



BS"D

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

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYIGASH - 5771

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

To sponsor an issue (proceeds to Tzedaka) email cshulman@gmail.com

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/>
Covenant & Conversation
Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from
Lord Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago - 5766]

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/tt-index.html> <http://www.chief Rabbi.org/tt-index.html> Article available in: Home » Writings,

Speeches, Broadcasts » Covenant & Conversation » 5770 Vayigash 5770 Judah has passed the test so elaborately contrived by Joseph. Twenty-two years earlier, it was Judah who had proposed selling Joseph into slavery. Now Joseph - still unrecognized by his brothers - has put him through a carefully constructed ordeal to see whether he is still the same character, or has changed. Judah had changed. Now he is willing to become a slave himself so that his brother Benjamin could go free.

That is all Joseph needed to know. Now, at last, he reveals his identity to his brothers in a moment of intense emotion. The most important feature of the scene, however, is Joseph's complete forgiveness for what the brothers had done to him all those years before. "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that G-d sent me ahead of you . . . G-d sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but G-d . . ." Joseph makes no reference to the brothers' plot to kill him or to the fact that they had sold him into slavery. He makes no mention of the lost years he spent, first as Potiphar's slave, then as a prisoner in jail. Not only does he forgive them: he does everything possible to relieve them from a sense of guilt. He tells them that they were not really responsible; that it had been G-d's plan all along; that it had been for the best, so that he could save lives during the years of famine, and so that he could act as their protector in the years to come. It is a moment of supreme generosity of spirit. Nor is this the only such moment. Five chapters later, at the end of the book of Genesis, Joseph repeats the act of forgiveness. Jacob has died, and the brothers now fear that Joseph will take revenge after all. They are afraid that his apparent friendliness was merely a way of biding his time until their father was no longer alive (recall that Esau said: "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob"). This is what Joseph said on that second

occasion: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of G-d? You intended to harm me, but G-d intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. It is sometimes said that Judaism lacks the concept of forgiveness. Occasionally the claim is more specific: in Judaism, G-d forgives; people do not. This is simply not so. Here is how Maimonides puts it:

It is forbidden to be obdurate and not allow yourself to be appeased. On the contrary, one should be easily pacified and find it difficult to become angry. When asked by an offender for forgiveness, one should forgive with a sincere mind and a willing spirit . . . forgiveness is natural to the seed of Israel. (Mishneh Torah, Teshuvah 2: 10) Nor is it necessary for the offender to apologise: If one who has been wronged by another does not wish to rebuke or speak to the offender - because the offender is simple or confused - then if he sincerely forgives him, neither bearing him ill-will nor administering a reprimand, he acts according to the standard of the pious. (Deot 6: 9) Why then is there so little reference to interpersonal forgiveness in the Bible? It is not that G-d forgives, while human beings do not. To the contrary, we believe that just as only G-d can forgive sins against G-d, so only human beings can forgive sins against human beings. That is why Yom Kippur atones for our sins against G-d, but not for our sins against other human beings. The reason lies elsewhere. The Bible is a book - a library of books - about the relationship between G-d and human beings. It is about heaven and earth, Divine command and human response. It is not primarily about interpersonal relationships at all. Once the Torah has established the principle of human forgiveness, which it does here in the Joseph narrative, it does not need to repeat it. Note how profound the passage really is. Joseph does more than forgive. He wants to make sure that the brothers, especially Judah, have changed. They are no longer people capable of selling others into slavery. The "Truth and Reconciliation" process established in South Africa by Nelson Mandela could only come about once apartheid had been ended. It would have been absurd for the victim to forgive while the crime was still being committed or while the criminal was still unrepentant.

Nor is it Judah alone who has to change. So does Joseph. He has to rethink the entire sequence of events. He no longer sees it in terms of a wrong done against him by his brothers. He sees it as part of a providential plan to bring him to where G-d needed him to be ("So then, it was not you who sent me here, but G-d"). He thinks not only of the moment twenty two years earlier when he was sold as a slave, but of its long-term consequences. It is as if Joseph has to come to terms with himself before he can do so with his brothers. That is why forgiveness lifts the one who forgives even more than the one who is forgiven.

But the real significance of this passage goes far beyond the story of Joseph and his brothers. It is the essential prelude to the book of Exodus and the birth of Israel as a nation. Genesis is, among other things, a set of variations on the theme of sibling rivalry: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers. The book begins with fratricide and ends with reconciliation. There is clear pattern to the final scene of each of the four narratives: 1 Cain/Abel Murder 2 Isaac/Ishmael The two stand together at Abraham's funeral 3 Jacob/Esau Meet, embrace, go their separate ways 4 Joseph/brothers Forgiveness, reconciliation, coexistence The Torah is making a statement of the most fundamental kind. Historically and psychologically, families precede society and the state. If brothers cannot live together in peace, then they cannot form a stable society or a cohesive nation. Maimonides explains that forgiveness and the associated command not to bear a grudge (Lev. 19:18) are essential to the survival of society: "For as long as one nurses a grievance and keeps it in mind, one may come to take vengeance. The Torah emphatically warns us not to bear a grudge, so that the impression of the wrong shall be quite obliterated and be no longer remembered. This is the right

principle. It alone makes civilization and human relationships possible." (Deot 7: 8).

Forgiveness is not merely personal, it is also political. It is essential to the life of a nation if it is to maintain its independence for long. There is no greater proof of this than Jewish history itself. Twice Israel suffered defeat and exile. The first - the conquest of the northern kingdom followed a century and a half later by the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile - was a direct consequence of the division of the kingdom into two after the death of Solomon. The second - defeat at the hands of the Romans and the destruction of the Second Temple - was the result of intense factionalism and internal strife, *sinat chinam*.

When people lack the ability to forgive, they are unable to resolve conflict. The result is division, factionalism, and the fragmentation of a nation into competing groups and sects. That is why Joseph's forgiveness is the bridge between Genesis and Exodus. The first is about the children of Israel as a family, the second is about them as a nation. Central to both is the experience of slavery, first Joseph's, then the entire people. The message could not be clearer. Those who seek freedom must learn to forgive.

There should be no shame in admitting a mistake Credo - 2003
There's a story told about the legendary head of IBM, Thomas Watson. On one occasion a senior manager made a serious business mistake that cost the company ten million dollars. Watson summoned him to his office. "I guess you want my resignation," the manager said. "Are you crazy?" Watson replied. "We've just spend ten million dollars educating you."

If there is one truth humanising above others in the Judeo-Christian tradition it is that it's OK to make mistakes. Not just OK - it is of the very essence of life in the presence of G-d. By giving us freewill, G-d empowered us to make mistakes. That is what makes us different from, and more interesting, than the angels.

We are not just computers programmed to sing the praises of our maker. By forming us in his image, the creative G-d made the one being in the universe capable of creativity - and there is no creativity without risk, no risk without occasional failure, and no failure without new self-knowledge. More than through the things we get right, it is through the things we get wrong that we learn.

G-d never asked us not to make mistakes. All He asks is that we acknowledge them when we make them, apologise, make amends, heal the relationships we harmed, and commit ourselves not to make the same mistake again. That is what turns failure into a learning experience. It's the cluster of ideas the Bible calls repentance, atonement and forgiveness. It is what makes biblical cultures more humane than their alternatives.

We owe to the anthropologist Ruth Benedict the fundamental distinction between shame cultures and guilt cultures. In shame cultures what matters is how we are seen by others. In guilt cultures like Judaism and Christianity, what matters is the voice within - conscience, what Freud called the *superego*, the moral values we internalise and make our own. In shame cultures a person is judged by the honour in which he or she is held. In guilt cultures there is no way of escaping the still, small voice that calls to us as it once called to Adam and Eve saying, "Where art thou?"

Shame cultures seem to lack the idea of forgiveness. If you've done wrong, the most important thing is to hope no one will find out. Once they do, there is no way of removing the stain of dishonour or the loss of face. Depending on time and circumstance, the shamed hero either goes off to fight and die in a distant battle, or flees to some remote country, or (in the old British theatrical tradition) disappears offstage to do the decent thing with a loaded revolver in the library of a country house. Shame cultures produce literatures of tragedy.

Guilt cultures produce literatures of hope. King David sins - seriously, as it happens - is confronted by the prophet Nathan and immediately confesses. So do the inhabitants of Nineveh when Jonah finally reaches them and tells them of their impending doom. They are given the greatest gift a culture can confer: the chance to begin again, not held captive by the past.

It seems to me that Britain, once biblical in its values, has now become a shame culture. What counts today is public image - hence the replacement of prophets by public relations practitioners, and the ten commandments by three new rules: Thou shalt not be found out, thou shalt not admit, thou shalt not apologise. It's a bad exchange. A shame culture turns mistakes into tragedies. A guilt culture turns them into learning experiences. I know which I prefer.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com (who prefers to remain anonymous) for collecting the following items:

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, December 10, 2010
A FIERY CHANUKAH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The terrible tragedy that engulfed Israel over the Chanukah holiday again raised the age old question of why seemingly innocent people suffer. From time immemorial this question gnaws at the heart and soul of every faith and believer. It somehow projects a feeling of helplessness and the idea of a world of randomness that runs counter to our emotions of justice, fairness and an ordered universe.

In the midst of all of the commissions, investigations and finger pointing and blame that is certain to arise from this disastrous fire, the real question that lies at the heart of the issue is what message is being sent to us here with this event. And our apparent inability to answer that question undoubtedly weakens our resolve and strengthens our omnipresent self doubts.

Chanukah, the holiday of cheer and lights, vacations and food, has suddenly been transformed in our memory to the time of fire and death, destruction and fear. Once again we stand defenseless and perplexed in front of tragedy and disaster and we resort to platitudes because we have no ability to express in correct words the turmoil that now lurks within our minds and souls.

The scoffer and nonbeliever will chalk the matter up to the randomness of nature abetted by the cruelty, negligence and pettiness of humans. But for the believer there is no such easy answer and escape from the problem.

Joseph's brothers in their moment of anguish and despair stated: "What and why is this that the Lord has now visited upon us?" That question has reverberated throughout all of human history. It is certainly the major theological issue in all of Jewish history and the Chanukah fire now joins many more such incidents of destruction, persecution and seeming unfairness in our story.

I would not attempt to deal with a problem of this magnitude. The book of Iyov stands as a stark reminder of the futility of reading God's mind, so to speak. The finite cannot effectively deal with the infinite and attempting to do so is only wearisome and frustrating beyond end. But, there is an obvious insight that all of us can certainly glean from such an event as the Chanukah fire, and that is the lesson of the uncertainty of life and its events.

It is this very uncertainty that makes life precious and drives us to make it meaningful and productive. We are therefore commanded to exploit it to the fullest together with the time and circumstances that life provides for us. That is what Rabbi Akiva meant when he said that one should never postpone Torah learning or any other good and productive deed for tomorrow, “for who knows what tomorrow brings to a human being?”

Therefore Judaism abhors procrastination and twiddling delay. Life is too uncertain to allow for unnecessary postponements and the wasting of time and opportunities. If there is anything that inexplicable events and tragedies can teach us it is that the very uncertainty of life forces us to live it in a prudent and immediate state of mind. We planned on celebrating a Chanukah of lights and instead we are forced to commemorate a Chanukah of raging, uncontrollable murderous fire and conflagration. There is certainly a telling lesson in that stark fact that we have just witnessed.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, according to the traditional Ashkenazic rite, one of the main prayers of the musaf service concerns itself with what is inscribed in the book of judgment in Heaven for the coming year. Various forms of death and tragedy are mentioned in that poetic prayer. One of them is “who will pass on because of fire.” I thought of that passage upon hearing and following the sad news of the great forest fire in the north of Israel and of the resultant loss of life – seemingly innocent young life. The prayer advances no reason for the long list of possible fatal mishaps that can and do occur to human beings on a regular basis.

It is so inscribed in the book and the justification for that inscription is not revealed to us in this world. The Rebbe of Kotzk pithily stated: “For the believer there are no questions and for the scoffer there are no answers.” That is probably the only sensible comment that can be made regarding the great Chanukah fire that we have just experienced. May the bereaved somehow be comforted and the wounded and injured healed speedily and completely. And may only good events surprise us in the future, uncertain as it is certain to be. Shabat shalom.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: VAYIGASH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

All is well that ends well is a popular and well known aphorism. Apparently that should be the case here in this week’s parsha when Yosef and his family are at last reconciled after over twenty years of pain and estrangement. Yaakov comes down to Egypt to embrace his long lost beloved son and the Jewish people begin the long sojourn in Egypt with the first century of that sojourn being successful and benign. However, as is the case with many a popular saying or belief, the aphorism stated above is not exactly accurate. The enmity, discord and bitterness of the dispute of decades between Yosef and his brothers is not easily forgotten. We will see in next week’s parsha how the brothers still suspect Yosef of ill intentions towards them and how Yosef after the death of Yaakov subtly distances himself from them.

Wounds may heal but they always leave their marks and scars. And the competition between Yosef and Yehuda, which is the centerpiece of the first part of this week’s parsha. This continues for millennia in Jewish history almost splitting the Jewish people as a whole and not just its kingdom into two warring factions.

So, even though the affair of Yosef and his brothers appears to end well and satisfactorily in the narrative of this week’s parsha, the residue of suspicion, competitiveness and bitter memories remain. This is so very

evident as the story continues and clouds any truly rosy assessment of the conclusion of this gripping family tale of ours.

Every human event has consequences that are much more long lasting and important than originally thought. Since we all live in a time range that is limited, far reaching results of our behavior are naturally hard to discern and appreciate. If the brothers of Yosef would have realized that their behavior towards him would, centuries later, lead to the breakup of the Jewish kingdom in the Land of Israel, perhaps they would have acted differently. And, perhaps Yosef himself might have acted differently towards his brothers as well.

It is not for naught that the rabbis taught us that the true wise man is the person who can realize the future consequences of present policies and behavior. This idea is also the basic underpinning of the rabbis’ other comment that even the wise must be very cautious in their statements, to guard against the unintended consequences that may result.

Many times consequences are exactly the opposite of what is originally desired. The rabbinic ban on Spinoza immortalized him, and the ban against Chasidut translated into the most popular Jewish religious movement in Eastern Europe.

Yosef and his brothers, like all of us, are powerless to undo the past. But, in realizing the fissure that the events of the past created in Jewish life, a special attempt at true reconciliation must be attempted. It would take the slavery of Egyptian exile and the redemption that followed to achieve this unity that was expressed at the moment of revelation at Sinai.

Troubles unite us. We should learn to live together in harmony even in more trouble-free times.

Shabat shalom.

From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>
To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>
Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas Vahyigash Then Yehudah approached him. (44:18)

The confrontation between Yehudah and Yosef presents abundant material for commentary. Each of these two great individuals represents transmitted qualities to his descendants, which comprise the DNA of the Jewish People. In the Midrash Rabbah (98:6), Chazal say that we are called Yehudim after Yehudah, rather than being named for any of the other brothers. What was the unique character of Yehudah which makes his qualities most worthy of being infused into his descendants?

Horav Aharon Soloveitchik, zl, cites the Rambam in his Shemoneh Perakim, Perek 6, in which he distinguishes between two types of character nobility: chassid me’ulah, ideal saint; and moshel b’nafsho, a person who dominates his spirit. The chassid me’ulah is an individual who is not driven by evil urges. He is naturally good and has it all together. No inner struggles occupy his life. He is free of torment, now that he is able to devote himself wholly to Hashem. Whatever conflicts he experiences are with his environment - not within himself. His counterpart, the moshel b’nafsho, is impelled by indecent urges, driven by inappropriate desires over which he ultimately triumphs, achieving ethical perfection for himself.

The Rambam notes a discrepancy between the opinion of the secular philosophers and Chazal concerning which of these personalities is superior. The philosophers opine that one who has no urges, no inner struggle, who is a chassid me’uleh, is the superior character type. The less one desires to commit a transgression, the less motivation he has to do wrong, the higher level of spirituality he has achieved. Our Chazal disagree, feeling that one who overcomes his inner urges, who transcends the evil motivations within himself, is truly the greater man. The Rambam quotes Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel who, in Toras

Kohanim, says that a person's attitude to prohibitive mitzvos should not be one of negativity, such as: "I cannot tolerate eating prohibitive foods; I dislike wearing shatnez, clothing made of wool and linen; I abhor illicit sexual relations." Rather, he should say that he is tempted to transgress these violations; he has a desire for the prohibited and immoral, but the Torah has forbidden them. Thus, he desists from any inappropriate activities, because the Torah demands his allegiance. The Rambam posits that there is no differential between the two qualities. It all depends upon the mitzvah in question. If the particular mitzvah which concerns us is dictated by human consciousness, then it is preferable to be a chassid me'ulah.

Rav Aharon delineates between two forms of mitzvos dictated by human consciousness: First is a sin which is clearly immoral, an accepted act of barbarism, such as murder, robbery, etc. There are also such acts which are considered immoral, but are not necessarily accepted as such by everyone. The fact that Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel includes illicit sexual relations among those mitzvos which are not dictated by human consciousness indicates that morality is a term which is ambiguous in our society. We have, regrettably, seen this in our own time, as our society becomes more utilitarian, where morality changes with the whims of society.

Yehudah and Yosef reflect these two ideals. Yaakov Avinu describes Yosef as a chassid me'ulah. In his blessing to him he says, "Blessings of Heaven Above, blessings of the deep that lies below (Bereishis 49:25)." From the very onset, Yosef was a saint. While he was compelled to encounter and triumph over external struggles, he was able to breeze by the inner conflicts that plague so many of us. Yosef was a chassid me'ulah from the very "get go."

Yehudah, in contrast, was a moshel b'nafsho. Indeed, Yehudah earned significance as a penitent when, realizing his error concerning the incident with Tamar, he publicly confessed to his part in the affair. He had blundered and was willing to accept the humiliation and consequences. In his brachah to Yehudah, Yaakov says, "Yehudah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have elevated yourself; he stooped down, he crouched as a lion; and a lioness, who shall raise him up (Bereishis 49:9)." Originally, Yehudah was a lion's whelp, impelled by various urges and drives, but he elevated himself from the prey. After his involvement in the sale of Yosef, Yehudah, the lion, which is the symbol of freedom, was willing to subordinate himself, surrendering his freedom so that he could protect Binyamin. He was a moshel b'nafsho. Of those possessing each of the two qualities, it is the individual who is moshel b'nafsho that is suitable to rule. A ruler must have the character of moshel b'nafsho, because the majority of his populace cannot relate to the chassid me'ulah. Most people are not born perfect. They have drives, urges and desires, inner conflicts and struggles. Any one of us can be a moshel b'nafsho, however, if he sets his mind to it. Thus, it was Yehudah who was selected to be melech, king, over Klal Yisrael. He had the quality Jews could emulate.

This is why we are called Yehudim, the name depicting struggle and triumph over conflict. Yehudah, the moshel b'nafsho, is the symbol of Judaism, because the task of the Jew is to struggle - not only with the external environment, but also internally, resolving the various conflicts within his own life. We are not born perfect, but we can, and should, strive throughout our lives to achieve that sense of freedom that comes with triumph over struggles.

Rav Aharon offers an alternative rationale for calling Jews Yehudim after Yehudah. Studying Yehudah's plea for the release of Binyomin, we note two points: the anguish that Yaakov would experience as a result of Binyamin's failure to return; Yehudah's commitment to the point of acting as surety for Binyamin. From the point of view of secular law, which actually was all Yosef was considering, Yehudah's acting as surety should have taken precedence over Yaakov's anguish. Yehudah's

breaking a commitment should have carried greater weight in the eyes of the Egyptian viceroy than the sorrow of an aged father.

By examining the sequence, we begin to understand the uniqueness of Yahadus, Judaism. Avraham Avinu practiced tzedakah u'mishpat - in that order. Targum Unkelos defines tzedek as k'eshot, that which is correct; and tzedakah as tzidkassa, which is charity, implying an act which is correct, proper - but with no obligation. A charitable endeavor is the right thing to do, but not necessarily an obligatory act. Mishpat is law. It implies certain inalienable rights of man. As a result of an individual's rights, society is not permitted to trespass on these rights. I own something; no one may take it from me. One who trespasses this right is a thief. That is mishpat. Thus, I am allowed by law to watch someone drown, unless I have entered into a contractual agreement with him, whereby I am obligated to save him. In that case, if I would not save him, I would be violating my commitment to him and trespassing his rights.

According to contemporary society's understanding of law, rights precede duty. In Yahadus, the concept of duty leads to the concept of rights. Thus, from the point of view of secular law, the United States government has no obligation to intervene on behalf of oppressed people throughout the world, since no contractual obligation has been made. Perhaps, this - coupled with other paranoia - motivated our country to ignore the plight of six million European Jews during World War II. In Yahadus, duty and responsibility define rights.

We now have two reasons for calling Jews Yehudim: first, to indicate the need for struggle - both inner and external - to fight our way up the ladder of spiritual ascendancy; second, to underscore the concept that duty and responsibility, tzedakah, take priority over mishpat.

So said your son, Yosef: "G-d has made me master of all Egypt." (45:9)

The Ruzhiner Rebbe, zl, wonders about the "wonderful" news that Yosef was conveying to his father. Did it really make a difference to Yaakov Avinu that his son had achieved nobility in Egypt? The Patriarch surely did not measure good fortune by material success. Becoming the viceroy of Egypt might have impressed many, but it was a far cry from the values that Yaakov had established for his family. The Rebbe explains that the answer is in the word, samani, which can be defined as sam - ani, "I placed Hashem as Master over Egypt." Yosef was not attempting to impress his father with his position. He informed his father that, as a result of his position, he was able to influence the Egyptian pagans into accepting Hashem as Master of the world. This was good news. Yosef projected his position as a means to an end - not the converse.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, notes that one does not have to become viceroy over Egypt in order to influence people. Even in mundane, everyday activities that the individual carries out in a manner befitting a Torah Jew, one can achieve great things. He relates the story of a Yerushalmi Jew who visited a relative in the hospital. The relative was sedated at the moment, so the visitor removed his frock and sat down on the side of the bed, bedecked in his large, woolen Tallis kattan; he proceeded to recite Tehillim

After a few minutes, an older gentleman of secular persuasion came by. With tears streaming down his face, he said, "You are causing me to have yearnings for my father's home. Looking at you evokes memories of the home in which I was raised many years ago. My father also wore such a large, woolen Tallis kattan over his shirt. Yes, that is the home in which I was raised."

The Yerushalmi sensed that this would be an opportune moment to talk about the past, revive old memories, and perhaps encourage a slight return to a Torah life of observance. They began to speak and after awhile, the gentleman agreed to make definite changes in his life. Shortly thereafter, the influence spread to his two married sons and their families - all of whom are observant Jews today. All because of a Tallis kattan.

Horav Yaakov Neiman, zl, Rosh Yeshivas Ohr Yisrael/Petach Tikvah, feels that the answer lies in the word, Elokim. Realistically, the average person who is fortunate to collar a distinguished position, is likely to announce, "I did it! I got it. So and so made me the boss. I got a promotion!" Rarely do we hear someone declare, "Hashem has seen to it that I was promoted," or "Hashem has delivered the position to me." It is always about "me," "I," "us" - never about Hashem. When Yaakov heard Yosef express himself with such reverence, "Hashem has made me," he was pleased. After all, so many years had transpired since Yosef had left home. Living in exile, in dungeons with the miscreants and dregs of the immoral Egyptian society, it was a miracle that Yosef remembered G-d and that He continued to play a leading role in his life. This was truly a nachas ruach, pleasure, for Yaakov.

The Rosh Yeshivah supplements this idea by calling our attention to our own lives and our individual and collective obligation - to acknowledge and recognize the miracles and wonders that sustain us daily. While some take life for granted, others recognize the miracles, but fail to pay proper gratitude to Hashem. It is almost as if we thought we could pull it off ourselves. How can we expect the "world" to acknowledge Hashem, when we fail to express our debt to Him properly ourselves?

The news was heard in Pharaoh's palace saying, "Joseph's brothers have come!" And it was pleasing in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants. (45:16)

The Midrash HaGadol notes the use of u'b'einei avadav, "in the eyes of his servants," as opposed to, u'b'einei kol avadav, "in the eyes of all of his servants." This prompts Chazal to say that not all of Pharaoh's servants were overjoyed with the news that Yosef's brothers were also emigrating to Egypt. They said, "If Yosef, who is only one, was able to displace us from our positions, imagine what will be when ten more brothers arrive." This is the meaning of the pasuk in Tehillim 105:38, "Egypt was happy when they (the Jewish People) left." They celebrated their departure; they were not, however, happy when they originally arrived. As king, Pharaoh was happy about the arrival of Yosef's brothers. Considering Yosef's brilliance, he was certain that the other ten brothers would only add to his and his country's good fortune. Pharaoh had benefitted greatly from Yosef's role as viceroy. His management of the country had made Pharaoh a powerful and wealthy king. Clearly, had Yosef not succeeded in directing the country, Pharaoh would probably have been overthrown by the people. Regardless of who the king may be, the country's economic stability has priority and determines his popularity. Thus, Pharaoh realized that considering the added brain power and moral discipline of Yosef's brothers, he and his country had much to gain.

This was not the case concerning Pharaoh's close advisors, who had been demoted as a result of Yosef's ascension to the position of viceroy. They cared about themselves first, and the country was a far second. Yosef's brothers would only endanger their shaky positions even more. These were individuals who were motivated by self-centered idealism, in which every endeavor was worthy as long as it promoted "them." Their concern was not the country or Pharaoh. The focus of their concern and idealism was themselves. If their position might be threatened as a result of the brothers' arrival, they were not happy.

Likewise, when communal decisions in the area of spiritual growth present themselves, we must ask ourselves whether our decision to support or "abstain" is motivated by personal prejudice and vested interests, or by well-thought-out logical concerns which affect the well-being of the community. Regrettably, all too often, our definition of priorities becomes mired in the pursuit of our own interests, hampering our ability to think cogently and rationally.

These are the names of Yisrael's children who came to Egypt. (46:8)

The Torah lists the seventy members of the family of Yaakov Avinu. There must be some significance to detailing this potpourri of names, other than informing the reader of their identity. Horav Eliyahu Munk,

zl, suggests that this list indicates their commitment to keeping their Jewish names. As the members of Yaakov's family left the shelter of Canaan to enter a new land, replete with its moral degradation, they decided to keep their names. The Torah brings out the significance of keeping names of Jewish origin as a way of warding off the threat of assimilation. Indeed, it was these original names that served as an important moral and spiritual protector which continued to serve them until their release from Egypt during the Exodus. Chazal teach us that this was one of their principal merits: She'lo shinu es shemam, "they did not alter their Jewish names," thus preserving their Jewish identity. What is so special about a Jewish name? I think what goes into it, the lessons in life upon which each name is founded, the individual it represents, all these grant it significance. Let us take some of the Biblical names and what they represent to get a better idea of their significance. Yosef called his older son Menashe, because, Ki nashani Elokim es kol amali v'es kol bais avi, "G-d has effaced from my mind all my suffering and all of my father's household (Bereishis 41:52)." At first glance, a name given for such a reason smacks of ingratitude and heartlessness. Did Yosef consider his father's pain as he mourned his son? It seems that he sought to forget that whole chapter in his life.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, informs us that the nashoh does not only mean to forget, but also to be a creditor. This would interpret Yosef's naming of Menashe to mean, "Hashem has transformed my misfortunes and my family into my creditors." The Almighty has taken Yosef's travail, suffered in his youth at home and later in exile, and transformed them into instruments for his abundant happiness. Thus, Yosef expressed his debt of gratitude to his misfortunes and his family. They are the reasons for his present joy. Quite a lesson can be derived from a name. Clearly, nothing was haphazard about Menashe's name.

The Malbim interprets ki nashani as Yosef expressing his concern lest he forget his travail later in life when life has become good and his fortune has changed drastically. Yosef worried that he might forget the bad times during the good. Yosef never wanted to lose track of the bad times, because he understood how they temper the good. This is another powerful lesson delivered by a Jewish name given with aforethought. Binyamin had ten sons. He named each one with a name which alluded to his missing brother, Yosef. Ten names - ten aspects of remembrance - this is the meaning of a Jewish name.

Let us address Yosef's wife, Osnas. Who gave her this name, and who was she? Targum Yonasan tells us that she was born to Dinah, Yaakov's daughter; her father was Shechem who had violated her. Pirkei d'Eliezer states that Dinah returned to her family with her daughter, and her brothers were unable to tolerate this product of sin. Yaakov made her an amulet upon which he inscribed: Osnas, daughter of Dinah, daughter of Yaakov. Hence, the name Osnas is derived from ason, tragedy, implying that she was the child born of a violent tragedy. Yaakov attached the amulet to a necklace which she wore around her neck. She made her way down to Egypt where she was brought up and adopted by Potifar and his wife. When Yosef became viceroy, all of the young maidens stepped up to the wall as the new leader rode through in triumph. The maidens all threw gifts to the new viceroy. Osnas was no different. Since she had nothing else with her, she threw down the amulet. Yosef caught the amulet, read its contents, and knew that Osnas was his niece. When Pharaoh insisted that he marry an Egyptian girl, Yosef chose Osnas; thus, the girl who had been named for a violent tragedy became the mother of two tribes in Klal Yisrael.

In contrast, the wicked either give names that have no meaning or names that call forth negativity and venom. The Sefer Rokeach interprets Yaakov's entreaty to Hashem, Hatzileini na mi'yad achi mi'yad Eisav, "Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Eisav (Bereishis 32:12)," in a novel manner. Apparently, as Yaakov was running away from Eisav, a boy was born to Eisav. Yaakov's evil brother, our archenemy Eisav, made it a point to name the infant Achi,

my brother, so that he would never forget what Yaakov had done to him. Eisav conferred a legacy of hatred upon his son, commanding him that whenever he would meet up with Yaakov he should kill him. This is why Yaakov prayed to be saved, both from Eisav and from Achi. In any event, I think this "naming" serves as a paradigm of how someone who is not connected to Torah views a name.

Rabbi Pesach Krohn tells an inspirational story, which demonstrates the meaning of a Jewish name and a Jew's overwhelming desire to pay gratitude to the Almighty. The story takes place during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when the Israelis were attacked on the holiest day of the year by Arabs on all fronts. One of the critical points of the battle was in the area of the Suez Canal. The chaplains involved with the gruesome work of collecting the bodies of fallen soldiers drove up and down the area, with great care and caution gathering the bodies of their comrades. Since it was now Succos, the Rav in charge of the chaplains took along a Lulav and Esrog, so that the soldiers could perform the mitzvah. Soldiers who were otherwise not observant asked to pray from a siddur and shake the Lulav and Esrog. War brings out the real essence of a person. Beneath the veneer of materialism, physicality and environmental pressures every Jew really wants what is proper and correct. This was their opportunity to express themselves with spiritual integrity.

The Rav arrived on Hoshanah Rabba at the last outpost near the Suez. Since he had himself already shaken the Lulav and Esrog, he could really have left it at the base. Soon a long line of soldiers formed, each waiting his turn to use the Lulav and Esrog. As they were standing in line, a young soldier driving an ammunition truck noticed the crowd that had gathered and, out of curiosity, stopped his truck, got out, and walked over to the group. "What is all the commotion about?" he asked. The soldiers explained that the Rav had come with a Lulav and Esrog. This soldier was not interested in waiting around for his turn. He was totally non-observant. Why bother? When the soldiers mentioned that this was the last day that the mitzvah could be performed for another year, he changed his mind and elected to wait.

Eventually, his turn to recite the blessings came. As he took the Lulav and Esrog into his hands and began to recite the blessing, a bomb hit his truck. The bomb blast set off multiple explosions on the truck. The blasts were so intense that they caused a deep crater where the truck had originally been parked.

Three months later, the Rav who had shared his Lulav and Esrog with so many soldiers that day - and who had noticed a unique, inspired look on the face of the ammunition truck driver - read an announcement in the army newspaper. Apparently, the wife of the ammunition truck driver had given birth to a little girl. The announcement included a statement by the father, "I believe with every fiber of my body that I am alive today and that I merited to see my daughter only because of the mitzvah that I was performing when my truck was hit by a bomb."

In remembrance of Hashem's goodness, he named his daughter Lulava.

Pharaoh said to Yaakov, "How many are the days of the years of your life?" Yaakov answered..."Few and bad were the days of the years of my life." (47:8,9)

The Shaagas Arye, Horav Arye Leib Gunzburg, zl, was asked to be Rav of the prestigious Jewish community in Metz, Germany. His appointment at the "advanced" age of seventy was then considered an anomaly. People began to talk. True, he was a scholar of international repute, but his age limited his ability to serve for very long. The talking continued as the malcontents and doomsayers had a field day predicting how long their illustrious new Rav would serve. Word reached the Shaagas Arye, who addressed the issue in a public address on Shabbos shortly after he arrived in Metz.

It was Parashas Vayigash, and the Rav presented a question on the parshah: "Pharaoh's 'welcome' to Yaakov was, 'How old are you?' Is this not strange? A venerable sage arrives from a distant land, the aged father

of your viceroy, and this is the way he is addressed? Is this not tacky? Furthermore, Yaakov Avinu's response seems out of character, 'Few and bad have been the days of the years of my life.' Why would Yaakov complain to Pharaoh that he has led a life of adversity? It was none of his business!"

The Shaagas Arye explained that when Yaakov arrived in Egypt, the country suddenly became blessed. The abundance which they experienced was unprecedented and could only be attributed to the presence of this venerable Jew. The problem was: Would it last? Yaakov clearly was not young. How much longer could he be expected to live? Yaakov sensed Pharaoh's concern. This is why he replied to him in the manner that he did. "You see, Pharaoh, I know I happen to appear to be very old, way beyond my actual age. It is because I have been subjected to great difficulty in my life, struggles that hastened the aging process, making me appear older than I am. Do not worry; I will be around for some time."

The Shaagas Arye concluded his address: "My friends, I am sure that my appearance is far from youthful, but, in fact, it is calumnious. I have experienced a very difficult life in the past. My earlier positions were very testy and far from financially remunerating. I am seventy years old; although I am not young, I assure you that I will enjoy longevity in this community and serve you for quite some time."

The Shaagas Arye lived to be over ninety years old, serving the community of Metz for over two decades.

Az yashir Moshe u'Bnei Yisrael.

Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sang.

Chazal note the word yashir, which is in the future tense; hence, it should be translated as "will sing," rather than "sang." Rashi applies the simple approach to his translation: "Then, it entered their minds to sing." After seeing the incredible miracles, they decided that it was necessary to express their gratitude in song. Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl, explains this further. Everyone should express his gratitude to Hashem on a regular basis. We only have to look around to see His amazing wonders and constant miracles. We neglect to do so, because of the affliction called "habit." We take life for granted out of habit. Everything seems natural - almost expected - until it is taken from us. So, while we should sing shirah on a regular basis, we do not, because everything continues on a "regular" basis. When an awesome life-altering miracle occurs, we wake up and realize that each day of life is actually a miracle. Thus, miracles inspire us to acknowledge the daily miracles which we have come to accept as nature. When Bnei Yisrael experienced the miracles accompanying Krias Yam Suf, they understood that they should sing shirah - not only for the overt miracles which they had just seen, but for everything which they had taken for granted. It is all the work of Hashem. Thus, they then decided to sing shirah, for everything, not only Krias Yam Suf.

Mazel tov and best wishes to Rabbi and Mrs. Simcha Dessler on the occasion of the Bar-Mitzvah of their sons Yehoshua n'y Chaim Ozer n'y. Special wishes to the esteemed grandparents Rabbi & Mrs. N.W. Dessler, Mr. & Mrs. Moshe Bertram

From Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org & genesis@torah.org

To ravfrand@torah.org

Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand * Parshas Vayigash

Three Steps Forward Before Praying – Three Examples

There is an interesting Rokeach (1176 - 1238) that is connected with our parsha. The Rokeach says the source of the Jewish custom to take three steps forward prior to reciting the Shmoneh Esrei prayer is the fact that there are 3 times in the Torah - in connection with prayer - where we find the word "vaYigash" [and he drew closer]. The first place is when

Avraham pleaded with G-d that he should not destroy Sodom, as it is written: "And Avraham drew near and said 'Will You even obliterate righteous with wicked?'" [Bereshis 18:23]. The second time is in our parsha when Yehudah stepped toward Yosef before delivering his appeal [Bereshis 44:18]. The third time is in the book of Kings, regarding Eliyahu on Har HaCarmel [Melachim I 18:36]: "And it was at the time of the Mincha offering, Eliyahu the prophet drew near and said, "Hashem, G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, today it will become known that You are G-d in Israel and I am Your servant, and that it is by Your word that I have done all these things."

Thus, says the Rokeach, the source for the Jewish custom (minhag Yisrael) to take 3 steps forward before beginning our prayers is the 3 times that the word VaYigash (he came near) is used in connection with prayer and petitioning. The question, however, is obvious. While it is true that the context of the word VaYigash by Avraham and by Eliyahu was drawing near to G-d before offering a petition to Him, that does not seem to be the case with Yehudah, who drew closer to Yosef before making his plea. This is not an example of prayer so how can it be used to establish the criteria for the number of steps to take forward before reciting the Amidah prayer. What does the Rokeach mean?

There is another troublesome issue in this parsha. If we read over Yehudah's speech, we see that there is nothing new that has not been said in the previous Chumash narrative. He adds absolutely nothing to the details that unfolded in Parshas Miketz. Yosef was aware of everything in Yehudah's plea before he offered it and yet for some reason it is only now that Yosef breaks down crying and reveals himself to his brothers.

Perhaps it is possible to say that one question answers the other. Even though Yehudah may physically have been in the same room as Yosef and he may have been approaching Yosef and ostensibly petitioning him, however the Being that Yehudah is really petitioning is the Master of the Universe. What is on Yehudah's mind is not the Egyptian Viceroy but the Ribono shel Olam. All else has failed. We are in the eleventh hour. Binyomin is held captive and the brothers are looking at the specter of having to return to their father without him. They know this will kill their father. Yehudah is desperate. He may be speaking to Yosef, approaching him and looking at him, but the petition is primarily to Him with a capital "H".

Therefore, indeed the Rokeach is correct. "Vayigash elav Yehudah" is a petition to the Ribono shel Olam and can count as one of the 3 places where the word vaYigash (he drew near) is used prior to prayer. True, it is the same information that Yehudah already told Yosef. He is adding no new information in his communication with the Viceroy of Egypt, but now it is directed primarily to someone else - to the Almighty.

The Vilna Gaon uses a similar concept to explain a Gemara [Megilla 16a]. In the dramatic 3 way meeting between Achashverosh, Esther, and Haman, Esther pleads with the king and tells him that someone is trying to kill her and her people. Achashverosh asks her to identify the culprit and she says "A wicked adversary - this evil Haman" [Esther 7:6]. The Gemara said that Esther was actually about to point her finger at the king himself until an Angel came and pushed it in the direction of Haman. One does not have to be schooled in the art of diplomacy to know that when asking the king for a favor one does not say: "It is you, you evil, rotten, lousy king who is the cause of all this trouble." What was Esther thinking? This is her crucial moment. How did she almost blow it like that? It may be true that Achashverosh himself was part of the problem, but one cannot talk like that to a king! What does the Gemara mean? The Vilna Gaon says that Esther may have been in the palace and she may have been looking at Achashverosh and giving him this whole speech, but she was really talking to the Almighty. Her plea for intercession to save the Jewish people from destruction was not to the King of Persia but to the King of Kings! She was so caught up in her preoccupation that she was really talking to G-d, that she did not stop to

worry about diplomatic niceties vis a vis the message that Achashverosh would be hearing. Miraculously, an Angel came and pushed her hand towards Haman to bring her back to the "real world" of where she was and who was listening to her plea in the palace.

This then is another example of a Biblical character seemingly talking to another human being, but on a deeper level, talking to the Ribono shel Olam. This too is the approach we must use to properly interpret the nature of Yehudah's speech in the presence of Yosef.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD
RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

From Rabbi Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com>
reply-To rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com
To Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com>
Subject [Rav Kook List]

Rav Kook List **Rav Kook on the Torah Portion** **VaYigash: The Hazards of Leadership**

Joseph Dies First

Out of Jacob's twelve sons, it appears that Joseph was the first to die. "Joseph died, and [then] his brothers and all that generation" (Ex. 1:6). Why was Joseph's life shorter than that of his brothers?

The Sages explained the reason for Joseph's early demise was due to his public office. When one assumes a position of authority, 'his days and years are shortened' (Berachot 55a). Yet this hardly seems fair. Why should those who dedicate their lives to public affairs be punished with fewer years?

Joseph's Mistake

Working for the public good is certainly laudable. However, there are certain hazards in such a career. Precisely because one is occupied attending to important communal needs, one may come to disregard his own personal needs. A communal leader may view his own needs - whether material, spiritual, or moral - as insignificant and inconsequential.

We may observe this phenomenon in Joseph. As viceroy, Joseph was busy supervising the national and economic affairs of Egypt. And he saw in his public office the vehicle by which the covenant of Bein HaBetarim - foretelling the exile of Abraham's descendants - would come to pass. When Joseph heard his father referred to as "your servant," he did not object. Joseph was occupied with the overall objective; he did not want it to be compromised due to his personal obligation to show respect for his father.

Joseph's mistake was not a private failing. This is a universal lesson for all leaders. They should not to allow any goal or aspiration, no matter how important, bring them to disregard lesser obligations.

The King's Sefer Torah

We find a similar idea in the special laws of a king. The Torah instructs the king to write his own sefer Torah and keep it with him at all times. In this way, "his heart will not be raised above his brothers, and he will not stray from the Law to the right or to the left" (Deut. 17:20). The Torah specifically cautions the monarch that, despite his involvement in critical national affairs, his public service should not lead him to ignore his private obligations. He is obligated to observe the law in his personal life, like every other citizen.

The Torah promises that a king who heeds this warning will be blessed with a long reign. Unlike those who fail the tests of public office, such a king will not live a life of 'shortened days and years.'

Life is not just major goals and aspirations. All of us, even the most prominent leader, must conduct ourselves appropriately in all facets of life. Those who maintain their integrity in life's private aspects, will be blessed with strength and energy to succeed in their most important and elevated goals.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II on Berachot IX: 25)

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com

From Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org>
reply-To neustadt@torah.org, genesis@torah.org
To weekly-halacha@torah.org
Subject Weekly Halacha - Parshas Terumah
by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)
Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Weekly Halacha by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Listening to Kerias ha-Torah * Part 1

There are two basic opinions among the early poskim concerning the nature of the obligation of Kerias ha-Torah on Shabbos morning. One opinion¹ holds that every adult male is obligated to listen to the weekly portion read every Shabbos morning from a kosher Sefer Torah. He must pay attention to every word being read, or he will not fulfill his obligation. The second opinion² maintains that the obligation of Kerias ha-Torah devolves upon the congregation as a whole. In other words, if ten or more men are together on Shabbos morning, they must read from the weekly portion. While each member of the congregation is included in this congregational obligation, it is not a specific obligation upon each individual, provided that there are ten men who are paying attention.

There are some basic questions concerning Kerias ha-Torah whose answers will differ depending on which of these two opinions one follows:

- * Is one actually required to follow each word recited by the Reader, the koreh, without missing even one letter [and, according to some opinions, even read along with him to make sure nothing is missed³], or is one permitted – even l'chatchilah – to be lax about this requirement?
- * Is it permitted to learn or to recite Shnayim mikra v'echad targum during Kerias ha-Torah?
- * If an individual missed a word or two of the Torah reading, must he hear the Torah reading again?
- * If ten or more men missed one word or more from the reading, should they take out the Sefer Torah after davening and read the portion they missed?
- * If one came late to shul but arrived in time for Kerias ha-Torah, should he listen to the Torah reading first and then daven?
- * If a situation arises where tefillah b'tzibur and Kerias ha-Torah conflict, which takes precedence?
- * If a situation arises where, by listening to Kerias ha-Torah, one would not be able to daven altogether, which takes precedence?
- * Should one interrupt his private Shemoneh Esrei to listen to Kerias ha-Torah?

The answer to these and other such questions depends, for the most part, on which of the two views one is following. Clearly, according to the first opinion, one must give undivided attention to each and every word being read. Davening, learning or reciting Shnayim mikra v'echad targum during Kerias ha-Torah would be prohibited, and even b'diavad one would have to make up any missed words. But according to the second opinion, the answers to all these questions would be more lenient, for as long as the congregation fulfilled its obligation to read the Torah correctly, and as long as ten men paid

attention to the reading, the individual's obligation is no longer a matter of concern.

Shulchan Aruch does not give a clear, definitive ruling concerning this dispute. Indeed, while discussing the laws regarding the permissibility of learning during Kerias ha-Torah, he quotes both opinions without rendering a decision. Instead, he concludes that "it is proper for a meticulous person to focus on and pay attention to the words of the reader." This indicates that Shulchan Aruch and many other prominent poskim⁴ hold that while it is commendable to be stringent, it is not absolutely essential. Mishnah Berurah⁵ though, quotes several poskim who maintain that the halachah requires that each individual listen to every word of Kerias ha-Torah.⁶ Rav M. Feinstein rules that even b'diavad one does not fulfill his obligation if he misses a word, and he must find a way to make up what he missed.⁷ There are, however, a host of poskim who maintain that Kerias ha-Torah is a congregational and not an individual obligation.⁸

Several contemporary poskim suggest what appears to be a compromise. Clearly, l'chatchilah we follow the view of the poskim that each individual is obligated to listen to Kerias ha-Torah, and it is standard practice for each individual to pay undivided attention to each word that is recited. Indeed, in the situation described above where Kerias ha-Torah conflicts with tefillah b'tzibur, some poskim rule that the obligation to hear Kerias ha-Torah takes precedence, in deference to the authorities who consider it an individual obligation.⁹

But, b'diavad, if it were to happen that a word or two was missed, one is not obligated to go to another shul to listen to the part of the reading that was missed. Rather, we rely on the second opinion which maintains that so long as the congregation has fulfilled its obligation, the individual is covered.¹⁰ Accordingly, if listening to Kerias ha-Torah will result in missing davening altogether, davening takes priority, since we rely on the poskim who maintain that Kerias ha-Torah is a congregational obligation.¹¹ Similarly, one should not interrupt his private Shemoneh Esrei to listen to Kerias ha-Torah.¹²

But regardless of the above dispute and compromise, the poskim are in agreement about the following rules:

- * There must be at least ten men listening to the entire Kerias ha-Torah. If there are fewer than ten, then the entire congregation has not fulfilled its obligation according to all views.¹³
- * Conversing during Kerias ha-Torah is strictly prohibited even when there are ten men paying attention. According to most poskim, it is prohibited to converse even between aliyos (bein gavra l'gavra).¹⁴ One who converses during Kerias ha-Torah is called "a sinner whose sin is too great to be forgiven."¹⁵
- * Even those who permit learning during Kerias ha-Torah stipulate that it may only be done quietly, so that it does not interfere with the Torah reading.¹⁶
- * "Talking in learning" bein gavra l'gavra is permitted by some poskim and prohibited by others. An individual, however, may learn by himself or answer a halachic question bein gavra l'gavra.¹⁷

1 Shiblei ha-Leket 39, quoted in Beis Yosef, O.C. 146. This also seems to be the view of the Magen Avraham 146:5, quoting Shelah and Mateh Moshe. See also Ma'asei Rav 131. See, however, Peulas Sachir on Ma'asei Rav 175.

2 Among the Rishonim see Ramban and Ran, Megillah 5a. Among the poskim see Ginas Veradim 2:21; Imrei Yosher 2:171; Binyan Shlomo 35; Levushei Mordechai 2:99 and others. See also Yabia Omer 4:31-3 and 7:9.

3 Mishnah Berurah 146:15.

4 Sha'arei Efrayim 4:12 and Siddur Derech ha-Chayim (4-5) clearly rule in accordance with this view. This may also be the ruling of Chayei Adam 31:2 and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 23:8.

5 146:15. Aruch ha-Shulchan 146:6 and Kaf ha-Chayim 146:10,14 concur with this view.

6 There are conflicting indications as to what, exactly, is the view of the Mishnah Berurah on this issue; see Beir Halachah 135:14, s.v. ein, and 146:2, s.v. v'yeish.

7 Igras Moshe, O.C. 4:23; 4:40-4-5. If ten or more men missed a section of the Torah reading, then they should take out the sefer after davening and read that section over; *ibid*.

8 See also Eimek Berachah (Kerias ha-Torah 3).

9 Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (oral ruling, quoted in Avnei Yashfei on Tefillah, pg. 140). See dissenting opinion in Minchas Yitzchak 7:6.

10 Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Siach Halachah 6:8 and Halichos Shlomo 1:12-1; see also Minchas Shlomo 2:4-15); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (oral ruling quoted in Avnei Yashfei on Tefillah, pg. 140).

11 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (oral ruling, quoted in Avnei Yashfei on Tefillah, pg. 140).

12 Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shlomo 1:12-4). [A Diaspora Jew who may have missed an entire parashah when traveling to Eretz Yisrael after a Yom Tov, does not need to make up what he missed (*ibid*. 6). See *Ishei Yisrael* 38:29 for a dissenting opinion.

13 Aruch ha-Shulchan 146:5.

14 Bach, as understood by Mishnah Berurah 146:6 and many poskim. There are poskim, however, who maintain that the Bach permits even idle talk *bein gavra l'gavra*; see *Machatzis ha-Shekel*, Aruch ha-Shulchan, and Shulchan ha-Tahor. See also Peri Chadash, who allows conversing *bein gavra l'gavra*. Obviously, they refer to the type of talk which is permitted in shul and/or on Shabbos.

15 Be'ur Halachah 146:2, s.v. *v'hanachon*, who uses strong language in condemning these people.

16 Mishnah Berurah 146:11.

17 Mishnah Berurah 146:6.

Weekly-Halacha, Weekly Halacha, Copyright © 2010 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr.

Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org.

Rabbi Neustadt is the *Yoshev Rosh* of the *Vaad Harabbonim* of Detroit and the *Av Beis Din* of the *Beis Din Tzedek* of Detroit. He could be reached at dneustadt@cordetroit.com

From Yeshiva.org.il <subscribe@yeshiva.org.il>

reply-To subscribe@yeshiva.org.il

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Why is this the Longest Year? By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Thirty Days has September, April, June, November, Tishrei, Shvat, Nissan, Sivan, Av and sometimes Cheshvani and Kislev. Yet a reading of Mishnah Rosh Hashanah implies that whether a month has 29 days or 30 depends on when the witnesses saw the new moon and testified in Beis Din early enough to declare the thirtieth day Rosh Chodesh. In addition, the Gemarai notes that Elul could be thirty days long, something that cannot happen in our calendar. How did our empirical calendar become so rigid and predictable in advance? Come with me as we explore the history and foundations of the Jewish calendar! The Torah (Shemos 12:2) commands the main Beis Din of the Jewish people, or a Beis Din specially appointed by them, to declare Rosh Chodesh upon accepting the testimony of witnesses who observed the new moon (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 1:1, 7; 5:1). The purpose of having eyewitnesses was not to notify the Beis Din of its occurrence; the Beis Din had extensive knowledge of astronomy and already knew exactly when and where the new moon would appear and what size and shape it would have (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 2:4; Ritva on the Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 18a). The moon's location and speed is constantly influenced by many factors, but the wise scholars of the tribe of Yissachar calculated where and when it would appear.

From the time of the actual molad you can calculate when the moon will become visible. Chazal always kept secret how one can predict when the new moon was to appear, a calculation called the *sod haibur* (Rambam, Kiddush Hachodesh, 11:4). This information had always been kept secret to avoid its abuse by false witnesses.

The purpose of having eyewitnesses was not to notify the Beis Din of its occurrence; rather, the Torah required the Beis Din to wait for witnesses with which to determine whether the 30th day (of the previous month)

would be the last day of the old month or the first day of a new month. If no witnesses to the new moon arrived on the 30th day, then the new month does not begin until the 31st day, regardless of the astronomic calculations (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 24a). Thus, prior to the establishment of Hillel HaNasi's "permanent" calendar, any month could be either 29 or 30 days, dependent on when the new moon appeared and whether witnesses arrived in Beis Din to testify about this phenomenon. Since the calendar printers could not go to press until the Beis Din had declared Rosh Chodesh, calendar manufacture in those times would have been a difficult business in which to turn a profit. Perhaps this is why organizations mailed out so few fundraising calendars in the days of Chazal!

There is another commandment of the Torah – that Pesach must always occur in the Spring (Devarim 16:1). This seemingly innocuous mitzvah actually requires considerable manipulation of the calendar, since the months, derived from the word moon, are determined by the length of time from one new moon to the next, which is a bit more than 29 1/2 days. However, the year and its seasons are determined by the relative location of the sun to the earth, which is a bit less than 365 1/4 days. By requiring Pesach to always be in the Spring, the Torah required that the calendar could not be exclusively twelve lunar months, since this would result in Pesach wandering its way through the solar year and occurring in all seasons.iii

In the modern "Western" world, there are three commonly used calendars, two of which make no attempt to accommodate the solar year and the lunar month. What we refer to as the common secular calendar, or the Gregorian calendar, is completely based on the sun. Although the year is broken into months, the use of the word "months" is borrowed from its original meaning and has been significantly changed since the months have no relationship to any cycle of the moon. Most of the secular months have 31 days, while the lunar cycle is only about 29 1/2 days, and even those secular months that have 30 days do not relate to any phase or change in the moon. Similarly, the length of February as a month of either 28 or 29 days has nothing to do with the moon. Thus, although the word month should correspond to the moon, the Western calendar is purely a solar one, with a borrowed unit "month" given a meaning that distorts its origins.

Another calendar becoming more commonly used in the Western world is the Moslem one, which is purely a lunar calendar of twelve lunar months, some 29 days and some 30, but has no relationship to the solar year. In truth, a pure lunar calendar such as the Moslem calendar has no real "year," since a year is based on the relative locations of the sun and the earth and the resultant seasons, and the Moslem year completely ignores seasons. The word "year" is used in the Moslem sense only as a basis for counting longer periods of time, but has no relationship to the sun. Thus the Moslem "year" is only 354 or 355 days long -- almost 11 days shorter than a true solar year. Therefore, a Moslem who tells you that he is 65 years old is really closer to 63 according to a solar year count. He has counted 65 years that are at least ten days shorter. I trust that Guinness takes these factors into account when computing longevity and insurance companies realize this when calculating actuarial tables. To review: the Moslem calendar accurately tracks the moon and the months, but has no relationship to a true year, and the Western secular calendar is fairly accurate at tracking the year and its seasons, but has no relationship to the moon and its phases.

It is noteworthy that although the Moslem "year" does not correspond at all to a solar or western year, it closely corresponds to our Jewish year in a "common" year which is only twelve months long, and the Moslem month follows closely the Jewish calendar month. (We will soon explain why there is sometimes a discrepancy of a day or two.) Thus, for the last three years, Ramadan, the Moslem holy month, corresponded to our month of Elul, although this coming year, which is a leap year, Ramadan falls in Av. It is accurate to say that the Moslem year "wanders" its way

through the seasons as it takes 33 years until a specific month returns to the same corresponding time in the solar year, and in the interim the month has visited each of the other seasons for several consecutive years. Thus, Ramadan will not coincide with Elul again this generation, but will fall out in Av for the next three years, and then with Tamuz for two years, and then with Sivan, etc.

However, when Hashem commanded us to create a calendar, He insisted that we use the moon to define the months, and yet also keep our months in sync with the seasons, which are dependent on the sun; to determine the dates of the Yomim Tovim. The only way to do this is to use the Jewish calendar method of occasionally adding months – thereby creating 13 month years, which we call "leap years," to offset the almost 11 day difference between twelve lunar months and a solar year. The result of this calendar is that although each date does not fall exactly on the same "solar date" every year, it falls within a relatively close range relative to the solar year.

Who determined which year has thirteen months?

The original system was that the main Beis Din (also known as the Sanhedrin) appointed a smaller special Beis Din to determine whether the year should have an extra month added. This special Beis Din took into consideration:

- 1) Astronomical data, such as: When Pesach will fall out relative to the vernal equinox (the Spring day on which day and night are closest to being equal in length).
- 2) Agricultural data, such as: How ripe is the barley? How large are the newborn lambs and pigeons?
- 3) Weather: Is the rainy season drawing to a close? Is it a famine year?
- 4) Convenience – or more specifically, the halachic inconvenience of creating a leap year: Shmittah was never made into a leap year, and the year before shmittah usually was.
- 5) Infrastructure, such as: In what condition were the highways and bridges.

All of these points influenced whether the thirteenth month, the extra Adar, would be added.^{iv} When this system was in place, which was, without interruption, from the time of Moshe and Yehoshua until hundreds of years after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, the main Beis Din sent written messages notifying outlying communities of the decision to create a leap year and the reasons for their decision.^v By the way, after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the main Beis Din was not located in Yerushalayim, but wherever the Nasi of the Jewish people resided, as long as it was in Eretz Yisrael. This included several other communities at various times of Jewish history, including Teverya, Yavneh, and Shafraam.^{vi} Indeed, during this period sometimes the special Beis Din met outside the land of Israel -- should the head of the Beis Din be in the Diaspora and there be no one of his stature remaining in Eretz Yisrael.^{vii}

This explains how the calendar is intended to be calculated. What we need to understand yet is how our current calendar varies from this, and why this year both Cheshvan and Kislev are thirty days long. For this we will need to refer to a different article.

i Although the correct name of the month is Marcheshvan, we will follow the colloquial use of calling it Cheshvan.

ii Rosh Hashanah 19b, 20a

iii Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh 4:1

iv Sanhedrin 11a- 12a

v Sanhedrin 11b; Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 4:17

vi Rosh Hashanah 31b

vii Berachos 63a; Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 1:8