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Tidbits**

ISSUE 1670

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JULY 25TH 2026 - י"א אב תשפ"ו

ואתחנן
VA'ETCHANAN

AVOT 4 | SHABBAT NACHAMU



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**Are Preferences
Meant to Be Tested?**
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IMPORTANT REMINDERS



7 Days After Molad 9 Av: Wed. night July 22

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Av /Wed. night July 29



The Fast of Tisha Be'Av begins Wednesday evening (July 22) at sundown (Jerusalem: 7:45pm) and the Fast concludes on Thursday night at 8:11pm (Jerusalem)

Birkat HaLevana is generally recited after Ma'ariv following Tisha B'Av (Rema, O.C. 426:1; M.B. 426:11; Chazon Ovadia, p. 410), although some recite it during the Nine Days (Gra, O.C. 426).

Ideally, one should first eat something and put on leather shoes (M.B. 426:11).

However, if delaying would mean missing the opportunity to recite it with a minyan, it may be recited beforehand (Sha'ar HaTziun 426:9; Nitei Gavriel 87:3).



Tu Be'Av is observed on Wednesday, July 29.

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Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	4:51-4:59
Sunrise	5:48-5:55
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:17-9:20
Magen Avraham	8:35-8:39
Sof Zman Tefila	10:26-10:28
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:45
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:20-1:19
Plag Mincha	6:15-6:10
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:47-7:40



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
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The Shema is arguably the most central prayer in our *Siddur*. Interestingly, the three paragraphs we say, morning and night, are drawn from three different places in the Torah, all read in the summer season. *V'ahavta*, the first paragraph, appears in this week's *parsha*, Va'etchanan (Devarim 6:4-9). *V'haya Im Shamo'a* is found in next week's *parsha*, Eikev (Devarim 11:13-21). And the third, "*Parshat Tzitzit*," comes from a bit earlier, Parshat Shelach (Bamidbar 15:37-41). *Baruch Hashem*, my wife and I have had the tremendous blessing of seven boys and two girls. Among the seven Bar Mitzvahs we have celebrated, five have been in the summer; three featured the Torah readings of precisely these three passages: one in Va'etchanan, one in Eikev, and one in Shelach.

For the last two Shabbatot, our family visited Camp Dror - two weeks ago with Camp Dror's girls' camp in Hodayot, and then this past week of Shabbat Chazon with the boys' camp in Kfar Chassidim. They were both

wonderful experiences for us. This past weekend, when I came to *davening* on Friday morning at the boys' camp, I witnessed a truly moving moment. The camp began to read the *Shema* out loud, word by word, according to the *trop* melody. Listening to boys from fifth grade through twelfth grade sing every word with its proper intonations, it struck me how much the *trop* gives us. Reading it this way places the emphasis on exactly the right word, it ensures that not a single word is skipped or slurred, and it grants us much greater meaning to what we are saying.

It was a great experience to be a part of. I saw close to a hundred boys sitting with their counselors, *davening* at length, with hardly anyone talking, no phones, all saying together, "*V'ahavta* - you shall love Hashem with all your heart, your soul, your might." Right then, I wished every parent could be a fly on the wall in that room, to get so much pride from watching their sons *daven* so beautifully. Knowing I had a column to write and report on this, I took a picture so their parents and our broader readership can get a glimpse of it.

Then, when we reached the words of *Shema* "*v'shinantam l'vanecha v'dibarta bam* - you shall teach them to your children and speak of them" (Devarim 6:7), I couldn't stop thinking about how the parents that decided to send their kids to Camp Dror, whether they sent their sons or their daughters, or both, were truly fulfilling the mitzvah of *v'shinantam l'vanecha v'dibarta bam*. Because we know that the mitzvah of *chinuch* of children is not only upon the parents to do directly, but also

In memory of our mother
Rose Edith Cohen a"h
13 Menachem Av

May the learning from this
Torah Tidbits be in her memory

We miss you very much

*Janice Weinreb
Barbara Yasgur
Benay Deborah Cohen-Nesher
and Families*

to hire the right teachers and the right staff to be able to educate our children in the best way possible.

The Gemara (Bava Batra 21a) tells us about how Rabbi Yehoshua ben Gamla established that teachers of children be appointed in every city, because by entrusting their children to the right teachers and staff, the Torah can live on in the next generation so much more powerfully. Throughout both Shabbatot at Camp Dror, I watched *v'shinantam l'van-echa* come alive.

Every morning, a half hour before davening, the Cocoa Club gathers over hot cocoa and biscuits for serious personalized learning sessions to prepare for the morning prayers. I had the privilege of presenting at one of those sessions on Shabbat morning, and I saw about fifteen boys across from me with real thirst, asking question after question while we discussed the importance and essence of Shabbat Chazon, as well as its connection to Parshat Devarim. I told them how lucky they are that they have parents who want to make sure that in their spiritual toolbox they have at least one summer experience at Camp Dror, which will undoubtedly enhance their lives with Torah, with positive role models, with a passion for Torah that Camp Dror is giving them. The previous Shabbat on the girls' campus, I also spoke about how lucky they were. Not only to be at Dror, but also about living in the Land of Israel. And later on towards the end of Shabbat, I spoke about how although the war gave us unfortunately painful moments, we must understand how lucky we are with the unbelievable miracles we have also seen.

What moved me most was seeing such genuine enthusiasm and passion from our staff at Dror. I was able to connect to staff over those Shabbatot at both campuses, and I heard from



so many of them how they had decided to dedicate such a large portion of their summer in order to inspire the younger generation. I heard from them how they believe in these kids and teenagers, how they see themselves as role models to be able to build up the next generation, to make sure that the next generation is equipped with everything they need in order to be our future leaders.

The staff we have is so, so incredible. I was floored hearing so many campers talk to me about how they hope to be *madrichim* and *madrichot* when they get older, and *madrichim* and *madrichot* telling me how they have been coming to Camp Dror since the fifth or sixth grade!

This is true *v'shinantam* - teaching and inspiring the next generation. On the girls' side, we have to recognize Zahava Bauer, Shyelle Nagel, and Mikki Averick, who dedicate themselves so completely for their campers, and on the boys' side, Rabbi Yonatan Hirschhorn and Rabbi Leor Brenner doing the same. I know this is a team that barely sleeps in order to give campers an incredible summer. Leading both camps is Rabbi Kenny Pollack, who does a phenomenal job with passion, a love of Torah, and genuine love for every single camper.

I haven't experienced a *Kabbalat Shabbat* like this in years. There was well over an hour of dancing and singing, with not a single camper left sitting on the side. It was

so remarkable that I was grateful to have brought OU Israel board member Meir Raskas along, so that someone could help me convey to our leadership what words can barely capture. And my wife told me when she attended the girls' *davening* how special it was, and about the amazing spirit the girls gave to the singing and the atmosphere of Shabbat.

Our dear readers should know how beloved the Torah Tidbits are up there in camp. I brought a huge stack of about 60 Torah Tidbits up to the girl campus, and every last copy was taken. Rabbi Pollack had even asked me to bring more (which was difficult, since our run of 15,000 copies is so in-demand), so that we can make sure there is enough for both campuses. The copies I brought to the boys' campus were likewise taken without any left over. And it was really amazing to see. Throughout Shabbat I saw campers not only reading the great comic in the back by Netanel Epstein, but also the *divrei Torah*. Several told me they read Torah Tidbits with their parents each week and say it over at the Shabbat table. To see the next generation modeling their *madrichim*, learning not from what they are told but from what they are shown, was so incredible.

Another Torah Tidbits story from this past Shabbat warms my heart. Right before Shabbat on the boys' campus, I was surrounded by a crowd of staff members who begged me to take a picture with them. They said all they wanted was that the picture would be printed in this week's Torah Tidbits! I happily obliged!

I want to thank Esti Moskovitz, our Director of Anglo Engagement & Programming in Israel, & her associate Nehama Cohen, for taking everything we do for the English-speaking community in Israel, and Camp Dror in particular, to ever greater heights. And to every parent and grandparent who sent a camper

**Condolences to
Michaela Levine and family
on the passing of her husband**

ALAN ז"ל

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

to Camp Dror this summer: you have made an extraordinary investment in their future, and I have no doubt you will *shep nachas* as you watch them grow.

May we all merit to say *Kriat Shema* with a little more *kavanah*, finding deeper meaning in the great work of educating our children, grandchildren, and all those who are dear to us, with the words "v'shinantam l'vanecha."

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,


Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel
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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT VA'ETCHANAN

Our parsha begins a majestic section of the Torah. It is unlike anything in the Torah up until this point.

All of the book of Devarim is Moshe's final charge to the people. He knows he will not enter the Land of Israel with the people. He has a lot to say before he takes leave of them.

He began his 30-chapter long speech last week with how we got to where we are. We left Mt. Sinai, journeyed to the Land, sent in spies, that ended badly, and now 40 years later we are here, poised to enter the Land.

That introduction was descriptive. He related the history. But it was just an introduction. What he really wants to convey to the people is not a description of history. What he really wants to convey is how special our entire Jewish enterprise is.

In memory of
BUBBY SPIRO a''h

**With every passing day
we wish for
One more day with you.
One more hug.
One more kiss.
One more book.
One more Shabbat together.**

**We love you,
Daniel, Sarah, Rakhel Chava
& Zahava**

And that begins with our parsha. The language changes. It is engaging, uplifting, expressive. It is emotional. Moshe, who engaged with G-d "panim el panim", face to face as it were, knows that relationship is simply unique. There has never been, nor will there ever be such a relationship. And it isn't him. He is merely the messenger, the representative of the Jewish people.

Moshe urgently wants to convey to the Jewish people how special our relationship with G-d is. The unique covenant between us. He doesn't emphasize what to do but why to do it. He is conveying the heart, the essence, the depth of our relationship with G-d, and more importantly, His relationship with us.



1ST ALIYA (3:23-4:4)

I beseeched G-d to allow me to enter the Land. He refused: ascend the mountain, gaze at the Land that you will not enter. Charge Yehoshua, for he will lead the people. Now, Yisrael Shema, listen to the commandments so you will remain in the Land. You saw what occurred with Baal Peor: those who followed Baal Peor were punished while those who did not, survived.

Our parsha begins with Moshe's desire to enter the Land of Israel. And with G-d's refusal. This really belongs in last week's parsha, the parsha describing how we got to where we are. Where we are is on the banks of the Jordan, with me, Moshe, about to take leave because G-d has refused my request to enter. That is last week's parsha.

We begin our parsha with Moshe explaining why he is giving this long speech. Moshe

is going to open his heart, his deepest feelings, trying to convey to the people how glorious our relationship with G-d is. This description sets the stage for that, for Moshe has to explain why he is about to make this big long speech. Because, I am not going into the Land with you.

I want to give you a heart transplant, taking my heart and giving it to you, so you will live in the Land without me physically but with my heart.



2ND ALIYA (4:5-40)

Keep the mitzvot, for they are wise. The nations will look at the mitzvot and say: what a wise people. And who has a G-d as close as ours is to us? Or who has noble laws as our Torah? Remember the day at Sinai, the mountain on fire and the darkness of the cloud. The Voice emanated but there was no form. Make no images. I taught you the mitzvot; keep them, for they are the covenant G-d commanded from you. Your children will make images and be exiled, flung to the ends of the earth, serving idols there. They will return to G-d, seeking Him with all their heart. He will not forget His covenant. Has any other people heard G-d's voice amidst fire? Or another one Who took His people with wonders from amidst another? Know and take to heart that there is none other than G-d.

Moshe begins with the incredulous. As if to say to the people: I can describe how we got to where we are, you know, leaving Egypt, getting the Torah. But let's pause a second and think about what that all means.

It means we have an intimate relationship with our G-d. Or more importantly, He with us. He Spoke to us at Sinai! That is unprecedented. Unique. He Redeemed us from Egypt. He wanted us? No other nation has

this embrace from G-d. It is unique to us.

Moshe has pierced the heart of our Jewish life. We have a special covenant, a special bond, initiated not by us, but by Him. His reach to us.

Everything else, the mitzvot, the prohibition of idol worship, it all is a seamless consequence of this covenant. How could you worship idols after He Did all that for you?



3RD ALIYA (4:41-49)

Moshe separated 3 cities of refuge for those who kill accidentally on the east side of the Jordan. Moshe taught these laws on the east side of the Jordan in the lands already conquered. These conquered lands extend from the Dead Sea all the way to Mt. Hermon.

Moshe's choosing 3 cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan, is his confirmation of the right of Bnei Gad, Bnei Reuven and half of Menashe to dwell there.

But also, his confirmation that entering the Land of Israel is not entering paradise. Our life will never be paradise. We aren't entering a dream. We are entering a special stage in our history. But people are people. Terrible things, like manslaughter, will happen. You are special, the Land is special, while at the same time we are human beings.

That is the balance we seek; living great

May your learning this Shabbat
be לעלוי נשמת

רחל בת שבת יהושע
יצחק חיים ונעכא ז"ל
RUTH MILLER ז"ל

ט"ז באב

on her 21st yahrzeit

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lives with full awareness of our human foibles.



4TH ALIYA (5:1-18)

Mt. Sinai. Moshe called the people: Shema Yisrael to the commandments, for our G-d made a covenant at Sinai. He made it with you, face to face amidst fire. I communicated it because you were afraid. And He said: I am G-d who took you out of Egypt. Do not make images. Or take My name in vain. Guard Shabbat as a day of rest to remember that you were slaves in Egypt. Honor your father and mother. Do not murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, covet.

Moshe relates the Ten Commandments. But less for their content than for the broad sweep of the meaning of Mt. Sinai. The drama of G-d bending down, reaching for man, initiating an intimate and direct contact with us. Descending on the mountain to speak directly with us.

And while the people present were fearful, and so He spoke with me, Moshe, that is not because of my uniqueness. He was speaking with you. He wanted to speak with you. That is the meaning of the moment. It is an intimate moment; His Love for us.



5TH ALIYA (5:19-6:3)

When you heard these words amidst the fire and the cloud you were afraid. You approached and said: now we know man can hear G-d's voice but we are afraid we will die. Moshe, you hear from Him, not us. G-d agreed and said to me: you stand with Me and I will tell you all the commandments to keep in the Land.

The word Shema appears 8 times in the first 7 verses of this aliya. The people heard the Voice at Sinai but were afraid. So, Moshe, you hear it for us. And G-d heard their suggestion and said it was good. Fine, Moshe will hear

G-d's voice.

But who hears is not the issue. The issue is who hears. I mean, who hears the voice with his ear; that can be Moshe. That's fine. But who hears, I mean, hears, gets it, understands it, accepts it; that, is you. Hence the last verse in the aliya, 8 verses later, comes back to Shema: Shemata Yisrael, you heard Israel and hence, you must keep the mitzvot. There is hearing and there is hearing.

Moshe is your hearing aid to hear; but you are the ones who need to hear. Do you hear what is going on? G-d is reaching for you. You need to hear that loud and clear.



6TH ALIYA (6:4-25)

The Shema. Shema Yisrael, G-d is one. You shall love G-d, and have that on your heart constantly; teaching of it to your children, speaking of it, at all times and in all places. Be bound with love of G-d; let it guide you and your home. When you come into the Land, you will find things that you did not build: large and good cities, homes full of wonderful things, cisterns, vineyards, olive groves. But be careful to not forget G-d. Fear Him, serve Him. Do what is moral and good in His eyes and He will do good for you. When your children ask you about all these commandments, tell them: we were slaves in Egypt, G-d took us out to give us this Land. These commandments are to cultivate awe of Him and bring us merit, to preserve us in this Land.

While we love the first line of the Shema, it is the second that is the emphasis of the paragraph. Love of G-d. All your heart, all your soul, all your might. We are used to saying this line so we become numb to its power.

Moshe is speaking to the people: pour yourself into this. Let it go. Invest all you got into it. No inhibitions. Love of G-d is to animate

all of your life: bubbling over to your children, percolating in you in your travels, your actions, your thoughts, your home. Wow. Little wonder that this paragraph is the heart of our daily tefila. We need to be G-d obsessed. Moshe is plain as day here: love G-d with all your heart, soul and might. All in.



7TH ALIYA (7:1-11)

When you come into the Land, conquer the seven nations. Do not make any covenant with them. Do not marry them, for that will lead to idol worship. You are G-d's holy people. Not because you are numerous but because He loved you and made a covenant with you. Know: He keeps His covenant. You too keep the mitzvot.

The love of G-d is exclusive. Idol worship violates that love. Be wary of the path to infidelity: people. Covenants with the idol worshippers of the Land will soften the way to their gods. And more dramatically, marrying the people of the land accelerates the path to their gods. Avoid covenants with the people. And avoid marrying them.

HAFTORAH YESHAYAHU 40:1-26

This week's *haftorah* is the first of a series of seven "*haftarot* of Consolation." These seven *haftarot* start on the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av and continue until Rosh Hashanah.

This section of Yeshayahu begins with G-d's conveying to the prophet: "Console, O console My people . . . Announce to Jerusalem that her period of exile has been fulfilled and that her sins have been forgiven."

Yeshayahu's prophecy describes some of the remarkable events that will unfold with the onset of the messianic era. These include: the return of the exiles to Yerushalayim, the

revelation of Hashem's glory, and the rewards and retribution that will then be meted out to the nations of the world.

The navi then goes on to comfort the people, describing G-d's power and might, and reassuring them of His care for His people. ■



STATS

45th of 54 sedras; 2nd of 11 in Devarim.
Written on 249 lines in a Torah, rank: 7.
21 parshiyot; 5 open, 16 closed, 7th (tied with Ki Tavo).
122 pesukim - rank: 17 (2nd in Devarim) same as Vayak'hel & Ki Tavo - but larger.
1878 words; rank: 10th (2nd in Devarim).
7343 letters; rank: 10th (2nd in Devarim).
Va'etchanan's pesukim are longer than average, hence the jump in rank from 17th for pesukim to 10th for words.



MITZVOT

12 of 613 mitzvot: 8 pos., 4 prohibitions and many more that are counted elsewhere - this is so for several sedras, but it really shows for Va'etchanan (e.g. Aseret HaDibrot in Yitro has 14 mitzvot, repeated here but not counted here).

**May the Torah learning
in this Torah Tidbits be a merit
for our beloved mother
Asna bat Reb Schneur a"h
who personified Ahavat Chinam
on her 22nd Yartzheit, 8 Av
from her daughters,
Shelley Hirshberg and Helen Sher**

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פן תשחיתון ועשיתם לכם פסל (ד:טז)

"You shall greatly beware for your souls, for you did not see any manner of form" (4:15)
"Lest you act corruptly and make yourselves a carved image" (4:16)

Why does the Torah make every effort to warn us to steer clear of the sin of idolatry? The Meshech Chochmah (Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen M'Divinsk 1843-1926) answers that although Moshe had brought forth great miracles to the Israelites, bringing the Manna, splitting the Red Sea and conquering the great Emorite king. While alive, those who saw Moshe remembered him as a simple human being. However, as Moshe's generation were committed to die in the desert, the new generation entering the Land of Israel, will have less to base their memories of Moshe on. The Torah was concerned that this new generation would consider Moshe to be transcendent and Divine, which could eventually lead them to lose faith in G-d. Already, when beginning to complain, the Israelites began to equate Moshe with G-d, as it says in Bamidbar 21:5 – "And the nation spoke against G-d and Moshe". Therefore, the emphasis of the Pesukim to steer clear of the danger of idolatry becomes obvious.

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

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

"What, Me? Worry?!"

I am a worrier. My friends and family tease me about it.

I sometimes worry about personal matters, and sometimes about professional concerns. More often, I worry about things that are going on in the community or in the world.

I worry about the economy, and I worry about Iran's development of nuclear weapons.

Because of my background in psychology, I sometimes compare my worries to the thoughts of patients who suffer from obsessive compulsive disorder. Like them, I sometimes have one worry on my mind and can think of nothing else. But I long ago decided that my worrying, though it may seem obsessive, is far from an indication of mental illness. Many people worry.

It is only very recently that I came to consider the possibility that, although my worrying was not a sign of a psychological disorder, it might be a sign of a theological disorder, a spiritual fault.

What prompted that consideration was a passage in the writings of Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, the late 19th century head of the Yeshiva of Volozhin, in Eastern Europe. In the introduction to his commentary on *Deuteronomy*, Rabbi Berlin, or the Netziv, as he is known, makes a remarkable statement:

"Reading carefully the words of instruction contained in this book, *Deuteronomy*, words which were divinely inspired and uttered by Moses our teacher, each person will find 'milk and honey' in accordance with his spiritual level... Therefore, each person should read it contemplatively, according to his ability, and he will find a straight path upon which to walk... So let this book be a source of illumination for one's life journey..."

I decided to heed the Netziv's counsel in reading this week's Torah portion, *Parshat Va'etchanan*, (*Deuteronomy* 3:23-7:11). But I immediately found myself facing a dilemma. Among the many themes and topics in this week's Torah portion are some strong words prohibiting idolatry. "Do not act wickedly and make yourself a sculptured image in any likeness whatever... You must not be lured into bowing down to them or serving them." (*Deuteronomy* 4:15, 19)

How does this apply to me? What "milk and honey" can I find in proscriptions against idol worship? When was I last tempted to make for myself a graven image, or to bow down to the sun or moon or stars?

The only answer I can find to resolve this dilemma is to profoundly redefine the meaning of the prohibition against idolatry for our day and age.

Idolatry in ancient times was a process by which primitive men identified a single object to worship. They turned away from the vastness of the universe and its complexity and isolated either a heavenly body or some artifact of their own making, and

came to believe that it, and only it, was worthy of their adulation. They became fixated upon a small fraction of reality. They became obsessed with one thing, and that thing was far from representative of the whole picture.

In more modern times, the process of idolatry took a different turn. Instead of fixating upon an object, human beings fixated upon an ideology. They came to believe that the vastness of the universe could be reduced to a set of ideas. Those ideas included the Enlightenment, nationalism, scientism, socialism, fascism, and communism. Those are but several of the idolatries of more recent history.

What they all have in common is a fixation or obsession with one set of ideas, as if that is all there is to life. That is where my nasty habit of worrying comes into play. The worrier becomes consumed with one fear, which may be trivial or may be monumental, but which is only a small part of the totality of existence.

When worrying is conceived of in this manner, it becomes apparent that worrying itself may be form of idolatry. When one is consumed by worry, the person is limiting his or her attention to one idea, or fear, or concern. Such individuals are ignoring the fact that there is a big world out there with a lot going on. They are certainly forgetting all the positive blessings that probably surround them.

Admittedly, this is a novel interpretation of idolatry, but it is one that fits our modern circumstances much better than sun worship or offering animal sacrifices to a totem.

This redefinition allows for a deeper understanding of another passage in this week's Torah portion, the *Shema*. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One". Only the Lord is One, because only He is

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all-encompassing. Nothing else is One in that sense – not the sun or moon, and not the currently popular ideology. They are all but parts of the greater whole.

Only of God is it said, "He is the place of the world, and the world is not His place." He contains the world; the world does not contain Him.

This is the real meaning of monotheism. Not that there is one God, but that God is One. Only He is big enough, complete enough, total enough, to be worshipped. Everything else is partial, fragmentary, and fractional. Everything else, including our worries, are mere idols which do not deserve the devotion we give them.

Perhaps the cynical Alfred E. Neumann of the comic books of my childhood was making a profound theological statement when he said, "What, me? Worry?!" ■



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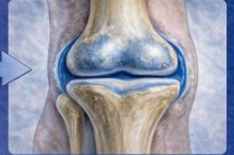
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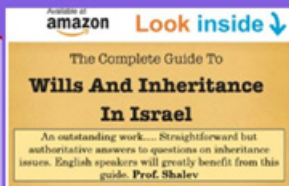
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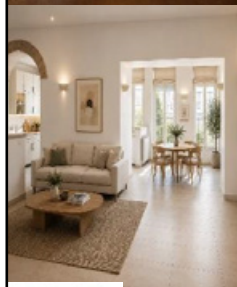
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HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

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

The First Commandment

One of the most profound disagreements in Judaism is the one between Moses Maimonides and Judah Halevi on the meaning of the first of the Ten Commandments.

For Maimonides (1135-1204), the first command is to believe in God, Creator of Heaven and Earth:

The basic principle of all basic principles and the pillar of all sciences is to realise that there is a First Being who brought every existing thing into being. If it could be supposed that He did not exist, it would follow that nothing else could possibly exist. If, however, it were supposed that all other beings were non-existent, He alone would still exist . . . To acknowledge this truth is a positive command, as it is said: "I am the Lord your God". (*Ex.20:2, Deut 5:7, Yesodei ha-Torah 1:1-5*)

Judah Halevi (c. 1080-c.1145) disagreed. The greatest of medieval Hebrew poets, Halevi also wrote one of Judaism's philosophical masterpieces, *The Kuzari*. It is framed as a dialogue between a Rabbi and the King of the Khazars. Historically, the Khazars were a Turkish people who, between the seventh and eleventh centuries, ruled a considerable area between the Black Sea and the Caspian

Sea, including southern Russia, northern Caucasus, eastern Ukraine, Western Kazakhstan, and northwestern Uzbekistan.

Many Jewish traders and refugees lived there, and in 838 the Khazar King Bulan converted to Judaism, after supposedly holding a debate between representatives of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths. The Arabic writer Dimashqi notes that the Khazars, having encountered the Jewish faith, "found it better than their own and accepted it". Khazaria thus became, spiritually as well as geographically, an independent third force between the Muslim Caliphate and the Christian Byzantine Empire. After their conversion, the Khazar people used Jewish personal names, spoke and wrote in Hebrew, were circumcised, had synagogues and rabbis, studied the Torah and Talmud, and observed the Jewish festivals.

The *Kuzari* is Judah Halevi's philosophy of Judaism, cast in the form of the imagined conversation between the king and a rabbi that led to the king's conversion. In it, Halevi draws a portrait that is diametrically opposed to what would later become Maimonides' account. Judaism, for Halevi, is not Aristotelian but counter-Aristotelian. The God of

the prophets, says Halevi, is not the God of the philosophers. The key difference is that whereas the philosophers found God in metaphysics, the prophets found God in history.

This is how Halevi's rabbi states his faith in *The Kuzari*:

I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, who led the Children of Israel out of Egypt with signs and miracles; who fed them in the desert and gave them the land, after having brought them through the sea and the Jordan in a miraculous way... (*Kuzari I:11*)

He goes on to emphasise that God's opening words in the revelation at Mount Sinai were not, "I am the Lord your God, Creator of Heaven and Earth" but "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (*Kuzari I:25*).

Halevi lived before Maimonides. Nahmanides (R. Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) lived after, but he too disagreed with Maimonides' interpretation of the opening verse of the Ten Commandments. His objection is based on a passage in the *Mechilta*:

"You shall have no other gods besides Me." Why is this said? Because it says, "I am the Lord your God." To give a parable: A king of flesh and blood entered a province. His servants said to him, "Issue decrees for the people." He, however, told them, "No. When they accept my sovereignty, I will issue decrees. For if they do not accept my sovereignty, how will they carry out my decrees?"

According to Nahmanides, the verse, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" is not a command, but a *preliminary* to the commands. It explains *why* the Israelites should be bound by the will of God. He had rescued them, liberated them, and brought them to safety. The first verse of the Decalogue is not a law but a



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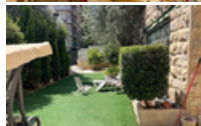
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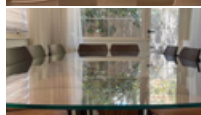
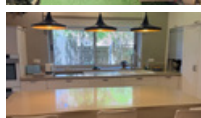
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statement of fact, a reason why the Israelites should accept God's sovereignty.

Thanks to a series of archaeological discoveries in the twentieth century, we now know that Nahmanides was right. The biblical covenant has the same literary structure as ancient near eastern political treaties, of which the oldest known are the "Stele of the Vultures" (before 2500 BCE), recording the victory of Eannatum, king of Lagash, over the people of Umma, both in southern Mesopotamia, and the treaty of Naram-Sin, king of Kish and Akkad, with the people of Elam (c. 2280 BCE). Other, later treaties have also been discovered, involving Hittites, Arameans, and Assyrians. One details a pact between the Hittite king Hattusilis III and the Pharaoh Rameses II, regarded by some scholars as the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

These treaties usually follow a six-part pattern, of which the first three elements were [1] the *preamble*, identifying the initiator of the treaty, [2] a *historical review*, summarising the past relationship between the parties, and [3] the *stipulations*, namely the terms and conditions of the covenant. The first verse of the Ten Commandments is a highly abridged form of [1] and [2]. "I am the Lord your God" is the preamble. "Who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" is the historical review. The verses that follow are the stipulations, or as we would call them, the commands. Nahmanides and the Midrash are therefore correct in seeing the verse as an introduction, not a command.

What is at stake in this difference of opinion between Maimonides on the one hand, Judah

Halevi and Nahmanides on the other? At the heart of Judaism is a twofold understanding of the nature of God and His relationship to the universe. God is *Creator of the universe* and the maker of the human person "in His image". This aspect of God is universal. It is accessible to anyone, Jew or Gentile. Aristotle arrived at it through logic and metaphysics. For him, God was the "prime mover" who set the universe into motion. Today, many people reach the same conclusion through science: the universe is too finely tuned for the emergence of life to have come into being through chance (this is sometimes called the Anthropic Principle). Some arrive at it not through logic or science but through a simple sense of awe and wonder ("Not *how* the world is, but *that* it is, is the mystical" said Wittgenstein). This aspect of God is called by the Torah, *Elokim*.

There is, however, a quite different aspect of God which predominates throughout most of *Tanach*, the Hebrew Bible. This is God as He is involved in the fate of one family, one nation: the Children of Israel. He intervenes in their history. He makes a highly specific covenant with them at Sinai – not at all like the general one He made with Noah and all humanity after the Flood. The Noahide covenant is simple and basic. The Sages said it involved a mere seven commands. The Sinai covenant, by contrast, is highly articulated, covering almost every conceivable aspect of life. This aspect of God is signalled by the use of the four-letter name for which we traditionally substitute (since the word itself is holy and could only be pronounced by the High Priest) the word *Hashem*.¹

Maimonides, the philosopher, emphasised the universal, metaphysical aspect of Judaism and the eternal, unchanging existence of God.

1. On the two aspects and names, see Kuzari IV:1-3; and Ramban to Exodus 3:13.



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Judah Halevi and Nahmanides, the one a poet, the other a mystic, were more sensitive to the particularistic and prophetic dimension of Judaism: the role of God in the historical drama of the covenant. Both are true and valid, but in this case, Halevi and Nahmanides are closer to the meaning of the biblical text.

Judaism needs both voices: the philosopher who teaches us to seek God in creation, and the prophet who teaches us to find Him in history. But when the Torah introduces the Ten Commandments, it begins with a hint to the story of our redemption before the command of law, a reminder of the journey from liberation to the constitution of liberty. ■

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PROBING THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER
FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

From Galut to Ge'ulah

After the first thirty-nine p'rakim of Sefer Yishayahu, chapters that primarily focus upon Israel's past sins-their moral and religious transgressions that led them astray, the fortieth perek - this week's well-known haftarat 'Nachamu' - marks the beginning of Yishayahu's prophecies of comfort, that continue through the last twenty-six chapters of the sefer.

The nevu'ot that fill these last p'rakim speak of the future redemption of the nation, of their eventual release from foreign oppression and even the promise of Israel's return to their homeland. Indeed, powerful words of comfort and solace for the people.

And yet, it is not difficult to understand the efficacy of such comforting prophecies when they were addressed to a generation that **preceded** the galut and the destruction of the Bet HaMikdash, by 150 years!? Why, after all, would Yishayahu dismiss the problems of his own time and, instead, prophesy comforting visions of forgiveness for sins-not yet committed and a return to a land in which they currently dwelled??

The solution to this seeming "enigma" can be found by a simple review of Israel's history. Yishayahu served as Hashem's prophet during the era of Assyrian domination over Shomron and Yehuda. It was during the Assyrian

invasion that the Northern Kingdom was exiled and many of the Judean cities were devastated. As a result, the population in the Yehuda feared their own exile-especially when the Assyrian hordes besieged Yerushalayim itself. In this light, we better understand the reason for Yeshayahu's nevu'ot and the value of his comforting words to his generation.

However, we might appreciate the depth of Yishayahu's message in this nevuah, the opening to the visions of comfort, and why it is so fitting as being the first of the prophecies of consolation.

"Amar Rav: 'kalu kol hakitzin, v'ein davar talui-elah b'tshuva u'ma'asim tovim'; uSh'muel amar: 'Dayo la'avel shya'amod b'evlo' " [Sanhedrin 97b]

HaRav Ya'akov Meidan turns to the disagreement found in the G'mara between the great scholars of the first Tannaitic era, Rav and Shmuel. In discussing what G-d would demand of His nation in order to bring about their final redemption, Rav submits that there is but one way that could bring the 'geulah'. He states: "all depends upon repentance and worthy deeds", **"Tshuva and Ma'asim tovim** '. On the other hand, Shmuel disputes the idea that there is but one way to bring redemption, arguing that **"Dayo la'avel shya'amod b'evlo'**, "It is enough for the mourner [Israel] to endure his period of mourning."

According to Rav Meidan, the exceptional approach of Shmuel was one that Yishayahu preached throughout these chapters of comfort, pointing to the navi's recurring depictions of Israel's years of suffering and repression,

and, in contrast, descriptions of their glorious future. Such visions were certainly powerful promises of relief for the Israel and comfort, as well. But beyond that, the navi's assurance that Ge'ulah would come as a result of their suffering - even if the entire nation did not return to G-d in complete penitence - was powerful consolation for the nation! Certainly, we must strive to return to G-d and His mitzvot, but Yishayahu's prophecies implanted real hope in the future generations, that Hashem understood Israel's misery and regards their extended anguish as reason for their liberation.

Today we look back some 2,000 years after Shmuel articulated his understanding of bringing redemption, and in doing so, we fully understand - and even witnessed - the years of torment and harassment, years of banishment, pogroms and ghettos. Perhaps, we would never be able to imagine being worthy for redemption. But the Tanah Shmuel told us (as explained by the *Yad Ramah*) that "complete repentance is **not** a prerequisite for redemption; the very suffering of our exile atones for the Jewish nation!

And so, you now understand why Shabbat Nachamu is truly a Shabbat of comfort and hope. ■

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Transmitting Torah - True Measure of Commitment

The first paragraph of *Kriyat Shema* is deeply personal. It speaks directly to the individual. וְאַהֲבַת אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ - *You shall love Hashem your God.* וְהַיּוֹדֵדִים הָאֵלֶּה... עַל לִבְּךָ - *These words... shall be upon your heart.*¹

The *parasha* focuses on a person's inner love and fear of God. Then, suddenly, in the middle of this intensely personal section, the Torah interrupts with the following imperative: וְשִׁנְנָתָם לְבָנֶיךָ - *You shall teach them diligently to your children.*² Hazal famously interpreted the term children broadly to include students as well.³

The placement is striking. The Torah first speaks about one's personal obligation: loving Hashem, placing Torah upon one's heart, accepting His sovereignty. Then, abruptly, it commands us to teach others, before returning immediately to the personal mitzvot of wearing tefillin. Why is the phrase of וְשִׁנְנָתָם לְבָנֶיךָ - *to teach children and students*, inserted specifically in the middle of these personal commandments?

THE LITMUS TEST OF AUTHENTICITY

The *Likkutei Yehoshua*⁴ explains that this placement is deliberate. The Torah is teaching that the truest indicator of genuine love for Hashem is whether one transmits it to the next generation. An individual may recite the Shema every day and outwardly appear committed, yet external behavior alone does not always reveal a person's deepest convictions. Sometimes people act against what they intellectually know to be true. A person may know that something is unhealthy



Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt"l

or destructive, yet continue because of habit, temptation, or weakness.

The *Likkutei Yehoshua* offers a powerful analogy. One who smokes excessively, or drinks irresponsibly, may fully acknowledge the dangers of his behavior. Nevertheless, despite his own failings, he will warn his children never to adopt those negative habits. Similarly, someone negligent about his own health will encourage his children to eat properly and care for themselves. Why? Because what a person wants for his children reveals what he truly believes.

1. Devarim 6: 5-6

2. Devarim 6:7

3. Kiddushin 30a

4. Rav Yehoshua Shainfeld, *Likkutei Yehoshua*

A person's own behavior may sometimes be compromised by weakness. However, what he teaches his children reflects the deepest inclinations of his heart. Therefore, when the Torah juxtaposes the personal obligations with teaching one's children, it teaches that transmitting Torah is itself testimony that Torah truly resides in one's heart. One who genuinely loves Torah cannot keep it to himself.

SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING ONE'S CHILDREN

Rav Shimshon Pincus⁵ develops this idea even further. When one davens or learns, he feels he is directly serving Hashem. Yet, when a father spends half an hour learning Mishnah or Gemara with his child, he may subconsciously feel that he is sacrificing "his own" learning time for the sake of his child. Rav Pincus sharply rejects this mentality. Learning with one's child is not secondary. Teaching one's child appears in the very same paragraph as *vedibarta bam-* that one should engage in Torah study himself, because teaching one's children is itself part of speaking words of Torah. A father who sits and learns with his child is not interrupting his spiritual life. He is fulfilling one of its greatest expressions.

Rav Pincus compares this to physical health. Parents naturally understand that a child requires constant nourishment. A healthy meal today may not transform the child overnight, but years of proper nutrition build strength and vitality. So too spiritually. A father may wonder: "What difference will fifteen minutes of learning really make?" But every Mishnah, every pasuk, every brief moment of consistent Torah learning

shapes the soul of a child. Just as healthy food strengthens the body over time, regular Torah learning strengthens the soul. Therefore, the Torah commands not merely to teach, but sharpen (ושנתם). Torah must become alive, natural, and deeply engraved within the child.

The Torah does not view Judaism as a private religious experience. A person's level of religiosity is measured not only by what a person says, but by what he longs to pass on. A Jew can daven, learn and outwardly appear connected, but the deepest proof of one's commitment is whether one feels compelled to share Torah with others, especially with one's children. When Torah truly enters the heart, it naturally seeks continuity.

Every moment a parent learns with a child, answers a question, or models genuine love of Torah, he is building eternity. Sometimes those moments feel small and insignificant. Yet spiritual greatness is rarely created in dramatic flashes. It is formed quietly through consistency, warmth, repetition, and presence. A few minutes of learning. A conversation at the Shabbat table. A Mishnah reviewed on the way somewhere. A father or mother showing that Torah matters. These moments shape generations.

Perhaps that is why וישנתם לבניך stands in the very center of *Kriyat Shema*. It highlights that the ultimate expression of *Ahavat Hashem* is not merely to hold Torah within our hearts, but to ensure that its flame continues to burn in the hearts of others in future generations. ■

5. Rav Shimshon Pincus; Tiferet Shimshon

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Menachem Ussishkin z'l, Secretary of the First Zionist Congress, was the head of the Jewish National Fund and one of the great builders of the Land. He dedicated his life to encouraging *aliyah*, and strengthening agricultural settlement and made a great impact in the renewal of Jewish life in Eretz Yisrael. Having just returned from an overseas trip,

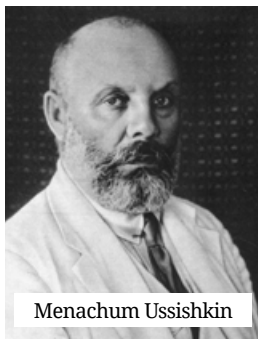
on Erev Rosh Hashanah 5690 (1929 / תרפ"ט), just a bit more than a month after the murderous Arab pogroms in Tzfat, Yerushalayim and Chevron, Ussishkin went to daven at the Kotel and recorded an account of his experience:

"Jewish Jerusalem was still wrapped in mourner's black and the impact of the frightful occurrences had not yet subsided. Somber and depressed, I entered the Old City. On the entire route to the Kotel, I met virtually no Jews; only police and Arabs filled the narrow streets.

Soon, I found myself before the Kotel... That wall, a reminder of our great and glorious past... and only two Jews were standing there, the *shammash* and myself. The entire plaza in front of the Kotel was filled with British policemen; above, near the mosque on the site of the Temple, Arabs stood looking down on the Jewish

ruins; and I stood silently in my distress...

I do not remember how long I stood there with these depressing thoughts. Dusk fell and darkness began to engulf the Kotel plaza, lanterns began to glimmer nearby, yet here it was forbidden to light them. I detected the sound of approaching footsteps. Out of a darkened side street stepped an elderly Jew of stately appearance, attired in traditional *yom tov* garb, who was accompanied by two men..."



Menachem Ussishkin

Ussishkin recognized "the elderly Jew". It was the revered leader of the *Yishuv haYashan*, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zt'l, the righteous "Guardian of Jerusalem". As founder of the Eida haChareidis, Rav Sonnenfeld represented unwavering traditionalism and uncompromising dedication

to *kedusha*. Ussishkin was awe-struck in the presence of the *tzadik*:

"I did not move or approach him, for I did not want to disturb his awesome reverence. He approached the Kotel with bowed head and began to kiss its stones with holy fervor. A deep sigh escaped his lips. He raised his head, gave the stones a final embrace, and turned to leave. Then he noticed me and approached.

"How happy I am," said the Rav, "that I have found here a brother who shares our anguish and pain. In recent years I have not visited the Kotel on Erev Rosh Hashanah, for I find walking this distance difficult. But after such events, I felt compelled to come and see this remnant of our past glory."

With the dark shadow of a painful summer hanging over them, the elderly *tzadik* of the Old City and the dedicated builder of the Land shared a few heavy, silent moments together in the desolate shadow of *בית מקדשנו*, ‘the remnant of our destroyed holy Temple’. Suddenly, Rav Sonnenfeld looked up, and with his eyes shining with hope, exclaimed, “*Es vet zei nisht helfen!* It will not help them (the Arabs) — let us not be dejected! *גם זה יעבור*, ‘this too shall pass.’ We will soon return to this holy place, not with bowed heads and through the broken, narrow alleyways, but with pride, in a rebuilt Yerushalayim!”

On this Shabbos Nachamu, may all of us, brothers and sisters who have “shared anguish and pain” be blessed to share joyous occasions, see and experience revealed good, with the restoration of Jewish pride and well-being, בגאולה השלימה והאמיתית, with the arrival of the complete and true Redemption.

Excerpt from Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah, forthcoming (Mosaica Press, Elul 5786) ■

Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the “Baderech” series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.



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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

This coming Tuesday evening and Wednesday, we will commemorate the sacred, yet often overlooked day of *Tu B'Av*—*Chamisha Asar B'Av*. The fifteenth day of the month of Av is filled with an inner joy that is both mysterious and deeply redemptive. The **Talmud (Ta'anit 30b)** teaches that there were no days as joyous for the Jewish people as *Tu B'Av* and *Yom Kippur*. While *Yom Kippur* offers the joy of forgiveness, *Tu B'Av* reveals the joy of reunion—of souls, of hearts, of the collective soul of *Am Yisrael* made whole again.

The **Apter Rebbe**, the **Ohev Yisrael zy'a**, explains the significance of this day through his deep teachings on the Hebrew letters. Every letter, he taught, is a vessel of Divine light, a code of spiritual reality. **Tu B'Av** is the fifteenth day of the month of Av (comprised of the letters *alef* and *bet*), corresponding to the fifteenth letter of the **Alef-Bet, Samech (o)**, that offers us a key to its meaning.

Samech is unique among the Hebrew letters: it is a perfect circle, closed and complete. A *Samech*, like all circles, has a center which is equidistant from all spaces along the circle, meaning no matter where an individual

may be standing around that circle, they all remain equally close to the center of the circle. The *Sameach* teaches us that every individual remains equally close to *Hashem*, without hierarchy or condition. The *Samech* symbolizes Divine support, surrounding love, the unshakable embrace of *Hashem* for every soul.

Tu B'Av reflects that same energy. On this day, the daughters of *Yerushalayim* would dance in borrowed white garments, in the vineyards; encouraging the young men and women to forge soul-connections not based on tribe or status, but essence and values. The **Gemara (Ta'anit 26b)** tells us that those who did not have a white dress of their own would borrow, so that no one would be ashamed. Everyone danced together, equal, radiant, and beloved.

The **Apter Rebbe**, whose life and Torah were devoted to *Ahavat Yisrael*, would say that the greatest spiritual elevation comes not from asceticism or isolation, but from loving every Jew, regardless of background or level. The circle of the *Samech* has no corners—no top or bottom, no inside or outside. So too must our love and connection flow: whole, unconditional, and unbreakable.

Perhaps most beautifully, this imagery of the circle refers to the unity we will experience in the days of *Mashiach*. The **Gemara** in **Ta'anit 31a** teaches that in the future, "*Hakadosh Baruch Hu oseh lahem machol la'tzaddikim—The Holy One will make a circle dance for the righteous*". *Hashem* will stand in the center, and each soul will point and

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exclaim: "*Hinei Elokeinu, Zeh Hashem Kivinu Lo!*"—"Behold our G-d, this is Hashem for whom we have longed!"

It will be the final *Samech*. A circle of redemption. A dance of equality and Divine presence, where no one is closer, and no one is further. Each one will see *Hashem* from their place in the circle. No competition, only joy and love.

This, says the *Oheiv Yisrael*, is the spirit of *Tu B'Av*. A foretaste of the future. A glimpse at that dance that each of us will experience, as we greet *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*.

Reb Tzadok HaKohain M'Lublin zy'a, explained that the essential joy of *Tu B'Av* emerges specifically after the pain and sadness of *Tisha B'Av*, for then the consolation begins to be revealed, and from within the concealment and destruction itself, the bestowal of Divine love and mercy is revealed.

The saddest day and the happiest day of the year occur only six days apart. This is no coincidence. Redemption is born from brokenness. The deepest love often follows the deepest separation. The Jewish calendar teaches that despair is never the final chapter.

Yehi Ratzon, May we merit to take to heart these beautiful teachings, and soon gather together to dance in that great circle of redemption, with *Hashem* at the center, and each of us basking in the light of unity. ■

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The World of Chicken Shechitah: Understanding the Basics

The world of kashrut is complex. Kashrut concerns arise during the production of nearly every food we consume. Many of these issues stem from Rabbinic enactments, while others are rooted directly in the Torah. Even Rabbinic decrees often exist to safeguard Biblical kosher laws.

The laws of *shechitah*, however, are unique in that they are primarily Biblical in origin. It is therefore understandable that many people are particularly meticulous in this area of halachah.

There are many questions regarding which chickens one should purchase, whether for home use or the food service industry. This article will address only the most fundamental issues relating to chicken *shechitah*.

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SHECHITAH

In earlier times, society was far less

industrialized. Food production and distribution were local, simple, and transparent. Bread was purchased from the neighborhood bakery, which obtained its ingredients from local suppliers, who in turn bought directly from nearby farmers. Communities were familiar with the merchants and producers who supplied their food.

The meat industry functioned in much the same way. A person would purchase a live chicken from the local poultry seller, bring it to the *shochet*, who would perform the *shechitah*, and then take the bird home to pluck, prepare, and kasher it. Similarly, local butchers purchased a small number of cattle, sheep, or goats from nearby farmers and had them slaughtered by the community *shochet*. Any halachic questions that arose were referred to the local rabbi. In rural areas, many families even raised and slaughtered their own livestock.

Because *shechitah* was performed on a small, local scale during the times of the Mishnah and Gemara, Chazal generally addressed individual cases rather than large industrial operations. They taught that if a traveler was welcomed into the home of a religious Jew, he could assume that the meat served had been slaughtered in accordance with halachah.

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TREIFOT: MORE THAN PROPER SHECHITAH

Proper supervision of the slaughtering process is only the first step in ensuring that meat and poultry are kosher.

The Torah prohibits consuming an animal that suffered from a life-threatening injury or illness that would likely have caused its death even had it not been slaughtered. An animal with such a condition remains non-kosher despite having undergone a perfectly valid *shechitah*. Such an animal is called a *treifah*, and disqualifying injuries or illnesses are known collectively as *treifot*.

CHECKING CHICKENS IN ISRAEL

The *Shulchan Aruch* (Yoreh De'ah 39:1) rules that it is unnecessary to inspect an animal for every possible *treifah*. The sole exception is the lungs of mammals, since lung defects occur with sufficient frequency to require examination.

The *Shach* (ibid) explains that this ruling is based on the halachic principle that the overwhelming majority of animals are healthy. Accordingly, we may presume an animal is free of *treifot* unless there is reason to suspect otherwise. However, whenever a particular *treifah* is known to occur with meaningful frequency, it must also be checked (see *Rashba, Chullin* 9a). The precise threshold at which a condition becomes common enough to require inspection is the subject of halachic debate.

In Eretz Yisrael, defects are found with notable frequency in chicken lungs and in the sinews and tendons of the legs. Consequently, these areas require inspection.

The Israeli Chief Rabbinate requires that

a *mashgiach* examine every chicken's lungs and legs. In modern industrial slaughterhouses, however, more than 30,000 chickens may be slaughtered in a single day. Thorough manual inspection of every bird would require enormous manpower, making the process both slow and expensive.

For this reason, the Rabbinate generally requires only a visual inspection of the lungs and an external examination of the legs. While this approach identifies obvious defects, it may not detect every possible *treifah*.

Many *mehadrin* kashrut organizations (*badatzim*) employ a more rigorous system. They make an incision in each leg, remove the sinews and tendons, and inspect them directly. This method is significantly more thorough, although considerably more labor-intensive.

THE OU STANDARD

OU Kosher follows a system similar to that used by the *badatzim*, but with an important distinction. Rabbi Yisroel Belsky zt"l maintained that even this approach has limitations.

He explained that if a sufficiently significant percentage of chickens are found to have *treifot*, halachah requires that every chicken be checked. Once such an obligation exists, the inspection must be complete and reliable. In an industrial facility processing tens of thousands of chickens each day, it is virtually impossible to guarantee that every single bird has been inspected without exception.

A comparable concept exists in the inspection of leafy vegetables for insects. We do not examine every individual leaf. Instead, we inspect a representative sample from each batch. If that sample is found to be clean, halachah allows us to establish a *chazakah* that the batch is free of infestation.

Rabbi Belsky applied this principle to poultry. By conducting a meticulous inspection of a substantial representative sample from each flock, it is possible to establish a *chezkat kashrut* — a halachic presumption that the flock is healthy and free of problematic levels of *treifot*.

The challenge arises when such a presumption cannot be established because the sample reveals an unacceptable percentage of *treifot*.

This presents a significant difficulty for many lower-standard *shechitot*. It also creates challenges for the *badatzim*. Most *badatz* organizations serve specific communities and supervise numerous caterers, restaurants, and event halls

that rely exclusively on their certification. As a result, they often need to continue processing chickens even when a flock contains a problematic rate of *treifot*. Their only option is to inspect every chicken individually and thoroughly evaluate each lung and leg.

OU Kosher operates differently. Because our consumers also rely on other high-end kosher certifications, we are not obligated to certify every flock presented to us.

Accordingly, we carefully inspect the first several hundred chickens from each flock. If we discover even a relatively low incidence of *treifot* — approximately two percent or more — we simply decline to certify that flock. In certain situations, we may continue processing the flock only if the slaughterhouse has the capability to perform a meticulous examination of every individual chicken.

EXPERIENCE MATTERS

In *shechitah*, as in every area of kashrut, experience is indispensable. Years of practical expertise develop the judgment necessary to recognize subtle issues and maintain consistently high standards.

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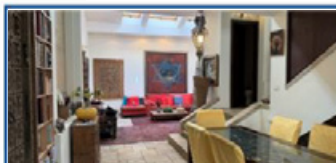
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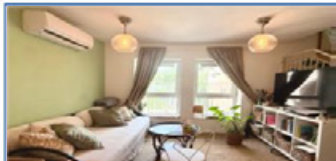
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Letter's Lessons

"Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem echad — Hear, O Israel: Hashem is our God; Hashem is One." (Devarim 6:4)

This grand verse has been found on the lips of countless Jews throughout the ages. Notably the letters *"ayin"* at the end of *"shema,"* and *"daled"* at the end of *"echad,"* are written larger than the other words in the Torah. Many of the commentators explain that these two letters, *ayin* and *daled* form the word *eid*—witness, as the Jewish people stand witness to the veracity of this statement. At the same time, however, there is much to learn from each of these letters independently.

Rav Shmuel Brazil in *B'shivili Nivra Ha'ol-am* offers a fascinating insight that highlights the significance of the *daled*. He teaches that when Hashem created Adam, there was absolute clarity and certainty of Hashem's presence in the world. After Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, reality became distorted, good and evil became mixed and difficult to discern from one another. This confusion is hinted at in Adam's punishment, *"arurah ha'adamah ba'avurecha... kots v'dardar tatzmi'ach lach* — cursed be the ground for your sake...And it will cause thorns and thistles to grow for you..." (Bereisheet 3:18).



Rav Shmuel Brazil

The word *"dardar"* is spelled *daled*, *reish* and again, *daled*, *reish*. Rav Brazil explains that the letter *daled* here alludes to the enlarged *daled* in the word *echad* in the Shema. The letter *reish* alludes to an enlarged letter *reish* at the end of the word *acher* in the verse, *"Ki lo tishtachaveh le'eil acher* — for you shall not prostrate yourself before **another** god," (Shemot 34:14). There is never a random placement of letters and words in the Torah; each detail is exceedingly precise and related to the other. **Dardar** expresses the obscurity included in the earth's curse. Can we recognize Hashem as *echad*, the sole authority of the universe? Or is our allegiance to *acher*, another? This is the distinction we must constantly determine as we go through life making choices

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and decisions. Do our thoughts, actions and deeds take us closer to Oneness or are they leading us toward another path?

Even the numerical difference between the letter *reish* (200) and the letter *daled* (4) is compelling. If we subtract 4 from 200, we are left with 196, the same numerical value as *kotz*, a thorn, that tiny little piece that sticks out of the top line on the *daled* that distinguishes it from the *reish*. Sometimes the feature that qualifies Oneness as opposed to “another” can be so small, yet, provokes us until we find it and make it our primary focus.

It is certainly not arbitrary that the Torah describes the war with Amalek as lasting, “*m’dor dor* — from generation to generation.” (*Shemot* 17:16) The word *dor* is spelled *daled*, *reish* as well. The biblical war with Amalek not only symbolizes the constant clash between the forces of evil and good



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in the world, but it also represents the daily struggle in us all to reveal truth and *kevod shamayim* in everything that we do. ■



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Yashar V'tov

Moshe Rabbeinu is about to begin the monumental task of reviewing the entire Torah, a process that gives Sefer Devarim its nickname, *Mishneh Torah* — the review or repetition of the Torah. Before launching into this review, however, he returns to the defining moment of Jewish history: Matan Torah at Har Sinai. He revisits the mountain where the Torah was given and, in the process, adds one important instruction that had not been explicitly recorded earlier:

“...וְעָשִׂיתָ הַיָּשָׁר וְהַטּוֹב...”

This pasuk demands that we act beyond the letter of the law — *lifnim mishurat hadin* — particularly in the realm of interpersonal ethics. When dealing with other people, we should ask not only, “What am I obligated to do?” but also, “What is the right and moral path to take?” Rashi offers one example: the willingness to reach a settlement or compromise (*peshara*) rather than insisting on litigating a dispute to the bitter end.

Halachah defines our legal obligations, but this pasuk reminds us that our moral responsibilities often extend beyond them.

BEYOND THE LETTER OF THE LAW

The demand of *Va’asita Hayashar Ve’hatov* in the realm of *bein adam lachaveiro* parallels the demand of *Kedoshim Tiheyu* in the realm of

bein adam laMakom. As the Ramban famously explains, *Kedoshim Tiheyu* calls upon us to preserve not only the letter of halachah but also its spirit. In theory, a person can indulge in endless physical pleasures while remaining technically within halachic boundaries. *Kedoshim Tiheyu* demands a life of restraint, moderation, and spiritual purpose, not merely technical halachic compliance.

Likewise, *Va’asita Hayashar Ve’hatov* teaches that our responsibility to others cannot be measured solely by legal obligation. We are expected to go beyond the letter of the law and act with kindness, fairness, and moral sensitivity.

MORAL CONSCIENCE

The concept of *yashar ve’hatov* is far more than a call to compromise or to follow the spirit of the law. It establishes the principle that not every decision falls within halachic parameters. The Torah does not leave those decisions to chance. Hashem also endowed us with a moral conscience, and He expects us to use that moral conscience to navigate moral issues even when they are not directly addressed by halachic codes.

Of course, moral conscience can never, *chas v’shalom*, override halachah. On the rare occasions when the two appear to clash, we submit our moral instincts to halachah. A halachah can never be suspended because it does not appear moral to us. Yet there remains a broad range of questions that



Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l

halachah does not directly address, and in those areas Hashem expects us to apply the moral conscience that He Himself implanted within the human heart.

This is not an obvious idea. Many would argue that halachah itself is the sole roadmap for moral decision-making. Human moral reasoning is too subjective and too limited to grasp the full complexity of every situation. Rather than relying upon our own moral instincts, we should allow halachah and mitzvot alone to shape our moral judgments.

RAV AHARON'S LEGACY

My own *mesorah* embraced this understanding of *Va'asita Hayashar Ve'hatov*. Mori V'Rabi, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, gave it a clear expression. In a landmark essay, *Does Jewish Tradition Recognize an Ethic Independent of Halakha?*, Rav Aharon wrote: "Traditional halakhic Judaism demands of the Jew... commitment to an ethical moment... The demand for transcending the *din* is itself part of the halachic corpus."

He rejected the assumption that every moral question can be resolved simply by consulting a halachic code: "Everything can be looked up, every moral dilemma resolved by reference to code or canon... [that] notion is both palpably naïve and patently false."

Va'asita Hayashar Ve'hatov is therefore much more than a narrow obligation to extend ourselves beyond halachic requirements in interpersonal affairs. It establishes an entire religious paradigm: follow your moral conscience as a complement to halachic mandate.

I witnessed Rav Lichtenstein applying this moral conscience on too many occasions to recount. I will suffice with two stories.

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asimonim. Each *asimon* purchased a fixed amount of calling time, and if the conversation continued, additional *asimonim* had to be inserted. These coins were sold at local post offices (again, on the rare occasions they were open). At one point, the post office in Alon Shevut ran out of *asimonim*, effectively shutting down the only reliable means of communication available to us.

The day a new shipment finally arrived, many of the students rushed to the post office and purchased as many *asimonim* as they could, fearing another shortage. Rav Lichtenstein delivered a stirring moral rebuke. How could we act with such moral insensitivity by hoarding *asimonim* and preventing others from purchasing them to make the phone calls they needed? We were instructed to return the excess *asimonim* and keep only a reasonable supply. There is no halachah prohibiting someone from buying too many *asimonim*. Yet Rav Lichtenstein felt that such behavior was morally inappropriate.

On another occasion, Rav Lichtenstein needed to travel to the United States, but every seat on the flight had already been booked. We all know the anxiety of needing to travel urgently and discovering that no seats are available. Someone suggested using personal connections to secure him a seat. Rav Lichtenstein refused. He reasoned that obtaining

a seat through *protektzia* would inevitably come at the expense of another passenger who already held a valid ticket. Though no halachah prohibited accepting the seat, he felt it would simply be wrong to do so.

The ability to employ strong moral reasoning and make stout moral decisions in areas of life that aren't legislated by halachah is one of the traits I most deeply value in my rebbe.

THE DEBATE BENEATH THE DEBATE

These ideas shape the way different Torah communities think about contemporary moral questions. Nowhere has that difference become more visible than in the current debate over Charedi military service.

We are living through a moment of profound disagreement, with each side believing that it is expressing the will of the Torah. In many ways, this is the quintessential *machloket l'shem Shamayim*. Yet the intensity of the debate over the practical question of military service often obscures the more subtle differences in worldview and values that lie at the heart of each community.

MILCHEMET MITZVAH

Part of the debate centers on the mitzvah of military service and the question of *milchemet mitzvah*. Those who believe — as I do — that the current war constitutes a *milchemet mitzvah* understand military service to be a halachic obligation that, when necessary, even

supersedes Torah study. Chazal teach that in a *milchemet mitzvah*, “*afilu chatan me'chedero*” — even a groom leaves his wedding chamber to join the battle. Tragically, since October 7, far too many young husbands have been called to duty only days after their weddings.

Many in the Charedi community see this differently. Based on their broader views of the State of Israel, and on a different understanding of what constitutes a *milchemet mitzvah*, they do not classify the current war as a *milchemet mitzvah*. Once that is the case, they no longer see a halachic obligation to interrupt full-time Torah study in order to serve.

My purpose here is not to resolve that halachic debate. But alongside the halachic debate about *milchemet mitzvah* lies a more nuanced question about moral reasoning.

MORAL OBLIGATION

Those who support Charedi conscription experience the issue not only as a halachic obligation but as a profound *moral imperative*. They ask: How can a person *not* join in defending the country during an existential war? How can someone morally justify allowing others to bear the burden, endure repeated reserve duty, and shoulder the sacrifice while remaining on the sidelines? Many people find this morally outrageous, and they express that moral outrage openly and passionately. For many of us, basic moral sensitivity and basic moral calculus demands that everyone bear the weight of physically protecting Israel equally.

In response, many within the Charedi community would argue that moral reasoning is



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itself a function of halachic and Torah-based reasoning. Some maintain that *Da'as Torah* is the final and most authoritative moral voice. If a recognized Torah scholar concludes that remaining in the beit midrash to study Torah is the correct course, then that decision becomes not only the halachically correct position but also the morally correct one, even if it appears otherwise to human instinct.

Even without invoking *Da'as Torah*, many argue that the mitzvah of Talmud Torah is itself the highest moral good. If Torah study protects the Jewish people and fulfills Hashem's will, then remaining in the beit midrash is not merely halachically justified — it is the most moral course of action. The GPS for moral decision-making is Torah itself. The signal comes from halachah, the mitzvah of Talmud Torah, and those entrusted to interpret and teach it — not from an independent moral intuition.

THE GIFT OF CONSCIENCE

Part of this divide turns on this fundamental question: Does the Torah expect us to exercise moral reasoning independent of formal halachic analysis? My *mesorah* answers that question with a resounding yes. We were taught that Hashem endowed us with a moral conscience and expects us to use it. Beyond asking whether something is halachically permitted or prohibited, we were taught to ask whether it is right, fair, and moral. In the many areas of life that halachah does not directly address, that moral conscience is not foreign to Torah — it is part of Hashem's will.

BEYOND THE DEBATE

It is supremely important not merely to engage in the debate over Charedi non-prescription, which at this point feels largely intractable. We need to identify the value systems that underlie each community and serve as the foundation for their differing positions.

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Doing so helps us better understand one another and engage the debate with greater respect and dignity.

Even more importantly, identifying the values that define our own community helps *us* become more conscious of them. Too often, we inherit values almost by instinct. When we stop to identify them and give them a name, we are more likely to think about them, speak about them, and actually live by them. Our goal should not merely be to explain our position, but to become better Jews by living the values that define our community more deeply and more consistently. ■



Rabbi Moshe Taragin's latest sefer entitled: **Reclaiming Redemption, Vol. II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood, and the Storms of War**, is available at: mtaraginbooks.com.



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA
SHMIDMAN
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Who Is Hashem Speaking To?

The opening words of this week's Haftarah are among the most familiar in all of Tanach: **נְחַמוּ נְחַמוּ עַמִּי יְאִמֵר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: Comfort, comfort My people,** says your G-d. (Yeshayahu 40:1) Most of us hear these words as Hashem speaking to the Jewish people: *"Be comforted, be comforted."* After the sorrow of Tisha B'Av, that seems exactly right. We have entered the **Shivah D'Nechemta**, the seven Haftarot of consolation, and Hashem begins by offering His people words of comfort.

Yet if we look more carefully at the opening words, it is not at all clear to whom Hashem is speaking. The Malbim invites us to hear these familiar words differently. Commenting on the words, *"Nachamu, Nachamu,"* he writes: **אַתֶּם הַנְּבִיאִים, נְחַמוּ אֶת עַמִּי. You, the prophets — comfort My people.** According to the Malbim, Hashem is not speaking directly to Klal Yisrael. He is speaking to the prophets, charging them to become the bearers of His consolation.

Suddenly, the opening of the Haftarah takes on an entirely new dimension. Rather than saying, *"I will comfort My people,"* Hashem commissions His prophets to comfort them. Perhaps this teaches us that Hashem often chooses to bring His comfort into the world through the words, presence, and kindness of another human being.

The prophets were the first to receive this charge, but they were not the last. Every time we visit a mourner, call a friend who is struggling, offer a listening ear, or quietly sit beside someone in pain, we become Hashem's messengers. His comfort enters the world through people who answer His call.

As we begin the seven weeks that lead us toward Rosh Hashanah, perhaps the journey toward redemption begins not only by receiving Hashem's comfort, but by answering His call to become messengers of His comfort to others.

May we merit to answer that call, bringing hope where there is despair, comfort where there is pain, and in doing so, hasten the day when Hashem's promise of **"נְחַמוּ נְחַמוּ עַמִּי"** is fulfilled completely with the redemption of Klal Yisrael. ■

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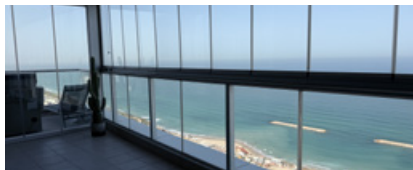
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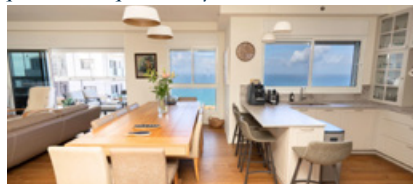
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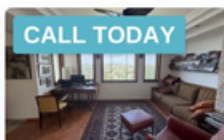


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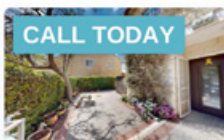


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Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot: Discovering Righteousness in Every Jew

"All of Israel has a portion in the World to Come. As the verse states, "Your nation is all righteous..." (Yeshayahu 60:21) (Prologue to Pirkei Avot, Sanhedrin 10:1).

The above passage is customarily recited before each chapter of Pirkei Avot.

What is the reason for the placement of this Mishnah at the beginning of each chapter?

One explanation offered in a classic commentary on Pirkei Avot by Rav Moshe Almosnino (c. 1515–1580) is to give a person encouragement at the beginning of a demanding assignment.

Many directives in Pirkei Avot make strenuous demands, and it may feel to the reader that they are not capable of achieving all of its lofty goals. The dictum that every Jew has great worth and potential — that all Israel have a position in the World to Come — is meant to motivate a Jew to pursue his or her place and strengthen his or her resolve to succeed in this great spiritual endeavor. (See Rav Lau on Pirkei Avot, vol. 1, pp. 6–7.)

Rav Kook offered an exquisite perspective on the notion that *tzidkut*, righteousness, is to be found in every Jew. The following episode powerfully spotlights this point of view:

In one of the most startling moments in the

entire narrative of the Torah, Moshe scolds the Jewish people and strikes the rock in order to miraculously release its water. The Talmud (Shabbat 97b) is quick to amplify Moshe's wrongdoing by correlating his actions at this time with criticism he hurled at the Jewish people many years earlier. In his first encounter with God at the burning bush, Moshe voices the following criticism concerning the Jewish people: "They will not believe me, and they will not listen to me..." (Shemot 4:1). The Talmudic sage Reish Lakish comments that Moshe's lack of faith in the people at the opening stages of his leadership reappears once again when he irately strikes the rock.

Rav Kook argued that on both occasions Moshe failed to see that *emunah* (faith), in its purest form, is a hidden and intrinsic quality of the soul. In the words of Rav Kook: "It is an integral part of the inner soul, forming the very basis for life, its light and splendor." The essence of *emunah*, in its true magnitude and strength, is often concealed. (Ain Aya, Shabbat 97b, piska #13.)

At that moment of crisis and confusion, when the people of Israel complained for water and were overwhelmed by gloom, unfortunately even the penetrating eye of Moshe failed to detect the people's inner reserve of faith. The

Talmud states that God turned to Moshe at that moment and told him that the Children of Israel are *ma'aminim bnei ma'aminim* — “they are believers, the children of believers” (Shabbat 97b). God is teaching, according to the Talmud, that unquestionably, the inner fire of faith always burns within their souls.

The lesson Rav Kook taught regarding Moshe’s misstep is a critically important teaching that every Jew must absorb. Indeed, this notion became a clarion call for Rav Kook throughout his life. He believed that especially when we as a people are restoring our nationhood and rebuilding the Land of Israel we can no longer judge our fellow Jew solely according to external actions. We must recognize and extol the sparks of goodness in every fellow Jew.

The statement, “Your nation is all righteous...,” which according to longstanding tradition introduces each chapter of Pirkei Avot, emphatically declares the righteousness of every Jew — a sanctity embedded deep within the soul that is a Jew’s eternal heritage and hidden treasure.

This profound message of the purity of the Jewish soul is poetically conveyed in a beautiful verse in Shir Hashirim: “Do not look upon me because I am black; for [it is only] the sun that has tanned me” (1:6). One can never claim that the Jewish people fail to believe in the word of God, even when their behavior appears dark and tarnished. This discoloration is only superficial. Purity of faith is the most natural and enduring state of the soul of a Jew.

A MEMORABLE DANCE: GUARD YOUR INNER LIGHT

Rav Kook and a small group of prominent rabbis organized a groundbreaking trip

in 1913 to visit the new settlements in the northern part of the country. They wanted to meet the *chalutzim* (pioneers) on “their turf” and share a message of unity and spiritual strengthening.

On a visit to the settlement of Poriah, a beautiful scene unfolded when Rav Kook joined a gathering in the dining hall where the mostly secular workers were singing and dancing.

Following the joyful dancing, when the mutual feelings of brotherhood and camaraderie were at their height, Rav Kook turned to

the men who served as guards in the new settlement, who were wearing Arab cloaks and *kefiyyeh* headdresses with rifles slung over their shoulders, and said: “You are heroically guarding the Holy Land and strengthening our people’s return to her borders... Please also guard your holy souls, your inner Jewish spark!”

They all responded by crying out, “We promise!”

Rav Kook then fervently replied, “Happy is the eye that witnessed such dances of *teshuvah* and holiness. Praise be God’s name!” (Stories from the Land of Israel, Morrison, pp. 38–39.)

Rav Kook, throughout his remarkable lifetime and especially during his leadership in the Land of Israel, powerfully taught that the pure soul within every person pulsates with light and boundless potential. It is merely a matter of recognizing this singular quality and consistently seeing more deeply. ■



Rabbi Goldscheider’s most recent OU Press Publication, “Torah United” on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.



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Onions in Public

Question: I, an obviously Jewish man, was on an intercity train (3-hour trip) in Europe, and took out a salad with onions to eat. Someone sitting a few rows away came over to complain, so I closed it up. Later I went over to ask him why it bothered him, whether he was allergic, and he started cursing me. I wondered afterward whether according to Halacha, he had a right to prevent me from opening the salad.

Answer: The better guess is that your unpleasant encounter stemmed from blatant or partial anti-Semitism (i.e., onions disturb him greatly but he treated you abusively because you are Jewish). However, you did not ask and we will not offer opinions on how to react to anti-Semitism in its myriad forms.

Most of the discussion of the impact of

one person's property or actions on another person focuses on one who is rationally using their own property, but it also affects his neighbor (see Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 155 at length). Included in the list of things that under certain circumstances are major offenses that can be protested are "bathrooms" and smoke, which are offensive to the smell (ibid. 36). The ability to complain is very similar in the public domain (see Tzitz Eliezer XV:39). Each of the people have the right to be there, but one should not cause undue hardship to the other.

Could food that many/most people enjoy be considered objectionable? Perhaps the most instructive source on this is an *aggadic gemara* (Sanhedrin 11a). Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi (Rebbe) was giving *shiur*, and one of the students had eaten enough garlic to significantly disturb him. Rebbe requested that whoever the "offender" is should leave the room. Rabbi Chiya, who had not eaten garlic, left the room, followed by all the others. When confronted by Rebbe's son, Rabbi Chiya said that he had to cause the exodus in order to save the offender from embarrassment.

The simple reading of the *gemara* is that Rebbe decided that the *talmid* had no right to go to a shared place with the smell of garlic, and that Rabbi Chiya agreed in principle, just that he felt that this needed to be carried out in a manner that protected the offender's dignity. It is possible to claim that the place of the *shiur* was Rebbe's personal domain, so that he could remove someone without "legal cause." However, it is unlikely that he would have

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taken a step in that manner without it being something that anyone could have demanded.

It is difficult to say clearly how to apply this to your case, as one might argue that garlic has a more potent and offensive odor than onions. Also, on a long train ride with many passengers, where people regularly eat full meals, it is more surprising that one would object to some onion in a salad than it would be to the same smell in a *shiur* room.

However, this does not totally close the door on protest. The *gemara* (Bava Batra 23a) discusses what we could call neighborly “super-offenses,” in which even if one seems to have acquired *chazaka* (the affected party’s implied acceptance of the situation), he can be forced to stop his usage. The *gemara* brings Rav Yosef’s claim that even something that is not objectively considered damaging is treated as such if the affected person is particularly sensitive to it. The Shulchan Aruch (CM 155:39) codifies this ability of the sensitive to protest. On the other hand, he clarifies (ibid. 41; see Be’ur Hagra, CM 155:119; Aruch Hashulchan CM 155:33) that to enjoy special power to object one must prove his sensitivity. In your case, the likely

anti-Semite would have difficulty doing so, and he also preferred to curse you rather than explain any hardship on his part. Regarding future consideration, if you believe someone who is claiming hardship, you should refrain from eating rather than cause him to suffer.

It is likely that the operators of the train have guidelines that include such cases, which would obligate passengers. Therefore, if a dispute arises, one might seek assistance from a member of the staff, who may be familiar with the policies and/or able to suggest practical solutions. ■

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RABBI GIDEON WEITZMAN

Machon Puah for Fertility and
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Pioneering Hope

Last time we spoke about the history and current practice of uterine transplants.

In Houston, a remarkable group of physicians and researchers is quietly reshaping the future of fertility medicine. At Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital, their work on uterine transplantation is helping turn what was once science fiction into real possibility.

At the heart of this effort are two remarkable physicians; Dr. Giuliano Testa and Dr. Liza Johannesson, whose pioneering spirit has driven the field forward. Together with multidisciplinary teams of surgeons, fertility specialists, and researchers, they are pushing the boundaries of what medicine can achieve.

Their work is not simply about performing surgeries, it is about solving an intricate medical puzzle. The uterus is one of the most complex organs to transplant, requiring delicate connections of tiny blood vessels and careful coordination with fertility treatments like IVF. The Houston team has played a critical role in refining these techniques, improving success rates, and making the procedure safer for patients.

Closely connected with their clinical partners at Baylor University Medical Center, this Texas-based program has become one of the most successful uterine transplant efforts in

the world. It was here that some of the first successful births in the United States took place, marking a turning point in reproductive medicine.

What sets the Houston group apart is its spirit of innovation. These physicians are not content with repeating what has already been done, they are constantly improving. They study how to reduce the risk of organ rejection, how to better support pregnancies in transplanted uteruses, and how to make the entire process more accessible in the future. Each case adds to a growing body of knowledge that benefits patients worldwide.

But beyond the science, there is a deeply human mission. For women born without a uterus or who have lost it, this work offers something that did not exist just a few years ago: the chance to carry a child themselves. That possibility is what fuels the dedication of the Houston team.

Of course, challenges remain. The procedure is still complex, expensive, and limited to a small number of centers. Yet the progress made in Houston shows what is possible when expertise, determination, and compassion come together.

In many ways, this team embodies the pioneering spirit, venturing into uncharted territory, not for discovery alone, but to transform lives.

It was with this spirit that Dr. Testa and Dr. Johannesson came to Israel and came to PUAH.

More on this next time. ■

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Masa'ot and Meaning

As we study the Masa'ot of Yeshayahu concerning the ultimate destruction of a series of world powers, we are guided by the same two questions that direct our study of Nach in general: What was the message of the Navi to his generation, and what was his message for the future that warranted the inclusion of these prophecies in Tanach? To further complicate the issue, many of the nations addressed by Yeshayahu in his Masa'ot did not exist in Yeshayahu's own times, and/or no longer exist today. How could their destinies occupy a role so significant that they merit no fewer than ten chapters of our holy Scriptures?

Many of the commentators ask to whom these prophecies of Yeshayahu were directed. There is no indication that Yeshayahu left Yerushalayim and its environs to deliver these messages to the nations of whom he spoke. It is reasonable to assume that word of Yeshayahu's prophecies of doom and destruction did reach the relevant empires even in those days before the advent of social media, but that does not seem to be his primary concern.¹ Thus we have to assume that

the Navi's message was intended for his Jewish audience, then and now.

Speaking several generations before the destruction of Yerushalayim and the Mikdash and the exile of the Jewish people, Yeshayahu directs our attention to the universal. We do not, nor are we intended to, live in a vacuum. Every nation has a role to play on the international stage, with Israel at its center. While the light of Torah is meant to radiate outward from Yerushalayim to the nations of the world, as Yeshayahu taught earlier, the nations of the world are summoned to serve as messengers of Hashem and instruments of His providence over Israel. The Navi demands that we see ourselves not only within the confines of our own communities, insulated from the reality surrounding us, but that we engage with that reality and learn from it.

Furthermore, the Navi projects a long view of the historical process. Even if our present situation is one of war and existential threats, such an outlook enables us to confront the challenges of the present with Emunah and Bitachon. Rav Soloveitchik, zt"l, taught that a Jew lives with a sense of time-awareness. "To exist as a Jew means to be at the juncture of past and future, of that which is no longer real and that which is not yet real. Our mission is to live in both dimensions."² The key to living such a life is the study of Tanach,

1. There are several examples in Tanach that demonstrate that nations outside of Israel were aware of prophecies delivered only within Yerushalayim; for example, when Nevuzaradan released Yirmiyahu from prison

at the time of the Churban he expressed awareness of Yirmiyahu's prophecies concerning the city.

2. Festival of Freedom, p. 177

and the discernment of its eternal relevance.

An apocryphal story is told of Napoleon passing by a synagogue on the night of Tisha B'Av and observing the Jews inside sitting on the floor in darkness, crying bitter tears. When he asked what tragedy had befallen the community that caused them to cry so bitterly, he was told that they were mourning the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years earlier. Napoleon purportedly responded admiringly, "Any nation that still mourns the destruction of its homeland after 2,000 years will surely see its rebuilding."

In Orot HaTechiyah, Rav Kook zt"l taught: "Our path in the national life and its orientation vis-a-vis the general human relation is very long... We are great, and great are our mistakes and therefore great are our troubles, but great also are our consolations."³

Living with a sense of eternity, with an awareness of our connection to both the past and the future, enables us to experience the present with a greater sense of purpose. May we merit to soon see the fulfillment of Yesha-yahu's prophecies, and until then be inspired by them to live a meaningful life. ■

3. Orot, Orot HaTechiya 5

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

In the **OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi series**, which just began its fourth cycle, women scholars deliver a daily shiur on the books of Prophets (Neviim) and Writings (Ketuvim) at the pace of a chapter a day. Shiurim are geared toward learners of all levels who would like to participate in the two-year Nach Yomi study cycle. Visit the OU Women's Initiative to register for additional content.

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The New Synagogue in Kissufim, with the Old Torah Ark from Gush Katif

This is not the day's main headline — but it should be. Take a look at what is happening right now in Kibbutz Kissufim, step by step:

First of all, the members of Kissufim are coming home. On October 7, twelve kibbutz residents and six Thai workers were murdered. Kibbutz member Shlomo Mansour was abducted to Gaza and murdered that same day. Dozens of homes were destroyed, and public buildings were burned to the ground. Devastation. And now, after more than two years, comes rebuilding.

Most of the community had been living temporarily in the town of Omer. Now, Kibbutz Kissufim chairman Lior Carmel has announced that 90 percent of the residents have decided to return, and that the kibbutz will also welcome new families who would like to join them. Agriculture, education, infrastructure: everything is coming back to life.

"The kibbutz that once looked like a disaster zone now looks like a construction site," one of its younger members told me this week.

But something entirely new is happening

as well. The young kibbutz member sent me moving photographs.

"Seventy-five years have passed since our parents founded this kibbutz, and this week, for the first time, a synagogue was inaugurated here. We decided that we are coming back, but that we also want to come back stronger."

The ceremony was led by Rabbi Ariel Igra of the nearby community of Shlomit.

"We are brothers," he said. "The moment you reached out and asked for help establishing the synagogue, I knew exactly what we could do."

And this was Shlomit's extraordinary contribution to Kibbutz Kissufim:

On October 7, four residents of Shlomit were killed after setting out to defend the nearby community of Pri Gan. They fought off the terrorists and saved the community. In their memory, a beautiful new synagogue was recently built in Shlomit.

"We were delighted to donate the furnishings from our previous synagogue to our friends in Kissufim," Rabbi Igra told me. "But only during the ceremony did I tell them who



had built and restored them. Our friends, the heroes Reuven Sasportas and Bechor Sweid, may their memories be a blessing, who fell in battle on Simchat Torah, were the ones who refurbished the bimah and the Torah ark. Today, that bimah and Torah ark stand in the new synagogue in Kissufim.”

When Rabbi Igra finished telling the story, one of the Kissufim members approached him, visibly moved.

“Do you see this menorah, which we placed here in the synagogue?” he asked. “It was made by my friend Shlomo Mansour, may his memory be a blessing.”

But it turns out that the Torah ark from Shlomit has an even longer history. Rabbi Igra continued: “The ark came to Shlomit from the synagogue of the small community of Shalev in Gush Katif. Eliraz Peretz lived in Shalev, where a synagogue had been established in memory of his brother, Uriel Peretz, may his memory be a blessing. Later, Eliraz himself was killed in battle in the Gaza Strip.

“When the community was tragically destroyed during the 2005 Disengagement, the synagogue’s Torah ark eventually found its way to Shlomit. Just think of it: an ark from a synagogue in the destroyed communities of

Gush Katif has now arrived at the first synagogue ever opened in Kibbutz Kissufim.”

The synagogue dedication continued with the first, deeply moving Mincha service. At the entrance to the new synagogue, a mezuzah was affixed to the doorpost. One of the kibbutz members recited the blessing and then added the blessing of *Shehecheyanu*.

Rabbi Igra said to him: “Let us stop and think about how meaningful these words are. For me, as a resident of Shlomit; for all of you, whose community’s name, Kissufim, means longing; and for your return to this place. You are the representative of the entire kibbutz as you recite *Shehecheyanu*.

“My blessing to you is that before long, we will be affixing another mezuzah to a new and larger building, because this synagogue will no longer have enough room for all the new worshippers.”

And then the words rang out: “Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment.”

Amen!

רפואה שלמה
Peleg Shabtai ben Chaviva Leah

5 Points About the Ari HaKadosh

1. This past Sunday, the 5th of Av, marked the passing of the Ari Hakadosh, Rabbi Yitzhak Luria. One of the greatest Kabbalists, he immersed himself in the secrets of the hidden Torah in the city of Tzfat, and passed away in 1572 at the age of 38. He made the *Zohar* a central
2. text in Jewish learning, and in the course of time, it would have a seminal influence on the Hasidic movement.
2. The Ari Hakadosh explained that the secrets he revealed and the heights of understanding that he reached were due mainly to the joy he experienced

when performing the mitzvot. In other words, he did not perform the mitzvot solely out of obligation, but rather due to the happiness and excitement that come when basking in the Infinite Light through fulfillment of Hashem's will.

3. His students related that he could have accessed heavenly guidance when studying the *Zohar*, but he preferred to study and toil without assistance, reaching the highest levels of understanding through his own efforts.
4. He left behind very few writings and Rabbi Chaim Vital, his venerable student, published most of his master's teachings. However, we do have three Shabbat *zemirot* written by the Ari Hakadosh himself: "*Azamer Bishvachin*" (I will sing His praises) for the Friday night meal, "*Asader LeSeudata*" (I will prepare the feast) for the Shabbat morning meal, and "*Bnei Heichala*" (Princes of the Palace) for the third meal toward the close of Shabbat. In these three *piyutim*, there are profound hints as to the essence of Shabbat.



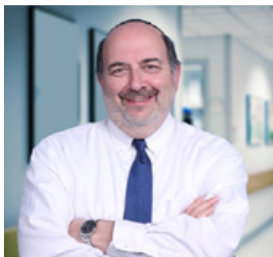
5. He inserted many *kavanot* and esoteric meditations into his siddur, but there is one line that he added, also written on his gravestone, that all of us can understand. Before beginning the morning prayers, he asked that we say the following: "I hereby take upon myself to fulfill the mitzvah of 'And you shall love your fellow as yourself.'"

This Motzaei Shabbat, you are invited to light a candle in his memory and to bring one of his practices, teachings, or

zemirot into your 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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In The Future

When tomorrow your son asks you: 'What are the... laws and ordinances that ... our G-d has commanded?'

You shall answer: 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and G-d took us out of Egypt with a strong hand... G-d commanded us to perform all these laws... to fear G-d, for our good, so that we may live... and He will treat us kindly, if we are careful to perform the commandments as He has instructed us' (6:20-25).

The question and answer appear to be mismatched. The son seeks detailed information on the Torah's demands. The words 'our G-d' indicate the son's commitment. But the father's answer does not appear to answer the son according to his question. He does not recount a single specific commandment. Instead, he explores the roots of the experiences of his people with the Creator, recounting the Exodus, and uses it to stress that the observance of the commandments is the key to G-d's continued goodwill. Why not a direct answer: Shabbat, Kashrut, honoring parents, and so on?

The use of the second word above - 'tomorrow' - suggests an answer. Rashi, following the Mechilta, renders the Hebrew word '*machar*' to mean 'in the future' – not necessarily the same day. That may indicate the following:

In recounting the educational advancements of Joshua ben Gamla, the Talmud (Baba Bathra

21a), implies that the best age for child to start to receive his first intensive Torah education is at age six. If that is postponed for a decade, the young man may simply 'rebel and walk out'. That is probably because he has reached an age where he has become too critical and cynical to let the Divine-originated scheme of things flow into him without resistance.

But a youngster's lifelong commitment must never be taken for granted - even with a good basic Torah education acquired in childhood. If his further education 'tomorrow' - at age sixteen - is not correctly handled, he might still go back on his commitment and 'rebel and walk out'. It is therefore essential that the father/educator manages to get behind the son's question and think for himself: 'What is he really asking?'

That could be a meaning of the word '*machar*' – 'in the future' – when he is a mature teenager, and begins on his own account to reassess the body of information fed to him in his childhood. That is what the son is doing in asking: 'What are the... laws and ordinances that ... our G-d has commanded?' And the father/educator must read that question for what it is.

Thus the Torah is telling the father/educator to put it all into a perspective that the son will appreciate. G-d, who created the universe, has a special relationship with His People which he showed demonstrably in the Exodus and more subtly today. And it is on both the father (/educator) and the son to do their bit (as equals) in working with the Creator to ensure that this relationship will continue... And with that knowledge, his Torah studies will continue to further heights... ■

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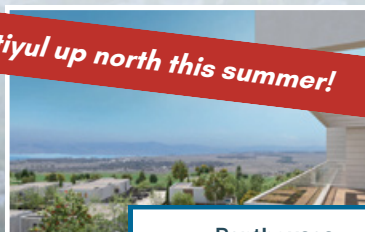
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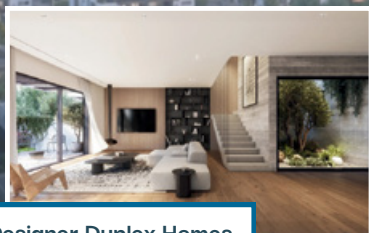
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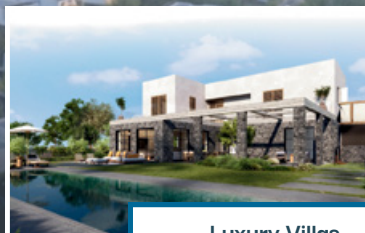
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Are Preferences Meant to Be Tested?

לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

Judy asks:

If a candidate says, "I don't want to meet anyone who doesn't want to make aliyah" should a shadchan indeed only suggest aliyah-minded people?

Aleeza answers:

When someone tells you, "I don't want to meet anyone who doesn't want to make aliyah," I believe we should take that seriously.

One of the fastest ways to build trust as a shadchan is to show people that you're actually listening. If someone has clearly identified aliyah as an important part of the future they envision, then your first suggestions should absolutely reflect that preference. It communicates, "I hear you. I respect what's important to you."

That trust matters.

In the beginning, I would focus on introducing them only to people who also want to make aliyah. Give that preference a real

opportunity. If after five or more strong, aliyah-minded suggestions they still haven't found the right person, then you have earned the credibility to broaden the conversation.

At that point, if someone exceptional comes along who doesn't currently plan to make aliyah, you can ask if they would be open to someone who isn't planning on Aliyah.

You might say, "I know you've been clear that aliyah is important to you. I also know what you're sincerely looking someone and (name) came to mind who aligns with you in so many meaningful ways although he's not committed to Aliyah. Would you be open to hearing more about him?"

Notice that you're asking permission, not trying to convince them.

As matchmakers, we constantly balance two responsibilities: honoring what people ask for and using our own experience to recognize compatibility they may not immediately see. I always look for both. What does the person say they want? And who do I genuinely believe has the potential to become someone's spouse?

That also means asking yourself an honest question: Would someone who doesn't want to make aliyah actually work for this person?

If the answer is no, don't force it. Not every preference is flexible. For some people, aliyah isn't simply a location - it's a life mission,

Shabbat afternoon
Parshat HaShavua Shiur
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a value, or part of their spiritual vision for the future. If that's the case, trying to persuade them otherwise may only create frustration for everyone involved.

On the other hand, if you believe the difference is one of timing, uncertainty, or limited exposure rather than a deeply held conviction, then after you've built trust and respected their preferences, it may be worth opening the conversation.

Good matchmaking isn't about ignoring people's criteria. It's about knowing when to honor them exactly as stated and when you've earned the opportunity to gently explore what else might be possible.

May you be blessed with the wisdom to listen carefully, the insight to recognize true compatibility, and the privilege of helping many couples build a shared future together.

Blessings, Aleeza ■

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CHAI SUMMER MADRICH

Rabbi Ephraim Luntschitz, in his commentary Kli Yakar on Devarim, highlights a subtle but significant change in the Torah's wording. Throughout the earlier books of the Torah, the Jewish people are usually referred to as *Bnei Yisrael* ("the children of Israel"). However, in Devarim, the Torah repeatedly uses the expression *Kol Yisrael* ("all of Israel"). According to the Kli Yakar, this change reflects an important transformation in the nation's identity as they prepare to enter the Land of Israel.

Until this point, the Jews were united primarily by their ancestry. They were all descendants of Yaakov, whose name was changed to Israel, making them one extended family. Their connection was rooted in a shared past and a common lineage. As they stood on the border of the Promised Land, however, Moshe was preparing them for a new stage in their development.

In this week's parsha, Moshe reinforces that transition through the giving of the *Shema*: „*Shema Yisrael*”—a call addressed not merely to individuals, but to the entire nation. Once they entered the land, they would need to function as a nation rather than simply a family. They would establish systems of justice, provide for one another, defend themselves, and take collective responsibility for society. During their years in the wilderness, Hashem had miraculously supplied their needs and

protected them. In the future, they would still rely on Hashem, but they would also be expected to act responsibly and uphold the covenant through their own actions.

The shift from *Bnei Yisrael* to *Kol Yisrael* symbolizes the transition from dependence to maturity. Their unity would now be based not only on their shared origins but also on their shared mission, responsibility, and commitment to building a society founded on the values of the Torah. It is therefore fitting that on **Shabbat Nachamu**, as we begin the journey of consolation and renewal after Tisha B'Av, we are reminded that our greatest strength lies in our ability to come together as **Kol Yisrael**—united by a shared covenant, shared purpose, and shared responsibility for one another.



SIMONA HOOK
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EFRAT CHAI SUMMER
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WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM MOSHE IN HIS FINAL DAYS?

Parshat Va'etchanan opens with one of the most emotional moments in the Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu pleads with Hashem to allow him to enter Eretz Yisrael. Chazal tells us that he davened **515 tefillot** to Hashem, yet despite all of his prayers, Hashem tells him that he will not enter the Land. But why?

If Moshe Rabbeinu, whose relationship with Hashem was stronger than anyone else's, did not receive the answer he hoped for, what does that teach us about tefillah?

Maybe it isn't for us as a wish list but instead to strengthen our relationship with Hashem. We often think that a successful tefillah is one that gets the answer we want. The Torah reminds us that sometimes the greatest accomplishment of tefillah is not changing what happens, but changing our wants and our neshamas.

What is most remarkable is Moshe's response. Although he is denied his lifelong dream, he does not become discouraged or give up. Instead, he

dedicates the rest of his life to preparing Bnei Yisrael to enter without him.

Moshe teaches us that even though we can't choose what we want, we can choose how we respond to them. Disappointment does not have to define us. Instead, it can become an opportunity to grow and to become the people we are capable of being. ■



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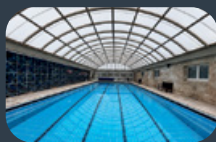
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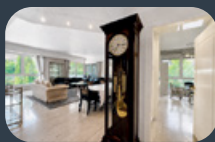


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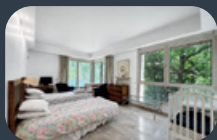
Swimming Pool



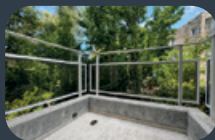
SWIMMINGPOOL



SWIMMINGPOOL



OVERSIZED MASTERBR



SUCCAHBALCONY

OVERVIEW

230 sqm+ on one level, this elegant 5-room apartment offers 3 bedroom en-suites, including a double-sized primary suite, plus a family room / study that may serve as a 4th bedroom. Spacious living and dining area, floor-to-ceiling windows, green views, separate kitchen, 2 balconies, 2 parking spaces, storage rooms and full accessibility. 24/7 concierge, swimming pool, gym, tenants room, security, Miklat

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