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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)>  
to: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org)  
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Parshas Behaaloscha

### **Two Approaches for Staying Enthusiastic About Mitzvos**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1296 Should You Daven for the Same Choleh Over and Over Again? Good Shabbos.

Two Approaches for Staying Enthusiastic About Mitzvos

There is a famous Rashi at the beginning of Parshas Beha'alosecha which we comment on almost every year.

Aharon was given the mitzva of lighting the Menorah every day in the Beis HaMikdash. The Torah says: "And Aharon did so, toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps, as Hashem had commanded Moshe." (Bamidbar 8:3) Rashi comments on the words "And Aharon did so" that "This is stated to tell the praise of Aharon in that he did not deviate."

On a simple level, Rashi is saying that this pasuk is a testimony to Aharon that he did not change what he was supposed to do. Everybody asks on this Rashi, what else would we expect of Aharon? Of course he did not deviate!

In past years, we quoted the famous vort of the Sefas Emes (Rav Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter, 1847-1905). This year we are sharing a vort from the Ishbitzer Rebbe (Rav Mordechai Leiner, 1801-1854), which also tries to understand this Rashi, but has a totally different take on this question.

The Sefas Emes says that when a person does something over and over again, by the thousandth time, it becomes a little monotonous and the person loses his enthusiasm. This is the time of year when schools let out for the summer. If you look at children coming into school on the first day of school in September or you look at the teachers on the first day of school, you can see an excitement and a passion for learning. However, in June, you can see the proverbial "child running away from school." Why? Because it has become "Same old, same old... Day in, day out, same thing." That is the way it is with people. If you ever see a Bar Mitzvah bochur putting on Tefillin for the first time, you see how carefully he wraps the straps around his arm to make sure that they are equidistant from each other and so on and so forth. After a person puts on Tefillin for thirty or forty years, his level of meticulousness is not the same. That is the way people are. Enthusiasm wanes.

The Sefas Emes explains that this is what Rashi is saying. The Torah states the praise of Aharon that no matter how long or for how many years he lit the Menorah, his enthusiasm for the mitzva never waned.

The Ishbitzer, on the other hand, says that the word "sheenah" (in Rashi's expression "melamed shelo sheenah") can mean something else. It can mean that Aharon never did it the same way twice. He didn't repeat. Each day he had a different kavannah (intent and focus) when he lit the Menorah. The hadlakas haMenorah of yesterday was not the same as the hadlakas haMenorah of today and tomorrow will yet again be a different hadlakas haMenorah.

These are two different approaches to Rashi, but the similarity is that either there was a tremendous enthusiasm which did not wane, or there was newness with every single lighting of the Menorah that introduced a new kavannah with each new day. We just finished Parshas Nasso, the longest parsha in the Torah. It is not, however, the hardest parsha in the Torah because a good part of it is just repetition. Everyone asks why the Torah needs to repeat the offering of each nasi (prince), even though they were identical to the offerings of the previous day's nasi. The answer is that even though it was the same offering, each nasi had a special kavannah.

We can relate to that, because we know that for different folks there are different strokes. Each person thinks in his own unique way. But it is perhaps even more noteworthy for the same person, doing the same thing over and over again, to have a unique kavannah each time. That is the praiseworthy attribute of Aharon haKohen.

The “Shame” of Not Bringing the Korban Pesach During the Forty Years in the Wilderness

The Torah states: “Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the second year from their exodus from the land of Egypt, in the first month, saying: The Children of Israel shall make the Pesach offering in its appointed time.” (Bamidbar 9:1-2). We are talking here about the first month, Nissan, in the year after the Exodus.

This is strange because Parshas Bamidbar, which we read two weeks ago, clearly takes place one month later, in the “second month,” Iyar, also one year after the Exodus. Why is the Torah going back in time from Iyar to Nissan? Rashi comments on this and cites this as an example of his well-known principle that the Torah is not necessarily written in chronological order (ayn mukdam u’me’uchar b’Torah).

Rashi advances a theory as to why the Torah does not begin Sefer Bamidbar with the mitzvah to bring a Korban Pesach (which is first mentioned here, in Beha’alosecha). Rashi says that this matter was “genusan shel Yisrael” (of an unseemly nature for Israel) in that throughout the entire forty years in the Midbar (Wilderness), this was the only Pesach offering that they brought. The Torah did not wish to emphasize or highlight that fact.

Tosfos in Maseches Kiddushin (37b) asks, what is so unseemly about this? After all, they were not commanded to bring the Korban Pesach until they arrived in Eretz Yisrael! It is not “genusan shel Yisrael” that we do not sit in a Succah in June! There is no mitzvah to sit in a Succah in Sivan so there is absolutely nothing unseemly about not doing so. Likewise, Klal Yisrael were given a mitzvah to bring a Korban Pesach on the second year of the Exodus and then not to bring it again until they reached Eretz Yisrael. What, Tosfos asks, is so unseemly about that?

Tosfos answers that the “genusan shel Yisrael” was the fact that the aveiros (sins) of Israel caused them to wander in the Midbar for forty years until they reached Eretz Yisrael. Had they not sinned, eleven days later they would have been in Eretz Yisrael and would indeed have once again brought the Korban Pesach the following Nissan.

The Maharal in Gur Aryeh asks Tosfos’ question and offers a different answer. He says that even when someone is excused from doing a mitzvah, it is still genai hu lo (an unseemly matter for him). The bottom line is that they did not do the mitzvah for all the many years when they were in the Midbar. Even if a person is an anus (he can’t help himself) and he has all the excuses in the world and he wasn’t supposed to bring the Korban Pesach, nevertheless that is not a good situation. There is no blame and there is no punishment but nevertheless, the mere fact that he did not fulfill the mitzvah is a genus.

The Chidushei HaRim, the first of the Gerer Rebbes, offers yet a different answer to this question. Parshas Beha’alosecha also

includes the story of the people who were tameh (impure) and couldn’t bring the Korban Pesach on the 14th of Nissan. They came before Moshe and complained “...Why should we be left out by not offering Hashem’s offering in its appointed time among the Children of Israel?” (Bamidbar 9:7) Basically, they claimed that it was not fair that they who were tameh for legitimate reasons (carrying the coffin of Yosef), should not be able to participate in the national enterprise of offering the Korban Pesach. It bothered them that they did not bring the Korban Pesach.

The Chidushei HaRim explains that the “genusan shel Yisrael” was that not offering the Korban Pesach for the balance of the forty years in the Midbar apparently did NOT bother them! These people who carried Yosef’s aron spoke up and asked the question “Why should we be left out?” What happened for the next forty years? Why didn’t Klal Yisroel feel bad? That was the “Genusan shel Yisrael.”

Sometimes a person is forced into situations where he just can’t fulfill certain mitzvos. We shouldn’t just have the attitude “Patur is patur!” The attitude should be “Why are we left out (Lamah neegara)?”

If a person comes home from shul on the second night of Sukkos and it is raining, the halacha is that he is patur from sitting in the Sukkah. Then suddenly one of the kids announces “The rain stopped!” They need to go into the Sukkah. He needs to wipe off the table and chairs. It is a mess. It is wet. It is damp. He thinks, “Well hold on. Maybe it will start raining again. Let’s not jump the gun.”

That should not be our attitude. Our attitude should be different. We should say, “It is raining? Why should we be deprived? Baruch Hashem, if it stops raining, we can go back into the Sukkah.” When it bothers someone that he cannot fulfill a mitzvah, that is an indication of the value of the mitzvah to him.

We should all live and be well until 120 years, healthy and strong, all the way to the end. But sometimes a person cannot fast on Yom Kippur. There are two ways of looking at that. A person can think, “Yom Kippur is so long, I have never been able to concentrate fully on my davening because of my hunger pains. This too is for the best. The doctor says that I need to eat, so I will eat.” That should not be our attitude. We should feel upset. “Why should I be deprived? I can’t fast on Yom Kippur? I fasted my whole life on Yom Kippur! Lamah neegara?”

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem

DavidATwersky@gmail.com

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD  
dhoffman@torah.org

This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion.

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subject: **Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky - Mitzvos: Obligation or Opportunity?**

**Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky**

**Mitzvos: Obligation or Opportunity?**

All of Torah was given to Moshe, who taught it to Klal Yisrael. There are however, two instances where a particular portion of Torah given to the Jewish people had the involvement of another party. One is the case of the 'mekosheish' (Bamidbar 15:32) who deserved the death penalty for desecrating Shabbos, but it was unclear which type of death penalty. The other instance was the case of the daughters of tzlafchad who sought clarification for the laws of inheritance regarding a daughter when there is no male child. In both those cases Chazal find it necessary to explain why it is that these people were the ones involved in bringing this particular teaching to Israel.

However, in this week's parsha we have something of a different magnitude, regarding people who could not bring a korban Pessach because the Torah forbids those who are defiled from bringing it. These people did not inquire as to a mere clarification of the existing law, rather they demanded that they be given a new opportunity to fulfill this mitzvah. This brought into being a whole new mitzvah that had not previously been revealed at all; it was as if they had indeed succeeded in creating a new mitzvah. This is an extraordinary phenomenon, and some understanding of how and why this happened is needed.

Let us consider for a moment two different attitudes towards mitzvos. One observant Jew takes the Torah to be God's will and dictum and feels obliged to fulfill it. He fulfills it to the best of his abilities and to the full demands of the Torah, but he sees no reason to demand or want more of the Torah. He approaches mitzvos like all duties that we fulfill; one's job is to fulfill one's duty appropriately and all obligations ends with that. It seems that we have described a truly virtuous Jew.

However, in this parsha we have a sign of how sorely lacking the attitude described above is. Rashi quotes Chazal describing Klal Yisroel's departure from Sinai as a negative event. It is unclear why, but in a few places in the Midrash, and as quoted by rishonim, it states that it is, "because when Israel left Sinai, they ran away like a child running away from school". This cannot mean that they left Sinai before they were supposed to, for their movements and journey were very specifically coordinated by Hashem himself. When the divine cloud folded

and began moving, that is when Israel began moving - not a minute before, and not a minute after. So what does it mean that they "ran away"? It means that they left exactly at the moment they were supposed to, but with a sense of relief that it's over. [Some versions of that above Chazal describe their departure as being, "like a child who leaves school and runs off."] This is an attitude towards Torah that expresses that Torah and its obligations are merely just that - obligations. Obligation that is, indeed, fulfilled meticulously, but nothing more than that.

One is not faulted for not demanding more obligation so long as one has fulfilled the obligation to perfection. But Torah is a lot more than obligation; it is opportunity as well. A person needs to see his sense of fulfillment and sense of self expressed in Torah. Every mitzvah performed, every part of Torah understood, builds the person bigger and better. This is in line with the words used by the people who were complaining about not being able to bring a korban Pesach. They used the phrase, "lomo nigari - why are we losing out?". They did not see the mitzvah as a mere obligation, from which they had been duly exempted. Rather, they understood each and every mitzvah to be an additional brick in building a person b'tzalomo k'dmuso. Therefore, they came with a demand, and it was the demand itself that caused Hashem to give them a so-called "new" mitzvah. This could not have been given by Moshe, because then it would have simply been part and parcel of all other obligations. This mitzvah represented the quest for fulfillment that is the inner basis for mitzvos.

This is something that unfortunately becomes somewhat lost to us, when we speak about "Torah observant Jewry", when we speak of Orthodoxy. We toe the line, we follow the regulations, and we dot every "i" and cross every "t". Certainly, that is the beginning of Torah observance, for if a person takes Torah and mitzvos to be only spiritual fulfillment, and not obligation, he is missing the basis for it all. It is like someone who is law-abiding because he feels like it, which means in effect that he does not recognize the authority and the validity of the government. That is something that is negative.

We have one more example in this week's parshah, of someone who saw mitzvos as fulfillment in addition to obligation. It says that Aaron was upset that he did not participate in the consecration of the mishkan. He had done no wrong, for he was not commanded to bring any sacrifice; all the necessary sacrifices were duly brought by the nesimim. But Aaron saw mitzvos as opportunities rather than obligation only.

And that is why Hashem told him, "You will light the menorah as your act of dedication of the mishkan." Hashem then added, "Yours is greater than theirs, for yours will last eternally". The reason for that difference is that when a person is occupied with fulfilling obligations, it comes to an end at some point; when the obligation has been duly fulfilled, it is over. Not so the

person who yearns and seeks mitzvos, recognizing that they are building him and bringing out the best in him. For a person like that, the chain of mitzvos and opportunities is indeed eternal.

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TorahWeb.org 94 Baker Ave Bergenfield, NJ 07621-3321

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from: Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

“אַחַדְּכֵן טְמֵאִים לְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם לָמָּה נִגְרַע לְבַלְתִּי הַקָּרִיב אֶת־קֶרְבְּנוֹ”

“Although we were impure through a corpse why should we be worse off and left out from bringing the korban [pesach]”

(Bamidbar 9:7)

Rashi explains that those who were unable to bring the korban pesach complained that they should have been allowed to sponsor a korban and have it sacrificed and eaten by those who were pure. The question is obvious; a sacrifice brought in such a manner does not fulfill the mitzvah of korban pesach. If so, what was the point in making this request of Moshe?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l explains that we learn from here that even if one is unable to fulfill a mitzvah in its fullest way, he should nevertheless involve himself in the mitzvah, thereby attaching himself to the mitzvah. For instance, even if one won’t be able to sit in the succah, he should nevertheless be involved in the building of a succah. Although they would not fulfill the mitzvah of korban pesach through this suggested act, they sought to participate in some aspect of this mitzvah. Rav Moshe explains that we bless a child that he should grow into “Torah, chuppah, and ma’asim tovim”. Rav Moshe explains that “ma’asim tovim”, good deeds, refer to such acts which aren’t necessarily fulfillment of a Torah obligation, but rather are deeds that one engages in out of love and reverence for mitzvos.

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein

<info@jewishdestiny.com>

reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com

subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Home Weekly Parsha B’HALOTCHA**

**Rabbi Wein’s Weekly Blog**

The Torah instructs Aharon and through him all of his successors, the High Priests of Israel, that when lighting the great menorah one should make certain that the six outside lamps should all face into the center lamp. There are various opinions amongst the commentators as to how this was to be accomplished. The wicks were bent inwards or perhaps the lamps themselves were tilted towards the middle lamp - or it could have been that this was only one of the recurring miracles that defined the Mishkan and later the Temple in Jerusalem. These are just some of the ideas advanced to explain how this matter was in fact accomplished. The greater question obviously is what lesson is the Torah imparting to us by this

instruction that the outside lamps should face the middle lamp. I think that the idea that the Torah wishes us to internalize is that the light of the holy menorah requires focus.

We know that in the physical world the more intense and concentrated the focus of the light, the greater is its ability to illuminate and reveal. Diffused light creates mood and atmosphere but it does not really show what lies before us. The light of the menorah is symbolic of Torah in Jewish life. Torah, its study, support and observance, requires focus and concentration. It cannot serve its true purpose in our lives when it exists amongst us only in a diffused and generalized sense. Our rabbis taught us what the focus of Jewish life is and should be: Torah, Godly service, human kindness and consideration for others. Other causes are only to be granted - diffused light - and they, by themselves, will not serve to erase the darkness of our existence and society. Every human life, every family, even every educational and commercial enterprise requires focus and concentration in order to be successful and productive.

We all have priorities in our lives. These priorities become the plans, actions and ideas that we focus our attention, talents and resources upon. Judaism demands that we focus upon love and study of Torah and its observances. We should concentrate upon our daily conversation, so too speak – our prayer services – with our Creator.

We are required to serve God and do His bidding. And that requires effort, sacrifice and devotion. It is perhaps the most challenging area of our religious life and demands total focus and concentration. Kindness towards others certainly requires focus. In theory, in a world of diffused light, we all subscribe to the notions of good behavior, social responsibility and charitable ideals. However when we are faced with the individual test of performing a specific human kindness to a specific human being we oftentimes shirk that responsibility. Our focus is not present and thus we are prevented, not out of malice but simply out of lack of concentration from performing the necessary act of kindness that lies before us. The lesson of the menorah is one of focus – the focus that will allow the spirit of Godliness to light our way through our lives.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust <info@rabbisacks.org>

subject: Covenant and Conversation

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt”l

**From Despair to Hope**

**BEHA’ALOTCHA**

**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

There have been times when one passage in this week’s parsha was, for me, little less than lifesaving. No leadership position is easy. Leading Jews is harder still. And spiritual leadership can

be hardest of them all. Leaders have a public face that is usually calm, upbeat, optimistic, and relaxed. But behind the façade we can all experience storms of emotion as we realise how deep are the divisions between people, how intractable are the problems we face, and how thin the ice on which we stand. Perhaps we all experience such moments at some point in our lives, when we know where we are and where we want to be, but simply cannot see a route from here to there. That is the prelude to despair.

Whenever I felt that way, I would turn to the searing moment in our parsha when Moses reached his lowest ebb. The precipitating cause was seemingly slight. The people were engaged in their favourite activity: complaining about the food. With self-deceptive nostalgia, they spoke about the fish they ate in Egypt, and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. Gone is their memory of slavery. All they can recall is the cuisine. At this, understandably, God was very angry (Num. 11:10). But Moses was more than angry. He suffered a complete emotional breakdown. He said this to God: “Why have You brought this evil on Your servant? Why have I failed to find favour in Your eyes, that You have placed the burden of this whole people on me? Did I conceive this whole people? Did I give birth to it, that You should say to me, ‘Carry it in your lap as a nurse carries a baby?’ ... Where can I find meat to give to this whole people when they cry to me saying, ‘Give us meat to eat?’ I cannot carry this whole people on my own. It is too heavy for me. If this is what You are doing to me, then, if I have found favour in Your eyes, kill me now, and let me not look upon this my evil.”

Num. 11:11-15

This, for me, is the benchmark of despair. Whenever I felt unable to carry on, I would read this passage and think, “If I haven’t yet reached this point, I’m okay.” Somehow the knowledge that the greatest Jewish leader of all time had experienced this depth of darkness was empowering. It said that the feeling of failure does not necessarily mean that you have failed. All it means is that you have not yet succeeded. Still less does it mean that you are a failure. To the contrary, failure comes to those who take risks; and the willingness to take risks is absolutely necessary if you seek, in however small a way, to change the world for the better.

What is striking about Tanach is the way it documents these dark nights of the soul in the lives of some of the greatest heroes of the spirit. Moses was not the only prophet to pray to die. Three others did so: Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), Jeremiah (Jer. 20:7-18) and Jonah (Jon. 4:3).[1]

The Psalms, especially those attributed to King David, are shot through with moments of despair:

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”

Ps. 22:2

“From the depths I cry to You.”

Ps. 130:1

“I am a helpless man abandoned among the dead ... You have laid me in the lowest pit, in the dark, in the depths.”

Ps. 88:5-7

What Tanach telling us in these stories is profoundly liberating. Judaism is not a recipe for blandness or bliss. It is not a guarantee that you will be spared heartache and pain. It is not what the Stoics sought, apatheia, a life undisturbed by passion. Nor is it a path to nirvana, stilling the fires of feeling by extinguishing the self. These things have a spiritual beauty of their own, and their counterparts can be found in the more mystical strands of Judaism. But they are not the world of the heroes and heroines of Tanach.

Why so? Because Judaism is a faith for those who seek to change the world. That is unusual in the history of faith. Most religions are about accepting the world the way it is. Judaism is a protest against the world that is in the name of the world that ought to be. To be a Jew is to seek to make a difference, to change lives for the better, to heal some of the scars of our fractured world. But people don’t like change. That’s why Moses, David, Elijah, and Jeremiah found life so hard.

We can say precisely what brought Moses to despair. He had faced a similar challenge before. Back in the book of Exodus the people had made the same complaint:

“If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this desert to starve this whole assembly to death.”

Ex. 16:3

Moses, on that occasion, experienced no crisis. The people were hungry and needed food. That was a legitimate request. Since then, though, they had experienced the twin peaks of the revelation at Mount Sinai and the construction of the Tabernacle. They had come closer to God than any nation had ever done before. Nor were they starving. Their complaint was not that they had no food. They had the manna. Their complaint was that it was boring: “Now we have lost our appetite (literally, “our soul is dried up”); we never see anything but this manna!” (Num. 11:6). They had reached the spiritual heights but they remained the same recalcitrant, ungrateful, small-minded people they had been before.[2]

That was what made Moses feel that his entire mission had failed and would continue to fail. His mission was to help the Israelites create a society that would be the opposite of Egypt, that would liberate instead of oppress; dignify not enslave. But the people had not changed. Worse: they had taken refuge in the most absurd nostalgia for the Egypt they had left: memories of fish, cucumbers, garlic and the rest. Moses had discovered it was easier to take the Israelites out of Egypt than to take Egypt out of the Israelites. If the people had not changed by now, it

was a reasonable assumption that they never would. Moses was staring at his own defeat. There was no point in carrying on. God then comforted him. First, He told him to gather seventy elders to share with him the burdens of leadership. Then He told him not to worry about the food. The people would soon have meat in plenty. It came in the form of a huge avalanche of quails.

What is most striking about this story is that thereafter Moses appears to be a changed man. Told by Joshua that there might be a challenge to his leadership, he replies: “Are you jealous on my behalf? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His spirit on them” (Num. 11:29). In the next chapter, when his own brother and sister begin to criticise him, he reacts with total calm. When God punishes Miriam, Moses prays on her behalf. It is specifically at this point in the long biblical account of Moses’ life that the Torah says, “The man Moses was very humble, more so than any other man on earth” (Num. 12:3).

The Torah is giving us a remarkable account of the psychodynamics of emotional crisis. The first thing it is telling us is that it is important, in the midst of despair, not to be alone. God performs the role of comforter. It is He who lifts Moses from the pit of despair. He speaks directly to Moses’ concerns. He tells him he will not have to lead alone in the future. There will be others to help him. Then He tells him not to be anxious about the people’s complaint. They would soon have so much meat that it would make them ill, and they would not complain about the food again.

The essential principle here is what the Sages meant when they said, “A prisoner cannot release himself from prison” (Brachot 5b). It needs someone else to lift you from depression. That is why Judaism is so insistent on not leaving people alone at times of maximum vulnerability. Hence the principles of visiting the sick, comforting mourners, including the lonely (“the stranger, the orphan and the widow”) in festive celebrations, and offering hospitality – an act said to be “greater than receiving the Shechinah.” Precisely because depression isolates you from others, remaining alone intensifies the despair. What the seventy elders actually did to help Moses is unclear. But simply being there with him was part of the cure.

The other thing it is telling us is that surviving despair is a character-transforming experience. It is when your self-esteem is ground to dust that you suddenly realise that life is not about you. It is about others, and ideals, and a sense of mission or vocation. What matters is the cause, not the person. That is what true humility is about. As the wise saying goes, popularly attributed to C. S. Lewis: Humility is not about thinking less of yourself. It is about thinking of yourself less.

When you have arrived at this point, even if you have done so through the most bruising experiences, you become stronger than you ever believed possible. You have learned not to put

your self-image on the line. You have learned not to think in terms of self-image at all. That is what Rabbi Yochanan meant when he said, “Greatness is humility.”[3] Greatness is a life turned outward, so that other people’s suffering matters to you more than your own. The mark of greatness is the combination of strength and gentleness that is among the most healing forces in human life.

Moses believed he was a failure. That is worth remembering every time we think we are failures. His journey from despair to self-effacing strength is one of the great psychological narratives in the Torah, a timeless tutorial in hope.

[1] So, of course, did Job, but Job was not a prophet, nor – according to many commentators – was he even Jewish. The book of Job is about another subject altogether, namely: Why do bad things happen to good people? That is a question about God, not about humanity.

[2] Note that the text attributes the complaint to the asafsuf, the rabble, the riffraff, which some commentators take to mean the “mixed multitude” who joined the Israelites on the Exodus.

[3] Pesikta Zutrata, Eikev.

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from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net>

subject: Essay by Rabbi YY

date: Jun 8, 2023, 4:31 PM

**Rabbi YY Jacobson**

**Essay Behaaloscha**

Every Child Needs a Miriam

**A Single Gesture Toward a Baby Reverberates Throughout History**

June 4, 2015 | 17 Sivan 5775

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Miriam’s Skin Disease

At the end of this week’s portion (Behaaloscha), we catch a rare and fascinating glimpse into the interpersonal relationship of Moshe, his brother Aaron, and their sister Miriam.

Miriam, speaking to her brother Aaron, was critiquing Moses’ marriage. The Torah is decidedly cryptic about what exactly she was criticizing, stating merely that “Miriam and Aaron spoke about Moses regarding the Cushite woman he had married[1].” There are various ways to explain what it was she said and who this Cushite woman was[2]. Whatever the case is, an older sister voicing criticism of her baby brother’s marriage is easy enough to understand—even if that younger brother happens to be Moses himself.

G-d hears their conversation and decides to clarify to Aaron and Miriam who their younger brother is. He says to them:

"Please listen to My words. If there are prophets among you, I make myself known to them only in a vision or a dream. Not so

is My servant Moses; he is faithful throughout My house. With him, I speak mouth to mouth... he beholds the image of the Lord. So how were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"

G-d departs in a huff, and Miriam – and according to Rabbi Akiva in the Talmud[3], Aaron too—is left stricken with leprosy, the biblical punishment for slander. Moses then intervenes, crying out to G-d[4]: "I beseech you, G-d, please heal her!" G-d limits her affliction to seven days, that she (like all lepers) must spend in isolation outside the camp. Following these seven quarantined days, she would be healed and could reenter the camp. In the words of the Torah:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאַבְיִיהָ יִרְק יִרְק בְּפִנְיָהּ הֲלֵא תִפְלֵם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תִּסָּגֵר שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מֵחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְאַחֲרַי תֵּאָסֵף.

"She shall be quarantined for seven days outside the camp, and afterward can she re-enter."

The Torah finishes the story: "And the people did not travel until Miriam had re-entered."

The greatest biblical commentator, the 11th-century French sage, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, known as Rashi, quoting the Talmud[5], tells us that the nation waiting for Miriam was a unique honor conferred upon her in the merit of something she had done eight decades earlier. At the beginning of Exodus, Pharaoh decreed that all male Jewish children be drowned in the Nile Delta. Moses' mother had placed her infant Moses in a basket and had set him afloat in the Nile. It is here that Miriam debuts in biblical history: "His sister stood from afar, to know what would happen to him[6]." It is the merit of her waiting for Moses that the nation now waited for her.

Although the nation was ready to embark on the next leg of its journey, they stopped for seven days, waiting for Miriam who was quarantined outside of the camp, as a reward for her noble deed decades earlier when Moses was an infant floating in the river.

Would They Let Her Die?

Yet, upon deeper reflection, this explanation by Rashi is deeply disturbing.

Is the only reason the nation waited for Miriam, while she was quarantined for a week because she once waited for Moses as an infant? What was the alternative? Not to wait for Miriam and leave her alone in a parched and barren desert, without food, water, or any protection, a place the Torah describes[7] as "a desert great and awesome, full of snakes, vipers, scorpions, and drought, where there was no water?"

Suppose Miriam would have never watched over Moses as an infant. Would she have then not been rewarded this "honor" and left to die in the desert alone?

Equally disturbing is the expression Rashi uses that the Jewish people waiting for Miriam was an "honor" ("kavod") bestowed upon her. Yet, this was no honor; it was a matter of life and death. It is impossible for any human being, let alone an elderly

woman (Miriam at that time was 87, being seven years older than Moses, who was 81 at the time), to survive alone in a dangerous desert.

And what happened to the other lepers expelled from the camp, who did not receive this special "honor" of the nation waiting for them? Were they simply abandoned to die whenever the people continued their journey?

The Camp

In an ingenuous presentation, the Lubavitcher Rebbe (in an address delivered on Shabbos Behaaloscha 1965[8]) presented the explanation.

We must draw attention to two words in the text. The verse states: "She shall be quarantined for seven days outside the camp (mechutz lamachaneh), and then she should reenter."

Each word and expression in Torah is precise. The words "outside the camp" intimate that her exclusion and expulsion would be effective when the people are encamped; when they are dwelling in one place as a camp ("machaneh" in Hebrew means to dwell in one place, as in the term "vayachanu"), and she would remain outside of the camp.

Only if she is quarantined for seven days outside of the nation's dwelling when it constitutes a stationary "camp", would she fulfill her duty and would be able to heal and reenter the community.

What this meant was that travel time did not count for this seven-day quarantine period. Even if Miriam were to travel in isolation behind the rest of the nation, this would not be counted as part of her seven-day quarantine necessary for her healing and reentry, since she was not quarantined "outside the camp", because during their traveling the Jews did not constitute a "camp", a "machaneh."

Thus, if the nation would not have waited the seven-day period for Miriam, she would have certainly traveled along with them. But she would not have had the ability to go into isolation for seven days to heal until the nation would cease traveling and become a "camp" once again. This would have delayed her healing process as long as they were on the move.

This, then, was the special honor bestowed upon Miriam. By delaying their journey for seven days, Miriam could be quarantined immediately outside of the camp, and at the conclusion of the week, reenter the camp after a full recovery. Her leprosy would not linger for even one extra day. This was not a question of life and death; it was only a question of how long she would endure her malady.

81 Years Earlier

Why did Miriam deserve this honor?

Let us now go back 81 years earlier. Let us see what Miriam actually did for her baby brother Moses, and then we can begin to appreciate the spiritual dynamics of history – how all of our actions return to us: what we put out there comes back to us.

Picture the scene: The king of the country, the most powerful man on the planet, the leader of the most important civilization at the time, had decreed that all Jewish newborn boys must be drowned. Miriam's baby brother is one of those slated for death. Their mother had just sent the infant to his divinely ordained fate by letting him sail into the Nile, which happens to be the longest river in the world. This desperate act was carried out in the hope that perhaps an Egyptian would, against odds, be aroused to compassion and save the innocent Jewish boy. Miriam goes to the river. "His sister stood from afar, to know what would happen to him [6]." She gazes at her brother from a distance to see how things would play themselves out. Miriam was a seven-year-old girl at the time. If he is captured by Pharaoh's soldiers, she knows she cannot save him; she is also probably too far away to help if the basket capsizes, nor will she be able to do much if an Egyptian takes the baby to his own home. Nor can she nurse the infant if he is crying for milk. So what does she actually achieve by standing guard (besides finding out what might happen to him)? She achieves one thing. We may see it as a small achievement, but from the biblical perspective, it is grand.

When Pharaoh's daughter discovers baby Moses wailing, she naturally attempts to find a wet nurse to feed him. Moses, although starving, refuses to nurse from an Egyptian woman[9]. That was when Miriam steps in: "Shall I go and call for you a wet nurse from the Hebrew women, so that she shall nurse the child for you?" she asks the Egyptian princess[10]. The princess, Batya, agrees. Miriam calls the mother of the child. Batya gives her the child so that she can nurse him. Moses is curled up again in the bosom of his loving mother. He survives, and the rest is history.

Let's now engage in the "what if" hypothesis. Suppose that Miriam was absent from the scene, what would have occurred? It is likely that after observing that the baby is not taking to any Egyptian women's milk, Batya would have eventually realized, that Moses, whom she knew was a Jewish child (as she states clearly, "he is a child of the Hebrews"), might take better to the milk of a Jewish woman. She would have summoned a Jewish woman and Moses would have received his nourishment. It would have taken longer, Moses would have cried for another hour or two, but eventually, he would have been fed.

So what did Miriam accomplish? Miriam's actions caused Moses' hunger to last for a shorter period of time. Miriam alleviated Moses' hunger pangs sooner, shortening the span of his discomfort.

Miriam caused a young Jewish baby, a "Yiddishen kind," to weep for a few moments less. She alleviated the agony and distress of a baby.

Eighty-one years pass. Miriam is experiencing discomfort. She has a skin disease. The nation is supposed to travel, on route to the Holy Land. (This was before the sin of the spies, and the

people were still moving towards the Land of Israel, hoping to fulfill the great dream.) But if they begin traveling now, Miriam's agony would be prolonged, maybe a few hours, maybe a few days, as long as the Hebrews are journeying. On the road, she would not have the opportunity to be quarantined for the requisite seven days.

Because she diminished the discomfort of her brother, eight decades later an entire nation—around three million people, men women, and children—plus the holy Tabernacle, the Ark, Moses, Aron, all of the leaders, and G-d Himself -- all waited. She minimized her brother's pain, and now millions of people waited patiently to minimize her distress.

Because the energy you put out there is the same energy that comes back to you, in one form or another form.

#### Your Weeping Child

How many times a night do you wake up to your crying infant who yearns to be fed or just held? Mothers often awake every few hours (if they even get that amount of rest) to cradle and nurture their little wailing angels. Some husbands do not even take note; they sleep through the night and then wonder why their wives are exhausted the next day...

It can become stressful to tend continuously to the needs of our little ones. Babies certainly know how to let themselves be heard and we caretakers often become overwhelmed and drained in the process. The serene corridors of office buildings seem so much more serene and interesting.

Yet, as this Miriam episode teaches us, real history is not created in office buildings. It is created in the arms of mothers and fathers nurturing the souls G-d granted them to create our collective tomorrow. On a single day, a little boy was spared, for a short time, hunger pangs. Eight decades later, millions of people and G-d himself, interrupted their journey to pay homage to that individual gesture.

Every child needs a Miriam in his or her life--and all of us can become that Miriam. We meet or hear of children or teenagers who are in pain, starving for nourishment, love, validation, confidence, and meaning. We may say: They will grow up and learn how to manage. Or we may tend to them, be there for them, embrace them, and shorten the span of their agony. And when we do that, as little Miriam did, millions will be thankful to us for making a difference in that one individual's life.

#### Godi and Shlomo

It was 1989. An Israeli Defense Force soldier named Godi Remon was shot by an Arab terrorist outside of the town of Ramallah. The Arab gunman assumed he was dead and moved on.

Shortly afterward, a young Israeli named Shlomo Bergman happened to be driving by and saw Godi bleeding on the ground. He brought him into his car and sped off to the nearest Israeli hospital. He underwent surgery and survived. Shlomo



left the hospital minutes before the parents of the victim arrived.

Godi's mother was bothered by not being able to thank the mystery person who saved her son and tried unsuccessfully for a year to find out who he is. But to no avail.

Godi's parents put up a sign at their grocery store which they owned in the city of Ashdod, describing what happened. They reasoned that Israel is a small country and eventually they might find the person who saved their son.

Months passed with no response. Finally, one morning about a year later, Anat Bergman, Shlomo's mother, was visiting friends in Ashdod. She entered a grocery store and noticed the sign hanging by the door of the store. She asked the store owner who put up the sign. When Godi's mother said it was her, the two mothers embraced for a long time.

Then Shlomo's mother said, "Look at me -- you don't remember me?" "No", Godi's mother said, "I'm sorry. Did we meet before?"

"Yes," Shlomo's mother said. "Twenty years ago I used to live around here and I came all the time to buy basic groceries. One day you noticed that I looked really down and you asked me why I was down. I told you that I was going through a very difficult time and on top of that I was pregnant with my first child and planning on having an abortion because I could not with the mental and financial pressure. As soon as I said "abortion" you called your husband over and the two of you didn't seem to care about your own store but sat and patiently listened to my story and my challenges. I still remember what you said."

"You told me that it is true that I was going through a hard time, and that you understood how stressed out I was, but sometimes the greatest things in life come through the biggest difficulties. You spoke of the joy of being a mother and that the most beautiful word to hear in the Hebrew language is "Ima" (mother) when spoken by one's child... You explained how all the challenges pale in comparison with the inner joy coming from raising a child, from embracing your little one, from cultivating a living miracle. You explained how with each child born, a new channel opens up in our lives, generating a greater consciousness, and more livelihood. You both spoke for a while with so much empathy, love, and sensitivity, until I was convinced that I should have this baby."

Shlomo's mother continued, "I gave birth to the baby twenty years ago. My son Shlomo wouldn't have been alive if not for you. Two decades later, he was the one who saved your son, Godi's life."

You see, you saved my son's life; now he saved your son's life.

[1] Numbers 12: 1-16.

[2] Rashi and others say that the Cushite woman was Tziporah, and Cushite, "black," is a euphemism for "beautiful." Miriam was criticizing Moshe for abstaining from physical relations

with her. Daas Zekanim and Rashbam say that the Cushite was a second wife of Moshe, one that he had married during the forty years he was king of Kush, and she was criticizing him for marrying a Cushite woman, and not a Jewish one. (Ibn Ezra brings both explanations, and settles for Rashi's explanation.)

Alshich suggests that Moses married a black woman, and Miriam felt he abstained because she was black. Miriam protested what seemed like a "racist" act.

[3] Shabbos 97a – the opinion of Rabbi Akiva (Rabbi Yehudah ben Beseira argues with him.)

[4] Numbers 12:13

[5] Sotah 8b and 9b. "With the measure one measures, he too is measured. Joseph the greatest among his brothers, personally took charge of his father Jacob's burial, and none other than Moses occupied himself with Joseph's burial. Moses personally took charge of the burial of Joseph, and none other than the Omnipresent occupied Himself with Moses' burial, as it is said, 'and He buried him in the valley.'

[6] Exodus 2:4.

[7] Deuteronomy 8:15.

[8] This essay is based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 18 Behaalosecha. To study it inside with Rabbi Jacobson, and for the source sheets from which this essay is taken, please click here.

[9] Rashi Exodus 2:7.

[10] Exodus ibid.

Essay Behaaloscha.

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**from: Shlomo Katz <skatz@torah.org>**

**to: hamaayan@torah.org**

date: Jun 9, 2023, 12:40 AM

subject: Hamaayan - "Three Sides of the Menorah"

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Our Parashah opens with instructions regarding the lighting of the Menorah in the Mishkan / Bet Hamikdash—the third time the Torah mentions this Mitzvah. **R' Raphael Moshe Luria** z"l (Rosh Yeshiva in several Chassidic yeshivot in Israel; died 2009) explains this repetition:

R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (Rambam; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) implies that the Bet Hamikdash serves three purposes: (1) it is a place for the Shechinah to rest, as we read (Shmot 25:8), "They shall make a Sanctuary for Me, so I will dwell among them"; (2) it is the place to offer sacrifices; and (3) it is the pilgrimage destination where we go to draw inspiration. (Hil. Bet Ha'bechirah 1:1)

R' Luria continues: The three times that lighting the Menorah is mentioned in the Torah parallel these three purposes. In Parashat Tetzaveh, lighting the Menorah is mentioned in connection with the command (in the previous Parashah) to build the Mishkan. There is no mention there of what will be

done in the Mishkan, only that Hashem will dwell among us as a result of our efforts.

In Parashat Emor, the Mitzvah to light the Menorah follows the list of festivals. This alludes to a connection between the Menorah and the Bet Hamikdash's role as a pilgrimage destination on the festivals.

Finally, in our Parashah, the Mitzvah to light the Menorah follows the offerings that were brought at the dedication of the Mishkan. This alludes to a connection between lighting the Menorah and the sacrificial offerings. (Bet Genazi)

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“When you go to wage war in your Land against an enemy who oppresses you, you shall sound short blasts of the trumpets, and you shall be recalled before Hashem, your Elokim, and you shall be saved from your foes.” (10:9)

**R' Aharon Eliezer Paskez** z”l (rabbi of Galanta, Hungary; died 1884) writes: A person must fight two wars—one with his external enemies and one with the enemy with him, the Yetzer Ha’ra. And, as Rabbeinu Bachya ibn Pekudah z”l (Spain; early 11th century) writes in Chovot Ha’levavot, the latter of these, the war against the Yetzer Ha’ra, is the harder battle.

R' Paskez continues: We read (Mishlei 16:7), “When Hashem approves of a man’s ways, even his foes will make peace with him.” This means that if we have external foes, it is an indication that we are not adequately fighting our internal foe, the Yetzer Ha’ra. Thus, says our verse, “When you go to wage war in your Land,” be aware that the true battle is “against an enemy who oppresses you,” the Yetzer Ha’ra. Therefore, “You shall sound short blasts of the trumpets” so that “you shall be recalled before Hashem, your Elokim,” and He will save you “from your foes”—both of them. (Mishmeret Eliezer)

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“The people took to seeking complaints . . .” (11:1)

**R' Shlomo Heiman** z”l (1892-1945; Rosh Yeshiva in several prominent Lithuanian Yeshivot; finally, Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Torah Vodaath in New York) observes: Bnei Yisrael complained about Hashem’s actions and inactions a great deal during their 40 years in the desert—much more than Jews today complain about what Hashem does or does not do. This is a testament to the high degree of Emunah that the Generation of the Desert possessed; their complaining shows that they felt Hashem’s presence in their lives and that they knew they had a Father in Heaven to whom they could turn with their complaints. In contrast, our Emunah is much weaker, so we complain less. (Chiddushei R' Shlomo: Imrot Ketzarot p.3)

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“The rabble that was among them cultivated a craving, and Bnei Yisrael also wept once more, and said, ‘Who will feed us meat?’” (11:4)

Rashi z”l writes: Did they not have meat? Does not the Torah (Shmot 12:38) record that they left Egypt with flocks and

herds?! Do not say that they had already eaten those animals, for we read later, at the end of the 40 years (Bemidbar 32:1), “The children of Reuven had cattle in a very great multitude”! But the truth is that they were only seeking a pretext. [Until here from Rashi. The Torah continues:]

“‘We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt Chinam / for free, and the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic.’” (11:5) Rashi writes: They could not have meant that the Egyptians gave them fish for nothing, without payment, for the Torah records (Shmot 5:18), “No straw will be given you!” If they did not give them straw, would they have given them fish for nothing? What then is the meaning of ‘Chinam’? It means free from—i.e., not burdened with—Heavenly commands. [Until here from Rashi. The Torah relates:]

“Moshe said, ‘Six hundred thousand are the people in whose midst I am, yet You say, ‘I will give them meat, and they will eat for a month!’ Can sheep and cattle be slaughtered and suffice for them? If all the fish in the sea are gathered, would it suffice for them?’” (11:21:22)

Surely Moshe did not doubt Hashem’s ability to provide meat for any number of people! **R' Yehuda Gruenwald** z”l (1845-1920; rabbi of Szatmar, Hungary) explains: As long as Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, they were not permitted to eat meat whenever they wished; rather, they had to slaughter it and offer it in the Tabernacle as a sacrifice, specifically a Korban Shelamim, from which they then ate. (This Halachah applied only during those 40 years.) When some of Bnei Yisrael complained, “We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt unencumbered by Mitzvot,” it was this restriction they were complaining about. They wanted to eat meat without restrictions. This is why their entire complaint is referred to as a pretext—they did not lack meat at all; they only lacked meat that was free of Mitzvot, just as cucumbers and melons, which they mentioned also, are eaten essentially free of Mitzvot.

When Moshe wondered how Hashem could satisfy their demand, he was not doubting Hashem’s ability to provide meat. He was saying, “No matter how much meat You give them, even if millions of sheep and cows wander into Bnei Yisrael’s camp out of nowhere, You cannot satisfy them because they still will need to bring those animals as Shelamim offerings!” “Can sheep and cattle be slaughtered and suffice for them?”

No! Because they can only be slaughtered encumbered by Mitzvot! “If all the fish in the sea are gathered, would it suffice for them?” True, fish do not require Shechitah or being offered as a sacrifice, but, for that very reason, it will not give them what they really want: meat that has had its restrictions lifted! Hashem responded (verse 23), “Is the hand of Hashem limited?” Certainly, Hashem can give them what they want.

And He did, as we read (verse 31), “A wind went forth from Hashem, Va’yagoz (literally, ‘and blew’) quail from the sea.” The word “Va’yagoz” appears only one other time in Tanach—

in Iyov (1:20), where we read “Va’yagoz rosho” / “And he tore [the hair] off his head.” This suggests, writes R’ Gruenwald, that the quail blew in with their heads already cut, i.e., already slaughtered and ready to eat. Thus, Hashem satisfied Bnei Yisrael’s desire. (She’erit Yehuda)

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#### Shabbat

“When the dew descended upon the camp at night, the Mahn would descend upon it.” (Bemidbar 11:9—in our Parashah) **R’ Moshe Isserles** z”l (“Rema”; 1530-1572; rabbi of Cracow, Poland, and author of the glosses on Shulchan Aruch that adapt that work for Ashkenazim) records that some have a custom on Shabbat evening to eat a filled dish called “Pashtida”—apparently a type of pie or quiche—to recall the Mahn. R’ Yisrael Meir Kagan z”l (the Chafetz Chaim; died 1933) writes that such was the custom where he lived, and he explains that just as the Mahn was protected by one layer of dew below it, between it and the ground (see verse quoted above), and a second layer of dew above it (see Shmot 16:12-14), so Pashtida has meat between two layers of dough.

However, the Chafetz Chaim wonders, why is there a custom to recall the Mahn on Shabbat—the one day of the week when Mahn did not fall? Moreover, why is there not a custom to eat Pashtida on Yom Tov, when Mahn also did not fall?

The **Chafetz Chaim** answers, citing the work **Torat Chaim** (R’ Avraham Chaim Schor z”l—Poland; 1550-1632): Our sages call Shabbat “Me’ein Olam Ha’ba” / “a little bit of the World-to-Come,” and they call the World-to-Come: “A day which is entirely Shabbat.” Therefore, we observe several customs on Shabbat that allude to the World-to-Come. For example, we eat fish and meat on Shabbat as an allusion to the “Feasts of Leviathan and Shor Ha’bar” (some type of large ox)—metaphors our Sages use to refer to the reward that awaits Tzaddikim in the World-to-Come. Likewise, we drink wine on Shabbat as an allusion to another such metaphor: “Wine stored in its grapes since the time of Creation.” [What these metaphors might mean is beyond the scope of this article.]

For the same reason, we eat foods on Shabbat that remind us of the Mahn, as Mahn is also the food of Olam Ha’ba (see Chagigah 12b). (Mishnah Berurah and Be’ur Halachah 242)

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Ohr Somayach

Insights into Halacha

**Insights into Halacha**

**Weighty Waiting Options**

**by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz**

We often find that the Torah’s description of even simple actions of our great forefathers impart to us a treasure trove of

hanhaga, hashkafa, and even halacha. Sometimes though, it is the exact opposite: a halacha is gleaned from the acts of those far from being paragons of virtue or exemplars of excellence. Indeed, sometimes we learn fascinating halachic insights from people whom we would not consider role models by any stretch of the imagination.

#### Double Agents

Every Tisha B’Av, and every time we read Parashas Shlach, we are reminded of the grave sin of the Meraglim, the spies whose evil report about Eretz Yisrael still echoes, with repercussions felt until today.[1] Of the twelve spies sent, only two remained loyal to Hashem: Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yefuneh.[2] The other ten chose to slander Eretz Yisrael instead and consequently suffered immediate and terrible deaths. Due to their vile report, the Jewish People were forced to remain in the desert an additional forty years, and eventually die out before their children ultimately were allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael.

Hashem called this rogues’ gallery of spies an “eidah,”[3] literally, “a congregation.” The Gemara[4] famously derives from this incident that the minimum requirement for a minyan is a quorum of ten men, since there were ten turncoat “double-agents” who were contemptuously called “a congregation.” If ten men can get together to conspire and hatch malevolent schemes, then ten men can assemble to form a congregation for devarim shebekedusha, sanctified matters. This exegesis is duly codified in halacha,[5] and all because of the dastardly deeds of ten misguided men.[6]

#### Covetous Carnivores

Another prime example of halacha being set by the actions of those less than virtuous,[7] [8] is the tragic chapter of the rabble-rousers who lusted after meat, and disparaged Hashem’s gift of the Heavenly bread called manna (munn), chronicled at the end of Parashas Beha’aloscha.[9] The pasuk states that “the meat was still between their teeth” when these sinners met their untimely and dreadful demise.[10] The Gemara extrapolates that since the Torah stressed that there was meat between their teeth, it means to show us that meat between the teeth is still considered tangible meat and requires one to wait before having a dairy meal afterward.[11]

There are actually several different ways to understand the Gemara’s intent, chief among them Rashi’s and the Rambam’s differing opinions:[12]

The Rambam writes that meat tends to get stuck between the teeth and is still considered meat for quite some time afterward.[13]

Rashi however, doesn’t seem to be perturbed about actual meat residue stuck in the teeth, but simply explains that since meat is fatty by nature, its taste lingers for a long time after eating.[14] In any case, regarding the general separation necessary

**between meat and milk**, the Gemara itself does not inform us

what the mandated waiting period is. Rather, it gives us several guideposts that the Rishonim use to set the halacha. The Gemara informs us that Mar Ukva's father would not eat dairy items on the same day that he had partaken of meat, but Mar Ukva himself (calling himself "vinegar the son of wine") would only wait "m'seudasa l'seudasa achrina - from one meal until a different meal." [15] [16] The various variant minhagim that Klal Yisrael keep related to waiting after eating meat are actually based on how the Rishonim understood this cryptic comment.

#### Six Hours

This, the most common custom, was first codified by the Rambam. He writes that meat stuck in the teeth remains "meat" for up to six hours, and mandates waiting that amount. This is the halacha as codified by the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, [17] as well as the vast majority of authorities. The Rashal, Chochmas Adam, and Aruch Hashulchan [18] all write very strongly that one should wait six hours. The mandated six hours seemingly comes from the many places in Rabbinic literature where it mentions that the "meals of a Torah scholar" are six hours apart. [19] Therefore, this fits well with Mar Ukva's statement that he would wait from one meal until the next after eating meat, meaning six hours.

#### Five Hours and Change

The idea of waiting five hours and a bit, or five and a half hours, is actually based on the choice of words of several Rishonim, including the Rambam and Meiri, when they rule to wait six hours. They write that one should keep "k'mosheish sha'os," approximately six hours. [20] Several contemporary authorities maintain that "six hours" does not have to be an exact six hours - that waiting five and a half or the majority of the sixth hour (or according to some even five hours and one minute) is sufficient, as it is almost six hours. [21] However, it should be noted that not everyone agrees to this, and many maintain that the six hours must be exact. [22]

#### Four Hours

Waiting four hours is first opined by the Pri Chodosh, who comments that the six hours mandated are not referring to regular "sixty-minute" hours, but rather halachic hours, known colloquially as "sha'os zmanios." This complicated halachic calculation is arrived at by dividing the amount of time between sunrise and sunset into twelve equal parts. Each of these new "hours" are halachic hours and are used to calculate the various zmanim throughout the day. The Pri Chodosh asserts that in the height of winter when days are extremely short, it is possible that six halachic hours can turn into a mere four actual hours! [23] Although several authorities rule this way, and others say one may rely on this exclusively in times of great need, [24] nevertheless, his opinion here is rejected out of hand by the vast majority of authorities, who maintain that the halacha follows six true hours. [25] The Yad Efraim points out

that if one follows "sha'os zmanios" in the winter, then he must also follow it during the summer, possibly needing to wait up to eight hours!

#### One Hour

Waiting only one hour between meat and dairy, mainly germane among Jews in and/or from Amsterdam, is codified by the Rema, citing common custom, based on several great Ashkenazic Rishonim, including the Maharil and Maharai (author of the Terumas Hadeshen). [26] The Rema himself, though, concludes that it is nevertheless proper to wait six hours.

#### Three Hours

Interestingly, and shocking to some, the common German custom of waiting three hours does not seem to have an explicit halachic source. [27] In fact, one who delves into the sefarim of great Rabbanim who served throughout Germany, from Rav Yonason Eibeshutz to Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, will find that they all recommended keeping the full six hours! Yet, there are several theories explaining how such a widespread custom came about: [28]

One, by the Mizmor L'Dovid, is that it is possibly based on the Pri Chodosh's opinion of sha'os zmanios. He posits that if in the middle of winter, three hours is deemed sufficient waiting time, it stands to reason that it should suffice year-round as well.

Another hypothesis, by Rav Binyomin Hamburger, author of Shorshei Minhag Ashkenaz and head of Machon Moreshes Ashkenaz, is that their original custom was to wait only one hour like the basic halacha cited by the Rema, following the majority of Ashkenazic Rishonim. Yet, when the six hours mandated by the Rambam and other Rishonim became more widespread, those in Ashkenaz decided to meet the rest of the world halfway, as a sort of compromise. According to this explanation, it turns out that waiting three hours is intrinsically a chumrah on waiting one hour.

An additional possible theory is that since many in Germany were accustomed to eating five light meals throughout the day, as opposed to the current common three large ones, their interpretation of "m'seudasa l'seudasa achrina" would be waiting the three hours they were accustomed to between their meals. [29]

#### Bentch and Go

Another opinion, and one not accepted lemaaseh, is that of Tosafos, [30] who posits that "from one meal to another" means exactly that. As soon as one finishes his meat meal, clears off the table and recites Birkas Hamazon, he may start a new dairy meal. Some add that this includes washing out the mouth and cleansing the palate (kinuach and hadacha). This is actually even more stringent than Rabbeinu Tam's opinion, that all one needs is kinuach and hadacha, and then one may eat dairy - even while part of the same meal! [31] It is important to realize

that his opinion here is categorically rejected lemaaseh by almost all later authorities.

#### A Day Away

The most stringent opinion is not to eat meat and milk on the same day (some call this a full twenty-four hours, but it seems a misnomer according to most authorities' understanding). First mentioned by Mar Ukva as his father's personal hanhaga, several great Rabbanim through the ages, including the Arizal, have been known to keep this. Interestingly, this custom is cited by Rav Chaim Palaji[32] as the proper one, and in his opinion, only those who are not able to stick to it can rely upon a "mere" six hours.

#### Just Sleep on It

Another remarkable, albeit not-widely accepted custom is that of sleeping after eating a meat meal. The proponents of this, including Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, Rosh Yeshivas Ner Yisrael, maintain that sleeping causes the food to digest quicker, thereby lessening the required waiting period.[33] It is told that the Chasam Sofer wanted to start relying on this leniency, but upon awakening, every time he tried drinking his coffee (presumably with milk) it would spill. He concluded that this hetter must not have been accepted in Heaven.[34] The majority of contemporary authorities as well do not rely on sleeping as a way of lessening the waiting time.[35] The Steipler Gaon is quoted as remarking that this leniency was the exclusive domain of Rav Elyashiv, as most people sleep six hours a night and he only slept three hours nightly.

Although there are many different and widespread opinions about the proper amount of time one is required to wait after eating meat, and everyone should follow his or her proper family minhag as per the dictum "minhag avoseinu Torah hi,"[36] nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the core requirement of waiting is based on the actions of those with less than perfect intentions. As it states in Pirkei Avos, "Who is wise? One who learns from everyone." [37]

Postscript: Children's Waiting: Although waiting six hours is indeed the most common minhag, nonetheless, most contemporary Poskim are of the opinion that this is not obligatory for children, following the lead of several Rishonim, including the Terumas Hadeshen (Leket Yosher vol. 1, pg. 69 s.v. v'nahag; thanks are due to Rabbi Avromy Kaplan for pointing this out) and the Meiri (Chullin 105a), who briefly mention that children are not mandated to keep the full waiting period. Several authorities, including the Chelkas Yaakov (Shu"t vol. 2:88-89 and vol. 3:147), Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Emes L'Yaakov on Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Y.D. 89, footnote 36), and Rav Nissim Karelitz Chut Shani (Shabbos vol. 4, end 343, pg. 309-310), maintain that young children need only wait an hour, and only once they reach nine years old should they start waiting longer. Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Shu"t

Yechaveh Daas vol. 3:58) is more lenient, ruling that children only need to start waiting the full amount from a year before their Bar or Bas Mitzvah.

Other Poskim, including the Debreciner Rav (Shu"t Ba'er Moshe vol. 8:36, 5), Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited in Piskei Halachos pg. 53:4-5), and Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos vol. 1:434) prefer a staggered approach. Once a child reaches age two-three, he should wait an hour. When he turns five-six, he should wait three hours, and from age nine-ten, he should wait the full six hours.

Others, including the Ponovezh Rosh Yeshiva Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach (Michtavim U'Maamarim vol. 4:332), Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in Va'aleihu Lo Yibol vol. 2, pg. 64:3 and Maadanei Shlomo on Dalet Chelkei Shulchan Aruch pg. 241-242), and Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner (Shu"t Shevet Halevi vol. 4:84 and Kovetz M'Beis Levi vol. 9, pg. 23:9 and vol. Y.D. pg. 36:13, footnote 14) maintain that there is no specific set age, but rather depends on each individual child, his needs, and specific situation. All agree that the child should be educated and trained to gradually wait longer, building up to the full waiting period. See also Shu"t She'aris Yisrael (Y.D. 3), Shu"t Eimek Hateshuva (vol. 6:314), and Shu"t Shulchan Halevi (Ch. 22:10, 3).

Many stress that this leniency for children is only applicable to real food or milk, as they are satiating and nutritional, as opposed to milchig candies and chocolates, etc. which are decidedly not, and for which no dispensation should be given. See Shu"t Yabia Omer (vol. 1, Y.D. 4 and vol. 3, Y.D. 3), Shu"t Maadanei Melachim (83:2), and Chinuch Habanim L'Mitzvos (Tzorchei Kattan 47 and footnote 183).

On the other hand, and contrary to all the above, there is the minority noteworthy opinion of the Steipler Gaon (Orchos Rabbeinu, new edition, vol. 4, pg. 25:2) who held that all minors should still keep the full six hours. His son, Rav Chaim Kanievsky holds this way as well (cited in Moadei HaGra"ch vol. 1:189-190). As with all inyanei halacha, one should ask his personal local halachic authority for guidance as to which opinion he should follow.

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For any questions, comments or for the full March Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, author of M'Shulchan Yehuda on Inyanei Halacha, serves as the Sho'el U'Meishiv and Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim. He also currently writes a contemporary halacha column for the Ohr Somayach website titled "Insights Into Halacha" – [www.ohr.edu/this\\_week/insights\\_into\\_halacha](http://www.ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha).

His recent English halacha sefer, "Insights Into Halacha - Food: A Halachic Analysis," (Mosaica/Feldheim) contains more than 500 pages and features over 30 comprehensive chapters, discussing a myriad of halachic issues relating to food. It is now available online and in bookstores everywhere.

From: ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com

**Rav Immanuel Bernstein**

PSHUTO SHEL MIKRA

From the Teachings of Rav Yehuda Copperman zt"l

PARSHAT BEHA'ALOTECHA

**The “Megillot” of the Chumash**

נִשְׁמַע מִפִּי מֹשֶׁה אֶת הַעָם בְּכֹה לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָיו

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

In the present chapter we will be discussing of one of the fundamentals of emunah, namely, the Divine origin of the Torah, to which we refer with the terms “Torah min HaShamayim” and “Torah MiSinai.” As we have noted numerous times throughout this sefer, it is important to distinguish between these terms, for they refer to two distinct areas of Torah.

“Torah min HaShamayim” refers to the dictation of Torah SheBichtav “from Hashem’s mouth to Moshe’s ear” (to use the terminology of the Ramban in his Introduction to his peirush on the Torah). As we shall see, not all of this dictation took place at Sinai.

“Torah MiSinai” refers to the transmission of Torah SheBaal Peh, as discussed in the opening Mishnah of Pirkei Avot, “משה קיבל תורה מסיני — Moshe received the Torah at Sinai.” Here, the reference is not to the text of the Chumash, but rather to the contents of the Taryag Mitzvot.

An Unusual Weeping — In Pshat and Midrash

In his peirush to our pasuk, Rashi quotes an explanation of Chazal in the Sifrei. The problem in terms of pshuto shel mikra is quite obvious: what is the meaning of the people crying “in their family groups,” something which we do not encounter either before or after, in any of the episodes where they complained?

ורבותינו אמרו, “למשפחותיו” — על עסקי משפחות, על העריות הנאסרות להם

Our Rabbis explained (the word) “למשפחותיו” — in their families” as a reference to family-related matters, i.e. the arayot relationships that were now forbidden to them.

According to the Sifrei, the people were reacting to the various restrictions imposed on them by the Torah forbidding them to marry certain family members. Regarding this comment of Chazal, Rabbeinu Eliyahu Mizrachi, the foremost among the mefarshei Rashi, raises a very basic question:

I do not understand why they only reacted now, upon journeying from Har Sinai, crying over the Torah’s having forbidden them marry these arayot. Many months had passed since the Torah forbade these relationships to them, for from the time Moshe descended the Mountain on the day after Yom Kippur, he did not ascend again, for the whole Torah had already been transmitted to him!

From Hashem to Moshe — and From Moshe to B’nei Yisrael

The question of the Mizrachi is quite straightforward. B’nei Yisrael journeyed from Har Sinai on the twentieth of Iyar in the year after leaving Mitzrayim, over seven months after Yom Kippur when Moshe had already received all the mitzvot. Why, then, did they only react to these prohibitions now? The Mizrachi answers:

Perhaps we may answer, that although the entire Torah had been transmitted to Moshe, it was not (immediately) said in its entirety to Yisrael; rather, each mitzvah in its appropriate time and place.

The Mizrachi is distinguishing between the Torah being transmitted by Hashem to Moshe, and it being transmitted by Moshe to B’nei Yisrael. The very fact that Moshe already had the Torah transmitted to him by a certain time (Yom Kippur) does not necessarily mean that he had likewise transmitted it to Yisrael at that time. That transmission took place over a longer period. This being the case, there is no longer any basis for looking at B’nei Yisrael crying over the arayot forbidden to them as a “delayed reaction.” It may well be that the reason B’nei Yisrael only cried at this point over these matters is because they only heard about them now!

The Mizrachi proceeds to adduce proof for his approach from the words of Chazal themselves:

For indeed, in the Gemara Gittin (60a) it is stated that eight parshiyot (sections) of Torah were said on the day the Mishkan was inaugurated: The parsha of Kohanim, of Levi’im, of the sending out of those who are tamei etc. This clearly indicates that although these parshiyot had already been transmitted to Moshe at Sinai, he did not transmit them to Yisrael until Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the day of the inauguration of the Mishkan. If so, perhaps the arayot were similarly not said to them until shortly before they journeyed from Har Sinai.

Concurrence in the Maharal

A similar idea to that of the Mizrachi, distinguishing between the transmission of the Torah to Moshe and its transmission to Yisrael, is stated by the Maharal in his peirush Gur Aryeh, Shemot 21:1.

Commenting on the fact that Parshat Mishpatim begins with the letter vav — “ואלה,” Rashi quotes the explanation of Chazal in the Mechilta:

כל מקום שנאמר “ואלה,” מוסיף על הראשונים: מה ראשונים מסיני, אף אלו מסיני

Whenever the word “ואלה — and these,” is said, it comes to add to that which was previously stated. (The meaning here is) just as the earlier ones (i.e. the Aseret HaDibrot) are from Sinai, so, too, these (the mitzvot of Parshat Mishpatim) are from Sinai.

The question, once again, is obvious. Are not all the mitzvot “from Sinai”? If so, what is so special about the mitzvot in Parshat Mishpatim that we need to be specifically told they were said “from Sinai”? The Gur Aryeh (s.v. kol makom) answers:

The meaning is, in the same way the Aseret HaDibrot were said to B’nei Yisrael at Har Sinai, so, too, the mitzvot of Parshat Mishpatim (were said to B’nei Yisrael at Har Sinai). However, all the other mitzvot were said to Moshe at Sinai, but were not transmitted to Yisrael until the (the period of) Ohel Moed[1] or until (the period when they had reached) the Plains of Moav.[2]

Transcribing the Parshiyot of Torah

We return now to the Mizrachi. As we have seen, based on the words of Chazal, the Mizrachi has stated that Moshe himself received the Torah in its entirety at Sinai. He now proceeds to address himself to another statement in Chazal which seems to imply that even Moshe received the Torah in stages: The Gemara (Gittin 60a) records a machloket between two Amoraim:

ר' יוחנן אמר תורה מגילה מגילה ניתנה, ור' שמעון בן לקיש אמר תורה החתומה ניתנה

R’ Yochanan said ... the Torah was given scroll by scroll, while R’ Shimon ben Lakish said, the Torah was given as a (finalized) sealed document.

Rashi (peirush to Gittin, ibid.) explains the meaning of each of these views:

Scroll by scroll — when each section was said to Moshe he would write it down, and at the end of the forty years he joined them together and sewed them with sinews.

A (finalized) sealed document — nothing was written until the end of the forty years when all the parshiyot were completed.

What both of these views have in common is that they both indicate that Hashem “said” — i.e. transmitted — the parshiyot of the Torah to Moshe either in installments during the time B’nei Yisrael were in the Midbar, or perhaps only at the end of the forty years there! How is this reconciled with the idea that Moshe received the entire Torah at Sinai? The Mizrachi explains:

This machloket does not relate to the stage when the mitzvot were originally said to Moshe, for they had all been said to him in both their general principle and specific details at Sinai, as is taught in the Torat Kohanim (beginning of Parshat Behar)[3] and cited in the Gemara Zevachim (115b). Rather, the meaning is, when a parsha was said to Moshe to transmit it to B’nei Yisrael, he would write it down. That is, originally Moshe was taught the entire Torah at Sinai, and subsequently Hashem told it to him again to tell B’nei Yisrael, each parsha in its time, at which point he would write it down.

According to the Mizrachi, the point in time which marked the transition of a mitzvah (or group of mitzvot) from being purely Torah SheBaal Peh to being comprised of Torah SheBichtav and Torah SheBaal Peh was the point when

Hashem instructed Moshe to transmit that section to B'nei Yisrael.

Joining the Megillot Together

It is worthwhile pointing out that the process referred to by Rashi as “joining the Megillot together” at the end of the forty years was not merely a technical matter of compiling the Megillot into one sefer. Rather, in some cases, there were additions that needed to be made to the Megillah before it was incorporated into the sefer. Let us mention one such example.

In the end of the parsha dealing with the manna (Shemot 16:35), the pasuk states, “ובני ישראל אכלו את המן ארבעים שנה ... עד בואם אל קצה ארץ כנען” — B'nei Yisrael ate the manna for forty years ... until their arrival at the border of the Land of Canaan.” It would not have been possible to write this pasuk in the original Megillah,[4] as the “forty years” being referred to came as a result of the Chet HaMeraglim, and foreknowledge of that Chet on the part of B'nei Yisrael[5] would have conflicted with their free will. Indeed, the Sifrei (Parshat Beha'alotecha) cites this pasuk as an example of the principle that אין מוקדם ומאוחר בתורה — the order in which things are written in the Torah does not necessarily reflect the order in which they occurred. The implications for our discussion are that this pasuk was not part of that Megillah as it was originally written; rather, it was dictated to Moshe when he joined the Megillot together to form the complete Sefer Torah at the end of the forty years.

The same is true regarding the two pesukim in that parsha which describe Hashem telling Moshe to take a flask of manna and place it in the Ohel Moed — the Mishkan (ibid. 33–34). At that stage, the Mishkan did not yet exist, nor had it been commanded to be built. Rather, those pesukim were stated later on once the Mishkan had been built, and added in to the appropriate parsha, as pointed out by Rashi (pasuk 33, s.v. vehanach).[6]

The Chazon Ish

A pertinent discussion concerning the timing of the transmission of mitzvot to B'nei Yisrael and the transcription of the parshiyot of Torah SheBichtav may also be found in the chiddushim of the Chazon Ish (Moed sec. 125), who writes:

It is clear from the words of Chazal that all of taryag mitzvot were transmitted to Moshe during those forty days,[7] and according to R' Akiva (Chagigah 6a) the details of those mitzvot were also transmitted to him, and Rashi explains similarly in the beginning of Parshat Behar ....

Now, Moshe had not yet been commanded to write (the mitzvot) down, nor to transmit them to B'nei Yisrael, with the exception of those mitzvot which he was explicitly commanded to transmit. Nonetheless, according to the opinion that the Torah was given “sealed” (חתומה), there was no command to write anything down.[8]

When the Mishkan was set up, that which was said to him at Sinai was repeated to him in the Ohel Moed, and indeed, there is room to inquire whether all the taryag mitzvot were repeated in the Ohel Moed, or rather only those which he was commanded to transmit to B'nei Yisrael at that time.

In Arvot Moav, the Torah was said to him (Moshe) a third time, and the Shechinah spoke from within his throat, and he was commanded to write (the mitzvot) down using the exact same words with which each parsha was transmitted to him when he was commanded to transmit it to B'nei Yisrael. Thus, there were mitzvot which were written with the words that were said to him at Sinai, and mitzvot which were written with the words that were said in the Ohel Moed, and others in the way they were said at Arvot Moav.

Although the Chazon Ish is discussing the view that the Torah was given “חתומה” — in which case none of the mitzvot were written down until the end of the forty years — nevertheless, he clearly states that the transmission of the mitzvot to B'nei Yisrael was a process which took place over those forty years.

When were the mitzvot “activated”?

Having mentioned the kabbalah (tradition) received from Chazal, that all of the taryag mitzvot were transmitted to Moshe at Sinai, the Chazon Ish proceeds to discuss a number of things which were apparently not

transmitted at that time:

Now, there were certain matters, such as the punishment for chillul Shabbat,[9] the punishment for one who blasphemes Hashem's Name[10] and the halachot of precedence regarding inheritance[11] that were not said at Sinai. The reason, as Chazal have explained, is that the righteous people in those episodes were given the merit of being the conduit through which the Halachah became known (מגלגלין זכות על ידי זכאי). Nevertheless, this does not represent a lack in the transmission of the Taryag Mitzvot at Sinai, for these were specific details (of the mitzvot).[12] [13] Additionally,[14] perhaps Moshe did not have permission to rule based on something he had received at Sinai unless he had already been commanded to transmit it to B'nei Yisrael.

With these final words, the Chazon Ish has highlighted yet another difference between the stage when the mitzvot had been transmitted to Moshe Rabbeinu and when they had been transmitted to B'nei Yisrael. No practical ruling could be issued based on Moshe's knowledge of a certain mitzvah until he had been instructed to transmit that mitzvah to B'nei Yisrael. In terms of our discussion we would like to suggest that until Moshe was told the words with which to present the mitzvah to B'nei Yisrael — and with which it would later be written in the Torah — the essence of the mitzvah was not sufficiently expressed in a way that would allow him to issue a halachic ruling regarding it. For the way in which a mitzvah is written in the Torah reveals its nature and essence.

It is indeed fitting that the mitzvah achieves its final formulation in terms of the division between Torah SheBichtav and Torah SheBaal Peh when it is transmitted to B'nei Yisrael, for they are the nation chosen by Hashem to receive and fulfill His Torah.

ישראל, אורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא — חד הוא!

Yisrael, the Torah and Hashem — are one!