

Good Shabbos, everyone.

- Etta Friedman and family in memory of her beloved husband, Norman Friedman, and her beloved parents, Kate and Morris Nechamkin.
- Eva Katznelson, in memory of her husband, Judah Katznelson, in commemoration of his 15th *yahrtzeit*, 23 Sivan.
- Paula and Fred Minsk, in memory of Paula's aunt, Pesel Katz, Pesel bas Yehoshua; in memory of Paula's uncles, Chaim Hersh Katz, Chaim Hersh ben Yehoshua, and Avraham Katz, Avraham ben Yehoshua, 7 Sivan; in memory of Fred's father, Bennie Minsk, Boruch ben Shmuel Yehudah, 16 Sivan; and in memory of Fred's grandmother, Fanny Shartar, Shifra bas Chaim, 20 Sivan.
- Chaim and Eleanor Leventhal, in commemoration of the second *yahrzeit*, 14 Sivan, of Chaim's mother, Yitta Leventhal, Yitta bas Binyomin.

May all the *neshamos* have an *aliyah* and may the sponsors be rewarded for their generous support of the shul with *bracha*, *hatzlacha*, and good health.

The recent spike in anti-Semitic attacks—which are allegedly a reaction to Israel's precise and calculated response—in Gaza, to defend itself and its citizens from the terrorist attacks of Hamas reminds us that the irrational and senseless hatred of the Jewish people is unfortunately alive and well. Why are we hated? Anti-Semitism has existed too long and in too many disparate cultures to allow a claim that each culture hated the Jews because of some distinct factor disconnected from being Jewish. To believe that the hatred of the Jewish people is just another form of racial or religious bigotry, ethnic hatred, lack of tolerance, xenophobia, resentment of affluence and success, is to turn a blind eye to the core cause of this unique loathing, which has existed for thousands of years. Various factors may exacerbate anti-Semitism and cause it to erupt at a given time, but these factors do not explain the origin and genesis of this hatred. The recent eruption of anti-Semitism throughout Europe and the United States is a reminder of the ancient statement *הלכה היא בידוע שעשו שונא את יעקב*, there is a “law” that Esav hates Yaakov. Why is it called a *halacha*, a “law”? **Rav Moshe Feinstein**, in a *teshuva* (*Igros Moshe Choshen Mishpat II: 77*) to the Jewish community in England, wrote the following:

וכבר אמרתי על הלשון שהביא רש"י בפ"י החומש פ' וישלח (ל"ג, ד') על קרא דוישקהו ארשב"י הלכה היא בידוע שעשו שונא ליעקב דמה שייך זה להלכה, דהוא כמו שהלכה לא משתנית כך שנאת עשו ליעקב לא משתנית דאף אלו שנוהגות באופן טוב שנאתן גדולה בעצמם שלכן ח"ו להתגרות בהם ולגרום איבה

*Why is the word halakha relevant here? It is because just as halakha never changes, so also Esau's hatred of Jacob never changes. Even in those [nations] that behave well [toward Jews], their hatred [of Jews] is actually strong.*

This reality is quite disconcerting, but also encouraging, as we know the “end of the story.” Because if anti-Semitism is rooted in the Torah's account of Esav's hatred of Yaakov, then our solution is found in that story, as well. Yaakov knew that the secret of his survival, together with his diplomacy, training for war, and his fervent prayers, was in his commitment to Hashem and Mitzva observance. Hence, he sends a message to Esav that he had lived with Lavan. **Rashi** says the word *גרתי* rearranged spells *תרי"ג*— hinting to the fact that he had observed the 613 Mitzvos.

בראשית פרק לב פסוק ה: ויצו אתם לאמר כה תאמרו לאדוני לעשו כה אמר עבדך יעקב עם לבן ואתר עד עתה:

The **Chasam Sofer** writes that Yaakov did not perform all 613 Mitzvos...the word *שמרתי* in Tanach means to wait, and Yaakov was saying that he was committed, ready, and willing to follow Hashem's will in any way He commanded.

תורת משה בראשית פרק לב פסוק ה עם לבן גרתי. פרש"י ותרי"ג מצות שמרתי. נראה דבדיוק אמר תרי"ג מצות שמרתי, שאם אמנם קיים הכל, לכל הפחות מצות כיבוד אב ואם לא הי' מקיים, מ"מ הי' עומד ומצפה מתי תבוא לידי ואוכל לקיימו, שמרתי דוגמת ואביו שמר את הדבר. . . ומאז נכספה נפשו לבית אבותיו וחישב לעשות מצוה ונאנס בידו ולא עשאה מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו עשאה (ברכות ו' ע"א).

The secret of Yaakov's survival was his attitude towards Hashem and His Mitzvos—looking for opportunities and observing whatever came his way. He was always ready and waiting to do what Hashem expected of him. He did not do only what he had to do, but he waited longingly for

opportunities. This is something we read about this morning in the story of the origin of Pesach Sheni. The 14<sup>th</sup> of Iyar is designated as a makeup day to bring the Korban Pesach, for those unable to bring it in Nissan, through no fault of their own. Although Pesach Sheni has its roots in the Torah, we tend to think of it as a relatively minor holiday, hardly as a Yom Tov at all, and certainly insignificant relative to the Shalosh Regalim and Yamim Noraim.

Yet the **Medrash** teaches that it has great significance. The Medrash on Esther writes that, when Haman wanted to destroy the Jewish people, he looked for a month without any special significance. He went through every month and found special merits for the Jews in every one of them. In Nissan was Pesach, in Iyar was Pesach Sheni, in Sivan was Mattan Torah and Shavuos, in Elul was Rosh Hashana, etc. Haman went through the calendar--month by month--until he finally came to Adar and all he found was that Moshe Rabbeinu had died in that month, and therefore, he chose that month to destroy the Jews.

אוצר מדרשים (אייזנשטיין) אסתר

והסתכל בחדשים ומצא בניסן חג המצות ובאייר פסח שני ובסיון מתן תורה ובתמוז מצא יהושע וכלב שהליצו טוב על ישראל ולולי זכותם נאבדו בעצת מרגלים, באב ראה שמתענין בו ישראל, באלול בו ראש השנה, בתשרי בו המועדים וצום כפור, במרחשון התחילו ישראל לעשות המשכן, בכסליו וטבת עלו ישראל מבבל לירושלם ברשיון כורש מלך פרס לבנות בית שני, בשבט היו כורתים עצים לבית י"י לקרבנות ולעולות, באדר לא מצא בו שום תועלת כי בו נפטר משה רבינו ע"ה, ולא ידע הרשע כי בו נולד משה

What is puzzling about this Medrash is that the relatively minor holiday of Pesach Sheni is listed along with the major holidays of Pesach, Shavuos, and Rosh Hashana! Why is this “Yom Tov” of Pesach Sheni so significant? Beyond our not saying *tachanun* and the *minhag* to eat *matza*, its significance has almost faded completely in our reality.

But, let us go back to the original story we read this morning...the origin of this special day.

(ו) ויהי אנשים אשר היו טמאים לגפש אדם ולא יוכלו לעשות הפסח ביום ההוא ויקרבו לפני משה ולפני אהרן ביום ההוא:  
(ז) ויאמרו האנשים ההמה אליו אנחנו טמאים לגפש אדם למה נגרע לבלתי הקריב את קרבן יקחן במעדו בתוך בני ישראל:  
(ח) ויאמר אל בני ישראל לאמר איש איש פיה יהיה טמא לגפש או בדרך החקה לכם או לדתיתכם ועשה פסח ליקחן:  
(יא) בחוד השני בארבעה עשר יום בין הערבים יעשו אתו על-מצות ומררים יאכלהו:

6. *But there were some men who were unclean by reason of a corpse and could not offer the Passover sacrifice on that day. Appearing that same day before Moses and Aaron,*  
7. *those men said to them, “Unclean though we are by reason of a corpse, why must we be debarred from presenting the Hashem’s offering at its set time with the rest of the Israelites?” \* \* \**  
10. *Speak to the Israelite people, saying: When any of you or of your posterity who are defiled by a corpse or are on a long journey would offer a Passover sacrifice to Hashem,*  
11. *they shall offer it in the second month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs,*

But this raises the question: There are all sorts of make-ups in Judaism. There are *tashlumin* for *tefilla*, for *havdalla*, for other *korbanos*! And while Pesach Sheni is significant to those who need a make-up day for the *korban Pesach*, why is this so important to the rest of us? Even more, the people who missed Pesach Rishon were not to blame. According to the Talmud, one who is prevented from doing a *Mitzva* due to no fault of their own, is credited with reward as if they did the *Mitzva*---so technically they did not even need to make it up!

תלמוד בבלי מסכת קידושין דף מ עמוד א: מחשבה טובה מצרפה למעשה, שנאמר: +מלאכי ג+ אז נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו ויקשב ה' וישמע ויכתב ספר זכרון לפניו ליראי ה' ולחושבי שמו, מאי ולחושבי שמו? אמר רב אסי: אפילו חשב אדם לעשות מצוה, ונאנס ולא עשאה, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו עשאה.

**I believe Pesach Sheni warrants its own holiday because it represents a fundamental religious attitude that is absolutely necessary for a life of Torah and *Mitzvos*...an important attitude that, at that time, was still emerging in the Jewish people.**

The significance of Pesach Sheni is evident in how they got there...the people **asked** for this make-up opportunity! They exclaimed למה נגרע why should we be deprived, or literally “diminished”---meaning

they saw *Mitzvos* not as burdens but as **opportunities**--something that makes us better; makes the world better and greater and more perfect...that without *mitzvos* they were smaller...and reduced.

And as the **Malbim** pointed out, they were so focused on being a part of this that they went to Moshe themselves—they did not send an impersonal text message or email, or a messenger.

מלבי"ם: ויאמרו האנשים ההמה אליו מ"ש האנשים ההמה מיותר. . . שהיה זה זכות מיוחד היה ע"י שהיו אנשים מיוחדים כשרים וחרדים על המצות וע"י שבאו לישאל בעצמם לא ע"י שליח שזה מצויין במלת ההמה ר"ל הם בעצתם. . . היה צריך שבעל המעשה עצמו ישאל וזכותם עמדה להם:

Furthermore, **Rav Moshe Feinstein** pointed out in *Darash Moshe* that, according to **Rashi**, in their original request—they asked only to be included in the groups that brought the Korban Pesach on time in Nissan, even if they could not do the actual *Mitzva* of eating the *korban*. He says it showed an unparalleled level of love of Hashem.

דרש משה עמ' קט"ז וצ"ל דבר חדש דאף שאין יוצאין מ"מ צד אהבת המצוות הוא שצריך להשתתף עכ"פ אף שלא יצא אם א"א לו לקיים ממש, וכעין הא שעשה משה שהפריש שלש ערים אף שלא קיים את המצוה...ומזה יש למילף לאד שקשה לו לקיים איזה מצוה המצד האהבה למצוה יראה לעסוק בה לכה"פ במה שאפשר...כגון שאסור לו לאכול כזית מרור יטעום מעט, וכן בכל מצוה...

They had come a long way from standing at Har Sinai---כפי עליהם הר כנגיית--being “forced” to accept the Torah.

It is this attitude that we celebrate as it needs to be present in our lives as Jews—an understanding that without Torah we are missing something, that without Torah we are incomplete and lacking...that Torah makes us bigger and greater...and makes us whole.

We see this idea in the beginning of Parshas Behaaloscha. **Rashi** cites a *Medrash Tanchuma*:

למה נסמכה פְּרִשְׁת הַמְּנוֹרָה לְפָרֶשֶׁת הַנְּשִׂיאִים? לְפִי שְׁכַשְׁרָאָה אֶהְרֹן חֲנֻכַּת הַנְּשִׂיאִים חֻלְּשָׁה אֲז דַּעְתּוֹ, שְׁלֹא הָיָה עִמָּהֶם בְּחֻנְפָּה לֹא הוּא וְלֹא שְׁבִטּוֹ, אָמַר לוֹ הַקָּב"ה חַיִּיךָ שְׁלֹף גְּדוּלָה מִשְׁלָלָהֶם, שְׁאַתָּה מְדַלֵּיק וּמְטִיב אֶת הַנְּרוֹת (ע"י תנחומא):

*Why is the section treating of the candelabrum put in juxtaposition with the section dealing with the offerings of the princes? Because when Aaron saw the dedication offerings of the princes, he felt distressed because neither he nor his tribe was with them in the dedication, whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, “By your life! Your part is of greater importance than theirs, for you will kindle and set in order the lamps.”*

Why did Aharon feel distressed because he had not brought dedication offerings? They were not mandatory. I believe the answer is that, like Pesach Sheni, Aharon did not want to miss out on any opportunity! He saw the sincere commitment of others and had *חלישות הדעת*, that he had missed out on an opportunity. It was not about what he had to do...it was about **what could he do...**

And this explains why, according to a Medrash cited in the **Ramban**, Aharon was rewarded not only with the *Menorah* of the Mishkan, but also with *neiros Chanuka*...

רמב"ן: וראיתי עוד בילמדנו (תנחומא בהעלותך ה) וכן במדרש רבה (טו ו), אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה, לך אמור לאהרן אל תתירא, לגדולה מזאת אתה מוכן, הקרבנות כל זמן שבית המקדש קיים הן נוהגין, אבל הנרות לעולם אל מול פני המנורה יאירו - וכל הברכות שנתתי לך לברך את בני אינן בטלין לעולם. והנה דבר ידוע שכשאינן בית המקדש קיים והקרבנות בטלין מפני חורבנו אף הנרות בטלות, אבל לא רמזו אלא לנרות חנכת חשמונאי שהיא נוהגת אף לאחר חורבן בגלותנו. וכן ברכת כהנים הסמוכה לחנכת הנשיאים נוהגת לעולם, דרשו סמוכין לחנכת הנשיאים מלפניה ומלאחריה בכבודו של אהרן שלא נמנה עמהם:

The Chanukah miracle of the candles were the result of this very attitude. The Chashmonaim were technically exempt from using pure olive oil to light the *Menorah*...but they went the extra mile...looking for pure olive oil...because they saw *Mitzvos* not as obligations, but as sacred opportunities..

**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** wrote in an article<sup>1</sup> about Pesach Sheni:

*And this, perhaps, is the essence of what Pesach Sheni is all about. It is no accident that this mitzvah comes about as a result of the query of a group of people who are technically exempt from the Paschal lamb. This desire to be a part of something bigger, this refusal to accept the given situation, is what creates this mitzvah in the first place.*

*Which is what Pesach is all about. The ultimate redemption from Egypt, and the entire Pesach story, begins with the Jewish people, after 200 years of exile in Egypt, finally crying out to G-d (Shemot 2:23), as a result of which they are given a second chance.*

***But before the Jews can be redeemed, they have to really want to be redeemed.***

*Nothing in this world exists without a will for it to exist. Everything we have built, and everything we receive from Hashem, all comes into being because someone somewhere wants it badly enough. If no one wanted something, it simply would not exist.*

*Thus anything that does not yet exist in the world is simply not wanted enough.*

*We do not yet have a third Beit HaMikdash simply because we don't want it enough. If the entire Jewish people (even the majority of the Jewish people) wanted something badly enough, no force on earth would stand in the way of Hashem's promise to fulfill such a desire. Indeed, this is the secret of the modern State of Israel.*

This was the attitude of those who requested another chance in Pesach Sheni---לָמָּה נִגְרַע ---why should we be deprived of an opportunity to keep Torah and *Mitzvos*? That is why this Yom Tov of Pesach Sheini is celebrated. All too frequently, don't we approach our religious obligations in a similar manner? Rather than appreciating and cherishing *Mitzvos*, do we approach them without enthusiasm? Or is the observance (the *minyan*, the *shiur*, the *chessed*) just something to check off our endless to-do lists? We feel that we have more than enough *Mitzvos* and may sometimes resent what they require of us. Many times we look for ways out—seeing *Mitzvos* as a burden. **We must look for opportunities. We must internalize the recognition that our observance of *Mitzvos* is not a gift we give to God. Instead, actually, the Torah is His gift to us.**

רבי חנניה בן עקשיא אומר רצה הקב"ה לזכות את ישראל הלכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות

God wanted to enhance **our** lives—and therefore gave us so many *Mitzvos*. We think that it is we who support the Torah; little does it occur to us that, to a far greater extent, the Torah supports—and sustains—us. We sometimes speak of the regimen of *Mitzvos* as a yoke—*ol malchus shamayim*. We must remember that the yoke is there to direct us to the greener pastures of the spirit during our long journey through life, to a life filled with meaning, with purpose, with transcendent values.

**Rabbi Sacks** ends his article as follows: *What do we, as a people, really want? Do we really want a Jewish state? Do we really want a place we can call home? We may pay lip service to an idea, but if we want it so much, we would fill the skies with El Al planes taking us home to the land of Israel.*

*We would do well to listen carefully to the lesson taught us so long ago by a group of individuals who may have technically been immersed in death (carrying the bones of Joseph), but who so desired to be a part of the living choice of the Pesach experience that they “forced” G-d's hand, as it were, to grant them a second chance at creating the Pesach experience, a month later.*

*It was this same group, over 3,000 years later, surrounded by the same death — the mounds of bodies in the liberated camps, and the barbed wire fences of the DP camps — who so desired to be a part of a living choice of the creation of a Jewish State, that they also “forced” G-d's hand, as it were, to grant them a second chance at creating a home for the Jewish people, after 2,000 years of exile.*

May we live our lives with this perspective and be *zoche* to see God bring about the end of the story of Yaakov and Esav, our destiny, with the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash*...*bimhera viyamenu*...*amen*.

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<sup>1</sup> Pesach Sheni: ‘Forcing’ G-d to meet our desires | *The Jewish Star* | [www.thejewishstar.com](http://www.thejewishstar.com)