

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1469 MAY 28TH '22 כ"ז אייר תשפ"ב

פרשת במדבר

PARSHAT BAMIDBAR - SHABBAT MEVARCHIM
AVOT CHAPTER 6

ב"ה
OU
OU ISRAEL



The Bottom Line

Rabbi Judah Mischel

Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

Executive Director, Camp HASC

page 28



Special Yom Yerushalayim Divrei Torah

Rabbi Sam Shor,

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Rabbi Reuven Taragin, and

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

page 40



YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT **BAMIDBAR**

Candles 7:01PM • Earliest 6:09PM • Havdala 8:19PM • Rabbeinu Tam 8:55PM



This week's Torah Tidbits cover image!

Photo By: Brian Lasky

About the Photo: I made Aliyah in July 2015. Israel has meant so much to me since first visiting as a 16 year old in 1964, when I could not even visit the kotel. What a miracle!!

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Ataya Ness-Aiver // Nomi Caplan



*Rabbi Mann and Menachem Persoff's Divrei Torah can be found online at www.torahtidbits.com

HELPFUL REMINDERS

SHABBAT MEVARCHIM



המולד יהיה בליל שלישי, ארבע דקות ושני חלקים אחרי שש בערב
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CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



CANDLES	EARLIEST	BAMIDBAR	HAVDALA	NASO		
				Candles	Earliest	Havdala
7:01	6:09	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	8:19	7:05	6:12	8:24
7:18	6:11	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	8:21	7:22	6:15	8:25
7:20	6:10	Beit Shemesh / RBS	8:20	7:24	6:13	8:24
7:16	6:09	Gush Etzion	8:19	7:20	6:13	8:24
7:19	6:11	Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	8:22	7:23	6:15	8:26
7:17	6:10	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	8:20	7:21	6:14	8:25
7:19	6:11	Netanya	8:22	7:23	6:15	8:27
7:17	6:10	Be'er Sheva	8:19	7:21	6:13	8:24
7:18	6:11	Rehovot	8:21	7:22	6:14	8:26
7:01	6:11	Petach Tikva	8:21	7:05	6:14	8:26
7:18	6:10	Ginot Shomron	8:21	7:22	6:14	8:25
7:10	6:12	Haifa / Zichron	8:23	7:14	6:16	8:28
7:17	6:09	Gush Shiloh	8:20	7:21	6:13	8:24
7:19	6:11	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	8:22	7:23	6:15	8:26
7:17	6:10	Giv'at Ze'ev	8:20	7:21	6:13	8:24
7:16	6:09	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	8:19	7:20	6:13	8:23
7:19	6:12	Ashkelon	8:21	7:23	6:15	8:26
7:18	6:11	Yad Binyamin	8:21	7:22	6:14	8:25
7:13	6:10	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	8:22	7:18	6:13	8:26
7:18	6:09	Golan	8:20	7:21	6:13	8:25

Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 8:55 PM • next week - 8:59 pm

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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OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed.- Shabbat
May 25 - June 4 / 24 Iyar - 5 Sivan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	4:35 - 4:30
Sunrise	5:33 - 5:30
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:04 - 9:03
Magen Avraham	8:21 - 8:19
Sof Zman Tefila	10:14
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:35 - 12:36
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:10 - 1:11
Plag Mincha	6:08 - 6:13
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:36 - 7:41

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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



I have penned quite a number of articles detailing how grateful we must be to OU Kashrut which provides 30 percent of the annual OU Israel budget. As if the global footprint of OU Kashrut isn't enough, beyond ensuring that the 1.3 million OU-certified products uphold its gold standard of Kashrut, OU Kashrut directly supports the fortification of Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael.

My readers know that too often I come across OU Kashrut employees who are unaware of their direct impact in OU Israel's success, and I therefore look for opportunities to convey the HaKarat HaTov I feel for the Rabbanim, Mashgichim, Rabbinical Coordinators (RCs) and Rabbinical Field Representatives (RFRs) who power OU Kashrut. This past week the OU Israel team had the honor of attending the OU Kashrut Conference in Tarrytown, New York, and I found a unique opportunity to convey my gratitude on a much larger scale, as I addressed the hundreds of conference attendees.

Of note, the conference began on the heels of a NCSY Summer Staff Training weekend that finished just hours before the Kashrut Conference kicked off. My team and I were very excited to hear about the many summer programs coming to Israel this summer, with notably higher participants than we've seen in recent years. The OU Israel team is gearing up to welcome the throngs of students roaming the streets of Eretz Yisrael in

just a few weeks!

At the Kashrut conference, the OU Israel team included Rabbi Yissacher Dov Krakowski, Rabbi Ezra Friedman and Rabbi Matti Cohen. While this was my first Kashrut Conference, I felt very much at home given OU Israel's ongoing work with OU Kashrut CEO Rabbi Menachem Genack, COO Rabbi Moshe Elefant among many other RCs. With OU Kashrut representation from employees hailing from South America, China, Israel, locations across North America and Europe, and more, it was incredible to witness a gathering of people who dedicate themselves to ensuring Kosher food for Jews around the globe. The event allowed OU Mashgichim to connect with one another, learn from each other and discuss the Kashrut challenges of today - much of which Covid created.

To give you an idea of the kinds of challenges discussed, OU Mashgichim have been certifying products since 1923 and uphold standards that are unparalleled. At this point, OU Kashrut is a well oiled machine that has run its services like clockwork for decades, supporting Mashgichim with internal databases and resources that allow for fully transparent supervision of Kashrut. But Covid threw a lot of unforeseen challenges into the mix and OU Kashrut had to adapt quickly and develop new resources to support RFRs wherever they were in the world, finding the safest way to conduct scheduled and surprise Kashrut visits to certified locations, and even check products virtually.

The OU Israel team works hand in hand with Mashgichim around the world on areas spanning import, export and everything in between. We were therefore asked to conduct a session to discuss the challenges and unique opportunities that Kashrut in Israel presents. But before we began I felt it important to begin with HaKarat HaTov for the efforts of OU Kashrut that support many of the initiatives we run at OU Israel.

In our mission to build a foundation for the Jewish future for Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael, it can be easy to take for granted the obvious impact of our efforts. I'd go as far as to say that the OU Israel team is somewhat spoiled because we have been Zoche to gain a tremendous amount of Sipuk from our programs. We've attended Smachot of every kind. We have seen children who found comfort and stability at The Zula build healthy families of their own. Olim who stay connected to their roots and values and create fulfilling lives in Israel. Women who attend our L'Ayla Women's learning initiative and find communal strength. Olim who have benefitted from The Gustave and Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education. But none of this would be possible without OU Kashrut's support, and the support of our private donors.

Through OU Kashrut, Mashgichim, RCs

and RFRs are directly helping us save lives of our youth, and inspire Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael. I remain grateful for the opportunity my team had this week to give OU Kashrut employees a taste of the kinds of programs

we run as a result of their efforts. For those of us living in Eretz Yisrael, supporting stores and restaurants that carry OU Kashrut allows OU Israel to continue on its mission of inspiring the next generation of Am Yisrael across the country. Please do what you can to support OU Kashrut establishments and to convince others to become OU establishments.



Take a moment to thank store owners and buyers for supporting a Kashrut organization that reinvests its revenue into Am Yisrael.

I left the RFR Conference with a renewed sense of purpose and mission, and landed in

Israel just in time to attend a Yachad Family Shabbaton, which I will tell you about B'ezrat HaShem next week!

Looking forward to seeing you all at the Yom Yerushalayim Tfillah Chagigit at 7:30am on the Tayelet.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Avi Berman'.

Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

BAMIDBAR



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY



Rabbi Reuven Tradburks Director of RCA Israel Region



1st aliya (Bamidbar 1:1-19) On Rosh Chodesh Iyar of the second year since leaving Egypt,

Moshe and Aharon are to take a census of all men over the age of 20. The leaders of each tribe are to assist. These leaders are named. Moshe, Aharon and the leaders gather the people who establish to which tribe each person belongs.

Sefer Bamidbar is the march to the Land of Israel. Truly the march to the Promised Land. The Promise of the Land was made to Avraham. And Yitzchak. And Yaakov. And to Moshe at the burning bush. Moshe was told at the burning bush that G-d would take the people out of Egypt because of the promise He made. To give them the Land of Israel. That has been the goal from the time of Avraham.

Now, living in the Land comes with a rich landscape. You are to settle the Land. But overlaid with an intimate connection to Me. I, G-d says, will dwell in the Mikdash. You will approach me. And you will settle this Land, my Land, proximate to Me. Sefer Vayikra laid out this landscape, this overlay of holiness, of nearness to G-d.

Now it is time for it to happen. And the

move from the idyllic, the theoretical, to the real world of human beings is oh so tricky. We know the end of the story – but at this point we are merely one year from Egypt and preparing to march to the Land. Bamidbar is the dawn of the march to the Land.



2nd aliya (1:20-54) The census, by tribe, of all men over the age of 20, the age of army service is

presented. The tribe of Reuven: 46,500. Shimon: 59,300. Gad: 46,500. Yehuda: 74,600. Yissachar: 54,400. Zevulun: 57,400. Ephraim: 40,500. Menashe: 32,200. Bin-yamin: 35,400. Dan: 62,700. Asher: 41,500. Naftali: 53,400. The total of this census done by Moshe and Aharon and the 12 leaders of the tribes was 603,550. However, the tribe of Levi is not included. They are to safeguard the Mishkan: camping around the Mishkan, transporting it, dismantling and assembling it. The tribes camp in distinct groups, while the Leviim encamp around the Mishkan.

This is the accountants parsha. Lots of numbers. While there were 12 sons of Yaakov, Levi is not a part of this census. That leaves 11 tribes. There is no tribe of Yosef; his 2 sons, Ephraim and Menashe take their place alongside their uncles as full tribes. Hence, 12 tribes even without Levi.

While this book is called Bamidbar, in the desert, in English it is called Numbers. Apt. Somewhat. But I like the Talmud's appellation: Pekudim. Which can be translated as Numbers. Or, as in modern Hebrew, Pakid, the person with the designated job. The count and the numbers is preparation for the armed march into Israel. All have a role to play. But the accountants will notice that the tribes vary significantly in size.

They all started out at the same time, sons of Yaakov. This is a hint at the prominent theme of differences. The tribes are different in name. In size. Later we will see, in encampment. While marching to the same destination, the Jewish people will always enjoy variation. Managing the variation is one of the themes of this book.



3rd aliya (2:1-34) The tribes are to camp in a designated manner. For each of the tribes the

name of their Nasi, the number of their tribe and the place in the formation is given. On the east side, the front, is Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun. Their combined number is 186,400. On the south side is Reuven, Shimon and Gad. Their combined number is 151,450. The Ohel Moed, surrounded by Levi, both camps and travels in the middle. On the west side is Ephraim, Menashe and Binyamin. Their combined number is 108,100. On the north side is Dan, Asher and Naftali. Their combined number is 157,600. The total count of the army age men is 603,550 without the tribe of Levi.

The people travel and camp with the Mishkan in their midst. Physically and metaphorically. We travel our history with G-d in our midst. The distinct feeling you get in the detailed description of where

The OU Israel Family
sends its heartfelt condolences to
Cindy Wiesel and family

(Camp Dror, Coordinator)
on the passing of her

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each tribe encamped is the feeling of an army encampment. Regimented. Specific. Detailed. Organized. But an army for which purpose? To fight the anticipated foes in the Land of Israel? Or to be the army of Hashem? A fighting army? Or a people with its G-d in its midst? Or both?



4th aliya (3:1-13) Aharon's son's names were Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar. Nadav and

Avihu died without children. Elazar and Itamar serve as Kohanim with Aharon. Take the Leviim: they are to serve Aharon. The Leviim are responsible for the Mishkan: to support the Kohanim and the people, to facilitate the running of the Mishkan. The Leviim shall take the place of the first-born, who became obligated to me when saved in Egypt.

There are 2 groups mentioned here: Kohanim and Leviim. The lineage of the kohanim is given. It just doesn't take much room. Because Aharon is a kohen and his sons. But he only has 2. So the entire lineage of the kohanim is 3 people. The Leviim, on the other hand, are an entire tribe, descendants of Levi, son of Yaakov. Their lineage, at quite some length, is given in the next aliya.



5th aliya (3:14-39) Count the tribe of Levi by households, from 1 month and older: the

households of Gershon, Kehat and Merari, the sons of Levi. The sons of Gershon, Kehat and Merari are listed. Gershon's family, from a month and above, is 7,500. They camp to the west of the Mishkan. Their task was to transport and be responsible for the curtains and coverings. Kehat numbered 8,600, camping to the south. They were responsible for the vessels: Aron, Menorah,

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Table, altars. Merari numbered 6,200, camping to the north. Responsible for the structure of the Mishkan; the walls, supports and beams. The total of the tribe of Levi is 22,000. On the front side, the east of the Mishkan, Moshe and Aharon and families camped.

The encampment around the Mishkan had 2 layers. The Leviim were in close, on 3 of the 4 sides of the Mishkan. The 4th side, the leading side, had Moshe and Aharon. The entire 12 tribes were farther removed on all 4 sides.

The 3 sons of Levi were family groups; Gershon, Kehat and Merari. They had full responsibility for the Mishkan. Their tasks fell in categories. Gershon, textiles. Kehat, furniture. Merari, building. Gershon took care of the curtains and coverings. Kehat, the important main vessels of the Mishkan. And Merari the structure of the building.



6th aliya (3:40-51) Count all the firstborn of the age of a month and above. The Leviim are to replace the firstborn. There were 273 more firstborn than Leviim; these were redeemed.

The previous aliya, continuing here, assumes that the firstborn will be dedicated public servants because they were spared in the plague of the firstborn. This is a theme of reciprocity: God says, I saved you, you serve Me. The showering of good upon us demands reciprocity – we become indebted to G-d. The notion that the firstborn shall be the public servants has great

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**Refuah Shleima to our granddaughter
Hallel Miriam Chana
bat Rivka Nechman Tziona**

appeal; every home becomes infused with public service by virtue of the firstborn dedicated to holy work. But, as appealing as that is, it is not implemented. The firstborn are switched off for the Leviim. Perhaps because it would be an inequitable burden. The poor families rely on their firstborn to work, to be the first to contribute to the family wellbeing. The replacement of the firstborn by the Leviim recognizes the inequity that would inevitably result in requiring the firstborn of every family to leave their home for public service.



7th aliya (4:1-20) Take from Kehat, all men from the age of 30 to 50 to do their work of the holy of holies. But since Kehat was to carry the vessels of the Mishkan, Aharon and his sons covered each vessel, to prevent Kehat from touching them. The Aron was covered by: the Parochet (curtain), then leather, then techelet covering. The Shulchan: techelet, then the extra utensils, then red, then the tachash skin. Menorah: techelet, then tachash. Incense altar: techelet, then tachash. Outer altar: purple, then tachash. In this way, calamity will not befall Kehat

in transporting the holy things.

There are 3 different age surveys. The tribes are surveyed to count all males above 20. For army service. The Leviim were surveyed to count all males above 1 month. For they assume Levi status pretty much from birth. And here, the Leviim who will actually do public service are those from age 30-50. Though their service in our parsha is to transport the Mishkan, their service in the Temple will be as musicians. Later the Torah will say the Leviim begin public service at age 25. The Talmud resolves this: it takes 5 years of training, from 25-30. Then they can play the music in the Temple or sing. 5 years of musical training; the music of the Temple must have been quite sophisticated.

HAFTORAH BAMIDBAR HOSHEA 2:1-22

The background and deeper meaning regarding this week's haftorah can be found in the Talmud (Pesachim 87a): When God conveys to Hoshea the seriousness of the sins of Israel the prophet makes

A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

כל פקודי הלויים...שנים ועשרים אלף (ג:לט)

"And all that were numbered of the Levites...were twenty-two thousand." (3:29)

The great commentator Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) asked a simple question. Why is it that the population of the tribe of Levi was the smallest number of all other tribes?

Ramban answers that all other tribes suffered under the oppression in Egypt. Those tribes who endured such great pain and suffering, G-d responded by enabling them to become fruitful and multiply at an unnatural accelerated rate.

However, the tribe of Levi did not experience the difficult working conditions in Egypt, according to the Rabbis. Therefore, Levi's birth rate continued only at the natural pace. At the time of the people's counting in this Parsha, their numbers were a bare minimum compared to the other tribes.

As Yom Yerushalayim approaches, we can appreciate this message. Only through the great toil and harsh sacrifices we made did we merit the grand miracle of reuniting Yerushalayim in an almost supernatural historical event. Shabbat Shalom and Yom Yerushalayim Sameach

the suggestion that perhaps God should exchange these sinful people with a nation that will show true allegiance and loyalty.

Hoshea realizes that he had transgressed by speaking evil of the Jewish people. He then offers blessing to the nation likening them to the uncountable sand of the sea.

It is at this point that we note the connection of our haftorah to the sidra of Bamidbar. Both speak of the numbers that make up the nation and the blessing of growth and her purpose and presence in this world.

Hoshea does go further, however, and warns the people that if they act like a harlot and are disloyal to the Holy One, they will be severely punished. The haftorah ends with the soaring words of love and commitment that God shares with his beloved people: "I shall marry you to Me forever; I shall marry you to Me with righteousness, and with justice, and with kindness, and with mercy." ■

STATS

34th sedra of 54; first of 10 in Bamidbar
Written on 263 lines, ranks 3rd
30 parshiyot; 23 open, 7 closed, 4th
159 p'sukim - rank 3 (3rd in Bamidbar)
1823 words - rank 13 (4th in Bamidbar)
7393 letters - rank 9 (3rd in Bamidbar)

MITZVOT

None of Taryag in Bamidbar - it is the largest of the 17 sedras without mitzvot

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THE PERSON

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

OU Executive Vice President, Emeritus

IN THE PARSHA

You Too Can Be a Levite

The world is indeed a stage, and we all play many roles in our lives. Some of these roles are assigned to us, leaving us with little choice but to fill them. Other roles, however, are freely chosen.

For example, we are all born as children to parents. As such, we have ethical and religious responsibilities towards them. We are in the roles of children, often for much of our lives, whether we like that role or not.

On the other hand, there are other roles which we seek out intentionally, and often with great effort. For example, our professional roles as doctors or lawyers or teachers are roles which we chose freely and which we work towards diligently.

Sociologists thus distinguish between ascribed roles and achieved roles. The

former are those assigned to us by society or circumstance. The latter are the ones we choose, and for which we hope to qualify.

In this week's Torah portion, *Parshat Bamidbar*, we read of the roles ascribed to the Levite. Persons born to the tribe of Levi were assigned certain privileges and certain responsibilities at birth. There were no special qualifications to be met and no titles or certificates to be earned.

One who was not born into the tribe of Levi could not attain any of those privileges no matter how hard he tried. Nor could he assume the responsibilities of the Levite even if he sought to do so with commitment and fervor.

The Torah outlines the special duties of the Levites at length and in great detail in this week's *parsha*, *Numbers* chapters 3 and 4. Later on in the *Book of Numbers*, particularly in chapter 18, we read of the benefits due to them.

The twelve other tribes of Israel are not



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neglected in this week's Torah portion. Quite the contrary; they are listed, and their stations in the wilderness encampment and march are delineated very specifically.

But the roles of the tens of thousands of members of these tribes are not specified at all. It is almost as if the Torah was telling us that, unlike the Levites, they had no ascribed roles, but were to pursue and achieve roles according to their individual motivations, ambitions, and personal predilections.

Thus, the community of Israelites in the wilderness was one in which one tribe had predetermined tasks which it did not choose and could not shirk, whereas the great majority of people had great freedom of choice as to which roles in life to choose.

This situation continued for many centuries, at least until the destruction of the second Temple. Even today, specialized roles for the descendents of Levi persist, albeit in a reduced and limited way.

Maimonides (the Rambam), however, offers an entirely different vision of the matter. He offers us an innovative idea which opens up the ascribed and predetermined roles of the Levite to everyone.

In his masterwork *Mishneh Torah* (*Hilchot Shemita v'Yovel* chapter 13), Maimonides describes the lot of the Levite in rich and graphic detail. He stresses that although the Levites had no equal portion in the land of Israel, they did have their own towns and villages there. He even

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offers his personal opinion that should the Jewish people come to possess land outside the perimeters of biblical Israel, the Levites will share equally in those lands.

He explains to us that the Levite is ascribed a limited social and economic role in order that he be freed to assume a greater spiritual role. It is incumbent upon him to serve God in the Temple service and to teach God's laws to the greater community.

Maimonides then makes an original, dramatic, and often quoted statement which challenges the entire distinction of ascribed versus achieved roles. He writes, "It is not only the tribe of Levi, but rather every individual in the entire world, who, if the spirit moves him to have achieved understanding, and who wishes to separate himself from others and to stand before God and worship Him, to shed from his neck the yoke of everyday concerns, and to become imbued with extreme

sanctity so that God becomes his lot and inheritance forever and ever."

Maimonides, as it were, opens up the closed society of the Levites. He offers a vision, and notes that it is a vision for all humanity, of the possibility to transcend the limits defined in this week's Torah portion. He suggests that each of us can potentially become a Levite, even if we are born to parents of other tribes.

What is, strictly speaking, an ascribed role becomes for Maimonides a role which can be achieved by anyone. This is a drastic, almost revolutionary, statement.

But it is one which challenges every one of us and offers each of us an opportunity. It is not only the biblical Levite who can attain closeness to God and spiritual sublimity. We all can.

But to do so, we need the motivation to assume greater responsibility, to suffer solitude, to be absolutely just and righteous, to teach others who might not wish to be taught. Then we all can achieve the benefits which were the due of the ancient tribe of Levi.

We can then each say, as Maimonides concludes, quoting King David in Psalms, "God, You are my portion and cup.

You uphold my destiny!" ■

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COVENANT & CONVERSATION

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

Former Chief Rabbi of the
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Dedicated by
Dr. Robert Sreter DDS., M.S.

Law as Love

One of the most amusing scenes in Anglo-Jewish history occurred on 14 October 1663. A mere seven years had passed since Oliver Cromwell had found no legal bar to Jews living in England (hence the so-called “return” of 1656). A small synagogue was opened in Creechurch Lane in the City of London, forerunner of Bevis Marks (1701), the oldest still-extant place of Jewish worship in Britain.

The famous diarist Samuel Pepys decided to pay a visit to this new curiosity, to see how Jews conducted themselves at prayer. What he saw amazed and scandalised him. As chance or providence had it, the day of his visit turned out to be Simchat Torah. This is how he described what he saw:

And anon their Laws that they take out of the press [i.e., the Ark] are carried by several men, four or five several burthens in all, and they do relieve one another; and

whether it is that everyone desires to have the carrying of it, I cannot tell, thus they carried it round about the room while such a service is singing ... But, Lord! to see the disorder, laughing, sporting, and no attention, but confusion in all their service, more like brutes than people knowing the true God, would make a man forswear ever seeing them more and indeed I never did see so much, or could have imagined there had been any religion in the whole world so absurdly performed as this.

The Diary of Samuel Pepys, entry for 14 October 1663, ed. Richard Le Gallienne (New York: Modern Library Classics, 2003), p. 106.

This was not the kind of behaviour that Pepys was used to in a house of worship.

There is something unique about the relationship of Jews to the Torah, the way we stand in its presence as if it were a king, dance with it as if it were a bride, listen to it telling our story, and study it, as we say in our prayers, as “our life and the length of our days.” There are few more poignant lines of prayer than the one contained in a



poem said at *Neilah*, at the end of Yom Kippur: *Ein shiyur rak haTorah hazot* - "Nothing remains," after the destruction of the Temple and the loss of the land, "but this Torah." A book, a scroll, was all that stood between Jews and despair.

What non-Jews (and sometimes Jews) fail to appreciate is how, in Judaism, Torah represents law as love, and love as law. Torah is not just "revealed legislation".¹ It represents God's faith in our ancestors that He entrusted them with the creation of a society that would become a home for His Presence and an example to the world.

One of the keys as to how this worked is contained in the parsha of Bamidbar, always read before Shavuot, the commemoration of the Giving of the Torah. This reminds us how central is the idea of wilderness – the desert, no man's land – is to Judaism. It is *midbar*, wilderness, that gives our parsha and the book as a whole its name. It was in the desert that the Israelites made a covenant with God and received the Torah, their constitution as a nation under the sovereignty of God. It is the desert that provides the setting for four of the five books of the Torah, and it was there that the Israelites experienced their most intimate contact with God, who sent them water from a rock, manna from heaven and surrounded them with Clouds of Glory.

What story is being told here? The Torah is telling us three fundamentals to Jewish

¹ *As Moses Mendelssohn described it in Jerusalem, or, On Religious Power and Judaism, trans. Allan Arkush (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1983), pp. 89–90, pp. 126–28.*

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identity. First is the unique phenomenon that, in Judaism, the law preceded the land. For every other nation in history the reverse was the case. First came the land, then human settlements, first in small groups, then in villages, towns and cities. Then came forms of order and governance and a legal system: first the land, then the law.

The fact that in Judaism the Torah was given *bemidbar*, in the desert, before they had even entered the land, meant that uniquely Jews and Judaism were able to survive, their identity intact, even in exile. *Because the law came before the land, even when Jews lost the land they still had the law.* This meant that, even in exile, Jews were still a nation. God remained their sovereign. The covenant was still in place. Even without a geography, they had an ongoing history. Even before they entered the land, Jews had been given the ability to survive outside the land.

Second, there is a tantalising connection between *midbar*, ‘wilderness,’ and *davar*, ‘word.’ Where other nations found the gods in nature – the rain, the earth, fertility, and the seasons of the agricultural year – Jews discovered God in transcendence, beyond nature, a God who could not be *seen* but rather *heard*. In the desert, there is no nature. Instead there is emptiness and silence, a silence in which one can hear the unearthly voice of the One-beyond-the-world. As Edmond Jabès put it: “The word

cannot dwell except in the silence of other words. To speak is, accordingly, to lean on a metaphor of the desert.”²

The German-American political scientist Eric Voegelin saw this as fundamental to the completely new form of spirituality born in the experience of the Israelites:

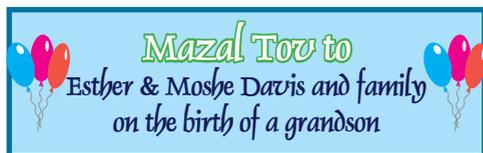
When we undertake the exodus and wander into the world, in order to found a new society elsewhere, we discover the world as the Desert. The flight leads nowhere, until we stop in order to find our bearings beyond the world. When the world has become Desert, man is at last in the solitude in which he can hear thunderingly the voice of the spirit that with its urgent whispering has already driven and rescued him from Sheol [the domain of death]. In the Desert God spoke to the leader and his tribes; in the desert, by listening to the voice, by accepting its offer, and by submitting to its command, they had at last reached life and became the people chosen by God.³

In the silence of the desert Israel became the people for whom the primary religious experience was not seeing but listening and hearing: *Shema Yisrael*. The God of Israel revealed Himself in speech. Judaism is a religion of holy words, in which the most sacred object is a book, a scroll, a text.

Third, and most remarkable, is the interpretation the prophets gave to those formative years in which the Israelites, having left Egypt and not yet entered the land, were alone with God. Hosea, predicting a

2 Edmond Jabès, *Du Desert au Libre*, Paris, Pierre Belford, 1980, p. 101.

3 Eric Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation*, Louisiana State University Press, 1956, p. 153.



second exodus, says in God's name regarding the Israelites:

I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her . . .

There she will respond as in the days of her youth,

As in the day she came out of Egypt.

Hos. 2:14-15

Jeremiah says in God's name:

"I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved Me and followed Me through the wilderness, through a land not sown."

Jer. 2:2

Shir HaShirim, The Song of Songs, contains the line, "Who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved?" (*Shir HaShirim* 8:5)

Common to each of these texts is the idea of the desert as a honeymoon in which God and the people, imagined as bridegroom and bride, were alone together, consummating their union in love. To be sure, in the Torah itself we see the Israelites as a recalcitrant, obstinate people complaining and rebelling against God. Yet the Prophets in retrospect saw things differently. The wilderness was a kind of *yichud*, an alone-togetherness, in which the people and God bonded in love.

Most instructive in this context is the work of anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep who focused attention on the importance of *rites of passage*.⁴ Societies develop rituals to mark the transition from one state to the next – from childhood to adulthood, for example, or from being single to being

4 Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago) 1960.



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Real Life Rescues

United Hatzalah Volunteer EMT Moshe Erlich was riding his ambucycle on highway 20 near Herzliya when he got caught in traffic. 200 yards up the road, Moshe saw a motorcycle lying on its side and a car with heavy damage to its rear. As he hadn't received an alert about the accident – Moshe called United Hatzalah's dispatch and alerted them to the incident while requesting backup.

Moshe flicked on his lights and sirens to alert other drivers that he was on his way to assist. He then sped to the scene on the shoulder of the highway. When he arrived, a few seconds later, he saw other motorists had exited their vehicles and had gathered around the rider of the motorcycle, who was lying on the ground in significant pain. Moshe asked them to move aside and began treating the patient. He asked the driver what hurt and took out bandages from his medical kit. Moments later, three more volunteer EMTs arrived, also on ambucycles to assist.

The motorcyclist had suffered serious injuries to his lower limbs and was bleeding from facial wounds. According to witnesses, the car in front of the motorcyclist made an emergency stop and applied the brakes very suddenly, leaving the unfortunate motorcyclist with no chance of stopping in time. He crashed into the rear of the vehicle at high speed and the force of the collision sent him flying onto and over the front of the car.

The patient had his wounds dressed and a neck brace applied to prevent any possible further spinal cord or neck injury. Ten minutes later, a local ambulance arrived to transport the motorcyclist to the hospital for further care.

"I'm very happy that I was able to assist the motorcyclist as quickly as I did to prevent further blood loss or aggravated injury," said Moshe. "This is another example of United Hatzalah's network of volunteers working by having EMS personnel spread throughout the country so that the fastest medical response and expert care can be given to those suffering from a medical emergency."



married – and they involve three stages. The first is *separation*, a symbolic break with the past. The last is *incorporation*, re-entering society with a new identity. Between the two comes the crucial stage of *transition* when, having cast off one identity but not yet donned another, you are remade, reborn, refashioned.

Van Gennep used the term *liminal*, from the Latin word for “threshold,” to describe this transitional state when you are in a kind of no-man’s-land between the old and the new. That is what the *wilderness* signifies for Israel: liminal space between slavery and freedom, past and future, exile and return, Egypt and the Promised Land. The desert was the space that made transition and transformation possible. There, in no-man’s-land, the Israelites, alone with God and with one another, could cast off one identity and assume another. There they could be reborn, no longer slaves to Pharaoh, instead servants of God, summoned to become “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Ex. 19:6)

Seeing the wilderness as the space-between helps us to see the connection between the Israelites in the days of Moses and the ancestor whose name they bore. For it was Jacob among the patriarchs who had his most intense experiences of God in liminal space, between the place he was leaving and the one he was travelling to, alone and at night. It was there, fleeing from his brother Esau but not yet arrived at the house of Laban, that he saw a vision of a ladder

Happy Birthday

Alter Yitzchak Yechiel Alexander Issac Fuchs

Hope it's the best year so far and that the Yankees win the world series. Thank you for giving me my bro shlo and for finding me a bed.

stretching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending, and there on his return that he fought with a stranger from night until dawn and was given the name Israel.

These episodes can now be seen to be pre-figurations of what would later happen to his descendants (*ma'aseh avot siman levanim*, “the acts of the fathers are a sign of what would later happen to the children”).⁵

The desert thus became the birthplace of a wholly new relationship between God and humankind, a relationship built on covenant, speech, and love as concretised in the Torah. Distant from the great centres of civilisation, a people found themselves alone with God and there consummated a bond that neither exile nor tragedy could break. That is the moral truth at the beating heart of our faith: that it is not power or politics that link us to God, but love.

Joy in the celebration of that love led King David to “leap and dance” when the Ark was brought into Jerusalem, earning the disapproval of King Saul’s daughter Michal (2 Sam. 6:16), and many centuries later led the Anglo-Jews of Creech Lane to dance on Simchat Torah, to the disapproval of Samuel Pepys. When love defeats dignity, faith is alive and well. ■

5 See Ramban’s commentary on Gen. 12:6.

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Upon analyzing this week's haftarah, a nevuah found in the second perek of Sefer Hoshea, we would find ourselves somewhat limited in understanding the complete message of the navi if we fail to take a look back to the prior chapter. It is there where Hashem tells the prophet to take a wayward woman as his wife (symbolic of the nation that was wayward in their faithfulness to G-d), and to give his future children names that would reflect the punishments that await Israel. In the final pasuk before the opening of our haftarah, Hashem tells Hoshea to name his youngest son "Lo Ami" – "**NOT** My nation" – an expression of G-d's abandonment of His people.

And yet, then, immediately following these most troublesome prophecies, Hoshea starts our haftarah reading with the words: "The number of Israel will be as the sand of the sea that cannot be measured nor counted, and, instead of being said of them "You are **NOT** My nation", it will be said of them "They **ARE** the children of the living G-d." It would appear that this new chapter does not begin a new nevuah but is a continuation of the first perek! Hoshea seems to be telling the people that the terrible prophecy of Hashem's abandonment of Israel of which he spoke, is but a temporary one.

How beautifully does Rav S.R. Hirsch translate the haftarah's opening words (the obvious connection to the "number" of Israelites counted in the parasha) as "**HOWEVER**,

the number of Israel will become (as important) as the sand..."and, by doing so, he clearly explains how the haftarah is meant to "soften" the harsh prophecy found in the first chapter and to give hope for the future to the people.

But, if so, we would find the message that follows especially difficult. Clearly, Hoshea is returning to the original theme of Israel being a wayward "wife" to Hashem, and, as a result, would suffer fitting punishments for their faithlessness. "Argue with your 'mother', G-d says, "I will have no compassion for her children", adding, "I will cancel her joy, her festivals....and lay waste to her vines and vineyards..." – are these the words of comfort, words meant to soften the harsh prophecy or give the nation hope as Rav Hirsch contends?? Certainly not!

However, the final verses of our haftarah are indeed comforting, as they promise G-d's return to His people and that, upon His return to His "wife"/nation, they will refer to Him "husband". The description of Israel's relationship with G-d being one of a wife to her husband is purposely continued through the psukim of punishment as well to underscore that, as upset the "Husband" might be with his "wife", He could never abandon her.

That message is driven home in the very last verses of the haftarah, words that men recite upon winding the tefillin straps around the fingers- a betrothal "ring" in a sense: "And I will betroth you unto Me **forever**..."

As a final note, I feel compelled to share with you the words of HaRav Soloveitchik commenting on this closing message:

“Marriage is not merely a civil institution pertaining to property and pleasure by two individuals starved for love and a convenient life....It is rather a covenantal community which is nurtured by the awareness of absolute belonging to each other. Married life is an existence in fellowship, togetherness. In it, a person finds completeness and existential fulfillment.

Today, as we stand one day before the celebration of Yom Yerushalayim, we find ourselves, once again, in a difficult situation. As demonstrations and protests spread around the world against Israel’s ‘audacity’ of allowing Jews to visit (but not pray at) the Temple site, as a movement established by those who deny all “non-believers’ freedom of worship, devotes its efforts to spreading misinformation and falsehoods about our Holy site and G-d’s Holy nation, we might wonder if our “marriage” to the Holy One has, G-d forbid, returned to the time of Hoshea, weakened, unfaithful and deserving of punishment.

The Rav’s approach to the message of Amos reminds us that, even during this difficult time, Hashem remains committed to His faithful “wife” and will stand by their side! As Rav Soloveitchik declares:

Marriage....distinguishes itself by a deep sense of loyalty and faith.....And when the prophet Hoshea portrays the eternal bond between G-d and Israel in (these) glowing ecstatic words, he exclaims that Israel is similarly betrothed to G-d in faith.”

And no more need be said!

Yom Yerushalayim Same’ach! ■



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Internalizing Torah Values

Three times in Sefer Bamidbar Bnei Yisrael are counted. In fact, the name of the sefer is translated as “numbers” due to these censuses. Typically, the men were counted from the age of twenty, worthy of being drafted into the army. The tribe of Levi, however, were counted from the age of 30 days. Rashi points out that from the age of thirty days one has a “*chezkat chayim*” and as such they are considered potential future laborers in the *mishkan*.

Shevet Levi may be used to being counted at a young age. We are told at the beginning of Sefer Shemot that 70 individuals descended to Egypt, yet only 69 people are identified. Chazal resolves the mystery by stating that Yocheved, a descendent of Levi, was born as they entered the gates of Egypt. Here too an infant was included in the calculation.

When asked to count the children of the tribe of Levi, the Torah tells us:

וַיִּפְקֹד אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה עַל־פִּי ה' כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה - *Moshe counted them according to God's word, just as he was commanded.* (Bamidbar 3:16).

Rashi is troubled by the insertion of the phrase **according to God's word**, which seems superfluous, given that the following phrase illustrates that he acted as “he was

commanded”. Rashi explains that Moshe was troubled by a practical complication. How could he enter the tents of the tribe of Levi to count the infants? He was concerned with potentially intruding while a mother was nursing her child. Hashem told Moshe to do his part and God will do the rest. What transpired was that Moshe would stand by the doorway of a tent and the *shechina* would inform Moshe of the number of males above the age of 30 days in each tent.

The Eish Tamid raises an intriguing question. If Moshe was commanded to count the tribe of Levi, why did he hesitate? Moshe should have immediately fulfilled Hashem's command! There is a significant message to derive from Moshe's behavior.

Moshe acted with *derech erez*. He has embedded in him the characteristic of respecting others and their privacy. Moshe conditioned himself to be an *oved Hashem*, to act in a way that reflects “*ratzon Hashem*” and to always conduct himself in a *tzanua* and modest manner. This command to count the infants seemed to contradict the Torah values with which he was imbued. He therefore asked Hashem for assistance with resolving this dilemma.

A story is told about Rav Moshe Feinstein that illustrates how one's devotion to Torah and mitzvot prevent them from acting in a seemingly contradictory fashion. Rav Moshe was once at a wedding and before the chuppa there was a minyan for mincha.

After Rav Moshe completed his *shemona esrei* the chazan waited for Rav Moshe to take three steps backwards before beginning *chazarat Hashatz*. There was an individual that was still davening behind Rav Moshe and so he refrained from taking three steps backwards, in accordance with the halacha, to avoid distracting that individual's concentration. He did not take steps sideways, or diagonally, but rather waited patiently in his place until the individual behind him completed his *tefilla*. Afterwards people asked Rav Moshe why he did not just take three small steps back rather than wait in his place. Rav Moshe responded- how could I have taken three steps backwards, it was like there was a brick wall behind me! In other words, if halacha forbids a certain movement, there is no way Rav Moshe could comprehend acting in a way that may be perceived as violating such a restriction.

Moshe Rabbeinu could not fathom infringing on one's privacy. Such conduct was not becoming of a ben Torah and so he needed guidance from Hashem as to how he would be able to accomplish the task at hand. May we emulate Moshe's behavior, always internalizing the Torah's precepts so they guide our every act and result in our constant portrayal of a kiddush Hashem! ■



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Encampment Elucidation

The Torah recounts an enormous amount of detail as it describes *Am Yisrael's* encampment in the desert. Three tribes camped in each of the four directions, north, south, east and west. Within each group, one tribe was designated as the leader of that side. Each tribe had its own unique flag that reflected their unique character. All the tribes surrounded the *Mishkan*, clearly everyone's focus was the service of Hashem.

In a fascinating comment, the *Ba'al Haturim* explains why Yehudah, Reuven, Yosef, and Dan were chosen to be the leaders of their set. When Yaakov Avinu blessed his children, he spoke to these four sons directly, addressing them in the second person. This reflects the idea that each person must see himself as personally

responsible to fulfill his mission in life. The Kuzari compares the Jewish people to a symphony wherein each player has his instrument and specific notes to play. Some instruments are loud, others are soft, some play continuously, some every few minutes. Each person must focus on his unique contribution to the symphony to create the exquisite musical masterpiece.

Each flag had its own symbol and color. These flags model a life perspective that we can follow. Rav Brazil in *Beshvili Nivra Haolam* explains that the letters of the word *tzeva*, color, can be rearranged to read *etzev*, sadness or *betza*, profit. One can look at his unique color, his particular strength and mission with a sense of sadness and ask, "Why was I given something different than my friends?" Or he can view his circumstance with a sense of pride, "Hashem gave me exactly what I need to be me, and I will utilize it to the fullest!"

We can keep in mind, notes Rav Hirsch, two fundamental ideas. Firstly, we are

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each special with our own distinct mission. Secondly and simultaneously, we are all focused on the one goal of serving Hashem and keeping His Torah. This is the imagery each tribe conveyed having its own flag, yet all encamped equally around the *Mishkan*.

Interestingly, the placement of the tribes only went into effect after the *Mishkan* was built, not when *Am Yisrael* left Egypt. In *Emet L'Yaakov*, Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky explains that the flags highlighted each tribe's singular, original identity. Such a focus could easily lead to dissension and competition among the tribes. However, after building the *Mishkan* each tribe was able to take its position around it and use their specialness toward the collective focus of serving Hashem. Thus, a paradigm was established, diversity that leads to unity. A unity of purpose and direction.

Parashat Bamidbar is always read around the time of *Chag haShavuot*. The Slonimer Rebbe explains that appreciating one's uniqueness and specific contribution to the Jewish people is a prerequisite to receive the Torah each year. *Ke'ish echad belev echad*. None of us is merely part of a crowd. We all have equal responsibility to contribute something unique to the whole. ■

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RABBI JUDAH

MISCHEL

Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

Executive Director, Camp HASC

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

The Bottom Line

Once, a successful and generous *gvir* named Moshe had lost his fortune and was in distress. In debt and facing the wrath of the local *poritz*, Moshe traveled to seek out the guidance and blessing of his Rebbe, Reb Menachem Mendel of Kosov, zy'a. Arriving in Kosov for Shabbos, Moshe was pleasantly surprised to meet the great *tzadik*, Reb Uri of Strelisk — Reb Menachem Mendel's brother-in-law.

Reb Uri, known as the *Seraph*, or 'fiery angel' of Strelisk was renown for his ascetic holiness, exalted *Avodas Hashem*, lengthy *dveykus*-filled prayers and disengagement from the material world. Moshe, desperate for assistance, was thrilled at the opportunity to share his burden with his Rebbe's brother-in-law, the *tzadik* of Strelisk.

"Oy, what a *tzarah*..." said Reb Uri sympathetically. "To do my part, I will have *kavanah* and keep you in mind while this morning when I go to *mikveh*; may the *zechus* of the immersion sweeten all judgments against you."

When Moshe's turn came to greet Rebbe Menachem Mendel, he shared the exchange he'd had with Reb Uri: "Please go back to my righteous *shvugger* (brother-in-law) and let him know that you can't pay your creditors by dipping in the mikveh." Slightly uncomfortable, Moshe followed his Rebbe's advice. Reb Uri furrowed his brow deep in thought and replied: "Very well. I understand your predicament is serious... I am prepared to dedicate the *zechus* of the mitzvah of tefillin toward your salvation."

When Rebbe Menachem Mendel heard, "Please go back to Reb Uri and tell him that despite the great holiness of his *avodah*, the *poritz* is not interested in his tefillin."

With no choice but to follow his Rebbe's directive, he returned to Reb Uri and delivered the message. This time, the Strelisker listened with even more intent and reassured him. My brother in law is right; your situation is grave, indeed. I will undertake a *taanis*, a fast, to break the decree. *B'eizer Hashem*, the collective *zechuyos* of these three *mitzvos* together will save you."

This time, Rebbe Menachem Mendel approached his brother-in-law in person. "My dear *shvugger*, there is no way to estimate the value and kedushah generated by your intentions, prayers and mitzvos! I'm sure that Heaven is pleased! Nonetheless, there is a time and place for everything in this material world. Now is the time for us to take action and help him pay off his debts.

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by Leviim, who had not participated in the *Cheit haEigel*. Furthermore, as each firstborn Yisrael was replaced by a Levi, the Yisrael was “redeemed” from the spiritual burden and harsh consequences of the *Cheit haEigel*. The only issue was that there were more firstborn Yisraelim than there were Levite replacements; the solution was revealed that the “excess” firstborns would be redeemed from their former role and spiritual burden, by contributing a sum of *keseif ha-p’duyim*.

Rashi points out that in addition to the money used for the process, the leftover Yisraelim were redeemed בגופן, “with their very selves”. This is perhaps the goal and “bottom line” of the monetary exchange.

While the exalted Reb Uri of Strelisk was of course correct in his instinct to remain above attachment to money and the material world, there’s a time for everything. And the Baal Shem Tov teaches another perspective: our possessions are, in a sense, part of us, part of our souls. Thus, “One who steals from his fellow, it is as if he robbed his soul.” One’s money is ‘part of oneself’. By offering their money, the Yisraelim were offering themselves, and this is what brought them redemption.

Rebbe Meir of Apta, the *Ohr LaShamayim*, one the leading students of the Chozeh of Lublin, provides another expansive interpretation:

“*Keseif ha-p’duyim*” refers to the yearning of Yisrael to come close to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*; the word *keseif* comes from *kisufin*, ‘yearnings’.

“כאשר יכספו ישראל להתקרב אליו ית, יקרבו בכך את גאולתם ופדיון נפשם”

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By means of their yearning they were powerfully brought close to their redemption, the *pidyon* of their souls.”

Chazal (Avos, 6:11) explain: כל מה שברא כל קדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו, לא בראו אלא לכבודו, “Whatever the Holy Blessed One created in His world, he created only for His glory.” Everything, including money, was created for *avodas Hashem* and *K’vod Shamayim*.

Reb Shlomo Carlebach shared an anecdote in the name of Reb Yitzchok Menachem, the saintly Rebbe of Aleksander HY”D, who was martyred by the Nazis:

Someone once challenged the Aleksander Rebbe, asking, ‘If everything was created for *avodas Hashem* and *K’vod Shamayim*, for what purpose was atheism created? The Rebbe replied, “When a Jew is in need and asks us a favor, as *maaminim*, believers, we may think, ‘OK, I’ll pray for him, I’ll bless him, and ‘*Hashem Ya’azor*.’ We may think we don’t have to do anything more than that, since ‘Hashem will help.’ But this is when you have to be an ‘atheist’, and act as if there is no God to help him. You have to help the person like there’s no one else to do it!”

When someone is in need it is a time to act; our *kisufin*, our yearning for the redemption of Klal Yisrael demands that we take direct action. And the bottom-line action is to give of ourselves through giving *tzedakah*: “Great is *tzedakah*, for it brings the Redemption!” (Bava Basra, 10a). ■

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MON, MAY 30

9:15 AM

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10:30 AM

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

10:30AM

Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

12:15 PM

Jewish History
Dr. Deborah Polster

2:00 PM

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Rabbi Bienenfeld

7:30 PM

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Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:15 am

Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Baruch Taub

11:30 AM

Unlocking the Messages
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Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

2:00 PM

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Perek 4
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Rabbi Taub

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(Resumes May 30)
Halacha, 7:00PM Wed

Rebbetzin Shatz

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

Rabbi Goldwicht

Parshat HaShavua
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Mom

People ask me why I opened SherlockS, my hat shop. While it's true – I love hats, my immediate reason is far more personal than that.

Not long ago, Mom's words about wearing a hat hit home. It turns out I had some (about 20) pre-cancerous growths removed from my forehead, and a stern warning from my dermatologist that echoed Mom's words: "When you go outside, wear a hat!"

It was then I started to do some research about melanomas and the sun's Ultra Violet (UV) rays.

Whatever your feelings about global warming or the "hole in the ozone layer", the world is experiencing record heat waves. The sun's UV rays are poisoning our skin faster than ever before. And about 90% of skin cancers appear on the exposed head, face, or back of the neck.

"The latest report on Melanoma released recently by the Cancer Research Registry of the Health Ministry's Center for Disease Control showed that every month an average of 144 new patients with Melanoma are diagnosed, and 17 die from it each month." (*J Post*).

Naturally, you need to get the right hat to be fully protected from the UV rays of the sun. Here are some helpful (life-saving?) suggestions on what to look for when purchasing a hat:

1. The brim of a hat should have an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) of at least 30. That means only 1/30th of the sun's UV radiation can reach your skin.
2. Brims of 2½ - 3 inches, or more, are preferable. Make sure the brim covers your nose.
3. Tightly woven Panama straw hats, especially those produced in Montecristi, Ecuador, offer excellent protection against the sun's UV rays.
4. Darker hats, made out of lightweight polys, also offer excellent UV protection.

So that's my story. I love hats but I find great satisfaction knowing that I'm selling something that can change people's lives (and make them look good too).

All those years of walking around without a hat finally caught up with me. Don't let it catch up to you. Mom was right:

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

This *Motzei Shabbat* we will celebrate the 55th anniversary of *Ichud Yerushalayim*-the reunification of Jerusalem, the miraculous military victory of the 1967 Six Day War. For nineteen years, the joy that had permeated the Jewish People with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was tempered by the somber, humbling reality that the city of Jerusalem remained divided, the ancient city, the Western Wall, and the Temple Mount under Jordanian sovereignty. That all changed with the dramatic events of June 7, 1967.

Shortly after Lt. General Motta Gur's thrilling announcement, '*Har Habayit B'yadeinu, Har Habayit B'yadeinu!*' 'The Temple Mount is in our hands, the Temple Mount is in our hands', the students of the *Beit Aharon Yeshiva*, the *yeshiva* of the *Slonimer Chasidim* in *Meah Shearim*, were huddled together in the bomb-shelter in the basement of the *yeshiva* complex, where they were addressed by their illustrious *Rosh Yeshiva*, **Rabbi Shalom Noach Brazovsky zy'a**, who years later would succeed his father-in law to serve as the **Slonimer Rebbe**.

Below are a few short excerpts from the

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Rebbe's inspirational message to the *Yeshiva's* students on that momentous day:

...We are obligated to recognize and give thanks for the miracles that HaKadosh Baruch Hu has brought upon us during these days, miraculous revelations not experienced for tens of generations, and it is forbidden to ignore these great gifts from Hashem...

*...Even those removed from our tradition, and **anyone with a brain in their head**, must acknowledge that these great events cannot be comprehended by the laws of nature....*

...The return to Jewish control of both the Kotel HaMaaravi and the other sacred places- Kever Rachel and Maarat HaMachpela, in the miraculously swift six-day war, leave us in awe of these great miraculous events which God has revealed to us, and we must give thanks to the Ribono Shel Olam....

...At this great moment, when God has returned to us the place where our Temple stood, we must sing praises....

The *Rebbe's* words help us to appreciate the significance of this incredible commemoration of *Yom Yerushalayim*. It was evident to see the *Yad Hashem*, the proverbial "hand of G-d" in the height of the events, and even in the days and months immediately following the events of June 7, 1967.

But today, even as we are still longing for the day when indeed we'll witness the complete ingathering of the Exiles and enter into that era of eternal peace, we must not turn

a blind eye to the many incredible gifts that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* bestows upon us each and every day. After 2,000 years of exile, each of us is free to visit, live, study and pray in the ancient city of *Yerushalayim*.

May the great gift that is *Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh*, the united eternal capital of the Jewish People, ever serve as an inspiration for each of us to appreciate all of *Hashem's* gifts, and help us to see the subtle hidden miracles we experience each and every day....

Yom Yerushalayim Sameach! ■

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GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Eztion

Yom Yerushalayim A City of Magnets

Sefer Breishit portrays three vastly different visits to Yerushalayim. Avraham first encounters this city after intervening in a raging world war. Years later, an acquiescent Avraham and his son voyage to the mountain to execute the Divine command and perform the *akeidah*. Finally, Ya'akov flees his murderous brother and experiences his famed nighttime vision upon this mountain. Though these three visits are dramatically different and undertaken by different personalities at different historical stages, they bare one common denominator: Yerushalayim had never been a predestined or prearranged destination; each guest is drawn to this mountain by some powerful and unexpected force. Upon returning from war, Avraham is suddenly embraced and hosted by the city's reigning king- a mysterious figure who appears from nowhere. Subsequently, for his *akeidah* mission, he travels to an "undetermined mountain" whose identity will only be Divinely revealed at some later stage. According to the Midrash, Ya'akov actually bypasses the

mountain, only to be ineluctably drawn back. There is something deeply "magnetizing" about this city and this mountain. It exerts a subliminal and primal lure upon the Jewish soul, drawing would-be travelers into its precincts. Yerushalayim- our city of gold- is also a city of magnets!

Fifty-five years ago we returned to our ancient city amidst the euphoria of the six-day war and its astounding miracles. The kinetic force of Yerushalayim was, once again, unmistakable and palpable. The six-day war and the return to Yerushalayim instantly generated a rich cultural iconography- images, sounds, and personalities forever etched upon our collective imagination. Who can forget the iconic image of the "three soldiers", eyes uplifted at the re-enfranchised Kotel, a wall which had occupied the Jewish imagination for two millennia? Naomi Shemer's soulful song "Yerushalayim shel zahav" became an instant symbol of the centuries-old wistfulness for this city. Bold proclamations such as "The Temple Mount is once again under Jewish rule" (Har Habayit b'yadeinu in Hebrew) or the radio broadcast of Tehillim perek 122 advertising "our feet are positioned in the gates of Yerushalayim"

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- each reverberate in our national memory. The war's legendary generals – Ariel Sharon, Motta Gur and Moshe Dayan-became instant national heroes. Interestingly, though the return to Yerushalayim generated instant “icons”, the Independence War did not. There aren't specific pictures, phrases or songs surrounding the 1948 war. This is due, in part, to technological advancement as by 1967 cameras and radio were more fully developed and better capable of popularizing these icons. Additionally, the war of 1967 actually climaxed with the return to Yerushalayim, whereas the war of 1948, which lasted a year and a half into 1949, felt anti-climactic after the celebrated Declaration of Independence. However, beyond these practical reasons, it seems as if, once again, the perennial magnetism of Yerushalayim mesmerized our people, and through these icons deeply lodged itself within collective Jewish consciousness.

Indeed, this magnetizing force of Yerushalayim wasn't only sensed in the country of Israel. For close to fifty years the Soviet regime had denied millions of Jews of their heritage, their religion and even of their Jewish identity. Suddenly, the electrifying

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reports of the Jewish return to Yerushalayim reinvigorated Jewish identity across the boulevards of Moscow and tundras of Siberia. The eventual emigration of millions of Russian Jews to Israel helped radically transform Israel from a fledgling economy, constantly vulnerable to destabilizing hyperinflation, into an economic superpower and technological epicenter.

As a student during the late 80's, I recall joining my entire yeshiva in Israel for a day-long "fast" to demonstrate support for an unnamed Jewish Soviet dissident languishing in a jail cell. After the conclusion of the fast we spoke with him in his Russian jail and assured him both of our support and of our expectation to one day welcome him to Israel. A few weeks later, Yuli Edelstein, the current speaker of the Knesset, walked into the Gush yeshiva to learn alongside me. The magnetism of Yerushalayim, unleashed in 1967, had drawn him home 20 years later. Ultimately, two years afterwards, the Berlin wall fell, thus terminating the sixty-nine-year Soviet regime. Who would have wagered that our fledgling state of Israel would outlast this empire built to last centuries.

However, the magnetism of Yerushalayim wasn't only sensed in Israel or in Russia. Prior to 1967, Jews had firmly established themselves in Western societies, but lived on the social margins of society wielding relatively little influence in governance and generally suppressing any outward signs of Jewish identity or religion. The return to

Yerushalayim provided a burst of national pride and a surge in Jewish confidence as Jewish enclaves across the Western world transformed into robust and vibrant Jewish communities – actively involved in all aspects of society, culture and politics. This "era of Yerushalayim" sparked unprecedented religious and Torah growth as well as renewed interest in Aliyah and tourism. The mysterious spell of this city continues to drive Jewish history.

Dovid Hamelech (Tehillim 122) referred to Yerushalayim as an "integrator city" (churban lah yachad). Though there is healthy disagreement across the Jewish world about a range of issues, including important questions surrounding the State of Israel, a deep consensus surrounding Yerushalayim unifies vastly different communities and ideologies. The instinctive draw to our common "city of magnets" is inalienable and eternal.

Last week's "Geulas Yisrael" article for Bechukotai, entitled "A Bittersweet Guarantee" incorrectly identified Chief Rabbi Herzog as the person assuring a US audience on the eve of the 1967 war, that a third churban will not occur. Rabbi Herzog had, in the past issued this guarantee. However, as he passed in 1959, he obviously wasn't involved in the 1967 guarantee. That assertion was voiced by Rabbi Goren. ■

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SPECIAL GUEST

RABBI REUVEN TARAGIN

Dean, Yeshivat Hakotel
Educational Director, World Mizrahi



Appreciating Yom Yerushalayim - Why A Second Holiday?

Hashem has blessed me with the great privilege of being able to spend my days learning and davening at Yeshivat Hakotel, overlooking Har Habayit. I am often asked what this feels like. I would like to answer by exploring Yom Yerushalayim.

Having recently celebrated Yom Ha'atzmaut, which commemorates the miraculous founding, survival, and thriving of the State of Israel, many wonder why we need a second holiday just three weeks later.

I believe that there are two answers to this question. The first lies in the full appreciation of the 1967 salvation and the second in the full appreciation of the significance of Yerushalayim and the Kotel/Har Habayit.

The 1967 Salvation

Military experts see the 1967 victory as possibly the most miraculous one in modern history. Through a combination of a number of amazing “coincidences” Israel went from digging tens of thousands of graves in public parks to vanquishing all those threatening

to exterminate her in a matter of six days. It was a “*v'nahafoch hu*” rivaled only by Purim. Thus, Yom Yerushalayim is an opportunity to thank Hashem for that incredible, unprecedented miracle, especially because through it, we were finally able to return to Yerushalayim.

Yerushalayim

In 1949, Israel's Chief Rabbinate recommended reciting Hallel on Yom Ha'atzmaut without a *berachah* mainly because (the Old City of) Yerushalayim was not yet included in the State of Israel. Throughout our exile, Jews davened not just for a return to Israel, but “*l'shana haba'ah b'Yerushalayim.*” They yearned not just for our national home, but also for the center of our religious identity.

Jews maintained their identity through thousands of years, in tens of different cultural milieus, because they saw Yerushalayim not just as part of an illustrious past, but as their immediate future.

When Natan Sharansky was convicted of treason against “Mother Russia,” he was asked by the court to sum up his defense. Sharansky responded: “I have nothing to say to this court, but to the People of Israel and to my wife I say: Next year in Jerusalem.”

As opposed to Rome's Pantheon, which, though prayed at in the past, is just a tourist site in the present, Har Habayit and the Kotel remain our holy sites that we seek to rebuild. Though less holy than Har Habayit, the Kotel was never usurped by any other

religion and remains a pristine remnant of the past that we envision in our future.

When we returned to the Kotel and the Kotel returned to us in 1967, we knew that Hashem was inviting us to begin reinstating our relationship with him.

At that point, once we had “*Har Habayis b’yadeinu*” once again, the Rabbanut sanctioned saying Hallel with a *berachah*.

What We Yearn For

Yom Ha’atzmaut celebrates our sovereignty in our independent Jewish State. Yom Yerushalayim complements that by focusing on the religious significance of our return and future here.

On Yom Yerushalayim, we reflect on the full religious significance of the State of Israel — the completion of our *teshuvah* process that will fully repair our relationship with Hashem and will culminate in the

eventual rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash.

This is what learning and davening daily opposite the Kotel is all about.

You begin every morning with a full view of Hashem’s benevolence to us and the miracles he performed on our behalf.

You wake up every morning to the miraculous return of our people to our past.

You wake up every morning to the fruition of Jewish history.

On Yom Yerushalayim, we celebrate not only Yerushalayim and the Kotel’s return to us and our return to it, but also what they symbolize about us as the Jewish People. When celebrating, let’s make sure we reflect not only on what Hashem did for us, but, more importantly and with more relevance for ourselves, on how we need to respond by strengthening our relationship with Him in order to merit the continuation of the *geulah* process. ■



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B'CHODSHO

BY RABBI SHMUEL GOLDIN

Faculty, OU Israel

Rabbi Emeritus, Congregation Ahavath
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What's in a Name?

A Yom Yerushalayim Contemplation

What is the origin of the name *Yerushalayim*, Jerusalem? How did the name of Judaism's holiest city come to be?

An intriguing answer is proposed by the Midrash...

The name *Yerushalayim*, the Rabbis claim, traces to two biblical figures who intersect briefly in the Torah text, Avraham and Malchi-tzedek.

Malchi-tzedek, who appears in the Torah only once, is described in the Torah as "the king of *Shalem*" and as a "priest of God, the Most High." Apparently a righteous spiritual leader, Malchi-tzedek lives in Avraham's time, but outside of the Patriarch's immediate orbit and influence.¹ The rabbis identify *Shalem*, the location of Malchi-tzedek's rule, as the city of *Yerushalayim*.

Years after his encounter with

1 The Midrash identifies Malchi-tzedek as Shem, the son of Noah.

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Malchi-tzedek, Avraham finds himself on the summit of Mount Moriah, following Akeidat Yitzchak, the aborted sacrifice of Yitzchak. Looking out from the mountain-top, Avraham declares the name of the site to be *Hashem Yireh*, "HaShem Will See." The rabbis maintain that Mount Moriah will ultimately become the Temple Mount, again in *Yerushalayim*.

God, the rabbis explain, is therefore confronted with a dilemma:

What shall the name of this city be? If I call the city Shalem, as did Malchi-tzedek, I will slight Avraham. If I choose the name that Avraham suggests, HaShem Yireh, I will slight Malchi-tzedek.

The Divinely ordained solution?

To honor both righteous men, I will combine the names. The city will be called Yireh-Shalem, Yerushalayim.

As is always the case, powerfully significant and complex ideas course beneath the surface of a seemingly simple rabbinic tale...

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The first point we immediately discern is that *HaShem's relationship with the Jewish people is unique, but not exclusive*. Our God is a universal God. While He relates to His "Chosen Nation" in singular ways, He is accessible and near to righteous individuals and peoples of all origins and backgrounds.

One might have thought that a "contest" between Avraham, the towering progenitor of the Jewish nation, and Malchi-tzedek, a non-Jewish priest who appears once, glancingly, in the Torah, would be no "contest" at all. Such, however, is not the case. HaShem will consider Malchi-tzedek's rights equally, alongside those of Avraham, in the naming of the Holy city of Jerusalem.

The messages that emerge from this Midrash, however, strike even deeper, in surprisingly prescient ways. Each of the two names originally chosen for Jerusalem mirrors a specific vision for that holy city.

To Malchi-tzedek, Jerusalem is *Shalem*, "whole." This is a city that will speak to all of mankind, Jew and Non-Jew alike. From its walls will emanate spiritual ideas designed to raise man's sights and transform his vision. Malchi-tzedek sees Jerusalem as a holy city for all, a city that is universal in scope.

In contrast to Malchi-tzedek's universal vision for Jerusalem, Avraham's dream is specific. The city is "*HaShem Yireh*," a place of pilgrimage for the Jewish people, a place where they will "be seen." Here the nation will come together thrice yearly, on their festive occasions, to connect with their God, with each other, and with their own spiritual potential. To Avraham, Jerusalem



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The Midrash could hardly have been more prophetic...

As we look back upon the centuries that have passed since the “naming” of Jerusalem, we clearly see the realization of both visions for the city.

On the one hand, is there any other location on earth that has captured the attention, and continues to capture the attention, of the world more completely than Jerusalem? Holy to the three major Western religions, Jerusalem has shaped the religious outlook of so much of the world. Every inch of its space has been hotly contested, and continues to be contested in our day. More headlines, news reports, books and more have been written about this city than any other location in the world.

Malchi-tzedek’s universal vision of the city as “*Shalem*” has certainly been realized and will apparently be realized until the end of days.

On the other hand, the connection between the Jewish Nation and the city of Jerusalem is singular in its strength and significance. No other people has dreamt of a return to this city as we have; no other nation has exclaimed “Next year in a rebuilt Jerusalem,” as we have exclaimed, over and over again, for centuries. It is the center that draws us, the magnet that pulls

us back from all corners of the globe.

Avraham’s vision of the city has also been realized, the vision of “*Har Yireh*,” the place where God and His people will ultimately come together “to be seen.”

And there is, of course, one additional message emerging from the Midrash, equally prescient and powerful as those above...

For both visions of Jerusalem, the universal and the particular, to truly take hold, one of these visions must take precedence.

The only time in centuries when all have had freedom of access and worship at Jerusalem’s holy sights has been when the city has been in Jewish hands.

HaShem Yireh enables *Shalem*; the realization of Avraham’s vision allows Malchi-tzedek’s to take hold, as well. This is a truth easily ignored by the world that we must loudly proclaim. Our return to Jerusalem in our day has resulted in an open city, allowing others to realize their dreams, even as we realize our own...

Yerushalayim, the city of visions and dreams, once again in our hands. As we celebrate its unification each year on Yom Yerushalayim, we pray that it will forever remain ours... For our sake, and for the sake of others, as well. ■

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The Totality of Shabbat

One of the most distinctive points of Shabbat is the moment on Friday night when Kiddush is recited. The mitzvah of Kiddush, all agree, is a Biblical obligation. The Sages (Pesachim 106a; Mechilta on Shemot 20:8) derived this imperative from the fourth of the Ten Commandments: “Remember the day of the Shabbat to sanctify it” (Ex. 20:8).

In order to appreciate the significance of this mitzvah Rabbi Soloveitchik analyzed its purpose. Why do we make kiddush? With its recitation, what are we meant to achieve?

The Rav identified two crucial aspects to the mitzvah that have far reaching implications regarding the very nature of Shabbat observance.

First, perhaps most simply, the Kiddush serves as a mechanism to offer a tribute to the day. Via the Kiddush we praise the day of Shabbat by proclaiming it as the day that God chose for an eternal testimony to His creation and His sovereignty. It is a song for the Shabbat; expressing our feelings of gratitude and devotion. We mark the uniqueness of the day by taking a cup of wine and pronouncing a blessing. (Birkei Mesorat HaRav, pp. 30-31)

However, the Rav beautifully suggested

that Kiddush has a more profound meaning. It is more than merely extending praise to the Shabbat. The true nature of kiddush is alluded to in the name itself. Literally, the word *Kiddush* means sanctification, implying that with its recitation we sanctify the day of Shabbat. In other words, Shabbat’s holiness is incomplete until the individual steps forward and bestows holiness on the day.

This second facet of *Kedushat Shabbat* is implicit in the Torah’s list of the yearly cycle of holidays, in which Shabbat is recorded as the first in the list of holy times, *mo’adei Hashem* (Vayikra 23:3). Shabbat too is one of the *mo’adei Hashem*, and like other festivals, which you must declare, it must be sanctified by man. (Ibid. , p. 28)

Two Aspects of Shabbat Reflected in the Two Ten Commandments

There is a facet of Shabbat’s holiness that flows directly from God. The Creator rested on the seventh day and declared that the Shabbat be holy. This notion is highlighted in the first presentation of the Shabbat in the Ten Commandments. In *Sefer Shemot*, we read: “For God made the heavens and earth in six days...and he rested on the seventh day (*Shemot* 20:10-11).

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However, in the second rendering of the Ten Commandments, in *Devarim*, instead of observing Shabbat to commemorate creation, we are bidden to observe Shabbat “to remember that you were a slave in the Land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you.” In this sense the obligation is to treat the day in such a way that one invests it with holiness and experiences its distinctness. (Ibid., pp 28-29)

Moreover, the two terms *Shamor* and *Zachor* connote two distinct components: *Shamor* suggests that one watches over, or guards, the holiness that is embedded in the day. *Zachor*, on the other hand, requires an action. To take action that makes the day unique. The Kiddush is recited in order to fulfill the imperative that the individual enrich the day of Shabbat and inject it with sanctity. (Ibid., p.29)

Experiencing the Totality of Shabbat

An important practical lesson emerges from the fact that man is tasked to imbue *kedusha* in Shabbat. One who passively observes Shabbat cannot experience the totality of its sanctity. While the basic level of *kedushat Shabbat* commences on its own with the sun’s descent on Shabbat eve, only man’s declaration of Kiddush creates the additional element of holiness. ■

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Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



שיר של יום

During the heat of the COVID lockdowns, one of the amusing challenges that many of us had to face was the issue of שיר של יום. As we would arrive at the end of Shacharit, we would be confronted with the daily existential question of – “what day is it???”. All of our days were one big blur, one day rolling into the next, the day of the week had lost all significance. Baruch Hashem, bli ayin hara, we are now back to regular life, where it is almost impossible to forget what day of the week it is. We have schedules and appointments, meetings and events, and we set off each day, armed with lists and goals to accomplish for that day.

Beyond being an amusing memory from our Corona days, this anecdote can give us some deeper insight into the daily שיר של יום paragraph that we recite.

Each day of the week, we recite a different chapter of Tehillim which corresponds to that day of the week. This is a replication of what was done during the times of the Beit HaMikdash. Each day of the week after bringing the Korban Tamid, the

Leviim used to sing a different Mizmor of Tehillim. They would only sing those songs after the Korban Tamid of the morning, and so we too, only recite שיר של יום after our morning Tefillot.

What is the purpose of these “day-of-the-week” chapters of Tehillim? **Gemara Rosh Hashana 31a** explains that each one of the chapters of Tehillim focuses on the unique potential of that day. Each chapter describes the specific aspect of creation that Hashem brought into motion on that day. For example, on Sunday, the first day of creation and the day that the land itself was formed, we recite - “ה' הארץ ומלואה, תבל” - “ויושבי בה” - *The earth and all it contains, the world and all its inhabitants, are Hashem's.* On Friday, the day on which man was created, we recite “ה' מלך גאות לבש” - *Hashem has reigned; He has attired Himself with majesty.* The reason for this selection is that Hashem could only be crowned after man was created. (Incidentally, there are 45 words which correspond to the gematria of the word אדם, man).

שיר של יום forces us to focus for a minute on the unique potential of the day ahead. What we can accomplish today is different from what we were able to

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achieve yesterday or what we will be able to achieve tomorrow. As the saying goes, "Today only happens once in a lifetime". It therefore behooves us to try and tap into the unique potential of today and to utilize the time we are given to reach new heights every day.

On the other hand, before reciting each day's chapter of Tehillim, we say היום ראשון בשבת שבו היו הלווים אומרים בבית המקדש – we announce which day of the week it is in relation to Shabbos. Why do we do this? In order to fulfill the Mitzva of "זכור את יום השבת לקדשו" – Chazal say the mitzvah here is not only to remember Shabbos on Shabbos itself, but to remember and mention Shabbos all the days leading up to Shabbos.

Each day has unique potential in and of itself, but it has even more כח as part of a whole. Hashem created a different aspect of the world each day, but only on Shabbos was He able to sit back and rest and see how all the parts of creation fit together and created a beautiful symphony. So too, each day of the week, we accomplish unique goals but only when we look back at the end of the week, can we see how all of the efforts we put in on a daily basis join together to reach great heights. ■

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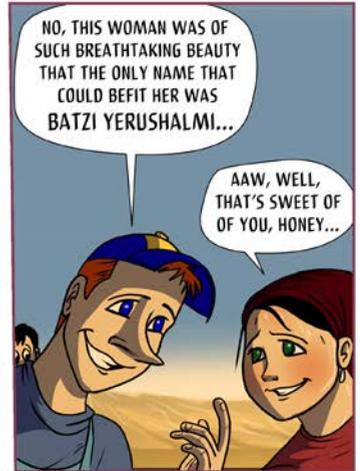
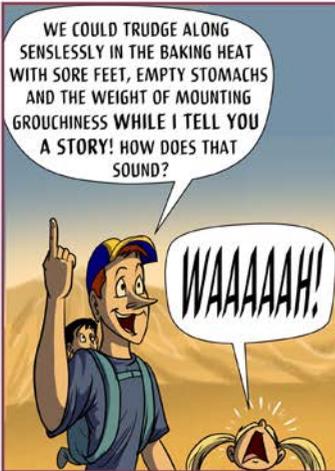
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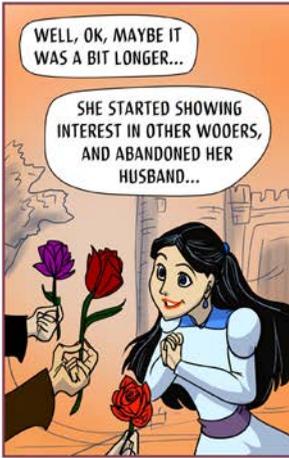


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(CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK)





WELL, OK, MAYBE IT WAS A BIT LONGER...

SHE STARTED SHOWING INTEREST IN OTHER WOOLERS, AND ABANDONED HER HUSBAND...



SHE WAS SHOWERED WITH RICHES, GRAIN, PROSPERITY, WHICH SHE ASSUMED ALL CAME FROM HER NEW ADMIRERS...

...AND CONSEQUENTLY, SHE CLUNG MORE FAITHFULLY TO THOSE ADMIRERS, AND SPENT THESE GIFTS TO PLEASE THEM FURTHER...



...WHEN, IN FACT, THESE GIFTS WERE FROM HER EX-HUSBAND, WHO STILL LOVED HER AND LONGED FOR HER...

HE SHOULD KILL A DRAGON FOR HER, THAT ALWAYS WORKS! OR CHANGE A LIGHT BULB, THAT SOMETIMES MAKES MUMMY ALL LOVEY-DOVEY, DOESN'T IT, MU-?

YOU WERE SAYING, BENTZ?



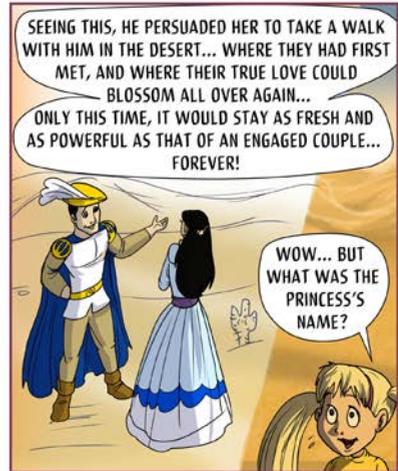
SO HE TOOK AWAY ALL THOSE GOODS, AND BLOCKED HER PATHWAYS TO THOSE EVIL MEN WHO LED HER ASTRAY...

...AND WHEN SHE REALISED SHE COULDN'T FIND THEM, THAT THEY HAD BETRAYED HER ALL ALONG...



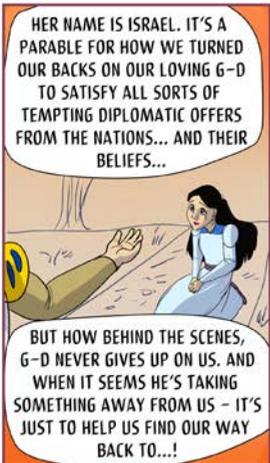
...SHE SUDDENLY UNDERSTOOD HOW WRONG SHE HAD BEEN TO TRUST THEM, HOW HORRENDOUSLY FALSE ALL THEY WERE, AND HOW UNBEARABLY EMPTY THEIR TEMPTATIONS WERE...

...ALL SHE REALLY WANTED WAS TO RETURN TO HER ONE TRUE LOVE



SEEING THIS, HE PERSUADED HER TO TAKE A WALK WITH HIM IN THE DESERT... WHERE THEY HAD FIRST MET, AND WHERE THEIR TRUE LOVE COULD BLOSSOM ALL OVER AGAIN... ONLY THIS TIME, IT WOULD STAY AS FRESH AND AS POWERFUL AS THAT OF AN ENGAGED COUPLE... FOREVER!

WOW... BUT WHAT WAS THE PRINCESS'S NAME?



HER NAME IS ISRAEL. IT'S A PARABLE FOR HOW WE TURNED OUR BACKS ON OUR LOVING G-D TO SATISFY ALL SORTS OF TEMPTING DIPLOMATIC OFFERS FROM THE NATIONS... AND THEIR BELIEFS...

BUT HOW BEHIND THE SCENES, G-D NEVER GIVES UP ON US. AND WHEN IT SEEMS HE'S TAKING SOMETHING AWAY FROM US - IT'S JUST TO HELP US FIND OUR WAY BACK TO...!



...THE CAR!

NO, BACK TO HIM!

WELL DONE, HONEY. TELLING THAT STORY REALLY WAS AN EXCELLENT IDEA...



THANKS, SWEETHEART. TO BE HONEST, I GOT A BIT WORRIED EARLIER THAT YOU WERE UPSET WITH ME... I FEARED OUR LOVE WASN'T AS JOYFUL AS IT USUALLY IS...

I KNOW...

BUT THE MORAL OF THAT STORY IS SO CLEAR...



...WHY, ALL OUR MARRIAGE NEEDS IS SOME MORE DESERT-WALKING!

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!



TORAH 4 TEENS

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Ataya Ness-Aiver
Raanana Chapter
Madrich

One rock. You rock. Three rock four.

“One rock. Two rocks. Three rocks. Ooh! That one is colorful.... Four rocks....” If I were to be taking a forty yearlong hike through sandy, scorching hot territory, rocks would be my best friend, my key to sanity amongst the never ending rolling hills of nothingness. But I am not G-d. “And G-d spoke to Moshe, in the desert of Sinai...on the first of the second month in the second year of them leaving Egypt, saying: ‘Count the heads of the Children of Israel...’” (Numbers 1:1). The desert is classically the home of the recluse, the spiritual seeker who finds the Infinite depth of spiritual silence amongst its many stones. But now hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people are finding themselves amongst the nothingness. What to do now? Not a month before, G-d rested his Presence amongst the Jewish people with the establishment of the Mishkan, G-d’s

“dwelling” in the physical. Now, says Rashi, in the second month, G-d sends us a message. “You are important to me”. “You are what this desert is about, what these forty years and resting of My Presence is about. Each one, I shall count, (or, literally translated, raise up the head).” In life, we may find ourselves stripped of our comforts, of our external crutches. We may find ourselves forced to find and build a home for G-d’s Presence from within, when nothing around us seems to be helping. But always remember, says G-d, that when the time is rough, when all you feel is a crushing weight of pain and judgments that “I’m not good enough” and “I’m incapable” - *I love you. You ARE valuable.* Feel it. And build from there.

As the Shechina rested on Har Sinai, may it continue to rest within us every year and all the time! Shabbat Shalom!

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Bamidbar begins by talking about the census of the Jewish People in the desert. This relates nicely to Shavuot, since Shavuot is a festival we reach after counting the Omer. It also relates nicely to Shavuot since Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai at which point the Jewish people committed the sin of the Golden Calf. This unfortunate

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event was followed by the death of many of Bnei Yisroel, followed by a census.

The parsha goes on to detail all of the Tribes of Israel excluding the tribe of Levi. Why is Levi excluded from this census? Perhaps the answer is because they were given a special status as a reward for their refraining from participating in the sin of the Golden Calf. The Tribe of Levi was to replace the first born with regard to all of the holy tasks to be performed in the Mishkan and the Beit Hamikdash. This shows us a concrete example of the long term rewards which we can receive as a result of resisting temptations to join in with the crowd when they are doing something bad – however attractive it may seem at the time.

Another interesting idea in parshat Bamidbar can be found in Chapter 3. We are told that these are the תולדות of Aharon and Moshe. Then, we are told only about the sons of Aharon. There is no mention of Moshe's biological sons. One answer can be found in the Gemara in Sanhedrin which says that since Moshe taught them Torah he was like their father. Another answer we are told is that Moshe prayed and saved the lives of two of Aharon's sons after the sin of the Golden Calf and therefore Moshe was like a father to them. There are many lessons that we can learn from this but that would be a shiur in itself!

Shabbat Shalom ■

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