

ב"ה  
**Torah**  
**Tidbits**

ISSUE 1625

AUG. 16<sup>TH</sup> 2025 ▪ כ"ב אב תשפ"ה

פרשת עקב  
**PARSHAT EIKEV**

PIRKEI AVOT 4

United  
We Stand

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**"Heel, Heal, and Hope"**

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Page 16



**Attentiveness Attuned**

Rebbetzin Shira Smiles

Page 30



למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם על האדמה  
דברים י"א:כ"א

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT EIKEV ZMANIM

CANDLES 6:46 PM • EARLY 5:59 PM • HAVDALA 8:00 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:38 PM



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Torah Tidbits is proud to share a photo each week on the cover from our readers! It is an honor to showcase the immense talent from across the country.

Send us your best photos and give us the opportunity to highlight your story.

Everyone is invited to submit! (amateurs and professionals alike)  
Please email to [aarong@ouisrael.org](mailto:aarong@ouisrael.org)



## COVER IMAGE Photographed by Jay Kalish

Judy and I live in Efrat and came on aliyah in 1987. Two of our children served as מדריכים at the Zula. I took this picture standing right next to the Kotel, looking up. When I saw the bushes, the image resembled a field, reminiscent of the pasuk "ציון שדה התחרש". But when I see the Kotel, I do not see destruction. I see the beginning of the rebuilding of the מקדש, starting with the walls surrounding Har HaBayit. שנזכה לראות בבנין בית מקדשנו בקרוב.

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



## OTHER Z'MANIM



### JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat**  
**August 13 - 23 / 19 - 29 Av**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	<b>5:08-5:16</b>
Sunrise	<b>6:03-6:09</b>
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	<b>9:23-9:25</b>
Magen Avraham	<b>8:44-8:47</b>
Sof Zman Tefila	<b>10:30</b>
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	<b>12:43-12:41</b>
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	<b>1:17-1:14</b>
Plag Mincha	<b>6:01-5:51</b>
Sunset (Including Elevation)	<b>7:29-7:18</b>



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	EIKEV			RE'EH		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	<b>6:46</b>	5:59	<b>8:00</b>	6:39	5:53	7:52
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	<b>7:04</b>	6:02	<b>8:02</b>	6:57	5:55	7:54
Beit Shemesh/RBS	<b>7:05</b>	6:00	<b>8:01</b>	6:58	5:54	7:53
Alon Shvut	<b>7:02</b>	6:00	<b>8:00</b>	6:55	5:53	7:52
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	<b>7:04</b>	6:01	<b>8:02</b>	6:56	5:55	7:54
Modiin/Chashmonaim	<b>7:03</b>	6:00	<b>8:01</b>	6:55	5:54	7:53
Netanya	<b>7:04</b>	6:02	<b>8:03</b>	6:57	5:55	7:54
Be'er Sheva	<b>7:03</b>	6:00	<b>8:01</b>	6:56	5:54	7:53
Rehovot	<b>7:04</b>	6:01	<b>8:02</b>	6:56	5:55	7:54
Petach Tikva	<b>6:46</b>	6:01	<b>8:02</b>	6:39	5:55	7:54
Ginot Shomron	<b>7:03</b>	6:00	<b>8:02</b>	6:55	5:54	7:53
Haifa / Zichron	<b>6:55</b>	6:02	<b>8:03</b>	6:47	5:55	7:55
Gush Shiloh	<b>7:02</b>	5:59	<b>8:00</b>	6:54	5:53	7:52
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	<b>7:04</b>	6:02	<b>8:03</b>	6:57	5:55	7:54
Givat Zeev	<b>7:07</b>	6:00	<b>8:01</b>	6:59	5:53	7:52
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	<b>7:02</b>	6:00	<b>8:00</b>	6:55	5:53	7:52
Ashkelon	<b>7:05</b>	6:02	<b>8:03</b>	6:57	5:56	7:54
Yad Binyamin	<b>7:04</b>	6:01	<b>8:02</b>	6:56	5:55	7:54
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	<b>6:57</b>	6:00	<b>8:01</b>	6:49	5:53	7:53
Golan	<b>7:02</b>	5:59	<b>8:00</b>	6:54	5:52	7:52
Nahariya/Maalot	<b>7:04</b>	6:01	<b>8:03</b>	6:56	5:55	7:54
Afula	<b>7:03</b>	6:00	<b>8:02</b>	6:55	5:54	7:53

**Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Eikev 8:38 PM • Re'eh 8:31 PM**

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;  
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

**Daf Yomi: Avodah Zarah 59**



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## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN  
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The places we inhabit throughout our lives - where we live, where we go to school, where we serve in the army - expose us to the diverse tapestry of this beautiful country. When I was in high school, I had the tremendous privilege of studying at Or Etzion, located in Mercaz Shapira near Kiryat Malachi. Long before the thriving American community currently growing in Kiryat Malachi called Carmei HaNadiv, Kiryat Malachi was a small, developing community, distinguished by a single traffic light.

That lone traffic light was significant. It qualified the town as a city large enough to offer driving tests. As I learned then, without a traffic light, a place couldn't be considered substantial enough to provide driving instruction. After all, how could students experience real traffic conditions? Consequently, the vast

majority of us boys studying at Or Etzion got our licenses in Kiryat Malachi rather than in the cities where our families lived. When people asked where we got our licenses, we would joke and say "Los Angeles," which is a kind of translation of "Kiryat Malachi."

Learning to drive means truly knowing a neighborhood. You navigate every street, master U-turns, know the shortcuts and the stop signs, and discover the rhythms of a place you might otherwise not explore. Kiryat Malachi became one of those cities for me. It was also a hang out place for us teenagers. When yeshiva dinners weren't so great, a bunch of us would get together, get permission from our madrich, and after night seder we'd go to Kiryat Malachi for dinner. In this way, my friends and I developed a very warm relationship with the city of Kiryat Malachi.

Every so often, as an adult, I return to Kiryat Malachi, and there are two things that get me emotional when I come back. First of all, we have a very active OU Israel Teen Center in Kiryat Malachi, one that has been there for many years at this point. So long, in fact, that I've had the *zechut* of being invited to weddings of alumni from our Kiryat Malachi Teen Center, and even to be honored with reciting a *bracha* under the *chuppah*.

The Teen Center has *baruch Hashem* been so successful that the current mayor of Kiryat Malachi, Eliyahu Zohar, and his *mankal* have asked us to focus our activities in the "San Diego" neighborhood. This is a neighborhood in dire need of help. While Kiryat Malachi

May the Torah learned from this  
issue of Torah Tidbits be לעינ

צבי בן יוסף קלמן ז"ל  
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on his first yahrzeit  
כ"ד מנחם אב – August 18

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and fondly remembered by all**

*His loving wife Shelley,  
children, grandchildren  
and great-grandchildren*

**Meeting at Tel Regev cemetery  
Monday, August 18<sup>th</sup> at 16:30**



as a whole is a town with tremendous potential, filled with incredible people, over the years it hasn't received the help and assistance it should have from the organizations that work in this space. While some are there doing vital work, we try to do our small part in impacting the teens of Kiryat Malachi. *Baruch Hashem* our alumni are becoming contributing citizens of Israel in the IDF, Yeshivot, national service, businesses, and beyond.

Whenever I return there and see the results of our team's hard work, it's truly remarkable and warms my heart every single time. Thanks to the partnership of our generous supporters, OU Israel was recently able to renovate a beautiful new Teen Center there. It serves over a hundred teenagers coming both from the San Diego neighborhood and other neighborhoods across Kiryat Malachi.

A few weeks ago, the leadership of the OU in New York came to visit. We knew this would be the perfect time to plan a grand opening of the center. We didn't give them much time to rest. The day our Executive Vice President and COO Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph landed, and the moment Yoni Cohen, our Chief of Staff, Hadar Weiss our Chief institutional advancement officer, and Mimi Jankowitz, our Director of Friends of OU Israel based in Florida, came to town, we hit the ground running and went to the beautiful opening ceremony with the town leadership, and everyone there who have really been there for us.

The Mayor himself, who everyone calls Lalo, actually grew up in the San Diego neighborhood, and sees what is needed to help his



hometown grow as he was able to grow from it. Today, his amazing success means he is able to do wonderful work and develop the city he loves. There's nothing more symbolic

In loving memory of  
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**JULIA KAHAN** a"h

**אסתר יהודית**

**בת חיים שלמה ע"ה**

**On her 18<sup>th</sup> Yartzeit - כ"א מנחם אב**

**May the Torah learned from this  
issue be in her merit.**

**Channie Kahan, Elizabeth Kahan  
Ledee, Yonatan Ledee,  
Yitzchak Ledee & Zev Ledee**

than when you have somebody from the town that's able to show the youth of his city what they can achieve if they put their minds and hearts to it.

There's another aspect of Kiryat Malachi today that gets me excited. Right across the street from the entrance to Kiryat Malachi is an industrial area. In that industrial area, there's a famous factory called Ben & Jerry's Israel, which has fought hard in order to make sure that they can legally continue distributing (OU-certified) Ben & Jerry's ice cream. This is an amazing factory, who are able to make a product beloved all over the country. They have ensured that many of the flavors are *chalav yisrael*.

Since OU Israel certifies the factory, we had the opportunity while in Kiryat Malachi to take OU leadership to see the factory and see how the delicious ice cream is made, explaining the different *halachic* challenges of ice cream production and how we work to make sure that the ice cream is OU.

We were able to demonstrate an important point that the leadership of course already knows but it is so important the public knows as well. The OU Kashrut division is purely for the benefit of the community. The profits from supervising Kosher food are not going to anybody's pocket, but just the opposite - they go towards the needs of the community literally across the block from the factory.

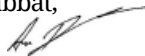
That juxtaposition of these two events in one day was such an important message. It made me think about one of the great things about our incredible but small country - a Teen Center on one side of the street and a factory on the other are united by the OU. It's not just in Kiryat Malachi. We could go to Nahariya and see from the Tivol factory

(certified by the OU) the Teen Center we have in Nahariya across the street. Or go to Akko, to the OU-certified Zoglovek factory, and see the Teen Center we have nearby. Or go to the Osem factory or the Elite factory in Sderot and see our Teen Center in Sderot across the street. The same is true for many, many cities across the country.

Every profit that comes from Kashrut goes right back into the Jewish community and helps make such a tremendous change in society. This is such an important message. That's why I tell all the factory owners that we'd like them to make sure that the OU on their products is nice and big, because there are hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people around the world who go to the supermarket and look for the OU symbol. The OU means not only a gold standard of Kosher supervision, but also the understanding of a sense of social responsibility that we have to all of our brothers and sisters to make sure that people get the assistance that they need.

*B'ezrat Hashem*, with your support, by buying OU products, and your help convincing producers and food makers to get the OU if they don't have it, you are also supporting the many incredible initiatives that the OU is doing in Israel and the world.

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



# The Bracha of Satisfaction

There is a word that is found in the Torah a total of four times, three of them in this week's Parsha (8:10, 8:12, 11:15), and once in last week's (6:11). The word is *v'savata*, "and you will be satiated." Three of the four times the word is used in a dire context, warning of the risks of arrogance and complacency that come along with material prosperity. The most familiar of these occurrences is in the second paragraph of the Shema (Devarim 11:15), where we read, "*v'achalta v'savata, hishamru lachem*, you will eat and be satiated, be careful lest your hearts be seduced..." Rashi there shares the concern sharply:

"Once you have eaten and are satiated be careful not to rebel, as a revolt against G-d arises only from a state of material satisfaction, as it is written (Devarim 8:12), 'Lest you eat and be satiated... and your sheep and cattle will increase....' What does it then say?

'Your hearts will swell and you will forget Hashem your G-d....'"

There is however one occurrence that is both familiar and positive, and that is in the verse that teaches us the Mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon (8:10): "*V'achalta v'savata u'beirachta*, you will eat and be satiated, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d." Whereas the other verses present the challenge of prosperity, here the Torah lays out its opportunity. When we have been blessed, we have the chance to turn to the source of that blessing, acknowledging and thanking G-d for His plentiful gifts. In that context our success becomes a source of firm connection to G-d (see Meshech Chochma, Devarim 8:12).

We live in a time of great material blessing, perhaps unprecedented in our Galut history. That prosperity can certainly be cause for concern, leading us to arrogance, complacency, and to forget the source of our blessing and ultimately disconnect from G-d. The Torah's very practical guidance for us - for our time - is to double down on gratitude. We must take every opportunity to recognize His hand in the incredible material gifts that have enabled Klal Yisrael to rebuild after the devastation of the Shoah, including the stunning development of Medinat Yisrael and the remarkable prosperity that has characterized the American Jewish experience. And we

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must be equally expressive of how grateful we are for the personal and familial blessings we have each been granted.

Prosperity and satisfaction can be an unmitigated blessing, bringing us peace of mind and connection to G-d when we respond to it with full-throated gratitude to the source of all blessing. "Thank You, Hashem!" ■

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## Legacy Summer Camp for At-Risk Teens

This summer, 1,200 Israeli teens are counting down the days until OU Israel Teen Centers' Legacy Summer Camp - a place of joy, healing, and belonging after a year of trauma and loss. These aren't just any teens. These are teens who were forced to run for their lives and lived in evacuee hotels for more than one and a half years. They lost parents, siblings, family and friends, while their education, sense of security, and comforts were stolen by Israel's enemies, it is no surprise that so many of them are suffering from PTSD.

The 8-days of OU Israel's Legacy Summer Camp is their much-needed break from the disruption and trauma. It is their time to have fun and heal with friends, benefit from the love and caring of counselors, gain Jewish wisdom and actually enjoy being a teen for a few days.

Each week we will share one of OU Israel's impactful programs helping English speaking *olim* with their *klita* and impacting Israeli society.



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## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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### PARSHAT EIKEV

Moshe’s long soliloquy that is the book of Devarim has a deliberate structure. The first 3 parshiot, including Eikev, are prose. The next 3 parshiot are mitzvot; instructions as to how to live in the land of Israel. And the last 5 are a gaze into the future.

In these first 3 parshiot, Moshe is preparing the people to enter the Land – without him as leader. He is nervous about various possible failures. And he tackles these concerns one by one. His first concern is what is on the people’s minds now: how are we going to conquer the Land without Moshe? He encourages the people that they will succeed, reviewing the story of the spies, as if to say, don’t repeat that.

Then he moves on chronologically, from *conquering* the Land to *living* in the Land. Once you are in the Land, I have concerns that you may be drawn to the religion of the Land, the idol worship you will see. To meet that challenge, he reviewed Mt. Sinai: but not the mitzvot of Sinai, but the drama of Sinai. That G-d Bent down to the mountain to speak to You. How could you possibly betray Him after that? And run to idols? You have a covenant, a bond of love between you and Him.

Our parsha tackles different challenges as

you enter the Land. Moshe begins the parsha with a glorious promise. When you are loyal to this covenant, G-d will love you, bless you and make you great. And that, Moshe says, is a conundrum. Because the blessing of riches and success brings its own challenge: the challenge of hubris. Moshe deflects their impending hubris by pointing out their failure in the sin of the golden calf. Hard to think too highly of yourself when you failed so dramatically.

This parsha then winds down Moshe’s instructions on how to be successful in the Land without him. And as he is closing this section, he uses deeply emotive language. Of loving G-d, cleaving to Him, being absorbed with Him. The most emotive and personal section of the entire Torah.



#### 1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 7:12-8:10)

On the heels of you keeping the mitzvot, G-d will keep His covenant with you. And love you. You will enjoy success: economic, health, military. Should you fear the nations in the Land, wondering how you will prevail over them, remember what G-d did in Egypt. The signs, the wonders, the outstretched arm. He will do similar to these nations. When you enter the Land, remember the manna in the desert. G-d relieved your hunger through manna, to teach you that bread comes from Him. Now when you enter the Land, it will be different: streams and springs, wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olive oil and dates. You will eat and be satisfied and bless G-d for all this bounty.



In the long list of concerns Moshe knows the people are feeling, the impending war to conquer the Land comes first. Moshe draws on history to address this concern; remember Egypt. They were more powerful. But G-d intervened with plagues and wonders. You need not fear.

Bounty in the Land is a concern. The food grows on trees, wild wheat and barley. Who needs Him? Remember the manna and Who provides. That manna was a lesson, that He provides. In the Land, it will look to you completely different, what with the food growing from the ground and on trees. But do not let that bounty muscle G-d out; it is still He Who provides. We, this generation of fabulous wealth know all too well how the success of the modern Jew has left little room for the Divine.



### 2ND ALIYA (8:11-9:3)

Be mindful amidst all your success that you not forget its Source. Even after He has led you all these years, you are apt to say “all this success is my doing”. Remember: He is the One Who gives you this success, as an expression of the covenant he made with you. If you forget Him, He will vanquish you. As you vanquish nations in the Land, so too will it be with you, on the heels of your ignoring Him. Great nations await you; fortified cities, strong people. Know that He will champion your cause and they will be overcome by you.

Material success squeezes G-d out of our lives. And so too national success, both military prowess and economic success can squeeze Him out too. We will assume that the architect of our success is me. We will think that we are simply stronger, smarter and more capable than the other nations.



### 3RD ALIYA (9:4-29)

Do not assume your displacement of the nations is due to your righteousness and their folly. It is rather due to their failing and G-d's covenant to you. Remember: you have a long history of your own folly. At Horeb: I ascended the mountain to get the tablets, Divinely inscribed with all He spoke at Sinai, for 40 days. But He ordered me to descend for you had made an idol. With the tablets in hand, I descended, shattering them upon seeing the golden calf. I ascended again to plead for you. And there were other moments of folly. But I pleaded, appealing to the covenant, that you are His people.

When you feel superior to the nations, well, let me remind you. Remember the golden calf, *your* terrible moment of folly. Don't delude yourself, thinking yourself infallible, indestructible. Remember our history. Learn from it. You failed with the golden calf. You survived due to G-d's loyalty to His covenant with you. He champions our cause. He is the source of our success. Don't let it go to your head. You suffer foibles like all others. Bad mistakes. He does not give up on you. But that says more about His greatness than it does about yours.



### 4TH ALIYA (10:1-11)

G-d said to me: chisel 2 stone tablets to replace the first and make an Aron for them. A second set as the first was made and put in the Aron. I descended with the Aron. The Leviim shall be G-d's servants; they bore the Aron. I implored successfully for you not to be destroyed. G-d said: go up and take the Land I promised to your forefathers.

While Moshe told the people the story of the golden calf in order to temper their

feelings of superiority, here, in describing the second set of tablets, he is addressing a different concern. Well, what if we enter the Land and we are rotten again? Will we then forfeit the Land, will we fail and be rejected? No, Moshe says. Remember, we received a new set of tablets. We were completely forgiven, wholly reconciled with G-d. As if to say: you are not a perfect nation. You have failed and you will in the future too. But despair not. If G-d forgave the golden calf – and that was bad, really bad, then obviously His commitment to you is more powerful than your failures.



#### 5TH ALIYA (10:12-11:9)

Now, what really does G-d want of you? Only this: fear Him, walk in His ways, love and serve Him and keep all His commands of you. His is the universe, yet He chose to love your forefathers. So, circumcise your heart and quit stiffening your neck. Fear, serve, cleave to Him. He is your G-d. As you yourself have seen: you descended to Egypt with 70 souls, all the wonders He wrought, the defeat of Egypt's might at the sea, the desert, the earth swallowing the rebellious ones in the Korah rebellion. You have seen all this; hence, keep the mitzvot to prolong your stay on the Land.

These 20 verses are very difficult to summarize, as they are so stunningly beautiful. This is Moshe with his hair down. It is like he leans a bit closer, elbows on the table, and confides: listen, really, what does G-d want? Now, one would think maybe a one word, one phrase answer. Like: loyalty. Or walk humbly with Him. Or truth.

Moshe's answer is not *what to do* but *how to feel*. Moshe answers: you know what G-d wants? He wants emotion, aspiration,

feelings, sensitivity. He wants your deepest being to want Him, love Him, cleave to Him. Drop the inhibitions, the distractions, the fluff of life and give your deepest self to Him. What a phrase: circumcise your heart, quit stiffening your neck. Meaning, give Me your true heart, don't be stubborn.

This aliya ranks up there with the most powerful of the Torah. For Moshe baits us with a simple question: after all, what does G-d want? And in his answer, shares with us his deepest feelings, a most profound answer: He wants you all in, to want Him, love Him, be preoccupied with Him. Hold nothing back.



#### 6TH ALIYA (11:10-21)

The Land of Israel is not like Egypt: Egypt is fertile, with an abundance of water. Israel relies on the rain from the heavens; hence G-d gazes upon the Land the entire year. (2nd paragraph of Shema) And if you will keep the mitzvot and love G-d with all your heart, then there will be rain. If you sway from this and serve other gods, then there will be no rain, nor will the crops grow. Be cognizant of this all the time, speaking of it with your children and in all you do. As this love of G-d will prolong your success in the Land.

This is a new twist on the theme of loving G-d. Not only will your military success depend on your love of G-d. But the rain too. And you'll need rain; not like Egypt. It's almost like G-d is saying: I am bringing you to the promised Land because of My love for you. But it is a tenuous place. Vulnerable. It requires My showering it with rain. And that rainfall is dependent on your love of Me. So, in a nutshell: I love you and I am bringing you to a Land where you will need to love Me.



## 7TH ALIYA (11:22-25)

If you do the mitzvot, love G-d and cleave to him, then you will prevail over the powerful nations of the Land. G-d will make them fear you and none will be able to stand up to you.

Love, cleaving, the heart. The word love appears 6 times, the word heart 4 times in these last aliyot. Moshe has pivoted. From doing. To feeling. From law. To spirit. Doing is not enough. Love, cleave, your heart. Give all in your love of G-d.

## YESHAYAHU 49:14- 51:3

This week's *haftorah* is the second of a series of seven "*haftorot* of Consolation." The exiled Jewish people are concerned that Hashem has abandoned them. Hashem responds by reassuring them that it is not so. God compares His love and mercy for His people to that of a mother for her children.

The navi then describes the ingathering of the exiles which will occur when the Mashiach arrives and then concludes with encouraging

words, reminding us of what had happened to our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah. Just as they were blessed with a child when it seemed impossible, so too, Hashem will send us the Redemption at the end of days. ■



## STATS

46<sup>th</sup> of the 54 sedras; 3<sup>rd</sup> of 11 in Devarim.  
231.83 lines in a Torah; rank: 14<sup>th</sup>.  
10 Parshiyot; 6 open, 4 closed.  
111 pesukim - rank: 26<sup>th</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> in Devarim).  
Same number as Vayikra, but larger.  
1747 words - rank: 16<sup>th</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> in Devarim).  
Same number as Ki Tavo; Ki Tavo has more pesukim; Eikev has more letters.  
6865 letters - rank: 14<sup>th</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> in Devarim).  
Eikev's pesukim are long - 3<sup>rd</sup> longest in the Torah in words and letters per pasuk.  
This accounts for the rise in ranking in those categories.



## MITZVOT

8 of 613: 6 positives, 2 prohibitions.

## A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES  
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

"And you shall eat, be satiated and bless G-d." (8:10)

Why are the words "and bless G-d" after the words "eat and be satiated"?

The Talmud ( Berachot 21a) points out this as the source that blessing or saying grace after the meal is a biblical obligation.

The question then asked is, wouldn't it be more appropriate to obligate us on a biblical level to bless the food before we eat, like by any other mitzvah? Like blessing learning Torah before we begin learning Torah and not afterwards.

The Meshech Chochmah gives a profound answer. The main difference between eating and learning Torah is that grace after the meal is not purposed to thank G-d, rather to protect man from his own haughtiness that may surface when he is well fed and satiated. Therefore, the mitzvah is to bless G-d after the meal, not to forget G-d's everlasting involvement in providing us with our meal. However, by learning Torah, by blessing G-d beforehand, we insure our true intentions for learning Torah and not for personal gain and honor.



## THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB  
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

### “Heel, Heal, and Hope”

The first verse in this week’s Torah portion, *Ekev*, (Deuteronomy 7:12-11: 25), presents a difficulty for those who choose to translate each word literally. Indeed, many translators simply avoid translating the word in question.

I refer to the word *ekev*, which literally means the heel, the bottom of one’s foot. If we were to translate the verse literally, it would read, “It will be heel you heed these laws, always vigilant to keep them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the oath He forged with your ancestors.” Obviously, the word “heel” makes no sense in this context.

The traditional commentaries deal with this difficulty in various ways. Rashi, for example,

suggests the following: “If you keep even those laws which men tend to tread upon with their heel... The Lord your God will keep the covenant etc.”

Rashi’s lesson is certainly an important one. We are certainly inclined to belittle, or even neglect, rules which we consider unimportant. But although this approach has homiletic value, it goes beyond the plain meaning of the text.

Others adopt an alternative translation offered by Targum Onkelos, who finds that the word *ekev* need not mean “heel” at all, but can mean “in exchange for”. Hence, “... in exchange for your keeping the laws, the Lord will keep His covenant, etc.”

Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban, or Nachmanides) supports the view of his predecessor, Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra, who understands *ekev* to often mean the “end result”, just as the “heel” is the “end result”, the “bottom line”, of the human body. Thus, the meaning of the verse, according to these major commentators, is something like this: “It will be in the end, after which you will have heeded and kept these laws, that the Lord will reward you by keeping His covenant... He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land... You shall be blessed over all other peoples... Free from all sickness ... etc.”

This approach, which might be considered a “consensus” translation, raises a fundamental question. Are we to observe the Lord’s

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commandments to receive a reward? Is our worship of the Creator no more than a children's game with prizes at the end for the winner?

Are we not enjoined by the ancient sage Antigonos of Sokho “not to be like servants who serve their master on condition of receiving a reward...”? (*Pirkei Avot* 1, paragraph 3).

Surely our spiritual aspirations would be better served if we would adopt Maimonides' eloquent climax to his *Laws of Repentance* (*Hilchot Teshuvah* 10:2):

“One who worships out of love, studies Torah, performs *mitzvot*, and walks the paths of wisdom, but not because of worldly considerations—he does not do so because of fear of disaster and not to gain benefit, but to commit to truth because it is truth (*oseh ha'met mipnei shehi emet*). This, in the end, will bring only good in its wake.”

There is a perspective upon this dilemma which appeals to me. It is based upon a comparison of the first two *parshiyot*, or passages, in the recitation of the *Shema*.

It happens that both passages, which the devout Jew recites twice a day every day of the year, are to be found in last week's and this week's Torah portions, *Va'etchanan* and *Ekev*.

The first of the passages of *Kriat Shema* is to be found in last week's Torah portion, in *Chumash Devarim* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). It reads, in Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' excellent translation: “Listen, Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD is One. Love the LORD with all your heart... These words which I command you today shall be on your heart. Teach them repeatedly to your children... Bind them as a sign on your hand, they shall be an emblem between your eyes. Write them on the doorposts of your house and gates.”

Note that several important *mitzvot* are prescribed above, including the study of Torah and teaching it to one's children, the *tefillin*, and the *mezuzah*.

Note too that no reward is promised for keeping these commandments, and no punishment is threatened for failing to do so. The motive is love for the Almighty, no more and no less.

Now I must give you a brief lesson in one of the differences between the Hebrew and the English language. In English, there is no distinction between the second person singular and the second person plural. If I speak to one friend, I address him as “you” and if I speak to an audience of a thousand, I refer to them as “you”. Hebrew, however, distinguishes between singular and plural. In speaking to one friend, I refer to him as *atah*, but when I address an audience of many, I refer to them as *atem*.

The first passage of the *Shema*, which I just excerpted above, is spoken to each of us singularly, individually. Each one of us is commanded to study Torah, to have a *mezuzah* on our doorpost, et cetera, out of love for our Creator, consistent with the teaching of the ancient Antigonos and the medieval Maimonides.

The second passage, on the other hand, is spoken to the Jewish nation as a whole, in the plural form of the second person. This passage is to be found in this week's *Parshat Ekev* (Deuteronomy 11:13-21). It reads:

“If you indeed heed My commandments... I will give rain in your land in its season... And you shall gather in your grain, wine and oil... And you shall eat and be satisfied... Be careful lest your heart be tempted and you go astray and worship other gods... Then the LORD's

anger will flare against you, and He will close the heavens so that there will be no rain... “

Note that when the entire Jewish nation is addressed, rewards are promised and punishments threatened.

The lesson is clear. Each of us as individuals must keep the commandments as the central component of our spiritual attachment to the Lord. We are not to act morally for personal benefit, nor are we to refrain from wrongdoing out of fear of divine retribution.

An entire nation cannot be expected to develop such a spiritual attachment. Obedience is demanded of the nation, and obedience is best achieved by virtue of behavioral reinforcement, reward or punishment.

Rabbi Yehudah Shaviv, in his wonderful book on the weekly *parshiyot* entitled *MiSinai Ba*, uses a similar concept to explain the text of one of the prayers in the weekday *Amidah*. It is the phrase in the blessing *Al HaTzaddikim*, “The Righteous”. It reads, “Grant a good reward to all who sincerely trust in Your name.”

Rabbi Shaviv asks, “Doesn’t this prayer contradict the directive of Antigonus, that we are not to seek reward for our good deeds?”

He responds, “Truthfully, when we recite the *Amidah* prayers three times each weekday, we do not pray as individuals, we do not seek personal favors. We ask for a better world, a redeemed world, that the Divine guidance of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, become revealed to us all, that evil be eradicated, that the righteous be recognized. For the Jew knows and declares and pleads morning, afternoon, and evening, that there is justice and a Judge, and that justice will prevail, and that then all will distinguish between those who sincerely worship the Lord, and those who do not.” ■



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THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

FORMER CHIEF RABBI OF THE UNITED HEBREW  
CONGREGATIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

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

לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד איז ע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטור ע"ה

# The Morality of Love

Something implicit in the Torah from the very beginning becomes explicit in the book of Devarim. God is the God of love. More than we love Him, He loves us. Here, for instance, is the beginning of this week's Parsha:

If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep His *covenant of love* [*et ha-brit ve-et ha-chessed*] with you, as He swore to your ancestors. He will *love* you and bless you and increase your numbers. (*Deut. 7:12-13*)

Again in the Parsha we read:

To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the Lord *set His affection* on your ancestors and *loved* them, and He chose you, their descendants, above all the nations - as it is today. (*Deut. 10:14-15*)

And here is a verse from last week's:

Because He *loved* your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, He brought you out of Egypt by His Presence and His great strength. (*Deut. 4:37*)

The book of Deuteronomy is saturated with

the language of love. The root *a-h-v* appears in Shemot twice, in Vayikra twice (both in Leviticus 19), in Bamidbar not at all, but in Sefer Devarim 23 times. Devarim is a book about societal beatitude and the transformative power of love.

Nothing could be more misleading and invidious than the Christian contrast between Christianity as a religion of love and forgiveness and Judaism as a religion of law and retribution. As I pointed out in my earlier *Covenant & Conversation* for Vayigash, forgiveness is born (as David Konstan notes in *Before Forgiveness*) in Judaism. Interpersonal forgiveness begins when Joseph forgives his brothers for selling him into slavery. Divine forgiveness starts with the institution of Yom Kippur as the supreme day of Divine pardon following the sin of the Golden Calf.

Similarly with love: when the New Testament speaks of love it does so by direct quotation from Leviticus ("You shall love your neighbour as yourself") and Deuteronomy ("You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your might"). As philosopher Simon May puts it in his splendid book, *Love: A History*:

"The widespread belief that the Hebrew Bible is all about vengeance and 'an eye for



an eye,' while the Gospels supposedly invent love as an unconditional and universal value, must therefore count as one of the most extraordinary misunderstandings in all of Western history. For the Hebrew Bible is the source not just of the two love commandments but of a larger moral vision inspired by wonder for love's power."<sup>1</sup> His judgment is unequivocal: "If love in the Western world has a founding text, that text is Hebrew."<sup>2</sup>

More than this: in *Ethical Life: The Past and Present of Ethical Cultures*, philosopher Harry Redner distinguishes four basic visions of the ethical life in the history of civilisations.<sup>3</sup> One he calls *civic ethics*, the ethics of ancient Greece and Rome. Second is the *ethic of duty*, which he identifies with Confucianism, Krishnaism and late Stoicism. Third is the *ethic of honour*, a distinctive combination of courtly and military decorum to be found among Persians, Arabs and Turks as well as in medieval Christianity (the 'chivalrous knight') and Islam.

The fourth, which he calls simply *morality*, he traces to Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He defines it simply as 'the ethic of love,' and represents what made the West morally unique:

"The biblical 'love of one's neighbour' is a very special form of love, a unique development of the Judaic religion and unlike any to be encountered outside it. It is a supremely altruistic love, for to love one's neighbour as oneself means always to put oneself in his place and to act on his behalf as one would naturally and selfishly act on one's own."<sup>4</sup>

1. Simon May, *Love: A History* (Yale University Press, 2011), 19-20.

2. Ibid., 14.

3. Harry Redner, *Ethical Life: The Past and Present of Ethical Cultures*, New York, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.

4. Ibid., 50.



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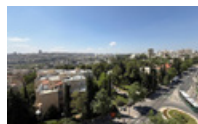
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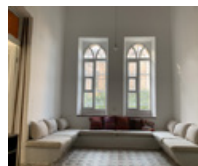


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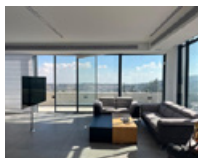


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To be sure, Buddhism also makes space for the idea of love, though it is differently inflected, more impersonal and unrelated to a relationship with God.

What is radical about this idea is that, first, the Torah insists, against virtually the whole of the ancient world, that the elements that constitute reality are neither hostile nor indifferent to humankind. We are here because Someone wanted us to be, One who cares about us, watches over us and seeks our wellbeing.

Second, the love with which God created the universe is not just Divine. It is to serve as the model for us in our humanity. We are bidden to love the neighbour and the stranger, to engage in acts of kindness and compassion, and to build a society based on love. Here is how our Parsha puts it:

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty and awesome God who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. So you must love the stranger, for you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt. (*Deut. 10:18-19*)

In short: *God created the world in love and forgiveness and asks us to love and forgive others.* I believe that to be the most profound moral idea in human history.

There is however an obvious question. Why is it that love, which plays so great a part in the book of Devarim, is so much less in evidence in the earlier books of Shemot, Vayikra (with the exception of Leviticus 19) and Bamidbar?

The best way of answering that question is to ask another. Why is it that forgiveness plays no part – at least on the surface of the

narrative – in the book of Bereishit?<sup>5</sup> God does not forgive Adam and Eve, or Cain (though he mitigates their punishments). Forgiveness does not figure in the stories of the Flood, the Tower of Babel or the destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain (Abraham's plea is that the cities be spared if they contain fifty or ten righteous people; this is not a plea for forgiveness). Divine forgiveness makes its first appearance in the book of Exodus after Moses' successful plea in the wake of Golden Calf, and is then institutionalised in the form of Yom Kippur (Lev. 16), but not before. Why so?

The simple, radical, answer is: *God does not forgive human beings until human beings learn to forgive one another.* Genesis ends with Joseph forgiving his brothers. Only thereafter does God forgive human beings.

Turning to love: Genesis contains many references to it. Abraham loves Isaac. Isaac loves Esau. Rebecca loves Jacob. Jacob loves Rachel. He also loves Joseph. There is interpersonal love in plentiful supply. *But almost all the loves of Genesis turn out to be divisive.* They lead to tension between Jacob and Esau, between Rachel and Leah, and between Joseph and his brothers. Implicit in Genesis is a profound observation missed by most moralists and theologians. Love in and of itself – real love, personal and passionate, the kind of love that suffuses much of the prophetic literature as well as Shir HaShirim, the greatest love song in Tanach, as opposed to the detached, generalised love called *agape* which we associate with ancient Greece – is not sufficient as a basis for society. It can divide as well as unite.

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5. I exclude, here, midrashic readings of these texts, some of which do make reference to forgiveness.

Hence it does not figure as a major motif until we reach the integrated social-moral-political vision of Deuteronomy which combines love and justice. *Tzedek* - justice - turns out to be another key word of Deuteronomy, appearing 18 times. It appears only four times in Shemot, not at all in Bamidbar, and in Vayikra only in chapter 19, the only chapter that also contains the word 'love.' In other words, *in Judaism love and justice go hand in hand*. Again this is noted by Simon May:

[W]hat we must note here, for it is fundamental to the history of Western love, is the remarkable and radical justice that underlies the love commandment of Leviticus. Not a cold justice in which due deserts are mechanically handed out, but the justice that brings the other, as an individual with needs and interests, into a relationship of respect. All our neighbours are to be recognised as equal to ourselves before the law of love. Justice and love therefore become inseparable.<sup>6</sup>

Love without justice leads to rivalry, and eventually to hate. Justice without love is devoid of the humanising forces of compassion and mercy. We need both. This unique ethical vision – the love of God for humans and of humans for God, translated into an ethic of love toward both neighbour and stranger – is the foundation of Western civilisation and its abiding glory.

It is born here in the book of Deuteronomy, the book of law-as-love and love-as-law. ■

6. Loc. Cit., 17.

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# “Banim Atem” – We Are G-d’s Children

The very first time that B’nei Yisra’el, the children of Israel, are referred to as “**Am** Yisrael”, the **Nation** of Israel, is found in the beginning of Sefer Shmot, when Pharaoh feared that Israel was becoming more numerous and powerful and, therefore, a threat to his own people. In response to the Egyptian regent’s enslavement of Israel, Hashem demands that Par’oh allow B’nei Yisrael to serve Hashem in the desert and explains: “B’ni Bechori Yisra’el”, that Israel is **His** eldest [read “precious”] child. I would submit that this powerful statement was not directed to the King of Egypt alone but to the suffering Israelites as well, those who, for the first time, would hear G-d proclaim that they were **HIS** children.

The very idea that Hashem regards Am Yisrael as His children is a truth found throughout the Tanach - no clearer than Moshe’s statement in Sefer D’varim:

“**Banim atem LaShem Elokeichem**”, “You are children to Hashem, your G-d”. And this truth allows us to better to understand the underlying impact of Yishayahu’s message in this week’s haftarah.

When our prophets call to Israel for her repentance and return to G-d, they often reach out to convince the nation of Hashem’s overwhelming love for them and His desire for their atonement. At times, they also find it necessary to remind the people of their sinful ways in an effort to impress upon them their need for regret and repentance. Unfortunately, upon realizing how their immoral behavior had corrupted their societies and betrayed the very relationship they were meant to build with G-d, they often fell into despair and hopelessness.”

Hence, our haftara.

Here, we find – for the first time- cries of remorse and regret from people and, sadly, feelings of despondency and, therefore, futility. “**Vatomer Tziyon ‘Azavani Hashem’...**” they cry, words of a mournful nation who believe that G-d had abandoned them, even forgotten them. After hearing G-d’s resounding call to His prophets that opened last week’s haftarah: “Nachamu, Nachamu Ami” – to comfort the nation after

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her loss - Israel reacts to those words with the hopeless sigh that opens our haftarah, believing that, given the evils we have committed, G-d has certainly “given up” on us!

It is in response to that desperate cry that Yishayahu reminds the nation of Hashem’s promise “**BANIM ATEM**”!!! **YOU ARE MY CHILDREN!!!!** and, given that promise, how could He ever “forget” or abandon them? With searing words, the navi asks the people “**Hatishkach Ishah Ulah??** - could a mother ever forget her suckling child??? YOU, Israel, are that suckling infant!!! You could NEVER be forgotten-certainly not by your ‘Mother’ –G-d - Who NEVER forgets!!!!

The heartfelt cry of Yishayahu is more than an answer or a comforting response to Israel who felt that they lost their Father. It is an essential lesson to generations. Know well, that before expecting remorse from those who have disappointed, failed or angered you, you must ensure that they know that, like a parent, you still love and would never abandon those who yearn to return.

Generations who have drifted away from the Mesorah cannot be expected to return through study, lecture or reward alone. Return from exile, physical or emotional, must first be preceded by being reminded “**Banim Atem!!**” You are children of G-d who loves you, cares for you and waits for your return.

Remember **Hatishkach Ishah Ulah??**

After all, **Banim Atem!!** ■

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## Being Honest with Yourself

אתה אלקיך תירא... (דברים יב)

*Be in awe of God... (Devarim 10:20).*

The Gemara in Pesachim (22b) relays a story about Rav Shimon Ha'amsuni. Rav Ha'amsuni posited that each verse that contains the word את could have been written absent that word. Since there is no superfluous word in the Torah, Rav Ha'amsuni sought to expand upon each "את" in the Torah. The word "את" appears over 4,000 times in the Torah so this was a tremendous undertaking. As an example of such an expanded interpretation – the pasuk כבד את אביך - honor thy father, is expanded to include not only honoring one's father, but to honor older siblings as well.

Rav Ha'amsuni continued with his approach until he reached the pasuk in

our parsha – אתה אלקיך תירא (Be in awe of Hashem). There is no other being that we are required to be in awe of alongside Hashem. Frustrated, he felt that if he could not find an answer to this pasuk, his entire thesis was flawed and so he was ready to rip up his entire treatise. His students asked why he would throw his life's work out just because he was unable to explain one pasuk in accordance with his theory. Rav Ha'amsuni replied: כשם שקבלתי שכר – על הדרישה כך אקבל שכר על הפרישה – just as I received reward for expanding those words, so too I will receive a reward for abandoning my thesis.

Then Rav Akiva suggested a resolution – אתה אלקיך תירא - לרבות תלמידי חכמים - This pasuk may be expanded to include being in awe of *talmedei chachamim* (Torah scholars). It is not to respect merely a particular individual, but rather reflects respect for one who sanctifies God's name.

Rav Gifter asks, why was Rabbi Akiva able to resolve the dilemma and Rav Ha'amsuni unable to do so? The answer is quite simple. Rabbi Akiva had something Rav Ha'amsuni lacked. Rav Akiva had Rav Ha'amsuni as a Rebbe. Rav Akiva saw a person so committed to truth that he was willing to admit that his life's work was mistaken. That is truly admirable.

It is difficult to admit that one is wrong. We try to rationalize our actions and make excuses that at times compromise

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our values. Parshat Eikev is read as we approach Chodesh Elul - a time for introspection. May we have the *gevura* – the strength of Rav Ha'amsuni, to be honest with ourselves. To admit when we are incorrect. To be able to improve the manner in which we view ourselves and the way we treat others, so that we merit a geula shlema! ■



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# Attentiveness Attuned

“*Vehaya ekev tishme’un et hamishpatim ha’eleh* – It shall come to pass **because** you will heed these laws...” (*Devarim 7:12*) The word *ekev* is an interesting choice to use in this verse. Rashi, drawing from Chazal, links *ekev* to another similar sounding word, *akev*, heel, to teach us that if one is careful to uphold ‘small’ mitzvot, meaning mitzvot that people generally ignore or disregard, even *trample on with their heel*, then Hashem will keep His promise to honor His covenant. Let us see how we can make this relevant and applicable to everyday living. Rav Scheinerman in *Ohel Moshe* highlights the grave danger that one risks when he acts carelessly. One who dismisses what seems to be an ‘easy’ mitzvah will ultimately grow lax or negligent with more ‘serious’ mitzvot. Human nature is such that once apathy enters the picture it will affect everything one does.

As Yeshayahu Hanavi bemoans, “this people has come near; with their mouth and with their lips they honor Me, but their heart they draw far away from Me, and their fear of Me has become a command of people [habitual], which has been taught.” (*Yeshayahu 29:13*) Simply going through the motions with no emotion will ultimately lead to observing even the most fundamental mitzvot, such as fearing Hashem, devoid of meaning.

The story is told of the Chofetz Chaim ztz”l who once offered a novel proposal at a Rabbinic conference in Lithuania. He suggested that every Rav and Rosh Yeshiva should sign a document stating that they would be mindful of their speech and refrain from speaking loshon hara with the same gravity as not eating pork. Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzhinsky ztz”l responded with a smile on his lips, and said that although the Chafetz Chaim was right, people were so used to speaking this way that it would be too hard to stop. He was also concerned that by associating speech with forbidden food, instead of being more careful, people would treat eating pork with a similar nonchalance that they took toward their speech.

Rav Yerucham ztz”l in *Ma’amarei Hamashgiach* notes that people “trample” on weighty matters as well. The great challenge we have is to live with mindfulness, to truly pay

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attention to everything we do. We tend to make light of brachot without realizing the severity of uttering Hashem's name in vain. In fact, there are no 'small mitzvot' and we must treat every mitzvah that comes our way with the intention it deserves. Speaking with a friend encompasses numerous aspects of *kavod habriot*, opening a siddur to daven requires concentrating on the *halachot* of tefillah.

Rav Yisrael Salanter *ztz"l* taught that everyone will especially be taken to account for how they treat the 'small' things. If we would take this into account, we would notice that it is not so difficult and we could succeed in making small changes with ease.

Let us strive to be more attentive, as we move closer to the month of Elul we can think big about small deeds. ■

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Shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel, Reb Mordechai Shlomo was traveling to the Holy Land to assume the

mantle of leadership of his father’s Chassidus. *Baderech*, along the way, the ship docked in England, where the Rebbe boarded a flight to Eretz Yisrael. Flying over the Swiss Alps, the Rebbe’s *gabbai*, who had never beheld such a breathtaking sight, asked the Rebbe to look at the incredible scenery. Engrossed in his *seforim*, the Boyaner was completely oblivious to the spectacular sights and the excitement of the other passengers. The *gabbai*, who normally would never have disturbed the Rebbe from his learning, was unable to hold himself back and exclaimed that he should look out the window and witness the extraordinary *niflo’os haBorei*, “wonders of the Creator”. The Rebbe looked up from his *sefer*, motioned with his hand, and declared, מִבֶּשְׂרִי אֶחֱזֶה אֱלֹהִים, “From my *flesh* I can see my God” (*Iyov*, 19:26). There was nothing he needed to see beyond his own finger, which held his place in his beloved Gemara — and he continued his learning.

When they arrived in Eretz Yisrael, Reb Mordechai Shlomo and his entourage were greeted by enthusiastic crowds. The Rebbe travelled the length and breadth of the country, often escorted by Chasidim eager to spend time and glean insight from him. One of the distinguished members of the community, Reb Berel Ludmir, had the privilege of accompanying the Rebbe on the *nesiyah*. He had hoped to hear some of the new Rebbe’s *divrei Torah*, stories of his illustrious ancestors, thoughts connected to the holy places and *kivrei tzadikim* they visited. Perhaps he



would share new insights chidushim from *Eretz hakodesh*.

Yet the Rebbe did not speak a word. He sat in silence, staring out the window for the duration of the journey, not looking away for even a moment. After traveling this way for hours, Reb Berel finally summoned the courage to ask, “Why is the Rebbe so intent on looking outside? Could the scenery be so meaningful and important?”

Without adjusting his position, the Rebbe replied, אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ דֹרֵשׁ אֹתָהּ תָּמִיד עֵינַי, “It is a land which Hashem your God looks after, upon which Hashem always keeps His eyes...” *Oib Ehr kukt, kehn ich zicher kukun...* “If He is looking, I should definitely look as well...”

וְהָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ אֶרֶץ הָרִים וּבְקָעֹת לְמִטֵּר הַשָּׁמַיִם תִּשְׁתָּהּ־מִיָּם:  
אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ דֹרֵשׁ אֹתָהּ תָּמִיד עֵינַי ה'  
אֱלֹקֶיךָ בָּהּ מְרִשִּׁית הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרִית שָׁנָה:

“But the land, to which you pass to possess, is a land of mountains and valleys and absorbs water from the rains of heaven. The eyes of Hashem your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year’s end.” (11:11-12)

Rav Mordechai Kamenetzky, shlit’a, rosh yeshivah and dean of Toras Chaim South Shore, is a beloved *talmid chacham*, prolific author and columnist. A grandson of the venerable Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt”l, he often shares first hand experiences and personal encounters with *gedolei Yisrael*, many of whom are family. Rav Kamenetzky described one such memorable visit with his cousin, the great *mashgiach* and *baal mussar*, Rav Shlomo Wolbe, zt”l, in Yerushalayim.

Educators, *rabbanim* and administrators

flocked to Rav Wolbe for his sage advice and guidance. As ‘*mishpacha*’, Rav Kamenetzky’s visit however was more personal and familial in nature, and the two cousins chatted about the years Rav Wolbe spent in Sweden during and after the War, as well as the time spent learning in yeshivah in Montreux, Switzerland. Somewhere in the conversation, the magnificent beauty of the Swiss Alps came up. Rav Kamenetzky shared a comment he had heard in the name of the Brisker Rav that when Moshiach arrives, the Swiss Alps will be uprooted and transplanted to Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Wolbe was a man of equanimity and inner calm. Upon hearing that comment, however, he drew himself up to his full height and shook with intensity. With fire in his eyes and a voice filled with emotion he declared “No! It can’t be! *Der Brisker Rav hut das kain mohl nisht gezogt*; the Brisker Rav could never have said that!”

“Reb Mordechai, listen carefully,” Rav Wolbe continued, “there are no mountains as beautiful as the ones by *Tz’fas*. There are no lakes as beautiful as the *Kineret*. And there is no city that sparkles like Yerushalayim! Moshiach does not need to bring anything here! It is all here!”

May we lift up our heads and open our eyes to witness, experience and appreciate the beauty and holiness, gift and opportunity, of Hashem’s beloved land, now and all year ‘round! ■

**Mazal Tov to**  
**Rosalind & Ian Jacobs on their**  
**Golden Wedding Anniversary**



# Bishul Akum Conditions – Current State

Our Sages decreed that food cooked by non-Jews—*Bishul Akum*—is prohibited for consumption, even when the ingredients themselves are entirely kosher. To apply this prohibition, the Sages established specific criteria under which food is classified as *Bishul Akum*. One key condition is that the food must be of a type not typically eaten raw. If a food is commonly consumed raw, it is exempt from the laws of *Bishul Akum*. In halacha, this condition is referred to as *ne'echal chai*—literally, “eaten raw.” This article explores the halachic standard for determining whether a food is considered raw.

## PRESENT STATE

The *Gemara* (*Avodah Zara* 38:b) discusses

that small fish which have been salted are considered edible. Consequently, even if such fish are later cooked by a non-Jew, they would still be permitted for consumption. This raises an important question: why should the salting process matter, given that the fish, in its raw state, is inedible and would seemingly fall under the prohibition of *Bishul Akum*?

*Rashi* and *Rambam* explain that this *Gemara* establishes a fundamental principle regarding *ne'echal chai*: although the fish is not edible when raw, the salting process renders the food *ne'echal chai*. Therefore, once the fish has been salted and rendered edible, it is no longer subject to the laws of *Bishul Akum*. Conversely, if the fish has not been salted and remains inedible in its raw form, it would require *Bishul Yisrael*.

In short, the standard of *ne'echal chai* depends on the current status of the food before being cooked. Early halachic authorities applied this concept broadly and provided numerous examples. For instance, the *Rashba* rules that while raw wheat was commonly consumed in earlier times, once it is ground into flour—rendering it inedible—it becomes subject to the laws of *Bishul Akum*. The *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 113:12) and later authorities adopts this position.

## CRANBERRIES

Does the prohibition of *Bishul Akum* apply to cranberries?



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Cranberries are used in various culinary applications, including cranberry sauce (commonly paired with meat dishes or used in pie fillings), cranberry juice, and dried cranberries. Regarding cranberry juice, there would appear to be no issue of *Bishul Akum*, since the cranberry becomes secondary to the water—similar to the rulings of the *Taz* (YD 114:1) and *Shach* (YD 114:1) concerning barley used in beer production. As discussed in previous articles, the same principle applies to coffee and tea as such most beverages are not subject to *Bishul Akum*.

Cranberries that are sweetened and then cooked also pose no halachic concern related to *Bishul Akum*, assuming they are considered edible through the sweetening process. However, the core question is whether cranberries are edible raw.

One of North America's most popular cranberry products is from Ocean Spray, a company certified by the OU Kosher. OU Kosher reached out to Ocean Spray to clarify the status of raw cranberries. Ocean Spray responded:

“As far as we know, there are no problems associated with consuming raw cranberries. However, most people prefer cranberries in their cooked form. Cranberries are a very tart, bitter fruit; they are usually more enjoyable once they have been sweetened in some way.”

Thus, while cranberries are typically cooked and sweetened to enhance flavor,

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they can be eaten raw. OU Kosher also identified two dishes that use raw cranberries without any cooking. This supports the position that cranberries, though commonly sweetened, are not inherently inedible when raw.

Based on this understanding, OU Kosher does not require *Bishul Yisrael* for cranberries (See *Otzar Bishulei Akum* 11:6). ■

## Kashrut Questions in Israel?

Call or Whatsapp Rabbi Friedman at  
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## SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR  
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,  
OU ISRAEL

Our Sedra opens with the words:

*Vhaya Eikev Tishmaun, eit hamishpatim haeleh, ushmartem vaasitem otam, v'shamar Hashem Elokecha lecha et HaBrit v'et HaChesed asher nishba laAvotecha.*

*And it shall be, if you will heed these statutes, and fulfill and do them, Hashem your G-d will fulfill the covenant and Kindness He promised to your ancestors.*

The great Chasidic Master, **Reb Mordechai of Lekovitch zy'a**, offered a very novel interpretation of this *pasuk*. The *Rebbe* points to a teaching from the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, that the word *V'Haya*-Literally and it shall be, connotes *simcha*-joy, while the word *ekev*-which literally mean the heel, or bottom, connotes humility.

The *Rebbe* explained if one merits to personify these two character traits, of serving *Hashem* with joy and humility, he will indeed succeed in heeding the words of the *Torah HaKadosha*, succeed in fulfilling the *mitzvot*, and merit that in turn, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will bless us through his covenant of kindness.

Similarly **Rabbeinu B'Chaya** taught that *"the simcha one experiences as they perform*

*a mitzva, is a mitzva in and of itself!"*

*But how are we to condition ourselves to feel joy in each and every mitzva? How exactly are we meant to see each and every mitzva as a joy filled experience?*

There is a well known teaching the *Mishna* in *Masechet Makkot* : *Rebbe Chananya ben Akashya omer: Ratza HaKadosh Baruch Hu Lzakot et Yisrael, Lefichach hirba Lahem Torah Umitzvot...Rabbi Chananya Ben Akashya taught: HaKadosh Baruch wishes to bestow merit upon the Jewish People, therefore he gave them so many mitzvot within the Torah....*

At face value, this teaching seems contradictory. If *Hashem* truly wants us to succeed and to receive merit, why then are there so many laws and statutes, which we are expected to fulfill? Seemingly having so many regulations might for many seem intimidating, or as potential obstacles to success. How are we to understand this teaching?

The **Rambam**, in his commentary on this *mishna*, brilliantly clarifies the message that *Rebbe Chananya* intended to convey. The *Rambam* explains, that since *Hashem* has given us so many *mitzvot*, it is impossible for one to go through an entire lifetime, and not have at least one *mitzva* that they excel at and fulfill completely, and through that one *mitzva* they give eternal life to their soul.

The *Rambam*, in this important insight, teaches us to pivot in our definition and relationship to *mitzvot*, to begin to see *Mitzvot* not



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solely as obligations, but more so as opportunities. Opportunities to demonstrate our fidelity to *Hashem* and the *Torah HaKedosha*, and simultaneously to feel *Hashem's* covenantal commitment and fidelity to each one of us.

*Yehi Ratson*, may each of us indeed merit to take to heart these two important insights, to see each and every *mitzva* as an opportunity to serve *Hashem* with joy and humility, and to merit to receive the blessing of the promise of Divine Kindness inherent in each and every moment. ■

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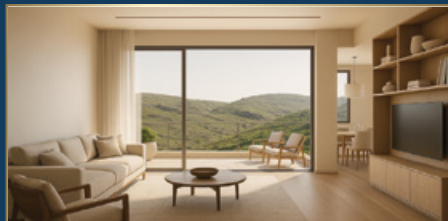
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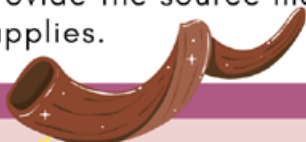
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# Why Israel? Three Powerful Incentives

As Moshe delivers his farewell address, he recalls the triumphs and failures of the past forty years. Before revisiting the catalog of mitzvot from the earlier books, he awakens our yearning for Israel—the Land of our dreams. Forty years earlier, in the shadow of Egyptian bondage, he had described Israel to weary slaves as a land flowing with milk and honey. Now, standing on the brink of entering the Land, Moshe offers a richer, more vivid picture. He reveals the many blessings and lasting beauty of life in Israel, giving us a glimpse of its vibrant spirit and showing why living there is such a special privilege. His portraits of life in Israel reveal the profound privilege we hold in living in this Land.

## THE PROMISE OF PLENTY

His first portrait of the benefits of life in Israel centers on the material blessings

of this Land. Moshe reminds us of the arduous march through the searing desert, when we were hungry, weary, and scorched by the sun. Through divine miracles, we were sustained with constant food, and even our garments did not wrinkle or fade under the relentless desert heat. Yet, despite these daily wonders, it was a harsh and spartan existence. Life in Israel, Moshe promises, will be utterly different. It is a Land laced with rivers, with underground streams coursing through its mountains and valleys. It is a Land brimming with fruits and grain, a land in which nothing is lacking. Beyond its food and water, its mountains yield iron and copper, enriching the nation with valuable resources. Moshe draws us toward a vision of a Land that will provide not only sustenance but also material abundance and even luxury. In Hashem's ideal design, luxury in Israel is not a mark of hedonism or moral decay; rather, life there is meant to be comfortable. When the strain and struggle for survival are eased, the human spirit is free to pursue higher callings and spiritual ambitions.

## ECONOMIC RENEWAL

Throughout much of our history, we have lived under financial strain—especially

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in exile, where we were often socially and economically marginalized. Even in our own Land, when we turned away from Hashem, our prosperity diminished. Yet the ideal remains: to dwell under His gaze, enjoying the blessing of material well-being while living a life of spiritual purpose. In the early years of the modern State of Israel, economic conditions were harsh—so severe that many Jews chose to emigrate, unable to bear the financial hardships of life. Over the past several decades, however, the situation has transformed dramatically, and Israel has risen to become a global economic powerhouse. This progress is part of the redemptive process—a realization of Moshe Rabbeinu’s vision of an abundant and comfortable life in the Land of Israel. Hopefully, we will learn how to steward this comfort and prosperity wisely.

### IRON, COPPER, AND INNOVATION

Financial comfort in Israel matters not only because it frees us to pursue higher goals but also because it empowers us to improve our world. The minerals Moshe highlights—iron and copper—are practical and essential, unlike gold or silver. Gold and silver often serve as symbols of vanity or as means to amass personal wealth. By contrast, copper and iron are practical metals, vital for building and sustaining society. In the ancient world, iron was forged into tools, farming equipment, and weapons for defense, while copper was used for cookware, water vessels, and house furnishings. These materials enabled construction, agriculture, and craftsmanship—the infrastructure of daily life. Life in Israel, as Moshe envisions it, does not treat luxury as a goal unto itself. Instead, the abundance anticipated will liberate us from



the relentless struggle for survival. Freed from that burden, we are able not only to pursue higher spiritual callings but also to elevate the human condition—building a society that is more stable, secure, and comfortable.

As Israel’s financial standing has strengthened, it has also emerged as a technological powerhouse, pioneering advances in medicine, energy, agriculture, and science. We have harnessed the iron and copper resources hidden within this Land to build a better world.

Moshe’s vision of a life of abundance in Israel is beginning to take shape in our modern return to the Land.

### THE HEARTBEAT OF ISRAEL’S MITZVOT

While describing the agricultural abundance of Israel, Moshe Rabbeinu focuses on the seven specific species for which the Land is praised—the sheva minim, shen-ishtabcha Eretz Yisrael: wheat, barley, grapes, pomegranates, figs, olives, and honey (date honey). By listing these fruits and grains, Moshe is not merely offering a menu of Israel’s delicacies; he is hinting at a mitzvah that can only be fulfilled in Israel and only with these species—the mitzvah of Bikkurim. This list, with its allusion to the mitzvah of Bikkurim, underscores an entirely different reason to yearn for the Land of Israel: the

opportunity to perform mitzvot unique to it. Moshe himself thirsted for entry into the Land, longing to fulfill commandments unavailable to him in the wilderness. His yearning was so intense that, even knowing he would not cross the Jordan, he designated three cities of refuge on the eastern bank—cities that would not take effect until the rest of the Land was conquered without him. It is a poignant and bittersweet moment: Moshe initiating a taste of the one mitzvah tied to the Land of Israel that he himself would experience. By mentioning the list of Bikkurim, Moshe underscores the expanded opportunity to fulfill mitzvot as an additional compelling incentive to live in Israel.

### A HALACHIC BLUEPRINT

This list is more than a catalogue of bikkurim-worthy produce—it points to a larger truth that positions Israel as a center of mitzvah observance. The Gemara in Sukkah (5b-6a) draws from the list of sheva minim to derive various shiurim of halacha. For example, the olive defines the size of a kezayit, the halachic minimum for eating, while the barley grain serves as the measure for determining when a human bone conveys tumah. Ultimately, the Gemara concludes that these precise measures were given to Moshe at Sinai as a halacha le-Moshe mi-Sinai, and that the list itself functions primarily as a mnemonic device. Yet as a mnemonic, this list of Israeli fruits alludes to the broader system of halachic observance, reminding us that life in the Land of Israel is halacha in full motion and full expression. Although these measures apply to mitzvot outside of Israel as well, Israeli produce serves as the model and template for halachic shiurim. This underscores that Israel—with

its fruits—is the unique setting where halacha can be lived to its fullest.

We have yet to witness the construction of the Mikdash and the full restoration of halachot, yet our return to the Land has already expanded the scope of mitzvot available to us. Moshe's second incentive for life in Israel is also gradually unfolding: the broadened halachic opportunities that the Land uniquely affords.

### THE GIFT OF UNCERTAINTY

Having emphasized Israel's abundance and its unique halachic opportunities, Moshe Rabbeinu—later in Parshat Eikev—shifts focus. He presents a completely different reason to live in the Land of Israel. Ironically, this reason is not rooted in abundance, but in the scarcity of one crucial resource: rain-water. All the produce, grain, and underground springs of Israel ultimately depend on rainfall. And rainfall in Israel is never constant, never guaranteed. In highlighting this element, Moshe does not contrast Israel with the desert, as he did earlier when describing Israel's potential bounty. Instead, he contrasts life in Israel with the conditions of Egypt. Egypt's conditions were harsh—marked by slavery, persecution, and cruelty—but food was plentiful, a rare advantage in the ancient world where securing nourishment was a constant struggle. Positioned along the fertile Nile Delta, Egypt enjoyed a steady and predictable supply of fresh water. The river not only irrigated its fields but also provided fish, an essential source of protein. Moshe cautions us not to expect the same certainty in Israel. All its agricultural promise depends on adequate rainfall—a resource never assured in the arid lands of the Middle



East. This dependence on rain fosters a continual reliance on Hashem. It is a Land that demands His direct and constant attention, “from the beginning of the year until the end of the year”:

אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ דֹרֵשׁ אוֹתָהּ תָּמִיד, מֵרֵאשִׁית  
הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרִית הַשָּׁנָה

Because of the uncertainty of rainfall, the greatest blessing of living in Israel is precisely this: the constant, palpable presence of Hashem—a gift unparalleled anywhere else. This is a very different incentive for living in Israel—not the opportunity to fulfill more mitzvot, but the chance to live more directly in the presence of Hashem. The conditions for this constant closeness are demanding and challenging. Life will be more uncertain and less steady. We will not have a constant stream of fresh water but must rely on seasonal rainfall. Yet it is precisely this delicate dependency that binds us closer to Hashem, offering a more immediate, day-to-day experience of living continually in His presence.

### EVER-PRESENT GUARDIAN

For thousands of years, we were wholly dependent on rainfall, living the literal meaning of the pasuk. However, recent advances in agricultural technology and water desalination have relieved much of this dependence on natural rainfall. We still remain dependent—several years of drought can still inflict serious damage on Israel’s ecosystems and natural aquifers. In a broader perspective, the acute awareness of living in constant need and presence of Hashem, driven by reliance on rainfall, has somewhat subsided—at least for the time being.

In modern Israel, however, a different factor creates an unstable reality—and with it, a deeper dependence on Hashem. The

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ongoing opposition and hostility directed at our people make life unpredictable and fragile, compelling us to turn to Hashem for help and, through that, to experience His presence more profoundly. Facing such intense adversity, we require Hashem’s constant attention—literally from the beginning of the year until its end. The privilege of living in a Land where Hashem’s watchful care is ever-present surpasses any material benefit or even the expanded halachic opportunities. Ultimately, this closeness—being continually in the presence of Hashem and His divine providence—is the greatest incentive to live in Israel.

Life in Israel will always be precarious—whether due to scarce rainfall or external threats. Yet the blessing within this reality is a sharpened awareness of living in Hashem’s presence and a heartfelt reliance upon Him. ■



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## HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA  
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# Carved from Courage, Hewn from Hope

Have you ever felt completely alone — as if you were standing apart from the entire world? I know I have. In the months since October 7, that feeling has been sharper than ever — as an individual, as part of Am Yisrael, and as part of a nation so often misunderstood and misjudged. There have been moments when the weight of isolation felt heavy, almost overwhelming.

The Navi recognizes these feelings and reassures us that isolation is not necessarily a weakness. He points us to Avraham and Sarah — seemingly alone in their viewpoints and messages to the world — a single couple standing apart from the world. Yet from that solitude came an entire nation, blessed by Hashem and destined to transform history. Yeshayahu tells us: if Hashem could build a people from one man and one woman, He can certainly rebuild and renew us now.

The Navi is speaking to us — רְדִפֵּי צֶדֶק, מְבַקְשֵׁי ה' — *those who pursue righteousness and seek Hashem* even in the darkness of exile. To find hope, he says, הִבִּיטוּ אֶל צִוְרֵי הַחֲצִבְתָּם — *look back to your beginnings*. Yeshayahu urges us to remember Avraham, separated from the masses like *a single stone cut from a mountain*, recognizing the One G-d amidst rampant paganism. He directs us to recall Sarah, the

*quarry from which you were hewn*, who shaped and refined the family that would become Am Yisrael.

The Radak notes, this is especially comforting when we remember how long Avraham and Sarah waited for a child. We too have been waiting for the redemption for so long — and in these months since October 7, the longing feels more profound. Yet, just as their long-awaited blessing brought forth a people that changed the world, so too our redemption, when it comes, will be vast and far-reaching beyond anything we can imagine.

This restoration will not be partial — כִּי נַחֵם ה' צִיּוֹן נַחֵם כָּל חֲרוֹבוֹתֶיהָ — *Hashem will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her ruins*. Every desolate place will be renewed, וַיֵּשֶׁם מִדְבָּרָהּ כֶּעֶדֶן, וְעִרְבָתָהּ כִּגְן ה' — *and He will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the garden of Hashem*. This redemption will not be silent; it will overflow with שִׂשׂוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה... — *joy and gladness, thanksgiving and the sound of song*. ■

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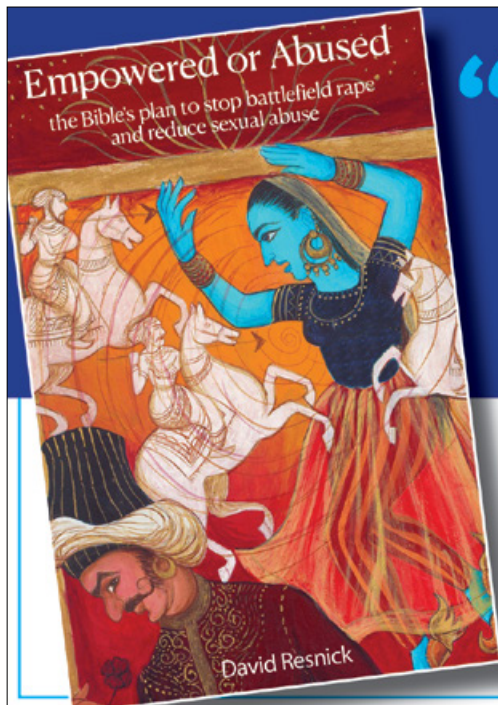
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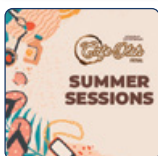
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## RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS  
RAV, THE JERUSALEM SHUL  
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# Jewish Dining

This week's *parashah* contains the biblical obligation of *birkat ha-mazon* (Grace after Meals), which requires every individual to express their gratitude to God following a meal (Deuteronomy 8:10). Interestingly, *birkat*

*ha-mazon* receives an upgrade when multiple people enjoy a meal together. At the end, one calls to the others to participate in a joint blessing, in what is known as a *zimun*. This practice is derived from the verse, "Declare the Lord's greatness with me, and let us exalt His name together" (Psalms 34:4).<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik posited that the character of the ritual changes in a *zimun*, even though the text does not. In place of a group of individuals, an assembly has been formed.<sup>2</sup> This new cohesion is clear from the Rambam's ruling that the leader must recite the four blessings aloud and those listening must respond amen after each one.<sup>3</sup> Although the practice today is for each participant to recite the blessings to themselves, the leader still recites the blessings aloud and the others answer amen. Otherwise, the group would

revert to individuals.<sup>4</sup> Why is it important to create a cohesive group in the first place?

### THE FIRST SUPPER

The first communal meal enjoyed by the Jewish people, the eating of the *korban pesach* (paschal lamb) in Egypt, had the Israelite slaves sit down to a feast in a *chaburah*, a fellowship of slaves who pitched in to procure a lamb:



Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt"l

The slave suddenly realized that the little he has saved up for himself, a single lamb, is too much for him. The slave spontaneously does something which he would never have believed that he was capable of doing, namely, he knocks on the door of his neighbor whom he had never noticed, inviting him to share the lamb with him and to eat together.<sup>5</sup>

This sharing of food turned the act from being self-centered to other-directed. To join others around the table expresses the sense of responsibility and sympathy one should feel for one's fellow man. The spirit of that original Seder meal is to be replicated at every meal.<sup>6</sup> "The meal pulls man out of

4. *Mesorat Harav Birken*, 23.

5. Genack, *Exalted Evening*, 97.

6. Holzer, *The Rav Thinking Aloud: Bamidbar*, 115. Of course, this is only when we are supposed to band together. Before Tisha be-Av, for example, we are meant to experience loneliness, so we do not make a *zimun* (Shulchan Aruch, *Orach Chayim*, 552:8). See Koren *Mesorat Harav Kinot*, 766.

1. *Berachot* 45a.

2. *Mesorat Harav Birken*, 17.

3. *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Berachot*, 5:2-3.

his self-centered state of mind and creates a community of equals.... The ceremony of the *zimun* is the halakhic institution that gives expression to this philosophy.”<sup>7</sup> In Egypt, God redeemed not only the Israelites but this very physical act.

### CHESSED-CONSCIOUSNESS

There is another call to others still practiced today that evokes this same theme of being *chesed*-conscious. At the beginning of the Seder, we begin Maggid with an open invitation: “Whoever is hungry let them come eat.” This phrase, the Rav pointed out, is not original to Pesach; it was how the Amora Rav Huna would begin every meal.<sup>8</sup> We may not be on the level of Rav Huna, but we do try to emulate him on the night when the whole idea of demonstrating concern for others at mealtime began. In fact, we add of our own accord that “whoever is in need let them come make Pesach (or have the paschal sacrifice) with us,” which speaks to those looking for a welcoming atmosphere.<sup>9</sup>

We demonstrate this sensitivity during other Festivals as well. The Rambam ruled about the mitzvah to have meals on the holidays:

“[O]ne is obligated to feed the convert, orphan, and widow along with the rest of the abject poor. Whoever locks their courtyard doors and dines with his wife and children, without feeding the poor and the depressed, does not experience joy of the mitzvah but the joy of their belly. [...] Such joy is a disgrace.”<sup>10</sup>

7. *Mesorat Harav Birkon*, 25. See also Parashat *Terumah*, “An Alternate Altar.”

8. *Ta'anit* 20b.

9. Genack, *Exalted Evening*, 27–28. According to the Rav, we also break the matzah at *Yachatz* because the slaves would share their bread (*ibid.*, 26–27).

10. *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Yom Tov*, 6:18.

It is only when sharing our food with others, the Rambam exhorted, that the meal is transformed into a performance of *chesed*. Otherwise, one has technically performed the mitzvah, but is morally repugnant in the eyes of man and God.

### EATING BEFORE GOD

The Greek philosophers viewed eating as a horrifying necessity to be taken care of in private, much as the beast drags his prey back to his lair to devour it alone. It was never to be done in front of God. The Torah takes a different approach: “You shall eat there before the Lord your God... and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God—you, your sons and your daughters, your slaves and your maidservants...” (Deuteronomy 12:7,12). Given the uniquely Jewish take on eating, Jews specifically eat “before the Lord” because we dine together and thank God as one. When we do so, “eating ceases to be a mechanical act and becomes a great service in which one stands in reverence and awe before his Maker.”<sup>11</sup>

The Rav further showed that in halachic terms the *zimun* appears to be a kind of *davar she-bi-kedushah*, akin to the holiest sections of the liturgy recited responsively only in the

11. *Mesorat Harav Birkon*, 25.

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presence of a minyan (the Kaddish and Kedushah prominent among them). While generally ten are required, here only three are needed, as the group is more closely knit around the meal.<sup>12</sup> What is the significance of this?

Apparently, like a *davar she-bi-kedushah*, *birkat ha-mazon* is intended to reveal God's presence and extol his greatness. This is perhaps even more significant in the context of physical indulgence than it is within the holy walls of the synagogue. God's presence at the table can be more easily missed at the dinner table than after the gradual spiritual build-up towards the Kedushah.

### FROM GUT TO GOD

Our forefather Avraham also used meals to remind, or rather inform, people of God's presence in the world. Avraham used his

12. Ibid., 17–18.

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famous hospitality to help spread monotheism. The Rav observed that Avraham had his visitors sit under a tree to enjoy their meal (Genesis 18:4). The tree obviously shielded them from the heat of the day, but it also served as a conversation piece. “Lift your eyes. Consider the organic process of growth, the mystery of life and focus beyond the treetop to the Heavens... to the stars, to the galaxies, to the nebulae, towards the vast expanse of space.”<sup>13</sup>

Avraham later planted an *eshel* (Genesis 21:33), which served this same goal. According to one Talmudic sage, the *eshel* was a field of delicious food. Passersby would eat and then thank him for his hospitality. At that point, he would stop them right there and inform them that in fact the food belonged to God. He would teach them about the Creator and instruct them to deliver their thanks and praise to Him. For Avraham, a square meal presented an opportunity to introduce pagans to God.<sup>14</sup>

To eat and thank God for our sustenance is to recognize the divine in the natural workings of the world. In the Rav's words: “Man has the unique ability to recognize and declare God's authority and mastery. By dispelling the mirage of nature's independence and declaring the true Creator, the influence of God's presence thereby increases in this world.”<sup>15</sup>

### EXPLORING THE RAV'S INSIGHT

13. Lustiger, *Derashot Harav*, 113–114.

14. *Sotah* 10b.

15. Lustiger, *Derashot Harav*, 113–114. Perhaps for this reason Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach took it upon himself at his ninetieth birthday to recite *birkat ha-mazon* from a *birkon*. After nine decades things can seem to be just the way the world is. Paying attention to the text reminds one of God's role in all things.



The Talmud informs us of an exchange on high:


The ministering angels said before the Holy One, "It is written in your Torah, 'Who favors no one (לֹא יִפְגֹּחַ)' and takes no bribes' (Deuteronomy 10:17), yet You indeed favor the Jewish people, as it is written, 'May the Lord raise His countenance toward you (וְהָרָם אֱלֹהֵינוּ)' (Numbers 6:26)!"

He answered them, "How shall I not favor the Jewish people? I have written in the Torah 'You will eat, be satisfied, and bless the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy 8:10), yet they are careful to bless me after consuming only an olive's or egg's volume of bread."<sup>16</sup>

The Rav explicated this odd exchange as follows. When God's face has been hidden in the darkest of time, the Jewish people have "favored" Him by acknowledging His presence. Even when tormented by poverty and hopelessness, the Jew consumed whatever crumbs he had and affirmed in *birkat ha-mazon*: "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who feeds the entire world through His goodness...."<sup>17</sup> ■

16. *Berachot* 20b.

17. Lustiger, *Derashot Harav*, 33–34.




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## How to Tell When Your Tefillin Need Adjustment

[Every few years, we re-issue our discussion on the proper position of tefillin shel rosh. Some people are concerned that the shel rosh is not well centered, which is rarely a problem and do not realize that tefillin extending too far forward is far more likely to be a real problem. In *Living the Halachic Process, I:G-1*, we develop the halacha that the end of the tefillin must not go beyond the roots of the hair of the hairline.

Upon visiting different shuls, from various

elements of society, it pains me to see many fine Jews who are definitely donning their tefillin wrong and many others about whom it is hard to tell, especially when they have receding hairlines. This being said, I sense an improvement over the years, but still even some learned people get it wrong. Presumably, then, they are having problems applying the halacha, not realizing, especially after their hairline receded, where the cutoff point is. We will focus here on tricks to figure this out.]

**Explanation:** Firstly, an adult who has not adjusted his tefillin shel rosh's knot in several years almost certainly needs an adjustment. Tefillin straps stretch slowly as we apply pressure to them (some more than others) when fastening the tefillin on our head. If one's hairline has not receded, he can easily check (see above).

Now, a little review of the anatomy of a normal human head. The skull is highest towards the back of the head; it then gradually slopes down. Near the front of the head, the slope increases, and then turns into a "cliff" (i.e., the forehead). The hairline ends at the end of the gradual or in the midst of the increased slope. No hair (except eyebrows) is rooted in the forehead.

Based on the above, the following are signs of misplaced tefillin. If the end of the tefillin looks like it is "hanging off a cliff," it is certainly much too far forward, as a line drawn down from the end of the tefillin would hit the forehead or even the nose.

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Because of the increased slope, there may be a little space between the bottom of the *tefillin* and the head. However, if there is too much room (i.e., a finger fits in comfortably), it is very likely not in the right place.

Another sign is the *tefillin*'s angle. The angle is determined primarily by where the *tefillin* are fastened to the head by the straps – at the back of the *tefillin*. Generally, *tefillin* in the right place will be upright with only a slight downward slant. If the *tefillin* has a serious downward-facing angle, it is generally (unless one has a rounder head than most) too far forward, so that its rear is where its forward part should be (on the steeper slope). Thus the *tefillin*'s front will be too far forward, unless the *tefillin* are very small.

A final sign is the *kippa*. With average size *kippot* and *tefillin*, there should be little or no room between the two. One with a particularly large *kippa* or who wears it more forward than most will have to move the *kippa* back.

When I look around many of the *shuls* I regularly *daven* in or visit, I see many too many people with apparent (or definite) problems in this regard. Among the older generation, I would estimate that the problems are in well **above 50%** of the people. As I HATE correcting people (and most hate being corrected), I am torn as to when the rectifiable problem is clear enough to halachically/morally require me to do the uncomfortable. The following *limud zechut*

decreases the problem. Most people put the *tefillin* at a certain position and push it forward in the process of fastening. Thus, some of those who keep the *tefillin* too far forward had it in the right place for a few moments after the *beracha* (so that it is not *l'vatala*) before the fastening was complete, and thereby may have fulfilled the *mitzva* for that short time.

More people should learn how to shorten the circumference of the head strap, which is necessary for the *tefillin* to stay in the right place. You are invited to visit me or ask a *sofer*. It may be easier to Google search: "youtube tefillin head adjust." Then, you can help yourself and your friends. ■

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# The Twin Boys

Last time we saw some “proofs” that the woman who gives birth to the baby is considered the halachic mother. But these proofs were allusions from Aggadic portions of the Talmud, such as the birth of Joseph and Dina, or the birth of Esther, which are not usually considered reliable sources for halachic decisions.

Another source has been quoted that also suggests that the mother is woman who gives birth and not the woman who supplies the egg, the genetic mother.

The Talmud (Yevamot 97b) discusses the case of two twin brothers and their mother who underwent a process of conversion. The Gemara presents three scenarios; a. the woman converts prior to becoming pregnant and she subsequently gives birth to twin boys, b. the woman gets pregnant, delivers the twin boys and then converts to Judaism, and c. the woman became pregnant and converted during the pregnancy.

In the first case, it is clear that the children are considered Jewish and brothers, since they were conceived and born to a Jewish woman. All of the obligations and prohibitions that exist for two brothers apply to them. They cannot marry each other's wife, and they are obligated in yibum, levirate marriage, that

were one of them to die childless, the other must marry the deceased brother's wife.

In the second case, since the boys were both conceived and delivered before the mother converted, even were the twins to convert they are not considered halachic brothers. Rashi explains that when a person converts it is as though they are reborn and any familial connections are erased.

The most fascinating case is the last one, since the mother converted during pregnancy the brothers are forbidden to marry each other's wife, but they are not obligated to perform levirate marriage. The reason for this discrepancy is that some of the filial responsibilities are paternal and some are maternal. A man cannot marry his brother's wife if they share the same mother, but is only obligated in levirate marriage in the case where they share the same father.

These twin boys have the same mother and father biologically, but their halachic status is different. They are considered maternal brothers, but not paternal brothers. Since the conversion erased all previous familial connections, they are not connected to their father.

This suggests that birth is the definitive factor in determining motherhood. If genetics was the deciding factor, then they would have neither paternal nor maternal connections, since the conversion would have erased both. But, since they are considered maternal siblings, this proves that they are connected to their mother and each other from birth.

More on this next time. ■





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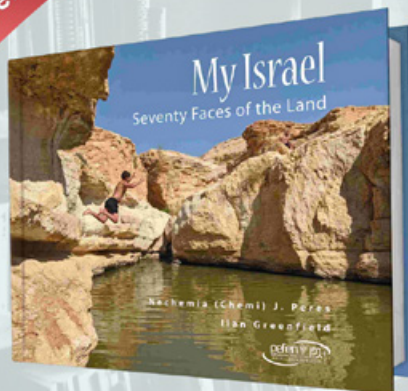
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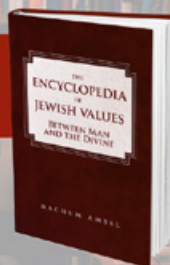
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# 105 Years Young

It's not clear whether she's the oldest Jewish woman in the world, but her grandchildren say she is certainly the most charming. They believe her historic birthday, celebrated recently in London, is not just a family event—it carries messages for all of us.

Yes, they have documentation— 105 years ago, on July 11, 1920, baby Rachel (Renee) was born in London to Jewish immigrants who had fled from Romania and Russia. During World War II, she worked as a typist in the British postal service, living through the Nazi blitz on London. After the war, she married Grandpa Joe (Yosef David), and they had two sons, Shlomo and Anthony. The family earned a living from a clothing

manufacturing business. Joe passed away at age 74, and Renee continued to run the business successfully until she retired.

Shlomo moved to Israel when he was young, thus creating the Israeli branch of the family.

Today Renee has seven grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. One of the grandchildren, Rabbi Yair Binstock of Efrat, recounts: “On the wall of Grandma’s small apartment hang two framed letters—one from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth on her 100th birthday, and a new one from King Charles and his wife Camilla in honor of her 105th.

“Grandma organized her own birthday party. She greeted us standing upright, smiling, perfectly lucid, and spoke for 18 minutes straight. She personally thanked each family member and friend who came to celebrate with her, for everything they had done for her—especially in recent years. Her first thanks went to the Master of the Universe, for the privilege of reaching such an advanced age.

“All her life, from early childhood, Grandma has been meticulous in living a fully observant Jewish life. Her devotion to mitzvot was such that at age 99, when the UK was in full lockdown during COVID, she cleaned and kashered her home for Pesach entirely on her own—just months before her 100th birthday. On Rosh Hashanah, during that same lockdown, the shul’s rabbi came specially to her home to blow the shofar for her.”





Rabbi Binstock shares that at the birthday celebration last week, he sat with his cousins trying to figure out her secret. They came up with two answers:

“First, she’s interested in everything. For example, whenever my cousin, an economist, comes to visit, she asks about his work in such detail that he finds himself explaining to her complex economic concepts while she listens intently.

“Second, she doesn’t dwell on life’s heavy and painful points. It’s not that she isn’t sad when something happens, or that she forgets—it’s that she won’t allow it to weigh her down for too long. She moves on.”

The birthday girl is exceptionally independent, and only after turning 100 did she agree to have a live-in helper.

When she was born, the Jewish population in the Land of Israel numbered about 84,000. She has always been a strong supporter of Israel, but since October 7 her connection has deepened; she prays regularly for the hostages by name, keeping their pictures before her. Even in her birthday speech she said: “I love Israel not only because my family is there. It’s deeper than that. It’s our life. It’s there for us. We must all strengthen Israel.”

Happy birthday, Renee, and mazel tov on 105 years of Jewish life, not only in quantity, but in quality.■

**Sivan Rahav-Meir** is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.




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# The Meaning of the Shema

If you will obey My commandments that I command you today, to love... G-d with all your heart and all your soul, [then] I shall provide rain at its proper time... you shall eat and be satisfied... Beware lest your heart turns away and you stray... G-d will be angry with you... and you will be swiftly banished from the... Land that G-d has given you (11:13-17; second paragraph of the Shema)

Both the first, and the second paragraph of the Shema at the end of this Parasha have the following things in common:

- To love G-d
- To keep the Torah teachings in mind at all times
- To pass the Torah on to the next generation – from father to son
- The practices of *Tefillin* and *Mezuzot*

However, the two paragraphs of the Shema have their differences, which amongst others include:

(a) The first paragraph demands: 'Hear,

O Israel: G-d, our G-d, G-d is One!' (6:4) It does not occur in the second paragraph. It does not tell us to love G-d after hearing Him. It tells us to love G-d by keeping His commandments, and enjoying the security that He will guarantee for His people in the Holy Land.

(b) The second paragraph contains a covenantal relationship – reward and punishment – which does not appear in the first. There, the Torah commands us to love G-d unconditionally – without any promise of reward in this world or the next. What may be learnt from these differences?

There are many meanings given by our sages throughout the generations of those most famous words: 'Hear O Israel'. Here we will take the words very literally – namely that 'Israel shall hear G-d'. This is explained below.

Most healthy people are blessed with five senses – touch, taste, smell, sight, and sound. But there are many things we cannot do. For example, we cannot pick up musical notes beyond a certain pitch – ask any dog owner with a silent dog whistle. We cannot pick up radio waves, but radios can. Just because we cannot sense those waves does not mean that they are not there, but we continue to benefit from them even though our five senses combined cannot directly pick them up.

Sensing G-d is life's work. Some people – even in our generation – seem to be far more successful in perceiving Him than

Mazal Tov to  
**Jake & Helen Weichholtz**  
and family on the engagement  
of their **granddaughter**



others. They have a deeply refined spiritual sensitivity. They perceive G-d in all they do and in all that happens to them, and prayer is a time of joy and privilege to communicate with Him. That is part of 'loving G-d' (4:5). Those people actually can fulfill 'Hear, O Israel: G-d, our G-d, G-d is One!' They do not need the reward and punishment section of the second paragraph, as they are too close to Him to be swayed by such considerations. They will fulfill His teachings 'even if it costs them their lives' (Rashi to 'all your glory' in 6:5).

Others are less well spiritually endowed, and they find 'getting to know G-d' a hard and arduous task. At some moments they see the Hand of G-d within their lives, but almost immediately it is forgotten, and months go by without any perceived flash of the Deity. These people cannot 'Hear'. But the Torah gives them another route – by observance of His commandments the Torah testifies they will come to love G-d – even if at present they cannot 'Hear'. In due course they will 'Hear' more subtly when they see the benefits of keeping His commandments, and thereby develop spiritual sensitivity.

Perhaps that is why a person's last words are 'Shema Yisrael' – when a person's soul is ascending to a higher plane, it will indeed 'Hear G-d'... ■

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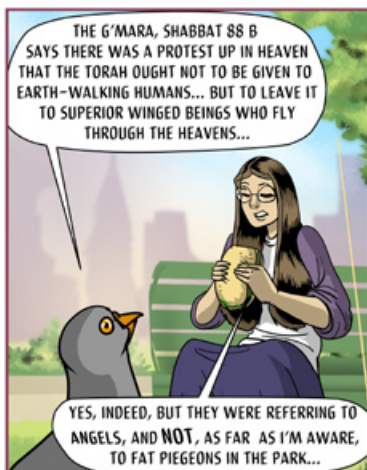
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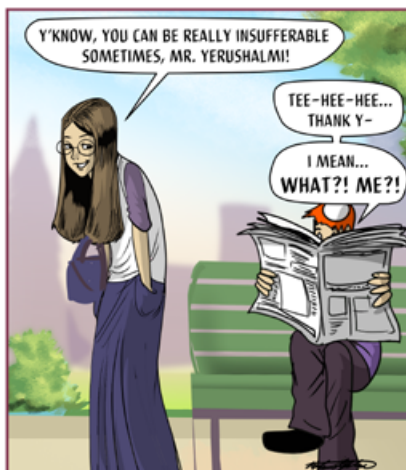
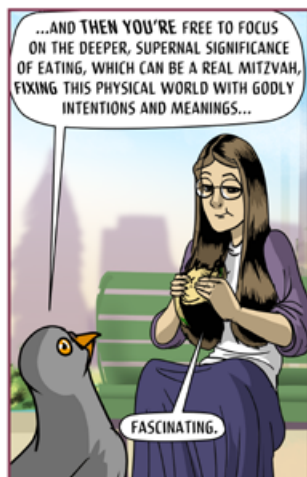
# THE Y FILES

(\*YERUSHALAYIM)

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## TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS NCSY ISRAEL



**ALYSSA GREENBERG**  
GUSH CHAPTER DIRECTOR

### THE ETERNAL NATION DOES NOT FEAR THE LONG PATH

There is a concept that שנצרכה לדורות נבואה - prophecies that are written in the Torah are those that were needed for all generations. Everything written in the Torah has ongoing relevance to our lives, and one of our main responsibilities is to find these connections and learn from them.

In Parshat Eikev, this task feels almost too easy. The parsha is filled with eerie sentiments that feel all too relevant in this day and age.

כי תאמר בלבבך רבים הגוים האלה ממני איכה אוכל להורישם: לא תירא מהם (דברים ז:יז)

*"When you say in your heart, these nations are too great! How can we ever drive them out?" Do not fear them."*

Hashem knows that as Bnei Yisrael stand at the brink of entering Eretz Yisrael, they fear the very same thing we often fear today: the lack of swift and immediate success in removing our enemies and bringing peace

to our land.

But Hashem tells us that this slow and gradual process should not be a cause for fear:

זָכוֹר תִּזְכֹּר אֶת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפָרְעָה וְלָעַלְמֵי-מִצְרַיִם (שם ז:יח)

*"You shall remember well what Hashem your God did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt."*

Just as Hashem swiftly defeated our enemies in Egypt, He will bring justice again-even through a longer, more drawn-out process. If we trust in Him and stay steadfast in His ways, He will ultimately deliver our enemies into our hands and bring peace to our land.

עם הנצח לא מפחד מדרך ארוכה

*The Eternal Nation does not fear the long journey, because in the end, Hashem will deliver our enemies into our hands.*

Be'ezrat Hashem, may we all be zocheh to witness the fulfillment of the וְאֵת הַחֶסֶד הַבְּרִית - the covenant and kindness promised to our forefathers-and to enjoy the beautiful land of our heritage in peace.



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### THE GIFT OF DOING

Have you ever felt the difference between waking up five minutes before you need to leave the house and waking up an hour before? Chances are, you wake up much faster when you have only five minutes.

Now consider another case: it's summer,

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and you wake up with nothing on your to-do list, no hangouts, no commitments, just you and your bed. How long does it take to get up then?

When we have a purpose, a reason to get out of bed, it happens much quicker and easier.

While **Bnei Yisrael** were in the desert, everything was provided for them. Food literally fell from the sky, their clothes grew with them, and their feet didn't wear out. Every need was taken care of.

But is that the best way to live?

Having a sense of purpose and responsibility amplifies our determination and motivation to act.

This week's parsha focuses on the transition that **Bnei Yisrael** are about to undergo-from life in the *midbar*, where everything was provided and they had the space to unite as a nation, to a life where they would need to wake up, plant seeds, grow crops, build tools, and so much more.

This transition gave them more control, but also more responsibility. These responsibilities contributed to their sense of purpose, their sense of accomplishment, and their state of doing.

It's vital to remember that the strength to accomplish all of this comes not from overt miracles, but from a shift in Hashem's involvement-He now gives us the strength to act:

“כִּי הוּא הַנּוֹתֵן לָךְ כֹּחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל”

*“For it is He who gives you strength to succeed.”*

May we wake up each day with that strength-to accomplish our responsibilities and goals.

**Shabbat Shalom! ■**



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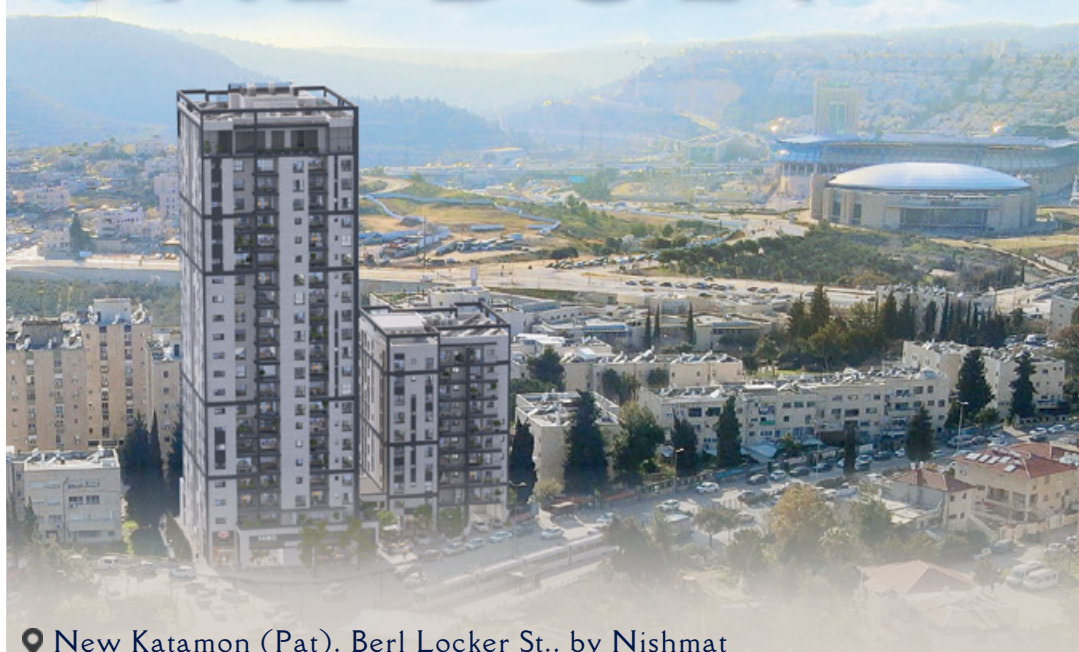
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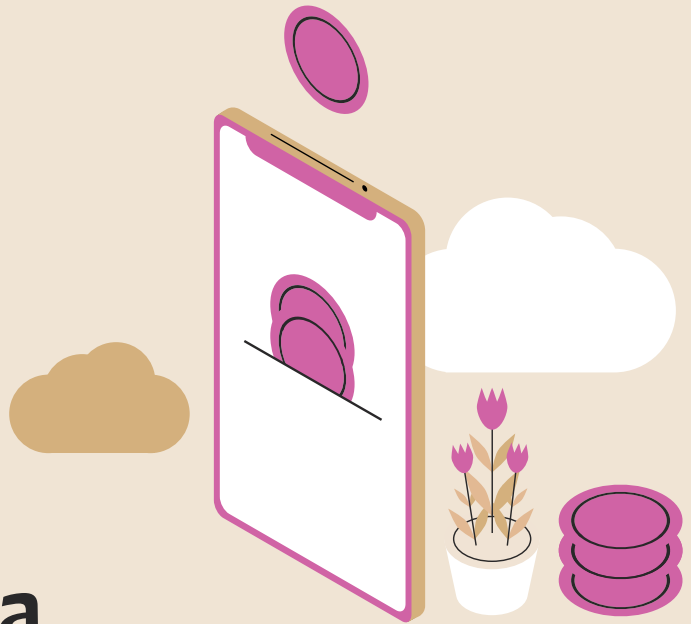
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