

ב"ה **Torah Tidbits**

ISSUE 1627



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AUG. 30TH 2025 • ו' אלול תשפ"ה

פרשת שפטים
PARSHAT SHOFTIM

PIRKEI AVOT 6

Elul: Our Sanctuary in Time
Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski
Page 56



Trauma Returning From Battle
Rabbi Dr. Ethan Eisen
Page 72



כי אתה בא אל-הארץ אשר-ה' אלקיך נתן לך
דברים י"ח:ט'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT SHOFTIM ZMANIM

CANDLES 6:30 PM • EARLY 5:46 PM • HAVDALA 7:43 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:22 PM



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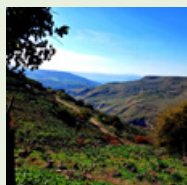
To view this week's Divrei Torah by
Rabbi Chanoch Yeres and **Rabbi Nachman Winkler**
see: www.TorahTidbits.com > Individual Articles

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

🌙 Earliest Kiddush Levana, 3 Days After Molad: 4 Elul/Wed. night Aug. 27

7 Days After Molad: 8 Elul/ Sun. night Aug. 31

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 14 Elul/ Motzei Shabbat Sept. 6



COVER IMAGE Photographed by Howie Mischel

We made Aliyah from Teaneck to Modiin in 2009, and feel very blessed that all of our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren are now living in Medinat Yisrael. It has always been very important to us to regularly travel this beloved land to deepen our knowledge of our history here. We regularly visit the Galil and Golan, often together with our family members. As we have learned, the Golan has around 30 ancient synagogues. This picture was taken in the vicinity of Ein Keshatot, an incredibly scenic site, with views to the Kinneret, and including the remains of a Jewish village and synagogue from the Talmudic Period.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
August 27 - Sept 6 / 3 - 13 Elul**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:19-5:26
Sunrise	6:11-6:17
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:26-9:27
Magen Avraham	8:48-8:50
Sof Zman Tefila	10:30
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:40-12:37
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:12-1:08
Plag Mincha	5:47-5:37
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:13-7:00



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	SHOFTIM			KI TEITZE		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	6:30	5:46	7:43	6:22	5:38	7:34
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	6:48	5:48	7:45	6:40	5:41	7:36
Beit Shemesh/RBS	6:49	5:47	7:44	6:41	5:39	7:35
Gush Etzion	6:46	5:46	7:43	6:38	5:39	7:34
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	6:48	5:48	7:45	6:39	5:40	7:36
Modiin/Chashmonaim	6:47	5:47	7:44	6:38	5:40	7:35
Netanya	6:48	5:48	7:45	6:39	5:40	7:36
Be'er Sheva	6:47	5:47	7:44	6:39	5:40	7:35
Rehovot	6:48	5:48	7:45	6:39	5:40	7:36
Petach Tikva	6:30	5:48	7:45	6:22	5:40	7:35
Ginot Shomron	6:47	5:47	7:44	6:38	5:39	7:35
Haifa / Zichron	6:38	5:48	7:45	6:29	5:40	7:36
Gush Shiloh	6:46	5:46	7:43	6:37	5:38	7:34
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	6:48	5:48	7:45	6:39	5:41	7:36
Givat Zeev	6:50	5:46	7:43	6:42	5:39	7:34
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:46	5:46	7:43	6:38	5:39	7:34
Ashkelon	6:49	5:49	7:46	6:40	5:41	7:36
Yad Binyamin	6:48	5:48	7:45	6:39	5:40	7:35
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	6:40	5:46	7:44	6:31	5:38	7:34
Golan	6:45	5:45	7:43	6:36	5:38	7:33
Nahariya/Maalot	6:47	5:47	7:45	6:38	5:40	7:36
Afula	6:47	5:46	7:44	6:38	5:39	7:34
Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Shoftim 8:22 PM • Ki Teitze 8:13 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 73



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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One of the best things about working for the OU is that every day is really an adventure. There are so many incredible things that OU Israel is doing in so many different fields that it's just exciting to come in to work. In a single day, you might meet with a company seeking *kashrut* from the OU, join a marketing discussion about *Torah Tidbits* or the many events we bring to communities, help organize educational programs for older *olim* followed by a separate program for younger *olim*, sit with municipal leaders to strengthen support for at-risk youth through our teen centers, develop summer programs coming to Israel, visit a factory, meet with a politician or city mayor, and collaborate with our diverse organizational

partners, each moment reminding me how meaningful and full of purpose this work truly is.

That's a typical day for someone in the OU Israel administration. I am so lucky to have so much variety and interesting things to do. Shabbat, for me, is finally the time for me to be with my family, to spend time with Shabbat guests, and explain what is going on, what we've accomplished, and the good that is being done in Israel.

I remember how about three years ago, after Pesach break, schools had started up again for the younger ones, but it was still "*bein hazmanim*" for my older boys. Two of my older sons asked me if I could do something with them during the week. I told them how much I wanted to take a vacation day from work on such-and-such day to do something with them, but it happens to be that day I can't because I am going to Beit She'an for the OU, to the *Of Tov* factory, a chicken factory.

My boys heard that, and immediately said, "Great! We'll come with you." I said, "What are you going to do in the chicken factory?" They said, "We'll learn a ton! We'll see how *shechita* is done, and how they make deli meats and schnitzel." I explained to them that a slaughterhouse is not exactly the most pristine place in the world. It smells terrible. It's bloody. It's got lots of dead chickens. And we would have to leave early in the morning to make it there.

They would not be deterred. "Fine with us," they said. So I called up the rabbi in charge of the *shechita*, a tremendous *talmid chacham* and a dear friend, Rav Yom Tov Turk. And I asked

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Rav Yom Tov, “Is it okay if I bring my boys?” He told me, “The law here is that you can’t bring anybody under the age of 18, but as long as they’re above 18, *b’simcha rabah*, I’ll be happy to show them around.”

I told Rav Yom Tov that I had two goals for this visit. The first was that my children should understand the *halachic* side of *kashrut* and *shechita*. The *OfTov* factory has had the OU *hashgacha* on their products for many decades now, and Rav Yom Tov works with OU Israel’s Rabbi Yissachar Dov Krakowski and the rest of the *kashrut* team on a regular basis to make sure that it is all up to OU standards. So I wanted him to show my children the high level of *kashrut* they have there. The second goal was to really show my children up close how the hot dogs are made - maybe they’ll stop liking hot dogs so much!

So we came, and they had a great time in the factory. They were not bothered by the smell or the blood. They saw the standards of hygiene at the factory, with the Misrad HaBriut there, with different veterinarians present, and how everything is cleaned and the standards are really top-notch. Nevertheless, a slaughterhouse gets messy. Yet they came away extremely impressed with what they saw and I could see that they really learned a tremendous amount. First, they had a good hour of sitting with Rav Yom Tov, talking through all the different *halachot* of *shechita*, going through the *Shulchan Aruch* and many commentaries, how we *pasken* this way and that. But seeing it happen in real life, the *halacha* jumping off the page and seeing the law being actualized in front of them, was obviously very impactful.

When we finished the factory, the first thing my children did was to go to the factory store



and buy fresh OU-certified hot dogs. I guess the tour didn’t change their minds. Well, clearly, at least I accomplished one of two goals I set out to do.

My other sons who couldn’t come because they weren’t 18 at the time heard all about it when we got home, and they so badly wanted to come too. So at the beginning of this summer, I told them that at some point in the summer, I would take them to the *OfTov* factory. Once again I called Rav Yom Tov, who said, “*B’simcha rabba!* Not only that, this time you’re also going to see Rav Shlomo Rosenfeld, the rabbi for the area for the Rabbanut, as well as Rav Azriel Auerbach, the grandson of the famed Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, the other rabbi giving certification in the factory.” So that was exciting.

Once again my kids woke up early, and we

In loving memory of
Eliezer (Larry) Yellin ז"ל
אליעזר בן חיים מנחם מנדל ז"ל
 on his second Yahrtzeit - ח' אלול

May the Torah learned
 from this issue be in his merit

The Yellin and Weingarten families

went on a tour at the factory. It definitely lived up to the hype that my older kids gave it. They were fascinated by how the machinery works and how advanced it is and how it is hardly touched by human hands. They saw the slicing machine that takes a whole chicken and creates pargiyot, schnitzel meat, wings, and so on. They couldn't get enough of it. Like their brothers before them, they had the opportunity to both learn *halacha* and see its real life applied practice. That is so important educationally. Being able to bring *halacha* to life gets people excited about what *halacha* is and how relevant it is to our lives.

Let me take the opportunity to thank the head rabbis and the head *shochet*, Rav Yom Tov, and to express my deep gratitude to the hundreds of *shochtim*, *mashgichim*, and *mefakchim* working tirelessly in chicken and food factories across the country. These dedicated individuals, often unseen, ensure that every product meets OU *kashrut* specifications, allowing us to have meals for Shabbat, weddings, Bar Mitzvas, and every occasion. And beyond Israel, I extend heartfelt thanks to our OU *mashgichim* around the world, serving in 120 countries, in 15,000 factories, and supervising 1.5 million products, faithfully upholding the highest standards of *kashrut* for our communities everywhere.

Last week I showed my deep respects and appreciation to Rabbi Berel Wein, ztl, for his role at OU Kosher in America. I received a lot

of messages afterwards about all those who were also involved in OU Kosher and helped create such an important Kashrut agency in the world, both before and after him in the 102 years that OU Kosher has existed. And they are exactly right. So let me take the opportunity now to thank everyone who was involved in OU Kosher and helped to make it what it is today. Not only Rabbi Genack and Rabbi Elephant, who are the heads of OU Kosher today along with the Poskim of the OU today; Rav Shechter, Rav Yehoshua Weiss, and Rav Mordechai Gross and all those who came before them, that have worked so hard and done so much to make sure OU Kosher is transparent, honest, and completely community-oriented (with its profits going right back into OU programming for communities).

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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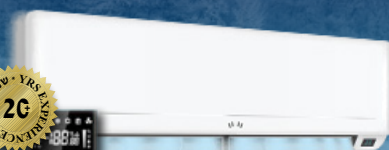
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FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



והחכמה מאין תמצא Where Will Wisdom be Found?

If a coin were to be minted to commemorate Rabbi Berel Wein, zt”l, it would be a version of the Avraham Avinu coin described in the Talmud (Bava Kamma 97b), with an elderly couple engraved on one side and a boy and girl on the other, celebrating his unique blending of the qualities of youth and older age.

Rabbi Wein was forever young, creatively and meaningfully engaged until his last days, reinventing himself to embark on entirely new missions and directions at an age when most people take a step back. In another sense, however, Rabbi Wein, from the first years that his unique voice began to be broadcast across the Jewish world, always spoke with the wisdom and authority of age and experience, sharing insights and perspective that cut to the heart of our most serious challenges.

Why does the Torah to refer to a wise person as a *zakein* (elder)?

The elderly deserve respect because they possess the wisdom of experience (Kiddushin 33a). They have seen this movie before, and they know how it will end. History repeats itself and the wise learn its lessons, *maasei avot siman l’banim*. Rabbi Wein’s command of history enabled him to draw on a rich repository of previous lifetimes to observe and analyze current events considering historical experience. He was as old as the Jewish people.

Rabbi Wein would often invoke Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi who attributed whatever advantages he had over his contemporaries to the exposure he had to Rabbi Meir (Eruvin 13b). In the same way, Rabbi Wein’s voice seemed to emanate from the past as he projected the perspectives of the wide range of outstanding mentors and personalities he had known and pursued. As noted by the Chazon Ish (Bava Kamma 11:20), “while the generations tend to become smaller, one who is enriched by knowledge of the experiences of earlier generations is endowed with an extra measure of wisdom and holiness.”

But Rabbi Wein’s most enlightening quality was the clarity of his convictions, his readiness

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to cut through shallow expectations and slogans and focus instead on that which is real and important, drilling down on genuine Torah values. From his relative youth he personified what the Maharal of Prague considered the ultimate wisdom of the aged who, having seen it all and moved past it, can distinguish between the *narishkeiten* (literally the folly of youth) and what ultimately matters.

The day following his passing I received a note from a friend who was a lifelong student of Rabbi Wein, having been a part of his shul and yeshiva. He wrote about how difficult it was for him to read the blurbs describing his rebbe as an inspiring orator, a great historian, and a prolific writer. While that was all true, it failed to convey what he meant to those whose lives he shaped, providing them with Torah values, genuine fear of Heaven ("un vos zohgt G-tt?!"), the sense of privilege and purpose in being part of and serving the Jewish people, and a compass with which to navigate our terribly confusing times.

In our parsha (Devarim 14:1) we are told *Banim A'tem la'Hashem Elokeichem*, that we are children of G-d. Rashi elsewhere (Devarim 6:7) explains that the verse is not referring to G-d's role as a parent/creator but as the teacher of the Jewish people. While all people are created by G-d, it is specifically the Jews who are called His children because only we stood at Sinai and became His students, shaped by the Torah that He taught us.


We all loved Rabbi Wein and we all enjoyed learning from him, but ironically - because he was so interesting and entertaining - we failed to absorb the wisdom and urgency of his messages. Other than his closest students, we did not allow ourselves to be shaped by him.

Truly a loss.


Yehi zichro baruch. ■

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PARSHAT SHOFTIM

Parshat Shoftim has 41 mitzvot and is the 2nd of 3 parshiot that have a total of 170 mitzvot.

The 3 parshiot of Re'eh, Shoftim and Ki Teitzei are nation building; they express the vision of the society we are to build in the Land of Israel. It is not narrative; it is legislation.

And what type of society do we want to build?

Well, man was created in the image of G-d. The society we are to build is an expression of the image of G-d. What He is, we too are. Kind of. The society we build is a "G-d's Image" society. Albeit with a dash of humility.

He is: One, Merciful, Judge, King, Revealer, All Powerful, All Knowing.

We began last week in Re'eh with His being One. First thing is monotheism and uprooting of idols. He is One, reflected here on earth. He is Merciful, Kind, Generous. We in our society will take care of the needy in canceling loans in Shemita and in the generosity inherent in Maaser Sheni. Ethical monotheism is the first pillar in the "G-d's Image" society.

Our parsha, Shoftim, is the building of

national institutions: the judiciary, the executive and the legislature, including courts, the king, prophets and proper conduct of war. And their checks and balances.

He is Judge, King, Revealer to man and All Powerful. Our institutions of courts, monarchy, prophet express on earth His attributes; we, created in His Image, act on earth in the way He does.



1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 16:18-17:13)

Courts: Establish courts and be vigilant in fairness; do not show favoritism or accept bribes for they blur good judgment. Do not plant a tree next to the altar, nor establish a stone monument, nor offer blemished sacrifices. If one is found to worship idols, examine the case carefully in court: guilt must be established through the testimony of witnesses. If established to be true, put that person to death and remove evil from your midst. Should a ruling be elusive, refer it to the higher court; its decision is binding. Do not deviate from its ruling.

Judiciary: The Torah has 2 parshiot that deal with law: Mishpatim and Shoftim. Mishpatim is substantive law, the substance of the law in all sorts of areas of conflict. Shoftim is procedural law; how justice is to be meted out.

Our pursuit of justice on earth is an expression of our image of G-d, the true Judge. We do what He does. However, there is an inherent danger in acting as He. We need to be careful to remember – we are but in His Image. We are not the true Judge. He is.

Perhaps this is the motivation of the checks and balances we will see in each of these

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FATHER ז"ל

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

national institutions; reins on our overstep. The Torah emphasizes the rules of testimony and procedure. If you require two eye witnesses to convict, convictions are shrunk. This could be to impress upon man that although courts are necessary for society, judging our fellow man is not really our business. True Justice belongs but to G-d. Hence, your ability to convict is shrunk, lest you see yourself as the True Judge.



2ND ALIYA (17:14-20)

King: When settled in the Land, appoint a Jewish king. He may not accumulate excessive horses, nor too many wives, nor silver and gold. He shall have his own Torah with him at all times in order to avoid self-aggrandizement and to ensure allegiance to the mitzvot.

Executive Branch: In the same breath that we are told to appoint a king, the Torah saddles him with restrictions. Not too many horses, meaning military power. Not too many wives; sexual license is often the consequence of excess power. And limit possessions, another license of power. The tempering of the power of the king is to temper both his abuse of power and his inflated self-image.

Unbridled power of the king could easily leave little room for the King of Kings. You, man, are a little king. He is the real King. While the crown may sit on your head, know that above that head is the real King of Kings.



3RD ALIYA (18:1-5)

Kohen, Levi: The tribe of Levi, including Kohanim, shall not have a portion in the land of Israel for the holy service is their lot. The Kohen, who serves G-d, shall be given portions of animals, produce and shearing.

Alongside Judges and Kings, the judiciary and the executive are the religious leaders,

Kohanim and Leviim. These religious leaders are supported by a type of tax on the people. But with limits. The power of the Judges to convict is limited. The power of the Kings is limited to avoid abuse. Religious leaders are also prone to abuse of power, using religious leverage to accumulate wealth. Hence, no land. Only these portions. It is not what is given to support the Kohanim and Leviim; it is what is not. Every society supports its religious leaders. But make sure the power that comes with high religious office not be abused. You get support; but only this, not more.

Religious leaders must serve G-d and the people; they are supported albeit with modesty.



4TH ALIYA (18:6-12)

The Levi is permitted to serve in the Temple whenever he chooses.

Sorcery: Avoid the practices of the people in the land, such as child sacrifice, divination, omens, sorcery, communicating with the dead. Your allegiance is to G-d.

One of the attributes of the Divine is omniscience; He Knows all. Man has knowledge; but man's knowledge falls far short of the Divine. We, oh how we wish we could know more, see beyond our limitations, have access to the secrets of the world. It is tempting to run, in the pursuit of accessing the secrets of the world to sorcery and divination.

That's not for you. Stay away. The Torah requires powerful restraint. That is not our source of knowledge. As the next aliya outlines, our source of truth is G-d through the prophet.

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the family and friends of
Zev Blumenfrucht ז"ל
on his passing

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים



5TH ALIYA (18:13-19:13)

Prophet: While the people in the Land seek wisdom through magical techniques, you seek yours through G-d Himself. Because you said at Sinai that you did not want to hear His voice directly you have the Prophet to convey G-d's directives. Heed the words of the prophet, though not of the false prophet. The true prophet's predictions come true: not so for the false prophet. Prepare 3 cities on the east bank of the Jordan and 3 cities in the Land of Israel as refuge for the accidental murderer. He is not subject to the death penalty. Innocent blood ought not be spilled in the Land.

Our parsha has outlined the judiciary, the judges and the executive, the king. The legislature, the branch that creates the laws, is trickier; the source of our laws is G-d, related through the prophet. The prophet is a mere conduit. Unlike the judge and king who act in this world in the image of the true Judge and King, the prophet acts as the messenger to man to communicate the Divine legislation.



6TH ALIYA (19:14-20:9)

Do not encroach over the borders of your property. **Testimony:** One witness is insufficient in court. Conniving witnesses who intend harm through their testimony shall themselves receive the harm they intended. **War:** Do not be afraid of the enemy in war, for G-d champions your battles. A specially appointed Kohen shall encourage the soldiers. In addition, he shall exempt some

of the soldiers: those who have a new home, a new vineyard, a betrothed wife, or are afraid. These shall not demoralize the other soldiers.

The protection of his people through the conduct of war is one of the primary functions of the executive, the King. As we say in Az Yashir, the song at the sea, "G-d is the conductor of battle". As He is a warrior, so too we, in our "G-d's Image" society need to fight wars. Some laws of war are outlined.

And in addressing the inherent danger of military men to assume military success is due to their great prowess, the Kohen is instructed to be present in war. The Kohen's presence reminds the soldiers that they are G-d's army. He fights their battles, while they fight down here on earth.



7TH ALIYA (20:10-21:9)

In approaching war, try peace first. But if refused, fight the war to the end, lest those who survive lead you astray. Do not destroy fruit trees while laying siege to a city. When a body is found dead in the field, the nearest city shall perform a ceremony declaring them not responsible for this death. The Land need be cleansed of innocent blood.

After the laws of war, the Torah circles back to one lone body found dead in the field. And the need to cleanse both the leadership and the land of this innocent blood.

This too is a kind of check and balance on the military. Oh, don't think we have low regard for life. Loss of innocent life defiles the Land – and us. Embark on war with sobriety. While not pacifists who desist from all war, we will conduct a sober war. After all, we are creating a human society reflecting the image of G-d. But all mankind is in His image. Death in battle is sometimes necessary, but regrettable nonetheless. For all are created in His Image. ■

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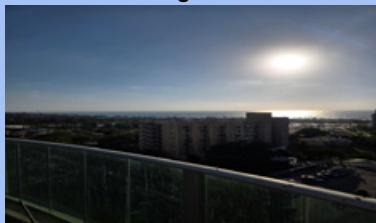
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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

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

Tamim: Perfection or Naïveté?

I begin this column with two distinct goals in mind. On the one hand, I want to familiarize you with the complexity of a brief verse in this week's Torah portion, *Shoftim* (Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9).

On the other hand, my second goal is to introduce you to the use a rabbi made of this verse in a sermon to his Brooklyn congregation long ago.

I refer to chapter 18, verse 13, a mere five words long in Hebrew: *Tamim tihyeh im HaShem Elokecha*. How to translate this significant teaching, particularly the word *tamim*, has tantalized experts throughout the ages and across the spectrum of Bible readers. Here are some sample translations:

First, two Jewish samples: one reads, "You must be wholehearted with the Lord your God." Another reads, "You must be wholly loyal to the Lord your God."

A standard but non-Jewish translation renders it, "You shall be blameless before the Lord

your God".

My preferred translation, although admittedly not perfect, is that of Rabbi J.H. Hertz, a former Chief Rabbi of the British Empire: "Thou shalt be whole-hearted with the Lord your God." But at the

His translation differs slightly from the first Jewish sample quoted above. Note especially that besides the use of the archaic "Thou shalt" and the hyphen in "whole-hearted", Rabbi Hertz correctly insists upon "**with** the Lord" rather than "**to** the Lord", indicating companionship *with* the Lord rather than subservience *to* Him.

Rabbi Hertz provides us an additional benefit. He includes in his notes the comments of Rashi on this verse: "Walk **with** him whole-heartedly and hope in Him. Pry not into the veiled future but accept whatever befalls you. Then you will be His people and His portion."

There is a subtle, but fundamental, difference between the translations just presented and Rashi's conception of the meaning of the verse. The issue at hand is the meaning of the word *tamim*, a word which has had a colorful history.

In modern Hebrew usage, the words *tam* or *tamim* or *temimut* imply simplemindedness, innocence bordering upon ignorance, or perhaps naïveté. One well known example of this usage is the third son, the *tam*, in the Passover *Haggadah* who comes across as a simpleton who can only utter, "*Mah zot?*", "What's going on?"

Another example is the term used by the

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Simcha ז"ל

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

Talmud to describe an ox that's been deemed harmless. It is therefore labeled a *tam*, a naïvely innocent creature.

Many assert that Rashi is defining *tamim* in this sense. He wisely locates our verse in its context in the preceding verses, 9-12. There we find strict prohibitions against following heathen superstitions, black magic, fortune telling, and the conviction that the stars irrevocably determine our destiny.

Rather, as Rashi puts it, "we must trust in Him and not inquire of soothsayers about what our future holds in store. We must accept *b'temimut*, with simplicity and confidence, **'with** the Lord', **with** Him and attached to Him." There is a sense of naïveté, a stance of stubborn refusal to submit to the dark forecasts and fatalistic predictions expounded by pagan cultures. "*Ma zot?*", "What gives with all this nonsense?" asks the *tam*!

The translations that I quoted earlier understand *tam* and *tamim* very differently. They base their translations upon the repeated usage of those terms in the Bible. Noah is described (Genesis 6:9) as a *tamim*; Abraham (Genesis 17:1) is asked to be *tamim*; Jacob in his youth (Genesis 25-27) is an *ish tam*, a mature *tam*; and Job (Job 1:1), is given the title *tam v'yashar*, a sincere *tam*.

Professor Nechama Leibowitz describes the link between these different heroes of the Bible as a *gesher*, a bridge, between them, a common denominator. Ramban is one of the early leaders of the chorus of commentators who therefore define *tam* or *tamim* in accordance with the Aramaic translation of Onkelos, who uses the term *shalem*, complete, total commitment. If I had to render the verse in English in accordance with this approach, I would suggest, "Walk in *complete devotion* **with** the Lord your God".

So far I have outlined my first goal, to convey

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the subtle complexity of the verse and the definition of *tamim*.

Now, on to my second goal.

For this, I must introduce you to an important American rabbinic figure of the mid-twentieth century, Rabbi Nisan Telushkin. He began his rabbinic career in communist Russia. His heroic leadership during that period are topics

**May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be לע"נ my father**

משה בן צבי ז"ל
Moshe Goldstein ז"ל
on his 33rd yahrzeit, 3 Elul

**Harriet Goldstein - Mark
Grandsons, great-grandchildren
and great-great-grandchildren**

I reserve for another opportunity. Fortunately, he escaped Russia and came to America. He assumed a pulpit there, in Brooklyn, and soon faced new and different challenges which he met with spiritual fervor and creative skill.

His congregation consisted of Jews who had arrived in the United States as refugees early in the twentieth century. Their Jewish awareness rapidly eroded as they struggled to cope with a new cultural and economic environment.

During my yeshiva years, I was personally privileged to benefit from his tutelage and halachic writings. His masterpiece, entitled *Taharat Mayim*, remains a practical handbook for the construction of *mikvaot*, ritual baths. I knew him as a devout *chasid*, and erudite traditional Talmudic scholar of the first rank. I proudly received *semicha* from him.

Much later, I came across a three-volume collection of his synagogue sermons. It is entitled *HaTorah V'HaOlam* ("Torah and the World"). It was published in 1958, and I discovered it only after I began my own rabbinic career. I continue to cherish it as a model of sermons to inspire an audience with limited Jewish education and Jewish observance. Please recognize that these sermons were delivered in the years prior to the Holocaust, during the Holocaust, and just subsequent to the Holocaust. Orthodox Judaism then was very different from what it is now.

He was able to draw upon the verse we have been discussing and the comments of Rashi on that verse. His homiletic interpretation of those texts markedly differs from the previous discussion. He presents the verse as if it was a message to his audience not to feel inadequate because they were religiously ignorant or insufficiently observant. *Tamim tihyeh* meant "be simple, do your best, be sincere with the little knowledge you have and with the limited

degree of observance of which you are capable." These words of reassurance and encouragement struck home. They remain relevant for those who are imperfect religiously but wish to participate in synagogue life.

For those who are skeptical of this daring homiletic display, Rabbi Telushkin validates it with an array of sources from Psalms, the Talmud and Midrash, and from Kabbalah.

One example is the Psalm 26:1: "Lord, vindicate me for I have walked *b'tumi* (the same root as *tamim*) in all innocence..." The Midrash known as *Sifre* remarks, "He who is a *tam* ranks with King David."

Another example is the statement of Rava in Tractate *Avodah Zara* 19: "A person should always study Torah, even if he will forget it all, and even if he does not understand a word he studied..."

Another statement is by Rabbi Akiva in *Mishnayot Eduyot* 5:6: "Better to be taunted by others as a dunce than to be considered an outlaw by the Lord."

And so forth. A brave man, this Rabbi Telushkin, but one who reached the hearts and souls of his congregants and kept them close to Torah and engaged in good deeds. This approach permeates all three volumes of his remarkable attempt to meet the needs of his people given their circumstances and the times they lived in. ■

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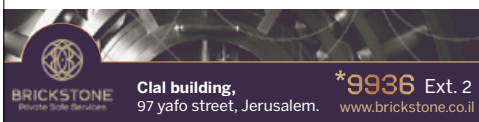
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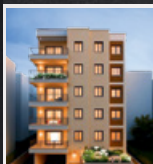
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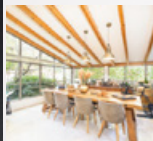
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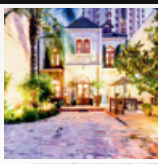
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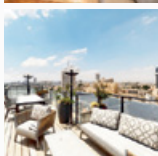
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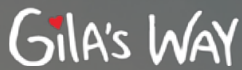
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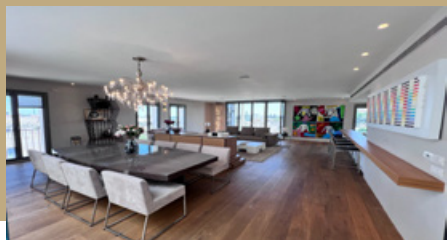
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Greatness is Humility

There is a fascinating detail in the passage about the king in this week's parsha. The text says:

"As he presides upon his royal throne, he must inscribe a copy of this Torah for himself upon a scroll, in the presences of the Levitical priests. It must always be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God, taking care to keep all the words of this commandment and these decrees, not considering himself superior to his people, or straying from the commandments to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign long in the midst of Israel." (Deut. 17:18)

He must "read it all the days of his life" so that he will be God-fearing and never break Torah law. But there is another reason also: so that he will "not begin to feel superior to his brethren" (Kaplan translation), "so that his heart be not haughty over his brothers" (Robert Alter). The king had to have humility. The highest in the land should not feel himself to be the highest in the land.

This is hugely significant in terms of the Jewish understanding of political leadership. There are other commands directed specifically to the king of Israel. He must not accumulate horses so as not to establish trading links with Egypt. He should not have too many wives for "they will lead his heart astray." He should not accumulate wealth. These were all standing temptations to a king. As we know, and as the Sages pointed out, it was these three prohibitions that Solomon, wisest of men, broke, marking the beginning of the long slow slide into corruption that marked much of the history of the monarchy in ancient Israel. It led, after his death, to the division of the kingdom.

But these were symptoms, not the cause. The cause was the feeling on the part of the king that, since he is above the people he is above the law. As the rabbis said, Solomon justified his breach of these prohibitions by saying:

The only reason that a king may not accumulate wives is that they will lead his heart astray, so I will marry many wives and not let my heart be led astray. And since the only reason not to have many horses is not to establish links with Egypt, I will have many horses but not do business with Egypt. (Sanhedrin 21b)

In both cases he fell into the trap of which the Torah had warned. Solomon's wives did lead his heart astray (1 Kings 11:3), and his horses

were imported from Egypt (I Kings 10:28-29). The arrogance of power is its downfall. Hubris leads to nemesis.

Hence the Torah's insistence on humility, not as a mere nicety, a good thing to have, but as essential to the role. The king was to be treated with the highest honour. In Jewish law, only a king may not renounce the honour due to his role. A parent may do so, so may a *rav*, so may even a *nasi*, but not a king (Kiddushin 32a-b). Yet there is to be a complete contrast between the external trappings of the king and his inward emotions.

Maimonides is eloquent on the subject:

Just as the Torah grants him [the king] great honour and obliges everyone to revere him, so it commands him to be lowly and empty at heart, as it says, 'My heart is empty within me' (Ps. 109:22). Nor should he treat Israel with overbearing haughtiness, for it says, "So that his heart be not haughty over his brothers" (Deut. 17:20). He should be gracious and merciful to the small and the great, involving himself in their good and welfare. He should protect the honour of even the humblest of men. When he speaks to the people as a community, he should speak gently, as it says, "Listen my brothers and my people...." (I Chronicles 28:2), and similarly, "If today you will be a servant to these people..." (I Kings 12:7). He should always conduct himself with great humility. There was none greater than Moses, our teacher. Yet he said: "What are we? Your complaints are not against us" (Ex. 16:8). He should bear the nation's difficulties, burdens, complaints and anger as a nurse carries an infant. (Maimonides, Laws of Kings 2:6)

The role-model is Moses, described in the Torah as "very humble, more so than any person on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). "Humble" here does not mean diffident, meek, self-abasing, timid, bashful, demure, or lacking



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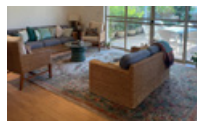
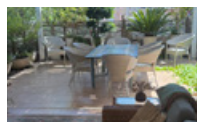
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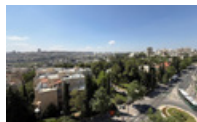
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in self-confidence. Moses was none of these. It means honouring others and regarding them as important, no less important than you are. It does not mean holding yourself low; it means holding other people high. It means roughly what Ben Zoma meant when he said (Avot 4:1), “Who is honoured? One who honours others.”

This led to one of the great rabbinic teachings, contained in the siddur and said on Motzei Shabbat:

Rabbi Yochanan said, “Wherever you find the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, there you find His humility.”

This is written in the Torah, repeated in the Prophets, and stated a third time in the Writings. It is written in the Torah:

“For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty and awe-inspiring God, who shows no favouritism and accepts no bribe.” (Deut. 10:17)

Immediately afterwards, as Megillah (31a) notes, we read that God, “upholds the cause of the orphan and widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing...” (Deuteronomy 10:18). God cares for all regardless of rank, and so must we, even a king, especially a king. Greatness is humility.

In the context of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II¹, there is a story worth telling. It happened in St James’ Palace on 27 January 2005. As Chief Rabbi, I was invited to join a group of Holocaust survivors, and together we marked the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Punctuality, said Louis XVIII of France, is the politeness of kings. Royalty arrives on time and leaves on time. So it is with the Queen, but not on this occasion. When the time came for her to leave,

she stayed. And stayed. One of her attendants said he had never known her to linger so long after her scheduled departure time.

The Queen gave each survivor – it was a large group – her focussed, unhurried attention. She stood with each until they had finished telling their personal story. One after another, the survivors were coming to me in a kind of trance, saying, “Sixty years ago I did not know whether I would be alive tomorrow, and here I am today talking to the Queen.” It brought a kind of blessed closure into deeply lacerated lives. Sixty years earlier they had been treated, in Germany, Austria, Poland, in fact in most of Europe, as subhuman, yet now the Queen was treating them as if each were a visiting Head of State. That was humility: not holding yourself low but holding others high. And where you find humility, there you find greatness.

It is a lesson for each of us. Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin said, *Der grester yester hora is az mir fargest az mi is ein ben melech*, “The greatest source of sin is to forget we are children of the king.” We say *Avinu Malkeinu*, “Our Father, our King.” It follows that we are all members of a royal family and must act as if we are. And the mark of royalty is humility.

The real honour is not the honour we receive but the honour we give. ■

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

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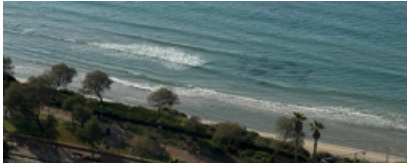
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1. This essay was written by Rabbi Sacks in the summer of 2012, at the time of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee.

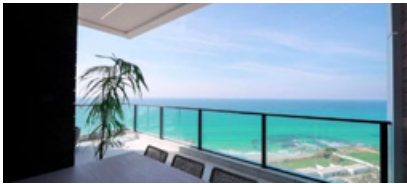
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The King of Kings

In Parshat Shoftim we encounter the directive to appoint a king. Many commentators are troubled by Shmuel's criticism of Am Yisrael when they request a king, after all, isn't it a mitzva to anoint a king? Perhaps the issue there was more with the impetus of the nation that caused them to request a king – to be like the other nations. If so, then what is the proper motivation of appointing a king?

THREE MITZVOT UPON ENTERING ERETZ YISRAEL

Upon entering Eretz Yisrael, we are commanded to fulfil three mitzvot: (i) appointing a king; (ii) uprooting Amalek; and (iii) building the Beit Hamikdash. It is interesting to note that although we are commanded to carry out these initiatives, they are all actually attributed to Hashem. We recite in Az Yashir: *מִקְדָּשׁ ה' כִּנּוּנוּ* – Hashem will build the Mikdash. Similarly, the Torah states: *מָחָה אֶמְחָה אֶת זֵכֶר עֹמֶלְק* – Hashem will eradicate Amalek.

KING REFLECTS GOD'S DOMINION

Rav Kastiel (Siman L'banim), suggests that perhaps this sheds light on the purpose of a king. A king is not to "replace" God, but rather to reflect Hashem's presence. On a daily basis, Hashem's presence is not always apparent. We do not witness supernatural miracles like the splitting of the sea that leads us to declare *ה' יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד* – that Hashem is the eternal king!

The recognition of a physical king should remind us of the "king of kings" – *מֶלֶךְ מְלָכֵי הָעוֹלָם*. The king carries a Torah to exhibit that he is subservient to a higher authority. Historically, certain kings, like David Hamelech fulfilled this mandate, especially through his writing of Tehillim, where David Hamelech praises Hashem's dominion in the world. As human beings, we are to recognize that a king reflects the ultimate Creator. When a king recites the *amida* he is to do so in a bent position to exhibit that he is subservient to Hashem.

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inquires as to why it was necessary for Hashem to utilize the parent-child model. Why is it that children do not just rise from the dust, like Adam? Rav Dessler suggests that through the parental child relationship, one is able to comprehend that there is a being that is willing to invest so much in another. To care for another in an altruistic manner. To wake up in the middle of the night and feed a baby, who is otherwise helpless and unable to care for itself. That leads one to get an inkling of an understanding of God's mercy and compassion towards man. Similarly, witnessing a king should lead one to better comprehend and appreciate Hashem, with the understanding that a king is subservient to a greater authority.

Today we are not privileged to appoint a king, but we should seek to recognize God's presence even in the natural sphere. Especially during the past year, when during challenging times, we witnessed many miracles. May we be zoche to fulfill all three initiatives and merit a *geula shlema b'mehera b'yamenu!* ■

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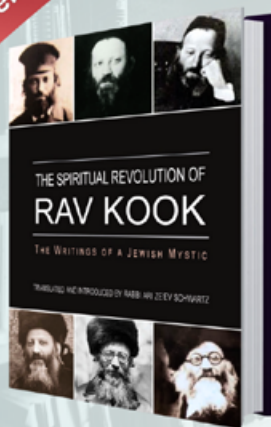


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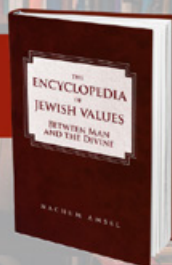
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Glorious Gates

Our *parashah* opens with the injunction, “*Shoftim ve’shotrim titen lecha bechol she’arecha* - You shall set up judges and law enforcement officials for yourself in all your gates [cities],” appropriately setting the stage for the required focus during the months of Elul and Tishrei. Although at first glance this verse refers to establishing a workable judicial system, many commentators understand that there is a deeper message here for each of us.

The Tosher Rebbe in *Avodat Avodah* shares the famous idea that the ‘gates’ can homiletically be understood as one’s five senses - sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing through which we perceive and interact with the world around us. We are being cautioned here to establish personal boundaries and carefully monitor that which enters our domain.

The forty days from Elul through Yom Kippur, notes the Tosher Rebbe, parallels the forty days it takes an embryo to form. This is a time when one can improve and develop himself, reassessing his priorities and values. It is an annual opportunity to introspect and refine areas that are lacking and set up one’s individual ‘judges’ and ‘officers’ to ensure that the changes one makes are genuine and lasting.

The Slonimer Rebbe zt”l in *Netivot Shalom* interprets the ‘gates’ to be the month of Elul, the portal through which we enter the new year.

Just as we employ the last day of the month, Yom Kippur Katan, to prepare ourselves to begin a new month and we spend the end of the week, Friday, to prepare for Shabbat, the way we capitalize on the opportunities Elul affords, will determine the quality and spirit of the new year ahead.

Further, the Rebbe points out that the metaphoric ‘judges’ and ‘officers’ we establish, act to assure us that we will be continuously reminded that Hashem is our G-d, intimately connected to every detail we experience. At the beginning of the *Shulchan Aruch*, the *Rema* quotes the Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim*) enjoining each person to live with the constant awareness that Hashem’s Presence fills the earth. Our goal is to be mindful of this reality and demonstrate it through all our thoughts, speech and actions.

Thus, we have a clear direction moving forward into Elul. Let us set up a personal system of ‘checks and balances’ to clearly assess our attitudes and actions. Let us be attentive to the ultimate goal of building our relationship with Hashem, “*Ani le’dodi ve’dodi li*”, seeking out Hashem’s presence every moment in every circumstance. ■

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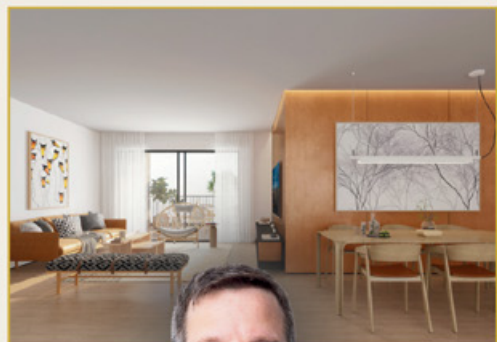
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A *talmid muvhak* of Rav Yitzchak Hutner, Reb Shlomo reflected his Rebbe's regal,

Rabbinic presence, embodying *kavod haTorah*, a deep respect for the trappings, garb and posture rooted in traditional Rabbinic appearance and custom. This form of *kavod* was enriched by his deep wisdom and charisma, and yet all of this was balanced by his personal warmth and down-to-earth approachability.

In a moment of thoughtful self-reflection, the Rosh Yeshivah commented on his own journey of growth. "At my *bris milah*, my father named me Shlomo, yet my mother still preferred to call me 'Seymour'. Don't let the hat and beard fool you! I was 'Seymour', not Shlomo!" Rebbe paused, letting the idea sink in. "But life is evolution, not revolution; we have to work consistently to tap more and more into the unlimited potential of our names. And we have to know that this mission is within our reach.... Today, I am *Shlomo*."

Following the mournful period of *Bein haMeitzarim* and Tisha B'Av, over the course of seven weeks we are granted the relief and comfort of *sheva d'nechemta*, seven weekly *haftarah* portions that deliver a message of hope and optimism. The *haftarah* for this week's sedra, Parshas Shoftim, is from Yeshayahu haNavi and includes this profound verse:

כי לא בחפזון תצאו ובמנוסה לא תחכו כי הלך לפניכם ה' ומאספכם אחרי ישראל

"For not in haste shall you go forth and not in a flurry of flight shall you go,

For Hashem is marching before you, and the God of Israel is your rear guard." (52:12)

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Mitzrayim, which happened with great haste (כי בחפזון יצאת ממצרים, *Devarim*, 16:3), our haftarah foretells that the final Geulah will be different: לא בחפזון תצאו, “You will *not* go out in haste.” When it came to leaving Egypt, we were mired in the lowest depths of impurity, and had we stayed a moment longer we would have passed the point of no return. Therefore, we needed to be removed in a flash, and with many miracles. The final redemption however, is unfolding stage after stage, “marching” forward step by step, slowly and deliberately.

Rav Yaakov Bender, shlit’a, a master educator and Rosh Yeshivah of Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, refers to a beautiful teaching of the Maharal examining the different modes of redemption. While filled with great illumination, miracles and excitement, Geulas Mitzrayim happened in an instant, and like a flash of lightning, the freedom we experienced did not last. On the other hand, Am Yisrael always remembers this Exodus and we draw strength from it while traversing the purification and suffering of galus on the way to complete Geulah. The final, eternal Geulah will be the culmination of a lengthy process, and *that* is *why* its freedom will be everlasting.

This week’s haftarah is also another step on the seven-runged ladder upon which we ascend toward Rosh Hashanah. Its message, as well as the inspiration and insight of these seven weeks, prepares us for the upcoming ‘season’ of *teshuvah* and subsequent Yamim Nora’im. With the onset of Chodesh Elul, our focus is on ‘beginning again’, returning to our highest aspirations and our true selves. It is a process of both discovery and recovery. Perhaps even more accurately, *teshuvah* is ‘uncovery’ — revealing who we really are by working through layers of *kelipah* and inner *galus*, slowly peeling off the coverings that

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separate us from knowledge of who we are, and from the righteous action that flows from this authentic identity.

Teshuvah is לא בחפזון, not done in haste; it does not demand a sudden change of lifestyle, but a deliberate, sustained change of direction. It takes steady repetition of the decision to steer toward our spiritually healthy baseline. It is a journey of restoration made of countless small steps, *baderech*.

As the great Rosh Yeshivah previously known as ‘Seymour’ taught, ‘*Teshuvah* is *evolution*, not *revolution*’ — and it is within our reach. ■

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Kashrut Principles as Taught by Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg zt"l

This week, on *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, *Am Yisrael* commemorated the fifth *Yahrzeit* of a Torah giant—my Rebbe and teacher, Hagaon Harav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg zt"l.

During his lifetime, the Rav delivered thousands of in-depth shiurim across the spectrum of the religious world. He was blessed with an extraordinary intellect and a profound capacity for Torah knowledge. He taught in dozens of *yeshivot* and *kollelim*, regardless of political affiliation, number of participants, or scholastic level. All of this stemmed from the Rav's remarkable piety. His humility was unparalleled—he consistently distanced himself from any form of honor or recognition. He treated

everyone around him as an equal and cherished every insight in Torah, no matter who it came from. In his memory, this article will explore one aspect of Rav Zalman Nechemia's teachings, specifically related to kashrut.

RABBINIC DECREES RELATED

TO SAKANA (DANGER)

Our Sages instituted numerous laws regarding food and drink based on the concept of *sakanah*—potential danger. These dangers typically relate to health risks that could arise from not adhering to certain practices.

One well-known example is the halacha prohibiting the consumption of meat and fish together. Although there is no explicit biblical source for this prohibition, our Sages had a tradition to avoid mixing or consuming them together. Even today, when no clear health risk is evident, we continue to refrain based on the halachic principle that once a decree is made, it remains in force unless formally annulled by a *Sanhedrin*.

A similar halacha tied to *sakanah* involves the laws of *giluy* (uncovered beverages). The *Gemara* (Avodah Zarah 30a) discusses the prohibition against drinking beverages left uncovered and unattended, due to concerns that venomous creatures—such as snakes or scorpions—might drink from them and leave



The author in his yeshiva days with Hagaon Harav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg zt"l



behind poison. *Tosafot* (*Avodah Zarah* 35a) writes that in the countries where they lived, this concern did not apply, and therefore, such beverages were permitted. The *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 116:1) rules accordingly: one may drink a beverage that was left uncovered if the local context poses no danger.

This raises a critical question:

Why do the laws of *giluy* change based on time and place, while the prohibition of mixing meat and fish does not? Generally, rabbinic decrees and any Torah law remains fixed and unchangeable, even if their original reasoning no longer applies—unless changed by a *Sanhedrin*.

RAV ZALMAN NECHEMIA'S INSIGHT

Rav Zalman Nechemia provided a brilliant explanation of this apparent inconsistency. While it is true, as seen in the *Gemara* (*Beitzah* 5:a), that rabbinic decrees cannot be nullified even if their original reasoning no longer applies, our Sages themselves created categories within rabbinic legislation. In the case of *giluy*, the prohibition was conditional from the outset—its applicability was explicitly tied to the presence of venomous creatures like snakes. The halacha was never intended to be universally binding in all times and places. It was a decree based on existing danger, not an abstract principle. Rav Zalman Nechemia explained that in many cases, the reason behind a decree supports it, but is not its essence. Therefore, even when the logic no longer applies, the decree stands. However, in cases where the reason is the foundation of the law itself, the halacha can change with changing circumstances.

Thus, the prohibition of mixing meat and fish

remains in effect regardless of current health concerns, because the decree was made as a binding rule independent of ongoing medical reality. In contrast, the laws of *giluy* were inherently conditional and subject to change.

A BROADER HALACHIC FRAMEWORK

Rav Zalman Nechemia expanded this idea across various areas of halacha, showing that not all decrees and rulings are equal in nature or flexibility. A striking example involves the laws of *terefot* (non-kosher due to fatal defects).

According to tradition, any kosher animal that has a physical defect causing it to die within 12 months is not kosher. These defects are listed in the *Gemara* and are considered laws handed down from *Moshe Rabbeinu* at *Har Sinai*. The *Rambam* rules that even if a doctor is certain the animal will live, the halacha remains fixed—we rely on the tradition.

However, when it comes to human *terefot* (e.g., whether someone who kills a gravely ill person is fully liable for murder), the *Rambam* rules that the determination depends on medical professionals of the time. This seems contradictory—why trust modern medicine in one case but not the other? Rav Zalman Nechemia



quotes Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski in Responsa *Achiezer*, who explains the distinction: The laws of animal *terefot* are based on tradition, while the laws of human *terefot* were not specified in the Torah and were always intended to follow contemporary medical knowledge. Once again, we see a critical theme in Rav Zalman Nechemia's teachings:

When halachic rulings are founded on specific reasoning, and that reasoning is made part of the decree, the halacha may evolve with time and circumstance. But when the law is rooted in tradition, even if it includes logical explanations, it remains fixed.

A PERSONAL NOTE

While I was a talmid in Yeshivat Ohr Etzion, I had the immense honor and privilege of driving Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg to his weekly shiurim. His vast Torah knowledge left a deep and lasting impression on me and on all who merited to learn from him. The Rav was a beacon of inspiration, teaching Torah to anyone who wished to listen. His dedication and love for Torah impacted the lives of thousands of *talmidim*. From this Torah giant, we learn that Torah study is not merely an intellectual exercise, but a way of life—a part of the Jewish soul.

May his legacy of Torah learning continue to inspire *Am Yisrael* for generations to come. ■

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**MONDAY
SEPT 1**

8:30 PM

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2 Radak St., Rechavia

6:00PM-9:00PM

ATID Midrasha Evening
(women in their 20's)

7:00PM-9:00PM

Dorot Choir Session with
Hadassah Jacobs

7:00PM-8:00PM

Elul Inspiration with Miriam
Tannenbaum (all ages)

8:15PM-10:00PM

NextGen Shiur with
Rebbetzin Tziporah
Heller-Gottlieb and Sushi
Workshop (20s-40s)

**TUESDAY
SEPT 2**

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Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

9:20 AM

Understanding Tefila

Rabbi Yossi Goldin

(will resume in this time slot on Sept. 9)

10:15 AM

Meaning in Mitzvot

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

11:25 AM

Understanding Tefila: **Rabbi Yossi**

Goldin (Rabbi Shmuel Goldin will resume Sept 9)

12:20 PM

Unpacking the Messages of Chazal

Rabbi Shai Finkelstein



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Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

10:00AM -2:00PM

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WEDNESDAY SEPT 3

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN RECHAVIA

@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,
24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

9:15AM

Holy Poetry
Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:20 AM

Contemporary Issues in Halacha
and Hashkafa
Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:25 AM

Wisdom of Rav Kook
Rabbi Goldscheider

12:30PM

Medieval Jewish History
Dr. Deborah Polster

THURSDAY SEPT 4

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Shai Agnon, 11
Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua Rabbi Ari Kahn
(Resumes Sept. 11)

10:30AM

Parshat HaShavua Rabbi Baruch Taub

11:20AM

AMTrailblazing the Text of TaNach
Rabbi Neil Winkler

12:20PM

Modern Masters Rabbi Sam Shor

8:00 PM

Halachic Controversies. (the Bais)
Rabbi Aschi Dick @ Bet Knesset
Ohel Yitzchak, Keren Hayesod Street
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Goldberg

MON. SEP. 29 | 7 TISHREI | 7 - 10 PM

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The Secret to Yom Hadin



Leah Feinberg
Reason and Resonance
of the Shofar Blast



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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
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Shoftim V'Shotrim Titein Lecha B'Chol Shaarecha- Judges and officers shall you place at all your gateways.

The **Netivot Shalom, the Slonimer Rebbe zy'a** offers a novel interpretation of our *pasuk*. Each *Rosh Chodesh* represents a new gateway, a new path to experience growth in our *Avodat HaShem*. So one might come to ask, what are the specific concepts and ideals we must work on during this month of *Elul*, during these days leading up to *Rosh HaShana*?

In *Likutei Torah, Rebbe Shneur Zalman M'Liadi, zy'a*, describes these days of *Elul* with the following parable. Throughout the year, a King sits in his royal palace and his many loyal subjects wait with trepidation for opportunities when the palace might be open for special occasions and celebrations, where the kingdom's constituents might catch a glimpse of or receive a brief word of encouragement from their beloved King. But during this month of *Elul*, the king departs from the palace and visits the fields. There in the fields, the King is accessible, clearly present, and approachable as he interacts and mingles among all those who are in the field.

The **Lubavitcher Rebbe zy'a**, elaborates further on this well known parable. Yes it may be true, that during these days of *Elul*, the *melech* is more clearly present among us, and may seem more accessible to us. However, the Rebbe asks the question, if the King shows up in the fields, do his constituents continue to plow and work the land, do they continue uninterrupted with their regular conduct, or do they pause, and recognize and acknowledge that indeed the King has graced us with his presence right here among us in the fields? During these days of *Elul*, do we simply carry on with the status quo, with business as usual, or do we see these days as an opportunity to greet and show honor to our King, even as he meets us on our proverbial home turf?

Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, the Bnai Yissascher zy'a, suggests that the words *b'chol shaarecha*- all your gateways. is alluding to the seven openings in a person's face- two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and our mouths. It is through these openings that most of our senses are manifest and activated. Our verse, explains the *Bnai Yissascher*, is teaching us the importance of safeguarding and protecting how we use each of our senses-what images we might look at, what type of speech we might choose to listen to, what foods we might smell and taste, how we use our capacity to speak-each of these senses can be used for great good, or can be misused for harm.

The **Chidushei HaRim, the first Gerrer Rebbe zy'a**, adds that the *pasuk* continues *Shoftim V'Shotrim Titein Lecha B'Chol Shaarecha-asher Hashem Elokecha Notein Lecha* - if

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one would only realize that all our capabilities and strength, all *bracha* that comes into our lives, is indeed a gift from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, then of course we will use those gifts to elevate ourselves, and to elevate our surroundings.

As we enter into this incredible month of *Elul*, may each of us be blessed to embody these beautiful ideas, and reach great heights in our *Avodat Hashem*.

Chodesh Tov! ■



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Shoftim: Systems Fail, Values Endure

Parshat Shoftim outlines the intricate framework of a just and civil society. It establishes five distinct channels of authority—Shoftim (who were more than judges in a court), Dayanim, Kohanim, Melachim, Nevi'im, and Shotrim. Each branch plays a unique role in upholding law and cultivating a society grounded in morality and ethics. Together, they provide a system of checks and balances, ensuring that power is not concentrated in a single arm of authority. For instance, the prophets' role in holding kings accountable is just one example of this broader system of checks and balances; unlike other cultures, where monarchs ruled unchecked, the Torah empowers Nevi'im to confront rulers morally. They spoke truth to power, often at great personal risk, exposing failings and holding leaders responsible for their actions.

Parshat Shoftim also provides systematic methods to cross-examine witnesses and arrive at truthful testimony. Courts are designed to be fair and unbiased, supported by a culture that rejects greed and corruption. The Sanhedrin holds centralized authority, and those who openly defy it are treated harshly as a *zaken mamre*.

Similarly, Nevi'im who deliver false prophecy face severe consequences. This was a serious ailment that undermined the First Beit Hamikdash, as false prophets offered comforting assurances that all was well despite the moral and spiritual decay around them, eroding accountability and dulling collective responsibility.

GUARDIANS OF SPIRIT

Additionally, to ensure the spiritual well-being of society, Parshat Shoftim repeats the mission of Kohanim and Levi'im: to dedicate their lives to the service of the Mikdash, even at great financial strain. These groups are to be supported by the general population. Every society requires spiritual vitality, embodied in a group devoted to sacred work and sustained by the community. Contemporary debates, such as the issue of non-Charedi conscription, can sometimes obscure this principle. No one questions that a society should sustain those who pursue spiritual endeavors; the discussion

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centers on the cost and whether a particular group may claim exclusive authority over this role. Regardless of these debates, the Torah clearly instructs us to support those committed to the spiritual welfare of the nation.

Parshat Shoftim also addresses the delicate situation of a negligent murderer. On one hand, he cannot be executed by a Beit Din, since he did not commit intentional murder. On the other hand, he cannot simply return to life as if nothing has happened. The elaborate system of Ir Miklat provides a solution: the negligent murderer is exiled, yet still able to lead a semi-normal life under controlled circumstances.

WAR AND MORALITY

Ethical integrity must guide our courts, prophets, and communal life, and it must shape how we prepare for and conduct war. Moral conscience and the sanctity of life extend to the battlefield as well as the city.

Parshat Shoftim exempts certain people from military service under specific circumstances. The Torah recognizes that a person's obligations to family and livelihood are deeply significant; it does not demand blind obedience to the state or army at the expense of foundational human and social bonds. Identity is shaped not only by collective action but also by care for home, family, and personal responsibilities. Of course, these exemptions apply only to optional wars—milchemet mitzvah or wars for pikuach nefesh require the participation of everyone, including, as the Gemara notes, the chatan who must leave his chupah.

After outlining how to prepare for war and mobilize an army, the Torah establishes moral parameters for warfare. Before drawing the sword, we must extend an offer of peace, allowing for the possibility of resolution without bloodshed.

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Shoftim reminds us that redemption is not merely geographical; returning to the Land of Israel is not enough. Cultivating ethical character and social order is as vital as building cities, fortifications, and farmland. The parsha provides a balanced and comprehensive roadmap for creating a just and properly functioning society.

WHEN THE SYSTEM FAILS

What happens when the system fails—when courts, forensic evidence, and even the authority of the king cannot resolve a crime? When a murder remains unsolved, the final section of the parsha, known as Eglah Arufah, addresses the issue. A murder has been committed, yet no culprit is identified. One might think the process comes to a halt, assuming that flaws in the system render action impossible.

Facing this predicament the Torah offers multiple layers of response, beginning with the preservation of human dignity. The person found in the field is likely marginalized, living on the fringes of society, and without family or community to seek him out. One might assume that for such an outlier, simply burying the

Mazal Tov to

Rabbi Chanoch and Esti Yeres

& family on the engagement

of their son

body would suffice. However, it is precisely at this moment—when human life is most at risk of being trivialized—that the Torah insists dignity must be honored.

When Shaul Hamelech wrestled with his mitzvah to eradicate Amalek, he invoked the example of Eglah Arufah as the epitome of moral conscience. If Hashem cares for a single anonymous corpse, how much more should He extend compassion to living Amalekites? While his reasoning was flawed, he correctly intuited the core lesson of Eglah Arufah: that the dignity of every human life must be preserved.

ETHICS MADE EXPLICIT

Additionally, the ceremony of Eglah Arufah ritualizes moral reflection, giving shape to our ethical consciousness and collective responsibility. While we are born with innate moral sensibilities, we often take them for granted, assuming morality is self-evident. Yet life's

pressures and distractions can cloud judgment and obscure ethical clarity. By articulating these responsibilities, Eglah Arufah makes explicit the moral obligations we hold—both individually and as a community.

NAVIGATING THE IMPERFECT

Eglah Arufah teaches that success is never absolute. Even in the face of failure, there are redeeming elements. No murderer is found, no punishment is meted out—yet ethics are upheld, and the dignity of human life is reaffirmed. It shows that even when the system falters, the values we enact and the care we preserve still matter profoundly. Our responses, even amid breakdowns, carry weight, sometimes more than our responses to large-scale triumphs.

What is true personally is also true nationally and socially. We may sense societal fractures and setbacks, that the ideals we aspire to and the unity we hope for remain out of reach. Yet the measure of a society lies not only in the gaps it confronts, but in how it responds—how it navigates failure, addresses breakdowns, and preserves ethical and moral integrity amid challenge. The story is never simply one of total success or complete collapse; significance lies in the care, thoughtfulness, and resilience with which we act.

Elul is a period of transcendence, a time to reclaim the ideal. It is also a time to recognize that the ideal rarely manifests fully in this world. Often, we must navigate life under less than perfect conditions, and Eglah Arufah teaches that our actions retain meaning even in incomplete circumstances. ■

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From Egypt to Eternity — The Double “אֲנֹכִי”

The opening words of this week's Haftarah ring with promise: אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא מְנַחֵמְךָ, *I, I am the One who comforts you.* The repetition of the word “אֲנֹכִי” is striking. It is not merely poetic emphasis, but rather a theologically rich expression that bridges the redemptive arc of Jewish history. This doubled “I” is a message of deep consolation: not just that Hashem will bring comfort, but that the very source of that comfort is He Himself, with no intermediary.

The Zohar teaches that the redemption from Egypt was not an isolated event, but the spiritual seed of the ultimate redemption. When Hashem spoke to Yaakov Avinu before he descended to Egypt, He promised: אֲנֹכִי אֶרֶד עִמָּךְ מִצְרָיִם, וְאֲנֹכִי אֶעֱלֶךָ I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up (Bereishit 46:4). This dual “אֲנֹכִי” — “I will descend” and “I will ascend” — echoes again in our Haftarah. Just as Hashem Himself descended with us into exile, so too He assures us that He will be the One to lift us up. The redemption will not come through a shaliach, an agent or emissary, but by the Divine Presence itself — a geulah that is direct and complete.

The Shemot Rabbah (3:4) adds a beautiful thread to this tapestry of meaning. It notes that the word “אֲנֹכִי” is used at two critical moments in redemptive history. When Israel went down to Egypt, Hashem said “אֲנֹכִי אֶרֶד עִמָּךְ” — and at the end of days, before the final redemption, the Navi Malachi declares: הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי שְׁלַח לָכֶם אֶת הַנָּבִי מַלְאֲכִי עֲלֵיָהּ הַנִּבְּיָא לְפָנַי בּוֹא יוֹם ה' הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא: *Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of G-D.*

There too, the verse opens with אֲנֹכִי. The word “אֲנֹכִי” thus becomes a spiritual bookend — the first marking the descent into exile, the second heralding our ascent into eternal geulah.

In this light, the comfort offered in our Haftarah takes on new meaning. Hashem is not merely offering consolation for past suffering. He is connecting the first redemption to the final one, assuring us that the process is unfolding as promised. Just as He descended into Egypt and redeemed us with signs and wonders, so too He will redeem us again — but this time in a way that is greater in scope and permanence, a redemption that will never be followed by exile.

אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא מְנַחֵמְךָ, *I, I am the One who comforts you.* I descended with you. I will ascend with you. I redeemed you before, and I will redeem you again. That is the promise. That is the comfort. ■

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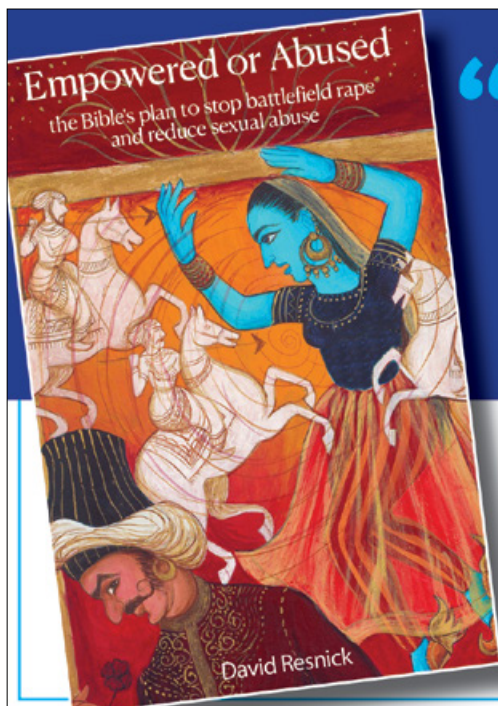
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Elul: Our Sanctuary in Time

Many of us are familiar with the well-known teaching that the word *Elul* is an acronym for *Ani L'dodi V'dodi Li*—"I am to my beloved, and my beloved is to me." But in fact, Chazal and the mefarshim point out at least **seven** other acronyms for the word *Elul*! This seems very perplexing! Why is there such an emphasis on finding acronyms for *Elul*? We don't do this for the other months of the year. And after all, *Elul* is not even a Hebrew word—it's Babylonian. So why invest so much energy in uncovering hidden layers of meaning within it?

Perhaps the answer can be understood through the following story:

A little boy once asked his father, "How big is Hashem?" The father replied, "As big as an airplane." The next day, the boy looked up at the sky and saw an airplane flying far above. It looked tiny. Months later, while waiting in the airport to board a flight, he stood right next to an airplane and was amazed at its size—it looked enormous! He turned to his father and asked, "So which is it? Is Hashem small, like the plane in the sky, or huge, like the one I see up close?" His father answered: "It depends how close you are to Him."

The closer we draw to Hashem, the greater He becomes in our eyes, and the more real

and present He feels in our lives. That is what *Elul* is all about. During this month, *HaMelech ba'sadeh*—"the King is in the field." Hashem is near, accessible, waiting for us to notice Him.

But how do we truly see Him? By training ourselves to look for Him everywhere. When my brother-in-law, a^h, was ill with cancer, his Rebbe, Rav Judah Mischel, gave him powerful guidance: "Always bring Hashem into the picture. Search for Him in the small things—even in the number of a hospital room." My brother-in-law and sister-in-law would pause in every room they entered, reflect on the gematria of the number, and search for its message. In doing so, they felt Hashem's presence with them—even in the hardest moments.

That is the essence of *Elul*. It is a time to strengthen our closeness with Hashem, to seek Him in every detail, and even in the very letters of a Babylonian name. The more we search for Him, the more we discover that He is right beside us—and the closer we become.

I want to focus today on a lesser-known acronym of the Arizal that ties into a theme from this week's parsha,—the *arei miklat* (cities of refuge). The Arizal notes a pasuk in *Shemot* whose words contain the letters of *Elul*:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ לֹא צָדָה, וְהָאֱלֹקִים אִנֶּה לִּידֹ, וְשִׁמְתִּי לָהּ מְקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר יָנוּס שָׂמָּה

"But one who did not lie in wait, and God brought it into his hand—I will designate for you a place to which he may flee" (Shemot 21:13).

At first glance, this seems puzzling. What could a pasuk about accidental killers possibly have to do with *Elul*? To answer this, we need

to look deeper into the concept of the *Ir Miklat*.

When Bnei Yisrael entered the Land, one of the very first systems they were commanded to establish was safe cities for those who killed unintentionally. Roads were widened, signs posted, and bridges built so the *shogeg* could reach refuge quickly. Why so much attention to this group? Because the *rotzeach b'shogeg* represents the *beinoni*—not a rasha, not a tzaddik, but someone in between. Not someone seeking to do wrong, but someone who lost focus. As Chazal explain, accidents happen when a person is careless, when priorities slip.

That's why the *arei miklat* were placed among the Leviim. The Leviim lived lives of singular focus on avodat Hashem—unencumbered by land, wealth, or career. Immersed in that environment, the *shogeg* could begin to rebuild his focus and elevate himself spiritually.

And now the connection becomes clear. The *Ir Miklat* is a sanctuary in space. *Elul* is a sanctuary in time. Most of us are not reshaim—we don't sin intentionally. Rather, we get distracted: we forget a bracha, we speak without thinking, we lose patience. Small lapses, but if repeated, they begin to shape our identity. *Elul* is our chance to break that cycle, to find refuge, to refocus.

From the very beginning, Hashem “prepared the road” for us, giving us Teshuva as the path back. As the *Shaarei Teshuva* explains, one of Hashem's greatest kindnesses was to create this escape route. During *Elul*, we can surround ourselves with our own “Leviim”—shiurim, cheshbon hanefesh, opportunities to re-anchor ourselves in what truly matters.

This month is our *Ir Miklat*. It is our safe space in time—a chance to step aside from distraction, realign with our goals, and come closer to Hashem. ■





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The Elegance of Simplicity

A verse in the *parashah* commands us, “You shall be wholehearted (*tamim*) with the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 18:13). There is perhaps no better way to illustrate what this means than with a Chassidic story about the founder of *Chassidut*, the Baal Shem Tov:

Once, at the Friday night *seudah* (meal), the Baal Shem Tov started to laugh after the fish course had been served. No one present could figure out the reason for this, and when he laughed again after the soup they were further puzzled. It happened a third time after the main course, and the Chassidim begged their rebbe for an explanation; the Baal Shem Tov promised that one would be forthcoming after Shabbat.

That *motza’ei Shabbat* (Saturday night) the Baal Shem Tov and his Chassidim set out for a certain village. They came to the house of Reb Shabsi Hopstein, an impoverished bookbinder, and the Baal Shem Tov said, “Tell us what happened on Shabbat!”

Replied the man, “Well it seems you already know that something happened; I will tell you what it was. This *erev Shabbat* (Shabbat eve) we had no food in the house. We had no wine, so

I thought we would make Kiddush on mead, but we had no mead either! I thought we could use *chalot* (bread), but we had none. In fact, we had no food at all! There was nothing I could do but go to the bet midrash to study; before I left, I cautioned my wife not to borrow from the neighbors.”

Of course, Reb Shabsi went on, his wife was despondent about the lack of necessities for Shabbat, but she was determined to do what she could in honor of the special day. Recalling



Rav Moshe Weinberger

that she had a beautiful dress left from her mother stored in the attic, she went upstairs to look for it. To her delight she realized that it had three gold buttons! Hurrying to the market, she sold them to buy food for Shabbat.

“When I returned from shul (synagogue) and saw the Shabbat table laden with food,” continued the simple bookbinder, “I thought my wife must have

broken her promise, but I decided not to say anything. Then she told me how *Hashem* had provided for us, by causing her to remember about her mother’s dress, so that she could prepare a beautiful Shabbat without having to accept any help from others. I was so overjoyed that I danced with my wife around the table! After the next course we danced again, and after the chicken once again.”

Said the Baal Shem Tov to the bookbinder, “When *you* danced, the angels in Heaven were so delighted, they danced as well! And when I saw this, I laughed... Tell me, Reb Shabsi, is

there anything you wish for?”

Sighing, Reb Shabsi told the tzaddik that after many years he and his wife were still childless. The Baal Shem Tov told him that they would have a son that year who would grow up to be a great tzaddik, and so it was. They named their son Yisrael, after the Baal Shem Tov, and he became famous as the Maggid of Kozhnitz.¹

This enchanting story possesses a certain elegance in its simplicity. Everything makes sense, everything works out. Both the style and the content of the tale reflect what Chassidic thought calls *emunah peshutah*, an unadulterated, wholesome, and steadfast faith in God. *Temimut* is a synonym for this same worldview rooted in the verse from *Parashat Shofetim*.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov was a famously vocal proponent of *temimut*: “The main purpose and perfection is only to serve God with absolute *temimut*, without any cleverness whatsoever.”² Accordingly, he urged simplicity in *avodat Hashem* (divine service): say your prayers with simple faith, jump at opportunities to do good, sing wordless melodies to lift your spirits. The sheer simplicity of it all is a necessary antidote to the overly complicated life we often find ourselves leading, and to the contortions of human reasoning. Needless complexity can be dispiriting, and overthinking things can trap us in the contorted corridors of our own minds. “Undoubtedly,” said Rebbe Nachman, “if a person has absolute faith and believes that God is attentive to them, listens to every word that they utter..., then with certainty that person would not be morose, apathetic, or sluggish...”³ A person filled with wholehearted faith, said the rebbe, tends to be optimistic. Anything can be handled or overcome with God at one’s side.

The nuisances and setbacks of the daily grind do not overwhelm the *tamim*, because he or she can lean on God as needed. This ultimately produces a state of tranquility—bliss even—that modern existence sorely needs.⁴

The dangers of logical reasoning to one’s faith were pointedly illustrated by a parable devised by the founder of the Ger dynasty known as the *Chidushei ha-Rim* (Rebbe Yitzchak Meir Alter):

A ruler once had an astronomically expensive horse and kept a close watch on it at all times. One day, he rode to another city and led it into the stable. At the stable entrance he posted a guard to make sure it wouldn’t be stolen. So that the guard would not doze off, the ruler advised him to busy himself in thought over various things. In the middle of the night, the ruler rose and went to the guard, finding him deep in thought.

“What are you thinking about?” the ruler asked.

“I am contemplating the question of where the wood goes when one hammers a nail into it.”

“Great,” said the ruler, “you’re doing good thinking.”

A few hours later the ruler approached the guard again.

4. Although *temimut* is a state of mind to be cultivated, Rebbe Nachman taught that some environments, like the Land of Israel, are more advantageous to this pursuit.

1. Barash, *Gut Voch*, 248–249.

2. *Likutei Moharan*, II:19.

3. *Likutei Moharan* I:155.



"What are you thinking about now?"

"I'm thinking about where the hole goes when you eat a bagel."

"Wonderful," said the ruler, and he went back to sleep.

In the early morning the ruler again found the guard lost in contemplation.

"What are you thinking about now?" the ruler asked him.

"I'm thinking about how it could be that with the stable closed and me sitting at the entrance with my thoughts, the horse could just disappear?"

When a person is caught up in their unnecessary ruminations, the evil inclination comes and steals their common sense.⁵

Temimut is so important that God commanded the very first Jew, Avraham, to pursue it: "Walk before me, and be *tamim*" (Genesis 17:1). According to Rashi on the verse, this means that Avraham should be wholehearted throughout the difficult tests God would give him. This is likely the highest degree of *temimut*, for it involves quieting the mind when one's faith and trust in the Almighty are being tested.

Rabbi Moshe Weinberger, the rabbi of Aish Kodesh Congregation in Woodmere, New York, shared the following story:

There was a Chassidic Jew in Bnei Brak who had lost everything during World War II and was spiritually broken. One day he came to pour his heart out to Rabbi Elazar Menachem Man Shach, who was not at all Chassidic, but who understood full well the pain of a broken Chassidic heart.

This Jew told what happened to him and said, "I cannot even pray anymore."

Rabbi Shach said, "What Chassidic group do you belong to?"

5. Greenberg, *Iturei Torah*, 5:123, s.v. תמים תהיה עם ה' אלהיך.

The man told him, and Rabbi Shach began to hum a niggun, a tune, from that group. The Chassid closed his eyes and hummed the niggun together with Rabbi Shach, until he started to cry.

Rabbi Shach said, "For a Chassid, it's not enough to sing a niggun. We have to dance." So Rabbi Shach stood up and danced with this Jew for a long time.

Afterwards, this Jew could pray again. Rabbi Shach did not give him a theological explanation about where God was during the Holocaust. He knew that this niggun was still inside that Jew, hidden underneath the pile of ashes from Auschwitz.

At the depth of one's heart and soul, the *temimut* is never extinguished.⁶

Chassidut teaches that the *temimut*, the *emunah peshutah*, is accessible to everyone. It is actually an innate divine gift, part of the organic bond we share with our Creator. Each and every soul yearns for its actual source of life. All that's left for us to do is to tap into it. ■

6. Weinberger, *Song of Teshuva*, 1:110.



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Must One Give His Apartment for Free?

לעילוי נשמת
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: A friend of mine splits his time between apartments he owns in two cities. He says that he does not charge rent to anyone who stays in the apartment he is not using because Pirkei Avot (5:10) says that one who subscribes to *sheli sheli* (mine is mine) employs *middat* (attribute of) *S'dom*. Is there a counterargument to allow charging rent?

Answer: We believe the counterargument is correct.

Pirkei Avot actually cites two opinions, and the main one is that if one realizes that "yours is yours," even if he treats "his as his," employs an "average approach." Furthermore, the *mishna* does not discuss specific actions but an approach to life. If someone is often forthcoming with his property, he is not following

"*sheli sheli*" even if he asks money to use some of his things. It is wonderful for your friend to emulate *Avraham Avinu* and be consistently generous, but failing to reach that level does not put one in the **opposite** camp.

Is one required to allow to borrow his property (for free)? In five contexts in *Shas*, at least one opinion prescribes forcing Reuven to cede to Shimon a financial right in a way that does not hurt Reuven and thereby avoid *middat S'dom*. None of those cases refers to lending one's property to someone else.

Consider the possibility that one is always required to let people use his things for free. Are the halachic discussions of rentals only for sinners? Realize that this would cancel large elements of healthy markets. What incentive would one who can afford more property than he needs have to buy and rent out property to one who can only afford a rental?

Undoubtedly, then, one who wants to be a landlord may buy property in order to rent it out. It is also obvious that if he bought it for secondary usage without a plan to rent but then decides that he wants rental income, he can turn it into rental property. The question is only if he does not plan to use it on any regular basis for rental, and the opportunity arises to allow someone to use it on a one-time basis. Here, there is logic to say that if he is not looking to use it for

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profit, why not be altruistic and give it for free?

The argument for no pay is bolstered by the *sugya* of *zeh neheneh v'zeh lo chaser* (Bava Kama 20a – 21a), regarding whether when Shimon already lived in Reuven's property without permission, he must pay for that usage. The two pertinent variables are whether Shimon was otherwise slated to rent living quarters, in which case he benefited from Reuven, and whether Reuven is in the practice of renting out his property, so that he loses if Shimon lived there for free. We rule that if Reuven did not lose, Shimon is exempt even if he benefitted (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 363:6).

Does the fact that Shimon does not have to pay, because Reuven did not lose, mean that Reuven must permit free usage if asked for permission in the first place? Tosafot (ibid. 20b) says that the person has a right to refuse use of his property; it is not considered *middat S'dom* (see Noda B'ye-huda II, CM 24). The Rama (CM 363:6) rules that as long as one **can** rent it out if he wants to, he may he charge for it. In contrast, if the possibility of rental does not exist, he cannot demand pay, as it would be considered *middat S'dom*.

Note also that the possibility of forcing sharing due to *middat S'dom* could exist only when lending causes no loss of any sort (see Pitchei Choshen, Geneva 8:(1)). Regarding use of one's apartment, there could be many factors of "loss." We will mention a few out of many possibilities: concern that Shimon's kids might damage it; Reuven may be inconvenienced making sure the place is tidy for Shimon; Reuven's privacy could be compromised. If Reuven can refuse, he can also say that he is willing,

but only if payment makes the danger/trouble worth his while.

While we covered only a small fraction of possible scenarios, it would be rare that someone with an extra apartment would be required to allow others to use it, or if he allowed it, forbidden to take money for the usage. ■

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From Helplessness to Action: Rethinking the Single Journey

לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

Being single when you didn't choose to be comes with inevitable challenges. It's not only about being without a partner; it's about the constant waiting, the sense that your life depends on opportunities that may or may not come your way.

In the world of dating, it's easy to feel powerless. So much depends on others who may or may not think of you. Sometimes the suggestions that do arrive are so far from what you're truly looking for that they leave you drained, as if all the wind has been knocked out of your sails. Other times, no suggestions come at all. The lack of movement is exhausting and as time passes, the feeling of despair grows stronger and stronger.

But there's another way. I don't share this as a magic solution, only as something that has personally helped me when I felt stuck. Instead of waiting passively, I chose to step into the world of action. I discovered that there are countless opportunities to volunteer and get involved in matchmaking and community building.

It's not a field reserved only for married couples or professional matchmakers but quite the opposite; there is great value in singles helping one another. By joining organizations like Shagririm Balev ("Ambassadors at Heart"), I entered a community of people who actively work to connect others. As an ambassador, you don't just sit on the sidelines; you join events, meet other volunteers, and feel part of a movement that is both purposeful and life-giving.

And here's the beautiful thing, while you're helping others, you may just find your own second half. In this space, opportunities to

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connect are natural. If someone

From Helplessness to Action: Rethinking the Single Journey

interests you, you have a built-in way to create an introduction. The sense of helplessness begins to lift when you realize you are not just waiting for your own personal geulah you are also actively helping to bring someone else closer to theirs.

I believe many singles feel helpless in this journey. But maybe it's time to shift that mindset. Instead of fearing what people might say or waiting endlessly for something to happen, why not take the initiative? If you're longing for your own breakthrough, try creating one for a friend. In helping others move closer to their joy, you may find that your own path opens too. ■



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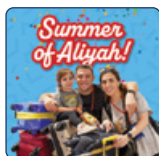
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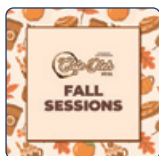


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Trauma Returning From Battle

In Parashat Shoftim, we first encounter the phrase “*ki teitzei lamilchama*” –when you go out to war (20:6). Several verses later, the Torah again issues rulings related to waging a war: “when you approach a town to attack it...” (20:10). A few *pesukim* after that, the Torah speaks of a situation “When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it...” (20:19). Next week’s parasha begins with the phrase “*ki teizei lamilchama*” (21:10).

While the insights from these passages that focus on waging war remain profoundly relevant to the ongoing war, I want to focus on one aspect of the post-combat return from the battlefield. Generally speaking, the returning soldiers might fit into one of three psychological trajectories. One trajectory is that of the resilient or quick-recovering soldier. He may not experience a significant decline in his psychological state, and if he does, his recovery is quick and robust. A second group includes the soldier who is clearly struggling with his post-combat adjustment to regular life, and he is not showing signs of recovery. For such a person, the post-combat disorientation spills into work, close relationships, and daily routines. Loved ones often take on a caregiving role. For such a soldier, there are typically support

systems available, imperfect as these systems can be, and many soldiers in this category do receive substantial support over time.

The soldier in the third group, which I refer to as “the blender,” is less visible, but I suspect this group is quite large. He functions well enough to manage, at least at the outset, but his trajectory is not one of full recovery. This soldier may have turned down psychological support at the beginning because it was not necessary, but after several months, his progress plateaus or regresses. He may be uncomfortable reaching out for support at this later point and he may not even know exactly what he would be trying to address. He also finds that public support is declining for people in his situation, partially because the systems were not designed for someone in his middle-ground position. He has a job, but he is not as productive as he used to be; his marriage is still technically intact and he spends time with his children, but he and his wife are not feeling connected to one another. He looks like he is functioning, but he experiences internal turmoil.

The blending-in soldier may seek relief in ways that are not conspicuously destructive, but his coping strategies do not promote recovery and may lead to increased feelings of disconnection. He may drink or smoke more often, may spend more time scrolling on his phone, or avoid time with friends or family. External events like new call-ups for reserves or news of a fellow soldier’s injury can be destabilizing.

This soldier’s spouse and loved ones also may feel frustrated and lost. Are they supposed to push the soldier to reduce or eliminate these

coping strategies? And if so, what happens when the soldier is not receptive to this encouragement? Or, alternatively, is his wife supposed to be hands-off and be patient as her husband seems bogged down—would this be considered help or neglect?

On a communal level, we also face a variety of challenges in supporting this soldier. Activating more psychotherapists does not really help address the issue, as the struggle of this group typically is not related to an inability to access mental health professions. The funding and services that might be the most useful—like covering some bills or childcare costs during the recovery time, or ensuring job security as they recover finding—are very complicated to implement, especially as public attention dissipates.

While it may not be possible to solve all the challenges faced by the “blenders,” we might take a lesson from the *eglah arufa* where the elders must testify that they did not abandon the traveler. The “blenders” among our returning soldiers are precisely such figures. Their suffering is easy to overlook because it is muted, overshadowed by more obvious crises. Yet the Torah demands we notice and try to take steps to ease their burdens. ■

Rabbi Dr. Ethan Eisen is a licensed clinical psychologist with specialty in helping those with combat trauma.

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Parashat Shoftim presents judges and kings as the decision-making authorities for the Jewish nation. Judges were chosen by G-d, while Kings were supreme, hereditary rulers emanating from the tribe of Yehuda. A judge's authority was focused on judicial tasks and certain military issues, whereas the king's position defined a more centralized, permanent authority over the entire country. The transition from judges to kings, initiated by the people's request for a king like other nations, marked a shift from G-d as the direct ruler to a man-centered system.

As kings assumed their positions in a hereditary manner, many followed their wants and their needs rather than the laws and commandments as set down in the Torah. Rabbi Yaakov Meidan writes that the Jews were given three Mitzvot when they entered the land, namely, to destroy Amalek, to build a Temple for sacrifice and prayer, and to appoint a king. Rav Meidan argues that the kings were often deficient in their G-d fearing behavior, but their influence on the people was astounding. Accordingly, when the country of Israel was split into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel, the unity of "Am Yisrael" was split into two, accompanied by many battles with thousands being killed.

In Shmuel 1, G-d was reluctant to give Israel a king because their request to be like other nations was a rejection of Him as their true king and an expression of misplaced trust in worldly power. G-d warned Shmuel that a king would be oppressive and that the people would

eventually regret their choice, but He ultimately granted their demand, allowing them free will, albeit with serious consequences.

Yet, the Ramban also lists a positive side for a country led by a king. Several times throughout the Torah, the need for Israel to be ruled by kings is expressed. This is particularly seen in 6 : 17 (בראשית 6 : 17) (where Abraham, Issac, and Jacob are told that their descendants will serve as kings of Israel. The perceived advantages for ancient Israel in having a human king included a person to provide guidance and protection, a way to establish national unity and identity like other nations, a more efficient system for warfare and leadership, and a leader who could serve as both a ruler and, when needed, as a judge for the people of Israel (1 Samuel 8).

Moreover, according to the Ramban, the institution of a king is not merely a practical or political choice but a mitzvah (commandment) to act per God's will and covenant. According to him, the king serves as the head of the nation, responsible for implementing Jewish law and ensuring the welfare of the people within the land of Israel proper. And, finally, unlike other opinions that see the command to establish royalty in Israel as conditional and temporary, the Ramban argues that the mandate for a king is a universal command for all generations, not limited to the original conquest or specific individuals. ■

Dr. Meni Koslowsky is a Professor in the department of Psychology at Ariel University and Bar-Ilan University (emeritus).

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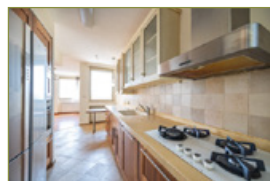
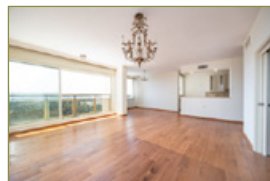


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תעשה לא תסור מן הדבר אשר יגידו לך ימין ושמאל”

Rashi: Even if you are told right is left and left is right.

The Ramban explains that this is a very important mitzvah. Our Torah is written by hand, and therefore if we don't listen to our rabbinic authorities there will be no rules and the Torah will fall apart.

Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. Everyone shines a special and different light on every situation in life. If so, it seems like an impossible task to create unity between people.

Rashi and the Ramban explain that the Torah does not try to take away your opinion. Rather, we are asked to trust — even if our opinion is the exact opposite. In order to create a united nation, we must trust each other and our leaders, even if we disagree with them.

We must hold ourselves and our leaders to a standard where we can be trusted, where it is clear that we truly mean well and do not want to harm the person standing next to us. When we make decisions that affect our nation, we must treat them as if we were deciding critical halachot. Our leaders must look at the reality of each moment and treat it as a holy, Torah-based text.

Shabbat Shalom ■



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OPENING OUR HEARTS IN ELUL

I want to begin this Dvar Torah by giving a warm welcome to the new olim who arrived just last week on the charter flight, and to all the olim who have come to Israel this summer. Seven years ago, baruch Hashem, my family and I also had the privilege of making aliyah, and every year we are so excited to see new families and individuals join us. We know it's no small thing to leave everything behind and start a new life here in Israel, and we want to say to you: welcome home.

This week also marks the beginning of Chodesh Elul, a time when we prepare ourselves spiritually for the Yamim Nora'im. It's a month to look inward and ask: How can I become my

best self? How can I strengthen my connection to Hashem and to others?

One answer comes right at the beginning of this week's parsha, Shoftim:

“צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדֹּף לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה וַיִּרְשֶׁת אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ” (דברים ט"ז, כ')

“Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and inherit the land that Hashem your God is giving you.”

Why does the Torah repeat the word “justice” twice?

The Rambam explains that it's not only the responsibility of judges to rule fairly — every citizen must actively seek out truth and integrity, choosing the best leaders and ensuring our society is built on honesty and respect.

The Midrash Tanchuma adds: - צדק צדק “one “justice” refers to judgment, but the second “justice” refers to compromise. Real justice is not only about punishment or strict rules, but about making peace, finding unity, and helping people live together in harmony.

And Rashi notes something powerful: the pursuit of justice is itself what allows us to stay in Eretz Yisrael. A society of fairness, respect, and peace is the very foundation that holds us here.

That's especially true when it comes to welcoming new olim. It is a mitzvah to greet them warmly, to make sure they feel part of Am Yisrael, and to help them settle in their new home. By showing love, unity, and support, we are not just being kind — we are literally fulfilling the Torah's command to “pursue justice” and to secure our future in this land.

As we begin Elul, may we all succeed in pursuing true צדק — by making peace, by supporting one another, and by welcoming every new oleh with open arms. And in this merit, may we all be written and sealed for a year of blessing, growth, and unity. ■



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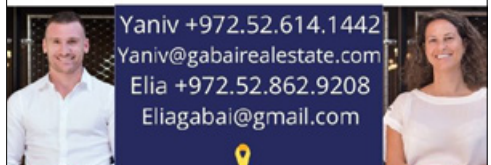
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