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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON **EIKEV** - 5772

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### **The Morality of Love**

#### **Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Something implicit in the Torah from the very beginning becomes explicit in the book of Devarim. God is the God of love. More than we love Him, He loves us. Here, for instance, is the beginning of this week's parsha: If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep his covenant of love [et ha-brit ve-et ha-chessed] with you, as he swore to your ancestors. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. (Deut 7: 12-13)

Again in the parsha we read: To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the Lord set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. (Deut. 10: 14-15)

And here is a verse from last week's: Because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength. (Deut. 4: 37)

The book of Deuteronomy is saturated with the language of love. The root a-h-v appears in Shemot twice, in Vayikra twice (both in Lev. 19), in Badmibar not at all, but in Sefer Devarim 23 times. Devarim is a book about societal beatitude and the transformative power of love.

Nothing could be more misleading and invidious than the Christian contrast between Christianity as a religion of love and forgiveness and Judaism as a religion of law and retribution. As I pointed out in Covenant and Conversation to Vayigash, forgiveness is born (as David Konstan notes in Before Forgiveness) in Judaism. Interpersonal forgiveness begins when Joseph forgives his brothers for selling him into slavery. Divine forgiveness starts with the institution of Yom Kippur as the supreme day of Divine pardon following the sin of the Golden Calf.

Similarly with love: when the New Testament speaks of love it does so by direct quotation from Leviticus ("You shall love your neighbour as yourself") and Deuteronomy ("You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your might"). As philosopher Simon May puts it in his splendid book, *Love: A History*: "The widespread belief that the Hebrew Bible is all about vengeance and 'an eye for an eye,' while the Gospels supposedly invent love as an unconditional and universal value, must therefore count as one of the most extraordinary misunderstandings in all of Western history. For the Hebrew Bible is the source not just of the two love commandments but of a larger moral vision inspired by wonder for love's power." [1] His judgment is unequivocal: "If love in the Western world has a founding text, that text is Hebrew." [2]

More than this: in *Ethical Life: The Past and Present of Ethical Cultures*, philosopher Harry Redner distinguishes four basic visions of the ethical life in the history of civilizations. [3] One he calls civic ethics, the ethics of ancient Greece and Rome. Second is the ethic of duty, which he identifies with Confucianism, Krishnaism and late Stoicism. Third is the ethic of honour, a distinctive combination of courtly and military decorum to be found among Persians, Arabs and Turks as well as in medieval Christianity (the 'chivalrous knight') and Islam.

The fourth, which he calls simply morality, he traces to Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He defines it simply as 'the ethic of love,' and represents what made the West morally unique: "The biblical 'love of one's neighbour' is a very special form of love, a unique development of the Judaic religion and unlike any to be encountered outside it. It is a supremely altruistic love, for to love one's neighbour as oneself means always to put oneself in his place and to act on his behalf as one would naturally and selfishly act on one's own." [4] To be sure, Buddhism also makes space for the idea of love, though it is differently inflected, more impersonal and unrelated to a relationship with God.

What is radical about this idea is that, first, the Torah insists, against virtually the whole of the ancient world, that the elements that constitute reality are neither hostile nor indifferent to humankind. We are here because Someone wanted us to be, One who cares about us, watches over us and seeks our wellbeing.

Second, the love with which God created the universe is not just divine. It is to serve as the model for us in our humanity. We are bidden to love the neighbour and the stranger, to engage in acts of kindness and compassion, and to build a society based on love. Here is how our parsha puts it: For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty and awesome God who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. So you must love the stranger, for you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deut. 10: 18-19) In short: God created the world in love and forgiveness and asks us to love and forgive others. I believe that to be the most profound moral idea in human history.

There is however an obvious question. Why is it that love, which plays so great a part in the book of Deuteronomy, is so much less in evidence

in the earlier books of Shemot, Vayikra (with the exception of Lev. 19) and Bamidbar?

The best way of answering that question is to ask another. Why is it that forgiveness plays no part – at least on the surface of the narrative – in the book of Bereishit?[5] God does not forgive Adam and Eve or Cain (though he mitigates their punishment). Forgiveness does not figure in the stories of the Flood, the Tower of Babel or the destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain (Abraham's plea is that the cities be spared if they contain fifty or ten righteous people; this is not a plea for forgiveness). Divine forgiveness makes its first appearance in the book of Exodus after Moses' successful plea in the wake of golden calf, and is then institutionalised in the form of Yom Kippur (Lev. 16), but not before. Why so?

The simple, radical, answer is: God does not forgive human beings until human beings learn to forgive one another. Genesis ends with Joseph forgiving his brothers. Only thereafter does God forgive human beings.

Turning to love: Genesis contains many references to it. Abraham loves Isaac. Isaac loves Esau. Rebecca loves Jacob. Jacob loves Rachel. He also loves Joseph. There is interpersonal love in plentiful supply. But almost all the loves of Genesis turn out to be divisive. They lead to tension between Jacob and Esau, between Rachel and Leah, and between Joseph and his brothers. Implicit in Genesis is a profound observation missed by most moralists and theologians. Love in and of itself – real love, personal and passionate, the kind of love that suffuses much of the prophetic literature as well as Shir Ha-Shirim, the greatest love song in Tanakh, as opposed to the detached, generalised love called agape which we associate with ancient Greece – is not sufficient as a basis for society. It can divide as well as unite.

Hence it does not figure as a major motif until we reach the integrated social-moral-political vision of Deuteronomy which combines love and justice. Tzedek, justice, turns out to be another key word of Deuteronomy, appearing 18 times. It appears only four times in Shemot, not at all in Bamidbar, and in Vayikra only in chapter 19, the only chapter that also contains the word 'love.' In other words, in Judaism love and justice go hand in hand. Again this is noted by Simon May: [W]hat we must note here, for it is fundamental to the history of Western love, is the remarkable and radical justice that underlies the love commandment of Leviticus. Not a cold justice in which due deserts are mechanically handed out, but the justice that brings the other, as an individual with needs and interests, into a relationship of respect. All our neighbours are to be recognised as equal to ourselves before the law of love. Justice and love therefore become inseparable.[6]

Love without justice leads to rivalry, and eventually to hate. Justice without love is devoid of the humanizing forces of compassion and mercy. We need both. This unique ethical vision – the love of God for humans and of humans for God, translated into an ethic of love toward both neighbour and stranger – is the foundation of Western civilization and its abiding glory.

It is born here in the book of Deuteronomy, the book of law-as-love and love-as-law.

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit [www.chiefrabbi.org](http://www.chiefrabbi.org).

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#### **Rabbi Frand on Parshas Eikev**

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The Supernatural Land

"A Land that Hashem, your God, seeks out; the eyes of Hashem, your God, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year's end" (11:12)

Not only were they punished for their report, but we continue to suffer as a result of it until today. The Tishah B'Av that we observe is part of the consequence of the Jews believing that report and crying all that night in the Wilderness.

But what, exactly, did the Meraglim do wrong? They honestly believed that it would be impossible to conquer the land. What should they have said?

The Baal HaAkeidah answers through an analogy.

A person sends his friend to the tailor's shop to check on a garment that is for sale. His mission is to investigate the material, the craftsmanship, dimensions, and price.

The messenger does as he was told, checking all the facts and figures. But when he returns, not only does he share the facts with his friend, he adds, "It's not the right color for you, and it's too expensive!"

This messenger has overstepped his mandate. He was supposed to deliver the raw facts, and instead he shared his opinion, which no one asked for. The buyer is the one who has to decide whether the color suits him and whether he can afford the garment.

The Baal HaAkeidah suggests that the Meraglim's sin was to add editorial observations to the facts. They should just have described the situation, and left it to Moshe to interpret it for the people. They should not have proclaimed that there was no way for the Jews to conquer the land.

The Shelah rejects the approach of the Akeidah. After all, he says, Moshe did ask them to share information regarding the strength of people living in Canaan at that point, which requires subjective judgment. One cannot expect a messenger to deliver only the facts on a matter that is so subjective without adding an editorial comment.

The Shelah suggests that Moshe was interested in hearing the Meraglim's opinion, but not one based solely on military projections, but on Torah hashkafah (philosophy) as well. Moshe knew that they would find fortified cities inhabited by powerful giants. But the appropriate response to such findings should have been, "Yes, they are strong, and yes, their cities are protected, and through natural means, we don't stand a chance. But Hashem has told us that we should go into the land, so we will certainly defeat them."

Their mission was to present the facts, along with a pep talk based on deep faith in Hashem. They were supposed to remind the people that just as Hashem had saved them miraculously at the Yam Suf, His Presence would negate the military advantage of the inhabitants of Canaan. The Meraglim's mistake was to present a dispassionate, secular analysis of the military situation without taking Torah hashkafah into account.

Rav Moshe Shapiro asks how the Shelah could suggest an approach that seems to run counter to the principle that one is not supposed to place himself into a situation of temptation. Not everyone is able to accept a report that the situation seems so bleak just because it comes along with a pep talk. If they were to say, "We can't win b'derech hateva (through natural means), but don't worry — Hashem will help," many people would question the wisdom of entering a battle with such weak odds. Why put the people into such a nisayon?

Rav Moshe Shapiro answers that although in all other areas of life, we should avoid nisyonos as much as possible, when it came to acquiring Eretz Yisrael, there was a need to spell out a precondition: There is no way to live in Eretz Yisrael under natural circumstances. Without Hashem's Presence, Eretz Yisrael is not inhabitable.

This lesson is spelled out clearly in Parashas Eike v, in which Moshe informs Klal Yisrael that Eretz Yisrael is, "A Land that Hashem, your God, seeks out; the eyes of Hashem, your God, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year's end" (11:12).

Eretz Yisrael has a supernatural existence.

Moshe knew that if the Jews did not enter the Land with that attitude, they wouldn't last there. Rather than try to sweep this unique quality under the rug, Moshe sent the Meraglim to find out for themselves just how unnatural the battle to conquer the Land would have to be. Unfortunately, they didn't complete their task properly, but delivered an analysis, not just the raw facts that they were meant to deliver.

Over the centuries, this message was delivered again and again to the Jewish people.

As Eretz Yisrael was being destroyed by Nevuchadnezzar and his army, Hashem instructed Yirmiyahu HaNavi (32:9-10) to purchase land and save the deed in a safe place.

Who buys real estate when values are plummeting, and in a few short years there would be no Jews left in the Land?

It depends which land. That logic would hold true for all other countries in the world. When housing prices go down throughout the "natural" world, there is no reason to purchase real estate until the market bottoms out.

But Eretz Yisrael is different. Since Hashem promises the Land to us, we will ultimately have it back. Even at the bleakest moments, it's worth investing in Eretz Yisrael.

This lesson is one that we saw repeatedly in the last 100 years. Whatever one's position is on secular Zionism, the fact that the country is inhabited by Jews again after thousands of years of exile is nothing short of miraculous.

To share just one example, when the "desert fox," Erwin Rommel ym"sh was already deep into Africa and advancing steadily with his German Afrika Corp toward Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, the Ponovezher Rav, borrowed some money to buy a parcel of land in Bnei Brak.

People thought he had lost his mind. What would be the point of buying land now, when it would fall shortly to the Germans, who would undoubtedly proceed to exterminate all of the Jews in Eretz Yisrael as they did in Europe? If the British running the country under the UN mandate were already burning all their classified documents, who in their right mind would buy land?

The Ponovezher Rav explained that not every prophecy was recorded in Navi. Only those that had some message for the future were recorded. In that case, he said, the prophecy in which Hashem told Yirmiyahu to buy land when the destruction of the country is imminent holds true throughout the generations.

As we all know, the Ponovezher was proven correct. In an absolutely shocking campaign, British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery defeated Rommel at El Alamein, a town on Egypt's northern coastline, several hundred kilometers short of Eretz Yisrael.

This is not the way it works in America or in France or in Brazil.

No other country has the promise of being "A Land that Hashem, your God, seeks out; the eyes of Hashem, your God, are always upon it" (11:12).

But Eretz Yisrael has always been, and will always be, a supernatural country.

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**Approach to Formative Jewish Education**

**Rabbi Michael Rosensweig**

Parshat Ekev: An Approach to Formative Jewish Education

The parshah of ve-hayah im shama, the second component of keriyat shema (see mishneh Berachot 13a ; Rambam, Hilchot Keriat Shema 1:2)(Devarim 11:19), provides a vital source for the mitzvah of chinuch banim (Jewish education): "velimadetam otam et beneckhem le-daber bam - and you should teach them, your children, to speak of them". One would have expected a more direct and polished formulation of the crucial obligation to teach Torah to the next generation. Evidently, the Torah intends to transmit important insights on chinuch by means of this challenging, seemingly complex construction. Inasmuch as this verse focuses on this wide ranging Torah dialogue between the generations, beginning from the initiation of Jewish education at the most impressionable age, its examination affords an opportunity to briefly revisit and reinforce three important perspectives that continue to be relevant to the life-long pursuit of Torah education, as well.

Although the Ramban does not explicate the difficulty of this construction, he clearly addresses this challenging formulation in his commentary. He posits that the Torah's complex formulation-"and you should teach...that they should speak"- conveys that Torah should be taught in a manner that inspires an infectious enthusiasm that stimulates incessant discussion of Torah themes and topics. Moreover, the Ramban outlines the methodology that accomplishes this ambitious educational goal: the promotion of clear understanding that entails the rationale underlying the ideas ("ve-yodium...ve-yavinu otam ve-taameihem"). The Ramban's perspective excludes superficial knowledge and rote learning. It perceives Torah teaching as a significant responsibility that implicitly demands thoughtful and rigorous preparation.

The Sifrei (also cited in Rashi) interprets this pasuk as referring to a dual charge at the very initiation of the chinuch of a young child: 1."medaber (rashi-"meisiah") imo be-lashon ha-kodesh" (conversing in Hebrew); 2. "u-melamdo Torah" (and teaching the content of the Torah). [The continuation of the Sifrei passage demonstrates that these are two distinct elements, although this is not evident in Rashi's citation.] Presumably, the Sifrei believes these two components correspond to the dual "ve-limadetam" and "vedibarta bam" in the pasuk. The requirement of Hebrew discourse in this context is particularly intriguing. [See, the view of the Rabad cited in Shitah Mekubezet, Berachot 13a. He interprets that Rebbe's ruling that "kol ha-Torah be-lashon ha-kodesh neemrah" refers to Torah study! See, also, the Torah Temimah's comments on this Sifrei.]

The requirement of lashon ha-kodesh perhaps underscores the importance of the text of Torah she-biktav. The mishneh in Sotah (32a) enumerates several parshiyot that require the standard of kichtavah - the authentic, precise, and original text of the Torah. These parshiyot specifically require lashon ha-kodesh. Indeed, there are indications that targumim (translations) may qualify, at least in some respects and

contexts, as Torah she-baal peh. [See Rambam, Hilchot Tefilah 12:10-11; Rabad, Hilchot Keriyat Shema 2:10; Rashi (Tanchuma), Devarim 1:5; and Rinat Yitzchak, Devarim 11:19. With respect to a father's obligation to teach his child, see also Kiddushin 30a and Rashi and Meiri op. cit.] Possibly, then, the Sifrei conveys that from the very outset young children are to be taught about the special interrelationship between the Written Torah as the embodiment of the actual *devar Hashem* (the Divine word), and the vast oral Torah tradition handed down since the time of Moshe Rabbeinu, which focuses on the concepts, methodology and application of halachic law and life. The dual character of Torah and the interrelationship of the components transcend issues of form and presentation; it constitutes one of the most singular aspects of halachic thought and life. Thus, the Sifrei apparently indicates that both components of Torah-text and tradition- and possibly their integration should be reflected in the actual teaching methodology of the formative educational experience, as well as that of the more mature student of the Torah.

It is noteworthy that the Sifrei concludes by noting that one who neglects Hebrew discourse and Torah discussion risks acute punishment ("ke-ilu kovro"). It is fascinating that this harsh indictment is based on the *semichut* (proximity) between "velimadetem..." and "lema'an yirbu yemeichem...", the verse that nearly follows, as well as the midrashic principle of "miklal lav atah shomeah hein", which, as Rashi significantly adds, is a general methodological principle in Torah interpretation. The vital need for Torah study as a *sine qua non* for Jewish survival is clearly articulated. It is meaningful that this perspective is integrated with the obligation to initiate the dual curriculum of Torah studies at a formative age. Moreover, the fact that it is precisely a dual midrashic mechanism that definitively establishes the stakes involved in the neglect of Torah studies compellingly reinforces the very charge that Jewish learning consists not only of the textual component of the Written Torah, but of the vast oral tradition, including its methods of textual interpretation, as well.

Finally, we note that Rashi adds a further dimension to the dual formulation- "ve-limadetem...le-daber bam"- of the chinuch obligation. In his view, the seemingly superfluous addition of "ledaber bam" hints at a specific formative first teaching to be transmitted to the young initiate to Torah study: "Torah zivah lanu Moshe" (Devarim 33:4). [See Sukah 42a] Given, the plethora of available options, why was this particular verse and theme selected to set the tone in Jewish education? The early educational emphasis on Moshe's indispensable role in both receiving and transmitting the Torah reinforces the previous motif regarding the centrality of the tradition-text combination. Maybe it also projects an equally critical theme, as well. The formative verse concludes: "morashah kehillat Yaakov". The term "morashah", in contradistinction to "yerusahah", refers not merely to a past inheritance, but to an ongoing heritage and legacy. While inheritance relates to the past and perhaps invokes a sense of nostalgia for a bygone era, a legacy is anchored in the past, but transcends any particular era. Legacies define aspirations, and inspire a sense of purpose and destiny; they connote rights, and responsibilities (see Pesachim 91b). Torah study and life, especially in its dual form and character, constitutes the ultimate legacy of the Jewish people. According to the midrash, this relationship is already hinted at by the very first word of the Torah- "be-reishit- beshvil ha-torah she-nikrah reishit- bara Elokim et ha-Shamayim ve-eit ha-aretz" (see also Pesachim 91b). The gemara (Sanhedrin 59a; Pesachim 49b) explicates that "morashah" implies an exclusivist relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people patterned after a marriage (*meurasah*). Moreover, this verse is the foundation of the prohibition against teaching essential aspects of the Torah to non-Jews who do not share its obligations or shoulder its responsibilities. From the very outset of the Jewish educational process, it is of utmost urgency to accentuate these themes of responsibility, spiritual opportunity, destiny, and legacy.

The themes that are already emphasized in the most formative stages of Jewish education continue to challenge and inspire even the most seasoned, senior, and accomplished devotee of Torah study. The fact that the relevance of the dual articulation of *ve-limadetem...le-daber*, in its various meanings, remains undiminished strikingly attests to Torah's singular status as the true legacy-"morashah"- of Am Yisrael.

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**Parshas Eikev**

**Rabbi Berel Wein**

Parshas Eikev All will be Set Right The parsha ties together the observance of the Torah commandments, especially the warnings against paganism and idolatry, with the earthly blessings of longevity and prosperity. Over the ages this has caused great philosophic debate and discussion, for this cause and effect relationship is not always apparent in the national or personal lives of the Jewish people.

Many commentators hasten to add that these biblical promises refer to biblical times when the Divine Spirit was palpably present amongst the Jewish community and the spirit of prophecy was also present and prevalent in the Land of Israel. This means that it was applicable to First Temple times only, for in Second Temple times the spirit of prophecy was absent in the Jewish commonwealth.

Perhaps this is an insight as to why the rabbis attributed the destruction of the First Temple primarily to idolatry – a fulfillment of the cause and effect system of justice as outlined in this week's parsha – while the demise of the Second Temple was attributed to social dispute and baseless hatred, an issue never specifically mentioned in this week's Torah presentation.

It appears that different equations, moral gauges and causes affected the Jewish commonwealth's spiritual status during Second Temple times than were present in First Temple times when prophecy and Divine Spirit were current and abundantly visible. In any event, it is apparent that the direct cause and effect relationship between observance of God's commandments and blessings and prosperity and disobedience causing punishment and disaster has not always been evident in the annals of Jewish history and life, especially in our long years of exile and persecution.

The very fact that the Torah in this week's parsha makes this cause and effect relationship so patently clear, and in fact repeats it a number of times, raises the age old problem of why the righteous suffer and the wicked are rewarded, in this world at least. This basic faith dilemma has its biblical origins in the book of Iyov where the problem is raised, debated and thoroughly discussed, but basically left unanswered.

Over the long Jewish exile with its attendant difficulties and pogroms this gnawing problem of faith has always accompanied us in every generation and circumstance. The events of the Holocaust, almost unimaginable in its numbers and horror, has certainly been a test of faith for many Jews, even for those who themselves were spared that actual experience. Yet the faith of Israel is that somehow in the unfathomable system of God's justice, all will be set right.

In reality, this is the main message of this week's parsha. It informs us that our actions have consequences and that there is a guiding hand to Jewish and world history and events that will eventually reveal itself. So our task remains, as it always was – to fulfill God's commandments and to behave morally and justly. The whole system of God's justice, opaque as it may seem to us to be, is simply to remind us of our potential and greatness, of the importance of our behavior in the grand scheme of things, and to reinforce our sense of destiny as individuals and as a people.

Shabat shalom,

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**How Are Tefillin Manufactured? (Part II)**  
**by Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

What does one look for when purchasing a pair of tefillin? In my earlier  
article, I presented some of the basics of tefillin manufacture. The four  
parshios in which the Torah mentions mitzvas tefillin: “Kadeish li kol  
bechor” and “V’hayah ki y’viacha” in Parshas Bo, “Shema” in Parshas  
Va’eschanan, and “V’hayah im shamoa’a” in Parsha Eikev  
are handwritten by a sofer. Each parsha of the tefillin shel rosh is written on  
a separate piece of parchment and placed in a separate compartment,  
whereas those of the shel yad are written on one parchment and placed in  
a single large compartment.

We also discussed certain problems that can occur while the parshios  
are written, the importance of using a skilled, knowledgeable, and G-d  
fearing sofer, and that the completed parshios should be checked  
carefully, preferably by two trained examiners and by computer.

As explained in the previous article, the batim consist of three parts: (a)  
the box part, called the ketzitzah, in which the parshios are placed, (b)  
the titura, the base on which the ketzitzah rests, and (c) the ma’avarta,  
through which the straps (retzuos) are inserted. The width of both the  
ketzitzah and the titura must be exactly the same as the corresponding  
length so that they are perfectly square, and there should be no nicks,  
dents, or bulges that ruin their perfect square-ness or the evenness of  
their sides. Someone concerned about the mitzvah should therefore  
purchase batim made from gasos, which means the hide of a mature  
animal. Gasos batim last much longer, have many hiddurim in halacha,  
and can be repaired if they become damaged.

We also discussed two halachic disputes regarding the manufacture of  
the shel rosh. One shaylah concerned gluing the compartments of the  
shel rosh together, and another concerned whether the shin on the  
outside must be pulled out manually before it is molded.

As explained in the first article, most stages of tefillin production, from  
tanning to painting and sewing, must be performed “lishmah.” Therefore,  
each stage is begun by an observant Jew who declares that his work is  
for the sake of kedushas tefillin. Several steps of tefillin manufacture  
were not described in the first article, including painting, making the  
retzuos, and placing the parshios in the bayis and sealing it. We will  
resume our narration and guide at this point, beginning with the  
manufacture and laws of the titura, the wide base upon which the  
ketzitzah holding the parshios rests.

The titura consists of two parts, the widening at the bottom of the  
ketzitzah (upper titura) and the flap that closes and seals the parshios

inside (lower titura). In gasos tefillin, the titura is formed out of the same  
piece of leather as the ketzitzah. The lower titura is bent 180 degrees  
until it is directly beneath the upper titura. The gap between the two is  
then filled with pieces of leather, and then the hide is shaved until it is  
perfectly square.

At one point in time, ordinary scrap leather was often used as filler, but  
this is rarely done today. Although these batim are kosher, it is preferable  
that the filler be hide that was tanned lishmah (Shu”t Minchas Yitzchak  
6:1). This is standard contemporary practice.

Some poskim contend that it is acceptable to fill small nicks in the side  
of the titura with glue. Others feel that it is not kosher l’chatchila to do  
this but that nicks should be patched with hide or parchment tanned  
lishmah (Shu”t Minchas Yitzchak 6:1; Shu”t Shevet HaLevi 3:2; 9:4).

When the titura is completed and perfectly square, twelve holes are  
punched through it so that it can later be stitched closed. It is vital that  
these holes form a perfect square and that they are not too large (which  
may cause the stitching not to be square).

**PAINTING**

The batim are painted jet-black using paint containing only kosher  
ingredients (Shulchan Aruch 32:40). Because there is little space  
between the compartments of the shel rosh, it often happens that after the  
painting one can no longer see the separation between the compartments.  
Since the individual compartments must be visible, the batim macher  
carefully separates the compartments from one another with a razor.

On inferior batim, non-scrupulous batim machers may merely scratch  
the outside of the bayis to make it appear where the four compartments  
actually are. This is an invalid method of marking the batim. The actual,  
separate compartments must be visible from the outside. Alternatively,  
sometimes a deep groove is mistakenly scratched in the wrong place and  
does not demonstrate the actual separation between the compartments.  
This is also invalid. Therefore, to prevent this, a responsible batim  
macher cuts between the compartments to guarantee that they are indeed  
fully separate even after the painting.

Now that we have excellent parshios and batim for our tefillin, we will  
investigate what constitutes excellent retzuos.

**IS THERE A HALACHIC PREFERENCE TO HANDMADE  
RETZUOS?**

The contemporary process of tanning retzuos is similar to the method  
used to tan leather for mundane uses, such as belts and handbags.  
However, retzuos must be tanned lishmah, for the sake of the mitzvah  
(Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 33:3). After the tanning of the retzuos is  
complete, the retzuos are painted black in order to fulfill a halacha  
le’Moshe mi’Sinai (Menachos 35a). The painting of the retzuos must  
also be performed lishmah (Mishnah Berurah 33:18).

In earlier days, tanning retzuos involved salting the hide and then  
soaking it in lime wash. Today, although both salt and lime are used in  
the tanning process, most of the tanning of retzuos is usually  
accomplished by the gradual, automatic adding of other chemicals to the  
soaking leather after the salt and lime have been rinsed out. Thus,  
although early poskim ruled that placing the lime into the water lishmah  
is sufficient to make retzuos lishmah, this may not be true today. For this  
reason, most contemporary poskim rule that one should use “avodas  
yad” retzuos, meaning that the extra chemicals added to the water were  
done lishmah by a Torah-observant person (Zichron Eliyahu). However,  
most retzuos sold for tefillin are not avodas yad.

According to my information, most retzuos are painted by transporting  
them on a conveyor belt through a large, electrically powered paint  
sprayer. This provides an additional reason to use only avodas yad  
retzuos. Most Torah-observant Jews use hand matzos for the seder  
because of concern that machine matzos are not considered lishmah. (I  
am not suggesting that machine matzohs are a problem for Seder use.  
Many great poskim contend that they are fine.) In all likelihood, the  
manufacture and painting of machine-made retzuos has greater halachic

concerns than the shaylos involved in machine matzos. When one realizes that the mitzvah of eating matzah is only once a year, whereas the tefillin will IY”H be worn daily for decades, I believe the choice is obvious.

Some poskim contend that one should also request that the parchment used for the parshios be only avodas yad. If one chooses to order avodas yad parchment, ask for extra thin parchment. This special parchment is less likely to crack when rolled and inserted into the batim, and thus there is less likelihood that the letters will eventually crack. It is also easier to fit the thin parchment properly into the batim. The difference in cost for this parchment is fairly small relative to the overall cost of the investment in the pair of tefillin.

It is important to check periodically that the retzuos are still completely black. Many authorities contend that the entire length of the retzua must always be black (Biyur Halacha 33:3 s.v. retzuos). If the paint peels off, fades or cracks, one must blacken the retzuos with kosher black retzuos paint. Before painting the retzuos, one must state that he is doing it l'sheim kedushas tefillin.

The reverse side of the retzua that lies on the skin need not be dyed at all. There is an opinion that the edges of the retzuos should also be painted black (Keses HaSofer 23:2). However, this opinion is not accepted in halachic practice (see for example, Mishnah Berurah 33:24 quoting Pri Megadim in Eishel Avraham 33:7).

#### ROLLING UP THE PARSHIOS

All the components of the tefillin are now complete, and it is time to insert the parshios into the bayis. Before being placed into the ketzitzah, each parsha is rolled from left to right, and then tied with a bovine tail hair (Elyah Rabbah 32:43). These hairs should preferably be from a calf to remind us of the sin of the eigel hazahav, the golden calf (Beis Yosef, quoting Shimusha Rabba). The parsha is then wrapped with a blank piece of parchment, and this parchment is then tied with another bovine hair. (According to Rambam, Hilchos Tefillin 3:1, these last two steps are both halacha le’Moshe mi’Sinai.) After each parsha is placed inside its appropriate bayis, one or more of these hairs are pulled through the left hole in front of the bayis that will be used to stitch the titura closed. Thus, the hair used to tie the parsha closed is visible on the outside of the tefillin (Zohar).

According to Rashi’s opinion, which is the halacha, the parshios are now inserted according to the order that they appear in the Torah. Thus, the first parsha, Kadeish li kol bechor (Shmos 13:1-10), fills the leftmost compartment (from the perspective of the wearer), with V’hayah ki y’viacha (Shmos 13:11-16) next to it. Shma (Devarim 6:4-9) is placed next to it; and V’hayah im shamo’a (Devarim 11:13-21) is inserted inside the rightmost compartment. However, according to Rabbeinu Tam, the last two parshios are reversed, with Shma in the right-most compartment and V’hayah im shamo’a next to it. (There are also at least two other opinions on this question.)

Although we fulfill the mitzvah with Rashi tefillin, the Shulchan Aruch states that a G-d fearing person should wear Rabbeinu Tam tefillin in addition to wearing Rashi tefillin (Orach Chaim 34:2). However, the Shulchan Aruch qualifies this ruling by stating that only a person known to observe beyond the requirements of halacha is permitted to wear Rabbeinu Tam tefillin (Orach Chaim 34:3). This is because of the prohibition against being pretentious in one’s Yiddishkeit. Ashkenazim follow the Shulchan Aruch’s ruling. However, the practice among many Sefardim and chassidim is that all married men wear Rabbeinu Tam tefillin. In their opinion once many people follow a certain practice, it is no longer ostentatious for an individual to observe it.

#### OTHER HALACHOS RELEVANT TO ASSEMBLING THE TEFILLIN

The parsha should fit completely inside its compartment. Sometimes the shel yad parsha is too tall to fit properly in the ketzitzah and the bottom of the parsha protrudes into the titura, a situation that should be

avoided (Shu”t Shevet HaLevi 3:3; Shu”t Yabia Omer 1:2:5). If the person who orders the tefillin coordinates the correct size with the sofer and the batim macher, this problem can be avoided.

After the parshios are placed into their appropriate compartments, the titura is sewn closed. There is a halacha le’Moshe mi’Sinai that this stitching must be made with sinews (gidin; singular gid) of a kosher animal (Shabbos 108a). There is another halacha le’Moshe mi’Sinai that these stitches must form a perfect square (Menachos 35a). This is something that a person can readily check on his own tefillin. I have often seen tefillin where the stitching or the punching of the holes is sloppy, making the stitching not square. This makes the entire pair of tefillin posul!

The tefillin should be stitched with a single length thread of sinew (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 32:51). Although there are lenient opinions that one can tie two pieces of gid together, insist that your tefillin be stitched with a single gid.

Some batim machers glue the top and bottom titura together, in addition to the stitching, to help the titura stay closed. Some poskim contend that this practice invalidates the tefillin since the halacha le’Moshe mi’Sinai is that the titura should be closed only by stitching with gidin and with no other materials (Chazon Ish, Orach Chaim 11:10). One should consult with his rav whether to request that the titura not be glued.

The retzuos should be about ½ inch wide. When purchasing new retzuos, they should be wider so that they remain the proper width even after they become stretched out.

#### WHERE SHOULD I BUY MY TEFILLIN?

The individual selling tefillin should be a halachically reliable person and preferably a talmid chacham. Furthermore, he should be fully familiar not only with the halachos of tefillin, but also with the details of tefillin manufacture. From my personal experience, it is not uncommon that a person selling tefillin, although extremely ehrlich, is totally unfamiliar with the halachic issues and concerns involved. Unfortunately, many sofrim and rabbanim lack sufficient training in the practical details of tefillin manufacture.

Assuming that one is purchasing tefillin from someone familiar with the halachos and practical aspects of tefillin manufacture, be specific what level of tefillin kashrus you are looking for. If you don’t tell him that you want tefillin that are kosher l’chatchila (in the preferred way), you might receive tefillin that only meet the very minimum standards of kashrus. A person who discriminately buys food with high kashrus standards should not settle for less when purchasing tefillin. Such a person should order “kosher mehudar tefillin,” or “kosher tefillin with extra hiddurim.” These descriptions may also affect other questions that we have not discussed, such as the quality of the writing or the source of the batim.

#### THE PRICE OF TEFILLIN

Considering how much time, labor and trained skill are required to produce a kosher pair of tefillin, it amazes me how inexpensive tefillin are. Imagine purchasing an item that requires tens of hours of skilled expert workmanship! What would you expect to pay for such an item? Probably thousands of dollars! And note that one wears tefillin every weekday of one’s life, without exception. The tefillin are certainly hundreds of times more valuable than a top quality suit! Remember that a top quality pair of tefillin should last many decades. A pair of tefillin that costs \$1000 and lasts for forty years are worn approximately 300 times a year or a total of 12,000 times. Thus, this pair of tefillin cost about 8 ½ cents a day. Compare this to how much value one gets per wearing from a nice suit!

#### WHAT TO ASK WHEN ORDERING TEFILLIN?

When ordering a pair of tefillin, one is entitled to ask as many questions about the tefillin as one chooses. After all, one is making a major purchase. In addition, asking these questions informs the seller that one wants tefillin that are mehadrin and are not simply minimally kosher.

Thus, it is perfectly acceptable to ask whether the seller knows the sofer personally or at least by reputation. Why did he choose this sofer? Is the sofer licensed by an organization that tests him periodically on the relevant halachos? One should definitely request that the sofer be instructed to write parshios that are kosher l'mehadrin, and not simply kosher or even kosher lichatchila. Request that the parshios be checked by two different examiners and also by computer. Also insist that the examiner be instructed that the parshios should be kosher l'mehadrin. Usually, the examiners are only checking to see if the parshios are minimally kosher.

From which manufacturer are the batim being ordered? Why did the seller choose this batim macher? Do the batim carry a hechsher? Order batim that are kosher l'mehadrin.

Order batim where no glue is added to the titura. Clarify that the batim macher cuts between the compartments after painting to guarantee that they are properly separated. Specify that the seller should make sure that the parshios, both shel yad and shel rosh, fit completely inside the ketzitzah.

Of course, one needs to verify that the tefillin are set up for someone left-handed or right-handed, and whether the ksav (the script) and the knots are for nusach Ashkenaz, Sfarad or Edot HaMizrah. Clarify in advance how large the batim of the tefillin will be. If the bar-mitzvah bochur is small, one may have a shaylah whether the tefillin are too large to fit on his arm correctly. Clarify this issue in advance with your tefillin seller and with your rav.

None of the items above should cost anything extra and therefore one should always ask for them even if one's budget is limited.

#### WHAT EXTRA ITEMS SHOULD I ASK FOR WHEN ORDERING TEFILLIN?

There are several other hiddurim one can order when purchasing new tefillin. Bear in mind that each of these items will add to the price of your tefillin and may require more advance time to order your tefillin.

1. Ask your rav whether you should order tefillin that were manufactured originally "perudos ad hatefer le'gamrei," literally, separated completely down to the stitch, referring to the stitching on the top of the titura. This means that the batim were manufactured without any glue between the compartments of the batim.

When ordering tefillin that are perudos ad hatefer le'gamrei, ask for batim that were made originally this way from the beginning of their manufacture. Sometimes a batim macher receiving an order for "perudos ad hatefer le'gamrei" will take a knife and attempt to cut through the compartments of the bayis in order to separate them. You do not want these batim. Firstly, the cutting could damage the batim. Furthermore, the batim macher may not have succeeded in separating all the glue.

Although all poskim agree that it is halachically preferable to have batim that are constructed without any glue between the compartments, there is a risk that these batim could separate with time and thus no longer be properly square. For this reason, if the person wearing the tefillin will not be checking periodically to ensure that his tefillin are still properly square, it may be preferable to have the compartments glued together. Your rav should be consulted.

2. Order parshios and retzuos that are avodas yad. If ordering parshios that are avodas yad, instruct the sofer that they should be written on extra thin parchment.

3. Order tefillin where the shin was pulled out by hand and the mold was used only to enhance an existing shin. (See part one article for the explanation.)

#### WHAT SHOULD I CHECK WHEN THE TEFILLIN ARRIVE?

The big day arrives. Your local sefarim store, sofer, or rav tells you that your tefillin have arrived! Is there anything you should check on the tefillin?

Check if the batim, titura and stitching are all properly square. You do not need to have a trained eye to check. Look if they appear perfectly

square to you. Pay special attention that the titura area that faces the ma'avarta is smooth. It is not unusual that this area is not finished to the extent that it should be.

#### WHAT SHOULD I BE CHECKING ON MY OWN TEFILLIN?

Just as a car owner knows that he must check the level of the motor oil every fill-up or two, the tefillin owner should know to periodically check certain things on his tefillin.

First, check that the retzuos and batim are completely black and are not rubbed out, cracked or faded. Are the retzuos black all the way to their tip? Be particular to check that they are black near where the knot is tightened, because at that point the paint often rubs out. One should also check that the retzua is still wide enough near the knot. If they are not fully black, blacken them with kosher tefillin paint. (Everyone who wears tefillin should have access to kosher tefillin paint or markers.) If someone's retzuos are cracking in several places, perhaps he should consider replacing them.

The knot of the shel yad should be connected that it touches the ketzitzah of the tefillin.

Check that the batim, titura, and stitches are still perfectly square. This means that the width and the length appear to be the same length to the naked eye, and that there are no dents, nicks, or projections along the sides or in the corners of the bayis. The back corners of the batim often become rounded because of hats or taleisim that are constantly rubbing them.

If the stitch of the titura is not taut or it loops in the middle, it is not kosher and you should contact your batim expert. With time or damage, the stitches often loosen or move, or the batim get banged or nicked and are no longer properly square. Your local batim expert has the equipment and know-how to repair them.

Know a batim macher or batim repair expert. Every major Jewish community should have at least one person who is trained and has the equipment to repair batim. Just as the community has shatnez testers, a mohel, a butcher, a mikvah for dishes, sefarim stores, and talmidei chachamim who are trained to check mezuzos, a community must have a talmid chacham who is trained properly in the repair of batim.

#### HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR TEFILLIN PROPERLY

Maintaining your tefillin is fairly easy. Never leave your tefillin in direct sunlight, in a very hot place, or inside your car during the daytime. As much as possible, your hair should be dry while wearing your tefillin. Protect corners by leaving the cover on the shel yad. (It should be noted that some poskim contend that one should not place these covers on the shel yad while one is wearing them or while making the bracha. However, since most poskim permit leaving these covers on, one may be lenient.)

Tefillin are one of the special signs that Hashem gave the Jewish people, and we should certainly excel in treating this mitzvah with the appropriate dignity. When Yidden request that their tefillin be only mehadrin, they demonstrate their reverence for the sign that bonds us to Hashem.

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Netziv: Davar B'Ito - Parshas Eikev

#### Netziv: Davar B'Ito by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

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Parshas Eikev Multiple-Choice Avodah1 Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you? Only to fear Hashem your G-d; to go in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve Hashem your G-d with all your heart and all your soul; to observe the commandments of Hashem and His decrees which I command you today, for your good.

"Only?!" What more could He ask? Does this list leave any demand unstated? Have we missed some form of avodah that is not mentioned here?

The gemara<sup>2</sup> begins to address the difficulties in these pesukim – and then drops the ball. “Is fear, then, such a trifling matter? Indeed, in regard to Moshe it is a small thing.” Why does the gemara not challenge all the other demands of these pesukim, and ask whether they, too, are minor affairs?

Furthermore, this list sports an internal contradiction, as well as a paradox. After demanding that we love Hashem, we learn a few phrases later that Hashem’s demands of us are for our own good. “Love” in the pasuk implies a selfless love of devotion and service of Hashem; it is incompatible with that service being tainted by our own self-interest. The demand that we love Him is also paradoxical. We know of only two ways in which a person can rise to the lofty level of loving Hashem: avodah in the beis ha-mikdosh, and deep Torah study. These are not accessible to all people at all times. How, then, can the Torah turn love into a normative demand of all Jews?

Clearly, the answer is that He doesn’t. The various items on the list do not apply universally, but to four different sub-groups within Klal Yisrael. The beginning of parshas Nitzavim<sup>3</sup> explicitly describes the makeup of these four groups: “the heads of your shevatim; your elders and officers; – all the men of Israel; your small children, your women.” Hashem assigns each group a different avodah. The remaining forms of service are not demanded. Indeed, in some cases they are forbidden, as we shall see.

We begin with the first – the “heads of tribes.” This is another way of saying community leaders. Burdened as they are with a constant procession of needs and issues, they have no time to devote to the quiet, contemplative hours of devekus to Hashem. Should they attempt to work on their ahavas Hashem, their performance as leaders will suffer. (Avraham’s ministering to the three guests<sup>4</sup> at the moment that he readied himself to receive the Shechinah illustrates this point. The gemara<sup>5</sup> determines that hosting guests is “greater” than receiving the Shechinah. This certainly does not mean that the spiritual value of the former is greater than that of the latter. The opposite is true. What makes hachnosas orchim “greater” is that it can trump the obligation to perform other mitzvos. It takes legal precedence over receiving the Shechinah, even if it does not excel spiritually. Similarly, the community needs borne by its leaders often push aside the observance of mitzvos, even though these mitzvos are spiritually loftier.)

Having shown that the community heads cannot involve themselves in love of Hashem and devekus, and that pressing communal matters must sometimes push aside their performance of practical mitzvos, we begin to understand what the Torah demands of them. They, more than any other group, need to be incessantly preoccupied with yir’as Hashem.

There is good reason for this expectation. Leaders in a position of power face an occupational hazard. Power corrupts and is corruptible. Leaders can easily utilize their power for their own advantage – unless a heightened sense of fear of Hashem leaves them no room to do so. They can apply their power unevenly, favoring those who flatter them, and using it as a cudgel against those who have slighted them – unless the fear of Hashem weighs heavily upon them. Perhaps more importantly, leaders need to focus on yir’as Hashem for their own protection. Aveiros against other human beings are not easily atoned for. When all else fails, it is yir’as Hashem that will protect them from willingly or unwittingly slighting others.

The second group listed in parshas Nitzavim are the elders, those looked up to by the community for guidance and inspiration. These elders are the talmidei chachamim who spend their days toiling in Torah. The next few demands of our pasuk all apply to these zekeinim. They can – and should – spend much time focused on Ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu, in a manner that leads to greater attachment to Him and love of Him. Moreover, their learning prepares them to serve Hashem with all their heart and soul, meaning that the avodah of their mitzvos is performed with full meticulousness, precision, and attention to small detail. Their penetrating understanding of Torah leads them to “go in all His ways,” i.e. understand enough about Him that they can imitate His various modes of compassionate conduct.

These demands are not placed upon the legions of working people, preoccupied as they are with making a living. Hashem asks of them that they “observe the commandments of Hashem and His decrees.” They are asked to rise to the challenge of ensuring that their involvement in their work does not come at the price of slacking off in the performance of their mitzvah duties.

That still leaves a good number of people who do not fall into any of the other categories. Not spending their days working at a livelihood, their productivity is generally in the service sector – they facilitate and enable the work of the other three categories. The Torah asks of them that they work for their “good,” meaning that they specialize in producing good for the rest of mankind, and in the process, become good people themselves.

The Torah brings all four categories together because together they describe the entirety of the Jewish people. Through those categories, all the different expectations Hashem has of different groups can be succinctly stated. Indeed, this

variegated avodah is not so difficult. Each sub-group is predisposed towards its designated form of avodah. (The gemara only questions the yir’ah asked of the leaders: is this such a trifling demand. After pondering the question, the gemara relates that in the company of a Moshe Rabbeinu, yir’ah is not so difficult to come by. The gemara does not ask the parallel question regarding the acquisition of love of Hashem, perfect service, etc. Since these are expected only of the talmid chacham, the gemara realized that limud Torah itself facilitates those ways of relating to Hashem.)

Hashem not only refrains from asking the impossible of us, He engineers things so that what we are expected to do is close at hand, well within our grasp.

1. Based on Ha’amek Davar, Devarim 10:12 2. Berachos 33B 3. Devarim 29:9-10 4. Bereshis 18:3 5. Shabbos 127A

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network shemalist@shemaisrael.com 7:46 PM **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**

to Peninim PARSHAS EIKEV This shall be the reward when you hearken to these ordinances. (7:12) Rashi notes that the homiletic interpretation of eikev, which means heel, alludes to the sort of mitzvos which people do not take seriously, that they regard as unimportant. Thus, they figuratively “tread upon them with their heels.” The Torah assures us that if we are careful to observe even these so-called “neglected” mitzvos, Hashem will certainly reward our efforts. The message is basic. We have no way to determine the value and weight of mitzvos. They are all decrees from Hashem which we are commanded to carry out - “no ands, ifs, or buts.”

We find another form of neglected mitzvah. It is a mitzvah which one performs “financially,” but not emotionally. One can spend thousands of dollars to purchase a pair of Tefillin, yet not think about what it is that he is wearing and why. We think that all one has to do is overspend on the mitzvah - buy the most expensive matzah; make the most expensive Succah; or spend Succos in the Holy Land - and then one has been yotzei, fulfilled, the mitzvah in accordance with everything that Hashem asks. The money is spent, but the mitzvah remains an eikev - afterthought.

I have seen individuals incarcerated in the penal system, who are permitted to use Tefillin once a week, or whenever the chaplain is in attendance. The excitement, devotion and religious fervor of these men would cause one to imagine that the Tefillin they are placing upon themselves are extraordinary - when, in fact, they are seventy-years-old and barely kosher. It is all in the attitude - not in the expenditure.

Horav David Tebel, zl, Rav of Minsk, was a brilliant gaon, scholar and Talmudist. He authored the Nachalas David, a volume of commentary on the Talmud that is a staple for any serious student of Talmud. Prior to becoming Rav in Minsk, he served as Rav in a small village whose Jewish community was even smaller. The community did not have the wherewithal to support a rabbi. Thus, the Rav subsisted on less than little, often going without a piece of bread in his home and no food for Shabbos.

A few times each year, two wealthy Jewish businessmen from a different city would come before him with a din Torah, monetary dispute. They chose him for his fair and clear adjudication of the law. Appreciating the Rav’s common sense approach to their halachic dispute, they both paid him handsomely for his service. This fee sustained his family.

One time, following a din Torah, Rav David asked them to sit for a moment. He had a request to make of them: “You are aware that during the past years, I have served as your Rav to render halachic judgment concerning your business dealings. I was glad to help, and I never asked for monetary recompense - although, I admit, that you were both more than kind in your manner of reimbursement. Now I must go against my grain, however, and ask you to help me with an issue that I find overwhelming. My daughter recently became engaged to a fine young man, a budding Torah scholar, who will one day be a jewel in the crown of Torah. I obligated myself to pay my daughter’s dowry, which comes to a substantial sum. As you probably are aware, I do not have a penny to my name. I, therefore, am breaking with tradition and asking you to help me in my time of need.”

Rav David concluded his request, hoping that their response would be immediate and positive. He was taken aback when they told him, “Rebbe, we give our Maaser, tithe money, to the Rav of our community. We feel each Jewish community should worry about and attend to the needs of its individual Rav. We take care of our own, and we suggest that the Rav’s kehillah, congregation, attend to the needs of its own spiritual leader.”

Rav David listened to their response and said, “Let me share a powerful story with you. Perhaps it will better illuminate the issues for you. A wealthy man became ill and passed away suddenly, in the flower of his youth. Aside from his enormous wealth, he left over a very special pair of Tefillin that were written by a sofer, scribe, of saintly repute. The Tefillin alone were of great value. As occurs often in

the best of families, a dispute arose between the surviving sons as to who should inherit the Tefillin. Rather than fight and become enemies, they decided to sell the Tefillin and split the proceeds evenly. In the meantime, the Tefillin lay in a drawer in their father's desk.

"One young brother had yet not become bar-mitzvah. As the bar mitzvah of the young orphan was rapidly approaching, the brothers decided that nothing could be more appropriate than to give their father's Tefillin to their little brother. The young bar-mitzvah boy put on the Tefillin in earnest, realizing their value, both in a spiritual and sentimental sense. They remained with him his entire life; he never missed a day of putting on his special Tefillin. Well, actually, he did miss one day.

"The young boy became a wealthy businessman whose business dealings carried him far and wide. Wherever he went, he had his Tefillin with him. They never left his side. One night, while on the road, he was snowed in and could not return to his hotel in the city. The roads would be impassable for at least a day. He became an emotional wreck. Not only did he not have his special Tefillin with him - he had no Tefillin. How could he daven? Where could he obtain a pair of Tefillin?

"The gentile with whom he was dealing remembered that one old Jew lived in the town. Perhaps he had a pair of Tefillin which the businessman could borrow. The gentile immediately sought out the Jew, who was only too happy to lend his Tefillin to a co-religionist. Regrettably, the Tefillin were ancient, the color peeling. He had no idea who had written them. At best, they were kosher b'dieved, ex-post facto. The businessman had no choice but to use them, but still hoped that he would make it back to his hotel in time to use his own. Unfortunately, his hope of returning on time did not materialize. This would be the only time in his life that he had not worn his father's Tefillin. Hopefully, at the appropriate time, he would not be called to task for it.

"Life does not go on forever - even for the high and mighty. We all must one day stand before the Heavenly Tribunal and offer our excuses for the failures in our life. Some are lucky. They prepare in this life. Others are not so fortunate. Our "hero" went the way of all men, and, in due time, he too stood before the Tribunal. How shocked his neshamah, soul, was to hear the words, karkafat d'lo monach Tefillin, "A person who did not put on Tefillin." Apparently in Heaven, they were aware of something that had eluded him in this world. The Tefillin which he thought were so exceptional, were in fact, pasul, unfit, disqualified! He had no idea, but one does not dispute the Heavenly Tribunal. The punishment for a Jew who does not wear Tefillin - for one who is a poshea Yisrael b'gufan, transgresses the law with his body - is eternal Gehinom, Purgatory.

Imagine how this neshamah trembled as the prosecuting angels grabbed hold of him and were about to carry out his punishment immediately. Suddenly, a different angel came forward and declared, "Wait! I have something. One time, he was stuck in a snowstorm and he borrowed an old pair of Tefillin that were kosher! He is no longer a person who never put on Tefillin. He wore Tefillin once in his life!" Yes, concluded Rav David, "it was those unseemly Tefillin that saved the day for him.

"My friends," Rav David told the two men, "It is certainly true that you have designated your tzedakah, charitable endeavors, for certain purposes, which I am sure that are very noble and important. Nevertheless, perhaps my daughter's wedding will be that specific tzedakah that will make the difference concerning your eternal future." We never know!

You will eat and you will be satisfied and bless Hashem, your G-d, for the good Land that He gave you. (8:10)

The words V'achalta v'savata, "You will eat and you will be satisfied," are mentioned twice in this Parsha: in the above pasuk, and later in (11:15). There is one discrepancy, however, the above pasuk has an added word: u'beirachta, "and [you] will bless [Hashem]." In the second pasuk, the words V'achalta v'savata are followed by, Hishamru lachem pen yifteh levavchem v'sartem, "Beware for yourselves, lest your heart be seduced and you will turn astray." Wherein lay the difference between the two phrases? Why is the second one followed with, "beware," while the first concludes, "you will bless"?

Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita, quotes Rashi on the second pasuk, hishamru, "beware" - "One does not rebel against Hashem, unless he is first satisfied." This means that the more one is successful, the greater his good fortune, the stronger the possibility of backlash. It is the successful person who can lose his faith as his good fortune goes to his head. He is capable of declaring, kochi v'otzem yadi assa li es ha'chayil hazeh, "My strength and might of my hand made me all this wealth" (Devaram 8:17). I did it all by myself. Nobody helped me. I am a self-made man. Such a person denies Divine Providence. He does not perceive Hashem's input. The arrogance goes to his head, as he blatantly - without fear - rebels against Hashem. This is the fear of hishamer, "beware," that is often the result of v'achalta v'savata.

How does one prevent such dire consequences? What safeguards can we put into place to prevent success from going to our heads? The answer to this question is provided by the Torah: u'beirachta es Hashem Elokecha, "Bless Hashem." When

one realizes and acknowledges that whatever success he enjoys is all the result of the Almighty, then it will not go to his head. One becomes haughty only if he thinks and begins to believe that he is it, that he has wrought all of his achievement. One who attributes good fortune to the Source of all success blesses Hashem for His gift and continues to grow with it.

The nisayon, challenge, of, v'ram levavecha, "And your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem" (Ibid. 8:14), is not exclusive to material success. Rav Weinberger emphasizes that it is a hurdle even with regard to spiritual achievement. It can go to one's head. The story is told that the Kotzker Rebbe, zl, once observed a chasid of his walking down the street on Shabbos following an inspiring day of learning, wearing his shtreimel, chassidic hat, on a tilt. The Rebbe remarked, "I am afraid that if you were to learn two more blatt, folios of Talmud, you would walk down the street with your head uncovered!" The Rebbe was alluding to the idea that even spiritual satisfaction taken the wrong way can indicate an inner spiritual emptiness.

One who achieves spiritual ascendancy should immediately use his accomplishment as a stepping-stone for reaching greater heights. Indeed, one should never be "satisfied" with spiritual fulfillment. He must spur himself further for greater purposes.

You shall cut away the barrier of your heart, and no longer stiffen your neck. (10:16)

The Torah is speaking metaphorically. The heart is the seat of emotion and desire. As long as one has not cut away the spiritual dross that surrounds his heart, his trend towards sinful behavior continues unabated. If one addresses his impulses and desires, puts them in check, he weakens their ability to cause him to gravitate towards sin. Ibn Ezra puts it, "One must distance himself from the thick and heavy desires (that weigh down on him) like an orlah, uncircumcised foreskin. Alternatively, it might mean that one should purify his heart, so that he understands the truth."

Essentially, Ibn Ezra teaches us that if one does not prepare himself; if he does not cleanse his heart of moral/spiritual impurity, he is unable to come close to Hashem. As an uncircumcised male is missing completion, so, too, will he who has not removed the moral filth covering his heart be able to retain a close affiliation with Hashem and His Torah. Taharas ha'lev, purifying the heart, freeing oneself from his blighted character traits, is a requisite for spiritual ascendancy. There are those who have successfully embraced Torah observance after years of alienation, assimilation, and moral deprivation. Some make it; some do not. They walk the walk, talk the talk, but never really make it. Why? It is their orlas ha'lev that prevents an enduring relationship with the Almighty. As long as there remains a deficiency in their middos, character traits, they remain spiritually "short" of their intended goal, of becoming a ben Torah. In order to have it "all", one must give up "all."

You shall teach them to your children to discuss them. (11:19)

The words, l'daber bam, "to discuss them," are a key to understanding the essence of a father's obligation of limud ha'Torah to his son. In the Talmud Bava Basra 60b, Chazal relate the story of two litigants that came before Rabbi Yanai - with a halachic dispute. One litigant insisted that Rabbi Yanai require his disputant to cut the branches of his tree which were encroaching on his property. The sage heard their arguments and asked them to return the next day for his rendering of judgment. As soon as they left, Rabbi Yanai quickly ran home to cut the branches of his tree, whose branches were growing out into the public thoroughfare. The next day, both litigants presented themselves before Rabbi Yanai. He then ordered the owner of the tree to cut the offending branches. Upon hearing the verdict, the litigant said to Rabbi Yanai, "His honor also has a tree that hangs over the public thoroughfare." Rabbi Yanai immediately countered, "I have already cut it down." This is what Chazal mean when they interpret the pasuk in Tzefanyah 2: 1, Hiskosheshu va'koshu, "Improve yourselves and improve others." First improve yourself - only then, are you prepared to improve others.

Perhaps we know this as, "People in glass houses should not throw stones." In any event, we are being taught that self-improvement is a pre-requisite to teaching others. For the student to respond to the lesson, he must respect the lecturer. If one finds fault in his mentor, he will have a problem accepting his lesson. In his sefer K'ayol Taarog, Horav Abitbul, Shlita, interprets this idea into the above pasuk. If one wants to succeed in teaching his son Torah, he must first be midaber bam, the father himself must discuss Torah, be conversant in Torah, demonstrate his own love for the Torah. He does this as he sits in his home, his office, on the road - wherever he is. When a child sees how valuable the Torah is to his father, he will also accept it. When a child sees how his father toils in Torah, expends every extra minute studying Torah, he will follow suit. Thus, they will both - father and son - achieve longevity.

The story is told concerning a wealthy man who sent his son off to study Torah with a prominent Rav. One day, the rebbe taught the young boy the responsibilities regarding mitzvos which would be incumbent upon him once he would become bar-mitzvah. This was the last day that the student showed up for class. After that lesson, the boy was finished. He wanted no part of his rebbe's teachings. The rebbe was shocked with the boy's reaction to his lesson. It did not make sense. This boy studied Torah with an uncanny thirst to imbibe as much as possible. Why should he suddenly drop out?

The rebbe presented his query to the boy's father. Perhaps he could explain his son's unusual behavior. The father was visibly upset and responded, "That day that you taught my son about Judaism, he came home and asked me when I was celebrating my bar-mitzvah. I looked at him incredulously and asked, 'What do you mean?' He replied, 'My rebbe taught me that following one's bar-mitzvah, one puts on Tefillin daily. When are you going to put on Tefillin? When you have your bar-mitzvah, we will both put on Tefillin every day.' I had no response to that question!"

If a father wants his children to follow in his footsteps, he should see to it that he is walking in the right path. "Do what I tell you - not what I do" does not work. On the contrary, children tend to respect what their parents value and disdain what their parents deprecate, either actively or subtly - by omission. A Jew once approached the Kotzer Rebbe, zl, and asked for a blessing that his young son learn Torah. The Rebbe, not one to coddle his petitioners, said, "If you will study Torah, then your son will follow your lead and also study Torah. If you will be satisfied with seeking blessings (rather than activity pursuing the actual study), in all likelihood, your son will do the same."

Children are quite attentive to and intuitive about what they hear and see at home. A Jew who was himself a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, asked Horav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, zl, why he did not merit to have sons that were talmidei chachamim. His sons were fine upstanding laymen, but Torah learning was not their forte. This was in contrast to his neighbor, who was not as learned as he, was a milkman, who raised a family of distinguished Torah scholars. How did he do it?

Rav Shlomo Zalmen asked the man, "Tell me, when you heard a shiur, Torah lecture, with which you did not agree. What remarks did you make concerning the speaker?" "I probably commented that he did not know how to learn," the man replied.

"What would be your response when your Rav rendered a halachic decision that was unacceptable to you?" Rav Shlomo Zalman asked.

"I probably had a similar reaction, disparaging his ability to render a halachic decision," the man answered. Rav Shlomo Zalmen looked up at the man and said, "This is the difference between you and the milkman. When he heard a drashah, lecture, he returned home all excited, lauding the Rav who gave the lecture. Likewise, when the Rav issued a p'sak, halachah, he never complained. He accepted the decision with reverence, acquiescing to whatever was asked of him. His children grew up in a home where respect was accorded to the rabbanim, where rabbinic leaders, teachers, and whoever was involved in Torah dissemination were revered and cherished. This motivated them to strive likewise for such a venerable pursuit.

"Regrettably, your children did not fare as well, because you acted in a manner unbecoming a talmid chacham of stature. Your children heard your complaints, your bitul, nullification, of the revered status of the other rabbanim. Like "good" children, they emulated their father. When they saw no respect, they followed suit and similarly showed no respect. Why would they want to pursue Torah scholarship if they had no respect for its disseminators?" In other words, "What goes around comes around."

Rav Abitbul concludes with a poignant mashal, analogy, from the Chafetz Chaim which goes to the very crux of the problem: A terrible illness was plaguing children. The toll was rising daily, as more children became very ill. One doctor was able to come up with a medicine that would cure the disease that was ravaging thousands of children. He was a good and kind man, producing the serum himself at his own expense. He then traveled from town to town administering the drug, literally saving thousands of children from the jaws of death. One day, his journey was tragically interrupted by a thief, who, after beating him, took his satchel, which contained the vials of life-saving serum. When the doctor arrived in the next city, he was besieged by hopeful parents who each wanted only one thing from him: the medicine that would save their sick children. Alas, with tears in his eyes, he informed them that he was unable to help them. His medicine had been stolen. Suddenly, a man carrying a very sick child pushed himself through the throngs of people surrounding the doctor. He cried bitterly to the doctor, "You must save my son. He is all that I have. Please do not allow him to die. Give me the medicine to save him!" As this was going on, the doctor took a penetrating look at the man, and realized that he was the thief who had beaten him earlier and stolen the medicine.

The doctor, who was a compassionate man, told the thief, "I forgive you for what you did to me, but give me back my satchel. I must have it. All of my medicine vials were in there." The thief was regretful and apologetic when he responded, "They were of no value to me, so I threw them away into the river."

The doctor looked at the thief with great sorrow as he told him, "You threw away the only opportunity to save your precious child. I cannot help you. You have only yourself to blame."

The lesson is quite simple. The rabbinic leaders, rebbeim, all have the therapeutic vials of Torah that offer a way out, a cure from the maladies plaguing society, and, by extension, our children. When a father - or mother - disparages those who devote their lives to our children, they are, in fact, impugning the integrity of the only ones who can help their child. They are essentially stealing the medicine from the physician. How can a parent hope that his child will behave a certain way when he has undermined any opportunity for success?

Many fathers put in a long day of difficult labor, returning home in the evening, physically exhausted and emotionally drained. Yet, they put themselves together and go to a shiur, a chavrusa - even if it means falling asleep during the learning, out of sheer fatigue. A fellow in Eretz Yisrael had such a habit. He came to shiur every night - after a long, hard day - and, after sitting down and propping up his sefer, proceeded to fall asleep. At first, his friends would nudge him awake, but, after a while, it appeared that he really needed the rest. They encouraged him to join an early-morning shiur, which he could attend after having had a decent night's sleep. Why did he insist on attending at night when he could not stay awake for the shiur?

His response should give us something to think about. He explained that every night his children saw him leaving the house with his Gemorah in hand on the way to the bais ha'medrash to learn. This is the image that they had of their father. This is the image he wanted them to savor in their minds. We must ask ourselves: What image do we project to our children? Is it one of learning with dedication, of davening with devotion, or is it something very much the opposite? We must remember that what they see in their youth is what they think we are sanctioning for them to emulate.

Va'ani Tefillah Avinu Malkeinu - Our Father, our King.

Previously, in the brachah of Yotzer or, we referred to Hashem as Melech ha'olam, "King of the World," because that brachah addresses the universal blessings which the entire world community enjoys as common blessings. Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, observes that Avinu Malkeinu is applied in connection to the Torah as our gift, our vocation, our heritage and legacy. It is not a universal gift. Hashem gave the Torah to us. After all, every other nation had the chance, but they repudiated it. This establishes a unique relationship between Hashem and the Jewish People. He is our Father, our King. We are His favorite son and His closest people. When He was "giving," we accepted. Having Hashem as our Father - not only our G-d and King - denotes that He especially created us out of a unique love, which is the reason that He bestows special gifts - both general and individual - on us. "King" indicates special interest and supervision, with unusual guidance founded upon His wisdom and power. By referring to Hashem as "Our Father", we are intimating that all of His love is for Klal Yisrael. By calling Him "our King", we are saying that His conducting the affairs of the entire world is all for Klal Yisrael.

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