

ב"ה *Torah* **Tidbits**

ISSUE 1675

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ישראל

AUGUST 29TH 2026

ט"ז אלול תשפ"ו

KI TAVO - כי תבוא

AVOT 3-4

From the Tochacha
Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Page 36



Yehuda Katz, of Blessed
Memory, and Us
Sivan Rahav-Meir Page 86



ברוך פרי-בטנך ופרי אדמתך דברים כ"ח:ד'

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT KI TAVO ZMANIM

CANDLES 6:32 PM • EARLY 5:47 PM • HAVDALA 7:45 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:24 PM



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IMPORTANT REMINDERS

📅 Next Motzei Shabbat the Ashkenaz community begins to recite Selichot (Sept. 5th)

COVER PHOTO Photographed by Ilene Cahan



This photo was taken at a vineyard in Mevo Horon a couple of months ago in 2026. I'm always drawn to the life cycle of certain plants. Grapes are so integral to our wonderful land that by the grace of HaShem He has allowed us to return to our ancestral land. He provides us the ability to help Eretz Yisrael flourish with the seven species and all of the other wonderful things.

I made aliyah with my family in 2004 from Baltimore, Maryland. We moved to Modi'in-Maccabim-Re'ut (Modi'in) and have been here ever since. One of my sons' Rabbeim told us that we are doing a mitzvah every four steps we take in Eretz Yisrael. What a pleasure to be able to fulfill such an easy and enjoyable mitzvah. I love living here where history comes alive!

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



	KI TAVO			NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH		
	Candles	Early	Havdala	Candles	Early	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	6:32	5:47	7:45	6:23	5:40	7:35
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	6:50	5:50	7:47	6:41	5:42	7:38
Beit Shemesh/RBS	6:51	5:48	7:46	6:42	5:41	7:36
Gush Etzion	6:48	5:48	7:45	6:39	5:40	7:36
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	6:49	5:49	7:47	6:41	5:42	7:37
Modiin/Chashmonaim	6:49	5:48	7:46	6:40	5:41	7:36
Netanya	6:50	5:49	7:47	6:41	5:42	7:38
Be'er Sheva	6:49	5:49	7:46	6:40	5:41	7:37
Rehovot	6:49	5:49	7:46	6:41	5:42	7:34
Petach Tikva	6:32	5:49	7:46	6:23	5:41	7:37
Ginot Shomron	6:49	5:48	7:46	6:40	5:41	7:36
Haifa / Zichron	6:40	5:49	7:47	6:31	5:42	7:38
Gush Shiloh	6:48	5:47	7:45	6:39	5:40	7:35
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	6:50	5:49	7:47	6:41	5:42	7:38
Givat Ze'ev	6:52	5:47	7:45	6:43	5:40	7:36
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	6:48	5:48	7:45	6:39	5:40	7:36
Ashkelon	6:50	5:50	7:47	6:42	5:43	7:38
Yad Binyamin	6:49	5:49	7:46	6:41	5:42	7:37
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	6:42	5:47	7:45	6:33	5:39	7:36
Golan	6:47	5:46	7:44	6:38	5:39	7:35
Nahariya/Maalot	6:39	5:49	7:47	6:30	5:41	7:37
Afula	6:48	5:48	7:46	6:39	5:40	7:36
Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Ki Tavo - 8:24 PM • Nitzavim-Vayeilech - 8:15 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 121

JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Aug. 26 - Sept. 5 | 13 - 23 Elul**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:18-5:25
Sunrise	6:11-6:17
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:25-9:27
Magen Avraham	8:47-8:50
Sof Zman Tefila	10:30
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:40-12:37
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:13-1:09
Plag Mincha	5:49-5:38
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:14-7:02



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
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A number of different threads in my life added up in order to create the experience that I had this past week. The first thread is my mother. She has always been extraordinarily passionate about thanking *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for everything we have in this world. Her *davening* was and is always deeply meaningful. I know where this passion comes from. I am writing this column on the week of my grandfather's twenty-first *yahrzeit*, Yechezkel ben Avraham Yitzchak z"l, who was extremely careful about his *tefillah*. He arrived on time. He was often the first one to open the *shul*. He took care never to talk during *davening*. It is no surprise to me at all that my mother took *tefillah* upon herself in such a beautiful way.

For many years now, one of the things my mother says every single day is *Perek Shirah*, published by ArtScroll in English as *The Song of the Universe*. *Perek Shirah* is traditionally attributed to King David, and it moves through creation after creation, giving each one its own song of praise to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. The heavenly bodies, the wind and rain, the fruits and grains, the animals and even the most tiny insects, are all represented and have their own praise to Hashem, with verses from Psalms and elsewhere in Tanach as their words of praise. Then, the last passages speak of the great *segulot* that come to a person who says it every day, including a portion in the World to Come.

What ArtScroll did so beautifully was to place a photograph of each creation alongside its song. The picture truly makes it come alive

for the reader, and it's really lovely to look at.

There are different opinions among the commentaries as to what *Perek Shirah* actually means. Does it mean that this is what the animals would say if they had a mouth to say it? Perhaps it's related to the idea that every species has its angel appointed for it, and this is what the angel would say? Whatever the idea, it is a beautiful *tefillah*, and I *daven* that all of *Klal Yisrael* should merit everything it promises.

And that is the point that has stayed with me. When we pray, we think of our own needs and personal perspectives. But when we say *Perek Shirah*, we are suddenly asked to think universally. What would the wind say? What would the stars say? What would the elephant say? Through *Perek Shirah*, we come away with a greater sense of the greatness of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and of how every single element of creation sees Him from a different angle.

The second thread goes back to Shilo. I learned in the Hesder yeshiva there and stayed on in Kollel afterward, and one of the greatest things about those years was the incredible group of guys. There were Israelis, and there was also a group of Canadians, mostly from Toronto and mostly from Yeshivat Or Chaim. The overseas program brought guys from Australia, both Melbourne and Sydney, and from South Africa, mainly Johannesburg and Cape Town with some from Durban. Many of them are still close friends of mine today. I get to see them when they come to visit, and quite a few have *Baruch Hashem made aliyah* and are living here.

Part of my job in those years was recruiting students for that program, flying to Australia and South Africa every year. Seeing the communities these boys came from changed how I understood them. Meeting their teachers, walking into their homes and their *shuls*, visiting their high schools, all of it gave me a much greater appreciation of how incredible those communities are, and of what it means for a boy from there to come to Israel for a year to learn and to grow, whether he ultimately stays here or returns to become a pillar of the community he came from.

I went to South Africa quite a few times. In Johannesburg I used to stay in the home of one of our students, Shaun Sacks, with his parents Ivor and Leslie, who welcomed me in the warmest and most incredible way. Other times I stayed in Glenhazel with Gideon Erster and his wonderful parents. And whenever I was there, I was asked the same question: are you making time to go on safari?

Honestly, I never really felt the need. Growing up in New York, I went to the Bronx Zoo, and after we made *aliyah* we went to the Biblical Zoo in Yerushalayim or to the safari in Ramat Gan. We saw the animals, what *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* created, and that felt like enough. But when people speak about something with that much excitement, you file it away and think, maybe one day.

Twenty-five years passed. I had not been in South Africa since 2001, and since nearly all of my overseas travel is for the OU and takes me to the United States and Canada, I never expected to go back.

Then, a few years ago, I was approached by someone connected to a foundation that supports youth here in Israel, an area we are working in very closely and very intensively at OU Israel. The man who runs the



foundation is not Jewish. He is a wonderful, deeply Zionist and passionate person, and he lives in South Africa just outside Durban. We have been speaking for two years, and over that period of time I have learned a lot more from him about what the foundation is doing. Eventually, he invited me to come out and meet him. He runs a private game

reserve, and we raised the possibility of bringing the reserve under OU kosher certification.

So this past week I traveled there together with Rabbi Yissachar Dov Krakowski, Rabbinic Administrator, OU Israel Kashrut. (Let me take the opportunity to wish Rabbi Krakowski a tremendous *Mazel Tov* -while he was with me in South Africa, he was planning his daughter's engagement party, and she became engaged literally hours after he landed back in Israel. May he and his wife see endless *Yiddishe nachas* from all of their children!) Rabbi Krakowski is always traveling, whether to South America for *shechita* or overseeing the various OU kosher plants here in Israel, and much more, and he does a remarkable job. I went in order to keep developing the relationship with the remarkable people running this foundation, and he went to look at whether a set of permanently kosher kitchens could provide for everyone who comes. Nothing is finalized yet, but it is looking very good and I am extremely hopeful that it will work out so that Orthodox Jews from around the world can enjoy a spectacular safari experience with delicious OU Kosher gourmet cuisine.

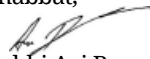
While we were there, they took us on a number of safari rides. And suddenly, with every one of our senses, so many verses of Tanach and so many lines of *Perek Shirah* came to life. Amos declared, "*Aryeh sha'ag mi lo yira* - a lion has roared, who will not be afraid?" Having a lion walk right next to you, hearing it roar from mere meters away, feeling the entire earth shake as it roars, you understand that verse with your whole body. We saw the rhinoceros right in front of us, the cheetah, the elephants, the buffalo, the zebras, the giraffes, the impala and the kudu.

I never imagined there could be such a difference between seeing a lion in the Biblical

Zoo in Yerushalayim and seeing a lion in nature. When there is glass or a fence between you and the animal, there's a clear divide. When David HaMelech saw a lion, writing his books with great inspiration, he was not looking at a lion in a zoo in Yerushalayim. He was hearing lions roaming, seeing them in front of him. Ever since that personal experience at the safari, every single time I recite *Perek Shirah* or mention an animal in learning or *davening*, it means something different to me now. And when I say the words "*Melech HaOlam*" - that Hashem is "King of the World," in all my *berachot*, I think of it in a whole new light. The lion may be called the king of the jungle, and every country has its king or its leader, but when you see it all with your own eyes, you understand in a completely different way that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is the King of all of it.

I also have found myself wondering whether the genuine warmth that South Africans so often exude has something to do with living Torah lives so close to Hashem's creation, with those African sunsets and those animals so near. I know many South Africans who have made *aliyah* and who are tremendous contributors to their communities and the State of Israel: passionate, warm, deeply connected to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and deeply Zionist. That closeness to nature they grew up seeing clearly left its mark on them. May the State of Israel continue to benefit from South African *olim*, may many more come and join the beautiful South African community here, and may all of us feel connected to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* in the most intense way possible.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel

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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT KI TAVO

Parshat Ki Tavo begins the conclusion of our Torah.

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

Ki Tavo is followed by 4 very short parshiot, which combined would be a long parsha. Meaning, we are barely a parsha length from the end of the Torah following Ki Tavo. This

is the end of our Torah.

These last 5 parshiot focus on history. Not the history of the past, but the history we create. Or more specifically, the final push from Moshe that our history is unique.

History is the recounting of events and how they unfold. What caused what or what led to what. History can only deal with people's actions. Economic collapse led to discontent. Discontent led to revolt against the government and the rise of a new government.

Jewish history follows a completely different path. It is not the story of events unfolding, of this action leading to that response.

It is the story of a covenant. Of the intertwining of this physical world of ours, where we humans act. And of the spiritual world, the covenantal world, where we walk with our G-d, do what He commands. In this covenantal world our actions contribute to our history, but not just our overt actions but our private life of mitzvot. Who sees that? Who knows whether my private life is noble or corrupt?

Moshe needs to tutor our people in this unique history of ours, the history not only of the past but the history of the future. It is this tutorial of history that is the theme of Ki Tavo and the final 4 parshiot that follow.



1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 26:1-11)

When settled in the Land, bring your first fruits as an offering.

When offered, declare the following: My forefathers descended to Egypt, were enslaved, called out and You redeemed them with a strong arm, bringing them to this Land of milk

**This weeks Torah learning
is dedicated לעילוי נשמת**

ישראל בן רפאל זאב ז"ל

Rabbi Dr. Israel Rivkin ז"ל
on his 2nd Yartzheit - כ' אלול תשפ"ו

**Sorely missed
and fondly remembered
by family and friends**

*His dear wife Rebecca,
children, grandchildren
and great grandchildren*

*The Rivkin, Kestenbaum, Kwestel
and Markowitz families*

and honey. And I am acknowledging that I have benefitted from all that, rejoicing in all the good I have been given.

Last week's parsha, Ki Teitzei, was full of mitzvot. This mitzvah of bikkurim, of first fruits, could have been included last week.

It is deliberately placed in our parsha, the parsha of our covenantal history. Because Bikkurim and the mitzvah following are unusual; they are mitzvot with speeches.

In Bikkurim, the successful farmer brings his first fruits to the Mikdash and then gives a speech; a full-throated expression of how fortunate he is to be where he is. He stands on the shoulders of our history. Egypt, redemption, the land and now little me, enjoying a bounty in the land. That is a beautiful mitzvah of gratitude and appreciation.

And it is a perfect introduction to the theme of history. Later Moshe will focus prophetically on the future. But he begins with a mitzvah of history of the past, a paradigm for how we view our history. And in particular, that the Jew lives in two lives. He lives in his private life enjoying the fruits of his labor. And in the broad sweep of Jewish history.



2ND ALIYA (26:12-15)

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

This too is a mitzvah with a speech. I have given all the gifts I am required to give.

Bikkurim was a speech of history. This, called Vidui Maaser, is a speech of kindness. I gave all the gifts I ought to give.

The first aliya was the way to live in relationship to G-d, recognizing His role in

bringing me to where I am. This mitzvah is the way to live in relationship to man. In my success, my bounty in the Land, I ascribe my success to my Creator. And in my success, I share with others, give the proper tithes. These are the two pillars of Jewish society: monotheism and ethics.



3RD ALIYA (26:16-19)

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

This very brief aliya is the statement of the uniqueness of Judaism, that we are a people walking with our G-d. Not just individuals reaching for our G-d. But a collective, a nation with a covenant with our G-d.

There is tension in the modern Jewish world of those wanting to define Judaism as just a religion, with no national element and hence no connection to our people in our Land. It is incomprehensible to read our Torah and to hold such a view. The entire Torah is the story of our people. And the end of the Torah presses this point. We are individuals and part of a people. The covenant is between our people and our G-d.

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4TH ALIYA (27:1-10)

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

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

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

And the word Hayom, today, occurs 3 times in just 4 verses in the previous aliya and 3 times in just 10 verses in this aliya. Rashi comments that the mitzvot should feel to us as if they were given to us today; fresh, exciting, relevant.

But the other side of this reciprocal relationship should also be fresh daily; that we should feel daily, all the time, that G-d views us as a treasured nation. The mitzvot should be fresh; but so too, the majesty of our station should be fresh daily as well.



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

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

be blessed with children, with produce, and flocks.

There is a similarity in the list of those who are cursed; they are all cursed for things done in private. The core of our religious life is our personal, private relationship with G-d. It is the things done in private that truly convey our allegiance. When no one is looking.

And this is a necessary preamble for the upcoming blessings and curses. For we will never truly be in a position to assess the fullness of the righteousness or failing of our people, for who can see into the hearts of human beings.



6TH ALIYA (28:7-69)

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

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

This aliya is the aliya of the curses; what will occur due to our abandonment of G-d and of

mitzvot. And it is long; at 63 verses, one of the longest in the entire Torah. There are a lot of curses.

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

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

In this Moshe presents the uniqueness of Jewish history. The covenant between the Jewish people and G-d is complex. It covers private life. And communal life of Kings and courts. Our success in the Land is a function of how well we do in living holy lives and in building a holy society in the Land.

And the stakes are high. The Land. Or exile.

Sobering thoughts in election season.



7TH ALIYA (29:1-8)

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

This deceptively short aliya has a surprising and profound brief statement. "It has taken until today to understand our history".

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לליעם יעקב ניסן בן אורה

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

HAFTORAH: YESHAYAHU 60:1-22

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

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



STATS

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



MITZVOT

6 of the 613; 3 positive and 3 prohibitions.

A SHORT VORT

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

In Memory of my mother-in law, Rabbanit Shlomit Fass zt"l whose Yartzheit is this Shabbat

לא עברתי ממצותיך ולא שכחתי (כו:יג)

"I have not transgressed any of Your commandments, neither have I forgotten them" (26:13)

Once the Pasuk states that I have not transgressed any of the commandments, is it not clear that I have not forgotten to comply with them? Why the need to underscore not forgetting them?

The Sefat Emet (Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter Admor M'Gur 1847-1905, Poland) answers with an idea connected to our human psyche. It is extremely easy to seem to fulfill a Mitzvah functionally, yet do it lack any attention or awareness. Our reflections are focused on something else and not on serving the Almighty. Therefore, the Pasuk is instructing us to declare "Lo Avarti MiMitzvotecha"- I have completed all the Mitzvot and moreover, "V'Lo Shochachti"- I have fulfilled the Mitzvot with true intentions and with correct mind and purpose to serve G-d with my fullest.

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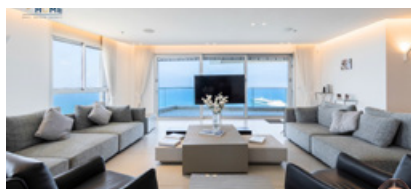
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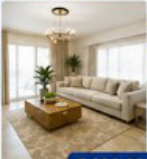


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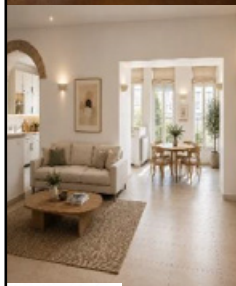




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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
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“Translating ‘Ki Tavo’”

How would you translate the opening verse in this week’s Torah portion, *Ki Tavo* (Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8)?

Here are two Jewish translations:

“When you enter the land that the Lord your God has given you...” (*JPS Holy Scripture*).

“When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you...” (*The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel*).

Neither of the above does justice to words with the root *ba*, especially as they appear in the title of this week’s *parsha*, *Ki Tavo*. I do find some satisfaction in the authoritative multi-volume Hebrew-Hebrew dictionary compiled by Evan Shushan. He prefers to

render *ba*, or *tavo*, as “to reach or achieve something of *mamashut*,” i.e., “attaining something of substance and significance.”

From Evan Shushan’s perspective, the opening verse in our *parsha* would read, in English, “When you have finally achieved the land you have longed for,” or words to that effect.

My preference for a stronger translation of *ba* originated in a lesson learned in my distant past. Permit me to tell you about it.

I received my *semicha*, my rabbinic ordination, in my early twenties. I continued to spend my days studying Talmud in the yeshiva I had attended since high school, Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva in Manhattan’s Lower East Side.

I was totally immersed in my studies and engaged in a complex discussion with my study partner when I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was the principal of the entire school, Rabbi Ginsberg, who had succeeded his predecessor, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Kagan, with whom I had a close relationship since my high school years but who was, at that time, retired.

After I responded to Rabbi Ginsberg’s gentle tap on my shoulder, I turned to him, stood up, and before I could say a word, he told me that he had an important proposal to discuss with me. It seemed that the teacher of one of the high school classes, a Rabbi Pantel, was ill and a substitute was required. He wanted me to be that substitute. I told him that I had zero experience teaching a class full of teenage boys, to which he responded, “You will learn the trade

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on the job.” He then shared with me that Rabbi Pantel’s illness was dire and that I would have to discontinue my personal Torah study and commit to several months of teaching. Somehow, I found his invitation attractive. I accepted it on the spot.

Although Rabbi Kagan, the former principal, had retired, he remained active in various capacities in the yeshiva. It occurred to me that I could invite him to come to my new classroom and give me some advice on handling twenty-five adolescents and inspiring them to actively participate in the advanced curriculum. I asked him in Yiddish, “*Kenn der Rav koomen tzu mein cheder*, Can the Rabbi come to my room?”

He bristled at the word *koomen*, come. He insisted that I should have added a prefix to *koomen*, either *ankoomen* or *tzukoomen* or *dernenteren*—not “come” or even “visit,” but rather “join” or “connect” or “draw close” to me and my class.

His lesson concerned not only word choice, but the relationship between a teacher and his pupils. The semester-long dialogue that followed centered on the essentials of pedagogy. Rabbi Kagan visited my classroom several times a week throughout that semester and often summarized his message in Yiddish: “Do not relate to your students merely by ‘coming’ to class. You must approach them, draw close to them, and treat them as grown-ups—not as *kinderlach*. You must

convey excitement, joy in learning, and an appreciation of their potential and individual differences. Be a human being, not a fussy, boring old has-been.”

Near the end of our semester in each other’s presence, Rabbi Kagan referred to the first verse in our *parsha*. “The Israelites did not just ‘come’ to the Holy Land. They approached the Land. They anticipated it eagerly, they looked forward to it, they became one with the land, they experienced it as their home.”

I remember supplementing his lesson by the power of the punctuation mark. One can say, “We arrived.” Or one can say, “We arrived!” That exclamation mark reframes the statement from an ordinary comment on the end of a journey to an expression of exhilaration and an achievement of *mamashut*. Rabbi Kagan, despite his background as a Lithuanian Torah scholar and Chief Rabbi of a major Jewish community in Belgium, was adept in the English language and responded gleefully to my use of a minor change in punctuation.

That experience left me with a lifelong appreciation for the true meaning of *ba* in all of its grammatical forms. One example is in *Megillat Esther*, which refers to Haman’s arrival at the king’s palace with the phrase “*Vayavo Haman*,” chanted by an experienced reader

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with great flourish. Haman didn't just "come" to the palace, nor did he simply "arrive" there. He came enthusiastically, expecting glory and success, royal rewards of *mamashut*, tangible and substantial material benefits.

So too, we look forward at this time of year to "*LeShana haba'a b'Yerushalayim*, Next year in Jerusalem" does not mean "next year we will visit Jerusalem, period." It means "next year, with overflowing enthusiasm and boundless joy, we will merge with all that is Jerusalem, exclamation mark!"

I've just tried my best, at some length, to make my point as to the full meaning of "coming to the Holy Land." Someone who lived in eighteenth-century Morocco, who emigrated to the Land of Israel and who is buried in the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem, made a similar point in his brief opening comment to this week's Torah portion. I refer to Rabbi Chaim ben Atar, the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*. I quote:

"*Vehaya ki tavo el ha'Aretz*. Note the word "*Vehaya*," a term used to connote joy, *simcha*. This underscores that there is no more lofty joy than dwelling in the Holy Land, as it is written in Psalm 126:

"When the Lord restores the fortunes of Zion, we will be like dreamers. Then our mouths will be filled with laughter, and our tongues with songs of joy." ■

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

A Sense of History

Ki Tavo begins with the ceremony of bringing first-fruits to the Temple. The Mishnah gives a detailed account of what happened:

Those that were near to Jerusalem brought fresh figs and grapes, and those that were far away brought dried figs and raisins. Before them went the ox, its horns overlaid with gold, and with a wreath of olive leaves on its head.

The flute was played before them until they approached Jerusalem. When they were near to Jerusalem, they sent messengers before them and bedecked their first-fruits. The rulers and the prefects and the treasurers of the Temple went forth to meet them. According to the honour due to those that came in, they used to go forth in that order. All the craftsmen in Jerusalem used to rise for them, and greet them, saying, "Brothers, men of such-and-such a place, you are welcome." (Bikkurim 3:3)

The flute was played before them until they reached the Temple Mount. When they reached the Temple Mount, even King Agrippa would take his basket on his shoulder and

enter in as far as the Temple Court. It was a magnificent ceremony. In historical context, however, its most significant aspect was the declaration that each individual had to make:

"My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous... Then the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders." (Deut. 26:5-10)

This passage is well-known. It became the text expounded as part of the Haggadah on Seder night at the beginning of Pesach. Its familiarity, though, should not blind us to its revolutionary character. Listening to these words, we are in the presence of one of the greatest revolutions in the history of thought.

The ancients saw the gods in nature, never more so than in thinking about the harvest and all that accompanied it. Nature does not change. Natural time is cyclical - the seasons of the year, the revolution of the planets, the cycle of birth, death, and new life. When the ancients thought about the past, it was not the historical but a mythical/metaphysical/cosmological past - the primeval time-before-time when the world was formed out of the struggle between the elements.

That is precisely what did not happen in Ancient Israel. It might have been otherwise. Had Judaism been a different kind of religion, the people bringing first-fruits might have recited a song of praise to God as the Author of creation and Sustainer of life. We find several such songs in the Book of Psalms:

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make music to our God on the harp. He covers the sky with clouds; He supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills and bread that sustains His heart. (*Ps. 147:7-8*)

The significance of the first-fruits declaration is that it is not about nature but about history: a thumbnail sketch of the sequence of events from the days of the patriarchs to the Exodus and then conquest of the Land. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi gave the best analysis of the intellectual transformation this involved:

It was Ancient Israel that first assigned a decisive significance to history and thus forged a new world-view ... Suddenly, as it were, the crucial encounter between man and the Divine shifted away from the realm of nature and the cosmos to the plane of history, conceived now in terms of Divine challenge and human response ... Rituals and festivals in Ancient Israel are themselves no longer primarily repetitions of mythic archetypes meant to annihilate historical time. Where they evoke the past, it is not the primeval but the historical past, in which the great and critical moments of Israel's history were fulfilled ... Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to *remember* felt as a religious imperative to an entire people. (*Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory, pp. 8-9*)

This history was not academic, the province of scholars or a literary elite. It belonged to everyone. The declaration was recited by



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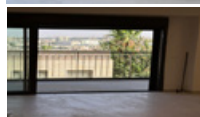
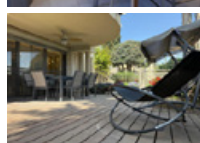
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everyone. Knowing the story of one's people was an essential part of citizenship in the community of faith. Not only that, but it was also said in the first person: "My father ... Then the Lord brought us out of Egypt... He brought us to this place". It is this internalisation of history that led the rabbis to say: "In each generation, every person should see himself as if he personally came out of Egypt" (Mishnah Pesachim 10:5). This is history transformed into memory.

To be a Jew is to be part of a story that extends across forty centuries and almost every land on the face of the earth. As Isaiah Berlin put it:

All Jews who are at all conscious of their identity as Jews are steeped in history. They have longer memories, they are aware of a longer continuity as a community than any other which has survived ... Whatever other factors may have entered into the unique amalgam which, if not always Jews themselves, at any rate the rest of the world instantly recognizes as the Jewish People, historical consciousness – sense of continuity with the past – is among the most powerful. (*Against the Current*, p. 252)

Despite Judaism's emphasis on the individual, it has a distinctive sense of what an individual is. We are not alone. There is no sense in Judaism of the atomic individual – the self in

and for itself – we encounter in Western philosophy from Hobbes onwards. Instead, our identity is bound up horizontally with other individuals: our parents, spouse, children, neighbours, members of the community, fellow citizens, fellow Jews. We are also joined vertically to those who came before us, whose story we make our own. To be a Jew is to be a link in the chain of the generations, a character in a drama that began long before we were born and will continue long after our death.

Memory is essential to identity – so Judaism insists. We did not come from nowhere; nor does our story end with us. We are leaves on an ancient tree, chapters in a long and still-being-written story, a letter in the scroll of the book of the people of the Book.

There is something momentous about this historical sense. It reflects the fact – itself one of the great themes of the Bible – that it takes time for human beings to learn, to grow, to rise beyond our often dysfunctional and destructive instincts, to reach moral and spiritual maturity and create a society of dignity and generosity. That is why the covenant is extended over time and why – according to the Sages – the only adequate guarantors of the covenant at Mount Sinai were the children yet to be born.

That is as near as we get to immortality on earth: to know that we are the guardians of

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the hopes of our ancestors, and the trustees of the covenant for the sake of the future. That is what happened in Temple times when people brought their first-fruits to Jerusalem and, instead of celebrating nature, celebrated the history of their people from the days when “My father was a wandering Aramean” to the present. As Moses said in some of his last words to posterity:

Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you. (*Deut. 32:7*)

To be a Jew is to know that the history of our people lives on in us. ■

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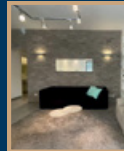


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Arise and Shine!

Throughout these post-Tish'a B'Av weeks, we find the prophetic words of consolation and their visions of redemption being increasingly powerful and optimistic in each subsequent haftarah - a point made by the Tosafot (Megilla 31b). Today's reading, the sixth of the seven haftarot, does not disappoint us, for it opens with the prophet's joyful call to Israel: "Kumi Ori!", "Arise! Shine!", a promise that Hashem's glory will shine upon them.

Indeed, so much of Chazal's view of the geula is based upon the descriptions found in this sixtieth perek. The navi's message includes the depiction of "shivat tziyon", the massive return of the Jews to their land, it includes the promise of eliminating "sh'ibud malchuyot" - the enemies' oppression of Israel - as well as the prophetic vision of the

world's acceptance of Tziyon as Hashem's Holy City. Additionally, Yish'ayahu assures the nation that, together with the spiritual awakening, there will also be an economic recovery, a promise expressed in the words: "Tachat han'choshet avi zahav..." "In place of the copper I shall bring gold and in place of iron I will bring silver..."

However, the most moving part of the haftarah might well be the final words where G-d proclaims: "Ani Hashem," "I am G-d," "b'itah achishena," "in its (proper) time, I will hasten it". These last two words are understood by Chazal (in Sanhedrin 98a) as describing two possibilities regarding the arrival of the Mashiach: either "In its time" or "I will hasten it." The Rabbis explain that, if we fail to do t'shuva, and thereby not deserve redemption, then "b'itah"-we will have to wait until its "proper time." But if we do respond to G-d's demands, if we heed the prophets' warnings and improve our ways, then "achishena," Hashem will hasten his arrival, even before its "proper time."

The Talmudic interpretation is fully understandable, in light of the place and time where and when they were written. Jews were living in the exile of Bavel, often under the oppressive rule of the Persians and, later, the Romans. The Rabbinic interpretation became a hopeful message to the Diaspora that **they** could hasten the arrival of the Mashiach and it also served as a call to return to G-d - certainly an especially fitting message for this time of year.

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But it is the simple translation of this phrase that speaks to our generation quite powerfully. “In its time,” - when G-d decides that it is the time for **Mashiach**, - “I will hasten it,” He will not delay or postpone redemption, but rather, will usher in the era quickly.

We stand as witnesses to the dizzying speed of impactful, even world-changing events that have redefined our history over these past 100 years. We have marched from defenseless victims, dependent upon an often-heartless world who watched as one third of our people were slaughtered, to a strong, independent existence, as a State whose medical, technological, military and economic success is the envy of the world.

Hashem may have decided that His nation’s repentance has merited the arrival of the **Mashiach** or, perhaps the centuries of unending suffering has G-d decided that “b’itah achishena!” Ge’ulah is coming because HKB”H is hastening His Redeemer.

Yes! “Kumi, Ori!”. It is truly a time for us to Arise and Shine! For it is a time that we can rightfully believe that Hashem is hastening our redemption! ■

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From the Tochacha

One of the striking features of *parashat Ki Tavo* is the imbalance between the blessings and the curses. Why does the Torah devote relatively few *pesukim* to the *berachot* and many more to the *kelalot*.

Many commentators suggest that every blessing contains within it an abundance that cannot be fully captured in words. A single blessing overflows with goodness, while curses require lengthy description. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz¹, however, offers a different and deeply insightful perspective. Rather than focusing on the blessings, he asks us to reflect on the nature of the curses themselves. He explains that the process that creates a reality of curse is far simpler than the creation of blessing. The moment something departs from its proper order, it already becomes a curse. This is not because negativity is stronger than goodness. Rather, blessing represents an optimal state, when there is harmony and everything is balanced. Human beings experience blessing when life is *just right*. Ironically, although the word *beracha* implies abundance and overflowing goodness, the experience of blessing often depends on a precise equilibrium.

Consider something as simple as the weather. If it is too hot, we complain. If it is too cold, we complain. A few degrees in either

direction and our sense of comfort disappears. The same is true with health, wealth, relationships, and countless other aspects of life. We constantly seek the perfect balance. In the nature of reality there is more room for curses than for blessings, because blessing is the optimal state of a person.

This idea is reflected in the famous story of *Honi HaMe'agel*.² After his prayers brought desperately needed rain, the downpour became overwhelming. The people pleaded with him to pray again, asking that the rain be moderated. Too little rain is a curse; too much rain can also become a curse. Human beings struggle not only with suffering but even with excessive blessing when it is out of proportion.

EXPANDING OUR DEFINITION OF BLESSING

Perhaps this understanding carries an implicit challenge. The problem may not only be that blessing occupies a narrow space; it may also be that we define blessing too narrowly.

If our standards for happiness are excessively rigid, then almost everything will feel lacking. If, however, we broaden our vision and learn to recognize the many forms that Divine goodness takes, we will discover that our lives contain far more blessing than we imagined.

Instead of demanding perfection, we can learn to appreciate the good that already exists.

READING THE TOCHACHA

AFTER JEWISH HISTORY

Rabbi Steinsaltz adds a second, profoundly

¹. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, Hayei Olam,

². Ta'anit 23a

moving insight. The Klausenberger Rebbe, who lost his wife and eleven children during the Holocaust, was once listening to the public reading of the *Tochacha*. As is customary, the *ba'al korei* lowered his voice during the reading of the curses.

The Rebbe stopped him and said: "*Louder! Louder!*" When those around him looked on in astonishment, he explained: "We have nothing to fear, these curses have already happened." After all that the Jewish people have endured, there is no need to whisper these verses. We have lived through them

This should remind us of the closing passage of Masekhet Makot.³ When the Rabbis saw a fox emerging from the ruins of the Beit HaMikdash, they wept, but Rabbi Akiva laughed. He explained that once the prophecy of destruction had been fulfilled, he was certain that the prophecy of redemption would also come to pass. If we have witnessed the fulfillment of the verses of destruction, then we can be equally certain that the promises of consolation and redemption will also be fulfilled.

THE TOCHACHA TEACHES TWO COMPLEMENTARY LESSONS.

First, blessing often exists within a delicate balance. If we insist on perfection, life will seem filled with curses. However, if we expand our capacity to recognize goodness, we will uncover blessings that were always present.

Second, Jewish history itself strengthens our faith. We have seen prophecies of suffering fulfilled with heartbreaking clarity. That very fact should deepen our confidence that the prophecies of redemption are equally certain.

As we read the *Tochacha* each year, we pray that we have already experienced the darkest

³. Makot 24b

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chapters of our national story, and that we stand at the threshold of the brighter half of the prophecy. May we merit to witness the fulfillment of the words:

עוד יֵשְׁבוּ זָקֵנִים וְזָקֵנוֹת בְּרִחוֹבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם... וְרִחוֹבוֹת
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*Old men and old women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem... and the streets of the city shall be filled with boys and girls playing there.*⁴

May we soon see the day when every curse is transformed into blessing. ■

⁴. Zehariah 8:4-5

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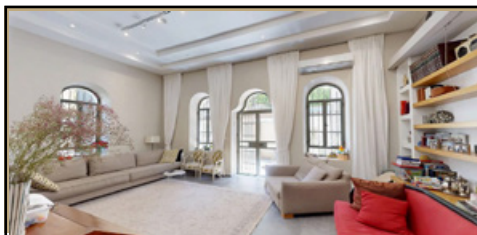
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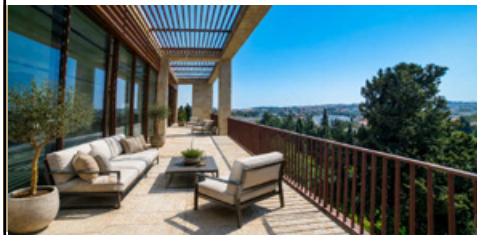
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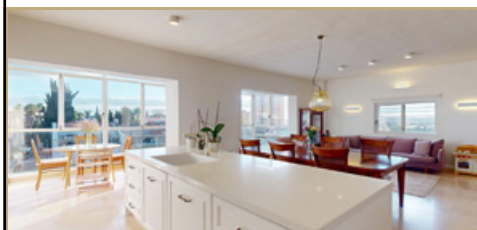
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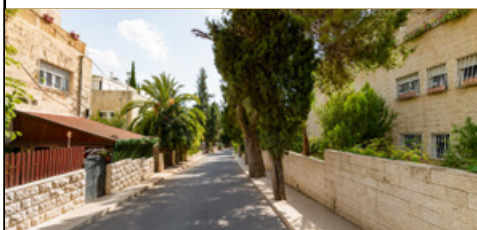
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Blessings

Rebbi Yaaqov Mutzafi, zy'a, was one of the last spiritual leaders of the ancient Jewish community of Iraq. Upon arrival in Eretz Yisrael, Rebbi Yaaqov became the leader of the Sefardic Edah Chareidit. He would often sit, adorned in his traditional *jalabiya*, in the "Shemesh Sedaqah" Beit Knesset on Rechov Haggai in Yerushalayim, teaching Torah, giving guidance and distributing blessings to petitioners of all stripes. He was known for his fiery *drashot* on the importance of *emunah*. In the course of one *drasha*, he shared the following story of a family from his hometown:

A baby born to a sweet and righteous couple was suffering from an extreme case of colic, and cried day and night. None of the doctors or specialists could figure out the cause of the incessant crying and screaming. After exhausting all medical options, the parents consulted with Chachamim and holy people and tried various *segulot* and

mystically potent remedies, but to no avail. The child continued to scream, and his worn down parents felt helpless.

One day, while walking in the market, the mother found a page of sacred writing laying in the dirt. Though illiterate and unable to identify what it was, she recognized it was a *davar sheb'kedusha*, and quickly picked it up, out of respect. When she got home, the righteous woman cleaned off the page and thought to herself that perhaps Hashem was sending her a healing message for her ailing son.

With simple faith, the mother put the crumpled page under her crying baby's pillow and spoke directly to Hashem: "*Ribbono Shel Olam..* You know very well that I can't read or write. But I do know that this page is holy. Master of the World! In the merit of this holy page, may my son be healed from his suffering!"

That night, for the very first time, the baby slept soundly. This miracle was a complete surprise to the child's father (and neighbors) who had become used to the non-stop screaming. After a few days of peace and

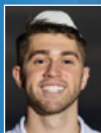
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quiet, the baby's father reflected on the amazing turn of events and wondered aloud as to what had changed. His wife heard him, went to the crib, pulled out the page from under the pillow and showed her husband, saying, "Is there any *segulah* in the world greater than words of Torah?" The husband grew pale as he scanned the page. Trembling he shouted, "Do you realize what you have done? This is a page of the *Tochacha*, the rebukes and fearful punishments... this is what you put under our child's head!"

Smiling, she responded, "My dear husband, you know I can't read... how could I possibly know what's written there? All I know is that it is from the Torah — the sweetest gift that our Father in Heaven has given us as an expression of His love. And look! In the merit of the Torah, Hashem has sent a complete healing to our son!"

When the great maggid of Brooklyn Heights, Reb Yitzhak Buxbaum, zy'a, shared this story of *temimus*, sincerity and simple faith, he added: "How great is the power of faith that turns Hashem's judgment to mercy and turns curses into blessings!"

Our *sedra* lays out the multitude of blessings inherent in living a life of following Hashem's will, including health, happiness and peace of mind:

וּבָאוּ עֲלֶיךָ כָּל־הַבְּרָכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהַשִּׁיגָךְ כִּי תִשְׁמַע
בְּקוֹל ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

"And all these blessings will come upon you and *hisigucha* ('cleave to you'), if you obey the Lord, your God...." (Devarim, 28:2)

It is interesting to note that parallel language frames the ramifications that will befall us in the *Tochacha* if we turn our backs on Hashem:

הָיָה אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁמֹר לַעֲשׂוֹת

אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵצִוְךָ הַיּוֹם וּבָאוּ
עֲלֶיךָ כָּל־הַקְּלָלוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהַשִּׁיגָךְ:

"And it will be, if you do not obey the Lord, your God, to observe to fulfill all His commandments and statutes which I am commanding you this day, that all these curses will **come upon you** and *hisigucha* ('over-take you')." (Devarim, 28:2, 15)

In both passages there are two steps: first the blessings or curses "come upon you", and then "*hisigucha*" (they 'cleave to you' or 'over-take you'). The word *hisigucha* is a construction of the verb להשיג, meaning 'to grasp' or 'understand', and also 'to reach' or 'acquire'. This alludes to our process of interpretation; first something comes upon us, and then we 'acquire' an experience of it according to our *hasagah*, our understanding. The way we 'reach' out to and interpret phenomena is the same way we 'acquire' and experience them. Whether something is a curse or a blessing depends on our *da'as*, our consciousness. This is illustrated in a story of the Alter Rebbe, Reb Shneur Zalman of Liadi:

The Alter Rebbe was the regular *baal korei* in his shul. It happened that one year that the Rebbe was away for Parshas Ki Savo, and someone else *leined* instead. That week after *kriyas haTorah*, Dov Ber, the Rebbe's twelve year old son, fell ill, and it became clear that the cause had been the stress and heaviness of the reading of the *Tochacha*. The effect upon little Dov Ber was so intense that his father was even hesitant to let him fast on Yom Kippur almost a month later. The doctors were astounded at the physiological response, and asked the boy, "But don't you hear the *Tochacha* every year?" Dov Ber responded, "When my Father reads the *Tochacha*, you don't hear curses!"

The days of Elul revolve around Teshuva, the premise of which is our *emunah peshutah*, wholehearted and simple faith in Hashem's promise for forgiveness: "*Vayomer Hashem, Salachti k'devarecha*, "And Hashem said, 'I have forgiven them in accordance with your word.'" (Bamidbar, 14:20). With our own 'word', our own compassionate understanding and interpretation of the mistakes that have come upon us, Hashem will forgive us.

Then, when we approach the Compassionate One with *emunah peshutah* in honest *teshuvah*, the words of Selichos can turn our *aveiros* into expressions of yearning and even closeness to Hashem. Indeed, how great is the power of simple faith in Hashem's desire to forgive us, heal us, and draw us close — for it turns curses into blessings!

May we all experience a year of revealed health, blessings, and closeness to Hashem.

.....
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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Monday | Sep 7 | כ"ה באולול

9:00 Dr. Yosefa Fogel Wruble
10:20 Rabbanit Shani Taragin
11:45 Rabbi Johnny Solomon

Wednesday | Sep 9 | כ"ז באולול

9:00 Rav Menachem Leibtag
10:20 Rabbanit Shani Taragin
11:45 Rabbanit Miriam White



Matan Beit Shemesh

Beit Knesset Netzach Menashe,
Reuven 18, Beit Shemesh and on zoom

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9:15 Karen Hochhauser
10:30 Rabbi Moshe Shulman
20:00 Rav Johnny Solomon

Beit Knesset Feigenson, 29 HaNarkis St

Sunday | Sep 6 | כ"ד באולול

9:15 Rachel Schaum
Beit Knesset Menorat Hamaor, Nachal Maor Street 6, RBS

Wednesday | Sep 9 | כ"ז באולול

9:15 Karen Hochhauser
10:30 Rabbi Moshe Shulman

Matan HaSharon

Beit Matan, 4 HaPalmach Street, Raanana and on Zoom

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9:00 Gina Junger
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11:30 Rabbanit Rebecca Linzer

Wednesday | Sep 9 | כ"ז באולול

9:15 Dr. Jonnie Schnytzer
10:15 Rabbanit Yael Leibowitz
11:15 Rabbanit Karen M. Jackson
12:15 Rabbanit Miriam Fenster

Shabbat Nitzavim Vayelech | Sep 5 | כ"ג באולול

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11:45 Harabnit Shira Zimmerman

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
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OU ISRAEL

Our *Sedra* this week, *Parshat Ki Tavo*, contains the second formal *pesukim* of *tochacha*- of warning and admonition given to the Jewish People should they fail in their fidelity to *Hashem*, his *Torah* and *mitzvot*.

In the midst of this extended expression of caution, we read the verse:

Tachat asher lo avadata et Hashem Elokecha B'Simcha UvTuv Leivov meirov kol- Since you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things...

How exactly are we to understand this verse?

Rabbeinu Bechaya offers a unique reading of our verse, *tach-at asher lo avadata et Hashem Elokecha, B'Simcha-* that not only did we fail in our *Avodat Hashem*, but that we were **b'simcha** -we were happy and glad with that failure.

The **Netivot Shalom, the Slonimer Rebbe zy'a**, explains that the *Torah's* rebuke is not simply about failing to feel happy while performing *mitzvot*. Rather, joy itself is the vessel through which we become receptive to *Hashem's* presence and blessing. When our *Avodat Hashem* is infused with *simcha*, we open our hearts to a deeper relationship with the *Rib-bono Shel Olam*; when joy is absent, that vital connection weakens.

Rebbe Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov zy'a, the **Bnai Yissascher**, offers a very different but inspirational interpretation of our verse.: '*tach-at asher-* is a reference to *Shabbat*- the letters which follow the letters *alef shin* and *reish* are the letters *bet, tav* and *shin*, the letters which comprise the word *shabbat*. When a Jew fails

to experience the joy and fulfillment of *Shabbat*, when the beauty of *Shabbat* is missing from one's life, then that is when we begin to feel lost, and lose our way.

Reb Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk zy'a, in his *sefer, Pri Haaretz* offers a slightly different take on our verse. The Rebbe cites the well known Talmudic

teaching that the transgressors among Israel are full of *mitzvot* like the *rimon*- the pomegranate. (*Chagiga 26a*).

What exactly are we meant to learn from this teaching likening those who transgress to a pomegranate, and how are we to understand that despite the fact that they are labeled as transgressors, they are still full of *mitzvot* like the *rimon*?

The Rebbe explains that a pomegranate is indeed full of seeds, in fact the actual fruit components of the pomegranate are the many individual, compartmentalized, isolated seeds. The pomegranate's fruit is a stark contrast to almost any other fruit, such as an apple or an orange, where the seeds are minute, but the fruit is one big continuous fleshy object. Our approach to *mitzvot* says the Rebbe must be one where each *mitzva* is not a random



Rabbi Sholom
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isolated sweet little kernel, but rather that each and every *mitzvah* brings more and more sweetness and happiness, that each individual *mitzvah* is a portion of an overall collective whole of sweetness and happiness. When that is achieved, explains the Rebbe then we will merit to experience *brachot*. However, if each *mitzvah* remains to be an isolated seedling, and doesn't join together with an overall sweet holistic, collective "fruit", then our *Avodat Hashem* is both devoid of vitality and joy and thus lacking, and we are therefore susceptible to stumble and to the harm of outside influence.

May each of us be blessed to heed this powerful message from the **Rebbe of Vitebsk**, and to live a life of *simcha*, of joy and vitality in our *Avodat Hashem*, and may we merit to experience the blessings that come through *Avodat Hashem B'Simcha*. ■

Dr. Harry Weisman

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From Text to Tachlis

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Rambam: Letters and Introduction

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

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11:25 am

Building Character and Midot: Rav Kook on Pirkei
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12:30 pm

Dr. Deborah Polster The Turbulent Nineteenth
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THURSDAY, SEPT 3RD

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Parshat HaShavua | **Rabbi Ari Kahn**

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He was also a man of prayer and song, serving for many years as a chazzan and paytan, and passing his love of Jewish tradition on to his children and grandchildren.

For those of us privileged to know Mayor Moshe Leon, it is clear that his father's values live on through him: a profound devotion to Jerusalem, a deep sense of responsibility to its people, and a commitment to strengthening Jewish life in the city he loves so dearly.

The OU Israel family is grateful for the warm friendship and partnership we have shared with Mayor Leon over the years. At this difficult time, we stand together with him and his family in their grief.

May the memory of Shalom Leon ז"ל be a source of strength and blessing to his family, and may the values he instilled in them continue to illuminate their path for generations to come. יהי זכרו ברוך.

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Eating Out in Israel – Part 2

INTRODUCTION

When addressing the issue of kosher restaurants, caterers, and event halls in Israel, one must understand the complicated nature of kosher food service and the unique challenges it presents.

Although the international kosher certification industry for manufactured food products far surpasses the number of kosher-certified manufacturers in Israel, the situation is almost the exact opposite when it comes to food service. The number of kosher restaurants and food-service establishments throughout Israel is enormous and far exceeds the combined number of kosher restaurants in other countries around the world.

As such, food service can arguably be considered the *Achilles' heel* of kosher certification in Israel. This is particularly true because

a large segment of the Israeli public expects and seeks kosher food. Providing reliable kosher certification to so many establishments requires substantial logistics, manpower, and effective systems of supervision.

PRACTICAL SUPERVISION

In Israel, the level of supervision required in a restaurant or other food-service establishment varies according to several factors. Among them are:

- Is the establishment owned by Shomrei Shabbat Jews?
- Are Jews exclusively employed in the kitchen?
- How complex is the menu?
- What types of food are being prepared?
- Is the establishment meat or dairy?
- How frequently is cooking taking place?
- Are non-Jews involved in food preparation?
- What other logistical or operational concerns exist within the establishment?

It is therefore very difficult to establish one uniform standard of supervision for all restaurants. In addition, it is relatively uncommon to find a *Mashgiach Temidi*—a full-time kosher supervisor—working in every restaurant.

Some certification agencies establish systems in which a competent *Mashgiach* visits the establishment several times a day, together with a *Shomer Shabbat* representative who works at the restaurant and can assist with maintaining the kosher program throughout the day. Under other certifications, the *Mashgiach* may visit once a day or even once



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every few days, depending on the nature of the establishment and the requirements of the certification.

There are many factors that can affect the level of *Hashgacha*. These include whether the establishment is meat or dairy, what products are being prepared, the complexity of the cooking process, and the presence of non-Jewish employees in the kitchen.

There are, of course, establishments where a much tighter system of supervision is necessary. Hotels, hostels, and *Simcha* halls are prime examples. The kosher program in these establishments can be extremely complex because food is prepared throughout the day, menus can be extensive, and both meat and dairy kitchens may operate simultaneously.

In general, OU Kosher takes a strict approach to food-service supervision and requires some form of *Hashgacha Temidis* in its establishments. Depending on the circumstances, this may involve a full-time *Mashgiach* in a hotel or a "working *Mashgiach*" in a restaurant. In the latter case, the *Mashgiach* may be responsible for additional duties, such as overseeing orders and receiving deliveries, allowing him to remain present in the establishment throughout the day while maintaining effective kosher supervision.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OVERSIGHT

Oversight is essential in every area of kosher certification, and food service is no exception. Even when an establishment has an on-site *Mashgiach*, there should be a trained supervisor or rabbinic authority overseeing the overall kosher program.

Numerous halachic questions arise in food service, as well as questions regarding kosher protocols, changes in ingredients, alterations to recipes, and changes in the establishment's logistics. These situations often require someone with greater experience who can evaluate the circumstances and determine the appropriate course of action.

This is itself an important consideration when evaluating different *Hashgachot*. The presence of a *Mashgiach* is important, but so is the system of oversight behind him. A strong kosher program requires not only personnel on the ground, but also experienced rabbinic oversight capable of addressing questions as they arise.

MEAT STANDARDS

As mentioned in previous articles, the subject of kosher beef and poultry in Israel can be quite sensitive. All chicken *Shechita* for the Israeli market is performed within Israel. Although standards have greatly improved over the years, it remains important for consumers to understand which *Shechita* they are consuming and whether it meets their personal standards of *Kashrut*.

When entering a *Mehadrin* or *Badatz* establishment, it should be clear which chicken *Shechita* is being used. There is a common misconception that there are simply two levels of chicken *Shechita*: "Mehadrin" and "regular." In reality, the situation is considerably more complicated.

Virtually all chicken *Shechita* operations use the term *Mehadrin* to describe their standards. However, there can still be significant

differences between the standards and practices of different slaughterhouses. Consumers who are particular about the *Shechita* they consume should therefore ascertain which *Shechita* is being used rather than relying solely on the term "Mehadrin."

BEEF

Regarding beef, the subject is even more complicated.

In broad terms, there are three levels that are commonly discussed when referring to the kosher status of beef:

1. **Non-Glatt**
2. **Glatt**
3. **Chalak Beit Yosef**

The differences between these standards relate primarily to the examination of the lungs following *Shechita* and the halachic status of various lesions and adhesions found on the lung.

Glatt certification generally follows the accepted approach of the *Rema*, together with additional later customs, while not necessarily satisfying all of the stricter requirements of the *Shulchan Aruch* regarding the examination of the lung.

Chalak Beit Yosef follows the more stringent requirements associated with the rulings of the *Shulchan Aruch* and is intended to satisfy the stricter standards of the various opinions.

Chalak Beit Yosef can be found in both Rabbanut *Shechita* and in slaughter conducted under various *Badatz* certifications.

Practically speaking, non-Glatt beef is no longer common in many kosher communities overseas, and consumers whose communities have traditionally required Glatt meat should assume that non-Glatt meat is unacceptable for them.

In Israel, Glatt meat as a separate category is also uncommon because the prevailing practice among many higher-level certifications is to require meat that satisfies the stricter standards. As such, OU Kosher requires *Chalak Beit Yosef* meat for its caterers and restaurants in Israel.

HINDQUARTERS

The issue of beef hindquarters is another unique area in which consumers must exercise caution.

In many communities overseas, the hindquarters of cattle are not sold as kosher meat because the complex process of *Nikkur* required to remove the forbidden fats and nerves is not performed. Consequently, kosher certification is generally not granted to those portions of the animal.

In Israel, however, there are several *Mehadrin* certifications that perform *Nikkur* and approve premium cuts from the hindquarters.

OU Kosher, based on the accepted custom followed by its standards, does not recommend consuming hindquarter cuts, even when they are sold under a reputable kosher certification.

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Consumers who are particular about this issue should therefore be aware of which cuts come from the hindquarters. Common examples include **Filet (Fillet), Sinta, and Sheitel**.

When purchasing meat at a restaurant, hotel, or catering establishment, consumers who follow the stricter practice regarding hindquarters should confirm that the establishment is serving only meat from the forequarters.

CONCLUSION

Eating out in Israel presents a unique set of challenges. The sheer number of restaurants, hotels, caterers, and event halls means that kosher certification cannot rely on a single model of supervision. Each establishment must be evaluated according to its ingredients, production methods, employees, logistics, and the halachic standards of the certifying authority.

For the consumer, this means that the words "kosher," "Mehadrin," or even "Badatz" do not necessarily provide the complete picture. Consumers should understand what standard they personally follow and, when necessary, ask questions about the *Hashgacha*, the *Shechita*, the source of the meat, and the procedures used to maintain the kosher program.

A reliable kosher system depends on more than a certificate on the wall. It requires knowledgeable supervision, strong rabbinic oversight, clear procedures, and the ability to respond appropriately when unexpected questions arise. In Israel, where eating out is such a significant part of everyday life, maintaining these standards is both a tremendous responsibility and an enormous undertaking. ■

Kashrut Questions in Israel?

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Baskets With Sacred Meaning

The mitzvah of *bikkurim* features prominently in our *parashah*. The Torah instructs the farmer to put his first fruits in a basket and bring them to the *Beit Hamikdash*. The Mishnah tells us that the wealthier people would make beautiful baskets of gold and silver, while the poorer people would weave baskets of reeds. The Mishnah further describes how the people would adorn their baskets with wreaths and organize beautiful, joyous processions to bring the fruit to Yerushalayim. (*Bikkurim* 3:2-8) After taking the fruits, the Kohanim would return the costly baskets to their affluent owners but would keep the fruit and the simple wicker baskets of the modest ones. Why was it necessary to beautify the baskets at all? What are we to

learn from this seemingly insignificant detail?

“*Zeh keli v'anvehu*” beautifying mitzvot is a fundamental value in Judaism. When people brought their first fruits to the Beit Hamikdash, they were filled with abounding gratitude, and they expressed their overwhelming thanks by embellishing the baskets to carry the fruit. This furthers the question of why the Kohanim only kept the baskets of the poor people.

Rav Aharon Baskt *zt”l, hy”d*, offers a beautiful insight into this inconsistency. The rich person’s fruits were of the finest quality and were certainly presentable even without a basket. Since the Kohanim did not need the gold and silver baskets, they only kept the fruit and returned the baskets. However, the poor person’s fruit was of a lower grade. Had the Kohen taken the fruit and returned the basket, the poorer person would have been deeply embarrassed, at least the basket elevated the presentation of his offering! Further, the Kohen shared the message that whatever a poor person gives is beloved to Hashem, no matter its status.

Rav Scheinerman in *Ohel Moshe* adds another important lesson. One can only imagine how impressive the gold and silver baskets were and how they naturally would have given the well-to-do people a sense of pride and gratification. Thus, by returning the fancy baskets, the Kohanim were highlighting the importance of the mitzvah itself rather than the container. Hashem does not desire a haughty heart; arrogance and conceit, however slight, have no place in the *Beit Hashem*. Humility, modesty and unpretentiousness,

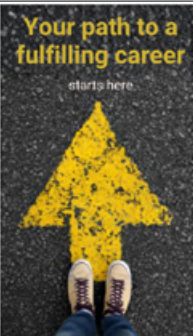


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reflected in the simple wicker baskets, are cherished qualities to be safeguarded and celebrated in Hashem's holy dwelling.

In his famous letter, the Ramban likens one who is haughty to one who rebels against Hashem. As we approach Rosh Hashanah, we ought to focus on accepting the Kingship of Hashem upon ourselves from a place of humility. The bent shofar suggests our fragmented, broken parts. Let us desire for Hashem to accept our *bikkurim* and our basket, the tefillot to offer Hashem our best selves, as we stand before Him on the New Year with new aspirations for growth and connection. ■

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Word Traps

Few ceremonies in Jewish life compare with the pageantry of bringing *Bikkurim*. The drama begins as the first fruits of the seven species associated with Eretz Yisrael begin to ripen. A farmer steps into his field, identifies the first fruits as they emerge, and ties a band around them, designating them as *Bikkurim*. As the crops mature, the anticipation builds. *Bikkurim* could first be brought on Shavuot. From then until Sukkot, farmers brought their first fruits to Yerushalayim and recited the accompanying declaration.

As the pilgrims approached Yerushalayim, they were greeted by residents of the surrounding towns and villages and escorted toward the city with great fanfare. The *Bikkurim* were presented to the Kohanim, placed beside the *mizbeach*, and subsequently eaten by the Kohanim, much like *terumah*.

The ceremony celebrated the agricultural success of the past year and the extraordinary

produce of Eretz Yisrael. But it also placed that success within the larger sweep of Jewish history. The farmer did not simply thank Hashem for his crops. He returned to the origins of our national story, recalling Yaakov Avinu, the descent to Egypt, our suffering there, and ultimately our arrival in the land whose fruits he now carried to the *Beit Hamikdash*.

This proclamation must be recited in Hebrew. The farmer cannot convey these sentiments in his own words or in another language, but must adhere to the precise text prescribed by the Torah. Each word carries echoes and allusions to Jewish history, particularly to *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. Indeed, these four pesukim, commonly known by their opening words *Arami Oved Avi*, became the centerpiece of the *Haggadah*. The *Haggadah* carefully deconstructs these verses, attaching midrashic meaning to individual words and phrases in order to more fully portray the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*.

WORDS CREATE CONSCIOUSNESS

Words do more than communicate ideas. Words create consciousness. Different words can frame the same experience differently and can subtly reshape the meaning we attach to it. By remaining faithful to the Torah's exact words, the farmer bringing his *Bikkurim* is reminded of the history behind them and of the story he is part of. Those words shape the way he understands both his harvest and his place within Jewish history.

The significance of language becomes even more striking when *Mikra Bikkurim* is compared with another declaration that appears

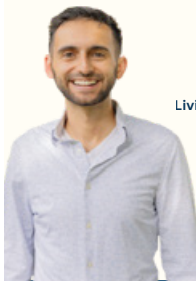


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only a few pesukim later. After completing the distribution of his tithes, a person recites *Vidui Maaser*: ואמרת לפני ה' אלוך, בערתי הקודש מן הבית. Yet Chazal distinguish sharply between these two declarations. While *Mikra Bikkurim* must be recited in *lashon hakodesh*, *Vidui Maaser* may be recited in any language.

Perhaps the difference lies in what these declarations are meant to accomplish. *Vidui Maaser* primarily testifies to his religious conduct: he has properly distributed his agricultural gifts and fulfilled his obligations. The essential concern is that the content be accurately expressed.

Mikra Bikkurim, however, is meant to shape the way a person understands himself. It locates him within a national history. He is not merely a successful farmer enjoying the fruits of his labor. He is the descendant of Yaakov, the child of slaves redeemed from Egypt, and the heir to a land promised generations earlier.

When words merely convey information, equivalent language may suffice. But when words shape identity, terminology matters.

THE TERMS WE USE

The words we use to describe people and communities do more than identify them. They emphasize certain qualities and, often without realizing it, suggest how those people should be understood. Once a term becomes familiar, we rarely stop to examine what it implies. We simply begin accepting the assumptions built into the language itself.

This is especially consequential when we adopt terminology that others have created about us. Without intending to, we may begin seeing ourselves through categories that do not accurately reflect our identity or values. Sometimes we even adopt these labels for ourselves, without first deciding whether we

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accept the assumptions behind them.

Religious consciousness therefore requires a certain vigilance about language. We should periodically ask where our terminology came from, what assumptions it carries, and whether those assumptions genuinely reflect how we understand ourselves.

A PAINFUL DEBATE

This question has particular relevance to the vocabulary Orthodox Jews use to describe the different religious communities. Our people, and more specifically the Orthodox community, are engaged in a fierce ideological debate over conscription into the IDF. Both sides believe that they are deeply fulfilling the will of Hashem: one through military service and the defense of our people, the other through preserving a communal model centered upon intensive Torah study. This is a *machloket l'shem Shamayim*, though an especially painful one.



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Unfortunately, some of the rhetoric surrounding this debate has spiraled out of control, deepening an already painful divide. As Elul approaches, we must be especially careful with our words and resist statements that raise the temperature of the debate. Even amid profound disagreement, our language should preserve respect and leave room for closeness rather than widening the distance between us.

The debate itself is framed by certain terms commonly used to define the different Orthodox communities. If we do not examine these terms and the assumptions they carry, we risk slipping almost unconsciously into categories of identity that we may not actually accept.

WHO IS ULTRA ORTHODOX?

Charedi society is often described in English as “ultra Orthodox.” A Charedi person is certainly entitled to embrace that description. But should not every religious Jew aspire to be ultra Orthodox? When we reserve that term exclusively for Charedim, those of us who are not Charedi implicitly define ourselves as something less than fully or intensely Orthodox.

Every religious Jew should aspire to the highest level of commitment to Torah and mitzvot. If someone believes that the Charedi lifestyle represents the ideal form of Orthodoxy, they should seriously consider embracing it.

I do not view Charedi life as the religious ideal for me. I have chosen a different religious path because I believe deeply in its values and aspirations. I certainly fall short in practice, as we all do, but this is the Orthodox ideal I aspire to live as fully as possible. The great people I have encountered who embody this value system with exceptional consistency represent, to me, the ideal of Orthodox

religious life.

We should be careful about reserving the term “ultra Orthodox” for one particular religious community. Every Orthodox Jew, whatever his or her hashkafah, should aspire to live Torah as fully and seriously as possible. If we believe that another community represents a more authentic or complete form of Orthodoxy, then we should ask ourselves why we have not chosen that path. But if we believe deeply in the religious path we have chosen, we should see ourselves as aspiring to be no less “ultra” in our Orthodoxy.

OLAM HATORAH/LOMDEI TORAH

There is another set of terms that can create an equally serious religious and psychological trap. In a perfect world, we would all devote ourselves entirely to Torah study, endlessly exploring the word of Hashem. That is the world of Gan Eden.

But we live in an imperfect world, one that requires human effort and responsibility. We need professionals and business people, scientists and doctors, and of course soldiers to protect us. The Charedi model seeks to preserve a community in which as many people as possible are freed from these responsibilities in order to devote themselves fully to Torah study. A non-Charedi model believes that these broader religious and moral responsibilities must also be shared by the religious community itself. There should be no fundamental disagreement, however, about the centrality of *Talmud Torah*.

It is undeniable that Charedi society devotes more time per capita, and more communal resources, to Torah study. But that should not lead to the assumption that Torah study matters less to those who follow a different religious path or occupies a less central place in their worldview. Nor need we deny the

spiritual power of Torah or its capacity to protect our people. We simply believe that this protection does not relieve us of the responsibility to participate actively in defending ourselves.

Which makes the expression "*Olam Hato-rah*" a potential word trap. This expression is often used within Charedi society as a designation for the Charedi community, just as the term "*lomdei Torah*" is frequently used to describe its members. There is nothing objectionable about a community using these expressions about itself, particularly one that devotes extraordinary amounts of time and energy to Torah study. But we should be careful before adopting these terms as exclusive descriptions.

For me, *Olam HaTorah* is much larger than any particular community. Torah was given at Sinai to the entire Jewish people. It belongs to those who study many hours each day, those who study less, and even those who, at this stage of their lives, barely study at all. Torah is too vast and too cosmic to be confined to one social sector, even one that has distinguished itself through exceptional devotion to Torah learning. The *Olam HaTorah* cannot be reduced to one social sector; it includes the entire Jewish people, and certainly every Jew who actively studies Torah.

Similarly, *lomdei Torah* should describe Jews who learn Torah, whether they learn all day or carve out precious hours from lives also devoted to other responsibilities. Someone who serves in the army, practices medicine, builds a business, or works in another profession does not cease to be a *lomdei Torah* because Torah study is not his full-time occupation.

If we uncritically adopt terminology that reserves *Olam HaTorah* and *lomdei Torah*

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for someone else, we subtly define ourselves as standing outside the Torah world and as something other than Torah learners. This linguistic mistake can gradually shape our religious identity and lower our expectations for the place Torah should occupy in lives that also embrace other important and sacred responsibilities.

Words shape identity, and we should be careful not to let someone else's terminology define us in ways we do not agree with. The language we use about ourselves should reflect who we believe we are and who we aspire to become. ■

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HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA
SHMIDMAN

DIRECTOR,
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Darkness to Light

YESHAYAHU 60:1-22

The haftorah opens with a stirring call: קוּמִי זָרַח עֲלֶיךָ זֶרַח, *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of Hashem has dawned upon you.* The Malbim reads קוּמִי as two distinct commands. First, קוּמִי — rise out of the darkness. Then, זָרַח — become a source of light for the entire world. This is not simply a promise that light will arrive. It is a call for each one of us to participate in bringing that light into the world.

But the very next posuk challenges us, acknowledging that: בִּי הָיָה הַחֹשֶׁךְ יִכְסֶה אֶרֶץ, *Behold, darkness shall cover the earth.* There is still darkness in the world and yet Yerushalayim is told that she need not wait before beginning to shine.

This is one of the many messages of Elul. We may believe that before we can move forward, every struggle must be resolved and every shadow removed. But teshuvah does

not begin when the darkness is gone. It begins with the willingness to rise within it. Facing darkness can help us discover a light we did not know we possessed.

Perhaps that is why Yeshayahu calls it אֶרְךָ — your light. It is formed through each of our individual journeys and is strengthened through all that we endure.

Hashem calls to each of us: קוּמִי זָרַח. Do not wait until every shadow has disappeared. Rise now. Shine now. Allow your own unique light to illuminate the path toward a better year. ■



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Birchot HaTorah: Beginning Our Learning With Tefillah

Every morning, after Netillat Yadayim and Asher Yatzar, we proceed to recite Birchot HaTorah, thanking Hashem for the opportunity and privilege to study His Torah. Today, we will take a closer look at the structure of these brachot and explore the deeper message they are meant to convey.

Gemara Nedarim offers a fascinating insight into the importance of Birchot HaTorah. The Gemara teaches that the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because the people of that generation did not recite Birchot HaTorah before learning Torah. This seems difficult to understand. Why would such a terrible punishment result from what appears to be a relatively minor omission?

The **Mishna Berura** explains that their failure to recite Birchot HaTorah was symptomatic of a much deeper problem. The people of that generation learned a great deal of Torah, but they had forgotten *why* they were learning. Torah had become an intellectual pursuit rather than a means of developing a relationship with Hashem.

The **Bach** similarly explains that the

people used their Torah learning to show off to others how learned and righteous they were. What they had forgotten was that the ultimate goal of *Limmud Torah* is for a person to grow in *ruchniyut* and develop a deeper connection with Hashem.

This gives us a deeper appreciation for Birchot HaTorah. Before we begin our Torah learning each morning, we take a moment to remind ourselves what Torah learning is really about. Torah is not simply knowledge to acquire. It is meant to shape us, change us, and bring us closer to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

The **Mishna Berura** therefore emphasizes the importance of saying Birchot HaTorah each day and using these brachot to establish the proper perspective toward our Torah learning. Before we open a sefer, we remind ourselves that our learning is meant to help us build our relationship with Hashem.

STRUCTURE

There is a debate in **Gemara Brachot** regarding the wording of Birchot HaTorah. Three different Amoraim offer different formulations, and our siddur reflects a combination of all three.

לעסק בדברי תורה 1.

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recited before performing a mitzvah. Before beginning our Torah learning for the day, we recognize that we are about to engage in a mitzvah that Hashem has commanded us to perform.

The wording is significant: לְעִסֵּק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה - to engage in the words of Torah. The word לעסוק suggests more than simply studying or acquiring information. It implies immersing ourselves in Torah and making it an integral part of who we are. This first bracha focuses on the effort that we need to put into our Torah learning.

2. והערב נא

וְהָעֵרֵב נָא ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ אֶת דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ בְּפִינוּ וּבְסִפּוּי עִמָּךְ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְנִהְיֶה אֲנִיחוּ וְצִמְצִמֵינוּ. (וְצִמְצִמֵינוּ) וְצִמְצִמֵינוּ עִמָּךְ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. כְּלָנוּ יוֹדְעֵי שְׂמֵךְ וְלֹמְדֵי תוֹרָתְךָ לְשִׂמְחָה: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הַמְלִמֵּד תוֹרָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

We then ask Hashem to make the words of Torah sweet to us, and not only to us, but to our children as well. In this bracha, we ask for *Hashem's help* to feel connected to our Torah learning and to pass that enthusiasm and passion on to our children. This is not a simple task, particularly in today's world. We therefore need to have real kavanah when saying this bracha, recognizing that it is only through tremendous *siyata d'Shmaya* that we can successfully inspire ourselves and our children with a love of Torah.

3. אשר בחר בנו

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם. אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל

הָעַמִּים וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'. נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה

In the final bracha, we praise Hashem for choosing us as the nation to receive the Torah. We recognize not only the importance of Torah in our individual lives, but also the way Torah shapes us as a nation.

There is a beautiful progression in these three brachot. First, we recognize our personal responsibility to engage in Torah. Then we ask Hashem to make Torah sweet and meaningful not only to us, but to our children. Finally, we acknowledge Torah as the unique gift that Hashem has given to Klal Yisrael as a whole.

After reciting Birchot HaTorah, we make sure to immediately engage in some actual Torah learning. We do this by reciting selections from three different areas of Torah, each highlighting a different aspect of the importance and impact of Torah learning:

Birchot HaTorah

Saying **Birchot HaTorah** gives us the correct perspective on daily basis, reminding ourselves that the goal of our Torah learning is to build our relationship with **הקב"ה**.

Rav Soloveichik explains that the reason we only say **Birchot HaTorah** once a day, is because the Torah remains constantly on our mind throughout the day. Just like a mother doesn't forget her children when she goes off to work, so too, the Torah should become such a part of us, that even when we are dealing with other mundane tasks, it is always there, shaping who we are, how we act, and what we do.

✂ Cut and paste into your siddur



Torah – Birkat Kohanim: The Midrash Rabbah explains that the words *יְאִיר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ* refer to Hashem illuminating our eyes and hearts through Torah — *שִׂיבֵי עֵינֶיךָ וְלִבְךָ בַּתּוֹרָה*. **Mishna – A list of mitzvot whose performance has no limit:** This list includes the mitzvah of Torah learning, highlighting that there is no limit to how much one can engage in this mitzvah.

Beraita – A list of mitzvot whose reward is received in Olam Haba: The passage concludes with “וְתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה דְּנֶגְדָּךְ גָּלוּם”—that the reward for learning and teaching Torah is equivalent to the reward of the entire list.

Together, these three passages emphasize the central role of Torah: it enlightens us, offers limitless opportunities for growth, and stands at the heart of our Avodat Hashem.

THE MESSAGE

Rav Soloveitchik asks an interesting question. Normally, we recite a bracha before each individual mitzvah. For example, If a person washes his hands for bread several times throughout the day, he recites *Al Netilat Yadayim* each time. So why do we recite Birkhot HaTorah only once in the morning, even though we may learn Torah many times throughout the day? Rav Soloveitchik answers that although we do not literally study Torah every moment of the day, Torah should remain constantly on our minds.

He compares this to a mother who goes to work but does not forget her children. Even while occupied with other responsibilities, her children remain in her thoughts.

Similarly, Torah should become such an integral part of us that even when we are engaged in mundane activities, it continues to shape who we are, how we behave, and the decisions we make.

In that sense, we are *עוסקים בתורה* throughout the day, even when we are not physically sitting and learning. Our Torah learning should not remain confined to the time we spend with a sefer. It should accompany us throughout the day, shaping who we are, how we act, and ultimately, our relationship with Hashem. ■

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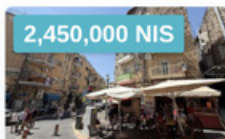


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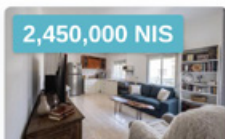


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Pirkei Avot (3:7): Personal and Communal Generosity

“Rabbi Elazar of Bartota says: ‘Give Him from His own, for you and your possessions are His.’” (Pirkei Avot 3:8)

The explanation of this teaching is that a person should not withhold either themselves or their wealth from being used to fulfill the will of Heaven. All that a person has belongs to God; hence, when one gives, one is not giving from one’s own possessions, but merely returning to God what is already His.

Surely, this Mishnah is a call against stinginess in matters of charity and expenditures for mitzvot. The commentary of the *Meiri* emphasizes that when one realizes that one is spending God’s money rather than one’s own, one will give more happily and generously.

Regarding this same Mishnah, Rabbeinu Yonah comments that all of a person’s wealth is entrusted to him by God for safekeeping. Unlike a human depositor, God allows a person to use part of the deposit for personal needs, but the remainder must certainly be used according to the depositor’s instructions.

EXTENDING ONE’S TABLE

Rav Kook beautifully elaborated on the balance between attending to one’s own needs and the broader obligation to provide for the needs of others in his comments on the following passage in the Talmud:

Rav Yehuda said: “Three things prolong a person’s days and years: one who extends his prayers, one who extends his table, and

one who extends his time in the lavatory.” (*Berachot* 54b).

The basic understanding of this statement seems straightforward. Praying with great devotion, ensuring that one’s table is used to help the impover-

ished, and attending to one’s physical health by spending ample time in the bathroom all contribute to the blessing of long life.

Rav Kook, in his *Ein Ayah*, finds deeper significance in Rav Yehuda’s statement. He suggests that the items on the list complement one another. A person who prays with great devotion runs the risk of focusing all his energies on achieving closeness with Hashem while forgetting the needs of the impoverished. Thus, Rav Yehuda supplements the



Rav Zelig Reuven Bengis and his wife

extended prayer with the extended table that provides for the poor.

Conversely, a person might be so dedicated to mitzvot, both *bein adam laMakom* and *bein adam lechavero*, that he forgets to care for his basic physical needs. Thus, the first two items are complemented by the extended stay in the bathroom, representing basic physical maintenance. (*Ein Ayah, Berachot*, chapter 9, piska #22)).

The Talmud continues by enumerating three things that shorten a person's days and years. One of them is "one who is given a cup of benediction to bless with and does not recite the blessing." Rav Kook explains that this example parallels the earlier reference to "extending one's table."

"The cup of benediction" refers to the cup of wine used for *Birkat Hamazon* when a group gathers for a meal. The person who turns down the cup of benediction, which is ordinarily offered when others have gathered around the table, resents having to share his meal with others. Such a person diametrically opposes the concept of the extended table. (Ibid.)

This passage in the Talmud, so beautifully elucidated by Rav Kook, emphasizes the kindness and compassion one extends to others. It begins with one's table - with the openness to needy guests and the effort to make them feel welcome in one's home.

A PIERCING CRY

Rav Aryeh Levin, the famed "Tzadik of Yerushalayim," was known for his exceptional compassion toward those who suffered and felt alone. Concerning the Torah's command that a Jew be deeply sensitive to the widow and orphan, Rav Aryeh offered the following penetrating insight:

"You shall not cause pain to any widow or orphan. If you [dare to] cause this person

pain... for if they shall cry out to Me, I shall surely hear their outcry." (*Shemot* 22:21–22).

Looking at the Hebrew in the verse, it does not merely say *im*, "if" this widow or orphan cries out. Rather, the Torah employs the less common phrase *ki im* ("for if"). Rav Aryeh said that with this additional word, the Torah emphasizes that any reason at all that causes pain to a widow or orphan - even unintentionally - angers God because of one's lack of sensitivity.

Rav Aryeh Levin's son, Rav Simcha Shlomo Levin, was fond of citing a piercing comment from the Kotzker Rebbe on this verse. The Torah employs a doubled expression three times in describing the pain caused to the widow and orphan: *aneh te'aneh* ("if you cause him/her pain"), *tza'ok yitz'ak* ("he/she will cry out"), and *shamo'a eshma* ("I shall surely hear"). Why this unusual emphasis?

The Kotzker Rebbe explained that when a wife is pained by someone's insensitive words or by a particular incident, she instinctively turns to her husband for support. Similarly, a child in pain turns to a parent for solace. The widow and orphan, however, no longer have their loved ones to care for them or protect them. When they suffer, they immediately feel the acute pain of not having their closest loved ones to whom they can turn.

Thus, the widow's or orphan's pain is doubled. First, there is the pain caused by whatever has brought them distress. At that same moment, they also experience the profound pain of knowing that their husband is no longer present to protect them, or that their parent is no longer alive to provide the loving protection they once received. This double-edged distress is subtly alluded to in the Torah's striking use of doubled expressions throughout the passage. (*Derech Avot*, Sternberg, p.250)

ENCOURAGING VISITS

Rav Aryeh Levin made a practice of visiting the widows of rabbis on *Chol Hamoed* and *Shabbat Chol Hamoed* during the festivals of Sukkot and Pesach. He knew that these homes had once been bustling during the holidays, filled with students and colleagues who came to visit. For many of these widows, however, after the passing of their eminent rabbinic husbands, their homes felt painfully vacant and terribly lonely.

Rav Aryeh would, of course, visit the women together with another colleague or friend. Particularly noteworthy were his visits to the wife of Rav Zelig Reuven Bengis, one of Jerusalem's leading sages (Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem for the *Eida Hacharedis*), and to the wife of Rav Kook throughout the years following Rav Kook's passing. He would spend precisely as much time as he felt was necessary to lift the widow's spirits, and then promptly make his way to the home of another widow - sometimes the widow of a deceased and illustrious rabbi, and sometimes simply a woman whom he felt would benefit from a holiday visit. (*Derech Avot*, p.133)

These teachings and stories remind us that true generosity is not limited to giving money, but is expressed through opening our tables, our homes, our time, and our hearts to those in need. When we recognize that all we possess is entrusted to us by God, we become more attentive to the pain of others and more willing to use what we have to bring comfort, dignity, and kindness into their lives. ■



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Beracha on a Havdala Candle You Cannot See

לעילוי נשמת
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Question: I will be in a hospital for Shabbat. They do *Havdala* in the ward. It is unclear if I will be able to make it close to where it is held, but I was told that the *mavdil* is very loud and I will hear it in my room. If this happens, what will I do about *Borei Me'orei Ha'eish* on a candle I do not see? (Safety concerns prevent any flames in hospital rooms.)

Answer: First, remember that your health is paramount and that there is no problem whatsoever doing *Havdala* without a candle (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 298:1). If one is able to make the *beracha* on the candle later that night, that is great (Mishna Berura 298:3).

The *mishna* (Berachot 51b) states that one can make a *beracha* on the *Havdala* candle

only when “they benefit from its light.” The *gemara* (ibid. 53b) cites a *machloket* on what this means: Rav says it just requires the light to be significant enough that if one were close, he could benefit. Rava requires actual benefit, with the example being that he is able to use it to distinguish between coins. Most *Rishonim* and the Shulchan Aruch (ibid. 4) rule that one needs to be close enough to benefit from the light.

On the other hand, according to most authorities, there is no *mitzva* to actually benefit from the light (see Halacha Berura 298:13). Actually, almost all agree that the *beracha* is a *birkat hashevach* (praising Hashem), in this case for creating fire/light, which Adam became aware of on *Motzaei Shabbat* (see Pesachim 54a). If so, the requirement of how to see the light is to ensure a sufficient trigger for the *beracha*, as one must see a rainbow or lightening before making a *beracha* on it.

Therefore, there is logic to say (as Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 61:(62) points out) that if the person who is reciting the *beracha* is properly triggered, those who hear his *beracha* are appropriately praising Hashem (e.g., by you answering *amen* from your room). Nevertheless, the Mishna Berura (297:13; 298:13) says that whoever wants to fulfill the *halacha* of the *Havdala* candle must be close enough to the light, and I did not find those

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who disagree. This goes well with the *halacha* (Shulchan Aruch ibid. 13) that a blind person does not make *Borei Me'orei Ha'eish*; we do find that he should hear the *beracha* from someone with sight.

One can **suggest** various explanations for everyone's need to be close enough. 1) The *mitzva* is not limited to the *beracha* but includes experiencing the light and being reminded of Hashem's creation, which is capped off with the *beracha*. This may explain why we make the effort to hold out our hands and look at our fingernails (ibid. 3) and that some do this after the *beracha* (against the simple halachic logic). 2) One should connect to the *beracha* as one who is obligated in it, which happens only when he is personally triggered (see Chief Rabbi Yosef's Birur Halacha 298:(19)).

That being said, even if you cannot make it close to the light, you can salvage the situation significantly. First, if you can light an **incandescent** lightbulb, some *poskim* allow using this for *Havdala* in a case of need (see Piskei Teshuvot 298:10). If so, it would be ideal if you answer *amen* to the *beracha* of the *mavdil* and "attach" the *beracha* to your incandescent light.

Finally, realize that despite the standard *p'sak* that one cannot fulfill the *mitzva* at a distance, hearing the *beracha* does have some value. First, some *poskim* say it might be possible you do fulfill the *mitzva* at a distance, and therefore if you did hear the *beracha* in this way, you cannot make a *beracha* later if you gain access (Kaf Hachayim

298:22). The Mishna Berura (297:13) likely agrees, because he says that when one is listening at a distance, he should have in mind not to be *yotzei*, and make the *beracha* later when he gains access. Additionally, according to the reasons we gave before, by listening intently to the *beracha* (you should not answer, as it is likely a *hefsek* in *Havdala*), one takes part in the praise of Hashem, just that it is missing either the seeing of the light or taking part in the *beracha* with an obligation to do so. ■

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PORTION FROM THE PORTION

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The Personal Side Of Bikkurim

The verses at the beginning of this week's *parashah* describe the *mitzvah* of Bikkurim, the first fruits, including the declaration the farmer makes when bringing his basket to the *Beit Hamikdash*. The declaration is familiar because the Rabbis chose it as the basis for the *Maggid* section of the *Haggadah*. But why did the *Tannaim* choose these verses, which describe events generations after the Exodus, rather than the verses in *Sefer Shemot* where the Exodus itself unfolds?

Maybe the answer lies in the *mitzvah* of *Bikkurim*. The ceremony was festive and dramatic. When the first fruit ripened, the farmer marked it as *Bikkurim*. Later, people traveled together to Jerusalem with singing and music. Finally, the

farmers carried their baskets on their shoulders and made their declaration.

Each farmer begins his declaration in the singular: "I declare this day to *Hashem*, my God, that I have come to the land which He swore to our forefathers to give us." He then shifts to the plural: "The Egyptians treated us cruelly... *Hashem* brought us out of Egypt... and He gave us this land." Finally, he returns to the singular: "And now, I have brought the first fruit of the land which You, *Hashem*, have given me."



Nechama Leibowitz

Rashi explains that the purpose is that we should not be ungrateful. The declaration is an expression of gratitude to *Hashem*. But this gratitude is not only for something that happened to our ancestors long ago. Nechama Leibowitz points out the significance of the singular language. The farmer does not merely say that our ancestors were brought into the Land. He says, "I have come to the land." He is standing there himself. He is holding fruit that has grown for him from the Land, and he is thanking *Hashem* for bringing him there.

This may explain why these verses were chosen for the *Haggadah*. On Pesach night, we are commanded to see ourselves "as though

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he himself went out of Egypt.” The Exodus is not merely Jewish history; it is part of my own story.

The same is true of our arrival in the Land of Israel. Every generation must see itself not only as descended from those who left Egypt, but as having itself been brought to the Land. We must never take the Land for granted. *Bikkurim* transforms the great events of Jewish history—the Exodus, the journey through the wilderness, and the arrival in the Land—into something personal. The farmer stands in Jerusalem and declares: I was brought here. This Land was given to me. And this fruit is my first fruit.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank *Hashem* for my own personal *Bikkurim*. I am not a farmer, although I do have grapes growing in my yard, and I look forward to the day when I will be able to bring them as *Bikkurim* to the *Beit Hamikdash*. Until then, I have another kind of “first fruit” for which to give thanks.

A month before *Pesach*, during the first days of the missile war with Iran, a project my daughter and I had worked on for three years finally came to fruition: a kit for creating a 3D pop-up *Haggadah* to use at the *Seder*. There is not enough space here to describe the *Haggadah* itself, but it can be seen at <https://haggada-zaza.my.canva.site/>. During such a frightening time, it felt like a tremendous miracle that we were able to complete the project. For three years, we had planted, worked, waited, and hoped to create something that would bring the *Haggadah* to life for children and families. When we brought two copies to the National Library, I felt something like what a farmer must have felt carrying his basket of *Bikkurim* to the *Beit Hamikdash*.

That is perhaps the deepest meaning of

Bikkurim: not simply to recognize that something good has happened, but to stop and acknowledge, through an elaborate ceremony, Who made it possible.

This *Haggadah* is dedicated in memory of Adam Bismuth, ד"ר, who inspired this project and was killed in Gaza. May his memory be a blessing, and may we soon merit to bring our first fruits to the *Beit Hamikdash* once again.

.....

Bikkurim are brought from the first fruits to ripen among the *Shivat HaMinim*, the seven species with which the Land of Israel is blessed. Since two of them — pomegranates and dates — are also among the symbolic foods traditionally served on *Rosh Hashanah* eve, this week’s easy and quick recipe combines the two, giving you a head start on your cooking for the upcoming holiday season.

Wishing everyone a **Shana Tova!**

DATE AND POMEGRANATE CHICKEN BREASTS

- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
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- 2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses
- 1/4 cup chicken broth or water
- 2 tablespoons fresh pomegranate seeds (for garnish)
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Fresh parsley, chopped (optional)

Season chicken breasts with salt and pepper on both sides. Heat olive oil in a pan over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook for 6 minutes (till golden brown). Flip the chicken and cook for 5 more minutes. Add the broth or water, pomegranate molasses, and chopped dates. Lower the heat, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes until the chicken is fully cooked. ■



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Yehuda Katz, of Blessed Memory, and Us

After forty-four years, Yehuda Katz z"l, who had been missing since the First Lebanon War, was finally laid to rest in Israel.

That is a sentence worth reading twice.

And in the very week when Yehuda, the last missing soldier from the Battle of Sultan Yacoub, was brought to burial, the Torah portion spoke about the mitzvah of *hashavat aveidah*, returning a lost object. Our commentators explain that the basic obligation is to return something that has been lost to its owner. But there is a broader idea here as well: to restore what is missing to its proper place — in the body, in the soul, in our people.



To bring back what has been lost, in every sense.

The Torah expresses this in three profound words: “You may not ignore it.” And indeed, the Jewish people did not look away. Even when decades have passed, even when the search is difficult, we do not say: “It’s lost. There’s no hope.”

This is also an opportunity to thank the many unsung heroes who made that possible.

The Torah continues: “And so shall you do with anything your brother loses.”

Last week, quite literally, a lost brother came home, to be buried in the soil of the Land of Israel. That moving commitment to those who are missing should shape the way we approach every area of life.

May we continue to notice what is missing, to search, to restore, and never to give up on what has been lost. And may we be instrumental in returning everything to its rightful place. ■

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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לעילוי נשמת
 מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

The “Perfect” Suggestion

Last week, someone came up to my friend in shul and said to him: “OMG. I have the perfect girl for you!”

Sounds great, right?

Except for one small problem: they had spoken for approximately 50 seconds in their entire lives before that moment.

So first of all, I truly love the enthusiasm. We need more people thinking: “Wait, I know someone who could be great for you!” We need more shidduch ideas, more people paying attention, and more friends making suggestions.

But before we declare someone “perfect,” maybe we should ask a few more questions. It’s not that we have to know everything about a person to have a great idea for them, but we

are more likely to hit the spot if we took the time to actually listen to them.

So for all you wonderful people who are thinking: “but how do I start a conversation like that?” Here is a list of questions you might use:

THE BASICS:

What are you looking for?

What are you looking for religiously?

What are the things you know you wouldn’t want in someone you date?

What qualities are important to you in a spouse?

A LITTLE DEEPER:

What does a good relationship look like to you?

What would make you feel comfortable and happy with someone?

In which current or past relationships do you feel most like yourself? Why?

How does an ideal afternoon with a spouse look like to you?

What are some things you’re not willing to compromise on in a marriage?

What kind of person would you never see yourself ending up with?

AND DIGGING IN:

What’s something about you that you think is important for a potential match to understand?

What’s a red line for you?

Tell me about the people you’ve dated. What did you like about them? What didn’t work for you?

What have you learned about yourself from dating? Are there patterns you’ve noticed?



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What kind of person brings out the best in you?

And one of my favorites: Why would someone be lucky to date you? What do you bring to a relationship?

Of course, you're not going to have all the answers, and you don't need to. You're just trying to know them well enough to make a suggestion that feels thoughtful rather than random. Sometimes you'll ask all the right questions and it still won't be a match. And sometimes the person you never would have expected will turn out to be exactly right—that's part of the miracle of shidduchim. The important thing is that the suggestion comes from knowing the person a bit, not just knowing their name.

So next time you have a "perfect" idea for someone you barely know - awesome!! Do something about it!

Just start by asking.

You might discover that your perfect idea is actually... perfect.

Or that it isn't.

Either way, you're one conversation closer to a better shidduch :) ■

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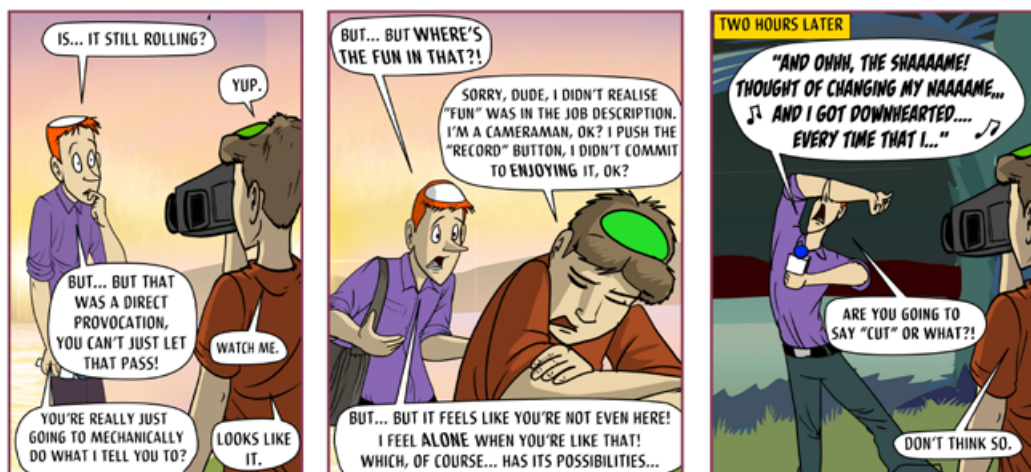


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SIMCHA LE'ARTZECHA

Parshat Ki Tavo opens with the words **וְהָיָה כִּי תָבוֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ...** "And it will be when you enter the Land (of Israel)." Many commentaries discuss why we need the extra word *vehaya*, "and it will be." In my love for Israel, the Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh spoke to me. He says that 'Vehaya' is a *lashon of Simcha*, and there is no greater Simcha than that of the mitzvah of dwelling in the Land of Israel.

The Rambam tells us that for a mitzvah to be done properly, it needs the proper *kavanah*. Furthermore, in order to have the proper *kavanah*, the mitzvah needs to be done with Simcha. The question then begs to be asked: what about the mitzvot where you are commanded to be sad, like that of mourning? How are you supposed to have Simcha? Unfortunately, this is a question every Jew faced this year.

I'd like to suggest that Simcha does not only mean happiness. It could mean happiness, but first and foremost I would define it as contentment. Not everything in Israel is easy or makes one happy. Not everything

tastes as good as where one used to live or runs as smoothly as things used to. Coming to the Land of Israel is a sacrifice and won't always make one happy. But knowing that you're in the right place, where you belong, with your people, and being content with that knowledge can trump any level of happiness. It gives one the ability to smile when they are sad and laugh when they are happy. We should be content and confident in knowing that as hard as it may be and with all its challenges, we are living the word of Hashem.

Shabbat Shalom!



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WHY ARE WE WHISPERING THE LOUDEST WORDS IN THE TORAH?

This week's parsha, Ki Tavo, contains the *Tochacha* - dozens of *pesukim* describing what will happen to us if we fail. Rebuke isn't unusual in the Torah. What's strange is that this *aliyah* is read especially quietly and quickly - and we read it now, in Elul, the month when *tochacha* is most on our minds. Is this really how *tochacha* is supposed to be delivered? The Rambam tells us the opposite: *tochacha* should be gentle, private, spoken softly, and repeated (Rambam, *Hilchot Deot* 6:7). So what's actually going on here?

Rabbeinu Bachya (Devarim 28:47) notices that the Torah doesn't list our sins as the cause of these curses. It gives one reason — **תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר** — because we — **לֹא עָבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה** — because we

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didn't serve Hashem with joy. Strikingly, this same parsha opens with bikkurim, commanding us to rejoice in all the good Hashem gave us (26:11). The parsha that opens by commanding joy ends by naming its absence as the root of everything else. Maybe that's the answer to our question: this tochacha couldn't be gentle and private, because the failure wasn't one sin you could quietly point to. It was the joy missing from the whole relationship, so it had to be named for the whole nation, all at once.

This idea comes to life in something as ordinary as taking out the garbage. Do it while complaining the whole way, and you've technically finished the task but not given it your heart. Hashem wasn't punishing us for skipping the mitzvot. He was responding to mitzvot done without the heart behind them.

At the end of the day, it doesn't matter that we fall. We fall, and we sometimes feel incompleteness that's part of being human. What matters is what we do with the life we're given: that we serve Hashem, and live, with genuine joy. ■

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As Elul is here, and Rosh Hashanah the Day of Remembrance draws near, we remember to help our over 200 poor and needy families.

You can send your donations to:
The Clara Hammer Chicken Fund
P.O.B. 18602 Jerusalem 9118501 | Tel. 02-582-3477
Donate via PayPal at Chickenladyofjerusalem.com
Or you can pay Hacker's Butcher Shop directly
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This Rosh Hashanah **Help 400 Families in Need**

As **Rosh Hashanah** approaches, **Ohr Meir & Bracha** is preparing to provide families affected by terror, widows, and orphans with **a generous and dignified food basket** that will include: A box of chicken, a box of challahs, grape juice for Kiddush, a carton of eggs, dates, pomegranates, beets, carrots, apples, oranges, onions, cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplants, potatoes, and pumpkin.

As well as a box containing basic food products:

Honey, oil, sugar, salt, rice, coffee, Chocolate milk powder, flour, tea, soup mix, honey cake, and tomato paste.

In addition a beautiful tablecloth, to add a sense of dignity and joy to the holiday table.

To make all of this possible, we need to raise \$100,000.

With your support and generous donations, we can reach our goal and provide these families with a dignified, abundant, and joyful holiday.

Every donation brings us one step closer to reaching our goal. **Thank you** from the bottom of our hearts for your generosity. **Wishing you and your families Shana Tova!**

To volunteer in packing the holiday food baskets, please email:

sarit@omb.org.il



To make a donation

www.omb.org.il office@omb.org.il

All donations are tax-deductible in the USA under 501(c)(3).

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3.5

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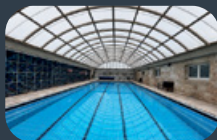
2

Garage Space



1

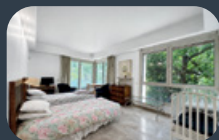
Swimming Pool



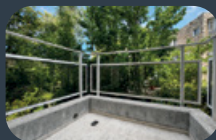
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