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Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet  
Eikev 5769

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NO FREE LUNCH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The current economic downturn has once again proven the truth of the adage that there is no free lunch in economic matters. In my opinion it is true in general life and in spiritual life as well. Many of the current problems, scandals and issues that have beset our world can be attributed to this attitude that many people have - that a free lunch is always present and eatable without later consequences. Thus complete reliance on political arm twisting in order to obtain governmental welfare largesse, which initially appears to be a lavish free lunch, carries with it great costs.

It creates a dependency mentality that permeates a large section of our society and is generational in its effects. It creates a culture of begging and eventually of cheating and dishonesty, with a false impression that somehow stealing from the government is not really stealing. It turns other citizens against us, seeing us as being basically predatory, extortionist and above all lazy and dishonest.

I am aware of a case where a man who traveled often to collect money solely on his own behalf, when he passed away, the asset that his sons fought about and actually contested in a rabbinic court was his list of donors. A generation brought up to believe that there is no necessity for it to work in order to make a living for one's family is doomed to a spiritual and social disaster - and eventual self-destruction. There is no free lunch for anyone in this world.

However, the culture that demands that young men be supported indefinitely by struggling in-laws also convinces a large section of young people that a free lunch is not only possible but it is to be justifiably expected. This is also running into some opposition now because of the diminished economic realities of our current situation. But in my opinion it is morally and practically an indefensible position. It causes heartbreak and division within families and it undoubtedly fosters a family of dysfunction and dependency.

There are families in Israel who are hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt with no hope of ever crawling out of this difficulty because of their supporting children and grandchildren who are not themselves working. In Israel it is almost impossible to survive financially unless there are two incomes in the family. When one of the incomes has to be supplied by parents or grandparents then the situation becomes a generational challenge and problem.

The cost in mental and physical health to all concerned is enormous and continuous. Yet many young couples in our society are convinced that they are entitled. But only later to their dismay do they realize that the lunch is not free in any respect. That such a system is encouraged by responsible religious and educational leaders is deeply troubling to me. Our children and grandchildren should be educated and trained to be self sufficient, independent and to realize and believe that there is really no free lunch for anyone in this world.

It is interesting to note that there are governmental policies that also seem to be based upon the false notion that a free lunch is available. The relationship of Israel with the rest of the world, especially with the United States, also was based on the false premise that we are entitled because of the Holocaust and the sympathy engendered thereby to the Jews. But that also was a false notion whose influence has long ago dissipated. The reliance on the Holocaust as a defense for our national existence as a state in the Land of Israel was a mistaken free ride from the start.

Ben Gurion was wise enough to tell the Peel Commission in 1936 that the Bible was our deed to the Holy Land. Ben Gurion in spite of being a secular agnostic was an Eastern European Jew whose grandfather had taken him to a Chasidic rebbe to receive a blessing. His successors in office in the main never had such beliefs and never expressed them publicly to the world till now. They relied on an illusory free lunch that no longer exists, no matter how many Holocaust courses and museums are created and financed.

Not believing in the eternal truth of our own God given cause has led us to lose our standing in the eyes of the world. That free lunch has turned out to be quite expensive as the current diplomatic situation clearly has shown. My friends, all rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, there really is no free lunch.=

Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: EKEV :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Moshe's long oration to the people of Israel continues. He portrays for them the blessings and the lurking dangers that await them in the Land of Israel. He is aware of the temptations that they will face in establishing themselves in their new and ancient homeland. Moshe views his people as a type of recovering alcoholic - always prone to fall off the wagon when passing an establishment that dispenses alcoholic beverages. The Jewish people are always prone to revert to their Egyptian ways - to the influence of the pagan societies that surround them and have a strange allure to them.

Moshe knows he will not be present to try and protect them and he sadly predicts that problems will prevail. Coming into a new country, having to live in a natural instead of supernatural environment, adjusting to new leadership and different challenges all combine to create a difficult and tense situation for the Jewish people. Moshe's warnings are not limited to his generation or Yehoshua's generation but are aimed at the Jewish people in all of its generations.

Jews are always subject to foreign and many times anti-Torah influences. How to protect one's self from that constant difficulty of societal life has remained the perennial challenge of Jewish life throughout the ages. In our time this struggle has been intensified by the establishment of a Jewish state once gain in the Land of Israel. In short, the issue remains how to remain Jewish, nationally and personally, in a very large and influential non-Jewish world.

Moshe's solution is the old time-tested and true one - the study and observance of Torah and its value system. There is no other solution to the "Jewish problem." All of history literally shouts this answer from its story of Jewish life and existence over thousands of years. Moshe warns us not to search for other apparently beguiling answers that eventually bankrupt and lead only to further problems and disasters.

People always search for the "ekev" - the "because" and "why" of Jewish problems and challenges. Moshe answers the "ekev" problem by explaining that it is up to us to live up to the role that the Lord has ordained for us. The Lord eventually does not easily tolerate backsliding from the Jewish people. People may deem God's instructions to be irrelevant to their own society and stage of life but in reality these instructions are the keys to personal fulfillment and Jewish survival and triumph.

"Ekev" "because" is the absolute answer to understanding our current world and societal challenges. Rashi comments that "ekev" also means the idea that people step on God's commandments deeming them to be irrelevant to their lives. So Moshe wishes us to

remember the “because” element of “ekev” as well to warn us not to trample on our heritage and disregard that uniqueness that can save us from the pitfalls of a non-Jewish world, devoid of holy values and lofty aims. There is no substitute for the authenticity of Moshe’s message to us. His words should be heeded. Shabat shalom.

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Ekev  
For the week ending 8 August 2009 / 17 Av 5769  
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com  
Overview

If Bnei Yisrael carefully observe even those “minor” mitzvot that are usually “trampled” underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations of earth. Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael that they will conquer Eretz Canaan little by little, so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before Bnei Yisrael are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning Bnei Yisrael to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance. Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions Bnei Yisrael not to become haughty and think that their success in Eretz Yisrael is a result of their own powers or vigor; rather, it was Hashem who gave them wealth and success. Nor did Hashem drive out the Canaanites because of Bnei Yisrael’s righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites, for the road from Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against Hashem and Moshe. Moshe details the events after Hashem spoke the 10 Commandments at Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon’s passing is recorded as is the elevation of the Levi’im to Hashem’s ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of the heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the Shema, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping mitzvot and the curse that results from non-observance.

Insights

The Ink Of Eternity

“Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones.” (10:1)

Michaelangelo may have known a thing or two about painting, but when it came to Jewish anatomy he was a bit off. When he painted Moses he gave him little horns. Michaelangelo’s problem came from a mis-translation of the Hebrew word keren. It’s true, keren does mean a ‘horn’, but it also means a ray of light. The English word corona, meaning a glowing halo, is probably a derivation of keren. How did Moshe get his ‘horns’?

After the Jewish People heard the Ten Commandments at Sinai, Moshe ascended the mountain on the 7th of Sivan to receive the rest of the Torah. He came down on the 17th of Tammuz and was greeted by the sight of the golden calf. Moshe smashed the two tablets of the Torah to the ground.

These first tablets were made by G-d and were engraved by G-d. They contained all the Torah. The gemaras and the agaditas etc., and everything that was necessary to carry out The Maker’s instructions. For example, the first tablets included all the details of how to make tefillin such as the tefillin had to be perfectly square black boxes made from the hide of a kosher animal. Similarly, it was on these two tablets that G-d inscribed all the minutiae of the laws of Shabbat.

However, when God gave Moshe the second tablets, they only contained the written Torah. The detailed instructions — the Oral Torah — was given to him verbally.

After G-d forgave the Jewish People their infidelity with the golden calf, Moshe ascended the mountain again on the first of Elul to receive the second tablets. He came down 40 days later on Yom Kippur. When the Children of Israel saw Moshe, his face was shining with a radiant corona.

Why didn’t Moshe’s face shine before?

The Midrash says that when Moshe had finished writing the Torah, some of the ink that was left over in his pen touched his face, and that’s where the radiance came from. However, the Torah itself says the rays of light came from speaking to G-d. But Moshe spoke to G-d many times before, so why only now did his face become luminescent?

And which was the real cause of the aura? The ink in the pen or speaking to G-d?

One would think that the second giving of the Torah was a second-class affair. After all, the first tablets were written by G-d on rock hewn by G-d, whereas the second tablets were the work of man, and only the writing was Divine.

It sounds like the first giving was on a higher level, doesn’t it?

Really the reverse is true. When G-d first gave the Torah the Jewish People were to be the vessel that would contain the Torah. Like the Holy Ark, we would hold the Torah, but we would not be part of the Torah, just as a box only contains what is inside it. It’s not the thing itself.

But with the second tablets, the Jewish People became part of the Torah itself.

The beams that came from the ink that was left in the pen of Moshe was the Oral Torah. G-d put into the mind of Moshe Rabbeinu — the rabbi, the teacher of Israel — the Oral Torah. All the verbal instructions that were originally written on the first Tablets were now engraved in the mind and heart of Moshe. Everything that is possible for a mortal understanding to attain was written in the mind of Moshe. The ink of eternity in the pen of Moshe was one and the same as G-d  *talking to him*.

Thus, the Jewish People became partners in the Torah. We became the parchment on which G-d wrote with the ink of eternity.

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Portion of the Week / In the Lord’s house, or not

By Benjamin Lau

This week, we read: “For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven. A land which the Lord thy God careth for: The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year” (Deuteronomy 12:10-12).

The Jewish people’s intimate link with its ancestral homeland is characterized by two elements: first, the unique geography of Eretz Israel, which makes it dependent on rain - heaven’s blessing - and, second, God’s intense presence there.

For centuries, Jewish migration from Eretz Israel was interpreted as a distancing from God. Ten years before the First Temple’s destruction (early 6th century B.C.E.), Jewish society split into two factions. The first emigrated to Babylon together with King Jeconiah, while the second remained in Jerusalem under King Zedekiah’s leadership. Members of the latter group are quoted by the prophet Ezekiel (11:15) in regard to those who have left: “... are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession.” This reminds us of the typical contemporary Israeli view that Diaspora Jews have no share in Eretz Israel or in God, and that emigration means moving

away from their Creator. Opposing those perceptions was the second group - of Jews who set down roots outside Eretz Israel and sought to replace it with their new country of residence.

Both factions had their prophets and intellectuals. Those of the Eretz Israel group promised it that the Babylonian Empire would soon collapse and the Kingdom of Israel would be restored. The Babylonian faction's prophets clung to the words of the prophet Jeremiah, who declared that the Babylonian exiles must be concerned for the welfare of their new home, where they must establish roots, build their community and await God's restoration of the Jews to their land.

Centuries after the first Babylonian exile, the same dialogue was heard between the Jews of Babylon and those of Eretz Israel. The first group's position was championed by Rabbi Judah, a third-century Babylonian rabbi who supported Diaspora existence: "Rabbi Judah states: 'All Jews who immigrate to Eretz Israel from Babylon violate a mitzvat asseh [prescriptive commandment], as it is written, 'They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the Lord; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place' (Jeremiah 27:22)." Elsewhere, we read: "Rabbi Judah states: 'For a Jew, living in Babylon is like living in Eretz Israel.'"

Thus, Rabbi Judah basically promised Diaspora Jews for generations to come that even if they made their homes elsewhere, they would not lose their connection with God. In fact, some rabbis even argued that Jews were prohibited from immigrating to Eretz Israel until the messiah's arrival, and that it was God's will that Jews should continue living on foreign soil.

During the same era, The rabbis of Tiberias, led by Rabbi Yohanan, supported an opposite viewpoint and developed an ideology that negated the Diaspora and viewed continued existence there a disgrace. Rabbi Elazar, who immigrated to Eretz Israel from Babylon, argued: "Jews who die abroad are not alive in the other-worldly sense, as it is written, '... and I shall set glory in the land of the living' (Ezek. 26:20). In other words, those who die in a glorious land [i.e., Eretz Israel] are alive in the other-worldly sense, while those who die in the Diaspora, which has no glory, are not."

Over the centuries, another party joined the debate: Diaspora Jews who adopted the second group's view of the centrality of Eretz Israel for all Jews but opposed immigration to Eretz Israel, because of the Shechina - the divine presence - there.

Hebrew University Jewish philosophy professor Avi Ravitzky wrote an article about this latter group: "The ancestral land is a home that invites intimacy ... and protects its Jewish inhabitants. However, its sanctity creates a lofty feeling intermingled with awe, making special demands on us ... We fear to draw near and it plants anxiety in our hearts ... While the home is a clearly existential concept ... the sacred aspect is a clearly metaphysical concept, as Jacob says, 'How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven' [Genesis 28:17]. While the home is intended primarily to extend love to Jews and attract them, the sacred aspect's role is to demand and threaten."

The "platform" for this group, which longs for the land but fears to live in it, was framed by the Maharam of Rotenberg (Rabbi Meir Ben Baruch), in the 13th century. He wrote: "When Jews sin in Eretz Israel, their punishment is far greater than the penalty they would suffer for any sin they might commit in the Diaspora, because God makes continual demands on Eretz Israel, which is under his constant vigilance and monitoring. Rebels against the throne who live in the palace are punished more severely than those rebels who live far away from the palace."

Opposition to Zionism united the members of the two Diaspora factions, while members of the opposing group in this debate immigrated here from the four corners of the earth, full of hope, that "here, in the land beloved by our ancestors, all dreams will be realized ... and the divine presence will reside."

A.D. Gordon described the fear that seized some newly arrived Jewish immigrants in Palestine: "I have sometimes seen Jews totally devoted to Eretz Israel who come here with much excitement in their hearts and with intoxicated imagination. However, after a short while, those individuals turn their backs on this land, leaving it, with ice in their hearts."

Diaspora Jewry continues to cling to the legitimacy granted it by thinkers of previous generations. Meanwhile, Eretz Israel's residents seek to preserve their dream of the ancestral homeland, and to tighten the intellectual binds that tie our souls to this land and increases our love for it.

Parshas Eikev

The Summary of All Fear

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Matzav.com)

One of the most discussed verses in this week's portion deals with the fear of Heaven. Moshe presents the Children of Israel with a simple request fear G-d. Though it may sound simple we all know that it is not. The problem is that Moshe presents the petition as if it were a simple feat. He says, And now Israel, what does G-d want of you? Only that you fear G-d your Lord (Deuteronomy 10:12). He makes it sound as though the fear of G-d is only a minor matter. The Talmud in Tractate Berachos asks what we all might ask: Is the fear of G-d such a small thing? The Gemara relates how Rabbi Chanina said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: The Holy One, blessed be He, has in His treasury nothing except a stockpile of the fear of heaven, as it says, "The fear of G-d is His treasure" (Isaiah 33: 6). Obviously if fear of G-d is so cherished by the Almighty, it must be very difficult to attain.

The Gemara answers: True! For it was Moshe who said this verse and for Moses fear of G-d was a small thing. Rabbi Chanina compared it to a person who is asked for a big article, and he has it. Since he has it, then it seems like a small article to him.

I always was bothered by the Gemara. Just because it was easy for Moshe, who says it is easy for us? So why does Moshe imply to the people that fear of G-d is simple. That is easy for him to say. But don't you have to know your audience and talk to them on their level? Rav Yitzchok Zilber, founder of Toldos Yeshurun, an organization that re-educates estranged Russian Jews about the heritage that was snatched from them, is known as the Father of contemporary Russian Jewry. A native of Kazan, Russia, Rav Zilber was born just before the Russian Revolution in 1917, but was discreetly taught Torah by his revered father and not only completed Shas several times during his years in Russia, but also taught Torah to many others. During World War II, he was imprisoned in Stalin's gulag where, yet hemanaged to remain Shomer Shabbos despite the inhumane conditions. He later had to flee from the KGB, which wanted to arrest him for his Torah activities in Russia. In 1972, he emigrated to Israel. As he walked off the airplane on his arrival in Israel and embraced the custom agent.

Chavivi! My dear one! shouted Rabbi Zilber as he gave the man a bear-hug embrace. It is so wonderful to be here and talk to a Jew like a Jew! The man offered a polite smile and a pleasant Shalom.

Please tell me, pleaded Rabbi Zilber with an intensity that seemed to announce a question whose answer would solve all the problems facing Jews for the millennia. For years I am struggling with this problem. Please tell me, how did you understand the K'tzos haChoshen on the sugya of Areiv? (The K'tzos haChoshen is a classical commentary on the Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat, Code of Jewish Law.)

Ma zeh K'tzos haChoshen. (What is a K'tzos haChoshen)? came the reply.

Rav Zilber was puzzled. He tried another query. Maybe you can explain how you understood the Mishne in (tractate) Uktzin in the last chapter.

Mishne? Uktzin? K'tzos? What are you talking about? Rav Zilber, recalling the difficulties he had trying to teach and study Torah in Russia was mortified. In honest shock, he asked the man. How is this possible? You mean to tell me that you live here in Israel and have the ability to learn Torah. And you don't know what the Ktzos is? You never heard of Mishne Uktzin?

Rav Zilber began to cry.

They say that the customs agent was so moved by Rabbi Zilber's simple sincerity, that he began to study Torah.

Perhaps the Gemara is telling us the simple truth. It was important for an entire nation to see the man to whom fear of heaven was considered the simplest and most rudimentary aspect of life. To Moshe, fear of Heaven was natural. As a leader, he had the imperative to impress the nation, with his sincerity. To us simple Jews, it is important to see someone whose Jewish observance is as simple and graceful as if it is second nature. To us it may be a struggle, but it is imperative that the benchmark of our goals is someone to whom fear comes natural.

In this country, we say anyone can become president. In Moshe's vision, the one he imparts to his people, anyone can fear Hashem.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

The TorahWeb Foundation

Tu B'Av - The Greatest of Our Holidays

"There were no yamim tovim for Israel like Tu b'Av and Yom Kippur, on which the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in borrowed white garments (to avoid embarrassing those who had no fine clothes), and they would dance in the vineyards. Young men were told, 'Do not look for physical attractiveness, but look for the familial origin. Charm is false and beauty is empty; the woman who fears Hashem is praised'" (Taanis 26b).

We have all attended many weddings, and we have heard the berachos recited after the man and woman have become husband and wife by the giving of the ring. The first beracha is shehakol bara lichvodo, that Hashem has created everything for His glory. This is indeed a wonderful concept, but have we ever given any thought to its relevance to the marriage ceremony? This idea would be in place on many other occasions, such as with the performance of any of the mitzvos, yet we do not recite it at other times. Our sages surely had a reason for making it part of the marriage ritual.

The relevance of this beracha to marriage occurred to me at the airport. I was standing on the moving walkway, and an airline employee noticed a friend on the adjacent moving walkway, which was moving in the opposite direction. They could exchange only a few words, because they were soon out of each other's range.

Many couples who consult a marriage counselor are told that their problem is one of "communication," that they do not know how to communicate properly. It occurred to me that the two people on the walkways may have excellent abilities to communicate, but they could not put them to good use because they were heading in opposite directions.

This may also be true of marriage. The man might see the marriage as fulfilling his particular needs, and the woman might view the marriage as fulfilling her particular needs. If this is so, then they are heading in different directions, and their shalom bayis is on a shaky foundation.

Our sages, therefore, instruct the young couple that whereas every person has legitimate needs, the primary purpose of the marriage is to further kevod shamaim, to establish a family that will bring greater glory to Hashem. When this is the foundation of the marriage, individual differences between husband and wife do not affect the basis of the marriage, and they may be reconciled more easily. If individual needs are primary, any frustration of one's needs undermines the very foundation of the marriage.

This requires an orientation which is alien to western civilization, which is the most hedonic in history. As I pointed out in a previous essay, Ramchal begins Mesilas Yesharim with "The Obligations of a Person in the World." Living a Torah life requires more than observance of the halachos. It requires that a person be driven by the will to do what Hashem wants, and this is the all-important area of middos. Preoccupation with "what I want" is very likely to encroach on what others may want, and in the close relationship of marriage may result in conflict. Sometimes a couple may be so perfectly matched that their individual goals are so harmonious that no conflict occurs, but this is indeed a rarity. Most often it is ezer kenegdo, a helpmate that may be opposite in many ways.

Human beings are composite creatures, being comprised of a physical body which is essentially an animal body with all the drives characteristic of an animal, and a neshama which is G-dly in nature. Hashem created man and woman betzelem Elokim, and when both primarily seek to emulate Hashem and fulfill the tzelem Elokim, making the strivings of the neshama primary, the frustrations which are often divisive in marriage are avoided.

The message of Tu b'Av makes it the greatest of all yamim tovim. "Charm is false and beauty is empty; the woman who fears Hashem is praised." When a relationship is based primarily on personal gratification, it is "false and empty," void of the ingredients that can make it an enduring and happy marriage.

Never before in Jewish history has the incidence of failed marriages been so high, with tragic effects on both partners and catastrophic effects on their children. We are derelict in not having a true perspective of what a Torah-true marriage should be like, and the young men and women who are taught Torah in yeshivos and seminaries are woefully unprepared for marriage.

We must teach our sons and daughters that the goal of marriage is shehakol bara lichvodo, and the most effective way of impressing them with this is by modeling our marriages for them. Just think what nachas you will have when your children have healthy, happy marriages, because they are united by a common goal, shehakol bara lichvodo.

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Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger

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V'Ôosiso Hayashar Veahatov

Daunting as it is to model Hashem's traits, we are reminded of this mitzvah several times in Parshas Eikev (10:12,20 see Sefer Hachinuch #432) and further instructed to practically and directly pursue it by spending time with scholars who have mastered pious, principled and virtuous behavior. Indeed, our passionate pursuit of etiquette and propriety is governed by the mandate of imatito dei and kidush Hashem.

This mitzvah with its practical guidance planted firmly in the flow of the final book of the Torah, Sefer Devarim, confirms a suggestion of HaRav Nisan Alpert tz"l, one of our roshei yeshiva who was one of the foremost students of Rav Moshe Feinstein tz"l. In his commentary on chumash, Limudei Nisan, that was brought to publication thru the untiring and skillful efforts of Rav Dovid Weinberger shlit"l, Rav Alpert addresses a question that has long puzzled Torah commentaries: What is the unifying thread of Sefer Devarim? Breishis describes creation of the physical world, the development of civilization and the birth of the Jewish people. Shemos tells of our first exile and its redemption, Vayikra details the service of the mishkan and mikdash, and Bamidbar records the events of the desert generations. Now how do we describe Sefer Devarim?

Ramban understands that in Devarim Moshe Rabbeinu delivers the final necessary preparations for our entry in Israel. Yet he concedes that it is hard to explain how the mitzvos of marriage, divorce and

yibum as well as details of witness collection were left out until now, to be collected in Mishne Torah. This leads Abarbanel to conclude that Devarim is the original FAQ, addressing any confusing or vague notions that the desert generation harbored!

Additionally, Rav Alpert poses whether we should seek a common thread not only in the mitzvos included in the sefer but also between the mitzvos and the musar of the sefer.

In a bold and sweeping opening comment to Sefer Devarim, Rav Alpert suggests that Mishne Torah focuses on <sup>^</sup>Óv<sup>^</sup>Óosiso hayashar veahatov<sup>^</sup>Ó, and the charge to be people of <sup>^</sup>Ógoodness and integrity<sup>^</sup>Ó embraces the whole sefer. We can support this insight as we note that this phrase is not found in an earlier sefer and is repeated numerous times in Devarim. Moreover it has been suggested that Devarim is referred to as <sup>^</sup>Ósefer Hayashar<sup>^</sup>Ó by no one less than Shmuel Hanavi (Shmuel 2, 1:18, Metzudas).

Rav Alpert explains that when Moshe reviewed the Torah, standing on the Plains of Moav, he stressed the goodness and decency inherent in many mitzvos. Moreover he instructed us to note the moral code of that which we had already learned. Thus we would be emotionally and intellectually incorporating the values that our behaviors were pursuing.

Here are a few examples: Whereas in Parshas Mishpatim the Torah defines the appropriate compensation for any damages that we have caused, in Devarim we are taught the care that one has to take in building one<sup>^</sup>Ós home to protect residents and guests from foreseeable danger. In other words, compensation alone should not act as a guide to behavior or as a deterrent. That would not go far enough in inculcating decent behavior. Moshe therefore stressed an imperative to be concerned and protective of others.

Though the prohibition of theft has already been recorded, Devarim teaches the care we extend to the lost objects of others, thus inculcating a lack of desire for that which we did not earn and the sensitivity to the pain caused by material loss. Whereas the obligations of support of one<sup>^</sup>Ós wife are written in Shemos, the goodness that we aspire to is underscored towards the end of Devarim, by the obligation of establishing a committed bond with ones wife.

The broad imperative of <sup>^</sup>Óyoshor vetov<sup>^</sup>Ó and imatito dei come as a firm reminder that the Torah is not a book of dry prescriptions and rote actions that will assure the character that the Torah demands of us. Truth be told, we do often witness the magic of Torah. We often acknowledge that the study of Torah in the young and all the way to the youngest, brings to the fore goodness and consistency that is often latent. Nevertheless the magic of Torah should not delude us to believe that the mechanical observance of the mitzvos is a magical potent or wand that will produce ethical people. They will go a long way to do so but will still need the concentrated focus and relentless visceral pursuit on the broad goals set out for us in Devarim.

It would seem that just as Moshe saw us embarking on setting up an organized community with all the necessary administrative offices and institutions he too was told to fear that our behavior could also become institutional, habitual and rote.

This called for a review of the entire Torah which would emphasize the goals of character that Hashem desires in His children who are charged above all to sanctify His name in the world in which we live. Copyright © 2009 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

YatedUSA Parshas Eikev 17 Av 5769

Halachah Discussion

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Tzedakah: The Preferred Method

When times are hard, it is easy to forget about those who have less than we do and who are struggling more than we are. The Torah, ever mindful of the less fortunate, commands us repeatedly about

our obligation towards the poor and about the community's responsibility to support its members when they fall upon hard times. Nowadays, especially, as the country is in the throes of a recession or worse, it becomes that much more important to strengthen ourselves in the fulfillment of the great mitzvah of Tzedakah. Now is the time to study its laws and learn how to perform the mitzvah optimally and to the best of our ability. Then, please G-d, we will merit the bountiful blessings that He promises to those who fulfill this precious mitzvah.

The Most Preferred Type of Tzedakah:

The best way to give Tzedakah is actually not to give it at all: Rather, hiring someone to work for you, finding him employment, extending him a loan with easy terms, patronizing his store or business (even if it costs a little more<sup>1</sup>), or assisting him in some way to become self-sufficient is clearly the best and most praiseworthy fulfillment of the mitzvah of Tzedakah. The Rambam<sup>2</sup> writes that there is no higher level of giving Tzedakah than to enable a person to become financially independent..

The Preferred Amount of Tzedakah

In order to fulfill the mitzvah of Tzedakah properly, the average person should give ma'aser, ten percent, of his income to charity. A wealthy person should give more than that - up to twenty percent of his income. A poor person, defined as one who needs financial assistance to pay his basic monthly bills, is not required to give ma'aser, but should still give a small sum to those who are even less fortunate than he.<sup>3</sup>

The Best Way to Give Tzedakah:

Some people give Tzedakah grudgingly; it is, after all, difficult to part with one's money. Such an attitude is undesirable, but as long as the recipient is unaware of the donor's negativity, he has fulfilled the mitzvah.<sup>4</sup> Giving Tzedakah with a cheerful countenance, however, accompanied by sympathetic and encouraging words is the superior manner of giving Tzedakah. One who actually demonstrates his displeasure while giving Tzedakah so that it is apparent to the recipient, loses the merit of his mitzvah, even if he gave an extremely large donation.<sup>5</sup>

Preferably, giving Tzedakah should be done with the right hand [even for a left-handed person] and while standing.<sup>6</sup>

The Best Time to give Tzedakah:

Chofetz Chaim writes that one should make sure that not a day passes without performing an act of Chesed or Tzedakah.<sup>7</sup> Still, there are certain times which are especially suited for fulfilling this mitzvah, among them: Before davening Shacharis or Minchah; before traveling<sup>8</sup>; before lighting Shabbos candles<sup>9</sup>; on a Yahrzeit or Yizkor; at a time of misfortune<sup>10</sup>; after experiencing a miracle<sup>11</sup>. Giving Tzedakah during the day is preferable to doing so at night.<sup>12</sup>

The Preferred Order of Giving Tzedakah:

While the donor has the right and privilege to choose to whom to give his Tzedakah, we are nevertheless given a list of priorities to guide us when we don't have enough money for all of the worthy individuals who approach us for Tzedakah.

Relatives take priority over non-relatives, even if the non-relatives are greater scholars, and even if the non-relatives have more compelling needs, in the following order: Parents, grandparents, married children, grandchildren, siblings, uncles, nephews and cousins. Uncles, aunts and cousins on the father's side have priority over those on the mother's side.<sup>13</sup>

Non-relatives should be helped in the following order: Friends, neighbors, residents of the same city, residents of Yerushalayim, residents of Eretz Yisrael. If, however, someone lower on the priority list has a more compelling need than someone higher, the more compelling takes precedence.<sup>14</sup>

Sometimes there are many people from the same category and with a similar level of need who are in need of Tzedakah. There is a list to guide us for that as well: Women get preference over men,

scholars over non-scholars, a Kohen before a Levi, and a Levi before a Yisrael.<sup>15</sup>

#### Limits for Giving Tzedakah

In order to insure that no one will become impoverished by overextending himself when giving Tzedakah, the Sages set a limit on the amount one may donate to others. As a rule, one may not give more than one-fifth of his money to charity.<sup>16</sup> But this applies only to one who is careful with his money — one who throws his money around shows that he is not afraid of losing it; he, therefore, may give to Tzedakah more than a fifth of his income.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the poskim agree that to help in a life-threatening situation, or to perform the mitzvah of pidyon shevuyim, redeeming captives, it is permitted to go beyond the normal limit of a fifth. Some poskim maintain that this holds true for the mitzvah of Talmud Torah — supporting Torah institutions and Torah scholars — as well.<sup>18</sup> Certainly, one who forms a Yissachar and Zevulun partnership is permitted to do so even if it would cost him more than one fifth of his earnings.<sup>19</sup>

#### Footnotes

- 1 Ahavas Chesed 5:12 and Nesiv ha-Chesed 12.
- 2 Hilchos Matanos Anyiim 10:7. See Mishnah Berurah 231:8.
- 3 See The Weekly Halachah Discussion to Parashas Vayeitzei for more information on this subject.
- 4 Shach, Y.D. 249:9.
- 5 Y.D. 249:3, based on Rambam, Hilchos Matanos Anyiim 10:4.
- 6 Derech Emunah, Hilchos Matanos Anyiim 7:1. See Magen Avraham, O.C. 51:7.
- 7 Ahavas Chesed 2, 12.
- 8 Kaf ha-Chaim 110:24.
- 9 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 75:2; Ben Ish Chai 2, Parashas Noach. 10 Y.D. 203:4; 247:4.
- 11 Mishnah Berurah 218:32.
- 12 See Birkei Yosef, O.C. 235:1; Y.D. 247:2; Maharsham 2:47.
- 13 Y.D. 251:3 and Pischei Teshuvah.
- 14 Y.D. 251:4 and Derech Emunah, Hilchos Matnos Anyiim 7:102.
- 15 Y.D. 251:7-9.
- 16 Rama, Y.D. 249:1.
- 17 Ahavas Chesed 2 20:2; Derech Emunah, Hilchos Matanos Anyiim 7:26.
- 18 Ahavas Chesed 2 20:2, quoting Shita Mekubetzes, Kesuvos 50a. See Ohoeli Yeshurun, vol. 2, pg.103, quoting Rav M. Feinstein as disagreeing with this.
- 19 See Igros Moshe, Y.D. 4:37.

YatedUSA Parshas Eikev 17 Av 5769

Halachah Talk

by Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff

Moving and Removing Mezuzos

#### CAN I TAKE IT WITH ME?

Question #1: We are moving residences, and I understand that I must leave the mezuzos in my old home. However, they are beautiful, mehudar mezuzos that I would like to use in my new dwelling. Is there any way that I can take these mezuzos with me?

Question #2: My landlord is not Jewish, but this is a neighborhood where only frum Jews are moving in. Do I remove my mezuzos when I leave?

Question #3: As I was preparing this article, someone called me with the following actual shailah:

We will be spending a few days with my ailing father who lives in Israel in an assisted living facility. We can stay in an apartment in his building, but there are no mezuzos on the doors. I know that in Israel one must place a mezuzah on one's hotel room even if one

stays only overnight. I can borrow mezuzos for our stay; however, may I remove them when we depart?

Answer: The obligation of placing mezuzos is incumbent on the person living in the house; nevertheless, when vacating the premises, one is usually required to leave the mezuzos in place. If one wants money for the mezuzos that are being left behind, the new resident is required to pay for them (Rama, Yoreh Deah 291:2). In explaining these laws, the Gemara teaches:

When a Jew rents a house to a fellow Jew, the tenant is responsible to affix the mezuzos. However, when the tenant vacates, he may not remove them. On the other hand, a Jew who rents a residence from a gentile removes the mezuzos when he leaves (Bava Metzia 102a).

The Gemara subsequently describes a horrible calamity that befell someone who removed his mezuzos when he was prohibited from doing so. (If you are anxious to know what happened, I refer you to the Gemara.) Thus, removing mezuzos involves not only a halachic violation but also a significant safety concern (Tzavaas Rabbi Yehudah HaChasid, addendum #7).

#### BUT WHY NOT?

It is difficult to understand why halachah requires one to leave the mezuzah behind: When a resident vacates a dwelling, he has no obligation to guarantee that mezuzos remain on its doorways. So why can't he take his mezuzos with him?

There are actually two reasons, each requiring its own introduction of why one may not remove the mezuzos.

#### APPROACH #1: DISDAIN OF MITZVOS – BIZUY MITZVAH

The first approach derives from the concept of bizuy mitzvah, treating a mitzvah object inappropriately: Removing the mezuzah is considered improper abandonment of a mitzvah object.

But if this is so, shouldn't it apply to other mitzvos as well? For example, may I remove tzitzis from a garment without due cause?

#### REMOVING TZITZIS FROM A GARMENT

The Gemara debates whether one may remove the tzitzis of one garment to tie them onto another four-cornered garment. The Amora Rav prohibited moving tzitzis from one garment to another, contending that this is bizuy mitzvah. His contemporary, Shmuel, permitted moving the tzitzis from one garment to another since they are still utilized for a mitzvah (Shabbos 22a). Both Rav and Shmuel prohibit removing the tzitzis when he will not use them on another garment as an act of bizuy mitzvah (Sheiltos, Shlach; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 15:1). That is, removing tzitzis from a garment without placing them onto another garment is considered disrespectful. We follow Shmuel's ruling, and therefore one may remove tzitzis from one garment to place them on another. One may also replace tzitzis with more mehudar ones even if he will not use the removed tzitzis, since upgrading to a higher standard demonstrates increased respect for the mitzvah, the exact opposite of bizuy mitzvah (Taz, Orach Chaim 15:2).

#### REMOVING THE MEZUZAH

Just as Shmuel ruled that one may remove tzitzis from one garment to place them on another, but one may not remove them if one is not planning to place them now onto another garment, we can now appreciate why one may not remove a mezuzah upon vacating a residence, since this demonstrates disrespect for the mezuzah that is being forcibly retired from its role (Sheiltos, Parshas Shlach; Tosafos, Shabbos 22a, s.v. Rav; Ritva, Bava Metzia 102a). (It would seem that one can derive from this that it is prohibited to forcibly retire someone from a position, or that one should strongly reconsider laying off employees, but we will leave this topic for a different time.) We will soon discuss whether the prohibition applies even when one intends to use the mezuzah elsewhere.

By the way, the authorities dispute whether the new tenant, entering a house with mezuzos already on the door, recites a bracha, Baruch Atta Hashem Elokeinu Melech haolam asher kidshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu ladur babayis sheyesh bo mezuzah (Magen

Avrohom 19:1; Shu"t Rabbi Akiva Eiger, end of #9). The reason why this bracha sounds so unfamiliar is that in this case, the blessing refers not to placement of a mezuzah on the doorpost, but to entering a new dwelling where the mezuzah is already present. In practice, most late authorities follow the ruling of the Chida that one does not recite a bracha on a mitzvah unless one performs a mitzvah actively, but not when one fulfills a mitzvah in a passive way (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chaim 19:2).

#### MOVING THE MEZUZAH FROM ONE HOUSE TO ANOTHER

At this point, we should note an important factor. If the only reason that one may not remove the mezuzah is due to bizuy mitzvah, one would be allowed to remove a mezuzah from the "old" building to install it in one's new residence. Those authorities who prohibit removing the mezuzah only because of bizuy mitzvah explain that this is indeed the case (Sheiltos, Shlach; Ritva, Bava Metzia 102a).

#### APPROACH #2: DIVINE PROTECTION

Most authorities explain that there is an additional reason, unique to mezuzah, why one must leave the mezuzah behind even if one wants to use it elsewhere. Although the primary reason a Jew observes any mitzvah is to fulfill Hashem's commandment, the mitzvah of mezuzah has an additional benefit in that it protects our house and our families from mishap. Removing the mezuzah eliminates this Divine shield, exposing one to tragedy and misfortune (Tosafos, Bava Metzia 101b s.v. lo; Shitah Mekubetzes, Menachos 41b, note 24; Tosafos, Shabbos 22a s.v. Rav in his second answer). Because of this reason, there is a widespread practice to check one's mezuzos if, G-d forbid, one is experiencing difficulties in one's home, since these problems might be indicative that the mezuzos are not providing the adequate protection that they should.

This approach understands that even though someone vacating a house is no longer responsible that there be mezuzos, removing them reduces the Divine protection on the domicile for the next Jewish person moving in. We now comprehend why removing the mezuzah may expose someone to danger, as the Gemara records.

If the property belongs to a gentile, however, one may, and according to many authorities must, remove the mezuzah, since removing the mezuzah is not depriving it from fulfilling a mitzvah and the protection provided is only for Jews. Similarly, one may remove tzitzis from a garment that will no longer be used to fulfill a mitzvah (Rama, Orach Chaim 15:1 and Magen Avrohom ad loc.).

#### HOW DO WE RULE?

The accepted halachic practice recognizes both concerns, forbidding one from removing the mezuzah to a new location. However, in an extenuating circumstance where someone is moving to a new residence and has no access to a kosher mezuzah, one may rely on the first opinion and take the mezuzah with him (Birkei Yosef, Yoreh Deah 291:2).

#### YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH YOU

Despite our conclusion that one should generally not remove the mezuzos when vacating a house, there are instances when one is required. As I mentioned above, the Gemara notes that one who rents from a gentile should remove the mezuzos upon leaving (Bava Metzia 102a). The authorities dispute whether this is simply permission to remove the mezuzah, or whether one is required to do so. Rav Yaakov Emden (Shailas Yaavetz 2:121) rules that one must remove the mezuzah out of concern that the gentile will treat it inappropriately, whereas the Aruch HaShulchan (Yoreh Deah 291:3) implies that it is permitted, but not actually required, to remove the mezuzah under such circumstances.

#### CHANGING OWNERSHIP

What is the halachah if a Jew vacates a residence that he was renting from a gentile, but a different Jew is moving in? May/should the first Jew remove the mezuzah when he leaves since the owner of the building is non-Jewish, or must he leave the mezuzah for the new Jewish resident?

Rav Yaakov Emden discusses a similar case: A Jew was renting a house from a gentile who then sold the house to a different Jew. The tenant will be moving out before the change of ownership takes effect. Should he remove the mezuzah before he leaves since the house is still owned by a gentile, or is this forbidden since a Jew will soon be acquiring the house and moving in? On the one hand, we do not want to leave the house mezuzah-less, yet there is a concern that the gentile owner may deface or steal the mezuzah before the Jew moves in.

Rav Emden rules that the tenant should remove the mezuzah before he vacates out of concern that the gentile may treat the mezuzah inappropriately. He also quotes the Maharil who requires removing the mezuzah because one may not give a mezuzah to a gentile. However, if the gentile's sales contract with the purchasing Jew specifies that the mezuzah is included, the tenant should leave the mezuzah (Shailas Yaavetz 2:121).

#### GENTILE LANDLORD, JEWISH TENANT

Rav Emden's case is when the gentile has sold the property to a new Jewish owner. What is the halachah if the property remains the gentile's, but he usually rents to Jews? Should one leave the mezuzah for the next Jewish occupant or not?

Beis Lechem Yehudah (Yoreh Deah 291:1) rules that one should remove the mezuzos, even if the gentile landlord usually rents to Jews, as long as the next Jewish tenant is not moving in immediately.

We can now answer one of our opening questions: My landlord is not Jewish, but this is a neighborhood where only from Jews are moving in. Do I remove my mezuzos when I leave?

This depends. If a new tenant is moving in immediately, one should leave the mezuzos for him. However, if there will be a time lag before he moves in, one should remove the mezuzos -- out of concern that in the interim they may be abused.

There are other instances when one is required to remove the mezuzah and, accordingly, no calamity will result from doing so. For example, if there is concern that someone may damage or deface a mezuzah that is left behind, one must remove the mezuzah. For example, if the residence will be painted, the mezuzos must be removed to prevent their becoming invalidated. Even if the landlord is Jewish, and the new tenant is also Jewish, if the apartment will be painted between residents, the vacating tenant should remove the mezuzah to save it from damage, which is certainly bizuy mitzvah, and no harm will befall him for doing so. Once he has removed the mezuzah for a legitimate reason, he is not required to return it to its place. The new tenant is now responsible to affix a new mezuzah.

Similarly, if there is concern that the mezuzah will be stolen or otherwise abused, one should remove it.

#### NEW RESIDENT HAS HIS OWN MEZUZOS

As I mentioned earlier, although the first resident is required to leave his mezuzos behind, he is technically permitted to charge the new tenant for them. What is the halachah if the new tenant wants to install his own mezuzos rather than purchase or receive gratis those of the previous tenant? Does this present any halachic problem and is there any basis for a safety concern in this instance? The contemporary authorities assume that if the new resident wants to install his/her own mezuzos, he may remove the "old" mezuzos owned by the previous tenant and put up his own. In this instance, one is not leaving the house unprotected since new mezuzos are placed immediately. Based on this ruling, many have the practice of having the new tenant, or his agent, remove the old mezuzos and install the new ones, since his intent is to enhance the mitzvah with mezuzos owned by the new dweller.

One should be careful to remove the "old" mezuzah before installing the new one, since having two mezuzos on one's door violates the prohibition of adding to the Torah's mitzvos, bal tosif (Pischei Teshuvah 291:2). Just as one may not add a fifth parsha to one's tefillin when the Torah requires four, and just as a kohein may not

add a fourth bracha to the three brachos of duchening, so one may not add a second mezuzah to the doorpost when the Torah requires only one. For the same reason, one who moves to a house that has an old, painted-over mezuzah on the door, must remove that mezuzah, even if it is probably invalid, and not just affix a kosher mezuzah alongside it.

#### MEZUZAH SWITCH

At this point, we can now address our first question:

"We are moving residences, and I understand that I must leave the mezuzos behind. But they are beautiful, mehudar mezuzos that I would like to use in my new dwelling. Is there any way that I can move these mezuzos to my future home?"

The Answer: One may remove the nice mezuzos one has on his door and replace them with kosher, non-mehudar mezuzos. Since one is leaving the house with a kosher mezuzah, this suffices to protect the house (Daas Kedoshim, Yoreh Deah 291:1).

At this point, we can now deal with our second question, concerning someone using a house in Eretz Yisroel who borrowed a mezuzah. It is indeed true that Chazal required someone to place a mezuzah on his or her doorpost in Israel even if one stays only overnight. However, may they remove the mezuzah when they vacate?

In this case there is an interesting complication, since they borrowed a mezuzah and must return it. On the other hand, assuming that the landlord and/or future residents are/will be Jewish, they cannot leave the house without a mezuzah. They can, of course, resolve the problem by purchasing mezuzos that they put up as replacement for the borrowed ones, but this is a solution that they wanted to avoid.

The problem was resolved by contacting the management of the building, which was interested in having a mezuzah on the door of the residence and made appropriate arrangements.

#### MEZUZAH REWARDS

Aside from fulfilling a mitzvah commanded by Hashem, the mitzvah of mezuzah serves to remind us constantly of His presence, every time we enter and exit our houses. In addition, the Gemara teaches that someone who is meticulous in his observance of the laws of mezuzah will merit acquiring a nice home (Shabbos 23b). We thus see that care in observing this mitzvah not only protects one's family against any calamity, but also rewards one with a beautiful domicile. May we all be zocheh to always be careful in our observance of the laws of mezuzah and the other mitzvos, and reap all the rewards, both material and spiritual, for doing so!

Ohr Somayach :: TalmuDigest :: Bava Metzia 107 - 113

For the week ending 8 August 2009 / 17 Av 5769

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

#### Risking For a Livelihood

In its command to pay a worker on time the Torah points out that the worker is a poor man who risks his life for the employer. Our gemara describes the nature of this risk as climbing up to the top of a high tree to pick olives or dates and facing the danger of falling to his death.

This situation is certainly not a very high risk one for then it would be forbidden to endanger one's life. But even such a level of risk is permitted only for the sake of earning a livelihood.

Such is the position taken by the great halachic authority Rabbi Yechezkel Landau in his response to a question put to him whether it is permitted for a Jew to hunt wild animals as a sport. While the Torah did not forbid a Jew to take a moderate risk for the purpose of earning a livelihood – such as climbing a high tree or traveling across seas or deserts – it did not permit him to hunt for sport and face the risk of being killed by the animals he is hunting. Should the hunting be done for the purpose of livelihood, such as is done by people trading in animal skins and furs, it is permissible for the

same reason that the Torah permitted the worker to risk falling from the tree.

What the Sages Say

"All Jews are princes."

•Rabbi Shimon - Bava Metzia 113b

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HaRav Moshe Dov Chait zt"l

By Yechezkel Sever

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

On the night of Tisha B'Av a large levaya was held for HaRav Moshe Dov Chait zt"l, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim in Jerusalem, a talmid muvhok of HaRav Dovid Leibowitz zt"l and who was a trusted agent of HaRav Aharon Kotler and HaRav Moshe Feinstein zt"l.

Moshe Dov Chait was born in 5681 (1921) in Philadelphia to Torah-true parents. In 5698 (1938) he began studying at Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim under HaRav Leibowitz, a talmid of the Alter of Slobodka zt"l. For three years he listened to every word his rebbe spoke and carefully observed his approach to learning. While at the yeshiva he also formed a bond with HaRav Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg, who was then serving as mashgiach of the yeshiva, a relationship he maintained throughout his lifetime.

In 5705 (1945) he married Esther Raizel Mainz tlct"a, a granddaughter of HaRav Zachariyoh Dershowitz, who set up the first shteibel in Williamsburg and battled to uphold Shabbos. As part of his campaign he started a laboratory to employ those who had been fired for keeping Shabbos.

After getting married, R' Chait joined the very first kollel to be set up in the US. He soon received semichoh and was appointed rov in Crown Heights, a post he held while continuing his kollel studies. During this period, on Shabbos he had to walk 90 minutes from his home in Williamsburg to the shul in Crown Heights.

He waged dedicated campaigns to uphold Yiddishkeit, at the same time doing outreach work for baalei batim and had an impact on them for years to come. Many of the children and grandchildren of these baalei batim have maintained contact with him to this day.

He was a member of the Agudas HaRabbonim under HaRav Kotler and HaRav Feinstein, who often sent him to discreetly carry out important tasks. He was also appointed to oversee various educational projects he was involved in. HaRav Dovid Feinstein shlita recalled that his father placed great trust in HaRav Chait.

HaRav Chait served as a ram at Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim, and in 5728 (1968) he moved to Eretz Yisroel, fulfilling a lifelong dream. He set up the yeshiva in Sanhedria, where he gave powerful talks based on the Slobodka method. He taught Torah in Eretz Yisroel for over 40 years.

At the levaya in Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim, hespeidim were delivered by his sons, HaRav Boruch and HaRav Dovid, his son-in-law, HaRav M. Dov Harris, who serves as a rosh yeshiva in Afula, HaRav Avrohom Kenarek, a talmid of HaRav Boruch Ber Leibowitz and one of the roshei yeshiva at Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim in Jerusalem.

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*[Note to Readers: The events about to be described took place 80 years ago on Shabbat, Parashat Ekev, 5689 [1929] – I hope that readers of Likutei Torah will permit me to share excerpts of this letter written by my great-grandfather, as it is relevant to our people's history on this Shabbat.--- Saadia Reuven Greenberg, Compiler*

*-----Additional information including extensive historical notes developed by my late father, Meyer Greenberg, z"l, and a facsimile*

MEGILLAT HEBRON (excerpts)

With the help of God, Monday, Torah portion Shoftim V'shotrim, 5689 [September 2, 1929], Tel Aviv, may it be built up and firmly established, speedily in our days, Amen. My dear children, may you live and be well. Even before I begin writing, my hand is already shaking, my head swims, and every limb is trembling. I am unable to get control of myself, because the cries are still ringing in my ears. It is one week today since we came back from the bitter tragedy... Although it seems that I am writing this letter with ink, you should know that it is not ink, but tears.

Now, let me get to the point. I don't really know where to start and where to finish, because my blood is still churning inside me. But I will begin my *Megillah* of Hebron. Children, as you already know from my earlier letter, Mama, may she live and be well, had been feeling very weak...she couldn't bear the terribly hot weather... So we left Tel Aviv and went to the country--to Hebron. ...From the very beginning, things did not go well...On Friday, the 23rd, we heard that things had gotten worse in Jerusalem... Friday afternoon the situation worsened. We heard that on the street Arabs had already beaten several Jews with clubs. Next we heard that all the Jewish stores had closed. The atmosphere was explosive. Everybody was afraid to go out into the street, and we locked ourselves in our rooms. Things looked really bad. What should we do? "No one could go out, and no one could come in "[Joshua 6.1]; everybody was fearful. By now the local Jews too were saying that the situation was serious.

Suddenly, just one hour before candle lighting, pandemonium broke loose. Window panes were smashed on all sides. In our building, they broke every window and began throwing large stones inside. We hid ourselves. They were breaking windows in all the Jewish homes. Now we were in deathly fear. As we were blessing the Shabbes candles, we heard that in the Yeshiva one young man had been killed. It was bitter, the beginning of a slaughter.

... On Shabbes morning, we saw that the situation was getting worse. Cars kept racing back and forth through the streets. They were filled with Arabs armed with long iron bars, long knives, and axes. The Arabs kept screaming that they were going to Jerusalem to slaughter all the Jews. Soon many Jews gathered in our house. We held a meeting and talked over the situation, but couldn't think of anything we could do to protect ourselves, since none of us had any weapons. Many of the people remained in our house, because by then it was too dangerous to try to go home.

Now let me tell you about the massacre. Right after eight o'clock in the morning we heard screams. Arabs had begun breaking into Jewish homes. The screams pierced the heart of the heavens. We didn't know what to do. Our house had two floors. We were downstairs and a doctor lived on the second floor. We figured that we would be safe in the doctor's apartment, but how could we get up there? The stairs were on the outside of the building, but it wasn't safe to go out. So we chopped through the ceiling and that way we climbed up to the doctor's house. Well, after being there only a little while, we realized that we were still in danger because by that time the Arabs had almost reached our house. They were going from door to door, slaughtering everyone who was inside. The screams and the moans were terrible. People were crying Help! Help! But what could we do? There were thirty-three of us. Soon, soon, all of us would be lost.

Just then, God, blessed be He, in His great mercy, sent us an Arab who lived in back of our house. He insisted that we come down from the doctor's apartment and enter his house through the back door. He took us to his cellar, a large room without windows to the outside. We all went in, while he, together with several Arab

women, stood outside near the door. As we lay there on the floor, we heard the screams as Arabs were slaughtering Jews. It was unbearable. As for us, we felt that the danger was so great that we had no chance of coming out alive. Each one of us said his vidui [his confession in anticipation of death]. At any moment we could be slaughtered, for double-edged swords were already at our throats. We had not even the slightest hope of remaining alive. We just begged that it should already be done and over.

Five times the Arabs stormed our house with axes, and all the while those wild murderers kept screaming at the Arabs who were standing guard to hand over the Jews. They, in turn, shouted back that they had not hidden any Jews and knew nothing. They begged the attackers not to destroy their homes... We heard everything. In addition, the little children in our group kept crying. We were in deadly fear that the murderers outside would hear them.

As for me, I was already 99 percent in the next world. All the time that we were in the Arab's house, I lay there on the floor in terrible pain [from a heart attack]. It just happened that there were two doctors in the house. They sat near me and they saved my life... Well, I cannot continue describing the destruction any longer. It took several hours--to us it seemed like years--until all became quiet outside. We still lay there, waiting for the Angel of Death to finish with us as quickly as possible.

But God heard our prayers. Suddenly, the door opened, and the police walked in. They had been told that we were hidden there. They demanded that we go along with them, and they would take us to a safe place... When we reached the police station, there was acted out a real-life dance of the devils, for the police had brought together those who were still alive, the surviving remnant. During the earlier confusion, naturally, no one could have known what was happening to anyone else, but there in the police station, everyone first discovered whom he had lost. As people told each other about their misfortunes and how many casualties they had suffered, there burst out a terrible cry, everyone shrieking and crying at the same time. It was unbearable. Blessed God, give us strength! It was beyond human endurance. Three women went out of their minds right there. It is very tragic, but everything is from God.

Now I will tell you the total number of people who were slaughtered in Hebron. As of today, there are 63 holy martyrs... Of the wounded, 49 are in serious condition, and 17 slightly wounded. Who knows how many more fatalities there will be? The Yeshiva suffered 23 killed and 17 wounded. Eight of the dead and 14 of the wounded from the Yeshiva are American boys. Gevald! Twenty-three living Torah scrolls were burned! May the heavens open and avenge us. All the houses of study with their Torah scrolls and holy books were burned; everything in them was destroyed. All the homes were plundered; not even a straw was left!...

...Just one thing, my dear children, may you live and be well, I ask of you that you put away this letter for the generations. Each year, at an agreed-upon day, you should all meet and give thanks and praise to God, blessed be He, who saved your parents from this great catastrophe, and each one of you should make a generous contribution to charity. The miracle took place on Shabbes, Torah portion Ekev, the 18th day of the month of Av, 5689 [August 24, 1929], in Hebron.

Your father, who wishes you the best, writing to you through tears.

Aharon [Aharon Reuven Bernzweig]