



BS"D

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

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **Shmini Atzeres/Simchas Torah**
& **Vzos Habracha** - 5771

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

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

From: ravfrand-owner@torah.org on behalf of **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2006 12:11 AM
To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: **Rabbi Frand on Parshas Zos HaBracha**

The Torah Is Not Yerusha – Only Morasha

The Torah reading on Simchas Torah contains the well known pasuk [verse]: "The Torah was commanded to us by Moshe, a Morasha [inheritance] to the Congregation of Yaakov." [Devorim 33:4] There is an interesting teaching in the Talmud Yerushalmi: Everywhere we find the word morasha, it connotes a weakening of the idea of inheritance (lashon deeha) [Bava Basra 8:2].

Morasha is a peculiar word. It is not easy to translate. It is significantly different than the word yerusha [inheritance]. The connotation is that one has less ownership in an object that has come to him as a "morasha" than he does in an item that comes to him as a "yerusha."

The Jerusalem Talmud is not referring to the source in our pasuk in Zos HaBracha but rather to a pasuk in Parshas VaEra: "And I will give it (referring to the Land of Israel) to you as a morasha." [Shmos 6:8] The Yerushalmi points out that the people who were given this promise never made it to the Land of Israel. Virtually the entire generation who left Egypt died out in the Wilderness. How then can the Torah make the statement that it will be given to them as a morasha? The Yerushalmi thus cites this as proof for the difference in nuance between yerusha and morasha.

Had the Torah promised Eretz Yisrael to those who left Egypt as a yerusha, it would have belonged to them with no ifs, ands, or buts. However, the Torah used the weaker form -- morasha, meaning that it will not necessarily be yours. In truth, it never became theirs.

It only became theirs to the extent that they gave it to their children. This in fact is the major connotation of the word morasha. The word implies "it is yours – sometimes literally and sometimes only to the extent that you pass it on to your children without ever having taken possession."

The Yerushalmi then questions this explanation by citing our pasuk regarding the Torah being a "morasha for the Congregation of Yaakov."

The Yerushalmi answers that in fact this translation of 'morasha' applies to Torah as well!

Torah is NOT a yerusha. Just because my father had the Torah does not mean that I will have the Torah. Sometimes a person only has the Torah as a 'morasha'. This means that if a person sweats over Torah and makes the effort to understand Torah and puts in the hours required to master Torah, then Torah actually becomes his. But there is no guarantee. Torah is not a no-strings-attached inheritance (yerusha). Without the sweat and the hours, Torah will only be something that the person can potentially pass on to the next generation (morasha).

Chazal teach a tradition based on the pasuk, "This Torah will not depart from your mouth or the mouths of you children or the mouths of your grandchildren forever" [Yehoshua 1:8]: If three generations are committed to learning Torah, then the Torah will never leave that person's family. The Talmud [Bava Metzia 85a] summarizes this idea with the expression "The Torah returns to its host" (Torah chozeres al achsania shelah).

Someone once asked the Chofetz Chaim the very obvious and pointed question that we know people who descend from many generations of Torah scholars who are themselves ignorant of Torah. Unfortunately, we see millions of Jews that fit into this category. There are families that bear the name of prestigious Gedolim [Torah greats], who today may not even know what an Aleph looks like. What then does it mean "Torah chozeres al achsania shelah"?

The Chofetz Chaim explained that the Gemara's analogy is very precise. The Torah is like a guest seeking its host's home. Sometimes a guest knocks on one's door. If no one answers the door, the guest will not come in.

"Torah chozeres al achsania shelah" means that if Torah has been in a family for three generations, the Torah will come "knocking on that family's door" in future generations. But still, the younger generation must open the door for the guest. The guest must still be invited in by each new generation.

Unfortunately, this does occur. There is knocking. There are opportunities. But the door does not get opened. Torah is not a yerusha. It is only a morasha. The difference is that the former is automatic, while the latter requires effort. If a person does not make the effort, his relationship to Torah might only be to the extent that he will pass it on to subsequent generations.

The Value of an Unknown Burial Place

In Zos HaBracha, the Torah teaches that the burial place of Moshe Rabbeinu is not known. [Devorim 34:6]

I read an interesting story recently about someone who was driving in Eretz Yisrael in the Golan Heights. He came to an intersection and picked up two Israeli soldiers who were hitchhiking. The soldiers piled into the back seat with their M-16s and started up a conversation.

As it turned out, the soldiers were not Jews, they were Druze. The Druze are loyal citizens of the State of Israel and serve in the Israel Defense Forces. They also have a difficult history with the Arabs.

The Druze soldiers explained that they have their own religion. They are not Moslem. The "father" of their religion is Yisro. They had a nice discussion and as they got to their destination and started leaving the car, the soldiers left the Jewish driver with a parting thought: "Our religion has something over your religion. Not only do we have something over your religion, we have something over the Christians and the Moslems as well. We know where the 'father' of our religion is buried. (Yisro is buried in the area around Teverya.) You do not know where Moshe is buried. The Christians do not know where the founder of their religion is buried. The Moslems do not even know IF the founder of their religion is buried. (According to their tradition, he ascended to Heaven before dying.)"

However, the truth is that it is not necessarily good to know where a person is buried. The Torah makes a point of telling us that we do not know and we will not know where Moshe is buried. The Talmud describes an attempt to locate the grave of Moshe Rabbeinu on Mount Nebo [Sotah 13b]. The attempt was foiled supernaturally. Why?

Rav Samson Rafael Hirsch explains that the Torah saw the potential that Moshe Rabbeinu's grave could become a deity. It is important for all of us to remember that when we visit the graves of the righteous, we do not pray TO the righteous people that they should bless us. We are forbidden to pray TO a human being – dead or alive! We visit the graves of Tzadikim to ask that they petition on our behalf to the Ribono shel Olam. We are not allowed to daven TO the Tzadik.

The Torah saw the potential of such a thing happening with Moshe Rabbeinu. Moshe was a person of such monumental stature that the Torah feared lest his burial place would become a shrine.

The Torah is also informing us that as monumental a person as Moshe Rabbeinu was, there needed to be a new leader once he died. No one could fill his shoes, but that was irrelevant. Life must go on. The Torah stresses this idea by emphasizing, "You will come to the Judge who will be present IN THOSE DAYS" [Devarim 17:9] and "You will come to the Priest who will be present IN THOSE DAYS." [Devarim 26:3]

The fact that this Judge or this Priest is not in the same league with his predecessor is irrelevant. We are told that Moshe's face was like the sun and Yehoshua's face was only like the moon. Yehoshua was not in the same league as Moshe. But Yehoshua was going to be the new leader.

Rabbi Wein always quotes the maxim: "No man is indispensable, yet no man is replaceable." This is very true. No man is indispensable to the extent that "we cannot continue onward." Yet no man is replaceable either. People have their own unique contributions that can never be replaced.

This is another explanation of why Moshe's burial place is not known. The Jewish people had to move forward. They had to continue with the next leader and the next generation. "A generation passes on and a new generation comes." [Koheles 1:4] We can only go to the leader who is present in our own generation. This is the way of the Torah and this is the way of the world.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington
DavidATwersky@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman;
Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org Tapes or 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.

RavFrاند, Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. They're here! Commuter's Chavrusa Bereishis Series 19 on tape or CD, to enlighten, inspire and perhaps amuse you with such fascinating topics as: "Standing for A Chassan and Kallah At The Chupah" "Six or Ten People for Chazoras Hashatz?" "You Look Great! - Permitted Flattery?"

Announcing: The new Yad Yechiel MP3 Torah Library now contains Commuter's Chavrusah series 1, 2, 3, and now 4. With the explosive growth in popularity of iPods and other MP3 players, we are proud to offer Commuter's Chavrusah Series 1-4 to the public in this exciting new format. Every file in this library is a live recording of a 60 minute shiur presented by Rabbi Frand. For complete listings of all the new offerings, log onto our secure site at <http://www.yadyechiel.org> or send e-mail to tapes@yadyechiel.org, or call us at 410-358-0416. And while you're there, don't forget that the entire Yad Yechiel Tape Library, featuring the complete collection of Rav Frand's cassette shiurim, is also now available for viewing online. At <http://www.yadyechiel.org>, you can browse through a comprehensive listing of 18 years of weekly shiurim, view Parsha Perceptions, Halacha Tapes, Hashkafa Tapes and Theme

Sets. Plus, you'll find order information on this easy-to-navigate site. Log on today, and enjoy the world of Torah Tapes from Yad Yechiel!

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. Project Genesis - Torah.org is a recognized charity and depends upon your support. Please help us by visiting <http://torah.org/support/> for information on class dedications, memorials, annual giving and more. Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

from Kol Torah Webmaster <webmaster@koltorah.org> to Kol Torah <koltorah@koltorah.org> Sep 22, 2010

subject Sukkot-Parashat BeReishit

**Who Wrote the Last Eight Pesukim of the Torah?
by Rabbi Chaim Jachter**

A Unique Set of Pesukim The events described in the Torah were written by Moshe Rabbeinu, exactly as transmitted from Hashem, after those events occurred. For example, the incident of the Mergalim was written after this incident occurred and the Korach rebellion was recorded in the Torah after this event transpired. While there is a dispute (Gittin 60a) whether the events of the Torah were recorded after each specific incident (Torah Megillah Megillah Nittenah) or only towards the conclusion of Sefer Devarim and Moshe Rabbeinu's life (Torah Chatumah Nittenah; all agree that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote the Torah up to the events of Har Sinai at Har Sinai – see Rashi to Shemot 24:4), all agree that the events were recorded only after each event occurred.

There are indeed prophetic portions in the Torah, such as in Bilam's blessings and the Tochachot (sections of rebuke) at the end of Sefer VaYikra and Sefer Devarim. As noted by Rabbeinu Bachya, these sections record events before they occur. However, in these portions, the Torah makes it clear that these events will happen in the future. On the other hand, Moshe Rabbeinu's death is presented in the Torah in past tense as having already occurred.

Hence, the last eight Pesukim of the Torah (Devarim 34:5-12), which describe the death of Moshe Rabbeinu as having already happened, pose a serious difficulty. On the one hand, if Moshe Rabbeinu wrote these Pesukim in advance of his death, these Pesukim differ from the entire Torah. On the other hand, it is axiomatic that the entire Torah was written by only Moshe Rabbeinu, as indicated in Devarim 31:24, which states that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote the words of the Torah "until their completion." Is it possible that the last Pesukim follow the pattern of the rest of the Torah and record the events only after they occurred, but differ in that they were not written by Moshe Rabbeinu?

The Tannaitic Dispute – Bava Batra 15a The Gemara (Bava Batra 15a) records a major dispute among the Tanna'im about this issue. Rabi Nechemyah argues that Yehoshua wrote these last Pesukim, whereas Rabi Shimon asserts that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote these Pesukim as well (although he was crying while writing these Pesukim; see Rav Yehuda Gershuni's Hagot BePharashiyot HaTorah for a summary of the major opinions explaining the meaning of writing in tears). Rambam (Hilchot Teshuvah 3:8 and Hilchot Tefillah 13:6) rules strongly in favor of Rabi Shimon, but Rashi (Devarim 34:5) cites both opinions. All opinions agree, however, that these Pesukim in some manner differ from the rest of the Torah. This phenomenon has Halachic implications for the Torah reading on Simchat Torah, as noted by the Gemara (ibid.).

According to Rabi Shimon and Rambam, these events are prophetic when written by Moshe Rabbeinu but are written in the past tense because they are “as good as done.” Some refer to this writing style as “prophetic past” and note that this phenomenon appears on occasion later in Tanach, such as in Yeshayahu 5:13, Iyov 5:20 and Divrei HaYamim Bet 20:37.

It is reasonable to suggest that even Rabi Shimon and Rambam would agree that these last eight Pesukim were not revealed to the entire Jewish People until after these events occurred. Thus, the Pasuk (Devarim 34:9) that states that the Jewish People were obedient to Yehoshua subsequent to Moshe Rabbeinu’s death was not known to us until it occurred. It is possible that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote the last eight Pesukim in prophetic past before his death but handed these Pesukim to a very limited group of students who revealed these Pesukim as Moshe Rabbeinu’s writing only after the events occurred.

Malbim (introduction to Sefer Tehillim) suggests the same approach regarding Rabi Meir’s opinion (Pesachim 117a) that David HaMelech composed the entire Tehillim. A problem with this opinion is that Tehillim includes Mizmorim that mourn the loss of the Davidic kingdom (Mizmor 89) and the exile to Babylon (Mizmor 137) as well as those that celebrate Shivat Tziyon, the return to Zion to build the Second Beit HaMikdash (Mizmor 126). Malbim explains that this opinion believes that David HaMelech composed these Mizmorim but handed them only to a small coterie of students, who, in turn, handed them to subsequent generations of limited groups of students, to be revealed to the entire Jewish People only when these Mizmorim would become relevant.

Rav Hayyim Angel suggests that the same applies to Yeshayahu’s prophecy (chapter 45) that seems to be about the Persian Emperor Koresh (Cyrus) establishing his empire. The problem is that Yeshayahu lived approximately two hundred years before Koresh conquered and succeeded the Babylonian empire. One may explain that Yeshayahu prophesied about this event long in advance of its occurring, but the prophecy was revealed to all only after Koresh fulfilled the prophecy.

Ibn Ezra’s Bold Opinion Ibn Ezra occasionally presents daring approaches to Pesukim that are at variance with Chazal in the narrative portions of the Chumash. Ibn Ezra presents a Peshat (straightforward explanation without the aid of Midrashim) approach to Chumash, which he believes may vary with Chazal’s Midrashic approach to sections of Chumash that do not have direct Halachic implications.

In Devarim chapter 34 (Pasuk 1), Ibn Ezra argues that the entire Perek was written by Yehoshua after Moshe Rabbeinu’s death. Thus, Ibn Ezra extends Rabi Nechemyah’s opinion and argues that the last twelve Pesukim were written by Yehoshua. Ibn Ezra is compelled by Devarim 34:1-4’s recording that Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Mount Nevo, apparently alone, where Hashem showed him Eretz Yisrael immediately prior to his death. Ibn Ezra notes that the Pesukim do not record that Moshe Rabbeinu descended the mountain after this episode. Thus, Moshe Rabbeinu did not have the opportunity to record this event after it happened and then transmit it to Bnei Yisrael. Accordingly, Ibn Ezra concludes that Yehoshua wrote also the first four Pesukim of Perek 34, after the event occurred. Ibn Ezra explains that Hashem presented Yehoshua with the information after the event (otherwise, how could Yehoshua have known what happened after Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Nevo?).

Rabi Nechemyah could defend his opinion that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote the first four Pesukim of Perek 34 (although he believes that the last eight were written by Yehoshua) by arguing that Yehoshua accompanied Moshe Rabbeinu in his ascent to Mount Nevo. Support for this answer may be derived from Yehoshua’s being the sole individual who waited for Moshe Rabbeinu after he ascended Har Sinai to heaven (Shemot 32:17) and from the Halachah (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 339:4) obligating us to Ensure that no one suffer the agony of dying alone.

Another possibility is that after Hashem showed him Eretz Yisrael, Moshe Rabbeinu did, in fact, descend from Har Nevo, in order to record this incident and transmit it to the Torah in accordance to Hashem’s exact specifications. A third option is that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote the first four Pesukim while on Har Nevo after being shown Eretz Yisrael but before he died. Yehoshua later discovered the scroll written by Moshe Rabbeinu. This answer might be supported by Sefer Melachim’s recording (Melachim Bet 2:16-17) that after Eiliyahu HaNavi died, his students scoured the area for his whereabouts. Yehoshua may have done a similar search for Moshe Rabbeinu’s body, whereupon he discovered the scroll. There are, in fact, many parallels between Moshe Rabbeinu and Eiliyahu HaNavi, making the comparison an appropriate one.

Ibn Ezra could respond to all of these suggestions that “Ikar Chaseir Min HaSefer”, – none of these suggestions are stated in the text. Rabi Nechemyah and Rashi could reply that this is an example of “Chisurei Mechasra,” that the obvious need not be stated explicitly in the text when we could infer it independently.

Criticism of Ibn Ezra The Or HaChayim (Devarim 34:9) severely criticizes Ibn Ezra’s approach. He writing that heresy sprouts from this approach, as it strengthens the heretical belief that that the Torah has been edited and changed from its original state. The Or HaChayim emphatically endorses the opinion of Rabi Shimon and Rambam that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote all of the Torah, including the last eight Pesukim.

One wonders why the Or HaChayim singles out Ibn Ezra for criticism while not similarly criticizing Rabi Nechemyah or even Rashi, who presents Rabi Nechemyah as a viable option. After all, Ibn Ezra is simply expanding upon Rabi Nechemyah’s opinion. One may respond that Or HaChayim is disturbed by Ibn Ezra’s venturing beyond where Rabi Nechemyah and Rashi dared to tread. Rabi Nechemyah and Rashi limit their approach to the Pesukim regarding which it seems impossible for Moshe Rabbeinu to have written it during his lifetime.

Resolving an Apparent Inconsistency within Ibn Ezra Ibn Ezra appears to adopt a strikingly different tone in his grappling with BeReishit 36:31-39, which lists eight generations of kings of Edom “before a king reigned in Israel.” Ramban, Rashbam and Chizkuni all believe that the king of Israel described here is Moshe Rabbeinu. Ibn Ezra cites an opinion that the king in Israel described here is King Saul, and that BeReishit 36:31-39 mentions, by prophetic means, kings not born yet during Moshe’s lifetime.

Ibn Ezra proceeds to quote a commentator from the deviationist Karaite sect who argued that these Pesukim were written long after Moshe Rabbeinu’s death, during the reign of King Yehoshafat. Ibn Ezra sharply criticizes this view, writing “Heaven forefend, Heaven forefend that the matter is like what he said about the days of Yehoshafat. His commentary deserves to be burnt.”

Why does Ibn Ezra embrace and even expand upon Rabi Nechemyah’s opinion that a small portion of the Torah was not written by Moshe Rabbeinu yet vigorously reject a notion that BeReishit 36:31-39 was written after Moshe Rabbeinu’s death? One may answer that the end of the Torah is a more fitting place to view as a codicil added to the end of the Torah by the leading student of Moshe Rabbeinu after the latter’s death. In addition, it is acceptable to the Ibn Ezra to claim that Yehoshua completed the Torah, since he was in the “same league” as Moshe Rabbeinu.

Chazal (Bava Batra 75a) compare Moshe Rabbeinu to the sun and Yehoshua to the moon. This statement captures the notion that although Yehoshua was a lesser prophet than Moshe Rabbeinu (as indicated by Devarim 34:10, which states that a prophet like Moshe Rabbeinu never arose amongst Israel), he is at least comparable to Moshe Rabbeinu. Moreover, Moshe Rabbeinu states (Devarim 18:15) that Hashem will send us a prophet “like me,” and Ibn Ezra interprets this as referring to Yehoshua. It cannot be referring to other prophets, since they cannot

legitimately be compared to Moshe Rabbeinu. In fact, Ibn Ezra interprets the phrase "until this very day" in Devarim 34:6 (which states that no one has discovered the location of Moshe Rabbeinu's grave "until this very day") as referring to the end of Yehoshua's life. Ibn Ezra does not explain this Pasuk, which potentially could be understood to refer to a much later time, to refer to a time later than the death of Yehoshua. Thus, Ibn Ezra cannot countenance the idea of a Pasuk being added to the Torah by someone other than Yehoshua.

Conclusion While there is vigorous debate regarding the authorship of the last eight (and perhaps twelve) Pesukim in the Torah, there is no debate regarding the authorship of the rest of the Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu's authorship of the rest of the Torah is a pillar of our belief, and Orthodox Judaism cannot countenance deviation, however minor, from this principle of faith. Orthodox Judaism by definition has "red lines," and if one crosses them, he or she is no longer defined as Orthodox. As open as Ibn Ezra was to bold and innovative approaches within Chumash, his stern comments in his commentary to BeReishit 36:31 demonstrate that he had clear limits and boundaries beyond which he dared not cross.

<http://www.njop.org/html/SIMCHATTORAH5764-2003.html>

Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Message

Updated 10/13/2003

SIMCHAT TORAH 5764-2003

"Celebrating Torah"

Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald

Because of the festivals of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, we do not read the normal Torah portion this week. Instead, on Sunday, October 19th we complete the annual cycle of reading the entire five books of the Torah, concluding with parashat V'zot Habracha. We immediately begin the new cycle, reading the beginning of parashat Bereishith. The fact that we again begin the Torah cycle on the same day that the Torah is completed, underscores the centrality of continuity--that we dare not stop studying Torah, indeed we begin afresh immediately on the heels of concluding the Torah.

While the Torah certainly contains much legal and narrative information, the Torah is not a mere academic document. As we say in the daily evening prayer: "Kee haim cha'yay'noo v'oh'rech ya'may'noo ooh'va'hem neh'heh'geh yo'mom v'lai'lah." It [the Torah] is our lifeblood and the length of our days, and upon it we shall meditate day and night! Torah is truly the elixir of Jewish life and Jewish living. Survival is simply impossible for the Jewish people without Torah. It is what refreshes us, sustains us and guides us, empowering us to continue living as Jews with enthusiasm and purpose.

Perhaps more than any other person in our generation, it was Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993), the late Rosh Yeshiva (head teacher) of Yeshiva University's rabbinic School, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, who most lyrically and poetically described the beauty of Torah study. This year marks the tenth anniversary of Rabbi Soloveitchik's passing, but in the forty years that he served as Rosh Yeshiva he taught thousands of students and inspired many tens of thousands with lectures and tapes.

So, for instance, Rabbi Soloveitchik recalled that as a young child of seven or eight he would lie in bed at night and listen to his father studying with his students in the adjoining room, debating over a portion in the Talmud or a section of the Code of Maimonides. He tells how exciting it was -- like a real battle. But in the end, Maimonides would always prevail. Some children play with toy soldiers, Rabbi Soloveitchik played with living images of the ancient rabbis and fantasized about them.

One night, after struggling with a particularly difficult passage, he heard his father, for the first time, express defeat, and announce that the

portion of the Code of Maimonides that they had been studying simply did not make sense. Maimonides had been vanquished. He had been defeated! Terribly upset, the young child, Joseph Ber, jumped out of bed, ran to his mother, and began crying, "Mommy, mommy, Maimonides has been defeated!" His mother comforted him and said: "Don't worry. Your father and the students will continue to study. They'll continue to argue, in order to try to understand the portion, and eventually Maimonides will prevail. And if not, when you grow up, you will study hard in order to elucidate this problem and you will show how Maimonides is truly correct!"

It is this unusual nurturing that allows Torah to assume the most central place in Jewish life, and to play a most potent role in the battle for Jewish survival.

On April 1, 1973, Rabbi Soloveitchik was recorded making impromptu remarks at a siyum, a celebration marking the conclusion of study of a portion of a Talmudic tractate, in which he expressed how deep is the Jew's love for the study of Torah. Rabbi Soloveitchik pointed out that every morning Jews recite the blessing: "Blessed art thou, Lord, our G-d, king of the universe, who has commanded us with His commandments to be involved, "La'asok," in the words of Torah. He notes that Tosafot (commentators on the Talmudic text) ask why Jews make this Torah blessing for learning Torah only once in the morning and it suffices for the rest of the day, whereas most blessings are repeated each time a particular mitzvah is performed. They answer that the verse in Joshua 1:8 "V'hah'gee'ta bo yo'mam va'lai'lah," underscores that Talmud Torah is a continuous mitzvah, there is no such thing as breaking one's connection with Torah during the day.

In his typically brilliant fashion, Rabbi Soloveitchik points out that people possess two types of awarenesses. There is "acute" awareness and there is "latent" awareness. Even though one is engaged in other matters, a person can still be conscious of those things that are most vital and important.

When the mother plays with her child she experiences acute awareness. But even when the mother is distracted by some other activity, there is always a natural latent awareness of her child's existence. In a mother's relationship with her child, there is no such thing as "out-of-sight, out-of-mind".

So, says Rabbi Soloveitchik, is it true of Torah. For the Jew who is engaged in Torah there is always a cognitive awareness. That is why when we complete a tractate in the Talmud we pronounce the nostalgic phrase: "Hadran Alach," we shall return to you, we will never abandon you. And so it is on Simchat Torah, as soon as we complete the cycle of reading the Five Books of Moses, we begin again, because Jews can not survive without affirming our continuous commitment to Torah. Clearly, the Torah is always present in our latent consciousnesses.

We pray that during the current holiday our people's bond with Torah--that great preserver of Jewish life--will be strengthened, and that all the blessings of G-d found in the Torah will be showered upon us.

We wish you all a wonderful and joyous Sukkot holiday.

May you be blessed.

("On the Love of Torah: Impromptu Remarks at a Siyum" found in Shiurei HaRav, a conspectus of public lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. 1974 pp.102-104.)

http://www.torahinmotion.org/articles_dvarim/divrei_torah/archives/simchat_torah_lots_of_fun.htm

**A Thought for the Week with Rabbi Jay Kelman
Simchat Torah - Going in Circles**

Simcha shel mitzvah, the joy of a mitzvah. This is the essence of Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. There is no historical event to commemorate, no agricultural motif to acknowledge. After three weeks

of intensive Jewish living, in which we beseech G-d to grant us a Shanna Tova, we feel a little more spiritual, a little closer to G-d. We do not want to let go, so we have a day to celebrate the bonding of G-d and the Jewish people. This is true Simchat Torah as we celebrate our renewed commitment to living closer to G-d. This is the ultimate celebration. We dance, sing and join together as we encircle the bima, holding our tree of life, our guidebook, the Torah.

During the festival of Sukkot, which immediately precedes Simchat Torah, we encircle the Sefer Torah holding our lulav and etrog. Both the hakafot, with the lulav on Sukkot and with the Torah on Simchat Torah, consist of a circular movement around a centre. A circle is the symbol of unity and togetherness. There is no head of the line, no back row seat; in a circle each and every person is equidistant from the centre, from G-d. Every single Jew, whether a Talmudic scholar or a simple person, has equal access to G-d. All G-d desires is that we be sincere: "Whether one does more or whether one does less, (it does not matter) provided your heart is directed towards heaven" (Talmud Berachot 5b).

Rav Soloveitchik, zt"l, points out (source) that in a circle, the point of departure is the point of arrival. Jewish history imbues the present. We do not only remember history, we actually relive it. We experience the Pesach seder, we actually move into the sukkah. Just telling the story, in and of itself, can make no lasting impact. Abraham is not some old Jew who lived thousands of years ago, but someone who lives with us each and every day as we embody his attribute of chesed.

There is, however, a basic difference between the hakafot on Sukkot and those on Simchat Torah. On Sukkot, it is the Torah that is placed in the centre, signifying its central importance in Jewish life. On Simchat Torah, however, the Torah forms part of the circle as we march around an apparently empty centre. Rav Soloveitchik explains that the centre is not empty at all; the Divine presence is resting there. We are marching around G-d.

Judaism teaches that the way to reach G-d is through the observance of the mitzvot in the Torah. Judaism is very wary of subjective religious feeling; it demands the following of objective standards, as presented by G-d and interpreted by our Sages in each generation. It is mitzvot like Shabbat, Kashrut, and Mikvah that provide the way to come closer to G-d.

Unfortunately, people often get so "bogged down" in the details of the mitzvot, they forget that their ultimate purpose is to bring us closer to G-d. They are willing to dance with the Torah, but sometimes, they forget that G-d is in the centre. The mitzvot can become habitual, devoid of much of their meaning. How else to explain Jews who meticulously observe every ritual, yet forget that G-d oversees their business practices? Some people have made the tragic error of equating Judaism with ritual. G-d is first and foremost the G-d of ethics.

Torah and mitzvot must be the key to our lives. But as we circle through life with the Torah, we must remember that G-d is the centre of everything we do. Constant awareness that G-d is always before us will ensure that the circle of those dedicated to the beautiful way of life that Judaism offers will grow ever wider.

<http://www.rabbiwein.com/Jerusalem-Post/2010/09/549.html>

SIMCHAT TORAH – V'ZOT HABRACHA

Rabbi Berel Wein

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

The completion of any significant portion of Torah learning is always an occasion for Jewish celebration. Any siyum (a completion of a tractate of Talmud or Mishna) is usually accompanied by a feast to help commemorate the happy event. There is a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment at having seen a difficult intellectual and time-consuming task to its successful conclusion. So it is naturally understandable that the occasion of our completing the annual cycle of

Torah readings with the reading of V'zot Habracha on the final day of the Succot holiday makes it the most joyful day of the entire magnificent holiday season of the month of Tishrei. Simchat Torah affirms our faith in Jewish continuity and our unshakable belief in the divinity of Torah that Moshe brought to Israel from Mount Sinai. It is the holiday basically created by the Jewish people itself, replete with customs and nuances developed over the ages that have hardened into accepted practice and ritual. Here in Israel when Simchat Torah and Smimni Atzeret occur simultaneously on the same day, Simchat Torah, the folk holiday, has almost pushed Shmini Atzeret, the biblical and halachic holiday aside in thought and practice. This is a practical example how sometimes Jewish custom based upon intense love of and attachment to Torah frequently overwhelms Torah ritual itself. What makes Simchat Torah so special is the fact that we begin to read from the beginning of the Torah again immediately so that there is no gap in our study and devotion to it. This is usually the case with all ceremonies of siyum in Jewish life where the completion of one tractate immediately leads to the beginning of study of another one. In reality the Torah ends on an apparently sad note for the final part of the reading describes to us poignantly the death of our great teacher Moshe. He will never enter the Land of Israel but only be able to glimpse it from afar. His generation whom he shepherded for forty years has passed away, his sons will not inherit his position or power, and in his great gift of prophecy he is aware of the terrible problems that his beloved people of Israel must yet face and overcome through their long journey of history and destiny.

Yet the joy of the presence of Torah within our nation overcomes these feelings of melancholy. As long as the words and ideals of Moshe still live amongst the Jewish people then there is great reason to rejoice. It means that we have not lost our way and that the eternity of Moshe and Israel is guaranteed. The nations of the world resent the fact that somehow we still have a chance to rejoice or attempt to live normal productive lives under terrible duress and distress. Witness Time magazine's outrageous cover story that Israel is not interested in peace since we are attempting to live life normally and enjoyably. This absurd and malicious idea was echoed in Roger Cohen's op-ed piece (Cohen is the regular contributing op-ed, resident assimilated court Jew in the palace of the New York Times) cluck clucking that raising our children and preserving our sanity and putting bread on the table of our family somehow takes immediate precedence over satisfying Saaeb Erekat and Mohammed Abbas and their irrational demands. Simchat Torah comes to teach us that we should rejoice when we are able to do so and celebrate our existence and accomplishments even if things are not 100 percent as we would wish them to be. Completing the Torah reading is a matter of perseverance and so is all of Jewish life. The Torah's description of the death of Moshe is meant to impress us with the fact that Judaism is not the cult of the personality. Even when the greatest of Jews ever, Moshe, as the Torah itself describes him in the final words of its text, dies and leaves us bereft and alone, we are not to overly mourn and certainly not to despair. We may yet continue to rejoice because the eternal Torah is still present within us with great vigor and vitality. As far as we are concerned the game is never over. We suffer and fall but we are never defeated. That is the power that the Torah grants us. It is the source of our great joy in celebrating the completion and simultaneous beginning of the reading of the Torah this year. So be it for all of the years yet to come. Chag sameach Berel Wein

From Rabbi Dovid Horwitz <yutorah@yutorah.org> Philosophy on the Parsha reply-to yutorah@yutorah.org to internetparshasheet@gmail.com date Tue, Sep 28, 2010 at 12:15 PM subject Keli Yaqar on ve-Zot Ha-Berachah

Keli Yaqar on ve-Zot Ha-Berachah The Beracha of Shevet Levi in Parashat ve-Zot Ha-Berachah is quite difficult to understand from a number of perspectives. It begins as follows: And of Levi he said: Let Your Thummim and Urim be with Your faithful, Whom You tested at Massah, Challenged at the waters of Meribah. (Deut. 33:8)

Keli Yaqar (R. Solomon Ephraim Luntzshitz), understands that Moshe's berachah must first of all be understood as a response to Ya'akov's berachah (or, if you will, non-berachah) of his sons Shimon and Levi in Sefer Bereshit. The relevant verses in Parashat Va-Yehi read as follows: Simeon and Levi are a pair; Their weapons are tools of lawlessness. Let not my person enter their council; Or my being be joined to their company. For when angry they slay men, And when pleased they maim oxen. Cursed be their anger so fierce, And their wrath so relentless. I will divide them in Jacob, Scatter them in Israel. (Genesis 49:7)

Keli Yaqar understands that Jacob's curse of Levi's (and Shimon's) anger apparently had the effect of intensifying a propensity that was already there. Thus, Jacob in effect prophesied that there would be at least one famous Levite in subsequent Israelite history who would succumb to the sin of anger. This leads us to the sin of Moses. Rambam, in Shemonah Peraqim famously understood that the sin of Moses was not smiting the rock (instead of speaking to it) per se; it was, rather, his rage at yelling at the children of Israel and exclaiming Listen, you rebels! (Numbers 20:10). With this we begin to understand the references to Massah and Meribah in the blessing of Moses to the tribe of Levi. But what needs to be understood is how the recollection of Moses' own sin is a blessing to the tribe.

Keli Yaqar advances a striking interpretation. Why, indeed, he asks did Moses succumb to the sin of anger at Mei Meribah? It was (at least partly), because of Jacob's curse, which had the effect of intensifying Levi's descendants' propensity towards anger. Thus, after Moses had yelled at the children of Israel, the prophecy of Jacob had already come true! There would be no need for it to be instantiated again.

Moshe was, in effect, praying to God and requesting the following, "Please God, let the curse of Jacob regarding anger be fulfilled and done with already, so no other Levite would have to succumb to the curse of anger in the manner that I did."

Keli Yaqar adds that as the members of Shevet Levi were destined to be the teachers of Israel, and anger could lead to a mistake in halakhah, God forbid, there is an additional and special reason for the curse of anger to be dispensed with once and for all. Keli Yaqar refers to the celebrated prayer that Jews recite right before Rosh Ha-Shanah: tikhleh Shanah ve-qillelotah: let the "year" with its curses end, and let the punishment of Moshe be the kapparah for all the members of Shevet Levi (and Shimon, for that matter) for all eternity.

With this prayer, Moses was truly acting selflessly, accepting his own personal responsibility for his own failure, but pleading that no other individual would have to suffer as he did. He demonstrated that he was Rabban Shel Yisrael not just with his intellect, but with his kindness as goodness as well.