

Weekly Parsha Shlach 5780

Rabbi Berel Wein's Weekly Blog

The Land of Israel has always been a challenge to the People of Israel. There are many reasons for this, both obvious and subtle. The Land of Israel plays a central role in Judaism, in Jewish life, within its laws and world view. Yet, for a great part of Jewish history, the Jewish People itself was absent from the Land of Israel. Because of this absence, the Land of Israel was not a reality in Jewish everyday life. It became a goal, a spiritual value, an imaginary place of perfection and holiness. It adopted a utopian character, a place well nigh impossible to translate into reality.

Though, over the past century the Land of Israel and the People of Israel again began to be joined one to another in actuality, it became difficult for many Jews to accept the reality of the Land and the People as opposed to the imaginary dream that had existed for millennia.

This I think helps explain the attitude of certain sections of Jewish society, interestingly enough both very secular and very religiously observant, that somehow finds it difficult to adjust to the miraculous and unforeseen reunification of the Land and the People that has occurred in our time. Expecting perfection or purely holy behavior, the existing reality is therefore frustrating and even disappointing to them and they reject this miracle of Jewish rebirth and of the great process of the rebuilding of the Jewish People in the Land of Israel in our time.

When the spies that Moshe sent rejected the Land of Israel thousands of years ago, they also did it out of ill perceived but relatively high motives. They saw the dangers inherent in the creation of any national entity and of the potential divisions that would necessarily arise within Jewish society. They realized that they would have to fight wars against strong enemies and work to till the land and develop an economy and a way of life. They realized that all of this somehow had to be compatible with the intrinsic holiness of the Land and of its special qualities.

They were nervous that “the eyes of the Lord their God would be fixed upon them and the Land from the beginning of the year till its conclusion.” They would have to combine the sword, the plow and holy learning in their personal and national lives. This was and is an enormous challenge that the generation of the desert shrank from. It is much easier to retain and be loyal to an image of the imaginary Land of Israel than to the nitty gritty of the actual Land of Israel.

Calev and Yehoshua said “aloh na’aleh” we will be worthy to elevate ourselves to meet that challenge. Our generation is in the midst of the third attempt of the Jewish People to realize its physical and spiritual ambitions in the Land of Israel. It is a difficult process but one that we cannot or should not shirk from attempting to succeed and thereby justify all that has happened to us in our past history.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion My Orchid Plant Revisited

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

Some time ago I wrote a short essay about my orchid plant and its wondrous ability to revive itself and flower after months of being dormant. Recently when I was in house quarantine upon returning to Jerusalem, I again noticed that the orchid plant in my kitchen rejuvenated – I believe for the third time- and was flowering beautifully. When one is confined for fourteen days, one notices such events and gives them a little more thought since there is little else to occupy one’s mind.

I am no longer able to read, so I am thrilled beyond words to be distracted. And the newly bloomed orchid plant proved to be such a pleasant distraction. I examined the plant closely and, in wonder, admired the subtlety of color that its flowers contained. I thought immediately of a poem from my childhood that stated: “Poems are made by fools like you and me but only God can make a tree.” So, it is with orchid plants as well.

The combination of beauty and apparent fragility, with tenacious resilience to bloom again after shedding its original flowers is worthy of human contemplation and even emulation.

There is much to be learned from the natural world that we inhabit. The Lord has made all things with a purpose, and wisdom is necessary to appreciate this. It is why we are instructed to make a blessing of thanksgiving to the Creator when we see and appreciate the wonders of His world in which we live.

I understand more deeply than I did before the anguish of the prophet Yonah when the plant that afforded him such pleasure and beauty was suddenly taken away from him. He utters a bitter lament toward Heaven at the disappearance. And Heaven replies to him, in essence, saying that one must see all events in this world in relative perspective.

One cannot care more for a plant, no matter how wondrous it may be, than for the lives of the human beings who lived in the city of Nineveh. And plants, like my orchid, rejuvenate themselves after being dormant temporarily do not preclude being verdant and productive in the future.

We have all been pretty much dormant over the past few months, and I will be the first to admit that such a state of being allows muscles to atrophy and spirits to sag. Vitality once lost is often difficult to regain. It is simply because of this known danger that lurks ever so menacingly, that my rejuvenated orchid plant brought me such assurance and hope.

If plants can and do rejuvenate, so too can human beings. It is within our make-up to be able to do if we attempt it. We have been through a very harrowing time, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. But the hallmark of the Jewish people throughout the ages has been our resilience, optimism, and renewed productivity. This trait will not fail us in this hour of challenge and rejuvenation.

Shabbat shalom

Berel Wein

What is going on? (Shelach Lecha 5780)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

In March 2020, whilst launching a new book,[1] I took part in a BBC radio programme along with Mervyn King, who had been governor of the Bank of England at the time of the financial crash of 2008. He, together with the economist John Kay, had also brought out a new book, Radical Uncertainty: decision-making for an unknowable future.[2]

The coronavirus pandemic was just beginning to make itself felt in Britain, and it had the effect of making both of our books relevant in a way that neither of us could have predicted. Mine is about the precarious balance between the “I” and the “we”: individualism versus the common good. Theirs is about how to make decisions when you cannot tell what the future holds.

The modern response to this latter question has been to hone and refine predictive techniques using mathematical modelling. The trouble is that mathematical models work in a relatively abstract, delimited, quantifiable world and cannot deal with the messy, unpredictable character of reality. They don’t and cannot consider what Donald Rumsfeld called the “unknown unknowns” and Nicholas Taleb termed “black swans” – things that no one expected but that change the environment. We live in a world of radical uncertainty.

Accordingly, they propose a different approach. In any critical situation, ask: “What is happening?” They quote Richard Rumelt: “A great deal of strategy work is trying to figure out what is going on. Not just deciding what to do, but the more fundamental problem of comprehending the situation.”[3] Narrative plays a major role in making good decisions in an uncertain world. We need to ask: of what story is this a part?

Neither Rumelt nor King and Kay quote Amy Chua, but her book Political Tribes is a classic account of failing to understand the situation.[4] Chapter by chapter she documents American foreign policy disasters from Vietnam to Iraq because policy-makers did not comprehend tribal societies. You cannot use war to turn them into liberal

democracies. Fail to understand this and you will waste many years, trillions of dollars, and tens of thousands of lives.

It might seem odd to suggest that a book by two contemporary economists holds the clue to unravelling the mystery of the spies in our parsha. But it does.

We think we know the story. Moses sent twelve spies to spy out the land. Ten of them came back with a negative report. The land is good, but unconquerable. The people are strong, the cities impregnable, the inhabitants are giants and we are grasshoppers. Only two of the men, Joshua and Caleb, took a different view. We can win. The land is good. God is on our side. With His help, we cannot fail.

On this reading, Joshua and Caleb had faith, courage and confidence, while the other ten did not. But this is hard to understand. The ten – not just Joshua and Caleb – knew that God was with them. He had crushed Egypt. The Israelites had just defeated the Amalekites. How could these ten – leaders, princes – not know that they could defeat the inhabitants of the land?

What if the story were not this at all? What if it was not about faith, confidence, or courage. What if it was about “What is going on?” – understanding the situation and what happens when you don’t. The Torah tells us that this is the correct reading, and it signals it in a most striking way.

Biblical Hebrew has two verbs that mean “to spy”: lachpor and leragel (from which we get the word meraglim, “spies”). Neither of these words appear in our parsha. That is the point. Instead, no less than twelve times, we encounter the rare verb, la-tur. It was revived in modern Hebrew and means (and sounds like) “to tour.” Tayar is a tourist. There is all the difference in the world between a tourist and a spy.

Malbim explains the difference simply. Latur means to seek out the good. That is what tourists do. They go to the beautiful, the majestic, the inspiring. They don’t spend their time trying to find out what is bad. Lachpor and leragel are the opposite. They are about searching out a place’s weaknesses and vulnerabilities. That is what spying is about. The exclusive use of the verb latur in our parsha – repeated twelve times – is there to tell us that the twelve men were not sent to spy. But only two of them understood this.

Almost forty years later, when Moses retells the episode in Devarim 1:22-24, he does use the verbs lachpor and leragel. In Genesis 42, when the brothers come before Joseph in Egypt to buy food, he accuses them of being meraglim, “spies”, a word that appears seven times in that one chapter. He also defines what it is to be a spy: “You have come to see the nakedness of the land” (i.e. where it is undefended).

The reason ten of the twelve men came back with a negative report is not because they lacked courage or confidence or faith. It was because they completely misunderstood their mission. They thought they had been sent to be spies. But the Torah never uses the word “spy” in our chapter. The ten simply did not understand what was going on.

They believed it was their role to find out the “nakedness” of the land, where it was vulnerable, where its defences could be overcome. They looked and could not find. The people were strong, and the cities impregnable. The bad news about the land was that there was not enough bad news to make it weak and thus conquerable. They thought their task was to be spies and they did their job. They were honest and open. They reported what they had seen. Based on the intelligence they had gathered, they advised the people not to attack – not now, and not from here.

Their mistake was that they were not meant to be spies. They were told latur, not lachpor or leragel. Their job was to tour, explore, travel, see what the land was like and report back. They were to see what was good about the land, not what was bad. So, if they were not meant to be spies, what was the purpose of this mission?

I suggest that the answer is to be found in a passage in the Talmud[5] that states: it is forbidden for a man to marry a woman without seeing her first. The reason? Were he to marry without having seen her first, he might, when he does see her, find he is not attracted to her. Tensions will inevitably arise. Hence the idea: first see, then love.

The same applies to a marriage between a people and its land. The Israelites were travelling to the country promised to their ancestors. But none of them had ever seen it. How then could they be expected to muster the energies necessary to fight the battles involved in conquering the land? They were about to marry a land they had not seen. They had no idea what they were fighting for.

The twelve were sent later: to explore and report on the good things of the land so that the people would know it was worth fighting for. Their task was to tour and explore, not spy and decry. But only two of them, Joshua and Caleb, listened carefully and understood what their mission was: to be the eyes of the congregation, letting them know the beauty and goodness of what lay ahead, the land that had been their destiny since the days of their ancestor Abraham.

The Israelites at that stage did not need spies. As Moses said many years later: “You did not trust in the Lord your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go” (Deut. 1:32-33). God was going to show them where to go and where to attack. The people needed something else entirely. Moses had told them that the land was good. It was “flowing with milk and honey.” But Moses had never seen the land. Why should they believe him? They needed the independent testimony of eyewitnesses. That was the mission of the twelve. And in fact, all twelve fulfilled that mission. When they returned, the first thing they said was: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit” (Num. 13:27). But because ten of them thought their task was to be spies, they went on to say that the conquest was impossible, and from then on, tragedy was inevitable.

The difference between the ten and Joshua and Caleb is not that the latter had the faith, courage and confidence the former did not. It is that they understood the story; the ten did not.

I find it fascinating that a leading economist and a former Governor of the Bank of England should argue for the importance of narrative when it comes to decision-making under conditions of radical uncertainty. Yet that is the profound truth in our parsha.

Ten of the twelve men thought they were part of a story of espionage. The result was that they looked for the wrong things, came to the wrong conclusion, demoralised the people, destroyed the hope of an entire generation, and will eternally be remembered as responsible for one of the worst failures in Jewish history.

Read Amy Chua’s Political Tribes, mentioned earlier, and you will discover a very similar analysis of America’s devastating failures in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq.[6]

I write these words while the Coronavirus pandemic is at its height. Has anyone yet identified the narrative of which it and we are a part? I believe that the story we tell affects the decisions we make. Get the story wrong and we can rob an entire generation of their future. Get it right, as did Joshua and Caleb, and we can achieve greatness.

Shabbat Shalom

Shabbat Shalom: Shelach Lecha (Numbers 13:1-15:41)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “We should go up at once and possess it [the land] for we are well able to overcome it” (Numbers 13:30)

The tragedy of the desert generation is the refusal of the Israelites to conquer the Land of Israel and to realize the main objective for their freedom from Egypt. The scouts give their report, show the luscious fruit with which they have returned and concede that Israel is a land flowing with milk and honey. But they continue to describe a land filled with aggressive giants, and well-fortified cities, concluding that; “we cannot go forward against those people... they are too strong for us.” One individual, Caleb, speaks out mightily on behalf of the land: “We must go forth and occupy the land.... We can do it.” We will be able to conquer it because we must conquer it; without a homeland, we cannot be a nation. Caleb, however, loses the argument. The nation silences his plea; their desire is either to return to Egypt or to remain homeless in the

desert forever. What was the point of this second view which won the day—at least for the desert generation?

I believe the difference between Caleb and the more vocal and convincing scouts is how to define the people Israel. Are we a religion or are we a nation? In more modern language, are we Israelis or are we Jews?

You will remember from previous commentaries that the Kotzker Rebbe referred to Korah as “the holy grandfather.” Korah was deeply religious and he wanted more than anything else to be a kohen-priest and serve God. He didn’t want to go to Israel, to get involved in a difficult war, to get his hands dirtied by the politics and arguments about nation-building. He believed, as the majority of scouts apparently believed, that the Hebrews could remain in the desert, focused on the portable sanctuary, pray to God and live off the manna from heaven. If the people of Israel is first and foremost a religion, then he was right. After all, life in the desert is an eternal Kollel with God taking care of you and no responsibilities to the outside world.

Moses, Caleb and Joshua—most importantly, God Himself—saw it differently. Yes, a very important part of Israel is our religion, which was given to us at our covenant at Sinai. But prior to that was the Abrahamic covenant “between the pieces,” the covenant in which we are promised eternal life as the seed of Abraham and a national homeland. From the beginning of our history, God elects Abraham with a promise that “I shall make you a great nation... and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:2-3). And even before we received the Revelation at Sinai, we were charged with being a “kingdom of priest-teachers [to all of humanity] and a holy nation” (Ex.19:6). God determined that our mission is to influence the other nations to accept a philosophy of compassionate righteousness and moral justice; God also understood that we could never hope to influence other nations unless we were also a nation-state, subject to the same challenges as other countries. A religion only bears responsibility towards God; the Jewish religion is meant to be expressed within a nation-state with responsibility to the entire world.

This analysis has critical ramifications for our attitudes concerning conversion, especially in Israel where there are approximately 300,000 Israeli citizens from the former Soviet Union who are not yet halachic Jews. Ruth is undoubtedly the most famous convert in Jewish history aside from Abraham our Patriarch. Her formula of conversion begins with her statement to Naomi, her Hebrew mother-in-law: “Wherever you go, I shall go... your nation shall be my nation and your God shall be my God...” (Ruth 1:16). For Ruth, the very first obligation of the convert is to live in the Land of Israel, the land of the Jewish nation; hence, her most important act of conversion is following her mother-in-law to the Land of Israel. When she defines what it means to convert to Judaism, she begins with national terms (your nation shall be my nation) then religious terms (your God shall be my God). She understands that whatever Judaism is, it includes a national as well as a religious aspect. When one studies the Talmudic discussion of conversion (B.T. Yevamot 45-47) and even the Codes of Jewish Law, we see that our sages never insisted on total performance of commandments before one could become a Jew. They did insist that the convert be tutored in several of the more stringent and several of the more lenient commands and accept Judaism as a system of commandments. They also insisted upon ritual immersion (rebirth into the Jewish nation) and circumcision for males (the symbol of the Abrahamic covenant “between the pieces”).

Citizens of Israel from the former Soviet Union, who themselves or whose children serve in the IDF, are performing the most stringent of our national commands in this generation. This must be taken into account by our conversion judges in addition to everything else these new immigrants will learn about the Sabbath, the festivals and our rituals. Living in Israel is not a sufficient criteria for Conversion, but it is an important aspect of the general criteria of “Acceptance of the Commandments – Your nation will be my nation”, to the extent that one will educate his/her children to serve in the IDF!

Shabbat Shalom!

Insights Parshas Shelach :: Sivan 5780

Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Yisroel ben Aryeh Lieb, HaLevi, Stanley Schwartz. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

Mob Mentality

These are the names of the men whom Moshe sent to spy out the land. And Moshe called Hoshea son of Nun "Yehoshua" (13:16).

This week's parsha opens with the infamous incident of the twelve spies who were sent to explore Eretz Yisrael. The spies conspired to convey a very grim interpretation of what they observed during their forty day journey. This led to Bnei Yisrael questioning whether or not going into Eretz Yisrael was a good idea, which inexorably ended with Hashem's decreeing that Bnei Yisrael should wander the desert for forty years. This incident also led to the ninth day of Av being marked as a day of tragedy for all future generations.

Only two of the original twelve spies refused to participate in the conspiracy of the others. Rashi cites the Gemara (Sotah 34b), which explains that Calev ben Yefunah traveled to Chevron to pray at the tombs of the patriarchs that he would not be ensnared in the plot of the others. Rava (ad loc) says that Moshe added a letter to Hoshea's name (a letter "yud" making his name Yehoshua, and creating Hashem's name with the first two letters) so that his name could be understood as meaning "Hashem should save you from the scheme of the spies."

Why did Moshe only see fit to pray for Yehoshua? At the very least he could have also prayed for Calev, the other spy who didn't participate in the plot.

This very same question seems to be bothering Targum Yonasan ben Uziel. The Targum comments on this very verse (13:16); "When Moshe saw his humility, he changed his name from Hoshea to Yehoshua."

Yehoshua was a on a very high level and clearly was the greatest of all the heads of the tribes. He shadowed Moshe and was permitted to go on Mount Sinai where others were not. He also eventually succeeded Moshe Rabbeinu as leader of Bnei Yisrael, and as Rashi points out (Devarim 31:29), as long as Yehoshua was alive Moshe felt as if he himself was alive. Yet, Moshe saw Yehoshua's humility as a potential problem. Why? As we saw in last week's parsha (12:3), Moshe himself was the most humble person on the face of the earth! What was the problem with Yehoshua's humility?

Moshe was concerned that Yehoshua's humility would prevent him from taking a stand against the other spies. The principal character trait of someone being modest and humble is the understanding that other people see things that he doesn't and that their perspective has some validity. Moshe was concerned that Yehoshua would be complicit with the other spies because his humility would prevent him from condemning them outright.

Moshe himself had been vested with the responsibility of leading the Jewish people. Leadership requires making decisions that you feel are proper regardless of what others may think or say. Therefore, his responsibility to act in the best interest of Bnei Yisrael superseded his humility and it was thus not detrimental to his leadership ability.

On the other hand, Yehoshua had not yet been chosen to be the leader of the Jewish people. Hence, his humility could possibly prevent him from taking a stand against them, so Moshe felt compelled to daven for Yehoshua.

WYSIWYG

Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them that they shall make themselves tzitzis on the corners of their garments...And they shall place upon the tzitzis of each corner a thread of turquoise. It shall then constitute tzitzis for you and shall see it and you shall remember all the commandments of Hashem... (15:38-39)

This week's parsha ends with the instructions to make tzitzis on our garments. This mitzvah is so precious and significant that all five verses have been incorporated as the final paragraph of the shema, which is said twice daily. Rashi (ad loc) says that the mitzvah of tzitzis reminds us of all the mitzvos in the Torah because the numerical value of the

word tzitzis is 600 and there are 8 strings and 5 knots on every corner, equaling 613 - the number of mitzvos that Bnei Yisroel have to perform. Tosfos (Menachos 39a) points out, that in actuality, the Torah spells the word tzitzis without the second "yud." This renders the numerical value of the word tzitzis as 590 - not 600 as Rashi claims. Incredibly, Tosfos goes on to explain that the third instance of the word tzitzis has the letter "lamed" in front of it; if one divides the numerical value of 30 into the occurrences of the word tzitzis then we have an extra ten for each and we are back at Rashi's calculation of 600 as the numerical value of tzitzis. This Tosfos seems almost surreal; Tosfos doesn't usually give us far fetched explanations that sound like something made up by a school child. What does Tosfos mean?

Remarkably, for something that is repeated twice every day of our lives, most of us fail to see that the simple translation of these verses do not seem to make sense: "they shall make themselves tzitzis on the corners of their garments...And they shall place upon the tzitzis of each corner a thread of turquoise. It shall then constitute tzitzis." What does the Torah mean they shall make tzitzis on the corners of their garments, then add a turquoise thread on the corner, and only then it shall constitute tzitzis? We already made it tzitzis in the first part of the verse! What does the Torah mean that after we add the techeles then it shall be tzitzis?

Rashi (15:38) says that the word tzitzis has two meanings; the first meaning is tassels. By adding threads to the corner we now have tassels on each corner. The second explanation of tzitzis is to peer; as tzitzis are something to look at, as the possuk says; "and you shall look at it" (15:39). Rashi is giving us an incredible clue on how these pesukim are to be read: You should put tzitzis on each corner of your garment. Now you have tassels on each corner known as tzitzis.

But that isn't enough. When you add the blue thread you are changing the essence of the tzitzis from merely tassels on a garment to something that you gaze at. As the Talmud (Menachos 43b) teaches, "The color blue is similar to the sea, which is like the clear blue sky, which is the color of the God's heavenly throne." In other words, gazing at the techeles reminds us of Hashem and, presumably, our obligation to keep all His mitzvos. Adding the techeles changes the very essence of the tzitzis.

This is what Tosfos is telling us. The third occurrence of the word tzitzis, which follows adding the techeles to each corner, refers to the change of the very essence of the tzitzis from tassels to something to gaze at to remind us of all the mitzvos. That's why the "lamed" that precedes it is divided with the other two to give each one a value of 600. Coupled with each one's 8 strings at 5 knots gives us 613 which, as the possuk so clearly states; "you will see them and be reminded of all the mitzvos of Hashem."

Did You Know...

In this week's parsha, the meraglim scout Eretz Yisroel, return with some huge fruit, and give a terribly slanderous report of the terrors that awaited Bnei Yisroel in Eretz Yisroel. Exactly how big were the fruit that they brought back?

The Gemara (Sotah 34a) and the Me'em Lo'ez (Shlach 1 13:23) cite Sefer Yehoshua (4:2), that men had to carry a stone that weighed 40 se'ah each (even though those weren't the same men, they're assuming all men could lift that). The Me'em Lo'ez (Shlach 1, 13:23) explains that since a se'ah is about 17 pounds, each of the meraglim was able to lift about 680 pounds. In any case, the fact that one man was strong enough to carry this tremendous burden shows the great strength the Jews of time possessed (Tosfos Chadashim, pe'eh 6:6).

In the Gemara (Sotah 34a) it explains that we can calculate how heavy the cluster of grapes were since we know eight people carried it. Additionally, we have a rule that a person can lift three times more than he can lift by himself when he's carrying it with other people. Therefore, the Me'em Lo'ez (ibid) explains that each person was able to carry over 2,000 pounds, which makes that one cluster a grand total of over 16,000 pounds, or 8 tons. To understand the enormity of this, the average car weighs around a measly 4,000 pounds.

The Me'em Lo'ez continues and explains that this is why the place they cut them was called "the river of the cluster." The amount of wine that came from these grapes literally made a river.

Besides the eight people who carried these grapes, one person carried a pomegranate and another a fig. Yehoshua and Calev refused to carry anything as they realized it would be used to slander Eretz Yisroel. When the giants saw them picking fruit, Talmi (one of the giants) roared at them, making them fall down unconscious out of terror. The giants woke them up gently and told them not to be afraid, as the "God of the Jews owns everything." The giants let them leave in peace, and were rewarded with long life until the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash.

The Me'em Lo'ez cites another opinion, which says that the spies didn't want to take the fruit back, but Calev drew his sword and threatened to kill them if they didn't bring back the fruit to show how blessedly luxuriant they were (Tanchuma, Yalkut Shemoni).

Talmudic College of Florida

Rohr Talmudic University Campus,
4000 Alton Road, Miami Beach, FL 33140

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Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Parsha Insights

Double Bluff

"Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, 'Send forth men, if you please, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I give to the Children of Israel.'" (13:1, 2)

Amateur psychologists are a dangerous breed. The intricacies of assessing motive and counter-motive can often lead to completely wrong conclusion.

In this week's Torah portion, Hashem tells Moshe that despite His previous promises about the Land of Israel, the Jewish People may, if they choose, send spies to assure themselves that it is a wonderful place. It has always intrigued me why the people's desire to check out the Land should not have immediately been the cause of Divine displeasure. It's a bit like saying, "Okay, Hashem, we know that You're the Creator of the World and all that, but we just want to take a little peek ourselves to make sure that Your standards are as high as ours." Maybe by letting them send spies, Hashem wanted the people to understand the challenges of the Land and yet still follow Him. In this way, their entry into the Land would have been on a higher level of trust.

But, clearly, Moshe was hoping that they wouldn't take him up on the offer. Our Rabbis offer a parable to why Moshe let them explore the Land: Someone wants to buy a donkey, but he tells the seller that he has to give it a 'test drive.' The seller says, "Sure!" The buyer says, "Okay... Can I take it up the mountain and into the valley as well?" "Sure! You take it up hill and down dale!" The seller is certain that because he shows total confidence in his animal that the buyer will forgo the test. This is where the amateur psychology comes in: Say the Jewish People to themselves" "Aha! He's only sounding so confident so we won't check for ourselves. But precisely because he wants us to go, we're going to go!"

The rabbit warrens of bluff and counter-bluff go very deep. Suspicion never rests from increasingly complex scenarios of betrayal. The only way through life is, "You shall be straight and open with Hashem." (Devarim 18:13) Follow the way of Hashem whether it leads up the hill or down the dale!

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb - Parshat Shelach

Two Types of People

For the past several months, we have all been struggling with the terrible COVID-19 pandemic. We have heard our share of sad and tragic stories, and many have had to cope with very frightening events. But, on more

than one occasion, we have also read about, and sometimes even witnessed, uplifting and inspiring episodes that have helped us cope with the situation constructively.

One such episode was particularly meaningful to me. I first read about it in a news release originating in Italy, a country which was particularly hard hit by the novel coronavirus. It soon became the "story of the day" for much of the media. Like many such stories, it soon evaporated from public consciousness. But I simply cannot forget this story and its powerful lesson.

There is an elderly gentleman in one of Italy's northern cities who contracted the virus and suffered greatly. His treatment involved the use of a ventilator, to which he was attached for quite some time. Eventually, he was removed from the ventilator and, soon afterwards, was pronounced healthy and was discharged from the hospital. As he was checking out of the hospital, he was presented with a bill for the use of the ventilator. The bill came to several thousand euros.

He stared at the bill and began to cry. The hospital worker was moved by his tears and assured him that some type of arrangement could be made to reduce the exorbitant fee. However, the old man responded, "I'm not concerned about paying so much money. I can afford it." "Then why are you crying?" asked the worker. The old man replied, "I have been breathing on my own for over eighty years. I never paid a penny for those breaths. Now I am asked to pay for the use of the ventilator which restored my breath to me. If I owe the hospital so much money for a few days of breathing, how much more do I owe the Creator of the Universe for allowing me to breathe all these many years!"

This anecdote affected me so that I remember it upon awakening every morning. Like every observant Jew, the first words out of my mouth each morning are words of thanksgiving to the King of Kings for having compassionately restored my soul to me, shehechezarta bi nishmati bechemla. Since hearing this story, I've "edited" the prayer, and I thank the Almighty for having compassionately restored "nishmati u'neshimati"—not just "my soul" but "my soul and my breath."

The old Italian gentleman left us all with a lesson: We must be grateful each morning that we can breathe effortlessly.

This anecdote motivated me to supplement the old adage that there are "two types of people in the world: those who view the cup as half-full versus those who view it as half-empty." In other words, some people are optimists and some are pessimists.

But the old Italian gentleman went beyond merely saying that the "cup was half-full." He insisted that the cup was entirely full, "half with water and half with air." He helped us to realize that even what appears to be of no value—emptiness—is, in reality, of life-giving significance.

In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Shelach (Numbers 13:1-15:41), we read of two such very different types of people. We read of the twelve men who were sent out from the wilderness on an espionage mission to spy out the land of Canaan. Upon their return, we discover that ten of them are, to say the least, pessimists. They report that the land is "a land that devours its inhabitants" and that it is occupied by giants who cannot possibly be conquered.

But two of them, Joshua and Caleb, have a different message. They optimistically report that "the land is very, very good" and that "if we but desist from rebelling against the Lord," we need not fear, and can easily even defeat, the giants.

The nineteenth-century commentator Rabbi Jacob Mecklenburg, whose work HaK'tav VeHaKabbalah typically unveils hidden nuances in the Hebrew language of the biblical text, points out that our sacred language provides two different verbs to describe these two different types of people, optimists and pessimists.

Two different verbs are used in the Chumash for the term "spy." One is latur and the other is leragel. Rabbi Mecklenburg demonstrates that latur is best translated not as "to spy" but as "to explore," or perhaps as "to wander", or even as "to tour." On the other hand, leragel is best translated as "to seek fault," or "to find weaknesses".

One who engages in leragel is the classic pessimist. He seeks the negative in every situation and invariably finds it. But one whose

mission is latur seeks the positive in his explorations and discovers, to use our metaphor, that the cup is not only half-full but entirely full. Categorizing all of humanity into just two types of people is an overly simplistic approach and is, therefore, not always helpful. However, toward the end of this week's Torah portion, I discovered another use of the "two types of people" categorization that is extremely insightful and very instructive.

Here I draw upon another of the great nineteenth-century commentators, namely Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, known as the Netziv.

Towards the end of this week's parsha, we read about the mitzvah of tzitzit, of wearing strings upon the fringes of our four cornered garments. We are instructed that, in addition to the uncolored or white strings, there must be one or two strings dyed blue, called tekhelet.

The Netziv suggests, in a homiletic tour de force, that the white/uncolored strings and the blue dyed strings represent two types of people—more specifically, two types of devout religious people. He argues that there are those Jews whose piety is exemplary but who also engage in mundane matters. They attend synagogue regularly, keep the various festivals and ritual activities, study Torah, and contribute to charity. But they have other concerns, whether in the world of commerce, with the arts and sciences, or with political affairs.

Then there is another type of Jew, the person who is exclusively preoccupied with heavenly matters and has room in his life for only purely spiritual concerns. He has a mystical bent and prefers to avoid the material world.

The white strings represent the first type of Jew, suggests the Netziv, whereas the blue tekhelet strings represent the second type.

The Netziv points out that the passage contains two imperatives, two commands, to gaze at the tzitzis and thereby come to "remember the mitzvot and perform them." In verse 15:39, we read, "... and remember all of the Lord's mitzvot and perform them and do not be led astray by your heart and by your eyes". And in verse 40, we read again, "... so that you will remember and perform all of my mitzvot and thereby become holy to the Almighty."

"Are not these two verses repetitive?", asks the Netziv. He answers, and this is his tour de force, that the first verse is directed to the "whites," to those who observe the religious basics but who can be led astray by their other interests and activities. They are told to be sure to observe the tradition and not to be seduced by the ideologies that their "hearts" encounter and by the attractions that their "eyes" observe.

The second verse, continues the Netziv, is addressed in the religious purists, the "blues," who wish to "cleave to the Lord." They must be reminded that they too must observe all the mitzvot, even those that require intense involvement in everyday affairs, in the needs of the community, and in the establishment of a just society. Only thereby will they become "holy to the Almighty."

How relevant are the Netziv's words to all of us today. The "whites" among us have chosen a path that has its moral and ethical temptations. They must creatively and energetically resist those temptations. They must know their boundaries.

The "blues" among us must realize that they cannot remain "in the heavens," in the proverbial "ivory tower." They must bring their spiritual gifts to bear upon the imperfect world in which we all live.

We need both types of people, the "blues" and the "whites."

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah : Shelach Lecha

When did an entire nation suffer from low self-esteem?

Parshat Shelach-Lecha tells us how the meraglim, the 12 spies, returned from the land of Canaan. Ten of them delivered a highly irresponsible and misleading report to the nation. They told them that Canaan was inhabited by giants. And how did they feel in their midst? They said:

" – and we felt as if we were like grasshoppers and that is exactly the perception they had of us". The Torah here highlights for us the direct

link between the perception we have of ourselves and the perception others have of us as a result.

If we think of ourselves as nothing, useless nobodies – that will be the perception that some others might have of us. On the other hand, if we exude confidence, it will inspire others to place their confidence in us.

The great medieval commentator Rav Avraham ibn Ezra explains that the entire nation of Israel carried with them through the wilderness a slave mentality – they couldn't shake off the inferiority complex they had gained in the land of Egypt. Consequently, Hashem determined that they would not be the ones to conquer the land of Canaan and indeed their mindset was reflected in the report of the spies.

Rather a new generation, to be born in the wilderness, would be the ones with the confidence, the courage and the conviction to conquer the land.

Another biblical character who suffered from low self-esteem was King Saul. So much so that the prophet Shmuel came to him and said “ even though you are so small in your eyes – nevertheless you are the head of the tribes of the people of Israel”

Shmuel's message to Shaul was not just for him – it is a message to all of us. Shmuel was telling us if ever we think that we are no better than grasshoppers we need to realise that, in reality, we are all giants. This message was encapsulated by Hillel who, in Pirkei Avot, taught “ מִן אָנָּי לִי, מַה לֵּי? If I am not for myself, who will ever be for me?” If I do not show that I am confident in my ability, how can others have confidence in me? However, Hillel gave a word of warning. Do not take it too far. Never become arrogant “אָמֶן לְעַצְמֵנוּ, מַה אָנָּנוּ?” Because if you're only for yourself and your ego takes over. The question is not only ‘who am I’ but ‘what am I?’ I stop being a mensch. I become a mere object in the world. I am of no value to society. And then Hillel concluded – when it comes to the importance of self-esteem and confidence in ourselves – we must never delay: “אָמֶן לְעַצְמֵנוּ, אַיִלְתִּים – if not now, then when?”

Shabbat Shalom Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

Rav Kook Torah

Shlach: Garments of the Soul

“Speak to the Israelites and tell them to make tassels (tzitzit) on the corners of their garments for all generations. They shall include a thread of sky-blue [wool] in the corner tassels.” (Num. 15:38)

Three Levels of the Soul

How is the human soul recognizable to the outside world? We may speak of a hierarchy of three levels:

The soul itself.

Its character traits - compassion, generosity, tolerance, humility, and so on.

Its actions and conduct.

The innermost level, the soul itself, is hidden from the outside world. The soul can only be observed through the outer two levels, its traits and actions. Character traits are like the soul's “clothing.” Through its distinctive characteristics, the soul reveals itself to the outside world. This is similar to the way we present ourselves to others through our garments. We are judged by the style and quality of our clothes. Yet, we are not our clothes; we may change them at will. So too, we are judged by our character traits, but they are external to the soul itself, and may be changed.

The Symbolism of Tzitzit

The ultimate manifestation of the soul in the outside world is in its day-to-day deportment. If our character traits constitute a metaphoric garment that clothes the soul, then our deeds are tassels that emanate from the corners of the garment. Each trait of the soul is revealed in a variety of actions, since different situations require specific responses. These varied actions are like the many tzitziot (tassels), extending naturally from the corners of the garment.

To summarize the metaphor:

The inner soul is represented by the body.

Personality traits are clothes covering the body.

Actions are the tassels extending from the garment.

The Thread of Techelet

We are accustomed to the tassels being white, but the actual Halachic requirement is that they be the same color as the garment. Sharing the same color indicates that our actions derive their power and direction from the garment, i.e., our character traits.

One thread, however, is not the color of the garment. The Torah instructs us to tie an additional thread, dyed sky-blue techelet. This color reminds us of hidden, sublime matters: the sea, the sky, and God's Holy Throne (Sotah 17a). Sky-blue is the background color of the universe. The techelet thread connects us to the very Source of life, from whom all forces flow. Together with the other threads, which correspond to the color of the garment and represent the diverse range of human activity, the techelet thread complements and completes the function of the tassels.

The Torah teaches that the mitzvah of wearing tzitzit corresponds to all 613 mitzvot: “When you see [the tassels], you will remember all of God's commandments and you will observe them” (Num. 15:39). By wearing a garment with these special tassels, we envelop our souls in the Torah's magnificent fabric of values and deeds.

(Gold from the Land of Israel (now available in paperback), pp. 246-248. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 4-5)

See also: Shlach: The Grape Harvest

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Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Faith in Hashem: Then and Now

I

After the death sentence handed down to all males above twenty (Bamidbar 14:29) in the aftermath of their complaints (27) and weeping (1) over the negative report of the ten spies (13:31-33), there is an abrupt transition. The laws of meal offerings and wine libations are stated, followed by the laws of challah (15:1-21). The Da'as Z'keinim (15:2) explains this juxtaposition. When Am Yisroel heard Hashem's decree, they feared that if they will sin there will be another decree and an endless sojourn in the desert. Hashem therefore said that after forty years you will certainly keep these laws when you enter Eretz Yisroel. The Ramban (15:2) adds that Hashem consoled the children by commanding laws observed only in Eretz Yisroel to assure them that they will enter the land.

The Ohr Hachaim refines this idea, explaining that Hashem saw that they were broken-hearted over the decree to wander forty years in the desert, far from Eretz Yisroel. He sustained their heart with the mitzvos which depend upon the land in order to strengthen their spirit by assuring them that they would ascend and conquer their land. Despite the forty-year wait, the end result was guaranteed.

This consolation is based upon the younger generation's faith in Hashem and His omnipotence. Their parents did not have faith in Hashem (14:11), and the spies even denied His omnipotence (Rashi 13:31). By correcting the sin of their elders and the spies, by reestablishing the faith of their parents which enabled their redemption from Egyptian slavery (Shemos 4:31; 14:31), they were no longer broken-hearted. Their spirits were lifted and they deserved Hashem's guarantee to enter Eretz Yisroel notwithstanding future sins.

II

“Go, my people, enter your rooms and close your doors behind you. Hide for a brief moment until the anger has passed” (Yeshaya 26:20). Many of us remain behind closed doors, hiding until the terrible plague will pass. What should we be doing while in hiding? Rashi interprets “your rooms” as your shuls and yeshivos. In our current situation, however, shuls and yeshivos were all closed for months, and for many of us they remain off limits.

Rashi then cites the non-literal interpretation of the first two phrases in the pasuk found in the Medrash Tanchuma: contemplate your deeds in the chambers (rooms) of your heart. Introspection and teshuva can and must take place even in quarantine. Close the doors of your mouth, and don't question Hashem's attribute of strict justice. We must bow our heads in the face of tragedy and state, “Perfect is His work, for all His ways are just” (Devarim 32:4), even when we cannot comprehend. Rashi

also cites the Targum, which explains that we should do good deeds which will protect you in a time of crisis. Exhibit patience in stressful situations, spend more time in positive interactions with spouses, children and parents, contact others who are in solitary isolation, learn more Torah, give more tzedaka, and daven with more kavana.

Many of us have returned to shuls, some even to yeshivos. The laws of social distancing, masks and limited participants must be followed. Medical experts warn us that Covid 19 remains very dangerous. Halacha demands that we avoid danger by appropriate precautionary measures, even beyond legal requirements.

The "brief moment" of hiding has lasted, for some totally and for some, now, partially, for over three months. This presents spiritual dangers as well. Many have exhibited signs of stress, impatience, restlessness and even depression. People ask "When will it end? How will it end? Will it end?" The proper Torah response is expressed in a popular song. We have talked the talk when we danced at weddings. We must walk the walk during our present crisis. "Yisroel, trust in Hashem. Their help and protection is He' (Tehillim 115:9). We are believers and sons of believers, and we have no one upon whom to rely except for our Father in Heaven".

The belief of our fathers enabled the Exodus from Egypt. Its resumption after the sin of the spies sustained us for forty years in the desert. Our belief in Hashem's promise to bring us to Eretz Yisroel was the self-fulfilling guarantee that we would enter and conquer it, notwithstanding powerful armies and future sins.

We do not know when or how the pandemic will end. We hope and pray for a swift end, by a vaccine, a mutation, or otherwise. But we must be patient and reinforce our belief in Hashem and His omnipotence to end this crisis when and how He pleases. May our faith be rewarded by Hashem answering our prayers for a complete and speedy return to a totally safe "old normal" to serve Him with joy.

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Equalizing the Elite (Shelach)

Ben-Tzion Spitz

Each honest calling, each walk of life, has its own elite, its own aristocracy based on excellence of performance. - James B. Connant

By both biblical and rabbinic accounts, Moses is likely the greatest man who ever lived. He confronted Pharaoh, brought the plagues upon Egypt, and took the Jewish nation out of its slavery. He split the sea, spoke to God like no person ever has or will. He received the Torah and relayed it to the People of Israel. The Torah also declares that he was the humblest of men and the greatest of prophets. We can't even imagine the type of person he was, his caliber, his sanctity, his righteousness, his wisdom, or his nobility.

Yet according to the Meshech Chochma on Numbers 15:37, God puts Moses on an equal footing with every Jew when he presents the commandment of Tzitzit.

Tzitzit are the ritual fringes that every Jewish male is meant to wear on an item of clothing that has four corners. From a young age, boys usually wear the Tzitzit under their shirts, some with the fringes sticking out, others with the fringes tucked in. From Bar-Mitzvah age, and at the latest, once a man is married, there is the related custom to wear a Talit, the prayer shawl, an outer garment with the fringes on the four corners, for morning prayers, or if someone is serving as the Chazan, the leader of the prayer service.

The passage regarding the commandment of Tzitzit is so important, that it was incorporated as the third section of the twice-daily reading of Shema, which we recite in our prayers.

What is interesting about the passage, the Meshech Chochma points out, is that it gives part of the rationale for the commandment of Tzitzit: "so that you shall not go after your hearts and after your eyes." It is a warning, a reminder, even protection, against inappropriate thoughts and intentions.

It would be reasonable to assume, that those of a high moral character, the spiritual leaders of the generation, those with little to no presumption of sin or even inappropriate thoughts, would be exempt from the need for Tzitzit. Why would a great sage whose thoughts are constantly dwelling on the holy and sacred need a coarse physical reminder of the Tzitzit to "not go after your hearts and after your eyes?"

The Meshech Chochma explains that God is saying that not only do "the great" need to wear Tzitzit but even the singular Moses, the greatest prophet, the one whose mind was as close to regular communion with God as possible, even Moses needed to wear Tzitzit.

May we appreciate the depth of the many commandments God has bequeathed to us, whether we are among the elite or not.

Dedication - On the marriage of Yakira and AJ Baumol. Mazal Tov!

Shabbat Shalom

Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Bs"d Shelach 5780

Reality and Tzitzit

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, Rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites the long story about the "meraglim" (Hebrew for "spies") – twelve representatives of the nation who were sent to scout out the land, ten of whom returned with a terrible and frightening report – we get to the commandment of "tzitzit": the commandment to tie fringes to a garment that has four corners.

This commandment is one of the special commandments in the Torah whose purpose is clearly written in a manner that cannot be ignored: "This shall be fringes for you, and when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the Lord to perform them, and you shall not wander after your hearts and after your eyes after which you are going astray. So that you shall remember and perform all My commandments and you shall be holy to your G-d." (Numbers 15, 39-40)

The purpose, then, is to remember the commandments and perform them. The tzitzit acts as a constant reminder to live a Jewish lifestyle and does not allow us to forget our commitment to act, as individuals and as a nation, in a manner that befits Jewish values.

Let's look at the words of one of the spiritual leaders of the Jewish community of Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen (Lithuania 1843 – Latvia 1926). In his commentary on the Torah, Meshech Chochma, there are profound concepts. One of those appears in our Torah portion, Shelach, in relation to the commandment of tzitzit.

What is the meaning of the purpose "and you shall be holy to your G-d"? The author of the Meshech Chochma explains: Everything we as humans can say about G-d, the Creator of the Universe, is that He is absolute and perfect. We might have expected, then, that the reality He created would be perfect as well. But when we look around us, or at ourselves, we discover that reality is far from perfect. Human reality is also composed of impurity and sin, injustice and mistakes. The gap between the Creator of the Universe and the world He created can be explained based on the verse from Psalms (115, 16): "The heavens are heavens of the Lord, but the earth He gave to the children of men". G-d created a reality that is not perfect because He gave it to humans to control and to determine whether or not it would reflect Divine values and thus become perfect, or, heaven forbid, the opposite.

The way man is called upon to reflect eternal values within reality, emphasizes the Meshech Chochma, is not by disconnecting, by withdrawing from the world to focus solely on spirituality. To the contrary. If man lives his life properly within reality, reality itself becomes holier and blessed.

This description of reality in relation to the Creator is like a garment that hides and covers the body. When we look at nature, it is hiding and covering the existence of G-d. The orientation of Judaism is to direct man how to discover and reveal G-d within reality, by living a life of values and commandments.

It is no coincidence that the constant reminder to live a Jewish life is an item of clothing – the tzitzit, whose fringed strings are not sewn along with the garment. This is a tangible illustration of the imperfect reality, one in which we are demanded to repair – “you shall be holy to your God”!

The clear linguistic connections, between the section about tzitzit and the one about the spies, hint at the fact that the spies failed in this respect. They saw the problems in Canaan (the ancient name of Israel), but rather than understand that these issues were a call for repair and that the challenges they were going to face were the gate to a repaired and blessed reality, they were overcome by despair and desistance. The commandment to wear tzitzit reminds us not to make this mistake, but to remember that the role of repairing reality rests on our shoulders.

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

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Shelach

פרק ש' הל' ח"ב

שליח לך אנשיים ויתרו את הארץ ננשׁ

Send forth men and let them spy out the land of Canaan. (13:2)

Moshe Rabbeinu relayed to Hashem the nation's request for spies to reconnoiter *Eretz Yisrael*. Hashem told Moshe to send them. If the nation insisted on sending spies, it was best that Moshe be involved in the decision concerning whom to send. For if the nation were to act on its own, without direction from its spiritual leadership, it would be tantamount to rebellion. Furthermore, a nation without leadership is more like 600,000 leaders, each with his own opinion, acting independently of the other. Obviously, they were deficient in their *emunah*, faith, in Hashem. He had promised to lead them into the Land, after making good on his previous commitments to them. The redemption that they had experienced was buttressed by many miracles, including the Splitting of the Sea and the *manna* from Heaven. The experience of these events should have been sufficient proof to believe in Hashem. The people thought otherwise. They were using mortal minds to determine a war that was to be fought with supernatural capabilities. Why did they act this way? They could not “see” success. One cannot perceive success using his limited human vision. This is the definition of faith. Their suggestion was founded in faithlessness. The fruit that it bore was rebellion against Hashem.

Horav Yisrael Lau, Shlita, relates the story of the daughter of a *rav* who had assimilated and given birth to a child that was the product of her liaison with a non-Jew. She gave the child up to a Catholic Monastery. She added to her act of apostasy by cutting herself off from Judaism. A young rabbi who knew her from childhood, when he would spend hours studying with her father, attempted to dissuade her. He visited her to find out what had happened to her father. When she saw who he was, she proceeded to slam the door in his face. He was relentless, and she finally deferred to him and opened the door. After pleading with her to tell him what had happened to her father, she finally broke down and told him.

Apparently, the Nazi murderers had entered his house, pushed her aside, and entered the study where her father was sitting ensconced in *Tallis* and *Tefillin*, bent over a *Gemorah*, learning. He looked up at them and innocently asked, “What do you want from me?” The Nazi took his rifle that was slung over his shoulder and pounded in the *Rav*'s head with its butt. The butt of the rifle drove the *Tefillin Shel Rosh* into his skull, killing him. The blood poured out of the wound, soaking his beautiful white beard and the *Gemorah* upon which his head fell.

“Do you now understand why I am bitter, why I have no faith? That is how they took my father from me. How can I continue believing?” The young rabbi broke down, and, together with his *rebbe*'s daughter, he wept bitterly for their loss.

“I, too, have questions which no mortal can answer. No human being can answer such questions. Our function is to believe. This is what Jews have done throughout the millennia. This is what your father, my saintly mentor, taught – by lecture and by example. Your child's grandfather has only one grandchild. If he continues on the present trajectory which

you have chosen for him, you will be handing your father's murderers their victory. This is what they wanted – to extinguish the fire of faith in the Almighty. If your child follows in his grandfather's -- your father's -- path, then your father has won. What will it be: the Nazis or your father?”

With these closing words, the rabbi walked to the door and down the steps of the house. The young woman came running after him and got into his car: “We are going to pick up my son. You can have him on the condition that you will raise him.” He agreed only if she would assist in the process. Otherwise, it would be too traumatic for the boy. “You draw him near to you, and, through you, I will draw near to him,” he proposed.

Today this child is a *Rosh Yeshivah* in Yerushalayim, the only living descendant of the old man in Warsaw.

I conclude with the words of a distinguished *Chassidische Rav* (quoted by *Horav Aharon Lopiansky, Shlita*), “People turn to me with all manner of questions, to many of which I do not have a readily available answer. Answers are not the solution; learning how to live with an unanswered question is the solution. As one sees the *emes*, truth, of the big picture, all it takes is patience and study, and understanding will someday follow.”

היש בה עץ אם אין

Are there trees in it or not? (13:20)

Was Moshe Rabbeinu interested in the land's vegetation? *Rashi* explains that Moshe's inquiry concerning a tree was an allusion to a *tzaddik*. He wanted the spies to discern whether a righteous man was in the Land, in whose merit its inhabitants would be spared. The righteous activities of *tzaddikim* are undisputed. If one were asked to paint a portrait of a *tzaddik*, he would probably depict a man with a saintly countenance, bent over a pile of *sefarim*, Torah volumes. Some *tzaddikim* are ordinary people, but have earned *tzaddik* status because they are *mezakei ha'rabit*, bring merit upon many people. Among them are individuals who have sacrificed their own perfection for the sake of perfecting others. Such a person has the added benefit of earning reward as a result of those whom he was instrumental in bringing to perfection.

Chazal teach that one who brings merit upon many people – *ein cheit ba al yado*, sin will not come through him. He will not be the cause of a sin for others – and certainly not himself. Many attempt to reach out to those in need of perfection, but, due to their own lack of perfection, they do so prematurely; and not only do these individuals not succeed in their mission, but they also hurt themselves in the process. *Horav Avigdor Miller, zl*, was wont to say that when young men who are yet unripe, not yet having themselves achieved the learning necessary to teach others, go out into the world and attempt to teach others, they may fail and, in the process, hurt themselves. They are like unripe fruit which can spoil easily. They must have a message to convey to the world, and a manner in which to communicate that message effectively. This process involves time and patience, as the would-be-mentor matures spiritually.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, would relate the following story concerning the extraordinary impact of *zikui ha'rabit*. The story occurred during one of his trips to London during *Chanukah*. He visited a distinguished businessman, himself a Holocaust survivor, who manifested unusual respect and love for Torah scholars who disseminated Torah. Indeed, anyone who promoted Torah study and *mitzvah* observance was very special in his eyes. *Rav Sholom* wondered what in his life had catalyzed such refreshing admiration. The man noticed the look of incredulity on his face and said, “*Rebbe!* My attitude toward *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars, is all because of my father.” A minute passed, and the man saw that *Rav Sholom* was expecting an explanation for the explanation. He said, “Let me share my story with the *Rebbe*.

“In the city where we lived, there was a tailor who was aptly called *Moshe the tailor* (*der shneider*). Unfortunately, he was a *maskil*, member of the Enlightenment, a secular Jew who observed absolutely nothing. His father became ill and passed away. *Moshe* sat *shivah*, observed the seven-days of mourning. (Apparently, in Europe circa pre-

World War II, this was one of the traditions to which *maskillim* still adhered.) Sadly, due to his alienation from Torah, the majority of the community (which was observant) did not make the effort to visit him during his period of mourning. My father's attitude was, 'He is a Jew and, as such, he deserves to be visited.' My father proceeded to go over to his house and spend time with him.

"When Moshe saw my father at his doorstep, he could not believe his eyes. My father broke the ice with warm comforting words. After a short conversation, my father said, 'Moshe, you are obligated to provide your father's soul with the ability to rest in peace. It would be appropriate for you to attend services in a *shul* where you could recite *Kaddish Yasom*, orphan's *Kaddish*. This would be a tremendous *illui neshamah*, perpetuation of your father's soul.' Surprisingly, Moshe immediately agreed and followed through on his commitment. After services, he remained in *shul* to attend a *shiur*, Torah class, and, in due time, he became a fully-observant Jew who adhered to all *mitzvos*.

"When I was thirteen, the Nazis ravaged our city and murdered the entire community – my family and Moshe the tailor included. I was saved and sent to a concentration camp where I was interred for five years. I was befriended by a young man who was quite distant from the Torah way. He attempted to convince me that to turn my back on Torah, to assimilate and emulate the lifestyle he had chosen for himself. Unfortunately, he was able to sway and convince me to 'alter' my religious commitment. I drew the line, however, at *Shabbos*. I would not be *mechallel*, desecrate, *Shabbos*.

"With the advent of the American liberation, we were both sent to a Displaced Persons camp where we were slowly introduced to a normal way of life. It took some time before we were able to eat regularly. Our bodies were unable to digest real food and certainly could not handle regular sized meals. To consume too much too fast was to invite illness and even death. We were nursed back to normal eating habits.

"One *Shabbos*, following a hearty dinner, my friend pulled out a cigarette and said, 'After eating such a filling meal, I must smoke a cigarette,' which he promptly did right in front of my face. He offered one to me, and, knowing that I had never smoked on *Shabbos*, put it into my mouth. All this was despite his awareness that I drew the line at *Shabbos*. My *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, burned within me: What damage can one cigarette make? I thought to myself that after all I had undergone these last five years, I was entitled to one cigarette. The *yetzer hora* knew that once he gets you into the *techum ha'heter*, boundary of permissiveness, he has you. Now, once I smoked, the *yetzer hora* had little resistance in convincing me to take the train into town – which we did.

"The city was packed with people rushing all over, and whom do I meet? None other than Moshe the tailor. I could not believe my eyes. Moshe had died at the hands of the Nazis. What was he doing here? He was certainly some sort of apparition. But why? It had to be some sort of subconscious vision. Moshe was no longer alive. Nonetheless, I was too shaken up to continue with my friend. I returned to my room and began to cry incessantly. I had just desecrated *Shabbos*. What had gotten into me?

"I drifted off to sleep and began to dream. In my dream I saw Moshe laughing at me, 'Your father was the reason I became observant. I could not "live" with the notion of you – his son – desecrating *Shabbos*. I asked permission to descend one time to save you from falling into the eternal abyss.' That day forever changed my life. My father's love of Torah caused him to reach out to an unaffiliated Jew. In turn, that Jew saved me. Those who devote themselves to *zikui ha'rabitim* are, therefore, my heroes."

ונָהִי בְּעַינֵינוּ כְּחַגְבִים וּכְהַיּוֹ בְּעַינֵנָה

We were like grasshoppers in our eyes and so were we in their eyes. (13:33)

When the *meraglim*, spies, returned from their mission, the nation debated their negative report. They ruminated back and forth: Could they triumph over the giant Canaanites or would they be defeated? The *meraglim* were emphatic that they had no hope for

success. The people listened to them, and they began their *bechiyah shel chinam*, unwarranted weeping – a weeping for which we have been punished with a *bechiyah l'doros*, weeping for generations. As a consequence, that night, which was the Ninth of Av, became the precursor of our national day of mourning. What did the *meraglim* fear? What was it that compelled them to return with such negativity? The *Kotzker Rebbe*, zl, in what has become a well-known, often repeated explanation, says that our above *pasuk* presents the crux of their problem, the root of the sin which led to their turning their collective backs on Hashem: "We were in our eyes as grasshoppers." Why? Because the giants referred to them as grasshoppers. In other words, the *meraglim*'s identity was defined by the Canaanite's opinion of them. Their self-image was predicated on what the giants thought of them.

A negative self-esteem is not a sin, but it invariably leads to – and is at the root of – most sin. One who feels good about himself, who is not filled with despair, cares about himself. Such a person will not easily fall prey to the wiles of the *yetzer hora*. Does negative self-esteem bespeak one who is wicked? No, but one who has a low self-esteem is an enemy of – himself. He is wicked to himself. He will ultimately become wicked to Hashem. The *Baal Shem Tov* once told his *talmid*, student, "You lack *emunah*, faith." The student was taken aback. "Rebbe, I spend hours daily engrossed in faith and in improving my relationship with Hashem." "You have faith in Hashem," said the *Baal Shem Tov*, "but you lack faith in yourself. One who has no faith in himself will eventually renege on his faith in Hashem."

We all encounter situations that create ambiguity in our lives. For some, it is a physical/economic/emotional challenge. For others, it is the demons within, products of depression, which, for the most part, is self-imposed. It is specifically during such moments that it would serve us well to reflect upon Hashem and the role He plays in our lives. This provides us with the comfort of knowing that we are not in this alone. We should, thus, be encouraged and empowered to go forward with confidence, to transform despair into hope.

This is how we should act. How many of us, however, can say that they conform to this line of thinking? How many, instead, defer to depression and fall into despair? When someone does not believe himself capable or suitable for a mission, it will adversely affect his spiritual standing. The *Chiddushei HaRim* implies this concept in an incredible commentary to *Devarim* 25:18 concerning Amalek's evil attack against our people. The Torah admonishes us to remember Amalek's ambush of the fledgling Jewish nation following our exodus from Egypt: "That he happened upon you on the way, and he struck those of you who were hindmost" – *necheshalim acharecha* – those who were hindmost, the back of the line, alone, without protection. This is Amalek. He preys on the weak, the least affiliated, those who do not have the community's protection.

The *Midrash Tanchuma* identifies those who were the *necheshalim*, who traveled at the back of the line: *Shevet Dan*, who were eschewed by the *Anan*, Pillar of Cloud, that protected the nation, because they were *ovdei avodah zarah*, idol worshippers! This statement is mindboggling. To assert that a Jewish tribe was guilty of idol worship so soon after *yetzias Mitzrayim*, exodus from Egypt, is unnerving. Yet, the *Midrash* clearly makes this statement. Furthermore, as the *Chidushei HaRim* points out, we know that the Jewish nation traveled in groups, with one of every four tribes carrying the group's *degel*, banner/flag, of distinction. The chosen tribe was the one which was the most worthy, most distinguished. *Shevet Dan* carried a *degel*! How do we reconcile their *avodah zarah* with being singled out to carry a *degel*?

The *Gerrer Rebbe* explains that the Tribe of *Dan* was very much like its name, which implies judgment – without compromise. Thus, since they felt that they were undeserving of accolades or honor, they refused to accept it. While some people would do anything for the opportunity to receive attention, *Shevet Dan* eschewed the limelight – especially if they perceived themselves to be unworthy of the recognition. Is this such a terrible attribute to have? It depends. If Hashem *Yisborach* selects a *Shevet*, this means that the Almighty considers the *Shevet* worthy of the position. Who is to argue with

Hashem? Indeed, this is why Hashem chose them for distinction – specifically because of their inordinate humility. Such a person/*Shevet* shall carry the Banner of the Tribe! Nonetheless, if they felt so low that they would refuse Hashem's Divine mandate, they were taking the issue of self-esteem too far. Even if one feels himself unworthy, he accepts the position if Hashem commands. Likewise, if one's *rebbe* believes in him, he should, in turn, believe in himself. If he does not, if he takes the negative self-image too far, he is a *rasha* – to himself! A *rasha* to himself is still a *rasha*!

I think this idea is behind the concept of the *rasha* of “four sons” fame. I was always bothered by this “errant” son who, despite having issues with the religion in which he was raised and for which his parents and grandparents before him had sacrificed, joins with his family at the *Seder* table. If he is so estranged with the religion that he has no problem deriding it publicly at his family’s *Seder* table, why does he bother to attend? If he is a *rasha*, let him stay away. Applying the above thought, we have a new understanding of the *rasha*. The son who comes to the *Seder* is wicked – to himself. His absolute negative self-image has distorted his entire outlook on Judaism. He thinks/believes that if he is inadequate, the entire religion must be failing him. His only way out is to denigrate what others consider holy, because the alternative means focusing on himself and his self-imposed/perceived shortcomings. He is not a bad son in the wicked sense of the word. He is a son whose negative image of himself, and concomitant low self-esteem, have so distorted his perspective on everything around him that is truly positive that he must whittle away at it in order to preserve his own distorted outlook of himself. The harm this *rasha* causes is primarily to himself.

An individual’s attitude under difficult circumstances not only often defines his character, but it also portrays his true spiritual commitment. It will determine if said commitment will endure the test of time. Yosef and Dovid originally met in Auschwitz where they were both interred in the same block and worked together on the same work detail. They both suffered traumatically, losing their entire families to the Nazi murderers. Their relationship was concretized when they spent a year as displaced persons in Bergen Belsen following the war. Having to emigrate to *Eretz Yisrael*, they, like so many others, were forced to suffer the pain of having insult added to injury when the British Mandate, which was then the governing power of Palestine, set a quota on how many Jews were allowed to come “home.” They set their sights on America, as did so many others.

By the time they arrived in America, they had married and started families. Being devout men, they both did everything possible to maintain their religious commitment in a country where Torah Judaism was an anomaly. Their greatest difficulty was on the economic front. Earning a living to support their families was becoming increasingly difficult, since *Shabbos*, our day of rest, was a regular workday. It was not uncommon for an observant Jew to hold down his job all summer, only to lose it the first Friday of the winter, after the clock was changed. To leave work early meant being fired, which was the case for many *frum*, observant Jews – Yosef and David were no different.

On one Friday afternoon, both Yosef and David were fired from their respective jobs. While it came as no surprise, it did not alleviate the fact that neither one even had food for *Shabbos*. Nonetheless, they accepted their lot as a faithful Jew would. It was their individual responses that distinguished one from the other. Yosef went home, informed his wife and children that it was going to be a rough *Shabbos* without food, and they proceeded to celebrate *Tishah B’Av* on *Shabbos*. The entire family sat there depressed, weeping, the pangs of hunger coursing through them. They lamented their sorry lot in life. David also came home and informed his family of their troubles. He, however, took a different attitude. They were going to celebrate *Shabbos Kodesh* with everything but food. His wife set the table, placed the *challah* cover -- sans *challah* -- in its appropriate place. She lit candles and wept through her usual prayer. When the children began to complain about their bitter lot in life, David began to sing *zemirots*, the *Shabbos* songs. Within a few minutes, everyone was singing like never before. Indeed, on that *Shabbos*, when they thought they had nothing – they

actually had everything. It was their greatest, most inspiring *Shabbos*, which they would remember for the rest of their lives. In fact, it was that *Shabbos* and how they celebrated it, which determined the spiritual trajectory of the individual children of Yosef and David.

Yosef’s children never forgot the misery and travail, the bitterness and emptiness of the *Shabbos* when they went hungry. Later in life, they decided that a religion that demands that one starve was one which they could do without. They reneged the religion which their father had tried so hard to keep. On the other hand, David’s children never forgot the inspiration they had experienced during that uplifting *Shabbos*, when they learned that religion was not about food, but rather, about one’s relationship with Hashem. The glass is either half full or half empty. A positive outlook on life begins with a positive outlook on oneself. Negativity begets negativity, while positivity breeds positivity.

Va’ani Tefillah

-nodeh לך ונספר תהלהך – Nodeh Lecha u'nisapeir Tehillasecha. We thank You and relate Your praise.

We all know the importance of paying gratitude, saying “thank you” for favors rendered. Do we ever stop to think, however, how far this obligation extends? I am sitting at my desk *Erev Pesach* during the insidious plague that is attacking the world, and I stop to think how much we owe Hashem – not just for the great, obvious gifts, but for every moment, literally every breath.

Horav Alexander Ziskind, zl, author of the *Yesod u'Shoresh Ha'Avodah* (quoted by *Horav Avraham Chaim Feuer, Shlita*), wrote a lengthy *tzavaah*, ethical will, to his children, in which he demonstrates in great detail how he never forgot any kindness which Hashem bestowed upon him. He explained how every line of *Shemoneh Esrai* speaks to him, awakening within him memories of Divine kindnesses going back to his earliest years. As a result, he devoted himself to reiterating Hashem’s kindness and relating His Praises to others.

The *Rav* reminds his children to thank Hashem for even the most mundane, almost insignificant favor. He writes: “Thank Hashem purposely every time you need the simplest utensil and you find it – a knife, a spoon, a pen. Thank Hashem for giving you a table and chair. Thank G-d for a small pinch of snuff. Nothing is too insignificant to warrant thanking Hashem.” If I may add: it is not the favor, but the Benefactor. We must realize and teach our children that Hashem bestows everything upon us. Without Him, we have nothing. Indeed, without Him – we are nothing!

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Ohr Somayach :: Insights into Halacha

For the week ending 20 June 2020 / 28 Sivan 5780

Parasha Permutations 5780/2020

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Which Week Is Which?

This time of year is an interesting one. Right after most of Klal Yisrael’s return to shuls before Shavuos, at least in some format (many due to US President Trump’s declaring ‘Houses of Worship’ as at least as essential as liquor stores, as in these trying times of Covid-19, “we need more prayer, not less”), and many figuring out if / how to catch up on all the parshiyos missed b’tzibbur.[1] [2] Klal Yisrael entered another parasha-based dilemma.

For five weeks (six Shabbosos), already starting right after Shavuos, and lasting until the Three Weeks, the Jewish world will not be aligned. No, I am not referring to constellations, but rather to the weekly parasha. A simple innocuous question of “What’s this week’s parasha?” will elicit a different response depending on where in the world the question is being asked. This is because the parasha will not be the same regularly scheduled one in Chutz La’aretz as it is in Eretz Yisrael.

Truthfully, this type of dichotomy actually happens not so infrequently, as it essentially occurs whenever the last day of a Yom Tov falls on Shabbos. In Chutz La’aretz where Yom Tov Sheini is halachically mandated,[3] a Yom Tov Krias HaTorah is publicly leined, yet, in Eretz Yisrael (unless by specific Chutznik minyanim)[4][5] the Krias HaTorah of the next scheduled Parasha is read. This puts Eretz Yisrael a Parasha ahead until the rest of the world soon ‘catches up’,

by an upcoming potential double-Parasha, which each would be read separately in Eretz Yisrael.

The reason for this current interesting phenomenon is that this year 5780 / 2020, the second day of Shavuos, observed only outside Eretz Yisrael, fell out on a Shabbos. On that Shabbos / Yom Tov the communities of the Diaspora leined the Yom Tov reading of ‘Asser Te’asser’ (Devarim, Parashas Re’eh, Ch. 14: 22), whereas in Eretz Yisrael, communities read Parashas Naso, the next parasha in the cycle, as Shavuos had already ended for them.[6]

Parasha Background

The background for this uncanny occurrence is as follows: It is well known that the Torah is divided into 54 parshiyos, ensuring there are enough parshiyos for every Shabbos of the yearly cycle, which begins and ends on Simchas Torah. Since most (non-leap) years require less than 54 parshiyos, we combine certain parshiyos. This means that two consecutive parshiyos are read on one Shabbos as if they are one long parsha, to make sure that we complete the Torah reading for the year on Simchas Torah.

As detailed by the Abudraham, there are seven potential occurrences when we read “double parshiyos”. These seven are:

Vayakheil / Pekudei, the last two parshiyos of Sefer Shemos.

Tazria / Metzora, in Sefer Vayikra.

Acharei Mos / Kedoshim, in Sefer Vayikra.

Behar / Bechukosai, in Sefer Vayikra.

Chukas / Balak, in Sefer Bamidbar.

Matos / Masei, the last two parshiyos of Sefer Bamidbar.

Netzavim / Vayeileich, towards the end of Sefer Devarim.[7]

However, there are several possible instances in which certain parshiyos are combined in Chutz La’aretz, yet are read on separate weeks in Eretz Yisrael. This is one of them, with those parshiyos being Chukas / Balak.

Calendrical Conundrum

Although, as mentioned previously, this calendrical conundrum occurs not infrequently, this year’s split seems to contrast greatly with last year’s - 5779 / 2019 - when the odd alignment with Eretz Yisrael being a week ahead continued with a divergence of over three months (!) with Eretz Yisrael out of sync with the rest of the world, and only realigning by Matos / Masei - around Rosh Chodesh Av.

On the other hand, this year, the split will be much shorter, ending right before the Three Weeks, with Chukas and Balak being read separately in Eretz Yisrael and together as a double parsha in the rest of the world.

However, this gives rise to an important question: Many ask, why last year did we not catch up by Chukas / Balak if it fine for us to do so this year? In layman’s terms, why did we wait so long for the whole world to be realigned last year and this year we get to take a shortcut? Or, to paraphrase the Haggada, “Mah nishtana hashana hazos”?

Although this year, with lockdowns due to coronavirus, this issue may not appear to have much practical ramifications, as (of this writing) the Israeli Interior Ministry just re-shut the borders, even to yeshiva bochurim sporting student visas, and even those allowed in to Israel are mandated a 14-day quarantine period, nonetheless, there are important khalim for us to learn.

Although some cite alternate minhagim,[8] nevertheless, it is important to note that nowadays this Parasha split is indeed Minhag Yisrael, as codified by the Gr”a and Mishnah Berurah.[9] [10] We should also realize that back then travel to and from Eretz Yisrael was far less of an issue, as since undertaking the trip would take several months, missing one Parasha would be the least of one’s worries. But to properly understand the ‘whys’ of this fascinating dual dichotomy, one must first gain an understanding of the Parasha rules and setup. In fact, this is not a new question, as several early Acharonim, including the Maharit, Rav Yosef Tirani, citing Rav Yissachar ben Sussan, one of the foremost experts on intercalation of the Jewish calendar and its minhagim, in his renowned sefer Tikkun Yissachar (written in 1538 / 5298), addressed this issue almost 500 years ago.[11]

Managing Mnemonics

While it is true that technically Eretz Yisrael does not, nor should not, have to take Chutz La’aretz into account, to slow down or join parshiyos together due to their independent luachs (or to be grammatically correct, ‘luchos’) and cycles, as Eretz Yisrael’s is indeed deemed the ikar kriah,[12] nevertheless, there is more to the story.

The Tur, when codifying the halacha, sets four necessary sign-posts in relation to parshiyos, time of year, and various Yomim Tovim. He also offers special codes, mnemonics, as to remember the proper order of parshiyos. In a regular year, he writes, ‘Pikdu U’Pischu’. This refers to Parashas Tzav being Shabbos Hagadol directly before Pesach,[13] ‘Minu V’Atzru’, Parashas Bamidbar is directly prior to Shavuos, ‘Tzumu V’Tzalu’, the fast of Tisha B’Av is directly before Parashas Va’eschanan (also meaning that Parashas Devarim is always Shabbos Chazon and Va’eschanan always Shabbos Nachamu), and ‘Kumu V’Tik’u’, that Parashas Netzavim is before Rosh Hashanah.[14] These mnemonics, denoting the four specific rules, or more accurately, necessary points of parsha alignment (or

realignment) during the year, are accepted lemaaseh as halachah pesukah by all later authorities.[15] [16]

So now that we have the necessary background, let’s get back to our question. Last year, as per the halacha pesuka,[17] the world only re-synchronized after 3 months by Matos / Masei, skipping over the potential combo of Chukas / Balak. Yet, this year, we specifically realign by Chukas / Balak. Why? What could the difference be?

Pondering the Pearls of Parashas Pinchas

The Bnei Yisaschar[18] cites an interesting reason. He explains that whenever possible, we attempt to ensure the public reading of Chalukas Ha’aretz, the apportioning of Eretz Yisrael, during the period of communal mourning known as Bein Hametzarim,[19] colloquially called ‘The Three Weeks’. This period commemorates the heralding of the beginning of the tragedies that took place prior to the destruction of both Batei Hamikdash, from the breaching of the walls of ancient Yerushalayim on the 17th of Tamuz, until the actual destruction of the Beis Hamikdash on the Tisha B’Av.

The reason for these readings, which are found in the parshiyos of Pinchas, Matos, and Masei, to be leined specifically then, is to remind us of Hashem’s promise, that although we are currently in gulos, exile, nevertheless, ‘le’eilah techalek ha’aretz,’ we will still inherit Eretz Yisrael.

A similar assessment is given by the Minchas Yitzchak,[20] albeit regarding Korbanos, especially the Korban Tamid, which is also detailed in Parashas Pinchas. He explains that the Korban Tamid protected Klal Yisrael from sinning with Avodah Zarah.[21] When the Korban Tamid was no longer offered, it enabled the Yetzer Hora of Avodah Zarah to strengthen; and it was due to this sinning that eventually led to the Beis Hamikdash’s destruction.

As such, and since we no longer have Korbanos, but at least we still have their recital, in the vein of ‘v’neshalmah parim sifoseinu’, that our tefillos are their current replacement,[22] the leining of the Korbanos is specifically read during the Three Weeks, when we are mourning the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. This serves to embolden and enable us to fight the reasons and causes for its destruction, and allow its rebuilding.

An additional point the Bnei Yisaschar raises is that Parashas Pinchas contains the Parashas HaMoadim, the reading detailing all the Yomim Tovim and their observances. He explains that this is also an apropos reading for the Three Weeks, to comfort us in our time of mourning. This is as the Navi Zechariah (Ch. 8: 19) prophesized that when the Geulah comes, this period will be turned into one of great rejoicing (‘l’sasson u’lsimcha ul’moadim tovim’).

For all of the above-mentioned reasons, last year, (5779 / 2019) it was simply not worthwhile for Chutz La’aretz to make Chukas and Balak into a double Parasha merely to catch up to Eretz Yisrael, since if it would have, then Parashas Pinchas will not have fallen out in the Three Weeks. Therefore, it was proper for Chutz La’aretz to wait and not catch up to Eretz Yisrael until Matos / Masei, thus ensuring that Parashas Pinchas be leined during Bein Hametzarim, and enabling us to glean and appreciate its veiled significance and promises for the future.

Yet, this year, the opposite holds true. In 2020, the fast of Shiva Asar B’Tamuz, and hence, the start of the Three Weeks, occurs on Thursday, as does its climax, Tisha B’Av, three weeks later. According to our mnemonic rule cited previously, Parashas Devarim has to be Shabbos Chazon, and the following parasha, Va’eschanan, is always Shabbos Nachamu, directly following Tisha B’Av. This means that the preceding week has to already be the double parasha of Matos / Masei, in order for Parashas Pinchas to be recited during the Three Weeks. If we would wait until Matos / Masei to realign, as we did last year, then for most of the world Parashas Pinchas would not be leined during the Three Weeks, but rather preceding it. Hence, the need to correct the calendar before Shiva Asar B’Tamuz, in order for Pinchas to be leined by all of Klal Yisrael in the correct time – during the Three Weeks.[23]

The Code for Consolation

The Maharit continues that the reason why Matos and Masei are generally combined is to a similar, yet reverse, reason to Bamidbar. As the Tur wrote, the code for this time of year is ‘Tzumu V’Tzalu’, the fast of Tisha B’Av is directly before Va’eschanan. This is not merely by chance.

Parashas Va’eschanan contains the pesukim of ‘Ki Soleed Banim U’vnei Vanim V’noshantem Ba’aretz’,[24] which although not a pleasant reading, as it is a tochachah (rebuke),[25] nevertheless, Chazal[26] glean that there is a hidden message of redemption buried within. V’noshantem in Gematria equals 852, letting us know that after 852 years of living in Eretz Yisrael, the Galus would start. Yet, we find that the Galus actually started two years early, after 850 years. This is because Hashem did not want us to have to destroy us,[27] and therefore, as a kindness, brought the Exile two years early, to ensure Klal Yisrael’s survival.

Therefore, explains the Maharit, we commonly join up Matos and Masei to make certain that Parashas Va’eschanan is always immediately following Tisha B’Av as Shabbos Nachamu, thus offering us a message of consolation even amidst the destruction.

In conclusion, although it may seem complicated and confusing, on the contrary, each calendrical calculation is clearly consistent with the clarion call of our Chazal - Parsha combination and separation, synchronized to showcase hope and consolation when we need it most, as well as serve as a buffer from condemnation.

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For any questions, comments or for the full March Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

[1] Although whether *Krias HaTorah* is considered a 'Chovas Yachid' or 'Chovas Tzibbur' is a famous 'chakirah' of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk (cited in *Birchas Shmuel*, *Yevamos* 21; see also *Eimek Bracha*, *Krias HaTorah* 3), as well as a seeming machlokes Ran and Ramban in the beginning of *Maseches Megillah* (3a in the Rif's pagination; see also *Biur Halacha* 143:1 citing the *Chavei Adam* vol. 1, 31: 11), nonetheless, the consensus of contemporary poskim is that *Krias HaTorah* is indeed a *Chovas HaTzibbur*. See *Peulas Sachir* on the *Maaseh Rav* (175), *Shu't Igros Moshe* (*Orach Chaim* vol. 1: 28), *Shu't Tzitz Eliezer* (vol. 18: 5), *Mikraei Kodesh* (*Purim* 7), *Orchos Rabbeinu* (vol. 1, *Hosafos* pg. 10), *Halichos Shlomo* (*Moadim* vol. 2, *Pesach* Ch. 10: 22), *Shu't Yabia Omer* (vol. 9, *Orach Chaim* 28), *Yalkut Yosef* (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 135: 5), and *Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchoso* (Ch. 9: 13 - 17) at length, quoting Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach, and Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. Although *Tosefes Maaseh Rav* (34) relates that when the Vilna Gaon was released from jail, he read all four of the parshiyos he missed at one time on the other hand, when someone pointed this *Maaseh Rav* out to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, after telling a questioner that he is not obligated to find a double-parasha-ed minyan as leining is a *Chovas HaTzibbur*, Rav Shlomo Zalman retorted rhetorically, "do you truly believe that you are on the Vilna Gaon's level to perform all of the *Minhagei HaGr"az*?" (*Halichos Shlomo*, ad loc. footnote 90). On the other hand, it is important to note that the *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 135: 2; citing the *Ohr Zarua*, vol. 2, *Halichos Shabbos* 45) rules regarding if an entire tzibbur did not lein one week, that they would be required to make it up the next week along with the current *Parasha*. In a related sheilah, Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Shu't Yabia Omer*, ibid; see also *Yalkut Yosef*, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim*, 143: 6), who relates a historical precedent (as cited in *sefer Birchos Hayamim* *Orach Chaim* 135, and *Shu't Mekor Yisrael* 105) from a severe snowstorm in *Yerushalayim* in 1787, that lasted from Wednesday through *Shabbos* - when the entire city was blanketed with so much snow that it was impossible for anyone to have possibly attended, except for one shul that managed to open. The psak given was that the tzibbur should lein a double parasha the next week. See also Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky's authoritative *Luach Eretz Yisrael* (5775): *Minhagei Hashanah*, *Nissan*: footnote 61. Although there is some debate [see *Magen Avraham* (135:4 citing the *Shu't Maharam Mintz* 85) that a tzibbur can only go back one parasha, and the *Olas Tamid* (*Orach Chaim* 282) and *Knesses Hagedolah* (*Hagahos HaTur* ad loc.) ruling that way as well; however the *Elyah Rabba* (282:2), citing the *Hagahos Minhagim* (*Shabbos*, *Shacharis*, 41) arguing that a tzibbur should make up as many parshiyos as were missed, and the *Magen Gibborim* (*Elef Hamagen* ad loc. 4), *Chida* (*Shu't Chaim Sha'al* vol. 1:71, 5), *Maharam Schick* (*Shu't Orach Chaim* 335; also citing the *Chasam Sofer* and *Rav Nosson Adler*), *Maharsham* (*Toras Torah* ad loc.), and *Aruch Hashulchan* (ad loc. 6) explicitly ruling like the *Elyah Rabba*; the *Mishnah Berurah* ad loc. 7 and *Kaf Hachaim* (ad loc. 5) cite both sides of this debate with no clear-cut *hachra'ah*, but seem to imply they favor the latter opinion as well] as to how many parshiyos a tzibbur can be expected (or allowed) to 'make-up' in one go, nonetheless many contemporary poskim have ruled that in our specific case when of coronavirus, when the vast majority of the world did not have access to minyanim for several months, when the tzibbur is able to get back together, it is preferable that they should lein all the missing parshiyos together. These poskim include *Rav Moshe Sternbuch* (in his weekly *Parasha Sheet Shavuos* 5780); he writes that there is a 'Ma'aloh' to do so, *Rav Yitzchak* and *Rav David Yosef* (in *Rav Yitzchak Yosef*'s *teshuva* dated 28 Nissan 5780); *Rav David* cosigned on it, adding 'Mitzvah rabba lefarsim'), and *Rav Moshe Heinemann* (in a *shuir* given soon after *Purim* 5780; available on the Star-K website). [On the other hand, Rav Asher Weiss (*Minchas Asher B'Tekufas HaCorona*, *Tinyana* 34) wrote that in his opinion, it is preferable for the tzibbur not to catch up on all the parshiyos, as aside for the *Acharonim* who held that a tzibbur shouldn't make up more than one parasha, there are others who may hold that in this situation the tzibbur may actually be patur. That along with the extended risk of people not keeping to the medical guidelines during this extensive *Kriya*, is reason enough for the tzibbur to daven not catch up on all the missing *Kriyos*. In fact, in my neighborhood, on *Parashas Bamidbar*, there was a special minyan leining all of 'Toras Kohanim' - the whole *Sefer Vayikra* and *Parashas Bamidbar* for the tzibbur that missed all the *Kriyos*.

[2] It is worthwhile knowing that the *Rema* himself, in his youth, wrote his famous *peirush* on *Megillas Esther*, titled "Mechir Yayin," while in quarantine, to present it to his father as *Mishloach Manos* (somewhat akin to *Rav Shlomo Alkabetz*'s famous "Manos Halevi" – see his commentary to *Esther* Ch. 9:17; decidedly not like the *Terumas Hadeshen*, vol. 1:11, who rules that one is not *yotzei Mishloach Manos* with anything but food and drink; although it seems that one may differentiate, as the *Rema* writes in the introduction that as they were on the run and forced to flee Cracow for the village of *Shidlov*, there was no money for a *Purim Seudah* or even wine to drink, so perhaps his *sefer* as *Mishloach Manos* is not proof of his disagreeing with the *Terumas Hadeshen*). The *Chida* as well, wrote his famous "Shem Gedolim" when in quarantine, as attested to in his *Maagal Tov* (20 Iyar). In fact, several sherilos that he addressed in his *Machzik Bracha* (*Orach Chaim* 55:1; cited in *Shaarei Teshuva* ad loc. 15), that suddenly became germane for us during coronavirus, such as whether one can be *metztaref* for a minyan *Yidden* in several different rooms that can see and hear each other; were his own personal *hanhagos* and *psakim* due to his being in quarantine in a lazaretto outside Livorno, Italy in 1774. See *Rabbi Yochanan Herskowitz's* fascinating related article in *Hamodia's Inyan Magazine* (May 13, 2020; "Roll Up Your Sleeves and Get Writing").

[3] As addressed at length in previous articles titled 'Rosh Hashanah: The Universal Two Day Yom Tov (and why Yom Kippur is Not)' and 'One Day or Two? What is a Chutznik in Eretz Yisrael to Do?'

[4] Although the famed *Chacham Tzvi* (*Shu't* 167), and later the *Shulchan Aruch Harav* (*Orach Chaim* 496, 11; although he also cites that 'yesh cholokin', nonetheless, according to the common consensus, this first opinion is *ikar* - see also vol. 1, *Mahadura Tinyana* 68) ruled that even one merely visiting *Eretz Yisrael* over *Yom Tov* should keep only one day of *Yom Tov* like the natives (to paraphrase: 'when in Israel, do as the Israelites do'), nevertheless, the vast majority of halachic authorities, including the codifier of the *Shulchan Aruch* himself (*Shu't Avkas Rochel* 26) and even the *Chacham Tzvi*'s own son, *Rav Yaakov Emden* (*Shu't Sheilas Ya'avetz* vol. 1: 168), maintained that visitors' status is dependant on whether or not their intention is to stay and live in *Eretz Yisrael*, or to return to *Chutz La'retz*, known as 'im da'atam lachzor' (see next footnote at length). We do however find that the one-day *shittah* is defended by the *Aderes* (*Sefer Shevach Haaretz*, 35) and *Shoel U'Meishiv* (*Shu't Mahadura Telitai* vol. 2: 28), and heavily implied by the *Avnei Nezer* (*Shu't Orach Chaim* 242: 27 and 33; 539: *Hashmatos* to *Halichos Yom Tov*, 48 - end; he maintains that 'da'atam lachzor' should not apply even for visitors from *Eretz Yisrael* who are staying in *Chutz La'retz* over *Yom Tov*). This *shittah* has also found support in certain *Rishonim*, including *Rabbeinu Chananel*'s understanding of *Rav Safraya*'s opinion (*Pesachim* 51b - 52a), and the *Ra'avan* (*Pesachim* 162: 2; see *Even Shlomo*'s commentary 37). Although, as shown later on, most contemporary authorities do not rule this way, nonetheless, *Chabad Chassidim* generally follow the *shittah* of their Alter Rebbe, the *Shulchan Aruch Harav*, and only keep one day in *Eretz Yisrael*, no matter how long they intend on staying. (However, there are those who cite different *minhagim* as prevalent in *Chabad* psak for this *inyan*. See, for example, *Rav Levi Yitzchak Raskin*'s extensive *Kuntress Yom Tov Sheini*, printed in his *sefer Nesivim B'sdei HaShlichus* vol. 1. Thanks are due to *R' Nochum Shmaryahu Zajac* for pointing this out.) *Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky* (*Ir HaKodesh V'Hamikdash* vol. 3, Ch. 19: 8 and 11) reports that his grandfather-in-law, the *Av Beis Din* of *Yerushalayim* for the latter part of the nineteenth century, *Rav Shmuel Salant*, was noted to this *shittah* as well. However, since he did not want to argue on his *Rabbeinu*, including the *Pe'a* as *Hashulchan* (see next footnote), who mandated visitors keeping *Yom Tov Sheini*, *Rav Salant* ruled that a *Ben Chutz La'retz* should keep *Yom Tov Sheini lechumrah*, a *shittah* nowadays commonly referred to as 'A Day

and a Half'. This refers to being *makpid* on not doing any *Melachah De'oraysa* on the second day, but also not doing the unique *Yom Tov Mitzvos*, i.e. making *Kiddush* etc. *Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook* (*Shu't Orach Mishpat*, *Orach Chaim* 125; thanks are due to *Dr. Moshe Simon-Shoshan* for pointing out this important source) and *Rav Yosef Dov* (*Soloveitchik* (as cited in *Nefesh HaRav* pg. 84) were also known to be proponents of this *shittah*, reporting that this was also the preferred *shittah* of the *Rav's* grandfather, *Rav Chaim Soloveitchik* of *Brisk*. [However, in this author's opinion, the misnomer for this *shittah*, 'A Day and a Half' is somewhat troublesome. Anecdotally, years ago, I met an older relative here in *Eretz Yisrael* on *Yom Tov Sheini* and noticed that she was performing *Melachah*. When I asked her about it, she innocently replied that her *Rabbi* told her to keep 'A Day and a Half...' and it was already after noon...]. For more on *Rav Shmuel Salant*'s *shittah*, see the annual *Tukachinsky Luach Eretz Yisrael* (*Chol Hamoed Sukkos*, footnote), *Shu't Lehoros Nosson* (vol. 11: 26), *Torah Rabbeinu Shmuel Salant* (pg. 120), and *Aderes Shmuel* (*Piskei Rav Shmuel Salant* zt"l; *Halichos Yom Tov* 129, and in footnotes at length, pg. 131-135).

[5] Although there are those who want to prove that the *Shulchan Aruch* meant to rule that a visitor to *Eretz Yisrael* should only keep one day, as in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 496) he only mentions visitors from *Eretz Yisrael* in *Chutz La'retz*, who need to keep a two-day *Yom Tov* like the locals [see, for example, *Ir HaKodesh V'Hamikdash* vol. 3, Ch. 19: 11, in the parenthesis, as an additional sevara of *Rav Shmuel Salant*'s 'ibro amar lo esfash'...]. Nevertheless, he personally put that notion to rest in his *Shu't Avkas Rochel* (26), where *Rav Karo* explicitly ruled that the *Yom Tov* observance of visitors to *Eretz Yisrael* is dependant on whether they are planning on staying or not. [Indeed, in *Ir HaKodesh V'Hamikdash* Ch. 19: 8, *Rav Tukachinsky* himself strongly disavows the aforementioned notion.] Other poskim who rule this way include the *Rav Yaakov Emden* (*Shu't Sheilas Ya'avetz* vol. 1: 168), the *Pe'a Hashulchan* (*Halichos Eretz Yisrael* 2: 15, 21), the *Chida* (*Shu't Chaim Sha'al* vol. 1: 55, and *Birkai Yosef*, *Orach Chaim* 496: 7), *Mahar'i Chagiz* (*Shu't Halachos Ketanos* vol. 1: 4; however, his son argues quite extensively, including *psakim* from his grandfather, *Rav Moshe Galanti*, and 'Rabbanei Tzfas', that *Bochurim* should certainly only keep one day), the *Pri Ha'adamah* (vol. 3, pg. 17b, and in *Mizbach Adamah*, *Orach Chaim* 468: 4 s.v. 'l'inyan'; citing 'kol Rabbanei Yerushalayim' regarding a *Bochur* who plans on returning to *Chutz La'retz*), *Shaarei Teshuva* (*Orach Chaim* 496: 3, in the parenthesis, and end 5; he makes a *sikum* of the *shittos*), *Chaye Adam* (vol. 2, 103: 4), *Rav Hashulchan* (*Orach Chaim* 496: end 5), *Mishnah Berurah* (ad loc. 13), *Kaf Hachaim* (ad loc. 38), and *Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky* (*Ir HaKodesh V'Hamikdash* vol. 3, Ch. 19: 8 and 11, and in his annual *Luach Eretz Yisrael* ibid); although he does seem to give equal credence to his grandfather-in-law, *Rav Shmuel Salant*'s 'Day and a Half' psak]. The vast majority of contemporary poskim rule this way as well. See *Shu't Igros Moshe* (*Orach Chaim* vol. 3: 73 and 74 and vol. 4: 101), *Orchos Rabbeinu* (new print - 5775 edition, vol. 2, Ch. 'Yom Tov Sheini'; citing the *Chazon Ish* and *Steipler Gaon*), *Shu't Seridei Aish* (new edition; vol. 1, *Orach Chaim* 51: 1), *Shu't Minchas Yitzchak* (vol. 4: 1), *Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchoso* (pg. 108, footnote 5; citing many *Rabbanim* including the *Tchebiner Rav*, *Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach*, *Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv*, and *Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg*, whose *teshuva* is printed in the back of the *sefer*), *Rav Shevet Halevi* (vol. 5: 64), *Shu't Mishnah Halachos* (vol. 4: 83), *Shu't Tzitz Eliezer* (vol. 9: 30), *Halichos Even Yisrael* (*Moadim* vol. 1, pg. 287 - 288), *Shu't Yaskil Avdi* (vol. 4, *Orach Chaim* 26), *Shu't B'etzil Hachochmah* (vol. 1: 60), *Shu't Yabea Omer* (vol. 6, *Orach Chaim* 40: 1 - 3), *Shu't Ohr L'Tzion* (vol. 3: Ch. 23: 5), *Shu't Knei Bosem* (vol. 1: 28), *Chazon Ovadia* (*Yom Tov*, pg. 133: 12), and *Yalkut Yosef* (*Moadim*, pg. 460).

[6] Even though the messengers of *Tishrei* and *Nissan* would certainly have reached even far flung places by *Shavuos*, nevertheless, *Chazal* still established a *Yom Tov Sheini* for *Shavuos*, in order not to make a distinction between the *Yomim Tovim*. See *Rambam* (*Halichos Kiddush HaChodesh* Ch. 12), *Shu't Chasam Sofer* (*Orach Chaim* 146 and *Yoreh De'ah* 252), *Shu't Sholeh U'Meishiv* (*Mahadura Tinyana* vol. 2: 85 s.v. v'hinei tifanya daati) and *Shu't Machazek Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 121). See also *Chiddushai Maran R'z HaLevi al HaTorah* (*Parashas Emor*): the *Brisker Ravnotov* that the exact date of *Shavuos* is always already set from the beginning of *Nisan*, as the *pasuk* states regarding *Shavuos* (*Parashas Emor* Ch. 23: 21) that it is observed "b'etzen hayom hazeh", hence keeping it as a two day *Yom Tov* is also considered a *Takanah* of sorts. Moreover, according to *Rema M'Fano* (*Asarah Maamaros*), as cited by the *Magen Avraham* (beg. *Orach Chaim* 494), according to the *shittah* of *Rav Yosi* in *Gemara Shabbos* (86b-88a), that *Mattan Torah* actually occurred on *7 Sivan*, as well as perhaps the 51st day of *Sefira*, there is an allusion to *Yom Tov Sheini* (at least for *Shavuos*) *Min HaTorah*. For alternate approaches, see *Maharsha* (*Chiddushai Aggados*, *Avodah Zarah* 3a, on *Tosafos* s.v. *yom hashishi*), *Chok Yaakov* (494:1, citing the *Shu't Rivash* 96; see also 430:2), and *Ba'er Heitev* (ad loc. 1; at length).

[7] *Abudraham* (*Seder HaParshiyos*). See also *Birur HaGr"a* (*Orach Chaim* 428: 4 s.v. *l'olam*) and *Biur Halacha* (ad loc. s.v. *B'midbar Sinai*).

[8] For example, the *Abudraham* (*Seder HaParshiyos* s.v. *eilu*) mentions *Shlach* and *Korach* are combined as regular double-*Parshiyos*; which to the extent of this authors' knowledge is not currently practiced. In a similar vein the *Tikkun Yissachar* mentions a certain *Chacham*, *Harav Saadya Dayan Tzova* (presumably a *Dayan* in *Aram Tzova* - Aleppo, Syria), who combined *Korach* and *Chukas*, an interesting combination that, as the *Tikkun Yissachar* notes, the rest of the world never combines. However, my esteemed father-in-law, *Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Lieberman* informed me based on his years of learning in *Kollel* there, that the *Chalev* (Syrian) community in Mexico City still follows (or, at least did several decades ago) this unusual combination of *Korach* and *Chukas*.

[9] *Birur HaGr"a* and *Mishnah Berurah* (*ibid*).
[10] In an interesting side point, the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 29b) mentions an alternate *minhag*, that of the *Bnei Maaraava* (*Eretz Yisrael*), "D'maski L'Deoraysa B'ilas Shnun," that they only complete the *Torah* every three years, as opposed to our common *minhag* of doing so every year. Let one thinks that this *minhag* was only extant during Talmudic times as the *Rambam* (*Halichos Tefilla* Ch. 13: 1) already wrote in the 1100s that it is not the *minhag pashut*, on the other hand, we find that famed traveler *Binayamin of Tudela* (*Masa'os Rabbi Binayamin M'Tudela*; *Adler* / London edition pg. 63) related that in the early 1170s, in Egypt there were two different co-existing *Kehilos*, that of the mainstream community finishing the *Torah* annually, and that of the *Bnei Eretz Yisrael*, splitting each *parasha* into three and only concluding the *Torah* every three years. Indeed, we do find differing views of the *parshiyos* and their *keivius* in the works of several *Rishonim*. For example, the *Chida*, at the end of his *Shu't Chaim Sha'al*, quotes *Kitzur Teshuvos HaRosh* as cited from *sefer Chazai Hatenufa* (54), that the main point is to ensure that the *Torah* is completed every year. Hence, it is within the rights of the *Tikkun Yissachar* to decide where to stop, as in his opinion, our *parasha* setup is not like *halacha kavua*, but rather *minhag*. The *Ohr Zarua* (vol. 2, *Halichos Shabbos* 45 s.v. *maaseh*) seems to concur with this assessment as well, stating that there is no *keivius* which *parasha* must specifically be *leined* on which *Shabbos*. Yet, it must be stressed that this is not the normative *halacha*. Thanks are due to *Rabbi Moshe Taub* for pointing out several of these important sources.

[11] *Shu't Maharit* (vol. 2, *Orach Chaim* 4), also quoting the *Tikkun Yissachar* (pg. 38 a -b), based on *Tosafos* (*Megillah* 31b s.v. *klosos*) and the *Levush* (*Orach Chaim* 428: 4).

[12] The *Tikkun Yissachar* (pg. 32b) explains that as *Eretz Yisrael* observes *Pesach* for seven days, exactly as prescribed in the *Torah*, as opposed to *Chutz La'retz*, which observes an eight-day *Pesach* due to *Rabbinic decree* (as detailed at length in previous articles titled: 'Rosh Hashana: The Universal Two-Day Yom Tov (and Why Yom Kippur is Not)' and 'One Day or Two? What is a Chutznik in Eretz Yisrael to Do?'), which in turn pushes off the calendar, the *Eretz Yisrael* *Luach* is deemed the *ikar* one and 'Bnei Ha'Ikar' im' certainly do not have to be concerned with the calendar of 'Bnei HaMinhag'. Indeed, regarding a year with similar calendrical structure, but not a leap year [so the 'split' occurred with earlier *parshiyos* and concluded much earlier; this was addressed in a previous article titled 'Parasha Permutations 5778'], the *Tikkun Yissachar* (ad loc. s.v. *hagahah*) relates that the *Sefardic Chachamim* of *Tzfas* agreed to separate *Tazria* and *Metzora* to be on par with the rest of the world. However, the response of the *Rabbanim* from the rest of *Eretz Yisrael* was not long in coming. They utterly rejected the idea, and demanded that they only catch up to *Beitar* / *Bechukosai*, as that was already the established *minhag* for generations. The exact quote of the sharply worded rejoinder of the *Rabbanim* is "Zehu Minhag Avoseinu U'Kadmoneinu B'Yadeinu Mei'Olam V'Shamim Kadmoniyos".

[13] According to the *Abudraham* (pg. 372), *Seder HaParshiyos*, and *Tikkun Yissachar* (pg. 38a), and cited *lemaaseh* by the *Levush* (*Orach Chaim* 428: 4), *Knesses Hagedolah* (*ibid*. s.v. *shittah* 44), and *Elyah Rabbah* (ad loc. 5), the reason why *Parashas Tzav* generally falls out on *Shabbos Hagadol*, the *Shabbos* immediately

preceding Pesach, is that it mentions the halachos of Kasherig Keilim (Vayikra Ch. 6: 21), albeit regarding the Korban Chatas, as, 'haga' alas keilim chometz lamud m'Korbanos'. Although in a leap year Parshas Metzora is usually read directly before Pesach, it is also in sync, as it mentions 'kli cheres yishaver', which is quite apropos for Pesach as well.

[14] According to the main commentaries on the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, 'Pikdu' means 'commanded', hence it is referring to Parshas Tzav, which also means 'command'. 'Pischa' is referring to Pesach. 'Minu', 'count', refers to Parshas Bamidbar, which deals mainly with the counting of Bnei Yisrael. 'Atzu', 'stop', refers to Shavuos, by referring to its name that it is called by in the Torah, 'Atzeres'. 'Tzumu', 'fast', refers to the fast of Tisha B'Av. 'Tzalu', 'daven', refers to Parshas Va'eschanan, as it starts with Moshe Rabbeinu's entreaties to Hashem. 'Kumu', 'stand', refers to Parshas Nitzavim, literally 'standing'. And 'Tik'u', 'blow' refers to Rosh Hashanah, when the Mitzva Hayom is to blow the Shofar.

[15] These mnemonics are cited and accepted lemasah by all later authorities as well, including the Shulchan Aruch, Levush, and Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 428: 4).

[16] Tosafos (Megillah 31b s.v. kulos), and later seconded by the Leush (Orach Chaim 428: 4), explains why Bamidbar must be prior to Shavuos. Since Parshas Bechukosai contains tochachah (rebuke), there must be a noticeable "buffer week" [practically, Parshas Bamidbar] between its reading and Shavuos. This is because we pray that a year and its curse should end, in order to usher in a new year with its blessings - 'Tichleh shana u'klaloseha, tachel shana u'birchaseha' (see Gemara Megillah 31b).

This is apropos for Shavuos as it is Rosh Hashanah for Peiros Ha'Ilan, tree fruits (see Gemara Rosh Hashanah 16a). Therefore, Bamidbar must be the stand-alone "buffer week" before Shavuos, in order to emphasize that we are getting Bechukosai in just before Shavuos.

[17] Knesses Hagedolah (Orach Chaim 428, Haggos on Tur s.v. kishe'ira), Magen Avraham (ad loc. end 6; citing the precedent and rulings of the Maharis and Tikkun Yissachar; see following footnotes), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. end 10).

[18] Bnei Yissachar (vol. 1, Maamarei Chodshei Tamuz - Av, Maamar 2: 2).

[19] This three-week season is referred to as such by the Midrash Rabbah (cited by Rashi in his commentary to Eichah Ch. 1, verse 3).

[20] Minchas Yitzchak al HaTorah (newer edition, vol. 2 pg. 185, Parshas Pinchas s.v. uvazeh).

[21] He proves this from different maamarei Chazal from Taanis (26a), Yoma (62b), Sanhedrin (56b), as well as the Kli Yakar (Pinchas Ch. 28: 4). His actual maamara was explaining why the fact that Battu HaTamid on Shiva Asur B'Tamuz is reason enough for fasting.

[22] Hoshea (Ch. 14: 3). See also Gemara Taanis (27b), Megillah (31b), and Yoma (86b).

[23] As pointed out by R' Mordechai Wainman, there is another, albeit technical reason why Chutz La'aretz catches up by Chukas/Balak. As Parshas Devorim has to be Shabbos Chazon, the way our calendar is set up this year there simply aren't enough weeks between Shavuos and Shabbos Chazon to allow Chukas and Balak to be split in Chutz La'aretz - anyway Mattos and Masei are read together this year - even in Eretz Israel - due to weekly limitations. So by default, the only other option to catch up by ends up being Chukas/Balak (which would otherwise not be combined), irrespective of the benefits of ensuring Pinchas is read during the Three Weeks.

[24] Devarim (Ch. 4: 25).

[25] In fact, it is also the Kriah for Shacharis on Tisha B'Av itself [see Rema (Orach Chaim 559: 4)], thus making it read twice in the same week, perhaps to let its hidden message sink in.

[26] Gemara Sanhedrin (38a), cited by Rashi on the pasuk. See also Sifsei Chachamim (ad loc.).

[27] Devarim (Ch. 4: 26).

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

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L'iluy Nishman the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, author of M'Shalchan Yehuda on Inyanei Halacha, serves as the Sho'el U'Meishiv and Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim. He writes a longstanding contemporary "Insights Into Halacha" column for Ohr Somayach's website as well. His first English halacha sefer, focusing on halachos pertaining to food, is due out shortly

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Ed. Note: very relevant to daf yomi learners !!

Writing on Shabbos

Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff

Question #1: Writing with my mouth!?

Is writing with a pen in my mouth considered writing?

Question #2: Disappearing ink

May I use disappearing ink on Shabbos?

Introduction:

Writing was one of the 39 melachos performed in the construction of the mishkan. According to most opinions, writing was performed when the boards of the mishkan were marked (see Shabbos 103a,b; Rashi 73a). The Mishnah (103a) mentions that the boards were marked in order to remember exactly in which location each board was placed.

Why mark?

The question is: Since the mishkan's boards were identical, what difference should it make where each board is placed? This question is already raised by the Talmud Yerushalmi (Shabbos 12:3), which explains that there is halachic importance that each board be in the exact same place whenever the mishkan was reassembled.

Recordkeeping

There is a minority opinion that contends that the melacha of writing is derived from the recordkeeping performed for the mishkan (see Shu't Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim 199:10). Since the Mishnah already mentions the marking of the boards as a source for the melacha, how and why can any commentary suggest a different reason?

The answer is that this approach was suggested in order to resolve a conundrum. There are rishonim who clearly did not use the Mishnah's example of marking the mishkan boards as the source of the melacha of writing. The acharonim who discuss this question note the following:

When the Mishnah states that the melacha of writing is derived from the labeling of the boards, it is explaining the opinion of a minority tanna, Rabbi Yosi, who holds that there is a melacha called roshem, or marking. The Avnei Neizer demonstrates that there are rishonim who definitely hold that the tanna kamma

who disagrees with Rabbi Yosi did not derive the melacha of writing from the boards; therefore, these rishonim must have another option from which the melacha of writing is derived. The Avnei Neizer suggests that the melacha was derived from the necessity of keeping good records regarding the contributions donated to the construction of the mishkan.

Minimum shiur

In general, there are two levels for violating any of the melachos of Shabbos. There is a greater degree of violation, called chayov, which includes performing a melacha with the minimum amount necessary, called the shiur. There is also a lesser degree of violation, called patur, which includes performing the melacha activity but in a quantitatively smaller way, called pachus mi'keshiur, literally, less than the minimal amount. Patur also includes activities that are forbidden to perform because of rabbinic injunction.

What difference does it make whether something is chayov, punishable, or patur, non-punishable? There are several halachic differences that result. Here are three:

1. At the time that the Sanhedrin existed, a special beis din, composed of 23 judges, would take forceful legal action against someone who desecrated Shabbos in a punishable way, but they would not take action if the act was non-punishable.

2. Is someone who violates Shabbos negligently required to offer a korban chatos as atonement? If the act is chayov, the perpetrator is obligated to offer a korban chatos. If not, it did not cross the threshold required to offer a korban chatos, notwithstanding that it violated a Torah law.

3. Under certain circumstances, it might be permitted to ask a gentile to perform the act.

Two letters

Regarding the melacha of writing, the violation of the higher degree is when someone writes two letters of the alphabet. Someone who writes only one letter has performed a non-punishable offense, unless his one letter completed a work, such as it was the last letter of a sefer Torah (Shabbos 104b).

Someone who writes one letter is not chayov for violating the melacha even when it is an abbreviation of a word. For example, in the time of the Mishnah, someone might mark a bin containing maaser produce with a single letter mem א. Despite the fact that everyone seeing this single א on a bin will realize that this is a code for an entire word, someone who marked the bin with a letter א is not chayov for Shabbos desecration, but is guilty of a lesser prohibition, that of writing pachus mi'keshiur.

Notwithstanding that writing less than the shiur is deemed non-punishable, it is forbidden, and its violation should not be treated lightly.

Writing with my mouth!?

At this point, we can discuss our opening question: Is writing with a pen in my mouth considered writing?

The Mishnah (Shabbos 103b) mentions other instances in which the act is not chayov; for example, someone wrote two letters in different places in a way that they cannot be read together, or he wrote in a way that people usually do not write, such as by holding the pen in his mouth.

Writing with your mouth

We have all heard of extremely talented artists who succeed in doing things that we would consider well-nigh impossible, such as drawing paintings with their toes or with a quill held between their teeth.

Actually, this incredible skill is not new. In the days of the Rama of Fanu, an early- seventeenth century Italian gadol, mekubal, and posek, there was a scribe who wrote sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos by holding the quill in his mouth. He wrote gorgeous sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos, but the halachic question was whether they were kosher. Some background to the issue is necessary:

Write right

The Mishnah (103b) lists many cases that are not prohibited min haTorah, including writing by holding the pen between the toes, with one's mouth, by holding it in the joint between his forearm and upper arm (the opposite side of the elbow), or by holding a pen upside-down (thus, writing by twisting your arm backwards – don't try it, it is a rather uncomfortable way to write). The Gemara adds that someone who writes with his weaker hand, such as a right-handed person who writes with his left hand, is patur from performing a punishable melacha.

Our opening question is now clearer. The poskim rule that just as writing in an unusual fashion does not qualify as an act of writing to desecrate Shabbos (min haTorah), sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos written this way are not written correctly and are invalid. Similarly, the Rama of Fanu ruled that the beautiful sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos written by holding the quill in the sofer's mouth are not kosher.

Can you write by erasing?

There are circumstances in which a letter is created by erasing. For example, the Hebrew letter reish needs to be written, and at the moment its place is taken by a dalet or a tav. If you erase the extra piece and thus create a reish, have you desecrated Shabbos?

Let me explain this question in more detail: There is a principle germane to the laws of sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos that the letters must be written and

cannot be scraped into existence. This case shows a perfect example: someone wrote a dalet where a reish is required, then scraped off the extension and point of the dalet to construct a reish. This is referred to as chok tochos and, unfortunately, sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos so made are invalid.

The question is: Does the creation of a letter on Shabbos by chok tochos constitute writing germane to the laws of Shabbos, or does it constitute only a rabbinic violation?

The answer:

Several authorities, both rishonim and acharonim, rule that a letter written by erasing violates the melacha of writing on Shabbos min haTorah (Ran, Or Zarua, Shu't Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim #207).

How were the boards marked?

I mentioned above the Mishnah that teaches that the boards were marked to be able to tell where each board should be placed when the mishkan was reassembled.

There is an interesting dispute between Rashi and the Rambam regarding how the boards of the mishkan were marked. According to Rashi (Shabbos 73a), each board was marked with a letter or symbol, with the two boards that were to be inserted into the same silver socket carrying the same symbol. The melacha is derived from the juxtaposition of two letters providing knowledge how to place the two boards.

The Rambam's opinion is that the boards were numbered consecutively, using the same system we would use today to write numbers using Hebrew letters. Thus the eleventh board was mark נ and the nineteenth ו (Commentary to Mishnah Shabbos 12:3). He does not explain why we cannot derive that writing even one letter is chayov, since the first ten boards were identified with only one letter. It seems that, in his opinion, Chazal understood that one letter, which does not form a word in Hebrew, cannot be enough writing to be chayov. According to Rashi, the requirement to write two letters to be chayov is itself derived from the construction of the mishkan.

Writing other than Hebrew

Some rishonim contend that the prohibition against writing on Shabbos is violated min haTorah only when using Hebrew characters (Rabbeinu Yoel Halevi, quoted by Or Zarua, Hilchos Shabbos #76, and Hagahos Maimoniyyos, Hilchos Sefer Torah 7:40 and Hilchos Tefillin, 1:70). According to these rishonim, writing in other alphabets is prohibited only because of a rabbinic injunction. Although most rishonim, including both Rashi (Shabbos 103a) and the Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 11:10), clearly dispute this, contending that writing in any alphabet is prohibited min haTorah, the Rema (Orach Chayim 306:11) rules according to the Or Zarua that writing in other alphabets is prohibited only because of a rabbinic injunction (cf. Beis Shmuel 126:1 and Magen Avraham 340:10). Upon this basis, some later poskim permit having a non-Jew use a western alphabet on Shabbos for the benefit of a Jew (See Shu't Noda Biyehudah, Orach Chayim 2:29).

Permanence

A requirement of most melachos is that the act involved must have a lasting result. For example, tying a knot that can last for only a matter of hours is not prohibited on Shabbos.

Germane to the melacha of writing, the Mishnah (Shabbos 104b) discusses this topic:

Someone who writes with ink, with a paint pigment, with sikra (a red dye), with tree-exudate gum, or with ferrous sulfate, or anything else that makes a permanent impression (is chayov).

The Tosefta (Shabbos 12:6) and other authorities add several other instances that are considered permanent: writing with pencil, coal, paint, shoe polish, tree sap, pomegranate peels, or congealed blood. (It is perhaps significant that the Rambam omits the case of congealed blood, a point raised by the Biur Halacha [340:4 s. v. bamashkin]. Biur Halacha leaves this issue unresolved.)

Temporary writing:

On the other hand, the Mishnah also mentions several types of writing that are deemed temporary and therefore only rabbinic violations of Shabbos. The Mishnah (103b) records the following instances of writing that qualify as temporary: "Someone who wrote with liquids (Rashi explains this to mean a berry juice with a black color), with fruit juices, with mud (or, alternatively, he used his finger to mark lettering in dust [Rashi]), with the residue left in an inkwell, or with any other substance that does not last is patur."

How permanent?

Two great recent authorities apparently were involved in debating this exact question. Sometime in 1977, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach paid a house visit to the posek of the eidah hachareidis, Rav Yitzchak Yaakov Weiss, and the two great authorities began discussing the question concerning how long a period of time must writing last to be considered permanent. Notwithstanding that both great leaders viewed one another with utmost respect, they disagreed very strongly over the halachic conclusions to be drawn from the evidence.

In a previous article discussing the laws of dyeing, we discussed how permanent you must color something to violate the laws of Shabbos min haTorah. Most authorities contend that violating the law min haTorah requires that the color last only to the end of Shabbos. Germane to the laws of writing, many authorities rule that the definition of permanent is the same: Any writing that will last until Shabbos is over is prohibited (see Shu't Minchas Yitzchok 7:13-15). However, other authorities rule that writing is more lenient than dyeing, which means that the length of time that a written message needs to last to violate a Torah prohibition is longer than the length of time required for a dye (Minchas Shlomoh 1:91:11; Rashba, Shabbos 115b; Biur Halacha, 340:4 s. v. Bemashkin).

Why should writing require a longer amount of time to be prohibited min haTorah than dyeing?

In writing, the goal is to provide communication, either to yourself as a reminder, or to someone else. If a person is writing a reminder, he probably needs the information to last for a few days, and therefore writing in a way that will not last this long does not violate the Torah prohibition.

The Shab-eit

I have in my possession a pen called a Shab-eit. This product was manufactured to assist security or medical personnel who are required to write on Shabbos because of pikuach nefesh situations. The instructions on the pen quote the words of the Mishnah, "Someone who wrote with liquids, with fruit juices, with mud, with the residue left in an inkwell, or with any other substance that does not last is patur," with the notation that usage of the Shab-eit is prohibited miderabban on Shabbos. The package insert explains that state that anything written with the pen will become hard to read and will completely disappear within a few days, depending on the type of paper on which it is written. They note that, based on the company's experience, the writing will remain on regular writing paper for about three days, and therefore use of the Shab-eit is advised for medical and security personnel required to write things on Shabbos because of life-threatening emergencies. The recommendations are to write on Shabbos in as limited a way as one can using this marker, and after Shabbos to rewrite or photograph what was written. They also suggest checking before Shabbos to see how long it lasts on the type of paper that will be used. As I discovered, on some types of paper this ink will disappear within hours, potentially rendering it useless.

The package includes a note that using this pen on Shabbos in the above-mentioned circumstances is based on piskei halacha of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, whose responsa on the subject they reference.

Prickly writer

The Mishnah (104b) teaches: "Someone who writes on his own skin is chayov. Someone who scratches on his skin: Rabbi Eliezer rules that he is chayov, whereas the Sages rule that he is patur."

What is the dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and the Sages?

According to most opinions (Rashi on Rif, Ran, Reshash), they are discussing someone who took a pin or thorn and "wrote" by scratching some letters or a brief message into his skin. Rabbi Eliezer considers this to be an act of writing, whereas the Sages rule that he is exempt from a Torah violation for writing since this is not considered a normal way to write (Rambam, Ran). The halacha follows the Sages that he is exempt from a Torah violation (Rambam), although this is prohibited on Shabbos as a rabbinic injunction. It is also a valid question why this is not chayov for the Shabbos violation of drawing blood. I hope to answer this question in a future article.

Conclusion

The Torah commanded us concerning the halachos of Shabbos by giving us the basic categories that are prohibited. Shabbos is a day that we refrain from altering the world for our own purposes, but instead allow Hashem's rule to be the focus of creation by refraining from our own creative acts (Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch's Commentary to Shemos 20:10). By demonstrating Hashem's rule even over non-exertive activities such as writing, we demonstrate and acknowledge the true Creator of the world and all it contains.

לע"ג

שרה משא בת ר' עקיבא אליעזר ע"ה
ביליא בת (אריה) ליבע ע"ה