



# הַמִּזְרָחִי HAMIZRACHI PARSHA WEEKLY

**SIGN UP TO RECEIVE WEEKLY:  
MIZRACHI.ORG/HAMIZRACHIWEEKLY**

**PARSHAT KI TAVO 5783 • 2023**








**ISRAEL**  
**Parsha Picture**  
Photo by Rabbi Hillel Van-Leeuwen

וַיְבִאֵנוּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה  
וַיִּתֵּן לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת  
אָרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ









דברים כו:ט

## INSIDE

### TORAT MIZRACHI

-  Rabbi Doron Perez 2
-  Rabbi Reuven Taragin 4
-  Rabbanit Shani Taragin 5
-  Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon 6
-  Rabbanit Sharon Rimon 7
-  Sivan Rahav Meir & Yedidya Meir 8
-  Rabbi Danny Mirvis 9




### PARSHAT HASHAVUA

-  Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l 10
-  Rabbi Hershel Schachter shlit"a 12
-  Rabbi Yisroel Reisman shlit"a 13
-  Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein 14
-  Rabbi Shalom Rosner 15
-  Michal Horowitz 16
-  Rabbi Menachem Leibtag 17
-  Rabbi Eli Mansour 18

### INSPIRATION

-  Rabbi Moshe Weinberger 19
-  Rabbi YY Jacobson 20
-  Rabbi Judah Mischel 21
-  Mrs. Shira Smiles 22
-  Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi 23

### ISRAEL CONTENT

-  Hebrew Language: David Curwin 24
-  Riddles: Reb Leor Broh 24
-  Dust & Stars: This Week in Jewish History 24



To dedicate an issue of HaMizrachi Parasha Weekly in this space in honor of someone, in memory of a loved one or in celebration of a simcha, please email [hamizrachiweekly@mizrachi.org](mailto:hamizrachiweekly@mizrachi.org)



**MIZRACHI**  
120 YEARS OF RELIGIOUS ZIONISM

www.mizrachi.org  
www.mizrachi.tv  
office@mizrachi.org  
+972 (0)2 620 9000



CO-PRESIDENT  
**Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman**

CHAIRMAN  
**Mr. Harvey Blitz**

CEO & EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN  
**Rabbi Doron Perez**

DEPUTY CEO  
**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**

EDUCATIONAL DIRECTORS  
**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**  
**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**

World Mizrachi is the global Religious Zionist movement, spreading *Torat Eretz Yisrael* across the world and strengthening the bond between the State of Israel and Jewish communities around the world.

Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi'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.

**HAMIZRACHI**  
PARSHA WEEKLY

EDITOR  
**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**

ASSISTANT EDITOR  
**Esther Shafier**

ASSOCIATE EDITORS  
**Yaakov Panitch**  
**Zac Winkler**

PROOFREADER  
**Renee Rosenberg**

GRAPHIC DESIGNER  
**Leah Rubin**

To dedicate an issue of HaMizrachi Parsha Weekly in memory of a loved one or in celebration of a simcha, or for other HaMizrachi enquiries, please email [hamizrachiweekly@mizrachi.org](mailto:hamizrachiweekly@mizrachi.org)

To sign up to receive HaMizrachi Parsha Weekly to your email or WhatsApp, visit [mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweekly](http://mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweekly)

# 'As a Man Thinketh'

## The Transformative Power of our Thoughts



**Rabbi Doron Perez**  
Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

One of the most beautifully written and stirring books that I have read is that of the brilliant author and philosophical writer, James Allen in his book, *As a Man Thinketh*.

Written at the turn of the 20th century, it became one of the inspirational classics in the realm of personal growth. It focuses on arguably the greatest asset that we have as human beings – the transformative power of our thoughts. Allen argues so articulately and persuasively that nothing impacts on our lives and shapes our personal destiny, more than our thoughts – how we see ourselves and how we see the world.

Of the many beautiful paragraphs in the book, I shall quote but one.

“Man is made or unmade by himself; in the armory of thought he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself; he also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy and strength and peace. By the right choice and true applications of thought, man ascends to Divine Perfection; by the abuse and wrong application of thought, he descends below the level of the beast. Between these two extremes are all the grades of character, and man is their maker and master.”

With these words, Allen echoes the profound insight of arguably the greatest

American psychologist, Professor William James. He said that if he was to sum up his key learning after 50 years of experience in the realm of the human psyche, he would say this – “people by and large become what they think of themselves”.

Our attitude to life and our perceptions of our experiences creates our own reality; just as “seeing is believing”, so too “believing is seeing.” What we believe about ourselves and the world we live in, becomes reality itself.

### The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Our perceptions indeed greatly influence our behaviors, decisions, and interactions with the world. One of the key mechanisms through which thoughts shape reality is the fascinating psychological phenomenon of the *self-fulfilling* prophecy. This phenomenon occurs when an individual holds a certain belief or expectation about a situation, which in turn leads them to behave in ways that ultimately bring about their predicted outcome. For example, if someone believes they are going to fail at a certain task, their negative thoughts about the task at hand often lead them to be less motivated to succeed, therefore putting in less effort and resulting in a higher likelihood of failure. On the other hand, a person with a positive “can do” attitude will approach the same task with greater enthusiasm

and determination, significantly increasing their chances of success.

Moreover, the relationship between thoughts and emotions is integral to understanding how thoughts create reality. Our thoughts can trigger emotional responses, which in turn influence our behavior and the way we perceive events. For instance, if someone consistently dwells on negative thoughts patterns, they are more likely to experience feelings of frustration and anxiety; sadness and anger, which then colors their perception of the world around them. Conversely, cultivating positive thoughts leads to a more optimistic outlook and a greater sense of positivity and hopefulness.

### Neuroplasticity and King Solomon

Neuroscience has shown considerable evidence on the connection between our thoughts and our reality. Neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections, suggests that repeated patterns of thought can physically alter the structure of the brain over time. This means that consistently focusing on positive or negative thoughts can create neural pathways that influence how we perceive and respond to the world. In essence, our brains become wired to reinforce the reality that aligns with our predominant thoughts.

The ideas developed in Allen's book, *As a Man Thinketh*, seem to be inspired by the wisest of all men, King Solomon in his book Mishlei – Proverbs, where he states:

“Do not eat the food of a stingy begrudging host and do not desire his delicacies. For **as he thinks in his heart, so is he.** ‘Eat and drink,’ he says to you but his heart is not with you.” (Mishlei 23:6-7).

These verses clearly state that indeed what a person thinks is indeed their reality. If a host does not really want you to eat and is offering you food begrudgingly and even spitefully, this may very well have impacted how they have prepared the food and it is better to refrain from partaking.

### If You Think You Live in a World of Curse – You Do!

One of the most clear and compelling examples of both the remarkable power of thought as well as its decisive spiritual value is an incredible verse in this week's parasha. In the middle of the horrific תוכחה – the lengthy rebuke and curses if Bnei Yisrael don't keep the Torah, there emerges a critical verse as to the source of the curses – a total game changer in terms of the real root of the curses.

“And all these curses will befall you, and will pursue you and overtake you until they destroy you because you did not obey the Lord your G-d, to keep his commandments and his statutes which He commanded you. And they shall be for you as a sign and a wonder, and upon your seed forever. Because you did not serve the Lord your G-d with happiness and with gladness of heart, when you had an abundance of everything.” (Devarim 28:45-48)

It would have made more sense to have a **full stop** after the words “Because you did not serve the Lord, your G-d.” After all, the opening verse to the curses clearly states that the reason the curses transpire is when we don't serve G-d – not obeying the Torah and not observing the commandments (Devarim 28:15). Yet the verse here clearly adds another component as to the reason the curses happen – only if we do not serve G-d with an attitude of happiness and a feeling of abundant blessing!

This changes everything.

It is not the lack of fulfilling the *mitzvot* alone which is the root of the curses. It turns out that serving G-d devoid of **any** feeling of happiness and hope, joy and blessing is indeed not really service of G-d according to Judaism. It is foreign to the DNA of Torah Judaism and Jewish life.

To put it differently – if we think that we live in a world of curse, then we do. No amount of objective blessing in our lives can convince a person with a mindset of curse that indeed they are blessed. If they view the world through a lens of curse, עין רעה – a negative and critical

eye, all they will see is a mirror reflection of what they believe. On the other hand, if one views the world and people through a prism of an עין טובה, a positive perspective, they will have an attitude of gratitude, see graciousness around them and constantly judge others favorably. If we believe we are blessed, then we truly are. If we believe that we live in a world of blessing, then we do.

This requires great mindfulness and self-awareness. It requires paying great attention to our thought patterns, mental conditioning and the subconscious voices in our head. We need to carefully think about the way we think and ought to analyze our emotional default positions, childhood wounds, and defense mechanisms. This can only happen through deep self reflection and proactively choosing to engage in constructive and wholesome thought analysis. Meditative prayer, seeking mentorship, cognitive therapy and gratitude practices can all contribute to rewiring our thought patterns and subsequently influencing our reality.

### Conclusion

In short, our thoughts significantly create our reality through our mental attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. Whether through the self-fulfilling prophecy, the interplay between thoughts and emotions, or the neural plasticity of the brain, it is clear that our thoughts have tangible effects on our lives. While this transformative idea is not a magical formula for controlling external events, it highlights the absolute free choice we have, as challenging as it is, to choose our thoughts and cultivate a positive and constructive mindset to navigate challenges and lead a more fulfilling life.

This critical verse at the heart of the blessings and the curses couldn't be clearer – whether we live in a world of blessing or curse, depends first and foremost on what type of world we think we live in.



PERSONAL GROWTH

# All For The Good



**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi  
Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

Scan here to join  
Rabbi Taragin's  
daily Divrei Torah  
WhatsApp group



## G-d Intends The Good

Yosef Hatzaddik found himself in a terrible situation. Sold into slavery by his own brothers, he had every reason to feel wronged. Surprisingly, when he was finally reunited with his brothers in Parshat Vayigash, he told them they were not responsible for where he was. Though they initiated the process by selling him as a slave, it was Hashem who had put him in a position of power.<sup>1</sup> In Parshat Vayechi, Yosef added that, although his brothers had bad intentions, Hashem designed a positive outcome.<sup>2</sup>

Yosef's positive outlook teaches us an important lesson. Everything we experience is ultimately for the good — even things that seem bad and even things done to us by other people. Though we might have viewed Yosef's miraculous rise from prison to viceroy as uniquely providential, Nachum Ish Gamzu and (his *talmid*) Rabbi Akiva teach us that *all occurrences* are (from Hashem and) for the good.<sup>3</sup>

Even suffering intended to punish us ultimately has a positive outcome. The Sifri encourages one suffering to reflect upon the great reward *yisurin* earn us in the next world.<sup>4</sup> Nachum Ish Gamzu and Rebbe Akiva add that *yisurin* have a positive outcome in *this world* as well.

This teaching should help us maintain our *simchat ha'chayim* (happiness with life). The Torah emphasizes the importance of being happy.<sup>5</sup> The Ba'al HaTanya<sup>6</sup> explains that our happiness should be based upon our realization that nothing bad comes from Above. We should celebrate the fact that everything we experience will ultimately benefit us.

## How It Is For the Good

So what good does suffering bring? Chazal give a few examples.

Relatively minor inconveniences often save us from danger. Rabbi Akiva told a story of how the death of his donkey and chicken and the extinguishing of his candle saved him from marauders who would otherwise have noticed (and killed) him. Most people

would have been upset with the deaths and extinguishing of the candle. Rabbi Akiva responded right away that it must be for the good, and, indeed, it turned out that way.<sup>7</sup>

Chazal give another example of this phenomenon: someone who misses a boat that ends up sinking.<sup>8</sup> The person is initially upset when he "misses the boat," but is appreciative later when he hears about it sinking.<sup>9</sup>

The appearance of *tzara'at* on the walls of homes in Eretz Yisrael is an additional model. The Torah presents this *tzara'at* positively<sup>10</sup> because it helped the Jews discover the treasure that the Emori people had hidden in the walls of their homes.<sup>11</sup> The *tzara'at* is a major inconvenience but well worth it. The Lubavitcher Rebbe<sup>12</sup> sees this as exemplifying a broader phenomenon: suffering reveals the "treasures" hidden deep within ourselves and the world around us.

The death of Boaz's wife at the beginning of Megillat Rut is an excellent example of this phenomenon. The city of Beit Lechem was in an uproar.<sup>13</sup> The wife of Boaz, the city's leader, had just passed away.<sup>14</sup> Naturally, people were saddened and mournful. What they did not realize is that Hashem arranged for this to happen so Boaz could marry Rut (who arrived in Beit Lechem that very day) and begin the line that would eventually lead to the birth of Dovid HaMelech.<sup>15</sup>

The Ramchal<sup>16</sup> elaborates that we need to realize that growth pangs are the only way to grow. This is why the *gemara*<sup>17</sup> teaches that we achieve the most important objectives — Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and Olam Haba — through *yisurin*. We can only achieve these goals through personal growth, which occurs only once we are forced out of our comfort zone.<sup>18</sup>

The downs of life are ways of reaching heights higher than where we were before. This is how the Seforno<sup>19</sup> explains the deeper meaning of Hashem's words to Yaakov Avinu when he was forced to move to Mitzrayim: "*Anochi eireid imcha Mitzraimah, v'Anochi a'alcha gam aloh* (I will go down with you to Mitzrayim, and I will surely bring you up)."<sup>20</sup> Hashem emphasizes (*a'alcha gam aloh*)

the *aliyah* that Yaakov's descendants will experience after leaving Mitzrayim to teach him (and us) that his *yeridah* will eventually bring him to a higher level.<sup>21</sup> This is true for us and all of our *yeridot* (downs) as well.

## How We Can See It

Obviously, seeing and appreciating the eventual good while suffering is hard. Even Yaakov Avinu struggled with this. When Yosef, disguised as the Egyptian viceroy, harassed his family, Yaakov described the situation as "bad."<sup>22</sup> Even once Yosef revealed his true identity and resolved the crisis, Yaakov still summarized his life as "bad." When Pharaoh asked him how old he was, Yaakov responded that he had lived 130 "few and bad" years.<sup>23</sup> Though the family had been reunited under Yosef's royal care, Yaakov still felt the pain of the suffering caused by Eisav, Lavan, Shechem, and his sons.<sup>24</sup>

The *medrash*<sup>25</sup> tells us that Yaakov's life was cut short as punishment for his words. The Baalei HaTosfot explain that Yaakov should have used his past experiences to strengthen his faith. Remembering how Hashem had saved him from Eisav and Lavan and how Dina was returned to him should have helped him realize that the difficulties with the "Egyptian viceroy" would also be for the best. We, too, should use our past experiences to inspire confidence in the future.

Often, our reflection upon our past experiences focuses on the suffering and difficulties. Instead, we should focus on the happy endings. The Torah compares Hashem's disciplinary tactics to those of a father because a father comforts his son after needing to discipline him.

This is why Dovid HaMelech proclaimed that he was comforted by Hashem's *shevet* (rod) and *mishan* (support). Though Hashem (like a shepherd) sometimes needs to use the stick as a rod, the fact that he also uses the stick to support us reminds us of His love for us. The comfort and support remind us that the suffering emanates from Hashem, our loving Father.

Continued on page 9

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

# The Consolation of Contrast



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

**T**he Tur (OC, 428) teaches: “From (parashat) Bereishit until the 17th of Tammuz the haftora follows the theme of the parasha; from then onwards (the theme of the haftora is) according to the date and the events (related to it): there are three (haftarot) of rebuke, then seven of comfort... the seven of comfort are ‘Nachamu’ for parashat Va’etchanan, ‘Va-tomer Tzion’ for parashat Ekev, ‘Aniya so’eret’ for Re’eh, ‘Anokhi’ for Shoftim, ‘Roni akara’ for Ki Tetze, ‘kumi uri’ for Ki Tavo, and ‘sos asis’ for Nitzavim....” Though the haftarot read from the 17th of Tammuz until the end of the year were chosen on the basis of their connection with the events of that period: the three haftarot of rebuke for the period between the 17th of Tammuz and Tish’a B’Av, followed by seven of comfort for the seven shabbatot after Tish’a B’Av, we may still reflect upon the relationship between the selected prophecy and the parashat hashavua.

Parashat Ki-Tavo contains the *tochacha* – the rebuke and punishment for failure to observe Torah; the nation will be afflicted by agricultural diseases, invasion and subjugation by foreign nations, and ultimately exiled from the Land of Israel. The haftarah selection for this week (Yeshayahu 60:1-22) describes Yeshayahu’s vision of Am Yisrael’s future deliverance and redemption – a remarkable antidote to the harsh message of the *parasha*. The ultimate redemption envisioned by Yeshayahu will reverse the awful calamities presented in the *tochacha*, thereby consoling the nation through contrasting themes of the *parasha*.

A close comparison reveals how several of the “curses” in the *parasha* are transformed to blessings in the haftarah:

- (1) The *parasha* describes how “the stranger among you will rise upon you higher and higher, while you descend lower and lower” (Devarim 28:43), and depicts the enemy as “a brazen nation, who will show no favor to old or young” (28:50). The haftarah highlights how “foreigners shall build your walls and their kings will serve you... The nation and kingdom which will not serve you will be destroyed...The children of those who tortured you will come bent over submissively to you” (Yeshayahu 60:10,12,14).
- (2) The *parasha* replete with rebuke ends with the final curse: “And the Lord will bring you back to Egypt in ships, through the way about which I had said to you, You will never see it again. And there, you will seek to be sold to your enemies for slaves and handmaids, but there will be no buyer. (Devarim 28:68) Moshe Rabbenu implores of Am Yisrael – “You have seen all that the Lord did before your very eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, to all his servants, and to all his land; the great trials which your very eyes beheld and those great signs and wonders.” (Devarim 29:1-2)

The prophecy of the haftarah opens with a description reminiscent of the prelude of our exodus from Egypt during the plague of darkness, when all the people of Israel had light in their homes: “For darkness may cover the earth, and clouds shroud nations, but over you, the Lord will be shining, His glory manifest over you.” (60:2) In contrast, however, the nations described in our prophecy will agree and even want to help the Israelites at the time of their redemption. Regarding the exodus from Egypt, the Torah emphasizes that Hashem

hardened the hearts of Egypt and the heart of Pharaoh so they would not agree to free Am Yisrael from slavery. Yeshayahu, thereby proclaims that Hashem who can harden the hearts of the nations to fight Israel, can also set in their hearts love for Israel and a desire to help them – the opposite of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.

- (3) A close analysis of the texts also underscores a literary connection: The *parasha* contains the threat that “Since (**tachat**) you did not serve Hashem your G-d with happiness...instead you will serve your enemies” (Devarim 28:47-48). This is deliberately echoed by Yeshayahu – “Instead (**tachat**) of being abandoned and hated...I will make you the pride of the world” (60:15)
- (4) One of the primary motifs of the haftarah is the theme of darkness and light: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has shone upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and a gross darkness the kingdoms, and the Lord shall shine upon you, and His glory shall appear over you. And nations shall go by your light and kings by the brilliance of your shine.” (Yeshayahu 60:1-3) “You shall no longer have the sun for light by day, and for brightness, the moon shall not give you light, but the Lord shall be to you for an everlasting light, and your G-d for your glory. Your sun shall no longer set, neither shall your moon be gathered in, for the Lord shall be to you for an everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be completed.” (60:19-20) Whereas the *parasha* focuses on the “darkness” of exile, the haftarah is a deliberate consolation, assuring us that the darkness will be transformed into the light of salvation.

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council

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

**Question:** We baked potatoes in dairy cream together with onions, and afterwards realized that the onions were cut with a clean meat knife. What is the status of the potatoes and oven?

Answer: There is room to be lenient regarding both the potatoes and the oven, as we can assume that the meat of the knife was *batel b'shishim*. If the knife was *aino ben yomo*, (not used in the last 24 hours) it is even better.

**Question:** Is there an issue of *kilayim* when planting different types of beans (white, red and dotted) together?

Answer: If they are all beans, and the only difference is the color, then there is no issue of *kilayim*, and they may be planted together.

**Question:** I am staying in an Airbnb which has a small vineyard. I asked the owner if I could harvest grapes, and he responded that he had already taken what he wanted and wasn't sure if anything was left. Are the grapes deemed "hefker" as a result of what he said? Also, can I take grapes without separating *ma'aser*?

Answer: It is not considered *hefker*, as only you are permitted to eat and seemingly not anyone else. You can take a grape and eat it, and then take another grape and eat it, without separating *ma'aser* as you are in a courtyard. This would be true even if it was your own courtyard. If you were in an orchard, you could eat an even greater amount.

**Question:** Is there a problem with renting an Airbnb for two nights if there is no *mezuzah*?

Answer: One who rents a house in *chutz la'aretz* is exempt from *mezuzah* for 30 days. One who rents a house in *Eretz Yisrael* is obligated in *mezuzah* immediately. Based on this, in *Eretz Yisrael*, you would need to bring a *mezuzah*, affix it to the doorpost (even just with tape) without a *bracha*, and stipulate that you are placing it there until the end of your trip, at which point you will take it down. If one is stuck, there is room to be lenient, but the ideal is certainly to have a *mezuzah*.

**Question:** May one go to a wedding on the night of a *yahrzeit*?

Answer: Some *Asheknazim* have the custom not to attend weddings on the night of a *yahrzeit* (Rama YD 391:3, Shach and Pitchei Tehsuva *ibid*). Others are lenient, excluding the first *yahrzeit* (*Levush*, *Aruch Hashulchan*). According to all *Ashkenazic* rulings, one may attend other forms of *seudat mitzvah*. In practice, if it is a wedding which is important for you to be at, you may go. If it is less important to you, you may go for the *chuppah*.

Most *Sephardim* do not attend weddings on a *yahrzeit* and do not attend other *seudot mitzvah* (*Tzror Hachaim*). Others are lenient, excluding the first year (*Chazon Ovadya*).

**Question:** If there are exactly ten men for a minyan on a Monday/Thursday and one person needs to leave early, what is the better option: *heicha kedusha* and skip *tachanun* in order to have enough time for *kriyat haTorah*, or regular *chazarat hashatz* and *tachanun*, but miss *kriyat haTorah*? Does it make a difference if there is a *Kohen present* (in which case doing *heichi kedusah* would mean missing *Birkat Kohanim*)?

Answer: It would seem best to daven in full fashion until you get stuck. However, in practice, it would be better to do the other option in order to ensure we do not become accustomed to missing *kriyat haTorah* even when there is no other option.

Therefore, I would recommend doing *heicha kedusha* and skipping long *tachnun*, going straight to "*vayomer david el gad*" of *tachanun*. If you are even more rushed, you can skip "*shomer yisrael*" as well. After that, say *chetzi kadish*, read from the Torah, and then whoever needs to leave can leave. It would be best for everyone to complete the parts they skipped over if they can afterwards.

● Compiled by Yaakov Panitch.



# הנסתרות - לה' או לנו?

**הרבנית שרון רימון**  
Tanach teacher and author



הנסתרים מעיניו - לכאורה איננו יכול לקחת אחריות עליהם ולתקנם.

**אכן, עלינו לקבל שיש רבדים במציאות ובנפש שאיננו מבינים ואיננו יכולים לקחת עליהם אחריות.**

**אך נראה כי התורה מצפה מהאדם לקחת אחריות מקיפה יותר.**

פעמים רבות אדם איננו רואה נגעי עצמו, לא שם לב לטעויות שלו, ובאופן יותר עמוק - איננו מודע לכוונותיו הנסתרות, העומדות מאחרי מעשיו. חוסר מודעות של אדם למעשיו ולמניעים העומדים מאחריהם עלול להיות בעייתי מאד. באופן כזה הוא עלול לחטוא, לפגוע באחרים, ואף להתכחש למעשיו לחלוטין. כאשר האדם מודע לעצמו הוא יכול לעשות עבודה פנימית ולתקן את דרכיו, הוא יכול לשלוט במעשיו ולכוונם בצורה יותר ראויה, ולהימנע מפגיעות נסתרות ומהתכחשות למעשיו.

חברה מתוקנת אמורה לפעול על מנת לצמצם את האפשרות לעשות בסתור מעשים לא ראויים, להפכם לגלויים, כך שתהיה אפשרות לדון אותם, ולמנוע את הישנותם בעתיד.

במקביל, התורה מצפה מהאדם להיות מודע, לקחת אחריות אישית, לחשוף את הנסתרות של עצמו, להפוך את המניעים הנסתרים לגלויים, ולעשות עבודת נפש כדי לכוון את מעשיו אל הטוב.

נשים לב שרוב רשימת הארורים מורכבת ממעשים שבין אדם לחברו. מעשי עוול ופגיעה הנעשים בסתור, ואולי לעולם לא יתגלו. התורה דורשת מהאדם להתנהג במוסריות, גם בחדרי חדרים, כאשר איש אינו רואה ואינו יודע. אדם חוטא בסתור מפני שהוא חושש להתפס, ויותר מכך - מפני שהוא מתבייש במעשיו, ואינו רוצה שאנשים ידעו שהוא חוטא. התורה מזכירה לנו את הנוכחות האלקית הרואה ומשגיחה, כפי שאומרת המשנה: "הסתכל בשלושה דברים ואי אתה בא לידי עברה: דע מה למעלה ממך, עין רואה ואזן שומעת וכל מעשיך בספר נכתבים" (אבות ב' א').

יראת העונש עשויה למנוע חטאים גלויים; יראת שמים עשויה למנוע חטאים נסתרים; אך מצופה מאיתנו גם להגיע לדרגה של יראת חטא - **להבין את הערך המהותי של המצוות ומתוך כך להמנע ממעשים שאינם ראויים, אפילו בסתור, ולדבוק בדרך הישר והטוב** (כפי שנאמר כמה וכמה פעמים בספר דברים).

רמב"ן, בפירושו לפסוק "הנסתרות לה' אלקינו", מוסיף עוד רובד: "ודעתי בדרך הפשט, כי הנסתרות הם החטאים הנסתרים מן העושים אותם". כוונת רמב"ן היא לחטאים הנעשים מחוסר ידיעה, בשוגג, והאדם לא מודע להם, הם אינם בשליטתו. אדם יכול לקחת אחריות על דברים גלויים לו - "הנגלות לנו ולבנינו לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת". אך דברים

פרשת כי תבא, מצווה משה על בני ישראל להקים אבנים ומזבח בכניסה לארץ, ולכתוב את דברי התורה על האבנים. בנוסף לכך, עליהם לעשות מעמד ציבורי (בהר גריזים ובהר עיבל), בו יקריאו את הברכה והקללה. המעמד פותח בהקראת רשימה של "ארורים".

המפרשים מצביעים על כך, שהאיסורים הנמצאים ברשימה זו הם דברים הנעשים בסתור: עבודה זרה בסתור; ביזוי הורים; הסגת גבול; הטעית עיור; הטיית משפט של אנשים חלשים בחברה; גילוי עריות; מכה רעהו בסתור (הריגת בסתור או לשון הרע); לקיחת שוחד.

בסיטואציות כאלה עלולה להיות תחושה שאין דין ואין דין, ולכאורה העולם הפקר, אך התורה מדגישה שמי שעושה מעשים חמורים בסתור, יהיה ארוך, ויקבל עונשו בידי שמים, כפי שנאמר בהמשך, בסיום פרשת הברכות והקללות: "הַנִּסְתָּרֹת לַיהוָה - אֲלֵהֶינּוּ וְהַגְּלוּת לָנוּ וְלִבְנֵינוּ עַד עוֹלָם לְעֲשׂוֹת אֵת כָּל דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת" (כ"ט, כח). ומסביר רשב"ם: "על הנסתרות היו הברכות והקללות, שאין הדבר ליענש ביד בית דין, אלא ביד הקדוש ברוך הוא" אם כן, פרשה זו מלמדת שתמיד יש דין ויש דין. הקב"ה רואה ויודע הכל, ומי שעושה בסתור דברים בעייתיים, יהיה ארוך, ויבואו עליו קללות.

**MIZRACHI**

**OROT MIMIZRACH**  
אורות מִמִּזְרַח PRESENTED BY WORLD MIZRACHI

A 12-part series of 20-minute podcasts on the remarkable persona and teachings of Rav Kook

**Episode 6 will air Sunday September 3 / 17 Elul**  
**Topic: A Burning Love For All**

Visit [mizrachi.org/OrotMiMizrach](http://mizrachi.org/OrotMiMizrach) to listen  
or find it on your favorite podcast streaming platform

# Elevating Every Moment of Our Lives



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

The 18th of Elul will be the birthday of the Ba'al Shem Tov, founder of the Hasidic movement. Here is a brief prescription of his for elevating every thought, word, and action every day of our lives.

This week's Torah portion, Ki Tavo, describes the ceremony of the first fruits: A farmer goes out to his orchard, sees the first ripe fruit and, instead of taking a bite, puts the fruit in a basket and takes it with him to Jerusalem in a festive procession.

The Ba'al Shem Tov explained that all our beginnings, all the initial moments of our endeavors, all the first fruits in our lives deserve special attention and elevation.

He called upon us to elevate our daily "first fruits," the moments upon awakening each day, in the following manner: "It is essential to pay attention to the firsts of each day: the first thought, the first word spoken, the first action."

Do we awaken with a positive or a negative thought? What is the first sentence that leaves our mouth, a complaint or a compliment? And what is the first thing that we do? Is it an action that will pull everything we do during the day in the

לאדם הזה יש ודאי עוד תחומים בחייו, אבל כולם, גם בני המשפחה שבאים איתו וגם מי שרואה אותו בדרך, מבינים כמה העניין הזה יקר וחשוב בעיניו. האסתטיקה, החוויה, הרגש – הכול מעיד כי זה העיקר עבורו. הרמח"ל, רבי משה חיים לוצאטו, כותב בספרו "מסילת ישרים" שכל התיאור הצבעוני הזה בא ללמד אותנו משהו:

"אין די בעשות המצווה לבד, אלא צריך לכבדה ולהדרה. וסדר העלאת הביכורים יהיה לנו לעינינו, לראות מה הוא הידורן של מצוות, וכמה ראוי לנו להוסיף על גופה של מצווה כדי להדרה, ומכאן נלמד לכל שאר המצוות שבתורה, לדעת להתבונן דבר מתוך דבר, לחדש המצוות לעשות נחת רוח ליוצרו."

אם משהו חשוב לנו, עלינו להשקיע בו ביצירתיות ואפילו "לחדש המצאות".

direction of goodness and kindness? The first fruits ceremony is not just ancient history. It is something we can replicate again and again, each morning, every day of our lives.



Can little, undramatic acts, without a crowd to witness them, have lasting meaning? Lior Frishman, chairman of the Rehovot Religious Council, told me the following story:

"Once in the month of Elul, Simcha Hakohen Kook, zt"l, the esteemed Chief Rabbi of Rehovot, conveyed to me his wish to say a few words of inspiration before the next day's *Selichot* (prayers for divine forgiveness) in one of the city's Sephardic synagogues. I asked if I could drive him there and he agreed.

At 4:15 the next morning I waited for him outside his home. He requested that I first take him to the *mikveh* on Shoftim Street. He immersed in the *mikveh* and then we drove to the Sephardic synagogue. We arrived there at 4:45, entered the synagogue, and saw . . . the *gabai* (synagogue manager) but no one else. That was it: me, the rabbi, and the *gabai*. The *gabai*'s

ולהתרגש. למרות הקורונה, למרות הפוליטיקה, למרות הכול, יהודים בכל הדורות היו מתחלפים איתנו בשמחה עצומה, ברגע זה.

הפסוקים האלה בפרשה קוראים גם לנו להסתכל כך סביב ולהודות, ממש עכשיו, כדי שלא נהיה כפויי טובה.



אנחנו עושים הרבה דברים בחיים, אבל איך אנחנו עושים אותם? איפה אנחנו משקיעים ביצירתיות ואיפה אנחנו מזלזלים? פרשת השבוע מתארת את מעמד הבאת הביכורים. אדם יוצא לשדה, רואה על העץ תאנה ראשונה, מסמן אותה בהתרגשות, ובהמשך הוא עולה איתה ועם כל הפירות הראשונים לירושלים, בתהלוכה מקושטת של שירה וריקודים.

face turned as white as a sheet. He did not know what to do with himself. How embarrassing. Here he had invited the city's chief rabbi, troubled him to get up before dawn, but apparently had not sufficiently publicized his appearance and therefore no one had come. What was there to do?

Clearly, each of us would have preferred to see a synagogue full of people, but Rabbi Kook just smiled and said: 'Gentlemen, let's learn together. It will be a true delight to make the two of you my Torah study partners.' I will never forget those moments. And then he added: 'Listen well, do not be disappointed. It's worth it for me to make the effort to get up before dawn and to come here to the synagogue even if I can open the heart of even one Jew. And look, there are two Jews here with me.'

Since then, fifteen years have passed. I am reminded of this story every year in the month of Elul. We are accustomed to speaking of Elul in terms of dramatic deeds and grandiose changes, promising ourselves the world. But every little act of ours is important. Even a class for two before dawn."



שלוש מילים של רש"י מספרות את כל הסיפור כולו: עם ישראל כבר מגיע לארץ ומתבסס בה, ומאות שנים אחר כך – מסופר בפרשת כי תבוא על חקלאי שיוצא למטע שלו ורואה שם ביכורים. הוא לוקח את הפרי הראשון ועולה איתו לירושלים, ובטקס מרגש נושא נאום שכולו תודה על העבר ותקווה לעתיד. מה פשר הטקס הזה? למה צריך להתרגש כל כך מאיזו תאנה ראשונה שצמחה בחצר? רש"י מגדיר זאת כך: "שאינך כפוי טובה."

זה סוג של מבחן: האם אתה יודע להודות על היש ולשמח בו? לראות מאיפה הכל הגיע, ולא לקחת שום דבר כמובן מאליו? ההוראה כאן היא לאמץ את התכונה הזו עם הכניסה לארץ ישראל. לזהות כל הזמן נקודות של טוב ושל חסד ולעשות מהן עניין גדול, לומר עליהן תודה. לא להפסיק להלל ולשבח



# For the Shabbat Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**  
Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi  
Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“You will grope in the afternoon like a blind man gropes in the darkness...” (Devarim 28:29).

This week’s *parsha* lists the blessings and curses which can befall us, depending on whether we listen to the word of Hashem or not. The curse that we will “grobe around in the afternoon like a blind man gropes in the darkness” is difficult to understand.

What difference does it make to a blind man whether it is light or dark? The verse should simply have stated: “You will grope like a blind man”. What is so significant about groping “like a blind man gropes in the darkness”?

The Gemara quotes Rebbi Yossi who states that this verse troubled him all of his life until the following story occurred to him:

“Once I was walking in the darkness of nighttime and I saw a blind person who was walking along the road with a torch in his hand. I said to him, ‘My son, why do you need this torch?’ He said to me, ‘As long as the torch is in my hand, people can see me and save me from ditches, thorns and briars.’” (Megilla 24b)

A blind man in the night faces a double challenge, for not only can he not see, but others cannot see him in order to help him. We can now understand the severity of the curse that not only will you grope like a blind man, but “like a blind man gropes in the darkness.”

We are all “blind” to a certain extent, in that there are many fields in which we are all somewhat ignorant and there are times when all of us need to ask for help. Just as a lawyer may be blind when it comes to medicine, a doctor may be blind when it

comes to law. Such blindness is not necessarily a curse, for the doctor can help the lawyer and the lawyer can help the doctor. It is only a curse if the doctor or the lawyer fail to ask each other for help.

Rather than walking around like blind men in the night, we should learn from Rebbi Yossi’s story and hold out our torches when we are in trouble and need help. We should never be too proud or embarrassed to ask for help, for everybody is blind in some ways. There is nobody alive who does not need at times to seek assistance from a professional, friend, or even a total stranger.

By holding out our torches and learning to help each other, may we only lead lives of blessings.

Shabbat Shalom!

*Continued from page 4*

Looking back at Jewish history, we see that periods of suffering were always followed by periods of success and growth. The middle of the twentieth century is an excellent example. The Jewish people emerged from the Holocaust in a desperate state. A third of our people and our most substantial religious centers were destroyed. Hashem comforted us with the miraculous founding of the State of Israel, which has fostered our people’s physical and spiritual rejuvenation. The *gemara* depicts Hashem as the greatest artist. Though the canvas looks like a jumble of colors during the painting process, eventually a beautiful picture emerges. Hashem similarly paints our lives. We go through difficult periods during which it is often hard to see the good. In retrospect, we realize that these periods were part of our growth process.

May we develop the vision needed to see the end while still working through the process, and the faith needed to know that the end will be for the best.

● *Written up by Joshua Pomerantz*

1. Sefer Bereishit 45:5-8.

2. Ibid 50:20.

3. In fact, Nachum Ish Gamzu received this unique nickname because he would respond to negative experiences by saying that “this also (*gam zu*) is for the good (Masechet Ta’anit 21a). Rebbi Akiva used to teach that “everything the Merciful One does is for the good (Masechet Berachot 60b).

4. Sifri, Ha’azinu 5. See also Sifri, Vaetchanan 7 which explains that *yisurin* (suffering) confer *mechila* for sins.

5. See, for example, Sefer Devarim 28:47.

6. Sefer HaTanya, Iggeret Hakodesh, Perek 11

7. See Ben Yehoyada (Berachot 60b) who explains that it turned out that way because Rebbi Akiva expressed the belief that it would be for the best!

8. Talmud Bavli, Niddah 31a. See also Medrash Tehillim 136.

9. There are many contemporary stories of people who were delayed in a way that caused them to miss a plane that ended up crashing.

10. Sefer Vayikra 14:34. See Vayikra Rabbah 17:1 and 6. The *medrash* seems to build off the Torah’s usage of the word *v’natati* which sounds like a gift.

11. Vayikra Rabbah (ibid). Note that the *medrash* describes the *tzara’at* as “*besorah* (good news).” The Ramban (Vayikra 26:16) uses the same phrase in reference to Eretz Yisrael lying fallow during our exile. Though seemingly bad, this was good news for the Jewish people because it kept others from settling our land and was a sign of the land’s continued relationship with us.

12. Likutei Sichot, Tazria.

13. Rut 1:19

14. Rashi on Rut 1:19

15. Rashbam, Bava Batra 91a

16. Da’at Tevunot 146.

17. Talmud Bavli, Masechet Berachot 5a.

18. See Derech Hashem of the Ramchal for a number of additional models of understanding how suffering can be for the good.

19. Seforno on Bereishit 46:4

20. Bereishit 46:4

21. See also Sefat Emet (5634, Vayigash, D”H Bamedrash).

22. Sefer Bereishit 43:6.

23. Ibid, 47:9.

24. See Chovat Halevavot (Sha’ar Sheini, Sha’ar Habechina) who presents different reasons why people find recognizing the good that Hashem does for us hard.

25. Bereishit Rabbah 95:9. See also 91:10.

# We Are What We Remember



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l

One reason religion has survived in the modern world despite four centuries of secularisation is that it answers the three questions every reflective human being will ask at some time in their life: Who am I? Why am I here? How then shall I live?

These cannot be answered by the four great institutions of the modern West: science, technology, the market economy, and the liberal democratic state. Science tells us how, but not why. Technology gives us power, but cannot tell us how to use that power. The market gives us choices, but does not tell us which choices to make. The liberal democratic state – as a matter of principle – holds back from endorsing any particular way of life. The result is that contemporary culture sets before us an almost infinite range of possibilities, but does not tell us who we are, why we are here, and how we should live.

Yet these are fundamental questions. Moses’ first question to G-d, in their first encounter at the Burning Bush was “Who am I?” (Ex. 3:11). The plain sense of the verse is that it was a rhetorical question: Who am I to undertake the extraordinary task of leading an entire people to freedom? But beneath the plain sense was a genuine question of identity. Moses had been brought up by an Egyptian princess, the daughter of Pharaoh. When he rescued Jethro’s daughters from the local Midianite shepherds, they went back and told their father, “An Egyptian man delivered us.” Moses looked and spoke like an Egyptian.

He then married Zipporah, one of Jethro’s daughters, and spent decades as

a Midianite shepherd. The chronology is not entirely clear but since he was a relatively young man when he went to Midian and was eighty years old when he started leading the Israelites, he spent most of his adult life with his Midianite father-in-law, tending his sheep. So when he asked G-d, “Who am I?” beneath the surface there was a real question. Am I an Egyptian, a Midianite, or a Jew?

By upbringing he was an Egyptian, by experience he was a Midianite. Yet what proved decisive was his ancestry. He was a descendant of Abraham, the child of Amram and Yocheved. When he asked G-d his second question, “Who are you?” G-d first told him, “I will be what I will be” (Ex. 3:14). But then He gave him a second answer:

Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, *the G-d of your fathers – the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac and the G-d of Jacob* – has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, the name you shall call Me from generation to generation. (Ex. 3:15)

Here too there is a double sense. On the surface G-d was telling Moses what to tell the Israelites when they asked, “Who sent you to us?” But at a deeper level the Torah is telling us about the nature of identity. The answer to the question, “Who am I?” is not simply a matter of where I was born, where I spent my childhood or my adult life, or of which country I am a citizen. Nor is it answered in terms of what I do for a living, or what are my interests and passions. These things are about *where* I am and *what* I am but not *who* I am.

G-d’s answer – I am the G-d of your fathers – suggests some fundamental propositions. First, identity runs through

genealogy. It is a matter of who my parents were, who their parents were and so on. This is not always true. There are adopted children. There are children who make a conscious break from their parents. But for most of us, identity lies in uncovering the story of our ancestors, which, in the case of Jews, given the unparalleled dislocations of Jewish life, is almost always a tale of journeys, courage, suffering or escapes from suffering, and sheer endurance.

Second, the genealogy itself tells a story. Immediately after telling Moses to tell the people he had been sent by the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, G-d continued:

Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘The Lord, the G-d of your fathers – the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. *And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites – a land flowing with milk and honey.*’ (Ex. 3:16-17)

It was not simply that G-d was the G-d of their ancestors. He was also the G-d who made certain promises: that He would bring them from slavery to freedom, from exile to the Promised Land. The Israelites were part of a narrative extended over time. They were part of an unfinished story, and G-d was about to write the next chapter.

What is more, when G-d told Moses that He was the G-d of the Israelites’ ancestors, He added, “This is My eternal name, this is how I am to be recalled [zichri]

from generation to generation.” G-d was here saying that He is *beyond* time – “This is My eternal name” – but when it comes to human understanding, He lives *within* time, “from generation to generation.” The way He does this is through the handing on of memory: “This is how I am to be recalled.” Identity is not just a matter of who my parents were. It is also a matter of *what they remembered and handed on to me*. Personal identity is shaped by individual memory. Group identity is formed by collective memory.<sup>1</sup>

All of this is by way of prelude to a remarkable law in today’s parsha. It tells us that first-fruits were to be taken to “the place G-d chooses,” i.e., Jerusalem. They were to be handed to the priest, and each was to make the following declaration:

“My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great, powerful and populous nation. The Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labour. Then we cried out to the Lord, the G-d of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our suffering, our harsh labour and our distress. The Lord then brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, with great fearsomeness and with signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land flowing with milk and honey. I am now bringing the first-fruits of the soil that You, Lord, have given me.” (Deut. 26:5-10)

We know this passage because, at least since Second Temple times it has been a central part of the Haggadah, the story we tell at the Seder table. But note that it was originally to be said on bringing first-fruits, which was not on Pesach. Usually it was done on Shavuot.

What makes this law remarkable is this: We would expect, when celebrating the soil and its produce, to speak of the G-d of nature. *But this text is not about nature. It is about history.* It is about a distant ancestor, a “wandering Aramean”. It is the



**Jews have told the story of who we are for longer and more devotedly than any other people on the face of the earth.**

story of our ancestors. It is a narrative explaining why I am here, and why the people to whom I belong is what it is and where it is. There was nothing remotely like this in the ancient world, and there is nothing quite like it today. As Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi said in his classic book *Zakhor*,<sup>2</sup> *Jews were the first people to see G-d in history, the first to see an overarching meaning in history, and the first to make memory a religious duty.*

That is why Jewish identity has proven to be the most tenacious the world has ever known: the only identity ever sustained by a minority dispersed throughout the world for two thousand years, one that eventually led Jews back to the land and state of Israel, turning Hebrew, the language of the Bible, into a living speech again after a lapse of many centuries in which it was used only for poetry and prayer. We are what we remember, and the first-fruits declaration was a way of ensuring that Jews would never forget.

In the past few years, a spate of books has appeared in the United States asking whether the American story is still being told, still being taught to children, still framing a story that speaks to all its citizens, reminding successive generations of the battles that had to be fought for there to be a “new birth of freedom”, and the virtues needed for liberty to be sustained.<sup>3</sup> The sense of crisis in each of these works is palpable, and though the authors come from very different positions in the political spectrum, their thesis is roughly the same: If you forget the story, you will lose your identity. There

is such a thing as a national equivalent of Alzheimer’s. Who we are depends on what we remember, and in the case of the contemporary West, a failure of collective memory poses a real and present danger to the future of liberty.

Jews have told the story of who we are for longer and more devotedly than any other people on the face of the earth. That is what makes Jewish identity so rich and resonant. In an age in which computer and smartphone memories have grown so fast, from kilobytes to megabytes to gigabytes, while human memories have become so foreshortened, there is an important Jewish message to humanity as a whole. You can’t delegate memory to machines. You have to renew it regularly and teach it to the next generation. Winston Churchill said: “The longer you can look back, the further you can see forward.”<sup>4</sup> Or to put it slightly differently: Those who tell the story of their past have already begun to build their children’s future.

**AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:**

- Why is story-telling important?
- How do you know the Jewish story? Who told it to you?
- In which ways does the Torah seek to ensure that the Jewish story is never forgotten?

---

1. The classic works on group memory and identity are Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, University of Chicago Press, 1992, and Jacques le Goff, *History and Memory*, Columbia University Press, 1992.

2. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. University of Washington Press, 1982. See also Lionel Kochan, *The Jew and His History*, London, Macmillan, 1977.

3. Among the most important of these are Charles Murray, *Coming Apart*, Crown, 2013; Robert Putnam, *Our Kids*, Simon and Shuster, 2015; Os Guinness, *A Free People’s Suicide*, IVP, 2012; Eric Metaxas, *If You Can Keep It*, Viking, 2016; and Yuval Levin, *The Fractured Republic*, Basic Books, 2016.

4. Chris Wrigley, *Winston Churchill: a biographical companion*, Santa Barbara, 2002, xxiv.



# Hakaras Hatov



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

**Y**ou shall come to whoever will be the Kohen in those days, and you shall say to him, “I declare today to Hashem, your G-d, that I have come to the Land that Hashem swore to our forefathers to give us.” (Devarim 26:3)

The *parsha* of *Arami Oved Avi* that follows this *passuk* was recited by a farmer when he brought his *bikkurim* to the Beis HaMikdash. Rashi, quoting the Sifrei, explains that by acknowledging to the *Kohen* that Hashem has fulfilled His promise, the farmer demonstrates that he is not *kafuy tovah*, “unappreciative.” Similarly, the Targum Yonasan interprets the word הגדתי as ואודינא – “I acknowledge,” since as the farmer makes this declaration of thanks, he acknowledges the goodness that Hashem has bestowed upon him.

That is why Chazal established that the *mitzvah* of *sippur yetzi'as Mitzrayim* should be fulfilled specifically through the recitation of the *parsha* of *Arami Oved Avi* – because this *parsha* is the *parsha* of *hakaras hatov*. Rav Soloveitchik explained, based on the Rambam's presentation of the *mitzvah* in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, that *sippur yetzi'as Mitzrayim* does not merely entail relating the story of *yetzi'as Mitzrayim* and the *ikarei emunah* that we learn from it. It should also be an expression of our gratitude towards HaKadosh Baruch Hu for redeeming us.

The Chovos HaLevavos views *hakaras hatov* as a basis of all of our *avodas Hashem*. HaKadosh Baruch Hu is a קל מסתתר – “a G-d Who conceals Himself” (Yeshayah 45:15), so much so that there are many people who deny His existence. Because He is invisible, it is very easy for someone not to be mindful of the *Ribbono shel Olam*. One of the ways that one may keep Hashem in the forefront of his mind is to

develop within himself the *middah tovah* of *hakaras hatov*.

By recognizing the great debt of gratitude we owe Hashem, we strengthen our *emunas Hashem*. That is why there are so many *mitzvos* that are related to the theme of thanksgiving – to strengthen our awareness of the need for *hakaras hatov*.

Rav Soloveitchik noted that there is an inherent difficulty in expressing gratitude to others. One can advance a logical argument that would obviate the need to express *hakaras hatov* in most situations. For example, the recipient of a gift need not thank his benefactor, since the recipient has obviously provided some favor or advantage to the benefactor that led to the beneficence.

This type of calculation may be applied to nearly all interpersonal relationships. A wife performs many acts of kindness for her husband, but if he benefits her in return, he may reason that he has no need to thank her. An employee may claim that he has no need to express gratitude to his employer, since the employer also profits significantly from their arrangement. He thinks, “Where could he find such a good employee for the salary I receive?” Of course, the wife and the employer may argue similarly in the opposite direction. In short, using this logic, one may conclude that he really does not need to thank anyone, since no one really performed true *chessed* for him; anyone who benefits him is merely recompensing a reciprocal act! Everything is merely a *quid pro quo*.

The Rav noted that a Gemara in *Bava Kamma* (92b) serves to dispel this mistaken notion. The Gemara quotes the popular adage: “The wine is the master's, but the appreciation goes to the one who

poured it.” In other words, even though only the *ba'al habayis* truly deserves our *hakaras hatov* for providing the wine, it is proper etiquette to thank the wine steward when he pours the wine for us. There is an important reason for this: If we withhold thanking the wine steward who directly benefits us, we will eventually be ungrateful to the *ba'al habayis* as well.

The Rav went further, applying this rule *vis-à-vis hakaras hatov* towards HaKadosh Baruch Hu. He noted that in the *berachah* of *Nishmas*, *Nusach Ashkenaz* includes the phrase, המהולל ברוב התשבחות – “[G-d] Who is extolled through most of the praises.” This *nusach* is in line with a statement of Rabbi Yochanan, cited in the Gemara in *Berachos* (59b), that discusses the proper *berachah* to recite over rain. Rabbi Yochanan suggests a *nusach* that is an abbreviated form of the *Nishmas* *tefillah*, concluding with the phrase, ברוך אתה ד' רוב ההודאות – “Blessed are You, Hashem, with most thanksgivings.” The Gemara immediately asks, “‘Most thanksgivings,’ and not ‘all thanksgivings?’”

Rather, answers Rava, one should say, – הקל ההודאות “the G-d of thanksgivings.” Rav Papa concludes that since there is a *machlokes* as to how to end the *berachah*, we should use both phrases: רוב ההודאות והקל ההודאות – “most thanksgivings and G-d of thanksgivings.” The Gemara never resolves Rava's question, however. Do we not owe Hashem all thanks?

Rav Soloveitchik suggested the following explanation of the phrase רוב ההודאות. We must be careful to thank Hashem and recognize His beneficence, but only for most of the favors He does for us – not for all of them. Despite the reality that *hakaras hatov* is truly relevant only to

*Continued on next page*

# Learning From Every Letter



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**  
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

In his sefer *Tamei Dikra*, Rav Chaim Kanievsky ZT”L explains a general rule that applies throughout the Torah. He explains that, as we know, there are certain words that are sometimes spelled using their complete spelling and sometimes with their incomplete spelling. Though the meaning of the word does not change, Rav Chaim explains that the message that is meant to be conveyed to us changes based on whether or not there is a *vav* included in the spelling or not.

For example, the word *bachor* can be written either בכור or בכר without there being a change in the meaning. We find a beautiful example of this in *parshas* Ki Teitzei. We find there that in the *parsha* the word *yovel* is used a total of 14 times. Of the times it is used, 6 are in its complete form (יובל) and 8 times in the incomplete form (יבל). What are we supposed to learn from the Torah's use of the different forms of this word? Says Rav Chaim based on the Gemara in Erchin (12B) that *Am Yisrael* has experienced a total of 14 different *Yovels*. This lasted until the *galus* of the time tribes in which most of *Am Yisrael* was then living outside of *Eretz Yisrael* and the observance of *Yovel* became irrelevant. The Baal HaTurim explains that

the 14 times *Yovel* is said was a hint to the number of times that *Am Yisrael* would partake in throughout their time in *Eretz Yisrael*. Rav Chaim explains that of these 14 times, 6 of them was when the *Beis HaMikdash* stood reflecting both our completeness as a nation and the 6 times that this word was written in its complete form versus 8 times when it was lacking a letter similarly to how were lacking the *Beis HaMikdash*.

Where do we find this in our *parsha* this week? We seem to find that the rule that applied in *Parshas* Ki Teitzei comes in the opposite direction here. The *pasuk* tells us regarding the *brachos* (blessings) we will receive from Hashem (28:2) וְהִשְׂיֵגְךָ – and they will reach you. This word here is written in a different manner than when discussing the *klalos* (curses) in (28:15) וּבְאֵי כָל־הַקְּלָלוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהִשְׂיֵגְךָ – and these curses will come and they will reach you. We saw previously by the word *bachor* that the complete spelling represented *Am Yisrael* being complete and therefore was used to express positive circumstances. Why is it that in our *parsha* the full spelling of the word is brought by the *klalos* as opposed to the *brachos*?

Rav Yissachar Dov Rubin ZT”L writes in his sefer *Talelei Oros*. He explains based

on Chazal that a person deserving (*chas v'shalom*) of punishment receives it in this world as opposed to receiving it in *Olam Haba*, yet one who is worthy of receiving great amounts of reward from Hashem does not receive it in this world. As hard as it may be for us, we need to appreciate what waits for us in the world to come even if it means feeling the lack of reward and *bracha* now. The ultimate reward we can receive is not that fulfilling our physical needs but rather spiritual when we will be separated from this world.

That is the explanation of the *Talelei Oros* on these *pesukim* – some of the reward we are deserving of will be given to us *B'Olam Hazeih*, the *klalos* on the other hand are given in this world so that one can have a clean slate when their time comes to go to *Olam Haba* without any such curses still waiting to be brought upon them.

We can learn from here not just a very powerful *vort*, but how much we are able to learn from every single letter included (or not included) in the Torah and the unbelievable wisdom that Chazal, to be able to bring out such foundational lessons from this.

● Edited by Zac Winkler.

*Continued from previous page*

towards HaKadosh Baruch Hu, nevertheless, Hashem wants us to reserve feelings of thanksgiving for human beings as well. If we neglect thanking other people, it will not be long before we deny the need to thank Hashem.

Thus, we must be *makir tov* to our employers, workers, and spouses, despite the calculations mentioned above. If we lack *hakaras hatov* towards these people, we will come to be ungrateful for all of the goodness that Hashem does for us as

well. According to the Midrashim cited, this will, in turn, inevitably lead to a lack of *emunah* in Hashem.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the *Parsha* II.

# Telling the Story of the Jewish People



**Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein**  
Chief Rabbi of South Africa

Storytelling is what makes us human. Interpreting events and constructing narratives about what happens to us in our lives is something we all do. Things happen to us – the basic, factual elements of a story – but as humans, we have unique perspectives that shape how a story is relayed, that give shape and meaning to the experiences we go through.

And this, perhaps, is why our sages refer to the human being as the *medaber*, “the speaker.” Animals also communicate with one another through sounds and gestures, but it is human beings alone who construct narratives and interpret events.

We see a stark illustration of how central constructing narratives is to Jewish identity in this week’s Torah portion. Ki Tavo opens with the requirement of a farmer to bring his first fruits to the Temple and make a declaration, in the presence of the *Kohanim*, dedicating the first fruits of his field to G-d. The wording of that declaration is precisely spelled out by the Torah and includes a significant word: *higaditi* – translated as “And I have told...” The farmer is telling a story.

What story is this farmer telling? There are the objective facts, the physical events, which led him to this point in time. He ploughed and planted and irrigated and harvested, and reaped produce from his land. But, there is also a narrative running parallel to these events. There is metaphysical shape and meaning to be found nestled in these physical details because bringing the first fruits to the Temple and dedicating them to G-d is a gesture of gratitude to the Creator. In acknowledging G-d’s blessings – G-d’s crucial role in bringing all of those processes quite literally to fruition – the farmer is situating his agricultural endeavours within the context of a much

grander narrative, a narrative that frames his entire farming experience in the context of spiritual meaning, connection to G-d, and deep appreciation.

In fact, this narrative of the farmer extends further – connecting his own individual experience to a national narrative, situating his own farming efforts within the context of the Jewish people and land of Israel as a whole. As part of his declaration, the farmer tells the story of how G-d gave the Jewish people the land of Israel, but also how Jewish history is intertwined with our relationship with G-d, and how he brought us into being as nation through redeeming us from the slavery of Egypt. The farmer’s declaration traces the story of how the Jewish people land up in Egypt, how we were afflicted by the Egyptians, how we called out to G-d, and how He answered our cries and redeemed us with signs and wonders. And so from this *mitzvah*, we learn how to narrate the story of Jewish identity – a story rooted in the historical facts of the Egyptian slavery, our redemption from that slavery, the Divine mission we were given, and the gift of the land of Israel.

Narratives are important because they frame the context and the meaning of our lives. This particular narrative – the story of the foundational episode of Jewish history – is important because it frames context and meaning of Jewish history.

The Torah itself is a framework for understanding the mission and meaning of our lives. Why is the *mitzvah* of learning Torah so important? Why is it referred to by our sages as the gateway to all of the other *mitzvot*? Why is it that our sages declare that the merit of learning Torah is equal to the merit of all the *mitzvot* combined? It could be because, through the *mitzvah* of learning Torah, we understand the story

of our lives and the context and the meaning of all of the *mitzvot*. Through Torah learning, we discover the framework to understand the purpose and meaning of our lives. It also gives us the insight to understand the *mitzvot* we do. The *mitzvot* are not simply actions that we have to perform. With every *mitzvah*, there is an accompanying narrative. Only through learning Torah can we understand, for example, that Shabbos is not only about what we can or can’t do on a particular day of the week, but it’s about a day that reminds us of the fact that G-d created the world and He took us out of Egypt and we owe our allegiance to Him.

When we learn Torah, we understand that every person is created in G-d’s image and that requires of us to treat everyone with sensitivity, with kindness, with compassion, with dignity, and with respect. So many of the *mitzvot* relate to how we treat one another and the ethics of these interpersonal relationships. These are not just actions. There is a narrative that surrounds it, a narrative of understanding and meaning of what it means to be a human being.

This idea of constructing narratives also touches on the essence of leadership. One of the words for a leader in the Torah is *nagid* (Samuel 2:5:2). The Radak says *nagid* comes from the Hebrew word *neged*, which means “facing” – the idea is that people face the leader, looking towards them for guidance, support and direction. But, perhaps there’s another meaning of *nagid*, based on the word *higaditi* from our *parsha*, “to tell the story.” One of the responsibilities of leadership is to provide the narrative and tell the overarching story of our lives; to frame the times we live in and place them within a wider, meaningful context.

*Continued on next page*



# The Significance of the Progression of Moshe's Speech



**Rabbi Shalom Rosner**  
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

**S**efer Devarim is Moshe's final speech to Bnei Yisrael (it begins just 36 days prior to his death). At first glance, the significance of the order of his message may not be apparent. Rav Shlomo Aviner in his *Sefer Tal Hermon* (on Parshat Ki Tavo) offers an interesting insight into the structure of the message being relayed by Moshe Rabbeinu.

We need to keep in mind that Moshe is addressing a group of people that served as slaves (or descendants of slaves), who have no experience with the basics necessary when considering establishing a society. The first three parshiyot focus on *Emunah* (faith). Devarim primarily focuses on the faith of the nation in God during the 40 year journey in the desert. Va'etchanan focuses on providing a deeper understanding of faith (10 commandments and *shema*) and Ekev – the general value of *mitzvot* and one's actions. This is followed by the next three *parshiyot*, Re'eh which focuses on national and communal laws, Shoftim, on judicial law, and Ki Tetze – relating primarily to laws of war. After all of these preparatory items, we are now ready to enter the land of Israel.

*Parshat Ki Tavo* addresses the laws of *bikkurim* – offering one's first fruits in Jerusalem, which was to occur after we settled the land of Israel. The *parsha* begins with the word "והיה" – which connotes

happiness. The Gra explains that the word היה is in the past and by inserting a letter "י" at the beginning of the word, it transforms the word to a future tense.

When we enter Israel, we and the land experience happiness. When *Am Yisrael* is not present in the land of Israel, it is not fertile. When the nation is in exile, the land does not bear fruit. Now that we have returned, the land is once again blossoming and fertile. There is a special connection between the Jewish nation and the land of Israel.

Yet the happiness we feel is not complete unless we share it with others. That is why following *bikkurim* we are instructed to share the wealth with *shevet Levi*, essentially the educators whose lives are dedicated to serving on behalf of the nation and who were not granted a portion of land. The Rambam declares that to experience true *simcha* on *yom tov*, one needs to share what he has with the less fortunate, as he states:

וכשהוא אוכל ושותה חייב להאכיל (דברים ט"ז) ליתום ולא למנה עם שאר העניים האמללים, אבל מי שנועל דלתות חצרו ואוכל ושותה הוא ובניו ואשתו ואינו מאכיל ומשקה לעניים ולמרי נפש אין זו שמחת מצווה אלא שמחת כריסו (רמב"ם, הלכות שבת י"ח)

*When a person eats and drinks [in celebration of a holiday], he is obligated to feed converts,*

*orphans, widows, and others who are destitute and poor. In contrast, a person who locks the gates of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and his wife, without feeding the poor and the embittered, is [not indulging in] rejoicing associated with a mitzvah, but rather the rejoicing of his gut.*

Once we have our foothold in Israel and take care of the less fortunate, we ought to internalize our very essence and purpose. Following the commandments connected to *ma'asrot*, we are told to serve as an *Am Segula* – to set an example of moral and ethical behavior for all of the nations of the world.

Rav Aviner skillfully explains the progression of Moshe's speech from the beginning of Devarim until Ki Tavo, highlighting the foundations upon which each message evolves. As the Yamin Noraim approach, we should take a moment to reflect and internalize these messages as well. We ought to strengthen our *emunah* and perfect our performance of *mitzvot*. We should appreciate our connection to Eretz Yisrael which was gifted to us once again in our generation, and do our part to enhance the lives of those less fortunate. Finally, we need to do our utmost to set the example of what it means to be a moral and ethical person – that is part of the *Am Segula*!

*Continued from previous page*

Each of us can be a *nagid*. Each of us is called on to play leadership roles in one way or another. Some people have official positions within society, but everyone is involved in influencing and leading the people around them in some way. We play leadership roles in our families, among our friends, in our communities, in our

business or other kinds of organisations, and in society in general. Parents, especially, are leaders, who frame the meaning and values of their children's lives. Providing the narrative for life is one of the most sacred dimensions of parenting. Whether it's among our children, our peers, our communities, or our places of work, each

of us has the opportunity to create the narrative, to frame experiences, to provide shape, meaning and context to our own lives and the lives of those around us – to lead by example and inspire virtue in others. The story is ours to tell.

# Lessons from Bikkurim



Michal Horowitz  
Judaic Studies Teacher

**P**arshas Ki Savo, begins with the *mitzvah* of *Bikkurim*, the first fruits of the *shivas ha'minim* (blessed produce species of Eretz Yisrael) (Devarim 8:8) that the landowner brings, in a celebratory procession, up to the *Beis HaMikdash*, preferably from Shavuot through Succos (Devarim 26:1-11).

The first fruits were given to the *kohanim* who were on duty at that time. They divided the produce among themselves to be eaten within the walls of the holy city of Jerusalem. The *kohen* took the fruit and returned the expensive containers (brought by the rich people) to the owners. In the case of a reed or grass basket (brought by the poor people), both the first fruits and the basket were given to the *kohanim*. After sleeping in Jerusalem overnight, the farmer was free to return home.

This beautiful *mitzvah*, which is an expression of *hakaras ha'tov* to Hashem for the Holy Land and its bounty, is so fundamental and important that the *Medrash* teaches that for *Bikkurim*, the whole world was created! (Medrash Bereishis Rabbah 1:4).

When the farmer offered the fruits as a gift to the *kohen*, he recited a special passage, known as the *Mikreh Bikkurim* (Devarim 26:5-10). Much of the passage is familiar to us, as it makes up a significant portion of the *Maggid* section of the *Haggadah shel Pesach*.

The passage begins with the history of Yaakov Avinu working for Lavan, who wanted to destroy him, then Yaakov and his family descending to Egypt. It recalls the Egyptian enslavement, the subsequent redemption, and our arrival to the Land flowing with milk and honey.

In the passage, the landowner says: **וַיַּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם**, וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ; וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבָדָה קָשָׁה, and the Egyptians mistreated us, and they afflicted us, and they placed upon us hard work (26:6). How can we explain the words, **וַיַּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם**, and what do they come to teach us?

As with any study of *lashon ha'kodesh*, identifying the *shoresh* (root) of the word often teaches us much about the message of the Torah.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski z'l explains, "While the concept of the term **וַיַּרְעוּ** is indeed 'mistreated,' the literal translation of the word is 'made bad' (from the *shoresh* רע). Furthermore, if the meaning of the verse is that the Egyptians did bad to us, the correct Hebrew expression is **וַיַּרְעוּ לָנוּ**, they did bad to us, rather than **וַיַּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ**, lit., they made us bad. The more accurate translation of this verse, therefore, is 'the Egyptians made us bad,' i.e., they corrupted us.

"Interestingly, another possible translation of **וַיַּרְעוּ** is derived from the word 'רע, friend', in which case, the phrase would read, 'they befriended us.'

"The two meanings of the word **וַיַּרְעוּ** may thus coincide. The Egyptians corrupted us both with their cruelty, which caused us to lose our sensitivity for one another, and on the other hand, by befriending us. We became degenerate by associating with them.

"It is said that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Psychology has elucidated a defense mechanism of 'identification with the aggressor,' wherein the victim adopts characteristics of his abuser. One would think that a child who was abused by a parent would resolve that he would never harm his children the way he was

harmed. Research has shown this not to be true. Sadly, parents who suffered abuse during their childhood may repeat the pattern with their own children.

**וַיַּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ**, lit., they made us bad. Alshich (R. Moshe Alshich, b.1508 in the Ottoman Empire, Turkey, d. 1593, Tzfas, buried in the Old Cemetery, Tzfas) explains that the abuse suffered by the Israelites in Egypt caused them to be insensitive to one another" (Twerski on Chumash, p.416-417).

This is the first interpretation of **וַיַּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ**, they made us bad. The mistreatment and abuse one suffers, tragically, may be perpetuated by the victim himself. In this case, the Egyptian enslavement was so brutal, so ongoing, and so painful, that the slaves themselves became cruel and insensitive to the plight and suffering of their brethren.

As for the second interpretation of **וַיַּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ**, based on the root word for friend, how do we explain that the Egyptians 'befriended us'?

Continues R' Dr. Twerski, "The second source of corruption is perhaps even more dangerous than the first. We are profoundly influenced by our friends and our environment. So much so, that the Rambam writes that a person who lives in a corrupt community must relocate, and if one cannot find a community that is wholesome and pure, one should live in the wilderness rather than be subject to a corrupt environment!

"In the decades since the horrors of the Holocaust, statistics show that Judaism has lost more than six million souls due to intermarriage and assimilation. Assimilation among 'friends' is a greater threat to Jewish survival than the open brutality of our enemies.

Continued on page 18

# The Finale – Moshe's Concluding Remarks



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

“On this day, G-d commands you to observe these **chukim u'mishpatim**... G-d has affirmed this day that you are His “**am segula**” (treasured nation) and He will set you high above all nations that you shall be, as He promised, an “**am kadosh**” (a holy nation)...” (see 26:16-19)

Moshe concludes the main speech by reiterating the primary purpose for keeping these mitzvot – in order that Am Yisrael become an **am kadosh** – a holy nation, worthy to represent G-d.

Moshe's concluding remarks also include a striking parallel to G-d's original charge to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai. Recall that when Bnei Yisrael first arrive at Har Sinai, G-d summons Moshe to the mountain and proposes a special covenant with Bnei Yisrael:

“And now, if **you will listen to my voice and keep my covenant**, then you shall become for Me a “**segula**” amongst all the nations... and you shall be for me a kingdom of priests and an “**am kadosh**...” (Shmot 19:5-6)

This proposal, which actually forms the prelude to the Ten Commandments, explains the primary purpose of Matan Torah – that Am Yisrael become a **goy kadosh** to represent G-d.

Now, at the conclusion of the main speech, in which Moshe Rabeinu repeats those mitzvot which were **originally given at Har Sinai**, we find this very same theme repeated:

“And G-d has affirmed this day that you are, as He promised you [at Har Sinai!], His **am segula** who shall **observe** all

of His commandments, and that He will set you, in fame and renown and glory, high above all the nations that He has made; and that you shall be, as He promised [at Har Sinai!] an **am kadosh**...” (26:18-19)

Moshe's concluding remarks are quite appropriate, for the purpose of the mitzvot, which he has just completed teaching Bnei Yisrael, are to help Bnei Yisrael become a **segula** and an **am kadosh**; just as He had originally promised them at Har Sinai!

Moshe's concluding remarks also beautifully tie together the two main sections of the main speech. The **mitzvah** section, whose primary topic is “ahavat Hashem”, opened with the commandment to love G-d – “b'chol lvavcha uvchol nafshecha” – with all one's heart and with all one's soul. Now, at the conclusion of the **chukim u'mishpatim** section, Moshe explains how these two sections relate to each other:

“The Lord your G-d commands you this day to keep these chukim u'mishpatim; observe them faithfully – “b'chol lvavcha u'v'chol naf'shecha” – with all your heart and with all your soul...” (26:16)

The numerous specific mitzvot which are recorded in the **chukim u'mishpatim** section must be kept with the proper attitude, as explained in the mitzvah section.

The above thematic and textual parallel to “Ma'amad Har Sinai” at the conclusion of the main speech continues in the parsha which follows immediately afterward:

“Moshe and the elders charged the people, saying: Observe everything that I command you today... for when you cross the Jordan, you must erect large

stones and coat them with plaster [in order that] you shall write on them all the words of this Torah [the mitzvot of Sefer Dvarim]... erect these stones on Har Eival... And you shall build there a **mizbayach**... (note parallel to Shmot 20:22), and you shall offer upon it **olot** and **shlamim**...” (Devarim 27:1-8)

An almost identical ceremony took place some forty years earlier at Ma'amad Har Sinai, immediately after Moshe teaches Bnei Yisrael the laws which G-d gave him after the Ten Commandments:

“And Moshe came [down from Har Sinai] and told the people all of G-d's commandments and the **mishpatim**... Moshe then wrote down all of G-d's commandments. Then, he woke up early in the morning and built a **mizbayach** at the foot of the mountain and erected twelve large stones... and they offered **olot** and **shlamim**...” (Shmot 24:3-8)

Likewise, there is a “tochacha” which is to be read at that ceremony on Har Eival (see Devarim 27:11-28:69), just as there was a “tochacha” which was read at Har Sinai (Vayikra 26:3-46, see also 25:1).

Thus, this ceremony which Bnei Yisrael must perform on Har Eival, which includes writing down and teaching the mitzvot of Sefer Devarim, building a **mizbayach**, and offering **olot** and **shlamim**, parallels the covenantal ceremony which took place at Ma'amad Har Sinai when Bnei Yisrael proclaimed “na'aseh v'nishma.” (see Shmot 24:3-11)

The reason for this parallel is quite simple: Because this generation (which is about to enter the Land and fulfill these mitzvot) was not present at the original ceremony,

*Continued on page 23*



# Reading the Curses – Opportunity to Achieve Atonement



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**  
Edmond J Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

Parashat Ki-Tavo is famous for the section known as the “*Tocheha*,” which describes the *Kelalot* (curses), the horrific calamities that threaten to befall Bene Yisrael if we forsake G-d’s commands. A similar section appears earlier in Parashat Behukotai, toward the end of the Book of Vayikra.

The Gemara notes a number of differences between the two sections. One difference is that the curses in Parashat Behukotai were dictated by G-d, whereas the curses here in Parashat Ki-Tavo were initiated by Moshe. Of course, G-d agreed with every letter, and it was thus all included in the Torah. But the curses in this *Parasha* were originally said by Moshe, and not by the Almighty.

At first glance, it seems very strange that Moshe would compose such horrific curses. Moshe Rabbenu was always our nation’s greatest advocate, interceding to G-d on our behalf and trying to secure a favorable judgment for us. It seems “out of character” for Moshe to warn of such dreadful and frightening catastrophes.

To understand Moshe’s intent in formulating these curses, let us first consider another comment of the Gemara. The Gemara teaches that Ezra, the leader of the Jewish people at the beginning of the Second Temple era, instituted that

the curses of Parashat Ki-Tavo should be read every year in the final week or two of the year, before Rosh Hashanah. The reason, the Gemara explains, is “*Tichleh Shana U’kelaloteha*” – “the year should end along with its curses.” We read the curses when the year ends to express our hope that just as the year is coming to an end, the curses that threaten us should likewise come to an end.

How does reading the curses help us ensure that they will end?

We might compare reading the curses to other forms of reading and study, such as studying about the *Korbanot*, the sacrifices brought in the Bet Ha’mikdash. Even without a *Mikdash*, when we cannot offer *Korbanot*, we can still gain access to the power and effects of the sacrifices by learning about them. This is why we include the *Korbanot* section in our daily prayer service. By learning about the sacrifices, we are considered as though we have actually offered them, and we thus gain the advantages of sacrifices despite our inability to place animals upon the altar. This applies to the *Kelalot*, as well. When we study the dreadful curses in this *Parasha*, we are considered to have actually experienced them – even though we have not actually gone through this suffering. Reading and learning the *Kelalot* is thus very beneficial for us, as it helps

us avoid having to actually endure them. Even if, Heaven forbid, we are deserving of suffering, we can study this section in lieu of punishment.

This is why Ezra had us read the *Kelalot* right before Rosh Hashanah. As we stand in judgment before G-d, we can tell Him that even if we have sinned and failed, we should be considered as having already endured punishment, since we’ve read and studied the curses of Parashat Ki-Tavo. This is why many great *Sadikim* listen very intently to the reading of the *Kelalot*, keenly aware of just how powerful and beneficial this study is.

And this might be why Moshe Rabbenu wrote these *Kelalot* in the first place. He was not trying to curse us, but to the contrary, to help us avoid calamity. He gave us this section for us to carefully read and study, so that we can be regarded as having endured this suffering and thereby earn atonement. The section of the *Tocheha* offers us the remarkable opportunity to achieve atonement for our sins without having to experience calamity and hardship. It is thus an invaluable asset, and an expression of immense love on the part of Moshe Rabbenu, who gave us this section to learn and probe as a means of averting calamity.

*Continued from page 16*

“The holiness and purity of Jewish morals, and way of life, has been eroded and corrupted by the permissiveness and immorality that prevails in western civilization. King David bewails this state of being and cries, וַיִּתְעַרְבוּ בְּגוֹיִם וַיִּלְמְדוּ,

מִעֲשֵׂיהֶם – they mingled with the nations and learned their ways’ (Tehillim 106:35). That historical tragedy is unfortunately with us today as well.

“We must be on guard in both realms, not to allow our ethics and morals to

be destroyed by either interpretation of וַיִּתְעַרְבוּ אִתָּנוּ, neither their abuse, nor their overtures of friendship,” (Twerski on Chumash, p.417) so that we may ensure the wholesomeness and integrity, kindness, holiness and purity of *Am Yisrael*.

# Every Man will be a King



**Rabbi Moshe Weinberger**

Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

The customs of the Jewish people are very holy, and we say the following *tefillah* over the head of a fish or sheep on Rosh Hashanah night: “May it be Your will that we should be the head and not the tail.” But how we can pray for this when the Mishna says in Avos (4:15), “Be a tail to lions and not a head to foxes.” This is understood to teach that one should be humble, not always running to be the “head,” the most important role in whatever he involves himself. Indeed, there is tremendous grace and charm in one who makes himself the “tail” by conducting himself in a humble way. As the *pasuk* (Mishlei 3:34) says, “[G-d] gives grace to the humble.”

Our *parsha* is filled with blessings. And to the extent some *psukim* in the *parsha* appear to be the opposite of blessings, it is only because we do not know how to read them properly. One *passuk* (Devarim 28:13) seems to “side” with the Rosh Hashanah custom: “And Hashem will make you the head and not the tail. You shall be only above and you will not be below when you listen to the *mitzvos* of Hashem your G-d which I command you today, to observe and do.” Targum Yonasan, in his interpretive Aramaic translation of the phrase “the head and not the tail,” renders the phrase: “Hashem will make you kings and not simple people.”

Indeed, the *passuk* (Shmos 19:6) says, “You shall be to Me a kingdom of *kohanim* and a holy nation.” But what does it mean that every Jew can be a king? As we will quote below, the Ibn Ezra explains this beautifully in his commentary on *parshas Nasso*. It must be noted that the Ibn Ezra himself suffered from profound poverty and suffered throughout his life. Nevertheless, he was a great *talmid chacham* and *paytan* and the Rambam even refers to him as a *chassid*, a pious individual. Because of his

constant lack of success at anything he attempted to do in order to improve his situation, he once wrote, tongue in cheek, “If I became a candle-maker, the sun would never set and if I began making burial shrouds, people would stop dying.”

The Ibn Ezra explains why the Torah calls one who makes a Nazir vow (to refrain from drinking wine or cutting his hair) a Nazir – נזיר, which literally means “crown.” The *passuk* makes this explicit when it says (Bamidbar 6:7) about the Nazir, “for the crown [נזיר] of his G-d is on his head.” He says, “Know that all people are slaves to the desires of the world. But a true king who has the crown of kingship on his head is anyone who is free from these desires.” It is therefore appropriate and fitting to call a Jew who is not a slave to his desires a “king.”

Perhaps that is what Targum Yonasan means when he translates “the head and not the tail” as “kings and not simple people.” In order to be masters of our own destiny and not slaves to our baser instincts, we must do as the *passuk* in our *parsha* continues, “to observe [לשמור] and do,” which implies that we must guard (שמירה) ourselves by setting up boundaries to ensure that we do not become enslaved to the illusory pleasures, values and priorities of this world.

We merit to be Hashem’s bride by acting as His betrothed. When He said, “Behold you are betrothed [מקודשת] to me,” we recognize that the intimacy of our relationship means that we must be separated like *hekdesh* from the things of this world. By freeing ourselves from being enslaved to our desires, we enable ourselves to connect to G-d as kings, as masters of our own lives. By doing so in advance of Rosh Hashanah, we not only coronate Hashem as King, but we make ourselves kings as

well – not simple people. By doing so, we will merit “only above and not be below.”

This is what it means to be a Jew. From the time a young man becomes a *bar mitzva*, he is called a *bachur* – בּוּחַר. The Tosafos Yom Tov in the tenth *perek* of Nedarim quotes the Maharal that because the word for *bachur* has the same letters as “one who chooses – בוחר,” we know that the essence of being a young man in *Yiddishkeit* is that he must make choices. He must be a master of his own destiny. He must choose to be a king and not a slave to his desires, above and not below, a head and not a tail.

This Rosh Hashanah, may we merit to coronate not only Hashem but also ourselves as kings. By letting Hashem guide our choices so that we are not enslaved by the desires, values, and priorities of this world, may we merit to see the world in which “Hashem will be King over the entire earth; on that day Hashem will be One and His name will be One” (Zecharia 14:9).

# Contributing Your Verse to the Play of Life



Rabbi YY Jacobson  
TheYeshiva.net

One of the most “green” and organic commandments in the Torah is the *mitzvah* of *Bikurim*, the “First Fruits,” in the opening of this week’s portion (Ki Savo.)

If you lived in the biblical Land of Israel, and your orchard grew any of the special fruits with which the Land was blessed—grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives or dates—you were commanded by the Torah to select the first-ripened fruits, place them in a basket, bring them to the Holy Temple, and present them to the *kohen*, the priest, as a gift,

Today, *Bikurim* are gone with the destruction of Temple. What is the closest thing we have left?

The Midrash says: “Moses saw that the Temple would eventually be destroyed, and *Bikurim* aborted, therefore he established prayer three times a day.” Just as *Bikurim* are the first and freshest fruit of my harvest, prayer is the first and freshest moment of my day.

But the comparison runs far deeper. On the surface, there is nothing more routine and potentially more boring than daily prayers. The same prayers day in and day out, the same words, the same boring congregation, the same monotonous rabbi, and the same people sleeping during the sermon.

Comes the Torah and tells us that we can view it in a very different way. Your prayers may be like the fruit basket of an impoverished farmer or like the fruit basket of a wealthy farmer. That does not matter; what matters is that it is yours. When you are real with G-d, when you speak your heart, your truth, your

feelings, when you show up with your voice, then all of the angels in all of the worlds become silent to listen to your daily declaration in the Temple.

What matters most is that you speak it in your authentic voice. And then your prayers, too, just like *Bikurim*, become a momentous opportunity.

The Baal Shem Tov once shared this following allegorical story:

Once upon a time, the lion grew furious with all of the other jungle animals. Since the lion is “the king of animal life,” and is most powerful and dominant, his ire evoked deep fright in the hearts of the other animals.

“What should we do?” murmured all the animals at an emergency meeting. “If the lion lets out his anger, we are all done.”

“No worries,” came the voice of the fox, known as the wiliest of animals. “In the reservoirs of my brain are stored 300 stories, anecdotes and vignettes. When I present them to the lion, his mood will be transformed.”

A wave of joy rushed through all the animals as they embarked on a march toward the lion’s home in the jungle, where the fox would placate him and restore the friendly relationship between the lion and his subjects.

During the journey through the jungle pathways, the fox suddenly turns to one of his animal friends and says, “You know, I forgot 100 of my entertaining stories.”

Rumors of the fox’s lapse of memory spread immediately. Many animals were overtaken by profound trepidation, but

soon came the calming voice of Mr. Bear. “No worries,” he said. “Two hundred vignettes of a brilliant fox are more than enough to get that arrogant lion rolling in laughter and delight.

“They will suffice to do the job,” agreed Mr. Wolf. A little while later, as the extraordinarily large entourage of animals was nearing the lion, Mr. Fox suddenly turned to another colleague. “I have forgotten another 100 of my anecdotes,” lamented the fox. “They simply slipped my mind.”

The animals’ fear became stronger, but soon enough came the reassuring voice of Mr. Deer. “No worries,” he proclaimed, “One hundred fox stories will suffice to capture the imagination of our simple king.”

“Yes, 100 jokes will assuage the lion,” agreed Mr. Tiger. A few moments later, all of the hundreds of thousands of animals were at the lion’s den. The lion rose to his full might and glory, casting a fierce gaze at all of his subjects, sending a shiver through their veins.

As the moment of truth arrived, all of the animals looked up with beseeching eyes to their bright representative the fox, to approach the lion and accomplish the great mission of reconciliation. At that very moment, the fox turned to the animals and said, “I am sorry, but I forgot my last 100 stories. I have nothing left to say to the king.”

The animals went into hysteria. “You are a vicious liar,” they cried. “You deceived us. What are we to do now?”

“My job,” responded the fox calmly, “was to persuade you to take the journey from

*Continued on page 22*



# Ki Savo: “Turn to Hashem”



**Rabbi Judah Mischel**

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

**R**av Yitzchak Zilber, zt'l, legendary champion of Russian Jewry, was a humble *talmid chacham* and teacher whose incredible self sacrifice and dedication inspired and strengthened generations of Jews. Having been imprisoned in gulags of the former Soviet Union, he escaped to Tashkent and later arrived in Eretz Yisrael, where he continued his efforts in teaching Torah around the clock. Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt'l, referred to him as “one of the *Lamed Vav Tzadikim*,” one of the hidden righteous people whose presence supports the entire world. Thousands of Russian *olim* to the Holy Land sought his counsel and Torah instruction.

One of Rav Zilber's early students shared an anecdote and memory of the first time he went to the *Kotel haMaaravi* to daven. He felt incredibly privileged to walk among a group of new immigrants accompanied by their *rav*, after years of yearning to make *aliyah* and live in Eretz Yisrael; he had finally made it!

When they first saw the Holy Wall, they shed a tear of awe, and then, kissing the holy stones, they felt the sweetness of homecoming. When a *Mincha minyan* commenced, they happily joined. But within a few seconds, instead of feeling inspired and connected, the student began to feel unsettled and frustrated, and tense in his stomach. “This is my first time here,” he whispered to his *Rav* during the *chazan's* repetition. “And everyone around me is davening beautifully, with all their hearts, but I have no idea how to join them! Everything is moving so fast and I can barely even read Hebrew!”

Rav Yitzchok placed his arm around his student's shoulder, and spoke into his ear: “I hear, I hear! There isn't much I can do for you other than this....” The *rav*

turned his body around to face the *Kotel*, and continued: “Whatever is in your heart — joy, pain, confusion, heart-brokenness, feelings of distance — tell Him about it! Speak to Hashem! Tell the *Ribbono Shel Olam* your story, in your own words, at your own pace.”



Our *sedra* contains the *pesukim* recited when bringing *bikurim*, first fruits, to the *Beis haMikdash*. One is to stand before Hashem in gratitude and tell Him the story of our journey that brought one to this moment. One describes the beginning of our people, our exile and redemption from *Mitzrayim*; one recounts the long and difficult road to “the Land flowing with milk and honey,” and to *Yerushalayim*. This recital is a ‘*vidui*’ of sorts, a ‘confession’ and acknowledgement of the past, and symbolically presenting to Hashem everything in one's mind and heart. Through reflecting on the story, one is to appreciate the process, including the challenges, complaints and hardships along the way. This moving section of our *parshah* is included as part of the *Haggadah* liturgy, forming an essential element of *Seder Night*: “My father was a fugitive Aramean....”

Finally, one acknowledges the ‘fruits’ of his labor, effort and faith, and recognizes that everything really comes from Hashem:

וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְגִיתָךְ  
 “You shall rejoice with all the good that Hashem has given you and your household.” (26:11)

Honoring the travails of exile, struggle and process as part of our redemption story enhances the sweetness of our deliverance and the abundance we have been given. And presenting to Hashem our personal spiritual narrative in such a beautiful way cultivates a deeper sense of connection and closeness to the

*Ribbono shel Olam*. Even our exiles and challenges were for the good; we finally made it!



Later on, our *sedra* lists the numerous blessings promised as a reward for following Hashem's will and living a life of Torah. Among them:

בְּרוּךְ טַבְּנָאךָ וּמִשְׁאַרְתְּךָ

Blessed will be your *tana*, ‘basket’, and your kneading bowl. (28:5)

While visiting the holy *tzion* of Reb Shaya-*leh*, zy'a, in *Kerestir*, Hungary, my wife and I had a wonderful conversation over coffee and *kokosh* cake with Rav Buxbaum, the generous inn-keeper and *mashgiach*. During this *shmues*, he shared the following teaching in the name of the *tzadik* Rebbe Mordechai of *Nadvorna*.

Every day we bring all sorts of *taanot*, complaints, before Hashem. Some of them we bring out into the open and present them to Him in a *tana*, ‘basket.’ Other complaints we hold inside, leaving them unspoken, kneading them over and over, tying knots inside the ‘kneading bowl’ of our stomach. Thus, the *Torah* blesses us: בְּרוּךְ טַבְּנָאךָ — ‘May your *ta'anut* be blessed and resolved through presenting them to Me so beautifully and openly. And may *וּמִשְׁאַרְתְּךָ*, even the lumps of dough, the challenges that you are still laboring on in your inner ‘kneading bowl’ be blessed and smoothed out — by turning to me and speaking to Me about them!”

Let us take the opportunities we have to turn to Hashem and confess our gratitude and our gripes — and share with Him everything that is on our mind, in our heart and even deep down in our stomach. And may be blessed to arrive in *Yerushalayim* with the fruits of our labor to rejoice in all the good Hashem has granted us!

# Elul – Month of Relationships

## Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

The Sefat Emet teaches that the essence of the month of Elul is understanding the interplay of the word ‘lo’ as expressed in the verse in Tehillim, “*Hu asanu v’lo anachnu*. He created us and we are His.” ‘Lo’ can be translated interchangeably as ‘to Him’ or ‘we are nothing.’ We have the ability to attach ourselves to Hashem to the extent that we nullify ourselves. This is encoded within the word *Elul* – spelled *lamed, aleph, lamed, vav*.

What does nullifying oneself mean? Rav Tatz explains that our inner struggles are linked to the root challenge first faced by Adam. Adam reasoned that if he would sin he would bring himself and the world down from its pure state into a world of physicality. If he could then stand firm against temptation, he would achieve much more than by resisting sin on an elevated level. However, he was mistaken. Where there is an illusion of independence, where there’s a wrong choice that

contradicts the Divine Will, there is a death. We all face this challenge. Being told what to do is a negation of self. Adam wanted to use his entire being to serve Hashem. But he failed to realize that the greatest assertion of free will is giving in to a Higher Will. Elul is a time to introspect and ask ourselves, how many times did our will and Hashem’s Will clash? How many times did we insist on our own will? It’s a time to work on nullifying the ‘I’ and committing our will to Hashem.

There’s also the second aspect of ‘lo.’ We belong to Hashem. The Netivot Shalom writes about the *pasuk*, “*Nachpesa diracheinu*, Let us search our ways.” We must not only think about our sins but also about our *mitzvot*. What is our mindset when we do *mitzvot* and learn Torah? Are we just going through the motions and missing the essence? When we say a *bracha* or *daven*, do we visualize that we are talking to the Master of the world? Elul is a preparatory time to analyze our relationship

with Hashem. We must open our eyes to find Him.

There’s no aspect of life devoid of Hashem. Whether it’s physical or spiritual needs, we must turn to Him for help. When we do this, even for minor things, He becomes more involved in our lives. The Chazon Ish told a student that the main thing to ingrain in a child’s mind is *emuna* and *hashgacha pratit*, recognizing that Hashem is intimately involved in every aspect of our life. This is how we develop an emotional bond with Him. The mindset of a Jew has to be, “*V’ani kirvat Elokim li tov*. For me closeness to Hashem is good.”

If we spend Elul focusing on making Hashem’s Will our own and on developing a relationship with Him, we can then stand before him on Rosh Hashana and crown Him king.

---

Continued from page 20

your own nests to the lion’s nest. I have accomplished my mission. You are here. Now, let each and every single one of you discover his own voice and rehabilitate his own personal relationship with the king.”

This story, concluded the Baal Shem Tov, illustrates a common problem in institutionalized religion. We come to synagogue on Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur, or any other time of the year, and we rely on the “foxes” – the cantors and the rabbis – to serve as our representative to the King of Kings.

“The rabbi’s sermon today was unbelievable,” we often proclaim after services.

“He is really awesome.” Or, “That cantor? His vibrato just melted my soul.”

These clergy all-too-often become the “foxes” who know how to get the job done for us.

Yet, sooner or later, we come to realize that the foxes, with all due respect, don’t really have what it takes to address the king on behalf of you and me. Each of us must discover his or her own inner voice and inner passion and spirit, and speak to G-d with a distinct and unique voice.

Cantors and rabbis during the High Holidays (and the rest of the year) ought to

view themselves as the Baal Shem Tov’s foxes: Their function is to persuade and inspire people to leave their own self-contained domains and embark on a journey toward something far deeper and more real. But each and every one of us must ultimately enter the space of G-d alone.

This, then, is the message we can learn from the fruit basket gifts. This year on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, don’t rely on any foxes. Speak to G-d directly. With your own words, with your own soul. Heart to heart, from your truest place to His truest place.

# The Chesed of Chasidism



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi**  
Popular Torah teacher and author

**T**his week, Chai Elul (the 18th of Elul), we speak again about the Baal Shem Tov who did not begin the “Kol Nidrei” prayer, even as the entire community waited. One story is about there being a crying baby at home whose mother had gone to pray, another story describes a Jewish boy who had discovered his Judaism, came to the synagogue and his heart was broken because he did not know the words of the prayer, and so the story appears in many different variations.

This Chasidic story is not about the ignorant child or the crying baby. It is not even about the Baal Shem Tov himself. It is about the people who come to the synagogue and their hearts stop. They hold the *machzor* in their hands, they can read well, they have learned everything about the Day of Judgement, but the books - are the books of the dead.

Chasidism does not want the death of the dead, it delays the entire prayer so that everyone sweats uncomfortably in their fixed places and asks that the prayer already begin to beat in them so that the letters do not die and that is why the Baal Shem Tov delayed the prayer because “the

first Chasidim remained.” Stop the world, he said, I will ascend...

“For the world has a heart,” wrote the great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Nachman, and in this week’s Parashah Moshe writes: “And the Lord has not given you a mind... Because you would not serve your G-d... .. in joy and gladness ... so G-d will strike you with madness, blindness and dismay...” The world has a heart, and every day, says Rabbi Nachman, one must draw new strength in order not to let the world die. How can you not die! Well, with fear. “As you behold, you will glow,” says the *haftarah*, “Your heart will throb and thrill.”

The Baal Shem Tov took the prayer from those waiting for a few moments, and suddenly they were very frightened. It will not be fear of judgment when you are told, “Pray!” It will be a wonderful Chasidic fear that will tell us, “Stop praying. Now we are not praying. Now you will miss the prayer that is repeated in the *machzor*, you will miss the holidays that discourage you so much, you will miss it like the ignorant child who desecrates the holiday and the whole prayer with his flute, only then will you realize what joy is in the *teshuvah*. It’s

about the ancient words, about the religious ritual, about repentance.”

Contrary to popular belief, the Baal Shem Tov did not want to pray with the “broken”, but with the happy!!! He received them broken, but this is not how he had imagined them, half-dead Jews... He knew that a few minutes of waiting for the prayer to begin, the fear that we have lost the prayer this year, only these allow us to suddenly worship G-d with joy and kindness more than anything else.

This precision is exquisite. The interpretation according to which Chasidism sees heartbreak as the goal is very Christian. Baal HaTanya explains heartbreak as a “fitness lesson,” a lesson that prepares the heart to understand that prayer is joy, that serving G-d is joy, that making a mistake in the covenant is a terrible sadness, and that keeping that covenant is so joyful!

There is a big difference between “seclusion” and solitude. The solitude will be without, it will be sadness, the seclusion will be with, it will be fellowship, it will be renewed devotion of youth, love like a bride and I will marry you in *chesed*.

*Continued from page 17*

a **new** ceremony is required in which the new generation can re-affirm their commitment to their covenant with G-d.

This ceremony will take place on Har Eival, where Bnei Yisrael will ‘re-live’ the experience of Har Sinai by studying the mitzvot of Sefer Devarim which will guide them as they establish their new nation.

It is not often in our history that one generation is given an opportunity to fulfill a destiny that was originally planned for an earlier generation. Aware of this potential, Moshe encourages the new generation in the desert to rise to the challenge of setting up an **am kadosh** in the Promised Land, as G-d had originally planned for the generation of their parents.

Although this challenge by Moshe Rabeinu to Am Yisrael is some three thousand years old, it takes on additional significance today, as our own generation has been given the potential to fulfill this very same destiny.



# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



**David Curwin**

balashon.com

Author of the book *Kohelet: A Map to Eden* (Maggid)

**P**arashat Ki Tavo contains a long list of curses that the nation will suffer if they don't remain loyal to G-d. One of the prevalent themes is exile, as predicted here:

וְנִסְחָתְכֶם מֵעַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם בָּא-שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:  
...וְכִן יִשִּׁישׁ ה' עֲלֵיכֶם לְהֶאֱבִיד אֶתְכֶם וְלְהַשְׁמִיד אֶתְכֶם

"And as the LORD once delighted in making you prosperous and many, so will the LORD now delight in causing you to perish and in wiping you out; you shall be torn from the land that you are about to enter and possess." (Devarim 28:63)

The word translated here as "you shall be torn from" is נִסְחָתְכֶם. Others translate it as "you shall be pulled up" or "you shall be deported." As Rashi in his commentary on the verse notes, the root נסח here means "uprooting," as in Mishlei 15:25,

"The Lord will uproot (יסח) the house of the haughty."

In the *hifil* form, הסיח, it means "to remove, put aside, deflect," and appears as a noun in the phrase היסח דעת - "distraction" (literally, "removal of the mind.")

In the related Semitic language Akkadian, the cognate verb *nishu* also means "to remove." From there, linguists claim the root entered Aramaic. This is where we first encounter the word נִסְחָה. It originally meant "excerpt," which as in English, is related to "extract" (i.e., "to remove.") This is similar to the use of "cut/copy/paste" in a word processor).

From "excerpt" or "copy," it came to mean "text, version." This sense is captured by the related word נוסח, which indicates the version of a document or the style of

a prayer service (e.g., Nusach Ashkenaz or Nusach Sefarad.) The word נִסְחָה (in contrast to נָסַח) today primarily means "formula, equation," in the same way that "formula" in English derives from "form."

A cognate root in Hebrew to נסח is נסע, meaning "to travel." To travel is to (re) move oneself from one place to another. In several places in the Tanakh, the root נסע also means "to uproot," as in this verse:

גָּפוֹן מִמִּצְרַיִם תִּסְיַע

"You uprooted a vine from Egypt." (Tehilim 80:9)

But in general, the root נסע has much more positive connotations in Biblical Hebrew, such as in describing the travels of the nation in the desert. This stands in stark contrast to the dire prediction of their uprooting from the land as a punishment.

## Parsha Riddle



**Reb Leor Broh**

Mizrachi Melbourne

Find a word in Ki Tavo that appears only once in the whole Tanach (a hapax legomena).

Clue: The word (with different vowels) appears as a name of a festival in other places in the Torah.

### Answer to the Parsha Riddle

תָּרַח - Be silent and hear  
It appears in 27:9 in the verse below  
(and has the same letters as Sukkot - ref: Devarim 16:13)  
(א:ט) מִשָּׁה מִשָּׁה וְהַיְהוּדִים לֹא יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת-לֵיל הַיְהוּדִים וְלֹא יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת-לֵיל הַיְהוּדִים  
And Moshe and the Kohanim, being Levites spoke to all of Israel saying,  
"Be attentive and listen!"  
Chazal learn from this word a number of different lessons:  
1. One must pay **close attention** when learning Torah. (Berachot 15b)  
2. Always learn in **groups** (derived from the last two letters of תרח).  
(Berachot 63b)  
3. First absorb silently/attentively - on the material at hand, only after that, explore, analyse and dissect - מ (as in the word מר - dissect/cut up). (Berachot 63b)  
The Torah Temimah writes that the unique one time appearance of this word intrigued Chazal and prompted them to learn several lessons from it.



## THIS WEEK in Jewish History

- Sept. 2, 1796:** Holland granted equality to its 50,000 Jews.
- Sept. 3, 1905:** Birthday of Nechama Leibowitz, Bible scholar, beloved teacher, author of popular study guides to the weekly Torah portion and winner of the Israel Prize in 1957 for her pioneering literary approach to the Bible.
- Elul 18, 5369 (1609):** Yahrzeit of the Maharal of Prague, Talmudist, author, philosopher, mathematician, astronomer and according to legend, creator of the Golem.
- Sept. 5, 1972:** At the Olympic Village in Munich, a group of Arab terrorists kidnapped and murdered 11 Israeli athletes.
- Sept. 6, 2007:** The Israeli Air Force destroyed a nuclear reactor in Deir ez-Zor, Syria.
- Sept. 7, 1827:** Czar Nicholas I of Russia issued a decree to draft Jewish boys at age 12, place them in military schools until 18 and then obligate them to another 25 years of service.
- Sept. 8, 1949:** The Knesset passed Israel's draft law, making it obligatory for every Jewish boy and girl in Israel to serve in the military forces.

The above is an abridged weekly version of *Dust & Stars*.  
To receive a free comprehensive post every day about the events and remarkable Jews who have changed the world, please subscribe:  
<https://dustandstars.substack.com/subscribe>

## OUR PARTNERS

Department of Education of the  
World Zionist Organization

### ARGENTINA

Comunidad La Casa

### AUSTRALIA

Mizrachi Australia

### MELBOURNE

Blake Street Hebrew Congregation  
Elsterwick Jewish Community  
Mizrachi Melbourne

### SYDNEY

Mizrachi Bondi

### PERTH

Dianella Shule – Mizrachi Perth

### AUSTRIA

#### VIENNA

Mizrachi Österreich

### BELGIUM

#### ANTWERP

Mizrachi Antwerp

### BRASIL

#### RIO DE JANEIRO

Mizrachi Rio de Janeiro

#### SAO PAULO

Mizrachi Sao Paulo

### BULGARIA

#### SOFIA

Jewish Community

### CANADA

#### MONTREAL

ADATH Congregation  
Hebrew Academy

#### HAMPSTEAD

The ADATH

#### TORONTO

Beit Tzion Congregation  
Bnei Akiva Schools of Toronto  
Shaarei Tefillah Congregation

### CHILE

Mizrachi Chile  
Escuela Maimonides

### CROATIA

#### ZAGREB

Bet Israel Jewish Community of Croatia

### CZECHIA

#### PRAGUE

Jewish Community of Prague

### ECUADOR

Equador Jewish Community

### FINLAND

#### HELSINKI

Jewish Community of Helsinki

### GERMANY

#### KOLN

Jewish Community

### GUATEMALA

Guatemala City Jewish Community

### HOLLAND

#### AMSTERDAM

AMOS Amsterdam Modern Orthodox Sjoel

### HONG KONG

Chabad HK

Jewish Women's Association (JWA)

Kehilat Zion – Hechal Ezra

Ohel Leah Synagogue

The Jewish Community Centre

United Jewish Congregation (UJC)

### HUNGARY

#### BUDAPEST

Orach Chaim Kyiv

### ISRAEL

#### JERUSALEM

Amudim Beit Midrash for Women

Baer Miriam

Hashiveinu

Jacques Sueke Foundation

Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim (MMY)

Midreshet Emunah v'Omanut

Midreshet Eshel

Midreshet HaRova

Midreshet Rachel vChaya

Neve Hagiva'a

Shapell's/Darche Noam

Torat Reva Yerushalayim

Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi

Yeshivat Hakotel

Yeshivat Orayta

### BEIT SHEMESH

Tiferet Midrasha

Kehillat Nofei Hashemesh

Yeshivat Ashreinu

Yeshivat Hesder Lev HaTorah

### HERZLIYA

Mizrachi OU-JLIC Herzliya

### MEVASERET ZION

Yeshivat Mevaseret

### RAMAT GAN

Israel XP at Bar Ilan University

### THE NEGEV

Mechinat Ruach HaNegev

### LATVIA

#### JURMALA

Jewrmala - the Jurmala Jewish Community

### MALTA

Jewish Community

### MEXICO

Mizrachi México

### NORTH MACEDONIA

#### SCOPIA

Jewish Community

### PANAMA

Centro comunitario BETH EL

### POLAND

Chief Rabbinate of Poland

### PORTUGAL

#### PORTO

Rabbi Daniel Litvak

### SCOTLAND

#### EDINBORO

Edinboro Hebrew Congregation

### SERBIA

#### BELGRADE

Rav Isak Asiel

### SOUTH AFRICA

#### JOHANNESBURG

Mizrachi Glenhazel Shul

## SWEDEN

The Jewish Community of Stockholm  
Kehilat Adat Yeshurun  
Kehiliat Adat Yisrael

## SWITZERLAND

### BERN

Jüdische Gemeinde Bern

### ZURICH

HaKehila HaYehudit Zurich  
HaKehila HaYehudit Lausanne  
Mizrachi  
Wollishofen

## TANZANIA

### ARUSHA

Bayit Kneset Shalem Al Shabazi

## UNITED KINGDOM

Mizrachi UK

## UNITED STATES

### NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Kol Hatorah Kulah  
National Council of Young Israel  
RZA-Mizrachi USA

### CALIFORNIA

Beth Jacob Congregation  
Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy  
West Coast Torah Center  
Young Israel of North Beverly Hills  
YULA High School  
Young Israel of Century City

### COLORADO

DAT Minyan  
East Denver Orthodox Synagogue  
The Denver Kehillah

### CONNECTICUT

Beth David Synagogue  
Congregation Agudath Sholom  
Young Israel of West Hartford

### FLORIDA

Beth Israel Congregation  
Hebrew Academy RASG  
PlayHard PrayHard  
Congregation Torah Ohr  
Sha'arei Bina Torah Academy for Girls  
Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale

### GEORGIA

Congregation Beth Jacob  
Congregation Ohr HaTorah

### HAWAII

Kehilat Olam Ejad Ganim

### ILLINOIS

Mizrachi-Religious Zionists of Chicago

### MARYLAND

Kemp Mill Synagogue  
Pikesville Jewish Congregation

Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation

## MASSACHUSETTS

Congregation Beth El Atereth Israel  
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe  
Congregation Shaarei Tefillah  
Young Israel of Brookline

## MICHIGAN

Young Israel of Oak Park  
Young Israel of Southfield  
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe

## MINNESOTA

Congregation Darchei Noam

## MISSOURI

Yeshivat Kadimah High School Nusach  
Hari B'nai Zion Congregation  
Young Israel of St. Louis

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hillel at Dartmouth

## NEW JERSEY

Ahavas Achim  
Volunteer Chaplain Middlesex County  
Congregation AABJ&D  
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  
Ohav Emeth  
Pal Foundation  
Shomrei Torah of Fair Lawn  
Synagogue of the Suburban Torah Center  
Yavneh Academy  
National Council of Young Israel  
Young Israel of Teaneck

## NEW YORK

Beis Community  
Congregation Anshei Shalom  
Congregation B'nai Tzedek  
Congregation Bais Tefilah of Woodmere  
Congregation Beth Sholom  
Ramaz  
Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls  
MTA – Yeshiva University High School for Boys  
Young Israel of Merrick  
Congregation Beth Torah  
Congregation Etz Chaim of Kew Gardens Hills  
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun  
Congregation Ohav Zedek  
Great Neck Synagogue  
Iranian Jewish Center/Beth Hadassah Synagogue  
Irving Place Minyan

Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach

Kehilath Jershurun  
Kingsway Jewish Center  
Lincoln Square Synagogue  
Merkaz Yisrael of Marine Park  
North Shore Hebrew Academy  
Young Israel of Merrick  
NYC Department of Correction  
OU-JLIC at Binghamton University  
OU-JLIC at Cornell University  
Queens Jewish Center  
Stars of Israel Academy  
The Jewish Center  
The Riverdale Minyan  
Vaad of Chevra Kadisha  
West Side Institutional Synagogue  
Yeshiva University High School for Girls  
Young Israel of Hillcrest  
Young Israel of Jamaica Estates  
Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst  
Young Israel of New Rochelle  
Young Israel of North Woodmere  
Young Israel of Oceanside  
Young Israel of Scarsdale  
Young Israel of Woodmere

## OHIO

Beachwood Kehilla  
Congregation Sha'arei Torah  
Congregation Torat Emet  
Green Road Synagogue  
Fuchs Mizrachi School  
Heights Jewish Center

## PENNSYLVANIA

Shaare Torah Congregation

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Brith Sholom Beth Israel  
Congregation Dor Tikvah

## TENNESSEE

Baron Hirsch Congregation

## TEXAS

Mayerland Minyan Synagogue  
Robert M. Beren Academy  
United Orthodox Synagogues of Houston

## VIRGINIA

Keneseth Beth Israel

## WASHINGTON

Bikur Cholim-Machzikay Hadath  
Northwest Yeshiva High School  
Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation

## URUGUAY

Comunidad Yavne Uruguay

## VENEZUELA

CARACAS  
Ashkenazi Kehilla  
Mizrachi Venezuela



To sign up to receive HaMizrachi  
Parasha Weekly for free:  
[mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweekly](http://mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweekly)



To sign up your organization  
as a partner for free:  
[mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweeklyorgs](http://mizrachi.org/hamizrachiweeklyorgs)