

BS"D



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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BO - 5766

Starting our 11th cycle!

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MOST OF SHEET THIS WEEK IS FROM EFRAIM GOLDSTEIN'S COLLECTION, EXCEPT FOR A FEW ITEMS IN THE BEGINNING

<http://www.torah.org/learning/ravfrand/5765/>

[From last year. Didn't make it in time for last year's collections.]

Rabbi Frand On Parshas Bo

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 446, The Dog In Halacha.

The Dogs Will Get Their Reward In The World To Come

The Yalkut Shimoni [Shmos 11:187] relates that Rav Yishaya, a disciple of the famous Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, fasted for 85 days because he could not understand a certain paradoxical tradition.

[It is worth noting why Rav Yishaya fasted. The righteous amongst us, perhaps, fast when someone they know is sick or if they are facing personal tragedy. Rav Yishaya fasted because he did not understand the interpretation of a teaching of our Sages. This itself is a tremendous lesson, although it is not our main point at this time.]

What teaching bothered Rav Yishaya? It is taught that in the World-to-Come, dogs will lead in singing the praises of the Almighty. They will say to other creatures "Come! Let us prostrate ourselves and bow, let us kneel before G-d, our Maker" [Tehillim 95:6]. Rav Yishaya reasoned, dogs are called "brazen creatures" in Tanach [Isaiah 56:11].

Throughout classical Jewish literature they are portrayed as the most insolent of animals. How could it be, he wondered, that this very same creature will merit to lead in the singing of praises to G-d in the World-to-Come?

The Yalkut says that an angel came down from Heaven and told Rav Yishaya to stop fasting. The angel told him that he would never find a satisfying answer to what was bothering him - it was simply a Heavenly decree that this is what is going to happen. The fact that dogs would merit saying Shirah (songs of praise before G-d) in the World-to-Come was a secret revealed to the prophet Chabakuk and to no one else.

However, the angel told Rav Yishaya, since you are a disciple of Rav Chanina ben Dosa, in honor of your teacher I will give you the explanation of this paradox:

The merit by which dogs will be able to lead the Shirah is by virtue of the pasuk [verse] "and no dog shall whet its tongue" [Shmos 11:7].

The fact that they kept quiet during the plague of the firstborn, earned them the right to lead the Shirah in the future world. A person that keeps his mouth shut saves himself from troubles.

Rav Mordechai Ezrachi (in his sefer Birkas Mordechai) writes that the praise of keeping quiet involves more than merely not speaking slander or gossip. The dogs did not earn this merit by not speaking lashon Harah. The dogs simply kept their mouths closed. Dogs are known for their attribute of chutzpah [impudence]. Therefore, keeping quiet represented the ultimate defeat of their negative character traits (shviras hamidos). This represented the ultimate self-improvement possible for that creature. It is a significant accomplishment when a person who is an az nefesh [having the characteristic of arrogance of spirit] and likes to use his mouth inappropriately, overcomes that characteristic and is quiet. Such an accomplishment is deserving of special reward.

Their song is that of "Come! Let us prostrate ourselves and bow, let us kneel before G-d, our Maker." We won't act with impudence and insolence. We will bow down and display servitude. The dogs turned their nature around by keeping their mouths closed. It took tremendous power and self-control to accomplish such a change. The lesson for us is that it is not always necessary to say something. It is not always necessary to comment. It is not always necessary to have a remark.

Rav Ezrachi quotes someone who personally knew the Alter of Slabodka (Rav Nosson Zvi Finkel [1849-1927]). This person testified that there was no one he knew who was as big a 'dabran' [talker] and simultaneously as big a 'shaskan' [silent one] as the Alter. It is not that the Alter of Slabodka always kept his mouth closed. He did not. He had hundreds of disciples and he talked to them frequently. But he knew when to talk to them and when to be quiet, what to say and what not to say. It takes great wisdom to know when not to speak and what not to speak.

The dogs, who kept quiet during the plague of the firstborn, merited the privilege of singing Shirah in the future World-to-Come as a result of this silence.

The Irritating Nature of Cynicism

Another Medrash in this week's parsha is very appropriate for our times. The pasuk says, "Not so; let the men go now. Serve Hashem, for that is what you seek! And he drove them out from Pharaoh's presence" [Shmos 10:11]. The Medrash makes an interesting comment: Because of the Almighty's extreme displeasure at Pharaoh's mocking attitude, He now changed the order of nature in delivering the next plague.

In all of the plagues up to this point, the Almighty did not change the order of nature. This means that all prior plagues could to some extent be given some "natural" explanation. For example, the Nile being filled with blood could have been the result of pollution, a type of 'oil spill', etc.; frogs can congregate in one place, occasionally; and so forth. None of the first eight plagues represented a fundamental change to the order of nature.

However, the ninth plague of Darkness did represent a change in the course of nature. Three days of consecutive darkness, was a miraculous departure from the natural day night cycle. Why now? The Medrash attributes it to a special Divine irritation with the king of Egypt.

This time Pharaoh did something that the Almighty would not tolerate. Pharaoh was cynical. He mocked the Jewish people. He treated Moshe Rabbeinu with derision. G-d has, so to speak, a special aversion to cynicism (leitzaanus) and mockery. The trait of cynicism and the practice of acting with derision is abhorred by Heaven to such an extent that when Pharaoh engaged in that behavior, G-d increased the intensity of the plagues by changing the order of nature.

Rav Shimon Schwab asks where in the above quoted pasuk do we find mocking or derision? Where is the cynicism here?

Rav Schwab suggests that the word 'nah' in the expression 'lechu nah haGevarim' (Let the men go now) means 'please'. Furthermore,

the word 'Gevarim' has the connotation of distinguished individuals, whereas Pharaoh was really speaking about slaves. Pharaoh thus begins with the statement "Please, let only the elders and statesmen go." Then the pasuk concludes "and he drove them out from Pharaoh's presence" as if to say "get out of here!" (or something much stronger). He mocks them by first speaking with a false respect and then throwing them out like trash. His attitude toward them was one of derision and cynicism.

G-d said, "Now you have done it!" Leitzanus is a very serious matter before the Almighty. Treat them nicely or treat them not nicely, but don't play games with them. Don't mock them.

Cynicism is very irritating both in Heaven and down here on Earth. May we guard against it so that we may be able to find favor in the 'eyes of G-d' as well as in the eyes of man.

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---This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. 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.

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<http://www.613.org/rav/notes1.html>

Rav Soloveichik ZT"L Notes (Volume 1)

Notice These are unapproved unedited notes of classes given by Rav Soloveichik. We do not know who wrote the notes. However we offer this to the world that maybe someone can get some use out of these notes. A member of the family has looked at the notes and said that look like the real thing .(Rav Soloveichik did NOT write these notes)

Thanks to Kinora a YULA graduate for typing these notes!

Bo Sketch notes taken from Rabbi Soloveichik's lecture on Saturday evening January 13, 1972

1. The tenth plague of Egypt was against the first born because they were all guilty of the crime called, "primogeniture" (exercising the power of the first born). In Egypt if a father left the house, the first born held absolute power of imprisonment and death over even members of his own family. It can be imagined then how they treated slaves such as Israelites. They were all guilty and worthy of death punishment. G-d warned against the practice, and we find that among leaders of Israel the first born were not necessarily the leaders. For example, we find Moses and David being the last in their families, and Joshua came from the tribe of Benjamin, the twelfth son of Jacob. Thus, G-d abandoned primogeniture. Each b'chor (first born) of Egypt was a tyrant and was guilty of enslavement.

Already, the patriarchal hierarchy was established with Cain, the first born son of Adam and Eve. Even his name Kayin means, "I have established or purchased." The words of Chava were, "Kaniti ish et Hashem." (I have purchased, or acquired, a man from G-d.) The word ish means here a "master." The text follows, "Vatosef laledeth" (and she gave birth again). This means that the second one already was not important to her; he would merely be a helper to Cain. This is exemplified by his name "Hevel," which in Hebrew means vain or foolish. Under these circumstances, he had no right to become a shepherd, but merely a helper--a farmer to Cain. However, he rebelled, he violated the social order.

2. After the murder of his brother, Cain argued with G-d saying, "Should I be my brother's keeper, or should you?" Apparently, if Abel died, it was your predestination, and if so, how can you charge me with murder? G-d answered him, "You are bound to moral law." The earth, of which you are a tiller, has stamped your act as immoral. If a man starts to question morality, he ceases to be moral. In this respect, naiveté is greater. A philosopher said that if you start to philosophize about prayer, you won't pray.

3 "Listen, the voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me." (Do you hear the voice?) Whenever a murder is committed, it is not only the person who is gone, but the possible genius, or the people or generations that could possibly have ensued. Therefore, we say the plural "shfichat damim" (the spilling of bloods). This is a historical crime, and so is the neglect of children's education, for also here we don't know what we have destroyed for the future. That too is a historical crime.

4. Insulting is also a "shfichat damim" because it undermines confidence, and this in turn can destroy initiative for the future. Rashi says that Cain killed Abel many times before the fatal blow with the shfichat damim of insult.

5. Shatnez (intermingled) is the product of the farmer (linen) with the product of the shepherd (wool, and should not be intermingled).

6. In connection with primogeniture, the Torah completely abhors one person exercising power over another, and declares that Joseph, who was almost the youngest of the brothers, died first (before all of them) because he exercised power over them before the revelation even though he treated them better than they deserved.

7. G-d declares, "Kadesh li kol b'chor." (Sanctify to me all the first born.) They are mine and are not the ones to hold the all potent power.

8. If this is so, why does the Torah declare that when a father leaves an inheritance, a double portion shall go to the first born? The reason for this is not because of extra power, but because a first born is a helper to his father. In many cases, he helps the father to rear the smaller ones, to help educate them with the knowledge he has acquired, and to guard over them. Thus, the father is allowed to pursue his work in order to earn a living. Thereby, the Torah rewards the first born with an extra portion, but it does not give him extra power.

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/>

Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago 5764]

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Bo

THE SEDRA OF BO, I have argued, is among the most revolutionary in the entire history of ideas. The reason has less to do with the miracles of the exodus than its message. Three times in the course of two chapters, Moses tells the Israelites about their duties to their children. Even before they have left Egypt, he instructs them to hand on to the future generations the story of the events through which they were living.

There has never been a more profound understanding of freedom. It is not difficult, Moses was saying, to gain liberty, but to sustain it is the work of a hundred generations. Forget it and you lose it.

Freedom needs three institutions: parenthood, education and memory.

You must tell your children about slavery and the long journey to liberation.

They must annually taste the bread of affliction and the bitter herbs of slave labour. They must know what oppression feels like if they are to fight against it in every age.

Freedom is not, as so many have thought, a matter of political or military victories alone. It involves "habits of the heart." Unless children know about

Egypt and the exodus, they will not understand the entire structure of Jewish law. They will not grasp the fact that Judaism is an infinitely subtle set of laws designed to create a society of free individuals serving the free G-d in and through the responsible exercise of freedom. The American judge Learned Hand put it well:

I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. And what is this liberty which must lie in the hearts of men and women? It is not the ruthless, the unbridled will; it is not freedom to do as one likes. That is the denial of liberty, and leads straight to its overthrow. A society in which men recognize no check upon their freedom soon becomes a society where freedom is the possession of only a savage few; as we have learned to our sorrow. Freedom lies in what we teach our children. That is what Moses told the Israelites on the brink of their release.

Three times Moses spoke about this subject in Bo:

When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children say to you, "What does this ceremony mean to you?" then tell them, "It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians." On that day tell your son, "I do this because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt." In days to come, when your son asks you, "What does this mean?" say to him, "With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. There is a further passage in Va-etchanan:

In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Famously, these four passages became the basis of the four sons of the Haggadah. I want to focus in this study on one of those sons: rasha, the wicked or rebellious child. This is how the Haggadah portrays him:

What does the wicked son say? "What does this ceremony mean to you?" To you, not to him. Because he excludes himself from the community and denies a fundamental principle of faith, so you shall set his teeth on edge and say to him, "I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt" -- for me, not for him. If he had been there he would not have been saved. What is going on in this passage? What was it in the nature of the question that led the sages to conclude that the child was rebellious? On the face of it, the query seems innocent. The child is presumably not yet bar mitzvah. He does not yet have obligations in Jewish law. He is therefore asking, rightly, "What does this law, to which you are obligated but I am not, mean?"

There are other perplexing features. What is the fundamental principle of faith the child denies? What, in any case, is wrong with asking? Judaism embodies the profound insight that it is only through the questions we ask, that we learn. How then can it be right to condemn a child for merely making a query, even if it is badly phrased? And how can any parent be so heartless as to say to a child: "if you had been there you would not have been saved?" Clearly, there is more going on in this passage than a superficial reading would suggest.

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, in his commentary Meshekh Chokhmah, makes a profound observation. What is significant, he says, is not so much the question as the verb with which it is introduced. In the other cases, the child is described as asking. In this case he is described as saying. You ask a question, you do not say one. It is therefore clear that the child does not wish to know. Instead he wishes not to know. His question is rhetorical. He is not asking, but expressing cynicism. "What is this strange and meaningless ritual?" R. Meir Simcha's close reading of the text helps us understand why the sages - in attributing this verse to the rebellious child - were in fact listening carefully to the nuances of the verse itself.

The Talmud Yerushalmi offers another approach. It translates the question, "What does this ceremony mean to you?" as "What is this burdensome effort that you impose on us each year?" I suspect that the sages were responding to yet another word in the verse, namely avodah, "ceremony." Avodah has a range of meanings often lost in translation. On the one hand it means service -- what we are commanded to do for God. On the other, it means slavery -- what the Israelites were forced to do for the Egyptians. Avodah is a key word in the opening chapter of Shemot.

So they, Egypt, made the children of Israel subservient with crushing labour. They embittered their lives with hard servitude in loam and in bricks and with all kinds of servitude in the field -- all their service in which they made them subservient with crushing labour.

In these two verses alone, the word avodah, in noun or verb form, appears no less than five times (seven times in all in Shemot 1-2; a sevenfold repetition is always a sign that the text is signaling a key term). It is what robbed the Israelites of their freedom. Yet the same word is also cited as the key to their liberation:

And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." And again:

Then say to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." In both cases the term used for "worship" is avodah. The meaning of the Yerushalmi is now clear. The son is saying: "What advantage did we gain by the exodus? In Egypt we were avadim, slaves. Leaving Egypt we became avadim, servants. The only difference is a change of master. Then we served Pharaoh. Now we serve G-d. But that is a distinction without a difference. Either way, we are not free. Either way, we carry the weight of burdensome effort. Then we were subject to Pharaoh's law, now we are subject to G-d's law. But do not tell me that avodah means freedom. It means the opposite."

This too is a profound insight. The word avodah in the child's question is significant (especially in contrast to the "wise" son's terms, "stipulations, decrees and laws," which focus on the positive aspects of Jewish law in its several varieties). Moreover the Yerushalmi is placing in the mouth of the rebellious child the classic argument that leads, eventually, to the downfall of societies, namely that the only freedom that counts is the freedom to do what you like. Judge Learned Hand was right when he said, "That is the denial of liberty, and leads straight to its overthrow." Freud said much the same in his Civilization and its Discontents. Civilization, he argued, is the capacity to defer the gratification of instinct. That is one of the central features of a life lived according to halakhah.

There is however one source which sheds a new light on the whole passage. It occurs in the Mekhilta, a midrashic commentary on Shemot dating from the period of the Mishnah:

"I do this because of what the Lord did for me . . ." Why is this said? Because it says, "What does this ceremony mean to you?" This refers to a wicked child who excludes himself from the community, and because he excludes himself from the community, you too should exclude him from the community by saying "I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt." Me, not you. And because you have excluded yourself from the community, had you been there [in Egypt] you would not have been saved. What is striking about this passage is that it only mentions the rebellious child, not the other three. The fact that the source is a very early one suggests that there was a time when the passage relating to the wicked son stood on its own, and was only later incorporated into a larger passage, dealing with four sons, as it appears in the Haggadah.

If so, we can place the text in a highly specific historical and halakhic context. There was a time, under both the Greeks and the Romans, during which Hellenistic culture had an enormous appeal for many Jews. They assimilated. They were drawn to Greek art and drama. They took part in athletic competitions. For them Hellenism was cosmopolitan, Judaism merely parochial. Both periods (the Greek in the second century BCE, the Roman in the first century CE) represented crises of Jewish identity, not unlike the one Diaspora Jewry is going through today.

What principle was at stake? During the medieval periods of forced conversions, under Christianity and Islam, the principle was clear. It was apostasy, changing one's religion. By contrast, Greek and Roman culture - like secular culture today - were not religions (to be sure, they had gods and religious rites, but these did not appeal to Jews. On the contrary, many Romans admired Judaism and adopted aspects of it themselves). What was at stake were styles of behaviour, not modes of belief: assimilation, not apostasy. The individuals concerned were not so much giving up Jewish practice, though doubtless they did that as well, but abandoning Jewish identity. They no longer saw themselves as Jews but as Greek or Roman citizens, Hellenes.

This explains a remarkable ruling of Maimonides. In the course of listing the various categories of sinners, heretics and apostates who "have no share in the world to come" he adds the following:

One who separates himself from the community, even if he does not commit a transgression, but only holds aloof from the congregation of Israel, does not fulfil religious precepts in common with his people, shows himself indifferent when they are in distress, does not observe their fasts, but goes his own way as if you were one of the Gentiles and did not belong to the Jewish people -- such a person has no share in the world to come. Almost certainly, this ruling and the passage from the Mekhilta refer to the same phenomenon, namely assimilation as the abandonment of Jewish identity.

Both should be read in the context of yet another passage, this time from the Talmud. The context is conversion -- a would-be proselyte who comes to the Beth Din wishing to become a Jew:

Our rabbis taught: if the present time a person desires to become a proselyte, he is to be addressed as follows: "What reason have you for desiring to become a proselyte? Do you not know that Israel at the present time are persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions?" If he replies, "I know and yet am unworthy," he is accepted immediately . . . He is also to be addressed thus: do you not know that before you came to this condition, if you had eaten suet you would not have been punishable with karet; if you had profaned the sabbath you would not have been punishable with stoning. But now, were you to eat suet you would be punished with karet, and were you to profane the Sabbath, you would be punished with stoning." What is clear from this passage is that there are two components of Jewish belonging, not one. There is the acceptance of Jewish law (forbidden foods, the Sabbath and so on). There is also, separately, the acceptance of Jewish identity, namely a willingness to be part of the often tragic terms of Jewish history ("persecuted and oppressed"). The late Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik called these, respectively, brit ye'ud (the covenant of destiny) and brit goral (the covenant of fate). Destiny is what we do. Fate is what happens to us. One is a code of action, halakhah. The other is a form of imagination, the story we tell ourselves as to who we are and where we belong.

There is an abandonment of Judaism that consists in giving up its laws of conduct. But there is another kind of abandonment - no longer seeing oneself as part of the Jewish people, sharing its fate and hope or identifying with the plight of other Jews. That is what Maimonides means by "separating oneself from the community" and its classic source is the passage in the Mekhilta about the "wicked child." When this passage was incorporated into the Haggadah and became part of an exposition about four kinds of children sitting around the seder table, it became less easy to understand. The children of the Haggadah are, after all, young. They are participating in a religious event. It becomes difficult to understand why one should be singled out for such rebuke. But once we recover the original context - a mature individual who has abandoned his people and become no longer a Jew but a Roman - the text makes sense. It also tells us something profound about Jewish identity.

Judaism is a communal faith. This is the "principle" that the rebellious child denies. Judaism is not addressed to individuals. Nor is it addressed to humanity as a whole. G-d chose a people, a nation, and asked them at Mount Sinai to pledge themselves, not only to Him but also to one another. Emunah, that key word of Judaism, usually translated as "faith," more properly means loyalty - to G-d, but also to the people He has chosen as the carriers of His mission, the witnesses to His presence. To be sure, Jews are sometimes exasperating. Rashi, commenting on Moses' charge to his successor Joshua, says that he told him: "Know that they [the people you are about to lead] are troublesome and contentious." But he also told him: "You are fortunate for you will have the privilege of leading the children of G-d Himself."

In this fundamental idea there is a measure of hope. To be sure, not all Jews today obey Jewish law. But many who do not, nevertheless identify with Israel and the Jewish people. They plead its case. They support its cause. When Israel suffers, they too feel pain. They are implicated in the fate of the people. They know only too well that "Israel at the present time are persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions" but they do not walk away. They may not be religiously observant, but they are loyal - and loyalty is an essential part (if only a part) of what Jewish faith is.

From the negative, therefore, we can infer the positive: that a Jew who does not say "You" when Jews or Israel are under attack, but "Me," has made a fundamental affirmation - to be part of a people, sharing in its responsibilities, identifying with its hopes and fears, celebrations and griefs. That is the covenant of fate and it still summons us today.

From: Kol Torah [<mailto:koltorah@koltorah.org>]

Sent: Friday, January 20, 2006

To: koltorah@koltorah.org

Subject: Kol Torah Parshiot Shemot & Va'eira

**Revealing Painful Medical Truths to Patients
by Rabbi Chaim Jachter**

Families and doctors are regrettably faced all too often with a painful decision as to whether or not one should reveal the truth to a patient about his illness. On the one hand, one would think that adults should be entitled to know the truth about what is happening to them. On the other hand, sometimes knowing certain information is to one's detriment. Indeed, Kohelet states that adding knowledge adds pain (1:18). Knowledge is not always in our best interest and sometimes ignorance is bliss.

Balancing Halachic Values

When dealing with the issue of informing a patient of a serious illness, caregivers and family must delicately balance the Halachic values of stating the truth and preserving the well-being of the patient. Truth is a paramount Torah value. Chazal state that the seal of Hashem is Emet (truth). Nevertheless, the Torah records that Hashem inaccurately reported to Avraham the comments that Sarah had made about him, in order to preserve marital harmony (see Breishit 18:12-13 and the commentary of Rashi ad. loc.). Similarly, one should not always present an accurate assessment to the patient if it will adversely affect his health.

This point is expressed in a number of classical sources. The Gemara (Moed Katan 26b) teaches that one must not inform a very sick person of the death of a relative lest he become depressed and his condition deteriorate. The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 337) codifies this rule as normative. The Shach (ibid subsection 1) adds that even if the patient is aware of the death of the relative, we do not instruct him to perform Keriah (tearing of his garments) lest it "increase his level of anxiety." Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in the Nishmat Avraham Y.D. 337:2) goes even further. He rules that if a mourner during Shiva must visit a gravely ill patient, the mourner may remove any sign of mourning such as ripped clothes and non-leather shoes in order to hide the fact that he is in mourning.

The Midrash (Kohelet Rabbah 5:6) describes a conversation between Yeshaya the prophet and King Chizkiyahu (see Melachim II 20:1-11). Hashem sent Yeshaya to inform Chizkiyahu that the latter's illness was fatal. The Midrash describes Chizkiyahu's criticism of Yeshaya for delivering such a depressing message as follows: "Customarily, when one visits the sick, the visitor says to the patient, 'May Heaven have mercy on you.' When a physician visits a sick individual he tells him, 'This you may eat and this you may not eat. This you may drink and this you may not drink.' Even if the doctor sees that the patient is near death he does not say to him, 'Write a will for your family,' lest this weaken the patient's resolve." We see that it is insufficient to tend to the patient's physical needs without paying attention to his psychological needs. Incidentally, we see the same approach regarding the Mitzvah of honoring one's parents (Kiddushin 31) and giving Tzedakah (Rambam Hilchot Matanot Aniym 10:4).

Furthermore, a well-known Midrash (cited by Rashi to Breishit 23:3 s.v. Lispod and see Sifte Chachamim ad. loc.) relates that Sarah Imeinu died when she was told about Akeidat Yitzchak and about how Yitzchak was almost slaughtered. This Midrash teaches that one must be extremely careful in how one delivers sensitive information, emphasizing that delivering traumatic news to someone in a very delicate medical condition (such as Sarah Imeinu, who was 127 years old at the time) can potentially have lethal consequences (also see Rashi to Pesachim 3b s.v. Ahadrei LeKarei). The Ramban (Bereishit 45:26) explains that the same applies to delivering surprisingly happy news to weak individuals, such as when Yaakov Avinu was informed that Yosef was alive in Egypt. For further discussion regarding the appropriate manner to present devastating information, see Rav Itamar Warhaftig's article in Techumin 1:537-539.

Shulchan Aruch

The Shulchan Aruch codifies these attitudes. We must make every effort to avoid discouraging a very sick individual. We must not cry before the sick person, nor may we eulogize the deathly ill person in his presence lest this break his heart (Y.D. 337). No talk of funeral preparations may take place while the patient is yet living (Y.D. 339:1). Dr. Abraham S. Abraham adds (Nishmat Avraham Y.D. 337:4) that both visitors and medical personnel must exercise discretion when talking in the presence of a patient who appears to be unconscious. In reality, the patient may be conscious and the patient may hear discouraging words that have the potential to break his spirit.

We must take great care to avoid discouraging a patient when instructing him to recite the Vidui (confessional) that is to be recited prior to dying (Y.D.338:1). The Shulchan Aruch states that we approach the gravely ill person in the following manner: "We say to him, 'Many have recited the Vidui and did not subsequently die and many who have not recited the Vidui and have died, and all who confess have a share in the world to come.'"

Concern for the psychological impact of the instruction to recite the Vidui is so great that an interesting practice developed in Berlin and some other communities more than two hundred years ago to accommodate it. The Chochmat Adam (151:11) records that in these communities, leaders would go to anyone who was sick for three days to instruct him to execute a will and recite the Vidui. The Chochmat Adam notes that since this was the standard practice for all ill patients, the patient did not perceive this instruction as an indication that they were in imminent danger of dying. He recommends that all communities adopt this practice.

Practical Advice- Rav J. David Bleich and Dr. Abraham S. Abraham

Rav J. David Bleich (Judaism and Healing, page 33) offers the following helpful suggestions for implementing these Halachot in the contemporary setting: "There is no need to convey a precise diagnosis to the patient, when such information can reasonably be withheld, if the patient will identify the diagnosed condition with a terminal malady. When the patient is aware of the gravity of his situation, the physician should always be encouraging and positive in his approach. He should stress the positive aspects of available modes of therapy and, by word and action, encourage the patient not to abandon hope. This is not to say that the doctor should guarantee either recovery or longevity. He should rather endeavor to bolster the spirits of his patients without denying the possibility of serious developments. Above all, the physician's tone and demeanor should at all times be hopeful and supportive."

Dr. Abraham (Nishmat Avraham Y.D. 338:1) adds that doctors should never state that there is absolutely no chance for recovery, nor should they state with certainty the amount of time that they expect a patient to live. Physicians must realize the limitations of medical knowledge and accept that Hashem makes these sorts of determinations. Indeed, Dr. Abraham cites Rav Kook's opinion (Teshuvot Daat Kohen, number 140) that medical assertions made by physicians are not regarded as absolute truth but merely as Safeik, possibly true.

Rav Betzalel Stern – a twentieth century authority – rules that doctors should not reveal to a patient that he is afflicted with cancer (Teshuvot BeTzeil Hachochma 2:55). Dr. Abraham S. Abraham (ibid.), however, notes that nowadays this can sometimes be impossible and/or counterproductive. Ignorance in some situations is not bliss and may cause the patient to panic more than knowledge of his illness would have. Dr. Abraham recommends that the doctor should first reveal the information to very close relatives and only then, together with these relatives, present the bad news to the patient. The conversation must be as encouraging as possible and coupled with the point that the physician and the therapy will serve as Hashem's messenger together with the prayers of the patient and his family in facilitating a full recovery. Indeed, it is well-known that the patient's attitude plays a dramatic role in determining the result of serious disease. Hence, medical personnel, family, rabbis, and friends are obligated to provide the patient with the most psychological support possible.

Dr. Abraham notes that if the patient is suffering in an advanced stage of cancer to the extent that there is no hope of curing the cancer (and the patient will therefore receive only palliative care to make him more comfortable), then he should not be told that he is suffering from cancer. (He does add, though, that close family members should be informed.) One may add that if the patient knows that he is suffering from cancer, but does not know that his condition has worsened, it is possible that the doctor should not reveal the updated information to the patient. Indeed, my family made a decision not to inform my father Z"l that his lung cancer had spread to other parts of his body. In retrospect, this was a sound decision that was suited to my father's personality. I believe that my father's quality of life during his last six months was enhanced by his ignorance of the details of his condition. In particular, I recall helping my father purchase some new clothes a few months before his death, which I believe encouraged him and helped him live somewhat longer.

Generally speaking, if one is (God forbid) faced with this sort of question regarding a patient or family member, he should consult with his Rav and a team of competent professionals to devise an appropriate course of action. It

is important to customize the approach to the patient's personality and circumstances, as there is no "cookie cutter" approach to such a difficult situation. If family and caregivers handle the situation properly, experience teaches that it can serve to increase both the quality and the length of life of the patient.

Conclusion

It should be noted that the Halachic approach to telling patients the truth runs very counter to the prevailing secular culture. Western culture today emphasizes the right of patients to know the details of the malady they are suffering from. On the other hand, it is fair to say that the Halacha does not recognize a patient's "right to know." Rather, we are obligated to act in a manner that promotes our own health and the health of others and withhold certain information if that is determined to be in the best interest of the patient.

If one has not executed a living will with provisions that caregivers follow Halachah regarding this issue, it is quite possible that one's caregivers will not follow the Halachah in this regard. Thus, it is crucial to execute a living will with provisions that family and caregivers consult a Rav regarding how to observe the Halachah concerning truth telling to patients. Furthermore, by designating a specific Rav to make a decision, it helps avoid a potential fight among family members regarding which Rav to consult and what information should be revealed.

May Hashem bless us that we should not experience any more illness and that we never need to implement any of these ideas and approaches in practice.

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Rest of sheet is from Efraim Goldstein <efraimg@aol.com> collection Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Shabbos Parshas Bo

Rabbi Hershel Schachter The TorahWeb Foundation Am Yisroel Chai

In the concluding possuk of the haftorah of Parshas Bo, the navi Yimriyahu speaks of the rise and fall of all civilizations except for "my servant Yaakov". The Jewish people is eternal.

The medrash comments on Yaakov's dream (in the beginning of Parsha Vayeitzei) where he saw the angels climbing up and down the ladder, that these angels represented the "guiding angels" of each of the nations of the world; and that each nation will have a natural progression of rising and falling, except for Klal Yisroel which will not disappear (see "Jewish History: Stranger than Fiction",

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2002/parsha/rsch_bo.html). The navi Malachi (3:6) also predicts benevuaah that "atem bani Yaakov lo chlisem". The Talmud (Bava Basra 116b) states that it is not only inconceivable for the entire Klal Yisroel to disappear, but even for an entire shevet. The Raavad (in his peirush on the Sifra on Parshas Bechukosai) explains that this is based on the principle that each and every shevet is referred to by the Torah as a "kahal" (see Talmud Huriyos 4b)!

Rambam (Sefer Hamitzvos aseh #153) adds a very interesting comment to these prophecies. Not only did G-d promise that there would always be individual survivors following whatever holocaust might occur, but more than that: Hakadosh Baruch Hu promised that "Klal Yisroel" would survive. Rambam takes that to mean that there would always remain at least a minyan of Jews living in Eretz Yisroel. For, if one were to imagine, chas veshalom, that there would only be millions of Jews living all over the world, but no Jews living in Eretz Yisroel, that would mean, by definition, that Klal Yisroel had ceased to exist. All the Jews who live outside Eretz

Yisroel are only considered as individuals. Only those who live in Eretz Yisroel constitute Klal Yisroel. Rambam further explains (in his commentary to Mishnayos Bechoros 29) that we have several halachos which are based on this premise. Semicha can only be conferred in Eretz Yisroel, because this is not a private matter. One who himself has semicha can confer it upon others only as a representative of Klal Yisroel. The semicha is really conferred by Klal Yisroel; since only those who live in Eretz Yisroel constitute Klal Yisroel, therefore the act of conferring semicha must take place only in Eretz Yisroel. (The institution of semicha which we have today is only rabbinic in nature, and is basically only an imitation of the authentic biblical semicha which existed years ago. See Rama to Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 242:14). When determining whether the majority of Klal Yisroel had sinned (with respect to bringing the special communal korban, par he'elem davar shel tzibbur) the Talmud (Huriyos 3a) derives from Tanach that the tzibbur only includes those who live in Eretz Yisroel. Similarly, Rambam writes, this is the reason that the beth din authorized to establish Rosh Chodesh must convene in Eretz Yisroel. This beth din doesn't really act as on its own, but rather as a representative of Klal Yisroel. Klal Yisroel was empowered to establish the Roshei Chodoshim, and the concept of Klal Yisroel only relates to those who live in Eretz Yisroel.

Jerusalem Post Feb 03 2006

A LOT OF LUGGAGE

Rabbi Berel Wein

My wife and I have just returned from an extensive trip in the United States. I was in the New York area, Cherry Hill, Pennsylvania, Atlanta, Georgia, Norfolk, Virginia and Boca Raton and Miami, Florida. I need a good rest after this exertion. However, the greatest discomfort caused by this type of an itinerary is the necessity to constantly pack and unpack one's luggage and drag it along with you through the enormous airports and innumerable security checks which so characterize air travel today. As I am sure everyone else is similarly perplexed, I cannot decide on what to take along in my luggage as I pack my suitcases before the trip. As a result of my indecision, I invariably take along much that I will not wear nor actually use once I reach my appointed destination. If there is the slightest glimmer of a possibility that I may actually need or use the item on my trip, into the suitcase it goes. And as I pack again to finally and blissfully return home to Israel, I ruefully view my suitcase and its belongings and note that a considerable portion of its contents lies there before me undisturbed from its original arrival to the United States. As always, I resolve that on my next trip I will only take along those limited number of items that are truly necessary for the trip. Even as I make this resolution, I am already aware of the little voice inside of me that whispers "take it along with you anyway." One never knows when somehow you may make use of it on this trip." Hard as I try to stifle that annoying voice, it always seems to revisit me as I prepare for the next trip.

All of this has set me to ponder the issue of the superfluous baggage that the Jewish people here in Israel seem anxious to continue dragging around even if the contents of that luggage are long since irrelevant, wrong and downright harmful to our cause and tranquility of spirit.

Much of what is going on here in Israel is simply the product of unnecessary and unwanted baggage that came to Israel with the various waves of both pre- and post-state aliyah. The Eastern European Jewish society of the pre-Holocaust period was rife with bitter disputes, disparate ideologies and dangerous illusions and even occasional violence. The struggle between the Left wing ideologies amongst themselves and then against the mainstream establishment Jews, the controversies regarding Zionism and secularism, and the competing trends and movements within the religious Jewish world, all should by now have somehow been mitigated by the events of the last seventy years of Jewish history.

Unfortunately, they have not been so mitigated and lie within our luggage as active and unnecessary as they were before we embarked upon our latest historical journey.

Why is Zionism still an issue almost sixty years after the State of Israel came into being? How can one still believe in Socialism, Marxism, Communism, etc. after Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot and the like destroyed over one hundred fifty million people for the fulfillment of Marx' impossible scheme of world order? Why should Jews continue to rail against the Torah and its practitioners after the Torah has proven its strength and resiliency amongst Jews over and over again in the near and distant past? Why attempt to import the ills of Reform and Conservative brands of Judaism to Israel after they have been proven to be dismal failures in the Diaspora? I think that our luggage needs a thorough cleansing and much of the bathwater of the Exile should gladly be discarded and dumped. We really do not need these matters with us any longer.

When the Jews came to Israel over the last two hundred years it is understandable that they may have brought with them more luggage than necessary. In fact, if one stands today at the luggage carousels at Ben Gurion Airport, one will be easily convinced that this case of too much luggage is still present amongst us. Yet, it should be a goal of ours to discard what is not at all necessary, if not downright harmful to us, from our collective national possessions. Much of the bathwater of the Exile, its disputes and disappointments, should not be allowed to linger amongst us. We should travel light and take with us the spirit, values and experiences of Jewish life in all of its positive modes and discard the negativism and strife that so depresses our world and dampens our hopes. Only then can we be sure that we have packed our suitcases correctly for the journey that yet lies ahead. Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha BO

Rabbi Berel Wein

The Parsha of Bo discusses the fact that children and grandchildren, later generations, will ask questions of the previous generations as to the reasons for Judaism, and Jewish practice and rituals. The Torah states that this questioning will occur as a matter of fact. It is a certainty to happen. And the Torah in its own cryptic way provides the guidelines that are to be employed in giving the proper answers to these questions. There are different types of parents and teachers in the world. There are those who are authoritarian and dogmatic in their approach, who resent questions in the home and the classroom and who in effect feel that their role as a teacher and parent is challenged by the propensity of the young to question the value system and knowledge of the older generation. On the other hand, there are parents and teachers who encourage and appreciate probing questions from the young. They are stimulated by the questioning, challenged to find meaningful and convincing answers to those questions and thereby create an atmosphere of learning and understanding. From the Torah's perspective, I believe that the latter course is the wiser one. There are those who do not know how or what to ask. But sad as that situation is, it is even sadder to live in a society that does not allow one to ask. Mankind's bitter experience of the twentieth century when hundreds of millions of people were living under totalitarian regimes that allowed no questioning of megalomaniacal rulers, testifies to the evils of a world where no questions are allowed and therefore no answers need be provided. In the Jewish world, especially in the religious and faithful Jewish world, asking good questions has become a rarity. Dogmatic belief in individuals and policies has almost become the norm over the entire spectrum of religious Jewish society. Many students have complained to me that in their schools and classrooms they are simply not allowed to ask questions about basic ideas and values of Judaism. This take-it-or-leave-it attitude produced disastrous results for the Torah world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I find it hard to understand why it should continue to be perpetuated currently in our homes and schools. To a certain extent this

encouragement of no questions reveals a terrible insecurity about the faith of Judaism and the Torah. It becomes an admission, God forbid, that the Torah really does not have any answers to these questions and therefore the questions are forbidden per se. But our Torah and beliefs that have stood the test of time, that have encountered all ideas, philosophies and popular movements and triumphed over them should never be placed in this position of not allowing questions, discussions and the clash of ideas. "Know what to answer the non-believer" is the mantra of the rabbis of the Mishap in Avot. Even the evil son is entitled to a question and an answer, albeit a harsh and brutally frank one. The continuity of Jewish generations is built upon the discussions, questions and answers that form the relationship between one generation and its succeeding generations. So, be prepared to be questioned and accept that fact gracefully. More importantly, be prepared to answer wisely, patiently and in harmonious faith. Shabat shalom.

TORAH WEEKLY - Parshat Bo
For the week ending 4 February 2006 / 6 Shevat 5766
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe that He is hardening Pharaoh's heart so that through miraculous plagues the world will know for all time that He is the one true G-d. Pharaoh is warned about the plague of locusts and is told how severe it will be. Pharaoh agrees to release only the men, but Moshe insists that everyone must go. During the plague, Pharaoh calls for Moshe and Aharon to remove the locusts, and he admits he has sinned. G-d ends the plague but hardens Pharaoh's heart, and again Pharaoh fails to free the Jews. The country, except for the Jewish People, is then engulfed in a palpable darkness. Pharaoh calls for Moshe and tells him to take all the Jews out of Egypt, but to leave their flocks behind. Moshe tells him that not only will they take their own flocks, but Pharaoh must add his own too. Moshe tells Pharaoh that G-d is going to bring one more plague, the death of the first-born, and then the Jews will leave Egypt. G-d again hardens Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh warns Moshe that if he sees him again, Moshe will be put to death. G-d tells Moshe that the month of Nissan will be the chief month. The Jewish people are commanded to take a sheep on the 10th of the month and guard it until the 14th. The sheep is then to be slaughtered as a Pesach offering, its blood put on their door-posts, and its roasted meat eaten. The blood on the door-post will be a sign that their homes will be passed-over when G-d strikes the first-born of Egypt. The Jewish People are told to memorialize this day as the Exodus from Egypt by never eating chametz on Pesach. Moshe relays G-d's commands, and the Jewish People fulfill them flawlessly. G-d sends the final plague, killing the first born, and Pharaoh sends the Jews out of Egypt. G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the laws concerning the Pesach sacrifice, pidyon haben (redemption of the first born son) and tefillin.

INSIGHTS

Just Do it!

"... you shall eat it in haste - it is a Pesach-offering to G-d." (12:11)

You can always recognize the Negative Drive. His is the voice that says, "Just do it! Don't think about it so much! JUST DO IT! Just say that spiteful word! Just eat that ice cream sundae without checking the hechsher (certification of kashrut). Just do it!

Any time the little voice inside you says "Just do it!", say to it "Sure I'll do it. but not right now.

I'll do it in another couple of seconds. I promise! " (Don't forget to cross your fingers behind your back!) The Negative Drive is very powerful, but he also suffers from ADD. Distract him for a few moments and the chances are that he'll leave you alone, at least for the time being.

Being a fully-realized Jewish person means moving through life with much thought and care. However, there's an exception to this.

Who hasn't had the feeling of wanting to be a better person? Whether it's standing in shul on Yom Kippur, or when faced by the reality of our own mortality and realizing how little we have accomplished in our lives. All of us have moments of spiritual awakening, flashes of insight and inspiration. When those flashes burst across our consciousness, we must act on them immediately, concretize them in some small but oft-repeated action. If we are moved, say, to be more generous, we should undertake on the spot to give a small amount to charity every day. On the spot. (Only oft-repeated actions have the power to change who we are. The impact of the grand gesture fades as quickly as a firecracker.)

"... you shall eat it in haste - it is a Pesach-offering to G-d."

The first moments of commitment to a greater contact with G-d must be done with zest and alacrity just like the eating of the Pesach-offering in . Just as the Jewish People left the fleshpots of with great haste, so too when we are inspired to be greater, more spiritual people, we must seize the moment and just DO it!"

Based on Reb Tzadok m'Lublin

Peninim on the Torah **by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum** **PARSHAS BO**

Please speak in the ears of the people: Let each man request of his fellow... silver vessels and gold vessels. (11:2)

Chazal explain Hashem's "request" of Moshe Rabbeinu to make a special effort to prevail upon Klal Yisrael to "borrow" valuables from their Egyptian neighbors. If they would not do so, then the soul of Avraham Avinu would have a "grievance" against Hashem. He would say that with regard to the prophecy that his descendants would be oppressed for many years, Hashem carried it out in full measure. The other part of the prophecy, however, in which Klal Yisrael would leave their captivity with great wealth, Hashem did not fulfill. We wonder why the fear of critique is only from Avraham. What about the Jews themselves? After all these terrible years of suffering, did they not have a valid complaint? True, the promise was made to Avraham. But this was a promise that was probably transmitted throughout the generations: you will leave this misery with joy and complete wealth. The Jews would certainly be justified in having a problem with the prophecy not being carried out.

In his Divrei Yisrael, the Modzitzer Rebbe, zl, explains that every Jew individually is supposed to accept his lot in life - lovingly and with joy. No one ever promised us that it would always be "good." Thus, the Jew suffers, falls down, gets up, brushes himself off - and goes on. Kol man d'avid Rachamana l'tav avid. "Whatever Hashem does is for the good" is the catchphrase by which we live. If the Jews were to suffer in Egypt and circumstances demanded that they leave there penniless, they would accept their fate. That is the Jewish way. Avraham Avinu, however, is different. The righteous leader may not remain silent when Klal Yisrael suffers. As individuals, we do not complain or make demands for ourselves, but we cannot stand idly by while others suffer.

In the Talmud Berachos 54a, Chazal comment that one is obligated to bless Hashem for bad (misfortune) in the same manner that he blesses Him for good. This certainly does not mean that the blessings are the same. After all, for a misfortune one blesses, Dayan HaEmes, the "true Judge," indicating our acceptance and acquiescence to Hashem's decree. In the event of a joyful occasion, one blesses HaTov u'Meitiv, "Who is good and does good." What Chazal are telling us is that the blessing over bad should be recited with a similar level of joyful acceptance as if he were reciting the blessing over good. Horav Nachman zl, m'Breslov added that this idea applies only to one's own individual troubles, but, concerning another Jew's pain, he must cry out with pain and sensitivity. We must feel our brother's pain. We do not distinguish between good and bad when it concerns us personally. In contrast, when it involves our brother, we feel the hurt and cry out in their

pain. Empathizing with our fellow's pain is an inherent Jewish character trait.

The great Admorim, chassidic leaders, were known for this empathy. Horav Moshe Mordechai, zl, m'Lelov once accepted a kvitel, a slip of paper containing requests submitted to a Rebbe as a petition, from a troubled chasid who cried his heart out over his many troubles. The Rebbe was visibly moved. Afterwards, he went into his dining room and noticed how members of his family were playing a game. He looked at them incredulously and asked, "How could you sit there, going on with business as usual, happy and carefree, knowing that a fellow Jew is in dire need? How can you be happy when you know that another Jew is in pain?" must add that we are not all capable of this lofty spiritual plateau. This was a spiritual giant whose essence encompassed the emotions of every Jew. He, and others like him, did not live for themselves. They lived for the klal, community at large. Each Jew's welfare was their concern - even at the expense of their own families. We should learn a lesson regarding our own behavior. Sensitivity towards another Jew is not merely another wonderful character trait, it is an obligation!

Horav Yitzchak, zl, m'Vorki cites an incident in the Talmud Megillah 28a, in which Rabbi Zeira's students asked him, "In what merit did you deserve longevity?" After mentioning a number of noble deeds he said, "I was never happy when my friend suffered a misfortune." The Rebbe asked, "Is this a reason to be granted longevity? What novelty is Rabbi Zeira teaching with this statement? How can anybody celebrate his friend's misfortune?" The Rebbe explained that Rabbi Zeira never celebrated his own personal joyous occasions at a time when he knew that another Jew was suffering.

Certainly, he celebrated, but when he knew that another Jew was in pain, he was also in pain and could, therefore, not celebrate with the same joy.

Rav Moshe Mordechai Lelover interpreted this idea into the Shabbos zemiros (Baruch Hashem yom yom), Shivtei Hashem eidus l'Yisrael, b'tzarasam lo tzar. "That the tribes are G-d's He bore witness to Yisrael. Amid their distress is His distress." Shivtei Hashem eidus: What bears witness? What is the litmus test that one is a member of Klal Yisrael?

B'tarasam lo tzar: if he is pained by the pain sustained by members of Klal Yisrael. A Jew who feels another Jew's pain - that is the defining factor of who is a Jew.

I think there is another factor that should be addressed, and, quite possibly, this may be another reason for empathizing with another Jew's plight: We should be cognizant of the fact that "what comes around goes around," and, therefore, we never know when we will be in need. Let me share with the reader the following analogy:

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law and four year old grandson. The elderly man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, and his step faltered. Regrettably, this is not uncommon as people age. It was a loving family, and they made every effort to include grandpa in all of their family functions. First and foremost was dinner when they would all sit down together at the table.

Unfortunately, grandpa's shaky hands and failing eyesight made eating quite difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon onto the floor. When he would grasp a glass, the milk, or whatever liquid was therein, spilled onto the tablecloth. The son and daughter-in-law slowly became irritated with the mess. "We must do something about Father," the son said. We have been patient long enough. I have had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating, and food on the floor." So grandpa was given his own small table in the corner of the room where he could eat and make noise, drop food on the floor and spill milk on the table. There he sat by himself, while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner.

Since grandpa had already broken a number of dishes, his food was served in a wooden bowl. Every once in a while when the family glanced in grandpa's direction, they would notice a tear in his eye as he sat alone. Nonetheless, the only words the self-righteous couple had for him were sharp admonitions whenever he dropped a utensil or spilled some food.

During this whole scenario, the four-year-old just sat there absorbing everything in silence.

One evening, before dinner, the father noticed his young son playing on the floor with some scraps of wood. Curiously, he asked his young son sweetly, "What are you making?"

The child looked up at his father, and, in all innocence, said, "Oh, I am making a little bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in when I grow up." The young lad just smiled and returned to his masterpiece. The words struck a chord. In fact, it struck so hard that the parents stood there speechless. Suddenly, tears formed in their eyes, and they began to cry. They said nothing, because nothing needed to be said. They knew what had to be done.

That evening the son gently took his father's hand in his and led him back to his place at the family table. For the remainder of his days, grandpa ate his meals at the table with the family. Yes, he continued to drop his fork and spill his food. He even continued to make noise when he ate, but for some reason, neither the father nor the mother had any complaint. "What comes around goes around." At times, empathy is a subtle reminder that if not for the grace of G-d, we would be in a similarly unfortunate situation. Moreover, as evidenced in the above story, if we live long enough, the possibility of it occurring "at home" becomes exceedingly less remote.

Please speak in the ears of the People: Let each man request of his fellow and each woman from her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels. (11:2)

Klal Yisrael are commanded to go to their Egyptian neighbors and ask them for their silver and gold vessels. This is to fulfill a promise Hashem made many years earlier to Avraham Avinu that his descendants would leave Egypt amid great wealth. The Torah's terminology is surprising. The people were instructed to "borrow" these vessels. Surely, the Jews had no intention of returning these vessels. After all, they were taking a one-way trip from Egypt. Why would they "borrow" the vessels? The Gerrer Rebbe, zl, derives a powerful lesson from here. They were not borrowing from the Egyptians; they were borrowing from Hashem. As far as the Jews were concerned, neither they nor the money was returning. They were owed this wealth, and they were taking what was coming to them. This was the first time that the Jewish people were confronted with the challenge of affluence. Hashem was intimating to them that what they were taking was not theirs. Nothing was theirs. It all belongs to Hashem, and it is on loan to us. Hashem wanted them to know how to view their newly found wealth. It belonged to Hashem. He allowed them to make use of it, but they should never forget its true owner.

This is a compelling statement, especially in light of the unprecedented wealth that exists in parts of the Jewish community in contrast with the tremendous needs that beg to be filled. How we should spend our money depends on how we view its possession. Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita, cites an intriguing Talmud Yerushalmi in Meseches Shekalim that should evoke some serious thought concerning how we spend our money. One day, Rav Chama and Rav walked by an impressive looking synagogue in the city of Lod. Rav Chama commented, "How much wealth did our ancestors invest here?" Rav countered, "How many lives were sunk into the ground here?" Were there no talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars, whom they could have supported with all the money they wasted on such a magnificent building?"

These two Amoraim had divergent opinions concerning the manner in which those who preceded them used their material wealth. Rav Chama took note of their material sacrifice. He understood that these people were willing to part with their hard-earned money, so that they could build a beautiful edifice to honor Hashem. Rav, on the other hand, certainly did not ignore their sacrifice. He felt that even when funds are used for a noble cause, such as beautifying a shul, his perception is of a misappropriation of Hashem's gift. He went as far as to compare it to murder, since these funds could have been used to sustain a worthy Jew.

In other words, Rav posits that there are priorities in spending. While erecting magnificent buildings are a glory to Hashem's Name and bring honor and reverence to the cause which they represent, this does not take precedence over the basics, such as what occurs in the building: Torah study, Jewish education, supporting those who sacrifice themselves daily to disseminate Torah, and the list goes on.

The custom of the pious men of France, as described by Rabbeinu Bachya in Parashas Tetzave, was to have the coffin in which they were buried made from their dining room tables. They indicated thereby that nothing remains with a person when he leaves this world other than the mitzvos he has performed - especially those which he has shared with others. The dining room table was a primary focus of chesed, kindness to others. It was there where the guests that he invited to his home would find sustenance. It was there that the poor were fed. It was there where those who had no family or friends found solace and friendship.

I think that there is another noteworthy lesson to be derived from this custom. People shy away from thinking about the inevitable. Death is morbid, and an inescapable experience that we want to ignore. Chazal teach us otherwise. "Repent one day before you die," they say. "Does one know when he will die? No. Therefore, repent daily, so that all of your days will be filled with teshuvah, repentance." The spectre of ineluctable death must maintain a prime position in our focus on life. When the pious men of France sat down to eat at their table, they did not ignore the significance of this table and its function as a medium for chesed. When they sat at their table - they were eating off of their coffin! They recognized their obligations to others. They were acutely aware that the table upon which they ate would "accompany" them on their final journey. They taught us that a constant awareness of the inevitable lends greater meaning to life.

And you shall tell your son on that day saying, "It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt." (13:8)

The Talmud in Pesachim 116b comments, "In every generation one is obligated to regard himself as if he personally had come out from Egypt." This pasuk is cited to support this statement. Chazal continue, "Therefore, it is our duty to thank, praise, pay tribute, glorify, exalt, honor, bless and acclaim to One Who performed all these miracles." In explaining Chazal's statement, the Brisker Rav, zl, cites the opinion of the Geonim, that there are actually two forms of Hallel, Praise, that are recited. There is a Hallel of Kriah, which we recite. This is done during the eighteen days of the year when Hallel is said during the morning prayers. There is another form of Hallel. This is a Hallel of Shirah, song, which we recite upon being saved from a tzarah, trouble, such as the Egyptian bondage.

Among the differences between these two forms of Hallel there stands out the fact that a Hallel of Shirah is said only upon one's personal rescue from a life-threatening situation. One however does not recite this form of Hallel, for his friend's rescue from a tzarah. That responsibility belongs to his friend.

The Hallel that we recite on Pesach night at the Seder, the Hallel in the Haggadah, is a Hallel of Shirah. This Hallel denotes our liberation, our rescue from the Egyptian enslavement. Therefore, it is essential that one feels that he was personally spared, that he was there and that he was rescued. Only then may he recite the Hallel of Shirah.

This is what the Baal Haggadah, author of the Haggadah, is telling us. Since one is duty-bound to view himself as having personally been there, he is now obligated to recite the unique Hallel of Shirah reserved specifically for those who have been spared from trouble.

It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt. (13:8)

The Torah instructs the Jewish People to relate to their children that Klal Yisrael was redeemed from Egypt for a specific reason: the commandments of Pesach, which means the Korban Pesach, which was brought as long as there was a Bais Hamikdash and in contemporary times, the mitzvos of Matzoh and Marror. It is only because of our kiyum ha'mitzvos, fulfillment of Hashem's commandments, that we were liberated.

The Meshech Chochmah gives the following analogy to further explain this concept. A man married off his daughter to a fine young man. The father, being a man of means, accepted upon himself to support the young couple. He provided them with a beautiful home and gave them the necessary credit cards, so that they could purchase what they needed. The bride's mother was overjoyed that her daughter had such a wonderful husband who provided for her every need. Her husband said, "True, things are presently wonderful. After all, I have given them a home and credit cards. The true test of our son-in-law's love for our daughter and his ability to provide for her will be when he leaves our home, when he will no longer have our credit cards, when he will have to fend for himself. Then we will know if he is a provider or a slouch who lives off of us.

This is the meaning of the enjoyment to observe the commandments later on, when they are not in the wilderness, being protected by the Pillars of Cloud and Fire, sustained by the Manna, being carried on the wings of eagles, and having plentiful water compliments of Miriam's well. They will have passed the test only when they maintain their commitment once they enter into Eretz Yisrael to plow and plant their own land. If they will then observe the mitzvos, then it will all have been worth it.

This is the underlying meaning of the Baal Haggadah's statement, "Baavur zeh, because of this - I say this only when Matzah and Marror are placed in front of you." When we will be in galus, exile, and the Korban Pesach will be history, and the only reminders of the Pesach observance that are placed before us are the Matzah and Marror - if we still observe it accordingly - then we have demonstrated our worthiness of redemption.

Va'ani Tefillah

Kol davar she'hayah b'klal v'yatza lidon b'davar ha'chadash.

Anything that was included in a general statement, but was then singled out to be treated as a new case.

When a principle is singled out from a general statement for the purpose of being treated as a new case, it cannot be returned to the general law unless it is explicitly returned by the Torah. An example of this rule is the law applying to the Asham Metzora, Guilt-offering brought by the metzora, spiritual leper, after he has been rendered ritually clean. Unlike other Ashamos, whose blood is applied to the Mizbayach, Altar, the blood of the Asham Metzora is applied to the bohen yad v'regel, thumb and big toe. For this reason, since there is an exclusion regarding this korban, the Torah had to state explicitly that the Asham Metzora is to be slaughtered in the same place as the other korbanos. Had the Torah not done this, it might be assumed that by virtue of this davar chadash, new case, this korban should also be excluded from having its Eimurim, entrails, placed on the Mizbayach, as is the law by other korbanos.

Another example of this rule would be the daughter of a Kohen, who under normal circumstances eats Terumah, may no longer partake of Terumah once she marries a non-Kohen. May she return to her father's home and eat Terumah in the event she is either widowed or divorced? Since this law was singled out to teach a new case, it was necessary for the Torah to bring her back to the family unit - which it does.

Sponsored l'zechor nishmas R' Tzvi Aryeh ben Itamar Ephraim haLevi z"l Pollak byDoniel Kasnett

Rav A.I. Kook on the Weekly Parasha

Parshat Bo: Destroy Chametz, Gain Freedom

"By the first day, you must clear out your homes of all leaven." [Ex. 12:15]

Why Clear Out "Chametz"?

Why does the Torah command us to destroy all "chametz" (leaven) found in our homes during Passover? It is logical to eat matzah; this fast-baked food is historically bound to the Exodus, recalling our hurried escape from Egyptian slavery. But how does clearing out leaven from our homes relate to the Passover theme of freedom and independence?

Freedom of Spirit

There are two aspects to attaining true freedom. First, one needs to be physically independent of all foreign subjugation. But complete freedom also requires freedom of the spirit. The soul is not free if it is subjected to external demands that prevent it from following the path of its inner truth. The difference between a slave and a free person is not just a matter of social status. One may find an educated slave whose spirit is free, and a free person with the mindset of a slave. What makes us truly free? When we are able to be faithful to our inner self, to the truth of our divine image (“tzelem Elokim”) - then we can live a fulfilled life, a life focused on our soul’s inner goals. One whose spirit is servile, on the other hand, will never experience this sense of self-fulfillment. His happiness will always depend upon the approval of another who dominates over him, whether this control is de jure or de facto.

The Foreign Influence of Leaven

What is “chametz”? Leaven is a foreign substance added to the dough. The leavening agent makes the dough rise; it changes its natural shape and characteristics. Destruction of all leaven symbolizes the removal of all foreign influences and constraints that prevent us from realizing our spiritual aspirations.

These two levels of independence, physical and spiritual, exist on both the individual and the national level. An independent people must be free not only from external rule, but also from foreign domination in the cultural and spiritual spheres.

For the Israelites in Egypt, it was precisely at the hour of imminent redemption that the dangers of these foreign ‘leavening’ forces were the greatest. At that time of great upheaval, true permanent emancipation was not a given. Would the Israelites succeed in freeing themselves, not only from Egyptian bondage, but also from the idolatrous culture in which they had lived for hundreds of years? To commemorate their spiritual liberation from Egypt, the Passover holiday of freedom requires the removal of all foreign ‘leavening’ agents.

Cleansing Ourselves of Foreign Influences

In our days too - an analogous era of imminent redemption - we need to purge the impure influences of alien cultures and attitudes which have entered our national spirit during our long exile among the nations. Freedom is the fulfillment of our inner essence. We need to aspire to the lofty freedom of those who left Egypt. To the Israelites of that generation, God revealed Himself, and brought them into His service. This is truly the highest form of freedom, as the Sages taught in “Avot” (6:2):

“Instead of ‘engraved (“charut”) on the tablets,’ read it as ‘freedom’ (“cheirut”). Only one who studies Torah is truly free.”

[adapted from Olat Re’iyah vol. II, p. 244]

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WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5766

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt, Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights
A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav
SHE’AILOS U’TESHUVOS

QUESTION: When driving long distance and stopping along the way in a motel, does one repeat Tefillas ha-derech upon resuming the trip in the morning?

DISCUSSION: Yes. When a trip takes longer than twenty-four hours, Tefillas ha-derech is repeated every day of the trip, but only if the traveler breaks up the trip by lodging in a hotel, camping at a campsite, staying over in another person’s home, etc., along the way. But if the traveler did not lodge anywhere overnight but either drove through the night or napped in the car, he does not repeat Tefillas ha-derech in the morning. He should, however, add the basic Tefillas ha-derech text [without concluding: Boruch ata Hashem shomea tefillah] when he recites Shema Koleinu during the morning Shemoneh Esrei.(1)

The same halachah applies to overnight airplane travel: Tefillas ha-derech is recited when the flight begins but is not repeated the next morning - even if

the passenger fell asleep for an extended period of time in his seat. As mentioned earlier, the text of Tefillas ha-derech should be incorporated into the Shemoneh Esrei when reciting Shema Koleinu.

QUESTION: When is the correct time to recite Tefillas ha-derech - before the trip begins or once the trip is underway?

DISCUSSION: It depends on the exact case: On the first day of a trip, Tefillas ha-derech should be recited only once the trip is underway - soon after leaving the city limits; i.e., when one begins to travel in an area where there are no more houses. [When travelling by plane, Tefillas ha-derech is said while the plane is taxiing down the runway at high speed, right before it is about to take off.(2)] B’ diavad, though, Tefillas ha-derech could be recited at any time during the trip, so long as the traveler is at least 2.5 miles from his destination.(3)

But on subsequent days of the trip, if the traveler sleeps over in a motel, etc., and must repeat Tefillas ha-derech the next morning when resuming the trip, Tefillas ha-derech may be recited right before leaving the hotel; there is no requirement to actually be on the road in order to recite it.(4)

QUESTION: Why did the Rabbis restrict clapping and dancing on Shabbos and Yom Tov?

DISCUSSION: The Talmud(5) records that the Rabbis prohibited playing musical instruments on Shabbos and Yom Tov because musical instruments often need to be tuned, a potential violation of the Shabbos Labor of Makeh b’ patish.(6) Not only did they prohibit all different types of musical instruments, but they also included all other noise-making objects, such as bells, whistles or rattles.(7)

The Rabbis of the Talmud(8) went even further. They decreed that certain actions which could lead to the playing of musical instruments should also be restricted, even if at the moment there are no musical instruments present or even available. Apparently, they were concerned that such an atmosphere could lead a creative individual to forget that it is Shabbos, and fashion a makeshift musical instrument on the spot.(9) Thus they banned clapping and dancing as well, since these are activities which generate an atmosphere in which music is played.

QUESTION: Nowadays, does the Rabbinical injunction against clapping and dancing on Shabbos and Yom Tov still apply?

DISCUSSION: While all authorities agree that the original edict against playing any kind of instrument remains in effect nowadays,(10) there are conflicting opinions whether or not the additional decree against dancing and clapping is also in effect. Some argue that nowadays we no longer have the ability or talent to fashion a musical instrument on the spot, so we should not prohibit activities that could lead to the fashioning of musical instruments.(11) Others hold that the original Rabbinical decree applied only to dance movements which required musical accompaniment, not to the unstructured and informal circle dancing popular today.(12) For whatever reason, the fact remains that it became customary for people to dance and clap on Shabbos and Yom Tov, and the poskim did not strenuously object to their behavior.(13) While it behooves a ba’al nefesh (a person who is especially meticulous in his mitzvah observance) to refrain from dancing and clapping(14) on Shabbos and Yom Tov [except on Simchas Torah (15)], especially for non-mitzvah purposes,(16) and many people are careful about it,(17) the basic halachah follows the opinion of the poskim who hold that nowadays, the Rabbinical decree against dancing and clapping is no longer applicable.(18)

QUESTION: When the Rabbis restricted clapping, was applauding also included?

DISCUSSION: No, it was not. The original injunction against clapping only included clapping to a specific rhythm or beat, since that type of clapping may lead to the fashioning of musical instruments. Applause, clapping to wake someone from his sleep, or any other type of clapping not done to a specific rhythm, is permitted.(19)

The same halachah applies to banging on a table-top with one’s fist or fingers. If it is done in order to silence a crowd or catch someone’s attention, it is permitted, since it is not a rhythmic beat. Beating on the

table-top to a specific beat, however, is included in the Rabbinical injunction against dancing and clapping, and should be avoided by those who do not dance and clap on Shabbos even nowadays.

Tapping a bottle or a glass with a spoon or a fork to a specific rhythm or beat should be avoided by everyone, since this is similar to using non-musical instruments to produce a musical sound (like a rattle), and may have been included in the original injunction against playing musical instruments which applies nowadays as well.(20)

FOOTNOTES:

1 Mishnah Berurah 110:24 and Halichos Shelomo 1:21-2. 2 Emes L'yaakov O.C. 110, note 139; Halichos Shelomo 1:21-4; Harav C.P. Scheinberg (oral ruling).

3 O.C. 110:7 and Mishnah Berurah 29. 4 Mishnah Berurah 110:29. 5 Eiruvin 104a. 6 As explained by Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 23:4. 7 Rama O.C. 338:1.

8 Beitzah 30a. 9 As explained by Sha'ar Efrayim O.C. 36, quoted in Minchas Elazer 1:29. 10 Beir Halachah 339:3 s.v. lehakel. 11 Tosfos, Beitzah 30a.

12 Aruch ha-Shulchan 339:9. 13 Rama O.C. 338:2; 339:3. 14 Clapping with a shinui is permitted according to all opinions; O.C. 339:3; Mishnah Berurah 338:1. 15 Mishnah Berurah 339:8. 16 Mishnah Berurah 339:10. 17 Kaf ha-Chayim 339:13-14. 18 Minchas Elazer 1:29; Igros Moshe O.C. 2:100. Even those who do not dance on Shabbos are permitted to do so during bein ha-shemashos; Eishel Avraham, Tanina, O.C. 299:10. 19 Mishnah Berurah 338:1; 339:9; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 28:36.

20 Based on Beir Halachah 339:3, s.v. lehakel. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. The series is distributed by the Harbotzas Torah Division of Congregation Shomre Shabbos, 1801 South Taylor Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118 HaRav Yisroel Grumer, Marah D'Asra.

YatedUSA

Parshas Bo - Diplomatic Immunity

by Based on an address by Rabbi Fishel Schachter

Adapted for print by M. Heimowitz

When diplomats enter a foreign country, they receive preferential treatment. At the border, they are free to sail past customs. No one checks their briefcases, no one opens their suitcases, and no one asks them what they have to declare. Then they slap diplomatic plates onto their cars, and they are free to violate parking rules with abandon. If you have ever driven near the United Nations building in Manhattan, you will know exactly what I am talking about. Why, you may ask, can a diplomat from Bangladesh park his car at a bus stop while you have to circle for hours to find an empty parking spot? You go to work every day and pay taxes to the U.S. government, but you are the one who has to worry about alternate side parking, not the Bulgarian ambassador. He can thumb his nose at the fire hydrant, and you can't. That's just the way it is.

Diplomatic immunity is a principle accepted by governments around the world – at least by governments that are on speaking terms with one another. Why is it that diplomats enjoy special privileges? Because they work for the government. They represent a higher authority.

In Parshas Bo, the Torah tells us that the bechorim, the firstborns, are entitled to special privileges. What did the bechorim do to earn these privileges? Nothing, really. They just happened to be born before any of their siblings.

The Chofetz Chaim explains that the reason the bechor occupies a distinguished position in Klal Yisroel is because during Makas Bechoros, the bechorim were a vehicle for kiddush shem shomayim. All along, Pharaoh and his advisors had insisted that the makos were natural phenomena, and they developed sophisticated scientific theories to substantiate their position. This only worked for the first nine makos, however. When Makas Bechoros hit, even the chartumim were stumped. As hard as they tried, they could not come up with any rational explanation for the fact that all of the Egyptian firstborns were slain while the Jewish firstborns were spared.

Makas Bechoros put an end to the Egyptians' denials that the makos were a manifestation of Hashem's hashgacha. The Egyptians finally had to admit that Hashem was in charge, and they had no choice but to follow His

directives and allow the Jews to leave Mitzrayim. In this way, Makas Bechoros brought about a tremendous kiddush Hashem.

No, the Jewish bechorim did not actually do anything to be mekadesh shem shomayim. But because they survived while the Egyptian firstborns perished, they proved to the world that there is a Ribbono Shel Olam. In doing so, they became Hashem's de facto ambassadors. Because the bechorim came to represent a Higher Authority, they became entitled to special privileges. Diplomatic immunity, in a sense.

The job of every Jew, says the Chofetz Chaim, is to be a vehicle of kiddush Hashem, an ambassador of kavod shomayim. And it is really in our own best interests to act as Hashem's representatives.

The Chofetz Chaim uses a mashal to illustrate this idea. In Poland, he says, people who provided a service to the king were given an official seal to put onto their wagons. The seal conferred a sort of diplomatic immunity.

Wagons bearing the label "In Service of His Majesty the King," were permitted to sail through tollbooths, roadblocks, and customs inspections. People would do anything to obtain the king's official seal. Of course, once they had earned the right to carry the coveted seal on their wagons, they would continue to use the wagons for their own purposes. But as long as the wagons carried the official seal of the king, no one would ask any questions or look too closely at the contents of these wagons.

"Omer ani maasai l' melech," Dovid HaMelech says (Tehillim 45:2). The Chofetz Chaim translates the posuk literally: "Omer ani maasai l' melech" – I say that my actions are for the king. Tell the Ribbono Shel Olam that your primary aspiration is to serve Him and to be mekadesh shem shomayim, the Chofetz Chaim advises. If you declare yourself a representative of the King, you automatically entitle yourself to the King's official seal that confers diplomatic immunity on your wagon. And then, magically, everything else can go into the wagon: health, parnassah, shidduchim, shalom bayis, children.

The truth is that we really do have an official seal from the King. The posuk tells us that when the nations of the world see that Klal Yisroel are the bearers of Hashem's Name, they will fear us: "Vera'u kol amei haaretz ki sheim Hashem nikra alecha v' yaru mimeka" (Devarim 28:10). What will the nations see that will inspire them to fear Klal Yisroel? "Eilu tefillin she'berosh," the Gemara says.

The mitzvah of tefillin is referred to as an os, a sign. Tefillin are the official seal that entitles us to diplomatic immunity. They proclaim that we are Hashem's ambassadors, and that we are deserving of protection from the nations of the world and from the heavenly forces of prosecution.

But in order for the King's official seal to entitle its bearer to diplomatic privileges, it has to be accorded the proper respect. The customs officials will not be too impressed by the label "In Service of His Majesty the King," if it has been slapped onto the wagon haphazardly. When you put on our tefillin, it has to be with the proper reverence. If your tefillin are not positioned correctly, if it is obvious that you are in a rush to take them off and go to work, if the way in which you perform the mitzvah makes it clear that you have very little appreciation for its significance, then you cannot expect your diplomatic status to be taken seriously. Your wagon of privileges may not be spared from the scrutiny of the prosecuting angels. Rav Aryeh Levin zt"l, the tzaddik of Yerushalayim, acted as the official prison chaplain during the British Mandate. Once, he visited two Jewish activists who were about to be executed by the British. The two prisoners asked if they could put on tefillin one last time. Rav Aryeh watched as they performed the mitzvah of tefillin. The passion, the emotion, the love, the joy that went into that mitzvah defied description.

This is how the mitzvah of tefillin should always be performed, Rav Aryeh later commented. Just because we are not about to be executed, should we have any less passion for the mitzvah? Just because we are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to put on tefillin every day, should we feel any less proud to declare ourselves ambassadors of the Ribbono Shel Olam? When the bechorim became Hashem's ambassadors, it was with no effort on their part. "Kadesh li kol bechor," Hashem commanded. Sanctify every

firstborn for Me. The bechorim did not need to wear any official seal. The mere fact that they were agents for increasing kavod shomayim was sufficient to imbue them with kedusha for eternity.

The first words written on the parchment of our tefillin are “Kadesh li kol bechor.” Now, you may not have had the good fortune to be born a bechor. But tefillin signify that regardless of your place in the family, you can also be a bechor. You can also be an ambassador of Hashem.

If the passive kiddush Hashem of the bechorim resulted in everlasting kedusha, says the Chofetz Chaim, can you imagine how much greater is the reward for active kiddush Hashem? If you wear your tefillin proudly, if you declare “omer ani maasai l’ melech,” if you lead the kind of life that promotes kavod shomayim, then you will be entitled to even greater privileges than the bechor.

We will all go up to shomayim after 120 years with a wagonload of packages. Chances are, you will not want the prosecuting angels to look too closely at the contents of your wagon. If you have taken care to affix the label “In Service of His Majesty the King,” to your wagon, then when you come before the customs officials in shomayim, they will allow you to park in Gan Eden, no questions asked.

Yeshivat Har Etzion

Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm)

The Weekly Mitzva

PARASHAT BO -Shiur #15: Matza

By Rav Binyamin Tabory (Forwarded by Elliot Goldofsky)

The Torah in Parashat Bo (Shemot 12:8) commands eating the korban pesach (the sacrificial lamb) together with matza and marror. Inasmuch as today we cannot offer sacrifices – including the korban pesach, there is no longer a biblical obligation to eat marror, which is to be eaten in conjunction with the korban pesach. However, our sages instituted a rabbinic requirement to eat marror independently of the korban. Regarding matza, however, Rava maintained that the obligation of matza has an independent status as a biblical requirement, since the Torah explicitly states, “On (that) night you should eat matzot” (Shemot 12:8). The gemara cites a beraita which supports this opinion. The beraita observes that in one place, the Torah requires eating matza all seven days of the festival (Shemot 12:15), whereas elsewhere, it obligates eating matza for only six days (Devarim 16:8). The beraita employs an exegetical principle of Rabbi Yishmael to conclude that once the second verse excludes the seventh day from the obligation, the entire obligation dissolves. Seemingly, then, the consumption of matza on Pesach should be entirely optional. Therefore, the Torah specifically mentions the obligation to eat matza together with the korban on the first night of Pesach. And even if there is no korban, the Torah still reiterated “on (that) night you should eat matzot” to establish an independent mitzva to eat matza. The Rambam (Sefer Ha-Mitzvot – mitzvat aseil 158), as well as other codifiers, write that there is a biblical requirement to eat matza on the first night of Pesach – even without a Beit Ha-mikdash.

The Chizkuni (Shemot 12:18) understands the Torah’s seemingly convoluted presentation of this mitzva to imply that although there is no obligation to eat matza the entire week of Pesach, one who does eat matza fulfills a mitzva by doing so. He explains that when it comes to most mitzvot, one not only merits reward for observing them, but also deserves punishment if he is negligent and fails to fulfill them. Other mitzvot, however (such as eating matza the rest of Pesach), do not entail any punishments but do bring reward to those who opt to fulfill them.

Another possible source for this mitzva to eat matza throughout the entirety of Pesach is the juxtaposition of the prohibition against eating chametz and the requirement to eat matza (Devarim 16:3). The gemara (Pesachim 43b) derives from this textual association that women (who are forbidden from eating chametz) must eat matza (despite its being a time-bound mitzvat aseil, and thus women should be exempt). According to Rav Shimon, (Pesachim

28b) these two mitzvot are mutually dependent in terms of the times of their application, as well. Rav Shimon maintains that there is no “lav” (a biblical prohibition) to eat chametz erev Pesach or after Pesach. His argument is that chametz is only biblically forbidden at the time that matza is to be eaten. The Penei Yehoshua (ad loc.) writes that Rashi’s interpretation of Rav Shimon shows that there is a biblical REQUIREMENT to eat matza all Pesach.

We find another indication that the mitzva of eating matza is required (or at least fulfilled) throughout Pesach in the discussion regarding tefillin on chol ha-moed. The gemara (Menachot 36b) explains that since tefillin are called an “ot” (a sign), and Shabbat and Yom Tov are themselves an “ot,” there is no need to put on tefillin on those days. Tosafot (ad loc.) raise the issue of whether one must wear tefillin on chol ha-moed, and they claim that Pesach is an “ot” since chametz is forbidden, and Sukkot is an “ot” because it obligates us to sit in the sukka. The Rosh, however (Responsa 23:3), cites the geonim as saying that Pesach is an “ot” due to the ‘OBLIGATION’ of eating matza. Indeed, it seems far more logical that an “ot” should involve a demonstrative act such as eating matza, rather than passively refraining from eating chametz. Although the Rosh maintains that one should put on tefillin on chol ha-moed, he does not take issue with the opinion that the obligation of matza creates an “ot.”

It is well known that the Gaon of Vilna maintained that eating matza all Pesach is an optional mitzva. It is related (Ma’aseh Rav 175) that he afforded immense value to this mitzva. In fact, he would make a point of eating se’uda shelishit on the last day of Pesach (although he did not usually eat se’uda shelishit on Yom Tov), in order to fulfill the mitzva of eating matza in its waning moments before it expired.

If we indeed assume that there is a mitzva to eat matza all Pesach, we must ask why there is no berakha attached to it. On Sukkot, for example, there is no obligation to eat in the sukka throughout the festival; the obligation to eat in the sukka applies only on the first night. Thereafter, there is only a prohibition against eating anything substantial outside the sukka, and technically, one could avoid eating in the sukka throughout the remainder of Sukkot by living the entire week on snacks. If, however, one does eat in the sukka, he fulfills a mitzva and also recites a berakha. Why should we not similarly require a berakha over the consumption of matza after the first day of Pesach?

This question, originally posed by the Ba’al Ha-Maor (end of Pesachim), has become the subject of much discussion, and various answers have been suggested. The Michtam (Sukka 27a) and the Meiri (Pesachim 91b) reject the entire thesis and maintain that there is no mitzva at all to eat matza after the first night of Pesach. By contrast, the Sedei Chemed (Chametz U’matza 14:10) cites a prevailing custom to recite a berakha, and the Netziv (Meishiv Davar 77) expresses uncertainty as to whether such a berakha would be considered a berakha le-vatala (an unnecessary berakha).

In any event, this custom of making a berakha has been resoundingly rejected. (See Responsa Yechaveh Da’at 1:22). The Ba’al Ha-Maor himself answered by saying that one need not eat matza the rest of Pesach, as it is possible to subsist on rice (for those whose custom permits it) or other foods. However, since a person cannot refrain from sleeping for an entire week, one must be in the sukka at some point during the week, and this mitzva therefore requires a berakha.

It is told that certain people who were known as extremely meticulous in mitzva observance did not eat matza at all after the first night of Pesach. Apparently, they were concerned about the intricacies of baking matza and feared that it could become chametz quite easily.

Rav Eliezer Waldenberg (Tzitz Eliezer 13:65) disputed this position very strongly for a number of reasons. He thought that there was an inherent contradiction in this practice. If the adherents of this custom were truly afraid that the matza was not baked according to halakha, how could they eat it on the first night of Pesach? Furthermore, Rav Waldenberg argued that there is a mitzva to eat “pat” (bread or matza) every day of Pesach, especially Shabbat and Yom Tov. How could they ignore this obligation?

If we accept the opinion of the Chizkuni and Vilna Gaon, then the followers of this practice also negate the fulfillment of eating matza all Pesach.

Rav Waldenberg also cites an opinion that given the Karaite doctrine requiring eating matza all Pesach, as the Torah says, "You should eat matza seven days" (Shemot 12:15), there were those who refrained from eating matza after the first night to demonstrate their opposition to the Karaite position. Nevertheless, Rav Waldenberg strongly advised eating matza all week.

We have shown that there is some dispute as to whether or not there is a mitzva to eat matza throughout Pesach. On the first night of Pesach, however, everyone agrees that there is an obligation to eat matza. In general, any mitzva of the Torah requiring eating involves the eating of a "ke-zayit" (an olive). The mishna (Pesachim 10:1) says that a waiter who took a moment at the seder to recline and eat a "ke-zayit" of matza has fulfilled his obligation. The Maharal of Prague (Sefer Gevurot Hashem 48) inferred from the formulation of this halakha that the waiter fulfills his requirement only be-di'avad (ex post facto); he satisfied the minimum requirement of eating while reclining. However, the mitzva involves all the matza that one eats the first night of Pesach and should therefore all be eaten while reclining. He says that this is the position of the Rambam, as well.

The Maharal did not specify to which halakha in the Rambam he refers, and attempts have been made to deduce this from various halakhot. (See Rav Y.B. Zolty's Mishnat Ya'avetz, 16 for one possible source.) It seems fairly clear to me, however, that the Maharal referred to the Rambam in Hilkhot Chametz U'Matza 6:1. There the Rambam writes, "There is a biblical requirement to eat matza on the night of the fifteenth... Once one has eaten a ke-zayit, he has fulfilled the mitzva." The Rambam could have said simply, that there is a mitzva to eat a ke-zayit of matza. By writing instead that there is a mitzva to eat matza and one need not eat more than a ke-zayit, he implies that all of one's matza consumption constitutes a fulfillment of the mitzva, though the minimum requirement is a ke-zayit. We have thus learned that according to one view there is an obligation to eat matza all week (Penei Yehoshua's understanding of Rav Shimon), whereas another opinion maintains that although there is no obligation, one fulfills a mitzva by eating matza all week (Chizkuni, Vilna Gaon). This latter opinion was disputed by Me'iri and others. Lastly, we saw that the Maharal felt that on the first night, although one fulfills the mitzva by eating a ke-zayit, all matza eaten that night is a fulfillment of the mitzva.