



BS"D

To: parsha@parsha.net
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON MASEI - 5771

In our 16th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to subscribe@parsha.net Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net> It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored anonymously for a Refuah Shleimah for **Chaim Yissachor Ben Chaye Mushkit b'soch sha'ar cholei yisroel**

Sponsored anonymously for a Refuah Shleimah for **Henna Sara bat Fayga Malya b'soch sha'ar cholei yisroel**

To sponsor a parsha sheet (proceeds to tzedaka) contact cshulman@parsha.net

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/>

Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Lord Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From several years ago]

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Home » Writings, Speeches, Broadcasts » Covenant & Conversation » 5769 Mattot Massei 5769 The long journey is nearing its close. The Jordan is almost within sight. The Torah (Num. 33: 1-49) sets out an extended list of the stages of the Israelites' route. It sounds prosaic: "They journeyed from X and camped at Y", over and over again. But the effect is to heighten tension and increase anticipation. Finally the list draws to a close, and G-d tells Moses: "Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess" (33: 53). This, according to Nachmanides, is the source of the command to dwell in the land of Israel and inherit it.

With this we come to one of the central tensions in Judaism and Jewish history: the religious significance of the land of Israel. Its centrality cannot be doubted. Whatever the subplots and subsidiary themes of Tanakh, its overarching narrative is the promise of and journey to the land. Jewish history begins with Abraham and Sarah's journey to it. Exodus to Deuteronomy are taken up with the second journey in the days of Moses. Tanakh as a whole ends with Cyrus king of Persia granting permission to Jews, exiled in Babylon, to return to their land: the third great journey.

The paradox of Jewish history is that though a specific territory, the holy land, is at its heart, Jews have spent more time in exile than in

Israel; more time longing for it than dwelling in it; more time travelling than arriving. Much of the Jewish story could be written in the language of today's sedra: "They journeyed from X and camped at Y".

Hence the tension. On the one hand, monotheism must understand G-d as non-territorial. The G-d of everywhere can be found anywhere. He is not confined to this people, that place – as pagans believed. He exercises His power even in Egypt. He sends a prophet, Jonah, to Nineveh in Assyria. He is with another prophet, Ezekiel, in Babylon. There is no place in the universe where He is not. On the other hand, it must be impossible to live fully as a Jew outside Israel, for if not, Jews would not have been commanded to go there initially, or to return subsequently. Why is the G-d beyond place to be found specifically in this place?

The sages formulated the tension in two striking propositions. On the one hand, "Wherever the Israelites went into exile, the Divine presence was exiled with them" (Mekhilta, Bo, 14). On the other, "One who leaves Israel to live elsewhere is as if he had no G-d." (Ketubot 110b). Can one find G-d, serve G-d, experience G-d, outside the holy land? Yes and No. If the answer was only Yes, there would be no incentive to return. If the answer were only No, there would be no reason to stay Jewish in exile. On this tension, the Jewish existence is built.

What then is special about Israel? In The Kuzari, Judah Halevi says that different environments have different ecologies. Just as there are some countries, climates and soils particularly suited to growing vines, so there is a country, Israel, particularly suited to growing prophets – indeed a whole Divinely-inspired people. "No other place shares the distinction of the Divine influence, just as no other mountain produces such good wine" (Kuzari, II: 9-12).

Nachmanides gives a different explanation. G-d, he says, "created everything and placed the power of the lower creatures in the higher beings, giving over each and every nation 'in their lands after their nations' some known star or constellation . . . But the land of Israel, in the middle of the inhabited earth, is the inheritance of G-d . . . He has set us apart from all the nations over whom He has appointed princes and other celestial powers, by giving us the land [of Israel] so that He, blessed be He, will be our G-d and we will be dedicated to His name." (Commentary to Lev. 18: 25). Though every land and nation is under the overarching sovereignty of G-d, only Israel is directly so. Others are ruled by intermediaries, earthly and heavenly. Their fate is governed by other factors. Only in the land and people of Israel do we find a nation's fortunes and misfortunes directly attributable to their relationship with G-d.

Judah Halevi and Nachmanides both expound what we might call mystical geography. The difference between them is that Judah Halevi looks to earth, Nachmanides to heaven. For Judah Halevi what is special about the land of Israel is its soil, landscape and climate. For Nachmanides, it is its direct governance by G-d. For both of them, religious experience is possible outside Israel, but it is a pale shadow of what it is in the land. Is there a way of stating this non-mystically, in concepts and categories closer to ordinary experience? Here is one way of doing so.

The Torah is not merely a code of personal perfection. It is the framework for the construction of a society, a nation, a culture. It is about what R. Aharon Lichtenstein called, in a memorable phrase, 'societal beatitude'. It contains welfare legislation, civil law, rules governing employer-employee relationships, environmental provisions, rules of animal welfare, public health, governmental and judicial systems.

The Torah stands at the opposite end of the spectrum from Gnosticism and other world-denying philosophies that see religion as an ascent of the soul to ethereal realms of the spirit. G-d lives here, on earth, in human lives, interactions and associations. The Torah is terrestrial because God seeks to dwell on earth. Thus the Jewish task is to create a

society with the Divine presence in its midst. Had Judaism been confined to matters of the spirit, it would have left vast areas of human concern – the entire realms of politics, economics and sociology – outside the religious sphere.

What was and is unique about Israel is that it is the sole place on earth (barring shortlived exceptions like the Himyarites in the 6th century and Khazars in the 8th, whose kings converted to Judaism) where Jews have had the chance to create an entire society on Jewish lines. It is possible to live a Jewish life in Manchester, Monsey, Madrid or Minsk. But it is always a truncated experience. Only in Israel do Jews conduct their lives in the language of the Bible, within time defined by the Jewish calendar and space saturated in Jewish history. Only there do they form a majority. Only there are they able to construct a political system, an economy and an environment on the template of Jewish values. There alone can Judaism be what it is meant to be: not just a code of conduct for individuals, but also and essentially the architectonics of a society.

Hence there must be some space on earth where Jews practice self-government under Divine sovereignty. But why Israel, specifically? Because it was and is a key strategic location where three continents, Europe, Africa and Asia, meet. Lacking the extended flat and fertile space of the Nile delta or the Tigris-Euphrates valley (or today, the oil-fields of Arabia), it could never be the base of an empire, but because of its location it was always sought after by empires. So it was politically vulnerable.

It was and is ecologically vulnerable, because its water-resources are dependent on rain, which in that part of the world is never predictable (hence the frequent 'famines' mentioned in Genesis). Its existence could never, therefore, be taken for granted. Time and again its people, surviving challenge, would experience this as a miracle. Small geographically and demographically, it would depend on outstanding achievement (political, military and economic) on the part of its people. This would depend, in turn, on their morale and sense of mission. Thus the prophets knew, naturally as well as supernaturally, that without social justice and a sense of divine vocation, the nation would eventually fall and suffer exile again.

These are, as it were, the empirical foundations of the mysticism of Halevi and Nachmanides. They are as true today as they were in ancient times. There is a directness, a naturalness, of Jewish experience in Israel that can be found nowhere else. History tells us that the project of constructing a society under Divine sovereignty in a vulnerable land is the highest of high-risk strategies. Yet, across forty centuries, Jews knew that the risk was worth taking. For only in Israel is G-d so close that you can feel Him in the sun and wind, sense Him just beyond the hills, hear Him in the inflections of everyday speech, breathe His presence in the early morning air and live, dangerously but confidently, under the shadow of His wings.

Having pride in Britain protects all cultures
Lord Jonathan Sacks

David Cameron was right to say that multiculturalism has failed, echoing similar statements by Nicholas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel. It was undertaken for the highest of motives. It was intended to create a more tolerant society, one in which everyone, regardless of colour, creed or culture, felt at home. Its effect has been precisely the opposite. Last week the Community Security Trust, the body that monitors antisemitic incidents, published its annual report, showing that the figures for 2010 were the second highest since record-keeping began. Jews especially in London and Manchester have found themselves attacked on their way to and from synagogue, or abused by passers-by. Jewish students feel themselves so intimidated on campuses throughout the country that last week they were in Westminster lobbying their MPs, something I cannot recall happening before. The Jewish community

in Britain is small, and antisemitism only one form of hatred among many. But the Jewish story is worth telling if only because the re-emergence of antisemitism in a culture is always an early warning signal of wider breakdown. The alarm has been sounding loudly for some time.

Many Jews of my parents' generation owed their lives to this country. It took them in when they faced persecution elsewhere. They loved Britain and deeply internalized its values. The inscription on the tombstone of a former President of the United Synagogue summed up the entire Anglo-Jewish experience. It read, "A proud Englishman and a proud Jew." The role model was Sir Moses Montefiore, the Victorian philanthropist and president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. The Times, in an editorial written on his hundredth birthday in 1884, said that he had shown that "fervent Judaism and patriotic citizenship are absolutely compatible with one another". That might sound condescending now, but considering what was happening to Jews elsewhere in Europe, it was a lifeline. My parents lived those values and taught them to us. They became the first Jews in their families for perhaps a thousand years not to teach their children Yiddish because they wanted us to be English and identify with the wider society. They were not naive. They remembered vividly when Mosley and the British Union of Fascists marched through London's East End. They knew the genteel anti-Semitism that was almost ubiquitous in certain literary and social circles. They knew that England was a class bound society with many faults. But they admired the British for their tolerance and decency, their sense of fair play and their understated but indomitable courage. They were proud to be English because the English were proud to be English. Indeed in the absence of pride there can be no identity at all. They integrated and encouraged us to go further because there was something to integrate into. At some time that pride disintegrated, to be replaced by what Kate Fox amusingly calls "one-downmanship." The British started seeing their own history as an irredeemable narrative of class, snobbery, imperialism, racism and social exclusion. It was in this atmosphere that, in the 1970s, multiculturalism was born. It said: there is no need to integrate. The first people to try multiculturalism, the Dutch, were also the first people to regret it. The Princeton sociologists Paul Sniderman and Louk Hagendoorn found that the Dutch favoured tolerance and opposed multiculturalism. When asked what the difference was, they replied that tolerance ignores differences; multiculturalism makes an issue of them at every point. Multiculturalism is part of the wider European phenomenon of moral relativism, a doctrine that became influential as a response to the Holocaust. It was argued that taking a stand on moral issues was a sign of an "authoritarian personality". Moral judgment was seen as the first step down the road to fanaticism. But moral relativism is the deathknell of a civilization. In a relativist culture, there is no moral consensus, only a clash of conflicting views in which the loudest voice wins. That is where we are today. The extremists command attention and capture the headlines, and they become the role models for the young. Since there is no national identity to claim their allegiance, there is no contest. Hence the phenomenon, widespread throughout Europe today but rare in the past, that the children of immigrants are more hostile to the host society than their parents were, and feel themselves more alien to its values. I have never known the British Jewish community, especially its university students, more anxious about the future than they are today. But I have heard the same from many Hindus and Sikhs. They feel that the more they seek to integrate, the less attention is paid to them by the government and the media. They are no problem, therefore they can be ignored. That too is terribly dangerous for the British future. Multiculturalism, entered into for the noblest of reasons, has suffered from the law of unintended consequences. By dissolving national identity it makes it impossible for groups to integrate because there is nothing to integrate into, and by failing to offer people pride in being British, it forces them to find sources of pride elsewhere. Without

shared values and a sense of collective identity, no society can sustain itself for long. I fear the extremism that is slowly but surely becoming, throughout the world, the siren song of the twenty-first century. We have to fight it here before we can convincingly oppose it elsewhere.

From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org

Rabbi Yissocher Frand
Parshas Masei

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 108, Toiveling Dishes. Good Shabbos! Ramban: Why was Parshas Nedarim given over specifically to "Roshei haMatos?"

Our parsha begins with Moshe Rabbenu telling the Jewish people the laws of Nedarim [vows]. The beginning of the parsha is unique in that it begins with the words "Speak to the heads of the tribes saying..." Most of the Torah was either told directly to the children of Israel (Daber el bnei Yisroel) or it was said to the Kohanim (Emor el haKohanim). We do not have any other portion that told specifically to the Roshei haMatos [Heads of the tribes].

The early commentaries themselves were bothered by this question. The Ramban in his Chumash commentary suggests that Parshas Nedarim is something that should not be said over to the masses. The concept of taking oaths and vows is very stringent; and when people will hear that you can be "matir" a neder or a father or husband can be "mefir" a neder, they will come to take these matters lightly. [Matir, Mefir, and Hataras Nedarim are technical terms for halachic devices that permit the "undoing" of vows.] Consequently, according to Ramban, these laws were only given to the Roshei HaMatos, the leaders of the nation, who could be trusted to deal with these concepts with the level of sophistication and reverence that they deserve.

Alternate Opinion of the Chasam Sofer on the same question:

The Chasam Sofer, however, offers a different answer to this question. The Chasam Sofer suggests that the leaders of the nation had a special need to be aware of these laws. The Chasam Sofer quotes the story of the Shofet [Judge] Yiftach, who in haste made a vow to offer as a Korban to G-d the first thing that came to greet him when he returned victoriously from battle. The first thing that came to greet him was his daughter. [Yiftach was the leader of Israel during the time of Judges (Shoftim Chapter 11).]

The Medrash in Bereishis Rabba asks, Why didn't Yiftach go to Pinchas, the grandson of Aharon HaKohen, and have his vow "permitted" through the vehicle of "Hataras Nedarim"? The Medrash answers that Pinchas was waiting for Yiftach to come to him (he being the "Gadol haDor") and Yiftach was waiting for Pinchas to come to him (he being the chief political and military officer in the country). While each was trying to protect the honor of his own position, the life of the daughter was lost.

The Medrash says that both Yiftach and Pinchas were punished for this:

Yiftach lost his life in a terrible disease where limbs started falling off one by one (as it says, "he was buried in the cities (plural) of Gilead") and Pinchas lost his ability to receive Ruach HaKodesh. The Chasam Sofer says that perhaps this is why the Torah was particularly concerned that the leaders be extremely careful and well versed in the laws of Nedarim.

Two observations are to be made on this teaching:< br>

1. We cannot project our own petty midos on people of the stature of Pinchas and Yiftach. Although the Medrash does say that in this situation they were punished for their actions, we must never confuse our own petty shortcomings with those of people who were Gedolei Olam [Unimaginably great leaders (literally "greats of the world")].

2. Many times, we see people do things because their Kavod [(personal) honor] was slighted. They do these things even though doing so is clearly to the detriment of both them and their own families. It is not unheard of for a person to sacrifice his own welfare or the welfare of his children on the altar of his ego. When a person's Kavod is affected, he can literally let his own children die.

We as human beings have a passion for kavod. The older we get, the more we have a tendency to be particular about our honor. A person needs an independent opinion to turn to -- be it his Rebbi, his Rav, his Rosh Yeshiva, or his good friend -- who can open his eyes to his own blindness regarding matters of Kavod. Only an independent opinion can help prevent a person from leading himself to self-destructive action or inaction.

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#108). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: # 108 is: Toiveling Dishes. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD RavFrands, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing. Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information.

<http://www.torah.org/learning/rabbiwein/5771/masei.html>

Rabbi Wein
Parshas Masei
Learn from Your Past!

The Torah records for us the travels of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai during their forty-year sojourn there. All of the stops and way stations are mentioned. Rashi explains that this is analogous to a parent reviewing to a grown child the record of a long family trip that was taken long ago and recalling how the then young child reacted to the matter at each and every location.

We are all acquainted with the cliché (trite as it may seem but nevertheless true) that life itself is a journey. When people travel and go forth on a journey they take photographs so that when they return home they can remember and recall the locations visited and the events that occurred in those places.

There is an inner drive within us to remember where we have visited and been in life. In fact, this is the basis for all memoirs and autobiographies. We do not wish to forget what happened to us on our life's journey and we do not wish to be forgotten by others that come after us.

This drive to remember and recall and then to retell our story is a very powerful one. If all politics is local then all history is personal and individual. Therefore the review in this week's parsha of all of the stops and locations in the desert made and visited by the Jewish people carries with it special and poignant meaning. It speaks to our human emotions and not only to our intellect and sense of the past.

Part of the benefit of reviewing past events and their locations is to enable us to learn from those experiences and not to foolishly repeat past errors and wrong decisions. That is what Rashi means when he recounts for us the example of the parent and child revisiting their long trip -- "Here your head hurt, here you tripped and fell, etc." The parent is telling the child to watch out in the coming years and not to be so negligent in the future.

The entire thrust of knowing Jewish history and understanding and appreciating our past is to guide our attitudes and behavior in the present and future and not to unnecessarily repeat past errors and wrongs. An individual or a nation that knows little or next to nothing of its past cannot realistically expect to make wise decisions in the present or immediate future.

The Jewish people have had such a long, eventful and rich history. We have lived everywhere on this planet and experienced every type of government rule ever known to humankind. Our travels, so to speak, should have given us the ability to judge current problems in the light of past experience. But this ability is naturally contingent on somehow remembering and recalling the events of the past.

The abysmal ignorance of a large section of the Jewish people regarding this long past of ours has contributed to much of the dissonance in our current Jewish world. We should take out our old photo album and study it.

Shabat shalom,
Rabbi Berel Wein

Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com Visit www.rabbiwein.com for a complete selection of Rabbi Wein's books and tapes.

From TorahWeb torahweb@torahweb.org Tue, Jul 26, 2011

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski
Getting the Uninterested Child to Shul

Recently there has been some discussion as to whether parents should force an unwilling child to go to shul. But there are some shuls where I wonder why any youngsters should want to go there.

When one enters a shul, one should recite the verse, "As for me, through Your abundant kindness I will enter Your House; I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You." Regrettably, in some shuls this is all but true. There is no awe of Hashem.

If the minyan is scheduled to begin at 8:30 AM, I see some people strolling in as late as 10 AM.

When I was in medical school, the pathology lecture began promptly at 8 AM, at which time the door to the lecture room was closed. If one arrived at 8:01, one could not enter. The fact that one's wife was sick and one had to drop off the baby at one's mother was not taken into account. Nothing short of a court order could have gotten the door open. You had better believe, we had respect for pathology

The Talmud states that when davening one should see oneself standing before Hashem (Berachos 28b). If one does not feel one is addressing Hashem, his verbalizations are not tefillah.

If the shul is a place of awe, where one should communicate with G-d, people should be respectful enough to be there at 8:30. Some people are more precise with being at the theater on time.

Then there is the inexcusable practice of conversing during services. In one shul, the rabbi had to stop the chazzan a number of times until silence could be restored. I cannot think of a chillul Hashem greater than this. Little wonder that the Shulchan Aruch says that this is an unforgivable sin, a term not even applied to eating treifeh! (Orach Chayim 124)

A shul is a beis hamikdash me'at, a smaller version of the Holy Temple (Orach Chaim 151). And yet, some still maintain a "Kiddush club," where children can see their parents drinking to excess.

How on earth can one expect young people to want to attend shuls like this? One worshipper responded to my criticism with, "What's the problem? A shul is a social club." With what right may you force a child to attend a social club?

If your child has no interest in davening, that may be remedied by spending ten minutes a few times a week (a bit more on Shabbos) going over part of the prayers and explaining them to him/her. This can arouse interest in what is otherwise just words. This may take some preparation. There are a number of books on tefillah that can make the prayers more interesting. If you cannot spare the time to help your child develop interest in tefillah, I doubt that you can be critical of his/her lack of interest in davening.

If we make shul respectful and the tefillos meaningful, our children are more likely to want to go to shul.

Copyright © 2011 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

from Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh kby@kby.org reply-to
kby@kby.org to Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh
<kby@kby.org> date Thu, Jul 28, 2011 at 11:00 PM subject
Parshat Masei

This is the Land that will Fall to You
Rosh Hayeshiva Harav Mordechai Greenberg, shlita

Sefer Bamidbar concludes the period of the exile in the desert. At the end of the fortieth year, we are at the entrance to Eretz Yisrael; we conquer the eastern bank of the Jordan River, map the boundaries of the Land, and prepare for battle.

This mitzvah of possessing the land is a permanent one for all generations, as the Ramban writes (addendum to Rambam's Seder Hamitzvot #4):

We are commanded to possess the Land that G-d has given us, and that we should not leave it in the hands of any other nation or desolate without inhabitants, as it says in Parshat Masei, "You shall possess the Land and you shall settle in it."

The rejection of "the coveted land" (cf. Tehillim 106:24) is what caused the long exile. Yet, in many people's mind, the question persists, why did G-d "imprison" us specifically in this tract of land?

The Ramban deals with this at length in Parshat Acharei Mot. In a succinct manner, Rav Kook zt"l writes in his introduction to Orot:

Eretz Yisrael is not something external, an external acquisition of the nation, merely as a means for the goal of the general assemblage and maintaining [the nation's] material, or even spiritual, existence -- Eretz Yisrael is bound to the nation with a bond of life.

Every means has a substitute. When we see Eretz Yisrael as a means for the security of Am Yisrael, as a national, or even cultural, center, it is possible in times of need to find a substitute. However, Eretz Yisrael is the Land of Life. On the pasuk, "I shall walk before Hashem in the Land of life" (Tehillim 116:9), Chazal comment: "This is Eretz Yisrael." Similarly, the Torah says numerous times, "So that you may live, and come and possess the Land." (Devarim 4:1; 8:1; 11:8) Since the nature of Israel is, "You who cling to Hashem, your G-d -- you are all alive today" (Devarim 4:4), this life and this clinging are possible only in the land of life. Just as a person does not seek explanations for the essence of life, so, too, there is no need to provide reasons for living in Eretz Yisrael, since life is primarily in it.

Therefore, Israel does not find a complete life other than in this place. Chazal interpret the pasuk, "The dove could not find a resting place for the sole of its foot" (Bereishit 8:9), as alluding to Knesset Yisrael, which is compared to a dove. This is what it says: "Among those nations you will not be tranquil, there will be no rest for the sole of your foot." (Devarim 28:65)

On the other hand, the other nations do not find tranquility in Eretz Yisrael, as the Ramban writes, "They are not fit for you, and you, as well, are not fit for them."

Eretz Yisrael is not only a place to live in, but rather it is the Sanctuary of Hashem (Yirmiya 7:4), as the Ramban writes. The phrases,

"Cain left the presence of Hashem" (Bereishit 4:16), "Yonah arose to flee to Tarshish from before Hashem" (Yonah 1:3), allude to Eretz Yisrael. The Ramban (Vayikra 18:25) writes about this:

We may not explain more about the [Kabalistic] notion of the Land, but if you are able to understand the first "earth" mentioned in the pasuk, "In the beginning" ... you will understand a great and hidden secret, and you will understand what our Sages said, "The Temple up above corresponds to the Temple below."

His intention is that when it says, "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth," (Bereishit 1:1), this means that He first created the "upper" earth, and afterwards the corresponding "lower" one.

This is what it says in our parsha, "This is the land that will fall to you as an inheritance." (Bamidbar 34:1) Chazal ask, "Does the land fall?" The Sfat Emet explains their answer to mean that so long as the Canaanites were in it, the necessary vessels to contain the "upper" earth were not yet formed. Only when Israel enters it, the upper earth "falls" and connects with the lower one, and thereby a parallel is formed between the upper realms and the lower one.

The battle over Eretz Yisrael is not over territory or the rights of other nations. This is a universal war over G-d's Throne in the world: "For the Hand is on the Throne of G-d etc.-- His Name is not complete and His Throne is not complete until Amalek's name is eradicated." (Shemot 17:16 and Rashi there) Therefore, the concluding phases of the war will focus on Yerushalayim, since, "At that time people will call Yerushalayim, 'The Throne of Hashem.'" (Yirmiya 3:17) and the nations of the world are seeking to prevent this. Otherwise it is impossible to understand the great interest of all the nations in this small place.

However, we are sure, as we say in our prayers, that "not one word of Your words will return empty," "and our eyes will see Your return to Zion with mercy."

VBM-SICHOT71 -43: Parashat Masei Yeshivat Har Etzion
<office@etzion.org.il> Wed, Jul 27, 2011 at 8:49 AM To: yhe-
sichot@etzion.org.il

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT
MIDRASH (VBM) STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI
YESHIVA

NEW BOOK: By Faith Alone: The Story of Rabbi Yehuda Amital Available at a
27% discount here.

In loving memory of Fred Stone, Yaakov Ben Yitzchak A"H beloved father and
grandfather, Ellen & Stanley, Jacob, Zack, Ezra, Yoni, Eliana and Gabi Stone,
Teaneck NJ

PARASHAT MASEI

SICHA OF HARAV MOSHEH LICHTENSTEIN COMPLEMENTARY REPROACHES

Translated by David Strauss

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YIRMIYAHU AND
YESHAYAHU Over the next two weeks, we will be reading
two haftarot of doom that deal with Israel's abandonment of God, the
first taken from the beginning of the book of Yirmiyahu and the second
from the beginning of the book of Yeshayahu. Apart from the
prophecies of consecration, these two haftarot constitute the opening
prophecies of these books. I wish to compare and contrast the two
rebukes in the hope that this will shed light on these prophecies and
allow us to better understand the causes of the destruction.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES Let us begin with the
similarities. Both prophets speak of Israel's abandonment of God, using
the metaphor of harlotry to describe the phenomenon – "How is the
faithful city become a harlot" (Yeshayahu 1:21); "when upon every hill
and under every green tree you did sprawl, playing the harlot"

(Yirmiyahu 2:20). Nevertheless, there seem to be significant differences
between the two prophecies. First of all, Yeshayahu's rebuke is harsher
and directed at the people as a whole, whereas Yirmiyahu speaks in a
more moderate tone. Yeshayahu presents Israel's lack of gratitude
reflected in their abandonment of the Creator as contrary to natural
morality and as a perversion of basic religious intuition: The ox
knows its owner, and the ass his master's trough; but Israel does not
know, My people does not consider. (v.3) Even an animal
instinctively recognizes who provides its basic necessities and therefore
remains attached to its trough. It does not go out to graze in other fields,
but rather remains faithful to its provider and does not become estranged
from him. Man, however, abandons Him who provides him with all his
needs, and fails to recognize Him as such. This, of course, is presented
as a severe religious failure and stated as a caustic rebuke. Thus, the
next verse continues: "A sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a
seed of evildoers, children that deal corruptly: they have forsaken the
Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone
away backward" (v. 4).

Yirmiyahu, on the other hand, does
not present the people's idol worship as corruption, but rather as the
tragic mistake of a panic-stricken and erring people. Therefore, the
prophet wonders how it can be that the people prefer idols, which have
no substance, over the God of Israel. What iniquity have your fathers
found in Me, that they have gone far from Me, and have walked after
vanity, and are become themselves worthless? Neither did they say,
Where is the Lord who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led
us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through
a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no
man passed through, and where no man dwelt? (vv. 5-6) This
seems to be most properly punctuated with a question mark, rather than
with an exclamation point. This line of astonishment regarding Israel's
actions continues: For pass over the isles of Kitiyim, and see; and
send to Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there has been such a
thing. Has a nation changed their gods, even though they are not gods?
But My people have changed its glory for that which does not profit.
(vv. 10-11) The metaphor that Yirmiyahu uses to describe Israel's
conduct is also different in its very essence from that used by Yeshayahu.
As we have already seen, Yeshayahu sharply contrasts Israel to animals
who know their place, whereas Yirmiyahu simply asks in wonderment:
"Is Israel a servant? Is he a homeborn slave? Why is he become a prey?"
(v. 14). THE ADDRESS OF THE REBUKE

Another difference between the two prophecies is the address
to which the arguments are directed. Yeshayahu accuses the people and
asserts that they are "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity,"
whereas Yirmiyahu critiques the people's leaders:

The priests said not, Where is the Lord? And they that handle the
Torah knew Me not: the rulers also transgressed against Me, and the
prophets prophesied by the Ba'al, and walked after things that do not
profit. (v. 8)

Thus, Yirmiyahu continues the line taken by many prophets
and often expressed in Scripture, according to which the criticism is
directed not at the failed political leadership, but at the spiritual
leadership, which is held responsible for the corrupt and irresponsible
social and religious atmosphere. Many examples can be brought to
illustrate that this is a general approach found throughout the later
Prophets. Here I wish to show how this perspective fits in with
Yirmiyahu's entire prophecy, as opposed to Yeshayahu's rebuke.
THE SOCIAL DIFFERENCE We now come to the
fundamental difference between the second and the third "haftarot of
destruction," and between the book of Yeshayahu and the book of
Yirmiyahu in general. Yeshayahu's primary struggle is with a hedonistic
society that tramples, exploits and oppresses the weak, and creates a
deep social divide. Even though the geo-political situation is beginning

to deteriorate with the rise of Ashur, and the political cracks that will ultimately lead to the great crisis are growing, the people do not feel that they are living under constant threat, nor do they plan their actions based on a sense of immediate physical danger. In such conditions, high society flourishes in its corruption, and Yeshayahu fights against it. However we understand the political reality of the time, what we can say is that Yeshayahu identifies the serious spiritual failure of his generation on the interpersonal plane. This finds expression in the haftara of Chazon in the famous verses: ... Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. (vv. 15-17)

How is the faithful city become a harlot? It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Your silver is become dross, you wine is mixed with water: your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loves bribes, and follows after rewards: they judge not the fatherless neither does the cause of the widow reach them. (vv. 21-23)

Yirmiyahu, in contrast, lives in a threatened and retreating society that is under constant security pressure. In such circumstances, people turn to other-worldly spiritual factors, both out of a sense and recognition of the nullity of pleasures and a change in priorities that follows from new situation, and out of the hope that the spiritual factor found outside the world of man will be able to overcome the earthly political reality and save them from their enemies. Seeing the spiritual state of the people – rather than geo-political alliances – as the basis of political reality is what underlies the spiritual struggle in the book of Yirmiyahu. Whereas Yeshayahu preached about this and the people ignored his warnings, Yirmiyahu's generation adopted this outlook, but instead of turning to God, the King of kings, they went after vanity. Thus, their fundamental problem was not moral corruption, but substituting another god for the God of Israel.[1] The people recognize that a spiritual factor is responsible for their fate, but they err in their identification of this factor.

CORRUPT SOCIETY OR SPIRITUAL ERROR

It seems to me that the two differences referred to above follow directly from this distinction. Yeshayahu directs his prophecy at a corrupt society, in which the individual sets himself up in the center, while harming the weak and trampling over justice and morality. Their abandonment of God does not follow from their turning to some other entity, but from placing man in the center. Just as the weak are pushed aside, so too God is pushed out of the world of the greedy hedonist. Thus, the sharp contrast between ungrateful man and the beast with its natural intuition. This also seems to underlie Yeshayahu's viewing the entire society as sinful, because the hedonism and immorality are seen as having spread through the entire society. The urges are egotistical, and the individual is more to blame than are the leaders.[2]

Yirmiyahu, in contrast, struggles with spiritual error stemming from a perverted view of metaphysical reality, and therefore his primary concern is to emphasize the mistake and express his astonishment about it. And since the error is primarily spiritual, his argument is with the priests, the prophets and the teachers of Torah. For it is their responsibility to provide the people with spiritual guidance. The fact that the world of the spirit is beyond the physical world and that God is transcendent creates a difficulty for the ordinary person and obligates the spiritual leadership to guide him. Let us not forget that "idols appear near, even though they are distant," whereas God appears distant, even though He is near.[3] Therefore the possibility of error exists and it falls upon the shoulders of the teachers and prophets who can see through the religious fog to teach the people.

INDIVIDUALS OR A PEOPLE

We can now add two more points that characterize our haftara. First of all, Yirmiyahu directs his words toward Israel as a people. Yeshayahu's rebuke is directed primarily at the conduct of individuals, and his assertion that the people are "laden with iniquity" follows from the fact that the nation has many individual sinners. Both the sins and the hypocrisy in the worship of God that Yeshayahu points to relate to the conduct of individuals, because that is the nature of such sins. Even when we talk about a rotten public climate, this is an expression of the community as a collection of individuals, and not an independent national entity.

In contrast, Yirmiyahu's words are directed primarily at Israel as a nation. Even the contrast that he draws between Israel and the nations speaks of the religious identity of the people as a people ("has a nation changed their gods") and what he says about Israel is said about Israel as a nation ("is Israel a servant", "but My people have changed its glory"). Thus, Yirmiyahu continues the line that he started with in the previous prophecy (which we read at the end of last week's haftara), where he spoke about Israel and God playing the roles of bride and groom during Israel's trek through the wilderness.

FALSEHOOD AND BETRAYAL

Let us now move on to the second and more significant issue in the haftara, namely, Yirmiyahu's understanding of idol worship. Yirmiyahu relates to Israel's worship of idols as an abandonment of God. Of course, idolatry is folly and falsehood, or as Yirmiyahu puts it, "vanity" and "things that do not profit." Indeed, in many places, the prophets attack idolatry for the lie that it represents, as we shall see in the haftara for Shabbat Nachamu, where Yeshayahu scorns and derides the folly of idolatry. But the relationship that exists between God and Israel is based not only on intellectual recognition of the truth; it is a personal and existential relationship. This principle is heavily emphasized by the Kuzari as the basis for the service of God, and its application regarding the prohibition of idol worship finds explicit expression in the Ramban's commentary to the Torah: In my opinion, the Torah mentions jealousy regarding idol worship exclusively with respect to Israel. The reason for the jealousy is that God set Israel apart for Himself as His unique people, as I explained above. If His own people turn to other gods, God will be jealous of them, just as a man is jealous when his wife goes off after other men, or when his servant takes himself another master. Scripture does not use the term with the other nations, to whom He gave the hosts of heaven. (Ramban, commentary to Shemot 20:2)

The Ramban means to say that idolatry for Israel is not merely a metaphysical error and a failure to recognize God as Creator and Ruler, but also a betrayal of the relationship between lover and beloved. For him, as for the Kuzari, this relationship is unique to Israel, and this is what underlies the book of Shir ha-Shirim. A key verse in this week's haftara points to the two-fold problem of Israel's turning to idols: For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. (v. 13)

As we see, the prophet complains about two evils. The one is going after broken cisterns that can hold no water, that is, turning to falsehood and vanity. This, however, is not the entirety of his complaint; he adds another argument, namely, the very abandonment. The problem is not the error, but Israel's betrayal of God. This point is emphasized by the contrast made to the other nations: For pass over the isles of Kitiyim, and see; and send to Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there has been such a thing. Has a nation changed their gods, even though they are not gods? (vv. 10-11)

Yirmiyahu's rebuke can only be understood in the framework of the assumption that idolatry constitutes betrayal and not only error. If idolatry is merely an error, why bring support from the fact that other

nations stubbornly cling to their mistakes? Are we supposed to learn something from that? If, however, we recognize that a "personal" relationship exists between Israel and God, we can then understand that the prophet contrasts Israel's treachery with nations' fidelity to their gods. **TWO REBUKES – TWO REPAIRS** To summarize, two haftarot of rebuke are directed at us during the last two Shabbatot of the Three Weeks. One focuses on the religious problem, on Israel's faithfulness to God, and the leadership's responsibility in that regard, whereas the other emphasizes the problems of justice and righteousness and turns to the individual as well as to society that they should improve their moral ways. Israel's redemption will come through the repairs of these two problems, and Zion will be redeemed through judgment and return to God. We therefore read both haftarot, each one complementing the other, in order to reprimand Israel and bring them to repent.

[1] To remove all doubts, let me say that it is not my claim that this is the only problem that Yirmiyahu deals with, but that this is the most fundamental and important issue with which he struggles. The same is true regarding Yeshayahu.

[2] It is important to note that in many other places it is the leaders whom the prophets criticize regarding this matter. But in the framework of our comparison between the two haftarot, it may be argued that Yeshayahu's emphasis on pleasure is connected to the fact that his accusation is directed at the entire nation.

[3] "An idol appears near, but is distant. What is the reason? He carries it on his shoulder, bears it, and in the end his god is with him in his house; he cries out until he dies, but it does not hear nor does it save him from his troubles. The Holy One, blessed be He, on the other hand, appears far, but there is none closer than He, for Levi said: From the earth to the firmament is a walk of five hundred years, and from one firmament to the next is a walk of five hundred years, and the width of the firmament is [a walk of] five hundred years, and so too regarding each of the firmaments... See how elevated He is above His world, yet a person enters a synagogue, stands behind a pillar, and prays in a whisper, and the Holy One, blessed be He, hears his prayer, as it is stated: 'Now Channa spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard' (I Shmuel 1:13), and the Holy One, blessed be He, listened to her prayer. And so too regarding all of His creatures, as it is stated: 'A prayer of the afflicted, when he faints' (Tehilim 102:1) – like a person who speaks in his friend's ear and he hears. Is there a God closer than this, close to His creatures like a mouth to the ear?" (Yerushalmi, Berakhot 9:1).

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/10453>
Main > Judaism > Odyssey of Obliviousness: The Three Weeks
Judaism: Odyssey of Obliviousness: The Three Weeks
Any generation in which the Beit Hamikdosh was not rebuilt it is as if the Beit Hamikdosh was actually destroyed in that generation...

Shira Smiles

Shira Smiles is a sought-after international lecturer, popular seminary teacher and experienced curriculum developer. A well-respected former Los Angeles teacher, she now lives in Israel, where she teaches at Darchei Bina Seminary and leads a number of women's study groups. Shira also trains Torah teachers in special workshops all over the world. www.naaleh.com

{Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein}

Medrash Rabbah on Eichah points out that everything associated with the tragedy of Tisha B'Av is in a double measure. The verses state that Jerusalem sinned in double measure, that she received punishment from Hashem in double measure, and that Hashem will in the future console her in double measure.

Rav Reiss asks several questions on this Medrash. First, what does it mean to sin in double measure rather than in the number of sins, and

then how can a just God punish doubly for those sins. If we are to properly mourn the destruction of our Temple, it behooves us to study the nature of our sins as a means of rectifying them and leading to the rebuilding of our Temple.

The Gemarrah in different sections offers different reasons for the destruction. The best known reasons are that the first Beit Hamikdosh was destroyed because Bnei Yisroel transgressed the three cardinal sins while the second Beit Hamikdosh was destroyed because of unwarranted hatred of one for the other. Yet the Gemarrah cites Hashem's words to the prophet Yirmiyahu that having left the Torah was the reason for the destruction.

Finally, the Gemarrah in Shabbos cites multiple reasons that Yerushalayim was destroyed, among them desecration of the Shabbos, Torah learning becoming marginalized, the people no longer being humble, they belittling the sages, and other transgressions. However, Rav Schlessenger rightfully points out in Areset Sefateynu that just as the Gemarrah mentions different sins, it is also referring to different aspects of the destruction, destruction of the land, of the first and subsequently second Temples, and finally the destruction of Jerusalem. Only by studying the sins cited and discovering a core element will be find a focus for ourselves and our attempt to rectify the basis for the losses.

We are told that any generation in which the Beit Hamikdosh was not rebuilt it is as if the Beit Hamikdosh was actually destroyed in that generation. Rav Moshe Schwab in Maarhei Lev tries to understand this saying. After all, he reasons, there is a difference between unrealized potential, that of the potential for having the Temple rebuilt, and destruction after the Temple had been built but was subsequently destroyed. Those who have potential must work to realize that potential, but those who have witnessed the destruction have the added challenge of finding out what flaw caused them to fall after reaching such heights. We can continue to build bricks of the Beit Hamikdosh through our mitzvah observance, but unless we shore up the foundation, the walls will not last. Rav Schwab offers the analogy of trying to save one's money by putting it into a pocket with a hole at the bottom.

We are each a world unto ourselves with a mini Beit Hamikdosh with us, continues Rabbi Schwab. We each have the potential to rebuild the Beit Hamikdosh within ourselves. But we must make sure that our foundation is secure. When we say the Shema, for example, we must not only be aware to perfect the technical recitation so that each letter is distinct, but we must also "accept the yoke of heaven" which the recitation is meant to achieve. And in Yerushalayim proper, whose very name means the fear and awe of God, removing that element from our actions, even if the action itself is positive, removes a major component of our performance. Losing that passion for our connection to Hashem is in itself a transgression against Hashem, compounded if we allow it in Yerushalayim, the City of Fear of Hashem.

Most important, perhaps, is Rabbi Friefeld's explanation of an individual's performance of a mitzvah toward his fellow man. When one gives tzedakah, for example, does one smile at the recipient, making him feel whole and good, or does one give as he is obliged to do, but give grudgingly. The former is giving to the whole person while the latter is giving only to the need. Rabbi Friefeld explains that when dealing with our fellow man, we must cast a broad view upon him, seeing him in totality as created in the image of God, not with a narrow vision that sees only the pauper now crossing our path. Yerushalayim was a place of magnanimity, where no one ever said, "This place is too narrow, there isn't enough room for you;" there was always space for one more. A lack of respect for one another, a disregard for the totality of another human being created a rift in the fabric of our nation.

When this occurred in Yerushalayim itself, explains Rabbi Pinchas Roberts in Timeless Seasons, in the city of peace and unity, of Shalom and Shalaim, the same disregard became doubly significant. Therefore

Hashem destroyed the city and dispersed us among the nations, creating a physical disunity where only a sociological or psychological one formerly existed.

Hashem sends us wake up calls through catastrophic events in the world, says Rav Reiss. But if we interpret them as pure happenstance, as nothing to do with us, Hashem brings those calamitous events closer so that we will wake up and do teshuvah.

Using this idea as our starting point, we can understand Rav Moshe Bick's interpretation of the saying of our Sages that Moshiach will come only either when the entire generation is meritorious or when it is all guilty. We can certainly understand that Moshiach would come if the entire generation is meritorious, but how would it even be possible for the entire nation to be guilty when Hashem promised that the Torah would never be totally forgotten by His people? And then how would that bring about our redemption?

Rav Bick, the Chayei Moshe, explains: It is not so much that everyone in that generation would be wicked, but rather that everyone in that generation would realize he had sinned, and with that realization would come an admission of guilt and a return to Hashem. Unfortunately, we tend to go through life in an odyssey of obliviousness, focused on our physical needs rather than on our spiritual needs. We don't even realize where we fall short. When the first Beit Hamikdosh was destroyed, our people recognized where they had failed and were able to do teshuvah. Therefore that exile lasted only seventy years, and we returned and rebuilt the Temple. But, says Rabbi Bick, the generation in which the second Temple was destroyed never recognized where they had gone astray. After all, they studied Torah, they gave tzedakah and performed other social mitzvot. But they did not admit that they devalued and disrespected each other and therefore they did not repent.

Unfortunately, neither do we admit our shortcomings. If our generation can do an honest introspection, suggests Rabbi Chaim Kamil, recognize our shortcomings, can admit that indeed we are guilty, then we can begin the process of teshuvah that will bring about the rebuilding of our Temple. During the time of the Beit Hamikdosh, Hashem's presence was palpable not only around us but also within us. Yet we distanced ourselves from Him on the one hand and then tried to find other, alien sources to give meaning to our lives, sinning on two different levels. Today, although His presence is still here, although less palpably, we usually choose to ignore it.

In our current state, says Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz in Tiv Hanechama, we are certainly unaware of Hashem's pain at being distanced from us. Hashem shows us so much love and showers us with so many blessings, yet we think only of ourselves and what we still want, forgetting to offer sincere thanks for our many blessings even as we may mouth the words. Unlike us, King David felt that pain and wanted that constant connection with his personal God.

Perhaps we need to learn from the sea. As Rav Zeichyk reminds us, not only Man, but every atom in the universe seeks a connection with the Creator. Indeed, when Hashem split the waters to create the upper waters and the lower waters, the lower waters cried because they were so far from their Creator. Although the upper waters were closer to God's presence, Hashem comforted the lower waters by demanding that the upper waters ask permission of the lower waters before they would sing praises to Hashem. This inanimate object felt the distance from Hashem, yet we do not.

Perhaps, as Rabbi Bamberger, the Mashgiach of the Ponovich Yeshiva writes, that is because we have no experience with the full light of God's presence, much like someone in a cave who has never seen sunlight, only the light of a candle. However, if someone were to drill a hole in the wall of the cave and a sliver of sunlight would stream in, he would then yearn for more of that bright light and mourn his inability to access it. In a similar way, says Rav Bamberger, we too must drill a hole in our symbolic cave so that we can feel Hashem's rays upon us. Then we will

be able to mourn the destruction, for we will have a better understanding of what we have lost.

A verse in Eichah states, "All who pursued her have caught her in the narrow straits." Rav Bamberger interprets this verse in a comforting way. "All who pursue God (rodfeha= rodfe Y-H) will reach God during the time known as the narrow straits, i.e., the 'three weeks'."

This is the time we must search for Hashem and feel His absence. Then may the time come soon that the last phrase, that Hashem will comfort us in double measure come to pass.

From Shema Yisrael Torah Network shemalist@shemayisrael.com
toPeninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date Thu, Jul 28, 2011

Peninim on the Torah **by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum** Parshas Masei

Or with any stone by which one could die... but he was not his enemy. (35:23) A retzichah b'shogeg, inadvertent murder, does not just happen in a vacuum. Chazal teach us that this incident had been preceded by another incident in which two people committed an act of murder. One killed someone through a premeditated act of malice. Regrettably, no witnesses were present to attest to his guilt, so he went free. In the other episode, one fellow inadvertently slew his friend. Once again, no witnesses were present. Two murders - one premeditated; one not - in both cases no witnesses were present. What do we do? Do they both get off scott free?

Hashem is the mesobev sibos, Cause of all causes, Who directs events according to His awareness of a given situation. He creates a situation in which the one who killed intentionally is sitting near a tree, while the one who killed inadvertently is chopping wood. It "happens" that the axe swung out, the blade finding its place in the head of the murderer, killing him. Now the one who was guilty of capital punishment receives his punishment, and the one who should have been exiled is exiled.

We think that Hashem overlooks, forgets, does not care. He cares; He never overlooks, nor does He ever forget. Hashem is very patient, and, at the right time and place, exacts punishment, usually when we least expect it.

A gentile, who was envious of Horav Shlomo Ibn Gavirol's incredible wisdom, his acuity and piety, plotted to kill him. He invited the venerable, holy sage to his home on some pretext and slew him. He buried the body beneath a fig tree in his orchard.

Hashem would not permit this sin to go unrequited. That tree began to produce figs that were abnormally large, absolutely beautiful and perfect. The murderer figured that the body that was buried beneath the tree was doing wonders fertilizing the earth. He decided that he would bring its fruit to the king. Surely, he would receive a high remuneration. When the king beheld the fruit, he was amazed. He had never seen such enormous, beautiful fruit. He could not wait to take a bite and sink his teeth into its succulent fruit. The king took one bite and immediately gagged and spit out the fig. The juice of the fig tasted like blood! "How dare you bring me blood-laced figs!" the king screamed at the man. "Immediately, tell me the story behind these figs or you will be put to death."

The man was not interested in dying at the time, so he related to the king his dastardly act of murder, and how he had buried the Jewish sage beneath the tree. Upon hearing this, the king ordered the man immediately put to death. Sooner or later, the wicked meet their punishment.

The author of Yalkut Me'am Loeiz, Horav Yaakov Kuli, zl, derives from this episode that anyone who intentionally takes a Jewish life will one day have to answer to Hashem, Who will provide him with a lasting

punishment, befitting the viciousness of his crime. In addition, those who are deserving of reward will also receive their due.

In Pirkei Avos 2:7, it is related that when Hillel saw a skull floating on the surface of the water, he remarked, "Because you drowned others, others have drowned you; and those who have drowned you, will themselves be drowned."

"Measure for measure" or, in today's popular vernacular, "What goes around comes around," would be the simplest way to interpret this Mishnah. Chazal offer various in-depth interpretations, which do not necessarily negate this idea. The Ramban puts it simply: Man himself suffers from the sufferings he inflicts on others.

Midrash Shmuel underscores the fact that the killer suffered the same form of death, beheading, which he imposed on his victims. Had he simply killed them without subjecting them to this gruesome death blow, he would have also died a death without decapitation. He succumbed to the same ordeal that he inflicted on others.

Another aspect of measure for measure present in the killer's punishment follows the Talmud in Sotah 8b that, in contemporary times, an individual who commits a sin for which during the times of the Bais Hamikdash he would have been liable for execution will die in a Heavenly-ordained manner, similar to that execution. In other words, if he committed a sin which incurs the punishment of stoning, he will die in a manner similar to the Biblical stoning. Indeed, this principle also functioned in the time of the Bais Hamikdash, in the event that there were no witnesses to testify concerning the crime. Bais Din could not punish, but Hashem surely could take the law into "His hands."

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, adds that when people witness a sinner being punished in a manner resembling a Biblical punishment, they realize that nothing occurs "by chance." This man received a punishment that coincided with what he deserved and with what he would have received - in the olden days.

Moshe wrote their goings forth according to their journeys at the bidding of Hashem. (33:2)

We read the words, "Moshe wrote... according to the bidding of Hashem." Do we understand the meaning of writing the Torah as Hashem's scribe? Imagine, Hashem dictating the words and Moshe writing. When we hold a Sefer Torah or study it, we are studying Hashem's dictation. The Sefer Torah is Divinely inspired - every letter, every word, every nuance. I recently read about an incident which occurred that will illuminate for us the concept of the sanctity of the Torah.

Horav Moshe Zaggaro, zl, one of the distinguished rabbanim in Fez, Morocco, was also a sofer, scribe. He had an interesting way of writing a Torah. He wrote the entire Torah, leaving space for Hashem's Name. When he concluded writing the entire Torah, except for Hashem's Name, he would then take a special quill which was used exclusively for this purpose, and write Hashem's Name, with all of the esoteric, Kabbalistic kavanos, intentions. Shortly before he passed from this world, he asked that the pen which he had designated for writing Hashem's Name should be buried with him.

Rav Moshe passed from this world, but, regrettably, during the commotion, they forgot to place the quill in his coffin. As the students were about to lift the coffin for its last time, they found it impossible to lift. Try as they did, the coffin was impossible to raise. They could not figure out why this had happened, until someone remembered the quill. They had forgotten to carry out Rav Moshe's tzavaah, last request. As soon as they brought the quill, the hand of the deceased reached out from within the coffin and took the pen in the natural way it was used. Suddenly, the coffin became as light as a feather, and it was taken to its final resting place.

A holy man; a holy quill; a kiddush Shem Shomayim, a sanctification of the Name of Heaven. We now have an idea of the kedushas Sefer Torah, sanctity of a Sefer Torah.

? And a murderer shall flee there - one who takes a life unintentionally. (35:11)

Murder, under any circumstances, is a terrible crime. Inadvertent murder is somewhere between an accident and intention. One should not chop wood in a forest near people. One should not speed down a street where children are playing. While the act of violence may clearly have been accidental, what preceded it? Was it negligence on the part of the violator? Halachah takes all of this into account. When it is clearly an accident, an oness, the individual does not have to go into exile. If it is clearly intentional with witnesses present, he is executed. If it is a grey area - if he did not act with premeditation to inflict harm and did not mean to do what he ultimately did; he was, at worst, careless.

The Torah's understanding of bloodshed is quite different from that of mortal man. Shofeich dam ha'adam ba'adam, damo yishafeich, ki b'tzelem Elokim asah es ha'adam, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of G-d He made man" (Bereishis 9:6). Murder violates the tzelem Elokim, the image of G-d. The murderer has committed a grave transgression by taking the life of a man whom Hashem created in His image. Atonement for this violation can only be attained with the life of the murderer.

Horav Avigdor HaLevi Nebentzhal offers two alternative expositions to explain to whom the Torah is referring when it mentions that "the man" is created b'tzelem Elokim. First, he quotes his father, who feels that the adam is the shofeit, judge. After all, what right does a mortal (judge) have to pass judgment against another human being's life? The answer to this question is that he is no ordinary creation. The judge is created in G-d's image. Thus, he renders judgment from the Shofeit kol ha'aretz, Supreme Judge of the world: Hashem.

Rav Nebentzhal offers his own understanding of the meaning of ha'adam. He begins with the question that has bothered many from time immemorial. Everything that occurs in the world does not just happen. Every creation is under Divine Providence. Hashem watches each and every person. If someone dies, it is because Hashem decreed that this should be! If so, why is the murderer punished? Clearly, he did not act against Hashem's will. On the contrary, if Hashem had not decreed that the victim become a victim, he would still be walking the earth full of life. Furthermore, had this murderer not killed the victim, Hashem would have "found" another way - or another person - to carry out His decree, which had been registered on Rosh Hashanah. If anything, the murderer is Hashem's agent.

Apparently, we are not punishing the murderer because of the victim, since the victim would have met his untimely end regardless of the murderer's "input." The murderer, however, did infringe on someone's tzelem Elokim: his own! Hashem created him with incredible potential. Adam is derived from hadom, footstool. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains that man is a footstool to Hashem. He can aspire to the greatest heights of spiritual ascendancy. Yet, what did this potential hadom do? He defiled his tzelem; he destroyed what Hashem gave him. This outrageous behavior; this lack of appreciation to his Creator; this denigration of the "G-d component" within him, can only be atoned by the pain of death - his death.

We now have an idea why the rotzeach b'shogeg, inadvertent murderer, receives such a strong punishment: he is banished into exile, having to leave friends and extended family; living in a community where he does not really fit in, because his past haunts him. His inadvertent deed created a breach, as it tainted his tzelem Elokim. It was not an accident in which he was compelled by outside forces. It was inadvertent, in many ways bordering on negligence. This is not something that can be easily overlooked. One's tzelem Elokim is what

characterizes his humanity. To taint this image is to blemish his humanity. To further underscore this idea, I share the concept of tzelem Elokim as understood in Slabodka. The Alter, zl, m'Slabodka, Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, dedicated his thesis on life to gadlus ha'adam, the greatness and distinction of man. Indeed, Slabodka chinuch, their approach to education, was to personify the greatness and honor of man, his potential and his quest to realize the Heavenly image of himself.

Slabodka taught that man is Creation's zenith. He is like a king's son. All of Creation was given to him, and he was endowed with amazing powers in order to achieve great things, to elevate himself higher and higher through his actions, thereby elevating the world. Conversely, it is also within his power to disgrace and bring Creation down with him.

Man is a prince, molded in the King's image - the image of Hashem. To dishonor that image is to dishonor the King. It is that simple.

And a murderer shall flee there - one who takes a life unintentionally. (35:11)

The inadvertent murderer is exiled to the Arei Miklat, Cities of Refuge, for an indeterminate length of time. This is because he is released only with the passing of the Kohen Gadol. What relationship exists between the murderer and the Kohen Gadol? A number of responses are suggested by the commentators, the most notable being that as spiritual leader of the Jewish People, the Kohen Gadol should have prayed that no inadvertent murders occur during his "watch." Perhaps had he taken his position with its awesome responsibility more to heart, the victim would still be alive and the inadvertent murderer would not be exiled.

Abarbanel posits an insightful reason. Life is fleeting, but regrettably, most people either do not realize this, or they act apathetically to the fact. The reality that life in this world is temporary, and that we may be called "home" at any time, seems to be another one of those realities that have been relegated to the hidden recesses of the mind. When the gadol ha'dor, preeminent leader of the generation, dies, the cobwebs of the mind are shaken. One suddenly receives a wake-up call: "Yes, we are all going to die - one day."

This realization causes one to ponder the meaning of life - and death. He begins to ask himself: "Is it all worth it? Is revenge going to change anything? Will it bring my relative back to life? Will taking one life bring back another life?" As the individual introspects, he realizes the futility of his endeavor. He really has nothing to gain. This will cause him to change his mind, to transcend his emotions of vengeance, and to forgive the inadvertent murderer, thereby allowing him to go home.

Chida cites the Arizal who explains this from a Kabbalistic perspective. When a great man, a distinguished Torah leader, leaves this world, not only does his pure soul ascend to Heaven, but it takes along with it the souls of all those who have not found peace. The neshamah, soul, of the nirtzach, victim, is sort of suspended, waiting to be taken to its final resting place in the Heavenly kingdom. This occurs when the Kohen Gadol dies. Now that the soul of the victim has been laid to rest, the rotzeiach, inadvertent murderer, can finally leave his exile.

Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita, offers a practical explanation for the murderer's release from exile. When the go'el ha'dam, redeemer of the blood, sees that the Middas Ha'Din, Attribute of Strict Justice, has dealt its judgment even against the noblest and holiest: the Kohen Gadol, it prompts his mind to think more rationally. No one is exempt from Divine Justice - not even the Kohen Gadol, and surely not his relative who died as a result of an inadvertent swing of the axe. There is a reason for everything, and mortal man has no right to question G-d, because he has no way of discovering or understanding the answer. When a person accepts the notion that Middas Ha'Din is beyond our control, he will come to terms with his relative's untimely death.

Two people; two brothers; two adverse reactions to the Middas Ha'Din. Avraham Avinu, the prince of humanity, the Patriarch of the

Jewish People, the first one to discover and disseminate the concept of monotheism, died. True, he had lived a long, inspired life, but why did he have to die? Was it right? Eisav ha'Rasha, the wicked, questioned the Middas Ha'Din that took away his grandfather. He could not deal with it, and, consequently, rejected everything that his grandfather had taught him. His brother, Yaakov, understood what was taking place. He saw his brother's metamorphosis and was immediately concerned lest the bechorah, birthright of the firstborn, go to Eisav. He understood that Middas Ha'Din is beyond our ability to comprehend. He addressed the immediate need: getting the bechorah away from Eisav. If Eisav would have stopped to think, he might have realized that some things are beyond us. Had he thought - things would have been different.

He shall dwell in it until the death of the Kohen Gadol. (35:25)

Chazal teach us that the mothers of the Kohanim Gedolim were very concerned about their sons' longevity. After all, the awareness that any number of inadvertent murderers were praying for her son's demise is likely to raise her anxiety level. To circumvent this problem, the mother of the Kohen Gadol would supply the inadvertent murderers with food and clothing, so that they would be positively inclined towards her son and not pray for his imminent death. Let us attempt to fully grasp this situation. The fate of a man who is forced overnight to leave his home, business, native city, acquaintances and family is, indeed, a difficult one. It is, therefore, quite understandable that anyone in this position would hope that the death of the Kohen Gadol - and, hence, the end to his forced incarceration in the City of Refuge - would come sooner than later. Given all of the difficulties involved in this forced move and the trauma of a new life, would a little food or clothing make such a difference to any of them? Would these simple gratuities impel them to cease praying for what in their mind was a very understandable wish?

Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, offers a pragmatic explanation that goes to the core of human nature and also teaches us a powerful lesson concerning the efficacy of prayer. A vast difference exists between one who prays when he is hungry and bitter and one who supplicates the Almighty amidst content and satisfaction. The mothers of the Kohanim Gedolim wanted to ensure that these men, although they were under extreme personal pressure due to the need to take leave of their home environment, would at least not be physically embittered, as well. Their punishment was exile - not physical deprivation. This would decrease the chances that their prayers be accepted.

A little bit of food can do a lot for a person. It can transform him from bitterness to satisfaction, from loneliness to feeling wanted. Clearly, it was not the extra bit of food, but rather, the added attention. Knowing that the Kohen Gadol's mother was coming with cupcakes must have raised the exiled's spirits. It engendered within him a sense of self-satisfaction, which impeded his prayers. One who feels a sense of smugness does not daven as fervently as one who is scared, anxious, bitter. Davening is based on attitude. It is difficult to ask for an end to incarceration when one does not feel the full burden of his captivity.

But a single witness shall not testify against a person regarding death. (35:30)

Simply, the pasuk is teaching us that a single witness has no standing concerning a case of capital punishment; it is either two witnesses or none. One witness achieves nothing. The Rambam explains this pasuk somewhat differently. He says that the Torah is commanding a witness not to report more than what he himself saw. He is forbidden to offer hearsay and present his feelings about what took place. The witness cannot act as judge and jury. This applies, regardless of the stature of the witness, his wisdom, knowledge of people and perception of a situation. A witness attests to the veracity of the action: Did it occur or not? The rest is up to the judges to decide. It is well-known that we must judge every Jew with the benefit of the doubt, looking for positive rationale for

an activity that has negative connotations. We are now admonished with a prohibitive command not to judge a person negatively. We should not jump to conclusions, regardless of how sinister an act appears, or how jaundiced our opinion may be of the individual who seems to be acting in an oppositional manner. We report only what we see. Conjecture has no place in a Jewish court. Our personal, often biased, conclusions should be kept to ourselves. A witness may not relate more than what he himself witnessed.

Horav Arye Levine, zl, related a poignant story that supports this notion. It was the funeral of Rav Elazar Rivlin, zl, one of Yerushalayim's finest, an individual who represented the Torah Jew at his zenith. Rav Elazar had a childhood friend, Rav Shmuel Kook, zl, who had worked with him for over thirty years. As Rav Shmuel and Rav Arye were walking in the funeral procession on its way to the cemetery, Rav Shmuel excused himself and entered a florist. Rav Arye could not fathom what was occurring. This was the deceased's best and closest friend. How could he be seen leaving the procession to enter a flower shop? His incredulity was piqued when Rav Shmuel returned carrying a flower pot with a plant growing in it. He was about to continue in a different direction than the funeral procession, but Rav Arye questioned him concerning his destination.

"I do not understand. The deceased was your closest friend. How could you leave the funeral to go shopping for a flower pot?" asked Rav Arye.

Rav Shmuel replied with a fascinating story: "For the past two years, I have been caring for a critically ill Jew who has been stricken with severe leprosy. He was hospitalized in the chronic disease hospital where I visit him often. Yesterday, he passed away. The doctors, fearing the contagious nature of his disease, decided to burn all of his effects, lest someone else use them. Among his possessions earmarked to be destroyed were his Tefillin. I screamed, I begged, please do not burn his Tefillin! Finally, I was able to convince the doctors to have his Tefillin placed and sealed in a flower pot and then buried in the ground. This is the halachically correct way to "dispose" of the Tefillin. They agreed on one condition: That I deliver the flower pot by 10:00 a.m. - today. I agreed. In the meantime, our dear friend, Rav Elazar, returned his holy soul to his Maker. Understandably, I was planning on attending his funeral. Suddenly, I saw that the hour was late, and I soon would have been delayed past the ten o'clock hour.

"I left the procession, entered the flower shop and asked to purchase a plain flower pot. The response was that they had no empty flower pots for sale. All of their pots had flowers growing inside. I said, 'Give me the pot,' figuring I would remove the flowers on the way to the hospital. Now, while I would love to continue speaking with you, if I do not hurry to the hospital, they will burn my friend's Tefillin."

Rav Arye concluded the story with the following remark: "Ever since then, I accepted upon myself to always judge every person favorably. One never knows what is behind the most questionable actions. We must always give the other person the benefit of the doubt."

How often does it occur when we are the ones who should be judged favorably? We do something foolish; we act rude; we are insulting; we become angry very quickly. These are just some of the usual reactions that might be misperceived. It just so happens that we had a good reason for being angry. Our foolish reaction was justifiable. We insulted someone, because we were misled. While this is no excuse, it does explain our aberrant behavior. We want others to give us the benefit of the doubt. We should at least do the same.

This leads us to the next step. When we see someone whom we know well acting in an atypical manner, perhaps we should inquire if everything is all right: Is everyone well? Has something occurred in his or her life that is weighing down on them? People do not like to open up and share what is bothering them. If someone seems to care, if someone asks them what is wrong, however, it could make an enormous

difference in their lives. It makes such a big difference when one does not have to deal with life's problems alone.

Va'ani Tefillah Yisgadal v'yiskadash Shmei rabba. His great Name will be recognized in all its greatness and holiness.

Kaddish is recited at least seven times daily as a requirement. The other Kaddeishim are discretionary. A remez, allusion, to this number is noted by the Sefer Rokeach. David Hamelech says in Sefer Tehillim (119:164), Sheva bayom hilalticha, "I praise You seven times daily." The seven Kaddeishim are: three during Tefillas Shacharis; and two each during Minchah and Maariv. Kaddish - just as Borchu and Kedushah, Krias HaTorah and Haftorah - is davar shebekedushah, a summons to sanctify Hashem's Name and must be said in the presence of a minyan, quorum/ten adult Jewish males. Kiddush Hashem, sanctification of Hashem's Name, denotes the most exalted level of man's execution of his task on earth. This glorification of Hashem's Name, which constitutes the subordination of all earthly affairs to the fulfillment of His purposes, demonstrates how exalted He is. Rav S. R. Hirsch, zl, explains that this most sublime task is to be carried out in the presence of the Jewish community, for they, the kehillas Yaakov, are entrusted with the morashah, inheritance, appointed as bearer, executor and guardian of that which shall be the goal of all mankind: kiddush Hashem. Ten males represent the body of the Jewish People.

Why the community? Why not the individual? Rav Hirsch explains that it is only within the framework of the community that this mission can be properly executed. Ein tzibur meis, "The community cannot die." A community can do all things. All limitations are compensated for in the framework of the community. Thus, the individual can discharge his task only as a part of the community. Most prayers were written for the tzibur. Very few are phrased in the singular form. Klal Yisrael is a total entity in which each and every individual is a component within the whole: "I will be sanctified in the midst of Bnei Yisrael." Kiddush Hashem has to be carried out within the tzibur, community, of Klal Yisrael, because only then does it achieve its true objective.

Sponsored by Yaakov and Karen Nisenbaum and Family In memory of our mother and grandmother Anna Nisenbaum Chana bas R' Yaakov Isaac a"h niftara 4 Av 5754 t.n.tz.v.h.

Peninim mailing list Peninim@shemayisrael.com
http://shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim_shemayisrael.com