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ON PARSHAS VAYEITZE - 5757

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rav vayeitze last year From jr@novell.com Wed Jan 3 22:56:48 1996

Shiur HaRav on Parshas Vayetze

"And Yaakov continued on his way and met angels of G-D. And when Yaakov saw them he said 'this is the camp of G-D' and he called that place Machanaim." (Breishis 32:3)

The Rav (Rabbi Y.B. Soloveichik z"l) analyzed the terms Machane (camp) and Machanayim (two camps) according to two different approaches.

1. Rashi interprets Machanayim as 2 Machanos-two camps: one of Angels belonging to Chutz l'Aretz (outside the land of Israel) who escorted him to the border of Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel), and the second consisting of Angels who were to escort him into Eretz Yisrael.

2. The Ramban raises the following question on Rashi's interpretation: at this time Yaakov was still quite far from reaching Eretz Yisrael. How could one of the camps refer to angels of Eretz Yisrael? The Ramban is therefore of the opinion that these groups of angels were sent to reassure Yaakov. Yaakov was traveling through danger, exposed to enemies lying in ambush for him. The purpose of showing him legions of angels was to reassure him that his "camp" will never be left alone. For wherever his camp may go and how

B'S'D' hopelessly outnumbered they may appear to be, there will always be a second "camp" of Malachei Hashem that will protect the camp of Yaakov. Yaakov has the G-Dly strength in his "camp" and need not fear the earthly powers of his enemies. Machanayim refers then to the camp that was traveling with Yaakov and to the heavenly camp, the angels of G-D who were sent to protect him.

The Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel on this verse indicates that the term Machanayim means the Beis Hamikdash. The sanctity of the Beis Hamikdash and its surrounding areas, referred to as Kedushat Machanot, increases in gradations, each of which is called a "camp" since they correspond to the different camps which the Jewish people consisted of in their sojourn in the desert. As the Rambam states (Hilchos Beis Habechirah 7:11) "There were three camps in the desert, and correspondingly three camps throughout the generations." In other words, besides the obvious sanctity of the Mikdash, the Mikdash and its surrounding areas also contained a Kedushat Machane (sanctity by camp) that derived from the three camps in the desert:

1) Machane Yisrael (camp of Israel) which is all of Jerusalem outside of the Temple mount. (Jerusalem is not simply a city, but rather it is an integral part of the Mikdash for several Halachic parameters.

2) Machane Leviyah (camp of Levites) which is the Temple mount.

3) Machane Shechina (the Beis Hamikdash itself).

Let us examine this Kedushat Machane more closely. Chazal say that Avraham called the place of the Beis Hamikdash "Har" a mountain, Yitzchak referred to it as "Sadeh", a field, and Yaakov referred to it as "Bayis", a house. The term house implies that there is an owner of the house who controls access to his house. There must be a protocol for approaching and entering the Bayis.

A camp, however, particularly a military camp, has a greater sense of equality among its inhabitants. The general and the private live together under the same conditions. The private can more readily approach the general and speak with him because of the shared cramped and difficult conditions than he could under more normal conditions.

The Kohen Gadol is called the watcher of the Beis Hamikdash, as it says in Zechariah (3:7) "And you [referring to the Kohen Gadol] will judge my House and watch my courtyards... The Kohen Gadol can invite his friends, i.e. the scholars and leaders of the generation into the home of Hashem. But what of the plain and simple Jew? How does he approach and enter the house of Hashem? Here is where the Machane concept comes in. The simple Jew approaches the Mikdash as a Machane. He, the lowly private, can enter the Mikdash and pour out his heart to the General himself without deference to the disparity between their "ranks".

"And I will meet with you there and speak to you from atop the Kapores between the two Kravim..." (Shemos 25:22). The rendezvous of G-D and Moshe Rabeinu took place in the Holy of Holies. What about the simple Jew? Where will he encounter G-D? The Torah tells us (Shemos 42:43) that the altar in the Temple courtyard was the rendezvous for G-D and Klal Yisrael. Any Jew could approach Hashem there.

Returning to our discussion, it is worth noting that it was Yaakov alone who recognized the Malachim as angels. To the rest of his entourage they appeared to be ordinary people. Yaakov said "This is the camp of G-D" but he called the place Machanaim. By this he meant that each person, each Jew, has the ability to grow spiritually to the point where he too will recognize the angels as such. Machanaim-two camps-the earthly one which you see and the heavenly one which Hashem has provided to the Bnai Yisrael to protect them from their enemies. I, Yaakov, see them clearly and you, potentially, can see as well.

When Yaakov embarked on his journey to the house of Lavan, his impression of what the Mikdash was to be was that of a house, as he said "This is the house of G-D..." (Breishis 28:17). The home of Hashem is exclusive; not all can enter. When he returned from Lavan, however, he saw the Mikdash as a camp where each Jew has the potential to raise himself to the level of seeing the angels of G-D and to ally his own personal camp with the camp of G-D. (NB: When Avrohom went to the Akeida, he saw Mount Moriah from afar. He asked Eliezer and Yishmael what they saw; they saw nothing. He asked

Yitzchak and Yitzchak saw a cloud of G-D's glory over the mountain, as did Avrohom himself. In order to discern that there even is another camp beyond your own, one must be on a higher spiritual level. Avraham and Yitzchak reached that higher level and were able to see and distinguish the two camps while Eliezer and Yishmael had not and could not. This is similar to Yaakov, and his message to his children, that the level of spirituality one has achieved determines how much of the heavenly "camp" one is privileged to see.)

In summary, the Machane Elokim provided Yaakov with security and confidence to face his challengers as his camp included the Machane Elokim as well. Each and every Jew must strive to reach the spiritual level of perceiving the Machane Elokim that surrounds him.

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Parashat Vayetzai

The Twice Promised Land by Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman

Ha'aretz Asher Ata Shocheiv Aleiha Lecha Etena Uleazaracha The land on which you lie, to you will I give it and to your descendants.. (28:13).

The Talmud (Chulin 91b) remarks, "This teaches that G-d folded the entire land of Israel and placed it underneath Yaakov, in order that it be easier for his descendants to conquer."

We find a similar statement in the Talmud in regard to Avraham. G-d said to Avraham: Kum Hithaleich Ba'Aretz Larkah Ulerachbah Ki Lecha Etenah Arise, walk in the land through the length of it and the breadth of it; for I will give it to you (13:17) The Talmud (Bava Batra 100a) rules that this was not a legal act of acquisition; rather: "Out of affection for Avraham He told him so in order that it be easier for his descendants to conquer it". (R' Eliezer, however, quotes this verse as a source for his view that walking the length and breadth of a piece of property is an actual act of acquisition.)

We might ask: Why does Avraham pave the way for his descendants by traversing the land, while Yaakov does so by having the land fold up under him as he sleeps on it?

(Parenthetically: Hashem later says to Avraham, "Lezarachah Natati et ha'Aretz Hazot" - "To your seed I have given this land" (15:18). Rash"i, following the Midrash, explains that the verse uses the past tense since G-d's promise is as good as done - prophetic past tense. But R' Yossi in the Yerushalmi (Challah 2:1) uses the past tense of this verse to prove that the Jews were in possession of the land of Israel from the time of Avraham and that, therefore, even grain that grew before they entered the land was obligated in challah. Why does Rash"i reject this explanation? If one examines the discussion in the Yerushalmi one finds that R' Yossi's statement is advanced on behalf of R' Eliezer, who holds that grain that grows outside of the land of Israel is normally exempt from Challah. Not surprisingly, then, it is consistent with R' Eliezer's own view in Bava Batra that Avraham performed a legal act of acquisition by traveling the land its length and breadth; according to this view, the past tense of the verse indeed implies that Avraham was already in legal possession of the land Rash"i, however, follows the view of the Sages in Bava Batra that walking the length and breadth of a piece of land is not a legal act of acquisition; accordingly, he follows the Midrash and explains the past tense of the verse as being an example of the prophetic past tense.)

After receiving this promise Yaakov vows: "Vechol Asher Titein Li Aser A'asrenu Lach" And of all that You shall give me I will surely give a tenth (ma'aser) to You (28:22) We find that Avraham (14:20) and Yitzchak (26:12, see Rash"i there) also gave maaser; only Yaakov, however, makes a

vow to do so. Why should this be so? To answer these two questions we must preface several items of information: The Talmud in Yevamot (82b) states that the obligations of terumah and ma'aser took effect only after the Jewish people took possession of the land of Israel. This happened twice; first, at the time of Yehoshua, and again at the time of Ezra, after the return from the Babylonian exile. The Ramba"m (Shmita 6:16) distinguishes between these two acts of acquisition; the first was accomplished through conquest, whereas the second was accomplished through chazaka (a form of legal acquisition). (See there the ramifications of this distinction.)

Furthermore, the Ramba"m (Terumot 1:26) rules that at the time of the Second Temple the obligations of terumah and maaser were only Rabbinic, because only a part of the people were settled on the land of Israel. On a Biblical level these obligations require that all of the Jewish people be living in the land of Israel. The source for this ruling seems to be the Yerushalmi in Shevi'it (6:1; see Resp. Beit Halevi 3:1) which records the view that, at the time of Ezra, the people accepted the obligations terumah and maaser of their own accord, rather than as a Biblical obligation. The Yerushalmi finds a source for this in the verse in Nechemiah (10:1ff), "And because of all this we make a covenant and write it... that we shall bring the first portion of our dough and our terumah... and the maaser of our land..."

In the light of the above, we can answer our first question by suggesting that when the Talmud in Bava Batra states that Avraham was told to traverse the land of Israel in order to pave the way for his descendants, the reference is to his descendants the time of the first acquisition of the land of Israel. As the Ramba"m writes, this acquisition was accomplished through conquest. Furthermore, it was only completed at the close of the seven years of division in which the boundaries of the tribes were laid out. Avraham's travels throughout the land prefigured the campaign to conquer the land and the laying down of its boundaries. But when the Talmud in Chulin states that G-d collapsed the entire land under Yaakov in order to make it easier for his descendants, the reference is to his descendants at the time of the second acquisition of the land of Israel. As the Ramba"m writes, that acquisition was accomplished through chazaka. Likewise, Yaakov's laying on the land was an act of chazaka, as we find bedding down on a piece of property is, under certain circumstances, an effective chazaka (hatzoat matzot; see Hil. Zechiyah u'Matanah, 2:4. Cf. Tzofnat Paaneach al HaTorah, Breishit 28).

Accordingly, we find an answer to our second question; we understand why Yaakov's giving of maaser was preceded by a vow, whereas Avraham and Yitzchak gave maaser without a vow. As the Yerushalmi in Shevi'it states, at the time of the second acquisition the Jews did not automatically become obligated in terumah and maaser; they made a covenant and obligated themselves. Likewise Yaakov, whose actions portended theirs, undertook a vow and obligated himself.

"ravfrand@torah.org" "Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayetzai

Rabbi Frand respectfully requests that people should daven [pray] and learn for the benefit of Rabbi Yitzchak Isbee [Yitzchak ben Chaya Rochel], that he should have a refuah shellayma [complete recovery]. Rabbi Isbee is a well known talmid chacham [Torah scholar] and is a respected Rav who has a kehilla [congregation] in Brooklyn, NY and is a personal friend of Rabbi Frand. Good Shabbos!

Even The Departure of a "Tent Dweller" Makes an Impression

At the start of this week's parsha, we find one of the most famous comments of Rash"i in Chumash. The pasuk [verse] says, "And Yaakov went out from Beer Sheva and went to Haran." [Bereshit 28:10] Rash"i quotes the statement of our Sages that this pasuk teaches us that the departure of a Tzadik [righteous person] from a city makes an impression. "The Tzadik is the beauty and glory of the city. Once he leaves, the beauty and the glory of the city have departed."

We can question this, because we see that prior to this incident, Avraham left where he was living and went down to Egypt. Yitzchak, too, left where he was living and went down to Gerrar. This Rash"i, one might think, is a couple of parshiyos late! Rash"i should have made this comment in Lech Lecha when Abraham left, or at least in Toldos when Yitzchak left, and then it would have been obvious that the same applied when Yaakov left. Why does Rash"i wait until Parshas Vayeitzei to tell us that when a Tzadik leaves a city, it makes an impression?

I saw an answer to this question from the Avnei Shoham. The Avnei Shoham says that it is obvious that when an Avraham leaves the city, it makes an impression. Avraham, after all, is the very personification of Chessed [generosity, kindness], who puts up every single guest who passes through the city. Avraham was an activist, well-known by all. Obviously, his departure made an impression.

Yitzchak, too, was a well-known man. He had dealings with his neighbors. He had dealings with Avimelech. He was wealthy. Certainly his departure from the city had an impact.

But Yaakov Avinu was a "simple man who sat in the tents." Yitzchak was still alive at the time. Yaakov, at this time, spent his time sitting in the Beis Medrash [house of study], learning! He was not involved, perhaps, in outreach activities. He wasn't involved, perhaps, in communal Chessed projects. That was still Yitzchak's domain. Yaakov was sitting and learning! Therefore, Rash"i has to tell us that even in this case, the departure of a Tzadik makes an impression. Perhaps, we do not sense his presence. Perhaps, Yaakov does not do anything for us other than sit and learn. But if he closes his Gemara [volume of Talmud] and leaves the city, that makes an impression. The Strength of Torah will be diminished in that city.

Let us not, G-d forbid, minimize the strength of outreach and the strength of Chessed. But let us not make the mistake to think that if a Tzadik who does nothing more than "sit in the tent" leaves town -- that it makes no difference. If, perhaps, it is not recognizable on a physical level, certainly on a spiritual and on a metaphysical level it does make an impression. It is no longer the same city.

The mere fact that a person sits and learns is an amazing thing. If we want to truly appreciate the importance of Torah, we must remind ourselves constantly that Torah study has an impact on larger society, even when we don't realize it ourselves. Whether a person directly benefits from that learning or not, the Tzadik learning in the city makes an impression. If (G-d forbid) that learning were to stop, it would make a terrible impression on the city. That is why Rash"i has to wait until Yaakov to tell us that the departure of a Tzadik from a city makes an impression.

The "Special Torah" Taught in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever

Where did this Tzadik, Yaakov, go after he left Beer Sheva? Our Sages say that he went to study for 14 years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever. This is a strange thing. Until now, Yaakov has also been sitting and learning. Now it is time to go -- time to go into exile. So what does he do? He goes and sits and learns literally day and night for another 14 years!

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky says that Yaakov had something to learn, and that is why he had to go to the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever. We all know that the holy patriarchs had their own schools of learning. The Talmud [Yoma 28b] says that our patriarchs constantly had their own Yeshivas. But, nevertheless Yaakov had something specific to gain from the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever. What was it?

Shem was the one who withstood the Generation of the Flood. He had a "special Torah" to teach -- the Torah of how to exist in a hostile society, one filled with theft and immorality and corruption. Ever was the one who withstood the heresy of the Generation of the Dispersion (at the Tower of Babel). He, too, had a special Torah to teach.

So now, when Yaakov knew that he was going into Exile, to live with the deceitful Lavan, he had to learn a "different Torah" than he had learned with his father and his grandfather. He had to learn how a Jew survives in Exile, outside the Land of Israel. That is why he had to go to the Yeshiva of Shem

and Ever.

Rash"i cites that all that Yaakov learned in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever he gave over to Yosef. It was this Torah of how a Jew exists in a hostile society, that Yaakov had to give to Yosef, specifically. For Yosef also went down to a hostile environment (Egypt). He, too, needed this "special Torah."

Ladder = Money = Poverty: With Each One Can Go Up or Down

The Medrash comments on the verse "And behold, a ladder was standing on the ground, and its top reached the Heavens" [Bereshis 28:12] that G-d showed Yaakov two individuals: Korach (who was swallowed up by the ground) and Moshe (who ascended up to the Heaven).

Why are Korach and Moshe hinted to by the ladder? There is a very interesting Ba'al HaTurim on this week's parsha. The Ba'al HaTurim says that the numerical ["Gematria"] value of the word ladder (samech-vov-lamed-mem) [60+6+30+406] is equal to the numerical value of the word money (mem-mem-vov-nun) [40+40+6+506], and it is also equal to the numerical value of the word poverty (ayin-vov-nun-yud) [70+6+50+106].

A ladder can be used as a parable for money. Just as a ladder can be used to climb to great heights or descend to the depths, so is the case with money. A person can be blessed with money, do the right things with money, and go up the ladder. On the other hand, money corrupts. Money can be a terribly destructive force.

The same applies with poverty. Poverty can be a terrible thing. The Talmud says that poverty can cause one to transgress the Will of his Creator. On the other hand, the "Test of Poverty" if dealt with correctly, can make a person the happiest person around. He will no longer be encumbered by money and the problems that it brings.

There are some people that can cope beautifully with poverty, such that they don't even know that they are poor. I heard a true story that happened here in Baltimore, MD. The woman involved went shopping for a "shaitel" [a head-covering (wig) commonly worn by married Orthodox women] with her 12-year-old daughter. All of a sudden she saw a "shaitel" that she liked and she said "I like that one." The saleslady tells her, "That one is not for you." But the woman insists, "I like it; I like it." Again the saleslady tells her it is not for her and again the woman insists she wants it.

Finally the saleslady is forced to tell her the truth. She told her "You can't afford that 'sheitel.'" The customer responded, "Honestly, I can't afford any of them; let me at least, however, take the one I like." The woman's 12-year-old daughter was sitting there and said to her mother incredulously, "We can't afford it? We're poor? We're not poor! Why can't we afford it?" Come and hear. It is so well-known that the family is poor, that the saleslady knows she has to keep the customer away from her expensive "sheitlach," and yet the daughter is blissfully unaware of the economic situation in her own home. That is dealing with poverty. Those parents are using poverty to go up the ladder.

This perhaps is what the Medrash means when it says that Yaakov was shown Korach and Moshe. Our Sages tell us that Korach had exceptional wealth. He was so wealthy that he did not crave additional money, he only craved power. It was his money that corrupted him and made him challenge the leadership of Moshe and Aharon. Yaakov was shown the ladder (sulam = mammon), and was shown what money can do to a person.

Yaakov was also shown Moshe. Our Sages comment on the words "Pesol lecha" (carve out for yourself) [Shmos 34:1] that G-d told Moshe to take for himself the material removed from the carving of the two tablets on stone - from which he too became very wealthy. But how did that affect him? Not at all. He went on to become the Master of all Prophets, the Rabbi of all Israel. Money is the ladder. It can bring up (as in the case of Moshe) or it can bring down (as in the case of Korach).

It is our test -- whether it be the ladder of poverty or the ladder of wealth -- that we should cope with it and deal with it -- that we should go up the ladder and not down the ladder.

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halacha@jer1.co.il" Parshas Vayeitze
SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS VAYEITZE

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Maaser Kesofim: Obligations and Exemptions

Maaser Kesofim, tithing one's income for charity, is an age-old practice dating back to our forefathers' days. Avrohom gave Maaser to Malki Tzedek(1); Yitzchak gave Maaser(2); and Yaakov, too, says, "From whatever You will give to me I will give You a tenth"(3). In addition, tithing is a time-honored formula for becoming wealthy(4), so much so that it is even permitted to give Maaser with the intent of "testing" Hashem to see if one will become rich through giving tithes(5).

There is a view in the Poskim that implies that tithing is a Biblical obligation(6). Other Poskim, noting that there is no explicit commandment in the Torah to tithe one's assets, consider this Mitzvah to be Rabbinical in nature(7). Still, many Poskim(8) consider Maaser Kesofim as neither a Biblical nor a Rabbinic obligation, but rather as an ancient custom that should be practiced by all Jews. According to this opinion, one who does not give a tenth of his income to charity, still fulfills the Mitzvah of Tzedaka, although he has not done so "properly"(9).

Whether Maaser Kesofim is a Biblical commandment, a Rabbinic ordinance, or an ancient custom is of crucial importance in actual practice. When in doubt about certain applications of a law, for instance, an Halachic authority may rule leniently on a Rabbinic or customary Mitzvah, but must rule stringently on a Biblical one. Similarly, a Biblical Mitzvah must be performed even under duress, while Rabbinical or customary Mitzvos can - under certain circumstances - be dealt with leniently. There are other distinctions as well.

Concerning Maaser Kesofim, therefore, the Poskim(10) offer the following advice: In order to avoid potential problems(11), one should stipulate - prior to the first time he gives Maaser - that he is giving Maaser Bli Neder, without the binding force of a vow. If he fails to make this stipulation, he becomes obligated to give Maaser as if he had vowed to give a tenth of his money to Tzedaka, and all the stringencies that apply when fulfilling a Biblical command would apply to him.

If one had been giving Maaser under the assumption that all Poskim require him to do so, but would now like to give Maaser only Bli Neder, he does not require Hatoras Nedarim(12). If, however, he had been giving Maaser knowing all along that he is not absolutely required to do so, he may not discontinue his practice without Hatoras Nedorim(13).

Maaser Kesofim: Disbursing the Maaser Money

In addition to giving Maaser initially Bli Neder, as outlined above, one should also stipulate that he reserves the right to allocate his Maaser money for any "Mitzvah purpose" of his choice. If he fails to do so, he must disburse his Maaser money to poor people only and not to any other charity, such as supporting a Shul, etc.(14).

Even when initially reserving the right to allocate Maaser money for any Mitzvah cause, one still faces many restrictions when disbursing the money. The general rule is that one may use Maaser money for any D'var Mitzva for which he is not otherwise obligated. For example, one may not use Maaser money to pay for Matanos Le'evyonim or Machatzis Hashekel, since he is obligated to spend that money regardless(15). Similarly, many Poskim hold that Maaser money cannot be used to pay tuition for either boys(16) or girls(17), since one is required to pay for a child's education regardless. If one

pays more tuition than the average parent, however, he may use Maaser money to pay the amount in excess of regular tuition(18). One should consult a Rav in these and in all such cases, since there are many exceptions and differing opinions concerning the laws Maaser Kesofim(19).

Preferably, Maaser money should be used to support poor people or to enable others to learn Torah. Chofetz Chaim rules(20) that supporting poor relatives(21), even one's grown [married(22)] children, takes priority over supporting un-related Torah scholars. When supporting poor people who are not relatives, however, preference should be given to those who are learning Torah.

The Poskim also allow Maaser money to be used for select Mitzvos if the only way one could afford to pay for them would be by using Maaser money(23).

Years ago, Poskim permitted buying Seforim from Maaser money on condition that they the Seforim are lent to others(24). Nowadays that Seforim abound and are easily accessible, this leniency should not be relied upon(25).

Maaser money may not be used by children for the basic expense of a parent's burial, since children are obligated to bury their parents upon their death(26).

One may put away Maaser money for someone who will learn Torah at a later date [e.g. after marriage], provided that the money is deposited in a special fund for safekeeping until it is needed(27).

FOOTNOTES:

1 Bereishis 14:20. 2 Rashi Bereishis 26:12.

3 Bereishis 28:22. 4 Tanchumah Deut. 18. Malachi 3:10.

5 Rama YD 247:4 based on the verse in Malachi 3:10. Although Pischei Teshuvah 2 quotes dissenting opinions, Aruch Hashulchan 6 and Ahavas Chesed 18:1 rule in accordance with the Rama.

6 See Tosfos Chadoshim (quoted and rejected by Rabbi Akiva Eiger Pe'ea 1:1); Aruch Hashulchan 249:5 in the opinion of the Taz; Chasam Sofer YD 232 in the opinion of the Maharil. 7 Taz (in the opinion of Tzitz Eliezer 9:1); Rabbi Akiva Eiger Pe'ea 1:1; Aruch Hashulchan 249:2 and other Poskim.

8 Bach YD 331; Shu"t Chavos Yair 224; Shu"t Yaavetz 1:3; 2:119; Shu"t Chasam Sofer YD 331; Shu"t Yehuda Yaaleh YD 334. This is the view of the majority of the Poskim - See Pischei Teshuva YD 331:12.

9 See YD 249:1 where the Shulchan Aruch rules that the "average" person gives a tenth to charity. Giving less than that is considered "giving with a bad eye", but as long as one gives a third of a Shekel, he has fulfilled his minimum obligation. 10 Ahavas Chesed 18:2; Minchas Yitzchok 5:34; Igros Moshe YD 1:153; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (printed responsum in Maaser Kesofim (Domb) pg. 19). 11 There are numerous complicated issues connected with Hilchos Maaser Kesofim in which there is no clear ruling or binding custom. Unless one wants to be stringent in all cases, he is advised to follow the Poskim who rule that Maaser Kesofim is based on custom. One can then rely on a more lenient view. 12 YD 214:1 and Shach 5.

13 If, as is the custom, he has "pre-nullified" all his vows on Erev Rosh Hashana, he may rely that his customary practice will not have the force of a vow - Shu"t Minchas Shlomo 91. 14 Chasam Sofer YD 231; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (printed responsum in Maaser Kesofim pg. 19). See also Tzitz Eliezer 9:3. 15 Mishnah Berurah 694:3 - See Magen Avraham and Be'er Heitev, ibid. See also Mishnah Berurah 605:6. 16 Ahavas Chesed 19:2; Aruch Hashulchan 249:10. See Tziitz Eliezer 9:5 for a more lenient opinion. 17 Igros Moshe YD 2:113; Harav M. Shternbuch (Am Hatorah vol. 2 5:4).

18 Igros Moshe, ibid; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (printed responsum in Maaser Kesofim pg. 22). 19 There are Poskim who permit paying tuition for older children who are away in Yeshiva, see Shu"t Pri Yitzchak 2:27 and Shu"t Maishiv Devorim YD 137. See also Tzedaka U'mishpat 5:14. 20 Ahavas Chesed 19:1 and footnote there. 21 Parents, however, should not be supported from Maaser money if their children have other sources of support for them - Ahavas Chesed, ibid. 22 Understanding of Tzedaka U'mishpat 5:5. 23 Ahavas Chesed 19:2 who allows giving to Hachnosas Kallah [even when they are not destitute] if otherwise he would not be able to do so. 24 Taz YD 249:2. 25 Harav S. Y. Elyashiv and Harav S. Wosner (oral

ruling quoted in Avne Yashfe 1:191). 26 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (written responsum published in Avne Yashfe 1:192) 27 Igros Moshe YD 1:144. TEHILLIM UPDATE FROM MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA: We were advised in shul this morning that a 17 year old girl here in Melbourne is critically ill, and that all shuls are saying tehillim for her. Her name is: Alter Esther Shayndel bat Blooma. HALACHA is published L'zchus Hayaed Doniel Meir ben Hinda. If you wish to sponsor a HALACHA Discussion, receive it free via the Internet or have any questions, please call (216)321-6381/ FAX (216)932-5762 or E-mail to:75310.3454@compuserve.com

"shabbat-zomet@jer1.co.il" Shabbat-B'Shabbato: Vayeitzei 5757 TORAH, SOCIETY, AND STATE: Who Should Wear a Talit? by Rabbi Uri Dasberg

In many Ashkenazi communities, it is customary that only married men wear a talit during prayers. Before marriage, the men only wear tzitzit on an undergarment ("talit katan"). The source of this custom is not known. One explanation that has been offered is the proximity of the two passages, "Make fringes for yourself" [Devarim 22:12] and "When a man takes a wife" [Devarim 22:13]. However, using proximity of passages as a basis for a ruling is a technique used almost exclusively in the Talmud, and this interpretation is not found anywhere in the Talmud.

In Kiddushin, it is written that when Rabbi Hamnuna was single he did not wear a cloth on his head, as was the custom of married men. This led the Magen Avraham to the conclusion that unmarried men do not cover their heads with a talit. However, an alternative interpretation could be that for some reason married men cover their heads, while single men wear a talit only up to their shoulders. In addition, there have been some who claim that the Talmud is referring to special clothing worn by married men and not a talit with tzitzit.

There have been many other proposals to explain the difference between single and married men. Some are based on kabbalah and mysticism. Another possible reason is related to the early age at which marriages used to take place; it would be natural for the bride to buy her groom a gift of new clothing, which might typically be a talit. From this it became normal for a groom to wear a new talit, and this was later transformed into a custom of wearing a talit only after being married.

Another problem with the Ashkenazi custom is that it seems to be in conflict with the ruling that "a child who knows how to do so must wear tzitzit" [Succah 42]. In addition, there is an opinion that the only talit requiring tzitzit under Torah law is one made of wool, and it is usually only a large talit which is made of wool, while undergarments are often made of other cloth. This means that a single man may never perform the Torah commandment properly until after he is married.

In any case, the custom that only married men wear a full-sized talit has been accepted by many prominent communities, and even if we do not understand the reason for it, everybody should continue the customs handed down from his family. Reference: Shlomi Riskin, "Misafra Leseifa," page 49.

"ohr@jer1.co.il" "weekly@jer1.co.il" Torah Weekly - Vayeitzei Ohr Somayach This issue is dedicated in memory of Edward Koppel - Yisrael Isser ben Alexander Koppel (12th Kislev 5729) by his daughter Cheryl Steinberg and grandchildren Elana Miriam and Yisrael Isser

Insights

Stone Talk "And he took from the stones of the place, and he placed them around his head, and he lay down in that place." (28:11) The Midrash tells us that the twelve stones all wanted the merit of being the stone on which the great tzaddik, Yaakov, would lay his head. A few verses later the Torah talks of one stone, implying that the stones had subsequently all become one. What is the significance of the stones being transformed into one? The

twelve stones represent the twelve tribes of Israel. The argument between the stones was about which tribe was the essence of the Jewish People. Was it Levi and his descendants of the priesthood who performed the service in the Holy Temple? Or was it Yissachar who would learn Torah? Or was it Zevulun who through his business acumen would support Yissachar so that he could concentrate on Torah study? Each of the stones claimed that it was the essence of the Jewish People, until Hashem took them all and made them into one. For no one part of the Jewish People is its essence. Rather, the essence of Israel is unity, for only in unity can it fulfill its purpose, which is to reflect the Oneness of the Creator who Unites everything into One. (Heard from Rabbi Calev Gestetner)

Ultimate Name-Dropping "It is in my power to do you all harm; but the G-d of your father addressed me last night, saying, 'Beware of speaking with Yaakov either good or bad.'" (31:29) If Lavan was trying to frighten Yaakov by telling him "It is in my power to do you all harm..." why does he then destroy his credibility by admitting that Hashem told him to 'Beware of speaking with Yaakov either good or bad'? Such is the way of those who lust for status in the eyes of others. They are quite prepared to trip themselves up just to 'drop' an important name. And Lavan could not resist the ultimate name-dropping -- telling Yaakov that Hashem had spoken to him -- even though it would completely emasculate his threats. (Heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman)

The Days of Our Lives "So Yaakov worked seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him a few days because of his love for her." (29:20) A man enters a restaurant and asks the waiter "What's good today?" When the waiter replies "The fish is excellent!" the man smiles and says "Great! I love fish!" Really all this man is saying is that he loves himself, because if he really loved fish he would be walking up and down outside the restaurant with a placard saying "THIS RESTAURANT MURDERS FISH!" Every worldly love, whether a love for an object or a person, every conventional love, is not a pure love of the one who loves for the object of his affections, but rather the reverse -- the lover loves himself. The object of his affections is merely the means to his own self-gratification. When love consists of taking, of self-gratifying, then, necessarily, every hour without the love-object is endless craving. However in a love which is giving, the fulfillment of the love starts when the giving starts. "Yaakov worked seven years for Rachel." From the moment Yaakov started working he was giving to Rachel -- and thus "...they (the years) seemed to him a few days because of his love for her." The "True Life Romance" hero protests to his 'beloved' -- "Darling, every minute since I saw you last has been an eternity! The minutes have been like years, the hours like centuries..." How different is soap-opera sentiment from the timeless love of Yaakov for Rachel! A 'love' which takes, expands time, but a giving love compresses it. (Adapted from Rabbi Eliya Lopian)

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Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair General Editor:
Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Lev Seltzer ffffffff
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Parsha Q&A - Vayeitzei Ohr Somayach <http://www.ohr.org.il>

Parsha Questions

1. When Yaakov traveled to Charan, the Torah stresses that he departed from Be'er Sheva. Why?
2. On the night of his dream, Yaakov did something he hadn't done in 14 years. What?
3. In his dream, Yaakov saw angels going up and down. What were the missions of these angels?
4. Why did Hashem promise Yaakov "I am with you" (28:15)?
5. What is "the gate of Heaven" (28:17)?
6. Why did Yaakov rebuke the shepherds?
7. Why did Yaakov cry when he met Rachel?
8. Why did Yaakov come empty-handed to Lavan's house?
9. Why did Lavan run to greet Yaakov?
- 10.

Why were Leah's eyes tender? 11. How old was Yaakov when he married Leah and Rachel? 12. Why did Rachel envy Leah? 13. Who was Yaakov's fifth son? 14. "Hashem remembered Rachel" (30:22). What did He remember? 15. What does 'Yosef' mean? Why was he named that? 16. Before Yaakov arrived, Rachel tended Lavan's sheep. Why didn't Lavan's sons tend his sheep? 17. Why did Rachel steal Lavan's terafim? 18. Where are there two Aramaic words in this week's Parsha? 19. Who was Bilhah's father? Who was Zilpah's father? 20. Who escorted Yaakov into Eretz Yisrael?

Recommended Reading List

Ramban 28:12 Yaakov's Dream 29:2 Three Flocks 30:2 Yaakov's Anger 31:19 The Terafim Sforno 28:12-13 Yaakov's Dream 29:6 A Proper Guest 29:11 Why Yaakov Cried 31:32 Yaakov's Curse 32:1 A Father's Blessing

Answers to this Week's Questions All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 28:10 - The departure of a righteous person leaves a noticeable void in that place. 2. 28:11 - Sleep at night lying down. 3. 28:12 - The ascending angels accompanied Yaakov in Eretz Canaan. The descending angels accompanied Yaakov outside of the Land. 4. 28:15 - To reassure Yaakov, since he was afraid of Eisav and Lavan. 5. 28:17 - The place via which our prayers ascend to Heaven. 6. 29:7 - He thought they were loafing, stopping work early in the day. 7. 29:11 - He saw prophetically that they would not be buried together. 8. 29:11 - Eliphaz, Eisav's son, chased him and took all his possessions. 9. 29:13 - He thought Yaakov was carrying money. 10. 29:17 - She cried continually, because she thought she was destined to marry Eisav. 11. 29:21 - Eighty-four. 12. 30:1 - She envied her mitzvos, thinking they were the reason Leah merited having children. 13. 30:5 - Dan. 14. 30:22 - That Rachel gave Leah the "signs of recognition" that Yaakov had taught her, so that she wouldn't be embarrassed. 15. 30:24 - 'Yosef' means 'He will add.' Rachel prayed to Hashem for another son, in addition to Yosef. 16. 30:29 - They weren't born yet. 17. 31:19 - To wean her father from idol worship. 18. 31:41 - Yagar Sahadusa, meaning 'wall of testimony.' 19. 31:50 - Lavan. 20. 32:1 - The angels of Eretz Yisrael.

Bonus QUESTION: When Yaakov left for Charan he was 63, and had learned Torah all his life; first from Avraham and later from Yitzchak. Why then -- despite his father's directive to find a wife -- did he suddenly need to delay 14 years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever?

Bonus ANSWER: Noach's son Shem survived the Flood. Before the Flood, he had lived amongst the most wicked of peoples, yet he remained righteous. Now that Yaakov was leaving the righteous influence of his father, Yitzchak, and going to live with the wicked Lavan and his like-minded countrymen, Yaakov needed Shem's teachings to show him how to remain righteous in evil surroundings. Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky

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"yhe@jer1.co.il | yhe-sichot@jer1.c. SICHOT - PARASHAT VAYETZE YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH PROJECT(VBM) STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT DELIVERED BY THE ROSHEI YESHIVA - VAYETZE - SICHA OF HARAV LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

The "House of the Lord (Beit Elokim)" and the "Gate of Heaven (Sha'ar Ha-Shamayim)"

Summarized by David Tee

"And he feared and said, 'How awesome this place is; this can only be the House of the Lord, and this is the gate of heaven.'"

The Ramban explains that Yaakov is referring here to two separate places: The 'house of the Lord' on one hand and the 'gateway to heaven' on the other. (Either the one place is Be'er Sheva and the other Jerusalem, or the one is Jerusalem and the other is Beit-El.) But other Rishonim maintain that there is only one place, representing both the 'house of God' and the 'gateway to heaven.' Rashi comments: "This refers to the Beit Ha-mikdash, which is the 'gateway' from which the prayers and sacrifices ascend." The

Ibn Ezra concurs.

So let us examine this issue of the "gateway to heaven" and whether it is an independent entity, standing alone, separate and disconnected from the concept of 'house,' or whether it is very closely bound up with the 'house.'

This question is reminiscent of the mitzva of placing a mezuzah on the doorpost, where we are told: "And you shall write them on the doorposts of your home and on your gates" - both house and gate are mentioned. Indeed, the Rishonim are divided as to whether one is obligated to place a mezuzah on one's gate even if it does not serve as part of the 'house' (e.g., the gate of the yard in which there is no house), or whether it is specifically on the gate (entrance) of the house itself that the obligation applies. In any event, all agree that there is a strong connection between the gate and the house, and when a mezuzah is affixed to the entrance of the house it must be on the inside, in the entrance to it, and not outside the house on the gate.

The significance of this distinction is more than a purely halakhic concept. There is also a profound and fundamental spiritual concept at stake.

There are philosophies which understand Godliness as something transcendental, very distant - God lives in "heaven" with no connection to the material, corporeal and loathsome earth. In contrast, there are other philosophies which regard God as being immanent, extremely near, like a person's best friend - God is in the world and the world is God. This approach identifies God with nature.

Judaism completely rejects both approaches. We believe that "God encompasses the world; the world does not encompass God." At the same time, though, God is near to us and watches over us constantly.

Heaven is not disconnected from earth: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Also, "Hear O Israel - the Lord our God, the Lord is One" - there is no separation between God on earth and God in heaven - He is all One. The relationship between heavenly God and earthly God is a self-contradictory one. On one hand, it is completely impossible to grasp the essence of God, who fills the entire world with His glory and whose domain is the heavens above and the earth below. On the other hand, we pray towards the Beit Ha-mikdash - the house where God's presence dwells, only on earth!

This contradiction is highlighted in Shlomo's prayer: "Will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold, the highest heavens cannot contain You, how much more so this house which I have built!" (Melachim I 8:27). Nevertheless, Shlomo asserts: "I have surely built You a heavenly mansion, a dwelling for Your eternal abode."

The key to solving the dilemma is to be found in our parasha: "This can only be the house of the Lord, and this is the gate of heaven." True, on one hand the place represents an awesome contraction of God - "the house of God." Immanent God is in the world, "contracted" into a house. On the other hand, the place is "the gateway to heaven." This very same house is the gateway to the transcendental God, beyond our grasp, "in the heavens above...."

We may understand the mitzva of affixing a mezuzah in the same way. When we enter a house we are not to disconnect ourselves from the Godly reality of nature outside. And upon entering, at the gate, we fulfill the mitzva of mezuzah which points to God's presence within the house too.

This perception is not limited to any particular mitzva, but rather reflects an all-encompassing view of the world as expressed by Chazal: "This world resembles a corridor [i.e., the entrance]; the World to Come resembles a hall [i.e., the house]. Prepare yourself in the corridor so that you will be able to enter the hall." (Avot 4:1)

It is not only the Beit Ha-mikdash which represents the "house of God" and "gateway to heaven." The entire world is in fact a "house of God" - "Better one hour of Torah study in this world than all of eternal life in the World to Come" [i.e., this world is also an end in itself] - and at the same time no more than a gateway - a corridor - to the World to Come.

From the above we must draw conclusions regarding our everyday lives. The Torah is directing us to act in a paradoxical manner. We must see God in our world, marvel at the miracles of nature - "How great are Your works,

O God" - and feel God's presence in our lives here, in every place and at every moment - the perception of immanence. This is the "house of God."

At the same time, let us not forget that our world is only a window, an opening to another world. Here we perceive ourselves as only at the "gate of heaven" - the transcendental, heavenly world, distanced from us, and God as being "whom human thought cannot grasp at all."

(Originally delivered on Shabbat Parashat Vayetze 5750. Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

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DRASHA PARSHAS VAYEITZEI -- BROTHERS IN SCORN

Yaakov's first encounter with his future wife Rachel was significant, encompassing varied emotions, each of which merits lengthy discussion. Upon greeting her at a well, Yaakov feeds her sheep, kisses her, cries, and then identifies himself as the brother of her father. (Genesis 29:11-12) Such classification needs explanation. Yaakov was not a brother of Rachel's father Lavan: he was a nephew, the son of Lavan's sister, Rivka. Why then did Yaakov refer to himself as a brother of Lavan? The Talmud in Megilah explains that Lavan's notorious reputation preceded him. He was nicknamed Lavan HaArami, or Lavan the charlatan. He was known not only to be avaricious, but to be unscrupulous as well. Yaakov wanted to lay the ground rules with his future bride.

"If your father will act conniving then I am his brother. However, if he will act honorably I will respond in kind." What needs clarification, however, is why begin a marital relationship on such a note. What precedent is Yaakov setting with such a powerful declaration?

Rabbi Meir Shapiro (1887-1933) was a leader of Polish Jewry in the years before World War II. In addition to being the chief Rabbi of Lublin, building and maintaining one of the world's largest and most beautiful yeshivos, Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, he was also one of the first Orthodox members of the Polish parliament, the Sejm. He was a courageous leader whose vision and unwavering commitment to Torah values gained him the respect of Jews and gentiles alike.

During his first weeks as the leader of the Orthodox Jewish delegation, Rabbi Shapiro was approached by a Polish parliamentary deputy, Professor Lutoslawski, a known anti-Semite whose devious legislation constantly deprived minorities of their civil and economic rights.

Standing in front of a group parliamentarians in the halls of the Sejm, the depraved deputy began. "Rabbi," he shouted, a sly smile spreading across his evil face. "I have a wonderful new way for Jews to make a living -- they can skin dead dogs."

Without missing a beat Rabbi Shapiro shot back. "Impossible, their representatives would never allow it."

The Professor looked puzzled. "Whose representatives? The Jews'?"

"No," smiled Rav Meir, "the dog deputies."

Flustered, the vicious bigot tried one more. "Well, my dear Rabbi," he continued sarcastically. "Do you know that on the entrance gate of the city of Schlesien there is an inscription, 'to Jews and dogs entrance forbidden?'"

Rabbi Meir just shrugged his shoulders. "I guess we will never be able to visit that city together." Needless to say, nary an anti-Semitic word was ever pointed in Rabbi Meir's direction again.

Yaakov knew that to initiate his destiny in the confines of a hostile environment he should proclaim the rules loud and clear. He would not allow himself to be swayed, duped, or connived by even the master of deception and ridicule, Lavan the charlatan. In forging the household that would be the basis for Jewish pride and eternity, Yaakov had to make it clear to his future bride that he too could play hardball. He sent a message of pride and

awareness to his descendants.

Though this Jew who sat in the tent would enter his new environment with brotherly love, if he needed to, he could just as well be a brother in scorn. Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Joel Mandel in memory of Joseph Jungreis Mordechai Kamenetzky - Yeshiva of South Shore rmk@torah.org Drasha, Copyright (c) 1996 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc.

"yhe@jer1.co.il" , "yhe-intparsha@jer... INTPARSHA - 06: PARASHAT VAYETZE INTRODUCTION TO PARASHAT HASHAVUA by Zvi Shimon ... INTERPRETATIONS OF THE DREAM

The question of the location of the dream is not only a matter of geography; it also affects our understanding of the content of Jacob's dream.

Jacob's dream includes a vision of the stairway and an oral communication from God in which God promises to protect Jacob, bring him back to the land of Israel and bequeath the land to his offspring. What is the meaning of Jacob's peculiar but incredible vision? This question is actually two-fold. First, what do the stairway connecting the earth to the sky and the angels ascending and descending it represent? Second, how does this vision relate to Jacob and the present circumstances in which he finds himself?

Let us begin by analyzing some of the homiletical interpretations offered by our sages, and then determine how these interpretations may answer the two aforementioned questions?

"Bar Kappara taught: No dream is without its interpretation. AND BEHOLD A LADDER symbolizes the stairway (leading to the top of the altar in the Temple.); SET UP ON THE EARTH - the altar, as it says, 'An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me' (Ex. 20:21); AND THE TOP OF IT REACHED TO HEAVEN - the sacrifices, the scent of which ascended to heaven; AND BEHOLD THE ANGELS OF GOD - the High Priests; ASCENDING AND DESCENDING ON IT - ascending and descending the stairway. AND BEHOLD, THE LORD STOOD BESIDE HIM (28:13) - 'I saw the Lord standing beside the altar' (Amos 9:1)." (Midrash Rabba Vayetze)

According to this interpretation, Jacob's vision portrays the offering of sacrifices by the priests in the Temple. The stairway symbolizes the steps to the altar in the Temple, and the angels represent priests offering sacrifices. This explanation adopts the position which identifies the location of Jacob's dream as Mount Moria, the sight of the temple in Jerusalem. Jacob sees a vision of the temple of God which is to be built on the spot where he presently sleeps. As stated above, the purpose of this vision is to ingrain in Jacob the understanding of the spiritual centrality of the land of Israel and to signal to Jacob that his exile is only temporary and that he must eventually return to Israel.

The Midrash Rabba cites a second interpretation: "The Rabbis related it to Sinai. AND HE DREAMED, AND BEHOLD A LADDER symbolizes Sinai; SET UP ON THE EARTH, as it says, 'And they stood at the foot of the mountain' (Ex. 19:17); AND THE TOP OF IT REACHED TO HEAVEN - 'And the mountain burned with fire unto the heart of heaven' (Deut. 4:11). AND BEHOLD THE ANGELS OF GOD alludes to Moses and Aaron. ASCENDING: 'And Moses went up to God' (Ex. 19:3); AND DESCENDING - 'And Moses went down from the mount' (ib. 14). AND BEHOLD, THE LORD STOOD BESIDE HIM - And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai (ib. 20)."

The interpretation of the Rabbis, is intriguing. Jacob's vision symbolizes the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The ladder represents Mount Sinai and the angels, Moses and Aaron ascending the mountain. What is the idea behind the Rabbis' seemingly farfetched interpretation? I believe that according to this interpretation, God was preparing Jacob for his sojourn away from home. Jacob was leaving his family and about to enter a totally different type of culture. What will ensure his survival as a Jew? What will prevent his assimilation into the enchanting cosmopolitan Babylonian culture? Only through his continual attachment to the heritage of his fathers,

to the commandments and customs of his family will he not lose his identity.

Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer (a collection of midrashim mostly on Genesis) cites another homiletical interpretation of our sages:

"And behold the angels of God ascending and descending': These are the princes of the heathen nations which God showed Jacob our father. The Prince of Babylon ascended seventy steps and descended, Media, fifty-two and descended, Greece, one hundred steps and descended, Edom ascended and no one knows how many! In that hour, Jacob was afraid and said: 'Perhaps this one has no descent?' Said the Holy One blessed be He to him: 'Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob ... neither be dismayed, O Israel.' Even if thou seest him, so to speak, ascend and sit by Me, I bring him down! "

According to this interpretation, the stairway represents ascendancy to power and world domination, and the angels represent the different nations. Each nation rises to power for a period represented by the number of steps its angel climbs up the stairway (Babylon ruled for seventy years) and then declines and is replaced by a new world power. Babylon gives way to Media (Persia), Persia to Greece, and Greece succumbs to Edom (Rome). Jacob's vision is actually a prophecy of the future rise and fall of empires. How does this relate to Jacob and his current circumstances? The Ramban explains that God "showed Jacob that whatever is done on earth is effected by means of the angels, and everything is by His decree... He further showed Jacob that He stands above the ladder and promises that Jacob will not be under the power of the angels, but he will be God's portion, and that He will always be with him ..." God assures Jacob that He will watch over him while in exile and although Esau might temporarily have the upper hand, he will eventually fall. Interestingly, Edom is the only empire which is described as ascending the ladder but not descending it. Why is this? We should remember that this homiletical interpretation was written during the time of our sages while the Roman Empire still controlled Israel. The sages interpreted the struggle between Jacob and Esau as symbolic of the conflict between Israel and the Roman Empire. The midrash was written with the belief and the anticipation of the impending downfall of the Romans.

All three interpretations cited so far are midrashim belonging to the homiletical school of interpretation. The connection between their interpretations and the symbols in Jacob's dream are relatively remote. The stairway in the vision is invested with symbolic significance far beyond a stairway connecting heaven and earth. It represents either the Temple Mount, or Mount Sinai, or the power and control over the world invested in the hands of the different nations. We will now analyze some of the 'peshat' interpretations (simpler, non-homiletical interpretations).

Rashi expounds Jacob's vision as follows. The Torah states that the angels first ascend and then descend, counter to our expectation that the angels first descend to the world from heaven. Rashi therefore explains that "the angels that accompanied him in the land of Israel do not leave Israel, so they ascended to the heavens. Then the angels of exile descended to accompany him."

According to this interpretation, the angels and the stairway are interpreted literally, as angels and as the stairway to heaven. The challenges and dangers endemic to Diaspora existence are substantially different from those in Israel. Hence, the protection and overseeing required in Diaspora are different and are therefore performed by different angels. God informs Jacob that his departure from Israel does not deprive him of divine overseeing. God will escort Jacob even while in a foreign land, in the house of Laban.

Rabbi David Zvi Hoffman (Germany, 1843-1921) interprets differently. He explains that God revealed to Jacob the stairway which connects the earth to heaven in order to challenge Jacob. This stairway is the path to perfection, to approaching God. The key to ascending this stairway is the keeping of the commandments and the performance of God's will. Jacob's situation is deteriorating. He is running for his life and must depart from the chosen land. In this woeful state God appears to Jacob and shows him the path to his future success. Jacob can still triumph over his brother Esau; he must only ascend the stairway of righteousness and perfection. The ascension of

this stairway will make him worthy of continuing Abraham's covenant and inheriting the land of Israel. To improve his situation; he must only ascend the 'stairway to heaven.'

For direct questions or comments to Zvi Shimon, please send email to inparsh@etzion.org.il.

daf-hashavua Vayetze 5757/1996

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Vayetze -Thanks in a Name -----

by Rabbi Emmanuel Levy - Palmers Green & Southgate Synagogue
The name 'Jew' is derived from Judah, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, whose birth is recorded in this week's Sidra (29:35). According to the Talmud (Yoma 83b), the names of Biblical characters actually describe their intrinsic character. 'By examining the true meaning of the name Yehudah (Judah), we can thereby also cast light on the meaning of the name Jew'. Upon the birth of Judah, Leah declared, "This time I shall thank G-d" (29:35). The name Yehudah is therefore derived from the verb lehodot meaning 'to give thanks'. But why was Leah more appreciative of G-d on this occasion than on the births of her previous three children? Furthermore, the Talmud in Berachot (7b) states: From the day G-d created the world, no one praised Him until Leah came along and did so'. But surely, Noah, Malkizedek (identified as Shem), and Eliezer, Abraham's servant, all used the expression, Baruch Hashem, 'may G-d be blessed'. What was so special about Leah's praise?

Rashi explains as follows: Leah said, "With this birth, I have been granted more than my share". Leah knew - apparently through prophecy - that Jacob was destined to have twelve children through four wives. That would mean three children each. By bearing a fourth son, Leah had been granted more than her share.

The Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 71:4) compares the situation to a priest who, when given tithe, was not particularly grateful, because this was the tax which was his due anyway. When he was offered ordinary food, however, he was thankful because this was an unsolicited gift, which even a non-priest could eat.

For this reason, explains the Chiddushei HaRim (Rabbi Isaac Meir Alter of Gur 1799 -1866) we are known as Jews. We continually thank G-d for his blessings for which we consider ourselves undeserving. It is this state of mind - a sense of gratitude in the face of his own inadequacy - which has strengthened the spirit of the Jew and enabled him to survive.

But this explanation raises a difficulty. The Maharsha (Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidels, 1555-1631) notes from the Talmud in Megillah (14a) that only seven women were granted prophecy: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Chuldah and Esther. If Leah is not included amongst them, she was not a prophetess, and if so, how could she have possibly known that Jacob would have four wives and twelve sons? The Maharsha therefore explains that G-d put the name into Leah's mind subconsciously, but she herself was unaware of the deeper significance behind the name. This theory is also born out by a comment of the Rashash (Rabbi Samuel Strashum of Lithuania 1794-1872), who suggests that the names of Jacob's children were not original, but were already in use. This explains the rather tenuous connection between the name given and the meaning behind the name. The names chosen were the closest in existence to the sentiment which Leah wished to express.

The late Rabbi Shimon Shwab in his work Mayyan Beit Hasho'evah gives a novel interpretation of the uniqueness of Leah's thanks in consonance with the view that Leah did not possess prophecy. He notes that the names of her first three children were really suggestive of a prayer which Leah made when each was born. Reuven was so called because G-d has seen (ra'ah) my affliction and 'now my husband will love me'; Shimon - G-d has heard (shama) 'that I am hated'; Levi - This time my husband 'will accompany me' (yelaveh). Yet we do not find that her words were ever fulfilled. She never

gained the same affection from her husband that Rachel did. If so, Leah's naming of her children can only have been an act of prayer and not a prophecy.

We see from here that Leah did not fully rejoice in these births. The natural joy of her childbirth was completely overshadowed by her desire to gain her husband's affections. But by the time that Yehudah was born, her philosophy had changed. She now realised that the birth of a baby in itself was a gift from G-d. True, she could never become the main wife of Jacob, but she could rejoice in the precious gift of a newborn baby that G-d had granted her: 'This time I shall thank G-d'.

It is Leah's philosophy that has sustained the Jew within the competitive world. Rather than striving for the unobtainable, Judaism teaches that sometimes it is better to have not, rather than to have. 'Who is rich?' ask the Rabbis. 'He who is happy with his portion'.

There is a further nuance to the name Yehudah. The verb *Lehodot* from which the name is derived means not only 'to give thanks' but also 'to admit'. We see this later in the *Sidra* of *Vayeshev* when Judah admits that Tamar, his daughter-in-law, is innocent of harlotry, even though this means implicating himself in the process. *Lehdot* therefore means, 'to confess' or 'to admit'.

Every expression of thanks is really a confession. People sometimes have difficulty saying 'thank you' to another person, because it implies that the first person needed the second.

In the *modim* prayer which we recite in every *Amidah*, we admit that we need G-d and go on to thank Him for everything He gives us. By so doing, we act as Jews and live up to the meaning of the name Jew at the same time.

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Vayetze

... "And she conceived again and bore a son and she said 'This time I thank Hashem,' therefore she called his name Yehudah." (29:35)

The Talmud *Brachos 7b* comments that from the beginning of Creation there had never been a person who thanked Hashem until Leah. Leah was the originator of the "official" sense of gratitude one should express for the good Hashem accords us. This does not seem consistent with the text in *Parashas Chayei Sarah* (4:52), where we note that upon securing *Rivkah* as a mate for *Yitzchak*, *Eliezer* bowed down in recognition to Hashem for providing *Rivkah* for *Yitzchak*. Why do *Chazal* attribute the distinction to Leah of being the first to offer gratitude?

Horav Meir Bergman, *Shlita*, distinguishes between bowing down, which was the expression of gratitude selected by *Eliezer*, and the oral expression of gratitude exhibited by Leah. Perhaps *Eliezer's* behavior might be the source for the halachah for bowing down during the *Shemoneh Esrai* upon saying the *brachah* of *Modim*. This blessing recognizes Hashem's beneficence and accords Him gratitude. When one acknowledges Hashem's favor and offers his gratitude, he should bow in respect. Leah, however, was the first to express her gratitude - verbally, when she thanked Hashem for granting her motherhood for the fourth time. *Horav Bergman* suggests another approach towards understanding *Chazal*. Indeed, *Eliezer* preceded Leah in expressing his gratitude to Hashem. There is a difference, however, between the two forms of gratitude. Although *Eliezer* acknowledged Hashem's favor, he nonetheless felt that *Avraham* was worthy of receiving the reward.

Consequently, *Eliezer* thanked Hashem for what he felt was "owed" him. After all, Hashem promised *Avraham* that a great nation would emerge from him. In contrast, Leah felt that whatever she received from Hashem was more than she deserved. This is consistent with *Rashi's* explanation of the *pasuk*, "This time I thank Hashem." What is so unique about "this" time, "this" son? She saw *b'ruach ha'Kodesh* that *Yaakov* would have twelve tribes. Each wife would then have three sons, if the tribes were to be "divided" equally among *Yaakov's* wives. When she gave birth to her fourth son, she felt she had received more than her due share.

The Midrash teaches us that as a result of Leah's expression of gratitude, she merited that her descendants, *Yehudah* and *David Ha'Melech*, would exemplify themselves in their ability to "confess". This is enigmatic. What is the relationship between Leah's expression of gratitude and the confession of

David Ha'Melech and *Yehudah*, who confessed to being guilty of a misdeed?

Accepting the onus of guilt is somewhat different than acknowledging gratitude.

Horav A.H. Leibowitz, *Shlita*, infers a fascinating lesson from this Midrash. *Hakoras hatov*, recognition of the good one receives, and *hakoras ha'cheit*, recognizing that one has sinned, accepting and conceding guilt, both originate from one source - the *middah* of *emes*, truth. An individual who is a truthful person, who is a man of integrity and rectitude, who sees everything through the perspective of absolute *emes*, has no problem recognizing the kindness he receives from Hashem. He is likewise quick to confess his guilt upon trans-gressing. He does not attempt to lamely justify his wrongdoing by painting it with a coat of false innocence. Similarly, he will not foolishly think that he himself is the source of his own success. He attributes success to Hashem and accepts guilt upon himself. This is an *ish emes*, a truthful person. One who is not a *makir tov* is not an *ish emes*. He is no different than the sinner who refuses to acknowledge his transgression. Leah imbued this sense of truth in her descendants, who reflected this character trait in their total demeanor.

Project Genesis "owner-torah-forum-digest@torah.org

Date: Mon, 14 Oct 1996 19:42:07 -0400 (EDT) From: Michael J Broyde <relmb@emory.edu> Subject: Re: Women's Tefilah Groups

There have now been two posts concerning women's tefilla groups, neither of which addressed the technical halachic questions raised by the initial poster's question. Let me suggest that there are two distinctly different issues at work here. The first is a technical halachic one: what may a group of women do as a group of women when they pray. This issue is just as relevant to a group of women in seminary in *Yerushalayim* as it is to a group of women on the upper west side of *Manhattan*, and it has nothing to do with what we call such a service. Included in these technical questions are whether a woman can read *megillah* for other women? Recite *berachot* for other women? Recite *Shemoneh Esrei* for other women -- (does it matter if they already know how to pray?). Indeed, these questions are very relevant to a variety of situations that have nothing to do with Feminism in its broader sense or any sort of modern issues -- they are addressed by the classical *poskim* of times of old. There are certain rituals that women are precluded from doing, because they need a *minyan*, and women do not count in the *minyan*. There are yet other technical issues at work here also.

The second set of issues address the "public policy" issue of whether *torah hashkafa* permits/encourage/prohibits the institutionalization of these practices WHEN THERE IS A MINYAN FOR MEN AVAILABLE. These go to the issues that *Rabbi Menken* addressed and they raise serious issues for our community. It might be that even when technical halacha permits women to do any particular ritual, when they can do that ritual with a *minyan* of men, they should. Perhaps in others, they need not. Perhaps it depends on whether they are really *mechuyav* [obligated] in the act that they are doing? However, before discussing those "meta-halachic" issues, it is important to address the first set of issues, which is what conduct is *mutar al pe din* [permitted according to halacha] assuming the motive issue were to disappear. Perhaps such a discussion should occur first, so that we can all understand what types of issues we are speaking about, when we discuss these issues.

Rabbi Michael J. Broyde

Date: Sun, 27 Oct 1996 13:19:12 +0100 From: Reuben Gardner <anavim@worldnet.fr> Subject: Re: Women praying with a minyan CAZAUBON <tarac@qualcomm.com> asked: >I have read in other posts about the value of praying in a minyan for men, >but is there any value in it for women? Since women are not counted in an >(Orthodox) minyan, is there any reason for a woman to exert herself to go to >shul and pray with a minyan?

At the moment I haven't found exactly what you want but definitely there is

an "inyan" for a women to go to a shul. gemarah sota daf 22 first side there is a story of a widow going to the shul of Rav Yohanan. He asked her was there not a shul in her area. She answered with a question: don't I have the merit of walking farther? If he would have asked her why do you not stay home it would have meant that there was no "inyan" to go to shul for a woman. Anyway this is still no proof that there is this something extra that you are looking for because even to daven alone we are supposed to go to shul.

Reuben Gardner

Date: Thu, 17 Oct 1996 15:25:24 -0400 (edt) From: Chaim Frazer <frazerch@carroll.com> Subject: Re: Women's Tefilah Groups
At 04:39 PM 10/14/96 -0400, Rav Yaakov Menken wrote: >[Having just sent through a post stating Rabbi Avi Weiss' support for these >groups, I must wonder what sort of reasoning or backing he has for his >position. He is a PR maven, but I've not heard him described as a leading >Halachic authority.] I think this is somewhat unfair. Having read Rabbi Weiss' book, I can tell you that he recounts conversations that he had on this matter with Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zt'l, and his understanding of Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt'l. In the latter case, Rabbi Weiss clarified his views of Rav Moshe with Rabbi Mordecai Tendler, Rav Moshe's grandson and personal assistant, and reports the results of Rabbi Tendler's responses to him. Before appearing to attack him for lack of scholarly stature or consultation with Gedolim, it would seem appropriate to read the book (to see if perhaps it does have merit), and to read his account of his consultations with unquestioned Gedolim. One can, of course, still disagree with him, but on the basis of what he said and/or did rather than giving the appearance of not darshaning him lek haf zekhut. For what it's worth, I found his use of the Tosefta to clarify the meaning of Kavod HaTzibbur fascinating, especially as it absolutely nails down the total impermissibility of giving women aliyot in practice. (And this from someone like Rabbi Weiss who is sensitive to people's expressed needs, but not at cost of the least damage to Halachic integrity.)

Incidentally, there is a Women's Tefillah Group in Teaneck, NJ, where I live, and it is interesting that virtually no high school or college girls or women have the slightest interest in it, including the daughters of many of its strongest enthusiasts. I suspect that this phenomenon appeals to a very small section of the Orthodox community, and one which does not have the experience of a thorough Jewish education. Most of those girls and young women who do not have an interest repeat almost verbatim the substantive comments and objections that Rav Menken mentioned in the rest of his message as their basis for non-interest. Chaim Frazer

Date: Sun, 3 Nov 1996 18:31:13 -0500 From: rhendel@mcs.drexel.edu (Russell Hendel) Subject: Re: Women's Tefilah Groups
I was told that women who abstain from saying bircath hatorah [blessings on learning Torah, also made when receiving an aliyah] in the morning may then say bircath hatorah when called up to an aliyah. However it is my understanding that if a man had not said bircath hatorah and had already said kriath shema (with beracoth) [the Shema with its blessings] that he is no longer allowed to say bircath hatorah since the beracoth of kriath shmah serve this purpose. Based on this it would seem that women also are not allowed to say bircath hatorah if they have davened kriath shemah. It would also appear to me that saying an improper beracha is not a rabbinical error but a biblical error (.. not using Hashem's name in vain). In response to Michael Broyde [TF V2 #86] who introduced the distinction between technical and public policy issues in women's prayer groups, I would like to also ask the following: would it be "logical / acceptable" to invoke the prohibition of lo tisgodidu (don't make yourselves into many factions) to discourage women from separating from men and making a prayer group? The reason I phrase my question in this way is that to the best of my knowledge we do ****not**** invoke lo tisgodidu when men wish to make a "new minyan" in a town. Respectfully Russell Jay Hendel, Ph.d., ASA

Date: Wed, 13 Nov 1996 19:38:33 -0400

From: Yaakov Menken <menken@torah.org>

Subject: Re: Women's Tefilah Groups

I'll apologize in advance for the length of this post. It was necessary to cover a lot of material.

It's interesting that despite the strong participation from both men and women on this mailing list, only one (private) response to my previous post on this subject came from a woman. The writer was Conservative, and inspired the following clarification: I have no particular trouble with women as Rabbis or other full participants in non-Orthodox movements. There was and is still male chauvenism in society, and if one does not believe that G-d gave both the written and Oral Torahs, then one has no reason not to believe that chauvenistic men created the laws. So our disagreement is about the fundamental nature of Torah, not about women's prayer groups!

The remainder of my post is therefore concerned with a Halachic perspective, and is at least as relevant to an understanding of the Halachic process overall, as it is to this specific issue. For though my first effort on this topic attempted to point out a certain self-contradiction within women's Tefillah groups from a feminist's own perspective, the objections (as received from other men) have concerned primarily Halachic issues, and it is to these that I wish to respond.

As Rabbi Michael Broyde pointed out, there is a difference between the technical issues - what a group of women can do when they pray - and the issue of what practices might be prohibited in a group from a Torah Hashkafic perspective. It is primarily the latter issue that is actively debated, and to my understanding, the Halachic opinions expressed do not depend on whether or not there is a minyan for men available.

Adam Szpiro termed my last post on the topic "ÄmyÄ personal opinion as to why women's tefilah groups are inappropriate." Juxtaposed against a defense of Rabbi Avi Weiss, this could give the mistaken impression that Rabbi Weiss represents the majority view. I may have explained the issues - the "why" - in my own words, but I do not merit a personal opinion on Halachic issues of this nature, and would not express that which I do not have.

In the Torah, Parshas Yisro, Yisro gave his son-in-law Moshe some valuable advice. He saw that Moshe was responsible for judging the entire nation, and realized that the job could not be done by one individual. He suggested that Moshe create a system using "ministers of thousands, ministers of hundreds, ministers of fifties, and ministers of tens. And they will judge the nation at all times, and it will be that they will bring you every great thing, and judge themselves every small thing, and lighten Äthe burdenÄ from upon you and lift it with you." ÄExodus 18:21 -22Ä

Clearly, in order for a system such as this to function properly, each judge must recognize where he fits. According to the numbers of judges provided by Rashi (600 ministers of thousands, vs. 60,000 ministers of tens), it is clear that each minister of tens was himself under the authority of the ministers of hundreds, etc. One of my own teachers once spoke at some length about this topic; how after Moshe's lifetime, we had a Sanhedrin, and after them the few leading scholars of each generation - the ministers of "revavos," or tens of thousands. He also spoke of the great troubles created not only by ministers of hundreds who fancied themselves ministers of thousands, but even by ministers of thousands who fancied themselves ministers of revavos.

Adam and my friend Chaim Frazer both asked how I could possibly question Rabbi Weiss' Halachic opinion without reading his book. The answer is derived entirely from the above. First, let me say that when I referred to Rabbi Weiss as a "PR maven," I was attempting to avoid any judgment of him either positive or negative - no one questions his central role in keeping the issue of Jonathan Pollard on the public agenda.

Nonetheless, this does not make him a leading Halachic authority.

Reading

the book would not change that. Reading the book might offer me evidence that Rabbi Weiss knows how to learn, knows how to think, knows how to write. But an issue such as the one we are discussing, a Halachic ruling with global impact, is not to be made by ministers of tens, hundreds or even thousands - but by the ministers of revavos. Even the most convincing presentation cannot give one who is not a minister of revavos the "last word on the subject." And I do not believe myself qualified to judge whether a given writer is a Halachic authority or minister of revavos, based upon reading his book.

We know the ministers of revavos, not by reading their books, but by consulting our more knowledgeable teachers, ministers of hundreds. And they consult theirs, the ministers of thousands - and they tell us who are ministers of revavos. Rabbi Weiss is not one of them. Neither are those individuals listed by Adam from the book's dust jacket, though they may be beloved leaders of holy Jewish congregations.

But we know who our leaders are, and we can learn their opinions. We need

not even ask about the positions of leading Halachic authorities in Israel such as Rabbi S.Z. Auerbach zt"l, or ylc"t Rabbi Y.S. Elyashiv or Rabbi C.P. Scheinberg, or about those of the leading Lithuanian and Chassidic Rabbis in this country. Is the name of Rabbi Herschel Schachter, Rosh Kollel of Yeshiva University, found on the dust jacket? No, because he and four other Roshei Yeshivos of Yeshiva University, students of Rav Soloveitchik zt"l, issued a ruling expressing their absolute opposition to groups of this nature.

Chaim Frazer wrote:

>I think this is somewhat unfair. Having read Rabbi Weiss' book, I can tell >you that he recounts conversations that he had on this matter with Rav Yosef >Dov Soloveitchik, zt"l, and his understanding of Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l. >In the latter case, Rabbi Weiss clarified his views of Rav Moshe with Rabbi >Mordecai Tandler, Rav Moshe's grandson and personal assistant, and reports >the results of Rabbi Tandler's responses to him.

It's upsetting, but people hear what they want to hear. Concerning Rav Soloveitchik, it is clear what his leading Talmidim (students) say, as mentioned above. Concerning Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l via ylc"t Rav Mordechai Tandler shlit"a, it has just been my pleasure to converse with the latter on this subject. I wanted to be certain that the Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim 4, Siman 49, applies in this case. It does, as Rav Tandler wrote to Reb Meir Fund thirteen years ago.

In that Teshuvah, Reb Moshe discusses the attempt to move Women's Liberation from the workplace - where there is real chauvenism - to the synagogue. He emphasizes that any differences between men and women's obligations in Judaism are not because women are in any way "less" or "lower" than men in levels of holiness, or anything of this nature. "Judaism is not chauvenistic," said Reb Mordechai. "This isn't to say that there aren't chauvenistic Jews, but they get that from the surrounding culture, not from the Torah."

But at any rate, the discussion there concerns women wearing a Tallis, which is a "doubly optional" Mitzvah. A Mitzvah! Because there is benefit to doing even an optional Mitzvah, "it is possible for a woman who so desires to wear a garment which is different from the garments of men, but which has four corners, and to place Tzitzis upon it in order to fulfill this Mitzvah." But then he adds, several lines later: "However, it is obvious that this only applies where her heart desires to fulfill even a Mitzvah which she has not been commanded to perform, but because their intention is not this, but rather emanates from their complaint against HaShem and His Torah, this is no Mitzvah action at all, but rather quite the opposite, a transgression..."

What is Reb Moshe z"l saying? That with pure motivations, it is possible to find a woman who puts on a four cornered garment with Tzitzis, and does

a Mitzvah. But it's rare - and in that case, the woman would feel no special inclination to have a Tallis that looked anything like men's. Concerning the women who put on a man's Tallis, it is appropriate "to object... to not change any item of the holy customs of Israel."

Now again, communal prayer is - for men - a Rabbinic edict. Not even a Torah Mitzvah. So is it possible to find a woman who wants to create a similar structure for women? Reb Mordechai took a liberal view - he said yes! Ah, but it's not likely that you could find ten such people in the entire country, much less one city. You need a holy and pious woman who knows all of Tanach (the Bible) and Sifrei Mussar (books of Jewish ethics), who is exceptional in charity, visiting the sick, and everything else - and still wants more.

Are those the participants in these groups? Honestly? Is that their motivation, or is it the novelty of it... or even, as Reb Moshe said, a complaint against Judaism because they really don't understand the beauty of G-d's Torah? Reb Mordechai in his own words: "you don't institutionalize novelty... We don't get our kicks out of modifying Minhagei Yisrael. The customs of Israel." As his grandfather said, we must object.

This is entirely borne out by Chaim Frazer's experience with the women's Tefillah group in his hometown - as he himself noted, the educated daughters of the "strongest adherents" do not participate. "I suspect that this phenomenon appeals to a very small section of the Orthodox community,"

he wrote, "one which does not have the experience of a thorough Jewish education. Most of those girls and young women who do not have an interest repeat almost verbatim the substantive comments and objections that Rav Menken mentioned in the rest of his message as their basis for non-interest."

So why did Rabbi Weiss understand Rabbi Tandler as permitting these groups?

Because if you want to learn the Halacha, you learn the Halacha. "If you're looking to hang your hat, you find a nail." Reb Mordechai's own statement on this subject. Hardly a ringing endorsement.

Adam Szpiro wrote:

>(2) Rabbi Menken describes women's tefilah groups as "pale imitations. Asans >Kaddish or Kedushah (in more ways than one)..." (of minyans). I limit >myself to requesting that Rabbi Menken clarify the above comment. What are >the multiple ways in which women's tefilah groups lack Kedushah?

Kedushah means holiness. Colloquially, it also refers to the declaration of G-d's holiness found in the Chazzan's repetition of the Amidah prayer - which is done only with a minyan of ten. So clearly, this latter is lacking in a "women's Tefillah group." According to Reb Moshe z"l, any participant who is not in the holy-and-righteous-and-knowing-all-Tanach-and-Mussar-and-kind-and-charitable

-and-constantly-visiting-the-sick-and-burying-the-dead-and-still-wants-more category (pew!) is doing not a Mitzvah, but a transgression. It's bad enough to do a transgression - you want the Divine Presence to show up, too?!

>(3) It appears to me that the main thrust of Rabbi Menken's post is that >women's tefilah groups do not represent an authentic way for women to >achieve spiritual meaning. ... I >offer a potential answer to Rabbi Menken's charge: There are multiple >dimensions to the religious significance of the standard communal prayer >service. ... intensified kavvanah, praying together with >coreligionists (regardless of quantity or gender), and creating a sense of >human community. ... women's >tefilah groups afford a unique opportunity to emphasize the more human >qualities of communal prayer.

It must be clarified what advantage such services would have over a communal Tehillim (Psalm) reading, such as those sponsored by the KEY organization (an unaffiliated effort by women to increase love among Jews). It would appear that the latter activity has the advantage: what they are doing fulfills Reb Moshe's criterium - that it be "different from the

garments of men!" And indeed, if you would look at the participants, you would see that many participants in Tehillim groups are far, far closer to the type which, according to Reb Mordechai, might have a legitimate claim to desiring a "Tefillah group." And yet, they do something entirely different.

Yaakov Menken

End of Torah-Forum V2 #99
