

שבת פרשת ואתחנן
 שבת נחמו

**SHABBAT NACHAMU
 PARSHAT VAETCHANAN
 16 AV**

Haftorah is Isaiah 40:1-26 (first of seven Haftorot of Consolation - שבוע דנחמתא - preceding Rosh HaShanah). Pirkei Avot Chapter 3.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA 7:00 PM

TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM 8:39 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA 8:15 AM

MAIN 9:00 AM

LAST KRIAT SHEMA 9:34 AM

GEMARA SHIUR 6:35 PM

MINCHA 7:20 PM

MAARIV 8:37 PM

HAPPENINGS & EVENTS



Kiddush is sponsored by Sara & Kenny Levine in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of their son Judah. A special welcome to Grandma Naomi, Safta Doris and their extended family that are joining us from Israel, West Hempstead and Teaneck. Mazel tov to all their family and friends!



Welcome to our newest members, Aliza & Rich Mayer, and their daughters Perri and Sophie!



A family fun day of apple picking, petting zoo & hayride

Sunday, September 15 @ 10:30 AM

Demarest Farms

244 Wierimus Rd, Hillsdale, NJ

Meet at the farm playground (make a right once you enter)



Please e-mail Jordana Cohen to RSVP or with any questions at bickel.jordana@gmail.com



Congregation Ahavat Achim's Sisterhood Membership Renewal & Rosh Hashana Scroll

- Yes, please enroll me as a Sisterhood member.
 - Yes, please include me/us on the Rosh Hashana Scroll.
- Please PRINT my/our name(s) as follows:

- Scroll @ \$10 per family _____
 - Sisterhood dues for 5780 are \$36 _____
 (Dues increase to \$45 after December 31st)
- Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Please return this form and your check to:

Beth Wechsler
 378 Owen Ave.
 Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
beth.berman@aya.yale.edu
 (201) 794-0044

Please make your check payable to SISTERHOOD OF AHAVAT ACHIM. Kindly respond by September 8th. Thank you for your participation.

	SUNDAY 8/18	MONDAY 8/19	TUESDAY 8/20	WEDNESDAY 8/21	THURSDAY 8/22	FRIDAY 8/23
WEEKDAY MINYONIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM						
SHACHARIT	8:15 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	7:30 PM	7:30 PM	7:30 PM	7:30 PM	7:30 PM	7:00 PM
ZMANIM OF INTEREST						
Earliest Tefillin	5:10 AM	5:11 AM	5:12 AM	5:13 AM	5:15 AM	5:16 AM
Shkia	7:51 PM	7:49 PM	7:48 PM	7:47 PM	7:45 PM	
Tzait Hakochovim	8:36 PM	8:34 PM	8:33 PM	8:32 PM	8:30 PM	

FUTURE EVENTS

Aug. 24 - Sponsored Kiddush

Aug. 24 - Siyum Mesechet Temurah at Seudah Shlishit

Sept. 1 - Softball game, 11:30 AM, at Edison field

Sept. 7 - Andy Freund's Aufruf

Sept. 14 - Aspiring Member Shabbaton

Sept. 14 - Perek on the Lawn, email Larry at lardavbern@gmail.com to host.

Sept. 15 - Apple Picking

Sept. 28 - Seudat Shilshit is sponsored by the Agress family on the Yahrzeit of Amy's father Ha'Rav Yisroel Yehuda Ben Ephraim Michal Ha'Levi Pruzansky^{ב"ר}.

Oct. 12 - Youth Taking Over, Sharsheret Pink Seudah Shlishit, sponsored by Kira & Andrew Wigod

Oct. 15 - Kiddush is sponsored by the Winchester family on the Yahrzeit of Steve's mother, Helen Winchester, Miriam Hendl bas Shimon^{ב"ר}

Nov. 10 - Coat Drive

Nov. 16 - David Kor's Aufruf

Dec. 7 - Yehuda Farajun Bar Mitzvah

Feb. 1 - Brett Spier Aufruf

Feb. 8 - Eden Riskin Bat Mitzvah

Feb. 22 - Yachad Shabbaton

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Sept. 8 - Paint Night by Paint By Me.

Paint solo, or together as a couple.

DARCHEI NOAM. Early bird pricing (by 8/18): \$35/pp or \$30/pp for two+. After \$45/pp or \$40/ppm, respectively. BYOB, dessert & refreshments will be served. RSVP by Sept. 1 at <https://dno.am/paintnight>.

POINTS TO PONDER

(1st) Whenever we take out the Torah we make the odd declarative statement, V'atem Hadveikim BaHashem Elokeichem, Chayim Kulchem Hayom - You who cleave to Hashem are all alive today (v.4); what is the meaning of this well known in context?

(2nd) Based on this aliyah, what is written on the luchot, the 2 tablets?

(4th) Why does Moshe say he stood between the Jewish people and Hashem?

(6th) This aliyah is made up of 4 distinct paragraphs (the first of which is the first paragraph of Shema) but each of the paragraphs are fundamental to Jewish theology and Jewish thought. What are the topics of each of the 4 paragraphs?

Answers to Points To Ponder

(1st) Those who followed Ba'al Peor were killed in plague (v.3)

(2nd) The covenant of "Ten Things/Statements" that Hashem said to the Jewish people at Sinai (v.13).

(4th) Because the Jewish people were afraid of the fire on the mountain (v.5)

(6th) Love Hashem, Jewish exceptionalism, Commanded-ness Orientation, Heritage

GITA COOPERWASSER^{ה"ע}

YOUTH PROGRAM

- Youth groups on summer hiatus. See you in the fall!
- Tot Shabbat, 10:40 AM!
- Email ideas/suggestions to kira.batist.msw@gmail.com.
- Oct. 12 - Parent/Child Learning, studying Kohelet.



STAY & PLAY

- Next date is Sept. 14, 4:15 PM, at the Borsuk home (82 Garwood Rd.).



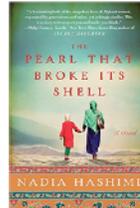
PIRKEI AVOT TEEN

LEARNING

- Teens Pirkei Avot Shiur at 10:40 AM.
- For info email Ben at benjamin.greenbaum@frisch.org.

SISTERHOOD BOOK CLUB

- The Pearl that Broke Its Shell, by Nadia Hashimi, will be discussed on Sept. 7, 4:30 PM, at the Winchester home, 19-18 Angelo Terrace.



KIDDUSH INFORMATION



- To sponsor a Kiddush (\$1000/\$613/\$318, plus scotch) email gplotnick@aol.com.
- If you are around when the Rabbi says "על המזון", your assistance in clean up would be appreciated.

ADULT EDUCATION



- GEMARA SHIUR - Shabbat, 45 minutes before Mincha, learning Beitza.
- DAYTIME TORAH VOYAGES - Hiatus.
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT - Hiatus.
- PEREK ON THE LAWN, Pirkei Avot Periodic Shiur.
- BEGINNER TALMUD CLASS - Mondays at 8:30 PM.

18-25 Saddle River Road
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410

201.797.0502

www.ahavatachim.org

To dedicate a bulletin for \$36 (\$54 w/ Photo), email gplotnick@gmail.com



COVENANT & CONVERSATION

THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA
FROM RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

בס"ד



I am deeply touched that Covenant & Conversation has been generously sponsored by THE MAURICE WOHL CHARITABLE FOUNDATION in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl ז"ל. Maurice was a visionary philanthropist on a vast scale, driven throughout his life by a sense of Jewish responsibility. Vivienne was a woman of the deepest humanity and compassion, who had a kind word for everyone. Together, they were a unique partnership of dedication and grace, for whom living was giving. Through their Charitable Foundation, they continue to bring blessings to Jewish communities around the world. — RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

ואתחנן תשע"ט
Va'etchanan 5779

COVENANT & CONVERSATION: FAMILY EDITION

Covenant & Conversation: Family Edition is a new and exciting accompaniment to Rabbi Sacks' weekly *Covenant & Conversation* essay, aimed at connecting older children and teenagers with his ideas and thoughts on the *parsha*. To download the accompanying Family Edition to this *Covenant & Conversation* essay, please visit www.RabbiSacks.org/CCFamilyEdition or subscribe to Rabbi Sacks' free mailing list via www.RabbiSacks.org/Subscribe.

Why is the Jewish People So Small?

Near the end of Va'etchanan is a statement with such far-reaching implications that it challenges the impression that has prevailed thus far in the Torah. This remark gives an entirely new complexion to the biblical image of the people Israel: "The Lord did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you are the fewest of all peoples" (Deut. 7:7).

This is not what we have heard thus far. In Genesis, God promised the patriarchs that their descendants would be like the stars of the heaven, the sand on the seashore, the dust of the earth, uncountable. Abraham will be the father, not just of one nation but of many. At the beginning of Exodus we read of how the covenantal family, numbering a mere seventy when they went down to Egypt, were "fertile and prolific, and their population increased. They became so numerous that the land was filled with them" (Ex. 1:7). Three times in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses describes the Israelites as being "as many as the stars of the sky" (1:10; 10:22; 28:62). King Solomon speaks of himself as being part of "the people You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number" (I Kings 3:8). The prophet Hosea says that "the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted" (Hos. 2:1).

In all these texts and others it is the size, the numerical greatness, of the people that is emphasised. What then are we to make of Moses' words that speak of its smallness? Targum Yonatan interprets it not to be about numbers at all but about self-image. He translates it not as "the fewest of all peoples" but as "the most lowly and humble of peoples." Rashi gives a similar reading, citing Abraham's words, "I am but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27), and Moses and Aaron's, "Who are we?" (Ex. 16:7).

Rashbam and Chizkuni¹ give the more straightforward explanation that Moses is contrasting the Israelites with the seven nations they would be fighting in the land of Canaan/Israel. God would lead the Israelites to victory despite the fact that they were outnumbered by the local inhabitants. Rabbeinu Bachya² quotes Maimonides, who says that we would have expected God, King of the universe, to have chosen the most numerous nation in the world as His people, since “the glory of the King is in the multitude of people” (Prov. 14:28). God did not do so. Thus Israel should count itself extraordinarily blessed that God chose it, despite its smallness, to be His *am segula*, His special treasure.

Rabbeinu Bachya finds himself forced to give a more complex reading to resolve the contradiction of Moses, in Deuteronomy, saying both that Israel is the smallest of peoples and “as many as the stars of the sky” (Gen. 22:17). He turns it into a hypothetical subjunctive, meaning: *God would still have chosen you, even if you had been the smallest of the peoples.*

Sforno³ gives a simple and straightforward reading: God did not choose a nation for the sake of His honour. Had He done so He would undoubtedly have chosen a mighty and numerous people. His choice had nothing to do with honour and everything to do with love. He loved the patriarchs for their willingness to heed His voice; therefore He loves their children.

Yet there is something in this verse that resonates throughout much of Jewish history. Historically Jews were and are a small people – today, less than 0.2 per cent of the population of the world. There were two reasons for this. First is the heavy toll taken through the ages by exile and persecution, directly by Jews killed in massacres and pogroms, indirectly by those who converted – in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Spain and nineteenth-century Europe – in order to avoid persecution (tragically, even conversion did not work; racial antisemitism persisted in both cases). The Jewish population is a mere fraction of what it might have been had there been no Hadrian, no Crusades, and no antisemitism.

“Historically Jews were and are a small people...”

The second reason is that Jews did not seek to convert others. Had they done so they would have been closer in numbers to Christianity (2.4 billion) or Islam (1.6 billion). In fact, Malbim⁴ reads something like this into our verse. The previous verses have said that the Israelites were about to enter a land with seven nations, Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. Moses warns them against intermarriage with the other nations, not for racial but for religious reasons: “They will turn your children away from following Me to serve other gods” (Deut. 7:4). Malbim interprets our verse as Moses saying to the Israelites: Do not

¹ Rabbi Chezekiah ben Manoah; France, 1250-1310

² Bachya ben Asher ibn Halava, Spain, 1255-1340

³ Ovadiah ben Yacov Sforno, Italy, 1475-1550

⁴ Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser, Ukraine, 1809-1879

justify out-marriage on the grounds that it will increase the number of Jews. God is not interested in numbers.

Notwithstanding all these interpretations and explanations, Tanach itself offers one extraordinary episode that sheds a different light on the whole issue. It occurs in the seventh chapter of the book of Judges. God has told Gideon to assemble an army and do battle with the Midianites. He gathers a force of 32,000 men. God tells him, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against Me, ‘My own strength has saved me’” (Judges 7:2).

God tells Gideon to say to the men: Whoever is afraid and wishes to go home may do so. Twenty-two thousand men leave. Ten thousand remain. God tells Gideon, “There are still too many men.” He proposes a new test. Gideon is to take the men to a river and see how they drink the water. Ninety-seven hundred kneel down to drink, and are dismissed. Gideon is left with a mere three hundred men. “With the three hundred men that lapped [the water] I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands,” God tells him (Judges 7:1–8). By a brilliant and unexpected strategy, the three hundred put the entire Midianite army to flight.

The Jewish people are small but have achieved great things to testify in themselves to a force beyond themselves. It has achieved things no other nation its size could have achieved. Its history has been living testimony to the force of Divine Providence and the impact of high ideals. That is what Moses meant when he said: Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God 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 God 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 testings, by 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 God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? (Deut. 4:32–34)

Israel defies the laws of history because it serves the Author of history. Attached to greatness, it becomes great. Through the Jewish people, God is telling humankind that you do not need to be numerous to be great. Nations are judged not by their size but by their contribution to human heritage. Of this the most compelling proof is that a nation as small as the Jews could produce an ever-renewed flow of prophets, priests, poets, philosophers, sages, saints, halachists, aggadists, codifiers, commentators, rebbes, and *rashei yeshivot*. It has also yielded some of the world’s greatest writers, artists, musicians, filmmakers, academics, intellectuals, doctors, lawyers, businesspeople, and technological innovators. Out of all proportion to their numbers, Jews could and can be found working as lawyers fighting injustice, economists fighting poverty, doctors fighting disease, teachers fighting ignorance, and therapists fighting depression and despair.

“Nations are judged not by their size but by their contribution to human heritage.”

You do not need numbers to enlarge the spiritual and moral horizons of humankind. You need other things altogether: a sense of the worth and dignity of the individual, of the power of human possibility to transform the world, of the importance of giving everyone the best education they can have, of making each feel part of a collective responsibility to ameliorate the human condition. Judaism asks of us the willingness to take high ideals and enact them in the real world, unswayed by disappointments and defeats.

This is still evident today, especially among the people of Israel in the State of Israel. Traduced in the media and pilloried by much of the world, Israel continues to produce human miracles in medicine, agriculture, technology, and the arts, as if the word “impossible” did not exist in the Hebrew language. Israel remains a small nation, surrounded, as in biblical times, by “nations larger and stronger than you” (Deut. 7:1). Yet the truth remains, as Moses said: “The Lord did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you are the fewest of all peoples.”

This small people has outlived all the world’s great empires to deliver to humanity a message of hope: you need not be large to be great. What you need is to be open to a power greater than yourself. It is said that King Louis XIV of France once asked Blaise Pascal, the brilliant mathematician and theologian, to give him proof of the existence of God. Pascal is said to have replied, “Your Majesty, the Jews!”

**“You need not be large to be great.
What you need is to be open to a
power greater than yourself.”**

Shabbat Shalom

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