

# Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1629

SEPT. 13<sup>TH</sup> 2025 • כ' אלול תשפ"ה

פרשת כי תבוא  
PARSHAT KI TAVO

PIRKEI AVOT 3 - 4



וְהָיָה כִּי־תָבֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ דְּבָרִים כִּ"ו:א'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT KI TAVO ZMANIM

CANDLES 6:12 PM • EARLY 5:31 PM • HAVDALA 7:24 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:04 PM



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**Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary**

Rabbi Reuven Tradburks  
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**Lost and Found**

Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman  
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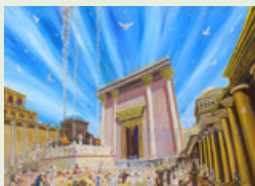


We continue to pray for the safe return of all of the hostages.

**DAY 705**

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS

 The Ashkenazi custom is to begin to recite Selichot this Motzaei Shabbat



### COVER IMAGE from Joshua Wiseman

I made aliya in 1990 (when I was 19). I live in Yerushalayim (Schunat Shomrei Emunim). The painting was made to make one feel like he himself is actually present in the Azarah (main courtyard of the Temple). The painting attempts to show almost all of the numerous types of sacrifices loyal to the halacha.

# CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



## OTHER Z'MANIM



### JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat  
Sept 10 - 20 / 17 - 27 Elul**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	<b>5:29-5:35</b>
Sunrise	<b>6:20-6:26</b>
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	<b>9:28-9:29</b>
Magen Avraham	<b>8:51-8:52</b>
Sof Zman Tefila	<b>10:30</b>
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	<b>12:35-12:32</b>
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	<b>1:07-1:02</b>
Plag Mincha	<b>5:33-5:21</b>
Sunset (Including Elevation)	<b>6:55-6:42</b>



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	KI TAVO			NITZAVIM		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	<b>6:12</b>	5:31	<b>7:24</b>	6:03	5:23	7:15
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	<b>6:31</b>	5:33	<b>7:27</b>	6:22	5:26	7:17
Beit Shemesh/RBS	<b>6:32</b>	5:32	<b>7:25</b>	6:22	5:24	7:16
Gush Etzion	<b>6:29</b>	5:31	<b>7:25</b>	6:19	5:23	7:15
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	<b>6:30</b>	5:32	<b>7:26</b>	6:21	5:25	7:17
Modiin/Chashmonaim	<b>6:29</b>	5:32	<b>7:25</b>	6:20	5:24	7:16
Netanya	<b>6:30</b>	5:33	<b>7:26</b>	6:21	5:25	7:17
Be'er Sheva	<b>6:30</b>	5:32	<b>7:26</b>	6:21	5:25	7:16
Rehovot	<b>6:30</b>	5:33	<b>7:26</b>	6:21	5:25	7:17
Petach Tikva	<b>6:12</b>	5:32	<b>7:26</b>	6:03	5:25	7:16
Ginot Shomron	<b>6:29</b>	5:32	<b>7:25</b>	6:20	5:24	7:16
Haifa / Zichron	<b>6:20</b>	5:32	<b>7:26</b>	6:10	5:24	7:17
Gush Shiloh	<b>6:28</b>	5:31	<b>7:24</b>	6:19	5:23	7:15
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	<b>6:30</b>	5:33	<b>7:26</b>	6:21	5:25	7:17
Givat Zeev	<b>6:33</b>	5:31	<b>7:25</b>	6:23	5:23	7:15
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	<b>6:29</b>	5:31	<b>7:25</b>	6:20	5:24	7:15
Ashkelon	<b>6:31</b>	5:34	<b>7:27</b>	6:22	5:26	7:18
Yad Binyamin	<b>6:30</b>	5:33	<b>7:26</b>	6:21	5:25	7:17
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	<b>6:22</b>	5:30	<b>7:24</b>	6:12	5:22	7:15
Golan	<b>6:27</b>	5:30	<b>7:24</b>	6:18	5:22	7:14
Nahariya/Maolot	<b>6:29</b>	5:32	<b>7:26</b>	6:19	5:24	7:16
Afula	<b>6:28</b>	5:31	<b>7:25</b>	6:19	5:23	7:15

**Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Ki Tavo 8:04 PM • Nitzavim 7:55 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: Horayos 12**



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## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL  
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The month of Elul in Israel has become synonymous with education. Throughout the country, schools, *yeshivot*, and *midrashot* have all started up during this month, starting the school-year cycle all over again after a long summer break. In fact, my family hit a major milestone with our oldest grandson starting first grade just a week ago, which made us so proud.

Over the years, people have asked me for my thoughts on how much of the responsibility of *chinuch* goes to the parents, and how much is upon the schools, the youth groups, and so on. I always respond that in an ideal world, over 90% *should be* on the parents and the family as a whole. It should only be a bit more that goes to the educational system in which the parents choose to send their child. It is clear to me that our children really get their love for Torah and Yiddishkeit, their desire to work hard, their desire to excel in life, and so on, only when they see their family - their parents, their grandparents, their aunts, uncles, and siblings - behaving in a way that demonstrates those values.

When a child sees his parents wake up every morning early to go to work, happy about what they do, and they see them come home in the evening and take care of them in such a loving and cooperative way, in doing homework with them, in making supper, and maintaining a functioning house, then that child grows up in an environment where they're able to see and appreciate these good values. When they see their father or mother

going to *shiurim*, picking up a book of Torah ideas instead of a newspaper on Shabbat, when they do *chessed* in the community, and are kind to others in the street, these are moments that that children pick up on as the determining moments that shape them.

This past Shabbat we celebrated the last bar mitzvah in our family. We have, *baruch Hashem*, seven sons and two daughters, and this was the bar mitzvah of our youngest son, Mordechai Tzemach. Now, after seven bar mitzvahs (and one bat mitzvah), I am able to reflect on what this celebration really means and what makes this so significant for them. One part is the *nachat* we have as parents that our children are continuing in our way. When we see that the *chinuch* moments we have imparted find their mark in our children and in our grandchildren and nieces and nephews, that is such a source of pride for us.

Another part is appreciating those who we have appointed to help guide the next generation with us. Our first three bar mitzvah boys learned with such a phenomenal parsha reading teacher, Rabbi Dan Kochav, and the rest with a close neighborhood friend. That they put their heart and soul into our children and really prepared them in such a beautiful way, we have to give so much thanks for that.

I saw throughout the year how much time Mordechai Tzemach put into getting the reading of the parsha just right. I would say he must have read the parsha with the trop over a hundred times in order to prepare for his Bar Mitzvah. And the practice paid off. *Baruch*



*Hashem*, he read beautifully on Shabbat. But for Mordechai, this went beyond a mere performance. Not only did he read the parsha at the early Shabbat minyan which we regularly attend, at 6:45am, but we have a neighbor who is handicapped, so he went afterward to the neighbor's minyan to read again, in order to ensure that he had somebody reading for him this Shabbat. This is how we knew that the values of his family and his community have been imparted so well to him, that he has such an amazing sensitivity to those who he can help.

He said something over Shabbat that was so powerful to me, and it was about a cake. I am lucky enough to be married to a very talented and artistic woman, who discovered she has the ability to make amazing-looking cakes with fondant. For every bar mitzvah, she has created these beautiful decorated cakes fitting the theme of the parsha. For one of our sons, whose bar mitzvah parsha was Va'etchanan, she depicted Moshe Rabbeinu begging to go into the Land of Israel. For another, for Parshat Bamidbar, she presented the twelve tribes on a cake. For Mordechai, in honor of Parshat Ki Teitzei, as the parsha with the most mitzvot in the Torah, my wife made the most incredible cake with tremendous detail in which she was able to show 25 different mitzvot from the parsha on the cake!

On Shabbat, after the presentation of the cake, Mordechai said, "*Abba*, you know I have read the parsha so many times, maybe over a hundred times. But it was only when I looked at that cake that it was all brought together." He told me that he saw the amount of time for weeks that his mother took off work in order to prepare for the bar mitzvah, including endless hours into preparing the cake. When



he then saw all the mitzvot on the cake, it represented for him all the love and passion that we as the Jewish people should have for the incredible mitzvot that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gave us and which we continue to keep for thousands of years afterwards. These are mitzvot that have changed the world and have brought values and morality to the world. These mitzvot are the foundation for who we are as a nation and as a light unto all the nations of the world. The cake showed my son what is truly important in life, not just what was on it, but also the work of the woman that made it, his mother, with such care.

May we all model this passion and excitement for Hashem's mitzvot to our children, our neighbors' children, our grandchildren, our nieces and nephews, and all those who look up to us. With that, they will follow in our footsteps and themselves be passionate for the Jewish people and our mission in the world.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman

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## FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

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# We Are All Family

It is your business.

We are appropriately cautious about becoming overly involved in the lives of others, but we can also mistakenly remain distant. Too much can be intrusive and meddlesome, and too little can be apathetic and uncaring. How do we thread the needle and do it just right? While there are no easy and uniform answers, this critical question

deserves serious consideration.

We can gain insight from the parshiyot that we read this week and next, where we find that as Moshe winds down his communications to Klal Yisrael, he focuses on the extent of our responsibility to mind other people's business. In Ki Tavo (Devarim 27:11-26), Moshe lists the curses which we were commanded to formally declare upon entry to Eretz Yisrael, all of which focus on private and secret failures (see Rashbam and Chizkuni 27:15). Then again in Nitzavim (29:17), Moshe references the hidden thoughts of the individual as an apparent cause for tragedy for the masses and concludes (29:28) with the memorable formulation, *hanistarot laHashem Elokeinu*, hidden matters belong with G-d while the overt are our responsibility.

Specifically then, as we were preparing to leave the desert for Eretz Yisrael, that our responsibility for each other's hidden issues was elevated. The Talmud even suggests that we accepted that responsibility – *areivut* – precisely as we were crossing through the Jordan river into Israel (see Sanhedrin 43b, Yerushalmi Sotah 7:5). Indeed, during our very first act of conquest in Eretz Yisrael, the entire Jewish people were held collectively accountable for the crime of one man – Achan – who secretly partook of the consecrated spoils of Jericho.

What changed so fundamentally when we entered the land? Why is it specifically then that it became our business to mind other people's business?

*In memory of*

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Robert & Suzanne Segal**

**Grandfather & great-grandfather**

*He was a beautiful human being  
who brought love & joy to us all*



In the desert, there was no need for charity. Our food fell from the heavens, our clothing stayed fresh and usable, and we were sheltered by the divine clouds representing G-d, the *ananei hakavod*. G-d took care of each of us. Hashem, completely aware of the issues on our minds and our hearts and Who knows our every need, addressed those issues and fulfilled those needs. But that situation would end when we left those desert clouds, crossed the Jordan river, and landed on earth; when we needed to use our own hands to build homes and till the soil to produce our bread from the ground, wearing out our clothing in the process.

As G-d stepped back, we needed to step forward, not only for ourselves but for each other. In the words of Rav Yisrael Salanter, when it comes to the needs of others we must not rely on G-d.

And yet, we are at a serious handicap. G-d knows the innermost thoughts of each of us and the intimate details of our lives. He can help. How can we humans assume responsibility for others when we are unaware of their *nistarot*, their private material needs and spiritual and emotional challenges?

It is for this reason that Pirkei Avot taught us to welcome others into our homes as family. Family members must respect each other's boundaries, but they always know how we are really doing as they can gauge the level of brightness in our eyes and are attuned to the energy in our voices. Indeed, the Talmud (Sanhedrin 44a) notes that we can be certain that Achan's family knew of his hidden crime and were his inner circle of awareness and responsibility for his spiritual wellbeing.

We as a community must realize that not

everyone lives with family and not everyone will have those immediately able to be all-knowing, to realize when things are going well for them or when they are struggling. That is why our prophets (Yeshayahu 58:7) and sages (Avot 1:5) guided us to not just feed the hungry but make them part of our households, making our homes into places where they feel like members of the family. This approach extends to anyone who does not have the blessing of a whole and supportive family to come home to, as we can make them feel valued and at home in our homes, extending the boundaries of our families to let others in. We must step forward, open our doors and our hearts, always respectful of boundaries yet open and willing to be part of that circle of family for those within our communities who are hidden in plain sight.

As we approach the Yom Tov season of umpteen festive meals, we need to recognize that this period is dreaded by many in our community – the divorced, widowed, unmarried, and orphaned – without a family table of their own. **How mutually rewarding would it be for us to make them part of ours**, welcoming them for a meal or for many, **having them feel as part of our family and that our home is in some measure theirs.** ■



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# OU... BEYOND KASHRUT

## Community Beit Midrash

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The Community Beit Midrash shiurim span a wide range of topics including Jewish philosophy, Tanach, halacha, and more and are designed to inspire learning, strengthen community bonds, and deepen participants' connection to the OU Israel family.

The response has been extraordinary, with attendance in many shiurim doubling and even quadrupling. We invite you to join us, explore inspiring Torah learning in your neighborhood, and become part of the growing OU Israel Community Beit Midrash.

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



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### PARSHAT KI TAVO

Parshat Ki Tavo begins the conclusion of our Torah. The book of Devarim consists of Moshe's long speech at the end of his life. His speech is a magnum opus of past, present and future. He began with a review of our history, including successes and failures and their lessons for the impending settling of the Land. He then outlined what a Jewish society shall look like; 170 mitzvot including ethical monotheism in all its color, nation building of judiciary, legislature and executive and the high ethical calling in the life of the individuals.

Parshat Ki Tavo looks to the future. It transitions from the mitzvah laden parshiot; it has but 6 mitzvot. It is the beginning of the conclusion of Moshe's charge to the people. Ki Tavo is followed by 4 very short parshiot, which combined would be a long parsha. Meaning, we are barely a parsha length from the end of the Torah following Ki Tavo. This is the end of our Torah. And this section deals not with the present task at hand, the impending settling of the Land. But rather, it gazes into the future, the distant future, the exile that follows the successful settlement of the Land.



#### 1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 26:1-11)

When settled in the Land, bring your first fruits as an offering. When offered, declare the following: My

forefathers descended to Egypt, were enslaved, called out and You redeemed them with a strong arm, bringing them to this Land of milk and honey. And I am acknowledging that I have benefitted from all that, rejoicing in all the good I have been given.

This mitzvah of bikkurim, of first fruits, is a rich one. But besides its own beauty, lies its significance in the narrative of Devarim. In bikkurim, the successful farmer gives a full-throated expression of how fortunate he is to be where he is. He stands on the shoulders of our history. Egypt, redemption, the Land and now little me, enjoying a bounty in the Land. That is a beautiful mitzvah of gratitude and appreciation.

But it is also foreshadowing. Moshe is preparing for the horrible predictions of the curses at the end of this parsha. And providing a foil, a contrast. To avoid that, do this. Know, my people, Moshe is saying, know that this is the way you should live. Appreciative, aware, a sense of history, placing G-d at the core of your success. And rejoicing in the presence of G-d. This is a foil to the horrible curses Moshe will outline should this ideal not be realized. Here is the way it should be. And could be.



#### 2ND ALIYA (26:12-15)

In the 3rd year, declare that all tithes have been given: I have given the holy tithes as well as those to the Levi and the needy. I have done all that I have been commanded to do. Gaze down from Your holy place in the heavens and bless us in this Land



flowing with milk and honey.

This too is a foil to the upcoming curses. This is the way to live to avoid those curses. The first aliya was the way to live in relationship to G-d. This mitzvah is the way to live in relationship to man. In my success, my bounty in the Land, I ascribe my success to my Creator. And in my success, I share with others, give the proper tithes. These are the two pillars of Jewish society: monotheism and ethics.



### 3RD ALIYA (26:16-19)

Today G-d is commanding you to keep His laws with all your heart. You declare today that He will be your G-d and you will keep His laws. And He declares that you will be a treasured nation, to elevate you, to be a glorious and holy people.

A brief statement but a powerful one. We are both committed: we to Him, He to us. This is our noble calling. The entire Torah has been this story; we are His people, He is our G-d.



### 4TH ALIYA (27:1-10)

Moshe with the elders commanded the people: upon entering the Land, establish a monument of stones with this entire Torah written upon it. Build an altar in front of it, offer offerings and rejoice before your G-d. Moshe, the Kohanim and the Leviim spoke: know that today you are G-d's people.

Monuments, stone, permanence. What do nations express by the monuments they make? Generals on horseback. Arches of triumph. Busts of Emperors. In a word, power.

What do we etch in stone in our entry to the Land? The Torah.

And the word Hayom, today, occurs 3 times in just 4 verses in the previous aliya and 3

times in just 10 verses in this aliya. Rashi comments that the mitzvot should feel to us as if they were given to us today; fresh, exciting, relevant. But the other side of this reciprocal relationship should also be fresh daily; that we should feel daily, all the time, that G-d views us as a treasured nation. The mitzvot should be fresh; but so too, the majesty of our station should be fresh daily as well.



### 5TH ALIYA (27:11-28:6)

Moshe commanded the people: 6 tribes shall be on Har Gerizim, 6 on Har Eval. The Leviim shall be between the mountains, pronouncing the following, affirmed with Amen by the people. Cursed is the one who: makes idols in private, curses parents, alters the land demarcations with his neighbor, deceives the blind, manipulates justice of the weak, commits incest, strikes another privately, takes a bribe resulting in corporal punishment, or fails to keep the Torah. **The Blessings and Curses: If you keep the mitzvot**, you will be a glorious nation. You will be blessed with children, with produce, and flocks.

There is a similarity in the list of those who are cursed; they are all cursed for things done in private. The core of our religious life is our personal, private relationship with G-d. It is the things done in private that truly convey our allegiance. When no one is looking. And this is a necessary preamble for the upcoming blessings and curses. For we will never truly be in a position to assess the fullness of the righteousness or failing of our people, for who can see into the hearts of human beings.



### 6TH ALIYA (28:7-69)

You will be blessed with military success, with an abundance of G-d's treasury, and excelling over others.

**But if you do not do the mitzvot:** you will be cursed. In offspring, produce, flocks, illness. Enemies will chase you. You will be carrion in the field. Illness, blindness, dementia, wandering without direction. You will not enjoy the fruits of your labor; they will be snatched from you. This will all drive you mad. You will be carried off to other nations, serving idols there. Your efforts there will not be successful. You will sink, other nations rise. You will be derided as one who abandoned G-d, refusing to serve Him in your success. All will disintegrate; your family, your social structure, those dear to you. Illnesses will decimate you. In lieu of being as the stars of the heavens, you will be miniscule. You will be thrown around the world, serving idols, finding no solace, fearful day and night. You will even end up back in Egypt, the place you were to never return. This is the covenant of the plains of Moav.

This aliya is the aliya of the curses; what will occur due to our abandonment of G-d and of mitzvot. And it is long; at 63 verses, one of the longest in the entire Torah. There are a lot of curses.

In this, Moshe moves well beyond the present. He has been preoccupied, understandably, with what is necessary to build the Jewish nation successfully. He has described what we can anticipate in life in the Land; its challenges, like idol worship, and its glory, its bounty.

Now, he peers into the distant future. There will be a time of exile. I know, we haven't even entered the Land, but there will be a time when we will lose this Land. We will lack gratitude, lack allegiance and be exiled. Our experience in exile will be horrible; illness, failure, insecurity, total societal breakdown.

And how does it all end? Uh, well, it doesn't. There is no happy ending. We are left hanging; wandering, suffering, decimated. Oh, but that is this parsha. In the most beautiful of parshiot of the Torah, Moshe returns to pick up the future next week, the parsha of Teshuva. But ending this description of the curses with no conclusion is powerfully poetic, leaving us with a feeling of terrible dread.

Now, we have had a parsha of blessings and curses before, in Parshat Bechukotai at the end of Vayikra. Perhaps this warning of our vulnerability is repeated here, specifically following the description of our national institutions of Kings, Judges, military. Back in Vayikra the theme was holiness. You must live a life of holiness in the holy Land.

But, maybe the description of national institutions invites hubris. We are invincible, what with our King and army. We may not be so good at being holy but our army will make us invincible. So, Moshe repeats the warning. As if to say: we live in this rough and tumble world, so build national institutions because you need to govern and protect yourself.

But. No hubris. The best army in the world will not save you if you stray from G-d. You need a good army. But you also need to be good people. Our success in our Land depends on our awareness of our G-d and our loyalty to Him. And a good army.



#### 7TH ALIYA (29:1-8)

Moshe called the people and spoke: You saw all the wonders of Egypt, but it has taken to this day to understand its meaning. He guided you, defeated nations, and gave you their lands. So keep this covenant, to live insightfully.

This deceiving short aliya has a surprising and profound brief statement. "It has taken

until today to understand our history". We shall never allow ourselves to be facile, to be presumptuous, to feel we understand history and G-d's ways. It took those in the desert 40 years to fully appreciate their history, the dynamic of G-d in their history. Understanding His ways is no easy matter.

## HAFTORAH YESHAYAHU 60:1-22

This week's *haftorah* is the sixth of a series of seven "*Haftarot* of Consolation." In exhilarating terms the navi describes what will unfold during the Redemption. Beginning with the resurrection of the dead and the ingathering of the exiles, continuing with the joy and abundance the Jewish people will then experience. The navi also spotlights the gifts that will be brought to G-d from all of the nations of the world.

In the end, the Jewish nation will no longer experience the hatred of the other nations, be despised and derided. The day will come when there will no longer be violence nor mourning, Hashem will shine His eternal light on His beloved people. ■



### STATS

50<sup>th</sup> of the 54 sedras; 7<sup>th</sup> of the 11 in Devarim.  
Written on 233 lines (rank: 13<sup>th</sup>).  
21 Parshiyot; 5 open, 16 closed.  
122 pesukim - rank: 17 (2<sup>nd</sup> in Devarim).  
1747 words - rank: 16 (2<sup>nd</sup> in Devarim).  
6811 letters - rank: 15 (4<sup>th</sup> in Devarim).  
Pesukim are longer than average for the Torah, but short for Devarim.



### MITZVOT

6 of the 613; 3 pos. and 3 prohibitions.

## A SHORT VORT

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

וְהָיָה בְּיוֹם אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲבְרוּ אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן.....וְהִקְמַתְּ לָךְ אֲבָנִים גְּדוֹלוֹת.....וְכָתַבְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶן אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה (כז:ב,ג)  
"And it shall be on the day when you shall pass over the Jordan...you shall set up for yourself great stones....and you shall write upon them all the words of this Torah" (27:2,3)

Why the need to set up these great stones immediately upon entering the Land and transcribe the Torah words on them, and not at a later point?

The Abarbanel (1437-1508, Italy) explains that from this text we can distinguish between the Israelites and the other nations. Other societies commemorate their victories in designing landmarks in honor of their war heroes which have portrayed great courage and valor. The Israelites, on the other hand, give first and foremost, special recognition to the Torah and the words it represents. The Israelites understand currently that their victories to come are because of staying loyal to the Torah before their might and strength of their military ability. For this reason, this monument is documented upon arrival into the Land before any major battles, to affirm our faith.

The great biblical interpreter, Onkelos (35-120) points out that the word "Avanim"-"Stones" has a further meaning. Within the word "Even" found "Av" and "Ben" - Father and Son, (Onkelos Bereishit 49:24) perhaps to emphasize the true important message upon entering the Promised Land. We are here to ensure the smooth transition from one generation to the next. With this the Israelites stand apart from other nations by emphasizing our belief in the importance of passing on the tradition over to our children.



## THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

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

### “To Each His Language”

There was a time when the literary treasures of the Jewish people were accessible only to those with a reading knowledge of Hebrew. This is no longer the case. I know of no major Jewish religious work which has not been translated into English in recent years and, in most instances, into many other languages as well. The past several decades have witnessed the publication of multiple editions of the Bible and the Talmud, commentaries ancient and modern, liturgical works, historical tomes, biographies, and even cookbooks with recipes of our ancestors.

I must confess that when this phenomenon of translation began, I was not all that

happy. I am a bit of a purist and have long clung to the belief that sacred Hebrew books should be read in the original. I was willing to make exceptions for those religious classics which were originally written in languages other than Hebrew, such as those works of Maimonides, Saadia Gaon, and Bahya ibn Paquda, which were originally written in Arabic and translated into Hebrew and eventually English as well. But for me, the Bible and classical commentaries were to be read only in the language in which they were written.

I was guided in my opposition to translation by the classic Italian motto, “*traduttore traditore*”, “the translator is a traitor.” No translation is exactly accurate, and ideas expressed in one language inevitably lose some of their meaning when rendered into another language. Every translation compromises beauty and forfeits subtlety and nuance.

Ironically, in recent years, I myself have become a translator. My first professional effort was with the elegies that are recited on the solemn day of Tisha b’Av, when Jews recall the seemingly endless chain of catastrophes that have marked Jewish history. Translating these poignantly tragic poems was a difficult challenge. But I undertook the task in the belief that an English translation was better than no translation, and that I was doing a public service by bringing these poems to the public, albeit in a far from perfect form.

Since then, and to this day, I have been involved in the process of translating classical

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Jewish works, and have come to terms with the fact that translations, although far from perfect, bring Torah study to multitudes of individuals who would otherwise be deprived from so much of our tradition.

These reflections bring us to this week's Torah portion, *Parshat Ki Tavo* (*Deuteronomy* 26:1-29:8). The relevant verses read, "As soon as you have crossed the Jordan into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones. Coat them with plaster and inscribe upon them all the words of this Teaching...On those stones you shall inscribe every word of this Teaching most distinctly" (*Deuteronomy* 27:2-3, and 8).

What does this phrase, *ba'er heitev*, translated as "most distinctly," mean? The Babylonian Talmud Tractate *Sotah* 32b suggests that the inscription of the "Teaching," that is, the Torah, should be done in seventy languages, in every language known to mankind. How fascinating! Moses himself, speaking on behalf of the Almighty, instructs the people to engage in that "traitorous" task of translation. He seems unconcerned with the difficulties of rendering the word of God from sacred Hebrew into the languages of all mankind.

Why? Why was it necessary to translate the Torah into languages which were incomprehensible to the people of Israel? Our Sages offer two very different answers to this question.

The Jerusalem Talmud takes a universalistic approach and suggests that these translations were to bring the teachings of the Torah to the entire world.

The *Zohar*, the basic text of the *Kabbalah*, notes that the members of the Jewish High Court, the *Sanhedrin*, knew all seventy languages. But the *Zohar* does not take this

literally. Instead, the *Zohar* understands the seventy languages to be a metaphor for the seventy facets of Torah, the seventy different avenues of interpretation with which the sacred text is endowed. The members of the Sanhedrin were thus not linguists, according to the *Zohar*, but experts in probing the depths of the Torah's meaning. Perhaps, the seventy languages inscribed on the stones in the River Jordan were also not the languages for the peoples of the world, but were seventy codes enabling so many different approaches to the Torah's interpretation.

Permit me to offer a somewhat different approach. I prefer to understand the word "language" more broadly. The word need not be restricted to its literal meaning, referring to French, Spanish, Swahili, and Portuguese. Rather, "language" can refer to a cognitive modality, or to a learning style. Thus, some of us prefer the language of humor, while others prefer the language of logic and reason. We speak of angry language, soothing language, and the language of love. Music is a language, play is a language, and there is even the language of war.

Every teacher worth his salt knows that he must use different "languages" for different



In loving memory of my mother

**Pearl Katz** a"h

**פֶּסַח בַּת אַפְרַיִם זָאב ע"ה**

Memphis, Tennessee

On her 24<sup>th</sup> Yahrtzeit - 18 Elul

*Ronnie Katz*

students. This does not mean that he speaks to some students in English and to others in Yiddish. No. This means that some students will respond to clear and logical explanations. Others will require anecdotes and stories. Still others will require humor, or perhaps visual illustrations of the subject matter being taught. This is the lesson which every successful teacher learns sooner or later: no two individuals learn in the same way. Woe to the teacher who delivers his or her prepared lecture once, and expects all thirty pupils to learn the material. The successful teacher discerns the learning styles of each pupil and develops strategies and modalities that facilitate the learning of every member of the class.

Perhaps this is what the Talmud in Tractate Sotah is really teaching. Inscribed on those stones in the River Jordan were seventy different teaching strategies, seventy pedagogical tools, which would enable every recipient of the Torah to learn its messages in his or her own idiosyncratic way. Some would learn best by reciting the words by rote until they were memorized. Others would learn by breaking the text down into small phrases and reflecting

on them, and still others would learn by using visual imagery to "see" the meaning of the text.

Indeed, the phrase "seventy facets of Torah" could be the Zohar's way of referring to seventy different learning styles, encouraging teachers to identify a "stone in the River Jordan" to match every pupil, even those who on the surface appear unteachable.

If I am at all correct in this interpretation of "the seventy languages" I am asserting that our Sages were very aware of a basic lesson in education. That lesson is that there is a need for individualized curricula so that diverse populations can all learn well.

This lesson is reflected throughout Talmudic literature. Here is one example:

"Observe the excellent advice given to us by the *Tanna* Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachya: 'Make for yourself a teacher, and acquire for yourself a friend...' If you do this you will find that your teacher will teach you *mikrah*, *mishnah*, *midrash*, *halachot*, *ve'aggadot*. Whatever is not conveyed in *mikrah* (Scripture) will be conveyed in *mishnah*; whatever is not conveyed in *midrash* will be conveyed in the *halachot*; whatever is not conveyed in the *halachot* will become clear in the study of the *aggadot*. Thus, the student will sit in place and fill himself with all that is good and blessed." (*Avot DeRabbi Nathan*, 8:1)

In this passage our Sages are advocating a richly variegated curriculum. They know that not every student will be fully informed by the study of one subject. The student who fails to gain from the study of *mikrah*, will gain instead from a very different type of text, *mishnah*, the early rabbinic codification of the Oral Law. And similarly for *midrash*, rabbinic lore; *halachot*, rules and regulations, and *aggadot*, legends and stories.

**Happy 80<sup>th</sup> birthday**

**to our loving**

**Charles Gold** 

**Ad Meah V'esrim!!!**

***From the Gold, Wisemon,  
and Blank families***

There are many erudite quotations that I could cite to summarize the point of my brief essay. But I prefer to conclude with a remark I hear from my teenage grandchildren: *Different strokes for different folks*. Arguably, this is an apt motto for getting along with people in all situations. But it is especially apt for teachers. And as I have repeatedly stated in this column, we are all teachers! ■

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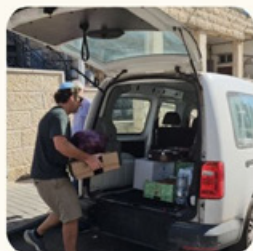


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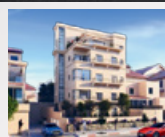
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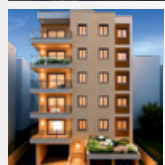
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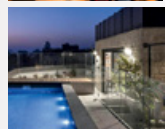
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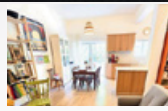
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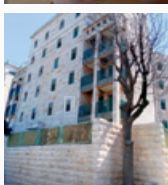
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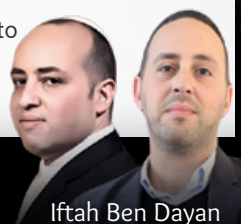


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BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER  
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# “What Was and What Will Be”

This Shabbat, we are privileged and, indeed blessed, to read one of the most uplifting and heartening prophecies of Yishayahu HaNavi, one that opens with the cry: “Kumi Ori!”. But it would be a mistake to ignore the navi’s earlier message from the 59th chapter (preceding our haftarah from the 60th perek), for, by doing so, we would fail to absorb the significance and impact of Yishayahu’s words that we will hear this Shabbat (iy”H).

Like the five earlier haftarot, this reading is one of consolation but, unlike most of the former prophecies, this haftarah does not make mention of any of the nation’s past sins. By doing so, this nevuah directly conflicts with Yishayahu’s previous message.. In fact, Rav Ariel lists over ten examples of prophetic

promises in our haftarah that contrast widely with the message we find in the last perek:

In the 59th chapter, Yishayahu calls out the nation, telling them G-d **had hidden His presence from them** (v. 2) while in the 60th perek we read how **Hashem’s glory will shine upon them** (v. 2).

In the previous perek, the navi cries that **“there was no justice”** [v. 4] while our haftarah promises that the nation will be “completely just (“kulam tzadikim”) [v. 21].

In the last chapter, the navi bemoans that **“they knew no path toward peace”** [v. 8] yet our haftarah predicts **“I will designate your leaders for peace”** [v. 17]

And, while the previous prophecy quotes the nation’s lament **“we pray for light but have only darkness”** [9], Yishayahu opens this nevuah with the clarion call: **“Arise and Shine for your light has arrived!”** [v. 1].

These juxtaposed prophecies do not **contradict** each other but, rather, are meant to **contrast** that which **HAD BEEN** in the past with that which **WILL BE** in Israel’s future - thereby comforting the grieving population. And, subtle as the message might seem, it is extremely impactful.

Consider: How can the purely Moral and Ethical G-d, One Whose very existence is defined by both righteous and merciful attributes, find a just way to both punish the corrupt generations, while, at the same time, to arouse His infinite mercies in order to bring comfort to those who suffered the consequences of His necessary justice?



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This is the challenge that faced the prophets both before and after the Churban – and a struggle that all later generations had to undergo. I would humbly submit that the contrast we've uncovered between these two p'rakim might help us understand the message of Hashem's "nechama" promised by Yishayahu throughout these weeks of "shiva d'nechemta".

The differences between these juxtaposing prophetic messages should not be seen only as a depiction of **WHAT ONCE WAS** versus **WHAT WILL YET BE**, but as a message that consolation from national tragedy does not arrive immediately. Clearly, both of these contrasting prophecies would not come about within a short time and must be understood, therefore, as a subtle message explaining that these diametrically different views would be realized only over many years. Just as the corruption of a culture spreads over many years, so full consolation will slowly grow over many years.

And yet, if this lesson is truly grasped, we wonder how any generation could accept comfort from a promise they are likely never to see??? Only when they also accept that they are an undying nation!!

**The guarantee of eternal salvation consoles *only* the eternal nation.**

The words of our prophets will comfort a nation confident in the truth that, no matter what we suffer today, **we**, i.e., our nation, will survive and realize Divine redemption. To put it simply, we should remember that....

**The extent of our consolation lies in the depth of our Emunah! ■**

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# Listening and Law

It would be reasonable to assume that a language containing the verb “to command” must also contain the verb “to obey.” The one implies the other, just as the concept of a question implies the possibility of an answer. We would, however, be wrong. *There are 613 commandments in the Torah, but there is no word in Biblical Hebrew that means “to obey.”* When Hebrew was revived as a language of everyday speech in the 19th century, a word, *letsayet*, had to be borrowed from Aramaic. Until then there was no Hebrew word for “to obey.”

This is an astonishing fact and not everyone was aware of it. It led some Christians (and secularists) to misunderstand the nature of Judaism: very few Christian thinkers fully appreciated the concept of *mitzva* and the idea that God might choose to reveal Himself in the form of laws. It also led some Jews to think about *mitzvot* in a way more appropriate to Islam (the word *Islam* means “submitting” to God’s law) than to Judaism. What word does the Torah use as the appropriate

response to a *mitzva*? *Shema*.

The root *sh-m-a* is a keyword in the book of Deuteronomy, where it occurs 92 times, usually in the sense of what God wants from us in response to the commandments. But the verb *sh-m-a* means many things. Here are some of the meanings it has in Genesis:

“To hear” as in: “Abram *heard* that his relative [Lot] had been taken captive” (Gen. 14:14).

“To listen, pay attention, heed” as in: “Because you *listened* to your wife and ate fruit from the tree” (Gen. 3:17) and “Then Rachel said: God has vindicated me; He has *listened* to my plea and given me a son” (Gen. 30:7).

“To understand” as in “Come, let Us go down and confuse their language so they will not *understand* each other” (Gen. 11:7). This is how tradition understood the later phrase *Naaseh ve-nishma* (Ex. 24: 7) to mean, “first we will do, then we will understand.”

“To be willing to obey” as the angel’s words to Abraham after the Binding of Isaac, “Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you were *willing to obey Me*” (Gen. 22:18), when Abraham was about to obey God’s command, and at the last moment an angel called upon him to stop.

“To respond in deed, to do what someone



else wants” as in “Do whatever Sarah tells you” - *sh'ma bekolah* (Gen. 21:12).

It is in this last sense that the verb *sh-m-a* comes closest in meaning to “obey.” The fact that *it* means all these things suggests that in the Torah there is no concept of blind obedience. In general, a commander orders and a soldier obeys. A slave-owner orders and the slave obeys. There is no active thought-process involved. The connection between the word of the commander and the deed of the commanded is one of action-and-reaction, stimulus-and-response. For practical purposes, the soldier or slave has no mind of his own. As Tennyson described the attitude of the soldiers before the Charge of the Light Brigade, “Ours not to reason why; ours but to do or die.”

That is not how the Torah conceives the relationship between God and us. God, who created us in His image, giving us freedom and the power to think, wants us to *understand* His commands. Ralbag (Gersonides, 1288-1344) argues that it is precisely this that makes the Torah different:

Behold our Torah is unique among all the other doctrines and religions that other nations have had, in that our Torah contains nothing that does not originate in equity and reason. Therefore this Divine Law attracts people in virtue of its essence, so that they behave in accordance with it. The laws and religions of other nations are not like this: they do not conform to equity and wisdom, but are foreign to the nature of man, and people obey them because of compulsion, out of fear of the threat of punishment but not because of their essence.<sup>1</sup>

1. Gersonides, *Commentary* to Va-etchanan, par. 14.



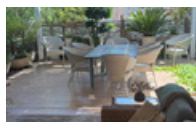
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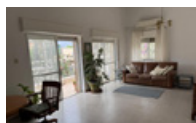
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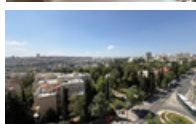


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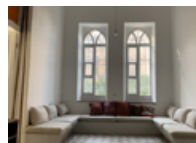
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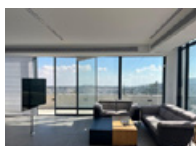


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Along similar lines, the modern scholar David Weiss Halivni speaks of “the Jewish predilection for justified law,” and contrasts this with other cultures in the ancient world:

Ancient law in general is apodictic, without justification and without persuasion. Its style is categorical, demanding, and commanding ... Ancient Near Eastern law in particular is devoid of any trace of desire to convince or to win hearts. It enjoins, prescribes, and orders, expecting to be heeded solely on the strength of being an official decree. It solicits no consent (through justification) from those to whom it is directed.<sup>2</sup>

The Torah uses at least three devices to show that Jewish law is not arbitrary, a mere decree. First, especially evident throughout the book of Devarim, is the giving of *reasons for the commands*. Often, though not always, the reason has to do with the experience of the Israelites in Egypt. They know what it feels like to be oppressed, to be a stranger, an outsider. I want you to create a different kind of society, says God through Moses, where slavery is more limited, where everyone is free one day a week, where the poor do not go hungry, and the powerless are not denied justice.

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2. David Weiss Halivni, *Midrash, Mishnah, Gemara: the Jewish predilection for justified law*, Harvard University Press, 1986, 5.

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The second, most notably in the book of Bamidbar, is *the juxtaposition of narrative and law*, as if to say, the law is best understood against the backdrop of history and the experience of the Israelites in their formative years. So the law of the Red Heifer – for purification from contact with the dead – occurs just before the death of Miriam and Aaron, as if to say, bereavement and grief interfere with our contact with God but this does not last forever. We can become pure again. The law of *tsitsit* occurs after the story of the spies because (as I explained in an earlier *Covenant & Conversation*) both have to do with ways of seeing: the difference between seeing-with-fear and seeing-with-faith.

The third is *the connection between law and metaphysics*. There is a strong connection between Genesis 1, the story of creation, and the laws of *kedushah*, holiness. Both belong to *torat kohanim*, the priestly voice, and both are about order and the maintenance of boundaries. The laws against mixing meat and milk, wool and linen, and so on, are about respecting the deep structure of nature as described in the opening chapter of the Torah.

Throughout Devarim (Deuteronomy), as Moses reaches the summit of his leadership, he becomes an educator, explaining to the new generation who will eventually conquer and inhabit the land, that the laws God has given them are not just Divine decrees. They make sense in human terms. They constitute the architectonics of a free and just society. They respect human dignity. They honour the integrity of nature. They give the land the chance to rest and recuperate. They protect Israel against the otherwise inexorable laws of the decline and fall of nations.

Only by recognising God as their sovereign

will they guard against overbearing kings and the corruptions of power. Time and again Moses tells the people that if they follow God's laws they will prosper. If they fail to do so they will suffer defeat and exile. All this can be understood in supernatural terms, but it can be understood in natural ways also.

That is why Moses, consistently throughout Devarim, uses the verb *sh-m-a*. He wants the Israelites to obey God, but not blindly or through fear alone. God is not an autocrat. The Israelites should know this through their own direct experience. They had seen how God, creator of heaven and earth, had chosen this people as His own, brought them from slavery to freedom, fed, sustained and protected them through the wilderness, and led them to victory against their enemies. God had not given the Torah to Israel for His sake but for theirs. As Weiss Halivni puts it: the Torah "invites the receiver of the law to join in grasping the beneficent effect of the law, thereby bestowing dignity upon him and giving him a sense that he is a partner in the law."<sup>3</sup>

That is the meaning of Moses' great words in this week's parsha:

*"Be silent, Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the Lord your God. Listen to the Lord your God and follow His commands and decrees that I give you today."* (Deut. 27:9-10)

Keeping the commands involves an act of listening, not just submission and blind obedience – listening in all its multiple senses of attending, meditating and reflecting of the nature of God through creation, revelation, and redemption. It means trying to understand our limits and imperfections as human

3. Ibid., 14.

beings. It means remembering what it felt like to be a slave in Egypt. It involves humility and memory and gratitude. But it does not involve abdication of the intellect or silencing of the questioning mind.

God is not a tyrant<sup>4</sup> but a teacher.<sup>5</sup> He seeks not just our obedience but also our understanding. All nations have laws, and laws are there to be obeyed. But few nations other than Israel set it as their highest task to understand *why* the law is as it is. That is what the Torah means by the word *shema*. ■

4. Avodah Zarah 3a.

5. Tamhuma (Buber), Yitro, 16.

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וְהָקִמֹתָ לָךְ אֲבָנִים גְּדֹלוֹת... (דברים כז:ב)

...that you shall set up for yourself huge stones... (Devarim 27:2)

There are several occasions in Tanach where stones are to be utilized to build a monument. Rashi citing a Gemara in Sotah (35b) claims that stones were used on at least three separate instances: (i) in the Jordan (ii) Gilgal (Bnei Yisrael's first stop in Eretz Yisrael, and (iii) at Har Eval. What is the significance of building with stones?

## STONES- STUMBLING BLOCKS

Rav Nissan Alpert (*Limudei Nissan*) suggests that stones symbolize stumbling blocks which one encounters that often stand in one's way of achieving a goal. In retrospect, one gains from past experiences, and it is crucial to recall past stumbling blocks so as to avoid tripping over them again.

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES ALONG THE WAY

At this juncture as Bnei Yisrael are about to enter Eretz Yisrael, Moshe builds a monument with the **desert stones** to highlight to the nation that they were able to overcome the difficulties of travelling through the dry desert. Hashem provided food (*mann*) and water (Miriam's well) for sustenance. Moshe seeks to instill faith in the people that once they enter Israel and are subject to natural law, they will be able to overcome obstacles

that they will encounter as well. Another reminder occurs as they cross the Jordan river and again after they conquer the land.

## STONES OF IRON

The Torah describes Eretz Yisrael as אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲבָנֶיהָ בְּרֹזָל - *a land whose stones are iron* (Devarim 8:9). The same stones that symbolize “stumbling blocks” and challenges, are depicted as strong and valuable. **Perhaps the lesson is that we must face challenges and recall our hardships so that we learn and grow from those experiences.**

## ACRONYM OF אבן

Additionally, the word אבן is the acronym of אב, בן, נכד. This symbolizes the *mesorah* that is to be transmitted from generation to generation. From father to son and then to grandson – fulfilling the statement from *Shir HaShirim*: וְהָיוּ הַמְּשָׁלֵשׁ לֹא בְמִהְרָה - *יִתַּק* – which is interpreted as when Torah is transmitted through three generations it will remain strong within the family.

We all face challenges – when we encounter rocks in our path – we need to learn to roll with the punches, so they strengthen us. May we be able to overcome all obstacles we encounter and properly transmit our Torah knowledge and enthusiasm to future generations so that we solidify our eternal commitment to Torah. ■

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## REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES

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### His[s]tory

The declaration one recites upon bringing his first fruits to the Beit Hamikdash is curious. The passages comprise an overview of Jewish history and do not seem related to the *Bikkurim* ceremony. Would it not be sufficient for the farmer to simply acknowledge the gifts of his fruits and his dedication to Hashem? What can **we** learn from this chapter?

Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro zt”l shares a fundamental lesson. To express true appreciation for the abundant Divine kindness we experience, it is imperative to reiterate the details again and again. When we look at the farmer’s proclamation, we notice the constant emphasis on Hashem’s unending goodness and mastery of all that exists.

This is a valuable lesson to us, stressing the importance of always expressing our gratitude to Hashem, not only through tefillah and brachot, but throughout our day in every experience. Living with this awareness humbles us and heightens our awareness of Hashem’s greatness and the need to voice our indebtedness over and over.

We have here an insight into the human psyche, taught by Rav Zaitchik zt”l in *Ohr Chadash*. Human nature is such that when blessed with goodness, one tends to become haughty and will often forget the needs of others. By recounting the collective past of our nation, one is reminded of what it feels like to suffer and live with deprivation. Thus, the declaration will inspire others to give to those less fortunate and indeed can rejoice before Hashem.

An alternative approach is found in *Birkat Mordechai* by Rav Mordechai Ezra-chi zt”l. He notes that this entire section focuses on the beauty and magnitude of Divine Providence. From *Yetziat Mizrayim* and beyond, Hashem orchestrates every detail of history that creates every episode and circumstance. Even the exact fruits in the farmer’s basket were directly gifted to him by Hashem.

Focusing on Jewish history gives us the opportunity to realize that nothing in this world is random, but an explicit manifestation of Hashem’s intense love for every one of us. This then gives rise to the overwhelming joy of the mitzvah of *Bikkurim*.

The month of Elul is a most fitting time to integrate these lessons into our lives. It is a time to become more mindful of Hashem’s abundant kindness and continuous love. When we personalize this awareness, we will be inspired to concentrate on how we do mitzvot and feel that we are each an integral part of Hashem’s grand scheme. ■

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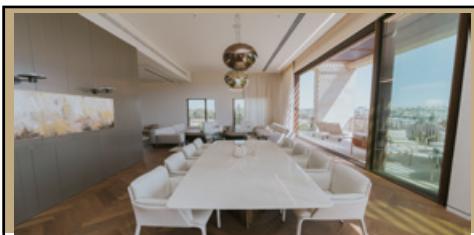
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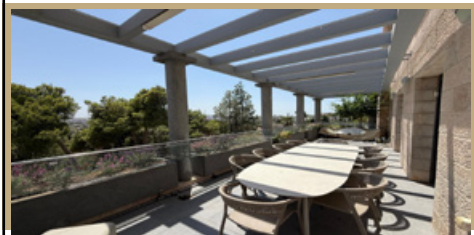
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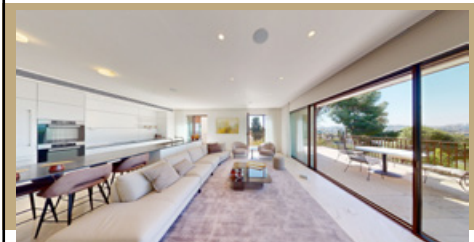
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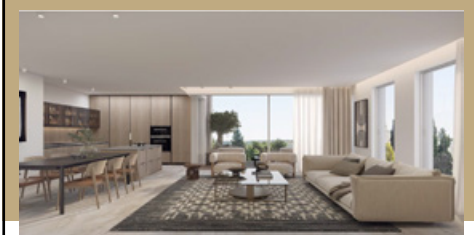
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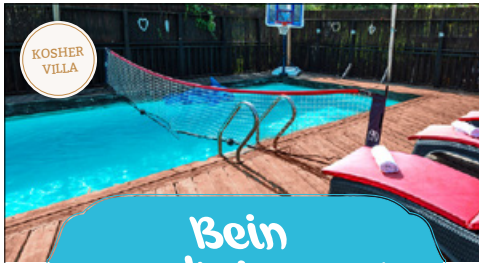


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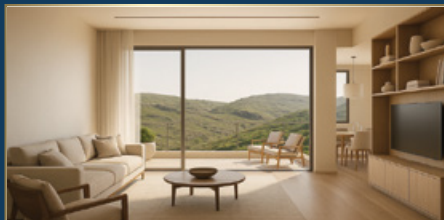
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# Zeh Ba, It Is Approaching!

Emerging from the ashes of the Shoah, the Gerrer Rebbe, Rav Yisrael Alter, the 'Beis Yisroel', was a beacon of faith and strength who gathered the scattered remnants of Polish Jewry and rebuilt his Chasidic community in Yerushalayim, the Holy City. He was unyielding in his standards, inspiring discipline and unyielding *avodah*. With incredible dedication and love, he both presided over the Agudas Yisroel movement, and was intimately involved in the every detail of the lives of his chasidim. The tzadik's presence was intense and uncompromising and yet his heart was overflowing with warmth — restoring dignity to broken souls as he rebuilt Chassidus in Eretz Yisrael.

There was a simple Yid, a sign painter, who lived in an old apartment building not far from the new dormitory of the Gerrer Yeshiva, Sfas Emes in Yerushalayim. He earned his living with steady, careful hands, painting letters and words on wood and tin in the small courtyard outside his home.

From his perch, brush in hand, he would often notice the Beis Yisroel passing by the dormitory on his way to the yeshiva. Whenever the Rebbe entered, a group of panicking *bachurim* would suddenly begin rushing and scrambling out of the building, caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. The painter's heart went out to them. These were sincere,

good boys, and the sight of their panic pained him. The painter devised a little system:

Since he was usually outdoors, whenever he spotted the Rebbe turning down the street, before he approached the dormitory, the sign painter would lay down his brush, step out of the yard, and walk toward the boys. He would softly call out two simple words, a code to warn the bachurim that the Rebbe was heading their way: *Zeh ba*, "This is approaching."

The bachurim were grateful and the painter enjoyed the friendly 'service' he provided to the local kids. But one morning, deeply absorbed in his work, he failed to notice the Rebbe walking up the street. The Rebbe stopped right beside him, lingering for a moment to study the freshly painted letters on the sign. The painter suddenly felt the presence at his side, looked up, and nearly fainted. It was the Beis Yisroel.

The Rebbe bent down ever so slightly and whispered: *Zeh ba*.

The brush slipped from his trembling fingers, his heart sank in shame. What was he doing, meddling in the affairs of the Rebbe? Who was he to insert himself into this holy man's business? As the Rebbe walked on, the painter steadied himself against the wall, his face flushed with regret. But then, suddenly, the Rebbe turned back. His intense gaze turned soft and warm, his voice gentle:

“You meant it for the good of the *bachurim*... You meant it for the good of the *bachurim*. And you will have good children.” And with that blessing, the Rebbe continued on his way...

טוב וישר ה' על כן יורה חטאים בדרך

“Hashem is good and upright, therefore He instructs *chata'im*, people who have sinned, the way.” (*Tehillim*, 25:8)

זה ששלח נביאים להם מודיעים דרכי ה' ומחזירין אותן בתשובה. ועוד שנתן בהם כח ללמוד ולהבין. שמדה זו בכל אדם שכל זמן שהוא נמשך בדרך החכמה והצדק מתאווה להן ורודף אותם. והוא מה שאמרנו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה בא לטהר מסיעין אותו כלומר ימצא עצמו נעצר על הדבר.

“This pasuk is a reference to the prophets who were sent to make the ways of God known, and to turn the people to *teshuvah*. Moreover, He endowed them with a power to study and understand, as it is the tendency of every man to yearn after and pursue wisdom and righteousness. This is in harmony with what our Sages said: “He who comes to be cleansed receives aid,” as if to say, “*He will find himself aided in the matter for which he strives...*” (Rambam, *Hilchos Teshuvah*, 6:5)

Rav Shlomo Freifeld proclaimed that this teaching from the Rambam revolutionized the entire concept of what it means to be a human being and a Jew. God is good and upright, therefore He teaches חטאים the way — not framing *cheit* as unredeemable evil and sin — rather just “to miss the mark”. As God wants only “good”, and He is fair and ‘straight-up’, of course he acknowledges the difficulty and challenge of this world, and seeks to help us when we fail and fall short again and again. We are helped to step onto the path that we want to take.

“One will find himself aided in the matter

for which he strives;” Hashem Himself comes to our assistance in it. This is *halachah*, the Jewish understanding of the way we are invited to ‘walk’ with Hashem in this world: God is good!

This Motza’ei Shabbos, “*Zeh ba*” — the King is approaching His Palace to sit on the awesome Throne of Divine Judgment, and Ashkenazim rush and scramble to join the communal recitation of *Selichos*. This service is a formal invitation to stand before Hashem as a congregation and humbly place before Him our mistakes and *chata'im*, ways that we have missed the mark. It is also an invaluable opportunity to call out together and awaken Compassion, great Kindness and Patience upon us and our entire nation, for Hashem Himself is coming to our assistance in the matter for which we strive.

*Zeh ba!* A new year is coming, with infinite possibilities and opportunities for growth, *tikun*, good deeds, connection and redemption. Let us prepare ourselves to greet it *b’simcha u-v’tuv levav*, with joy and a heart overflowing with warmth. ■





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# Kosher Processes

In the past, kosher production was relatively simple. People cooked food in their own homes, made their own ingredients, and rarely used complex or processed items. However, since the advent of mass manufacturing, food production has drastically changed — and with it, the nature of kosher supervision.

As discussed previously, in order to provide proper kosher certification for mass-produced food, three core factors must be taken into consideration. These elements define how kosher certification is administered in the modern era:

1. **Ingredient Compatibility** – Whether the ingredients used are kosher-sensitive or not.
2. **Production Process** – How the food is

produced (e.g., cooking methods, mixing dairy and meat, etc.).

3. **Supervision** – The level and frequency of involvement required from a kosher representative.

This article will focus on the second factor: Production Processes.

## THE ROLE OF PRODUCTION PROCESSES IN KOSHER CERTIFICATION

Just like in our home kitchens, there's a key difference between cold and hot processes when it comes to kosher certification. Cold processes are typically simpler and often require minimal supervision.

For example, OU Kosher certifies many companies that produce cake mixes. These facilities generally do not involve heat; rather, they combine dry ingredients in mixers to produce the final product. If none of the ingredients used are kosher-sensitive, the kosher program is relatively straightforward. However, not all cold processes are without concern. Some involve ingredients or methods that may raise kashrut issues. A good example is ethanol (ethyl alcohol), which can be produced naturally by fermenting grains, molasses, citrus fruits, or wine — or synthetically from petroleum. The source of the alcohol can present a kosher concern, particularly when fermentation is involved.

Hot processes, on the other hand, are often a greater kashrut concern. That said, some heating methods used in mass production may not necessarily pose a problem. For instance, blanching — a process used to



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heat vegetables and remove moisture — is typically applied to non-sensitive ingredients and may not always require kosher oversight.

### EXAMPLES OF COMMON FOOD PROCESSING METHODS

To better understand how kosher concerns, arise in manufacturing, let's review a few common production processes. Some are more kashrut-sensitive than others:

- **Deodorization:** This process removes undesirable odors and tastes from oil using pressurized steam distillation at high temperatures (464–518°F) for 30 to 60 minutes. The extreme heat and equipment involved can make this a significant kosher concern, especially if the facility also processes non-kosher oils.
- **Encapsulation:** Encapsulation involves coating powder particles with a protective layer to maintain stability or enable gradual (timed) release. Commonly encapsulated items include vitamins, spray-dried flavors, and citric acid. The source of the coating and the equipment used can both be kashrut concerns. This is particularly relevant for vitamins and food supplements. In some cases, halachic authorities may permit leniency if the product is swallowed whole and has no taste. However, each case should be evaluated by a competent halachic authority.
- **Spray Drying:** Spray drying converts a liquid into powder or flakes using a heated machine called a spray dryer.

Because spray dryers are expensive to operate, companies often rent them out for custom drying and blending, including for non-kosher products. As a result, anything that is spray-dried is generally considered kashrut-sensitive. In relation to this process, a common misconception exists, particularly in Israel. Some claim that milk powder that is not Chalav Yisrael (milk not supervised by Jewish authorities) is easier to permit than non-Chalav Yisrael liquid milk. While there is room for halachic debate on this point, there is no question that milk powder is more kashrut-sensitive than liquid milk. This is because it must go through a spray dryer, which — if previously used for non-kosher products like non-kosher cheese — may render even kosher ingredients non-kosher due to absorption of flavor or residue. Liquid milk on the other hand does not go through any similar process rather it is typically pasteurized on site in a machine dedicated only for liquid milk. ■

## Kashrut Questions in Israel?

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## SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR  
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,  
OU ISRAEL

One afternoon a number of summers ago, I had the *zechut* to sit and visit with *Moreinu V'Rabbeinu, Rabbi Dr. Sholom Gold ztvk'l*, the beloved Dean of OU Israel's Avrom Silver Jerusalem College for Adults. As always, time spent with this giant of Jewish life left me inspired and feeling blessed. Blessed to have a role model and teacher like Rabbi Gold ztvk'l whose love of *Torah, Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael* was exuded with every fiber of his being; and blessed to know that I have been fortunate to follow in his footsteps, to build our family here in *Artzeinu HaKedosha* and contribute in our own unique way in building Jewish Life here in *Eretz Yisrael*.

My discussion with Rabbi Gold, as typically happened when we sat together, returned to this very great blessing, of the building of Jewish life here in the Land of Israel. Rabbi Gold reminded me of an idea he had shared with me on numerous occasions in the past.

It is often stated in the name of the great sage **HaRav Moshe Feinstein ztvk'l**, that in his esteemed opinion, the *mitzva* of *Aliya* to live in Israel in our time, is a *mitzva kiyumi* - a voluntary *mitzva*, a *mitzva* where one certainly receives great merit through the fulfillment of the *mitzva*, but nonetheless is not necessarily compulsory. Rabbi Gold confided in me that for many years he struggled to understand this ruling of *Rav Moshe*, and then one day he finally came to this conclusion. *Rav Moshe zt'l*, was teaching us that a Jew should **truly want** to make *aliya*, not feel compelled to live in Israel, but rather

should want to live here, **should be happy and excited to build their life here in this sacred land.**

Our *Sedra* opens with the familiar words: *V'haya Ki Tavo El Haaretz-And it shall be when you arrive upon the Land.*

The ***Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh***, in his comments on this verse explains. ***Vhaya-Lashon Simcha***. Our arrival to the Land of Israel is something to celebrate and rejoice over!

The great early Chasidic sage, the ***Kedushat Levi-Reb Levi Yitzchak MiBerdichev zy'a*** further elaborates: *“והיה לשון שמחה כי בארץ ישראל נפתח הלב לשמוח בעבודת ה'”* — the joy of entering the Land stems from the fact that in *Eretz Yisrael* the heart opens naturally to joy in Divine service. The *simcha* is not incidental but intrinsic to the Land itself.

***The Ohalei Yaakov, the Admor of Husi-yatin zy'a***, shared a powerful message on this *Shabbat* of *Parshat Ki Tavo* in 1952, The Rebbe points to this insight of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*:

*Vhaya-Lashon Simcha...*

*When we look at the reality and spiritual circumstances here in Eretz Yisrael today (in 1952), one can't help but ask-how are we to rejoice? Yes, indeed we have merited to receive the gift of Medinat Yisrael, and for the beginning of the ingathering of the Exiles, but how can we rejoice when we look at the lack of spirituality which seems rampant among us. I do not wish to pass judgment, Chas V'Shalom, rather our way is always to find merit and see the good.*



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*There are three reasons for the spiritual malaise which is so worrisome and a cause for deep concern. 1. A portion of our people have received a poor education 2. A portion of our people live in difficult conditions and circumstances, abject poverty 3. The Shoah which nearly decimated our people, and left so many broken physically and despondent emotionally and spiritually, we have yet to recover.*

*However, there is no room for despair! The Torah has already promised us that indeed the Jewish People will return to the ways of Hakadosh Baruch Hu-V'Shavta Ad Hashem Elokecha.*

*This Spiritual Renewal will not come from any other place, except for here in Eretz Yisrael. The Spiritual Renewal of Am Yisrael will indeed come forth from this Center of Jewish Life we are building now here in Eretz*

*Yisrael..."*

The Rebbe had the capacity to contextualize the challenges of Jewish life during the difficult formative years of *Medinat Yisrael*, and the vision to see the fledgling state being built in the Land of Israel, as a Center of Jewish life, which would serve as a catalyst for strengthening Jewish identity and commitment.

*Baruch Hashem*, in the seventy three years since the Rebbe shared this powerful message, the growth of Torah learning and Jewish commitment, and ritual observance has indeed grown exponentially.

*Yehi Ratzon*, may we indeed merit to celebrate the continued spiritual transformation taking root here in our sacred Land, and may we experience in the days ahead the redemption and transformation of the entire world, which will flow forth from *Artzeinu HaKedosh*..... ■

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# THIS WEEK'S INSPIRATIONAL TORAH LEARNING

## SUNDAY SEPT 14

**7:30 PM**

Men's Advanced Safrut  
(The Bais) **Rabbi Tzvi Maurer**  
7 Hartum Street, 2nd Floor  
(Will Resume after the Chagim)



\*The schedule is subject to change  
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## MONDAY SEPT 15

**8:30 PM**

**The Bais** (for Men) - **Semichat  
Chaver Program Rav Elyada  
Goldwicht@ Bet Knesset  
Ohel Yitzchak**, Keren Hayesod St.



**OU Israel | Women's Division**  
**2 Radak St., Rechavia**

**6:00PM-10:00PM**

ATID Midrasha  
(women in their 20's)

**7:00PM-9:00PM**

Dorot Choir Session with  
Hadassah Jacobs

**7:15PM-9:45PM**

Mother-Daughter  
Rosh Hashana Event



**TUESDAY  
SEPT 16**

OU Israel is supported by the Jewish  
Federation of Broward County



## COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA

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**

Rambam: Letters and Introductions

**Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz**

**11:25 AM**

Pshat in the Parsha

**Rabbi Shmuel Goldin**

**12:20 PM**

Unpacking the Messages  
of Chazal

**Rabbi Shai Finkelstein**

## TORAH TUESDAYS WITH THE WOMEN'S DIVISION

Classes @ Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St. Rechavia

**9:15AM**

Torah Tapestries

Parsha Shiur

**Mrs. Shira Smiles**

**10:15AM**

Living with

Emunah

**Mrs. Raquel**

**Kirszenbaum**



## MODIIN-THE BAIS

Men's Programs in Modiin Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel,  
Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

**10:00AM - 2:00PM**

Weekly Kollel Boker-Instructors include

**Rabbi David Fine**

**Rabbi Ian Shaffer**

**Rabbi Aschi Dick**

**Rabbi Avi Herzog**

**1:00PM- NEW!!!**

Modiin Lunch and Learn with **Rabbi Aschi Dick** -Masamerica Offices,  
28 Dam HaMacabbiim St, 3rd Floor, Shiur followed by mincha at 1:45pm

# This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

**WEDNESDAY  
SEPT 17**

## 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**

Mussar and Self Improvement:  
A study of Rav Kook's sefer "Midot  
HaRaya" **Rabbi Goldscheider**

**12:30PM**

Jews in the Middle Ages: External  
Threats and Internal Development  
**Dr. Deborah Polster**



**THURSDAY  
SEPT 18**

## COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

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

**9:15 AM**

Parshat HaShavua **Rabbi Ari Kahn**

**10:30AM**

Modern Masters

**Rabbi Sam Shor**

(Rabbi Baruch Taub will resume after  
the chagim)

**11:20AM**

Trailblazing the Text of TaNach  
**Rabbi Neil Winkler**

**8:00 PM**

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

**NOTE NEW NIGHT!!!!**

**8:30 PM**

The Bais- Men's Chabura in  
partnership with Kehilat Hashiveinu  
**Rabbi Noam Kenigsberg RAMOT**

FOR GIRLS  
AGES 9-12  
AND THEIR  
MOTHERS



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Women's Division

# MOTHER-DAUGHTER PRE-ROSH HASHANA EVENT

Events taking place in multiple locations  
around Israel the week of Sept. 14



Mother-Daughter  
Chavruta Learning

Mini-Shiur

Kahoot  
Competition

Rosh Hashana  
Art Project

CARMEI GAT - SUN SEPT 14  
BEIT SHEMESH - MON SEPT 15  
YERUSHALAYIM - MON SEPT 15  
PARDES CHANA - MON SEPT 15  
EFRAT - WED SEPT 17

[www.ouisrael.org/events/md-rh2025](http://www.ouisrael.org/events/md-rh2025)



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Rabbi Shai  
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Rabbi Joel  
Kenigsberg



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**WED. SEP. 17 | 24 ELUL | 7 - 10 PM**

75 nis per person includes Dessert Reception

Full schedule & Registration: <https://torahyerushalaim25.ouisrael.org/>



**Location:** Beit Knesset Nitzanim, Asher 4, Baka.

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Mrs.  
Jen Airley



Aleeza  
Ben Shalom



Rabbanit Shayna  
Goldberg

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

75 nis per person includes Dessert Reception

Full schedule & Registration: <http://torahmodiin25.ouisrael.org/>



**Location:** Kehilat Shaarei Yonah Menachem, 13 Efraim St., Buchman, Modiin

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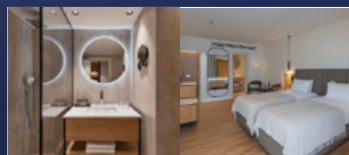
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27th September | 5th Tishrei 5786

Yeshurun Central Synagogue, 44 King George Street

Shacharit 8.15am followed by a light Kiddush. Drasha 11.00am

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*Women's Division*

# TORAH TUESDAYS

Beit Knesset Hanassi, 24 Ussishkin

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# OU Israel Bat Mitzvah and Beyond



The OU Israel Bat Mitzvah and Beyond program is a 6-session mother-daughter journey which includes learning from the sources, group discussions, meeting inspiring women and hearing their stories, Challa baking, trip to Kever Rachel, Old City tour, chessed trip, art, drama, dance, and more. This year's program begins at the end of October!

*NEW: This year there will be a group forming in both Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh!*

**For more information and to register:**

**[www.ouisrael.org/batmitzvah](http://www.ouisrael.org/batmitzvah)**



# OU Israel ATID



Mondays Sept 1,8,15

**Elul Midrasha**



OU Israel Women's Hub 2 Radak St. Rechavia

**6:00 PM**

Coffee and Refreshments

**6:10 PM**

**The Haftarot of Rosh Hashana**

Atara Starr

**6:55 PM**

Dinner

**7:25 PM**

**Insights into the Machzor**

Rabbi Eli Wagner

**8:15 PM**

**Rav Soloveitchik on Teshuva**

Miriam Tannenbaum

**9:00 PM**

Evening Activity



**Honey Dish Painting**

Monday Sept. 1



**Trip to Kever Shmuel**

Monday Sept. 8

(returning by 10pm)



**Sushi Simanim**

Monday Sept. 15



For more info  
& to sign up!

ATID is for  
women  
in their 20's

**[www.ouisrael.org/atid](http://www.ouisrael.org/atid)**





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*When:* Thursday (September 19th) 7:00 PM

*Price:* FREE for pre-registered, 20 NIS at the door

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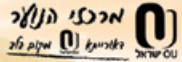
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**Sunday morning, Sep 14<sup>th</sup>**

ISSUE YOM KIPPUR / SHABBAT OCT 3-4 /  
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**Wednesday morning, Sep 17<sup>th</sup>**

ISSUE SHABBAT OCT 24-25

**Monday morning, Oct 20<sup>th</sup>**

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# Lifting and Carrying Torah

The Torah was delivered in a barren desert, a landscape stripped of permanence, to remind us that the eternal word of Hashem transcends both time and place. It does not belong to this world, though it was gifted to a human community that yearned for and embraced His word.

Though the Torah was given in the wilderness to reveal its timeless and universal character, the epic revelation at Sinai must be relived upon entering the Land of Israel. To reenact it is to affirm our hold on the Land, rooted in our divine mission and national destiny. Without devotion to the word and will of Hashem, that destiny cannot unfold.

For this reason, the drama of Sinai was reenacted upon the two northern mountains—Har Gerizim and Har Eival. Just as the ceremony at Sinai centered on the Ten Commandments, which form the foundation of religion, so too the ceremony on these

northern mountains was framed by a selection of mitzvot, presented in the Torah as a registry of ארורים—curses for noncompliance.

Of course, every pronouncement of ארור for violating a mitzvah was paired with its inverse: a declaration of ברוך for upholding that mitzvah.

## UPHOLDING TORAH

The final entry in this list stands as a sweeping, summative declaration:

ארור אשר לא יקים את דברי התורה הזאת —“Cursed is he who does not uphold the words of this Torah.”

Alongside these words stood the counter-affirmation: ברוך אשר יקים את דברי התורה —“Blessed is the one who is תורה,” who upholds the Torah. Yet the precise meaning of someone who is תורה remains elusive.

Clearly, a person who performs mitzvot is considered תורה and is blessed. By extension, one who violates mitzvot fails to be תורה and is subject to ארור.

This appears almost implicit, not requiring repetition or formal declaration. Evidently, this endorsement of תורה reaches beyond the legalistic performance of individual mitzvot. It points to something deeper, more encompassing than the mere act of fulfilling a commandment. Being תורה speaks to something larger and more general

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than mitzvah adherence.

The Ramban suggests three explanations for “meikim Torah,” each unrelated to specific mitzvah adherence and offering an important lesson about religious identity, particularly as it is exposed and transformed through the course of history.

### COMMITMENT AND CONVICTION, NOT PERFECTION

In his first explanation, the Ramban asserts that a *מְקִים תּוֹרָה* is a person who believes in the mitzvot even when their actual performance falters. A person who upholds the concept of divine commandments is considered a *מְקִים תּוֹרָה*, affirming the foundation of Torah even if perfect observance of mitzvot is beyond reach. Faith in and commitment to the principles of mitzvot is enough to be regarded as an upholder of Torah.

Conversely, a person who denies the concept of mitzvot, or questions whether they are logical or arbitrary, is regarded as not upholding the mitzvot and is subject to *אָרוּר*. The goal of meikim Torah demands that we believe in and commit to mitzvah observance, even if our execution falls short.

This offers a vital and comforting framework for religious struggle. We all wrestle with our inability to perform every mitzvah perfectly. Guilt accumulates, and we begin to question whether we can still call ourselves religious if we consistently fall short.

This declaration reminds us that religious identity rests in embracing the yoke of mitzvot and affirming their purpose. Hashem wants us to fulfill as many as we can, and we must certainly strive for complete success. When we fail, we should feel remorse for falling short of divine expectations and for prioritizing our own needs or weaknesses

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over the commandments.

Yet we should not erase ourselves from the life of Torah. Our orthodoxy is rooted in our mindset and our commitment to mitzvot. Even when our performance is imperfect, we are still considered *מְקִים תּוֹרָה*.

### RESTORATION

The Ramban offers a second definition of *מְקִים תּוֹרָה*, drawn from a dramatic spiritual awakening near the end of the First Mikdash era. Yoshiyahu became king as a child, ascending the throne after a string of corrupt and evil rulers. At this point, the nation had sunk so low that the people had largely forgotten the mitzvot and were scarcely familiar with the Torah.

During renovations of the Mikdash, a Sefer Torah was discovered and brought to Yoshiyahu. When it was opened, it fell upon the verse *אֲרוּר אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָקִים אֶת דְּבַר יְהוָה הַזֹּאת*. Confronted with the gravity of the spiritual decline and the stakes for the nation, Yoshiyahu declared “*Alai l’hakim*” — “Upon me to uphold it”—and launched a sweeping religious revival. He eradicated idolatrous practices, reinstated commitment to the Torah, and sought to awaken the people to the obligations of mitzvot.

Tragically, this renewal was cut short by his untimely death at the hands of the

Egyptians, leaving the promise of restoration unfulfilled. Yet the episode illustrates that to be מְקִימֵ תוֹרָה is to recognize pivotal moments in history when Torah is faltering and needs restoration. It is a summons to rebuild Torah during critical periods, when it seems to be fading.

### GUARDIANS OF TORAH

Torah itself can never truly vanish, for it is the eternal word of Hashem. It transcends history and will endure beyond every generation. Every attempt to eradicate it has failed; its survival is certain, impervious to the forces of destruction and neglect.

However, there have been moments in history when Torah heroes were needed to replenish it. Individuals have singlehandedly rebuilt Torah in the darkest periods. For example, after losing 24,000 students and facing brutal Roman persecution, Rabbi Akiva did not surrender but trained five new talmidim—Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Shimon, Rabbi Yosei, and Rabbi Eliezer ben Shamua—who would later reshape the landscape of Torah.

Similarly, after witnessing the devastation of the Rhineland Jewish communities at the end of the 11th and 12th centuries, Rashi and his grandchildren, the Ba’alei HaTosafot, led

a Torah renaissance. They sparked an outpouring of Torah learning in the same land where Jews had suffered severe massacres.

More recently, great Torah leaders in both Israel and America devoted their lives to rebuilding a Torah world that the Nazis had sought to annihilate.

Torah endures through history, yet there is always a need for a מְקִימֵ תוֹרָה—someone willing to uphold Torah in perilous times. Yoshiyahu was among the first, but far from the last.

### THE METAPHOR OF HAGBAHAH

Finally, the Rambam cites a Yerushalami which assigns the title of מְקִימֵ תוֹרָה to a specific context. It refers to someone who performs the Hagbahah and, while holding up the Torah, fully displays it to the audience. A מְקִימֵ תוֹרָה is someone who performs Hagbahah well!

Yet, this declaration of בְּרוּךְ cannot be understood merely as praise for a technical Hagbahah. Clearly, the Yerushalami’s example conveys a deeper, metaphorical lesson.

Sometimes we are able to lead Torah revolutions like Yoshiyahu, replenishing Torah study and renewing halachic commitment. In other circumstances, advancing actual Torah learning is not possible—the timing is wrong, or historical conditions impede the effort.

At those times, we are called to perform the Hagbahah: to show people the beauty and dignity of Torah, and to create a positive atmosphere around it. Shouldering the Torah is not merely teaching its wisdom; it is leaving the nation with an impression of Torah’s majesty. Literally holding it up for people to see conveys its presence and significance. It does not require that they study it in that moment; rather, it introduces them to the

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### CARRYING THE WEIGHT OF TORAH

On the doorstep of Rosh Hashanah, as we yearn for the malchut of Hashem, all three connotations of מְקִים תּוֹרָה should be held in mind. Without diminishing our awareness of imperfect observance, we must remind ourselves that as long as we submit to the principle of malchut shamayim and embrace the mitzvot, we are sustaining and upholding the Torah.

Regarding the second connotation of מְקִים תּוֹרָה, we are a fortunate generation. We have the privilege of inhabiting a world rebuilt for Torah, with Torah learning flourishing as never before. There has never been such widespread study since the days of the First Mikdash.

While we could always use more figures like Yoshiyahu and Rabbi Akiva, we must not underestimate that Torah is vibrant and pervasive today. Nor should debates over army conscription diminish our appreciation of Torah. Our nation is protected through Torah study and through our encounter with the eternal word of Hashem. We must not overlook this, nor allow ideological differences to dull our own engagement with Torah or

our appreciation of its profound significance.

We believe that under current conditions, the ideal devotion to Torah must be united with the sacred responsibility of defending our people and our Land.

Finally, it is imperative that religious people are mindful not only of their actions but, more significantly, of their words. People are listening, and sometimes our comments act as a reverse Hagbahah: instead of elevating the beauty of Torah, they leave others with a bitter impression. Part of our calling to be מְקִים תּוֹרָה is to care deeply about how all Jews—even those distant from Torah study—perceive the eternal word of Hashem.

We must lift Torah for ourselves and for others. Too often, we let it slip. ■



Rabbi Taragin's newest sefer entitled **"To be Holy but Human: Reflections upon my Rebbe, Rav Yehuda Amital (Kodesh)"** is now available at: [mtaraginbooks.com](http://mtaraginbooks.com) and in bookstores

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## HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA  
SHMIDMAN  
DIRECTOR,  
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# Lost and Found

Have you ever lost something of deep value and felt the panic of it slipping away—only to experience the joy of finding it again because it bore a unique sign that could belong to no one else?

This week's Haftorah describes that very dynamic between Hashem and Israel: וְקָרָא: "לְךָ עִיר ה' צִיּוֹן קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל". Zion, once abandoned and humiliated, will be called holy and beloved. The reversal of shame into honor is captured in the very word צִיּוֹן, which comes from the root צָיַן, meaning a "mark" or "sign." A צִיּוֹן is a marker on the road—something that makes an object identifiable. The Hebrew name Tzion (צִיּוֹן), or "Zion," appears at least 157 times in Tanach, underscoring how central this image of marking an identity is to our story.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that we,

the Jewish people bear this צִיּוֹן. Through Torah study and mitzvah observance, we carry a mark that sets us apart as Hashem's own. Even when dispersed to the far corners of the earth, even when history tried to erase us, this inner sign never faded. Like a lost object that can always be reclaimed by its true owner because of its unmistakable mark, the people of Israel remain recognizable to Hashem.

Redemption, then, is not only about rebuilding a city. It is the rediscovery of a people, the moment when Hashem reveals to the world that what seemed lost was never forgotten. The Navi assures us that the day will come when Hashem will reclaim us publicly, calling us and our city: וְקָרָא: "לְךָ עִיר ה' צִיּוֹן קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל". ■

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Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world,  
in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama  
shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with  
tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a  
crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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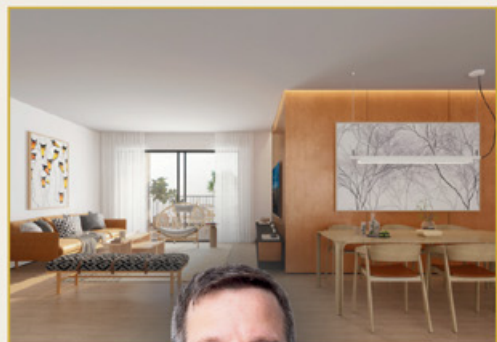
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# Parenting Lessons from Malchuyot, Zichronot, and Shofarot

As Rosh Hashana approaches, it is worthwhile to begin taking a look at the Rosh Hashana Machzor and to prepare for this special day of Tefilla. The Mussaf Shemoneh Esrei of Rosh Hashana is composed of three important sections: Malchuyot, Zichronot, and Shofarot. Together, they form a framework for how we relate to Hashem — and a model for how we can approach our own roles as parents.

### MALCHUYOT: THE MANY FACES OF HASHEM'S KINGSHIP

In *Malchuyot*, we proclaim Hashem as King. But Chazal do not paint a one-dimensional picture of monarchy. Through ten different pesukim, we are shown the multifaceted

nature of Hashem's *melucha*. Here are some examples:

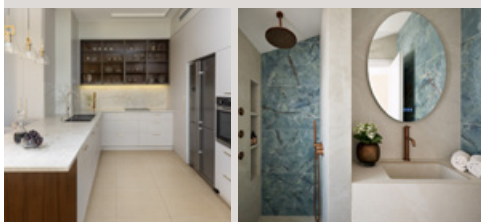
- **Majestic Ruler of Nature** – ה' מֶלֶךְ גָּאוֹת — לָבַשׁ ... אֶף תִּכּוֹן תִּבְל בִּל תִּמּוֹט" — Hashem dons grandeur, establishing the world on a firm foundation.
- **Judge** – לְשֹׁפֹט אֶת הָרָעָה — Hashem judges the nations with truth and precision.
- **Melech and Moshel** – כִּי לֹה' הַמְּלִיכָה — ומִשָּׁל בְּגוֹיִם" — Hashem is both democratic leader for those who accept Him willingly and dictator for those who resist His authority.
- **Parent and Child** – אֲנִי רֹאשׁוֹן וְאַנִּי אַחֲרוֹן" — As the **Vilna Gaon** explains based on a Midrash in Shemot Rabbah, Hashem is "the first, the father to everyone who has no father, who is lonely, and the last, the son, to those who die childless."
- **Friend** – וְתִרְוַעַת מֶלֶךְ בּוֹ" — From the root *re'ah* (friend), Hashem is described as One who stands close, loyal, and supportive.

This variety of roles teaches that true authority is not one-dimensional. As parents, we too must wear many hats. At times we must

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be firm like a king, setting boundaries and expectations. At other times we serve as judge, evaluating situations with fairness. And at the same time, we are parents and even friends, offering love, warmth, and closeness.

*Malchuyot* reminds us that real leadership — whether Divine or parental — is a blend of strength and compassion, authority and closeness.

### ZICHRONOT: REMEMBERING WITH LOVE

In Zichronot, we ask Hashem to “remember” us for the good. Two of the pesukim chosen from Sefer Yirmiyahu show Hashem remembering us a loving parent:

- “כֹּה אָמַר ה' זָכַרְתִּי לָךְ חֶסֶד נְעוּרֶיךָ, אֲהַבָּת כְּלוּלוֹתֶיךָ, לְכַתֵּךְ אַחֲרֵי בְמִדְבָּר, בְּאַרְץ לֹא יְרוּעָה” - This pasuk recalls how Hashem remembers the *chesed* of our youth — the faith and devotion we showed when we left Mitzrayim and followed Him into the desert. What makes the pasuk so striking is its placement: it appears in the middle of Yirmiyahu’s harsh words of rebuke, after the decree of destruction had already been sealed and the Navi is describing the tragedies that will befall Am Yisrael. Suddenly, right in the midst of despair, comes a note of comfort. The message is powerful: no matter how far we stray or how badly we mess up, Hashem will continue to love us. He can always find the spark of good, the memory of our loyalty, and hold onto it as a source of compassion.
- “הֵבֵן יִקְרִי לִי אֶפְרַיִם, אִם יֶלֶד שֶׁעֲשׂוּעִים, כִּי מָדִי דְבָרִי בּוֹ זָכוֹר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ עוֹד, עַל כֵּן הִמּוֹ מֵעַי לוֹ, רַחֵם” - In this pasuk, Hashem describes us as a “precious son” and a “delightful child.” The imagery is striking: even when we have grown and stumbled,



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Hashem still relates to us as if we are His playful little child. **Rav Avigdor Neven-zahl** explains that this is like a mother who cannot stop speaking about her children — proudly showing pictures, retelling stories, and in the process constantly reigniting her own love.

**Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik** adds a deeper layer: The first pasuk reflects the love of a father, who remembers his child's early years with pride and nostalgia. The second pasuk reflects the love of a mother, who will always see her child as her baby, no matter how old. Together, the two pesukim remind us that Hashem embodies both aspects of parental love — cherishing our youthful devotion and continuing to view us with the tenderness of a parent who sees their child as forever young and beloved.

This is the essence of parenting. Our children will struggle and stumble, but our memories of their pure beginnings help us respond with patience and compassion. We look back at their “חסד נעורייך” moments and continue to see them as “ילד שעשועים” — precious and beloved even when imperfect. Just as we beg Hashem to remember us this way, we must learn to remember our children this way too.

## SHOFAROT: COMMUNICATION BEYOND WORDS

Finally, in Shofarot, the piercing sound of the shofar reminds us of three defining moments: the shofar of Har Sinai, the shofar that proclaims Hashem's kingship, and the shofar the future Geula.

The shofar is not words — it is a cry. It speaks directly to the heart when speech fails. As parents, we know there are times when words fall short, and what our children need most is for us to just be there for them. Sometimes our actions, attentive listening, or a heartfelt hug speak louder than any words ever could. The shofar teaches us that communication must come from the heart to be effective.

In conclusion, *Malchuyot*, *Zichronot*, and *Shofarot* together form a framework that mirrors many aspects of parenting:

- **Malchuyot** — The role of authority, expressed through its various facets.
- **Zichronot** — Memory suffused with love and compassion.
- **Shofarot** — Communication that comes from the heart

On Rosh Hashanah, we stand before Hashem as His children. We crown Him as King in all its aspects, we ask Him to remember us as His beloved children, and we cry out from the heart with the shofar. And in doing so, we learn how to crown ourselves with responsibility as parents — balancing authority and love, memory and compassion, words and heartfelt presence.

B'ezrat Hashem, may the ideas found in our Rosh Hashana Tefillot inspire us to parent with the same care and guidance that Hashem shows us. And in that merit, may we be inscribed for a year of growth and meaningful parenting. ■

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## RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS  
RAV, THE JERUSALEM SHUL  
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*Be'ezrat Hashem*, this column, for the coming season, will be devoted to the ethical, moral and Mussar teachings from Rav Kook. In particular we will look at a distinct *mida* (character trait) each week from Rav Kook's sefer *Midot Hara'aya*, learn more about its content and seek to contemplate how these ideas can help foster personal spiritual growth and greater *Kirvat Elokim* (closeness with the Almighty).

# Rav Kook's Midot: A Time for Self-Reflection

When young Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, then an eighteen-year-old Talmidic student in Smargon (today Smarhon, Belarus) heard of the passing of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, the founder of the Mussar movement, he rent his garment, removed his shoes and sat on ground in ritual mourning. And when the premier disciple of Rabbi Salanter, Rabbi Yitzchak Blaser (known as "Reb Itzeleh Peterburger" after his rabbinate in the Russian imperial capital), was hospitalized in Jaffa, Rav Kook walked to Sha'arei Zion hospital, rather than ride in a wagon. Rav Kook explained that to pay a visit to someone of Reb Itzeleh's spiritual stature, it is fitting to set out on foot as a pilgrim. (The Legends of Raba Bar Bar Chana, Naor, p. 214)

Fifty years after the passing of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, Rav Kook penned a eulogy to honor

his beloved master. In it he sums up Rav Yisrael Salanter's remarkable achievements and writes the following:



"The theme that encompassed his entire life was inventing a comprehensive 'bandage' that would heal every type of illness that afflicts the soul...He noted how profound the disease of distraction from self-examination is, how people are preoccupied - either with their daily physical concerns, or with their own intellectual fixations - and no one thinks of trying to find himself on the storm of life." (Mussar Avicha, Rabbi Joshua Gerstein, p. 206)

It is apparent that Rav Kook held Rabbi Yisrael Salanter in awe. However, Rav Kook did not fully accept his pathway. In what way did Rav Kook differ?

It is instructive to study Rav Kook's small work, *Midot Hara'aya* in order to gain insight

into Rav Kook's distinct pathway in Mussar and see which areas he placed special emphasis.

*Midot HaRa'aya*, a somewhat lesser known work of Rav Kook, was compiled by his son Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook. It contains concise insights regarding eighteen character traits which one should contemplate and develop in one's service of God. Some of the categories in the treatise are familiar categories that one finds in many of the Mussar books, but occasionally, Rav Kook invokes concepts that are distinctive to his unique worldview.

The opening page begins with the two introductory statements which serve as a preface for the book:

"The refinement of morals by reason must precede their cultivation in feeling, for unless a person can distinguish between good and evil, how will his feelings help him to acquire the good as an attribute of his nature, and to purge his nature of evil after he has become accustomed to it?"

"Every good attribute bears with it some accompanying defect and this is the full service of God: to express the good attributes cleansed from all the dross and the defects."

The teachings above from Rav Kook echo a foundational theme in the Mussar movement. Namely the essential need to consistently devote time and energy to contemplating one's actions and assessing one's character. One who fails to take personal stock on a regular basis will most likely come up short in one's spiritual development and service of God.

It is noteworthy that Rav Kook's opening statement in *Midot HaRa'aya* hints at a particular critique of the method found in the classic Mussar movement. One of Rabbi Salanter's innovations was that Mussar be



read aloud with "burning lips" (*sefatayim dolekim*), thus engaging the emotion. Students were encouraged to recite the texts in a mournful tune. (Ibid. p. 215)

Rav Kook believed that this emotional overload was counterproductive and potentially hazardous. It was conducive to depression (*atzvut*) whereas the study of Torah and *teshuva* should be pursued with a cheerful outlook and in a state of equanimity.

### HILLEL AND THE RAMBAM: SELF-IMPROVEMENT

The notion that Judaism places immense value on self-examination and moral growth is not a new idea which was discovered by the Mussar movement in the 1800s. This notion of working on bettering one's *midot* can be seen in a multiplicity of statements and teachings from the revered Sages of the Mishna and Talmud. One exquisite example of this idea is found in a teaching of Hillel in the Mishna: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now when? (Avot 1:13)

The Rambam, in his commentary on this Mishna, argues that Hillel is speaking of the need for religious self-examination. The opening phrase "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" refers to the need for a person to take ownership of improving their virtues

and bettering their character.

The second statement “And if I am only for myself”, the Rambam understands to mean that when I look honestly at myself, my conduct and behavior, I realize “what am I?,” I have much to improve on and miles to go in mastering my *midot* (character traits).

And lastly, “If not now when”, is expressing the idea that one must address their faults and character flaws swiftly before they become too ingrained and established where it will be nearly impossible to make the needed adjustments. (Rambam’s Commentary on Pirkei Avot 1:13)

#### **A DAILY PRAYER TO EXCEL IN OUR CHARACTER AND ACTIONS**

In the morning prayers, following *birchot hashachar*, one says the following: “Help us attach ourselves to the good instinct (*b’yetzer hatov*) and to good deeds (*maasim tovim*). Rav Kook explains that a person often has an urge to pursue loftier character traits and act more righteously, however, those aspirations easily fade and one fails to incorporate these qualities and make them part and parcel of one’s personality. We therefore pray, *v’dabekenu*, to help us to bond with virtuous deeds. (*Siddur Olat Re’iyah* p. 78)

In a similar vein, Rav Kook offers a novel interpretation of the morning blessing, “Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who makes firm the steps of man.” (*Birchot Hashachar*). This blessing recognizes a remarkable ability granted to man in that he is able to balance himself so that he walks and can even run at rapid speed.

Rav Kook extends the notion of balance from the physical body to the ability of man to balance the many conflicting values and choices that a person consistently makes in

life. For example, we know that we are not to hate and yet there are times when hatred of evil is necessary. We must develop a character which is deeply compassionate and generous and yet there are times we must restrain ourselves and from being too compassionate which can ultimately be harmful to others and to ourselves. This unique “balancing act” in the area of *midot* is what we strive to achieve and bless God daily for the human capacity to achieve this nuanced path in life. (Ibid. p. 74)

#### **40 DAYS LIKE NONE OTHER**

The forty days from the first of the month of Elul until Yom Kippur, is a unique and auspicious time for every Jew to direct one’s mind and heart in self-reflection and *teshuva*. The well known verse from ‘Shir Hashirim,’ *Ani le’dodi v’dodi li*, is cited in this regard because of the fact the first letter of word spells *Elul* and that it captures the love and intimate bond between a Jew and Hashem which can be intensely experienced this time of year. The Chafetz Chaim (*Mishnah Berurah, Hilchot Rosh Hashana*) adds that each word of the Hebrew phrase *Ani le’dodi v’dodi li*, ends with the letter yud (the *yud* is the equivalent of 10). All four *yuds* add up to 40. This hints to the distinct opportunity and heavenly gift given to a Jew each year, for forty days, to engage in *cheshbon hanefesh, tikun hamidot*, and strive for lasting spiritual growth.

#### **LESSONS FOR LIFE:**

- We must approach spiritual growth in an orderly fashion, grasping and integrating each level before moving on to the next higher level.
- Even positive traits need careful watch and vigilance. Humility, for example, can be misplaced, and there are times



when one must exert one's leadership and authority rather than be docile and humble.

- It is characteristic of the pleasure-driven person that he scorns constructive criticism. However, righteous and insightful individuals in our midst who see things from their sagacious vantage point can offer counsel and steer others in the right direction. Those who are wise will seek their counsel. ■



**Rabbi Goldscheider's** most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at [aaron@ouisrael.org](mailto:aaron@ouisrael.org) at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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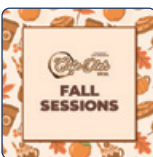
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# Omitting Tachanun in Selichot in the Presence of Simcha

לעילוי נשמת  
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

**Question:** At our pre-*Shacharit Selichot* during Elul, do we omit *Tachanun* if a *chatan* or a principal to a *brit mila* is present, as we omit it during *Shacharit*?

**Answer:** The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 131:4) rules to omit *Tachanun* in the “house of a *chatan*,” a *shul* that will host a *brit* that day, and a *shul* which a *chatan* is attending. While the Rama (ad loc.) says that only a *chatan* on his wedding day pushes off *Tachanun*, *Acharonim* rule that it applies throughout the week of *Sheva Berachot* (Mishna Berura 131:26), which is the *minhag*. The *minhag* is also to push off *Tachanun* if the father, the planned *mohel*, or the *sandek* of a baby on the day of his *brit* is *davening* there (ibid. 22). The idea is that the *simcha* that the *tzibbur* absorbs from these people is incongruous with *Tachanun*, as we find on happy days throughout the year. While it is not fundamentally severe to say *Tachanun* anyway, we have no reason not to follow the *poskim*’s instructions.

There is more than one reason not to push off *Tachanun* in this way at *Selichot*. One applies to the *simcha* of *brit* if the *Selichot*

finish before daybreak. As opposed to the *chatan*, whose halachic status of *simcha* lasts throughout the entire time period, those related to the *brit* do not have a formal status. Rather, the proximity of the important *mitzva* of *brit* conveys through them an atmosphere of joy that precludes *Tachanun*. The Pitchei Teshuva (Isserlin) 581:1 is among those who posit that if they get up to *Tachanun* when it is too early for a *brit mila*, *Tachanun* should be recited. He is unsure what to do between *alot hashachar* and *netz hachama*, when the Torah-level *mitzva* of *mila* has begun but the Rabbis required to wait until sunrise (Megilla 20a). Machazeh Avraham (OC I:154) says that since *mila* at that time is valid *b’di’aved*, *Tachanun* is omitted.

B’tzel Hachochma (IV:146) sees the exemption as applying pre-daytime even though *brit mila* must be performed during daytime. He bases this on the fact that the baby’s status of requiring *brit mila* exists from the beginning of the baby’s eighth day, i.e., from the previous night. Arguably, the baby’s halachic status is less relevant than the fact that people have awoken for the day on which the *brit* will take place. It is unclear if according to B’tzel Hachochma, we would omit *Tachanun*

at a late-night *Selichot* when the *brit* will be the next morning.

Shevet Halevi (IV:54) succinctly presents a broader reason not to skip *Tachanun* for a *brit* or a *chatan*, upon which we will expand. Unquestionably, we do not waive the entire *Selichot* due to a *chatan* or a *brit*. He argues, then, that the role of *Tachanun* in *Selichot* is not as a relative “add-on,” like it is in during regular *tefilla*, which sometimes is said and sometimes not (e.g., Shabbat, major and minor *chagim*, *Ma'ariv*). Rather, *Tachanun* is part and parcel, in terms of structure and content, of the fabric of *Selichot*. Therefore, given we are doing *Selichot*, we cannot allow ourselves nor will we gain much by omitting *Tachanun*. Some point out that similarly while *Erev Rosh Hashana* is too festive to recite *Tachanun* in *Shacharit*, we recite it in *Selichot*.

One can argue whether this viewpoint fits well with the following general approach to *Selichot*, championed by Rav Soloveitchik (see Batei Yosef 581:2-3). *Selichot* of Elul and Tishrei have a semi-status of an independent

*tefilla*, introduced with *Ashrei*, ending with *Kaddish Titkabel*, and including *Tachanun*. One can claim that *Tachanun* has a similar role in *Selichot* as in standard *tefillot*, so it can be omitted due to *simcha*. However, there is stronger logic to say that we lack precedent to amend the internal structure of *Selichot*, and also that the moods of *Selichot* and *Tachanun* are too similar to do one and not the other.

Both practical approaches have serious proponents (see opinions in B'tzel Hachochma *ibid.*), and each *shul's minhag* is fully acceptable. Some communities have a preference to make *Selichot* short, while some communities prefer consistency; factoring in these preferences is also legitimate. ■

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# Attraction, Expectations, and Opening the Heart

לעילוי נשמת  
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

## **Yair asks:**

My candidate is extremely particular about the external look of the person he's willing to date. It feels like he's dismissing wonderful people too quickly. Should I try to help him loosen up? Or maybe he just knows what's right for him?

## **Aleeza Answers:**

This is such an important question, and not so easy to answer.

When someone is very fixed on a "look," it often comes from a deeper place. Maybe it's fear: *If I don't choose exactly what I want, I'll regret it. Maybe I won't be attracted to them for a lifetime.* Or maybe it's a belief: *I have to feel instant attraction or it's not real, I don't want to convince myself.* And sometimes... it's just habit. They've trained their eyes to notice a certain "type," and everything else feels "off."

We know that looks don't truly sustain a relationship. And yet you can't marry

someone you're not attracted to. So what degree of attraction does a person need? Looks change. Styles shift. But middot, kindness, faith, laughter, and shared values that's what builds a bayit ne'eman and only get better over time.

I do think it's valuable to gently open the conversation. Not to pressure or shame, but to invite curiosity. You can ask questions like:  
– "What matters most to you long-term?"  
– "How would it feel to meet someone amazing in almost every way...what could you get used to if it was different than you expected?"  
– "Would you consider dating someone outside of your typical look preference?"  
Sometimes, just *trying* a different experience opens the heart. I've seen people say "not my type" and then find love with somebody they almost walked past. But they had to be willing to *look again*.

You can still support them *and* challenge them to try outside their type, with love. But remember you won't have been the first one to request this. They have likely been asked



**Mazal Tov to**

**Leah Yerushalmi and family**  
on the birth of a **grandson**



**Mazal Tov to**

**Joy & Sean Kahn and family on**  
the marriage of their **daughter**





this many times.

The goal isn't to erase their taste. It's to expand their vision. To help them see that Hashem's blessings sometimes come in unexpected wrapping. May they be open to your suggestion and may their soulmate be revealed to them soon.

With warmth, hope, and faith in the process, **Aleeza** ■

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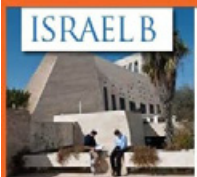


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# Where Will You Be for the Holiday Prayers?

Across Israel, preparations are already underway for the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. During this season in Israel, shuls overflow and many new prayer gatherings open—in kibbutzim, in city squares, and even in tents along the streets.

This week, Yonatan Levy, a hi-tech professional from Givat Shmuel, sent me the following story:

“For several years now, I have been joining the Yom Kippur prayers at Kibbutz Nir Oz in the Gaza periphery. The kibbutz members are joined by a group of religious Jews from Givat Shmuel and Jerusalem, together with alumni of the Hesder Yeshiva in Elon Moreh.

On erev Yom Kippur, dozens of kibbutz residents would come for *Kol Nidrei*, and the following day, at the fast’s conclusion, many would gather to hear Amotz, a kibbutz member, blow the shofar. The joy would peak when everyone—religious and secular, old-timers and youth—danced together and sang *L’shana Haba’a B’Yerushalayim Habnuyah* and *Asher Bachar Banu Mikol Ha’amim*. Even the children would come,

wide-eyed, as the air filled with the sound of the shofar.

Each year, we tried to bring a *kohen* so that everyone could hear Birkat Kohanim. But on our last Yom Kippur there, in 5784 (2023), we couldn’t find one—until we suddenly remembered Ravid Katz, a local resident who came every year for the *Ne’ilah* prayer. We asked if he could come that year for *Shacharit* as well, to lift his hands and bless the congregation. Ravid hesitated at first but eventually agreed.

When he arrived in the morning, we understood his hesitation. It was the first time in his life he had ever been asked to give Birkat Kohanim. He turned to Binyamin, one of the organizers, and asked him to explain the order of the blessing.

The moment was moving beyond words: a simple, kind, humble man, standing there for the very first time, raising his hands to bless the congregation with the ancient words: “May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn His face toward you and grant you peace.” That moment is forever engraved in our hearts.

Only a week and a half later, on October 7th, Ravid fought heroically with the kibbutz emergency squad—and fell in battle. His body was taken to Gaza and later returned in a military operation. Ravid worked with at-risk youth, was a devoted father, and so much more could be said about his remarkable character.

When I went to comfort his family, they told me how deeply moved he had been on that



Yom Kippur, just days before his murder, to deliver Birkat Kohanim. It was clear to me that this was no ordinary blessing but a final gift he left us all—a message of unity, a moment of holiness before his soul ascended to heaven.

This year, we are once again organizing a joint *minyán* with members of Kibbutz Nachal Oz, now based in Kiryat Gat. The ties have remained and even strengthened. This Yom Kippur, Birkat Kohanim will be dedicated to the memory of Ravid Katz, our *kohen*, who blessed us only once in his life.” ■

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

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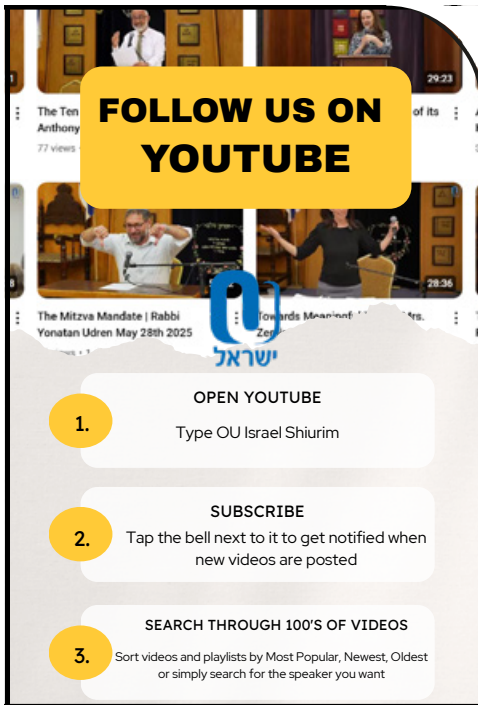
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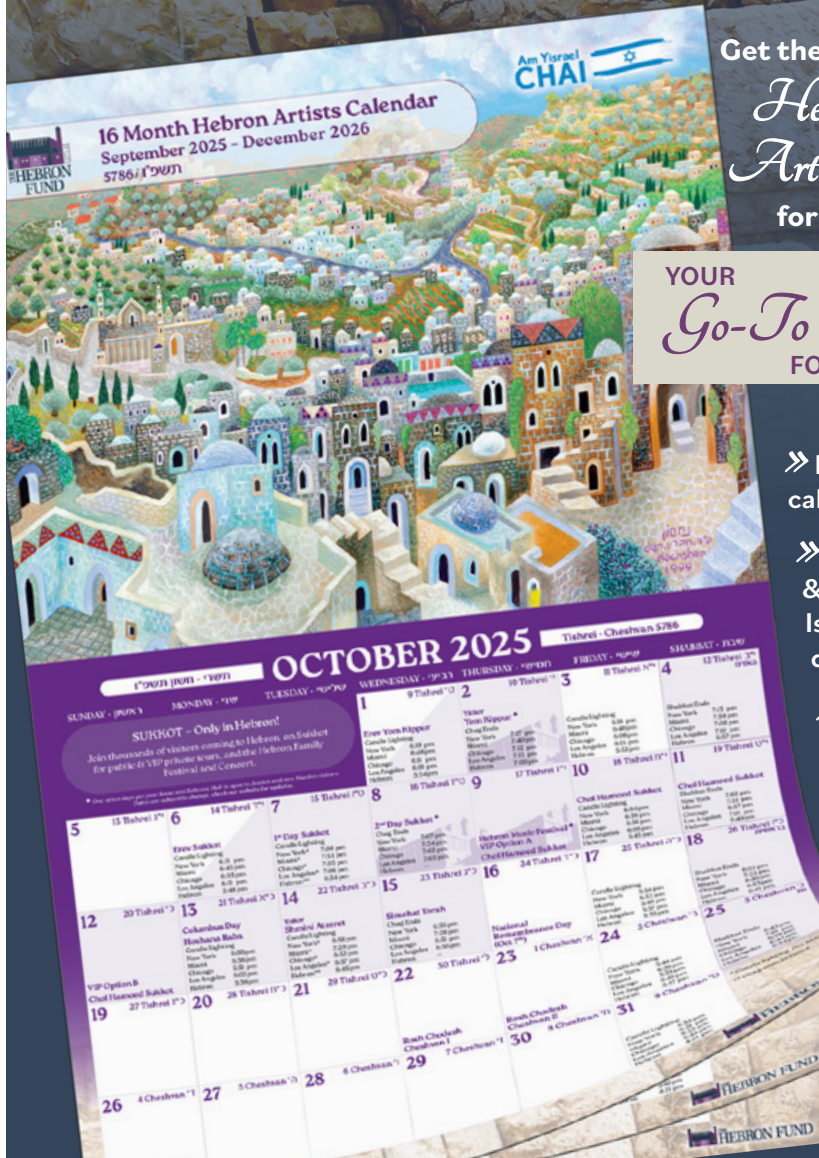
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### “WHAT ARE YOU GRATEFUL FOR?”

We begin this week's parasha, *Ki Tavo*, learning about the laws of *Bikkurim*. *Bikkurim* were the first fruits that farmers in the Land of Israel would collect from their fields and bring to the *Beit HaMikdash*.

It states in Devarim (26:1–3):

“וְהָיָה כִּי־תָבוֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הָקָדְשָׁנוּ לְךָ  
נַחֲלָה וּיְרִשְׁתָּהּ וְיָשַׁבְתָּ בָּהּ: וְלָקַחְתָּ מִמְּאֻשֵּׁי כָל־פְּרִי  
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לָךְ וְשָׂמְתָּ בַטֶּנֶא וְהֵלַכְתָּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה'  
אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם:”

“When you enter the land that Hashem your God is giving you as a heritage... you shall take some of every first fruit of the soil, which you harvest from the land... put it in a basket and go to the place where Hashem your God will choose to establish His name.”

Rashi comments that the mitzvah of

*Bikkurim* only applies to the fruits of the Land (*shivat haminim*) and only once we have entered and conquered the Land of Israel. We see here the importance of the Land and the special mitzvot we are privileged to fulfill in it. The *Or HaChaim* adds that the Torah emphasizes that Hashem gave us this portion of the Land—it is His gift to the people of Israel.

*Bikkurim* is our way of showing gratitude and saying thank you! Hashem has given us an incredible Land, where miracles happen every day. By declaring and separating the first fruits of the Land, we recognize and appreciate Hashem's role in establishing the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael.

As we go about our daily lives, whenever we see something beautiful in the Land of Israel, let's take a moment to pause, appreciate, and thank Hashem for His blessings.



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מֵאֲרָצָךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ”

“And you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which Hashem your God gives you.”

At the start of our parasha, we are commanded to bring *Bikkurim*, the first fruits, to the *Kohanim* in the *Beit HaMikdash*.

But why the first fruits? They are the “first-born,” the ones we've been anticipating and

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working so hard to grow. They represent the moment we finally see the results of our efforts. But is it really just our effort?

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Just like the first fruits, we pause and remind ourselves that our success is not solely our own. We thank Hashem, who has brought us to where we are, and we continue to give thanks for all that is yet to come. *Am Yisrael Chai!* ■




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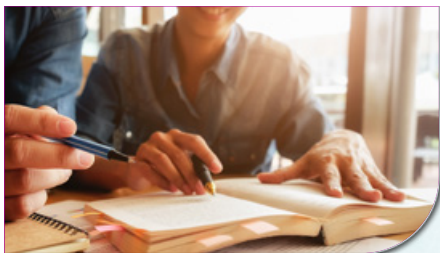
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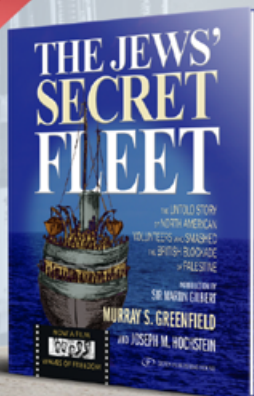


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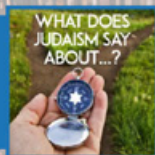


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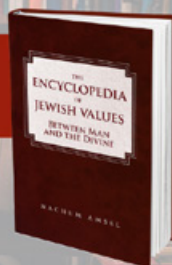
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