

**Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet
Behaloscha 5769**

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, June 12, 2009

JEWS AND THE LAND OF ISRAEL :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The relationship of the Jewish people to their homeland in the Land of Israel has always been a delicate one. Firm in faith but fragile in application. We find that Moshe sends his trusted lieutenants on a fact-finding mission to assess the situation in the Land of Israel. Moshe fully expects a positive report from them and is shocked when the majority report in essence says "it is a great place to visit but we could never live there."

Eventually the desert will consume that entire generation but their reaction to the Land of Israel has left a deep and abiding impression amongst Jews for all generations. Jews have maintained a constant presence in the Land of Israel – sometimes a large, dominant and independent presence and many times a smaller, subservient presence – for over three millennia. Jews prayed thrice daily for their return to Zion and Jerusalem.

Over the centuries individual Jews, many of them the spiritual leaders of their times, risked everything to reach and settle in the Land of Israel. Jews never forfeited the hope of returning to their homeland no matter how improbable that hope seemed to be of actualization.

Yet in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century when the great emigration of Eastern European Jews took place barely five percent of those Jews chose to settle in the Land of Israel. Most Jews then opted for North America and Western Europe as their new home. In the main, these were the same Jews who continued to pray daily for their return to Zion and Jerusalem. History contains many ironies.

The Zionist movement and its predecessor the Lovers of Zion attracted greater Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel but the vast majority of Jews still did not come. When the gates of the Soviet Union and later Germany and finally all of Europe shut and trapped the Jews of Europe, six million of them were doomed to destruction.

After World War II there was a determined effort by hundreds of thousands of survivors to reach the Land of Israel. With the creation of the State of Israel these Jews were absorbed into the Jewish state as were, soon afterwards, almost six hundred thousand Jews who were expelled from their homes in Moslem and Arab countries where they had lived for centuries.

The early leaders of the state, Ben Gurion, Weizman and others fully expected a large wave of immigration of Jews from Western countries especially the United States to occur. They were surprised and shocked when this did not at all materialize. In effect, for most Jews in the world the Land of Israel was a nice place to visit (though most of them did not even visit) but they preferred to live elsewhere. When the Soviet Union finally collapsed a great wave of Russian Jews came to live in Israel.

But over the decades hundreds of thousands of Jews left the Land of Israel to live elsewhere, some of them even former high ranking legislators and officials in the government of the state. I do not write any of this in criticism of anyone but these are merely the facts of the matter. And there continue to be millions of Jews who pray every day for their return to Zion while living comfortably or uncomfortably as the individual case may be on foreign shores.

The ultimate test for the State of Israel in my opinion is not so much what our enemies or even our erstwhile friends think about our wonderful little country but what the Jews of the world think about it. How deep is their real affection for Zion and Jerusalem? Does it enter into their future plans to arrive and settle here and help build the Jewish state physically, financially and spiritually?

How do we explain to the world that our affection and longing for Zion and Jewish independence is not solely a Holocaust related cause and effect situation? The original words of the Hatikvah anthem had it more correct than the new improved version. In the old version we sang about David's

city, where he lived and ruled millennia ago. That is our claim to the Land of Israel and to Jerusalem.

The current version speaks of independence and freedom but those are not exclusively Jewish values – everyone in the world wants to live in independence and freedom – and do nothing to buttress our more than legitimate claim to our land and our capitol city. If we are not for ourselves than who will be for us? The saga of Moshe and his fact-finders lingers on. Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: BEHALOTCHA :: Rabbi Berel Wein

It is a terrible personality trait to be a complainer. It is hard to live with complainers at home, in the work place and in the community. In this week's parsha we are made aware of the dismal consequences of complaining. Rashi points out that the complainers in the desert had no real basis for that complaint. They were just dissatisfied somehow and so they complained against Moshe and eventually against God.

Moshe in his final oration to the Jewish people in the book of Dvarim will himself complain about the people of Israel that they are unnecessarily quarrelsome and a bunch of complainers. There is a Jewish joke, more ironic than funny, about three Jewish matrons eating lunch at a restaurant in New York and the waiter approached them in the middle of their meal and asked them "Is anything alright?"

Rashi's interpretation of the lack of justification for complaints in the desert portrays for us a very serious character defect within the Jewish people. They are chronic complainers and a vast majority of the time their complaints are really baseless. The many complaints in the desert follow the usual pattern – food, Moshe's leadership, the unfairness of life and the difficulty of living up to the role of being the chosen people.

All through First Temple times we find that the prophets of Israel were barraged with complaints about their mission and words. The prophets were the solution to Israel's troubles. The people complained that they were the problem. And so destruction and exile came in the wake of the unjustified complaints.

I am not a mental health professional by any stretch of imagination. Yet my instinct tells me that chronic complainers are really not happy with themselves and project that dissatisfaction outwards on events and humans that are not the cause of their original dissatisfaction. There is something deep within us that requires self-justification and self-empowerment.

When that need is fulfilled we are on the whole happy, contented and optimistic. When that ingredient in our soul and psyche is absent we are complainers, carpers, sad and sometimes destructive people. We recite in our daily morning prayers the statement as to how fortunate we are to be the special people that God has chosen to lead the world in service to Him. We may all recite that prayer but how many of us are really convinced in our heart of hearts of its truth?

The rabbis of the Talmud harshly disdained the chronic complainer – "Is it not sufficient for you that you are alive?" Nothing is perfect in life but that is not a justification for complaints. We are bidden to deal with problems to the extent that we can and not to dwell on them overly and constantly complain about them. We have to seek an inner peace that will allow us an optimistic attitude and an avoidance of complaints. Our parents, schools and society should somehow concentrate on achieving this goal with our coming generations.

Shabat shalom.

**TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Beha'lotcha
For the week ending 13 June 2009 / 20 Sivan 5769
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
OVERVIEW**

Aharon is taught the method for kindling the menorah. Moshe sanctifies the levi'im to work in the Mishkan. They replace the first-born, who were disqualified after sinning at the golden calf. The levi'im are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the Mishkan from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they are to engage in less strenuous work. One year after the Exodus from Egypt, G-d commands Moshe concerning the korban Pesach. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini, allowing a "second chance" to offer the korban Pesach one month later, is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the Mishkan signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified. Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the eruv rav the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined the Jewish People in the Exodus some people complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. G-d tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. G-d sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained. Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. G-d explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet, and punishes Miriam with tzara'at as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard.) Moshe prays for her, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

INSIGHTS

Turning Over The World

"We are contaminated by a human corpse; why should we be diminished by not offering G-d's offering in its appointed time?" (9:7)

A man goes into a shop to buy a watch. His eye settles on the glint of gold and he takes a fancy to a fake Rolex. The owner of the shop says, "Don't take that thing. It's rubbish. In six months it's going to be asking you the time. Take this one instead. True it doesn't look much on the outside, but it will last you for more than a lifetime."

But the buyer insists in spite of all on the fake Rolex so the storeowner says, "Okay, if that's really what you want - take it!"

"We are contaminated by a human corpse; why should we be diminished by not offering G-d's offering in its appointed time?"

There's something strange about the above verse.

The group of people who complained about not being able to bring the korban Pesach said that the reason they were unable to do so was because they were contaminated. So why then should they ask, "Why should we be diminished?", meaning "Why should we be left out?" Didn't they already answer their own question? Because they were contaminated?

The answer is that their question was not a question at all, it was a cry from the heart. And through this cry from the heart an entire section of the Torah not given at Sinai was written into the Torah - the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini, a second chance to bring the korban Pesach.

What a person truly desires, G-d gives that person.

One of the ways that G-d interfaces with His creation is the characteristic called Hod. The week of the counting of the Omer that contains Pesach Sheini is the week of Hod. Hod is connected to the verb l'hodot' - "to admit"; meaning that G-d "admits" to what is in the heart of a person; that G-d will grant what a person really wants if his desire is authentic.

The Avnei Nezer asks why Amalek deserved the punishment of total obliteration. He answers that Amalek truly desired, in his heart of hearts, the removal of the Jewish People from existence. So G-d, so to speak, said, "Fine, you don't want the Jewish People to exist, so I will behave towards you as they don't exist; and seeing as the entire Creation was for the purpose of the Jewish People to observe the Torah, therefore there is no reason for the Creation to exist - in which case - you don't exist."

When Rabbi Akiva saw that water had carved a channel in a stone he reasoned that if something as soft as water could shape something as hard as stone, surely the Torah - which is as hard as iron - could shape his heart which was mere flesh.

Rabbi Akiva's feeling was, "Am I worse than a stone? Why should I be diminished?" Not having Torah was impossible to him. That feeling expressed from the deepest place of his heart brought a forty-year-old man who had never learned a thing in his life to be the father of the Oral Torah. The nature of Hod is both frightening and exhilarating. Frightening, because it means that if our minds and hearts are full of superficial desires G-d will let us buy that fake Rolex.

And exhilarating, because if we really want Torah, then like Rabbi Akiva and those people who missed out on the korban Pesach, G-d will turn the world over for us.

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

© 2009 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Parshas Behaaloscha

Aharon did so... as Hashem had commanded. (8:3)

Rashi explains that the Torah emphasizes that Aharon did as he was commanded in order to teach us that he did not waver one iota from that which he was instructed to do. She'lo shinah, "that he did not change," is considered a great endorsement for Aharon. Is that trait really laudatory? Would we doubt that Aharon HaKohen would execute Hashem's command to the letter of the law? Horav Meir, zl, m'Premishlan, interprets Aharon's lack of change as a reference to his retaining his humility, despite his elevated position. He had become the Kohen Gadol, High Priest; yet, he was still involved in promoting social discourse among his brethren and creating harmony between husband and wife. Yes, Aharon did not change - himself. He remained the same person as he had been before.

Furthermore, we often find that when the status of a person is increased, he becomes overwhelmed and amazed - with himself. He actually begins to believe that he is worthy of his exalted position, and that he genuinely is a great person. Not Aharon. He was like the Menorah. Just as the Menorah is inanimate, not able to sense whether it is high or low in stature, Aharon was unimpressed with his new status.

While some leaders demonstrate to the public that they maintain a sense of humility, this is not necessarily the reality. The mere fact that the Torah attests to the humility of Aharon HaKohen is indicative of this phenomenon. At the end of the parsha, the Torah records Moshe Rabbeinu's greatest character trait: anav me'od, "very humble." Humility is an indication of the individual's sense of self-satisfaction. Whatever Hashem has blessed him with is sufficient for him.

Horav Naftali, zl, m'Rophshitz, was well known for his charismatic nature. His smile would warm a heart and illuminate an individual who had otherwise been miserable. He possessed that power because his smile was genuine. When he said that he cared, he was not merely paying lip service. He once encountered a distinguished rav who was obsessed with the Ropshitzer's popularity. "Why is it," he asked, "that they flock to you by the thousands and I do not seem to have such incredible success? Let's face it; I am greater than you in Torah erudition. One would think that it would account for something."

The Ropshitzer replied, "Truthfully, I have no idea why they converge on me. I think that perhaps part of the reason may be the fact that I have never asked, 'Why do they not come to me?' In your case, I think it is because you ask, 'Why do they not come?'"

The Ropshitzer was alluding to the notion that people seek the presence of someone who does not care about himself but rather cares about them. One who is obsessed with himself has no room left for others.

There are those, however, who get carried away with their own humility. In other words, they really have nothing about themselves to arrogate; instead, they claim humility, and transform the humility into conceit. The Kotzker Rebbe, zl, once remarked that the Torah was given on Har Sinai, the smallest of mountains, to teach us the significance of humility. If so, why was it not given in a valley, which is even lower? He explained that it

is not significant for one who is on the lowest level to act with humility. After all, what about himself or his achievements are notable? On the other hand, one who is on a mountain-- and nonetheless depresses his achievements-- is truly humble.

Indeed, Horav Yechiel Michel, zl, mZlotchev, was asked to explain why, if all of the mitzvos are clearly written in the Torah, and anavah, humility, is equal to all of the character traits that one should possess, it is not a mitzvah which is recorded in the Torah. If humility is so significant, why is it not mentioned? The Torah only alludes to it by remarking that Moshe exemplified humility. The Rebbe explained that if a person were to act with humility because he is seeking to fulfill a mitzvah, then he would never achieve true humility. Indeed, the concept of acting modestly in order to perform a mitzvah is part of the yetzer hora's, evil-inclination's, arsenal of crafty lies to convince us to sin. Thus, if a person endeavors to be humble because it is a mitzvah to do so, he will never achieve true humility. The yetzer hora would convince him that he is saintly and virtuous, indeed more exalted than the average person. In reality, he should expect honor and undivided respect from the common man. After all, he is on a more elevated, spiritual plane than they are, but he is not permitted to be arrogant. Therefore, he will act modestly because this is a mitzvah. One who performs such a mitzvah is only satisfying his arrogant nature. In a way, this type of modesty is nothing more than a subtle form of arrogance.

Why should we be dismissed by not offering Hashem's offering in its appointed time? (9:7)

A group of people who had become ritually contaminated asked to be included in the Korban Pesach. While they did not question the fact that contaminated individuals are forbidden to bring the Pesach-offering, they thought that a dispensation would be made for them. After all, their contamination had not been their fault, since it came as the result of their involvement in the performance of a mitzvah. Rashi emphasizes this group's devotion to the mitzvah of Korban Pesach. Apparently, those who were tamei, ritually unclean, requested that the Korban Pesach be sacrificed by Kohanim who were tahor, ritually clean, and eaten by Jews who were tahor. In other words, these men would not really participate in the mitzvah, but they did not want to be excluded from it. This is enigmatic, since a korban brought solely for tamei'im is pasul, invalid. What would they gain from such an endeavor? Furthermore, even if their intention was to have a sacrifice brought for a group consisting of both tamei and tahor individuals, which would render the korban valid, it would still not benefit them since such a sacrifice would not discharge their obligation to bring a Korban Pesach. What did they have to gain by this request?

Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, explains that, indeed, they would gain nothing from the Korban Pesach aspect; however, they loved the mitzvah so much, and their desire to fulfill it was so compelling, that they yearned to share in the mitzvah, even if it did not mean the fulfillment of their mitzvah. Yes, some people care so much, that they want to be involved, even if they do not personally benefit from the mitzvah. This attitude is reminiscent of Moshe Rabbeinu's designation of the three Arei Miklat, Cities of Refuge, on the eastern side of the Jordan River, even though he was acutely aware that these cities would have no legitimacy in protecting the inadvertent murderer until Yehoshua designated the remaining three cities in Eretz Yisrael proper.

I used the word "reminiscent" as opposed to "analogous," since the two are not totally parallel to one another. When Moshe designated the Arei Miklat, the act contained some efficacy, to the extent that they forever remained Cities of Refuge. That would not change. The authority to protect did not come until later. Concerning the Korban Pesach, however, these people did not discharge their duty whatsoever. Nonetheless, we derive from here that a person must strive to involve himself in the performance of mitzvos to the extent that he is able, even if his actions do not totally discharge his duty.

This is the meaning of ahavas ha'mitzvos, love for Hashem's commandments. Rav Moshe contends that if one finds it difficult to carry out a mitzvah due to his limited physical ability, he should do whatever he can and engage in the mitzvah to the extent that he is able. For example, if one cannot physically tolerate the consumption of a kazayis of marror, the

required measurement of bitter herbs on Pesach, he should, at least, taste a little of it; or if he, for medical reasons, is unable to sit in a Succah, he should, at least, build a Succah to indicate the chavivus ha'mitzvah, his amiability towards the mitzvah.

The Torah has enjoined us with a number of mitzvos that have loopholes, through which one can exempt himself. For instance, one may be exempted from the mitzvah of Hafroschas Terumos u'Maasros, separating Terumah and Tithes, by bringing the produce into the house by way of the roof, thereby bypassing the front door. Hashem relied on Klal Yisrael's love for the mitzvos, assuming that they would not avail themselves of the opportunity to absolve themselves from the mitzvah. Hashem knew His nation, because history has demonstrated that Shevet Levi, which was supported by the nation's Tithes, was supported for centuries by means of this arrangement. The nation did not seek loopholes. Instead, they strove resolutely, with all of their property, to provide for the Levi.

This, explains Rav Moshe, is underscored in the blessing we confer on a rach ha'nimol, newly-circumcised infant, that yikaneis l'Torah, l'chupah, u'l'maasim tovim, "He enters into the Torah, the marriage canopy, and good deeds." This expression seems redundant. If one enters into Torah, clearly good deeds are included. One who learns Torah without intent to perform mitzvos, it is better had he not been born, as Chazal assert that without Torah one cannot be pious. Torah and maasim tovim go hand in hand. Why, then, do we use a dual expression? The answer is that we bless the infant that he should perform mitzvos with love, so that even if Torah law exempts him, such as Terumah, Maaser and Tzitzis, which are an obligation only on those garments that have four-corners, he will seek every opportunity to avail himself of the mitzvah. In order to attain this special plateau of love for mitzvos, one needs an added blessing.

Alternatively, we suggest the following rationale for the seeming redundancy. First, a short vignette that occurred concerning Horav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zl, explains the rationale. One of the elderly patients in an Israeli nursing home had been lauding the qualities of Rav Shlomo Zalman. Indeed, this patient, who had usually been sullen, was that day energetic and almost effervescent in his praise of the venerable Torah giant. Apparently, the other day Rav Shlomo Zalman, who was the old man's neighbor, had come to visit accompanied by his grandson.

"He is sleeping, Zaide," the grandson said.

"Wake him up," said Rav Shlomo Zalman.

"But, Zaide, he is sleeping," the grandson reiterated.

"If you will not wake him up, I will," Rav Shlomo Zalman replied. "He is not sleeping because he is tired; he is sleeping because he is bored." Rav Shlomo Zalman proceeded to raise his voice, "Hello, it is I, Shlomo Zalman, wake up."

The old man stirred and opened his eyes. When he saw who stood before him, he broke out in a smile from ear to ear. They spent a while in friendly conversation, and the gadol ha'dor, pre-eminent leader of the generation, bid his neighbor good-day and left. This is why the man could not stop lauding Rav Shlomo Zalman. He had made his day.

There is Torah, and there are maasim tovim. Torah is a reference to the letter of the Law, clearly defined principles to which we are to adhere. Maasim tovim is a reference to those activities that we undertake in an effort to minister to the needs of others. Maasim tovim take on many scenarios relative to the conditions or the circumstances which create the need for assistance. When one is carrying out good deeds, he needs to employ seichel, common sense, which might not coincide with what appears to be the letter of the law. This is indicated by the above story, in which Rav Shlomo Zalman understood that the elderly gentleman's sleep was induced by boredom - not by exhaustion. He quickly understood the problem and ministered to the specific needs of the patient. He used common sense. There is Torah - and there are maasim tovim. They work in tandem, but one must use his seichel in order to discern the specific demands of the maasim tovim. We bless the child to have such ability and to make use of it.

He (Moshe) said, "Please do not forsake us, inasmuch as you know our encampments in the wilderness, and you have been as eyes for us." (10:31)

Moshe Rabbeinu offered a number of reasons to explain why Yisro should remain with Klal Yisrael in the wilderness. Among them was the fact that he had been with the people in the wilderness and had seen firsthand the miracles that Hashem had wrought for them. In a sense, he was like the nation's eyes in perceiving the wonders. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, feels that Moshe's appeal to his father-in-law indicates the true depth of his mission to lead the Jewish nation. He asked Yisro for advice; and he sought his knowledge of the terrain. These are both clear indications that our quintessential leader was not schooled in organizational leadership. We find in Shemos 18:13-27 that Yisro taught Moshe the ways and means of state-building and legislation. In addition, Moshe had no knowledge of the plans for the various camps that were to be home to the nascent nation. He led the people as Hashem's agent.

As an individual who required his father-in-law's counsel for the most rudimentary organization and arrangements for the camp and wrote down these instructions for the everlasting memory of his people, Moshe demonstrated clearly that he was nothing more than the instrument of G-d. He was the last person who sought acknowledgement for his exceptional insight and miraculous powers - because, he did not possess any exceptional capabilities. He was Hashem's choice, led by His mandate and destined to succeed only through His intervention.

Moshe's ability to lead was derived from the Torah, as is that of every ensuing leader. He may procure advice from various sources. Decisions, however, are to be derived only from the Torah. His intentions are holy; his motives are pure; his knowledge emanates from a Divine source. It might be difficult for some of us to understand-- and even harder to accept-- but it is the only way - for an observant Jew.

An individual who exemplified this unique ability was Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl. His Talmudic insights were all based on pshat, simple but profound explanation of the Talmud, coupled with his inextricable dedication to Torah principles. He continued to guide the Jewish nation in its approach to Torah study and conduction of communal and national affairs. The purview of this paper does not allow for a full appreciation of Rav Elchanan's wisdom and impact. I will, however, just cite one of his publications, the Ikvesa D'Meshicha, Footsteps of Moshiach, which was originally published in America as a Yiddish monograph. This is a sefer which incorporates a number of Biblical and Talmudic sources to interpret the tragic events that had occurred prior to World War II and were continuing to evolve. He explained the necessary way for a Jew to respond and the proper course for him to follow during this challenging period.

The sefer had a major impact on the world Torah community. The Chazon Ish had it translated into Hebrew, and it was later rendered into English. Rav Elchanan demonstrated how world events were clearly foreshadowed in the Torah. His intention was to teach the Jewish people what it was that Hashem was demanding of them. Indeed, some of the observations were not comprehensible until certain events took place decades later. Rav Elchanan was an individual who was so bound up in the Torah that he recognized past, present and future in the Torah's words.

Moshe heard the people weeping in their family groups. (11:10)

Horav Yonasan Eybeshutz, zl, explains this weeping from a practical point of view. A wealthy person derives great pleasure, not so much from his actual wealth, but from what the wealth does for him. It distinguishes him from others. He is different - better - more resourceful - or so he thinks. He has been able to acquire something that his peers only dream of having. This is the primary reason that a wealthy person has a certain "air" about him. He is different.

All of this changed with the introduction of the Heavenly Manna. Everybody had all that he needed. The one who had more - needed more. The dichotomy between the wealthy and poverty stricken did not exist. There were no differences between classes. Everybody was the same. For some, this was sufficient reason to weep. Nothing about their lives distinguished them from others. While it might sound like a strange reason for crying, some people cry for strange reasons.

Horav Simchah Bunim, zl, mPeshischa, cites the Talmud Berachos 32 where Chazal state that Shaarei demaos lo ninalu, "The Gates of Tears are never closed." In other words, when one expresses himself with sincerity, such that he is brought to weeping, his prayers pierce the heavens and enter

through the Gates of Tears, which are never closed. The question is obvious: If they are never shut, why have gates altogether? They really serve no purpose.

The Peschischa explains that the gates prevent the tears of fools from entering. This applies to those who do not even know why, and for what, they are weeping. They simply weep because they feel compelled to do so. Their emotions are non-rational. They display emotion without rhyme or reason. Such crying activates the gates - to close.

Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe regarding the Cushite woman he had married. (12:1)

Miriam HaNeviah spoke against Moshe Rabbeinu in a manner that was defined by the Almighty as lashon hora, slanderous speech. While it was not of the nature of lashon hora that we might deem inappropriate, the Divine measuring stick for His closest devotees is much more exacting. Thus, Miriam was punished with tzaraas, a Divinely- imposed skin affliction, often referred to as leprosy - but in no way of the same source. This punishment was reserved for those whose speech left much to be desired. Since Miriam instigated the conversation, she was the individual who was punished. The lesson for the people was clear: If Miriam, whose intentions were not malevolent in any way, was nonetheless chastised so strongly, how much more so should we all be meticulous in our speech and take the greatest care when speaking about others.

The various commentators find it difficult to substantiate Miriam's comments under the purview of lashon hora. Indeed, Chazal feel that Miriam's intentions were actually noble. She neither spoke in Moshe's presence, nor did she mean to criticize him. Why is it considered lashon hora? The basic gist of their commentary is that her comments were not "perfect" and could lead others to err. Horav Nosson Ordman, zl, presents a practical approach to Miriam's words, which conceivably explains her transgression.

Apparently, when Miriam met Tziporah, Moshe's wife, she heard her lament the life of the wife of a Navi, prophet: "I feel bad for all those other women whose husbands are prophets, for their husbands separate from them, as mine has from me." Miriam heard this and went to her brother, Aharon HaKohen, and shared it with him. So, where was the sin? What did Miriam do that was so wrong?

Rav Ordman explains that it was not Miriam's business to relate Tziporah's lament to Aharon. She should have gone straight to Moshe and asked for an explanation. She would certainly have been told that this was the will of the Almighty. She did not, however, go to Moshe. She went, instead, to Aharon. This is where she erred. Going to Aharon constituted a semblance of lashon hora, enough for her to be punished, so that others would take heed and not act it out in a worse manner. It was probably considered a harmless statement, innocuous, and without any malicious intent. When one reaches the spiritual plateau achieved by Miriam, the measuring rod is un-permissive, the demand for perfection relentless.

The incident concerning Miriam teaches us another lesson: no good deed goes unrewarded. This applies to even the smallest measure of good. When Miriam was stricken with tzaraas, she was quarantined for seven days as prescribed by halachah. The nation waited for her to recuperate and only then did it continue its travels. For seven days, an entire nation waited. Why? Because when Moshe was in the little reed basket, afloat on the Nile River, Miriam waited for one hour, because she was concerned for the welfare of her baby brother. One little girl, one hour, and for that she was rewarded with an entire nation-- including the Holy Ark, the Kohanim, Leviim, Yisraelim, Ananei HaKavod, Clouds of Glory--all waiting for her. Yes, Miriam was punished for her error, but she was also rewarded for her good deed. Nothing we do - whether it is good or not so good- is forgotten. This is something we must remember.

Va'ani Tefillah

Oseh mishpat la'ashukim - He does justice for the wronged.

When the prophecy concerning the End of Days occurs, when the Yemos Ha'Moshiach, Days of Moshiach, the Revival of the Dead and the Olam Ha'Neshamos, the spiritual world of souls after death, when this new world order comes into being, Hashem will do justice for all those who have been deprived of Justice. Oshet is a reference to all of those who have been divested of their rightful compensation. Oshet is a reference to something

withheld from its rightful owner. Therefore, as Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, explains, the majority of the world's population has been deprived in one way or another of what is rightfully theirs.

Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, understands this term from two perspectives: First, when we see someone who has been exploited and no judgment has been served in his defense, we must believe that ultimately Hashem will provide justice for him. It will happen! Second, when a man is prevented from being wronged, we must know that it is solely because Hashem has protected him. There is no other reason! We note here one principle that is constantly reiterated in Tanach: An essential element of a Jew's trust in Hashem and knowledge of Him is the awareness of ultimate vengeance upon evil doers. Whoever sins will pay. Hashem is patient, exacting punishment when He deems it most appropriate and effective.

l'zechar nishmas Chaim Tzvi ben Aharon HaLevi z"l Dr. Harry Feld niftar 28 Iayar 5760 by Dr. Donnie and Debbie Norowitz and family

Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Beha'aloscha A Depression That Impresses

The beginning of Parshas Beha'aloscha, which deals with the kindling of the Menorah, immediately follows the lengthy section at the end of Parshas Nasso, which deals with the gifts of the Nesseyim [Tribal Princes] to the Mishkan. Rashi explains this juxtaposition: Aharon was chalsha da'ato [depressed] that neither he nor his tribe (Shayvet Levi) participated in the inauguration ceremony of the Tabernacle. Therefore, the Almighty told him, "By your life, your lot is greater than their lot – for you (and your descendants) will kindle and prepare the lamps of the Menorah."

We have spoken numerous times in the past about this Rashi and analyzed how exactly the lighting of the Menorah served as a "consolation prize" for not having participated in the inauguration. Rather than repeating our prior discussions, I will make another observation about Rashi's comment.

Rashi says that Aharon was "weakened" or depressed by the fact that he and his tribe did not participate with the Nesseyim. Aharon was depressed because he could not participate in a mitzvah. This is an admirable quality. It is a measure of a person as to what upsets him and gets him dispirited. Some people get depressed over the stock-market. Some people get depressed when their sports team loses. What gets Aharon depressed? When does he feel deprived? "I could not participate in a mitzvah." That depressed him.

We find another example of this in our parsha as well: "We are impure as a result of human corpse impurity – why should we be left out, unable to sacrifice the offering to Hashem in the midst of the Children of Israel?" [Bamidbar 9:7]. The setting is the offering of the first Paschal sacrifice in the Wilderness, one year after the exodus. A group of people were unable to participate because they were Tameh Mes. They protested before Moshe – Lamah Nigarah (why should we be deprived)?

Again, it is praise-worthy to feel deprived because you could not do a mitzvah, because you could not offer the Korban Pessach. Usually what do we think of when someone says, for example, "I had a deprived childhood"? Typically, it means he did not get a bike; he could not go to camp, etc. Usually "I am deprived" refers to materialistic deprivation – I cannot go on vacation, I cannot afford this, I cannot afford that.

People who are depressed because they could not do a mitzvah or who feel deprived because they could not bring a Korban Pessach are very special people. Such emotions say a lot about who they are.

This is in stark contrast to another group of people in this parsha: "And the rabble that were in their midst cultivated a craving, and the Children of Israel, also turned, and they wept, and said, 'Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we would eat in Egypt free of charge; the cucumbers, and the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic...'" [Bamidbar 11:4-5]. What were they crying about? They felt deprived because they did not have meat!

These are two opposite ends of the spectrum. Aharon is depressed because he cannot bring a Korban. The carriers of Yosef's coffin felt deprived because they could not bring a Korban Pessach. And then there is the other end of the spectrum: "Who will feed us meat?" That which makes one depressed is a measure of the man.

Where's The Beef?

It is interesting to note G-d's response when Moshe presented the case of the people clamoring for meat. Moshe expressed his frustration over the situation: "...Where shall I get meat to give to this entire people when they weep to me saying 'Give us meat that we may eat'?..." [Bamidbar 11:12]. G-d's very first response to Moshe's plea had nothing to do with meat. G-d stated: "Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel..." [Bamidbar 11:16]. The response to the people who were complaining for meat was the establishment of a Sanhedrin. Moshe's spirit would rest on the 70 elders and they would form the first Jewish High Court.

That is all fine and well but "Where's the beef?" What happened to the people's complaint about lack of meat? What's the answer to that question? The answer is that what was required to resolve this situation was not meat, it was an education. It was necessary to change people's priorities in life. How is that going to be accomplished? "Gather for me 70 elders..." Gather together a group of people who will become holy like you; prophets like you, and who will be able to teach the people.

If the problem would have merely been solved by giving them meat, they would have asked for something else tomorrow and a third thing the day after tomorrow. They would never be satisfied. The way to rectify people who cry over the lack of meat is not with meat but with a Torah education.

Do The Trumpets Send A Mixed Message?

This week's parsha contains the mitzvah of the silver trumpets. The trumpets were to be blown in war time: "When you go to wage war in your land against an enemy who oppresses you, you shall sound short blasts of the trumpets..." [Bamidbar 10:9]. The trumpets are also blown on happy occasions: "On a day of your gladness, and on your festivals, and on your new moons, you shall sound the trumpets over your olah-offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings; and they shall be for a remembrance for you before your G-d..." [Bamidbar 10:10].

This appears to be a contradiction. What is the nature of the trumpets? Are they like a fire alarm? If so, we understand that the "fire alarm" is pulled when there is a danger. But we do not pull the "fire alarm" when we have a Yom Tov! Sirens announce danger – be careful! How can the same trumpet be blown for tragic occasions, for dangerous occasions, AND for joyous occasions?

The answer is to be found in the Mishneh Torah. The Rambam writes: "There is a positive Biblical command to cry out and to blow the trumpets for any tragedy that comes upon the community... And this matter is part of the ways of repentance, for when trouble comes and everyone cries out and they blow the blasts then everyone will recognize that because of their evil ways this calamity has befallen them..." [Hilchos Tanis 1:1-2]

The trumpets' blast proclaims that this trouble comes from the Almighty. "Do not think that this is a land grab, an oil grab, a money grab. Do not think this is global politics. If the enemy attacks, you should know that the Almighty is behind it. G-d is saying he wants you to be attacked." Blow the trumpets as a reminder of the nature of the calamity.

This is precisely why, when a person has a simcha, a festival, a joyous occasion, we are called upon to blow these same trumpets. We should remember that this too comes from the Almighty. Both our troubles and our celebrations come from Hashem.

When bad times occur, our tendency is often to ask "Why is G-d doing this to me?" However, when the good times occur, we think "We are lucky, smart, and successful." The Torah commands us to blow the trumpets when good things happen as well, to remind us that this too is the Hand of G-d in our lives.

Perhaps, suggests the Shemen HaTov, if we remember — when the good times happen — that this is from G-d, then there won't be a need to blow "when the enemy attacks," because the enemy will not attack. If we remember when the good times happen that "from the L-rd this event transpired" [Tehillim 118:23], then there will be no need for the Almighty to have to "set us straight" with some kind of crises situation.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

RavFrand, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

Drasha Parshas Behaaloscha
Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Fatherly Rebuke

This week's portion ends with a disheartening story, one that Jews are reminded to recount every day of their lives. The great prophetess, Miriam, sister of Moshe and heroine to a nation, spoke lashon horah (gossip) about her brother Moshe, "regarding the Cushite woman he had married. And Hashem heard." (Numbers 12:3)

She was upset at Moshe's righteous reaction to his omnipresent Divine communication, which had him separate from an intimate matrimonial life. "Miriam said (to Ahron), 'Was it only to Moshe that Hashem spoke? Did He not speak to us, as well?'" (ibid v.3)

After harsh rebuke from the Almighty for the audacity to speak against her brother Moshe, the world's greatest prophet and most humble man, Miriam was punished with leprosy. Her skin turned white as snow. But Moshe was not daunted by her remarks. His unyielding concern for her welfare proved itself as he fervently prayed for her immediate recovery and looked for Divine direction for the next step of penitence.

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Were her father to spit in her face, would she not be humiliated for seven days? Let her be quarantined outside the camp for seven days, and then she may be brought in.'" (ibid v.14) The Talmud in Tractate Bava Kama, infers a logical supposition: if a father's wrath would result in a seven-day quarantine, surely (kal v'chomer) G-d's wrath should effect a fourteen-day punishment. However, an integral component of Talmudic exegesis states that a law that is derived by a kal v'chomer (a fortiori conclusion) can be only as strict as the baseline law from which it is derived, and not go beyond it. Therefore, even as a consequence of G-d's reprimand, surely more potent than a father's rebuke, would also warrant only be a seven-day punishment.

For example, if assault warrants a 30-day prison sentence, the logic of kal v'chomer cannot help us deduce that the crime of murder would warrant the death penalty. It can only meet the level of the baseline premise. Thus, if assault warrants a 30-day prison sentence, surely, or kal v'chomer, murder would warrant a 30-day prison sentence. For a longer sentence you would need a direct command.

However, while Divine chastisement should warrant a harsher ban, nevertheless, since Hashem used a fatherly analogy, Miriam was spared and only excommunicated for seven days. The question is why did Hashem use the parental analogy and thus limit the punishment to seven days? If there was a slight to the Divinity, then why not immediately use the Divine analogy to inflict a harsher punishment? What did Hashem want in mitigating the reprimand by asking, "If her father would spit in her face, would she not be humiliated for seven days."?

William Howard Taft, the 27th President of the United States, did not have a record as chief executive without distinction, though it was beclouded by the bitter political factional quarrel that ended his presidency after one term.

He was sitting at the supper table with his family one evening, and, as children sometimes do, his son directed a disrespectful remark toward him. Mrs. Taft looked at her husband and exclaimed, "I am sure you will not let that pass unpunished!"

Taft replied, "If he directed the remark toward me as President of the United States, I will let it pass as his Constitutional right. However, as a father to his child, I will surely deal with this abuse!"

Perhaps Hashem, in reprimanding Miriam as a father and not the Divine Presence, sent us all a message about the pain of lashon horah. Lashon Horah is considered a terrible sin. The Torah has no less than 31 warnings concerning that crime, and it is incumbent upon Jews to remember the story of Miriam as a daily reminder of the difficult test we face in our encounters and our oral reactions to them.

However, Hashem did not want to rebuke Miriam as Master of the Universe. He did not use the severity of the rebuke of the Divine Presence to ban her from the camp for fourteen days. Instead, he used a parental analogy, "If her father would spit." His rebuke did not come as a King but rather as a Father, hurt and dismayed about how one of his children talked against a sibling.

If we fail to avoid speaking lashon horah because of the pain that it inflicts upon our fellow Jews, I will give you another reason. Worry about the pain we inflict upon our Father in Heaven when we talk ill of his children. Think about how a parent cries when he sees his children quibble, and then remember that it is also Our Father in Heaven who hears how we talk about our sisters and brothers.

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi M. Kamenetzky is the Associate Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky
The TorahWeb Foundation
A Song of Joy

"The Song of the Leviim in the Beis HaMikdash" - these words conclude our daily tefilah. This song began in this week's parshah with the inauguration of the Leviim. Many years later the joyous song of the Leviim would become associated with tragedy. "Al Naharos Bavel - By the rivers of Babylon", is the chapter of Tehillim most associated with the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. This chapter focuses of the cessation of the Leviim's song at the time of the churban. The enemy taunted the Leviim - "Shiru lanu mishir Tziyon - Sing us the songs of Zion". Responding with the words that would accompany the Jewish people throughout its long Exile, the Leviim swore "Im eshkech Yerushalayim - If I forget you Jerusalem". This tragic chapter of Tehillim focuses primarily on the end of the role of the Leviim as singers in the Beis HaMikdash.

Chazal highlight the tragedy of the Leviim as they relate to us the precise moment the enemy entered the Beis HaMikdash. It was as the Leviim were singing that the defilement, and subsequently the destruction, of the Beis HaMikdash occurred. Why does the end of the Leviim's song play such a prominent role in the churban?

In parshas Ki Savo we read about the terrible events of the churban and exile that will occur to the Jewish People. These curses are brought about by not serving Hashem, "BeSimcha uvtuv levav - with joy and a good heart. Service of Hashem that is performed by rote without joy and enthusiasm can chas veshalom bring about churban. Chazal teach us the singing of the Leviim while the Kohanim offered korbanos is a fulfillment of "Simcha vtuv levav - joy and a good

heart". Song is the expression of the great joy that should accompany the service of the Beis Hamikdash in particular, and the service of Hashem in general. If this song is deficient it is indicative that the heart and soul of avodas Hashem is missing. The churban occurred as the Leviim were singing. Apparently their song was no longer a genuine expression of enthusiasm about avodas Hashem. As the Jewish People wept by the rivers of Bavel the realization set in that the true song of the Beis Hamikdash had ceased years before, eventually bringing down the Beis Hamikdash. What can we do to rectify the situation of the churban we are in now? Looking to the Leviim may give us the answer. Besides their role in the Beis Hamikdash, the Leviim were entrusted with another responsibility. The Leviim were not given land, rather they would be the spiritual leaders primarily by being the Torah scholars and teachers. In this role the Leviim also lead us in song. In parahas VaYeLech we are commanded "Kisvu lachem es hashira hazos - write for yourselves this song." Chazal interpret this to be referring to the sefer Torah. Why is the Torah likened to a song? The study of Torah must be with joy and enthusiasm just as one sings. It is the role of the Leviim as the singers of the Jewish people to sing the song of Torah as well.

The Beis HaMikdash is gone and its song silenced. Yet, we can still sing the song of Torah. We are taught by Chazal that from the day of the churban Hashem now dwells in the world of Torah. We must not only learn Torah but sing its song with the enthusiasm and joy that accompanies its study. Through our dedication to this second song of the Leviim may we merit to once again be inspired by the song of the Leviim as they accompany the avodas hakarbanos. May Hashem grant us "V'hashev Kohanim laavodasam Ulvim lshiram ulezimram - Return the Kohanim to their service and the Leviim to their song."

Copyright © 2009 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

Haaretz

Portion of the Week / Combining catastrophes

By Benjamin Lau

When the spies sent by Moses on a reconnaissance mission to the Promised Land slander Canaan, the entire Jewish nation mourns, as we read in this week's Torah portion: "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night" (Numbers 14:1).

According to Jewish tradition (as seen in the Mishna, Tractate Taanit), this was the night on which the Fast of the Ninth of Av (Tisha B'Av) begins. However, when the Talmud discusses the chronology of events that occurred, from the Exodus from Egypt until the sin of the spies, it concludes that there is a discrepancy of one day: According to the Talmud's calculations, the Jewish nation bewails the slanderous report on Canaan on the night of the Tenth of Av.

In the Hebrew calendar, full months (30 days) alternate with incomplete ones (29 days). Thus, the month of Sivan, which has 30 days, is usually followed by Tammuz, with 29. To explain the above discrepancy regarding the day on which the Israelites mourned in the desert, the Talmud argues that, in the year when the spies sinned, Tammuz had 30 days; as a result, the night on which the Jews began to mourn was, in fact, the Ninth of Av.

Why did the Talmud's scholars want the story of the spies to be merged with this fast day? They were ostensibly applying the principle of "megalgelim hova leyom hahova" (a reference to linking various elements to a single day of disaster).

In other words, the rabbinical authorities consistently try to avoid "overburdening" the Hebrew calendar with too many individual days of mourning, and instead, declared a collective day of mourning. Therefore, on Tisha B'Av, we remember the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, although neither was actually destroyed on that day. In addition to the Israelites' painful reaction to the spies' report and the destruction of the two temples, other disasters recalled on Tisha B'Av are the fall of Betar, the last fortification captured in the Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans, and the razing of Jerusalem during Hadrian's rule.

The principle of "combining" catastrophes and assigning their commemoration to a single day was applied in later periods of Jewish history as well. For instance, Don Isaac Abarbanel relates that Spanish Jews recited dirges recalling the expulsion from Spain together with the traditional dirges of Tisha B'Av. Among Ashkenazi Jews, a special fast day, on the 20th of Sivan, was declared to memorialize the disasters that befell them in their Diaspora communities.

Today is Sivan 20, which was declared a day of fast for Ashkenazi Jews in the 12th century by Rabbeinu Tam (Rabbi Yaakov Ben Meir), the grandson of Rashi, in the wake of the blood libel directed against the Jews in the Hebrew year 4931 (1171 in the Gregorian calendar) in the French city of Blois. As a result of this, 31 Jews were murdered. For this fast day, Ashkenazim composed special dirges, such as the one by Talmudic scholar and paytan (religious poet) Rabbi Ephraim of Bonn, where he describes the burning of Jewish martyrs at Blois, and draws a connection between the various disasters that befell the Jews from the destruction of the two temples up to the era of the blood libel: "Titus, Vespasian and Hadrian uprooted us / In the year 4856 [1096] we were handed over for slaughter and in 4838 [1077-1078] we aged / And in 4931 [1171] we were massacred and burned to death in Blois. / This is the law of the burnt offering: It is the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar' [Leviticus 6:9]."

Five centuries later, in 1648, Bogdan Khmelnytsky and his soldiers destroyed hundreds of Jewish communities and massacred tens of thousands of Jews in Ukraine. Two years later the Jewish leadership of Vaad Arba Aratzot (the Council of Four Lands) convened in the city of Lublin, and declared that Sivan 20 would now commemorate all the Jewish individuals and communities destroyed by Khmelnytsky. Indeed, up until World War II, that day was a day of fast. But the Holocaust overshadowed the 20th of Sivan and, for a number of years, this fast was not observed.

When the war ended, Hungarian Jews who survived and were living in Budapest unsuccessfully tried to revive the fast day on Sivan 20.

In the 1950s, the State of Israel established Nissan 27 as Holocaust Memorial Day, and the Chief Rabbinate designated Tevet 10 as the "day of the general Kaddish," in memory of the Jews who perished in the Holocaust. In addition, many Jews recite dirges relating to the Holocaust together with the traditional dirges connected with Tisha B'Av.

For Israelis, the 20th of Sivan has yet another significance: On that terrible night in 1982, during the first Lebanon War, the battle of Sultan Yakub took place and three Israeli soldiers were abducted: Zechariah Baumel, Zvi Feldman and Yehuda Katz. Zechariah's father, Yonah, who valiantly but unsuccessfully fought for his son's return to Israel, died two weeks ago.

On Sivan 20 this year, let us all pray and do whatever we can for the return of our POWs and MIAs. In accordance with tradition, let us also pray that Sivan 20 will be transformed from a day of sadness and grief to a day of happiness and rejoicing.

How to Deal with the Recession

The "days" and "nights" of life

By Yosef Y. Jacobson (algemeiner.com)

The Debate

An architect, a surgeon, and economist are arguing who of them holds the most prominent position.

The surgeon said, 'Look, we're the most important. The very first thing G-d did was surgery: to extract Eve from Adam's rib.'

The architect said, 'No, wait a minute, G-d is an architect first and foremost. G-d made the world in six days out of chaos.'

The economist smiled, 'And who made the chaos?'

The Dual Canopy

"On the day the Tabernacle was erected, the cloud covered the Tabernacle," the Bible records in the Torah portion of Behaalosecha (1). "Then, in the evening, there would be upon the Tabernacle like a fiery glow till morning."

"From then on it remained that way," the Torah continues. "The cloud would cover it and a glow of fire by night (2)."

Two points require clarification. First: What was the significance and purpose of this dual miraculous canopy that hovered over the Tabernacle in the desert -- a cloud during the day and a glowing flame during the night (3)?

Second: Like every episode recorded in the Bible, this one, too, contains a spiritual interpretation that continuously plays itself out in journeys of the human spirit. How can we apply the story of this Tabernacle canopy to our lives today?

Smugness Vs. Despair

The Tabernacle was the edifice erected by the people of Israel in the Sinai desert to serve as a home for the Divine presence. In Jewish writings, the Tabernacle represents the place in the human heart where the light of G-d resides (4). The Tabernacle, then, exists timelessly within the human soul.

This sacred and noble place within us, declares the Bible, must include both a cloud by day and a fire by night. Let us apply this practically:

Each person experiences in his or her life "days" and "nights" -- moments of light and moments of darkness, times of happiness and contentment as well as times of agony and turmoil. For some, the days are longer than the nights; for others the nights sadly exceed the days. Yet most humans possess a share of both realities.

Now, when things are going well for us -- when we're paying the bills nicely, the kids are healthy, our spouses are there for us and we're satisfied with our lot -- we often forget how vulnerable we really are in this world. We tend to become smug, complacent and desensitized. We often become apathetic to other people's pain. We don't feel the need for genuine friendships, and certainly not for a relationship with G-d. We don't feel the urgent need to be real. At moments of bliss people often feel that they are on top of the world and they do not need anybody. They forget their humaneness and simplicity.

On the other hand, when things become (heaven forbid) difficult and painful – your company “is in der erd” (Yiddish for “is in the ground”), a loss in the family, illness of a loved one, a marriage goes sour, the bank is after us, our children are not doing well or we are overcome by inner mental or physical challenges -- we often fall prey to feelings of despair and loneliness. We sink into the morass of life's hardships, as we say to ourselves, "it's dark and it's getting darker."

Maintain Perspective

Thus, the Torah this week teaches us a movingly profound lesson.

If you are to become a human Tabernacle, if you wish to discover the grace of G-d within your heart, you must recall the darker cloud hovering above you even during times of brightness and splendor. A person must always remember that ultimately he cannot claim ownership over anything in his life: Life is a gift, love is gift, parents are gifts and children are gifts. Financial success, too, is not a natural symptom of your brilliant investments; it is a gift. One ought never to become blind to the truth that everything can change in a single instance (5) and that there is so much pain in the world. When you remember the clouds, you will never become arrogant, detached and false.

On the other hand, when night falls upon us, when life exposes its painful and darker side to us, we need to recall the glowing light hovering above us. We must remember that every experience we endure is part of our life's mission to serve G-d under these circumstances and to transform the world into a home for goodness and G-dliness. Every challenge contains an opportunity for deeper growth and for a deeper relationship with our soul and our G-d. Each cloud contains a flame within.

Judaism's Mission Statement

This is the powerful significance behind the mitzvah, the Jewish tradition, to recite twice each day the Shema Yisroel, the most reverent Jewish prayer, once in the morning and once in the evening.

When dawn breaks and the sun emerges to embrace us with its warmth, we state: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One." Each of us is essentially a reflection of G-d, a recipient of His grace.

When night falls and darkness makes its way into our lives, we once again declare: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One." G-d is one means that the same G-d Who was present during the "day," is also present during the "night." Darkness is painful and bitter, but it, too, must become part of a dynamic relationship with life and with G-d (6).

The Breaking of the Glass

This is also the mystical reason for the enigmatic Jewish custom to break a glass under the wedding canopy (the Chupah) at the moment when the groom and the bride are about to enter into a private room and celebrate their union, and the guests are about to begin feasting and dancing.

Granted, we break a glass during a marriage ceremony to remember the destruction of Jerusalem and all of the broken hearts in the world. But couldn't we do the breaking a little earlier, during the more solemn moments of the ceremony? Must we, at the happiest moment of a bride and a groom, introduce sadness and melancholy?

The answer: Those who at the peak of their personal joy remember the pain that is still present in the outside world, will, at the moment of their pain, remember the joy out there in the world. On the other hand, those who at a moment of a personal high, become totally submerged in their own mood and are indifferent to the broken hearts around them, then, when struck by pain and hardship, they will remain stuck in their own quagmire, unable to reach out and glean hope and inspiration from the laughter and joy still present in the world (7).

Thus, the Torah states: "From then on it remained that way, the cloud would cover it and a glow of fire by night." This is an eternal directive. During your days, look up to the clouds; during your nights, gaze up to the fire.

And if during your days, you will remember the clouds, then during your nights you will remember the flame (8).

Footnotes:

- 1) Numbers 9:15.
- 2) Ibid. 9:16.

3) It is clear that the cloud did not serve as a shield from the hot sun burning in the desert. First, the entire dwelling place of the Jews was constantly surrounded by "clouds of glory" (see, for example, Leviticus 23:43 and Rashi *ibid*; Talmud Sukah 11b.). It is also clear from the commentary of Ramban on this verse that the cloud did not serve the purpose.

The Or HaChaim *ibid*. presents a twofold explanation for the existence of the hovering cloud during daytime from the literal point a view. What follows is the spiritual explanation of a metaphysical and timeless tale.

4) See Alshich to Terumah 25:8. Reishis Chachmah Portal of Love chapter 6. Shalsh 69a; 201a; 325b; 326b. Likkutei Torah Naso 20b.

5) See the commentary of Even Ezra to Ecclesiastes 7:14.

6) See Sichas 24 Teves 5704 (Published in Toras Yemei Bereshis).

7) Heard from my brother Simon Jacobson, in the name of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

8) This essay is based on the writings of the Chassidic masters. Cf. L'torah U'lmo'adim (by Rabbi S.Y. Zevin) Parshas Behaaloschah. ~~~
Posted on June 12, 2009

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Beha'alotecha - Praying 'Against' God

Defending the People

Adjustment to the harsh realities of life in the wilderness was not easy for the newly-freed slaves. "The people began to complain... When God heard, He displayed His anger, and God's fire flared out, consuming the edge of the camp" [Num. 11:1].

The people cried out to Moses for help, and Moses defended them before God. "Moses prayed to God, and the fire died down."

The Torah does not tell us what exactly Moses said to God. But the Sages wrote that Moses spoke out forcefully in defense of the people. In fact, the Talmud suggests that Moses' prayer was so audacious, that Moses didn't pray to God - he prayed against God [Berachot 32a].

Praying Against God?

Rav Kook noted that the expression "praying to God" is uncommon. Often, the Torah just says, 'he prayed.' It is understood that prayer is directed towards God. Yet there is an additional reason why the phrase 'to pray to God' is abnormal.

The Hebrew verb *lehitepa'il* ('to pray') is in the reflexive tense. This grammatical form emphasizes the emotional impact of prayer back on the soul. The introspective nature of prayer brings out an outpouring of enlightened emotion within the soul.

It is therefore fitting to speak of praying *lifnei Hashem*, meaning to pray 'before God' or 'facing God.' This phrase indicates that one has directed one's heart and mind to contemplate God in prayer. However, it is unrealistic to speak about praying "to God." The clarity of enlightenment that one may attain through intellectual study and reflection goes far beyond the emotional inspiration experienced in prayer. Praying 'to God' would indicate that one attained a heightened awareness of the Creator, and through concentrated prayer was somehow able to achieve an emotional uplifting of the soul at this elevated cognitive level.

Moses' Remarkable Prayer

Therefore the Sages emphasized the tremendous struggle and conflict in Moses' extraordinary prayer. It was as if he had prayed 'against God.' Moses needed to defy the normal limitations of prayer. This explanation is reinforced from a literal reading of the Midrashic text, which states that Moses "hurled words towards heaven," providing us with an image of one who forcefully heaves an object upwards, fighting against the laws of gravity as he throws it higher than he can reach.

What enabled Moses to attain such a remarkable prayer? His holy soul poured forth with such passionate yearnings towards perfection that his inspired prayer was able to surpass his intellectual grasp of Divine providence. This unusual phenomenon sometimes occurs with giants of the spirit; it testifies to the purity of their natural inner longings for good and perfection.

[adapted from Ein Ayah vol. I, p. 140]

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: RavKookList@gmail.com

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

This week's haftorah gives us a profound insight into the spiritual direction of our present exile and final redemption. The haftorah begins with the prophet Zecharya experiencing a vision wherein the ordained High Priest, Yehoshua, was brought to a critical trial regarding his pending esteemed position. Zecharya says, "And I was shown the High Priest Yehoshua standing before Hashem's prosecuting angel." (3:1) The reason for this prosecution is stated shortly thereafter in the following words, "And Yehoshua was clothed with soiled garments." (3:3) Our Chazal explain that these garments refer to the wives of Yehoshua's descendants. Although Yehoshua was personally a very pious individual some of his children were adversely affected by the foreign environment of Babylonia. They strayed from their rich heritage of priesthood and married women prohibited to them due to their lofty ritual status. Because of this offense to the priest hood, Yehoshua's personal status of the High Priest was under severe scrutiny.

Suddenly, an angel of Hashem interceded on behalf of Yehoshua and defeated the prosecuting angel with the following statement of defense. "Is Yehoshua not an ember rescued from the fire!?" (3:2) This response of defense was quite favorable in the eyes of Hashem and Yehoshua was immediately restored to his lofty position. The angel responded and said, "Remove the soiled garments from upon Yehoshua... See that I have removed his sin from him... Dress him with new garments." The prophet continues, "And they placed the pure priestly turban on his head." (3:4) Rashi (adloc.) explains that Yehoshua was granted the opportunity of rectifying his children's behavior and he successfully influenced them to divorce their wives and marry more appropriate ones. Once Yehoshua's garments -referring to his children's inappropriate spouses - were cleansed Hashem clothed Yehoshua with the priestly garb and restored him to the position of Kohain Gadol.

What was the angel's powerful defense that produced such immediate favorable results? After his sons' disgrace to the priesthood, what outstanding merit could Yehoshua have possessed that secured his lofty position? The Radak explains that the angel argued that Yehoshua was "an ember rescued from fire." Radak understands this to mean that Yehoshua had been previously thrown into a fiery furnace. He sacrificed his life for the sake of Hashem and was miraculously spared from the fire. Through this heroic act, Yehoshua demonstrated total submission for the sake of Heaven offering his life for Hashem's glory. Such individuals deserve to prominently serve Hashem and His people. Such devotion and commitment must be inculcated into the blood stream of the Jewish people. Although Yehoshua's children veered from the straight path there remained much hope for them.

The shining example of their father could surely inspire them to return from their inappropriate ways. They too could eventually become devout servants of Hashem and attain lofty levels of priesthood. Through their father's guidance they could also rise above their physical and mundane pursuits and develop the purest qualities. In fact, Yehoshua was told that his children could potentially perfect themselves beyond normal levels of human achievement. Hashem said, "I will establish them superior to these angels standing here." (3:7) Yes, Yehoshua's submissiveness could produce untold results and certainly lead his children back to perfect spirituality.

This same lesson is taught to us in this week's parsha regarding the newly appointed judges. We read about the masses of Jewish people straying from the perfect path demonstrating serious leanings towards certain physical and inappropriate dimensions of life. They disgraced the Heavenly manna bread which Hashem sent them on a daily basis and expressed their physical cravings for substitute foods such as; melons, onions and garlic. They even complained about the Torah's strict standards of morality and sought freedom from its taxing and demanding life. Hashem responded with a severe punishment which ended the lives of many thousands of Jewish people. But at the same time Hashem responded to a plea from Moshe Rabbeinu and instituted a structure of seventy elders to share the judicial responsibilities. During this process these hand-picked judges experienced an incredible transition. The Torah states, "And Hashem intensified the Heavenly Spirit which rested upon Moshe Rabbei

nu and shared it with the seventy elders." (Bamidbar 11:25) In addition to their new position as judges, these elders received prophecy and merited for a short time, to actually serve as a sanctuary for the Divine Presence.

Rashi comments on this incident and reveals the secret identity of the seventy elders. He quotes Chazal who explain, "These were the Jewish policemen in Egypt who were beaten mercilessly instead of their Jewish brethren." (Rashi to Bamidbar 11:16) These elders refused to enforce upon their brethren the unreasonable Egyptian demands and opted to accept torturous Egyptian blows on behalf of their brethren. This previous heroic act of self negation now served as a meaningful merit and lesson for the Jewish people. The recent outburst of the Jewish people revealed that they were embarking upon an immoral path, focusing on pleasure and self pursuit. Hashem responded to this by elevating a host of their own peers to the lofty position of leadership. These elders were not ensnared by self pursuit but were instead perfect role models of self negation. Their interest lay in spiritual association with Hashem and their selfless efforts brought them to the lofty achievement of personal sanctuaries for the presence of Hashem. With such personalities at the head of the Jewish people their direction could be effectively reversed. Their self sacrifice could secure the Jewish survival and hopefully remind the Jewish people never to plunge into self pursuit and immorality.

In our present times we hear repeated vibes of similar physical calls to immorality. We realize that our predecessors were also embers rescued from the fiery furnace - the fires of Europe - and their self sacrifice for the sake of Hashem surely serves as an everlasting merit for us. Our recollections of their total devotion to Hashem is a significant factor in the incredible transition for many of us from total physical pursuits to a sincere yearning to become sanctuaries of Hashem. May this new development continue to flourish and contribute to the hastening of Mashiach we so anxiously await.

Rabbi Dovid Siegel is Rosh Kollel of Kollel Toras Chaim of Kiryat Sefer, Israel.

YatedUSA Parshas Baha'aloscha 20 Sivan 5769

Halachah Discussion

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Question: Is yichud permitted with a married woman whose husband is out of the house but in town?

Discussion: The prohibition of yichud does not apply to a married woman whose husband is in town¹ (even if the man with whom she would be secluded is a non-Jew²). The Rishonim differ in their reasoning for this exemption. Rashi³ explains that the unexpected appearance of the husband at any time is enough to deter any illicit behavior. The Rambam⁴ explains that the nature of a woman is such that the mere presence of her husband in the same city — even without the possibility of his unexpected appearance — is a sufficient deterrent to illicit behavior. The practical halachah in the following scenarios depends (mostly) on whether we follow Rashi's or the Rambam's rationale:

A woman leaves her house and her husband does not know where she might be,⁵ or a husband gives specific permission for his wife to go to a house where he knows she will be alone with a man: According to Rashi's explanation, yichud would be forbidden in both of these situations, since the woman has no fear of being discovered. According to the Rambam, however, there would be no prohibition of yichud, since her husband's presence in the city serves as a sufficient deterrent.

Although there are several poskim who tend to rule leniently in these cases,⁶ there are many poskim⁷ who rule stringently. In practice, therefore, one should not be lenient unless extenuating circumstances are involved.⁸ Another issue which depends on the rationale behind this halachah is the question of what is considered "the same town." Many people live in large cities and the husband may be on the other side of town, a trip which could take an hour or two. Following Rashi's reasoning, yichud would be prohibited, since the husband is not likely to walk in at any given moment. According to the Rambam, however, the wife's nature is to fear her husband as long as he is in town, regardless of the size of the town and the distances involved, and thus yichud would be permitted.

There is much disagreement among the poskim on this point. According to the lenient view,⁹ the size of the city is not a factor. The Chazon Ish, for example, ruled (at the time) that the entire metropolitan area of Tel-Aviv is “one city.” Other poskim¹⁰ include even the neighboring cities of Ramat Gan and Petach Tikvah as part of Tel-Aviv, since they are adjacent to each other and one can walk from one to the next on Shabbos.

There are, however, other poskim who rule stringently and do not consider such large metropolitan areas as “one city.” Rav M. Feinstein¹¹ rules that a husband who must attend to matters on the other side of town is not considered to be in the same city as his wife.¹² This is especially so, says Rav Moshe, if he is employed by others and is normally required to remain at his workplace during standard business hours. If, however, he is self-employed and may come and go as he pleases, even though he generally does not come home at that time, yichud is permitted.

Note: The leniency of the husband being in town does not apply to a situation in which the married woman has a close, long-term relationship with the man, e.g., a family friend,¹³ etc. Similarly, if the man and the woman are close business associates, etc., yichud is prohibited even if the woman’s husband is in town.¹⁴

Question: Is yichud permitted with a man whose wife is out of the house but in town?

Discussion: Another issue discussed by the poskim is whether a married man whose wife is in town is permitted to be secluded with another woman. As in the case of a married woman whose husband is in town (mentioned earlier), whether the prohibition of yichud applies to him or not depends [partially] upon the line of reasoning followed. If we reason like Rashi, that a woman fears her husband’s unexpected arrival, then the same applies to a husband: He fears his wife’s unexpected arrival. But if we reason like the Rambam, that a woman is intimidated by her husband’s presence in town, then the reverse is not true: A husband is not intimidated by his wife’s mere presence in town.

What is the practical halachah? Many poskim rule stringently on this issue.¹⁵ A man’s wife must be with him in the same house (even if she is asleep¹⁶), or in the neighborhood with keys to enter the house,¹⁷ in order for there not to be a prohibition of yichud.

There are, however, some poskim¹⁸ who are more lenient. They rule that a wife’s presence in town is a sufficient deterrent to illicit behavior and the prohibition of yichud would not apply to her husband. Note, however, that even these poskim place two important restrictions on this leniency:

◆ Yichud is permitted only in the man’s home or usual workplace. A wife’s presence in town does not permit her husband to be alone with another woman in another area of town, even if his wife knows where he is.¹⁹

◆ This leniency applies only if the wife is away from the home for a brief period. If she is at work or on a long trip, this leniency is not valid.²⁰

General note: All of the hilchos yichud stated on these pages apply only to yichud with G-d-fearing, observant Jews. When a yichud situation with a non-Jew or a non-observant Jew arises, many of the laws quoted here do not apply. A rav should be consulted.

Footnotes

1 E.H. 22:8. Note that there are poskim who differ with the basic halachah and hold that it is prohibited to be alone with a woman whose husband is in town (Binas Adam 126:17 and Aruch ha-Shulchan, E.H. 22:6 based on Rashi and other Rishonim). If possible, one should not rely on a husband being in the city as a sole leniency. It is also recommended to use one or more of the methods described above concerning a baby-sitter.

2 Pischei Teshuvah, E.H. 22:3 quoting Chochmas Adam. Chazon Ish was strict on this issue; see Devar Halachah 7:14.

3 Kiddushin 81:1.

4 Hilchos Isurei Biah 22:12, according to the interpretation of several poskim; see Devar Halachah 7:2.

5 If, however, she is in a place which she frequents, we assume that the husband would know where to find her and yichud is permitted even according to Rashi; Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:61-21.

6 Chida, Chazon Ish and Dovev Meisharim quoted in Devar Halachah 7:2.

7 Chochmas Adam 126:6; Pischei Teshuvah, E.H. 22:6; Chofetz Chaim (Nidchei Yisrael 24:6); Shevet ha-Levi 5:203-3.

8 Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:65-21. See also Tzitz Eliezer 6:40-6.

9 Eizer Mekudash 22:5; Chazon Ish quoted in Devar Halachah 7:21.

10 Rav S.Z. Auerbach quoted in Nishmas Avraham, E.H. 22:9.

11 Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:65-7, 21. See there also regarding a husband who is incarcerated.

12 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv agrees with this ruling (Kuntres Yichud, pg. 21).

13 E.H. 22:8.

14 Aruch ha-Shulchan, E.H. 22:6. A steady cleaning lady with whom the household members have developed a personal relationship may also fall under this category; see Birkei Yosef, Y.D. 267:9 and Devar Halachah 7:18.

15 E.H. 22:3; Eizer Mekudash 22:5; Maharsham 4:148; Dovev Meisharim 1:5; Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:65-6.

16 Devar Halachah 6:10.

17 Devar Halachah 6:4; Rav Y.Y. Neuwirth (quoted in Nishmas Avraham, E.H. 22:4) based on the view of Chazon Ish and Dovev Meisharim.

18 Beis Shemuel, E.H. 22:8; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 152:7; Aruch ha-Shulchan 22:15. See Dovev Meisharim 1:5 who relies on this leniency only when there are two women present, since that type of yichud is not Biblically forbidden.

19 Devar Halachah 6:4. See also Nishmas Avraham, E.H. 22:4 quoting Rav S.Z. Auerbach.

20 Imrei Yosher 2:9; Tzitz Eliezer 6:40-9.

**Please address all comments and requests to
HAMELAKET@hotmail.com**