

# Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1456 FEB 19<sup>TH</sup> '22 י"ח אדר א' תשפ"ב

פרשת כי תשא

PARSHAT KI TISA

ב"ה  
ס' ישראל



**Beautiful Belief**  
**Rebbetzin Shira Smiles**  
Faculty, OU Israel Center  
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**Stop Your Prophecy**  
**Rabbi Gideon Weitzman**  
Director, Machon Puah  
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## מחצית השקל תרומה לה'

שמות פרק ל', פסוק י"ג

**YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TISA**

Candles 4:52PM • Havdala 6:06PM • Rabbeinu Tam 6:46PM

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### JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wed.- Shabbat**  
**Feb 16 - 26 / 15 - 25 Adar Aleph**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:29 - 5:19
Sunrise	6:20 - 6:10
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:07 - 9:01
Magen Avraham	8:30 - 8:25
Sof Zman Tefila	10:02 - 9:58
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:53 - 11:52
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:23 - 12:22
Plag Mincha	4:16 - 4:23
Sunset (Including Elevation)	5:31 - 5:39

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CANDLES	KI TISA	HAVDALA	VAYAKHEL	
			Candles	Havdala
4:52	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	6:06	4:58	6:11
5:10	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	6:09	5:10	6:09
5:11	Beit Shemesh / RBS	6:07	5:11	6:07
5:08	Gush Etzion	6:07	5:08	6:07
5:09	Raanana / Tel Mond/ Herzliya/ K. Saba	6:07	5:09	6:07
5:08	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	6:07	5:08	6:07
5:08	Netanya	6:07	5:08	6:07
5:10	Be'er Sheva	6:08	5:10	6:08
5:09	Rehovot	6:08	5:09	6:08
4:52	Petach Tikva	6:07	4:58	6:07
5:08	Ginot Shomron	6:06	5:08	6:06
4:57	Haifa / Zichron	6:06	4:57	6:06
5:07	Gush Shiloh	6:06	5:07	6:06
5:09	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	6:08	5:09	6:08
5:08	Giv'at Ze'ev	6:06	5:08	6:06
5:08	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:07	5:08	6:07
5:10	Ashkelon	6:09	5:10	6:09
5:09	Yad Binyamin	6:08	5:09	6:08
5:00	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	6:04	5:00	6:04
5:05	Golan	6:04	5:05	6:04
Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 6:46PM • next week - 6:52pm				

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



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# DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

**RABBI AVI BERMAN**

Executive Director, OU Israel



In 1923 Rabbi Meir Shapiro initiated a daily regimen of Gemara learning, known as Daf Yomi. With this regimen the entire Talmud can be completed roughly every seven and a half years by learning one page a day. In its time, the Daf Yomi was a novel idea that quickly spread, continuing for generations. Rav Shapiro demonstrated the value of creating a regimen of Torah study on a daily basis.

Personally, I have had the Zechut of learning Gemara and Halacha for many years in both Yeshiva, Kollel and since. The vast majority of my Gemara learning was B'iyyun, which is a more in-depth and exploratory analysis of Gemara. This style of learning allowed me to appreciate the beauty in each Daf I learned, helping me see the vastness of Shivim Panim La'Torah. However, there is an incredible value in learning Gemara B'kiyut, which allows for a broader familiarity and perspective of a larger quantity of topics. While I continue to feel grateful for the time I spend learning B'iyyun I set a goal for myself at age 28 to finish Shas by the time I reached age 50.

At the time such an endeavor seemed doable - if I stuck to the B'kiyut style of Daf Yomi learning, I'd finish Shas before I reached 36. But my life became far busier than I anticipated and I found myself falling behind. Determined to make my dream

into reality, it became clear that I had to begin learning Daf Yomi no later than 42 and a half. Just over 3 years ago, I began learning Daf Yomi with Masechet Zevachim and am on my way to make this dream a reality.

In all honesty, it took some time before I found the Shiur that worked best for me. At the beginning I tried to learn with a virtual Hebrew Shiur that would fit more easily into my schedule. But I found that my Chavrusah with my computer was lacking - I couldn't see the face of the Rav giving Shiur and it was hard for me to connect. Two and a half years ago I attended an "OU Torah New York" event and saw an OU advertisement of a new learning program where users can experience Daf Yomi from both an individualized and holistic perspective of the Gemara - All-Daf. I decided to give it a try.

I was quickly drawn to a Shiur offered by Rav Eli Stefansky and have been captivated ever since. With options to watch the Shiur live or catch the recording later in the day, I particularly appreciate the personal nature of the Shiurim. Each Shiur begins with personal anecdotes and appreciative emails received. Rav Eli also highlights participating members who sponsor the Shiur and anyone who joins the Shiur receives a free Gemara.

Today, Rav Eli Stefansky is a known name in the Berman household and I



share his insights with my two sons who also learn Daf Yomi with Rav Eli - Shlomo and Yechezkel.



In all my years listening to Rav Stefansky's Shiurim I never had the Zechut of meeting him. But this Motzei Shabbat I took my son Yechezkel to hear Rav Stefansky speak at the home of my friends Jonathan and Ariella Eltes who made Aliyah from Toronto to Raanana. It was a surreal experience. The Eltes home was packed with over 100 people eager to hear the Rav Eli's Daf Yomi Shiur. After years of virtually joining Rav Stefansky Shiur, he was finally standing just a few feet away from where I sat. After the Shiur we introduced ourselves to Rav Stefansky, someone whom I felt connected to all these years, yet he had no idea who I was.

I sat beside two extremely nice men who were delighted to hear that I had 2 copies of last week's Torah Tidbits in my car which Yechezkel went to get for them. We spent the rest of the evening reflecting on the beauty of joining Am Yisrael in a global exploration of the words of the Talmud. Even when our connection to our local communities became more distant during Covid, we felt a sense of belonging to one another as we remained unified in our

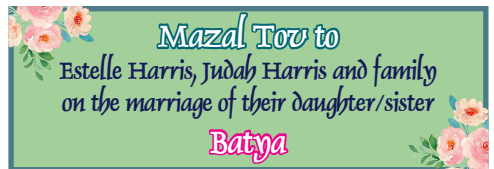
mission to finish Shas.

We are fortunate to live in a time where Torah is more accessible than ever. As someone who has personally benefited from joining a global community of people who dedicate time to Torah study each day, I am taking this opportunity to highlight the many OU programs available to inspire and ground our learning. For those looking to learn daily or weekly, take a moment to browse through the many smartphone applications developed by the OU, beginning with All-Daf, All-Parsha and All-Mishna. You can also find groups for Rambam Yomi, Shmirat HaLashon Yomi, Tehillim Yomi, Nach Yomi, the ongoing Shiurim being zoomed from the OU Israel Center and so many others.

Learning Daf Yomi added a tremendous amount of light to my life and I encourage all our Torah Tidbits readers to find something in addition to TT to learn on a daily basis. Whether you join Rabbi Eli Stefansky, Rabbi Moshe Elefant, Rabbi Shalom Rosner, Shira Smiles or other classes offered by the OU, establishing a daily learning routine into our lives will no doubt bring us tremendous inspiration and Chizuk.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman  
Executive Director, OU Israel  
[aberman@ouisrael.org](mailto:aberman@ouisrael.org)





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

The first third of the parsha concludes instructions concerning the Mishkan. The rest of the parsha is the story of the Golden Calf, concluding with reconciliation and forgiveness.

The first aliyot are amongst the longest in the Torah; the first is 44 verses, the second 47. The remaining are among the shortest; 5 aliyot, 48 verses.



**1<sup>st</sup> aliya (30:11-31:17)** All are to give a **half shekel** to be an atonement. The offerings are brought from these funds – and hence, all the people are represented equally as a remembrance and atonement. Make a **wash basin** of copper. Place it outside the Mishkan area, near the altar. The Kohanim must wash their hands and feet before

service. Make **spiced anointing oil** to anoint the Mishkan, all its utensils and the Kohanim. This recipe is not to be made for personal body lotions. Make **incense** to place in front of the ark, the place that I will meet you. This incense is holy of holies. It is not to be made for your olfactory pleasure. I have called **Bezalel** and filled him with the Divine spirit to master all means of craftsmanship, in metals and in materials. He, with Ohaliav, will fashion all the things that I have commanded be made for the Mishkan. Keep **Shabbat** as a sign between Me and you for all time, for I am the One who sanctifies you. Do not do any melacha. It is an eternal sign for them that in six days I made the world and in the seventh ceased.

This very long aliya allows the entire story of the Golden Calf to be told in the Levi aliya, the second, as the Leviim did not participate in the Golden Calf.

The instructions for the building of the Mishkan have been completed. As have the instructions for the Kohen's garments. The instructions here are all preparations. Have all these things ready for when the Mishkan is built.

The Kohanim were required to wash before the service. Hands and feet. Rashi says: put your right hand and right foot together and pour the water over both at once. Water is a recurring theme in the Torah. Harkening back to creation. Verse 2 of the Torah: And the spirit of G-d hovered over the waters. Water is a symbol of going back to Creation; a restart, reboot, recreation, fresh start. But sometimes we immerse *in* the water; here, we don't go *into* the water, we *pour* the water on ourselves.

With deep sadness we announce  
the peaceful passing of our Father,  
Grandfather, Great Grandfather  
**Rabbi Dr. Fred S. Heuman z"l**

Children: Varda Deutsch,  
Azriel Heuman, Sheera Shine,  
Iryah Mordchai, Judy Listhaus  
(Funeral and Shiva were held in Israel)

Going into the water is submission; I let go of my autonomy and submerge myself into the water. Here, the Kohen is in charge. He pours the water. Pouring is assertive; immersing is submissive. Holiness is created not only by submission but also by man's assertiveness. Man both submits to and partners with G-d in creating holiness.

Anointing the utensils through special spiced oil, fragrant olive oil is another expression of man's role in creating holy utensils.

Washing and anointing indicate that holiness needs to be created, to have preparation. We know this from Shabbat. There is an expression: those who cook on Erev Shabbat, have food to eat on Shabbat. But what it means is: if Shabbat is to be holy, truly a holy day, it requires preparation. Man partners in the creation of the holiness of Shabbat, through preparation and through Kiddush. And this is true for all the holy days, the chagim of the year. They all have preparation time. Pesach, well, no need to outline the preparations needed there. Shavuot has the Sefira leading to it. Tisha B'av has the 3 weeks. Rosh Hashana has the month of elul. Sukkot has Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Even Purim has Taanit Esther.

Holiness is cultivated, nurtured, anticipated. Prepared.




**2<sup>nd</sup> aliya (31:18-33:11)** While Moshe is on the mountain receiving the luchot, the

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people below are making a golden calf. G-d tells Moshe that his people have made a golden calf. He wants to destroy them and begin anew with Moshe. Moshe pleads on their behalf. G-d relents. Moshe descends with Divinely inscribed tablets. When he sees the golden calf he smashes the tablets. Moshe confronts Aharon. Aharon explains what happened. At the behest of Moshe, the Leviim punish the 3,000 guilty. Moshe ascends the mountain. He admits the sin of the people, asking for forgiveness. And if not, remove me from the book. G-d counters that those who sin will be the ones to be erased. Now, go, led by My angel and lead the people to the Land. For I will not be in your midst lest you be destroyed. The people are distraught. Moshe moves the tent of meeting to outside of the camp, for there G-d will now speak with him. A cloud descended when G-d spoke with Moshe. The people saw and bowed. G-d spoke to Moshe face to face, as people do.

The dominant theme of this very rich and complex story is the theme of forgiveness. The Torah has been the story of G-d's reach for man. It culminated in the intimate revelation at Sinai. The Mishkan is to be an enduring point of contact between man and G-d. This story too is not the story of sin, but the story of G-d's reach for man in spite of man's sin.

Very little is said about the sin; but many many verses describe the forgiveness. The story is not the story of sin. It is the story of the love that endures after the sin. The people are not destroyed. The march to the Land of Israel continues. G-d continues to speak to Moshe. Sin, idol worship no less,

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will happen; but He does not give up on man.



**3<sup>rd</sup> aliya (33:12-16)** Moshe challenges G-d: If I have found favor in your eyes, tell me Your ways. That way I can act properly, for this is, after all, Your people. G-d: I will guide you. Moshe: Don't move us from here unless Your Face goes with us.

This is my favorite aliya in the Torah. Along with the next. This section is the Torah reading for Shabbat Chol Hamoad Pesach and Sukkot.

This is the fullest, richest interaction between G-d and Moshe that we are privy to overhear. Moshe wants to know G-d's ways. And he's not alone in that one. How are we going to work out this Divine-human interaction? Because You are here and You are not. Moshe seeks closeness. G-d demurs. Moshe presses. We want your Face.



**4<sup>th</sup> aliya (33:17-23)** G-d: I will do as you say. Moshe: show me Your kavod, Your glory. G-d: I

will pass before you, will call My name before you, show mercy to whom I choose to show mercy to. You cannot see My face and survive. Stand in the nook in the rock; I will pass in front of you. You will see My back but My face you will not see.

G-d acquiesces to Moshe's demand for closeness. To a point. Moshe presses on. Not just Your Face. Who are You? I want Your fullness, Your glory. G-d does not back off. I will reveal but with limits: glimpses

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from behind need suffice. This exchange is what we all sense in the challenge of this world. We see but we don't. We perceive, but from behind. We want a peak but must live without.



**5<sup>th</sup> aliya (34:1-9)** G-d instructs Moshe to make a second set of tablets. Moshe ascends the mountain by himself. G-d descends in a cloud and he calls: G-d, G-d, Merciful... the 13 attributes of mercy. Moshe bows. And says: please be in our midst, for though the people are obstinate, forgive their sins.

When G-d descends and He calls out "G-d is Merciful" – who is the He? Is G-d describing Himself as Merciful or is Moshe calling out "oh Merciful One"? Is it G-d calling or Moshe calling? Does Moshe plead with G-d for mercy? Or does G-d Himself call out His own Name? The Talmud says that G-d is the One speaking. He teaches Moshe the 13 attributes of mercy. While that sounds odd – He is calling His own Name – in the previous aliya, He told Moshe he was going to do that. Verse 33:19: I will pass in front of you and I will call in the Name of G-d before you. G-d teaches man how to gain back His favor after sinning. That too is a sign of love of Him for us.



**6<sup>th</sup> aliya (34:10-26)** G-d responded: I am making a covenant. You will see signs and wonders, G-d's work that is awesome. You

keep what I command. Don't make a pact with the people in the land, for it will lead to you worshipping idols, and to marriage with them. Keep our festivals, our Shabbat, our laws in our Temple.

The march to the Land of Israel continues. As if to say: now, let's get back to where we were. We were marching to the Land. That sin? That was a really bad sin, a disappointing national sin that golden calf. But let's get on with things; marching to the Land. Now that is true forgiveness.



**7<sup>th</sup> aliya (34:27-35)** Moshe was in the mountain 40 days, writing the second set of the 10 commandments. As he descended with the tablets, his face shone. The people were afraid of him. Moshe instructed them in all that G-d spoke with him on the mountain. Moshe covered his face when he was with the people, uncovering it when G-d spoke with him.

This most intense of parshas ends with an even more sublime image. Moshe's encounter with G-d is written all over his face. Proximity to the Divine cannot leave one unchanged.

## HAFTORAH

### 1 MELACHIM 18:20 -39.

In this week's *haftorah*, Eliyahu HaNavi demonstrates the worthlessness of the Baal, just as Moshe chastised the Israelites for serving the Golden Calf, as discussed in this week's Torah reading.

The background of this week's *haftorah*: King Achav and Queen Izevel ruled the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and encouraged the worship of the Baal deity as well

לעילוי נשמת

**Prof. Dr Dan Vogel z"l**

**פנחס דוד בן שלמה שמעון ז"ל**

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as other forms of idolatry. To prove that G-d alone is in control and provides sustenance, Eliyahu decreed a drought on the kingdom—no rain fell for three years. When Achav then accused Eliyahu of causing hardship for Bnei Yisrael, Eliyahu challenged him to a showdown. He, Eliyahu, would represent the cause of monotheism, and 850 idolatrous “prophets” would represent their cause. Achav accepted.

The *haftorah* begins with Eliyahu, the Baal prophets, and many spectators gathering atop Mount Carmel. Eliyahu rebuked Bnei Yisrael, uttering the famous words: “How long will you hop between two ideas? If the Hashem is G-d go after Him, and if the Baal, go after him.”

Eliyahu then stated his challenge: “Give us two bulls and let them [the Baal prophets] choose one bull for themselves and cut it up and place it on the wood, but fire they shall not put; and I will prepare one bull, and I will put it on the wood, and fire will I not place. And you will call in the name of your deity, and I will call in the name of Hashem, and it will be the G-d that will answer with fire, he is G-d.”

The people agreed to the challenge, and the prophets of the Baal were first. The prophets’ entreaties to their god went unanswered. Eliyahu taunted them: “Call with a loud voice, for you presume that he is a god. [Perhaps] he is talking or he is pursuing [enemies], or maybe he is on a journey; perhaps he is sleeping and will awaken...”

As evening approached, Eliyahu took

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center-stage. He built an altar, laid his offering upon it and surrounded it with water. "Hashem, the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yisrael," he declared. "Today let it be known that You are G-d in Israel and that I am Your servant, and at Your word have I done all these things. Answer me, Hashem, answer me, and this people shall know that You are the true G-d..."

A fire immediately descended from

heaven and consumed the offering, as well as the altar and the surrounding water. "And all the people saw and fell on their faces, and they said, "The Lord is G-d, the L-rd is G-d." ■



## STATS

21st of 54 sedras; 9th of 11 in Sh'mot  
Written on 245.17 lines in a Torah (8th)  
14 Parshiot; 10 open, 4 closed  
139 p'sukim (10th), 1st in Sh'mot  
2002 words (5th), 1st in Shmot  
7424 letters (8th), 1st in Sh'mot

Large sedra in general plus relatively long p'sukim, which explains the jump in rank from 10th for p'sukim to 5th for words. Only 4 other sedra have more than 2000 words.



## MITZVOT

9 doesn't seem like very many mitzvot, but only 17 of the other 53 sedras (less than a third) have more mitzvot

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and great grandfather

*Malka (Silverberg) & Avraham Shrybman*

## A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

וְהָיָה מִמָּחָר וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל הָעָם אֲתֵם חָטֵאתֶם חֲטָאָה גְדוֹלָה (לב: ל')

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moshe said unto the people: You have sinned a great sin." (32:30)

Here we are, after the sin of the golden calf has already transpired and after approximately three thousand perpetrators have already been executed, who exactly is Moshe now accusing of sinning such a great sin?

In addition, the language of "great sin" is mentioned seemingly incorrectly, in the feminine usage "Chataah Gedolah" while in the correct Hebrew language, the correct word should be "Chait Gadol" - in the masculine usage.

I heard in the name of Rabbi Yosef B. Soloveitchik zt"l that in syntax, and in syntax alone, the feminine usage of a word in Hebrew refers to "passivity". For example, we know to place our Tefillin on our passive hand because the text says "Al Yadchah" - hand in feminine usage.

So too here in our Parsha. Even though the active sinners were already punished, Moshe accuses the Israelites of being guilty of passivity and not intervening and stopping those from creating the golden calf.

How important it is to understand the need for us to be actively involved in rectifying the world around us and not remain passive and letting sin occur. Shabbat Shalom

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# THE PERSON

# IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

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## Little Did I Know

Birthdays are important, and the older one gets, the more important they become. With age, birthdays begin to stimulate ambiguous feelings.

On the one hand, every birthday is cause for celebration. Another year of life and accomplishment has gone by, and a new year full of hope and great possibilities is about to begin. There is much to be thankful for.

On the other hand, one can no longer deny that he is getting older. Sadly, some who we celebrated with last year are no longer around to celebrate with us this year.

Birthdays bring back memories of the past. The memories themselves are sometimes wonderful, but sometimes remind us of tragic experiences that we would rather forget.

My own birthday is coming up soon, and one of the ways I know it is approaching is with the upcoming weekly Torah portion. You see, my Bar Mitzvah *parsha* was *Parshat Ki Tisa* (Exodus 30:11-34:35), which we read this coming Shabbat. Each year, this Torah portion is an occasion for reflection for me, and this year is no exception.

My memories center about the people who were there. My parents, of course, are among them, and three of my grandparents, all long gone. A great-uncle, already old then, who went on to live until he was a hundred and ten years old, and who was one of the few people then who actually taught me something about my *parsha*. My sisters were there, although one was barely a year old.

I also remember fondly, and with great respect, the man who taught me to read the Torah. His name was Mr. Sender Kolatch, and he was a world class *baal koreh*, or Torah reader, himself. I would walk to his home every Friday night for lessons, each

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of which was followed by tea and cookies. I still keep in touch with one of his children. He too is long gone.

But what I reflect on most is the discrepancy between what I knew about my *parsha* then, and what I have learned about it in the many decades since my bar mitzvah. I did learn to read it from the Torah scroll, and I'm told I did it well, but I had only a very superficial knowledge about this profound *parsha* and its very diverse contents.

I knew, for example, that it opened with the *mitzvah* of *machatzit hashekel* that every Jew was to contribute a half shekel to a central fund, out of which the costs of the Tabernacle services would be paid.

I knew that the opening two sections of the *parsha* were among the longest, if not the longest, in the entire Torah. This was one of the biggest obstacles I had to mastering the Torah reading. But I hadn't a clue as to the details of those two sections: about the special oils and fragrances which were an essential part of the Temple service. It was much later that the Talmud tractate which discusses these details and their significance, *Masechet Kritut*, became one of my favorite Talmud tractates.

I knew about the reference to Shabbat in the opening sections of the *parsha*, but it was not until much later that I began to appreciate the connection between sacred space—the Temple precincts, and sacred time—the Shabbat day.

I knew the story of the Golden Calf, but only as a story. I did not appreciate its contemporary relevance and rich symbolism until much later. I have since, for example, become enamored of Rabbi Yehudah



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HaLevi's explanation of the attractiveness of a Golden Calf for the people. He maintains that the demand to worship an invisible god was just too much for the Children of Israel, so that they chose a tangible object through which to worship a God Who could not be seen. How tempting it is to this very day to try to find tangible physical or ideological substitutes for the transcendent Almighty, a temptation which leads us to modes of worship which are more "sophisticated" than dancing around a Golden Calf, but no less idolatrous.

The courageous confrontation of Moses with God, as he intercedes for the sinful people and begs forgiveness for them, was "over my head." It made no impression upon me. And yet, now, these verses have come to exemplify what for me is the essence of true leadership: "Moses went back to the Lord and said: 'Alas. This nation is guilty of a great sin in making for themselves a god of gold. Now, if You will forgive their sin [well and good]; but if not, erase me from the record which You have written'" (*Exodus* 32: 31-32).

Nor did I in any way understand Moses' plea: "Now, if I have truly gained Your favor, pray let me know Your ways." What ways? What exactly was Moses asking for?

I now have learned that Moses was asking to understand God's inscrutable will. He needed to understand so much that we find difficult in our daily lives as we struggle to

make sense of "why the righteous suffer." But for a 13-year-old, blessed with a relatively problem-free life, I was protected from such a "need to know."

Our Torah portion contains so much else that was not part of the agenda of a 13-year-old boy, brought up in the United States in those years. It was not that the period of history in which I was born and raised did not have its immense trials and tribulations. After all, I was born months after World War II began. When I was safe and secure in my baby bunting, my cousins in Poland were being shot and buried alive. My childhood years were concurrent with the State of Israel's struggle for independence. My Bar Mitzvah took place during a time when our neighbors' sons were off in the distant land of Korea, from which one of them did not return.

Yet, there is much in the *parsha* that was relevant then: God's response to Moses' request that he know His ways: "You cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live;" the mysterious "cleft in the rock" in which Moses hid; the symbolism of the Second Tablets which Moses was instructed to carve of stone; the Thirteen Attributes of God's mercy; the radiance which graced Moses face, so that "the people shrank from coming near him;" and the mask, or veil, which Moses wore so as to frighten the people no longer.

All this rich content, and more, was not taught to me, and had it been taught to me, it wouldn't have meant very much.

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There is a lesson in the ignorance of this particular Bar Mitzvah boy and all that he has subsequently learned about the Torah and about this *parsha*. It is lesson by which I have tried, albeit neither constantly nor consistently, to live by. The lesson is this: One cannot be complacently satisfied with the understanding of Torah that he attained as a schoolchild. As we mature, so must our knowledge of Torah mature. The Torah of a 13-year-old cannot slake the intellectual thirst of a 30-year-old, nor can the Torah we learned when we were 30 satisfy our spiritual needs when we turn 60.

Our Torah must be renewed as we grow older. Torah study must be a life-long endeavor. Then, and only then, can it continue to inspire and instruct us as we struggle with the challenges of living, with the challenges that change as we age. ■

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Dedicated by  
Dr. Robert Sreter DDS., M.S.

# Can There Be Compassion Without Justice?

At the height of the drama of the Golden Calf, a vivid and enigmatic scene takes place. Moses has secured forgiveness for the people. But now, on Mount Sinai yet again, he does more. He asks God to be with the people. He asks Him to “teach me Your ways,” and “show me Your glory” (Ex. 33:13, Ex. 18). God replies:

“I will cause all My goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim My Name, the Lord, in your presence ... I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” But, He said, “you cannot see My face, for no one may see Me and live.” (Ex. 33:20)

God then places Moses in a cleft in the rock face, telling him he will be able to “see My back” but not His face, and Moses hears God say these words:

“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished. (Ex. 34:6-7)

This passage became known as the “Thirteen Attributes of God’s Mercy.”

The Sages understood this episode as the moment in which God taught Moses, and through him all future generations, how to pray when atoning for sin (Rosh Hashanah 17b). Moses himself used these words with slight variations during the next crisis, that of the spies. Eventually they became the basis of the special prayers known as *Selichot*, prayers of penitence. It was as if God were binding himself to forgive the penitent in each generation by this self-definition.<sup>1</sup> God is compassionate and

<sup>1</sup> *The Talmud in Rosh Hashanah 17b says that God made a covenant on the basis of these words, binding Himself to forgive those who, in penitence, appealed to these attributes. Hence their centrality in the prayers leading up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom*

lives in love and forgiveness. This is an essential element of Jewish faith.

But there is a caveat. God adds: *“Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished.”* There is a further clause about visiting the sins of the parents upon the children which demands separate attention and is not our subject here. The caveat tells us that there is forgiveness but also punishment. There is compassion but also justice.

Why so? Why must there be justice as well as compassion, punishment as well as forgiveness? The Sages said:

“When God created the universe He did so under the attribute of justice, but then saw it could not survive. What did He do? He added compassion to justice and created the world.” (See Rashi to Genesis 1:1.)

This statement prompts the same question. Why did God not abandon justice altogether? Why is forgiveness alone not enough?

Some fascinating recent research in diverse fields from moral philosophy to evolutionary psychology, and from games theory to environmental ethics, provides us with an extraordinary and unexpected answer.

The best point of entry is Garrett Hardin’s famous paper written in 1968 about “the tragedy of the commons.”<sup>2</sup> He asks us to imagine an asset with no specific owner: pasture land that belongs to everyone (the commons), for example, or the sea and the fish it contains. The asset provides a

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*Kippur, and on Yom Kippur itself.*

2 Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” Vol. Science 162, 13 December 1968: no. 3859 pp. 1243-1248.

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livelihood to many people, the local farmers or fishermen. But eventually it attracts too many people. There is over-pasturing or overfishing, and the resource is depleted. The pasture is at risk of becoming wasteland. The fish are in danger of extinction.<sup>3</sup>

What then happens? The common good demands that everyone from here on must practice restraint. They must limit the number of animals they graze or the number of fish they catch. But some individuals are tempted not to do so. They continue to over-pasture or overfish. They justify to themselves that the gain to them is great and the loss to others is small, since it is divided by many. Self-interest takes

precedence over the common good, and if enough people act on these instincts, the result is disaster.

This is the tragedy of the commons, and it explains how environmental catastrophes and other disasters occur. The problem is the *free rider*, the person who pursues their self-interest without bearing their share of the cost of the common good. Because of the importance of this type of situation to many contemporary problems, they have been intensively studied by mathematical biologists like Anatol Rapoport and Martin Nowak and behavioural economists like Daniel Kahneman and the late Amos Tversky.<sup>4</sup>

One of the things they have done is to create experimental situations that simulate this sort of problem. Here is one example. Four players are each given \$8. They are told they can choose to invest as much or as little as they want in a common fund. The experimenter collects the contributions, adds them up, adds 50% (the gain the farmer or fisherman would have made by using the commons), and distributes the sum equally to all four players. So if each contributes the full \$8 to the fund, they each receive \$12 at the end. But if one player contributes nothing, the fund will

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3 *Long before Garrett Hardin, there was an old Hassidic story about a village where the people were asked each to donate an amount of wine to fill a large vat to present to the King on his forthcoming visit to the village. Each villager secretly contributed only water instead of wine, arguing to themselves that such a small dilution would not be noticed in the large gift. The King arrived, the villagers presented him with the vat, he drank from it and said, "It's just plain water." I guess many folk traditions have similar stories. This is, in essence, the tragedy of the commons.*

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4 *See Robert Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation. New York: Basic, 1984. Matt Ridley, The Origins of Virtue, Penguin, 1996. Daniel Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow, Allen Lane, 2011. Martin Nowak and Roger Highfield, Super Cooperators: Evolution, Altruism and Human Behaviour or Why We Need Each Other to Succeed, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2011.*



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total \$24, which with 50% added becomes \$36. Distributed equally it means that each will receive \$9. Three will thus have gained \$1, while the fourth, the free rider, will have gained \$9.

This, though, is not a stable situation. As the game is played repeatedly, the participants begin to realise there is a free rider among them even if the experiment is structured so that they don't know who it is. One of two things then tends to happen. Either everyone stops contributing to the fund (i.e. the common good) or they agree, if given the choice, to punish the free rider. Often people are keen to punish, even if it means that they will lose thereby, a phenomenon sometimes called "altruistic punishment."

Some have linked participants to MRI machines to see which parts of the brain are activated by such games. Interestingly, altruistic punishment is linked to pleasure centres in the brain. As Kahneman puts it:

"It appears that maintaining the social order and the rules of fairness in this fashion is its own reward. Altruistic punishment could well be the glue that holds societies together."<sup>5</sup>

This, though, is hardly a happy situation. Punishment is bad news for everyone. The offender suffers, but so do the punishers, who have to spend time or money they might otherwise use in improving the collective outcome. And in cross-cultural studies, it turns out to be people from countries where there is widespread free-riding who punish most severely. People are most

<sup>5</sup> Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 308.

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punitive in societies where there is the most corruption and the least public-spiritedness. Punishment, in other words, is the solution of last resort.

This brings us to religion. A whole series of experiments has shed light on the role of religious practice in such circumstances. Tests have been carried out in which participants have the opportunity to cheat and gain by so doing. If, without any connection being made to the experiment at hand, participants have been primed to think religious thoughts – by being shown words relating to God, for example, or being reminded of the Ten Commandments – they cheat significantly less.<sup>6</sup> What is particularly fascinating about such tests is that outcomes show no relationship to the underlying beliefs of the participants. What makes the difference is not *believing* in God, but rather *being reminded* of God before the test. This may well be why daily prayer and other regular rituals are so important. What affects us at moments of temptation is not so much background belief but the act of bringing that belief into awareness.

Of much greater significance have been the experiments designed to test the impact of different ways of thinking about God. Do we think primarily in terms of Divine forgiveness, or of Divine justice and punishment? Some strands within the great faiths emphasise one, others the other. There are hellfire preachers and those who speak in the still, small voice of love. Which is the

more effective?

Needless to say, when the experimental subjects are atheists or agnostics, there is no difference. They are not affected either way. Among believers, though, the difference is significant. *Those who believe in a punitive God cheat and steal less than those who believe in a forgiving God.* Experiments were then performed to see how believers relate to free-riders in common-good situations like those described above. Were they willing to forgive, or did they punish the free-riders even at a cost to themselves. Here the results were revelatory. *People who believe in a punitive God, punish people less than those who believe in a forgiving God.*<sup>7</sup> Those who believe that, as the Torah says, God “does not leave the guilty unpunished,” are more willing to leave punishment to God. *Those who focus on Divine forgiveness are more likely to practice human retribution or revenge.*

The same applies to societies as a whole. Here the experimenters used terms not entirely germane to Judaism: they compared countries in terms of percentages of the population who believed in heaven and hell. “Nations with the highest levels of belief in hell and the lowest levels of belief in heaven had the lowest crime rates. In contrast, nations that privileged heaven over hell were champions of crime. These patterns persisted across nearly all major religious faiths, including various Christian, Hindu and syncretic religions that are a blend of several belief systems.”<sup>8</sup>

This was so surprising a finding that

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6 Ara Norenzayan, *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*, Princeton University Press, 2013, 34-35.

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7 *Ibid.*, 44-47.

8 *Ibid.*, 46.

people asked: in that case, why are there religions that de-emphasise Divine punishment? Azim Shariff offered the following explanation:

“Because though Hell might be better at getting people to be good, Heaven is much better at making them feel good.” So, if a religion is intent on making converts, “it’s much easier to sell a religion that promises a divine paradise than one that threatens believers with fire and brimstone.”<sup>9</sup>

It is now clear why, at the very moment He is declaring his compassion, grace and forgiveness, God insists that He does not leave the guilty unpunished. *A world without Divine justice would be one where there is more resentment, punishment, and crime, and less public-spiritedness and forgiveness, even among religious believers.* The more we believe that God punishes the guilty, the more forgiving we become. The less we believe that God punishes the guilty, the more resentful and punitive we become. This is a totally counterintuitive truth, yet one that finally allows us to see the profound wisdom of the Torah in helping us create a humane and compassionate society. ■

## 9 Ibid.

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## PROBING

## THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive:  
<https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>

Among the most compelling rivalries described in all of Tanach is the conflict between Eliyahu HaNavi and the Israelite king, Ach'av. The text describes Ach'av's wickedness as being worse than that of any previous Israelite king as he openly worshiped foreign gods, especially Ba'al. The king's behavior, promoted by his Phoenecian queen, Izevel, helped spread the practice of idolatry throughout the Northern Kingdom, corrupting the masses and angering Hashem. And so, as the 17<sup>th</sup> perek of M'lachim A opens, we read the very first act of Eliyahu, i.e., that of decreeing a drought (and subsequent famine) that would be broken only by his word alone.

As our haftarah opens, at the beginning of perek 18 (according to Ashkenazic practice), Hashem, in the third year of the drought, calls upon the prophet to appear before Ach'av so that Hashem could break the drought and bring the rain. Eliyahu arranges for a vivid display of G-d's power

as he challenges the prophets of Ba'al to a public confrontation and gathers all of Israel to Har HaCarmel. There, in dramatic fashion, G-d answers the navi's prayers and sends down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice that lay upon the temporary altar. The people react by falling to the ground and proclaiming "Hashem is the (true) G-d!"

The connection of this selection from the nevi'im to the events depicted in today's parasha seems quite obvious. Like Moshe in our parasha, Eliyahu strikes out against the idolaters of his time; like Moshe, Eliyahu punishes those who served the false god; and, like Moshe, Eliyahu brings the people back to G-d. But the similarities between these two spiritual giants go beyond this one story. Moshe "exiled" himself from his people by placing the Ohel Moed outside of the Israelite camp while Eliyahu was exiled from the people throughout the years of drought. Moshe stayed atop Har Sinai for forty days and nights without eating or drinking while Eliyahu walked for forty days and nights without eating or drinking in order to reach Har Sinai. Moshe was forced to flee a king for fear of his life while Eliyahu was forced to flee a queen (Izevel) for fear of his life. The similarities continue (you might try to think of some yourselves!).

Sadly, we note that Moshe succeeded in his mission to end idolatry within the nation (with the exception of the sin of Ba'al P'or)

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and led the people to the Promised Land. Eliyahu, however, did not succeed, leading the people back to the worship of G-d. He is taken from this world with his mission unfulfilled, but with the promise that he would yet return to complete his job.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the prophet Mal'achi ends his prophecies - and closes the Era of Prophecy - with the promise that G-d will send Elijah as a harbinger of messianic times. And how fitting that is! It was Moshe who informed the nation of their soon-to-be redemption from the exile in Egypt and their return to the land of their fathers. It will be Eliyahu who informs the nation of their redemption and their return from the Diaspora to the land of their fathers. May we see that soon, speedily and in our time. ■



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**RABBI SHALOM**

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# Appreciating Our Gifts In Life Before It's Too Late

וְהַלְחֹת מִעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹקִים הָיָה וְהִמְכָּתֹב מִכְתָּב אֱלֹקִים הוּא  
חֲרוּת עַל-הַלְחֹת:

*The Luchos were God's work, and the inscription was God's inscription, engraved on the tablets. (Shemos 32:15).*

It is interesting to note that the first time the Torah mentions the *Luchos*, there is no detailed description of the *Luchos*. It is only immediately prior to Moshe's destruction of the *Luchos* that they are described as the work of Hashem, inscribed by God and divinely engraved. Why are the *Luchos* only described before they are broken and not at their first appearance? We will explore two lessons that can be learned from the placement of the description of the *Luchos* at this juncture.

The Shemen Hatov suggests that the Torah wanted to emphasize right before Moshe breaks the *Luchos*, that despite that they were in fact written by Hashem, Moshe did not hesitate to break the *Luchos* when he felt the nation was not ready or

able to receive them.

In fact, the last words of the Torah, "*le'einei kol Yisrael*" – "before the eyes of all Israel", according to Rashi, refers to Moshe's shattering of the *Luchos*. Moshe is credited with having broken the *Luchos*. Despite the fact that he spent 40 days and nights studying its contents with Hashem, he did not hesitate to destroy them. Why did he not just place them in a hidden area and when he felt things quieted down and Bnei Yisrael would be ready to accept the *Luchos*, he could then go and retrieve them. Why did he destroy the *Luchos*? It is like someone destroying a thesis they labored over for months.

The *Meshech Chochma* posits that Moshe feared that Bnei Yisrael would ascribe special power to the *Luchos* as they did with the Golden Calf. They thought Moshe was granted godly powers and when he did not return when they anticipated, they needed to replace him with a Golden Calf that they felt had inherent power. Moshe had to clearly indicate to them that there is no inherent *kedusha* in the *Luchos*. The *kedusha* is derived from the fact that its content was directed by Hashem. All holiness flows from Torah, which is ultimately from HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The description of the *Luchos* appears prior to them being broken to highlight Moshe's brave act of destroying the God given *Luchos*.

The Shemen Hatov offers an additional

explanation. Often, one only realizes the significance of something when he is about to lose it. The description of the *Luchos* appears before they are broken to accentuate that Bnei Yisrael are going to miss this most precious gift.

This is an important lesson for us. Our inability to appreciate what we have before it is too late is one of the saddest aspects of human nature. Rabbi Frand (in his sefer on the Parsha vol 2) relates this thought to our lives. When we are young and spend time in school or Yeshiva, we do not always maximize that time and appreciate the educational experience. It is only in our later years that we become nostalgic and wish we could relive those special years.

When we raise our children, we get caught up in the challenging moments and fail to appreciate the time we spend with them. Years later, when our nests are empty, we wish we could hear their laughter in our living room.

At times one's parents seem to pose difficulty. They may offer unsolicited advice or criticism and it may take a lot of effort to care for them. Yet, when they pass away, children suddenly realize what they lost and yearn for one more conversation and contemplate what advice they would offer when such advice is indeed needed. We may not always appreciate our relationship with our parents until they are no longer with us.

By reserving the description of the *Luchos* until they were about to be broken, the Torah warns us to appreciate our gifts in life -our children, our parents, and the myriad of other gifts that Hashem grants us- before it is too late. ■



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## Beautiful Belief

In one of the most fascinating conversations in *Tanach*, Moshe Rabbeinu z”l asks Hashem, “please show me a vision of Your Glory” (*Shemot* 33:18). Hashem responds, “You cannot have a vision of My Presence. A man cannot have a vision of Me (lit. see My face) and still exist...you will have a vision of ‘My back’” (*Shemot* 33:20-23). Many of the commentaries struggle to understand what Moshe Rabbeinu z”l was trying to ‘see’, and what Hashem’s response means.

The *Mishchat Shemen* quotes an idea that Moshe Rabbeinu z”l was trying to understand the classic mystery of “*tzadik vera lo, rasha vetov lo*”, how it is that the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper; how do we make sense of the contradictions we see

in this world? Hashem answers by telling Moshe Rabbeinu z”l that you can “only see My Back”. The *Chatam Sofer* z”l explains this answer as meaning that we can only understand the workings of this world in retrospect, but certainly not while the events transpire. This world exists as a continuum from the time of creation until the times of *Mashiach*. Everything that occurs fits exactly into a larger picture; we, however, are living frame by frame. Hashem’s response implies that there is an order to everything that happens, we must believe that things aren’t random. Sometimes when we look back, we can even get a glimpse of the mechanics of Above. Chazal teach that one who reads the *Megillah* out of order does not fulfill his obligation; we must trust that there is a distinct order to the world both on the collective, as well as on the individual level. The *Chafetz Chayim* z”l would often say, “one who has *emunah* has no questions, but if one has no *emunah*, no answer will ever suffice for him.”

Rav Ochayon in *Ohr Daniel* takes this idea one step further. In retrospect, one will see that the ‘bad’ the *tzadik* experienced was not really bad, and the ‘good’ the wicked enjoyed was not really good. Further, when one looks back, he will understand why it was impossible to comprehend these events while they were happening. In retrospect, had he had the understanding then of what the future held, he too would have asked for these very experiences.

### Please Note:

#### Upcoming deadlines for ads in Torah Tidbits

- Parshat Vayakhel, Feb 25-26 (issue 1457)  
(ads by Sun. Feb 20)
- Parshat P’kudei, March 4-5 (issue 1458)  
(ads by Sun. Feb 27)
- Parshat Vayikra, March 11-12 (issue 1459)  
(ads by Mon. Feb 28)
- Shabbat Parshat Tzav, March 18-19 (issue 1460)  
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Rav Pincus z"l, in *Tiferet Shimshon*, speaks about the front and back of a face. When one sees someone from the back, he can recognize who the person is, however, he can't tell much else. Only when he sees a person's face, he can discern their emotions and gain a sense of their inner world. We only see the exposed affairs of Hashem, the "intentions", however, why things happen, are beyond our comprehension. We must realize that our understanding of the inner workings of this world are limited.

Rav Aharon of Karlin z"l in *Orchot Aharon* reflects that believing in *hasgacha pratit* and in Hashem's immense goodness can't just be lip service, it must become an integral part of our emotional psyche. To the extent we can perceive everything as good, it can sweeten what seems to be bitter, and transform everything into revealed good. ■



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Author of Baderech: Along the Path of Teshuva (Mosaica 2021)

# One By One

Professor David Weiss was a leading scientist in the field of cancer immunotherapy and was a Professor of Immunology and Bacteriology at the University of California in Berkeley until he moved with his family to Israel in 1966. Following his return from an international conference in Moscow, through contact with the local Chabad *shaliach* in San Francisco, Professor Weiss was invited to meet with the Lubavitcher Rebbe to discuss all he had experienced and seen relating to Jewish life behind the ‘Iron Curtain’.

At the end of his *yechidus*, his private audience and conversation with the Rebbe on communal and professional matters, Professor Weiss became emotional, and was moved to ask a personal question:

“I am not as exacting in my Torah observance as some others. I do pray three times a day, but not always with a minyan. And I am not always as careful about observing the commandments as the people who are your emissaries. But I would just like to know, “Who can call himself one of your chasidim?”

The Rebbe responded, “It’s very simple ... Somebody who can say at the end of the day that he has advanced a small step higher than he was at the beginning of the day, I would be happy to call that person a chasid of mine.”

“The Lubavitcher Rebbe’s statement contained a very powerful message,” commented Professor Weiss. “And ever since then, I have tried – though I have not always succeeded – to be the kind of person who is able to look back at the end of the day and say, “I’ve risen today by a small step...”

\*\*\*\*\*

Our sedra presents the system through which Moshe Rabbeinu is instructed to conduct a census of the Nation, the “half shekel”:

כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְקֹדֵיהֶם... זֶה יָתֵנוּ כָּל־הָעָבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בַּשֶּׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ... מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל תְּרוּמָה לָה'.

“When you take the sum of the Children of Israel according to their numbers... This they shall give, everyone who goes through the counting: **half a shekel** according to the holy shekel... A half shekel as a gift to Hashem...”

Reb Zvi Hirsch Riminover comments on the process through which each person was counted by means of this half shekel:

As Moshe Rabbeinu was counting the Jewish people, he was not only collecting data or raising funds for community projects — for *תִּשָּׂא אֶת־רֹאשׁ* means not only “take the sum,” but literally, ‘raise the head.’ Moshe was directed also to ‘uplift’, to inspire and strengthen each Jew by demonstrating that even when we can give only a small contribution or a partial achievement, it is “holy” and meaningful to our Creator. When I know that my ‘half shekel’ counts, I recognize that I am connected to a larger whole; I belong to

a greater wholeness, “B’nei Yisrael”.

Giving a *machatzis ha-shekel*, an ‘incomplete’ coin, means filling the lack that we feel in our Divine service. The gematria, numerical value, of the word *shekel* is 430, which is also the value of the word *nefesh*, self or soul. When we feel lacking or broken, when we feel like ‘half a soul’, we are asked to connect to our greater wholeness by giving ourselves in some small way to the collective mission of the ‘Children of Israel’. Every contribution is counted and appreciated by *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

Rebbe Reb Zusha of Anipoli adds that the way to raise up another Jew is to connect them to mitzvah observance. The word לפקוד דיהם, “according to their numbers” is a hint to פקודה וציווי, ‘ordinances and commandments’. There is an internal connection between our *nefesh* and the mitzvos that we achieve. Every small observance matters and lifts up our life. Reb Zusha calls upon us to encourage our sisters and brothers to grow, learn and engage in Torah and mitzvos. Every interaction presents an opportunity to lift one another up, and draw each other close to our true selves, with a good word, a meaningful conversation, a mention of something holy — explicitly or implicitly inspiring each other to express our soul and our Yiddishkeit in action, in a mitzvah.

May our reading of the counting of Am Yisrael remind us of how we count, and all of our efforts in holiness count. May we renew our strength to dig into our pockets and into our *nefesh* to contribute even just a little “gift” to Hashem, so that at the end of the day, we can raise our head and admit with pride: ‘Yes, I have risen today by a small step!’ ■

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SUN, FEB 20

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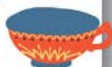
**Rabbi David Walk**

**10:20 AM**

Likutei Halachot:  
Discover the Deeper  
Meaning within Halacha  
**Rabbi Azarya Berzon**

**11:30 AM**

Shivat Tzion in Tanach:  
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Hilchot Shabbat  
**Rabbanit Shani  
Taragin** (L'Ayla)  
(Resumes Feb. 27)

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MON, FEB 21

**9:15 AM**

Divrei HaYamim (Layla)  
**Rebbetzin Pearl Borow**

**10:30 AM**

The Thought of Rav  
Soloveitchik **Rabbi Aaron  
Goldscheider**

**11:45 AM**

**Rabbi Shmuel Herschler**  
Halacha and Agada in  
Contemporary Society.  
Resumes Mon. March 7  
This week Zoom only @ new  
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TUE, FEB 22

**9:15 AM**

Torah Tapestries (L'Ayla)  
**Rebbetzin Shira Smiles**

**9:30AM**

Minchat Chinuch-Meaning  
in Mitzvot **Rabbi  
Yitzchak Breitowitz**

**10:30 AM**

Parshat HaShavua  
**Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

**12:15 PM**

Jewish History  
**Dr. Deborah Polster**

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**7:30 PM**

Safrut Course  
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WED, FEB 23

9:00 AM

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10:15 AM

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9:00 AM

Parshat HaShavua

**Rabbi Ari Kahn**

9:15 AM

Sefer Kohelet

**Rabbanit Shani**

**Taragin (L'Ayla)**

Resumes March 3

10:15 am

Parshat HaShavua

**Rabbi Baruch**

**Taub**

11:30 AM

Understanding Chazal

**Rabbi Shai Finkelstein**

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2:00PM

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Wed, Thurs, 4:30PM

### **Rabbi Taub**

Parsha, 7:00PM Mon  
Halacha, 7:00PM Wed

### **Rebbetzin Shatz**

(L'Ayla)-Insights of Chazal-  
Tues, 5:00PM

### **Rabbi Goldwicht**

Parshat HaShavua  
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# Our Secret Language

There were many different methods through which the word of Hashem was relayed to the Jewish people at Sinai. Obviously, the Torah itself contains and conveys the divine will and we are all expected to study it. The study of Torah isn't relegated to the clergy and is not the private or exclusive possession of an elite or educated aristocracy. It is part of the collective commons.

Additionally, the word of Hashem was delivered through commandments. Religion isn't merely a collection of values and beliefs, but must translate into obedience and halachic fidelity.

In addition to accepting His commandments, we also swore an oath of allegiance. The Torah doesn't explicitly describe this Sinai oath, but the Talmud takes it as a given. As we swore halachic loyalty, any private oath to violate a mitzvah is legally invalid since that personal oath was already preempted by our Sinai oath to fulfill all mitzvot; a subsequent oath can never contravene an earlier one. As the gemara asserts "we are

all מושבע ועומד מהר סיני" we all swore at Sinai to fulfill the Torah. Even when our religious fervor wanes, we must honorably uphold our "word" to Hashem.

In addition to oaths, we also joined a new brit or covenant with Hashem. The Bereishit covenants with our founding fathers were pivoted upon Jewish mission and settlement of the land of Israel. Those seminal covenants were now expanded to include the revealed word of Hashem. This brit is depicted in the final section of Mishpatim and incorporated the classic elements of a covenant—sacrifices, blood, and monuments.

The record of this earlier brit in Mishpatim makes the vague brit announced in Ki Tisa puzzling. After the *egel*, Hashem announces an additional covenant to Moshe: כִּי עַל פִּי הָדָבֵר: רִים הָאֱלֹהִים כָּרַתִּי אִתְּךָ בְּרִית וְאֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל. What is this additional brit and why is it only launched at this later stage?

The *egel* disaster described in Ki Tisa altered history. Originally, we were tracked to enter Israel in under two weeks. That is the approximate time it would take to journey by foot from Sinai to Israel. We were perched upon the doorstep of utopia. We would vanquish the indigenous cultures and cleanse the land of pagan perversion. Settling the land of Hashem, we would install Jewish dynasty, construct a Mikdash and usher in utopia. History was meant to "end" in the year 2448. We would forever reside in our Homeland under the eye of

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Hashem, living in a world in harmony with itself and with the chosen people.

The *egel* debacle shattered that narrative. The *egel* (and the subsequent sequel of the *meraglim*) shifted the arc of Jewish history, and introduced a very different and harsh narrative- the notion of Jewish exile. For thousands of years, we would live outside our Homeland. Additionally, we would not enjoy any common currency, language, state, flag or culture. Furthermore, to make matters even more challenging, we would courageously represent Hashem to an often dark world, but would face interminable hostility. How would we persevere? How would our national identity remain intact under this barrage? How would we remain unified as one people, despite lacking any shared commons?

The divine solution (as per the Talmud in Gittin 60b) was Torah sheba'al peh- or the Oral law and its traditions. Obviously, Torah sheba'al peh was initially delivered at Sinai. However, it was now reconstituted at the core of a new brit. In fact, according to some it was not just incorporated into a brit but was itself reformulated. Rabbi Yossef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik (the great grandfather of Rabbi Soloveitchik) asserted that, initially, Torah sheba'al peh was easily accessible. Miraculously, one glance at the luchot would yield full knowledge of Torah sheba'al peh. At this stage however, after the *egel*, Torah sheba'al peh itself became more encrypted. Not only was it established at the core of a new covenant, but it became less accessible to the public.

Throughout our long exile Torah sheba'al peh would serve as our secret language. Though we would inhabit different parts



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of the globe, adopt different cultures, and speak different dialects, we would still possess a common language and it would be the Torah sheba'al peh.

Torah shebichtav or the actual written Scripture, would be adopted, adapted and corrupted by other religions. It would not be the unique province of Jews. Regrettably, there would be periods in Jewish history in which the study of Scripture by Jews would recede. Thankfully with our return to Israel there has been a revival of Tanach study. Either way Scripture would never serve as our secret language.

Despite being dispersed across the world we would all study the same ideas. Ideas about Talmud penned in France by Rashi in the 11<sup>th</sup> century would be eagerly consumed by Jews in Syria. Torah concepts analyzed in White Russia would inspire Torah analysis in New York. Halachic responsa would be shipped across the oceans and shared across cultures. Torah sheba'al peh would glue Jews together.

Ultimately, in the 20th century, as revolutions in transportation shrunk the Jewish world, the innovation of daf yomi would institutionalize this common study. Not only would we be studying the same general system of Torah sheba'al peh, we would now be studying the very same page. We would

become even more united by Torah sheba'al peh.

Since Torah sheba'al peh would serve as a secret language, a ban was decreed upon methodically instructing Torah sheba'al peh to non-Jews. Unlike the internationally adopted Scripture, Torah sheba'al peh would remain the protected reservation of our people. It is almost impossible to master the intricate logic of Torah sheba'al peh without a teacher who connects you to the hidden logic and eternal traditions of this secret system.

Torah sheba'al peh would also create a common language of practice. Certain words would be universally understood and universally experienced: Shabbat, mukzeh, matzo, chametz, succah, lulav, mikveh, tefillin and siddur would be understood and lived by every Jew. It would provide instant communication and instant bonding. United in study and bonded in practice, we would remain one cohesive people despite being geographically scattered. Torah sheba'al peh would be our secret language of survival.

This strategy for survival of exile formed the core of the brit in Ki Tisa. Now that the *egel* occurred and the specter of gallut became likely, if not inevitable, Hashem offered us a distinct brit surrounding Torah sheba'al Peh. It is a treaty of survival. Study this corpus and you will remain unified. Apply its intricate halachic details and you will remain one. If you retain this unity you will survive. If not you will become disjointed and disappear. The treaty of Torah sheba'al peh is a treaty of survival.

Apparently we did a pretty good job. We have survived. ■

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# Just One Tiny Step!

In our topsy-turvy world, filled with increasing turmoil and treachery, self-centeredness and materialism, we take a breath of fresh air when we see acts of self-sacrifice and Chessed. Paraphrasing Rabbi M. Miller, self-sacrifice refers to individuals who have raised themselves above the limitations of their intrinsic nature, purged of all taints of egoism.

This worldview brings us to the almost unexplainable episode in our Parsha whereby the Leviim, answering Moshe's call, operated against human nature, ready to exact capital punishment on their families and friends, the guilty parties in the matter of the Golden Calf.

Moshe had exclaimed, "Who is for God?" and the responding Levites were told, "The Lord, God of Israel said...kill your brother, or your friend, or your relative." Did Hashem actually say that! And why did Moshe assert that the Leviim would be blessed for doing this act?

Rabbi Miller, quoting the Emek Davar, helps make sense of these questions. He cites the Talmudic account of Rabbi Akiva who caused rain to fall while the erudite Rabbi Eliezer's prayer was not heeded. What was different about Rabbi Akiva?

In contradistinction to Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Akiva was not naturally spiritual and observant. So Akiva had to suppress and transcend his nature; ultimately, his will became nothing before Hashem. Akiva served Hashem with no thought of a reward for doing a Mitzva. In that respect, Hashem responded mutually and changed the natural state of things by causing rain to fall in response to Akiva's petition.

Hashem could not command the Leviim to carry out a seemingly impossible and life-threatening task. Thus, when Moshe cried out, he was actually asking, "Who is *unreservedly* for God?" The question being asked was who was so pure that the will of God and their will are the same?

It is probably reasonable to posit that our "natural order of things" is to see what we can gain from our actions (and even our Mitzvot). We may be looking for praise, recognition, and even prestige – perhaps even for the reward. (Have we not heard consistently that Tzedakah is duly compensated?) Indeed, how impossible it seems to cleave continuously and selflessly to Hashem in our daily lives.

But if the Leviim of old could overcome natural tendencies under such horrendous circumstances, maybe we could take but just one tiny step in that direction in our little worlds. Maybe. ■

Shabbat Shalom!

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# SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

**P**arshat Ki Tisa contains the tragic episode of *Chait HaEgel*, the Golden Calf, and its aftermath.

In the *pasuk*, which is familiar to us as the opening verse in the *Kriat HaTorah* for a *Taanit Tzibur* (Public Fast Days), we read these well known words:

וַיִּחַל מֹשֶׁה אֶת־פָּנָיו ה' אֱלֹקָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לַיהוָה ה' יִחַרָה אַפִּי  
בְּעַמֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם בְּכַח גְּדוֹל וּבְיָד חֲזָקָה

And Moshe pleaded (**vayechal**) before Hashem “Why let your anger, Hashem, be directed toward Your people, whom You delivered from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand.

The word for “pleaded” - *vayechal* - is an unusual word to be used in this context.

Chazal (*Gemara, Brachot 32a*) offered several interpretations as to why this particular word-*vayechal* is used to describe Moshe’s prayer on behalf of the Jewish People.

“And Moshe pleaded [**vayechal**] before Hashem”: *Rebbi Elazar said: It teaches that Moshe stood in prayer and exhausted himself before HaKadosh Baruch Hu, until it made him ill [hechelahu] ...*

According to Rebbi Elazar, *vayechal* shares the same root as *choleh* (sick). Moshe davened so intensely on behalf of Klal Yisrael that he became ill.

*It was taught in a baraita: Rebbe Eliezer HaGadol said: This term teaches that Moshe stood in prayer before HaKadosh Baruch Hu, until he was overcome by achilu. What*

*is the meaning of achilu? Rebbi Elazar said that achilu is eish shel atzamot- fire in the bones...*

**Rav Kook zy’a**, offered the following insight in interpreting our *gemara*.

*Moshe Rabbeinu* became totally consumed with his effort to plead the case of *Am Yisrael* before *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. He was overcome with an *eish shel atzamot*-a fire in his bones. The word *etzem* can mean both bone, as well as essence.

At this important juncture, as he pleaded on behalf of the entire Jewish People, *Moshe* experienced a revelation of a fire from within, a fire of compassion, a fire that essentially defined who indeed he truly was! In his essence, he was not only inextricably bound to every member of *Klal Yisrael*, but also desired to do everything within his power on their behalf! At this critical moment, *Moshe* was able to channel that inner fire, and advocate for all of *Klal Yisrael*.

*Yehi Ratzon*, may each of us likewise be blessed to find our own inner fire, to feel that inseparable bond with every member of *Klal Yisrael*, and be inspired to do everything we possibly can to help one another grow and succeed. ■



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Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time  
of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to  
Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in  
his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown  
jewel, now he returns her to Hashem. With  
thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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***Dear O.U. Parenting***  
***My husband and I have very different parenting styles. It causes a lot of stress between us—and the child who triggers us the most. What's the best way to deal with this situation? E.P.***



**Dr. Ethan Eisen**

Dear E.P.,

John Thompson Jr., Georgetown University's famed basketball coach, continued his career in sports radio after he retired from coaching. During a broadcast that followed a close game, one of the radio show's co-hosts asked Coach Thompson to talk about his experience as a coach, and his strategy in drawing up the right play in buzzer-beater situations. Thompson did not miss a beat: "I never knew if I was drawing up the best plan, but I told my guys 'this may not be the right play, but if you execute it as hard as you can, it just might work.'"

As parents, we want to support our children and provide them with the best opportunities. So we discuss, deliberate, and try to implement our plans for raising each child according to her unique characteristics: where should she go to school? How should we discipline her? What kind of snacks do we have around the house?

What time is her curfew? But in almost every two-parent family, the parents will disagree about various aspects of raising their children, particularly when the child in question is struggling. And as you suggested in your question, sometimes these disagreements can become sources of ongoing conflict between the parents.

So how can parents proceed if they do not agree about a certain aspect of child-rearing? One element relates to how the two parents are communicating. In many cases, each spouse comes into the conversation with some combination of challenging emotions. You may feel invalidated, and then defensive, because your partner is disregarding your point of view. You also may feel anxious or fearful because you don't want to make a poor decision for your child that might be harmful. And then, as a way of communicating feeling invalidated or afraid, anger is often expressed. This cycle tends to repeat each time a new challenge comes up with your child.

One strategy to improve this type of communication is to purposefully get into a collaborative state of mind before the conversation starts. As awkward as it might sound, saying to your spouse something

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like the following can change the course of the interaction: “We are about to have a conversation about our child. I know that we both have her best interest in mind, and we are both doing our best to figure out how to be the best parents that we can. I understand we may disagree with each other, but I know that we are working together toward the common goal of supporting our daughter.” When conversations are framed in such a way, you and your husband start out less defensive, and you are more likely to express patience, articulate your position clearly and calmly, find room for compromise, and give the other one the benefit of the doubt.

A second principle to consider is that whatever decision the two of you reach, barring extreme examples, there will be opportunities to assess, reconsider, and recalibrate how you and your husband are addressing these challenges. We sometimes become entrenched in our point of view because we think if we make the wrong choice, that will be devastating for our kids. Understanding and communicating that this is a work in progress, and you are open to flexibility, can allow each of you to be more willing to try out the other’s suggestions or to find a balanced approach. It also will allow you to not immediately see setbacks as an indictment of the other’s position. Rather, you can see setbacks as an opportunity to reconsider with your

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husband whether any adjustments need to be made.

As Coach Thompson understood, each decision may not be the perfect one for children. But if we remain committed to the process, communicate trust to each other that each of us are operating in good faith, and continue to try our best, we are more likely to have success even if any particular choice is less than optimal. ■

Dr. Ethan Eisen, PhD is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist (Israel and U.S.) offering Evidence-Based Solutions for Individuals and Couples

Feel free to send in any parenting questions you may have to [parenting@ouisrael.org](mailto:parenting@ouisrael.org) (Details will be changed to preserve anonymity).



WELL, IT'S A FINE DAY HERE, AT MOUNT CARMEL, WHERE ELIJAHU THE PROPHET, THE MOST "WANTED" MAN IN THE MIDDLE EAST GATHERS A NATION-WIDE PUBLIC CONFRONTATION AGAINST THE EVIL SO-CALLED PROPHETS OF THE SO-CALLED BA'AL, THE CANAANITE SO-CALLED GOD... IT'S BEEN A TOUGH SEASON, BUT THE PLAYERS ARE WARMED UP, AND WE'RE READY TO KICK OFF...



HOW MUCH LONGER WILL YOU KEEP UP THIS DOUBLE-LIFE, GIVING YOUR ALLEGIANCE TO TWO GODS?! IF HASHEM IS THE TRUE G-D, SERVE HIM ALONE! AND IF YOU THINK THE BA'AL IS, WELL, GO WITH HIM, THEN!



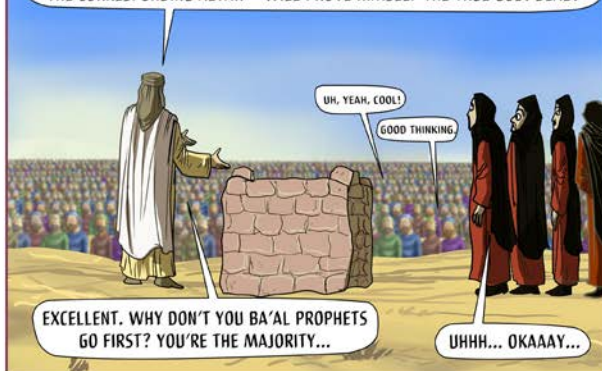
IT'S OKAY TO FAIL SOMETIMES, TO GET THINGS WRONG, BUT THE REAL QUESTION IS: WHO DO YOU REALLY IDENTIFY WITH?! AT THE END OF THE DAY, WHEN YOU LOOK AT YOUR LIFE SERIOUSLY, TO WHOM DOES YOUR TRUE IDENTITY AND LOYALTY BELONG?!

NICE TACKLE THERE, THE REFERENCE TO MOSHE RABBEINU'S FAMOUS "מִי לֵה' אֵלֵי", DID YOU CATCH THAT?

YES, DUDE... AND IT WOULD BE NICE IF YOU DIDN'T RELATE TO THIS AS A SPORTING EVENT...



SO, HERE'S THE TEST: TWO ALTARS, TWO IDENTICAL BULLS. THE BA'AL PROPHETS WILL PRAY TO THEIR GOD, AND I, יְהוָה, WILL PRAY TO HASHEM. THE GOD WHO RESPONDS BY SENDING A HOLY FIRE DOWN FROM HEAVEN ONTO THE CORRESPONDING ALTAR - WILL PROVE HIMSELF THE TRUE GOD! DEAL?



OH, BA'AL, ANSWER US!

OH, BA'AL, PLEASE RESPOND!



SHOUT LOUDER! MR. BA'AL MUST BE IN A MEETING, WITH HIS PHONE SWITCHED OFF. OR MAYBE HE'S DOZING IN AN ARM-CHAIR, WITH THE SPORTS PAGES OVER HIS EYES... OR MAYBE...



YEAH, OR MAYBE HE DOESN'T BLOOMIN'-WELL EXIST, YOU BUNCH OF OVER-IMAGINATIVE CHOLENT-BRAINS!





SEVERAL HOURS LATER

WELL, AFTER THAT RATHER EMBARRASSING PERFORMANCE, ELIYAHU, PROPHET OF G-D STEPS ONTO THE COURT FOR HIS ROUND...

DUDE! THIS IS A HISTORIC, SPIRITUAL SHOWDOWN, NOT WIMBLEDON!

WELL, AS YOU CAN ALL SEE, I HAVE REPAIRED THE ANCIENT HOLY ALTAR WITH TWELVE ROCKS, AND CONSTRUCTED A WATER-CHANNEL AROUND IT. ANY FIRE ATTEMPTING TO CONSUME THIS SACRIFICE WILL HAVE TO BE EXTREMELY POWERFUL...

HASHEM, G-D OF AVRAHAM, YITZCHAK AND YAAKOV, MAKE IT KNOWN THIS VERY DAY THAT YOU ARE THE ONE AND ONLY TRUE G-D, AND THAT ALL I DID WAS IN YOUR SERVICE!

PLEASE ANSWER ME, HASHEM, AND LET THIS PEOPLE KNOW ONCE AND FOR ALL THAT YOU ARE G-D, AND IT WAS YOU WHO CAUSED THEIR HEARTS TO TURN AWAY...

INCOMING!

GOAL!  
STRIKE!  
TOUCHDOWN!  
SLAM-DUNK!  
HOWZAT!

DUDE!!

HASHEM IS THE TRUE G-D!  
HASHEM IS THE TRUE G-D!

WELL, A SPECUTACULAR GAME TODAY, FANS, VERY WELL PLAYED THERE BY ELIYAHU... THE CROWDS WENT WILD...

I CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS... I HAVE TO GET HIM OFF THIS SPORTS-COMMENTATING ROLL HE'S ON...

HEY, I WONDER WHAT YOUR WIFE WILL MAKE OF TODAY'S SHOW, WITH ALL YOUR CYNICAL REMARKS ABOUT THE CANAANITE SO-CALLED GOD BEING SO USELESS AND HOW CHOLENT-BRAINED IT IS TO RELY ON IT...

BATZI? I'M SURE SHE'LL LOVE THIS SHOW, WHY...?

OH, YOU KNOW... "BA'AL" DOES TRANSLATE AS... HUSBAND...

FOUL! OFFSIDE!  
PENATLY! RED CARD!

OH, BOY...  
GAME, SET,  
MATCH.



# Sheva Berachot Every Day of Sheva Berachot?

**Question:** Is it necessary, proper, or at least recommended to have a *sheva berachot* celebration every day of the week of Sheva Berachot?

**Answer:** We have to present as full a picture as possible to appreciate the nuances here.

What we call the week of “*Sheva Berachot*” (=SB) the *gemara* (Ketubot 4a) calls “the seven days of *mishteh* (feasting).” This period focuses on a state of *simcha* and of giving thanks to Hashem (see Ketubot 7a). The most basic part of the *simcha* is the *chatan* and *kalla* spending quality time together (Shulchan Aruch, Even Haezer 64:1). However, the involvement of others in festive meals is also important. For one, a *minyan* and *panim chadashot* are required to recite the *sheva berachot* (=sb) at *Birkat Hamazon* (Ketubot 7b). More fundamentally, we see from the *halacha* that a *chatan* and his entourage are exempt from eating in a *sukka* throughout SB that having

a nice amount of appropriate co-celebrants is a significant consideration, especially at the time of eating (Sukka 25b and Meiri ad loc.).

*Poskim* broadly assume that there is no full obligation to have *sb* every day of SB. Many quote Rav Pe’alim (IV, EH 6), and his main source is Ketubot 7b. The *baraita* states that the *sb* are recited with a *minyan* “all seven days,” but Rav Yehuda makes this conditional on the presence of *panim chadashot*. The Rav Pe’alim infers from the *gemara* that one is not responsible to bring *panim chadashot* to have a complete *sb*.

It is possible to argue that the existence of a nicely attended party (which provides the *simcha*) is a given, and the variable is whether the party needs the possibility of reciting the *berachot*. However, *Acharonim* generally understand that although when *sb* is held, it is a *seudat mitzva*, there is no halachic **requirement** to have *sb* every day of SB (Aruch Hashulchan, OC 640:14; Nitei Gavriel, Nisuin 83:3; Bemareh Habazak VII:96). The Aruch Hashulchan (late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Eastern Europe) reports that it was standard to have only a few *sb*. He admits that this was not as *Chazal*’s envisioned SB but explains that the difficult national climate in a difficult exile has worn us out to the point that it is hard to celebrate too much. The Yam Shel Shlomo (Ketubot 1:12) provides similar comments hundreds of years earlier. He justifies halachically that

The Orthodox Union - via its website - fields questions of all types in areas of kashrut, Jewish law and values. Some of them are answered by Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by HaRav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Yerushalayim Network, Eretz Hemdah... and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



since these meals are in the *kalla's* honor, she may waive her right to them. The Nitei Gavriel (contemporary) says that in **our times** there is a *minhag* to try to have *sheva berachot* every day, except when this proves too difficult. Hanisuim K'hilchatam (15:7) relates to the matter similarly but slightly less forcefully. In Bemareh Habazak, we wrote similarly that there is no obligation but that we encourage doing a nice amount of *sb*.

We will demonstrate a nuanced difference with the help of Sukkot. The *mitzva* of *sukka* applies continually during the 168 hours of Sukkot. The more time in the *sukka* the better, and this applies more or less equally throughout the *chag*. Regarding *lulav*, it must be taken **each day** but Shabbat, but each day, once one finishes doing what needs to be done, there is thereafter little value in taking it more. Nitei Gavriel understands the present-day *minhag*/preference in terms of one each day, like *lulav*. In Bemareh Habazak, we talk of a nice amount of celebrating, without stressing if it covers each day. The *minhag* seems to be to try to align the *sb* by halachic day, but this is just a preference. Logically, having the most meaningful experience is more important, and one should not get carried away trying to conform to the each-day *minhag*.

There is an additional element besides our general belief in following *minhag*.

While older sources discuss the *chatan's* obligation to arrange his *SB*, now family and friends do it. Once an act to honor others becomes standard, one who receives sub-standard is likely to be insulted or disappointed. Therefore, while on the one hand, many couples appear to benefit from extra rest and privacy, it is still generally an expected *chesed* for their loved ones to make the standard amount of *sb*. ■

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.

## Having a dispute?



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# Stop Your Prophecy

Last time we saw that the Talmud adds an unexpected twist at the end of the story of the meeting between the prophet, Yeshayahu, and the king, Chizkiyahu. Initially the prophet rebuked the king for refusing to marry and have children, after receiving a prophetic message that they would be problematic. The prophet urged the king to have children, out of a religious duty.

But then the tables are turned and it is Yeshayahu who rejects out of hand the proposal that Chizkiyahu marry the prophet's daughter and their combined merits will assure that any child born will be a fitting heir for both of them.

At the heart of the argument between these two great men is the question of fate and merit, or whether everything is predetermined or can our efforts change the eventual outcome. Yeshayahu believes in fate, and he relays the Divine and immutable message to Chizkiyahu. This is the prophet's God-given task; to transmit to the people an accurate account of what will happen. If God has determined that your child will be inappropriate, then nothing that you can do will change the outcome.

Chizkiyahu has a different approach that has emerged from his family tradition; we

are not just products of our fate, rather we can change our station, our reality, and our eventual destination. This message was transmitted through his family line from David, who did just that. His actions enabled him to be chosen as king and conquer the monarchy from King Shaul and his family. The king's role is to be involved in politics and international negotiations, wars and legislation, that help the entire nation to develop and reach their potential, not just resign themselves to their fate as individuals and as a collective.

The whole time that the conversation revolved around fate, it was Yeshayahu who had the upper hand. But when the conversation shifted to merit and the possibility of molding a new reality, Chizkiyahu took the lead.

This twist in the tale, and, indeed, the entire story, can be used as a paradigm and to offer guidance in complex situations. A couple discover that they carry a genetic disorder and have a chance of passing the disorder on to their children. What should they choose to do? Is it permitted for them to decide to not have children or must they continue to procreate despite the possible outcome?

More on this next week. ■

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# Real Life Rescues



A few months ago, late one Tuesday afternoon, Raanan Mizrahi who lives in Ganei Tikvah and Asher Sroor from Petach Tikvah received an alert to an accident near the Kfar Maas moshav – a motorbike had overturned in the rocky, mountainous region. Raanan and Asher immediately jumped on their ambucycles and headed over to the area. However, pinpointing the accident's exact coordinates proved a difficult task. As the United Hatzalah dispatcher tried to clarify the accident site, Raanan and Asher searched along the dirt paths and overgrown trails. Their ambucycles enabled them to easily navigate the challenging terrain in search of the location as they worked systematically searching the area. After half an hour, they reached a point that was not even accessible to ambucycles and the two volunteer EMTs continued on foot into the underbrush. Night was falling rapidly, and it was already difficult to see in the dusky light. After 500 meters, they spotted the overturned bike and hurried towards it.

The two volunteers found a heavy-duty motorbike strewn on the ground. The 40 year-old biker had his head resting on his bike. He was totally spent. They checked the weakened man for injuries and found a broken ankle. Raanan took a set of vital signs as Asher gave the man some water to help him regain some strength. Raanan used the man's calf-high motorcycle boots to help splint the injured limb. Meanwhile, due to the lack of reception in the remote location, Asher backtracked nearer to civilization, so as to call and coordinate with rescue forces. A Border Police jeep soon arrived, followed by a 4x4 ambulance.

The man was carefully placed on a stretcher and slowly transported back to the road.

It was about 2 and a half hours later by the time Raanan and Asher returned to their homes, shoes and pants covered with a thick layer of mud and soil.





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# Otzar Beit Din: The Rabbinical Court Treasury #1

## Historical Background

The otzar beit din system was first recorded by the Tosefta (parallel to the Mishnah; Tosefta Shevi'it 8:1-2), and is the first documented system for public management during the shemita year.

What problem did it attempt to solve?

The Sages were concerned that opportunists would go to the ownerless fields and orchards, pick large quantities, and sell them in the marketplace.

Initially to solve this problem, the rabbinical court (beit din) of each town appointed agents to sit at the city gates. When they saw people leaving the city with large quantities of shemita produce in hand, the agents left them with a weekly allowance of food and put the rest of the produce

in its storehouse (treasury, otzar). In this way, people had their needs met and did not take more than they needed.

The Sages saw that there was a need to streamline the process and distribute food to everyone in an equitable fashion. How did they accomplish this?

The Tosefta goes on to describe how this was accomplished (specifically for produce that could be processed and stored for a long time): The court hired workers to go to the ownerless fields and harvest figs, olives, and grapes. The workers processed this produce: they dried and strung the figs; pressed the olives into oil; and crushed the grapes and produced wine. The workers then packaged and stored these products in the court's storehouse. Then, every erev Shabbat the workers distributed these products to every household according to size.

WAIT!! Isn't it forbidden to harvest shemita produce in large quantities and process it in the usual fashion (as the Tosefta implies)? Stay tuned for next week. ■

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### Hashem > HASHEM!

In this week's incredible Parsha, Ki Tissa, we encounter one of the gravest sins ever committed by our people; the sin of the golden calf. Even with the beautiful reasoning brought by Ben Zion below in his Dvar Torah, it still qualified as a grave sin in which almost led to the separation between Hashem and the Jews-Chas v'Shalom.

After Moshe's pleading to Hashem on our behalf, Hashem not only forgives us, but also gifts us with the 13 Middot Hara-chamim, essentially a backdoor entrance to forgiveness from sin." Hashem, Hashem, Kel Rachum, Vchanun etc..." Why in the Middot is Hashem's name repeated twice at the beginning? We know that there are no

superfluous words in the Torah and all the more so using G-D's name! The Rebbe of Piaseczna HY"D in his Sefer Derech Hamel-each asks even further; if it's us calling out to Hashem, why did Hashem 'need' us to call out to Himself?

Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev ZY"A writes and reminds us in his Sefer Kedushat Levi that each and every Jew has a soul, and within that soul holds a part of Hashem, literally. When a Jew calls out to Hashem, who often seems far away, in reality they should really first reveal the G-Dliness within themselves first. When that G-Dliness within us is revealed, only then we can connect with the unifying oneness that is Hashem in a true way.

The reason why it says Hashem twice is because we are first meant to call and bring out the Hashem within us and then take that Hashem and call out to the Hashem 'above'. Hashem, Hashem etc... This practice should be active in every prayer or connection with Him. May we be Zoche to



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reveal the Hashem within us and within the world as a whole and be Zoche to bring the complete redemption speedily in our days.

Shabbat Shalom!



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## Reason For The Sin Of The Golden Calf

In this week's Parsha, כי תשא, Moses climbs up mount Sinai to receive the לוחות. Simultaneously, B'nai Israel think that Moses is not coming back, so the Israelites go to Aaron and ask him, "Come, make us a god who shall go before us, for that man Moses, who brought us from the land of Egypt- we do not know what has happened to him" (Exodus 32:1). Aaron responds and tells them to take golden rings from their wives, sons and daughters. With that gold a golden calf was cast. The calf would be an idol to worship.

Why would B'nai Israel commit this sin? Didn't they just witness many miracles performed by Hashem, such as the ten plagues and the splitting of the Red Sea?

I believe that since Hashem showed some of his almighty power to them, the Israelites developed a strong trust and belief in Him. Then, when Bnei Israel expected Moses to return and he didn't return, their trust and belief was broken

in a stronger way and they felt betrayed by G-D. Because of all their negative emotions, they sinned. I hope we can learn from the past and control our emotions in times of woe. Shabbat Shalom!! ■

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

## SHIUR SPONSORS

**Monday, February 14** - Rebbetzin Pearl Borow's Shiur was sponsored by **Deanne Shapiro** in loving memory of her mother **Chaviva Leba bas Alte Avraham Moshe Hachohen a"h** - **Rebbetzin Libbe Chill**

**Tuesday, February 15** - all Morning shiurim (Shira Smiles, Rabbi Breitowitz & Rabbi Ozarowski) were sponsored by **Estelle Harris** in honor of the marriage of her daughter **Batya to Shimshon Weisz of Suffern, N.Y.**

**Tuesday, February 15** - Rebbetzin Shira Smiles shiur was sponsored by **Hally Frist** נשמת her father יז אדר א - אליעזר בן משה אהרן ז"ל

**Thursday, February 17** - Rabbi Bienenfeld's Gemara shiur is sponsored by **Phil Sevrinsky** in memory of his father **Shmuel ben Chaim HaLevi z"l, Samuel Sevrinsky,** whose yahrzeit is today - 16 Adar

**Rebbetzin Shira Smiles shiur** is sponsored for the 2022 academic year by **Dr. & Mrs. Menachem Marcus** in memory of their parents **Rose & Dr. Emanuel Marcus** רייזל בת יוסף מאיר ומרדכי בן משה מרקוס ז"ל and **Rosi & Ernest Strauss** לימוד בת אברהם ודניאל בן דוד שטראוס ז"ל

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UH Headquarters - 2 Aholiav St.  
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### Rehovot

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## Jewish Music Conference

aged 70+

# The Evolution of the Nigun

THURSDAY MARCH 3, 2022 ∞ יום ה', ל' אדר א', ר"ח אדר ב' ∞ Beit Tovi Ha'ir

### Morning Conference ∞

**8:45** Registration, coffee and cake

**9:30** "Sing us a Song of Zion" a panel discussion on "What is a Jewish Melody?" moderated by Yedidya Meir (Hebrew)

#### Choice of 3 sessions:

- ∞ "Nigunei Meron as a Musical Melting Pot" with Klezmer clarinetists Musa Berlin and Chilik Frank (Hebrew)
- 10:30** ∞ A Musical Journey through the Style of Prayer with Eli Yaffe (English)
- ∞ Women's Gathering with Racheli Frenkel and Odelia Berlin

#### Choice of 2 sessions:

- 11:30** ∞ "The Jewish Roots of Broadway" with Paul Salter (English)
- ∞ Presentation by Racheli Frenkel (Hebrew)

**12:30** Main Morning Concert - "Nigun Moledet" A musical journey from the Shtetl to Eretz Yisrael with Musa Berlin and his band

**13:30** Meat Lunch

### Afternoon Conference ∞

**15:30** Registration, coffee and cake

**16:15** "Where is Jewish Melody Today?" a panel discussion moderated by Yedidya Meir (Hebrew)

#### Choice of 3 sessions:

- ∞ "The Melodies of Ben Zion Shenkar and the Melodies of Moditz" with David Zeira (Hebrew)
- 17:00** ∞ "Halacha as a Symphony" with Rabbi Anthony Manning & Mozart (English)
- ∞ Women's Gathering with Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi and Odelia Berlin

#### Choice of 2 sessions:

- 18:00** ∞ "Singing Tehillim as the Basis of Hebrew Song" with Hillel Mali (Hebrew)
- ∞ "Up: The Elderly Man Who Learned to Fly" with Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi (English)

**19:00** Main Evening Concert: World-renowned Chazan Yaakov Motzen performing with the Jerusalem Cantors' Choir conducted by Paul Salter & featuring the Resonance Piano Trio

**20:30** Dairy Dinner

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Advance Registration required | Call Binyamin at 054-446-5276 (office hours)  
Conference Tickets 50 NIS in aid of Yad Sarah | Tav Yarak rules apply | Transportation available on request  
Participants can register for either the Morning or the Afternoon Conference