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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON **BECHUKOSAI** - 5776

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June 3 The count is: 42 Today is the 42nd day, which is 6 weeks of the omer

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> to: weeklydt@torahweb.org
date: Thu, Jun 2, 2016 at 7:42 PM subject: Rabbi Mordechai Willig - Torah,
Emunah, and Beracha

Rabbi Mordechai Willig
Torah, Emunah, and Beracha

"If you will go in [the way of] My laws" (Vayikra 26:3), the opening phrase of parshas Bechukosai, is interpreted by Rashi, "she't'hi'yu ameilim baTorah - that you should be laboring in the Torah". Conversely, Rashi explains the opening phrase of the curses, "If you will not listen to Me" (26:14), as referring to not laboring in the Torah.

The pivotal and critical distinction between the behavior of Am Yisrael which deserves blessing and the behavior which results in the horrific curses of the tochacha is whether we are ameilim baTorah or not. If we do labor in Torah, and, as a result, "observe My commandments and perform them" (26:3), we are blessed with bounty, peace, victory, fertility, and the spiritual rewards of the Bais Hamikdash and Gan Eden (26:4-12).

The causes of the curses, according to Rashi (16:14), are "seven sins, the first brings on the second, and so forth until the seventh. They are the following: He did not study [i.e. labor intensely in the Torah], he did not perform [the mitzvos], he despises others who perform [the mitzvos], he hates the [Torah] scholars, he prevents others [from performing mitzvos], he denies the mitzvos, he denies Hashem". This progression, from bitul Torah to k'fira, from a failure to labor in Torah to outright atheism, has tragic consequences. But how does one lead to the other?

Rav Eliyahu Dessler (Michtav Me'Eliyahu vol. 3, pg. 177) provides a crucial insight: inner faith comes as a result of learning Torah in depth, not by abstract speculation and philosophy. Human reason is "bribed" by all types of personal interests (negi'os); desire leads reason to wherever it wishes. Relying on one's own independent human reason is comparable to someone going to a judge that he bribed in order that the judge will rule for him as he wishes. As such, one who says "I will only accept what I understand" can never apprehend the truth because he is swayed by his

desires. Instead of building on our own subjective and limited human reason, our faith must be firmly rooted in the Torah tradition (mesorah) received from previous generations, and on learning Torah and recognizing its greatness and the greatness of our Sages. Only one who is rooted in, and subservient to, the Torah, as explained by mesorah, can attempt to apprehend the fundamentals of faith rationally.

This insight of Rav Dessler explains how a failure to learn Torah in depth can lead to heresy. Laboring in the Torah for its own sake yields clarity that Hashem gave the Torah at Sinai, and joy similar to when Torah was given at Sinai (ibid pg. 176, based on Talmud Yerushalmi, Chagiga 2:1).

"Do not stray after your hearts" (Bamidbar 15:39) refers to heresy (Berachos 12b). Hashem implanted within man the quality of curiosity in order to drive us towards deep learning of Torah. However, we may not be curious to learn about heresy. Our evil inclination misuses our curiosity to lead us to heresy, and even idolatry, so that sexual immorality is permitted publically (Sanhedrin 63b). To overcome this, one should reinforce one's simple faith based on tradition, and labor incessantly in Torah (pg. 178-9).

Today we are witness to an exponential increase in the labor of Torah, in numbers unprecedented in the post-Talmudic era (see Rambam, introduction to Mishne Torah). We must constantly thank Hashem for this phenomenon, and the attendant blessings, relative to our recent past, of bounty, peace, victory, and fertility.

At the same time, sadly, unprecedented numbers of Jews are being lost to assimilation and intermarriage, as the progression of the seven sins highlighted by Rashi continues to play out before our eyes. Even affiliated Jews, including even some who identify as Orthodox, are involved in some of the negative actions and attitudes which are listed amongst those sins, and are progressing down the destructive path towards assimilation and the concomitant curses. Simple, unquestioning emunah (faith) in the eternity and morality of the Torah is being derided, even among observant Jews, by proponents of the postmodern zeitgeist described and anticipated by Chazal in Sanhedrin (63b) and by Rav Dessler.

It remains for the faithful to strengthen our faith and labor in Torah. May we thereby merit the continued and enhanced worldly brachos, and, ultimately, the eschatological ones as well.

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Closing Thoughts: **Masorah In America**

Posted by: **Rabbi J. David Bleich** in Journal, Posts Jun 1, 16 0
by J. David Bleich

This essay is excerpted with permission from the introduction to Contemporary Halakhic Problems volume 7, forthcoming from Maggid. The quintessence of Judaism is a sense of masorah, transmission from generation to generation. Fundamentally, that masorah is the corpus of the revealed Halakhah received at Sinai, passed on from generation to generation, father to son, teacher to pupil. But it is far more. "This is my G-d and I will beautify him; the G-d of my father and I will exalt him" (Exodus 15:2). How does one beautify G-d? Beauty as ascribed to the Deity is an anthropomorphic depiction but even such figurative descriptions have limits. As the medieval philosophers well understood, the essence of G-d is certainly beyond human comprehension but the results of divine activity are

perceived by men and so we speak of those actions and their results in the only terms that we can comprehend, viz., the language of human acts and resultant effects. But beauty is neither an act nor a description of the effect of an act. Moreover, anthropomorphic language may be appropriate in describing G-d's relationship with us but how could we possibly have any effect upon G-d? Yet the verse reads, "and I will beautify Him." What could the attribute of beauty, as applied to the Deity, possibly signify? Even more incomprehensible is the notion that man can somehow endow G-d with beauty that He otherwise lacks. Understood literally, the words border on the blasphemous.

Quite frequently in rabbinic literature answers are presented without prior formulation of a question. The questions are either obvious or much too subtle to be grasped by every student. But the answers are of tremendous importance and when the answers are properly appreciated one finds that the questions have evaporated. And so the lesson conveyed by the answer is sufficient. The difficulties inherent in the verse "and I will beautify Him" are so obvious to the inquiring mind that they need not be formulated. The answer presented by the Sages, Shabbat 133b, is a rendition of the verse as "make yourself beautiful before Him in performance of mitzvot: a beautiful sukkah, a beautiful lulav, a beautiful shofar, etc." G-d could not possibly be beautiful or not be beautiful. But man can and must harness his G-d-given sense of aesthetic appreciation and channel it to the service of G-d.

Not explicitly addressed by the Sages is the second clause of that verse, "the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him." Scripture is not mere poetry. Phrases are not simply repetitive and synonyms are not employed solely for emphasis. "This is my G-d"—even the maidservant witnessing the splitting of the Red Sea experienced a beatific vision of the Deity surpassing that of Ezekiel and the prophets," declares the Mekhilta, ad locum.

For one privileged to enjoy that beatific experience the prophetic vision is undeniable and self-validating. Faith is not required to accept that which is apprehended by the intellect. "This is my G-d"—the maidservant perceived G-d; she accepted G-d's existence because of knowledge born of her own perception rather than on the basis of faith in what was taught by others. For one who can exclaim "This is my G-d" while experiencing a personal encounter with the Deity, what need is there further to describe Him as "the G-d of my father?" The passage reflects a recognition that even a prophetic experience does not exhaust the totality of religious awareness. Much of that awareness is conveyed on the basis of a received tradition, a tradition transmitted by the previous generation. Thus, a perception that "This is my G-d"—powerful and convincing as it may be—is incomplete without the complementary awareness that He is "the G-d of my father." To be properly comprehended, the awareness that "This is my G-d" must be accompanied by an appreciation—and acceptance—of the masorah transmitted by an earlier generation. "The G-d of my father" expresses the notion that one can properly experience "This is my G-d" only within the framework of a masorah received from one's forebears.

I remember quite vividly a discourse delivered by the late R. Ya'akov Kamenetsky that I attended in my youth in which he quoted a statement of Sefer ha-Yashar. Abraham, raised as an idol-worshiper, became convinced of the existence of the one G-d at a very early age on the basis of his formulation of a teleological argument. But upon becoming convinced of G-d's existence, states this source, Abraham sought out Noah, who was still living, and his son Shem.¹ That fact in itself did not strike me as remarkable. Abraham either actually heard of the Seven Commandments of the Sons of Noah or recognized that G-d might have revealed Himself to mankind. The contents of the Seven Commandments cannot be discerned by reason alone. There are myriad minutiae in the application of the Noahide Code that remain ambiguous even today.² Abraham was certainly in need of guidance with regard to such matters. But Sefer ha-Yashar reports that Abraham had a far more ambitious agenda: Abraham went to Noah and Shem "and lived with them in their home to learn the instruction of G-d (mussar) and His ways . . . and Abraham served Noah and his son Shem many years."³

Certainly, information concerning the content of the Noahide Code could be obtained only from the recipients and their successors. But the masorah that Abraham seeks from Noah and Shem is much more encompassing. It includes divine "mussar" and the "ways of G-d." Even that which Abraham was able to fathom on the basis of intellect required confirmation by means of masorah.

Human intellect is fallible. Even when its apprehension is correct there can be no certainty precisely because a wise person knows that his intelligence may mislead him. Abraham was in need of confirmation of his own rationally perceived conclusions. Adam received the masorah directly from G-d; from Adam the masorah passed to Seth and Enoch and ultimately to Shem.⁴ Abraham sought out Noah and Shem in order to acquire from them not only instruction in the myriad details of both theological and halakhic teachings but also an understanding of the ways of G-d that may be attained only on the basis of the masorah. Without that tradition, Abraham's beliefs and comportment, not to speak of his observance of the Noahide Code, would have been riddled with lacunae.

Judaism, and the masorah integral to its essence, involves much more than divine service. It encompasses mores and values that both reflect and enhance performance of mitzvot. Often such matters can be articulated only with difficulty; they must be lived rather than taught. They are encapsulated in familial, social and cultural experience. Masorah is taught by comportment even more so than by explicit instruction. As the Gemara, Berakhot 7b, underscores, serving Torah scholars, and thereby observing their conduct is of even greater import than that which they teach. The words of Sefer ha-Yashar are precise: ". . . and Abraham served Noah and his son Shem many years."

E.B. DeVito's poem "Graduates" gives eloquent expression to a Chinese tale. A young man comes to his teacher for instruction in how to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit jade. Each day master and student discuss matters various and sundry and all the while pieces of jade are passed between them. One day, after a period of time, the young man pauses, frowns and suddenly exclaims, "This is not jade!" The point of the narrative is that some forms of knowledge cannot be taught directly. Ability to distinguish between the genuine and the imitation requires time, experience as well as repeated and continual exposure to the authentic.

Acculturation and assimilation were the scourge of post-Enlightenment European Jewry. Conscious disaffiliation resulted in the loss of countless numbers of Jews and their total alienation from Judaism. The early American experience was far different but no less tragic. Jews crossed the ocean and established themselves in the New World but the masorah in its pristine, authentic guise did not accompany them. The reasons are many and varied: the immigrant generation tended to be less knowledgeable than conferees left behind; religious leaders were often men of inferior erudition, of less than sterling character and stellar piety; Jewish education was poor to non-existent; a sense of community was lacking; poverty was rampant; and the desire successfully to forge a new life was all-pervasive. The masorah offered by the immigrant generation to the successor generation was adulterated at best. The result, precisely because it was unintended, was all the more tragic.

The masorah that was transmitted was attenuated and hence less than fully authentic. The result was not only compromise, both personal and communal, in religious practice but also a compromised, and hence less than authentic, value system. There is no need to cast aspersions or to assign blame—but the facts remain. The greatest misfortune is that the attenuated masorah came to be regarded—and in some circles is still regarded—as entirely authentic. It is not compromise, but the hallowing of the compromise, that is deplorable. Heavy-hearted resignation in light of changed circumstances might have been acceptable but idealization of the compromise as a norm is a denial, nay, a perversion, of the masorah.

During that epoch, the final years of which I experienced, the level of Torah knowledge both among the laity and members of the American-born

rabbinate was appalling. Efforts were concentrated upon prevention of further deterioration of religious observance rather than upon enhancement. Corrective measures could not be undertaken or, if undertaken, met with only limited success because the strength of the masorah, the chain linking each generation to the next, had been severely compromised.

World War II was an unspeakable tragedy for mankind and most certainly for world Jewry. Mysterious are the way of G-d. Paradoxically, the ashes of the tragedy made possible a phoenix-like blossoming of Judaism on American soil. The masorah that had been disrupted in the United States remained intact in Europe. Post-war immigration of Jewish survivors took place in a social, cultural and economic climate entirely different from that confronted by earlier waves of immigrants. Communities succeeded in reestablishing themselves with both institutions and mores intact and, with time, flourished on American soil. Their masorah remained unbroken and undiminished. By and large, the post-war immigrant generation did not consciously attempt to transform what by then was the indigenous Jewish community, but transform that community it most certainly did. To the unpracticed eye, counterfeit currency may seem real but often the difference becomes readily recognizable when the authentic is placed against the inauthentic. The profound influence of the immigrant community was often both unintended and unrecognized but that influence cannot be overstated. Wonder of wonders, the authentic masorah was reestablished in a plethora of accents and vocabularies.

In many ways standards of religious observance and practice now exceed those of pre-war Europe. Economics, technology and economy of scale have contributed to an across-the-board raising of the bar in dietary kashrut. Glatt kosher has become de rigueur; Bet Yosef glatt is the new platinum standard. Once the story of how the Sha'agat Aryeh travelled with his own cooking utensils was the sum total of most individuals' knowledge of yashan, assuming that they knew the meaning of the term. Today, in many communities it is impossible to find a bakery that is not scrupulous with regard to the distinction between yashan and chadash. In my youth the cognoscenti went to considerable lengths and expense to procure tefillin made of leather obtained from gassot. Recently, I discovered that the less expensive dakot of reliable kashrut are no longer available. They are not produced because there is no market for them. Modern technology makes it possible routinely to produce tefillin whose deviation from a perfect square can be measured in microns. I am informed that use of "zisse klaf," if it has not already become, is rapidly becoming the standard for sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzot without the legendary man in the street being aware that there ever was a possible problem requiring a solution. A hybrid etrog candidly acknowledged to be the product of interspecies grafting is hard to find; the price of the etrog is commensurate with the strength of its pedigree. The most fundamental expression of "Zeh Keli ve-anvehu—This is my G-d and I will beautify Him" is scrupulous avoidance of halakhic doubt in performance of mitzvot. The ultimate beauty of the mitzvah is its highest common denominator. "The G-d of my father and I will exalt Him," the masorah of earlier generations has been reestablished in its pristine beauty!

Nowhere is this transformation more pronounced than in devotion to Torah study. Aspiration to single-minded pursuit of Torah study was always regarded by Jews as the most noble of endeavors. Throughout the generations, there were always individuals for whom "their Torah was their craft." They were the pride of the community and held in highest esteem. Such persons did not seek honor, glory or prominence. Often they shunned positions of leadership and responsibility. Yet it is precisely those individuals who are endowed with the discernment necessary to distinguish between the authentic and the inauthentic. The community at large was keenly attuned to the correlation between Torah scholarship and transmission of the masorah expressing the quintessence of Judaism.

Among the lacunae of tradition as transmitted to the American continent was pursuit of Torah study for its own sake. Absent that goal, a cadre of accomplished indigenous Torah scholars could not possibly have

been developed. Nature abhors a vacuum. It is the nature of scholarship that it, too, abhors a vacuum. In the absence of erudite leadership, the mantle of authority and the role of communal spokesmen was assumed by individuals of lesser knowledge and a diminished commitment to the ideological postulates of Judaism that so often accompanies a lack of scholarship. Unfortunately, that phenomenon still persists. But now, to paraphrase the comments of R. Naphtali Zevi Judah Berlin, in section IV of the introduction to his Ha'amek She'elah, the prescient observer recognizes that bridal adornments worn by anyone other than a bride are at best a charade.

A remarkable transformation has indeed taken place. Most apparent in the post-war transplantation of undiluted authentic traditions of European Jewry is the reestablishment of educational institutions in the New World replicating those that had been destroyed with standards of scholarly excellence mirroring those they were designed to replace. In terms of sheer numbers, in the aggregate, their enrollment now surpasses the number of students pursuing Torah wisdom for its own sake during any earlier period in recorded history. The influence of the post-war immigrants upon the American-born Jewish community has been profound. Instead of assimilating into what was then the dominant community, large segments of the already existing community have identified themselves with the Torah culture of the new arrivals. The result is an explosion of Torah scholarship.

Despite the many salient developments that we have witnessed, jubilation is hardly in order. The masorah has been reestablished within the committed community and many youths have been attracted precisely because of the genuineness of its teaching. But the countless souls that have not been awakened have become more and more estranged from authentic Judaism. The attenuated allegiance to Judaism that was emblematic of past generations of American Jews has become weaker and weaker. The result is a polarization between those who have accepted the masorah in its fullest sense and those to whom it is an alien concept.

The phenomenon of the "3-y Jew," *yahrzeit*, *yizkor* and *yamim nora'im*, is fading into oblivion. A generation ago, a person attending a typical American synagogue would often have heard at least half of the attendees reciting kaddish. Those individuals were mourners and men observing a *yahrzeit* who were in the synagogue solely for the purpose of reciting kaddish. Today, when no mourner is present, I am frequently asked whether it is appropriate, as indeed is the ruling of Rema, for another worshipper to recite the mourner's kaddish. There was a time when there was standing room only at *yizkor*. I recall a mailman who serviced the route that included my own synagogue who I saw in shul with mailbag in tow exactly three times a year. Each time he was present for no longer than half an hour, the half-hour timed precisely to include *yizkor*. Now increased attendance at *yizkor* is barely discernible. There are still three-day-a-year *yamim nora'im* Jews but their numbers are rapidly dwindling.

In my memory, there was a time when there were no *shi'urim* on Sunday for classes in the ordination program of Yeshivat Rabbenu Yitzchak Elchanan. The students were otherwise occupied as teachers in Talmud Torahs that met several weekday afternoons and on Sunday morning. Talmud Torahs are now virtually non-existent. True, some of the counterparts of the Talmud Torah students of yesteryear now attend day schools and *yeshivot*—and surely that is to be applauded. But it is a source of great anguish that countless others do not receive even the minimal exposure to Jewish teaching that was provided by the most inadequate of Talmud Torah schools.

One may be alarmed by the ever-increasing rate of intermarriage but the phenomenon should not be a surprise. Lack of Torah education results in diminished observance. With the passing of time, observance becomes more and more diluted. The masorah of Judaism is not passed from one generation to another. Judaism without its masorah is devoid of meaning. What remains is simply a residual ethnic taboo against marrying a person who is not of Jewish lineage. Surely, that is the poorest of all reasons for marriage only within the Jewish community. Small wonder, then, that in the sectors of our

community in which the magnetic force of the masorah is not felt, intermarriage is rapidly becoming the norm.

The Psalmist writes: “We will not hide from their children declaring unto the last generation the praises of the Lord and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done” (Psalms 78:4). Redak’s elucidation of this verse is remarkable. Redak renders the verse as: “From their children, the children of our ancestors—and they are our brothers—who do not learn and do not know the tradition, we, who know, are obligated (chayyavim anu ha-yod’im) to remind them and not to desist from them, until also they will declare unto their children, and their children unto their children’s children, until they declare the praises of the Lord unto the last generation.”

Redak spells out the challenge and the obligation quite clearly. We are charged with sharing the masorah in all its complexity and beauty with each and every one of our brothers and sisters. The very concept of masorah entails the notion that, not only must it be received, but that it must be passed on as well—passed on, not only to the next generation, but also to those of our generation who have not yet been reached.

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The final installment in this symposium will appear Wednesday night, June 1. See previous installments here:

http://www.torahmusings.com/tag/masorah_symposium/

1. See *Sefer ha-Yashar*, Parashat Noach.

2. For example, the principle that organ meat of an animal in which the trachea and esophagus have been severed while the animal is yet alive is regarded “as placed in a basket” and hence forbidden as “a limb torn from a live animal” is not a regulation that can be intuitively grasped by the intellect. Those organs are permitted to Jews only if the animal is slaughtered in accordance with the law handed down at Sinai. Would an improperly performed act of shechitah have rendered such organs permissible to Abraham? See R. Moses Sofer, *Teshuvot Chatam Sofer*, Yoreh De’ah, nos. 18-19. R. Meir Dan Plocki devotes a section of *Kuntres Ner Mitzvah*, published in his *Chemdat Yisra’el*, to an examination of many matters pertaining to the Noahide Code regarding which determination is far from obvious. Numerous aspects of the Noahide laws are elucidated in *Mishneh le-Melekh*, *Hilkhos Melakhim* 10:7. In recent years a number of compendia have been published codifying the prescriptions of the Noahide Code.

3. See *Sefer ha-Yashar*, Parashat Noach.

4. *Zohar Chadash*, *Midrash ha-Ne’elam*, ed. R. Reuben Margolis (Jerusalem, 5738), p. 22b. ←

<http://5tjt.com/undocumented/>

Undocumented Halachic Musings By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

It has happened numerous times, over thousands of years. Precious documents have been lost, causing serious repercussions. Passports, titles to vehicles, the wife’s kesubah. The repercussion of losing a passport is not being able to leave the country. If one loses the title certificate for a vehicle, one cannot sell that vehicle. And if a woman’s kesubah is lost, then yichud of husband and wife (remaining alone with each other) is prohibited (see *Shulchan Aruch*, *Even HaEzer* 66:1)—that is, until a replacement kesubah, called a kesubah d’irkasa, is obtained.

What? Is that really the case? What if you just cannot get to a rabbi in time? Does the Chaverim organization carry an emergency kesubah d’irkasa?

Before we call Chaverim, let’s realize that the Rema (E.H. 66) cites views that offer a more lenient opinion regarding yichud, but not in regard to other matters. The Bach explains that when the Tur forbade yichud, he was only referring to a bride, but a woman who is already in a marriage and lost her kesubah may remain alone with her husband until a replacement kesubah can be obtained. The Sma and Chelkas Mechokek cite this Bach, but the Vilna Gaon disagrees with this reading and rules that it is forbidden. The Chazon Ish (66:20) as well was stringent. The Levush (65:1) is also stringent. The Mishnah Berurah 545:27 seems to cite the Rema’s leniency, but it is not clear.

Two Reasons For Leniency

There are two reasons for the leniency cited in the poskim. First, the prohibition is only rabbinic, and that being the case, perhaps one can rely on the Bach that it only refers to a bride but not to an established marriage. Second, the wife is aware that she needs to be legally protected and will ensure that the new kesubah will be made.

What To Do In The Meantime

Nonetheless, the new kesubah must be written as soon as possible, since the leniency is only to permit yichud on a temporary basis.

Some contemporary poskim have advised that one can even write his wife a check for the fair-market value of the kesubah and remain with her until the kesubah d’irkasa is written. But what about on Shabbos? On Shabbos a check cannot be written.

The solution for Shabbos, according to the *Shulchan Aruch*, is to give the wife ownership of portable property worth that amount. Even though it is forbidden to perform a kinyan on Shabbos (see *Eiruvim* 71a), in order to avoid the prohibition of yichud, the Rishonim have different ways to understand how and why it is permitted.

Keeping Tabs On The Kesubah

It is related that Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, zt”l, father-in-law of Rav Aharon Kotler, zt”l, used to occasionally ask his wife if she knew where her kesubah was located. Once, when she could not locate it, Rav Isser Zalman ran out of the house so as not to violate this halachah. This brings us to the next question.

What happens if after one has written the kesubah d’irkasa, the original kesubah is found? Now the woman has two documents. What should be done?

It is a clear halachah (see *Shulchan Aruch*, *Choshen Mishpat* 41; see also E.H. 100:14) that one is not permitted to have two documents that can be used for collecting the same debt. Rav Elyashiv, zt”l, ruled that when one makes a photocopy of the kesubah for registration purposes, the witnesses are not permitted to sign the photocopy, because of this halachah.

So which one should be destroyed and which one should be kept?

Rav Vosner, zt”l, in his *Shevet HaLevi* volume VIII #288, rules that the woman may keep whichever one she wishes, but she must destroy the other one.

Surprisingly, other poskim rule that she may only use the kesubah d’irkasa, because the original document was invalidated when it got lost. It is clear, however, that Rav Vosner rejects this rationale. Generally speaking, the woman places more sentimental value in the original kesubah than in the kesubah d’irkasa that was just arranged, so it would be better to use the original kesubah.

If you report that your passport has been lost, the State Department will not allow you to travel with it if found. It is entered into the Consular “Lost and Stolen” database and flagged. This is not the case, however, with a kesubah.

Recalling Faulty Documents

As an interesting aside, a number of years ago a major posek in Eretz Yisrael came to the realization that he had been writing the wrong name of the city on all the kesubos he wrote for close to two decades. Apparently, he

had written Ramat Gan when he should have written Tel-Aviv. What did he do? Believe it or not, he issued a recall of over 20 years' worth of kesubos. Is A Copy OK?

What if someone took a picture of the kesubah or made a copy of the kesubah and gave it to a beis din? Would this help avoid the issur of yichud if the kesubah is ever lost?

Here, too, the answer is no. The picture is not enough to collect a debt with, and therefore, while it may be sufficient to deny a claim of "this never happened," it is not sufficient to lay a claim with and collect upon it. Rav Elyashiv thus ruled that yichud is still forbidden even if there is a copy of the kesubah that is extant.

So, if you lose a passport, contact the State Department or a local embassy. And if you lose a kesubah, contact a rav who can replace it right away. v The author can be reached at Yairhoffman2@gmail.com.

from: Kol Torah Webmaster <webmaster@koltorah.org> to: Kol Torah <koltorah@koltorah.org> date: Thu, Jun 2, 2016 at 7:01 PM subject: Kol Torah Parashat BeChukotay 2016

Yerushalayim, the Beit HaMikdash and Ezra Perek 4 by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

This past June (2015-5775), more than twenty incoming TABC students, current TABC students and TABC alumni gathered, with Hashem's help, for the twelfth annual Tanach Kollel, where we devoted a week to learning Sefer Ezra. This coming June 15th, 16th and 17th, we again, G-d willing, will devote another exciting week to the study of Tanach. We will be learning Sefer Daniel, one of the most fascinating Sefarim in the entire Tanach.

One of the issues the 5774 Tanach Kollel grappled with was the mystifying Perek 4 of Sefer Ezra. It is a pleasure to present the Tanach Kollel's collective explanation of this challenging Perek, especially in honor of this coming Sunday's celebration of Yom Yerushalayim.

The Content of Ezra Perek 4

Sefer Ezra begins with great excitement as the Persian emperor Koresh (Cyrus) grants us (in the year 539 BCE[1]) permission to return to Eretz Yisrael and to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash. Perek 4 of Sefer Ezra, however, opens with tension recording that our enemies[2] offer to help us in our efforts to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash, but our leaders (including Yehoshua Kohein Gadol and the governor Zerubavel) refuse their assistance. The refusal seems to stem from the fact that the Jewish status of these Samaritans is highly questionable, and consenting to their cooperation would wrongly confer legitimacy to their claims of Jewish identity.

Infuriated by our refusal to recognize the Samaritans as Jews, the Samaritans tenaciously resisted our attempts to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash and even hired representatives to successfully convince Koresh to retract his permission to rebuild the Mikdash.

Perek 4 of Sefer Ezra continues and notes that Samaritan resistance to our rebuilding project continues from Koresh until[3] the reign of Daryavesh (Darius, who reigned from 522-486 BCE according to the common chronology). Our Samaritan adversaries persist in the days of Achashveirosh (485-465 BCE, according to the common chronology) and write an accusation against us. Perek 4 continues and describes that during the reign of Artachshasta (Artaxerxes, king of Persia, 464-424 BCE), the Samaritans write a letter saying that if Jerusalem is rebuilt, Persian control of it will cease. Pasuk 23 records that Artaxerxes forces the rebuilding of Yerushalayim to cease. The letter of complaint and Artachshasta's response is presented at great length from Pesukim 8 to 22. Pasuk 24 then shockingly records that the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash ceases until the second year of Darius' reign.

Profound Problems with Ezra Perek 4

The inclusion in Perek 4 of the letter to Artachshasta regarding our rebuilding the walls of Yerushalayim is utterly shocking. Sefer Nechemiah is devoted to a full description of the struggle to rebuild the walls of

Yerushalayim in the year 445 BCE (according to the common chronology). By contrast, Ezra, Perakim 1-6, describes the struggle to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash. The Artachshasta correspondence appears entirely irrelevant to this section of Sefer Ezra. Moreover, Perek 4 seamlessly transitions from describing in Pasuk 23 the interruption of the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash to recording the disruption of the building of the Beit HaMikdash in Pasuk 24. Why does Sefer Ezra in Perek 4 interpolate the rebuilding of the Jerusalem walls within a discussion of the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash?[4]

The Equation of Yerushalayim with the Beit HaMikdash

A solution to this enormous problem emerges from Rambam's linking the holiness of Yerushalayim with the Kedushah of the Beit HaMikdash (Hilchot Beit HaBechirah 6:16). Rambam famously argues that even though the Kedushah Rishonah – the special holiness bestowed upon Eretz Yisrael which took effect when Yehoshua conquered Eretz Yisrael – elapsed with Nevuchadnetzar's conquest of Eretz Yisrael, the Kedushah of the Beit HaMikdash remains intact. Rambam explains that while the Kedushah conferred by Yehoshua's conquest may be reversed, the Kedushah of the Beit HaMikdash is irreversible, since its holiness is a result of Hashem's eternal presence. Rambam classifies Yerushalayim and the Beit HaMikdash in the same category and argues that, unlike the rest of Eretz Yisrael, Jerusalem's and the Beit HaMikdash's holiness was not canceled by the Babylonian conquest. The holiness of Jerusalem is a result of G-d's eternal presence, identical to the holiness of the Beit HaMikdash.

Similarly, when the Mishnah (Rosh HaShanah 4:1) writes that Shofar is blown on Shabbat in the Mikdash – but not in the rest of Eretz Yisrael – Rambam (Hilchot Shofar 2:8) writes that Shofar is blown not only in the Beit HaMikdash but also in all of Yerushalayim on Shabbat. Once again, when the Mishnah (Sukkah 3:12) records that on a Torah level one is obligated to take the Four Minim only in the Beit HaMikdash during the last six days of Sukkot, Rambam (Peirush HaMishanayot Sukkah) includes the entire city of Yerushalayim in this obligation[5].

We should note that Rav Soloveitchik invoked this point when many Jews asked in the aftermath of the Six Day War and the subsequent building of much of Yerushalayim whether they should continue reciting the "Nacheim" prayer – which describes Yerushalayim among other things as "desolate without inhabitants" – on Tishah BeAv, since the prayer seems to be entirely inappropriate in a time when hundreds of thousands of Jews live and thrive in Jerusalem.

Rav Chaim David HaLeivy (Teshuvot Aseih Lecha Rav 1:14) calls for adding one word to "Nacheim," namely "SheHayeta," which clarifies that the city that was desolate without inhabitants, but it still mourns during times of prosperity due to the continued absence of the Beit HaMikdash. However, most Rabbanim, including Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (cited in Nefesh HaRav pp.78-79), opposed changing the text of "Nacheim." Rav Soloveitchik argues that referring to Yerushalayim as desolate refers to Jerusalem in its status as an extension of the Beit HaMikdash, a status from which Jerusalem derives its special Halachic standing. As long as the Beit HaMikdash is not rebuilt, we view Yerushalayim as desolate and degraded.

Explaining Ezra Perek 4

By anachronistically inserting the correspondence regarding our rebuilding the walls of Yerushalayim within the discussion of our rebuilding the Beit HaMikdash, Sefer Ezra equates the rebuilding of Jerusalem with the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash. In fact, the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash was incomplete until the walls of Yerushalayim were complete.

The reasoning for this equation is straightforward. Yeshayahu (Perek 1 is a prime example) and many other Nevi'im condemn as repulsive those who offer generous Korbanot in the Beit HaMikdash and behave unethically outside its precincts. The Kedushah of the Beit HaMikdash must overflow into everyday life and not remain confined within its walls. For this reason, Hashem includes many ethical commands in the second half of Sefer VaYikra, the Sefer designated as Torat Kohanim, devoted to the laws of the

Beit HaMikdash and Korbanot. The holiness of the Mishkan described in the first half of Sefer VaYikra must be extended and applied to our mundane activities discussed in the second half of Sefer VaYikra. The ethical conduct of everyday life in Jerusalem in close proximity to the Beit HaMikdash serves as a paradigmatic example of how the Kedushah of the Temple must extend beyond its four walls, as taught by Sefer VaYikra.

Conclusion

Chazal (Bava Batra 14b) view Ezra and Nechemiah as one Sefer even though the portion called "Ezra" focuses on the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash and that which is called "Nechemiah" focuses on rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. By synthesizing these two projects, even though they took place nearly seventy years apart from each other (according to the common chronology), Sefer Ezra teaches that the holiness of Yerushalayim stems from its being constituted as an extension of the Beit HaMikdash. The mysterious Ezra Perek 4 is not a mystery at all. Ezra Perek 4 powerfully conveys the message that in order for the holiness of the Beit HaMikdash to be expressed authentically, it must be extended and applied to ordinary life in Jerusalem's markets, homes and interpersonal connections.

[1] This year is in accord with the common chronology which is supported by both Persian and Greek historical records as well as a straightforward reading of Ezra Perek 4, which lists the order of the kings as Cyrus, Darius, Achashveirosh (the Jewish version of the Persian name Chashirash – see Esther 10:1, which presents Achashirash as a "Ketiv" alternative to Achashveirosh, seemingly clinching the identification of Xerxes with Achashveirosh) and Artachshasta. This order of Persian kings conforms to the common chronology of Persian kings but differs from the mainstream view of Chazal (see, for example, Rashi to Ezra 4:6), that the order is Koresh, Achashveirosh and then Daryavesh. The strictly Orthodox commentary Da'at Mikra presents a Peshat (basic and straightforward) explanation of Sefer Ezra-Nechemiah conforming to the common chronology. Malbim (Ezra 7:1) presents Radak and the Ba'al HaMa'or, who regard alternatives to Chazal's chronology. Malbim regards this as a legitimate and viable alternative.

[2] These enemies appear to be the Shomeroni (Samaritans), as they mention that they were brought to Eretz Yisrael by an Assyrian king. See Melachim II 17:24-41 for the story of their forced transfer to Eretz Yisrael by the Assyrians and their subsequent highly questionable conversion to Judaism. A tiny community of Samaritans survive and live near Har Gerizim, which they regard as holy (as recorded in Chullin 6a). A video entitled "Are Samaritans a Disappearing People?" (available on You Tube) describes their current situation.

[3] Tanach Kolliel members/Torah Academy of Bergen County students Hillel Koslowe and Gavriel Kruman note that the fact that our Perek describes the time as from Koresh until Daryavesh (and not simply in the days of Koresh and Daryavesh) indicates that there was at least one other ruler between Koresh and Daryavesh. This, Hillel and Gavriel note, seems to refer to Cambyses, who served as emperor, according to Greek and Persian sources, between Koresh and Daryavesh. Rashi to Daniel 11:2 also makes mention of Cambyses.

[4] Rashi (Ezra 4:7) solves this problem by identifying (based on Rosh Hashanah 3b) the Artachshasta of Perek 4 with either Koresh or Daryavesh (Rashi explains that Artachshasta is the title given to all Persian kings, as Par'oh is the title given to every Egyptian ruler). Rashi, however, does not explain why a discussion of the building of Jerusalem's walls is inserted in a discussion of the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash.

[5] Rav Yitzchak Yosef, in Yalkut Yosef (Orach Chaim 658:1), writes that some have the custom to bring their Lulav to the Kotel on each of the last six days of Sukkot to fulfill this Mitzvah on a Torah level in accordance with Rambam's view.

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In Honor of Yom Yerushalayim: Rav Aviner

Tearing One's Garment upon Seeing the Temple Mount after the Six-Day War

The Halachah rules that one must tear his garment when seeing the place of the Temple in ruins (Moed Katan 26a and Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim #561). In the Beit Yosef when discussing the obligation to rip one's garment upon seeing the cities of Yehudah and Jerusalem in ruins, Rav Yosef Karo explained that we hold that "in ruins" means "under non-Jewish control." The Magen Avraham (#1) and Mishnah Berurah (#2) accepted this view. This means that even if there is a Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel but it is under non-Jewish control, it is still considered "in ruins", and one must tear his garment upon seeing it. Our Rabbi, Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, explained that the same applies for seeing the place of the Temple in ruins, and just as "in ruins" means "under non-Jewish control" for the cities of Yehudah and Jerusalem, so too does "in ruins" mean "under non-Jewish control" for the Temple Mount. Therefore after the famous call of "Har Ha-Bayit Be-Yadenu - the Temple Mount is in our hands" during the Six-Day War, he ruled that there is no longer an obligation to tear one's garment when seeing the Temple Mount, even though the Temple is still destroyed. Our Rabbi explained that it is possible to claim that since there is no Temple, one must tear his garment. One must understand, however, what prevents us from fulfilling the Divine Commandment of "Make for me a Temple" (Shemot 25:8). Our inability to build the Temple is not due to "exile." The Temple Mount is in our hands and we are in control. But we are prevented from building the Temple because of halachic and political reasons. These are our reasons, not those of the non-Jews (Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah – Yom Ha-Atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim, talk for Yom Yerushalayim p. 90 and Tal Chermon - Moadim, p. 218). Our Rabbi wrote, additionally, that we should also be concerned about ripping our garments when we are not obligated and thus violating "Bal Tashchit" (wanton destruction of items) when the whole prohibition for tearing when seeing the Temple in a destroyed state is a Rabbinic prohibition.

In the book, "Mekor Chaim" (2:95 #1), Ha-Rav Chaim David Halevy - Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Yafo for 25 years - wrote that he agrees with our Rabbi's opinion. He explained that when a close relative dies, we tear our garments when the "dead is before us." After the mourning, we observe an annual Yahrzeit. Similarly, when our "dead was before us" – the Temple Mount was under non-Jewish control – we had the obligation to tear our garments. Now that we have control, the dead is no longer before us, and we observe an annual Yahrzeit: Tisha Be-Av. Despite his agreement, Rav Halevy concluded that in order to exempt us from this obligation, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel must make this decision.

It is related what our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, did on the day when the Temple Mount was liberated: "On the day of the liberation of Jerusalem, our Rabbi and "The Nazir," Rav David Cohain, were together at the Kotel, and the next day our Rabbi went to him to bring him his book "Le-Netivot Yisrael" volume 1 which was published on that very 28th of Iyar 5727. Our Rabbi said that while standing facing the Kotel, he did not tear his garment upon his seeing the place of the Temple since "it is only considered in a destroyed state when the non-Jews rule over it" (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 561 and Mishnah Berurah #2), and this fundamental principle which was stated regarding the cities of Yehudah also applies to the spot of the Temple. "The Nazir" responded in agreement and added: "Is it not also true that his honor saw that our Master the Rav was there in his

Shabbat clothing and he did not tear?" (He had seen a vision of Maran Rav Kook). All were astounded and all eyes turned to our Rabbi, who nodded his head approvingly: "Yes, certainly" ("Rabbenu" - On the Life of Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah p. 211).

[Note: In the book "Peninei Halachah" (end of vol. 1 in the second edition), Ha-Rav Eliezer Melamed - Rav of Har Berachah - writes that our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, would agree today that one should tear his garment upon seeing the spot of the Temple, after the horrible desecration of Hashem's Name which have occurred there. When asked about this, Rav Aviner responded: "Baruch Hashem, the Temple Mount is still in our hands, and with Hashem's help it will remain so," i.e. our Rabbi's ruling still stands that we are exempt from tearing our garments upon seeing the spot of the Temple – M.T.]

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Missing the Reading II

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: The Missing Speaker

The audience waited patiently for the guest speaker from America who never arrived, notwithstanding that he had marked it carefully on his calendar and was planning to be there. What went wrong?

Question #2: The Missing Reading

"I will be traveling to *Eretz Yisroel* this spring, and will miss one of the *parshiyos*. Can I make up the missing *kerias haTorah*?"

Question #3: The Missing Parshah

"I will be traveling from *Eretz Yisroel* to the United States after *Pesach*. Do I need to review the *parshah* twice?"

Question #4: The Missing Aliyah

"May I accept an *aliyah* for a *parshah* that is not the one I will be reading on *Shabbos*?"

Introduction:

As we explained in the first part of this article, this year we have a very interesting phenomenon -- there is a difference in the weekly Torah reading between what is read in *Eretz Yisroel* and what is read in *chutz la'aretz* for over three months -- until the *Shabbos* of *Matos/Masei*, during the Three Weeks and immediately before *Shabbos Chazon*. Since the Eighth Day of *Pesach*, *Acharon shel Pesach*, falls on *Shabbos*, in *chutz la'aretz*, where this day is *Yom Tov*, we read a special Torah reading in honor of *Yom Tov* that begins with the words *Aseir te'aseir*. In *Eretz Yisroel*, where *Pesach* is only seven days long, this *Shabbos* is after *Pesach* (although the house is still *chometz-free*), and the reading is *parshas Acharei Mos*, which is always the first reading after *Pesach* in a leap year (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 428:4). On the subsequent *Shabbos*, the Jews of *Eretz Yisroel* already read *parshas Kedoshim*, whereas outside *Eretz Yisroel* the reading is *parshas Acharei Mos*, since for them it is the first *Shabbos* after *Pesach*. This phenomenon, whereby the readings of *Eretz Yisroel* and *chutz la'aretz* are a week apart, continues until the *Shabbos* that falls on August 6th. On that *Shabbos*, in *chutz la'aretz parshiyos Matos* and *Masei* are read together, whereas in *Eretz Yisroel* that week is *parshas Masei, parshas Matos* having been read the *Shabbos* before.

Anyone traveling to *Eretz Yisroel* during these three months will miss a *parshah* on his trip there, and anyone traveling from *Eretz Yisroel* to *chutz la'aretz* will hear the same *parshah* on two consecutive *Shabbosos*. Those from *Eretz Yisroel* who spend *Pesach* in *chutz la'aretz* will find that they have missed a *parshah*.

As I mentioned, there are several *halachic* questions that result from this phenomenon. Is a traveler or someone who attended a *chutz la'aretz minyan* on *Acharon shel Pesach* required to make up the missed *parshah*, and, if so, how? During which week does he review the *parshah shenayim mikra ve'echad Targum*? If he will be hearing a repeated *parshah*, is he required to review the *parshah* again on the consecutive week? Can he receive an *aliyah* or "lein" on a Torah reading that is not "his" *parshah*? These are some of the questions that result from this occurrence.

Searching for a Missing Parshah

At this point, let us examine some of our opening questions. "I will be traveling to *Eretz Yisroel* this spring, and will miss one of the *parshiyos*. Can I make up the missing *kerias haTorah*?"

To the best of my knowledge, all *halachic* authorities rule that there is no requirement upon an individual to make up a missing *parshah* (*Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchasah*, page 239, notes 40 and 41, quoting Rav Shlomoh Zalman Auerbach, Rav Elazar Shach, and disciples of Rav Moshe Feinstein, in his name). Nevertheless, there is a widespread practice to try to find ways of reading through the entire extra *parshah*. Among the approaches I know are the following:

1. Read the entire missed *parshah* together with the *kohen's aliyah*.
2. On the *Shabbos mincha* of the week before one leaves *chutz la'aretz*, read the entire coming week's *parshah*, rather than only until *sheini*, as we usually do (*Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchasah*, page 241).

Individual versus tzibur

We should note that there is a major difference in *halachah* whether an *individual* missed the week's reading, or whether an entire *tzibur* missed the reading. There is longstanding *halachic* literature ruling that, when an entire *tzibur* missed a week's Torah reading, a situation that transpired occasionally due to flooding, warfare or other calamity, the *tzibur* would be required to make up the reading that was missed by reading a double *parshah* the following week (*Rema, Orach Chayim* 135:2, quoting *Or Zarua*).

Which parshah?

At this point, let us examine the next of our opening questions:

"I will be traveling from *Eretz Yisroel* to the United States after *Pesach*. Do I need to review the *parshah* twice?"

Let me explain the background to the question. The *Gemara (Brachos* 8a-b) states: "A person should always complete his weekly *parshiyos* with the community by reading the Scriptures twice and the *targum* once (*shenayim mikra ve'echad targum*)." The *targum* referred to here is the Aramaic translation of the *chumash* known as *Targum Onkelos*. We will leave the details of this mitzvah for a different time, but we should be aware that the *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim* 285:2) states that one who "fears Heaven" should read both the *targum* and *Rashi*.

Our questioner is asking as follows: He will have read each *parshah* according to the weekly schedule in *Eretz Yisroel*, and then he will be traveling to *chutz la'aretz*, where the previous week's *Eretz Yisroel* reading will be read. Does the requirement to read the weekly *parshah* "with the community" require him to read the same *parshah* again, the next week, since for this week, he is part of that community, notwithstanding that he just read through that entire *parshah* the week before?

This exact issue is raised by Rav Avraham Chaim Na'eh, one of the great *halachic* authorities of mid-twentieth century Yerushalayim. Rav Na'eh, usually referred as the *Grach Na'eh*, authored many Torah works, among them *Shiurei Torah* on the measurements germane to *halachah*, and *Ketzos Hashulchan*, which is an easy-to-read, practical guide to daily *halachah*. Aside from being a very excellent source of *halachah* that can be studied by both a layman and a skilled *talmid chacham*, the *Grach Na'eh* had a specific unwritten goal to accomplish. Whenever the *Mishnah Berurah* disputes an approach of the *Gra"z* (also known as the *Shulchan Aruch Harav*), the *Grach Na'eh* presents a brilliant approach explaining how the *Gra"z* understood the topic and thus justifying that position. The *Grach Na'eh* himself was a *Lubavitcher Chassid*, and, therefore, felt a personal responsibility to explain any difficulty that someone might pose with a *halachic* position of the *Gra"z*, the founder of *Chabad Chassidus*.

Returning to our original question, the *Grach Na'eh (Ketzos Hashulchan, Chapter 72, footnote 3)* rules that a *ben Eretz Yisroel* is not required to read *shenayim mikra ve'echad targum* a second time the next week, since he already fulfilled the mitzvah of reading it together with the Israeli *tzibur*. However, a *ben chutz la'aretz* who is in *Eretz Yisroel* should read *shenayim mikra ve'echad targum* for both *parshiyos* the week he is in *Eretz Yisroel*. Since he will be part of an *Eretz Yisroel tzibur*, he should read that *parshah*, and he also must read the one of *chutz la'aretz*, because otherwise, he'll completely miss studying that *parshah* this year.

Which one first?

This last point leads us to a new question. Assuming that our *chutz la'aretz* traveler is now required to read through two *parshiyos* during the week that will be his first *Shabbos* in Israel, which *parshah* does he read first? Does he read the two *parshiyos* according to their order in the Torah, or does he read first the *Eretz Yisroel parshah*, which is second in order in the Torah?

Why would he read the two *parshiyos* out of order?

The reason to require this is because the mitzvah is to read the *parshah with the tzibur*, and the Torah reading our traveler will be hearing that week is the **second parshah** since *Eretz Yisroel's* reading is a week ahead.

We actually find a responsum on a related question. The *Maharsham*, one of the greatest *halachic* authorities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was asked a question by Rav Yitzchak Weiss, who is identified as a *rav* of Pressburg, Hungary. (You won't find this city in any map of Hungary today, for two very good reasons: This city is known today as Bratislava, and it is no longer in Hungary, but serves as the capital of Slovakia.)

The question concerns someone who did not complete being *maavir sedra* one week. Should he complete the *parshah* that he is missing before beginning the current week, in order to do his *parshiyos* in order, or should he do the current week first, and then make up the missed part of the previous week?

The *Maharsham* concludes that he should do the current week first and then the makeup (*Shu"t Maharsham* 1:213). If we consider our case to be parallel to his, then one should do the two *parshiyos* in reverse order. However, one could, perhaps, argue that our traveler has an equal *chiyuv* to complete both *parshiyos*, since he is now considered a member of two different communities regarding the laws of the week's *parshah*. In this case, he should do them in order.

Which *aliyah*?

At this point, let us look at our final question. "May I accept an *aliyah* for a *parshah* that is not the one I will be reading on *Shabbos*?"

All *halachic* authorities that I have heard contend that one may receive an *aliyah* and/or *lein* without any concerns. The basis for this approach is that there is no requirement to hear a specific Torah reading each week. One is required to hear a Torah reading, and that reading should follow a consecutive pattern. But these details are not requirements that govern an individual's mitzvah.

This year in Jerusalem...

In these occasional years when *Matos* and *Masei* are read separately, *parshas Pinchas* falls out before the Three Weeks -- and we actually get to read the *haftarah* that is printed in the *chumashim* for *parshas Pinchas, Ve'yad Hashem*, from the book of *Melachim*. In all other years, *parshas Pinchas* is the first *Shabbos* of the Three Weeks, and the *haftarah* is *Divrei Yirmiyahu*, the opening words of the book of *Yirmiyahu*, which is appropriate to the season. The printers of *chumashim* usually elect to print *Divrei Yirmiyahu* as if it is the *haftarah* for *parshas Matos*, and then instruct you to read it, on most years, instead as the *haftarah* for *Pinchas*. What is more logical is to label *Divrei Yirmiyahu* as the *atarah* appropriate for the first of the Three Weeks, and to print both *Ve'yad Hashem* and *Divrei Yirmiyahu* after *Pinchas, Ve'yad Hashem* for the occasional year when *Pinchas* falls before the 17th of Tamuz, and *Divrei Yirmiyahu* for the far more frequent year when it falls after, and instruct people that when there is a *haftarah* to be read just for *parshas Matos*, they should read *Divrei Yirmiyahu* which is located as the second *haftarah* printed after *parshas Pinchas*. But, then, the printers do not usually ask me what to do, electing instead to mimic what previous printers have done. This phenomenon affects practical *halachah*, but that is a topic for a different time. However, the printers' insistence to call *Ve'yad Hashem* the "regular" *haftarah* for *parshas Pinchas* has led to interesting questions.

Wrong *haftarah*

The *Tzemach Tzedek*, the third Lubavitcher Rebbe, was asked the following *shaylah*. A *shul* read the *haftarah Ve'yad Hashem* for *parshas Pinchas* when it fell during the Three Weeks, which is the wrong *haftarah* (they should have read *Divrei Yirmiyahu*), and now it is *parshas Matos/Masei*. Which *haftarah* do they read, *Divrei Yirmiyahu* which is the one for the first of the Three Weeks, or the one for the second of the Three Weeks, which begins with the words *Shim'u dvar Hashem*?

He says that because these two chapters, *Divrei Yirmiyahu* and *Shim'u dvar Hashem* are next to one another, they should begin with *Divrei Yirmiyahu* and read them in order, both together, as one long *haftarah* (*Shu"t Tzemach Tzedek*, quoted by *Maharsham*). Those who are unhappy about this decision of reading what is, in essence, a doubled *haftarah*, should take it up with their *gabbai*, or, if they prefer, with the printers, who should have placed *Divrei Yirmiyahu* after *parshas Pinchas*!

End of *Shim'u dvar Hashem* – Nice or near?

By the way, there is a difference between the way the *Sefardim* and the *Ashkenazim* end this *haftarah*. The passage *Shim'u dvar Hashem* does not end on the most pleasant topic, and we try to close our *haftaros* on a positive note. For this reason, both *Ashkenazim* and *Sefardim* skip ahead to find a nice way to end the *haftarah*, but we

don't jump to the same place. *Ashkenazim* skip to the *pasuk Halo Mei'atah*, which is twelve *pesukim* ahead, whereas *Sefardim* jump ahead further, to the two heart-warming *pesukim* that begin with *Im tashuv Yisroel*, which are over thirty *pesukim* ahead. In this instance, it appears that *Sefardim* elected to go with the nicer conclusion, whereas *Ashkenazim* elected the nearest appropriate ending.

Conclusion

We see the importance of reading through the entire Torah every year. We should place even more importance in understanding the Torah's portion well every week and putting it into practice.

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BECHUKOTAI

From a cursory review of this week's Torah reading, one can easily come to the conclusion that G-d's method for dealing with us is with earthly rewards and punishments. The blessings that appear in the reading are all physical, emotional and sometimes psychological. There is no mention of eternal life, the survival of the soul, and/or of the rewards in the World to Come. And the same is true relative to the punishments and disasters, which are predicted to happen to the Jewish people when they stray from the path of G-d and righteousness. All of those punishments and tragedies, described in great and graphic detail, are events of this world and of its physical nature. Again, there is no mention of an afterlife judgment or of the concept of the punishment of the soul in a different sphere of existence.

All of this creates a great philosophical and theological conundrum of why good people oftentimes suffer greatly in their lifetime and why, in the reverse, evil people many times seem to prosper and are never held accountable for their nefarious deeds. Though there is a biblical book – *Iyov* – that deals almost exclusively with this issue, in its conclusion it really affords no answer to the great question that it has raised.

It is only in the development of the Oral Law in Jewish tradition that the concept of the afterlife and of heavenly judgment of the soul is introduced. At the very least, this basic idea of Jewish faith is presented as a partial answer to the nagging question of why the righteous suffer in this world. Yet, it must be admitted that the literal written Torah speaks of reward and punishment as a purely physical matter that takes place in our actual physical world. All of the great scholars of Israel throughout the ages have grappled with this issue and followed varied paths in attempting to deal with the matter. There are many factors, known and unknown, which determine the fate of an individual and of the nation. In effect, that is really the answer that the Lord, so to speak, addresses to *Iyov* regarding his complaints pertaining to the unfairness of life.

Heaven operates in this world on so many different levels that it is impossible for human beings to comprehend them all. The Torah presents reward and punishment in its simplest form and with the lowest common denominator possible. But it does not limit itself to our understanding of righteousness and evil. It simply sets forth that in this world, just as in the world of the afterlife and the spirit, the concept of reward and punishment governs.

We pray thrice daily to the kingdom of judgment. We live our lives based on the fact that we know that we are constantly being assessed and judged. Our ignorance of the details as to how this system functions, does not in any way belie our knowledge that it exists. It must be taken into account continually during our lives.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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A Sense of Direction – Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Smartphones can do amazing things – few more amazing than Waze, the Israeli-designed satellite navigation system acquired by Google in 2013. But there is one thing even Waze cannot do. It can tell you how to get there, but it cannot tell you where to go. That is something you must decide. The most important decision we can make in life is to choose where we want eventually to be. Without a sense of destiny and destination, our lives will be directionless. If we don't know where we want to go, we will never get there no matter how fast we travel. Yet despite this, there are people who spend months planning a holiday, but not even a day planning a life. They simply let it happen.

That is what our parsha is about, applied to a nation, not an individual. G-d, through Moses, set out the stark choice. "If you follow my statutes and carefully obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit ... I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid." If, on the other hand, "You do not listen to Me, and do not keep all these commands," then disaster will follow. The curses set out here at length are among the most frightening of all biblical texts – a portrait of national catastrophe, bleak and devastating. The entire passage, both the blessings and the curses, can be read supernaturally or naturally. Read the first way, Israel's fate, at least in biblical times, was a direct result of its faithfulness or lack of it to the Torah. G-d was constantly intervening miraculously in history to reward the good and punish the bad. Every drought and famine, every bad harvest or military defeat, was the result of sin. Every peaceful and productive year was the result of obedience to G-d. That is how Israel's prophets understood history.

But there is also a more naturalistic reading, which says that Divine providence works through us, internally rather than externally. If you are the Israelites in the land of Israel, you will always be surrounded by empires and enemies bigger and stronger than you are. You will always be vulnerable to the hazards of rainfall and drought because Israel, unlike the Nile Delta or the Tigris-Euphrates valley, has no natural, reliable, predictable supply of water. You will always, therefore, find yourself looking up to the heavens. Even quite secular Jews often understand this – most famously David Ben Gurion when he said, "In Israel, in order to be a realist you have to believe in miracles." On this reading, the way of life set out in the Torah is unique in ways that are natural rather than supernatural. It is indeed the word of G-d, but not G-d as a perpetual strategic intervener in history, but rather, G-d as guide as to how to live in such a way as to be blessed. The Torah is a set of instructions for life issued by the Designer of life. That is what the sages meant when they said that at the beginning of time, "G-d looked into the Torah and created the world." Living according to the Torah means, on this view, aligning yourself with the forces that make for human flourishing, especially if you are a tiny people surrounded by enemies.

What was unique about the society envisaged by the Torah is that in it every individual mattered. Justice was to be paramount. The rich could not buy special treatment and the poor were not left destitute. When it came to communal celebrations, everyone – especially the orphan, the widow, the

stranger – was to be included. Everyone had at least some share in the harvest of grain and fruit. Employers were to treat employees with fairness and sensitivity. Even though there were still slaves, one day in seven they would enjoy the same freedom as their owners. This meant that everyone had a stake in society. Therefore they would defend it with their lives. The Israelites were not an army conscripted by a ruler for the purpose of his own self-aggrandizement. That is why they were capable of defeating armies and nations many times their size.

Above all, they were to have a sense of destiny and destination. That is the meaning of the keyword that runs like a refrain through the curses: *keri*, a word that appears seven times in our parsha and nowhere else in Tanakh. "If you walk with Me with *keri* ... then I will walk with you with *keri*." There are many interpretations of this word. Targum Onkelos reads it as "hardheartedly," Saadia as "rebelliously," Rashi as "treating as a casual concern." Others understood it as "harshly," or "with hostility." Maimonides, however (partially echoed by Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Chizkuni and others), understands it as related to the word *mikreh*, meaning "chance." Hence the meaning of the passage according to Maimonides is: "If you believe that what happens to you is simply a matter of chance, then, says G-d, I will leave you to chance."

On this reading, the book of Vayikra ends as it began, with the fateful choice between *mikra* (with an aleph) and *mikreh* (with a heh): between seeing life as a call, a summons, a vocation, a destiny, and seeing it an accident, a random happening with no ultimate meaning whatsoever. So it is in the life of nations and individuals. If you see what happens to you as mere chance, your fate will be governed by mere chance. That is what the sages meant when they said, "Wherever [the Torah] says, 'And it came to pass,' it is always a prelude to tragedy." If you simply let things come to pass, you will find yourself exposed to the vagaries of fortune and the whims of others. But if you believe you are here for a purpose, your life will take on the directedness of that purpose. Your energies will be focused. A sense of mission will give you strength. You will do remarkable things.

That was the special insight Jews brought to the world. They did not believe – as people did in ancient times and as atheists do today – that the universe is governed by mere chance. Was it mere chance that a random fluctuation in the quantum field produced the Big Bang that brought the universe into being? Or that the universe just happened to be regulated by precisely the six mathematical constants necessary for it to give rise to stars and planets and the chemical elements essential for the emergence of life? Was it mere chance that life did in fact emerge from inanimate matter? Or that among the hundred million life forms that have existed on earth, just one, *Homo sapiens*, was capable of asking the question "Why?" There is nothing self-contradictory about such a view. It is compatible with all the science we now know, perhaps with all the science we will ever know. That is the universe as *keri*. Many people think this way. They always did. On this view, there is no "Why," not for nations, and not for individuals. Life just happens. We are here by accident. Jews believed otherwise. No one said it better than the Catholic historian Paul Johnson:

No people has ever insisted more firmly than the Jews that history has a purpose and humanity a destiny. At a very early stage in their collective existence they believed they had detected a divine scheme for the human race, of which their own society was to be a pilot. They worked out their role in immense detail. They clung to it with heroic persistence in the face of savage suffering. Many of them believe it still. Others transmuted it into Promethean endeavours to raise our condition by purely human means. The Jewish vision became the prototype for many similar grand designs for humanity, both divine and man-made. The Jews therefore stand right at the centre of the perennial attempt to give human life the dignity of a purpose.

The people who change the world are those who believe that life has a purpose, a direction, a destiny. They know where they want to go and what they want to achieve. In the case of Judaism that purpose is clear: to show what it is to create a small clearing in the desert of humanity where freedom and order coexist, where justice prevails, the weak are cared for and those in need are given help, where we have the humility to attribute our successes to G-d and our failures to ourselves, where we cherish life as the gift of G-d and do all we can to make it holy. In other words: precisely the opposite of the violence and brutality that is today being perpetrated by some religious extremists in the name of G-d.

To achieve this, though, we have to have a sense of collective purpose. That is the choice that Moses, speaking in the name of G-d, set before the Israelites. *Mikra ormikreh?* Does life just happen? Or is it a call from G-d to create moments of moral and spiritual beauty that redeem our humanity from the ruthless pursuit of power? “To give human life the dignity of a purpose.” That is what Jews are called on to show the world.

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Good News in the Middle of the Tochacha – Rabbi Yissachor Frand

There is a very long and interesting Ramban in this week’s parsha, which attempts to demonstrate that all the terrible things in the *Tochacha* (those things that the Torah predicts will occur if we do not keep the mitzvos), did indeed happen. For instance, the Ramban says that the *pasuk* [verse] “G-d will return you to Egypt in boats” refers to the days of Titus when the Jews were loaded onto boats and shipped as slaves to Egypt. The Ramban brings many different examples... “The King which you will appoint over yourself...” refers to Agrippa; the *pasuk* hints to the fact that he was not worthy of being a King.

Finally, the Ramban says that the *pasuk* [26:32] “I will make desolate the Land, and your enemies who dwell upon it will be desolate” (*V’shamemu aleha oyeveichem hayoshvim bah*) is not a curse, but rather is a blessing. It is a bit of “good news” in the middle of the bad: the *pasuk* tells us that our Holy Land will not accept our enemies upon it. The Ramban says that this is a great proof of the Divine Hand in action. “For there cannot be found throughout the world a land that had been so good and fertile (which now became so desolate and inhospitable)”. If you want to be a Believer, says the Ramban, all you need to do is look at *Eretz Yisroel*. Look what happened there for 2000 years when Romans, Arabs, Turks and the British was occupied it.

It had previously been a beautiful and fertile land, but under foreign dominion, it became the most desolate of lands. The Torah assures us that from the day we left *Eretz Yisroel* the land would not accept any other nation or populace. They all tried to settle it, but were not successful. This is the meaning of what the Torah says, “Your enemies will be desolate upon it”. No nation will ever be successful at inhabiting *Eretz Yisroel*, except *Klal Yisroel* [The Jewish Nation].

What would happen if the Indians came to the Federal Government and said, “We made a silly mistake 200 years ago. We sold Manhattan Island to you at a rock bottom price — \$24. We realize that you’re entitled to a profit, so we’ll give you \$48 for Manhattan”? Or even if they would offer 48 million dollars! Or 48 billion dollars! Guess what? There would be no sale. What has happened to Manhattan Island in those 200 years? Considering its value now, there is no way the Government would ever give it back.

Imagine if other nations had been successful in making *Eretz Yisroel* profitable. Imagine if in 1948, it was a beautiful and productive land. Would they have consented to returning it to the Jewish People? However, as the Ramban says, they were not able to develop the land. In 1948, when we came to ask, “Can we have the land back?” those in power may have thought, “Do you mean that strip of land that’s hard like iron, in which nothing grows? Are you talking about that worthless strip of land in the middle of the desert? Good Luck with it!” This is Divine Providence, as promised by the Torah in this week’s *parsha*. I have always wondered – if one examines the Middle East — Saudi Arabia has oil, Qatar, Iraq, Yemen all have oil, every country has oil. Even Egypt has oil. How is it that from our Holy Land, the choicest of all lands, we cannot squeeze a drop of oil (at least until very recent discoveries)? Is this “the Eyes of the L-rd are upon it from the start of the year to its end?”

However, what would have been in 1948, if the British were sitting on a Saudi Arabia? What would have been if they were sitting on a Kuwait? Obviously, they would not have been so eager to give black gold to the Jews. This is part of “Your enemies will be desolate upon it.” The upshot of all of this is that if we seek a lesson in *Emunah* [Belief (in G-d)], if one is unimpressed with all the other miracles and wonders that G-d has performed... Just look at this Ramban, just look at this *pasuk*, just look at that Land. If our eyes are open, we will see the Hand of G-d and His Divine Providence upon us and upon all the Jewish people.

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OU Torah

Rabbi Weinreb’s Parasha Column, Bechukotai “The Walking Tour”

I am the type of person who has always believed that the only way to learn about something important is to buy a book about it. For example, it has been my good fortune to have traveled widely in my life and to have visited many interesting cities. Invariably, I bought guidebooks before each such visit, with detailed itineraries describing the “not to be missed” sites in those cities.

Eventually, I learned that there is a much better way to come to know a new city than to read a book about it. It is more interesting, more entertaining, and more inspiring to simply walk around the city aimlessly. I have even stopped buying those books which provide maps of walking tours around the city. Instead I just wander, and have never been disappointed in the process. The list of cities which I have aimlessly explored has grown quite long over the years. It includes my own native New York, the holy city of Jerusalem, numerous cities in the United States, and several in Europe such as London, Rome and Prague.

Despite the diversity of these cities, I inevitably end up in one of two destinations: either a used bookstore, or a small park, usually one in which children are playing.

The last time I had this experience, I was quite taken aback and muttered to myself, “I guess my feet take me where my heart wants me to go.” As soon as those words occurred to me, I realized that they were not my own words at all. Rather, I was preceded in that reaction by two very glorious figures in Jewish history: the great sage Hillel, and no one less than King David. That brings us to this week’s Torah portion, Parashat Bechukotai (Leviticus 26:3-27:34).

The parasha begins: “If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments, I will grant your rains in their season...”

That is the standard translation of this opening verse. But a more literal translation would begin not, "If you follow My laws," but rather, "If you walk in My laws." Most translators understandably choose the word "follow" over the literal "walk" in this context.

But the Midrash takes a different approach. It retains the literal "walk," and links it to the phrase in Psalms 119:59 which reads, "I have considered my ways, and have turned my steps to Your decrees". After linking the verse in our Torah portion with this verse from Psalms, the Midrash continues, putting these words into the mouth of King David: "Master of the universe, each and every day I would decide to go to such and such a place, or to such and such a dwelling, but my feet would bring me to synagogues and study halls, as it is written: 'I have turned my steps to Your decrees.'"

Long before this Midrash was composed, but long after the life of King David, the rabbinic sage Hillel is recorded by the Talmud to have said, "To the place which I love, that is where my feet guide me." (Sukkah 53a)

The lesson is clear. Our unconscious knows our authentic inner preferences very well. So much so that no matter what our conscious plans are, our feet take us to where we really want to be. To take myself as an example, I may have told myself when I visited some new city that I wanted to see its ancient ruins, its museums, its palaces and Houses of Parliament. But my inner self knew better and instructed my feet to direct me to the dusty old bookstores where I could browse to my heart's content. Or to off-the-beaten-path, leafy parks where I could observe children at play.

This Midrash understands the opening phrase of our parasha, "If you walk in my laws," as indicating the Torah's desire that we internalize G-d's laws thoroughly so that they become our major purpose in life. Even if we initially define our life's journey in terms of very different goals, G-d's laws will hopefully become our ultimate destination.

There are numerous other ways suggested by commentaries throughout the ages to understand the literal phrase, "If you walk in my ways." Indeed, Rabbi Chaim ibn Atar, the great 18th century author of *Ohr HaChaim*, enumerates no less than 42 explanations of the phrase.

Several of his explanations, while not identical to that of our Midrash, are consistent with it and help us understand it more deeply.

For example, he suggests that by using the verb "walk," the Torah is suggesting to us that it is sometimes important in religious life to leave one's familiar environment. One must "walk," embark on a journey to some distant place, in order to fully realize his or her religious mission. It is hard to be innovative, it is hard to change, in the presence of people who have known us all of our lives.

Ohr HaChaim also leaves us with the following profound insight, which the author bases upon a passage in the sourcebook of the Kabbalah, the *Zohar*: "Animals do not change their nature. They are not 'walkers.' But humans are 'walkers.' We are always changing our habits, 'walking away' from base conduct to noble conduct, and from lower levels of behavior to higher ones. 'Walking,' progressing, is our very essence. 'Walking' distinguishes us from the rest of G-d's creatures."

The phrase "to walk" is thus a powerful metaphor for who we are. No wonder, then, that this final portion of the Book of Leviticus begins with such a choice of words. All of life is a journey, and despite our intentions, we somehow arrive at *Bechukotai*, "My laws," so that we end our journey through this third book of the Bible with these words:

"These are the commandments that the Lord gave Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai."

Jerusalem Day: Returning to the Kotel

In a sense, it all started in the fall of 1966. During the annual memorial for Rav Kook on the third of Elul, Rav Tzvi Yehudah surprised the people gathered at Beit HaRav with an unusual statement. "My father labored for the sake of the Jewish people when he was alive in this world," he said. "And he continues to work for the Jewish people, with even greater strength and merit, while in the next world."

These labors, Rav Tzvi Yehudah noted, are connected to the Jewish people's possession of Eretz Yisrael. Especially this year:

"As his stay in the next world lengthens, so his power and influence grow. Each year, he conquers an additional realm in the "yeshiva on high," and these conquests continue and spread. This year is the 31st year since his passing [in 1935]. The number of conquests is thus 31 - corresponding to the number of Canaanite kings that Joshua subdued [when conquering the Land of Israel]."

The following spring, the security situation in Israel deteriorated rapidly. Egypt expelled UN peacekeeping forces in the Sinai Peninsula and began massing troops on Israel's border. On May 22, Egypt blocked the Straits of Tiran, passageway for almost all of Israel's oil. The following week, Egypt and Jordan signed a defense pact, posing a further threat to the young country. (Syria had signed a mutual defense agreement the previous November.) And the Iraqi army deployed troops and armored units in Jordan.

In Israel, spirits were low and tensions high.

During Israel Independence Day celebrations at the *Mercaz HaRav* yeshiva, Rav Tzvi Yehudah usually spoke about the spiritual significance of the day. But this year, the nineteenth year of the State of Israel, his address took on a different tone. It was less lecture, more prophetic vision.

Rav Tzvi Yehudah recalled his visceral pain nineteen years previous, when the 1947 UN Partition Plan was approved, assigning parts of the Jewish homeland to an Arab state. People streamed into the streets to celebrate and rejoice.

"But I could not go out and join in the celebration. I sat alone and silent; a heavy burden lay upon me. During those first hours, I could not resign myself to what had been done. I could not accept the fact that, indeed, "They have divided My land" (Joel 4:2)."

The rabbi then stunned the audience as he thundered,

"And where is our Hebron? Are we forgetting this? Where is our Shechem, our Jericho? Have we forgotten them?"

Rabbi Hanan Porat, well-known author, educator, and member of *Knesset*, was one of the *Mercaz HaRav* students who fought in the battle for Jerusalem. "I was in the yeshiva during that Independence Day celebration," Rabbi Porat recalled. "Rav Tzvi Yehudah's roars still reverberate in my ears. If I think back to lectures or speeches which influenced me, without a doubt it was this address that had the greatest impact on me."

He added, "We felt that our rabbi was speaking with prophetic spirit, that 'the Shechinah was speaking through his mouth.' The very walls shook. People looked at one other in wonder."

The Liberation of Jerusalem

Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, another student of *Mercaz HaRav* who participated in the liberation of Jerusalem, told his story, which began soon after that momentous address in the yeshiva.

When they announced preparations [of the reserve army] before the Six-Day War, I was called up as a paratrooper. For three weeks, we waited in orchards near the Lod airport, ready to parachute into the Sinai Desert.

During these weeks of waiting, many thoughts passed in my head. What was the meaning of this war? Ten years earlier, the Sinai War had been fought, at the price of many lives. And in the end, nothing had been gained from it.

What was the point of another war and the further spilling of precious blood?

I wrote my questions in a letter to Rav Tzvi Yehudah and the Rav HaNazir.

But before I had a chance to mail my letter, the war broke out. Our division,

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Rav Kook Torah

under the command of Motta Gur, was re-assigned to Jerusalem. With G-d's mercy, we had the privilege of liberating the Old City and the Temple Mount.

As we made our way to the Temple Mount, it was rumored that two elders from Jerusalem had arrived. I was overcome with powerful emotions and an unbelievable feeling of elation. I was sure that these two elders must be the Messiah and Elijah the prophet....

When I descended from the Temple Mount to the Kotel, I discovered that the two elders were none other than our master, Rav Tzvi Yehudah, and the Rav HaNazir. We hugged, we kissed, and our tears flowed without stop....

I realized then that I had received the answer to my questions - directly from Rav Tzvi Yehudah and the Rav HaNazir. We had merited seeing, with our own eyes, G-d's return to Zion!

Rabbi Hanan Porat related his memories from the war:

On the fourth day of the war, we fought at Ammunition Hill. From there we went up to Mount Scopus and the Agusta Victoria hospital. We started making our way toward the Temple Mount. Suddenly - I couldn't believe my eyes - an army jeep passed by us, carrying Rav Tzvi Yehudah and the Rav HaNazir! They were wearing steel helmets, and the Rav HaNazir's long hair streamed out in the wind....

It was an otherworldly sight. The fact that these two holy scholars were among the first ones to reach the Kotel added another level of holiness to our return to the Kotel.

Rabbi Porat recalled how Rav Tzvi Yehudah cleaved to the stones of the Kotel. He prayed with intense fervor; and afterward he turned to the soldiers and kissed them. The Rav HaNazir, on the other hand, cleaved to the Kotel and never let go. He was soaring in elevated realms. This was typical of these two great figures; each one expressed himself in his own individual spiritual path.

The Soldier's Reward

The next day, several of Rav Tzvi Yehudah's students went to visit their master. They found Rav Tzvi Yehudah visiting the Rav HaNazir in his Jerusalem apartment. The two scholars were discussing the momentous events of the previous day.

"Around eleven o'clock in the morning," Rav Tzvi Yehudah told the students, "an army officer knocked on my door. He told me that Rabbi Goren, the IDF Chief Rabbi, had invited me to come immediately to the Kotel. A jeep waited for me in the street."

The rabbi entered the vehicle, where he was joined by the Rav HaNazir (who was the father-in-law of Rabbi Goren). On the way to the Kotel, the officer told them the following story:

When the paratroopers arrived at the Kotel, one of the soldiers - a student at Mercaz HaRav - climbed up to the highest row of stones and waved the flag of Israel. Down below, the paratroopers shouted and cheered. The commander announced that the soldier deserved a prize for his action, and asked him what he wanted.

In the silence that followed, the soldier thought for a moment and replied, "The greatest prize for me would be to bring Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook, the head of the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva, so that he will join us in our great joy."

The Rav HaNazir then startled those present with his account of the visit.

"As we approached the Kotel, I saw Rav Kook, of blessed memory, standing there, wearing his Sabbath clothes." Surprised by the looks of confusion on the students' faces, he said, "But of course the Rav had to be there on that special day!"

(Stories from the Land of Israel. Mashmia Yeshu'ah, pp. 327-334.)

See also: The Kotel - Stones with Hearts