



BS"D

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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON MATOS MASEI - 5785

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**Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky**

### From the Mishkan to Eretz Yisroel

Sefer Bamidbar begins and concludes with what appears to be two different images of Klal Yisroel. The sefer starts with the elaborate description of the temporary encampment in the desert. Everything revolves around the Mishkan. The inner camp of Levi'im and outer one of Yisra'elim surround the Mishkan. Meticulous care is given as to how to dismantle and transport the Mishkan. Much of parshas Naso is dedicated to the dedication of the Mishkan. The nesi'im are the ones who represent their tribes for the joyous celebration of chanukas haMishkan.

As we read the end of sefer Bamidbar there is a switch of emphasis from the temporary traveling Mishkan to the permanent state of being in Eretz Yisroel. Yet, many of the themes of life surrounding the Mishkan appear in parshas Masei concerning Eretz Yisroel, albeit in different manifestations. Unlike the transient borders of the moving Mishkan, the permanent boundaries of Eretz Yisroel are established. Levi'im and Yisra'elim areas are designated, but unlike in the Mishkan, permanent cities for Levi'im are set up. The nesi'im once again have a central role as the representatives of the people. In parshas Masei they are the ones who assist in dividing the land into permanent portions for every individual. They are no longer only involved in the inauguration of the temporary structure of the Mishkan. Emerging from these two images of the Mishkan and Eretz Yisroel is the idea that what the Mishkan was supposed to accomplish on a temporary basis would become permanent upon entering Eretz Yisroel. We think of the Beis Hamikdash as the permanent succession to the Mishkan. What is the role of Eretz Yisroel as the continuation of the Mishkan?

The Mishkan and later the Beis Hamikdash had two distinct roles. They were the center of avodas haKorbanos as well as of talmud Torah. The halacha requires that the Sanhedrin sit in the Beis Hamikdash next to the mizbeach to highlight that these dual roles merge together. "לשכנו תדרשו" - you should search out Hashem's presence" encompasses the essence of the Mikdash. It is

this proximity to Hashem that enables this relationship. Hashem allows us to approach Him through avodah and He responds to us by sharing with us His Torah. Within kedushas haMikdash there are different gradations of sanctity. The mishna in Keilim lists ten distinct areas which are endowed with different degrees of holiness. The last of these areas is Eretz Yisroel. The meforshim note that by placing Eretz Yisroel in the context of kedushas haMikdash, Chazal are highlighting that Eretz Yisroel is an extension of Mikdash.

Although actual korbanos are not brought outside of the Beis Hamikdash, we see that Eretz Yisroel, as part of the Mikdash, has unique qualities of avodah. Even in chutz la'aretz one faces Eretz Yisroel as our tefilos, which correspond to korbanos, are directed to the area in which the Shechina is present. "ארץ אשר עיני ה' אלוהיך בה", the land on which Hashem's eyes are focused on.

As an extension of makom haMikdash, we know Eretz Yisroel is the source of talmud Torah for the entire world. This is reflected in the halachos that govern semicha. The original semicha that was the formal transmission of Torah from Moshe to Yehoshua and then to subsequent generations can only be conferred in Eretz Yisroel. Only those who receive semicha are eligible to judge in many areas of halacha such as cases concerning דיני קנסות - penalties, and קידוש החודש - declaring Rosh Chodesh. Because this semicha can only be conferred in Eretz Yisroel, eventually this semicha process ended as the Jewish community in Eretz Yisroel diminished after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash.

Another dimension of Torah that is limited to Eretz Yisroel is the declaration of Rosh Chodesh and subsequently the establishment of yomim tovim. Only a beis din in Eretz Yisroel is authorized to decide when Rosh Chodesh will occur. Even today when Rosh Chodesh is established based on a set calendar, Eretz Yisroel has a central role. The Rambam teaches us that it is the Jewish community of Eretz Yisroel that follows the calendar established by the last functioning beis din for קידוש החודש in Eretz Yisroel that "declares" Rosh Chodesh for the entire world.

These two aspects of Torah, conferring semicha and establishing the yomim tovim emanate from the Beis Hamikdash.

Chazal saw in these two areas of halacha a fulfillment of the words of Yeshayahu, "כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ה' מירושלים", that Eretz Yisroel as the outermost section of the Beis Hamikdash is integral to the spread of dvar Hashem. The tradition beginning at Har Sinai and the yomim tovim cycle are dependent upon Eretz Yisroel.

The sanctity of Eretz Yisroel that emanates from the Beis Hamikdash has its original roots in Har Sinai. The Ramban in his introduction to Vayikra explains that the Har Sinai experience would be replicated in the Beis Hamikdash. We come to the Beis Hamikdash to be in close proximity to the luchos in the aron housed in the kodosh haKodoshim to reenact standing at Har Sinai. Just as we offered korbanos at Har Sinai celebrating our relationship with Hashem, we return to that kedusha that is housed in the Beis Hamikdash and rekindle our closeness to Hashem. The Beis Hamikdash serves as a permanent manifestation of "תעבדו את האלוהים על ההר הזה" - serving Hashem through Torah and korbanos on Har Sinai. Throughout Eretz Yisroel we are granted the special gift to reconnect with the Divine Presence that we encountered at Har Sinai. We have a unique opportunity for talmud Torah and avodas Hashem through tefilah corresponding to korbanos. As we mourn the loss of the Beis Hamikdash and eagerly anticipate its rebuilding, we are so grateful to Hashem for the gift in our days of Eretz Yisroel. We hope to merit to continue to serve Hashem through Torah and tefilah especially in Eretz Yisroel. We turn to Hashem to watch over the great treasure of Eretz Yisroel He has granted us. May Hashem protect the soldiers who guard Eretz Yisroel and continue to bless them as they enable all of Klal Yisroel to live safely in our beloved land of Torah and avodas Hashem. May we merit to see the end of all the troubles of Klal Yisroel including the return of the hostages and genuine peace in Eretz Yisroel. We hope to see this Tisha B'Av transformed to become the great yom tov celebrating the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash and the fulfillment in the fullest sense.

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Thoughts for Masei: **The Unpromised Land**

By **Rabbi Moshe Taragin**

Date: July 21 2025

For forty years we wandered the desert, passing through forty-two desolate locations. What was meant to be a short journey from Egypt to Israel, lasting just a few months, became a drawn-out odyssey. The original generation that left Egypt was not prepared for the challenges of life in Israel. A new generation had to emerge, and that transformation demanded forty years on the clock and forty-two stops in the wilderness. Not all forty-two desert stops were alike. Roughly fourteen of them took place during the first year, as part of the initial journey toward the promised land. After that first year, the mission was suspended; over the next thirty-eight years of aimless wandering, we camped at twenty additional locations—without clear direction and without any itinerary leading to Eretz Yisrael. We traveled in circles.

In the fortieth year, the pilgrimage to Eretz Yisrael resumed, and we advanced through another eight encampments, back on track toward the promised land. The fourteen stops of the first year and the eight of the final year both reflected purposeful movement toward Israel—interrupted by a long, wandering detour. Two years of purposeful stride, swallowed by thirty-eight years of wandering—until at last, the journey reclaimed its path.

And yet, the Torah does not restrict itself to the fourteen stops of the first year or the eight of the final year—those purposeful steps toward Eretz Yisrael. It records all forty-two, including the twenty scattered encampments across those barren years of delay. We scarcely know where these places lay, and they seem to hold no lasting religious significance. Just names written in the sand—twenty desert stretches without clear meaning. And still, each one is documented with exactness: the arrival, the departure. A ledger of movement without progress. Traveling without ever arriving. All included within Parshat Masei – a map with no end.

**Footsteps That Still Count**

By recording these stops to nowhere, the Torah validates the lives of those who wandered through this unpromised land. These were a generation stripped of their future. The promised land was no longer theirs. They were a generation destined to perish in a wilderness—walking across dry sands carrying dreams that had long since dried up. And yet, they lived. Their loss did not drain their lives of meaning. They found purpose in days that led nowhere and built lives rooted firmly in the fragile present. This generation had witnessed miraculous liberation from Egypt, seen the hand of God part the sea, and heard His voice at Sinai. Though barred from entering the promised land, they carried these moments deep within—and wove them into our national memory. For thirty-eight quiet years, without spectacle or overt miracles, they lived steady lives of faith and resolve. Even without final fulfillment, they lived lives of profound meaning.

To affirm those lives, the Torah meticulously records each stop, carefully marking every place they camped—even when no promise awaited them at journey's end. The list of desert stops honors lives lived fully in the moment, even without the long-term goal of entering the promised land. Without a future to grasp, they found meaning in the present—reminding us that the moment itself holds value, not only what lies ahead.

**Doing Vs. Being**

Modern culture centers on goals. We are judged by how productive and efficient we are. Technology accelerates the pace of life—speeding up communication, information flow, and action. This rapid pace closes the gaps between events and decisions and compresses our sense of time. We treat time like a resource to manage instead of something to live through. Under these conditions life becomes an endless treadmill of constant striving. “Being” produces no measurable output, so we become narrowly focused on “Doing”—on goals, milestones, and deadlines. Our worth is tied to what we accomplish, not who we are. As we climb the ladder of success, it becomes more difficult to breathe and savor the moment. We dream of becoming

something, not simply being. Goals and projects replace meaning and relationships.

**Speeding Through Destiny**

Life in Israel is intensely goal-oriented—not in pursuit of personal success or material gain, but in service of our national story. We have returned to our homeland with a deep sense of historical mission, guided by a larger destiny. There is a constant drive to advance that mission, to push our shared story forward. This calling shapes our national consciousness and defines our collective identity. We live with urgency and direction, always pressing toward the next stage of our historical journey—deeply goal-oriented at our core.

This national urgency is only heightened by the pace of daily life in Israel. The news cycle here moves at a relentless speed. We are currently facing a war on seven fronts, while still grappling with the challenge of rebuilding our fractured social fabric. Today's headlines quickly become tomorrow's history, often before we've had a chance to absorb or process them. Life in Israel is deeply meaningful and often inspiring—but it can also leave us breathless and dizzy.

**Writing History While Trying to Breathe**

If life in Israel is generally shaped by national goals, the past two years have only intensified that mindset. In the shadow of crisis and war, we have worked tirelessly toward clear, urgent objectives: removing the threats facing our country on multiple fronts and bringing our hostages home safely. These goals have become the measure of our collective energy, hope, and frustration. Thank God, we have seen meaningful successes—but some of these goals remain painfully out of reach, stubborn and unyielding despite our efforts. An entire nation shares common goals, even if we sometimes differ on which to prioritize. It has become increasingly difficult to live in the moment. We are living through visionary events, with our eyes constantly fixed on the future. We know that future generations will record the very days we are now experiencing. We are aware that we are writing history—and we are willing to make sacrifices for that historical calling. Yet alongside that drive, there is value in trying to live in the moment—to “be”, not only to “do”. It means allowing ourselves to experience life as it unfolds, even as our attention is pulled toward what lies ahead. Easier said than done.

**Oasis in the Unpromised Land**

Beyond its lesson about the power of “being” over mere “doing,” the story of the desert encampments carries a quiet but enduring historical resonance. For thousands of years, Jews lived in exile without hope of return. The idea of even visiting the homeland was a distant dream, beyond the reach of time and possibility. Yet during those desert stops, our people built rich lives of meaning and spirit. They clung to faith under difficult circumstances and never abandoned the dream of returning to the land.

In modern Israel, there is a tendency to undervalue this period of Jewish history. It doesn't fit neatly into the contemporary narrative of a strong country inhabited by strong people. In secular sectors especially, it can be difficult to reconcile the struggles of exile with the achievements of the modern state. Religious Jews find this connection more natural, as the chain of tradition and mitzvot binds past to present.

It is crucial not to sever modern Jewish history from the desert experience of the past two thousand years. The Torah records an anonymous desert dunes simply because Jews lived there and infused them with meaning. Likewise, we must not overlook the many places where Jews have lived for millennia—places where they built lives of deep religious and historical meaning. We lived in the desert but built an oasis of Jewish spirit.

Life in the unpromised land still counts.

The writer is a rabbi at the hesder pre-military Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, with YU ordination and an MA in English literature. His books include *To Be Holy but Human: Reflections Upon My Rebbe*, HaRav Yehuda Amital, available at [mtaraginbooks.com](http://mtaraginbooks.com).

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subject: Covenant and Conversation

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

## Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

### The Prophetic Voice

#### Matot, Masei

time symbols with sundial and sea moon ancient scroll clock and prophecy scroll copy

During the three weeks between 17 Tammuz and Tisha b'Av, as we recall the destruction of the Temples, we read three of the most searing passages in the prophetic literature, the first two from the opening of the book of Jeremiah, the third, next week, from the first chapter of Isaiah.

At perhaps no other time of the year are we so acutely aware of the enduring force of ancient Israel's great visionaries. The prophets had no power. They were not kings or members of the royal court. They were (usually) not priests or members of the religious establishment. They held no office. They were not elected. Often they were deeply unpopular, none more so than the author of this week's Haftara, Jeremiah, who was arrested, flogged, abused, put on trial, and only narrowly escaped with his life. Only rarely were the prophets heeded in their lifetimes.[1] Yet their words were recorded for posterity and became a major feature of Tanach, the Hebrew Bible. They were the world's first social critics, and their message continues through the centuries. As Kierkegaard almost said: when a king dies, his power ends; when a prophet dies his influence begins.[2]

What was distinctive about the prophet was not that he foretold the future. The ancient world was full of such people: soothsayers, oracles, readers of runes, shamans, and other diviners, each of whom claimed inside track with the forces that govern fate and "shape our ends, rough-hew them how we will." Judaism has no time for such people. The Torah bans one "who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead" (Deut. 18:10-11). It disbelieves such practices because it believes in human freedom. The future is not pre-scripted. It depends on us and the choices we make. If a prediction comes true it has succeeded; if a prophecy comes true it has failed. The prophet tells of the future that will happen if we do not heed the danger and mend our ways. He (or she – there were seven biblical prophetesses) does not predict; he or she warns.

Nor was the prophet distinctive in blessing or cursing the people. That was Bilaam's gift, not Isaiah's or Jeremiah's. In Judaism, blessing comes through priests not prophets.

Several things made the prophets unique. The first was his or her sense of history. The prophets were the first people to see God in history. We tend to take our sense of time for granted. Time happens. Time flows. As the saying goes, time is God's way of keeping everything from happening at once. But actually there are several ways of relating to time and different civilisations have perceived it differently.

There is cyclical time: time as the slow turning of the seasons, or the cycle of birth, growth, decline and death. Cyclical time is time as it occurs in nature. Some trees have long lives; most fruit flies have short ones; but all that lives, dies. The species endures, individual members do not. In Kohelet we read the most famous expression of cyclical time in Judaism:

"The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course ... What has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun."

Then there is linear time: time as an inexorable sequence of cause and effect. The French astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace gave this idea its most famous expression in 1814 when he said that if you "know all forces that set nature in motion, and all positions of all items of which nature is composed," together with all the laws of physics and chemistry, then "nothing would be uncertain and the future just like the past would be present" before your eyes. Karl Marx applied this idea to society and history. It is known as historical inevitability, and when transferred to the affairs of humankind it amounts to a massive denial of personal freedom.

Finally there is time as a mere sequence of events with no underlying plot or theme. This leads to the kind of historical writing pioneered by the scholars of ancient Greece, Herodotus and Thucydides.

Each of these has its place, the first in biology, the second in physics, the third in secular history, but none was time as the prophets understood it. The prophets saw time as the arena in which the great drama between God and humanity was played out, especially in the history of Israel. If Israel was faithful to its mission, its covenant, then it would flourish.

If it was unfaithful it would fail. It would suffer defeat and exile. That is what Jeremiah never tired of telling his contemporaries.

The second prophetic insight was the unbreakable connection between monotheism and morality. Somehow the prophets sensed – it is implicit in all their words, though they do not explain it explicitly – that idolatry was not just false. It was also corrupting. It saw the universe as a multiplicity of powers that often clashed. The battle went to the strong. Might defeated right. The fittest survived while the weak perished. Nietzsche believed this, as did the social Darwinists.

The prophets opposed this with all their force. For them the power of God was secondary; what mattered was the righteousness of God. Precisely because God loved and had redeemed Israel, Israel owed Him loyalty as their sole ultimate sovereign, and if they were unfaithful to God they would also be unfaithful to their fellow humans. They would lie, rob, cheat, etc. Jeremiah doubts whether there was one honest person in the whole of Jerusalem (Jer. 5:1). They would become sexually adulterous and promiscuous:

"I supplied all their needs, yet they committed adultery and thronged to the houses of prostitutes. They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for another man's wife."

Jer. 5:7-8 Their third great insight was the primacy of ethics over politics. The prophets have surprisingly little to say about politics. Yes, Samuel was wary of monarchy, but we find almost nothing in Isaiah or Jeremiah about the way Israel/Judah should be governed. Instead we hear a constant insistence that the strength of a nation – certainly of Israel/Judah – is not military or demographic but moral and spiritual. If the people keep faith with God and one another, no force on earth can defeat them. If they do not, no force can save them. As Jeremiah says in this week's Haftara, they will discover too late that their false gods offered false comfort:

They say to wood, 'You are my father,' and to stone, 'You gave me birth.' They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, 'Come and save us!' Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble! For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah.

Jer. 2:27-28 Jeremiah, the most passionate and tormented of all the prophets, has gone down in history as the prophet of doom. Yet this is unfair. He was also supremely a prophet of hope. He is the man who said that the people of Israel will be "as eternal as the laws of the sun, moon, and stars" (Jer. 31:35). He is the man who, while the Babylonians were laying siege to Jerusalem, bought a field as a public gesture of faith that Jews would return from exile: "For this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land." Jer. 32:15 Jeremiah's feelings of doom and hope were not in conflict: they were two sides of the same coin. The God who sentenced His people to exile would be the God who brought them back, for though His people might forsake Him, He would never forsake them. Jeremiah may have lost faith in people; he never lost faith in God.

Prophecy ceased in Israel with Haggai, Zekhariah, and Malachi in the Second Temple era. But the prophetic truths have not ceased to be true. Only by being faithful to God do people stay faithful to one another. Only by being open to a power greater than themselves do people become greater than themselves. Only by understanding the deep forces that shape history can a people defeat the ravages of history. It took a long time for biblical Israel to learn these truths, and a very long time indeed before they returned to their land, re-entering the arena of history. We must never forget them again.

[1] The one clear exception was Jonah, and he spoke to non-Jews, the citizens of Nineveh.[2] Kierkegaard actually said: "The tyrant dies and his

rule is over; the martyr dies and his rule begins.” Kierkegaard, *Papers and Journals*, 352.

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[Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski's 85th Yahrzeit is this coming Wednesday  
Heh Av 5700]

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**Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky zt"l: A Life of Torah Leadership in a Turbulent Era**  
May 13, 2025

By **Rabbi Yair Hoffman** Early Life and Background in Historical Context  
Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky zt"l was born in 1863 (5623) in Ivye, a small town near Vilna, during a period of significant transition for European Jewry. The 1860s marked a time when the Russian Empire, under Czar Alexander II, initially implemented more liberal policies toward Jews, only to be followed by increased restrictions and pogroms after his assassination in 1881. Rabbi Chaim Ozer was born into a family with a distinguished rabbinic lineage at a time when traditional Jewish life was beginning to face modern challenges including the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), secularization, and political movements that would transform Jewish communities.

His father, Rabbi David Shlomo, served as Rav of Ivye for forty years, a position previously held by Chaim Ozer's grandfather for forty years before that. His father was a student of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, the founder of the Mussar movement, establishing a family connection to this ethical tradition that would influence Rabbi Chaim Ozer throughout his life. Rabbi Yisrael Salanter had established the Mussar movement in response to the spiritual and ethical challenges facing 19th-century Lithuanian Jewry, and this connection would shape Rabbi Chaim Ozer's approach to leadership in times of rapid change.

From his earliest years, Chaim Ozer displayed extraordinary intellectual gifts. He possessed what many described as an infallible memory—something he himself noted he never experienced “forgetting” until his old age. This remarkable ability was demonstrated at his Bar Mitzvah when, instead of delivering the customary drashah (sermon), he invited guests to “open any page in the Ktzos Hachoshen or in the Nesivos Hamishpat (classic commentaries on Shulchan Aruch), and I'll recite it from memory.” The guests took up his challenge, and he responded—page after page—without missing a word.

**Torah Education and Marriage**

At age fifteen, Chaim Ozer entered the renowned Volozhin Yeshiva, which was the premier center of Torah learning in Eastern Europe and the model for the modern Lithuanian yeshiva system. This was during the tenure of Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (the Netziv), who served as the head of Volozhin from 1853 to 1892. Despite his youth, Chaim Ozer was immediately accepted into Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik's (Rabbi Chaim Brisker's) select study group—a testament to his exceptional abilities. The analytical “Brisker method” of Talmud study pioneered by Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik would become one of the dominant approaches in the yeshiva world, and Rabbi Chaim Ozer's early exposure to this methodology helped shape his own approach to Torah learning.

During this era, the Volozhin Yeshiva was facing increasing pressure from the Russian government to include secular studies in its curriculum, which the leadership resisted. This tension ultimately led to the yeshiva's forced closure in 1892, illustrating the difficult position of traditional Jewish institutions under Imperial Russian rule—a challenge that would inform Rabbi Chaim Ozer's later leadership during similar political pressures. At twenty, while passing through Vilna, his reputation preceded him. After delivering an impressive shiur (Torah lecture) to a learned group there, he became the target of every matchmaker in the city. Following his father's advice—who was a student of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter—he married the daughter of Reb Lazer, a dayan (judge) in Vilna and son-in-law of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter.

A fascinating din Torah (legal dispute) actually arose regarding Rabbi Chaim Ozer's marriage. One claimant argued that since he had given the young

scholar his “derech in lernen” (approach to Torah study), he held a spiritual claim over him. Reb Lazer countered that he had a physical claim, having arranged Rabbi Chaim Ozer's “green billet” (exemption slip) from the Czar's army. This exemption was particularly valuable as military service for Jews in Czarist Russia often lasted up to 25 years and made religious observance nearly impossible. After Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan, the revered Kovno Rav, had a Torah discussion with the young man, he remarked, “If I had a daughter, I would want him for my own son-in-law.” Neither knew that, under his father's guidance, Rabbi Chaim Ozer had already made his own selection.

He had initially expected to dedicate himself exclusively to Torah study in his father-in-law's house, following the traditional kollel arrangement common in Lithuanian Jewish society. However, after just two years, Reb Lazer passed away, and the Vilna community requested that the young Chaim Ozer take his father-in-law's position. At only twenty-two years old, he joined Vilna's rabbinat—a group of elderly, scholarly dayanim that had governed the city's religious affairs since the time of the Vilna Gaon, as Vilna traditionally had no official rabbi.

**Leadership in Vilna and Beyond**

Over the next fifty-five years, Rabbi Chaim Ozer emerged as the unofficial Rav of Vilna. His tenure spanned dramatic historical periods including the end of Czarist Russia, World War I, the Russian Revolution, the brief independence of Lithuania, and the lead-up to World War II. Vilna itself changed hands multiple times during this period, moving from Russian to German to Polish and finally Lithuanian control. These political shifts created enormous practical challenges for the Jewish community, requiring Rabbi Chaim Ozer to navigate relationships with multiple governments and adapt communal institutions to changing legal frameworks.

His vast Torah knowledge, complemented by great wisdom, made him an indispensable leader. Soon, no convention of Torah leaders (gedolim) took place without his participation—usually as the presiding officer. It became a common sight to see elder Torah scholars, great in learning and years, leaning forward to catch every word from the lips of the young man with the jet-black beard.

His leadership extended far beyond Vilna. Communities worldwide, from Jerusalem to Lomza, consulted him when seeking a Rav or Rosh Yeshiva. His recommendations were always perfectly suitable, as he knew the unique character of each community and could match them with the right leader. For Dvinsk, he recommended an unknown young man learning in his father-in-law's house in Bialystok—Rabbi Meir Simcha, later known by the name of his sefer, the Or Same'ach. For Lomza, he recommended his student, the Rav of his hometown Ivye, Rabbi Moshe Shatzkes.

Among those who received semicha (rabbinic ordination) and kaballah (recognition of advanced status) from Rabbi Chaim Ozer was Rav Avrohom Hoffman z"l, the great-grandfather of this biographical account's author—a testament to Rabbi Chaim Ozer's far-reaching influence on subsequent generations of rabbinical leaders.

**The Special Relationship with Rav Eliezer Silver**

Rabbi Chaim Ozer had a particularly close relationship with Rav Eliezer Silver, who would become one of the most prominent American rabbinic leaders of the 20th century. Their connection began when Rav Silver was a young student in Rabbi Chaim Ozer's unique “Kibbutz” in Vilna. Rav Silver quickly distinguished himself through his brilliance and dedication, becoming one of Rabbi Chaim Ozer's closest disciples.

When Rav Silver emigrated to America in 1907, unlike many European rabbis who viewed America as a spiritual wasteland (the “treife medinah”), Rabbi Chaim Ozer saw an opportunity. He charged his student with a sacred mission: to establish authentic Torah Judaism in America and create institutions that would preserve traditional learning and observance in the New World. This foresight was remarkable at a time when most European rabbinical leaders had little hope for American Jewry's spiritual future. Their correspondence continued for decades, with Rabbi Chaim Ozer providing guidance on the complex halachic questions arising in America and advice on building Jewish institutions in a secular environment. When

Rav Silver became a leading figure in American Orthodox Judaism as the Rav of Cincinnati and later as the founding president of Agudath Israel of America, he continued to consult with his mentor on all major decisions. During the interwar period, Rav Silver made several return trips to Europe to meet with Rabbi Chaim Ozer. These meetings were not merely student-teacher reunions but strategic planning sessions for the future of Torah Judaism. Rabbi Chaim Ozer entrusted Rav Silver with raising funds from American Jews for the struggling yeshivas of Eastern Europe, which faced financial collapse after World War I due to the economic devastation and political changes in the region.

Their relationship became even more crucial in the late 1930s as the Nazi threat grew. Rabbi Chaim Ozer relied heavily on Rav Silver's American connections to secure visas and affidavits for European rabbinic leaders and yeshiva students. Rav Silver, following his mentor's guidance, became instrumental in establishing the Vaad Hatzalah (Rescue Committee) in America, which would save countless lives. Though Rabbi Chaim Ozer did not live to see the full horrors of the Holocaust, his preparatory work with Rav Silver laid the groundwork for rescue efforts that would preserve a remnant of European Torah scholarship.

In his eulogy for Rabbi Chaim Ozer, Rav Silver recalled that his teacher had once told him, "The fire of Torah that has burned in Europe for centuries must not be extinguished. If it dims here, you must ensure it blazes in America." This charge shaped Rav Silver's life mission and contributed significantly to the post-Holocaust rebuilding of Torah Judaism in America.

#### Political and Organizational Leadership

##### The European Political Climate

Rabbi Chaim Ozer's leadership unfolded against a backdrop of profound political upheaval. The early 20th century saw the Russian Empire's collapse, followed by World War I, the Russian Revolution, the creation of independent Baltic states, Polish independence, and the rising threats of Soviet communism and German Nazism.

During World War I (1914-1918), Vilna and surrounding areas were occupied by German forces, creating severe hardships for the Jewish population. Food shortages, forced labor, and restrictions on movement disrupted communal life. Rabbi Chaim Ozer worked tirelessly with relief organizations to distribute food and medicine to the suffering population. The war's aftermath brought further challenges as borders were redrawn and new nation-states emerged from the fallen empires.

The Treaty of Versailles and subsequent arrangements placed Vilna under Polish control, despite Lithuanian claims to the city as their historical capital. This created a complicated political situation where Vilna's Jews had to adapt to Polish governance, language requirements, and educational policies that often disadvantaged minorities. Rabbi Chaim Ozer became adept at negotiating with Polish authorities to protect Jewish religious and educational institutions from interference.

In 1909, he participated in a meeting in Hamburg, Germany, that was the precursor to Agudath Israel, whose main goal was to combat both secular Zionism and religious Zionism. Rabbi Chaim Ozer was one of the founders of Agudath Israel (officially established in Kattowitz, Silesia, in 1912) and served as the first chairman of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages), a position he held throughout his life.

He also co-founded and actively led the Va'ad ha-Yeshivot (Council of the Yeshivot), an umbrella organization based in Vilnius that provided material and spiritual support for yeshivot throughout eastern Poland from 1924 to 1939. Through this organization, he helped sustain Torah learning during economically and politically challenging times, particularly during the Great Depression which devastated the already fragile economies of Eastern Europe.

His influence extended to America as well. When his student Rabbi Eliezer Silver became the founding president of Agudath Israel of America, Rabbi Chaim Ozer sent personal greetings. He also instructed Rabbi Shlomo Heiman, Rosh Yeshiva of Mesifita Torah Vodaath, to participate in the first American Agudath Israel Convention in Far Rockaway in 1937 and to accept the vice-presidency of the organization, despite Rabbi Heiman's usual

reluctance toward public affairs. Rabbi Chaim Ozer urged him to make an exception since "to associate with Agudath Israel in any way possible is a Kiddush Hashem (sanctification of God's name)."

Even the Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan) would not initiate any public action or sign any public document without first consulting Rabbi Chaim Ozer, whom he considered a living embodiment of Torah. Their mutual respect was evident in an incident when both were to sign a public proclamation—the Chofetz Chaim insisted Rabbi Chaim Ozer sign first as he represented "Kavod HaTorah" (the honor of Torah) and was the "Moreh of Klal Yisrael" (teacher of all Israel). Rabbi Chaim Ozer countered that the Chofetz Chaim embodied both "Kavod HaTorah and venerable old age." Eventually, Rabbi Chaim Ozer prevailed by citing "Vekidashto—you shall sanctify the kohen," noting that the Chofetz Chaim was a kohen. The Chofetz Chaim agreed, but only on condition that Rabbi Chaim Ozer sign alongside his signature, not on the following line.

##### Supporting Rav Aharon Kotler and Kletzk Yeshiva

Among the many yeshivas that Rabbi Chaim Ozer supported, his relationship with Rav Aharon Kotler and the Kletzk Yeshiva was particularly significant. Rav Aharon Kotler, who would later become a transformative figure in American Torah Judaism as the founder of Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, was then the young Rosh Yeshiva of Kletzk, having assumed leadership of the institution in 1921 at the age of 30.

The economic situation in interwar Poland was extremely challenging for yeshivas. The country's economy had been devastated by World War I, and the Polish zloty suffered from severe inflation throughout the 1920s. The global Great Depression that began in 1929 further exacerbated these difficulties, as American and Western European donors—who had traditionally supported Eastern European yeshivas—could no longer provide the same level of assistance.

During this crisis, Rav Aharon Kotler would frequently write to Rav Chaim Ozer. The letters were often centered on the dire financial situation at Kletzk Yeshiva, where students sometimes went without food and basic necessities. On multiple occasions, Rabbi Chaim Ozer would immediately contact wealthy supporters or redirect funds from his own charitable collections to ensure that Kletzk Yeshiva could continue operating.

One particularly harsh winter in the early 1930s, when economic conditions in Poland had reached a breaking point, Rav Kotler wrote him with news that the yeshiva was about to close its doors. The building had no heat, there was no money for food, and creditors were threatening legal action. Rabbi Chaim Ozer, despite managing the financial crises of dozens of yeshivas simultaneously, took special interest in Kletzk because of his deep respect for Rav Kotler's brilliance and teaching methods, which he saw as vital to the future of Torah scholarship.

Rabbi Chaim Ozer immediately arranged an emergency meeting with several wealthy businessmen in Vilna. According to witnesses, he told them, "In Kletzk, Rav Aharon is developing a new generation of Torah giants who will preserve our tradition through whatever difficulties lie ahead. If you want a share in the world to come, this is your opportunity." Within hours, he had secured enough funds to cover the yeshiva's immediate debts and operating expenses for several months.

The relationship between these two Torah giants extended beyond financial matters. Rabbi Chaim Ozer greatly respected Rav Kotler's innovative approach to Talmudic analysis and would often discuss complex halachic issues with him. For his part, Rav Kotler considered Rabbi Chaim Ozer his primary mentor in communal leadership and would later apply many of the lessons learned from him when establishing Torah institutions in America after World War II.

##### Vaad Hatzalah and Rescue Work

As Europe descended into chaos with the rise of Nazism, Rabbi Chaim Ozer became a central figure in rescue efforts. His work with the Vaad Hatzalah (Rescue Committee) was crucial in saving numerous lives, particularly those of Torah scholars and yeshiva students.

The Nazi rise to power in Germany in 1933 immediately raised alarms for Rabbi Chaim Ozer, who recognized the existential threat long before many

political leaders did. He began working with international Jewish organizations to help German Jews emigrate and find refuge in other countries. His extensive network of contacts with rabbinic leaders worldwide proved invaluable in securing placements for displaced scholars and students.

When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Rabbi Chaim Ozer played an instrumental role in preserving Lithuanian, Polish, and Russian yeshivas by arranging for them to relocate to Lithuanian cities, which remained neutral initially. This effort became even more urgent when the Soviets occupied eastern Poland as part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, putting yeshivas in those territories at risk of forced closure under Communist rule.

The Soviet annexation of the Baltic states in June 1940 created a narrow window of opportunity for many refugees to obtain transit visas through the efforts of diplomats like Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Kaunas, and Jan Zwartendijk, the Dutch consul. Rabbi Chaim Ozer was instrumental in coordinating these rescue efforts, working tirelessly despite his failing health.

For people worldwide, organizations like the Joint Distribution Committee, Vaad Hatzalah, and the Haffkine Fund all had one address for both donors and recipients: Rabbi Chaim Ozer's home. Regarding the Haffkine Fund—established by Dr. Waldemar Haffkine, who became a ba'al teshuvah (returnee to religious observance) after inventing a serum that arrested a cholera epidemic—Rabbi Chaim Ozer remarked, “Dr. Haffkine devised not only a serum against cholera but also a serum for Klal Yisrael—that is, for the yeshivos.”

**Personal Character and Chessed (Kindness)**Rabbi Chaim Ozer's home was open to all, day and night, without appointments. His house was constantly filled with people—the sick, widows, orphans, rabbis, heads of yeshivas, and visitors from around the world. Observers wondered when he found time for study, yet he published three volumes of his monumental responsa, *Achiezer*, which addressed complex contemporary halachic issues.

His compassion extended to individuals in need. Once, when a young orphan girl came to him for financial help before her wedding, he discovered she had not learned the laws of family purity. He invited her to his office and, while looking out the window to preserve her dignity, instructed her in detail about these essential laws.

Despite his busy public life, his mind remained disciplined for Torah study. He would simultaneously write responsa on halakhah, give orders to secretaries, and speak on the telephone. This remarkable ability to manage multiple complex tasks reflected the disciplined thinking developed through decades of intensive Talmudic study.

Perhaps most remarkable was his spiritual stamina. When his only child, a girl of seventeen, became ill and was bedridden for three years before passing away at twenty, his communal activities and scholarly writing did not diminish. This personal tragedy occurred during a particularly difficult period for European Jewry, and Rabbi Chaim Ozer reportedly said, “Now I can better understand and share the pain of my people.”

**Summer at Druskenik**

Druskenik, a town surrounded by forests and known for its “dry air,” was a popular recuperation spot recommended by Polish doctors. Being close to both Grodno and Vilna, Rabbi Chaim Ozer, along with other Torah giants like Rabbi Shimon Shkop, Rabbi Boruch Ber of Kamenitz, and Rabbi Aharon Kotler, would vacation there.

The local Jewish community eagerly awaited these summer months when every house became a “hotel” with all available space rented out. Despite the commercialization, Torah students in need of respite were never without accommodation, as the local rabbi and his son headed a committee arranging free room and board for them. This created a “yeshiva corner” in the forest, away from more worldly activities.

When Rabbi Chaim Ozer arrived in Druskenik, the local rabbi would struggle to find suitable accommodation for him. Though Rabbi Chaim Ozer claimed to need only a bed for himself and a bookcase for his sefarim (books), the rabbi knew better—as leader of world Jewry, the hundreds of

daily letters with questions and problems had to be answered even during vacation, and visitors, dignitaries, and government officials continued to seek his counsel.

In a characteristic display of his concern for others, upon being shown a suitable house in Druskenik, Rabbi Chaim Ozer insisted on checking with “her” before accepting it. When onlookers assumed he meant his wife (though he was a widower), it turned out he was referring to his cook. The kitchen was far from the dining room, and he worried the distance would be too tiring for her when serving meals. Only after the cook arrived and approved the quarters did he accept the accommodation.

These summer gatherings in Druskenik also served an important strategic purpose, providing an opportunity for the leading Torah authorities to discuss pressing issues facing Jewish communities throughout Europe. Many significant policy decisions of Agudath Israel and the Va'ad ha-Yeshivot were formulated during these seemingly casual summer conversations among the rabbinic leadership.

**The Political Climate and Final Years**

The political situation surrounding Rabbi Chaim Ozer's final years was dire. Nazi Germany loomed to the west and south, threatening physical annihilation, while Soviet troops positioned themselves to the east and north, poised to obliterate Jewish spiritual life. Lithuania's defenses were minimal—one observer derisively noted their “crack troops” consisted merely of “a dozen small tanks, followed by an army on bicycles wearing white gloves, with rifles hanging from their shoulders.”

On October 10, 1939, the Soviets forced Lithuania to grant them military bases in exchange for returning Vilna as their capital, adding Vilna's Jews to the existing Lithuanian Jewish community. With Germany's attack on Poland in September 1939, Lithuania became overwhelmed with yeshiva students and thousands of other refugees fleeing Poland. Nine months later, on June 14, 1940, the Soviets delivered an ultimatum to the Lithuanian government, and by July 21, they had annexed Lithuania as a Soviet Republic.

For four years, only Rabbi Chaim Ozer and his immediate family knew that he suffered from cancer. He showed no visible signs of his terrible suffering, maintaining a smile on his face. He refused hospitalization, aware of his responsibilities to world Jewry and the yeshivas that rested on his shoulders. When he finally did enter the hospital, his communal work continued—including answering the steady stream of halachic queries from around the world.

**Final Hours and Legacy**

On the last Thursday night of his life, Rabbi Chaim Ozer issued orders regarding the dispersal of all charity funds in his care. To visitors in his room, he said, “Good night,” then whispered, “Who can be zocheh (merit) to having a good night? Even so, I have no tynes (grievances), chas veshalom, to the Ribono Shel Olam (G-d).”

He passed away on Friday, August 9, 1939 (5 Av 5700), just weeks before World War II officially began with Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1. The hospital was three kilometers from the city, but as soon as news of his passing reached Vilna, the entire road filled with mourners.

Torah scholars were assigned to carry his remains on their shoulders to the city limits, then placed them on a wagon, fearing Soviet authorities' reaction to any unusual demonstration. His body was placed in the room where he had studied Torah, rendered decisions on halachic questions, and dispensed chesed and tzedakah for fifty-five years. There, until Sunday, Torah scholars recited Tehillim (Psalms) and studied his sefarim day and night.

Those arranging his funeral were haunted by a previous experience with the Soviets at the funeral of Reb Lazer, the Minsker Gadol, when authorities arrested all the eulogizers and many mourners. Some suggested a quiet funeral for Rabbi Chaim Ozer, but this was deemed impossible—surely all of Vilna would attend regardless. The decision was made to hold a public funeral without securing Soviet permission, with Rabbi Yoseif Shuv, Rabbi Chaim Ozer's secretary, taking full responsibility should authorities challenge the proceedings.

On Sunday morning, Vilna's entire Jewish populace gathered, joined by yeshiva students and refugees to whom he had been a father figure. The first eulogy was delivered at his house by the head of the rabbinical court, the aged Rabbi Henoch Eigesh. The procession then moved to the big shul (synagogue), where Rabbi Shatzkes and Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin (Lutzker Rav) spoke. The procession continued, stopping every few blocks, with makeshift platforms erected for speakers. In total, forty eulogies were delivered. Rather than interfering, the Soviets dispatched militiamen to preserve order. At the graveside, thousands of tzetlach (notes) with requests were thrown into the grave—the soldiers ensuring they all reached their destination, fearing some might contain anti-Soviet propaganda. The timing of Rabbi Chaim Ozer's passing, just weeks before the outbreak of World War II, was viewed by many as significant. Some quoted the Talmudic teaching that God sometimes takes the righteous before calamity strikes so they will not witness the suffering of their people. Others noted that his death marked the end of an era of relative stability for Eastern European Jewry, which would soon be devastated beyond recognition.

#### His Final Decisions

Rabbi Chaim Ozer's last three halakhic rulings reflected his principled leadership:

When students of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin who had escaped to Vilna wanted to join Yeshivas Mir, he ruled against it, explaining that every yeshiva has a rightful place in Klal Yisrael (the Jewish nation), and no one has the right to dissolve a yeshiva, especially one like Chachmei Lublin. While he did appoint Rabbi Moshe Shatzkes as Rosh Yeshiva for the Grodno yeshiva when its students arrived in Vilna, he did not appoint anyone for Chachmei Lublin, apparently because he did not know a qualified Hasidic Torah scholar in Vilna, which was essential to preserve the yeshiva's character.

When asked who should receive the limited visas to leave Vilna—older rabbis and Roshei Yeshiva or younger ones—a life-and-death question as everyone expected to eventually fall victim to either the Russians or Germans—he ruled that older rabbis should receive priority, believing they would work tirelessly to secure visas for those left behind. (Rabbi Chaim Ozer himself could have gone to the country of his choice but refused to abandon Vilna.)

His final recorded responsum, addressed to the Swiss Rabbinate regarding whether stunning animals with electric shock before ritual slaughter was permissible to conform with Swiss law (as Nazi occupation had cut off kosher meat imports), was a resounding “No.” He concluded: “The Jews are an ancient people—old and gray from tzaros (troubles) and enemies. Yet all its enemies of the past have vanished and the Jews are still in existence. In times such as these, every one is called upon to demonstrate mesiras nefesh (self-sacrifice) even for a rabbinical ordinance—most assuredly in our case, when a Torah prohibition is involved.”

#### Conclusion

Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky was called “Ish Ha'Eshkolos—The Man of Clusters,” a Talmudic term explained as “a man who has everything in him.” Rashi elaborates: “True understanding of Torah, without falsehood, without forgetfulness, nor is he argumentative.”

His passing came as the third devastating blow to Klal Yisrael in ten months. On 9 Cheshvan, the Jewish world had lost Rabbi Shimon Shkop, who had been Rosh Yeshiva in Telshe for 25 years, then in Brainsk and in Grodno. The beloved Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Boruch Ber Levovitz of Kamenitz, died on 5 Kislev. And now the Rav of all Rabbanim, the leader of all yeshivos, supreme authority over the poskim—Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky—had left them. As one witness described, “Each individual was personally wounded, as was evident as old men cried like children. One hundred thousand weeping people!”

With his passing, many believed a tekufah (era) had come to an end, as explained by the Dubner Maggid—when a man of such greatness who lights up the world with his knowledge and wisdom passes, a darkness fills the world, marking the end of one era and the beginning of another. In his eulogy for the Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman quoted this

explanation from the Dubner Maggid regarding the Vilna Gaon, applying it equally to the Chofetz Chaim—and now it applied to Rabbi Chaim Ozer as well. The ensuing era was aptly described by Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman as “Ikvesa D' meshicha”—the chaotic period immediately preceding the Messiah's arrival.

Rabbi Chaim Ozer's legacy continues through the institutions he supported and the leaders he mentored. In America, his students Rav Eliezer Silver and later Rav Aharon Kotler would become pillars of Orthodox Judaism, building upon the foundations he had established. The rescue networks he helped create saved thousands during the Holocaust, and his halachic decisions continue to guide contemporary poskim. Perhaps most importantly, his model of selfless leadership, combining vast Torah knowledge with practical wisdom and limitless compassion, remains an inspiration for Jewish leaders facing the challenges of modern times.

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from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <[iraz@klalgovoa.org](mailto:iraz@klalgovoa.org)>

date: Jul 24, 2025, 7:01 PM

subject: Tidbits • Parashas Mattos-Masei 5785

Parashas Mattos-Masei • July 26th • Rosh Chodesh Av 5785

The sorts of tidbits my father, Rav Meir Zlotowitz zt"l, made sure his family was up to date on from the mundane, to the profound, to the 'thanks for reminding me!'

#### **Klal Gavoah in Memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz ZTL**

Shabbos Rosh Chodesh

Parashas Mattos-Masei • July 26th • Rosh Chodesh Av 5785

This Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh Av. Yaaleh Veyavo is included in Shemoneh Esrei and Bircas Hamazon. Hallel is added after Shemoneh Esrei of Shacharis. Two Sifrei Torah are taken out; maftir for Rosh Chodesh is leined (Bamidbar 28:9-15) from the second sefer. Although it is Rosh Chodesh, most congregations lein the haftarah of Masei (“Shim'u”) - the second in the series of the Shalosh D'Puranusa (three Haftaros of Chastisement) - instead of the haftarah for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh. Some, however, do lein the haftarah of Rosh Chodesh (Yeshaya 66:1-24) or add select verses from this Haftarah. Av Harachamim is omitted. Shabbos Rosh Chodesh's “Ata Yatzarta” replaces the standard Mussaf of Shabbos. Borchi Nafshi is said at the end of davening. Tzidkas'cha is omitted at Mincha.

#### The Nine Days

The Nine Days begin on the evening of Rosh Chodesh Av, Friday night, July 25th at shekiya. The restrictions of the Three Weeks remain in effect (see Tidbits on Parashas Balak - The Three weeks) in addition to the following restrictions: Consuming Meat and Wine. Eating meat or chicken is prohibited. Wine is prohibited, but alcoholic beverages not from grapes are permitted. There are no restrictions on Shabbos or at a Seudas Mitzvah. There is room for leniency for health reasons. Children above the age of 3 should preferably not be fed meat unless the child refuses other foods. One who customarily uses wine for Havdalah may drink the wine. However, many have the minhag to give it to a boy who is a minor of chinuch age (6 or 7, but preferably a child who does not understand the concept of mourning). Some simply use beer instead. Purchasing Clothing and Expensive Items. This prohibition includes all types of clothing. There is room for leniency for: newborns and young children; an uncommon sale; an item that will be unavailable after Tishah B'Av; exchanging an item for a similar item; and footwear for Tishah B'Av.

Fashioning & Alterations of New Garments. Laundering and Dry Cleaning. There is room for leniency for: young children, spot cleaning, laundering to prevent permanent stains, laundry needed for a mitzvah, picking up previously cleaned clothes from dry cleaners, washclothes used for cleaning, ironing Shabbos clothes and tablecloths. Wearing New or Freshly Laundered Clothes and Linen. Before the Nine Days begin, one should briefly wear freshly laundered clothing and briefly utilize any fresh towels or linen to remove its freshness. A newly arrived guest may use fresh linens. Freshly laundered clothes may be worn on Shabbos of the Nine Days. (Note, clothes which are worn on Shabbos, even briefly, lose their freshness and become

suitable for the Nine Days. However, clothing which is not suitable for Shabbos may not be worn solely for the purpose of removing its freshness due to the prohibition of hachanah. Home Decorating and Moving. Swimming and Showering. Washing hands, face, and feet with cool water is permissible. The purpose of the prohibition is to feel some level of discomfort, and should not be regarded lightly. Nevertheless, one who feels very uncomfortable or is very sensitive may take a quick cool shower. Soap should be used only if necessary. There is a dispute among the Poskim if one may take a regular shower on Erev Shabbos Chazon (Parashas Devorim). Wearing Shabbos Clothing on a Weekday. There may be room for leniency for select baalei simchah in the case of a Bris, Pidyon Haben or Bar Mitzvah, as well as for a date or an engagement party. Brand new clothes, however, may not be worn. Dangerous Activities. One should be extra careful not to engage in hazardous activities during this period as it is an inauspicious time. Many Sefardim observe these restrictions only during the week in which Tishah B'Av falls, which may not be applicable during a year such as this one when Tishah B'Av is Sunday.

#### Reminders

Most shuls read the haftarah for Parashas Masei, the second in the series of the Shalosh D'Puranusa (the Three Haftarahs of Chastisement). See Parasha in a Paragraph for further details. The prevalent minhag is to wait until Motza'ei Tishah B'Av to recite Kiddush Levana. Kiddush Levana may not be recited before Monday night, July 28th. The final opportunity is at 10:43 PM on Friday night, August 8th. Pirkei Avos: Perek 2 Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Avodah Zara 40 • Yerushalmi: Pesachim 58 • Mishnah Yomis: Zevachim 4:5-6 • Oraysa (coming week): Moed Katan 11a-13a • Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: 189:6-191:End Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rebbe to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well!

Next on the Calendar

Rosh Chodesh Av is this Shabbos Parashas Mattos-Masei, July 26th. This marks the beginning of the Nine Days. Shabbos Chazon is next Shabbos, Parashas Devarim. Tishah B'Av begins Motzaei Shabbos Parashas Devarim, August 2nd. Shabbos Nachamu is Shabbos Parasha Va'eschanan, August 9th and is also Tu B'Av.

Parshah in a Paragraph

MATTOS: The laws of vows • Attacking Midian to avenge their incitement to sin • Purifying the spoils of war • Laws of Hagalah ('Kashering') • Division of the spoils between hekdes, the soldiers and the nation • Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven request to settle the land across the Jordan River • Moshe is angered at first • Moshe conditionally accepts their proposition, if they first assist the Nation conquer and settle the Land. MASEI: The journeys and campings through the desert are listed • Instructions for conquering and occupying the land • The Land's borders • Yehoshua, Elazar and the Nesiim are named as leaders • Cities for the Leviim and the Migrash surrounding them • Ir Miklat • To keep the integrity of the tribes' initial borders, the Bnos Tzela'fchad who receive ancestral land must marry within their tribe • Chazak Chazak V'nis'chazeik! Haftarah: The haftarah for Parashas Masei is read. Yirmiyah (2:4-28, [3:4, 4:1-2]) chastises the nation for abandoning Hashem despite all the material good they were given and the spiritual opportunities He has provided.

Taryag Weekly

Parashas Mattos: 112 Pesukim • 1 Obligation • 1 Prohibition 1) Abide by the laws of vows and their annulment. 2) Do not violate a vow. Parashas Masei: 132 Pesukim • 2 Obligations • 4 Prohibitions 1) Provide cities for the dwelling of Kohanim and Leviim in Eretz Yisrael. 2) Do not kill a murderer without a trial in Beis Din. 3) Exile an accidental killer. 4) A witness may only state his testimony, and not his legal opinion. 5-6) Do not substitute the punishment for a murderer or an accidental killer. Mitzvah Highlight: The power of a neder is to prohibit items as if they are holy like a korban. Thus, violating a neder is tantamount to stating that one does not believe in the holiness of korbanos (Sefer HaChinuch).

For the Shabbos Table

כִּי הָדָם הוּא יְקָרְבָן אֶת־הַדָּם יִקָּרֵב

For the blood will bring guilt upon the land (Bamidbar 35:33) In condemning acts of murder, the Torah describes it as "chanifah" - flattering of the land. In what sense is murder considered to be flattery? Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains that while murder is considered immoral by every nation, their reasoning differs from ours. They eschew murder for its negative impact on society; the drawback of this viewpoint is that at times society as a whole or even an individual can deem 'murder' as a "benefit to society," tolerating assisted suicide, failing to extend the lives of the elderly, taking cost concerns into account, etc. In the eyes of the Torah, however, the evil of murder comes from the inherent value and sanctity of Life. We violate almost any mitzvah to save the life of even a sick or elderly person, and even to extend life for moments. Thus, the Torah describes 'murder' as "flattering [the society of] the land," since it lends more importance to societal concerns than to the value of each moment of a Jew's life.

from: יעקב וינברגר - ישיבת הר ברכה <yaakov@yhb.org.il>

date: Jul 20, 2025, 4:14 AM

#### Tefillin of Rashi and Tefillin of Rabbenu Tam

##### Revivim

##### Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Tefillin of Rashi and Tefillin of Rabbenu Tam

A major dispute exists regarding the order of the four passages of tefillin \* According to Rashi, the order of the passages is as their order in the Torah \* According to Rabbenu Tam, the third passage is "Ve-haya im shamo'a", and the fourth is "Shema" \* The kabbalists explained that there is value to both methods, and optimally, there is place to put on both pairs of tefillin \* In the Shulchan Aruch, it was decided that the custom is like Rashi, and a God-fearing person should put on both pairs \* Most of those who practice today according to the kabbalah, to also put on tefillin of Rabbenu Tam, are Hasidim of Ashkenazi origin

The Dispute

As is well-known, a major dispute exists regarding the order of the four passages of tefillin: "Kadesh" (Exodus 13:1-10), "Ve-haya ki yeivi'acha" (Exodus 13:11-16), "Shema" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), "Ve-haya im shamo'a" (Deuteronomy 11:13-21). When in simple terms, according to every opinion, one who practices according to the second opinion does not fulfill the commandment, because as the Gemara says: "Rav Chananel said that Rav said: If one exchanged its passages, i.e., placed them in a different order within the compartment, the phylacteries are unfit." (Menachot 34b). According to Rashi, the order of the passages is as their order in the Torah. That is, when standing facing the person who puts on tefillin, on the right side is found the passage of "Kadesh", after it the passage of "Ve-haya ki yeivi'acha", after it, "Shema" and last from the left "Ve-haya im shamo'a", in other words, parshot ke'sidran (passages in their order). However, according to Rabbenu Tam, the third passage is "Ve-haya im shamo'a" and the fourth is "Shema". That is "havayot in the middle" (passages "Ve-haya" and "Ve-haya" in the middle). And they also disagreed regarding tefillin of the hand (though according to Smak 153, regarding tefillin of the hand, Rabbenu Tam agrees with Rashi).

The dispute is based on the interpretation of the words of our Sages: "Our rabbis taught: How does one arrange them? 'Kadesh li' 'Ve-haya ki yeivi'acha' – on the right, 'Shema' 'Ve-haya im shamo'a' – on the left" (Menachot 34b). According to Rashi, the order is continuous, as the order in the Torah. And according to Rabbenu Tam, if the order were continuous, it would have been necessary to say the order of the passages continuously, and from the fact that they said two on the right and two on the left, we learned that the two on the right begin from the right side inward, and similarly the two on the left begin from the left side inward.

Longstanding Dispute

Apparently, one could ask: Rabbenu Tam is the grandson of Rashi, and it is well-known that all his family members grew up on his Torah, and presumably, the tefillin that Rabbenu Tam received in his youth were according to the method of Rashi; how then suddenly, did he decide to disagree with his great grandfather, and change from the tradition?! But in

truth, this dispute has older roots, and for many generations there were many communities that practiced “havayot in the middle” (like Rabbenu Tam), and therefore, when Rabbenu Tam inferred precisely from the Gemara that this is the correct order, he disagreed with his grandfather, and joined in this issue the opinion of the poskim (Jewish law arbiters) who preceded him, as brought in Tosafot (Menachot 34b, “Ve-ha-korei”).

According to the method of Rashi held the Geonim of the Land of Israel and the author of ‘Shimusha Rabba’, and so emerges from the Mechilta of Rabbi Ishmael (Masechet De-Pascha 18), and according to the method of Rabbenu Tam, held Rav Saadia Gaon, Rabbenu Chananel, and the Rif. And according to the opinion of several Rishonim, so practiced also Rav Sherira Gaon and his son Rav Hai Gaon (Tosafot and Rosh). And so it is brought in Tikkunei Zohar (Introduction 9a) in the name of the Jerusalem Talmud.

Testimony of the Rambam The Rambam, who was born about forty years after Rabbenu Tam, ruled (Laws of Tefillin 3:5) to establish the passages in their order (like Rashi). Following this, the sages of Lunel asked him why he changed from the custom, was it not that “we learned from our teachers and from the Geonim, and Rav Hai Gaon at their head z”l, that we need havayot in the middle” (like Rabbenu Tam). The Rambam answered them (Responsa 489), that initially, his opinion was like their opinion, and so were his tefillin when he was in the Western lands (Spain and North Africa), but when he came to Egypt, he saw that all the people of the Land of Israel and its surroundings practice like Rashi, and he received testimony that so practiced the Geonim of the Land of Israel and Rav Hai Gaon, and therefore, he changed his custom to the method of Rashi. His testimony about the custom of the West matches the words of Rabbi Yehuda of Barcelona who lived about two generations before him, from whose words it emerges that he was not familiar with the method of Rashi.

#### The Process of Decision

Apparently, until the days of Rashi and Rabbenu Tam, this question had not yet arisen in its full sharpness, and consequently, the law was also not decided, but there were important communities that practiced like Rashi, and there were those who practiced like Rabbenu Tam, and following the objection of Rabbenu Tam to Rashi, as brought in Tosafot, the dispute came to the order of the day. There were those who continued in their custom, and there were those who accepted one of the methods, and there were those who instructed God-fearing people to put on two pairs of tefillin in order to remove the doubt (Terumah, Rosh, Tur and Rabbenu Yerocham).

However, in the study hall of the Ramban, they decided to practice according to the method of Rashi, and did not take into consideration the method of Rabbenu Tam. As wrote the Rashba (Meyuchasot 234), that so practiced Ramban and Rabbenu Yonah. In parallel, also in Ashkenaz the custom of Rashi took root and was established (Mordechai, Laws of Tefillin 669), and so wrote Maharil (137), that they practice like Rashi, and only one who is muchzak u’ mifursom b’ chasidut (someone with a well-recognized reputation for exceptional religious devotion and righteousness) puts on both pairs.

#### How the Dispute Arose

A great question arises from the dispute: How is it possible that in a matter where the tradition continued from generation to generation, there arose a fundamental dispute, to the extent that according to each method, one does not fulfill the obligation according to the other method? It is possible to explain, that indeed, this is the disaster of exile, that following the upheavals of exile and evil decrees, the traditions became confused, and thus, an erroneous custom was created, and the Rishonim disagreed what is the correct custom, and what is the mistaken one.

#### Opinion of the Kabbalists that Both Pairs Have Place

However, the kabbalists explained that there is value to both methods, that each method expresses its own intention and unification, and if so, le’chatchila (optimally), there is place to put on both pairs of tefillin, in order to hint at both intentions. According to this, it is understood that both traditions have ancient roots, and as was clarified when tefillin from the days of the Tannaim were found, that there were some according to the method of Rashi, and others according to the method of Rabbenu Tam.

The Ari wrote (Sha’ar Ha-Kavanot Drushei Tefillin Drush 6), that tefillin of Rabbenu Tam emerge from “mochin de-abba”, and those of Rashi from “mochin de-ima”, and in this world the law is like Rashi, and in the future, like Rabbenu Tam. The foundation of his words is in Tikkunei Zohar Chadash (14a). And the Ben Ish Chai (Vayera 21) even elaborated and wrote that from the days of Moses our teacher, they put on two pairs.

#### They Did Not Hold that the Order of Passages is Invalidating

As a continuation of this, it can be explained that initially they did not rule that the order of passages is maakev (invalidating), and all the discussion was how it is more proper to fulfill the commandment, and naturally it is understood that there were different methods in this. Moreover, there are interpreters that also the words of the Gemara that the order of passages is maakev, is only according to the method of Abaye, but in truth, the method of Rava (Menachot 35a) is that the order of passages is not maakev. And also, according to those who hold that the order of passages is invalidating, from the Torah it is not maakev (Beshamayim Rosh 24; Rabbi Yitzchak Tayeb author of Erech Ha-Shulchan; Maharsham in ‘Da’at Torah’ 34b; and Rabbi Kasher in supplements to ‘Torah Shleimah’ sign 1).

#### Ruling of the Shulchan Aruch

In the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 34:1-3) it is ruled that the custom is like Rashi, and a God-fearing person should put on both pairs, however he emphasized: “One should not do so, except if he has a well-recognized reputation for exceptional religious devotion and righteousness.” And he wrote that one who puts on both pairs should bless on those of Rashi, and should be careful to intend that he is fulfilling the commandment with the pair that is proper according to the truth, while the other is like mere straps, because if not, according to the opinion of many, he will transgress the prohibition of bal toseef from the Torah (the commandment not to add to the Torah’s commandments, or to perform more than what is required) [Bach], or rabbinically (Taz and Machatzit Ha-Shekel), as explained in Mishnah Berurah (34:7), and Yabia Omer (part 1, Orach Chaim 3).

#### Custom of the Kabbalists

However, the kabbalists disagreed with the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch in two matters. The first, in their opinion one should intend to fulfill the commandment with both pairs, because there is virtue in both of them. The second, in their opinion it is proper for every Jewish male to put on two pairs, and not only for God-fearing people who have a well-recognized reputation for exceptional religious devotion and righteousness (Machazik Berachah Orach Chaim 34:2). So wrote Ben Ish Chai (Vayera 22), and explained that we do not bless on those of Rabbenu Tam because of their exalted status, that we do not have the power to draw down the light that flows from their level.

#### Opinion of the Gaon of Vilna

In contrast, the opinion of the Gaon of Vilna is that even a God-fearing person with a well-recognized reputation for exceptional religious devotion and righteousness does not need to put on tefillin of Rabbenu Tam, because the law has been decided like Rashi and Rambam. And if we worry about all the different methods in the laws of tefillin, we will need to put on, according to his calculation, twenty-four pairs of tefillin, or sixty-four pairs each day (this is not the place to expand, but indeed, there are additional doubts on the scale of the dispute of Rashi and Rabbenu Tam), but the way to fulfill the commandments of the Torah is as the law that was decided, and as the custom of Israel which is Torah, and therefore, it is sufficient to put on one pair only.

It is told that Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin asked the Gaon of Vilna in his sweet, gentle, respectful manner: “Granted, that our master (the Gra, who wore tefillin all day long) does not put on tefillin of Rabbenu Tam, so as not to nullify even one moment from tefillin, and those of Rashi z”l are primary. But I, who in any case nullify several hours from tefillin, what is the matter if I put on some hours in the day, and fulfill the obligation of tefillin according to all opinions? And he answered him: If you want to fulfill all opinions, you will need to put on 24 pairs”. And in Siach Eliahu, it reads ‘64 pairs’. He further asked: “Behold, it is found in the Zohar about tefillin of Rabbenu Tam that they are of the World to Come. And he answered him that

the simple meaning of the Zohar is not so, and one who beautifies after the World to Come, should put them on. And from the day he heard words of the living God from his holy mouth, he stopped putting them on”.

#### The Practical Halakha

In practice, those who’s custom is to follow the halachic poskim, both from Ashkenazi and Sephardic origin, are accustomed to put on tefillin of Rashi only, and only God-fearing people who have a well-recognized reputation for exceptional religious devotion and righteousness, put on also those of Rabbenu Tam, and make a condition that they fulfill the commandment only with the tefillin that are correct according to the truth. And so was the custom in Syria, Iraq and Egypt (Pada et Avraham part 2, p. 292). In Tunisia, they practiced that only the rabbis put on two pairs (Alei Hadas Tefillin 32). In Yemen even the rabbis did not practice to put them on (Etz Chaim, Laws of Tefillin ‘Ve’seder Ha’parshiyot’; Pe’ulat Tzaddik part 3, 216).

So is the custom of students of the Gaon of Vilna, and most of all those who pray in Ashkenazi liturgy, that also most of all the rabbis do not put on tefillin of Rabbenu Tam. So is the custom of Morocco, that almost no one put on tefillin of Rabbenu Tam, including rabbis (Shemesh U-Magen part 3, Orach Chaim 58:4). Those who practice according to the kabbalah put on both pairs, and do not make a condition, because according to the Ari, both pairs are needed, and both are true. In practice, most of those whose custom goes according to the kabbalah to put on also tefillin of Rabbenu Tam, are Hasidim of Ashkenazi origin. Another group practices to put on like Rabbenu Tam, and they are those who practice according to the kabbalah as guided by Rabbi Yosef Chaim, author of ‘Ben Ish Chai’. In practice, it is proper for every person to go according to the custom of his fathers. And if he has a rav muvhak (someone’s primary rabbi, or halachic authority) – as his rabbi’s instruction.

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#### Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha Parshas Matos

#### Kohein-in-Waiting

There is a fascinating law in this week’s portion. The Torah tells us that one who kills accidentally must be banished to a city of refuge. The Torah refers to an accident that is tinged with a bit of negligence, not a total mishap or a death tainted with intent. The cities of refuge were the home of the Levites, whose life’s mission was service to others. Thus a lesson in care and concern during the murderer’s stay would elevate of his soul.

The Torah tells us very unique terms of release. The killer was to stay in the city of refuge until the Kohein Gadol (High Priest) died. Of course, the scene among his Levite neighbors, who were the protégés of the Kohein Gadol mourning the loss of their beloved leader, would put the murderer’s joy of freedom in perspective. It would be almost impossible to be exuberant with his own release amongst the thousands of residents mourning their leader – and that would be another lesson, before his new life in society.

But the Torah identifies the Kohein Gadol, whose death results in the killer’s release, in a strange way. “He (the killer) shall remain (in the city of refuge) until the passing of the Kohein Gadol who he anointed”(Numbers 35:25). The Talmud in Makos is baffled by the words who he anointed. It somewhat implies that the killer had to do with the Kohein’s anointing – and that just cannot be. After all wasn’t the Kohein anointed way before the accident occurred?

The Talmud answers. True. This verse implies that if, after the time of the accident but before its judicial resolution, a new Kohein Gadol is anointed, then the killer only is released after the new Kohein’s death. The Talmud asks why? This new Kohein Gadol was not around during the accident? True he was appointed before the verdict, but he was appointed after the death occurred. Why is he somehow involved the verdict of the accused? Why is his death the redeeming factor for the accused? Why is he punished? The Talmud answers that if there was a trial during the new Kohein’s tenure, he should have prayed for the welfare of the accused. He should have

interceded and prayed in order to mitigate a verdict of exile. Therefore, if the verdict came in his tenure, the man is released with his death.

It is quite difficult to understand. How is an incoming Kohein Gadol, during the most exciting and prestigious period of his career expected to worry about the verdict of a man, he has never heard of, who is accused of manslaughter.

Rabbi Chaim Kanievski, of B’nei Berak, Israel, the son of the Steipler Gaon of blessed memory, is known for his amazing breadth of Torah Knowledge which is only paralleled by his great diligence in Torah study. With the passing of his father more than a decade ago, people from all walks of life line up in front of his home seeking answers to complex Torah and personal questions.

But his greatness and wisdom were known to hundreds in the yeshiva world for many years.

Many years ago, as a student in the Ponovez Yeshiva, I heard an amazing story. A young man came to Reb Chaim with a long list of questions. Reb Chaim seemed a bit preoccupied but the visitor insisted in asking the questions, to which Reb Chaim responded, one by one.

Suddenly Reb Chaim began tidying himself up and put on a recently pressed kapote and new hat, and asked the young man’s indulgence. He had to go somewhere but he allowed the visitor to accompany him. The younger man did, peppering him with questions the entire way.

They walked a few blocks until they reached a wedding hall. Upon entering, Reb Chaim embraced the groom with a warm hug and kiss and apologized for the delay. Reb Chaim sat himself among the prestigious Rabbonim who graced the dais as they prepared the marriage documents. The persistent questioner was almost oblivious to the scene and continued to ask as more questions and eliciting responses. Reb Chaim tried to juggle the needs of the groom while trying to accommodate the visitor who had besieged him with problems.

But the persistent questioner received the shock of his life when, as the music began, heralding the march to the badekin, where the groom, flanked by his father and father-in-law, met the bride and covered her face with the veil. The groom rose from his seat and immediately his future father-in-law took hold of his arm. The groom’s father took hold of the other arm. But before he did so, the groom’s father turned around and apologized to the stranger who he had been talking to for the last hour or so. He said that would be unable to help him until after the ceremony. And then Rabbi Kanievski nodded Mazel Tov to the hundreds of well-wishers and began the procession to his own son’s wedding!

The Torah tells us that the Kohein Gadol-elect, waiting to be anointed to the most spiritual position in Judaism has a responsibility to worry about the welfare of the common man – even those accused of manslaughter. He should worry about his welfare and the verdict on his life. There is no greater inauguration to the responsibilities of priesthood than the concern for every single one of us.

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#### Matos 5785: Time-Filled Lessons from Reuven & Gad

This Shabbos is Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Av, Shabbos Chazak, and the yartzheit of Aharon Ha’Kohen. On Shabbos, we read the double parshios of Matos-Masei, and close the book of Bamidbar once again. The parshios deal with matters pertaining to the readiness and preparedness of the nation to enter into the land of Israel.

In Matos, we learn of the disturbing request of the Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven: to remain on ever la’Yarden - the eastern side of the Jordan River.

The perek begins with:

מִקְנֵה רֶב־הַיָּהּ לְבָנֵי רְאוּבֵן וְלְבָנֵי גָד עֲצוּם מְאֹד וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת-אֲרָץ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִלְּעֵד וְהִגִּידוּ  
הַמִּקְנֵה מִקְדוּם מִקְדוּם

“And abundant livestock had the children of Reuven and the children of Gad — exceedingly great — and they saw the land of Ya’zer and the land of Gil’ad, and behold, the place was a place of livestock.” (Bamidbar 32:1).

Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah points out that the first words of the perek are not “The children of Reuven and the children of Gad,” but rather: “מקנה רב - abundant livestock.”

Immediately, we are cued in to the fact that the most important asset to these tribes was their wealth (the Medrash elaborates on this point, and Chazal do not view these tribes with favor).

Later in the perek, when these tribes are negotiating the terms of their inheritance on the eastern side of the Yarden - while promising to cross armed before the Children of Israel into Canaan to help with the conquer and conquest of the land - they say to Moshe:

נבנה למקננו פה. חסים היו על ממונם יותר מבניהם. — pens for our animals we will build here, and cities for our children (32:16). Once again, their flocks and animals (i.e.: wealth) are placed before all else - even the care of their children!

On these words, Rashi teaches: נבנה למקננו פה. חסים היו על ממונם יותר מבניהם. וּבְנֵי מִיָּהֵם, שֶׁהִקְדִּימוּ מִקְנֵיהֶם לְטָפֶם. אָמַר לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה לֹא כֵן, עָשׂוּ הָעֵקֶר עֵקֶר וְהַטָּפֶל טָפֶל, בְּנֵי לָקֶם תְּחַלְּקֵה עָרִים לְטָפְכֶם וְאַחֶר כֵּן גְּדֵרוֹת לְצִאֲנֵכֶם (תנחומא)

They were more concerned about their money, more than their concern for their sons and daughters, for they gave precedence to their animals before their children. And Moshe said to them, This is not so! Make what is primary (your families) primary, and what is secondary (your material wealth) secondary. Hence, Moshe instructed them to reverse the order of what they would do.

Hence, Moshe rebukes them when he says to them בְּנֵי־לָקֶם עָרִים לְטָפְכֶם וּגְדֵרוֹת לְצִאֲנֵכֶם, build for yourselves cities for your children, and pens for your flocks (32:24).

Notably, Moshe instructs them to care for their families before they care for their animals.

This is a lesson, not only for the Bnei Gad and Reuven, but for us as well. Each person must ask himself: what are my priorities in life? Do we make the ikar, ikar, and keep the tafel, tafel?

While Chazal criticize the actions of these two tribes, they are further teaching us a lesson for our lives as well.

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin writes, “The centuries-old failure of the tribes of Reuven and Gad, in full sight of their intended goal, speaks volumes to us concerning the causes of personal failure in our own lives. We often seem to fall short of our own goals for the same reasons that the two tribes fell short of theirs.

“Mistaken priorities ... For many of us, such recognition only arrives in retrospect. Day after day, our drive towards personal success and professional advancement regularly overwhelms our attempts to carve out time for ourselves and our families. Whatever scarce downtime we do have is marred by the demands created by instant accessibility. We become as available as the closest handheld device, expected to answer an e-mail, text or call, under all circumstances and at a moment’s notice. [We must note if this was true when Rabbi Goldin penned these words almost fifteen years ago, what shall we say today...?] In spite of our good intentions, we inevitably find ourselves giving ‘pens for our livestock’ precedence over ‘cities for our children.’

“To compensate for this lack of availability to our families, today’s society has popularized the notion of ‘quality time.’ Quality, we reason, is better than quantity. I can’t be with my family often but I can at least ensure that the limited time we spend together is filled with value and experience.

“While such planned experiences are certainly worthwhile, however, what our loved ones need most from us is not quality time, but time, period... Given that we cannot predict which moment of our shared lives will be important, the better part of wisdom dictates that we optimize our opportunities. The more time we spend in the company of those we care about, the greater the chance that we will be there when it matters” (Unlocking the Torah Text, Bamidbar, p.314-315).

The frenetic pace of our modern world is more demanding on our time than ever (in the history of mankind!). We must be ever-more cognizant to be mindful, present, and attentive in our interactions with others - and certainly, must always strive to put “cities for our children,” before “enclosures for our livestock.”

By giving our time, attention, resources, interest to our loved ones, we are demonstrating to them - and to Hashem - that we focus on the ikkarim in life. In this merit, may Hashem continue to bless us with His boundless blessings, as we utilize our (limited time in this world) time wisely and well.

בברכת מנחם אב ושבת שלום

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**Ohr Somayach**

**Insights into Halacha**

**Rabbi Yehuda Spitz**

**Of Haftaros and Havdalah**

**Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Av 5785**

As detailed in previous articles over the course of the year, our current year 5785, is not only a rare one, but calendrically speaking, actually the hands-down rarest of them all. ה"ש"א is classified as a א"ש year in our calendars. This abbreviation is referring to Rosh Hashana falling out on Thursday (hei), both months of Cheshvan and Kislev being shalem (shin - 30 day months instead of possibly 29; these are the only months that can switch off in our set calendar), and Pesach falling out on Sunday (aleph). A HaSh”A year is the rarest of years, and out of the 14 possibilities in Tur’s 247-year calendar cycle,[1] this year type occurs on average only once in about 30.19 years (approximately 3.3 percent of the time).[2] Indeed, at times there are 71 years (!) in between HaSh”A years. The last time this year type occurred was 31 years ago in 5754 / 1994. The next time will be 20 years hence in 5805 / 2044. The next several times after that are slated to be 27 years further, in 5832 / 2071 and then a 51 year gap in 5883 / 2122.

The reasons and rules governing the whys and whens this transpires are too complicated for this discussion; suffice to say that when the Mishnah Berurah discusses these issues he writes “ain kan makom l’ha’arich,” that this is not the place to expound in detail,[3] which is certainly good enough for this author.

Obviously, such a rare calendar year contain many rare occurrences. Let’s continue our journey through this unique year.

One interesting issue that arises is that for most of world Jewry, the special haftarah for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh was not leined since the beginning of our year, and will not be leined for a year and half – until the middle of next year.

Delayed Shabbos-Rosh Chodesh Haftara?

The first Shabbos Rosh Chodesh of 5785 was Rosh Chodesh Marcheshvan, Parashas Noach – in which the haftarah for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh “Hashamayim Kisi” (Yeshaya Ch. 66:1) was leined. However, as mentioned previously, although there are and will be several more Shabbosei Rosh Chodesh over the course of this year, nonetheless, this special haftarah will not be leined for another year and a half from its previous reading right after Sukkos. The second Shabbos Rosh Chodesh this year was Rosh Chodesh Adar, which also was Parashas Shekalim, which as one of the Arba Parshiyos, knocked off any other haftarah.[4] Yet, the third occurrence of Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, the upcoming Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Av, this Shabbos, Parashas Mattos/Masei is when it gets interesting.

But first some background is in order. As we know, most haftaros share some similarity with at least one concept presented in the Torah reading. The Gemara Megillah discusses the proper haftarah readings for the various holidays throughout the year.[5] The Gemara states that whenever Rosh Chodesh falls out on Shabbos, a special haftarah is read: “Hashamayim Kisi,” as it mentions both the inyanim of Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh.[6]

Head-To-Head Haftaros

Our dilemma arises when that rule goes head-to-head with another rule. The Pesikta, (an early Midrash cited by many early authorities including Tosafos and the Abudraham)[7] continues the teachings of Chazal as to the proper haftarah readings starting from the Fast of Shiva Assur B’ Tamuz.

During the ‘Three Weeks’ from 17 Tamuz until Tisha B’Av, we read ‘T’lasa D’Poranusa,’ - ‘Three Readings of Misfortune.’ After Tisha B’Av (starting with Shabbos Nachamu, dubbed so due to its haftarah, Nachamu Nachamu Ami)[8] until Rosh Hashana, ‘Shiva D’Nechemta,’ or ‘Seven Readings of Consolation’ are read.[9] This is followed by a reading of Teshuva,[10] during the Shabbos between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, aptly named ‘Shabbos Shuva,’ for its repentance-themed haftarah starting with ‘Shuva Yisrael.’[11] The Abudraham as well as Rabbeinu Tam, conclude that these special haftarah readings are so important, that they are never pushed off!

The \$64,000 question becomes, what happens when Rosh Chodesh Av falls out on Shabbos? Which ruling trumps which? Do we follow the Gemara or the Pesikta? Do we stick with the ‘T’lasa D’Poranusa’ or the special Rosh Chodesh reading? The answer is that there is no easy answer! The Beis Yosef writes that the ikar halacha follows the Abudraham as he was considered the expert in these topics.[12]

Consequently, in the Shulchan Aruch, he only mentions that during the “Three Weeks” the ‘T’lasa D’Poranus’ are read.[13] Hence on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Av, the Sefardic minhag is to only read the regularly scheduled haftarah of “Misfortune”: “Shimu,”[14] (along with the first and last psuk of Hashamayim Kisi).[15] Prague vs. Posen

Yet, figuring out the Ashkenazic minhag is not so simple.[16] Aside from this being a divergence of minhag between the cities of Prague[17] and Posen,[18] as well as a machlokes Rishonim, it is also a machlokes of Tosafos in different Masechtos.[19] And although several Poskim conclude that whichever of the two haftaros is read is fine,[20] nevertheless, the majority consensus seems to be that the minhag to read “Shimu” is the most prevalent,[21] following the Mishnah Berurah’s citing of the Vilna Gaon’s position as the final word on the matter.[22] Accordingly, to most of the world, the special Shabbos Rosh Chodesh haftarah of “Hashamayim Kisi” will not be read again 5785.[23]

Although in other year make-ups Sefardic and Ashkenazic minhag diverge on this point, nonetheless, on a practical level, this year, they concur. Accordingly, to most of the world, the special Shabbos Rosh Chodesh haftarah of “Hashamayim Kisi” will not be read from the beginning of 5785 all the way until Parashas Tazria-Metzora, Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5786 - eighteen months later.[24] This is due to the next Shabbos Rosh Chodesh being Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Teves 5786, which as occurring on Chanuka, Chanuka’s special haftarah trumps it due to Pirumei Nissa. Hence, for most of Klal Yisrael, ‘Hashamayim Kisi’ will practically not be leined until the following Shabbos Rosh Chodesh - Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5786.

Similar will occur this year regarding “Machar Chodesh,” the special haftarah ordinarily read on Shabbos directly preceding a Sunday Rosh Chodesh,[25] which was leined as the haftarah for Parashas Toldos, and will not be read again by the majority of Klal Yisrael[26] until Parashas Bamidbar 5786, a year and a half later.[27] This is due to “Machar Chodesh” being practically pushed off for Parashas Hachodesh, Shiva D’Nechemta, and two-day Rosh Chodeshes respectively, the next several times that a Sunday Rosh Chodesh occurs over the next year.

#### The Nine Days

The Mishnah in Maseches Ta’anis famously teaches that “Mishenichnas Av Mema’atin Besimchah, When the month of Av arrives (Rosh Chodesh Av), we lessen our joy.” This is due to the heralding of the beginning of the tragedies that took place prior to the destruction of both Batei Hamikdash, from the breaching of the walls of ancient Jerusalem on the 17th of Tamuz, until the actual destruction of the Beis Hamikdash on the Ninth of Av. As detailed in the Mishnah and Gemara Taanis, both of these days have since become communal Fast Days, in remembrance of the tragedies that happened on these days.[28] In order to properly commemorate and feel the devastation, halacha dictates various restrictions on us during this period, getting progressively stricter up until Tisha B’Av itself.[29]

These ‘Nine Days’ restrictions include not eating meat or chicken, nor drinking wine,[30] not doing laundry, nor wearing freshly laundered clothing, nor pleasure bathing.[31] Many of these restrictions are generally still in effect until midday (Chatzos) of the next day, the tenth of Av with some being makpid the whole next day for some of the restrictions (unless in a year when Tisha B’Av is actually being observed on the tenth of Av, since it fell out on Shabbos).[32]

#### Ashkenazicor Sefardic Halacha?

However, this aforementioned timeline follows the general Ashkenazic minhag. On the other hand, many Sefardim start most restrictions on beginning of the week that Tisha B’Av falls out on, a.k.a. ‘Shavua Shechal Bo.’

Although there is no mention of such in the Gemara, these restrictions are indeed binding Ashkenazic practice as instituted by many Rishonim[33] and later codified by the great Ashkenazic authorities including the Rema, Derech Hachaim, Shevus Yaakov, Chayei Adam, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Aruch Hashulchan, and Mishnah Berurah.[34]

While several later Sefardic authorities maintain that it is proper for Sefardim to follow the Ashkenazic minhag and start the restrictions from Rosh Chodesh Av,[35] nevertheless, most Sefardim are only noheg the majority of the restrictions from the actual week of Tisha B’Av, as per the actual ruling of the Shulchan Aruch.[36] This year, Tisha B’Av falls out on a Sunday. This means that accordingly, without an actual ‘Shavua Shechal Bo Tisha B’Av,’ generally speaking, this year Sefardim will not undertake any Nine Days restrictions, save for the proscription of partaking of meat and wine.[37] Sefardim may shower, shave, and do their laundry all the way up until Shabbos Chazon – which is Erev Tisha B’Av this year. On the other hand, Ashkenazim do not share this dispensation, and would still need to keep all the Nine Days’ restrictions.[38]

#### How to Havdalah?

But now that Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Av ends, another question arises. How do we make Havdalah on this Motzai Shabbos? Indeed, the proper way to perform Havdalah on the Motzai Shabbos of the Nine Days (usually Motzai Shabbos Chazon) is one annual issue that seems to always have disparate approaches.

The main problem is that the very essence of Havdalah is ending Shabbos, resulting in the fact that it is actually recited during ‘chol,’ weekday. That is fine for an ordinary week, but this Motzai Shabbos is generally halachically part and parcel of the Nine Days. And one of the Nine Days’ restrictions prohibits drinking wine,[39] the mainstay of Havdalah.[40] So how are we supposed to synthesize making Havdalah while not transgressing this restriction?[41]

Actually, this year, 5785, this dilemma is doubled, as there are two Havdalahs in question. The first Havdalah is this coming Motzai Shabbos, Motzai Parashas Mattos–Masei and the second, the following week, with the Taanis of Tisha B’Av commencing immediately after Shabbos’s conclusion, its Havdalah gets pushed off until Sunday night (this fascinating topic will IY”H be discussed at length in next week’s article, to help alleviate any compounded confusion). Just Drink It!

The first approach to this quandary is the Shulchan Aruch’s.[42] He maintains that whoever makes the Havdalah should just drink the wine himself. The Gr”a explains this position (and is later echoed by the Mishnah Berurah) that Havdalah is no worse than a Seudas Mitzva; just as at a Seudas Mitzva (such as a Bris) one may drink the wine even if it falls out during the week of Tisha B’Av,[43] so too by Havdalah. They add that according to the Shulchan Aruch, these restrictions were never intended to negate a Mitzva. This ruling is accepted and followed by Sefardic Jewry, and this Motzai Shabbos, their psak is to drink the Havdalah wine as usual.[44] [45] Child Care

The Rema’s opinion is a bit more complicated.[46] He maintains that it is preferable to find a child and let him drink the Havdalah wine. That way, the one who actually makes the Havdalah does not have to transgress this prohibition. He concludes however, that mei’ikar hadin the Shulchan Aruch is correct, and if one cannot find a child to drink the wine, then an adult may do so.

But one detail the Rema does not mention is how old this child should be. The Magen Avraham (and clarified by the Machatzis Hashekel and Dagul Mervava ad loc.) qualifies the Rema’s ruling. He explains that the child must not be old enough to be able to mourn the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, for if a child is able to understand and properly mourn, there is no halachic advantage gained by having him drink the cup.

Additionally, the child must be ‘higia l’chinuch,’ old enough to understand the need to make a bracha before drinking, for, if not, the Havdalah would end up being a ‘bracha levattala,’ in vain, unless an adult drinks the wine. So basically, to fulfill the Rema’s ruling lechatchila, the child must be in the ballpark of 6 to 9 years old;[47] otherwise, it would be preferable for an adult to drink it. This ruling is followed by most mainstream Ashkenazic authorities, including the Magen Avraham, Chayei Adam, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, and Mishnah Berurah.[48]

#### Can You Beer It?

However, there is a third opinion, that of the Aruch Hashulchan.[49] He maintains that the best solution to our concern is to make Havdalah on this Motzai Shabbos using beer instead of wine. Since beer is cited throughout the ages as a ‘Chamar Medina,’ a ‘drink of the land’ on which Havdalah is permitted to be made,[50] it would therefore be the simplest resolution to our problem.

However, many authorities remain hesitant to rely on this l’maaseh. The reason for this is that there is no clear-cut delineation of what ‘Chamar Medina’ actually is or how to properly define it, resulting in different poskim having very different understandings of its parameters.

For example, many authorities maintain that one may only rely on using ‘Chamar Medina’ if wine cannot be found anywhere in the city.[51] Others maintain that it must be a popular drink that people would always serve at a proper meal.[52] A different definition cited is that it must be a drink that one would serve to honor someone.[53] Others define it as a drink that can be intoxicating, making having alcoholic content a prerequisite.[54] Another view is that it must be a drink that has inherent importance.[55] Others say it refers to a drink that one has ‘chavivus,’ an affection for or affinity to drinking.[56]

Although our ubiquitous beer fits many of these definitions, still the Magen Avraham and Vilna Gaon ruled that in Ashkenaz, beer has lost its status of ‘Chamar Medina’.[57] Also, due to the whole machlokes regarding defining ‘Chamar Medina,’ as well as the fact that many authorities rule that if wine is available, it trumps beer’s use for Havdalah, consequently, many poskim are hesitant about fulfilling the mitzvah of Havdalah with beer in this day and age. Additionally, based on how beer is viewed nowadays, and especially in Eretz Yisrael, several poskim, including the Chazon Ish,[58] rule that beer would no longer be considered ‘Chamar Medina.’

Conversely, many contemporary authorities do indeed confirm beer as ‘Chamar Medina,’ even nowadays, especially in America and Europe; yet, they still generally maintain wine’s superiority for Havdalah.[59]

#### What To Drink?

So now that we explained that there is a three-way machlokes, what’s the bottom line? Generally speaking, Sefardim follow the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch, and therefore the adult who makes the Havdalah should drink the wine. Most mainstream

Ashkenazim follow the Rema's psak and try to find a child in the proper age range (approx. 6 - 9). If one cannot be found, then an adult should drink the wine. Yet, surprisingly, several contemporary Ashkenazic poskim, including Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the Chazon Ish, and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, held that it is preferable to follow the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch and an adult should rather drink the wine than a child. Rav Moshe Feinstein is quoted as holding this way as well.[60] However, it is important to note that drinking the wine oneself, several authorities point out that it is preferable to only drink a minimum shiur of wine.[61] But what of the Aruch Hashulchan's beer solution? Certainly the authorities mentioned previously who allow beer's use for Havdalah year round would permit one to do so Motzai Shabbos in the Nine Days as well. Rav Dovid Feinstein zt"l is quoted as maintaining beer's actual preference for Havdalah on Motzai Shabbos during the Nine Days.[62] Indeed, this author has likewise heard from Rav Efraim Greenblatt zt"l (the renowned Rivevos Efraim)[63] that one may make Havdalah with beer on Motzai Shabbos during the Nine Days (usually Motzai Shabbos Chazon) with no compunction.[64]

In somewhat of a contrast, mv"r Rav Yaakov Blau zt"l told this author that although he personally held that it was preferable for an adult to drink the Havdalah wine, nonetheless, he gave dispensation to one who was accustomed to making Havdalah on beer, or one who's minhag was to do so specifically on Motzai Shabbos Chazon, to continue doing so, even in Eretz Yisrael. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l is quoted as holding similarly.[65]

Interestingly, it is reported that 'Meine Altere Shuchein,' the Bobover Rebbe zy"ta, would make Havdalah on Motzai Shabbos during the Nine Dayson wine and drink it himself, but when Tisha B'Av would fall out on Motzai Shabbos (as it does this year), on that Motzai Tisha B'Av he would make that Havdalah specifically on beer.[66]

However one ends up making Havdalah this Motzai Shabbos [make sure to discuss this with your local rabbinic advisor in advance], it is important for us all to remember that these restrictions were instituted by our Rabbanim as a public show of mourning during the most devastating time period on the timeline of the Jewish year. Our goal should be to utilize these restrictions as a catalyst for inspiration towards

Teshuva.[67] It is worthwhile to do so, as well. As the Gemara relates, everyone who observes and properly demonstrates their personal mourning over the destruction of Yerushalayim will merit seeing its rejoicing.[68] B'Ezras Hashem, may this year be the one that Tisha B'Av is finally transformed into a full 'Mo'ed!

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: [yspitz@ohr.edu](mailto:yspitz@ohr.edu).

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