

^{ב"ה} *Torah* **Tidbits**

ISSUE 1508 MAR 11TH '23 י"ח אדר תשפ"ג

פרשת כי תשא

PARSHAT KI TISA - SHABBAT PARAH

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**אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי...
לְזַרְעֶךָ אֶת־נַחֲלָה**

שמות לג:



Probing the Prophets
Rabbi Nachman Winkler
Faculty, OU Israel Center
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Simchat Shmuel
Rabbi Sam Shor
Program Director, OU Israel Center
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YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TISA
CANDLES 5:07PM • HAVDALA 6:21PM • RABBEINU TAM 7:01PM



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This week's Torah Tidbits cover image!

Photo by: Julian Alper

My wife and I made Aliyah to Tverya in 2014, from Manchester UK. We feel blessed to live in the North of Israel surrounded by Hashem's wonderful world of nature. This photo, of a plain tiger butterfly, was taken in the nearby Hula Valley. The life cycle of butterflies is an incredible adventure in metamorphosis. From eggs, caterpillars are hatched which subsequently sort of die, forming a chrysalis from which a beautiful butterfly develops. Likewise, we, who were born in Chutz L'Aretz went through various phases in our lives, and have only reached our full potential with our Aliyah to Israel, to the land Hashem promised to our forefathers.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



CANDLES	KI TISA	HAVDALA	VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI	
			Candles	Havdala
5:07	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	6:21	5:12	6:26
5:25	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	6:23	5:30	6:28
5:26	Beit Shemesh / RBS	6:22	5:31	6:26
5:23	Gush Etzion	6:21	5:28	6:26
5:24	Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	6:22	5:29	6:27
5:24	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	6:21	5:29	6:26
5:24	Netanya	6:22	5:29	6:27
5:25	Be'er Sheva	6:22	5:29	6:27
5:24	Rehovot	6:22	5:29	6:27
5:07	Petach Tikva	6:22	5:12	6:27
5:23	Ginot Shomron	6:21	5:28	6:26
5:13	Haifa / Zichron	6:22	5:19	6:27
5:22	Gush Shiloh	6:20	5:27	6:25
5:24	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	6:22	5:29	6:27
5:27	Giv'at Ze'ev	6:21	5:32	6:26
5:23	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:21	5:28	6:26
5:25	Ashkelon	6:23	5:30	6:28
5:24	Yad Binyamin	6:22	5:29	6:27
5:16	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	6:20	5:21	6:25
5:21	Golan	6:19	5:26	6:24
Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 7:01PM • next week - 7:06pm				

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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JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat
March 8-18 / 15-25 Adar

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:08 - 4:55
Sunrise	5:58 - 5:46
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	8:54 - 8:46
Magen Avraham	8:18 - 8:10
Sof Zman Tefila	9:53 - 9:47
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:50 - 11:47
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:20 - 12:17
Plag Mincha	4:28 - 4:33
Sunset (Including Elevation)	5:46 - 5:53



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



Every Shabbat, my wife and I experience *Nachat* when our two youngest children – Mordechai who is ten years old and Moriah who is seven – join us at the 6:50 am *minyan* at our shul. Moriah sits with Pnina and Mordechai sits with me. He has a beautiful habit of going and standing by the *Bima* during *Torah* reading. Since he is fluent in Hebrew, he understands the words and usually follows along.

The book of *Beresheit* and the beginning of the book of *Shemot* are interesting to listen to. The stories of the *Avot* and *Imahot* (forefathers and foremothers), followed by the stories in Egypt and the miracles of the ten plagues and the splitting of the sea are easy for him to understand.

After listening to the *parsha*, Mordechai goes out for a break during the *Haftorah* and then returns to *daven Musaf*. This past week, I looked up during *shlishi* and noticed that he had already left. The nuances and repetition in the *parshiyot* about the building of the *Mishkan* (tabernacle) and its vessels are hard for adults to follow, all the

more so kids.

As adults, most of us stay in *Shul* and listen to the Torah reading even when we don't fully understand it or have a harder time relating to the concepts. We know that even Moshe Rabeinu had to be shown an image to fully understand. Similarly, when learning different areas of *Halacha* there are concepts that are hard to grasp.

How do we create a situation in which the next generation is connected to what they are learning?

One answer is to come up with modern day scenarios comparable to the cases in the sources. For example, children can't relate to an ox doing damage, but if we modernize it as a Tesla crashing into a Chevy the *Halachic* scenario becomes more relatable. Another answer is for them to experience what they are learning about, whether via pictures, videos, acting out scenarios or building models with their own hands.

There are resources available to help the younger generation better understand the *parshiyot* of the *Mishkan*. (Perhaps we as adults should utilize them as well... especially if we use this as a bonding opportunity with the children in our lives.) Artscroll's *The Mishkan, Its Structure and Its Sacred Vessels* is a book which brings

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the verses to life through beautiful color pictures and explanations. A visit to the ancient Shilo or to *Machon HaMikdash* is a powerful way for everyone to learn about the sacred vessels in the *Mishkan* and *Beit HaMikdash*. Another amazing tool is a build your own model of the *Mishkan* kit by Neshuma, an Israeli company which creates educational art kits to help make different aspects of Judaism more relatable.

I recall building a model of the *Beit HaMikdash* as a child for *Tisha B'Av* and then watching it burn. The image is clear in my mind decades later. Building the model was an excellent tool for learning and understanding. Therefore, I was excited to see that children can use Neshuma's kit to learn about and appreciate the *Mishkan*. (For more information and purchase kits visit: facebook.com/

In loving memory of
לעילוי נשמת

**Dr. Abraham
Abba Walker z"l**

**אברהם אבא
בן שלמה ז"ל**



On his 39th Yahrzeit -
אדר 11

May the midot he taught live on
in all those whose lives he touched.

Daddy, you are always in my heart.

*Tami (Shulamit Chana) Walker,
Eitan Abba (grandson)
and Eitan's aishet chayil - Sarah Yehudit*

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Experiential education is a focus of our work at OU Israel. Studies have shown that summer camps are incredibly effective for educating youth and ingraining values into their day to day lives. Camp Dror staff work year-round on creating a value based, fun, engaging curriculum and schedule for camp.

OU Israel Youth Centers and NCSY Israel place a strong focus on experiential learning as well, engaging teens in ways that they can relate to and internalize. NCSY's Winter Regional Shabbaton which took place in Moshav Nechalim is a prime example. We had a record 215 people who came to socialize and be inspired



NCSY's Winter Regional Shabbaton

while strengthening their connection to living in Israel. The entire NCSY Israel staff, led by co-directors Rabbi Yosef Ginsberg and Rabbi Michael Kahn did an incredible job. Kudos to Educational Director Shlomo Ray-

man who developed the theme and materials for the Shabbaton which focused on the teens' unique talents and abilities and how we can contribute to *Am Yisrael*. Sessions included a "choose your own

adventure" where teens could pick small group discussions on "Faith and God" or "Life as an Anglo teen in Israel" or join a Q&A with select staff.

I encourage all of us to take advantage of the tools, resources and programs available to help connect the next generation to the values and *Halachot* of our beautiful religion – they are our future!

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

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

May the Torah learning from
this issue be in loving memory of
Harry Silverberg z"l
השל בן אברהם ז"ל

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grandfather, great grandfather
On his 43rd yartzheit - 19 Adar A

Malka & Avraham Shrybman

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FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER



OU Executive Vice President

Determined Patience

Anticipation, waiting, looking forward. It is a difficult task to do these patiently, remaining focused on the goal and willing to wait for it, however long it takes. Yet it is that kind of dreaming and discipline that keeps us aiming high and avoiding settling for mediocrity.

This tension was at the core of the story of the Golden Calf, the *Eigel Hazahav*, in which the Jewish people ran out of patience, lowering their standards and expectations from living under the leadership of the saintly Moshe to following the image of an animal. What a shocking change! Yet, they made that adjustment because – after all – Moshe had been gone for forty days and they could now conceive of life without him.

This same issue may be the intent of the familiar verses about Shabbos that are found immediately before the story of the

Golden Calf (*Shemos* 31:16). “*V’shomru b’nei Yisrael es Hashabbos*. The Jewish people shall guard the Shabbos so as to make the Shabbos an eternal covenant for their generations.” The *Ohr HaChaim* suggests that the mandate to “guard the Shabbos,” or, “*v’shomru*,” relates to the use of that same term describing Yaakov’s attitude towards Yosef’s dreams, where it is written (*Bereishis* 37:11) that “his father guarded the matter, *v’aviv shamar es hadavar*. There we are taught by Rashi that the term implies a carefully guarded hope, where Yaakov was waiting and anticipating the fulfillment of Yosef’s dream.

It was this anticipation that prevented Yaakov from becoming reconciled with the loss of Yosef as he maintained the hope and dream of being reunited with and seeing the future leadership of Yosef (37:35; see Rashi there). He could easily have become resigned to the apparent reality of Yosef’s death, but he chose to dream on, and the dream was ultimately fulfilled.

That is how we “make the Shabbos.” We

In memory of
Prof. Dr. Dan Vogel z"l

פנחס דוד בן שלמה שמעון ז"ל

on his 8th yahrzeit

*The Vogel, Bass, Mandelbaum,
Dimant and Spielman families
and the Yogev family*

May the Torah learning
from this issue be

לעלוי נשמת אמי מורתי

חיה אסתר בת ישראל משה ע"ה

Helen Winkler a"h

יח אדר א'

Rabbi Yehoshua & Yocheved Bienenfeld

wait for it, holding on with anticipation for the special quality of that day, not allowing ourselves to settle into the mundane world of our weekdays. The more we “wait for Shabbos,” the more we long for something deeper and calmer, something more connected and sacred than our regular days, the more we will experience Shabbos in that way.

This same attitude stands as the basis for the core value of **צפייה לישועה**, the yearning for redemption that is expected of all of us. The world is not quite right, there is much that is still broken. The more we get comfortable with it as it is, the less likely we are to be able to see it arrive at its ultimate perfection.

Ours is the task of patience, waiting with determination to see our personal and collective dreams fulfilled, and never settling for anything less. ■

Lenny Davidman

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**Rabbi Reuven
Tradburks**
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The first third of the Parsha concludes instructions concerning the Mishkan. The rest of the Parsha is the story of the Golden Calf, concluding with reconciliation and forgiveness.

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



1st aliya (30:11-31:17) All are to give a **half shekel** to be an atonement. The offerings are brought from these funds – and hence, all the people are represented equally as a remembrance and atonement. Make a **wash basin** of copper. Place it outside the Mishkan area, near the altar. The Kohanim must wash their hands and feet before service. Make **spiced anointing oil** to anoint the Mishkan, all its utensils and the Kohanim. This recipe is not to be made for personal body lotions. Make **incense** to place in front of the ark, the place that I will meet you. This incense is holy of holies. It is not to be made for your olfactory pleasure. I have called **Bezalel** and filled him with the Divine spirit to master all means of craftsmanship, in metals and in

materials. He, with Ohaliav, will fashion all the things that I have commanded be made for the Mishkan. Keep **Shabbat** as a sign between Me and you for all time, for I am the One who sanctifies you. Do not do any melacha. It is an eternal sign for them that in six days I made the world and in the seventh ceased.

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

The instructions for the building of the Mishkan have been completed. As have the instructions for the Kohen's garments. The instructions here are all preparations; you won't be able to start the actual use of the Mishkan without these things. Money. Anointing oil to sanctify all the vessels. Wash basin. Incense. Have all these things ready for when the Mishkan is built.

The Kohanim were required to wash before the service. Hands and feet. Rashi says: put your right hand and right foot together and pour the water over both at once. Water is a recurring theme in the Torah. Harkening back to creation. Verse 2 of the Torah: And the spirit of G-d hovered over the waters. Water is a symbol of going back to Creation; a restart, reboot, recreation, fresh start.

But sometimes we immerse *in* the water; here, we don't go *into* the water, we *pour* the water on ourselves. Going into the water is submission; I let go of my autonomy and submerge myself into the water. Here, the Kohen is in charge. He pours the water. Pouring is assertive; immersing is submissive. Holiness is created not only by submission but also by man's assertiveness.

Man is G-d's partner in creating holiness.

The vessels of the Mishkan, including the Menorah and Shulchan only become holy through being anointed. Holiness requires man's hand. That is remarkable. Man is the partner of G-d in creating holiness.

Until we get to Shabbat. Holiness of Shabbat does not require man's action; it requires man's inaction. The Mishkan is tactile holiness, holiness of matter. Earthly holiness. Earthly holiness is created by man. Shabbat is the holiness of being, non-tactile. The holiness of time of Shabbat requires inaction, withdrawal. Being. Without creating. Holiness is a duality; of action and inaction, creation and withdrawal, partnering with G-d in its formation while deferring to the Holy One on Shabbat.



2nd aliya (31:18-33:11) Moshe is on the mountain receiving the luchot; the people below are making a golden calf. G-d tells Moshe: your people have made a golden calf. I will destroy them and begin anew with you, Moshe. Moshe pleads on their behalf. G-d relents. Moshe descends with Divinely inscribed tablets. He sees the golden calf, smashes the tablets. Moshe confronts Aharon. Aharon explains what happened. At the behest of Moshe, the Leviim punish the 3,000 guilty. Moshe ascends the mountain. He admits the sin of the people, asking for forgiveness. And if not, remove me from the book. G-d counters: those that sin will be the ones to be erased. Now, go, led by My angel and lead the people to the land. For I will not be in your midst lest you be destroyed. The people are distraught. Moshe moves the tent of meeting outside of the camp, for there G-d will now speak with

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him. A cloud descended; G-d spoke with Moshe. The people saw and bowed. G-d spoke to Moshe face to face, as people do.

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

Very little is said about the sin; but many many verses describe the forgiveness. While the story involves sin, its message is of forgiveness. It is the story of the love that endures after the sin. The people are not destroyed. The march to the Land of Israel continues. G-d continues to speak to

Moshe. Sin, idol worship no less, will happen; but He does not give up on man.



3rd aliya (33:12-16) Moshe challenges G-d: If I have found favor in your eyes, tell me Your

ways. That way I can act properly, for this is, after all, Your people. G-d: I will guide you. Moshe: Don't move us from here unless Your Face goes with us.

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



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

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

G-d acquiesces to Moshe's demand for closeness. To a point. Moshe presses on. Not just Your Face. Who are You? I want Your fullness, Your glory. G-d does not back off. I will reveal but with limits: glimpses from behind need suffice. This exchange is what we all sense in the challenge of this



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world. We see but we don't. We perceive, but from behind. We want a peak but must live without.



5th aliya (34:1-9) G-d instructs Moshe to make a second set of tablets. Moshe ascends the

mountain by himself. G-d descends in a cloud and he calls: G-d, G-d, Merciful... the 13 attributes of mercy. Moshe bows. And says: please be in our midst, for though the people are obstinate, forgive their sins.

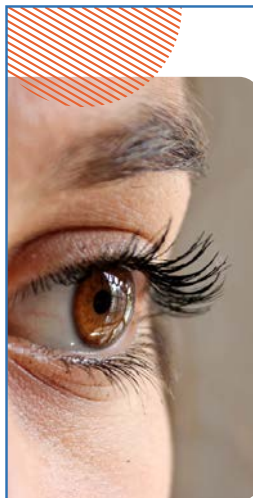
When G-d descends and he calls out "G-d is Merciful" – who is the He? Is G-d describing Himself as Merciful or is Moshe calling out "oh Merciful One"? Is it G-d calling or Moshe calling? Does Moshe plead with G-d for mercy? Or does G-d Himself call out His own Name? The Talmud says that G-d is the One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



6th aliya (34:10-26)

G-d responded: I am making a cove-

nant. You will see signs and wonders, G-d's work that is awesome. You keep what I command. Don't make a pact with the people in the Land, for it will lead to you worshipping idols, and to marriage with them. Keep our festivals, our Shabbat, our laws in our Temple.



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



7th **aliya (34:27-35)** Moshe was on the mountain for 40 days, writing the second set of the 10



STATS

21st of 54 sedras; 9th of 11 in Sh'mot
Written on 245.17 lines in a Torah (8th)
14 Parshiot; 10 open, 4 closed
139 p'sukim (10th), 1st in Sh'mot
2002 words (5th), 1st in Shmot
7424 letters (8th), 1st in Sh'mot
Large sedra in general plus relatively long p'sukim, which explains the jump in rank from 10th for p'sukim to 5th for words. Only 4 other sedra have more than 2000 words.



MITZVOT

9 mitzvot; 4 positives, 5 prohibitions
9 doesn't seem like very many mitzvot, but only 17 of the other 53 sedras (less than a third) have more mitzvot

commandments. As he descended with the tablets, his face shone. The people were afraid of him. Moshe instructed them in all that G-d spoke with him on the mountain. Moshe covered his face when he was with the people, uncovering it when G-d spoke with him.

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

MAFTIR ALIYAH

PARSHAT PARAH

BAMIDBAR 19:1-22

HAFTORAH

YEchezkel 36:16-36

This week's special haftorah mentions the "purifying waters" that G-d will sprinkle upon us with the coming of Moshiach. This follows the theme of this week's additional Torah reading — the purifying qualities of the "Parah Adumah"

The prophet Yechezkel transmits Hashem's

A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

In a theological discussion, Moshe asks to see G-d's glory. G-d answers Moshe: (לג:כג) והסרתני את כפי וראית את אחורי ופני לא יראו

"And I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." (33:23)

What is G-d offering to Moshe to see of Him?

Rashi quotes the Talmud Berachot 7 that G-d showed His back, the knot of His Tefillin, to Moshe, seemingly in literal fashion.

The Chatam Sofer (Rabbi Moshe Sofer 1762-1839) points out that the ways of G-d in His arranging of daily events are difficult for us to understand. Only in hindsight, after an entire series of events have completed its course, can we identify the direction which was established initially. Even occurrences which are distressing at the time, can reveal the fingerprints of G-d in retrospection.

The pasuk can be interpreted in terms of this understanding:

"You shall see My back (in hindsight) but not My face (not as history occurs)" -And you will see My ways in the end. At the end of Days all men will be able to understand the ultimate intentions of G-d.

Shabbat Shalom

message: The Israelites have defiled the Holy Land with their idol-worship and immoral ways. As a result, they will be sent into exile. “And they came to the nations where they came, and they profaned My Holy Name, inasmuch as it was said of them, ‘These are the people of G-d, and they have come out of His Land.’” So G-d will take them out of their exile — but not by virtue of the Israelites’ merits: “Not for your sake do I do this, O house of Israel, but for My Holy Name, which you have profaned among the nations.”

Hashem will bring the Israelites back to the Holy Land and purify them with the waters of the Para Adumah. The people will feel ashamed of their actions, and after they will have undergone the process of purification and repentance, G-d will rebuild the country and bestow upon it prosperity and bounty. ■



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THE PERSON

IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

OU Executive Vice President, Emeritus

Don't Take Down the Sign!

Times were very different then. When one of our books was torn, we didn't junk it. We took it to a little shop where a book-binder rebounded it.

When our briefcase (we didn't have backpacks then) was falling apart, we didn't discard it. Instead, we took it to that same shop where the proprietor stitched it and fixed it.

The proprietor of the shop that my friends and I frequented, down on the Lower East side of Manhattan, was an old man named Yossel.

Looking back, I now realize that Yossel, who was arthritic physically and far from genial emotionally, was a Holocaust survivor who eked out a meager livelihood by binding books, fixing broken zippers, and repairing all sorts of everyday tools and trinkets.

I remember once bringing some books to Yossel for rebinding and finding that the shop was closed. There was no sign on the door indicating that he was out to lunch, or that he had gone to pray, or when he would return.

So I came back to Yossel's shop several times that week, and then but occasionally for the next two or three months. His sign, advertising his services, was still suspended over his doorway. I had every reason to assume that he would eventually reopen.

Finally, one day I approached his shop, and saw that the sign over his door was taken down. Now I knew that Yossel was out of business.

This experience, hardly significant in its own right, took on a very profound meaning for me when I first heard an explanation, given by the great sage known as the Chofetz Chaim, of why the Torah calls the Sabbath a sign in this week's portion, *Ki Tisa*.

"The people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath... It shall be a sign for all time between Me and the people of Israel..." (*Exodus 31:16-17*)

The Chofetz Chaim explained that the Sabbath is like a sign on a shopkeeper's door. However far a Jew might stray, he is still connected to the Jewish people as long as he keeps the Sabbath in some manner. As long as there is a sign on the shopkeeper's door, he may one day return and reopen for business. But once the sign is removed, once Sabbath observance is

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totally abandoned, then even that tenuous connection is severed.

It occurs to me that just as there are all sorts of signs, and Yossel's makeshift shabby sign was certainly very different from signs on more luxurious stores, so too do Jews differ in the way in which they observe the Sabbath.

There are those who focus on every *halachah* involved in Sabbath observance. They are punctilious in following every rule contained in our code of laws.

There are others whose observance is a more spiritual one. They may keep the basic Sabbath laws in some fashion but find the joy of the Sabbath more personally rewarding. They enjoy the festive meals, and they heartily sing the Sabbath songs.

Still, others take delight in intellectual indulgences in celebration of the Sabbath. They study, they read, they converse, they teach.

Then there are those of a more mystical bent who use the Sabbath for introspection, meditation, and contemplation, and maybe even as an occasion to delve into the classics of Jewish mysticism.

For some the Sabbath is something entirely different. It is merely a day of rest, a physical respite from the toil and stress

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of a busy week.

Whatever your Sabbath is like, dear reader, as long as it is a special day for you in some way, the sign of Sabbath is suspended over your door. You are, at least potentially, a Sabbath observer, and that is a sign of your connection to God and to the Jewish people.

But there is a lesson here for all of us: None of us can say that our Sabbath observance is a perfect one. None of us is innocent of some minor halachic infraction. Certainly, none of us can say that our Sabbath is one of pure and untainted spirituality. We all have "a way to go".

Yet the vast majority of Jews whom I know, of whatever level of observance or denominational persuasion, have the sign of Sabbath on their shop door, in some manner or another.

As long as that sign hangs suspended over our doorway, we can confidently look forward to that day when each of us will celebrate a Sabbath worthy of the ultimate redemption of which our sages assure us. For they have said the *geulah*, the final redemption of our people, will come about when we fully observe two Sabbaths in succession.

Don't take down the sign! ■



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Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from
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Former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew
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לעילוי נשמות
May the learning of these Divrei Torah be
HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

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The Closeness of God

The more I study the Torah, the more conscious I become of the immense mystery of Exodus 33. This is the chapter set in the middle of the Golden Calf narrative (between Exodus chapter 32 describing the sin and its consequences, and Exodus chapter 34 with God's revelation to Moses of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, the second set of Tablets, and the renewal of the covenant. It is, I believe, this mystery that frames the shape of Jewish spirituality.

What makes chapter 33 perplexing is, first, that it is not clear what it is about. What was Moses doing? In the previous chapter he had already prayed twice for the people to be forgiven. In chapter 34 he prays for forgiveness again. What then was he trying to achieve in chapter 33?

Second, Moses' requests are strange. He says, "Show me now Your ways" (Ex. 33:13) and "Show me now Your glory" (Ex. 33:18).

These seem more requests for metaphysical understanding or mystical experience than for forgiveness. They have to do with Moses as an individual, not with the people on whose behalf he was praying. This was a moment of national crisis. God was angry. The people were traumatised. The whole nation was in disarray. This was not the time for Moses to ask for a seminar in theology.

Third, more than once the narrative seems to be going backward in time. In verse 4, for example, it says, "No man put on his ornaments," then in the next verse God says, "Now, then, remove your ornaments." (Ex. 33:5) In verse 14, God says, "My presence will go with you." In verse 15, Moses says, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not make us leave this place." In both cases, time seems to be reversed: the second sentence is responded to by the one before. The Torah is clearly drawing our attention to something, but what?

Add to this the mystery of the Calf itself – was it or was it not an idol? The text states that the people said, "This, Israel, is your God who brought you out of Egypt" (Ex. 32:4). But it also says that they sought the Calf because they did not know what had happened to *Moses*. Were they seeking a replacement for him or for God? What was their sin?

Surrounding it all is the larger mystery of the precise sequence of events involved in the long passages about the *Mishkan*, before and after the Golden Calf. What was the relationship between the Sanctuary and the Calf?

At the heart of the mystery is the odd and troubling detail of verses 7–11. This tells us that Moses took his tent and pitched it *outside the camp*. What has this to do with the subject at hand, namely the relationship between God and the people after the Golden Calf? In any case, it was surely the worst possible thing for Moses to do at that time under those circumstances. God had just announced that “I will not go in your midst” (Ex. 33:3). At this, the people were deeply distressed. They “went into mourning” (Ex. 33:4). For Moses, then, to leave the camp must have been doubly demoralizing. At times of collective distress, a leader has to be close to the people, not distant.

There are many ways of reading this cryptic text, but it seems to me that the most powerful and simple interpretation is this. Moses was making his most audacious prayer, so audacious that the Torah does not state it directly and explicitly. We have to reconstruct it from anomalies and clues within the text itself.

The previous chapter implied that the people panicked because of the absence of Moses, their leader. God Himself implied as much when He said to Moses, “Go down, because *your* people, whom *you* brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt” (Ex. 32:7). The suggestion is that Moses’ absence or distance was the cause of the sin. He should have stayed closer to the people. Moses took the point. He did go down. He



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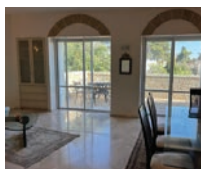
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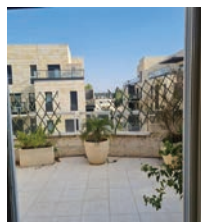
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did punish the guilty. He did pray for God to forgive the people. That was the theme of chapter 32. But in chapter 33, having restored order to the people, Moses now began on an entirely new line of approach. He was, in effect, saying to God: What the people need is not for *me* to be close to them. I am just a human, here today, gone tomorrow. But You are eternal. You are their God. They need *You* to be close to them.

It was as if Moses was saying: Until now, they have experienced You as a terrifying, elemental force, delivering plague after plague to the Egyptians, bringing the world's greatest empire to its knees, dividing the sea, overturning the very order of nature itself. At Mount Sinai, merely hearing Your voice, they were so overwhelmed that they said, if we continue to hear the voice, "we will die" (Ex. 20:16). The people needed, said Moses, to experience not the *greatness* of God but the *closeness* of God, not God heard in thunder and lightning at the top of the mountain, but as a perpetual presence in the valley below.

That is why Moses removed his tent and pitched it outside the camp, as if to say to God: It is not my presence the people need in their midst, but Yours. That is why Moses sought to understand the very nature of God Himself. Is it possible for God to be close to where people are? Can transcendence become immanence? Can the God who is vaster than the universe live within the universe in a predictable, comprehensible way, not just in the form of miraculous intervention?

To this, God replied in a highly structured way. First, He said: you cannot understand

My ways. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy" (Ex. 33:19). There is an element of Divine justice that must always elude human comprehension. We cannot fully enter into the mind of another human being, how much less so the mind of the Creator Himself.

Second, "You cannot see My face, for no one can see Me and live" (Ex. 33:20). Humans can at best "see My back." Even when God intervenes in history, we can see this only in retrospect, looking back. Stephen Hawking was wrong.¹ Even if we decode every scientific mystery, we still will not know the mind of God.

However, third, you *can* see My "glory." That is what Moses asked for once he realised that he could never know God's "ways" or see His "face." That is what God caused to pass by as Moses stood "in a cleft of the rock" (Ex. 33:22). We do not know at this stage exactly what is meant by God's glory, but we discover this at the very end of the book of Exodus. Chapters 35–40 describe how the Israelites built the *Mishkan*. When it is finished and assembled we read this:

Then the Cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and *the glory of the Lord* filled the *Mishkan*. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the Cloud had settled on it, and *the glory of the Lord* filled the *Mishkan*. [SEPP] (Ex. 40:34–35)

We now understand the entire drama set in motion by the making of the Golden Calf.

1 He famously said, at the end of *A Brief History of Time*, that if we were to reach a full scientific understanding of the cosmos, we would "know the mind of God."

Moses pleaded with God to come closer to the people, so that they would encounter Him, not only at unrepeatable moments in the form of miracles, but regularly, on a daily basis, and not only as a force that threatens to obliterate all it touches, but as a presence that can be sensed in the heart of the camp.

That is why God commanded Moses to instruct the people to build the Mishkan. It is what He meant when He said: “Let them make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell (*vesh-achanti*) among them” (Ex. 25:8). It is from this verb that we get the word *Mishkan*, “Tabernacle,” and the post-biblical word *Shechinah*, meaning the Divine Presence. Applied to God, as discussed last week in *parshat Terumah*, it means “the presence that is close.” If this is so – and it is the way Judah Halevi understood the text² – then the entire institution of the *Mishkan* was a Divine response to the sin of the Golden Calf, and an acceptance by God of Moses’ plea that He come close to the people. We cannot see God’s *face*; we cannot understand God’s *ways*; but we can encounter God’s *glory* whenever we build a home for His presence here on earth.

That is the ongoing miracle of Jewish spirituality. No one before the birth of Judaism ever envisaged God in such abstract and awe-inspiring ways: God is more distant than the furthest star and more eternal than time itself. Yet no religion has ever felt God to be closer. In Tanach the prophets argue with God. In the book of Psalms King David speaks to Him in terms of utmost intimacy. In the Talmud God

listens to the debates between the Sages and accepts their rulings even when they go against a heavenly voice. God’s relationship with Israel, said the prophets, is like that between a parent and a child, or between a husband and a wife. In the Song of Songs it is like that between two infatuated lovers. The Zohar, key text of Jewish mysticism, uses the most daring language of passion, as does *Yedid Nefesh*, the poem attributed to the sixteenth-century Safed kabbalist, Rabbi Elazar Azikri.

That is one of the striking differences between the synagogues and the cathedrals of the Middle Ages. In a cathedral you sense the vastness of God and the smallness of humankind. But in the Altneushul in Prague or the synagogues of the Ari and Rabbi Joseph Karo in Safed, you sense the closeness of God and the potential greatness of humankind. Many nations worship God, but Jews are the only people to count themselves His close relatives (“My child, My firstborn, Israel” – Ex. 4:22).

Between the lines of Exodus 33, if we listen attentively enough, we sense the emergence of one of the most distinctive and paradoxical features of Jewish spirituality. No religion has ever held God higher, but none has ever felt Him closer. That is what Moses sought and achieved in chapter 33, in his most daring conversation with God. ■

These weekly teachings from Rabbi Sacks zt”l are part of his ‘Covenant & Conversation’ series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

2 Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari*, 1:97.



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THE PROPHETS

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Faculty, OU Israel Center

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

The primary theme of the special haftarah we read for this Shabbat Parah is that of Hashem's promise of the future purification of Israel from her sins, as prophesied by Yechezkael HaNavi in the 36th perek of his sefer. This haftarah mirrors the topic of the special maftir reading (read annually on the Shabbat preceding Shabbat HaChodesh), that details the purification ritual that would be performed to remove one from the state of ritual contamination ("tum'ah").

When commenting on the haftarah last year, we noted that its initial section decried the sinfulness of the nation. This, we felt, was a particularly difficult introduction to a reading that was meant to prepare us for the arrival of the joyous "Z'man Cheirutenu", a celebration of our freedom. I shared with you the view of Rav S.R. Hirsch who explained that this "troubling" opening to the navi's message was meant to fill the people with hope. This prelude to Hashem's promise to purify the sinful nation was a message to Israel and meant to teach the exiled nation that it is possible for them to reach the very heights of purity from the deepest depths of moral defilement – described in these opening p'sukim.

HaRav Moshe Lichtenstein also directs our attention to this section, quoting the *Yalkut Shim'oni* (a compilation of older interpretations and explanations on the *Tanach*, dating from the 13th-14th centuries,

CE - the precise date is not known) that emphasizes the prophet's description of the nation's defilement as that of a *niddah* (menstruant). The *Yalkut* states:

"Just as a *niddah* becomes [ritually] impure but is [regularly] purified, so too Hashem will purify Israel. Additionally, unlike one who is defiled by contact with the dead whose house may not be entered by a Kohen, [even] the Kohen Gadol may enter the house with his *niddah* (wife) and sit with her on the same (solid) bench

Similarly, were Israel's defilement compared to *tum'at met* (contact with a corpse) one might believe that G-d's *Shechina* (divine presence) could never return to Israel. But just as the Kohen and his wife, G-d remains with Israel – even during their times of impurity".

Rav Lichtenstein expands upon this approach by including yet another difference between these two sources of impurity. The *niddah* defilement imposed by the Torah is a result of a natural human condition, not one brought through conscious choice nor a purposeful decision. It is part of life's realities. *Tum'at Met*, although a result of the reality of a mortal life, is a condition that can, indeed, be brought upon the individual through conscious choice or purposeful decision. And the conscious act of causing the cessation of life is far from a natural deed. It is, perhaps, the most UNnatural of all human acts.

It is for this reason, Rav Lichtenstein

argues, that Yechezkel depicts the nation's defilement as one of "*Tum'at Niddah*", an impurity that results from sins that reflect the human state. Such actions mirror the weaknesses of Mankind: their foibles, their shortcomings and their "humanness". Ultimately, therefore, they can be purified, for such sins are forgivable.

But those who purposely commit sins that are beyond the usual human "temptations", acts that Hashem considers to be UNnatural and, indeed, INhuman, are considered to be defiled with *Tum'at Hamet*. Such sinners would require far more acts of remorse and atonement to remove the impurity. As opposed to the sins that are committed through the inherent shortcomings of human condition, these extreme actions reflect a corruption in the basic character of the sinner, a debilitating condition that requires a complete transformation of one's value system.

Looking at society's changing moral compass, I wonder if there still is any differentiation made between the two "defilements". Given the acts we have seen too often, I am forced to ask: Is any immoral act TOO immoral? Is there any moral outrage that is TOO outrageous? Has our society accepted ALL human acts – whether murdering children or slaughtering innocents – as part of an "understandable" human "foible"?

Morality takes on different definitions in different times and places. Right and Wrong, *Tum'at Niddah* and *Tum'at Met*, seem to change with the prevailing winds.

That is why we must have an eternal moral system.

And that is why we are blessed with the Torah! ■



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Parah Aduma and Korban Pesach Two Diametrically Opposed Chukim

Dovid HaMelech requested: יהי לבי תמים – “May my heart be perfect in your statutes” (*Tehillim* 119:80). The Midrash explains that the word “statutes” is in the plural to reflect two statutes (*chukim*). First, the *korban pesach*: It is written “*Zot chukat haPesach*” (*Shemot* 12:43) – “This is the statute of the *korban pesach*.” Second, “*Zot chukat haTorah*” (*Bamidbar* 19:2) is the statute of the *para aduma*.

What is the connection between the *parah aduma* and the *korban pesach*?

Why did Dovid HaMelech pray that his heart be sincere in the fulfillment of both of these statutes specifically?

Contrasting Chukim

Rav Asher Weiss offers an explanation. In the Midrash, there is not a comparison of these two different statutes, but rather, a contrasting. On the Seder night, we are encouraged to ask questions. Those people that are learned delve into an understanding of every nuance in the Haggada. We also do specific acts in order to trigger questions from our children (*Minhat Asher Al HaTorah: Vayikra, Bamidbar, Devarim*, p. 180, and Rav Asher Weiss on the *Haggada*, p. 309). Thus, the *korban pesach* is a symbol for asking questions: asking, searching, studying. For what other mitzva do we

have to state the reason for doing it? We keep saying, *Al shum mah* – “For what reason?” We have to go above and beyond in order to understand and internalize the message and customs of Pesach.

On the other hand, the mitzva of *hukat para aduma* is a mystery. Even Shlomo HaMelech admitted he does not fully understand the reasoning behind the intricacies of the statute of *para aduma* (*Kohelet* 7:23). Yet, even absent a clear understanding we are instructed to fulfill all of the details of *para aduma*.

These two *chukim* represent two approaches to mitzvot. *Hukat haPesach* involves striving to understand, searching, and yearning. *Parah aduma* requires us to accept what HaKadosh Barukh Hu dictates and to perform acts that are beyond our comprehension.

When are we meant to ask and investigate, and when are we meant to humbly accept Hashem’s commandments?

When to Act and When to Question

Rav Asher Weiss suggests we emulate Avraham Avinu. When asked to sacrifice his son Yitzhak, Avraham acts without questioning. He wakes up early in the morning and sets out on his journey. Yet after Avraham binds his son and lifts a knife to slaughter him, an angel calls out to Avraham instructing him to

cease and desist.

At this point, according to the Midrash (*Bereshit Rabba* 56:8, quoted in Rashi, *Bereshit* 22:12), Avraham begins to question. First Hashem says, “Yitzhak will be your heir,” and then He says, “Kill your son.” Now Hashem is commanding me, “Don’t kill him.” What is the meaning of all this?

However, why didn’t Avraham question Hashem’s request immediately? As long as Avraham Avinu had a responsibility to act, he asked no questions. He focused on fulfilling a command. Only after he is instructed to spare his son and no longer has an obligation to complete an action, he inquires more deeply in order to better comprehend Hashem’s intentions.

Naaseh V’nishma

Perhaps that is also the explanation as to why Bnei Yisrael received two crowns for stating *naaseh venishma*. The gemara (Shabbat 88a) tells us that 600,000 angels descended and placed two crowns on the head of each individual at Har Sinai, one crown for having stated *naaseh* and the second for stating *nishma*. Why did we get two crowns? Bnei Yisrael did one great thing: We said *naaseh* before *nishma*. Why did we get a second crown for *nishma*?

The *Minhat Asher* explains that yes, the first thing they did was *naaseh*, that is, *chukat hapara*. We accepted the commandments unconditionally. Then, there was the *hukat haPesach*, and this involved searching, yearning, and trying to understand the messages of the mitzvot. That’s also what Bnei Yisrael committed to do.

Throughout most of the year we observe *chukat hapara*: obedience and unconditional fulfillment of Hashem’s commandments.

On Seder night in particular, we experience *chukat haPesach*, we delve into communal discourse to enhance our understanding of the Hagaddah.

May we be able to fulfill both of these *chukim* – *chukat hapara* and *chukat HaPesach*. Knowing when to act obediently and perform mitzvot and when to question and obtain a deeper understanding of the mitzvot. ■



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Lofty Learning

“Vayiten el Moshe ke’chaloto ledaber ito behar sinai sh’nai luchot ha’edut luchot even ketuvim be’Etzba Elokim – And [Hashem] gave Moshe, when He finished speaking to him on Har Sinai, two tablets of the Testimony, they were stone tablets, written with Hashem’s finger” (Shemot 31:18). The structure of the verse here is curious. It would seem to read more smoothly had it said, “When Hashem finished speaking to Moshe...He gave him...” Why the more cumbersome articulation?

Rashi (*ibid*) notes that the word “*ke’chaloto* - when he finished” is written without a “*vav*” and can also be read as “*ke’kalato* – like His bride,” as if to say, Hashem gave the Torah as a gift like a bride is gifted to her groom. Rashi further explains that Moshe Rabbeinu was unable to learn the entire Torah in such a limited time (40 days), so Hashem presented him with the Torah, including its wisdom and the capacity to understand it, as a gift. Therefore, this verse reflects the manner in which the Torah was given and can be understood as, “And [Hashem] gave the Torah as a gift to Moshe when He finished speaking to him.”

Rav Pincus in *Tiferet Shimshon* learns a

tremendous lesson from Rashi’s comment. It is impossible for the human mind to truly comprehend Torah as it is Divine wisdom, beyond mortal understanding. Our ability to learn and understand Torah is a gift from Above. This highlights how truly precious Torah learning is; it is an opportunity to learn, *ka’viyachol*, with Hashem as a *chavruta*. Each morning, when we say *birkat HaTorah*, “*hamelamed Torah le’amo Yisrael*,” we express our gratitude to Hashem for teaching us Torah directly every day.

Similarly, Rav Schwab in *Ma’ayan Beit Hasho’eva*, understands the word “*ke’chaloto*” as a descriptive, and offers a fascinating interpretation of the dialogue between Moshe Rabbeinu and the angels when he was in *shamayim*. “*Mah le’yelud isha beineinu* – what is a human being doing among us?” (*Shabbos 88b*). The angels protested, “Hashem, You have kept your Torah here in the heavens for 974 generations. Why are you now giving it to people on earth?” How could the angels even consider that Torah is relevant to them? Clearly, they have no parents to honor, no creative work to cease on Shabbos, they have no *yetzer hara* to steal or commit murder! There is so much in Torah that doesn’t apply to them! Notes Rav Schwab, Torah can be understood on myriad levels, from the most basic to the most sublime. Take the prohibition of murder,

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for example. On the most elemental level we are admonished not to take another human life. On a deeper level, we are enjoined not to embarrass another, causing the blood to drain from their face. Yet a more abstract level is cautioning us not to cause others to sin. On a more metaphysical level, one who should teach and does not, is also considered as a 'murderer.' There is still a more exalted, pristine level of Torah that is appropriate for the angels.

Hashem taught Moshe Rabbeinu every mitzvah with its multiple nuances, from the most transcendent to the most concrete level which was conveyed as *Torah she'bichtav* at Har Sinai. This insight allows us to appreciate the vast depth and consciousness embedded in Torah and that it is possible to connect to the *devar Hashem* at any level, from any place. ■

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Journey Through the Siddur
Rabbi David Walk

10:20 AM Seder Selections

Rabbi Sam Shor
(Rabbi Adler Resumes
March 26)

11:30 AM

Shivat Zion in Tanach: **Rabbi**
Yitzchak Breitowitz

2:00 PM

Men's Talmud
Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

7:30-9:30PM

Hashkafa & Gemara in Depth
(The Bais) with **Rabbi**
Azarya Berzon
(will resume in the Spring)

MON, MAR 13

9:15 AM

Divrei Hayamim
Rebbetzin Pearl Borow
(L'Ayla)

10:30 AM

The Thought of Rav Kook
on Eretz Yisrael: A study of
the sefer Eretz Chefetz
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

11:45 AM

Novel Parsha Nuances
Rabbi Avi Herzog
(new Course)

8:30 PM

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

TUE, MAR 14

9:15 AM

Rebbetzin Shira Smiles
Torah Tapestries (L'Ayla)

9:30AM

Minchat Chinuch **Rabbi**
Yitzchak Breitowitz

10:30AM

Parshat Hashavua
Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

12:15 PM

Jewish National Revival
Dr. Deborah Polster

2:00 PM

Men's Talmud **Rabbi Jeff**
Bienenfeld

7:30PM (The Bais) Safrus (Men)
Rabbi Tzvi Maurer

8:00PM

Sefer Shmuel **Rabbi**
Mordechai Machlis

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WED, MAR 15

9:00 AM

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Rabbi Shimshon Nadel

10:15 AM

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Issues
Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:40 AM

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Feigenbaum** (new course)

12:30 PM Lunch and Learn

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8:00 PM

Halachic Controversies
Rabbi Aschi Dick
(The Bais) New start time

THURS, MAR 16

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-Mesechta –
Bava Basra
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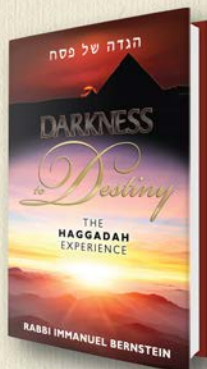
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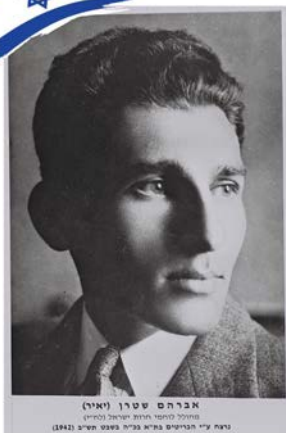
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Remembering Yoni Jesner - Naming an Ambucycle by Popular Vote

Bikey McBikeface is an ambucycle named in honor of Yoni Jesner, a Scottish 19-year-old who lost his life in a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv in 2002. Jesner's friends raised funds to donate the vehicle in his memory back in 2017 and chose the quirky name, inspired by the humorous name of a British research vessel that captured international attention, Boaty McBoatface.

Bikey McBikeface has served as a valuable asset to United Hatzalah, helping its various drivers save many lives over the past six years. However, with the vehicle nearing retirement age, the organization is calling on supporters to donate, even small amounts, to carry on Yoni's legacy and donate towards a new ambucycle that will carry on Bikey's, and Yoni's legacy.

Donors who contribute to the campaign can suggest a name, with the final choice to be determined by a public vote. The person whose name is chosen by the popular vote will also get the opportunity to submit a dedication text that will be placed on the ambucycle as well.

One of the many rescues the Bikey, and his current Rider Michael Cassar responded to was the November 23rd double bombing that took place in Jerusalem.

Michael, together with Bikey, raced to the scene of the explosion that took place near the city entrance and arrived to treat the victims of the horrendous attacks. Michael triaged the injured people, tending first to those who were most severely injured and providing critical lifesaving interventions. He applied tourniquets and trauma bandages to stem bleeding and administered high-flow oxygen. Michael also treated wounds and lacerations caused by shrapnel from the explosive device, which was laced with deadly nails and sharp objects. Michael then assisted other first responders to transfer the injured to ambulances which whisked them to the hospital for further treatment.

This is just one of the many medical emergencies that Bikey and his various riders have responded to over the years and some of the people treated that day were saved in memory of Yoni Jesner, another victim of terror. Please help us keep this legacy going.

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(Photo - Bikey McBikeface and his rider responding to a medical emergency involving an overturned car)



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Parshas Parah: *Lev Basar*

Rav Simcha Wasserman, the renowned *rosh yeshivah* and pioneering educator, was the eldest son of the martyred *gaon*, Reb Elchonon, Hy'd. A 'down to earth' *talmid chacham*, Rav Simcha was beloved for his sensitivity, openness and approachability. Although the Wasserman's were not blessed with children of their own, they dedicated themselves to rebuilding Torah institutions, establishing *yeshivos* in Strasbourg, Detroit, Los Angeles and Yerushalayim. In this way, they raised thousands of students across the world.

Rav Simcha's holy father had been murdered in Kovno, and his entire world was lost. Since then, he would soldier through life, with incredible faith and strength, and seldom speak about or show emotion about his losses in the War. However, one time of year, on Parshas Parah, he would receive the *Maftir aliyah* and recite the Haftarah which contains the End-of-Days prophecy of Yechezkel (11:19):

וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב אֶחָד וְרוּחַ יְחִידָה אֶתֵּן בְּקִרְבָּכֶם וְהִסְרֵתִי לָב
הָאֶבֶן מִבְּשָׂרָם וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר

"And I shall give them one heart, and a new spirit I shall place within them, and I shall remove the heart of stone from their flesh, and I shall give them a heart of flesh."

When Rav Simcha came to this line, his voice would choke and he would break down and weep copiously. Every year, approaching the redemption of Pesach, he allowed himself to soften, open his heart and feel everything that he had gone through.

We usually think that a *lev even*, a 'heart of stone' is undesirable; a hardened, closed heart implies we are not in touch with our feelings, emotions and true desires. However, the Chasam Sofer says, in exile, the heart of stone is really a gift, a coping mechanism we are given in our excruciating exiles, allowing us to survive. The suffering, travails and hardships we experience in *galus* can just be too much to consider fully and feel deeply. If we were to be completely vulnerable and open, we would crumble under the weight of our collective suffering and lack the strength to continue on in our service of Hashem. With the dawn of redemption and the End of Days, we will be granted respite from the travails of *galus* and finally have the opportunity to reflect, take a deep breath, open our hearts and fully process the entire experience of our personal and communal history.

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Parshas Ki Sisa details the laws of the Red Heifer, a *tikun* for Am Yisrael following their falling into a state of impurity with the *Eigel haZahav*, the Golden Calf.

When Moshe ascended to the upper worlds to petition Hashem in prayer on behalf of his fallen people, the Midrash teaches that he found the *Ribbono shel Olam* learning (as it were) the *parsha* of the Parah Adumah: *Zos chukas haTorah....* Hashem said to Moshe: *Eini osek elah b'taharasan shel Yisrael*, "I busy Myself only with the purity of the Jewish People!" (*Pesikta Rabbasi*, 14)

In the days of Moshiach, Hashem will 'be busy' extricating us from the depth of our exile. He will metaphorically sprinkle us with pure waters like those being cleansed from *tumas meis*, the ritual impurity of coming in contact with death. He will renew within each of us a pure heart and a

spirit as befitting His beloved ones. He will replace the emotional armor of our battles with a deep sensitivity, allowing us to feel His healing Presence and giving us all a new beginning in Eretz Yisrael.

"I will give you a heart of flesh, *LeV BaSaR....*" The Midrash suggests reading the word not as *BaSaR* but as *BoSeR*, "glad". Rebbe Nachman says this means everyone will be glad at their friends' good fortune. (*Chayey Moharan* #339)

A heart that hurts, that feels, is a heart that is totally alive. As we approach our redemption, may we open our hearts to hold and relieve the pain of those who are not yet able to feel completely, those who are soldiering through life for Hashem. And may we merit to tearfully rejoice with them on the day that their good fortune is fully revealed. ■



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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

This *Shabbat* we will read *Parshat Ki Tisa* as well as *Parshat Parah*, the third of the four special *parshiot* which surround the days of *Purim* and *Pesach*.

Parshat Ki Tisa contains the tragic episode of *Chait HaEgel*, the Golden Calf, and its aftermath. *Parshat Parah* is comprised of the opening verses of *Parshat Chukat*, which introduce us to the mystical elixir for impurity, the mysterious inexplicable concept of the *para aduma* -the red heifer.

The *Bat Ayin*, the *Rebbe of Avrich zy'a*, points out that the *para aduma* is on some level meant to be a *tikkun* (fixing, correction) for the impurity introduced into the world through the *Cheit HaEgel* (The Sin of the Golden Calf). The *Rebbe* taught:

Our Master the *Toldot Yaakov Yosef, zy'a*, wrote that *Cheit HaEgel* impacted future generations, and that the word *egel* is an acronym for the words *arayot* (illicit behavior), *gezel* (theft) and *lashon hara* (inappropriate speech).

So too, the *tikkun* for all of these, as represented by the *para aduma*, also comprises an acronym for the word *egel*-*Avoda*, *Gemilut chasadim* and *Limud Torah*...

The *Bat Ayin* taught that the *para aduma* not only provided a metaphysical healing for those who had come into contact with impurity, but also came to teach us how to overcome the impact that resulted from the *Cheit HaEgel*.

One of the perplexing aspects of the *Para Aduma* ritual, is that the *Kohanim* who were involved in preparing the ashes of the *para aduma* became *tamei*-impure through the process. In preparing the mystical compound which would return others to a state of purity, they in turn became *tamei*-impure. How exactly are we to understand this unusual outcome? How could it possibly be that in preparing this remedy for impurity, the *Kohanim* themselves are rendered to be *tamei*?

The *Avodat Elazar*, the *Admor of Kozhnitz zy'a*, explains this peculiar phenomenon based on the opening verse-*Zot Chukat HaTorah*-This is the inexplicable principle of the *Torah*.

This verse, the *Rebbe* explained, is not

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only describing the mysterious nature of the *para aduma*, but also teaching us a very fundamental idea about *Torah* itself. Like any remedy, when channeled appropriately it can transform and cure and bring complete healing, or if *chas v'shalom* it is misused, taken out of context and applied inappropriately, then it can bring further deficiency and harm.

The *Netivot Shalom, the Admor of Slonim zy'a* offers a different interpretation of our verse *Zot Chukat HaTorah*. Our verse, explains the Rebbe, is not only introducing us to the transformative capacity of the *para aduma* as a vehicle to restore purity, but also communicating an eternal message which applies even now in the absence of the *Beit HaMikdash* and of the *para aduma*.

Zot Chukat HaTorah- In our current state, in the absence of the *Beit HaMikdash* and with no *para aduma*, the vehicle for we as Jews to experience some form of a return to purity is by immersing ourselves in the study of *Torah-Zot Chukat HaTorah!*

Yehi Ratzon that our *limud haTorah*, should indeed bring purity to our minds and hearts, that we should find purity in our *avodat Hashem* and though acts of *chesed*, and that we soon merit to experience the building of the *Beit HaMikdash*, and the return of all its associated sacred rituals and constant miracles. ■

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GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

Stubborn In All the Right Ways

Up in heaven, Moshe Rabeinu had not yet heard the disastrous news. Preoccupied with the stony luchot he was unaware of the debacle unfolding below. The magic of Matan Torah had faded and the commitments of נעשה ונשמע proved to be brittle. The nation of Hashem had quickly degenerated into idol worship and wild debauchery. Moshe was instructed to immediately descend the mountain to witness, firsthand, the moral decline of his nation. The luchot, etched with Hashem's letters, would not last long.

Subsequently, Hashem threatened to annihilate Am Yisrael and reboot history with Moshe as the founder of a new chosen nation. And then, shockingly, Hashem

dubbed us with a seemingly derogatory term. In the past, He had promised that we would be His valued treasure or עם סגולה and that we would be a nation of nobility. At this disgraceful moment of national dishonor Hashem disapprovingly framed us as an obstinate nation or an קשי עורף.

Despite the dramatic miracles we had witnessed, and despite hearing the directly revealed voice of Hashem at Har Sinai, we were too headstrong to obey Hashem's very simple instructions. Most of the Torah had yet to be delivered, but we had already been warned three times not to indulge in pagan worship. Yet, the moment that Moshe tarried in his return from the mountain, our faith wilted and we shamelessly crafted a golden image, casting aside all our promises and all our faith.

Refusal to Listen

Our stubbornness would resurface hundreds of years later. In the desert, our stubbornness prompted the egel misadventure, but in the first Beit Hamikdash era our



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persistent recalcitrance doomed us to our first exile. During this extended period of moral decay Hashem sent numerous nevi'im to rebuke us hoping to correct our religious malfunction. Stoutly refusing to heed their sincere appeals, we also murdered and imprisoned some of these divine agents.

In the desert we had been too wooden-headed to follow simple instructions and to appreciate the grand miracles we had experienced. During the first Beit Hamikdash era we were too obstinate to follow the desperate pleas of Hashem's messengers who risked their lives to voice unpopular but necessary moral reprimand.

A Flaw and a Blessing

By labeling us as קשי עורף, Hashem wasn't just criticizing our failures; He was also describing our national character. Our obstinacy, though toxic when left unchecked, is also an invaluable asset of Jewish history. In his Sefer Hakuzari, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi asserted that Hashem chose our people because we displayed the two instinctive character traits absolutely vital for our historical calling: the ability to process supernatural information and our relentless stubbornness. Knowing that we would face a hostile world, opposed to our mission, Hashem selected a stout people capable of withstanding scorn and hostility. Appreciating the possibility and even likelihood of Jewish exile, Hashem selected a tough-necked people who wouldn't break under the pressures of history.

Courage at Sinai

From the very outset of Jewish history, even before our journey to exile, our audacity came in handy. What other nation would have the brazen nerve to stand beneath a



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fiery mountain, engaging with the booming voice of Hashem? As the Midrash comments אמר רב נחמן: תדע לך שהם קשים, כשבא הקב"ה ליתן להם את התורה מה כתיב בהם: "ויהי ביום השלישי בהיות הבוקר". "ויהי קולות וברקים וענן כבד על ההר וקול שופר חזק מאד". This midrash doesn't bemoan our boldness but acknowledges that without this stout-heartedness we could not have withstood Sinai. Only a stiff-necked people could face the infernal fire atop the mountain and not turn their heads away.

Though critical of our obstinacy during the egel, Hashem Himself realized that only a brawny nation would be capable of accepting the divine will and of subscribing to a monotheistic religion. Nations of lesser bravery would have folded. During the egel, our excessive stubbornness sabotaged our relationship with Hashem. However, throughout history it would preserve that relationship.

Defying History

During the long night of Jewish exile it would take all of our considerable stubbornness just to survive a two thousand year onslaught. Had we not been יקשי עורף it is unlikely we would have survived this dark tunnel of history. Or as the midrash reports אמר ר' יצחק בר רדיפא בשם ר' אמי: אתה סבור שהוא לגנאי, Rebbi Yitzchak bar Radifa affirmed that our stubbornness

emboldened us to face relentless religious pressure throughout our exile. Throughout our history we declared: "either we remain Jewish, or we are prepared to die".

In our early history our obstinacy produced the egel and wrecked the Mikdash. Later on, it preserved our religious faith amidst a maelstrom of religious persecution and unending pressure to abandon our ancient faith. Sometimes it pays to be stubborn in all the right ways.

20th Century Obstnacy

In the 20th century we drew upon this national trait of tenacity in facing two unprecedented historical challenges. We endured a nightmarish Holocaust which would have ripped the faith out of every other nation. To be honest, many Jews lost their faith in the Holocaust, and you must never judge a person before you walk a mile in their shoes. However, as a nation, we have rebuilt our communities, revitalized our Torah commitment, and steadfastly refused to buckle in the face of such unspeakable tragedy. Our stubborn commitment to Hashem allowed us to pass through the gates of hell and remain committed to our covenant and to our love for Hashem.

A few years afterwards we were beckoned home. We anticipated a hero's welcome, but, instead, were contested by an entire world. Once again, as our ancestor Avraham, we stood on one side of the river in opposition to an entire world which disclaimed our right to our ancient homeland. But we are too stubborn to simply walk away. Despite the improbable odds, we secured our state and turned her into a global superpower.

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Evidently, Hashem chose well. More compliant people would have less stamina and less historical insolence. Sometimes our stubbornness creates havoc and dooms our moral behavior. However, for the past two thousand years it has been indispensable in helping us navigate the crosswinds of history and in resettling the plains of redemption.

So, the next time you are frustrated by a Jew and their stubborn behavior, just know that you are not alone. Hashem is also frustrated, sometimes. Jews are born stubborn and without this obstinance we would not be here today.

Now that we have returned home to conclude history, it is actually time to turn our necks around and look back at our history. When we were stuck in the mud of history it was difficult to make sense of the process. Now that we have emerged from the tunnel of history it is easier to appreciate the fear-some challenges of Jewish history, which brought our people such glory but also exacted such a heavy price.

Our stiff necks have navigated us home. Now that we are home, look back at our stiff-necked refusal to look back. Turn your head around, and appreciate how stubborn we have been. Hashem chose well. We are too stubborn to believe otherwise. ■

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RABBI AARON

GOLDSCHIEDER

Editor, Torah Tidbits

Joy Only in the Land

Only in the Land of Israel is it possible to also draw joy (simcha) from its very source. However, outside of the Land it is not possible to draw out joy on account of the ‘prosecution’ and the sternness of ‘strict justice’ that endures in the exile...(Eretz Chefetz 4:9)

Rav Kook’s assertion that true joy can be fully accessed only in the Land of Israel is actually expressed in Halacha. One example of this is with regard to the practice of *Birkat Kohanim* (the Priestly Blessing).

The mitzvah of *Birkat Kohanim* is indeed not restricted to the *Beit Hamikdash* or to the Land of Israel (Rambam, Sefer Hamitzvot, Positive mitzvah 336). Yet, the custom developed, among Ashkenazi Jews, that *Birkat Kohanim* only be recited on the major festivals when outside the Land. Why?

One answer: The benediction which is meant to disseminate God’s blessing requires joy. Only in Israel is joy accessible on a daily basis. This is the opinion of the *Rama*: “In the countries [i.e. Ashkenazim], we only say *Birkat Kohanim* on *Yom Tov*, as then we are filled with happiness and joy. This is not the case on the rest of the days of the year as people are worried about their jobs and livelihood. Even on *Yom Tov*, we

only say it during *mussaf*, as that is when people are leaving shul and filled with the happiness of *Yom Tov* (*Rama, Orach Chaim, siman 128, se’if 44*).

We find that the first Rebbe of Lubavitch made the same claim:

The custom in all these lands [e.g., Ashkenazic custom] is that the Priestly Blessing is conferred only on yom tov [i.e., holiday], because then people are in a joyful and festive mood—and “only one who is glad of heart shall bless.” On other days, by contrast, even on Shabbat, [the kohanim] are preoccupied with their livelihood and their loss of working hours, and they are not in a happy state of mind. Indeed, even on yom tov the Priestly Blessing is conferred only in the Mussaf service, when [directly afterwards] they will leave the synagogue and partake of refreshments and rejoice in the celebration of the festival. (Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Orach Chaim 128:57)

In other words, since the Priestly Blessing is meant to be conferred in a spirit of joy, and the holidays specifically are a time to rejoice, it is performed only then. Apparently, the Land of Israel offers its inhabitants an atmosphere of tranquility found nowhere else.

Mysterious Obstacles From Heaven

Rabbi Chaim Volozhin was the main disciple of Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna, known as the Vilna Gaon. He notes that his teacher greatly desired that *Birkat Kohanim* be

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instituted every day in his synagogue. After hesitating, he finally decided that the next day the *kohanim* of his synagogue would do *Birkat Kohanim*. That very same day he was placed under arrest by government authorities. Apparently, Heaven prevented him from acting on the matter.

Rabbi Chaim continued that many years later, he too instructed in his own synagogue that on the next day the *Birkat Kohanim* should be recited. But that night the synagogue burned down. From all this it was clear to him that the matter was not supported by Heaven. Strikingly, this episode is referenced in the halachic work *Aruch Hashulchan* in his discussion why *Birkat Kohanim* is not observed outside the Land (Aruch HaShulchan 128:64). (See also *Aliyot Eliyahu* (Jerusalem 5749) pp. 57-58, see also *Hilchot HaGra uMinhagav*, p. 124)

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson suggested in one of his *sichot* that today the blessings of the *kohanim* in the Land of Israel are diffused throughout the Diaspora. (Likkutei Sichot vol. 39, p. 375) (The above information is culled from the Chabad.org article “Why is the Priestly Blessing only on Yom Tov?”)

Simcha Must Be Shared

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks argues that whenever the Torah speaks of joy it is always shared joy.

“*Simcha*, joy, in the Torah, is never about individuals. It is always about something we share. A newly married man does not serve in the army for a year, says the Torah, so that he can stay home “and bring joy to the wife he has married” (Devarim 24:5). You shall bring your offerings to the central sanctuary, says Moses, so that “there, in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your families shall rejoice in all you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you” (Devarim 12:7). The festivals, as described in the book of Devarim, are days of joy, precisely because they are occasions of collective celebration: “you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites in your towns, and the strangers and the fatherless the widows living among you” (Devarim 16:11). *Simcha* is joy shared. It is not something that we experience in solitude.” (The Pursuit of Joy, Rabbi Sacks on the Parsha, OU Torah).

Perhaps, Rav Kook is also suggesting that Jewish living outside the Land is a splintered and disintegrated existence. The unique blessing on seeing a gathering of six hundred thousand Jews can only be recited in the Land of Israel. The joy engendered on seeing that scene is incomplete without being in the Land. The Land wed to her people arouses in the Jew a sense of joy and true delight. ■

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Learning During *Kaddish*

Question: I give a *shiur* to a few people before *Shacharit* and aim to finish when *davening* begins, with *Rabbi Yishmael/Kaddish D'Rabbanan*. Sometimes we are not quite finished then, in which case, we try to answer *Kaddish's* main recitations, although we sometimes get caught up and fail to respond. Someone complained that continuing to learn during *Kaddish* is *assur* and a disgrace to *Kaddish* and the people listening to it. I don't see it that way but said I would ask.

Answer: It is good that you plan to finish by *Kaddish*. Hopefully you learn with your *tallit* and *tefillin* on and have *davened* up to there. It would be a shame to either need to skip parts of *P'sukei D'zimra*, speed through it, or be behind the *tzibbur*. We will focus on *Kaddish*, as you ask.

There are three possible objections to a *shiur* continuing during *Kaddish*: 1. Listening/answering *Kaddish* has innate precedence over learning; 2. The learning

can transmit one's rejection or disregard for *Kaddish's* content. 3. The learning can disturb those trying to focus on *Kaddish*.

1. One may/should answer the main responses of *Kaddish*, *Kedusha* and *Barchu* in the midst of almost any part of *davening* (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 66:3). The only debate is whether this is so if one who is *davening* in one *minyan* should respond to what he hears from another *minyan*. On the one hand, there is no *Kaddish* quota, so that any prompt makes responding important (Igrot Moshe III:89). Others say that the sources on non-participants responding are to permit answering, not obligating it, and so in multi-*minyan* locations (e.g., the *Kotel*) one does not have to harm his *tefilla* by having his focus wander from *minyan* to *minyan* (see Tzitz Eliezer XI:3; Yabia Omer VI, OC 20).

Only the study of the loftiest scholars (see Shabbat 11a) can push off the normal requirements of *tefilla* (Igrot Moshe OC II:27). Some people opt to learn Torah during *chazarat hashatz*, and even there most *poskim* oppose it (Mishna Berura 124:17; Kaf Hachayim, OC 124:16). On the other hand, the problem may be that less learned people will speak/not listen without a good reason (Mishna Berura *ibid.*). Therefore, some permit learning Torah in one's head (see Dirshu 124:27). However, during *Kaddish* and *Kedusha*, one's mind must be only on them, not learning

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



(Mishna Berura 125:1).

2. If one is among a *minyan* who are up to *Kri'at Shema*, he must say the first *pasuk* along with them, even if he has already recited *Kri'at Shema*, in order to not appear reluctant to recite his allegiance to Hashem (Shulchan Aruch, OC 65:2). *Poskim* extend this idea to other central parts of *davening*, including such a major joint recitation of praise to Hashem as *Kaddish* (see Igrot Moshe *ibid.*). When one is at a *minyan*, not answering a different *minyan* need not look a rejection (Tzitz Eliezer *ibid.*). However, in your case, learning audibly in the beginning of your *minyan* is publicly indicating that joining everyone in declaring praise of Hashem is not at the top of your priorities, which is included in this problem.

3. The local *rav* or *gabbai* can best consider the technical and communal elements of what is an unacceptable disturbance to others. However, the concept is generally applicable. We note that the Mishna Berura (566:12), regarding the *minhag* to collect *tzedaka* on a fast day as a “*kofer nefesh*,” says that the *gabbai* should not go around announcing it during *chazarat hashatz* because it disrupts concentration.

The remaining question is whether these matters apply to the entire *Kaddish* or just the public's responses. Regarding *chazarat hashatz*, *l'hatchila* one is to listen to every word but answering the *berachot* (while knowing which one is being said each

time) is sufficient *b'di'eved* (Mishna Berura 124:17). However, regarding *Kaddish*, the need to listen to every word seems stronger (Mishna Berura 125:1).

In terms of bottom line, your *shul*-mate is right. Since stopping learning “on a dime” is difficult, try to stop a little earlier, making *Kaddish* the **absolute** endpoint. ■

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Staying Together With Klal Yisrael, No Matter What

It says in this week's parsha:

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We all learned in kindergarten that after Moshe saw the Jews dancing with the *egel hazahav* he broke the *luchos*. Have we ever asked ourselves, how is it possible that Moshe broke the *luchos* ?! There's no way that this was done impulsively out of anger.... What happened here?

Rav Mottel Zilber shlita teaches in the name of various *tzadikim* that although *b'pashtus* the breaking of the *luchos* could be seen as a personal *aveirah* for Moshe, the reason that Moshe did it was because he couldn't see a reality in which he would walk alone as the only *tzadik* in town. If then, Am Yisrael as a whole would be considered sinners. Therefore, he decided to do an act which seems like an *aveirah* to include himself with the rest of Klal Yisrael.

It is brought down in the Gemara: "Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri: One who rends his garments in his anger, or who breaks his vessels in his anger, or who scatters his

money in his anger, should be like an idol worshiper in your eyes" (Shabbos 105:)

From this we see that the breaking of the *luchos* was an act done by Moshe to remain unified with the rest of the nation. Moshe's goal was more than just to be a part of the whole, he didn't want to tag along for fun, he wanted to bring himself to be a part of *klal yisrael* so he would be able to bring the rest of the nation to do *teshuvah* together with him!

The message is clear, one's personal *avodah* is crucial! Yet, without a constant *shaychus* to *klal yisrael* it isn't worth it.

We should be *zocheh* to uplift ourselves together with the entire *klal yisrael*!!



Jonah Klein
10th Grade,
Raanana

Are The 13 Middot Really A Tefilah??

In the Gemara Masechet Rosh Hashana Daf 17b Rabbi Yochanan says that the 13 middot are considered a prayer for the Yamim Noraim. The question is when we look at all of the 13 middot it just looks like a list of all of Hashem's attributes. In what way is this a tefilah? We aren't asking for anything we need.

To answer this question we need to take a step back and look at the whole picture. The 13 middot are brought up in this week's

parsha, as a response to a chain of events that started with the Chet Ha-egel. After Bnei Israel sins and Moshe begs Hashem to forgive them, Hashem acquiesces but refuses to lead them himself. Moshe does not like Hashem's decision and says:

וַיִּבְקֶשׁ יְיָדָע אֶפּוֹאֵל, כִּי-מִצָּדָתִי הֵן בָּעֵינֶיךָ אֲנִי וְעַמְּךָ--הַלֹּא, בְּלִכְתָּךְ עִמָּנוּ; וְנִפְלִינוּ, אֲנִי וְעַמְּךָ, מִכָּל-הָעָם, אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה

Hashem then accepts Moshe's prayer and agrees to continue leading Bnei Yisrael - Hashem then teaches Moshe the 13 Middot.

Numerous places in the Gemara refer to how we must imitate Hashem. All the examples brought by the Gemara of which middot to follow are from the 13 middot. Hashem is showing Moshe not only what to say but what to do! In other words, when we say to Hashem that He is merciful we are actually saying – and so would we like to be. The Gemara (in Masechet Sota daf 14a) teaches that following Hashem means following His ways – imitating Him. Hashem's giving of the 13 middot is explaining to Moshe the meaning of Hashem having a direct relationship with Bnei Israel - by imitating Hashem's attributes of mercy.

And how do we do that? By saying it over and over. We stand and tell Hashem who He is and by saying so it is an expression of our will to also be people of kindness and mercy.

Returning to our original question, prayer is not simply asking Hashem for something, rather it is for most, a call to ourselves to imitate Hashem. The 13 Middot are the best expression of this idea as they spell out what Hashem means to us and in what way we strive to follow him. ■



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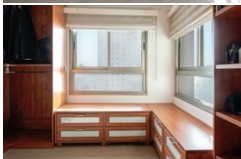
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