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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org genesis@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Thu, Aug 15, 2013 at 6:05 PM subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Ki Seitzei

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Ki Seitzei

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #911, Returning A Lost Pacifier. Good Shabbos! Never Miss Subscription Series

You Can't Turn A Blind Eye

This week's parsha contains the following three pasukim: "You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep driven away, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely bring them back to your brother. And if your brother not be near you and you don't know him, then you shall bring it home to your house and it shall be with you until your brother inquires of it, and then you will restore it to him. And so shall you do with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment, and so shall you do with every lost thing of your brother's which he has lost; and you have found; you may not hide yourself." [Devorim 22: 1-3].

It is noteworthy about this passage that in these 3 pasukim, the word "achicha" [your brother] appears 5 times! We know that the Torah is extremely economical when it comes to choosing its words. There does appear to be some redundant use of the word "achicha". The pasukim could have easily been written without using this same word again and again and ag ain. Obviously, the Torah is trying to tell us something by the repetitive use of this word.

I saw an interesting explanation of this in an essay by Rav Matisyahu Solomon. Rav Matisyahu Solomon bases his thought on a Medrash in Parshas Vayetzei. When Lavan chased after Yaakov Avinu and it was not at all clear whether or not his intention was to actually do battle with Yaakov, the pasuk tells us that Yaakov instructed his children: "Gather stones" [Bereshis 31:46]. However, the pasuk there uses the expression "Vayomer Yaakov el echav" (and Yaakov said to his brethren), rather than "Vayomer Yaakov el banav" (and Yaakov said to his sons), even though it is clear from the context that he was speaking to his sons!

Rashi there notes this anomaly and explains that the Torah used the word "echav" to connote that Yaakov and his children were "brothers in arms". When one is willing to risk his life for someone else he loves, the word the Torah uses to express this relati onship is "achva" [brotherhood]. The Torah was not addressing the biological relationship between Yaakov and his sons. Rather, it was addressing the emotional and strategic relationship that was coming to bear in the impending confrontation with Lavan.

The Medrash Rabbah in Vayetzei makes almost the same comment. It emphasizes that in the Holy Language (Lashon HaKodesh), words define the essence of an object. The word "achva" [brotherhood] in its essence means a comrade in arms, a kinship of emotions and of purpose. It has nothing to do with whether the person is a sibling or an offspring.

This information clarifies the redundancy of the word "achicha" in these three pasukim.

The Torah is not merely telling us in the mitzvah of returning a lost object that when one finds a watch, he returns it to his owner. The Torah is telling us is that the relationship between a Jew and his fellow Jew should be that of an "ach" -- the type of person one cares about, a person about whom one is constantly concerned with his welfare. A kinship must exists between the two of us.

Rabbeinu Yona writes regarding this mitzvah writes: "The Torah warns us to care about our brothers in the time of their trouble." Rabbeinu Yona advises regarding this mitzvah that every community should have organizations that are there to take care of the needs of the people of the town. Groups such as Bikur Cholim Societies, Jewish Family Services, etc. are thus all under the rubric of "Returning a Lost Object" (HaShavas Aveidah). If it is incumbent to take care of the person's ox, it is certainly incumbent to take care of the person himself!

Rav Matisyahu concludes his essay with a beautiful analysis of the expression "lo suchal li'hisalem" [you are not able to look away]. Normally, if the Torah was going to forbid us to ignore the lost object of one's fellow Jew, the Torah should have simply said "Do not look away" (Lo Tisalem). That is not what the Torah said.

What does the Torah mean when it says Lo Suchal L'hisalem? It means "You CAN'T walk away! You are not CAPABLE of turning a blind eye!" Why? "Because he is your brother." That is the message here. This is the relationship a person should have with his fellow Jew: Not merely you should not walk away; but you CAN'T walk away!

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from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org date: Thu, Aug 15, 2013 at 3:55 PM subject: Rabbi Mordechai Willig - Overcoming Amalek: Certainty and Passion

Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Overcoming Amalek: Certainty and Passion

I

"Zachor es asher asa lecha Amalek...asher karcha baderech - Remember what Amalek did to you...that they happened upon you" (Devarim 25:17-18). Rashi explains "karcha" to indicate something happening by chance - mikreh. Amalek represents the idea of chance happenings which are devoid of Divine Providence. "Va'ye'sa'per Haman l'Zerech ishto u'l'kol ohavov es kol ahser karahu - Haman told his wife and friends all that had happened to him" (Esther 6:13). Haman was the descendant of Amalek who happened upon you (Esther Rabbah 8:5). He attributed everything to chance sued the casting of lots, a random selection method, to choose the date on which to destroy us. The holiday of our victory, aptly named Purim - Lots, resulted from our realization that Hashem guides world events and as such our cries and repentance can save us.

In the Sinai desert Am Yisrael doubted if Hashem was in their midst and determining whether they would have water to drink (Shemos 17:1-2). After recording Hashem's revealing to us the miraculous well which provided water to us throughout our sojourn in the desert, the Torah relates the attack of Amalek - "va'ya'vo Amalek va'yi'lachem b'Yisrael - Amalek came and battled Yisrael" (Shemos 17:8). Rashi explains that the juxtaposition of pessukim teaches us that the attack of Amalek, who denies Hashem's involvement in daily life, was a result of our lack of faith. "I am always among you and prepared to address all of your needs, and you say (17:7) 'Is Hashem in our midst or not?' By your life, the dog (i.e. Amalek) will come and bite you causing you to cry out to me and you will know where I am" (Rashi).

Unlike Amalek, Am Yisrael never denied Hashem's presence, they merely doubted it. However, in matters of fundamental faith there can be no room for doubt. Indeed, the gematria of Amalek is safek - doubt. Eliminating doubt regarding principles of faith is, thus, a fulfillment of the mitzvah (25:19) of wiping out Amalek.

Kar'cha, which we translated before to mean "happened upon you" also means "cooled you off" (as in kar - cold). Rashi (25:18) explains that until Amalek attacked we were viewed by potential enemies as "too hot to touch", but once Amalek attacked, the other enemies felt able to attack as well. Alternatively we can understand this "cooling" to mean that our boiling heat, i.e. our fiery "bren" and passion in the service of Hashem, was cooled by their attack. As such, restoring that passion is a fulfillment of wiping out Amalek as well.

II

The two dangers of Amalek, casting doubt and reducing passion, are closely related. It is impossible to be passionate about a doubtful premise. Theological weakness inevitably leads to laxity in observance.

Hashem instructs us: Beware lest you forget the day that Hashem spoke to you from the midst of the fire. It may not be removed from your heart all your days, and you must inform your children and grandchildren (Devarim 4:9-12). The Ramban understood this charge to include not forgetting the revelation at Sinai, Hashem's greatness, and the words that we heard from the midst of the fire, and also transmitting it to our descendants forever. He further explains that Hashem revealed Himself in order that we fear Him and teach this all to our children for all generations.

Hashem said to Moshe "I will appear to you in a thick cloud, so that the people will hear as I speak to you, and they will also believe in you forever." (Shemos 19:9) The Ramban (ibid) explains: when we teach the revelation to our children, they will know it is true without a doubt as if they saw it themselves, for we will not testify falsely to our children. They will believe with certainty a) that we all saw [the revelation] with our own eyes and b) all that we tell them.

Certain and everlasting faith does not emerge from philosophical inquiry. It requires the belief that our fathers and mothers are telling the truth which they received from their parents (see Family Redeemed by Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, p. 58, 115). Torah's principles are articulated by our Torah leaders in every generation, from Moshe until today, who transmit them to their disciples. Its passion is rooted in the fire of Sinai and has, and must continue to be, passed from one generation to another.

For hundreds of years the accepted fundamentals of faith have been the thirteen principles of faith articulated by the Rambam (for further discussion of the indispensability of these principles, see What Must a Jew Believe? Foundational Beliefs and Their Practical Implications, by Rabbi Michael Rosensweig). In the siddur these principles are prefaced by the words, "I believe with complete faith," emphasizing the aforementioned need for absolute and unconditional faith. Such complete faith is a prerequisite for the passionate self-sacrifice required for proper religious observance. Furthermore, historically, the capacity to make the ultimate sacrifice of kiddush Hashem, forfeiting one's life to sanctify Hashem's name when called upon to do so, is linked to, and accompanied by, pure and simple faith.(Chasid Yaavetz, Or Hachaim Chapter 5).

III

Recently, some have doubted the substance and normative nature of the Rambam's principles. The principles they question include the Divine authorship of the entire Torah, the institution of prophecy, and the coming of a human messiah. Not unexpectedly, significant controversy has ensued.

Some of these doubts are expressed in the spirit of modernity or openness. These popular notions resonate in a world of post-modernism and non-judgmentalism. However, principles of faith require certainty and passion. The term Orthodox, which literally means "straight knowledge", requires its adherents to unquestionably affirm all of its time-honored principles of faith. Abandonment of this certainty affects religious observance as well.

"Milchama la'Hashem ba'Amalek mi'dor dor - Hashem maintains a war against Amalek, from generation to generation" (Shemos 17:16), meaning forever. Rav Hutner (Pachad Yitzchak, Purim p. 65) interprets that Amalek causes a "generation gap", seducing children to scoff at the traditions of their parents and teachers. To overcome Amalek, we must close that gap by seamlessly transmitting absolute and passionate faith to the next generations of Orthodox Jews.

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from: Shabbat Shalom <ShabbatShalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: ShabbatShalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, Aug 15, 2013 at 5:57 PM subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU

The Parameters of Justice

Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

In Deuteronomy 24, we encounter for the first time the explicit statement of a law of far-reaching significance: "Parents shall not be put to death for children, nor children who put to death for parents: a person shall be put to death only for his own crime. (Deut. 24:16)"

We have strong historical evidence as to what this law was excluding, namely vicarious punishment, the idea that someone else may be punished for my crime: For example, in the Middle Assyrian Laws, the rape of unbetrothed virgin who lives in her father's house is punished by the ravishing of the rapist's wife, who also remains thereafter with the

father of the victim. Hammurabi decrees that if a man struck a pregnant woman, thereby causing her to miscarry and die, it is the assailant's daughter who is put to death. If a builder erected a house which collapsed, killing the owner's son, then the builder's son, not the builder, is put to death. (Nahum Sarna, Exploring Exodus, p. 176)

We also have inner-biblical evidence of how the Mosaic law was applied. Joash, one of the righteous kings of Judah, attempted to stamp out corruption among the priests, and was assassinated by two of his officials. He was succeeded by his son Amaziah, about whom we read the following: After the kingdom was firmly in his grasp, he [Amaziah] executed the officials who had murdered his father the king. Yet he did not put the sons of the assassins to death, in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses where the Lord commanded: "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sins." (2 Kings:14: 5-6)

The obvious question, however, is: how is this principle compatible with the idea, enunciated four times in the Mosaic books, that children may suffer for the sins of their parents?" The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." (Ex. 34: 7; see also 20:5; Numbers 14: 18; Deut. 5: 8)

The short answer is simple: It is the difference between human justice and divine justice. We are not God. We can neither look into the hearts of wrongdoers nor assess the full consequences of their deeds. It is not given to us to execute perfect justice, matching the evil a person suffers to the evil he causes. We would not even know where to begin. How do you punish a dictator responsible for the deaths of millions of people? How do you weigh the full extent of a devastating injury caused by drunken driving, where not only the victim but his entire family are affected for the rest of their lives? How do we assess the degree of culpability of, say, those Germans who knew what was happening during the Holocaust but did or said nothing? Moral guilt is a far more difficult concept to apply than legal guilt.

Human justice must work within the parameters of human understanding and regulation. Hence the straightforward rule: no vicarious punishment. Only the wrongdoer is to suffer, and only after his guilt has been established by fair and impartial judicial procedures. That is the foundational principle set out, for the first time in Deuteronomy 24: 16.

However, the issue did not end there. In two later prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we find an explicit renunciation of the idea that children might suffer for the sins of their parents, even when applied to Divine justice. Here is Jeremiah, speaking in the name of God: In those days people will no longer say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes-his own teeth will be set on edge. (Jeremiah 31: 29-30)

And this, Ezekiel: The word of the Lord came to me: "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: 'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son-both alike belong to me. The soul that sins is the one who will die." (Ezekiel 18: 1-3)

The Talmud (Makkot 24a) raises the obvious question. If Ezekiel is correct, what then happens to the idea of children being punished to the third and fourth generation? Its answer is astonishing: Said R. Jose ben Hanina: Our master Moses pronounced four [adverse] sentences on Israel, but four prophets came and revoked them . . . Moses said, "He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." Ezekiel came and declared: "The soul that sins is the one who will die." Moses decreed: Ezekiel came and annulled the decree! Clearly the matter cannot be that simple. After all, it was not Moses who decreed this, but God Himself. What do the sages mean?

They mean, I think, this: the concept of perfect justice is beyond human understanding, for the reasons already given. We can never fully know the degree of guilt. Nor can we know the full extent of responsibility. The Mishnah in Sanhedrin (4: 5), says that a witness in capital cases was solemnly warned that if, by false testimony, a person was wrongly sentenced to death, he, the witness, "is held responsible for his [the accused's] blood and the blood of his [potential] descendants until the end of time." Nor, when we speak of Providence, is it always possible to distinguish punishment from natural consequence. A drug-addicted mother gives birth to a drug-addicted child. A violent father is assaulted by his violent son. Is this retribution or genetics or environmental influence? When it comes to Divine, as opposed to human justice, we can never reach beyond the most rudimentary understanding, if that.

Two things are clear from God's words to Moses. First, He is a God of compassion but also of justice – since without justice, there is anarchy, but without compassion, there is neither humanity nor hope. Second, in the tension between these two values, God's compassion vastly exceeds His justice. The former is forever ("to thousands [of generations]"). The latter is confined to the lifetime of the sinner: the "third and fourth generation" (grandchildren and great-grandchildren) are the limits of posterity one can expect to see in a human lifetime.

What Jeremiah and Ezekiel are talking about is something else. They were speaking about the fate of the nation. Both lived and worked at the time of the Babylonian exile. They were fighting a mood of despair among the people. "What can we do? We are being punished for the sins of our forefathers." Not so, said the prophets. Each generation holds its destiny in its own hands. Repent, and you will be forgiven, whatever the sins of the past – yours or those who came before you.

Justice is a complex phenomenon, Divine justice infinitely more so. One thing, however, is clear. When it comes to human justice, Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all agree: children may not be punished for the sins of their parents. Vicarious punishment is simply unjust.

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit www.chiefrabbi.org.

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from: **Rabbi Yitz Etshalom** <rebyitz@torah.org> reply-to: rebyitz+@torah.org to: mikra@torah.org date: Thu, Aug 15, 2013 at 8:24 AM subject: Mikra - Parshat Ki Seitzei

Parshas Ki Seitzei

Psalm 27 - Hashem Ori v'Yish'i

I INTRODUCTION

Beginning on the first day of Elul, nearly all communities begin reciting Psalm 27 ("God is my Light and Salvation") twice daily, continuing through the end of Sukkot. In Eretz Yisra'el, the custom is to continue through Hosha'na Rabba (21 Tishri) and in the Diaspora the recitation continues through Sh'mini 'Atzeret (22 Tishri). (Parenthetically, this is the only custom - of which I'm aware - which binds together the reflective season of Elul with the festivities of Sukkot). Although all traditions who recite it exclusively during this season (the Vilna Ga'on did not recite it, due to his general principle of only reciting one "Psalm of the day" per day; some eastern communities recite this Psalm every day of the year) include the recitation during Shaharit (at some point after the Shir Shel Yom), the second recitation is subject to different customs. Ashkenazim say it after 'Arvit, whereas Hasidim and S'pharadim recite it after Minhah.

Significantly, there is no mention of this custom anywhere in the literature of the Rishonim (and certainly not in Rabbinic literature); it

first appears in a Siddur published by R. Shabtai of Raskov (1788). Nonetheless, as noted above, the custom of reciting it during this season is nearly universal and almost assuredly predates the late-18th century. Generally, the custom is associated with the Midrash, which appears much earlier than the custom, which interprets the opening line as a reference to the highlight of the season:

(another interpretation:) the Rabbis interpret the verse as referring to Rosh haShanah and Yom haKippurim. [Hashem is] my Light on Rosh haShana, which is the day of judgment, as it says: And He shall bring forth your righteousness like the light, and your judgment like the noonday. (T'hillim 37:6). My Salvation on Yom haKippurim, when He saves us and forgives us for all of our wrongdoings (Midrash T'hillim 27:3).

In this essay, we will address two interrelated issues: The "sense" of the psalm and its propriety to the season. As will soon be demonstrated, identifying the coherence of the chapter is no easy matter - it seems, prima facie, to be two unrelated psalms that were "fused" together. As we review the text, we will note the point at which "Psalm A" becomes "Psalm B" - after which, we will demonstrate the literary coherence of the psalm and then address the thematic integration - which will help us understand the association with this season of Elul-Tishri.

II THE TEXT - TRANSLATION AND COMMENTS

l'David. 1. Hashem is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? Hashem is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?

As we pointed out in our analysis of Psalm 47, the "superscription" which appears as the heading of many of the psalms need not be understood in a uniform manner. Whereas some superscriptions indicate dedication (e.g. 122, 72) and others may point to composition with a particular group of Levite musicians in mind (e.g. Sa'adiah's explanation of "T'fillah l'Mosheh" - #90, as well as one suggestion of the Korahide psalms), the most conventional and "straightest" explanation is that the superscription operates as a colophon which identifies the author of the psalm. Further on (at v. 4), we will assay the likelihood of that approach here.

The psalm opens with a parallelism (light:salvation) within a parallelism (light/salvation : strength of my life). The tone here is one of confidence - which will grow as we proceed through the psalm. Note that God is not being addressed here; rather it is an audience (or a musing) who hears these praises of God and of the security, enabled by God's Presence, experienced and extolled by the psalmist.

2. When the wicked, my enemies and my adversaries, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

Whereas the first verse gave us no direct information as to the context of the fearlessness, we are now brought into the direct circumstance where this security is felt. The setting here (explicated yet more overtly in the next verse) is one of war - which heightens our curiosity as to the propriety of this psalm to the season of Elul through Sukkot.

This verse utilizes three words for enemies (m're'im, tzarai, oyvai li) which neatly parallel the three words/terms used to describe the security of God's Presence in the previous verse (ori, yish'i, ma'oz hayyay).

The final two words - stumble and fall (kash'lu v'naphalu) are utilized in war contexts throughout T'nakh (e.g. Vayyikra 26:36-37).

3. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, even then I will be confident.

The casual reader often assumes the second word (tahaneh) to be second person male singular - to wit: "If you encamp", but it neither makes sense given the sympathetic audience, nor is it supported by the second stich. Rather, since Mahaneh (camp) is a feminine noun, the word Tahaneh is to be understood as third person feminine singular (as translated above). Thus, the (army) camp (in the first stich) and its parallel "war" (in the second stich) are both treated as active.

4. One thing have I desired of Hashem, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Hashem, and l'vaqer in His temple.

Given the doubled stress ("One thing…that I will seek" - Ahat sha'alti…otah avaqesh), it is proper to understand the word "only" in translation: There is only one thing that I ask of God, that is what I will seek after…

While the sentiment of this verse is, to say the least, both noble and inspiring (and the source of many beautiful songs), it seems to border on religious "over-confidence" (arrogance?). The psalmist is so assured of his physical safety as ensured by God's Presence, that he seems to take that for granted - and can turn his attention to his one true desire. We will yet address this mercurial expression of emotion.

Although the psalmist stresses that he has only one request - note that there are six components to the request (dwell in the house, behold the beauty, l'vaqer, hide me, protect me, set me upon a rock). This is not unusual, since all six are aspects of the one basic request - to maintain this level of intense cleaving to God, as expressed both in physical security and spiritual enlightenment.

As we mentioned in the comments on the superscription, this verse has much to tell us about the authorship of the psalm - or does it? At first glance, one might argue that any mention of Beit Hashem and Heikhalo militate strongly against Davidic composition, since the Bayit (and Heikhal) were not built until after his death. This proof, however, may be used against itself. Since the psalmist experiences such intrepidity in the face of danger, conquering the only obstacle with which he is challenged, the only thing left to desire is the one thing withheld from him (see II Sh'mu'el chapter 7). As such, l'David is most easily rendered "of David", i.e. authored by David.

Notice that I haven't translated the word l'vaqer; it is not only difficult to translate, but what is the most likely translation gives us an opportunity to expand our awareness of the beauty of Hebrew.

The various times of day are not depicted by arbitrary words; rather, they relate to the opportunities afforded by that time. Since the central utility which shifts during the hours of the day is visual acuity, that is the central emphasis in the Hebrew words used to define this time.

Ramban (Sh'mot 12:6) maintains that the three terms 'erev, boker, tzohorayim cover all times of the day (based on Psalms 55:18).

As R. Avraham ibn Ezra (B'resheet 1:5) explains, the word Erev (evening) is anchored in the same root - 'RB, which means "to mix, to combine" (hence - 'Eruv, a mixing of ownership of property; the verb 'arev, to mix its homophonic noun 'arev - a co-signer, who has admixed his responsibilities with that of the borrower.). This is a time of day when it becomes hard to distinguish various items from each other (e.g. a pole and a man); the lack of visual acuity leads to a "mixture" of sensory input as it is translated by the brain. As ibn Ezra himself states: yit'arvu bo hatzurot - various forms become intermingled at this time.

The middle of the day, tzohorayim, comes from the root TzHR, (and its variant ZHR), meaning "gleam" - that is the time when the light is strongest and clearest. According to Ramban (ibid.), the paired form (tzohorayim) is used because there are two hours at the middle of the day which most properly take this name.

The root BQR means "investigate" (cf. Vayyikra 19:20). The first time of day when visual investigation becomes possible is after sunrise - hence, the morning is called Boqer.

As a result of various stages of this philology, some commentators (Rashi, Ibn Ezra) read the phrase l'vaqer b'Heikhalo as "to visit His Sanctuary every morning" (taking the applied meaning of bqr); however, others (Radak, Me'iri) understand it as "to cogitate" - i.e. to contemplate the various aspects of Godliness. This explanation, favored by modern commentators as well, fits more comfortably with the use of the root as a verb (using the verb as connected with "morning" is unattested in T'nakh). In addition, it fits contextually, as the single request increases in

intensity: 1) to sit in God's House 2) to gaze at the beauty of God 3) to contemplate His Presence (or His teachings - see the elliptic comment of Me'iri).

5. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in Sukkoh (His pavilion); under the cover of His tent shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock.

This is the continuation of the "one request" introduced in the previous verse. Parallel to the three aspects of nearness to God expressed in v. 4, this verse highlights three forms of protection from enemies which the psalmist expects God to employ on his behalf. The first of the three protections (his pavilion) serves as the hook on which to hang the extension of the recitation through Sukkot.

The "rock" mentioned here likely refers to a cropping of rocks which forms a natural fortress and protection from the enemy. This is also known as a M'tzad (see Shoftim 6:2).

6. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies around me; therefore I will offer in His tent sacrifices of joy; I will sing, I will make music to Hashem.

The reasonable conclusion of all of this praise is to offer thanksgiving to God. The mention of the tent (as opposed to "the House") serves as added support for Davdic composition, as the Ark was housed in a tent during his rule.

At this point, we have reached the conclusion of "Psalm A". The first and final words in this section are God's Name - and the entire piece is of one tone (confident) and one address (an audience of supporters or allies).

Observe how dramatically and suddenly everything shifts as we begin "Psalm B": 7. Hear, Hashem, when I cry with my voice; be gracious to me, and answer me.

The psalmist turns to God, turning his back on an audience (if it exists at all) and is begging for Divine grace. Not only is the tone one of supplication, but the psalmist is even unsure of God's readiness to hear his prayer.

8. Of You my heart said, "Seek My face"; Your face, Hashem, will I seek!

He continues to introduce his prayer with this justification - he is, to wit, impelled to seek out God and to pray to Him as it is the incessant urging of his heart which has driven him so.

9. Hide not Your face from me; put not Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not abandon me, nor forsake me, O God of my salvation.

Note how drastically the tone varies from the earlier exaltation - the psalmist has angered God and faces the worst possible consequence: The hiding of the Divine Countenance (see D'varim 31:17-18). The fear of experiencing a manifestation of deus abscondum is explicated as God abandoning & forsaking the psalmist.

10. For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but Hashem will take me up.

It is unclear whether this verse is part of the prayer or an aside, reflecting the psalmist's hope that it will be answered. In any case, the sense of desperation and isolation is intensified here, as all "safety nets" have been removed and the psalmist has only one hope left to him - "we can only turn to our Father in Heaven".

11. Teach me Your way, Hashem, and lead me on a level path, because of my enemies.

It is curious that the psalmist, in his return to the direct-address prayer, pleads for God's direction (certainly a noble request) with less than noble motivations. Instead of asking that God lead him on the proper path for its own sake, or to become closer to God, his focus is utilitarian and defensive. He hopes that his enemies will wither away when they sense God's Presence in his life due to the instruction he receives. His motivation highlights the desperation he feels, that even proximity to God is chiefly viewed as a vehicle to safety.

12. Do not give me up to the will of my enemies; for false witnesses have risen up against me, and they breathe out violence.

Some render Nephesh ("will") as "throat", claiming that the imagery utilized here is one of the enemy swallowing up his prey; although an unnecessary extravagance, this picturesque approach is poetically attractive. The final phrase viY'fe'ach Hamas is often rendered "breath violence" (as here), understanding the penultimate word as associated with the root NPhCh. The form belies this, and the suggestion has been raised, both based on the parallelism within the verse and a common use in Ugaritic, that we understand the meaning of Y'fe'ach as "witness". This meaning is possibly attested to in Mishlei 14:25.

13. Were it not that I believe I should see the goodness of Hashem in the land of the living.

This verse is awkward any way it may be read. [Those who suggest an emendation of the first word Lulei do so unnecessarily; a brief foray into the various forms of speech in T'nakh will clarify the strange construction here.] The conditional clause is present, to wit: If I hadn't held my faith… but the consequence is missing. What would have happened had the psalmist wavered in his belief? The next verse does nothing to satisfy our discomfort - at no point is the conditional resolved.

It is, however, not all that strange to find similarly elliptical statements in T'nakh. The usual form of an oath, taken by the challenged party (as opposed to administered by an officiant), includes an oath-formula introduction (usually invoking a reference to God), the word Im (if) and the opposite of the truth statement to which he is attesting. For example, when Ya'akov and Lavan formalize their separation pact at Gal-Ed, Lavan states:

If you shall afflict my daughters, or if you shall take other wives beside my daughters, although no man is with us, God is witness between me and you. (B'resheet 31:50).

Lavan never states what will happen if Ya'akov violates the pact. That is the form of oaths - to leave the punishment unstated. This may be done to increase the anxiety relating to a violation or merely to avoid stating such a terrible consequence; either way, an undesirable and terrifying result of a presently hypothetical situation (e.g. violating an oath, losing faith) need not be explicated. The ellipses serve a greater purpose, leaving the unstated punishment looming over the head of the speaker.

In our case, the psalmist is averring that if he were to lose his faith in ultimately seeing God (or however we understand the end of the verse), something awful would have befallen him (most likely, he would have been "lost").

14. Wait on Hashem; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; and wait on Hashem.

This final verse is hard to assimilate into either "Psalm B" or "Psalm A". It doesn't reflect a prayerful stance, as in "B", addressed to God; neither is it exuberant and confident as in "A". It is, rather, exhortative to the (probably) receptive audience. This leaves us with two questions regarding this verse - to which section of the psalm does it belong and what are we to make of the doubled phrase Kaveh el Hashem? However we might translate Kaveh (hope, wait, pray, long for, anticipate etc.), it is the only repeated phrase in the psalm; a phenomenon which deserves our attention.

III LITERARY CLUES TOWARDS TEXTUAL INTEGRATION

All of the information presented so far points us towards the "two-psalm" approach; two independent psalms, one a petition and the other an exaltation, were merged into one unit. In spite of the evidence presented thus far, this approach is hard to maintain even without the literary clues we will utilize further on. Why would anyone combine two psalms which are so different in tone and address, creating one confusing hybrid? The vast difference between "Psalm A" and "Psalm B", ironically, lends support to textual unity.

Beyond that, however, here are some significant observations regarding the literary structure and deliberate use of words which serve to clearly tie the two sections together.

1) As the attached chart shows, even though the two halves are imbalanced in number of verses, they have the identical amount of phrases (I am using the schema suggested by Rav Elhanan Samet, whose observations form the core of this shiur.) 2) God's Name appears six times in each half - thus increasing the sense of deliberate balance between the sections. 3) Perhaps most telling, there are a significant number of words which are repeated in both halves - including some words which are relatively uncommon in T'nakh. What makes the textual unity at once clearer while increasing our confusion is the dialectic method in which the same word is used in each half. For instance, in v. 1, the psalmist declares that God is "my salvation" - as part of trumpeting his confidence in his virtual invulnerability. In v. 9, in contradistinction, God who is "the God of my salvation" is beseeched not to turn away and expose the psalmists vulnerability. The same tzarai who "bite the dust" in v. 2 are the tzarai who threaten to eat the psalmist alive in v. 12. A most convincing example of this method of ironic repetition is the use of the root STR. In v. 5, the psalmist is confident that God will hide him in the folds of His tent; in v. 9, the psalmist begs God not to hide His countenance from him.

We have, so far, demonstrated that this psalm should be treated, after all, as one textual unit, made up of three sections; vv. 1-6, 7-13 and v. 14. That raises the bar significantly, for we now have to explain the vast difference in tone (and address) between the two halves and the purpose and meaning of the epilogue.

IV THE SOLUTION

The relationship between God and Man, while multi-faceted and constantly shifting, admits of two poles - "God seeking Man" and "Man seeking God".

There are times in the life of the individual - and of the nation - when God addresses Man, seeking him out and making His Presence felt in all of its immanent power. The model for this overpowering meeting is the Stand at Sinai, when God "descended" on Mount Sinai, which was then covered with a thick cloud as smoke, fire, lightning and the sound of the Shofar were felt by the entire nation at the foot of the mountain. (see Sh'mot 19, 20:15, 24:16-17 and Mekhilta at 20:15). This is similar to the experience of a coronation, when the king, in all of his splendor and glory, is presented to the people with fanfare, pomp and circumstance.

There are times when Man has to set out, in quiet solitude and with no assurances, to seek God. No earthquake, conflagration or tornado highlights the meeting - Man is listening for the still, small Voice. There are oft-times in life when it feels as if God's Presence has waned and the burden falls upon us to seek Him out. The model for this "timid" meeting is, ironically, atop the same mountain. After the initial giving of the Torah, with all of the commotion cited above, the B'nei Yisra'el eventually violated the covenant and built a golden calf, which they idolized. When the various stages of Mosheh's supplication to God that He spare the nation were completed, he was told to ascend the mountain again to renew the covenant. This time, however, there was no shofar blast, no smoke, fire or lightning. Mosheh was not entering a Divine cloud which had descended; rather, Mosheh himself had to ascend the mountain, seeking out God and His forgiveness.

Each half of our psalm reflects the station of a person found in either of these poles of the continuum in this relationship. The first half ("Psalm A") is sung by someone who is engulfed in God's Presence, hearing the shofar, surrounded by the Divine cloud, with nary a thought of outside threats (which cease to exist) and only a deep yearning to make this station permanent.

The second half ("Psalm B") is the prayer of a person who feels isolated, desperate and far from God, seeking Him out at every juncture, terrified by the possibility of failure and begging God not to turn from him.

Although we have "aligned" the two opposing halves with the poles of the relationship between God and Man, we have yet to explain why they are presented in one (deliberately) unified text. The epilogue, in the light of the questions we asked on that final verse, will be the key to our answer.

The two poles of this relationship - the overwhelming distance and the overwhelming Presence - share one common feature. Both inhere the danger, for Man, of losing his bearings in this, the most important relationship in which he is engaged.

The man who has been met by God, in all of His glory, can fall into the trap of believing that it can never be different. This total envelopment in God's Presence, expressed by Haza"l in such statements as "He held the mountain over them like a pot" (following Mahara"l's explanation), "For every word uttered by God, their souls fled their bodies" etc. can lead Man to feel that he never need to worry about suffering from distance. This is always a source of Man's downfall - as he cannot fathom the possibility of being pushed away from the Divine.

The man who feels isolated, frightened and desperate can give up hope, again never believing that his station can ever change.

To the proud marcher in the Independence Day parade of 1968 and to the mourning relative outside of Sbarro's; to the confident trader on September 10 and to the despairing relative with a picture titled "Missing" on September 11; to the one and to the other the psalmist turns and exhorts: Kaveh el Hashem. Never lose your hope and expectation and your awareness that all of this may not last; and never give up hope, falling into the despair of accepting your isolation as permanent. Kaveh el Hashem.

V THE SEASON

As we have discussed in our shiur on the Parashat haMo'adot, Rosh haShanah is presented in the Torah as a commemoration of the Stand at Sinai - a commemoration of a shofar-blast. This is, of course, the initial stage of Mattan Torah, complete with the entire audio-visual experience. Indeed, the central Mitzvah of the day is one of noise - the same noise as that heard at Sinai.

According to Rabbinic tradition, the day on which Mosheh finally descended Sinai for the third and final time, carrying the "second tablets" and the assurance of God's forgiveness was on Yom haKippurim - and this most singular of days is understood as a commemoration of that event. Here, again, there is one central Mitzvah - confession. This Mitzvah, unlike the shofar, is primarily fulfilled quietly "before God", approximating Mosheh's lonely ascent to Sinai to achieve God's forgiveness.

The duality of the season cuts much deeper than this; from the onset of "Elul", we are simultaneously gripped with dread of facing God in Judgment and excitement at the imminent coronation of the God of Israel. The fear and joy course throughout the season.

We now understand not only the sense of our integrated psalm - but also the propriety of reciting it during this season of feeling God's immanenc

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from: Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald <ezbuchwald@njop.org> via njop.ccsend.com reply-to: ezbuchwald@njop.org to: internetparshasheet@gmail.com date: Mon, Aug 12, 2013 at 4:23 PM
subject: Weekly Torah Message from Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald
Kee Teitzei 5773-2013

"The 'Mitzvah' of Divorce, Revisited"
by, Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

This week's parasha, parashat Kee Teitzei, speaks of the "mitzvah" of divorce. Although we have previously discussed the issue of divorce at length in Kee Teitzei 5768-2008, there are several important additional aspects that were not noted at that time that are worth reviewing.

The Torah, in Deuteronomy 24:1 states, "Kee yee'kach eesh eesha oov'ah'lah, v'ha'yah eem lo tim'tzah chayn b'ay'nahv, kee mah'tzah vah ehr'vaht dah'vahr, v'chah'tav lah seh'fer k'ree'toot, v'nah'tahn b'yah'dah v'shil'chah mee'bay'toh," If a man marries a woman and lives with her, and it will be that she will not find favor in his eyes, for he found in her a matter of immorality, and he wrote her a bill of divorce and presented it into her hands, and sent her from his house…she is then permitted to marry another man.

Despite the legal option of divorce, it is clear that Jewish tradition regards marriage as a sanctified bond that should ideally last a lifetime. A divorce, in Jewish tradition, is certainly regarded as a tragic event. The Talmud, in Tractate Gittin 90b, states, that even the altar sheds tears when a husband and wife divorce.

Although the Ketubah document, which is agreed upon at the time of the marriage, includes a guaranty of alimony payment, the proposed payments are more a reflection of love, than a contemplation of divorce. The husband, in effect, says to his wife, at that very special, sublime occasion: "I love you so much at this moment that, G-d forbid, if I ever fall out of love with you, I will make certain that you are properly cared and provided for."

Reconciling husbands and wives is considered to be a most meritorious religious act. In fact, the only instance in which erasing G-d's name is permissible is in the case of the Sotah, a wife suspected of adultery,(Numbers 5:23). In the hope of restoring peace in a marriage, G-d, in effect, says: Let My name be erased, as long as it brings about harmony between husband and wife.

In the Mishna, Gittin 9:10, the school of Shamai only permits divorce in the instance of a wife's infidelity. The school of Hillel, allows a husband to divorce his wife for a much broader range of reasons, including "spoiling a dish for him." Rabbi Akiva, dispenses with the notion of stringent grounds, and allows for divorce, even if a man has grown to prefer another woman to his present wife.

Since the verse (Deuteronomy 24:1) clearly specifies, "And he wrote her a bill of divorce," the rabbis established a requirement that the husband actually present the Get (the divorce document) to his wife. Not only must the husband write the Get, or appoint an emissary to write it, he must actually deliver it, or designate a representative to do so.

The fact that the man must initiate the Get, has resulted in many difficulties, where recalcitrant husbands refuse to grant their wives a divorce. In ancient times, this was not a serious problem because the courts of Jewish Law had the power and authority to coerce the reluctant husbands to give the Get. In fact, Maimonides (Gerushin 2:20), addresses the rabbis' concern that a Get must be given of the husband's free will, by stating that a resistant husband may be beaten until he says, "I wish to give the Get of my own free will."

Because of the resulting power differential between husbands and wives, the rabbis, over the centuries, have introduced numerous enactments designed to empower the wife and mitigate this imbalance. The Ketubah, the Jewish marriage contract, was the first and foremost document designed to protect women's rights in marriage, ensuring divorced and widowed women adequate support. The rabbis even ruled, That a wife may actually initiate divorce proceedings in certain circumstances.

In the 11th century, Rabbeinu Gershon of Mainz issued an enactment that forbade polygamy and also required the wife's agreement to divorce. These enactments were initially accepted by the entire Ashkenazic world, and eventually became the law in most of the world for Sephardic Jews as well. As a result, both parties must consent in the vast majority of divorces.

Maimonides suggests that the reason that the Torah requires a formal written divorce document and recourse to a court of Jewish law, is to ensure that a public record will exist that a particular man has divorced a particular woman. The public record now makes it impossible for either of them to masquerade as a widow or widower and remarry, which of course would violate the Torah prohibition of adultery.

The The Abarbanel explains, that since the husband takes upon himself the major burden of providing food for the family, he is entitled to expect that his wife be helpful and compatible. If for some reason she is not cooperative, and their home is not peaceful, tranquil and harmonious, the husband may divorce his wife.

The author of the Sefer Ha'Chinuch points out that the flexible Jewish approach to divorce is more reasonable than any of the other religions, some of which forbid divorce under any circumstances. The Chinuch suggests that it is far more reasonable to dissolve an incompatible marriage than to have the couple continue to live together under strain and friction. After all, it would not only harm the husband and wife, but the children, the extended families, and perhaps even the general community.

It is clear that in Jewish tradition, marriage is highly valued, and if divorce can be avoided, it is strongly preferred. The fact that the relationship between G-d and the People of Israel is described in terms of marriage, further underscores the high regard in which marriage is held.

While stability in family life is a much hoped-for ideal, Judaism was remarkably ahead of its time in understanding that unhappy spouses can sometimes not be reconciled. In such instances, divorce may be an unfortunate, but appropriate, option, that is not only in the best interests of the married couple, but for the collective well-being of the community of Israel, as well.

May you be blessed.

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, Aug 15, 2013
Peninim on the Torah
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
- Parshas Ki Seitzei

An Ammoni or Moavi shall not enter the congregation of Hashem… because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water… You shall not reject an Egyptian for you were a sojourner in their land. (23:4, 5, 8) Gratitude plays an important role in Judaism. The Torah does not countenance ingratitude. It is considered an indication of selfishness and mean-spiritedness - character deficiencies which do not integrate well into the Jewish nation. Thus, members of the nations of Ammon and Moav, both descendants of Lot, whose lives were spared as a result of our Patriarch's actions, are not accepted by members of the Jewish nation for marriage. They may convert, but their genes are unacceptable, due to their character flaw of ingratitude. The Egyptian, however, upon conversion, is accepted. Although we suffered greatly at the hands of the Egyptians, we may not ignore their hospitality. As a sign of appreciation, we allow them to convert and marry into the Jewish faith.

Chazal derive from the masculine use of the word Moavi/Amoni that the prohibition against marrying into the Jewish congregation applies only to males, but an Amonis/ Moavis, female, is acceptable for marriage after sincere conversion.

The classic example of this dispensation is Rus, who originally had been a Moavis. She subsequently, married Boaz, and became the progenitress of the Davidic dynasty. Chazal explain that it was the role of men to go out on the treacherous desert paths - not women. If so, how do we know that the Moavite women are not also carriers of the "gene of ingratitude," just as men are? The women never went out to the desert. Perhaps, had they been confronted with the same opportunity as the men, they, too, would have gone out. How do we determine that Moavite women are any different than the men?

We might suggest that everyone is born with an innate proclivity towards hakoras hatov, gratitude. We are created by Hashem, raised by parents. Our origins are based on the support of others. Our ability to function in society, to get along with others, is all gratitude-based. For one to be ungrateful goes against his basic human nature. When the Moavite men refused to greet the Jews, they indicated more than a simple character flaw. They demonstrated a break with their natural character by challenging their base tendency to appreciate and show gratitude. This is a character flaw at its nadir.

Society is based on the give and take of people. Those who only take, but refuse to give, are social misfits and not productive members of society. The yetzer hora, evil inclination, recognizes the significance of human interaction and the destructive force of ingratitude. Thus, it will do everything in its power to convince us not to be grateful. It offers us a plethora of excuses for ingratitude: "I did not ask for the favor;" "The favor was not performed exclusively for me;" "The benefactor had personal gain from the favor." The list goes on. Indeed, one who looks for excuses to feed his mean-spiritedness will find support.

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita, relates a classic story of ingratitude to which many of us might personally be able to relate. The lottery is an easy way to make money - only if one wins. It has become a big business, due to the many gullible people who jump at every opportunity to get rich quick. The story is told about a fellow by the name of Yossel, who lived a life of abject poverty. Yossel could ill afford even his daily staple of bread. His clothes were threadbare and dirty because he could not afford to wash them.

One day a vendor, who was selling lottery tickets, approached Yossel and made his pitch. "Why not buy a few tickets? This could be your lucky day. It will turn your entire life around," the vendor said.

"How can I buy even one ticket?" Yossel asked. "I do not have a penny to my name! Now leave me alone and allow me to continue begging. I have 'work' to do."

"Yossel, this could be the avenue for wealth and an end to your misery. At least buy one ticket," the fellow countered.

"Buy a lottery ticket when I cannot even buy a piece of bread? Are you out of your mind? I have no money. A lottery ticket is the last thing I would buy" was Yossel's answer.

The dialogue between the vendor and Yossel went on for hours. Yossel vehemently demurred. Finally, Yossel asked the vendor, "What do you want from me? Why will you not leave me alone?"

The conversation continued until the next day when the vendor, out of great compassion for Yossel's plight, offered to lend him the money to buy a ticket. Yossel looked at the vendor and asked, "Do you think I am a fool? So what if you will lend me the money? Have you ever heard that a loan must be paid back? How will I pay up the loan?" Yossel asked.

"I will lend you the money on a two-year payment plan," the vendor replied. He seriously wanted to help Yossel, and he thought this would be a wonderful way.

"I do not borrow," Yossel said. "If one cannot repay a loan, he should not borrow the money in the first place." This is a wonderful custom. Perhaps more of us should adhere to it.

"Last chance, Yossel," the vendor said. "I will lend you the money. If you win, you will pay me back. If you do not win, the loan will be my gift to you. You cannot lose."

Yossel relented and took the loan. He filled out his lottery ticket, thanked the vendor, said goodbye, and thought nothing more of it.

Two weeks later, the vendor who sold Yossel the ticket received a telegram that one of his tickets had come in a winner. He checked through the numbers, and, lo and behold, Yossel was a millionaire! It was late at night, brutally cold and snowy, but the vendor figured that he had to share the good news with Yossel. Such wonderful news could not wait until morning.

The vendor put on his coat and trudged outside. Yossel lived at the other end of town, in the low-rent district. It would be a long, cold walk, but well worth it, he thought. When he arrived at Yossel's "house," the vendor was covered from head to toe with a layer of snow. He knocked on the door many times, until Yossel finally responded, somewhat angrily, "Who has the gall to come knocking on my door so late at night?"

"It is I, the vendor, with some good news for you."

"What could be so important at this time of the night?" Yossel asked.

"I will tell you, but first, you must let me in out of the cold," the vendor replied.

"No," Yossel countered. "I will let you in when you tell me what is so important that you woke me for it."

Since Yossel was adamant and acting quite stubbornly, the vendor decided to share the good news with him - regardless of his implacable behavior. "Your lottery ticket came in a winner! You are a millionaire. No more begging for alms. For the first time in your life, you are your own man, beholden to no one."

Yossel waited a moment before responding: "If this is the case, your arrival at my home in the middle of the night is even more offensive. I would not be upset with anyone else, since my recent financial developments are not yet well-known. To them, I am still a poor man, but you know better. How could you be so insolent to wake a millionaire in the middle of the night?"

What a powerful story. Suddenly, the fellow who had gone out of his way to help him achieve this incredible good fortune is the "bad" guy. How quickly we forget when our fortune changes. Perhaps, we should sit back for a moment and think: How would I have been had my fortune not changed? Where would I be today, without that rebbe, morah, parent, friend? If we could only view life through the perspective of hakoras hatov, we would be much better and happier people and, then, we might even show our gratitude to the One Who orchestrated it all: Hashem.

For Hashem, your G-d, walks in the midst of your camp… so your camp shall be holy, so that He will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you. (23:15)

Dressing and acting appropriately are prerequisites for Torah-oriented behavior. "Your camp shall be holy" applies not only to the "camp" in the wilderness; it also applies to our homes, schools, shuls - wherever observant Jews congregate. One's personal camp should not be ignored either. This means that, although one may be respectful of the laws of tznius, modesty/chastity, upon entering a holy edifice, he should not forget that he is himself a holy camp. Thus, how one dresses represents his attitude with regard to Hashem. To dress in an immodest manner is to put G-d to shame and cause Him to turn away

. In his Nitzotzos, Horav Yitzchak Hershkowitz relates an inspiring story, which underscores the importance of tznius in the life of a Jew. A kollel fellow in Yerushalayim received a fax from a young woman containing a note of deep gratitude for "what he had done for her." "In fact," she wrote, "you saved my life." Now his curiosity was piqued. He could not remember an incident in which he saved anyone's life - let alone this woman's life.

Not allowing this letter of gratitude to go unanswered, he checked the return address, and he was able to locate and contact the sender of the letter. The story he heard was mind-boggling. Apparently, a few weeks earlier, he had gone to the bank where he usually conducts business. Waiting in line, he noticed that the female teller was dressed inappropriately. Under normal circumstances, he would have kept his mouth shut or moved over to a different teller, but this time, for some reason, he was bothered. After all, since it was a public place that catered to many observant Jews, he felt that the young woman should have manifested little more respect. Furthermore, she was herself "somewhat" observant. True, it was a warm summer day, but what is wrong is wrong.

"Excuse me, giveret, ma'am," he said courteously and with complete sincerity. "Do you think it is appropriate for you to serve the customers of this bank wearing the outfit that you have on?"

Before she could reply, he added, "Tznius is very important, and it impacts the environment around you; more than that, however, what about yourself? What about your own self-respect? Is this what you think of yourself?"

Powerful words, to which the young lady countered, "Sir, if you have a problem with my outfit, you can always take your business to the next teller." End of story? No!

A few weeks later, the young lady was a guest at the wedding of a close friend. It was a warm evening, and the dancing was quite spirited. She began to perspire profusely. She decided that, if she were to continue dancing, she would remove her new, stylish linen jacket that she was wearing over her dress. Understandably, her jacket served a purpose other than just fashion. As she was about to remove it, she reminded herself of the comment the kollel fellow had addressed to her earlier in the bank: "It is not only about others; it is also about you." She then decided that this time she would have a little more self-respect and, rather than remove the jacket, she would go outside and cool off in the evening air.

In her heart, she felt that perhaps the man was right. She had no business lowering her self-esteem by dressing in an immodest fashion. As she stood outside enjoying the cool air and ruminating over her conversation with the man, she suddenly heard the sirens of many ambulances. She turned around and looked at the wedding hall, and she saw that the floor on which she had been dancing was gone! The entire

floor had collapsed. Yes, she was attending the ill-fated wedding celebration on May 24, 2001, at the Versailles Hall in Talpiot, Israel, at which the floor collapsed, taking the lives of 24 guests. She could have been one of the casualties, but she had gone outside to cool off - rather than remove her jacket. Tznius had saved her life.

Tznius is inherent in every Jewish woman. It is innate from Creation, due to the fact that Hashem created Chavah from an internal rib, implying that the public stage is foreign to a woman. She was endowed with an extra dose of modesty. Our Patriarch, Avraham Avinu, who was probably the first mass educator, wore a medallion on which was engraved the image of an elderly man and woman on one side and a boy and girl on the other side. Horav Pesach Eliyahu Falk, Shlita, gives a meaningful explanation for the contrasting flip-side of the medallion. Avraham taught the world that the qualities found in an elderly man and woman are the direct result of their education in their young and formative years. The future of a woman is greatly dependent on the qualities and values structured for her in her younger, adolescent years. She follows and imitates what she sees.

As we see from the above episode, the rewards of adherence to tznius are incalculable. Indeed, the Almighty has a special love for those who practice a refined and modest lifestyle, maintaining strict confidentiality concerning their personal life and affairs. He feels a unique closeness to those who maintain such a lifestyle, because it is pure and genuine, unsullied by the libertine, Madison Avenue society in which we live. What greater stamp of approval does one need than to know that the lifestyle he leads is beloved by Hashem?

When a man marries a new wife… he shall gladden his wife whom he has married. (24:5)

During the first year of marriage man is exempt from being drafted into the army, because he is supposed to stay home to "gladden his wife." The Torah writes, V'seemach es ishto, "He shall gladden his wife." Rashi comments, "This pasuk is interpreted by Targum Onkelos as, v'yachdei yas itsei, "he shall gladden his wife," but one who translates the pasuk as, v'yechdai im itsei, "he shall gladden with his wife," is in error because this is not the translation of v'seemach, but rather, of v'samach."

In Rabbi Sholom Smith's, A Vort From Rav Pam, he quotes the Rosh Yeshivah, zl, who derives a vital homiletic message from Rashi. This lesson is probably one of the staples of a successful, harmonious marriage. One must make his wife happy - not seek to make himself happy with her. It is all about the spouse. I might add that the advice applies reciprocally, as well. At times, a young husband will complain that all of the wonderful attributes and character traits which he heard about his wife prior to their marriage seem to have disappeared. They are simply not there, or he has the wrong woman. He - or rather his parents - had made the usual investigation, indeed, vetting her as if she was applying for the position of National Security Advisor. Based on all the wonderful information which they gathered, he had agreed to meet her. Subsequently, after a lengthy dating period of five dates, he had decided to marry her. (Notice how everything is about him.) The girl is some kind of object which his royal highness agreed to marry. Then the friction began. They were married, and, apparently, she is not the same girl he had investigated, dated and married. What happened to her? Still, it is all about him. He is perfect. She is the one who has changed.

Rav Pam suggests that the young man has either forgotten or ignored Rashi's message. He is under the misconception that marriage means he should be happy together with his wife. Rashi teaches otherwise. In order to have a good marriage, the husband should see to it that his wife is happy. He must make her happy. A happy wife makes for a happy husband. A wife who is treated with dignity and respect will return the compliment many times over. Over time, he will see all the positive information that he had heard concerning his wife to be quite true.

If, however, he enters the marriage as the spoiled child of parents who clearly failed the most elementary parenting class, he will probably expect his wife to cater to his every whim and fancy. If she does not conform, at first his anger will churn to a "slow boil," consistent with his level of immaturity. Eventually, he will explode with anger, and the marriage will be headed toward disaster. Regardless of a young woman's background and upbringing, the finest and the best can tolerate just so much. An obtuse husband, who expects everything and contributes little, is not a partner in marriage. Whatever refinement the girl brought into the equation will quickly dissipate under the iron rule of a self-centered husband.

Thus, Rashi teaches us that marriage is about making one's wife happy. His contribution to the relationship is vital. He must be a nosein, giver, not a taker. One who gives will ultimately receive. One who just wants to take and take will eventually have nothing left to take.

But if the man shall not wish to marry his sister-in-law… and she shall say, "My brother-in-law refuses to establish a name for his brother in Yisrael." (25:7)

For whatever reason, the surviving brother refuses to perform yibum, levirate marriage with his sister-in-law. The woman comes before bais din and declares, Me'ein yevami l'hakim shem b'Yisrael, "My brother-in-law refuses to establish a name for his brother." It seems from the text that no more is said, other than that he simply refuses to perform the mitzvah. Reasons are not discussed. We find another instance of miyun, refusal, in the Torah, when Yosef refused to succumb to the advances made by Potifar's wife: Va'yimaen, vayomer, "He refused and he said" (Berachos 39:8). In this case, however, Yosef seems to present a number of reasons/excuses to justify his refusal. This prompts the Midrash Rabba (Bereishis 87) to posit, B'dvar mitzvah memaanin, b'dvar aveirah, ein memaanin, "For a mitzvah (which one is not going to transgress) one refuses; for an aveirah which one will not commit, one will refuse." What are Chazal teaching us?

The basic explanation, as seen by the commentators, is that when one refuses to execute a mitzvah, he simply says, "I refuse," and gives no explanation for his behavior. This is noted from the above case of the levirate marriage where the woman simply declares, "He said no;" end of the story. It is best that explanations not be rendered, so that others not learn another way out of performing a mitzvah. Concerning an aveirah, however, it is better to give explanations, so that others will learn that there are many rational reasons for not transgressing an aveirah.

Gevilei Eish quotes Horav Yitzchak Cott, zl who presents a human nature twist to explain Chazal's perspective. When a person refuses to perform a mitzvah, he does not need an excuse to sanction his noncompliance. The power of the yetzer hora, evil inclination, and its tenacious grip on him is sufficient reason for his abnegation. He does not feel beholden to anyone. This is what the evil inclination can do to a person.

The individual who does not countenance sin invariably conjures up an excuse to justify his being "good." The Rosh Yeshivah offers the following example: One who is addicted to smoking of course does not light up on Shabbos, since it is prohibited. Yet, he does not acknowledge that his refusal to smoke is due to his adherence to the Torah. He simply says that he is not in the mood or that he does not feel well. Heaven forbid that someone should think that he is observant and actually cares about transgressing Shabbos.

Two types of refusals: Refusal to perform a mitzvah needs no justification. He belongs to the yetzer hora. Refusal to transgress, however, requires some qualification: otherwise, people might begin to believe that he is actually frum, observant. Perhaps there is more to it. The one who offers lame excuses to justify his non-actions intimates that he really wants to sin - if we can only remove the impediments that prevent him. Otherwise, why offer excuses? To refuse means to say no. That should be sufficient. After all, what part of "no" does one not understand? Additional excuses and justifications only serve to undermine the emphatic nature of the "no."

This idea receives support from the Netziv, zl, who observes that the cantillation note, shalsheles, followed by a psik, suggests a refusal that was adamant. The notes set off the va'yimaein, "and he refused," adding to it, "and he adamantly refused." He repulsed her firmly with no indication of hope for a later weakening of his defenses. As far as Yosef personally was concerned, he was not giving in, not changing his mind. The refusal was unequivocal and not open to any compromise. The excuses which follow were for Potifar's wife, to explain to her why he was taking such a position. Yosef, however, understood that excuses are a sign of weakness.

Va'ani Tefillah B'chol levavcha u'b'chol nafshecha u'b'chol meodecha.

In the ascending sequence of values, one would assume that wealth precedes life, with people caring much less about their financial portfolios than their lives. Rashi comments that, regrettably, this is a misconception. There are individuals for whom mamonam chaviv aleihem yoseir migufam, material wealth is more valuable to them than their life. Thus, u'b'chol meodecha is last in the sequence. Interestingly, in the second parsha of krias shema, momentum is made concerning material bounty. There it says merely, b'chol levavchem u'b'chol nafshechem. Why is this?

Horav Yosef Engel, zl, quotes a distinguished sage who distinguishes between the plural, community, and the singular, the individual. For communal funds, money belonging to a group carries the same weight as nefashos, lives. Therefore, in the second parsha which addresses the community, the concept of b'chol meodechem is included under the purvue of b'chol nafshechem. The first parsha, however, which addresses the individual, splits up the two.

Rav Engel supports this idea from the Sefer HaChinuch which distinguishes between communal funds and private funds with regard to the laws of moseir, one who tattles to the government and causes Jewish money to be taken away. One who damages communal funds or hurts a community as a whole, performed acts tantamount to harming their lives. This should be a wake-up call to those whose sense of propriety concerning the community's finances is limited to their personal needs.

l'zechar uli'lui nishmas R' Baruch ben R' Zev Yehuda z"l niftar 24 Ellul 5771 In memory of Baruch Berger z"l Whose contribution to Peninim was immeasurable.

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from: Shabbat Shalom <ShabbatShalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: ShabbatShalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, Aug 15, 2013 at 5:57 PM subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU

Move de Line

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

Share: Facebook Twitter Print this page Email More Sharing Services Share "Why can't we all just get along?" - Rodney King

Few people could have greater justification to cry out for vengeance than Rodney King. Videotape captured five Los Angeles police officers beating the African-American construction worker, with several other officers standing by without taking any action to stop the beating. Four of the officers were charged with assault with a deadly weapon and the use of excessive force. Three of the four were acquitted on all counts. The fourth was acquitted on the deadly weapon charge with the jury unable to reach a verdict on the use of excessive force. The four were subsequently tried in Federal court for violating Mr. King's civil rights. After the subsequent verdict, which sent two of the officers to jail, there were riots in the streets of Los Angeles. At which time, Mr. King went on television to ask for peace, saying, "Can't we all just get along?"

In parashat Ki Tetzei, Moses teaches us, almost as an afterthought, "Do not hate an Edomite because he is your brother." This teaching is understandable. After all, even an estranged brother who has wronged me is still my brother. But then, in a leap hard to grasp for many of us, the Torah goes on to teach, "Do not hate an Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land." (23:8)

What? How can we help but hate those who enslaved us? Whose king demanded that "every male Israelite born be thrown into the Nile"? There must be a deeper meaning to these words! How could we be expected to develop good relations with such a mortal enemy? Which do we do? Do we recall our suffering in Egypt (l'maan tizkor et yom tzetcha m'eretz mitzrayim) or do we "not hate an Egyptian"?

* * *

When I studied at Yeshiva University, hundreds of us would rush to the cafeteria after morning learning seder to quickly get our lunches so we could make it to our afternoon shiur on time. As you can imagine, the line could grow very long. There, standing behind the counter, dishing out daily helpings of whatever was on the menu was a gentle, Holocaust survivor, Mr. Weber. To this day, so many years later, I can still hear his voice prompting us along, "Move de (the) line, move de line."

Over the many years of my life, his constant refrain has become integral to my life's philosophy. For, to me, he was not simply asking us not to slow down the line. He was telling us not to get stuck in a tough spot and, by extension, not to remain mired in the bitterness of the inevitable challenges and disappointments we all face; not to bear grudges for the rest of our lives. We all have to "move de line."

"Moving de line" means letting go of the negatives that hold us back; letting go of the things that enslave us, that humiliate us, that degrade us. Ironically, until we can let go of those things, we will remain enslaved – even long after our captors have set us free! We need to "move de line" if we are to forge new paths and realize new goals.

Hurt begets hurt. Anger begets anger. Hate begets hate.

If you want to move de line, you have to let go of hurt and anger. If your "captor" allows you to go free, the least you can do is grant yourself the same grace. As long as you continue to be enslaved by negativity, you can know no freedom; you cannot embark on a new beginning. You are stuck.

As Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks eloquently teaches, "To be free, you have to let go of hate. That is what Moses is saying. If they continued to hate their erstwhile enemies, Moses would have taken the Israelites out of Egypt, but he would not have taken Egypt out of the Israelites. Mentally, they would still be there, slaves to the past. They would still be in chains, not of metal but of the mind – and chains of the mind are the most constricting of all."

But what of all the mitzvoth recalling yetziat mitzrayim – including those recalled on Shabbat, when laying tefillin, putting on our tzitzit or reciting the ancient truths at our Seders? In truth, there is no hate, no rage, no call for revenge or retaliation – not even a shred of negativity – in any of these mitzvoth. Instead, they focus on the positive – remember! Remember. Learn. Grow.

Move de line.

Rav Soloveitchik views the Egyptian exile and suffering as the, "…experience which molded the moral quality of the Jewish people for all time." Rather than embitter us, our experience in Egypt and subsequent emancipation teaches us not to hate and retaliate, but rather teaches us, "…ethical sensitivity, what it truly means to be a Jew. It sought to transform the Jew into a rachaman, one possessing a heightened form of ethical sensitivity and responsiveness."

The most practical method of teaching compassion, sensitivity and concern for others; the most direct way of imparting a sense of mitgefiel is to recall one's own experience of tzara. It should come as no surprise that it is often he who has suffered sickness who best understands the discomfort of the ill; he who has sustained loss who can best comfort the bereaved, and he who knew wealth and success but who suffered reversals who can best identify with a colleague or neighbor who confronts similar obstacles. Isn't that one reason AA groups are so successful? Former addicts – those who know what it means to overcome addiction – help those trying to beat their own addiction?

To recall our former state of helplessness and degradation does not demand our hate or recrimination toward anyone, even those directly responsible for our galus. Quite the opposite. Our memory serves to give us insight so that we can impart compassion and sympathy for the oppressed and underprivileged in society, communally and individually. The galus experience sharpens and refines our ethical sensitivity and moral awareness. The Torah commands us, "You shall not pervert the justice due a stranger or to the fatherless, nor take a widow's garment in pawn."

Why not?

"Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you to observe this commandment."

Thirty six times we are exhorted to treat the stranger kindly. Why? Because you were gerim in Egypt. You know the nefesh ha'ger. Therefore, you are expected to behave more kindly and ethically than one who does not know what it means to be a stranger.

This is no easy task, to draw positive lessons from life's challenges and hurts. It does not come easy to be caring rather than spiteful. We struggle to let go of hatred when it is directed toward one who has been a mortal enemy. Yet, we do so, just as we have learned "not to hate" the Egyptians. Yet, too often, we cling to our animosity when it is directed toward those who had once been to us "as one flesh"?

We see anger, bitterness and hatred expressed and acted upon between divorced couples – all to the detriment of each other and, most certainly, to any children caught in the middle of these raw emotions. Divorce, with all its hurt, uncertainty and loss should not lead to lifelong enmity. Two people need to find a new path forward, a path that will remain lost to them until they can find a way to live with civility, decency and sensitivity toward one another.

Tizkor et eretz mitzrayim!

Move de line!

The promise of the chuppah was unrealized. This is terribly sad. The kiddushin did not take hold. It happens more often than any of us would like. But when it does, let's turn the pages of the Tractate Gittin.

Move de line.

Why should our frum and Charedi community allow for so many pained husbands to focus on hatred and spite rather than freedom and sensitivity? Why insist on keeping wives in chains, literally and figuratively? Why should an unsuccessful marriage be made even worse; twisted into the enslavement of a tormented agunah wife, witnessed by bewildered and frightened children? Did not these "learned" husbands take to heart the teachings of Torah and mussar? Where does our tradition teach to maintain such venom toward a woman with whom you had intended to spend your life? Where do our sages teach to plant your boot upon the neck of the woman who gave birth to your children?

The marriage did not work. It is sad. It is hurtful. But what do our unhappy days in Egypt teach you about your suffering? To continually hate? No! The very opposite. To not hate!

No good will ever come from hatred – not personal nor communal. Moving forward can only be accomplished by letting go. Move de line. Get on with life!

Once again, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is particularly articulate and powerful when he teaches, "Hatred and liberty cannot coexist. A free people does not hate its former enemies; if it does, it is not yet ready for freedom. To create a non- persecuting society out of people who have been persecuted, you have to break the chains of the past; rob memory of its sting; sublimate pain into constructive energy and the determination to build a different future."

To any spiteful husband who has not yet delivered the get to his chained wife – seek a rav, a therapist, a friend, someone, anyone who can help you let go of your hate, who can help you turn your heart toward freedom – yours and your ex's.

If you are a friend, a teacher, a mentor to such a husband, take him by the hand; help him free himself from his self-affliction. Declare freedom for him and his agunah wife.

How about right now, before Rosh Hashanah? During the ten days of repentance? On Yom Kippur? Let the new year be a real new beginning! Take your first steps on a new path, one that leads to freedom, to a life free of hatred and blame.

He who thinks that a get refusal is the "last, best weapon" to use as punishment is deceiving himself. It is not only his agunah wife who is forced to remain enslaved. He is also enslaved by his hurt, anger and hate.

As long as you hate, you remain a slave.

No slave can honestly recite al chet! Accept the responsibility and joy of freedom. Move de line. Move de line.

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Parsha Potpourri
Parshas Ki Seitzei – Vol. 8, Issue 45
Compiled by **Rabbi Ozer Alport**

וראית בשביה אשת יפת תאר וחשקת בה ולקחת לך לאשה (21:11)

Parshas Ki Seitzei begins by discussing the y'fas toar – woman of beautiful form. The Torah permits a soldier who becomes infatuated with a non-Jewish woman during battle to marry her. This concept is difficult to comprehend. The Torah is replete with warnings against becoming too familiar with the non-Jewish inhabitants of the land, yet it explicitly permits a soldier to take a non-Jewish woman home and marry her. Rashi explains that this apparently counter-intuitive permission was granted as a concession to the evil inclination. Hashem recognized that if He didn't allow the soldier to marry this woman in a permissible fashion, he would do so illegally, so He made an allowance for this exceptional case.

Rav Yechezkel Abramsky derives from here an inspiring lesson. Judaism is such an all-encompassing religion, with laws governing virtually every aspect of daily life, that a person will almost surely encounter mitzvos that run counter to his nature. Although which mitzvah seems insurmountable will vary from person to person, it is likely that there will be laws that upon learning of them, one's instinctive reaction will be to declare their observance beyond his capabilities.

From the fact that the Torah permitted a soldier to marry a y'fas toar as an acknowledgement that forbidding him to do so would represent an impossible task, we may conclude that our Maker clearly understands our human limitations. If He nevertheless commanded us regarding a particular mitzvah, it must be that He knows that we have within us the strength to overcome the evil inclination by properly observing that mitzvah.

לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל ידוד גם דור עשירי לא יבא להם בקהל ד' עד עולם (23:4)

The Torah forbids a person who is born to proper Jewish parents to marry an Ammonite or Moabite. Commenting on this prohibition, the Medrash Pliah cryptically remarks that this verse is what Dovid HaMelech was referring to when he wrote (Tehillim 118:21) אודך כי עניתני- I thank You (Hashem) because you afflicted me. The connection between these two concepts is difficult to grasp. What does the prohibition against marrying somebody descended from the nations of Ammon and Moab have to do with Hashem causing us to suffer, and why did that specifically inspire and motivate Dovid to thank Hashem?

Rav Mordechai Benet writes that in order to understand this perplexing Medrash, we first need to understand what pain and suffering Dovid was referring to. The Gemora in Shabbos (88a) teaches that when the Jewish people were encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai, Hashem lifted the mountain above them like a barrel and threatened them that if they would not accept the Torah, שם תהא קבורתכם– there will be your collective burial place.

Commenting on this Gemora, Tosefos questions why it was necessary for Hashem to do so after the Jewish people had already enthusiastically declared that whatever Hashem says, נעשה ונשמע– we will do and we will listen (Shemos 24:7). The Medrash Tanchuma (Noach 3) answers that although they had readily accepted the Written Torah, which is relatively limited in scope and can be learned with little difficulty, they were initially unwilling to accept the Oral Torah, which is substantially more complex and can only be understood after great toil and exertion, until Hashem forced them to do so by threatening them with mass extinction.

In light of the teaching of the Medrash, Rav Benet explains that Dovid was thanking Hashem for afflicting the entire nation and compelling them to accept the Oral Law in addition to the Written Law. What is the connection between the Oral Torah and the prohibition against marrying a descendant of Ammon and Moab? The Gemora in Yevamos (76b) records that after Dovid slew Goliath, Shaul grew concerned that perhaps Dovid was destined to become king and take his position away from him, so he inquired about Dovid's lineage. Although Shaul posed this question to Avner, who was the general of his army, his advisor Doeg overheard the question and responded, "Before you examine Dovid's pedigree to determine if he is fit to be king, you should first inspect his ancestry to see if he is even fit to marry a regular Jewish woman, as he is descended from Rus the Moabite, and the Torah teaches that a Moabite may not marry into the Jewish congregation."

After a lengthy discussion of the ensuing arguments and refutations presented by Avner and Doeg, the Gemora concludes that the law is עמוני ולא עמונית מואבי ולא מואבית- the prohibition against marrying Ammonites and Moabites applies only to the males of these nations but not to the females, who one is indeed permitted to marry after they convert. The Gemora explains this distinction in light of the reason given by the Torah for this prohibition: they did not greet the Jews with bread and water as they were leaving Egypt. Because it is the practice of men to go out to greet guests while women modestly remain in their homes, this lack of hospitality does not reflect negatively on the females of these nations, and they are therefore permitted to marry Jews. As a result, the ancestry of Dovid, who was descended from the female Rus, was deemed acceptable.

With this background information, Rav Mordechai Benet suggests that the meaning of the Medrash Pliah becomes clear. The verse in the Torah which forbids the offspring of Ammon and Moab to marry into the Jewish nation does not appear to differentiate between male and female progeny, seemingly including both of them equally in the prohibition. When Dovid encountered this verse, he became frightened that perhaps it applied to his great-grandmother Rus as well, as Doeg maintained. However, when he realized that the Oral Law distinguishes between the genders and rules authoritatively that female descendants are permitted to marry Jews, he rejoiced and exclaimed אודך כי עניתני- thank you Hashem for afflicting me at Mount Sinai by threatening to kill us if we did not accept the Oral Torah, which clarifies my legal status and clears the way for me to get married and become king.