

ב"ה *Torah* **Tidbits**

ISSUE 1671

AUGUST 1ST 2026
י"ח מנחם אב תשפ"ו

עקב - EIKEV

AVOT 5

UNITED
WE STAND



Probing the Prophets
Rabbi Nachman Winkler
Page 28



Asher Yatzar:
A Moment to Stop and Focus
Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski Page 58



וברכת את-ה' אלקיך על-הארץ הטבה
דברים ח':

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT EIKEV ZMANIM

CANDLES 7:00 PM • EARLY 6:11 PM • HAVDALA 8:16 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:53 PM



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Table of Contents

- 04** Dear Torah Tidbits Family
Rabbi Avi Berman
- 10** Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary
Rabbi Reuven Tradburks
- 16** "Be Careful What You Pray For"
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Weinreb
- 22** Greatness and Humility
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l
- 28** Probing the Prophets
Rabbi Nachman Winkler
- 30** The Spiritual Art of Listening:
The Deeper Meaning of *Shema*
Rabbi Shalom Rosner
- 34** It's All Here!
Rabbi Judah Mischel
- 38** Simchat Shmuel
Rabbi Sam Shor
- 42** An Introduction to
Beef Shechitah in Israel
Rabbi Ezra Friedman
- 46** Beautiful Blessing
Rebbetzin Shira Smiles
- 50** Remember the Journey
Rabbi Moshe Taragin
- 56** Can a Mother Forget?
Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman

- 58** Asher Yatzar:
A Moment to Stop and Focus
Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski
- 64** Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot (5:16):
Supreme Tzedaka
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider
- 68** *Mezuza on a Tzimmer*
Rabbi Daniel Mann
- 72** What Do We Share?
Ayelet Glatt
- 74** The Y-Files Comic
Netanel Epstein
- 76** Torah 4 Teens by Teens
Julia Brown // Talya Kruger

Torah Tidbits is proud to share a photo each week on the cover from our readers!

It is an honor to showcase the immense talent from across the country.

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

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



COVER PHOTO Photographed by Ilene Cahan



I made Aliyah in 2004 from Baltimore to Modi'in. This photo was taken at Kibbutz Nachshon in May 2026. This photo gives me a feeling of endless hope and smiley faces (and plentiful garinim (sunflower seeds) for those who might worry that there won't be enough to go around. This incredible field filled with sunflowers gave me such hakarat hatov for Hashem to grant us and our land such abundant blessings. I love nature and photography.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
July 29 - Aug. 8 | 15 - 25 Av

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	4:56-5:04
Sunrise	5:53-5:59
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:19-9:22
Magen Avraham	8:38-8:42
Sof Zman Tefila	10:28-10:29
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:45-12:44
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:19-1:18
Plag Mincha	6:11-6:05
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:42-7:34



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	EIKEV			RE'EH		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	7:00	6:11	8:16	6:55	6:06	8:09
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	7:18	6:13	8:18	7:12	6:08	8:11
Beit Shemesh/RBS	7:19	6:12	8:17	7:14	6:07	8:10
Gush Etzion	7:16	6:11	8:16	7:10	6:06	8:09
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	7:18	6:13	8:18	7:12	6:08	8:12
Modiin/Chashmonaim	7:17	6:12	8:17	7:11	6:07	8:10
Netanya	7:19	6:13	8:19	7:13	6:08	8:12
Be'er Sheva	7:17	6:12	8:16	7:11	6:07	8:10
Rehovot	7:18	6:13	8:18	7:12	6:08	8:11
Petach Tikva	7:00	6:13	8:18	6:55	6:08	8:11
Ginot Shomron	7:17	6:12	8:17	7:11	6:07	8:11
Haifa / Zichron	7:09	6:13	8:20	7:03	6:09	8:13
Gush Shiloh	7:16	6:11	8:16	7:10	6:06	8:10
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	7:18	6:13	8:18	7:12	6:08	8:12
Givat Ze'ev	7:21	6:11	8:16	7:15	6:06	8:10
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	7:16	6:11	8:16	7:10	6:06	8:09
Ashkelon	7:18	6:13	8:18	7:13	6:09	8:12
Yad Binyamin	7:18	6:12	8:18	7:12	6:08	8:11
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	7:11	6:11	8:18	7:05	6:06	8:11
Golan	7:16	6:11	8:17	7:10	6:06	8:10
Nahariya/Maalot	7:09	6:13	8:19	7:02	6:08	8:13
Afula	7:17	6:12	8:18	7:11	6:07	8:11
Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Eikev - 8:53 PM • Re'eh - 8:47 PM						

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

Daf Yomi: Chulin 93



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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Walk into a *shul* almost anywhere in the world and look above the *aron* where the Torah scrolls are stored. Somewhere there, or sometimes stitched into the *aron*'s curtain itself, is a verse that in some way represents the *shul* and the community. I always find this so fascinating. Sometimes it's one that was argued over, voted upon, and decided. Sometimes it was simply inherited from founders long gone. But what is written there is what that community wants to have before it every time it rises to be present before Hashem every day.

Because I am constantly visiting *shuls* around Israel and North America, I notice these choices, and to a certain degree they tell me something about where I am standing. The *shul* my family went to in Har Nof when I was growing up had one that has stayed with me for years: "*Hashkifa mimeon kodshecha min hashamayim uwarech et amcha et Yisrael* - Look down from Your holy dwelling in heaven and bless Your people Israel." It is a verse bound up with the Land of Israel, as the Torah

makes clear: the verse ends with "*eret zavat chalav u'devash* - it is a land flowing with milk and honey" (Devarim 26:15). We will not read those words for a few more weeks, in Parshat Ki Tavo. But a very similar idea occurs in this week's *parsha*, where the Land of Israel is described as a Land that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* constantly seeks out, for "*einei Hashem Elokecha bah* - His eyes are upon it" (Devarim 11:12).

The imagery of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* looking toward us in the Land is an important theme. Years ago at an NCSY Shabbaton, Rabbi Steven Burg, then the regional director of West Coast NCSY, was trying to convey to a room of teenagers how special the *divrei Torah* and the singing of that particular Shabbaton really were. He offered an image I have borrowed many times since: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* sitting with a map of the world spread out before Him, watching for the places where a point of *kedusha*, of holiness and goodness, suddenly lights up. He told that crowd of NCSYers that surely the map was pointing right there, at that place. It was such an amazing image for them (and me!) to hear. And it came with a call for action: how can we make that map light up more?

This is something I always think about around every Tisha B'Av, the time of my Bubby's *Yahrtzeit* — Chana Ita bat Reb Moshe HaLevi a"h passed away twenty-one years ago on Tisha B'Av, and on the *Yahrtzeit* of each of my four grandparents, I try to pack in as many *mitzvot* and as much good as one day can hold in their memory.

WE REMEMBER

18th of Menachem Av

(Shabbat, Aug. 1st)

- the actual day this year)

is the anniversary of the

1929 CHEVRON MASSACRE

in which 67 Jews were killed,

including 24 Chevron

Yeshiva students

ה' יקום דמם

This year that effort had a great deal of company. All through the fast, message after message arrived about OU Israel's Tisha B'Av film, *Beit HaMikdash: In the Making*, which I had the privilege of preparing together with our OU Israel team and the amazing Jen Airley. We released it for Tisha B'Av, though in truth it belongs to every day of the year, and it has already passed 73,000 views. The responses came from Hebrew-speaking Israelis, from English-speaking Israelis and from our brothers and sisters across the world, and so many said the same thing: they had no idea how much is already underway to show *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* that we want the *Beit HaMikdash* now.

So I sat through Tisha B'Av thinking, *Ribono Shel Olam*, another light is going on, and this one is on the internet. Are You seeing how many Jews around the world are pining for the *Beit HaMikdash*? On my Bubby's *Yahrtzeit* of all days, I could not have asked for a better way to honor her.

Then came the final hour of the fast at the Kotel, sitting on the ground among an endless stream of NCSY summer program participants, among *olim*, among men who learned beside me in yeshiva and now come in from Raanana, Beit Shemesh, Modiin and Yerushalayim. Teenagers, advisors and counselors singing together to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Over a hundred thousand passed through that plaza over the fast. It remains a highlight of my year.

Joining us, as he does every year, was the mayor of Yerushalayim, Moshe Lion, together with NCSY International Director Rabbi Micah Greenland, OU Executive Vice President and COO Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph, OU President Mitchel Aeder, Elliot Tanzman, Director of NCSY Summer, Rav Zvi Sobolofsky, Rabbi



Yisroel Kaminetsky, and Rabbi Moshe Benovitz, who leads NCSY Kollel.

One difference from last year was impossible to miss. Last year we sat with parents of hostages still held in Gaza and sang *Acheinu*:

In loving memory of our dear
Mother and Grandmother
who we miss every day
JULIA KAHAN a"h
On her 19th Yartzeit - כא מנחם אב

Le'iluy nishmat
אסתר יהודית (יוליאנה)
בת חיים שלמה ע"ה

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

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

אחינו כל בית ישראל הנתונים בצרה ובשביה
העומדים בין בים ובין ביבשה המקום ירחם עליהם
ויציאם מצרה לרוחה ומאפלה לאורה ומשעבוד לגאולה
השנה בעגלא ובזמן קריב ונאמר אמן

“Our brothers, the whole house of Israel, who are in distress and captivity, on sea or on land, may Hashem have mercy upon them and bring them out from narrowness to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption, swiftly, soon, and in our days.”

Last year when I shouted those last words, I meant them as urgently as I have ever meant anything.

This year all of them are home, some to their families and some to *kever Yisrael*. They have carried more than anyone should, and they are rebuilding themselves and their families. Singing *Acheinu* this year was an entirely different experience, one filled with appreciation and hope for a better future.

And in this Land, the one His eyes are upon, the *chizuk* just keeps coming. Close to 2,000 NCSYers are here this summer, along with the JLIC students and the Yad B'Yad participants from Yachad, traveling the country and drawing strength from it. Having summer program participants at our home for Shabbat and hearing what these weeks have done for them gives every one of us what we need to keep going.

Another point of *kedusha* on the map, and another, and another. *B'ezrat Hashem*, He is watching every one of them light up; let's light as many as possible!

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman
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Shabbat afternoon

Parshat HaShavua Shiur

Given by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

At Beit Kneset Ohel Yitzchak

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OU... Beyond Kashrut

**Dror Baktana Welcomes
the Next Generation
of Camp Dror**



This summer, Camp Dror proudly launched Dror Baktana, an exciting new program designed especially for children entering fourth grade who are experiencing overnight camp for the very first time. While Camp Dror's flagship three-week session serves campers entering grades 5–10 from July 9–30, Dror Baktana offers younger campers a unique one-week introduction to the Camp Dror experience.

Now completing its inaugural week, Dror Baktana gives first-time campers the opportunity to enjoy the highlights of Camp Dror in a format perfectly suited to their age and readiness. The program allows children to experience the excitement, friendships, activities, and spirit of camp while giving parents the opportunity to see whether their child is ready for the full three-week Camp Dror experience the following summer. For many families, Dror Baktana serves as the perfect "first taste" of overnight camp.

The program opened with a full girls' bunk at the Hodayot campus. Campers arrived on Sunday, immersed themselves in the vibrant Camp Dror atmosphere throughout the week, and return home on Thursday alongside the rest of the camp community.

We are thrilled with this new initiative and look forward to welcoming these young campers back next summer as full Camp Dror participants. Dror Baktana is more than a new program—it is the beginning of the next generation of the Camp Dror family.



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A safe, caring environment where every camper feels part of the family.



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A TASTE OF CAMP DROR

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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT EIKEV

Moshe's long soliloquy that is the book of Devarim has a deliberate structure.

The first 3 parshiot, including our parshat Eikev, are prose. He speaks with the people. The next 3 parshiot are mitzvot; hundreds of mitzvot that are the constitution, the principles of how to create a unique, model society in the Land of Israel. And the last 5 are a gaze into the future.

In these first 3 parshiot, Moshe is preparing the people to enter the Land – without him as leader. He is nervous about what could go wrong. And he tackles these one by one.

Last week he gave a glorious foundation to the entire Jewish project; Mt. Sinai. Sinai was an intimate moment of G-d Reaching for you,

Speaking directly with you. That has never been in human history. G-d Has initiated a unique covenant, a unique intimate relationship with you. How could you possibly betray Him after that? And run to idols? I know you will be exposed to, attracted to idols in the Land. But they are not for you. You have a covenant, a bond of love between you and Him.

Our parsha tackles different challenges; challenges of riches and success. Blessing will bring its own challenge. Fear of the nations will be a challenge. Success in conquering the Land, a different challenge.

After addressing these challenges, Moshe rhetorically asks: what is it that G-d wants from you? He wants you to love Him, to cleave to Him, to be absorbed with Him. This section is Moshe sharing his innermost feelings. It is the most emotive and personal section of the entire Torah.



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

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

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

**RUTH SANDRA
FRANKS a"h**

רחל שרה בת יעקב ובינה ע"ה
On her first Yahrzeit, 21st Av

*Deeply missed by her
husband Morley,
sons Adam and James,
daughters-in-law Sara and Shoshana,
brother Brian,
sister-in-law Barbara,
grandchildren and wider family*

figs, pomegranates, olive oil and dates. You will eat and be satisfied and bless G-d for all this bounty.

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

Bounty in the Land is a concern. Blessing is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, G-d says, I want to provide for you, to bless you. I will bless you: your food will grow on trees. The Land will produce wild wheat and barley. It all grows naturally. But you will naturally conclude, Who needs Him? Remember the manna and Who provides. That manna was a lesson that He provides.

Do not let bounty muscle G-d out; it is still He Who provides. We, this generation of fabulous wealth know all too well how the success of the modern Jew has left little room for the Divine.



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

Be mindful amidst all your success that you not forget its Source.

Even after He has led you all these years, you are apt to say “all this success is my doing”. Remember: He is the One Who gives you this success, as an expression of the covenant he made with you. If you forget Him, He will vanquish you. As you vanquish nations in the Land, so too will it be with you, on the heels of your ignoring Him. Great nations await you; fortified cities, strong people. Know that He will champion your cause and they will be overcome by you.

Material success squeezes G-d out of our lives. And so too national success, both military prowess and economic success can

squeeze Him out too. We will assume that the architect of our success is me. We will think that we are simply stronger, smarter and more capable than the other nations.



3RD ALIYA (9:4-29)

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

Our success in defeating the people of the Land will bring hubris. We are a superior people to these nations. Well, says Moshe, let me remind you. Remember the golden calf, *your* terrible moment of folly. Don't delude yourself, thinking yourself infallible, indestructible. Remember our history. Learn from it. You failed with the golden calf.

In loving memory of our dear
Mother, Grandmother
& Great Grandmother
ANNA BEER a”h
חנה טובא בת יעקב הלוי
וסימה מרים ע”ה
on her 10th Yahrtzeit - כ' מנחם אב

May the Torah learned
from this issue be in her merit
Cooki & Howie Maisel, Efrat
Lenny & Penny Beer, Cleveland
Esther Sarah Carroll, Norfolk

You survived due to G-d's loyalty to His covenant with you. Moshe has emphasized this covenant over and over. He took you out of Egypt because of his promise, His covenant with our forefathers. He created an enhanced covenant at Sinai, an intimate one, that we will be His treasured people.

He champions our cause. He is the source of our success. But don't let it go to your head. You suffer foibles like all others. Bad mistakes. However, He does not give up on you. Because of that covenant.

Moshe will get to our part of the covenant soon. But if we were to search for Moshe's interpretation of the ways of G-d, it would easily be reduced to one thing: He Made a covenant with you. He committed Himself, bound Himself. The essence of Judaism is this bond; He to us, us to Him.



4TH ALIYA (10:1-11)

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

While Moshe told the people the story of the golden calf in order to temper their feelings of superiority, here, in describing the second set of tablets, he is addressing a different concern. Well, what if we enter the Land and we are rotten again? Will we then forfeit the Land, will we fail and be rejected?

No, Moshe says. Remember, we received a new set of tablets. We were completely forgiven, wholly reconciled with G-d. As if to say: you are not a perfect nation. You have failed and you will in the future too. But despair not. If G-d forgave the golden calf – and that

was bad, really bad, then obviously His commitment to you is more powerful than your failures.



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

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

These 20 verses are very difficult to summarize, as they are so stunningly beautiful. This is Moshe with his hair down. It is like he leans a bit closer, elbows on the table, and confides: listen, really, what does G-d want? I have been talking about how He relates to you. Now, what about you. What does he want of you?

One would think maybe a one word, one phrase answer. Like: loyalty. Or walk humbly with Him. Or truth.

Moshe's answer is not *what to do* but *how to feel*. Moshe answers: you know what G-d wants? He wants emotion, aspiration, feelings, sensitivity. He wants your deepest being to want Him, love Him, cleave to Him. Drop the inhibitions, the distractions, the fluff of life and give your deepest self to Him. What a phrase: circumcise your heart, quit stiffening your neck. Meaning, give Me your true heart, don't be stubborn.

This aliya ranks up there with the most powerful of the Torah. For Moshe baits us with a simple question: after all, what does G-d want? And in his answer, shares with us

his deepest feelings, a most profound answer: He wants you all in, to want Him, love Him, be preoccupied with Him. Hold nothing back.



6TH ALIYA (11:10-21)

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

This is a new twist on the theme of loving G-d. Not only will your military success depend on your love of G-d. But the rain too. And you'll need rain; not like Egypt.

It's almost like G-d is saying: I am bringing you to the promised Land because of My love for you. But it is a tenuous place. Vulnerable. It requires My showering it with rain. And that rainfall is dependent on your love of Me.

So, in a nutshell: I love you and I am bringing you to a Land where you will need to love Me.



7TH ALIYA (11:22-25)

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

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

HAFOTRAH YESHAYAHU 49:14- 51:3

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

The navi then describes the ingathering of the exiles which will occur when the Mashiach arrives and then concludes with encouraging words, reminding us of what had happened to our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah. Just as they were blessed with a child when it seemed impossible, so too, Hashem will send us the Redemption at the end of days. ■



STATS

46th of the 54 sedras; 3rd of 11 in Devarim.

231.83 lines in a Torah; rank: 14th.

10 Parshiyot; 6 open, 4 closed.

111 pesukim - rank: 26th (4th in Devarim).

Same number as Vayikra, but larger.

1747 words - rank: 16th (3rd in Devarim).

Same number as Ki Tavo; Ki Tavo has more pesukim; Eikev has more letters.

6865 letters - rank: 14th (3rd in Devarim).

Eikev's pesukim are long - 3rd longest in the Torah in words and letters per pasuk. This accounts for the rise in ranking in those categories.



MITZVOT

8 of 613: 6 positives, 2 prohibitions.



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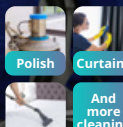
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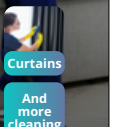
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A SHORT VORT

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

לא בצדקתך וביש לבבך אתה בא לרשת את ארצם (ט:ה)
לא בצדקתך ה' אלקיך נתן לך את הארץ הטובה הזאת לרשתה (ט:ו)

“Not for your righteousness, or for the uprightness of your heart do you go into possessing their Land” (9:5)

“You should know that not for your righteousness that G-d, your L-rd, gives you this good Land to possess it” (9:6)

What is this message of Moshe that needs to be repeated twice, one verse after the other?

The Chidushe HaRim (Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, 1799-1866, founder of Chasidut Gur) answers that these two pesukim were emphasizing an important message from Moshe. The Land of Israel was being presented to the Israelites not simply because one generation deserved it more or had more merits than any other. The legacy of receiving the Land of Israel was to all the people of Israel, for each generation and generation. Every generation will earn the gift of the Land of Israel according to which it deserves. Moshe wanted to instill the motivation in every generation to do its utmost towards deserving and appreciating the Land of Israel with their fulfillment of the Torah.

- Shabbat Shalom



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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

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

“Be Careful What You Pray For”

Ah, the benefits of Google and, more recently, of AI. For, you see, I have long had a special interest in the saying, “Be careful what you pray for lest it come true.” I attributed this advice to the British playwright, George Bernard Shaw.

As I hope to demonstrate in this week’s column, there is much to support Shaw’s counsel in traditional Jewish sources. But I wanted to first ascertain the true author of those words. Was it really this famous but non-Jewish sceptic, or could I find some other wise individual who said something similar. And, especially, could I find authoritative Jewish sources that promulgated a similar approach to prayer?

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& Great-grandmother

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on her second yearzeit
20 Menachem Av

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I began, as I often do, by consulting Google and AI. I immediately discovered that I needed to abandon my assumption that the source of the saying was George Bernard Shaw. Nor was it the product of another British literary hero, Oscar Wilde. Rather, it dated back to Aesop’s Fables, circa 260 B.C.

I immediately had an “aha” moment. That date coincided with the Second Temple period and the years of prominence of the *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah* (the Men of the Great Assembly). Perhaps Aesop’s saying had its origins, or at least some parallels, in Jewish sources dating back to late biblical or early rabbinic times.

But first, permit me to describe the roots of my fascination with the saying. I trace that fascination with the need for cautious prayer back to my high school days. More specifically, to the late spring of my eleventh-grade year at Rabbi Jacob Joseph High School on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

Like most of my peers, I was preoccupied with finding a summer job, preferably one with at least a modest salary and a location such as the Catskill mountains. Like a good Yeshiva *bachur*, I incorporated my ardent desires in my three daily prayers. I specified in detail exactly what I was looking for: minimum wage, vacation days so that I could tour the Catskills, opportunities to swim, go boating, play basketball, and friendly companions.

Of course, in my prayers I promised the Almighty that I would gratefully “compensate” Him for answering my prayers by devoting the entire next year, my senior year,

to diligent Talmud study, perfect attendance, obedience to my rabbis, and impeccable conformity to every halachic stringency.

Had my prayers come true, I may have had, at most, a pleasant summer. With certainty, I would have wasted a precious summer and gained little spiritual substance.

Suffice it to say that my prayers were unsuccessful. Denied summer employment, I instead accepted an invitation from my eleventh grade rebbe, Rabbi Yitzchak Tendler, of blessed memory, to join a study group at his home during the months of late June and July. The curriculum would focus upon the halachic disputes between two early nineteenth century Talmudic scholars, Rabbi Aryeh Leib HaCohen Heller (author of *Ketzos HaChoshen*), and Rabbi Yakov Loberbaum (author of *Nesivos HaMishpat*).

The group met twice a week for six weeks. During that time, we learned that the disputes between these two dazzling scholars were based upon fundamentally different approaches to Talmudic analysis. We were asked to choose which of the two approaches appealed to us acolytes. We were twelve students, as I recall, and we were split evenly between those who advocated the style of the author of *Ketzos* versus those who favored his opponent, the *Nesivos*.

I aligned myself with the *Nesivos* and continue to this very day to study the many other works that he published. One of those works is his commentary on *Chumash*, entitled *Nachalas Yaakov*. It is there that I discovered his teaching on a verse in this week's Torah portion, *Ekev* (Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25), specifically the verse (ibid. 9:26) which reads, "I prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord G-d, do not annihilate Your very own people, whom You redeemed in Your majesty and whom You

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freed from Egypt with a mighty hand.”

Upon this verse, the author of *Nesivos* cites this Talmudic passage (*Berachot* 32b): “Any-one who prolongs his prayer is assured that his prayer will not return unanswered. From where do we derive this? From Moses our teacher.” The passage continues to cite the very verse that we just quoted in the previous paragraph! The Talmud continues to inform us of the Lord’s response to Moses’ prolonged prayer: “And the Lord heard me that time as well...”

The Talmud proceeds to question the above teaching: “Is that so? Did not Rabbi Yochanan say that anyone who prolongs his prayer and expects it to be answered will ultimately come to heartache (as it will not be answered), as it is stated: ‘Hope deferred makes the heart sick.’ (Proverbs 13:12)?”

The author of *Nesivos* suggests the following

interpretation of the above passage: “Prolonging prayer” in this context refers to one who specifies at length and in detail precisely what he is asking for, and what he is convinced is good for him. But truth to be told, no person really knows what is good for him! It is preferable to recite the standard prescribed prayer or leave it up to the Almighty to determine what is best for him. Thereby he will avoid heartache and demonstrate his trust in the Lord. If one thinks that he knows what is good for himself, and doesn’t achieve the goals of his prayers, that is when he will suffer heartache.”

It is in this passage in his lesser-known work, *Nachalas Yaakov*, that the author of *Nesivos* discourages the specification of particular personal requests in one’s prayers.

It must be pointed out, in all fairness, that other authorities disagree. Two examples are offered in the edition of *Nachlas Yaakov* published by Machon Yerushalayim. One is the author of *Chayei Adam* who writes that “it is appropriate for everyone to pray daily for his personal needs and sustenance and for what he knows in his heart is good for him”. The other, an earlier authority, is Rabbi Yonasan Eyeshutz in his *Yaaros Devash*, book 1, sermon 1.

I dare not intervene between these outstanding authorities, despite my personal affinity with the teachings of Rabbi Yaakov Loberbaum. After all, I discovered him during the summer that my adolescent prayers were denied, but when I was rewarded with a summer of spiritual and intellectual growth and by becoming acquainted with one of my lifelong rabbinic heroes, the author of *Nesivos HaMishpat*, *Nachalas Yakov*, and numerous other masterpieces.

I leave it up to you, dear reader, to choose the approach to prayer that appeals to you upon reflection. One way or the other, pray! ■



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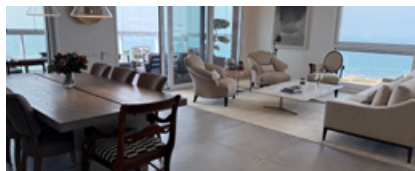
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Greatness and Humility

A sequence of verses in this week's sedra gave rise to a beautiful Talmudic passage – one that has found a place in the Siddur. It is among the readings we say after the Evening Service on Saturday night as Shabbat comes to an end. Here is the text on which it is based:

“For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty and awe-inspiring God, who shows no favouritism and accepts no bribe. He upholds the cause of the orphan and widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.” (*Deut. 10:17-18*)

The juxtaposition of the two verses – the first about God's supremacy, the second about His care for the low and lonely – could not be more striking. The Power of powers cares for the powerless. The Infinite One great shows concern for the small. The Being at the heart of being listens to those at the margins: the orphan, the widow, the stranger, the poor, the outcast, the neglected. On this idea, the third century teacher Rabbi Yochanan built the following homily:

Wherever you find the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, there you find His

humility. This is written in the Torah, repeated in the Prophets, and stated a third time in the Writings. It is written in the Torah: “For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty and awe-inspiring God, who shows no favouritism and accepts no bribe.”

Immediately afterwards it is written, “He upholds the cause of the orphan and widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.” It is repeated in the Prophets, as it says: “So says the High and Exalted One, who lives for ever and whose name is Holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with the contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.” It is stated a third time in the Writings: “Sing to God, make music for His name, extol Him who rides the clouds – God is His name – and exult before Him.” Immediately afterwards it is written: “Father of the fatherless and judge of widows, is God in His holy habitation.” (*Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 31a*)

It is this passage that found its way into the (Ashkenazi) service at the end of Shabbat. Its presence there is to remind us that, as the day of rest ends and we return to our weekday concerns, we should not be so caught up in our own interests that we forget others less favourably situated. To care only for ourselves

and those immediately dependent on us is not “the way of God”.

One of the more unusual aspects of being a Chief Rabbi is that one comes to know people one otherwise might not. These were three moments that made a deep impression on me.

From time to time, Elaine and I give dinner parties for people within, and also outside, the Jewish community. Usually, at the end, the guests thank the hosts. Only once, though, did a guest not only thank us but also ask to be allowed to go into the kitchen to thank those who had made and served the meal. It was a fine act of sensitivity. No less interesting was who it was who did so. It was John Major, a British Prime Minister. Greatness is humility.

The oldest synagogue in Britain is Bevis Marks, in the heart of the City of London. Built in 1701, it was the first purpose-built synagogue in London, created by the Spanish and Portuguese Jews who were the first to return to England (or practice their Judaism in public: some had been *marranos*) after Oliver Cromwell gave permission in 1656 for Jews to return after their expulsion by Edward I in 1290.

Modelled on the Great Synagogue in Amsterdam, it has stayed almost unchanged ever since. Only the addition of electric lights has marked the passing of time – and even so, on special occasions, services are candle-lit as they were in those early days.

For the tercentenary service in 2001, Prince Charles came to the synagogue. There he met members of the community as well as leaders of Anglo-Jewry. What was impressive is that he spent as much time talking to the young men and women who were doing security duty as he did to the great and good of British Jewry. For security reasons, people volunteer to stand guard at communal events – part of the work of one of our finest organisations, the



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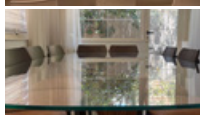
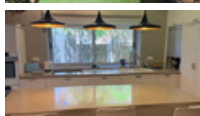
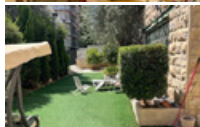
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Community Security Trust. Often, people walk past them, hardly noticing their presence. But Prince Charles did notice them, and he made them feel as important as anyone else on that glittering occasion. Greatness is humility.

Sarah Levene (not her real name) died tragically young. She and her husband had been blessed by God with great success and they were extremely wealthy; but they did not spend their money on themselves. They gave *tzedakah* on a massive scale – within and beyond the Jewish community, in Britain, Israel and elsewhere. They were among the greatest philanthropists of our time.

When Sarah died, among those who felt most bereaved were the waiters and waitresses of a well-known hotel in Israel where they often stayed. It transpired that she had come to know all of them – where they came from, what their family situation was, the difficulties they were going through, the problems they faced. She remembered not only their names but also the names of their spouses and children. Whenever any of them needed help, she made sure it came, quietly, unobtrusively. It was a habit she had wherever she went.

After her death I discovered how she and her husband came to be married. He was older than she was, a friend of her parents. She had some weeks free in the summer before the start of the academic year, and Mr Levene (not his real name) gave her a holiday job. One

evening after work they were about to join her parents for a meal.

In the street they passed a beggar. Mr Levene, punctilious about the mitzvah of *tzedakah*, reached into his pocket and gave the man a coin. As they were walking on, Sarah asked him to lend her some money – a fairly large sum, which she promised she would repay at the end of the week when he paid her wages.

He did so. She then ran back to the beggar and gave him the money. “Why did you do that?” he asked, “I had already given him some money.” “What you gave him,” she said, “was enough to help him for today but not enough to make a difference to his life.”

At the end of the week, Mr Levene gave Sarah her wages. She handed him back most of the money, reminding him that she had to repay him for the sum he had lent her. “I will accept the money,” he told her, “Because I do not want to rob you of your mitzvah.” But – as he himself told me after her death, “It was then that I decided to ask her to marry me – because her heart was bigger than mine.”

Throughout their marriage they spent as much time and energy on giving their money to charitable causes as they did on earning it. They were responsible for many of the most outstanding educational, medical, and environmental projects of our time. I have had the privilege of knowing other philanthropists – but none who knew the names of the children of the waiters at the hotel where they stayed; none who cared more for those others hardly noticed or who gave help more quietly, more effectively, more humanly. Greatness is humility.

This idea – counter-intuitive, unexpected, life-changing – is one of the great contributions of the Torah to Western civilisation and it is set out in the words of our *sedra*,

**Mazal tov to
Yehudit Collins
on the occasion of
her 90th birthday**

when Moses told the people about the “God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awe-inspiring God” whose greatness lay not just in the fact that He was Creator of the universe and shaper of history, but that “He upholds the cause of the orphan and widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.” Those who do this are the true men and women of God. ■

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

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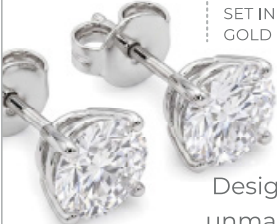

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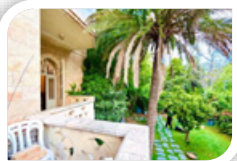
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BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER
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Punishment is not Rejection

The tragic words that open this week's haftarah ("Vatomer Tziyon 'azavani Hashem, Vashem shechechani") reflect the hopelessness of post-exile Israel who exclaim that G-d had abandoned and forgotten her. But these words also reflect the belief, held by many in the nation, that the exile and the destruction of the Temple meant that they need no longer worship the One G-d. Having been overwhelmed by the Babylonian military and having seen the enemy destroy Hashem's "house," convinced many that they must now worship the Babylonian "god" who, clearly, they believed, proved his power to be greater than that of Hashem (r"l).

This unfortunate attitude, one that spread within the suffering generation, should not surprise us. We find it repeated numerous times over succeeding eras, and bemoaned by different prophets. After the destruction of Yerushalayim and the Churban of the Beit HaMikdash, Yirmiyahu HaNavi authors the Sefer M'lachim as a response to this very

attitude:

The Jewish population had witnessed the victory of Babylonia over the Southern Kingdom of Israel and saw it as proof of the "failure" [ch"v'sh] of Hashem's ability to protect His nation. But they never accepted it as their own shortcoming, as a result of ignoring the decades of warnings issued by numerous prophets. For this reason, Yirmiyahu detailed in Sefer M'lachim the growing sinfulness of the people and the recurring refusal of Israel to repent so that the people would realize that it was **their defeat** - NOT Hashem's. The tragedy that befell them was due to their corruption and immorality; and their refusal to heed G-d's warnings.

Likewise, we find this argument (that Israel should now turn to others "gods") openly disputed in the words of Yechezkel who clearly warned the exiled Judeans (chapter 20; 32): "And that which you believe will not be, when you say: 'We will be like other nations and worship (gods of) wood and stone' "

However, Yishayahu's responds to these false ideas differently from both Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel. In this week's haftarah we hear the prophet turn to Israel in a soothing tone and comforting words. He explains that, as a mother could never forget her baby or fail to be compassionate to it, so true it is that G-d could never forget His nation or fail to be merciful to them. The navi reasserts that

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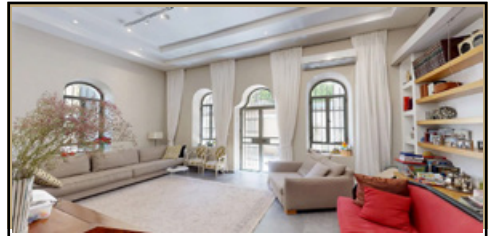
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Israel is eternally bound to G-d through the covenant made to their ancestors and, sin though they might, they remain chosen by G-d. To put it simply, Yishayahu reminds them that **punishment** does not mean **rejection**.

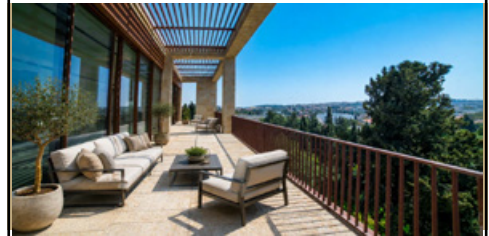
The navi supports his comforting words with a prophecy of a massive return to Israel, of a repopulating of the now-barren cities and of the rebuilding of destroyed edifices. He additionally promises that other nations will lend their support to Israel's return and, as a result, joy and gladness will return to the grieving land that will be filled with joyful music and prayers of thanksgiving.

It is, is it not, a vision that we see with our own eyes today. ■

Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>



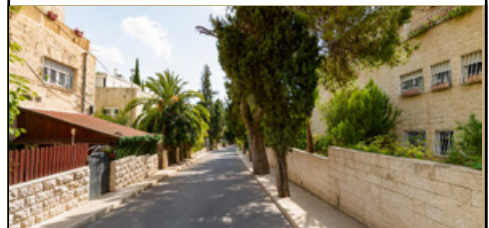
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The Spiritual Art of Listening: The Deeper Meaning of *Shema*

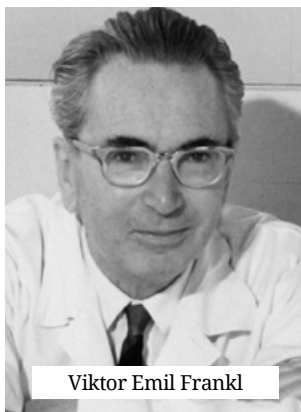
One of the most powerful and recurring words in Sefer Devarim is the word שמע (*Shema*). At first glance, it appears simple enough: *hear* or *listen*. Yet, the Hebrew word *Shema* contains layers of meaning that cannot be captured by any single English translation.

THE FALLACY OF TRANSLATABILITY

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks famously described what he called *the fallacy of translatability* - the mistaken assumption that every word in one language can be perfectly translated into another. Languages reflect cultures, values, and spiritual worlds. Therefore, certain words carry dimensions of meaning that simply do not exist elsewhere. The Hebrew language is especially rich in this regard. Words in *Lashon HaKodesh* are not merely labels; they express essence and spiritual reality.

Rabbi Sacks¹ notes that *Shema* is one of those untranslatable words. Depending on context, it can mean: to hear, to listen, to pay attention, to understand, to internalize, to heed, or even to obey. Indeed, various English

translations of the opening verse of Parashat Eikev render the word differently: “If you hearken...”; “If you obey...”; “If you pay attention...”. Yet none fully captures the depth of *Shema*.



Viktor Emil Frankl

The Torah’s concept of listening is not passive hearing. It is active receptivity. *Shema* means allowing another voice to enter one’s inner world.

LISTENING AS AVODAH

Listening is difficult. Seeing is immediate and effortless. Listening, however, demands patience, humility, focus, and emotional presence. True listening requires setting aside one’s own inner noise in order

to make room for someone else. Rabbi Sacks describes listening itself as an *avodah*, a form of spiritual labor. Modern life conditions people to speak, react, argue, and persuade. Rarely are we trained simply to listen. Yet some of the deepest human healing emerges not from brilliant speeches, but from attentive presence.

POWER OF BEING HEARD

Viktor Frankl once recounted that he received a late-night phone call from a woman contemplating suicide. For two hours he

1. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Lessons in Leadership*

spoke with her, offering every conceivable reason to continue living. Eventually she agreed not to take her life. Later, Frankl asked her which argument had convinced her. She answered: none of them. What changed her mind, she explained, was the realization that someone was willing to listen to her for two hours in the middle of the night. That alone convinced her that life was worth living.

This story reveals a profound truth: to be heard is to be affirmed. Listening tells another person- *your existence matters. Your pain matters. You matter.* In many ways, the deepest human need is not merely to be helped, but to be understood.

LISTENING AS HEALING

Rabbi Sacks applied this principle in his own rabbinic work. He once described his involvement in resolving difficult *agunah* cases, situations in which husbands refused to grant a *get*. Surprisingly, many of these painful disputes were resolved not primarily through legal mechanisms, but through deep listening. By allowing each side to fully express their pain and sense of injustice, healing and reconciliation became possible. Listening is therapeutic because it restores dignity. Very often people do not become angry simply because of disagreement; they become angry because they feel unheard.

In Tanach we find the importance of attentive listening: דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים בְּנִחָת נִשְׁמָעִים - *the words of the wise are heard when spoken gently.*²

The ability to hear another person deeply is therefore not only an interpersonal skill; it is a Torah value.

MOSHE RABBEINU: THE GREAT LISTENER

This insight sheds new light on one of the Torah's great mysteries.

When Hashem first appeared to Moshe Rabbeinu at the Burning Bush, Moshe protested:

“בִּי אֶ-דֹּנִי לֹא אִישׁ דְּבָרִים אֲנִי... כִּי כְבֹד-פֶּה וְכֶבֶד לִשׁוֹן אֲנִי”

Please, my Lord, I am not a man of words... for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue

Why would Hashem choose someone who struggled with speech to become the greatest leader in Jewish history? Perhaps one who struggles to speak learns how to listen. Moshe's greatness may not have begun with eloquence, but with receptivity. Before he could transmit the word of Hashem, he first had to hear it. The foundation of Torah leadership is not rhetoric, it is listening.

In a world saturated with noise, true listening has become rare. People rush to respond before understanding. Conversations become performances. Even relationships often suffer because individuals seek to be heard more than they seek to hear. Yet the Torah teaches that holiness begins with *Shema*.

Shema Yisrael is not merely a declaration of faith. It is a call to cultivate an inner posture of attentiveness, toward Hashem, toward Torah, and toward other human beings. To truly listen is to recognize that another soul carries infinite dignity. Sometimes the greatest act of kindness is not advice, persuasion or brilliance, but presence. A listening ear can restore hope. A listening heart can heal pain. A listening soul can hear the voice of Hashem hidden within the noise of life.

May we merit to become not only people who speak words of Torah, but people who embody the Torah's deepest command: *Shema* - to hear, to understand, and to truly listen. ■

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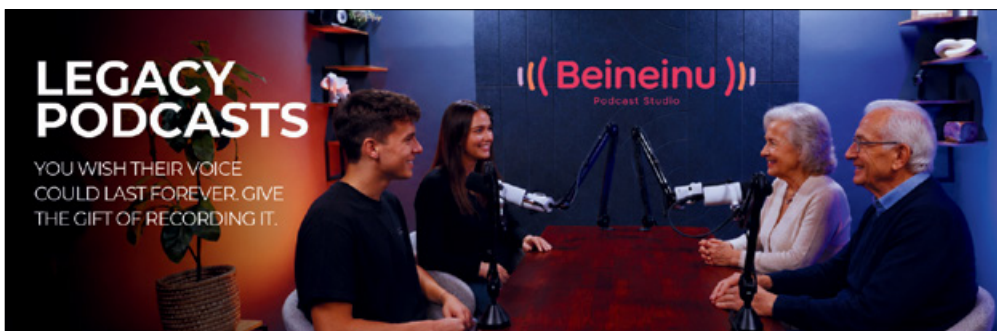
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Rav Mordechai Kamenetzky, shlit'a, Rosh Yeshiva and Dean of Toras Chaim South Shore is a beloved *talmid chacham*, prolific author and columnist. A grandson of the venerable Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt'l, he often shares first hand experiences and personal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

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

Rav Wolbe was a man of equanimity and inner calm. Upon hearing the comment, he

drew himself up to his full height and shook with intensity. With fire in his eyes and a voice filled with emotion he declared "No! It can't be! *Der Brisker Rav hut das kain mohl nisht gezagt*; the Brisker Rav could never have said that!"

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

כִּי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה בָּא־שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ לֹא כְּאֶרֶץ
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ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּהּ מִרְשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרִית שָׁנָה:

"For the Land that you are about to enter and possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come... It is a Land which Hashem looks after, upon which Hashem always keeps His eye, from the year's beginning to its end." (*Devarim*, 11:10-12)

Torah assures us that Eretz Yisrael is under God's direct and watchful protection, and as such, this land merits a clearer and more present expression of *hashgacha p'ratis*, Divine providence. The powerful imagery and promise of being a land which Hashem 'looks after' follows another meaningful directive in our Parsha:

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ וְשָׁמַרְתָּ מְשֻׁמְרָתוֹ וְחֻקָּיו
וּמִצְוָתָיו וּמִצְוָתוֹ כְּלֵהִימִים:

"Love Hashem your God, and always keep His charge, His laws, His rules, and His commandments." (11:1)

Mazal Tov to
Moshe & Evelyn Elbogen
and family on the **Bar Mitzva**
of their **grandson**



Ramban understands this verse as emphasizing our obligation to walk in God's ways: *Ve-halachta be-derachav*, "And you shall walk in His ways." And this means to 'imitate' Him, שתשמור מה שהשם שומר, "that you shall look after and guard what Hashem is looking after and guarding". The command *ve-shamarta mishmarto*, "keep His charge," encourages us to be aware of the needs of the poor, widows and orphans, just as Hashem watches out for those who may be on the periphery of society.

In other words, we are asked to be concerned with, and actively look after, that with which Hashem is concerned. And this is a hint in the verse: "It is a land which Hashem looks after, upon which Hashem always keeps His eye..."

We instinctually imitate Hashem's concern for Eretz Yisrael because our connection to this land is fundamental and inherent. Its holiness and pull is interlaced with our spiritual identity and DNA. There is nothing external about our *kesher* to the land, from its holy history and topography to its politics and economic development. A spiritually healthy Jew appreciates and connects with Hashem's Promised Land naturally – simply because it is ours.

Israel's first President, Dr. Chaim Weizmann spent years dedicated to working to garner international diplomatic support for the establishment of a Zionist state and Jewish homeland. Meeting with British politicians while lobbying in the United Kingdom, a member of the House of Lords publicly accosted him: "Why do you Jews insist on Palestine when there are so many undeveloped countries you could settle in more conveniently?"

Ever ready and always sharp, Weizmann answered immediately, "Well my good chap,

that is like me asking you why you drove twenty miles to visit your mother last Sunday when there are so many other old ladies living on your street."

Rav Yitzchak Hutner, Rosh Yeshivas Chaim Berlin and author of *Pachad Yitzchok* shared a memory of time spent with Rav Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook:

"I once took a walk with the Rav and another man amid the mountains of the Land of Israel. Rav Kook told how impressed he was by the landscape. The fellow replied, with surprise, "But you were in the Alps! What's so special about *these* mountains?" Rav Kook replied, "The Alps didn't speak to me... the mountains of Eretz Yisrael call me by name."

May we be blessed to hear the mountains and streams, rivers and valleys of Eretz Yisrael calling to us by name, and with our eyes to 'look after what Hashem is looking after,' and to see what the Ribbono Shel Olam is seeing... from the year's beginning to its end.

"Ten measures of beauty were bestowed upon the world;

nine were received by Jerusalem, and one by the rest of the world." (*Kidushin*, 49b)

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.

 Mazal Tov to 
Dr. Dovid Hurwitz and family
on the birth of a great-grandson

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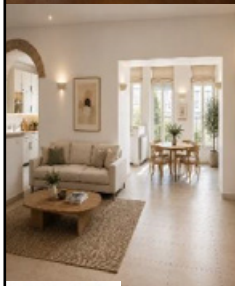
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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

Correction:

The Simchat Shmuel column for this week - Parshat Eikev, was inadvertently shared last week in place of Rabbi Shor's article about Tu B'Av, which falls on Wednesday July 29th. As such, we have included both of these articles in this week's edition. We apologize for the confusion.

Tu B'Av

This Tuesday evening and Wednesday, we commemorated 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 *Samech* 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 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.

Parshat Eikev

In our *sedra* this week we read the familiar verse- (*Devarim 8:10*):

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל-הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ

When you have eaten and been satiated, you shall bless the Lord your G-d upon the good land that he has given unto you.

According to the **Sefer HaChinuch**-This verse serves as the basis for the recitation of *birkat hamazon*, as well as the recitation of *brachot* in general before or after eating, as a sign of our appreciation and acknowledgment that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has provided that sustenance to us- *Mitzva levareich et Hashem Yitbarach achar sheyaacheil haadam, vayesova milechem oh mishivat haminim*.

The **Maggid, Reb Dov Ber of Mezritch**

zy'a, taught that we learn from this verse that *birkat hamazon* requires even more *kavana* than *tefila*, since *tefila* is proscribed by our sages, and *birkat hamazon* is learned from this specific Torah verse.

Our **Chazal** in the *Gemara* in *Brachot* (35b) explain this idea further:

אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינְיָא בַּר פִּפְאִי: כָּל הַנִּהְנֶה מִן הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּלֹא בִּרְכָה כְּאִילוּ גִזְלָל לְהַקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְכִנְסֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל

Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa said: Anyone who benefits in this world without reciting a blessing is considered as if he has stolen from G-d and from Knesset Yisrael...

The concept of acknowledging that Hashem has provided us with sustenance and the importance of declaring our appreciation for that sustenance makes sense, but how are we

to understand this statement that if we fail to recite a *bracha* upon deriving benefit, that somehow we have also stolen from the Jewish People as well?

Rabbeinu B'Chaya, points to this *gemara* in his commentary on our verse. He explains that we need to understand that a *bracha* is not solely a vehicle for expressing our appreciation to G-d, but also the vehicle, the pipeline to bring further blessing, sustenance and goodness into the world. If we were to derive pleasure or benefit in this world without reciting a blessing, we would not only be coming up short in our show of gratitude to *Hashem* for that sustenance, but we would also be missing out on the opportunity to help others by the power inherent in that *bracha* to metaphysically channel and provide additional sustenance to descend into this world.

Similarly, the **Be'er Moshe**, the **Admor of**

Ozerov zy'a, explains that each time we recite a *bracha*, the spiritual cognition of the gifts that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* bestows upon us, is not only a manifestation of *Hakarat HaTov* for all we have received, but simultaneously becomes the catalyst to experience further *bracha*. When we acknowledge and are cognizant that *Hashem Yitbarach* is indeed the source of all blessing, then it opens us up spiritually and metaphysically to seeing and experiencing more and more *bracha* each and every day.

Yehi Ratzon, may each of us merit to recall the incredible dual capacity for goodness contained within every *bracha* we recite. ■



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An Introduction to Beef Shechitah in Israel

Meat is one of the most complex, yet highly sought-after, foods in the kosher kitchen. Red meat, in particular, is served not only on Shabbat and Yom Tov, but also forms a regular part of the daily diet for many Jewish families in Israel and throughout the world.

Proper *shechitah* of cattle requires exceptional expertise and attention to detail. In today's global food industry, kosher beef production presents numerous technical and logistical challenges. One of the most significant is location. Israel produces less than 30% of the beef consumed domestically, with more than 70% imported from animals slaughtered overseas. Maintaining kosher standards across such an extensive international supply chain requires modern slaughterhouses, highly trained *shochtim* and *bodkim*, and sophisticated tracking systems capable of monitoring every animal from the moment of *shechitah* until the finished

product is packaged, sealed, and distributed. Likewise, much of the kosher beef supplied to the North American market is now produced in South America under the supervision of leading kosher certification agencies.

Although the subject of kosher beef production is both broad and intricate, this article will introduce some of the fundamental principles of beef *shechitah* and discuss their practical application in Israel today.

THE BASICS

Every kosher slaughter operation requires meticulous planning and supervision. This includes the qualifications and expertise of the *shochtim*, the health and suitability of the animals, properly maintained *chalafim* (shechitah knives), and approved restraining equipment. The actual act of *shechitah* is only one stage in the overall process.

Following slaughter, additional procedures must be carefully supervised. These include the inspection of the animal's organs to determine its kosher status, the removal of prohibited fats and the koshering process of soaking, salting, and washing the meat.

Each of these stages requires experienced kashrut professionals and trained rabbinic supervisors. All procedures must be performed with precision while operating within modern facilities that process hundreds of



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animals each day. Kashrut certification agencies invest tremendous resources to ensure that kosher beef reaches consumers in full compliance with halachic requirements.

HINDQUARTERS

One of the unique aspects of kosher beef production is the prohibition against consuming certain portions of an otherwise kosher animal. Even after a cow has been properly slaughtered, the Torah prohibits the consumption of specific forbidden fats (*cheilev*) as well as certain blood vessels, all of which must be removed.

Additionally, the Torah prohibits consumption of the *Gid HaNasheh* (the sciatic nerve). *Chazal* further prohibited certain surrounding tissues associated with the nerve. The removal of these prohibited portions is a highly specialized process, since not all fats are forbidden. Permitted fats (*shuman*) remain allowed, as do many muscles and tissues surrounding the sciatic nerve. Distinguishing between these permitted and prohibited areas requires extensive knowledge and practical experience.

The individual trained to perform this work is known as a *Menaker*. The process, called *Nikkur*, is known in Yiddish as *treibering* and in English as *porging*. Unlike many other areas of *halachah*, the techniques of *nikkur* are based largely upon practical tradition. The *Shulchan Aruch* explains that because this expertise is acquired through hands-on training rather than written instruction, it must be transmitted from one generation of experts to the next.

Although different customs and methods of

nikkur developed over the centuries, the process was successfully practiced for generations, allowing the consumption of the hindquarters of the animal, including premium cuts such as the *Sheitel*, *Filet*, *Sinta*, and others.

Over time, however, many Ashkenazic communities gradually discontinued the practice of *nikkur*. This eventually became the accepted custom throughout much of the Ashkenazic world. There remains considerable discussion among halachic authorities whether limiting consumption to the forequarters—where virtually no *cheilev* is present—is based on a binding halachic tradition or developed primarily for practical reasons. Regardless, today there is relatively little continuous Ashkenazic tradition regarding the detailed practice of *nikkur*.

THE MODERN CUSTOM

As a result, OU Kosher and virtually all major kosher certification agencies outside Israel do not perform *nikkur* and therefore certify only the forequarters of the animal (more precisely, the portion forward of the twelfth rib). Consequently, the issue of kosher hindquarters is largely absent from kosher meat production outside Israel.



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In Israel, however, the situation is markedly different. *Nikkur* has continued to be practiced for many decades. Although Ashkenazic communities originally performed *nikkur* even after the establishment of the State of Israel, as kosher meat became more readily available and the economic necessity diminished. Sephardic and Yemenite communities, by contrast, have maintained a tradition of *nikkur*.

Today, several Mehadrin kosher certification agencies in Israel continue to perform *nikkur*, maintaining that their methods preserve the accepted traditions, including those historically practiced by Ashkenazic authorities. Consequently, Israeli consumers regularly encounter both forequarter and hindquarter cuts. Hindquarter meat is commonly served in restaurants, hotels, and catering establishments throughout the country and includes many of the most desirable premium cuts.

Although, as noted above, the widespread Ashkenazic custom has been to refrain from consuming hindquarters, practical questions may arise when one is served such meat as a guest or when it has been prepared in shared utensils. In such circumstances, one should consult a competent halachic authority who is familiar with the relevant customs and halachic considerations. ■

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“*Ve’achalta ve’savata u’veirachta et Hashem Elokecha al ha’aretz hatovah asher natan lach*—And you will eat and be sated, and you shall bless Hashem, your God, for the good land He has given you.” (*Devarim* 8:10) This is the source for *Birkat Hamazon* in the Torah. (*Berachot* 48b)

Let us examine the beginning of the second brachah that begins with, “*Nodeh lecha*—We give thanks to you Hashem,” to learn powerful, inspiring insights and meaning.

Rav Moshe Meir Weiss points out that Yehoshua composed this brachah in the plural form to represent *Am Yisrael*, thanking Hashem for facilitating the conquest and settlement of the land. The brachah continues, “*Hashem Elokeinu*,” which,



Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt”l

as Rav Dovid Cohen notes, echoes the Torah commandment, “...*u’veirachta et Hashem Elokecha*.” The Beis Aharon zt”l teaches that the greatest thanks comes from the feeling that we have a personal relationship with Hashem.

R Chaim Kanievsky zt”l notes that like the “Shema,” each section of *Birkat Hamazon* follow a pattern, two words succeeded by the name of Hashem, “*Nodeh lecha Hashem*,” “*V’al hakol Hashem*,” “*Rachem na Hashem*,” “*Yiru et Hashem*.” This parallel draws our attention to the importance and primacy of *Birkat Hamazon*. Just as the Shema declares the oneness of God, the brachah we say after a meal testifies to the omnipotence of Hashem as the source of everything in this world.

Eretz Yisrael is described here as an “*eretz chemdah*,” a desirable land. The Midrash points out, and we have seen with our own eyes, that every king in the world desires the land of Israel. The *Levush* adds that Yehoshua characterized the land as such, seeing how passionately his rebbe, Moshe Rabbeinu, prayed to enter the land. Additionally, according to the Midrash, this land is so treasured and coveted since it is the place where Hashem desired to dwell.

The brachah further describes Eretz Yisrael as, “*tovah u’rechavah*,” good, and spacious. The Talmud teaches that one only fulfills his obligation for *Birkat Hamazon* if he mentions all three words of praise. The *Meiri* notes that



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using these descriptions follow the known principle to praise something when mentioning it, as Hashem did when He described the land to Moshe Rabbeinu at the scene of the burning bush, using the same three words. The *Avudraham* zt”l adds that speaking its praise fuels one’s desire to connect and bond with the land.

Accordingly, the *Olat Tamid* explains that this brachah is meant to elicit feelings of gratitude for the gift of Eretz Yisrael, and appreciation for the opportunity to live in the land where one can fulfill a mitzvah at every moment. He further comments that one should only leave the land under extenuating circumstances, and even then, only for a short time, so as not to forgo the chance to observe this important mitzvah.

It is significant that this brachah expresses thanks to Hashem first for the land and only afterward for taking us out of Egypt, when in fact the events were reversed — we only came to the land after leaving Egypt! *Aish Tamid* explains that we can only appreciate a process in retrospect. So often we are consumed by a challenge that it is difficult to fully recognize the goodness that occurs along the way. Rav Avraham Schorr shares in *Halekach Ve’halebuv*, that expressing gratitude must include not only appreciation for salvation but for the difficulties and troubles as well. By acknowledging the complete picture, we can then realize the kindness and generosity of Hashem in everything we experience. ■



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Remember the Journey

As Moshe Rabbeinu prepares us for our entry into Eretz Yisrael, he is gripped by a series of profound fears. He worries that we will be drawn to the worship of lifeless idols of wood and metal. He fears that prosperity in Israel will breed arrogance and erode our awareness of Hashem. He worries that we will become self-righteous, attributing our military victories to our own virtue rather than to Hashem's promise and kindness. Self-congratulation breeds complacency and self-sufficiency.

Most poignantly, Moshe knows that he will not be there to guide us through this uncharted territory.

REMEMBER THE DESERT

Facing these concerns, Moshe Rabbeinu repeatedly turns the nation's attention to the past. He reminds them that the Hashem who shattered the might of Egypt will also deliver the kings of Canaan into their hands.

Yet memories of Egypt alone will not suffice. Three times in Parshat Eikev he returns to the wilderness, urging us to remember the Divine providence that sustained us. At one point he becomes remarkably specific: the manna, the clothing that never wore out, and the feet that never swelled despite forty years in the desert. As Moshe commands:

וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת-כָּל-הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הוֹלִיכְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ זֶה
אֶרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּמִדְבָּר (דברים ח:ב)

"You shall remember the entire journey along which Hashem your God led you during these forty years in the wilderness."

AMBIVALENT MEMORIES

This was a bold gamble. The wilderness experience was, by and large, a tragic one. The first year and a half after leaving Egypt was marked by a series of rebellions, culminating in the sin of the spies, which doomed that generation to wander the desert until it died out. Thirty-eight years later, after nearly the entire generation had perished, the tragedies still had not ended. Twenty-four thousand more died in the aftermath of the sin of Pe'or.

The wilderness was not simply a story of miracles, but of miracles and failures, of extraordinary faith alongside devastating spiritual collapse.

A midrash in Shir Hashirim Rabbah (3:1) sums up the mixed legacy of those forty years: עִלּוּיָהּ מִן הַמִּדְבָּר... מִיִּתְתָּהּ מִן הַמִּדְבָּר... תּוֹרָה מִן הַמִּדְבָּר... אָמַר ר' שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי בַּמִּדְבָּר טַעְנוּ וּבַמִּדְבָּר פָּרְקוּ, נִבְוָאָה מִן הַמִּדְבָּר הִיא עִלּוּיָהּ מִן הַמִּדְבָּר.

Her ascent came from the wilderness... her death came from the wilderness. Her Torah

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came from the wilderness; the Mishkan came from the wilderness ... Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: In the wilderness they became burdened (or: they complained), and in the wilderness they cast it off.

Undoubtedly, we were eager to turn the page on the frustration and futility of those difficult forty years. Yet Moshe refuses to allow us to forget. Instead, he insists that we remember the entire journey.

Although entry into Eretz Yisrael marks a new era, Moshe is determined to preserve continuity with the past. He does not want this generation to think they are starting over.

The desert taught enduring lessons about faith, loyalty, and Divine providence. The spectacular miracles of the wilderness would not be repeated in the same overt fashion in Eretz Yisrael. There, Hashem's hand would be hidden behind nature, history, and politics. Remembering the desert would help us recognize Him even when He was less visible.

The wilderness also taught painful lessons about the fragility of faith. Before we grow too confident in the permanence of the Beit Hamikdash or Jewish sovereignty, we are meant to remember how quickly spiritual greatness can unravel. Mere weeks after hearing Hashem's voice at Sinai, we fashioned a golden calf. Only months later, standing at the threshold of destiny, we rejected the very gift of Israel. The desert reminds us that even extraordinary religious experiences do not guarantee enduring faith.

That generation had been granted the extraordinary privilege of entering and settling Eretz Yisrael. Life in the Land would demand new ways of thinking, new responsibilities, and new opportunities to serve Hashem. They would cultivate fields, defend their borders, build a government, and create

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a society guided by Torah. Yet despite these profound changes, they must never imagine that they were starting over.

INNOVATION AND PRESERVATION

Our generation faces a similar challenge. Life in the modern State of Israel presents the same challenge of blending the old with the new, of combining tradition with innovation. We believe that we have entered a new stage of Jewish history, one that, Iy"H, will ultimately lead to the end of history. We are confronting questions Jews could only dream about for nearly two thousand years: how to govern a Jewish state, how to build a society shaped by Jewish values, and how to bring Torah into every area of national life.

Many mitzvot that lay dormant throughout exile have returned to the center of Jewish life. Jewish sovereignty has reopened entire areas of halachah that had remained largely theoretical throughout the centuries of exile. Returning to our homeland has created religious opportunities previous generations could scarcely imagine.

We are trying to reverse one of exile's deepest legacies—its splintering of the Jewish people. Centuries of dispersion gave rise to different communities, customs, and traditions. In Israel, we are challenged to weave these diverse strands back into a shared national fabric. At the same time, we are building a

common future with fellow Jews who do not yet share the same level of religious commitment. Since 1948, Jewish history has entered unfamiliar territory.

Moshe's warning feels especially relevant in Israel. So much has changed, and it is easy to feel as though we are living through a complete break with the past. We aren't. We are adding a new chapter to a story that began long before us.

The challenge is to cultivate a pioneering spirit while remaining deeply faithful to our past. This is what makes religious life in Israel so different from religious life in the Diaspora. In Chutz LaAretz, the primary religious instinct is preservation—to safeguard the mesorah and faithfully transmit it from one generation to the next. Continuity remains the defining principle.

In Israel, the primary impulse is one of renewal and change. Every day presents new religious and national challenges. That is exactly why Moshe's warning is so important. We are building something new, but it must grow out of everything that came before it.

EXILE WAS NOT A HIATUS

This tension between continuity and renewal did not begin in our generation. This temptation has deep historical and cultural roots. The founding fathers of secular Zionism—to whom we owe an enormous debt—were nevertheless determined to break from the previous two thousand years of Jewish experience. The image of the weak, powerless Jew wandering through exile stood in sharp contrast to the proud, self-reliant Jew defending his homeland. Exile was often portrayed as a long interruption in Jewish history, with the true story of the Jewish people resuming only with the rebirth of the State of Israel.

We must not accept that narrative. Galut

was a punishment, and many of the fullest expressions of Jewish life could not be realized without a homeland. Yet those centuries weren't empty. Across the globe, we built vibrant communities, produced towering Torah scholarship, and fashioned a rich religious world that endured despite persecution and displacement. Within the walls of the Beit Midrash we created an eternal spiritual universe that no hostile society could destroy. Without the faith, sacrifice, and resilience of those generations, there would have been no Jewish people to return home in 1948.

Perhaps that is why I sometimes think we need to create a Jewish legacy trip for young Israelis—one that takes them to the communities from which their parents and grandparents came.

Let them see the courage and commitment that sustained Jewish life in exile. Let them see how deeply Jews throughout the world cherished Eretz Yisrael, prayed for it, sacrificed for it, and eventually helped rebuild it. Let them see that the road home did not begin in 1948. It was not merely a story of darkness, frustration, and helplessness. It was also a story of faith, creativity, endurance, and hope.

Standing once again in our own Eretz Yisrael, Moshe's charge remains as relevant as ever: *"You shall remember the entire journey."* ■



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

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Can a Mother Forget?

YESHAYAHU 49:14–51:3

Now that Tisha B'Av has passed, how are we expected to move on from the mourning of the Nine Days? Can mourning be turned on and off like a light switch?

We spend seven weeks reading Haftarat of consolation. Perhaps Chazal understood that genuine comfort cannot be rushed. Just as our national mourning unfolds gradually, so too does our healing. While weddings celebrations have begun, we refrain from initiating court cases because the shadow of the Churban still lingers. If we are truly mourning, consolation cannot come overnight. It must be rebuilt, one step at a time.

That is precisely where this week's Haftorah begins — not with redemption, but with raw emotion. Zion cries, *עָזַבְנִי ה', וְה' שָׁכַחְנִי*, Hashem has abandoned me; Hashem has forgotten me. The progression is striking. To feel abandoned is painful; to feel forgotten is even more so. Abandonment suggests distance. Forgetting

suggests that the relationship itself has been lost.

Hashem does not answer with an explanation. Instead, He responds with the strongest relationship we know: *הַתִּשְׁכַּח אִשָּׁה עוֹלָה, מֵרָחֵם בְּכִנּוּהָ? Can a woman forget her nursing child, cease to have compassion on the child she bore?*

The Malbim notes that the verse deliberately describes two dimensions of motherhood. “עוֹלָה” is the nursing infant, wholly dependent on its mother in the present. “בְּכִנּוּהָ” is the child she carried in her womb, recalling a bond that began long before birth. Together, they encompass the deepest attachment a human being can experience. Hashem offer His reassurance: *גַּם אִלּוּ תִשְׁכַּחְנָה, וְאֵנֹכִי לֹא אֶשְׁכַּח. Even if such a thing were possible, I will never forget you.*

Perhaps this is the purpose of the Shivah D'Nechemta. Healing does not begin by erasing our grief, but by restoring our trust. Before the navi speaks of redemption, he first restores our confidence in the relationship itself. The journey back to Zion begins with the assurance that, even in exile, Hashem has never forgotten His people. ■

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Asher Yatzar: A Moment to Stop and Focus

When my seven year old daughter Ayelet walks out of the bathroom, she doesn't rush back to what she was doing. Instead, she stops, stands completely still, and recites Asher Yatzar slowly and with complete concentration. She does this numerous times a day and has been doing it ever since she was three! .

Watching her always gives me pause. Here is a little girl who instinctively understands that this bracha deserves her full attention. Every time I see her, I ask myself: *When was the last time I truly stopped to appreciate the incredible miracle my body has just performed?*

Not long ago, I was reminded of this lesson in a very different way. As I sat writing this article, sipping a cup of coffee, a large gulp somehow went down the wrong pipe. What should have happened? The coffee should have continued into my airway, interfered with my breathing, and sent me rushing to

the emergency room. Instead, before I even had time to realize what was happening, my body sprang into action. Instinctively, I began coughing, expelling the coffee and protecting me from serious harm.

Is that unusual? Not at all. In fact, it's so ordinary that I didn't even think to mention it to anyone afterwards. I certainly wasn't going to recite *Birkat HaGomel*. It was simply one of the countless miracles our bodies perform every single day—miracles we rarely stop to notice.

That, in essence, is what the bracha of Asher Yatzar is all about: recognizing and appreciating the extraordinary miracles hidden within the ordinary functioning of our bodies.

We recite Asher Yatzar each time we use the bathroom (**Gemara Berachot 60b**). In addition, the **Rama** writes that it is considered one of the morning blessings and should be recited first thing in the morning, beginning our day by acknowledging these remarkable, often-overlooked miracles.

The **Mashgiach of Ponevezh** used to say that the functioning of all of the body's systems is an even greater miracle than *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The more one studies medicine and learns anatomy, the more one comes to appreciate the incredible wisdom reflected in the human body. Examining the digestive

Beyond Tisha B'av

Live Kiddush Hashem

Greet everyone with a smile.

Judge others favorably.

*Forgive a friend, spouse, relative,
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Together we can bring the Geulah

system, the reproductive system, or any other aspect of the body's design should naturally lead us to a profound recognition of, gratitude to, and love for Hashem.

Let's take a closer look at some of the phrases in this beautiful bracha.

האדם בחכמה – *Who formed man with wisdom.* Hashem created the human body with infinite wisdom, providing every detail necessary for it to function properly. This phrase can also be understood another way: Hashem created man with the innate instincts that keep us away from danger—for example, avoiding rotten food or blinking when something approaches the eye.

וברא בו נקבים נקבים חלולים חלולים – *He created within him many openings and many hollow spaces.* **Rashi** (Gemara Brachot) explains that if one of the body's openings, such as the mouth or nose, were completely blocked, or if one of its enclosed organs, such as the heart or intestines, were to rupture, life itself would be impossible.

גלוי וידוע לפני כסא כבוד – *It is revealed and known before Your Throne of Glory.* **Rav Shaul Rubin**, author of *Tziyunei Derech*, explains that there is still so much we do not know about the human body. For many years, doctors believed that the appendix served no purpose and routinely removed it during other abdominal surgeries. Only later did researchers discover that it plays an important role in maintaining healthy gut bacteria.

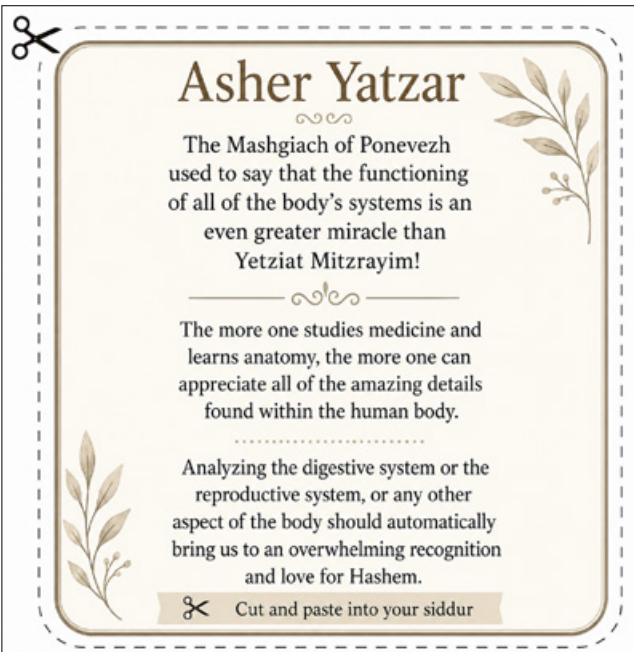
This reminds us that even with all the advances of modern medicine, we understand only

a fraction of the body's incredible complexity. When we praise Hashem for creating the human body, we acknowledge that although we may not understand the purpose of every organ and every system, He knows precisely why each one was created.

The mention of **לפני כסא כבוד** is particularly striking. One might have thought that it is inappropriate to mention the *Kisei HaKavod* in a blessing associated with the bathroom. More broadly, many people feel uncomfortable making a bracha about something as mundane as bodily functions.

The **Gra** teaches the opposite. This bracha reminds us that Hashem's involvement extends to every aspect of our lives. Not only is the creation of the body itself guided by Divine wisdom, but every one of its daily functions, even the body's elimination of waste, is carried out under Hashem's constant supervision and Divine Providence.

שאם יפתח אחד מהם או יסתם אחד מהם אי



Asher Yatzar

The Mashgiach of Ponevezh used to say that the functioning of all of the body's systems is an even greater miracle than Yetziat Mitzrayim!

The more one studies medicine and learns anatomy, the more one can appreciate all of the amazing details found within the human body.

Analyzing the digestive system or the reproductive system, or any other aspect of the body should automatically bring us to an overwhelming recognition and love for Hashem.

✂ Cut and paste into your siddur

If one of them were to be opened when it should be closed, or closed when it should be open, it would be impossible to survive and stand before You.

The continued functioning of our bodies depends on countless delicate systems working together in perfect harmony. The slightest malfunction can have devastating consequences, reminding us how completely dependent we are upon Hashem every moment.

ברוך אתה ה' רופא כל בשר ומפליא לעשות – *Blessed are You, Hashem, Who heals all flesh and performs wonders.*

Here we acknowledge not only the extraordinary design of the human body, but also its remarkable ability to heal itself. Cuts close, bones mend, infections are fought, and countless repairs take place every day without our even being aware of them. The combined operation of all these intricate systems truly is מפליא לעשות, nothing short of wondrous.

The **Chofetz Chaim** taught that reciting Asher Yatzar with concentration is a *segulah* for good health, and many inspiring stories have been shared illustrating this idea. One such story involves a twenty-year-old yeshiva student, Yossi Hecht, who underwent a ten-hour surgery to remove a spinal tumour. Following the operation, he was unable to relieve himself without the aid of a catheter.

Two hundred of his friends accepted upon themselves to stand still while reciting Asher Yatzar, saying every word with complete concentration. Two days later, the catheter was removed, and he was able to function independently.

Let's try and follow the lead of these 200 Yeshiva students and of my 7 year old daughter Ayelet to stop, stand still, and give this bracha the attention it deserves. Even if we begin with just one Asher Yatzar each day, perhaps the first one we recite in the morning, and say it slowly and with genuine concentration, it can transform the way we view our bodies and our relationship with Hashem. ■

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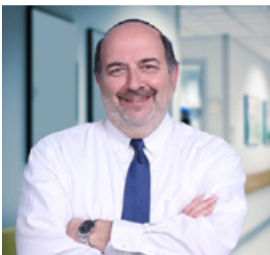
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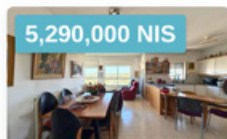
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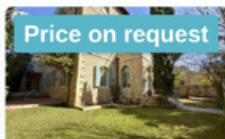


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Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot (5:16): Supreme Tzedaka

“There are four types of givers of tzedaka:...he who gives and wishes others to give is a pious person...”
(Pirkei Avot 5:16)

EXEMPLARY GIVING

The Talmud (Berachot 58b) tells the story of two rabbis who, when walking past the former residence of the great sage, Rav Chana bar Chanilai, reminisced about the extraordinary charity which was performed in that home: “Sixty bakers baked breads day and night for the needy; Rav Chana bar Chanilai kept his wallet with him at all times so that he need not cause a beggar to wait unnecessarily; there were four entrances made available for those in need to enter, and in times of desperate need, wheat and barley would be placed outside the home so even those who were not impoverished could take without embarrassment.

Rav Kook exquisitely suggested that the saintly practices of the great sage illustrate four ways one is to endeavor to give tzedaka in the most exemplary fashion.

The description of sixty bakers baking bread represents that the abundant and plentiful gifts that God bestows on us should be lovingly shared with others. Providing for others with an open heart and giving to others

in abundance is emblematic of the overflowing kindness of a Jewish heart.

Second, Rabbi Chanilai was mindful to always have his wallet in close proximity so that he could immediately give charity to others. Tzedaka must also be given with extreme sensitivity so that the recipient does not suffer any loss of dignity. When the recipient is forced to wait, or worse, to ask a second or a third time, he suffers further embarrassment.

Rav Kook offered a novel interpretation to the description of the Rabbi Chanilai’s home being “open to all four directions.” Often people are particular on judging whether the organization or individual that he is giving to aligns with their own viewpoint. One who sincerely and wholeheartedly gives tzedaka is much less concerned about others’ specific viewpoints. A person in need is a person in need. The righteous give tzedeka to a wide variety of people with a generous heart no matter which “direction” they come from or viewpoint they maintain.

Finally, one who gives tzedaka in the most elevated fashion does not seek recognition. Making it possible for people to receive the donation without the giver being present or known is an unadulterated act of righteousness. In the Talmudic passage above, Rabbi Chanilai placed the “wheat and barley

outside” - which is emblematic of giving with the purest of intent and not in order to bolster one’s own personal fame or glory.

THE SCHOOL CHILDREN’S

GIMEL AND DALET

Another stunning Talmudic passage teaches the lesson of giving tzedaka with sensitivity and care. In this teaching, it is the very shape of the Hebrew letters which convey this essential lesson.

The Talmud reports that young school children, stepping out of their school building, offered their interpretation of the message contained in the shapes of the letters gimel and dalet and say that they represent the relationship between the giver and the poor person. The letter gimel is similar to the term gomel which means to give, and the dalet is similar to the word dal (poor), representing the impoverished. The shape of the gimel, say the children, looks similar to a stick figure of a person with two legs. The gimel, with its front leg extended, is pursuing the dalet, the poor person and seizing the opportunity to give tzedaka. (Shabbat 104a)

Additionally, say the youngsters: “Why does the dalet turn its face away from the gimel? [To show that the giver] should give [the poor person] clandestinely, so that [the poor person] will not be ashamed of him.” Rav Kook comments: “The giver is obligated to protect the basic element of the recipient’s dignity in order not to debase the nobility of engaging in the mitzvah of giving charity...and the effort must be great.” (Ain Aya, Shabbat, Vol. 2, Chapter 12, #16).

It is noteworthy that this lesson, emphasizing the need to be compassionate and sensitive to the feelings of the impoverished, is specifically being articulated by school-children. They instinctively perceived these lessons

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simply by noting the unique forms of certain Hebrew letters.

Perhaps the Talmud is emphasizing that these truths are basic to the human condition. Even a child at a young age recognizes these values to be foundational and true. Thus the Talmud is suggesting that when it comes to helping others it would be wise for us to return to the innocent child-like response of natural sensitivity to the suffering of another person.

“THE NECKLACE WAS MEANT FOR YOU”

Acts of tzedaka come in many forms. The following moving episode tells the story of Rav Aryeh Levin’s pious wife and an act of tzedaka directed toward her beloved sister; how her act of exquisite selfishness ensured that peace and love would continually flourish in the family.

Rav Aryeh’s wife was Tzipora Chana

Shapira, daughter of Rav Dovid Shapira, the eminent rav of Kovno, and sister of Rebbetzin Malka Frank, wife of Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, the eminent rav of Yerushalayim. When Tzipora Chana left for her aliyah to Eretz Yisrael her father gifted her a precious pearl necklace which belonged to her mother who had passed away at a relatively young age. He felt that this could also be helpful to her if she was ever desperate for funds when facing the adversities of her new life in Palestine.

When she met her sister in Jerusalem for the first time, her sister, Malka Frank, inquired if she knew the whereabouts of their mother's precious pearl necklace. She expressed her hope that she would be able to have at least one item which could be inherited as a keepsake and hold on to a tangible memorial from her mother.

Before she even finished speaking, Tzipora Chana presented her sister with the pearl necklace, and, with fullness of heart said, "Our father actually sent the necklace with me in order to give it to you."

Rav Simcha Shlomo Levin, Rav Aryeh and Tzipora Chana's son, would later report that he can testify to the fact that his mother, the righteous Tzipora Chana, never for a moment regretted giving her sister the inner-joy and satisfaction of owning and frequently wearing her mother's pearls. (Derech Avot, Sternberg, pp. 272-273).

THE REBBETZIN'S BURIAL PLACE

Rav Aryeh Levin often made reference to the remarkable conduct of the Jewish people's matriarch, Rachel. She selflessly allowed her sister to take her place and marry her beloved Yaakov, not knowing what the future would hold. In a word, our mother Rachel heroically relinquished her own hopes and dreams in order to protect the honor and dignity of her older sister. Rav Aryeh suggested that it is for this reason that

praying at her burial place - *Kever Rachel* - has special significance. She personified concern with the needs of others and placing those who are suffering first and foremost.

Rav Aryeh beautifully added that for this reason he felt that it is especially propitious to pray at the burial place of his wife, Rebbetzin Tzipora Chana. She was a holy woman because she personified the character trait of relinquishing was rightfully hers for the sake of others who would benefit. Her first concern was that others be alleviated of their pain and help them feel more joy and blessing in their lives. (Ibid.) ■



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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Mezuza on a Tzimmer

Question: We will soon complete building a *tzimmer* (vacation cabin) attached to my house (separate entrance). I will definitely put *mezuzot* up, even if just for the “feel” or protection, but am I really obligated, since I do not live there? I guess that will determine whether I make a *beracha* or not.

Answer: The *gemara* (Bava Metzia 101b) does say that the obligation of putting up *mezuzot* on rental property is on the renter, implying not on the landlord (see also Avoda Zara 21a). While this is practical for a lengthy rental, a *tzimmer* owner could not expect that vacationers will bring *mezuzot* with them. Actually, though, the vacationers do not need them. True, in *Eretz Yisrael*, a renter is required to affix *mezuzot* right away,

as opposed to in *chutz la'aretz*, where there is a 30-day “grace” period (Menachot 44a; Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 286:22). However, even in *Eretz Yisrael*, one who stays in a *pundak* (an inn for travelers – Rashi ad loc.) is exempt from *mezuza* (ibid.). This applies to hotels and *tzimmers* as well (Chovat Hadar 3:5), **at least** for 30 days (see S’dei Chemed vol. V, p. 63; Mishneh Halachot IV:134).

Then, the question becomes – if your guests are exempt, does that mean you are obligated? This depends on the rationale of the *gemara* (Bava Metzia 101a) that *mezuza* is the obligation of the *dar* (the renter who is living there). Some posit that if one owns a house but does not live in it (i.e., the landlord) he is fundamentally exempt from *mezuza* (Tosafot, Avoda Zara 21a). If so, if you never use the *tzimmer* as part of your “living quarters,” you should not be obligated. On the other hand, Rav Yehonatan (cited in Shita Mekubetzet, Bava Metzia 101b) posits that according to Torah law, the landlord is obligated in *mezuza*, but they obligated the renter because he is the one who benefits from the *mezuza*’s protection. According to this latter approach, if the guests are not obligated during their insufficiently significant stint, the owner would be obligated.

Even if a permanent landlord is not obligated on any level in attaching *mezuzot*, you might be obligated. One possibility is that the fact that you are dealing with the *tzimmer* commercially, to make money, on an ongoing basis rather than on a one-time basis, makes it considered a use of the money maker (see

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Torat Hamezuzah p. 104). This is enhanced if, as proprietor, you often have to go in and take care of the *tzimmer* (see Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah II, 141). Also, the Shevet Halevi (II:156) says that even if hospital patients do not require a *mezuzah* on their room (due to the nature of the stay), a Jewish hospital would require *mezuzot* on all its doors. This is not only because the Jewish staff frequent the rooms, but also because of the Jewish ownership. (He does not discuss whether they are affixed with a *beracha*.)

The approach that the owner does not need to live there like a home depends on the question of *mezuzot* for the workplace (which we discussed in Living the Halachic Process, I:G-4). The Rambam (Mezuzah 6:9, accepted by the Shulchan Aruch, YD 286:11) says that a store in a marketplace does not require *mezuzot* seems to imply that *mezuzah* requires domestic living. However, some attribute the Rambam's exemption to other factors – it is used only in the daytime; the market was only on certain days. Still, most *poskim* suggest not making a *beracha* on attaching the *mezuzah* to a commercial space due to doubt about the

requirement (see LTHP *ibid.*).

The simplest advice is to affix the *mezuzah* without a *beracha*. If you want to find a way to make a *beracha* appropriate, you can use the *tzimmer* for personal needs either before turning it commercial or even afterwards, if you do so from time to time. This includes having close family and friends being semi-frequent occupants, as many consider the living use of such people like your own (see Torat Hamezuzah *ibid.*). Note common practice is that one who moves into a house that has a room set aside as a guest room affixes a *mezuzah* on it without a *beracha*, even if the guests are not constant! ■

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What Do We Share?

One of the most delicate parts of being a Shagrir (ambassador) is knowing how to hold two important values at the same time: protecting the privacy of the person we are representing, while also making sure the other side has the information they need in order to make a real decision.

At our recent Shagririm Balev Shabbat for head volunteers, we had the privilege of learning together with Rabbanit Sharon Rimon about these types of situations. We spoke about the moments where there is no obvious answer, where honesty, sensitivity, privacy, and responsibility all come into play.

I want to share one of the dilemmas we discussed. I'm intentionally not sharing the "answer," because these are exactly the

conversations we, as ambassadors, need to think about together.

Elad is a wonderful young man.

He has excellent middot, works hard, is loved by his friends and family, and everyone who knows him speaks highly of him.

Someone wants to suggest him to Shira.

While making inquiries, they discover a complicated detail: Elad's older brother has a significant criminal past. Several years ago, he was involved in serious situations, served time in prison, and even today there is still some complexity surrounding him and the family.

Elad's ambassador, who knows him well, says:

"Elad is not his brother. Why should Shira reject someone because of something he didn't do? Elad has built his own life, and he should be judged by who he is."

But Shira's ambassador sees it differently:

"If they get married, she won't only be connected to Elad, she will also become part of his family. Maybe this is something she should know before stepping in."

So what is the right thing to do?

Is information about a sibling's past something that belongs in the conversation when suggesting someone?

Does it make a difference how close Elad is to his brother? Would we look at it differently if this was a sibling who is very involved in the family's daily life, compared to someone who's "cut out"?

Who should make the decision about sharing this information: Elad himself, the

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ambassador, or the person on the other side?

And perhaps the hardest question: when information has the potential to cause someone to reject a wonderful person before ever meeting them, are we protecting them by sharing it, or are we taking away an opportunity unfairly?

These questions are not easy. That is exactly why they are important.

As ambassadors, we are not only matchmakers. We are people who are trusted with someone's story. That trust requires us to see the whole person, to act with sensitivity, and to recognize that every detail carries weight.

There is no single rule that can answer every situation. Each person, each family, and each circumstance requires thought and care.

And this is only one example.

During the Shabbat, we continued exploring other situations where the answer is not always simple. For example: What about a 22-year-old who was married for two months and divorced, and now finds it difficult to find a shidduch? Should we leave it to him to share this part of his story, or is it our responsibility to make sure this information is known before they meet? And what about someone with a medical issue that isn't visible at first glance? Or someone who went through a period of life when they were not religious, but has since gone through a deep process of change? When do we share? When do we wait? And how do we make sure that in our effort to be responsible, we never forget the person behind the information?

And perhaps that is the most important part of being a Shagrir: not having all the answers, but being willing to ask the right questions. ■

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by
Netanel Epstein

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JULIA BROWN
CHAI SUMMER MADRICHA

Parshat Eikev opens with the phrase:

וְהָיָה עֵקֶב תִּשְׁמָעוּן אֶת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הָאֵלֶּה

I saw a really nice idea from Sivan Rahav-Meir on the word *eikev*, which literally means “heel.” Rashi explains that it’s referring to the small mitzvot, the ones people tend to step on or brush aside because they don’t seem so important. We usually think spirituality has to come from big, meaningful moments, but the Torah is shifting our focus to the simple, everyday things.

Then the parsha describes Hashem:

הָאֵל-ל-הַגְּדוֹל הַגָּבוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא

But right after that, what does Hashem actually do?

עָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט יָתוֹם וְאִלְמָנָה וְאָהֵב גֵּר לְתֵת לוֹ לֶחֶם וְשָׁמְלָה

It’s all about the small, human things: taking care of people, noticing who needs something, giving in a real, practical way. That’s what real greatness looks like.

And it connects to how we influence the people around us:



וְלִמְדֶתֶם אֹתָם אֶת בְּנֵיכֶם לְדַבֵּר כִּם בְּשִׁבְתְּכֶם בְּבֵיתְכֶם וּבְלֶכְתְּכֶם בַּדֶּרֶךְ

It’s not about big speeches. It’s the in-between moments: walking somewhere, sitting at home, dealing with something small or annoying. That’s when people are actually watching and learning from us-how we speak, how we react, and how we treat others.

This Shabbat, Parshat Eikev is reminding us that the biggest things aren’t the big moments. They’re all the small choices we make every single day.



TALYA KRUGER
10TH GRADE, MODIIN
CHAI GIRLS SUMMER PARTICIPANT

TRUST OVER FEAR

In this week’s parsha, we read about Moshe talking to Am Yisrael about worries they might have when going into Israel תֹּאמַר כִּי תֵאֱמָר רַבִּים הָאֱלֹהִים מִמֶּנִּי; אֵיכָה אוֹכֵל, לְהוֹרִישָׁם. בְּלִבְבְּךָ,

In this pasuk, Moshe is saying that you might be scared to conquer the Land because our enemies are greater than us, and wonder how we will be able to overcome them.

But then Moshe reminds them how Hashem protected them back in Egypt and what He did to Pharaoh. He tells us that this time Hashem will do the same when we enter Eretz Yisrael. These days, during the war, it’s hard to stay positive, and we start thinking, how will we overcome all these countries? But it’s important to remember what we learned in this parsha: that no matter what, or how great the enemy we are fighting is, Hashem

will always be with us, like He was with us in Egypt, and when we entered Eretz Israel, and in the Six-Day War.

Hashem is always with us, and He will keep on being with us in these times of war.

Amichai Vanino, a fallen soldier from this war, once said, מרגיש את אהבתו — “Hashem is with me; I feel His love and trust in Him.” What Amichai is saying is that in every situation Hashem will be there and take care of us. So in these days when we feel worried, stressed, or even afraid, we can remember what Amichai and Moshe are telling us: always believe in Hashem and trust that He will always take care of us. ■

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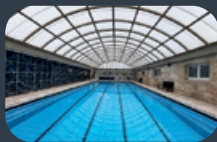
2

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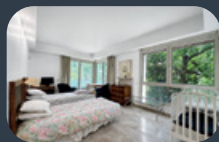
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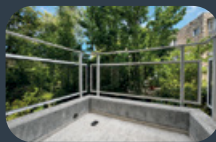
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8 כ"ה Open until 11:30 PM	7 כ"ד Open 8:30- 12:00	6 כ"ג Balloon program & Ice Cream	5 כ"ב Open 8:30- 12:00	4 כ"א "אסתר" Screening	3 כ Open 8:30- 12:00	2 כ Face painting & Ice Cream
15 ב Open until 11:30 PM	14 א Open 8:30- 12:00	13 ט"ז "אסתר" Screening	12 ט"ו Crafts & Ice Cream	11 ט"ד Open 8:30- 12:00	10 ט"ג Face paintings & Ice Cream	9 ט"ב Open 8:30- 12:00

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