

**From EfraimG@aol.com
Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet
Ki Sisa 5769**

*Mazal Tov to Shaul Mordechai and Michal Stein on the birth of a son.
Mazal Tov to the proud grandparents Marcie & Neil Stein.*

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JEWISH HUMOR :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The advent of Purim caused a noted Israeli rabbi to write an article about Jewish humor in a Hebrew journal. Having read his article I am inspired to write this article in English about the same subject.

There really is only a nebulous type of definition regarding Jewish humor. In Eastern Europe Jewish humor depended heavily upon the earthiness and myriad nuance of Yiddish, the lingua franca of the Jewish society.

There was a popular book written a number of decades ago by Leo Rosten called "The Joys of Yiddish." It ended up being a collection of jokes - some hilarious, some indecent and many head-scratching.

The circumstances of the dire condition of Eastern European Jewry over centuries almost forced a type of humor upon that society. The humor was self-deprecating, always mildly sarcastic and totally ironic. It was meant to amuse and not to hurt.

It never targeted individuals per se but it was nevertheless a social commentary on society, the times and varied circumstances. It always had a dark side but it was not really depressing or too bitter. It acknowledged human foibles, even of great people and held them up to laughter but not to ridicule.

Probably the greatest example of Eastern European Jewish humor is to be found in the works of Shalom Aleichem who lived at the turn of the twentieth century. Mark Twain upon meeting him in New York during his visit to America remarked: "They say that I am the American Shalom Aleichem."

In reality there was a great deal of similarity in their works for they both emphasized situational humor rather than out and out guffaw-producing stand alone jokes.

In American vaudeville and later in the famous Borscht Belt circuit, Jewish humor and Jewish comedians flourished. Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor, Milton Berle, Henny Youngman, the Marx Brothers, among others all went on to fame and fortune employing situational comedy that was common in Eastern European Jewish life. They were the natural heirs of the badchan - the jokester who appeared to perform publicly at Jewish weddings in Eastern Europe and the Purim Rav who was a fixture at all Purim festivities.

The badchan mocked the bride and groom, the institution of marriage itself, the in-laws and all of the foibles of family life. The Purim Rav pricked the balloon of pomposity of the religious leadership of the community.

They and their American descendants always portrayed themselves as somewhat nebbish, idiocentric, slightly daft characters. They took a look at life and its randomness and dangers and made fun of themselves as the ultimate defense weapon against such a world.

They really were the forerunners of the situation comedy programs that for a while dominated American television. In that respect Bill Cosby, Jerry Seinfeld and Ray Romano were all in the tradition of Eastern European Jewish humor whether they consciously intended to be so or not.

But probably such humor is common to the human race generally and not restricted to any particular ethnic group or society.

Laughter is a cure for many human ills and it is almost instinctive within us to want to laugh. Witness how babies learn to laugh and cackle so early in their development.

The Talmud itself has descriptions of many humorous and ironic situations and comments. It recommends to teachers to begin their classroom studies each day by employing humor. All public speakers will readily agree that beginning a talk with a humorous story will go a long way in winning the audience's attention - and in holding their attention for the rest of the remarks.

The rise of stand-up comedy is really another form of the badchan's performance at Jewish weddings. It is a far more difficult form to be successful at than the situational type of comedy which relies on the development of characters rather than rapid fire jokes.

But we see that both types of humor were very common in the Jewish world. Yiddish humor oftentimes bordered somewhat on the risqué but never really crossed the line of obscenity and immorality. Unfortunately the same certainly cannot be said of the type of humor that pervades the Western and Israeli general world today.

Perhaps that is why there is a decline in Jewish humor today in the religious world. People take themselves too seriously to be able to be self-deprecating - which was always the hallmark of Jewish humor.

At Jewish weddings, wild dancing and ear splitting music have replaced the badchan in most of the Jewish world today. Too bad. We could all use a good ironic look at ourselves every so often. But Purim is this week so maybe we will hear some good Purim Torah and Jewish jokes after all.

Happy Purim
Shabat shalom

Weekly Parsha :: KI TISA :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The Talmud teaches us that in every generation a portion of the punishment for the construction of the Golden calf in the desert by the Jewish people is exacted. I think that in a greater measure we can state that the sin of the Golden Calf itself is repeated in every generation.

The obvious problem arising out of the Golden Calf is how could the Jewish people, fresh from the miracles of Egypt, Yam Suf, manna and the revelation at Sinai revert to paganism and to the worship of a man-made deity. What possessed them to be so blind as to their own recent experiences and to their stated destiny?

Of course, this incident is the ultimate proof of the allowance for free will in human affairs, even for the most destructive form of free will. And, yet, it is most troubling to realize how seriously error prone the Jewish people can be.

And, the fact that this weakness constantly asserts itself in every generation is itself part of the punishment. This portion has been meted out to us over the many generations since that Golden Calf was constructed and worshipped in the desert of Sinai. After all, one could hope that after 3321 years something might have been learned.

And yet we are witness to the fact that the Golden Calf in all of its modern and secular manifestations still dances and prances amongst us. Apparently this punishment still exacts its pain and finds its victims even though much time has elapsed since the original sin of the Golden Calf.

There appears to have been multiple causes for the construction of the original Golden Calf. The absence of Moshe, Aharon's vacillation, the presence of a large and vocal non-Jewish section within the Jewish people - the eirev rav, - the always present memories of Egypt and its pagan society and culture, and the uncertain self-worth of a recently emancipated people from slavery, are all contributory factors in the unfolding tragedy of the Golden Calf.

Almost all of these factors exist in our time as well. The absence of inspiring religious leadership, the inability to formulate a positive vision for the people and the state, the influences of a non-Jewish world that has turned all basic human values on its face, the revival of pagan ideas and lifestyles of the ancient world in the guise of new liberal ideas and permissive values, the difficulties of adjusting to national independence after millennia of exile, all combine in our time to allow the Golden Calf to still exist within us.

The failures of assimilation, secularism, and Westernization at all costs, are all visible to all of us. Yet, we are all reluctant to abandon the allure of the shine of the Golden Calf.

Only when we will have our fill of these false hopes and retrograde ideas will we be free to accept Moshe's dramatic act of destroying the Golden Calf to dust and powder. Perhaps then will our bill for the original Golden Calf be finally stamped as being paid in full.

Shabat shalom.

Happy Purim.

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Ki Tisa

For the week ending 14 March 2009 / 18 Adar I 5769

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Overview

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, Aharon and his sons. G-d selects Bezalel and Oholiav as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that G-d made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments. The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. G-d tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship he smashes the tablets and destroys the golden calf. The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men. Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up the Mishkan and G-d's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request. G-d tells Moshe to hew new tablets and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy. Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

INSIGHTS

In The Shadow of G-d

“See, I have called by name: Betzalel.” (31:2)” - “And behold I have appointed with him Oholiav.” (31:6)

A shadow on the ground.

Itself without substance, ephemeral, yet it reveals the existence of something somewhere else.

Nothing is as insubstantial as a shadow, and yet the shadow is the silhouette of something that is beyond.

Faith is like a shadow.

The essence of a succa is its shade, its shadow, if you like; a succa that has more sun than shadow is invalid. Our Sages teach that when we sit in the succa we are sitting in “the shadow of faith.” The spiritual masters derived this phrase from a verse in the Song of Songs, “In His shadow I delighted and there I sat, and the fruit of His Torah was sweet to my palate.” (2:4)

We can experience closeness to G-d through tasting “the fruit of His Torah.” We can experience the sweetness of that Existence that is beyond, but, for the very reason that He is beyond, we can never see that Existence. When Moshe asked G-d to show him a revelation of that Existence, God replied, “You cannot see My face, for man cannot see Me and live.”

The name Betzalel means, “In the shadow of G-d.”

It was Betzalel who was responsible for the building of the Mishkan - the Ohel Mo'ed (Tent of Meeting). G-d used the letters of the aleph bet to create the heavens and the earth, and Betzalel's particular gift was that he knew how to combine the letters of the aleph bet, the DNA of creation, and create a microcosm of the universe. Interestingly, if you look at the name of Betzalel's partner in the building of the Mishkan, Oholiav, you will see that it comprises the words Oheli - “My tent” - and “aleph Bet.” Oheli -

aleph bet. It was as though G-d placed into Oholiav's name “My tent, My Mishkan, is made of the aleph bet.”

This is why the Mishkan and the Beit HaMikdash were beautiful.

The Talmud says “if you never saw the Second Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple), you never saw a beautiful building in your life.” The Beit HaMikdash was called the “eye of the world.” The eye is a physical organ but it receives something that is about as non-physical as you can get: Light. The Beit Hamikdash was called “the eye of the world” because it was the portal for the Light. The Beit HaMikdash was the most beautiful building not because of its dimensions and proportions or its finishes but because it revealed the resting of the Divine Presence in this world.

Faith is like a shadow. Faith is the knowledge of something that you cannot see.

The nation that dwells in the shadow of faith proclaims that existence extends beyond the here-and-now, beyond what can be perceived by the five senses of man. Faith is something that takes place in the shade. In the shadow.

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Ki Sisa Fence-Sitters Refuse To Deal With Reality

This week's Haftorah contains the famous incident of Eliyahu at Har HaCarmel [Mt. Carmel]. Eliyahu HaNavi [The prophet] gathered all the people and challenged the prophets of Baal to a “duel”: Whoever can make fire descend from Heaven will prove that they represent the true G-d. The simple connection between the Haftorah and the Parsha is that Ki Sisa contains the story of the Eigel Hazahav [Golden Calf]. Both stories involve Jews worshipping idols. The narrative of Eliyahu at Har HaCarmel in Sefer Melachim parallels the Biblical incident of the Eigel Hazahav.

However, one might suggest another theme in the Haftorah that directly links to our parsha. The Haftorah contains the following striking pasuk [verse] in the Haftorah: “Eliyahu approached the people and said: How long will you dance between two opinions? If Hashem is G-d, follow Him! And if Baal is, follow it!” [Melachim I 18:21]. It is impossible to interpret this pasuk that Eliyahu was advocating that the people worship Avodah Zarah (by following Baal) under any circumstance. Eliyahu was telling the people that a person cannot spend his life straddling the fence. A person cannot have it both ways – one day worshipping Baal and the next day worshipping Hashem. A person cannot put on Tefillin and then offer sacrifices to Baal. A person cannot keep a Glat Kosher home and then worship idols. Hypocrisy is intolerable.

Eliyahu dramatically tells the people that he would rather deal with a person who is totally committed to Baal than deal with people who waffle. A person who is committed to Baal is terribly wrong, but at least he is consistent. He is not living a lie. He is not a hypocrite. Therefore, Eliyahu argues, I can influence such a person. I may be able to win over such a person. An honest person is salvageable. However, a person, who is living one way on one day and another way the next day, is living a lie. It is very difficult to win a person over to the truth when the person is not being honest with himself. People who refuse to deal with reality are almost beyond hope.

The pasuk continues: “the people could not answer him anything.” When one's life is such hypocrisy, what is there to say?

There is a similar idea in the incident of the Eigel Hazahav. The Talmud teaches [Shabbos 87a]: There are three things that Moshe Rabbeinu did on his own and G-d retroactively agreed. One of the three bold initiatives that Moshe took on his own was to break the Luchos [Tablets] upon his descent from Har Sinai when he witnessed the Jews sinning with the Eigel Hazahav. The Talmud explains Moshe's justification for breaking the Luchos. Moshe made a kal v'chomer argument: If a person who worships a false god (mumar) can not offer a Korban Pessach, even though the Korban Pessach is just a single mitzvah, certainly these people who worshipped the Eigel Hazahav, cannot receive the Luchos which represent the entire Torah.

Tosfos questions the logic of this kal v'chomer. Tosfos argues that just because a mumar is excluded from the Paschal Offering, should not result

in them being denied the Torah. Perhaps they would have learned from the Torah that they could repent!

Since Moshe was not told by G-d to break the Luchos and there was not a convincing logical argument that he should break them, why in fact did he break them? Rav Pam once explained: When people danced around the Calf and proclaimed "This is your G-d O Israel who brought you up from the land of Egypt," knowing full well that this was a lie, it showed that they were hypocrites. Having personally experienced the exodus and having personally heard and witnessed G-d tell them not to make graven images and then making such an image and proclaiming that it took them out of Egypt was an unforgivable sin. It showed that their lives were full of contradictions and inconsistencies. They were living a lie. Moshe felt that such people were beyond hope.

This is the parallel theme between Parshas Ki Sisa and Eliyahu on Har HaCarmel. This is exactly what Eliyahu told the people on Har HaCarmel. "If Baal is G-d, go after him" – meaning if you are consistent, then I can deal with you. However, I cannot deal with you if you are inconsistent and dance on both sides of the fence. In that case, you are hopeless. That was Eliyahu's problem and that was Moshe's problem as well.

Eliyahu was right. Even though the people (after witnessing the fire come down from Heaven) proclaimed "Hashem is Elokim! Hashem is Elokim!" their enthusiasm did not last. By the very next chapter of Melachim, the people's enthusiasm had dissipated.

Rav Nachum of Kelm noted: If they believed what they were saying, they would only have said: "Hashem is Elokim!" once. The fact that they said it twice indicates they were trying to convince themselves. When one is sure of something then "Yes" is yes and "No" is no, "Black" is black and "White" is white. Why did they repeat it twice? They didn't really fully believe it. As a result, they were back to square one the next day.

If one is not able to fully commit, any spiritual enthusiasm will be short lasting indeed.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARSHAS KI SISA

This shall they give - everyone who passes through the census - a half-shekel. (30:13)

During the time in which the Bais Hamikdash was standing, every adult male was obligated to give a half-shekel contribution annually for the maintenance of the public sacrificial service. Why did the Torah specifically require a half-shekel, as opposed to a complete unit? The commentators say that this idea represents the symbolism of the fractured nature of the individual Jew. A Jew alone is incomplete. As an individual, something is lacking in the Jew. Only when he joins together with the community does he become whole. A Jew belongs. He is supposed to feel part of something. He should never feel that he is alone - because he is not. Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, used this explanation to shed light on the Mishnah in Shekalim 1:1. "On the first of Adar, announcements are made regarding the donation of the shekalim, and, also, concerning the kilayim, crops that are co-mingled in a forbidden manner." Two cases, two pronouncements, which seem to have no relationship with one another - other than the proximity in time - Shekalim is a contribution and, thus, holy. A half-shekel is a coin used to promote interpersonal relationships.

Chazal emphasize the importance of cultivating positive and lasting relationships. "Acquire for yourself a friend" is a powerful statement issued by Chazal in Meseches Avos 1:6. A person whose life is focused inwardly, self-centered, limited to those around him, is considered an incomplete person. Nonetheless, while he must seek out friends in order to address the issue of loneliness, it should not be at the expense of virtue, ethics and mitzvah observance. Just as it is forbidden to partake of crops that are the result of an admixture, so, too, it is similarly wrong to associate with an inappropriate group of people, simply in order to prevent loneliness. Consorting with people of questionable behavior, affiliating

with those of dubious character, is not the way to resolve the issue of loneliness.

Rav Yosef Chaim supported this idea with a statement from Chazal in Pirkei Avos 2:9. Rabbi Yehoshua was asked, "What should be the most important focus of a person's life?" He replied, "(Having) a good friend." When asked what one should avoid most in life, he responded, "A bad friend." Friendship is an important factor in developing one's character, but, as vital as it may be, it is equally significant that one's pursuit of a friend not be the source of his downfall. Friendship is not defined merely by the strength of the relationship. If one's "friend" is harmful to his character, then he can do better without such friends.

The above may be summed up in two popular maxims: "Associate yourself with men of good quality, if you esteem your reputation; for it is better to be alone than to be in bad company." In addition, "Tell me with whom you are, and I will tell you what you are." Friends have a powerful effect on a person, but, at times, someone may be so bereft of a human connection that he will resort to establishing a relationship with someone of a negative character. Such a friendship will have a deleterious effect on him.

How does one define friendship? Does a "good" friend have to be a "good" person? Is a "bad" friend a "bad" person? Friendship is a relationship which catalyzes growth and improves the individual. One who, as a result of a friend's influence, takes a downward plunge spiritually or emotionally does not really have a friend. There is no upward movement - only negative growth. How much is your friend willing to sacrifice for the relationship? What is he willing to give up in order to sustain a friendship? Perhaps the following vignette defines the relationship between two people which we consider a true friendship. Two men were employed by the same firm for many years. They appeared to be very close. At least, that is what people thought. After many years, one of them was transferred to another city. People came over to commiserate with the remaining man, as he was apparently losing his friend. I feel that his reply is a powerful commentary on the meaning of friendship. "He was not my friend," the man answered. "He was nothing more than an acquaintance."

"But you laughed together on many occasions, and you shared so many good times together."

The man thought for a moment, met their eyes, countering, "But we never cried together." A good friend is available through thick and thin. He is a tower of support and respect - never violating his friend's trust - never doing anything that might cause him harm of any kind - even if they do not share all personal perspectives. That is true friendship.

He saw the calf and the dances, and Moshe's anger flared up, and he threw down the Tablets from his hands and shattered them. (32:19)

The Midrash Tanchuma explains that when Hashem gave Moshe Rabbeinu the Luchos, they basically "carried themselves," given their size and weight. When Moshe saw the people dancing around the calf and witnessed their licentious behavior, the letters of the Luchos floated up to Heaven. Suddenly, the Luchos became exceedingly heavy, and Moshe let them fall to the ground. A symbolic lesson can clearly be derived from the fact that the Luchos became too heavy a load for Moshe to carry as soon as the letters disappeared. Was it the weight of the stone, or did our leader suddenly become weak and helpless, perhaps even overwhelmed by Luchos which had been separated from their letters?

I think that Chazal are teaching us a profound lesson. Torah is more than a body of wisdom. It is Hashem's wisdom, and, as such, cannot be separated from its Divine Author. This might be the underlying motif which Chazal express in Pirkei Avos 3:11, "Any person in whom the fear of sin precedes wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but anyone in whom wisdom precedes the fear of sin, his wisdom shall not endure." Simply put, Chazal are teaching us that wisdom, thought, is subservient to the will, which is inextricably bound up with the emotions. Thus, if a person is not first thoroughly imbued with a sense of "fear of sin," if his moral compass is not pointing in the correct direction, his wisdom cannot influence him in a fundamental manner, regardless of how intellectually developed he may be. Sooner or later, his mind and his accumulated wisdom become nothing more than a glorified handmaiden to rationalize and justify the wishes and demands of the "will."

To explain this further: There is chochmah, wisdom, and there is Torah. Torah is the greatest, most profound compendium of wisdom, but--without the premise and belief that it is Divine-- it is nothing more than wisdom, like any other body of knowledge. It does absolutely nothing for the one who "studies" it. Torah must be "lived." The Chochmas haTorah, wisdom of the Torah, must be understood from the perspective that its profundity is often beyond our ability to grasp. This is why we need a rebbe - not a teacher, a mentor, a professor - but a rebbe, who embodies the Torah's wisdom and who respects it.

The previous Gerrer Rebbe, zl, the Pnei Menachem, explains that a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, who is immersed in Torah study should feel extremely close to Hashem. If, despite his study, his wisdom and knowledge of Torah remain greater than his fear of sinning, this reality indicates that his learning is seriously flawed. Learning Torah properly, with an emes, a sense of truth-- and not merely for the sake of intellectual knowledge-- brings the individual closer to Hashem and engenders fear of Heaven.

This is how the Jew of old learned Torah. It was his greatest source of joy - not a textbook which he researched to prepare a paper or a source to cite for his thesis. Despite the ever-mounting obstacles, he lived his life according to the Shulchan Aruch, because the Torah's mitzvos were not an irrational burden or an archaic tradition, but rather, an effervescent source of pure joy. They were his life! He carried the Luchos close to his heart, fulfilling their precepts, because they were his gift from their Divine Author. It was Torah - not simply chochmah.

How wise were Chazal when they intimated that the Luchos without the letters, their essence as G-d's hard work, constituted an unbearable load. They were missing the source of joy that made carrying them so simple. In order to carry the Luchos with joy, one must recognize and acknowledge their source and never separate their Author from His treatise.

We often define Judaism as one of the major religions, when, in fact, it is not a religion. It is a relationship with Hashem, including everything that we do, from carrying out His mitzvos to performing acts of loving-kindness, both of which serve as vehicles for bringing ourselves closer to Him. To divorce Hashem from Judaism is to undermine its meaning and to destroy its goal. As we seek greater consciousness and deeper meaning in life, we must train our focus on Hashem. He is the only reality in our life. To live a life devoid of Hashem is to exist without acknowledging ultimate reality. Those who choose to recognize the wisdom of Torah, but fail to acknowledge its Divine Authorship, are no different than those who delve into spirituality, but do not acknowledge Hashem as the Source of all spirituality. They do this for the obvious reasons: they are not interested in the fetters of religion. They want to choose their own direction in life, live it as modern as they want, of course with a rationale that, in contemporary society, some "restrictions" just do not apply. It is like saying, "The Luchos are just too heavy to carry." Mitzvos become encroachments on their lives; the rabbis are not in touch with the times; the demands of Judaism inhibit the growth of its members as citizens of the wider society.

The Torah is the life of its chochmah. In other words, the Torah's wisdom--without the Torah/G-d aspect of it-- is nothing but dry wisdom, lifeless and sterile. The joy one receives when learning Torah is his way of identifying with its source, the Divine Author. On the other hand, one should not get carried away with this "relationship" to the point that he ignores everything else.

The Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, personified this relationship. His love for Hashem was palpable. His joy in learning Torah was an experience to behold. In his *Warmed by their Fire*, Rabbi Yisrael Besser tells of just one of these experiences. It was Simchas Torah: One of the high points of the year in Klausenberg was the majestic spectacle of witnessing the Rebbe, clutching a small Sefer Torah close to his heart and dancing, gazing upon the Rebbe's face as he was bound up in a Heavenly reverie of joy while he danced with the Almighty's Torah. One who watched this scene almost felt as if the Rebbe were dancing with Hashem, so intense and ecstatic was the rapture that one observed on his face. The dance was a symphony of expression: the expression of love for the Torah and its Divine Author, and an expression of utter gratitude to He Who allowed the Rebbe to witness the rebirth of a new world dedicated to Torah study and mitzvah

observance. The Rebbe might have been dancing with his feet touching upon the earthly surface of this world, but his essence was soaring in the Heavens. He was totally disconnected with this world - or so it seemed.

One year, as thousands of eyes focused on the sublime figure dancing before their eyes, the Rebbe suddenly stopped in mid-motion. The room became still, not a sound emanated as everyone, his eyes glued on the Rebbe, caught his breath and listened. He raised his eyes to the top of the bleachers, pointing to two youngsters and summoned them to his side. They were orphans, who had recently lost their father. They should not be alone at a time like this. The Rebbe placed a loving arm around them and continued to dance. He was bound up with the Torah, but he never lost sight of those around him. That is Torah. This defines our relationship with Hashem. As He never forgets those in need, so, too, should we not lose sight of those who are in need.

He remained there with Hashem for forty days and forty nights. (34:28)

Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Sinai for a third time, during which he wrote on the Luchos the Aseres HaDibros. We wonder why this return for forty days was necessary. Moshe had already been up there for forty days during which he studied the Torah. Although he did have to return to retrieve the newest set of Luchos, it need not have taken forty days. Moshe had already learned the Torah during the first forty days, and Hashem clearly did not need forty days to carve out the letters on the Luchos.

The Shem MiShmuel posits that remarkable changes took place concerning Klal Yisrael at Har Sinai - changes that were reversed when they sinned with the Eigel HaZahav, Golden Calf. Once we understand the nature of these changes, and the meaning of their reversal, we are able to appreciate why Moshe had to spend another forty days to receive the Torah for a second time.

When Adam and Chavah were in Gan Eden prior to the sin that changed life and living forever, the yetzer hora, evil inclination, that is so much a part of us, was not a part of them. It was not an intrinsic part of their personalities, but rather, it acted as an adversary, standing apart from them, challenging and seducing them from the outside. Thus, when Chazal say that the zuhama, pollution, of the nachash ha'kadmoni, original serpent, left Klal Yisrael, causing them to be like Adam and Chavah prior to the cheit, sin, of eating of the Eiz Hadaas, Tree of Knowledge, they mean that the yetzer hora was removed from their midst. It was external, having been eliminated from their intrinsic natures.

Being divested of the snake's poison elevated Klal Yisrael to an unprecedented level of kedushah, holiness. No longer would they have to contend with their inner yetzer hora; no more would they battle with their inner passions, their imaginary challenges. The Ramban explains that during the days of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, we will revert to the pre-sin mode, in which man will perform the Will of Hashem in an entirely natural manner. There will be nothing dragging us down, no yetzer hora convincing us with its guile to do otherwise. Serving Hashem will be a natural phenomenon. This will reflect the final destruction of the yetzer hora.

Upon analysis, we now have three variant stages in man's relationship with the yetzer hora. The three stages: Adam HaRishon before the sin; Klal Yisrael at Har Sinai; Klal Yisrael during the days of Moshiach - all share a common factor: the absence of the yetzer hora. Adam was an unusual creation. His level of kedushah and closeness with Hashem were unlike anything we can fathom. This is primarily because he was free from any internal drives. He served Hashem naturally. This was the spiritual plateau that Klal Yisrael achieved as they stood at the foot of Har Sinai, prepared to receive the Torah - and this is the level they will once again achieve during the times of Moshiach.

As such, the Klal Yisrael of Har Sinai was qualitatively different from us and therefore, needed a different sort of Torah to address their particular circumstances and needs. The Torah is eternal because of its Divine Author and, thus, is adaptable and able to manifest itself in various guises, each appropriate for a different frame of reference. The style of Torah needed for men free from the fetters of the yetzer hora is quite unlike that which we contemporary Jews require. We now understand why Moshe needed a second set of forty days on Har Sinai. When Moshe had

originally received the Torah, he had received the version appropriate for a Klal Yisrael devoid of an internal yetzer hora. They had been at the peak of their spiritual development. After the sin of the Golden Calf, however, things had changed. The Torah which was originally designed for them was no longer suitable for them. It was too spiritual. They needed something more practical. Hence, Moshe returned to the mountain to learn the Torah over again.

And after that, all of Bnei Yisrael came close (to Moshe), and he commanded them all that Hashem told him on Har Sinai. (34:32)

The manner in which Moshe Rabbeinu transmitted the Torah to the Jewish People was unique. He first gave a private lesson to Aharon HaKohen, who then sat beside him as Moshe taught the Torah to Aharon's sons, Elazar and Isamar. Moshe then repeated the lesson a third time for the benefit of the Zekeinim, Elders. Last, he taught the Torah to Klal Yisrael. Thus, Aharon heard the lesson three times, his sons twice, and Klal Yisrael once.

Moshe left, and Aharon reviewed the lesson with all of those assembled. He then left, and his sons repeated the lesson, and they left. Last, the Elders repeated the lesson and left. Consequently, everyone heard the Torah a total of four times. Chazal question why Moshe himself could not have simply taught the lesson four times to Klal Yisrael. They explain that this unusual procedure was performed to show honor to Aharon, his sons, and the Elders by granting them a private lecture with Moshe. If so, ask Chazal, why did Moshe not simply teach the Torah four times to Aharon, and have Aharon teach it four times to his sons and so on? Chazal reply that there was no replacement for hearing the Torah directly from Moshe. He was the human who had spoken directly with Hashem, which, in turn, enabled them to have a deeper understanding of the material.

According to the above, the ideal method of education would have been for Moshe to have been the teacher for everyone. Nonetheless, since it was important that Aharon, his sons, and the Elders all be given their due honor, the optimum method was substituted with what might seem to be a less practical, but more honorable, one. This way each individual grouping, Aharon, his sons, and the Elders, had its private time with Moshe, reflecting its unique status to the hierarchy of Klal Yisrael. The problem is that, with this system, the Jewish People only had one audience with Moshe, rather than four. They lost out so that they could give honor to the other leadership. Is this proper? They forfeited learning from the master for the purpose of giving honor. Was it worth it? Did not the spiritual development of our people suffer as a result of this method?

Horav Henach Liebowitz, zl, explains that the transmission of Torah from one generation to the next is not dependent merely upon the quality of the actual teaching. Equally important is the respect and honor afforded to the rebbeim, the Torah teachers, who impart their knowledge to the student. As bearers of the Mesorah, chain of tradition of Torah transmission from Har Sinai, the esteem which they receive from us is quite possibly even more critical than the actual teaching. Without respect for the teacher there is no teaching! It is the respect that enables them to teach and to have their lesson accepted and incorporated into the life of the student. Respect is a prerequisite to the proper understanding of the Torah they teach. Indeed, the honor accorded to Aharon, his sons, and the Elders actually enhanced the lesson they taught, deepening Klal Yisrael's understanding of the Torah. They did not lose; rather, they gained immeasurably.

Horav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv, Shlita, cites the Rav of Teplik, who gives a noteworthy explanation for the mention of Rav Papa's ten sons who were making a siyum, completing a Meseches, tractate of Talmud. Rav Papa was a distinguished Amora who was blessed with ten sons, all great talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars. Why? What did he do to be so immeasurably blessed? Rav Ovadiah Bartenura explains that ten times in Shas we find a machlokes, dispute, among the chachamim, sages, concerning the correct nusach, version, to be said for certain brachos, blessings. Among them are the nusach, version of the text, for Bircas Asher Yatzar and Horav es riveinu, which is recited following the Megillah reading on Purim. In all ten disputes, Rav Papa decided that the halachah should follow both contenders. He refused to slight a Torah sage. His outstanding kavod haTorah, esteem for the Torah knowledge, of each sage prevented him from taking sides. An individual who so exemplifies

kavod haTorah merits to have sons who are great Torah sages. He was repaid in the "currency" which he valued most: Torah.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, adds that originally, before Klal Yisrael had sinned with the meraglim, spies, Klal Yisrael would have entered the land forty years earlier. This allowed the Canaani Tribes to inhabit the Holy Land for an extra forty years. What was their merit? He explains that it reverts back to Kiryas Arba when Avraham Avinu purchased the land for Sarah Imeinu's gravesite. The Canaani accorded our Patriarch great respect, referring to him as Nesi Elokim atah b'socheinu, "A Prince of G-d in our midst" (Bereishis 23:6). This display of kavod haTorah was repaid to them hundreds of years later, long after this act of reverence was forgotten. They forgot. We often forget. Hashem never forgets.

Va'ani Tefillah

Va'anachnu nevarech Kah, mei'atah v'ad olam.

Why is the mizmor, Psalm, concluded with a pasuk "borrowed" from another Psalm? This pasuk is stated previously in 115:18. The Chasam Sofer cites the Talmud Meseches Yoma 87a where Chazal say, "Any person who catalyzes merit for the public - no sin will come about through him." The mezakeh es ha'rabim has incredible merit, since he seeks to provide the greatest good for others - spiritual good. He will never have to worry about being the catalyst of sin for others, for Hashem will protect him. Therefore, one who praises Hashem - Tehillas Hashem yedaber pi - causes others also to praise Hashem. His actions engender a positive response among others - v'yevarech kol basar shem kodsho - all people will bless Hashem - as a result of the individual who "started it all," the mezakeh es ha'rabim. He should be aware that as a result of his actions - V'anachnu nevarech Kah mei'atah v'ad olam. He will always bless Hashem. He will not be the cause of sin.

l'zechar nishmas our husband, father, grandfather HaRav Daniel ben HaRav Avraham Aryeh Leib Schur Horav Doniel Schur Z"L niftar 21 Adar 5766, t.n.tz.v.h. sponsored by his wife, sons, daughters and all his family

h a a r e t z

Portion of the Week / Artistic partner in creation

By Benjamin Lau

This week's Torah reading introduces us to Bezalel, the artist who will execute the project of constructing the Portable Tabernacle and its vessels: "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship" (Exodus 31:2-5).

In 1903, Prof. Boris Schatz, a noted sculptor who helped found the Royal Academy of Art in Sofia, Bulgaria, proposed to the father of modern political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, to establish a school of art in Palestine. Two years later, the Seventh Zionist Congress in Basel passed a resolution to found such an institution. In 1906, Schatz established what was called the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem. Its aim: "to train people in crafts, consolidate original Jewish art and support Jewish artists, and to find visual expression for the much yearned-for national and spiritual independence, which seeks to create a synthesis between European artistic traditions and the Jewish design tradition of Eastern Europe, and to integrate it with the local culture of the Land of Israel." Today that institution is known as the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design.

The choice of the name Bezalel as a source or symbol of inspiration for original Jewish artwork raises a serious question. After all, a very detailed design of the Tabernacle and its vessels is given to the artist, whose sole function is to follow it. Although Bezalel is a gifted craftsman, why did he become a model for contemporary Jewish artists?

The Babylonian Talmud (Tractate Brakhot) tries to explain: "Rabbi Samuel, son of Nahmani, cites Rabbi Jonathan: 'Bezalel was given that name because of his great wisdom. Although God instructs Moses, Go to Bezalel and tell him 'Make me a tabernacle, an ark of the covenant and vessels,' Moses' instructions to Bezalel change the order: 'Make an ark of the covenant, vessels and a tabernacle.' Bezalel replies: 'Our teacher and

master Moses, first we build a house and only then do we bring in its vessels. Yet you are saying, Make an ark of the covenant, vessels and a tabernacle. Where will I put the vessels I shall fashion? Is it possible that God actually said to you, Make a tabernacle, an ark of the covenant, and vessels?" Moses responds, 'Is it possible that you were standing in God's shadow [Bezalel comes from the root betzel el, meaning "in God's shadow"], and that this is how you know what God said?"

This midrashic passage notes the differences between the Torah portion that was read in the synagogue two weeks ago, Parashat Truma, and the first portion of the double parasha that will be read next Shabbat, Parashat Vayakhel-Pekudei. Whereas Truma begins with the Tabernacle's vessels and only then proceeds to the Tabernacle itself, in Parashat Vayakhel, the Tabernacle is constructed before the vessels.

According to the midrash, Bezalel displays his profound wisdom not in the actual work he does, but rather in the planning and the order of the implementation. However, even this midrash only explains why Bezalel was a brilliant organizer, not why he was a great, creative artist.

Perhaps Bezalel becomes a model for all Jewish artists because he was the first member of a formerly enslaved nation to work with materials other than mud and mortar. Nahmanides notes: "In Egypt, Israel engaged in back-breaking labor, working with mud and bricks; the Israelites neither learned how to work with silver, gold or precious gems nor did they even see such materials. And here, wonder of wonders, we find a wise individual who knows how to work with silver, gold, stone and wood, and knows how to do intricate artisan work, how to embroider and to weave." However, even Nahmanides' words describe Bezalel as a highly gifted artisan, not as a free, creative artist.

In a festive letter Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook sent to Bezalel Academy on the occasion of its opening, he wrote: "The pretty little girl ... has been ill for a long time ... Now she opens her eyes and opens her lips a little, after they were closed for so long ... Her pained voice emerges from those lips: 'Mother, mother, please give me my doll, my beloved doll that I have not seen for so long' ... Everyone is filled with joy ... Little Shoshana wants her doll - thank God, a good sign."

In Rabbi Kook's eyes, Bezalel was a place where the human spirit could rise above daily life's worries and connect with its spiritual essence. After years of malaise, the Jewish people has survived physically, but only the return to Zion can really arouse the spirits of the little girl, who has been ill and now wants her doll.

However, Rabbi Kook's words do not depict Bezalel as an artistic genius. The Talmudic passage above also includes the following discussion, which might help us appreciate Bezalel's greatness: "Rabbi Judah cites Rav: Bezalel knew how to apply the letters of the alphabet with which heaven and earth were created, as it is written, 'And he hath filled him [Bezalel] with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship' (Exod. 35:31). And, 'the Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew' (Proverbs 3:19-20)." This midrash enables us to fully understand Bezalel's greatness: He grasped the profundities of God's creation. He was wise in three ways, says Rashi: "The term 'in wisdom' refers to the capacity for listening to and learning from others, 'in understanding' refers to drawing conclusions on your own from what you have learned, and 'in knowledge' refers to the holy spirit."

Bezalel's third quality, knowledge, enables him to connect with the holy spirit; thus, he serves as a model for all Jewish artists in every generation because his artistic genius allows him to become a partner in God's creation.

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion Ki Tisa: The Copper Washstand

"Make a copper washstand along with a copper base for it. Place it between the altar and the Communion Tent, and fill it with water for

washing. Aaron and his sons must wash their hands and feet from it." [Ex. 30:18-19]

Most of the Temple vessels were made of gold and silver. Why was the kiyor, the washstand, made out of copper? Why did it require a base, and why was it placed between the altar and the sanctuary?

Preparing to Serve

Three metals were used when building the Tabernacle, and later, the Temple in Jerusalem: gold, silver, and copper. Each metal was employed according to its relative value. Gold, with its great ornamental value, was used to construct the innermost vessels - the ark, the table, the menorah, and the incense altar. Silver is more utilitarian in nature. The sockets which formed the foundation of the Tabernacle, as well as various sacred implements, were fashioned from silver.

Copper, the least valuable of the three metals, was used for those vessels that were not used for the actual Temple service, but rather to prepare for it. Thus the washstand, where the kohanim washed their hands and feet before starting their holy service, was formed out of copper.

A Permanent Vessel

Why does the Torah require that the washstand be built on a base?

Not all of the vessels of the Tabernacle were also employed in the Temple. Some components of the Tabernacle were transient in nature, only appropriate for the period before the Jewish people had settled down in their own land. But the kohanim would always need to wash their hands and feet before commencing their holy service. Since there would always be a need for a purifying washstand, even in the Tabernacle the washstand was placed on a base, thus indicating its permanence.

Purifying Thought and Deed

What is the significance of the location of the washstand? Why was it placed between the altar and the sanctuary? And why did the kohanim need to wash not only their hands but their feet as well?

We serve God in two basic ways: with our minds, in Torah study, and with our actions, through practical mitzvot. Washing at the kiyor purifies and prepares for both forms of service.

The sanctuary was called the Ohel Moed, the Communion Tent "where I will meet with you." It was a place of divine revelation and prophecy. God's word emanated from the Holy Ark, containing the two luchot of the Ten Commandments, within the sanctuary. This area of the Tabernacle/Temple signifies our intellectual service of God, through prophecy and Torah.

The altar, on the other hand, was the focal point for elevating the ratzon (the will or primal desire) and deed. The practical aspects of the Temple service were performed around the altar. Offerings brought on the altar served to refine the faculty of ratzon - they were to be "leratzon lifnei Hashem," 'for a desire that is pleasing before God.'

The washstand prepared the kohanim to serve God in both thought and deed. It was situated between the sanctuary and the altar, as both forms of divine service require the necessary preparation so that they will be performed with purity..

The hands and feet are metaphors for these two faculties. Our hands follow the dictates of the mind, while our feet move almost involuntarily, without conscious effort.. When the kohanim washed their hands, they purified themselves for their service of mind and thought. And when they washed their feet, they purified themselves for their service of action and deed.

[Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 119-120]

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: RavKookList@gmail.com

YatedUSA Parshas Ki Tisa, 17 Adar 5769

Halacha Discussion

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

The Mitzvah of Mezuzah: Basic Rules

Question: What is the basic obligation of the mitzvah of mezuzah?

Discussion: It is a Biblical obligation for all adults, men and women,¹ to affix a mezuzah to the right post of each doorway of their home, including car garage doors. One who fails to do so transgresses a positive command.² Although a mezuzah also protects a home³ and safeguards the well-being of one's little children,⁴ this is by no means the primary reason for the mezuzah. The intention that one must have when affixing the mezuzah to the doorpost must be "for the sake of the mitzvah of mezuzah."⁵ Indeed, some poskim mention that it is prohibited to consciously have in mind that the mezuzah is for the purpose of protection. Such an intention detracts from the essential character of a mitzvah, which is to fulfill Hashem's will with no other considerations.⁶

Question: When does a homeowner's obligation of mezuzah begin?

Discussion: Contrary to what is commonly believed, the obligation begins as soon as one moves into his own home. By the first day or night that a home will be "occupied," or by the first day or night that an addition to an existing home will be "used," every doorway must have a mezuzah. But how, exactly, do we define "occupied" or "used" is a subject of dispute. We find three opinions:

◆ Some poskim hold that the obligation begins only when the family actually moves in.⁷ Many contemporary poskim rule in accordance with this opinion.⁸

◆ Some poskim hold that the obligation begins once one's furniture or belongings are in the house, even though the family has not yet moved in.⁹

◆ A minority opinion holds that the obligation begins as soon as one owns the house and it is ready to be occupied, even though the house is presently empty.¹⁰ Most authorities do not follow this view, and certainly the blessing should not be recited until the actual move.¹¹

Question: When does a renter's obligation of mezuzah begin?

Discussion: When one rents (or borrows) a home from another person outside of Eretz Yisrael, a thirty-day waiting period is allowed until one becomes obligated to affix a mezuzah.¹² The obligation begins on the evening of the thirty-first day from his move.¹³ The Rishonim argue as to the reason for this exemption: Rashi¹⁴ explains that until thirty days have elapsed, one can easily change his mind about the rental; thus the house is not really "his" until thirty days are over. Tosfos explains that the first thirty days of residence are considered as "temporary dwelling," and temporary dwelling does not obligate one to affix a mezuzah.

Based on Rashi's explanation, it follows that when a long-term contract is signed which legally obligates the renter for an extended period of time, then the obligation of mezuzah takes effect immediately.¹⁵ Moreover, if upon moving into the house, the renter fixes it up in a manner which shows that he is planning to remain there for a long while, logic dictates that a mezuzah be put up and the proper blessing recited. This, indeed, is the view of some poskim,¹⁶ and one may conduct himself in accordance with this view.¹⁷

But other poskim advise that although the mezuzah should be affixed immediately upon moving in, the blessing should not be recited until the thirty-day period is over.¹⁸ At that time, it is proper to remove one mezuzah, recite the blessing, and return the mezuzah to its proper place. If it is difficult or bothersome to do so, then the mezuzah need not be removed; merely touching it is sufficient for the blessing to be recited.¹⁹ [An exception to this is when one rents a bungalow or a summer home for a short stay. In such a case, the poskim agree that thirty days should elapse before a mezuzah is affixed.²⁰]

If the thirty-day period is up on Shabbos or Yom Tov, the mezuzah should be affixed on erev Shabbos or erev Yom Tov before lighting candles. The blessing should be recited at that time.²¹

Question: Is it permitted to live in a home that has no mezuzos affixed to its doors?

Discussion: Some poskim hold that it is Rabbinically prohibited to live in a home which does not have proper mezuzos, just as it is prohibited to wear a four-cornered garment without tzitzis.²² These poskim rule that if another house is available, one must move out of his home as soon as he realizes that it is lacking proper mezuzos.²³ He is permitted to temporarily

remain in his home only if he is unable to obtain a mezuzah immediately, or if he found out on Shabbos that his home has no mezuzah.²⁴ Most other poskim are somewhat more lenient and do not require the residents to move out if they have already moved in.²⁵ All agree that the problem must be rectified immediately. There is absolutely no excuse for delaying the purchase and placement of a mezuzah for several days or weeks.

One may enter another Jew's home even though there are no mezuzos on his door.²⁶

It is clearly prohibited to nail a mezuzah case to a door-post on Shabbos and Yom Tov.²⁷ If the mezuzah case was nailed in before Shabbos or Yom Tov and remains intact, but the mezuzah parchment fell out, most poskim permit replacing the mezuzah in the case.²⁸ In any event, the mezuzah parchment does not become muktzeh and it may be picked up so that it does not lie on the floor in disgrace.²⁹

1 Y.D. 291:3.

2 Sefer ha-Chinuch 423. See Menachos 44a where it states that two positive commands are transgressed. See also Teshuvos Binyan Tziyon 7.

3 Tur, Y.D. 285 based on Avodah Zarah 11a.

4 Shabbos 32b.

5 Tur, Y.D. 285; Aruch ha-Shulchan 285:3.

6 Sedei Chemed (Mem, 114) quoting Derech ha-Melech, based on Rambam (Hilchos Mezuzah 5:4) and Kesef Mishneh, ibid. See also Igros Moshe, Y.D. 2:141 who explains this issue at length.

7 See Birkei Yosef, O.C. 19-2; Toras Chesed 53; Kaf ha-Chaim, O.C. 19:3.

8 Rav M. Feinstein (quoted in Rivevos Ephraim 2:29-4); Minchas Yitzchak 4:89-90; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Chayei Yaakov 2); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Avnei Yashfei 2:80); Divrei Yatziv, Y.D. 188; Shevet ha-Levi 6:161.

9 Aruch ha-Shulchan, O.C. 19:2; Ben Ish Chai (Ki Savo 23); Chazon Ish (quoted in Mezuzos Bei'secha 276:78 and Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 3, pg. 171); Har Tzvi, Y.D. 235.

10 See Avnei Nezer, Y.D. 381; Mikdash Me'at, Y.D. 285:3; Kinyan Torah 1:126.

11 See Mishnah Berurah 19:4.

12 Y.D. 286:22. The Rishonim debate whether a renter's obligation after thirty days is min ha-Torah or mi-derabanan.

13 See Sedei Chemed (Mem, 112). Moving day, even if it is close to night, is counted as day number 1.

14 Menachos 44a.

15 Siddur Derech ha-Chaim quoted in Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 286:18.

16 Several poskim quoted in Sedei Chemed (Mem, 115) and Chovas ha-Dar, pg. 31.

17 Da'as Torah, Y.D. 286:22; Aruch ha-Shulchan 286:49; Ben Ish Chai (Ki Savo 23); Shevet ha-Levi 6:160. See also Chayei Adam 15:22

18 Pischei Teshuvah 286:18; Nachalas Tzvi; Sedei Chemed (Mem, 115); Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:179; Mezuzos Beisecha 286:74.

19 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:179. See Avnei Yashfei 1:207-6.

20 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:179.

21 Kuntres ha-Mezuzah 286:193.

22 Magen Avraham, O.C. 13:8 as explained by Pri Megadim, O.C. 38:15; Eretz Tzvi 1:90. See Avnei Nezer, O.C. 441 and Y.D. 381.

23 It remains unclear if in the opinion of these poskim one needs to move to a friend's home or to rent a hotel room in order to avoid this prohibition.

24 Pischei Teshuvah, Y.D. 285:1 quoting Pri Megadim; Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 285:5; Ben Ish Chai (Ki Savo).

25 See Sedei Chemed (Mem, 115), Kuntres ha-Mezuzah (pg. 6 and pg. 128) and Tzitz Eliezer 13:53 who quote several poskim who hold that the Rabbis did not prohibit entering a house that has no mezuzah nor did they require one to move out of his dwelling when he realizes that there is a problem with the mezuzah. See also Shevet ha-Levi 4:143.

26 Sedei Chemed (Mem, 115) quoting Ruach Chaim.

27 Mishnah Berurah 313:41; 314:8.

28 See Sedei Chemed (Mem, 115), Tzitz Eliezer 13:53 and Shevet ha-Levi 4:143. See Binyan Shabbos, vol. 1, pg. 306, for an explanation.

29 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 28); Be'er Moshe 8:72.

TALMUDIGEST :: Bava Kama 79 - 85
For the week ending 14 March 2009 / 18 Adar I 5769

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by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

THIRST FOR TORAH - Bava Kama 82a

What is the origin of public reading of the Torah?

Our gemara traces the origin to a passage in the Torah (Shemot 15:22).

“They went for a three-day period in the Wilderness but could not find water.”

The water referred to here, say our Sages, is Torah. Three days without communal learning of Torah led to a serious weakening of the spirit. The prophets among them (led by Moshe) thereupon instituted the practice of public reading of the Torah on Shabbat, Yom Sheini (Monday) and Yom Chamishi (Thursday), so that there should never be three consecutive days without Torah.

In a later period of history Ezra the Scribe added to this practice the reading of the Torah at Mincha on Shabbat, and instituted in that reading and the ones on the weekdays the requirement of calling up three people for the reading of a minimum of ten passages.

But why were Monday and Thursday chosen as the days for public reading when the same objective of avoiding a three-day break could have been achieved with other days?

Tosefot supplies the answer by citing a midrash that it was on Thursday that Moshe went up to Heaven to receive the Second Tablets and came down with them on Monday. Since these Tablets represented Divine forgiveness for the sin of the Golden Calf, these days are considered special days of finding favor in the eyes of G-d and most fitting for the public reading of His Torah.

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

“Torah is compared to water as the Prophet Yishayahu puts it (54:1), ‘Ho, let everyone who is thirsty come to the water’.”

Anonymous Sages Expert in Torah Interpretation - Bava Kama 82a

**Please address all comments and requests to
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