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TorahWeb

Rabbi Benjamin Yudin

Sensitive Soil, Lofty Land

This Shabbos all of Israel is united and finishes Sefer Bamidbar. It is not coincidental that we read Matos and Masei, which highlight Eretz Yisrael, in the period of the three weeks, and especially as we celebrate Rosh Chodesh Av this Friday. According to the Ramban, Parshas Masei contains the biblical mitzvah of yishuv Eretz Yisrael, imploring all Jews to come up with a good

reason why they are not yet living in Eretz Yisrael, as found in Bamidbar (33:53) "you shall possess the Land and you shall settle in it."

In Chapter 35, the Torah gives us in detail the laws of the accidental murderer who is to go to an ir miklat, and that of the intentional murderer who is to be executed. This is spelled out most succinctly. Then (35:31-32) the Torah warns that an accidental murderer is not to be given the opportunity to pay a ransom instead of going to a city of refuge, and likewise a murderer is not to be given the opportunity to pay a ransom, build a hospital or benefit society instead of the death penalty.

The Torah then (35:33-34) adds, "Do not bring guilt on the land, in which you are living because bloodshed is that which brings guilt upon the land, and the land will not be forgiven for the blood that is shed in it except through the blood of the person who shed it." Finally, the next verse reads, "do not defile the land in which you dwell in the midst of which I dwell, because I Hashem dwell among the children of Israel." Given there are no extra words in the Torah, at first glance the last two verses seem superfluous. Murder is forbidden universally, regardless of where the act is committed. Why does the Torah mention the word "land" four times even though this is certainly not a mitzvah dependent on the land of Israel?

The Ramban answers this question (v.33) by stating that while murder is indeed universally prohibited, the Torah is teaching that it is especially so in the land where G-d's Shechinah is present. The land of Israel, more than any other geographic location, cannot tolerate murder. The land itself is especially sensitive. Similarly, we find at the end of Parshas Acharei Mos, where the Torah clearly warns the Jewish people against repeating the sins of immorality of the nations that lived in the land before them, lest they too be evicted from the land.

Morality is a norm that is to be practiced in every society. Yet, there too in Vayikra (18:27-28), the Torah highlights the offense and effect of immorality upon the land of Israel. The land of Israel has character and personality and due to its higher level of sanctity, simply cannot tolerate both immorality and murder.

We pray that Tisha B'Av will speedily become a holiday as prophesized by the Zechariah (8:19), that the fast of the fifth month will be to the House of Judah for joy and for gladness and for a happy festival. In the event that we are

not privileged for this yet, we will read on the night of Tisha B'Av the book of Eicha, written by the Yirmiyahu. In Chapter 1, verse 4, the Yirmiyahu relates "the roads of Zion are mourning for lack of festival pilgrims." One can argue that this is a poetic continuation of the prior verse which describes that "Judah has gone into exile because of suffering and great servitude."

However, I would like to understand this verse literally in keeping with our above teachings, that the land and roads of Israel are literally mourning in the absence of the multitudes that came to celebrate the three pilgrim festivals annually. Similarly, on the Shabbos following Tisha B'Av, we read from Yishayahu (40:2) "Dabru al lev Yerushalyim - speak consolingly to the heart of Jerusalem" is not only to be understood as a message of consolation for the Jewish people after their lengthy exile, but also the holy city that housed two Batei Mikdash and will house the third is to be comforted. Additionally, Yirmiyahu (30:17) proclaimed "Tzion he, doresh ein la - She is Zion, no one cares about her," and based upon the above the Talmud teaches we are to care and literally feel the anguish, suffering and neglect of the Holy City.

Rav Eliyahu Lopian zt"l had a condition that necessitated him to expectorate. When he came to Eretz Yisrael, he refused to spit on the ground. The land itself is holy and has feelings. This may be substantiated by the Gemara (Kesubos 112b) that Rav Chiya bar Gamda rolled in the dust of Eretz Yisrael, to fulfill that which is found in Psalms (112:15) "for your servants have cherished our stones and favored her dust." Interestingly, this verse is the source of the custom among some to place some soil from Eretz Yisrael upon the dead who are buried in the Diaspora. Similarly, the Rambam (Hilchos Melachim 5:10) teaches that great sages would kiss the borders of Eretz Yisrael, kiss its stones and roll in its dust.

The Gemara (Megillah 29a) teaches that the synagogues and study halls in Bavel are destined to be established in Eretz Yisrael in the Messianic age. The Maharsha in his commentary on this Gemara writes that the land of Israel in its entirety has a Kedusha - a holiness similar to a Beis HaKenesis. Based upon the above, the Vilna Gaon at the end of his prayers would walk an additional four cubits in his synagogue in Vilna, fulfilling to the best of his ability the rabbinic dictum to walk four cubits in the land of Israel.

The message that emerges from the above may be found most succinctly in the Gemara (Kesubos 75a), where R. Meysha explains the verse (Tehillim 87:5) "and to Zion it shall be said ish v'ish yulad bah - this man and this man was born in her." He explains this phrase to mean that both one who is born in Tzion and one who yearns to see Tzion are considered its sons. Rashi explains the above verse to refer to the future time when the nations of the world will bring them back to Zion, saying about "each Jew this one is a son of Tzion, he was born there, let us bring him back to her."

The first lesson is that we must consider ourselves sons of Tzion. This is demonstrated by our longing to be there and our endeavoring to enhance and improve the process of settling the land. Not only are we to attempt to go to recharge our batteries and to connect firsthand with the land of constant miracles, but in our prioritization of our tzedaka allotments, yeshivas in Eretz Yisrael should be one of our priorities, allowing us to literally participate in the mitzvah of yishuv Eretz Yisrael. Finally, let's not forget the kedusha of Eretz Yisrael. The Bach (Orach Chaim 208) teaches that the land itself has kedusha, thus the trees that bear fruit have kedusha. When we imbibe the fruit of Eretz Yisrael, we are ingesting kedusha and become uplifted spiritually.

More divrei Torah and shiurim from Rabbi Yudin

More divrei Torah on Parshas Masei

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RABBI SHALOM ROSNER

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

Curbing Anger

In this week's parsha, Hashem instructs Moshe to go to battle with Midyan, in revenge for having caused Bnei Yisrael to sin with Ba'al Peor. Moshe relays the directive to the people who go to battle with Midyan. When they return from battle, Moshe realizes that Bnei Yisrael only destroyed the males of Midyan but took the women and children captive. The very same women who engaged in promiscuous activity with members of Am Yisrael and caused them to sin with Ba'al Peor, which resulted in a plague! Moshe is very upset with this result. The Torah

states: Moshe became angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had returned from the campaign of war. Moshe said to them, Did you allow all the females to live?

The Oznayim L'torah inquires as to why the Torah repeats Moshe's name here. First we are told that Moshe is upset, then the Torah repeats that Moshe speaks. Vayikztof Moshe Yayomer Aleihem Moshe. The Torah could have simply stated Vayhomer Aleiyem that he said- and it would be understood that Moshe was speaking, as he is the subject in the previous sentence. Why the need to repeat his name?

Perhaps we can derive a significant lesson from this repetition. There was a break between Moshe's immediate feeling of anger and the moment that he spoke. Moshe did not address the nation in the heat of the moment. He waited a little for his anger to subside and then he spoke to them. This is highlighted by the use of the word Vayomer which is typically identified as a softer form of speech as compared to Vayedaber.

In the midst of experiencing anger, a person does not always act rationally. Moshe took a breath, gathered himself and then spoke to the people. That is why his name is repeated a second time. To emphasize that it is not the same Moshe in his state of anger, who addressed the nation. It was Moshe in a peaceful state of mind who spoke in a respectful manner.

Several ba'ale mussar speak of a hassid who when he got angry would put on his designated "anger coat", which he kept in his attic. He purposely kept it there so that when he was angry, he would have to walk up three flights of stairs to get his coat, and after the tireless climb up all those stairs, his true anger would subside.

The Rambam suggests that when it comes to behavior, people should avoid extremes and steer towards the middle path. Yet when it comes to anger – the Rambam states in Hilchot Deot 2:3 that one should go to an extreme to avoid getting angry, as anger causes one to lose their senses.

During the three weeks as we recall the destruction of the Batei Hamikdash due to sinat chinam, we should contemplate ways of improving our relationships with our family and friends and being more tolerant of others who may have differing views or hashkafot. We ought to consider the way we react to others. If we get angry,

which can happen, we should follow Moshe's lead and take a "break". Try not to react immediately while in the heat of the moment, so as not to say something we may later regret. As is stated in the Talmud: Bishloshah Devarhim Adam Nikar - BiKoso, BiKiso U'Bkaaso. Three things are very telling about a person, the way he acts when he drinks, contributes to charity and the way he reacts when angry.

May we be able to interact in a positive manner with each other so that we may be zoche to a geula shlema bimhera biyamenu!

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/hashems-regret/2022/07/28/> 1/4

Hashem's Regret

By Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser

- 1 Av 5782 – July 28, 2022

These are the journeys of the Children of Israel (Bamidbar 33:1). R' Menachem Mendel of Kotzk observes that the various journeys of the Jewish nation in the desert following their redemption from Mitzrayim hint at the struggles and suffering the Jewish people will undergo in the future until the Final Redemption.

The Tzror HaMor states that this is intended to enroot within us bitachon and emunah even in the face of great challenges, travails and tribulation. Hashem will give us strength to continue and ultimately deliver us from galus. Just as in Mitzrayim we were subjected to the harshest servitude, and Hashem took us out even though we were not worthy of redemption, so too we will be redeemed in the future through Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben Dovid.

Three times daily we pray to Hashem to hasten the redemption and to rebuild the Holy Temple. R' Menachem Mendel of Rimanov cites the Talmud (Succah 52b) that there are four things that Hashem regrets creating: exile, the Kasdim, the Yishmaelim, and the Evil Inclination, as it says (Micha 4:6), "On that day I will assemble ... whomever I have harmed," because it is the entity of the Evil Inclination that led the Jewish nation to sin, thereby bringing about their exile. The Talmud (Brachos 3a) recounts how R' Yosi once entered the ruins of Yerushalayim in order to pray. The setting was particularly distressing, as it served as a powerful depiction of the prevailing galus, yet R' Yosi fortified himself to recite his prayers with great happiness. This

was an impressive gesture, and Hashem's regret was once again passionately aroused. Upon his encounter with Eliyahu HaNavi, R' Yosi related that he had heard a Heavenly Voice cooing like a dove and saying, "Woe that I have destroyed My House, burned My Temple, and exiled My children among the nations."

The period of the Three Weeks is a time of judgment, and it often engenders a feeling of despair that makes it difficult to serve Hashem. We remember that we lost the protection of the Divine Providence and the Holy Temple was destroyed. Nevertheless, when we triumph over the Evil Inclination, and continue to fulfill the Torah and perform mitzvos, Hashem derives great pleasure and His regret is intensified. When we offer fervent heartfelt prayers to Hashem, lamenting our estrangement from Hashem without the Holy Temple, and beseech Him with deep longing and yearning for our redemption, we will inspire Hashem to redeem us speedily.

A Midnight Revelation

During the mid-1860s, a severe cholera epidemic raged through Yerushalayim and many lives were being lost. All the prayers and entreaties of the great sages of the city to annul the deadly decree were to no avail. All the inhabitants of the city raised their voices to Heaven but the Angel of Destruction did not set aside his sword.

When the great tzaddik and leader of his generation, R' Zundel of Salant, succumbed in Cheshvan along with many other talmidei chachamim, R' Meir Auerbach, the Rav of Kalish and author of the Imrei Binah, went to his mentor and teacher, the great R' Refoel Yedidiah Aboulafia, rosh yeshiva Yeshivat HaMekubalim Beit El, to gain insight into the reason for this devastating scourge. The two sat all night praying, and at sunrise R' Meir went to the mikvah and immersed 310 times in the cold water. They then went to pray vasikin (reciting the Shema moments before sunrise and then commencing Shemone Esrei exactly as the sun rises over the horizon – considered to be the ideal way to daven Shacharis) at the Bais HaMedrash Menachem Tzion. They spent the entire day wrapped in tallis and tefillin, without rest or food, steeped in Torah study and the service of Hashem.

In the evening, R' Auerbach immersed in the mikvah again, and after the Maariv prayers he made a she'eilas chalom (a procedure of writing on parchment for one who wishes to ask a question of Hashem while he is sleeping).

He recited the Krias Shema before retiring and went to sleep with the piece of parchment beneath his pillow.

It was midnight when R' Meir awoke upon the revelation of black fire on top of white fire. When he saw the verse, "My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart – Behold! He is standing behind our wall, looking through the windows, peering through the lattice" (Shir HaShirim 2:9), he fainted. When he was finally revived, he sat quietly trying to understand the explanation of the pasuk he had seen. He could not recall, though, any meforshim or commentaries that would apply to the community's plight. He dressed and, in the dark of night, ran to the home of R' Refoel Yedidiah, who was waiting for him by the door and greeted him enthusiastically. R' Refoel disclosed that at midnight he had heard a great noise, and a Heavenly Voice called out, "Who revealed the secret to My children?"

"I realized then," said R' Refoel, "that the reason for the decree and plague had, indeed, been revealed to you. We will now work together to bring salvation for our people." R' Refoel proceeded to explain that the pasuk referred to the Kosel HaMaaravi that longed for the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. He noted that the Jewish people cannot celebrate their joyous occasions unconditionally when the Holy Temple is in ruins. Yet, he observed, we bring bands and groups to play music at these events. "That is the reason why Hashem has allowed this plague to overwhelm us," he concluded.

R' Meir called together the heads of the Bais Din of Yerushalayim and told them about his dream. He then relayed to them the explanation that he had been given by the great R' Refoel Yedidiah Aboulafia. A directive, accepted throughout Yerushalayim for all generations, was enacted by the Bais Din disallowing music to be played in Yerushalayim. Everyone gathered at the Kosel HaMaaravi and poured out their hearts to Hashem in prayer, and within a few days the epidemic came to an end.

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, a prominent rav and Torah personality, is a daily radio commentator who has authored over a dozen books, and a renowned speaker recognized for his exceptional ability to captivate and inspire audiences worldwide.

from: YUTorah <office@yutorah.org> date: Jul 28, 2022, 7:01 PM subject: Appreciating Israel

Don't Mind Your Shivrei Luchos

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh

(Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from the YUTorah shiur originally given in the Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on Jul 12, 2018)

In this week's Parsha, Moshe sent Pinchas with an army to battle Midyan. And the pasuk says about Pinchas: U'klei ha-kodesh ve-chatzotzros ha-truah be-yado. Rashi asks: What are these Klei ha-kodesh? And he responds that they were the Aron and the Tzitz. Rashi quotes Chazal that there were two Aronos. One contained the unbroken Luchos Shnios that always stayed in the Kodosh Kodashim of the Mishkan. The other encased the shattered pieces of the First Luchos—Shivrei Luchos—that represented the Shechina accompanying them in their military expeditions and battles. Chazal tell us that they always took the Aron to milchama. And the pasuk says: Hashem Elokecha mis'halech be-kerev machanecha lehatzilcha u-la-seis oyivecha lefanecha. The third Belzer Rebbe—Rav Yissachar Dov Rokeach (with the same name as the current Belzer Rebbe)—asks the obvious question. Why were the First Luchos broken? Because, as the gemara says, when Klal Yisroel made an Eigel ha-Zachav just 40 days after Ma'amad Har Sinai, they were like a kala aluva she-zinsa be-kerev chupasa—a chutzpadik bride, unfaithful during her wedding celebration. Hashem was very indignant, and therefore Moshe broke the Luchos. So why would they want to bring it out to the battlefield if it serves as a reminder of the chet ha-Eigel? If I go to a china shop and break something, I wouldn't want to bring it around everywhere I go to remind me of my failure. So how does it help to take the broken Luchos to milchamos? The Belzer Rebbe gives a beautiful answer. We all know that everyone messed up plenty in life. But they did not carry the Shivrei Luchos as a memento—a testament of sorts to the chet ha-Eigel. On the contrary, we carry these broken Luchos in an Aron to remind us that even if we did the worst sin—worshiped Avoda Zarah at Har Sinai—Hashem still loves us, and we are still the Am ha-Nivchar. Hashem still rests His Shechina amongst us. We are still special, valuable, and have potential even after we messed up. And the Shivrei Luchos are still a cheftza of kedusha and represent a ma'ala of Klal Yisroel. When you go out to war, you are nervous, and you become ha-ish ha-yorei ve-rach ha-leivav. You start worrying and

lose your morale because of everything you did wrong. You say to yourselves: Who are we that Hashem should care about us after we messed up with this or that? Therefore, the Torah tells us to bring those broken Luchos with us to remind us that even if it's true that we messed up, it's ok. And it doesn't mean that it's ok to mess up lechatchila. Nevertheless, Hashem still rests his Shechina amongst you. And it's very wonderous then why we have two Arons and two sets of Luchos. You need Luchos shleimos in the Mikdash because your mess-ups cannot turn into a lechatchila. There must be someplace that is Kodosh Kodashim—an ideal of doing everything perfectly. If you are not striving for perfection of a malach, you don't have the right goal in mind. None of us is perfect. But we should know what the Ideal is. It's not a compromise, and it is not mediocrity. The unbroken Luchos represent the Ideal. But at the same time, we ought to know that we can and do mess up—both a yachid and the tzibur. And nonetheless, Hashem still rests his Shechina amongst us and gives kedusha to the Luchos Shenios. And if we take this understanding to the battles that we fight in this world, then, im yirtze Hashem, we will remember that Hashem is with us, and we will be inspired to win them all.

from: **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein**

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Reb Yeruchem

Look Inside For Real Torah

If a man takes a vow to Hashem, or swears an oath to create a prohibition upon himself, he may not desecrate his word.[2]

Vows are confusing. Sometimes they are recommended. Sometimes they are frowned upon. More confusing is how they work. A person takes something that is perfectly permitted according to Torah law, pronounces a verbal formula, and voila, it changes its spots. It turns into something impermissible. To boot, the Torah doesn't just suggest honoring one's word as an exercise in personal integrity. It views it as an actual, Torah-level prohibition like eating a cheeseburger or a BLT sandwich. How does this happen?

The explanation, I believe, is simple. It is axiomatic that Hashem demands of us not to be bound and shackled to

our desires. We are directed countless times in our Torah to act in ways that are inconvenient and otherwise opposed by our perceived wants and needs. The Torah expects us to get past them; He expects that we can work our way free of their pressure, by reining in our passions and lusts.

Seen this way, the intended nature of vows is apparent. They are some of the tools to cut through the shackles that bind us to our desires. They can be an effective way for us to self-discipline, to restrain ourselves when our resolve weakens. Hashem provides them in our tool kit to get our assigned jobs done.

Moreover, we are taught that we are held accountable according to the extent of our understanding. The more we understand, the more Hashem expects – no, demands! – of us. When we realize that we need to protect ourselves by imposing individualized restraints on our behavior, those restraints rise to the level of Torah! They, too, become part of halachah – of what Hashem commands us to do.

This approach is the key to unlocking the meaning of a passage in the gemara.[3]

Porters broke a keg of wine belonging to Rabbah bar bar Chanan. He took their garments as payment. They went to complain to Rav, who said to Rabbah bar bar Chanan, “Give them back their garments.” Rabbah bar bar Chanan asked Rav, “Is that the law?” Rav responded, “Yes, as it is written[4], ‘In order that you go on the path of the good people.’” Rabbah bar bar Chanan gave them back their garments. The porters then said to Rav, “We are poor, we labored the entire day, and we are hungry and have nothing to eat.” Rav then instructed Rabbah bar bar Chanan, “Pay them their fee.” Rabbah bar bar Chanan asked Rav, “Is that the law?” Rav responded, “Yes, as the verse continues, ‘And keep the ways of righteous people.’”

Rav’s rulings sound...progressive, but they hardly can be called din/the law. A person has the right to say that he is not interested in performing a mitzvah min ha-muvchar/a choicely performed mitzvah. He can opt to stay within the letter of the law, without going beyond it. And that is exactly what Rabbah bar bar Chanan conveyed to Rav. “Is that the law? I wish to follow what the law asks of me, and nothing more!” Why did Rav instruct him to go beyond, and act on what we ordinarily call a midas chassidus/the way of the extremely pious?

The answer is as we explained above. Rav recognized Rabbah bar bar Chanan’s spiritual level, including what values he had fully comprehended and internalized. Rabbah bar bar Chanan fully understood the “right thing to do.” For him, that comprehension became normative. It became part of Torah, for which he would be held fully accountable.

For him, it had indeed become din.

1. Based on Daas Torah by Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l, Bamidbar, pgs. 236-237 2. Bamidbar 30:3 3. Bava Metzia 83a ↑ 4. Mishlei 2:20 ↑

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OU Torah Rabbi Sacks on Parsha

Oaths and Vows

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l

The parsha of Matot begins with a passage about vows and oaths and their annulment. It uses vocabulary that was later to be adopted and adapted for Kol Nidrei, the annulment of vows on the eve of Yom Kippur. Its position here, though – near the end of the book of Numbers – is strange.

The Torah has been describing the last stages in the Israelites’ journey to the Promised Land. The command has been given to divide the land by lot between the tribes. Moses has been told by God to prepare for his death. He asks God to appoint a successor, which He does. The role goes to Joshua, Moses’ apprentice for many years. The narrative then breaks off to make way for an extended account of the sacrifices to be brought on the various days of the year. Following that comes the section with which parshat Matot begins, about vows and oaths.

Why is it here? There is a superficial answer. There is a verbal link with the penultimate verse of the previous parsha:

“These shall you offer to the Lord on your festivals, in addition to your vows and your freewill offerings.”

Num. 29:39

Having mentioned vows, the Torah now states the laws that apply to them. That is one explanation.

However there is another answer, one that goes to the very heart of the project on which the Israelites were

about to embark once they had crossed the Jordan and conquered the land. One problem, perhaps the problem, to which the Torah is an answer is: Can freedom and order coexist in the human sphere? Can there be a society which is both free and just at the same time? The Torah sets out for us the other alternatives. There can be freedom and chaos. That was the world full of violence before the Flood. And there can be order without freedom. That was the Egypt from which the Israelites were liberated. Is there a third alternative? And if so, how is it created?

The answer the Torah gives has to do with language. Recall that it was with language that God created the world: “And God said, Let there be... and there was...” One of the first gifts God gave humanity was language. When the Torah says that “God formed man from the dust of the land and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7), the Targum translates the last phrase as “and man became a speaking being.” For Judaism, speaking is life itself.

However, Judaism is particularly interested in one unusual use of language. The Oxford philosopher J. L. Austin called it “performative utterance.”[1] This happens when we use language not to describe something but to do something. So, for instance, when a groom says to his bride under the chupah, “Behold you are betrothed to me,” he is not describing a marriage, he is getting married. When in ancient times the Beit Din declared the New Moon, they were not making a statement of fact. They were creating a fact, they were turning the day into the New Moon.

The key example of a performative utterance is a promise. When I promise you that I will do something, I am creating something that did not exist before, namely an obligation. This fact, small though it might seem, is the foundation of Judaism.

A mutual promise – X pledges himself to do certain things for Y, and Y commits himself to do other things for X – is called a covenant, and Judaism is based on covenant, specifically the covenant made between God and the Israelites at Mount Sinai, which bound them and still to this day binds us. In human history, it is the supreme case of a performative utterance.

Two philosophers understood the significance of the act of promising to the moral life. One was Nietzsche. This is what he said:

To breed an animal with the prerogative to promise – is that not precisely the paradoxical task which nature has set herself with regard to humankind? Is it not the real problem of humankind?... Man himself will really have to become reliable, regular, necessary, even in his own self-image, so that he, as someone making a promise is, is answerable to his own future! That is precisely what constitutes the long history of the origins of responsibility. On the Genealogy of Morality[2]

The other was Hannah Arendt, who in essence explained what Nietzsche meant. Human affairs are fraught with unpredictability. That is because we are free. We do not know how other people will behave or how they will respond to an act of ours. So we can never be sure of the consequences of our own decisions. Freedom seems to rob the human world of order. We can tell how inanimate objects will behave under different conditions. We can be reasonably sure of how animals will behave. But we cannot tell in advance how humans will react. How then can we create an orderly society without taking away people’s freedom?

The answer is the act of promising. When I promise to do something, I am freely placing myself under an obligation to do something in the future. If I am the kind of person who is known to keep his word, I have removed one element of unpredictability from the human world. You can rely on me, since I have given my word. When I promise, I voluntarily bind myself. It is this ability of humans to voluntarily commit themselves to do, or refrain from doing, certain acts that generates order in the relations between human beings without the use of coercive force.[3]

“When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath binding himself to an obligation, he must not break his word; whatever he speaks, that he must fulfil” (Num. 30:3). It is no accident that this, the second verse of parshat Matot, is stated shortly before the Israelites approach the Promised Land. The institution of promising, of which vows and oaths to God are a supreme example, is essential to the existence of a free society. Freedom depends upon people keeping their word.

One instance of how this plays out in real life appears later in the parsha. Two of the tribes, Reuben and Gad, decide that they would rather live to the east of the Jordan where the land is more suitable for their livestock. After a

fraught conversation with Moses, who accuses them of shirking their responsibilities to the rest of the people, they agree to be on the front lines of the army until the conquest of the land is complete. Everything depends on their keeping their word.

All social institutions in a free society depend on trust, and trust means honouring our promises, doing what we say we will do. When this breaks down, the very future of freedom is at risk. There is a classic example of this in Tanach. It appears in the book of Jeremiah, where the Prophet is describing the society of his time, when people could no longer be trusted to keep their word:

They bend their tongues like bows;

They are valorous in the land for treachery, not for honesty;

They advance from evil to evil.

They do not heed Me – declares the Lord.

Beware of your friends;

Trust not even a brother,

For every one of them is a deceiver, and every friend a slanderer.

Friend deceives friend, and no one speaks the truth.

They have taught their tongues to lie; they weary themselves with sinning.

You live in the midst of deceit; in their deceit they refuse to heed Me – declares the Lord. Jer. 9:2–5

That was the condition of a society that was about to lose its freedom to the Babylonians. It never fully recovered.

If trust breaks down, social relationships break down. Society will then depend on law enforcement agencies or some other use of force. When force is widely used, society is no longer free. The only way free human beings can form collaborative and cooperative relationships without recourse to force is by the use of verbal undertakings honoured by those who make them.

Freedom needs trust. Trust needs people to keep their word, and keeping your word means treating words as holy, vows and oaths as sacrosanct. Only under very special and precisely formulated circumstances can you be released from your undertakings. That is why, as the Israelites approached the Holy Land where they were to create a free society, they had to be reminded of the sacred character of vows and oaths.

The temptation to break your word when it is to your advantage to do so can sometimes be overwhelming. That

is why belief in God – a God who oversees all we think, say, and do, and who holds us accountable to our commitments – is so fundamental. Although it sounds strange to us now, the father of toleration and liberalism, John Locke, held that citizenship should not be extended to atheists because, not believing in God, they could not be trusted to honour their word.[4]

Understanding this, we can now appreciate that the appearance of laws about vows and oaths at the end of the book of Numbers, as the Israelites are approaching the land of Israel, is no accident, and the moral is still relevant today. A free society depends on trust. Trust depends on keeping your word. That is how humans imitate God – by using language to create. Words create moral obligations, and moral obligations, undertaken responsibly and honoured faithfully, create the possibility of a free society. So never break a promise. Always do what you say you are going to do. If we fail to keep our word, eventually we will lose our freedom.

[1] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

[2] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe and ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 35–36.

[3] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 243–44.

[4] John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689).

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l was a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and the moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks, please visit www.rabbisacks.org

Retribution and Revenge

MASEI

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l

Near the end of the book of Bamidbar, we encounter the law of the cities of refuge: three cities to the east of the Jordan and, later, three more within the land of Israel itself. There, people who had committed homicide could flee and find protection until their case was heard by a court of law. If they were found guilty of murder, in biblical times, they were sentenced to death. If found

innocent – if the death happened by accident or inadvertently, with neither deliberation nor malice – then they were to stay in a city of refuge “until the death of the High Priest.” (See Num. 35:28) By residing there, they were protected against revenge on the part of the *goel ha-dam*, the blood-redeemer, usually the closest relative of the person who had been killed.

Homicide is never less than serious in Jewish law. But there is a fundamental difference between murder – deliberate killing – and manslaughter, accidental death. To kill someone not guilty of murder as an act of revenge for an accidental death is not justice but further bloodshed; this must be prevented – hence the need for safe havens where people at risk from vigilantes.

The prevention of unjust violence is fundamental to the Torah. God’s covenant with Noah and humankind after the Flood identifies murder as the ultimate crime:

“One who sheds the blood of man – by man shall his blood be shed, for in God’s image man was made.”

Gen. 9:6 Blood wrongly shed cries out to Heaven itself. After Cain had murdered Abel, God said to Cain,

“Your brother’s blood is crying out to Me from the ground!”

Gen. 4:10 Here in Bamidbar we hear a similar sentiment:

“You shall not pollute the land in which you live; blood pollutes the land, and the land can have no atonement for the blood that is shed in it – except through the blood of the one who shed it.”

Num. 35:33 The verb *ch-n-ph*, which appears twice in this verse and nowhere else in the Mosaic books, means to pollute, to soil, to dirty, to defile. There is something fundamentally blemished about a world in which murder goes unpunished. Human life is sacred. Even justified acts of bloodshed, as in the case of war, still communicate impurity. A Kohen who has shed blood does not therefore bless the people.[1] David is told that he may not build the Temple “because you shed much blood.”[2] Death defiles. That is what lies behind the idea of revenge. And though the Torah rejects revenge except when commanded by God,[3] something of the idea survives in the concept of the *goel ha-dam*, wrongly translated as ‘blood-avenger.’ It means, in fact, ‘blood-redeemer.’

A redeemer is someone who rights an imbalance in the world, who rescues someone or something and restores it to its rightful place. Thus Boaz redeems land belonging to

Naomi.[4] Redeemers are the ones who restore relatives to freedom after they have been forced to sell themselves into slavery.[5] God redeems His people from bondage in Egypt. A blood-redeemer is one who ensures that murder does not go unpunished.

However, not all acts of killing are murder. Some are *bishgagah*, that is, unintentional, accidental, or inadvertent. These are the acts that lead to exile in the cities of refuge. Yet, there is an ambiguity about this law. Was exile to the cities of refuge considered a way of protecting the accidental killer, or was it a form of punishment – not the death sentence that would have applied to one guilty of murder, but punishment nonetheless? Recall that exile is a biblical form of punishment. Adam and Eve, after their sin, were exiled from Eden. Cain, after killing Abel, was told he would be “a restless wanderer on the face of the earth.” (Gen. 4:12) We say in our prayers, “Because of our sins we were exiled from our land.”

In truth both elements are present. On the one hand, the Torah says that “the assembly must protect the one accused of murder from the redeemer of blood and send the accused back to the city of refuge to which they fled.” (Num. 35:25) Here the emphasis is on protection. But on the other hand, we read that if the exiled person “ever goes outside the limits of the city of refuge to which they fled and the redeemer of blood finds them outside the city, the redeemer of blood may kill the accused without being guilty of murder.” (Num. 35:26-27) Here an element of guilt is presumed; otherwise why would the blood-redeemer be innocent of murder?[6]

Let us examine how the Talmud and Maimonides explain the provision that those who are exiled must stay in the city of refuge until the death of the High Priest. What had the High Priest to do with accidental killing? According to the Talmud, the High Priest “should have asked for mercy [i.e. should have prayed that there be no accidental deaths among the people] and he did not do so.”[7] The assumption is that had the High Priest prayed more fervently, God would not have allowed this accident to happen. Whether or not there is moral guilt, something wrong has occurred and there is a need for atonement, achieved partly through exile and partly through the death of the High Priest. For the High Priest atoned for the people as a whole and, when he died, his death atoned for the death of those who were accidentally killed.

Maimonides, however, gives a completely different explanation in *The Guide for the Perplexed* (III:40). For him the issue at stake is not atonement but protection. The reason the man goes into exile in a city of refuge is to allow the passions of the relative of the victim, the blood-redeemer, to cool. The exile stays there until the death of the High Priest, because his death creates a mood of national mourning, which dissolves the longing for revenge – “for it is a natural phenomenon that we find consolation in our misfortune when the same misfortune or a greater one befalls another person. Amongst us no death causes more grief than that of the High Priest.”

The desire for revenge is basic. It exists in all societies. It led to cycles of retaliation – the Montagues against the Capulets in *Romeo and Juliet*, the Corleones and Tattaglias in *The Godfather* – that have no natural end. Wars of the clans were capable of destroying whole societies.[8]

The Torah, understanding that the desire for revenge as natural, tames it by translating it into something else altogether. It recognises the pain, the loss and moral indignation of the family of the victim. That is the meaning of the phrase *goel hadam*, the blood-redeemer, the figure who represents that instinct for revenge. The Torah legislates for people with all their passions, not for saints. It is a realistic code, not a utopian one.

Yet the Torah inserts one vital element between the killer and the victim’s family: the principle of justice. There must be no direct act of revenge. The killer must be protected until his case has been heard in a court of law. If found guilty, he must pay the price. If found innocent, he must be given refuge. This single act turns revenge into retribution. This makes all the difference.

People often find it difficult to distinguish retribution and revenge, yet they are completely different concepts. Revenge is an I-Thou relationship. You killed a member of my family so I will kill you. It is intrinsically personal. Retribution, by contrast, is impersonal. It is no longer the Montagues against the Capulets but both under the impartial rule of law. Indeed the best definition of the society the Torah seeks to create is nomocracy: the rule of laws, not men.

Retribution is the principled rejection of revenge. It says that we are not free to take the law into our own hands. Passion may not override the due process of the law, for that is a sure route to anarchy and bloodshed. Wrong must

be punished, but only after it has been established by a fair trial, and only on behalf, not just of the victim but of society as a whole. It was this principle that drove the work of the late Simon Wiesenthal in bringing Nazi war criminals to trial. He called his biography *Justice, not Vengeance*. [9] The cities of refuge were part of this process by which vengeance was subordinated to, and replaced by, retributive justice.

This is not just ancient history. Almost as soon as the Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War came to an end in 1989, brutal ethnic war came to the former Yugoslavia, first in Bosnia then Kosovo. It has now spread to Iraq, Syria, and many other parts of the world. In his book *The Warrior’s Honor*, Michael Ignatieff wondered how these regions descended so rapidly into chaos. This was his conclusion:

The chief moral obstacle in the path of reconciliation is the desire for revenge. Now, revenge is commonly regarded as a low and unworthy emotion, and because it is regarded as such, its deep moral hold on people is rarely understood. But revenge – morally considered – is a desire to keep faith with the dead, to honour their memory by taking up their cause where they left off. Revenge keeps faith between the generations; the violence it engenders is a ritual form of respect for the community’s dead – therein lies its legitimacy. Reconciliation is difficult precisely because it must compete with the powerful alternative morality of violence. Political terror is tenacious because it is an ethical practice. It is a cult of the dead, a dire and absolute expression of respect.

Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior’s Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, New York: Henry Holt, 2000. p. 188. It is foolhardy to act as if the desire for revenge does not exist. It does. But given free rein, it will reduce societies to violence and bloodshed without end. The only alternative is to channel it through the operation of law, fair trial, and then either punishment or protection. That is what was introduced into civilisation by the law of the cities of refuge, allowing retribution to take the place of revenge, and justice the place of retaliation.

[1] Brachot 32b; Rambam, *Hilchot Tefillah* 15:3.

[2] I Chronicles 22:8.

[3] Only God, the Giver of life, can command us to take life, and then often only on the basis of facts known to God but not to us.

[4] See Ruth, chapters 3-4.

[5] See Lev. 25, where the verb appears 19 times.

[6] See Amnon Bazak, 'Cities of Refuge and Cities of Flight,' in Torah MiEtzion, Devarim, Maggid, Jerusalem, 2012, pp. 229-236.

[7] Makkot 11a.

[8] See Rene Girard, Violence and the Sacred, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.

[9] New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989.

from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison**

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**Tisha B'Av: Rebuilding the World with Love
Rectifying Baseless Hatred
Rav Kook Torah**

Why was the Second Temple destroyed? The Sages in Yoma 9b noted that the people at that time studied Torah, observed mitzvot and performed good deeds. Their great failure was in *sinat chinam* - baseless hatred. It was internal strife and conflict that ultimately brought about the Temple's destruction.

How may we rectify this sin of *sinat chinam*? Rav Kook wrote, in one of his most oft-quoted statements:

"If we were destroyed, and the world with us, due to baseless hatred, then we shall rebuild ourselves, and the world with us, with baseless love — *ahavat chinam*. (Orot HaKodesh vol. III, p. 324)

This call for baseless love could be interpreted as following Maimonides' advice on how to correct bad character traits. In the fourth chapter of *Shemonah Perakim*, Maimonides taught that negative traits are corrected by temporarily overcompensating and practicing the opposite extreme. For example, one who is naturally stingy should balance this trait by acting overly generous, until he succeeds in uprooting his miserliness. Similarly, by going to the extreme of *ahavat chinam*, we repair the trait of *sinat chinam*.

This interpretation, however, is not Rav Kook's line of thought. *Ahavat chinam* is not a temporary remedy, but an ideal, the result of our perception of the world's underlying unity and goodness.

The Source of Hatred Why do we hate others? We may think of many reasons why, but these explanations are not

the real source for our hatred of other people. They are merely signs and indications of our hatred. It is a lack of clarity of thought that misleads us into believing that these are the true causes of hatred.

The true source of hate comes from our *otzar hachaim*, our inner resource of life. This fundamental life-force pushes us to live and thrive, and opposes all that it views as different and threatening. Ultimately, our hate is rooted in *sinat chinam* - groundless and irrational animosity, just because something is different.

Yet even in hatred lies a hidden measure of love. Baseless love and baseless hatred share a common source, a love of life and the world. This common source hates that which is evil and destructive, and loves that which is good and productive.

How can we overcome our hatred? If we can uncover the depth of good in what we perceive as negative, we will be able to see how good will result even from actions and ideas that we oppose. We will then recognize that our reasons for hatred are unfounded, and transform our hatred into love and appreciation.

"I Burn with Love!"

This idea of *ahavat chinam* was not just a theoretical concept. Rav Kook was well-known for his profound love for all Jews, even those far removed from Torah and mitzvot. When questioned why he loved Jews distant from the ideals of Torah, he would respond, "Better I should err on the side of baseless love, than I should err on the side of baseless hatred."

Stories abound of Rav Kook's extraordinary love for other Jews, even those intensely antagonistic to his ways and beliefs. Once Rav Kook was publicly humiliated by a group of extremists who showered him with waste water in the streets of Jerusalem. The entire city was in an uproar over this scandalous act. The legal counsel of the British Mandate advised Rav Kook to press charges against the hooligans, promising that they would be promptly deported from the country. The legal counsel, however, was astounded by the Chief Rabbi's response.

"I have no interest in court cases. Despite what they did to me, I love them. I am ready to kiss them, so great is my love! I burn with love for every Jew."

Practical Steps towards Ahavat Chinam In his magnum opus Orot HaKodesh, Rav Kook gave practical advice on how to achieve this love.

Love for the Jewish people does not start from the heart, but from the head. To truly love and understand the Jewish people - each individual Jew and the nation as a whole — requires a wisdom that is both insightful and multifaceted. This intellectual inquiry is an important discipline of Torah study. Loving others does not mean indifference to baseness and moral decline. Our goal is to awaken knowledge and morality, integrity, and refinement; to clearly mark the purpose of life, its purity and holiness. Even our acts of loving-kindness should be based on a hidden Gevurah, an inner outrage at the world's — and thus our own — spiritual failures. If we take note of others' positive traits, we will come to love them with an inner affection. This is not a form of insincere flattery, nor does it mean white-washing their faults and foibles. But by concentrating on their positive characteristics — and every person has a good side — the negative aspects become less significant. This method provides an additional benefit. The Sages cautioned against joining with the wicked and exposing oneself to their negative influence. But if we connect to their positive traits, then this contact will not endanger our own moral and spiritual purity. We can attain a high level of love for Israel by deepening our awareness of the inner ties that bind together all the souls of the Jewish people, throughout all the generations. In the following revealing passage, Rav Kook expressed his own profound sense of connection with and love for every Jewish soul: “Listen to me, my people! I speak to you from my soul, from within my innermost soul. I call out to you from the living connection by which I am bound to all of you, and by which all of you are bound to me. I feel this more deeply than any other feeling: that only you — all of you, all of your souls, throughout all of your generations — you alone are the meaning of my life. In you I live. In the aggregation of all of you, my life has that content that is called ‘life.’ Without you, I have nothing. All hopes, all aspirations, all purpose in life, all that I find inside myself — these are only when I am with you. I need to connect with all of your souls. I must love you with a boundless love....

Each one of you, each individual soul from the aggregation of all of you, is a great spark from the torch

of infinite light, which enlightens my existence. You give meaning to life and work, to Torah and prayer, to song and hope. It is through the conduit of your being that I sense everything and love everything.” (Shemonah Kevatzim, vol. I, sec. 163)

(Silver from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Orot HaKodesh vol. III, pp. 324-334; Malachim K'venei Adam, pp. 262, 483-485)

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from: OU Kosher <noreply@ounetwork.org> date: Jul 28, 2022, 8:01 AM subject: **Halacha Yomis** - Friday Rosh Chodesh Av, Showering

Q. When Rosh Chodesh Av occurs on Erev Shabbos, as it does this year, are there any restrictions on taking a shower?

A. During the Nine Days, a person may not shower or bathe (Rama OC 551:16) but may wash his hands, feet and face with cold water (Mishna Berura ibid. 94) without soap or shampoo (Magen Avraham ibid. 41).

In warm climates, where one tends to perspire, some poskim allow a brief shower in cold or lukewarm water, and when necessary soap may be used as well (See Piskei Teshuvos 551:48 and Moadei Yeshurun p. 132:14 and p. 156:80).

This year we have two Arvei Shabbosos during the Nine Days. The first occurs on Rosh Chodesh Av and the second is the one which falls on Erev Tisha B'Av. On the first Erev Shabbos, for one who always honors the Shabbos by bathing on Erev Shabbos, the mitzvah of kovod Shabbos overrides the restrictions of the Nine Days and one may wash his whole body in hot water (Mishna Berura 551:89) and use soap (see Dirshu MB, Beurim 551:104 in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach, zt"l) even when not required for hygienic purposes.

On the second Friday, Erev Shabbos Chazon, one may wash hands, face and feet with hot water. Nowadays, since people shower daily, Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l allowed bathing the entire body as well (Moadei Yeshurun p. 133:21 and Kitzur Hilchos Bein HaMitzorim p. 13:7).

from: Ben Olam Haba <ben@halachafortoday.com>
date: Jul 28, 2022, 8:15 PM subject: Week In Review:
Week of Parashiyos Matos- Masei 5782

www.HalachaForToday.com PARASHAS MATOS-
MASEI 5782 When Reading in Shul, Do Not Read
During Davening or Krias HaTorah

CURRENT TOPIC: HILCHOS BEIN HAMETZORIM
Halachos for Sunday, July 24, 2022

1) The severity of the prohibitions of the 'three weeks' increase for the last 'nine days' from Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av through Tisha B'Av, and increase even further for the actual week in which Tisha B'Av falls. (See Shulchan Aruch Siman 551: 2 and 3) During the nine days we do not eat meat or poultry, and we don't drink wine. (See Mishna Berura Siman 551 S"K 58 and Aruch HaShulchan Siman 551:24. This includes minors; See Mishna Berura S"K 70) However, if someone is ill (this includes a mother of a newborn or similarly ill individual) and meat will make them feel better, he/she may eat meat. However, if possible, the ill person should abstain from meat from the 7th of Av (the day the idol worshipers entered the Heichal of the Bais HaMikdash) until after Tisha B'Av.(See Mishna Berura Siman 551 S"K 61) The prohibition against eating meat does not apply on Shabbos or at a Seudas Mitzvah (e.g. Bris, Pidyon Haben, and Siyum on a tractate of Talmud) (Rama Siman 551:10 and Mishna Berura S"K 73. We will discuss more details pertaining to "Seudas Mitzvah" tomorrow B'Ezras Hashem)

2) There is a discussion in the Poskim whether one may eat leftover meat and meat dishes from Shabbos on Motzaei Shabbos and Sunday. The prevalent custom, based on the consensus of most contemporary Poskim is to be stringent with this. (See Aruch Hashulchan Siman 551:24 and Birchei Yosef Siman 551:6 and Sha'arei Teshuva Siman 551 Os 29)

Regarding the cup of wine at Havdalah, according to many Poskim it is best to have a child drink it (This child must be old enough to understand that you are being Motzaei him with the Bracha of HaGafen but not too old that he comprehends how to mourn the Churban, and thus cannot drink wine either. Rav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach Zatzal and other Poskim maintained that such a child is hard to find and thus rule that it is always best to drink it yourself even if a child is available. See Rama Siman

551:10 and Mishna Berura S"K 70) If no child is available, the one who recited Havdalah may drink it.(ibid.)

Halachos for Monday, July 25, 2022

1) At a "Seudas Mitzvah" during the 'nine days', meat and wine (during the meal as well as for Birchas Hamazon after the meal) are permitted.(Rama Siman 551:10 and Mishna Berura S"K 72 and 75) The allowance is not just for the one celebrating the "Simcha" but also for his wife, children as well as for his friends and any other man or woman who would otherwise have been invited to the meal had it not been during the 'nine days' as well. (See Mishna Berura S"K 73)

2) One who attends the Seudas Mitzvah just in order to eat meat and drink wine, but has no particular closeness or friendship to the one making the Simcha has not acted properly. (Mogen Avrohom in the name of the MaHaril, quoted in Mishna Berura Siman 551 S"K 76. In many summer camps and other such venues, often in the presence of Gedolei Yisroel, they do have someone make a siyum and then serve Fleishigs to the campers.

Although this is seemingly not in accordance with halacha, there are those who are melamed zechus on this practice, especially for children. It is definitely best not to rely on this minhag if at all possible.) Only while actually in attendance at the Seudas Mitzvah is the meat and wine permitted; meat and wine sent from the Seudah to someone's home is prohibited. (Mishna Berura S"K 75) Once the actual week of Tisha B'Av arrives, only ten of the guests (besides the ones making the Simcha) may eat meat and drink wine, while the rest of the attendees must eat non-meat and wine items. (Rama ibid. and Mishna Berura S"K 77)

Halachos for Tuesday, July 26, 2022

1) A meal in conjunction with a Siyum upon completing a Masechta (tractate of Mishna or Talmud) is considered a Seudas Mitzvah and may contain meat and wine when celebrated during the 'nine days'. (Rama Siman 551:10)

2) If one would not otherwise have finished the Masechta he was learning in time for a Siyum in the 'nine days' he should not increase or decrease his speed of learning in order to have it "conveniently" fall out in time for a meat meal in the 'nine days'.(Mishna Berura Siman 551 S"K 73)

Likewise, if one would usually not make a Siyum with a meal for finishing whatever it is he finished, had it not

been in the 'nine days', he should not make it during the 'nine days' either. (ibid.)

Halachos for Wednesday, July 27, 2022

1) Even those who did not finish the Masechta or even learn any part of it together with the one making the Siyum, may participate in the meal and partake of the meat and wine, provided that they would have participated in the meal had it taken place at a different time of year as well. (Mishna Berura Siman 551 S"K 73. See also Biur Halacha Dibur Hamaschil V'Siyum Maseches where he brings a more stringent opinion from Rav Yaakov Emden Zatzal regarding who may be on the Siyum guest list during the 'nine days') Like any Seudas Mitzvah, once the week of Tisha B'Av arrives, only ten of the guests (besides the ones making the Siyum) may eat meat and drink wine, while the rest of the attendees must eat non-meat and wine items. (Rama Siman 551 and Mishna Berura S"K 77)

2) A Seudas Bar Mitzvah taking place "Bo Bayom" is considered a Seudas Mitzvah and a meat meal may be served at the Bar Mitzvah celebration during the 'nine days'. If, however, the meal is taking place on a day other than the actual day on which the boy turns thirteen years of age, it may only be considered a Seudas Mitzvah, according to some Poskim, if the boy gives a speech with Torah content (See Chayei Adam Klal 133:16 and Mogen Avraham Siman 225:4 quoting the Yam Shel Shlomo Bava Kama Perek 5 Siman 37)

In the week in which Tisha B'Av falls, if it isn't the boy's actual thirteenth birthday, a Seudas Bar Mitzvah should not be scheduled, rather it should be postponed until after Tisha B'av. (Ruling of Harav Chaim Kanievsky Zatzal quoted in Sefer Yad B'Bein Hametzorim page 86 footnote 17)

Many people have the custom to make a Seudah on the eve before a baby's Bris. This is referred to as a "Vacht Nacht Seudah". (See Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Siman 163:8) Some Poskim (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Siman 122:8) prohibit serving meat and wine at such a Seudah that takes place during the 'nine days', while some (See Sha'arei Teshuva Siman 551:33) allow it, besides for the actual week in which Tisha B'av falls out. The Shvus Yaakov (Vol. 3 Siman 36, quoted in Sha'arei Teshuva above) allows only one item (either meat or wine) at such a Seuda, in order that there at least some sort of a remembrance of the Churban Bais HaMikdash.)

Halachos for Thursday, July 28, 2022

1) It is prohibited to launder clothing, or even to wear freshly laundered clothing or use freshly laundered linen, tablecloths and towels, during the nine days, except for on Shabbos. (Shulchan Aruch and Rama Siman 551:3) It is similarly prohibited to give clothing to an Aino-Yehudi dry cleaner or Laundromat (or an Aino-yehudi housekeeper) in this time period, even if the clothing isn't needed for the nine days, and will only be picked up and worn after Tisha B'Av. Clothing that is needed for very small children, may be laundered in small loads, as needed. (Rama ibid. and Mishna Berura S"K 83) If a Jew owns a dry cleaners or a Laundromat, he may clean clothing of Aino-Yehudim during the nine days, if his Parnassah depends on it. (See Mishna Berura Siman 551 S"K 42)

2) It is the accepted custom to prohibit showering the entire body at once in the regular manner during the nine days, even with cold water, besides for a shower on Erev Shabbos. (Rama Siman 551:16 and Mishna Berura S"K 94) If one is unable to go nine days without a shower, as is the case for most people nowadays, there are various leniencies discussed by the Poskim. Some allow showering without soap and shampoo. Some Poskim allow only cold showers (or at least not as hot as one is accustomed to). For Halacha L'Ma'aseh a Rav should be consulted.

Halachos for Erev Shabbos Kodesh, July 29, 2022
Double Portion L'Kavod Shabbos Kodesh Halachos for Erev Shabbos Kodesh 1) Obviously, for medical reasons regular hot showers are permitted during the 'nine days'. Thus, pregnant women, mothers of newborns, and other frail people may shower as necessary. (See Sha'ar HaTziyun Siman 551 os 94. According to many Poskim, one who is extremely sweaty may also shower, with cold water, to freshen up without shampoo and soap, as this isn't considered washing for pleasure. See Aruch Hashulchan Siman 551:38 and Igros Moshe Even HaEzer Vol. 4 Siman 84:4)

2) One who has the custom to immerse in a Mikvah every day, without fail, may immerse in a Mikvah during the 'nine days' provided the water is not hot. (See Aruch HaShulchan Siman 551:35) Likewise, one who has the custom to immerse in a Mikvah each Erev Shabbos, without fail, may do so on Erev Shabbos Chazon as well, provided the water is not hot. (Mishna Berura Siman 551

S"K 95 and Sha'ar HaTziyun os 98) For Halacha L'Ma'aseh, as always, a Rav must be consulted.

Halachos for Shabbos Kodesh 1) It is prohibited to sew any new clothing or shoes in the 'nine days', including socks and similar garments. (Shulchan Aruch Siman 551:7 and Mishna Berura S"K 46.) New shoes may also not be worn in the 'nine days'. (Mishna Berura S"K 47)

2) An article of clothing that ripped during the nine days may be mended and worn, as the prohibition against sewing clothing is only applicable to making new clothing. Similarly, if a button fell off a shirt or any other article of clothing, it may be sewn on during the nine days. (See Kaf HaChaim Siman 551:115) Halacha For Today sends a FREE daily email received by thousands of Yidden across the world, which contains practical Halacha and Chizuk for everyday life. To subscribe, send a request to Ben@HalachaForToday.com or sign up via the website www.HalachaForToday.com. To sponsor the daily email or this Week In Review Sheet please email Ben@HalachaForToday.com. The Halachos are based on my personal understanding of the Halachic texts quoted, and are for learning purposes only, NOT for Psak Halacha. If you have questions or require further source information, please email Ben@HalachaForToday.com and I will try to respond as soon as I can. For a Halacha L'Ma'aseh Psak, please contact your local Orthodox Rabbi

from: Office of the Chief Rabbi <info@chiefrabbi.org>
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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis
Matot-Massei

The Torah on 'cancel culture

Video transcript: Where in the Torah do we find a warning against 'cancel culture'? In Parshat Matot, we find that the tribes of Reuven, Gad and half the tribe of Menashe appealed to Moshe to allow them to dwell on the east side of the River Jordan. At first, Moshe questioned their sincerity, however, he then gave them a condition and said that if they would come to fight with the people in the conquest of Canaan then, "Vehiyitem nekiim meiHashem umiYisroel," - "You will then be innocent and good in the eyes of Hashem and in the eyes of the people of Israel."

Now this is intriguing. Surely if the two and a half tribes were to achieve a distinction in a report card from

Hashem, it would not be necessary to receive a report card as well from the people! If they were to be found to be innocent and good in Hashem's eyes, why is it necessary to say in the eyes of the people as well?

R' Zalman Sorotzkin in his book Oznaim LeTorah' explains beautifully. He says that sometimes we find a weakness in the minds and in the hearts of some people. Perhaps they have feelings of inadequacy within themselves or perhaps they are jealous of others and this results in them trying to tear others apart, to highlight a little point where, a little point there, and as a result to declare the entire person to be 'treif'. That is why, with regard to the two and a half tribes, Hashem says that they should be 'nekiim meiHashem umiYisroel' - if they are good in the eyes of Hashem, that should be good enough for us. And the view of the nation should follow automatically.

I find this to be of enormous relevance at our time, when cancel culture is gaining strength within our society.

In Pirkei Avot, the Ethics of the Fathers, we are taught, "Vehevei dan et kol ha'adam lekaf zechut." - "You should judge every person favourably." But some explain 'kol haadam' actually to mean the whole person, meaning that when we view others we should look at the entire person, kol haadam - not just one little point concerning them but rather to see them in their entire context and as a result we we'll always be able to judge people favourably.

From Parshat Matot we learn that if someone or something is good enough in the eyes of Hashem, it should also be good enough for us.

Shabbat shalom

from: The Lamm Heritage Archives
<lammheritage@yu.edu> date: Jul 28, 2022, 5:02 PM
subject: The Disciples of Aaron

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm zt"l
Matot Masei 1960

"The Disciples of Aaron"

כיון שמת אהרון ונתעלם מהם ירדו משה ואלעזר והיו כל ישראל עומדין וחרדין ומצפין לראות מפני שהיה אוהב שלום ורודף שלום - ילק"ש רמז תשפ"ז הלל אומר: הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן, אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה - אבות פ"א מי"ב

The death of Aaron, recorded in this morning's Sidra, is described in stirring and dramatic detail in the Midrash. The people mourned for Aaron even more than they later did for Moses, for Aaron was a man who loved peace and

pursued peace. It was an eternal tribute to the first High-Priest of Israel that Hillel bade us regard ourselves as the disciples of Aron by emulating his noble qualities. They are four in numbers, and deserve to be spelled out clearly for all of us who so earnestly desire the ideals Aaron cherished.

Ohev shalom. To the man who is ambitious and opportunistic, peace is only a truce, a poor second-best to total victory for his own ruthless pursuits. In order to be a disciple of Aaron, you must not seek peace merely for its utilitarian value, not merely because it is the best arrangement under the conditions that prevail, but because you love peace, because peace is the normal, most desirable state of the world. One of G-d's names is: Shalom. Shalom is a positive virtue in its own right, not merely the absence of strife. Hence, one must not only hate war but love peace. Peace is the kind of harmony that leads to perfection; Shalom leads to shalom. Rodef shalom. To pursue peace means not to be satisfied with finding it, but actively to engage in seeking it out, in creating it where it is lacking. Aaron was a pursuer of peace. The Rabbis tell of Aaron going first to one antagonist and then to the other and telling each how the other regrets the state of enmity and wishes that bygones would be bygones. As a result of his active efforts, peace would reign.

There is yet another explanation of this felicitous phrase given by a Hasidic teacher. Peace, he says, is a virtue only when it unites decent people with each other. But peace amongst people of evil design can only lead to greater harm to the world. Therefore one must "pursue" peace, in the sense of chasing it away, when it concerns corrupt and malicious people. If we fail to "pursue" peace in this sense, then the Arab League might prove a more serious threat to Israel, the Chinese and Russians too powerful for the survival of democracy, and the gangsters of the country more influential than the forces of righteousness.

Ohev et ha-beriyot. The love of fellow man can come from many sources. I may love my fellow human because he is human. In a deeper sense, that means I love another man because I love myself, I see myself in him. There is nothing wrong with that kind of humanistic approach. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" implies we must first love ourselves. But there is always the danger that one does not really love himself. There is the danger that this kind of love exists only where I feel a kinship of

some kind between myself and the other man. But where there are pronounced differences in color or belief or background or opinion, this kind of love breaks down. Hence, Hillel tells us, we must be disciples of Aaron who loved et ha-beriyot--creatures. He loved men because they were created by G-d. In loving man he loved G-d, for the love of created and Creator were intimately bound up with each other in his eyes. And when we love a man because he is G-d's creature, then no differences between us can affect that love adversely. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, I am the Lord."

U'mekarvan le'Torah. The love of fellow creature may be expressed in many ways. Charity, respect, consideration, economic assistance, appreciation--all are signs of such love. But greatest of all is helping your fellow creature find meaning in life, assist[ing] him to appreciate why he is alive and how to spend his life in a manner that is worthy and dignified. The highest form of ohev et ha-beriyot is therefore mekarvan le'Torah. The "Netziv" of Volozhin used to say that this Mishnah urges us to love not only those who are devout and scholars, benei Torah, but--perhaps especially-- those who are distant from Torah. For the Tanna pleads with us to love people and bring them close to Torah--which means that they originally were distant from Torah, and only through our love were brought close!