



הַמִּזְרָחִי HAMIZRACHI PARSHA WEEKLY

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ISRAEL
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**בְּהַעֲלֹתְךָ אֶת הַנֵּרוֹת
אֶל מוֹל פְּנֵי הַמִּנְוָרָה
יֵאֲדָרוּ שְׁבַעַת הַנֵּרוֹת:
בַּמְדָּבָר ח:ב**

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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrahi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrahi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

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The Mindset of a Complainer

Get Busy Living or Get Busy Dying



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrahi

Perhaps the most stark example of both the psychological mindset of a complainer, as well as its destructive consequences appears in this week's *parsha*. So much so that the very story itself has become known as the 'story of the complainers'. The brief and enigmatic description of this obscure event in the desert contains deep and critical lessons for us today.

The timing of this event is most telling, as it marks the beginning of the end of the generation who came out of Egypt. It was *this* incident which unleashed a snowball effect of sin and suffering, turmoil and tragedy which resulted in the sin of the spies which ultimately sealed the devastating fate of an entire generation.

The Mystery

“וַיְהִי הָעַם כְּמִתְאַנְּנִים...”

“The people were complaining (as complainers), and it was evil in the ears of the Lord. The Lord heard and His anger flared, and a fire from the Lord burned among them, consuming the edges of the camp. And the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to G-d, and the fire receded. And he called the place Tave'ira (inferno).” (Bamidbar 11:1-3)

A number of critical questions emerge from these verses:

1. Why does the Torah use a most unusual word for the complainers, ‘מִתְאַנְּנִים’? Usually the word for complainers is *מתלוננים* as evidenced from the com-

plaints a year earlier, when the children of Israel left Egypt, regarding the lack of food and water in the desert. This root word *מתלונן* appears there ten times, and is clearly the more prevalent usage of the word. Indeed the modern Hebrew word for complaining is this same word – *מתלונן*. So why is *מתאונן* and not *מתלונן* used specifically here – a most unusual way of describing complaints?

2. The word *מתאוננים* used here for complainers appears with the prefix *כ*, which denotes a comparison. So, strangely the word describing these complainers is *כמתאוננים* – not only complainers, but they were *like* complainers. What does it mean to be ‘like a complainer’ – either you are complaining or you are not?
3. What were they complaining about? Strangely, the verse is absolutely silent on what was bothering them. This is most unusual, as such a harsh punishment was meted out with a fire burning in the camp and taking many lives, as well as being described as evil to G-d. Yet, the Torah is enigmatically silent on this issue. What did they do that was so bad and why does the Torah not mention it?

Solving the Mystery

Rashi and Seforno brilliantly unlock the mystery. Rashi explains that the key lies in the unusual word used here for the com-

plainers – מתאווננים. Rashi proves that this word is actually linked to another concept: a *pretext* – a reason given to justify a course of action that is *not* the real reason. This is the root word נ.א.ת. He brings proof from an explicit verse regarding Samson's marriage to Delila, where he hid his true motives. He was not looking for love but rather for a pretext, an excuse, to find a way to fight the Philistine stranglehold. As the verse says –

'And his father and mother were not aware, that (the incident) was from G-d, since he was looking for a **pretext** for the Plishtim' – 'כִּי הָאָנָה הוּא מְבַקֵּשׁ מְפֹלְשֵׁתִים' (Shoftim 14:4).

Turns out that what makes the complaints in this week's *parsha* unique is that they are in essence *an excuse for something else*. There is *no* genuine complaint – only an excuse and pretext concealing the real issue. This, therefore, is the reason that the Torah makes *no* mention whatsoever as to what they were complaining about – it is totally irrelevant. What they were complaining about is inconsequential because it was *not* the true reason for their complaining.

Now it becomes clear why the verse employs the unusual syntax, the prefix 'like' – that they were *like* complainers and not real complainers as they had no genuine and justifiable complaint.

This is a crucial point and a pivotal life lesson. If we are in tune with our emotional world, we notice that often our complaints are not really a reflection of what is truly bothering us. The object of the complaints is not the issue at hand, but rather a general frustration and inability to accept our reality. When this happens the complainer, often unaware themselves of the real reason, complains about anything and everything. This creates a self-eroding mindset of the complainer.

Why were they complaining?

A *passuk* that appears just before gives us some critical hints.

Having spent an entire year at Mount Sinai, receiving the Torah and basking in spiritual glory, it was now time to enter

the land of their forebears as G-d had promised.

'They journeyed from the Mountain of Hashem for a three day journey... to search out for them a resting place' (Bamidbar 10:33).

After a three day journey into the desert on the way to the Promised Land and to fulfill the very purpose of the Exodus from Egypt, they almost immediately begin to complain. The juxtaposition of the three day desert journey followed almost immediately by complaining is not by chance, explains the Seforno. They are indeed moaning about טורח הדרך – the burden of the journey. This is unjustifiable and indefensible, continues the Seforno. After all, this is the next step of the biggest journey of their lives and the very point of the Exodus – to enter the land and live according to the Torah they had just received. Additionally, their physical needs were also fully taken care of – booths for shade from the desert sun, the Well of Miriam according to the Sages providing water, and the *manna* for daily sustenance – they lacked for nothing. In short, fully physically prepared, spiritually loaded and ready to fulfill their destiny, they inexplicably express corrosive malcontent and complaints.

This is the crux – at a time that ought to have been one of unbridled excitement and spiritual anticipation they malevolently complain about the tiresome journey. They essentially reveal that they don't really want to be on the journey.

If at the height of the greatest race of your life, all you can complain about is your sore feet then you don't really want to be running the race at all. This reveals that at the heart of their complaint is genuine lack of desire to accept and embrace the purpose of the journey itself – to enter the Land.

It is for this reason, explains Rav Soloveitchik, that the fate of the Israelites in the desert – דור המדבר – was essentially sealed with this very moment. What began as unjustifiable petty complaining about the commitment to the journey itself, very quickly and unavoidably snowballed into the blatant and overt refusal

of the spies to lead the people into the Promised Land. If they reject the very purpose and destination of their journey – entering the land of their forebears that G-d designated – then they are at a point of no return. There is no turning back to Egypt now. The train left the station a long time ago – if you don't want to be on, then it is time to get off.¹

Get Busy Living

There is an eternal lesson and a great life truism to be learned; when people complain for the sake of complaining without any justifiable reason, it is nothing more than a pretext, an excuse. The issue at hand is not the petty complaining but rather a fundamental inability to accept their lot and to embrace their destiny. When this happens, people complain about anything and everything, in a way that is counterproductive and destructive. Get busy living or get busy dying.

May we all merit to accept our destiny, to accept and embrace that which we cannot change, and to endeavor to change positively and proactively that which is in our power to change.

1. This explains why the multiple complaints of the Children of Israel a year earlier when they left Egypt were tolerated and they were not punished. Their complaints then were understandable if not even justifiable. They too traveled into the desert for three days after the great miracle of the splitting of the sea in search of water. When arriving in the town of Mara, the water was bitter and undrinkable. Thirsty for water, they understandably complained to Moshe. It is impossible to survive in the desert without water, and after a three day journey of three million men, women and children, who had not yet found any oasis in the desert, the complaints were acceptable under the circumstances. Perhaps not the greatest show of faith, but certainly understandable. When they shortly thereafter complained about the lack of food in Midbar Sin, this was also understandable, as indeed their supplies from Egypt were running out – what were they supposed to eat during their arid desert sojourn? G-d then provided them with the *manna* which sustained them in the desert. In Refidim, they lacked water once again and again they complained and water was provided. In short – their complaints stemmed from a genuine shortage of food and water and were therefore understandable – what they complained about was genuinely about what they needed. This type of complaint is therefore legitimate and is called by a different word – מתלונן, complainer or תלונה – reasonable complaint. (See Shemot 15:22 through to the end of chapter 16.

PERSONAL GROWTH

Living In Hashem's World



Rabbi Reuven Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi
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אני מאמין באמונה שלימה שהבורא יתברך שמו
הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים והוא לבדו עשה עושה ויעשה לכל המעשים.

Where We Begin

Judaism's Thirteen Principles of Faith begin with the need to recognize Hashem as creator of the world. This philosophical focus on creation deepens our appreciation of why the Torah also begins with this topic. One might have thought that the Torah begins this way merely because creation was the world's *historical* beginning. The Principles of Faith beginning this way as well teaches us that creation is not just where our world began *historically*, but also where it begins philosophically.

Recognizing Hashem as creator facilitates a proper perspective on the world and everything in it.

Hashem's Ownership

Most significantly, this recognition helps us appreciate that Hashem is the world's true owner. As Rebbi Elazar Ish Bartuta taught: "Give Him (Hashem) what is His, because you and that which is yours are really His." When we donate our money, time or effort to Hashem, we naturally assume that we are giving Him something that is our own. In truth, we are merely giving Him what is (already) His. This is why Hashem formulates the donations to the *Mishkan* as "v'yikchu li *terumah*." It is Hashem *taking* what is His, not the Jewish People *giving* a donation.

Rashi begins his commentary to the Torah with a similar idea. He explains that the Torah begins with the creation narrative (rather than with the first *mitzvah*) in order to teach us where our rights to Eretz Yisrael come from. The response to those who brand our settlement of Israel as thievery is that Hashem created and (therefore) owns the world and thus rightfully distributes lands as He sees fit.

Hashem's ownership of the world also gives Him the right to set the conditions

for its existence. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks described it this way:

The Torah is not a book of science. It is a book of law. That is what the word "Torah" means. It follows that the opening chapter of the Torah is not a *scientific* account but a *legal* one. It is not an answer to the question, "How was the universe born?" It is an answer to a different question entirely: "By what right does God command human beings?" The answer is: because He created the universe. Therefore He owns the universe. Therefore He is entitled to lay down the conditions on which He permits us to inhabit the universe. This is the basis of all biblical law. God rules not by might but by right — the right of a creator vis-à-vis his creation and He has the right to give direction to those living in the world as to how to live their lives (We Are What We Do Not Own, Covenant and Conversation, Behar 2018)."

We express and reinforce our appreciation of Hashem as creator and thus owner by reciting *berachot* before deriving pleasure from His world. These *berachot* all describe Hashem as creator of the type of food we are about to eat. Our recognition of Hashem as creator permits us to partake of and enjoy His creations.

We reaffirm this recognition each Yom Rishon (which parallels the first day of creation) when we recite the *pesukim* "*La-Hashem ha'aretz u'meloah teivel v'yoshvei vah. Ki Hu al yamim yisadah v'al neharot yichone-nehah*" as part of that day's *shir shel yom*. These *pesukim* recognize Hashem's ownership over two distinct components of the world: the frameworks (*aretz* and *teivel*) and the content (*melo'ah* and *yoshvei vah*). During the first three days of creation, Hashem created the frameworks; during the last three, he filled them with content and inhabitants.

The Value of Each Creation

Hashem's creation of the world should also enhance our appreciation of everything in existence. The objects and phenomena we find in our world are not coincidental. They were created intentionally by Hashem, and thus have great significance.

Ben Azai taught: "Do not be scornful of any person and do not be disdainful of any thing, for each person has his hour and each thing has its place." This idea is rooted in Sefer Kohelet, which explains its assertion that "everything has its time" by adding that "Hashem *made everything* beautiful in its proper time."

This is how the Ba'al HaTanya explained Chazal's usage of the term "*briyot* (creations)" when discouraging hatred and encouraging love of all people.

The term includes even those we see nothing positive in but for the fact that Hashem created them. Our realization that Hashem created them should give us enough reason to (find reasons to) love them.

Ben Azai encourages us to appreciate not only people, but every creation. The Midrash famously tells us that Hashem created everything for a purpose. Even small creatures like frogs and spiders (can) serve as his emissaries. Another Midrash explains that, because David HaMelech doubted the value of spiders, Hashem arranged for him to need their help when hiding from Shaul.

Rebbe Shalom Dov Ber of Lubavitch extended this to every leaf of every tree. While on a leisurely walk, his young son Yosef Yitzchok (the Freidiker Rebbe) absentmindedly plucked a leaf off a tree. Surprised, the father turned to his son and admonished him for his seemingly harmless action: "The leaf you tore from its branch was created by the Ribbono Shel Olam for a specific purpose! It's alive,

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HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

The Menorah: Light, Might and the Spirit (Ruach) of Hashem



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

The *haftarah* for this week's *parasha*, Parshat Beha'alotcha (Zecharya 2:14-4:7) also serves as the *haftarah* for Shabbat Chanukah as it describes the *menorah* and its lights, connected also to the lighting of the *menorah* at the beginning of the *parasha*. While the *parasha* opens with lights, the prophecy of the *haftarah* concludes with this vision, and in fact relates to many other subjects of the *parasha* as well.

One of the main differences between the *parasha* and the *haftarah*, as evident through the vision of the *menorah* is the activity involved in the former and the passive nature of the vision and time period of the latter. The beginning of the *parasha* implores of Aharon to "Rise up and light the *menorah*..." "so he made the *menorah*" (8:2-4). In Zecharya's prophetic vision, the lights are already upon the *menorah*; they do not need to be placed there, nor does oil need to be poured, for there is a bowl on top of the *menorah* and two olive trees from which oil will be poured into it. Similarly, regarding the next subject of the *parasha*, the sanctification of the *leviim*; Aharon, the Kohen Gadol, is active - he presents the *leviim* before Hashem. In the *haftarah*, Yehoshua, the Kohen Gadol, passively stands before the angel, and the prophet hears Hashem's voice calling to those before Him to remove Yehoshua's soiled clothes from upon him and to dress him in festive garments.

The entire *parashat* Beha'alotcha introduces action and movement; starting with the lighting of the lamps and the construction of the *menorah*, followed by the presentation of the *leviim*, leaders representing the camp of Bnei Yisrael,

who receive the wagons of the *nesi'im* - vehicles of movement. The *parasha* continues with the human initiative of impure members of Bnei Yisrael who, though exempt from bringing the *korban Pesach*, ask to participate! Their initiative is answered affirmatively with a second opportunity of participation in national service - *pesach sheni*. The climax of the action in the *parasha* is the beginning of the journey of Bnei Yisrael following the ark of covenant. On one hand, Hashem leads with the cloud of glory, but the people must participate as well with the active blowing of the trumpets, and with the invitation to Chovav to help guide. If the *parasha* is one of active travels, then the *haftarah* is characterized as "encampment" - encouraging the returnees to Tzion that they have reached their final destination - "On that day... each man will call to his neighbor, inviting him to sit under his vine and under his fig tree" (3:10).

The *parasha* speaks of enemies and haters: "Rise up, Hashem; let Your enemies be scattered and let those who hate You flee from before You" (10:35). The *haftarah* offers a similar image: "Be silent, all flesh, before Hashem, for He has arisen from His holy habitation" (2:17). Just as enemies flee at the sight of the Ark on its journeys, so the Satan is silent before Hashem's rebuke. The key to the downfall of our enemies is described in the *parasha* and *haftarah* as not (only) strength and power, "but by My spirit." But both the *parasha* and the *haftarah* also speak of the potential of the inclusion of other families/nations within the Jewish people. "And Moshe said to Chovav the son of Re'u'el the Midianite... we are traveling to the place concerning

which Hashem said, I shall give it to you. Go with us and we shall be good to you" (10:29). Zecharya similarly - "And many nations will join themselves to Hashem on that day, and will be My people" (2:16).

Another parallel is evident in the form of leadership necessary to properly lead and inspire the nation. The *parasha* describes a crisis of leadership as the people complain for meat and Moshe feels that he has no more strength to continue leading the nation alone: "I cannot myself bear this whole nation, for it is too heavy for me" (11:14). Hashem offers two solutions: The first is to have seventy elders receive prophecy so that they may help provide spiritual leadership. The second is to rid the lust for meat by showing the nation that they shall die if they do not eat Hashem's *manna* for thirty days for they cannot survive by meat alone. The prophecy of the *haftarah* similarly introduces proper political and spiritual leadership. On either side of the *menorah* are two olive trees, symbolizing the two anointed leaders - Yehoshua, the Kohen Gadol, and the political leader and potential king, Zerubavel (4:6). These messages are evident in the repetitive words of the *parasha*: The issues of "*basar*" - meat/flesh (x8) may only be offset with proper "*ruach*" - spirit (7x). The *haftarah* encapsulates these ideas as it begins - "Be silent, all flesh (*basar*) before Hashem" and ends with the vision of the *menorah* which symbolizes much more than light - "Not by might, nor by power, but My spirit (*ruchi*), says Hashem..." (4:6).

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

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Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

Question: Can one use the same dishwasher for dairy and meat dishes?

Answer:

Washing Dishes Together

Washing dairy and meat dishes together may result in a direct interaction between the milk and meat leftover particles. This interaction would cause the dishes inside the dishwasher to become *treif*. **Therefore, one should not wash dairy and meat dishes together in the dishwasher** (Igrot Moshe and others). If one did wash them together, there is room to assume after the fact that the soap soiled the flavor, preventing the dishes from becoming *treif*.

However, may one use the same dishwasher for washing dairy and meat dishes consecutively? Most of the *halachic* responsa on this matter was written tens of years ago, and since then, dishwashers have changed. The details of the washing process play an important role in determining the *halachic* rulings.

Leftover Pieces

The main issue with using the same dishwasher is the leftover pieces that accumulate in the filter. According to Rav Moshe Feinstein, one can use a dishwasher for dairy and meat consecutively provided that one switches the racks. The dishwasher itself does not become *treif* from the leftover pieces as they are *batel b'shishim* (nullified by sixty) in the water. Nevertheless, Rav Moshe claims that the pieces interact with the racks directly, causing them to become milk or meat. Therefore, he rules that one must have

separate meat and dairy racks and switch them in between cycles.

Rav Rozen disagrees with Rav Moshe's leniency. While *bitul b'shishim* may occur when the dishwasher is full of water, there will not be *shishim* as the water is drained near the end of the cycle. Therefore, the leftover pieces in the filter will affect the status of the dishwasher itself, making usage of milk and meat consecutively problematic.

However, nowadays people generally wash off the dishes before putting them in the dishwasher. Additionally, soap is stronger nowadays. By the end of the washing it is almost impossible to find any remnants of milk or meat. Even if one piece does remain, it is deemed *pagum* (soiled) and is likely nullified in *shishim*.

Soap

It seems that we can be lenient regarding the trays as well. The Shulchan Aruch rules (YD 95:4) that ashes added to boiling water can prevent the transfer of taste between milk and meat as the ashes spoil the taste. Based on this, we can assume that placing soap (especially dish soap which is particularly strong) prevents the dishes from becoming *treif* as it soils the taste of the leftover particles.

In older dishwashers, soap was placed in the main compartment together with the dishes. The soap would thus have its effect immediately, preventing the trays from becoming dairy or meat. Nowadays, there is a separate soap compartment, and in many models the soap is not released until midway through the cycle. If this is the case, the soap does not help prevent

the interaction between the meat dishes and the trays. The trays would become meat, and we would not be able to use them for dairy dishes.

In order to solve this problem, one can place soap directly into the main compartment (liquid soap is better) in addition to the smaller compartment. This will prevent any issue with the trays becoming meat or dairy.

In this fashion, one may use the same dishwasher for dairy and meat dishes consecutively while using the same trays (Shu"t Yabiyah Omer).

Cooking Dairy and Meat Leftovers

Another problem which may arise relates to the leftover pieces in the filter. Cooking milk and meat is forbidden even if one does not eat it. There may be a concern that by running the cycle, one may cook meat and dairy particles together. While one could be lenient and assume that the soap soils the taste, it is nevertheless best to check the filter in between uses and clean it out.

Kebolo Kach Polto

Modern dishwashers feature an additional washing cycle of hot water at the end of the cycle. This may present another reason for ruling leniently.

Nowadays, dishwashers run at about 70 degrees Celsius. While generally one needs boiling water to extract absorbed taste, here we can apply the ruling of "*kebolo kach polto*." This principle states that the manner in which a vessel absorbs is the same manner in which it can be *kashered*.

Continued on next page

פרשת בהעלתך - למה נגרע?

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author



לא היה לו: למה יגרע שם אבינו מתוך משפחתו כי אין לו בן תנה לנו אֶחָזָה בְּתוֹךְ אָחֵי אָבִינוּ" (במדבר כ"ז, א-ד). בנות צלפחד באות אל משה עם אותה תחושה של "גריעה". במקרה זה התחושה פשוטה מאד - לא מדובר בהפסד מצווה חד פעמי, אלא ב"גרעון" קבוע - מי שלא קיבל נחלה בארץ, הפסיד לגמרי את החלק שלו בארץ, ויותר מכך - שמו איננו נזכר על שום נחלה ולכן שמו אובד, והוא מפסיד לחלוטין את השייכות לעם ישראל. דרישתן של בנות צלפחד מעידה על הבנת החשיבות והמשמעות של הנחלה - אין מדובר ברכוש אלא בשייכות של אביהן לעם ישראל ולארץ ישראל.

בראשית דרכם של ישראל במדבר ובסיום דרכם במדבר, עומדות שתי קבוצות אנשים המתעקשות על קיום שתי מצוות חשובות, המבטאות נקודות מהותיות בשייכות לעם ישראל: קרבן הפסח המבטא את השייכות לעם ולברית עם ה'; ונחלה בארץ המבטאת את השייכות לארץ ישראל.

שתי מצוות אלה חסרות לנו כיום, אך עיון בפרשות אלה מעורר את הגעגוע אליהן ואת הצורך לבטא ערכים חשובים אלה בדרכים נוספות.

ישראל במו ידיו: כל משפחה קונה שה ומעלה אותה לקרבן וכולם יושבים ואוכלים יחד ומספרים ביציאת מצרים. להפסיד אירוע כזה - זה לא רק הפסד של מצווה אחת באופן חד פעמי, אלא הפסד של תחושת השייכות לעם ישראל ולברית עם ה'.

החשיבות הרבה של חגיגת הפסח ע"י כל ישראל באה לידי ביטוי במהלך ההיסטוריה של עם ישראל - ברגעים קריטיים של כריתת ברית מחודשת בין ה' לישראל, דאגו מנהיגי העם לחגוג את הפסח בטהרה, בנוכחות כל ישראל: יהושע דואג לחגוג את הפסח עם כניסת ישראל לארץ (יהושע ה'); חזקיהו ויאשיהו מעמידים את חג הפסח כחלק חשוב מהברית המחודשת שהם כורתים עם ה', ומשתפים בכך את כל ישראל (דבה"ב ל'; דבה"ב ל"ה); ואף עזרא חוגג את הפסח בראשית ימי הבית השני (עזרא ו').

הדרישה של האנשים הטמאים להיות שותפים בחגיגת הפסח מעידה על הבנת חשיבות המצווה בעיניהם, ועל הרצון העז שלהם להיות שותפים ושייכים לכלל ישראל ולברית עם ה'. מתוך כך, ה' נענה להם בשמחה, ומחדש בזכותם את הדין של פסח שני, המאפשר הזדמנות נוספת להבאת קרבן הפסח בתנאים מסויימים.

פעם אחת נוספת הייתה פניה דומה אל משה רבנו: "וַתִּקְרַבְנָה בָנוֹת צִלְפָּחֵד... אָבִינוּ מֵת בְּמִדְבָּר... וּבָנִים

ש

נה לאחר שיצאו בני ישראל ממצרים, הם חוגגים לראשונה את חג הפסח: "וַיִּדְבֹר ה'... בְּמִדְבָּר סִינַי בְּשָׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיָּה לְצֵאתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן לַאֲמֹר: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַפֶּסַח בְּמוֹעֲדוֹ" (ט', א-ב). והנה הם נתקלים בשאלה הלכתית: "וַיְהִי אֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ טְמֵאִים לְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח..." (ו'). לכאורה התשובה פשוטה - טמא לא יכול להקריב קרבן פסח. אולם, אותם אנשים אינם מוכנים לקבל תשובה פשוטה זו, הם אינם מוכנים לוותר על הזכות להקריב קרבן פסח, והם טוענים: "לָמָּה נִגְרַע לְבַלְתִּי הַקָּרִיב אֶת קָרְבְּנוֹ ה' בְּמוֹעֲדוֹ..." (ז) - הם מרגישים שאם לא ישתתפו במצווה זו, הם "יגרעו". סביר להניח שאנשים רבים הפסידו פה ושם קיום מצוות מסוימות מכל מיני סיבות. מה מיוחד במצווה זו שהפסד חד-פעמי שלה כל כך מפריע להם, ומעורר בהם תחושה של "גריעה"?

נראה כי אותם אנשים הבינו היטב, שקרבן הפסח איננו מצווה רגילה ככל המצוות. קרבן הפסח הוא תזכורת ליציאת ישראל מעבדות לחירות, תזכורת לרגע בו הפכו ישראל לעם, ובעיקר - תזכורת לברית שנכרתה בין ה' לישראל ביום צאתם ממצרים, ברית בה הפכו בני ישראל לעם ה'.

הקרבנות קרבן הפסח נעשית בנוכחות כל העם, כקרבן תודה לאומי, בו לוקח חלק כל אחד ואחד מעם

Continued from previous page

Because the dishwasher could have only absorbed flavor at the temperature of 70 degrees, we can assume the flavor will be extracted at 70 degrees. While we do not rely on this *lechatchila*, it is an additional reason to rule leniently.

Rav Moshe Feinstein writes that it is proper to run an empty cycle between the dairy and meat cycles. Because of this additional washing cycle in modern dishwashers, one does not need to run an additional cycle in between the dairy and meat cycles.

Halacha Lema'ase

One may use a dishwasher for meat and dairy consecutively (not at the same time) under the following conditions:

- 1) The plates are lightly cleaned before being put into the dishwasher so there are no big leftover pieces.
- 2) The filter is cleaned before the cycle.
- 3) A bit of soap is added to the main compartment of the dishwasher (in addition to the small compartment).

- 4) No dairy dishes are washed at the same time as meat dishes (or vice-versa).

One who wishes to be more careful can designate his dishwasher as either meat or dairy and choose to use it for the other only if there is a real need. One who wishes to be even more careful can wait 24 hours between using them or switch out the trays.

● Compiled by Yaakov Panitch.

To Taste the Flavor



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

What do we do about boredom? The Torah portion of Beha'alotecha is full of the nation's complaints. In places named Taveirah or Conflagration (representing HaShem's burning anger) and Kivrot Hata'avah or Graves of Craving (signifying the fate of those who had a strong craving for meat), the people express great frustration before Moshe Rabeinu. Our commentators explain that they did not find meaning in what they were doing, did not connect to the

wonderful prospect of leaving Egypt, and therefore complained.

Rabbi Yaakov Edelstein once asked what would happen if someone repeated a chewing motion if there was nothing in his mouth. Soon enough, He would get tired. You are invited to try it. It is truly tiring to chew and chew when your mouth is empty.

But what happens when there is a delicious cake in your mouth, the rabbi asked, or some other delectable food? Then we

have the capacity to chew well, and to take another bite and then another, and not pay any attention whatsoever to the energy we expend. Why? There is a pleasant flavor that we taste. So too in life. In work, in raising children, in learning, in keeping *mitzvot*. We do not always experience sweetness in every action, but generally it is worthwhile to find and taste the flavor in what we do. Not to just chew for no reason.



שנה אבל רלבנטיות מאוד ושווה להשקיע בהן דקה, למרות העברית העתיקה. קולות הניגון, כך הוא כותב, מוציאים אותנו מהשגרה, ומי שזוכה לשמוע כמו שצריך את קול השופר – יודע בדיוק את סוד העניין:

”האדם מהיותו בעל חומר צריך התעוררות גדולה אל הדברים, כי הטבע מבלי מעיר יעמוד כישן, ואין דבר יעוררהו כמו קולות הניגון, ידוע הדבר, וכל שכן קול החצוצרות, שהוא הקול הגדול שבכל כלי ניגון. ועוד יש תועלת נמצא בקול החצוצרות לפי הדומה מלבד ההתעוררות אל הכוונה, כי בכוח הקולות יסיר האדם מלבו מחשבת שאר עסקי העולם ולא ייתן לב באותה שעה כי אם בדבר הקורבן, ומה אאריך וידוע זה לכל אשר היטה אוזן לשמע החצוצרות וקול שופר בכוונה“.

לפרמט, לעשות את זה אחרת. לפעמים החידוש הכי גדול בימינו הוא פשוט לא לחדש.



כאשר מפסיקים לדבר ומתחילים לנגן או לשיר – המציאות משתנה. עולם הניגון נמצא מעל לעולם הדיבור, והתורה אומרת לנו לעלות מדי פעם רמה, ולהיפתח אל המוזיקה. הבוקר, בחלק היומי בפרשת השבוע, משה מקבל הוראה להכין שתי חצוצרות כסף, ולתקוע בהן בזמנים יוצאי דופן (כשצריך לקרוא לעם, כאשר נאלצים לצאת למלחמה, וגם להבדיל בהקרב הקורבנות בחגים ובמועדים ובזמני שמחה). ”ספר החינוך“ מסביר בשפה נפלאה את המצווה המיוחדת הזו, לתקוע בחצוצרות. המילים נכתבו לפני כשמונה מאות

אלה שלוש מילים שהן לכאורה טכניות: ”ויעש כן אהרון“. פרשת השבוע מתארת איך אהרון מדליק את המנורה, ושלוש המילים האלה מוקדשות כדי לספר לנו שהוא אכן עשה את מה שאמרו לו.

רש”י מסביר למה שלוש המילים האלה מופיעות כאן: ”ויעש כן אהרון – להגיד שבחו של אהרון, שלא שינה“. כלומר, זה לא דבר פשוט, לעשות מה שאומרים לך. זה ראוי לשבח. אם נחזור לסיפור גן העדן, נראה שהחטא הראשון של האנושות הוא לא למלא הוראות באופן מדויק. לאכול מהעץ הלא נכון, לחשוב שאנחנו מבינים טוב יותר. התוצאה הייתה קשה. זה ממשיך גם בחטא של בני אהרון, בחטא העגל, בחטא המרגלים ועד לימינו אנו. קשה לנו לעשות דברים בפשטות, בתמימות, בדיוק כמו שצריך. אנחנו מעדיפים להמציא אלטרנטיבה,

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd Hashem spoke to Moshe, as follows: ‘Speak to Aharon, and you shall say to him, “When you light the lamps, towards the face of the *Menorah* the seven lamps shall cast light”’ (Bemidbar 8:1-2).

This week’s Parsha commences with the commandment to Aharon to light the *Menorah*. Based on the proverb, “For a candle is a *mitzvah* and Torah is light” (Mishlei 6:23), the *Menorah* and light are often used to symbolize Torah and knowledge. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l taught an important message about education from one of the details of the lighting of the *Menorah*.

The lights of the *Menorah* were required to burn, “from evening to morning before Hashem” (Shemot 27:21). Despite the fact that the long winter nights and the short summer nights would require different amounts of oil to burn through until the morning, a standard measurement was fixed for all the nights of the year:

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its physical structure is akin to a body, it’s imbued with a Divine life-force, it’s guided by *hashgacha pratit* (Divine Providence). Every blade of grass, every leaf on every tree is invested with G-d’s own vitality, created intentionally, each with a Divine spark, part of a ‘soul’ that has descended to earth to find its correction and fulfillment. How can you be so callous towards a creation of G-d?”

The Rishonim extended this idea to include even natural phenomena. The Ramban’s approach to sexuality is an excellent example. We see his approach in his response to the Rambam who saw the Hebrew language’s lack of words to describe sexual organs and activities as a sign of

“Our Sages measured half a “log” (about 300 ml) for the long nights of the period of Tevet, and so for all the nights” (Rashi, Shemot 27:21).

Our Sages calculated how much oil would be needed for the longest night of the year and adopted that amount all other nights. Why is there such insistence on using equal amounts of oil? Should we not be concerned about the extra oil going to waste?

Rav Feinstein taught from here that we must make a maximum effort to educate all our pupils, regardless of their ability.

Some pupils naturally soak up all the effort invested in them to burn brightly. Others may give the impression that much of the effort invested in them goes to waste. Nevertheless, maximum importance and effort should be allocated to each and every one of our pupils. Our education systems should not only cater for the brightest pupils but care for all. At the same time, when paying extra focus and attention to those who need more help,

the language’s holiness. The Ramban disagreed strongly with the Rambam’s explanation and proved the holiness of sexual relations from the fact that Hashem created them: “All ‘owners of Torah’ believe that Hashem created everything in His infinite wisdom. He did not create anything meant to be negative or disgusting.” For the Ramban, if Hashem created sexual organs and the sexual act, they cannot be negative or disgusting.

Rav Kook expanded this idea beautifully: “Anyone who thinks in a pure, godly way cannot hate or denigrate any creation or ability found in our world.” He explains further that hatred and denigration are rooted in our choice to focus on what is

we must still allow for our top pupils to reach their full potential.

Whilst all pupils deserve the same importance and focus, we should not reach the erroneous conclusion that all our pupils must be educated in the same way. Rav Feinstein’s message can be extended based on Rashi’s opinion in Menachot, “that in the summer he would make a thick wick and in the winter a fine wick so that it (all the oil) would be consumed in the summer (as well)” (Rashi, Menachot 89a).

According to Rashi, the thickness of the wick was altered to ensure that regardless of the length of the night, no oil would ever go to waste. Whilst all our pupils are equal when it comes to the importance and investment they deserve, each individual needs to be approached differently to ensure that none of our efforts go to waste.

Though some students may shine differently from others, we must adapt our methods to allow every individual to reach their full potential.

Shabbat Shalom!

lacking instead of identifying and appreciating the positive potential G-d imbues within His creations.

We often see the contents of our world as mundane and insignificant. Chazal remind us that everything was created by Hashem — and should be appreciated as such.

May our reflection upon the beginning of the Torah and of our Principles of Faith, (both of which remind us that we live in Hashem’s world) ensure our proper perspective on the world and everything within it.

● *Writeup by Adina Lev and Rafi Davis.*

From Despair to Hope



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

There have been times when one passage in this week's *parsha* was, for me, little less than life-saving. No leadership position is easy. Leading Jews is harder still. And spiritual leadership can be the hardest of them all. Leaders have a public face that is usually calm, upbeat, optimistic, and relaxed. But behind the façade we can all experience storms of emotion as we realise how deep are the divisions between people, how intractable are the problems we face, and how thin the ice on which we stand. Perhaps we all experience such moments at some point in our lives, when we know where we are and where we want to be, but simply cannot see a route from here to there. That is the prelude to despair.

Whenever I felt that way, I would turn to the searing moment in our *parsha* when Moses reached his lowest ebb. The precipitating cause was seemingly slight. The people were engaged in their favourite activity: complaining about the food. With self-deceptive nostalgia, they spoke about the fish they ate in Egypt, and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. Gone is their memory of slavery. All they can recall is the cuisine. At this, understandably, G-d was very angry (Num. 11:10). But Moses was more than angry. He suffered a complete emotional breakdown. He said this to G-d:

"Why have You brought this evil on Your servant? Why have I failed to find favour in Your eyes, that You have placed the burden of this whole people on me? Did I conceive this whole people? Did I give birth to it, that You should say to me, 'Carry it in your lap as a nurse carries a baby?' ... Where

can I find meat to give to this whole people when they cry to me saying, 'Give us meat to eat?' I cannot carry this whole people on my own. It is too heavy for me. If this is what You are doing to me, then, if I have found favour in Your eyes, kill me now, and let me not look upon this my evil." (Num. 11:11-15)

This, for me, is the benchmark of despair. Whenever I felt unable to carry on, I would read this passage and think, "If I haven't yet reached this point, I'm okay." Somehow the knowledge that the greatest Jewish leader of all time had experienced this depth of darkness was empowering. It said that the feeling of failure does not necessarily mean that you have failed. All it means is that you have not yet succeeded. Still less does it mean that *you are* a failure. To the contrary, failure comes to those who take risks; and the willingness to take risks is absolutely necessary if you seek, in however small a way, to change the world for the better.

What is striking about Tanach is the way it documents these dark nights of the soul in the lives of some of the greatest heroes of the spirit. Moses was not the only prophet to pray to die. Three others did so: Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), Jeremiah (Jer. 20:7-18) and Jonah (Jon. 4:3).¹

The Psalms, especially those attributed to King David, are shot through with moments of despair:

"My G-d, my G-d, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:2)

"From the depths I cry to You." (Ps. 130:1)

"I am a helpless man abandoned among the dead ... You have laid me in the lowest pit, in the dark, in the depths." (Ps. 88:5-7)

What Tanach telling us in these stories is profoundly liberating. Judaism is not a recipe for blandness or bliss. It is not a guarantee that you will be spared heartache and pain. It is not what the Stoics sought, *apatheia*, a life undisturbed by passion. Nor is it a path to *nirvana*, stilling the fires of feeling by extinguishing the self. These things have a spiritual beauty of their own, and their counterparts can be found in the more mystical strands of Judaism. But they are not the world of the heroes and heroines of Tanach.

Why so? Because Judaism is a faith for those who seek to change the world. That is unusual in the history of faith. Most religions are about accepting the world the way it is. *Judaism is a protest against the world that is in the name of the world that ought to be.* To be a Jew is to seek to make a difference, to change lives for the better, to heal some of the scars of our fractured world. But *people don't like change.* That's why Moses, David, Elijah, and Jeremiah found life so hard.

We can say precisely what brought Moses to despair. He had faced a similar challenge before. Back in the book of Exodus the people had made the same complaint:

"If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this desert to starve this whole assembly to death." (Ex. 16:3)

Moses, on that occasion, experienced no

crisis. The people were hungry and needed food. That was a legitimate request.

Since then, though, they had experienced the twin peaks of the revelation at Mount Sinai and the construction of the Tabernacle. They had come closer to G-d than any nation had ever done before. Nor were they starving. Their complaint was not that they had no food. They had the manna. Their complaint was that it was boring: “Now we have lost our appetite (literally, “our soul is dried up”); we never see anything but this manna!” (Num. 11:6). They had reached the spiritual heights but they remained the same recalcitrant, ungrateful, small-minded people they had been before.²

That was what made Moses feel that his entire mission had failed and would continue to fail. His mission was to help the Israelites create a society that would be the opposite of Egypt, that would liberate instead of oppress; dignify not enslave. But the people had not changed. Worse: they had taken refuge in the most absurd nostalgia for the Egypt they had left: memories of fish, cucumbers, garlic and the rest. Moses had discovered it was easier to take the Israelites out of Egypt than to take Egypt out of the Israelites. If the people had not changed by now, it was a reasonable assumption that they never would. Moses was staring at his own defeat. There was no point in carrying on.

G-d then comforted him. First, He told him to gather seventy elders to share with him the burdens of leadership. Then He told him not to worry about the food. The people would soon have meat in plenty. It came in the form of a huge avalanche of quails.

What is most striking about this story is that thereafter Moses appears to be a changed man. Told by Joshua that there might be a challenge to his leadership, he replies: “Are you jealous on my behalf? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His spirit on them” (Num. 11:29). In the next chapter, when his own brother and sister begin to criticise him, he reacts with total calm. When G-d punishes



What matters is the cause, not the person. That is what true humility is about.

Miriam, Moses prays on her behalf. It is specifically at this point in the long biblical account of Moses’ life that the Torah says, “The man Moses was very humble, more so than any other man on earth” (Num. 12:3).

The Torah is giving us a remarkable account of the psychodynamics of emotional crisis. The first thing it is telling us is that it is important, in the midst of despair, not to be alone. G-d performs the role of comforter. It is He who lifts Moses from the pit of despair. He speaks directly to Moses’ concerns. He tells him he will not have to lead alone in the future. There will be others to help him. Then He tells him not to be anxious about the people’s complaint. They would soon have so much meat that it would make them ill, and they would not complain about the food again.

The essential principle here is what the Sages meant when they said, “A prisoner cannot release himself from prison.” (Brachot 5b) It needs someone else to lift you from depression. That is why Judaism is so insistent on not leaving people alone at times of maximum vulnerability. Hence the principles of visiting the sick, comforting mourners, including the lonely (“the stranger, the orphan and the widow”) in festive celebrations, and offering hospitality – an act said to be “greater than receiving the Shechinah.” Precisely because depression isolates you from others, remaining alone intensifies the despair. What the seventy elders actually did to help Moses is unclear. But simply *being there with him* was part of the cure.

The other thing it is telling us is that surviving despair is a character-transforming experience. It is when your self-es-

teem is ground to dust that you suddenly realise that *life is not about you*. It is about others, and ideals, and a sense of mission or vocation. What matters is the cause, not the person. That is what true humility is about. As the wise saying goes, popularly attributed to C. S. Lewis: *Humility is not about thinking less of yourself. It is about thinking of yourself less.*

When you have arrived at this point, even if you have done so through the most bruising experiences, you become stronger than you ever believed possible. You have learned not to put your self-image on the line. You have learned not to think in terms of self-image at all. That is what Rabbi Yochanan meant when he said, “Greatness is humility.”³ Greatness is a life turned outward, so that other people’s suffering matters to you more than your own. The mark of greatness is the combination of strength and gentleness that is among the most healing forces in human life.

Moses believed he was a failure. That is worth remembering every time we think we are failures. His journey from despair to self-effacing strength is one of the great psychological narratives in the Torah, a timeless tutorial in hope.

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Why do you think the Torah includes stories of when our leaders face failure and despair?
- Have you ever experienced frustration and failure, like Moshe in this week’s parsha?
- Can you apply any of the messages G-d taught Moshe to help you in times of crisis?

1. So, of course, did Job, but Job was not a Prophet, nor - according to many commentators - was he even Jewish. The book of Job is about another subject altogether, namely: Why do bad things happen to good people? That is a question about G-d, not about humanity.

2. Note that the text attributes the complaint to the *asafsuf*, the rabble, the riffraff, which some commentators take to mean the “mixed multitude” who joined the Israelites on the Exodus.

3. *Pesikta Zutrata, Eikev.*

Emunas Chachamim



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

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ויהי בנסוע הארון ... ובנחה יאמר.

When the aron would journey ... And when it rested. (Bamidbar 10:35-36)

The Gemara in Shabbos (116a) cites a *machlokes Tanna'im* as to how many “Chumashim” comprise the *Chamishah Chumshei Torah*. We accept the opinion that there are in fact a total of seven *sefarim* in the Torah, as the inverted *nunim* found before and after the section of ויהי בנסוע הארון indicate that these *pessukim* are to be regarded as a *sefer bifnei atzmo*, a book unto itself. Thus, Sefer Bamidbar is actually made up of three *sefarim* – the portion of Bamidbar that precedes this section, the section of ויהי בנסוע הארון itself, and the portion that follows it. In accordance with this opinion, the Gemara quotes the passuk, “[Wisdom] has hewn out her seven pillars” (Mishlei 9:1), representing the seven *sefarim* of the Torah.

There is a halachah derived from the fact that the section of ויהי בנסוע הארון has the status of a *sefer bifnei atzmo*. The Gemara above teaches that if a *sefer* of Tanach became worn out, such that its writing was erased, as long as there remains a minimum of eighty-five intact letters, similar to the parsha of ויהי בנסוע הארון, the *sefer* retains the status of *kedushas kisvei hakodesh*.

What is the significance of labeling the section of ויהי בנסוע הארון as a *sefer bifnei atzmo*? It seems that this represents the idea that the Torah is able to travel from one continent to another and that it can be applied in all generations; the aron “travels.” Despite the fact that the world changes at such an accelerated pace, the *dinei haTorah* are as relevant today as they always were.

Throughout the generations, the principal method employed in *paskening* a

sheilah was being – מילתא למילתא – comparing one case to another, the case at hand to an established precedent. A *psak* seeks to accurately select the appropriate halachah that most resembles the current situation. For many years, Acharonim in Galicia and Hungary utilized this style of *psak* halachah in their *sefarim* of *sheilos u'teshuvos*. They would cite earlier *teshuvos*, and their discussion centered around whether the circumstances of the *sheilah* they had been sent were analogous to one *teshuvah* or another.

However, this method is difficult to implement in a fast changing world. If merely superficial similarities are used in evaluating the various cases, one may easily draw the incorrect conclusion. Instead, it became more appropriate to employ a different approach, based on reasoning. Thus, in the Lithuanian *teshuvos* of the past hundred years, starting from the time of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, rather than *paskening* by analogy, a system of *paskening* by analysis was developed. Rav Moshe Feinstein, for example, first seeks to elucidate the underlying principles of the relevant Gemaros and Rishonim. After clarifying the definitions of the halachah, the *psak* in the particular case presented to him emerges logically.

As an example, in the 1800s, when electric bulbs first began to be used widely, the Maharsham (2:247) held that turning on lights on Shabbos could not possibly be a *melachah d'oraisa* of *hav'arah* (kindling), since these lights did not exist in the Mishkan from which we derive the thirty-nine forbidden *melachos* of Shabbos. We have however accepted

Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky's dissenting opinion (Achiezer 3:60), that heating a metal filament until it glows constitutes a *melachah* of *hav'arah* (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 12:1).

In fact, Rav Soloveitchik reported that Rabbi Chaim Ozer would routinely use an electric bulb for Havdalah in order to demonstrate how strongly he felt that electricity should be treated exactly like fire from the perspective of Halachah.

With the strength of Torah SheBe'al Peh, we can adapt *halachos* that were originally formulated millenia ago and apply them to the modern world.

Along these lines, Maseches Sofrim (16:5) teaches that if the entire Torah would have been committed to writing, it would not be a dynamic Torah, but, instead a rigid one that is “etched in stone.” Torah SheBe'al Peh, with its concomitant rabbinic input, allows the Halachah to keep pace with an ever-changing world.

The Halachah does not change, but the application of a previously held *halachah* may have changed due to a different set of circumstances. Through an understanding of the underpinnings of the *halachah*, the *dinei haTorah* relate to every era and location. Thus, the same halachic system that was valid two-thousand years ago in the days of the Gemara is relevant nowadays as well, despite completely different conditions.

The Torah is able to travel. It transcends time and place, and it applies in each generation, to every society. This was a recurrent theme in many of Rav Soloveitchik's *derashos*. He would make the point by stating, “If I would have been the

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Appreciating The Mitzvos We Don't Have To Do



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
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In the third Aliyah of our Parsha, we are told the story of the *Tamei L'Nefesh Adam*, the people who were impure and unable to bring a *Korban Pesach*. On the one hand, it can be seen as very inspiring and praiseworthy to see this effort and desire they had to still want to bring their *Korbanos*. On the other hand, if the reality was that at this given time they were unable to do so, should this have been something that was just accepted by them? Could it be that they were lacking the recognition of what the *Ratzon Hashem* was for them on this Pesach?

We all remember that during times of lockdown during the pandemic, we were forced to *Daven* by ourselves rather than joining for *minyanim* together in our *Shuls*. Though this is what we would have ideally wanted, we recognized that what Hashem wanted for us during that time was to stay home. This was the attitude we all needed at this time. Why is it that this was not the same attitude of the impure members of *Am Yisrael* as well?

Rav Mordechai Druk ZT"l (in his sefer *Darash Mordechai* page 115) quotes Rav Gedaliya Scorr ZT"l who brings a *Zohar* (Balak 186A). A story is told of a child who did not want to approach Rav Yitzchak and Rav Yehuda as he sensed that they did not say *Kriyas Shema* in the right time. Rav Yitzchak asked why this was the case and responded that they had been helping a *Chasan* and *Kallah* and because of that were not obligated in the *Mitzvah* of *Kriyas*

Shema. Rav Druk asks why is it that the boy did not take this into consideration? He explains that despite the fact that *halachically* they were not *chayav* in the *Mitzvah* at the time, there is something that is still missing. The *Kedusha* of that potentially fulfilled *Mitzvah* is lacking. The child was unable to come close to *Rabbonim* because he felt a certain sadness on the basis that there was a *Mitzvah* that was not done even though it was not required.

So too, by our *Parsha* even though they were not *chayav* to bring a *Korban* there was a feeling of inferiority to the rest of *Am Yisrael* and awareness that they were not taking part in a *Mitzvah* being performed by all others.

Rav Druk quotes a story of a *Talmid* in a *Yeshiva* in Europe who before Rosh Hashana was asked to blow *Shofar* for his *kehilla* back home because nobody else could do so. He asked the *Mashgiach* of the *Yeshiva* whether it would be better to go back so there would not be a Rosh Hashana that would go by in a town with no *shofar* blowing or to stay in *Yeshiva* as was his will. The *Mashgiach* answered immediately that the *Talmid* must return home. As the *Talmid* after Rosh Hashana returned to the *Yeshiva* he had noticed that the *Mashgiach* was acting rather distant from him. He asked him why this was so. He thought he had done what the *Mashgiach* had told him to do. The *Mashgiach* answered, "It is true, you have done what had been told to you, yet you

are not conducting yourself in a way as if you feel you have missed anything or that there was anything lacking in your Rosh Hashana".

This is the way a person should try to feel about his relationship with Torah and *Mitzvos*. There are times of course where one is required to do a *Mitzvah*, and it is true that it can be the *Ratzon Hashem* for him to refrain from doing this *Mitzvah*. The question one should ask is how did they feel because of this. We know that when there is a *Chasan* in our *Shuls*, *Tachanun* is not said and it seems to be a cause for celebration. This must be seen as an opportunity that is being missed even though it is supposed to be missed.

Rav Druk ends his piece by quoting the Gemara in Megillah (16A) that states *Talmud Torah* is greater than *Hatzalos Nefashos* (saving one's life). How can this be? When Mordechai recognized that *Klal Yisrael* was in danger and set out to make sure they would be saved, do we say he did the wrong thing because he gave up the precious time that could have been used for learning? *Chas V'Shalom* we should think of it that way, but at the same time we must recognize that even when we take upon something significant for ourselves we should still be able to recognize and reflect on the *Mitzvos* that we are sacrificing and the value they still have even when we can refrain from fulfilling them.

● Edited by Zac Winkler.

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Rambam, I would have written a fourteenth *ikar ha'emunah*: This Torah can be fulfilled under all conditions, and it

has significance in every country in the world and in every period in history." The *pessukim* of ויהי בנסוע הארון, especially

their special status as a *sefer bifnei atzmo*, convey this message.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.

Are You Humble?



Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein
Chief Rabbi of South Africa

Life is a tightrope of competing interests and demands. To navigate it requires balance. Work-life balance. Balanced finances. A balanced diet. Judaism, too, espouses balance. We avoid extremes.

The Rambam is well known for his Golden Mean – a formula for prescribing moderation in various character traits, and finding what he calls “the middle path”. But there are two exceptions, two areas where we ignore balance. Where the extreme is the ideal. The first is anger; we should always seek the extreme opposite of anger. And the second is humility. We should always strive for extreme humility. “If a man is only [moderately] humble,” the Rambam writes, “he is not following a good path. Rather, he must hold himself humble and his spirit very unassuming.” (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot De’ot 2:3)

The Rambam derives this lesson from a verse in this week’s parsha. The Torah describes the greatest leader of Jewish history, Moses, as follows: “Moses, the man, was very humble [more than] any person on earth.” (Numbers 12:3) Moses teaches us that there is no room for the middle path between arrogance and humility; that a person should always be extremely humble.

The Ramchal, says humility is not only an imperative; it’s one of the highest spiritual and moral levels that a person can achieve. In his great ethical work, Mesillat Yescharim, and based on a verse in the Talmud, he sets out an ascending ladder of spiritual greatness – and right near the top of the ladder is humility.

The Ramchal defines humility as a mindset – of not thinking one is better than others, and of feeling oneself undeserving

of praise and honour. In this vein, Rav Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenberg points out that Moses, the person who led the Jewish people out of Egypt, who spoke with G-d Himself, who reached the pinnacle of human perfection, could have (perhaps with some justification) looked down on others. A person with lesser gifts than Moses would have had a more natural inclination towards humility. And yet he mastered himself and held others in great esteem, never looking down on them, never succumbing to arrogance.

But how do we bring humility into our lives? The Ramchal outlines a four-step formula. The first step is to modify the way we speak, walk and sit: we should speak gently and kindly, we should not walk with a swagger, and we should not jostle for the most prominent seat in a room.

The second step is to get used to remaining silent in the face of insult: arrogant people who hold themselves in high regard take offence at the smallest slight, but humble people, while they recognise their self-worth and are comfortable with themselves, don’t become indignant at offence from others.

The third step to humility is to run away from honour and recognition. This applies especially, say our sages, in the context of leadership. The Torah outlook on leadership is summed up in a passage in the Gemara, where a sage who is appointing two young people for a leadership position, tells them: “Do you think I give you power and lordship [over others]? I give you service!” (Horiot 10a)

The fourth step is to practise giving *kavod* – honour – to other people. As it says in Pirkei Avot: “Who is honoured?

One who honours people.” (Avot 4:1) The Mesillat Yescharim says there are many ways to honour others – from simply greeting people in a warm manner, to being extremely careful not to disrespect another person.

One of the most striking tributes to the value of humility comes from the Ramban, the Chief Rabbi of Catalonia. In 1263, he was challenged to a theological debate by Pablo Christiani, a Jewish convert to Christianity, in the presence of King James I. The Ramban emerged victorious, though was banished from Europe as a result. Fleeing to Israel, he wrote a famous letter to his son who had remained in Catalonia, laying out a few core Torah values to guide him in life. And it’s humility that features prominently in the letter.

“This sterling quality [of humility] is the finest of all admirable traits,” he writes. He advises his son to “speak gently to all people at all times [as] this will protect you from anger – a most serious character flaw which causes one to sin. Once you have distanced yourself from anger, the quality of humility will enter your heart.”

He goes on to describe humility as the gateway to G-d consciousness. “Through humility the awe of G-d will intensify in your heart for you will always be aware of where you come from and to where you are destined to go...”

He writes of the futility of arrogance: “And now my son, understand clearly that one who is arrogant in his heart towards other people rebels against the sovereignty of heaven, for he glorifies himself in G-d’s own robes... For indeed of what should man be prideful? If he has wealth – it is G-d who makes one prosperous. And if honour – does honour not belong to G-d?

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The Miraculous Mann – Crystal Clear!



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In Parshat Beha'alotcha we encounter Bnei Yisrael complaining about their lack of delicacies. They crave meat. They declare:

“We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, the watermelons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now, our bodies are dried out, for there is nothing at all; we have nothing but manna to look at.” (Bamidbar 11:5-6).

It is a bit strange that they are longing for the food they ate in Egypt as slaves. One would have thought that the meals they were provided were not of such high quality. Furthermore, Bnei Yisrael were provided with the *mann* in the midbar, gifted by G-d. The gemara tells us in Yoma (75), that the taste of the *mann* essentially resembled the flavor one desired. It could taste like meat or fish. If so, then why did the people feel as if they lacked sufficient sustenance? If they yearned for fish, all they had to do was think of fish when they ate the *mann* and they would enjoy the taste of fish. What exactly were they lacking?

The Nachlat Tzvi offers an explanation based on a close reading of the *pasuk*.



**Only after we recognize
that it is all from Hashem,
we will be satiated.**

The complaint of the people is that they “have nothing but manna to look at” אֵין כֹּל אֶל־הֶמָּן עֵינֵינוּ בְּלֹתֵי אֶל־הֶמָּן עֵינֵינוּ. True they may taste a savory steak or fine fish. The issue was, as top chefs put it: “it’s all about the presentation.” All they saw before their eyes was the *mann* and not the texture of fish or steak. As the gemara in Yoma 74b states that a blind person is never satiated because he does not see his food.

The flaw of the people was their tunnel vision in the desert. They did not recognize the amazing gift they were granted by G-d. The miraculous *mann* provided all the necessary nutrition and *chazal* tell us that it did not even turn into waste. The nation’s shortsightedness led them to focus on what was directly in front of them rather than fully appreciate the greater picture.

In a similar light, Rav Asher Weiss in his commentary on *zemirot L’shabbat*, cites the Klozenberg Rebbe who interprets the words ושבענו מטובך – we should be satiated from your goodness. When we recite these words, we are not only thanking Hashem for all he has provided, but requesting that Hashem enable us to recognize all the goodness that He bestows upon us. Only after we recognize that it is all from Hashem, we will be satiated. We have to “see”, understand and comprehend that it was provided by G-d and only then will we be able to appreciate it fully and be satiated.

Unfortunately, people take things for granted and do not always recognize the effort another invested, or that it is all coming from Above. May we learn a lesson from those that complained about the *mann* in the *midbar*. Always see the bigger picture and appreciate all our blessings. Perhaps that is why the *mann* is described as a crystal כְּעֵין הַבְּדוּלָה – so we can see through its appearance and appreciate its essence.

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If he takes pride in wisdom – let him understand that G-d may remove the speech of the most competent and take away the wisdom of the aged.”

And then he closes the argument. “Thus all people stand as equals before their Creator... he casts down the lofty... he elevates the downtrodden. Therefore humble yourself for G-d will lift you”.

And so from the Ramban we see the constellation of Torah values which are founded on humility: gentleness, kindness, slowness to anger, awe of G-d and recognizing Him as the source of all blessings; and at the heart of it all, the deep-seated belief in the equality of all people.

If we adopt this mindset, then there’s simply no room for airs and graces.

Humility becomes a natural state of being, and with it, self-mastery. It’s no coincidence that Moses, the greatest prophet ever, was also the most humble human being. Humility and greatness are two sides of the same coin.

The Great Defender of the Jews



Michal Horowitz
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In this week's *parsha*, the nation sets out to leave Har Sinai, under the impression that they are about to enter into Eretz Yisrael. How certain is the nation that their arrival in the Land is imminent? Moshe Rabbeinu extends an invitation to Yisro to join them on their historic journey: *And Moshe said to his father-in-law: We are journeying to the place of which Hashem has said: I shall give it to you. Go with us and we shall treat you well, for Hashem has spoken of good for Israel* (Bamidbar 10:29).

Rashi (ibid) says: *We are journeying to the place – (Moshe meant to say) Immediately! In another three days we are entering the land! For on this first journey, they journeyed with intent to enter the Land of Israel, but they did not enter immediately, for they sinned with the sin of the תְּהַאָּוִיִּים (those who seek pretexts and excuses, Bamidbar 11:1-3). And why did Moshe include himself among them? Because the decree was not yet decreed upon him, and he was certain that he too would enter!*

How moving, how tragic, how difficult to read these verses... At this juncture, the nation believed they were about to enter the Land, and Moshe Rabbeinu along with them. *We are traveling to the Land, in just three days we will cross the Yarden River, come with us and it will be good for you!* Alas, due to the sins of the nation, it was not meant to be.

And yet, Rashi indicates here that the initial stirrings of rebellion of the תְּהַאָּוִיִּים, later in our *parsha*, was the beginning of the end for the *dor yotzei Mitzrayim* (the generation that left Egypt and would not enter the Land). Even before the slander, and sin, of the spies, those who were seeking pretexts, those who complained, those who rejected the goodness of G-d in their midst, brought ruination upon the nation.

And the nation were like those who seek pre-

texts of evil in the ears of Hashem, and Hashem heard and His wrath flared... And the rabble that was among them desired a desire, and the Children of Israel also turned, and they wept, and said: Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we would eat in Egypt for free; the cucumbers, and the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic; and now our soul is parched, there is nothing, we have nothing before our eyes but the manna! (Bamidbar 11:1-6).

According to the most basic understanding of the *pshat* (text), the nations murmurings, dissent, dissatisfaction and ingratitude towards G-d are readily apparent in these verses. They are unhappy and complaining.

However, the great defender of the Jews, Rav Levi Yitzchak m'Berditchev zt'l, zy'a (1740-1809) offers an entirely different perspective. One that is not negative, but positive. One that puts the nation, not in a derogatory light, but in a complimentary one.

“Moshe was beleaguered by throngs of hungry people crying out for meat. ‘Who will feed us meat?’ they said. ‘We still remember the fish we ate in Egypt.’ What is the connection between these two statements? If they had a desire for meat, why did they find it necessary to mention the fish that they ate in Egypt?”

“Our Sages tells us, explains R' Levi Yitzchak, that the manna had the taste of almost all the other foods in the world. If a person wanted it to taste like a certain food then it did. But there was one condition. The person had to know the taste of that food; it had to be lodged in his memory. Then, when he recalled the taste of that food, he could transfer those flavors from his memory into the manna and enjoy the experience of eating that food. But if he had never tasted that food, if that taste was unknown to him, he could not

experience the pleasure of eating that unfamiliar food when he ate the manna.

“The taste of kosher meat, having been slaughtered and salted according to the instructions of the Torah, differs from the taste of non-kosher meat. The Jewish people were not familiar with the taste of kosher meat. The only meat they knew was non-kosher meat which they had eaten in Egypt before they were instructed with kosher laws. Therefore, they could not experience the taste of kosher meat in the manna.

“That is what they were saying to Moshe. ‘Who will feed us meat?’ How will we experience the enjoyment of eating meat? We have no recollection of the taste of kosher meat in our memories. We do not have this problem with fish, because there are no special instructions for the preparation of fish. Therefore, since we remember the fish that we ate in Egypt for free we can experience the taste of fish in the manna. But how will we have the taste of meat?” (Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev According to the Weekly Parashah, Artscroll Mesorah, p.195).

According to the *pshat*, the תְּהַאָּוִיִּים, those seeking pretexts, along with those who desired desires, הַתְּאַוִּי תְּאַוָּה, were motivated by rejection of the good Hashem had bestowed upon them from Egypt to now. And yet, for one as great as a Rav Levi Yitzchak m'Berditchev, who always strove to see the good in G-d, and in His nation, there is a way to explain even these murmurings and complaints.

Who is the man who desires life, who loves days? One who sees the good. It is he who will guard his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He is one who turns away from bad to do good, who seeks peace and pursues it (Ps.34:13-15).

“Chalsha Da’ato Shel Aharon”



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

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Why was Aharon depressed? The first Rashi in this week’s *Parsha* deals with this question as he explains the juxtaposition between the first topic in Parshat Bha’alotcha – for Aharon to light the *Menorah* (8:1-5), and the last topic in Parshat Naso – the twelve day dedication ceremony of the *Mizbayach* (7:1-88):

“Why is the parsha of the *Menorah* juxtaposed to ‘*chanukat ha’nssiim*’ (the special offering brought by the princes of each tribe)? – When Aharon saw the daily dedication offering by the ‘*nssiim*’, he became DEPRESSED, because neither he, nor his *shevet*, took part in this ceremony. G-d assured Aharon saying: Do not worry, YOUR PORTION IS GREATER than theirs, for you are to light and attend to the MENORAH every morning and evening.”

Ramban immediately questions the basic assumption of this Midrash (as quoted by Rashi):

“Could it be that Aharon is depressed because he felt ‘left out’? After all, each “*nasi*” enjoyed only ONE day of special attention, while Aharon was at the center of attention during each of those TWELVE DAYS! Did he not offer all of the *korbanot* on each of those days, as well as the *ktoret* and *korban tamid*?”

Furthermore, during the *miluim* ceremony (see Vayikra 8:1-36) that preceded that dedication, he and his children enjoyed seven days of ‘exclusive attention’. For what possible reason could Aharon have felt ‘left out’?

In this commentary, Ramban is unable to find a satisfying explanation of this Midrash according to “*pshat*”. Instead,

he suggests that the intention of the Midrash is not to explain the *psukim*, but rather to show a biblical source for the Hasmonean revolt:

“Even though Aharon did not participate in the dedication of the *mizbayach* of the *Mishkan*, in the merit of his descendants – the Hasmoneans – the *mizbayach* of the Second Temple will be dedicated. Furthermore, in commemoration of that event, a *Menorah* will be lit in every home, even after the destruction of the Temple.”

One could suggest an alternative explanation of the *Midrash*, without the need of limiting its significance to the events of the Hasmonean revolt.

The opening statement of the *Midrash* – “*chalsha da’ato shel Aharon*” (Aharon became depressed) – requires explanation.

Considering that Aharon is indeed at the center of attention and very busy during each day of the dedication ceremony, why should he have become depressed?

To understand Aharon’s reaction (according to the *Midrash*) we must consider the political realities of his predicament. *Bnei Yisrael* are about to leave *Har Sinai* and begin their journey to conquer and inherit the Land of Israel. Although Aharon is indeed a very key figure during *Bnei Yisrael*’s short stay in the desert, he is apprehensive about what will most probably take place once *Bnei Yisrael* leave *Har Sinai*. The focus of national attention will shift to the excitement of military initiatives and political enterprise. *Har Sinai*, and maybe even the *Mishkan*, will soon be ‘long forgotten’.

Once the conquest of *Eretz Canaan* would begin, it will be the twelve “*nssiim*” (the

tribal leaders) who will hold the highest positions of national leadership. They will establish economic policy; they will make treaties with foreign dignitaries; they will make speeches at national gatherings; they will lead the nation in war.

Thus, it is quite understandable why Aharon becomes depressed. When he sees the attention that the twelve “*nssiim*” receive, he realizes the insignificance of his position within the emerging national leadership. What ministry post will he receive? In his own eyes, he may have begun to view his job as merely the “*shamash*” (a beadle/attendant) taking care of the *Mishkan*. Indeed, a very technical job at best.

Will he have any lasting influence on the nation? At best, he may possibly be appointed “*sar ha’datot*” – the Minister of Religion. Within a short time, Aharon fears, he will be distanced from national leadership.

Thus far, we have suggested a reason for Aharon’s depression (according to the *Midrash*). What is the significance of G-d’s consolation – that he will light the *Menorah*?

Although the *Midrash* is well aware of Aharon’s numerous responsibilities in the *Mishkan*, it chooses specifically the *Menorah* to symbolize an additional aspect of his national duties, i.e. teaching G-d’s laws to the people. This double purpose is mentioned in the blessing to Shevet Levi in Parshat v’Zot ha’bracha:

“They shall TEACH Your laws to Yaakov, and your instructions to Yisrael, they shall offer Your incense... and offer the ‘*olah*’ (“*kalil*”) on Your *mizbayach*...” (Devarim 33:10)

Once *Bnei Yisrael* will enter the land,

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Never be Satisfied



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Parashat Behaalotecha begins with the command concerning the lighting of the Menorah in the Mishkan, and Rashi comments that this command was given in order to “console” Aharon. The previous section – the final section of Parashat Naso – described the special gifts brought by the Nesi'im, the twelve tribal leaders, in honor of the dedication of the Mishkan. The leader of every tribe brought several lavish gifts and numerous animals for sacrifices to G-d. The only tribe that did not participate in this event was Aharon's tribe, the tribe of Levi. Unlike the leaders of all the other tribes, Aharon did not bring a special gift and special sacrifices for the Mishkan's inauguration. Aharon was distressed over having been excluded from this event, and thus Hashem told Moshe to console Aharon by reminding him of the special privilege he had to kindle the Menorah each day.

The Ramban raises the question of why Aharon would have felt distressed over not participating in the Mishkan's dedication. He was selected from among the entire nation to be the Kohen Gadol, who is granted several unique privileges, including the privilege of entering the Kodesh Ha'kodashim – the most sacred chamber in the Mishkan – on Yom Kippur each year. Given his special status, why

would his exclusion from the Mishkan's dedication have mattered? Why did he need the comfort of being reminded of his privileges as Kohen Gadol?

Rav Yerucham Levovitz of the Mir Yeshiva (1873-1936) explained that when it comes to Mivot, righteous people are indeed “greedy.” Their love for Mivot is so overpowering that they are never content, and always want more. Just as a wealthy person always looks to increase his fortune, and is never satisfied with what he has, a spiritually “wealthy” person is never satisfied with his “fortune.” He is always looking for more Misva opportunities. And thus despite all the special Mivot Aharon was able to perform by virtue of his position as Kohen Gadol, he was never satisfied, and he felt distressed by every missed opportunity to perform yet another Misva.

Our Sages make a similar comment about Moshe Rabbenu. Moshe's “resume” included accomplishments that no human being could ever possibly come close to matching, such as leading Beneh Yisrael out of Egypt, splitting the sea, and spending forty days with G-d receiving the Torah without eating or drinking. And yet, the Gemara says, Moshe pleaded with G-d to allow him to enter Eretz Yisrael so he could perform the Mivot that are unique to the Land of Israel. Moshe did

not need to enter Eretz Yisrael to establish his legacy of greatness, but this did not matter. His love for Mivot was so immense that he was constantly seeking more opportunities.

The Hafetz Haim (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, 1839-1933) was once seen walking about outside his home on a frigid, snowy night. A family member was asked what he was doing outside in those conditions, and it was discovered that he was doing this already for three consecutive nights. He had not yet recited Birkat Ha'lebana that month, and so he was waiting outside every night to see if the clouds would dissipate for a moment to allow him to see the moon and recite the Beracha. The Hafetz Haim was already a world-renowned Sage and author of groundbreaking Torah works. If he would have missed Birkat Ha'lebana that month, his stature of greatness would not have been compromised one iota. But this did not matter. He loved Mivot and passionately sought each and every opportunity he could get to perform them.

This is the lesson we should learn from Aharon Ha'kohen. When it comes to spirituality, we should be greedy. We must never be satisfied with what we've accomplished, and should always be striving to reach even greater and loftier heights, one Misva at a time.

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teaching the laws of the Torah will become the PRIMARY duty of the *Kohanim* and *Leviim*. Since their work is divided into 24 week shifts, the average *kohen* or *levi* would find himself working in the *Mishkan* only two weeks a year. Therefore, most of their time would be spent teaching and judging the people. It was for this reason that their cities are scattered throughout the twelve tribes of

Israel.

Thus, the *Menorah* may symbolize specifically this duty of the *Kohanim* – “*chinuch*”, teaching. If the purpose of the *Menorah* is to spread light, then the purpose of the *kohanim* is to spread Torah to the entire nation. This understanding can explain why Aharon is consoled when told that it is his job to light the *Menorah*.

If we continue with our parallel to the realm of national politics, one could explain that Aharon and his “*shevet*” are consoled – for they are given a responsibility similar to the control the Ministry of Education and Justice (in addition to the Ministry of Religion) – a cabinet position no less important than any other!

The Eyes of the Ger



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
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Moshe Rabbeinu almost begs Yisro, his father-in-law, to stay with the Jewish people, but Yisro responds (Bamidbar 10:30) “I will only go to my land and my birthplace.” Surprisingly, even after everything Yisro heard and saw, even after his conversion, he still looked at Midyan as his homeland. Remarkably, we see the same expression used by Avraham Avinu (Bereishis 24:4). Even after all of the years, all of the tests he passed, including Akeidas Yitzchak, and everything else he had been through for Hashem, when he tells his servant Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak, he says “You shall only go to my land and my birthplace and take a wife for my son, for Yitzchak.” When we read that Hashem commands Avraham (Bereishis 12:1) “Go from your land, your birthplace, and your father’s house...,” it sounds like Hashem told him to leave everything behind. It is therefore difficult to understand how, after going through so much, Avraham still considers Padan Aram and Charan his true homeland.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, זצ"ל, is quoted as saying about one who converts as an adult, “You cannot tear away a person and tell him, ‘Forget your past, abandon your experiences, forget your father and mother, sisters and brothers, forget all the tender moments and impressions.’” A person’s childhood memories, which are some of the most formative, stay with a person through the decades and even into old age. These memories form the individual’s personality. A normal person is not a computer whose memory can be erased and reprogrammed. The lifetime of a person consists of one “stream of consciousness” and everything in it forms a “unity of personality” according to Rav Soloveitchik. As one grows older, this tendency to remember the past returns even

more as the person uses the past to find his identity, his foundation.

On a *halachic*/metaphysical level, a convert is a brand new person, totally cut off from the past (Yevamos 22a). He is as holy, pure and equal to any other Jew, as the pasuk says in the *parsha* (Bamidbar 9:14), “there is one rule for you, for the convert and the native.” But the convert still remembers his life before he joined the Jewish people.

Rav Ovadia Ger Tzedek, who was a great *talmid chacham*, wrote a letter to the Rambam, pouring his heart out about the problems he was still experiencing, even many years after his conversion. Apparently, even such an accomplished Ger Tzedek was being regularly reminded of his origins. The Rambam wrote him back to strengthen him by pointing out that he was just like Avraham Avinu who chose Hashem’s path himself. He also pointed out how strongly the Torah emphasizes the *mitzva* to love the convert by saying no less than thirty-six times (see, e.g., Devarim 10:19) “You shall love the convert.”

Rav Soloveitchik asks why the Torah has to repeat the *mitzva* to love the convert so many times. We derive many other *halachos* from even subtle inferences from extraneous letters. Why does the Torah hammer this point home again and again? He explains: “Apparently there’s good reason not to love him [the convert], otherwise the Torah wouldn’t have repeated it. The good reason is because half of his life doesn’t belong to us, it belongs to somebody else.” It must be that Jews’ difficulty internalizing the *mitzva* to love the convert arises from feeling that this person isn’t totally “ours.”

I read a letter to the editor in one of the Jewish magazines this past week by a woman who said she converted over

50 years earlier. She wrote in response to a well-meaning article by a rabbi in which he urged people to overcome loneliness by recognizing that Hashem is our friend. This woman wrote that although she respected the message he was trying to deliver, the rabbi clearly could not understand the experience of a convert. She explained that even though she had converted so many years earlier, even though she had wonderful children and grandchildren, some of whom were *talmidei chachamim*, and even though she also had great-grandchildren, she still felt alone in the world, without the deep roots, family, and communal connections that her neighbors and friends had.

With our new understanding of the life of the convert, whose life is torn between two worlds, we can now understand how Avraham Avinu and Yisro, the two most famous converts in history, could refer to their non-Jewish places of origin as “my land, my birthplace” even after completely dedicating their lives to Hashem and the Jewish people. Their original upbringing was still part of them. This is also true, although to a lesser degree, with the colloquial “Baal Teshuva.”

It is no coincidence that people like Avraham and Yisro retained their past as part of them. It was specifically because of that background that they became who they became. It was only because of Avraham’s background that Hashem called him (Bereishis 17:5) “father of all nations.” Similarly, Yisro’s influence cast a wide net. According to *chazal* (Mechilta, Yisro), Yisro returned to Midyan to convert his family and community. Because he understood the world of Torah, but also remembered the outside world, he was able to connect people to Torah in a way that others could not.

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The Death of Conviction



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There is an intriguing element in the construction of the Tabernacle, discussed in this week's Torah portion. Of all the furniture and equipment to be built for the Tabernacle, only a few were required to be made of a single piece of gold. One of them was the menorah, the five-foot-tall seven-branched golden candelabra, kindled every evening in the Sanctuary, casting its sacred glow on the surroundings.

"You shall make a *menorah* of pure gold," the Torah instructs, "the *menorah* should be made of a single piece of beaten gold." The *menorah* was an elaborate structure, comprised of many shapes, forms and nuanced designs, yet it needed to be hammered out from a single ingot of gold; no part of it may be made separately and attached afterwards.

Rashi explains this instruction clearly: "He should not make it [the *menorah*] of sections, nor should he make its branches and lamps of separate pieces and connect them afterward in the style of metal-workers which they call "soulder" in Old French. Rather, it should all come from a single piece. He (the craftsman) beats it with a mallet and cuts it with craftsman tools, separating the branches to either side... The craftsman draws the parts of the *menorah* out of the solid block of gold."

Now, you need not be a skilled craftsman to appreciate how difficult a task this was. The *menorah* was an extremely complex and intricately designed article. Why does the Torah demand it be hammered out from a single lump of gold? Why not construct the *menorah* from separate pieces of metal, and then weld them together?

What is even more intriguing is that the *menorah* was one of only three articles in the Tabernacle that the Torah required to be built in this fashion! Most other

articles, like the table with the show bread, the altars, the washing basin, even the holiest article—the ark, could all be built from separate pieces of material. Yet the *menorah*, perhaps the most intricate article in the Temple, needed to be fleshed out of a single lump of gold. What is the message behind this?

The Torah, it has been suggested, is attempting to convey a profound insight into the human condition and the objective of education. If you ever wish to become a *menorah*, a source of light to others, you must ensure that you are made of "one piece." To be a leader, a pillar of conviction and a wellspring of inspiration, you cannot afford to be dichotomized. You need to know who you are and what you stand for. You must be holistic.

Ambivalence and ambiguity make for good conversation at campus cafes, or on op-ed pages. Yet in all of their glamorous sophistication, they lack the capacity to inspire youth. Passion and conviction are the fruits of a deep and integrated sense of self. Children do not respond well to ambivalence, because it often leaves them with a sense of uncertainty and with a hole in their hearts. Judaism always understood that if you wish to live a self-contained life, you can be made of many pieces, dichotomized and fragmented. But if you wish to become a *menorah*, if you wish to inspire your children and students, if you wish to cast a light on a dark world and to kindle sparks and brighten lives you must be made of "one piece." You may still struggle and wonder, yet you must know who you are, what you believe in, and why you are alive.

For fourteen years I was privileged to attend the weekly addresses of a brilliant teacher, a man well educated in the sciences, arts and philosophies, who professed encyclopedic knowledge in the

fields of physics, science (in the broadest sense of the term), history and literature, and mastery over the enormous body of Biblical, Talmudic, Halachik and Kabbalistic texts. He was also a profoundly open-minded individual, with a keen understanding of the complexities of the human mind. Yet in almost every one of his speeches and addresses, he would quote this apparently simplistic Talmudic statement: "I was created in order to serve G-d."

I often wondered why this extraordinary thinker felt compelled to quote this dictum again and again. Why the need to repeat something we have all heard hundreds of times? In retrospect I have come to understand that by reiterating this message continuously, sincerely and wholeheartedly, our Rebbe (teacher) wished to communicate to his disciples a powerful message: Appreciate diversity, tolerate otherness, and open yourself up to the colorfulness of the world. But never allow yourself to become emotionally and mentally torn in the process. Remember who you are and what you were created for. You were created to serve G-d, to fulfill His will and to build a world saturated with goodness and G-dliness. Do not allow life to become so complicated that you are no longer sure who you are and what you represent.

The wise and open-minded King Solomon knew a thing or two about the compelling force of cynicism. Just read through the book of Ecclesiastes. Yet he also understood that skepticism is a means, not an end. The final verse of this deeply disturbing biblical book is what is missing from today's educational curriculum: "The final word after all that is known is this: Fear G-d and Observe His commandments, for this is the whole purpose of man."

B'haalosecha: Bon Appetite!



Rabbi Judah Mischel

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Chacham Yosef Chaim of Baghdad was the great *posek*, Kabbalist and community leader of Sefardic Jewry at the turn of the 19th Century. He wrote extensively and is known by the title of his most popular work, *Ben Ish Chai*, an exposition of the laws of everyday Jewish life interspersed with *minhagim*, *musar* and mystical insights, all arranged by order of the weekly *parshiyos*.

An ascetic who fasted regularly to remove distraction and weaken his physical desires, the Ben Ish Chai was known for his unwavering dedication to personal and communal *kedushah*. He would also rise each night to recite *Tikun Chatzos*, lamenting the destruction of the Beis haMikdash, after which he continued learning until Shacharit prayers at sunrise. In all, he was widely respected as a great *chacham* and *tzadik* of the generation.

Once, the son of a prominent family in Baghdad had left home and abandoned *mitzvah* observance. All the ‘interventions’, pleading and threats were to no avail. On the verge of conversion and intermarriage, the man’s family finally begged for an opportunity to meet with the elder Chacham of Bagdad.

The Ben Ish Chai agreed to the meeting and set the time for Shabbos morning following davening. “But let’s not meet at the Beit Knesset; perhaps you’ll be more comfortable at my home.” The young man arrived at the set time, the elderly *tzadik* welcomed him, made Kiddush for him and served him a heaping, steaming portion of *hamin* (cholent). As the aroma of meat, rice and beans, spiced to perfection and cooked overnight, tantalized his senses, the Chacham asked, “Would you like to taste the *haminados* as well?” *Haminados* is a Sefardic dish of eggs browned in the *hamin* which have absorbed all the flavors

of the stew, as well as the exquisite light of *Layl Shabbos*. “Thank you! Of course, it’s the tastiest part of the *hamin*.” As the young man, alienated from Yahadut, sat relishing the feast, the Ben Ish Chai looked into the man’s eyes and asked, “My son, if you go through with this, you will not have a Jewish wife, nor a Jewish home. How will you be able to go through life without ever enjoying *haminados* again?!”

(Based on *Sefer Ben Yehoyada*, Maseches Shabbos, 119)



Rebbi Yehudah haNasi once hosted the future Emperor of Rome, Antoninus, at a Shabbos meal. As, according to the halacha he could not cook new food on Shabbos, Rebbi Yehudah served him cold foods. At a later date, he prepared a more lavish feast on a weekday, in which he served Antoninus a more extensive menu, with freshly cooked, hot food. “Hey,” the Emperor frowned with surprise, “this food is not as good as the first meal; you omitted something!” Rebbi understood: “Indeed, there is one spice we omitted, but it’s not something the Emperor has at home....” “Really?” grunted Antoninus, “is it possible that the Emperor’s kitchen is lacking any particular spice?”

Rebbi Yehudah responded:
“The missing ingredient is *Shabbos*.
Do you have *Shabbos*?”
(*Midrash Bereshis Rabbah*, 11).

We all know this to be true; no matter how carefully one follows the recipe, mid-week cholent or challah is just not the same.



Our sedra recounts the strange fixation we had on seemingly inane menu items Jews had enjoyed ‘on the house’ in the ‘good old days’, when we were slaves in Mitzrayim:

“We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt... Oy, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, the garlic!”
(*Bamidbar*, 11:5)

Considering the immense suffering, slavery and exile we experienced in Mitzrayim, it is hard to understand this sudden wave of nostalgia. The irony may seem laughable — or tearfully tragic. The deepest form of exile is taking comfort in the ‘stability’ of incarceration and slavery. Even while we had been miraculously redeemed, and then wined and dined with *mannah* that fell from Heaven and tasted like anything we wanted, we were gripped by a sort of ‘Stockholm syndrome’. We yearned for the cuisine we had known for so long as hostages.

Yet, the Gemara explains that חָפְזִים, “free”, means we considered ourselves ‘free’ of any obligation to be thankful to the Source of the food. Under the unimaginable pressure of slavery we felt free from having to consider the benevolence of the Giver of Sustenance. We were paradoxically “free” from commitment. When we were no longer in bondage and under external oppression, we had entered a new stage of our development. We were suddenly responsible to thank Hashem, to keep Mitzvos, and to have a grown up, committed relationship with the Ribbono shel Olam. The food we ate then represented much more than just a meal. It was now laden with our story, our identity as a nation, and our mutual commitment and connection with our Sustainer.

‘Food is great...in that it brings people near...’ (*Sanhedrin*, 13b)

Whether it is the sweetness of the *charoses*, the crispiness of Chanukah latkes, the particular aroma of *hamantaschen* coming out of the oven, or the *haminados* brewed in the *cholent*, our traditional foods mysteriously

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Levite Leverage

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The inauguration of the tribe of Levi to the service in the sanctuary the ritual contained elements of the purification of a *metzora* (leper), as well as rituals of sacrificial offerings. Like the *metzora*, the Levites are to shave their entire bodies. Like the grain offerings and the *lulav*, the Levites are to be waved in all directions. Like the animal offerings, first Bnei Yisroel would lay their hands upon the Levites and then the Levites would lay their hands on the sacrificial animals.

The Levites were chosen to serve because they had refrained from sinning with the golden calf. Why then must they undergo a process related to the *metzora*? Perhaps since they were taking the place of the firstborn in the Sanctuary, the Leviim would now, as Rashi explains, go through a purification process instead of the sinners themselves whom they were replacing. The *metzora* is considered as dead, and those who worship idols worship lifeless, dead objects. Therefore, to atone for this sin, the Levites were given a purification process similar to the *metzora*.

Yet the *kohanim* who performed the primary service in the Sanctuary did not undergo this purification process. Rabbi Munk explains that Hashem created and administers the world through *chesed*-loving kindness, and *din*-justice. The *kohanim* represent the attribute of loving kindness. Through their service

therefore they served as appropriate vehicles to channel Hashem's benevolence to the world. The Levites on the other hand were the people who carried out G-d's justice and killed those who had worshiped the golden calf. In order to represent Bnei Yisroel in invoking Hashem's benevolence toward Bnei Yisroel, they would need to be stripped of the quality of harsh judgment. Therefore they shaved themselves, symbolically stripping themselves of that layer of their persona. Then they were waved around to shake up their inner character, and finally, Bnei Yisroel placed their hands on the Levites to complete the procedure of transformation from judgment to mercy and loving kindness.

Still, shaving the hair seems like a sign of degradation. It may be that the Levites would have experienced a sense of arrogance at taking the place of the sinning firstborns. Therefore, Hashem had them undergo a humbling experience associated with sinners. Similarly, in our own service to the Almighty, we must also act and pray with a sense of humility.

"*Ki nitunim nitunim heimah li*. For they are given given to me ... instead of every firstborn of Bnei Yisroel." The Levites are 'given' to Hashem twice, implying an extreme sense of devotion to G-d, a feeling that comes from deep within themselves, says the Lashon Chasidim. Hashem wants this feeling of connection and devotion

from all of us. He wants us to feel it in every *mitzvah* we do.

The Leviim epitomized this emotional attachment to Hashem and they acted on it. They also felt an overriding sense of responsibility for their brethren. Because of this, they were destined to be teachers scattered throughout the land. This is the kind of responsibility teachers must feel for each of their students, says the Einei Yisrael. This was the connection Shimon and Levy felt to their sister and the responsibility to take action to uphold her honor when she was defiled by Shechem. A sense of connection is at the very essence of the name Levi, "*Hapa'am yiloveh ishi elaiy*. This time my husband will become attached to me," stated his mother Leah when she named him.

Halekach Vehalebuv explains that as a corollary to this concept, when one of us sins, the entire body of Klal Yisroel is affected. Similarly, when one of us does *teshuvah*, all are forgiven. If we bear this in mind, if we love each other as we love ourselves and take responsibility for each other, it will be easier for us to avoid sin. Within this rubric also lies the responsibility to pray for our fellow Jew when he finds himself in difficult circumstances. We especially pray for someone to find his connection to G-d. Through their service, the Leviim had the responsibility of praying for Bnei Yisroel and maintaining that connection with Hashem.

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bring us close to a sense of home and connection to our family, ancestors and religious engagement. Much of the *avodah* of our lifecycle events is awakened just by tasting the unique foods we are commanded to eat or accustomed to serve.

Aromas and tastes create a primal, direct link to the collective cultural and spiritual memory bank of *Klal Yisrael*. They can help bring us near — not only to family, community and tradition, but to faith in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* itself. In this way, the 'special sauce' and not-so-secret

ingredient key to our nation's spiritual sustenance is always to serve up Yiddishkeit with warmth and sweetness, abundantly spiced with love and simchah:

"Taste and see how good Hashem is!"
(*Tehillim*, 34:9)

The “Nephilim” Generation?



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

“**N**ephil” in Hebrew means giant. Our Sages refer to the *Nephilim* in the Chumash Bereishit, describing a type of angels who were “parachuted” into this world. This is how the phrase “the generation of the *Nephilim*” came about. This week, the great Rabbi Gershon Edelstein was described as: “the last of the generation of the *Nephilim*”, which apparently means that Rabbi Edelstein was the last one left after the departure of the spiritual giants and leaders of the last generation. Huge.

It seems to me that Rabbi Edelstein wanted to be remembered as the rabbi of the “*Nephilim*” despite the pure intentions of the one who used that term.

The boys and girls of this generation, he said, will feel even more belittled by the division of the “*Nephilim*” – “We will be the lords and rabbis of the “*Nephilim*”. In Parshat Beha'alotcha, Moshe is confronted with the generation of the fallen (Hebrew: *nophlim*), with those who run away from school, with those who make Moshe feel like he can not take it anymore, with those who speak badly about the *manna* and Moshe. The generation of the *nuns*. In the parashah, the letter of the fall appears, the letter *nun*, and it is reversed on both sides of the verses “ויהי בנסוע”.



**A father is not an angel,
he is a wanderer, and he will
fall when his children fall,
and rise when they rise.**

The Maharsha explains that the *nun* will be reversed because a generation will come that will change for the better just by reversing and uplifting! In the *Haftarah*, the priest, Yehoshua, wears dirty clothing. He does not know his soul. His two sons are married to foreigners and he sees a stone before his eyes. The stone with which the construction of the Temple was started, but Cyrus suddenly ordered to stop the construction. This is what his house looked like. Something that began as a great hope and ceased. It is to this shamed father that G-d will say: take off your dirty clothes! Do not listen to the words of the rebels who mock you and the house you have tried to build! You shall not be an angel, you are a wanderer: “I will permit you to move about among these attendants.” The *Nephilim*, the angels, are always standing still. But there will

come a generation when we will have to approach our fallen children to take this stone, of which the builders were weary, and because they took pleasure in it, “it shall be greeted with shouts of ‘Beautiful! Beautiful!’”

A father of seven children told Rabbi Edelstein zt”l that he has a daughter who does not follow the path on which she was brought up, and he wants to place her in a nearby rented apartment where she will feel loved... “And the other children are all right?” the rabbi asked. “Yes,” replied the father, “then you are not needed for them. Rent them an apartment and leave the daughter with you. She needs you.”

You do not want fallen children, Rabbi Edelstein said with an insight that fills us with humility, you think you are fallen parents... A father is not an angel, he is a wanderer, and he will fall when his children fall, and rise when they rise. The *Nephilim* do not need G-d. We are the generation of the fallen and “The LORD supports all who stumble...”

This week a great rabbi fell from us. The rabbi of the fallen generation. A righteous man worthy of blessing.

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I have merited to take part in the *beis din* at three conversions, all of which were powerfully moving experiences. Before one woman’s conversion, she was asked, as is the custom, “Are you sure you want to do this? Things may be alright for the Jewish people now, but we are not loved; things could change for the worse and it

could become very hard to be a Jew.” I will never forget her response. She answered, “There is nothing more that I want in life than to do this. I want to be a Jew even if it means that I will have to give up my life.” Her words reverberated in my mind for a long time afterward. I asked myself,

“When was the last time I thought that way?”

May Hashem help us merit to bring converts close, learn from them, and to gain perspective from them and based on our own past while constantly growing to new levels in our service of Hashem.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin

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The title of Parashat Behaalotcha comes from a word in the middle of its second verse (Bamidbar 8:2):

בְּהֶעֱלִיתָ אֶת-הַנֵּרוֹת אֶל-מִוֵּל פְּנֵי
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ יָאִירוּ שִׁבְעַת הַנֵּרוֹת:

Surprisingly, there is no consensus about how the word should be translated. While everyone agrees this section deals with the instructions for the *menorah*, they disagree about the actual meaning of בְּהֶעֱלִיתָ. One translation renders the verse as, identifying בְּהֶעֱלִיתָ as “when you mount”:

“Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you mount the lamps, let the seven lamps give light at the front of the lampstand.”

Other translations I have found offer these alternatives: “draw up,” “kindle,” “light (up),” “set in order,” or “raise up.”

These options are preceded by debates among the commentaries as well. However, all agree that בְּהֶעֱלִיתָ derives from the root עלה “to rise, go up,” and are only arguing about what exactly it is that goes up (for example, the flame or the lamps).

The root עלה meaning “to ascend” is still very common in Hebrew. We see it in such words as עֲלִיָּה (to be called up to the Torah, or to move “up” to the Land of Israel,” עֲלִיּוֹן – “most high”, and מַעְלִית – “elevator.”

But עלה also means “to cost.” Where did that sense come from?

Between “to rise up” and “to cost,” came a more metaphorical sense – “to surpass, excel.” This may be familiar from the *Eshet Chayil* song (originally from the book of Mishlei) where the woman of valor is

praised, “Many women have excelled, but you surpassed them all” – רְבוֹת בָּנוֹת עָשׂוּ - רְבוֹת עָלֶיךָ מִכָּל נְשֵׁי אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן (Mishei 31:29). This sense is commonly used today in the word מְעֻלָּה – “excellent”.

And from here the root also took on another meaning. In post-biblical Hebrew, we find a newer sense – “was reckoned, counted in, considered.” This is a development from the previous meaning, since something that excelled would be counted in and considered. And because the price of something is how it is reckoned or considered, we get to the meaning “to cost”.

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh

Mizrachi Melbourne

In describing the journey from the Sinai desert undertaken by the 12 tribes (excluding Levi), there is a word that appears in 11 of them but does not appear in one of them. What is the word, and from which tribe is it missing?

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

The word is “בָּרָא”
It is missing from the tribe of Reuven in the verse: (נ:י) בָּרָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
but does appear in the case of all the other 11 tribes.
The Oznyaim LaTorah suggests the following explanation:
There were 4 leading tribes that were the head of their division (division). They were Yehudah, Reuven, Efrayim and Dan. In each case, except for Reuven, the leading tribes outnumbered the two satellite tribes that were in their division, as listed in Parshat Bamidbar.
Whilst the leading tribes and their positions in the journeys and encampments was instructed by Hashem, people may wonder why is Reuven the leading tribe in his division, yet, the only one whose population was outnumbered by one of the satellite Tribes (Shimon).
To answer this query, the Torah intentionally deletes the word “בָּרָא” from Reuven to indicate that Reuven did not need to have the numbers to be the leading tribe. He was the firstborn of his father Yaakov, “בְּרִאשׁוֹתָא” as Yaakov calls him, and was the leader of his division in his own right, not because of the “בָּרָא” members of his tribe.)

DUST AND STARS THIS WEEK in Jewish History

June 3, 1940: The Madagascar Plan was proposed by the Nazis to exile the Jews of Europe to a police state in Madagascar, an important psychological step toward the Final Solution.

Sivan 15, 2196 (1565 BCE): According to *Midrash Tadshe*, Yehudah, the fourth son of Yaakov and Leah, was born; and also died on the same day in 2314 [1446 BCE].

June 5, 1967: On the first day of the Six Day War in a pre-emptive strike, the Israeli army destroyed virtually the entire Egyptian air force on the ground.

June 6, 1982: The IDF crossed into Lebanon at the beginning of Operation Peace for Galilee to destroy P.L.O. bases used to launch Katyushas against Northern Israel.

June 7, 1967: Israel liberated the Old City of Jerusalem, uniting the city for the 1st time since establishment of the State.

Sivan 19, 5658 (1898): Yahrzeit of Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever, early advocate of aliya for Russian Jews, whose efforts served as the foundation for Mizrachi organization.

Sivan 20, 3830 (70 CE): Yahrzeit of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, *Tanna*, head of the Sanhedrin during the destruction of the 2nd Temple, and a leader of the Great Revolt against the Romans.

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Yeshivat Hakotel
Yeshivat Orayta

BEIT SHEMESH

Tiferet Midrasha
Kehillat Nofei Hashemesh
Yeshivat Ashreinu
Yeshivat Hesder Lev HaTorah

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Young Israel of Southfield
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Congregation Adath Israel of the JEC
National Council of Young Israel
Congregation Ahavat Achim
Congregation Ahavath Torah
Congregation Brothers of Israel
Congregation Darchei Noam of Fair Lawn
Congregation Etz Chaim of Livingston
Congregation Israel of Springfield
Congregation Ohr Torah
Congregation Sons of Israel of Cherry Hill
Kehilat Keshet
Ma Tov Day Camp
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Yavneh Academy
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Young Israel of Merrick

NYC Department of Correction

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The Riverdale Minyan

Vaad of Chevra Kadisha

West Side institutional Synagogue

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Young Israel of Jamaica Estates

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Young Israel of New Rochelle

Young Israel of North Woodmere

Young Israel of Oceanside

Young Israel of Scarsdale

Young Israel of Woodmere

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Congregation Sha'arei Torah
Congregation Torat Emet
Green Road Synagogue
Fuchs Mizrachi School
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