



BS"D

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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON ACHREI MOS - 5776

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This is a Sefira reminder for Friday evening, May 6. The count is: 14  
Today is the 14th day, which is 2 weeks the omer.

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<http://etzion.org.il/en/salt-chol-hamoed-pesach-5776-acharei-mot-2016>

### **Rav David Silverberg**

This year (5776), as the seventh day of Pesach falls on Friday, communities in Israel will observe the next day, Shabbat, as an ordinary Shabbat, whereas Diaspora communities will observe that day as the eighth and final day of Pesach. Hence, Israeli communities will read on that Shabbat Parashat Acharei-Mot, following the standard sequence of weekly Torah readings, whereas in the Diaspora, a special section will be read for the Yom Tov (the end of Parashat Re'ei). This discrepancy will result in a "gap" between Israel and the Diaspora, with Diaspora communities lagging one parasha behind. This gap will continue until after Shiva Assar Be'Tammuz, when Israeli communities will read Parashat Matot and Parshat Masei separately, rather than combining them as is normally done. Diaspora communities will combine these two parashiyot, thereby "catching up" to the communities in Israel.

Rabbi Dr. Chaim Simons, in an in-depth article on the subject, cites an account when this circumstance presented itself, and the Chief Rabbi of Aleppo, Syria ruled that his city's community should combine Korach and Chukat, which are read several weeks before Parashat Matot. The advantage of this policy is that it allows the Diaspora communities to get back in sync with Israeli communities earlier, rather than waiting several more weeks until Parashat Matot.

Of course, this ruling is exceptional, and it is not customary to ever combine Korach and Chukat. However, Diaspora communities do, on occasion, combine Parashiyot Chukat and Balak. (This is done when Shavuot falls on Friday, and thus Diaspora communities fall behind because they observe Shabbat as the second day of Shavuot and thus do not read the regular weekly parasha.) The question thus arises, why do Diaspora communities in situations such as this year combine Matot and Masei, instead of Chukat and Balak, thereby prolonging the period of discrepancy?

In truth, we should ask even a stronger question. Why do Diaspora communities not "catch up" to Israeli communities immediately on the Shabbat after Pesach, by combining Parashat Acharei-Mot and Parashat

Kedoshim, two parashiyot which are generally read together in non-leap years? And even if there is some reason we can find for why they do not combine these parashiyot, why do they not combine Behar and Bechukotai?

The answer to this question, as discussed by the Maharit (2:4), lies in the time-honored practice, rooted in the Talmud, to read Parashat Bamidbar on the Shabbat immediately preceding Shavuot. The Gemara in Masekhet Megilla (31a) tells of Ezra's enactment that Parashat Bechukotai – the final parasha in Sefer Vayikra – should be read before Shavuot. Tosafot explain that the custom is to read Parashat Bechukotai not the Shabbat immediately preceding Shavuot, but rather one week earlier, in order not to juxtapose the kelalot ("curses") found in Parashat Bechukotai with Shavuot. This is, indeed, the accepted practice, and thus Parashat Bechukotai is generally read two Shabbatot before Shavuot, and Parashat Bamidbar on the Shabbat immediately preceding Shavuot. The exception to this rule is situations such as this year, in Israel, when Parashat Naso will be read on the Shabbat preceding Shavuot. The schedule of Torah readings here in Israel this year leave no alternative to reading Parashat Bamidbar two Shabbatot before Shavuot. In the Diaspora, however, the lag created by the eighth day of Pesach allows communities to maintain the custom of reading Parashat Bamidbar right before Shavuot even this year. As such, they do not combine Acharei Mot and Kedoshim, or Behar and Bechukotai, which would have the effect of distancing Parashat Bamidbar from Shavuot. The interest in maintaining this practice overrides the benefit of being synchronized with the communities in Israel, and so Diaspora communities do not combine Acharei-Mot and Kedoshim or Behar and Bechukotai.

This does not, however, answer the question of why Diaspora communities wait until Matot and Masei to combine two parashiyot, rather than combine Chukat and Balak. Addressing this question, the Maharit explains, quite simply, that Parashiyot Matot and Masei are almost always read together, and thus communities preferred to read them together in our case rather than read them separately. Although here in Israel these parashiyot must be read separately (because of the leap year, as mentioned), the Diaspora communities are able to follow the normal practice of reading them together, and this is preferable to reading Matot and Masei separately and combining Chukat and Balak.

(See also Rav Reuven Spolter's "Calendar Confusion: Why Will it Take So Long for Chutz L'aretz to "Catch Up" with Israel This Year?")

[choppingwood.blogspot.com/2016/04/calendar-confusion-why-will-it-take-so.html](http://choppingwood.blogspot.com/2016/04/calendar-confusion-why-will-it-take-so.html)

### **Chopping Wood**

**Rabbi Reuven Spolter**

Sunday, April 24, 2016

Calendar Confusion: Why Will it Take So Long for Chutz L'aretz to "Catch Up" with Israel This Year?

I received a fascinating question from good friend and former congregant Jeffrey Schlusel that stumped me. So, I shared it with a Hebrew rabbinic email list that I follow and received a great answer in the form of an article by Israeli scholar Rabbi Dr. Chaim Simons in the Hebrew-language journal Sinai. I would like to share the question and then present as clearly as I can Dr. Simons' answer.

Jeff's Question:

I'm writing because I have a question that bothered me last year and will bother me again this year. Maybe you can help provide an explanation (although it has little bearing on you).

Because of the second Yom Sheni this year in chutz l'aretz, Israel's torah reading will be Acharei on the same day as the 8th day torah reading for the diaspora. What bothers me is that it would seem logical given the fluidity of Jews these days travelling to and from Israel, we would want to make sure the entire Jewish world reads the same weekly parsha as quickly as possible. It would then make sense that the following Shabbat the diaspora reads Acharei-Kedoshim so we are back in unison within a week. But that is not the case. In fact, it is only until Matot-Masei, which is nearly two months

later, that we are back in-line with Israel. Why? I can't seem to find any justification. The delay ultimately deprives those coming to Israel of a parsha and forces those coming from Israel to repeat a parsha.

Do you have any thoughts? I would love to hear them.

Just to highlight Jeff's question, it helps to frame it in terms of last year, when the same thing (Eighth day of Pesach fell on a Shabbat) happened.

Here's last year's calendar from Israel (all charts are screenshots from the incredibly useful Hebcal.com calendar tool. Highly recommended.)

You can see from this calendar that last year in Israel when Pesach ended on Friday (and we immediately read Parashat Shemini, we also split Behar and Bechukotai. Notice that by the Shabbat before Shavuot, we read Parashat Bamidbar - this is important, and we'll come back to it later. Meanwhile, in the Diaspora, they couldn't read Shemini until the next week, on April 18th...

But last year in the Diaspora, communities combined Behar and Bechukotai thus allowing galut Jewry to "catch up" by Bamidbar which was read in communities around the world on May 23rd.

Fast forward to this year:

Again this year, the last day of Pesach (in Israel) falls out on a Friday, and we immediately read Parashat Achrei Mot. Since we're a Parashah "ahead", there's no reason for us to "combine" a parshah. That's up to the Diaspora, who at some point need to combine Parshiot in order to "catch up."

Remember that last year you did it in Behar-Bechukotai...

But when we look at the calendar this year, you immediately notice that this "catching up" doesn't take place until two months later in Matot-Masei! Why the long wait?

That's basically Jeff's question in a nutshell. And it's a great question.

Before the Answer: A Few Basic Principles

The answer lies in understanding a few basic rules that guided the division of the parshiot according to the calendar. Again, all of this comes from a short article by Rabbi Dr. Chaim Simons which appeared in the Israeli journal Sinai (volume 36 pp. 33-40). You can find a link to the article here.

First of all, Dr. Simons suggests that evidence indicates that until the 13th century, in Israel the reading of the Torah remained on the three-year cycle. He seems to make this suggestion based on the fact that the halachic literature doesn't discuss the issue of dealing with the calendar until the 1300's. In any case, it is clear that during these centuries, the calendar was far from set, and historical evidence indicates that different communities (and later the entire city of Safed) had various customs as to which parshiot to split (on a non-leap year) in order to account for the "extra" week (just like we "split" Behar and Bechukotai. It even happened that within the city itself different congregations read different parshiot on the same week! (Truth be told, when you think about it, this is not all that surprising.)

In addition, the Gemara in Megillah (31b) writes that Ezra HaSofer decreed that communities should finish reading the Parshiot which contained the Tochecha before the conclusion of the New Year.

This is so that "The year and her curses should end" before the entrance of the New Year. This applies both to concluding Ki Tavo (with the long Tochecha) before Rosh Hashanah, and also to finishing Bechukotai (with the short Tochecha) before Shavuot. The Baalei HaTosfot note that in their communities, they never read Bechukotai before Shavuot nor Ki Tavo before Rosh Hashanah. Rather, they always read those parshiot at least a week beforehand.

The Baalei Tosfot explain that by design, we read a parshah after the "Rebukes" in order to specifically distance ourselves from the "curses" of the Tochecha. Yet, we don't want too much distance - one week is just enough to make the point that we're connecting the Tochecha to the "New Year" of Shavuot, but keeping our distance. This means that ideally, we should read Parshat Bamidbar on the week before Shavuot.

With these guiding principles in mind, we can now understand the difference between last year and this year, and why the Diaspora will wait so long in order to "catch up."

Leap Year vs. Non-Leap Year

Essentially, the major difference between last year and this year is that last year was a "regular" - non-leap year, and this year was a "leap" year, in which we added an extra month of Adar II in order to stretch the calendar into the springtime. During a "normal" year, a number of parshiot in Vayikra are combined together. Look back at the 5775 calendars above. In Israel, with the addition of the Shabbat of Shemini after Pesach, had the calendar kept all of the normal readings combined (and not separated Behar and Bechukotai), we would have ended up reading Parshat Naso before Shavuot, and been too far ahead of Shavuot. So, the calendar combined Behar and Bechukotai in order to have Bamidbar fall on the Shabbat before Shavuot. While to the layperson it might look like it's designed in order to allow the Diaspora to "catch up", that's only a convenient coincidence. Rabbi Yissachar ben Mordechai Ibn Sussan, a 15th century Sefardic posek, wrote in his "Tikkun Yissachar" that it would be inappropriate for communities in Israel to combine Parshiot for the sake of Diaspora Jewry. The community in Israel is the "ikkar" and follows the essential law of keeping only one day of Yom Tov. So he had no interest in changing the reading in Israel to "help" our brothers in the Diaspora. In other words Israel, we do what we do. If you want to "catch up" to us, do whatever you have to do...but don't expect us to help you. So last year, basically the Diaspora got lucky, and things worked out nicely leaving a "split" for a relatively short period of time.

What About 5776?

This year was a leap year, so the Vayikra parshiot are essentially separated to account for the extra month. In order to catch up, the Diaspora, which has an extra week, needs at some point to combine two parshiot. When should they do it? Looking back at the 5776 Diaspora calendar above, notice that without combining any parshiot in the weeks after Pesach, on the Shabbat before Shavuot you read Parshat Bamidbar. Perfect! Just as the Ba'alei HaTosfot advocated. So no parshiot were combined before Shavuot.

What about after Shavuot? Why do you wait until Matot-Masei, and not pick an earlier date to combine? It turns out that the parshiot are combined not in the interest of global unity, but again for a different reason entirely: we want to read Parshat Devarim (with its mournful Eichah lament of Moshe) on the week before Tisha B'av, and Va'etchanan immediately afterward. In order to do this in Israel, we must divide Matot and Masei into two weeks. In the Diaspora they leave Matot and Masei together in order to achieve the same result, thus "rejoining" with Israel. Interestingly, Dr. Simons adds that while the Tikkun Yissachar accepted this approach, he does note that R' Saadia Dayyan Tzova (from the Syrian city of Aleppo) wrote that in their community, they combined Korach and Chukkat together, and kept Matot-Masei split, apparently in order to "rejoin" with Israel which was only 250 miles away!

According to this understanding, having the different communities in Israel and the Diaspora was never really a halachic concern at all. Intuitively this makes sense. Travel between countries was dangerous and relatively rare, and communication was slow. What difference did it make whether the communities read the same Sedra on the same week?

Today, with instant global communication and regular, safe travel between Israel and the Diaspora, it would of course make sense for the Diaspora community to make a greater effort to "catch up" to Israel. (In Israel, there's really nothing we can do, and Israel would never change for the sake of the Diaspora anyway.) Since the layout of the parshiot is completely based on custom, and apparently quite fungible, it would be fascinating to revisit the suggestion of the Tikkun Yissachar, and suggest combining Korach and Chukkat instead of Matot and Masei, to minimize the split between the communities.

Yet, that only begs the question. Who would you ask? Who could make a decision to change the custom which would be universally acceptable to all of Diaspora Jewry? What would ensure, I imagine, would instead be a scenario in which communities within the Diaspora would then accept different customs - the more "Zionist" communities combining earlier, to better unite with the Jewish State, which the more conservative communities

would insist on maintaining minhag hamakom, preferring to merge later on in the summer. Thus, we'd be back to the situation in 14th century Safed, where the parshah being read depended on the shul you attended, bringing us back full-circle - to the way things have always been.

Posted by Reuven Spolter at 2:10 PM

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from: Rabbi Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Mon, May 2, 2016 at 11:54 AM  
subject: **The Case of the Missing Haftarah**

This week I am presenting an article by a guest author, Rabbi Yehuda Spitz. The original article was written for a common year. I have modified the article to make it appropriate for a leap year.

#### **Parshah Insights: The Case of the Missing Haftarah**

##### **Rabbi Yehuda Spitz**

Because this Shabbos, Parshas Acharei Mos in chutz la'aretz and Parshas Kedoshim in Eretz Yisroel, falls on erev Rosh Chodesh, the accepted reading in most communities is from the book of Shemuel, because the words at the beginning of the haftarah are Mochor Chodesh, "Tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh." However, as we will soon see, whether this is the correct haftarah for this Shabbos is a subject of dispute. There is also a dispute regarding what haftarah is read next Shabbos. It is fairly common that the Haftarah on parshas Kedoshim is not the one listed in the Chumash. I have even seen times when the haftarah reading commenced in the shul, while a concurrent dispute was carrying on with some congregants arguing that the Ba'al Koreh was reading the wrong haftarah! To understand properly whether the "wrong haftarah" was read, some background is needed.

Haftarah History According to the Abudraham and Tosafos Yom Tov, the haftaros were established when the wicked Antiochus (infamous from the Chanukah miracle) outlawed public reading of the Torah. The Chachamim of the time therefore established the custom of reading a topic from the Nevi'im similar to what was supposed to be read from the Torah.[1] Even after the decree was nullified, this became minhag Yisrael. Most haftaros share similarity with at least some concept presented in the Torah reading. For example, the Gemara (Megillah 29b - 31a) discusses the proper haftarah readings for the various holidays throughout the year. An interesting halachah germane to us is which haftarah is read when there is a double parshah. The Abudraham cites two minhagim which are based on a dispute in halachah: one, to read the first parshah's haftarah; two, the "Rambam's minhag" to read the second. Most Rishonim, including the Sefer Haminhagim, Mordechai, Ramban, Hagahos Maimoniyos, Shibbolei Haleket, and Tur rule that one should read the second parshah's haftarah.[2] This second approach is codified as the proper psak by both the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 284; 7) and the Rema (Orach Chaim 428; 8), and, as far as this author knows, this is accepted by all of Klal Yisrael.[3] The main reason to do so is to enable reading a haftarah that is related to what was just concluded in the Torah leining, which is the second parshah, not the first one.

##### **Acharei Exclusion**

Yet, when it comes to the parshiyos of Acharei Mos and Kedoshim, it seems that it is not so simple. Although the Shulchan Aruch does not mention any difference between these and other double parshiyos, the Rema, citing the Sefer Haminhagim and the Mordechai, writes that the haftarah of the first parshah, Acharei Mos, is the proper one to read. The reason for the uncharacteristic change is that the haftarah of Parshas Kedoshim, "Hashishpot," from sefer Yechezkel, includes what is known as "To'avas Yerushalayim," a revealing prophecy of the woeful spiritual state of the Jewish communities and the terrible things that will occur to the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael for not following the word of G-d. The Gemara (Megillah 25b) relates a story of one who read such a haftarah in the presence of Rabbi Eliezer, and whose own family's indiscretions subsequently exposed. It was suggested that this passage not be read as a haftarah. Ultimately, though, the

Gemara concludes that Hashishpot can be read as a haftarah. Despite this halachic conclusion, it seems that the custom developed that, whenever possible, we avoid reading this condemning passage as the haftarah, whenever there is an easy alternative. Additionally, the content of Acharei Mos' haftarah, "Halo K'Bnei Kushiym" (from Amos in Trei Asar, Ch. 9) relates to Parshas Kedoshim, as well. Therefore, the Rema rules that when the Torah reading is the double parshiyos of Acharei Mos and Kedoshim, the haftarah of Acharei Mos is read, as opposed to every other double parshah, where the haftarah of the second parshah is read. The Levush argued vehemently against such a switch, and suggested that the earlier authorities, who are quoted in support of the Rema's position, never held this way. The Levush contends that it was a printing mistake to suggest such a switch.[4] Nevertheless, the Rema's rule is followed by virtually all later poskim and Ashkenazic Kehillos.[5] It should be noted that the Rema's ruling here was not accepted by the Sefardic authorities. When Acharei Mos and Kedoshim are combined, they do indeed read Kedoshim's haftarah, Hashishpot.[6]

Hazardous Haftarah? Let us now take this question to the next step. How far do Ashkenazim go to avoid reading Hashishpot (Kedoshim's usual haftarah) when Acharei Mos and Kedoshim are read on separate weeks? This is where it gets interesting. The Gemara (Megillah 31a) states that whenever Rosh Chodesh falls on Shabbos, a special haftarah is read: "Hashamayim Kis'i," as it mentions the concepts of both Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh.[7] If Rosh Chodesh falls out on Sunday, then on the preceding Shabbos, the haftarah of 'Machar Chodesh' is read, as it mentions the following day being Rosh Chodesh. Rav Akiva Eiger[8] mentions that when Parshas Acharei Mos falls on Erev Rosh Chodesh and its haftarah gets pushed off for 'Machar Chodesh', then the proper haftarah for Parshas Kedoshim the next week is... Acharei Mos's haftarah, and not Kedoshim's! Rav Eiger's reasoning is that since we find precedent not to read Kedoshim's haftarah when the two parshiyos are read together, due to its explicit content, the same should apply for any other time Acharei Mos's haftarah was not read; it should replace Kedoshim's haftarah! Indeed, although not the common custom elsewhere, there is even an old Yerushalmi minhag not to ever read the haftarah of Kedoshim; and even when the Parshiyos are separate, Acharei Mos's haftarah is read two weeks in a row.[9] Although not universally accepted,[10] Rav Akiva Eiger's rule is cited as the halachah by the Mishnah Berurah, and the proper Ashkenazic minhag by the Kaf Hachaim.[11] The Chazon Ish, as well as Rav Moshe Feinstein, and Rav Chaim Kanievisky,[12] rule this way as well. That is why in 5774/2014, when Acharei Mos was Shabbos Hagadol and its usual haftarah was not read, but replaced by the special haftarah for Shabbos Hagadol, many shuls read Acharei Mos' haftarah on Parshas Kedoshim, instead of Kedoshim's usual one. The same question will occur next week in chutz la'aretz: which haftarah do we read? In fact, that is how both Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin's authoritative Ezras Torah Luach and Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky's essential Luach Eretz Yisrael rule as the proper minhag.[13] To sum up, the next time you are trying to figure out what happened to the missing haftarah of Kedoshim, be aware - you may have to go back to Acharei Mos!

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org  
date: Thu, May 5, 2016 at 7:04 PM subject: Rav Frand - Get a Life!

This dvar Torah was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Parsha Perceptions Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion. Good Shabbos!

The pasuk says, "You should keep My statutes and My laws, which if a man obeys, ('v'chai bahem') he shall live through them, I am Hashem." [Vayikra 18:5] The Gemara learns from this source that if a person is faced with the choice of committing a aveira [sin] or being murdered (or alternatively, neglecting a mitzva or being murdered), the halacha requires the person to commit the aveira or neglect the mitzva, and not die. However, there are

three exceptions: avoda zarah [idol worship], shfichas damim [murder], and giluy arayus [illicit relations].

Barring these three exceptions, the halacha says that one should eat pork, violate the Shabbos, eat bread on Pesach, and do not die. Why? Because we learn from this pasuk: these are the mitzvos that I gave you, “v’chai bahem,” and you should live by them. The Gemara [Sanhedren 74a] interprets this to mean, “You should live by them, and not die by them.”

A cursory examination of this pasuk seems to indicate that the Torah is telling us that human life is more precious than keeping the mitzvos. Therefore, if you have a choice between observing Shabbos and staying alive, your life is more valuable than the mitzva. This is a general rule: life is more important than the mitzvos, with just three exceptions.

Rav Moshe Feinstein Zt”l, in his sefer “Igros Moshe,” says (in the course of answering a query on a different subject) that this common understanding of the pasuk is incorrect. That is not what the pasuk is saying, and this is as basic as a Targum Onkelos. [The Targum Onkelos is a nearly literal translation to Aramaic of the words in the Torah, with a minimum of interpolated commentary.]

The Targum Onkelos translates this pasuk as: “and you should live through them in the World to Come.” In other words, the pasuk is not telling us to stay alive and neglect the mitzvos, because life is more precious than mitzvos. The pasuk is telling us that the most precious thing in life is keeping mitzvos, because they bring us to olam haba, the World to Come.

Therefore, if I have a choice between observing the Shabbos or being murdered, the Torah says, “live!” Why? Not because life, for its own sake, is more precious than G-d’s Commandments. Rather, life is precious because you can do those Commandments! Therefore, do work on this Shabbos so you can keep so many more Shabbosos in the future. Eatchometz [leaven] on Pesach. Why? So you can go on and do more mitzvos, and be worthy of life in the world to come.

This is an entirely different perspective. Life is not valuable just for the sake of life itself, without a purpose. Life is not valuable simply in order for a person to work, do errands and go to ball games. That is not what makes life worth living! What does make life worth living? “V’chai bahem” – “I’chayei alma” [in the world to come]. This life leads to a goal.

The Torah is telling us to violate the Shabbos and to eat chometz on Pesach. Why? Because a human life is valuable because it can do so many more mitzvos in this world. Therefore, violate the Shabbos once so that you can observe Shabbos many more times.

Guest Transcribed by Aryeh Leib Freedman ; Baltimore, Maryland.

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, Maryland.

This week’s write-up is adapted from the Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Parsha Perceptions Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion. Rav Frand & copy 2015 by Torah.org. You can contact the author at Rabbi@theinformalproject.com Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

PARASHAT ACHAREI-MOT- 2014, 5774

### **Rabbi Aharon and Libby Ziegler**

Towards the end of the parasha, the Torah provides us with an example of two prohibitions in sequence: (a) “Do not approach a woman during her menses...”, “Do not lie with your neighbor’s wife to contaminate yourself with her” (18:19-20). This is followed immediately with (b): “You shall not present any of your children to pass through for Molech, and do not profane the name of your G-d- I am HaShem” (18:21). T

The first part relates to sexual morality and therefore falls into the category of chukim. The second pertains to the ritual murder of children, which clearly is in the category of Mishpatim. What is the connection between these two categories that the Torah finds their juxtaposition necessary? And how is the prohibition of Molech understood in our day and age? Rav Soloveitchik described an actual case in which parents were willing to place their own child up for adoption rather than compromise their present

lifestyle, and he declared that this was a modern-day example of giving one’s child to Molech.

The Rav further explained the conceptual connection between chukim and Mishpatim. He declared that people who observe the chukim laws of family purity will also love their children. If they do not preserve sexual morality in their lives, will likely lead to Molech- disdain for children. Sexual morality from a Torah perspective is definitely a chok; difficult to understand and accept. It calls for strong discipline and sacrifice. Often, when couples wish to live as observant Jews, they have no objection to Shabbat, or kashrut. Their greatest challenge is accepting the laws of Taharat HaMishpacha (family purity) as proscribed by the Torah and by our sages. Those who observe chukim out of surrender to the will of G-d will always observe Mishpatim. However, those who reject the chukim will one day abandon the Mishpatim as well.

A true story comes to mind. In a small mid-western Jewish community in the United States lived an elderly couple from Russia. Having no children they mostly kept to themselves and rarely mingled with the others. After several years, the husband died. The wife had to plead with people to assist and attend the funeral. At the cemetery she begged someone to say a few kind words about her husband, but, no one came forth. She then said, “In that case I will speak about him. We were a young religious couple, very much in love when we married in Russia. But being there was no Mikveh available, my husband controlled himself and we had no marital relations during all those years. When we came to America we were too old to have children.” That was her eulogy; there was not a dry eye among those present. Without doubt, this couple observed all the Mishpatim as well.

Shabbat Shalom and a Chag Pesach Samei’ach from Yerushalayim

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from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>  
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com subject: Weekly Parsha **from Rabbi**

### **Berel Wein** ACHREI MOS

The Torah has already described the tragedy of the family of Aaron, when his sons Nadav and Avihu died while performing incense burning on the day of the final dedication of the Mishkan/Tabernacle. So, why does the Torah return to the subject and mention it again in this week’s Torah reading? The commentators over the ages, from the time of the Talmud onwards, have derived many explanations, laws and moral ideas from the repetition of this incident here in this parsha. Since the Torah is limitless, eternal and speaks to all generations, I take the liberty of suggesting another idea to help us understand the depths of the Torah’s sensitivity to the human psyche and condition. In a subtle but important way the Torah emphasizes that from now on everything that Aaron and his sons will do in the service of God and Israel, inside the holy Mishkan/Tabernacle or outside of it, will always be influenced by the tragedy they witnessed and experienced on the day their sons and brothers died. Moshe’s comment that Nadav and Avihu were holy and sanctified people, close to God, so to speak, only amplifies the tragedy and makes it more difficult to comprehend and rationalize. For the rest of their lives, Aaron, his surviving family and the entire Jewish nation will be haunted by this tragic event. It will hover over every occurrence that will befall them, personally or nationally, for all time. Everything will now be encapsulated in the time frame of “after the death of the two sons of Aaron.” And this idea is implicit in the message of the Torah to us this week. In a very few days from now, Holocaust Remembrance Day will be upon us. The inexplicable iniquity of this tragedy haunts the Jewish people today, even seven decades after the fact. It seems that every accomplishment and shortcoming in Jewish life generally, and regarding the State of Israel particularly, is Holocaust driven. Everything is seen as being holy vengeance or justified retribution, as “remember and do not forget,” or “never again!” There is no event that takes place in Jewish life today that does not have Holocaust overtones. We are always “achrei mot” - after the tragedy that

brooks no explanation and constantly challenges our faith on one hand and our rationality on the other. It is as though the formal commemorations of Holocaust Remembrance Day are not that special and unique, hard as we try to make them so, because every day and every occurrence now is still just another form of that memorial. Naturally, the formal commemorations of Holocaust Remembrance Day invoke again the emotional connection to this enormous national tragedy. That is why such a national day of mourning is justified and necessary. And this only enhances our realization that we are all living in the time of "achrei mot." And this explains a great deal of the mood and behavior of the Jewish people on our time.

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from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com>

date: Tue, May 3, 2016 at 8:57 AM

subject: Moving Videos & Articles for Holocaust Remembrance Day

<http://www.aish.com/ho/p/A-Holocaust-Love-Story.html>

### **A Holocaust Love Story**

#### **A powerful true story of Jewish heroism.**

**by Rabbi Yosef Wallis**

Rabbi Yosef Wallis, director of Arachim of Israel, talks to Project Witness about his father, Judah Wallis, who was born and raised in Pavenitz, Poland.

While he was in Dachau, a Jew who was being taken to his death suddenly flung a small bag at my father, Judah Wallis. He caught it, thinking it might contain a piece of bread. Upon opening it, however, he was disturbed to discover a pair of tefillin. Judah was very frightened because he knew that were he to be caught carrying tefillin, he would be put to death instantly. So he hid the tefillin under his shirt and headed for his bunkhouse. In the morning, just before the appel [roll call], while still in his bunkhouse, he put on the tefillin. Unexpectedly, a German officer appeared. He ordered him to remove the tefillin, noted the number on Judah's arm. At the appel, in front of thousands of silent Jews, the officer called out Judah's number and he had no choice but to step forward. The German officer waved the tefillin in the air and said, "Dog! I sentence you to death by public hanging for wearing these." Judah was placed on a stool and a noose was placed around his neck. Before he was hanged, the officer said in a mocking tone, "Dog, what is your last wish?" "To wear my tefillin one last time," Judah replied. "The officer was dumbfounded. He handed Judah the tefillin. As Judah put them on, he recited the verse that is said while the tefillin are being wound around the fingers: "Ve'eirastich li le'olam, ve'eirastich li b'tzedek uvemishpat, ub'chesed, uv'rachamim, ve'eirastich li b'emunah, v'yodaat es Hashem – I will betroth you to me forever and I will betroth you to me with righteousness and with justice and with kindness and with mercy and I will betroth you to me with fidelity, and you shall know God." It is hard for us to picture this Jew with a noose around his neck, wearing tefillin on his head and arm – but that was the scene that the entire camp was forced to watch, as they awaited the impending hanging of the Jew who had dared to break the rule against wearing tefillin. Even women from the adjoining camp were lined up at the barbed wire fence that separated them from the men's camp, forced to watch this horrible sight.

As Judah turned to watch the silent crowd, he saw tears in many people's eyes. Even at that moment, as he was about to be hanged, he was shocked. Jews were crying! How was it possible that they still had tears left to shed? And for a stranger? Where were those tears coming from? Impulsively, in Yiddish, he called out, "Yidden, I am the victor. Don't you understand, I am the winner!" The German officer understood the Yiddish and was infuriated. He said to Judah, "You dog, you think you are the winner? Hanging is too good for you. You are going to get another kind of death." "Judah, my father, was taken from the stool and the noose was removed from his neck. He was forced into a squatting position and two huge rocks were placed under his arms. Then he was told that he would be receiving 25 lashes to his head – the head on which he had dared to position his tefillin. The officer told him that if he dropped even one of the rocks, he would be shot immediately. In fact,

because this was such an extremely painful form of death, the officer advised him, "Drop the rocks now. You will never survive the 25 lashes to the head. Nobody ever does." Judah's response was, "No, I won't give you the pleasure."

At the 25th lash, Judah lost consciousness and was left for dead. He was about to be dragged to a pile of corpses, after which he would have been burned in a ditch, when another Jew saw him, shoved him to the side, and covered his head with a rag so people didn't realize he was alive. Eventually, after he recovered consciousness fully, he crawled to the nearest bunkhouse that was on raised piles and hid under it until he was strong enough to come out under his own power. Two months later he was liberated.

During the hanging and beating episode, a 17-year-old girl had been watching the events from the women's side of the fence. After liberation, she made her way to Judah. She walked over to him and said, "I've lost everyone. I don't want to be alone any more. I saw what you did that day when the officer wanted to hang you. Will you marry me?"

My parents walked over to the Klausenberger Rebbe and requested that he perform the marriage ceremony. The Klausenberger Rebbe, whose Kiddush Hashem is legendary, wrote out a kesubah [marriage contract] by hand from memory and married the couple. I have that handwritten kesubah in my possession to this day.

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to:

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Survivors; Putting Women Back in; God Says Sorry

And God Said, "I Am Sorry"

**Rabbi Ari Kahn**

April 29, 2014

Every spring, a number of days of commemoration are observed. Yom HaShoah and Yom HaZikaron, established by the government of Israel, are days in which we honor the memory of the fallen – first for the victims of the Holocaust and then for those who gave their lives to create and defend the State of Israel. On these solemn days, we remember the fallen as individuals, just as we attempt to transmit the lessons learned from tragic loss to the next generation.

Yom HaAtzmaut immediately follows Yom HaZikaron, marking the establishment of the State of Israel and celebrating our continued freedom and sovereignty in our homeland. These three days, clustered together in a very intensive sequence, create a period of national introspection and stock-taking in which we consider, on the one hand, our many achievements and the unprecedented success of the Jewish nation-state, while on the other hand, the extreme sacrifices that were made to achieve our freedom. By creating the juxtaposition between Remembrance Day and Independence Day, this was the underlying message Israel's founders hoped to convey – a lesson they apparently learned from the juxtaposition of the solemn fast of Esther and the celebratory holiday of Purim: Our victory, our survival, was made possible by almost-unthinkable sacrifice.

Similarly, the darkness of the Holocaust is contrasted with the dawn of the emerging Jewish state – not to insinuate a correlation or "barter" of six million souls for the establishment of the State, but to help us appreciate the contrast between these two eras through their juxtaposition. The Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel should be seen as polar opposites – not only in the political or physical sense, but also, as Rabbi Soloveitchik encouraged us to understand them, in terms of their theological implications.

The Holocaust is an archetypal example of darkness, of the hester panim (literally "hidden face") mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy: "I will surely hide my face on that day..." (31:18). Conversely, the establishment of the modern State of Israel is a revelation of God's presence and active involvement in Jewish history, a dazzling gilui panim (revelation) in which God's hand is unmistakable. The contrast between the darkness that we experienced and the emergence into the light and warmth of modern Israel is almost startling.

In a very real sense, the relationship between God and the Jewish people may be likened to the cycle of the moon, which disappears and then reappears, at first as a sliver, and eventually as a full moon. A brief rabbinic comment regarding the new moon may help us reframe this strange shift from darkness to light from a theocentric perspective: On each holiday, we are commanded to sacrifice a sin-offering, just as a sin-offering is brought on the eve of every new month. However, the biblical passage that describes the sin-offering on Rosh Hodesh – the new moon – differs from all the

others. In all other instances, the Torah refers simply to the “sin-offering.” Only the sacrifice brought on Rosh Hodesh is described as “a sin-offering for God” (B’midbar 28:15). The Talmud (Hullin 60b) offers a philosophical explanation for this anomaly: God asks that a sin offering be brought each month to atone for His own sin – the sin of diminishing the moon.

The implications of this teaching are extraordinary, and they speak to the very core of our reality. The world was created with a delicate balance between light and darkness, between clarity and obscurity, between revelation and hester panim. Presumably, this balance is necessary in order to create an atmosphere in which man can retain free will, which is the very foundation of our independent existence. In a world in which God’s constant, active involvement in human history is always apparent, free will is eclipsed, and man cannot thrive. Ultimately, the periods of darkness, the terrible bouts of existential loneliness, are as spiritually beneficial for us as the periods of light. The waves of hester panim, as they are juxtaposed with gilui panim, sharpen our awareness of the Divine and encourage us to seek out the spiritual message contained in the darkness, in the silence, in the pain that precedes the appearance of that sliver of moon. It is the struggle with the darkness that allows us to grow.

And yet, God expresses remorse for inflicting upon us the hours, days, even years of darkness and doubt. God takes responsibility for the pain we must experience. “Pray for Me,” He says. “Bring an offering to atone for My sin. Forgive Me.”

By commanding us to bring this offering, God says “Forgive Me for the pain you have experienced.” We might consider this the flip-side of the coin of the human condition: We all, unavoidably, sin. When we do, we turn to God, we desperately pray and plead for forgiveness. Once each month, the proverbial shoe is on the other foot, and God seeks our forgiveness for the pain inherent in the human condition. Can we rejoice in the loving reunion that ensues as the light overcomes the darkness and we realize that the pain was an indispensable stage in our spiritual growth? Do we have the moral fortitude to forgive God?

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from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

to: weeklydt@torahweb.org

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**Rabbi Hershel Schachter –**

### **The Moon, the Jews, and Moshiach**

When Rosh Chodesh falls out on a Sunday, our practice is that on the Shabbos which precedes it we recite the special haftorah of Mochar Chodesh. When any other yom tov falls out on a Sunday we do not choose a haftorah that speaks of the upcoming yom tov. Why do we only have this practice with respect to Rosh Chodesh?

Rav Soloveitchik suggested the following: one of the berachos we recite after reading the haftorah contains a prayer requesting of Hashem that he should bring us joy by bringing Eliyahu Hanovi and Moshiach. The last of the nevi'im was Malachi, who was involved in the building of the second Beis Hamikdash. He knew b'nevuah that there will no more prophets sent to the Jewish people until Eliyahu, would come to announce to the sanhedrin that tomorrow the Moshiach will appear. The fact that the Anshei Keneset Hagedola chose to incorporate this request into the berachos of the haftorah seems to indicate that one of the purposes of reciting the haftorahs is to strengthen the belief in the coming of Moshiach. The choice of quite a few of the sections of novi which we read for the haftorahs would also seem to indicate the same.

The Midrash Rabbah points out that the Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar. The moon grows progressively bigger for fifteen days starting from the molad until it is a full moon, and then becomes progressively smaller for fifteen days until it disappears from sight for eighteen hours. So too, there were fifteen generations starting from Avrohom Avinu until the days of Shlomo Ha'melech, during which time the Jewish people grew to their peak. During the days of Shlomo Ha'melech there was peace, no poverty, and a Beis Hamikdash. Then there were fifteen generations from Shlomo Ha'melech until Tzidkiyahu Ha'melech, during which time everything disintegrated. Tzidkiyahu Ha'melech was blinded by the king of Bavel, and according to the Midrash this corresponds to the disappearance of the moon for eighteen hours at the end of the monthly lunar cycle. If Sunday is Rosh Chodesh, then on Shabbos the moon will not be visible. Today, living in

galus, we are experiencing this long period of time wherein the malchus beis Dovid has disappeared. But, as we mention in Kiddush Levana, the Jewish people in general, as well as the malchus beis Dovid in particular, will renew themselves just like the moon. The Jewish people have a lunar calendar because our history is similar to the moon - we have ups and downs, and we were promised by Hashem that our nation as well as the malchus beis Dovid will be renewed.

The story contained in the haftorah of Mochar Chodesh is about the love between Dovid and Yehonasan. Yehonasan loved Dovid so much that he protected him from his father's anger and saw to it that Dovid would become the next King. However, if Dovid loved Yehonasan also, why didn't he allow Yehonasan to become the next king? The answer obviously is that they had heard from the novi that the promise for the renewal of the Jewish kingdom in the future would only apply if it would be the malchus beis Dovid. That is why Yehonasan had to give up the malchus to Dovid as opposed to Dovid allowing Yehonasan to be king. The choice of this haftorah is to strengthen the belief in the coming of Moshiach. It is well over two thousand years since Tzidkiyahu Ha'melech was blinded and all of this long period is, in a certain sense, comparable to the eighteen hours that the moon disappeared. Copyright © 2016 by TorahWeb.org. All rights reserved.

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, May 5, 2016 at 4:54 PM

### **The Courage to Admit Mistakes**

#### **Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

Some years ago I was visited by the then American ambassador to the Court of St James, Philip Lader. He told me of a fascinating project he and his wife had initiated in 1981. They had come to realise that many of their contemporaries would find themselves in positions of influence and power in the not-too-distant future. He thought it would be useful and creative if they were to come together for a study retreat every so often to share ideas, listen to experts and form friendships, thinking through collectively the challenges they would face in the coming years. So they created what they called Renaissance Weekends. They still happen.

The most interesting thing he told me was that they discovered that the participants, all exceptionally gifted people, found one thing particularly difficult, namely, admitting that they made mistakes. The Laders understood that this was something important they had to learn. Leaders, above all, should be capable of acknowledging when and how they had erred, and how to put it right. They came up with a brilliant idea. They set aside a session at each Weekend for a talk given by a recognised star in some field, on the subject of “My biggest blooper.” Being English, not American, I had to ask for a translation. I discovered that a blooper is an embarrassing mistake. A gaffe. A faux pas. A bungle. A boo-boo. A fashla. A balagan. Something you shouldn't have done and are ashamed to admit you did.

This, in essence, is what Yom Kippur is in Judaism. In Tabernacle and Temple times, it was the day when the holiest man in Israel, the High Priest, made atonement, first for his own sins, then for the sins of his “house,” then for the sins of all Israel. From the day the Temple was destroyed, we have had no High Priest nor the rites he performed, but we still have the day, and the ability to confess and pray for forgiveness. It is so much easier to admit your sins, failings and mistakes when other people are doing likewise. If a High Priest, or the other members of our congregation, can admit to sins, so can we.

I have argued elsewhere (in the Introduction to the Koren Yom Kippur Machzor) that the move from the first Yom Kippur to the second was one of the great transitions in Jewish spirituality. The first Yom Kippur was the culmination of Moses' efforts to secure forgiveness for the people after the sin of the Golden Calf (Ex. 32-34). The process, which began on 17th Tammuz, ended on the 10th of Tishri – the day that later became Yom Kippur. That was the day when Moses descended the mountain with the

second set of tablets, the visible sign that God had reaffirmed his covenant with the people. The second Yom Kippur, one year later, initiated the series of rites set out in this week's parsha (Lev. 16), conducted in the Mishkan by Aaron in his role as High priest.

The differences between the two were immense. Moses acted as a prophet. Aaron functioned as a priest. Moses was following his heart and mind, improvising in response to God's response to his words. Aaron was following a precisely choreographed ritual, every detail of which was set out in advance. Moses' encounter was ad hoc, a unique, unrepeatable drama between heaven and earth. Aaron's was the opposite. The rules he was following never changed throughout the generations, so long as the Temple stood.

Moses' prayers on behalf of the people were full of audacity, what the sages called *chutzpah kelapei shemaya*, "audacity toward heaven," reaching a climax in the astonishing words, "Now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book You have written." (Ex. 32: 32). Aaron's behavior by contrast was marked by obedience, humility, and confession. There were purification rituals, sin offerings and atonements, for his own sins and those of his "house" as well as those of the people.

The move from Yom Kippur 1 to Yom Kippur 2 was a classic instance of what Max Weber called the "routinization of charisma," that is, taking a unique moment and translating it into ritual, turning a "peak experience" into a regular part of life. Few moments in the Torah rival in intensity the dialogue between Moses and God after the Golden Calf. But the question thereafter was: how could we achieve forgiveness – we who no longer have a Moses, or prophets, or direct access to God? Great moments change history. But what changes us is the unspectacular habit of doing certain acts again and again until they reconfigure the brain and change our habits of the heart. We are shaped by the rituals we repeatedly perform.

Besides which, Moses' intercession with God did not, in and of itself, induce a penitential mood among the people. Yes, he performed a series of dramatic acts to demonstrate to the people their guilt. But we have no evidence that they internalized it. Aaron's acts were different. They involved confession, atonement and a search for spiritual purification. They involved a candid acknowledgment of the sins and failures of the people, and they began with the High Priest himself.

The effect of Yom Kippur – extended into the prayers of much of the rest of the year by way of *tachanun* (supplicatory prayers), *vidui* (confession), and *selichot* (prayers for forgiveness) – was to create a culture in which people are not ashamed or embarrassed to say, "I got it wrong, I sinned, I made mistakes." That is what we do in the litany of wrongs we enumerate on Yom Kippur in two alphabetical lists, one beginning *Ashamnu*, *bagadnu*, the other beginning *Al cheit shechatanu*.

As Philip Lader discovered, the capacity to admit mistakes is anything but widespread. We rationalize. We justify. We deny. We blame others. There have been several powerful books on the subject in recent years, among them Matthew Syed, *Black Box Thinking: The Surprising Truth About Success* (and *Why Some People Never Learn from Their Mistakes*)[1]; Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margins of Error*,[2] and Carol Tavis and Elliot Aronson, *Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me*. [3]

Politicians find it hard to admit mistakes. So do doctors: preventable medical error causes more than 400,000 deaths every year in the United States. So do bankers and economists. The financial crash of 2008 was predicted by Warren Buffett as early as 2002. It happened despite the warnings of several experts that the level of mortgage lending and the leveraging of debt was unsustainable. Tavis and Aronson tell a similar story about the police. Once they have identified a suspect, they are reluctant to admit evidence of his or her innocence. And so it goes.

The avoidance strategies are almost endless. People say, It wasn't a mistake. Or, given the circumstances, it was the best that could have been done. Or it was a small mistake. Or it was unavoidable given what we knew at the time. Or someone else was to blame. We were given the wrong facts. We were

faultily advised. So people bluff it out, or engage in denial, or see themselves as victims.

We have an almost infinite capacity for interpreting the facts to vindicate ourselves. As the sages said in the context of the laws of purity, "No one can see his own blemishes, his own impurities." [4] We are our own best advocates in the court of self-esteem. Rare is the individual with the courage to say, as the High Priest did, or as King David did after the prophet Nathan confronted him with his guilt in relation to Uriah and Batsheva, *chatati*, "I have sinned." [5]

Judaism helps us admit our mistakes in three ways. First is the knowledge that God forgives. He does not ask us never to sin. He knew in advance that His gift of freedom would sometimes be misused. All he asks of us is that we acknowledge our mistakes, learn from them, confess and resolve not to do them again.

Second is Judaism's clear separation between the sinner and the sin. We can condemn an act without losing faith in the agent.

Third is the aura Yom Kippur spreads over the rest of the year. It helps create a culture of honesty in which we are not ashamed to acknowledge the wrongs we have done. And despite the fact that, technically, Yom Kippur is focused on sins between us and God, a simple reading of the confessions in *Ashamnu* and *Al Chet* shows us that, actually, most of the sins we confess are about our dealings with other people.

What Philip Lader discovered about his high-flying contemporaries, Judaism internalized long ago. Seeing the best admit that they too make mistakes is deeply empowering for the rest of us. The first Jew to admit he made a mistake was Judah, who had wrongly accused Tamar of sexual misconduct, and then, realizing he had been wrong, said, "She is more righteous than I" (Gen. 38: 26).

It is surely more than mere coincidence that the name Judah comes from the same root as *Vidui*, "confession." In other words, the very fact that we are called Jews – *Yehudim* – means that we are the people who have the courage to admit our wrongs.

Honest self-criticism is one of the unmistakable marks of spiritual greatness.

[1] Portfolio Books, 2015. [2] Ecco Books, 2011. [3] Mariner Books, 2008. [4] *Bekhorot* 38b. [5] 2 Samuel 12: 13.

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from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com>

date: Wed, May 4, 2016 at 11:19 AM

subject: Torah Musings Daily Digest

**Buying Clothes During Sefirah**

**by R. Gil Student**

The period between Pesach and Shavuot contains a mourning period--different days depending on one's custom--during which certain joyous behaviors are forbidden (commonly called Sefirah because this period also includes the counting ("sefirah" in Hebrew) of the Omer). These mourning customs have developed over time. However, I often hear confusion about the permissibility of buying new clothes during this mourning period. The short answer is that it is allowed. The long answer is that it might not be allowed.

During the mourning period prior to the summer fast day of Tisha B'Av, we experience an intense mourning over the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Among the activities forbidden by custom is reciting the "Shehecheyanu" blessing on new fruits or new clothes. Some early authorities rule that this also applies to the Sefirah, such as the author of *Keli Yakar* (Olelos Efraim 2:107) and the *Eliyahu Zuta* (593) in the name of *Rabbeinu Yerucham* (1:5). *Yosef Ometz* (845), *Rav Chaim Palaggi* (*Mo'ed Kol Chai* 6:12) and his son *Rav Yitzchak Palaggi* (*Yefeh La-Lev* 2:493) say that the custom is to refrain from wearing new clothes during Sefirah. However, the vast majority of authorities make no mention of this custom to refrain from reciting the blessing of "Shehecheyanu" during Sefirah.

Four customs seem to have developed about this issue:

- No Shehecheyanu -- Some people are strict and do not do eat new fruits or buy new items that would necessitate a Shehecheyanu blessing. *Rav Mordechai Eliyahu* (*Ma'amar Mordekhai Le-Mo'adim U-Li-Zemanim* 20:55) says that some have this practice (*yesh nohagim*).
- Yes Shehecheyanu -- Some have no such practice whatsoever and feel free to eat new fruits and buy new clothes. *Rav Eliyahu* (*ibid.*) says

that this is the standard practice (ve-khen nohagim). Kaf Ha-Chaim (593:4) and Mishnah Berurah (593:2) take this approach, as well. • Only On Fruits -- Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Yecheveh Da'as 1:24) distinguishes between reciting a Shehecheyanu on new fruits and on buying new things. He argues that the practice of refraining from reciting Shehecheyanu on new fruits is a mistake and should not be observed. You do not even need to annul your custom before discontinuing it because it is an error. However, he suggests refraining from wearing new clothes during Sefirah, based on the comments of Rav Chaim Palaggi and others (mentioned above). If there is a need to wear new clothes, wear them for the first time on Shabbos, when there is no mourning and therefore no problem in reciting "Shehecheyanu." • If Necessary -- Some desire to act strictly and refrain from doing anything that necessitates reciting a "Shehecheyanu" during Sefirah. However, when a need arises--such as a sale or a young man returned for a brief yeshiva break who needs to go shopping--you buy the clothing and wear it for the first time on Shabbos or at a mitzvah celebration like a circumcision (Peninei Halakhah, Zemanim 3:11 says that this should be the practice for those who are strict). If someone asks me whether they may buy clothes during Sefirah, I tell them the first view above, adopted by the Mishnah Berurah and Kaf Ha-Chaim. But really there are more views. When it comes to customs, custom is as custom does. They evolve over time organically. I suspect that the strict opinion is slowly gaining ground because of confusion with the Three Weeks. Eventually, people will observe the two mourning periods in the same way. Perhaps this will become the standard custom. Until then, we still have the Mishnah Berurah.