

ב"ה  
**Torah  
Tidbits**

ISSUE 1484 SEP 10<sup>TH</sup> '22 י"ד אלול תשפ"ב

**פרשת כי תצא**

PARSHAT KI TEITZEI  
AVOT CHAPTER 2

**OU**  
ישראל

**כי יקרא קוֹצֵפוֹר**

דברים כ"א:ו'



**Hakem Takim Imo –  
Doing Our Part**  
**Rabbi Shalom Rosner**  
Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh  
page 28



**Bird's Blessings**  
**Rebbetzin Shira Smiles**  
Faculty, OU Israel Center  
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**YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TEITZEI**

**CANDLES 6:17PM • EARLIEST 5:34PM • HAVDALA 7:29PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:09PM**



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**Kiddush Levana**

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana Until 15 Elul, Motzei Shabbat Sept. 10, until 3:07 am



*This week's Torah Tidbits cover image!*

Photo By: Yaakov Adler, Ramat Beit Shemesh

**About the Photo:** We learn in Parshat Ki-Tetzei about the mitzvah of Shiluach haken. This photo was taken on the window sill of my house in Beit Shemesh during Corona quarantine. We couldn't leave the house so the mitzvos came to us!

## A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק (כה"ז)

"Remember forever what Amalek did to you when you left Egypt." (25:17)

Why is this pasuk, as well as the following verses that deal with this subject, written in the singular form-"lecha" as opposed to the plural form?

Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshischa (1765-1827, Poland) answers that this teaches us that Amalek was successful against those who felt themselves separate from the nation, as individuals. The Rabbis teach us that the "clouds of glory" protected only the Jewish nation but rejected those individuals who did not feel part of the people. Those who identified themselves with the people and were united with them were untouchable.

Amalek cannot overcome us if we are all united in our dedication to G-d. This lesson is for future generations how essential it is for us to strengthen our connection to our nation. Shabbat Shalom

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



CANDLES	EARLIEST	KI TEITZEI	HAVDALA	KI TAVO		
				Candles	Earliest	Havdala
6:17	5:42	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	7:29	6:08	5:27	7:19
6:35	5:44	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	7:31	6:26	5:29	7:22
6:36	5:43	Beit Shemesh / RBS	7:30	6:27	5:28	7:20
6:33	5:42	Gush Etzion	7:29	6:24	5:27	7:20
6:34	5:44	Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	7:31	6:25	5:28	7:21
6:34	5:43	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	7:30	6:24	5:28	7:20
6:34	5:44	Netanya	7:31	6:25	5:28	7:21
6:34	5:44	Be'er Sheva	7:30	6:25	5:28	7:21
6:34	5:44	Rehovot	7:31	6:25	5:28	7:21
6:17	5:44	Petach Tikva	7:30	6:08	5:28	7:21
6:33	5:43	Ginot Shomron	7:30	6:24	5:27	7:20
6:24	5:44	Haifa / Zichron	7:31	6:15	5:28	7:21
6:32	5:42	Gush Shiloh	7:29	6:23	5:27	7:19
6:35	5:44	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	7:31	6:25	5:29	7:21
6:33	5:42	Giv'at Ze'ev	7:29	6:24	5:27	7:20
6:33	5:42	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	7:29	6:24	5:27	7:20
6:35	5:45	Ashkelon	7:31	6:26	5:29	7:22
6:34	5:44	Yad Binyamin	7:30	6:25	5:28	7:21
6:27	5:42	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	7:29	6:18	5:26	7:19
6:32	5:41	Golan	7:28	6:22	5:26	7:18

**Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 8:09 PM • next week - 8:00 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**  
**Sept. 7-17 / 11-21 Elul**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:27 - 5:33
Sunrise	6:18 - 6:24
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:27 - 9:28
Magen Avraham	8:50 - 8:52
Sof Zman Tefila	10:30
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:36-12:33
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:08 - 1:04
Plag Mincha	5:44 - 5:33
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:09 - 6:56

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# DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

**RABBI AVI BERMAN**

Executive Director, OU Israel



Elul and the beginning of the academic year means that this time of year is one of new beginnings. We start fresh and try our best to implement positive behaviors in our day to day lives. For those starting a new stage in life, this is particularly true. For the most part, my job is the same as it was in June, July and August. Sure, specific tasks and meetings change, but the overall responsibilities remain the same. Yet, for those beginning a new school, Yeshiva/Midrasha, IDF or Sherut Leumi service, or a new job, the excitement is palpable.

This past Sunday was very exciting. The OU Israel building was packed. This was the first in-person weekly staff meeting we had in a long-time (since Covid they have primarily been virtual). We had hundreds of people in the building between our L'Ayla Rosh Chodesh Seminar in memory of Mrs. Linda Pruwer-Brachfeld a"h and other Shiurim and programs taking place in the classrooms. Yet, while all of this was beautiful there was a particular room which had the greatest impact on me.

I had the privilege of speaking to a room of young women embarking on their Sherut Leumi at the OU. These young women will be spending their year of Sherut volunteering for Yachad Israel and our OU Israel Youth Centers. What was unique about this room is that these individuals chose

and were selected to do Sherut Leumi for OU Israel, and I am proud to say that majority of them come from Torah Tidbits readership homes. While most of the people in the building on Sunday were returning to what they had been doing prior to summer break, these young women are starting something new.

This is the first time they are entering a year where they are going to have to initiate, create, dream and implement on their own. We obviously have a dedicated staff to guide, help and support them, but they are no longer in school where they are told what to learn, when their tests are, what time to show up and what time to leave. There is an energy here which will hopefully accompany them not only throughout this year but that will Bezrat Hashem guide them throughout their lives to become initiating creative, and inspirational individuals.

One of the many inspiring traits we see in Bnot Sherut is their passion. Throughout the year, I see them working late at night or out early in the morning to brainstorm and execute innovative programs. Their love of Chessed and their "can-do" attitudes are truly praiseworthy.

While this is my small professional window into these wonderful young women, the Bnot Sherut, we as a society get to see them in many places across the

country. We meet them in hospitals, our kids' schools, community centers, historical museums





and attractions, government offices and so many other places. Yet, unlike soldiers they don't wear a special uniform, so we often miss seeing the incredible dedication and spirit they bring to their respective establishments.

Soldiers feel tremendous pride when they leave their bases with a new beret or pin – an external item showing themselves and those around them that they accomplished new milestones of service. The Bnot Sherut do not have that external uniform, but their contribution to the State of Israel is no less important. Let's all try to identify the wonderful Bnot Sherut who improve our lives and the lives of those around us.

Wishing them a year of tremendous success and with hope that they end this year being able to see the tangible impact they made and embark upon their lives with that gratifying feeling. Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



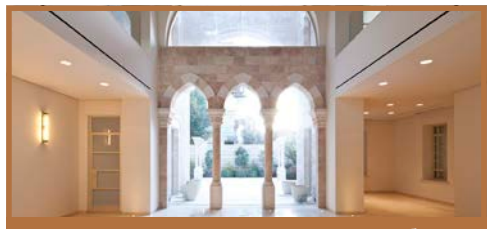
Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

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**Yisrael & Ariella Spero and families**  
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# KI TEITZEI



## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY



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

The Parsha contains 74 mitzvot, the most of any parsha in our Torah. It is the third of the parshiot of Mitzvot; Ekev, Shoftim and Ki Teitzei. Moshe began his long address in Sefer Devarim with narrative, reviewing the central experiences of the desert and their lessons; his intent was to help the entry into the Land be successful. He then switched to speaking not about entering the Land, but how to live in the Land; the building of the Jewish nation. In the Parshiot of Ekev and Shoftim, he outlined Jewish National society beautifully. It is to be an ethical monotheistic society; hence, he outlined the laws of avoiding idol worship, the centrality of what would be Jerusalem and laws of generosity, of sharing with others. He then moved on from the principles of

ethical monotheism to the foundations of our Nation; the judiciary, the executive and the legislature. And now in Ki Teitzei, he focuses on personal mitzvot. Nation building requires government, courts and checks and balances. But government does not make a great nation; it regulates behavior within certain broad frameworks. Greatness will lie in the day-to-day life of the people; how they treat each other, help each other, what they say and what they give, how they live with kindness and generosity in day to day life. That is where the greatness of the Jewish nation will lie. Perhaps said differently: Parshat Shoftim will produce headlines. The court system, the king, the wars. Now those make good headlines. Parshat Ki Teitzei will never make the headlines: returning a lost object, paying wages promptly, healthy relationships in marriage. Regard for others doesn't make headlines, but it makes great nations.



**1<sup>st</sup> aliya (Devarim 21:10-21) Captive Woman:** One may not marry a woman captured in war until 30

days have elapsed and the passion subsided. **First born:** The rights of the first born to a double portion shall not be diverted to the first born of a more favoured wife. **Ben Sorer U'moreh:** a boy entering adulthood who is brazen and gluttonous shall be judged on the fear of future more egregious behaviour.

The soldier is able to marry the non-Jewish woman captured in war; but only after a month of seeing her daily in an unkempt manner. But what is left unsaid is far more important: war is accompanied by rape and pillage of women. Women are viewed as the spoils of war. Not in the Jewish army. The permission granted to marry this non-Jewish woman after a month screams out the

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far more basic war ethic: war should never ever be seen by the Jewish army as license for abuse of women.



**2<sup>nd</sup> aliya (21:22-22:7) Burial:** Do not allow the body of one sentenced to death to be hung. He is

to be buried immediately. **Returning Lost Property:** Don't look away from lost property; return it to its owner. Help up an overly **burdened animal** who has buckled; don't look away. Do not **cross dress**. **Send** a mother bird away before taking the eggs or chicks.

Look at the implied ethic. A person sentenced to death has committed the most serious of sins. Nonetheless, human beings never lose the right to dignity. Even one sentenced to death is a human being; their body is not to be left hanging, but to be buried immediately. Human beings may sully their dignity by terrible crimes deserving of death; but they never forfeit their essential human dignity.

A further implied ethic is contained in the return of lost property. Legal ethics can only regulate that I do not damage your property. But Jewish ethics mandates that we go much further; I need to jump to help your property. There can be no passive bystanders; we need to jump to save lives of others and property of others.



**Congratulations to**  
**Mel David**  
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**3<sup>rd</sup> aliya (22:8-23:7)** Build a **fence on your roof** to prevent accidents. **Do not: plant** vines

and grain together, **plow** with ox and mules together, **wear** wool and linen **together**. A man shall not: **slander** a new bride claiming her not to be a virgin, nor commit **adultery** with a married woman, nor with a betrothed bride, nor **rape** a single woman. One may **not marry** a mamzer, nor a male from Ammon or Moav.

In this aliya we have mitzvot about the most basic of daily life: our homes, our fields or livelihood, our clothes and our relationships with our partners. Each one of these regulates the basic aspects of our lives. In this lies the profound meaning of this parsha. The Torah infuses our lives with meaning. Our relationships, our homes, our food, our clothes; all these things take on meaning when regulated by mitzvot. Rav Soloveitchik called this redemption, or geula; man's mundane life is redeemed from vulgarity and emptiness by mitzvot. Suddenly, the trite and trivial, the banal life we live becomes meaningful, an expression of loyalty to our Creator and His love of us by commanding us.



**4<sup>th</sup> aliya (23:8-23:24)** One **may marry** one from Edom or Egypt. **Military encampments** shall be

treated with a degree of **cleanliness**;

bathroom facilities shall be outside the camp. Since G-d's presence goes with you, your camp has holiness. **Shelter** a runaway slave. Do not engage in **prostitution**, nor accept its gains as offerings. Do not exact **loan interest**. **Do** that which you **vow**; do not delay its fulfilment.

The charging of interest on a loan is not permitted. This is a Torah legislated type of welfare. When a person is in trouble and needs a loan, he is vulnerable to loan sharking. If he needs money and is desperate, what better recipe for milking him for all he is worth. The Torah forbids the preying on misfortune. Find another way to profit; not off the misfortune of others.



**5<sup>th</sup> aliya (23:25-24:4)** **Harvesters** may eat grapes or grains while harvesting. **Divorce**: Divorce

need be done through a bill of divorce (a Get). If the woman marries another she may not return to remarry the first husband.

Allowing the worker to eat that which he is harvesting is the introduction of employer ethics. Being an employer comes with responsibility; people's lives are in your hands. Allowing the worker to consume what he is harvesting is merely an example of sensitivity to the feelings of employees. Worker's rights have their basis in these verses.

Divorce is accomplished through a Get, or



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a document of divorce. While the creation of a marriage is called kiddushin and has holiness, the dissolution of the marriage must be absolute and complete. The Get is called sefer kritut, a document of complete dissolution. The granting of complete freedom to the woman is the essence of divorce. Creating a relationship is marriage; granting complete freedom is divorce.



#### 6<sup>th</sup> aliya (24:5-13) First year

**marriage:** Do not go to war in the first year of marriage: bring

joy to the new bride. **Kidnapping** is a capital offense. Remember Miriam's **Tzarat** and keep its laws. **Collateral** may be taken, but only with the owner's cooperation. If the owner needs this collateral, return it to him nightly.

If I lend you money and am concerned that you will not pay me back, I may secure my loan with collateral. That makes sense. But the granting of collateral, while fair, should be fair to the borrower as well. Monetary laws are all the balancing of conflicting interests. Benefitting the lender, disadvantages the borrower. And benefitting the borrower, has a cost to the lender. The Torah alerts us to be sensitive in all monetary dealings; an action that benefits one, hurts the other. Balancing the needs of both is the message of the rules of the taking of collateral.



#### 7<sup>th</sup> aliya (24:14-25:16) Do not

withhold **wages:** workers are to be paid before the end of the day.

Do not **pervert justice** of the foreigner or widow. When **harvesting** grain, olives or grapes, leave the dropped produce for the needy. No more than 40 **lashes** shall ever be given. **Yibum:** a brother shall marry the childless widow of his brother and hence maintain

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his name. Maintain only **accurate weights** and measures. Remember what **Amalek** did to you in attacking the weak when you left Egypt. Erase any memory of him.

In one aliya we have mitzvot of wages, of justice, of kindness, of lashes, of levirate marriage, of honesty in business and of Amalek. The lack of a clear pattern to these mitzvot is itself instructive. Perhaps Moshe is deliberately moving from generosity to justice to business to war. He wants to cover mitzvot in all aspects of our life. Our lives include homes and relationships and work and war and honesty and keeping our word and paying our workers....and on and on. Moshe is describing our life. And telling us that in all aspects of our lives we have mitzvot; ways to do things nobly and with holiness. And that there is nary a part of life void of mitzvot. It is this richness of behavior in our personal life that is truly the necessary ingredient of nation building. The Jewish nation will be built on ethical monotheism, on national institutions that are kept in check; but ultimately a great nation is built in the homes and in the private lives of its citizens. The nation is built on the quiet, private behavior of its people, in all the facets of their lives. ■

## STATS

49th of the 54 sedras; 6th of 11 in D'varim  
Written on 212.8 lines; ranks 21st  
44 Parshiyot; 2 open, 42 closed; rank: 1  
110 p'sukim; ranks 28th (5th in D'varim)  
1582 words; ranks 23rd (5th in D'varim)  
5856 letters; ranks 26th (6th in D'varim)

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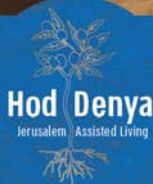
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OU Executive Vice President, Emeritus

IN THE PARSHA

## He is *Not* What He Is

There is a phrase that one hears quite commonly nowadays: “It is what it is.” There is something that has always disturbed me about that phrase.

To me, the phrase seems to be stating that things will remain as they are and that there is no possibility for change. It conveys a sense of resignation and suggests that one must accept the status quo. The implicit lesson is that one should not expect circumstances to change for the better or, for that matter, for the worse.

In spite of its popularity, the phrase contradicts everything we know about the human experience. We know that things change. People change, circumstances change. Our social surroundings, and even our natural environment, change all the time. Heraclitus was certainly correct when he said that one cannot step into the same river twice.

I would not bother to protest the statement, however false I think it is, were I not convinced that it is more than untrue—it is quite dangerous. I base this conviction on a fundamental distinction which goes back to the early Greek philosophers, and which is reflected in traditional Jewish works as well.

I refer to the distinction between *actual* and *potential*. This distinction is especially significant when we assess ourselves or judge

other individuals. We can consider what we or they are today, overlooking the fact that there is potential for us and them to develop into quite different sorts of people.

I sometimes ponder this distinction when I consider contemporary military situations. For example, the State of Israel today faces a serious military threat from Iran. Today, at this very moment in time, there is little, if any, *actual* danger. But the *potential* for very great danger certainly exists. It is the *potential*, in this case, which might very well justify a preemptive strike against future capacities of a hostile Iran.

The moral justification of a preemptive war necessitates that we reject the implications of “it is what it is,” and instead imagine what things might be like if the current *potential* became *actual*.

In this week’s Torah portion, *Parshat Ki Tetzei* (Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19), we encounter an example of a preemptive strike not against a vicious enemy, but against a mere child. Just several verses from the beginning of our *parsha*, in verse 18, we read of the *ben sorer u’moreh*, the “stubborn and rebellious son, that will not hearken to the voice of his father, nor the voice of his mother, and though they chasten him, he will not hearken unto them.”

Which parent has not encountered some stubbornness and rebelliousness in even the best behaved of his or her children? But the son who is described in this week’s Torah portion goes a bit too far. He raids his



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mother's purse or his father's wallet, steals some money, and purchases a small quantity of meat and consumes it, and a half measure of wine and imbibes it, perhaps becoming a bit tipsy in the process.

Are we not astonished to read that this young boy is to be stoned to death, that the evil he represents is to be eliminated from our midst, and that we all must learn the lesson of his behavior and its consequences?

Of course, we are astonished, as were the rabbis of old. They responded with two teachings: first of all, this boy's punishment is not the result of his *actual* behavior, but rather because of the inevitable *potential* that he would one day "become a bandit, and lie in wait at the crossroads and steal from wayfarers."

They further insisted that the entire passage of the "stubborn and rebellious son"

is totally hypothetical. "It never happened and never will happen." They instruct us that the passage was written just so that we reflect theoretically upon its implications, but not that we actually administer such harsh punishment.

If the "stubborn and rebellious son" provides us an example of how we must take a person's potential for evil into account, the story of Ishmael provides an opposite lesson, namely that we must assess a person in terms of his current behavior and not anticipate his potential.

Thus, in *Genesis* 21:17, where the young Ishmael is about to die of thirst in the desert, his mother Hagar is assured by the angel that God has heard his prayers and that he will survive: "...For God has heard the voice of the lad where he is."

Our rabbis note that despite the fact that

Ishmael was destined to become an arch foe of the Jewish people, he was judged as a young boy dying of thirst in the wilderness. He was judged “where he is,” in terms of the *actual* Ishmael, and not in terms of the *potential* one.

Numerous commentators, *Chizkuni* and Rabbi Obadiah Sforno among them, have offered explanations as to why the “stubborn and rebellious son” was judged in terms of his *potential* for evil, whereas Ishmael was given the benefit of being judged in terms of his *actual* innocence. These commentators suggest that Ishmael demonstrated, by the honor he gave to his mother Hagar and to his father Abraham, that he possessed *potential* for both good and bad, whereas, in the words of *Sforno*, “the very rebelliousness of (the wayward son) removed all hope that he would one day change his stubborn ways.”

The biblical texts discussed above are open to various interpretations. As we saw, the rabbis of the Talmud instructed us to reflect well upon the lessons of the “stubborn and rebellious son,” but they did not clearly enunciate what those lessons are.

That they left for us to ponder.

From a pedagogical and parental perspective, it is clear that we must always consider the *potential* that our students and children possess. That master pedagogue, who preached in the darkest days of the Warsaw ghetto and eventually perished at the hands of the Nazis in the Holocaust, Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, would meet with his young adolescent students as they entered his *yeshiva* and encourage them to envision who they might be in a year, in two years, and in five years. He would then gently tell them that he would not be dealing with them as they were then but, rather, as they might be in the future.

Sadly, in his case, both the master and the majority of his numerous disciples did not survive long enough to realize the *potential* that they each envisioned. But we, children and grandchildren of survivors, can take the lesson to heart.

When dealing with others, we must forget about the slogan “it is what it is.” It is a false and invidious slogan. I offer an alternative slogan: “It is what it could become.” ■



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## To the Third and Fourth Generations

There is, on the face of it, a fundamental contradiction in the Torah. On the one hand we hear, in the passage known as the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, the following words:

The Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness and truth ... but who does not acquit the guilty, *holding descendants to account for the sins of the fathers, children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation.*" (Ex. 34:7)

The implication is clear. Children suffer for the sins of their parents. On the other hand, we read in this week's parsha:

Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to

death for their parents. A person shall be put to death only for their own sin. (Deut. 24:16)

The book of Kings records a historic event when this principle proved decisive.

When Amaziah was well-established as king, he executed the officials who had assassinated his father. However, he did not kill the children of the assassins, for he obeyed the command of the Lord as written by Moses in the Book of the Law: "Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents. A person shall be put to death only for their own sin." (2 Kings 14:5-6)

There is an obvious resolution. The first statement refers to Divine justice, "at the hands of Heaven." The second, in Deuteronomy, refers to human justice as administered in a court of law. How can mere mortals decide the extent to which one person's crime was induced by the influence of others? Clearly the judicial process must limit itself to the observable facts. The person who committed the crime is guilty. Those who may have shaped his character are not.

Yet the matter is not so simple, because we find Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the two great prophets of exile in the sixth century BCE, restating the principle of individual

responsibility in strong and strikingly similar ways. Jeremiah says:

In those days people will no longer say, 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' Instead, everyone will die for their own sin; whoever eats sour grapes - their own teeth will be set on edge. (Jer. 31:29-30)

Ezekiel says:

The word of the Lord came to me: "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the Land of Israel: 'The parents eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As surely as I live," declares the Sovereign Lord, "you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For everyone belongs to Me, the parent as well as the child - both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die." (Ezekiel 18:1-4)

Here the prophets were not speaking about judicial procedures and legal responsibility. They are talking about Divine judgement and justice. They were giving the people hope at one of the lowest points in Jewish history: the Babylonian conquest and the destruction of the First Temple. The people, sitting and weeping by the waters of Babylon, might have given up hope altogether. They were being judged for the failings of their ancestors that had brought the nation to this desperate plight, and their exile seemed to stretch endlessly into the future. Ezekiel, in his vision of the valley of dry bones, hears God reporting that the people were saying, "Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost." (Ezek. 37:11) He and Jeremiah were counselling against despair. The people's future was in their own hands. If they returned to God, God would return to them and bring them back to their land.

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The guilt of previous generations would not be attached to them.

But, if this is so, then the words of Jeremiah and Ezekiel really do conflict with the idea that God punishes sins to the third and fourth generation. Recognising this, the Talmud makes a remarkable statement:

Said R. Yose b. Hanina: Our master, Moses, pronounced four [adverse] sentences on Israel, but four prophets came and revoked them ...Moses said, “the Lord punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.” Ezekiel came and declared, “The one who sins is the one who will die.” (Makkot 24b)

In general the Sages rejected the idea that children could be punished, even at the hands of Heaven, for the sins of their parents. As a result, they systematically re-interpreted every passage that gave the opposite impression, that children were indeed being punished for their parents’ sins. Their general position was this:

Are not children then to be put to death for the sins committed by their parents? Is it not written, “Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children”? – There the reference is to children who follow in their parents’ footsteps [literally “seize their parents’ deeds in their hands,” i.e. commit the same sins themselves]. (Brachot 7a, Sanhedrin 27b)

Specifically, they explained biblical episodes in which children were punished along with their parents by saying that in these cases the children “had the power to protest/prevent their parents from sinning, but they failed to do so.” (Sanhedrin 27b; *Yalkut Shimoni*, I:290) As Maimonides

says, whoever has the power of preventing someone from committing a sin but does not do so, he is seized (i.e., punished, held responsible) for that sin.<sup>1</sup>

Did, then, the idea of individual responsibility come late to Judaism, as some scholars argue? This is highly unlikely. During the rebellion of Korach, when God threatened to destroy the people, Moses said, “Shall one man sin and will You be angry with the whole congregation?” (Num. 16:22) When people began dying after King David had sinned by instituting a census, he prayed to God: “I have sinned. I, the shepherd, have done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let Your hand fall on me and my family.” (II Sam. 24:17) The principle of individual responsibility is fundamental to Judaism, as it was to other cultures in the ancient Near East.<sup>2</sup>

Rather, what is at stake is the deep understanding of the scope of responsibility we bear if we take seriously our roles as parents, neighbours, townspeople, citizens, and children of the covenant. Judicially, only the criminal is responsible for his crime. But, implies the Torah, we are also our brothers’ keepers. We share collective responsibility for the moral and spiritual health of society. “All Israelites,” said the Sages, “are responsible for one another.” (Shavuot 39a) Legal responsibility is one thing, and relatively easy to define. But moral responsibility is something altogether larger, if necessarily more vague.

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1 *Hilchot Deot* 6:7.

2 See Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, New York, Schocken, 1972, pp. 329-333.



“Let a person not say, ‘I have not sinned, and if someone else commits a sin, that is a matter between him and God.’ This is contrary to the Torah,” writes Maimonides in the *Sefer HaMitzvot*.<sup>3</sup>

This is particularly so when it comes to the relationship between parents and children. Abraham was chosen, says the Torah, solely so that “he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.” (Gen. 18:19) The duty of parents to teach their children is fundamental to Judaism. It appears in both the first two paragraphs of the Shema, as well as the various passages cited in the “Four Sons” section of the Hag-gadah. Maimonides counts as one of the gravest of all sins – so serious that God does not give us an opportunity to repent – “one who sees his son falling into bad ways and does not stop him.” The reason, he says, is that “since his son is under his authority, had he stopped him the son would have desisted.” Therefore it is accounted to the father as if he had actively caused his son to sin.<sup>4</sup>

If so, then we begin to hear the challenging truth in the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. To be sure, we are not legally responsible for the sins of either our parents or our children. But in a deeper, more amorphous sense, what we do and how we live do have an effect on the future to the third and fourth generation.

Rarely has that effect been more

<sup>3</sup> *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*, positive command 205.

<sup>4</sup> *Hilchot Teshuvah* 4:1. The reference is of course to a son under the age of thirteen.

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devastatingly described than in recent books by two of America's most insightful social critics: Charles Murray of the American Enterprise Institute, and Robert Putnam of Harvard. Notwithstanding their vastly different approaches to politics, Murray in *Coming Apart* and Putnam in *Our Kids* have issued essentially the same prophetic warning of a social catastrophe in the making. For Putnam, "the American dream" is "in crisis".<sup>5</sup> For Murray, the division of the United States into two classes with ever decreasing mobility between them "will end what has made America America."<sup>6</sup>

Their argument is roughly this, that at a certain point, in the late 1950s or early 1960s, a whole series of institutions and moral codes began to dissolve. Marriage was devalued. Families began to fracture. More and more children grew up without stable association with their biological parents. New forms of child poverty began to appear, as well as social dysfunctions such as drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancies and crime and unemployment in low-income areas. Over time, an upper

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5 Robert Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

6 Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010* (New York: Crown Forum, 2012), p. 11.

class pulled back from the brink, and is now intensively preparing its children for high achievement, while on the other side of the tracks children are growing up with little hope for educational, social, and occupational success. The American Dream of opportunity for all is wearing thin.

What makes this development so tragic is that, for a moment, people forgot the biblical truth that what we do does not affect us alone. It will affect our children to the third and fourth generation. Even the greatest libertarian of modern times, John Stuart Mill, was emphatic on the responsibilities of parenthood. He wrote:

The fact itself, of causing the existence of a human being, is one of the most responsible actions in the range of human life. To undertake this responsibility - to bestow a life which may be either a curse or a blessing - unless the being on whom it is to be bestowed will have at least the ordinary chances of a desirable existence, is a crime against that being.<sup>7</sup>

If we fail to honour our responsibilities as parents, then - though no law will hold us responsible - society's children will pay the price. They will suffer because of our sins. ■

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7 *On Liberty and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 117.

Covenant and Conversation 5782 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l. These weekly teachings from Rabbi Sacks zt"l are part of the 'Covenant & Conversation' series on the weekly Torah reading. Read more on [www.rabbisacks.org](http://www.rabbisacks.org).

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Faculty, OU Israel Center

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I begin this week's article with a question, wondering if any others have shared my experience - or not? During my first years after our Aliya, I entered my car one day to drive my usual morning route, only to find that the road I had been traveling each morning had suddenly become a one-way street...in the opposite direction?! I read of no warnings the day before nor saw any signs as I traveled that morning - but there it was! Everything had changed overnight!

Well, whether or not you have also undergone this kind of experience, I am relatively sure that you have heard even frequent visitors to Israel remark of how there had been so much growth in the little time that they were away. Which gets me to this week's haftarah.

As we marked Rosh Chodesh Elul just two weeks ago - on Shabbat Re'eh - the traditional haftarah of consolation was replaced by the selection read on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh. As a result, this Shabbat we add the haftarah we "missed" to the usual haftarah for this parasha, giving us the opportunity to read the entire perek 54 in Sefer Yishayahu (as we also do for the haftarah of parashat Noach) that is made up of both of these selections.

"Roni Akara!!!", the navi cries out to Yerushalayim at the outset of the haftarah and perek itself. Describing the Holy City as an "akara", a barren woman, Hashem is

quoted as reassuring the city that, although she has been "barren" for so many years, bereft of her "children" - her population, she should now rejoice. But why? "Ki rabim bnei shomeima..." - "For the children of the barren (Jerusalem) will (yet) outnumber those of the (present) inhabited Jerusalem" - explained by most commentaries as Hashem's promise that the future population of Yerushalayim would increase significantly.

The Malbim, however, "tweaks" this common explanation with what is, I believe, an especially meaningful approach for us today. He explains that G-d comforts Israel with the promise of a renewed and repopulated Jerusalem, whose rebirth will be due to the arrival of those who were "barren" of their motherland and who will return to her and fill her streets once again. The Malbim elaborates on his unique "take" of these p'sukim by explaining that the prophet emphasizes his description of the barren Yerushalayim as a woman who "lo challah", never had experienced birth pains and yet, her lost brethren from the Diaspora would pour into her borders, providing her with innumerable "children" - without causing her to suffer the pains that accompany birth! The Malbim even supports this view by pointing to the p'sukim in perek 49 (v. 21 - the haftarah we read for parashat Ekev) where we read of the astonished city wondering from

where all of her population had suddenly appeared. “Who has begotten these?” she will ask, “For I have been bereaved and alone!”

A fair question, I believe. After all, who would ever imagine it? A quiet 18<sup>th</sup> century village with few inhabitants would overflow with a population close to one million?! Dusty roads once traveled only by caravans and camels would become streets and boulevards that would change overnight to one-way routes in order to absorb the ever increasing traffic?! And the once-barren plots of land would be humming with the never-ending sounds of heavy machinery, busily constructing more apartments to satisfy the growing demand for living space, and changing the country's horizon each month?!

Indeed, could they imagine hearing Amharic, French, Russian and English - languages reflecting diverse origins - emanating from the mouths of their once “lost” brothers and sisters?!

Yes. Certainly a fair question!

And so, the next time you get a bit frustrated at the traffic tie-ups or at the cacophony of construction noises - just think of our haftarah and remember the Malbim!

Or, perhaps just close your eyes and listen - you might just hear Yishayahu's words echoing in your ears.

Because they may well be the sounds of the Geula. ■

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# Hakem Takim Imo – Doing Our Part

לֹא תִרְאֶה אֶת־חֲמֹר אֲחִיךָ אִשׁוּר וְנִפְלִים בְּדֶרֶךְ וְהִתְעַלְמָתָּ  
מֵהֶם הֵקֵם תְּקִים עִמּוֹ

*You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen [under its load] on the road, and ignore them. [Rather,] you shall pick up [the load] with him. (Devarim 22:4).*

The mitzva referred to above requires an individual to assist another when his donkey or ox falls due to carrying a heavy load. One is prohibited from ignoring the situation only if the owner involves himself with reloading the donkey or ox as is stated “*hakem takim imo*” (see Rashi on this pasuk). It is to be done together. The owner cannot sit idly by and demand of others to engage in this difficult task. He himself **must partake** and only then are others obligated to assist.

Based on this principle and *al derech drush*, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik (cited by the Esh Tamid) offers a new way of understanding a *pasuk* that we recite from Rosh Chodesh Elul through the end of Succot. In the mizmor – *L'david Hashem Ori* we recite the following pasuk: אחת שאלתי מאת ה' – *One thing I ask of God that I seek...* (Tehillim 27:4). This language seems superfluous. Why do we need to refer to

a question (*sha'alti*) and then state that is what I request or seek (*avakesh*). It would suffice to simply state “One thing I ask of God” (*achat shalati me'et Hashem*) and end the sentence there!

Rav Moshe Soloveitchik explains that Hashem follows the principle of “*hakem takim imo*”. If we want God to fulfill a request, we have to do the utmost we can in order to seek to achieve the result. That is why the sentence ends with “*ota avakesh*”. I will do all in my power to seek the result and I beg Hakadosh Baruch Hu to do His part as well.

A similar idea is expressed by Rav Asher Weiss in another context. In connection with Yetziat Mitzrayim the Torah uses the phrase “*I have lifted you upon the wings of eagles and brought you to Me*” (Shemot 19:4). Rashi explains that an eagle (some define *neshet* as a griffon vulture), carrying its children is compared to Hashem carrying Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt for the following reason. Most birds hold their young in their claws to protect them from the predatory birds that fly above them. Since the eagle flies higher than all other birds, it fears only the archers that shoot at it from below. It therefore carries its young upon its wings to protect them from arrows that may be fired from below. So too, Hashem placed His Clouds of Glory between Bnei Yisrael and the Egyptians, to absorb the arrows and slingshots of the Egyptians lest they harm Bnei Yisrael.

The eagle's young enjoy the best possible




protection. However, **they** must make the effort to climb onto the eagle's wings and hold on tightly, since the eagle does not have arms long enough to lift them up or hold them in place. The eagle can only bend its back to make their ascent easier, but they must make the ascent themselves. These offspring must take the first step and only thereafter can their mother assist them.

The same is true of the physical and spiritual protection that Hashem offers His children. He descends to help us during the month of Elul, but we must make the effort to ascend in *teshuvah* and thus climb onto His proverbial wings. After the Yomim Noraim pass, it then becomes our duty to hold on tightly, lest we fall from the spiritual heights we have attained.

The Midrash on Shir Hashirim 5:3 states:  
פתחו לי פתח כפתחו של מחט ואני אפתח לכם פתחים  
שיהיו עגלות וקרונות עוברים בהם.


*Open for Me an opening in your hearts no wider than the eye of a needle, and I shall open for you an opening wide enough for wagons and carts to drive through.*

May we internalize the lesson of "*hakem takim imo*" and during the month of Elul do our part in playing an active role in getting closer to Hashem. He is there waiting for us to take the first step! ■



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## Bird's Blessings

“*Ki yakarei kan tzipor lifanecha ...shalech teshalach es ha-eim...* - if you come across a bird's nest...you must first **send** away the mother ...” (*Devarim* 22). The midrash states that one who fulfills this mitzvah will hasten the coming of Eliyahu Hanavi [to herald the Mashiach's arrival] about whom the word ‘**sending**’ is written, “*Hinei anochi sholeach lachem es Eliyahu Hanavi* – Behold, I shall **send** you Eliyahu the prophet.” (*Malachi* 3:23). Clearly, there is a connection between these two ideas that we must understand.

*Rabbeinu Bechaye*, based on the *Zohar Hakadosh*, explains that this mitzvah is meant to awaken and intensify Hashem's mercy on His creations. When one sends away the mother bird, she cries with such pain that she wants to kill herself. The angel of the birds begs Hashem for mercy, as He is merciful to all His creations. At that

moment, Hashem, as it were, says, “Who will have mercy on My children that are without a home?” Hashem Himself then extends an outpouring of His mercy to alleviate the suffering of all those in exile.

Indeed, the cry of a mother for her children, or of a woman who yearns for children, is one of the main motifs of Rosh Hashanah, notes Rav Schlesinger in *Eleh Heim Moadai*. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we read about Sara Imeinu's pain in childlessness, Hagar who cried at the plight of her child, and Chana who longed to have children. On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we read about the birth of Rivka Imeinu, and the Haftorah about Rachel Imeinu crying for her children. The sound of the Shofar recalls the cries of Sisera's mother waiting for her son to return from battle. The power of a mother's cries is a mighty force to arouse mercy from Above, and for Hashem to grant compassion to His people.

Rav Bick in *Chayei Moshe* comments on

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the language of the mitzvah, “*Ki yikarei* -if you come across,” i.e., if you “happen upon” a bird’s nest. One must recognize that nothing in life is happenstance, rather opportunities to do mitzvot present themselves to give us merit. When we can integrate this level of faith, intimately feeling Hashem’s deep and close guidance, we bring the redemption closer.

There are many mystical ideas linked to this mitzvah, writes Rav Friedman in *Shivlei Pinchas*. The *Zohar Hakadosh* teaches that the place where Mashiach is waiting to reveal himself is referred to as “*kan tzipor* – a bird’s nest.” Thus, the acronym “*keitz*,” literally meaning “end”, is the word we use to express the redemption. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz notes that there are 150 chapters in Tehillim, the numerical value of “*keitz*”; reciting Tehillim is a *segulah* to bring Mashiach.

Rav Pincus in *Zera Shimshon* notes that in addition to bringing redemption closer, the mitzvah of *shiluach haken* is a *segulah* for one to have children. Indeed, the two are strongly interconnected. Mashiach will only come when all the souls leave the “*guf*”, the place where all souls are waiting in heaven. Each time a child is born, the redemption is brought one step closer. Rachel Imeinu is the quintessential mother crying for her children, “*al beneha ki einenu*.” She yearns, so to speak, for all the *neshamot* to be born. “*Vehabanim tikach lach* – and then you may take the young,” refers to the *neshamot* being taken from their storehouse down to this world to hasten the Final Redemption, may it come speedily in our days. ■



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Men's Talmud-Sanhedrin  
Perek 4 **Rabbi Jeff  
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MON, SEP 12

**9:15 AM**

Special class with  
**Paula Weber** (L'Ayla)

**10:30 AM**

The Thought of Rav  
Soloveitchik  
**Rabbi Aaron  
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Minchat Chinuch-Meaning  
in Mitzvot **Rabbi Yitzchak  
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**10:30AM**

Parshat HaShavua  
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**6:30 PM**

Halacha Brought to Life (The Bais)  
**Rabbi Kalman Flaks**

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**Rabbi Tzvi Mauner**

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Medina and Halacha  
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**10:15 AM**

Contemporary Issues in  
Halacha and Hashkafa  
**Rabbi Anthony  
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**11:30 AM**

Great Jewish Thinkers  
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**Rabbi Neil Winkler**

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Halachic Controversies  
**Rabbi Aschi Dick**  
(The Bais)

### SPECIAL EVENT

**8:00PM**

Atid Elul Midrasha  
for Young Olot

## THURS, SEP 15

**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  
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Halacha, 7:00PM Wed  
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**Rebbetzin Shatz**  
(L'Ayla)-Insights of  
Chazal- Tues, 5:00PM

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## For Others

When the Lubavitcher Rebbe shared the following story, which he heard from his father in law, the Frieddiker, or ‘Previous’ Rebbe, he remarked that there was a time when the chassidim refrained from sharing it publicly....

One Yom Kippur morning, Reb Shneur Zalman, the Alter Rebbe, stood in shul among his chassidim, deep in *deveikus*, when suddenly he became motionless, gazing into space. Snapping out of the trance, he closed his *sid-dur*, took off his *tallis* and *kittel*, and walked briskly out the front door.

Concerned, as well as curious, one *chassid* followed him at a distance, as the Rebbe strode along an icy road leading to the edge of the city, and then onto a footpath entering the woods. The *chassid* was stunned to see that when the great Alter Rebbe stopped at a clearing, he picked up an ax and began chopping wood. Then he carried the wood into a small house and, through the frosty window, he was visibly stoking a fire, heating water, making soup, and dipping a towel into the remaining water. Each of these activities was strictly prohibited on Yom Kippur!

However, when the *chassid* caught sight of the Rebbe serving the soup to a woman inside, who was helplessly shivering under her blankets, clutching a newborn baby... he understood.

The Rebbe expounded on this story of *chesed* and sacrifice:

*“Immersed in prayer, dressed in his tallis and kittel like a malach, the exalted spiritual level and deveikus that the Alter Rebbe reached on Yom Kippur is beyond our comprehension. Even so, the Alter Rebbe took off his tallis and kittel and went to the edge of the city, just to help bring another Jew into the world. This story also illustrates the necessity for action and doing all that we can in the service of others... This was the way of the Alter Rebbe: without pausing to draw up accounts, he interrupted his avodah in order to help a simple Jew, waiving his gashmiyus (physical well-being) and even his ruchniyus (spiritual pursuits) for the sake of loving another.*

Of the numerous *mitzvos* commanded in our *sedra*, the Torah forbids welcoming any male of Moavite or Ammonite descent as a convert:

לֹא־יָבֹא עִמּוֹנִי וּמוֹאָבִי בְּקֹהֶל ה' גַּם דּוֹר עֲשִׂירִי לֹא־יָבֹא לָהֶם  
בְּקֹהֶל ה' עַד־עוֹלָם: עַל־דֵּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־קִדְּמוּ אֹתָם בְּלָחֶם  
וּבִמִּים בְּדָרֶךְ בְּצִאתָם מִמִּצְרָיִם...

No one from the nation of Amon of Moav shall be admitted into the congregation of Hashem; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall be admitted into the congregation of Hashem... because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey after you left Egypt... (23:4-5)

*Sefer haChinuch* explored the essence of

this law and suggests a reason for the underlying principle:

והודיענו הכתוב מזה, גודל מעלת גמילות חסדים והרחקת מדת הנבלה והכילות, ועל כן צונו לקבוע שגנה עמהם שהשחיתו והתעיבו להראות תכלית רשעם ונבלותם, שלא להקדים אפילו בלחם ובמים לקראת קהל גדול עיפי הדרך העוברים בגבולם...

From here the Torah informs us of the greatness of the virtue of acts of loving-kindness, and the need to distance oneself from villainy and stinginess. And therefore we are commanded to prescribe a hatred for them, as they were wicked and abominable, in order to display the fullness of their evil and villainy in not even greeting with bread and water a large congregation exhausted from the road, passing their border..."

One of the fundamental human traits that Hashem expects of us is to engage in *ahavas chesed*, loving-kindness. The idea of *chesed* transcends a simple definition, yet gives voice to the essence of being a Jew and a human being. With every act of service and kindness, the *tzelem Elokim*, the Divine likeness within a person, is given expression. With each such expression, that person more fully realizes his or her mission on this earth.

The cruel refusal of Amon and Moav to extend any help to the forlorn people at their border showed that they were at odds with the *tzelem Elokim* itself. This is why it would be impossible to welcome them into our spiritual community and our collective mission.

Rav Daniel Z. Feldman, Maggid shiur at Yeshiva University, wrote eloquently on the

the nature of the *midah* or quality of *chesed*: "...It is a feeling to possess, an attitude to maintain, an action to perform, a personality to develop, a mindset to cultivate, a habit to acquire, a perspective to apply; it is mandatory and voluntary, basic and extraordinary, routine and outstanding all at once. It is a birthright and an inheritance, and yet it is actualized only through personal initiative and commitment. The Jewish mission is to bring this trait to life in all of its manifestations, and to pursue every method and every opportunity to do so.... To quantify or to limit this endeavor in any way is to do no less than hold back the very development of what a human being can be.

.....

In the early 1980s, the Lubavitcher Rebbe began to speak on the importance of sharing the Torah's universal code of morality with the whole world through the Seven Laws of Noah. At that time, he related the above story, and said that if the Alter Rebbe could break the laws of the holiest day of the year to help a vulnerable person, then surely every Jew can set aside time to reach out to the rest of humanity.

As we approach the *Yamim Nora'im*, may we internalize the lesson learned from our sedra and turn our attention toward providing for the needs of others! ■

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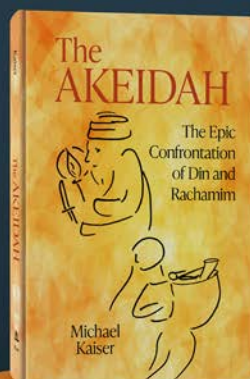


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## SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

One of the many experiences our family has repeatedly shared, has been the appearance on numerous occasions of birds' nests on the balcony of our home. Over the years, our daughter's reaction has matured from excitement, to indifference, to concern for the eggs we inevitably find within these nests.

Our Sedra, Parshat Ki Teitzei, contains within it the challenging mitzva of *Shiluach HaKen*- the mitzva to send away the mother bird.

*If you happen upon a bird's nest before you on the road, on any tree, or on the ground, and it contains hatchlings or eggs, if the mother is sitting upon the hatchlings or upon the eggs, you shall not take the mother upon the young. You shall send away the mother, and [then] you may take the young for yourself, in order that it should be good for you, and you should lengthen your days. (Devarim 22:6-7)*

There are many important details contained within these verses. First and foremost, the pesukim describe happening upon the nest, baderech while you are traveling, on the road, on the ground or in a tree ground before you. According to many poskim, the mitzva may thus not be performed by shooing away a mother bird from our own porch or yard, rather it is as the pesukim stipulate, if we happen upon the nest in a random place, while traveling outside, away from our own home.

The Rambam in the Moreh Nevuchim

points out two powerful ideas contained within the Torah's instruction to send away the mother bird.

First, we are concerned for the trauma it might cause the mother bird if we were to take the eggs or hatchlings within her sight, and therefore we are instructed to send away the mother bird. However the Rambam points out another important idea, our concern for the eggs and hatchlings themselves. The young underdeveloped hatchlings and small eggs, are probably not even truly edible or appropriate to be eaten! Despite our hunger, or human inclination, we are required to take the extra step of chasing away the mother bird,. This extra step, explains the Rambam, is meant to be an impediment that for most people will result in their letting go of any desire to take the eggs or hatchlings.

The mitzva of *Shiluach HaKen* therefore could really be categorized on two levels as a mitzva kiyumit- a mitzva which may indeed be fulfilled, but is not obligatory under all circumstances. First, if we do happen upon a bird's nest while traveling, according to most poskim, we may indeed follow the Torah's specific instructions, and fulfill the mitzva of sending away the mother bird, and taking the eggs to eat. However, the Rambam's insight, perhaps, gives us a different understanding of the mitzva inherent in these pesukim. Perhaps, the mitzva opportunity contained within the various details of this scenario, is specifically, as the Rambam

suggests, meant to condition us to rise above any natural inclination to serve our human desire and hunger, and rather channel our innate potential for emulating the compassionate midot of the Ribono Shel Olam.

The Kedushat Levi, Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zy'a, seemingly agrees with this train of thought. The Rebbe explained:

*The mitzva to send away the mother bird is not solely due to considerations of mercy for the mother bird's feelings, for if it were so, the Torah did not have to issue such a commandment, for Hashem himself could have taken care either of the mother bird or its young without leaving their fate to our sense of compassion. Hashem has many other ways and means of ensuring these birds' survival. Rather, the decree was issued to teach us to have compassion for every single one of Hashem's creatures...*

Yehi Ratson that each of us, during these days of Elul, should merit to take to heart this beautiful idea introduced in the Moreh Nevuchim and echoed by the words of the Kedushat Levi. May we be able to channel the mida of compassion not only when we happen upon a bird's nest, but also in our interactions with one another. ■



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## The Color of Redemption

The mitzvah of tzitzit is mentioned twice in the Torah. In parshat Ki Teitzei, tzitzit is embedded within an extensive list of seemingly unrelated mitzvot. The mitzvah of tzitzit is implanted in a section of halachot pertaining to travel, agricultural activity, house construction and, of course, personal clothing. It is an odd placement for the mitzvah of tzitzit.

We typically view tzitzit as part of a *ritual uniform*. By situating tzitzit within this broad list of human activity, the Torah underscores that mitzvot are all-pervasive. Religious experience isn't limited to the "house of study" or the prayer hall and it isn't confined solely to ritual ceremony. Hashem's will penetrates all precincts of the human condition, including travel, industry, domestic activity and personal clothing. Nothing is devoid of Hashem's will.

The "other" reference to tzitzit appears in parshat Shelach, at a very depressing stage of history. We had arrived at the doorstep of Jewish history and were primed to enter the Land of Hashem. Tragically, we slandered

Israel, balked at this epic opportunity, and were sentenced to a 40-year detour through the hot deserts of Sinai.

Looking to restore the people's faith in a redemptive future, Hashem delivered the mitzvah of tzitzit. As the Torah articulates, tzitzit elicits awareness of all mitzvot- חזרתם ו' את כל מצוותה' and, additionally, tzitzit recall our Exodus from Mitzrayim. Something about this mitzvah stokes our redemptive vision.

### An "all-access" color

The blue dye of t'chelet, mentioned in the "redemptive" tzitzit section of Shelach, but omitted from the more technical section of Ki



Teitzei, is an evocative color. The gemara in Menachot (43b) claims that tchelet-blue evokes the azure blue of the ocean, which in turn, conjures the blue horizon of the sky, which itself, alludes to the blue sapphire base of Hashem's heavenly throne. Through the color of t'chelet, aided by a little imagination,

we can trace our way to the divine throne in heaven.

After the meraglim debacle our entry to Israel was severely delayed, and our encounter with the heavenly city of Yerushalayim was deferred. Though we could not physically stand in Yerushalayim under the gates of heaven, we could still virtually gaze at the gates of heaven- through t'chelet. The





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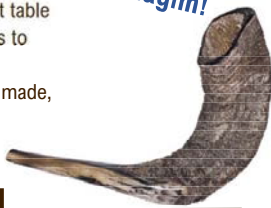
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“t’chelet ticket” to Yerushalayim wasn’t just a consolation for that generation, but an opportunity for every Jew who could not visit the city they so deeply longed for. Even at a distance from the heavenly city we could always pray in her direction and additionally, could be transported to the gates of heaven through a quick glance at the blue strings of tzizit. T’chelet was a blue ticket back to Yerushalayim.

### **Princely nobility**

Additionally, the t’chelet blue dye showcases our lofty rank as Hashem’s children. In antiquity this blue dye, extracted from the blood of sea-mollusks, was inordinately expensive. Cheaper dyes were harvested from plants or tree saps, but this luxurious and visually stunning pigment was animal-based. Being so pricey, it was reserved solely for the affluent and the noble. Stiff

penalties were levied for illegal possession or illegal sporting of contraband tchelet. It was the aristocratic color of the upper. The politics of color were quite rigid.

Yet, every Jew wore four stringlets of t’chelet upon each of their garments. We may not be an affluent aristocracy, but we are all princely. As Hashem’s selected children, we conduct ourselves with the class and dignity of our station. T’chelet dye always reminded us to conduct ourselves with the self-respect and pride of nobility. T’chelet was our badge of honor.

In the aftermath of the meraglim, this message was especially resonant. We may have betrayed our covenant with Hashem, and we may have been condemned to certain death. Yet, as far as we fell, we were still princes of history, chosen to represent Hashem in this world, and bearing t’chelet dye reminded us

of our noble mission.

### **A “Lost” color**

Sadly, for thousands of years we lost t’chelet, and with that loss our ticket to heaven expired, and our token of Jewish nobility vanished. Ironically, the color which was intended to connect us to heaven and remind us of our inalienable nobility was lost to Jewish exile. For thousands of years, without access to t’chelet, we maintained a shell-performance of the mitzvah. From a purely *halachic* standpoint the blue strings aren’t crucial to the performance of the mitzvah. As the Mishnah in Menachot (38a) rules, t’chelet strings aren’t “me’akeiv”, which means their absence from tzitzit doesn’t disable the mitzvah. For much of our exile, we fulfilled the kernel of the mitzvah even without t’chelet. Even though the formal mitzvah wasn’t diminished, the overall experience was clearly impacted. We lost our colorful ticket to heaven, and we lost our vivid reminder of Jewish nobility.

### **Blue became yellow**

Tragically, we didn’t just forfeit the t’chelet, but witnessed in horror, as our blue pride turned to yellow shame. As early as the eighth-century Jews were forced to wear demeaning badges -more often than not, colored yellow or faded white. This policy wasn’t just a strategy to distinguish Jews from their neighbors, but was an attempt to humiliate Jews by forcing them to wear faded and colorless badges.

In an edict of 1215 Pope Innocent III justified the yellow badge policy based upon the mitzvah of tzitzit:

“we decree that such Jews .... in every Christian province ....shall be marked off in the eyes of the public from other peoples through the character of their dress.

Particularly, since it may be read in the writings of Moses [[Numbers 15:37–41](#)], that this very law has been enjoined upon them.”

What had once been a royal badge of sparkling blue had now deteriorated into a faded and yellowing badge of embarrassment. The color schemes of the illustrious period of Jewish history were replaced with colors of debasement and subjugation. History was discolored.

### **The return of blue**

As part of our return to Israel and our return to history we have resurrected our original badge of honor. In his redemptive essay entitled “Ikvita D’meshicha” (the Messianic era), the Chofetz Chaim claimed that, toward the end of history Jews will be particularly committed to the mitzvah of tzitzit!! We have begun to express his prophecy! We have recovered the full spectrum of tzitzit, once again combining blue and white strings in a complete mitzvah. Once again, we walk proud in this world, with the royal blue dye on our tzitzit and on our national flag.

Once again, we stand in Yerushalayim, gazing at our t’chelet strings while glancing upward at the actual gates of heaven. The restoration of blue t’chelet has dovetailed with the resurrection of Jewish history. Yellow has become blue, shame has become pride. We are back in blue.

### **A New color**

To this palette of history, we have inserted an additional color. For the first time in 1900 years since the defeat of Rabbi Akiva and Bar Kochba, we have restored the tradition of Jewish soldier-scholars. As a teacher in a hesder yeshiva, I am exhilarated by the prospect that I am part of the restoration of this lost tradition. What a zechut!

As part of this shift, a new color has become synonymous with Jewish pride. Green

uniforms of Israeli soldiers have become a symbol of national dreams and messianic hopes. For centuries we lived in abject terror of soldiers and policemen. We finally have a Jewish army to protect us, and Israeli soldiers dressed in army fatigues is a visual affirmation of the great shift in history.

One of the most gratifying scenes in Israel is watching an Israeli soldier dressed in a green army uniform, wrapped in blue t'chelet tzitzit. History is closing and all the colors are merging. Green and blue have replaced yellow and white, and our world has become colored with redemption. ■

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# Fulfilling Parashat Zachor on Ki Teitzei

**Question:** I heard a *chumra* that during a leap year, with 13 months between readings of *Parashat Zachor*, one should have in mind to fulfill the *mitzva* of *zechirat Amalek* during the reading of those *p'sukim* in *Ki Teitzei*. Should I do that (*shuls* do not usually announce it)?

**Answer:** The 13 month “concern” occurs the year **before** a leap year. Between *Parashat Zachor* 5782 (a leap year) and that of 5783, there will be 12 months + 2 days.

The main reasons to reject this *chumra* are that it is first raised around 200 years ago and it is still not widely followed, but analysis is both interesting and of limited use. The Torah does not give clear instructions on the timing of the *mitzva* of *zechirat Amalek*, but *Chazal* understood it is to be a yearly *mitzva*. The Torah was not concerned when other yearly *mitzvot* (e.g., the *mitzvot* of the *Seder*) have a 13 month gap between them, so why should *Zachor* be different?

The Chatam Sofer (Shut Even Haezer I:119) theorizes that the idea behind a yearly schedule is that the Torah commands

us not to forget what Amalek did, and there is precedence of forgetting after more than a year. His *talmid*, the Maharam Shick (on Sefer Hamitzvot 605), brings sources that forgetting happens after 12 months and reports that the Chatam Sofer would have in mind during *Ki Teitzei*'s reading to fulfill the *mitzva* in the years it was “necessary” (**theoretically** including this year due to the 2 days). Others (see Mo'adim U'zmanim II:166) point out that the Chatam Sofer writes that we can learn the laws of *zechirat Amalek* from those of *batei arei choma*, which are also connected to forgetting, and yet a year is the cut-off point even in a leap year (Arachin 31a). He explains that forgetting is impacted by the Jewish year cycle more than 12 months. Therefore, the leap year is not a problem for *Zachor*.

There are also reasons to reject the assumptions behind the Chatam Sofer's question. For one, who says that we need to read *Parashat Zachor* (*mitzva* #603) to not forget Amalek (#605)? The *gemara* (Megilla 18a) says that *zechira* must be done orally from a written text, whereas forgetting depends on the heart. So as long as a person has given thought to the story of Amalek within the critical time period, even without intention for the *mitzva*, he will not forget, and he can do the active, oral *mitzva* at the prescribed time. Many (including the Mo'adim U'zmanim) disagree with the Chatam Sofer's *chiddush* that concern of



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forgetting defines precisely the oral *mitzva* of *Zachor*. Also, since it is very possible that having *Zachor* done from a *sefer Torah* with a *minyan* is only a Rabbinic *mitzva* (see Minchat Chinuch #603), it is questionable whether it requires *kavana* (see Mishna Berura 60:10).

If one wants to have *kavana* during the *Ki Teitzei* reading, is that enough? The Har Tzvi (OC I:58) leaves as a question whether the *ba'al korei* must have *kavana* to be *motzi* one for this mitzva or whether it is enough he is reading on behalf of everyone in the *shul*. The Pri Megadim (EA 692:1) says that in order for *Shehecheyanu* recited at *Megilla* reading to cover all of Purim's *mitzvot*, the *Megilla* reader should have the *beracha's* broad use in mind, but there may be counter implications in other sources (see Har Tzvi *ibid.*; Magen Avraham 685). Perhaps also, since the *mitzva* is performed only as part of a community (see *ibid.*), the *minyan*, not just individuals, needs the appropriate *kavana*. Possibly, the *Ki Teitzei* reading cannot help. Divrei Yoel (OC I, 33) says the *mitzva* can only be performed around the time of Purim.

In practice, while there could be value in people having in mind for *Zachor* on *Ki Teitzei*, there is nothing compelling enough to create a new *minhag* because of leap years. If someone missed *Parashat Zachor* and faces the prospect of going two years, it pays for him to have intention for it. Therefore, it

behooves a *ba'al korei* (he loses nothing) to have that in mind. Only a *shul* that likes to incorporate *chumrot* – in a wise manner – should consider instituting announcing that people should have such *kavana*. ■

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**RABBI AARON**

Editor, Torah Tidbits

**GOLDSCHIEDER**

As we reach the halfway point in the month of Elul we open our hearts to thoughts of teshuva and personal growth. The following anecdotes concerning the tzaddik, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook zt”l remind us to place emphasis on being forgiving of others.

## The Greatest Tikun

The eminent *Admor of Talne*, Rebbe Yochanan Twersky (1906-1981) lived in Israel during his younger years and merited to forge a close bond with Rav Kook. Sadly, he often witnessed first-hand the staunch opposition and, at times, vicious attacks on Rav Kook. “What impacted me most about his personality was his ability to be *maavir al midotav*, not to hold a grudge and be entirely forgiving of others. I saw many great Rabbis and *Admorim* in my day but none possessed the heightened degree of compassion and forgiveness that Rav Kook embodied. This is an attribute we strive to emulate.”

The Talne Rebbe added this note: “It is well known that the Kabbalistic

tradition teaches that one can attain the highest states of spiritual ascent (*tikunim*) through fasting and self affliction (*sigufim*). But in my mind, all of these methods do not compare to the power of a single time that one sincerely forgives one who has inflicted pain and has been hurtful. This is the greatest *tikun* of them all. Rav Kook was a person who excelled in this most sacred *midah* (character trait).” (*Heichal Haahava*, p.241)

In a similar vein, the following episode was related by Rav Kook’s beloved friend and colleague, Rav Aryeh Levin, *the Tzadik of Yerushalayim*:



Rav Kook



Rav Aryeh Levin

Oftentimes Rav Kook was relentlessly harassed and vilified by eccentric Orthodox groups. They were intent on embittering his life. They stalked him, mocked him, and would post defamatory notices all over Jerusalem. Rav Aryeh Levin’s daughter was once standing on a balcony in *Meah Shearim* and saw Rav Kook pass below on his way to deliver a shiur in the synagogue nearby. She was horrified to see and hear a group of zealots jeering and went so far as to close him in and knock his fur hat onto the ground. “The site of this,” said Reb Aryeh Levin, “tormented her for days afterwards and she could not help



recalling this painful event.”

“I said to myself: ‘I must go and see Rav Kook and give him encouragement in the midst of this difficult and tense time.’ Knowing that Rav Kook was occupied every second of the day, I thought it would be best to visit him late at night. I entered the *beit midrash* of Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav, where I found him immersed in study, utterly oblivious to my presence. I sat on a bench and began learning while I waited. There was no one there apart from Rav Kook and myself.

“Rav Kook suddenly looked up and noticed me. He knew why I had come. ‘Believe me,’ he said, ‘It is especially during trying times that I merit a surge of Divine help in my studies and *Chidushei Torah* [new interpretations of the Law]. I see the words of *Kohelet* spring forth to life: “God seeks those who are persecuted (*Kohelet* 3:15).”

Evidently, along with Rav Kook’s ability to withstand the torment of others he utilized those moments to seek God’s closeness. He was able to transform such times of turmoil into elevated experiences that served to enrich his perceptions and enhance his spiritual growth. (‘A Tzaddik For Eternity,’ Raz, pp. 259-261) ■

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## DIVREI MENACHEM

BY MENACHEM PERSOFF

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# Parents Take Note!

This week's Parsha contains a plethora of mitzvot designed to protect family and social relationships in the new community in Eretz Yisrael. Now Bnei Yisrael will have to learn to live among themselves, respect justice, maintain their moral fiber, and take care of each other in matters related to civic life.

Notably, the Parsha opens with the topic of the beautiful captive woman whom the captor desires. Then, after the restrictions of that issue are recorded, the Parsha discusses inheritance, where a younger son is favored over the firstborn.

Then the matter of the wayward son, “disobedient and recalcitrant,” is raised as another topic where the relationship between father and son is critical. In the former case, the father sees his firstborn as his inheritor, continuing to support the family. In the latter instance, the father sees his son as a glutton and drunkard who will ultimately squander his wealth (Sanhedrin 72a) – and possibly, he is the offspring of that captive woman!

Surprisingly, the parents must bring their delinquent son to the elders for judgment, even though close relatives are generally forbidden as witnesses. The Talmud

relates, however, that the *totality* of the many criteria by which the child could be put to death never occurred and will never be realized in practice.

For example, the son must have *just reached* adolescence when he is most susceptible to awakening tendencies. Furthermore, both parents must concur that “our son does not listen to *our* voice” after they chastised him in front of three people. Moreover, Rashi comments that the rebellious son is not subject to the death penalty until (a) he proves to be a thief and (b) consumes an excessive and defined amount of flesh and drink in one meal.

These seemingly unfeasible conditions do not take away from the Torah's intent. The implication (reinforced in the next Passuk that talks of a man deserving of the death penalty) is that sooner or later, the “rebellious son” will commit deeds deserving of capital punishment (ibid 71b, 72a).

Rabbi Hirsch sees in these lines a paramount lesson. Responsible for their children's education, parents must work in harmony, be consistent, treat their offspring with dignity, and promote values that negate the overriding prominence of “food and drink.” Today, in our open society, where individualistic notions and entitlement are so prevalent, these words appear more appropriate than ever. ■

Menachem Persoff



## Real Life Rescues

### Saving The Entire World During A Car Accident

On August 15, a pedestrian was struck by a car on Hahistadrut Street in Holon, sustaining significant head trauma. The broken windshield had a spider web crack which indicated that this was a high-intensity crash. A panicked eye-witness called for emergency services.

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When Chen got to the scene he found a 40-year-old pedestrian lying unconscious on the asphalt. Chen hurried to check the person's vital signs and found that the victim still had a steady pulse.

Chen attached oxygen to a nonrebreather mask and gently put it over the patient's mouth and nose very carefully so as not to cause any further injury should the person have suffered a neck or spine injury. By doing so, Chen stabilized his patient with high-flow oxygen as additional emergency resources arrived. As the injured man was prepared for transport and placed in the ambulance, Chen turned his attention to the driver of the car.

In addition to being an EMT, Chen is also a member of the organization's Psychotrauma and Crisis Response Unit (PCRU) and is trained at providing Psychological First Aid at the scene of traumatic medical emergencies in order to provide emotional and psychological stabilization. Chen spoke to the agitated driver who was suffering some distress after the accident and stabilized him for the next 15 minutes. Chen also provided information that was asked by the traffic accident inspector and ended up staying with the driver for the next two hours.

"Whenever there is an emergency, I drop whatever I am doing and rush to help," said Chen

who works as a truck driver and is married with four children.

"Knowing that I am helping others has a major impact on who I am and helps me instill the proper ideals in my children. I very much identify with the statement from the Talmud that says, "Whoever saves a single life in Israel, it is considered as if he saved an entire world". (from - Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5).



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### Shlomo Rayman Beit Shemesh Chapter Director The Rebellious Teen

As someone who has been working with teenagers for the past couple of years, I find the fate of the **בן סורר ומורה**, the wayward and rebellious child, quite troubling. Why is a teenager who is acting rebellious, or in other words like a teenager, sentenced to death?! How can we understand this unfair and extreme response?

There is an opinion in the Gemara, that this death sentence was never actually carried out, due to the many near impossible requirements to be a **בן סורר ומורה**. What then, is the purpose of this law? Rav Shlomo Sason has a fascinating approach. The punishment of the **בן סורר ומורה** was never supposed to be carried out, the purpose was to save the child from an abusive home! In many ancient cultures parents were allowed to kill their rebellious children. This law in the Torah caused these parents to instead bring them to the courts, where they would be exonerated on a technicality. Once the issue was made public, the authorities were able to properly help

the abused and rebellious child. This fits the theme of the rest of Parshat Ki Teitzei, of helping the helpless and protecting the unprotected.

Unfortunately, abuse is not something unique to ancient cultures. We need to be vigilant about preventing abuse in our communities, calling it out, creating more transparency, and doing all we can to help the helpless and protect the unprotected.



### Leora Kashnow 11th Grade, Beit Shemesh

#### Why Should I Even Try?

Chazal say there are three scenarios where one is obligated to give up his life. Aside from the 'big three', we are commanded **"וחי בהם"** - to live. Not just to live a regular life, but **"בחרת"** - בחיים - we should choose to live a positive, active and fulfilling life.

Why do we need to keep our lives going? Not just 'going', but to make sure our life is fulfilling as well. Why can't we just give up when things get hard?

The Pasuk in this parsha says: **"זכרת כי עבד"** היית במצריים ויפדך ה' אלוקיך משם על כן אנוכי מצוך לעשות את הדבר הזה

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hard for you, I do challenge you, and I did send you to slavery. However, I also redeem you and give you the tools and the strength to get through the challenges I set for you. This in turn gives us true pleasure.

Hashem brings people into this world with a purpose. He sends us challenges in order to make us feel accomplished, which brings us true pleasure.

Many people falsely think that the opposite of pleasure is pain. But that is untrue. Pleasure comes from hard work and accomplishment and being able to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

The opposite of pleasure is complacency; to sit back and just watch life happen, let opportunities go by without acting, and to not analyze the tools and talents a person has to meet their potential.

Letting life fly by you without moving a finger is the most depressing and saddest thing for a person. But, when we realize that Hashem is waiting for us and putting us in the driver's seat, it's empowering, invigorating, and exciting. Even when things don't work out exactly the way we want, just the knowledge that Hashem is letting us sit in the cockpit of this plane, gives us the drive and the energy to push hard and to work hard. חזק ואמץ! ■

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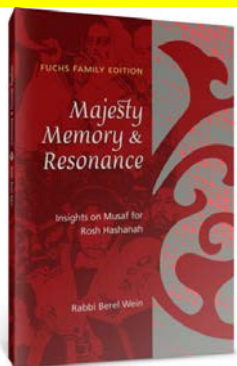
# **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

***THIS TUESDAY NIGHT, SEPTEMBER 13***

**at 8:00 PM at**

**Beit Knesset Hanassi (& on Zoom)**

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