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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Thu, Aug 27, 2015 at 10:05 AM subject: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** - Parshas Ki Seitzei
Parshas Ki Seitzei

Keeping Composure In A Tense Situation – The Sign of A Great Person
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: CD# 998, Making A Bracha For Building A Ma'akeh? Good Shabbos!

The Yalkut Shimoni in Sefer Shoftim says the phrase "She stretches out her hands to the spindle" [Mishlei 31:19] in Shlomo Hamelech's praise of the Woman of Valor refers to Yael wife of Chever the Kenite, who did not use a weapon to kill Sisera but rather used the peg of a tent, as it is written "Her hand she sent to the peg" [Shoftim 5:26].

In the battle described in Sefer Shoftim between Devorah and Barak against Sisro the general of Yavin, King of Chazor, the forces of Israel were victorious. When the army of Sisro was defeated, Sisro fled to the tent of Yael, wife of Chever the Kenite. Yael gave Sisro to drink, tired him out, and while he was asleep, killed him by pounding a peg of the tent into his head.

According to the above cited Yalkut Shimoni, Yael chose to use a tent peg as her weapon rather than the sword of the sleeping general, which would have been a more efficient weapon, in fulfillment of the pasuk, "A woman should not wear a man's garment" [Devorim 22:5] (which includes armor and weaponry, which are considered "male garments").

Consider the situation. Sisro was a fearsome warrior. Yael had the option of taking his sword and stabbing him, which would have been the normal and "safest" way to accomplish her goal or she could attempt to use a non-lethal item such as a tent peg to accomplish this difficult task. She took a terrible risk that he would wake up while she was trying to bang the peg into his forehead. I would venture to say that if she asked a "shaylah" [halachic question] whether under those circumstances, she could use a sword or whether she must she use the tent peg, she would have been told to certainly use a sword.

This was a moment of great tension. She was putting her life in danger. Yet she was thinking about the halacha that a woman should not wear men's

clothing. We see the Midrash praises her for this. The explanation is that it is a measure of a human being how (s)he acts under pressure. It says a world about the nature of a person who has the composure and frame of mind to ask "what does the Halacha say about this?" when things are very tense and hectic. It is a tremendous quality to not "lose it" under pressure.

Rav Ruderman, zt"l, used to share the following insight: The Talmud teaches that Manoach (father of Shimshon) was an Am HaAretz (ignoramus), the proof being that when the Angel came back and he and his wife went out to speak with the Angel, Scripture testifies that "Manoach walked behind his wife" [Shoftim 13:11]. Rav Ruderman explained that a full-fledged Talmid Chochom, a scholar of stature would have kept his cool even knowing that there was an Angel in the front yard. He would not have rushed out in panic, but would have paused long enough to ask himself what is proper and what is improper conduct and would have remembered that a man is not supposed to walk behind a woman.

By virtue of the fact that she kept her senses and did not lose her composure, for that the Medrash says "She stretches out her hands to the spindle" – this refers to Yael wife of Chever the Kenite who did not kill Sisro with a weapon but rather used a tent peg.

Perfect Stones And Perfect Measures

At the end of the Parsha, the Torah says that we must have honest weights and measures: "A perfect and honest stone shall you have, a perfect and honest measure shall you have, so that your days shall be lengthened on the Land that Hashem, your G-d gives you." [Devorim 25:15]

In olden times, the way things were weighed was by balance scales. If the weights used to measure the merchandise being sold were not carefully calibrated, a person could rig the scales and cheat his customers. The weight may be labeled 1 pound, but if the merchant shaved off some of the metal so that it now weighed less than 1 pound, he will be deceiving his unsuspecting customers.

I once mentioned that the famous Sephardic Siddur commentary, the Abudram, had that strange name because he was a merchant known for his extreme integrity and meticulousness with his weights and measures. There is a measure called a dram (.125 ounces). He was known as the Abu-dram, the father of the dram, because his dram was the "gold standard" in town in terms of its accuracy and integrity.

It is interesting to note the pasuk that immediately follows the mitzvah to keep honest weights and measures: "For an abomination of Hashem your G-d, are all who do this, all who act fraudulently." [Devorim 25:16]

The word used in this pasuk – toayvah – means "abomination". We know the context of this word in other places in the Torah. For instance, the Torah uses the word toayvah in the context of male homosexuality. The Torah uses it in connection with bestiality. The Torah also uses this word in connection with the Molech ritual whereby people would pass their children through fire, offering them to the Molech god. (According to some Rishonim these children were burned alive.)

These acts are all labeled "toayvah". The Master of the Universe detests them. He is repulsed by them. It is ironic that here too, by dishonest business practices, the Torah testifies that all who do such actions are causing an abomination of G-d. Something as "minor" as having dishonest business practices in the eyes of the Ribono shel Olam is a toayvah.

Whenever we are tempted to "cheat" in financial matters – and there are many such temptations – we need to remember how the Almighty looks at this. This is not "just" another Torah obligation. The Master of the World apparently treats this with great severity. Ki Toavas Hashem Elokecha kol oseh ayleh. [For it is an abomination to the L-rd your G-d – all who do such things.]

I recently read a story involving Rav Menachem Manis Mandel, the late Dean of the Yeshiva of Brooklyn. Rav Mandel was once audited by the IRS. He came into the auditor's office with all his papers. The IRS agent asked him to produce the receipts or cancelled checks he had for the charitable donations he was claiming. Rav Mandel placed a pile of checks and receipts

on the table. After the IRS agent added them all up he said, "Rabbi you have claimed more charitable donations than you have proof for." Rabbi Mandel explained the discrepancy by telling the agent "Yes, but I gave money in cash also, for which I do not have receipts." The Agent told him "If you do not have receipts or other proof, you cannot claim the charitable deduction." Upon hearing this, Rabbi Mandel reached into his wallet and took out another wad of cancelled checks made out to various charities. When the agent added up all the additional checks, they far exceeded what he claimed as deductions.

The agent asked the Rabbi, "If you had all these checks in your wallet, why didn't you just give them to me in the first place? Why did you say 'The rest of my donations were in cash?'"

Rabbi Mandel then took the second batch of checks back from the IRS agent and pointed out some small Hebrew writing on the back of each check which said "chalipin". He explained, "These are not really checks I gave as personal charitable donations. These checks are for money the kids in school used to put in charity boxes (pushkas) in their classrooms. They would come to school with their quarters, dimes, and nickels to put into charity boxes. Periodically, I collect all the small change and write personal checks to the charity for the amount contained in these "pushkas" from student donations. However, I was not going to claim it on my tax form, because it was not a personal donation, it was just an exchange of the money the students donated."

"However if I was not an honest person", Rabbi Mandel continued, "I could have just pulled out all these checks and you would not have known what this 'chalipin' designation was all about." [In Talmudic terminology, he was arguing that he had a 'Meego': If I wanted to lie, I could have told a better lie.]

The IRS agent told him "Apparently you are a very honest person. Therefore, I will allow your deduction even for the cash for which you have no receipts." This is the type of Jew from which the Almighty has nachas [pleasure]. This is the type of honesty to which we should all try to aspire.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Ki Seitzei is provided below: A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. To Support Project Genesis- Torah.org Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD RavFrand, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissochar Frand and Torah.org. Questions or comments? Email feedback@torah.org. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

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The Enemy Within
by **Rabbi Yosef Levinson**

"When you go out to war against your enemies and Hashem your G-d will deliver him into your hands" (Devarim 21)

Rabbi Mordechai Gifter zt'l, the late Telzer Rosh Yeshiva notes that the parsha begins with "When you go out to war against your enemies", implying many enemies. However the passuk continues "and Hashem your

G-d will deliver him into your hands". The conclusion of the verse refers to just one enemy. Rabbi Gifter explains that our parsha is alluding to another war - our constant struggle with the yetzer hara, our evil inclination. The yetzer hara attacks us in many different ways, using various tactics, giving the impression that we are battling many soldiers. However when one defeats his yetzer, he realises that he was fighting the same single enemy all along. Often we are unaware that it is our yetzer hara attacking us for he appears as a friend who apparently has our best interests in mind. The first step in overcoming him is to realise that it is indeed our yetzer hara that is confronting us.

We learn a few strategies for fighting our evil inclination from the beginning of this week's parsha. One tactic of the yetzer hara is that he tells us the mitzvos are too difficult for us to observe. We may try to convince ourselves that in our personal predicament, it is impractical to observe the Torah for the time being! The parsha of yefas toar (beautiful woman) reveals that this not so. The Torah teaches that if a soldier in wartime has an uncontrollable urge for a woman captive, it is permissible for him to have relations with her provided the conditions set forth in the parsha are met. Although relations with a gentile woman are forbidden - "lo dibra Torah eleh k'neged yetzer hara", the Torah only permitted this in recognition of the strength of the yetzer hara (Kiddushin 21b). Hashem created the evil inclination so He truly understands its strengths. In this instance, the beautiful female captives, especially adorned to seduce the enemy, represented too strong a test for the soldiers. Therefore the Torah permitted the female prisoners, recognising that many soldiers would otherwise have succumbed to temptation and transgressed this abhorrent sin. So how does this concession to the yetzer hara give us strength to battle again him?

Hashem as it were, 'examined' the mitzvos to determine whether or not it was possible to fulfil them. His 'search' revealed only one situation where man could not control himself - the yefas toar. But in all other situations, man really does have the strength to overcome the formidable yetzer hara. "HaKadosh Boruch Hu (The Holy One blessed be He) tells us 'I created the yetzer hara and I created Torah to be its antidote. If you toil in Torah, you will not be delivered into his hand.'" (Kiddushin 30b). Likewise, Hashem says that if we make the effort to conquer our desires, then He will assist us in our struggle (ibid; see Maharsha there).

This parsha also addresses another trick of the yetzer hara. After years of successfully conquering our desires, we might think that we defeated the yetzer hara. Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian writes that the Torah reveals this to be untrue. Who are the brave soldiers of the Jewish nation's army? It is written that a fearful man should return to his home (above 20:8). Chazal (the Sages) say that the passuk is referring to one who is fearful of being punished because of his sins (Sota 44a). The Gemara teaches that one who sinned by talking between donning the tefillin shel yad and tefillin shel rosh (necessitating reciting an otherwise unnecessary bracha) could not represent the nation in war. From this example, we can infer that only the most righteous were sent to the front. These tzaddikim are the men the Torah had in mind when it permitted the yefas toar. Even they could fall prey to the yetzer hara. Therefore, no man can ever say he has slain his yetzer hara as we are taught in Pirkei Avos: "Do not trust in yourself until the day that you die (2:5)". Rabbi Lopian writes that one must constantly be on guard and seek Divine assistance, even in the final moments of life (Lev Eliyahu vol.3 p.16).

The Talmud Yerushalmi relates that there was a very pious old man. Since he was very saintly and he had already reached old age, he felt that he was totally removed from the pleasures of this world. He therefore amended the Mishna in Avos to read "Do not trust in yourself until you have reached old age". The Heavens were angered by this and granted the Satan permission to lure this tzaddik to sin. The Satan disguised himself as a woman of unparalleled beauty and appeared before him. When the saint raised his eyes and saw this beautiful woman in front of him, he began to speak to her. The words that he uttered were totally inappropriate for such a righteous person and he immediately regretted it.

He was so distressed by this momentary lapse that his life became endangered, for he truly was a saintly man. The Heavens had mercy on the tzaddik and ordered the Satan to reveal himself. The Satan told him that he was sent to teach him that he should learn the Mishna as it was originally taught, "Do not trust in yourself until the day that you die".

Finally, "there is no man so righteous on earth that always does good and never sins (Koheles 7:20)." There will be times when the yetzer hara is winning the battle. Human nature is such that when we fall, we become discouraged and we despair of ever defeating our evil inclination. Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner zt"l wrote to a student in such a predicament. He said that we must remember that we are in a continuous war with the yetzer hara, and war consists of many battles. Any seasoned soldier knows that even though they may lose a battle, the objective is still to win the war. Shlomo Hamelech said "For though the righteous one may fall seven times he will arise" (Mishlei 24:16). This does not simply mean that he will rise again despite the fall, rather it is because he has fallen, through his battles and struggles, that he grows and rises to greatness. May we also grow from our battles with the yetzer hara, from both our victories and our setbacks. Then we too will rise and win the war.

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From: Michael Hoenic <MHoenic@herzfeld-rubin.com> Date: Tue, Aug 25, 2015 at 4:45 PM Subject: RE: Ki Seitze Essay

On Enemies, Haters, War and Peace

Michael Hoenic

Torah verse is usually quite economical so when we see words that, at first blush, seem unnecessary, the savvy reader can be assured that Torah is sending a special message. One must dig deeper, probe diligently, perhaps focus more intensely, to unearth the gem of learning waiting to be discerned.

There is no superfluity in Torah. The words beckon invitingly to the willing. Parshas Ki Seitzei (Devarim 21:10) begins with such a curiosity: "When you will go out to war against your enemies . . . "[Emphasis added.] (Ki Seitzei LaMilchama Al Oyvecha . . .). The emphasized phrase raises questions. Waging war is serious business. Lives can be lost, casualties inflicted and incurred, property damaged, precious resources squandered. So, if war is ordained, of course it will be conducted "against your enemies."

Why does Torah have to tell us that? Just say: "When you will go out to war" The very same verse tells us there will be captives and the next one ushers in the discussion of the "Yefas ToAr," the woman captive of beautiful form for whom the soldier feels an uncontrollable desire. So the overall context is perfectly clear: it is war against "enemies"; why does Torah tell us the obvious? Rashi, citing Sifri, explains that the type of war referred to here is not a "Milchemes Mitzvah" – a war expressly ordered by Hashem for conquest of the Land, or a defensive war when the country is attacked by others. Rather, the subject involves a "Milchemes Reshus" – a war undertaken for other purposes as, for example, a war to prevent an attack by weakening the enemy forces, or one to extend territory or to gain resources. A "Milchemes Reshus", a permissive war, required authorization by the Sanhedrin, the nation's 71-member supreme consultant body. [see R' Shmshon Raphael Hirsch's commentary, Devarim, Shoftim, 20:1 (citing Sota 44b and Sanhedrin 2a and 20b)]. The Mechiltah, as summarized in Otzar Hamidrashim (Ki Seitzei, 21:10), cites Rabbi Yoshiah that "Oyvecha," "Your enemies," refers to a nation of idol worshipers ("Zehu Goy Oved Ellilim"). But that doesn't answer our question. War plainly is against one's enemies. So, whoever they may be, whether idolaters or even God-fearing, the "Al Oyvecha" language seems superfluous. Perhaps one might hypothesize a "civil war" as, for example, occurred in the incident of the "Pilegsh B'Givah." But that makes no sense here because the context clearly involves the laws applicable to a "Yefas ToAr," a type of captive that would not be applicable in an inter-Shevet, Jewish tribal war. Further, Rashi earlier [at Shoftim 20:3] explains that when the Kohen Meshuach Milchama

addresses the nation and says that "you are going out to battle against your enemies" (Al Oyvechem), the Kohen means to say: "These enemies are not your brothers. If you fall into their hands, they will not have pity on you. This is not like a battle of Yehuda against Yisrael." So the expression "Al Oyvechem" excludes a Jewish civil war. Though Rashi tells us that Ki Seitzei here is speaking of a Milchemes Reshus, a permissive war, he does not comment at all on the "Al Oyvecha" redundancy. But there's a good reason. Rashi has already addressed our question explicitly in the previous Parsha, Shoftim [at 20:1], where the same terminology is used: "Ki Seitzei LaMilchama Al Oyvecha" – "When you go out to battle against your enemy, and you see horse and chariot – a people more numerous than you- you shall not fear them, for Hashem, your God, is with you." Rashi [at 20:1 citing Tanchumah] comments on the words, "against your enemy" (Al Oyvecha): ["Yihiyu B'Einecha KeOyvim, Al Terachem Aleihem Ki Lo Yerachamu Alecha"] -- "They should be viewed by you as your enemy. Do not take pity on them because they will not take pity on you." Thanks to Rashi, we have a specific reason, a bona fide purpose for Torah to insert the words "against your enemies." The message is strong. It is resolute. It is unrelenting. War is nasty business. There are rules of war that Torah enumerates. There are protocols of behavior in battle that Torah specifies. But, as Rashi in essence admonishes: "No Pity! Regard them as your enemies, nothing less! You will not get any mercy from them, so don't deign to give them mercy." But isn't this advice rather obvious? Why does Torah (and Rashi) have to spell this out? We will return to this residual question.

Enemies and Haters Inevitable The truth is that Torah already has informed us that Yisrael, from its earliest days and onwards, has had and will have its "enemies" and its "haters." Lamentably, history abundantly confirms this dire truth. It is not lightly that we say every Pesach, "Bechol Dor Vador Omdim Oleinu Lechalosenu" – "In each generation they arise against us to destroy us." In recent times, the Shoah and the present-day exhortations of "Death to Israel" by the ruling elite in Iran, among others, vividly show that Torah's message is not merely historical but prescient. Fortunately, Torah also supplies the antidote to such poison. The formulas for effective protection and pathways to peace are also specified. In Parshas BeHaAloscha [Bamidbar, 10:35], Torah advises that, "when the Ark would journey, Moshe said, 'Arise Hashem, and let your enemies be scattered, let those who hate you flee from before you.'" [...Kumah Hashem Veyafutzu Oyvecha Veyonusu MeSanecha Mipanecha. (Emphasis added).] The truism and currency of these words in our lives is reflected in the fact that this verse is recited during prayer by the entire congregation each time the Torah is removed from the Ark. Torah's enduring message is not confined to a secluded verse visited (or learned) in a Torah reading only one week a year. Rather, the words resonate (or should) multiple times each week. This declaration by Moshe was made during the travels of Yisrael in the Midbar, the desert, after the well-known miracles attending the Exodus and Krias Yam Suf, the splitting of the sea. Moshe's plea was pronounced even after the world power of the day, Egypt, had been defeated. The other nations heard and trembled with fear, astonished at the demonstrative might of Hashem. As the "Az Yashir", the Song at the Sea, recited daily, says: "Peoples heard – they were agitated; convulsive terror gripped the dwellers of Philistia. Then the chieftains of Edom were confounded, trembling gripped the powers of Moab, all the dwellers of Canaan dissolved." Yet, notwithstanding this "high point" of Yisrael's power, as perceived by the other nations, Moshe would, during their travels, nevertheless exhort Hashem "to arise", to "scatter" the enemies, and to make the "haters flee." Why? Weren't enemies and haters of the day too cowed and too fearful to attack? What threat did Moshe see or recognize that caused him to invoke these majestic pleas upon each travel – indeed, ones that we ourselves utter repeatedly nowadays? In fact, Torah is teaching a major lesson. There were "enemies" and "haters" then and there always will be. These are two separate categories of foes. "Enemies" can be "haters," of course, and "haters" indeed can become "enemies." Yet, Torah individually identifies these as

two distinct kinds of adversaries. Thus, some foes will be enemies but not “haters”. Some can be “haters” but not necessarily rise to be “enemies.” Artscroll’s Chumash commentary on the verses [BeHaAloscha, at 10:35-36] says: “Recognizing that Israel would always have foes and haters who strive to prevent submission to God from holding sway on earth, Moses began every journey with a plea that God protect his servants from those who seek to thwart the realization of His will.” That plea for protection is as relevant today as it was then. However, Moshe’s declaration announces not only the threat from each kind of adversary but the appropriate defensive solution for each. The reader will note that Moshe’s request is not to kill all enemies and haters, to exterminate them, to eradicate or obliterate them. Given the numerosity of such potential foes, the extent of their geography and populations and their endurance throughout time, their summary termination is not practicably feasible. All mankind are the children of Hashem and there is hope that all nations will, at some point, accept the Divine ideal. This hope we invoke daily in the Aleinu prayer. But wishes do not substitute for practical realities in thwarting real physical dangers. So, Moshe’s guidance for dealing with each kind of foe is spelled out. “VeYafutzu Oyvecha” – “Let your enemies be scattered.” In other words, with Hashem’s help we are to keep the enemies “scattered”, separated, divided, apart. Don’t let them unite, assemble, or bunch up under one banner, in one place, at one time. Perhaps it means to “divide and conquer,” to keep the enemies’ physical threat within bounds in terms of numbers, geography and time. In short, to keep the peril manageable for a successful defense. With Divine help and if we are worthy of it, such protective objectives are attainable. The message of “VeYafutzu Oyvecha” is echoed in the words of King David, “Let Hashem arise! Let His enemies be scattered.” [Yakum Elokim Yafutzu Oyvov (Psalms 68:2)] As for the “haters” [MeSanecha], the antidote for their brand of poison is to “make them flee from before you” [VeYanusu]. The “haters” should be identified, outed, and exposed for their hatred. They should be chased from their lairs, their zones of comfort. They should be expelled from positions of power and influence. Their evil behavior should be revealed; they should be shamed; they should have no respite, no peace, no protected refuge from which to spew their venom. In short, they should be made “to flee” [VeYanusu]. The challenge posed by enemies and haters of Yisrael persists to this day. Moshe’s guidance for salvation is as pertinent and timely now as it was in the Midbar. Our mechanisms for defense may be different in this age of digital technology, instant communications and modern weaponry, but the core formula for survival remains the same.

Power and Peace King David also points the way in Psalm 29 which we recite when returning the Torah to the Ark on Shabbos and Holidays. The last verse says: “Hashem will give might to His people, Hashem will bless His people with peace.” [Hashem Oz LeAmo Yitain, Hashem Yevarech Es Amo Bashalom.” (Emphasis added)]. These dual declarations project majestic messages but few of us pause to parse the richness of the Psalmist’s incisive idiom. As a result, the magnificent substance of the formula can be overlooked. First, the analytical reader should note the chronology of the statements. Which comes first? It is important. “Oz” (might or power) precedes “Shalom” (peace). In other words, Yisrael must possess power or might as a prerequisite predicate for achieving peace. A modern equivalent of what King David projected would seem to be the principle of “Peace Through Strength” – a current strategy for democratic super-powers such as the United States. A nation’s superior might helps to keep foes at bay. Given the persistent existence of “enemies” and “haters,” it is imperative that Yisrael, surrounded by many foes with malicious, murderous intent, possess superior “Oz” (strength) as a precondition for achieving peace (Shalom). Second, the analytical reader will note that King David’s condition precedent for achieving peace, “Oz” (might), comes as a “gift,” a “Matanah” from God. (“Hashem Oz LeAmo Yitain” – “Hashem will give might to his people”) [Emphasis added.]. As with any “gift,” particularly one that is valuable or precious, the recipient somehow must find favor or possess special status with the giver. A relationship based on bonds of love, kinship, trust and

endearment, for example, motivate a giver to convey a valuable gift to a recipient. So, too, a reward for loyalty, devotion or meritorious service to the giver. In the case of Yisrael, the people’s reverence and love for the Creator, and appropriate behavior in accordance with Torah’s rules, would seem to justify the Divine gifts of power and strength. Third, as to achieving “peace” (Shalom), King David’s precise use of language warrants close analytical attention. The Psalmist declares: “Hashem will bless His people with peace.” (Emphasis added) – [“Hashem YeVorech Es Amo BaShalom” (Emphasis added)]. In other words, Yisrael’s achievement of “peace,” after it possesses the requisite gift of “Oz,” comes as a blessing (BeRacha) from Hashem. Peace is a status distinct from power or strength. Thus, for example, a nation may have superior might, may even win wars, but still not enjoy peace. Although strength is a means by which peace can be facilitated, it is not itself the equivalent of peace. True Shalom comes from a blessing, a BeRacha, from the Almighty. To qualify for a BeRacha, a blessing of peace, Yisrael must be worthy of such bounty. The Psalmist’s formula regarding the gift of might and the blessing of peace is as timely now as it was then. At the outset of this essay, we cited Rashi’s explanation that the extra words “Al Oyvecha” (“against your enemies”) were inserted after “Ki Setzei LaMilchama” because Torah is teaching Yisrael that, in war, it must regard and treat its adversaries as true “enemies,” without pity or mercy. Yet, Rashi’s admonitions seems so obvious. Why does Yisrael need such a reminder? The answer lies in Yisrael’s inherent traits of kindness and generosity. Chazal teach that Yisrael are “Bayshanim, Rachmonim and Gomlei Chassodim.” They are humbly quiescent, decently merciful and abundantly generous with acts of loving kindness. These character traits are wondrous attributes of a people’s inner strengths. Under ordinary circumstances, they infuse society with wholesome, beneficent behavior. However, these same virtues can become suicidal flaws during a war against a murderous, merciless enemy. A brutal foe that shows no mercy forfeits any merciful treatment in return. Because Yisrael is naturally kind and innately merciful, however, Torah (per Rashi) must admonish Yisrael that war simply is not a normal time. The attribute of generous loving kindness must be put “on hold” when on the battlefield against a treacherous foe. Although rules and protocols of war must be observed, the “enemy” must be viewed and treated as the enemy. The words “Al Oyvecha” are not superfluous at all. They teach a powerful lesson in the art of self-preservation.

Conclusion Torah and King David’s Psalms provide an accurate, time-honored, history-tested and prescient road map for Yisrael to cope with threats by omni-present enemies and haters, to successfully conduct wars against evil foes and to attain “peace through strength.” Torah teaches that Yisrael will always have its “enemies.” These must be “scattered.” Divide and conquer them. Similarly, there will always be “haters,” even when Yisrael is strong and these antagonists are fearful. Such haters must be made “to flee.” When worthy, Yisrael will receive from Hashem the gift of “Oz”, superior might. Likewise, when deserving, Yisrael will then be blessed by Hashem with the BeRacha of Shalom,” peace. And should Yisrael indeed have to conduct a war, then it must regard and treat its enemy mercilessly since its foe will not reciprocate with mercy. We see that Tanach’s lessons are quite “modern” – if the reader opens his heart and mind as well as his eyes to receive them.

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, Aug 27, 2015 at 5:00 PM

To the Third and Fourth Generations

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Do children suffer because of the sins of their parents?

There is, on the face of it, a fundamental contradiction in the Torah. On the one hand we hear, in the passage known as the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, the following words:

The Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness and truth ... Yet he does not leave the guilty

unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.” (Ex 34: 7)

The implication is clear. Children suffer for the sins of their parents. On the other hand we read in this week’s parsha:

Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin. (Deut 24: 16)

The book of Kings records a historic event when this principle proved decisive. “When Amaziah was well established as king, he executed the officials who had assassinated his father. However, he did not kill the children of the assassins, for he obeyed the command of the Lord as written by Moses in the Book of the Law: ‘Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.’” (2 Kings 14: 5-6).

There is an obvious resolution. The first statement refers to Divine justice, “at the hands of heaven.” The second, in Deuteronomy, refers to human justice as administered in a court of law. How can mere mortals decide the extent to which one person’s crime was induced by the influence of others? Clearly the judicial process must limit itself to the observable facts. The person who committed the crime is guilty. Those who may have shaped his character are not.

Yet the matter is not so simple, because we find Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the two great prophets of exile in the sixth century BCE, restating the principle of individual responsibility in strong and strikingly similar ways. Jeremiah says:

In those days people will no longer say, ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ Instead, everyone will die for their own sin; whoever eats sour grapes—their own teeth will be set on edge. (Jer. 31: 29-30)

Ezekiel says:

The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: “‘The parents 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 everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child—both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die. (Ezekiel 18: 1-4)

Here the prophets were not speaking about judicial procedures and legal responsibility. They are talking about Divine judgment and justice. They were giving the people hope at one of the lowest points in Jewish history: the Babylonian conquest and the destruction of the First Temple. The people, sitting and weeping by the waters of Babylon, might have given up hope altogether. They were being judged for the failings of their ancestors that had brought the nation to this desperate plight, and their exile seemed to stretch endlessly into the future. Ezekiel, in his vision of the valley of dry bones, hears God reporting that the people were saying, “Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost.” He and Jeremiah were counselling against despair. The people’s future was in their own hands. If they returned to God, God would return to them and bring them back to their land. The guilt of previous generations would not be attached to them.

But if this was so, then the words of Jeremiah and Ezekiel really do conflict with the idea that God punishes sins to the third and fourth generation. Recognizing this, the Talmud makes a remarkable statement:

Said R. Jose b. Hanina: Our Master Moses pronounced four [adverse] sentences on Israel, but four prophets came and revoked them ...Moses said, The Lord ... punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.” Ezekiel came and declared, “The one who sins is the one who will die.”[1]

In general the sages rejected the idea that children could be punished, even at the hands of heaven, for the sins of their parents. As a result, they systematically re-interpreted every passage that gave the opposite impression, that children were indeed being punished for their parents’ sins. Their general position was this:

Are not children then to be put to death for the sins committed by their

parents? Is it not written, “Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children?” – There the reference is to children who follow in their parents footsteps (literally “seize their parents’ deeds in their hands,” i.e. commit the same sins themselves).[2]

Specifically, they explained biblical episodes in which children were punished along with their parents, by saying that in these cases the children “had the power to protest/prevent their parents from sinning, but they failed to do so.” As Maimonides says, whoever has the power of preventing someone from committing a sin but does not do so, he is seized (i.e. punished, held responsible) for that sin.[3]

Did, then, the idea of individual responsibility come late to Judaism, as some scholars argue? This is highly unlikely. During the rebellion of Korach, when God threatened to destroy the people, Moses said, “Shall one man sin and will You be angry with the whole congregation?” (Num. 16: 22). When people began dying after David had sinned by instituting a census, he prayed to God: “I have sinned. I, the shepherd, have done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall on me and my family.” The principle of individual responsibility is basic to Judaism, as it was to other cultures in the ancient Near East.[4]

Rather, what is at stake is the deep understanding of the scope of responsibility we bear if we take seriously our roles as parents, neighbours, townspeople, citizens and children of the covenant. Judicially, only the criminal is responsible for his crime. But, implies the Torah, we are also our brother’s keeper. We share collective responsibility for the moral and spiritual health of society. “All Israel,” said the sages, “are responsible for one another.” Legal responsibility is one thing, and relatively easy to define. But moral responsibility is something altogether larger, if necessarily more vague. “Let a person not say, ‘I have not sinned, and if someone else commits a sin, that is a matter between him and God.’ This is contrary to the Torah,” writes Maimonides in the *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*. [5]

This is particularly so when it comes to the relationship between parents and children. Abraham was chosen, says the Torah, solely so that “he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.” The duty of parents to teach their children is fundamental to Judaism. It appears in both the first two paragraphs of the *Shema*, as well as the various passages cited in the “Four sons” section of the *Haggadah*. Maimonides counts as one of the gravest of all sins – so serious that God does not give us an opportunity to repent – “one who sees his son falling into bad ways and does not stop him.” The reason, he says, is that “since his son is under his authority, had he stopped him the son would have desisted.” Therefore it is accounted to the father as if he had actively caused his son to sin.[6]

If so, then we begin to hear the challenging truth in the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. To be sure, we are not legally responsible for the sins of either our parents or our children. But in a deeper, more amorphous sense, what we do and how we live do have an effect on the future to the third and fourth generation.

Rarely has that effect been more devastatingly described than in recent books by two of America’s most insightful social critics: Charles Murray of the American Enterprise Institute, and Robert Putnam of Harvard. Notwithstanding their vastly different approaches to politics, Murray in *Coming Apart* and Putnam in *Our Kids* have issued essentially the same prophetic warning of a social catastrophe in the making. For Putnam, “the American dream” is “in crisis”. For Murray, the division of the United States into two classes with ever decreasing mobility between them “will end what has made America America.”

Their argument is roughly this, that at a certain point, in the late 1950s or early 1960s, a whole series of institutions and moral codes began to dissolve. Marriage was devalued. Families began to fracture. More and more children grew up without stable association with their biological parents. New forms of child poverty began to appear, as well as social dysfunctions such as drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancies and crime and unemployment in

low-income areas. Over time, an upper class pulled back from the brink, and is now intensively preparing its children for high achievement, while on the other side of the tracks children are growing up with little hope for educational, social and occupational success. The American dream of opportunity for all is wearing thin.

What makes this development so tragic is that for a moment people forgot the biblical truth that what we do does not affect us alone. It will affect our children to the third and fourth generation. Even the greatest libertarian of modern times, John Stuart Mill, was emphatic on the responsibilities of parenthood. He wrote: "The fact itself, of causing the existence of a human being, is one of the most responsible actions in the range of human life. To undertake this responsibility—to bestow a life which may be either a curse or a blessing—unless the being on whom it is to be bestowed will have at least the ordinary chances of a desirable existence, is a crime against that being."

If we fail to honour our responsibilities as parents, then though no law will hold us responsible, society's children will pay the price. They will suffer because of our sins.

[1] Makkot 24b. [2] Berakhot 7a, Sanhedrin 27b. [3] Hilkhos Deot 6:7. [4] See Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, New York, Schocken, 1972, 329-333. [5] *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*, positive command 205. [6] *Hilkhos Teshuvah* 4: 1. The reference is of course to a son under the age of thirteen.

from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: peninim@shemayisrael.com date: Thu, Aug 27, 2015 at 7:09 PM subject:

Peninim on the Torah

by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Parshas KI Seitzei

You shall surely return them to your brother... you shall not hide yourself. (22:1,3)

We wonder why certain mitzvos are included in the Torah. Any decent person knows that if he finds an object belonging to someone else, he should proceed to return it to the rightful owner. People, however, are lazy and greedy. We are not often inclined to go out of our way to search for the owner. This is especially true when we find an object of great value, whose owner is not readily identifiable. Thus, between the time involved and the value of the item, the finder rationalizes that he does not have to return the item. A mitzvah is a mitzvah, and convenience does not enter the equation. If one discovers an item belonging to someone, he must return it - regardless of its value and regardless of the trouble involved. The following stories are inspirational, illustrating the value of the mitzvah both from an economic and spiritual perspective. There is one other aspect of hashovas aveidah which must be underscored, but I will leave that for the conclusion.

A woman went shopping on Rechov Rabbi Akiva in Bnei Brak. As she was about to enter one of the stores, she looked in her purse and almost passed out. An envelope containing five thousand shekalim was missing. When she had left the house, she had taken the money along to pay for her shopping expedition. She immediately retraced her steps, visiting every store that she had earlier entered. Nothing, absolutely nothing, had been found. She was devastated, but life goes on. She resigned herself to her loss. Let it be a kaparah, atonement, for something bad that could have happened.

One month later, she went shopping again. She looked down at her purse; the clasp was open. When she looked inside her purse to confirm that everything was there, she saw that her wallet was missing! Now what? She returned to the first store that she had visited and approached the manager, "Something is very wrong," she began. "This is the second time that I have gone shopping in this area, and both times I lost a substantial sum of money."

"Giveret," the manager said, "do you have any idea how I have searched for you? Two days after you shopped in this store, I found an envelope with thousands of shekalim in the back of the store. Regrettably, the envelope had only a name on the front, no address, no phone number. I have tried to match the name to various phone numbers, with no success. Baruch Hashem, you

are here, and I am now able to fulfill the mitzvah of hashovas aveidah, returning a lost object." It just so happened that this occurred on Erev Yom Kippur.

The woman opened up the envelope and counted the shekalim. Every last shekel was there. She attempted to show her appreciation with a reward. The manager flatly refused. This was his mitzvah. He was not exchanging it for a few shekalim.

Incidentally, let us think about how fortunate the woman was that she had lost her wallet, a loss that made her retrace her steps one month later. By the way, she found her wallet in another one of the stores.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates the next story. One Friday morning, an individual who for years had davened in one of the shteiblach, small shuls, in Bnei Brak, was in need of a significant sum of money - for a day or two. He had spoken to a number of sources with whom he had done "business" in the past. This time he was not as fortunate. While he was in shul, he noticed another mispallel, worshipper, with whom he davened every day. Veritably, the two had never spoken more than the friendly, "Good morning." He did not even know the man's name. When one is up against the wall and a deadline is looming too close for comfort, however, one takes a chance. After all, the worst that could happen is that the man would say "No."

The individual approached the man following davening and asked, "Could you possibly lend me six thousand shekel until Sunday morning?" The man looked at him and started thinking. It was obvious that this was not a sum the individual could go to the bank and withdraw. He probably had a steady fixed income from which he lived. If, for some reason, he would not be reimbursed on Sunday, he would be in serious trouble. A few moments went by and he said, "Yes."

The borrower wrote out an IOU and affixed his name to the promissory note to be paid back on Sunday morning. The borrower was unsure of the lender's name, so he simply did not fill it in. Sunday morning, the borrower promptly paid back the loan, to the apparent joy of the lender. When the borrower asked why he was so joyful, the lender replied that on Friday he had lost his wallet. Inside was some small cash and a few credit cards. Had he not lent him the six thousand shekel, he might have lost that too! This is why he was so happy. Performing a mitzvah of lending a fellow Jew money had saved him from losing six thousand shekel.

Sounds like the end of the story? No, there is more. That Sunday afternoon the lender received a phone call from an individual who was simply an honest, fine Jew. Apparently, he discovered a wallet on Friday while riding the bus, but there was no identification in the wallet. It had in it a few hundred shekel and some credit cards. No phone number or address, not a full name. There was something, however, in the wallet - a promissory note signed by the borrower with his name, address and phone number! As a result of the lender's mitzvah, not only did he not lose his six thousand shekel, he was able to retrieve his wallet. We think that by performing an act of chesed, kindness, we are helping the beneficiary. We do not realize that it is us - the benefactor - whom we are really helping!

Since we are addressing the mitzvah of returning lost objects, perhaps this would be the proper venue for discussing the return of a most critical lost object: Jewish souls. When we meet a Jew estranged from Jewish observance, is he or she any different than coming across a lost object? In a way, he or she is worse off. The lost object at least has an owner who is searching for it and awaiting its return. Can we say the same emotion applies to the lost Jewish soul? How can a person search for something that he is unaware he has lost?

The Torah exhorts us, Lo suchal l'hisaleim, "You shall not hide yourself." This pasuk addresses the one who sees a lost article, but does not want to get involved in returning it to its rightful owner, because it is a pain. It will take up his time and energy, and he simply has more important things to do with his life. The Torah's response is: You do not have anything more important to do than helping out your fellow Jew. Is it any different with the many

alienated Jews whom we come across in the course of our daily endeavor? What about the many boys and girls who used to be frum, observant, Jews, and today are no longer? Perhaps it is difficult for some to get involved, but how many are willing to help those who do get involved? One last question: There are those who are not personally up to reaching out. There are those who find it difficult to help others who are doing a fine job of sacrificing themselves to reach out to those who need it. What excuse is there for those who not only refuse to do anything themselves, but stand in the way of those who do; who make light of their efforts and disdain their meager successes? Hasheiv teshiveim l'achecha, "You shall surely return them to your brother." Is their lost object any different?

Dedicated l'zchus u'lerefuah shleima for Harav Shmaryahu Pesach ben Hinda Zlata Miller Peninim@shemayisrael.com
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from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Sun, Aug 23, 2015 at 10:31 AM subject: **Semicha and Sanhedrin** in the 19th - 21st Century

This is the continuation of the article I wrote a number of years ago. I sent out the first part of this article last week. Although the news story for which this was written is no longer a hot topic, the halachic information is still germane and relates directly to Parshas Ki Seitzei.

Semicha and Sanhedrin in the 19th - 21st Century By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff
Last week, we explained that the Sanhedrin, which is also called the Beis Din Hagadol, is the final authority on all matters of halacha and that the interpretation by its 71 members of Torah shebe'al peh is both exclusive and authoritative. Any halachic issue that is questionable and disputed by a lower beis din is referred to the Beis Din Hagadol for a binding decision. We also noted that the Sanhedrin fulfills several vital political and administrative roles, including the appointment of the Jewish King and the judges who serve on the courts of the tribes (the shevatim) and the cities. Furthermore, many other halachos require the participation or agreement of the Sanhedrin, including a decision to wage war, or any attempt to expand the boundaries of the Beis HaMikdash or of the city of Yerushalayim (Rambam, Hilchos Sanhedrin 5:1). Thus, the Sanhedrin is not only the supreme authority in matters of halacha, but it is also, quite literally, the "power behind the throne," "the power behind the courts," – and, at the same time, the court of final appeal. It has the final say in all matters, both worldly and spiritual. The Sanhedrin is also in charge of supervising the Jewish calendar through the appointment of a specially-designated committee. (In the absence of a Sanhedrin or Beis Din Hagadol, Hillel Hanasi established a calendar over 1500 years ago, so that the calendar can continue to exist, even during the interim that there is no Sanhedrin.)

We also noted that among the many technical requirements that all members of the Sanhedrin must meet, there is a basic one: they must all be superior talmidei chachamim and G-d fearing individuals. In addition, all members of the Sanhedrin and, indeed, of all the lower courts must also receive the special semicha that Moshe bestowed upon Yehoshua, authorizing him to rule on all areas of Jewish law. We noted that there are several levels of semicha, and that all members of the Sanhedrin are required to have the highest level of semicha – one that authorizes its recipient to rule on capital and corporal cases (chayavei misas beis din and malkus) and to judge kenasos, penalties that the Torah invoked. This semicha can only be given to someone who is an expert in all areas of halacha.

We also studied the question as to whether the semicha can be reintroduced by us, and the controversy that developed in the 16th century about this matter. We noted that the conclusion was that the attempt to reintroduce the semicha then was not accepted on halachic grounds, for several different reasons. One of those reasons was that the person receiving semicha must be a talmid chacham with the scholarship to rule on any subject in Torah.

How, then, will the Sanhedrin be reestablished?

The Radbaz, gadol hador of that generation, concluded either that Eliyahu HaNavi will issue semicha to others, as the harbinger of Moshiach's arrival; or, that descendants of shevet Reuven may reappear who have semicha. A third option he suggests is that Moshiach, himself, will grant semicha and thus create a Beis Din Hagadol.

At this point, we continue our discussion:

SEARCHING FOR SEMICHA IN THE 1830'S

In the 1830's, a leading disciple of the Vilna Gaon who had settled in Yerushalayim, Rav Yisroel of Shklov, made another attempt to restart semicha. Rav Yisroel was interested in organizing a Sanhedrin, but he accepted the ruling of the Maharalbach and the Radbaz that we cannot create semicha by ourselves. Instead, he decided to utilize the suggestion of the Radbaz of receiving semicha from the tribes of Reuven. Rav Yisroel

charted out where he thought the Bnei Reuven were probably located, and sent a certain Rav Baruch, as his emissary, to find them (see Sefer Halikutim, in the "Shabsei Frankel" edition of Rambam, Hilchos Sanhedrin 4:11). Unfortunately, Rav Baruch did not succeed in locating the shevet of Reuven, and the plan came to naught.

It should be noted that Rav Yisroel raised the following question: How could the Bnei Reuven have kept the semicha alive, considering the fact that they were outside Eretz Yisroel and the semicha can be granted only in Eretz Yisroel? He answered that since the Bnei Reuven had been distant from the rest of Klal Yisroel before the decision that semicha can be only in Eretz Yisroel had been accepted, there is no reason to assume that they accepted this ruling, and they were probably still issuing semicha!! It is odd that Rav Yisroel assumed that although we paskin that semicha can be given and received only in Eretz Yisroel, he still held that a semicha granted outside Eretz Yisroel is, nonetheless, valid.

Rav Yisroel's vain search to locate a musmach was an attempt to reintroduce the Sanhedrin, a far more ambitious plan than the Mahari Beirav had considered. Apparently, Rav Yisroel understood from the Gemara (Eruvin 43b) that the Sanhedrin must exist before Eliyahu can appear, a position that almost all poskim reject, as we pointed out above.

NAPOLEON'S SANHEDRIN

In 5567 (1807), Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France, decreed the opening of what he called "The Sanhedrin," consisting of 71 Jewish leaders, mostly Rabbonim, but including many communal leaders, many not religious.

This group had nothing to do with being a Sanhedrin other than that Napoleon had given them this name. Napoleon presented this group with a list of 12 inquiries to answer, all of which questioned whether the Jews were loyal to the French Empire and its laws, and about the interactions between Jews and non-Jewish Frenchmen. Of course, the "Sanhedrin" had to be very careful how they answered Napoleon's questions to make sure that they were not guilty of treason. This Sanhedrin met many times in the course of about a year and then disbanded. It was never called into session again.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Those who call their modern organization the "Sanhedrin" base themselves on the Mahari Beirav's opinion that we can recreate semicha today, based on the acceptance of most of the gedolei Yisroel. On this basis, they claim to have created semicha for one of the well-known poskim in Eretz Yisroel, who subsequently ordained a few others, who have ordained yet others, until they now claim several hundred "musmachim."

I spoke to one of the "dayanim" of the "Sanhedrin" about the procedure used to appoint their musmachim. He told me that the organization mailed letters to every shul and settlement in Israel requesting appointment of a certain well-respected Rav as musmach. They then counted the votes of those who responded and approved of their appointment. Since most of those who responded approved of the appointment, they have ruled that this Rav is now a musmach whose semicha qualifies people to serve on the Sanhedrin! To quote this "dayan," "those who chose not to respond do not count. We have a majority of those who responded!?"

Obviously, this system carries absolutely no halachic validity according to any opinion. When I spoke to the "dayan," he asked me if I was interested in becoming one of their musmachim. He told me that he would send me the information necessary for an appointment with their committee that approves musmachim. Consequently, I received a letter inviting me to the next meeting of their "Sanhedrin," and a note that they had asked one of their members about me and, upon that basis, they were preparing a semicha with which to present me at the next meeting of the "Sanhedrin"! I noted above that the Radbaz ruled that the person receiving semicha must be a talmid chacham with the scholarship to rule on any subject in Torah. Since I do not qualify for semicha on that basis, I am curious what criteria they are applying to determine a minimum standard for semicha. Unfortunately, I think I know the answer.

The group behind this "Sanhedrin" often implies that several different gedolim are behind their activities. This is highly misleading, since these gedolim refuse to be identified with this group's activities. Any Jewish organization built upon falsehood is doomed to failure, even if it is well intentioned, since the Torah is Toras Emes.

When I spoke to the "dayan," I told him that I had some questions about the halachic basis for their procedures. He answered that they prefer to reply to questions in writing, and he requested that I send my letters via e-mail. He promised that they would answer all my inquiries quickly. In a subsequent conversation, he told me that he had received my initial inquiry. I sent him two respectful letters, one asking several halachic questions about their procedures, the second asking for verification that some of the gedolim they have quoted have, indeed, endorsed their position. Although I sent each of these requests to them twice, I never received any reply from them.

Moreover, there are some serious issues that this "Sanhedrin" is delegating to itself. If I might quote from a list of their activities:

"Among the many topics the Sanhedrin intends to address are the bridging of the divisions between various communities of Jewish exiles who have returned to Israel; the

establishment of authentic techeilet, the biblical blue thread Jews are commanded to wear amongst the fringes attached to four-cornered garments; the definition of the measurement of the 'amah' (the biblical cubit); the determination of the exact point of human death, so as to deal with the Jewish ethics of euthanasia; and the issue of agunot -- women whose husbands refuse to grant them a divorce."

I would like to point out that all these issues have been or are being dealt with by Klal Yisroel's gedolei haposkim. (In other articles, I explained why most gedolei haposkim rejected the suggested sources of the techeiles dye.)

Recently, the group has gotten involved in several really serious issues. Apparently, they are exploring the location of the mizbeich, the possibility of offering korban Pesach, and of appointing a king from the descendants of Dovid Hamelech. One of their meetings was, apparently, conducted on the Har Habayis itself! (Please note that most poskim prohibit ascending the Har Habayis.) The discussion about bringing korbanos is a well-trodden halachic discourse and, here also, all gedolei poskim have ruled that we cannot offer korbanos now. (Again, I refer the reader to an article on this subject that is available on RabbiKaganoff.com)

Based on what I have seen about this "Sanhedrin," I pose the following questions to the reader:

Are the members of this "Sanhedrin" qualified to make decisions that affect Klal Yisroel? Are they qualified to make any halachic decisions at all? Is this not an attempt at arrogating halachic decisions from the Gedolei Yisroel and the Gedolei Haposkim? Are these the people who should be determining Klal Yisroel's agenda? Doesn't this organization cheapen the kedusha that the word Sanhedrin implies? Isn't this organization an insult to anyone with Torah sensitivities?

The Gedolei Yisroel could organize a Sanhedrin today, if they considered it halachically acceptable. Clearly, they are of the opinion that the halachic foundation for such a move does not exist or, alternatively, that Klal Yisroel will not benefit from its creation.

We should all daven with more kavanah when reciting the bracha Hoshiva shofeteinu kivarishonah, "Return our judges like the ones we had originally," as a result of Teka bishofar gadol licheiruseinu, "Blow the Great Shofar that will free us."

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Rabbi Mayer Twersky

Teshuva: A Mandate for Change

The impending *din* of *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* focuses our attention upon [the need for] *teshuva*. This is obviously entirely appropriate and commendable. The problem is that we inappropriately associate *teshuva* exclusively with the *din* of *Yomim Noraim*. This distorts the *mitzvah* of *teshuva* in two crucial, interrelated ways. Firstly, the *mitzvah* of *teshuva* is perennial, not seasonal. *Rabbeinu* Yona opens *Sha'arei Teshuva* by underscoring the vital obligation to repent immediately, as soon as one becomes aware of *cheit*.

Likewise, *Maharsha* comments that when *Chazal* detail the *mitzvah* of studying the appropriate seasonal *halachos* on the respective *yomin tovim* (*halachos* of *Pesach* on *Pesach*, *Shavuos* on *Shavuos*, *Sukkos* on *Sukkos*) they conspicuously omit mention of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, lest one erroneously think that *mitzvas teshuva* is seasonal and limited to the *Yomim Noraim*.

Secondly, the exclusive association of *teshuva* with *din* yields a truncated, distorted view and vision of *teshuva*. The goal of *teshuva* becomes settling accounts, attaining forgiveness and winning a favorable verdict. Completely absent from that vision is change. The *mitzvah* of *teshuva* actually entails affecting formidable, even dramatic personal change - transforming our character and very persona.

צריך להפשי בדעות רעות שיש לו ולשוב מהן

one has to identify his bad character traits and repent from them

מן הכעס ומן האיבה ומן הקנאה וכו'

from anger and enmity and jealousy etc. ...

מן רדיפת הממון והכבוד ומרדיפת המאכלות וכו'

from pursuit of money, honor and food...

(*Teshuva*, 7:3)

משנה שמו, כלומר אני אחר ואיני אותו האיש שעשה אותן המעשים

he changes his name, so as to say that I am different; I am not the same

person who committed those [sins]
(*Teshuva*, 2:4)

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<http://www.aish.com/ci/s/The-Wall-Street-Crash-and-the-Torah.html>

The Wall Street Crash and the Torah

by Rabbi Benjamin Blech

Another wake-up call just in time for Elul.

Wall Street is reeling. The Dow Jones industrial average fell 1089 points in just a few hours one morning this week, setting the worst intraday drop in its history. Concern is spreading across global markets and fear is the prevailing mood of investors. The bull market doesn't seem to be in sight anymore and the gurus of Wall Street try to maintain their optimism even as they weep over their unexpected losses.

What happened? For those of us who take the lessons of the Torah seriously we recognize that God long ago warned us of precisely this kind of economic distress, offering wisdom especially relevant as we prepare for the forthcoming High Holy Days.

It was a story we surely all remember from the Bible:

And Joseph said unto Pharaoh: The dream of Pharaoh is one; what God is about to do He has declared unto Pharaoh. The seven good cows are seven years and the seven good stalks are seven years. The dream is one. And the seven lean and ill-favored cows that came up after them are seven years, and also the seven empty stalks blasted with the east wind, they shall be seven years of famine . . . behold, there comes seven years of plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. And there shall arise after them seven years of famine, and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt (Genesis 41:25-30).

Joseph taught Pharaoh a startling new idea that had previously never been recognized. There is an economic cycle that constantly repeats itself, taking us from prosperity to poverty, only to replicate the pattern over and over again. The gist of Joseph's advice, which saved Egypt's economy and allowed it to become a world power, was simple: Prepare in the good times for the bad times that will surely follow.

Fast forward to 1929. While the poor had sunk their savings into a market they were assured could only go up, American statistician, business forecaster, and author Roger Babson warned in September of that year: "Fair weather cannot always continue. The economic cycle is in progress today, as it was in the past. The Federal Reserve System has put the banks in a strong position, but it has not changed human nature. More people are borrowing and speculating today more than ever in our history. Sooner or later a crash is coming and it may be terrific."

It isn't true that people had no advance warning for the Crash of '29. James Dale Davidson and Sir William Rees-Mogg, in their book about this crisis, *Blood in the Streets*, quote Paul Clay of Moody's Investor Service, who on December 28, 1928, spoke about that time's major "injurious financial fallacies." Clay said, "First among these fallacies is the New Era delusion as typified by the famous dictum, 'This is a new era. Statistics of the past don't count.' Every period of great prosperity is considered to be a new era and so much better fortified to give promise of permanence."

Sound familiar? Before the crash of 2001 as well as that of 2008, (note: 7 years between them and seven years later brings us to the present, 2015) newspapers and magazines overflowed with stories about the "new paradigm"—the notion that thanks to increased global competition and technological advances, inflation and the business cycle are dead. The advanced economies, in other words, could look forward to uninterrupted years of strong growth and low inflation, and the exuberance of equity prices around the world was thereby justified.

In other words, forget the past and the theory of economic cycles. Joseph was wrong. The cows and the stalks of Pharaoh's dream had been replaced by bulls. As the *Economist* pointed out on July 18, 1998: "The key to Wall Street's continuing miracles, bulls have started arguing, is the new courage of

small investors. The suggestion is the rules that they have followed in the past no longer apply. Having overcome a previously irrational fear of the risks of equities, they are pouring into them.”

Too bad everyone forgot yet another all-important piece of Biblical advice:

The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

What is even more incredible, some economists pointed out, is that the duration of financial cycles also correlates to biblical laws:

At the end of every seven years, you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it (Deuteronomy 15:1-2).

And you shall count . . . seven times seven years . . . forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. For the fiftieth year shall be holy, a time to proclaim liberty throughout the land to all enslaved debtors and a time for canceling of all public and private debts. It shall be a year when all the family estates sold to others shall be returned to the original owners for their heirs (Leviticus 25:8-10).

Just as Joseph spoke of seven good years followed by seven lean years, economic history seems to indicate a general pattern of recessions every seven to eight years with a major depression approximately every fifty years. The cancellation of short-term debt after seven years and the return of land every fifty years may perhaps be the Bible's way of helping all those hurt by the consequences of inevitable economic cycles.

Why in Autumn?

James Dale Davidson and Sir William Rees-Mogg, financial advisors and authors of *Blood in the Streets*, are intrigued by yet another aspect of timing apparent in economic cycles. They write:

Even more mysterious is the strange tendency for major crashes to occur in the autumn. For example, September 18, 1873; October 29, 1929; October 6, 1932; October 18, 1937; October 19, 1987; and October 13, 1989. Each of these dramatic results, among the largest drops ever recorded, occurred in the fall. The old view would be to argue that this is only coincidence, which of course is possible. Most likely some factor we do not now understand increases the vulnerability to sell-offs in the fall.

What could there possibly be in that time period which from a divine perspective makes it so susceptible to terrible downfalls? Allow me to suggest a possible answer: On the Jewish calendar, these dates always coincide with the period of the High Holy Days, biblically designated as the time of Heavenly Judgment.

It isn't quite September yet. We're still in August but on the Hebrew calendar we are already in Elul – the month designated for introspection, for soul-searching, and for repentance in every area of our lives. Money, too, requires our attention. How we spend it, how much we allow it to influence us, for good or for bad, how much we permit it to define our concerns and to affect our character. The message on our coins is “in God we trust,” but all too often the message of our lives is that it is wealth we worship.

I believe that it is precisely now, in these days with such special spiritual meaning, that Wall Street urges us to remember that our financial well-being is ultimately in the hands of God, and the best way to ensure blessings from above is to be guided by the wisdom of the Torah.

This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/ci/s/The-Wall-Street-Crash-and-the-Torah.html>

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subject: [**Rav Kook List**] **Elul: Unity and Repentance**

As we stand before the start of a new year, it is incumbent upon us to examine our deeds and aspire to the path of teshuvah (repentance), a path that brings redemption and healing to the world.

The Jewish people have become divided into two camps, through the categorization of Jews as Charedi (religious) and Chofshi (secular). These are new terms, which were not used in the past. Of course, not everyone is identical, especially in spiritual matters; but there was never a specific term to describe each faction. In this respect, we can certainly say that previous generations were superior to ours.

By emphasizing this categorization, we obstruct the path toward improvement and growth in both camps. Those who feel that they belong to the religious camp look down upon the secular camp. If they think about teshuvah and improvement, they immediately cast their eyes in the direction of the secularists, devoid of Torah and mitzvot. They are confident that full repentance is required by the irreligious, not by them.

The secular Jews, on the other hand, are convinced that any notion of penitence is a religious concept, completely irrelevant to their lives.

It would be better if we would all concentrate on examining our own defects, and judge others generously. It could very well be that others have treasure-troves of merits, hidden from sight. We should recognize that there exists in each camp a latent force leading toward goodness. Each camp has much to improve upon, and could learn much from the positive traits of the other camp.

Let us be known to each other by one name - Klal Yisrael. And let our prayer be fulfilled,

“May they all become one brotherhood, to fulfill Your Will wholeheartedly” (from the High Holiday liturgy).

(Silver from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Mo'adei HaRe'iyah, p. 58, originally published in the journal HaYesod, 1933.)

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subject: [Parshapotpourri] Parsha Potpourri by Ozer Alport - Parshas Ki Seitzei **Parshas Ki Seitzei** - Vol. 10, Issue 45

Compiled by Oizer Alport

V'raisa b'shivya eishes y'fas toar v'chashakta ba v'lakachta lecha l'isha (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 is difficult to understand, as only the most righteous individuals constituted the Jewish army. Rashi writes (20:8) that somebody who had committed even the smallest sin was sent back from the war. How could such pious Rabbis be tempted to marry a beautiful non-Jewish woman? Rashi writes that a person who marries a y'fas toar will ultimately give birth to a ben sorer u'moreh - wayward son. The Gemora in Sanhedrin (71a) rules that a child may only be punished as a rebellious son if his parents are identical in their voices, appearances, and height. Rav Shimon Moshe Diskin explains that even the most righteous soldier will be taken aback upon encountering a woman who looks like him and whose voice is identical to his. All external signs seem to indicate that she is meant for him, and he may be convinced that Hashem's will is for him to convert her to Judaism and marry her. However, from the fact that Rashi teaches that a wayward son will come out of such a union, we may conclude that the ideal marriage isn't one in which the husband and wife enter already identical to one another.

Dayan Yisroel Yaakov Fisher derives a similar lesson from Parshas Beha'aloscha. The Gemora in Shabbos (130a) teaches that any mitzvah

which was accepted by the Jewish people with joy, such as circumcision, is still performed happily to the present day. Any mitzvah that was accepted with fighting, such as forbidden relationships (Rashi Bamidbar 11:10), is still accompanied by tension, as the issues involved in the negotiation of every wedding cause struggles. Of all of the commandments, why did the Jewish people specifically complain about the prohibition against marrying family members?

Dayan Fisher suggests that when the Jews heard that they would be unable to marry their close relatives, they feared that they would be unable to enjoy successful marriages. They believed that the ideal candidate for marriage would be a person who was familiar since birth and who would be almost identical in terms of values and stylistic preferences. From the Torah's prohibition to marry those most similar to us, we may deduce that Hashem's vision of an ideal marriage differs from our own. A Torah marriage is one in which the two partners grow together over time to understand and respect one another, allowing them to overcome their differences and create a beautiful, harmonious blend of their unique perspectives and experiences.

Ki yih'yeh l'ish ben sorer u'moreh (21:18)

Rashi writes (Bereishis 48:8) that although Yaakov initially intended to bless Yosef's sons Ephraim and Menashe, he grew hesitant when he became aware that they would have wicked descendants. Yosef attempted to reassure Yaakov by showing him proof that he had married their mother according to Jewish law and they were his legitimate children. Although it was commendable that Yosef had been committed to properly marrying his wife even in the midst of the immoral Egyptians, how did this assuage Yaakov's concern that their offspring would include evil men?

The Torah L'Daas (Vol. 1) and Peninei Kedem offer a clever explanation based on the answer to a well-known question. A ben sorer u'moreh (wayward son) is put to death at a young age for the relatively minor (and non-capital) crimes of disobeying his parents, stealing from them, and overeating. Rashi explains that he is killed al shem sofo - although his present actions don't justify the death penalty, because they reveal that he is headed down a path that will lead that way, it is preferable for him to die now while he is still relatively innocent.

On the other hand, when Yishmael was sick in the desert and Hashem wished to miraculously create a well to heal him, the Heavenly angels challenged why He would help somebody whose descendants would later kill the Jewish people. Hashem answered that He only judges people *ààù çàà ùí* - based on their actions at the present moment without taking into account what will happen in the future. If so, why is the wayward son punished based on his future actions?

The Maharsha and Ma'asei Hashem answer that the mother of the ben sorer u'moreh was a beautiful non-Jewish woman who was captured during war (Rashi 21:11). Even though the Torah permitted marrying her, it was only done as a concession to the yetzer hara (evil inclination) and in a sense, the child is considered to be the product of a sinful relationship. As a result, he is judged more stringently and held accountable for his future actions, as opposed to Yishmael who was born from a permitted relationship.

In light of this distinction, when Yosef saw Yaakov judging Ephraim and Menashe based on the future and refraining from blessing them as a result of their wicked descendants, he demonstrated that they were legitimate children from a proper marriage and therefore should only be judged based on their present (righteous) actions.

V'yased tih'yeh lecha al azeinecha v'haya b'shivt'cha chutz v'chafarta bah v'shavisa v'kis'sa es tzeiasecha (23:14)

The Jewish people are commanded to designate a place outside of their camp to serve as a bathroom and to place a shovel there to enable a person to cover his waste in order to preserve the sanctity of the camp. The Gemora in Yoma (75b) questions the need for this, as the Manna which they ate was completely absorbed in their bodies without producing any waste. The

Gemora explains that it was required due to the food items that they purchased from traveling merchants.

In his commentary on Pirkei Avos (3:3), Rav Chaim Volozhiner questions why the Gemora needed to make an assumption - that they purchased and consumed food from passing merchants. Couldn't the Gemora have answered more directly, that this procedure was necessary due to their consumption of sacrifices, something which is explicitly discussed in the Torah?

Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains that since the sin of Adam, all food items have contained within them both valuable nutrients and unnecessary components, which humans must excrete as waste. However, food which comes from heaven, such as Manna, is purely spiritual and contains no wasteful parts, thus allowing it to be directly and completely absorbed into the body.

From the fact that the Gemora chose not to attribute the need for bathroom facilities to the consumption of the sacrifices, we may conclude that the Heavenly fire on the Altar consumed any superfluous components of the animals burned thereon, thereby elevating the meat to the status of Divine food which was completely absorbed in the body.