



COVENANT & CONVERSATION

THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

FORMER CHIEF RABBI OF THE UNITED HEBREW
CONGREGATIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

HA'AZINU/SHABBAT SHUVA

May the learning of these Divrei Torah be לעילוי נשמת
HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

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

Let My Teaching Drop as Rain

In the glorious song with which Moses addresses the congregation, he invites the people to think of the Torah – their covenant with God – as if it were like the rain that waters the ground so that it brings forth its produce:

Let my teaching drop as rain,

Let my words fall like dew,

Like gentle rain on tender plants,

Like showers upon the grasses. (*Deut. 32:2*)

God's word is like rain in a dry land. It brings life. It makes things grow. There is much we can do of our own accord: we can plough the earth and plant the seeds. But in the end our success depends on something

beyond our control. If no rain falls, there will be no harvest, whatever preparations we make. So it is with Israel. It must never be tempted into the hubris of saying:

"My power, the strength of my own hand, has brought me this great wealth." (*Deut. 8:17*)

The Sages, however, sensed something more in the analogy. This is how Sifrei (a compendium of commentaries on Numbers and Deuteronomy dating back to the Mishnaic period) puts it:

Let my teaching drop as rain: Just as the rain is one thing, yet it falls on trees, enabling each to produce tasty fruit according to the kind of tree it is – the vine in its way, the olive tree in its way, and the date palm in its way – so the Torah is one, yet its words yield Scripture, Mishnah, laws, and lore. Like showers upon the grass: Just as showers fall upon plants and make them grow, some green, some red, some black, some white, so the words of Torah produce teachers, worthy individuals, Sages, the righteous, and the pious.¹

There is only one Torah, yet it has multiple effects. It gives rise to different kinds of

1. Sifrei, *Ha'azinu* 306.

**May the learning in this
Torah Tidbits be a merit for**

**Meni's beloved mother
Yiska Leah Koslowsky a"h
On her Yahrzeit, 12 Tishrei**

**And Sandy's beloved father
Naftali Lieman z"l**

**On his Yahrzeit, 12 Tishrei
*Koslowsky and Lieman families***

teaching, different sorts of virtue. Torah is sometimes seen by its critics as overly prescriptive, as if it sought to make everyone the same. The Midrash argues otherwise. The Torah is compared to rain precisely to emphasise that its most important effect is to make each of us grow into what we could become. We are *not* all the same, nor does Torah seek uniformity. As a famous Mishnah puts it:

“When a human being makes many coins from the same mint, they are all the same. God makes everyone in the same image – His image – yet none is the same as another.” (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5)

This emphasis on difference is a recurring theme in Judaism. For example, when Moses asks God to appoint his successor, he uses an unusual phrase: “May the Lord, *God of the spirits of all humankind*, appoint a man over the community” (Num. 27:16). On this, Rashi comments:

Why is this expression (“God of the spirits of all humankind”) used? [Moses] said to Him: Lord of the universe, You know each person’s character, and that no two people are alike. Therefore, appoint a leader for them who will bear with each person according to his or her disposition.

One of the fundamental requirements of a leader in Judaism is that he or she is able to *respect the differences* between human beings. This is a point emphasised by Maimonides in *Guide for the Perplexed*:

Man is, as you know, the highest form in creation, and he therefore includes the largest number of constituent elements. This is why the human race contains so great a variety of individuals that we cannot discover two persons exactly alike in any moral quality or in external appearance... This great variety and the necessity of social life are essential



EM | ETA MORRIS
JERUSALEM REALTY

Jerusalem Real Estate is My Business

Eta: 054-723-3863

Amazing stand alone homes in **OLD KATAMON, TALBIYA, BAKA, GERMAN COLONY**

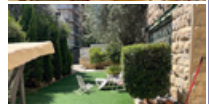
Historic semi attached villa for sale with permits to build 400 sqm with underground parking in the **GREEK COLONY**. Finished by one of Jerusalem's finest contractors. Call for more information



Shavua Tova



Opportunity to buy two properties in old Katamon. Primary residence 141 sqm built as 4 bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms. Additional unit of 19 sqm. Large garden in **private use of this apartment**.
Price 7,800,000



Fantastic townhouse for sale in **Old Katamon**. Total living space 255 sqm plus 74 sqm registered garden. Move in ready
Call for more information



Harav Berlin 116 sqm.
Good condition
Price: 5,200,000 NIS



In Old Katamon.
Newly renovated like brand new apartment on quiet street. 102 sqm with 3 bedrooms and 2 full bathrooms- terrace and view, safe room and Shabbat elevator.
Price: 5,500,000 NIS



Eta Morris Realty, Ltd.

etamorrisrealestate@gmail.com

Eta: 054-723-3863 etamorrisrealty.co.il

elements in man's nature. But the well-being of society demands that there should be a leader able to regulate the actions of man. He must complete every shortcoming, remove every excess, and prescribe for the conduct of all, so that the natural variety should be counterbalanced by the uniformity of legislation, so that social order may be well established.²

The political problem as Maimonides sees it is how to regulate the affairs of human beings in such a way as to respect their individuality while not creating chaos. A similar point emerges from a surprising rabbinic teaching:

“Our Rabbis taught: If one sees a crowd of Israelites, one says: Blessed be He who discerns secrets – because the mind of each is different from that of another, just as the face of each is different from another.” (Brachot 58a)

We would have expected a blessing over a
2. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, II:40.

crowd to emphasise its size, its mass: human beings in their collectivity.³ A crowd is a group large enough for the individuality of the faces to be lost. Yet the blessing stresses the opposite – that each member of a crowd is still an individual with distinctive thoughts, hopes, fears, and aspirations.

The same was true for the relationship between the Sages. A Mishnah states:

When Rabbi Meir died, the composers of fables ceased. When ben Azzai died, assiduous students ceased. When ben Zoma died, the expositors ceased... When Rabbi Akiva died, the honour of the Torah ceased. When Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa died, men of deed ceased. When Rabbi Yose Ketanta died, the pious men ceased... When Rabban Yochanan bar Zakai died, the lustre of wisdom ceased.... When Rabban Gamliel the Elder died, humility, purity, and the fear of sin ceased. (*Mishnah Sotah 9:15*)

There was no single template of the Sage. Each had his own distinctive merits, his unique contribution to the collective heritage. In this respect, the Sages were merely continuing the tradition of the Torah itself. There is no single role-model of the religious hero or heroine in Tanach. The patriarchs and matriarchs each had their own unmistakable character. Moses, Aaron, and Miriam each emerge as different personality types. Kings, priests, and prophets had different roles to play in Israelite society. Even among the prophets, “No two prophesy in the same style,” said the Sages (Sanhedrin 89a). Elijah was zealous, Elisha gentle. Hosea spoke of love, Amos spoke of justice. Isaiah's visions were simpler and less opaque than those of Ezekiel.

The same applies even to the Revelation at Sinai itself. Each individual heard, in the same

3. See Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973).

Dr Natan Silver

MBChB, FRCS, Dip Hand Surg

Hand Surgeon

UK & Israeli Trained



Holistic care for hand disorders
Adults and children of all ages

- Hand, wrist and thumb-base arthritis
- Joint replacement of all joints in the hand and wrist
- Hand and wrist trauma
- Injections in clinic



Expedited care for hand/finger injuries
requiring urgent attention

Elitemed Modiin Shaare Zedek
0733214181 (24/6) 026666174




words, a different inflection:

The voice of the Lord is with power (Ps. 29:4): that is, according to the power of each individual, the young, the old, and the very small ones, each according to their power [of understanding]. God said to Israel, “Do not believe that there are many gods in heaven because you heard many voices. Know that I alone am the Lord your God.”⁴

According to Maharsha, there are 600, 000 interpretations of Torah. Each individual is theoretically capable of a unique insight into its meaning. The French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas commented:

The Revelation has a particular way of producing meaning, which lies in its calling upon the unique within me. It is as if a multiplicity of persons... were the condition for the plenitude of “absolute truth,” as if each person, by virtue of his own uniqueness, were able to guarantee the revelation of one unique aspect of the truth, so that some of its facets would never have been revealed if certain people had been absent from mankind. (*Emmanuel Levinas, “Revelation in the Jewish Tradition,” in The Levinas Reader, ed. Sean Hand (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001), pp. 190–210.*)

Judaism, in short, emphasises the other side of the maxim *E pluribus unum* (“Out of the many, one”). For Judaism says: “Out of the One, many.”

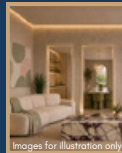
The miracle of creation is that unity in heaven produces diversity on earth. Torah is the rain that feeds this diversity, allowing each of us to become what only we can be. ■

4. Exodus Rabbah 29:1.

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

This Sukkot, Find the Place You’ll Call Home

Hag sameach from Noam Homes!



Images for illustration only

SHAAREI CHESED, JERUSALEM

300 Sqm~buildable | 131 Sqm Plot
Approved permit for a 4-story villa
and with elevator, garden & balcony.

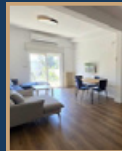
₪19,850,000



NACHALAT ACHIM, JERUSALEM

100 Sqm built | 180 Sqm plot
House facing Gan Sacker, rented unit,
and 240 sqm expansion rights.

₪ 10,850,000



RECHAVIA, JERUSALEM

2 BR | 75 sqm | 2.5 floors
Beautiful 2-Bedroom apartment, Bright,
private, renovated, 2 sukkah balconies.

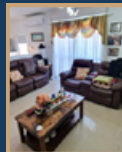
₪ 4,850,000



TAMAR, EFRAT

5 BR | 200 sqm | SEMI-DETACHED
Spacious & bright family home with
garden. Attic, 3 exposures, parking

₪ 5,900,000



ZAYIT, EFRAT

4BR | 168 sqm
Duplex Penthouse with panoramic views
& large balconies. 3 exposures, parking.

₪ 3,750,000



ELAZAR, GUSH ETZION

5 BR | Approx. 240 sqm
Bright corner cottage, garden, attic, 2
master suites, parking and Sukkah balcony

₪ 5,000,000

For new projects visit: sellingisrael.com



+972 52-587-8788
office@noamhomes.com
www.noamhomes.com

