

^{ב"ה} **Torah Tidbits**

ISSUE 1515 MAY 13TH '23 כ"ב אייר תשפ"ג

פרשת בהר בחוקתי

PARSHAT BEHAR BECHUKOTAI - SHABBAT CHAZAK
AVOT CHAPTER 5

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ישראל

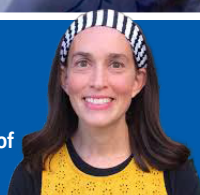
ובנה ירושלים

עיר הקודש

במהרה בימינו



**The Controversial Creation of
Yom Yerushalayim**
Rabbi Shimshon HaKohen Nadel
Mara D'atra, Kehilat Zichron Yosef, Har Nof
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Tefillat HaDerech
Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski
Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's
Initiative
page 70

YERUSHALAYIM IN/OUT TIMES FOR SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHAR BECHUKOTAI
CANDLES 6:51PM • EARLIEST 6:01PM • HAVDALA 8:08PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:45PM

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This week's Torah Tidbits cover image!

Photo taken by Yaakov Adler

I am 17 years old and live in Ramat Bet Shemesh, I am a ben aliyah.

I took this photo last year on yom yerushalayim and it shows the old and the new.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



CANDLES	EARLY	BEHAR BECHUKOTAI	HAVDALA	BAMIDBAR		
				Candles	Early	Havdala
6:51	6:01	Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	8:08	6:56	6:05	8:13
7:08	6:03	Aza area (Netivot, S'derot, Et al)	8:10	7:13	6:07	8:15
7:10	6:02	Beit Shemesh / RBS	8:09	7:14	6:06	8:14
7:06	6:01	Gush Etzion	8:08	7:11	6:05	8:13
7:08	6:03	Raanana/ Tel Mond/ Herzliya/ K. Saba	8:10	7:13	6:07	8:16
7:07	6:02	Modi'in / Chashmona'im	8:09	7:12	6:06	8:14
7:09	6:03	Netanya	8:11	7:14	6:07	8:16
7:07	6:02	Be'er Sheva	8:08	7:12	6:06	8:14
7:08	6:03	Rehovot	8:10	7:13	6:07	8:15
6:51	6:03	Petach Tikva	8:10	6:56	6:07	8:15
7:07	6:02	Ginot Shomron	8:09	7:12	6:06	8:12
6:59	6:04	Haifa / Zichron	8:11	7:04	6:08	8:17
7:06	6:01	Gush Shiloh	8:08	7:11	6:05	8:14
7:08	6:03	Tel Aviv / Giv'at Shmuel	8:10	7:13	6:07	8:16
7:11	6:01	Giv'at Ze'ev	8:08	7:16	6:05	8:14
7:06	6:01	Chevron / Kiryat Arba	8:08	7:11	6:05	8:13
7:09	6:03	Ashkelon	8:10	7:13	6:07	8:16
7:08	6:03	Yad Binyamin	8:09	7:13	6:06	8:15
7:03	6:01	Tzfat / Bik'at HaYarden	8:10	7:08	6:05	8:15
7:06	6:01	Golan	8:09	7:11	6:05	8:14

Rabbeinu Tam (J'lem) - 8:45PM • next week - 8:45pm

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

Daf Yomi this Shabbat: Sota 45



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OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat
May 10-20/ 19-29 Iyar

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	4:51 - 4:42
Sunrise	5:46 - 5:39
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:11 - 9:07
Magen Avraham	8:30 - 8:26
Sof Zman Tefila	10:19 - 10:17
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:35
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:10
Plag Mincha	6:00 - 6:05
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:30 - 7:37



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



Celebrating a 100 year anniversary is a special occasion. Whether it be a grand cake with 100 candles lit, a long guest list, photographers, speeches and balloons, the occasion will not go unnoticed. Last week, I attended OU's Kinus Mashgichim Conference, during which we celebrated 100 years of OU Kosher.

The OU Israel Kashrut team, including Rabbi Yissocher Dov Krakowski, Rabbi Ezra Friedman, Rabbi Yonatan Korach and Rabbi Yisrael Breish, flew to New Jersey to participate in the annual Kinus Mashgichim conference which took place at the Hilton Meadowlands. This year's conference went far beyond simply celebrating the accomplishments of OU Kosher over the past century. Rather, the conference gathered 150 *Rabbanim* from around the world who support and sustain OU Kosher

initiatives, to learn about new areas of food production and sharpen our skills across a variety of areas in *kashrut*.

Rabbinical Field Representatives (RFRs) and Rabbinical Coordinators (RCs) joined the conference from Israel, Australia, Europe, Asia, the Persian Gulf and across the United States to share their experiences and learn from one another. The event kicked off with speeches from Rabbi Menachem Genack (CEO, OU Kosher), Rabbi Moshe Elefant, (COO, OU Kosher) and Dr. Josh Penn, who reflected on the achieve-



ments of OU Kosher to date and reiterated the ways in which OU Kosher continues to provide the highest level of Kosher certification in the world, with transparency as a core value.

OU Kosher was founded in 1923,

certifying its first batch of products to be marketed nationally with several varieties of Heinz vegetarian baked beans in 1927. Today, OU Kosher remains the largest and most widely recognized Kosher certifying agency, with 970 *mashgichim* and managers, supervising more than 1.3 million products produced at 14,000 facilities in 106 countries, servicing more than 6,000 companies and providing a database for tracking 2.4 million ingredients used in

The OU Israel Family sends heartfelt condolences to the family of
Mrs. Chana Homnick a'h
on her passing

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

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I found this year's event particularly meaningful due to the time period we are in. As we count the *omer* in commemoration of the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva who died as a result of the way they treated one another, I was touched by the level of respect each *rav* showed for the other. When difficult questions were posed to specific rabbis they would not hesitate to refer the question to someone they felt had more experience with that particular issue, often responding, "Don't ask me, ask rabbi ___, he is the real *mumcheh* (expert) in this area."

With a century of experience under OU Kosher's belt, its RFRs and RCs have become well versed in areas across food production and work tirelessly to keep up with the latest advancements. These experts are available to *Am Yisrael* around the world, bringing unique areas of specialty to their work. To give you an idea, I connected

Aliya LaKever on the 7th Yahrzeit of
**Rabbi Yaakov Yechiel
Mechel (Mel) Heftler** *zt"l*

will take place b'ezrat Hashem on
Sunday, Rosh Chodesh Sivan (May 21)
at 9:30am in Eretz Hachayim Cemetery,
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with the world-renowned Rabbi Avraham Juravel who specializes in kosher ingredients, Rabbi Daniel Sharatt who specializes in the certification of leafy vegetables in Controlled Environment Agriculture. I particularly enjoyed the one-on-one *chavruta* learning during which we delved into the *mareh mekomot* of various issues relating to *Kashrut* today, such as hydroponic-grown vegetables and new technologies facilitating food production.

During my speech I highlighted the fact that beyond supporting, maintaining and advancing OU's high standards of *Kashrut* around the world, the efforts of OU *mashgichim* also enable the needs of *Klal Yisrael* to be met. With proceeds of OU Kosher invested into its existing programs such as strengthening Jewish identity across college campuses with JLIC, Yachad, NCSY, *klitat aliyah*, publishing Torah Tidbits and Jewish Action magazines, and creating programs for teens at risk.

Although at first I expected to see more marketing efforts around OU Kosher's 100-year milestone, it was evident that OU Kosher's leadership continues to remain focused on building upon what previous generations of OU *mashgichim* accomplished. With no time to waste on lauding our accomplishments, the conference focused participants on the task at hand - servicing the global *tzibur*.

When I heard my good friend Yoni Kempinsky, a reporter for Arutz 7, was in town, I jumped at the opportunity and invited him

to see the Kinus Mashgichim for himself. He too was blown away by what he saw, and quickly penned an article about the



experience he had. You can read his article via this link: <https://www.inn.co.il/news/600129>

When all was said and done, despite the slices of cake offered and being featured in Jewish magazine, the OU Kinus Mashgichim conference

took place virtually under the radar. Photographers, music, and a full press box were nowhere to be found. Instead, a group of 150 individuals dedicated to meeting the *Kashrut* needs of *Am Yisrael* around the world gathered to learn from one another and prepare for the challenges ahead. I truly felt privileged to spend a few days with people whom I consider to be giants in the *Kashrut* field.

If you would like to learn more about OU Kosher and its history, you can find a beautiful feature in Jewish Action. Pick up your copy at OU Israel or read online via this link: <https://jewishaction.com/cover-story/celebrating-100-years-of-ou-kosher/>

I look forward to seeing everyone on Friday morning, May 19, for OU Israel's *Yom Yerushalayim Tefila Chagigit* taking place at the Tayelet, Haas Promenade in Armon Hanatziv.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring *Shabbat*,

Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
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FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER



OU Executive Vice President

Never Alone

Whatever the challenge or difficulty, we do so much better when we do not experience it alone. As Rashi in this week's parsha makes clear: "I will scatter you amongst the nations." This is the harshest measure. When members of a country are exiled to a single place, they see each other and take comfort from each other. The Jewish people however were scattered such that no one was able to be connected to another." (Vayikra 26:32, Rashi)

By contrast, the Talmud (Brachos 5b) records how Rav Yochanan would carry with him a bone fragment from the tenth child that he had lost, ר"ל. When he showed it to other bereaved parents it opened a door for them to see that he was someone who could understand what they were experiencing, who could truly empathize with their indescribable pain, and who could make them feel a bit less alone.

Relieving the loneliness of others is our fundamental role within both our family and our community.

G-d created marriage and family because "it is not good for man to be alone." While according to Halacha, the marriage bond is created by a gift of money or something else of value, none of us has witnessed a wedding where the bride was presented with five, five hundred or five thousand

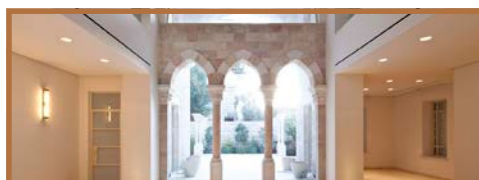
dollars. Instead, we give a ring. Money is put away, in a bank, a wallet or a drawer, while a ring – explained the Sefer HaChinuch – is worn on the finger, seen and played with all the time, a constant reminder of the special connection and relationship that it had forged, that the bearer of the ring is not alone.

While this role is easily noticed by those blessed with marriage and family, it is similarly essential to friendship and community. Author Johann Hari quotes a South African psychiatrist named Dr. Derek Summerfield who told the story of a Cambodian who worked in the rice fields. One day, he stood on a land mine left over from the war with the United States, and he got his leg blown off. They made him an artificial leg, and after a while, he went back to work in the rice fields. Apparently, it is super painful to work under water when one has an artificial limb, and it was traumatic to go back and work in the field where he had gotten blown up. He began to spend all day crying and refused to get out of bed, developing all the symptoms of classic depression. His doctors, his friends, his community, went and sat with him. They listened to him. They realized that his pain made sense, that it had perfectly understandable causes. One of the doctors, talking to the people in the community, figured, "You know, if we bought this guy a cow, he could become a dairy

farmer, and he wouldn't have to go and work in the rice fields." They bought him a cow. Within a couple of weeks, his crying stopped, within a month, his depression was gone. Notice that they did not say to this farmer, 'Hey, buddy, you need to pull yourself together. It's your job to figure out and fix this problem on your own.' On the contrary, what they said is, 'We're here as a group to pull together with you so that together we can figure out and fix this problem.' The listening – the community – the fact that someone understands what I am going through – that is an important part of the solution. He was already on the road to recovery when those friends came to sit with him to try to understand his sadness.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. There are many benefits to our community when we enhance our collective awareness of mental health. We benefit from being sensitized to the issues so that we recognize them in ourselves and in others, and we gain from being educated about available resources and the many ways that these challenges can be addressed. But perhaps most importantly, by discussing these issues we relieve the terrible loneliness of those who feel they are suffering alone. Our community provides strength by any measure taken to relieve the isolation of those who will now know that there are others who share their struggles, and that they are part of a community that is aware of and sensitive to their pain. ■

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BEHAR BECHUKOTAI



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA
SEDRA SUMMARY



**Rabbi Reuven
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1st aliya (Vayikra 25:1-18)

Shmita: The Land of Israel has its Shabbat. Work 6 years, the 7th is a Shabbat to G-d. What grows on its own is available to be used. **Yovel:** 7 cycles of 7 years are followed by Yovel, the 50th year, the Jubilee year. It is holy; pronounce liberty throughout the Land. Slaves go free; Land returns to its original owner. When selling your Land, do not abuse the buyer knowing the Land will return to you in the 50th year. Sell it commensurate with the years the buyer will have until Yovel. Keeping these laws will allow you to be secure in the Land.

The theme of holiness is expanded yet again. We have had holiness in the Mikdash, our approach to Him in His home.

We have had holiness in food. Holiness in relationships; those permitted and those not. Holiness in time; Shabbat and holidays. Now we are introduced to the holiness of the Land of Israel.

There are 2 aspects to the holiness of the Land of Israel. First, it is the Land of the Jewish nation. We have unique laws of kindness in agriculture; leaving parts for the poor, giving support to the Kohanim and Leviim. These laws only apply in our Land, where we build our unique Jewish society.

And second, our Land is where G-d has invited us to be close to Him. We are closest to Him in His home, in the Mikdash. And in Jerusalem, His city. But the holiness of proximity to Him seeps outward from Jerusalem to the entire Land. Hence, the Land is holy both in our standing close to the King. And in it being our unique Homeland, the place where we live according to our unique laws, reflecting Jewish philosophy.



2nd aliya (25:19-28) Don't be concerned that you will not have enough to eat if you rest

the Land; I will provide. Let the Land not be permanently sold; for the Land is Mine, you are but sojourners on it. If **one becomes needy and sells his field**, redeem it. The seller may also redeem it according to the years left until it returns to him in Yovel.

After introducing our limited ownership in the Land of Israel, the Torah switches to our responsibilities one to another. When people are in trouble, help them out. The sale of a field cannot end well. It's losing a job. In an agrarian society, what will this former landowner do for a living? This

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is the beginning of a downward spiral. Redeem his field; get it back for him, so he can make a living. This is as the Talmud states: the highest form of tzedakah is giving a person a job. Redeeming the field is returning his way of making a living to him.



3rd aliya (25:29-38) A house in a city may also be redeemed if sold, but only within the first

year. After that, the sale is permanent. **Homes in open towns** are considered like fields; they may be redeemed and they return in Yovel. The **towns of the Leviim**, even if walled, are always able to be redeemed and they too return in Yovel. When **one is in need**, help him. Do not charge interest; give him life. I am G-d who took you out of Egypt to give you this Land and to be your G-d.

The Talmud points out that the progression of stories the Torah presents here is from bad to worse. A forced sale of a field due to poverty. Then the sale of a home. Then the need for a loan. And in the next aliya, sold as a slave. The cheapest tsedaka is the first one; getting the field back, avoiding this whole collapse.



4th aliya (25:39-26:9) If one is sold to you as a slave, do not oppress him. Treat him as a

worker. He goes free in the Yovel year. For you are My servants. **Slaves purchased from the surrounding nations** are property that passes to future generations. If a **Jew is sold to a non-Jew**, a relative shall redeem him, for the Jewish people are servants to Me; My servants that I redeemed from Egypt. (Bechukotai) And if you will do all my mitzvot you will have bounty, peace, unusual success against your enemies. I

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will turn to you, multiply you and fulfill My covenant with you.

Parshat Bechukotai, though short, is powerful. Following an entire book of holiness, the stakes are laid out. The pursuit of holiness in the land that is holy is a high stakes endeavor. The achievement brings wonderful blessings; food, peace, health. For us, who enjoy walking in this holy place, the blessings are abundant. Though we know from history, so is the opposite.



5th aliya (26:10-46) And I will be in your midst; I, your G-d, You, my people. I will remove

the yokes from you and you will walk proudly. But if you do not do My mitzvot, I too will not pay attention to you. You will be subjected to illness, to enemies, to drought. If you persist in ignoring Me, I will persist in ignoring you, leaving you vulnerable to war, pestilence, famine. Your holy places will be vanquished, your cities destroyed; you will

be scattered around the world. Then the Land will have the rest of its Shmita. You will panic in your exile, afraid of a driven leaf. You will admit your failings; I will remember my promises to you. Even in your dispersion, I will not allow you to be destroyed.

Failure to live up to the demands of this holy place brings desolation and exile. The desolation of the Land of Israel without the Jewish people is legendary. Chilling. The Jewish diaspora, Jewish history, is predicted here; who needs a description of its fulfillment? Jewish suffering in exile was taken by other religions to be a sign of the rejection of the Jew. The return to the Land of Israel, so unexpected, so unprecedented, and so dynamic is a powerful refutation of that. If the exile was Divine displeasure with our dismissive attitude to Him, the return to the Land can only be Divine pleasure in bringing us close. And a charge for us; to never be dismissive of Him, but to engage, to search, to reach. What privileged times we, the undeserving, are

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fortunate to be a part of. And how vigilant we need to be to not again be dismissive of Him in His land.



6th aliya (27:1-15) When you make a **vow of your value** to G-d, there are set values for dif-

ferent ages and stations. This value is given to the Mikdash. If you pledge an **animal**, it is given and should not be switched. A pledge of a **home** may be given or redeemed.

Following the chilling section of the curses, the book of Vayikra ends with a full chapter of laws of vows. Generosity inspires contributions to the Mikdash. That's a good thing. The religious center of the Jewish people needs contributions. But this section is not only about what is given; but also what is not. When I pledge my value, is my intent to become a monk, giving up my life to serve in the Mikdash? The Torah does not endorse that. Pay money; keep your station in life. The Torah imposes the interpretation of vows of people and their value to be monetary gifts; but not Temple slaves. If you pledge an animal? Fine, let that become a sacrifice. But not you. Or any around you. A home too; the Torah does not want the Mikdash to acquire vast holdings. Homes are for people; the Mikdash is to be splendid, grand, and inspiring. But it is not to become a vast financial empire.



7th aliya (27:16-34) If a **field** is pledged, it's worth until Yovel is calculated. That value is given to

the Mikdash to redeem the field. If it is not

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redeemed, it remains with the Mikdash even after Yovel. **Property** which becomes owned by the Mikdash may not be redeemed.

Fields are the quintessential means of livelihood. If you wanted the Mikdash to be a financial empire, fields would be the place to start. But the Torah's default is that a donation of a field ought to be redeemed. Fields are for the people to make a living; not for the Mikdash.

The book of Vayikra, the book of man's approach to G-d, ends with a sober balance. While we approach G-d, dedicate our lives to Him, reach for Him, and He for us, the Torah protects us from going too far, from divesting of our assets, ridding ourselves of our homes and becoming a Temple slave, giving our all to the Mikdash. Our challenge is to be holy in our homes and our fields while reaching for the Divine.

HAFTORAH

YIRMIYAHU 16:19-17:14

The theme found in the Torah reading

of blessings and curses is echoed in the haftorah which discusses the punishment to those who disregard God's will and the reward to those who follow His will.

The courageous prophet Yirmiyahu scolds the people and warns them of the disaster if they maintain their idolatrous practices. Nothing less than exile from the Holy Land will come as the result of not having faith in God and commitment to the mitzvot.

Moreover, there is the positive outgrowth of obedience and loyalty to the Torah: "Blessed is the man who trusts in God; to whom God will be his trust. For he shall be like a tree planted by the water, and which spreads its roots out into a stream, so it will not be affected when heat comes, and its leaves shall be green, and in the year of drought will not be anxious, neither shall it cease from bearing fruit."

The haftorah concludes with a declaration of hope and salvation: "Heal me, O God, then shall I be healed; help me, then I shall be helped, for You are my praise!" ■

A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

את שבתתי תשמרו ומקדשי תיראו (ב:ב)

"My Shabbats shall you observe, and My Sanctuary shall you revere" (26:2)

Why is Shabbat mentioned and moreover, why is the reverence for the Sanctuary mentioned together?

Rabbi Ovadiah Seforno (Italy 1475-1550) connected this verse to the following *parsha* that discusses the punishment of Exile. He states that even without a Temple in Exile, we are to respect our Synagogues and Batei Medrash as such and keep the Sabbath.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l gave another lesson here. He connected this phrase with the *parsha* it is found in, which discusses the Laws of Hebrew slaves. The Hebrew slave may not learn from his gentile master. The Hebrew slave may not adopt the manner that the heathens serve their deities, namely, that their entire worship and faith are centered around their temples. As a result, the temple itself, with all its images, becomes the focus of all their worship. Although a Jew must revere the Temple, it is not the Temple itself that is subject of his reverence but rather the One Who commanded us concerning it. Therefore, it is imperative that we take to heart to observe the Shabbat and to revere G-d's Temple.

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IN THE PARSHA

“The Work-Study Program”

It has been quite a long time now since I first heard the term “work-study program.” This was a special federal program designed to assist young adults with limited financial means to achieve a professional education. Recipients of this grant were encouraged to continue with their jobs, to work, but were also paid to enroll in college level training courses, to study. Hence the term “work-study program.”

There was something about this term that struck me as odd. It seemed to make a distinction between work and study. It conveyed, to me at least, the notion that study was not work. To someone who had been trained in the yeshiva system, this notion was unacceptable. Study is work!

May the Torah learning
from this issue be לעילוי נשמת
and in loving memory of

Joe (Yosef) Goodman ז"ל
of London/Israel on his 25th yahrzeit

Missed By Susie, Terry, Judy, David, Neil,
Grandchildren & Great Grandchildren



In this week’s double Torah portion, *Behar-Bechukotai*, we come across the following phrase: “If you shall walk in My statutes...” (*Leviticus 26:3*) Rashi explains what it means to “walk” in the ways of God’s statutes. He suggests that “walking” here means that we must “toil in the Torah, *she-tihyu ameilim batorah*.”

The concept of “toiling in the Torah” is a basic one to anyone familiar with Torah study. But those less familiar with the subject can legitimately be puzzled by the phrase. They surely can understand learning Torah, or studying Torah, or comprehending Torah. But what does it mean to “toil” in the Torah?

My life-long interest in educational psychology has prompted me to analyze the process of “Torah-toil” and break it down into several components, or stages.

The first stage consists of diligence, of what is known in Hebrew as *hatmadah*. This is a requirement of putting in time. Torah study cannot be done on a piecemeal basis, in small segments of five or ten minutes. It requires sustained concentration and long hours of simply sitting and poring over the text.

The ideal Torah student is constantly studying. His is the image portrayed by the great poet Chaim Nachman Bialik in his masterpiece, *HaMatmid*. There he describes the night and day devotion of the young man to his studying task in moving and inspiring


terms. For Bialik, himself once a yeshiva student, the “matmid” is the true hero of Jewish history.

The second stage is that of struggle, of encountering the text and figuring out its basic meaning. This is difficult even to the student whose first language is Hebrew, and is even more challenging to those of us who grew up speaking English or another language and who come to the texts at a disadvantage.

There are skills that must be mastered in order to decipher the give and take of the Talmud and its commentaries. Simple meaning, punctuation, knowing where questions end and answers begin, understanding implicit assumptions, appreciating nuance – these are all aspects of this second stage of wrestling with the text.

In recent times, aids to Torah study have

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proliferated. Translations, elucidations, and abbreviations make the process much more user friendly. Sometimes, however, in my opinion, these valuable tools come at the cost of the kind of mastery which can only emerge from intense efforts and cannot be achieved through shortcuts.

And here we come to a third stage of Torah study: learning from one's mistakes. The Talmud itself maintains that "a person can only study Torah successfully if he makes errors in the process, *elah im kain nichshal bah*." All Torah students make mistakes in the initial phases of study sessions. They, or their study partners, soon detect these errors and correct them. Then real learning occurs.

In the fourth stage of this toil, the students probe and questions. He searches his memory for passages which might contradict the text at hand. He wonders about the underlying assumptions of what he has just read, and how they fit with principles from other sections of the Torah with which he is familiar. He consults the numerous super-commentaries to see whether his questions were anticipated by previous Torah students, perhaps centuries ago. This is stage four.

A fifth stage, omitted by some but essential in my personal opinion, is the search for relevance. "What personal meaning," the student must ask, "can I find in the text I have just mastered?" "How can it be

applied to current events, to contemporary problems, or maybe even to my own life experience and personal dilemmas?"

And finally we come to a sixth stage: teaching others. Maimonides, in his *Treatise on the Mitzvot*, asserts that one has not fulfilled the *mitzvah* of Torah study unless he shares his learning with others. *Lilmod*, to study, *ulelamed*, to teach.

How well I recall the process demanded of us by my favorite teacher, Reb Shmuel Dovid, who had each of us explain every passage we learned aloud to the rest of the class until our peers felt that we had explained it well. "If you can't explain something," he insisted, "then you don't understand it."

I have shared with you my own personal analysis of the many ingredients of effortful Torah study. Others have offered different analyses to be sure. But I hope that my highly personal perspective has helped clarify the idea of "toiling in the Torah" to you.

The fact that the Torah involves so much effort, such intense and diverse tasks, helps us understand why true Torah greatness, *gadlut*, is so rare and so appreciated.

We also understand why the reward for such toil is "rain in its season, a land of bountiful crops, and trees of the field that yield their fruit." (*Leviticus* 26:4)

Enjoy your Shabbat, and remember that one way to enjoy it is to use it to "toil in the Torah." ■





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COVENANT & CONVERSATION

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

Former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew
Congregations of the Commonwealth

לעילוי נשמות
HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

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Family Feeling

I argued in my *Covenant & Conversation* for *parshat Kedoshim* that Judaism is more than an ethnicity. It is a call to holiness. In one sense, however, there is an important ethnic dimension to Judaism.

It is best captured in the 1980s joke about an advertising campaign in New York. Throughout the city there were giant posters with the slogan, "You have a friend in the Chase Manhattan Bank." Underneath one, an Israeli had scribbled the words, "But in Bank Leumi you have *mishpachah*." Jews are, and are conscious of being, a single extended family.

This is particularly evident in this week's *parsha*. Repeatedly we read of social legislation couched in the language of family:

When you buy or sell to your neighbour, let no one wrong *his brother*. (Lev. 25:14)

If your brother becomes impoverished and sells some of his property, his near redeemer is to come to you and redeem what *his brother* sold. (Lev. 25:25)

If *your brother* is impoverished and indebted to you, you must support him; he must live with you like a foreign resident. Do not take interest or profit from him, but fear your God and let *your brother* live with you. (Lev. 25:35-36)

If *your brother* becomes impoverished and is sold to you, do not work him like a slave. (Lev. 25:39)

"Your brother" in these verses is not meant literally. At times it means "your relative", but mostly it means "your fellow Jew". This is a distinctive way of thinking about society and our obligations to others. Jews are not just citizens of the same nation or adherents of the same faith. We are members of the same extended family. We are – biologically or electively – children of Abraham and Sarah. For the most part, we share the same history. On the festivals we relive the same memories. We were forged in the same crucible of suffering. We are more than friends. We are *mishpachah*, family.

The concept of family is absolutely fundamental to Judaism. Consider the book of Genesis, the Torah's starting-point. It is not primarily about theology, doctrine, dogma. It is not a polemic against idolatry. It is about families: husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters.

At key moments in the Torah, God Himself defines His relationship with the Israelites in terms of family. He tells Moses to say to Pharaoh in His name: "My child, My firstborn, Israel" (Ex. 4:22). When Moses wants to explain to the Israelites why they have a duty to be holy, He answers, "You are children of the Lord your God" (Deut. 14:1). If God is our parent, then we are all brothers and sisters. We are related by bonds that go to the very heart of who we are.

The prophets continued the metaphor. There is a lovely passage in Hosea in which the prophet describes God as a parent teaching a young child how to take its first faltering steps: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son ... It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms ... To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them." (Hosea 11:1-4).

The same image is continued in rabbinic Judaism. In one of the most famous phrases of prayer, Rabbi Akiva used the words *Avinu Malkeinu*, "Our Father, our King". That is a precise and deliberate expression. God is indeed our sovereign, our lawgiver and our judge, but before He is any of these things He is our parent and we are His children. That is why we believe Divine compassion will always override strict justice.

This concept of Jews as an extended family is powerfully expressed in Maimonides' *Laws of Charity*:

The entire Jewish people and all those who attach themselves to them are like brothers, as [Deuteronomy 14:1] states: "You are children of the Lord your God."

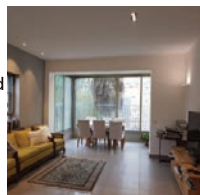


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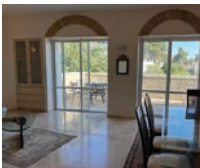
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And if a brother will not show mercy to a brother, who will show mercy to them? To whom do the poor of Israel lift up their eyes? To the Gentiles who hate them and pursue them? Their eyes are turned to their brethren alone. (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Gifts to the Poor, 10:2)

This sense of kinship, fraternity and the family bond, is at the heart of the idea of *Kol Yisrael arevin zeh bazeh*, “All Jews are responsible for one another.” Or as Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai put it, “When one Jew is injured, all Jews feel the pain.”¹

Why is Judaism built on this model of the family? Partly to tell us that God did not choose an elite of the righteous or a sect of the likeminded. He chose a family – Abraham and Sarah’s descendants — extended through time. The family is the most powerful vehicle of continuity, and the kinds of changes Jews were expected to make to the world could not be achieved in a single generation. Hence the importance of the family as a place of education (“You shall teach these things repeatedly to your children ...”) and of handing the story on, especially on Pesach through the Seder service.

Another reason is that family feeling is the most primal and powerful moral bond. The scientist J. B. S. Haldane famously said, when asked whether he would jump into a river and risk his life to save his drowning brother, “No, but I would do so to save two brothers or eight cousins.” The point he was making was that we share 50 per cent of our genes with our siblings, and

an eighth with our cousins. Taking a risk to save them is a way of ensuring that our genes are passed on to the next generation. This principle, known as “kin selection”, is the most basic form of human altruism. It is where the moral sense is born.

That is a key insight, not only of biology but also of political theory. Edmund Burke famously said that “To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind.”² Likewise Alexis de Tocqueville said, “As long as family feeling was kept alive, the opponent of oppression was never alone.”³

Strong families are essential to free societies. Where families are strong, a sense of altruism exists that can be extended outward, from family to friends to neighbours to community and from there to the nation as a whole.

It was the sense of family that kept Jews linked in a web of mutual obligation despite the fact that they were scattered across the world. Does it still exist? Sometimes the divisions in the Jewish world go so deep, and the insults hurled by one group against another are so brutal that one could almost be persuaded that it does not. In the 1950s Martin Buber expressed

2 Edmund Burke (1729–1797). *Reflections on the French Revolution: The Harvard Classics*, 1909–14.

3 *Democracy in America*, Chapter XVII: *Principal causes which tend to maintain the democratic republic in the United States.*

1 *Mechilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai to Ex. 19:6.*

the belief that the Jewish people in the traditional sense no longer existed. *Kneset Yisrael*, the covenantal people as a single entity before God, was no more. The divisions between Jews, religious and secular, orthodox and non-orthodox, Zionist and non-Zionist, had, he thought, fragmented the people beyond hope of repair.

Yet that conclusion is premature for precisely the reason that makes family so elemental a bond. Argue with your friend and tomorrow he may no longer be your friend, but argue with your brother and tomorrow he is still your brother. The book of Genesis is full of sibling rivalries but they do not all end the same way. The story of Cain and Abel ends with Abel dead. The story of Isaac and Ishmael ends with their standing together at Abraham's grave. The story of Esau and Jacob reaches a climax when, after a long separation, they meet, embrace and go their separate ways. The story of Joseph and his brothers begins with animosity but ends with forgiveness and reconciliation. Even the most dysfunctional families can eventually come together.

The Jewish people remains a family, often divided, always argumentative, but bound in a common bond of fate nonetheless. As our *parsha* reminds us, that person who has fallen is our brother or sister, and ours must be the hand that helps them rise again. ■

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.

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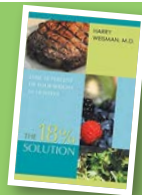
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Listening to the Torah reading this week can be a rather difficult challenge. The first parasha of B'har delineates the various mitzvot that would be incumbent upon Israel to observe upon their entry to the land, including the laws of *Shemita* and of *Yovel*, as well as the proper regulations regarding the sale and redemption of ancestral estates. In short, the first parasha lays down these requirements to impress upon the nation the inherent sanctity of the land – and the privilege they received to live there. In contrast to that theme, the second parasha of B'chukotai focuses on the punishments and eventual exile from the land were the people to ignore the holiness of Eretz Yisrael and fail to observe those laws and regulations. The theme of the second parasha, therefore, is one a denial of the sanctity of the land and the loss of our privilege to live there.

One parasha of promise; one parasha of doom.

Further upsetting our peaceful Shabbat is the worrying choice of past scholars to read the 16th and 17th prakim of Sefer Yirmiyahu for our haftarah. These chapters seem, at first glance, to focus our attention upon the *tochacha* (admonition) portion of B'chukotai, with the navi's harsh words assailing the sins of the people. The navi's forewarnings such as: "Chatat Yehuda k'tuva b'et barzel" – "The sin of Yehuda is written with a pen of iron", or "v'ha'avad'ti-cha et oyvecha ba'aretz asher lo yad'ta" – "I shall make you serve your enemies in a land you do not know"..." and "'ki esh k'dachtem b'api, ad olam tukad'" – "the fire you've kindled in My anger will glow into the future." – these are not messages that we would want to keep in our hearts as we turn back to our tefillah on Shabbat!

With these disconcerting thoughts, I turned to HaRav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch to see how he understands these troubling messages. And I am glad that I did. Rav Hirsch sees this haftarah in a totally different light. "Hashem Uzi U'ma'uzi", the opening words of the haftarah, praising Hashem as his "strength and refuge", sets the tone for the entire haftarah, argues Rav Hirsch. The navi, who was witness to the destruction of the Mikdash and the galut of his people, nonetheless glorifies G-d as

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his “strength” and his “refuge” because he does not see the galut experience simply as a punishment. Rather, he sees the sad years of the Diaspora as a prelude to the great redemption.

As Rav Hirsch writes:

“G-d, who made this powerless, helpless, abandoned...people triumphant, and gave them indomitable independence and endurance ...and always accorded them refuge and salvation in every hour of danger....will ultimately gather all the nations to Him.”

In the eyes of Rav Hirsch, our haftarah is not a reflection of the *tochacha* in the parasha, but its very antithesis! Our ancients chose this message of Yirmiyahu in order to grant us comfort after having listened to the *tochecha*. Israel's survival of the galut - with its sufferings, its pogroms, its ghettos – proves why Hashem is “Uzi Uma’uzi”. The terrible *tochacha* of the parasha must be seen as the precursor to the magnificent geula!

And, when we see the haftarah as Rav Hirsch does, if we regard the parasha's admonitions as part of the redemption process, we are able to return to our tefillot in a much better frame of mind.

I know that I will! ■


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It All Begins With Listening

Parshat Bechukotai opens on a positive note describing the blessings that will befall upon us if we fulfill the mitzvot. We will be blessed with rain, excess produce, peace etc. Then there is a lengthy depiction of what will transpire in the event that Am Yisrael does not follow in the path of the Torah. It is known as the *tochecha*. There is a narrative of many atrocities, all of which we have unfortunately witnessed throughout the generations.

When we are introduced to the blessings the term used is *אם בִּחְקֵי תִלְכוּ* - if you **follow** in the path of my statutes (Vayikra 26:3). However, when introduced to the curses, the phrase used is *אם לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ לִי* - But if you do not **listen** to Me (Vayikra 26:14). Why is the language not parallel? It should have stated – if you do not **follow** in the path of my statutes. *אם בחקתי לא תלכו*. Why does the Torah prefer to use the term *לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ*, a lack of **listening** when introducing the reason for the severe punishments?

We will provide an answer based on an idea expressed by *L'shimcha Elyon*. The first step in getting anywhere is listening. All too often people may hear another,

but the sound enters one ear and exits the other. Listening is not just hearing. It is processing, internalizing and understanding what is heard.

The gemara in Eruvin (13) declares that when there is a dispute between Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai, most often the halacha is in accordance with the view of Bet Hillel. One of the explanations provided is because Bet Hillel tried to understand the shita of Bet Shammai first. They were willing to listen and delve into what another expressed in order to reach the truth.

Bet Hillel learned from Hillel - an individual who was likely one of the greatest listeners who ever lived. A story is told in the gemara of a Friday afternoon where a visitor appeared at Hillel's door shortly before Shabbat to ask Hillel several trivial questions. Hillel listened intently to each question and patiently responded. It is Hillel who **listened** to the requests of three potential converts who attached conditions to their conversions (one wanted to be the

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kohen gadol, another to learn the Torah on one foot). After understanding each of them, he knew how best to respond and each accepted Judaism unconditionally.

With respect to Yitro we are told **ישמע** – Yitro heard. The entire world heard of what transpired at Yam Suf. Yitro not only “heard”. It did not just enter his ears, it entered his heart! He internalized and changed his life based on what he learned.

Imagine an individual learning about the mitzva of tzadaka. He is then interrupted by a knock on the door and a poor man asks for charity. The individual's response is “sorry, I am in the middle of learning right now and I cannot interrupt my studies to engage in giving charity.” Such an individual may be gaining an **understanding** of the mitzva of charity, but he does not **listen** to what he learns.

The *tochacha* begins with a warning to us. If we do not listen to the words of the Torah- if we do not internalize what we learn and make it a part of us, then we will likely not properly fulfil the commandments.

As we state twice daily – *Shema Yisrael* – Listen Israel – may we be able to make the Torah a part of us so that the fulfillment of mitzvot becomes second nature. ■

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"Im bechukotai teleichu ve'et mitzvotai tishmiru ve'asitem otam - If you follow my laws and keep my mitzvot and perform them..." (Vayikra 26:3) This is the prerequisite to receiving the beautiful rewards of enjoyment and tranquility promised by Hashem. The Midrash notes the redundancy in the verse and comments on the curious choice of the words *"ve'asitem otam"*, drawn from the root word *"asah* – to make". The sages thus said that if one follows the Torah, G-d will consider it as if he himself has "made" the mitzvah. Another interpretation offered by the Midrash is that Hashem will consider one who does the mitzvot to have "made" himself. What is the Midrash trying to teach us with these exegetical comments?

The Tosher Rebbe in *Avodat Avodah* comments on the Midrash - how is it possible for us to deserve any credit for doing mitzvot? Hashem gives us a house, only then can we put up a mezuzah. Hashem gives us a child; only then can we perform a bris. Every opportunity to

do a mitzvah is G-d given, what do we do that is deserving of reward? Thus, says the Tosher Rebbe, the only mitzvot we can take credit for are those that we "initiate." Meaning, that a person takes a non-mitzvah activity and elevates it to serve Hashem. When a person eats with the intention of serving Hashem, he has transformed that moment and created a spiritual connection. We know that when Hashem created the world, He did not send down rain until man was present to work the land. Rain, *geshem*, is a metaphor for *gashmiut*, the physicality of this world. Material matter is only worthy of being in this world if man can transform it into something sublime.

How do we understand that if one keeps Torah and mitzvot, he is considered to have "made himself?" Rav Reiss in *Me'rosh Tzurim* explains that Torah directs our actions and perspectives so we become more spiritual and elevated. Torah laws guide us how to speak, think, and even

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how to feel towards others. When one allows his Divine image to dominate his every activity and response, he becomes a king over his inner world; his self-control “makes” him who he is. Hence, the great variety of mitzvot are not to be viewed as a burden imposed upon us from Above, rather, they serve as repetitive practice to ensure that our spiritual selves govern our decisions and choices.

Consequently, Rav Scheinerman in *Ohel Moshe* explains Dovid Hamelech’s impassioned words, “*tzama lecha nafshi, kama lecha be’sari* - my soul yearns for You, my flesh pines for You” (*Tehillim* 63;3). Clearly, it is not surprising that one’s soul would yearn for Hashem, but for the physical body to yearn for Hashem... that can only come from the transformative nature of living a Torah life. With the focused practice of Torah and mitzvot we indeed can revolutionize ourselves, reaching more exalted, loftier dimensions.

The defining factor, says Rav Weissblum, is feeling a sweetness in learning Torah. When one feels the joy and pleasantness of Torah, he can be assured that Torah’s Divine impact and influence will find its mark. ■

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Chizuk

In the height of High Holiday celebrations in autumn of 1978, the Lubavitcher Rebbe suffered a heart attack. Dr. Ira Weiss of Chicago, a renowned cardiologist who had written a textbook on heart rhythm analysis, served as the head of the team of doctors who treated the Rebbe. For years following the Rebbe's miraculous recovery, Dr. Weiss continued to maintain a close relationship, attending annual farbrengens and closely monitoring the Rebbe's wellbeing.

One year, Dr. Weiss brought a professional colleague with him, Dr. Gerald Dorros Jr., a world-renowned cardiovascular interventionist from Wisconsin. After the farbrengen and medical consultation, Dr. Dorros had the opportunity of a few private moments with the Rebbe in *yechidus*. Not knowing what to expect from a deeper conversation with the Rebbe, he was surprised when the Rebbe suggested that the doctor should devote himself to preventative medicine: 'Consider treating people who are healthy — not only those who are suffering from illness or in need of emergency medical care. You can make healthy people even more healthy.'

"Are we to believe that we can improve on what the Almighty has done?" replied

the doctor with curiosity. "Of course!" the Rebbe responded. "If a layman can't improve on what the Almighty has created in this world, and if a doctor does not aim to improve on what the Almighty has done, then what are we doing here with our lives?"

Our sedra introduces us to our Torah-defined responsibility in lending a helping hand and issues a prohibition against taking/charging interest on a loan when assist our neighbors and brothers in their time of need:

וְכִי־יָמוּךְ אֶחָיֶךָ וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךְ וְהִזְקַתָּ בּוֹ גֵּר וְתוֹשֵׁב וְחִי עִמָּךְ... אַל תִּקַּח מֵאוֹתוֹ נֶשֶׁךְ וְתִרְבִּית...

"If your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you, you shall support him, whether a convert or a resident, so that he can live with you... Do not take interest from him."

(*Vayikra*, 25:35-6)

Rashi adds detail in his commentary on the verses:

וְהִזְקַתָּ בּוֹ אַל תַּנִּיחֵהוּ שְׂכִירָד וְיִפֹּל וְיִהְיֶה קָשָׁה לְהַקִּימוֹ, אֶלָּא חִזְקָהוּ מִשְׁעַת מוֹטָת הַיָּד; לָמָּה זֶה דּוֹמָה? לְמַשְׁאוֹי שְׁעַל הַחֲמוֹר, עוֹדֶה עַל הַחֲמוֹר אֶחָד תּוֹפֵס בּוֹ וּמַעֲמִידוֹ, נָפֵל לְאָרֶץ, חֲמִשָּׁה אֵין מַעֲמִידִין אוֹתוֹ;

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“Do not allow him to fall down and collapse altogether, in which case it would be difficult to pick him up again [from his dire poverty]. Rather, “support him” while his hand is still faltering [for then it is easier to help him out of his trouble]. To what can this be compared? To a load on a donkey-while it is still on the donkey, one person can grasp it and hold it in place. Once it falls to the ground, however, [even] five people cannot pick it up.”

Before someone becomes completely destitute and is in need of a bail-out, rehabilitation, we must strengthen them, and to be ahead of the curve, anticipating what may happen before it does.

Rambam (*Matnas Aniyim*, 10:7) provides us with even greater detail:

שמונה מעלות יש בצדקה זו למעלה מזו. מעלה גדולה שאין למעלה ממנה זה המעזיק ביד ישראל שמך ונתן

לו מתנה או הלואה או עושה עמו שתפוח או ממציא לו מלאכה כדי לחזק את ידו עד שלא יצטרך לבריות לשאל ועל זה נאמר (ויקרא כה לה) "והחזקת בו גר ותושב וחי עמך" כלומר החזק בו עד שלא יפל ויצטרך:

“There are eight levels in charity, each level surpassing the other. The highest level, beyond which there is none, is a person who supports a Jew who has fallen into poverty [by] giving him a present or a loan, entering into partnership with him, or finding him work so that his hand will be fortified so that he will not have to ask others for a hand-out: ‘You shall support him, the stranger, the resident, and he shall live among you.’ Meaning, support him before he falls and becomes needy.”

Our charge of *v’hechezakta bo*, “strengthen and support one another” is to do so spiritually as well as materially. This includes offering words of encouragement

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or guidance, and whatever resources we may have at our disposal. Perhaps someone can benefit from our social currency, our professional introduction, our listening ear or good word, but the main thing is devoting ourselves to the ‘preventative medicine’ of *v’hechezakta bo*.

Rebbe Moshe Alshich notes that when we are presented with an opportunity to help, we sometimes imagine others with more skills, resources, better connections or greater wealth, to be in a better position to assist. However, in the commandment, אחיך “your brother” is in לשון יחיד, singular form. This means *your* brother or sister, not that of the person with more resources. Our calling is to take others’ potential needs personally, see them as our own brother or sister, and even to imagine that we are the only one able to be of assistance to them. We should not passively assume that others will do our mitzvah for us.

Rebbe Nosson Dovid of Shidlovitz (*Sefer Imrei Binah*, Parshas Behar), writes:

“When one loves another, he can uplift him spiritually. If one is invited to dine with the king, and replies, ‘I don’t want to go unless my friend comes with me’ he

has expressed a deep bond of love, and has manifested the ultimate, inner goal and meaning of the Covenant between Am Yisrael and Hashem. This applies to every Jew. To the degree that a person takes part in manifesting the relationship and strengthening the Covenant between friends and God, he can bring the entire world to perfection.”

Before taking leave of the Rebbe, Dr. Dorros asked one last question: “Are you asking me to attempt to make man a perfect being?” “No,” the Rebbe told him, “that is not what is asked of you.” With a twinkle, he added: “Leave that for Mashiach.”

Dr. Dorros later founded the Dorros-Feuer Interventional Cardiovascular Disease Foundation — and as Medical Director, continues to promote proactive heart health and wellbeing to countless recipients, “making healthy people even more healthy”.

By lifting one another up, and strengthening each other even before we might face an inner or outer challenge, may we merit the restoration — and perfection — of our collective physical and spiritual health, with the coming of Mashiach, soon and in our days. ■



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9:15AM The Top 10: A Look at the Aseret HaDibrot **Mrs. Zemira Ozarowski**

9:25AM 'אנוכי' – Let's Talk Emunah
Rabbi David Aaron

10:15AM כיבוד אב ואם – The Ageless Mitzvah of Respecting Parents and a Special Tribute to our Mother, Mrs. Linda Pruwer-Brachfeld a"h
The Brachfeld and Pruwer families

11:05AM Yahrtzeit Brunch

11:25AM ללא תרצה: End-of-Life Issues
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

12:10PM ללא תחמוד: The Prohibition of Jealousy- Parameters, Preventatives and Prescriptions
Mrs. Sara Leah Haber



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10:15AM Coffee and Refreshments

10:30AM Megillat Rut with **Mrs. Leah Feinberg**

11:20AM A Bite of Tefilla - Sandwiches and Davening Insights with
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12:00PM Hashkafic Insights into Sefirat HaOmer with
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www.ouisrael.org/events/jchat-shavuot-night-meal-for-young-professionals-2/

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Monday May 15 - all morning shiurim are sponsored in loving memory of our mother Elaine Mittman אסתר איטא בת ברוך הלוי ע"ה,
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INSPIRATIONAL TORAH LEARNING AT OU ISRAEL

SUN, MAY 14

9:15 AM

Journey Through the Siddur
Rabbi David Walk
(Resumes May 21)

10:20 AM

Mishnah with Rambam's
commentary **Rabbi Dr.
Aaron Adler**
(Resumes May 21)

11:30 AM

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

2:00 PM

Men's Talmud
Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

SPECIAL EVENT

10:00AM-12:00PM

The Mommy Club (L'Ayla)

MON, MAY 15

9:15 AM

Divrei Hayamim (L'Ayla)
Rebbetzin Pearl Borow

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

8:30 PM

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

TUE, MAY 16

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 Mauner**

8:00PM

Sefer Shmuel **Rabbi Machlis**

SPECIAL EVENTS

9:15-1:00PM

L'Ayla Morning of
Learning for Women

4:00PM Hebrew on the
Go- Old City Walk for
Young Olim Families



Schedule Subject to change, please check website for updates
ouisrael.org/events/

WED, MAY 17

9:00 AM

Torah and Technology
Rabbi Shimshon Nadel

(new course)
(Resumes May 31)

10:15 AM

Contemporary Halachic
Issues

Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:30 AM

Ani Maamin- But Do You
Know if it's Really True?

**Rabbi Yitzchak
Feigenbaum** (new course)

12:30 PM Lunch and Learn

Rabbi Neil Winkler
Bagels/Spreads 30NIS

8:00 PM

Halachic Controversies

Rabbi Aschi Dick
(The Bais) New start time

***L'AYLA CLASSES
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THURS, MAY 18

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
Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld



VIRTUAL SCHEDULE

(Zoom Only Classes):
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88363420460>
Password: ouisrael

Rabbi Taub

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

Rebbetzin Shatz

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

Rabbi Goldwicht

Parshat HaShavua
Wed. 8:30PM
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2244321902>
Password 18

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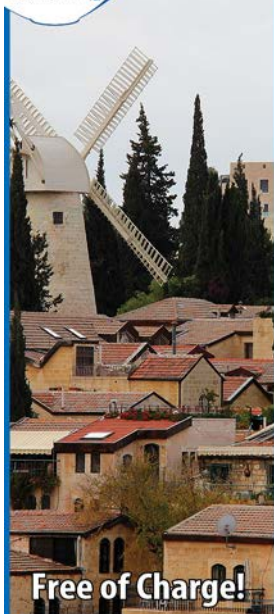
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Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier
- 12:30AM One People, One Heart
Rabbi Sam Shor
- 1:30AM TBA
- 2:30AM Marking Rav Soloveitchik's 30th Yahrtzeit-
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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

The second of our two *parshiyot* this Shabbat, *Parshat Bechukotai* begins with the words:

"Im Bechukotai teleichu, if you walk in my statutes and safeguard my commandments and fulfill them, then I will provide rain at its proper time."

Rashi, in a famous comment explains the words, *Im Bechukotai Teleichu*- if you walk in my statutes, to be an instruction to immerse ourselves in Torah- *Shetihyu Ameilim Batorah*-to immerse oneself in the labor of Torah.

How are we to understand this insight of Rashi?

In the fifth chapter of *Sefer Iyov* (verse 7) we read: **adam le'amel yulad....A person is born to toil/labor.**

The Great Chasidic Master, the **Avodat Yisrael of Koshnitz zy'a** points out that the word **Le'amel-lamed, ayin, mem, lamed** is an acronym for the words **Lilmod al menat lelamed-** to study Torah, in order that we may teach it to others..."

How are we to fulfill the precept to walk in Hashem's statutes? By delving into the Torah's wisdom, and sharing the relevance, morality and beauty of Torah with others.

Rabbi Avraham Borenstein, the Avnei Nezer, the first Rebbe of Sokatchov, zy'a defines this experience of *ameilut b'Torah*, with these words from the

introduction to his work **Eglei Tal**.

'The essential definition of immersion in Torah, is that one needs to find fulfillment, and sweetness or pleasantness in that which is being learned...'

Rav Kook, zy'a, in the ninth chapter of **Orot HaTorah**, echoes these sentiments, and says though it is important that a person strives to achieve basic fluency and fundamental knowledge of all areas of Torah wisdom, it is important to recognize that as individuals each of our souls may be drawn more to a particular area of Torah study. True *ameilut*, is to find those areas of Torah wisdom that most resonate with our hearts and souls, and to let the sweetness of that wisdom permeate our entire being.

Yehi Ratzon, that each of us may find that *chelek* in the Torah *HaKedosha* within which our *neshama* may truly experience that *matikut*, the sweetness of Torah, and be blessed to share the sweetness of Torah with one another... ■



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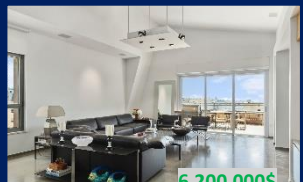
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GEULAS YISRAEL

BY RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Etzion

Six for Six: How the World Changed in Six Days

The actual state of Israel was established 75 years ago in 1948. However, the modern state of Israel as we know it, was launched in 1967. The six-day war was so revolutionary and so transformative, that in many ways, it was more groundbreaking than 1948. Thousands of years ago, Hashem created our natural world in six days. Fifty-six years ago, during the week before Matan Torah, He reshaped history in six quick days. Here is a list of the six major revolutions which occurred during those six days in June

Six for Six.

The Biblical Corridor

In 1948, we were graciously “permitted” to return to a carved-up parcel of our ancient Homeland. After the shock and horror of the

Holocaust, our return to Israel soothed the world’s conscience and, additionally, solved the thorny issue of unwanted and “undesirable” Jewish refugees. By contrast, in 1967, we returned to the Biblical corridor – a passage of land which cuts through the heart of Israel and the heart of Jewish history. This territory stretches from Shechem in the north, snakes its way through Jerusalem, bends toward Beit Lechem and Chevron, finally passing through Be’er Sheva in the south. Jewish history and sefer Bereishit, emerged in these lands, and our return to this passageway signaled the resurgence of our people and the reconstitution of redemptive History. Jews living in the Tanach provinces signal the acceleration of history in a manner that the important, but indefinite miracles of 1948 did not.

Emergent Superpower

Conditions in Israel between 1948 and 1967 were harsh and unforgiving as our country was riddled by food rationing,

numerous wars of attrition, and stifling diplomatic isolation. In 1948, our nascent and beloved state provided a respite from the tumultuous and tragic years of the Holocaust,



and fulfilled a centuries-long dream of resettling our Homeland. However, life continued to be arduous, and conditions were austere. The miracles of 1967, the courage of our soldiers, and, of course, the palpable Divine intervention created a swell of national pride or *קוממיות* which transformed the fabric of Israeli society.

Ironically, the War of Independence in 1948 is sometimes referred to as the war of *komemiyut* because, for the first time in thousands of years, Jews defended themselves from military aggression. In truth, the miraculous events of 1967 established far greater *komemiyut* than the ambiguous victory of 1948. The restoration of our national pride began in 1967 and since this watershed moment we have emerged as a military, economic, agricultural, medical, water, energy, and, of course, high-tech superpower. This little country of the Jews is certainly responsible for an outsized portion of modern human welfare. This is part of the redemptive arc and 1967 launched this era of Israeli confidence and innovation. As Artificial Intelligence and laboratory manufactured food revolutionize our world, it is likely that we will continue to lead Mankind into this unknown future.

Flocking Home

The return to Yerushalayim and the surrounding environs stoked international Jewish interest in returning home. Prior to 1967, much of the emigration to Israel consisted of “distress Aliyah”- Jews fleeing persecution from Arab countries. Between 1948 and 1967 the financial hardships in Israel were so severe that more people emigrated *from* Israel than *to* Israel. That all



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changed in 1967. The magnetizing effect of Yerushalayim as well as the slow but steady economic improvement in Israel drew the interest of Jews from across the globe. Many made aliyah and still more became more embedded in Israeli life, purchasing real estate or increasing their frequency of visits. The worldwide Jewish interest in Israel spiked after 1967. Jews in New York, London, and Paris became shareholders in our joint project of historical reconstruction.

Diplomatic Acceptance

Prior to 1967, Israel was a diplomatic pariah. Despite the broad support afforded us during the UN votes of the late 1940s, we were soon plunged into diplomatic isolation. Much of the third world was aligned with Arab interests and, also, was deeply influenced by the Communist bloc which

enjoyed spheres of influence in Europe, China, and parts of Latin America. This joint Communist and third-world bloc routinely exhibited diplomatic hostility toward israel.

Though we enjoyed broad diplomatic support in Europe and the United States, militarily, we were still isolated. The US arming of Israel began in earnest only after our military victory in 1967. During the war of 1967, we literally stood “alone” on one side of the river, facing off against an entire world; we had assumed the role of our ancient grandfather, Avraham, who had also opposed an entire world of idolatry.

As our mission is to inspire an entire world, international acceptance of Israel is a crucial element of that vision. Though full embrace of the Jews in their Homeland will only be achieved when history ends, the slow but steady diplomatic progress over the past twenty years is part of our redemptive advance.

Religious Revival

The legendary scenes of Israeli soldiers sounding the shofar while standing at the newly liberated Kotel galvanized an entire people. Witnessing Hashem’s explicit intervention in the historical process prompted a revival of religious sentiment. Over the past 50 years Israel has rightly established itself as the epicenter of worldwide Torah study. The euphoria of 1967 launched the National Religious Torah world, which, alongside the Charedi Torah world, has dramatically augmented the spread of Torah study.

1967 didn’t just stimulate Torah study and Orthodox behavior. The original culture of

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Israel and of the founders of Zionism was highly secular and even anti-religious. It is no wonder that so many Orthodox Jews were unable to endorse a redemption which was masked in such animosity to religion. Since 1967 Israel has witnessed a revival of 'traditionalism' as a large majority of non-Orthodox Israeli Jews identify as "Masorati". They may not adhere to strict halachic regulations, but they do believe deeply in Hashem and in His historical mission for His people. 1967 altered the religious landscape of Israel, both by animating Torah study and by relandscaping the secular demographic.

Jewish Confidence Index

Over the past fifty years, Jews across the world have become more engaged in local governance, culture and society. Previously, Jews lived along the margins of society and were barred from prestigious schools, law firms and country clubs. Modern Jewish communities display more confidence and participate more extensively in local society than previous generations. Much of this confidence stems from the *komemiyut* achieved in Israel during the 1967 war. Knowing that we have constructed a strong and successful Jewish state feeds Jewish confidence across the globe.

Six days and six seismic shifts in Jewish history. We eagerly await the seventh day of history. That day will be Moshiach and will feel a lot like Shabbat, the original seventh day. ■

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RABBI AARON

GOLDSCHIEDER

Editor, Torah Tidbits

Spiritual Vitamins in the Food of the Land

The purpose of remembering Jerusalem [when reciting] ‘Al naharot bavel,’ and ‘Shir hama’alot’, at every meal is in order that we yearn for the Land of Israel, in close proximity to eating. This serves to enhance the food outside the Land of Israel and brings it closer to the heights of Israel.

Even in the Land of Israel in this time, when there is a diminished holiness due the destruction [of the Temple] and there is increased physicality, in proportion, in its food - still, there remains substantial spiritual content [in the food] in proportion to the longing for the redemption, which we accentuate by [reciting] the Psalms, which introduces the Blessing of the Land and [the blessing] of ‘Rebuilding Jerusalem’ in Birkat Hamazon (The Blessing After the Meal). (Eretz Cheftetz 4:10)

The notion that there is holiness found within food is an idea espoused by the kabbalists and underscored in Chassidic thought. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski zt”l elucidates this esoteric concept:

“Chassidic writings raise the question: Inasmuch as the foods we eat provide only physical nutrients, where does the *neshama* get its nutrients? They answer that in every physical object there is a spark, a nucleus of *kedusha* and Godliness, which enables the object to exist. This nucleus of divinity that is within the food is the nutrition of the *neshama*.

Just as physical digestion is dependent on the presence of certain enzymes that convert the food into the body’s necessary building blocks, so is the absorption of the nucleus of *kedusha* that is within the food dependent on the spiritual “enzymes.” These are the *berachot* that proceed consumption of food, whereby one invokes the name of God as one thanks Him for the food. Similarly, sharing words of Torah at the table enables the *neshama* to extract the spark of *kedusha* in the food and absorb it (Visions of the Fathers, Twerski, pp. 149-150).

Evidently, Rav Kook is suggesting that reciting these chapters of Psalms at the conclusion of the meal have the ability to extract the sanctity that is embedded in Eretz Yisrael.

Perhaps an additional dimension to Rav Kook’s teaching can be found in the following explanation from Rabbi Twerski: “Chassidus teaches that retrieving the sparks of Godliness that are dispersed within the physical world hastens the ultimate Redemption of Israel. Think of it! A

person has the extraordinary power of hastening redemption by eating properly” (Ibid, p. 150).

The Source for Reciting Psalms with *Birkat Hamazon*

What is the source for the custom of reciting the Psalms, *Al Naharot Bavel* (*Tehillim* 137) and on Shabbat and Yom Tov *Shir Hamaalot* (*Tehillim* 126) before *Birkat Hamazon*?

The Zohar states (*Terumah* p.154 b) that if one derives pleasure from bread and delights in given foods, he is required to remember and worry over the sanctity of the Holy Land and over the Palace of the King which is in ruins. So on weekdays we recite, “There we sat and also wept when we remembered Zion.” On Shabbos and Yom Tov when it is prohibited to openly display grief, we say a joyful psalm instead: “When Hashem returned the captivity of Zion, we were as dreamers” (*Shelah*, p. 82b).

The Zohar is suggesting that we read these verses to temper our joy by remembering the loss of the Temple. Rav Kook, however, seems to emphasize something different. He sees the positive effect in reading these Psalms. When we concentrate on the Land while engaging in eating we ennoble the act of eating - and amazingly, we even elevate the spiritual content of food itself. The result is bonding with the spiritual quality inherent in the Land simply by reciting words that focus on the Land.

A Halacha Regarding Sparks of *Kedusha* Found in Food

The *Tur* specifies the correct text that should be recited following the consumption of the seven species of the Land of Israel (*Tur, Orach Chaim* 208). He states that the

words: *ve'nisboa mituva* וְנִשְׂבַּע מִטּוֹבָה (to be sated with its goodness) should be omitted from the blessing of *Al Hamichya*. This phrase connotes that we are eating only in order to enjoy the pleasure of the Land's food. This emphasis, suggests the *Tur*, has no place in the blessing. Perhaps the *Tur* is alluding to the Talmud (*Sota* 14b) where it notes that Moshe's desire to enter the Land was *not* for the purpose of enjoying its sustenance. Why should we make mention that the food is tasty when that is not our focus?

The commentary of the *Bach* counters and suggests that this phrase is indeed correct because it does not relate to the physical nourishment or superior cuisine in the Land but rather to the sparks of Godliness found in its produce. This message, he argues, should certainly be highlighted in the blessing. It is noteworthy that it is our practice today to include the words “to be sated with its goodness.”

The legendary Chatam Sofer suggests that the Torah's praise of Israel as being a “Land flowing with milk and honey” is actually meant to underscore the spiritual content found in all the produce in the Land of Israel. We use a similar expression to describe the sweetness of the Torah - “Honey and milk under her tongue” (Song of Songs 4:11). The concept that holiness is found in the food is hinted at in the following way: The final letters (*sofei tevot*) of the words - *zvat chalav u'devash* זֶבֶת חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ spell the word Shabbat. The Chatam Sofer concludes: ‘Partaking of the food of Israel is compared to partaking of a Shabbat meal’ (*Chatam Sofer, Chiddushim on Chullin*, 71b). ■



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR.
ADINA SHMIDMAN



רְפְּאֵנִי ה' וְאֶרְפָּא הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וְאִנְשְׁעָה כִּי תִהְלֹתִי אִתָּה:
*Heal me, O LORD, and let me be healed;
Save me, and let me be saved; For You are
my glory.* (Yirmiyahu 17:14)

The words of Yirmiyahu are familiar to us as they are used as the basis of the bracha of Refainu in our daily Shemoneh Esrei. Our Sages reformulated the personal request of Yirmiyahu to reflect the beseeching of a community asking for healing. These words resonate so deeply during these times. We've faced a pandemic with unprecedented illness and loss and continue to turn to Hashem in prayer to cure our friends and family and heal our world.

Rabbeinu Bachaya makes an interesting observation as he explains the words in the verse in Shemot 21:9, וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא, *and he shall surely heal*. This verse sanctions man to heal another human being. While the root (ר-פ-א) is the same in both Shemot and in our verse in Yirmiyahu, there is a slight difference in the words. In Shemot and in other places in Tanach (e.g., Yirmiyahu 51:9), when discussing man's treatment of the sick, the letter פ (Pey) is used. However, when we request that Hashem heal man, the letter פ (Fey) is used as seen in

the Posuk in our Haftorah, רְפְּאֵנִי ה' וְאֶרְפָּא, *heal me and I shall be healed*, as well is in other places (e.g., Tehillim 147:3). Rabbeinu Bachaya explains that the פ (Pey) is a harsher sound, suggesting that medical treatment often can be difficult and painful. The dot in the פ (Pey) alludes to the pricking and poking, the invasive acts that often must be done in order to cure illness. By contrast, when G-d heals us, the letter used is פ (Fey) which is a softer sound. We ask Him to heal us gently and kindly and use measures that are as unobtrusive as possible.

These words, “רְפְּאֵנִי ה' וְאֶרְפָּא הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וְאִנְשְׁעָה, כִּי תִהְלֹתִי אִתָּה,” *Heal me, O L-rd, and let me be healed; Save me, and let me be saved; For You are my glory*, are used in our daily Tefillah. We beseech Hashem at this time, and always, that He will cure those who are ill with His love and kindness, that the sick won't have to suffer needlessly and that our world is cured from illness for all time. ■

Rebbeztin Dr. Adina Shmidman is the founding director of the Orthodox Union Women's Initiative and the rebbeztin of the Lower Merion Synagogue in Bala Cynwyd, PA.

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Rearranging Aliyot to Enable a Levi's Aliya

Question: This Shabbat (Vayakhel/Pekudei), the *gabbai* called up a *levi* for *shvii*, and as *ba'al korei*, I knew he was going to make a *hosafa* and give *acharon/chazak* to someone else. I quickly told him the *levi* cannot come up, but that they should switch the intended *olim*, having the *levi* wait for *acharon*. After *laining*, someone suggested we should have relied on the Sephardi *minhag* that *kohanim* and *levi'im* can have *aliyot* after the first three. Who was right?

Answer: The reason a *levi* gets the

second *aliya* is to honor his status, which is lower than a *kohen's* and higher than a *yisrael's* (Gittin 59b). Once there is a hierarchy, giving a *kohen* or a *levi* a lower than prescribed *aliya*, especially giving an *aliya* after another “tribesmen” can give the impression that one of them is disqualified from his status (see *ibid.*).

All agree that the three *aliyot* during the week and the first three of Shabbat and *Yom Tov* morning are given to *kohen*, *levi*, and *yisrael*, in that order. According to Sephardi practice, starting with the fourth *aliya*, we can give *aliyot* to *kohanim* and/or *levi'im*, as long as it is not to two in a row and that when we call them, we announce “... even though he is a *kohen*” (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 135:10). The Rama (*ad loc.*) says that Ashkenazi *minhag* is that they cannot get *aliyot* until after the required seven. However, Ashkenazi *minhag* has changed somewhat: *kohanim/levi'im* do not get even *hosafot* except for *maftir* and *acharon*, but they can be even back-to-back (Mishna Berura 135:36, based on the Levush). On the side of leniency, even if *acharon* is one of the seven, the importance of its finishing the reading makes it appropriate for *kohanim/levi'im* (*ibid.*).

The Taz (OC 135:9) points out the “self-fulfilling prophecy” element of these matters. If the rule is that a certain *aliya* is appropriate for a *kohen/levi*, then receiving it cannot

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cast aspersions on them. This observation helps justify Sephardic leniency but makes it more difficult (while still possible) for Ashkenazim to rely upon the lenient opinions, when in the *shul* at hand, it is not an *aliya* that *kohanim/levi'im* receive. In your case, since the previous *levi* received an *aliya* long before, aspersions will not go back onto him (see Beit Yosef, OC 135). However, in general, we do not leave it up to the *kohen/levi* to decide if they are willing to put up with possible aspersions upon themselves.

On the other hand, Halacha does consider other factors in this matter, including the embarrassment of coming up for the *aliya* and not being able to receive it (see Mishna Berura 135:35). (It is not fully clear if the embarrassment begins in earnest from the time one's name is called and he is thus expected to get up (see Berachot 55a), or only when he stands by the *bima* – see *ibid.* and Mor U'ketzia to OC 135). Yet, classical *poskim* do see your solution, of giving him a subsequent *aliya*, as a good remedy to embarrassment. The Shulchan Aruch (*ibid.* 6) says that if a *yisrael* was called for the first *aliya* due to absence of a

kohen and then a *kohen* comes in before the *yisrael* begins the *beracha*, the *yisrael* waits at the *bima* until he can get the *aliya*. The Mishna Berura (*ibid.*) embraces that idea for our general case. So what you did was an excellent way to deal with the situation, and better than ignoring our *minhag* of not giving *aliyot* before *acharon*.

There may have been other viable possibilities. Even if the *yisrael* was informed about his *aliya*, until he is called up, nothing firmly binds the *shul* to give him one. Of course, decency calls for keeping one's word (see Bava Metzia 49a), but mistakes or changed circumstances can legitimize asking the *yisrael* to forgo his expected *aliya* and “compensating” him in the future. (Which idea was better might depend on a quick appraisal of who is likely to be insulted.) If it was important to give *chazak* to the *yisrael*, it was possible to give *maftir* to the *levi* (when it is fine to split the *berachot* and the *haftara* reading is a good question – see Rama, OC 284:4; Ishei Yisrael 38:56). ■



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The Chadash Prohibition #3: Current Situation in Israel

Two weeks ago I recounted how I saw Brooklyn bakeries advertising *kemach yashan* and asked why we don't see such signs in Israel.

We do see kashrut certificates for baked goods and bakeries in Israel featuring “*challah* was taken,” “no concern of *tevel*” and “*terumot* and *ma'aserot* were separated,” but not “*kemach yashan*” or “no concern of *chadash*.” Why not? Last week we discussed the *posekim* who maintain that it is a rabbinic prohibition outside of Israel and are therefore lenient. However, *posekim* agree that *chadash* is biblically prohibited in the Land of Israel.

Situation in the field

Most grains in Israel are sown in the winter and harvested between *Iyar* and *Sivan*, so *chadash* does not present a practical issue for locally-grown grains. Even if grain is harvested early before mid-*Nissan*, or if farmers sow during the spring and harvest in late summer, Israel's Chief Rabbinate

supervises the granaries and ensures that no *chadash* grain or flour reaches the marketplace. All grains imported to granaries are under the supervision of the Chief Rabbinate, which sees to it that either no *chadash* grain is imported or that it is stored until it becomes *yashan*. All imports certified by Israel's Chief Rabbinate do not contain *chadash* grain.

That is, the reason we do not see “no concern of *chadash*” on kashrut certification is because, ***Baruch Hashem, all products certified by Israel's Chief Rabbinate are chadash-free.*** This is thanks to the fact that the Chief Rabbinate is a dominant and influential player in the local kashrut scene. Most Mehadrin and Badatz kashrut agencies in Israel rely in many ways on the Rabbinate's basic kashrut certification, only adding extra stringencies.

Note that more than 90% of grain consumption in Israel is from imports, not from locally grown grain. ■

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RABBI GIDEON

**Machon Puah for Fertility and
Gynecology in Accordance with Halacha**

WEITZMAN

Redeeming the First Born

Last time we presented the case of a woman who delivered twins, that each developed separately in two uteruses. The woman was born with a rare congenital condition, uterus didelphys, in which she has two uteruses. She became pregnant with twins, one in her right side uterus and one in her left side, and both developed and were delivered.

Since this was her first pregnancy, would both boys born have to be redeemed in a pidyon haben? A firstborn child, if neither parents were from the tribe of Levi, needs to be redeemed in a pidyon haben ceremony. In this ceremony, the child is brought before a kohen and the father gives the kohen five silver shekel coins.

If the father was either a kohen or a levi, or the mother was the daughter of a kohen or a levi, the child would not need to have a pidyon haben. If the mother had previous children, even from a different man, the child would not need to have a pidyon haben. This is true even if the previous child did not survive, or there was miscarriage, after the child had begun to develop. This is usually around 40 days after conception, and so, generally, we assume that if the miscarriage occurred prior to this time, then the next child born would need a pidyon haben. But, if the

miscarriage occurred after 40 days, the next son born would not need a pidyon haben. In the case of doubt the son born subsequently would need a pidyon haben, which would be performed without making the blessing. This is due to the halachic principle that in cases of doubt we perform the action but do not make the bracha.

The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 305:24) writes that in the case of a "*yotzei dofen*" the child does not need a pidyon haben. This literally means, "the one who came through the wall", what we call a Cesarean delivery, or C-section, since traditionally it was thought that Julius Caesar was born this way, or that he was descended from someone born this way. As Pliny the Elder wrote "*a caeso matris utero*", born by caesarian section. But the validity of this tale is widely debated as historical fact.

Since the delivery was not natural, the child is not liable to a pidyon haben. But, continues the Shulchan Aruch, neither is the next son liable to a pidyon haben, since he is not the firstborn.

What does this tell us about the case of uterus didelphys?

More on this next time. ■

The Puah Institute is based in Jerusalem and helps couples from all over the world who are experiencing fertility problems. Offices in Jerusalem, New York, Los Angeles & Paris. Contact (Isr) 02-651-5050 (US) 718-336-0603 www.puahonline.org

Real Life Rescues



Chessed Comes Full Circle

My name is Moise Paskez and earlier tonight, I was driving on Highway 1 toward Jerusalem on my ambucycle, when suddenly things started to go wrong. The dashboard gauges began to flicker, the engine began to sputter, and before long it died completely, sending me coasting to a disappointing halt on the shoulder. After a quick consultation with United Hatzalah's head mechanic, we decided that I should hook up my emergency jump-starter to the battery and see if it would work. This got me another few kilometers... but then the motorcycle battery AND the booster pack conked out, leaving me utterly, devastatingly stranded.

I spent more than a half-hour trying different options - calling different people, posting on various WhatsApp groups... to no avail. I began to despair of getting home at anything even remotely resembling a normal hour. Never mind the fact that there was no way in the world I would be able to get my bike to Jerusalem now... even if I were to abandon it on the side of the road, how would I get myself home? As cars and buses whizzed by me almost tauntingly, the realization sank in that I was really and truly stuck, and that only G-d could help me now...

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a truck came barreling onto the shoulder, honking furiously and flashing his headlights. On the side of the truck, in huge letters, were emblazoned the words - I kid you not!!! - "EIN OD MILVADO". The driver rolled down his window and shouted "Brother, where do you need to go? Jerusalem? Come quickly, I'll take you AND your motorcycle!!!" Almost as if in a dream, I watched dumbstruck as he lowered the electric jack on the back of the truck to the ground. I worked with him to heave the dead bike onto it, and into the truck. Of all things in the world, his cargo consisted of (again, I PROMISE I'm not making this up!!!) OLD MATTRESSES... which he used to pad between my bike and the wall of the truck so that it wouldn't even get an unnecessary scratch. Talk about an extra "kiss" from G-d! Within moments, I was sitting up front next to the driver (who told me that his sister actually used to work for United Hatzalah until 2 years ago), happily speeding toward Jerusalem. But the best part was yet to come...

While chatting with the driver, he mentioned that approximately eight years ago, he was involved in a severe motorcycle crash - the short version is that he plowed into a bus at 90 KPH. Broken pelvis, open fracture of the femur, many broken bones... you get the picture. Four United Hatzalah EMTs were the first ones on the scene. "United Hatzalah saved my life that day," he said, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "For eight years I've waited for an opportunity to repay the favor. EIGHT YEARS. Today is finally my day!!!"





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BY RABBI SHIMSHON HAKOHEN NADEL

Mara D'atra, Kehilat Zichron Yosef, Har Nof
OU Israel Faculty

The Controversial Creation of Yom Yerushalayim: A Day in Transition

The indelible images of those six miraculous days in June 1967, along with the echo of Motta Gur's battle cry, "הר הבית, בידנו", are forever seared into our collective consciousness: The defeat of the Syrian, Jordanian and Egyptian armies. The dramatic unification of Jerusalem and reclamation of the Temple Mount. Soldiers weeping as they touch and kiss the ancient stones of the Kotel. And the IDF's Chief Rabbi, Rav Shlomo Goren, clutching a Torah scroll, blowing the Shofar, and reciting the Beracha of Shehecheyanu.

On Thursday, the 29th of Iyyar - one day after the liberation of Jerusalem and with the war still being waged on the battlefield - Chief Rabbis Rav Isser Yehudah Unterman and Rav Yitzchak Nissim called on synagogues throughout Israel and the Diaspora to recite Hallel and offer up festive prayers on Shabbat, the 2nd of Nissan, giving thanks to Hashem for the wonders and miracles He bestowed upon them.

The *Mo'etzet Harabbanut Harashit* soon met to discuss establishing a festival to commemorate these miraculous events, and the idea was also discussed at

a conference of leading rabbis at Heichal Shlomo immediately following Shavuot. But with the initial euphoria following the Six Day War waning, and other important matters to address, the item was moved off the agenda. It wasn't until six months later, the 28th of Tishrei, that the *Mo'etzet Harabbanut Harashit* met again to discuss Yom Yerushalayim. Rav Unterman suggested commemorating the day on the 28th of Iyyar, the day Jerusalem was liberated. Rav Shaul Yisraeli, however, preferred Rosh Chodesh Sivan for the following reasons: 1. He felt that the 28th of Iyyar is too close to Yom Ha'atzmaut, and the day will not get its due. 2. As the ceasefire was declared on Rosh Chodesh, celebrating that day would be similar to how Purim was celebrated once the fighting had ceased and the people 'rested.' And 3., celebrating on Rosh Chodesh prevents any potential controversy over the recitation of Hallel, as Hallel is already recited on Rosh Chodesh! The decision was made to create a special committee and include other leading rabbis in the discussion, among them Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv

and Rav Yaakov Betzalel Zolty. On the 8th of Tevet they met again and decided by majority to establish the 28th of Iyyar as a festive day.

Following its decision, the Chief Rabbinate sent a letter to 17 additional rabbis asking them to respond with suggestions on how the day should be observed. A conference of rabbis was called for the 3rd of Adar to discuss what Tefillot should be recited, and how to mark this special day. Thirty-eight rabbis were invited to the conference - among them Poskim, Dayyanim, and Admorim from the Charedi community - but only 11 participated. Following much discussion and debate, the following decisions were made: 1. To adopt the 28th of Iyyar as a day of thanksgiving. 2. To recite Hallel without a Beracha, consistent with the ruling of the Chief Rabbinate at the

time regarding Hallel on Yom Ha'atzmaut. 3. To request that the government give a half-day vacation from work to encourage its citizens to celebrate. 4. To celebrate the day with a festive meal. 5. Further decisions to be made at a future meeting of the *Mo'etzet Harabbanut Harashit*.

After additional discussion and debate, a final decision was made on the 17th of Adar. The 28th of Iyyar, initially called *Yom Hodayah V'Simchah*, was proclaimed as a "day of great victory of Israel over her enemies and the liberation of Jerusalem, the Holy City," to be celebrated by Jews in Israel and throughout the Diaspora with :

1. The reading of Shirat HaYam responsively,
2. the recitation of Hallel with a Beracha,
3. a sermon publicizing the miracle following Hallel,
4. the recitation of Psalms 107 and
- 5., festive meals



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and celebrations (*Mishte V'simchah*). Rav Unterman noted that the celebration suspends the customs of mourning for those who observe customs of mourning during this part of Sefirat Ha'omer.

In Iyyar, the decision was made public. Rav Unterman pointed out that this decision was for the first year alone and that there will be further discussions as to how the day should be observed in the future. Adding to the confusion, the decision was not well publicized and the broader community was unsure as to how the day should be observed. Mizrachi and Hapoel Mizrachi publicized special Tefillot for the night of Yom Yerushalayim, which included Psalms 136 and 122, festive meals, the lighting of candles, and the study of *Masechet Middot* and the Rambam's *Hilchot Beit Habechirah*, as a way to celebrate the day.

Once the day had been adopted by the Chief Rabbinate, the Minister of Religion, Dr. Zerach Warhaftig, urged the government of Israel to declare a national holiday. But concern over the reaction by Arabs to the celebration of the unification of Jerusalem prevented the government from making a decision. In fact, the United States sent a message to Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressing its opposition to celebrating the victory as a national holiday. Two weeks before the first Yom Yerushalayim, on the 14th of Iyyar, the Israeli government decided it best that the day be celebrated as a 'religious' holiday and not a 'legal' holiday. It wasn't until March 23, 1998 - thirty years later! - that the Knesset would pass the Jerusalem Day Law, formally proclaiming the day a national holiday.

In the years that followed the Chief Rabbinate's initial decision, Yom Yerushalayim would go through a number of incarnations. The recitation of Psalms 20, 35, and 83 on both Yom Yerushalayim and Yom Ha'atzmaut was added in 1969, and in 1972 they instituted the recitation of Yizkor for fallen IDF soldiers.

The election of Rav Shlomo Goren as Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi would mean more changes. Already while Chief Rabbi of the IDF, Rav Goren had created his own Tefillah service for Yom Ha'atzmaut, different from that of the Chief Rabbinate. Now in his role as Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel, he would institute his Tefillah Chagigit for Yom Yerushalayim as well. It included Psalm 122 and the omission of *Vehu Rachum* at Ma'ariv. In the morning, he instituted the festive *P'sukei D'zimra*, with the omission of *Nishmat Kol Chai*, similar to what is done on *Hoshanah Rabbah*, Hallel *without* a Beracha, the omission of *Tachanun* and *Lamnatze'ach*, and the addition of the prayer for the State of Israel and the *Mi Sheberach* for the IDF. In subsequent years, Rav Goren would change his mind about Hallel, and encourage its recitation *with* a Beracha, eventually instituting half-Hallel at night without a Beracha. He also instituted the recitation of Shehecheyanu.

Rav Ovadia Yosef, who served as Sephardic Chief Rabbi at the time, did not agree with the additions made by Rav Goren. While recognizing the miracles and wonders of the Six Day War, for a number of reasons Rav Ovadia believed that it is too premature to recite Hallel with a Beracha: 1. The opposition of many leading

authorities to the recitation of Hallel, 2. in light of the tragedy of many fallen and injured soldiers, 3. King David did not institute Hallel following his conquest of Jerusalem and 4., our Holy Temple is still in ruin. Instead, Rav Ovadia believed Hallel should be recited in the morning without a Beracha, at the conclusion of the Tefillah and *Tachanun* should be omitted.

In 1989, Chief Rabbis Rav Avraham Shapira and Rav Mordechai Eliyahu would encourage the broader public to celebrate this profound day, and added the recitation of Psalms 91, 98, 107, and 122 before Ma'ariv, and Psalm 126 and *L'Shanah Habah* following Ma'ariv, in addition to the Psalms and prayers already recited by many on Yom Ha'atzmaut. They affirmed the decision of Rav Ovadia and ruled that members of the Eidot Hamizrach recite Hallel without a Beracha at the conclusion of the Tefillah.

Over the decades, gatherings and celebrations at the Kotel, Yeshivat Mercaz Harav, and the *Rikudegalim* flag parade would develop, marking the day.

But due to the lack of clarity and confusion caused by the many changes and additions made by the Chief Rabbinate over the years, the Religious Zionist community - who agrees the day deserves religious expression - has not yet come to a consensus as to just how the day should be observed: Hallel with or without a Beracha, at night and in the morning, or just in the morning, etc. Special Siddurim and proclamations from rabbinic organizations have attempted to streamline the Tefillot, but even today different communities observe different customs.

In addition, the day is not celebrated by the Charedi community or the broader, secular community.

Perhaps this phenomenon is not new. Chanukah was only instituted the "the following year" (*Shabbat* 21b), and Purim too took time before it was formally accepted (See *Megillah* 7a). Perhaps Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim will take some time to coalesce and crystallize, until all of Am Yisrael can put their differences aside and celebrate together these days of profound religious significance and meaning. ■

Rabbi Shimshon HaKohen Nadel lives and teaches in Jerusalem, where he serves as Mara D'atra of Har Nof's Kehilat Zichron Yosef and Rosh Kollel of the Sinai Kollel and Chovevei Zion's Kollel Boker.

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GUEST DVAR TORAH

RABBI DAVID FINE

Founder and Dean of Barkai

Achdut and Yerushalayim

Throughout the years many historians have suggested that the main cause for Israel's inability to capture Jerusalem in the 1948 war was Jewish disunity. These same historians have argued that unity is what ultimately allowed for the capture of Jerusalem in 1967. Religious and spiritual leaders have claimed the same. The famous "father of the Kippot Srugot", Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neria said: "In the war of liberation there was no people's army. There were subterfuges and disputes, and if Jerusalem were to be liberated, everyone would pull in their own direction and say it's all mine. In the Six Day War, however, we came as a united army, the people's army, and therefore HaShem granted us the right to return to Jerusalem." Jerusalem is synonymous with Jewish unity, and at no time in our history has the need to recognize this been more critical.

Shockingly, the name Jerusalem is not mentioned in the Torah. The Torah instead refers to "The place which God will choose (Devarim 12:5)". One would think that the location where David would ultimately establish his kingdom and where God's eternal presence would be found in the Beit HaMikdash would certainly be revealed.

Rambam addresses this question in

his Guide to the Perplexed (3:45), writing that "every one of the twelve tribes would desire to have this place in its borders and under its control; this would lead to divisions and discord, such as were caused by the desire for the priesthood. Therefore, it was commanded that the Temple should not be built before the election of a king who would order its construction, and thus remove the cause of discord." In Hilchot Melachim, Rambam rules that Israel was commanded to fulfill three mitzvot upon entering the Promised Land: a) To choose a king...b) To wipe out the descendants of Amalek,...and c) To build God's Chosen House. Rambam rules that this order is binding; the Mikdash can only be built after the appointment of the King. Since the purpose of the king is to prevent division and bring about unity, by proclaiming the order to be binding, Rambam is teaching that unity is a prerequisite for achieving Jerusalem. The Torah avoids explicit mention of it to prevent strife.

This is not the only example of how Halacha proves that unity is Jerusalem's most important element. Two (out of many) additional sources demonstrate this as well: The Talmud (Bava Kamma 82b) teaches that a house in Jerusalem cannot be privately sold because Jerusalem was not assigned to the Tribes (the rest of the Land was assigned to specific tribes thus allowing the sale of homes to individuals in places in Israel other than Jerusalem). Furthermore the

Jerusalem Talmud (Chagiga 79b) based on the verse in Tehillim “Jerusalem built like a city - *SheChubra Lah Yachdav*”, teaches that Jerusalem is a city that makes all Israel *chaverim*. The Talmud does not bring this statement simply to teach a nice concept but goes on to show that this idea has very specific implications in several important areas of Halacha.

In our past we have needed to worry about the unity of military and political leaders for Jerusalem to be captured physically. Today, each and every one of us need to make every effort to bring about unity so that Jerusalem can be the city of peace that it was meant to be for the entire world. ■

Rabbi David Fine is the Founder and Dean of the Barkai Center for Practical Rabbinics and Community Development.

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BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative



Tefillat HaDerech

When thinking about the various Brachot and Tefillot I recite throughout my day, one that I definitely have the most kavana for is Tefillat HaDerech. Every morning, after successfully getting all of my kids out of the house and running to catch the bus, I take my seat, catch my breath, and take a pause to daven for a safe trip to work. Given all the car accidents and acts of terror we hear about on a daily basis, I truly believe that every time we arrive safely at our destination, it is a miracle. Though we no longer have to deal with roadside bandits and wild animals (generally...though this week there was a video that went viral featuring a camel that had gotten lost in my yishuv and proceeded to run down the highway veering in between lanes and cars as he pleased....), we have many other very real dangers facing us on a daily basis.

There is a lot of Halachic discussion as to what the parameters are for when Tefillat HaDerech is required (how far do you need to travel from a populated city, how long the drive takes, etc.). But even when a drive doesn't fall into these Halachic parameters, it is agreed upon that one may still recite the Tefilla without

the concluding bracha and ask Hashem for a safe journey. So it seems that it can never hurt to recite the Tefilla, and can only come to our benefit.

The **Shelah** writes - אם שגורה תפילת הדרך - בפיו אזי תלך לבטח דרכך, *if your mouth is well-versed in Tefillat HaDerech, you will be able to travel in safety.* The **Nimmukei Orach Chaim** supports this idea as well. He writes as follows: *"Many are lenient in our times not to recite Tefillat HaDerech. They explain that the roads are not currently dangerous, especially when traveling on the train. However, "their mouths speak futility." And our eyes have seen and our ears have heard about the danger in our days, the murders, thefts, and all sorts of other calamities that take place on the roads, and also about the locomotive trains that collide with other trains or turn over and go off the tracks, and especially concerning automobiles, which are more dangerous than any wagon. Therefore, we certainly need Tefillat HaDerech, and Hashem should accept our prayers."*

Modern transportation has developed since those words were written in the early 1900's, and train, plane, and car travel is significantly safer than it was in the author's day. Nevertheless, the idea that Tefillat HaDerech can protect us from harm is still quite relevant today and seems to be a good practice.

Every time I recite Tefillat HaDerech,

I invariably end up asking Hashem not only to watch over me on my ride to work but to watch over me in my journey throughout the day. I never knew there was a source for this until I encountered the following quote by **Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook** in *Ein Aya*. Rav Kook writes as follows:

כל מצב חדש צריך שמירה, שעכ"פ מביא ציורים חדשים ורגשות חדשות...ע"כ אפילו כשאתה יוצא לדרך תכין עצמך לקראת ההתרגשות והשינויים החדשים שתוכל הדרך להביא בצורך...וזאת היא עיקר מטרת תפילת הדרך, שעמה יחד תבא המירה המעולה, כי ד' ישמור את יראיו.

Any new situation requires protection, since it inevitably brings with it new challenges and new emotions...Therefore, when you travel, prepare yourself for the emotions and new changes that traveling may bring your way...This is the primary purpose of Tefillat HaDerech, which through it will bring the best protection, since Hashem watches over those who fear Him.

May Hashem protect us on all of our journeys and throughout life, watching over us and granting us success in all our endeavors.

**Many thanks to my husband Rabbi Eli Ozarowski, English editor of Tzurba M'Rabanan, for his contribution to this article (based on his material for the upcoming volume of Tzurba) ■*

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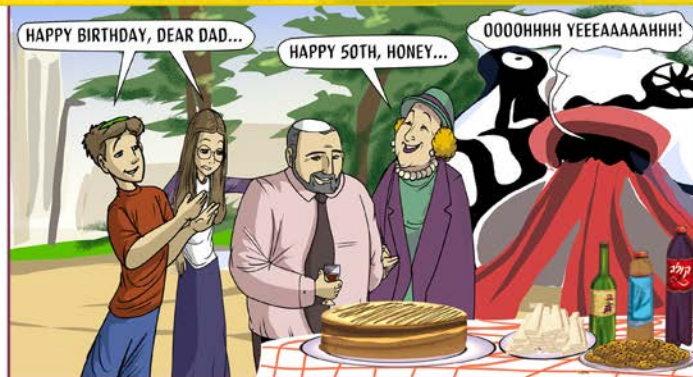
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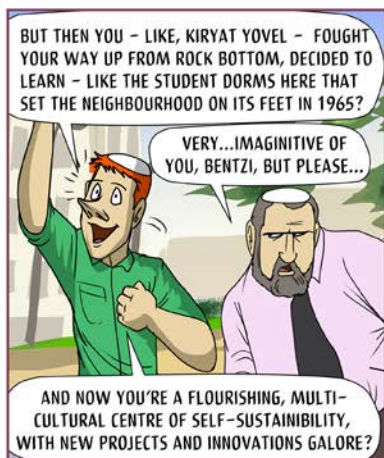
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Yehuda Benhamu **JLIC Jerusalem** **Brooklyn, NY**

The Gemara Shabbat states the following warning: “Due to the sin of prohibited illicit relations, idol worship, and abdication of the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years, exile comes to the world and they exile the Jewish people from their land..” While the first two reasons for exile seem justified, for what reason would Israel’s desecration of Shemittah merit such dire consequences? What makes Shemittah so fundamental to the creation and preservation of a nation?

To attempt to understand the essence of what makes Shemittah so crucial to society, we must delve into the verses. There are three consecutive verses that seemingly have varying accounts of who or what the utility of this command comes to serve. They state:

“But in the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath of complete rest, a sabbath for the Almighty, you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your untrimmed vines; it shall be a complete sabbath for the land. This sabbath shall be for you to eat; for you, you slaves, your laborers who live with you.”

It begins by attributing the seventh year

of rest to God, it is for his sake that we rest on Shemittah. However, it then quickly transitions to stating we give the land rest for the sake of the land itself. Finally, it assigns the purpose of this command to the people themselves, for all those who work and benefit from the land to sit and rest. So which is it? Why do we have the laws of Shemittah and who exactly are they for?

The answer comes from a later verse in our Parasha that at first glance seems misplaced. Right in the middle of the discussion of all the laws and intricacies of Shemittah comes a verse that states “Do not wrong one another, but fear your God”. The essence of Shemittah is the creation of a foundation of morality that permeates every area of our society. While we usually think of morals as the appropriate behavior we have towards the world, Shemittah challenges us to move beyond that. It is to cultivate a perspective of humility, compassion, empathy, and faith within the communities we create. To leave things up to God, to give things to the less fortunate around you, and to forgive in the present on behalf of a brighter future.

What then do we make of these three different attributions in the verses? It was Lawrence Kohlberg, a psychologist and moral philosopher, who outlined three main stages of moral development. The first is pre-conventional morality, which entails an individual’s motivation for acting justly as overall obedience to authority.

Right and wrong are defined by the powers that be, and despite our wishes, we must go along in fear of punishment. The next stage is conventional morality, morality based on social norms and expectations of the people around us. For the sake of approval or social utility, we adhere to morals, knowing that it is what the land demands of us. The final stage, post-conventional morality, is where a person transcends mere pragmatic motivations and acts with an intuitive sense of justice. For no reason other than transcendent principles is justice required, even when it stands at odds with the world around them.

These are the very same stages the Torah was referring to for society. When we begin creating a society, we act in relation to authority, a seventh year of rest “A sabbath for God”. Once we begin to settle and build institutions, our morals must be in line with the land and community around us. To feel true compassion for the less fortunate, to sacrifice from our own in service of others. To understand what the nation requires of us and to act in accordance. A “sabbath for the land”. But to truly create a just and moral society, to create a people that are righteous no matter the circumstance, we must eventually derive our

ethical motivation from ourselves. To feel the responsibility, to emulate the Divine, and to truly recognize the intrinsic morality that the world requires. To allow the field to rest, to allow all to share, and to forgive all things because it is what God would do. “A sabbath shall be for you”.

We can now answer our original question. Why are the laws of Shemittah considered to be so axiomatic for the maintenance of society? It was Einstein who said it best “Only morality in our actions can give beauty and dignity to life”. We exist as Jews in service to a higher ideal, believing that all are created in the image of the Divine. We owe dignity and beauty to God, to those around us, and to ourselves. Without them, without morality, we are as fleeting as the wind. It is only through the internalization of those values that our nation can flourish and stand as a model to the world. We must craft a perspective of intrinsic morality, from the ground up, and have that serve as our guiding light while building our communities and ourselves. ■

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The OU's Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus (JLIC) is creating and nurturing vibrant religious communities in Israel to support English-speaking college students and young professionals. JLIC Israel's goals include: building a warm and welcoming Jewish community for students and young professionals; providing engaging and dynamic Jewish education; providing a supportive home environment for Olim; providing resources for personal and religious growth, including personal mentoring, Aliyah support, religious guidance and leadership development. Current JLIC programs in Israel include: Reichman University - Herzliya; Bar Ilan University - Givat Shmuel; Tel Aviv University; Tel Aviv for Young Professionals; and Jerusalem. Contact: Rabbi Jonathan Shulman, Director of OU-JLIC in Israel shulmanj@ou.org



Lauren Shore
Beit Shemesh
Chapter Director

The Right Kind of Giver

In Behar, Hashem tells us that if another Jew should become impoverished, we must help them by lending money, and we may not charge interest.

It is common today to charge interest when lending money to someone to ensure it is fully returned. Why can't we charge interest?

The first powerful lesson we learn from this commandment is that all blessings we are given in life, including how much money one has, come directly from Hashem. Since it is Hashem's money to begin with, He has the right to tell us not to charge interest on the money we lend out.

The second lesson is designed to help us ensure that we never forget the first. Today, we are surrounded by a selfish society where people often do things for selfish reasons. Many people subconsciously will think through a "cost/benefit" analysis to see what kind of benefits they can expect to receive for their actions.

By giving us this commandment, Hashem is ensuring that when we lend money to someone, it will be completely about the person we are helping and not about us, about the other person's needs

and not our own gain.

The ultimate form of giving is selfless giving. No matter what we give to someone in need, be it money, time, or advice, we must make sure that it is about the other person. Coming full circle this type of giving allows us to emulate how God gives! Just as He gave us this money completely selflessly, so too when we pass it on, we should try to be completely selfless as well.



Noa Feldman
10th Grade,
Beit Shemesh

In the last year, there's been a downturn in the economy. People are losing their jobs, companies are closing down, and it's caused a lot of hardships for many families. This week's Parsha addresses these kinds of situations and how to help others.

The Parsha starts off talking about people who are in very difficult situations. When talking about the Yovel, the fiftieth year after seven Shmita cycles, the Torah talks about a person who had to sell off all of their land and only in the fiftieth year will they get their land back. Then, it talks about a Jew who becomes so poor they have to sell themselves as a slave.

The Torah advises us and gives us a special mitzvah to help others before it gets that bad. In Vayikra 25:35 it says, "When

your brother becomes impoverished and loses the ability to support himself in your neighborhood you must strengthen him.” Elsewhere in the Torah, (Devarim 14:8) it says when your brother is poor give him money to support himself and his needs. Why does the Torah say it differently here in our Parsha?

The Torah says that before he even gets to the point that he’s poor, right when he starts to struggle you must help him before the situation gets worse. Rashi on our Pasuk gives an example of a donkey who has a heavy burden on his back and is starting to fall. While the donkey is still standing, one person could grab hold of the load before the donkey falls whereas once it falls you would need more than five people to bring it back up.

This idea is presented by The Rambam

in the eight levels of Tzedeka (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Charity, 10:7-14) where he tells us the eighth and highest level of tzedaka is to help another Jew by giving them the ability to support themselves rather than giving them charity to take care of their immediate needs. This could be done by giving them an interest-free loan (this is also a Mitzva mentioned in this week’s Parsha) to start a business, involving them in a partnership, or finding a job opportunity for them. Give them a fishing rod rather than a fish.

I think this is a very good teaching from the Torah because the person who is receiving charity might feel a little embarrassed and helpless. This way of helping others makes them feel empowered so they are not dependent or reliant on others while still getting the help they need. ■



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