

BS"D



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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **ACHREI / KEDOSHIM** - 5766

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From: Don't Forget [sefira@torah.org]

Tonight, the evening of Friday, May 5, will be day 23, which is 3 weeks and 2 days of the omer. ...

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

Rav Soloveichik ZT'L Notes

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

Lecture--Spring of 1975

Dealing with the prophets and haftarah of Sedra Kedoshim

The bracha preceding the mafir is an expression of faith in the ultimate truth of the prophet and the prophecies. We believe that every expression will come true and that not a single syllable will be wasted--especially the Messianic prophecies.

When the haftarah was introduced around 1900 years ago after the chorbah of the Beit Hamikdash (the destruction of the second Temple), the Jewish situation was at a point of disintegration. The Jew was not even allowed to enter Jerusalem, not to observe Sabbath, circumcision, study the Torah etc. The uppermost question was, "How can a Jew, without the Beit Hamikdash and without everything else, survive?" We were afraid that "in the land of your enemies will you perish!"

First, we had to be taught to regain our spiritual identity. It was at this time that the great sages such as Rabbi Akivah actually had to teach the people how to observe holidays such as Yom Kippur and Chag Hamatzoth (Passover) without the Temple ritual. It was actually a retraining, a reteaching of how to observe the holidays in a new manner to which they were not accustomed.

Secondly, the task was to strengthen the faith of the people in the Messianic promise that Jerusalem will be restored. Two institutions were introduced to strengthen their faith: The recitation of the brachot (blessings) in connection with the haftarah and the Kaddish D'Rabbanan. (Both are an affirmation of the faith in future redemption.) Most haftaroth either begin with or end with words of comfort. It was customary for the people to rise to their feet and exclaim in unison, "It will be so." (Blessed art Thou, Lord

our G-d, King of the universe--righteous in all generations, trusted G-d who decrees and does, who pronounces and fulfills, whose all words are truth and just. Not one word will be empty etc.)

Shabbat was dedicated almost exclusively to Torah Sh'bal Peh (study of the Oral Law, Mishnayot) by the chacham (the wise or the sages). The people would gather and listen to their teachings of wisdom. After he concluded the words of hope which appealed not only to the mind but of the heart, someone would stand up and publicly exclaim the faith in the form of Kaddish. It was a longer Kaddish than that which we know, stating that paganism will be uprooted. All this is as important now as it was 1900 years ago. The purpose of the haftarah is to encourage the faith in the ultimate rebuilding of Jerusalem.

In Sedra Kedoshim, we find for the first time in the Torah the possibility of exile. The Torah declares that the land will not tolerate sin or sinners. The land is very sensitive such as is the stomach. "Lo soki ha'aretz etchem" (the land does not vomit you out). Such as a stomach will expel by vomiting a poisonous, a spoiled or a foreign material, so is Eretz Yisrael ready to expel sin or sinners. Until here, in connection with the patriarchs, we get the impression that we'll never be separated from the land. The prophet Amos was the first to mention exile. Therefore, the connection to today's sedra.

What will happen if the people are driven off the land? Will it be an eternal exile as our enemies claim? Will Israel always be controlled and exploited by the enemy? there is no answer here in this sedra of Kedoshim but in the sedra of B'chukotai. What follows exile? Return or disintegration. In Amos he mentions exile but also answered the question. "I will bring back the captives of Israel." It is not forever.

What does return mean? "I have promised you the land; I have set you apart from other nations!" There is something singular about us spiritually. The Jew stands out in society. The haftarah reads, "Haloh kivnay chushim atem li" (Behold you are like Ethiopians to me). What does this mean? The Ethiopians were the black people. You stand out like the black man. As the black man cannot hide himself, so cannot the Jew. How is this? The Jew dresses, talks, lives etc. as all others. And yet, "You are distinguishable to me!" In which way is he different? He prays and sings hymns in a way not understandable to his neighbor. The way we react to tragedy and happiness is different. But the chief characteristic is that "his memory is not mechanical." We resurrect and relive events. We interweave the past with the present. That is why nations do not understand our relationship to Eretz Yisrael after 1900 years. It is our memory. "I gave you the capacity to remember." It is not just a recollection by an experience. "Your looks are the same, but your emotions are different." Thus, where other nations have long forgotten tragic events of the distant past, we continue to mourn our loss once a year (Tisha b'Av) with the same emotion and fervor as if it just occurred--although 1900 years have elapsed.



<http://www.yutorah.org/showShiur.cfm?shiurID=714546>

Einayim L'Torah

Parshas Acharei Mos – Kedoshim "To Counterbalance Love"

Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman

Date: April 24, 2006

The Talmud (Yevamos 62a) tells us that Rabbi Akiva's students died because they did not treat each other with kavod [respect]. We mourn their deaths during sefiras haOmer each year. Jewish history, unfortunately, has known many other tragedies; why do we continue to remember this one?

The answer emerges from an analysis of Rabbi Akiva's famous dictum, "Love your friend as yourself – this is a major rule in the Torah," and its relation to his students' actions. If Rabbi Akiva put this concept of ahavas

yisrael, love of fellow Jews, at the center of his philosophy, how is it possible that all of his own students neglected it?

The Talmud (Yevamos 62a) instructs men to "love their wives as much as themselves, and respect them more than themselves." Why must love be balanced by respect; isn't marriage all about love, and doesn't love automatically imply respect?

R. Zerachyahu haLevi explains that the word kavod is etymologically synonymous with nefesh, which means 'soul' or 'self'. Kavod means respect because we respect someone whom we perceive as having some self-distinguishing quality that sets them apart. Kavod is the acknowledgement and deference that we offer to individuality, to individual uniqueness, and to accomplishment. We don't respect someone for being the same as everyone else, but for being his own self, for being different in a way that we value. The difference between love and respect is that love is based on the feeling that we are really one. People marry because they find in their partner a kindred spirit. People love their children because they see them as extensions of themselves. We love our fellow Jews because we feel kinship with people who share our own history and destiny.

Respect, on the other hand, is based on the dignity of difference. I respect someone because I recognize that he is different than me, and I consider that difference valuable.

Love without respect can be overbearing, even tyrannical. One can see that with children. A parent can love his children – and yet ruin them by constantly trying to make them more like him or her. This is even truer with a spouse. Marriage is such a close human relationship because it is based on love – on finding in each other kindred spirits. Therefore, it is especially important for that love to be balanced by respect, by kavod – by recognition that one's partner is a different person. He or she need not like the same books or food that I do, nor have the same opinion. Because I love them, I may be driven to make them more like me, but that is destructive; that is the tyranny of love. Love must be tempered with kavod; we must value our differences as much as our similarities.

This is where Rabbi Akiva's students went wrong. They did not neglect their rebbe's teaching of loving each other as themselves. Rather, they took this rule too far. Because they put so much emphasis on love, they failed to balance it with kavod. They loved each other, but they didn't respect each other's individuality and differences.

In contrast, our failing – the failing that led to the destruction of the Beis haMikdash and its continued desolation – is sinas chinam, unwarranted hatred. This is why we mourn for Rabbi Akiva's students. With them, we lost a reservoir of ahavas yisrael, love of fellow Jews, which might have saved the Jewish people.

A generation after the churban – after that eruption of civil strife and sinas chinam that destroyed everything – a group of scholars arose, a potent force within the people, who adopted as their motto the cardinal principle of Rabbi Akiva, the principle of ahavas yisrael. They represented so much potential and promise. But they went too far. They excelled at loving others as themselves – but not at respecting them more than themselves. Our mourning is for that loss.



[From last year]

From: ravfrand-owner@torah.org on behalf of **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [ryfrand@torah.org]
Sent: April 21, 2005 11:51 PM To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on

Parshas Acharei Mos

The pasuk [verse] 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 [Talmud] learns from this source that if a person is faced with the choice of committing a sin or being murdered [or

alternatively, neglecting a mitzva or being murdered], the halacha requires the person to commit the aveira [sin] or neglect the mitzva, and not die. However, there are three exceptions: avoda zarah [idol worship], sfichas 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 interprets this to mean that "you should live by them, and not die by them." [Sanhedrin 74a]

A cursory examination of this pasuk would seem 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 or staying alive, your life is more valuable than the mitzva. We would conclude that there is a general rule: life is more important than the mitzvos, with just three exceptions.

Rav Moshe Feinstein Zt"l, in his sefer [book] "Igros Moshe," writes (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. The true explanation 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, perform work on this Shabbos so you can keep so many more Shabbosos in the future. Eat chometz 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" - "Ichayei alma" [in the world to come]. Life that leads to this goal is worth living. The Torah is instructing us to violate the Shabbos and to eat chometz [leaven] on Pesach. Why? The reason is 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

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Parsha Perceptions Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion. Good Shabbos & Chag Kosher V'Somayach! Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadvechiel.org <<mailto:tapes@yadvechiel.org>> or visit <http://www.yadvechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrand, Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing. Project Genesis - Torah.org is a recognized charity and depends upon your support. Please help us by visiting <http://torah.org/support/> for information on class dedications, memorials, annual giving and more. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208



http://www.aish.com/literacy/lifecycle/15_Lessons_from_Shiva.asp

15 Lessons from Shiva by Rabbi Aryeh Markman

Practical ideas for helping to ease someone through the mourning process. It was 4 a.m. when the call came, but we slept through it. Then it came again at 5:45 a.m. and I let it go to voice mail. The third time the phone rang I ran for it. It was New York calling. My wife's family was on the line. I knew the words before they spoke them. My mother-in-law had passed away a few hours ago. Shock, disillusionment, disorientation, regret, frustration. These emotions and more flowed through us as we scrambled to arrange the funeral and flights, and assemble a small army to tend to our children while my wife and I would be away. Throughout the flight I felt terrible pangs of regret. Had I been too selfish by not championing my wife to visit her mother more often? Should she have red-eyed it more to New York to see her ailing mother, who was a widow and alone in a beautiful assisted living facility? I pondered these thoughts in the dark plane cabin, enveloped within my gnawing guilt. My poor wife, had I added to her mournful state? I decided that I would do whatever necessary to ease my wife through the mourning process. Shiva is the seven-day mourning period that follows burial. The purpose is to grieve intensely, and prepare to move on. During that week, friends, neighbors and colleagues come for a short visit to comfort the mourner. Here are my lessons learned from my wife's week of sitting shiva:

Lesson 1: Shiva is not for anything but mourning. Yes, if you are a mom you must do things no one else can, like give emotional deposits, guidance, and lunch instructions to your kids. Otherwise defer, postpone, and reschedule. Change your voicemail, have an auto-responder on your email, and post a sign on your office door.

Lesson 2: We posted visiting hours on our front door and made sure people understood they could not come after 9:30 p.m. Otherwise people will come in, whenever, for however long. In any event, leave a pad on the front door so people can leave notes. Some people traveled a long distance, only to find out they missed out on the hours and wanted to give their condolences.

Lesson 3: Contact everyone and let them know what happened. You have circles of friends and acquaintances that are bigger than you think. There are work circles, family circles, school circles, community circles, distant relative circles, etc. Think them through and have others help get the word out. I sent out notices on three different email lists and still missed a swath of people. If there ever was a week that things fall through the cracks, this is it. Worse than not coming to visit shiva, is forgetting to inform someone that would have come to visit. On the flip side, everyone forgives you for everything.

Lesson 4: Give your spouse everything you can. She has only one mother. The best advice a colleague gave me was to take the week off from work. I did. I ran errands and tried to make life pleasant with lunches and coffee drink surprises. It definitely brought us closer together. Normally I work long hours, so to take off work meant a lot to my wife. She knew I was giving her my all. And our neighbors knew something was amiss when, the first day back from the New York burial, I was spotted at 10 a.m. wheeling a baby stroller.

Lesson 5: Write down the names of everyone who delivers a meal, does you a favor, watches the kids for an hour, anything. It means a lot to people to be thanked, and my wife wanted to express her gratitude to all those who eased her loss. At first you think you will remember everyone, but then it becomes too overwhelming. Also, compile all letters and notes received. It makes for a comforting read months down the line.

Lesson 6: When you come to visit, remember that it is for the benefit of the mourner. This is the last place on earth you want to talk about yourself as interesting as you may be. It takes tremendous psychic energy for the mourner to entertain your ego. Also, never argue about anything with the

mourner. Never. Leave it at the door. At least wait till the shiva week is over.

Lesson 7: When making a shiva call, don't expect food and entertainment. The "deli platter concept" every evening is really not conducive to the shiva process. Just focus on the mourner, not your appetite. The coffee clutch that sometimes develops in the kitchen is just out of place with the mourner holding court in the living room. There should be only one conversation going on. That is giving real honor to the deceased and the mourner. Obviously in other quarters of the house homework and other matters can be discussed as long as they are not heard. But it's not party time. [If there is a morning minyan in the house, you can put out coffee, juice, fruit, danish, etc., for those who need to go straight to work.]

Lesson 8: It seems to me that anything less than a 10-minute visit, unless you're the President of the United States or something like that, is too quick. G-d will forgive your time management goals this day, unless of course you left a child in the bath tub. And please, make sure to turn off your cell phone.

Lesson 9: So what should you talk about? Ask to see pictures of the deceased's life. Ask the mourner to describe the deceased's finest hour. What will they want to have been remembered for? How will you remember them?

Lesson 10: Never assume the mourner has taken care of anything. They are spaced out and disoriented. I have literally seen mourners go without lunch because everyone thinks they are taken care of. Don't assume that at all. Mourners are preoccupied. They may need shopping, errands, car pools, letters mailed, a phone call or three made, the dog walked, the baby diapered, etc. Who is doing the laundry and cleaning the floors and bathrooms? These are big jobs. Mourning is physically taxing and they are locked down with visitors. Assume nothing was done. Don't ask "Do you need something?" Instead, just do something. Better yet, do something and then ask, "Can I do anything else?"

Lesson 11: Make sure someone is on hand to rearrange chairs, clean up, direct traffic, take deliveries, etc. Someone has to be the head referee and crowd controller. I walked everyone out and welcomed everyone in. It helped create movement to keep the rotation flowing. It also helped those who felt self-conscious about entering and exiting.

Lesson 12: When the shiva period has ended, don't expect the mourner's relief to suddenly break forth or sadness to evaporate. That takes time. So when you see the mourner participating in the world again, treat them with care. Constantly be checking in with the mourner. They will still like to talk about their loss. It is an awful feeling to be abandoned after the shiva, even for introverts. Spend some private time later on with the mourner, "just because." Getting back to normal could take a year or more.

Lesson 13: Make sure Kaddish is said every day. Kaddish fills the spiritual void that is now missing from the world and is an enormous merit for the deceased. We arranged on Aish.com for someone to say Kaddish by the Western Wall. We also arranged for the entire Oral Law to be learned in my mother-in-law's memory and merit. That is a big mitzvah and a big comfort to the soul of the deceased.

Lesson 14: Take on one good deed in the deceased's memory. My son and I learn small, concise pieces of Torah each day. We recite his grandmother's name before we start. It also has bonded us like glue.

Lesson 15: Write out an ethical will that the deceased would have left behind for their children, grandchildren, spouse, and friends. I asked my wife to write out what her mother would have told the children if she knew she would never see them again. It can be a very powerful and cathartic experience.

If you have additional advice, please post it in the comments box below, to help others deal with this difficult time of life. Written for the elevation of the soul of Sheina Rishah bas Noach Leib Author Biography: Rabbi Aryeh Markman graduated with honors in Finance from the University of Illinois and spent 5 years leading tours around the world. His claim to fame is he was on the first ever Discovery Seminar and it worked! He is the

Executive Director of Aish Los Angeles where he lives with his wife Rochel (his editor) and their children.

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From: owner-weeklydt@torahweb2.org on behalf of TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: May 03, 2006 9:46 PM To: weeklydt@torahweb2.org Subject: Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - A Fence Around the Torah - The Key to Yiras Shomayim

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<http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

A Fence Around the Torah - The Key to Yiras Shomayim

"Asu syag laTorah - make a fence as a safeguard around the Torah laws" is the instruction given to us by the Anshei Keneset Hagedolah (Avos 1:1). Chazal (Yevamos 21a) derive this obligation to protect the mitzvos by enacting rabbinic decrees from the last passuk in Parshas Achrei Mos (Vayikra 18:30), "ushmartem es mishmarti". While gezeiros d'rabanan are found in all areas of halacha, a unique status was assigned to the safeguards protecting prohibitions of gilui arayos (prohibited relationships). We are taught (Avos D'Rabbi Nosson 2:1) that the Torah itself enacted safeguards to protect us from violating the prohibitions of arayos. All physical contact is prohibited by the Torah itself. These prohibitions are to be a fence to protect us from committing actual gilui arayos.

Chazal extol the value of sayagim around mitzvos. Shlomo Hamelech is praised by Hashem for instituting gezeiros in the realm of carrying on Shabbos. Chazal (Eruvin 21b) consider this to be one of the greatest achievements of Shlomo Hamelech. Why are gezeiros drabanan so critical?

Why is Shlomo Hamelech praised so lavishly for this gezeira that it even overshadows his other accomplishments, such as building the beis hamikdash?

The Ramban (Shemos 20:8) comments that all the negative commandments of the Torah are rooted in yiras Hashem. In contrast to the positive commandments which serve to express our ahavas Hashem, one expresses one's fear and awe of Hashem by refraining from what He prohibits.

In the realm of positive mitzvos one can express one's ahavas Hashem to different degrees. One who merely fulfills mitzvos in the basic form without embellishing on the beauty of their performance has only attained a certain level of ahavas Hashem. Performance of a mitzvah in the most beautiful way possible clearly demonstrates, and serves as a tool to enable us to grow in, our ahavas Hashem.

In the realm of mitzvas lo taase it is more difficult to differentiate between different levels of yiras Hashem. Isn't yiras Hashem exhausted by simply refraining from issurim? Where is there room for growth in abstaining from aveiros? Perhaps the key to growth in yiras Hashem can be found in the requirement of "asu syag laTorah". A person who not only refrains from prohibitions, but also creates safeguards that distance him from violating the word of Hashem demonstrates his appreciation for yiras Hashem. One who does not have such safeguards, even if he technically does not violate any prohibition, clearly is lacking in yiras Hashem.

There are two distinct aspects of yiras Hashem. The elementary level is yiras haonesh - fear of punishment. The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva emphasizes that everyone must begin with this basic level of fear. Hopefully, one's yiras Hashem will mature and reach the level of yiras haromemus - awe for the majesty of Hashem. We allude to these two levels of yiras Hashem in the tefillah for mevarchim hachodesh. We ask Hashem for many things during this tefillah. The only request that we repeat is our desire for a life full of yiras Hashem. Why do we repeat? Apparently we are

asking for two distinct types of yiras Hashem. First we request yiras shomayim v'yiras cheit. Yiras cheit is the basic fear that cheit carries with it a punishment. When we beseech Hashem for yiras shomayim v'yiras cheit we are requesting that we refrain from cheit because of yiras haonesh. We then progress to requesting ahavas Torah v'yiras shomayim. This is a very different type of yiras shomayim. This is a yirah that stems from an appreciation of the greatness of Hashem. Just as ahavas Torah emanates from an appreciation of the beauty of Torah, so too this yiras shomayim of yiras haromemus comes from a realization of the absolute awesome power of Hashem.

Asu syag laTorah is the mechanism to demonstrate our yiras Hashem. It serves to indicate both yiras haonesh as well as yiras haromemus. One who truly views cheit as a spiritual poison and understands the severity of onesh involved with violating the word of Hashem will not suffice to passively abstain from aveiros. He will actively search for ways to guard himself from coming anywhere near cheit. Just as one who has poison in his house will not leave it out in a way that it may inadvertently be eaten, one who views cheit as spiritual poison will make every effort to protect himself from any association with it.

Yiras haromemus is the corollary of shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid. One who truly believes he is constantly in the presence of Hashem will be filled with the awe that is natural to be felt being in His presence. One who is in the king's palace is on his best behavior and scrutinizes his every action and word, lest he offend the king. If we are truly in the presence of Melech Malchei Hamelachim, how much more so are we obligated to guard ourselves not to violate the word of The King. We have to take extra precautions not to even come close to violating an actual mitzvah.

Shlomo Hamelech accomplished many great things during his lifetime. Part of his legacy to us is Asu syag laTorah. He taught us how to grow in our yiras haonesh and our yiras haromemus. It is through our dedication to gezeiros drabanan that we demonstrate to Hashem our desire for yiras shomayim. May we merit that Hashem grants all of us chayim sheyesh bohem yiras shomayim v'yiras cheit, chayim sheyesh bohem ahavas Torah v'yiras shomayim.

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago 5764]

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

Acharei Mot - Kedoshim - Surviving Catastrophe

THE FIRST SECTION OF THIS WEEK'S SEDRA is about the service of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Vayikra 16). I want in this study to look, not at the details of that service, but its history - or more precisely its post-history. What happened when the ritual was no longer possible?

The events of the first century CE precipitated the worst crisis in Jewish history until modern times. The various groups in Jewish life responded differently. Some - the Sadducees and Essenes for example - simply disappeared. Their worldviews could not survive. One response, however, was fateful: that of the sages and rabbinic tradition. In this story, one name stands out as a giant of the rabbinic imagination - Rabbi Akiva, the person who turned tragedy into hope.

So long as the Temple stood, once a year there was a great national ceremony of atonement. It took place on the holiest day, Yom Kippur; at the holiest place, the Holy of Holies within the Temple in Jerusalem, and it was performed by the holiest person, the High Priest. It was an event of

great drama. In an ascending series of declarations, the High Priest atoned, first for himself then for his family, then for the whole nation. Two animals were brought, one to be offered as a sacrifice, the other (the source of the word "scapegoat") sent into the wilderness to die, symbolically carrying with it the sins of the people.

When the Second Temple was destroyed, the entire infrastructure of the ritual was lost. There was now no sanctuary, no sacrifices, no functioning priesthood. A psalm famously records the crisis felt when the First Temple was destroyed. "By the waters of Babylon we sat and wept as we remembered Zion . . . How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" I But the loss of the First Temple was accompanied by hope. The people would return. The sanctuary would be rebuilt. Jeremiah said so. So did Ezekiel. They were right. Within two generations, the people did return.

But by the late Second Temple period there was no such clarity. Israel was deeply divided. The Romans were stronger and less vulnerable than the Babylonians. Besides which there were no prophets - or perhaps there were too many. The first Christians (though they were not yet known by that name) were only one group among several (the Dead Sea sectarians were another) expecting the apocalypse, the "end of history," and the beginning of a new era in the affairs of mankind.

We get the impression, from many sources from that time, of a widespread sense that a catastrophe was about to occur. It did. It was precipitated by the "great rebellion" against Rome in 66 CE. For seven years the battle raged. It was a hopeless task. The Romans were highly disciplined. They could call on the vast resources of an empire. The Jews had indomitable courage, but they were divided. They lacked a single vision, an effective leadership structure, and national cohesion. As Maimonides was later to write, in his Letter to the Sages of Marseilles, they "neglected the arts of martial defence and government."

The rabbinic sages of mishnaic times spoke of *sinat chinam*, "baseless [internal] hatred." The picture that emerges from both rabbinic sources and Josephus is of a fatally fragmented people, at times more intent on fighting one another than the enemy outside. In 70, Jerusalem fell and the Temple was destroyed. In 73, the last outpost of resistance at Massada committed collective suicide rather than hand themselves over to the Romans. It was a terrible defeat.

The crisis was not just military and political. It was also and ultimately spiritual. Atonement was a central part of Judaism. How could it be otherwise? The very life of the nation depended on its relationship with G-d. If an individual cannot avoid occasional failures - sins - how much less can a people as a whole? And if these failures could not be rectified or discharged, what then could lift the burden of accumulated and accumulating sin?

Without the ability to restore its integrity before G-d, there was no hope. And with the loss of Temple, priesthood and sacrifices, the institutional base of atonement no longer existed. The service of Yom Kippur, as prescribed in this week's sedra, was impossible. How then could the people, individually and collectively, restore their relationship with G-d? How could they live without an overwhelming sense of guilt? Perhaps we in this guilt-free age find this hard to understand, but then (and even now if we have not yet lost the voice of conscience) it was a crisis without parallel and went to the very roots of life in the conscious presence of G-d.

It is from that period that a remarkable statement appears in the Mishnah:

Rabbi Akiva said: Happy are you, Israel. Who is it before whom you are purified and who purifies you? Your Father in heaven. As it is said: And I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean. And it further says: You hope of Israel, the Lord. Just as a fountain purifies the impure, so does the Holy One, blessed be He, purify Israel.

This statement is one of the most transformative insights in the history of the Jewish people.

First note the radical midrashic reading of the text. The words *mikveh Yisrael Hashem* mean, "G-d is the hope of Israel." However, the root *k-v-h* has two meanings. One is "hope." The other is "a collection or gathering,"

hence "a gathering of water," and thus *mikveh*, a ritual bath, a place you go to be purified. Rabbi Akiva uses this double entendre or ambiguity to read the phrase as "G-d is the ritual bath of Israel," thus generating a daringly mystical vision. In his reading G-d is the ritual bath into which we plunge ourselves in order to be cleansed. Not only does G-d enter us. We, according to Rabbi Akiva, enter G-d. We immerse ourselves in Him and emerge pure, our sins dissolved.

Second and more significantly, Rabbi Akiva has turned one of the most tragic events in the history of Israel into a stunning disclosure of new spiritual possibility. According to him, when the Temple stood, the people of Israel atoned vicariously, through the service of the High Priest, acting as representative of the people, the intermediary between them and G-d. Now that there was no Temple and no High Priest, no intermediary was necessary. G-d and the people were linked directly. Heaven had suddenly come closer. By atoning on Yom Kippur, every Jew became a High Priest. Every place where Jews gathered to pray became a Temple. Prayer took the place of sacrifice. Confession and remorse took the place of the scapegoat. Instead of being connected to G-d through the words and deeds of the High Priest, each individual Jew now stood directly in the Divine presence. Atonement was democratized, and hope was saved.

Here in dry legal prose is how Maimonides puts it:

At the present time, when the Temple no longer exists and we have no altar for atonement, nothing is left but repentance. Repentance atones for all transgressions. Even if a person was wicked all the days of his life, and repented at the end, nothing of his wickedness is recalled to him, as it is said, "As for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not stumble thereby in the day that he turns from his wickedness." The Day of Atonement itself atones for the penitent, as it is said, "For on this day shall atonement be made for you." It is sometimes hard to understand in retrospect a revolution of thought. For us, centuries or millennia later, it has become part of our common sense, taken-for-granted interpretation of reality. We no longer believe that the earth is flat, or that it stands at the centre of the universe, and that the sun revolves around it. Yet there was a time when people believed these things, and the suggestion that truth might be otherwise was radical and disturbing. Hence the battle between the Vatican and Galileo. The revolution implicit in Rabbi Akiva's idea was no less dramatic, despite the fact that it did not generate controversy.

In the biblical era there were two quite different understandings of how people might find their way back to G-d after they had sinned. One, set out in great detail in the book of Vayikra, was essentially priestly. It involved sacrifices and a ritual. It took place in the Temple, at specified times and according to a precisely structured set of procedures.

The other was prophetic. It is described many times in the prophetic literature:

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your G-d. Your sins have been your downfall. Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer our lips instead of sacrifices of bulls. (Hosea 14: 1-2) Therefore this is what the Lord says: if you repent, I will restore you, that you may serve me. (Jeremiah 15: 19) I have swept away your offences like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you. (Isaiah 44: 22) Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? (Ezekiel 18: 23) Prophetic repentance has little to do with ritual and sacrifice. It is about the change of heart that changes lives. It involves remorse and the recognition that we have lost our way. It is spontaneous and internal. It represents a profound transformation in the lives of individuals and the nation that only emerges from a sense of crisis. It is central to the drama of covenant as it plays itself out in the course of history. It involves the recognition that bad things happen to us because we have done bad things. We will only recover our poise, our stability, if we return to the path from which we have drifted: the path of decency and righteousness, caring for others and for G-d.

The rabbinic concept of teshuvah was an almost miraculous coming together of priestly and prophetic traditions. Like the ritual of the high priest, it had its specific time, the Day of Atonement. It had prescribed words, a liturgy of confession. However, as for the prophets, atonement was less a matter of external deeds than internal rededication: a psychological process of remorse, repentance and the determination to change. The emergence of a concept of teshuvah that combined both priestly and prophetic elements was like the discovery that light is both a series of particles and a set of waves.

In a real sense, of course, this convergence of the two traditions was implicit at the outset. As the sages said, "Whatever new interpretation an experienced disciple will offer in the future was already given to Moses at Sinai." Nonetheless it took the most profound historical crisis to bring it to the surface. It is not too much to say that the concept of teshuvah - atonement without sacrifice or High Priest - saved the Jewish people after the destruction of the Second Temple. It did more than save it. It invested ultimate spiritual dignity in the individual as such. No longer did he or she need someone else to atone on their behalf. At the very moment that redemption seemed distant, G-d had become very close.

We know several things about Rabbi Akiva. He was known by his saying that "Whatever the Almighty does, He does for the good." In a famous Talmudic scene, we see him comforting his contemporaries as they look down from Mount Scopus and see the Temple in ruins, a fox walking where once the Holy of Holies stood.

He was not an optimist; he was a man of hope. This is not a simple accomplishment. It needs a combination of faith, imagination and trust. It means what in contemporary psychology is called the ability to reframe. However deep the distress, there is a path from here to hope, but it sometimes takes a giant of the spirit to discern it. That is what Rabbi Akiva did and was. He was the man who saw through the veil of despair and witnessed beneath it a momentous possibility, that instead of a hierarchy of priests and people, Jews could become, in words spoken by G-d immediately prior to the revelation at Mount Sinai, a "kingdom of priests," everyone of whose members was holy.

Atonement was now not a sacrificial rite, but a turning - a returning - of the soul to G-d. This was always implicit in Judaism, but it took Rabbi Akiva to see it and make it explicit. This is what he discovered: that all it takes for G-d to return to us is for us to return to G-d.

second day of Pesach until the day that the Torah was given -- to show how greatly we desire the Torah.

How to Count the Omer

The Omer is counted every evening after nightfall (approx. 30 minutes after sunset), which is the start of the Jewish 'day.' (In the synagogue it is counted toward the end of the Maariv service.) If a person neglected to count the Omer one evening, he should count the following daytime, but without a blessing.

To properly 'count the Omer,' you must say both the number of days and the weeks. For example:

On days 1-6, we say only the number of days. For example:

"Today is 4 days of the Omer."

On days which are complete weeks -- e.g. 7, 14, 21 -- we say as follows, for example:

"Today is 21 days, which is 3 weeks of the Omer."

On all other days, we say, for example:

"Today is 33 days, which is 4 weeks and 5 days of the Omer."

(Since you must recite the blessing before you count, don't mention the count for that night beforehand.)

Before counting, stand and say the following blessing:

Baruch ata Adonoy, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu be'mitzvo'sav ve-tzivanu al sefiras ha'omer.

Blessed are You, G-d, King of the Universe, Who made us holy with His commandments, and commanded us on the counting of the Omer.

The Omer may be counted with a blessing only if both of the following conditions have been met:

1) you count the Omer during the evening, and 2) you have not missed counting any of the days so far

This means to say that if a person neglected to count the Omer for an entire day and did not recall until the following evening, he should continue counting on subsequent days -- but without a blessing.

Why can't you "continue counting with a blessing" if you miss counting one day?

The reason is because regarding the Omer, the Torah writes: "Seven weeks, they shall be complete" (Leviticus 23:15). Thus according to many authorities, if one missed counting any day, the 7-week period can no longer be considered 'complete'.

Restrictions During the Omer

The Talmud tells us that Rabbi Akiva had 24,000 students who tragically died during the Omer period, because they did not treat each other with sufficient respect. Therefore, for the 33 days from Passover until Lag B'Omer, we observe these signs of mourning:

1) no weddings

2) not listening to instrumental music, either live or recorded (vocal music is permitted)

3) no or shaving, unless for business purposes

[Note: According to some customs, the 33-day mourning period begins a few weeks later -- on the first of Iyar, and ends on the third of Sivan.]

48 Ways

Each day of the Omer is related to a different level of the kabbalistic "Sefirot," the emanations through which G-d interacts with the world. (see: Kabbalah 101) Each of the seven weeks is associated with one of seven Sefirot, and each day within each of the seven weeks is associated also with one of the same seven Sefirot -- thus creating 49 permutations. Each day during the Omer, we focus on a different aspect of the Sefirot, with the hopes of attaining spiritual improvement in that specific area. http://www.aish.com/spirituality/kabbala101/Kabbala_3_-_The_Ten_Sefirot.asp

Specifically, since Rabbi Akiva's students showed a lack of proper respect, during the Omer period we try to look for the best way to treat our family, friends and acquaintances, so that we may make a "tikkun" (spiritual correction) on the mistakes of the past.



From: Aish.com [newsletterserver@aish.com] Sent: May 03, 2006 12:13 PM

http://www.aish.com/omerLawsAndCustoms/omerLawsAndCustomsDefault/ABCs_of_the_Omer.asp

ABC's of the Omer

by Rabbi Shraga Simmons

The significance, customs and mechanics of counting the Omer.

What is the Omer?

In the days of the Holy Temple, the Jewish people would bring a barley offering on the second day of Passover (Leviticus 23:10). This was called the "Omer" (literally, "sheaf") and in practical terms would permit the consumption of recently-harvested grains.

Starting on the second day of Passover, the Torah (Leviticus 23:15) says it is a mitzvah every day to "count the Omer" -- the 50 days leading up to Shavuot. This is an important period of growth and introspection, in preparation for the holiday of Shavuot which arrives 50 days later.

Shavuot is the day that the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, and as such required a seven-week preparation period. The commentators say that we were freed from Egypt only in order to receive the Torah and to fulfill it. Thus we were commanded to count from the

The Talmud (Avot 6:5) says that "Torah is acquired through 48 ways." Thus during the weeks leading up to Shavuot, many have the custom to prepare to "receive the Torah" by studying the 48 Ways. One popular method is to learn a lesson each day of Rabbi Noah Weinberg's series, the "48 Ways"; there is both a text and audio version available online.

Lag B'Omer

Lag B'Omer, the 33rd day of the Omer ('Lag' has a numerical value of 33), marks the date of death of one of the greatest Talmudic sages, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. This is a day of great celebration, because tradition says that on his death bed Rabbi Shimon revealed the secrets of the Zohar, the primary book of Jewish mysticism (kabbalah).

For centuries, Lag B'Omer has been a day of pilgrimage to the tomb of Rabbi Shimon in the Galilee town of Meiron. In one day, an estimated 250,000 Jews visit Meiron -- dancing, praying, and celebrating the wonderful spiritual gifts that Rabbi Shimon bequeathed to us. Many people camp out for days beforehand in anticipation.

To celebrate Lag B'Omer, Jews from around Israel light bonfires, to commemorate the great mystical illuminations that Rabbi Shimon revealed. For weeks before, Israeli children scavenge wood to arrange as impressive sculptures -- often 20 and 30 feet high. Great public celebrations are held and the wood towers are burned on Lag B'Omer.

This article can also be read at: http://www.aish.com/omerLawsAndCustoms/omerLawsAndCustomsDefault/ABCs_of_the_Omer.asp Author Biography: Rabbi Shraga Simmons spent his childhood trekking through snow in Buffalo, New York. He has worked in the fields of journalism and public relations, and is now the Co-editor of Aish.com in Jerusalem. Aish.com One Western Wall Plaza PO Box 14149 Jerusalem 91141 Israel Tel - 972-2-628-5666 Fax - 972-2-627-3172 © 2006 Aish.com

From: usa-weekly-owner@yatednews.com [mailto:usa-weekly-owner@yatednews.com] Sent: May 04, 2006 2:31 PM To: usa-weekly@yatednews.com Subject: YATED USA WEEKLY 05-05-06

Halacha Discussion

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

She'ailos U'teshuvos

Counting Sefiras ha-Omer Unintentionally

As Lag ba-Omer approaches, it is timely to call attention to a halachic problem which can easily arise. People frequently ask each other what day of the Omer it is. If one gives the correct answer -- even though he does not intend to fulfill the mitzvah of counting the Omer by answering his friend -- it is considered as if he fulfilled his obligation to count the Omer. This halachah, which is recorded in the Shulchan Aruch,¹ is based on an opinion in the Talmud that holds that mitzvos eimam tzrichos kavanah, mitzvos can be fulfilled even without specific intent to fulfill them. By uttering the correct day's count of the Omer, he has lost the opportunity to recite a blessing over the counting since he has, in the eyes of the halachah, already counted the Omer, albeit unintentionally.² One should, therefore, not give a direct answer when asked for the day of the Omer; rather one should say: Yesterday's count was such and such. Of course, this advisory applies only from sunset and onwards, since counting sefirah before sunset is invalid.³

The danger of inadvertently counting the Omer by a causal response or comment regarding what day of the Omer it is, is most prevalent on Lag ba-Omer. The very name "Lag ba-Omer" states that it is the 33rd day of the Omer count (as Lag is the letter equivalent for the number 33).⁴ Thus on the evening of Lag ba-Omer after sunset, one should be careful not to express that "today is Lag ba-Omer" until after he counts the Omer with the blessing.

Question: If, inadvertently, one forgot and responded with the correct sefirah count, is there any way that he can count again that night with the blessing? Discussion: B'diavad, one is permitted to recite sefirah that night with the blessing: If he responded by saying just the correct number of that day, but did not say "Today is number so and so,"

then he may repeat the sefirah with a blessing.⁵ But if he omitted just the word "ba-Omer" (or "la-Omer"), then the count remains valid and it may not be repeated with the blessing.⁶ If he responded by saying, "Today is so and so" but did not mention the "weeks" count, he may still repeat the sefirah with a blessing. For instance, on the seventeenth day he responded, "Today is day number seventeen," but he did not add, "which is two weeks and three days."⁷ [Obviously, this applies only after the first week of sefirah has passed.] Even if he responded with the correct number and the right weekly count but had specific and clear intention not to fulfill the mitzvah of Sefiras ha-Omer with his response, then he may repeat the sefirah with a blessing.⁸ If the person who inadvertently forgot and responded, "Today is so and so" is one who is always particular to count the Omer after tzeis ha-kochavim only, and this exchange took place before tzeis ha-kochavim, he may repeat the count with the blessing.⁹ If on the fifth day, for example, he responded, "Today is six minus one," or, "Today is three plus three," he may repeat the count with the blessing.¹⁰ If in response to the question he wrote down the correct sefirah count (but did not say it), he may repeat the sefirah with the blessing.¹¹ If the questioner, for example, asked, "Is today day number five?" and the response was, "Yes, it is," then both the questioner and respondent can repeat the sefirah and recite the blessing.¹²

Question: May one repeat the sefirah with a blessing if, in response to the question, "What was yesterday's Sefiras ha-Omer," one mistakenly answered today's count?

Discussion: Yes, he may. Since his intention was to say yesterday's count, it is considered as if he had specific intent not to fulfill today's mitzvah. Although he mistakenly said the wrong (today's) count, it still does not change the fact that he specifically intended not to fulfill the mitzvah.¹³

Question: Is nail cutting permitted during sefirah?

Discussion: Yes, it is¹⁴; only hair cutting and removal is forbidden during sefirah. It is also permitted to trim a mustache that interferes with eating,¹⁵ to tweeze eyebrows or eyelashes,¹⁶ and to comb one's hair even though some hair will get pulled out in the process.¹⁷ Married women may cut hair that is protruding from their head covering.¹⁸

Question: If, mistakenly, one bought chametz after Pesach from a Jewish-owned store [whose chametz was not sold properly], must the chametz be disposed of?

Discussion: L'hatchilah, it is forbidden to purchase chametz which was in a Jew's possession over Pesach. Therefore if such chametz was purchased, one should make every attempt to return it to the store.¹⁹ But if returning the chametz is not an option, one should not rush to dispose of it before discussing the issue with a reliable halachic authority who is familiar with the stores in his area. This is because it is often impossible to ascertain whether or not the chametz in question was in the Jewish-owned store during Pesach -- in which case it would be forbidden to purchase, or if it was delivered to the store only after Pesach -- in which case it may be permitted, since it may have been in the possession of a non-Jewish distributor over Pesach.²⁰ Since the prohibition against eating chametz that was in a Jew's possession over Pesach is Rabbinic in nature, we may follow the standard rule of safek derabanan l'kulah when in doubt.²¹ A rav should be consulted.²²

Question: May one who does not use the city eiruv [for carrying on Shabbos] ask another person who does use the eiruv to carry on his behalf?

Discussion: The answer will depend upon the reason why the first person does not make use of the eiruv. If, in his opinion or in the opinion of his halachic authority, the eiruv is not valid and may not be used at all, then he may not ask another person to carry for him either. This is because he is asking the other person to do something which is not halachically permitted. But if, in his opinion or in the opinion of his halachic authority, the eiruv is valid, yet he chooses to be stringent and not use the eiruv, it is permitted to ask another person to carry on his behalf. In this case, the other person is not performing an halachically forbidden action.

The same principle applies in other areas of halachah. For example: Contemporary poskim disagree whether or not it is permitted to lift off the tab of a soda or a beer can on Shabbos.²³ One who does not remove tabs because he adheres to the halachic opinion that forbids it, may not ask another person to open a can on his behalf. If, however, it is only a personal stringency but in theory he agrees that it is permissible, he is allowed to ask another person who opens soda cans to open one for him as well.

May a person who keeps Shabbos until 72 minutes past sunset ask another person who waits less than 72 minutes to perform a forbidden Shabbos "Labor" for him before 72 minutes are up? Again, it will depend on the previously mentioned principle. If waiting 72 minutes is based on a strict halachic interpretation, then asking someone else to do a forbidden Labor is like asking him to be mechalel Shabbos. If, however, keeping 72 minutes is a personal stringency or a family custom, it is permitted to ask another person who does not have this stringency or custom to "transgress" Shabbos on your behalf.²⁴

(Footnotes) 1O.C. 489:4. 2Although basic halachah follows the opposing view — that one must have specific intent when fulfilling mitzvos — still, in deference to the view according to which one would have fulfilled the mitzvah, we do not recite the blessing on the (second) sefirah; Mishnah Berurah 489:22 and Beir Halachah (s.v. sh'eim and ein). 3Beir Halachah 489:4 s.v. ein. A minority view recommends that one should avoid a direct response as early as plag ha-minchah; see Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 489:15 and Machatzis ha-Shekel 489:10. 4See Sha'arei Teshuvah 489:1 and Beir Halachah s.v. moneh, who quote various views as to whether or not one fulfills the mitzvah of sefirah by counting with roshei teivos. 5Mishnah Berurah 489:20 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 25. L'chatchilah, however, one should not rely on this leniency and should avoid stating the correct number even without saying "today," Kaf ha-Chayim 489:53. 6Mishnah Berurah 489:8;489:21. 7Mishnah Berurah 489:22. Since other poskim disagree and maintain that one has fulfilled his obligation even without mentioning the "weeks" count [except at the end of each week - day 7, 14, 21, etc.], one should l'chatchilah not rely on this leniency; see Da'as Torah 489:4 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 489:28 and Kaf ha-Chayim 489:55. 8Mishnah Berurah 489:22. 9Beir Halachah 489:4 s.v. sheim. 10Be'er Moshe 3:82. 11Chasam Sofer 6:19; Aruch ha-Shulchan 489:9. 12Da'as Torah 489:4, quoting Zachor l'Avraham 13 Be'er Moshe 3:80. 14 Kaf ha-Chayim 493:16. 15 O.C. 551:13. 16 Bein Pesach l'Shavuos, pg. 241, quoting an oral ruling from Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S. Wosner. 17 Mishnah Berurah 551:20. 18Mishnah Berurah 551:79. When necessary, women may shave their legs; Harav M. Feinstein (Oholei Yeshurun, pg. 9). See also Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:137 where he allows women to take haircuts when necessary during the Three Weeks. When necessary, a girl of marriageable age may have her hair cut; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Beisah, pg. 371). 19 O.C. 448:3. 20This is especially true of large supermarkets and superstores where there are daily deliveries of new merchandise. 21See Mishnah Berurah 449:3 and 5. 22There are also other factors that a rav should consider: 1) Some poskim consider a mumar as a non-Jew concerning this halachah; see Magen ha-Elef 448:7. 2) Certain chametz mixtures which may not be eaten on Pesach are not necessarily prohibited after Pesach even if they were owned by a Jew on Pesach; see O.C. 447:11 and Beir Halachah s.v. kein. 23See The Weekly Halachah Discussion, vol. 1, pg. 137. 24Entire discussion based on the following sources: Darkei Teshuvah Y.D. 119:58 quoting Ksav Sofer; Igros Moshe O.C. 1:186; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Peninei ha-Maor, letter 3-8 and letter 22-1; Shulchan Shelomo 318:57 and footnote); Shevet ha-Levi 1:53.



From: Rav Kook List [ravkooklist@gmail.com] Sent: May 02, 2006 3:00 AM

Rav Kook on Israel Independence Day: The Balfour Declaration

London, 1916

In Shevat 5676 (1916), after being trapped for nearly two years in Switzerland due to the outbreak of World War I, Rav Kook was invited to occupy the rabbinic post of the Machzikei HaDat congregation in London. He accepted the position on condition that after the war he be allowed to return unhindered to Eretz Yisrael.

'Not many days passed,' recorded Rabbi Shimon Glitzenstein, his personal secretary in London, 'when already an atmosphere of influence on all circles of Jewish life in this large and important community was formed. All recognized his extraordinary concern for the entire Jewish people.'

Rav Kook certainly did not plan to spend three years in London; but he would later express his feelings about the momentous events of this period - events in which he took an active role - writing: "The hand of G-d is revealed; the voice of G-d calls out to all who can hear" [Igrot vol. III, p. 100].

National Treachery

Not long after his arrival, Rav Kook was forced into conflict with Jews who were working to undermine the Jewish people's hopes of national renaissance. Certain assimilated leaders of the British Jewish community, who considered themselves 'Englishmen of the Mosaic faith,' openly opposed the Zionist front. This powerful group, which included the staunchly anti-Zionist Lord Edwin Montagu (the only Jewish member of the British cabinet during World War I), had great influence on the British government due to their social, economic, and political standing. They officially declared to the British government that the Jewish religion has no connection to Jewish nationalism, and that they opposed any action recognizing the Land of Israel as the Jewish homeland.

In an open letter "in response to the national treachery," Rav Kook sharply condemned all those "who rend the Jewish soul, who wish to shatter the wondrous unity of Judaism and Jewish nationalism."

"The entire debate whether it is our national or our religious heritage which sustains our life is a bitter mockery. The perfection of 'You are one and Your name is one, and who is like Your nation, Israel, one nation in the land' is indivisible."

He described the cruel injustice perpetrated by the Gentile nations throughout the generations, and demanded that they atone for their awesome sin by returning our land to us and assisting us in establishing an independent state. The letter was read in all English synagogues on Shabbat after the Torah reading, and made a tremendous impression. Rav Kook then sent another letter urging the members of all English synagogues to immediately request that the British government 'aid us in our demand to return to our holy land, our eternal national home' [Igrot III, pp. 107-114].

Rav Kook's efforts succeeded: the spiteful letter written by the influential Jewish leaders was disregarded. The major British newspapers recorded the spontaneous protest, correcting the negative impression caused by the assimilationists.

During the parliamentary debates over authorizing a national Jewish home in the Land of Israel, several members raised the claims advanced by the Jewish assimilationists. Such a mandate, they said, is contrary to the spirit of Judaism. Mr. Kiley, a proponent of the declaration, then stood up and asked, "Upon whom shall we rely on the religious aspect of this issue - upon Lord Montagu, or upon Rabbi Kook, the rabbi of Machzikei HaDat?"

Congratulating the British Nation

After the Balfour Declaration was passed in 1917, the Jewish leaders held a huge, celebratory banquet in London, to which they invited lords, dignitaries, and members of Parliament. Speech after speech by Jewish communal and Zionist leaders thanked the British for their historic act. When Rav Kook was given the honor of speaking, he said:

"I have come not only to thank the British nation, but to congratulate it for being privileged to make this declaration. The Jewish people is the 'scholar' among the nations, the people of the book, a nation of prophets; and it is a great honor for any nation to aid it. I bless the British nation for having extended such honorable aid to the people of the Torah, to return to its land and assist it in renewing its homeland."

A Wondrous Chain of Events

Rav Kook saw in the national return of the Jewish people an overt revelation of the hand of G-d. How could one be blind to this divine nature of this historical process?

"An imperviousness to divine intervention in history plagues our generation. A series of wondrous events has, and is, passing before us. Blind eyes fail to see the hand of G-d, deaf ears fail to hear the divine utterance guiding history.

"The sequence of events commenced with the immigration of the disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov and the Vilna Gaon to Eretz Yisrael. They were followed by the awakening of the "Chibat Zion" movement, and the establishment of the first settlements. The Zionism founded by Herzl, the building of the Land by the pioneers of the Second "Aliyah", the Balfour Declaration, and the affirmation of the mandate in San Remo by the League of Nations - these are the most current events.

"Taken individually, each event may be explained in a logical- natural manner. But when they are viewed together, we may discern a wondrous chain of complementary links created and guided by the divine hand. The prophet of redemption cried out, 'Hear O deaf, and look, O blind, that you may see!' [Isaiah 42:18]."

[Celebration of the Soul, by R. Pesach Jaffe, pp. 186-189; additional material from Encyclopedia of Religious Zionism vol. 5, pp. 179-190]

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