

ב"ה *Torah* **Tidbits**

ISSUE 1674

AUGUST 22ND 2026

ט' אלול תשפ"ו

כי תצא - KI TEITZEI

AVOT 2

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ישראל



Eating Out in Israel - Part 1

Rabbi Ezra Friedman

Page 46



Divine Forgiveness

Mrs. Leah Feinberg

Page 66



כי אהבך ה' אלקיך דברים כ"ג:ו'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT KI TEITZEI ZMANIM

CANDLES 6:40 PM • EARLY 5:54 PM • HAVDALA 7:53 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:31 PM



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IMPORTANT REMINDERS

🕒 Last time to recite Kiddush Levana is Thursday night, the 15th of Elul

COVER PHOTO Photographed by Leah Yerushalmi



The IMJ (Israel Museum, Jerusalem) iconic "Ahava" ("LOVE") sculpture by American artist Robert Indiana is equally impressive - when viewed from behind. It then reads from left to right. This photo was taken about ten days after Tu bAv, the Jewish "Day of Love" holiday.

I made Aliyah to Jerusalem in two steps. First from Washington DC in 1970 (as Louise Tourkin) in what was then called provisional Aliyah, and then from NYC in 1977. I am blessed with 4 children, their 4 spouses, and 16 grandchildren - all of them Sabras and the grand majority born in Jerusalem. I'm a retired translator and writer, and merited working at the Yad Vashem Archives for many years. One of my sons is in the professional IDF, and two of my sons did 2.5 years of Miluim following Oct. 7th 2023. I salute them and their families with much love and pride.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Aug. 19 - 29 | 6 - 16 Elul

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:13-5:20
Sunrise	6:06-6:12
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:24-9:26
Magen Avraham	8:45-8:48
Sof Zman Tefila	10:30
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:42-12:39
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:15-1:12
Plag Mincha	5:55-5:46
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:22-7:11



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	KI TEITZEI			KI TAVO		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	6:40	5:54	7:53	6:32	5:47	7:45
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	6:58	5:56	7:56	6:50	5:50	7:47
Beit Shemesh/RBS	6:59	5:55	7:54	6:51	5:48	7:46
Gush Etzion	6:56	5:54	7:54	6:48	5:48	7:45
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	6:58	5:56	7:56	6:49	5:49	7:47
Modiin/Chashmonaim	6:57	5:55	7:54	6:49	5:48	7:46
Netanya	6:58	5:56	7:56	6:50	5:49	7:47
Be'er Sheva	6:57	5:55	7:54	6:49	5:49	7:46
Rehovot	6:58	5:56	7:55	6:49	5:49	7:46
Petach Tikva	6:40	5:56	7:55	6:32	5:49	7:46
Ginot Shomron	6:57	5:55	7:55	6:49	5:48	7:46
Haifa / Zichron	6:48	5:56	7:56	6:40	5:49	7:47
Gush Shiloh	6:56	5:54	7:54	6:48	5:47	7:45
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	6:58	5:56	7:56	6:50	5:49	7:47
Givat Zeev	7:00	5:54	7:54	6:52	5:47	7:45
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:56	5:54	7:54	6:48	5:48	7:45
Ashkelon	6:58	5:57	7:56	6:50	5:50	7:47
Yad Binyamin	6:57	5:56	7:55	6:49	5:49	7:46
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	6:50	5:54	7:54	6:42	5:47	7:45
Golan	6:55	5:54	7:53	6:47	5:46	7:44
Nahariya/Maalot	6:48	5:56	7:56	6:39	5:49	7:47
Afula	6:57	5:55	7:55	6:48	5:48	7:46

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Ki Teitzel - 8:31 PM • Ki Tavo - 8:24 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 114



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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It is very common to hear certain religious phrases amongst the Jewish people in Israel, among the religious and the secular alike. Phrases like *Be'ezrat Hashem* ("with the help of Hashem"), *Baruch Hashem* ("blessed is Hashem"), and *Chasdei Hashem* ("the kindnesses of Hashem"), to name just a few, all express the idea of recognition of the role of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* in our lives and gratitude for the miracles He is doing for the Jewish people, on a personal level and on a *Klal Yisrael* level. And, of course, we have just entered the month of Elul and suddenly, everybody is wishing everybody a *ketivah vechatimah tovah*, to be written and sealed for the good in the heavenly books.

The vocabulary, the way we talk, the custom of bringing *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* into the words and the sentences that we say, has brought us to a stage in this country and amongst the Jewish people where saying *Baruch Hashem* is the norm.

I made *aliyah* when I was entering fourth grade. The song that was very popular when we made *aliyah*, which we sang as a family a lot, was the Miami Boys Choir's *Besiyata Dishmaya* - Aramaic for "with the help of Heaven." And I always used to make sure that "*bet-samech-dalet*" was on the top of every new piece of paper I wrote on, and I've continued to do it to this day. In this way, I can bring *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* into everything I do.

A week ago, I decided, together with my wife and children, to celebrate the fact that it has been over five years since I was diagnosed with kidney cancer, and *Baruch Hashem*, I am

completely clean after many MRIs and many CTs to check up. In addition, I wanted to thank Hashem that I was able to *Baruch Hashem* finish Shas Bavli in its entirety, to thank Him for fifty years of my life, and of course, to thank Him that our boys are home from the army after endless rounds in Gaza and Lebanon. Most of all, I thank Hashem for all the many miracles that have happened to the Jewish people. There is so much to be grateful for, and we organized a celebration and expression of our gratitude.

Luckily for me, Rabbi Hershel Schachter, the *posek* of the OU and a *Rosh Yeshiva* at Yeshiva University, was in Israel to teach at NCSY Kollel. I invited him and his Rebbetzin to come and join. I also invited Rav Shmuel Eliyahu, who I have the privilege of being a close student of and of broadcasting with him twice a week on Radio Galei Yisrael. I also invited Rav Nachman Kahana, who for many decades sat in the OU building and wrote his commentary on *Tosafot* called *Mei Menuchot*, and with whom I have the privilege of weekly studying together. We invited many rabbis and friends, although since we held it in our backyard, I had to keep it pretty small and tight, really only inviting a very small group of about 120 people from each stage in my life. But *Baruch Hashem*, we got to celebrate together with many people that we love.

I stood up there and expressed gratitude to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for all the good He has done for me and for *Klal Yisrael*. How many times did I pray before every scan, every CT, every ultrasound, every endoscopy? I asked

so many times that with the great efforts of my doctors, and all the changes in the way I lived, Hashem should give me health. Now that I have received, *Baruch Hashem*, a clean bill of health, I thought it was time to say thank you. You know, Jews have a character trait of knowing how to ask for a favor - and it's so wonderful that Jews love to help other Jews. I believe it's so important that the person who receives the favor turns around after all is said and done and explains to the favor-giver how much it meant to them. So too with Hashem. We are constantly *davening* for so many different people, for their health, prosperity, that they should find the right match, that they should have the child they have been waiting for. How many times do we actually dedicate an entire evening to say "Thank you Hashem"?

It just felt so overdue after asking *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for so much. And I hope to continue dedicating time not just to the asking, but to have more and more concentration in the *Modim* prayer, and in all the ways that I can continue connecting to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and developing that relationship.

In the month of Elul now, many people say, "*HaMelech BaSadeh*" - that the King (of all kings) is not in His palace now, not in His ivory tower, but *HaMelech BaSadeh*, the King is here with us, accessible to all who seek Him. If only we could just open up, if only we could talk to Him personally, we would be able to get so much in return. Having a chance to enter the month of Elul with this great evening of just thanking *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* was so meaningful to me.

It does not mean that we do not have challenges in life, and it does not mean that we do not have trials. But that being said, there is just so much to thank *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*



for, and hopefully Hashem sees the thanks that we have for Him. I am purposely writing it publicly on these pages of Torah Tidbits so that I can even more publicly declare my thanks to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. *Be'ezrat Hashem*, giving thanks should take all of us to a place where we are feeling more and more connected to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and the *Ribono Shel Olam* wants to do more and more and more positive for all of *Klal Yisrael*.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel





OU... Beyond Kashrut

BEYOND THE LETTERS: RESTORING A HOLOCAUST-ERA SEFER TORAH



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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT KI TEITZEI

The parsha contains 74 mitzvot, the most of any parsha in our Torah. It is the last of the 3 parshiot of mitzvot that are the middle section of Sefer Devarim.

In Parshiot Re'eh and Shoftim we were introduced to our Jewish National society; an ethical monotheistic society. Laws of avoiding idol worship, the centrality of what would be Jerusalem, laws of generosity, of sharing with others. And of Nation building; Judges, Kings and war.

Our parsha is personal, not national. A Jew is not only a part of a nation. He is a person living the day-to-day life of people; living a life of holiness, fidelity to G-d, treating people with generosity and dignity, helping each other, living a moral life.

Ki Teitzei is a sister parsha to Kedoshim. Many of the marvelous, unique moral imperatives of our Torah, those principles that became foundational in the moral development of the world are found here. Perhaps to communicate that while we are part of a great nation and ought to give altruistically to nation building, our national pride and place ought not to muscle out the need to be good people, overwhelming our personal lives in the large project of our Jewish Nation. No. We at heart live personal holy lives, believing in One G-d and believing in the Image of G-d of each person. Living elevated and noble lives. The 74 mitzvot of our parsha communicate that rarefied life.



1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 21:10-21)

Captive Woman: One may not marry a woman captured in war until 30 days have elapsed and the passion subsided. **First born:** The rights of the first born to a double portion shall not be diverted to the first born of a more favored wife. **Ben Sorer Umoreh:** a boy entering adulthood who is brazen and gluttonous shall be judged on the fear of future more egregious behaviour.

The soldier is able to marry the non-Jewish woman captured in war; but only after a month of seeing her daily in an unkempt manner. As if to say – slowww downnn. This slowed down permission to marry the non-Jewish woman in war has a powerful implied ethic: women are not spoils of war. As we know all too well, oh so tragically and painfully, war is accompanied by rape and pillage of women. It is an expression of power, of victory. Women are the spoils of war.

Not in the Jewish army. The permission granted to marry this non-Jewish woman after a month screams out the far more basic war ethic: war should never ever be seen by the Jewish army as license for abuse of women.

But this first mitzvah of the parsha seems to belong in last week's parsha. At the end of Shoftim there were a number of mitzvot related to war: the special Kohen who motivates the troops in war, the war exemptions, try peace first, do not destroy fruit trees in war. Would it not have made more sense to include this mitzvah of the special procedure of marrying a foreign woman in war in last week's

parsha that was speaking of war?

Last week's parsha was national institutions. This week's parsha is personal piety. This mitzvah is an expression of personal piety, piety demanded even of the soldier. It belongs in our parsha of piety.



2ND ALIYA (21:22-22:7)

Burial: Do not allow the body of one sentenced to death to be hung.

He is to be buried immediately. **Returning Lost Property:** Don't look away from lost property; return it to its owner. Help up an overly **burdened animal** who has buckled; don't look away. Do not **cross dress**. **Send** a mother bird away before taking the eggs or chicks.

There is an important ethical principle expressed in the mitzvah of burying the one put to death. A person sentenced to death has committed the most serious of sins. Nonetheless, human beings never lose the right to dignity. Even the sinner, the one sentenced to death, is a human being; their body is not to be left hanging, but to be buried immediately. Human beings may sully their dignity by terrible crimes deserving of death; but they never forfeit their essential human dignity.

A further implied ethic is contained in the return of lost property. Laws of property, Torts, are to protect: property law regulates that I not damage your property. But Jewish ethics mandates that we go much further; I need to jump to help your property. There can be no innocent bystanders; we need to jump to save the lives of others and the property of others.



3RD ALIYA (22:8-23:7)

Build a **fence on your roof** to prevent accidents. **Do not:** plant vines and grain together, **plow** with ox and mules together, **wear** wool and linen

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together. A man shall not: **slander** a new bride claiming her not to be a virgin, nor commit **adultery** with a married woman, nor with a betrothed bride, nor **rape** a single woman. One may **not marry** a mamzer, nor a male from Amon or Moav.

In this aliya we have mitzvot about the most basic of daily life: our homes, our fields or livelihood, our clothes and our relationships with our partners. Each one of these regulates the basic aspects of our lives.

In this lies a sweeping principle of our Torah. We live mundane lives. Homes, livelihood, clothes, and relationships. All these things take on meaning when regulated by mitzvot. The Torah doesn't deal only with the holy, with G-d, with prayer and service. It gets right into our lives, pushes its way into our homes, kitchens, bedrooms.

Rav Soloveitchik called this redemption,

or geula; man's mundane life is redeemed from vulgarity and emptiness by mitzvot. Suddenly, the trite and trivial, the banal life we live becomes meaningful, an expression of loyalty to our Creator and His love of us by commanding us. Nary a moment is devoid of some mitzvah or other, transforming our lives into lush, full and meaningful moments. A redeemed existence.



4TH ALIYA (23:8-23:24)

One **may marry** one from Edom or Egypt. **Military encampments** shall be treated with a degree of **cleanliness**; bathroom facilities shall be outside the camp. Since G-d's presence goes with you, your camp has holiness. **Shelter** a runaway slave. Do not engage in **prostitution**, nor accept its gains as offerings. Do not exact **loan interest**. **Do** that which you **vow**; do not delay its fulfillment.

The charging of interest on a loan is not permitted. This is a Torah legislated type of welfare. When a person is in trouble and needs a loan, he is vulnerable to loan sharking. If he needs money and is desperate, what better recipe for milking him for all he is worth. The Torah forbids preying on misfortune. Find another way to profit; not on the backs of the misfortunate.



5TH ALIYA (23:25-24:4)

Harvesters may eat grapes or grains while harvesting. **Divorce**: Divorce need be done through a bill of divorce (a Get). If the woman marries another man, she may subsequently not return to remarry the first husband.

Allowing the worker to eat that which he is harvesting is the introduction of employer ethics. Being an employer comes with responsibility; people's lives are in our hands. Allowing the worker to consume what he is

harvesting is merely an example of sensitivity to the feelings of employees. Worker's rights have their basis in these verses.

Divorce is accomplished through a Get, or a document of divorce. While the creation of a marriage is called kiddushin and has holiness, this holy union may be dissolved through divorce. While we view marriage as holy, it is holiness in the difficult realm of human interactions, which sometimes sour. The Torah's permission to dissolve a marriage is an expression of the recognition of the complexity of life. While marriage is holy, allegiance to the marriage does not require one to live a life of misery.



6TH ALIYA (24:5-13)

First year marriage: Do not go to war in the first year of marriage: bring joy to the new bride. **Kidnapping** is a capital offense. Remember Miriam's **Tzaraat** and keep its laws. **Collateral** may be taken, but only with the owner's cooperation. If the owner needs this collateral, return it to him nightly.

Kidnapping, the taking of hostages, is a capital offense punishable by the death penalty. Knowing how we so value life, we become vulnerable to evil, cynical, and perverse manipulation; the kidnapping of innocent people, demanding ransom or who knows what. The Torah's view is expressed in the punishment; this is a capital offense. Amongst the worst of ethical violations.



7TH ALIYA (24:14-25:16)

Do not withhold **wages**: workers are to be paid before the end of the day. Do not **pervert justice** of the foreigner or widow. When **harvesting** grain, olives or grapes, leave the dropped produce for the needy. No more than 40 **lashes** shall ever be given. **Yibum**: a brother shall marry the

childless widow of his brother and hence maintain his name. Maintain only **accurate weights** and measures. Remember what **Amalek** did to you in attacking the weak when you left Egypt. Erase any memory of him.

In one aliya we have mitzvot of wages, of justice, of kindness, of lashes, of levirate marriage, of honesty in business and of Amalek. The lack of a clear pattern to these mitzvot is itself instructive. Perhaps Moshe is deliberately moving from generosity to justice to business to war. He wants to cover mitzvot in all aspects of our life. Our lives include homes and relationships and work and war and honesty and justice and paying our workers....and on and on. In all aspects of our lives we have mitzvot; ways to do things nobly and with holiness.

It is this richness of behavior in our personal life that is truly the necessary ingredient of nation building. The Jewish nation will be built on ethical monotheism, on national institutions that are kept in check; but ultimately a great nation is built in the homes and in the private lives of its citizens. Our great nation is built on the quiet greatness of its people.

HAFTORAH YESHAYAHU 51:12 - 52:12

This week's *haftorah* is the fourth of a series of seven "*Haftarot* of Consolation."

The recent *haftorahs* have alluded to the fear of the nation of Israel that perhaps they have been abandoned by God. In response, this week's *haftorah* begins with God's response: "I, indeed I, will comfort you. After castigating Israel for forgetting their Creator, the prophet describes the suffering and tribulations which Israel has endured. However,

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the time has come for Israel's oppressors to drink the "cup of suffering."

Yeshayahu announces the good tidings of Redemption. "Burst out in song, sing together; O ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has consoled His people; He has redeemed Jerusalem."

The *haftorah* concludes by spotlighting the difference between the Egyptian Exodus, when the Israelites quickly hurried out of their exile, and the future Redemption: "For not with haste shall you go forth and not in a flurry of flight shall you go, for the Lord goes before you, and your rear guard is the God of Israel." ■



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A SHORT VORT

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

על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם ובמים בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים ואשר שכר עליך את בלעם בן בעור (כג:ה)
"Because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor." (23:5)

While discussing why the nations of Ammon and Moav are perpetually excluded from joining the Children of Israel, why does the pasuk need to mention the two wrongdoings they perpetrated and not simply be satisfied with one reason? Why the need to mention both their aversion to providing humanitarian assistance to the Israelites in the desert as well as their attempt to engage Balaam, to render them off limits?

Rabbi Yonatan Eibeschitz (1690-1764, Prague) explains that people commonly try to justify their inappropriate actions. Only after inconsistencies are presented to them of their behavior, do they have no resort but to acknowledge their true intentions. Had Ammon and Moav only be accused of failing to supply rations to the Israelites in their sojourning, they simply could have claimed that they themselves were strapped for provisions, not allowing them the "privilege" of helping others. However, once disclosed that they had disbursed great wealth to employ Balaam on his dastardly mission to eliminate the Israelites, their weak alibi was revealed to all. Rather, it was their ingrained hostility toward the Israelites that stopped any attempt to aid the Israelites. It was both this self-deceit as well as their utter antagonism which eliminated any possibility of their joining ranks with the Children of Israel.

Shabbat Shalom

STATS

49th of the 54 sedras; 6th of 11 in Devarim.

Written on 212.8 lines; ranks 21st.

44 Parshiyot; 2 open, 42 closed; rank: 1.

110 pesukim; ranks 28th (5th in Devarim).

1582 words; ranks 23rd (5th in Devarim).

5856 letters; ranks 26th (6th in Devarim).

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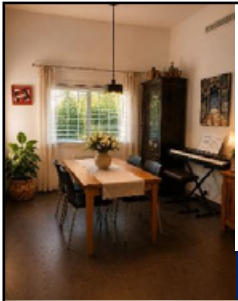
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“A Gentler Message”

For the past several weeks, in anticipation of the upcoming Days of Awe, I have devoted this column to the topic of *teshuva*, repentance.

Many of us find this topic quite scary. Confessing our sins of the past year and committing ourselves to improving our religious conduct threatens to undermine our self-confidence and self-esteem.

For my most recent columns, I have focused on the teaching of that sector of the Mussar Movement known as Nevardek. One of this movement’s major adherents was Rav Yosef Yoisel Horovitz *zt”l*, who established his *yeshiva* in the town in Lithuania by that name. Popularly, he was called the *Alter*, or “Old Man,” of Nevardek.

He and his numerous students and followers advocated a relatively extreme program

for attaining ethical and spiritual perfection, particularly with reference to *teshuva*. I was first exposed to the Nevardek methodology when I studied with a tutor in my adolescence. I was later influenced by another Nevardek alumnus named Rav Chaim Zeitchik whose lectures I was privileged to hear and whose copious writings I still study, especially at this time of year.

Suffice it to say that Nevardek demands a lot from those who choose to follow its path. It expects its adherents to have great self-control, meticulous conformity to halachic stringencies, and absolute *bitachon*, trust, in the Almighty.

Several of you have given me feedback after reading those recent columns of mine. They felt, understandably, that the examples I presented of the Nevardek approach set the bar too high. Some insisted quite vigorously that Nevardek’s standards were too harsh and unrealistic for most.

So, in today’s column, I will present several examples of Nevardek’s “gentler” messages, drawn from two of Rav Zeitchik’s essays on this week’s Torah portion, *Ki Tetzei* (Deuteronomy 21:10–25:19).

As a first example, I suggest that we focus on a passage in this week’s *parsha* that is, at first glance, quite harsh. It reads:

“If man has a wayward and defiant son, who does not heed his father or mother and does not obey them even after they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the public place of his community.



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They shall say to the elders of his town, ‘This son of ours is disloyal and defiant; he does not heed us. He is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Thereupon the men of his town shall stone him to death...” (ibid. 21:18-21).

Rabbi Zeitchik is troubled by the extreme punishment meted out for what seems to be minor delinquency. He is somewhat encouraged, however, by the ruling cited in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 88b), which insists, “The wayward and defiant son whose parents wish to forgive him may do so.” Thus, they can prevent his terrible punishment.

Rabbi Zeitchik then shares a powerful question raised by the Chassidic Rebbe of Sochachov, author of *Shem MiShmuel*: We are taught that the wayward son is not punished merely for disobeying his parents. Rather, he is punished so severely because of what his behavior will ultimately lead to. *Al shem sofo*—because of his eventual end—his seemingly minor misconduct is expected to turn him into a murderous bandit and a danger to society. If the purpose of the punishment is to protect society, what right do his parents have to forgive him?

Rabbi Zeitchik’s response is nothing less than delightful! He argues that the parents forgive him because they know their son better than anyone else. They believe he can change. They see his better self—his capacity not only to overcome his waywardness and defiance, but to grow into an exemplary adult, perhaps even a blessing to society.

The “gentle” message here is twofold, with implications for child-rearing and with a theological teaching as well. For child-rearing, Rabbi Zeitchik makes us aware that parenting involves not only knowing the child as he or she is at any given moment. Rather, it entails the ability to see, and to help shape and direct,

the child’s potential. Don’t judge your children as who they are, but rather as who they can become.

The theological teaching is Navardek’s gentle message for those of us who, especially at this time of year, struggle with the process of *teshuva*. We are often paralyzed by guilt, by the recognition of our shortcomings and failures, which lead to despair, to the surrender of the possibility of self-improvement.

Rabbi Zeitchik assures us with these words: “Only the merciful Holy One Blessed Be He, who created and sustains the human heart and knows its dark secrets, who searches out our hearts on the Day of Judgment, who uncovers our hidden strengths, who spies hidden potential, can thereby acquire ‘servants’ of whom He can take pride.”

A second example of Nevardek’s “gentler” message in this week’s *parsha* is drawn by Rabbi Zeitchik from these two passages:

“You must fulfill what has crossed your lips and perform what you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God, having made the promise with your own mouth (ibid. 23:24).”

“For this applies to all mankind: that God will call every creature to account for everything unknown, be it good or bad (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).”

Rabbi Zeitchik eloquently expresses what he



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derives from the above two passages. He writes:

“Just as the Lord judges Man for the evil that lies within him, unconscious motivations and passions of which he is unaware, so too does the Lord consider the good which lies within Man, the suppressed light which he does not reveal, the great potential which he fails to develop. Man is responsible to ferret out his evil propensities, and, perhaps even more so, he must search in himself for the good within him of which he is barely aware and never activates.”

The second “gentle” message, as I understand it, is this: Each of us has both a *yetzer hara* and a *yetzer tov*—dark urges and motives, as well as noble and compassionate ones. We are often unaware of their presence, let alone their influence on our conduct. *Teshuva* calls for introspection and self-searching: uncovering the hidden forces within us, including those that are undesirable or even harmful. But even more important is the task of discovering the hidden resources that can help us grow ethically, morally, and spiritually—for our own fulfillment and for the benefit of others, perhaps even all humankind.

A New Year is approaching. Let us greet it with these gentle messages in mind. Many more are available, if only we open ourselves to hear them. *Shana Tova!* ■



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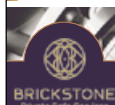
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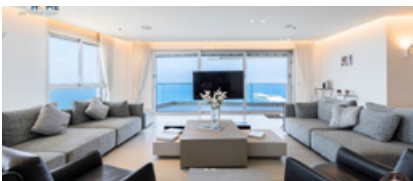
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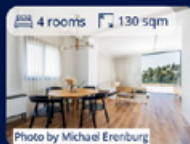


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The Parameters of Justice

In Deuteronomy 24, we encounter - for the first time - the explicit statement of a law of far-reaching significance:

“Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for parents. A person shall be put to death only for his own sin.” (*Deut. 24:16*)

We have strong historical evidence as to what this law was excluding, namely vicarious punishment, the idea that someone else may be punished for my crime:

For example, in the Middle Assyrian Laws, the rape of an unbetrothed virgin who lives in her father's house is punished by the ravishing of the rapist's wife, who also remains thereafter with the father of the victim. Hammurabi decrees that if a man struck

a pregnant woman, thereby causing her to miscarry and die, it is the assailant's daughter who is put to death. If a builder erected a house which collapsed, killing the owner's son, then the builder's son, not the builder, is put to death. (*Nahum Sarna, Exploring Exodus, p. 176*)

We also have inner-biblical evidence of how the Mosaic law was applied. Joash, one of the righteous kings of Judah, attempted to stamp out corruption among the priests, and was assassinated by two of his officials. He was succeeded by his son Amaziah, about whom we read the following:

After the kingdom was firmly in his grasp, he [Amaziah] executed the officials who had murdered his father the king. Yet he did not put the sons of the assassins to death, in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, where the Lord commanded: “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sins.” (*II Kings: 14:5-6*)

The obvious question, however, is: how is this principle compatible with the idea, enunciated four times in the Mosaic books, that

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children may suffer for the sins of their parents? “The Lord, the Lord, God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and truth, extending kindness for thousands of generations, forgiving sin, rebellion, and error, but who does not acquit the guilty, holding descendants to account for the sins of the fathers, children, and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation.” Ex. 34:7; see also Ex. 20:5; Numbers 14:18; Deut. 5:8)

The short answer is simple: It is the difference between human justice and Divine justice. We are not God. We can neither look into the hearts of wrongdoers nor assess the full consequences of their deeds. It is not given to us to execute perfect justice, matching the evil a person suffers to the evil he causes. We would not even know where to begin. How do you punish a dictator responsible for the deaths of millions of people? How do you weigh the full extent of a devastating injury caused by drunken driving, where not only the victim but his entire family are affected for the rest of their lives? How do we assess the degree of culpability of, say, those Germans who knew what was happening during the Holocaust but did or said nothing to help? Moral guilt is a far more difficult concept to apply than legal guilt.

Human justice must work within the parameters of human understanding and regulation. Hence the straightforward rule: no vicarious punishment. Only the wrongdoer is to suffer, and only after his guilt has been established by fair and impartial judicial procedures. That is the foundational principle set out, for the first time in Deuteronomy 24:16.

However, the issue did not end there. In two later prophets - Jeremiah and Ezekiel - we find an explicit renunciation of the idea



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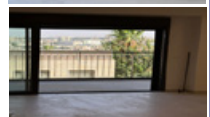
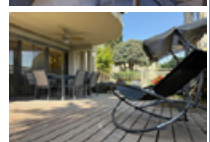
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that children might suffer for the sins of their parents, even when applied to Divine justice. Here is Jeremiah, speaking in the name of God:

In those days, people will no longer say, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes - his own teeth will be set on edge. (*Jeremiah 31:29-30*)

And this, from Ezekiel:

The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: ‘The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? ‘As surely as I live,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to Me, the father as well as the son - both alike belong to Me. The soul that sins is the one who

will die.” (*Ezekiel 18:1-3*)

The Talmud (Makkot 24a) raises the obvious question. If Ezekiel is correct, what then happens to the idea of children being punished to the third and fourth generation?

Its answer is astonishing:

Said R. Jose ben Hanina: Our master Moses pronounced four [adverse] sentences on Israel, but four prophets came and revoked them...Moses said, “He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.” Ezekiel came and declared: “The soul that sins is the one who will die.”

Moses decreed: Ezekiel came and annulled the decree! Clearly the matter cannot be that simple. After all, it was not Moses who decreed this, but God Himself. What do the Sages mean?

They mean - I think - this: the concept of perfect justice is beyond human understanding, for the reasons already given. We can never fully know the degree of guilt. Nor can we know the full extent of responsibility. The Mishnah in Sanhedrin (4:5), says that a witness in capital cases was solemnly warned that if, by false testimony, a person was wrongly sentenced to death, then he, the witness, “is held responsible for his [the accused’s] blood and the blood of his [potential] descendants until the end of time.” Nor, when we speak of Providence, is it always possible to distinguish punishment from natural consequence. A drug-addicted mother gives birth to a drug-addicted child. A violent father is assaulted by his violent son. Is this retribution or genetics or environmental influence? When it comes to Divine, as opposed to human justice, we can never reach beyond the most rudimentary understanding, if that.

Two things are clear from God’s words to

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Moses. First, He is a God of compassion but also of justice, for without justice there is anarchy, but without compassion, there is neither humanity nor hope. Second, in the tension between these two values, God's compassion vastly exceeds His justice. The former is forever ("to thousands [of generations]"). The latter is confined to the lifetime of the sinner: the "third and fourth generation" (grandchildren and great-grandchildren) are the limits of posterity one can expect to see in a human lifetime.

What Jeremiah and Ezekiel are talking about is something else. They were speaking about the fate of the nation. Both lived and worked at the time of the Babylonian exile. They were fighting a mood of despair among the people. "What can we do? We are being punished for the sins of our forefathers." Not so, said the prophets. Each generation holds its destiny in its own hands. Repent, and you will be forgiven, whatever the sins of the past – yours or those who came before you.

Justice is a complex phenomenon, Divine justice infinitely more so. One thing, however, is clear. When it comes to human justice, Moses, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all agree: children may not be punished for the sins of their parents. Vicarious punishment is simply unjust. ■

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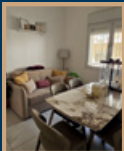


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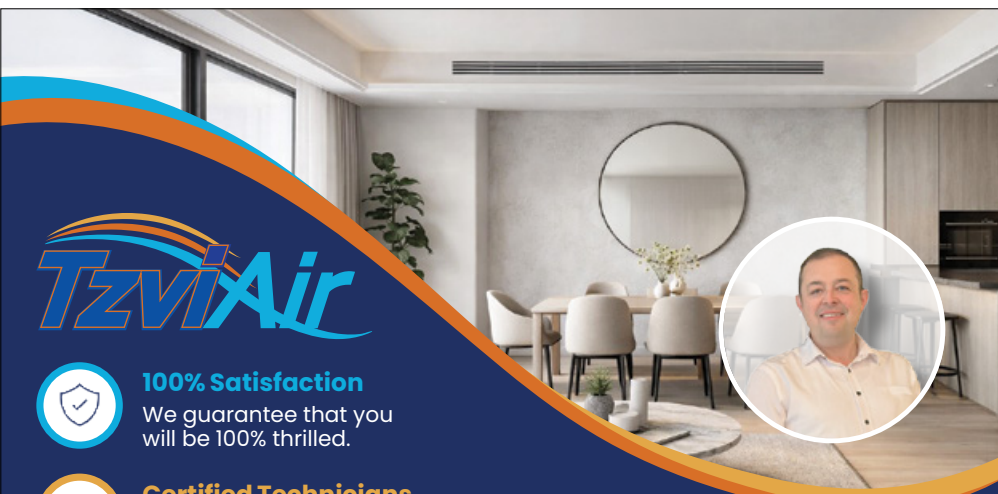
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Quality-Not Quantity

Perhaps the most surprising opening to a prophetic message of consolation are the words that begin this week's haftarah: "Roni akara"- "Sing out, O barren one". What? A barren woman should "sing out" in joy? Is this a proper beginning for a prophetic message of consolation?? And yet, this **IS** what Yishayahu cries out to his people in his very first remark to us in this haftarah! Why would the navi tell Israel, whose great matriarchs - Sarah and Rivka, Rachel and Channah - pleaded with G-d to be blessed with a child - say such things? How could he expect a nation, whose history was filled with the tears of childless families, to rejoice in their barrenness?!! Such a statement is more than "curious" - it is almost inexplicable!!

For this reason, we turn to the words of HaRav Soloveitchik who explains what-and

why- Yishayahu would utter such a troubling declaration.

The Rav, as well, is troubled by the navi's words, but he sees in them a message that was directed to future generations. Indeed, it is quite true that those in Yishayahu's time would find it difficult to see any comfort in being "the barren one". However, upon looking back in history we, as a nation, would better understand how these painful words ring true and why they were necessary.



Rav Joseph B.
Soloveitchik zt"l

When we look back over the last 150 years, we see the sharp reduction in the population of the Jewish nation. The multiple attacks, pogroms and expulsions from their homes that we have suffered, the assimilation and, of course, the Holocaust, all have decreased the number of Jews in the world. Our people that numbered over 18,000,000 one-hundred years ago, today total but [approximately] 15,000,000. And while nations and religions around us have increased steadily (even exponentially), we have not even equaled the number we were a century ago!

Yet, Rav Soloveitchik states, we should not be surprised. Quoting the pasuk in D'varim [7:7]: Ki atem ham'at mikol ha'ammim", "for you are the fewest of all the peoples". Surprisingly, the Rav explains that this statement is, actually, a bracha that Hashem bestowed upon us. He goes on to explain:

The smallest of people should rejoice in its failure to become a dominant world religion. For the greatness of the faith and the people lies precisely in its remaining small in number... *Yahadus*, by its very nature, demands extraordinary discipline

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and consistency of belief and action in every aspect of life.

He goes on to say:

Had either Rome or Arabia converted *en masse* to Judaism, the result would have been the thorough dilution, distortion and, ultimately, disappearance of Judaism as a religion (ch"v'sh).

And Rav Soloveitchik closes by stating:

...(O)ur task and our fate is to be-and remain-separate and apart, uniquely dedicated as a small minority to our unique and treasured spiritual patrimony.

Yes. As difficult and as troubling it is for us to rejoice in the "childness" of our nation, to face an overwhelming majority that may stand against us - and face them with faith and confidence - it is, nonetheless, the very secret of our survival. It is true that our people remain few in number compared with the world's larger nations, but it is also true that, due to that, we are the most eternal of all of them!

The Torah's lesson is "Quality, not Quantity"

And so, as the latest generation who can look back at our history, we should be able to rejoice "Roni Akara", for we also know why we still exist, living in our own Land, speaking our own language and following our Torah, given to us by our G-d. ■

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The Power of Personal Example

Among the many difficult sections in *parashat Ki Teitze* is the law of the *Ben Sorer U'Moreh*, the wayward and rebellious son. Hazal famously debate whether such a case ever actually occurred.¹ Yet even if the law is primarily theoretical, the Torah included it because it contains a timeless lesson about human influence and responsibility.

WHAT IS A "SORER U'MOREH"?

What does the term *sorer u'moreh* mean? Rashi explains: סורר - סר מן הדרך. *Sorer* refers to one who has strayed from the proper path. Regarding the word *moreh*, Rashi writes: מסרב - בדברי אביו, לשון ממרים - He rebels against the words of his father; it is a term of defiance.²

Thus, according to Rashi, the *Ben Sorer*

U'Moreh is a child who not only abandons the proper path but actively rebels against authority.

The *Yalkut Gershuni*, however, cited by the *Esh Tamid*,³ offers a striking alternative insight. Perhaps the word *moreh* could be understood literally, as a *teacher*.

At first glance, this seems paradoxical. The *Ben Sorer U'Moreh* is not a teacher; he is precisely the one who requires guidance. Yet, he teaches by example. His danger lies not merely in his own behavior but in his ability to influence those around him.

EVERY PERSON IS TEACHING SOMETHING

The *Ben Sorer U'Moreh* does not necessarily gather followers and explicitly encourage them to imitate him. Rather, his very lifestyle becomes a lesson. Through his conduct itself he teaches others, who observe him and learn from his actions.

Every individual serves as a role model, whether intentionally or unintentionally. We often assume that influence requires speeches, classes, or formal instruction. In reality, the most powerful lessons are often communicated silently through behavior. Children learn not only from what their parents say but from what they see. Students absorb not only their teachers' words but their values. Communities

3. *Eish Tamid*, name of author

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are shaped not only by ideals that are preached but by ideals that are practiced. The *Ben Sorer U'Moreh* is dangerous because he becomes a living example of the wrong values.

WHY WERE THE EGYPTIAN FIRSTBORNS PUNISHED?

The *Esh Tamid* applies this principle to one of the great questions surrounding *Makkat Bechorot*.

Why were the Egyptian firstborns singled out for punishment? Were they more wicked than everyone else? After all, the entire Egyptian nation participated in the oppression of Israel. Furthermore, why do Jewish firstborns observe the custom of *Ta'anit Bechorot* on Erev Pesach? None of the other plagues required a special annual commemoration by those who were spared. Why should the firstborns specifically express gratitude for having been saved? The answer lies in understanding the role of the firstborn.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP

The Torah grants special status to the firstborn because the firstborn naturally serves as a model for younger siblings. Parents remain the primary educators, but older siblings often exert enormous influence. The younger children watch them closely. They imitate their behavior. They learn what is acceptable by observing how their older brothers and sisters live. The *Esh Tamid* suggests that the Egyptian firstborns were punished because they served as the negative role models who shaped the moral culture of Egypt. The cruelty of Egypt did not emerge in a vacuum. The attitudes and behaviors of the leaders of each household shaped the generations that followed. Because they carried greater influence, they bore greater responsibility.

THE JEWISH FIRSTBORN

This insight also sheds light on the custom of *Ta'anit Bechorot*. Hazal teach that the Jewish



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people in Egypt had descended to a spiritually dangerous level. Various Midrashim describe the ministering angels questioning why Israel deserved salvation while Egypt deserved destruction. The Jewish firstborns therefore had reason to reflect upon their own responsibility. Had they fully utilized their position as spiritual leaders within their families? Had they inspired those around them? Had they served as proper role models? The annual observance of *Ta'anit Bechorot* becomes an opportunity to reaffirm that leadership.

WHY A SIYUM?

This may also explain the widespread custom that firstborns participate in a *siyum* on



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Erev Pesach. At first glance, this seems surprising. How can participation in a celebratory meal exempt one from fasting? The answer may be that the purpose of the day is not merely abstinence. The goal is positive leadership.

A siyum represents dedication to Torah, perseverance in learning, and commitment to spiritual growth. When a firstborn celebrates Torah achievement, he demonstrates precisely the type of influence he is meant to exert. He becomes a role model. He publicly affirms that true leadership is rooted not in power or privilege but in Torah and personal example.

AVRAHAM AVINU: THE ULTIMATE MODEL

This concept appears in Hashem's description of Avraham Avinu:

כִּי יִדְעֵתִי, לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִצְוֶה אֶת בְּנָיו וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו, וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָכָהּ.⁴

*For I have known him because he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Hashem.*⁴

Many commentators note that the Torah never records Avraham delivering formal lessons to Yitzhak. How, then, did he educate his family? The answer is that Avraham's life itself was the lesson. His kindness taught kindness. His faith taught faith. His integrity taught integrity. He educated through example. The greatest shiurim are often not spoken, rather they are lived.

4. Bereshit 18:19

THE SHIUR WE ARE ALWAYS GIVING

The lesson of the *Ben Sorer U'Moreh* is that every person is a teacher. Whether we realize it or not, others are watching us. Our children, students, friends, family members, and colleagues learn from our conduct far more than from our words. The question is not whether we are influencing others. The question is what we are teaching. A single act of integrity can inspire generations. A single display of kindness can transform a family. A single commitment to Torah can elevate an entire community.

Like Avraham Avinu, we may never know the full impact of our example. Yet every day we are giving a shiur, not only through what we say, but through how we live. May we merit to become role models who inspire others toward Torah, mitzvot, *chesed* and *yirat Shamayim*, and may our actions teach lessons that endure long after our words have been forgotten. ■



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The Rebbe looked deeply into the young man's eyes. "Tell me, what is the greatest praise a person can say about the Ribono Shel Olam?" Overwhelmed and intimidated, the young man could hardly speak as the Rebbe answered his own question: "There is no greater praise of Him than extolling the fact that the Ribbono Shel Olam doesn't laugh at a Yid."

As the Rebbe continued on his way, the young man, speechless and confused headed back to the yeshiva on his way to the airport, where he noticed that the light was still on the office of the Rosh Yeshiva, the 'Pnei Menachem', Reb Pinchas Menachem, zt'l. He knocked on the door, and as he was welcomed in he asked the Pnei Menachem if he could shed light on the Rebbe's cryptic statement.

Smiling knowingly, the Pnei Menachem explained:

"Imagine if a student were to act inappropriately and violate the rules of the yeshiva. Brought before me, he asks to be forgiven, declares that he regrets his actions, and that he'll never ever repeat the same poor choices. Of course, I will believe his sincerity and give him another chance. Now imagine that this person breaks the rules not once or twice, but again and again, and each time, he comes into the office and tearfully regrets his indiscretion, begging for forgiveness. How would a Rosh Yeshiva react? What could I say? 'Are you not making a mockery of the program, the rules, of me, of yourself?' His act of piety and sincerity is all a show, one big joke.

"This is how *basar v'dam*, a human being, might respond. However, when it comes to the Ribono Shel Olam, even if someone has fallen over and over, repeating the same mistakes again and again, his Teshuvah is accepted as if it is the first time he is seeking to change. This is *gevaldik* praise of the Ribono Shel Olam, who takes our efforts in Teshuvah and our *retzonos* to change seriously. For Hashem Yisborach there are no jokes and the sincere efforts of a Yid are no laughing matter."

.....
"Ki Seitze l'milchamah — When you go out to engage your enemy...." Chazal interpret this opening pasuk of our *sedra* to be a description of our eternal struggle with our lower self and *yeitzer hara*, our evil inclination. In this

parshah of the month of Elul, we are instructed to “go out” and adopt a proactive stance in our efforts to draw close to Hashem and make good choices. While sometimes we may get discouraged, and we may need to begin again countless times, we must nonetheless “go out” and re-engage, over and over again.

As we approach the end of another year, we are looking forward to new beginnings, a year of health and stability. All too often this past calendar year we heard the old Yiddish aphorism quoted: *A mentch tracht, un Gott lacht*, “Man plans, G-d laughs.” Though this saying never sat well with me, this year it stung. It was as if the Ribbono shel Olam were insensitive and deaf to our suffering and disappointment, snickering over our canceled plans and misfortunes, *chas v’Shalom*. How could it be?

The truth is, however, man plans and sometimes Hashem sees fit to rearrange those plans for the best. If one thing is important to remember during this season of *Teshuvah*, it is that the desires of a Jew to draw close and fulfill Hashem’s will are no joke — and no laughing matter. May we have the *bitachon* to “go out” as many times as it takes, no matter what obstacles or “enemies” may arise. And may HaKadosh Baruch Hu always see the good of our inner intentions, for the sincere efforts of a *Yid* are no

laughing matter!

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

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

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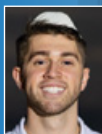
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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
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One of the many experiences our family has repeatedly shared, has been the appearance on numerous occasions of birds' nests on the balcony of our home. Over the years, our daughter's reaction has matured from excitement, to indifference, to concern for the eggs we inevitably find within these nests.

Our *Sedra*, *Parshat Ki Teitzei*, contains within it the challenging *mitzvah* of *Shiluach HaKen*—the *mitzvah* to send away the mother bird.

If you happen upon a bird's nest before you on the road, on any tree, or on the ground, and it contains hatchlings or eggs, if the mother is sitting upon the hatchlings or upon the eggs, you shall not take the mother upon the young.

You shall send away the mother, and [then] you may take the young for yourself; in order that it should be good for you, and you should lengthen your days. (Devarim 22:6-7)

There are many important details contained within these verses. First and foremost, the *pesukim* describe happening upon the nest, *baderech* while you are traveling, on the road, on the ground or in a tree before you. According to many *poskim*, the *mitzva* may thus not be performed by shooing away a mother bird from our own porch or yard, rather it is as the *pesukim* stipulate, if we happen upon the nest in a random place, while traveling outside, away from our own home.

It's interesting to note however, that **Rav Asher**

Weiss, *shlita*, distinguishes between a bird's nest appearing on our porch or in our yard—areas we utilize as living space, an extension of our homes—and a nest in a gutter attached to our building or on a rooftop; he considers these latter areas to be a *makom hefker*, similar to finding a nest in the street or wilderness.

Based on the above, it appears this *mitzvah* is

meant to reiterate and condition us to some level of heightened compassion and consideration as we travel away from our own homes, away from our regular routines. It is one thing to model *rachmanut* and



Rav Asher Weiss

kindness within the walls of our own homes, but how do we conduct ourselves when we travel, when we vacation, when we happen upon a circumstance and opportunity to express compassion when we are *baderech*, when we are away from our regular routines?

There is an interesting passage in the *Tikunei Zohar*, which can help us to begin to better understand this *mitzvah*.

There is an angel appointed over the birds . . . and when the Jewish people perform this mitzva, and the mother departs weeping and her children crying, this angel agonizes for his birds, and asks Hashem: "Does it not say that 'His compassion is on all of His works' ? Why did You decree for that bird to be exiled from her nest?" And what does HaKadosh Baruch Hu do? He gathers all of His other angels and says to them: "This angel is concerned for the welfare of a bird and is complaining

of its suffering; is there none amongst you who will seek merit on My children Israel, and for the Shechina which is in exile, and whose nest in Yerushalayim has been destroyed, and whose children are in exile under the hand of harsh rulers? Is there no one who seeks compassion for them and will attribute merit to them?" Then Hakadosh Baruch Hu issues a decree and says, "For My sake I shall act, and I shall act for My sake," and compassion is thereby aroused upon the Shechina and the children of Israel in exile...

The **Lubavitcher Rebbe zy'a**, points to this teaching from the *Tikunei Zohar*, and suggests that this mitzva of *Shiluach HaKen* is meant to arouse Hashem's mercy and compassion for His people and finally take us out of exile.

The **Rambam** in the **Moreh Nevuchim** offers a different take on the Torah's instruction to send away the mother bird.

First, we are concerned about the trauma it might cause to the mother bird if we were to take the eggs or hatchlings within her sight, and therefore we are instructed to send away the mother bird. However the *Rambam* points out another important idea, our concern for the eggs and hatchlings themselves. The young underdeveloped hatchlings and small eggs are probably not even truly edible or appropriate to be eaten! Despite our hunger, or human inclination, we are required to take the extra step of chasing away the mother bird. This extra step, explains the *Rambam*, is meant to be an impediment that for most people will result in their letting go of any desire to take the eggs or hatchlings.

The mitzva of *Shiluach HaKen* therefore could really be categorized on two levels as a mitzva *kiyumit*- a mitzva which may indeed be fulfilled, but is not obligatory under all circumstances. First, if we do happen upon a bird's nest while traveling, according to most *poskim*, we may indeed follow the Torah's specific instructions,

and fulfill the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird, and taking the eggs to eat. However, the *Rambam's* insight, perhaps, gives us a different understanding of the mitzva inherent in these *pesukim*. Perhaps, the mitzva opportunity contained within the various details of this scenario, is specifically, as the *Rambam* suggests, meant to condition us to rise above any natural inclination to serve our human desire and hunger, and rather channel our innate potential for emulating the compassionate *midot* of the *Ribono Shel Olam*.

The **Kedushat Levi, Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zy'a**, seemingly agrees with this train of thought. The *Rebbe* explained:

The mitzvah to send away the mother bird is not solely due to considerations of mercy for the mother bird's feelings, for if it were so, the Torah did not have to issue such a commandment, for Hashem himself could have taken care either of the mother bird or its young without leaving their fate to our sense of compassion. Hashem has many other ways and means of ensuring these birds' survival. Rather, the decree was issued to teach us to have compassion for every single one of Hashem's creatures...

Yehi Ratzon that each of us, during these days of *Elul*, should merit to take to heart this beautiful idea introduced in the *Moreh Nevuchim* and echoed by the words of the *Kedushat Levi*. May we be able to channel the *mida* of compassion not only when we happen upon a bird's nest, but also in our interactions with one another, and may we merit to realize that we are worthy of Hashem's compassion and love. ■

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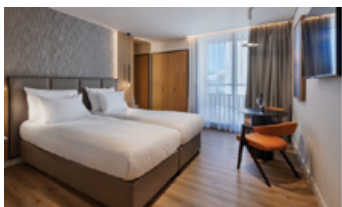
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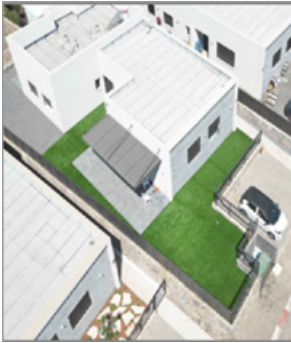
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Eating Out in Israel - Part 1

One of the things that excite many people upon their arrival in Eretz Yisrael whether on vacation or making Aliyah is the multitude of restaurants that are labeled “kosher.” As we have pointed out in the past, there are various levels of kashrut in Israel. It is certainly an experience to walk into a mall and see that almost all restaurants and food stands have kashrut certificates displayed. While OU Kosher cannot decide for every consumer which *hashgachot* is reliable and which aren't, we can offer you knowledge of our standards in OU-certified eateries, as well as an outline of the issues involved relating to other certifications. In addition, we will discuss some of the concerns that might arise at food services in Israel specifically. While it may be impossible to enumerate every scenario that might conceivably take place, we will make this series as brief yet as comprehensive as possible.

MEHADRIN AND NON-MEHADRIN

There are two general standards of kashrut in Israel: *mehadrin* and regular *rabbanut*. Most regular *rabbanut* certifiers will accept anything approved by the import division of the Chief Rabbinate, as well as anything produced locally and certified by other local rabbinates. In practical terms, this means that dairy products with non-*mehadrin* certification are *not Chalav Yisrael* and meat products are *not glatt*. Although OU Kosher certainly approves *Cholov Sta'am* products oversees there is a range of issues of approving such ingredients in Israel for food service that are not OU as such after long research OU Kosher decided to only approve *Chalav Yisrael* for their restaurants and hotels in Israel.

Regarding the issue of *Bishul Yisrael*, there is a dispute between the *Rema* and the *Beit Yosef* about the minimal requirement to remove the prohibition of *Bishul Akum* (certain kosher foods that are nevertheless prohibited because they were cooked by non-Jews). According to the *Rema*, it is enough if a Jew performs a small act in the cooking process such as lighting the fire or throwing a match into an existing flame. The *Beit Yosef* requires more hands-on participation in the cooking process, such as putting the food into the oven to be cooked or flipping the food during cooking (see *Shulchan Aruch* YD 113:7). *Sefardim* generally adhere to the *Beit Yosef*'s opinion, while *Ashkenazim* rule like the *Rema*. All *mehadrin* certifications, however, are supposed to uphold *Bishul Yisrael* according to the more stringent standard of the *Beit Yosef*.

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To summarize, the three main differences that are almost universal between *mehadrin* and non-*mehadrin* establishments are in the realm of *Bishul Yisrael*, *Chalav Yisrael* and *glatt* meat.

Another unfortunate difference among restaurants which can be contentious is the issue of ingredients. The OU, as well as other kashrut organizations, does not approve all “*mehadrin*” ingredients in Israel. This is because of the complexity of Israeli certifications. Many ingredients are imported, sometimes from countries where kosher certification is difficult, or where the manufacturer is not interested in certification. In such a case the importer must deal with whatever is available. Often, importers exert tremendous pressure to get ingredients certified here in Israel without requiring any changes in production or supervision abroad, and this leads to what is essentially a rubber-stamp procedure.

HASHGACHAH

For obvious reasons, supervision is an essential part of the certification process. Many Anglos are shocked when they enter an establishment in Israel with no *mashgiach*. In many cases they are told that the *mashgiach* does not spend full days at the establishment. This is an essential difference that should be understood. According to Israeli standards, especially in a case of Jewish owners, the idea of a full time *mashgiach* is non-existent. It is not clear how this came about, but in Israel even certifications with the highest standards don't require a full-time *mashgiach*. There are certifications that require very little presence

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of a *mashgiach* — he might show up once a day for an hour, or only once or twice a week. It is very important when deciding to dine at a restaurant to understand how often the *mashgiach* is present and how much he is really involved with the kosher program of the establishment. Some establishments have *mashgichim* that come in for a few hours a day, and in addition they have an employee who works as a *ne'eman kashrut* (that is, someone who is reliable according to halachah to ensure that the food being served meets the requirements of the restaurant's *hechsher*) In Europe such an individual is normally called a *Shomer*. When a *mashgiach* is not present full time many concerns arise such as *Bishul Akum*, mixing up utensils and the use of non-approved ingredients.

In the coming weeks we will continue to dig deep into the standards of restaurants and food service in Israel. ■

Kashrut Questions in Israel?

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Continuous Caution

Among the numerous topics and halachot in our *parashah* we find the injunction to recall what was done to Miriam while journeying in the desert. (*Devarim* 24:9) Miriam spoke against her brother Moshe and was stricken with *tzara'at* (*Bamidbar* 12:1-16) Thus, the Torah underscores the need to constantly remember the consequences of speaking *loshon hara*.

Rav Broide *zt"l* in *Sam Derech* quotes three different approaches to our verse. Rashi and the Rambam understand this as advice; take a lesson from what happened to Miriam and be careful not to speak negatively of others. The Ramban, however, counts this in the tally of mitzvot; it is a *mitzvat aseh* to recall what Miriam did and how she was punished. We find a third view in *Targum Yonatan*—this is a warning not to suspect people, as we see what happened to Miriam when she suspected her brother of wrongdoing.

The Saba of Slabodka *zt"l* shares a powerful insight following the opinion that this verse indeed conveys a mitzvah. There are six such events that we are enjoined to remember: the Exodus from Egypt, the Sinai experience, Amalek, the Golden Calf, Miriam and Shabbat. How, he asks, can we compare remembering what Miriam did to remembering what Amalek did to the Jewish people! Miriam was a

righteous woman whose sin was barely perceptible and was judged for speaking inappropriately about Moshe Rabbeinu. Amalek was our chief enemy and acted with unbridled cruelty to *Am Yisrael*! Yet, by juxtaposing the two events, the Saba explains, we see how careful we must be in the arena of speech. Each person is created in Hashem's image, and that demands from us extraordinary care when we speak of another. The Torah demonstrates here how careful we must be to honor and preserve the dignity of every person.

Following the approach of *Targum Yonatan*, Rav Kalman Pinsky *zt"l* sees how one can avoid speaking negatively of others. We must first habituate ourselves to view others in a positive light. When we have a “good eye” and we seek to give others the benefit of the doubt, we are less likely to find something negative in someone else. Rav Tzvi Meir Zilverberg *shlit"l* teaches that this is the intention in the verse, “*Mi ha'ish hachafetz chaim ohev yamim ler'ot tov, netzor leshoncha mei'ra u'sefatecha mi'daber mirmah* — Who is the man who desires life, who loves days to see goodness? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceitfully.” (*Tehillim* 34:13-14) If you desire and love life you will develop yourself to see the good in others. Naturally, you will then avoid negative, disparaging or antagonistic speech about others.

Remembering Miriam is a call to remember the sanctity of the human being. It also reminds us to see goodness in others and highlight their positive qualities and features. ■

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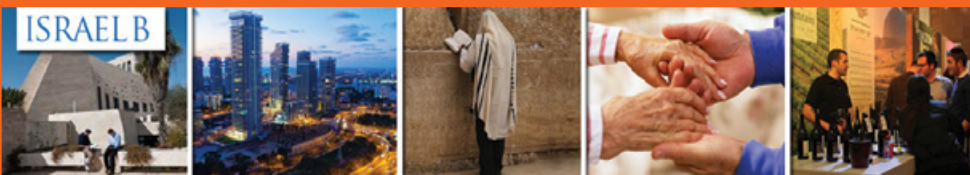


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Imperfect Teshuvah

Elul is here, and our thoughts turn toward teshuva. Human beings are endowed with the extraordinary gift of free will. We normally exercise that freedom by making choices about the world around us: where to live, which profession to pursue, whom to marry, and how to shape our lives.

Teshuva demands a far bolder exercise of that freedom. Instead of choosing what we will do or where we will go, we turn the looking glass inward and ask who we want to become. Teshuva rests upon the audacious belief that we are not prisoners of the people we have become. The person we have become does not have to be the person we remain.

THE DREAM OF כְּדָם

Our ambitions for this process are extraordinarily high. The conclusion of Eicha sets the tone:

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִשְׁכַּח, חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם.

“Return us to You, Hashem, and we will return; renew our days as of old.”

Chazal understand כְּדָם as a yearning to return to עולם של עולם, to the original state of the world, to Gan Eden before Man disobeyed the will of Hashem. Teshuva aims at more than small improvements. We dream of restoring something that has been lost, of returning to a purer version of ourselves before sin and failure took their toll.

Each of us has had our own Gan Eden moments, periods when we were better than we are now and more faithful to Hashem. Since then, we may have betrayed Hashem, surrendered to weakness, or fallen short religiously. Teshuva asks us to walk back toward the person we once were, and ultimately toward the person we were meant to be.

THE REALITY OF IMPERFECT TESHUVAH

Yet the greater our ambitions for teshuva, the more painfully aware we become of the distance between those ambitions and the teshuva we actually perform. We yearn for כְּדָם, but we know ourselves too well. We have seen this movie before. We confess our sins, sincerely resolve to change, and too often find ourselves returning to the same behavior. It is difficult not to feel a measure of hypocrisy as we recite viduy.

In fact, one of the confessions we recite is **עַל חַטָּא שְׁחָטָנוּ לַפְּנִיךָ בִּידוּי פַה**, for the sin of confessing with our mouths without producing genuine change. There is a painful irony in this confession. We acknowledge that previous confessions did not always lead

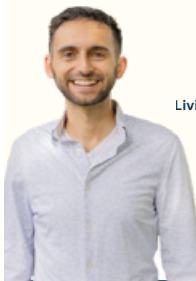


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to change, even as we wonder whether our present confession will fare any better. Even our confession for **פה וידוי פה** risks becoming yet another **פה וידוי פה**.

This tension lies at the heart of our experience of teshuva. We yearn for nothing less than **נקדמ**, yet experience teaches us how incomplete our teshuva may remain. The question, then, is what value does imperfect teshuva possess? If our motives are mixed and our resolutions uncertain, does our teshuva still count?

Chazal already recognized that teshuva need not be perfect to be genuine. The Gemara distinguishes between **teshuva me'ahava**, repentance motivated by love, and **teshuva me'yirah**, repentance driven by fear. The Rambam draws a different distinction. He describes the highest caliber of repentance as **teshuva gemurah**, complete teshuva, implying that there is also genuine teshuva which falls short of that ideal.

Yet even these lower forms presume a fairly advanced process of teshuva. The sinner has recognized his failure, regretted it, and consciously turned toward change. The Torah takes us back to even earlier stages of teshuva. It records far more basic and compromised forms of teshuva, moments when people have barely begun the journey of return. Remarkably, even these first steps are treated as meaningful acts of teshuva.

ACKNOWLEDGING SIN

Kayin was the first person to embark upon teshuva. Adam and Chava, despite committing a sin that altered the course of human history, never embarked upon a process of return. They couldn't imagine that teshuva was even possible.

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גדול עוני מנשוא

"Is my sin too great for You to bear?"

There are many interpretations of this oblique phrase, but on a literal level Kayin is asking whether his sin is really too great for Hashem to bear. His response is insolent: surely the Creator of the entire universe can bear his crime without exacting punishment. This truculent response leads Chazal to describe Kayin at this moment as:

נעשה כגונב דעת העליונה

"He acted as though he could deceive the Divine mind."

Yet beneath this defiant response lies the first glimmer of teshuva. Simply by referring to his behavior as a *sin*, Kayin acknowledges that he has committed a crime.

Acknowledgment is the first step toward teshuva. Without accepting guilt, the process of teshuva cannot begin.

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LOOKING BACKWARD

Close to two thousand years later, the Torah records a second form of incomplete teshuva. The brothers had sold Yosef into slavery in Egypt and assumed that their secret was safe.

Two decades later, they become entangled in Egypt, accused of being foreign agents. As their predicament becomes more severe, they experience an awakening:

אבל אשמים אנחנו על אחינו...

“Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother...”

They connect the dots. Their current struggles are a consequence of their crime decades earlier. More than merely acknowledging a sin, they understand that sins carry consequences, something Kayin was unable to fully accept.

They also realize that sins have a lasting impact. They travel back in time and reexamine their past conduct. The Rambam writes in Hilchot Teshuva (2:8) that even sins confessed in the past should be confessed again on subsequent Yom Kippurs. Teshuva requires us to continue confronting earlier chapters of our lives.

The brothers’ teshuva isn’t perfect. They never voice their apology directly to Yosef, and their remorse appears, at least initially, to be prompted by fear of consequences. Yet they achieve something significant. They admit their sin, accept that it carries consequences, and widen the lens through which they examine their lives.

VIDUY

About a thousand years later, yet another form of imperfect teshuva is recorded. After returning to Israel and witnessing that only about 42,000 Jews had come back from the Diaspora, it becomes clear to Nechemiah that they cannot rebuild Jewish life without

accounting for the misdeeds that contributed to the collapse of the First Mikdash. Nechemiah orchestrates a public confession in which they articulate their sins.

Yet despite this public accounting, not everything changes. They had taken foreign wives, and despite their contrition, many refused to separate from them. Many of the behaviors they confessed remained unchanged.

Still, through this confession they advance the arc of teshuva. The brothers’ declaration, **אבל אשמים אנחנו**, was a spontaneous recognition of guilt, not a formal act of confession undertaken as part of a process of teshuva. Nechemiah and his generation take the next step. They deliberately gather to confess, reviewing their past and giving explicit verbal expression to their failures. Their confession begins to resemble our own viduy.

There is a reason teshuva demands formal confession rather than allowing remorse to remain buried within our thoughts. Ideas left unspoken remain nebulous. By articulating our sins, we make them concrete and force ourselves to confront what we have done. This confrontation produces pain and shame over our failures, difficult but crucial emotions in the process of teshuva.

Nechemiah’s generation does not achieve *complete* teshuva. Their behavior does not fully match their confession. But they have advanced beyond recognizing guilt and understanding its consequences. They have turned acknowledgment into viduy.

None of these forms of teshuva were complete or perfect. That is exactly the point. The Torah records these incomplete forms of teshuva to provide hope for us. We certainly aspire to a teshuva that will far exceed these limited examples. Yet our teshuva may never

be the perfect teshuva we dream of. It may be laced with doubt, inconsistency, and even hypocrisy. Despite its flaws and limitations, however, it is still teshuva, and it is still accepted by Hashem.

ONE DAY, TESHUVAH WILL BE PERFECT

Imperfect teshuva is not our final destination. The Torah also promises that history will ultimately culminate in a very different kind of teshuva. In Parshat Nitzavim the Torah writes:

ושבת עד ה' אלוֹקֶיךָ

“And you will return to Hashem your God.”

The Rambam, in Hilchot Teshuva, perek 7, views this pasuk as a prophecy that ultimately, at the end of time, every Jew will perform teshuva. Hashem’s presence will be so clear and unmistakable that everyone will recognize His authority and repent for their sins. That teshuva will be complete, inspired by a Divine presence that can no longer be ignored or denied.

Until that day of perfect teshuva, we have our own imperfect teshuva. It is human teshuva, often flawed and incomplete. We should strive for more, but we should never dismiss the teshuva we are capable of achieving. It may not be **teshuva gemurah**, but it is still teshuva, and it is accepted by HaKadosh Baruch Hu. ■



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Never Forgotten

HAFTORAH KI TEITZEI

We usually think of forgetting as a failure — something important that has escaped our attention. Yet in Parashat Ki Teitzei, the Torah introduces a mitzvah that can be fulfilled only through forgetting: **כִּי תִקְצֹר קְצִירְךָ בְשָׂדֶךָ וְשָׂכַחְתָּ עֹמֶר בְּשָׂדֶךָ לֹא תָשׁוּב לִקְהָתוֹ לְגֵר לִיתוֹם וְלְאַלְמָנָה יְהִיָּה לְמַעַן יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל מַעֲשֶׂה יְדֶיךָ** - *When you reap the harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not return to retrieve it; it shall be for the stranger, the orphan and the widow, so that Hashem your God will bless you in all the work of your hands.* (Devarim 24:19)

The language contains a striking irony: the sheaf may be forgotten, but the person in need must not be. What the landowner leaves behind becomes the means through which the stranger, orphan and widow are remembered. The Torah transforms an ordinary lapse of awareness into an act of care.

Perhaps **shikhechah** addresses not only the sheaf that has been forgotten, but also those whom society is in danger of forgetting. The stranger, orphan and widow lack the security and influence to ensure that their needs will be noticed. The Torah therefore builds their remembrance into the very structure of the harvest. The forgotten part of the field becomes a place in which another person is seen.

In our Haftorah, Yeshayahu portrays Yerushalayim as a city left behind, abandoned in the field of history. She has watched other nations grow while she remains desolate. To the outside world, she appears to have been passed over and forgotten. But she has never disappeared from Hashem's sight. He turns toward her in her desolation and promises: **בְּרַגַע קָטָן עֲזַבְתִּיךָ וּבְרַחֲמִים גָּדִלְתִּי אֶקְבָּצֶךָ: בְּשָׂפָךְ קִצְרְךָ הִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי רָגַע מִמֶּךָ וּבְחֶסֶד עוֹלָם רַחֲמֶיךָ אָמַר גָּאֻלְךָ ה'** - *For a brief moment I left you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In a surge of anger, I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion upon you, says Hashem, your Redeemer.* (Yeshayahu 54:7-8)

The parashah and the Haftorah speak to one another through the language of forgetting. In the parashah, the forgotten sheaf ensures that vulnerable people will be remembered. In the Haftorah, a seemingly forgotten Yerushalayim is assured that Hashem has never lost sight of her. Both the sheaf and the city appear to have been left behind, yet neither is without purpose or future. The sheaf becomes a source of sustenance and

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blessing; the desolate city will expand beyond its borders and once again overflow with children. What appears neglected becomes the setting for renewal.

There are moments when a person—and even an entire nation—may feel left at the edge of the field, unnoticed and uncertain of what comes next. The Haftorah reminds us that being left behind is not the same as being lost. Even when she feels forgotten, Yerushalayim remains held within Hashem's everlasting compassion. And just as Hashem remembers Yerushalayim in her desolation, He will ultimately remember us, gather us and bring us home. ■

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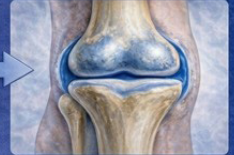
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Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot (2:1): A Mitzvah to Speak Hebrew

**“Be as scrupulous in performing a ‘minor’ mitzvah as in a ‘major’ one, for you do not know the reward given for the [respective] mitzvot.”
(Pirkei Avot 2:1)**

The Rambam comments on this Mishnah and emphasizes that this injunction exhorts us to perform all *positive* commandments with equal zeal. The reward for fulfilling them, and the punishment for not doing so, is not given explicitly in the Torah, so that we remain unaware of the relative importance of the various commandments. This ensures that we will perform them all with the same care and enthusiasm. (Rambam, Commentary on Pirkei Avot 2:1)

The Rambam offers examples of mitzvot that we might consider “minor,” yet are more weighty than we realize. One particular example is especially surprising because it is generally not classified as a mitzvah. The Rambam says that learning the Hebrew language is a mitzvah that falls into the category of a seemingly “minor” mitzvah that should nevertheless be taken with the utmost seriousness. (Ibid.)

It is striking that the Rambam classifies proficiency in the Hebrew language as a mitzvah. Perhaps its obligation is rooted in

the necessity of mastering Hebrew, being that it is a key to understanding the Torah in all its subtlety and richness.

GOD’S LANGUAGE

One of Rav Kook’s finest students in his yeshiva was a young man by the name of Rav Yehuda Gershuni. Rav Gershuni arrived in Palestine in 1933, two years prior to Rav Kook’s passing, in order to bask in the presence of the great Rav Kook and study with him. Prior to his arrival, at the age of eighteen, the young Yehuda Gershuni was already famous in the yeshiva world of Europe as the *Grodner Illui*—the genius from Grodno. He studied for five years with the famed Talmudic gaon, Reb Baruch Ber Leibowitz, the rosh yeshiva of the Kaminetz Yeshiva. He then set off for Palestine and became one of the great lights in Rav Kook’s yeshiva.

It is interesting to note, especially in the context of appreciating the sanctity of the Hebrew language, that it was Rav Kook who encouraged him to Hebraize his name. Thus, he decided to change it from Sorokszabel to Gershuni—“son of Gershon,” his father’s name. (The Times of Israel, “Remembering a Great Man,” Ukeles, January 2022)

Rav Gershuni passed along a few select ideas that he heard in a teaching given by Rav Kook on the topic of the lofty nature of

the Hebrew language and the importance of speaking the holy language: A learned and committed Jew, especially one living in the Land of Israel, should endeavor to speak only in Hebrew. The more adept one is in Hebrew, the more one comprehends and discovers the true and authentic meaning of the Torah. God Himself created the world with the holy language of Hebrew, and the Torah was given to Moshe and the Jewish people in Hebrew. It is God's language, and the secrets of the Torah are contained within its letters and words. The nation of Israel is bound with the God of Israel through this divine language. This is the reason why the Hebrew language is indeed so eminently known as *lashon hakodesh* — the holy language. (*Sichat Avot*, p. 152)

TEACHING IN YIDDISH OR HEBREW?

Rav Kook gave a daily class teaching Mishnah, which was attended by local *balabatim* and learned Jews. Rav Kook chose to teach in the language that would be most suited to the majority of the group and thus gave the class in Yiddish.

One of Rav Kook's most eminent students, the famed "Nazir," Rav David Cohen, was also a regular attendee of the class. However, at some point, Rav David Cohen stopped attending.

What had happened was that although Rav Cohen was a loyal student of Rav Kook and took every opportunity to humbly sit at his feet and learn Torah from his master, he found it unbearably difficult to listen to the study of Torah in any language other than *lashon hakodesh*, the holy language of Hebrew.



An acquaintance of Rav David Cohen came to Rav Kook and told him that Rav David Cohen had chosen to refrain from attending the class because it was distressful for him to hear Torah taught in Yiddish. He had accepted upon himself the sacred practice of studying

Torah only in Hebrew.

Rav Kook turned to this fellow and offered the following response:

"The Nazir is a very holy person. It is fitting that he has chosen this sacred practice. He is observing the dictum of the Sages who stated: 'Anyone who lives in Eretz Yisrael, and speaks the holy language, and recites the Shema morning and evening, is assured a place in *Olam*

Haba (the World to Come).' (Sifri, Haazinu, 333). "He is certainly a Jew," said Rav Kook, "who lives his life, even in this world, with the radiance and reality of the ethereal world of *Olam Haba*."

Rav Kook went on to note that for generations there have been holy individuals among our people who have sought to embrace the exalted observance of speaking Hebrew. Some of these holy Jews adopted the practice of speaking their native languages during the weekdays, but on Shabbat they would speak only Hebrew over the entire twenty-four-hour period.

Rav Kook said that the Nazir perceived coming to the Land of Israel as being tantamount to elevating the weekdays so that they would be saturated with the holiness of Shabbat, and therefore the Nazir elected to speak Hebrew throughout the week as well. What, then, was the Nazir's practice on Shabbat? On Shabbat, the Nazir did not speak at all in

order to imbibe the great elevation of the day. On Shabbat, he speaks only when he learned Torah, prayed, and was involved in the mitzvot of the day. (*Sichat Avot*, p. 152)

The story is told that this episode, in which Rav Kook explained and praised the practice of his eminent student, the Nazir, took place immediately before he began his daily class teaching Mishnah. Rav Kook then opened the Mishnah to where they had left off previously. Rav Kook taught the Mishnah in *Peah* (4:1), which discusses the topic of leaving a corner of one's field for the poor.

The issue raised in the Mishnah is that although the law states that the poor enter the field and pick the produce themselves, if the owner prefers to pick it and distribute it, that is also acceptable. There is, however, a scenario in which this would not be accepted: Even if 99 prefer that the produce be distributed by the owner and one person prefers to pick it himself - it must be left unpicked for the entire group. The rationale is that the one who prefers to pick the produce is indeed observing the law in the manner in which the mitzvah of *Peah* is expressly mandated in the Torah. Thus, all the others must follow his preference.

Rav Kook commented and said that perhaps there is an implicit message that we should glean from this regarding our own daily learning of Mishnah. Although the majority of the group prefers to learn in Yiddish, if there is one person who is observing the Torah's directive, we might very well be obliged to follow his higher path! (*Ibid.*) ■



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Taking a Bus Instead of Driving

Question: A not yet fully Shabbat observant Jew regularly drives to (near) my shul because it is difficult for him to walk the distance. Can I suggest to him that it is better for him to go by bus, or is that fundamentally wrong or too slippery a slope to permit?

Answer: It is not possible to answer this crucial question unequivocally. Let us see basic sources and distinctions. We will indeed assume that taking public transportation is a less severe violation of Shabbat than driving, although the extent to which this is true could depend on different factors (*eiruv*, type of car, etc.).

The most direct source in favor of trying to lighten the level of violation is the *gemara* in Sota (48a). The *gemara* says that one type of male/female joint singing is worse than another and that this is notable because of

“cancelling this in place of that” (*l’v’tulei ha...*). Rashi explains that if we can only convince them to stop one, we should stop the more problematic one. Some understand Rashi as not allowing a rabbi to recommend replacing the bigger *aveira* with the smaller but just choosing on which to focus the criticism. But major *poskim* understand Rashi more broadly (see Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah I:53 and Yabia Omer VI, YD 3 regarding *hashgachot* that do not prevent “minor” kashrut problems but cover the main halachic issues when without the *hashgacha* people will eat full-fledged *kashrut* violations). Rabbeinu Yona (Berachot, 21b in the Rif’s pages) is a *Rishon* who explicitly allows a rabbi to allow the more lenient violation to prevent the bigger violation.

Another focal *gemara* is Chagiga 16a. It says that if someone is not able to control his *yetzer hara*, he should go to a distant place, dress in black, and sin privately rather than desecrate Hashem’s Name in public. Tosafot (ad loc.) offers two explanations whether this is the *gemara*’s advice to the would-be sinner (lessen the *aveira*’s damage) or whether it is giving a plan how to avoid the *aveira* totally.

On the other hand, a *gemara* (Shabbat 4a) could be grounds for a counterargument – we do not tell someone to do a small *aveira* in order to save another from a bigger *aveira*. Very likely, “encouraging” the smaller *aveira* is itself an *aveira* (see Yabia Omer *ibid.*).

There are different “currents” in *Rishonim* on whether to apply *l’v’tulei ha*, and while there could be some *machloket*, some discrepancies can be explained by distinctions. One is

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that *l'v'tulei ha* is more likely when it involves an individual or small group as opposed to a large group (see Sha'arei Chayim (Rotter) 42). Another is that it should not look as if the rabbi is permitting the small *aveira*, but only that it is better to choose the lesser evil (see Igrot Moshe, OC IV:35). Another major factor is that allowing the smaller violation should not cause people who keep *mitzvot* to mistakenly sin (see Meishiv Davar 42-43; Igrot Moshe, YD I:53). It is also better if the allowance is temporary, not an ongoing rule (see Rav Asher Sabag in Hama'ayan #246, p. 85). We will leave for now some other possible distinctions.

If you word things correctly, you will not tell him it is permitted to go by bus or that he may use it as a permanent practice, but that he should know that it is preferable. If so, your case comes up on the right side of these distinctions. On the other hand, as *poskim* point out (see Meishiv Davar *ibid.*), one should be very careful about if, when, and how to employ *l'v'tulei ha*. When you are talking about someone whose concepts of Halacha are very limited, to say that some things are important and some are less so, within the same *aveira* of violating Shabbat, you raise the possibility of confusing him and giving him the wrong impression (e.g., there is no need to do things correctly, as long as it is not "too far off"). You, as the rabbi, can also get into serious communal problems if you think it is a good idea for one and not for another; what often happens is that community members compare notes.

We wish you *hatzlacha* in inspiring and

guiding your "flock" on the path to full *avodat Hashem*. ■

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Divine Forgiveness

"To err is human; to forgive, divine." While this well-known and oft-cited quote was penned in 1711 by the poet Alexander Pope, its foundational truth lies in the prophecy of Yeshayahu which we have been studying. Two pesukim from Yeshayahu form part of one of the essential piyutim recited during Selichot and in our Tefillot on Yom Kippur. In a paragraph leading to the Viduy, the verbal confession of our sins, we ask Hashem to remember His covenant with us, and forgive our sins as He has promised: In Yeshayahu 43:25, Hashem promises: אנכי אנכי הוא מוחה פשעיך למעני, *I, only I, am He who erases your willful sins, for My own sake, and I will not recall your sins.* Yeshayahu further promises in the name of Hashem, מחיתי כעב פשעיך, *I will wipe away your willful sins like a fog, and your sins like a cloud; return to Me, for I have redeemed you.*¹ In context, in Sefer Yeshayahu, both of these verses appear in sections that speak of Hashem as the Creator, King and Redeemer. It is as such that Hashem forgives our sins.

As Creator, Hashem is not bound by the laws of nature, or limited in any way by Man's actions. Hashem's plan for the world,

which remains under His constant governance as King, will be realized regardless of Man's behavior. Thus, Hashem will act as our Redeemer when He sees fit. We can hasten the Redemption through our efforts, but if we are not successful, there is a set time when Hashem's vision for the world will be realized, and Hashem will act for His own sake.

Just as this is true on a national historical level, so it applies to every individual, who experiences a microcosmic redemption every Yom Kippur. Teshuvah itself does not rectify our sins, nor erase the past. Only Hashem Himself, אנכי אנכי, through His infinite Chessed, and for the sake of the sanctification of His name, can do that. Siftei Chaim cites the Ramchal, who explains that Hashem created the world and governs it according to certain fundamental principles, including a just system of reward and punishment. If Hashem were bound to the Middat HaDin, the attribute of Justice, anyone who transgresses His law would be sentenced to punishment. Since Hashem is both Creator and King, only He can override His own laws at will, and that is the tremendous power invested in the concept of Teshuvah. Our Teshuvah sparks a process through which Hashem negates His own laws and erases our sins.²

Rav Yigal Ariel raises the question of which comes first, Teshuvah or redemption. While it would be logical to think that Teshuvah is a prerequisite for redemption, our text seems to suggest otherwise - שובה אלי כי - *Return unto Me, for I have redeemed*

1. A third verse, from Yeshayahu 1:18, is cited in Sefer Tikkunei Shema but is not included in the parallel paragraph in the Amidah of Yom Kippur.

2. Siftei Chaim Moadim I p.482

you! He resolves the question by citing a text from the Torah itself, from Parashat HaTeshuvah in Parashat Nitzavim: ושבתי עד - Return to Hashem your G-d, and Hashem will return you from your captivity. ושב וקבצך - and He will return and gather you in, ואתה תשוב ושמע - And then you will return and listen to the voice of Hashem. It is difficult to effect complete Teshuvah while under the yoke of the diaspora, explains Rav Ariel. If our initial sins were caused by the influence of the powerful surrounding nations while we were in Eretz Yisrael, how much more so must this be true in exile. If we make the initial overture to return to Hashem, Hashem will then act expeditiously, for His own sake, to ease our conditions, bringing us back to our homeland in which we feel His Presence so much more profoundly, so that we may return to Him fully.³

May our Tefillot this Elul and Tishrei be enhanced by our study of the texts with which they are replete, and may Hashem answer our Tefillot l'Tovah, with the גאולה השלמה, complete redemption, individually and nationally. ■

3. HaMevasser vol. II pp. 119-120

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

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



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How To Get Unstuck!

How do you break a bad cycle with your child? Everyone has those interactions with their child when suddenly something changes and the mood or conversation starts to spiral out of control. One minute you're having a great interaction with your child and the next minute everything has disintegrated. Sometimes you're not even sure what happened to cause the spiral.

When a parent stops to reflect, when this happens, many times they will see that there is some sort of pattern that occurs. It can be that the parent is triggered by something that the child says or does or the child was set off by the parent. What's clear is that there tends to be cycles parents and children get stuck in and are left feeling powerless to navigate.

I'd like to offer some suggestions to free yourself from these vicious cycles.

Firstly, when a situation arises and you feel

like oh no, here we go again, it's a sign to pay close attention.

1. Notice the cycle and pause.
Stop and observe the change in the mood. Take a breath in order to calm your system and step away if you feel overwhelmed. It's hard for a child to calm down when the parent is dysregulated.
2. Gather information and look for a trigger.
Ask yourself if this happens every time you discuss a certain topic or if it's always at a specific time of day. For example things always take a turn for the worse when your child gets home from school or before bedtime. Check if your child is hungry or tired? Or maybe you are. Ask yourself how you're feeling at that moment. Are you angry, resentful, sad or frustrated? Once you check in with your emotions you can explore how you usually respond. For example, every time I bring up this topic my child ignores me so I yell.
3. Change your response - The parent can now break the pattern and choose to respond differently. It helps to recognize that your child's "rude" behavior is usually a sign of internal stress. Once you learn to not take the defiance personally, you can focus on the things that trigger you. Change doesn't happen when you continue to do the same thing. Acknowledge your child's emotions and validate them before you correct their behavior. Respond in a brief statement of what you

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expect from your child instead of giving a long lecture.

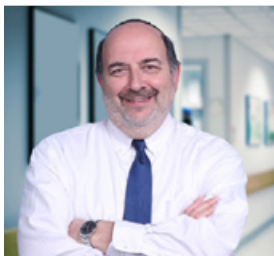
4. Now you can make space for repair and connection. Part of repairing the relationship is setting aside time to connect with your child and do something that they enjoy. Repairing the relationship outside of the conflict can lessen future clashes. It also helps when a parent can apologize when they've lost their temper. Try noticing and acknowledging good behavior and positive interactions. The process of change takes time and patience, often requiring a lot of effort and creativity from parents.

When a parent can shift from automatic, emotional reactions to intentional, calm responses, negative cycles can be broken, and new healthier dynamics can be built.

Be'hatzlaha ■

Michal Silverstein has a MS in educational psychology and counseling. She facilitates parenting workshops in and around Jerusalem and maintains a private practice.

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Do we appreciate our time enough?

In last week's Torah portion, we read about a person who kills someone unintentionally - a death caused by accident, without any intent to harm.

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, one of the great Chassidic masters, offers a striking interpretation. When a person neglects what truly matters in life, when he wastes his time, he is in a sense unintentionally "killing" the life he has been given. Instead of making each moment count, he creates more and more "dead" moments, time that passes without being put to good use.

But the opposite is also true. When we devote our time to what is meaningful and worthwhile, we add life to our lives. We bring the time we have been given to life.

We often speak about the mitzvot *bein*

adam laMakom, and about those *bein adam l'chaveiro*. Perhaps we also need to think about *bein adam l'zmano*, our relationship with our time. And maybe, these days, even *bein adam l'machshiro*, our relationship with our devices!

How much time disappears into scrolling and staring at a screen almost without our noticing, only to realize afterward that we have squandered something precious?

Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk calls on us, especially during the month of Elul, to become more aware of our time. At every moment, we are choosing

anew whether to "kill" time God forbid, or to bring it to life.

May we merit to use our time well, filling it with light, abundance, and holiness! ■



Title page of the
Noam Elimelech

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

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When Are They Ready to Move On?

Davis asks:

My candidate just ended a relationship of a few months and the very next day told me they're ready for suggestions. How can I tell if they're actually ready?

Aleeza answers:

There isn't a magic number of days, weeks, or months that tells you someone is ready to date again. I've seen people genuinely ready after a week, and I've seen others still carrying a breakup years later. The calendar isn't your best guide. The conversation is.

Here are a few things I look for before making another suggestion.

1. Ask what they've learned.

A breakup should leave us with more than heartache, it should leave us with insight. Ask what they discovered about themselves, what worked, and what didn't. If they can reflect thoughtfully instead of simply blaming the other person, that's a healthy sign.

2. Ask what still hurts.

You don't need every detail, but it's important to understand whether they're processing the relationship or still living inside it. If every answer circles back to the ex, the emotions are probably still too fresh. If they can acknowledge the pain without being consumed by it, they're likely further along.

3. Ask what they're looking for now.

Sometimes a breakup brings tremendous clarity. Other times it creates confusion. Has anything changed about what they're hoping to build? Have their priorities shifted? If so, what new info do you need to make a thoughtful accurate suggestion?

4. Watch their motivation.

One of my favorite questions is, "Why do you want another suggestion right now?" Are they excited to meet someone new? Do they feel emotionally available? Or are they simply trying to fill the silence that the breakup left behind? There's a big difference between running toward a future and running away from loneliness.

5. Pay attention to how they speak.

Listen for emotional regulation more

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than emotional perfection. They don't have to be completely over the relationship. Most people aren't. But can they speak respectfully about what happened? Can they own their part? Can they imagine a new relationship without constantly comparing it to the last one? Those are encouraging signs.

As an ambassador, remember that your role isn't to decide whether someone is "allowed" to date again. Your role is to help them succeed. Sometimes that means making the introduction. Sometimes it means gently encouraging them to give themselves another week, another conversation with a trusted friend, or simply a little more space to heal.

And just because they are ready doesn't mean you are ready to make another suggestion. Thoughtful matches take time to find and vet.

May Hashem grant every person the wisdom to heal with honesty, the courage to begin again when the time is right.

Blessings,
Aleeza ■

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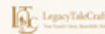


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FOR WHO COULD EVER LOVE
A BEAST?



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FROM SKINIES ABOVE?

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...BUT HEARING IT FROM A CLOCK LIKE ME
RATHER... YOU KNOW... WOUND HIM UP.

ONE DAY, A GIRL APPEARED IN
THE CASTLE, AND WAS
ASTOUNDED TO DISCOVER
THE TALKING SILVERWARE...

MY CHER
MADMOISELLE!
ALLOW US TO
ASSIST YOU!



BUT "BDIKAT CHAMETZ"
ISN'T FOR ANOTHER
SIX MONTHS OR SO!

THE GIRL BECAME THE BEAST'S
PRISONER, SHE WAS GIVEN A
ROOM IN THE TOWER, WHERE
SHE CRIED FOR HER PARENTS
FOR THIRTY DAYS...



THE SERVANTS SPOTTED AN
OPPORTUNITY AND TRIED
TALKING SENSE TO THE BEAST...

MASTER, HAVE
YOU NOTICED HOW
WHAT A BEAUTY
OUR PRISONER IS?



DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.
NEVER HEARD OF
"SHMIRAT HA-EINAYIM"?

BUT DON'T YOU SEE?
SHE MAY BE ZE ONE
TO BREAK ZE CURSE!

IF YOU WERE TO LEARN
TO LOVE HER, AND SHE
WERE TO LOVE YOU...



A BEAUTIFUL FEMALE PRISONER?!
SHE'S AN "ESHET YEFAT TO'AR!"
THOSE THINGS ARE NOTHING BUT
TROUBLE!

MASTER, YOU ARE READING ZE SUGYA ON FAR TOO
SHALLOW A LEVEL...
LIKE EVERYTHING IN ZE TORAH, IT IS OF UTMOST
MOARILTY, INTEGRITY AND OPENS ZE DEEPEST
GATES OF UNDERSTANDING...



YEAH?
TELL THAT
TO BAGATZ...

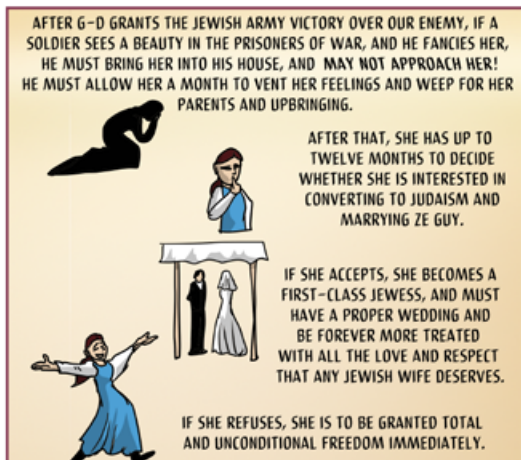
SIGH...
I ADMIT ZAT ON ZE FACE OF IT, ZIS MITZVAH
LOOKS UNCOMFORTABLY AS THOUGH ZERE IS AN
INSTRUCTION TO HUMILIATE A CAPTIVE WOMAN
AND DO WHAT YOU LIKE WITH HER.

NOTHING COULD BE
FURTHER THAN ZE
TRUTH!



EXCEPT PERHAPS
OUR SHAMELESS
FLATTERY OF
YOUR SINGING...

GO ON...



(*AND NOW THAT THERE ARE, SUPPOSEDLY, INTERNATIONAL MORAL STANDARDS FOR WARFARE, AND THE IDEA OF POTENTIALLY MARRYING A CAPTIVE IS NOT CONSIDERED MORALLY ACCEPTABLE - PRACTICAL HALACHA NO LONGER PERMITS IT EITHER...)





TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



TIFERET FINKEL
GUSH ETZION GIRLS DIRECTOR

MAKING THE MOST OF OUR HIGH MOMENTS

In this week's parsha, we learn about the mitzvah of ma'akeh:

"When you build a new house, you shall make a guardrail for your roof, so that you shall not cause blood [to be spilled] in your house, that the one who falls should fall from it [the roof]." (Devarim 22:8)

On a simple level, this mitzvah teaches us to put a protective fence around the roof of our homes so that no one will fall and get hurt.

The Chassidic masters offer a beautiful insight. They explain that the word "gagcha" ("your roof") can also symbolize a person reaching a high spiritual place and a moment of inspiration, clarity, and closeness to Hashem.

The Torah is teaching us that when we reach those spiritual highs, we shouldn't let them slip away. We need to "build a fence" around them to protect them and help them continue influencing our lives.

But how do we hold on to those moments of inspiration?

Rashi explains that the juxtaposition of

the mitzvot of Shiluach HaKen, Ma'akeh, and Tzitzit illustrates the principle of "mitzvah goreret mitzvah" – one mitzvah leads to another. If a person fulfills the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKen, they will merit building a new home, where they will perform the mitzvah of Ma'akeh. That, in turn, leads to owning a beautiful garment that requires Tzitzit.

Perhaps this is one of the greatest ways to preserve our spiritual highs. When we do one mitzvah, instead of letting the inspiration fade, we can use that momentum to do another. Every act of kindness, every mitzvah, every positive choice can become the stepping stone to the next one. Rather than waiting for inspiration to return, we create it by continuing to move forward.

May we be zocheh to recognize every opportunity Hashem gives us, to build on each mitzvah we do, and to keep growing and bringing more light to ourselves, our families, and all of Am Yisrael.



MAYA WEISMAN
10TH GRADE, EFRAT

BUILDING THROUGH RESPONSIBILITY

Parshat Ki Tetze contains more mitzvot than any other parsha in the Torah. One of the most well-known is the mitzvah of ma'akeh: "Ki tivneh bayit chadash, v'asita ma'akeh l'gagecha" – "When you build a new house, you shall make a guardrail for your roof" (Devarim כב:ח). At first glance, this

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Shmuel Rosenzweig
Aluf in home
repairs

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mitzvah is about safety. But on a deeper level, it teaches that building a Jewish society means taking responsibility before something goes wrong. The Torah teaches us to be proactive.

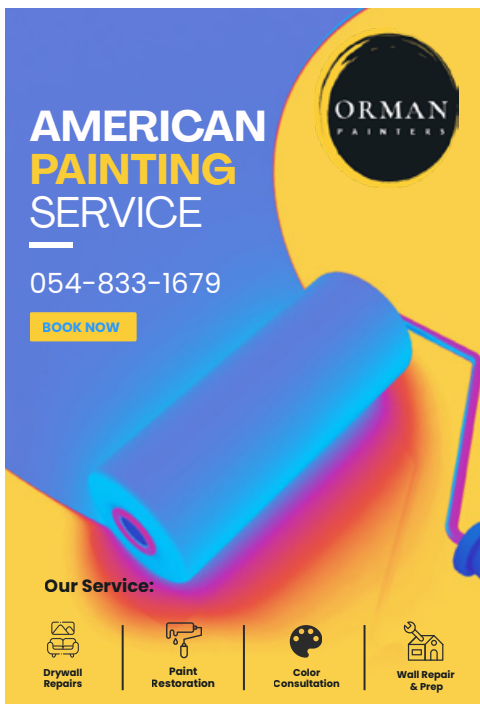
One message emerging from Ki Tetze is that a strong nation is not built only through extraordinary moments, but through the many everyday choices that reflect responsibility. Responsibility for other people, for our communities, and for the Land Hashem has entrusted to us.

This idea feels especially meaningful to me, as I hope to be able to volunteer next year with Hashomer HaChadash, strengthening Israel through agriculture and supporting my local community. Preparing for this opportunity has made me think about the many different ways people take responsibility for Eretz Yisrael. Some protect our

country by serving in the army, while others strengthen it by caring for the land, helping a neighbor, or being part of a chesed organization and take responsibility for the place they call home. Every role is different, but every role matters.

In discussing how we build a healthy society, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks beautifully noted that “we are individually and collectively responsible for our future. We each have a part to play.” The mitzvah of ma’akeh reminds us that protecting something important begins with caring enough to act. We cannot simply close our doors and ignore the vulnerabilities of others.

I know each of us can find our own way to strengthen Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael, both in moments of crisis and through the quiet acts of responsibility that shape our future together. ■



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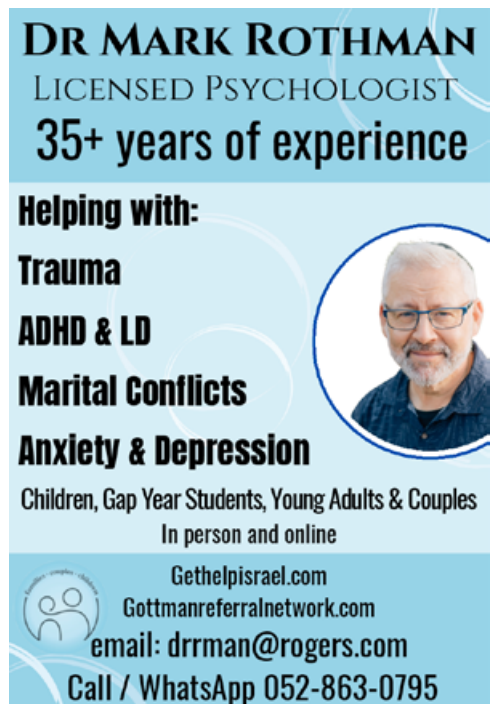
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This Rosh Hashanah **Help 400 Families in Need**

Rosh Hashanah is approaching, and during these difficult times of war, uncertainty, and rising food prices, we continue to stand alongside 400 families in need.

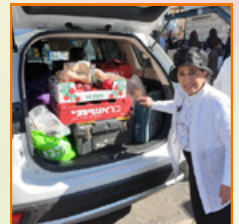
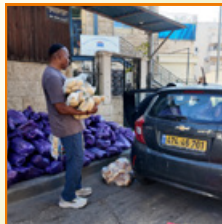
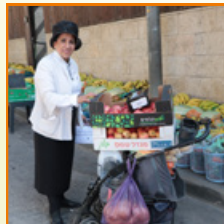
As the holiday approaches, **Ohr Meir U'Bracha** urgently needs to raise **\$100,000** to prepare festive food packages for these families, including chicken, grape juice, honey, fruits, vegetables, and essential food items, so that every family can celebrate Rosh Hashanah with dignity, joy, and a sense of warmth and home.

This year, due to the difficult circumstances, our suppliers require payment in advance. That is why we are reaching out earlier than usual, so we can prepare in time and make sure no family is left behind.

Help us bring light to the holiday tables of 400 families.
Every donation, large or small, makes a meaningful difference.

With your support, we can bring light, dignity, and holiday joy to homes that need it so deeply.

Wishing you a Shana Tova U'Metukah,
Liora Tedgi – Ohr Meir U'Bracha



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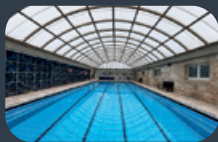
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Garage Space



1

Swimming Pool



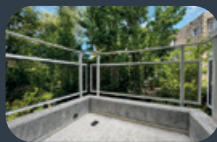
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