambam.

I believe that arrogance often makes people forget both the need and the right to give of themselves to their community. Often, people who have always invested in the community start drifting away once they hit the jackpot – they suddenly do not find the time to attend the weekly shiur, or help set up the kiddush on Shabbat. Of course, this does not stem from any ill intentions, but, as is often the case, money does strange things to people, often causing them to lose sight of the important things.

The sad thing is that these same individuals had striven to achieve success with the aim of doing good things, promising themselves that once the desired goal was achieved, it would be used for helping others. This is where the opportunity lies for us, as shlichim, because we can turn the negative aspects into positive ones. What do I mean? We can focus on praising those individuals who have achieved great success and wealth and yet have chosen to remain part and parcel of the community, rather than standing aloof. These individuals (and many other community members) are driven by true devotion, and also feel a strong sense of belonging.

In conclusion, if we tie together these two central ideas from Parshat Ekev, we could even say that they represent two sides of the same coin. The first: on the road to achieving success and rising up in life one must never neglect the tiny details. The second: once the desired success is achieved, one must face the challenges of success heads on.

May we, as shlichim, merit to never lose sight of the minute details, those seeming trifles, and remember to praise and show gratitude to all the members of our community who invest of their time and their resources out of the sheer goodness of their hearts. Often we get blinded by the success of others and foster negative feelings towards them. Let us, rather, rejoice in their success and pray that God continues to shower great abundance upon all the good Jews living in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora, those generous individuals who, despite their personal success, keep giving of themselves and contributing to the Jewish community which they perceive as their extended family.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Kosher Style Cuisine

Years ago, there used to be restaurants which would advertise that they were "kosher style". That meant that the food was not kosher at all but rather kosher "style". Bnei Torah realized that that is a farce. The laws of the Torah are very detailed and if one of the necessary conditions is for kashrus is missing, it does not help that it is "kosher style"; it is absolutely not kosher.

The same is true in all areas of halacha. Halacha is very detailed and very complicated. Many non-observant Jews raise a question, "do you really think that G-d is so pedantic that He really cares about all of those intricate details??" Rav Soloveitchik zt"l once pointed out that the same G-d that gave the Torah also created all living creatures in the world. The DNA of a simple butterfly is extremely complicated. The same G-d who came up with the idea about complicated DNA also came up with all of the halachos, including all of their complicated details.

Every so often, Jewish folklore takes over a certain halacha and succeeds in totally distorting it, sometimes l'chumra and sometimes l'kula. The Torah tells us (Devarim 17:11) that when the rabbonim issue a psak, one is not permitted to ignore that psak by either going to the right or to the left - "לא תסור מן הדבר אשר יגידו לך ימין ושמאל". Some of the commentaries interpret that going to the right means l'chumra, that one feels that the rabbonim were too lenient; and going to the left means l'kula, that one feels that the rabbis were too stringent in their psak.

Over the years, folklore has taken over the laws of mesirah and misrepresented this halacha as if it implies that no Jewish criminals may be given over to the police. Those who follow the Daf Yomi have been learning the Gemorah Gittin the last three months. In the first perek in Gittin (7a), the Gemorah makes it clear that sometimes mesirah is permissible and even required. If one is a public menace, or one is harming other people, it is clear from the Shulchan Aruch and all of the classical poskim that there is no prohibition of mesirah and because the Jewish community in chutz la'aretz has no beis din which can take care of the matter, we have no choice other than to report the individual to the governmental authorities. Just the other day, I read a beautiful essay on this topic in a sefer called shu"t Ishei Yisroel (volume 6 page 522), by Rabbi Aschi Dick (a young talmid chacham who gives shiurim in the OU center in Jerusalem) which quotes all of the sources that indicate clearly that the prohibition of mesirah definitely does not apply in such a situation.

Let us not fall in to the "kosher style" attitude that used to be so prevalent in the area of kashrus years ago. All the details of every halacha are significant, folklore notwithstanding.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

ALL We Do

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 (KOL) all that emanates from the mouth of HASHEM does man live. (Devarim 8:3)

What is added by the word "KOL" – "all"? How does it add flavor to the Manna or meaning to the verse? This is a question I have been pursuing for a while now and new information has recently been revealed to me. It may help explain an obvious and repeating theme throughout Aikev. The combination of names "HASHEM Elochecha" is employed not less than 35 times. What does that mixture of Holy Names imply? What's the practical message?

The Meor Eynai enlightens our eyes. He writes that the word KOL, in general is a code word, in reference to a the Tzadik who is the foundation of the world. Yaakov replied to Eisav, "Yeish Li KOL" – "I have all!" All means heaven and earth, this world and the next. The Tzadik is essentially the bridge striding and connecting two disparate realms, reconciling physicality and spirituality, with the understanding that they are not two distinct dimensions but rather one seamless continuum, not unlike Yaakov vision of "The Ladder". The world is fundamentally spiritual and there is more dense spirituality and less dense spirituality. "ALL" is essentially spiritual!

There are four classic approaches to dealing with the seeming dichotomy between the material and spiritual realms that reside within and around each and everyone of us. We are all made of an odd-odd couple. We have bodies that want to run horizontally like any good horse and eat all the goodies of this world. Yet HASHEM breathed the breath of life into us, a slice of eternity was installed deeply within our hearts and it is endlessly curious to unravel the secrets of the universe and rise to the heavens.

1-The classic far eastern approach idealizes the separation of the body, silencing one's feeling until the signals from the physical are muted and no longer perceived. This is the ideal of Nirvana. 2-The classic western approach is to divorce one's self from the spiritual. The quieting of the conscience, that small thin voice, allows one to go headlong into the universe of materialism without second thoughts or concern. Can this be ideal?! "Just go for it! Do it!?"

3-There is a third option of flipping and flopping, going for each alternately. There is a price to pay here as well. The Talmud states pithily, "Oy l'Yitzri! Oy L'Yotzri!" "Woe to my negative inclination and woe to my Creator!" Whatever I do to satisfy one of my passions seriously offends the other part of my sensibilities and sensitivities and visa versa. A Professor Meier did an experiment in which he successfully induced neurosis in laboratory rats. He set up the Skinnerian box with two bars for the rat to push. One delivered a treat while the other a punch in the nose. Once the rat got his treat the results were immediately switched and the door now was set up to give that punch in the nose. The other bar that gave a punch was now the bar with the treat. Every time the rat figured it out the stimulus was changed. In the end the rat sits equidistant from the two bars and starves to death rather than risk getting a punch in the nose even with the possibility of finding food.

4-The fourth approach is the "middle east". Somebody had a horse that he was caring for all day, combing its hair and feeding it. His friend asked him how come he is spending a whole day taking care of his horse. The man replied, "Because he's a dumb creature and I'm smart!" His friend challenged him, "If he's so dumb and you're so smart then get him to do something for you!" If the horse can be disciplined and induced to serve the owner, then both can have their needs and desires fulfilled. So, the Torah helps us navigate pleasantly and negotiate peacefully this treaty of mutual cooperation.

By abiding by this contract, one is essentially bridging two worlds. There is a danger entering the land that one can become preoccupied with material temptations, represented by the name ELOCHIM which is how HASHEM shows up in this world. Then one just might over react and withdraw to the Heavens beyond the realm of time and space as spelled out in the name HASHEM. The real ideal is to join them and enjoy them, because they are really one, and it is not only true with food, it is true about ALL we do!

Mizrachi Dvar Torah

Rav Doron Perez

Israel's Spiritual Embassies Worldwide

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 very land of a shul in chutz la'aretz, in the Diaspora, is part of the Land of Israel – it is like being in the Land of Israel!

The Maharsha similarly explains the Gemara that says that all the shuls and batei midrash (learning centers) will come to Israel in the future, because the shuls are already part of Israel.

How can we explain this? Embassies! An Israeli embassy is considered to be part of Israel. Every embassy, in every country around the world, even though it is geographically not in its homeland, it is considered extraterritorial. So, too, 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, especially today, 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.

Likutei Divrei Torah

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Note to Readers: The events about to be described took place 95 years ago on Shabbat, Parashat Ekev, 5689 [1929] – I hope that readers of Likutei Divrei Torah will permit me once again to share excerpts of this letter written by my great-grandfather, as it is relevant to our people's history on this Shabbat.

- Saadia Reuven Greenberg, Compiler

------Additional information including extensive historical notes developed by my late father, Meyer Greenberg, z"l, and a facsimile of the original Yiddish letter may be found on my web site: www.hebron1929.info

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MEGILLAT HEBRON (excerpts)

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… 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…she couldn't bear the terribly hot weather… So we left Tel Aviv and went to the country--to Hebron. …From the very beginning, things did not go well.…On Friday, the 23rd, we heard that things had gotten worse in Jerusalem… 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.

... 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. 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.

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. 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 our 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.

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]. It just happened that there were two doctors in the house. They sat near me and they saved my life… 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… 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. 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... 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!...

…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]

BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io
From: Chaim Shulman <cshulman@gmail.com>
& Allen Klein <allen.klein@gmail.com>

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **EIKEV** - 5784

parsha@groups.io / www.parsha.net - in our 29th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to http://www.parsha.net and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha+subscribe@groups.io Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now available at http://www.parsha.net It is also fully searchable.

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from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>
date: Aug 22, 2024, 10:35 AM
subject: **Rabbi Daniel Stein - Living Beyond the Letter of the Law**

Rabbi Daniel Stein
Living Beyond the Letter of the Law

The Gemara (Berachos 35b) raises an apparent contradiction between two pesukim. On the one hand, the pasuk states "And you shall gather your grain" (Devarim 11:14), which ostensibly commands personal engagement with the natural order and the expending of effort to procure a livelihood. While at the same time we are instructed, "This Torah shall not depart from your mouths and you shall contemplate in it day and night" (Yehoshua 1:8). Rabbi Yishmael resolves to blend the two pesukim and endorses a balanced and integrated approach, "in the way of the world." Each person should set aside some time for working and other times for Torah study. Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai passionately disagrees and argues, "is it possible that a person plows in the plowing season and sows in the sowing season and harvests in the harvest season and threshes in the threshing season and winnows in the windy season." If he is constantly busy and preoccupied with his job "what will become of the Torah?" Rather, in his view, Torah learning demands total dedication and a singular focus, to the exclusion of all other endeavors.

According to Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, the pasuk "And you shall gather your grain" is referring specifically to a time when the Jewish people are "ain osin ratzono shel makom - not doing the will of Hashem." Only then, will they be required to support themselves manually. But if they act appropriately and meet Hashem's expectations, their physical work will be delegated to others, as it states, "And strangers will stand and feed your flocks and foreigners will be your plowmen and your vinedressers" (Yeshayahu 61:5), providing them the freedom to study Torah continuously "and contemplate in it day and night."

However, the Maharsha (Berachos ad loc) and Nefesh Hachaim (1:8) note that Rabbi Shimon's reading of the pasuk, "And you shall gather your grain", does not seem to jibe with its broader context. This clause is found immediately following the words, "And it will be, if you obey the commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, loving Hashem your God and serving Him with all your heart and soul, I will grant the rain for your land in its season" (Devarim 11:13-14). If the Torah is discussing the consequences and blessings that will follow if the Jewish people adhere properly to the mitzvos, how can Rabbi Shimon claim that the conclusion of the pasuk addresses the scenario of "ain osin ratzono shel makom - not doing the will of Hashem." Rav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel deduces that it is possible to be in technical compliance with all the mitzvos but still be "ain osin ratzono shel makom - not doing the will of Hashem." If the Jewish people are fastidiously obsessed with the letter of the law but ignore the larger question of, "what ultimately is the will of Hashem," they are still in a perilous and inadequate space.

Not every behavior or attitude that a Jew must embrace is articulated explicitly. Some are intuited or inferred meta-halachic principles. Rav Elchanan Wasserman (Kuntrus Divrei Sofrim 1:22-23) classifies this set of mitzvos as "ratzon haTorah - the will of the Torah", a designation which is explored and expanded upon further by Rav Asher Weiss (Minchas Asher, Devarim 75).[1] For example, while the specific fulfillment of mitzvos by children is only mandated rabbinically, it is untenable to suggest that the general notion of educating and training children to live a life of Torah and mitzvos once they reach maturity is not of Biblical origin, despite the absence of any definitive directive. After all, Avraham Avinu was only chosen as the progenitor of the Jewish people because he was trusted to "instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of Hashem by doing what is just and right" (Breishis 18:19). Ironically, it is quite possible that the relative paucity of overt source material regarding certain foundational issues only highlights their overarching nature further. Some things are so fundamental they simply cannot be contained or limited to one verse, jot, or tittle.

In the section of the Gemara (Gittin 58a) that deals with the precursors to the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, the concluding item mentioned is a tragic incident involving a certain carpenter's apprentice who set his eyes upon his master's wife. Once it happened that the master needed to borrow some money, and his apprentice generously suggested, "Send your wife to me and I will lend her the money." He dispatched his wife to him, but the apprentice delayed her for three extra days before granting her leave. The apprentice then hurried back to his master, ahead of his returning wife, whereupon the master questioned him, "Where is my wife whom I sent to you?" The apprentice said to him, "I sent her back immediately, but I heard that she became romantically involved with the youth along the way." The master turned to his trusted apprentice and asked, "What shall I do?" The apprentice responded, "If you listen to my advice, divorce her." The master objected, "But her kesubah is large and I do not have the money to pay it." The apprentice assured him, "I will lend you the money, and you will give her payment of her kesubah." The master accepted his terms and divorced her at once. Not long after, the apprentice went and married her himself. When the due date for the debt arrived, the master did not have the means with which to repay the apprentice. The apprentice offered him, "Come and work off your debt with me." And so it was, the apprentice and his new wife would eat and drink, while he, the woman's first husband, would stand over them and serve them. As the master's tears of humiliation and betrayal dropped from his eyes and fell into their cups, the Jewish people's sentence was sealed for the crime of remaining silent in the face of such an injustice.

What is the parting message of this stirring story? Rav Yaakov Emden claims that perhaps the apprentice did not violate any official prohibition or precept. He graciously lent money twice to his former master and was careful to only marry his wife after she was already divorced. At the same time Hashem is disgusted by his duplicity and hypocrisy in plotting to achieve his desired outcome. His treachery constituted a particularly despised sin precisely because of his perverted halachic machinations. Sometimes because of our intimate knowledge of halacha and advanced learning, we too, paradoxically, fall into a similar trap. Before following

rabbinic guidance, many erstwhile yeshiva students will insist upon a written source, whilst forgetting that just because a certain practice is not expressly proscribed by a particular siman or seif in Shulchan Aruch, does not mean it is automatically sanctioned or advised. Indeed, the Netziv (Haamek Davar, Introduction to Breishis) writes that at the time of Second Beis Hamikdash, though they were pious and toiled in Torah study, they were still not upright - yashar - in their societal dealings, and that alone was sufficient grounds for the churban.

In concert with investigating and investing in the legalities of the mitzvos, which is wonderful and admirable, we must also always remember to ask ourselves, "what does Hashem truly want?" Moshe encourages the Jewish people, "And now, Yisrael, what is Hashem, your God, asking of you, other than to fear Hashem, your God, to go in all His ways and to love Him, to serve Hashem your God wholeheartedly and with your whole being" (Devarim 10:12). The Chafetz Chaim (Ahavas Chesed 2:11) interprets the word "now" to mean the universal "now," namely, that one should always stop to consider, "What is Hashem asking of me?" This should be our religious compass and objective throughout life in all that we do. We must be able to transcend the letter of the law and the details of Jewish life to create a unified spiritual existence that is "upright and good in the eyes of Hashem" (Devarim 6:18).

[1] See also Rabbi Yonasan Sacks, Ratzon HaTorah.

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from**: Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>
date: Aug 22, 2024, 7:02 PM
subject: **Tidbits for Parashas Eikev**
Klal Gavoah In Memory of **Rav Meir Zlotowitz ZT"L**

Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Bava Basra 60 • Yerushalmi: Challah 23 • Mishnah Yomis: Bava Kama 7:4-5 • Oraysa: Next week is Succah 45a-47a. Pirkei Avos: Perek 5 Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh Elul is next Shabbos, Parashas Re'eh, August 31st. Rosh Chodesh Elul is on Tuesday & Wednesday, September 3rd-4th.

Parsha in a Paragraph: 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 (e.g., 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, however, continue to explain that Hashem never forsakes His nation and ultimately happiness and joy will return to Zion. (Yeshaya 49:15-51:3)

Taryag Mitzvos 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 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).

For the Shabbos Table

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 your G-d 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 our faith, as is recalling the miraculous redemption from Mitzrayim. Why does the Torah command 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.

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from: ArtScroll BookNews <emailupdates@artscroll.com>
date: Aug 22, 2024, 8:06 PM

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

Rabbi Frand on the Parashah

Hamachilcha Man Bamidbar .. uLimaan Nasoscha - The One Who feeds you manna in the desert . . . in order to test you. (8:16)

Everyone knows that life is a test. We struggle to make a living, to raise our children, to build up our communities. Nothing comes easy, and our test is to deal with the hardships and frustrations in the best way possible.

But what if our livelihood were served up to us on a silver platter? How wonderful that would be! No more worries about how to pay for the children' s tuition or the new roof. What if everything we needed came to us like manna from heaven?

Would we consider this a test? Hardly. We would consider it a blessing. The Torah, however, seems to say otherwise. No sooner had the Jewish people come forth from Egypt that they complained (Shemos 16:3), "If only we had died by the hand of God in the land of Egypt when we were sitting beside the fleshpots, when we ate our fill of bread; now you have brought us out into the desert to let the entire congregation starve to death."

"Behold, I will rain down bread from the heavens on you," Hashem replied (ibid. 16:4). "The people shall go out to collect their daily portion every day, in order to test whether or not they will follow My Torah."

The commentators wonder what kind of test this is. What could be better than having everything you need delivered to your doorstep every day? This is a test? This is a blessing!

Rashi explains that Hashem was referring to the laws that govern the manna. One could not store away any manna for the next day. One had to collect a double portion on Friday. And so forth. This was the test. Would the Jewish people observe the laws of the manna scrupulously? This test is also mentioned in Parashas Eikev, "The One Who feeds you manna in the desert ... in order to test you." Sforno explains that the test is to see if the Jews would still follow the Torah when they do not have to worry about their livelihood.

Yes, there is a great test in “bread raining down from heaven.” Affluence without effort is a dangerous thing. It comes with a great amount of leisure time and freedom of action.
What do we do with that leisure time and that freedom of action? Do we use our leisure time and freedom of action to taste the forbidden? This is the great test of the manna.
We are all aware of the test of poverty. We are all aware of the trials and tribulations of being poor. However, says Sforno, affluence also comes with great temptations. It puts a tremendous responsibility on a person. This is the test of the manna, and it is the test for many Jews in these affluent times.
The Chovos Halevavos writes in Shaar Habitachon that one of the reasons people, unlike birds and animals, must make a great effort to earn their livelihood is to control the yetzer hara. If we had too much time on our hands, we would be unable to resist the temptations he puts before us. As it is, we are either too busy or too tired most of the time. And even then it is a struggle to resist temptation.
The Maggid of Mezritch once said that when people face troubles, sickness or mortal danger, Heaven forbid, they all become religious. They all come to shul. They pray fervently. They say Tehillim with tears streaming down their cheeks. They give charity generously. But when things are going well, when they are going wonderfully, do they give much thought to the Almighty? This is the test of the manna.
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from: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabbiyy-theyeshiva.net@shared1.ccsend.com>
reply-to: info@theyeshiva.net
to: internetparshasheet@gmail.com
date: Aug 22, 2024, 5:30 PM
subject: **Don’t Be Afraid to Visit Your Broken Places** - essay by Rabbi YY

Don’t Be Afraid to Visit Your Broken Places
Why Breaking the Tablets Was Moses' Greatest Accomplishment
By: Rabbi YY Jacobson
"The world breaks everyone, and afterwards some are stronger in the broken places." -- Ernest Hemingway
Broken
The simple reading of the story (recorded twice in Torah, in Exodus, and then again in Deuteronomy, in this week's portion) goes like this: After the Jews created a Golden Calf, Moses smashed the stone tablets created by G-d, engraved with the Ten Commandments. Moses and G-d then "debated" the appropriate response to this transgression and it was decided that if the people would truly repent, G-d would give them a second chance. Moses hewed a second set of stone tablets; G-d engraved them also with the Ten Commandments, and Moses gave them to the Jewish people.
Yet a few major questions come to mind.
1. Moses, outraged by the sight of a golden calf erected by the Hebrews as a deity, smashed the stone tablets. He apparently felt that the Jews were undeserving of them, and that it would be inappropriate to give them this Divine gift. But why did Moses have to break and shatter the heavenly tablets? Moses could have hidden them or returned them to their heavenly maker?
2. The rabbis teach us that, "The whole tablets and the broken tablets nestled inside the Ark of the Covenant[1]." The Jews proceeded to gather the broken fragments of the first set of tablets and had them stored in the Ark, in the Tabernacle, together with the second whole tablets. Both sets of tablets were later taken into the Land of Israel and kept side by side in the Ark, situated in the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem.
This seems strange. Why would they place the broken tablets in the Holy of Holies, when these fragments were a constant reminder of the great moral failure of the Jewish people[2]? Why not just disregard them, or deposit them in a safe isolated place?
3. In its eulogy for Moses, the Torah chooses this episode of smashing the tablets as the highlight and climax of Moses’ achievements.
In the closing verses of Deuteronomy we read: "Moses, the servant of G-d, died there in the land of Moab... And there arose not since a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom G-d knew face to face; all the signs and wonders which G-d sent to do in the land of Egypt... that mighty hand, those great fearsome deeds, which Moses did before the eyes of all Israel."
What did Moses do "before the eyes of all Israel?" Rashi[3], in his commentary on Torah, explains "That his heart emboldened him to break the tablets before their eyes, as it is written, ‘and I broke them before your eyes.’ G-d's opinion then concurred with his opinion, as it is written, ‘which you broke—I affirm your strength for having broken them."
This is shocking. Following all of the grand achievements of Moses, the Torah chooses to conclude its tribute to Moses by alluding to this episode of breaking the tablets! Granted that Moses was justified in breaking the tablets, but can this be said to embody his greatest achievement? How about his taking the Jews out of Egypt? Molding them into a people? Splitting the Red Sea? Receiving the Torah from G-d and transmitting it to humanity? Shepherding them for forty years in a wilderness?
Why does the Torah choose this tragic and devastating episode to capture the zenith of Moses’ life and as the theme with which to conclude the entire Torah, all five books of Moses?!
In the Fragments
We need to examine this entire episode from a deeper vantage point.
Moses did not break the tablets because he was angry and lost his control. Rather, the breaking of the tablets was the beginning of the healing process.
Before the golden calf was created, the Jews could find G-d within the wholesomeness of the tablets, within the spiritual wholesomeness of life. Now, after the people have created the golden calf, hope was not lost. Now they would find G-d in the shattered pieces of a once beautiful dream.
Moses was teaching the Jewish people the greatest message of Judaism: Truth could be crafted not only from the spiritually perfected life, but also from the broken pieces of the human corrupt and demoralized psyche. The broken tablets, too, possess the light of G-d.
Which is why the sages tell us that not only the whole tablets, but also the broken ones, were situated in the holy of holies. This conveyed the message articulated at the very genesis of Judaism: From the broken pieces of life you can create a holy of holies.
G-d, the sages tell us, affirmed Moses’ decision to break the tablets. G-d told him, "Thank you for breaking them[4]." Because the broken tablets, representing the shattered pieces of human existence, have their own story to tell; they contain a light all their own. Truth is found not only in wholesomeness, but also—sometimes primarily—in the broken fragments of the human spirit[5]. There are moments when G-d desires that we connect to Him as wholesome people, with clarity and a sense of fullness; there are yet deeper moments when He desires that we find Him in the shattered experiences of our lives.
We hope and pray to always enjoy the "whole tablets," but when we encounter the broken ones, we ought not to run from them or become dejected by them; with tenderness, we ought to embrace them and bring them into our "holy of holies," recalling the observation of one of the Rebbe’s, "there is nothing more whole than a broken heart."
We often believe that G-d can be found in our moments of spiritual wholesomeness. But how about in the conflicts that torment our psyches? How about when we are struggling with depression, addiction or confusion? How about when we feel despair and pain? How about in every conflict between a godless existence and a G-d-centered existence? We associate "religion" with "religious" moments. But how about our "non-religious" moments?
What Moses accomplished with breaking the tablets was the demonstration of the truth that the stuff we call holiness can be carved out from the very alienation of a person from G-d. From the very turmoil of his or her psychological and spiritual brokenness, a new holiness can be discovered.
It is on this note that the Torah chooses to culminate its tribute to Moses’ life. The greatest achievement of Moses was his ability to show humanity how we can take our brokenness and turn it into a holy of holies. There is light and joy to be found in the fragments of sacredness.[6]

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[1] Talmud Bava Basra 14a. [2] On Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, the high priest would not perform the service with his usual golden garments, since gold was remotely reminiscent of the golden calf. Yet in this instance, throughout the entire year, the very symptom of the golden calf – the broken tablets – were stored in the holy of holies! Cf. Ramban and Ritva to Bava Basra ibid; Likkutei Sichos vol 26 Parshas Ki Sisa. [3] Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105), whose work is the most basic of biblical commentaries. [4] See Talmud Shabbas 87a and Rashi ibid; Rashi to Deut. 34:12, the final verse of the Torah. [5] "G-d said to Moses: 'Do not be distressed over the First Tablets, which contained only the Ten Commandments. In the Second Tablets I am giving you, you will also have Halachah, Midrash and Aggadah" (Midrash Rabbah, Shemot 46:1.) This means, that it was precisely the breaking of the tablets that became the catalyst for a far deeper divine revelation. [6] This essay is based on a talk delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, on the 20th of Av 5725, August 18th 1965, on the occasion of his father's yartziet. In this talk, in which the Rebbe broke down twice, he described the agony of many deeply spiritual Jews put in situations where they are unable to study Torah and observe its Mitzvos. "There are times when G-d wants your mitzvos," the Rebbe said, "and other times when He wants your 'broken tablets.'"

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https://www.jewishpress.com/indepth/opinions/a-biblical-story/2024/08/22/

A Biblical Story

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

October 7 shattered many illusions. We believed we had constructed an impenetrable defense, fortified by sophisticated technology and capable of shielding our citizens and cities from Arab brutality. This conception proved to be false. Conversely, our enemies assumed we were too fractured to rally and defend our land. Fortunately, our enemies were also wrong.

In addition to these false conceptions, another devastating illusion was shattered. Those who believed that antisemitism and hatred toward Jews had been eradicated were, tragically, also proven wrong.

In particular, many residents of communities near Gaza, who were profoundly committed to peaceful coexistence with their Arab neighbors, saw their dreams of harmony go up in flames. They had dedicated themselves to peace initiatives, fostering a vision of mutual respect and understanding. But on Oct.7, their communities were rampaged and burned. One of the most poignant examples is that of Vivian Silver, a peace activist from Kibbutz Be'eri, who had selflessly driven Palestinians from Gaza to receive medical treatment in Israeli hospitals. On that fateful day, she was abducted, and after weeks of uncertainty, it was confirmed that she had been killed. Countless others across Israel, who had devoted themselves to building bridges, came to the bitter realization of how deeply we are hated by many, perhaps most Palestinians both in Gaza and in neighboring areas.

It wasn't only the illusions of Jews in Israel that were shattered on Oct. 7. Many Jews around the world had built their Jewish identity on the mission of creating a more just and perfect society – the program of tikkun olam. Especially for those who found traditional rituals less compelling, the pursuit of social justice became the centerpiece of their Jewish experience. As they marched alongside other minority groups in the battle against discrimination, they assumed that Jews had been embraced by modern society as equal partners in the fight for social justice.

In the aftermath of Oct. 7, however, many of the minority groups whose rights they had campaigned for turned their backs on them. Those with whom they had stood shoulder to shoulder in the noble struggle for equality, betrayed them while unleashing a torrent of venomous antisemitism. The halls of academia, once viewed as bastions of enlightenment and education and assumed to be forces against racism and antisemitism, became hotbeds of hatred and violence.

The world they thought they knew, and the society they believed was civil and enlightened, revealed darker realities. Their vision of an enlightened world, one striving for a society free of racism and hatred, was shattered.

In both Israel and the broader Jewish world, deeply held beliefs were shattered. We realized the persistent toxicity of antisemitism lurking beneath the surface, ready to erupt at any moment. Opportunistic antisemites will always align themselves with whichever political movement advances their agenda of hate and bigotry. Many mistakenly believed that the trauma of the Holocaust had etched a permanent revulsion to antisemitism into the human conscience.

Yet, 80 years later, antisemitism still rages unchecked. On Oct. 7, our naive conceptions of a modern and enlightened world – whether in Gaza, on US campuses, or along the boulevards of Europe – came crashing down.

A Biblical World

However, Oct. 7 caused an even more profound and sweeping transformation of Jewish identity. It didn't just showcase the enduring malignancy of antisemitism but also provided a vivid reminder of our place within biblical history. That fateful day and its harrowing aftermath revived the ancient echoes of the Torah and its prophecies, reminding us that we are part of a timeless narrative. It reaffirmed, with striking clarity, the profound connection between our people, their history, and the Land of Israel.

Often, the discourse in Israel revolves around the divide between religious and secular Jews, between those who adhere to a halachic lifestyle and those who do not. Yet, a more profound divide exists: between those whose lives are shaped by Biblical narratives and those whose experiences are detached from the Torah. This division is not merely about observance but about how we perceive the relevance of the Torah in our modern, technology-driven world.

For many, the Bible has become a historical document, offering only moral guidance and a record of our national past. It is seen as a relic from an ancient, sandy desert, disconnected from our current urbanized, technologically advanced reality. In this view, history has moved beyond the pages of the Torah.

Conversely, others perceive the Torah and its teachings as the foundation of their identity and existence. They see their lives and the Jewish mission as intricately woven into the promises and prophecies of the Torah. Even those who may not follow a classic, halachic lifestyle still view their lives and our national struggle through the lens of Biblical narratives. Our ongoing effort to settle the land and confront international hostility is viewed as a chapter within a sacred book which is just as compelling now as it was thousands of years ago.

Israeli society may not be growing more religious, but it is undeniably embracing a more Biblical or Torah-oriented essence.

This wasn't always the case. Zionism began as a secular nationalist movement, largely detached from the Torah's narratives. The early Zionist leaders, including Herzl, envisioned the State of Israel not as a continuation of ancient prophecies but as a means to combat the age-old hatred of antisemitism. They believed that the creation of a Jewish homeland could overcome the prejudices rooted in Jewish exile and the experiences of living among foreign nations. In its early years, the State of Israel was more shaped by Marx than by Moses.

Over the past 75 years, the character of the State of Israel has undergone a profound transformation. Secular Israeli society today is imbued with far more Biblical influence than the secular culture of its early years. This shift is partly due to the influx and growing impact of Jews from Sephardic lands. Sephardic Jews, even those not classically observant, often bring a more traditional perspective compared to their Ashkenazi counterparts. The secularizing movements that shaped European Jewry in the 19th and 20th centuries largely bypassed the Jews of Sephardic regions. Additionally, the rise of religious society in Israel, including a robust national-religious sector, has significantly influenced Israeli public life, particularly within the military and political spheres.

The ongoing struggle over our land has powerfully transformed Israeli secular society into a more Biblical one. The relentless hostility towards our presence here, the disproportionate judgment and double standards imposed on the State of Israel, and the sheer ferocity of the violence on Oct. 7 – all of these elements defy a purely geopolitical explanation. The intensity of the

hatred we face suggests that our conflict transcends territorial disputes; it is embedded in a Biblical narrative, entwined with profound, ancient themes about the people of Hashem and the land promised to them. This story reaches beyond mere human dimensions.

Oct. 7 has not only reshaped Jewish identity worldwide but has also profoundly impacted broader Israeli society. It has reinforced the realization that the Bible is not merely an ancient document but a living text, reflecting the modern chapters of the enduring story of Hashem's people.

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https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/1107091

Eikev 5784: T**he Miracle & Blessing of Eretz Yisrael**

Speaker: **Mrs. Michal Horowitz**

Date: August 20 2024

In Parshas Eikev, the beautiful and stirring words of Moshe Rabbeinu, during the last days of his life, continue to inspire, elevate and teach us. One of the main themes of the final teachings of Moshe is the topic of our beloved Land, Eretz Yisrael. Though Moshe was never allowed to enter the land (not in life, nor in death for kevurah), he speaks of the Land's beauty, miraculous nature, holiness and special qualities.

Here is a small selection of pasukim regarding Eretz Yisrael from this week's parsha:

Devarim 7:13 - וַאֲהֵבְךָ֣ וּבֵרַכְךָ֔ וְהִרְבֶּ֑ךָ וּבֵרַ֞ךְ פְּרִי־בִטְנְךָ֤ וּפְרִי־אַדְמָתֶךָ֙ דְּגָנְךָ֣ וְתִירֹשְׁךָ֔ וְיִצְהָרֶ֑ךָ שְׁגַר־אֲלָפֶ֙יךָ֙ וְעַשְׁתְּרֹ֣ת צֹאנֶ֔ךָ עַ֚ל הָאֲדָמָ֔ה אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּ֥ע לַאֲבֹתֶ֖יךָ לָתֵ֥ת לָֽךְ - And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your soil, your grain, your wine, and your oil, the offspring of your cattle and the choice of your flocks, upon the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you;

8:1 - כָּל־הַמִּצְוָ֣ה אֲשֶׁר֩ אָנֹכִ֨י מְצַוְּךָ֜ הַיּ֗וֹם--תִּשְׁמְר֣וּן לַעֲשׂ֔וֹת לְמַ֣עַן תִּחְי֔וּן וּרְבִיתֶ֖ם, וּבָאתֶ֣ם וִֽירִשְׁתֶּ֔ם אֶת־הָאָ֕רֶץ, אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּ֥ע יְהוָ֖ה לַאֲבֹתֵיכֶֽם - Every commandment that I command you this day you shall keep to do, that you may live and multiply, and come and possess the land that Hashem swore to your forefathers;

v.7 - כִּ֣י יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹקֶ֗יךָ מְבִיאֲךָ֙ אֶל־אֶ֣רֶץ טוֹבָ֔ה אֶ֖רֶץ, נַחֲלֵ֣י מָ֑יִם--עֲיָנֹ֥ת וּתְהֹמֹ֖ת, יֹצְאִ֥ים בַּבִּקְעָ֖ה וּבָהָֽר - For Hashem your G-d is bringing you to a good land, a land with brooks of water, fountains and depths, that emerge in valleys and mountains;

v.8 - אֶ֣רֶץ חִטָּ֣ה וּשְׂעֹרָ֔ה, וְגֶ֥פֶן וּתְאֵנָ֖ה וְרִמּ֑וֹן; אֶ֣רֶץ־זֵ֣ית שֶׁ֔מֶן, וּדְבָֽשׁ - a land of wheat and barley, vines and figs and pomegranates, a land of oil producing olives and honey;

v.10 - וְאָכַלְתָּ֖, וְשָׂבָ֑עְתָּ--וּבֵרַכְתָּ֙ אֶת־יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹקֶ֔יךָ, עַל־הָאָ֥רֶץ הַטֹּבָ֖ה אֲשֶׁ֥ר נָתַן־לָֽךְ - And you shall eat and be satiated, and you will bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good land that He has given you;

11:12 - אֶ֣רֶץ, אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹקֶ֔יךָ דֹּרֵ֥שׁ אֹתָ֖הּ תָּמִ֑יד, עֵינֵ֨י יְהוָ֤ה אֱלֹקֶ֙יךָ֙ בָּ֔הּ--מֵרֵשִׁ֥ית הַשָּׁנָ֖ה, וְעַ֥ד אַחֲרִ֥ית שָׁנָֽה - it is a land that Hashem, your G-d, seeks out; the eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

Though he never merited to enter into the Land, as an emissary of Hashem, Moshe was in love with Eretz Yisrael,. He knew that it was the only place where Torah and mitzvos could be properly fulfilled as prescribed by the Torah (Sotah 14a), and Moshe exhorts us - over and over again - to love, appreciate and cherish the good Land.

Over the last close-to-eleven months, Hashem yerachem aleinu, much of the happenings from Eretz Yisrael are exceptionally, painfully difficult and impossible to comprehend. From the brave soldiers fighting for us all, the fallen who gave their lives, the hostages and their families, the evacuees from the North and South, the continuous barrage of missiles, rockets and drones in the North, the businesses destroyed, the hatred of the world for our State and our Nation… our beloved Land and nation are under attack.

However, despite all the losses and all the pain, we must remember that Hashem loves us and His Land, and His eyes are upon the Land always (cf. Devarim 11:12, quoted above). Earlier this week, a great miracle occurred in Tel Aviv, reminding us of Hashem's ever-present Hashgacha and shemira upon us. During these challenging times, it behooves us, and encourages us, to remember that Hashem's Merciful Guidance is always present.

Rav Avraham Meshulam, the Gabbai of the Rashbi shul in southern Tel Aviv, where a great neis occurred on Sunday evening (August 18, 2024) when a suicide bomber's powerful bomb prematurely exploded ten meters away from it, spoke to the media on Monday about the magnitude of the neis (miracle). "The explosion was louder than I've ever heard before," he said. "The whole shul shook like in a powerful earthquake. The electricity went out in part of the building and the glass of the windows shattered on people. Miraculously there were no people on the street at the time except for one passerby who was injured and we daven for his speedy recovery."

"They saw on the security cameras that the terrorist had already approached the entrance of the shul, checked out the area and saw that there was a shul there full of people. Afterward, you see him going back ten meters and sitting on a bench and fiddling with the buttons inside his knapsack. HKB"H caused him to accidentally press the wrong button, activating the device at that moment and not several minutes afterward. It truly was a neis. The building next to the shul, a hardware store, was destroyed – the wall completely exploded. The glass that shattered on us was really marginal, nothing. None of us were hurt, not even a little. We believe that HKB"H protects us and saved us."

Rav Meshulam told B'Chadrei Chareidim that the shul has a Yeshivas Bein Hazemanim every day, the largest one in the city, and the shul is especially crowded at night with mispallelim and lomdei Torah – exactly the time that the device exploded. "Just last week, the Sephardi Rav of Bnei Brak, HaGaon HaRav Masoud Ben-Shimon, came to the opening ceremony for Yeshivas Bein HaZemanim, and said: 'Know one thing – this Yeshivas Bein HaZemanim protects all of Tel Aviv.' At that time, people didn't attribute much importance to his words and thought it was simply a statement of chizzuk. But B"H, everyone understands the koach of Torah – that's what protects Am Yisrael. It could have ended in a mass-casualty incident – the explosion was extremely powerful. My father built this shul 75 years ago in the name of Rav Shimon Bar Yochai. The shteibelach have been here for 75 years and are full of tefillos and Torah all the time"

www.theyeshivaworld.com.

May we merit to witness the ultimate Revelation and Redemption, with the coming of Moshiach; כִּי תִמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ לָדַעַת אֶת־כְּבוֹד ה' כַּמַּיִם יְכַסּוּ עַל־יָם - For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Hashem, as the water covers the sea (Chavakuk 2:14).

בברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום

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from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

date: Aug 22, 2024, 3:48 AM

subject: Rav Kook on Eikev: Four Blessings after the Meal

Rav Kook Torah

Eikev: Four Blessings After Eating

"When you eat and are sated, you must bless the Lord your God for the good land that He has given you." (Deut. 8:10)

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, הַזָּן ("the One Who provides sustenance for the entire world"), when the manna fell in the desert. Joshua composed the second blessing, עַל הָאָרֶץ ("For the Land"), when the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel.

David and Solomon composed the third blessing, בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם ("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, הַטּוֹב וְהַמֵּיטִיב ("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)

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.

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from: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein** <ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com>
date: Aug 22, 2024, 7:14 AM
subject: **Meshech Chochmah on Ekev**

MESHECH CHOCHMAH

Ekev

The Mitzvah of Cleaving to Hashem

אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ תִּירָא אֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹד וּבוֹ תִדְבָּק

You shall fear Hashem your God… and to Him you shall cleave (10:20)

Defining the Mitzvah

The Ramban explains that the phrase "and to Him you shall cleave" refers to those righteous individuals for whom an awareness of and desire for Hashem is constantly present in their thoughts and actions. The Meshech Chochmah, however, takes issue with this approach, on the basis of the assertion that any mitzvah that is addressed to the Jewish people in a general way must be able to be fulfilled by every member of the people on their level, not just by a select few.

Therefore, the Meshech Chochmah explains that this mitzvah contains a basic Jewish obligation that is elaborated upon at length in Neviim and Kesuvim, namely, bitachon – trust in Hashem.

The basis of this trust is twofold:

A citizen of a country will generally trust in the king to uphold his moral duty to protect his subjects.

A son will naturally trust his father who loves him to look after him and provide for him.

Certainly, then, Hashem, who is both our Father and our King, should be the recipient of our trust to care and look after us. Indeed, in His infinite knowledge, He knows better than we do ourselves what we need, and has infinite capacity to take care of those needs.

This is the mitzvah of cleaving to Hashem; it involves the person recognizing that he is connected to Hashem's Divine care and providence, and trusting in Him accordingly. Moreover, this mitzvah can be performed by anyone among the Jewish people, regardless of their spiritual stature, as the Midrash states, that even a wicked person who trusts in Hashem will be enveloped by His kindness and protection.[1] To be sure, the highest level of this mitzvah involves a person's every thought and deed as being devoted and dedicated to Hashem, as the Ramban stated, but the mitzvah itself on a basic level is in the province of the entire Jewish people.

This understanding of the mitzvah is corroborated by Yehoshua's final words to the Jewish people, where he exhorts them to continue to cleave to Hashem as they have done until now.[2] The context of this exhortation is the wars that he describes in the preceding verses, which the people had fought with implicit trust that Hashem will assist them in the conquest of the land.[3] That trust is called "cleaving to Hashem," and Yehoshua exhorts the people to continue to act in accordance with this principle.

The Gemara's Exposition

Now, it should be noted that the Gemara has an explanation of the concept of cleaving to Hashem which seems to be at odds with that of the Meshech Chochmah. In Maseches Kesubos, it explains that the "cleaving to Hashem" involves one attaching himself to a Torah scholar, for example by having one's daughter marry a talmid chacham and by doing business on behalf of the talmid chacham.[4] Indeed, the Rambam bases his understanding of our mitzvah on that gemara.[5]

However, the Meshech Chochmah explains that there is no conflict between the explanation given by the gemara (attaching oneself to ta talmid chacham) and the one he is advancing (trusting in Hashem), for the simple reason that each one is addressing a different verse. The Torah mentions this idea of "cleaving to Hashem" in two places: first in our parsha and then again at the end of Parshas Nitzavim.

The Gemara is addressing the command as it appears in Parshas Nitzavim. There, the verse writes "to love Hashem, to heed His voice and to cleave to Him."[6] Cleaving to Hashem's voice as expressed in the Torah indeed takes the form of attaching oneself to a talmid chacham in the ways described by the gemara there.

Our verse commands "to fear Hashem… and to cleave to Him." This is the mitzvah of bitachon, for one who trusts in Hashem fears Him alone and no other power.

Bitachon and Shabbos

With the above in mind, the Meshech Chochmah comes back to explain a matter he has dealt with in an earlier parsha. Keeping Shabbos is a commemoration of Hashem resting from creation on the seventh day. As such, it should be applicable to all nations, yet we know that only the Jewish people were given the Shabbos!

Upon reflection, however, we will appreciate that embracing a day where all productive labor is forbidden can only be done if one trusts in Hashem completely that his livelihood will not suffer as result. Therefore, only the Jewish people, from whom such a level of bitachon is expected, were entrusted with keeping the Shabbos day. This gives us new insight into the idea of Shabbos, as presented in the second set of luchos, being accompanied by a command to remember that we were slaves in Egypt and that Hashem took us out.[7] The idea is that reflection on those events should engender within us an awareness of Hashem's Divine protection over us, which will then allow us to keep the Shabbos day as it should be kept, with no worry over our livelihood and material wellbeing.

Moreover, the first time Shabbos is mentioned to the Jewish people in the verse is in the context of the double portion of manna that fell on Friday, with no manna falling on Shabbos.[8] The entire experience of having their food fall from heaven engendered and embedded within the people a fundamental sense of trust in Hashem as the source of their sustenance; hence, this was a most appropriate juncture to introduce the day of Shabbos which is predicated on that theme.

Indeed, the very first historical act of national trust in Hashem on the part of the Jewish people is intimately bound up with Shabbos. Four days prior to the slaughtering of the korban pesach, the people were told to take a sheep, in full view of the Egyptians who worshipped it as a deity, and tie it to their bedposts in anticipation of slaughtering it as a korban. That day, the tenth of Nissan, fell on that year on the Shabbos, and trust the people demonstrated in Hashem by taking those animals showed them to be uniquely deserving to receive the Shabbos day – for which reason we celebrate the Shabbos before Pesach every year as Shabbos Hagadol!

[1] Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim sec. 719. [2] Yehoshua 23:8. [3] See ibid. verses 1-7. [4] Kesubos 111b. [5] See Sefer Hamitzvos, positive mitzvah 6, and Hilchos De'os 6:2. [6] Devarim 30:20. [7] See ibid. 5:15. [8] See Shemos 16:22-26.

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https://aish.com/antisemites-are-attacking-the-talmud/

Antisemites Are Attacking the Talmud

by **Rabbi Efrem Goldberg**

August 21, 2024

Influencers are shamelessly promoting blood libels and unfounded accusations about the Talmud to an audience eager to hear it. Arm yourself with knowledge.

This week, a Jew hater with 1.6 million Twitter followers posted an image consisting of a collection of supposed passages from the Talmud that paint Jews as disparaging towards and discriminating against non-Jews, seeing them as inferior and treating them with a bias and double standard. The image isn't new but this was likely the biggest audience it had ever been published to.

Some of the quotes don't exist altogether, others are taken out of context, and others are intentionally misrepresented or misquoted. No matter, the post was viewed more than 5.9 million times, liked more than 33,000 times and shared 8,300 times.

I posted the following in response:

Since the Talmud was written it has been misquoted, twisted and used to fuel and justify antisemitism. Those who hosted "disputations" disappeared into oblivion while the Talmud is alive, well and studied more than ever around the world. @DanBilzerian and @RealCandaceO - you don't scare us. You will long be gone and the Talmud will continue to light up the world.

Putting Judaism on trial goes back to our very beginning. Abraham holds a religious debate with Nimrod. The Talmud records stories of disputations between Jews and Roman tormentors. In the Middle Ages, Jews were forced to defend the Talmud against Christians authorities who accused it of containing blasphemy and anti-Christian sentiments. Some famous incidents include Nicholas Donin, a Jewish apostate, disputing R' Yechiel of Paris in 1240 that resulted in the burning of 24 wagonloads of hand-written volumes of Talmud. In 1263, King James I of Spain ordered the Ramban to debate with apostate Pablo Christiani at a disputation in Barcelona. In the 15th century, R' Yosef Albo participated in the disputation of Tortosa. In 1757 in Kamenets, Polish Jewry was tasked with defending Judaism and the Talmud against Jacob Frank that included the spurious blood libel charge, the false accusation that Jews baked their matzahs with the blood of murdered Christian babies. The list sadly goes on and on.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Who would believe that in 2024, public personalities with large platforms could continue to shamelessly promote blood libels and unfounded accusations about the Talmud to an audience eager to hear it.

The response to my post was predictable, but it was nonetheless jarring. A torrent of antisemitism, including hundreds of hateful comments, were unleashed in my direction. A small sample of some of the ones I can print here:

· "The only lighting up the Talmud should do is when it's drenched in gasoline and set fire to."
· "Nicholas Donin was a hero"
· "The Talmud is satanic garbage"

An educator named Rabbi Yisrael M. Eliashiv wrote a detailed thread addressing each of the alleged Talmudic statements, finding and posting original sources, and debunking the lies in the offensive image. He introduced it by saying, "Preface: None of this is new; most of these fake quotes originate from a couple of antisemitic German books that are over a hundred years old and they've been debunked over and over in many places. Sadly, most of them are not so accessible so I'll go over them myself."

Impressively, the response has been viewed 2.1 million times. While it does set the record straight for those who are willing to read it and be open to the truth, sadly, that number is less than half of the number who read the original, hateful post.

Get Informed

The Jewish people are under attack. We are the target of false accusations and distortions of our Torah, of our country, and of our people. Ignorance is not bliss, it is irresponsible. How can we expect others to defend us if we are unaware and unfamiliar with the facts and truths ourselves? We may well encounter a hateful antisemite, or even someone well-intentioned who came across a post that made them question what we believe, who saw something that makes them ask us about our sacred texts. When the moment arises at the watercooler at work, on the checkout line of the supermarket, or with our seatmate on the plane, will we be ready, armed and informed with the facts? Are our children sufficiently literate on the basics of our people, our history, our Torah, and Israel to stand up and defend if they are ever under attack?

Our rabbis teach: "Rebbe Elazar said: Be diligent in the study of the Torah and know how to answer a heretic" (Ethics of the Fathers, 2:14). Commentators wonder, why doesn't Rebbe Elazar command us to answer the disputer; why is the instruction "know what to answer"?

If they are looking into the Talmud to discredit it, we must be inspired to look more often and more deeply into our Talmud to be informed, inspired and guided by it.

The greatest response to our enemies and attackers is not necessarily to engage and debate but to be knowledgeable, literate, informed, passionate and practicing. That is why the Mishna begins by telling us to be diligent in studying Torah. How much? Until you are armed with the knowledge, confidence, and clarity to not be threatened or challenged by the heretic and instead to live a passionate, rich Jewish life.

Just like the antagonists and disputants who came before, Dan Bilzerian, Candace Owens and the raging antisemites of our time will not be effective and will not be remembered, but our sacred Torah and our timeless Talmud will continue to be learned around the world.

If they are looking into the Talmud to discredit it, we must be inspired to look more often and more deeply into our Talmud to be informed, inspired and guided by it.

We must continue to confront and stop antisemites, but the most important response we can offer is to not only never apologize, be ashamed or defensive of our Talmud or tradition, but to channel their hate into a greater love and commitment for our wisdom and our way of life.

They want us to stop learning and living Torah? The response must be to learn it and live it more.

They want us to abandon our values? Lean into them, hold on to them stronger, tighter.

They want you to hide your yarmulka? Get a bigger one.

We cannot win if we don't know what we are fighting for. Become a better, bigger, and more practicing and learned Jew.

Someone asked me, if I had $100 million to fight antisemitism what would I do? I said I wouldn't buy ads on television or hire lobbyists in Congress. I would put every penny into reaching out to our Jewish brothers and sisters to stand taller, prouder, to live more Jewishly. I would send a mezuzah for every Jew and every Jewish student on a college campus to hang on their door. I would send candles for every Jew to light Friday night or for Hanukkah.

We cannot win if we don't know what we are fighting for. Become a better, bigger, and more practicing and learned Jew.

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg is the rabbi of the Boca Raton Synagogue.

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Small Tastings of Torah, Judaism and Spirituality

from **Rav Binny Freedman** – Portion of Ekev

Some years ago, I received this fascinating story* via e- mail:

** The story in the email was later found to be a hoax, but it still makes a great story!*

At the turn of the twentieth century, two of the wealthiest and most famous men in America was a pair of Jewish brothers named Nathan and Isidor Straus. Owners of R.H. Macy's Department Store and founders of the A&S (Abraham & Straus) chain, the brothers were multimillionaires, renowned for their philanthropy and social activism.

In 1912, the brothers and their wives were touring Europe, when Nathan, the more ardent Zionist of the two, impulsively said one day, "Hey, why don't we hop over to Palestine?" Israel wasn't the tourist hotspot then that it is today. Its population was ravaged by disease, famine, and poverty; but the two had a strong sense of solidarity with their less fortunate brethren, and they also wanted to see the health and welfare centers they had endowed with their millions. However, after a week spent touring, Isidor Straus had had enough.

"How many camels, hovels, and yeshivas can you see? It's time to go," Isidor decreed with edgy impatience in his voice. But Nathan refused to heed his brother's imperious command. It wasn't that he was oblivious to the hardships around him; it was precisely because of them that he wanted to stay.

As he absorbed firsthand the vastness of the challenges his fellow Jews were coping with, he felt the burden of responsibility. "We can't leave now," he protested. "Look how much work has to be done here. We have to help. We have the means to help. We can't turn our backs on our people." "So we'll send more money," his brother snapped back. "I just want to get out of here."

But Nathan felt that money simply wasn't enough. He felt that the Jews who lived under such dire circumstances in Palestine needed the brothers' very presence among them: their initiative, their leadership, and their ideas. Isidor disagreed.

The two argued back and forth, and finally Isidor said, "If you insist, stay here. Ida and I are going back to America where we belong."

The two separated. Isidor and his wife returned to Europe, while Nathan and his spouse stayed in Palestine, traveling the country and contributing huge sums of money to the establishment of education, health, and social welfare programs to benefit the needy. Nathan also financed the creation of a brand-new city on the shores of the Mediterranean. And since his name in Hebrew was Natan, and he was the city's chief donor, the founders named it after him and called it…Natanya.

Meanwhile, back in Europe, Isidor Straus was preparing to sail home to America aboard an ocean liner for which he had also made reservations for his brother, Nathan, and his wife. "You must leave Palestine NOW!" he cabled his brother in an urgent telegram. "I have made reservations for you and if you don't get here soon, you'll miss the boat."

But Nathan delayed. There was so much work to be done that he waited until the last possible moment to make the connection. By the time he reached London, it was April 12 and the liner had already left port in Southampton with Isidor and Ida Straus aboard. Nathan felt disconsolate that he had, as his brother had warned, "missed the boat." For this was no ordinary expedition, no common, everyday cruise that he had forfeited, but the much-ballyhooed maiden voyage of the most famous ship of the century. This was the Titanic.

Nathan Straus, grief-stricken and deeply mourning his brother and sister-in-law could not shake off his sense that he had had a rendezvous with history. The knowledge that he had avoided death permeated his consciousness for the rest of his life, and until his death in l931, he pursued his philanthropic activities with an intensity that was unrivaled in his time. Truly, his life was a blessing for the Jewish people.

[In reality, Nathan Straus broke his leg on a 1912 visit to Palestine and was unable to join his brother, Isidor, on the RMS Titanic. Isidor died in the sinking. The Israeli city of Netanya (Hebrew: Natan, for Nathan), founded in 1927, was named in his honor.]

Today, Netanya is a scenic resort city of 200,000 and headquarters to Israel's thriving diamond trade – one of the most important industries in the country. And in almost every part of the city, there is some small reminder of Nathan Straus's largesse, his humanity, and love for his people. His legacy lives on….

What motivates some people to do more than just appreciate the blessings they have in their lives; and to actually be a vehicle for blessing?

This week's portion, Ekev, contains one of the pivotal verses of the entire Torah regarding the concept of blessings:

"Ve'achalta' ve'sava'ta' u'verachta' et Hashem Elokecha al ha'aretz hatovah asher natan lach."

"And (when) you shall eat and be satisfied and bless G-d your G-d for the good land which He has given you." (Devarim (Deuteronomy) 8:10)

This verse is actually the biblical basis for the Grace after Meals (known as the Birkat hamazon): the four blessings we say after a meal which includes a satisfying helping of bread. Coming as it does, in the midst of Moshe's speech to the Jewish people (now in its third portion….) and his stern warnings to the generation about to enter the land of Israel lest they forget who they are and why they have been charged by G-d with the challenge of conquering the land of Israel, this verse begs a number of questions.

First of all, how does one bless G-d? Thanking G-d is one thing; after all, it makes sense to be appreciative of all the gifts we are blessed with and the value of being thankful for it all, especially to the source of all good in this world makes a lot of sense. But what does it mean to bless G-d? Why would G-d need our blessings, much less demand them? In fact, what exactly is a blessing?

Furthermore, why is the system for blessings after eating bread (the grace after meals or Birkat hamazon) so much more involved (3-4 blessings) than say, the blessing over fruits?

In fact, Moshe mentions these 'fruits' in declaring how wonderful the land of Israel is:

"Ki' Hashem Elokecha' me'viacha' el eretz tovah: eretz nachalei mayim…eretz chittah u'se'orah ve'gefen u'te'enah ve'rimon ,eretz zeit shemen u'dvash."

"For Hashem your G-d is bringing you to a good land: a land of streams of water… a land of wheat and barley, vines and figs and pomegranates, a land of olive (oil) trees and (date) honey." (Devarim(Deuteronomy) 8:7-8)

According to Jewish tradition these are seven special 'fruits' known as the seven species which grew in the land of Israel (and were apparently what the spies brought back to the Jewish people in the desert). Yet even though these species include grains, it is only when these grains are utilized to make bread that for some reason, the blessings we make upon eating them are taken to a different level, resulting in three (and later four) blessings instead of the usual one (known as the Al HaMichyah or Bracha achat me'ein shalosh blessing made after eating cakes and fruits…)

Considering how beautiful these fruits are, and how much more appreciative one might expect us to be upon eating fruits, than say, on a simple piece of pita….
All of this is wrapped up in understanding the nature of blessings in the first place.
I recall once, at a Friday night dinner, meeting a fellow who seemed quite prominent in his Synagogue, and who had sponsored the evening in memory of his son who had passed away in a tragic car accident. At the end of dinner thinking it would be appropriate, I asked him if he would honor us by leading the blessings after the meals but he politely declined, saying "I don't do that!"
Given that he appeared quite knowledgeable in Judaism and seemed familiar and even comfortable with Jewish tradition, I was somewhat surprised by his comment and later found the opportunity to ask him what he meant.
"I used to buy it all; the whole nine yards" he explained to me.
"And I still think Judaism is an incredible system with a magnificent community structure. I grew up religious and have never driven on Shabbat nor knowingly placed unkosher food in my mouth, and I never will. I even believe in G-d; who else could be the reason we are all here?'
"But after he took my son, I'll be damned if I'm ever going to bless Him again!"
While at the time, due to the circumstances, I wasn't able to have the long discussion such a comment almost demands (and of course, far be it from me to have the arrogance to judge such a person, given the pain he had obviously been and continued to be going through…) I did manage to ask him what he thought blessings were. After all, if you decide you are not going to bless, you must have a working definition of what a blessing really is, right?
Fascinatingly, he had never really thought about it, but upon reflection realized he considered it to be a form of thanksgiving and recognition (and he felt himself unable to be fully thankful to a G-d who, he perceived, had taken his son. Indeed, his decision to remain an involved Jew on every other level other than blessings was, I imagine his own form of rebellion against a G-d he was not quite ready to forgive.
And yet, blessings are not really about saying thank you. The Hebrew word for 'thanks' is todah, which is very different from the Hebrew word for blessing which is 'bracha'.
In fact, thanksgiving is an entirely different topic, and we do in fact have many blessings that are about thanksgiving such as the 'Modim' prayer (in the silent Amidah) and the 'Nodeh Lecha' blessing after meals.
So, what is the meaning of the word 'brachah' (blessing)?
When Hashem (G-d) blesses Avraham, the verse in Genesis says:
"Va'Hashem Beirach et Avraham Bakol."
"And G-d blessed Avraham with everything."
And the commentaries there suggest that Hashem actually blessed Avraham by increasing his wealth as well as his progeny. Rav Soleveitchick suggests that this is indeed the true nature of the word 'bracha': to increase.
When you are blessed, something is increased, whether it is the joy in your life, your sense of fulfillment or even having more children. In fact, when you bless someone that their business should be successful you are really hoping they will earn more money.
So how do we bless Hashem, and why does Hashem need our blessing?
Obviously, Hashem doesn't need our blessings; rather, we need to be blessing Hashem. Blessing G-d is, quite simply, the art of increasing Hashem's presence in our lives, and in all that we do.
Thus, blessing G-d when you are eating an apple is actually a conscious decision to elevate the simple act of eating an apple into an opportunity to appreciate G-d's presence in my life. By making a blessing over an apple we allow this apple to become a vehicle for increasing Hashem's presence in our life, which of course not only elevates the act of eating an apple, but elevates as well the person eating the apple.
Which leaves us with the question of why the blessing for bread seems so much more involved than for other foods?
In truth, what separates bread from other types of food, is not the food item itself, but rather what we do with it.
Interestingly, in the portion of Shoftim, (Devarim 20: 5-7) which we will read in a couple of weeks, the Torah tells us that there are three instances (aside from being afraid) that allow someone to be exempt from going to battle (if it is a war of expansion or economic security (milchemet reshut), as opposed to a war being fought to save the Jewish people from destruction or milchemet mitzvah).
If someone has built a new home (and has not yet lived there), planted a vineyard (whose vintage he has not yet savored), or betrothed a woman (but has not yet married…), he need not go to such a war. And the Baruch She'amar (Rav Baruch HaLevi Epstein also known as the Torah Temimah) points out that these three instances represent a growing appreciation of the nature of our partnership with G-d. When a person builds a home, he often feels as though he has built it himself, and he revels in the pride of his accomplishment. But when a person plants a vineyard, he is much more aware of how much he is really in partnership with G-d, because without the rains, nothing he planted would have grown, so he is much more aware of Hashem as responsible for all the good he is experiencing. And of course, when marrying and having children, it becomes even clearer that we are just vehicles for G- d's plan. We are, on the one hand, blessed to be in partnership with G-d in bringing life into the world, and yet very much aware of how fragile life truly is, and how much Hashem is really responsible for all the good we have in our lives.
When a person goes to war, he actually has to find the balance between placing himself completely in Hashem's hands while at the same time recognizing that G-d wants us to be partners in making the world a better place.
After all, if we truly believed G-d runs the world then we wouldn't bother bringing our guns to battle because it's all in G-d's hands anyway, right?
And yet Judaism suggests that Hashem very much wants us as partners in building this world, hence its creation as an unfinished project….
And of course, this is not because Hashem needs our help to fight, or to finish planting the field. Rather, this is part of Hashem's gift to us; it is we who gain from the process of being partners in building this world.
All of which brings us back to the wheat growing in the field.
The Talmud (in tractates Berachot and Shabbat 74b) tells us there are ten processes in making bread. (Hence the ten words of the blessing over bread: the 'Hamotzi'…) We come to an empty field, but if we watch it and wait for it to grow bread it will be a long wait!
We plough and then sew seeds, reap the grain and then thresh and winnow, gather and divide, eventually making and kneading the dough and then baking it into what finally becomes bread. It takes a lot of work to make bread, which is why, according to some commentaries; it was specifically bread (known as the lechem hapanim or show bread) that was put on 'show' in the Temple every week.
Fruit in the fields was essentially a gift from G-d; once the trees are planted all they need is water, and the fruit will arrive. Thus, they represent G-d's gift to us.
Bread on the other hand, which takes so much work, represents our gift back to G-d. Bread is all about what we choose to do with the world that G-d gives us.
(Indeed, this is the essence of understanding why the challenge G-d gave Adam after the sin of eating from the tree of knowledge was that we would eat bread 'by the sweat of our brow…'. We did not fully appreciate the gifts (the Garden of Eden) G-d gave us, so now we would need to earn them…
Bread then, is the ultimate expression of our partnership with G-d, and as such creates a much greater sense of the presence of G-d in our lives.
And the more we are willing to be partners in bringing G-d into our lives and into this world, the higher level the world and us along with it, will reach….
In these times filled with so many challenges, and with so much work needed to create a better society, the daily act of blessing our bread, serves as both a reminder as well as an inspiration of how different the world could be, if only we were all willing to make it so….
Shabbat Shalom from Yerushalayim,
Rav Binny Freedman

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?