

ב"ה

Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1478 JULY 30TH '22 ב' אב תשפ"ב

פרשת מסעי

PARSHAT MASEI - SHABBAT CHAZAK
AVOT CHAPTER 3

OU
ישראל

כי לכם נתתי
את־הארץ
לרשת אתה

במדבר ל"ג:נג



Probing The Prophets
Rabbi Nachman
Winkler
Faculty, OU Israel Center
page 22



Simchat Shmuel
Rabbi Sam Shor
Program Director,
OU Israel Center
page 40



**Tisha B'av
Program at
OU Israel**
See Back Page

YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT MASEI
CANDLES 7:02PM • EARLIEST 6:12PM • HAVDALA 8:18PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:55PM

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Rena Gelband// Yechezkel Bitter



Kiddush Levana

Many wait to say Kiddush Levana until after the fast of Tisha B'av

Earliest Kiddush Levana, 3 Days After Molad **4 Av/Sun. night July 31**

7 Days After Molad **8 Av/ Thurs. night Aug 4**

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until **15 Av, Thurs. Aug. 11, All night**



This week's Torah Tidbits cover image!

Photo By: Shifra Raskas

I am 13 years old and made Aliyah to Raanana 1 year ago.

About the Photo: This photo represents the old and the new of Jerusalem!

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



CANDLES	EARLIEST	MASEI	HAVDALA	DEVARIM		
				Candles	Earliest	Havdala
7:02	6:12	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	8:18	6:57	6:07	8:11
7:20	6:14	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	8:20	7:14	6:10	8:13
7:21	6:13	Beit Shemesh / RBS	8:19	7:15	6:08	8:12
7:18	6:12	Gush Etzion	8:18	7:12	6:08	8:11
7:20	6:14	Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	8:20	7:14	6:10	8:14
7:19	6:13	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	8:19	7:13	6:09	8:12
7:20	6:14	Netanya	8:21	7:14	6:10	8:14
7:18	6:13	Be'er Sheva	8:18	7:13	6:09	8:12
7:19	6:14	Rehovot	8:20	7:14	6:09	8:13
7:02	6:14	Petach Tikva	8:20	6:57	6:09	8:13
7:19	6:13	Ginot Shomron	8:19	7:13	6:09	8:13
7:11	6:15	Haifa / Zichron	8:21	7:05	6:10	8:15
7:18	6:12	Gush Shiloh	8:18	7:12	6:08	8:12
7:20	6:14	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	8:20	7:14	6:10	8:14
7:18	6:12	Giv'at Ze'ev	8:18	7:12	6:08	8:12
7:18	6:12	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	8:18	7:12	6:08	8:11
7:20	6:15	Ashkelon	8:20	7:14	6:10	8:14
7:19	6:14	Yad Binyamin	8:19	7:14	6:09	8:13
7:14	6:13	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	8:20	7:08	6:08	8:13
7:18	6:12	Golan	8:18	7:12	6:07	8:12

Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 8:55 PM • next week - 8:49 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
July 27-Aug 6 / 28 Tamuz - 9 Av

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	4:55 - 5:03
Sunrise	5:52 - 5:58
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:18 - 9:21
Magen Avraham	8:37-8:41
Sof Zman Tefila	10:27 - 10:29
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:45
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:20-1:18
Plag Mincha	6:13-6:07
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:44-7:36

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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



Once every few years, for a few weeks at a time, different portions of the *Torah* are read in *Eretz Yisrael* and in *chutz la'aretz*. We are currently experiencing one of these years and this *Shabbat*, we realign *Torah* readings, as *Parshat Mattot-Masei* is read in the Diaspora while *Parshat Masei* is read in *Eretz Yisrael*. It begs the question, what can we learn about *Parshat Masei*, a *Torah* portion that unifies Jews in and outside of *Eretz Yisrael*?

In *Parshat Masei*, all the journeys of *Am Yisrael* in the desert are carefully detailed, the boundaries of their future lands are given, and the *arei miklat* (cities of refuge) are designated. This *parsha* offers an important lesson for what it means to be a member of *Klal Yisrael*. *Am Yisrael* has a unifying journey - to serve the *Borei Olam* and bring an awareness of the Almighty to the world. But we cannot reach our goals without each individual member of *Klal Yisrael* actively upholding the values of *Torah*, thus inspiring one another to reach for greater heights.

When we do a *mitzvah* we not only impact ourselves but we impact those around us, and more broadly, we actively contribute to the collective holiness of *Klal Yisrael*. As we each embark on fulfilling our personal mission on this earth there is so much we can learn from one another. In my own life, I have found that seeing the ways in which

my parents, *rabbanim*, mentors, family and community members serve *HaShem*, I can envision my own potential and be inspired to hold myself to higher standards...

Seeing the love my parents had for *Eretz Yisrael* and their dedication to the dream of building a life here despite challenges they faced ignited a fire in their children, all of whom live here today.

Both my grandfathers exemplified what it means to serve as reliable members of the *Klal*. Despite how challenging it was for my *Zaidy* to walk from his home to Rabbi Shalom Gold's shul in *Har Nof*, he was always among the first group of people to arrive. My Grandpa *a"h* was the first one to open the shul where he *davened* every morning in Brooklyn. They inspire me to get out of bed regardless of how tired I might feel and play an active role in making a *minyán* for the community.

Seeing the respect that my parents had for Rav Moshe Feinstein and the stories they would tell me about his *gadlus* (*greatness*) helped me appreciate the *gedolim* (revered rabbis) of our generation and I share the same stories with my own children.

The time my father would spend bringing me to see Rav Moshe Feinstein at Yeshivat Tiferet Yerushalayim impressed upon me the value of building relationships with *gedolim* and seeing them as role models. These experiences helped me set the foundation for fostering my own relationships with *rabbanim* such as *Rav Mordechai*

Eliyahu. Following in my father's ways, I make sure my children are given opportunities to visit *Torah* giants and learn from them.

This past week, *Am Yisrael* lost a holy soul with the passing of Mr. Kurt Rothschild, a person who taught the world what it means to be involved in *tzarchei tzibur* (the needs of the community) and how important it is to serve as an active member of *Klal Yisrael*.

Born in Germany in 1920, Kurt was sent by his parents to England and just three years later, migrated to Canada where he built a career of scrupulous honesty and a life dedicated to *Am Yisrael*, *Eretz Yisrael* and *Torat Yisrael*. In 2012, after Kurt and his wife Edith made *aliyah*, he found new opportunities to lend a hand and devoted himself to *Am Yisrael* in *Eretz Yisrael*. One of the many projects he took on was establishing communities in the *Negev* for Israelis displaced from *Gush Katif* looking to rebuild their lives.

Mr. Rothschild modeled respect toward every Jew and deeply believed in the unity of *Klal Yisrael*. As a testament to the way in which he conducted his life, Jews came to pay their respects and accompany his *neschama* to the *Olam HaEmet*. Some wore *kippot* of all shapes, sizes and materials, some wore baseball caps, some wore traditional *yeshivish* garb, while others wore T-shirts and sandals.

I had the *zechus* to meet with Kurt on a number of occasions and always felt motivated by the excitement he had when tackling the latest need he identified in *Klal Yisrael*. On one such occasion, Zvi Sand, OU Israel President, and I went together to meet with Kurt (see photo). We were



incredibly impressed with his endless work in the Jewish world. Seeing the love, dedication, time, effort and funds that he personally invested into the Jewish people left me with no choice other than to join in his latest efforts to help our brethren. The lessons I learned from Mr. Rothschild I hope to implement in my own life and pass down to my children.

May we follow in the path that Mr. Rothschild set for us and find opportunities to reinforce *Am Yisrael*. With so many holy members of *Klal Yisrael* to learn from, may we see the beauty in one another, inspire each other through our own personal growth and may we unite in our mission as children of *HaShem* and bring His light to this world.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

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

Condolences to Lynne Steinberg and family
on the passing of her mother

Ruth Weinberg a"h

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

MASEI

ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY



Rabbi Reuven Tradburks
Director of
RCA Israel Region



1st aliya (33:1-10) These are the travels of the Jewish people after leaving Egypt by the hands

of Moshe and Aharon. Moshe recorded all the travels by Divine command, beginning on the day following the Pesach in Egypt, while the Egyptians were burying their dead. Each place that the people journeyed is recounted.

Parshat Masei is the last parsha in the book of Bamidbar. The book of Bamidbar began on Rosh Chodesh Iyar of the second year – a year after the Exodus. It ends with the end of all the journeys of the 40 years in the desert.

42 journeys are listed over about 40 verses in this and the next aliya. Simple descriptions: they traveled from here to here.

The commentators seek meaning in this list. Rashi, Rambam, Sforno all offer meaning.

In honor of the 14th yartzheit
of our beloved husband, father
and grandfather

Shimon Beryl Seidner ז"ל

שמעון ברעל בן יעקוב ושרה ז"ל

I would suggest that it is foreshadowing. The desert was travels; 42 journeys in 40 years. But. The Land of Israel is the opposite. Rooted, home, yours. Each tribe with its place. Each family with its place. What you had in the desert is the contrast to what you will have in the Land of Israel. It is your Homeland, your rightful place, your Promised Land. The rest of the parsha will describe the borders, the allocations, the specifics of the settling. The desert, wandering. The Land of Israel, home.



2nd aliya (33:11-49) The listing of the journeys continues. When they arrived at Hor Hahar,

Aharon died; in the 40th year, on the first of the fifth month (1 Av), at age 123. The list of the travels continues, concluding at the plains of Moav opposite Jericho.

The mention of Aharon's death in the midst of the travels is noteworthy. The journeys began with the Exodus at the hand of Moshe and Aharon, verse 1; they end with the death of Aharon. Perhaps to deflate any notion that we are a people led by the charisma of the brother team of Moshe and Aharon. Without whom we will fall apart. No. The journeys continue without Aharon. As the entry to the Land will continue without Moshe. Great as they are, the Jewish people will be fine without them. The Jewish people is greater than the greatness of any particular leader.



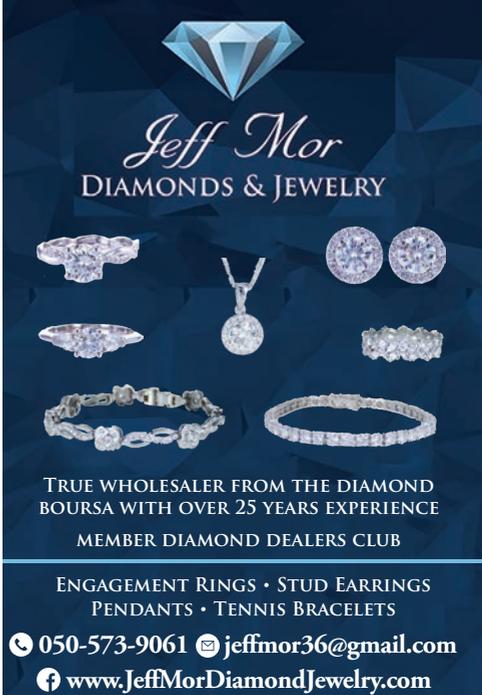
3rd aliya (33:50-34:15) On the banks of the Jordan, the people are commanded to take the

Land of Israel and settle in it for it is given to you. You must supplant the people of the Land for if not, they will be a thorn in your side; and inevitably, what I am commanding

of you to supplant them, will be done by them to you. The borders of the Land: in the south from the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea, the western border is the Mediterranean Sea north into Lebanon, the North into Syria, the east along the Jordan. This Land will be divided by the 9 ½ tribes while the tribes of Reuven, Gad and half of Menashe will settle on the east bank of the Jordan.

This is the mitzvah of settling the Land of Israel. The Jewish people have entered the Land of Israel only 3 times in history: here, led by Yehoshua. In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, returning from the Babylonian exile. And in our time. This first entry is glorious, the entire Jewish people, with prophecy led by Yehoshua, with self-rule, then monarchy. The second entry was disappointing. Small numbers, fits and starts, semi autonomy, not full sovereignty. But this third entry, in our time, while complicated, and without prophecy, and not the entire Jewish people, nonetheless is much more like Yehoshua's time. Large numbers, and growing. Glorious success. Sovereignty – our own government, our own defense, our own decision making. How privileged. This aliya is our life.

The delineation of the borders of the Land is tricky because some of the landmarks it describes are not familiar to us. Nonetheless it is clear that the southern border does not extend all the way down to Eilat. The northern border extends well into Lebanon of today. And the eastern border includes much of Syria of today. These borders are important to us today as Rav Ezra Friedman pointed out last week for the laws of Shemita. The western Negev falls outside of these borders and hence may be exempt



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from the laws of Shemita. The specific borders and how they impact halacha makes this aliya, perhaps neglected over the long years of the exile, a living aliya in our time.



4th aliya (34:16-29) The leaders of the tribes shall apportion the Land. The names of the leader of each tribe are listed. These are the ones who have been instructed to apportion the Land.

The transfer of leadership continues with this list of new leaders.

The Torah has emphasized a few times that the allocation of land in the Land of Israel needs to be by tribe. And within the tribe, by its leader. And we have learned already that any land sold must return to its original owner in Yovel. Why this insistence on tribal integrity, of allocating in a prescribed manner and of maintaining that original allocation over time?

It could be communicating that the settling of the Land of Israel is not merely a land grab to accommodate this large group of people. It is a Divine command with its structure and its limitations. The return of land in Yovel seems quite anti-capitalist.

Large land holdings are not for us; the land returns to the ones who settled there when they entered the Land.



5th aliya (35:1-8) The Leviim shall be given cities amongst the tribes. Each city shall have open area and grazing area surrounding it, 2,000 amot in total area outside the city. The Leviim may settle in the cities of refuge or in 48 designated cities. These cities are provided by the tribes, according to the size of the tribe and their allotted area.

The description of the open and grazing area around the city is one of the ecological passages of the Torah. Green lung around the city. 2,000 amot is about a kilometer. As the cities were small (no need for wide roads for cars in the ancient world), this amounts to a healthy greenbelt around the city.



6th aliya (35:9-34) Cities of Refuge are to be allocated, 3 on the west side of the Jordan, 3 on the east. One who kills accidentally may flee there. It is not accidental but rather murder if one attacks with a lethal weapon, or the assault is premeditated. The murderer

A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

“וישב בה עד מות הכהן הגדול” (לה:כה)

“And he shall dwell there (in the City of Refuge) until the death of the High Priest.” (34:25)

This command is baffling. Why is a killer’s sentence affected by the life of another?

One known answer given by Rashi is that the High Priest should have prayed that there should not occur such a calamity to Israel in his lifetime. Therefore, the High Priest is held accountable for another’s action due to his lack of prayer.

The great Spanish commentary Rabbi Yitzchak Abarbanel (1437-1508) gives a more psychological reason. The passing of the High Priest has a tremendous influence on the greater Jewish community and awakens thoughts of Repentance and rectifying one’s flaws. One can assume that the “avenger of the family” is also affected by this holy man’s passing and will compare the death of this pious man to the death of his relative. He will be consoled for the loss of his relative, realizing that even a High Priest can pass from this world. Any intentions to revenge his family’s loss and murder the perpetrator has all but dissipated. Now the killer is safe to exit from the City of Refuge. Shabbat Shalom

shall be put to death; he may not flee to these cities.

In the description of the cities of refuge, any illusion that the Jewish society in the Land will be perfect is dispelled. There will be murders and manslaughter. And earlier, we fought a battle due to the failing of sexual impropriety with the women of Midian. And earlier in the Torah, the Golden Calf and idol worship. So there you have it: the Jews of the desert have covered the big 3, idolatry, adultery and murder. We aren't, nor do we have illusions that we will be a perfect society. But, with that full knowledge, G-d is promising us that we will enter the Land imminently. Some Jews will err, will sin, will fail. But not the Jewish people.

The covenant with the people endures. Rocky at times, but enduring.



7th aliya (36:1-13) The relatives of the daughters of Zelophchad pointed out to Moshe that their

family inheritance will be damaged. For the daughters will marry men of another tribe; the integrity of their family allotment will be damaged. It will not even return in Yovel, for it will begin with another tribe. Moshe instructed that these women marry men from their family so as to maintain the integrity of the family allotment.

In loving memory of
Yona (Solomon J.) Benson ז"ל

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יונה בן שמשון ורחל ז"ל
כ"ו תמוז

on his 2nd Yahrzeit
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Here too we have insistence on the land allotments staying with the designated tribes. The daughters of Zelophchad will settle the Land allotted to their fathers. But if they marry a man from another tribe, there will be intruders into their tribe. The Torah chooses to maintain the tribal unit; marry only within your tribe.

And so the book of Bamidbar ends with a query, resolved by Moshe. And with laws of murder and manslaughter. And with transfer of leadership. All of this following a listing of travels. For, in a moment the people will enter the Land of Israel, to be rooted, implanted, stable. Now this stability will have its murders, its queries, its leadership changes. It may be rocky in the way that human beings are rocky. But it will no longer be wandering, those 42 journeys in 40 years. It will be home. ■



STATS

	Mas'ei
of 54 sedras	43rd
of 10 in Bamidbar	10th
lines in a Torah	189
rank	30th
Parshiyot	8
P'tuchot	6
S'tumot	2
P'sukim	132
rank (Torah/Bam.)	12/5
Words	1461
rank	32/7
Letters	5773
rank	28/6
Mitzvot	6
positive	2
prohibitions	4

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THE PERSON

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

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IN THE PARSHA

The Kiss of Hope

Would you ever imagine that our holy Sages had a lot to say about a kiss? Would we not assume that kisses would be judged unworthy of their consideration?

But such is not the case. They had much to say about kisses.

The significance of the kiss was brought home to me recently when I came across a street sign advertising a film. It read, “Is not a kiss the very signature of love?” Indeed it is, so much so that the kiss plays a role in the spiritual realm. Thus, the *Song of Songs*, the biblical book which is traditionally interpreted as a description of the passionate love affair between God and His people, begins with the phrase, “Let Him give me of the kisses of His mouth.”

The Midrash (*Genesis Rabbah* 70:12) distinguishes between three significant types of kisses. One is the “kiss of greatness,” which is exemplified by the prophet Samuel’s kissing Saul when he anointed him king. Another is the “kiss of special occasions”—Aaron’s kissing Moses upon their reunion. The third kiss is the “kiss of separation,” the kiss given at the moment we take leave from one another. It is the “kiss of departure”.

This third kiss comes with mixed feelings. On the one hand, we are bidding farewell to a beloved friend and are saddened to say goodbye. On the other hand, we are leaving

for a reason—to encounter a new friend or a new opportunity. This is a tearful kiss, but it is also a kiss of anticipation, a kiss of hope, a kiss which signifies the beginning of a new journey.

In this week’s Torah portion, *Masei* (*Numbers* 33:1-36:13), we read of no less than fifty such journeys. The Torah describes the long and arduous procession of the people of Israel as they left Egypt and marched toward the Promised Land. They stopped at fifty stations along the way.

We can assume that after they settled into one station, they had some reluctance to leave a familiar place, a place of shelter, and to plunge ahead into the unknown. But we can also imagine the joyous emotions they experienced, knowing that they were taking another step toward their desired destination.

This is the way of all journeys. Moreover, it is the very essence of life itself. We settle into one place, to one role, to one stage of life. It becomes familiar to us, and we feel comfortable there. Moving on to a new place, a new role, a new stage of life, feels threatening. Often we are tempted to remain in that place, to continue to live in the status quo. We don’t want to kiss this familiar station goodbye.

On the other hand, we often find this old place tiring, boring. We no longer feel the challenges we felt when we first came to this station, to this point in our lives. We relish the opportunity to move on, in spite of the

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uncertainty that lies ahead. We look forward to the novelty of a new place, a new role, a new stage of life.

There is a contemporary poet whose works I admire. Here is how he puts it:

I envy those
who live in two places
New York, say, and London...
There is always the anticipation
of the change, the chance that what is
wrong
is the result of where you are. I have
always loved both the freshness of
arriving and the relief of leaving. With
two homes every move would be a
homecoming.

I am not even considering the weather, hot
Or cold, dry or wet: I am talking about
hope.

(Gerald Locklin, *Where We Are*).

It is no secret that many of us find the first fifty or so verses of *Parshat Masei* repetitive and dry. “These were the marches of the Israelites who started out from the land of Egypt...Their marches, by starting points, were as follows: They set out from Rameses... And encamped at Succoth. They set out from Succoth and encamped at Etham...They set out from Etham and turned about toward Pi Hahiroth, which faces Baal Zephon, and

they encamped before Migdol...They set out from the hills of Abarim and encamped at the steppes of Moab, at the Jordan near Jericho...”

Of what possible interest can this long list of stations in the wilderness be to the average reader? What can he possibly learn from these verses?

Commentators throughout the ages have struggled with these very questions and have offered various approaches to answering them. I would like to advance an original approach, a metaphorical one. We suggest that just as the Israelites embarked upon a journey when they left Egypt, so do we all embark upon a journey the moment we are born. This journey entails many stations along the way before it is completed. Each station is necessary for the individual's development, but no one station can be permanent.

Psychologists discuss the concept of “developmental tasks.” Each stage of life has its developmental task. The infant must learn to crawl, but his failure to move on from the crawling stage to the walking stage is a symptom of pathology. The two- or three-year-old who has mastered the human need to become attached to his parents must soon proceed to the next stage and learn to separate from them.

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While all this is true at the physical level, it is also true of intellectual development. The ten-year-old who is still reading the books he read when he was five has a stunted intellect. But so does the fifty-year-old who has not transcended the literary interests he had when he was twenty.

The need to progress from station to station is especially true when it comes to spirituality. It has been said, correctly, that children are naturally spiritual. But childlike spirituality cannot slake the spiritual thirst of the adolescent. And the adult whose spirituality has not progressed beyond adolescence is a spiritual cripple. The inner resources that serve the adolescent well are of no help in coping with the challenges of adulthood.

And so it goes from stage to stage until the end of life.

Rabbi Judah ben Tema put it this way: "Five years old is the age to begin studying Scripture; ten for Mishnah; thirteen for the obligation of the commandments; fifteen for the study of Talmud; eighteen for marriage; twenty for seeking a livelihood; thirty for full strength; forty for understanding; fifty for giving counsel; sixty for old age; seventy for ripe old age; eighty for exceptional strength; and ninety for a bent back; at one hundred, one is as if he were dead and had left and gone from the world." (Avot 5:25)

Fifty stations were necessary for the Israelites to reach the Promised Land. At least as many are required of all of us if we are to reach our God-given potential as mature human beings. As we journey from station to station in our lives, we need to learn to kiss the kiss of departure, which is also the kiss of hope. ■

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Retribution and Revenge

Near the end of Bamidbar, we encounter the law of the cities of refuge: three cities to the east of the Jordan and, later, three more within the land of Israel itself. There, people who had committed homicide could flee and find protection until their case was heard by a court of law. If they were found guilty of murder, in biblical times, they were sentenced to death. If found innocent – if the death happened by accident or inadvertently, with neither deliberation nor malice – then they were to stay in a city of refuge “until the death of the High Priest.” (See Num. 35:28) By residing there, they were protected against revenge on the part of the *goel ha-dam*, the blood-redeemer, usually the closest relative of the person who had been killed.

Homicide is never less than serious in

Jewish law. But there is a fundamental difference between murder – deliberate killing – and manslaughter, accidental death. To kill someone not guilty of murder as an act of revenge for an accidental death is not justice but further bloodshed; this must be prevented - hence the need for safe havens where people at risk from vigilantes.

The prevention of unjust violence is fundamental to the Torah. God’s covenant with Noah and humankind after the Flood identifies murder as the ultimate crime:

“He who sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God has God created man.” (Gen. 9:6)

Blood wrongly shed cries out to Heaven itself. God said to Cain, after he had murdered Abel, “Your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground!” (Gen. 4:10)

Here in Bamidbar we hear a similar sentiment:

“You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and the land can have no expiation for blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.” (Num. 35:33)

The verb *ch-n-ph*, which appears twice in this verse and nowhere else in the Mosaic books, means to pollute, to soil, to dirty, to defile. There is something fundamentally blemished about a world in which murder

goes unpunished. Human life is sacred. Even justified acts of bloodshed, as in the case of war, still communicate impurity. A Kohen who has shed blood does not therefore bless the people.¹ David is told that he may not build the Temple “because you shed much blood.”² Death defiles.

That is what lies behind the idea of revenge. And though the Torah rejects revenge except when commanded by God,³ something of the idea survives in the concept of the *goel ha-dam*, wrongly translated as ‘blood-avenger.’ It means, in fact, ‘blood-redeemer.’ A redeemer is someone who rights an imbalance in the world, who rescues someone or something and restores it to its rightful place. Thus Boaz redeems land belonging to Naomi.⁴ Redeemers are the ones who restore relatives to freedom after they have been forced to sell themselves into slavery. God redeems His people from bondage in Egypt. A blood-redeemer is one who ensures that murder does not go unpunished.

However, not all acts of killing are murder. Some are *bishgaggah*, that is, unintentional, accidental, or inadvertent. These are the acts that lead to exile in the cities of refuge.

1 *Brachot 32b; Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 15:3.*

2 *I Chronicles 22:8.*

3 *Only God, the Giver of life, can command us to take life, and then often only on the basis of facts known to God but not to us.*

4 *See Ruth, chapters 3-4.*


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Yet, there is an ambiguity about this law. Was exile to the cities of refuge considered a way of *protecting* the accidental killer, or was it a *form of punishment* - not the death sentence that would have applied to one guilty of murder, but punishment nonetheless? Recall that exile is a biblical form of punishment. Adam and Eve, after their sin, were exiled from Eden. Cain, after killing Abel, was told he would be “a restless wanderer on the face of the earth.” (Gen. 4:12) We say in our prayers, “Because of our sins we were exiled from our land.”

In truth both elements are present. On the one hand, the Torah says that “the assembly must protect the one accused of murder from the redeemer of blood and send the accused back to the city of refuge to which they fled.” (Num. 35:25) Here the emphasis is on protection. But on the other hand, we read that if the exiled person “ever goes outside the limits of the city of refuge to which they fled and the redeemer of blood finds them outside the city, the redeemer of blood may kill the accused without being guilty of murder.” (Num. 35:26-27) Here an element of guilt is presumed; otherwise why would the blood-redeemer be innocent of murder?

Let us examine how the Talmud and Maimonides explain the provision that those

who are exiled must stay in the city of refuge until the death of the High Priest. What had the High Priest to do with accidental killing? According to the Talmud, the High Priest “should have asked for mercy [i.e. should have prayed that there be no accidental deaths among the people] and he did not do so.” The assumption is that had the High Priest prayed more fervently, God would not have allowed this accident to happen. Whether or not there is moral guilt, something wrong has occurred and there is a need for atonement, achieved partly through exile and partly through the death of the High Priest. For the High Priest atoned for the people as a whole and, when he died, his death atoned for the death of those who were accidentally killed.

Maimonides, however, gives a completely different explanation in *The Guide for the Perplexed* (III:40). For him the issue at stake is not atonement but protection. The reason the man goes into exile in a city of refuge is to allow the passions of the relative of the victim, the blood-redeemer, to cool. The exile stays there until the death of the High Priest, because his death creates a mood of national mourning, which dissolves the longing for revenge – “for it is a natural phenomenon that we find consolation in



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our misfortune when the same misfortune or a greater one befalls another person. Amongst us no death causes more grief than that of the High Priest.”

The desire for revenge is basic. It exists in all societies. It led to cycles of retaliation – the Montagues against the Capulets in *Romeo and Juliet*, the Corleones and Tattaglias in *The Godfather* – that have no natural end. Wars of the clans were capable of destroying whole societies.

The Torah, understanding that the desire for revenge as natural, tames it by translating it into something else altogether. It recognises the pain, the loss and moral indignation of the family of the victim. That is the meaning of the phrase *goel hadam*, the blood-redeemer, the figure who represents that instinct for revenge. The Torah legislates for people with all their passions, not for saints. It is a realistic code, not a utopian one.

Yet the Torah inserts one vital element *between* the killer and the victim’s family: the principle of justice. There must be no direct act of revenge. The killer must be protected until his case has been heard in a court of law. If found guilty, he must pay the price. If found innocent, he must be given refuge. *This single act turns revenge into retribution.* This makes all the difference.

People often find it difficult to distinguish retribution and revenge, yet they are completely different concepts. Revenge is an I-Thou relationship. You killed a member of my family so I will kill you. It is intrinsically



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personal. Retribution, by contrast, is *im*personal. It is no longer the Montagues against the Capulets but both under the impartial rule of law. Indeed the best definition of the society the Torah seeks to create is *nomocracy*: the rule of laws, not men.

Retribution is the principled rejection of revenge. It says that we are not free to take the law into our own hands. Passion may not override the due process of the law, for that is a sure route to anarchy and bloodshed. Wrong must be punished, but only after it has been established by a fair trial, and only on behalf, not just of the victim but of society as a whole. It was this principle that drove the work of the late Simon Wiesenthal in bringing Nazi war criminals to trial. He called his biography *Justice, not Vengeance*. The cities of refuge were part of this process by which vengeance was subordinated to, and replaced by, retributive justice.

This is not just ancient history. Almost as soon as the Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War came to an end in 1989, brutal ethnic war came to the former Yugoslavia, first in Bosnia then Kosovo. It has now spread to Iraq, Syria, and many other parts of the world. In his book *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*,

Michael Ignatieff wondered how these regions descended so rapidly into chaos. This was his conclusion:

The chief moral obstacle in the path of reconciliation is the desire for revenge. Now, revenge is commonly regarded as a low and unworthy emotion, and because it is regarded as such, its deep moral hold on people is rarely understood. But revenge – morally considered – is a desire to keep faith with the dead, to honour their memory by taking up their cause where they left off. Revenge keeps faith between the generations; the violence it engenders is a ritual form of respect for the community's dead – therein lies its legitimacy. Reconciliation is difficult precisely because it must compete with the powerful alternative morality of violence. Political terror is tenacious because it is an ethical practice. It is a cult of the dead, a dire and absolute expression of respect.

It is foolhardy to act as if the desire for revenge does not exist. It does. But given free rein, it will reduce societies to violence and bloodshed without end. The only alternative is to channel it through the operation of law, fair trial, and then either punishment or protection. That is what was introduced into civilisation by the law of the cities of refuge, allowing retribution to take the place of revenge, and justice the place of retaliation. ■

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This second perek of Sefer Yirmiyahu, also the second selection of the pre-Tish'a B'Av haftarot, comprises the bulk of this week's haftarah, stands in contrast to the earlier chapter that we read last Shabbat. In this reading, the navi excoriates Israel for her abandonment of Hashem in favor of the idolatrous pagan cults that surrounded them. If we keep in mind the final verses of last week's haftarah, psukim in which the prophet tells the sinful nation of how G-d remembers their devotion when they followed Him faithfully as they traveled through the desert, we better understand the navi's opening to this haftarah (that follows those very words), that underscores the sharp difference between their former loyalty to Hashem and their present faithlessness.

Yirmiyahu divides his nevu'ah that focuses on Israel's misdeeds, into a few sections. The first section highlights the nation's lack of gratitude, forgetting how G-d's had liberated them from Egyptian slavery and led them through the desert in order to bring to their land. Additionally, the prophet points out how the very religious leadership turned corrupt, with the kohanim, the Torah teachers and even the (false) prophets, having turned their backs on Hashem. In the second

section, Yirmiyahu excoriates the people for abandoning their true G-d in favor of foreign deities who are powerless to help them and, in the next section, the prophet delineates the punishments that await them for their sins. The navi closes his words of condemnation in the following chapter – not included as part of our haftarah - with, perhaps, the worst of all sins: the nation's lack of shame or regret over their wayward behavior, a sin that prevented the possibility of any teshuva, any return to Hashem.

In the course of describing Israel's misdeeds, Yirmiyahu quotes the people's denial of any sin, and yet, the navi adds, you can find their immorality "on every lofty hill and under every lush tree". HaRav Soloveitchik explains that such "worship" of using natural beauty as a form of religious expression was-and remains- a common technique that is rejected by Judaism.

He says: [excerpts taken from ("*Out of the Whirlwind*")]:

"Religious experience flows from a heart filled to the brim with love of G-d and from a soul stirred to its inmost roots..... Judaism is interested in a religious experience which mirrors the genuine personality (and)... that is why the Jewish (prayer) service distinguishes

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itself by its utter simplicity..... It (prayer) is nothing but a dialogue between G-d and Man, a conversation – ordinary in its beginning, simple in its unfolding and unceremoniously organized at its conclusion....

Judaism sees in all these aesthetic motifs... extraneous means of creating a fugitive mood which will disappear with the departure of the worshipper from the cathedral....Judaism concentrates on feelings which flow NOT from the outside but from within the personality, on emotions.....enhanced – not by external stimuli – but by the inner existence awareness.”

In his inimitable style, the Rav explains the failure for which Yirmiyahu condemns his generation and one that remains an all-too-common mistake in the future as well. Simply put: there are no short-cuts” to G-d. One cannot use external stimuli as a replacement for heartfelt connection. Outer trappings cannot substitute for internal commitment. The oft-repeated warning of the prophets that ritual alone is meaningless if it does not express sincere contrition and regret reflect the mistaken attitude of the ancients. The sad “joke” that one need not BE ‘frum’ as long as he LOOKS ‘frum’, reminds us that the very same sin condemned by Yirmiyahu 2,500 years ago, is “alive and well” in our society as well.

There can be no short cuts taken if one truly hopes to reach Hashem. It takes a full commitment of time, effort and “inner existence awareness”. ■

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A Son is Not an “Other” (אחר)

Elders of the tribe of Menashe approached Moshe voicing concern that once the daughters of Tzlofchad were able to inherit their father’s property, they feared that were they to marry into another tribe, that property which was designated to the tribe of Menashe would be transferred to their respective husband’s tribe. This would detract from the property apportioned to the tribe of Menashe. Moshe appreciated this concern and declared, based on God’s directive, that inherited property cannot be transferred from one tribe to another.

וְלֹא־תִסָּבֵב נַחֲלֵה מִמַּטֵּה לְמַטֵּה אֶחָד (במדבר לו:ט)

And no inheritance will be transferred from one tribe to another tribe

This limitation is understood with respect to the daughters of Tzlofchad. The gemara in Bava Batra 113a discusses whether such limitation applies to the transfer of land via a husband or son. The gemara concludes that the pasuk cited above cannot be referring to a transfer via a son because a son is never classified as an אחר (an “other”, the term that appears at the end of the phrase above). A son is connected to his father by blood and that bond cannot be broken. A son can never be classified as an אחר – an other!

Rav Soloveitchik (cited in Masoret Harav) explains that the term אחר that appears in our pasuk, reminds us of an individual who was known by this appellation. Elisha Ben Avuya was one of four individuals who entered the Pardes (mystical learning) and later became a heretic (אפיקורוס). From that point on he was referred to as אחר the “other one”.

The gemara in Hagiga (15a) recounts how he allegedly heard a voice from heaven quoting the pasuk from Yirmiyahu 3:22 שׁוּבוּ בְּנִים שׁוֹרְבִים, *return rebellious sons*, but with an exclusion appended “with the exception of אחר, at which point he was convinced that for him repentance was precluded. Elisha Ben Avuya was of course mistaken. No matter how far a Jew strays he is never so distant that repentance is precluded. God remains hidden in the depths of the heart of even the worst transgressor. We are his children and can never be considered removed as an other – an אחר.

The thirteen attributes begin with the repetition of the name of God. “Hashem, Hashem, Kel rachum...” Rashi explains that this repetition highlights that He is our God before man sins and He is our God after man sins and repents. When one transgresses it creates a distance between the individual and God. That distance is only temporary, God is waiting there for our return.

As we begin chodesh Av, we should

recognize that we all are all בנים לה – sons of God, which makes us brothers! Nothing upsets parents more than when they witness sibling rivalry. The *Beit Hamikdash* were destroyed due to *sinat chinam*- so let's do what we can to correct our behavior and spread brotherly love and acceptance so that we can merit the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash* in our time! ■

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Elucidation of Encampments

Every word in the Torah is deliberate, meticulously placed for a precise purpose. It is therefore surprising that we find a long, detailed list of each of the 42 places where the Jews encamped as they traversed the desert for 40 years. Even more extraordinary, is the repetition of the words, “*vayis’u* – they traveled” and “*vayachanu* - they encamped,” at each stop, as opposed to simply listing the places they went to.

Rav Dovid Hofstedter in *Darash Dovid* notes that each place the Jews encamped was not an ordinary rest stop. At each point, they struggled to grow closer to Hashem and uncover their inherent spiritual greatness. Their experience at each site compelled them to further remove themselves from the spiritual dross represented by Egypt, to further climb their spiritual ladder and thus

be worthy of entering the holy soil of Eretz Yisrael. The Torah delineates not only their journey, but also their stops. Each resting place enabled them to integrate what they learned from each experience and fortified them with the spiritual strength for future battles.

The *Shelah Hakadosh* parallels these journeys to the journey of every Jewish soul. We each have 42 *masa’ot* – places we must travel to from the moment we are born until our final days on earth. Our mission in this world requires us to continually move forward. Rav Eisenberger in *Misilot Bilvavam* adds that there are two components to the movement in our lives. One is “*vayachnu*,” we must be genuine about our current spiritual level and make sure not to posture or portray ourselves on a level beyond that reality. At the same time, we must adopt the mindset of “*vayis’u*,” constantly aspiring to reach more noble heights. Without a vision of greatness, one will inevitably lead a life of apathy and stagnation.

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“Vayachanu,” teaches the *Netivot Shalom*, is crucial in one’s *avodat Hashem*. Often, one makes great strides and wants to continue marching forward. “Stop!” Advises the Slonimer Rebbe, “vayachanu!” Allow your achievements to become part of you! Let your new *avodah* sink in and become incorporated into who you are. Only once you have done this can you continue to develop.

The Rebbe from Tosh, in *Avodat Avodah*, takes this one step further. He advises us to make “vayachanu” part of our daily schedule. With this he means that our *avodat Hashem* should be with consistency, stability and order. “Vayachanu” means living with set expectations and regulated service and ensures that our service of Hashem is not a string of haphazard acts, based on our moods and inclinations.

The 21 days and 21 nights of the three weeks mirror the 42 encampments as explained by Rabbi Pinchas Friedman in *Shevilei Pinchas*. This is a time when we should focus on our personal journeys and aspirations, as we prepare for the 21 days and nights from Rosh Hashanah through Hoshana Rabbah. These 2 intense time periods reflect a micro image of the macro life we live. May we head in the right direction and find meaning and purpose in the journey. ■

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9:15AM Opening Remarks **Zemira Ozarowski** 11:00AM Brunch

9:25AM Tisha B'av: Why are we Crying over Spilled Milk? **Miriam Broderson**

11:25AM Mashiach: What's it Like **Rabbi Menachem Nissel**

10:15AM Bet Hamikdash: Yearning for an Unfamiliar Reality **Golda Warhaftig**

12:15PM Living Directly Across from מוקום המקדש: Personal Story **Tziporah Piltz**

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40nis

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MONDAY AUG. 1, 5-8 PM

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WEDNESDAY AUG 3, 7:15PM

Insights of Rav Ahron Soloveichik ztl

on the Three Weeks and Tisha B'Av

In memory of Chaya bat Yona

Rebbitzen Elaine Stolper a"h

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SUN, JULY 31

9:15 AM

Journey Through the Siddur

Rabbi David Walk

10:20 AM

Likutei Halachot:
Discover the Deeper
Meaning in Halacha

Rabbi Azarya Berzon

11:30 AM

Shivat Tzion in Tanach:
Daniel, Ezra, Nechemia

**Rabbi Yitzchak
Breitowitz**

SPECIAL EVENTS

9:15AM - 1:00PM

Women's Rosh Chodesh
Av Seminar (L'Ayla)

7:30 PM

The Question Only
Hashem Could Answer-
Special Shiur with
HaRav Zev Leff

MON, AUG 1

9:15 AM

**Rebbetzin
Pearl Borow**

Divrei HaYamim (L'Ayla)

10:30 AM

Reconciling the Two
Meraglim Stories

Rabbi Avi Herzog

Rabbi Goldscheider
resumes Aug 22

11:45 AM

Halacha and Agada in
Contemporary Society

**Rabbi Shmuel
Herschler**

8:30 PM

Semichat Chaver Program
**Rabbi Elyada
Goldwicht**
(The Bais)

SPECIAL EVENTS

5:00PM

Evening of Inspiration-
Kivrei Tzadikim Davening
Trip to Har HaZeitim

TUE, AUG 2

9:15 AM

Rebbetzin Smiles

Torah Tapestries (L'Ayla)

9:30AM

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

10:30AM

Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Yossi Goldin

2:00 PM

Rabbi Bienenfeld

7:30 PM

Safrut Course (The Bais)
Rabbi Tzvi Mauner

8:00 PM

**Rabbi Mordechai
Machlis**

SPECIAL EVENT

7:00PM

ATID Three Weeks- Stones
with Soul-Twilight Old City
Walk (Young Olot)

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for class pass or individual classes



WED, AUG 3

9:00 AM

Medina and Halacha

Rabbi Shimshon Nadel

10:15 AM

Contemporary Issues in
Halacha and Hashkafa

Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:30 AM

Great Jewish Thinkers

Rabbi Alan Kimche

12:30 PM- Trailblazing the
Text of Tanach- Lunch and
Learn **Rabbi Neil Winkler**

8:30 PM

Halachic Controversies

Rabbi Aschi Dick

(The Bais)

SPECIAL EVENTS

7:15PM

Insights of Rav Ahron
Soloveitchik on the Three
Weeks and Tisha B'Av

Dr. David Luchins

THURS, AUG 4

9:00 AM

Parshat HaShavua

Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:15 am

Parshat HaShavua

**Rabbi Baruch
Taub**

11:30 AM

Unlocking the Messages
of Chazal

Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

2:00 PM

Men's Talmud-Sanhedrin

Perek 4

Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

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Password: OU Israel

Rabbi Taub

Parsha, 7:00PM

MonHalacha, 7:00PM Wed

Rebbetzin Shatz

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

Rabbi Goldwicht

Parshat HaShavua

Wed. 8:30PM

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FROM GRIEF TO GEULA



SUN AUG 7, SHACHARIT 8:30 AM

Tisha B'Av Kinot @ OU Israel Center
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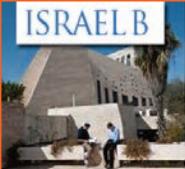
Kinot begin approximately 9:30AM

Mincha @ 1:20PM



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Shabbat afternoon shiur with
Rabbi Chanoch Yeres - 5:30pm
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THE QUESTION ONLY HASHEM COULD ANSWER

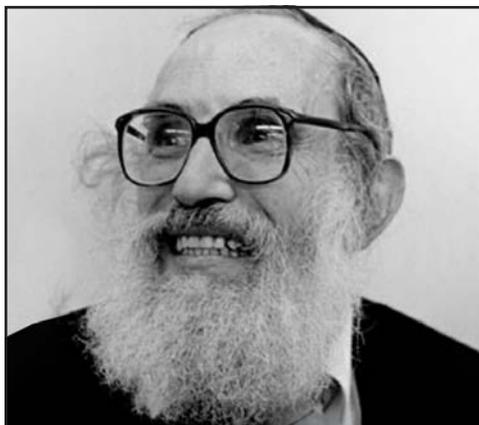
Sunday, July 31st, 7:30pm

by **Rabbi Zev Leff**
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Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

Emancipation

Nearly two centuries after his *petira*, the great leader of world Jewry, Rav Moshe Sofer, “the Chasam Sofer” remains a paradigm of how impactful a Rav and Rosh Yeshiva can be. The Chasam Sofer remains a beloved authority not only of Hungarian and Ashkenazic Jewry, but as a most influential Gadol whose perspective and opinions continues to shape the entire Jewish world until today. The extraordinary personality, Torah genius, wisdom and compassion of the Chasam Sofer remain a *ner tamid*, an eternal light in our world.

“The Emancipation”, the process in which European Jews were recognized as full citizens and granted equal rights, included efforts within the community to integrate into their host countries. After generations of being excluded from many facets of life, culture, politics and the economy, Jews were ecstatic at the opportunity to be fully accepted by their neighbors and governments.

As the Hungarian Parliament deliberated the fate of its country’s Jews, representatives brought an optimistic report to the Chasam Sofer. They asked the Rav to publicly acknowledge the officials working toward Emancipation, and to share a celebratory update with the Jewish community.

The Jews of Pressberg were gathered together, and their beloved Rav rose to address them. However, some of the community leaders were taken aback when the Chasam Sofer appeared downcast. He struggled to begin his address, and when finally composed himself, he spoke with a voice filled with seriousness and pain. He shared a tale of an only son of a beloved king who rebelled against his father. Effort after effort toward reconciliation failed, and brokenhearted, the king ultimately banished his son to a faraway part of the kingdom.

Years of distance and alienation passed, and the son began to adopt the coarse way of life and degenerate values of those among whom he lived. Over time, having shed the trappings of royalty, he had become one of them, disconnected from his roots, virtually unrecognizable.

One day, a royal delegation arrived with a message from his father, the king. He regretted the harsh punishment and yearned to make amends. “We have come at your father’s behest to see to it that your needs are met and to assist you in building a proper home here for you.”

The exiled prince was crushed and burst into tears: “I have always held on to the hope that my father would one day summon me back to the palace... that he would miss me and invite me back home. But now that my father wants me to settle down and be comfortable far, far away

from him, it is clear that he has given up on me returning.”

The Chasam Sofer’s voice reached a crescendo: “Ribbono shel Olam! אי להם לבנים! ונגלו מעל שולחן אביהם! Woe to the children who have been exiled, distanced from their father’s table! What have we done to be banished from the king’s palace for so long?”

When the Chasam Sofer had finished his ‘*drasha*’, the Rav led the Jews of Pressburg in a heartfelt prayer to forego the temporary comfortability within exile, and begged the *Ribbono shel Olam* to return His children home to His palace, instead.

.....

Our sedra enumerates the forty two journeys that Klal Yisrael made throughout their sojourn in the Desert. For far too long we have suffered the degradation of exile, being out of place, wandering as foreigners and outsiders, persecuted and dispersed among the nations who seek to destroy us.

We have also experienced a very different manifestation of exile: one in which we are welcomed to enjoy ‘emancipation’ and a ‘seat at the table’, living comfortably from the largesse and fleshpots of the Diaspora. Self-aware Jews, knowledgeable of history and sensitive to the spiritual reality of life, understand the futility of trying to put

down roots in the shifting sands of *galus*.

These days of *Bein haMeitzarim* are an opportune time to recalibrate our spiritual orientation by focusing on who we are, where we aspire to be, and where we truly belong. With this in mind, it is worthwhile to consider a moving Torah commentary of the 18th Century *tzadik* and *gaon*, Rebbe Chaim ben Attar, the *Ohr haChayim* ha-kadosh (Behar 25:25):

“...הגאולה תהיה בהעיר לבות בני אדם ויאמר להם הטוב לכם כי תשבו חוץ גולים מעל שלחן אביכם ומה יערב לכם החיים בעולם זולת החברה העליונה אשר הייתם סמוכים סביב לשלחן אביכם הוא אלהי עולם ב”ה לעד, וימאים בעיניו תאוות הנדמים ויעירם בחשק הרוחני גם נרגש לבעל נפש כל חי עד אשר יטיבו מעשיהם, ובזה יגאל ה’ ממכרו, ועל זה עתידין ליתן את הדין כל אדוני הארץ גדולי ישראל ומהם יבקש ה’ עלבון הבית העלוב:

“Redemption will occur when the righteous succeed in awakening the hearts of their contemporaries by convincing them that it is really not in their best interest to spend their time exiled from the table of their Father in Heaven. The righteous have to convince the average Jew that what he considers success in his world is illusory if bought at the expense of forfeiting his respective eternity in a better world. In the future, all Torah scholars who have failed in their efforts to convince their peers to adopt a Torah-true lifestyle, etc. will have to render an account before the highest tribunal. Hashem will hold those Torah scholars responsible for the continued disgrace suffered by the Holy Temple....”

.....

May we be counted among those students of Torah who strive toward fulfilling Hashem’s will in the right way — and in the right place: together with our loving Father and King, in His palace, the *Beis haMikdash*. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

Parshat Masei is typically read either just before, or as is the case this year, immediately following *Rosh Chodesh Av*.

Parshat Masei recalls for a second time the passing of *Aharon HaKohen*, and tells us that the date of his passing is *Rosh Chodesh Av*.

And Aharon died there, during the fortieth year after Bnai Yisrael went forth from the land of Egypt, in the fifth month on the first of the month.

So, we must ask, why does the *Torah* specify the exact date of *Aharon's* passing, a detail that is not elaborated upon for any of the *Avot* or *Imahot*, or for *Moshe Rabbeinu*? Why is the date of *Aharon's* passing mentioned here in this second account, and not in the earlier account of his passing which we read of a few weeks ago in *Parshat Chukat*? Why is the date of his passing specified now, in the midst of describing the journeys of the Jewish people in the wilderness?

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Horowitz, the Patiker Rav zy'a, suggests that there is an eternal message to be gleaned from the date of *Aharon's* passing being both revealed during the verses which describe the extended wanderings of the Jewish People in the wilderness, as well as the actual date of *Rosh Chodesh Av*.

Aharon, as we know, represents the ultimate *Ish Shalom*, the great peace-maker and unifier of the Jewish People. The Jewish People, as we know, will experience an extended reality of wandering that will occur following the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash*, which of course we commemorate, during the nine days, beginning with *Rosh Chodesh Av*. As we begin these days of reflection of the destruction and absence of the *Beit HaMikdash*, we also recall the life and legacy of *Aharon HaKohen*, whose legacy we must work to emulate, which will form the foundation to re-building the *Beit HaMikdash*. During these nine days, our focus must be to follow the example set forth by *Aharon HaKohen*, to strive to strengthen unity and mutual respect *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

Yehi Ratzon, that as we recall the date that *Aharon HaKohen* left this world, that indeed we merit to emulate his ways, to love one another, to come together in unity and harmony, and to usher in an era of tranquility with the *Binyan Beit HaMikdash*. ■



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Is There a Mitzvah to Live In Israel? Why Does it Matter?

The time had finally arrived. Forty years had elapsed, and we were about to return home. Directing us to enter Israel, the Torah delivers an ambiguous instruction:

וְהוֹרַשְׁתֶּם אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְיִשְׁבְּתֶם בָּהּ כִּי לָכֵן נִתְּנָה אֶת-הָאָרֶץ לְרֵשֵׁת אֹתָהּ:

The first word of this directive “וְהוֹרַשְׁתֶּם” invites two very different meanings. It may refer to *clearing* the Land of its idolatrous inhabitants. The *previous* verse had already employed the very same word when it instructed us to empty Israel of paganism: “וְהוֹרַשְׁתֶּם אֶת-כָּל-יְשִׁבְיָהּ הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְאֶבְדְּתֶם אֵת כָּל-מִשְׁכַּבְיֹתֵיכֶם וְאֵת כָּל-בְּמוֹתֵיכֶם מִשְׁכִּיבְיֹתֵיכֶם וְאֵת כָּל-צִלְמֵי מַסַּכְתֵּיכֶם תִּאבְדּוּ וְאֵת כָּל-בְּמוֹתֵיכֶם תִּשְׁמְדוּ”-then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the Land from before you, and destroy all their figured pavements, and destroy all their molten images”. Perhaps both verses declare the very same commandment to oust the local pagans. This is how Rashi interprets the couplet of verses, as a repeated command to discharge the inhabitants from the Land.

By contrast, the Ramban asserts that the second verse presents an independent mitzvah to dwell in the Land of Israel. The term “וְהוֹרַשְׁתֶּם” doesn’t instruct us to discharge inhabitants but to *inherit* and settle the Land. The Ramban’s interpretation of this second verse yields a famous consequence: there is a formal mitzvah to live in the Land of Israel. The second iteration of וְהוֹרַשְׁתֶּם assigns an actual mitzvah to live in Israel!

Just as famously, Maimonides or the Rambam, *did not* codify dwelling in Israel as a formal mitzvah. Does the Rambam’s omission diminish the significance of settling Israel? Or, ironically, does this exclusion enhance the importance of living in Israel.

Did it Expire?

Perhaps the Rambam agreed that there was *once* a mitzvah to occupy the Land, but believed that the mitzvah had long expired. Perhaps the mitzvah only applied for the *immediate* generation which was charged to both conquer and settle the Land, but not for future generations. Alternatively, even if the mitzvah extended beyond the founding generation, perhaps the mitzvah expired when we were exiled from Israel. The gemara in Ketuvot lists three divine vows, one of which bans us from a “strong-armed” return to Israel (literally to return “like a wall”) Based on these vows, Rebbe Yehuda, a 3rd century Amora, forbade Rebbe Zeira, his talmid from emigrating to

Israel. Interestingly, Rebbe Zeira disobeyed his teacher, ultimately relocating to Israel. Based on this incident some suggest that any *original* mitzvah to live in Israel was terminated by these divine decrees imposed as we departed Israel for exile.

Perhaps the Rambam agrees that living in Israel *was once* a mitzvah, but as it expired, it cannot be incorporated as a formal listing among the roster of 613.

Is it a “Pre-Mitzvah” ?

There are important religious experiences which are so foundational that they resist easy classification as *a mitzvah*, among the general register of 613. These essential religious experiences may be classified as a “pre-mitzvah”, which serve as a platform for religion *in general*, and are therefore not listed *within* the list of 613 particular mitzvot. They are too general and too seminal to be defined as a particular mitzvah.

For example, some suggest that there is no formal mitzvah to believe in Hashem. Faith and belief are prerequisites for the entire collection of mitzvot and, of course, for our relationship with Hashem. Most disagree and do list emunah as a mitzvah, but this minority opinion provides an important template- seminal features of religion may be *too basic* to be *narrowly* defined as *a mitzvah*.

Prayer as well, may be too elementary to be classified among the set of 613 religious *activities*. The Rambam did codify prayer as a Biblical mitzvah, but many disagreed. Excluding prayer from the formal list of 613 doesn't reduce its value. Human dialogue with Hashem and human petition of Hashem are so central to religious experience that they don't have to be mandated

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through law or commandment. Tefillah may be an example of a pre-mitzvah which is omitted from the catalogue of religious actions because it anchors religious identity.

Likewise, teshuva may not appear within the list of 613, as the Torah never explicitly commands this decision. Teshuva represents a bold implementation of human freedom and should be practiced daily, rather than evoked once a year, on Yom Kippur. As an exercise of freedom of choice, it can't be shrunken into a *particular* mitzvah, alongside other mandated *activities*. Teshuva isn't an activity, but an attitude or a "pre-mitzvah".

Excluding living in Israel as a mitzvah may reflect a similar evaluation. Living under the eye of Hashem lies at the core of all religious experience and cannot simply be cataloged as "a mitzvah". It is the classic "pre-mitzvah", similar to prayer and teshuva, and its exclusion from the roster of 613 highlights how foundational Israel is to general religious experience.

A "Meta-Mitzvah"

Rabb Soloveitchik explained that the Rambam omits dwelling in Israel from the list of 613 because it is a gateway to multiple mitzvot. Residence in the Land of Israel "activates" a sweeping range of mitzvot which are crucial to forming a religious society in Israel. The "ideal" of living in Israel can only be attained if the following secondary mitzvot are performed: appointing a king, constructing a judiciary system, ensuring a moral and ethical society, building a Mikdash, and obliterating idol worship. Each of these activities represents an independent mitzvah, but each is a fulfillment of the larger meta-mitzvah to live in

a country of Israel founded upon Hashem's moral, political and theological stipulations. Essentially, dwelling in Israel is a mitzvah but it manifests in a range of subordinate mitzvot without which the broader mitzvah of Israel is deficient. The "blank" act of living in Israel isn't listed because it is insufficient without the derivative mitzvot. Living in Israel is not only a "pre-mitzvah" it is also a "meta-mitzvah". It doesn't just serve as a *conceptual* foundation of religion, but it also splinters into a range of offshoot mitzvot. Since the larger mitzvah can't be realized without the subsidiary mitzvot, the meta-mitzvah of dwelling in Israel isn't listed among the 613.

The "Un-Mitzvah"

Additionally, the absence of a formal commandment to inhabit Israel preserves the voluntary tone of the "mitzvah". Imposing a mandate would ruin the voluntary nature of the great mission of living in Israel. Living in Israel is still a religious duty but one which should be taken by choice, and not in response to commandment. Voluntary doesn't mean neutral, it just means something willfully chosen.

For example, some believe that the omission of bracha before acts of chesed preserves the altruistic nature of charity. Reciting a bracha would imply that chesed is primarily driven by commandment, rather than by compassion. Ideally, chesed shouldn't be a product of legal summons but of human sympathy. Reciting a bracha would underscore the obligation of chesed, and blur the philanthropic element of chesed.

Living in Israel is a similar phenomenon. We are commanded *subjects* of Hashem,

but we are also His *bride*, with whom he established a bilateral covenant. In general, religion is delicately calibrated between “His” commands and “our” covenant. Too much “command” and the human voice is stifled. Too much covenant and the transcendence of Hashem is compromised.

Though religion in general is a composite of volition and mandate, living in Israel is more covenant than commandment. As Hashem’s chosen bride, we willfully abandon our past lives to be with Him, in His Land. The decision to relocate to Hashem’s house must be voluntary, else it will not be a marital covenant. By *offering* us Israel rather than commanding us to Israel, Hashem invites us to His home and to partner with him in shaping history. You can’t *command* the bride, she must come on her own. Ask, don’t tell. ■

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Family Name as Alternative for a *Ketuba* Witness

Question: Must witnesses on a *ketuba* sign with their father's name (Ploni ben Ploni)? Can one instead use his first and last name? This could be valuable for a convert or someone whose father is someone else than what people think and is embarrassed about the truth.

Answer: The discussion about how a witness is to sign is in relation to a sensitive document, a *get*. The *baraita* (Gittin 36a) tells that the Rabbis enacted that the witnesses need to “elucidate their names.” Rashi explains that if the signature does not include his legible name, if its authenticity is challenged, it will be difficult to get information about the witnesses to confirm it.

What did the enactment change? The Rashba (ad loc.) understood that originally it could be signed anonymously, and it became required to write his name, although either one's given name or “son of [his father's name]” suffices if followed by “*eid*” (Gittin 87b). The Tur (Even Haezer 130), as the Beit Yosef (ad loc.) understood, holds that the enactment required writing

both the witness' and his father's name, the shorter forms being valid only after the fact; so rules the Shulchan Aruch (EH 130:11). Even the Rashba presumably agrees that the standard *get* signature included name and father's name (see Gittin 87a).

The *gemara* (Gittin 36a) questions the requirement to specify the witness' name from accounts of rabbis who signed with symbols rather than their name. The *gemara* responds that this is valid only for such rabbis whose symbol signatures were well known, but it asks how their signatures could become known if they cannot be used before they were known. The *gemara* answers that they became known by means of *diski'ot* (Rashi - responsa and personal letters). Some cogently prove from this *gemara* that the requirement of a clear name applies to all legal documents, for otherwise the *gemara* could have answered that the symbols became known through other documents (see Yalkut Be'urim ad loc.). The Aruch Hashulchan (Choshen Mishpat 45:2) indeed requires writing the father's name in all documents, which certainly includes a *ketuba*.

We can confidently say that the *ketuba* will be valid *b'di'eved*. First, the first name is enough (with the word *eid* or its equivalent) even for a *get*. Second, according to some (see Rashi, Gittin 97b; Mishpat Haketuba 51:(46)), a family name is what the *mishna* calls a *chanicha*, which is valid (perhaps

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even *l'chatchila*- see Pitchei Teshuva, EH 129:2). Regarding one who signs his name in Hebrew with his family name on legal documents, the Chatam Sofer (EH II, 21) says this is likely the proper way to sign. Mishpat Haketuba (ibid.) argues that this seems no worse than the rabbis' symbol signatures, and assuming the writing is legible, it should be easy to trace. In fact, family names in our times are important enough that common practice (recommended by Igrot Moshe, OC IV, 40.20) is to regularly add them to the principles' and witnesses' names. The Minchat Pitim (to CM 45:1) leaves it as an open question whether family name works as **effectively** as the father's name.

Based on the above, according to straight-forward *halacha*, leniency is very reasonable. However, many ancillary factors need to be weighed. For one, rabbinic conventional wisdom rightfully is reluctant to make changes on formal documents (see Chatam Sofer ibid. regarding *get*, which is, admittedly, more severe). Change can also raise eyebrows in the direction of the *mesader kiddushin*, the witness himself, and even the couple (sometimes in evaluating the credentials of a couple or their children, rabbis look to see if their *ketuba* seems like a standard one). Although sometimes we work hard to hide embarrassing information about the bride and groom, they have no choice but to be the subject of the *ketuba*, whereas a witness is rarely compelled to serve as one. On the other hand, a

witness' embarrassment can be a strong reason for leniency. Therefore, a rabbi must deal with the circumstances of each specific case, while we have sufficed with mapping out the main factors. ■

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GOLDSCHIEDER

Rabbi Soloveitchik: Ingredients for Thriving on the Journey

In every generation the Jew has been faced with the momentous challenge of upholding an age old tradition and transmitting it to the next generation. When we are encountered with new ideas, and new cultural norms, how do we as Jews successfully make trek through the proverbial desert? How do we withstand foreign elements that often pose danger and stay true to the Torah, our ideals and belief system?

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik offered an exquisite *derasha*, given in honor of the festival of Shavuot, in which he addressed this issue. His point of departure was a verse in the Torah. An obscure section in the book of *Devarim* delineates the procedure by which the vessels in the Tabernacle are carefully packed before the Israelites set out in the wilderness to their next encampment.

Aharon the *Kohen Gadol* and his sons were given the responsibility to wrap each

vessel in two coverings. Only then, would the Levites, and more specifically, the family of *Kehat*, enter the inner chamber and take the vessels and transport them (*Devarim* 4:20).

Two coverings were used for each item: “They shall place upon it a covering of *tachash* skin and on top of that they shall spread a cloth of pure blue wool.” (*Devarim* 4: 6).

Rabbi Soloveitchik asked: Why these two garments and what is the symbolic meaning?

Techelet Covering

First, let us explore the symbolism embedded in the *techelet* garment. The Rambam writes the color of *techelet* used for tzitzit must be one “...that always retains its beauty and its color never fades. If it’s not dyed in this way, even if its color matches the color of the sky, it is unfit for tzitzit.” (*Mishne Torah, Hilchot Tzitzit*, chap. 2). The Talmud emphasizes that if the color fades that the *techelet* is invalid (*Menachot* 42b).

The symbolism of the blue (*techelet*) covering teaches that if we want to transport the ark and the values of the Torah - through a wilderness - the Jew will need to manifest consistency, firmness, and authenticity. To ensure continuity one needs unyielding commitment; one that does not fade over time or fluctuate. In order to carry the table of the Jew, the lamp, the Torah’s wisdom,

to the next station the unfading blue dye serves as a symbol of the unwavering commitment of the Jew, which at times will call for the ultimate zeal of *mesirat nefesh*. It is noteworthy that the color of *techelet* appears most famously among the strands of the tzitzit. The knots and the interwoven threads represent the unbreakable link the Jew forges with the Torah. A bond never to be broken.

Tachash Covering

The second garment which was used to wrap the five vessels in the Tabernacle was quite unique. The *tachash* skins, says the Talmud, were multi-colored (*Shabbat* 28a). We can picture in our mind's eye a rainbow colored blanket which covers, for example, the menorah, altar and ark when Israelites marched forward in the wilderness..

The Rav offered two distinct formulations

in regard to the *tachash* garment used in this sacred manner.

First, the multi-colors represent the multifaceted laws that are required within the rubric of the commandments. 613 Torah laws and many rabbinic injunctions make up the halachic system. In order to successfully survive the journey, not only must the Jew adhere to the foundational values and precepts, but also the minutiae of the law - every hue is an essential component which fashions the structure and design of Jewish life.

Elaborating on this idea the Rav interpreted a passage in the Talmud which expands on the well known conversation between the convert Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi. Ruth fervently expresses her devotion to Naomi and her desire to adopt a Jewish way of life: "Wherever you lodge ,

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I will lodge, wherever you go I will go, your people shall be my people, and your God my God, Where you will die I will die, and there I will be buried” (Ruth 1:16-17).

The Talmud (*Yevamot* 47b) interprets each phrase as alluding to a particular area in Jewish law.

“Wherever you lodge I will lodge’ alludes to Ruth accepting upon herself the laws of *yichud*.

‘Wherever you go I will go’ suggests that Ruth accepted upon herself the law of *techum Shabbos*.

‘Your people are my people,’ alludes to Ruth accepting the 613 commandments.

‘Your God is my God,’ symbolizes Ruth’s rejection of idol worship.”

This passage, suggested the Rav, is accentuating Ruth’s full fledged acceptance of the gamut of Jewish observance; both the major principle (rejection of idol worship) and the particulars (*yichud*, *techum Shabbat*). The colors of the *tachash* express the notion that divine law and their details are indivisible. Jewish life rests on the successful implantation of the great principles and adherence to even the smallest details.

The Hooks Like Sparkling Stars

Another captivating midrash. Moshe questioned by rabble-rousers regarding his use of the funds for the Tabernacle. Following its construction an accounting was made of all funds that were donated. It suddenly appeared that 1,775 shekels were unaccounted for. Even Moshe, for a moment, was unable to identify how those particular funds had been used. “He sat confused until God enlightened his eyes, and noticed those hooks, sparkling like the stars of the night...” (*Yalkut Shimoni, Pekudei*, 415). The Rav

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interpreted this midrash to mean that even the greatest among us, at times, wonder why there are so many details and minutiae in the halachic system. Why the complexity and the seemingly overabundance of strictures? We then pause, contemplate the grandeur of the Law and they then begin to sparkle. The little hooks seem so insignificant compared to the primary vessels in the Tabernacle. And yet, each element plays a role in creating the magnificent construction of the Sanctuary.

The Rav offered a second homiletic teaching regarding the symbolism of the *tachash* skins used to cover the vessels. The multi-colored garment represents the mosaic of hues and perspectives found in the Torah. In order to survive and thrive during the long and arduous journey of our people who will encounter various settings and cultures the diversity that is found within the Torah must be embraced; *Shivim panim l'Torah*, "There are seventy faces to the Torah" (*Midrash Parshat Naso, 7:19*). Furthermore, the nation of Israel is made of 600,000 souls. Every person has their own calling. The Torah must speak to every generation and every member of the community is to be granted an honored place within the community of Israel. ■

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Shenat Hasheva Year Seven Project

We wanted to tell you about a wonderful project whose goal is to bring produce with *kedushat shevi'it* to all parts of the country.

The goal of Shenat Hasheva is to strengthen the *otzar beit din* system. This non-profit raised funds abroad and underwrites the fruits that grew through Rabbi Nissim Karelitz's *otzar beit din*. Shenat Hasheva refunds the farmers for their expenses and distributes holy fruit, free of charge, to 337 institutions (yeshivas, seminaries, girls' and boys' high schools) from the Religious Zionist and Haredi sectors. The fund absorbs all costs of transportation, distribution, etc. Shenat Hasheva has the approbations of rabbis across the religious spectrum (Religious Zionist and Haredi). In this way, approximately 80,000 students are afforded the opportunity to eat fruit with *kedushat shevi'it*; the vast majority of whom would otherwise never do so without this important project. Each institution commits to appoint a *shemita* monitor from the student body to ensure that the fruit is not wasted or used disrespectfully and that edible leftovers are placed in a *shemita* bin. Additionally, the

schools commit to teach about the special status of *shemita* fruit. This project is called *Pri Yomi* (daily fruit) since in every institution each student eats at least one fruit with *kedushat shevi'it* daily!

Furthermore, Shenat Hasheva has distribution points where they sell fruits to the general public once a week at cost price. See their website here for distribution points and information.

The fruits are sold by the container, not by kg. They have, as of beginning of Tammuz, 5 kinds of fruit. Note that other *otzar beit din* systems (like *Otzar Ha'aretz*) provide additional fruits (cherries, grapes, pears, yellow plums) and *mehudar shemita* solutions for vegetables as well (*olei Mitzrayim*, etc.).



Fruit at Shenat Hasheva's distribution points including a note with instructions

We at Torah VeHa'aretz Institute are in close contact with Shenat Hasheva and collaborate on many projects.

Torah VeHa'aretz Institute is overjoyed that other organizations distribute holy produce to the public while strengthening Jewish farmers who observe *shemita* in a *mehudar* way, despite all of the hardships this entails. ■



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PORTION FROM

BY RAKEL BERENBAUM

Contributor, Torah Tidbits

THE PORTION

The Lesson Of An Itinerary

Traveling isn't what it used to be; long waits, canceled flights, lost luggage. But after two years of Corona these nuisances don't seem to be stopping many people from packing their bags and setting out on a trip. The airports are bustling with people flying to destinations around the globe. People are choosing to travel with just a carry on for fear of not getting their baggage at their final destination. They have to plan their itineraries very carefully since everything is so expensive now.

This week's portion actually begins with a travel log. The Torah enumerates all the 42 stages in the nation's wanderings in the desert. What is the significance in this seemingly dry list of place names that the Torah lists? To most readers the list may seem boring and they may wonder why the Torah spent time telling us about all the places they went? What purpose does this list serve? What can be learned from this? There must be some significance since the Torah prefaces this whole chapter with the verse "Moshe wrote their goings forth, stage, by stage, **by the commandment of God**" (33:2) God wanted these to be written for all generations for some reason. What could the reason be?

Rashi states that the stages were mapped out for us in the Torah in order to publicize God's mercy towards His nation. It shows how He is compassionate to us even in the midst of His anger. Although He had decreed that the nation would wander in the desert for 40 years as a punishment for the sin of the spies, He did not make them travel a lot during this time. Most of the 40 years they remained in the same place and didn't have to move. God only made them move 42 times in the 40 years in the desert.

Rashi brings another reason which is elaborated upon by Be'er Yitchak. He says that this short listing of the stages of Israel's journey was designed as a message for the nation for when they finally settle in the land of Israel. Each place name reminded them of how they misbehaved towards God, and how he punished them for their sins. It was to remind them to be faithful to God while highlighting God's mercy and love towards them throughout their stay in the desert.

The Sforno has a very different explanation. He says that the purpose of the list was not to highlight God's goodness, but rather to highlight the merit of Israel. They followed God into the desert, a very difficult and dangerous place. "And Moshe wrote" their destination and place of departure. Sometimes the place where they were headed was evil while the place they left was a good place. Sometimes the reverse

was true. Sometimes they had to pack up and leave without much warning. All these situations were difficult, and yet the nation did it.

While throughout the book of Bamidbar we have seen a nation that is disobedient and quarrelsome at times, in these verses we see the other side, a nation loyal to their trust, “following God through the wilderness in a land not sown”, despite all the trials and scary things along the way. Nechama Leibowitz adds that we have continued to follow Him through the wilderness of exile down the ages.

What seems at first to be boring verses with no eternal message are verses that on one hand teach us about God’s love for His people but also teaches about their dedication and love towards Him. How can we not listen to these verses read from the Torah in shul with much excitement!

RECIPE

Places enumerated in the 42 stages of the journey include **Marah** (where the water was bitter), **Elim** where there were 70 palm (trees), **Livnah** – a place where the boundaries were marked with bricks (Targum Yonathan 33:20), and **Yatvathah**, an area of flowing brooks (Devarim 10:7). This week’s recipe includes ingredients reminiscent of these locations; dates that grow on palm trees, shaped into bricks. You can add a bit of pepper – not bitter like the water in Mara but

it does give these brownies an unexpected punch that adds a unique taste. It’s no bake so you don’t need to heat up the kitchen on these hot summer days. You can serve them with a cool cup of **Yatvatah** milk – another place mentioned in this week’s portion.

NO-BAKE CHOCOLATE DATE BROWNIE BRICKS

- 1 cup (93 g) raw walnuts
- 1 cup almonds
- 2 1/2 cups dates (pitted // if dry, soak in warm water for 10 minutes then drain // ~15 ounces)
- 3/4 cup cocoa powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 2-3 pinches pepper (optional)
- 2 Tbsp chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup (47 g) chopped walnuts for topping

Process first six ingredients until the mixture starts to become smooth and clump up into a ball. The dates will be all chopped up but there will still be bits of nuts. Turn the mixture out into an 8 inch square dish lined with baking paper. Use your hands to firmly press the mixture into the bottom of the dish. Top with chopped walnuts and chocolate chips mixture. Cover and refrigerate for at least 10 minutes. Cut into rectangles. Remove the bars from the pan and cut into pieces using a sharp knife. Enjoy these bars cold or frozen. Store in an air-tight container in the fridge or freezer tomatoes instead. ■

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BY MENACHEM PERSOFF

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Unto You Have I Given The Land

We tend to think of life as a journey. That journey can be geographical, but our direction in life also has a spiritual dimension. Thus, we might set ourselves lofty goals as we traverse the earthly trail; however, in our religious tradition, our life's mission has been defined for us.

Moreover, we, the children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, cannot dismiss the “geographical” aspect of our lifelong odyssey. Because the substantive meaning we attach to our national, cultural, and moral experience is tied up unequivocally with the Land promised to our forefathers thousands of years ago.

In our Parsha, Hashem advised Moshe that when the people enter the Land of Canaan, they should drive out the inhabitants and dwell within – “for unto you have I given the Land to possess it” (Bemidbar 33:50-53).

Unlike Rambam, for Ramban, there is no question that there is a positive command to settle the Land and inherit it. Moreover, writes Nachmanidies, if Bnei Yisrael were to conquer another land (outside the borders of Israel), that would be tantamount to transgressing one of Hashem's commandments.

In our times, many have rationalized why they have not made Aliyah, perhaps missing out on Hashem's directive to the Meraglim: “Go up and possess it [Eretz Yisrael], as Hashem has spoken to you – fear not and be not dismayed!” (Devarim 1:1-21). Moreover, as Ramban observes, when the Meraglim refused to do so, the Torah informs us that “they rebelled against the word of the Lord.”

For Ramban, this Mitzvah applies for all time, “even during the exile.” Notably, the most powerful statements concerning the Mitzvah can be found in Masechet Ketuvot 110b:

- At all times, one shall settle in Eretz Yisrael – even in a city inhabited mostly by heathens;
- Whoever resides outside of Eretz Yisrael is like one who has no god, as it stated: “To give you the land of Canaan to be your God”;
- One who resides outside of the Land of Israel is as if he served idols.

We can only truly observe all the Mitzvot incumbent upon us in Eretz Yisrael, and only in Eretz Yisrael can we attempt to become a kingdom of priests and a light unto the nations.

Ultimately, it depends on us, every one of us, to do our utmost to achieve this providential mission, thus to bring Hashem's holy light into this world. ■

Menachem Persoff



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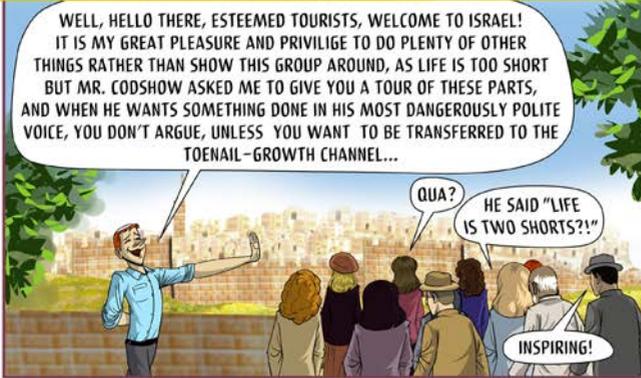
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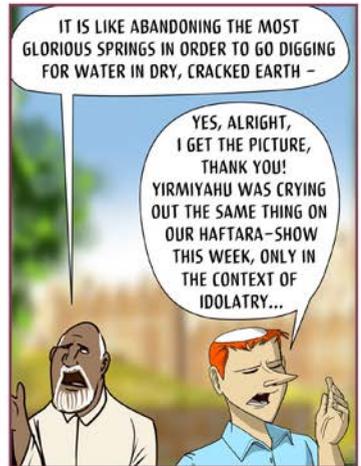
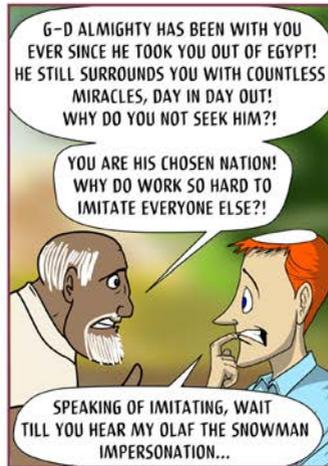
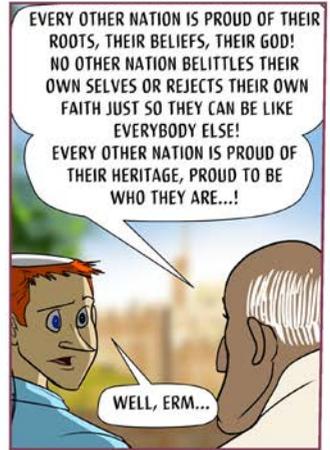
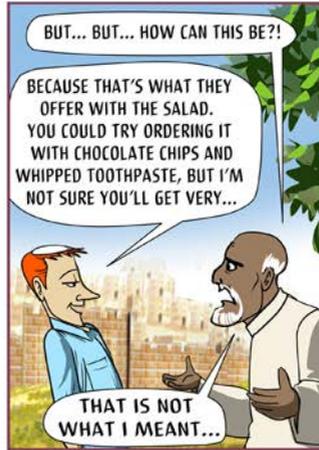
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Rina Gelband Modi'in Chapter Director Journey Before Destination

In parashat *Masei* we get an extensive list of all the places B'ne Israel camped in the desert. One might find this peculiar, why couldn't the Torah just mention that B'ne Israel walked in the desert till they reached the Holy Land?

The answer is simple, the journey is important, maybe even more important than the destination. Whether we are on a self-growth journey, a road trip or a long NCSY pre-Shabbaton hike, we tend to forget about the journey. We focus on the destination and when we finally reach it, we realize that we didn't stop to enjoy the journey.

The Torah is trying to teach us that life isn't only about reaching goals, it's also about the process. B'ne Israel could have made it to Israel in a few weeks, instead they toured the desert for 40 years! They needed the time to become a unified nation, a nation that is ready to receive the Torah and become the light of the world.

In our day to day lives sometimes it's easier to ignore the daily routine and focus on the goals. Hashem is teaching us that the journey is crucial to our success, if we embrace the journey we will come out of it stronger and better.

Shabbat Shalom ☺



Yechezkel Bitter 11th Grade, Alon Shevut Why Repeat?

In this week's Parsha, Parshat *Masei*, we get a recap of every place Am Yisrael stops and it made me wonder: Why do we need to repeat every place Am Yisrael has been in if it was already written previously? In addition, a similar question, why repeat the words:

"אלה מסיעהם למוצאיהם"

The Abarbanel, who addresses these questions, suggests that there are four explanations to these two connected questions.

The first explanation is that this is repeated in order to remind us of Hashem's grace towards Am Yisrael. After all, Hashem did send us to 40 long years in the desert and only sent us on 42 journeys in the desert during that long period of time. That means we only had a journey through the desert (on average) every 9.5 months!

The second and third explanations are

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regarding the details which were repeated in order to highlight how hard life in the desert was, the thirst and heat, etc... and how Hashem then helped us during these 40 years in the desert.

The final and my favorite explanation is that these journeys were repeated as a hint to Am Yisrael's future where we would relive similar events. What I find so fascinating about this answer is that, in my opinion, this hint at the future has already happened! We have already re-lived these similar events in the Galut. And now we have returned to Israel just like Am Yisrael did thousands of years ago.

May we continue to merit Hashem's protection in our journeys in life, as individuals and as a nation. Shabbat Shalom! ■

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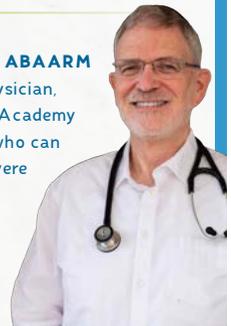
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