

# Torah Tidbits

י' שבט תשפ"א 21<sup>RD</sup> JAN 23<sup>RD</sup> ISSUE 1404

פרשת בא

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TU B'SHVAT  
DIVREI TORAH  
AND INSIGHTS  
page 60-79



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APPRECIATION  
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PEOPLE  
Rabbi Moshe Taragin  
page 70

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Expanded  
Tu B'shvat  
Edition

## השקדיה פורחת

YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT BO

Candles 4:29PM • Havdala 5:44PM • Rabbeinu Tam 6:23PM

## WEEKLY INSPIRATION

One should know that God's kindness and compassion reach all His creation. However, individuals are chosen, be they people of individual nations, that the good may reach all beings through them.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook zt"l (Ein Ayah, Berachot, Chapter 5, Note 102)

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# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



CANDLES	BO	HAVDALA	BESHALACH	
			Candles	Havdala
4:29	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	5:44	4:35	5:50
4:47	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	5:47	4:53	5:53
4:47	Beit Shemesh / RBS	5:45	4:54	5:51
4:44	Gush Etzion	5:45	4:51	5:50
4:44	Raanana/ Tel Mond/ Herzliya/ K. Saba	5:45	4:51	5:51
4:44	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	5:45	4:51	5:51
4:44	Netanya	5:45	4:51	5:51
4:47	Be'er Sheva	5:47	4:53	5:52
4:45	Rehovot	5:46	4:52	5:52
4:29	Petach Tikva	5:45	4:35	5:51
4:43	Ginot Shomron	5:44	4:50	5:50
4:33	Haifa / Zichron	5:44	4:39	5:50
4:43	Gush Shiloh	5:43	4:49	5:49
4:45	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	5:45	4:51	5:51
4:44	Giv'at Ze'ev	5:44	4:50	5:50
4:45	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:45	4:51	5:51
4:47	Ashkelon	5:47	4:53	5:53
4:45	Yad Binyamin	5:46	4:52	5:52
4:36	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	5:41	4:42	5:47
4:40	Golan	5:41	4:47	5:47

**Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 6:23 PM** • next week - 6:29 pm

Times According to MyZmanim (20 min. before sundown in most cities,  
40 min. in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva, 30 min. in Tzfat/Haifa)

# OTHER Z'MANIM



## JERUSALEM

**RANGES 11 DAYS WED - SHABBAT  
7 - 17 SHEVAT (JAN. 20 - JAN. 30)**

Earliest Talit and Tefilin	5:44 - 5:41am
Sunrise	6:38 - 6:33am
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema (Magen Avraham: 8:36 - 8:35am)	9:14 - 9:13am
Sof Z'man T'fila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	10:06am
Chatzot (Halachic noon)	11:50 - 11:52am
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:20 - 12:22pm
Plag Mincha	3:57 - 4:04pm
Sunset (counting elevation)	5:07 - 5:16pm

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## Rabbi Avi Berman Executive Director, OU Israel

The Gemara says “אינו דומה שמייעה לראיה” (hearing something cannot be compared to seeing something, Yevamot 65b). I feel this constantly when I try to relay OU Israel program experiences to friends around the world that support our programs. There is a certain level of excitement, awe, and pride which I feel when speaking to a participant that cannot be properly given over with words.

When a teenager from Kiryat Gat who made Aliyah to one of the city’s poorest, and crime filled neighborhoods tells me that he decided to spend the year after high school in a pre-IDF preparatory Mechina based on the advice of his OU Israel Youth Center advisor, it fills me with a pride that I cannot fully articulate. This was a young man who struggled week after week throughout high school and who was supported by his advisor every step of the way. I also have this feeling when I received a call from an elderly Anglo Olah who has been alone in her apartment practically since the start of

the pandemic. She shared that her visit from an OU Israel staff member bringing a Chanukah package was the first visit she has had in months, and she can’t wait for the day when Covid-19 is gone so she can come back to her favorite Shiurim and meet all of her friends in person at the OU Israel Center. Her words and tone of voice resonate in a way I cannot give over.

---

## These life changing moments for the Taglit participants were all thanks to him

---

I challenge our ‘Start Up Nation’ to create some type of sophisticated body camera that captures not only images but intellect and emotions as well. In the interim, I do my best to share inspirational success stories with our friends and supporters. I try to give over the stories and experiences that I think will resonate with each individual based on what I know about them. Generally, I leave these meetings or phone calls also having gained much from the person I am meeting.

One such meeting was with the giant Sheldon Adelson z”l, a tremendous supporter of Israel and the Jewish people. Two years ago, I had the fortunate honor to be invited to the White House



Chanukah party. I remember feeling extremely happy and excited when I saw that Sheldon was there. Speaking with him was a surreal experience. Here was a man who had the ability to invest more money than I will ever see, and he and his dear wife Dr. Miriam prioritized investing it in bringing Jewish young adults to Israel.

I thanked Sheldon for his incredible impact on the State of Israel and the Jewish people, and I shared with him a few moments from OU Israel Free Spirit Taglit Birthright trips which demonstrated the impact he was having on the tens of thousands of participants. I told him about these young men and women crying atop Masada or at the Kotel as they experienced something they never thought they would experience, and that these life changing moments for the Taglit participants were all thanks to him. He smiled and was extremely thankful for my words, and his smile left an impression on me. I feel very blessed to have been able to share a small token of our Hakarat HaTov to Sheldon for enabling the OU and other Birthright providers to transform so many lives.



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To end off, I want to thank everyone that sent in feedback about last week's article. I was happy to see so many of you agree with our decision that Torah Tidbits is not the place for politics. Please continue to share your feedback with me at [aberman@ouisrael.org](mailto:aberman@ouisrael.org).



Avi  
Executive Director, OU Israel





**Rabbi Reuven  
Tradburks**  
Director of RCA  
Israel Region

The 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> plagues occur. Before the 10<sup>th</sup>, death of the first born, the mitzvot of Korban Pesach and of Matza are given. The first-born die. The Jews are sent out of Egypt. Mitzvot are given to commemorate the momentous event of the Exodus from Egypt.

**1<sup>st</sup> aliya (10:1-11)** The eighth plague: locusts. Moshe and Aharon come to Paro: locusts will swarm, eating all vegetation left from the hail. They leave. Paro's advisors warn him that Egypt is heading to destruction. Moshe and Aharon are brought back. Paro says: go and serve your G-d. Who is going? Moshe replies:

May the Torah learning this week  
be in loving memory of

**Michael L Shrybman**

Moshe Leib ben Yosef Baer z"l -

twin brother

**Matthew S. Silverberg**

Meir Zalman ben Godel Pesach z"l -

dear cousin

*Malka and Avraham Shrybman*

young, old, men, women, animals. Paro refuses: only men. And sends them out.

The plagues have patterns. One pattern in these last plagues seems to be a reversal of creation. Back in the creation story, light is created on day 1. The heavens on day 2. The land and vegetation on day 3. In reverse: the locusts eat all the vegetation on the land. They swarm from the sky. In darkness, Moshe lifts his staff to the sky. And then; no light. As if the world of Egypt is unraveling back to chaos.

**2<sup>nd</sup> aliya (10:12-23)** The east wind brings in the locusts. They darken the earth, eating all vegetation. Paro quickly calls Moshe and Aharon: I have sinned to G-d your G-d. Pray to remove this death from me. Moshe does. The wind brings the locusts back to the sea. Paro does not send the people out. The 9<sup>th</sup> plague: 3 days of darkness. There is light for the Jews.

While we shouldn't have a favourite child, we can have a favourite plague. Kids like frogs. My favourite is darkness. For what it says about the Jews. If it is dark in Egypt for 3 days – oh yea, why 3 days? None of the other plagues tell us how long they lasted. Why did the darkness last 3 days? Where else in this story does 3 days come up?

Moshe asked Paro to allow the Jews to go 3 days journey into the desert to serve G-d. If it's dark for 3 days – perfect – leave, go the 3 days and by the time the lights come on, the Jewish people are at the Sea. Why didn't they leave under

cover of 3 days darkness?

Because the story is not the Jew's march to freedom. A freedom march would have a charismatic leader, who rallies the people to fight the injustices done to them, leading a people who yearn to gain their freedom. But that is not the story. The Jews are in Egypt 430 years. No insurrection. Moshe is 80 when called for his mission – kind of late in life to lead your people. But leading the people is not his idea, it's thrust upon him. He refuses. Moshe is not a charismatic leader, a smooth rhetorical speaker, a master legislator.

The story of the Exodus is His story. He chooses Moshe, against his will, to be his pawn. And look at the Jews – they could have run for it – but they are not freedom marchers. They leave completely by the will of G-d, not their own wiles. When they had the chance to run – they didn't. The reluctant leader and the passive followers mean only one thing: their redemption was not their own doing, but His doing.

**3<sup>rd</sup> aliya (10:24-11:3)** Paro calls Moshe: Go serve G-d, even your babies. Just leave the animals behind. Moshe replies: we need to take them – we don't know what to offer til we get there. Paro: don't ever see me again or you will die. G-d tells Moshe that after the next plague they will go free. And the Egyptians will equip the people with gold and silver.

Justice is a central theme of the Torah. The injustice of the slavery must be righted – hence the promise that the Egyptians will give gold and silver, a small righting of the wrong of the slavery.

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**4<sup>th</sup> aliya (11:4-12:20)** Moshe tells Paro of the impending plague of the first-born. Your people will plead with us to leave. Moshe leaves angrily. G-d tells him that Paro will not listen. Moshe and Aharon are given the instructions for the Korban Pesach: on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month take a lamb for the family, guard it until the 14<sup>th</sup>, the entire Jewish people shall offer it, consume it at night roasted with Matza and Maror, with your staff in your hand, shoes on your feet. Meanwhile I will smite all first born at midnight. This day and its celebration will be marked eternally. 7 days eat Matza; no chametz shall be eaten for 7 days.

Matza is to be eaten on the night of the exodus – before midnight. But I thought we eat Matza because of the haste of the exodus? That doesn't happen til tomorrow. Rav Menachem Liebttag points out that the seder on the night of the exodus is an anti-Egypt dinner. Animals are sacred – we roast one. And bread that rises is an Egyptian development. All bread in these parts is flatbread – pitas, laffa. Bread in fancy bread molds is Egyptian. So, at the seder in Egypt – no fancy Egyptian bread, just Matza.

לעילוי נשמת

Our beloved husband, father,  
grandfather and great grandfather  
**Rabbi Lipman Z. Rabinowitz z"l**

הרב חיים ליפמן זאב בן אבא שמואל ולאה ז"ל  
On the occasion of his 12th yearzeit

ט"ו בשבט

*Renee Rabinowitz  
Rabinowitz and Adams Families*

**5<sup>th</sup> aliya (12:21-28)** Moshe instructs the people in the Pesach, including marking their doors with its blood. You are not to leave your home on that night. This holiday will be observed forever; when you get to the land, observe it. Your children will ask you why; tell them because G-d passed over our homes. The people hearing these instructions bow and go and do exactly as G-d commanded Moshe and Aharon.

Imagine the faith necessary to follow these instructions. Ok, G-d has promised that the first-born Egyptians will be smitten on the 15<sup>th</sup> at midnight. And with that, we will go free. But for slaves to brazenly prepare to slaughter the sacred animals of Egypt, not on one day, but take it and guard it for 4 days, offer it, roast it. Why roasting on an open fire? I don't know, I speculate, but, well, you can't hide the smell of a barbecue. The whole neighborhood enjoys it. The Jews are commanded to celebrate, unashamed, on full display, burning what is sacred to the Egyptians, right in their faces – *before* they go free!

And to magnify the confidence, the faith, the assurance, know that you will observe this forever. Before the exodus happens, they are planning to celebrate it forever. That is confidence. Faith.

When Moshe instructs the people, they did exactly as G-d commanded. Wow.

**6<sup>th</sup> aliya (12:29-51)** At midnight, all the first-born in Egypt die. Paro calls Moshe and Aharon and orders them to leave to serve G-d. Quickly, so all of Egypt is not smitten. 600,000 adult men were amongst the Jews who left Egypt. The dough was baked as

Matza as they could not wait for it to rise. The sojourn in Egypt was 430 years. G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the rules of the Pesach offering: only circumcised slaves, not employees, the whole people, don't take it out of the home, one rule for all the people.

The Exodus from Egypt is a core belief: that G-d shapes Jewish history, with a yad chazaka and an outstretched arm. We believe in an all-powerful G-d. Who gave us the Torah. But Who, in addition, has a plan. He intervened in the affairs of man, brought us to Him. G-d's Hand in history has too often, in fact most often, been obscured from our view. Where is He leading us, how is He guiding us?

We, the privileged generation, oh, how privileged, we, who have returned to our Land, we are truly privileged to read of the His Yad Hachazaka and His Zroa Netuya, His strong hand and outstretched arm – and we can give a nod, yes, affirm, that He does guide our people, does intervene in our history.

7<sup>th</sup> aliya (13:1-16) G-d commands: all first-born people and animals of the Jewish people shall be holy to Me. Moshe tells the people: remember this day, for on it G-d took you out of slavery with a strong Hand. When you come to the land of Israel, observe this: eat matza 7 days, rid the house of chametz, tell your children that it is for this that G-d took us out of Egypt. And bind them as a sign on your arm and remembrance between your eyes. Every first born animal is a dedicated offering. When your child asks what is this, tell him

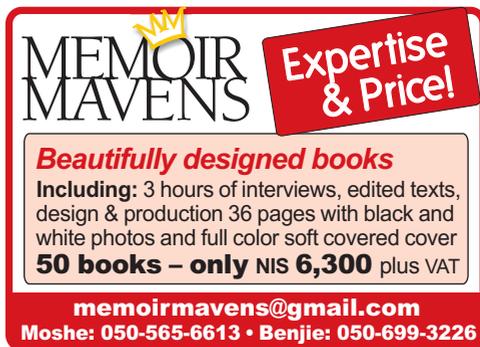


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that G-d took us out of Egypt. Bind this as a sign on your hand and a guide between your eyes, as G-d took us out with a strong hand.

The story of the Exodus need be remembered in its details through Mitzvot. Including binding tefilin on our hand, our weaker arm, for He has the strong arm, and on our heads. For all our actions and all our aspirations, for all of history, need be guided by that story of His love, taking us to be his beloved. ■

## STATS

15th of 54 sedras; 3rd of 11 in Sh'mot  
Written on 205.67 lines in a Torah, 24th  
14 parshiot; 8 open, 6 closed 106 p'sukim - rank:  
29 (7th in Shmot) tied with Toldot & Vayigash; but  
larger than each one, otherwise  
1655 words - ranks 21st (5th in Shmot)  
6149 letters - ranks 20th (6th in Shmot)  
Rise in rankings results from BO's p'sukim being  
much longer than average for the Torah (longest  
in Sh'mot).

## MITZVOT

20 mitzvot; 9 positive, 11 prohibitions  
Last four sedras of D'varim, all of B'reishit (12  
sedras), Sh'mot & Va'eira have a total of 5 mitzvot  
(.8%). The other 36 sedras (2/3 of the Torah) have  
the other 608! (99.2%)

We are sad to inform you of the passing of

**EVELYN SUNRAY a"h**

חיה רייזל בת אברהם ז"ל

dear wife, beloved mother, grandmother  
and greatgrandmother

כח טבת תשפ"א

*Mordechai Sunray and family*

## HAFTORAH BO YIRMIYAHU 46:13-28

This week's Torah reading is well known for its dramatic description of the devastation of the Egyptian nation. We learn about the final three of the Ten Plagues. In the *haftorah*, we learn about the terrible punishment that the Almighty brought upon Egypt centuries later. These were experienced through the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

Hashem conveyed his message through a prophecy of Yirmiyahu. The navi Yirmiyahu describes Egypt's helplessness and the hardships and suffering that it will incur at the hands of the Babylonians.

The *haftorah* concludes on an uplifting note. The Almighty assures the Jewish people that they need not fear. Although they will experience periods of punishment in the exile, in the end they will be redeemed.

The following verse articulates this lofty and most comforting Divine promise: "You fear not, O Jacob My servant, and be not dismayed, O Israel! For behold, I will redeem you from afar, and your children from the land of captivity, and Jacob shall return and be quiet and at ease, and there shall be none who disturbs his rest." ■

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## THE PERSON

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB  
OU Executive Vice President, Emeritus

## IN THE PARSHA

May the learning of this D'var Torah  
be in celebration of our dear grandson's Bar Mitzvah,  
**Azriel Yeshaya (Azi) Knecht**

### Creature-hood

For the past several weeks, this column has addressed a challenge that we all face during Passover, Pesach, which is now barely two months away. The challenge is posed in a passage in the Haggadah, which ultimately derives from a Mishna in the tractate of *Pesachim*. The text reads, "In each and every generation, one is obligated to see himself, *lir'ot et atzmo*, as if he had personally left Egypt."

How is one to do that? Is it not a nearly impossible feat for one to imagine oneself as a shackled slave and then to see himself as a free man, ready to march into an unknown wilderness?

We have attempted to address this dilemma by employing the definition given by *Ramban*, the great thirteenth century commentator, to the concept of

redemption, *geulah*. He insists that merely "leaving Egypt" does not equal redemption. In his words, which can be found in his introduction to the Book of Exodus, "The exile was not completed until the day they returned to their place and were **restored to the status of their forefathers.**"

In other words, "redemption" is not a mere synonym for "freedom from slavery." Rather, "redemption" requires personal moral and ethical improvement. "Seeing oneself as having personally left Egypt" demands that we recover the ethical and moral stature of our Forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The task is not one of creative imagination. It is one of personal spiritual transformation.

In the past two weeks, we have suggested several components of that moral and ethical stature. Following the nineteenth century commentator *Netziv*, we demonstrated that our Forefathers were each considered a *yashar*, an ethically straightforward individual who can relate harmoniously even to people who differ from him. We concluded that one aspect of the forefathers was their ability to work constructively even with

Condolences to  
**Feygah Sarah Friedman**  
and family on the passing of her  
**HUSBAND z"l**

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

their pagan neighbors. For us today that means developing the will and the skill to overcome our various prejudices and to work cooperatively with people despite their differentness.

We also identified another component of the stature of our Forefathers, a two-sided component. On the one hand, they were able to remain tenaciously faithful to the Almighty even when they were faced with great frustration. “*Lo hirharu achar midotai*,” they did not question their Maker. And on the other hand, they were able to celebrate every small blessing that they were granted. They expressed gratitude for everyday gifts. For us today, that means going beyond our verbal declarations of faith and remaining faithful even in very trying times. It also requires gratefully cherishing the many blessings that we too often take for granted.

Remembering that *Ramban* defined redemption as the reclamation of the “status of our Forefathers,” I propose that this week, we turn to another component of that “status.” Here I will use a term coined by the early nineteenth century non-Jewish theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. The term is, in German, *Kreatur-gefühl*, or a “sense of creature-hood.”

To define this concept, permit me to share a powerful personal experience that I had quite a few years ago.

I was then a guest lecturer in a Jewish community far from my home. At the conclusion of the Shabbat there, I was approached by a social worker who was the assistant to the director of the Jewish

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home for the aged. He was reluctant to ask me to do another, unscheduled, presentation. He told me of the challenge he had with his non-Jewish staff, mostly medical paraprofessionals. They dealt with Jewish patients 24/7 but found themselves with very little in common with them. This was mostly a group of devout Christians, and almost all were people of color.

He felt that I might be able to demonstrate to the staff that these differences were, quite literally, no more than skin deep. He felt that I would be able to build a “soul bridge” between his wonderful staff and his wonderful patients.

I couldn't say no, but I was hard put to think of the words that might build that “bridge.” That *motza'ei Shabbat* night was a sleepless one for me. But early that morning, two common liturgical texts came to my rescue, as if in a dream.

Later that morning, after sharing a “Jewish” bagels and lox breakfast with about two dozen fundamentalist Christians, I began my formal remarks. I asserted that we are all creatures of the Almighty. I claimed that the essence of Judaism was the sense that we are creatures of the divine. I asked the audience whether this was also part of the essence of their religion.

I had prepared copies of two prayers which I distributed to the group. I explained that these prayers were recited at the beginning of the day by every practicing Jew, every day without exception. I referred first to the blessing *Asher Yatzar*. The text reads, in Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks' masterful translation:

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who formed man in wisdom and created in him many orifices and cavities... Were one of them to be ruptured or blocked, it would be impossible to survive and stand before You, Healer of all flesh who does wondrous deeds.” The theme of this blessing is this: our bodies, our physical being, are the Lord's creation.

I then introduced a matching blessing, again in Rabbi Sacks' translation:

“My God, the soul You placed within me is pure. You created it, You formed it, You breathed it into me... One day You will take it from me and restore it to me in the time to come... Blessed are You, Lord, who restores souls to lifeless bodies.” The theme of this blessing is this: our souls, our spiritual being, are the Lord's creation.

Body and soul, soul and body; in every way, we are creatures, and we strive to be conscious of our “creature-hood.”

There was electricity in the room. Everyone, I daresay without exception, exclaimed, “That's beautiful! But that's also the essence of our religion!”

At that moment, I knew that, with the Almighty's assistance, I hit a home run.

Sometime later, a friend of mine educated me about Friedrich Schleiermacher and his concept of *Kreatur-gefühl*, the sense of being a creature of the divine.

But it was long before that serendipitous experience that I was taught the concept of “creature-hood” and the central role it plays in Jewish theology. For that lesson, I

am indebted to my paternal grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak Weinreb, of blessed memory.

My grandfather was fond of introducing me to what he called “the gaps in my education.” One of those gaps, which I have ever since strived to fill, is the commentary of Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, *Ramban*, on the Torah.

Grandfather’s favorite passage in that important commentary is to be found toward the very end of this week’s Torah portion, *Parshat Bo* (Exodus 10:1-13:16). The passage reads, this time in the excellent translation of Rabbi Charles B. Chavel:

“The purpose of all the Commandments... is that man should know and be thankful to God for having created him. The purposes of raising our voices in prayer and of the service in synagogues, as well as the merits of public prayer, is precisely this: that people should have a place wherein they assemble and express their thankfulness to God for having created them and supported them, and thus proclaim and say before Him, ‘*Bri’otecha anachnu!* We are your creatures!’”

And so, we have uncovered yet a fourth component of the spiritual stature of our Forefathers: the capacity of acting *yashar*, free of prejudice against those who differ from us; faith in the Lord in the face of adversity; gratitude to the Lord for His everyday blessings; and a deeply felt sense, in our bodies and in our souls, of being but a very small part of His glorious creation. ■



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# COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from  
RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

Former Chief Rabbi of the  
United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

May the learning of these Divrei Torah be לעילוי נשמת

**HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt'l**

The following dvar Torah was submitted to Torah Tidbits from Rabbi Sacks before his passing.

לעילוי נשמות

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## The Far Horizon

To gain insight into the unique leadership lesson of this week's parsha, I often ask an audience to perform a thought-experiment. Imagine you are the leader of a people that is enslaved and oppressed, that has suffered exile for more than two centuries. Now, after a series of miracles, it is about to go free. You assemble them and rise to address them. They are waiting expectantly for your words. This

is a defining moment they will never forget. What will you speak about?

Most people answer: freedom. That was Abraham Lincoln's decision in the Gettysburg Address when he invoked the memory of "a new nation, conceived in liberty," and looked forward to "a new birth of freedom."<sup>1</sup> Some suggest that they would inspire the people by talking about the destination that lay ahead, the "land flowing with milk and honey." Yet others say they would warn the people of the dangers and challenges that they would encounter on what Nelson Mandela called "the long walk to freedom."<sup>2</sup>

Any of these would have been the great speech of a great leader. Guided by God, Moses did none of these things. That is what made him a unique leader. If you examine the text in parshat Bo you will see that three times he reverted to the

Mazal Tov to  
**Norman & Gail Brainin**  
and family on the birth of a  
**GRANDDAUGHTER**



1 Abraham Lincoln, "The Gettysburg Address" (Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Penn., Nov. 19, 1863).

2 Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Back Bay Books, 1995).

same theme: children, education and the distant future.

And when your children ask you, “What do you mean by this rite?” you shall say, “It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, because He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians, but saved our houses.” (Ex. 12:26-27)

And you shall explain to your child on that day, “It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt.” (Ex. 13:8)

And when, in time to come, your child asks you, saying, “What does this mean?” you shall say to him, “It was with a mighty hand that the Lord brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage.” (Ex. 13:14)

It is one of the most counter-intuitive acts in the history of leadership. Moses did not speak about today or tomorrow. He spoke about the distant future and the duty of parents to educate their children. He even hinted – as Jewish tradition understood – that we should encourage our children to ask questions, so that the handing on of the Jewish heritage would be not a matter of rote learning but of active dialogue between parents and children.

So Jews became the only people in history to predicate their very survival on education. The most sacred duty of parents was to teach their children. Pesach itself became an ongoing seminar in the handing on of memory. Judaism became the religion whose heroes were teachers and whose passion was study and the life

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of the mind. The Mesopotamians built ziggurats. The Egyptians built pyramids. The Greeks built the Parthenon. The Romans built the Coliseum. Jews built schools. That is why they alone, of all the civilisations of the ancient world are still alive and strong, still continuing their ancestors' vocation, their heritage intact and undiminished.

Moses' insight was profound. He knew that you cannot change the world by externalities alone, by monumental architecture, or armies and empires, or the use of force and power. How many empires have come and gone while the human condition remains untransformed and unredeemed?

There is only one way to change the world, and that is by education. You have to teach children the importance of justice, righteousness, kindness and compassion. You have to teach them that freedom can only be sustained by the laws and habits of self-restraint. You have continually to remind them of the lessons of history, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt," because those who forget the bitterness of slavery eventually lose the commitment and courage to fight for freedom. And you have to empower children to ask, challenge and argue. You have to respect them if they are to respect the values you wish them to embrace.



This is a lesson most cultures still have not learned after more than three thousand years. Revolutions, protests and civil wars still take place, encouraging people to think that removing a tyrant or having a democratic election will end corruption, create freedom, and lead to justice and the rule of law – and still people are surprised and disappointed when it does not happen. All that happens is a change of faces in the corridors of power.

In one of the great speeches of the twentieth century, a distinguished American justice, Judge Learned Hand, said:

I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it.<sup>3</sup>

What God taught Moses was that the real challenge does not lie in gaining freedom; it lies in sustaining it, keeping the spirit of liberty alive in the hearts of successive generations. That can only be done through a sustained process of education. Nor is this something that can be delegated away to teachers and schools. Some of it has to take place within the family, at home, and with the sacred obligation that comes from religious duty. No one ever saw this more

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3 Learned Hand, "The Spirit of Liberty" - speech at "I Am an American Day" ceremony, Central Park, New York City (21 May 1944).

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clearly than Moses, and only because of his teachings have Jews and Judaism survived.

What makes leaders great is that they think ahead, worrying not about tomorrow but about next year, or the next decade, or the next generation. In one of his finest speeches Robert F. Kennedy spoke of the power of leaders to transform the world when they have a clear vision of a possible future:

Some believe there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills – against misery, against ignorance, or injustice and violence. Yet many of the world's great movements, of thought and action, have flowed from the work of a single man. A young monk began the Protestant reformation, a young general extended an empire from Macedonia to the borders of the earth, and a young woman reclaimed the territory of France. It was a young Italian explorer who discovered the New World, and 32 year old Thomas Jefferson who proclaimed that all men are created equal. 'Give me a place to stand,' said Archimedes, 'and I will move the world.' These men moved the world, and so can we all."<sup>4</sup>

Visionary leadership forms the text and texture of Judaism. It was the book of Proverbs that said, "Without a vision [*chazzon*] the people perish." (Prov. 29:18). That vision in the minds of the Prophets was always of a long-term future. God told

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4 *The Poynter Institute, The Kennedys: America's Front Page Family* (Kansas City, Mo.: Andrews McMeel, 2010), 112.

Ezekiel that a Prophet is a watchman, one who climbs to a high vantage-point and so can see the danger in the distance, before anyone else is aware of it at ground level (Ezek. 33:1-6). The Sages said, "Who is wise? One who sees the long-term consequences [*ha-nolad*]."<sup>5</sup> Two of the greatest leaders of the twentieth century, Churchill and Ben Gurion, were also distinguished historians. Knowing the past, they could anticipate the future. They were like Chess Masters who, because they have studied thousands of games, recognise almost immediately the dangers and possibilities in any configuration of the pieces on the board. They know what will happen if you make this move or that.

If you want to be a great leader in any field, from Prime Minister to parent, it is essential to think long-term. Never choose the easy option because it is simple or fast or yields immediate satisfaction. You will pay a high price in the end.

**Moses was the greatest leader because he thought further ahead than anyone else. He knew that real change in human behaviour is the work of many generations. Therefore we must place as our highest priority educating our children in our ideals so that what we begin they will continue until the world changes because we have changed. He knew that if you plan for a year, plant rice. If you plan for a decade, plant a tree. If you plan for posterity, educate**

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5 *Tamid* 32a.

a child.<sup>6</sup> Moses' lesson, thirty-three centuries old, is still compelling today. ■

## QUESTIONS

- How did Jewish education ensure Jewish survival?
- Which do you think has the great influence on children, what they learn at home or what they learn at school?
- What are the issues for which you believe your leaders need to begin making long-term plans?

*Covenant and Conversation 5781 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l.*

6 A statement attributed to Confucius.

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## PROBING

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

## THE PROPHETS

The parasha of Bo is quite exceptional. It includes the story of the final three plagues, the “surrender” of the Egyptians to Hashem’s demand, the very first mitzvah commanded to all of Israel and, of course, Yetziat Mitzrayim, the Exodus itself. Even if we put aside the mitzvot of tefillin, of the Korban Pesach - both the one observed in Egypt and that which would be sacrificed in the future - the sanctification of the first-born, the holiday of Pesach and more, it is one of the most outstanding single parshiot that we read during the year. One would imagine, therefore, that our Rabbis would find the fitting haftarah selection to match the dramatic events that are related in the parasha or the important mitzvot included therein.

But they did not.

The selection from Sefer Yirmiyahu (46: 14-28) is almost a repetition of the haftarah we read last week. As we have mentioned before, both Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel prophesied at the same time and their prophecies regarding the collapse of the Egyptian empire are what we read both on last Shabbat and now, on this one. Would not a perek from the books of the nevi'im that told of Hashem saving Israel from a harsh enemy be a fitting choice for the haftarah of this parasha? Or, perhaps, one of the several chapters that tell of Israel's

observance of Pesach in Eretz Yisrael could have also been chosen by Chazal. What did our Rabbanim see in this perek that convinced them that it was the proper haftarah for Parashat Bo?

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### The three plagues gave the populace a “taste” of death

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HaRav Moshe Lichtenstein suggests that, indeed, there is a clear difference between the two haftarot that are read one week after the other and a clear reason why both are read. The first seven plagues brought upon Egypt, those described in parashat Va'era, had one overriding goal. The first time Moshe confronted Par'oh with G-d's demand to release the Jew, Par'oh responded with the words: “Lo yada'ti et Hashem,” “I do not know Hashem.” And so, G-d sends down supernatural wonders to prove to the Egyptian king Who G-d was. The purpose of these first seven plagues was an educational/religious one: to teach Whom Hashem was. To learn of His power, of His abilities and of His mastery over all. It is for that reason that, throughout the parasha, we read the repetitive phrase “Lma'an teida,” so that you should know Who G-d is. The plagues were directed primarily toward Par'oh and his advisers-not the people. The people were “inconvenienced”, bothered

and troubled – but none died as a result of the plagues.

The three plagues described in parasha Bo, however, were aimed at the population itself. These plagues were meant to be a punishment for all Egyptians who were equally to blame for the enslavement of Israel. The three plagues gave the populace a “taste” of death. The Pharaoh referred to the plague of locust as “hamavet hazeh” – this ‘death.’ It destroyed all growing things – unequaled by any such locust before – and it ruined the very economy of Egypt. And all suffered from it. The plague of darkness that followed immobilized the entire population and “buried” them in a blackness that was almost tangible. And, of course, the final plague brought death into the homes of every citizen.

And the theme of the respective haftaratot reflects those of their parshiot.

In last week’s haftarah, the navi Yechezkel repeats the reason for Egypt’s defeat by pointing to the Pharaoh who saw himself as a god. Yechezkel clearly states the purpose of the defeat: “vyad’u kol yoshvei Mitzrayim KI ANI HASHEM,” – “all of Egypt will know that I AM HASHEM.” He describes Egypt’s defeat as a political/military loss that would teach the Pharaoh that it is only G-d Who directs world events.

In this week’s haftarah, Yirmiyahu describes Babylonia’s invasion of Egypt and the utter destruction of the land as a punishment from G-d. There is no mention of proving that Hashem is the only power on earth – just a description of the complete

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devastation that the Egyptians will suffer.

But why must the people suffer for the sins of their leaders?

Rav Lichtenstein quotes his grandfather, Rav Soloveitchik zt”l, who stated that no tyrant could be successful without the cooperation of his citizenry. We live at a time that the lesson of the Rav speaks powerfully to us. We have seen the result of a cooperative population in the despicable and inhuman acts that were perpetrated against us. For us, therefore, the haftarah leaves a lasting impression.

There is a need for educating a society that does not recognize Divine imperatives.

But there is also a need for punishment of a society that lacks any moral conscience. ■

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## Wonderful Will

There are two simple but powerful words in our *parashah* that teach us worlds about *avodat Hashem*. On *rosh chodesh Nissan*, Moshe Rabbeinu is told to convey the specifics concerning the mitzvah of *korban Pesach*. It was to commence on the tenth day of *Nissan* by taking the lamb for the *korban* (*Shemot* 12;3-20). Upon hearing Hashem's directive from Moshe, the nation responds, "vayelchu vayaasu", *Benei Yisrael* went and did as they were instructed (*Shemot* 12;28). Rashi notes that although they did not actually do anything until ten days later, they are credited with performing the mitzvah then.

Rabbeinu Yonah in *Sha'arei Teshuvah* draws an incredible lesson from this incident. Imagine a person who listens to a shiur about advancing in the service of Hashem. He is so inspired and resolves to be a different, better person. At that moment, says Rabbeinu Yonah, although he has yet to put these thoughts into practice he is considered a *baal teshuvah* and is rewarded for the many changes he commits to making. Rav Friedlander in *Siftei Chayim* notes that by doing so, a

person enters a different sphere. Until this point he was focused only on himself, now he is opened to listening to words of Torah. Just this shift in mindset generates the reality of already achieving all he imagined.

The desire to act and the purity of our motivations is within our control

Rav Freidlander further quotes the *Chovot Halevavot* who teaches that the only thing in a person's control is his desire to act. Indeed, whether one will be able to follow through on an action is completely in Hashem's hands. It is the strength of our desire to accomplish something that determines our free choice. However, this desire must be sincere; one must honestly confront his inner blockages that prevent him from wanting to make lasting changes.

Moreover, the *Sefat Emet* expounds on the famous idea of *chazal*; Hashem considered creating the world with the attribute of justice but ultimately, He

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combined justice with the attribute of mercy. The “*alah bemachshavah*” alludes to this compelling idea; **the only thing we control is our thoughts**. The desire to act and the purity of our motivations is within our control and is surveyed with the aspect of strict justice. However, the actual completion of any chosen act is beyond the realm of human control and is therefore evaluated with the added dimension of mercy.

Rav Schorr in *Ohr Gedalyhu* notes that one’s success in completing an act is very much a function of the desire that drives the act. Although there may be many unforeseen obstacles in one’s path, nothing can hinder true desire. When one’s commitment and aspiration is ironclad, generally one will see the hoped-for results ensue.

By telling us that the Jews “went and did” the Torah is revealing their innermost thoughts. Although taking the lamb and killing the Egyptian idolatry involved serious risk, their devotion was strong, and they therefore merited to see it to completion. In the higher worlds this moment was indeed the moment they fulfilled the Divine command. ■

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## Bo / Yud Shvat: Come With Me

Throughout the early part of the Twentieth Century, Jews suffered brutal religious persecution at the hands of the evil Soviet regime. Religious life was forced underground, where a clandestine network of Jewish life persisted with great sacrifice. The incredible efforts of sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson zy'a lie at the core of Jewish life in Russia. A constant target of the Yevseksiya, a Jewish section of the Soviet Communist Party, the Frierdiker, or 'Previous' Lubavitcher Rebbe was accused of "counter-revolutionary" activities and subjected to brutal torture, imprisonment and ultimately sentenced to death for treason.

On the morning that the Frierdiker Rebbe was observing *yahrzeit* for his father, three members of the Yevsektzia burst into the *beis medrash* with arms drawn and arrested him. Throughout

the interrogation and imprisonment, the Rebbe remained steadfast that regardless of the threats and intimidation, he would not give up on his efforts to teach Torah and spread *Yiddishkeit*, whatever the cost: "I have already made it clear that I will not budge from my principles," he said, calmly. "There has never been born and never will there be born, a man or demon who will move me in the slightest degree from my principles."

One of the agents pointed his loaded revolver at the Rebbe: "You see this? This little toy does away with 'principles', and has made many a man change his mind."

The Rebbe stared at the officer. "That little toy impresses someone who believes in *ein velt un asach getter*, one world and many gods. But for one who has One God and believes in two worlds, your toy makes no impression whatsoever."

.....  
"Hashem said to Moshe, *Bo el Pharaoh*, 'Come to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, in order that I may place these signs of Mine

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in his midst, and in order that you tell into the ears of your son and your son's son how I made a mockery of the Egyptians, and that you tell of My signs that I placed in them — in order that you will know that I am the Lord.” (10:1-2)

As preparation for redemption from Egypt, Hashem instructs Moshe Rabbeinu, Bo, “come to Pharaoh.” Numerous commentaries have pointed out the Torah’s choice of words: wouldn’t the instructions to confront Pharaoh be more appropriately framed with the imperative to ‘go to’, *lech el Pharaoh*, sending Moshe on a mission, representing the Jewish Nation before the evil ruler? ‘Go’ is an encouraging word; ‘go with success, go present your message with confidence and faith...’ Yet, this is not the word Hashem used. The Ribbono shel Olam was instead inviting Moshe to ‘come with Him’ to meet Pharaoh.

Pharaoh was the quintessential *rasha*, an evil and brutal tormentor whose reign of darkness was the template for all subsequent exiles and sufferings. He represents *kefirah*, denial of faith, and rebellion against the Creator. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (*Likutei Moharan*, 64) explains Hashem’s instructions in light of the great heresy and darkness represented by Pharaoh: “Through *emunah*, faith, believing that God is *קמלא* *בְּכָל עֲלָמִין*, ‘filling all worlds and encircling all worlds’ — and in truth His Godliness is in every place — accordingly, the Jewish People (represented by Moshe) will prevail over all (dark) philosophies, ideologies, doubts and heresies...”



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‘Hand-in-hand’ with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Moshe was empowered to meet Pharaoh head on, directly confronting his evil. Moshe was modeling a pathway of *emunah* that embraces the unanswerable questions and challenges, the existential tension and painful ‘not-knowing’ inherent in a life of faith. The One God tells Moshe, ‘Come with Me to Pharaoh; you are not alone. We will face these cruel demons together.’

.....

Throughout this lengthy exile, in every generation we are forced to confront ‘Pharaohs’ of all types. There has been no lack of dangerous enemies who threatened our physical safety, no lack of ‘revolvers’ pointed our way. Many forces also threaten our spiritual well being, seeking to interfere with our way of life and *avodas Hashem*. These include peer pressure, low self-esteem, and unchecked cravings for money, power or *kavod*. Within all of us there is a ‘Pharaoh’ voice, belittling us, attempting to make us appear small in our own eyes, encouraging us to remain enslaved to our desires, sufferings and negativities. In the face of all of them, let us remember

Hashem’s encouragement and invitation, “Bo, Come with Me. You are not alone in this.”

This Shabbos marks Yud Shvat, the *yahrtzeit* of the Friediker Rebbe. It also marks seventy years since the formal acceptance of *nesiyus*, leadership by his great son-in-law and successor, the Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, one year later. Together, the Rebbe and his holy father-in-law blazed a trail for us, inviting us to live with faith, confidence and fearlessness. Resonating with their legacy, we come to recognize, and eventually attain a constant awareness, that while there are ‘many’ distractions and impediments to Divine service, there is only One God.

Following his escape from Nazi occupied Poland, Rebbe Yosef Yitzchok arrived in the United States and issued an urgent call to world Jewry, crying out from the depths of his soul his message of *emunah*, his direct confrontation with exile: *L’alter l’tshuvah, l’alter l’geulah*, “Immediately to repentance — immediately to redemption!” So may it be...immediately, in our days! ■

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# Kashering Factory Machinery- P. II

In the course of its work in kashrut supervision, the OU often needs to kasher factory machinery. There can be many different reasons why this need arises: (1) creating a kosher line in a plant that was used for non-kosher in the past; (2) when a factory is producing a special run; or (3) kashering a factory for Pesach. As explained in previous articles, in most cases the OU requires the machinery to remain unused for twenty-four hours prior to kashering (rather than relying on opinions that this waiting time is not needed.) In this article, we will look at important elements leading up to the actual kashering.

The OU, based on the *Rema* (YD 103:7) and other *poskim* (see Shach 103:18), insists that no hot cleaning process may be done within twenty-four hours prior to kashering. Any hot water will cause the taste of prohibited food to reenter the machinery, and would require another twenty-four hour wait. A cold cleaning, however, has no effect. As such, if a factory has a standard cold wash prior to kashering, there

would be no halachic concern.

The OU ideally sends a mashgiach to thoroughly check the machinery twenty-four hours before the kashering process in order to ensure that the machinery will be completely clean and fit for kashering.

Regardless of these preparations, an issue that needs to be addressed is how can the OU be sure that the machinery was not used during the twenty-four period? One option is to rely on the testimony of the workers or management of the factory. This is not so simple. In halacha, we do not normally rely on the testimony of non-Jews that has halachic consequences. There are certain areas of halacha in which a non-Jew's testimony may be relied on—when it is *mesiach lefi tumo* (see *Shulchan Aruch* YD 98:1). This term, means that if someone is not meaning to give testimony, but rather is just telling a story and certain facts are mentioned during the story, halachically there is no concern of lying. Our Sages relied on that even with a non-Jew. It should be noted that this would only be allowed in a case of a rabbinic prohibition; our Sages did not allow *mesiach lefi tumo* when the prohibition is biblical. Based on this, in a case where the machinery had absorbed the taste of a biblically-prohibited food and now requires kashering, *mesiach lefi tumo* would not be sufficient (see *Biur Hagra* YD 122:32-33). In fact, in most cases it is not



practical to receive information in such fashion from factory workers.

The OU *poskim* (Rav Yisroel Belsky zt"l and Rav Heshel Shachter shlit" a) discuss relying on Taylor charts or date codes. Rav Belsky ruled that log books of companies that are very organized and are always found to be accurate can be relied upon in cases of need. Rav Schachter also concurs that checking Taylor charts or other company logs can be sufficient. Another solution is CCTV and other surveillance systems. If a factory has 24-hour surveillance and the mashgiach or rabbinic representative can receive access, it is sufficient in order to determine if the machinery was used. The mashgiach should review the surveillance tapes of the last twenty-four hours in order to confirm that the machinery was not used. In fact, it would seem that even testimony from workers would suffice if there was surveillance. This is based on a halachic principle called *miltei de'avid ligiluyei*: If someone is aware that his testimony is liable to be verified or refuted, then he will not be dishonest lest he get caught in a falsehood. In many cases, we rely on the factor of verifiable facts as a means to believe those who are not normally trusted to give halachic testimony. As such, workers who are aware of surveillance and the consequences of lying would be very careful, and may be relied upon to

confirm the status of machinery. Many of these issues depend on individual factors, such as the level of cooperation in a particular factory.

In summary:

Under normal circumstances, one must wait until a utensil is an *eino ben yomo* (not in use for the past twenty four hours) before kashering.

A mashgiach should inspect the equipment 24 hours before kashering.

We count the 24 hours from the last time the utensil was used with heat.

One cannot rely on a non-Jew's testimony even *mesiach lifi tumo* regarding a biblical prohibition.

A mashgiach can rely on Taylor charts and log books of organized companies, but only in cases of need.

It would seem that if there is CCTV or other surveillance, it may be relied upon in order to confirm the status of utensils.

In a case where a mashgiach can get access to surveillance, it would seem that even a worker's testimony would suffice. ■

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# Time

When examining this week's parsha we are immediately struck by the fact that major events in the Exodus and their accompanying mitzvot are contextualized within the framework of time and timeliness. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik zt"l was intrigued by this matter. He felt that the prominence of time in this particular place is entirely intentional. As we first emerged as a people we needed to relearn and recognize the true value of time.

## *Time Is Of The Essence*

The Rav called attention to the following three riveting instances in the Parshat Bo:

**1. Midnight:** On the final night in Egypt the idea of 'precision of time' is given center stage. One final blow to the Egyptians would occur precisely at midnight - and the people will finally be freed. Although Moshe himself uses the phrase *ka'chatzot ha'layla, around midnight*, in his message to Moshe, God said *ba'chtzot*: exactly at midnight (see *Rashi, Shemot 11:4*). The Sages say that it was not a half-second before midnight or a half second later, or even an infinitesimal time before or after (*Mechilta, Mesichta Depisacha [Parshat Bo] 13*) ('The Lord is Righteous' pp.128-129).

The Israelite slave suddenly was aware that a definitive hour on the clock would be life changing for them and all of Egypt.

**2. The First Commandment:** "This month shall be to you the head of the months" (*Shemot 12:2*). The first commandment given to the people of Israel, even prior to receiving the Torah at Sinai, was to mark time. Why specifically was this concept conveyed to the Jews at this moment? The Rav explained: "To the slave, time is a curse; he waits for the day to pass. The slave's time is the property of the master. No matter how hard he may try to be productive in time, he will not reap the harvest of his work; therefore, he is insensitive to time." Having the first commandment teaching time-awareness was critical for the slave to begin to learn a new way of appreciating time (*Chumash Mesoras Harav, Shemos, p. 85*).

**3. Do Not Allow It To Leaven:** "You shall guard the Matzot..." (*Shemot 12:17*). Rashi explains that the simple meaning of the verse refers to ensuring that matza does not become *chametz* (Rashi's first explanation). However, Rashi expands on this theme and suggests another layer of meaning: "Do not read the word only as '*matzot*', but rather as "mitzvot"...just as people do not allow the matzot to become leavened - so should they not allow commandments to become leavened. Rather if the opportunity

comes to your hand - do it immediately.” Alacrity, sensitivity to time, is an essential component in the service of God.

While the Israelites were still anticipating their freedom, the lesson of ‘time-awareness’, to use the Rav’s terminology, was essential to their emancipation. Moreover, even our celebration of Pesach today is punctuated with the notion of preciousness of time. The matzah must be prepared within 18 minutes. Not a second more. The matzah, as Rashi teaches above, is paradigmatic of every mitzvah, our service of God must be accentuated by time-awareness.

### ***The Psychology of a Slave***

The Rav expanded on the theme above and explained that from a psychological perspective the slave has no sense of time. A slave is a man without options. He cannot make his own decisions. The slave, in the words of the Rav, loses a sense of his time-awareness. He lacks time-awareness. He doesn’t value time because he lacks a feeling for its movement and the passage of time. (*Reflections of the Rav, Besdin, p.200*)

The Rav suggested that this insight helps to explain a puzzling halacha regarding the slave: A slave is relieved of the requirements to observe time-related mitzvot (*Mitzvat Aseh Shehazeman Gerama*). Why? Perhaps it is due to the fact that the slave lacks time-awareness. Without a grasp of the truth of time and its ebb and flow the slave cannot be held responsible for the mitzvot that require exactitude of time. (*Reflections of the Rav, p.200*)

Therefore the Israelite slave had to learn and integrate the value of time. A single theme comes into focus. The final plague at *exactly* midnight, establishing a new month, specific time limits surrounding the slave eating the matzah in Egypt - all accentuated for the Israelite slave the lesson that time is an essential quality in attaining true freedom.

### ***Lessons for Living***

What practical lessons can we learn from Judaism’s unique perspective on time? The Rav offered the following three ideas:

***A Triad of Time:*** The Rav offered a philosophic approach regarding the way in which a Jew experiences time which has practical implications. There are three dimensions of time, each of which is part of the time-experience: ‘*Retrospection*’, ‘*anticipation*’, and ‘*appreciation*’. *Retrospection* refers to man’s ability to re-experience the past. *Anticipation* is man’s projection of visions and aspirations into the future. *Appreciation* embraces the present as a precious possession - often serving as a bridge between the past and fruit. (*Reflections of the Rav, Besdin, p. 200*). A Jew who internalizes this perspective



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is bound to live their days with greater meaning and purpose.

**Limited Time:** Rabbi Soloveitchik drew powerfully on a personal experience in conveying the following powerful lesson. In 1959, the Rav was diagnosed with cancer and had to undergo a difficult surgery. The Rav reflected on his experience (Majesty and Humility, Zielgler, p. 254):

“The night preceding my operation I prayed to God and beseeched Him to spare me. I did not ask for too much. All I wanted was that He should make it possible for me to attend my daughter’s wedding, which was postponed on account of my illness - a very modest wish in comparison with my insane claims to life prior to my sickness. The fantastic flights of human foolishness and egocentrism were distant from me that night” (Our of the Whirlwind, 131-32).

When a person becomes aware that he is mortal and has limited time on earth, this awakens his time-awareness and sensitizes him to the value of each passing moment. This newfound awareness requires one to assess what he wants to accomplish in his remaining time.

**Treasure Time:** “A person reads *Kriat Shema* at 9:05 and fulfills the mitzvah, but at 9:06, his performance is worthless. What

did he miss? It was the same recitation, the same commitment, the same dedication. And yet, he has not fulfilled the mitzvah of *Kriat Shema*. Time is of critical importance - not years or months, but seconds and split seconds. Time-awareness and appreciation is the singular gift granted to free man, because time belongs to him; it is his time, and he can utilize it to the utmost or waste it.” (*Chumash Mesoras HaRav, Shemos*, p.86). The concern we have to maximize time and contempt for *bitul z’man*, wasting time, finds its underpinnings in the Exodus story.

The Sages captured this perhaps most famously in a Mishna in *Pirkei Avot*: “Rabbi Tarfon said, the day is short, the task is great, the laborers are lazy, the reward is much, and the Master is insistent” (2:20).

In this context we share the following anecdote regarding one of greatest luminaries of the past generation, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky zt”l. He would often give Bar Mitzvah boys the gift of a new watch. He commented that he did so in order to impart the message on this auspicious day in a young man’s life, that there is nothing more precious in life than time. ■



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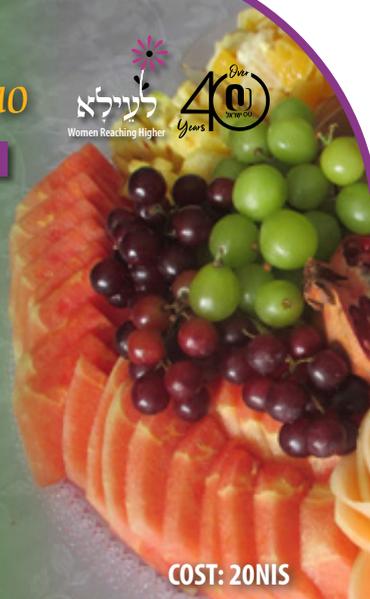
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# OUIsrael at Online Shiurim & Programs

SUN, JAN 24

**9:00 AM**

**Rabbi David Walk** Tehillim  
– Divine Poetry <https://zoom.us/j/92253147141>

**10:15 AM**

**Rabbi Aharon Adler** The Giants  
Who Shaped Modern Orthodoxy  
<https://zoom.us/j/403831319>

**11:30 AM**

**Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz**  
Mishlei: Wisdom for Life (L'Ayla)  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82280847618>

**2:00 PM**

**Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld**  
Men's Gemara Chabura S,T,TH  
<https://zoom.us/j/887981820>

**4:30 PM**

**Rabbi Hillel Ruvell**  
Men's Gemara B'Iyun S,M,W,Th  
<https://zoom.us/j/86466998217>

**8:30PM**

Torat Imecha Nach Yomi  
Siyum (L'Ayla) <https://zoom.us/j/84443065605>

**8:00PM Special Event**

Tu B'Shvat, Tu B'Av, Two  
Roshei HaShana & Two Trees.  
**Rabbi Zev Leff** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81293948298>



MON, JAN 25

**9:15 AM**

Tu b'Shvat shiur and fruit  
platter workshop (L'Ayla)  
[www.ouisrael.org/events/fruit](http://www.ouisrael.org/events/fruit)



**10:30 AM**

**Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider**  
Rav Soloveitchik on the Parsha  
<https://zoom.us/j/700303855>

**11:45 AM**

**Rabbi Shmuel Herschler**  
Ethics, family and society  
in the writings of Rav  
Hirsch, Rav Kook and Rav  
Soloveitchik <https://zoom.us/j/81925157325>

**4:30PM**

**Rabbi Hillel Ruvell**

**7:00 PM**

**Rabbi Baruch Taub**  
Parshat HaShavua  
<https://zoom.us/j/888974573>

**9:00 PM**

**Rabbi Sam Shor**  
Tu b'Shvat-Understanding  
Rosh HaShana L'ilanot  
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TUE, JAN 26

**9:00 AM**

**Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz**  
Minchat Chinuch  
<https://zoom.us/j/89983298537>

**9:15 AM**

**Mrs. Shira Smiles**  
Torah Tapestries (L'Ayla)  
<https://zoom.us/j/98629920642>

**10:30 AM**

**Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**  
Parshat HaShavua  
<https://zoom.us/j/195174554>

**2:00 PM**

**Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld**

**5:00 PM**

**Mrs. Sylvie Schatz**  
Chazal: Insights Into Our Times  
(L'Ayla)  
<https://zoom.us/j/85177782268>

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Archived recordings of shiurim: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library/>

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WED, JAN 27

**9:00 AM Rabbi Shimshon**

**Nadel** Halacha and Medina  
<https://zoom.us/j/6878683646>

**10:15 AM**

**Rabbi Anthony Manning**  
 Contemporary Issues in Halacha  
 and Hashkafa <https://zoom.us/j/460662359>

**11:30 AM Rabbi Alan**

**Kimche** Great Jewish Thinkers  
<https://zoom.us/j/772450422>

**4:30PM**

**Rabbi Hillel Ruvell**

**7:00 PM Rabbi Baruch**

**Taub** Halacha <https://zoom.us/j/709706986>

**8:30 PM Rabbi Ezra**

**Friedman** Practical Kashrut  
<https://zoom.us/j/698124792>

**8:30 PM Rav Meir Goldwicht**

(Hebrew) Parshat Hashavua  
<https://zoom.us/j/2244321902>  
 Passcode: 18

**5:00PM**

**Special Event**

**Kids Kollel Family**  
**Tu b'Shvat Seder**  
<https://zoom.us/j/87159465384>



THURS, JAN 28

**9:00 AM**

**Rabbi Ian Pear**

Meaning in Mitzvot  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83538640996>

**10:15 AM**

**Rabbi Baruch Taub**

Parshat HaShavua  
<https://zoom.us/j/615813416>

**11:30 AM**

**Rabbi Shai Finkelstein**

Unlocking the Messages  
 of Chazal  
<https://zoom.us/j/488542635>

**2:00 PM**

**Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld**

**4:30PM Rabbi Hillel**  
**Ruvell**

**8:00 PM**

**Rabbi Ari Kahn**

Parshat HaShavua  
<https://zoom.us/j/2624570009>

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## DIVREI MENACHEM

BY MENACHEM PERSOFF

Special Projects Consultant, OU Israel Center  
mpersoff@ou.org

# Will the Next Generation Even Ask...?

Are we aware of how many young Jewish people today are totally ignorant of the basic tenets of our religion? Do we realize the extent of ignorance that is pervasive in this generation? Could it really be that newly recruited Israeli soldiers have no idea what lies behind the story of Chanukah, so much so that they cannot tell you who the Maccabim were?

In our Parsha this week, we come across the verse, “And when your child shall ask tomorrow (*Machar*) saying, ‘What is this?’” (Shemot 13:14). In response we give a simple, straightforward answer: “With a strong hand, God brought us out of Egypt.” Here, there are no explanations, commentary, or creative responses. We give an answer the way it is. We cover up our anguish and shock that a young Jew

today would ask such a question, and with care, concern, and love, we respond.

How could it be that here, in Israel, there is such ignorance? Perhaps, we are reminded that our state was founded by Jews who threw off the yolk of Yahadut and wanted to create a new type of Jew. We have only to look at the posters of the young Chalutzim produced during the pre-state period, to gaze upon the images of the romantic pioneers with their bulging muscles and upward jaws, and with the scythes in their hands, to recall what that image represented.

But something else happened. Like the four sons of the Seder night, generation after generation, so many lost just a bit more of the connection with Yiddishkeit: The Chacham of the Haggadah was Shomer Torah and Mitzvot. His son broke away with the Haskalah, the Emancipation, and the rising nationalism that overtook Europe, and took on secular, liberal notions and ideologies. Some would have labeled such an individual as the Rasha, the wicked one of the four sons.

The grandchild sees a pious grandparent and an unbelieving or non-practicing parent, and is confused. That child is the “simpleton” of the Pesach Haggadah. Last, comes

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the child whose great-grandparent passed from the world. And what does that child see? He gazes at the grandparent who discarded Jewish tradition. His parents are completely uninformed, secular, or non believing. He doesn't even know that there are questions to ask!

Partly, we see in our days, that some of the most ignorant among us are also those who are the fierce opponents of orthodoxy. And, *davka*, some of those who *do* know, have become *apirkosim*, and in the guise of academia, are among the greatest critics of anything smattering of Jewish tradition. Moreover, among our people are those ashamed to be identified as Jews who would willingly renounce their Judaism – that, after all that our people endured through 3000 years of survival!

So, now is the time to look back into our Parsha. The “tomorrow” of the verse above is “today”! Notably, however, the Israelites in Egypt were presented with an even greater challenge than that of ignorance and assimilation. They were commanded to take a lamb and to tie this revered god of Egypt to their bed posts

for several days before the great Exodus. In essence, the people, at great risk to their lives, had to throw their belief in Hashem in the faces of the Egyptians, their taskmasters!

These servile Jews who had endured depersonalization and disgrace could have easily given up. But, no, they stood steadfast in their belief in Hashem and demonstrated their resolve at the risk of their lives. They were not ashamed of their identity.

Let us pray that the excesses we witness today are but the tests that Hashem Yitbarach throws our way. Perhaps those who stand for Torah and Mitzvot should be reaching out to our brothers and sisters with greater love and tolerance. Maybe the “traditionalists” among us should, more than ever, be serving as role models in the public discourse and in the “Tikkun” of our society. Then, perhaps, we will bring the Ge'ulah closer, as did our holy ancestors many, many years ago. ■

Shabbat Shalom!

*Menachem Persoff*



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## Behavior during *Kedusha* of Street *Minyanim*

**Question:** My neighborhood is filled with outdoor Covid 19 *minyanim*. I was walking down the street on Shabbat and a *minyan* across the street was in the middle of *Kedusha*. In such cases, do I need to stop, keep my feet together, and respond to *Kedusha* until they are done, or may I continue walking?

**Answer:** The Rashba (*Shut HaRashba* 1:249) was asked by someone who assumed that if after reciting *Kedusha*, one enters a *shul* reciting it, he would be forbidden to repeat it. The Rashba rejects this, arguing that there is no reason not to repeat *Kedusha* in this manner. The Rama (Orach Chayim 125:2) in *paskening* like the Rashba, rules that in this case one **should** do so. Some posit that not repeating *Kedusha* with the congregation would appear as if he did not agree with the concepts expressed, which is a disgrace (see Yabia Omer VI, OC 20). All agree to this concept regarding the first *pasuk* of *Kri'at Shema* (Shulchan Aruch, OC 65:2). Others explain that the opportunity to sanctify HaShem's Name obligates one to do so (Igrot Moshe, OC III:89). Both pieces of logic also apply

to *Kaddish* and *Barchu*, where the congregation joins together to sanctify HaShem's Name (see *ibid.* and Mishna Berura 65:9). Answering *Kedusha* is important enough to allow one to recite its crucial sections during *P'sukei D'Zimra* and *Kri'at Shema* (Shulchan Aruch, OC 66:3 and Mishna Berura 51:8).

Yet, significant sources posit that there is just a preference rather than a full obligation to answer *Kedusha* outside one's own *minyan*. Rav SZ Auerbach (as cited by *Ishei Yisrael* 24:(62)) notes that the language of the Shulchan Aruch (OC 55:20) is that one who is adjacent to a *minyan* reciting *Kaddish* or *Kedusha* may answer with them; he does not say they are required to. Rav Elyashiv is similarly cited regarding someone walking outside a *shul* (*Tefilla K'hilchata* 13:(119)). Others (see *Ishei Yisrael* *ibid.*) argue that while the Shulchan Aruch is focused on the ability to connect to a *minyan* one hears, if they are able, it is obvious that they must.

There is much discussion about the challenges of *davening* in a place like

the *Kotel*. Many (including Rav Chaim Palachi in Nishmat Kol Chai I:4) assume that there is an obligation to answer other *minyanim* and recognize this can be unconvincing to focusing on one's own *davening/minyan*. That conflict between competing *mitzvot* allows some to raise concepts such as *osek b'mitzva patur min hamitzva* (see Tzitz Eliezer XI:3). Also, as part of a different *minyan*, continuing to *daven* with one's own *minyan* looks less like rejecting the words coming from an adjacent *minyan*.

Street *minyanim* may raise other factors. Sometimes one is very close and/or in the same domain even when not part of the *minyan*. On the other hand, sometimes there can be "dirty matters" (e.g., garbage bins, dog droppings) in between oneself and the *minyan*, which may preclude answering (Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*)

Generally, we would posit that walking down the street, there is usually no compelling reason not to answer, which is what we expect one to indeed do. One is permitted to continue walking during *Kaddish* as there is never an obligation to not move (it is less respectful if he looks like he is ignoring it). *Kedusha* it is more complicated. While the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 95:1) requires having one's feet together during *Shemoneh Esrei*, to "imitate" angels in service of

Hashem, he writes regarding *Kedusha* that it is good to maintain that position, based on the same comparison (*ibid.* 4). There would still need to be a compelling reason not to do so. On a weekday, *Kedusha* takes less than a minute, even until the end of the *beracha* (there is some dispute as to when the status of *Kedusha* ends – *Ishei Yisrael* 24:26). On Shabbat, the additional liturgy within *Kedusha* not only takes longer but it is not considered a full-fledged part of *Kedusha* (see Mishna Berura 125:1 regarding learning quietly then). Therefore, one who has reason to make progress going down the street during the singing of those parts has what to rely upon. ■

*Eretz Hemdah has begun a participatory Zoom class - "Behind the Scenes with the Vebbe Rebbe" - an analytical look at the sources, methodology, and considerations behind our rulings, with Rav Daniel Mann. Contact [info@eretzhemdah.org](mailto:info@eretzhemdah.org) to join while places are open.*

## Having a dispute?



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## Telling the Public

Last time we discussed the tremendous efforts that the Rabbis in PUAH employed to allow women to continue to use the mikvah, (or mikveh as an observant reader wrote to me). After the safety had been firmly established, the next task was to convince the public that the mikveh remained a safe place to visit.

Our discussion has focused only on the women's mikveh. The approach to the men's mikveh is very different for a number of reasons. The obligation for women to immerse in the mikveh is much greater than that of men, which is more of a custom and less an obligation. Women's mikvaot tend to have a higher level of supervision and general cleanliness than those used by men. And women generally go to the mikveh at a very specific time of the day, whereas men can visit the mikveh throughout the day. This makes it even harder to control the use of the

mikveh and the high standards necessary. For these, and other, reasons, the Health Ministry was willing to permit women to go to the mikveh but not men.

**At PUAH we are adamant that it is imperative to spread correct and updated information**

After clear guidelines had been established and the supervision was in place to ensure that the standards were maintained, PUAH embarked on another task; encouraging women to continue to use the mikveh.

Rumors travel fast and wide; people heard that the mikveh was dangerous, that Corona spread in the warm water, that the mikveh ladies had passed the virus from one woman to the next, and other such false stories that served to further confuse and frighten the public.

At PUAH we are adamant that it is imperative to spread correct and updated information. We connected with other organizations that deal with family purity to spread the word that the mikveh was safe. We participated in international meetings and lectures, together with medical experts, mikveh ladies, kallah teachers and other professionals, to calm the situation

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and to educate people about how to be cautious during this pandemic, but also to continue observing the laws of family purity.

There were some specific challenges in places where the mikveh was not able to handle the volume during the night. Questions were asked as to whether there was permission to use the mikveh during the day. In certain places a street minyan was held in a place that women needed to pass in order to get to the mikveh. And other such novel and complex issues.

More on this next time. ■

*The Puah Institute is based in Jerusalem and helps couples from all over the world who are experiencing fertility problems. Offices in Jerusalem, New York, Los Angeles & Paris. Contact (Isr) 02-651-5050 (US) 718-336-0603 [www.puahonline.org](http://www.puahonline.org)*



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Rabbi Manning's shiurim for the 2021 academic year have been sponsored anonymously in the merit of an aliyat neshama for

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Rabbi Kimche's shiurim for the 2021 academic year have been sponsored anonymously in the merit of a refuah shleima for **Janet bat Hannah**

**Tuesdays, January 5 & 12** - Rebbetzin Shira Smiles shiurim were sponsored by **Leah Weinberger** for a refuah shleima for her brother  
**Zvi Aryeh HaLevi ben Chana**

**Wednesday, January 13** - Rabbi Manning's shiur was sponsored by **John Corre** in memory of his dear father z"l **אברהם בן יעקב** whose 25th yearzeit was כ"ז טבת

**Monday, January 18** - Pearl Borow's shiur was sponsored by **Marcia Greenhouse** L'ilui Nishmat her Mother **Edna Yachet bat Avraham a"h**

**Monday, Jan 18** - Rabbi Sam Shor's shiur was sponsored by **Dovid and Pnina Halprin** L'ilui Nishmat **Avraham ben Asher Zelig z"l**, Pnina's father and **Shimon Tzvi ben HaRav Dovid a"l**, Dovid's father

**Thursday, January 21** - Ari Kahn's shiur is sponsored by **Joyce Boim** in memory of her father **אשר זעליג בן משה יוסף ז"ל** whose yearzeit is ט שבט

**Monday, Jan 25** - Rabbi Goldscheider's shiur is sponsored by **Hana Rozenbaum and Aharon Lewkowitz** in loving memory of their mother, **Eva Lewkowitz a"h**

**Tuesday, January 26** - Rebbetzin Shira Smiles shiur is sponsored by **Bubbie Linda Marcus** in honor of her granddaughter **Miriam Chava** becoming a Bat Mitzvah, daughter of Rabbi Moshe and Naomi Ginian



## Imported Grape Juice – Part II

Last week we saw the after-*berachah* on Israeli grape juice ends with *ve'al peri gafnah*, while the ending for imported grape juice is *ve'al peri hagefen*. If the label indicates יבול חו"ל, the grapes grew abroad; if nothing is written, the grapes grew in Israel.

It seems that today, only half of the grape juice is produced in Israel, while until 2006, nearly all grape juice was produced from Israeli grapes (with the exception of the *shemita* year, when there are many imports). There is no significant difference between red and white grape juice. Why are such large quantities of grape juice imported?

### Grapevine Leafroll Virus

Leafroll virus causes leaves to change color and curl. This undermines photosynthesis and damages both the yield and quality of the fruit. Grapevine saplings are produced by taking propagative material from mother orchards. In 2007, the propagative material imported to Israel was infected with the virus and hundreds of hectares

planted with the grapevine saplings were affected by it. These young saplings infected the mature vines in their vicinity, which dealt a severe blow to the wine industry. In 2016, a similar phenomenon took place.



*Leaves affected by Leafroll virus. Photo: Mizuho Nita*

The result is that for several years there are less grapevines in Israel. While vinegrowers assure that the quality of the grape juice has not been affected, there has been a drastic reduction in quantity. The Ministry of Agriculture currently imports “clean” propagative material from South Africa, but it is impossible to import and plant too many at a time. It will take approximately another five years until we have sufficient grape vines in Israel so that all our grape juice can be locally produced.

**In conclusion:** before saying an after-*berachah* on your grape juice, first check the source of the grapes so you can say the *berachah* precisely. ■



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### Rabbi Shimon Isaacson Rosh Yeshiva



Parshat Bo recounts the early stages of Yetziat Mizrayim. Like all matters pertaining to redemption, Geulah doesn't just happen. Hashem redeems us, but we must do our part in triggering the process. In this week's Parsha, Bnei Yisrael are given their first mitzvot, and bringing the Korban Pesach becomes the "Get Out of Jail Free" card of the Jewish people. After generations of slavery, the end is in sight and freedom is on the horizon.

One of the first things one notices about the Korban Pesach is the myriad details

that the Torah prescribes. The lamb must be taken at a certain day. Its gender is prescribed. Its age is prescribed. It must be roasted in a very specific way. It must be eaten in a very specific way, in a very specific location, and at very specific times. So many details (many of which we are learning now in the Daf Yomi)! In a sense, the Korban Pesach as one of the first mitzvot that are given to Klal Yisrael is a paradigm of all mitzvot and all of Halacha. Indeed, so many details and minutiae.

The Sefer HaChinuch has a very famous comment on the prohibition of breaking the bones of the Korban Pesach (Mitzvah 16). The reason we are prohibited to break bones of the Korban Pesach is because

eating the Korban in a thrashing bone-breaking manner would be an animalistic type of consumption. Only lowly people would in such a fashion. As Klal Yisrael is embarking on the dramatic process transitioning from human slaves to princes, we need to instill in ourselves who we are and what we represent. The many mitzvot that are associated with the Korban Pesach are all there to instill within us a sense of what an exalted people we are.

The Sefer HaChinuch questions, however, why we need so many mitzvot to instill this ideal into us? Why all the minutiae - wouldn't one or two mitzvot have been sufficient? The Chinuch explains with a core and fundamental idea.

כי אחרי הפעולות נמשכים הלבבות

Contrary to what we might otherwise

think, human nature is such that we often operate in an “outside-in” fashion. Our hearts (the inside) follow our actions (the outside). We are all creatures of habit, and oftentimes, by building good patterns of behaviors, we will be well positioned on the inside as well.

Educators, will often hear youngsters express frustration at mitzva performance. “I don't do the mitzvot because I first need to understand what I am doing. If I understood why I need to daven, why I need to learn, why I need to wear tefillin, etc. then I would be more committed to doing these mitzvot.” While this “inside-out” approach is certainly understandable, the Chinuch teaches us that sometimes we simply need to act, and by experiencing the mitzva and its performance we will come to appreciate it. More often than not,



“the heart follows the actions.”

Try and explain to someone the beauty of a sunset. See if you can explain to someone the magnificence of a piece of music or a work of art. You won't be successful. A sunset, a work of art or a piece of music need to be experienced in order to be appreciated. Certain things need to be fully practiced in a deep and constant way, in order to be truly valued. Spirituality and a relationship with Hashem is one of those things. It needs to be sincerely experienced in order to be appreciated.

Stephen Covey, in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, describes a conversation between a husband and his marriage counselor. “I'm really worried,” the husband explained. “My wife and I just don't have the same feelings for each other that we used to have. I guess I just don't love her anymore, and she doesn't love me.” The counselor replied, “so love her.” “I told you, the feeling isn't there anymore.” “So love her.” “I told you, the feeling is gone.” After going in circles for some time, the counselor explained, “my friend, love is a verb. So love her. Sacrifice. Listen to her.



Empathize. Appreciate. Are you willing to that?”

We have been scripted to believe that love is a feeling. That I must feel before I do. Perhaps that is not the correct script. Perhaps, we must live in the moment, experience the feeling of connectedness, and then the feelings and the heart will follow. If we wait until we “feel it,” we might be waiting for a very long time. It seems that Klal Yisrael took this message to heart because when they got to Har Sinai and were presented with the Torah, their response was an immediate Na'aseh VeNishma. “We will act, and then we will feel.” While it's nice to fully understand everything in advance of doing, we can also appreciate that - אחרי הפעולות נמשכים הלבבות. ■

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**H**ow are we supposed to deal with yet another round of elections? Rav Yehuda Henkin zt”l passed away just over a week ago. He made aliyah from the United States and was a prominent educator and authority on Jewish law. He was also the father of Rav Eitam Henkin hy”d who was murdered with his wife in a terrorist attack. In one of his articles, he wrote that election day is supposed to be a day of prayer and Torah study, as follows:

“For some reason, elections are considered to be a strictly secular matter. Every resource is drawn upon to propagandize, to recruit voters, to organize rallies and all the rest. We do not minimize any of these efforts. On the other hand, there is nothing that demands more guidance from above than the election of our leaders.

“Who among us can predict the future, and who can see into the hearts of the candidates? And if we were to know what is in their hearts, we do not know — and the candidates themselves do not know — what will happen tomorrow and how they will react to future events. We have already known those who have been elected due to a certain platform yet, in practice, they did the opposite. Leadership that looks good today may be revealed as a disaster tomorrow and vice versa. We require an enormous amount of heavenly assistance regarding elections.

“Elections are no less important than war, and sometimes are even more fateful. Whoever thinks that the lexicon of elections begins with ‘rally’ and ends with ‘propaganda’ is in error. To this vocabulary we need to add ‘Torah,’ ‘prayer,’ ‘teshuva,’ and ‘tzedakah.’” ■

*Sivan Rahav-Meir is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.*

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## Storytelling

I am currently taking a course on innovation. One of the things we learned is the importance of storytelling. We were told our “pitch” should include the “why” – the personal story behind our creative project. My project is a popup book for kids. Why? I grew up in a house with lots of books, lots of art and a father who was an engineer. Therefore I always loved those kinds of books that combine beautiful artwork and humor with amazing paper engineering. I love them even more now when I am able to read them with my grandchildren and see their eyes light up with excitement.

Aren't the stories in all TED talks what make them so popular, and watched and shared so many times?

Just this week in the class I'm giving in English on Zoom on memory improvement at Herzog College, I also taught about using the story method for memory improvement. Taking a list that one wants to remember, and linking the objects in one's mind into a creative (meaning silly) story, makes it easier to remember the list.

A verse (10:2) in this week's portion also talks about telling a story. “So that **you** may tell the story, in the ears of your son

and son's son of how I made a mockery of the Egyptians...”. Rabbi Weinreb in his book, “The Person in the Parasha” points out something fascinating that the Belzer Rebbe teaches on the verse. He says that Moshe's own sons, Gershom and Eliezer, were left behind in Egypt when he went on God's mission. They “missed out on the show” to say. They didn't experience all the amazing miracles of the Exodus from Egypt and the splitting of the Reed Sea. The Belzer Rebbe asks why? He says that God wanted Moshe to model for us what parents must do for their children – tell them the story of the Exodus. The word “you” is singular in the verse – to refer to Moshe. God instructed him to tell the Exodus story to his sons who had not experienced it. Only one generation of Jews experienced the actual redemption from Egypt, but every generation is able to experience it virtually if their parents tell them the story.

For the Pesach events we don't need to invent a story like in the memory technique I taught. The deliverance from Egypt is a well known epic filled with excitement, emotion and heritage. Each year as we gather around the Seder table, we have an obligation and opportunity to share the story that has been passed down from generation to generation and make it our own. Each generation is a link in the story,

ensuring it will always be remembered. It is our hope that this year we will actually be able to share the story with our families in person. ■



## RECIPE

If you want a bit of sugar and chocolate with your almonds for Tu'Bshvat here's one of our favorite easy almond brittle recipes, otherwise the best dessert is to enjoy all the fresh fruits, nuts and seeds being sold in honor of the "birthday" of the trees.

### ALMOND BRITTLE

Melt 300 g chocolate  
Flatten out in pan (size of oven) &  
Freeze

Mix  
2 eggs  
1 c sugar  
1 tbsp oil  
150 almonds  
150 g walnuts  
(100 grams = almost 1 cup)  
Flatten mixture out on top of the  
chocolate layer.

Bake 20 minutes at 180  
Cut straight away.



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# TORAH 4 TEENS

## BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



### Albert Katz Modiin Chapter Director

### First Born

I remember when my oldest sibling and I hung out with friends and came home 30 minutes past our curfew. We slowly unlocked the door, trying to sneak our way into the house. To our dismay, the door chime beeped, and we were caught! Yet only my older sibling got in trouble!

I felt like I totally got away with coming home late! I realized my parents felt that my sibling was the one responsible for this mishap. What is it about the role of the oldest sibling that plays such a pivotal role in Torah and in reality? Why do they bear the responsibility?

We are told that Am Yisrael is the “First Born Nation”. Additionally, Pesach gets its name because of the centrality of the first-born in the final plague. So, what makes the first born so special?

The beauty of the firstborn is they are not from the generation of the parents. Yet, they have an ability to understand the parents in a way the other siblings

רפואה שלמה  
יהודה מאיר בן יקירה

can't. Perhaps this is because at a point the family consisted of only the parents and this child. Perhaps it's because the oldest siblings have been alive with the parents the longest. Either way, this sibling has the ability to understand the parent in a way the other siblings can't. At the same time, the oldest sibling is one of the children. They relate to the kids as a peer. This unique position gives the first born a unique role by conveying the values of the parents to the children in a relatable way. This is Am Yisrael's role in the world. Not all of the children of Hashem can relate to Him in the way we can. Our role is to realize we too are people, just like the other nations in the world. This gives us a unique ability to connect to Hashem in the same way a Bechor connects to a parent. We should use this role as a G-dly people to bring Hashem's values to the rest of the world. ■

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**Liora Tolub**  
11th Grade,  
Modiin

## Hearing the Collective Pain

In our parasha, parashat Bo, Hashem says to Moshe,

”דַּבֵּר-נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם”

“Speak to the ears of the people.”

Why is there such a strong emphasis on not only speaking to the people but to the ears of the people? Why is Hashem saying “also”? Who else has been hearing the Jewish people?

To answer this question, I will bring a story from the Chatam Sofer. Rav Moshe Sofer was once visited by a rich man whose business was in trouble – he came to ask for a blessing so things would turn around. The Chatam Sofer had heard that this businessman’s own brother was living in poverty so he asked him: “Your brother needs your help with his livelihood, yet, you have ignored his situation?”

The man apologized and explained that his own financial situation was not good enough for him to support his brother. But the Chatam Sofer exclaimed: “Help others and Hashem will help you!”.

The Chatam Sofer explains that when the Jews cried from the suffering inflicted upon them, their fellow Jews heard them. Despite their own suffering, people were able to empathize and lighten their friends’ burden. Hashem

saw how they heard one other and he “also” heard.

This lesson made me reflect on the current situation. While we are all suffering from the crisis, away from our friends, not able to see our family that is away, some people are suffering even more. They are sick in hospitals or they are unable to leave their house – the risk posed by the virus is much greater to them than the risk that we face as healthy teenagers. But what we can do is **hear** their suffering and do our part. We can respect the guidelines in place to protect each other, and when the opportunity comes, we can take the vaccine to help the community fight the virus. ■

*NCSY Israel is the premier organization in Israel, dedicated to connect, inspire, empower, and help teen olim with "Klita" to the Land of Israel by encouraging passionate Judaism through Torah and Tradition. Find out more at [israel.ncsy.org](http://israel.ncsy.org)*



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# Tu B'shvat

ט"ו בשבט

ראש השנה לאילנות

Special Section page 60-79

# Tu B'shvat: A History

*Torah Tidbits is proud to share the following pages of teachings related to Tu B'Shvat and a Tu B'Shvat Seder provided by Torah Ve' Ha'aretz Institute*

“The four new years are ... on the first of Shevat, the new year for trees, according to the words of the House of Shammai; the House of Hillel says: on the fifteenth thereof” (Mishna Rosh Hashana 1:1).

Tu B'shvat went through four significant historical developments, all revolving around the bond between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel:

## Tu B'shvat in halacha—the mitzvot tied to the Land of Israel

**Orlah:** The Torah prohibits eating orlah fruit, that is, fruit of a tree that has not completed three years since being planted, whether in the Land of Israel or abroad. The cut-off date determining the orlah year for the fruit is Tu B'shvat, following the opinion of the House of Hillel in the Mishna. That is, fruit that blooms from Tu B'shvat and on, following three years from when the tree is planted, are no longer considered orlah and are permissible to eat.

**Terumot and Ma'aserot:** Fruit grown in the Land of Israel are subject to separating offerings and tithes, terumot and ma'aserot. Fruit that bloomed prior to the fifteenth of Shevat, Tu B'shvat, need to have terumot and ma'aserot set aside separately from fruit that bloomed after Tu B'shvat. There are differences between the years in the shemita cycle, including the types of ma'aserot that need to be separated (some years ma'aser sheni, the second tithe; other years, ma'aser ani, the poor man's tithe). It is necessary to separate terumot and ma'aserot (without a blessing) from fruits and vegetables exported from Israel, purchased abroad.

Tu B'shvat is considered a joyous day. Tachanun is not recited, and one does not fast.

## The Tu B'shvat Seder

The 17th century kabbalists of Safed instituted a Tu B'shvat Seder, which involved eating fruit from the Land of Israel. The desire to eat fruit on Tu B'shvat that is not necessarily available in the market during this period was the reason why people purchased dried fruit. In addition, Jewish communities in the Diaspora who wanted to eat fruit from the Land of Israel generally needed to buy dried fruit, since it took a long time for the fruit to arrive. For these two reasons, the custom developed to eat dried fruit on Tu B'shvat.

Note that today it is possible to purchase fresh fruit from Israel, which is preferable to dried fruit. The point is to eat fruit from the Land of Israel; it's unnecessary to buy dried fruit that wasn't produced in Israel.

## Arbor Day

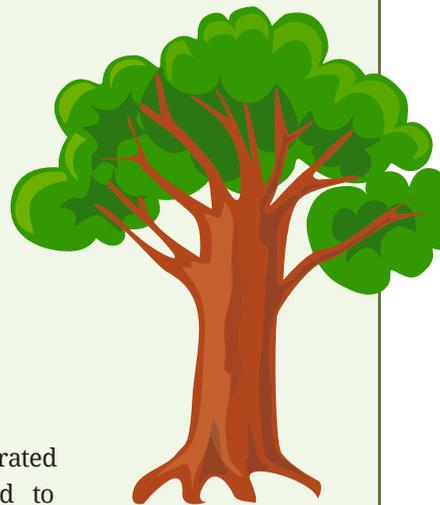
At the end of the 19th century, the Zionist movement began to celebrate Tu B'shvat as a sort of Arbor Day, dedicated to planting saplings in the Land of Israel.

## Environmental Protection Day

In recent decades, Tu B'shvat has been celebrated as a Green Earth Day, a holiday dedicated to environmental protection, as God commanded Adam:

“When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, He took him for a tour of all the trees of the Garden of Eden, and said to him: ‘Behold my creations, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are. And everything I created, I created for you. Take care not to damage and destroy my world, for if you damage it, there will be no one to fix it up after you’ (Midrash Kohelet Raba 9).

Tu B'shvat 5709 (February 14, 1949) was the date of the inauguration of the State of Israel's First Knesset!



# Blessings During the Seder

The following Tu B'Shvat Seder is suggested by Torah V'Haaretz Institute. For an expanded Seder with interactive videos and activities for children see: [en.toraland.org.il](http://en.toraland.org.il).

## The order of the blessings

The order of blessings is the Hebrew acronym of מגע אש, maga eish (lit. "touch of fire"): mezonot, gefen, etiz, adama, shehakol. At the start of the Seder we eat a food whose blessing is mezonot, then we recite a blessing over wine (or grape juice), and then on a fruit.

If is recommended to add a vegetable whose blessing is ha'adama, and a food or drink with the blessing of shehakol, in order to say more blessings.

Some also add the blessings over pleasant scents (borei atzei besamim, isbei besamim, minei besamim, hanoten re'ach tov baferot).

## Order of eating fruit

First we partake of fruit from the seven species, indigenous to the Land of Israel, Whichever fruit appears in in verse closer to the word eretz (land), comes first:



**"אֶרֶץ חֹטֶה וְשֵׁעֶרָה וְגִפְנוֹ וְתַאֲנָה וְרִמּוֹן, אֶרֶץ זֵית שֶׁמֶן וְדִבְשׁ"**

"A land of wheat and barley, of grapevines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil olives and date honey" (Duet. 8:8).

For this reason, the order for eating fruit is: olive, date, grape, fig, and pomegranate.

After eating fruit from the seven species, it is possible and laudable to eat other fruit as well. Some customarily partake of 30 (!) different types of fruit.

If eating a new (=seasonal) fruit, one should also recite shehechyanu:

**בְּרִידָה אֶתָּה ד', אֱלֹקֵינוּ מִלֶּדֶד הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה**

# Tu B'shvat Seder

## Kiddush and Four Cups

### Kiddush

Since Tu B'shvat is not a holiday, there is no special Kiddush recited. We will just say the blessing together:

**בְּרִיךְ אַתָּה ד', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן**

Blessed are You Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates fruit of the vine

Four cups of wine

There is a new custom not mentioned by the kabbalists, that parallels Tu B'shvat to the Pesach Seder, where four cups of wine are drunk. Each cup symbolizes a different season:

First cup: white wine—fall

Second cup: mostly white wine, some red wine—winter

Third cup: half white, half red—spring

Fourth cup: red wine—summer

For those who want to incorporate this practice, we recommend the following order:

Wheat and barley, first cup, olive and date, second cup, grape and fig, third cup, pomegranate, fourth cup.



## Wheat

On the verse, "Your belly is like a heap of wheat" (Song of Songs 7:3), our Sages explain: Heaps of pepper and cedar fruit are much nicer than these, so why are Israel likened to

wheat? Rather, man can live without pepper and cedar fruit, but cannot live forever without wheat—just the world cannot survive without wheat, the world cannot survive without the People of Israel (Shir HaShirim Raba §7).

Let's all take a food made of wheat in our right hand, and say together aloud:

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיַּי מְזוֹנוֹת**

Blessed are You Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates types of grains



## Barley

"One who sees barley in a dream [has received a sign that] his iniquities have been taken away, as it is stated: "And your iniquity has gone away, and your sin expiated (Isaiah 6:7)" (Berachot 57a).

Barley is used for animal fodder and symbolize the animalistic part of the human being. People sin because of their animalistic drives, not because of their spiritual side. So one who dreams about barley essentially is seeing their sins leaving them, "your iniquity has gone away."

## Olives

Why are the People of Israel likened to an olive tree? Just as an olive tree's leaves do not fall away, not during the summer not during the rainy season, so too the People of Israel will never cease to exist, not in this world, nor in the World to Come. (Yalkut Shimoni, Jeremiah §289)



Let's all take an olive in our right hand and say together aloud:

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ**

Blessed are You Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates fruit of the tree

## Dates

"Why are the People of Israel likened to a date palm? Just as date palms produce no waste—rather dates are for eating, and lulavim are for hallel (for the four species on Sukkot), fronds are for shade, fibers for ropes ... so too are the People of Israel, they have not waste, rather: some are masters of the Bible, some masters of the Mishna, some masters of Aggada, some perform mitzvot, some perform righteous deeds" (Bereishit Raba §41).



## Eating a vegetable and candy

For those interested, it's possible to add a vegetable (preferably from Israel), and say the following blessing:

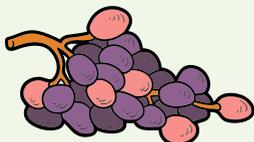
**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה**

Blessed are You Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates fruit of the ground.

Afterwards, take a food whose blessing is shehakol (candy, ice cream, chocolate, etc.), and say:

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָ בְּדַבְּרוֹ**

Blessed are You Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, everything came to be at His word

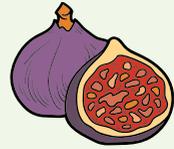


## Grapes

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says: why are the Jewish people likened to a vine? The branches of the vine are [represented by] the homeowners. The clusters, these are the Torah scholars. The leaves on it are the ignoramuses. The tendrils, these are the empty ones of the Jewish people. And they are all on the same vine. Why is this? The clusters

[represented by the Torah scholars] will ask for mercy for the leaves [the ignoramuses], since without the leaves, the clusters cannot exist (Chullin 92a).

## Figs



"He who tends to a fig tree will enjoy its fruit" (Proverbs 27:18). Why is the Torah likened to a fig tree? Since most fruit trees, such as the olive tree and grapevine, are harvested all at once, while the fig tree is harvested little by little. So too, with the Torah: today one acquired a little, and tomorrow a lot, since it is not acquired in one year and not in two (Bamidbar Raba §12).

## Herbs

For those interested, it is possible to add the blessing over blessings over sweet-smelling herbs.

For perennial herbs, or sweet-smelling trees:

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֲצֵי בְשָׁמִים**

Blessed are you Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates sweet-smelling trees

For bushes or grasses:

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֲשָׂבֵי בְשָׁמִים**

Blessed are you Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates sweet-smelling grasses

For sweet-smelling fruit (such as an etrog):

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַנוֹתֵן רִיחַ טוֹב בְּפְרוֹת**

Blessed are you Lord, our G-d, King of the universe, Who gives a pleasant scent to fruit

For a pleasant aroma not from grasses or trees, say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְנֵי בְשָׁמִים

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei minei besamim

Blessed are you Lord, our G-d, king of the universe, Who creates types of spices

## Pomegranate



"Your temples [rakatech] are like a split pomegranate" (Song of Songs 6:7) ... Do not read: Your temples [rakatech], but rather: "Your empty ones [reikateich]," meaning that even the sinners among you are full of mitzvot like a pomegranate"(Eiruvin 19a).



Special Thanks to Rabbi Bloom and the Torah V'Haaretz Institute for this resource and for his wonderful weekly Dvar Torah in Torah Tidbits. For more information and Tu B'shvat activities see: <https://en.toraland.org.il/>

## From Giving a Bath To Giving Breath

On a recent evening at 8:30 PM, a 47 year-old man from Givat Ko'ach, a small moshav bordering the Judean hills, went out for an evening jog. In mid-route he suddenly collapsed to the ground and lay there unresponsive. Fortunately, someone witnessed the man going down and called for help. United Hatzalah's dispatch center immediately pinpointed the exact coordinates of the caller and alerted the nearby first responders to the emergency.

Upon receiving the urgent alert, Lior Tabib, a resident of Shoham, who was bathing his children, told his wife that he had to go. He dried his hands and grabbed his ambucycle jacket as his wife, who is also an EMT, took over bathing the children. Lior raced to his ambucycle, jumped on and sped to the scene.

Lior arrived together with another United Hatzalah ambucycle EMT and the duo immediately checked for a pulse and found none. The pair of first responders launched into CPR on the lifeless individual. Lior bared the man's chest and applied the defibrillator pads, while his partner began assembling the BVM mask. The team alternated between compressions and assisted ventilation, pausing only for a moment to administer a shock from the defibrillator. They then resumed their efforts keeping oxygenated blood flowing to the man's brain and vital organs. Barely a few minutes later, the man's pulse suddenly returned.

The duo continued the oxygen therapy, started an IV line and vigilantly monitored the patient's fragile condition as they waited for the ambulance to arrive. By the time it finally came, about twelve minutes later, the man had already begun to breathe on his own. Lior briefed the crew and helped stabilize the patient before transferring him to the ambulance for evacuation to the hospital.

"There is no way to put into words the feeling one gets when you save a life," Lior said. "All of the many classes I went through and all of the time I spent training to become an EMT was worth it just to save one person. Thankfully, I have merited to save many people in instances like these, and although this isn't my first successful CPR rescue, they are all special and unique in their own way."





RABBI MOSHE

TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Eztion

# Nature Appreciation for Religious People

**A** strident mishnah in Avot (3:7) condemns the disruption of Torah study to ponder the beauty of Nature: “Whoever halts Torah study to appreciate natural beauty (a tree) has committed a crime sinful enough to warrant death.” Rav Kook reinterpreted this severe admonition: Ideally, Nature should be experienced as an integral aspect of religious experience and not as an interruption. The mishnah warns against Nature appreciation which doesn’t evoke a spiritual response and should not disturb actual religious experience such as Torah study. We all sense that, in Nature, lies spiritual meaning. How do religious people experience Nature?

Judaism’s seminal moment occurred at Har Sinai when God directly revealed His word and His will to His chosen people. Ever since that epic moment, we have been deeply engrossed in the study of His Torah. Our Avot however, lived prior to this revelation and discovered God by

studying Nature. In identifying God, they didn’t just ponder the ‘cold’ science and physics of Nature, but detected a moral spirit which supported life and human welfare. The midrash depicts Avraham as strolling through a city “alive” with light and life, and intuiting the Creator of this “world of welfare”. Hashem implanted moral spirit and traits within Nature allowing our Avot to identify Him. Even after Har Sinai, we can still trace Divine morality through the world we inhabit. Sadly, Darwin tarnished our view of Nature by depicting a natural world of violence, rivalries and survival of the fittest. Unlike Darwin, we don’t view our world as hostile or violent but delicately balanced by its Creator to support life and, especially, human life.

Nature also provides a song to G-d: the midrash documents Dovid Hamelech eavesdropping on the actual melodic song of every organism in Nature – anthologized in a collection known as Pirkei Shira. Our ears may no longer detect this supernatural poetry, but science has empowered us to detect a different chord of Nature’s song. Unlike ancients who were befuddled by Nature, we fully understand how she operates and the delicate coordination necessary for the entire system to function. The “synchronization of Nature” is the song

we are capable of hearing. We may no longer be capable of hearing the actual song of the trees described in Tehilim as “az yeranenu atzei haya’ar”, but science has unlocked the secrets of the Amazon rain forests! God’s delicate management of this complex ecosystem is the exquisite song of Nature discernible to modern ears.

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## Nature is a dynamic system which is impacted by human behavior

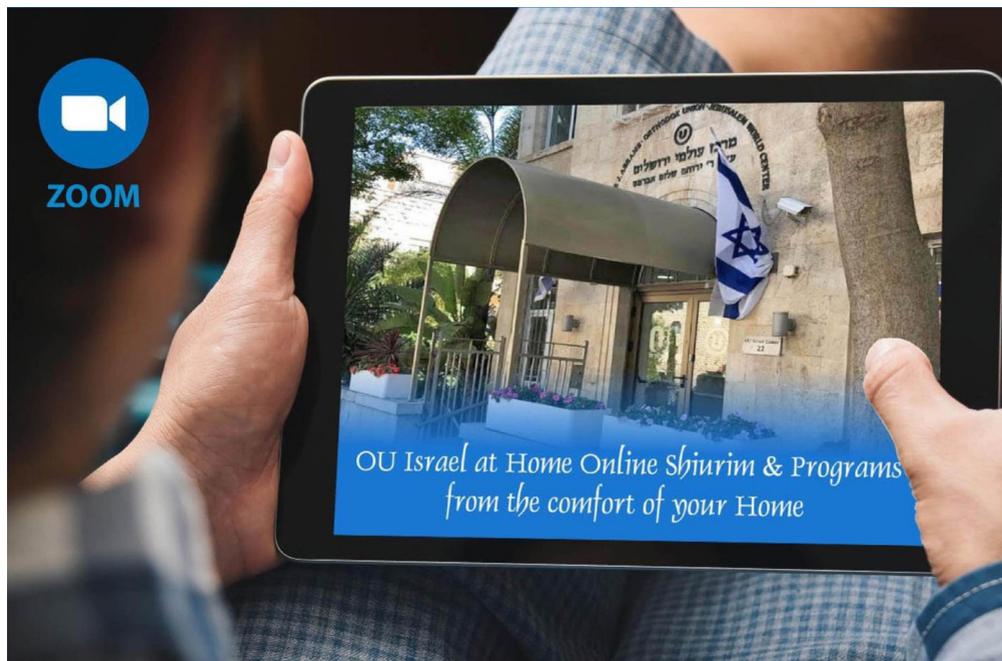
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Nature also should also humble us by her vastness and her enormity. Exposure to the immensity of Nature can open our imaginations to the incalculability

and infinity of God. Having scanned the Heavens and pondered infinity, Dovid Hamelech (Tehilim chapter 8) exclaims “What is Man that he should even merit mention”? Religious sin or malfunction are often the product of the “shrinking of human imagination” and the narrowing of human perspective. Sin always entails a tragic barter in which we forfeit long-term future for short-term needs. Resetting healthy vision avoids moral myopia and protects against religious failure. The poet John Keats described the ability of Nature to provide religious proportion:

Then on the shore

Of the wide world I stand alone, and think,



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Till Love and Fame to nothingness do  
sink

Hopefully this ‘wide world’ helps  
maintain ‘wide imagination’ rather  
than narrow self-interest.

A religious Jew doesn’t only look to Nature to detect Divine morality, or to reset human proportion. Nature is a dynamic system which is impacted by human behavior. Under ideal conditions, Nature exists in a perfect state, in complete harmony with Man and in full cooperation with human interest. So it was in Gan Eden at the beginning of time, and so it will be when history concludes and human beings recover religious utopia. Likewise, at certain milestones in history, as humanity veered closer to God, Nature became revitalized. The spies return from Israel with enormous outsized fruit; the pending entry of the Jews into their homeland has awakened Nature’s bounty. Similarly, the renewed blooming of the modern State of Israel, after centuries of parched infertility, signals that history is veering toward its redemptive terminus.

Finally, Nature can remind us of something we all have lost- our primal innocence. We were all born into this world pure and noble, but life has taken its toll and has corrupted our native virtue. Watching Nature daily renew herself, rebuilds hope in our own ability to restore our own purity. The poet William Wordsworth wrote

My heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky:

So was it when my life began;

So is it now I am a man;”.

As we grow from children to Men, we lose our innocence but teshuva and the dream of “chadesh yameinu c’kedem” exhorts us to restore that lost purity. Nature makes us believe that we can.

To summarize, Nature allows us to detect the moral imprint of God while Nature’s beauty and synchronicity are songs to God. Nature’s vastness and sweep can humble us and open our imagination to true “proportion”. Finally, Nature’s constant renewal demonstrates our own search for the restoration of innocence.

The ability to feel religion within Nature is even more crucial in the aftermath of the Corona crisis. A natural force has wreaked havoc with human civilization. This tragedy cannot paint Nature as hostile or menacing to Man. For whatever reason the boundaries between Man and animal which normally insure against the spread of animal viruses to the human realm dissolved and allowed this tragic contagion. However the system of Nature and even the intricate system of micorganism isn’t threatening to human experience. Humans as well as animals depend upon a vast array of bacteria and viruses to survive. Sadly this equilibrium was upturned and human lives were lost. However Nature remains G-d’s handiwork and a system Divinely and delicately assembled to support human life and welfare. ■



## TOWARDS MEANINGFUL

## TEFILLA

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



# על המחיה and a Fruitful Tu B'shvat

**R**abbi Avraham Dov Auerbach of Avrush served as a Rebbe in the Ukraine during the 1800's. When he was in his 60's, he finally fulfilled his life-long dream of moving to Eretz Yisrael. Back in the Ukraine, he had heard all about the beauty of Eretz Yisrael, and how even the stones in the street shine like diamonds. He was so excited to finally arrive at his destination. But when he got to Israel and settled in the city of Tzfat, he didn't see beauty. All he saw was desolation and hardship. He was so depressed he even considered returning to his hometown of Avrush. He couldn't understand why he could not tap into the beauty of Eretz Yisrael. Finally, someone explained to him that in order to see the beauty, you need to be worthy of it. Rav Avraham Dov secluded himself for a year, during which time he worked on himself and was eventually able to recognize the kedusha found in every stone of Eretz Yisrael.

Though this story took place 200 years ago, I believe we can all relate to it on some level. We arrive in Israel expecting the Kedusha

to jump out at us, and it doesn't. Personally, I remember my first visit to the Kotel and feeling disappointed and letdown. Making Aliya can be challenging and exhausting and sometimes those feelings get in the way of feeling any sort of spirituality. But that doesn't mean it isn't there!!

We will soon see how this story is specifically connected to Tu B'shvat and the bracha of Al Hamichya.

With the approach of Tu B'shvat, we will take a break from our weekly analysis of the words of Shacharit and instead focus on the special bracha of Al Hamichya, which we recite numerous times each day after we eat mezonot or any of the shivat haminim (the 7 special fruits which Israel is specifically praised for). In this bracha, we recognize and thank Hashem for all of the sustenance He has given us. We go on to thank Hashem for bringing us into Eretz Yisrael **in order** that we could eat its fruits.

וְעַל אֶרֶץ חֻמְדָּה טוֹבָה וְרוּחָבָה שְׂרָצִית וְהִנְחַלְתָּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ  
לְאֶכּוֹל מִפְרֵיהָ וּלְשִׂבּוֹעַ מִטּוֹבָהּ

For the precious, good, and spacious land which You have graciously given as a heritage to our ancestors, in order to eat of its fruit and to be satiated with its goodness.

The **Bach** (Orach Chaim 208) quotes some

opinions that say that we should skip this part of Al hamichya! After all, how can we thank Hashem for bringing us to Eretz Yisrael for something so petty as the fruit – that’s not why we want to be here! Who cares about the fruit? Is there really any difference between an apple in Israel and an apple in America?! The Bach however argues vehemently with these opinions and says as follows – קדושת ארץ הנשפט בה היא נשפעת גם בפירותיה מקדושת הארץ העליונה היא נשפעת גם בפירותיה מקדושת הארץ שיונקים מקדושת השכינה השוכנת בקרב הארץ

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## We have the ability on Tu B'Shvat, and really throughout the year, to bring out the special Kedusha inherent in our fruits

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Eretz Yisrael is imbued with a special Kedusha which stems from the fact that the Shechina (Hashem’s Presence) resides here. The fruit of Israel sucks up this Kedusha from the land. We don’t realize the unique privilege we have to live here in Eretz Yisrael and to eat the fruit of the land. An apple here is not the same as an American apple and an Israeli orange is not the same as an American one. Not only in taste and size, but in its actual potential for kedusha! The Bach explains that we praise Hashem for this every day because yes, one of the main reasons we want to be here is Israel is to eat the fruit of Eretz Yisrael, because inherent within it is the unique capacity and potential for kedusha.

We, like Rabbi Avraham Dov Auerbach of Avrush, sometimes fail to see the special beauty and kedusha found in something as mundane as an Israeli apple. We might even complain about its size or its taste, and compare it to what we used to have back in America. But this line in Al Hamichya teaches us to think otherwise.

We find a similar message within the holiday of Tu B'Shvat. The **Magen Avraham** brings down that there is a special minhag to eat fruit on Tu B'shvat. This is based on the **Tikun Yissaschar** who says we should especially eat the *shivat haminim*, and other fruits from Eretz Yisrael. The **Sefer Pri Etz Hadar** brings down that R' Chaim Vital used to try and eat at least 30 different types of fruits every Tu B'shvat!

Why? One reason brought down by **Rav Kook** in Orot HaKodesh is similar to what we discussed earlier. Rav Kook explains that we eat a lot of fruit on Tu B'shvat so that we can sanctify the mundane (קדושת החומר). We have the ability on Tu B'shvat, and really throughout the year, to bring out the special Kedusha inherent in our fruits. When we take a bite, we need to not only take a moment to appreciate the taste, smell, and feel of the fruit, but to also realize that we are eating a fruit that has soaked up the special Kedusha of the land where the Shechina resides.

This year, I can relate to this message much more than in the past. Over the past few months, my daughter and I used some of our corona time to create a garden in our backyard. We weeded and raked, laid down grass, planted flowers and plants,

and our next step will be to plant a fruit tree. I never thought of myself as being the agricultural type, but the feeling of settling and planting a portion of Eretz Yisrael, has been truly euphoric. Iy"YH, when we plant our tree, and eat the fruits that will grow one day, I think we will be able to truly appreciate that unique Kedusha found in the fruit of Eretz Yisrael!

To conclude, when you buy your Tu B'shvat fruit this year, don't search for those dried apricots and banana chips imported from Turkey. Rather, head over to the fresh produce and buy yourself some nice juicy Kedusha-filled Jaffa oranges and thank Hashem for bringing you to this land *in order* to be able to לאכול מפריה ולשבוע מטובה, imbibing that Kedusha in every bite that you take!! ■

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## SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

In just a few days we will commemorate *Tu B'shvat*, referred to in the oral tradition as *Rosh HaShana La'Ilanot* - The New Year of the Trees.

As a child, I never really understood this idea, of a new year for the trees. I recall eating fruits including that very peculiar looking and even more peculiar tasting piece of carob, and remember getting those certificates saying that my parents had planted a tree in Israel in my honor on *Tu B'shvat*, but that was about the extent of my *Tu B'shvat* commemoration. For many here in Israel today, *Tu B'shvat* has become a Jewish "Arbor Day", when schools typically schedule trips to plant saplings. Of course there is also practical *halachic* reasoning behind a new year for the trees. *Tu B'shvat* has significance in calculating several of the *mitzvot hatluot B'Aratz* - the many laws regarding planting and harvesting outlined in the *Torah* for produce grown in Israel.

In recent years, I have begun to reflect, and consider this idea of a *Rosh Hashana La'Ilanot*, a *Rosh Hashana* for the trees.

What are the many familiar themes associated with *Rosh Hashana*? Self evaluation, reflection, examining and working to better our interpersonal relationships, achieving spiritual and physical fulfillment in our daily lives, etc. How can these themes be understood within the context of a *Rosh HaShana La'Ilanot*?

There is a beautiful Chasidic teaching from Rabbi Yisrael of Chortikov z'y'a, which I feel clarifies the parallel to be drawn between our more well known *Rosh HaShana* in *Tishrei*, and *Tu B'shvat*.

*"When a person takes a fruit in his hand, he must contemplate how it is that this fruit exists. Seeds are planted in the ground, and the seeds begin to decay, and just as it appears to be disintegrating it*



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*gains strength, and begins to grow and becomes a tree and produces fruit. So too, a human being even if capable and of good character, involved in Torah and mitzvot, whenever he acts with haughtiness, then man loses his equilibrium. Only when a person recognizes and works at improving this deficiency can they begin to grow upwards and be capable of receiving the sparks of holiness, and become a 'respectable tree.' And this is the meaning of the verse: '...for man is a tree of the field... (Devarim 20:20).' If a person desires to ascend spiritually to the highest level of humanity, he should look to the trees of the field, and ponder 'how do these trees continue to exist?' A tree is planted and remains anchored in the ground, and from this we learn that in order to grow branches that reach great heights, in order to achieve and approach the highest spiritual realms, we must begin grounded, anchored in humility..."*

Yehi Ratzon, as we enjoy the fruits of Eretz Yisrael on Tu B'shvat, may each of us merit to heed and find *chizuk* in the beautiful words of the Rebbe of Chortikov zy'a. ■

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# Tu B'shvat: Man Is Compared to a Tree

כי האדם עץ השדה. (דברים כ"ט)

Man is like the tree in the field. (*Devarim* 20:19)

The Torah compares man to a tree. How are they analogous? Based on the interpretation of Rabbi Eliyahu Shlesinger (in his sefer, *Eileh Hem Mo'adai*), and certain ideas offered by the Hida, we will suggest several areas in which man may be compared to a tree in order to improve upon himself.

## ***A Tree Is Alive, Even When Not Bearing Fruit***

First, halakhically speaking, what is the difference between a tree and vegetable? The difference is that a tree lives throughout the year even though it produces fruit only during one season, whereas, when a vegetable is not in season and producing, it dies. An apple tree is always alive, even though it only produces

apples in its season. A potato patch, and banana plant by contrast, are completely dried out when it's out of season.

Similarly, a Jew is compared to a tree because he is always alive. He always has the strength of growth – to produce, to bear fruit. Even in dark times, like the short days of winter, when we face challenges, we are still alive and have the ability to produce, notwithstanding our temporary dormancy. The potential is always alive within us and we have to introspect and derive strength from within and capitalize on it.

## ***Defying Gravity***

A tree grows upward, and nutrients flow upward from the roots into the branches, which seems to defy the laws of gravity. Sometimes we have to go against the grain and defy gravity. We may have to push against the entire world, which is trying to force us to conform. A Jew has to stand on the other side, all alone, like

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*Avraham Ha'ivri.* Defying gravity, we have to stand up for our moral and Torah-based principles.

In addition, like a tree, man obtains his strength from his roots, the previous generation and transmits it to various branches, which are propagated and the tradition is transmitted to future offspring.

### ***Toil to bear Fruit***

In order for a tree to bear fruit, one has to dig, plant, groom, water and care for it. Absent hard work and constant maintenance, the tree is unlikely to blossom. So too a person – the more we invest in ourselves and our quest for spiritual growth, the greater fruit we will bear. Our success will be evident in our yields.

### ***Growth Requires Proper Elements***

A tree requires the right amount of water and sun to survive, and all other environmental elements have to be appropriate for it to thrive. Similarly, man must ensure that his atmosphere is

proper and appropriate for his growth and spiritual well-being. A person is influenced by his surroundings and it is crucial to place ourselves in the proper environment.

As a tree requires sunlight, so too man requires a proper role model or *Rebbe* who can shed light on the proper conduct. In addition, a tree must obtain a proper amount of water to survive. As Hazal tell us, Torah is compared to water. One must engage in the study of Torah in order to provide the requisite nutrients to enable one to thrive spiritually.

When we celebrate Tu B'shvat, Rosh HaShana for the trees, may we internalize its symbolic and “fruitful” meaning for our personal growth. ■

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