

BS"D



To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com
From: crshulman@aol.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BAMIDBAR - 5765

To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/parsha/join> or send a blank e-mail to parsha-subscribe@yahoo.com. Please also copy me at crshulman@aol.com. A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.teaneckshuls.org/parsha> (hosted by onlysimchas.com). It is also fully searchable. See also torah links at www.teaneckshuls.org/parsha



From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org]
Sent: June 01, 2005 Subject: Rav Hershel Schachter - Finding the Hidden Link to subscribe, email weekly@torahweb.org unsubscribe or for anything else, email: torahweb@torahweb.org <http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

RAV HERSHEL SCHACHTER FINDING THE HIDDEN LINK

The rabbi instituted a takanah to read a haftarah each Shabbos following the krias haTorah. The

section read from the navi should always be related to the krias (Tosfos Megillah 23a, s.v. "keivan").

Often the connection with the parsha is very obvious, but once in a while it is not that apparent. Sometimes there is both a superficial apparent connection as well as a more subtle one.

I At first glance, the connection between parshas Bamidbar and the haftarah is obvious: the parsha deals with the census of the Jewish people taken in the midbar, and the haftarah opens with the prophetic statement that the population of the Jewish people will grow so much that it will be impossible to count them.

But there seems to be another, more subtle connection between the two. The halacha recognizes two stages in marriage: erusin and nissuin. When the chosson says "harei at" and gives the ring to the kallah she becomes an eishes ish, but only an arusa. Their marital relationship is not yet complete until the chosson brings the kallah into his home. This constitutes nissuin, and only at that point does the halacha declare that the couple is considered "one": ba'al k'ishto, and isha k'ba'alah (Sanhedrin 28b).

The relationship between Hashem and His Jewish people is described in Tanach as one of marriage. The prophets state that Hashem has never - and will never - "divorce" his "spouse". He always was - and always will continue to be - a most faithful spouse; even though perhaps we didn't really deserve such loyalty.

Nonetheless the Talmud points out (Yoma 54a) that our "marital relationship" with Hashem fluctuates between the stage of erusin and that of nissuin. When the aron (with the luchos) is in its proper place in the kodesh hakodoshim, the relationship is compared to the more intense state of nissuin. When there is no Beis Hamikdash, or even during the period of the second temple when the aron with the luchos was not in its proper place, the relationship was compared to the incomplete state of erusin.

The Talmud relates that during the period of the first Temple, when the Jews would come to visit on the sholosh regalim, the kohanim would roll up the curtain in the paroches to show the "olei regalim" the cherubim hugging each other on top of the aron "as a husband would hug his wife" (Melachim I, 7:36). This demonstrated the great love that Hashem

always has for His chosen people. But the concluding passuk in parshas Bamidbar indicates that when the mishkan was taken apart, it was forbidden for outsiders (other than the kohanim who were needed to pack up the aron) to look at the aron. The Talmud relates that during the period of the second temple one of the kohanim noticed that one of the tiles on the floor was not properly aligned with the others. He picked up the tile and realized that this was a secret trap door which led to the basement. When he entered the basement he saw "the lost ark" and stared at it for a while. This was not allowed, and for this he was punished.

When the relationship with Hashem is compared to one of nissuin, of course the couple may stare at each other. They are living together intimately. But during the period of erusin, we're not even permitted to stare at the aron.

In the haftarah the navi Hoshea prophecies that the day will come when the Jewish people will return to Eretz Yisroel and no longer will refer to Hashem as "ba'ali", but rather as "ishi". According to the interpretation of the Mishne Lamelech (last paragraph of his book "Poroshas Derachim", based on Pesachim 87a), this means that our relationship with Hashem will be restored to that of nissuin as opposed to the state of erusin we've been in since the aron with the luchos was removed from the kodesh hakodoshim in the days of Yoshiyahu Hamelech.

II In a similar fashion even a superficial glance at parshas Beha'aloscha and its haftarah would lead one to notice the obvious connection between the krias and its haftarah. The parsha opens with the mitzvah of kindling the menorah, and the navi Zecharya has the prophetic vision of the menorah of the second and third temples.

After some careful study, there seems to be a more subtle and fundamental connection between the two. Rambam (Peirush Hamishnayos on Sanhedrin, perek Cheilek) lists what he considers to be the thirteen principles of faith. Among them is that we believe that the level of Moshe Rabbeinu's prophecy is higher than that of all the other prophets. The source for this principle is the seventh aliyah in parshas Beha'aloscha. To use the language of the Talmud (Yevamos 49b), the prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu was illuminated and crystal-clear, as opposed to that of the other prophets, whose nevuah was not that clear. To demonstrate this point, Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim, part II chapter 43) quotes from the nevuah of Zecharya, which happens to be the haftarah for parshas Beha'aloscha, that the navi had to ask the angel to explain to him what he had been shown. At first he simply could not understand what the prophecy was supposed to represent, until the angel explained it to him. This perhaps is a more significant connection between parshas Beha'aloscha and its haftarah, as the entire story of the prophecy of Zecharya demonstrates the principle of faith spelled out in the sedra.

Copyright © 2005 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.



<http://www.yutorah.org/showShiur.cfm?shiurID=706144>

RABBI ELI BARUCH SHULMAN

Rav, Young Israel of Midwood
Bochen., RIETS

Outline - Parshas Bamidbar 5761

1. Sefer Bamidbar in English called Book of Numbers. English name actually closer to name that chazal use: Chomesh Hapekudim.

Question: Why should this be the name of the book; isn't the counting one of the least important episodes in it?

2. Rashi says that Mitoch Chavivusan etc., counting expresses Chavivus - preciousness of people. How so?

Rashi at beginning of Shmos: Because they are like the stars he counts them by number and by name, as it says: Hamotzi Bimispar Tziva'am Likulam Bishem Yikra. But doesn't counting by number diminish their individual worth?

3. Vi'Lo Yihiyeh Bahem Negef - Torah implies that counting is dangerous, has to be camouflaged with Machtzis Hashekel. And later Shaul Hamelech counts his army bibazak, with shards, not by head. And when Dovid counts them there are calamitous results. And today when we count a Minyan we don't count by number. Why should counting be dangerous?

4. Preface two ideas that we find in chazal. Somewhat foreign to our everyday thinking, but describe spiritual topography of the world. First: World is arena in which good and evil, Kedusha and Tumah, contend. The verse in Mishlei says Zeh Li'umas Zeh Asah Ha'elokim, the two are opposed and balanced against each other. Wherever Kedusha is strongest, Tumah opposes with the most strength. Many examples: a) Nations of Canaan were most depraved of all peoples - because they lives in Eretz Hakodesh. b) Anti-semitism; very existence of Am Kadosh arouses opposition. This idea expressed in Gemara in Shabbos that says that Har Sinai was so called because it is the origin of Sinah for Jews in the world.

c) Kol Hagadol Meichaveiro Yitzro Gadol Heimenu, the greater a person's spiritual potential, the more Kochos Hatumah try to undermine it.

d) Talmid Chacham Al Yetzeh Yichidi Balailah - a Talmid Chacham should not go out alone at night, because forces of darkness have it in for him. Of course, Torah itself offers some protection - Torah Meiginah Umatzlah - so a kind of spiritual balance of power is preserved.

5. Second idea: Kochos Hatumah are aware only of what is on the surface, what is superficial. The more something is below the surface, the more Pnimit it is, the more Tzanua it is, the more it is protected. Examples:

a) Gemara at beginning of Berachos: Mazikin have no power over whatever is Tzrir Vichasim - whatever is sealed closed.

b) Ein Habracha Metzuyah Elah Bidavar Hasamui Min Ha'ayin.

c) Beis Hasetarim Eino Mekabel Tumah, Tumah is only contracted by an exterior surface.

This concept lies behind the otherwise strange ideas of Li'arvev Es HaSatan, and Ayin Hara. The more a Ma'ala - a quality with potential for good - is brought into the public view, the less protected it is.

6. Every Jewish Neshama has two kinds of Chavivus: First, it is valuable because it is unique and individual. No two people are alike: Kisheim She'ein Pirtzufeihen Shavim Kach Ein Daateihem Shavim. That Chavivus is expressed in counting by name, Bishem - each person has a different name, because each person is unique.

Each Neshama is Chaviv, also, because at its core each Neshama is a Chelek Elokah Mima'al, a reflection of the Divine. In this regard each Neshama is equal and alike. This Chavivus is expressed in counting by number - because one can only count together things that are the same.

7. That is the Chavivus that is expressed with Minyan - the Chavivus that each Neshama shares equally, because each - at its deepest core - reflects the infinite.

8. That is why counting is dangerous: Because superficially each Jew is different, has different spiritual stature and attainments. And Satan opposes most only those Jews whose spiritual attainments are obvious - which is why, as we saw, Talmidei Chachamim need special protection. But counting brings out - exposes to the surface - the deep wellspring of Kedusha that lies within every Jew. And to the degree that that is brought to the surface - it is brought to the attention, and arouses the opposition, of Kochos Hatumah. And therefore the counting has to be camouflaged.

9. Perhaps no accident that greatest evil in modern times - perhaps all time - that sought to eradicate every Jewish man, woman and child - saw

to it to put a number on every Jew who fell into its clutches. Because what it sought to destroy was that Kedusha that lies within every Jew, that is represented by the Mispar Bnei Yisrael, the number of the children of Israel.

10. If counting is so dangerous, that why count at all? Because we have to be aware of our Chavivus, of the spiritual wellsprings that lie within us. Lest we think that spiritual accomplishment belongs to a chosen few.

11. Basic theme of Sefer Bamidbar, as Ramban explains in introduction, is the transformation of the people into a Machaneh, which is the nascent nation. And the danger in nation building is that the value of the individuals that compose it may be compromised. Therefore Sefer Bamidbar begins with counting, which expresses the essential, irreducible and infinite value of every individual Neshama. And therefore entire book is called: the book of Numbers, Chomesh Hapekudim.



From: ravfrand-owner@torah.org on behalf of
RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND
[ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: Thursday, June 02,
2005 10:18 PM To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject:
Rabbi Frand on Parshas Bamidbar

"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Bamidbar -
Becoming The Head of The Household

The pasuk says, "And with you shall be one man from each tribe (ish, ish l'mateh), a man who is a leader of his father's household (rosh l'beis avosav, hu)." [Bamidbar 1:4] The Sefer Imrei Shammai has an encouraging insight on this pasuk. The author comments that every person has the opportunity to be a leader of his family.

The Sefer Imrei Shammai cites a cute story. A Jew who was an ignoramus (Am ha'aretz) approached another Jew who was a scholar (Talmid Chacham) and started bragging about his lineage: "You should know my 'yichus'. I come from a line of great people! However, you do not come from anyone of importance." The Am ha'aretz was obviously jealous of the Torah scholar. He had only one thing going for himself - his great ancestors - so he bragged about his lineage. The Talmud Chacham answered him sharply, "The difference between us is that your 'yichus' ends with you. In my case, my 'yichus' begins with me."

This capacity - to begin a distinguished family lineage from oneself - is hinted at in the above quoted pasuk. Every person (ish, ish), no matter from where he comes, has the ability to become the head of his own family (rosh l'beis avosav, hu) - meaning the beginning of an illustrious chain in his own family that will henceforth trace its origin to him.

No person should feel discouraged because he comes from humble beginnings. On the contrary - 'yichus' has to start somewhere. If it hasn't started from one's ancestors, let a person make every effort to insure that great lineage begins with him.

A Chassidic tale is told involving the Maggid of Mezrich. When the Maggid of Mezrich was five years old, a fire burned down his house. His mother sat in front of the rubble crying. She explained to her son that she was not crying because she had lost her house. The cause of her great grief was that a family tree (shetar yuchsin) going back many many generations was lost in the fire. Tradition has it that the five year old, future Maggid of Mezrich, consoled his mother with the words, "Don't worry mommy. I am going to start a new 'yichus'."

He in fact became the start of a great line of Chassidic leaders. Today if someone can show that he traces his ancestry back to the Maggid of Mezrich, he is considered to be a person of great lineage. Every person has the ability to become the "head of the lineage of his household." Some people have the fate of being the "end of the line" of the 'yichus' of their family. Others are able to begin a new line of 'yichus,' from themselves forward.

Ancestry of Our Moshiach Highlights His Universal Mission

I saw the following thought on the Book of Rus from Rav Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik, zt"l.

Rus was the great grandmother of Dovid HaMelech [King David]. Speaking of humble beginnings, there could be no more humble beginning to the Jewish monarchy than tracing one's ancestry to Rus the Moabite. The Jewish people held Moabites in such disregard that male Moabite converts were not allowed to intermarry with the "Congregation of Hashem." And yet, Dovid HaMelech's genealogy is traced back to this daughter of a Moabite King.

Apparently, Rav Soloveitchik said, Rus brought something to Klal Yisrael that was a necessary ingredient for ultimately producing the Moshiach [Messiah]. It is not accidental that Moshiach will stem from Rus. Rus demonstrated extraordinary courage, devotion, and loyalty. Here is a woman who was a princess in her own right. When widowed by the death of Naomi's son, she was left penniless. Now she had a decision to make: "Do I go back to the palace or do I go to a foreign land where the prospects of me marrying again are next to nothing?"

Despite all this, her devotion to her mother-in-law, her foresight and her strength (Gevurah), enabled her to make a most heroic and courageous decision. She returned to the Land of Israel and to Klal Yisrael with her elderly mother-in-law. The traits of courage and heroism displayed by Rus are personality ingredients that will be needed by the Moshiach.

Moshiach also descends from two other women, the first of whom was the daughter of Lot. Thinking that after their escape from the destruction of Sodom, she, her sister, and her father were the only three living survivors on the planet, Lot's daughter did something that was despicable. She had relations with her own father. But the motivation behind this act was a desire to save the world. She did what she did because she thought that otherwise the world would come to an end and she felt she had to act to save humanity. This attribute of self-sacrifice for the purpose of saving the world is a noble one. This too is a necessary ingredient in the Moshiach, who must possess a pressing urge to save mankind.

The third woman from whom the Moshiach stems is Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Yehudah. Her first two husbands died. She was relegated to a position of "who knows what is going to be with me." She waited patiently until she was able to have a child with Yehudah. She, too, foreshadows a desirable trait for the Moshiach: The attribute of patience.

The Moshiach is waiting to come. He must have Job-like patience, two thousand years of patience or more may be necessary -- until we are on the level when we will be worthy of his coming.

The courage of Rus, the patience of Tamar, and the desire to save the world as manifested by Lot's eldest daughter - are all necessary ingredients for producing a Moshiach. The irony is that all three of these women were not Jewish. This fits in with the idea that the role of the Moshiach -- in spite of the fact that he is going to be OUR Moshiach -- will not be limited to the Jewish nation. He will have a universal effect on the entire planet. "And Hashem will be King over the entire world and on that day Hashem will be One and His Name will be One" [Zecharia 14:9].

Therefore, it is not a coincidence that the spiritual gene pool, from which Moshiach will descend, will also include genes from members of the nations of the world. Moshiach's job will not only be to bring back Jews to where they have to be, but also to bring back the entire world - Jews and Gentiles alike - so that everyone will recognize that G-d is One and His Name is One.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA DavidATwersky@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org. These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #462, May A Child Carry A Sefer On Shabbos. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410)

358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrand, Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

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



From: Avi Lieberman <AteresHaShavua@aol.com>
Subject: ATERES HASHAVUA
Mesivta Ateres Yaakov 1170A William Street
Hewlett NY, 11557 (516)-374-6465
AteresHaShavua@aol.com
EMES LIYAAKOV
Weekly Insights from MOREINU
HORAV YAAKOV KAMENETZKY zt"l

[Translated by Ephraim Weiss]

"Count the entire congregation of Bnei Yisroel according to their father's families, by the number of names, every male according to their head count."

In this week's parsha, Moshe is instructed by Hashem to count Bnei Yisroel. Interestingly, the word that is used to mean count, is "WAS," literally, "to raise." The Midrash explains that the word "WAS" can have both positive and negative connotations. It can mean to raise oneself to greatness, or it can mean to raise oneself to death. Through the usage of the word "WAS," Hashem was telling Moshe that if Bnei Yisroel would be zocheh, they could attain great heights during their sojourn through the midbar. At the same time, Hashem was also warning Moshe of the potential pitfalls along the way that could cause Bnei Yisroel to perish in the desert. However, since Hashem knew that in the end Bnei Yisroel would stumble during the episode of the meraglim, and would end up dying in the desert, Hashem made sure to count shevet Levi separately, so that they would not be deserving of the death penalty along with the rest of Bnei Yisroel.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenezky, zt"l asks two questions on this Midrash. First of all, what connection is there between the counting of Bnei Yisroel, and the chet ha'meraglim? Second, how would being counted separately protect shevet Levi from being punished along with Bnei Yisroel?

Rav Yaakov answers these questions by explaining the Midrash in the following way. The purpose of counting Bnei Yisroel was to set up the order in which they would camp. The Ramban brings a Midrash that explains that Hashem's intention was for the organization of Bnei Yisroel to be an earthly manifestation of the four directions, and the four animals that surround the Kisei HaKavod. However, some of Bnei Yisroel mistakenly understood this as a measure taken to decide whether Bnei Yisroel were strong enough to conquer Eretz Yisroel. This mistake was lacking in emunah, for Bnei Yisroel should have understood that the conquering of Eretz Yisroel was not dependent on their might, but rather on siyata di'shimaya. This was the same mistake that was made by the chet ha'meraglim, when Bnei Yisroel realized that indeed, they did not possess the physical prowess necessary to defeat the thirty one kings of Eretz Yisroel. As such, we can understand the connection between the census taken in the midbar and the chet ha'meraglim. The census could have raised Bnei Yisroel to tremendous heights in kedusha, but it instead caused the mistake that eventually led to the chet ha'meraglim.

Based on this psht, we can now understand how a separate census was able to protect shevet Levi from the punishment endured by the rest of Bnei Yisroel. In reality, the chet ha'eigel was also caused by a lack of emunah. When Bnei Yisroel realized that Moshe was not returning from Har Sinai, they immediately began to worry about how they would survive. Instead of putting their trust in Hashem, they built the eigel. However, shevet Levi was the only shevet that did not

participate in the chet ha'eigel, thus demonstrating that they were not lacking in their bitachon. Because of their lofty level of emunah, shevet Levi was not subject to the same misunderstanding of the census, as the rest of Bnei Yisroel. As such, the fact that they were not counted with the rest of Bnei Yisroel protected them from being punished as a result of the tragic error that took place during the census.

May we be zocheh to raise our level of emunah to new and greater heights, so that we may merit the lofty madreigos intended for Bnei Yisroel, culminating in the coming of Moshiach, bi'mihayra bi'yameinu, amen.

From: office@etzion.org.il on behalf of Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: June 02, 2005 To: yhe-sichot@etzion.org.il Subject: SICHOT65 -33: Yom Yerushalayim
Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm) Yom Yerushalayim 5765 <http://vbm-torah.org/archive/sichot65/33-65yyerush.htm>
Dedicated in honor of my dear friends Rabbi Dovid and Miriam Shapiro. -Marcy Shyovitz

"REISHIT TZEMICHAT GE'ULATENU":
WHAT KIND OF REDEMPTION DOES ISRAEL REPRESENT?

BY HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL

A. JOY AND TREPIDATION

"You shall say on that day: I will praise You, O G-d; although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned back and You comfort me." (Yishayahu 12:1)

We experienced this verse on the day the State of Israel was declared. The fifth of Iyar, 5708 (May 14, 1948), was a day of G-d's anger, for we received the bitter news of the fall of Gush Etzion and the many victims who were slaughtered here. But it was also a day of G-d "turning back" and "comforting me."

Although intellectually I understand the importance of our celebration today, it is psychologically and emotionally difficult for me to rejoice. One reason for this difficulty concerns upcoming events in Gush Katif. One of the forty-eight traits by virtue of which the Torah is acquired is "sharing the yoke with one's neighbor." In other words, one must not let the other person bear his burden alone; one must not stand by and observe from the side. Rather, one must feel existential partnership with his brother who is in distress, and help share his burden.

Along with my anxiety for the residents of Gush Katif, I also have grave concerns, which should not be hidden, regarding the security situation following the disengagement, and regarding the political results of the disengagement process as well. My personal opinion is that until the coming of the Messiah, we will have problems with the Arab world; the question is just at what level.

Beyond these problems, there is another factor that clouds my joy: we are all part of Religious Zionism, a movement that is currently in deep crisis.

For these reasons, it is difficult for me to speak. Yet it is important to emphasize that my difficulty is only emotional. From an ideological perspective, I have no problem rejoicing on Yom Ha-atzma'ut this year. I danced and rejoiced on the fifth of Iyar 5708, when the State was declared without Gush Katif, without Jaffa, without Nahariya, and without the Old City of Jerusalem – so should I not rejoice today? We cannot deny that the current period is a bitter one, but then, too – when we heard about the fall of Gush Etzion – it was bitter, and nevertheless we rejoiced! Therefore the problem is more emotional than substantial.

This year we are hearing, for the first time, some voices from within the Religious Zionist camp calling on us not to celebrate Yom Ha-atzma'ut and not to recite Hallel. Although several leading rabbis have denounced this call, the very fact that rabbis have come out with a statement that "We have no portion and inheritance in the Lord of Israel" must give rise to very serious questions. What is the origin of this confusion, which has completely reversed the attitude of many people towards the State?

It seems to me that the main problem stems from the fact that among various groups, doubts have begun to arise concerning the expression, "reishit tzemichat ge'ulateinu, the beginning of the flowering of our redemption." What is the source of these doubts? They arise from the philosophy of a great man, Rav Zvi Yehuda ha-Kohen Kook zt"l, and principally from the philosophy of his students. Since I believe that the majority of Religious Zionism does not identify with the philosophy that I shall discuss shortly, and I count myself

among that majority, I feel a need to express my opinion and to serve as their mouthpiece. I hope that you will listen to what I have to say, although this is not an opinion that is usually voiced.

B. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STATE

In fact, the concept of the "beginning of the redemption" (atchalta degula) was spoken about long before the establishment of the State. The students of the Vilna Gaon and the students of the Ba'al Shem Tov who made aliya to Eretz Yisrael decided that they were living at the time of the "beginning of the redemption." The son-in-law of R. Yehoshua Kutner brought a letter from Rav Eliyahu Guttmacher, one of the leading disciples of R. Akiva Eiger, written in the year 5634 (1874), in which he asserts that if there would be 130 families working the land in Eretz Yisrael, this would be considered the "beginning of the redemption."

Before the founding of the State, Rav Avraham Yitzchak ha-Kohen Kook zt"l decided that we are living in the time of the "beginning of the redemption" on the basis of the well-known Gemara (Sanhedrin 98a): "Rabbi Abba said: There is no more revealed sign of the redemption than that which is written: 'And you, O mountains of Israel – you shall give forth your branches and bear fruit for My nation, Israel' (Yechezkel 36:8)."

His son, Rav Zvi Yehuda, also spoke about this – but in his time the State was already established. And so the question arose: what was so special about the establishment of the State? If the land began to give its fruit to the Nation of Israel before the creation of the State, and the "beginning of the redemption" was already upon us, then what great change came about with the State's birth?

The students of Rav Zvi Yehuda had an answer to this question: indeed, the establishment of the State brought about something new. In light of the Ramban's teaching in his comments on Rambam's Sefer Ha-mitzvot, they explained that the "beginning of the redemption" refers not to the Jewish nation dwelling in the Land of Israel, but rather to the absolute sovereignty of the Jewish nation over all parts of Eretz Yisrael. I heard this for the first time many years ago, and I was astounded to discover that they believed that a major component of the significance of the State was that it facilitated the fulfillment of the command to dwell in the Land of Israel and to conquer it, in accordance with the teaching of the Ramban. According to this understanding, if a major aspect of the purpose of the State is the fulfillment of the command to exercise sovereignty over Eretz Yisrael, then a State that hands over territories betrays its purpose, and we must question whether it is still "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption." According to this view, the State is invested with significance by virtue of its exercising sovereignty over all areas of the land. To my mind, this is the source of the doubts among the Religious Zionist public today concerning the significance of the State.

I do not believe in this approach. I can testify concerning myself that I recited the blessing of "She-hechiyanu" and I danced on the 29th of November 1947, at Be'erot Yitzchak, even though the U.N. had partitioned the land, and likewise in 1948. Our feeling was one of elation; it was as though there was an intoxicating drug in the air – Israeli independence. We weren't rejoicing because of what the Ramban taught, but rather because of the fulfillment of Herzl's vision. At that time, Rav Zvi Yehuda recounted: "I could not go out and participate in the festivities... for indeed, G-d's word – 'They have divided My land' (Yael 4:2) – was being fulfilled... In that condition – my whole body shaken, wounded all over, cut up into pieces – I could not rejoice" (excerpt from "Eretz Ha-Zvi"). We – the simple Jews among whom I regard myself – didn't know about the Ramban. We knew that there was Israeli independence, Jewish sovereignty in our land – and we rejoiced over that.

C. JEWISH SOVEREIGNTY

I didn't invent this approach. In the previous generation, there were Rabbis who spoke about the "beginning of the redemption," the "revealed end," the "footsteps of the Messiah" – and a few years later came the greatest Holocaust that had ever happened in all of Jewish history. Anyone who thought that he was witnessing the signs of the complete redemption was proved wrong in the Holocaust.

When the State was established, some of the greatest Torah Sages in the world – some of whom I was fortunate to know – declared that although we are not living in the time of the "revealed end" of the "footsteps of the Mashiach," there is still great importance to the political freedom of establishing a State. Rambam writes that one of the reasons for the festival of Chanuka is that "Jewish sovereignty was restored for more than two hundred years" during the period of the Chashmonaim (Hilkhos Chanuka 3:1) – even though we know the low moral standing of the many members of the Hasmonean dynasty. The Mishna teaches that on Yom Kippur the Kohen Gadol would recite eight blessings, one of which is "Upon Israel" (Yoma 68b). The Gemara explains that this blessing is "Upon Your nation, Israel, who need to be saved" (Yoma 70a). Rambam

elaborates: "Its theme is that G-d should save Israel, and not let them be left without a king" (Hilkhos Avodot Yom ha-Kippurim 3:11). Again, although we know what type of kings ruled during the Second Temple period, and we know how deficient was their moral and religious level, Rambam nevertheless asserts that the "salvation of Israel" is expressed in sovereignty, royalty.

For these reasons, the Chief Rabbis, including Rav Herzog zt"l, ruled that the establishment of the State of Israel is "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption." A situation in which Am Yisrael has "a king" (sovereignty) and freedom is a harbinger of redemption. We have no previous accounts; following the Holocaust, any previous accounts are hidden away. We do not know what is supposed to happen, what is destined to take place, but there is no doubt that the establishment of the State of Israel is of great significance in its own right.

After the Oslo Accords, when Israel transferred a few cities to Palestinian control, I participated in a panel discussion in New York with some other Israeli rabbis. One of the questions raised was whether it was still possible to speak of the "beginning of the flowering of our redemption," following the handing over of territories to the Palestinians. One of the speakers answered that if Rav Kook spoke about the "beginning of the flowering of our redemption" in his time, we can certainly speak in such terms in our own times. In response, I said that, with all due respect to the teachings of Rav Kook, a Holocaust had happened in the meantime. Hence, I would not talk about drawing inferences from Rav Kook's time to ours. Rather, I would say that if we believed in "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption" in 1948, then we could certainly still use this term after the Oslo Accords.

When Rav Herzog spoke of "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption," he did not mean the messianic redemption; rather, he meant the simple redemption consisting of Jewish sovereignty in the land. The Chatam Sofer (parashat Shoftim, p. 37) comments that several times during the course of history, the Holy One wanted to redeem Israel with an incomplete redemption – as during the period of the Second Temple – but the nation of Israel refused, for we have no desire for an incomplete redemption, without Mashiach. The Chatam Sofer wrote this prior to the Holocaust, but after that terrible period during which people sailed aimlessly in boats, with no home, we understand that there was never any chillul Hashem – desecration of G-d's Name – like the Holocaust, nor any kiddush Hashem – sanctification of G-d's Name – like the establishment of the State. There can be no doubt that praise and thanks should be offered for the establishment of the State, even if it is not a messianic redemption, the "revealed end."

Indeed, in 1948 we did not speak of the Mashiach. We prayed for malkhut Yisrael, and sufficed with sovereignty comparable to that of the Second Temple period. There is no doubt that we attained at least that much. During Ezra's time, very few people came back to Israel; in our time – thank G-d, we have reached five, six million. We never had such numbers here!

The messianic feeling, the sense of the "revealed end," started after the Six-Day War. In realistic terms, it was difficult to understand how we had managed to defeat seven Arab armies with such ease. Admittedly, there were Torah giants who thought otherwise. In his typically resolute fashion, Rav Shlomo Goren z"l said immediately after the war, in a speech at Mossad ha-Rav Kook, that all the events of that war were not miraculous. As proof, he brought the verse, "And it was, when Pharaoh sent out the nation, that G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines ... for G-d said, 'Lest the nation regret [leaving] when they see war [approaching], and return to Egypt'" (Shemot 13:17). Could G-d then not perform miracles for Israel in the war to conquer the land, as He did for them in Egypt? What Rav Goren wanted to say was that this was proof that wars of conquest of Eretz Yisrael are not carried out through miracles, but rather through human means. Hence, since the Six-Day War was a war for Eretz Yisrael, it could not be miraculous. Admittedly, this approach remains an uncommon one. For a large sector of the public, the Six-Day War actually strengthened the view that the significance of the State of Israel is bound up with ruling over Eretz Yisrael, rather than with the actual fact of Jewish sovereignty, autonomy and freedom. These people regarded the war as a revealed miracle, and as proof of the imminent messianic redemption.

D. MAINTAINING THE JEWISH MAJORITY

At the same time, after the Six-Day War, some Jews – both religious and secular – stood up and said that the partition of the land that had been forced upon us by the U.N. during the British mandate should be nullified. One of these people was Prof. Yisrael Eldad, who said to me: "We're finished with the partition; let's get back to the Greater Land of Israel."

These people began to speak about a vision of the complete Eretz Yisrael, but they didn't notice the Arabs living within the borders of that "Whole Land of Israel." At the time of the establishment of the State, the Arab population within

the borders of the country was relatively small, and there was a chance that the Jewish nation would remain the majority for the long term. Today, after our conquest of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, there arises a risk that the State will not remain Jewish. When the government agreed that marriage and divorce would be handled in this country in accordance with religious principles, and that public institutions would observe kashrut, this flowed from the sense that this is a Jewish country. But in a Jewish country there must be a Jewish majority, and this is diminishing with time.

For this reason, since the Six-Day War, no government of Israel has dreamed of annexing Judea, Samaria and Gaza as part of the State of Israel. We annexed the Golan Heights, where there are no Arabs, and Jerusalem – based on the view that we could deal with the number of Arabs living there. But annexing Judea, Samaria and Gaza? How long could we hold on without giving the Arabs the right to vote? Even those on the far left admit that the Arabs should not be granted the "right of return," for this would destroy the Jewishness of the State.

Two approaches were proposed to deal with the problem of how to retain the entire land despite the demographic issue. One, led by Rechavam Ze'evi Hy'd and fundamentally secular, claimed that the solution was a "transfer" of the Arabs. Aside from the moral problem involved, no Arab state agrees to take in these Arabs. Still, the "transfer" approach arose from logical reasoning: if we want to annex the entire Eretz Yisrael, we must find a solution to the demographic problem.

A second approach, whose proponents included religious people with a zealous vision of a Greater Eretz Yisrael, claimed that the solution would be found with the coming of the Mashiach, and since the Mashiach is already knocking at the door, there is no need to worry about the pragmatic, actual ramifications of our action. This messianic thinking – which perceived the Mashiach as already lurking somewhere in the Jerusalem mountains and soon to be revealed to us – is what led to this view.

To my sorrow, I have not merited Divine inspiration. I have never met a prophet who fit all of the Rambam's identifying criteria, who told me that the Mashiach is already on the way. When I established the yeshiva, the architect who thought up the shape of the beit midrash planned it without windows. I told her about the tzaddik in whose town a shofar blast was once heard, and the whole community thought that the Mashiach had arrived. The tzaddik poked his nose out of the window, sniffed gently, and said: "No. When the Mashiach comes, it will be possible to sense it in the air." A beit midrash needs windows, in order to be able to sense when the Mashiach is coming. If I haven't yet sensed the Mashiach's footsteps – it is a sign that the Mashiach hasn't yet come...

In any event, we must rejoice today just as we rejoiced in 1948. We must recognize that just as the Holocaust was a gargantuan chillul Hashem, so the State of Israel is the greatest kiddush Hashem. We have a problem with giving away parts of Eretz Yisrael, but let us look at what the Holy One has done for us! We have an independent State, we are a prosperous country, and we are militarily strong. True, there is poverty and there are plenty of other problems, but it is difficult to conceive of the magnitude of the change that has been wrought in our condition over the past sixty years.

We are permitted to rejoice wholeheartedly on Yom Ha-atzma'ut. Despite our pain, we must follow Rashi's words, "At a time of mourning – one mourns; at a time of joy – one rejoices" (Bereishit 6:6). This is "a time of joy," and therefore let us declare without reservation, "This day – G-d has made; let us celebrate and rejoice in it!" (Tehillim 118:24).

[This sicha was delivered on Yom Ha-atzma'ut 5765 (2005). It was adapted by Shaul Barth with Reuven Ziegler and translated by Kaeren Fish.]

Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash Alon Shevut, Gush Etzion 90433 E-Mail: Yhe@Etzion.Org.II Or Office@Etzion.Org.II Copyright (c) 2004 Yeshivat Har Etzion

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/>

Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

RABBI DR. JONATHAN SACKS

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago]

bemidbar

ON THE FACE OF IT THE CONNECTIONS between the sedra and haftarah of Bemidbar are slender. The first has to do with demography. Bemidbar begins with a census of the people. The haftarah begins with Hosea's vision of a time when "the number of the children of Israel will

be like the sand on the sea-shore which cannot be measured or numbered." There was a time when the Israelites could be counted; the day will come when they will be countless. That is one contrast between the future and the past.

The second goes deeper. The sedra and the book that bears its name are called Bemidbar, "in the wilderness". The book is about the wilderness years in both a physical and spiritual sense: a time of wandering and internal conflict. Hosea, however, foresees a time when G-d will bring the people back to the desert and there enact a second honeymoon:

. . . I will lead her into the wilderness [says G-d about the Israelites] and speak tenderly to her . . . There she will respond as in the days of her youth, As in the day she came out of Egypt.

What gives the haftarah its special resonance, however, is the fact that Bemidbar is always read on the Shabbat preceding Shavuot, the festival of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The fact that tradition chose this of all prophetic passages tells us something deeply moving about how the Jewish people understood this festival and about the Torah itself as the living connection between a people and G-d.

THE STORY OF HOSEA is one of the strangest of that great chain of visionaries we call the prophets. It is the story of a marriage. The prophet married a woman called Gomer. He was deeply in love with her. We can infer this, because of all the prophets, Hosea is the most eloquent and passionate on the subject of love. Gomer, however, proved faithless. She left home, had a series of lovers, was serially unfaithful, and was eventually forced to sell herself into slavery. Yet Hosea, caught between anger and tender longing, found that he could not relinquish his love for her.

In a flash of prophetic insight, G-d leads him to understand that his own personal experience mirrors that between G-d and the Israelites. He had rescued them from slavery, led them through the wilderness and brought them to their new home, the land of Israel. But the people proved faithless. They worshipped other gods. They were promiscuous in their spiritual attachments. By rights, says G-d, I should have abandoned them. I should have called them (as the prophet called his third child) Lo-ammi, "you are not My people". Yet G-d's love is inextinguishable. He too cannot let go. Whatever the people's sins, He will bring them back into the desert, scene of their first love, and their marriage will be renewed.

The Talmud in Pesachim gives an extraordinary account of the dialogue between G-d and Hosea - the unwritten story of the episode that precedes chapter 1 of the book of Hosea:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Hosea, "Your children have sinned." To this, the prophet should have replied, "[My children?] - they are Your children, the children of your favoured ones, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Be merciful to them." Not only did he not say this, but he actually said, "Lord of the universe, the whole world is yours. Exchange them for another nation."

The Holy One, blessed be He, said [to Himself], "What shall I do with this old man? I will tell him to go and marry a prostitute and have children by her. Then I will tell him to send her away. If he can, then I too will send Israel away."

There are few more telling passages in the whole of rabbinic literature. If I were to summarise it, I would say: Who is a leader of the Jewish people? Only one who loves the Jewish people. Reading the prophetic literature, it is easy to see the prophets as social critics. They see the people's faults; they speak them aloud; their message is often a negative one, foretelling disaster. The Talmud is telling us that such a view is superficial and misses the essential point. The prophets loved their people. They spoke not out of condemnation but from the depths of deep desire. They knew that Israel was capable of, and had been summoned to, great things. They never criticised in order to distance themselves, to set themselves above and apart. They spoke in love - G-d's love. That is

why, in Israel's darkest nights, the prophets always had a message of hope.

THERE IS ONE VERSE in the haftarah so deep that it deserves special attention. G-d is telling the prophet about the time yet to come when He will bring His people back to the places they once visited, the desert where they first pledged their love, and there they will renew their relationship:

In that day - declares the Lord - you will call Me 'my husband'; you will no longer call Me 'my master'.

The resonances of this sentence are impossible to capture in translation. The key words in Hebrew are Ish and Baal, and they both mean 'husband'. Hosea is telling us about two kinds of marital relationships - and two kinds of culture. One is signalled by the word Baal, which not only means 'husband' but is also the name of the Canaanite god. Baal, one of the central figures in the pantheon of the ancient Near East, was the storm god of lightning and the fertility god who sends rain to impregnate the ground. He was the macho deity who represented sex and power on a cosmic scale.

Hosea, punning on the name, hints at the kind of world that emerges when you worship sex and power. It is a world without loyalties, where relationships are casual and people taken advantage of and then dropped. A marriage predicated on the word Baal is a relationship of male dominance in which women are used not loved, owned not honoured. The word Baal means, among other things, 'owner'.

Against this Hosea describes a different kind of relationship. Here his literary device is not pun but quotation. In using the word Ish to describe the relationship between G-d and His people, the prophet is evoking a verse at the beginning of Genesis - the words of the first man seeing the first woman: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called 'woman' [ishah] for she was taken out of man [ish]." Daringly, Hosea suggests that the making of woman from man mirrors the creation of humanity from G-d. First they are separated, then they are joined again, but now as two distinct persons each of whom respects the integrity of the other. What joins them is a new kind of relationship built on fidelity and trust.

HOW WE UNDERSTAND the giving of the Torah depends on how we see the relationship between G-d and the people He chose to be His special witnesses on earth. Inevitably, the language of Judaism when it speaks of G-d is metaphorical. The Infinite cannot be compassed in finite categories. The metaphors the prophets use are many. G-d is, among other things, artist, creator, king, master, warrior, shepherd, judge, teacher, redeemer and father. From the point of view of G-d-as-king, the Torah is the code of laws He ordains for the people He rules. From the perspective of G-d-as-father-and-teacher, it represents the instructions He gives His children as to how they should best live. Adopting the image of artist-creator, Jewish mystics throughout the ages saw the Torah as the architecture of the universe, the deep structure of existence. Of all the metaphors, however, the most lovely and most intimate was of G-d as husband, with Israel as His bride. Isaiah says:

For your Maker is your husband, The Lord Almighty is his name . . . (54: 5)

Likewise Jeremiah:

'Return, faithless people,' declares the Lord, 'for I am your husband.' (3: 14)

This is how Ezekiel describes the marriage between G-d and Israel in the days of Moses:

Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you -- declares the Lord G-d - and you became mine. (16: 8)

From this perspective, the Torah is more than a constitution and code of laws, more than a set of instructions or even the metaphysical DNA of the universe. It is a marriage contract - a token and gesture of love.

When attraction, that most fleeting of emotions, seeks to perpetuate itself as love, it takes the form of marriage: marriage as covenant, in which both parties pledge themselves to one another, to be loyal, steadfast, to stay together through difficult times as well as good and to achieve together what neither could do alone. A marriage is created not by force or coercion but by words - the word given, the word received, the word honoured in faithfulness and trust. There are such things as the laws of marriage (the respective responsibilities of husband and wife), but marriage of its essence is more than a dispassionate set of obligations and rights. It is law suffused with love, and love translated into law. That, according to this metaphor, is what the Sinai event was.

The supreme poet of marriage was Hosea. By reading this haftarah on the Shabbat before Shevuot, we make a momentous affirmation: that in giving the Torah to Israel, G-d was not asserting His power, dominance or lordship over Israel (what Hosea means when he uses the word ba'al). He was declaring His love. That is why it is no accident that the words with which the haftarah ends - among the most beautiful in the entire religious literature of mankind - are the words Jewish men recite every weekday morning as they wind the strap of the hand-tefillin like a wedding ring around their finger, renewing daily the marriage covenant of Sinai:

I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and justice, love and compassion; I will betroth you to me in faithfulness, And you will know G-d.

From: RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM PARSHA COLUMN [Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il] on behalf of Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column [parshat_hashavua@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2005 4:46 AM To: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Bamidbar/ Yom Yerushalayim by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Bamidbar, Yom Yerushalayim (Numbers 1:1 - 4:20) By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - The name by which this fourth Book of the Five Books of Moses (Pentateuch) is most popularly known is Bamidbar, or in the Desert - an apt description of the forty years of the Israelite desert-wanderings which the book records.

Indeed, this desert period serves as the precursor of - as well as a most apt metaphor for - the almost 2000 years of homeless wandering from place to place which has characterized much of Jewish history before the emergence of our Jewish State in 1948.

The Hebrew word for desert, midbar, is also pregnant with meanings and allusions which in many ways have served as a beacon for our Jewish exile. The root noun from which midbar is built is dabar, which means leader or shepherd. After all, the most ancient occupation known to humanity is shepherding, and the desert is the most natural place for the shepherd to lead his flock: the sheep can comfortably wander in a virtual no-man's land and graze on the vegetation of the various oases or their outskirts without the problem of stealing from private property or harming the ecology of settled habitations. And perhaps dabar means leader - shepherd because it also means word: the shepherd directs the flock by meaningful sounds and words, and the leader of people must also have the ability to inspire and lead by the verbal message he communicates; indeed, the Ten Words (or Ten Commandments, aseret hadibrot) were revealed in the Sinai desert, and they govern Israel - as well as a good part of the world - to this very day.

Moreover, it must be noted that wherever the Israelites wandered in the desert, they were always accompanied by the portable desert mishkan, or Sanctuary, which literally means (Divine) Presence (Shakon). However, G-d was not in the Sanctuary; even the greatest expanse of the heavens cannot contain the Divine Presence, declared King Solomon when he

dedicated the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. (Kings I, 8) It was rather G-d's word which was in the Sanctuary, in the form of the "Ten Words" on the Tablets of Stone preserved in the Holy Ark, as well as the ongoing and continuing word of G-d which He would speak (vedibarti, Ex 25:22) from between the cherubs on the end of the Kapporet above the Holy Ark. It was by means of these Divine Words that even the desert - a metaphor for an inhospitable and even alien exile environment which is broilingly hot by day, freezingly cold by night and deficient in water which is the very elixir of life - can become transformed into sacred space. And indeed the word succeeded in sanctifying the many Marrakeshes and Vilnas of our wanderings!

Allow me to share with you a story from my previous life (in the exile of the West Side of New York City) which taught me how the word can bring sanctity into the most unlikely of places. In the early 1970's, a disco opened up in a window storefront building on 72nd Street and Broadway; despite the fact that it was called the Tel Aviv Disco and was owned by Israelis living in New York, it remained open every night of the year, even Kol Nidre night. I must have placed at least two dozen calls to the owners to try to persuade them to close at least on the night of Yom Kippur, only to have finally received a message from their secretary informing me that the owners would not speak to rabbis!!

During this period, Rav Yitzhak Dovid Grossman - a beloved and respected friend who is the Rav of Migdal HaEmek - spent Shabbat with us at Lincoln Square Synagogue. He is a charismatic religious leader who is well-known for the many prisoners and other alienated Jews whom he has brought back to religious observance. After a delightful Friday evening meal at my home, replete with inspiring Hassidic melodies and words of Torah, he suggested that we go for a "shpatzir" (Yiddish for leisurely walk). I tried to explain that the general atmosphere of the West Side streets of Manhattan were hardly conducive to Sabbath sanctity - but to no avail. His steps led us in the direction of 72nd Street and Broadway, right in front of the window revealing the frenzied disco dancers. "Did you ever see a mosquito captured in a glass jar?" he asked me in Yiddish (our language of discourse). "The mosquito is moving with all sorts of contortions, and appears to be dancing. In reality, however, the mosquito is gasping for air. That is the situation of those "dancers" in the disco. They are really gasping for air, struggling in their search for a real Shabbos. Let's go in and show them Shabbos."

Before I could say "Jackie Robinson," he was inside the disco - and as a good host, I felt constrained to follow him. He sported a long beard and side-locks, and was wearing a shtreimel (fur hat) and Kapote (silk gaberdine), and I was dressed in my Sabbath Prince Albert, Kippa and ritual fringes out; as we entered the disco, the band of Israelis immediately stopped playing. I immediately recognized three young men from the Synagogue - who seemed totally discombobulated; two ran out covering their faces, and the third tried to explain to me that he wasn't really there, that his mother had had some kind of attack and he thought that her doctor might be at the disco... Rav Grossman began to sing, Sabbath melodies. Almost miraculously, the men danced on one side, the women on the other. After about twenty minutes, he urged me to speak to them in English. I told them of the magical beauty, the joy and the love of the Sabbath, and they listened with wrapt attention. Rav Grossman led them in one more song - and we left.

I cannot tell you that the miracle continued, it didn't take five minutes, and we could hear the resumption of the disco band music. However, before the next Yom Kippur, the Tel Aviv Disco closed down; I don't know why, because the owners wouldn't speak to rabbis. And for the next two years, at least a dozen young singles joined Lincoln Square Synagogue because they had been inspired by our Disco visit....

In a few days, we shall celebrate Yom Yerushalayim. The vision of Jerusalem is the City of Peace, from whence the "word of G-d" (davar HaShem) will emanate to all nations of the world, will sanctify and uplift

every spiritual desert. And if the word can sanctify a disco, it can sanctify every desert out-post as well!
Shabbat Shalom & Yom Yerushalayim Sameach.

From: Peninim-bounces@shemayisrael.com on behalf of Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalist@shemayisrael.com] Sent: Thursday, June 02, 2005 5:58 AM
To: Peninim Parsha

PENINIM ON THE TORAH
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM
Parshas Bamidbar

Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai. (1:1) Rashi explains the reason that yet another census is attributed to Hashem's great love for the Jewish People. He counted Klal Yisrael when they left Egypt, after the sin of the Golden Calf, to see how many had survived, and again when He was about to rest His Shechinah among them. Furthermore, in his commentary to Shemos 1:1, Rashi cites the pasuk in Yeshayah 40:26 that likens Klal Yisrael to stars, which Hashem brings in by number and by name. Likewise, Hashem counts and enumerates His children when they come out and again when they are "gathered in." What is the significance of being compared to a legion of stars?

Horav Simchah Wasserman, zl, explains that an army of stars is different from a standard army of soldiers. In an army, the officers and heads of divisions are known and referred to by their names. The simple soldier, however, is known only by a number. The reason for this is that since there are so many soldiers, the individual soldier becomes inconsequential. Only after the entire legion is counted by number do they achieve significance as part of the larger collective group. The officers, however, have singular relevance as leaders and are, thus, referred to by name.

Stars are certainly a mighty legion; the universe is filled with millions of them. For this reason, they are referred to by number. Due to their individual impressiveness, however, each star is a world in itself, the smallest star larger than the entire earth. Thus, they are also referred to by name. This is the meaning of Yeshayah 40:26, "He who takes out their hosts by number; He calls them all by name." Stars have a dual quality: individual and collective significance.

Hashem ensured the Patriarchs that their descendants would be like the stars of the universe. They will be many like the stars, but they will, nonetheless, never lose their individual significance. Every individual Jew is like the stars of the sky: each is an entire world unto himself.

When a person realizes his incredible personal value, when he becomes aware of the esteem in which Hashem holds him, he will think twice before acting foolishly and becoming involved in sinful behavior. The reason most people sin is low self-esteem, which tells them "Who cares what you do?" When a person realizes that, Bishvili nivra ha'olam, "The world was created solely for me," that Hashem is machshiv him, cares about him, he will act with greater dignity. When we think that we are inconsequential, we regrettably act as if there is no consequence to our actions.

Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai. (1:1)

The Midrash notes the Torah's emphasis on the place where the Torah was given to Klal Yisrael. Chazal say, "The Torah was given through three media: fire, water and wilderness." What is the significance of these three? Just as these three are accessible and free to everyone, so, too, is the Torah. Furthermore, one must make himself hefker, ownerless, like a wilderness, devoid of all self, in order to acquire Torah. Horav Yehudah Tzedaka, zl, suggests that these three items allude to the criteria through which one will achieve success in Torah study. Fire is a reference to the passion and enthusiasm one must manifest when learning Torah. Water symbolizes humility, since it always flows downward to the lowest area. The wilderness represents the will of Hashem Who gave the Torah and wants that the individual who studies His Torah give up everything - himself and his possessions - in the pursuit of his studies. The lomeid Torah, one who studies Torah, must be satisfied with a simple life, devoid of luxury and excess.

While each of the above qualities deserves particular attention, I would like to focus on the aspect of humility. In a classic exposition of humility, we find Moshe and Aharon exclaiming V'nachnu mah, "For what are we?" This is probably one of the most insightful statements concerning humility. What am I? One must be introspective and ask himself: What am I - really? Take off the mask that others see and view yourself with uncompromising honesty. Are you as you present yourself, or are you someone else - entirely? Are you a giver - or a taker? Do you really care about others, or do you simply put on a facade of concern? This question applies to every area of our daily endeavor, both in our relationship with Hashem and in our relationships with our peers. The difference is that Hashem knows the true you.

While this self-examination is difficult, and for some it might even be painful, nonetheless, one emerges a different person, purged of self-deceit. When one confronts his "real self" he becomes more human and, ultimately, ascends to a higher level on the ladder of spirituality.

I recently read a thesis on the character trait of humility that focuses on the question: "Who am I?" Moshe Rabbeinu, the anav mikol adam, humblest man on earth, refused to go to Egypt as Klal Yisrael's leader, arguing with the words, "Who am I?" This question has a double connotation. On the one hand, it is an expression of humility: "Who am I to take the Jewish People out of Egypt? I am not distinguished enough for this monumental task. Choose someone else, more worthy than I." On the other hand, it is a statement that bespeaks pride in being Hashem's creation, His handiwork: "I am not a simple earthly creature. I possess a Divine soul, which grants me incredible potential. I am created in the Divine image, as well as being a descendant of the Avos HaKedoshim, Holy Patriarchs." Yes, the question, "Who am I?" leads to pride, but it is a pride built on self-knowledge and awareness of one's capacity for achieving spiritual success.

Humility is an important character trait that must be managed with great care. It offers one the potential for greatness when he recognizes that he is the repository of wonderful Divine gifts, which he must work at maintaining. He must strive to be worthy of Hashem Who granted him these gifts. When humility obscures one's potential for success, when it becomes a validation for lack of spiritual growth, when it casts doubts on his ability to ascend the spiritual ladder, it becomes a dangerous negative character trait. Rather than being a motivation for positive growth, it becomes a negative factor in his life.

Our gedolei Yisrael, Torah leaders - from Moshe Rabbeinu, the quintessential leader of our People, down to his contemporary spiritual heirs - are clearly cognizant of the qualities they possess, qualities which catalyze their greatness. They realize that these attributes are G-d-given gifts granted to them for a specific purpose. When they asked, "What am I?" it conveyed their inner feeling of inconsequence and nothingness. Yet, it never negated their feeling of self-worth. One must be aware of his strengths and potential, yet not let it totally define him. This is the humility of "What am I." "I know what I am, and this awareness increases my feelings of "What am I?" Humility is a character trait necessary to the achievement of true greatness. Misplaced humility, however, can lead to disaster, both personal and collective.

They established their genealogy according to their families, according to their fathers' households. (1:18)

There is a fascinating Yalkut Shimoni on the beginning of the Parshah that gives us a compelling insight into the merit of yichus, distinguished lineage. Chazal teach us that when Klal Yisrael received the Torah, the nations of the world were envious. They complained, "Why did the Jews, more so than any other nation, merit to receive the Torah?" Hashem replied to them, "Bring Me your Sefer Yuchsin, genealogical records, as My children, the Jewish People, did. They were given the Torah in the merit of their distinguished pedigree."

We must endeavor to understand Chazal. Is the Torah to be given only to those who have a distinguished lineage? Why does yichus play such a primary role in receiving the Torah? The Maggid, zl, m'Dubno explains that when Hashem offered the Torah to Klal Yisrael, the people responded with a resounding, Kol asher diber Hashem naas'e, "Everything that Hashem has spoken, we will do" (Shemos 19:8). The Yalkut in Parshas Yisro explains that Klal Yisrael were telling Hashem, "All that You will command us to do in the Torah has already been carried out by our forefathers. Thus, we are especially worthy of receiving the Torah. It is our heritage." It would seem, explains Horav Avraham Pam, zl, cited in the newly translated version of Ateres Avraham by Rabbi Sholom Smith, that the Yalkut's interpretation is based on a play on the word naas'e, "we will do." It should be read as naasa, "it was already done (by our forebears)."

Rav Pam explains the reason for this radical departure from the simple pshat, meaning. There is an obvious question to be asked with regard to Klal Yisrael's unequivocal statement. How can a rational people undertake to do whatever they are commanded? How can they be certain that they will be able to honor this commitment? The response is that since their forefathers had kept the Torah, even under the most difficult circumstances, it rendered it possible for them, the children, to make this commitment. Torah observance was in their blood. They were going to continue the commitment that had already been accepted by their ancestors.

Avraham Avinu initiated it with his unstinting conviction. At an advanced age, after waiting an entire life for a child, he was prepared to offer Yitzchak as a sacrifice, in response to Hashem's command. This commitment was imbued in Yitzchak Avinu, who demonstrated total obedience as he lay there willing and ready to be the Olah Temimah, perfect sacrifice. Yaakov Avinu was tested a number of times by Hashem, and he emerged triumphant, because mesiras nefesh,

dedication to the point of self-sacrifice, ran in his blood. It was his heritage, and it became his legacy.

Thus, the actions of our ancestors throughout the ages, their commitment to Hashem and His Torah, have been the symbols, and ultimately the foundation, of our commitment. It is deeply-rooted in our souls. The gentile world that claimed the Torah did not have such yichus. Therefore, they could not say, "All that Hashem has spoken, we will do!" It was not an intrinsic part of them.

Rav Pam suggests that this concept, this unique heritage which is endemic only to Klal Yisrael, has practical significance in our own time. The baal-teshuvah movement, recent returnees to religious observance, movement is one of the greatest phenomena of our generation. Young men and women, from all walks of life and from various nationalities and cultures, are flocking to special Torah centers to study Torah. They rapidly develop the skills necessary for mastering areas of Torah knowledge that had until now been foreign to them. Many become erudite Torah scholars. What caused this overnight sensation? How do they come from backgrounds in which Torah was compared to ancient hieroglyphics to complete proficiency? The answer is yichus. Jews are endowed with a unique pedigree. As descendants of people who dedicated their lives to Torah and mitzvah observance, their neshamos, souls, are the repositories of long-dormant traits and talents that have come to the fore when the Pintele Yid, that Jewish spark, is awakened within them. This spark is stoked into a brilliant flame, which burns brightly as they go from strength to strength.

There is another aspect to yichus which merits mention. It is important to know from where we originated, who our forebears were, what type of lives they led and their level of commitment to Hashem and His Torah. This catalyzes within us a sense of pride as it empowers us to triumph over adversity and the challenges which confront us. With regard to the laws of Yovel, fifty-year Jubilee, all ancestral plots of land that have been sold between one Jubilee and the next revert to their original owners. The Meshech Chochmah writes, that over time, people disperse throughout the country in search of their livelihood. It is important that families return to their origins and strengthen their bonds. Renewing family ties is important because it strengthens each individual's resolve as he sees the commitment of other members of his own family. In the famous tzavaah, final will, of Rabbeinu Yehudah ben HaRash, he writes about his ancestors, so that his descendants would never forget their origins. He hopes that when his descendants delve into the achievements of their forebears, they will be ashamed to deviate from their practices and commitments and that this awareness will increase their level of observance. When we realize upon whose shoulders we stand, we are inspired and encouraged. It also obligates us to follow in their footsteps. Generations come and go, but as long as we remain connected to a common source, we continue to survive collectively as a nation.

And the Nasi for Bnei Gad is Eliyasaph ben Re'uel. (2:14)

The name of this Nasi is spelled in two different ways. Here he is called Eliyasaph ben Re'uel, with a raish, while earlier, in 1:14, he is referred to as Eliyasaph ben De'uel, with a daled. What was his real name? The Imrei Noam derives from here an important ethical lesson. When Shevet Dan was selected as the head of the Degel, Banner formation, Shevet Gad, of which Eliyasaph was the Nasi, could have easily complained. After all, just as Dan was Zilpah's bechor, firstborn, Gad was Bilhah's firstborn. Why should Dan precede Gad? Despite his apparent taaneh, justified complaint, Eliyasaph was me'vater, willing to concede and comply. His name was, therefore, changed to ben Re'uel, an acronym for re'a-Keil, friend of Hashem, just like Moshe Rabbeinu. Indeed, Moshe's burial site was located in Gad's portion. One who acquiesces and accepts upon himself Hashem's judgment becomes a friend of Hashem. So great is the reward for one who is me'vater.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita relates a fascinating story about a young boy who received a wonderful reward for an act of generosity on his part. It was recently that a young man, a talmid chacham, Torah scholar of note, became engaged to a young woman from a fine family in Bnei Brak. The people of the community who knew this young man from the time he was a teenager marveled at his constant good fortune. He was eminently successful in Torah study. He was lucky to find a wonderful shidduch, match, almost immediately, and the wedding plans seemed to be progressing very smoothly. In short, everything that he touched seemed to be blessed. Everyone wondered at the special z'chus, merit, this young man had in order to catalyze this good fortune.

The rav of the community explained that they had to go back in time, eight years to be exact, to discover the reason for his success. "There were two boys rapidly approaching bar-mitzvah," said the rav, "who were both destined to celebrate their bar-mitzvah on the same Shabbos. One of them had to concede the Shabbos, the Haftorah, and the use of the shul's social hall. I decided that the only way to

determine who would have the Shabbos was by goral, a lottery. Both boys drew lots, and our chassan won. He could celebrate his bar-mitzvah in the shul.

"Now what would one expect from a young bar-mitzvah boy? We would expect him to jump for joy and celebrate his triumph. Not our chassan. He was concerned for the other boy. Knowing fully well that his friend would have to travel across the city to locate a shul to celebrate his bar-mitzvah, our chassan made a decision that demonstrated an ethical character far beyond his young years. He was me'vater the Shabbos, giving the rights to the bar-mitzvah in that shul to the other boy. When asked why he was so compliant, he responded, 'I could not sleep that night knowing the hardship my friend would have to sustain as a result of my winning the lot.'

"I can only tell you," said the rav, "that the look of joy on the face of the other boy upon hearing the good news was awesome. By nature a sensitive boy, the other bar-mitzvah boy beamed and was obviously ecstatic that he could celebrate his bar-mitzvah in the community shul. The joy that the boy manifested, however, was nothing compared to the feeling of ecstasy that our chassan enjoyed from the satisfaction he had received from helping another Jew.

"I followed this chassan's life from that day on," said the rav, "and he was met with success after success, becoming the recipient of overwhelming good fortune. It is my feeling that it was all due to his ability to be me'vater, to empathize with the plight of another Jew and concede his own portion in order to help his less fortunate friend."

Sponsored in memory of Mrs. Seliga Ahuva (Schur) Mandelbaum by her parents Rabbi Doniel & Shoshana Schur Peninim mailing list Peninim@shemayisrael.com http://mail.shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim_shemayisrael.com

From: weekly-halacha-owner@torah.org on behalf of Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: Wednesday, June 01, 2005 6:06 PM To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Bamidbar WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5765

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav SHE'AIVOS UTESHUVOS

QUESTION: If a testator (a person who makes a will) draws up a legal will which makes provisions that run counter to Torah law (e.g., the oldest son is not given a "double portion" of the inheritance), and the will is probated in court, will beis din overturn the will if its validity is contested by the heirs?

DISCUSSION: Drawing up a legal will whose provisions run counter to the Torah's laws of inheritance is strictly forbidden by the Torah, and every effort should be made to educate the public regarding the obligation of writing a will according to halachah. But in the event that such a will was drawn up by an attorney and probated in court, either out of the testator's ignorance or because of his disregard for Torah Law, there is a dispute among the poskim whether or not it can be overturned by beis din. Some hold that if the will is contested in beis din as being contrary to halachah, beis din may declare the will null and void and redistribute the estate according to Torah law.(1) Other poskim, however, hold that a legal will which was probated in court is valid and cannot be contested in beis din.(2)

To better understand the issues involved, let us list some of the basic differences that exist between the Torah's laws of inheritance and the secular law:

* Children: According to civil law, all children -sons and daughters, adopted or natural - inherit equally.(3) According to the halachah, when there are natural sons, daughters and adopted sons do not inherit the estate at all.

* Spouse: According to civil law, upon the death of a spouse, the surviving spouse inherits the estate. According to Torah law, a husband inherits from his wife but a wife does not inherit from her husband; the sons do.

* Maternal relatives - According to civil law there is no distinction between paternal or maternal relatives. The halachah, however, holds that maternal relatives are not considered relatives regarding the halachos of inheritance.

* First born - Civil law does not differentiate between the first born son and his younger brothers. The halachah does; the first born receives a "double portion" [of certain parts] of the estate.

So if, for instance, one draws up a legal will where he divides his estate equally between his sons and daughters and the estate is probated in court, the poskim debate whether or not the sons have the right to contest the will in beis din, as the division is blatantly contrary to halachah. Beis din will then have to rule whether or not they should disregard the deceased's wishes and redistribute the estate according to the halachah. Since there are conflicting views as to the validity of a non-halachic will, and the final ruling will depend on a host of factors, one is well advised to write a will with rabbinical guidance. Otherwise, he runs the risk

of having his will overturned by a future ruling of beis din.

QUESTION: Is there any leeway in Torah law for a testator to divide his estate in a manner that is at variance with any of the four points enumerated above? For example, if a testator wanted to disinherit a son, could he do so halachically?

DISCUSSION: There is leeway and he may do so. While, in general, Chazal were strongly critical of those who do not follow the Torah's guidelines in matters of inheritance,(4) the halachah recognizes that there are many factors involved in inheritance laws (financial, societal, emotional, familial) that the situation may demand an alternate course of action.(5) For example, we mentioned earlier that according to the Torah daughters do not inherit their father's estate when there are sons. But because this could result in familial strife,(6) in reducing young women to poverty upon the death of their father, or in ruining their chances of marriage for lack of a dowry,(7) Rabbinic leaders searched for halachically permitted methods whereby daughters, too, could inherit at least part of the estate, and indeed, this has become the norm.(8) There are a number of halachic methods available whereby one may distribute a significant part of his estate according to his wishes, as long as a certain percentage(9) of it is distributed according to the Torah's laws of inheritance.(10) One should contact a Torah observant lawyer or beis din and have them draw up the required documents. But it is imperative that all changes from the Torah's laws of inheritance be stipulated and finalized prior to the death of the testator. If, for any reason, the testator failed to prepare a halachic will, his estate will be probated by beis din according to Torah law, though it may run counter to his true wishes.

QUESTION: In the U.S. and other countries, the law allows one to declare personal bankruptcy which frees him from the obligation of paying back his debts. Does the halachah, too, recognize the concept of personal bankruptcy?

DISCUSSION: No, it does not. While one who declares personal bankruptcy is not legally obligated to pay back his debts, he is still obligated to pay them back under Torah law. Thus one who avoids paying his debts because he has declared bankruptcy violates the Torah prohibition against stealing. (11) Even if one filed for bankruptcy years back and he has all but forgotten about his debts since he was legally exempt from paying them, he is still obligated to make every effort to pay back all of his debts, either to his creditors or, if they are no longer alive, to their estate. The legal concept of "statute of limitations" is not recognized by the halachah.(12)

QUESTION: Does one fulfill his obligation of reciting Kerias Shema if he fails to pronounce each word correctly according to the rules of dikduk?

DISCUSSION: Chazal attach great significance to pronouncing the words of Kerias Shema correctly, going as far as to say "that one who is particular about reading Shema correctly will be rewarded with a "cooled down" *geheimom*".(13) Still, Shulchan Aruch rules that b'diavad one fulfills his obligation of Shema even if he was not particular to pronounce each word correctly (e.g., he did not correctly accent each syllable) as long as he clearly articulated every single word and every single letter. In particular, Chazal were concerned about words whose last letter is the same as the first letter of the next word. In the words *bechal levavecha*, for example, the letter *lamed* is both at the end of *bechal* and at the beginning of *levavecha*. Both *lameds* need to be clearly and distinctly pronounced, necessitating a slight pause between the two words; otherwise, the two words will sound like one long word - *bechalevavecha*. The same holds true for *al levavchem*, *va'avadetem meheirah*, and many others.(14) It is interesting, though, that while Chazal specifically single out *bechal levavecha* as one of the word combinations where a pause is necessary, this particular pause must be extremely brief; otherwise, one runs afoul of a different grammatical rule: These two words are connected with a *makaf*, a hyphen, which means that they are supposed to be read together with no pause between them. Is this not a contradiction - on the one hand a pause is necessary to separate the two *lameds*, while on the other hand, the two words are supposed to be read together?(15) The solution is not to pause fully and leave a space between these two words [like we would between similar combinations, e.g. *va'avadetem meheirah*], but rather leave a hair-breadth between them - enunciating both *lameds* clearly and accenting the second word, *levavecha*.(16) One would be well advised to practice reading these words in advance, so that when he recites Kerias Shema the correct pronunciation will come easily.(17)

FOOTNOTES: 1 See *Pischei Choshen*, Yerushah 4, note 85 quoting several *poskim*; *Minchas Yitzchak* 6:165. 2 See *Binyan Tziyon* 2:24; *Achiezer* 3:34; *Igros Moshe* E.H. 1:104-105. 3 Laws concerning adopted children vary from state to state. 4 *Bava Basra* 133b, *Shulchan Aruch* C.M. 282:1. 5 See *Ketzos ha-Shulchan* C.M. 282, *Igros Moshe* C.M. 2:49. *Minchas Yitzchak* 3:135 and *Shevet ha-Levi* 4:216. 6 See *Rama* C.M. 257:2 7 See *Teshuvos Chasam Sofer* E.H. 1:147. 8 See *Rama* E.H. 90:1; 108:3; 113:2; *Maharsham* 2:224-29. 9 While all *poskim* agree that a "sizable" percentage of the estate be distributed according to Torah law, there are different opinions as to the exact percentage. In *Igros Moshe* C.M. 2:50 *Harav M. Feinstein* writes that leaving a thousand dollars per son is considered a sizable amount, while in another responsum (C.M. 2:49) he recommends that a fifth of the estate be probated according to Torah Law. See also *Igros Moshe* E.H. 1:110 where he writes

that the house where the deceased lived should be probated according to Torah law, while the rest of the estate can be allocated according to his wishes. 10 See *Kuntress M'dor L'dor* and *Mishpat ha-Tzvah*, pg. 66. 11 See *Koveitz ha-Poskim* 26, pg. 221; *Minchas Yitzchak* 3:134; *Pischei Choshen*, *Halvahah* 2, note 63; *Koveitz Meishiv ba-Halachah* 9:129 and 10:141. 12 *Pischei Choshen*, *Halvahah* 2, note 72. 13 See explanation of this concept in *Mishnah Berurah* 62:2. 14 O.C. 61:20. 15 In addition, if these two words are read separately without the *makaf*, then the proper vocalization is *bechol* with a *cholom*, and not *bechal* with a *kamatz*. 16 *Mishnah Berurah* 61:33. 17 A good start is to read and listen to *Kuntress Shema B'ni*, a guide to grammatically correct pronunciation of *Kerias Shema*, with an audio companion to the text (Rabbi S. Herkowitz, Toronto, 2001). *Weekly-Halacha*, Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. [learn@torah.org](http://www.learn@torah.org) 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

From: Halacha [halacha@yutorah.org] Sent: Monday, May 16, 2005 1:40 PM To: Shulman, Charles Subject: Weekly Halacha Overview -

RABBI JOSH FLUG

THE PROPER GARMENTS FOR THE MITZVAH OF TZITZIT

Which Garments May be Used to Fulfill the Mitzvah of Tzitzit?

The mitzvah of tzitzit demands that in order to don a four-cornered garment, one must place tzitzit on those corners. Although one is not obligated in this mitzvah unless he wears a four-cornered garment, *Rambam*, *Hilchot Tzitzit* 3:11, states that one should strive to wear four-cornered garments in order to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit. However, not all garments have the same value in their ability to allow one to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit.

Cotton Garments

The *Gemara*, *Menachot* 39b, quotes a dispute between *Rav Nachman* and *Rava* regarding which types of garments are included in the mitzvah of tzitzit. *Rav Nachman* maintains that only wool and linen garments are included in this mitzvah.

One is also obligated to place tzitzit on other garments. However the fulfillment of the mitzvah in wearing these garments is only rabbinic in nature. *Rava* disagrees, and asserts that all garments may be used to fulfill the biblical mitzvah of tzitzit. *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 9:1, rules in accordance with *Rav Nachman*, and therefore one can only fulfill the biblical mitzvah with either a wool garment or a linen garment. However, *Rama*, *ad loc.*, rules in accordance with *Rava* that one may fulfill the biblical mitzvah with any garment.

The most practical difference between the ruling of *Shulchan Aruch* and the ruling of *Rama* lies in the use of cotton garments to fulfill the mitzvah. According to *Shulchan Aruch*, one would only fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit on a rabbinic level by wearing a four-cornered cotton garment containing tzitzit. However, according to *Rama*, there is a biblical fulfillment in donning such a garment.

Although *Rama*, the decisor for Ashkenazic Jewry, does rule that all garments are worthy of fulfilling the biblical mitzvah of tzitzit, there are varying practices whether one should try to satisfy all opinions by wearing a four-cornered garment made of wool. *Mishna Berurah* 9:5, writes that a *yarei shamayim* (a G-d fearing person) should fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit with a wool garment, both on a *talit katan*, the garment worn the entire day, and the *talit gadol*, the garment worn for the morning prayer services. The *Vilna Gaon* (as recorded in *Ma'aseh Rav*, *Hilchot Birchot HaShachar* no. 17) as well as *Chazon Ish* (as recorded in *Shoneh Halachot* 9:1) personally wore a wool *talit gadol*, but a non-woolen *talit katan*. *Rav Moshe Feinstein*, *Igrot Moshe*, *Orach Chaim* 2:1, writes that although it is proper to wear a wool garment rather than a cotton garment, if one is particularly uncomfortable wearing a wool garment in the summertime, one may wear a cotton garment. Nevertheless, a *ba'al nefesh* (a very scrupulous person) who wears a wool garment even in the summertime is worthy of a blessing.

Leather and Synthetic Garments

There are certain garments that are completely exempt from the mitzvah of tzitzit. The *Gemara*, *Menachot* 40b, states that a garment made of leather is exempt from the mitzvah of tzitzit. *Mishna Berurah* 10:11, states that there is not even a rabbinic obligation to place tzitzit on a four-cornered leather garment.

While four-cornered leather garments are not currently popular, the question arises regarding synthetic garments such as polyester, rayon, and nylon, and whether they are suitable to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit. The question of synthetic materials revolves around the reason why leather is exempt from the mitzvah of tzitzit. *Levush*, *Orach Chaim* 10:4, states that the reason why leather is exempt is because it is not woven. Based on the comments of *Levush*, *R. Tzvi Pesach Frank*, *Har Tzvi*, *Orach Chaim* no. 9, states that synthetic garments that are woven are comparable to cotton garments. If they are not woven but rather produced as one unit, they are exempt from the mitzvah of tzitzit.

However, R. Moshe Feinstein, Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 2:1, asserts that reason why leather is exempt from the mitzvah of tzitzit is because weaving is not a necessary step in the production of a leather garment. Therefore, even if one were to weave thin leather strands and produce a garment, there would still be no obligation to place tzitzit on that garment. Similarly, since synthetic garments do not require weaving in their production, there is no fulfillment in placing tzitzit on them even if one were to weave them.

R. Eliezer Waldenberg, Tzitz Eliezer, 12:3, suggest that perhaps the reason why leather is exempt from the mitzvah of tzitzit is because it is naturally designed as a garment. However, regarding other garments, one is obligated to place tzitzit on them since they require weaving or some other method of production. Synthetic garments which require a production process are no different than any other garment. R. Waldenberg rules that one should place tzitzit on a four-cornered garment made of synthetic materials. However, he states that one should not recite a beracha on such a garment.

Linen Garments

As stated above, one is biblically obligated to place tzitzit on a four-cornered linen garment according to all opinions. However, the Gemara, Menachot 40a, states that the rabbis placed certain limitations on the use of linen garments for the mitzvah of tzitzit. According to Rashi, ad loc., the rabbis prohibited placing techelet on a linen garment. The reason is because techelet is not only unique in its color, but it must also be made of wool. While the Torah does allow a wool techelet string to be placed on a linen garment, this leniency only applies if there is a fulfillment of the mitzvah of tzitzit. However, if for whatever reason, there is no fulfillment of the mitzvah of tzitzit, one violates the prohibition of sha'atnez by wearing such a garment. Out of concern that one might wear such a garment without adhering to the many laws of tzitzit and techelet, the rabbis banned placing techelet on linen garments. Rabbeinu Tam, Shabbat 25b s.v. Sadin, disputes the opinion of Rashi and claims that the ban is not limited to techelet. The ban extends to the use of any linen garment, even if no techelet is placed on the garment.

Teshuvot HaRosh 2:8, claims that the common practice is to follow the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam and to disallow the use of all linen garments for the mitzvah of tzitzit. However, he notes that upon arriving in Spain he noticed that many people used linen to fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzit. He suggests that they might have been relying on the fact that there is no techelet, and perhaps even Rabbeinu Tam would agree that there is less of a concern.

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 9:6, cites the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam as normative. However, Rama ad loc., mentions the leniency of Teshuvot HaRosh that if only linen is available one may use it for tzitzit, as there is no techelet available. It should be noted, that nowadays there are many people who place techelet on their garments, and Teshuvot HaRosh's leniency may not be applicable. This would apply even to those who question the authenticity of modern day techelet, as the concern exists that by allowing linen garments, it may lead to someone who does use modern day techelet to violate the prohibition of sha'atnez.

The Weekly Halacha Overview, by Rabbi Josh Flug, is a service of YUTorah, the online source of the Torah of Yeshiva University. Get more halacha shiurim and thousands of other shiurim, by visiting www.yutorah.org. To unsubscribe from this list, please click here.

From: Halacha [halacha@yutorah.org] Sent: Monday, May 23, 2005 3:11 PM To: Shulman, Charles Subject: Weekly Halacha Overview

RABBI JOSH FLUG

ARE MY TZITZIT STILL KOSHER?

Dealing With Torn Tzitzit Strands

Tzitzit strands are not indestructible and are thus susceptible to tearing. This is especially true of the strands on the talit gadol, the prayer shawl, which tend to get caught in chairs or stepped on by passersby. Sometimes the tear will not invalidate the tzitzit, and sometimes it will. This article will attempt to clarify what criteria are used to determine whether the tzitzit are still kosher.

The Minimum Length of the Strands

Each tzitzit tassel is comprised of two distinct sections. The gedil is the section that contains a series of knots. The anaf is the section where the strands hang loose. This article will refer to the combined gedil and anaf as the tassel. The Gemara, Menachot 41b, states that the length of the tzitzit strands should be four thumb-breadths (approximately 3.2-3.84 inches). Rabbeinu Asher, Hilchot Tzitzit no. 12, states that the entire tassel must be four thumb-breadths in length. Rambam, Hilchot Tzitzit 1:6, implies that minimum length refers to the strands prior to construction of the gedil. [See however, Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 11:4, who understands that Rambam and Rabbeinu Asher are of the same opinion.]

If one were to follow the opinion of Rabbeinu Asher or Rambam, the strands will usually have the requisite length even after they are torn. This is

because the strand usually tears at the anaf while the gedil remains intact. The gedil will generally be four thumb-breadths. However, Rabbeinu Tam (cited in Tosafot, Menachot 41b, s.v. Beit Shammai) maintains that the minimum length of four thumb-breadths refers to the gedil. He then posits that since the Gemara, Menachot 39a, states that the tzitzit tassel should be one-third gedil and two-thirds anaf, the minimum length of the tzitzit should be twelve thumb-breadths (9.6-11.52 inches). Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 11:4, states that the common practice is to follow the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam and to require that the minimum length of the entire tassel be twelve thumb-breadths after the gedil is constructed.

The Gardumin Principle

Despite Rabbeinu Tam's stringency, there still remains another leniency for one whose strand has torn and is now shorter than twelve thumb-breadths long. The Gemara, Menachot 38b, states that a completed tassel whose strands were torn (gardumin) is still valid as long as there remains enough strand to loop the torn strands together (k'dai anivah). This is known as the gardumin principle

From where does one measure k'dai anivah? Tosafot, Menachot 38b, deduce that Rashi's opinion is that there must remain k'dai anivah from the anaf. If the strands tear at any point on the gedil, the gardumin principle cannot be employed. Tosafot argue and conclude that as long as there remains k'dai anivah on the strand, even below the gedil, the gardumin principle can still be employed. Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 12:3, rules that one should follow Rashi's opinion, unless one has no other option, in which case he may rely on the opinion of Tosafot. Mishna Berurah 12:13 notes that one should not recite a beracha when relying on the opinion of Tosafot. [Mishna Berurah adds that if the strand is torn at the hole where the strands are threaded through the garment, the tzitzit are invalid even according to Tosafot.]

There still remains one limitation to the gardumin principle. Rabbeinu Tam (cited in Tosafot, Menachot 38b, s.v. Elah) suggests that the gardumin principle only applies when two (of the four) strands remain intact. If there are not two strands remaining that are long enough to satisfy the minimum length of the strand, the tzitzit are invalid even if all of the strands still have k'dai anivah remaining. Rabbeinu Asher, Hilchot Tzitzit no. 7, disagrees with Rabbeinu Tam and maintains that the gardumin principle applies even if all of the strands are torn, so long as there remains k'dai anivah.

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 12:1, rules that the gardumin principle can be applied even if all of the strands are torn. However, he states that it is proper to follow Rabbeinu Tam's stringency wherever possible. Rama, ad loc., seems to give more weight to Rabbeinu Tam's opinion, but nevertheless, Mishna Berurah, Bi'ur Halacha 12:1, s.v. VeHalacha, states that one may recite a beracha when relying on the opinion of Rabbeinu Asher.

The Leniency of the Two-Sided Strand

If one's strand is torn to the point where it does not satisfy the minimum length, and the gardumin principle cannot be applied, the tzitzit are not necessarily invalid. The tzitzit tassel is composed of four strands that are folded in half through a hole and the two halves are tied together to form the gedil, with the anaf now comprising eight strings. Tzitzit manufacturers are instructed to ensure that the strings on each half of the anaf remain together. Therefore, each of the four strands on one half of the anaf is connected to a corresponding strand on the other half of the anaf. If one of the strands of the anaf should tear, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 12:1, rules that the tzitzit are still valid, even if that strand does not have k'dai anivah, since its counterpart on the other half of the anaf is still intact, and thus there is automatically k'dai anivah. This leniency would also apply if multiple strands are torn from the same half of the anaf. However, if strands are torn from both sides of the anaf, Shulchan Aruch rules that one must assume that both halves are part of the same strand, and unless there remains k'dai anivah, the tzitzit are invalid. Furthermore, according to Rabbeinu Tam, if three strands tear on the same half of the anaf, one can no longer apply the gardumin principle and the tzitzit are invalid according to Rabbeinu Tam.

To summarize this section, if one or two strands on one half of the anaf tears the tzitzit are still valid. If strands are torn on both halves of the anaf, the tzitzit are only valid if there remains k'dai anivah. If three strands tear, the tzitzit are invalid according to Rabbeinu Tam even if all three strands are on the same half of the anaf. If one is in a pressing situation, one may rely on the opinion of Tosafot, that k'dai anivah is measured from below the gedil, and therefore, if only the anaf is torn, the tzitzit are still valid. However, if the strand is torn below the bottom knot, the tzitzit are invalid even according to Tosafot.

Continuing to Wear a Garment with Invalid Tzitzit

Can one continue to wear a garment whose tzitzit became invalid? The Gemara, Menachot 37b, records that Mar Bar Rav Ashi was walking in a semi-private domain (karmelit) on Shabbat and his tzitzit became invalid. The Gemara implies that he would not have had to remove the garment had he known that they were

invalid as this would have caused him embarrassment. The Gemara is working with the principle that one is permitted to violate a rabbinic prohibition to prevent someone's embarrassment. Wearing a garment with invalid tzitzit in a karmelit is only a rabbinic prohibition, and therefore Mar Bar Rav Ashi was permitted to continue wearing the garment.

Mordechai, Menachot no. 944, quotes Ri who questions the assumption of the Gemara that the prohibition is only rabbinic in nature. If in fact the tzitzit were invalid, one who wears a four-cornered garment with invalid tzitzit violates a positive commandment, the mitzvah to place tzitzit on a garment before donning it. Ri answers that since it was Shabbat, and it was prohibited to repair the tzitzit, there is no violation of the positive commandment to place tzitzit on such a garment. Ri therefore concludes that one may wear a four-cornered garment on Shabbat even if there are no tzitzit attached. However, on a weekday, it is prohibited to wear a four-cornered garment with invalid tzitzit. Maharam of Rutenberg, Teshuvot Maharam no. 287 (Prague edition), disagrees with Ri's explanation of why it was permissible for Mar Bar Rav Ashi to continue to wear the four-cornered garment. Maharam explains that the prohibition to wear a four-cornered garment without tzitzit is also lifted where there is great embarrassment. Therefore, one who finds himself in a situation where his tzitzit become invalid and he is embarrassed to sit among his fellow members of the congregation without a talit, may continue to wear the invalidated talit.

Rama, Orach Chaim 13:3, rules that if both Ri's opinion and Maharam's opinion are satisfied, one may be lenient. Therefore, if it is Shabbat and one is embarrassed to sit without a talit one may wear his invalid talit. However, on a weekday, one may not be lenient.

The Weekly Halacha Overview, by Rabbi Josh Flug, is a service of YUTorah, the online source of the Torah of Yeshiva University. Get more halacha shiurim and thousands of other shiurim, by visiting www.yutorah.org. To unsubscribe from this list, please click [here](#).