



BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON VAYEITZE - 5764

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From: Chaim Shulman <crshulman@aol.com>
Subject: Visein Tal Umatar Motzei Shabbos Dec. 6; Background
Reminder We begin Visein Tal Umatar at Maariv on Motzei Shabbos Dec. 6.

By way of background, from what I understand the original date for visein tal umatar in chutz laaretz was about Nov. 22 (60 days after the autumnal equinox of about September 23). But in the 20th & 21st centuries we begin Visein Tal Umatar at Maariv of Dec. 4, or in the case of a solar leap year Maariv of Dec. 5 (like 5764 where Feb 2004 has 29 days). Hence we should begin on Maariv Dec. 5, but on shabbos it's academic, so first tefilah of chol is Dec. 6. The reason we didn't switch to Dec. 5 & Dec. 6 in 2000 despite the fact that in halacha we don't adjust for the Gregorian calendar's elimination of a leap year at the turn of the century, is that as 2000 is divisible by 400 even the Gregorian adjustment didn't eliminate that leap year (Gregorian only eliminates leap year in 3 out of every 4 turn of centuries). But in 2100 (Dec. 2099 to be exact), if Mashiah has not yet come and if we're still unfortunately in chutz laaretz, since it won't be a leap year by the Gregorian calendar (and the halacha still follows the Julian calendar that each fourth year is a leap year including turn of century years) the halacha would move the Visein Tal Umatar date to Maariv of Dec. 5 & 6.

<http://www.ezratorah.org/kislev.htm>

SHABBOS PARSHAS VAYEITZEI 11 KISLEV, DEC. 6 The Haftarah is read from Hosea: 12:13-14:10. (The Mishneh brurah Siman 428 Subparagraph 22 states in the name of the Chayei Adam that we add additional pasukim in order to conclude the Haftarah on a positive note). 12 KISLEV, MOTZIE SHABBOS, DEC. 6 At Maariv of Motzie Shabbos Dec. 6, 12 Kislev, we begin to include Vesain Tal Umatar into the Shemonah Esrei. If one became aware, after he had completed the Bracha Mevaraich Hashanim, that he had omitted Vesain Tal Umatar he should wait to insert it right before Ki Ata Shomeah of Shema Koleinu. If he had already completed the Bracha Shomeah Tfilah, he may insert it before saying Retzei. If he had already begun Retzei he must return to the Bracha "Boraich Aleinu", which is the proper place for Vesain Tal Umatar. If he had already completed the Shemonah Esrei and stepped backward, then he must repeat the entire Shemonah Esrei. In any situation in which a person must repeat the entire Shemonah Esrei, he may fulfill his obligation by listening to every word of the Chazzan's

Repetition from beginning to end, with the intention of thus fulfilling his obligation. (It is advisable to repeat 101 times [at the very least 90 times]: Ves Kal Minei Svuasa Letova Vesaen Tal Umatar so as to make the inclusion of Vesain Tal Umatar habitual and fluent, thus eliminating any future doubt as to whether one included Vesain Tal Umatar in the Shemonah Esrei or not.) The final time for the sanctification of the New Moon of Kislev is the night following Monday, Dec. 8 until 12:17 a.m. (14 Kislev).

www.dafyomi.co.il THOUGHTS ON THE DAILY DAF brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Har Nof Rosh Kollel: RAV MORDECAI KORNFIELD
Ta'anis 10

DECEMBER 4TH AND THE Y2.1K (YEAR 2100) CRISIS QUESTION: The Gemara rules that outside of Eretz Yisrael, we begin asking for rain "60 days after the Tekufah of Tishrei." What is special about this date? Rav Yonah Mertzbach (ALAH YONAH, p. 22) explains why this date was chosen. In Eretz Yisrael, where rain is needed more, if no rain falls until the first of Kislev, Beis Din institutes days of prayer and fasting. The Chachamim chose to institute the prayer for rain in Bavel on a day corresponding to this important date in Eretz Yisrael, since it is the very latest time for rains to begin in Eretz Yisrael. However, since most people out of Israel are non-Jews, who use a solar calendar, and since the rainy season is actually more closely related to the solar year than to the lunar year, the Chachamim instituted that we pray for rain on the first of the "solar month of Kislev." The Gemara refers to a "solar Shevat" (Rosh Hashanah 15a) which is 30 days after the Tekufah of Teves. Likewise, "solar Kislev" would begin 60 days after the Tekufah of Tishrei, and that is when those outside of Israel should begin to ask for rain. Tekufas Tishrei, the vernal [autumnal] equinox, occurs on September 23 (or September 24 in the year preceding a leap year). Hence, 60 days after that would be November 22 (or November 23 before a leap year), which is, in fact, the date given by the Avudraham for beginning to ask for rain (cited by the Beis Yosef in OC 117). Why, then, do we ask for rain only on December 4 (or 5), 12 days later? ANSWER: The Gemara in many places quotes Shmuel as saying that the four Tekufos of the year are each exactly 91 days and 7 1/2 hours long, which means that the full year is 365 days and 6 hours long (91 days and 7 1/2 hours x 4). Julius Caesar, in the year 3714 (46 B.C.E.) arranged an eternal *solar* calendar, the first 365 day calendar, based on the earth's relationship with the position of the sun. His calendar was very similar to the one used by the modern world today. At that time, his astronomers advised him that the solar year is exactly 365 1/4 days (365 days and 6 hours), the same as Shmuel's calculation. (Besides the 365 days of the average year, he instituted the addition of a 366th day (nowadays, February 29) every four years in order to reflect the extra day that the solar year gained after the passage of four years because of the four 1/4 days.) However, in truth this figure for the length of the year is inaccurate; it is a bit too long. The true solar year is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds. Shmuel's calculation was off by approximately 11 minutes per year, which means that with the passage of time, the actual solar year lags behind Shmuel's year. The equinoxes and solstices slowly migrate through the calendar with the passage of time; every 128 years (11 minutes X 128) the equinoxes and solstices arrive one day too early on the calendar. At a later time (in 1582 C.E.) it became evident that the calendar was not compensating properly for the true length of the year. In order to prevent the summer months from occurring during winter and the winter months during summer, they modified the Julian calendar and adopted a new version, known as the Gregorian calendar. The first change they made to the calendar was to cut out 10 days that were mistakenly added to the year over the passage of time, due to the miscalculation of the Julian astronomers. (The day after October 4 that year was not October 5, but October 15.) They also adjusted the calendar to compensate for the discrepancy between the actual solar year and the Julian calendar year by deducting three leap years every 400 years. Three out of four centesimal years (for example, the years 1700, 1800, and 1900) will *not* be leap years although they are divisible by four (they will have no February 29), and only a centesimal year in which the number of centuries is divisible by 4 (such as the years 1600 and 2000) will be leap years. (This means that according to their calculations, the year is 365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes and 12 seconds long. This is actually off by approximately 26 seconds, but it is close enough for most practical purposes. It will only cause the calendar to be ahead by one day after 3,323 years.) At that time, the Jewish authorities agreed that it was not necessary to institute a parallel change to the Jewish solar calendar with regard to calculating when the Tekufos occur (which, in Halachah, affects the date to begin asking for rain and to recite Birchas ha'Chamah). We still rely on Shmuel's calculation. However, as a result of the change made by the Gregorian calendar,

sixty days after the Tekufah was changed from November 21 (the night which becomes November 22 at midnight) to December 1. In 1700, when another leap year was skipped by the Gregorian calendar, the day for saying "v'Sen Tal u'Matar" became December 2, and in 1800 it moved up to December 3 (this is the date given by the Chayei Adam and his 19th century contemporaries). In 1900, the date was moved up to December 4. This is why "v'Sen Tal u'Matar" is said in Chutz la'Aretz beginning from December 4 (or 5, in the year preceding a leap year) today. It is comforting to note that this date, December 4 (or 5), will not change upon the arrival of the year 2000 since that year is a centesimal year divisible by 400, which *is* a leap year according to the Gregorian calendar -- giving us one less thing to worry about for Y2K. Only in the year 2100 will we have to change the date for starting to say "v'Sen Tal u'Matar" in the Golah, and Mashi'ach will certainly arrive well before that date.

[See also Erubin 56]

http://www.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/Shokel/941215_Conundrums.html
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Calendar Conundrums[1]

Jews are well accustomed to the fact that our religious calendar marches to a completely different rhythm from the one that is in common use in the surrounding society. There is however a conspicuous exception to that pattern: The day on which we begin to pray for rain in our daily prayers (introducing the Hebrew formula "Ten tal umatar") is defined in the Siddur by a date in the "civil" calendar, the 4th (or sometimes the 5th) of December. The origins of this anomaly go back to ancient times, when the Rabbis of Babylonia decreed that rain should not be requested prior to the sixtieth day after the Autumnal Equinox. The significance of this date is not explained in the Talmud, and some scholars have suggested that for the Babylonian farmers rainfall was considered a nuisance before the conclusion of the date-harvest. Whatever the reason, it is clear that the equinox, as a phase in the cycle of the sun, is most conveniently calculated by the civil calendar, which is a solar one.

In the course of the Middle Ages the Babylonian practice came to be accepted--though not without a struggle--by all Jewish communities outside the Holy Land. Israel itself follows a different, earlier date, defined according to the Jewish calendar (the 7th of Heshvan).

Initially many Diaspora communities followed the Israeli custom, but eventually the powerful Babylonian Rabbinate succeeded in asserting its authority as the supreme authority for religious practice.

Thus, as an eminent contemporary halakhist has observed, normative practice has rejected the more reasonable precedents of praying for rain either when it is beneficial for our own climate, or when it is required in the Holy Land--in favour of the unlikely option of linking it to the climate of Iraq (the current inhabitant of the land that was formerly called Babylonia).

But the peculiarity of the situation does not end there. The Autumnal Equinox actually occurs on the 22nd of September, so that the sixtieth day following should come out on November 20, not December 4!

The discrepancy originates in the methods that we employ for calculating the solar year. The Talmud assumes that a year consists of precisely 364 1/4 days and halakhic practice bases its calculations on that premise.

The calculation is very close, but it is not fully accurate, since an astronomical year falls eleven minutes and fourteen seconds behind that estimate. The margin is admittedly a tiny one, but when stretched across the centuries of Jewish history the minutes begin to add up. Every 128 years the Jewish reckoning pulls a full day ahead of the astronomical equinox.

The Catholic Church, aware that their traditional Julian calendar (based on the same assumptions as the Talmud's) had lost touch with the facts of nature, corrected the situation through the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1582, which involved turning the clocks ahead eleven days to adjust for the discrepancy! The Gregorian calendar cleverly regulates the frequency of leap-years in order to keep the equinoxes in astronomic proportion. It has now become the accepted standard for most of the world. Because the Jewish world has never introduced an equivalent adjustment, the cumulative error over the centuries now amounts to fifteen full days.

And the gap will continue to widen. Even as Siddurim published a century ago instruct the worshippers to begin reciting "Ten tal umatar" on December 3 or 4, so in the year 2100 will the dates shift to Dec. 5 or 6--gaining three days every four hundred years. If left uncorrected this will lead to some bizarre consequences, as the season for reciting "Ten tal umatar" keeps shrinking. Eventually it will advance all the way to Passover, which marks the termination of the rainy season, and will

not be recited at all. Although this is a mathematical inevitability, don't hold your breaths. It is not scheduled to happen yet for another 35,000 years.

As often happens, the halakhic world tends to prefer its own traditional rules and definitions over ones that issue from the outside world. Some Rabbis have taken note of the problem, but are reluctant to tamper with traditions. Almost none have discerned any cause for alarm.

After all, they argue, we live in faith that the Messiah will appear at any moment. Surely he will arrive before matters get out of hand, so why don't we just wait and let him deal with the problem!

See also,

<http://www.judaic.org/halakhot/talumatar.pdf>

http://www.otmall.com/mj_ht_arch/v22/mj_v22i57.html

<http://www.yu.edu/riets/torah/tal.htm>

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org]

Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayietzei

"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayietzei

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 394, Accepting Tzedaka from Women.

Eisav Had It Easy. Yaakov Travels A Different Path

The first Rashi in the parsha notes that the pasuk [verse] beginning "And Yaakov departed" appears to be a little out of place. At the end of Parshas Toldos, the pasuk already said, "So Yitzchak sent away Yaakov and he went toward Paddan-Aram to Lavan, son of Besuel, the Aramean..." [28:5].

Parshas Vayietzei should not begin with Yaakov's itinerary, because we already know where he was going. The parsha should begin with the pasuk "He encountered the place and spent the night there because the sun had set..." [28:11]. What is gained by repeating that which we already know?

Rashi explains that the pasuk had to "reset the narration," so to speak, because it was sidetracked at the end of Toldos. Eisav saw that Yitzchak sent Yaakov away from home to find a wife because he was not pleased with his Canaanite daughters-in-law whom Eisav had married. Therefore, Eisav went to marry his cousin, Machlas the daughter of Yishmael [28:9]. This tangential story diverts our attention from the main narrative of Yaakov's journey, making it necessary to repeat the basic details of that journey before continuing on with the story.

But we must stop and ask ourselves, why did we get off the track? This story was not narrated by a speaker departing from his prepared text. The narration comes from the Master of the World. There must be an important reason for inserting the detail regarding Eisav's marriage to Machlas at precisely this point.

Rav Yosef Salant provides an interesting insight in his sefer, Be'er Yosef. Our patriarch Yaakov is the prototype of exile [galus]. As we have quoted on many occasions, "What occurs to our forefathers foreshadows that which will occur to their descendants." The children are able to persevere in difficult circumstances by virtue of the fact that their ancestors already successfully experienced -- to some extent -- the same trials and tribulations.

As Jews of the exile, Yaakov Avinu -- more than any of the other Patriarchs -- is really our role model. He lived the life of a Jew living in exile -- outside the Land of Israel. He lived a life of constant troubles, one thing after another happening to him and his family. Yaakov's departure from the Land of Israel began in this parsha when he left Be'er Sheva. Since this parsha represents the beginning of the exile and the beginning of the troubles for Yaakov, the pasuk emphasizes: This is where it all began.

Eisav and Yaakov were brothers. They received a similar upbringing. They both had righteous parents. Eisav wanted to find a match. What did

he do? He went to his uncle Yishmael, he married Yishmael's daughter Machlas. It went one two three. He had it easy.

Yaakov Avinu wanted to find a match. He had to travel a great distance to reach his uncle Lavan. Lavan forced Yaakov to work for seven years for the wife that he wished to marry. Then after the seven years, Lavan switched sisters and forced Yaakov to work for another seven years. Yaakov had trouble with shidduchim [match making]. It took him years to marry the woman he wanted to marry.

This was the beginning of Yaakov's sojourn in exile. Therefore the pasuk interrupts the narration to contrast how easy it was for Eisav to be able to marry the woman who he was seeking, compared with how difficult it was for Yaakov to marry the woman who he was seeking. In spite of all the troubles, Yaakov accepted his lot. He never bemoaned the fact that his lot was a much more difficult one than that of his twin brother. He never questioned G-d's justice; rather he accepted it with love.

Rav Matisyahu Solomon adds a further insight to the words of the Be'er Yosef: Where do we see that Yaakov did not bemoan his lot and willingly accepted what G-d had in store for him? Rav Solomon says this is explicit in the first pasuk of this week's parsha: "And Yaakov departed from Be'er Sheva and went to Charan."

The Haftarah of this week's parsha describes what actually happened to Yaakov a bit more bluntly: "And Yaakov fled (vaYivrach Yaakov) to the field of Aram..." [Hoshea 12:13]. It was not really "Vayetzei Yaakov" implying that he leisurely left Be'er Sheva. No! It was "VaYivrach Yaakov." Yaakov was fleeing for his life. Even in the Torah itself, when Rivkah told Yaakov to leave, she did not say "Go have a nice trip". She said "Arise, run for your life!" (kum, berach lecha) [Bereshis 27:43]. That described the actual situation.

But how did Yaakov view the event? "And Yaakov went out (vaYietzei) from Be'er Sheva and he journeyed (vaYelech) to Charan." He went, at his own pace, with confidence that G-d would watch over him. This is the key to Yaakov's existence in Galus. It may appear like he had to run for his life, and that is in fact what happened. But he did it with calm and equanimity, knowing that he would be protected by G-d. It is that faith that has stood us well through these long years of exile.

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From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com]
PENINIM ON THE TORAH
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM Parshas Vayeitzei

Leah's eyes were tender, while Rachel was beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance. (29:17)

Chazal tell us that Leah's eyes were tender because she wept constantly in prayer that she would not have to marry Eisav. People would say that Rivkah had two sons and her brother, Lavan, had two daughters. The elder daughter would marry the elder son, and the younger daughter would marry the younger son. Leah's prayers were answered: Not only did she not marry Eisav, she even was the first to marry Yaakov. In his sefer Simchas HaTorah, Horav Simchah Hakohen Sheps, zl, notes that while Leah was the one who wept profusely because she was concerned about her fate, in the eternal scheme of things it was Rachel who was designated as the one who cries for her children. Her tears leave an

impression. Hashem listens to her pleas. Why? Indeed, once she gave up her opportunity to wed Yaakov, she had every reason to fear that Eisav would seek to marry her. What is there about Rachel's tears that render their influence more favorable than those of any of the other Matriarchs? Rav Sheps explains that the nature of Rachel's tears was different than Leah's because the two women had two distinct personalities. Leah worried; she feared that she would fall into Eisav's clutches. Rachel, by her very nature, was a baalas bitachon; she had incredible trust in Hashem that everything would work out for her. She did not cry; she did not fear. This is the underlying meaning of "Leah's eyes were tender." She did not have the fortitude, the stoicism, to confront challenges, trials and tribulations with tenacity, forbearance and conviction. She wept profusely out of fear and anxiety. Rachel was "beautiful of form and appearance." She never manifests hopelessness. She never gave up hope. One would look at her and see beauty in the way she carried herself - proud, hopeful, and filled with courage and resolution. When she wept, her tears were heard. She was, therefore, selected to serve as Klal Yisrael's advocate par excellence.

Rav Sheps notes that we have turned the tables around. In regard to routine, simple pressures, such as earning a livelihood, instead of being like Rachel and maintaining a sense of bitachon, we act like Leah and worry and cry. We demonstrate everything but bitachon. In regard to the important things, such as our children's education, we are like Rachel: filled with bitachon that everything will work out - eventually. To expand a bit upon the above thesis, we may cite Chazal who teach us that after the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, all the gates through which prayers travel to Heaven were closed, except for the Shaarei Demaos, Gates of Tears. This means that currently it is much more difficult for our prayers to penetrate the Heavenly Court. There is one set of gates, however, that remains open: the Gates of Tears.

If the Gates of Tears never close, why have gates altogether? The purpose of a gate is to lock someone out. If the gates never close, what purpose is served by them? The Kotzker Rebbe, zl, explains that some tears do not get through - regardless. Tears of desperation and hopelessness do not penetrate the Heavenly Court. These do not represent Jewish tears. The tears of a Jew should reflect the individual's innermost and purest thoughts. These are tears of hope. They have the power to pierce the Heavens. The gates are there to distinguish between tears of hope and tears of hopelessness.

Regardless of how overwhelming and desperate a situation may seem, a Jew cannot give up hope. The Izbitzer Rebbe, zl, explains that we are called Yehudim, after Shevet Yehudah, because when Yosef confronted his brothers with the planted incriminating evidence, all the brothers gave up hope - except Yehudah. He immediately approached Yosef. He drew near to him in order to establish a dialogue. Yehudah never gave up hope. This attitude must epitomize all Jews.

And she declared, "This time let me gratefully praise Hashem. Therefore, she called his name Yehudah." (29:35)

In the Talmud Berachos 7b, Chazal say that no one paid gratitude to Hashem until Leah made this statement. Was Leah really the first to thank Hashem? Does this mean that the Avos, Patriarchs, did not show their appreciation to Hashem? The Kesav Sofer responds after first citing Chazal's maxim, "He who recites Hallel daily scoffs Hashem." Why should someone who praises Hashem be castigated? Apparently, Chazal are teaching us a significant lesson in regard to awareness of Hashem's daily miracles. One who is the beneficiary of a miracle that goes beyond the parameters of Hashem's daily caring for us is motivated to render his gratitude with the lofty praises of Hallel. What about the daily miracles, however, that are cloaked in what we call "nature?" Are they to be ignored? Ostensibly, this person thanks Hashem only for the "miracles," but not for the "nature." One who says Hallel daily, who appreciates the

"Hallel type" miracles, but ignores the daily miracles which we take for granted, scoffs Hashem.

Surely, Avraham and Yitzchak thanked and praised Hashem for the miracles which He wrought for them. Indeed, their lives were filled with miracles. Leah, on the other hand, thanked Hashem for giving her a child - a seemingly "natural" gift. She understood the gift of a child. She understood that teva, nature, is really neis, miracle. She taught the world that one must offer gratitude for the natural as well as for the miraculous. A man once came into shul, bringing with him a l'chaim, bottle of whiskey, to share with the members in honor of the great miracle that occurred in his life. He had been walking down the street, when a car went out of control and hit him. Baruch Hashem, it was a minor injury. In gratitude to Hashem, he was sharing his good fortune with others. The next day, another member came into shul and also brought a "l'chaim" to share with others. Assuming that he was also the beneficiary of a great miracle, they all wanted to know what had happened to him. "Nothing," he said, "absolutely nothing. I walked down the street, and nothing happened to me. Is that not also a miracle?"

Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl, in his Michtav M'Eliyahu, explains the concept of teva and neis in the following manner. He cites the famous statement made by the Rambam at the end of Parashas Bo that one must be aware and believe that everything that occurs is actually a miracle. Nothing is natural. It is all the result of Hashem's will. If so, how does one distinguish between neis and teva? Rav Dessler explains that while everything that occurs is really miraculous, Hashem has set forth a process in the world whereby some miraculous occurrences are disguised in the cloak of nature, which means they adhere to the rule of cause and effect. It is only in certain circumstances for unique individuals, that Hashem acts outside of the parameter of cause and effect, causing what we refer to as a miracle, to occur.

Let us give an example of cause and effect. One plants a seed in the ground, and in a few weeks it begins to sprout. The cause is the planting and watering. The effect is the natural result. It seems natural, but is it really so? Does it make sense that when a living seed is buried in the ground, it decays and germinates, producing a living plant? Is this not some form of techiyas ha'meisim, resurrection of the dead? Indeed, it is; if it would happen with a human being, it would be called a miracle, while with a seed, it is called natural and taken for granted. In other words, there is no difference between neis and teva, other than what we have become accustomed to believing.

In our times, we should be aware of the daily miracles that pursue us. The places that we did not go - and something terrible happened; the places that we did go and - to our good fortune - we "lucked out." It was just a couple of years ago following the 9/11 tragedy, that so many people became aware of the idea of neis and teva, and how what seemed to be an oversight, or a nuisance, was Hashem's gift of life - for some.

The following story caught my eye as an incident of neis which some might casually write off as teva. A group of Orthodox Jews prayed daily in a small, makeshift synagogue near the Twin Towers. Rarely was there a problem with a minyan, quorum. On September 11th, for some reason, they just could not put together a minyan. Perhaps the regular worshippers had opted to stay at their resident shuls for the Selichos services. Or, perhaps they were among the two hundred men who worked at the Twin Towers who were late to work that fateful day because they attended a Shloshim, one-month anniversary service, for a group of Jews killed in a helicopter crash over the Grand Canyon. Whatever the reason, only nine men were present for the minyan. It was getting late, and they all had to be at work at the Towers Trade Center well before 9:00AM. They looked at their watches and the time to leave for work was fast approaching. What would they do? They never missed minyan. Especially during Selichos, with Rosh Hashanah approaching, they had to try to get the proverbial tenth man.

As they were about to give up, an elderly gentleman shuffled in, asking, "Did you daven yet? I have to say Kaddish, the memorial prayer, for my father. It is his yahrzeit, the anniversary of his passing, and I would like to daven for the amud, lead the services."

Under normal circumstances, the members would have questioned the man: Who was he? Where did he come from? Was he observant? By now, however, they were frantic. It was late, and they had to move on - or they would be late for work. The man proved to be anything but a fast davener. He turned the pages and read the words at an agonizingly slow pace. The members were literally climbing the walls. Indeed, it seemed as if every gesture, every movement, every sound the man made was done so deliberately. The worshippers nonetheless respected his slow pace.

Suddenly, during their insistent complaining about being late for work, they heard the first plane explode. They heard the horrible blast that would forever shake their hearts and souls. They ran outside and saw the mass hysteria, the chaos and the thick smoke that lay before them. "It should have been us," they thought. After the initial shock wore off, they realized that they had been miraculously spared from the jaws of death. Each and every one of them would have been there if not for the minyan and the elderly man who appeared from nowhere and who had davened so slowly. By the way, where was that man? They looked around, because they wanted to grab him and shower him with thanks. Where was that elusive mystery man who was probably the reason they were alive?

They would never know the answer to that question, however, because just as he had suddenly appeared - he disappeared. During the commotion, he must have slipped out of shul. Now is that teva or neis?

Then Lavan spoke up... "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flock is my flock, and all that you see is mine. (31:43)

Lavan's response was to be expected: arrogant and insolent. It did not, however, respond to Yaakov's demand. Lavan pursued Yaakov and threatened him. Yaakov responded from the depths of over twenty years of frustration, describing his dedication and integrity beyond what was expected of him. He cited the many times that he had been mistreated and shortchanged by Lavan. How did Lavan respond to these claims? He said simply, "Your wives are mine; your children are mine; your sheep are mine; whatever you possess is mine." In other words, he did not respond to Yaakov. He ignored him - completely!

A famous incident occurred between the Brisker Rav, zl, and the Chafetz Chaim, zl. This dialogue serves as a portent for future relationships with our non-Jewish neighbors. The Brisker Rav once had a two-hour layover in Warsaw. As he was waiting in the station, he was notified that the Chafetz Chaim was presently in Warsaw. The Brisker Rav immediately ordered a wagon and driver, so that he could visit the Chafetz Chaim. During their conversation, the Chafetz Chaim shared the following incident with him. The Chafetz Chaim yearned to visit Eretz Yisrael. He decided to apply for an exit visa. The ministry for immigration said that he would have to produce a valid birth certificate before they could process his application. He told them that he had been born over ninety years ago, at a time when they were not issuing birth certificates. The only other alternative was to produce two witnesses from the same town who remembered his birth. The Chafetz Chaim looked at the minister incredulously, "The witnesses would have to be over one hundred years old!" To find two such witnesses was impossible.

"Now," continued the Chafetz Chaim, "what was the minister thinking? He certainly understood that his demand was impossible for me to fulfill. Why did he make such an impossible request of me? The answer lies in Parashas Va'Yetzei - and he cited the above pasuk in which Lavan basically dismissed Yaakov, saying, "Everything is mine. You have no claim on anything!" Lavan disregarded Yaakov's reasoning, overriding it

with the notion that since everything is mine, you are a nobody with no ability to demand anything of me.

"The same idea applies to our position in Polish society. We are nothing in their eyes. They view us as non-entities with no claim to anything. We are dismissed and ignored. Our feelings and sensitivities are totally meaningless to them."

Lavan did not consider himself arrogant. He viewed Yaakov as a nothing, someone whom he could dismiss without any compunction. This type of anti-Semitism is worse than blatant hatred. Not to be considered a people, to be regarded as a nonentity, to be dismissed without reason, to be relegated to a position of insignificance is worse than hatred. This demeaning view of our People is self-inflicted. We ask for it when we refuse to act like a Torah nation with pride and dignity. When we attempt to act like them, we become like them. What is there about us that is worthy of respect? We are not religious. We are not moral. We are not ethical. We are no different than the nations around us. Our assimilation indicates our insecurity. No one cares for an insecure person. Why should the nations of the world have regard for an insecure, vacillating nation? The cure for anti-Semitism is simple: act in the manner in which a Jew was created and instructed to act; the hatred will dissipate, and the respect will return.

In loving memory of our father and grandfather on his yahrtzeit Elchanan ben Peretz z'l niftar 11 Kislev 5759 Mordechai & Jenny Kurant Aliza & Avrohom Wrona Naomi & Avrohom Yitzchok Weinberger Dovid & Yossi Kurant

From: Kerem B'Yavneh Online [feedback@kby.org] To: KBY parsha Subject: Parshat Vayetzei

"Heaven and Earth"

Rosh Hayeshiva RAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG shlita

"Behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward." (Bereishit 28:12) The Torah first mentions the relationship between heaven and earth at the beginning of Creation, as it says: "In the beginning G-d created the heaven and the earth." There, the Torah mentions heaven first and earth second. However, in ch. 2, this order is reversed: "These are the products of the heaven and the earth when they were created, on the day that Hashem G-d made earth and heaven." (Bereishit 2:4) The Mesora there notes that the only other place in which this reverse order appears is in Tehillim: "His glory is above earth and heaven. And he will have exalted the pride of his nation." (Tehillim 148:13-14)

There are two ways of viewing heaven and earth. On the one hand, heaven is the higher and more spiritual, the source of Hashem's influence, while earth is the lower, material and recipient of the influence. On the other hand, ever since Hashem created the Jews to tell his glory and gave them the Torah, the direction has been reversed, and earth is the source that influences from below to above: "I have placed my words in your mouth - and with the shade of my hand have I covered you - to implant the heavens and to set a foundation for the earth." (Yeshaya 51:16) In Nefesh Hachaim, Rabbi Chaim Volozhoner comments on the pasuk, "Man became a living being" (Bereishit 2:7), that man is the living being of all the worlds and that everything depends on him.

"The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool." (Yeshaya 61:1) Heaven is greater than earth, just as a throne is greater than a footstool. The author of the Tanya writes, though, that there is a virtue in a footstool that a throne does not possess. Even a throne diminishes the height of the person when he sits down on it, while a footstool raises the feet that are placed on it. So, too, the earth raises the heaven.

Creating is the initial G-dly work, ex nihilo, something out of nothing. However, doing is the job and virtue of men, "which G-d created to do." (Bereishit 2:3) G-d creates and man continues to do and repair.

"These are the products of the heaven and the earth when they were created." From the perspective of creation, heaven comes first. Yet, from the perspective of man's doing and repairing, earth comes first: "...on the day that Hashem G-d made earth and heaven." Between the two parts of the pasuk it says: "when they were created (b'hibaram)." Chazal point out that the letters of "b'hibaram" spell out the name of Avraham. Avraham, and later Am Yisrael, are the reason behind the revolution that placed earth before heaven.

"His glory is above earth and heaven", because he exalted the pride of his nation, "Causing praise for all his devout ones, for Bnei Yisrael, his intimate people." Ever since Hashem chose Am Yisrael as his intimate people the direction has been reversed and now earth comes before heaven.

"He dreamt, and behold! A ladder was set earthward and its top reached heavenward." Chazal note that the numerical value of "ladder" (sulam) equals that of "Sinai." "Set earthward" parallels what is written at Sinai, "they stood at the bottom of the mountain." (Shemot 19:17) "It's top reached heavenward" parallels, "the mountain was burning with fire up to the heart of heaven. (Devarim 4:11) The Revelation at Har Sinai is the ladder whereby man can climb from earth to heaven in order to connect between them.

"Behold! Angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it." Angels belong in heaven, and therefore the Torah should have written, "descending and ascending." Why were the angels first ascending? The Torah is teaching that angels are our actions and influences that flow from us down below to heaven. Chazal teach: "Angels of G-d are the merits as it says, 'but a single defending angel out of a thousand.'" (Iyov 33:23) The Maharal writes in Sefer Hatiferet that the mitzvot that we perform are likened to a rope that pulls the person out of the bottommost pit, to place him with the King, Hashem, Master of Legions. Thus, from man's perspective, the deeds come first. They are what ascend to above and then later return and influence from above to below. Therefore, the angels of G-d ascend first and later descend.

If a person is seeking for a way to meet G-d, there is no need to climb the loftiest heights and to ascend to heaven. It is possible to discover him here in our place, the material world of doing. "Surely Hashem is present in this place" - "Behold! Hashem was standing over him."

This is what Rav Kook zt"l wrote to those who seek Hashem above: They need to be shown the way, how to enter the pavilion - through the gate, The gate is Hashem's G-dliness that is revealed in this world. (Zer'onim)

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] To: yehsichot@etzion.org.il Subject: Sichot64 -07: Parshat Vayetze Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm) Student Summaries Of Sichot Of The Roshei Yeshiva Parshat Vayetze

Sunday morning, December 7th, HaRav Lichtenstein will be giving a shiur at Congregation Rinat Yisrael in Teaneck. The shiur will begin at 8:45 A.M. after the 8:00 Shacharit minyan. The topic of the shiur is "The Efficacy of Prayer." Rinat Yisrael is at 389 West Englewood Ave in Teaneck. Hope to see you there.

SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A
"IF YOU GIVE ME BREAD TO EAT AND CLOTHING TO WEAR"
Adapted by Dov Karoll

Ya'akov dreamt a dream, and behold, there was a ladder that was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky; and angels of G-d were going up and down on it. (Bereishit 28:12)

The Midrash Tanchuma (Parashat Vayetze, 2) cites the view of Rabbi Berekhya in the name of Rabbi Chelbo and Rabbi Shimon ben Yosina that G-d showed Ya'akov the rise and fall of the empires of Bavel (Babylonia), Maddai (Medea), Yavan (Greece) and Edom (Rome). He then asked Ya'akov why he was not also ascending. The Midrash explains that Ya'akov was afraid that he too would fall, asking, "Will I fall just as the others did?" G-d answered him, "If you ascend, you will not fall." Nevertheless, he refused to ascend.

G-d offered Ya'akov the opportunity to become a superpower, like the four empires described in the dream. But when Ya'akov understood that those who rise to great political heights eventually fall, he was apprehensive, and therefore preferred not to rise. Furthermore, when Ya'akov makes a vow to G-d the next morning, he does not ask for political dominance or even prominence. What is his request? "If G-d gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear..." (20). His request is most humble; he asks only for his physical sustenance, and does not seek sovereignty.

When Lavan tricks Ya'akov by switching Leah for Rachel, Ya'akov complains to Lavan, "Why did you deceive me?" Lavan responds, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the older" (29:25-26). Whether or not Lavan was aware of what Ya'akov had done, the Torah clearly is aware of it. Ya'akov pays a price for his actions regarding the attainment of the birthright. Rivka took the steps she felt were necessary for the achievement of the blessing, but it turned out that the blessing in question was not the "blessing of Avraham," the transmission of Avraham's special heritage. That special blessing was given by Yitzchak to Ya'akov on a different occasion, at the end of last week's parasha (28:3-4). Rather, the blessing Ya'akov received while masquerading as Esav, "May G-d give you of the dew of heaven..." (27:28-29), was a blessing of physical prosperity and sovereignty.

In the end, Esav too received a blessing of physical prosperity, although he was not blessed with sovereignty over his brother, as this cannot be given to both. The Seforno explains (27:29, s.v. hevei gevir) that Yitzchak intended to give Esav the blessing of sovereignty, for he felt it was better for Ya'akov not to be burdened with the responsibility of running a sovereign state, fighting wars, etc. Furthermore, Yitzchak felt that it would be better for Ya'akov to be subject to his brother rather than to a foreign power. However, the promise of the land of Israel and the special heritage of Avraham were meant all along for Ya'akov, and as such were not included in the blessing he intended to give to Esav (and mistakenly gave to Ya'akov).

Despite the events of last week's parasha, we see from the episode of the dream and the oath that Ya'akov was not interested in building a world power, or even in political control. He is asked by G-d to ascend the ladder to political greatness, but he refuses. He prefers to ask G-d for bread and clothing, simple physical sustenance. In fact, Rashi (32:5 s.v. garti) points out that we never find that the blessing he stole from Esav - "Be master of your brothers" (27:29) - was fulfilled during Ya'akov's lifetime. Rather, the Midrash (Bereishit Rabba 78:14) explains, this goal will be attained at the end of days, with the fulfillment of the prophecy of Ovadya, "And liberators shall ascend Mount Zion to judge Mount Esav, and dominion shall be G-d's" (verse 21).

[This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat, Parashat Vayetze 5763 (2002).]

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From: ohr@ohr.edu To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Vayeitzei TORAH WEEKLY Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu Parshat Vayeitzei -- http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1349 INSIGHTS - Waiting to Rust

"Then Rachel and Leah replied and said to him, 'Have we then still a share and an inheritance in our father's house? Are we not considered as strangers... so whatever G-d has said to you, do.'" (31:14-16)

There's a widespread misunderstanding about why people are religious. It runs something like this. Okay. I'm prepared to sacrifice something of my pleasure in this world so that I can get a piece of the action in the next. I don't mind refraining from the occasional BLT or McDonald's because I believe the Big Mac's are bigger on the other side.

Even those of us who like to think of ourselves as religious, if questioned, may subscribe to this line of thinking.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

A person should feel that he is giving nothing up of this world - because this world has nothing to give him.

Let me give you an example:

Tuesday morning. You finally get the call. You've waited for two full months. And now it's here. Your champagne-metallic luxury turbodiesel 4x4 has arrived at the car dealer. Your heartbeat leaps to 120 beats a minute. Your mouth dries up. You jump into the nearest taxi and sit there lost in the glow of expectation. You arrive at the showroom. The car dealer hands you the keys. This is the moment you've been waiting for. You slide behind the wheel. The smell of leather and "new car" is more potent than the latest Paris perfume. You turn the key and the engine purrs into life. You ease the car out of the parking lot and cruise down the main drag of the city real slow.

Riding a wild set of wheels at an easy pace.

Phew!

A couple of months later, you've already scratched the champagne metallic paint in more than a few places, and the front fender shows the battle scars of a shopping expedition to the mall.

Why can't new cars stay new? What happens to that smell of 'new-car'? Does the factory send out a fragrance recall on it? And what happens to the feeling of new car? Why does it always turn into a gas-guzzling insurance-eating rusting heap?

Nothing in this world that is solely of this world brings you real happiness.

Compare this to the feeling that comes from praying, even with a little bit of concentration. Most of us, at some time or another, have had this beautiful experience. And that feeling is second only to the feeling of learning Torah - that's the most exquisite experience in the world. And it's a genuine pleasure that stays with you. Not like this week's new purchase that fills you with pride and desire and then comes to collect from you a heavy debt, both physically and spiritually.

"Then Rachel and Leah replied and said to him, 'Have we then still a share and an inheritance in our father's house? Are we not considered as strangers... so whatever G-d has said to you, do.'" "

You could very easily misunderstand what Rachel and Leah meant by the above statement. You could very easily think that they were saying that the only reason to do what G-d said was because they had no share or inheritance in their father's house, that they were considered as strangers, but if that were not the case, then Yaakov should not do what G-d said!

What Rachel and Leah were really saying was that they understood that leaving their father's house was in no way a sacrifice for them. For they felt estranged from everything that Lavan's house represented.

Life's true pleasure is to be close to G-d, everything else is like a pile of steel waiting to rust.

- Based on Lev Eliyahu

Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

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From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] To: weekly-halacha@torah.org
Subject: Parshas Vayetzei WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5764
By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights
A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav

RECITING SHEVA BERACHOS: WHEN and WHERE

BASIC REQUIREMENTS Sheva Berachos are recited only after a meal which requires Birkas ha-Mazon and in which Elokeinu is recited when the zimun takes place.(1) Therefore:

1. At least ten adult males, including the chasan, must be present and partake of the meal.
2. At least seven people must eat a k'zayis of bread.(2)
3. The remaining three men do not have to eat bread but must eat at least a k'zayis of any food, or drink a revi'is(3) (approximately 3 fl. oz.) of any beverage except water.(4) [These three people do not have to be present throughout the meal. As long as they ate or drank at any time during the meal.(5) even if they ate or drank when the other seven were no longer eating,(6) zimun with Elokeinu and Sheva Berachos are recited.]
4. Both the chasan and kallah must be present at the meal. Even if they arrive late and miss much of the meal, they are considered as present for the meal. If they did not eat bread, Sheva Berachos should not be recited.(7) If the chasan and kallah must leave before Birkas ha-Mazon, Sheva Berachos are not recited.(8)
5. If there will not be a minyan without him, a mourner may be counted as one of the ten men required for Sheva Berachos.(9)

THE REQUIREMENT OF PANIM CHADASHOS Sheva Berachos cannot take place unless at least one(10) of the adult male participants is a panim chadashos, literally, "a new face"; i.e., he was not present at the wedding dinner or at a previous Sheva Berachos for this couple. If a panim chadashos is not present, Sheva Berachos are not recited, but the final blessing, asher bara, is.(11) Preferably, the panim chadashos should make ha-motzi and remain for the entire meal. If that is difficult to arrange, he may partake of anything served at the meal.(12) According to many poskim, even if he did not eat at all, and even if he came after the meal was over but before the Sheva Berachos were recited, he can still qualify as a panim chadashos.(13) The panim chadashos must, however, be present when the Sheva Berachos are recited. Accordingly, if he partook of the meal but left early, the Sheva Berachos are not recited.(14) When Sheva Berachos take place at either one of the first two meals of Shabbos or Yom Tov (both days), there is no need for an additional panim chadashos. We consider the Shabbos and Yom Tov themselves to be eminent "guests" who fulfill the role of panim chadashos.(15) For the third meal(16) (seudah shelishis), panim chadashos are required unless formal divrei Torah will be delivered(17) at the meal.(18)

WHO IS CONSIDERED A PANIM CHADASHOS? According to some opinions, a panim chadashos is more than just a "new face"; rather, it is a person whose presence adds a new dimension to the celebration.(19) Accordingly, a panim chadashos should be a person who is well-known to the chasan or kallah or their parents, and whose presence adds to the degree of simchah. Alternatively, a panim chadashos could be a dignitary or a respected talmid chacham whose distinguished presence enhances the meal even though he is not a personal friend of the couple or their families.(20) But if such a person is not available, any acquaintance may be called upon to serve as a panim chadashos, provided that he is not a complete stranger.(21) A panim chadashos is a person who did not participate in any part of a previous meal that was held to celebrate this couple's marriage. Therefore:

1. If he was present at the chupah but not at the wedding meal, he can still be counted as a panim chadashos.

2. If he ate at a previous Sheva Berachos meal but had to leave before Sheva Berachos were recited, he can no longer qualify as a panim chadashos.

3. If he heard the Sheva Berachos recited at the wedding meal or at a previous Sheva Berachos meal, even though he did not partake of the meal, he can no longer qualify as a panim chadashos.(22)

RECITING SHEVA BERACHOS There are three opinions concerning who may recite Sheva Berachos. Some hold that only those who ate bread may do so.(23) Others allow anyone who ate anything at all, even if he ate no bread, to recite Sheva Berachos.(24) Still others hold that even one who ate nothing at all may be honored with reciting a berachah.(25) The chasan should not be honored with any of the Sheva Berachos.(26) Some poskim hold that the fourth, fifth and sixth berachos should be recited by one person and not divided among three people.(27) The custom, however, follows the opinions who hold that all of the berachos may be split up among the participants. It is proper that anyone honored with a berachah pay careful attention [and remain silent] while all of the other berachos are recited.(28)

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FOOTNOTES: 1 While there are various opinions on this issue (some hold that it is sufficient to have just three people eating bread), the common practice today - based on safek berachos l'hakel - is as stated above. 2 Or enough cake that would require Birkas ha-Mazon. See The Weekly Halachah Discussion, pgs. 478-480, for details. 3 B'diavad, even rov revi'is (1.6 fl. oz.) is sufficient. 4 Mishnah Berurah 197:12. Some poskim equate soda and lemonade with water while others hold that they qualify as a "beverage"; see Vezos ha-Berachah, fifth edition, pg. 130, who quotes both views. 5 "Any time" means before the participants decide not to eat any more or before they wash for mayim acharonim; Rama O.C. 197:1 and Beur Halachah (s.v. matzu). 6 Many people assume that a zimun necessitates eating together - the participants must actually eat together at least a bit, either in the beginning or at the end of a meal. The halachah is clear, however, that as long as the meal is still in progress and the participants could eat [even a morsel of food; Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 197:2], even though they are no longer actually eating anything, there is a zimun. 7 Tzitz Eliezer 13:99; Yabia Omer 6:9. See dissenting opinion in Sova Semachos 1:19. 8 Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 9:10). 9 Rav Akiva Eiger (Y.D. 391). He may also qualify as a panim chadashos; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Pnei Baruch, pg. 459). 10 According to some opinions two panim chadashos are required (Ben Ish Chai, Shoftim 15, based on the view of the Rambam). Many Sephardim follow this view (Yabia Omer 3:11). 11 E.H. 62:7. 12 Based on Sova Semachos 1:9. 13 Rama E.H. 62:7; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 149:5. Sephardim should not rely on this leniency. 14 Sova Semachos 1:12 quoting several poskim. 15 According to many poskim, seudas Purim, too, is considered a panim chadashos. 16 Even on Yom Tov (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 59, note 38). 17 Preferably, the divrei Torah should be said by the chasan (Chochmas Adam 129:5), but if he cannot, then any formal drashah of divrei Torah is sufficient (Based on Aruch ha-Shulchan 62:30). 18 E.H. 62:8. Note that divrei Torah may be used as a substitute for panim chadashos only for seudah shelishis. During the week, or at any additional meal on Shabbos or Yom Tov (beyond the mandatory three meals), panim chadashos are required. 19 E.H. 62:8. 20 Harav M. Feinstein (Oholei Yeshurun 4:2). 21 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 149:5; Sova Semachos 1:7. 22 Sova Semachos 1:11. 23 Yabia Omer 3:11; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 12:6). 24 Harav M. Feinstein (Oholei Yeshurun 5:9), Harav Y. Teitelbaum (quoted in Be'er Moshe 2:118), and other poskim. 25 Sova Semachos 4, note 74, quoting Harav E.Y. Finkel. Many people conduct themselves according to this lenient view (ibid., note 72). See also Minchas Shelomo 3:103:21 and Nefesh ha-Rav, pg. 257. 26 Minchas Yitzchak 3:114. 27 Sha'arei Efrayim, Pischei She'arim 9:19; Har Tzvi O.C. 44. This is because the fifth and sixth berachos do not begin with the words Baruch Atah... which makes them a berachah ha-smuchah l'chaverta. 28 Igros Moshe E.H. 1:94; Tzitz Eliezer 6:2; Sova Semachos 1:44.

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[I'm skipping these since they are familiar from the parsha. Chaim
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Crash Course in Jewish History Part 14 - Joshua and the Conquest of the Promised Land

by Rabbi Ken Spiro

The Book of Joshua begins:

And it was after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, that the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, "Moses my servant has died and now arise and cross the River Jordan. You and all this nation go to the land which I give the Children of Israel. Every place on which the soles of your feet will tread I have given to you, as I have spoken to Moses. No man shall stand up before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so shall I be with you. I will not weaken my grasp on you nor will I abandon you. Just be strong and very courageous to observe and do in accordance with all the Torah that Moses my servant has commanded you. Therefore, do not stray right or left in order that you will succeed in wherever you go."

The Book of Joshua describes the conquest and settlement of the Land of Israel during a very significant period of Jewish history.

There is no single power ruling the land, rather it is dotted with many fortified city-states. At this time the so-called Promised Land is bounded by the Egyptian empire to the south and the Assyrian empire to the north. But it is not ruled by either of them. In fact, there is no one power ruling this section of land, rather it is settled by seven Canaanite tribes who inhabit 31 fortified city-states scattered all over the map, each ruled by its own "king."

(Jericho is one of these city-states, so is Ai, so is Jerusalem, where Canaanite tribesmen called Jebusites dwell.)

Before they enter the land, the Jewish people send an envoy to the Canaanites with the message, "G-d, the Creator of the Universe has promised this land to our forefathers. We are now here to claim our inheritance, and we ask you to leave peacefully."

Needless to say most of the Canaanites don't. (Only one tribe does the right thing and gets out.)

Meanwhile, Joshua has clear instructions from G-d that if the Canaanites don't get out, the Jews must wipe them out, because if they remain in the land they are going to corrupt the Jews. It is made clear that the Canaanites are extremely immoral and idolatrous people and the Jews cannot live with them as neighbors.

This is like saying today that living in a bad neighborhood messes up your kids. You have to always be careful about outside influences.

So what happens?

THE BATTLE OF JERICHO

The people go into the land and they fight a series of battles. The first is the battle of Jericho, the entrance to the heartland of Canaan.

Some archeologists have suggested that the easy conquest of this heavily-fortified city was made possible by a well-timed earthquake. But isn't it remarkable that precisely when the Jewish people need the city to fall, there is an earthquake and it does? Of course, they call it a miracle.

The waters of the Jordan part and they cross on dry land, then the Jordan refills with water. The waters of the Jordan part and they cross on dry land, then the Jordan refills with water. Next they march around the city walls, which crumble before their eyes. They conquer the city, taking no booty as commanded by G-d.

Hard to believe?

Writes archeologist-physicist Charles Pellegrino in Return to Sodom and Gomorrah:

... we are told (in Joshua 4:18) that the waters of the Jordan quickly returned to their normal level. This is consistent with the recent history of the Jordan's natural dams. Within forty-eight hours (and typically within as few as sixteen hours), the waters piling up behind an earthquake-made barrier overflow the mount, tearing great holes in it as they spill forth. (p. 267)

Pellegrino details (pp. 257-268) the excavation of what is believed to be the ancient city of Jericho. He notes many findings that support the story as it is told in the Book of Joshua, including the fact that the storehouses of grain -- a very valuable booty -- had been found intact.

It must be clear by now that this is not the typical war of conquest such as we read about in human history of bloody warfare, of raping and pillaging. G-d has said, "Nothing like that here. And if you follow My instructions all will go well."

ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE

The Jews move on to the next city-state, a place called Ai.

But here things don't go so smoothly. In fact, they meet with a terrible defeat with many of their number killed. Traumatized by the experience, they plead to know why G-d had abandoned them and quickly learn the terrible truth -- that one person, Achan, had stolen some items back in Jericho.

One person out of 3 million didn't listen to G-d and everyone suffers! One person out of 3 million didn't listen to G-d and everyone suffers!

The fascinating thing here is that the Bible seems to be saying that obedience to G-d's commands is paramount and that as far as the Jews are concerned -- it is all for one and one for all.

As an outgrowth of that lesson, Judaism teaches that there is such a thing as collective responsibility as well as individual responsibility -- no person is an island, each exists as part of the whole and is responsible for the actions of others as well as his or her own.

In today's world, the motto seems to be "Mind your own business." If we operated on the same level as they did back then, half the world's problems would disappear.

LIFE IN THE LAND

Despite many difficulties on the way, the Israelites do finally lay claim to the Promised Land but their life there is far from calm, particularly after Joshua dies. The Bible relates that they had only themselves to blame:

And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord ... and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers ... and he gave them over into the hands of their enemies." (Judges 2:8-14)

From a simple reading of the text, one might assume that the entire Jewish people abandoned the Torah and started worshipping idols. But this, in fact, was not true. As with the incident of the golden calf (see Part 12) only a small percentage of the people sinned, yet the entire nation is held accountable.

The highly self-critical nature of this passage is typical of others which make the Hebrew Bible a unique document -- a holy book of a people, but also relating the sinful history of this people. It has been said that if the Hebrew Bible was not written by the Jews, it must have been written by anti-Semites. As Gabriel Sivan observes in The Bible and Civilization:

Biblical heroes and heroines ... are depicted as they are, with their virtues and their human failings ... This ethically uncompromising aspect of the scriptural narrative particularly impressed the Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill: "The Bible is an anti-Semitic book. Israel is the villain not the hero in his own story." Alone among epics, it is out for truth, not high heroics. (p. 10)

There is no question that the criticism of the Jews in the Bible is hyper-criticism, but there are two reasons why the slightest offense by a small group of people is condemned so strongly:

As noted above, every Jew is responsible for every other Jew, and what one does reflects on all.

It's such an obvious point in the moral history of the world that as soon as you tolerate something, it becomes bearable, and before long it will become common. Therefore, here G-d is driving home an important point to the Jews: You're on a very high spiritual level. If you tolerate even small indiscretions by a few, eventually these few are going to pollute the nation.

Indeed, this is eventually what does happen, but before it does the Jews enjoy a honeymoon period in the land known as the Time of Judges.

NEXT: THE TIME OF JUDGES