



הַמִּזְרָחִי HAMIZRACHI PARSHA WEEKLY

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ISRAEL Parsha Picture

וְאֶת־חֵן אֱלֹהֵי בְעֵת הַהוּא...
וְקִשְׁרֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל יָדָךְ
וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ....

דברים ג:כג, ו:ח

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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.

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The Smallest Nation

The Greatest Impact



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

One of the remarkable facts of Jewish and human life is just how small the Jewish people are relative to other nations and just how tiny Israel is in relation to other countries.

Less than a Mistake in a Chinese Census

There are around 8 billion people in the world today and around 15 million Jews. That's less than one-fifth of one percent, a blip in terms of human numbers.

To highlight just how few Jews there are, the Jewish people have been juxtaposed to the Chinese. There are approximately 1.4 billion Chinese in the world. It has been shown that an acceptable mistake – to still be considered accurate – in a Chinese population census is around 30 million people. Incredibly, this means that there are far less Jews in the world than an acceptable mistake in a Chinese population census!

So too the Land of Israel – one of the smaller countries in the world. It's a similar size to New Jersey, one of the smaller American states and is the size of the small Central American country El Salvador. In Great Britain, it's around the size of Wales, and in South Africa, it is approximately the size of the Kruger National Park, a large wildlife reserve. Despite the tiny number of Jews and size of the Jewish State, the impact of both the Jewish people throughout history and the State of Israel today is staggeringly disproportionate to their tiny numbers and size.

A Puff of Dust in the Milky Way!

Perhaps this sentiment was best expressed in the English language by Mark Twain almost 125 years ago when he wrote of the uniqueness of the Jewish contribution:

“If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.

“His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and abstruse learning are also very out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and be excused for it. The Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greeks and Romans followed and made a vast noise, and they were gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, and have vanished.

“The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities, of age,

no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert but aggressive mind...”¹

Nobel and Johnson

What would Twain say today?

He wrote this two years before the first Nobel prize was awarded to people who contributed most in the fields of Science, Medicine, Literature, and Peace.² Subsequently a staggering 22% of all individual recipients worldwide and 36% of all American recipients are Jews. Israel contributes to these fields and in modern technology for the betterment of humanity in the most remarkable disproportionate ways.

Paul Johnson, arguably one of our generation's greatest popular historians wrote this in the epilogue of his book 'A History of the Jews' regarding the Jewish disproportionate contribution to human spirituality and morality:

“To them (the Jews) we owe the idea of equality before the law, both divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person; of the individual conscience and so of personal redemption; of the collective conscience and so of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as the foundation of justice, and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind.”³

‘Not because you are Numerous’

One of the greatest spiritual components of what it means to be a Jew is undoubtedly this – so few people can have such a monumental impact.

Quantity of numbers is not the salient driver of contribution and success in life but rather the quality of spiritual and moral conviction.

Indeed there is a remarkable *pasuk* at the end of this week's *parasha*, Va'etchanan, with respect to the unique defining and differentiating quality of the Jews in relation to the other nations – indeed the very

source for the sense of 'chosenness for a higher mission' of the Jewish people.

כִּי עַם קְדוֹשׁ אַתָּה.. בְּךָ בָּחַר ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ לְהַיּוֹת לָנוּ לְעַם סִגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה: לֹא מִרְבֹּכְךָ מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים חֵשֶׁק ה' בְּכֶם... כִּי-אַתֶּם הַמְעַט מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים: כִּי מֵאַהֲבַת ה' אֶתְכֶם וּמִשְׁמֵרוֹ אֶת-הַשְּׂבִעָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם הַצִּיא... וַיִּפְדֶּךָ מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים...”

“For you are a holy people to the Lord your G-d : the Lord your G-d has chosen you to be a treasured people to Him amongst all people that are on the face of the earth. **The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you are the smallest of all people;** For the love the Lord has for you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your forefathers, has the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

The great Rabbinic leader and medieval commentator Ramban highlights this very foundational point in his commentary to these verses:

“... It would have been appropriate for the multitude of numbers (to be the decisive factor for chosenness) before the King as it says (Proverbs 14:28) 'In strength of numbers is the grandeur of the king' ... despite this G-d desired you and chose you ...”⁴

There is no doubt that there is significance in the quantity of numbers as the verse in Proverbs highlights. What type of dignified king or influential leader has few followers? In life in general 'the more the merrier' and strength of numbers affords many advantages in many areas of life. So too in religious matters – this *pasuk* is the basis for a Halachic principle mentioned by our Sages that the more people involved in participating in a *mitzvah* the better.

The Chayei Adam⁵ writes:

“Any *mitzvah* which can be done in a group is better to be done in a group than by an individual as it says (Proverbs 14:28) 'In strength of numbers is the grandeur of the king' (as is stated in Masechet

Pesachim 64 and Yoma 70). Our Sages have said – you cannot compare many who together perform a *mitzvah* as opposed to a few.”⁶

The Legacy of Jewish Uniqueness

Therefore, highlights the Ramban, notwithstanding the significant advantage and importance of numbers in both physical and spiritual life, you have still been chosen despite the fact that you are the smallest of nations. This makes Jewish uniqueness all the more remarkable. Regardless of their tiny numbers, there are other Divine factors at play in having a disproportionate if not miraculous influence – a holy mission, a higher purpose and a Providential promise to the founding fathers.

If there is one thing that Jewish history has taught, it is this – our connection to G-d and our impact in the world, is not a result of quantity of numbers, but rather of the quality and power of our Divinely mandated Jewish mission, the conviction to be a positive light to others.

Indeed a small amount of bright light dispels a huge amount of darkness.

1. Essay entitled: Concerning the Jews' published by Harpers Monthly in 1899.
2. In 1968, Sweden's central bank, Sveriges Riksbank established the Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, adding a new category, that is also administered by the Nobel Foundation.
3. Pg. 585, published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1987.
4. Commentary to Devarim 7: 'כי היה ראוי שהיו הרבים למלך, כענין שכתוב (משלי יד:כח): "ברב עם הדרת מלך", ויפקיד שרי צבאות בראש הנשואים, ואתם המעט, ואע"פ כן חשק בכם ויבחר בכם'.
5. Authoritative halachic work on the section of Orach Chaiom of the Shul han Aruch written by Rabbi Avraham Danzig (1748-1820).
6. Chapter 68, section 11.

PERSONAL GROWTH

When Strange Things Happen



Rabbi Reuven Taragin
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Previously, we explored the fundamental belief that Hashem controls everything that happens to a person, and some of the ramifications of that reality. The fact that Hashem determines what happens in the world and in our lives means that we should be reflective about our experiences. We should realize that these events are planned, not random.

Reflective Leadership

Moshe Rabbeinu had this perspective. The Torah notes that upon seeing a bush that was burning without being consumed, Moshe went to investigate further.¹ Many others saw the bush, but only Moshe looked into the phenomenon.² His attentiveness and reflectiveness made him worthy of Hashem's revelation.³

Mordechai followed Moshe's lead. When Ester was chosen as queen (despite her lack of effort⁴ or interest), most people shrugged their shoulders and moved on. Mordechai understood that this was divinely planned and visited Ester each day to determine Hashem's intention.⁵

When Haman issued his decree against the Jewish people, Mordechai figured things out. Hashem had made Ester queen to put her in a position to help the Jewish people at their moment of need.⁶ Mordechai's reflection upon past events facilitated his guidance to Ester when the crisis arrived.

Actively Searching

Avraham Avinu took this idea a step further. In addition to internalizing the message of phenomena he chanced upon,⁷ he *actively sought* indications of Hashem's Will in his surroundings.

After Hashem congratulated him for his willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak and told him to desist, Avraham "raised his eyes" to look for something else to sacrifice in

Yitzchak's stead.⁸ Though Hashem had not commanded him to do so, Avraham assumed Hashem might want him to offer an animal sacrifice and he searched for that possibility. This search led him to the ram that was (suddenly) caught in the thicket. This ram's presence was no coincidence. Chazal posit that Hashem created it during the six days of creation especially for this purpose.⁹

In many ways, Avraham's sacrifice of the ram was more significant than his willingness to sacrifice Yitzchak. This is why the angel blessed Avraham for his efforts only *after* he sacrificed the ram¹⁰ and why our Rosh Hashanah commemoration of the *akeidah* uses a *ram's* horn as a shofar. Though Avraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son showed great devotion, his sacrifice of the ram exhibited his search for the unspoken Will Hashem relays to us through our natural experiences. This is a higher level of *avodat Hashem* and a critical element in a world without prophecy.

Missing The Point

In contrast to Avraham, Moshe, and Mordechai, the Torah also describes leaders who were insensitive to Hashem's messages. Paroh was an excellent example. When introducing the *makah* (plaque) of *Arbeh*, Hashem expresses unique frustration with Paroh by branding him as a "refusenik."¹¹ Why did Hashem describe Paroh this way particularly at *this point* in the *makot*?

The answer lies in the fact that Hashem had used the preceding *makah* — *Makat Barad* (hail) — to send Paroh a message. Though Hashem used the *barad* to destroy most of the crops, He spared the *chitah* (wheat) and the *kusemet* (emmer) to send Paroh a message.¹² If Paroh continued refusing to free the Jewish People, there would be another *makah* that would

destroy these (remaining) crops as well.¹³

Paroh's continued refusal showed his disregard for Hashem's message and earned him the "refusenik" title. Hashem sent him a message and he refused to internalize it.

The Meraglim were also guilty of a similar refusal. Rashi explains that the story of the Meraglim is juxtaposed with the story of Miriam's leprosy to teach us that the Meraglim should have learned the danger of negative speech from seeing Miriam's punishment.¹⁴ "These *reshaim* saw and did not learn a lesson,"¹⁵ and they subsequently spoke negatively about Eretz Yisrael.

Why We See

The fate of Paroh and the Meraglim should remind us to consider the message embedded in what happens to us. Chazal took this idea a step further by applying it to non-miraculous events as well. The *gemara*¹⁶ instructs one who sees a *sotah's* disgrace to respond by separating himself from wine (by becoming a *nazir*). The Baal Shem Tov asks why only one who sees the disgrace should respond this way. If separating from wine is advisable, shouldn't everyone take such action?

The Baal Shem Tov¹⁷ explained that only the one who sees the *sotah* needs to take such action because the fact that he saw the *sotah* is an indication that he himself has a similar problem.¹⁸ Hashem arranged for him to see the *sotah* as a way of showing him his need to take such action in order to prevent a similar personal outcome.

The Ohr HaMeir¹⁹ derives a general principle from here: "Any time a person sees something... they should realize that Hashem has shown them this for a reason." Rav Tzadok Hakohen²⁰ adds that everything in our surroundings hints at something we need to internalize or respond to in some way.

Continued on page 7

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

Prophecy of Perspective and Prospiration



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

“From Parshat Bereshit through the 17th of Tammuz, the Haftarah is chosen to correspond to the Parshah topic by topic; but from there on – the choice of Haftarah is determined entirely by the time of year and the corresponding historical events” (Rabbi Avraham ben David of Luneil, “Sefer HaManhig,” Hilchot Taanit, Din 16).

The custom based on the *Pesikta* is to read three *haftarot* of rebuke before *Tisha Be-Av*, i.e., *Divrei Yirmiyahu*, *Shimu devar Hashem* and *Chazon Yeshayahu*, and after *Tisha Be-Av* seven *haftarot* of consolation and two *haftarot* of repentance, i.e., *Nachamu nachamu*, *Vatomer Tziyon*, *Aniya so'ara levada*, *Anokhi anokhi*, *Roni akara*, *Kumi ori*, *Sos asis*, *Dirshu* and *Shuva*. *Tosafot* noted (*Megilla* 31b, s.v. *Rosh Chodesh*), that we are dealing with a very old custom, one that is rooted in the ancient rite observed in Eretz Israel!

Based on the above, it seems fruitless to seek any relationship between these *haftarot* and the *parashot haShavua* which they accompany, since they were all chosen for their common theme of consolation. We will attempt to understand why these specific chapters of prophecy were chosen and the reason for the aforementioned order in which they are read. One could argue that the *haftarot* of consolation follow the textual order as they appear in the *Sefer Yeshayahu*, the prophet of consolation; though there are cases where this order is not followed.

(A) R. Simcha of Vitri, in his *Machzor Vitri*, explains that the order of consolation is strategically developed to console the personal and national mourners in stages:

“Therefore, [the first haftara begins,] “Comfort you, comfort you, My people.” [The people’s response:] “And Zion shall say, G-d has abandoned me...” – although Zion is destroyed, do not say that she is abandoned. Since G-d has comforted her already in His mercy, He does not call for mercy again. Up until this point the prophets console her;

from here onwards He consoles her. And once she has received consolation, we follow with: “Sing, O barren one,” “Arise and shine,” “I shall rejoice.”

(B) A different explanation is offered by a *midrash* quoted by the *Avudraham* in his comments on the order of the *parashiot* and *haftarot*:

The Midrash suggests... that the Sages established that the first of these haftarot would be “Comfort, comfort My people” – as though G-d were commanding the prophets to console His nation. To this, Knesset Yisrael responds: “And Zion says, G-d has abandoned me” – i.e., she is not consoled by the consolation of the prophets... Thereafter, we see that the Jewish people is still “a stormy ship that will not be consoled;” it is as if the prophets once again declare before the Holy One: See, Knesset Yisrael is not appeased with our consolations. Therefore the Holy One Himself again speaks: “I, even I am your consoler;” and then He says, “Rejoice, O barren one who has not given birth,” and also, “Arise and shine, for your light has come.” To this, Knesset Yisrael responds: “I shall surely rejoice in G-d” – as if to say, now I have reason to rejoice and to be joyful, “My soul will rejoice in my G-d for He has dressed me in garments of salvation...”

(C) Although these *haftarot* were selected for their theme of consolation, there may still be *parshanut* (exegesis) on the respective *parshiyot*, e.g. this week’s *parashah* – *Va’etchanan* and *Yeshayahu*’s prophecy of *Nachamu* (40:1-26)

A few verses in the *haftarah* speak of the unique Oneness of G-d, (e.g. 13,17,18,25), parallel to the famous *pasuk* in this week’s *parashah* – “*Shema Yisrael*” – “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God – the Lord is One” (6:4).

(2) In the *Asseret haDibrot* recorded in *Va’etchanan*, we find several prohibitions concerning idolatry: (4:16, 23, 5:7-8). In the *haftarah*, the prophet mocks “the idol – a craftsman casts it, and a refiner covers it

with silver... he seeks a wise craftsman to make an idol that will not be moved” (19-20).

(3) The process of *Nechama* provides for a changed perspective as one looks back on the past and projects a trajectory for the future. This week’s *parasha* is replete with events revisited from the past (Moshe’s pleas, Divine revelation at Sinai and transmission of laws) which create national responsibility for the future. This week’s *haftarah* of “*Nachamu, Nachamu*” underscores the need to change perspective post-destruction; to look at the past with sorrow and simultaneously to remember the rebuke. It therefore serves as the perfect response of the Sages to Rabbi Akiva’s laughter upon seeing jackals by the *Kodesh Kodashim* (*Makkot* 24b). He explained to them that as he reflects not only on the current destruction of the Second Temple but on the previous destruction of the First Temple, he is also reminded of the resettlement and rebuilding of *Yehuda* at the time of *Shivat Tzion*. Those experiences imbue him with hope to channel sorrow to laughter, towards the eventual redemption. His colleagues understand his changed perspective – looking at the past and future – *Nachamu* #1 – they recognize the past with greater clarity, *Nachamu* #2 – they have been consoled, by reflecting differently towards the future.

Rabbi Akiva’s “*nechama*” is rooted in this week’s *parasha* – as we read the verse of *yichud Hashem* – “*Shema Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is the One and Only!*” Rabbi Akiva understands that *Hashem is echad* – in the past, present and future, and therefore one may already anticipate the future in the present as we reflect on our past – a true change in perspective – a double consolation!

As we *Baruch Hashem* merit to witness redemption unfolding before our eyes today, we will be all the more consoled if we reflect upon over two thousand years of *galut*, and appreciate *Hashem*’s continued salvation – “*Nachamu, Nachamu!*”

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council
Rosh Yeshiva, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

Question: Does oil which is used to maintain wooden cutting boards need to be kosher?

Answer: There is a *machloket* about this. The reason to be lenient is because the non-kosher taste will be spoiled by the oil (*noten-ta'am lifgam*). Rav Ovadya Yosef is lenient in similar cases. It is best to get something with a *hechsher*, but if there is nothing, there are those to rely upon that it is permissible.

Question: Is one exempt from wearing tzitzit when playing sports? What if one is wearing clothing for sports but not actually playing sports?

Answer: The Gemara in Menachot (41a) teaches that the obligation to wear *tzitzit* only applies *me'ikar hadin* when wearing a four cornered garment. If one were to wear a four-cornered garment without *tzitzit*, he would be a nullifying of a positive commandment. Based on this, if one does not wear a four-cornered garment, there is no obligation to wear *tzitzit*. However:

1. The Gemara (ibid) tells us that Rav Katina wore clothing that did not require *tzitzit*. An angel came to him and said: "Katina Katina...what will become of *tzitzit*? [Rav Ketina] said to him: Do you punish [us even] for [failing to fulfill] a positive *mitzvah*? [The angel] said to him: At a time when there is [divine] anger [and judgment], we punish [even for the failure to fulfill a positive *mitzvah*]."
2. The Gemara in Menachot 43b teaches that the *mitzvah* of *tzitzit* is equivalent to all the *mitzvot* in the Torah.
3. There are stories about how this *mitzvah* helps protect one from sinning (see the story in Menachot 44a of

when the *tzitzit* hit a man in the face, preventing him from sinning). Additionally, it helps one do *mitzvot*, as the Torah says: "That you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them (Bamidbar 15:39). The Gemara breaks down this *passuk*, explaining that seeing brings one to remember, and remembering brings one to doing *mitzvot*. (Rashi on "Shkula" says that *tzitzit* in *gematria* is 600. When adding the 5 knots and 8 strings, one arrives at 613 *mitzvot*.)

4. Now that people wear a *tallit katan*, one who does not do so is prohibiting "Al titosh torat imecha – Do not abandon your mother's teachings" (Proverbs 1:8). (Igrot Moshe)
5. The Gemara in Pesachim (113b) says that seven are ostracized by Heaven, and included in that list is one who does not wear *tzitzit* (Tosfot explains that this is one who has a *tallit* and does not wear it. Tosfot brings a second explanation that this refers even to one without a *tallit*, as he should buy one to become obligated in the *mitzvah*).
6. This is a *mitzvah* which is so easy and it is a shame to miss out on. The Gemara in Menachot 44a says that *tzitzit* is a "*mitzvah kalah* – easy *mitzvah*." It also teaches that punishment for not wearing white strings is greater than the punishment of not wearing *techeilet*. This is because the *mitzvah* of *techeilet* is much more difficult and therefore the punishment is lesser. White, however, is easier to wear, and nowadays when this is our *mitzvah*, the punishment for not wearing is even greater.

However, when one is playing sports and is sweating a lot, there is room to justify

not wearing *tzitzit* (I do wear *tzitzit* in these situations, and I have a special pair for running and exercise). If a person is wearing sports clothing but not actually playing, I do not see any reason to rule leniently.

Question: I have a coffee machine which uses dairy capsules. In what way would I make pareve coffee in this machine and eat it with a meat meal?

Answer: If you made *pareve* coffee once in between, then it is fine to make coffee to have with meat. Or, you can run it while empty and then make your *pareve* coffee and have it with meat.

Question: A few days ago, somebody hit my car. It caused some external damage. The cost of repair is about 900 shekels, and they offered to pay this amount (out of pocket without insurance). From our perspective, at the moment, we don't have a good reason to fix the car. The main reason would be for the devaluation of the car, although it is probably less than 900 shekels. Do I need to tell him that I do not plan to fix it?

Answer: The money is yours. The main ruling with damages is that you pay to return the damaged item to its original state. The fact that you do not want to fix it does not change the degree of the damage. However, if the person would not have offered to pay and the damage really did not matter to you, not demanding the money probably would be the right thing to do. In this case, where they seem to be ready to give you the money, it seems that you can take the money which you *halachically* deserve.

● Compiled by Yaakov Panitch.

התמודדות

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author



כפי שראינו בשבוע הקודם, משה רבנו נפרד מעם ישראל בנאום ארוך, בו הוא מביע את חששו, שלאחר מותו בני ישראל יעזבו את דרך ה'.

בפרשת ואתחנן מוסיף משה עוד היבט לחששותיו: "כִּי תוֹלִיד בְּנִים וּבְנֵי בְנֵים וְנוֹשְׁנֶתְם בְּאֶרֶץ וְהִשְׁחַתְּתֶם... וְעַשִׂיתֶם הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ לְהַכְעִיסוֹ" (ד', כה). מדוע הישיבה בארץ עלולה לגרום להתרחקות מה'?

הסיבה הראשונה והעיקרית לכך היא שהשפע עלול לגרום להשחתה, או לפחות לשכחת ה': "וְהָיָה כִּי יִבְיָאֵךְ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ... לָתֵת לָךְ עָרִים גְּדֹלֹת וְטַבַּת אֲשֶׁר לֹא בְּנִיתָ: וּבָתִּים מְלֵאִים כָּל טוֹב אֲשֶׁר לֹא מִלְּאֵת וּבָרַת חֲצוּבִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא חֲצַבְתָּ כְּרָמִים... אֲשֶׁר לֹא נִטְעַתָּ וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ: הֲשֹׁמֵר לָךְ פֶּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת ה' אֲשֶׁר הוֹצִיאֲךָ מֵאֶרֶץ... (ו', ייב).

באופן טבעי, אדם זוכר את ה' ופונה אליו בשעות של קושי או מצוקה. אז הוא מרגיש את התלות בה' באופן ברור. בתקופת המדבר הייתה תלות מוחלטת של העם בה': הלחם ירד מן השמים; המים יצאו מהסלע בנס; הדרך התיישרה ע"י ענני הכבוד וה' נלחם להם בכל מלחמותיהם. לכן, במדבר היה ברור שה' הוא מקור השפע. לעומת זאת, בארץ הקיום יהיה טבעי: התבואה תצמח מן הארץ וממנה יכינו לחם; פירות יגדלו על העצים; גשם ירד מן השמים; מים יזרמו בנהרות; מלחמות יתנהלו ע"י צבא, וכו'.

האמנם היינו מעדיפים שישראל יישארו במדבר, על מנת שיהיו תלויים בה' באופן ברור, ורחוקים מתרבויות זרות שמשפיעות עליהם? ברור שלא. המטרה היא להכנס אל הארץ ובה לעבוד את ה' דווקא מתוך החיים הטבעיים, ודווקא מתוך ההתמודדות עם תרבויות אחרות. התורה חוזרת ומדגישה שוב ושוב, שהישיבה בארץ ישראל מותנית בקיום המצוות: "וְעַשִׂיתָ הַיֵּשֶׁר וְהַטוֹב בְּעֵינֵי ה' לְמַעַן יִיטַב לָךְ וּבָאֵת וַיִּרְשֶׁתָּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָשַׁבַע ה' לְאַבְרָהָם" (ו', יח).

אם כן, משה רבנו בנאום הפרידה שלו מישראל מכין אותם לקראת ההתמודדות עם הישיבה בארץ ישראל: להמשיך להרגיש את הקשר עם ה' גם כשחיים מתוך שפע. גם שהנוכחות האלקית איננה ישירה וגלויה כמו במדבר, ומתוך כך להבין שקיום התורה והמצוות הוא קריטי והכרחי לקיומם בארץ.

כדי שעם ישראל יוכל לעמוד בדרישות הגבוהות הללו, משה נותן לעם ישראל כלים להתמודדות:

1. זכרון החוויה של ההליכה במדבר – משה מזכיר לעם ישראל שבתקופת המדבר הם חוו על בשרם את ההתגלות האלקית, את התלות המוחלטת בה' ואת קרבת אלקים הברורה ואהבתו אליהם. שימור הזכרון של חוויות אלה יעזור להם להרגיש את המחויבות לקיום המצוות בארץ.
2. לימוד ושינון התורה בכל עת ובכל מקום, בהתמדה, מתוך אהבת ה'.

דווקא בסיטואציות טבעיות ובמיוחד כאשר יש שפע – בריאות, פרנסה ובטחון – האדם עלול לשכוח מי נתן לו את השפע הזה, מי נותן לו כח לעשות חיל.

משה מוסיף לכך עוד היבט: בדרך כלל כדי להשיג פירות טבעיים יש צורך בהרבה טרחה ועמל. לעומת זאת, יש מזון המתקבל מאת ה' בדרך נס, ללא עמל אנושי. אך בשעת כניסת ישראל אל הארץ, יהיה מצב ייחודי: ישראל יגיעו אל ארץ מיושבת ויקבלו בתים ופירות ללא טרחה ועמל – "אשר לא בנית... אשר לא נטעת". זהו מצב חריג – פירות טבעיים (שיד ה' לא ניכרת בהם בגלוי), המגיעים אל האדם במתנה ללא עמל, עלולים להטעות ולבלבל, מבחינה מוסרית ואמונית, ולגרום להשחתה ולשכחת אלקים גדולה יותר. משה רבנו מזהיר את עם ישראל ומבקש שבסיטואציה חריגה זו לא ישכחו את ה'. שישמו לב, שהפירות שהגיעו אליהם ללא עמל ניתנו להם במתנה מאת ה'.

החשש השני הוא שהתרבות של עמי הארץ עלולה לסחוף את בני ישראל. כל עוד עם ישראל מבודד במדבר, הם אינם מושפעים מתרבויות אחרות. ברגע שהם נכנסים לארץ, הם נחשפים לתרבויות של עמים אחרים ועלולים לאמץ אותן. לכן, ה' חוזר ומזהיר את ישראל להתרחק מעמי הארץ; לא להתחנן איתם; לשבור את מזבחותיהם; ואפילו לא לאפשר להם להמשיך לחיות בארץ, על מנת שלא ישפיעו על ישראל לעבוד ע"ז (ראה ב-ו', יד; ז', א-ה).

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A Calling, Not A Coincidence

Because Hashem directs the world, things that happen to and around us are more than just coincidental. They call upon us to reflect and react. The idea of coincidence as "a call" is the reason the Torah sometimes adds an *aleph* to (conjugations of) the word *mikreh* (chance)²¹. The *aleph* adds a connotation of calling (*kuf, reish, aleph*) and thus redefines the chance as a calling. Things that seem to occur by accident, are actually Hashem calling upon us to take notice and reflect. May our realization of Hashem's directorship of the world inspire us to be more sensitive to and reflective upon our life experiences, and may this sensitivity help us hear Hashem's call to us and to fulfill our mission(s) in this world.

● Written by Rafi Davis

1. Sefer Shemot 3:2-5
2. Medrash Rabbah 2:5.
3. Medrash Tanchuma Shemot 15, Seforno Shemot 3:4.
4. Megillat Ester 2:15.
5. Rashi Ester 2:11.
6. Megillat Ester 4:14
7. See, for example, Bereishit Rabbah 39:1.
8. Sefer Bereishit 22:12-13. See also Bereishit 18:2 and 22:4, which also use the term "raised his eyes" to describe Avraham's search for Hashem's Will in the world around him.
9. Masechet Avot 5:6.
10. Ibid., 22:15-18.
11. Sefer Shemot 10:3
12. Ibid., 9:32. See Rashi et al. and Gur Aryeh 10:1.
13. Ramban Shemot 9:31. See also Gri"z al HaTorah Shemot 10:3, Rambam in Hilchot Ta'aniyot 1:3 and his Iggeret Tichiyat Hameitim. This is why Moshe and Aharon describe the *makah* of Arbeh

- as consuming the "crops that remained after Makat Barad (Shemot 10:5)."
14. Rashi to Sefer Bamidbar 13:2
15. This formulation may imply that the lack of response reflects or even reaffirms a person's status as a *rasha*.
16. Talmud Bavli, Masechet Berachot 63b.
17. This teaching is quoted in many sefarim. See, for example, Arugot Habosem (Parshat Vayera), Ohr Zaru'a La'tzaddik (7 DH V'amru), and Arvei Nachal (Parshat Lech Lecha). See Tosefta (Masechet Shavuot 3) for an earlier source for this idea.
18. See Kometz Hamincha (2:2), Me'or Einayim (Chukat), and Toldot Yaakov Yosef (Terumah 3).
19. Rabbi Zev Wolf of Zotamir, Talmid of the Maggid MiMezritch to Parashat Nasso.
20. Pri Tzaddik (Naso 13). See also Ohr Zarua, Ohev Yisrael (Likutim Chadashim Bereishit) and Hayom Yom (9 Iyar).
21. Sefer Bereishit 42:38 (in contrast with 44:29 and 49:1, as well as Vayikra 10:19).

Consolation for Jerusalem



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

What a difference between the news one year ago from Jerusalem – two critically wounded in a terrorist attack in the Old City – and the *haftarah* we read about Jerusalem being consoled and comforted on Shabbat.

This Shabbat, known as *Shabbat Nachamu* (Shabbat of Consolation) is the first in a series of seven *Shabbatot* of solace and consolation. On each of these *Shabbatot*, we read a moving, comforting *haftarah*, with heart-warming words about Jerusalem.

We will read the following words, spoken by G-d to the prophet Isaiah, on Shabbat morning, words that are pertinent to today's news: "Console, console My people," says your G-d. "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her."

But it is not just Jerusalem that needs to be consoled and comforted. Jerusalem must be the source of comfort for all of humanity. When we read these seven *haftarahs* of consolation we understand that the state of affairs inside Jerusalem affects what happens outside it. Our ability to make Jerusalem safe and secure, making sure good triumphs over evil within it, will radiate outward and give light to the entire world.

Here are some passages from the *haftarahs* of consolation we will read in the coming weeks:

"On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted watchmen; all day and all night"

"Awake, awake; Clothe yourself with strength, O Zion; Put on your garments of majesty, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for the uncircumcised and the unclean shall never enter you again."

"Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither robbery nor destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise."

Amen. May we merit to see all the prophecies of consolation fulfilled in our own days.



Taking a picture is the exact opposite of remembering. Sometimes, when we take a picture of something, we rely on the camera to remember it for us. We click, and by doing so, we in fact tell our cellphone: You should store and keep this moment for me.

The word "תמונה", picture, appears throughout the Torah 8 times, of them – 6 times, in this week's portion, Vaetchanan. Moshe Rabbenu asks of us not to turn the Torah into a picture, not to make a statue or a painting out of it, not to turn the big idea that he gave us, into something tangible and physical that one can see: "...For ye saw no manner of form on the day that the L-RD spoke unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire". This is a warning for *Avodah Zarah*, idol worship, a warning against being dominated by the statues or pictures that we ourselves would create. If there are pictures, there will be no living memory that will pass on from generation to generation through learning. We would simply take a picture and pass it on. Moshe Rabbenu calls upon us to etch, to absorb and internalize the experiences within us, rather than in a data cloud. It is precisely the fact that we do not have a photo album as a souvenir from the momentous event at Mt. Sinai that causes us to live in its light and pass the story on for thousands of years now.

This plea is relevant also today, perhaps even especially today: Which experiences do we keep and preserve in our minds and hearts, rather than in the memory of our cellphone?



משפט מפורסם קובע שהמרחק הכי גדול הוא לא בין כדור הארץ לגלקסיה הכי רחוקה, אלא המרחק בין הראש לבין הלב. יש הרבה דברים שאנחנו יודעים בשכל, אבל מתקשים להפנים ולהכניס לתוך הלב. כולם מבינים את האזהרות המבהילות על חפיסות הסיגריות, אבל האם זה אומר שבגללן כולם גם מפסיקים לעשן? הסרטונים על זהירות בדרכים הם נכונים, אז האם כולנו מפסיקים לגעת בסלולרי בזמן נהיגה, תמיד?

ידיעה זה לא מספיק, צריך להשתנות לאור האמת הזו, צריך לחיות את הדברים. זה נכון לגבי דיאטה או קימה בבוקר, וזה נכון לגבי האמיתות הנצחיות ביותר.

משה רבנו עומד בפרשת השבוע מול העם ואומר: "וַיִּדְעֶתָ הַיּוֹם וְהִשְׁבַּתְּ אֶל לְבָבְךָ, כִּי ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים... אֵין עוֹד."

פרשנינו מבקשים שנשים לב לניסוח: וידעת היום, ומייד גם: והשבתי אל לבבך. בשלב הראשון לדעת, אבל בשלב השני להשיב זאת אל הלב. להסיר את המחסום שבין ידיעה למעשה, להצליח לחיות לפי מה שאנחנו באמת יודעים ורוצים. כל אחד מזמן לחשוב על דוגמאות למקרים שבהם צריך לקצר את המרחק בין הראש לבין הלב.



"שמע ישראל, ה' אלוהינו, ה' אחד."

המשפט הזה, שמופיע לראשונה בפרשת השבוע, הוא כל כך מוכר שלפעמים אנחנו לא שמים לב למשמעותו. אז מה אומרות המילים "ה' אחד"? הנה הפירוש הנפלא של הרב שמשון רפאל הירש. לדבריו, גם כשהכול מסביב סוער ומבלבל – הפסוק הזה עושה סדר. הבלגן שסביבנו והבלגן שבתוכנו, נרגעים קצת כשאנחנו נזכרים שיש מקור אחד ותכלית אחת לכל המהומה. וכך הוא כותב:

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For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“You shall not covet your friend’s wife and you shall not desire your friend’s house, (nor) his field and his maidservant and his ox and his donkey and anything that belongs to your friend” (Devarim 5:18).

At first glance, the last of the Ten Commandments is very difficult to understand. First, desiring or longing for someone else’s possessions is a natural human response. Can we really be commanded to suppress natural emotions? Second, whilst we do not know which commandments are more important than others, this final commandment nevertheless seems somewhat out of place. The other nine commandments clearly stand out as fundamental tenets of our faith. Does “You shall not covet...” belong on this list of fundamentals? Does coveting one’s friend’s wife belong on the same list as adultery?

Ibn Ezra addresses our first question and explains with a parable:

“Many people have been astounded by this commandment. How can there be a person who does not covet in his heart something that he finds attractive? And now I will give you a parable: Know that a villager who sees the King’s daughter and finds her attractive will not yearn for her in his heart to sleep with her, for he knows that this is impossible. Nor will this villager think like one of the madmen and yearn for wings so that he can fly to the heavens, for this is also impossible. Just like no man longs to sleep with his mother, even though she is attractive, for he has grown up from his youth knowing that she is forbidden to him” (Ibn Ezra, Shemot 20:14).

Ibn Ezra explains that although coveting may be natural, nobody covets anything that is entrenched in their mind as being beyond their reach, impossible, or forbidden. Therefore, we are not being commanded to suppress our yearnings for that which we covet, but to never reach those yearnings in the first place.

It is essential for us to internalize the fact that everything we have and everything we own comes from Hashem. Once we understand deep down that that which belongs to us is ours because that is what Hashem gave us, and we learn to appreciate and be happy with our portion, we will not come to coveting possessions which Hashem has decided to give to others.

“You shall not covet” is therefore much deeper than a commandment to suppress emotions. It is about conditioning our minds with the notion that everything we have comes from Hashem. It is about being happy with what we have got so we will not ever come to looking longingly elsewhere. It is about internalizing Hashem’s commandments to the extent that we would never yearn or long to break them. It certainly deserves its place in the Ten Commandments.

Shabbat Shalom!

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אחד. הוא ברא ומחזיק את כל הניגודים האלה, הוא המסדר והמנהיג את כל הניגודים האלה, הוא שיצר את כל הניגודים האלה שמסביבנו ושבטוכנו.”

פריחה ונבילה, של חיים ומוות, של קניין ואובדן, של הנאה ועינוי, של עלייה וירידה, של אהבה ושנאה, של שמחה וצער, וכן כל הניגודים שאדם חש בנפשו פנימה, של חירות ושעבוד, של רוח וחוש, של כוחות עליונים וכוחות ארציים – הכול הוא מעשה ידי אל

”בעיצומו של העולם הזה, שכולו סתירות, מכריז האדם: ה' אחד. כל הניגודים האלה של שמיים וארץ, של תבל ויחידים, של כוחות וחומרים המבקשים זה את זה ובורחים זה מפני זה, הבונים ומחריבים איש את רעהו, של יום ולילה, של הוויה וכליה, של

The Power of Why



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

In a much-watched TED Talk, Simon Sinek asked the following question: how do great leaders inspire action?¹ What made people like Martin Luther King and Steve Jobs stand out from their contemporaries who may have been no less gifted, no less qualified? His answer: Most people talk about *what*. Some people talk about *how*. Great leaders, though, start with *why*. This is what makes them transformative.²

Sinek's lecture was about business and political leadership. The most powerful examples, though, are directly or indirectly religious. Indeed I argued in *The Great Partnership*³ what makes Abraham-ic monotheism different is that it believes there is an answer to the question, why. Neither the universe nor human life is meaningless, an accident, a mere happenstance. As Freud, Einstein, and Wittgenstein all said, religious faith is faith in the meaningfulness of life.

Rarely is this shown in a more powerful light than in *Va'etchanan*. There is much in Judaism about *what*: what is permitted, what forbidden, what is sacred, what is secular. There is much, too, about *how*: how to learn, how to pray, how to grow in our relationship with G-d and with other people. There is relatively little about *why*.

In *Va'etchanan* Moses says some of the most inspiring words ever uttered about the why of Jewish existence. That is what made him the great transformational leader he was, and it has consequences for us, here, now.

To have a sense of how strange Moses' words were, we must recall several facts. The Israelites were still in the desert. They had not yet entered the land. They had no military advantages over the

nations they would have to fight. Ten of the twelve spies had argued, almost forty years before, that the mission was impossible. In a world of empires, nations and fortified cities, the Israelites must have seemed to the untutored eye defenceless, unproven, one more horde among the many who swept across Asia and Africa in ancient times. Other than their religious practices, few contemporary observers would have seen anything about them to set them apart from the Jebusites and Perizzites, Midianites and Moabites, and the other petty powers that populated that corner of the Middle East.

Yet in this week's parsha Moses communicated an unshakeable certainty that what had happened to them would eventually change and inspire the world. Listen to his language:

Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day G-d created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of G-d speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation by miracles, signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your G-d did for you in Egypt before your eyes? (Deut. 4:32-34)

Moses was convinced that Jewish history was, and would remain, unique. In an age of empires, a small, defenceless group had been liberated from the greatest empire of all by a power not their

own, by G-d Himself. That was Moses' first point: the singularity of Jewish history as a narrative of redemption.

His second was the uniqueness of revelation:

What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our G-d is near us whenever we pray to Him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? (Deut. 4:7-8)

Other nations had gods to whom they prayed and offered sacrifices. They too attributed their military successes to their deities. But no other nation saw G-d as their sovereign, legislator, and law-giver. Elsewhere law represented the decree of the king or, in more recent centuries, the will of the people. In Israel, uniquely, even when there was a king, he had no legislative power. Only in Israel was G-d seen not just as a power but as the architect of society, the orchestrator of its music of justice and mercy, liberty and dignity.

The question is why. Toward the end of the chapter, Moses gives one answer: "Because He loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them." (Deut. 4:37). G-d loved Abraham, not least because Abraham loved G-d. And G-d loved Abraham's children because they were his children and He had promised the patriarch that He would bless and protect them.

Earlier though Moses had given a different kind of answer, not incompatible with the second, but different:

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my G-d commanded

me ... Observe them carefully, for *this is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations*, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deut. 4:5-6).

Why did Moses, or G-d, care whether or not other nations saw Israel's laws as wise and understanding? Judaism was and is a love story between G-d and a particular people, often tempestuous, sometimes serene, frequently joyous, but close, intimate, even inward-looking. What has the rest of the world to do with it?

But the rest of the world does have something to do with it. Judaism was never meant for Jews alone. In his first words to Abraham, G-d already said, "I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you, I will curse; through you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Jews were to be a source of blessing to the world.

G-d is the G-d of all humanity. In Genesis He spoke to Adam, Eve, Cain, Noah, and made a covenant with all humankind before He made one with Abraham. In Egypt, whether in Potiphar's house, or prison, or Pharaoh's palace, Joseph continually talked about G-d. He wanted the Egyptians to know that nothing he did, he did himself. He was merely an agent of the G-d of Israel. There is nothing here to suggest that G-d is indifferent to the nations of the world.

Later in the days of Moses, G-d said that He would perform signs and wonders so that "The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord" (Ex. 7:5). He called Jeremiah to be "a prophet to the nations." He sent Jonah to the Assyrians in Nineveh. He had Amos deliver oracles to the other nations before He sent him an oracle about Israel. In perhaps the most astonishing prophecy in Tanach, He sent Isaiah the message that a time will come when G-d will bless Israel's enemies:

"The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt My people, Assyria My handiwork, and Israel My inheritance'" (Is. 19:26).

G-d is concerned with all humanity. Therefore what we do as Jews makes a difference to humanity, not just in a mystical sense, but as exemplars of what it means to love and be loved by G-d. Other nations would look at Jews and sense that some larger power was at work in their history. As the late Milton Himmelfarb put it:

Each Jew knows how thoroughly ordinary he is; yet taken together, we seem caught up in things great and inexplicable . . . The number of Jews in the world is smaller than a small statistical error in the Chinese census. Yet we remain bigger than our numbers. Big things seem to happen around us and to us.⁴

We were not called on to convert the world. We were called on to inspire the world. As the prophet Zechariah put it, a time will come when "Ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that G-d is with you'" (Zech. 8:23). Our vocation is to be G-d's ambassadors to the world, giving testimony through the way we live that it is possible for a small people to survive and thrive under the most adverse conditions, to construct a society of law-governed liberty for which we all bear collective responsibility, and to "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly"⁵ with our G-d. *Va'etchanan* is the mission statement of the Jewish people.

And others were and still are inspired by it. The conclusion I have drawn from a lifetime lived in the public square is that *non-Jews respect Jews who respect Judaism*. They find it hard to understand why Jews, in countries where there is genuine religious liberty, abandon their faith or define their identity in purely ethnic terms.

Speaking personally, I believe that the world in its current state of turbulence needs the Jewish message, which is that G-d calls on us to be *true to our faith and a blessing to others regardless of their faith*. Imagine a world in which everyone be-

lieved this. It would be a world transformed.

We are not just another ethnic minority. We are the people who predicated freedom on teaching our children to love, not hate. Ours is the faith that consecrated marriage and the family, and spoke of responsibilities long before it spoke of rights. Ours is the vision that sees alleviation of poverty as a religious task because, as Maimonides said, you cannot think exalted spiritual thoughts if you are starving or sick or homeless and alone.⁶ We do these things not because we are conservative or liberal, Republicans or Democrats, but because we believe that is what G-d wants of us.

Much is written these days about the *what* and *how* of Judaism, but all too little about the *why*. Moses, in the last month of his life, taught the *why*. That is how the greatest of leaders inspired action from his day to ours.

If you want to change the world, start with *why*.

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Why does Moshe choose to explain the 'why' of Judaism here, at this point in the Torah?
- If you wanted to sum up all of Judaism in a brief mission statement, what would you say?
- Do you think Judaism and the Jewish people are making an impact on the world today? How?

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKF_VuA

2. For a more detailed account, see the book based on the talk: *Simon Sinek, Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. New York, Portfolio, 2009.

3. Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning* (New York: Schocken Books, 2012).

4. Milton Himmelfarb and Gertrude Himmelfarb. *Jews and Gentiles*. New York, Encounter, 2007, p. 141.

5. Micah 6:8.

6. *The Guide for the Perplexed*, III:27.

S'char Batalah



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

See, I have taught you decrees and ordinances, as Hashem, my G-d, has commanded me. (Devarim 4:5)

The simple explanation of this *passuk* is that Moshe Rabbeinu fulfilled Hashem's command to teach *Bnei Yisrael* the Torah. Chazal had a tradition, however, that the *passuk* contains an additional level of interpretation – that Moshe taught the Torah to *Bnei Yisrael* in the same manner that Hashem taught the Torah to him. Just as Hashem taught Moshe free of charge, so did Moshe teach *Bnei Yisrael* free of charge, and that is the way Torah must be taught for all generations.

The *Mishnah* in *Bechoros* extends this requirement to other *mitzvah*-related services for which one may not take payment – serving as a judge, testifying, or sprinkling or consecrating *mei chatas* (the water of the *parah adumah* for one who is *tamei meis*). Likewise, one who performs *hashavas aveidah* (returning a lost object) – including a doctor who restores an ill person's health to him – may not charge for his services.

However, the Gemara in *Bava Metzia* teaches that one who performs *hashavas aveidah* may be paid *s'char batalah* – the wage of a worker who stands idle from his usual work, which enables him to instead carry out the easier job of returning a lost object. A doctor, as well as one who teaches Torah, may be similarly compensated.

The idea behind this type of compensation in the case of a *talmid chacham* for example, is that the *kehillah* decides that it is worthwhile to pay him a salary on the condition that he refrains from taking any form of employment. This way, he remains available to teach Torah to the *kehillah*. At the same time, in keeping

with the Gemara in *Bechoros*, he engages in teaching Torah completely free of charge. Similarly, in the case of a doctor's compensation, a group of patients pays their doctor not to work in a different profession so that he can treat his patients gratis.

This understanding of *s'char batalah* is relevant to the issue of *s'char Shabbos*, wages for a job performed on the Shabbos. Although it is generally forbidden *miderabbanan* to take *s'char Shabbos* (*Bava Metzia* 58a), in light of our analysis, it seems that there is no prohibition of *s'char Shabbos* when a doctor treats a *choleh* on Shabbos. Even when a doctor renders medical care on a weekday, his wage is not in lieu of that particular treatment; rather, it is compensation for not taking a different job. The treatment of the *choleh* must always be free of charge. Since a doctor's compensation is not for the job performed on the Shabbos, it is not *s'char Shabbos*. It is therefore completely permissible for the doctor to receive *s'char batalah* for treating a patient on Shabbos.

The Chasam Sofer discusses whether a Jewish doctor should accept payment for treating a *nochri* patient on Shabbos. On the one hand, since the payment is *s'char Shabbos*, he may not derive benefit from it. Alternatively, perhaps he should take payment to avoid the violation of giving free gifts to *nochrin*. Therefore, the Chasam Sofer advises that the doctor should take the payment and donate it to *tzedakah*.

It seems that the issue of *s'char Shabbos* in that case is due to the fact that the doctor treated a *nochri* specifically. Since we do not have a *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah* to a *nochri*, we likewise have no obligation to restore his good health to him. Therefore, the doctor may be paid direct-

ly for his work, not as *s'char batalah*, and that is why the Chasam Sofer considers his payment a problem of *s'char Shabbos*.

L'halachah, we are lenient with regard to *s'char Shabbos* when the payment is for the performance of a *mitzvah*. Nevertheless, the Shulchan Aruch states that one who takes payment for blowing the *shofar* will not see a *siman berachah* from that money.

This is quite puzzling. We should apply the *halachah* taught in the Mishnah in *Bechoros* to this case. It should be forbidden for one to charge a regular wage for *shofar*-blowing, but receiving *s'char batalah* should be permissible. Accordingly, just as with regard to a doctor who treats a *choleh* on Shabbos, the prohibition of accepting *s'char Shabbos* should not apply at all. Why should the *ba'al tokei'ah* not see a *siman berachah* from that money?

The answer is that this calculation is not correct. Rav Hirsch explains that the *mitzvos* listed in the Mishnah in *Bechoros* are all examples of one person performing a *mitzvah* on behalf of another when the latter could not perform it on his own. Obviously, one may not judge or serve as a witness in his own *din* Torah, nor can he sprinkle the *mei chatas* on himself or return his own *aveidah* to himself.

Similarly, oftentimes, one cannot teach Torah to himself when he is unfamiliar with the portion of Torah in question. Since many people are unable to perform this *mitzvah* themselves, the Torah places an obligation on someone who possesses Torah knowledge to transmit that Torah to anyone who lacks that knowledge. Thus, Chazal interpret the *passuk*, “You shall teach them thoroughly to your children”, as a reference to teaching Torah to *talmidim* (Sifrei). The Torah similarly obli-

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Good Enough Is Just Not Good Enough



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Although we were originally taught the laws of *Arei Miklat* (cities of refuge) a couple of weeks ago in *Parshas Masei*, the Torah teaches us about them once again in this week's *parsha*. The question to ask is what is the Torah adding to the *pesukim* this time to teach that we did not originally learn? We learn here (4:42) that one who kills unwittingly can run to one of these cities "וְחָי" – and live. The Gemara in Makkos (10A) learns out from here that "תלמיד שגלה מגלין רבו עמו" – one who is sent into his exile, his teacher goes with him. How is this learned from "וְחָי"? The murderer wants to continue to live his life properly while he is "away" and for that he needs his *rebbe*. Since one does not leave the *Ir Miklat* until the *Kohen Gadol* passes away, this could mean the *Rebbe* possibly spending the rest of his life with this *talmid*.

The Rambam in *Hilchos Rotzeiach* at the beginning of the seventh *perek* brings down this Gemara and adds "וְחָי בְּעֵלֵי הַקָּמָה" וְחָי בְּעֵלֵי הַקָּמָה – the life of one who possesses wisdom without Torah study is considered to be like one who is dead.

This concept of a *rebbe* joining a *talmid* for what could be the remainder of his life in order to make sure he continues to live correctly is wonderful, but still requires further explanation. If this was in the case of a child, it would make sense that some sort of spiritual accompaniment would be required to ensure that as he gets older he continues to grow in his *Torah* and *mitzvos*, but why is it essential for an already established adult to have this as well? Perhaps he is already a *Talmid Chacham*! Why is it that he would still be considered not alive had his *rebbe* not joined him?

It is brought down in the sefer *Badei Kodesh Al HaTorah* written by Rav Barel Pvarsky Shlit'a is that we are perhaps misunderstanding the goal of "וְחָי". Someone in this situation may be a *Talmid Chacham*, who is strong in his *avodah*, and maybe even a *rebbe* himself, but to constantly be striving to get to an even higher level is "וְחָי", is what life is about and what helps one to feel alive. The recognition of a constant need to continue improving who you are applies wherever one may be and sometimes there is a need for someone to be there with us giving that reminder.

We live in a world where there is a feeling of whatever we do just needs to be "good enough". To just get a passing grade in school or if we are learning having the feeling that we only need to understand the basics. Good enough is just not good enough. This is a term used for physical matters, *chas v'shalom* we should use this in our relationship with Hashem! If there is opportunity for a spiritual improvement for one's self it needs to be taken seriously and acted upon. This is what helps us to feel the most alive – looking for ways in which we can reach our highest potentials and most succeed.

The danger is when we begin comparing the level in which we find ourselves on to those around us. We need not to compare ourselves to our surroundings but rather to who we were yesterday, to make sure we are on a higher level than yesterday and planning to be even higher tomorrow. Now past Tisha B'Av may we use these next seven weeks looking at every way in which we can ensure we are the best possible versions of ourselves as we can be as we slowly inch closer and closer to the *Yamim Noraim*.

● Edited by Zac Winkler and Sam Rothstein.

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gates a witness who knows information about a *din Torah* to testify. Furthermore, in placing these obligations, the Torah also required that one perform these *mitzvos* without charge.

However, other *mitzvos* that one could discharge on his own, such as blowing *shofar*, are in a different category. Even though many are not expert in blowing

shofar, they could, in theory, learn to do so. For this reason, the Torah never posited an obligation on a *ba'al toke'ah* to blow *shofar* to discharge another's obligation. The Torah similarly never obligated a person to tie *tzitzis* on someone else's garment, nor a *sofer* to write a *sefer Torah*, *tefillin*, or *mezuzos* for another. Therefore, one who performs these *mitzvos* on another's behalf is permitted to take full

payment and need not suffice with taking *s'char batalah*. For this reason, when one blows *shofar* for others on Yom Tov and they compensate him, there is a definite concern of *s'char Shabbos* with regard to accepting this payment.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.

After All The Tragedy – It Is Hashem Himself Who Will Comfort Us



Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef zt"l
Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel

We read in the Haphtarah, “Comfort, comfort My people, says your G-d” (Yeshaya 40:1). The chachamim explain in the Midrash that when the First Bet HaMikdash was destroyed Hashem saw what had happened to Klal Yisrael, therefore Hashem said to the prophets, “...when I became slightly wrathful, they augmented the evil” (Zechariya 1:15), these are the wicked people who didn’t have any mercy on Am Yisrael, they slaughtered them like sheep. They took the Sanhedrin and slaughtered them all. They took children from the Talmud Torah and in sheer cruelty slaughtered them. These are the cursed wicked. Hashem was full of pain, how could Klal Yisrael reach such a distressing situation? How could they have gone like sheep to the slaughter?

Therefore Hashem summoned the prophets and said to them, “Speak consolingly of Yerushalayim”(Yeshaya 40:2). Go and comfort my People! When the prophets came to comfort Yisrael, Yisrael said to them, is it no longer fitting for Hashem to speak directly with us? For the passuk states, “Tziyon said, ‘Hashem has forsaken me’” (ibid. 49:14). Hashem has already forsaken us so what will your comfort achieve? A person whose daughter was killed, his children killed, what will comfort achieve? Therefore they said to the prophets, “Go from here! We will not accept comfort from you!”

The prophets came and relayed to Hashem, “Ribono shel Olam, your people aren’t

prepared to accept comfort!” He replied to them, “Yisrael are correct! Therefore “I, only I, am He Who comforts you” (ibid. 51:12) Hashem Himself will comfort you! And so you shall see in all the ensuing Haphtarot that the prophets say that Yisrael aren’t prepared to accept comfort, “O afflicted, storm-tossed one, who has not been consoled” (ibid. 59:11). And Hashem responds, “I (Anochi), only I (Anochi), am He Who comforts you”, in the merit of I (Anochi) am Hashem your G-d, that you accepted upon yourselves with the Ten Commandments, “I (Anochi), I (Anochi)” am He Who comforts you. Yisrael heard this and their minds were at ease.

A parable is related regarding this. There were two couples that lived in the same neighborhood. One was wealthy and the other poor. The wealthy one’s wife by nature was not an easy person, she was a nervous person, and she would regularly attack him, as such, he was very distressed. One day they had a massive row, the husband got up and left, traveling to America. After he left, his wife just sat and cried, “My husband, my husband! Who will return him to me?” She was in a state of regret knowing that she hadn’t behaved properly.

Now the wife of the poor man was an easy-going and good person, yet despite this, they lived in great poverty. The poor man said, “I will travel to America and perhaps there I will be able to provide a livelihood for my family.” He sought his wife’s permission and set off to travel.

And so they both traveled the wealthy man and the poor man, both on the same plane. When they arrived in America, they both stayed in the same hotel. Over the next few days, the two neighbors eagerly waited for their husbands.

After about a month, a merchant from America arrived and told the two ladies that he has letters for them from their husbands. The wife of the wealthy one said, “Sir, please give me my husband’s letter!” The merchant replied, “I’m afraid I cannot do that now, you see all, my belongings are packed, at the moment it is difficult for me, come back tomorrow and I will give you the letter.” The lady replied, “Okay, thank you very much,” and off she went.

The poor man’s wife also asked the merchant, “Please can you give me my letter.” The merchant replied, “You see madam, currently all my belongings are packed in suitcases, come back tomorrow and I will give you your letter.” But she continued to pressure him, “Please would you make the effort to find the letter amongst your belongings.” The merchant asked her, “Why is it that your neighbor, when she saw that it was difficult for me to locate the letter, she accepted it and went away, but you are pressuring me so much to give you the letter?”

The poor lady replied, “Regarding my friend, her husband left because of a row, so the moment you told her that her husband sent her a letter, she was relieved, she said to herself, ‘See, my

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Nachamu, Nachamu Ami



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This Shabbat is known as Shabbat Nachamu – named after the haftorah that we read “*nachamu, nachamu ami*”. It serves as a *nechama* – to comfort us following Tisha B'av and our mourning of the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. We will share two thoughts on “*nachamu*”, one connected to the parsha and the other to the haftorah.

Parsha

We remain in exile and the Beit HaMikdash has not been rebuilt, so what type of comfort or relief do we experience? Perhaps we can find the source of this *nechama* (comfort) in the *parsha*.

Chazal tell us that “Va’etchanan” refers to Moshe Rabbeinu’s prayers begging to be able to enter Eretz Yisrael. Hashem denies Moshe’s repeated requests, but He does enable Moshe to **see** the land.

עֲלֵה רֹאשׁ הַפָּסֶגֶה וְשֵׂא עֵינֶיךָ... וּרְאֵה בְּעֵינֶיךָ כִּי-לֹא הִעֲבַר אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה.

Go up to the top of the hill and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward and **see with your eyes**, for you shall not cross this Jordan. (Devarim 3:27).

The Sefat Emet offers an explanation with respect to how Parshat Va’etchanan provides us with a tool from which to

obtain comfort while in exile. Moshe being granted the ability to “**see**” the land was not just with respect to viewing it on a superficial, physical realm, but rather to be able to internalize and connect with the *kedusah* of Eretz Yisrael. Moshe was granted the ability to connect to the holiness present in the land of Israel while remaining on its perimeter. This is something that Moshe transmitted to future generations that are not privileged to enter within the borders of Israel. From a distance they are able to connect to the *kedusha* of Eretz Yisrael through *tefillah*. We face the land of Israel when praying and when in Israel we face the *kodesh Kodashim*.

Parshat Va’etchanan is always read following Tisha B'av, to highlight that just as Moshe was granted the ability to connect with Eretz Yisrael from a distance, irrespective of our presence in *galut* (exile) we can connect to the holiness of the land of Israel via our prayers.

Haftorah

An important lesson can be derived from the haftorah as well. Why is it that we use the double language of “*nachamu, nachamu*”? Chazal suggest that since our transgression is recorded in this fashion (חַטָּא חֲטָא יְרוּשָׁלַיִם (איכה א:ח) – with the word

“*chet*” (transgression), repeated twice, so too our conciliation is offered twice.

Rav Yaakov Neiman (Darchei Mussar) offers the following suggestion. The Torah was given to Am Yisrael, but it was not only for their benefit. Am Yisrael have an obligation to serve as an “*ohr L'goyim*” – a light unto the nations. As is stated כִּי מְצִיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה – *From Zion shall the Torah come forth* (Yeshayahu 2:3). Through our actions and moral and ethical behavior we are to positively influence the world.

That is why the word *nechama* is repeated. To be comforted we need to correct our ways – to act respectfully to one another to counter the *sinat chinam* that led to the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. Our behavior however, does not only have an impact on our immediate community. It has an effect on the other nations of the world. One *nechama* for Am Yisrael and another for the rest of the world.

In particular, during vacation season when we travel, we have to keep in mind that by wearing a kippah, we are an ambassador of the Jewish nation. With it comes the responsibility to act in a way that sanctifies G-d’s name מְקַדֵּשׁ שֵׁם שְׁמַיִם. May we be able to live up to that challenge and to be a conduit for the fulfillment of the double *nechama*!

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husband is thinking of me.’ But I love my husband and my husband loves me, and he only traveled in order to provide for his family. In his letter, he will certainly write whether he has been successful, and therefore the mere fact that he has written me a letter doesn’t put me at ease, for I need to know what’s written in the letter!”

So too with Hashem, “...for nothing prevents Hashem from saving, whether through many or through few” (Shmuel 1, 14:6) but we haven’t behaved correctly, we have angered Him and now He sent us a messenger who says, “Comfort, comfort My people”, listen Yisrael and understand,

Hashem hasn’t forsaken us! He still thinks about us! Their mind was put at ease.

May Hashem completely redeem us, and build for us the Bet HaMikdash and return the crown to its rightful place, with the coming of Mashiach Tzidkeinu, let it be Hashem’s Will and let us say Amen!

The Sanctity & Beauty of Shabbos



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

In *Parshas Va'Eschanan*, Moshe Rabbeinu reviews the *Aseres ha'Dibros*, the Ten Commandments (lit. 'the Ten Declarations'), with the nation. The *Aseres ha'Dibros*, which were given to the first generation at the foothills of Sinai forty years prior, are now repeated for the sake of their children, who would hear the truisms of the law from Moshe, prior to his demise, and prior to their entry into the Holy Land.

In the fourth commandment, we are commanded regarding Shabbos. In *Yisro* (Shemos 20:8), the *pasuk* says: זָכוֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ, *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*.

Rashi tells us: *Pay attention always to remember the Sabbath day, for if a special item of food comes your way during the week, prepare it and set it aside for Shabbos* (ibid).

When Moshe repeats the *Aseres ha'Dibros* in our *parsha*, the *lashon* is amended slightly and the *pasuk* reads: שְׁמֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ – *guard the Sabbath day to keep it holy* (Devarim 5:12).

Here Rashi teaches: *And in the first set, the pasuk says 'zachor' (remember), for both zachor and shamor were said in one declaration and as one word, and were heard simultaneously* (ibid).

This comes to teach us that both the *zachor* (remember) aspect of Shabbos and the *shamor* (guard) aspect of Shabbos are of equal importance and relevance.

Furthermore: *zachor* – we must remember and keep the *mitzvos asey* in regard to Shabbos, and *shamor* – we must be on guard not to transgress the *mitzvos lo sa'asey* in regard to *hilchos Shabbos*.

An additional insight of the Ohr HaChaim *ha'Kadosh* into the meaning of שְׁמֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ teaches us of the importance of *longing and waiting*

for Shabbos. The Ohr HaChaim writes that Shabbos should not be viewed as a burden, but rather, we must rejoice in Shabbos and desire it, and to be “*shomer Shabbos*” means that one must constantly *wait and anticipate the arrival of Shabbos*, longing for it and wondering “when will it come?” so that the *mitzvos* of Shabbos can be fulfilled (Ohr HaChaim to Shemos 31:16-17).

Perhaps we can also derive another lesson from the duality of *zachor* – remember the Sabbath – and *shamor* – guard the Sabbath.

Zachor, we as *shmorei Shabbos* Jews, must remember the Shabbos day to keep it holy. And furthermore, *Shamor* – we have to guard Shabbos and try to ensure that other Jews appreciate her beauty and holiness as well.

Rav Yisrael Meir Lau *shlita* records the following narrative in his masterful book, *Out of the Depths*. In the early days of the State, Ha-Shahar bus company (which later merged with Egged) decided that its buses would drive through Kiryat Motzkin en route to the Galia beach.

“The bus route was to begin operation on the first Shabbat after the opening of the swimming season. On that day, following the Torah reading in the main *beit knesset* in Kiryat Motzkin, Rabbi Vogelmann (Rav Lau's uncle) led the congregants into the streets. The rabbi announced that they would pray the *Mussaf* service outside.

“I was about twelve years old, and I stood in prayer along with the crowd that had gathered from synagogues all around. Ashkenazic and Sephardic, new immigrants and old timers, elderly and youth, we all gathered in the neighborhood streets. Bus #52 approached from Kiryat Bialik going west. My sensitive uncle did not dare stand in its path, but he re-

moved his (*talit*) prayer shawl from his shoulders and spread it over the road. I remember his lovely prayer shawl with the silver border, spread in all its glory on the black asphalt. Then the rest of the crowd followed his lead, carpeting Ha-Shoftim Avenue with prayer shawls until not an inch of asphalt was visible. With a screech of brakes, the bus stopped beside the rabbi, just in front of the prayer shawls. The driver got off, shaking all over, and pleaded to my uncle:

“Why is your Honor, the rabbi, doing this to me? Am I not a Jew? How can I run over a prayer shawl?”

“The rabbi answered, ‘My son, just as it is forbidden to trample a prayer shawl, so is it forbidden to trample the holiness of the Shabbat! We are all Jews standing here around you. We have come to live as Jews here in this neighborhood, in which Shabbat has never been desecrated in public. Please, do not break the tradition of Shabbat in Kiryat Motzkin, and do not break the chain of generations.’

“The driver listened silently. Then he got back onto his bus, put it into reverse, made a U-turn, and went back the way he came. I do not know what the situation is in Kiryat Motzkin today, but as long as I lived there, public transportation never again ran on Shabbat or on Jewish holidays” (*Out of the Depths*, p.126-127).

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the Rav zt'l, teaches, “While we have survived almost 2,000 years without the *Beis HaMikdash*, we would not have survived one week without Shabbos” (Darosh Darash Yosef).

May we merit to “*remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*”, as we all “*to guard the Sabbath day to keep it holy*,” for us, our families, and all of *Klal Yisrael*.

Two Types of Yir'a



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

As we discussed in last week's shiur, chapter 5 details the events which took place at Ma'amad Har Sinai when Bnei Yisrael were overcome with fear. In Sefer Shmot (see 20:14-18), we find what appears to be a parallel account of the same event.

Let's compare them.

We begin with the account in Sefer Devarim, when Bnei Yisrael request that Moshe Rabbeinu act as an intermediary immediately after the completion of the Ten Commandments:

"Let us not die, then, for this fearsome fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of G-d any longer, we shall die! For what mortal ever heard the voice of the living G-d speaking out of the fire, as we did, and lived? You go closer and hear all that Hashem says; then you tell us everything that Hashem tells you, and we will listen and do it" (5:22-24).

G-d concedes to this request [note the positive aspect attributed to this fear]:

"I have heard the plea that this people made to you; they did well to speak thus. May they always be of such mind, to revere Me and follow all my Commandments..."

Sefer Shmot records a very similar incident that took place immediately following the Ten Commandments, which according to some commentators (see Ibn Ezra) describes the same event: "All the people saw the thunder and lightning..., and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance and asked Moshe: You speak to us and we will listen, but let not G-d speak to us, lest we die. Moshe answered them: Be not afraid, for G-d has come only in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may be with you forever..." (Shmot 20:15-17).

Although Rashi and Ramban explain that this event (in Shmot) took place either before or during the Ten Commandments, for the purpose of this mini-shiur, we will follow Ibn Ezra's shitta which understands that both accounts describe the same event.

There is one major discrepancy between these two accounts: In Sefer Shmot, Moshe is not pleased with this fear, while in Sefer Devarim, G-d praises it!

It seems as though Moshe prefers that Bnei Yisrael confront G-d directly during Ma'amad Har Sinai, while G-d Himself endorses a more distanced relationship. Could this discrepancy reflect a dispute between Moshe and G-d regarding the value of fearing G-d?

An understanding of the two forms of 'yir'at Hashem' – the fear of G-d – can help us appreciate this controversy.

TYPE I: Positive (or Constructive) Fear

When one recognizes G-d's infinite greatness, even though he may be enthralled with the possibility of encountering the Almighty, out of humility he feels that it be improper to confront Him directly. This fear is commendable, for it reflects an ideal balance between possible closeness and necessary distance.

TYPE II: Negative Fear

On the other hand, a person not interested in any relationship with G-d would view a divine encounter such as Har Sinai as a nuisance, for it is meaningless to him. Fearful of its inherent danger, he prefers distance and limited responsibility. This type of fear of G-d, like a 'child running away from school', can ruin a relationship.

THE MACHLOKET

It seems that Moshe Rabbeinu, based on his experience with Bnei Yisrael since the time of the Exodus, is concerned that the people's fear stems from the latter reason. Therefore, he is unhappy with Bnei Yisrael's request that he act as their intermediary. He encourages them to stay at Har Sinai.

G-d, on the other hand, aware of the nature of man's haughtiness, stresses the positive aspect of this fear. He agrees with Bnei Yisrael's request, sends them to their tents, and gives the mitzvot to them through Moshe instead.

Nonetheless, when the mitzvot of the main speech actually begin, we find a beautiful resolution of this conflict.

Because G-d is indeed aware of Moshe's worry that there is a danger of the distance caused by yir'at Hashem, G-d chooses to begin the mitzvot, which He gives via Moshe to Bnei Yisrael with the commandment of ahavat Hashem – the love of G-d!

"Shema Yisrael... and you must love the Lord your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (6:4-5).

To counter this potential danger of 'too much yir'a', G-d begins with the mitzva of ahavat Hashem! The love of G-d and the proper appreciation of His laws assure that one's fear will strengthen his relationship, rather than weaken it.

Nahamu Nahamu



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The Shabbat after Tisha B'Ab is known as "Shabbat Nahamu," a reference to the portion from the Prophets read on this Shabbat, a section from the Book of Yeshayahu (40) which begins, "Nahamu Nahamu Ami" – "Comfort, comfort My nation." We read this prophecy of comfort and consolation every year after Tisha B'Ab even though nothing has changed. The Bet Ha'mikdash is still not rebuilt, we still live in a state of exile, we still endure many difficult problems and hardships, and we still wait and yearn for redemption. If nothing has changed, then for what reason do we suddenly change our tune from mourning to comfort? Why do we now speak of consolation and hope, if the situation remains the same?

One explanation, given by Rav Shimshon Pincus (1944-2001), is that the phrase "Nahamu Nahamu Ami" itself provides us with consolation. The very fact that G-d calls us "Ami" – His nation – despite our wrongdoing which led to our exile, is a reason for us to feel comforted and consoled. Despite all we've endured, we know that we are still G-d's beloved and cherished nation, and this itself is reason for hope and optimism.

There is also an additional explanation. The Gematria (numerical value) of the word "Nahamu" is 104, and thus the Gematria of the phrase "Nahamu Nahamu" is twice 104, or 208. This is

also the Gematria of the name "Yishak." Yishak Abinu is associated with the divine attribute of Din ("judgment"), as opposed to Abraham Abinu, who is associated with G-d's attribute of kindness and compassion. The phrase "Nahamu Nahamu" alludes to us that even within judgment there is reason for comfort and encouragement. Even when it seems like G-d deals with us harshly, He is, in truth, dealing with us with love and compassion. Everything G-d does is for our ultimate benefit and is done with love and kindness, and this is true even of the hardships we sometimes experience. This is why we feel comforted despite the fact that nothing has changed – because we know that even the calamities which have befallen us are, in truth, manifestations of G-d's kindness and compassion.

This opening verse of the Haftara concludes, "Yomar Elokechem" ("your G-d says"). The verb "A.M.R." generally denotes a soft, gentle tone (in contrast to "D.B.R.," which generally refers to a stricter, harsher mode of speech). Significantly, it appears here in conjunction with the divine Name "Elokim," which refers to G-d's attribute of strict justice.

This phrase, too, conveys the message that there is no substantive difference between G-d's judgment and His compassion, because the two are really one and the same. Even when G-d appears to deal

with us harshly, He is, in truth, treating us with love, compassion and kindness.

Parashat Va'ethanan contains the famous verse, "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokenu Hashem Ehad" ("Hear, O Israel – Hashem our G-d, Hashem is one"). This verse bids us to "hear" – meaning, to understand and contemplate – that "Hashem Elokenu," both attributes of G-d, are really "Ehad," one. The Name "Elokim," as mentioned, refers to the divine attribute of judgment, whereas the Name of "Havaya" refers to G-d's kindness. We affirm several times each day the fundamental belief that "Hashem Elokenu," the two different ways in which we experience G-d in our lives, are, in truth, "Hashem Ehad" – one and the same, and both stem from His kindness. We are required to recite this verse several times each day because of the vital importance of this tenet, that everything G-d does is done with love and kindness, and is for our benefit.

This fundamental belief is our source of consolation after Tisha B'Ab, after we've mourned the destruction of the Bet Ha'mikdash, and it is our source of consolation whenever we deal with difficult hardships over the course of our lives.

When Everything Else is Stripped Away



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This week, I was thinking about a beautiful *Midrash* on the *parshah* (*Sifri, Devarim* 36). In it, *Chazal* say, “The Jewish people are so precious that the Torah surrounded them with *mitzvos*: *tefillin* on their heads, *tefillin* on their arms, *mezuzos* on their doors, and *tzitzis* on their garments. Regarding them Dovid said, ‘Seven in a day I praise You for Your righteous statutes’ (*Tehillim* 119:164).” The *passuk* quoted by the *Midrash* refers to the fact that Dovid HaMelech was inspired to praise Hashem seven times a day for the seven *mitzvos* that surround His children as a sign of how precious they are to Him: four *tzitzis* on their garments, *tefillin* on their heads and arms, and a *mezuzah* on their doors.

The *Midrash* then continues with a well-known story about Dovid HaMelech, “He entered the bath house and saw himself naked. He said, ‘Woe that I am naked of *mitzvos*!’ He then gazed at the sign of the covenant on his flesh and began to arrange his praise [after leaving the *mikvah*], as the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 12:1) says, ‘For the conductor, on the eighth, a song of Dovid,’” a hint at *bris milah*, which is done on a baby’s eighth day of life.

What exactly happened to Dovid HaMelech in the *mikvah*? What was the nature of the epiphany he had there? He certainly wasn’t embarrassed by the fact that the other people in the *mikvah* “caught” him without his *tefillin* and *tzitzis* on. First, that is the nature of the place and what everyone would expect. Second, as he was the king of the Jewish people, when he entered the *mikvah*, everyone else certainly left as soon as he arrived!

Besides the fact that Hashem told us to, why do we wear *tefillin* and *tzitzis* and put *mezuzos* on our doors? We bind *tefillin* on

our heads and our arms to remind us to bind our minds and actions to Hashem’s will. Wearing *tzitzis* remind us, wherever we go, of the *mitzvos*. And the *mezuzah* reminds us, before we leave the house, to remember Hashem’s will in all the choices we make as we journey out into the world. They stand as reminders to awaken our minds to remember our connection to Hashem and His will – “Seven in a day I praise You.”

But Dovid HaMelech was bothered by the question: What happens if all of the reminders that keep my actions and thoughts in the right place are removed? What is left of me? Do I still have a connection with Hashem? Is it all external? Do I have an essential connection with G-d? How have all of these reminders affected my essence, if at all? Perhaps this question is what caused Dovid to cry out, “Woe that I am naked of *mitzvos*!”

It is so easy for us to allow Yiddishkeit to be reduced to one long string of reminders and signs without any change in the nature of who we are, what we want, or the nature of our consciousness. One’s entire Jewish life may only be defined by one’s *rebbe*, *morah*, family, *shul*, *yeshivah*, and the checklist of Jewish activities one engages in on a daily, weekly, or yearly basis. These signs of Hashem’s love surround us on all sides and are wonderful. But does the way we rely on them make us into empty shells? What are we without them? Have they changed us on the *inside*?

How does one act when he is naked of *mitzvos*? When all the reminders are somewhere else and something pops up on the screen on a person’s phone, even unintentionally, what does he do? What is left when he is stripped of every external reminder and motivator to keep him or

her on the straight and narrow? Is he still connected to Hashem and his *Yiddishkeit*? Perhaps Dovid HaMelech’s fear at that moment in the *mikvah* was about what happens when one takes away all of his external badges of Divine service, when he was truly naked of *mitzvos*, disconnected from everything outside of himself. He was worried whether, after removing all of the “means” in his life, whether the “ends” had become part of his essence.

What was his epiphany? He realized that the part of him which was always covered, which was most private, the part of him so internal that it was part of his very flesh, had never left him. “This is My covenant which you shall observe, between Me, you, and your children after you: circumcise for yourselves every male.” (*Bereishis* 17:10). This hidden sign of “My covenant” is the symbol of the relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem because it is invisible. It cannot serve to jog the memory. It only exists as part of our essence. That was his comfort and the subject a new chapter of *Tehillim*.

Each of us is surrounded by a myriad of *mitzvos* and positive Jewish role models, environments, and lessons. But if they remain as external reminders which, if removed, would leave us naked of *mitzvos*, then they will not have ever fulfilled their purpose. Let us merit not to be satisfied with the external marks of *Yiddishkeit* alone. May we succeed in driving these reminders of our relationship with Hashem deep into our minds and hearts so that when we enter our version of Dovid HaMelech’s *mikvah*, we too will rejoice in our own internalization of our covenant with Hashem.

Are You a Jealous Person?



Rabbi YY Jacobson
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The tenth and final of the Ten Commandments recorded in this week's portion (Vaeschanan) reads: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; you shall not covet your neighbor's house, nor his field, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, and anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Deuteronomy 5:17; Exodus 20:14).

The structure of the verse seems strange. In the beginning, the Bible specifies seven things we should not covet: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; you shall not covet your neighbor's home, nor his field, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey." But then, at the conclusion of the verse, the Bible states: "And anything that belongs to your neighbor." Why the unnecessary redundancy? Why not just state at the onset "You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor," which would include all of the specifics? And if the Torah does not want to rely on generalizations and wishes to specify details, why does it specify only a few items and then anyhow revert to a generalization, "And anything that belongs to your neighbor?"

A Holistic Story

In Hebrew, the word employed for "anything" and "everything" is identical, "Kol." Hence, the above verse can also be translated as, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; you shall not covet your neighbor's house, nor his field, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, and everything that belongs to your neighbor." By concluding the verse with these words, the Torah is not just instructing us not to covet anything of our neighbor, but also helping us achieve this difficult state of consciousness.

How could you demand from a person not to be jealous? When I walk into your home and observe your living conditions, your cars, your bank accounts, and your general life style, how could I not become envious?

The answer is, "Do not covet everything that belongs to your neighbor." What the Torah is intimating is that it is indeed easy to envy the home and spouse of your neighbor, his servants, his ox and donkey; yet the question you have to ask yourself is, do you covet "everything that belongs to your neighbor?" Are you prepared to assume his or her life completely? To actually become him?

You cannot see life as myriads of disjointed events and experiences. You can't pluck out one aspect of somebody's life and state "I wish I could have had his (or her) marriage, his home, his career, his money..." Life is a holistic and integrated experience. Each life, with its blessings and challenges, with its obstacles and opportunities, constitutes a single story, a narrative that begins with birth and ends with death. Every experience in our life represents one chapter of our singular, unique story and we do not have the luxury to pluck out a chapter from someone's story without embracing their entire life-journey.

When you isolate one or a few aspects of someone else's life, it is natural to become envious. But when you become aware of "everything that belongs to your neighbor," your perception is altered. Do you really want to acquire everything that is going on in his or her life?

So the next time you feel yourself coveting the life of the other, ask yourself if you really want to become them.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was correct when he observed that "envy is ignorance."

Nachamu: Lift Our Burdens



Rabbi Judah Mischel

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Rav Daniel Movshovitz, HY"D, was the *menahel* of the Talmud Torah of Kelm. He was an embodiment of *mussar*, refinement, greatness in Torah, faith, straightforward *yashrus*, and nobility in *midos* — a portrait of *sheleimus*. He was a son in law of Rav Nochum Zev Ziv, scion of the glory of Kelm. When Rav Simcha Zissel Broide, zt'l, the Chevron Rosh Yeshivah, shared memories of Rav Movshovitz, he sighed, "His face shined bright... There was a unique kind of clarity and exalted feeling in his discourses that lifted us up and transported listeners to a different world."

Rav Elchonon Wasserman HY"D always made a point of spending the *Yomim Noraim* in Kelm, leaving his own yeshivah to daven in what he felt to be the headquarters of *tefillah* in all of Europe. Beyond the exalted *tefillah* and the intensive, high level study of Torah, one emphasis of the particular *derech avodah* of Kelm was being *nosei be'ol im chavero*, "sharing the burden and suffering of a fellow Jew".

Rav Movshovitz was *fahrrering* a potential *talmid* interested in joining the Talmud Torah in Kelm, testing his abilities in learning, asked the young man which *midah* or character trait he sought to develop and refine. "I am striving to become someone who is *nosei be'ol im chavero*." Rav Movshovitz smiled, responding with a humble smile, "You are way ahead of me... I envy you! I'm still trying to make myself aware that there is a "*chavero*", someone other than myself with a burden that I must share!"



Rav Efraim Oshry, zy'a, the heroic *poseik* and leader who chronicled annihilation of Lithuanian Jewry, was a master of *mesirus nefesh* and devotion to Torah in the worst of times. In his book of responsa, *Mima'amakim*, concludes his essay on the

destruction of Kelm with the lament, "Kelm, Kelm! Where is the poet that can portray the beauty of your life? Who is qualified to sing the song of the purity of your death?"

In June 1941, Nazi forces entered Kelm and together with their willing collaborators, decimated the city. Rav Movshovitz was martyred with his family, students and community, and buried in a mass grave in the fields of the Grozhebiski farm. Rav Movshovitz's esteemed brother in law, Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler shares a heart wrenching account and reflection on "The Martyrdom of the Kelm Yeshivah" in *Sefer Michtav Me'Eliyahu*:

HaKadosh Baruch Hu had a corner in His world...where people went about life unobtrusively together with Hashem; a small town called Kelm...a holy and awe-inspiring place, whose each and every corner radiated with the splendor of the light of truth. Those who knew, always said, "This holy house will stand forever, until the Redeemer arrives"...but this did not happen. Once the fearsome decree of destruction had been made, it did not endure... Even the *Beis haMikdash* itself didn't continue standing, so how could a *mikdash* in the Diaspora remain intact?

Yet, the destruction of this house was unlike the destruction of all the rest. Not all demises are the same... The deaths of men of truth are different. The whole idea of destruction has no relevance to them. Their outer covering falls away but their inner content continues to live and endure, since it is "a portion of Hashem above." The very outermost layer...drops away, but whatever was imbued with holiness, ascends Heavenward; it is no longer a raiment because there is holiness in it. It was and it remains holy and eternal.



Years before the outbreak of the war, Rav Movshovitz composed a letter sharing words of *tanchumin*, consolation, to his brother-in-law Rav Dessler upon the passing of his father, Rav Reuven Dov, zt"l:

Perhaps we can explain the (traditional words of consolation used in *nichum aveilim* בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים "among the mourners of Tziyon and Yerushalayim", according to the words of Tehillim: שיר המעלות בשׁוֹב ה' אֵת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הֵינּוּ כְּחֹלְמִים "A Song of Ascents: When Hashem returns the captives of Zion, we will be like dreamers...") This means that the *yeshuah*, salvation and *nechamah* should be so great that there will be no more memory of the troubles; they will be like a bad dream, a fleeting nightmare.

And moreso: it will be revealed that the troubles themselves were an essential reason for the *salvation*. As we say in *the Amidah*, מֶלֶךְ מְחַיֶּה מֵתִים וּמְצַמֵּחַ יְשׁוּעָה, the King who brings death and restores life, and causes salvation to spring forth." Hashem is the One Who both brings death and restores life, so that the *yeshuah* can spring forth from within the pain and suffering itself. This means that the comfort of *Tziyon* and Yerushalayim...is that there will be a true and complete *nechamah* for all who are brokenhearted, because all will be redeemed; all loss will be restored, and everything will be returned to a state of wholeness..."



"Nachamu, nachamu *ami*..." Being among *ami*, our people, and knowing that we are not alone, is the deepest consolation. May we be among those who let others know that they are not alone, and may we lift and carry one another's burdens...and set them down before the One Who restores life.

Shemirat Shabbat

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

“**S**hamor vezachor b'dibur echad”. These two expressions said in one breath, direct us to experience the holiness of Shabbat in the most exalted way. *Shamor* relates to the positive *mitzvot* associated with keeping Shabbat, *zachor* relates to the negative ones.

From a *halachic* perspective the interconnectedness of the two is what obligates women in the positive *mitzvot* of Shabbat, albeit they are time-bound. Hence, women are obligated in *kiddush*, eating *lechem mishneh* and three *seudot* on Shabbat.

Shamor is guarding Shabbat; ensuring that one does not transgress any laws specific to Shabbat entails tremendous effort.

The Chafetz Chayim in his introduction to the laws of Shabbat states emphatically that one who does not learn the laws of Shabbat will inadvertently come to transgress multiple laws each week. To strengthen Shemirat Shabbat many

people have a custom to learn at least two Shabbat laws at each Shabbat meal; this creates a sensitivity to and awareness of the complexity and intricacies of *Hilchot Shabbat*.

The Netivot Shalom likens Shabbat to the experience of entering a king's palace. When a person is in his own home, he has the right to touch, look and move things around without a second thought. However, when one is in someone else's home, he must respect the implicit boundaries and rules of that home. If the rule of the home is to take off one's shoes upon entering so as not to dirty the carpet, one must follow suit. If a person were to spend Shabbat in the home of a great person, she would obviously be careful to display the proper behavior and speech throughout Shabbat as well. On Shabbat, it is as if we enter the Kingdom of Hashem. Our demeanor, speech and conduct must reflect this special reality. *Shamor* therefore, is not seen as limiting

us as what we cannot do, rather it gives us the parameters of what is acceptable in such a holy environment.

Rav Matitayhu Salamon in *Matnat Chayim* notes that *shamor* is related to the idea of anticipation, as in “*veaviv shamar et hadavar*” (*Bereishit* 37;11). One should feel a sense of anticipation and excitement for Shabbat the entire week, in particular on Friday. This translates into the special preparation that we do as we shop, cook and preparing the house. It also entails introspection and setting the proper attitude to appreciate the magnitude that the gift of Shabbat presents us. Indeed, we begin *Kiddush* on Friday night with the words “*Yom hashishi*”; Shabbat takes on its fullness only with our preparation on “*yom hashishi*”. To the extent we anticipate and desire, we can appreciate and experience.

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Matchmaker needed!



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

This week, in the midst of the nine days, I was invited to speak at a conference of matchmakers and wedding consultants. I thought to myself, as many girls say to me, and I understand them so well when they say, "I do not want a matchmaker! I want it to be natural! Meet, talk, fall in love and get married!". The matchmaker will always be perceived as someone interfering, artificial – sometimes too educational and too critical. At Tu Be'Av, there was no matchmaker. The girls dressed each other in their finest clothing, went to the vineyards and made their match on their own. They said, "Young man, lift up your eyes" – they knew how to highlight their strengths and make themselves noticed... How can that be done?

These girls seemingly knew that there was a matchmaker in Heaven and since the day He created the world, His "job" was to "make shidduchim". They knew that as long as they were accompanied by a wise man or woman who had made many matches before, it would be a match made in heaven...

Rabbi Kurtz, who had the honor of match-making hundreds of couples (!), told a story at the conference that one particular

man on his "list" wanted someone with a good heart, Hassidic...and with a light complexion (I was embarrassed and wrote anyway). A wonderful candidate came to Rabbi Kurtz, who in his eyes was a very good match for the man, but she certainly didn't have a light complexion. Rabbi Kurtz decided to call the man anyways and tell him that he had found a wonderful match for him. When he mentioned the girl's name, the man could not believe his ears. He told him that he had gone out with her once before but that she didn't agree to continue with him. He had several people ask her again but she still refused. However, he really wanted to go out with her and she eventually agreed. They are now happily married.

Without Rabbi Kurtz, this union probably would not have happened, but if the rabbi had not known that the union would happen without him, it would not have been possible even then.

A matchmaker is essential if they are humble in the matchmaking world. They will be a source of encouragement, support and prayer for the success of the endeavor. Who will give her the courage to go out and even the desire to look

Heavenward towards will be the great matchmaker, G-d Almighty.

This week, when the big demonstrations had died down and the tents in Sacher Park had closed, I felt an urgent need for a Shadchan. A person who is willing to say: I take responsibility, and I am aware of the limits of my power. I will gather information and will try to bring you together, but then I will say a big prayer to He who brings matches together to make this meeting possible.

In Sacher Park every evening this week, demonstrators and their children sat in large circles doing activities. On one of the evenings I saw them teaching the children the song, "More peace will come to us, more peace will come to us and to all. Peace be with them".... I thought how they understand that they alone will not bring peace, it will come eventually on its own. "And it'll come, like a line engraved in the palm of your hand. It'll come, self-assured as if it had always been there, waiting for us to notice." (Waiting, by the Israel singer, Rita). He is always there, the great matchmaker, waiting for us to lift our eyes to grace and beauty, to family, and above all, to heaven.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin

balashon.com

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וְקָשְׂתֶםם לְאוֹת עַל־יָדְךָ וְהָיָה לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ:
“Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as an emblem [totafot] between your eyes” (Devarim 6:8)

Modern scholars have two primary theories as to the etymology of טֹטְפֹת. Both note that the singular, טֹטְפָה, appears in the Mishna (Shabbat 6:1) as an ornament that women wear.

One theory says that the word refers to a type of hanging pendant, and derives from the root נָטַף, “to drop.” The head tefillin is of a similar design, hanging down.

The other theory says the ornament would be better translated as “headband,” and טֹטְפָה is cognate with the Arabic *tafa*, “to go around, encircle.” This would also apply to the head tefillin.

Those are both plausible explanations. However, let’s look at a much earlier etymology. Perhaps the first origin for טֹטְפֹת is offered

by Rabbi Akiva in Sanhedrin 4b. The Talmud there is discussing the source of the law that the head tefillin have four compartments. Rabbi Akiva states:

טַט בְּכַתְפֵי שְׁתֵּי פָת בְּאַפְרִיקַי שְׁתֵּי

“The word *tat* in the language of the Katfei means two, and the word *pat* in the language of Afriki also means two (and therefore it should be understood as a compound word meaning ‘four’.)”

“Katfei” is the Ancient Egyptian language Coptic, which has a word similar to *tat* meaning “two.” “Afriki” is likely Phrygian – a language spoken in Anatolia (in modern Turkey) and related to Ancient Greek. This language has a word like *pat*, also meaning two (cognate with the English “both.”)

This is a surprising etymology. Many of us were taught that Hebrew is the primeval language, and as the language of the Torah, perhaps even predates the world. So how could a word in the Torah, especially one

connected with such an important mitzva as tefillin, be of foreign origin?

We can’t fully know Rabbi Akiva’s reasoning. Perhaps he really felt that טֹטְפָה is a foreign word in the Torah and that it was somehow a compound of both languages, like how we have English words which are a compound of Greek and Latin. Maybe he thought the word was Hebrew, but its components had cognates in those languages. Or perhaps he didn’t mean that טֹטְפָה was actually of foreign origin but was just using those words as a mnemonic device to remember that the head tefillin has four sections. But even if this last option is true, he certainly wasn’t concerned about the impression that such a statement might make.

As we’ve noted, modern scholars do give טֹטְפָה a Hebrew (or at least Semitic) origin. But we do have other words in the Torah which do suggest more remote etymologies. Rabbi Akiva’s statement can give us the confidence to not reject them out of hand.

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh

Mizrachi Melbourne

Two words appearing together share three common letters in exactly the same order. They are of different lengths and have different meanings. What are the two words?

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

There are several answers to the riddle as given, as for example in (4:6) וּבְרִבְעָתָם אֲשֶׁר יוֹצֵא לָהֶם מִן הַבַּיִת וְהָיָה לָהֶם לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֵיהֶם. A more specific question would have been to find two words appearing together share three common letters in exactly the same order, the first comprising 3 letters, the second comprising 4. For this, the answer appears in (5:28) “עַל־יָדְךָ” – “Stand with Me”. Hashem instructs Moshe to stay with Him after allowing the Beni Yisrael to go back to their tents and family life after the giving of the Torah. The Baal HaTuvim (5:28) notes that it is from these words that we learn that Hashem gave Moshe the unique role of being committed to Him even at the cost of separating from Tziporah his wife. He adds that the word “עַל־יָדְךָ” ending with the letter “ך” alludes to Hashem saying “For your sake I have descended 10 levels, and have given you the 10 commandments”.

DUST AND STARS THIS WEEK in Jewish History

- July 29, 1898:** Birthday of Isidor Rabi, Nobel Prize winner for Physics in 1944 for advancing our knowledge of the nature of atomic structure.
- July 30, 1992:** Yael Arad became the first Israeli to win an Olympic medal, taking the silver in judo in Barcelona.
- July 31, 1941:** Hermann Goering ordered Reinhard Heydrich to launch “the final solution of the Jewish question in the European territories under German influence.”
- Aug. 1, 1914:** August Von Wasserman instituted the Wasserman test, the most advanced diagnostic tool of its day against syphilis.
- Av 15, 2487 (1274 BCE):** After 38 years of wandering, the last of the Exodus Jews died in the desert and a new generation stood ready to enter the Holy Land.
- Aug. 3, 2001:** Gavriel Iddan, an Israeli engineer, received FDA approval for a disposable pill-sized camera that passes through the digestive tract continuously broadcasting to an external receiver.
- Aug. 4, 1840:** Birthday of Zvi Schapira, mathematician and Zionist leader, who proposed the ideas for Hebrew University in Israel, and the Jewish National Fund.

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