

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Parshas Beha'aloscha 5774

Weekly Blog :: Rabbi Berel Wein *Great-Grandfatherhood*

After a very long and busy tour of the United States on behalf of Destiny Foundation I was finally scheduled to return to Israel and my beloved congregation. But my granddaughter in New York gave birth to a baby boy a few days before my scheduled departure to Israel. Faced with a difficult decision as to whether to stay for the brit or not, I thought to myself: "There are many rabbis around everywhere but I am the only great-grandfather around for the brit." So I decided to stay for the brit. In reflection it really was the only choice to have been made.

I come from a generation where my peers and I hardly knew grandparents, and nobody, to my memory, had a live great-grandparent. Here the Lord has blessed me many times over to witness and cuddle a fourth generation in our family. Being a great-grandfather is such a special blessing that the Torah makes note of it in reference to the fact that Yosef was privileged to witness great-grandchildren in his family. Great-grandparenthood grants one a glimpse into the unknown future but with it comes all of the doubts that one senses upon viewing the unknown.

The talents, traits and personality of the little infant are also in the realm of the unknown. But the great-grandfather is overjoyed at the brit and is somehow confident that all will yet be well for the baby and the whole family. How can one feel differently after witnessing all of the unbelievably positive events that occurred to one's family and to the Jewish people over the last sixty-five years?

The only obvious drawback to great-grandfatherhood is that one has to be blessed with advanced age to become a great-grandfather. In our time there are no thirty-five year old great-grandfathers. To a certain extent that fact cramps one's style regarding dealing with great-grandchildren. It is harder to roll on the floor with them, to play catch or ball with them, even to hear and understand what they are babbling to you. But no matter. Just being in their presence and knowing that they are the continuity of one's family is sufficient reward for all of the exertions - mental, physical and financial involved in being the elder of the family.

Ultimately in Judaism, it is this continuity of generations that define families, communities, ways of life and the Jewish people as a whole. The Torah always emphasizes the transmission of its message and value system from one generation to the next. There is no Judaism without Jews and the task of raising the next generation to be loyal and observant Jews is the supreme goal and achievement in Jewish life.

Dealing with a fourth generation in one's family only magnifies this awesome challenge. There are so many different factors - genetic, social, educational, etc. - present in this fourth generation that one cannot help but feel somewhat distanced from this challenge. Perhaps this is also one of the unspoken blessings of being a great-grandparent.

In reality, any exploration of great-grandparenthood is a visit into virgin territory, Jewishly speaking. There is very little mention of this status in life that appears in the Bible (Yosef excepted) or even the Oral Law of the Mishna and Talmud. Perhaps this is because there was much less longevity in those times compared to today.

Perhaps it is also because the actual influence in practical terms of great-grandparents on later generations is essentially minimal. After all, we are hard pressed to influence our own children let alone to be of influence on those two generations later. Yet the mere knowledge that children have that they are backed by generations that are vitally interested in their welfare and achievements is itself influential, even if it be in an indirect fashion.

No one wants to disappoint their elders if they can somehow avoid doing so. There are many instances in Jewish history when later generations, who would somehow feel justified to depart from the ways of their forbearers, were nevertheless sensitive enough to change their names to protect the reputations of previous generations.

It is difficult to be bound to the activities of later or even previous generations. But that is part of generational life. The Torah informs us that Avraham died five years prematurely so that he would not have to witness the evil behavior of his descendant, Eisav. So, family life even for the greatest amongst us is always a chancy affair. But I am delighted to have again become a great-grandfather.

Shabat shalom

Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel Wein *Behalotcha*

There is a moment of tension and crisis in the lives of all humans when one switches from dependence on others - parents, teachers, mentors, etc. - to self-reliance and independence. This transition is not usually accomplished easily or painlessly. And, truth be said, there are many who never accomplish this transition at all and remain in a stage of abject dependency all of their lives.

This moment of transition usually begins in one's adolescent years, with the tug of war between parents and authority figures on one hand and the young trying to find their own way of life and achievements. It is very difficult for parents and teachers to witness their children or students making mistakes that these authority figures could have prevented.

But making mistakes is an integral part of life's developmental process. I have always felt that one learns much more from one's mistakes than one does from one's apparent successes and triumphs. How to bear up under frustration and disappointment, how to be resilient in the face of failure and tragedy - this is the stuff of Jewish life and history. And all of this is the subtle message that we are taught at the beginning of this week's parsha.

Rashi explains to us that the priest that lit the lights of the great candelabra in the Tabernacle/Temple held the lit taper to the wick of the lamp "until the new flame rose by itself." The message here is clear. When the flame is able to rise by itself, the taper used to light it should be removed. The new flame has to burn by itself. The next generation has to be able to make its own way on its own.

Jewish history records many different eras in our long story. All of the generations faced similar challenges and difficulties - the constant problem of being a moral voice and a small demographic minority. Yet they all also faced difficulties and challenges that were particular and peculiar to their times and locales.

Though the general strategies of Jewish survival - Torah and observance, moral behavior and optimistic attitude and resilience - remained the same, the tactics of survival and Jewish success changed and adapted. The flame had to rise by itself or the taper of the previous generation's presence and help would inexorably disappear.

Part of the challenge of our current society is its over-reliance on past generations - financially, morally, intellectually, tactically and socially. Recreating a fantasy laden past and justifying current policies that have already been proven to be less than constructive only compounds the problems that we truly face. The new flame is not allowed to rise and be able to burn on its own. The task of the past is to instruct, strengthen and ignite the new flame and not to stifle it by its overbearing presence.

Where this line is to be drawn is the stuff of wisdom and foresight, responsibility and probity. The great High Priest Aharon was entrusted with this task. His love of others was the guarantee that he would light the future lamps correctly while using the older taper he held in his hands.

Shabat shalom

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum *Parshas Beha'aloscha*

Those men said to him... Why should we be diminished by not offering Hashem's offering at the appointed time? (9:7)

A group of people, who due to their being in a state of tumah, ritual impurity, were ineligible to bring the Korban Pesach, presented themselves before Moshe Rabbeinu, asking for a dispensation of some sort. Their desire to offer the Korban Pesach was so intense that they appealed to Moshe to somehow, someway, help them experience this milestone event. As a result of their burning desire to perform the mitzvah, Hashem made them agents through whom He revealed the mitzvah of celebrating Pesach Sheni, the Second Pesach. Essentially, it was to be viewed as a makeup Pesach.

This is the only mitzvah of its kind - a commandment initiated by a group of people whose intensity for serving Hashem was so great that Hashem provided them with the opportunity to perform the mitzvah at a later date. As a result, Pesach Sheni has become a mitzvah, as well as a standard for demonstrating how much one can achieve if he sets his heart onto something.

One who desires to come closer to Hashem - yet, his actions are not worthy because he is on a level akin to ritual contamination - can, and should, pray to Hashem to enable him to experience the mitzvah. Lama nigara, "Why should we be diminished?" Why should we lose out on this mitzvah?

Ein davar omeid bifnei ha'ratzon, "Nothing stands in the way of one's (strong) will (desire)." A Jew never gives up hope, never stops aspiring for greatness. The road is tough and filled with many obstacles and challenges. Yet, if a person is resolute and tenacious, he will persevere and achieve his intended goal.

Not every gadol b'Yisrael, Torah luminary, was born with a brilliant mind. They achieved their prodigious distinction through toil and persistence. Indolence was not in their vocabulary, as they doggedly endured and triumphed over many challenges on their long road to gadlus baTorah, greatness in Torah. One such gadol was the venerable Maharam Schick, zl, one of the most distinguished students of the Chasam Sofer.

As a young boy, he toiled diligently in what seemed almost impossible studies to master. His mother would tell him to go to sleep, but the child continued to study until he physically could not go on any longer. Regrettably, the next day when he came to cheder and the rebbe would ask who had understood yesterday's lesson, his hand did not go up in the air. He had reviewed and reviewed countless times - to no avail. His ability to retain the lesson seemed to be nonexistent.

His parents supported his efforts at mastering the shiur, lesson. One night, after observing how her son went to bed after crying himself to sleep, she bemoaned his plight to her husband, "If only our Moshe would be like other boys. He works so hard and is so intense in his commitment to his studies. Yet, regardless of how hard he tries to achieve, it eludes him. He is not a strong child. The late nights filled with persistent study and little sleep are taking their toll on his body. Do you notice that he never smiles? His is so sad over his inability to achieve success - to be like everyone else." With these words, his mother broke down in bitter, uncontrolled weeping for her son who wanted so much to understand a blatt, page, of Gemorah.

Her husband listened. While he, too, was concerned, he sincerely believed that all of his son's hasmadah, diligence, would one day pay off. He was certain that at a certain point, his son's hasmadah and profound desire for Torah achievement, coupled with his mother's prayers and tears, would amount to the recipe for success. Hashem would listen. His son would one day illuminate the Torah world and be counted among the great Torah leaders of his generation.

The next day followed the usual pattern as the many days that had preceded it. The rebbe explained the passage in the Gemorah, then he asked who had not understood what he had said. One hand was raised: Moshe Schick. The rebbe made a "silent" moan, as he began to explain the passage once again for Moshe's benefit.

"Now do you understand?" the rebbe asked. "No, I do not," Moshe replied, to the visible smirks and chuckles of the other boys in the classroom. This did not bother Moshe. He knew what was taking place around him, but he was totally focused on the rebbe and his explanation of the Gemorah. Only

one thought coursed through his young mind: "I want to understand! I want to understand, to understand, to understand!"

The rebbe continued with his discourse. He attempted to cite a difficult question from the preeminent Torah giant of the generation, the holy Chasam Sofer. The class sat dumfounded as they applied their minds to understand the profundity of the question. "Does anyone understand the question?" the rebbe asked.

Suddenly, one of the students screamed out, "Moshe Schick!" This brought the house down, as the entire classroom erupted in laughter. Imagine, Moshe Schick understanding the question. What a joke. The rebbe did not laugh. He was shocked; the pain he felt for young Moshe was obvious. One need only look at the rebbe's face. The student who called out was filled with regret and shame. The entire classroom became still; one could hear a pin drop. The rebbe continued staring at the student who had called out, and without warning, closed his Gemorah, and, began to shake back and forth.

The children looked at their rebbe incredulously. What was he doing? It appeared as if he had "lost it." A few moments went by, and the rebbe began to speak. "You are all Hashem's children. Every Jew is a beloved child of the Almighty. We do not fathom Hashem's ways. We cannot know, we cannot understand why one boy is blessed with an acute mind, while the other is not; why one is destined for great wealth and the other for abject poverty. One thing is for certain: Hashem gives each person what is best for him; no different from a loving parent who gives his child the very best that is suited for that individual child.

"How much pain Hashem experiences when His brilliant child humiliates his academically challenged child. We are all guilty! With two words, we allowed an arrow to be shot into a child's heart! I do not know what teshuvah, repentance, we are collectively obliged to perform." The rebbe stopped for a moment, and then he added, "And I do not know what teshuvah I personally must do, because such an egregious act of public humiliation occurred in my classroom." Moshe Schick took all of this in. He stood up and, in an attempt to assuage his rebbe's pain, said, "Rebbe, do not be concerned. He did not mean to hurt me. It was only a joke." The rest of the class turned to Moshe with admiration, the result of appreciation for what he had just done. Clearly, he was hurting inside, but he concealed his pain for the sake of his rebbe.

The boy who had called out was now crying hysterically. He realized that Moshe Schick was no ordinary student. Everyone understood that they were in the presence of greatness, of a child that would one day be a very special adult. It was the rebbe who articulated their collective feelings when he said, "Moshe, I have no doubt that you will one day be a leader in Klal Yisrael!" With these words, the rebbe kissed his Gemorah and left the room.

Moshe Schick maintained his routine, reviewing the lesson many times until he grew stronger in his understanding of the lesson. With time, his hidden talents matured and his acuity became more and more honed until he was counted among the most superior students of the Chasam Sofer. Indeed, Moshe Schick became one of the gedolei ha'dor.

Rav Moshe Schick wrote about himself: "As a child, I was not blessed with a good mind. Hashem blessed my diligence and toil, as I ascended upon the ladder of Torah erudition... I reviewed my lessons up to forty times. I prayed to Hashem, supplicating Him to take pity on me and allow me to understand His holy Torah. Finally, after much toil, tears and prayer, Hashem listened to my pleas and blessed me with a deeper understanding of His Torah." Nothing stands in the way of one's will.

Make for yourself two silver trumpets - make them hammered out, and they shall be yours for the summoning of the Assembly and to cause the camps to journey. (10:2)

The Talmud Menachos 28b states: "All the vessels which Moshe made were valid for him and (remained) valid for future generations. (This is exclusive of) the Chatzotzros, silver trumpets, which were valid for him and invalid for future generations." The limitations of age did not apply to such keilim, vessels, as the Menorah, Shulchan, Shofar; every utensil which Moshe Rabbeinu had made was perfectly kosher, valid, for all future

generations. The silver trumpets were different. They were made by Moshe for his own use; no one else could use Moshe's trumpets. They would have to fashion their own.

The rationale behind the trumpets' exclusiveness is simple. The trumpets were used to rally the people; to call them together; to initiate forward movement. Every generation has its unique manner of communication. What was novel last century might be considered primitive by contemporary standards. Likewise, the masses respond differently today than they did one hundred years ago. How we respond to the call of our leadership defines us; how our leadership conveys their message will somehow reflect upon them. While it is important that, with the changing times, the method of communication must change to placate the level of and attitude concerning the art of listening - the message must be the same. The call to Torah has not changed in three thousand years. We might resort to a different presentation or manner of expression, but the message is unchanging. Truth is immutable.

The Aron HaKodesh, the Shulchan and the Menorah could be handed down from one generation to the next, because they each, in its own way, represent a timeless valued aspect of Judaism. Their message is a constant and absolute. How their message is conveyed depends on the lifestyle and culture of the people of that generation. Someone living in an age of materialism must be spoken to in "his" language. At times the "volume" must be lowered, and, at times, it must be raised. It all depends on the generation's ability to hear and acquiesce, to listen and accept.

The people took to seeking complaints; it was evil in the ears of Hashem. (11:1)

Complaining can reflect much more than simple negativity. It all depends against whom and about what one complains. A chronic complainer will invariably not be selective about what or whom he finds fault. It begins with mild grumbling about nothing of major concern, then graduates to harping about everything, anything and everyone. It, however, does not stop there. One who becomes used to denouncing everything will ultimately protest the way Hashem directs the general world, and especially this individual's own little world.

Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, Shlita, once commented to a close student, "You should know, one who looks askance on hanhagas Hashem, the manner in which Hashem acts, his attitude is one of the primary catalysts for his own prayers not to be accepted." To put this in simple, laymen terms: If one complains about Hashem - his prayers will invariably have great difficulty achieving efficacy. The reason for this is elementary. The essence of prayer is hisbatlus and hachnaah, self-abnegation, denouncing one's ego, before Hashem. Veritably, everyone should negate himself and his desires before Hashem. The problem is that when one is overwhelmed with tzaros, troubles, the first thing he asks is: "What does Hashem want from me now? Why is He picking on me? I don't deserve such a headache - especially now - after all I have gone through."

Now, if this person, with his baggage of tzaros, complaints, comes before Hashem in prayer - not only is he not filled with humility - he comes ungezetzet - morose, and filled with deprecation. His prayer will be anything but helpful. Indeed, his prayer, quite simply, might work in his disfavor! He is not beseeching Hashem - he is, chas v'shalom, Heaven forbid, remonstrating against Him.

The Rosh Hayeshivah applied this rationale to explain a difficult concept presented in the Talmud Rosh Hashanah 18a. Chazal distinguish between two individuals upon whom was issued a similar Heavenly decree: they were both sentenced to be executed, or they were both to become gravely ill. Both men prayed; one was answered positively while the other, sadly, was executed or succumbed to the illness. Chazal posit that the one who was spared had prayed a tefillah sheleimah, perfect, complete prayer. The other one, whose prayer was seemingly rejected, had not prayed a tefillah sheleimah.

Both men equally perceived their upcoming mortality. They both knew that they were supposed to die. One accepted Hashem's decree and prepared himself for his impending death. He believed in Hashem's judgment and acquiesced to whatever Heaven was demanding of him.

Thus, his prayer was heartfelt, without protest, no grumbling, just a simple entreaty asking that, despite his unworthiness, "Please Hashem, spare me! Let me live for my wife, my children, for myself. Give me a chance to do more for Your glory. Allow me to sanctify Your holy Name."

The other fellow had taanos. He was not prepared to accept the Heavenly decree. After all, he was a good person. He studied Torah, performed mitzvos, gave tzedakah, charity. Why should he die prematurely? It just was not fair. It was not right. Since tefillah is comprised of hisbatlus, his prayer was missing the primary ingredient which would render it perfect and successful. Thus, he died. It is all in the presentation - and the presentation depends upon one's attitude.

Did I conceive this entire people... that You say to me, Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a suckling. (11:12)

Horav Meir Shapiro, zl, interprets Moshe Rabbeinu's lament to Hashem as analogous with the complaints issued by rabbinic leaders throughout the generations. Two words used by Moshe are not synonymous with one another. An omein is more of a governess, who raises and instructs the child. We find Mordechai being referred to as Esther's omein, V'hu omein es Hadassah, "And he raised Hadassah" (Megillas Esther 2:7). A yoneik, on the other hand, is a young suckling infant whose interest is primarily concerning its next meal. What is the relationship between the individual who is charged with educating the child and the individual who is providing for its meals?

This is what Moshe was saying to Hashem. "Almighty, I have the skills and ability to teach the nation Torah, to inspire and elevate them spiritually, to guide and embellish their moral rectitude. Instead, I am being asked to provide them with food and meat. Am I a meinekes, nursemaid, or am I an omein, who teaches?"

Likewise, the members of our rabbinic leadership have spent their lives developing a proficiency in Torah erudition, in learning how to inspire and guide the spiritual development of their flock. Their time should be well spent studying and teaching Torah, elevating their congregations to unprecedented spiritual heights. The material sustenance and maintenance of their congregants' needs should be provided for and directed by those whom Hashem has blessed with material abundance. Instead, the rabbis spend a good part of their precious time fundraising to provide the basic needs of their congregants. Whether it be food on the table; finding a job for the family's provider; raising money for tuition; seeing to it that families have decent, presentable clothing for Shabbos, Yom Tov and yes, for during the week; seeing to it that a family is not evicted, nor foreclosed upon; making sure that those who prey upon the unknowing are dealt with and the unknowing are paid back. These are some of the responsibilities of today's rabbanim. Oh, yes, they also teach and render halachic decisions but, as Rav Meir Shapiro bemoans, this is secondary to the financial obligations that really should be addressed by the community's lay leadership. Apparently, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth! (12:3)

Moshe Rabbeinu was the quintessential leader of our People. He was replete with and exemplified, every positive character trait. Yet, the one middah, character trait, with which the Torah defines Moshe is anavah, humility. This teaches us the significance of humility as being the one middah which towers above all the rest. The Shlah HaKodesh states that the word ha'adam, person, is an acronym for the three pillars of humility - Avraham Avinu, David HaMelech and Moshe Rabbeinu. Aleph - Avraham, daled - David; mem- Moshe. Three giants of humility, of which Moshe was the greatest.

Moshe's humility is indicated from his remaining silent and not seeking to defend himself against the statement made by his siblings. How do we know that his silence was due to humility? Perhaps, he was simply a refined human being who - either because of his incredible yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven; or his total lack of envy - was able to accept derogatory remarks made about him without responding to his offenders.

Horav Tzvi Shraga Grossbard, zl, explains that Moshe's response to these comments was no response whatsoever. It is not as if he was offended, and it did not bother him. He was not offended at all! He was so humble that he did not even feel any form of humiliation.

He quotes a similar idea rendered by the Chafetz Chaim, zl, in explaining Aharon HaKohen's response to the tragic death of his two sons. Vayidom Aharon, "And Aharon was silent" (Vayikra 10:3). Vayidom is commonly translated as silence. The Chafetz Chaim explains that Aharon's silence was much more profound. Aharon was totally mute. He did not react whatsoever. It was as if nothing had happened. Aharon was mute. No facial expression. No soft weeping. No moving of his lips. It never took place. So powerful was his deep faith and belief in Hashem. No questions. Total acceptance. It never happened.

Likewise, Moshe was not affected. He did not defend himself because there was nothing to defend. He was so humble that he did not feel that anything happened. This is the meaning of true humility. Not silence. Not laid back. Nothing whatsoever. It never happened.

What was the nature of Moshe's humility? What caused him to be so humble? Was he unaware of his distinctiveness as the Torah's lawgiver, the man who stood up to Pharaoh, who spent forty days in Heaven learning the Torah from Hashem before bringing it down to Am Yisrael? Does humility mean unawareness? Bina L'Itim explains that Moshe was acutely aware of who he was and what he had achieved. He felt, however, that every person was greater and more worthy than he was. Thus, he showed deference to everyone.

Humility refers to someone's personal assessment of himself. He may be aware of the esteem in which others hold him, but he himself feels - no, knows - that he has not yet achieved his potential. So whatever he has done is nothing in comparison to what he is capable of doing.

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl, quotes from the Chafetz Chaim who asked why the wealthy arrogate about their material bounty. Their money is not readily available. They are not necessarily liquid. True, their assets and holdings are worth an incredible fortune, but most of it is not accessible. The banker, however, has oodles of money, conveniently securable in his possession at all times. Why does this accessible wealth not go to the banker's head? The answer is obvious: It does not belong to him. It is deposited in his bank and must be made available to the depositor whenever he so desires.

The Chafetz Chaim continues. Why should the man blessed with wealth feel any different than the banker? Hashem has deposited His money with him - not because of his wisdom or acumen, not because of his strength or charisma - only for one purpose: to perform the will of G-d. When Hashem indicates that it is time to give some of it up, he must do so immediately, without question. Wealth begets responsibility; responsibility engenders humility.

There is a well-known story concerning the founder of the mussar, ethical, character refinement, movement, Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, which demonstrates the meaning of humility. Rav Yisrael was a brilliant Torah scholar who had achieved mastery in all areas of Torah erudition. He devoted his life to an area of spiritual development that, at the time, was greatly deficient. He focused on yiraas Shomayim, increasing one's fear of Heaven and his ethical character refinement. He felt, and rightfully so, that with increased fear, Torah knowledge would also be elevated. The medium for this development was through the study of mussar, ethical discourse. When people focus on their character traits and attempt to repair their shortcomings, they acquire the skills for greater devotion, diligence and perseverance in Torah study.

Rav Yisrael devoted his life towards teaching the masses this new approach to growth and development. Essentially, it was a new way of life, an entirely different approach in Torah study. Mussar had its dissenters and Rav Yisrael had his critics, but he overcame the challenges and moved on. He was unwavering and tenacious, accomplishing alone what would have normally required an army. He once commented, "I am fully aware that I have the brilliance and talents of one thousand gaonim, eminent scholars. Because of this, however, I must achieve what it would take one thousand gaonim to accomplish. I have no idea if I am capable of this." He threw his

entire life into spreading the teachings of mussar. He had no material means to speak of; he was too occupied with his and everybody's spiritual dimension.

His wife once purchased a lottery ticket and asked him to pray in her behalf that she win the prize. Rav Yisrael asked her, "What is it that you want to win?" "I would like to win the grand prize of 10,000 rubles," she replied. He said, "No problem. First, I need two witnesses to attest that I relinquish all rights to any part of your winnings. If you purchase a new home with the prize money, I will not be able to enter it. If you buy food with the winnings, I will not be able to eat from it." The rebbeztzin understandably asked, "Why?"

Rav Yisrael explained. "You should be aware that Heaven does not dole out gifts. For every quality that a person receives, he must produce commensurate with his newly-acquired ability. Hashem blessed me with exceptional kishronos, talents. I must, therefore, work very hard to be deserving of them. This is why I work feverishly to excel, to achieve, to reach out to as many people as possible. I have an enormous responsibility because of my outstanding gift.

"Now you want me to win 10,000 rubles. For what? Do you realize what all of this material wealth will oblige me to do? Why do I need so much money? A person can eat only so much. Even after he stuffs himself, he will have so much money left over of which he will have no idea what to do with it. Imagine that he decides to become a philanthropist to support the many poverty stricken Jews in Kovno. What happens if he misses one poor man, who, as a result, dies of hunger? He is punished! What if a poor man has no money to go to the doctor - and he dies? The philanthropist is culpable! What about the young boy who cannot afford to go to cheder - and, as a result, strays from the correct path of serving Hashem? Who is guilty - the philanthropist! Do I need more headaches? If you want the money, it is yours, but I don't want any part of it. I cannot undertake another obligation."

A humble person is acutely aware of his qualities and also of his concomitant obligations resulting from it. The responsibility is overwhelming. He is humbled by the enormity of what he must accomplish. This awareness provides sufficient reason for being humble.

Va'ani Tefillah

V'limaditem osam es b'neichem l'daber bam.

You shall teach them to your children to discuss them.

V'limaditem osam, "And you should teach them." The word osam is spelled without a vav; thus, without nekudos, vowels, it could be read as, v'limaditem atem, "You should personally teach." The Chafetz Chaim, zl, explains that the Torah is teaching us that fathers should not rely solely on the Torah of their sons. Rather, they, too, should study Torah and teach it to their children. Studying Torah is not a spectator sport. A father should be proactive in studying with his son, but only after he, himself, has studied. One cannot teach what one does not know, and one does not know what one does not learn. Therefore, the Torah admonishes the father to learn not only for himself - but also for his son.

Sponsored in loving memory of our dear father and zaidy on his yahrzeit Rabbi Shlomo Silberberg Harav Shlomoe ben Nossan z"l niftar 14 Sivan 5759 t.n.tz.v.h. Mrs. Miriam Solomon and Family

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Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column

Beha'alotecha: Humble, Not Meek

I don't usually disagree publicly with lecturers, particularly when they are expressing opinions which are mostly consistent with my own. But there was one time when I felt that I had to speak up and object to one of the speaker's expressions.

It was at a lecture on the subject of self-absorption. The speaker characterized the time we live in as "the age of narcissism." He argued that we live in an era when most people are totally self-centered and guilty of false pride and arrogance. He advanced many examples to bolster his position

Although I found his hypothesis to be somewhat extreme, I could agree with much of what he was saying. I, too, have often felt that the phrase “the me generation” was an apt appellation for contemporary society. But then the gentleman at the podium made a statement that touched a raw nerve in me. He said something that I had heard expressed many times over the years and have invariably felt compelled to correct. He said that, as a good Christian, he found the hubris which predominated contemporary society to be quite contrary to “the Christian values of forgiveness and humility.” It was his description of these noble values as being of Christian origin, and the way in which he conveyed his conviction that his own faith tradition somehow “owned” them, that brought me to my feet.

“I must object,” I asserted, “not to your major thesis about the faults of our generation, but to your insistence on identifying what you believe to be the desirable qualities for the human race with Christianity, and with Christianity alone.”

I must confess that I was secretly hoping that my protest would cause him to at least modify his remarks, and perhaps speak, as so many do, of the “Judeo-Christian values of forgiveness and humility.”

But that was not to be. Instead, he cited chapter and verse in the Christian Bible on the importance of forgiveness, and then, raising his voice for emphasis, said: “Surely, the learned Rabbi knows that it is in the Book of Matthew that we find the phrase, ‘And the meek shall inherit the earth.’”

I will not report what I said to him about forgiveness as a Jewish virtue. I will save those remarks for another occasion. But, because of the connection to this week’s Torah portion, Beha’alotecha (Numbers 8:1-12:16), I will share with you the essence of my retort with regard to the Jewish origin of the all-important virtue of humility.

“Yes, my dear sir,” I replied, “this learned Rabbi does indeed know that the phrase that you translate as, ‘And the meek shall inherit the earth,’ appears in your Scriptures. But I also know that the identical phrase appears in the Book of Psalms chapter 37, verse 11, written many centuries before Matthew. And I also know that translating the Hebrew word *anavim* as ‘the meek’ is not quite correct. We preferred to translate *anavim* as ‘the humble,’ and not as ‘the meek’”.

I continued to build my argument by quoting the verse near the end of this week’s Torah portion, “Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any other man on earth.” (Numbers 12:3) “There is no way,” I insisted, “that the Torah would use the word *anav* to describe Moses if the word meant ‘meek.’ Moses was not meek. I think you will agree that the image evoked by the phrase ‘a meek person’ is that of a weak person, or at least a mild-mannered one. Moses was most certainly neither weak nor mild-mannered. He was strong, in body and in spirit, and could be quite assertive when circumstances called for assertiveness.”

While I do not delude myself into thinking that I changed my adversary’s mind, I did get the audience thinking. This was proven when about a dozen of those present gathered around me after the lecture was concluded and asked me to expand upon the Jewish definition of humility.

I told them that a comprehensive discussion of the importance which Judaism assigns to the character trait of *anava*, or humility, would take a very long time. I agreed, however, to share with them but one thought upon the subject.

I quoted to them the following passage in the Talmud (Nedarim 38a): “Rabbi Yochanan said: ‘The Holy One Blessed Be He allows the Shechinah [the Divine Presence] to rest only upon someone who is strong, wealthy, wise, and humble. All of these traits were to be found in Moses. Humility, as it is written, ‘Now Moses was a very humble man...’”

It was not long before one member of the group asked the question that I was expecting. “Does the Almighty really favor people with the mundane virtues of strength and wealth? I would think that He would rather favor spiritual virtues.”

“Your question,” I responded, “was anticipated by a rabbi who wrote in the early 20th century. His name was Rabbi Baruch Epstein, and whereas his magnum opus, entitled *Torah Temimah*, was written in 1904, he lived to an advanced old age and witnessed the Holocaust. His answer is a most instructive one.”

I then went on to describe that answer. I told the group that the test of humility can only be passed by one who is strong and wealthy and wise. If someone who lacks those resources acts humbly, we cannot be sure that he in truth possesses a humble character. It could be that he acts humbly simply because he is weak, or poor, or of limited intelligence. God, therefore, chooses to have the Shechinah dwell with the person who, despite his many assets and talents, remains humble. He is the one who is genuinely an *anav*.

Thus, writes Rabbi Epstein, “It is precisely because Moses was powerful and wealthy and wise and tall, and yet humble, that we can speak of him as the ‘humblest of men.’”

There is much wisdom in this manner of understanding the virtue of humility, of *anava*. The *anav* is not a meek person. Quite the contrary. He has many talents and many skills. He is fully aware of his capacities and of his strengths. And yet he recognizes that these gifts are just that, gifts. Moreover, these gifts are Divine blessings, and he has no right to be proud of them as if they were his personal achievements.

The humble man recognizes that his very advantage over others is a gift of God. That is what allows him to utilize his powers to help achieve God’s purposes, not out of meekness, but out of humility.

Once again, Moses is a model for all of us. We are called upon to be humble, but that doesn’t mean that we are to be weak, passive, or submissive. We can be strong, active, and assertive—and humble.

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Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
A Double Celebration

The festival of Shavuot is a mystery wrapped in an enigma. Here is how Shavuot is described and defined in parsha Emor

“From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord . . . On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.” (Leviticus 23: 15-21)

These are the difficulties. In the first place, Shavuot, “the feast of weeks”, is given no calendrical date: all the other festivals are. Pesach, for example is “on the fifteenth day” of the “first month”. Shavuot has no such date. It is calculated on the basis of counting “seven full weeks” from a particular starting time, not by noting a date in the year.

Secondly, as long as the New Moon was determined on the basis of eyewitness testimony (i.e. until the fourth century of the Common Era), Shavuot could have no fixed date. In the Jewish calendar a month can be long (30 days) or short (29). If Nisan and Iyar were both long months, Shavuot would fall on 5 Sivan. If both were short, it would fall on 7 Sivan. And if one were long and the other short, it would fall on 6 Sivan. Unlike other festivals, Shavuot is (or was) a moveable feast.

Thirdly, the point at which the counting of days and weeks begins is signaled in a profoundly ambiguous phrase: “From the day after the Sabbath”. But which Sabbath? And what is the reference to a Sabbath doing here at all? The previous passage has talked about Pesach, not the Sabbath. This led to one of the great controversies in Second Temple Judaism. The Pharisees, who believed in the Oral Law as well as the Written one understood “the Sabbath” to mean, here, the first day of Pesach (15 Nisan). The Sadducees, who believed in the Written Law only, took the text literally. The day after the Sabbath is Sunday. Thus the count always begins on a Sunday, and Shavuot, fifty days later, also always falls on a Sunday.

The fourth mystery, though, is the deepest: what is Shavuot about? What does it commemorate? About Pesach and Sukkot, we have no doubt. Pesach is a commemoration of the exodus. Sukkot is a reminder of the forty years in the wilderness. As our *sedra* says: “Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so your descendants

will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

In the case of Shavuot, all the Torah says is that it is the “Feast of the Harvest”, and the “Day of Firstfruits”. These are agricultural descriptions, not historical ones. Pesach and Sukkot have both: an agricultural aspect (spring/autumn) and a historical one (exodus/wilderness). This is not a marginal phenomenon, but of the essence. Other religions of the ancient world celebrated seasons. They recognised cyclical time. Only Israel observed historical time – time as a journey, a story, an evolving narrative. The historical dimension of the Jewish festivals was unique. All the more, then, is it strange that Shavuot is not biblically linked to a historical event. Jewish tradition identified Shavuot as “the time of the giving of the Torah”, the anniversary of the Divine revelation at Sinai when the Israelites heard the voice of God and made a covenant with Him. But that connection is not made in the Torah itself. To be sure, the Torah says that “In the third month after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai” (Ex. 19: 1), and Shavuot is the only festival in the third month. So the connection is implicit; but it is not explicit. For this, as for the festival’s date, we need the Oral tradition.

What then was the view of the Sadducees? It is unlikely that they linked Shavuot with the giving of the Torah. For that event had a date, and for the Sadducees Shavuot did not have a date. They kept it on a Sunday – they observed it on a specific day of the week, not on a specific date in the year. How did the Sadducees view Shavuot?

There is a fascinating episode recorded in the rabbinic literature (Menachot 65a) in which a Sadducee explains to R. Yochanan ben Zakkai why, according to them, Shavuot is always on a Sunday: “Moses our teacher was a great lover of Israel. Knowing that Shavuot lasted only one day, he therefore fixed it on the day after the Sabbath so that Israel might enjoy themselves for two successive days.” Shavuot gave the Israelites a long weekend!

From this starting point we can begin to speculate what Shavuot might have meant for the Sadducees. The late Louis Finkelstein argued that they were landowners and farmers. In general, they were wealthier than the Pharisees, and more closely attached to the State and its institutions: the Temple and the political elite. They were as near as Judaism came to a governing class.

For farmers the agricultural significance of Shavuot would have been clear and primary. It was “the festival of the harvest, of the firstfruits of your work, of what you sow in the field” (Ex. 23: 16). It came at the end of a seven-week process that began with the bringing of the Omer – “a sheaf of the first grain of your harvest” (Lev. 23: 10), i.e. the first of the barley crop. This was the busy time of gathering in the grain (this is the setting of the Book of Ruth, and one of the reasons why we read it on Shavuot). Farmers would have a specific reason to give thanks to God who “brings forth bread from the ground”. They would also, by the end of harvesting, be exhausted. Hence the Sadducee’s remark about needing a long weekend.

We can now see the outline of a possible Sadducean argument. Pesach represents the beginning of the Israelites’ journey to freedom. Sukkot recalls the forty years of wandering in the desert. But where in the Jewish year do we recall and celebrate the end of the journey: the entry into the promised land? When, in fact, did it take place? The Book of Joshua (5: 10-12) states:

“On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.”

It is this text that Maimonides takes as proof that “the day after the Sabbath” in fact means, as the text states here, “the day after the Passover”. Seen through Sadducean eyes, however, this text might have held a quite different significance. The Omer recalls the day the Israelites first ate the produce of the promised land. It was the end of the wilderness years – the

day they stopped eating manna (“bread from heaven” – Exodus 16: 4) and started eating bread from the land to which they had been traveling for forty years.

The reason Shavuot is given only agricultural, not historical, content in the Torah is that in this case agriculture was history. The fifty day count from the first time they ate food grown in Israel to the end of the grain harvest represents the end of the journey of which Pesach was the beginning and Sukkot the middle. Shavuot is a festival of the land and its produce because it commemorates the entry into the land in the days of Joshua. So the Sadducees may have argued. It was Israel’s first Yom ha-Atzma’ut, Independence Day. It was the festival of entry into the promised land.

It is, perhaps, not surprising that after the destruction of the Second Temple, the Sadducees rapidly disappeared. How do you celebrate a festival of the land when you have lost the land? How do you predicate your religious identity on the State and its institutions (Temple, priests, kings) when you have lost those institutions? Only a movement (the Pharisees) and a festival (Shavuot) based on the giving of the Torah, could survive. For the Torah was not completely dependent on the land. It had been given “in the wilderness”. It applied anywhere and everywhere.

To be sure, the Pharisees, no less than the Sadducees, loved the land. They knew the Torah in its entirety could only be kept there. They longed for it, prayed for it, lived there whenever they could. But even in exile, they still had the Torah and the promise it contained that one day Jews would return, and recover their sovereignty, and rebuild what they had lost.

The argument about Shavuot turned out to be fateful for Jewish history. Those who celebrated it as “the time of the giving of the Torah” ensured Jewish survival through nearly 20 centuries of exile and dispersion. And we, who live in the era of the return, can rejoice in a double celebration: of the Torah and of the land

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks or to subscribe to his mailing list, please visit www.rabbisacks.org.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Behaaloscha

A Tale Of Two Lessons In Hakaras HaTov

The parsha contains the pasuk: "The people complained, speaking evil in the ears of Hashem, and Hashem heard and His wrath flared, and a fire of Hashem burned against them, and it consumed at the edge of the camp." [Bamidbar 11:1]. This Parsha contains the beginning of the unfortunate decline of the Jewish people during their sojourn in the Wilderness.

Rashi describes the "disconnect" between the people and the Almighty. They complained: "How much we have struggled on this journey! It has been three days that we have not rested from the suffering of the way!" G-d was angry at them: "I had intended it for your benefit, so that you would enter the Land immediately."

The Ramban takes note of a peculiar expression in the pasuk describing the complaints: "And the nation was 'k-misonenim' [they were LIKE complainers]". Strangely, the Torah does not state that the people complained. It states that they were "like complainers". What does that mean?

The Ramban explains that the people spoke out of hurt and pain. In other words, there was a certain degree of legitimacy to their whining. When people are in pain, it is natural for them to complain. If someone is in the hospital, he is laid up, he is in pain, and he sometimes utters things that he really should not be saying: "Why is G-d doing this to me? I do not deserve the suffering I am experiencing!" People get upset and when they are in pain, they complain. This is somewhat of a mitigating factor. They are only "LIKE" complainers. We cannot really throw the book at them. They were doing what comes naturally for those who are in pain.

If that's the case, asks the Ramban, why does Hashem get upset with them? The Ramban answers that they should have followed Him with a good spirit and attitude based on all the multitude of goodness and kindness He

provided to them. When things are going so well and one has so much good fortune, it is simply inappropriate to complain!

This is one of the great challenges of life. Most of us are extremely fortunate. We merit the uncontested bounty of the Almighty. Most of us have good health and families. We have so much good! But when things are not 100% right, we complain.

The Ramban is saying that this is not right. We should be looking at the "big picture" before we start complaining. The big picture is that there is a bounty of blessing we are enjoying despite the bumps in the road or the pot holes in the road or the ditch in the road that we occasionally get stuck in. We still should not complain because the sum total of our life is still overwhelmingly tilted towards the side of joy, gladness, and abundance of that which is good.

This is another example of a theme that is repeated so often in the Torah – the theme of "Hakaras haTov" [recognizing favors; showing gratitude].

The Apter Rav used to say that in every single parsha in the Torah, there is a hint (Remez) to the importance of Ahavas Yisrael [the mitzvah to love a fellow Jew]. The Apter Rav was once asked to point out the 'Remez' for Ahavas Yisrael in Parshas Balak. He quipped "That's simple. The name of the parashah – Balak – is an acronym for the words V'Ahavta L'Reacha Kamocha [You should love your neighbor as yourself]". The Chassidim questioned their master. "Rebbe, V'Ahavta begins with a Vov, while Balak begins with a Bais. Furthermore, Kamocha begins with a Kaf not a Kuf, which is the last letter of Balak!" The Apter Rav answered, "If you are so particular about the individual letters, you will never find Ahavas Yisrael!"

I use this story by way of introduction to note that in almost every parsha in the Torah, we may find some type of hint to the concept of Hakaras HaTov. We just mentioned one such 'remez'. However, there is a very novel interpretation given by the Moshav Zekeinim to an incident at the end of the parsha, which also highlights this concept of appreciating favors.

"Miriam and Aaron spoke (ill) about Moshe regarding the Cushite woman he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman." [Bamidbar 12:1] The Torah does not tell us explicitly what their problem was with this Cushite woman.

Rashi and most of the commentaries say that their problem was the fact that their brother Moshe neglected his wife. Because of his unique status of always being "on call" to speak to the Almighty, he could not live a normal life of husband and wife and had to physically separate from his wife, thereby neglecting her. Miriam and Aaron complained about Moshe, "Was it only with Moshe that Hashem spoke? Did He not speak with us as well?"

This is the classic, standard, interpretation of their complaint. The Moshav Zekeinim has a different interpretation. The Moshav Zekeinim says that their complaint was, on the contrary, that Moshe Rabbeinu should divorce this woman. Maybe, they reasoned, it was okay for Moshe to have married such a woman when he was a simple shepherd. However, now that he was the leader of the Jewish people, he was due for an "upgrade". He deserved a wife more fitting of his station in life.

According to this approach, Moshe's response to his sibling was that to divorce this wife now would be a violation of the principle of "Hakaras HaTov". "This woman married me when I was a poor shepherd. I was a fugitive of justice, running away from the sword of Pharaoh and this woman married me and stuck with me. For me to dump her now that I have found a bit of success in my life would be a gross violation of the attribute of having appropriate gratitude (Hakaras haTov). Where is the loyalty toward the woman and the wife who was with me all these years?"

This interpretation, claims the Moshav Zekeinim, fits in well with the rebuke of the Almighty to the words of Miriam and Aaron: "B'chol Beisi Ne'eman Hu" [In all My House he is the most loyal one]. The trustworthiness of Moshe, his loyalty and faithfulness, extended not only to Hashem, it extended to his wife as well! He does not abandon the people around him.

The Common Denominator Between Miriam's Error and That Of The Spies

The beginning of next week's parsha contains the famous Rashi which explains the juxtaposition of the story of the Spies with the incident of Miriam's punishment. Rashi explains that Miriam was stricken with Tzaraas as punishment for speaking Lashon HaRah [slander] against her brother, Moshe. The Spies were aware of this. They should have taken the lesson to heart and not spoken slander against the Land of Israel, but they failed to do so.

Rabbi Berel Weinberger asks that there are two parshiyos in the Torah (Tazriah and Metzarah) that deal at length with the evils of speaking slanderously. If there is a complaint against the Spies for not being well-versed on the severity of the prohibition against speaking Lashon HaRah, the complaint should be that they did not properly study the parshiyos of Tazriah and Metzarah! We certainly do not need the incident of Miriam and Aharon to teach us that one should not speak Lashon HaRah.

Rabbi Weinberger suggests an interesting idea. Miriam did two things wrong. She spoke ill of Moshe Rabbeinu, but she did something else wrong as well: She equated the prophetic status of Moshe to the prophetic status of any other prophet. One must understand that there are differences in life. Moshe Rabbeinu was not just another prophet. "Not so is my servant Moshe. In all My House he is the most faithful. Mouth to mouth do I speak to him, in a vision and not in riddles..." [Bamidbar 12:7-8] Do not make the mistake of comparison when there is no comparison.

This was the same complaint that G-d had against the Spies. Eretz Yisrael is special. It is different from all other lands. "They saw (the result of the incident with Miriam) and did not draw the proper lesson" means they fell into the trap of judging the Land of Israel by standard measures. One cannot make the same military assessments. One cannot make the same economic assessments. Eretz Yisrael is different!

The lesson they failed to learn from Miriam is the need to make appropriate differentiations and not to equate things that are incommensurate.

Rabbi Weinberger explains that he is appalled by the use of the word Holocaust for anything other than the description of what happened to the Jews of Europe. The use of that term any time an injustice is done against people profanes it and equates that which should not be equated. It should be reserved for nothing less than the unprecedented systematic extermination of six million people. Making such inappropriate comparisons degrades and insults the people to whom it really happened.

Rav Meir Shapiro once commented that the difference between the Jews of America and the Jews of Europe is that in America people know how to make Kiddush whereas in Europe they knew also how to make Havdalah [distinctions]. We fail to make proper "havdalah" here. Not everything is the same. We are constantly bombarded with "moral equivalencies" that are totally absurd and thoroughly insulting. Moshe Rabbeinu is not to be compared with anyone else and Eretz Yisrael is not to be compared to any place else. We need to know when things are equal and when they are radically different.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Parshat Beha'alotcha: Who deserves a second chance?

By Shmuel Rabinowitz

June 5, 2014 Thursday 7 Sivan 5774

The passion, the sincere desire, the positive attitude – these are what merited the halacha of Pesach Sheni.

This week's Torah portion, Behaalotcha, is long and loaded with many topics. One of the parsha's central topics is Pesach Sheni.

This topic was relevant when the Temple stood and Am Yisrael ascended to Jerusalem during Passover to celebrate and eat Korban Pesach (the Passover sacrifice). But not everyone could make the trip on the holiday. There were those who wanted to go up to Jerusalem but were delayed on their way and did not make it in time; others were impure, meaning they had touched a dead body or other source of impurity and were therefore

forbidden to eat the Korban Pesach; and still others who for any of many other reasons could not make it to Jerusalem to celebrate the holiday.

The Torah offers a solution to all these people: One month after Passover, on the 14th day of the month of Iyar, there is a second chance. On this date, they can come to the Temple and sacrifice the Korban Pesach and thus merit participating in the great national-spiritual celebration that took place one month earlier in Jerusalem.

This solution is a novel one. We do not find this kind of consideration of someone who cannot fulfill a commandment in a timely manner for any other commandment that is dependent on being done at a specific time. For example, a person who did not hear shofar blowing on Rosh Hashana, even if he wanted to fulfill the mitzva and couldn't, does not get a second chance; he cannot fulfill the commandment at another date since this mitzva is time-sensitive. Or, a person who for one reason or another did not fulfill the commandment to sit in a succah during Succot, even if the reason was completely legitimate, cannot fulfill the commandment by sitting in a succah at some other time. This is the situation with every time-sensitive mitzva – with the exception of eating Korban Pesach.

Many reasons for this exception have been mentioned and written about. We will focus on one of them, which is relevant to our lives today.

If we look carefully, this halacha (Jewish law) of Pesach Sheni was not given the way most other commandments were given. Most of the mitzvot of the Torah were given by G-d to Moshe in the way described by the words "And the Lord spoke to Moshe." He who initiated the contact was G-d and He turned to Moshe as the leader of Am Yisrael and conveyed to him the various commandments.

However, Pesach Sheni was given in the opposite manner, as it is described in the Torah: "There were men who were ritually unclean [because of contact with] a dead person, and therefore could not make the Passover sacrifice on that day. So they approached Moses and Aaron on that day. Those men said to him, We are ritually unclean [because of contact] with a dead person; [but] why should we be excluded so as not to bring the offering of the Lord in its appointed time, with all the children of Israel? Moses said to them, 'Wait, and I will hear what the Lord instructs concerning you.

"The Lord spoke to Moses saying: Speak to the children of Israel saying, Any person who becomes unclean from [contact with] the dead, or is on a distant journey, whether among you or in future generations, he shall make a Passover sacrifice for the Lord. In the second month, on the 14th day, in the afternoon, they shall make it..." (Numbers 9, 6-11) G-d did not convey the halacha of Pesach Sheni to Moshe of His own initiative. This halacha was given to Moshe only after a demand was made by the nation. Only when people came and complained about their bitter fate, about not being able to fulfill the mitzva of eating the Korban Pesach, was this halacha stated that allowed them a second chance to fulfill the commandment.

The passion, the sincere desire, the positive attitude – these are what merited the halacha of Pesach Sheni.

We learn two things from this: First, when people expresses an honest desire and passion to fulfill commandments, and see religion as a privilege rather than as a heavy burden, it merits another chance that will allow it to fulfill its desire. The second relates to any relationship between one person and another. When we see that someone expresses a desire to start a new page, we should give him another opportunity to act differently.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

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Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Shavuot: Do Not Forget, For Ourselves and Our Children

The receiving of the Torah was the most significant event in the history of the Jewish people. Not only does the Yom Tov of Shavuot revolve around the experience of Har Sinai, but we are also commanded to never forget the events that occurred on that first Shavuot. We are given a two-fold commandment, "Do not forget what you have seen...and transmit them to your children and grandchildren" (Devarim 4:9.) What precisely must we

be careful not to forget? What exactly are we to impart to the next generations?

We are taught (Pirkei Avos 3:10) that one must be exceedingly careful not to forget what one has learned, and one who forgets even one word of what he has learned is in violation of the prohibition mentioned above. Although one who tries to retain the information studied and doesn't succeed does not violate this prohibition, the essence of this halacha is to emphasize the significance of remembering as much Torah knowledge as possible. The corollary of this prohibition is the positive commandment to transmit all of our knowledge to our children.

There is a dispute between Rabbeinu Yona, the Rambam, and the Ramban as to the precise nature of this dual commandment. Rabbeinu Yona in his commentary to Pirkei Avos explains why the Torah insists that we not forget what we have learned. One who forgets will inevitably commit errors in his mitzvah observance. According to Rabbeinu Yona the Torah is highlighting the role of talmud Torah as the prerequisite for the proper observance of the mitzvos. We are required to do everything in our ability to maintain proper observance for ourselves and our children, and his begins with a thorough knowledge of the Torah.

The Rambam (Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:10) emphasizes a different aspect of talmud Torah concerning the prohibition of forgetting. The Rambam cites the prohibition against forgetting one's learning as the source that one must learn until the end of one's life. Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that the Rambam is addressing the dimension of talmud Torah as an end in it and of itself. How much must one learn to fulfill this mitzvah properly? One must learn the entire Torah. One who forgets any Torah must continue to learn because otherwise this mitzvah is not fulfilled in its entirety. Thus, the Rambam saw in this passuk the source for an independent, never ending obligation to study Torah, not just as a way to fulfill other mitzvos. Only if we dedicate ourselves to maintaining a complete mastery of Torah as a goal in it of itself can we impart this knowledge properly to our children.

The Ramban in his Sefer Hamitzvos (prohibition two not mentioned by the Rambam) interprets this dual obligation as focusing on the general experience of Har Sinai rather than addressing forgetting a specific part of the Torah as the Rabbeinu Yona and the Rambam did. The Ramban elaborates as to why the nature of the HarSinai experience must be constantly remembered. It was only this experience which enables the Torah to remain eternal in our eyes. If we would have only received the Torah from Moshe without seeing Hashem's presence revealed on Har Sinai, we could potentially be led to believe by a subsequent navi that a new Torah had been given. We who saw with our own eyes that Hashem gave us this Torah are certain that this Torah will remain eternal. We must constantly strengthen our own faith in this principle and transmit it to our children

As we celebrate that monumental day at Har Sinai, we have to once again commit ourselves to all aspects of kabalas haTorah. We must constantly strive to reach greater heights in talmud Torah enabling ourselves and our children to properly observe the mitzvos. Talmud Torah must also be an independent goal; mastering as much Torah as we can must be an absolute priority for ourselves and our children. An absolute commitment to the eternal truth of the Torah must be maintained. This cornerstone of Jewish belief must be guarded and transmitted properly to the next generation.

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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Shavuot: The Lesson of Mount Sinai

What does the name "Sinai" mean? The Talmudic interpretation is surprising - and somewhat shocking:

"What is Mount Sinai? The mountain that brought enmity (sin'ah) upon the nations of the world." (Shabbat 89b)

What is the nature of this animosity? What does it have to do with Mount Sinai?

Why Sinai?

Where would one expect that God would reveal His Torah to the Jewish people? The logical place would be on the holiest mountain in the world - Jerusalem's Mount Moriah, the site of the Binding of Isaac, Jacob's holy "gate to heaven" (Gen 28:17), the spot where both Temples stood. Why did the revelation of the Torah take place outside of the Land of Israel, in the middle of the desert?

The fact that the Torah was not given to the Jewish people in their own land, but rather in a desert, in no-man's land, is very significant. This indicates that the inner content of the Torah is relevant to all peoples. If receiving the Torah required the special holiness of the Jewish people, then the Torah should have been given in a place that reflects this holiness. Revelation on Mount Sinai attests to the Torah's universal nature.

This idea is corroborated by the Talmudic tradition that "God offered the Torah to every nation and every tongue, but none accepted it, until He came to Israel, who received it" (Avodah Zarah 2b). This Midrash is well known, but it contains an implication that is often overlooked. How could God offer the nations something that is beyond their spiritual level? It is only because the Torah is relevant to all peoples that their refusal to accept it reflects so harshly on them.

The Torah's revelation on Mount Sinai, as a neutral location belonging to none and thus belonging to all, emphasizes the disappointment and estrangement from God that the nations brought upon themselves by rejecting the Torah and its ethical teachings. It is for this reason Mount Sinai "brought enmity upon the nations of the world."

In the future, however, the nations will recognize this mistake and correct it:

"In those days, it shall come to pass that ten men from all the languages of the nations will take hold of every Jew by a corner of his cloak and say, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zachariah 8:23)

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 133-134. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, pp. 219-220)

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The Numbers Game

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Because this article explains some basics of how Torah is taught by Chazal, I think it is appropriate to the week of Shavuot.

Question #1: Pie r squared

Yanki is supposed to be watching his weight and therefore needs to figure out how many calories are in the pie he beholds. To figure out how big the pie is, he measures the diameter of the pie, and divides it in half to get the length of its radius. He then multiplies the length of the radius by itself to get "r squared," and multiplies the result by three so that he knows the area of the pie's surface. Is there anything wrong with his calculation?

Question #2: Puzzled by the *pasuk*

"How can the *pesukim* tell us that the relationship between the circumference of a circle to its diameter is three-to-one, when simply taking a string and measuring around it demonstrates that it is noticeably longer?"

Question #3: Performing *mitzvos* accurately

"How accurate a calculation must I make when determining the size of an item to be used for a *mitzvah*?"

Introduction:

In numerous places, both *Tanach* and *Chazal* approximate certain mathematical values, such as evaluating the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter as three to one. The problem is that we can demonstrate mathematically that the ratio is greater than three and is almost $3 \frac{1}{7}$. This leads to the following questions:

(1) Why would *Chazal* calculate using inaccurate approximations?

(2) When making *halachic* calculations, may we rely on these estimates, or do we need to be mathematically more accurate?

(3) A corollary question is: when providing an estimate, one must allow for a margin of error. Does *halachah* require a margin of error, and, if so, how much?

The slide rule versus the calculator

Let me begin our discussion with a modern analogy, if something I remember can still be considered "modern." When I first studied sophisticated mathematical estimates, I learned to use a slide rule, which today is as valuable to an engineer as an abacus. Relative to the calculator, a slide rule does not provide accurate measurements, and someone using a slide rule must allow a fairly significant margin of error in one direction or the other, depending on the situation.

Today, complex computations are made with calculators, which provide far more accurate results that can be rounded off, as necessary, to the nearest tenth, millionth, quadrillionth or smaller. Of course, using a calculator still requires one to round upward or downward, but because it is much more precise, the margin of error is greatly reduced.

How irrational are you?

Numerous *halachic* questions require mathematical calculations, involving what we call "irrational numbers." An irrational number means one that cannot be expressed in fractional notation. Another way of explaining an irrational number is that its value can never be calculated totally accurately, but can only be estimated.

The two most common examples of irrational numbers that show up in *Chazal* are:

Pi

(1) The ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, which we are used to calling by the Greek letter π (pronounced like the word "pie," and spelled in English "pi"). Since the 19th century, the letter pi has been used to represent this number, because the Greek word for **periphery** is *peripherion*, which begins with the letter π . Hundreds of years earlier, the *Rambam* (*Commentary to the Mishnah, Eruvin* 1:5) noted that the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter is an irrational number that can only be approximated, and that the scientists of his era used an estimate of 3 and $\frac{1}{7}$, which is actually slightly greater than the value of π . The *Rambam* explains that since there is no accurate ratio, *Chazal* used a round number, three, for this calculation.

The diagonal of a square

(2) The length of a diagonal of a square, which is equal to the side of the square multiplied by the square root of two ($\sqrt{2}$). *Chazal* calculated the length of a diagonal of a square to be 1 and $\frac{2}{5}$ times its side, which is slightly smaller than the value of $\sqrt{2}$. (Another way of expressing this idea is that the ratio between the diagonal and the side is 7:5.) The fact that *Chazal's* figuring is somewhat smaller than the mathematical reality is already proved by *Tosafos* (*Sukkah* 8a s.v. *kol*).

Since both pi and the square root of two are irrational numbers, they can only be estimated, but can never be calculated with absolute accuracy.

Based on the above-quoted statement of the *Rambam*, we can already address one of our earlier questions: "Why would *Chazal* calculate using inaccurate approximations?" The answer is that any computation of the correlation of the circumference of a circle to its diameter will be an estimate. The only question is how accurate must this estimate be for the purpose at hand.

Chazal or *Tanach*?

Although the *Rambam* attributes the rounding of pi to *Chazal*, in actuality, there are sources in *Tanach* that calculate the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter as three-to-one. Both in *Melachim* (I 7:23) and again in *Divrei Hayamim* (II 4:2), *Tanach* teaches that the *Yam shel Shlomoh*, the large, round pool or *mikveh* that was built in the first *Beis Hamikdash*, was thirty *amos* in circumference and ten *amos* in diameter,

which provides a ratio of circumference to diameter of three-to-one. Thus, we can ask a question of the *Rambam*: Why does he attribute this ratio to *Chazal*, rather than the source for *Chazal*'s calculation, the *pesukim*?

In fact, the early commentaries to these verses already ask how the verse can make a calculation that we know is not accurate. The *Ralbag* suggests two options: either that the numbers used are intended to be a very broad estimate, or, alternatively, that the diameter is measured from the external dimensions of the *mikveh*, whereas the circumference is measured from its inside, which makes the estimate closer to mathematical reality.

According to the second approach of the *Ralbag*, no Biblical source uses an estimate of three-to-one as a substitute for pi. This will explain why the *Rambam* attributed the estimation of pi as three to *Chazal*, rather than to the *Tanach*. The *Rambam* was fully aware that one could interpret the verses according to the second approach of the *Ralbag*, in which case, there is no proof from the verse. He, therefore, attributed this estimate to *Chazal*.

Gemara Eruvin

The *Ralbag*'s approach reflects an earlier passage of *Gemara*. The *Mishnah* in *Eruvin* (13b) states that if the circumference of a pole is three *tefachim*, its diameter is one *tefach*, which means that the *Mishnah* assumes a ratio of three-to-one. The *Gemara* questions how the *Mishnah* knows that the ratio is three-to-one, and then draws proof from the above-quoted verse that the *Yam shel Shlomoh* was thirty *amos* around and ten *amos* across. The *Gemara* then debates whether the calculations of the *Yam shel Shlomoh* indeed result in a ratio of three-to-one, because one must also include the thickness of the pool itself, which offsets the computation. The *Gemara* eventually concludes that the verse was calculating from the inside of the pool, not its outside, and therefore the thickness of the pool's containing wall is not included in the calculation (*Eruvin* 14a).

Nevertheless, this *Gemara*'s discussion leaves the mathematician dissatisfied, a question already noted by *Tosafos*. If the internal diameter of the *Yam shel Shlomoh* was ten *amos*, its circumference must have been greater than thirty *amos*, and if its circumference was thirty *amos*, then its internal diameter must have been less than ten *amos*.

A different question

The *Rosh*, in his responsa, is bothered by a different question, based on Talmudic logic rather than on mathematical calculation. He finds the *Gemara*'s question requesting proof for the ratio between a circle's circumference and its diameter to be odd. The ratio between a circle's circumference and its diameter is a value that one should calculate. By its nature, this is not a question that requires a Biblical proof or source.

In the literature that we have received from the *Rosh*, he asks this question in two different places. In his responsa (*Shu't HaRosh* 2:19), we find a letter that he wrote to the *Rashba*, in which he asked the *Rashba* a series of questions that the *Rosh* notes bother him tremendously, and to whom he has no one else to turn for an answer. One of the questions the *Rosh* asks is: "Why does the *Gemara* ask for a Biblical source for a mathematical calculation?"

It is curious to note that a later commentary mentions that, in all the considerable literature that we have received from the *Rashba*, we have no recorded answer of the *Rashba* to this question of the *Rosh* (*Cheishek Shlomoh* to *Eruvin* 14a).

Another comment of the Rosh

The *Tosafos HaRosh* commentary to *Eruvin*, which was published for the first time relatively recently, is the second place where the *Rosh* asks why the *Gemara* wanted a Biblical source for a mathematical calculation. There, the *Rosh* provides an answer to this question: Since the calculation of three-to-one is not accurate, the *Gemara* wanted a biblical source as proof that we are permitted to rely on this estimate.

(The *Cheishek Shlomoh*, whom I quoted above, provides the same answer to this question as does the *Rosh* in his *Tosafos*. The *Cheishek Shlomoh* never saw the *Tosafos HaRosh*, which had not yet been printed in his day.)

Curiosity about the Tosafos HaRosh

There is an interesting historical point that can presumably be derived from the fact that, in the *Tosafos HaRosh*, the *Rosh* answers the question that he raised and accredits this answer to himself. This should be able to prove which work the *Rosh* had written earlier, and also whether he ever received an answer to his question from the *Rashba*. This analysis is based on the following question: Why did the *Rosh* cite an answer in his *Tosafos*, but not in his responsum, which was addressed as a question to the *Rashba*. There are three obvious possibilities:

(1) Although the *Rosh* wrote this answer in his *Tosafos*, he was dissatisfied with it, and therefore wrote a question to the *Rashba*. I would reject this answer because, if it is true, then, in his correspondence to the *Rashba*, the *Rosh* would have mentioned this answer and his reason for rejecting it.

(2) The *Rosh* indeed received an answer, either this one or a different answer, from the *Rashba*. I reject this approach also, because, were it true, the *Rosh* would have quoted the *Rashba*'s answer in his *Tosafos* and, if need be, discussed it.

(3) Therefore, I conclude that the *Rosh*, indeed, never received an answer to the question he asked of the *Rashba* and subsequently reached his own conclusion as to how to answer the question, which he then recorded in the *Tosafos HaRosh*. This would lead us to conclude that the *Tosafos HaRosh* was written later in his life than his responsa, or, at least, this responsum.

Mathematical accuracy

At this point, we can address one of earlier questions. When making *halachic* calculations, may we rely on these estimates, or do we need to be mathematically more accurate? We might be able to prove this point by noting something in the *Mishnah* in *Eruvin* quoted above. The *Mishnah* there ruled that, under certain circumstances, an area that is fully enclosed on three of its sides and has a beam a *tefach* wide above the fourth side is considered *halachically* fully enclosed, and one may carry inside it. The *Mishnah* then proceeds to explain that if the beam is round and has a circumference of three *tefachim*, one may carry inside the area because, based on the calculation that the relationship of its circumference to its diameter is three-to-one, the beam is considered to be a *tefach*-wide. However, as the *Rambam* notes, a beam that has a circumference of three *tefachim* is actually less than a *tefach* in diameter, and therefore one should not be permitted to carry in this area!

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (*Orach Chayim* 363:22; *Yoreh Deah* 30:13) notes this problem and concludes that one may carry in this area. He contends that this is exactly what the *Gemara* was asking when it requested Scriptural proof for a mathematical calculation. "Upon what *halachic* basis may we be lenient in using this estimate of three-to-one, when this will permit carrying in an area in which the beam is less than a *tefach* wide? The answer is that this is a *halachah* that we derive from the verse."

To clarify this concept, the *Chazon Ish* notes that the purpose of mitzvos is to draw us nearer to *Hashem*, to accept His reign, and to be meticulously careful in observing His laws. However, none of this is conflicted when the Torah teaches that we may use certain calculations, even if they are not completely mathematically accurate. In this instance, relying on these estimates is exactly what the Torah requires (*Chazon Ish*, *Orach Chayim* 138:4). As expressed by a different author, the *Gemara* (*Eruvin* 4a; *Sukkah* 5b) teaches that the measurements, the *shiurim*, required to fulfill mitzvos are all *halachah lemoshe misinai*, laws that *Moshe Rabbeinu* received as a *mesorah* on *Har Sinai*. Similarly, these estimates of irrational numbers mentioned above are all *halachah lemoshe misinai* that one may rely upon to fulfill mitzvos, whether or not they are mathematically accurate. The same Torah takes these calculations into consideration when instructing us which dimensions are required in order to fulfill specific mitzvos (*Shu't Tashbeitz* 1:165).

In the context of a different *halachah* in the laws of *Eruvin*, the *Mishnah Berurah* makes a similar statement, contending that we can rely on *Chazal*'s estimates, even when the result is lenient. However, the *Mishnah Berurah* there vacillates a bit in his conclusion, ruling that one can certainly rely on this when the issue is a rabbinic concern (*Shaar Hatziyun* 372:18). In a responsum, Rav Moshe Feinstein questions why the *Mishnah*

Berurah limits relying on this approach, and Rav Moshe rules unequivocally that one may rely on these estimates even when it involves leniency in *de'oraysa* laws (*Shu't Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah* Volume 3 #120:5).

How straight are my tefillin?

Personally, I find the context of Rav Moshe's *teshuvah* very interesting. There is a *halacha lemoshe misinai* that requires that the boxes of the *tefillin*, the *batim*, must be perfectly square. Rav Moshe was asked whether there is a *halachic* preference to use scientific measuring equipment to determine that one's *tefillin* are perfectly square. Rav Moshe rules that there is neither a reason nor a *hiddur* in measuring the *tefillin* squareness this accurately. Since *Chazal* have used the calculation of 1.4 or a ratio of 7:5, which we know is an estimate, to determine the correct diagonal of a square, there is no requirement to make one's *tefillin* squarer than this, and it is perfectly fine simply to measure the length of each of the sides of one's *tefillin* and its two diagonals to ascertain that the ratio between the diagonal and the side is 7:5.

In the above-cited responsum, Rav Moshe notes that he had heard that the Brisker Rav, Rav Yitzchak Zeev Soloveichik, had ruled that it was preferable to check one's *tefillin* in the most scientific method available. Rav Moshe writes that he finds this suggestion very strange and disputes its being *halachically* correct (*Shu't Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah* Volume 3 #120:5).

Thus, according to these authorities, we have answered one of our previous questions: “

When making *halachic* calculations, may we rely on these estimates, or do we need to be mathematically more accurate?” The answer is that, indeed, the purpose of *Chazal*'s making these estimates was that observing *halachah* does not require that these calculations be mathematically precise, provided they meet the criteria that the *halachah* established.

An alternate approach

Although the majority of late authorities conclude that the calculations of *Chazal* are, indeed, part of the *halachos* of *shiurim*, this is not a universally-held position. The *Tashbeitz*, a *rishon*, wrote a lengthy responsum on the topic, in which he presents two ways to explain why *Chazal* used estimates that are not precisely accurate. His first approach reaches the same conclusion as we have already found in the later *poskim*, that these measurements are included within the *halachos* of *shiurim* that are part of the *halachah lemoshe misinai*.

The second approach of the *Tashbeitz*, however, differs with the above-mentioned *halachic* conclusion. In his second approach, he contends that all the above estimates were meant for pedagogic, but not *halachic* purposes. The rounding of pi to three and the diagonal of a square to 1.4 were provided to make the material easily comprehensible to all students, since every individual is required to know the entire Torah. Thus, when *Chazal* used these estimates in calculating the laws, their intent was to enable the average student to comprehend the *halachic* material, not to provide the most accurate interpretation. When an actual *halachic* calculation is made, it must be totally accurate. Any *halachic* authority involved would realize that he must use a highly accurate mathematical computation and then round either upward or downward as necessary for the specific application. (A similar position is held by *Chiddushim Uviurim, Ohalos* 5:6.)

Conclusion:

Certainly, the majority of late *halachic* opinions conclude that the estimates of *Chazal* are meant to be *halachically* definitive and not simply pedagogic in nature. However, I leave it to the individual reader to ask his or her *posek* what to do when a practical question presents itself.

We never forgot Jerusalem

By JONATHAN SACKS

June 5, 2014 Thursday 7 Sivan 5774

Whenever Jews remembered Jerusalem something good came of it. Whenever they forgot Jerusalem, bad things happen.

There are moments that make Jerusalem feel like no other place on earth; when you feel yourself lifted beyond time and space and embraced, as it were, by *zreut olam*, the arms of eternity.

There is no other place in the world where this happens. I want to share with you three epiphanies that changed my life.

The first took place in 1969. I had come to study in Israel following the completion of my first degree, and was standing on the newly rebuilt Hebrew University campus on Mount Scopus as the sun began to set, bathing the whole landscape in a divine radiance.

As I found myself looking down on the Temple Mount, I recalled the famous story at the end of *Masechet Makot*, where Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues are looking down at the ruins of the Temple and see a fox walking through the place that was once the Holy of Holies. As the rabbis wept, Rabbi Akiva smiled and laughed, and when asked how he could, Rabbi Akiva retold the two interlinked prophecies of Uriah – who foresaw the day when Jerusalem would be ruined – and Zachariah – who saw the day it would be rebuilt.

Said Rabbi Akiva, until he saw the first prophecy fulfilled, he was not sure the second would be. Now he had seen the first prophecy fulfilled, he knew the second would one day also come true.

I remember standing at almost that exact spot and being overwhelmed with emotion.

For almost 2,000 years, Jews had waited for that moment, and ours was the generation that lived to see Jerusalem reunited and rebuilt. We saw the realization of Zachariah's prophecy 24 centuries ago.

We had lived to see in person what our greatest prophets could only see in a vision.

And I was struck by a question.

If only Rabbi Akiva had known how long it would take, would he still have believed? Rabbi Akiva, a supporter of Bar Kokhba, thought the rebellion would succeed and believed that the Temple would be rebuilt in his lifetime. If Rabbi Akiva had seen the devastation, persecution and hatred that occurred as a result of the rebellion and after, would he have still believed? The answer is of course he would, because that is what Jews did all through the generations.

No people ever loved a city more. We saw Jerusalem destroyed twice, besieged 23 times, captured and recaptured 44 times, and yet in all those years, wherever Jews lived they never ceased to pray about Jerusalem, face Jerusalem, speak the language of Jerusalem, remember it at every wedding, in every home they built, and at the high points of the Jewish year.

I ask myself how could Jews believe so much in a city they had been exiled from for so long? The answer, of course, is very powerful and is contained in two words in the story of Jacob. Recall, the brothers return home and show Jacob the blood-stained coat of Joseph. Realizing Joseph has gone, Jacob weeps, and when the brothers move to comfort him we are told, *Veyimaein lehitnachen*, Jacob “refused to be comforted.” Why? There are, after all, laws in Judaism about the limits of grief; there is no such thing as a bereavement for which grief is endless. The answer is that Jacob had not yet given up hope that Joseph was still alive. To refuse to be comforted is to refuse to give up hope.

That is what Jews did with Jerusalem. They remembered the promise that Am Yisrael had made by the waters of Babylon, *Im eshkachech Yerushalayim tishkach yemini*, “If I forget Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its cunning.” We never forgot Jerusalem. We were never comforted. We never gave up hope that one day we would return and because of that Jews never felt separated from Jerusalem.

And when it happened, in 1967, my Jewish identity was transformed when the world heard, “*Har habayit beyadeinu*,” “The Temple Mount is in our hands.” Those three words changed a generation. That was my first epiphany: That no love was ever as strong as between the Jews and Jerusalem.

MY SECOND epiphany happened just a few days ago on Jerusalem Day. Standing on the streets of the city, I watched as youngsters from around the

world, waving Israeli flags, sing and dance with a joy that was overwhelming. As I watched the celebrations, I was overcome with emotion because suddenly I had a vision of the 1.5 million children who were killed in the Shoah not because of anything they had done, not because of anything their parents had done, but because their grandparents happened to be Jews.

I remembered how 26 centuries ago, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision of the Jewish people reduced to a valley of dry bones. God asked shall these bones live, and Ezekiel saw them come together, take on flesh, and begin to breathe and live again. God promised Ezekiel he would open his peoples' graves and bring them back to the land.

I remembered the first reference to Israel outside the Bible on the Merneptah Stele, a block of granite engraved by Merneptah IV, successor to Ramses II, thought by many to have been the Egyptian pharaoh at the time of the Exodus.

It was an obituary, Israel is laid waste, her seed is no more.

I thought how some of the greatest empires the world has ever known – Egypt of the pharaohs, Assyria, Babylon, the Alexandrian Empire, the Roman Empire, the medieval empires of Christianity and Islam all the way to the Third Reich and the Soviet Union – were the superpowers of their day that bestrode the narrow world like a colossus, seemingly invulnerable in their time. And yet each tried to write the obituary of the Jewish people, and whilst they have been consigned to history, our people can still stand and sing Am Yisrael Chai. That was my second epiphany: The knowledge that what I was seeing on that day in Jerusalem was *Techiyat hamaiyim*, a collective people being bought back from death to life.

MY THIRD epiphany happened in early 1991. Having come to Israel prior to becoming chief rabbi, Elaine and I found ourselves in the middle of the First Gulf War. Towards the end of the war, one late Shabbat afternoon we were staying in Yemin Moshe when we heard beautiful music coming from one of the houses a few doors away. We went to see what was happening and found a group of Romanian Jews – a choir – who had just made *aliya* that week. Soon it seemed as though all the residents of Yemin Moshe had been drawn to the sound, people who had come to Jerusalem from all four corners of the world: America, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Eastern Europe and Arab lands.

Twenty-six centuries ago, the prophet Jeremiah said that a time would come when we would not thank God for bringing us out of the land of Egypt, but rather for bringing our people together from all the lands of the earth. This, second exodus, Jeremiah described, would be even more miraculous than the first. We lived to see this day, when Jews from 103

countries speaking 82 languages came to Israel to build not just their lives but the Jewish homeland. After generations it was Jerusalem that bought Jews together from all over the world as one people, in one voice, singing one song.

Whenever Jews remembered Jerusalem something good came of it. Whenever they forgot Jerusalem, bad things happen.

So long as Jews remembered Jerusalem, we knew we were still on a journey, one in which the Jewish people has been on ever since the first syllables of recorded time: "*Lech lecha m'artzech u'mimoladecha u'mibeit avicha*," ("Leave your land, your birthplace and your father's house"). That is what every one of those people in Yemin Moshe that afternoon had done.

That was my third epiphany: Never has a city had such power over a people's imagination.

Never did God love a people more and never were a people more loyal than our ancestors who endured 20 centuries of exile and persecution so that their children or grandchildren or great-grandchildren could come home to Jerusalem, *Ir hakodesh* (the holy city), the home of the Jewish heart.

As we stand here today and see a place of such beauty it takes your breath away. Jerusalem is the place where all the prayers of all the Jews across all the centuries and from all the continents meet and take flight on their way to heaven. It is the place where you feel brushed by the wings of the *Shechina*.

We have had the privilege to be born in a generation that has seen Jerusalem reunited and rebuilt. We have seen the Jewish people come home.

Therefore, whilst this may be an individual award, God is calling on us all to be Guardians of Zion. Never has this been more important. We must all stand up for the one home our people has ever known and the one city our people has loved more than any other. We are all *shagrirey medinat Yisrael* (ambassadors for the State of Israel) and we must all make Israel's case in a world that sometimes fails to see the beauty we know is here. Let us all take on that task. With Hashem's help, we will succeed and we pray may the world make its peace with Israel so that Israel and Israel's God can bring peace to the world. *Bimhera beyamainu. Amen.*

This op-ed is an edited version of Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' speech on receiving The Guardian of Zion Award from Bar-Ilan University's Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies at The King David Hotel on Monday evening.

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