

BS"D



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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BEHAALOSCHA - 5765

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[http://www.chief Rabbi.org/Covenant & Conversation](http://www.chief Rabbi.org/Covenant%20&%20Conversation)
Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from
SIR JONATHAN SACKS
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of
the British Commonwealth
[From last year]

Beha'alotcha - Humility

I find it one of the most revealing moments in Moses' life. To understand it we must remember the context. He has just been challenged by the Israelites to provide them with meat. "If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost - also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!" It is not their desire for meat that distresses Moses, so much as their false nostalgia, their ingratitude, their continued failure to grow up. He prays to die: He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? . . . I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now - if I have found favor in your eyes - and do not let me face my own ruin."

The crisis passes - how, I wrote about last year. But then a new challenge arises: Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this.

The nature of their complaint will not concern us. What gives this episode its intensity is not what is said but who said it. This is not "the people," still less "the mixed multitude." This is Moses' own brother and sister, the sister who watched over him as a baby as he floated down the Nile in a reed basket, the brother who was his faithful companion in some of his most risk laden encounters. To be criticized by the crowd, or by opponents, is one thing. To be turned on by those closest to you is altogether different and unnerving.

What is Moses' response? Nothing. The text is explicit at this point for a reason. There is an absence of response which comes from simply not knowing. There is another which comes from not caring. The Torah wishes us to know that neither is the case here. Instead, Moses' equanimity comes from deep within his character: Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth. It is not Moses who reacts, but who does so on his behalf.

The sentence is strange, both in the sentiment it expresses, and in its place in the narrative. Moses humble? The man who spoke words of fire, who was undaunted in the presence of Pharaoh, who led an entire people

out of slavery, who was unafraid to argue with himself, the man who smashed the tablets after seeing the golden calf. Was this a humble man? And what is the place of this sentence in the story of Miriam and Aaron? It seems to interrupt the flow. Verse 2 tells us that he heard their remarks. Verse 4 tells us that He replied. Moses, at this stage, is not party to the conversation at all. Verse 3 breaks the sequence. For that reason, a number of English translations put it in parentheses.

Besides this, why is Moses so calm in the face of this seeming betrayal by those closest to him, when in the previous chapter he had been so agitated by the people's request for meat - a challenge of a type he had faced and overcome before?

The questions answer one another. The people's challenge was directed against G-d - or fate or circumstance - not against him. That is why he cared. Miriam and Aaron's challenge was directed against him. It was personal. That is why he was serene. Moses did not care about himself. If he had, he would not have been able to survive a single day as leader of this fractious, unstable people. He cared about the cause, about G-d and freedom and responsibility. That was what made him humble.

Humility is not what it is sometimes taken to be - a low estimate of oneself. That is false or counterfeit humility. True humility is mindlessness of self. An anav (the biblical word used in this chapter) is one who never thinks about himself because he has more important things to think about. I once heard someone say about a religious leader: "He took G-d so seriously that he didn't need to take himself seriously at all." That is biblical humility.

Moses cared about others. Only once - when he heard he would not enter the land he had spent forty years leading his people toward - did he pray on his own behalf. Even then, he was not thinking about himself but the land. In truth, he was not even thinking about the land but rather about witnessing G-d's promise fulfilled.

Humility is not self-abasement. It is not self-anything. It is the ability to stand in silent awe in the presence of otherness - the Thou of G-d, the otherness of other people, the majesty of creation, the beauty of the world, the power of great ideas, the call of great ideals. Humility is the silence of the self in the presence of that which is greater than the self.

How values change! Humility is the orphaned virtue of our age. Charles Dickens dealt it a blow in his portrayal of the unctuous Uriah Heep, who kept saying, "I am the 'umblest person going." Its demise, though, came a century later with the threatening anonymity of mass culture alongside the loss of neighborhoods and congregations.

A community is a place of friends. Urban society is a landscape of strangers. Yet there is an irrepressible human urge for recognition. So a culture emerged out of the various ways of 'making a statement' to people we do not know, but who, we hope, will somehow notice. Beliefs ceased to be things confessed in prayer and became slogans emblazoned on tee-shirts. A comprehensive repertoire developed of signalling individuality, from personalized number-plates, to 'in your face' dressing, to designer labels worn on the outside, not within. You can trace an entire cultural transformation in the shift from renown to fame, to celebrity, to being famous for being famous. The creed of our age is, "If you've got it, flaunt it." Humility, being humble, does not stand a chance. This is a shame. Humility - true humility - is one of the most expansive and life-enhancing of all virtues. It does not mean undervaluing yourself. It means valuing other people. It signals an openness to life's grandeur and the willingness to be surprised, uplifted, by goodness wherever one finds it.

I learned the meaning of humility from my late father. He had come to England at the age of five, fleeing persecution in Poland. His family was poor and he had to leave school at the age of fourteen to support them. What education he had was largely self-taught. Yet he loved excellence, in whatever field or form it came. He had a passion for classical music and painting, and his taste in literature was impeccable, far better than mine.

He was an enthusiast. He had - this was what I so cherished in him - the capacity to admire. That is the greater part of humility: the capacity to be open to something greater than oneself. False humility is the pretence that one is small. True humility is the consciousness of standing in the presence of greatness, which is why it is the virtue of prophets, those who feel most vividly the nearness of .

As a young man, full of questions about faith, I travelled to the United States where, I had heard, there were outstanding rabbis. I met many, but I also had the privilege of meeting the greatest Jewish leader of my generation, the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn. Heir to the dynastic leadership of a relatively small group of Jewish mystics, he had escaped from Europe to New York during the Second World War and had turned the tattered remnants of his flock into a worldwide movement. Wherever I travelled, I heard tales of his extraordinary leadership, many verging on the miraculous. He was, I was told, one of the outstanding charismatic leaders of our time. I resolved to meet him if I could.

I did, and was utterly surprised. He was certainly not charismatic in any conventional sense. Quiet, self-effacing, understated, one might hardly have noticed him had it not been for the reverence in which he was held by his disciples. That meeting, though, changed my life. He was a world-famous figure. I was an anonymous student from three thousand miles away. Yet in his presence I seemed to be the most important person in the world.

He asked me about myself. He listened carefully. He challenged me to become a leader, something I had never contemplated before. Quickly it became clear to me that he believed in me more than I believed in myself. As I left the room, it occurred to me that it had been full of my presence and his absence. That is what listening is, considered as a religious act. I then knew that greatness is measured by what we efface ourselves towards. There was no grandeur in his manner; neither was there any false modesty. He was serene, dignified, majestic; a man of transcending humility who gathered you into his embrace and taught you to look up.

Leadership, as anyone who has ever exercised it knows, is difficult. Mistakes that might be forgiven in someone else, in a leader are not. Even a leader who is in the right - especially one who is in the right - will be criticised. If he or she is responsible, they will be thinking about the future, which means disturbing the present, and anyone who disturbs the present arouses anger, even a feeling of betrayal. A leader challenges people, and we do not like being challenged. He or she poses uncomfortable questions, the ones we would rather avoid.

A leader - indeed anyone who follows in the footsteps of the prophets - is caught in the impossible tension between the demands of and the wishes of the people. The Torah has left us with an indelible image - Jacob wrestling with the angel only to be told that his name will henceforth be Israel, "one who wrestles with and with human beings and prevails." No wonder that four leaders in the Bible - Moses, Elijah, Jonah and Jeremiah - prayed to die rather than carry on. No wonder, either, that those who most challenged their contemporaries - Abraham Lincoln, Gandhi, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Anwar Sadat and Yitzhak Rabin - were assassinated.

How do leaders survive? Some by cunning and adroitness; some by ruthless suppression of opponents; others by indomitable belief in themselves. None of these apply to true spiritual giants, nor are they worthy of emulation by us. True leaders survive by believing in the cause, not in themselves. They do not take personal attacks personally. They respect the fact that their message will be difficult, that they are asking others to change, and that change is never less than painful.

Several biblical leaders felt they were unequal to the task. Listen to three of the greatest: Moses: "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? . . . O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow

of speech and tongue . . . O Lord, please send someone else to do it." Isaiah: "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Jeremiah: "Ah, Sovereign LORD, I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child."

The most eloquent people in history were the ones most convinced of their inability to speak. It is not that Moses, Isaiah or Jeremiah lacked self-confidence, or self-worth, or a sense of personal destiny. Such considerations are utterly irrelevant. It is that they, more than others, knew the difficulty of the task ahead. They knew how painful it is to get people to acknowledge reality as it is, rather than as they would wish it to be. They knew how hard it is to get people to change. Precisely because they were thinking about the task, not about themselves, they declared themselves unequal to it - and it is just this that made them the most qualified to do it. Hence "Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth."

Humility, then, is more than just a virtue: it is a form of perception, a language in which the 'I' is silent so that I can hear the 'Thou', the unspoken call beneath human speech, the Divine whisper within all that moves, the voice of otherness that calls me to redeem its loneliness with the touch of love. Humility is what opens us to the world.

Nor is it as rare as we think. Time and again when someone died and I conducted the funeral or visited the mourners, I discovered that the deceased had led a life of generosity and kindness unknown to even close relatives. I came to the conclusion - one I did not fully understand before I was given this window into private worlds - that the vast majority of saintly or generous acts are done quietly with no desire for public recognition. That is humility, and what a glorious revelation it is of the human spirit.

True virtue never needs to advertise itself. That is why today's aggressive marketing of personality is so sad. It speaks of loneliness, the profound, endemic loneliness of a world without relationships of fidelity and trust. It testifies ultimately to a loss of faith - a loss of that knowledge, so precious to previous generations, that beyond the visible surfaces of this world is a Presence who knows us, loves us, and takes notice of our deeds. What else, secure in that knowledge, could we need?

And does it matter that humility no longer fits the confines of our age? The truth is that moral beauty, like music, always moves those who can hear beneath the noise. Virtues may be out of fashion, but they are never out of date. The things that call attention to themselves are never interesting for long, which is why our attention span grows shorter by the year. Humility - the polar opposite of 'advertisements for myself' - never fails to leave its afterglow. We know when we have been in the presence of someone in whom the Divine presence breathes. We feel affirmed, enlarged, and with good reason. For we have met someone who, not taking himself or herself seriously at all, has shown us what it is to take with utmost seriousness that which is not I.



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Parshas Bahaloscha 5763

How are you all this morning? ברוך השם. That is the typical Jewish response. We punctuate the past with השם ברוך, and the future with אמן, and the present with השם ירצה.

Likewise many of us write on the top right hand corner of every document - בשמחה וברצון, or בשמחה וברצון, which means the same thing. I am told that one of the Israeli ministers, from the Shinui party, when given a document that was issued under his Shas predecessor, is careful

to first cross out the words **השם** בעזרת השם at the top of the document. But that only shows how estranged he and his party are from our heritage. Where did all this come from? Whence this compulsion to infuse Hakadosh Baruch Hu into every utterance? When did it begin? We can trace it back at least as far as the sixteenth century. Already the Shalah, almost 500 years ago, observed that the practice of Jews is to constantly say **השם** ברוך השם, and **אם ירצה השם**. And the Shalah seeks a source for this practice, and he finds it in this weeks פרשה.

The Torah says in today's פרשה that as the Jews travelled from encampment to encampment, from מהנה סמחנה, on their journey to the promised land, every station on their journey was ordained by the רבונו של עולם. When the ענן moved, they pulled up camp and followed it; when it came to rest, they stopped and pitched their tents. ועל פי השם יסעו they encamped by the word of השם, and they traveled by the word of השם.

We, too, says the Shalah, go through our march through with this sense that על פי השם יחנו ועל פי השם יסעו. Every step that we take is informed by the conviction that it is על פי השם. And therefore at every step we acknowledge His presence and guidance. If we are well, it is because of His grace - **ברוך השם**. If we undertake something, we count on His support - בעזרת השם. If we plan for the future, our plans are contingent on His sanction - **אם ירצה השם**.

There is a fascinating Gemara which I think it worthwhile to share with you in this context. The הלכה is that a Jew is forbidden on Shabbos to walk 2,000 - about 3,000 feet - beyond the place where he resided at the beginning of Shabbos. If he lives in a city, then this 2,000 אמות is measured from the outskirts of the city. If, however, he begins Shabbos alone, outside any city or town, then he measures the 2,000 אמות from where he stands.

The Gemara in עירובין says, in this regard, as follows: במדבר (מתיב רב חסדא יושבי צריפין אין מודדין להן אלא מפתח בתיהן: אמר רב הונא והוי, ויחנו על הירדן מבית הישמט ואמר רבה בר בר חנה לרידי חזי לי ההוא אתרא (לג אין נפנין לא לפנינה ולא לצדיהן אלא - כשהן נפנין: ותניא. תלתא פרסי על תלתא פרסי יחנו 'על פי ה' (במדבר ט) כיון דכתיב בהו 'דגלי מדבר קאמרת: אמר ליה רבא. לאחריהן כמאן דקביע להו דמי -יסעו 'ועל פי ה'.

Beyond its halachic context, the Gemara is telling us something of great importance. The Jews in the מדבר traveled from place to place, living a seemingly nomadic existence. Each morning they woke up, not knowing where they would sleep that night, ready to move at a moment's notice across the trackless desert. They were, it would seem, the first DPs, displaced persons with nowhere to call home.

And that kind of existence, we know from the experience of refugees around the world, is profoundly unsettling. A displaced person is disoriented, he feels himself cast off and adrift without an anchor. He feels alienated, with nowhere to call home. And that, presumably, was the experience of the Jews in the מדבר. כמאן, יסעו 'יהנו ועל פי ה' כיון דכתיב בהו על פי ה'. In a deep sense, the Jews were not adrift at all, they were not even in motion. To be in motion means to mean from one place to another on the map; but the Jews mapped their existence not against the backdrop of the shifting sands of the desert, but against the focal point of the דגלים. And from that perspective, כמאן דקביע להו דמי, they were not in motion at all. Each Jew was always at the same דגל, at the same distance and the same direction from the ארון. The ארון was at the center of their existence, and so long as the ארון moved with them, they were always at rest, and always at home.

And this has been the secret of our existence throughout history. To an outside observer it would have seemed that we were the most rootless people in the world, moving from province to province, from land to land, from continent to continent, without a land that we could call our own, seldom even staying more than a few generations in one place. "Rootless cosmopolitans", Stalin called us. But in a deeper sense, we were the most rooted people in the world,

because we carried with us the secret of יסעו ועל פי השם יהנו ועל פי השם יחנו. The shifting landscape of Babylonia, and Rome, and North Africa, and Germany and France and Poland and Russia, was a passing blur. We mapped our existence not against it, but against the **השם** that was the center of our lives.

Wherever we encamped we erected the משכן, the מבתי כנסיות and בתי הגלים that are the portable homeland of the Jew, and set up our אש and הענן around them. And before our mind's eye we saw the אש and הענן before us, guiding us on our way.

Leaf through the pages of history, and you will see pictures of people Jews throughout the centuries, at home in many different lands, speaking many different languages and wearing many different costumes, a kaleidoscope of humanity. Yet if we could speak to those Jews, if somehow we could reach across space and time and talk to them, we would have no difficulty at all - we could tell them a דבר חררה, a vort on the parsha, a question on the גמרא that we are learning - and they could converse with us as freely as our neighbor next to us in shul.

I'm reminded of a story my grandfather used to tell. My grandfather ז"ל, his wife, along with my mother, ran from Poland in 1939, through Russia and Persia and Iraq to Palestine and from there to South Africa. En route they passed through Teheran. You can imagine how displaced they felt, three ליטוישע אידן alone in the middle of Persia. My grandfather asked for the Jewish quarter, and there he found an Oriental looking building with Hebrew letters on the outside, which he understood to be the shul, although it didn't look anything like the shul's he was used to. And he walked inside, and there he saw a group of Persian Jews, seated around a table, and learning - the משנה ברורה ה'פין חיים. And suddenly he felt at home.

I cannot think of a more striking illustration of the Gemara's principle: כמאן דקביע דמי -יסעו 'יהנו ועל פי ה' כיון דכתיב על פי ה'. Often, in our history, we had to take flight; but we were never refugees. Seldom did we strike root; but we were never rootless. Rarely did we stay in one place; but we never moved.

We have not yet come to the end of the journey. America has been good to us, but we know that this is not the last encampment. Sometimes I wonder if we haven't already been shown the handwriting on the wall. But whatever comes, whatever will be, we too know that על פי השם יחנו ועל פי השם יסעו. And we affirm that knowledge by saying always - **ברוך** - השם, Who has sustianed us through stations past; **בעזרת השם**, Who is with us in our present station; and **כשירצה השם** He will bring us soon to that final station, **בביאת גואל צדק במהרה בימינו אמן**.



From: Rabbi Goldwicht
[rgoldwicht@yutorah.org] Sent: Thursday, June 16, 2005 1:35 PM Subject: Parashat Beha'alotcha WEEKLY INSIGHTS BY RAV MEIR GOLDWICHT @www.yutorah.org Parashat Beha'alotcha

The end of Parashat Beha'alotcha deals with the Miriam's sin of lashon hara, of relating to Aharon, her brother, that which she had heard from Tziporah, Moshe's wife. Rashi explains that Miriam overheard Tziporah comment that Moshe had separated from her in order to be constantly prepared for nevuah. Miriam was punished for this in three ways: 1) with tzara'at; 2) the whole machaneh waited a week to travel until Miriam healed, during which time they most certainly spoke of her punishment; 3) for all generations, we must recall Miriam's sin every day as one of the six zechirot - along with remembering Amalek, yetziat Mitzrayim, Kabbalat haTorah, Shabbat, and the Cheit haEigel. Why was Miriam punished so harshly for speaking about Moshe, especially since, as Rashi explains, she did not intend it derogatorily?

At the beginning of the next parasha, parashat Shelach, the Torah

deals with the sin of the meraglim. Rashi explains the reason for the juxtaposition of these two parshiot: Miriam was punished with tzara'at for speaking against Moshe, but these resha'im, the nesi'ei ha'eidah, witnessed the incident but didn't take mussar from it. This explanation is troublesome, for how can we even compare between the two incidents? The meraglim specifically intended to speak degradingly of Eretz Yisrael, whereas Miriam had absolutely no derogatory intent!

To answer these questions, we will explain as follows: Of the five basic senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell – four are for the most part objective, in the sense that a person perceives the stimulus as it is. If a person smells a fragrance, he either smells it as pleasant or unpleasant, depending on whether it is in fact pleasant or unpleasant. The only sense that is subjective by nature is sight. A person sees things as he wishes to see them. One person sees a cup as half-full, while another sees it as half-empty. The subjective nature of vision allows for the concept of ayin tova and ayin ra'ah. The tremendous strength of ayin ra'ah can be seen from the gemara which relates that Rebbi once pointed out to his talmidim as they passed a cemetery that 99% of the people buried there died before their destined time because of ayin ra'ah. We see that a person has tremendous ko'ach in his eyes, ko'ach which can be used either for good or, chas v'chalih, for evil.

Not only do we have eyes, but even the land has eyes. Balak's messengers tell Bilam about us, Am Yisrael, saying, "Hinei am yatza miMitzrayim hinei chisah et ein ha'aretz, Behold, a nation has left Egypt; behold it has covered the eye of the land" (BaMidbar 22:5). In other words, even the land has the power of the ayin to influence a person's actions. Our job is not to be influenced by the ayin of the land, but rather to influence the land through our own ayin tova. For this reason, there are many many examples in Chazal demonstrating the tremendous power of the eyes.

Miriam haNeviah is to a great extent the reason for Moshe's birth. As a young child, her father, Amram, who was the gedol hador, separated from his wife, Yocheved, after Pharaoh decreed that all male children be cast into the Nile, and the entire generation followed suit. Miriam pointed out to her father that by separating from his wife he was essentially making a decree even worse than Pharaoh's – Pharaoh only decreed that the males be killed; Amram was essentially decreeing that no children, not even females, be brought to life. At this, Amram returned to his wife, and the entire generation again followed suit. That Miriam was able to see the greater picture is demonstrative of her ayin tova. This positive attribute was granted to all of Am Yisrael at Har Sinai, as the Torah says, "V'chol ha'am ro'im et hakolot, And the entire nation saw the sounds" (Shemot 20:15). However, afterwards they all returned to normal, as the Torah says, "Lech emor lahem shuvu lachem l'oholeichem, Go tell them, 'Return to your tents'" (Devarim 5:27). Only Moshe remained at the original level of Har Sinai, as the Torah continues, "V'atah poh amod imadi, And you, stand here with Me" (v. 28).

The Rambam explains that Moshe was the master of the nevi'im, different from all other nevi'im in four key ways, one of which was his ability to speak with Hashem whenever he wanted, constantly in Hashem's presence, like a malach Hashem. Miriam was unable to perceive this difference, and so when she heard from Tziporah that Moshe separated from her because of a tzivuy Hashem, she should have asked Moshe directly, rather than discussing it with Aharon. Her sin was in speaking to Aharon about Moshe. For this reason, the Torah stopped the whole machaneh and publicized her sin to such an extent, in order that we understand that improper sight leads to improper speech.

The same way that there exists ayin tova and ayin ra'ah, there exists lashon tov and lashon hara. The Torah wanted to arouse within us a sensitivity to ayin tova and lashon tov, because all of the major corruptions in the world began with improper sight. The sin of Adam haRishon began with, "Vateir ha'isha ki tov ha'eitz l'm'achal, And the

woman saw that the tree was good for eating" (Bereishit 3:6). Cheit haEigel began with, "Vayar ha'am ki boshesh Moshe laredet min hahar, And the nation saw that Moshe delayed from descending the mountain" (Shemot 32:1). HaKadosh Baruch Hu wanted us to understand that sight, proper or improper, is the key to success or failure.

This is the relationship between the sin of Miriam and that of the meraglim. In each case there was improper sight (despite the fact that Miriam was really looking out for Moshe, not looking to disparage him, as explained earlier). The nesi'ei ha'eidah saw Eretz Yisrael improperly, even though Moshe had explicitly warned them to look at the land properly, as it says, "Ur'item et ha'aretz, And you shall view the land" (BaMidbar 13:18). Their sin was that they preceded their mouths to their eyes, influencing their sight and biasing their judgment. This is one of the reasons that the hadassim are higher than the aravot in the arba'at haminim – the hadassim represent the eyes, while the aravot represent the lips. The eyes must be given more importance than the lips, because otherwise, if the lips are given precedence, there is no chance for ayin tova. The number of hadassim in the bundle teaches a similar lesson. The lulav corresponds to the spine, and therefore there is one lulav in the bundle, just as we have only one spine. The etrog corresponds to the heart, and therefore there is only one etrog in the bundle. The aravot correspond to the lips, and therefore there are two of them – one for the upper lip and one for the lower lip. Accordingly, then, there should be only two hadassim in the bundle, since the hadassim correspond to the eyes. Yet the Torah commands us to take three hadassim in the bundle! The explanation is that not only must a person see with his two physical eyes, but he must also see with the eye of his mind, his seichel.

The ability to see with ayin tova can be gained only through Torah. On this, the first Shabbat after Kabbalat haTorah, we must take this message to heart, adopting the lesson of ayin tova. To the extent we accomplish this, we will merit speedily to see the fulfillment of, "Ki ayin b'ayin yiru b'shuv Hashem tzion, For they shall see, eye to eye, Hashem returning to Zion" (Yeshayahu 52:8). Shabbat Shalom! Meir Goldwicht

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PENINIM ON THE TORAH
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBUAM
- ParshasBeha'aloscha

Speak to Aharon... When you kindle the lamps. (8:2)

Rashi explains the juxtaposition of the passage concerning the Menorah upon the previous parsha, which details the offerings of the Nesim. Aharon was chagrined that every other tribe, represented by its leader, was involved in some way in the dedication of the Mishkan. His tribe, however, Shevet Levi, of which he was the leader, was excluded from this important task. Hashem responded to Aharon with the notion that his service, the lighting of the Menorah, exceeded their role in the dedication. The Ramban wonders why Hashem did not comfort Aharon with the more auspicious rituals that he performed, such as burning the Ketores, Incense. He explains that the passage regarding the Menorah alludes to a later Menorah, namely, the miracle of Chanukah. Hashem was alluding to the role Aharon's descendants would play when the

avodas Bais Hamikdash, Temple service, would be discontinued as a result of a decree by the Greek oppressors. Specifically at a time when all seemed to be lost, when Klal Yisrael would be on the verge of forgetting the Torah, the emunah, faith, and mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, of the Chashmoneans, descendants of Aharon would miraculously triumph over the Greeks, and they would reinstate the kindling of the Menorah in the Bais Hamikdash once again. The offerings of the Nesiim were truly distinctive, but they were temporary. Aharon's contribution, in contrast, would be eternal.

The Ramban's statement begs elucidation. Are the neiros Chanukah the personal domain of only Aharon and his priestly family? Does not every Jew light the Chanukah candles? How was "Aharon" to be comforted? The text of Chazal cited by Rashi is, Shelcha gedolah mi'shelahem, "Yours is greater than theirs." Is this accurate?

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, explains that the actual neis, miracle, that Hashem wrought with the pach shemen, flask of oil, underscores the distinction of the kindling of the lamps. In what other context do we find a circumstance in which Hashem performs a miracle for the sole reason of preserving a mitzvah? For what other reason did this miracle occur, if not to guarantee the future of the kindling of the Menorah? This, in itself, is the greatest indicator of the Menorah's unique place in the avodas Bais Hamikdash. Aharon's contribution exceeded that of the Nesiim, because Hashem was willing to transform nature to ensure the continuity of the Menorah.

We can go one step further. Hashem told Aharon that "his" mitzvah, the kindling of the Menorah, would endure forever. Is this realistic? The hadlakas neiros Chanukah is a different mitzvah than the lighting of the Menorah in the Bais Hamikdash - or are the two mitzvos one and the same? It could be suggested that hadlakas neiros Chanukah is actually a "reincarnation" of the kindling of the Menorah in the Bais Hamikdash. To paraphrase Rav Ezrachi, "Whoever has eyes can discern in the neiros Chanukah that they are the neiros of the Bais Hamikdash." Veritably, logic dictates this concept. The fact that Hashem wanted the neiros of the Bais Hamikdash to endure through the miracle of the flask of oil indicates their uniqueness and special significance. It is as if, when Hashem gave the mitzvah of kindling the Menorah, there was a hidden clause stating if the Bais Hamikdash were to be destroyed, the Menorah would continue to be lit in the home of each and every Jew! The mitzvah of Hadlokas haMenorah lasts forever! Shelcha gedolah mi'shelahem. "Your mitzvah is greater than theirs, because yours endures forever."

Make for yourself two silver trumpets. (10:2)

These trumpets provided the same fanfare for Moshe Rabbeinu as for a king. Rashi adds that the funds used for making these trumpets were to be provided personally by Moshe. This halachah seems inconsistent with Moshe's position as king. A king does not generally have to pay for the trumpets used to glorify him. Should the funds not have come from the treasury?

Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, distinguishes between Moshe as king and other kings. The Torah states in Devarim 17:15, "You shall surely place upon yourself a king." Once appointed, the king has royal status. He now has the power to legislate laws and enforce his position over the nation. Moshe, however, was never appointed by the people to be king. He achieved this status because he was Hashem's agent for the redemption from Egypt and the individual who served as the medium for receiving and teaching the Torah to Klal Yisrael. Hashem provided for all of Klal Yisrael's needs through Moshe. The status of royalty that Moshe achieved was a G-d-given position based upon one primary role: he was every Jew's teacher. While it was appropriate that trumpets be blown before him to assemble the people when necessary, his royalty was an expression of the fact that he was the quintessential teacher of Torah. As such, he was not permitted to take anything from the people. This would be considered undue remuneration. As it is, Chazal teach us in the

Talmud Chagigah 7a that a Torah scholar may not be reimbursed for his efforts, because Hashem says, "Just as I teach you without compensation, you, too, must teach and not receive payment."

To supplement this idea, Horav Michel Barenbaum, zl, pointed out that this explains why the trumpets had to be hammered into shape, rather than cast. The Menorah was also hammered, not cast. The process of hammering symbolizes the manner in which Torah is studied. Diligence, labor, toil, these are the terms used to describe Torah study. It is not simply studied as literature; it demands toil. It demands mikshah, hammering. We now understand what Chazal mean when they say, Mon malki? - Rabbanan. "Who are kings? The Rabbanim." Our Torah scholars are our kings, because each one is a teacher/king to his students.

Now, the man Moshe was exceedingly humble. (12:3)

Moshe Rabbeinu epitomized the character trait of humility. He did not shy away from accepting responsibility, taking a stand when needed, confronting challenge after challenge with resolution. Yet, he always felt that he was merely doing what had been asked of him. While he understood his great ability, he felt humble in that he had not yet achieved his great potential. The Shalah Hakadosh, zl, observes that, of all of Moshe's virtues, the one that the Torah chose to emphasize most emphatically was his humility. Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl, writes that humility is the key to acquiring all other positive character traits, and, indeed, to all success in general. He adds that if an individual had been living in his generation whose humility was of the calibre of Moshe's, he would have been worthy of acquiring the knowledge of the entire Torah. The Chida, zl, writes that the Bais Yosef merited to be the codifier of Jewish law due to his extreme humility. The Steipler Rav, zl, related that in the generation of the Pri Megadim, another gaon with the equivalent ability lived, who produced a similar volume of halachah. It was because of the incredible humility of the Pri Megadim, however, that Hashem granted him the privilege of having his sefer accepted as the last word in halachah. The Pri Megadim would conclude every halachic exposition with the words, tzarich iyun, "it needs contemplation," making it sound as if the author felt personally unworthy of halachic rendering. The other author, however, writes in his preface that he had thoroughly researched and elucidated the halachah. The individual who viewed himself as less than competent achieved total acceptance by the Torah world.

The Chafetz Chaim, zl, did not perceive himself to be any different than the common Jew. He would say, "A person eats and drinks. Is that a reason for him to be haughty? Is spiritual sustenance any different? Does one who studies Torah, and performs mitzvos as part of his spiritual regimen, deserve any special credit for this?" Indeed, the Chafetz Chaim dressed as a common Jew, wearing a simple suit and the hat of that of a plain Polish Jew. He would not allow those rabbanim who gave approbations on his Seforim to praise him personally or to confer any titles upon him. He asked only that the literary and halachic value of the sefer be emphasized. He shied away from any honor, because he truly felt that he did not warrant it.

Kelm, the famous mussar, ethics, center, was a yeshivah where great emphasis was placed on extirpating selfishness at its source. The Alter, zl, m'Kelm, mentor of some of the greatest mussar giants, attacked the consequences of self-love, one of which was the pursuit of honor. In fact, Kelm anathematized kavod, honor. Humility and discreetness were the badges of the true Kelm product. Anything that called attention to oneself, by its very nature reflected the intrusion of some value other than the rigorous pursuit of emes, truth.

In Kelm, no one stood in the place of honor in the first row of the bais ha'medrash. No one had honorific titles, and students did not even rise out of respect for the rebbeim, much less one another. The Alter was uncomfortable when anyone stood for him, and he did not allow anyone to address him with any distinguishing titles. He would say, "Honor destroys both the body and the soul. It is disgraceful for me to be addressed as, 'Our master and teacher,' since I am neither. I wish to be addressed only as, 'The one who loves us and seeks our good.' I think that might be the truth."

The Alter considered any display of honor tantamount to administering poison to the one so honored. Men were called up to the Torah only by their names, with no titles of any kind. The Alter was called up without any title. Even Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, was called up as Elchanan ben Naftali. There was one exception to this rule: the Chafetz Chaim, whom the Alter instructed the gabbai to call up as, "Moreinu, Our teacher."

One of the legendary features that described the life of Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, was his humility. In his later years, he wrote up an announcement and had it placed on the door of the bais ha'medrash in the Yeshivah Kfar Chassidim. It read: "I earnestly request of the public and of the yeshivah students that they not stand up

for me when I enter the bais ha'medrash, as this causes me much grief. David Hamelech said in Tehillim 51:5, 'I acknowledge my transgressions.' Since he used the first-person grammatical form of the verb, the word ani, which means 'I,' is superfluous in the pasuk. Obviously he was speaking of himself. Yet, his intention was to make it clear that when someone has sinned, often he alone knows of the sin, while the rest of the world is unaware of his failing. For this reason, he is embarrassed before everyone, for, were they to be aware of his shortcomings, they would not think of him in a positive light.

"For myself, I can only repeat the words of David Hamelech: 'I acknowledge my transgressions.' Although I agree to bless others, it is not because I feel that I hold any advantage, but solely because 'a layman's blessing should not be taken lightly in your eyes.'"

Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, embodied the greatness of one who walks with Hashem. Yet, his self-effacing character was one of his hallmarks. Indeed, as his stature grew, his estimation of himself diminished. When the Mashgiach of Baranowitz would exhort the students with his fiery discourses prior to Rosh Hashanah, Rav Elchanan would stand in the back and weep, as if the words were being directed to him. He always sought to be "one of the crowd," looking to remain inconspicuous, never seeking to call attention to himself. He would not permit the chazzan to wait for him for the public recital of Shemoneh Esrai. People from all over would approach him seeking his blessing, which he avoided giving. Once, when someone persisted in asking for a blessing, Rav Elchanan replied with candor, "Believe me, if you knew me as well as I know myself, you would not seek my blessing."

Last, we cite from the life of a contemporary Rosh Yeshivah. Horav Mendel Kaplan, zl, who exemplified the trait of anavah, humility. Each year when a new group of students arrived in his shiur, he would deliberately explain the Talmud incorrectly for the first few days. Then, as he observed the students taking notes of everything he said, he would remark, "Oy, I made a mistake! What, you are writing down everything I say? Why must you write down my mistakes?" He would thus teach his students two lessons: First, he could err. Second, they should think independently about everything that he said.

Rav Kaplan once explained why he peppered his shiur with much of his own chidushim, novellae. I like the things that I say myself more so than what I see in other sefarim. It is not that I think that I am better or that what I say is better. It is just that what I say is clearer to me, so I understand it better."

Now, the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person on the face of the earth. (12:3)

Rashi adds a new dimension to Moshe Rabbeinu's humility when he defines anav as shafal v'savlan, lowly and forbearing. Humility bespeaks more than just self-effacement; it goes a step further. The humble person is tolerant and accepting. He does not respond to the taunts and disparagement of others. The commentators wonder why the Torah emphasizes Moshe's humility at this point. The Ramban explains that Hashem intervened on behalf of Moshe, because He knew that Moshe would never involve himself in any form of discord. If someone spoke ill of him, he would take it in stride and ignore the comment. That was Moshe; that was his unique humility.

Chazal refer to this character trait as, Ne'elavim v'einam olvim, "They are humiliated, but do not rebut with the same." They accept their humiliation. The Shevet Sofer writes that at the moment that David Hamelech did not respond to Shimi ben Geira's curses and his continued disparagement, he was chosen to become one of the four images on the Holy Chariot.

In the Talmud Bava Basra 23b, Chazal relate that Rabbi Yirmiyah peppered his shiurim with a multitude of halachic questions. It became increasingly difficult for the rabbis to learn because they were always responding to his many questions. It reached the point at which they felt they had to ask him to leave. Horav Chaim Vital, zl, writes that Rabbi Yirmiyah had lofty reasons for asking his many questions. His intentions were noble, as he sought to increase the Torah learning in the bais ha'medrash. He was willing to undergo the embarrassment of being asked to leave. He accepted this with forbearance and resolve. He was rewarded posthumously in that in the Yeshivah Shel Maalah, Heavenly Yeshivah, every question that is raised may be articulated only through him.

The following episode concerning Horav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zl, the Bais Halevi, demonstrates the extent to which our Torah leaders have acquiesced to disparagement. One hot summer day, the Bais Halevi was studying together with his son Rav Chaim. Rav Yosef Dov removed his hat and frock due to the heat. Suddenly, one of the city's butchers stormed into the bais ha'medrash and began to rant and rave at Rav Yosef Dov. Among the many insults that he heaped upon him was the claim that the rav was crooked. It seems that the previous day this butcher had come before Rav Yosef Dov in a dispute with another butcher. Although this

butcher was justified and the halachah would have been rendered in his favor, he made a foolish mistake: he offered Rav Yosef Dov a large bribe. In response, the rav found him guilty.

When Rav Yosef Dov heard the claims against him, he immediately donned his rabbanic frock and hat and stood there, mute, with his head lowered. When the butcher saw how lowly the rav acted, he took it as a sign of weakness and proceeded to heap even more scorn on him. Yet, this was not enough. He extended his vicious tirade to include all the rabbanim, calling Rav Yosef Dov a crook and leader of a band of crooks. During this entire time, Rav Yosef Dov remained silent, accepting his humiliation without reply. As the butcher was leaving, Rav Yosef Dov followed, saying, "Machul lach, machul lach. I forgive you completely. I do not want anyone to suffer as a result of my pain." The next day, as the butcher was leading a herd of bulls to the slaughter, one of the bulls broke away and killed the butcher. Upon hearing the news, Rav Yosef Dov was terribly shaken up. He said, "I am afraid that I might have been a bit upset, causing his sudden death." His son, Rav Chaim, countered, "But, father, did you not forgive him?" "How do you know this?" queried Rav Yosef Dov. "I, myself, heard the words," Rav Chaim replied. "Are you absolutely sure that I said those words, that I forgave him b'mechillah gemurah, with total forgiveness?" asked Rav Yosef Dov. The rav, although finally convinced, would not relent. He followed the bier to its final resting place at the cemetery and cried bitterly at the funeral. He took it upon himself to recite Kaddish for the soul of the butcher for the duration of the eleven months of Kaddish. Every year on the Yahrzeit, anniversary of his death, Rav Yosef Dov would fast, say Kaddish and study Mishnayot in memory of the butcher. Furthermore, he maintained every chumrah, stringency, as if his own father had passed away. This is gadlus, greatness, at its zenith!

Sponsored in loving memory of our dear father and zaidy on his third yahrzeit
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From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2005 10:00 PM To: tw731@torahweb.org Subject: Rabbi Yaakov Haber - The Dual Themes of the Clarion Call to subscribe, email weekly@torahweb.org for anything else, email: torahweb@torahweb.org
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RABBI YAAKOV HABER

The Dual Themes of the Clarion Call

[1]"And when you go to war against the enemy who oppresses you, you shall blow the trumpets, and you shall be remembered before Hashem, your G-d, and you will be delivered from your enemies" (B'ha'alos'cha 10:9). With this sentence, the Torah commands us to sound the trumpets in a time of communal tzara, distress. (The trumpets are also blown in the Beis HaMikdash in the context of the offering of communal korbanos, but that is not our focus in this article.) Both Rambam (Hilchos Ta'aniyos 1:1) and Ramban (Hasagos L'Seifer HaMitzvot l'HaRambam, Mitzas 'Asei 5) enumerate this commandment as one of the 613 mitzvos. However, interestingly, whereas the Torah directs us only to blow the trumpets, "vaharei'osem bachatzot'z'ros", Rambam adds "liz'ok ul'hari'a", "to cry out and to blow", and Ramban similarly adds "liz'ok l'fanav bi'tfila uvi'tru'a", "to cry out before Him with prayer and the trumpet-call". In the koteret, or introduction, to Hilchos Ta'aniyos, the Rambam formulates the mitzva as "lits'ok lifnei Hashem b'chol eis tzara g'dola shelo tavo 'al ha'tsibbur", "to cry out before G-d at [the time of] every great tragedy which should never come to [a euphemism for 'befalls'] the congregation." The blowing of the trumpets is omitted entirely! Apparently, the Rishonim understood the Torah's commandment as an obligation to cry out in prayer to G-d when tragedy threatens; the trumpets are just a vehicle of "musical prayer" to be accompanied by prayer of the lips as well. Rav Soloveitchik zt"l (see Y'mei Zikaron) explained this theme of "prayer without words" as representing the motif that often we do not know adequately how to express our needs and we just cry out to G-d as a child would to his parent. He applied a similar analysis to the blowing of the shofar on Rosh HaShana. (See Seifer HaChinuch (384) for an alternative understanding of the nature of the mitzva to sound the trumpets.)

It would appear from the simple reading of the formulation of the p'sukim, as well as that of Rambam and Ramban that this commandment applies specifically to a communal tzara. However, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (O.C. 2:25) as well as Seifer HaChinuch (433) seems to have understood that it applies even to an individual tzara. The students of the Brisker Rav, Rav Velvel Soloveitchik zt"l, record that their teacher used to constantly recite the passuk, "lishuat'cha kivisi Hashem", "I await your salvation, Hashem", in fulfillment of this Divine directive. Seifer HaChinuch (ibid.) describes how Hashem gave us the gift of being able to pray to him in time of need. "Patach lahem petach ba'asher yasigu kol mish'aloisehem l'tov," He affords us the opportunity to cry out to Him when we are in need and will often respond positively to our requests when done in earnest. However, he further notes that Hashem commanded such prayer. Even though Rambam and Ramban debate whether or not daily prayer is biblically mandated, all agree that prayer in times of tzara is a mitzva min haTorah based on the verse in our Parasha. How are we to understand the nature of the commandment to pray in times of need? If one chooses not to, what divine concept is he violating? Apparently addressing this very question, Ramban writes in his formulation of this mitzva : "it is a commandment in time of troubles that we should believe that He (may He be blessed and exalted) listens to prayer and it is He who saves from distress through prayer and cries." Seifer HaChinuch formulates the commandment very similarly. It would appear then from Ramban and Seifer HaChinuch that the nature of the commandment to pray is that we are charged by Hashem to actively express belief and reliance (emuna u'bitachon) in the central tenets of our religion: that G-d, as Creator and Mashgiach, Eternal Overseer of the world, listens to prayer and is in ultimate control of all human events. Thus the beseecher, besides engaging in a natural call for help with the hope of a positive reply, by directing his request to the Holy One, expresses his faith and trust in Him. (In the article cited in [1], we have elaborated on this concept even further including one important ramification concerning the obligation of prayer for non-Jews.) Rambam (ibid. 1:2), in his formulation of this commandment, seems to stress a different, albeit complementary, motif. "And this (act of prayer and sounding the trumpets) is midarkei haTeshuva (of the ways of repentance) that when a tzara occurs and they will cry out and sound the trumpets concerning it, all will know that because of their evil deeds, evil befell them... and this (awareness and prayer) will cause the removal of the tzara from them." Thus, the Rambam stresses not belief but repentance. Through turning to G-d in times of distress, we recognize the ultimate source of the trouble: our deficiencies in Divine service. The heartfelt prayer serves as an impetus for greater introspection and correction of spiritual flaws, which in turn would lead to a Divine repeal of the decree causing the tragedy. After almost five years of intifada – with thousands of terrorist attacks against our fellow Jews in Israel claiming over a thousand Jewish lives and with attacks and attempts at attacks continuing through the present, in two months time, thousands of Jews are slated for removal from their homes in Chevel 'Aza, the Gaza Strip. This article is certainly not the forum to discuss the correctness of this political decision. However, even by the rosier of predictions such action would lead to: an increase in terrorism at least in the short term; drastic emotional and psychological effects on those Jews removed and many others as well; and, of course, the very tragedy of having to evacuate sections of our Holy Land even if deemed politically necessary. Many other detrimental consequences are also anticipated at least in the short term. Even for those who feel that in the current environment the plan is a correct course of action, this time period, coupled with the backdrop of the ongoing intifada, certainly qualifies as an 'Eis Tzara! It therefore behooves all of us, in addition to strengthening other aspects of 'avodas Hashem – as well as perhaps other modes of expressing support and encouragement to acheinu B'nei Yisrael living in the communities slated

for evacuation – to turn our eyes and hearts to shamayim and pour out our words of tefila to the Almighty for salvation, assistance and Divine protection in this very difficult time period. Whether by means of recital of T'hillim, extra concentration or even insertion of additional relevant requests in those parts of the Sh'mone 'Esrei dealing with salvation from trouble – such as the blessings of "R'ei na v'anyeinu", "Shm'a koleinu", and "Es Tzemach Dovid avd'cha", or intense focus on tachanun and specifically "V'Hu Rachum" on Mondays and Thursdays which we return to saying soon, we must increase our beseeching of the "Av HaRachamim" in this crucial juncture in the history of K'lal Yisrael and the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael.

The dual motifs presented by Rambam and Ramban, those of 'Emuna and T'shuva, should guide us during these trying times. In the words of the prophet Isaiah (62:1): "L'ma'an Tzion lo echeshe ul'ma'an Yerushalayim lo eshkot 'ad yeitsei kanoga tsidka vishuata k'lapid yiv'ar", "For the sake of Zion I will not be silent, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not be quiet, until her righteousness shines brightly, and her salvation is lit up like a torch!" May Hashem fulfill all of our requests l'tova!

[1] Some of the themes in this article were presented in a previous article, Rachel's Weeping and Tefila B'eis Tzara. We expand on these themes in this article due to its relevance to our Parasha and to current events.

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INSIGHTS

Going Up "...In your lighting..." (8:2)

Once there was a rich nobleman who had a friend who was a simple laborer. The rich man told his friend that he would eat in his home. The laborer did not stint in preparing his home to the maximum of his ability. He cleaned and arranged his meager furnishings, set the table as lavishly as he could, and lit candles to welcome his friend. As it grew dark, the laborer went to the window and saw rising on the horizon a glow. At first, he thought it was the setting sun, but as the sky darkened, the glow continued to get brighter. Suddenly, his friend the nobleman appeared on the crest of the hill with a large group of servants all carrying torches. These torches were so bright that they lit up the night as though it were day. When the laborer saw this entourage approaching his cottage, he turned and looked at his room. The candles that he had arranged paled into insignificance in the glow of the torches that approached his home. Quickly, he extinguished the candles and hid the candlesticks in a drawer. The nobleman entered his cottage and saw the darkness and said, "Were you not expecting me tonight?" "Yes, I was," said the laborer. "Why did you kindle no lights?" enquired the nobleman. "I did," replied the other, "but when I saw the wonderful blaze of lights from the torches of your servants, I was ashamed and hid my candles away."

On hearing this, the nobleman dismissed all his attendants and said, "Tonight, I will dine only by the light of your candles so you will see how dear they are to me."

People often ask why G-d gave us so many commandments.

Altogether, there are 613. It's true, however, that not all of them can be performed by everyone. For example, there are mitzvot that only kohanim can do. There are those that only levi'im can do, that only women can do, as well as mitzvot that can only be done when the Beit

Hamikdash exists. Nevertheless, that still leaves a tremendous amount of mitzvot.

Why does G-d need me to do all these things? What possible benefit is there to the Creator of the World if I put on tefillin, or if I love my neighbor as myself? Whatever little light I can shine into this world is infinitesimal compared to His Light. How can the little light that my kindness generates compare with G-d's eternal kindness in creating the world and giving me the opportunity to exist and create a relationship with Him? Isn't my little light swamped completely by His light?

This is exactly how Moshe felt when he entered the Sanctuary. When Moshe went in there he found the Sanctuary bathed in radiance of the Shechina, the Divine Presence. Moshe wondered how the poor earthly lights of the menorah could radiate any light. He thought they would be overpowered by the brilliance of the Shechina.

What possible use could G-d have for the wicks and oils of mere mortals?

G-d spoke to Moshe using the first word of this week's Torah portion, "Beha'alotecha..." This word is usually translated as "When you light"; however it can also mean "In your elevation." G-d was telling Moshe that the mitzvah of the menorah would elevate him. And so it is with all the mitzvot. Every mitzvah is a chance to become spiritually elevated.

The Torah is 613 ways to become closer to G-d.

- Based on the Midrash

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From: Rav Kook List [ravkooklist@gmail.com] Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2005 2:11 PM

Rav A.I. Kook on the Weekly Parasha

Beha'alotecha: The Unique Prophecy of Moses

Moses Separates from His Wife

"Miriam and Aaron began speaking against Moses regarding the dark-skinned woman he had married." [Numbers 12:1]

What exactly was their complaint against Moses?

According to Targum Onkelos and Rashi, they were upset that Moses had separated from his wife Tziporah, the dark-skinned Midianite daughter of Jethro. Miriam and Aaron were able to receive prophecy without resorting to celibacy. Why did Moses feel it was necessary to separate from his wife?

In fact, the separation was Moses' idea. He was not commanded to do this. The Talmud writes that Moses came to this conclusion when G-d revealed Himself at Mount Sinai. "The Shechina only spoke with the Jewish people on one occasion and at a predetermined hour; nevertheless, the Torah warned them, 'Do not come near a woman'. Certainly I, with whom the Shechina speaks at all times and with no set hour, must do the same." [Shabbat 87a]

The Sages noted that Moses was correct in his reasoning, and G-d approved of his action. After the revelation at Sinai, G-d told the people, "Return to your tents" (i.e., your families). But to Moses, G-d commanded, "You, however, stay here with Me." [Deuteronomy 5:27-28]

Why was this separation something that Moses had to figure out for himself? And why did only Moses need to leave his wife, and not other prophets?

The Human and the Divine Perspective

With all of the greatness and purity to be found in the human spirit, we are nonetheless constrained by our private lives and narrow concerns. Compared to the light of the "Shechina" that encompasses everything - a sublime light shining over all universes and all that they contain - our private lives are like flickering candles before a blazing torch. The cosmos are full of holiness - in all of their minutiae, in their processes of generation and growth, in their physical and spiritual paths. All of their heights and depths are holy; all is G-d's treasure.

However, in order to arrive at this higher perspective, a prophet must free himself from his limited viewpoint. The pristine onset of "Daat" (Knowledge) must be guarded from all influences that could lead to withdrawal within a private, personal love.

Moses, the faithful shepherd, could not be confined to the restricting framework of private life, even momentarily. Even from the natural perspective, his world was G-d's world, the overall world where all is holy.

This necessity for separation from all private existence was Moses' initiative. From the Divine perspective, all is holy and such measures are unnecessary. For Moses, however, it was essential. It allowed him to raise his sights to the elevated outlook.

Separating from his family allowed Moses' soul to be constantly 'draw in' to the Soul of all worlds; it enabled the unique illumination of the Torah make its appearance in the world.

Continual Light

What was so special about Moses' prophecy that, unlike all other prophets, he needed to avoid all private life? In Orot HaKodesh [vol. I p. 275], Rav Kook used the following analogy to illustrate the qualitative difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of other prophets.

We cannot properly learn about the physical world only through the light given off by intermittent bolts of lightning. Even if the lightning occurs repeatedly, its lack of constancy makes such light inadequate. If, however, it is extremely frequent, than its illumination becomes a constant source of light.

The same applies to spiritual enlightenment. One cannot recognize the elevated realm, the light of holiness and pure morality, the rule of uprightness, and the flow of the sublime, without a continual illumination of prophecy.

"(Regular) prophecy is an intermittent light. Only the prophecy of the Torah, the prophecy of Moses, is a light that radiates continually. By its light, we will journey."

[adapted from Ein Aya vol. IV p. 174]

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<http://ravkook.n3.net> - Rav A.I. Kook on the Weekly Parasha

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 15, 2005 4:10 AM To: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom

Parsha Column Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Behalotcha by Rabbi Shlomo

Riskin

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Behalotcha (Numbers 8:1-12:16) By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat Israel - Towards the end of our Biblical reading, we find a very strange dialogue between Miriam and Aaron, the elder brother and sister of Moses: "And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite (Midianite) woman he had taken to wife (and divorced - Rashi)... And they said, 'Did the Lord speak only to Moses? Did He not also speak to us?!'" (Numbers 12:1,2). What are his siblings criticizing Moses for, and what do they mean by insisting that G-d spoke to them as well as to their younger brother?

I believe that this text can become clarified if we properly understand the general name for the study of our Mystical tradition, the "Kabbalah." The Hebrew term kabbalah means acceptance, and for our great mystical teachers, everything upon our ability to properly accept. Rav David Aaron, the founder and director of Israelite, tells of the first time he came into a class given by a well-known mystical thinker in Jerusalem. The teacher summoned Rav David, and held out an apple - presumably for him to take. Rav David put his hand over the apple, only to find that the teacher removed his hand with the apple. This procedure repeated itself a number of times, with Rav David attempting to lift the apple from the mystic's hand, and the mystic almost "teasing" him by removing his hand again and again. The other students began to laugh; one of them whispered to David not to grab or take the apple, but rather to accept it in his open and cupped hand just as one accepts the Kiddush goblet, filled with wine, right before the blessing of sanctification. That's what David did, and the mystic - teacher immediately placed the apple in his cupped hand and smiled. So he learned the first lesson of Jewish mysticism: it all depends on one's ability to properly accept. And whatever proper acceptance means, it begins with the understanding that one dare never grasp only for oneself, but one's hand must always be ready to receive, and must remain open and ready to share one's bounty with anyone else who may wish to partake of it.

In the Biblical portion of Balak, we shall read of Balaam's talking donkey, who teaches him a crucially important lesson (Numbers 22:21-35). Rabbenu Zadok of Lubin (known as the P'ri Zaddik) explains that the Bible is attempting to teach us that G-d is constantly sending out "Divine Rays of Splendor" which are waiting for human beings to receive them; we must merely have the properly attuned antennae to receive the electric waves of transmissions which are in the very atmosphere all around us.

Rabbenu Zadok proves his point by recounting how he was once walking along a desolate road when he saw a peasant farmer walking towards him carrying a large bale-full of hay; the bale turned over, the hay fell to the ground, and the hapless farmer asked the Rabbi to help him lift his produce. "I'm sorry but I can't," answered Rabbenu Zadok, already feeling weak and thirsty from his travels. "No, you mean you won't," responded the peasant farmer. Rabbenu Zadok immediately began helping the Gentile, all the time thanking him for the invaluable message he had taught him. Whenever we say that we can't, we really mean that we won't; if

there is a strong enough will, virtually anything becomes possible. Apparently, G-d speaks through donkeys, through farmers, through children... We must really develop within ourselves the finely honed antennae to receive the Divine transmissions.

This is the deep meaning of the Biblical verse, "These words the Lord spoke unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice which never ceased (Targum)" (Deut 5:19). The Divine Voice heard at Sinai constantly continues to communicate; it is up to us to develop our minds and our souls sufficiently to be able to accept the Divine waves or rays.

Let us now return to Moses' siblings, who couldn't understand how this great prophet could have divorced his Midianite wife Zipporah. The great philosopher – legalist of the 12th Century, Maimonides, explains it as follows (Laws of the Foundations of Torah, 6): The Almighty, in an attempt to raise the spiritual level of the Israelites and prepare them for the Revelation at Sinai, instructed them to separate from their spouse for three days prior to the Appearance of the Almighty atop the Mount. At the conclusion of the Revelation, G-d instructs His prophet, "go now and tell them to return to their tents (and their wives)" (Deut 5: 27,28). Miriam therefore tells Aaron that Moses, too, should have returned to his wife Zipporah. After all, was not the commandment to return to the natural familial situation after the Revelation given to everyone – including Moses !? What Miriam did not understand was that Moses was sui generis, unique and different "in kind" from everyone else, and even from every subsequent prophet. G-d specifically singled out Moses and separated him from the general return to the family tents when He said to him, "But you stand here with Me and I shall (constantly) speak to you...." (Deut. 5:28). "All other prophets had their 'prophetic moments of Divine communication,' either in a dream or in a vision; Moses prophesized when awake and standing ... the holy spirit garbed and enveloped him, whenever he desired it... He was constantly prepared and ready for Divine communication, just like a heavenly angel. Therefore the other prophets would return to their homes and to their bodily, physical needs once the spirit of prophecy departed from them, whereas Moses could not return to his wife, but had to separate himself from her forever, because his mind was constantly bound up with the "mind" of the Rock of Eternity, whose Divine glory never left him..." (Maimonides, *ibid*). Moses was in a continuous state of prophecy, always attuned to the Divine signals of emission; he was an eternal "receiving" (Kabbalah) station, a receptor of the Divine rays of splendor. He was the mekabel, mekubal, par excellence. Shabbat Shalom

From: Kol Torah [koltorah@koltorah.org] Sent: Friday, June 03, 2005 2:24 PM To: koltorah@koltorah.org Subject: Kol Torah Parshat Bemidbar Medicines that Contain Non-Kosher Ingredients or Chametz – Part Three
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MEDICINES THAT CONTAIN NON-KOSHER INGREDIENTS OR CHAMETZ
– PART THREE
BY RABBI CHAIM JACHTER
[FOR PARTS 1 & 2, SEE
<http://www.teaneckshuls.org/parsha/Vayikra/Bechukosai65.doc>]

In the last two weeks, we reviewed the debate regarding taking medicines that contain either Chametz or other forbidden substances. We noted that the consensus appears to permit swallowing either poor tasting or tasteless medicine in tablet form. However, we noted that good tasting liquid medicine or chewable medicine is a problem. Thus, many children's medicines, which frequently contain glycerin, seem to pose a serious problem. We noted last week that glycerin comes either from a forbidden animal, plant, or petroleum source, and it is impossible to determine the source of the glycerin in a product that one has purchased.

Pleasant Tasting Children's Medicine Nevertheless, Rav David Heber of the Star-K presents a lenient approach in the Orthodox Union's journal Mesorah (7:91-96, published in 1992, when Rav Heber served as a Kashrut coordinator for the OU). Rav Heber told me (in 1995) that Rav Hershel Schachter agreed with this ruling that permits one to give children pleasant-tasting medications. We noted last week that Rav Waldenburg (Teshuvot Tzitz Eliezer 6:16) notes, based on the Minchat Kohen and the Pri Chadash, that almost all medications are at worst a rabbinic prohibition. The medications are taken in small doses and thus constitute a Chatzi Shiur (see the full explanation of this concept in last week's essay). Moreover, the non-kosher ingredients are usually less than half of the volume of the product. The Minchat Kohen and the Pri Chadash rule that a Chatzi Shiur is regarded as only a rabbinic prohibition if it is in a mixture and constitutes less than

half of the mix. The most straightforward manner in which one may be lenient for children (at least in regard to glycerin) is that since one is unsure whether the glycerin in the medicine is not kosher, a child may consume the product based on the rule of Safek Miderabbanan Lekula (that one may be lenient in case of doubt, when a rabbinic prohibition is involved). Furthermore,

there is another lenient consideration. Rav Shlomo Kluger (Teshuvot Ha'elef Lecha Shlomo 202) argues that a Choleh She'ein Bo Sakanah (a sick individual whose life is not endangered) is permitted to consume a curative item if it is only rabbinically prohibited. He reasons that since a sick individual is permitted to consume non-kosher medicine in an unusual manner (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 155:3; Rav Kluger believes that eating non-kosher foods in an unusual manner is only rabbinically prohibited), so too a Choleh She'ein Bo Sakanah is permitted to consume any rabbinically prohibited item. Moreover, Rav Kluger believes that a Choleh She'ein Bo Sakanah is permitted to eat a Chatzi Shiur of a prohibited substance.

Both of these leniencies are highly debatable, as Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yabia Omer 2:Y.D. 12) and Dr. Abraham S. Abraham (Nishmat Avraham 2:52-57) note. However, the Beit Yosef (Orach Chaim 169) permits giving a rabbinically prohibited item to a child if that item is permitted according to some opinions. The Beit Yosef writes that this is the basis for the practice (which continues until this day) of giving a child to drink from the Kiddush wine, in a Shul where the custom is to recite Kiddush after the Friday night services. Even though adults follow the mainstream opinion that drinking this wine is rabbinically prohibited, we give the wine to children in accordance with the opinions that one is permitted to drink this wine. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yabia Omer 1: Y.D. 4) explains the basis for this leniency. Rav Ovadia notes the dispute (cited in the Beit Yosef, O.C. 343) between the Rambam and the Rashba as to whether one is permitted to give a child a rabbinically forbidden item. Although the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 343:1) rules in accordance with the strict view of the Rambam on this matter, the Rashba (Yevamot 114 and Teshuvot HaRashba 1:92) adopts the lenient view (he agrees, however, that one is forbidden to give his child an item that is biblically prohibited). The Beit Yosef, explains Rav Ovadia, uses this lenient approach of the Rashba to permit giving children to drink from the Friday night Kiddush, as there is a Sfeik Sfeika (double doubt) to permit this practice. The first Safek is that perhaps the Rashba is correct that it is not forbidden to give a child a rabbinically forbidden item. The second Safek is that perhaps it is permitted to drink from the wine of the Kiddush that is recited after Friday night services.

Thus, even though adults do not drink this wine due to concern for the opinions that rule that it is forbidden to do so, it is permitted to give this wine to a child. Rav Ovadia writes (*ad. loc.*) that this is also the basis for the practice of serving dairy products to children even though they have not completed waiting six hours after eating meat. Rav Ovadia explains that we rely on a similar Sfeik Sfeika, combining the Rashba and the lenient view of Tosafot (Chulin 105a s.v. Liseudata) that do not require waiting a full six hours between meat and milk. Accordingly, Rav Heber reasons that a similar Sfeik Sfeika permits giving the usual small doses of pleasant tasting medicine with non-kosher ingredients to children. This Sfeik Sfeika combines the lenient views of the Rashba and Rav Shlomo Kluger. Although each of these opinions is debatable, one may be lenient when one is able to "combine" these two lenient rulings. Furthermore, it is doubtful even if the ingredients of the medicine are non-kosher. Thus, there seems to be ample Halachic basis to permit giving children the usual small doses of medicines whose ingredients might be non-kosher. However, despite the cogency of this argument, Rav Heber noted (in 2003, at a conference of the Council of Young Israel rabbis) that some Rabbanim do not agree with this lenient approach. Moreover, an alternative approach is necessary to permit adults to consume cough syrup that contains glycerin and is not certified kosher.

Nullifying the Glycerin Rav Heber (Mesorah 14:93 and in an essay written in English that is available at www.star-k.org) cites a solution to this problem offered by Rav Moshe Heinemann, the rabbinic administrator of the Star-K, in the context of cough medicines. Rav Heber notes that glycerin usually composes from 5-15% of the cough medicine's volume, but never more than 20% of the product. Accordingly, he suggests nullifying the potentially prohibited glycerin by mixing each required teaspoon of elixir into two fluid ounces of water or juice. Thus, there will be twelve times as much juice than medicine (there are six teaspoons in one fluid ounce) and the glycerin will be nullified by at least sixty times (Batel Beshishim), as the glycerin constitutes no more than twenty percent of the medicine. Rav Heber writes that the Star K has consulted with various pharmaceutical companies, and they all stated that cough syrup does not lose its potency in such a mixture.

There are two potential Halachic problems with this solution. First is that Ein Mevatlin Issur Lechatchila, we cannot intentionally nullify forbidden items (Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 99:5). Rav Heber, though, explains that Rav Heinemann relies on the Shach who rules (Y.D. 84:40, 92:8, 114:21 and

115:28) that this prohibition does not apply to an item that is only possibly prohibited (Safek Issur). Since Ein Mevatlin Issur Lechatchilah is only a rabbinic prohibition (according to most Rishonim, see Encyclopedia Talmudit 1:637-638) it does not apply in a case of Safek Issur because we say Safek Miderabbanan Lekula.

Accordingly, since the glycerin in a product is only possibly prohibited and it is impossible to clarify whether the glycerin in the product is derived from a forbidden animal (see Shach, Y.D. 98:9, that when something is potentially known but one has failed to take the necessary steps to secure the necessary information, it is not considered even a Safek), it is permissible to intentionally nullify it. We should add that the fact that the original dose constituted only a rabbinic prohibition (as we explained earlier citing Rav Waldenburg) is an important factor in this leniency, as some Acharonim (see Darkei Teshuvah 99:37 and Teshuvot Igrat Moshe Y.D. 2:32) permit relying on this leniency of the Shach only if a potential rabbinic prohibition is involved. These authorities do not permit relying on the Shach if a potential biblical prohibition is involved. (The Aruch Hashulchan Y.D. 99:28 and Rav Feivel Cohen in his Badei Hashulchan also cite and discuss this lenient ruling of the Shach, but do not endorse it.) The other possible problem with this leniency is the issue of Chatichah Atzmah Naaseit Neveilah (commonly abbreviated as "Chanan"). This means that if there is a mixture of forbidden food with permitted food, it is necessary to nullify sixty times the entire mixture (including the permitted component) in order to render it permissible (Shulchan Aruch 92:4). This is because either the permissible component of the mixture is viewed conceptually as forbidden food, or (as Rav Menachem Genack cites Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik) because the permissible food functions as a "carrier" for the forbidden food, so it is necessary to nullify the carrier of the forbidden food as well as the forbidden food itself. Thus, sixty times the entire medicine should be required to nullify it, rather than merely sixty times the glycerin contained in the medicine. A solution hinges on the dispute among the Rishonim (Rabbeinu Tam and Rabbeinu Efraim, see Tosafot Chullin 100a s.v. Bishekideim) whether Chanan applies only to mixtures of milk and meat or to all prohibitions. The Rama (ad. loc.) rules in accordance with the view of Rabbeinu Tam that it applies to all prohibitions. However, in a case where the prohibited and the permitted items are thoroughly mixed (Lach Belach), the Rama rules that we may be lenient in case of very great need. In the case of nullifying the glycerin there seems to be a need to follow the lenient approach, since otherwise ten ounces of liquid per teaspoon would be necessary to nullify the medicine, which is far less practical than two ounces per teaspoon. Moreover, Rav Moshe Feinstein rules (Teshuvot Igrat Moshe Y.D. 2:34 and 36) that if the underlying prohibition is only a rabbinic prohibition, we may be lenient even when it is not a case of great need (Rav Menachem Genack told the Semichah students at Yeshiva University in 1989 that one may rely on this ruling of Rav Moshe). Once again, we see that Rav Waldenburg's assertion that medicines taken in the usual small doses are at worst a rabbinic prohibition serves as the basis of Rav Heinemann's ruling that permits nullifying the glycerin.

Conclusion Next week, IY"Y and B"N, we shall conclude our review of the permissibility of consuming medicine that contains either Chametz or other forbidden foods.

Medicines that Contain Non-Kosher Ingredients or Chametz – Part Four by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

This week we shall conclude our discussion of consuming medicines that contain Chametz or other forbidden ingredients as well as some other related issues. The previous three sections are available at www.koltorah.org.

Homeopathic Medications Homeopathic medicines very often contain forbidden items, including such exotic items like snake venom and dog's saliva. They are, however, diluted in extreme quantities, sometimes even up to one million parts. The question is whether one violates the prohibition of Ein Mevatlin Issur Lichatchila (deliberately nullifying a forbidden item) in such a circumstance. We are not only forbidden from nullifying a prohibited item, but we are also forbidden from benefiting from an item that was nullified on our behalf (Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 99:5). Rav Akiva Eiger (ad. loc. s.v. V'chein; but see Taz ad. loc. 99:10) writes that this applies even if a merchant nullifies a forbidden item for anyone who will purchase this item from him and not necessarily for a specific customer.

However, there are at least two potential reasons to be lenient regarding homeopathic medicines. First, the Halacha might differ if the nullification was done by a non-Jew to benefit all of his customers, Jew and non-Jew alike (see Be'er Heitev Y.D. 108:7 and Darkei Teshuvah ad. loc. 20 for a review of the debate regarding this issue). Second, Rav Chaim David Halevi (who served as the Sephardic chief rabbi of Tel Aviv for many years in the late twentieth century) argues (Techumin 3:68-69) that this prohibition does not apply since the intention of the dilution is not to nullify the prohibited substance, but rather to prepare the

elixir in the appropriate manner.

The concern for Chatichah Atzmah Na'aseit Neveilah (defined at length in last week's essay) might be relevant, though, even though some dilutions that occur in the course of preparing homeopathic medicines occur in proportions of a hundred to one. Nonetheless, some dilutions occur only in successive dilutions of ten to one. However, in such a case one might rely on the Rama cited last week who rules that in case of great need one may rely on the opinions that the principle Chatichah Atzmah Na'aseit Neveilah applies only to mixtures of milk and meat, in case of a Lach Bilach mixture (for further explanation, please see last week's essay). However, one might object to using homeopathic remedies based on the Rama (Y.D. 155:3) who writes that forbidden foods may be given to a sick individual for curative purposes only with the direction of an expert or if consuming the forbidden food is regarded as a "known" remedy (Refu'ah Yedu'ah). The Mishnah Berurah (328:5) similarly rules that one may desecrate Shabbat to save a life only if the remedy that is being used is performed based on the direction of an expert or if it is a Refuah Bedukah. Rav Chaim David Halevi (Techumin 3:71) cites an anonymous Rav who ruled that homeopathic remedies that contain non-kosher ingredients are forbidden since they do not constitute a Refuah Yeduah. However, Rav Halevi disagrees and regards homeopathic medicine as a Refuah Yeduah even though many physicians trained in Western medicine see no value in them. Rav Dovid Heber (a rabbinic coordinator at the Star-K Kashrut Agency, a renowned expert in the field of the kashrut status of various medicines) reports that Rav Moshe Heinemann (the rabbinic administrator of the Star-K who is a leading Halachic authority) agrees and rules that as long as a recognized expert asserts the medical efficacy of a product, one may take it (if there are no risks to one's health) even though it contains non-kosher ingredients that are either nullified or Eino Ra'ui Laachilat Kelev. Rav Heber adds that the Rabbanim should not endorse the efficacy of homeopathic products. Rather, they should merely decide whether one is permitted to take homeopathic medicines despite their non-kosher ingredients. The decision to take these products remains the responsibility of those who consume these products, and they should consult with recognized and competent health care providers for guidance.

Medicine on Fast Days

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrat Moshe O.C. 3:91) rules that a Choleh She'ein Bo Sakanah (one who is ill but his life is not endangered) may take a pill if he takes it without water. Rav Moshe explains that this is considered to be consuming a product in an unusual manner, which a Choleh She'ein Bo Sakanah is permitted to do. The practical problem with this, though, is that many people find it impossible to swallow a pill without water. Rav Heber (in the tape available from the Star-K) reports that many Rabbanim commonly advise that in such a situation one should swallow the medicine with a poor tasting liquid, so that the liquid is also considered drinking in an unusual manner, which is permitted for a Choleh She'ein Bo Sakanah. I heard that one Rav suggests putting bitter-tasting echinacea in water to use as the bitter drink (one should consult with a health care professional to determine if it is advisable to consume echinacea on a fast day).

Reciting a Bracha on Pleasant Tasting Medicine

The Shulchan Aruch (O. C. 204:8) rules that one should recite a Bracha on "any food or drink that one consumes for healing purposes if it has a good taste and is pleasant to the palate." Accordingly, it would seem that one should recite a Bracha on pleasant-tasting medicine. However, applying this Halacha to modern medicines is not a simple matter. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach originally ruled (cited in Nishmat Avraham 1:91 and Shmirat Shabbat Kehilchata 40 footnote 191) that one should recite a Bracha on pleasant tasting medicine. In addition, Dr. Abraham S. Abraham reports (Nishmat Avraham ad. loc.) that Rav Ovadia Yosef told him that he agrees with this ruling. However, Rav Yehoshua Neuwirth (ad. loc.) disagrees arguing that since the active ingredient of the medicine is bitter, one does not recite a Bracha on the sweet inactive ingredient (the active ingredient of medicine is the ingredient that effects the cure; inactive ingredients are added to assist in the consumption of the medicine). He argues that the sweet inactive ingredient is considered Tafel (insignificant) and thus does not merit a Bracha. He cites the Gemara (Brachot 35b-36a) as proof to his position. This Gemara states that one who drinks pure olive oil to cure a sore throat does not recite a Bracha because the olive oil "damages" him (even though it effects a cure) and is not considered to constitute an act of eating (see Rashi s.v. Azukei). However, if one places the olive oil in a vegetable soup (apparently this was a common practice in the time of the Gemara) he recites Borei Pri Haetz on the mixture since the active ingredient (the olive oil) is considered the primary and significant ingredient. Ordinarily, though, one who places olive oil in vegetable soup and drinks it for non-healing purposes recites Borei Pri Ha'adama, since the vegetable soup is the primary ingredient (see, though, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 205 for further discussion regarding whether to recite Borei P'ri Ha'adamah or She'hakol on

vegetable soups). Accordingly, Rav Neuwirth argues that this passage in the Gemara teaches that when medicine is mixed with another product (to make taking the medicine easier) the medicine is considered the primary ingredient that determines which Bracha should be recited. Thus, when the active ingredient (the “medicine”) is bitter (and merits no Bracha) and is mixed with pleasant tasting inactive ingredients (which do merit a Bracha), the active ingredient should be considered the primary ingredient and thus no Bracha should be recited on the elixir. Thus, just as in the Gemara’s case, the active ingredient determines which Bracha should be recited, so too, the active ingredient determines whether a Bracha should be recited altogether on the mixture. Rav Shlomo Zalman replies, though, that the Gemara (Berachot 35a) writes that one who benefits from this world without reciting a Bracha is compared to a thief (as he takes from Hashem without paying “the fee,” i.e. reciting the Bracha). One could reply that the active ingredient characterizes the elixir as a medicine and not as a food. The prohibition to benefit from this world applies only to benefiting from food without reciting a Bracha. Medicine, simply put, is not food. In addition, one could argue that the Halacha requires a Bracha on “medicine” only when one consumes food or drink for healing purposes. However, modern medicines are, generally speaking, not considered food or drink, as no one other than a sick individual would take such food, unlike the olive oil that is discussed on the Gemara. Accordingly, Dr. Abraham (Nishmat Avraham 4:7) reports that Rav Shlomo Zalman retracted his ruling and agreed with his student Rav Neuwirth that no Bracha should be recited on pleasant-tasting medicines. However, Rav Shlomo Zalman is cited (ad. loc.) as nonetheless ruling that a Bracha should be recited if the medicine is coated with sugar, since one tastes the sugar before taking the medicine. Rav Heber reports that the common practice appears to accord with Rav Neuwirth’s ruling. Dr. Abraham cites (ad. loc. 1:91) that Rav Waldenberg told him that one can avoid this controversy simply by reciting the very brief Tefillah mentioned in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 230:4) that one should recite before one undergoes a medical procedure. Rav Waldenberg argues that this recitation functions in a similar manner to a Bracha and therefore obviates the problem of stealing from Hashem, as one enjoys the sweetener only after he has thanked Hashem.

Conclusion

I hope that our discussion of medicines and Halacha have informed and enabled our readers to competently pose questions to their Rav. The issues are varied and are subject to change and thus one should remain informed and alert regarding the points we have outlined. I would add that it would seem that a potentially ideal remedy to the problem of Chametz or non-kosher ingredients in medicines is using Israeli-produced medicines that are certified kosher. One not only enhances his standards of Kashrut thereby, but he has also helped the business of another Yehudi (Memkar Laamitecha, see Rashi to Vayikra 25:14) and Yishuv Eretz Yisrael by facilitating Jews being able to earn a livelihood and thereby residing in Eretz Yisrael.

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[from last year]

RABBI MICHAEL ROSENSWEIG

Parshat Behalotekkah: INGREDIENTS OF RABBINIC LEADERSHIP

Parshat Behalotekkah registers Moshe Rabbeinu’s extreme frustration with the Jewish people (Bamidbar 11:11-15), as well as his urgent conviction that he could no longer shoulder the crushing burden of leadership alone. [The contrast to Moshe’s initially reluctant response to his father-in-law’s efficient proposal to diffuse and delegate authority in Parshat Yitro is striking and significant in its own right.] The Torah proceeds to delineate the methodology of investing spiritual leadership. Surely a close examination of these pesukim provides an invaluable window and insight into halachic thought as some of the indispensable elements required for halachic authority are identified.

It is axiomatic that Moshe exemplifies the ideal of Jewish leadership and that he is not fully replaceable. His unique stature as a prophet is codified in the Rambam’s 13 principles of faith. Moreover, Moshe Rabbeinu is the model for and source of rabbinic authority, as the gemara (Sanhedrin 13b) indicates and as the Rambam

(Hilchot Sanhedrin 4:1, and see 2:1 and Kesef Mishneh) rules. At the same time, these pesukim are cited as a basis for the continuity of halachic authority, particularly with respect to the highest halachic court (Mishneh, Sanhedrin 2a) and are therefore consequential in any assessment of the character of rabbinic leadership. Indeed, the Rambam (Hilchot Mamrim 1:1) depicts the multiple functions of Sanhedrin ha-Gadol and then records that anyone who believes in the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu and is committed to the Torah he conveyed must accept the authority of this court modeled after the process established in these pesukim. Let us briefly examine three of the important ingredients reflected in the parshah.

The Torah records that seventy elders were required to partner with Moshe. The Mishneh (Sanhedrin 2a) records a debate whether sanhedrin ha-gadol requires exactly seventy (R. Yehudah) or seventy one (as it includes Moshe). The gemara (Sanhedrin 3b) notes that the view of seventy defies the normal requirement that a beit din be composed of an odd number of judges to insure a decisive outcome. The Ran asks how R. Yehudah could conclude that seventy suffices given this principle when the gemara elsewhere simply assumes that an additional judge should be added to the number implied in the pesukim based on this rule. He responds that the fact that the Torah explicates the number seventy in this context is significant and precludes applying the standard odd-number rule. The Ran’s comment can be understood in light of the Ramban’s explanation of the significance of the seventy elders. Ramban (11:15) notes that the requirement corresponds to the full range of nations-cultures and languages. The Torah powerfully conveys that rabbinic leadership in the model of Moshe Rabbeinu, and the sanhedrin by extension, must exercise halachic leadership with a breadth of vision. According to R. Yehudah the theme embodied by this symbolic number outweighs the rule of an odd-numbered court. The normative view that requires seventy one elders also accepts this principle but actually goes a step further in its ideal ambition for halachic leadership since Moshe initially presided over the seventy!

The need for breadth of vision in halachic leadership obviously extends to single rabbinic authorities striving to emulate the model of Moshe and the zekenim to the best of their ability. At the same time, the prospects of achieving that vision is daunting and the ability to apply it is significantly more challenging. Halachic leadership demands more than a careful reading of texts and a discerning eye toward application. Many halachic issues defy easy classification and assessment. In the complex world which we inhabit this is particularly true, as we struggle to incorporate and integrate the halachic ramifications of technological innovation and thorny social and ethical conundrums. Moreover, much of halachic-decision making revolves around broader halachic value and policy issues that require both vision and clarity. Halachists are obligated to be roeh et ha-nolad, to assess the likely long-term impact of their decisions. Their responsibility is a dual one: to the matter at hand and its immediate constituency, as well as to future generations. These considerations are sometimes misconstrued and inaccurately portrayed as either peripheral or political. In fact, these factors have always been an integral component of halachic leadership and in many respects their proper integration into the halachic process distinguishes the truly great poskim. One of the first lessons conveyed in the mesorah of massechet Avot is the need for a “seyag la-Torah.” Chazal (See Avot de-Rav Nattan Avot 1:2) note that this has a dual meaning that underscores two opposing but complementary tendencies- to protect the Torah by erecting fences (seyag) around it when called for, and to refine or purge (sig) the halachah by rejecting counterproductive overprotective measures that are not sustainable or that clouds the halachah itself and makes it inaccessible. The ability to differentiate between productive protection counterproductive overprotection requires discernment, clarity and a breadth of vision.

The choosing of the seventy elders, which serves as a precedent for the appointment of the Sanhedrin and by extension all rabbinic authority, reflects a related dimension of halachic leadership, as well. It was important for Moshe to share some of his transcendent spiritual personality- “ve-atzalta min ha-ruach asher alechah” with those who would share the burden of leadership and ultimately succeed him. The Rambam (Hilchot. Sanhedrin 4:1) notes this link with the shechinah in his introduction to the institution of semichah, rabbinic authorization. Moreover, the Rambam (Hilchot. Sanhedrin 2:1) continues to cite Moshe and the appointment of the seventy elders as a paradigm for the requisite qualities of judges, despite the fact that Moshe and the initial seventy also served in a political and prophetic role. [See Kesef Mishneh’s question based on Sanhedrin 36b.] We may conclude that rabbinic leadership is not confined or even primarily relegated to the formal realm of halachic decision making, but constitutes national leadership. The stories cited in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 14a) confirm this conclusion. The halachist is neither a narrow legal technician nor is he simply an effective and efficient decisor. He is a spiritual guide and authority who is attuned to halachic values and principles by virtue of his immersion and dedication to Torah, and thus,

constitutes a proper representative of Klal Yisrael's interests. The gemara (Sanhedrin 13b) defines semichah as conferring the title "rebbe", implying a stature of leadership, as well as providing for a license to judge in the realms of kenasot (penalties) and capital crimes. [The relationship of these two components needs to be examined more closely.] Rambam (Hilchot. Sanhedrin 4:8,10) rules that one cannot be authorized for classic ordination unless he is versed and capable or rendering decisions in all realms of halachah even if his license to practice is going to be a more limited one. Because halachic leadership draws from the total commitment to and understanding of Torah, transcending the function of actual halachic rulings, this broader idealistic requirement is essential. It is obvious that it also contributes significantly to a more precise rendering of halachic decisions, one that is informed by breadth of vision and by an acute sense of the presence of the shechinah, rooted in Moshe's atzilut ha-ruach.

Finally, we should note that because rabbinic leadership in the model of Moshe does transcend judicial competence and efficiency, it does not tolerate fundamental inconsistency, compartmentalization or a breach in reverence- yirat shamayim. The commentators debate the details but generally explain that Yehoshua perceived that the conduct of Eldad and Meidad was disrespectful to Moshe. His response - "kelaeim- hatei aleichem tzorchei zibbur" (Sanhedrin 17a) (impose upon them the burden of leadership and they will be neutralized)- is intriguing and suggestive. Tosafot (ad loc) explains that Yehoshua's strategy to terminate their prophecy was based on the principle that prophecy cannot abide the burden of a beleaguered leader. This perspective is more than ironic, since Moshe himself, was both the ultimate prophet and the singular leader of Klal Yisrael! Moreover, it was precisely his visceral sense of burden that motivated the entire episode which led to Eldad and Meidad's breach! Upon further reflection, however, it is evident that Yehoshua was projecting a profound insight into the fundamental character of Jewish and halachic leadership. Ultimately, one cannot be a spiritual guide-prophet and public leader unless one is able to integrate the two themes. A prophet-halachist who perceives his role in terms of the spiritual interests of Klal Yisrael, past, present and future, may maintain and even enhance his spiritual capacity through a leadership role, notwithstanding the distraction and burden. And only a public leader who is motivated and shaped by the spiritual values of halachah-nevuah and is able to integrate these with his leadership calling will emerge as an ideal leader of Klal Yisrael.

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