

[CS – late-breaking dvar torah:

from: **OU Kosher** <noreply@ounetwork.org>

subject: **Halacha Yomis - V'sain Tal Umatar**

TOPIC: **V'SAIN TAL UMATAR**

QUESTION: Thursday evening, December 4th, 2025, we begin reciting V'sain Tal Umatar in the Shmoneh Esrei of Maariv. What happens if one forgot to say V'sain Tal Umatar and what is the halacha if one is uncertain?

ANSWER: If a person said "v'sain beracha" instead of "v'sain tal umatar livracha", and he realized his error after ending Shmoneh Esrei, the entire Shmoneh Esrei must be repeated.

If the error was caught while in the middle of Shmoneh Esrei, corrective action may be taken by inserting the phrase of v'sain tal umatar livrocha in the beracha of Shema Koleinu, before the words of "Ki ata shomeiya". If the beracha of Shema Koleinu was already completed, but he did not yet begin the beracha of Retzei, Shulchan Aruch (117:5) writes that the phrase v'sain tal umatar livracha should be inserted between the two berachos. However if he already began the beracha of Retzei, the individual must return to the beginning of the beracha of Bareich Aleinu and use the proper phrase of v'sain tal umatar.

What if a person does not remember if he said v'sain bracha or v'sain tal umatar? Since he has no recollection, we assume the bracha was recited without thought, out of habit, in the manner that he was accustomed to saying it. Halacha assumes that habits of davening are established with thirty days of repetition. As such, thirty days after December 4th, when in doubt, Shmoneh Esrei need not be repeated. It can be assumed that v'sain tal umatar was said out habit and second nature. Before thirty days, it can be assumed that the wrong phrase (v'sain bracha) was used, and Shmoneh Esrei must be repeated.

The Mishna Berura (114:38) qualifies this last halacha and says that if the person intended to say "v'sain tal umatar" in Shmoneh Esrei, and later in the day he cannot remember what he said, he need not repeat Shmoneh Esrei. This is because it can be assumed that he recited the bracha properly, since that was his intention. The fact that he cannot remember is inconsequential because people do not typically remember such details after a significant amount of time has elapsed. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auervach, z"tl (Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchoso 57:17) notes that each person's memory span is different. For someone whose memory is poor, the last halacha would apply even if one cannot remember soon after reciting Shmoneh Esrei.

QUESTION: Thursday evening, December 4, 2025 (which is the sixtieth day after the halachic calculation of the autumnal equinox), Klal Yisrael in the diaspora will begin reciting V'sain Tal Umatar, a prayer for rain, in the Shemoneh Esrai of Maariv. In Israel, the Jewish community began saying V'sain Tal Umatar about a month earlier on the seventh day of Cheshvon. Why is there a difference between Israel and the diaspora? The Talmud (Taanis 10a) explains that Israel is a mountainous region which needs much rain, and therefore V'sain Tal Umatar is recited in the early fall. On the other hand, Bavel (Babylonia) is a low-lying country, and rain was not needed until late fall. The Talmud concludes that the diaspora follows the same schedule as Bavel. Can you explain why we in the U.S. follow the minhag of Bavel when our weather patterns are completely different, and we are in need of rain even in early autumn.

ANSWER: Rashi (ibid) explains that the diaspora begins reciting V'sain Tal Umatar in late autumn because they follow the customs of Bavel. Apparently, Rashi's position is that the Talmudic scholars of old instituted that the diaspora should follow Babylonian tradition because Bavel had the largest Jewish community at that time, and that ruling remains permanently binding even though the location of the Jewish community has changed.

Rabbeinu Asher, the 13th century posek who composed the definitive halachic work known as the Rosh, writes (Taanis 1:4) that he does not understand why the diaspora should follow minhag-Bavel, when our

climate and the need for rain is completely different than Bavel. Furthermore, the Rosh reports that when he was in Provance, he observed that they recited V'sain Tal Umatar in the month of Cheshvon (as was done in Israel), and he concludes, "It is very correct in my eyes". Rabbeinu Asher lived in Germany and was a close disciple of the Maharam Mi'Rutenberg. The Maharam was unjustly imprisoned and died in jail after seven years. After the death of the Maharam, Rabbeinu Asher feared for his own life. He fled Germany and settled in the Provance region of France. It was then that he observed the minhag quoted above. Subsequently, Rabbeinu Asher travelled to Toledo Spain, and there he was invited to serve as the head of the Jewish community. In his responsa (4:10), the Rosh described a scene that took place in his synagogue on Pesach, in 1312. There were drought conditions for the past few months, and the Rosh decided that now was the time to change the custom in Spain and continue to say Mashiv horuach (the prayer for rain) during Pesach and V'sain Tal Umatar in Cheshvon. This created an uproar in the synagogue because it was contrary to the minhag, and the Rosh backed down from promoting this position, so as not to divide the community.

Rav Yosef Kairo writes in the Bais Yosef (Orach Chaim 117) that since the position of the Rosh was not accepted as normative practice, the basic halacha remains that V'sain Tal Umatar is not recited in the diaspora until the sixtieth day after the autumnal equinox. However, some have the custom during the summer months to add V'sain Tal Umatar in the beracha of Shomei Tefilah. In this way, if the halacha follows the Rosh or if the halacha follows Rav Kairo, either way the Shemoneh Esrai would be acceptable. This was the custom of Rav Soloveitchik zt"l as well. Rabbi Genack asked Rav Soloveitchik how can one recite V'sain Tal Umatar in the summer unless he also recites mashiv ha'ruach or at least morid ha'tal. Rav Soloveitchik answered in a way that implied that he recites morid ha'tal as well.

If one inserted V'sain Tal Umatar in Bircas hashanim before December 4th, and he lives in a country that needs rain in the summer, Shemoneh Esrai is not repeated since according to the Rosh he davened correctly. Still, it is preferable to repeat Shemoneh Esrai as a voluntary tefila (tefilas nedavah) and say V'sain Beracha instead (Shulchan Aruch OC 117:2). The Mishnah Berurah (117:13) adds that the areas where we live require rain during the fall, and they have the status discussed above. The Aruch Hashulchan (117:7) writes that due to our lack of concentration, we avoid davening tefilas nidava. Piskei Teshuvos (117:4) also cites many later poskim who follow this ruling.

QUESTION: In a previous halacha, we mentioned the opinion of the Rosh that those who live in countries that require rain even in the summer months should recite V'sain Tal Umatar in the summer as well. Although the Rosh admitted that his opinion was not accepted, and Shulchan Aruch does not follow this ruling, there are individuals who want to be strict to accommodate both opinions. Is there a way to do this?

ANSWER: Rabbi Genack relates that the practice of Rav Soloveitchik zt"l was to recite v'sain Tal umatar during the summer months in the beracha of shema koleinu. This was the practice of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik zt"l as well. In the beracha of Shema Koleinu one may add a private request. Even if one is not required to daven for rain, one may do so at this point as a private request. On the other hand, if one is required to recite V'sain Tal Umatar in the summer, as per the opinion of the Rosh, then one fulfills their obligation by inserting v'sain tal umatar in shema koleinu. In this way, one fulfills their obligation according to all opinions. However, this practice still needs further clarification, since the Gemara Taanis (4b) compares one who davens for rain (v'sain tal umatar) but does not praise Hashem for the rain (by reciting mashiv ha'ruach u'morid ha'geshem) to putting smoke in one's eyes and vinegar on their teeth. Since one may not recite mashiv ha'ruach u'morid ha'geshem in the summer months, it would seem that it is inappropriate to daven for rain. However, Rabbi Genack explained

that for those who recite “morid ha’tal” in the summer, this would not be an issue. The halacha is that if one recited “morid ha’tal” instead of “mashiv ha’ruach u’morid ha’geshem” it is acceptable bidd’eved. Therefore, by reciting morid ha’tal in the beracha of gevuros, and v’sain tal umatar in Shema koleinu one can fulfill all the opinions.

from: Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

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Parashas Vayishlach • December 6th • 16 Kislev 5786

On Thursday night, December 4th at Maariv, we began saying V’sain Tal U’matar in Bareich Aleinu (those in Eretz Yisrael began last month on 7 Cheshvan). If one forgets V’sain Tal U’matar in Bareich Aleinu, he can make it up by saying it in Shema Koleinu. If one remembers his omission only after passing Shema Koleinu, he must go back to the berachah of Bareich Aleinu. If one has already finished Shemoneh Esrei, he must repeat Shemoneh Esrei. If one is unsure what he said, until thirty days have passed (Shabbos Parashas Vayechi, January 3rd, 2026), we assume that he did not say V’sain Tal U’matar. However, one who repeats the phrase “V’es Kol... V’sain Tal U’matar” 90 times (ideally 101 times) is thereafter - in case of doubt - halachically presumed to have said it properly and thus would need not repeat.]

Vayishlach

by Rabbi Berel Wein

In this week’s parsha, our father Yaakov, fresh from his successful escape from Lavan, prepares to encounter his brother and sworn enemy, Eisav. He sends malachim to deal with Eisav before he meets with him face to face. The word malachim signifies two different meanings. One is that it means agents, messengers, human beings who were sent on a particular mission to do Yaakov’s bidding. The other meaning is that the word malachim signifies angels, supernatural messengers of God who were sent to Yaakov to help him in his fateful encounter with his brother.

Rashi cites both possible interpretations in his commentary. When Rashi does so, he is teaching us that both interpretations are correct at differing levels of understanding the verse involved. The message here is that the encounter with Eisav, to be successful from Yaakov’s vantage point and situation, must have both human and supernatural help.

Eisav is a formidable foe, physically, militarily, culturally and intellectually speaking. He cannot be ignored nor wished away. He has accompanied us from the time of Yaakov till this very day. At times he threatens our very existence and at times he appears to have a more benevolent attitude towards us. Yet, he is always there, hovering over and around us, and he has never relinquished any of his demands upon us to either convert, assimilate or just plain disappear. While it is Yishmael that currently occupies the bulk of our attention, it would be foolish of us to ignore the continuing presence of Eisav in our world and affairs.

Yaakov’s strategy is to employ both possibilities of malachim in his defense. He prepares himself for soothing Eisav by gifts and wealth, pointing out to Eisav that it is beneficial to him to have Yaakov around and being productive. He also strengthens himself spiritually in prayer and in appealing to God to deliver him from Eisav. And finally, as a last resort he is prepared to fight Eisav with his own weapons, the sword and war.

Two of these strategies – gifts to Eisav and war against Eisav – require human endeavor, talent and sacrifice. They are the representative of the interpretation of malachim as being human agents and messengers. The third strategy, prayer and reliance upon heavenly intervention to thwart Eisav’s evil designs, follows the idea that Yaakov’s malachim were heavenly, supernatural creatures. In the long history of our encounter with Eisav we have always relied upon both interpretations of malachim. Neither interpretation by itself will suffice to defeat Eisav. Without human endeavor and sacrifice, heavenly aid is often denied or diminished.

According to the labor is the reward. But it is foolish to believe that a small and beleaguered people can by itself weather all storms and defeat Eisav’s intentions solely by its own efforts.

Without the Lord to help, we attempt in vain to build our national home. Thus, the double meaning of malachim in this week’s parsha has great relevance to our situation.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein ZT”L

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Travel Notes from the United States: Dreaming of Aliyah!

Revivim

With only the ability to speak Hebrew, I traveled to the United States * The purpose of the trip was to teach Torah, meet our Jewish brethren, learn about their strengths and the challenges they face * The classes and meetings were mainly with communities and schools belonging to what is known as the “Modern Orthodox” public * I met a Zionist community for whom the Land of Israel is very dear * Many people are seriously considering Aliyah * In all communities, Psalms were recited at the end of prayers for the success of IDF soldiers * The synagogue rabbis work to strengthen community cohesion and to maintain each member’s connection to the community and to Judaism * I found myself needing to describe the goodness of the Land, since the media naturally focuses on problems and tensions

A week ago, I returned from a twelve-day tour of the Jewish communities in the New York and New Jersey area. The purpose of the trip was to teach Torah and meet our Jewish brethren, to learn about their strengths, and the challenges they face. In practice, I delivered dozens of classes to rabbis, communities, and students in yeshivot and schools. Usually, at the end of each lesson, I answered questions on halakha and emunah (faith).

At first, I did not think I would go to the United States, but after I traveled abroad for the first time about eight months ago—to serve as a rabbi at a conference of rabbis and emissaries in Paris—people argued that it was important to visit the Jewish communities in America as well. I argued that I did not know English; they replied that indeed this was a serious problem, and yet, there would still be great benefit, since many study the “Peninei Halakha” books, and meeting them would strengthen their connection to Torah, and to the Land of Israel.

Incidentally, when I was a student in the middle school of the Yeshiva High School adjacent to Merkaz HaRav, the righteous Rebbetzin Mendelcorn was our English teacher. But at the time I wanted to study Mishnah. She tried to persuade me to attend English class, but even then, I knew I wanted to devote my life to Torah, and did not want to “waste time” on English. When she argued that millions of Jews speak only English, I replied that instead of my learning English, they should learn Hebrew. From then on, I stopped studying English. About twelve years later, I gave a lecture for women at the Yeshurun synagogue in Jerusalem. After the class, Rebbetzin Mendelcorn approached me, and asked: “Do you remember that you didn’t want to learn English, and what I told you?” I replied: “Of course I remember.” She continued: “And what do you think now?” I answered: “Now I regret that I don’t know English.” She was very happy to hear my honest answer and called her friends so they could hear it too. So, retrospectively, I became one of her beloved students. And thus—with only Hebrew—I traveled to the United States.

Modern Orthodox

The classes and meetings were mainly with communities and schools of the “Modern Orthodox” public, all of whom are Zionist, as well as with Zionist Sephardic communities. Indeed, I met a Zionist community for whom the Land of Israel is very dear, and the past two years—in which we have fought our enemies on all sides—have greatly strengthened their identification with the State of Israel and their desire to make Aliyah, and participate in building the country, and safeguarding its security.

In all communities, Psalms were recited at the end of prayer for the success of IDF soldiers. In our community in Har Bracha, we stopped

saying these Psalms more than a month ago, at the start of the cease-fire since, from that time, the tension and concern for the many residents on the front lines decreased greatly. It is fitting to reserve special prayers for a time when the war is in full force, and concern is high. When I told one of the rabbis that we no longer recite these Psalms, he explained that since they are far away, they must be even more careful not to appear indifferent to what is happening in Israel. I replied with a smile that this is similar to the "Second Day of Yom Tov in the Diaspora."

In the courtyard of the Bnai Yeshurun synagogue in Teaneck, small lanterns had been placed—one for each hostage, including those still not brought to burial. On Motzei Shabbat, after Maariv, they went outside and recited Psalms, and a child removed two lanterns corresponding to the two bodies recovered that Shabbat. Tears came to my eyes from the intensity of their solidarity.

In almost all meetings with rabbis or communities, time was devoted to questions and answers, and some of the questions related to Israel's security situation and internal social tensions, including how the Haredim could be enlisted into the army. In general, I found myself needing to describe the goodness of the Land, since the media naturally focuses on problems and tensions, and does not work to describe the great brotherhood that prevails in Israeli society, as expressed in joint military service. Nor do they frequently report on the rapid economic and scientific development of the State of Israel.

Incidentally, external appearance as classified in Israel does not match norms abroad. At one meeting two young men, about twenty-five, participated. They looked like members of the Lithuanian-Haredi community in Israel, yet from their question—why the Haredi community evades army service and opposes core curriculum studies—it was clear that they supported the National-Religious path. Indeed, it turned out they study science at prestigious universities, and plan to make Aliyah after finishing their studies.

Growing Desire for Aliyah

Joining us on the trip was Dr. Raphael Kayim, a physician who made Aliyah from New York about thirty years ago, at around age forty-four. Many times, he translated my words into English. In the past he would say, ironically, that if you want to end a conversation with American Jews, start talking about Aliyah—but today, for many, raising the topic does not end the conversation. Many people are seriously considering Aliyah. In the past, Aliyah did not stand at the center of the agenda; now it is at the top. Investment in education is bearing fruit. For years, along with the emissaries who come from Israel, rabbis have been educating for love of the Land and the value of Aliyah, and gradually, more and more Jews want to move to Israel.

Many already have a close relative who has made Aliyah. For example, before boarding the plane back to Israel, a Jew approached me and told me he had attended one of the classes, and that he too was flying to visit Israel to meet his father who made Aliyah a few years ago, and to meet his son and daughter-in-law, who made Aliyah a few months ago. The principal of one of the schools told me that his children have already made Aliyah, and that he too plans to follow soon. This is the situation of many rabbis and educators—so much so that at times, they must be strengthened to continue their sacred mission in the Diaspora. A mission that yields rare, wonderful fruit, for the contribution of American olim to building the Land is tremendous.

For a few days, we stayed in central Manhattan with a family whose son made Aliyah for a year of study in a Hesder yeshiva, and decided to continue into combat service. A few months ago, they attended his swearing-in ceremony at the Western Wall, and his photograph with his comrades in formation stands in their living room. Every day they pray for his safety, and the safety of all soldiers. Incredible! Instead of studying medicine at one of the most prestigious universities in the United States as he had planned, he decided to enlist, and then study medicine in Israel. Incidentally, his sister, who spent a year in Israel, is now a student at Columbia University and serves as president of the Hillel Jewish organization, and on a hostile campus, she worked on behalf of Jewish students, and against antisemitism.

"Peninei Halakha"

One evening we arrived at a class and meeting with about ten families who plan to make Aliyah together this coming summer, along with several families considering joining them. This meeting was joyful and encouraging for me, as they told me that about seven years ago one of the community activists began encouraging study of the "Peninei Halakha" books, and as a result, a process of strengthening observance began. For example, several women began covering their hair, and after studying the "Peninei Halakha" volume "The Nation and the Land," the decision to make Aliyah crystallized. Likewise, a Jew who lives in Manhattan and has an additional home in Florida told me that a young woman from a Haredi background who had left religion had agreed, as a favor, to live in his Florida home while they were in New York. While living there, she saw the "Peninei Halakha" books and began reading the volume on prayer, and since then, she has begun to pray, and is gradually returning to observance. This man often gives the "Peninei Halakha" series as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah gift.

Community Rabbis

The rabbis of the synagogues have a particularly important role in the United States. They are the backbone of the community, and besides their concern for prayers and Torah classes, they work to strengthen communal cohesion and maintain each member's connection to the community, and to Judaism. And they succeed. Comparing the situation of Modern Orthodox communities thirty years ago to today, one finds that many more Jews attend synagogue for prayers and classes, far more parents send their children to spend a year studying Torah in Israel, and many of those children are also encouraged to make Aliyah. In the past two years, this strengthening has intensified further. We hope that thanks to olim from the United States, this rabbinic heritage will also become more widespread in the Land of Israel. On another occasion I will try to elaborate on what can be learned from the community rabbis in the U.S.

The Straight Path

Despite the great challenges facing the Modern Orthodox public, it seems that this community represents more than any other the true path of Torah in the United States, since it is connected to all the mitzvot of the Torah, without rejecting any value or commandment. Torah study and the observance of its commandments hold great value, as do the sanctity of the nation and the Land, and work and science also have great worth. Alienation from all of this—even if done for the sake of Heaven to preserve tradition—contains a major deficiency, and does not allow movement toward complete repentance and redemption.

In a meeting with rabbis, this topic arose when they said that at times it is difficult to explain to young people seeking to strengthen observance that the proper path is to do so while continuing to embrace the full spectrum of Torah's values and commandments, and not by following the Haredi path that rejects some of them. One rabbi wrote that educational material on this topic is lacking. That night, I thought about it at length, and decided that after finishing the book I am currently writing (on sacred objects—Torah scrolls, tzitzit, tefillin, synagogues, mezuzot), I will devote time to clarifying the mitzvah of Torah study and, within that, the value of Torah's completeness in all its parts, and the values of life and its needs.

Is One Obligated to Make Aliyah?

Several times, after the conversation and Q&A session ended, one of the youths approached and asked whether one is obligated to make Aliyah if one's parents oppose it. I did not want to answer this question; instead, I preferred to refer them to a rabbi who knows them—provided he is a Zionist. For although the principle is that when parents instruct their child to act against the Torah, the Torah must be obeyed—as explained in the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 240:15), and as I wrote in "Peninei Halakha" (Ha'am Veha'aretz 3:8)—I cannot, in practice, give a ruling based solely on this principle, because I do not know the young person or his parents. For example, he may need their emotional and financial support, and if he goes against their wishes and makes Aliyah, he may not succeed in adjusting, and might eventually have to leave Israel. In that case, my answer would not help him fulfill the mitzvah and would only cause him and his parents' pain and suffering. However, if he consults with a rabbi who knows him, that rabbi will know how to guide

him in a way that, while honoring his parents, he can grow closer and closer to the Land, until he will likely merit to make Aliyah successfully. That is, assuming the rabbi is faithful to Torah and all its commandments—that is, he is a Zionist.

[CS – Late-breaking dvar torah

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

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subject: **Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky** - Biological Descendants and Spiritual Legacy

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Biological Descendants and Spiritual Legacy

The Torah dedicates forty-three pesukim at the end of פרשת וישלח to a topic that appears to be insignificant. An elaborate list of the descendants of Esav, the family of Se'ir and the children of Edom are introduced with the phrase “ואלה תולדות עשו”. An identical wording concerning the descendants of Yishmael appears in the end of פרשת חיי שרה, “ואלה תולדות ישמעאל”, and we then read the listing of the sons of Yishmael. Once again it is perplexing that the Torah even mentions individuals who are not significant. Similarly, in both lists of descendants we are told almost nothing about any of them. The Torah, which is usually succinct, devotes many pesukim to descendants of individuals who will not carry on the legacy of Avraham. What are we to derive from the two lists of toldos, both of Yishmael and of Esav?

A similarity exists in the context of the descendants of Esav and Yishmael. Immediately following these toldos, we read about another set of toldos. We see פרשת חיי שרה concludes with the toldos of Yishmael and “ואלה תולדות יצחק”. Furthermore, פרשת וישלח ends with “תולדות עשו” and is followed by פרשת וישב that begins with “אלה תולדות יעקב”. Apparently, the Torah is contrasting the genealogies of Yitzchak and Yishmael, and subsequently those of Yaakov and Esav. What is the meaning of this contrast?

Earlier in the Torah we read of another set of toldos, i.e. “אלה תולדות נח”. The meaning of the word toldos in that context is ambiguous. Rather than immediately listing the physical descendants of Noah, the Torah highlights that Noah was an “איש צדיק”. Rashi presents two interpretations as to why the Torah interjects that Noah was a tzaddik before telling us who his toldos were. According to one approach, the phrase “איש צדיק” is not a description of his toldos but rather it is modifying Noah himself. When a righteous person is mentioned, his righteousness should be highlighted, as is taught by the phrase “זכר צדיק לברכה”. Alternatively, Rashi suggests that the description of “איש צדיק” is actually referencing the toldos of Noah; the primary toldos of a person are one's righteous deeds. Rashi is teaching us that there are two ways to evaluate a person's toldos. There are a person's biological descendants and there are one's spiritual accomplishments which constitute one's legacy and are also a form of toldos.

By presenting the toldos of Yitzchak and Yishmael and then Yaakov and Esav next to one another, the Torah is juxtaposing these two elements. Yishmael has twelve physical descendants. The promise that he will be a father of a “גוי גדול”, a large nation, is fulfilled. Yet, these twelve descendants do not reach spiritual greatness. The Torah deliberately lists them quickly without elaborating upon any spiritual greatness because there was nothing to mention. They were physical toldos but never became spiritual ones. The toldos of Yitzchak follow, and here the Torah elaborates upon the spiritual legacy of Yitzchak. He is known as the blessed one of Hashem. It is he who follows in the path of Avraham and transmits that legacy to Yaakov. Although he had only two biological toldos, his righteous actions are his eternal toldos. Similarly, the great multitudes who are the descendants of Esav are nothing more than a list of names. There are no ma'asim tovim to relate about any of them. In contrast, the descendants of Yaakov will be known as “העם”, the smallest nation measured by demographics. Yet, it is Yaakov and his children's spiritual story that become the rest of the Torah. It is these contrasts that highlight the toldos of Klal Yisroel for eternity.

This dual definition of toldos relates to each of us in our dual roles in transmitting the mesorah. The words “וישננתם לבניך” is translated literally as obligating us to teach Torah to our biological children. In addition, Chazal teach us that “בניך” also refers to our talmidim. We can all influence others in various aspects of spiritual growth. During our lifetime we encounter many opportunities to influence spiritual toldos. Our ma'asim tovim, and especially those that inspire others, are our true toldos. May we always look to our Avos as role models as we write the story of both our physical toldos and the legacy of our spiritual toldos.

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Fear or Distress?

Vayishlach

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Jacob and Esau are about to meet again after a separation of twenty-two years. It is a fraught encounter. Once, Esau had sworn to kill Jacob in revenge for what he saw as the theft of his blessing. Will he do so now – or has time healed the wound? Jacob sends messengers to let his brother know he is coming. They return, saying that Esau is coming to meet Jacob with a force of four hundred men. We then read: Jacob was acutely afraid and distressed.

Bereishit 32:8

The question is obvious. Jacob is in the grip of strong emotions. But why the tautology, the duplication of verbs? What is the difference between being afraid and being distressed? To this a Midrash gives a profound answer:

Rabbi Judah bar Ilai said: Are not fear and distress identical? The meaning, however, is that “he was afraid” that he might be killed. “He was distressed” that he might kill. For Jacob thought: If he prevails against me, will he not kill me; while if I prevail against him, will I not kill him? That is the meaning of “he was afraid” – lest he should be killed; “and distressed” – lest he should kill.

The difference between being afraid and distressed, according to the Midrash, is that the first is a physical anxiety; the second a moral one. It is one thing to fear one's own death, quite another to contemplate being the cause of someone else's. However, a further question now arises. Surely self-defence is permitted in Jewish law? If Esau were to try to kill Jacob, Jacob would be justified in fighting back, if necessary at the cost of Esau's life. Why then should this possibility raise moral qualms? This is the issue addressed by Rabbi Shabbetai Bass, author of the commentary on Rashi, Siftei Chachamim:

One might argue that Jacob should surely not be distressed about the possibility of killing Esau, for there is an explicit rule: “If someone comes to kill you, forestall it by killing him.” Nonetheless, Jacob did have qualms, fearing that in the course of the fight he might kill some of Esau's men, who were not themselves intent on killing Jacob but merely on fighting Jacob's men. And even though Esau's men were pursuing Jacob's men, and every person has the right to save the life of the pursued at the cost of the life of the pursuer, nonetheless there is a condition: “If the pursued could have been saved by maiming a limb of the pursuer, but instead the rescuer killed the pursuer, the rescuer is liable to capital punishment on that account.” Hence Jacob feared that, in the confusion of battle, he might kill some of Esau's men when he might have restrained them by merely inflicting injury on them.

The principle at stake, according to the Siftei Chachamim, is the minimum use of force. Jacob was distressed at the possibility that in the heat of conflict he might kill some of the combatants when injury alone might have been all that was necessary to defend the lives of those – including himself – who were under attack.

There is, however, a second possibility, namely that the Midrash means what it says, no more, no less: that Jacob was distressed at the possibility of being forced to kill even if that were entirely justified.

At stake is the concept of a moral dilemma. A dilemma is not simply a conflict. There are many moral conflicts. May we perform an abortion to save the life of the mother? Should we obey a parent when he or she asks us to do something forbidden in Jewish law? May we break Shabbat to extend the life of a terminally ill patient? These questions have answers. There is a right course of action and a wrong one. Two duties conflict and we have meta-halachic principles to tell us which takes priority. There are some systems in which all moral conflicts are of this kind. There is always a decision procedure and thus a determinate answer to the question, "What shall I do?"

A dilemma, however, is a situation in which there is no right answer. I ought not to do A (allow myself to be killed); I ought not to do B (kill someone else); but I must do one or the other. To put it more precisely, there may be situations in which doing the right thing is not the end of the matter. The conflict may be inherently tragic. The fact that one principle (self-defence) overrides another (the prohibition against killing) does not mean that, faced with such a choice, I am without qualms. Sometimes being moral means that I experience distress at having to make such a choice. Doing the right thing may mean that I do not feel remorse or guilt, but I still feel regret or grief that I had to do what I did.

A moral system which leaves room for the existence of dilemmas is one that does not attempt to eliminate the complexities of the moral life. In a conflict between two rights or two wrongs, there may be a proper way to act (the lesser of two evils, or the greater of two goods), but this does not cancel out all emotional pain. A righteous individual may sometimes be one who is capable of distress even when they know they have acted rightly. What the Midrash is telling us is that Judaism recognises the existence of dilemmas. Despite the intricacy of Jewish law and its meta-halachic principles for deciding which of two duties takes priority, we may still be faced with situations in which there is an ineliminable cause for distress. It was Jacob's greatness that he was capable of moral anxiety even at the prospect of doing something entirely justified, namely defending his life at the cost of his brother's.

That characteristic – distress at violence and potential bloodshed even when undertaken in self-defence – has stayed with the Jewish people ever since. One of the most remarkable phenomena in modern history was the reaction of Israeli soldiers after the Six Day War in 1967. In the weeks preceding the war, few Jews anywhere in the world were unaware that Israel and its people faced terrifying danger. Troops – Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian – were massing on all its borders. Israel was surrounded by enemies who had sworn to drive its people into the sea. In the event, it won one of the most stunning military victories of all time. The sense of relief was overwhelming, as was the exhilaration at the reunification of Jerusalem and the fact that Jews could now pray (as they had been unable to do for nineteen years) at the Western Wall. Even the most secular Israelis admitted to feeling intense religious emotion at what they knew was an historic triumph.

Yet, in the months after the war, as conversations took place throughout Israel, it became clear that the mood among those who had taken part in the war was anything but triumphal. It was sombre, reflective, even anguished. That year, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem gave an honorary doctorate to Yitzhak Rabin, Chief of Staff during the war. During his speech of acceptance, he said:

"We find more and more a strange phenomenon among our fighters. Their joy is incomplete, and more than a small portion of sorrow and shock prevails in their festivities, and there are those who abstain from celebration. The warriors in the front lines saw with their own eyes not only the glory of victory but the price of victory: their comrades who fell beside them bleeding, and I know that even the terrible price which our enemies paid touched the hearts of many of our men. It may be that the Jewish people has never learned or accustomed itself to feel the triumph of conquest and victory, and therefore we receive it with mixed feelings."

A people capable of feeling distress, even in victory, is one that knows the tragic complexity of the moral life. Sometimes it is not enough to make the right choice. One must also fight to create a world in which such choices do not arise because we have sought and found non-violent ways of resolving conflict.

Chief Rabbi Mirvis

Vayishlach The Greatest of All Gifts

The very best gift that a person can give is a Mincha. But hold on, isn't Mincha the afternoon service that we pray every day? In what way is it a present? And how does it become the best of all presents?

In Parshat Vayishlach we are told how Jacob desperately wanted to appease his twin brother Esau, and so he sent him a gift of many hundreds of animals, part of the wealth he had accumulated, having worked for Laban for 22 years.

And the Torah describes this as "mincha hei shlucha", he sent this mincha to his brother. Onkelos, the authoritative Aramaic translation of the Torah, explains that the word mincha is 'tikrulta', which means a sacrifice.

Tikrulta also comes from the root 'karov', which means to be close. It is a sacrifice that you make, and through which you become closer to another person. Jacob wanted to show Esau that he cared about him and therefore he invested money, effort, energy, care, and love into the present he was giving. That is what makes the mincha so special. And you know that a mincha does not have to cost a lot of money. For example, God forbid, if somebody is sitting shiva and people bring a meal for the family to eat, that is a mincha - they're showing their love and their care.

Or when you bake a cake for somebody on their birthday, that feeling of closeness becomes really intense because one invests so much love and effort into the mincha that is given. And one of the greatest of all minchas is actually, the ring that the groom gives to a bride under the chuppah.

In order to show that he loves and cares for her, he needs to have bought that ring, as a token of his affection for her. He places it on the forefinger of her right hand, declares that with this ring they become husband and wife, and it is called Kiddushin.

It is a moment of a sacred bond between them. That is how they become husband and wife. And here we see another element of tikrulta. Not only are the groom and bride being bonded together but Almighty God becomes part of a three-way, sacred relationship. Hashem exists in places where people are there to give to others.

And now we can understand why in the Gemara, Masechet Brachot, our sages tell us that Elijah the prophet was answered through the mincha offering in the afternoon. Because when it comes to the mincha prayer, we have to make a special effort. Shacharit is first thing in the morning, Ma'ariv late at night, but especially during the winter months you have to make a special effort to invest in finding that time to pray the mincha service and that is why it is elevated above the others.

So therefore, if you want to come closer to others and closer to Hashem, why not give a mincha?

Shabbat Shalom

Rav Kook Torah

VaYishlach: The Prohibition of Gid HaNasheh

Jacob was limping, but he had survived the nighttime struggle at Peniel. Nervously awaiting a confrontation with his estranged brother Esau, Jacob was attacked by a mysterious opponent. As dawn broke, the stranger struck Jacob's thigh and dislocated it.

"Therefore the Israelites do not eat the displaced nerve (gid ha-nasheh) on the hip joint to this very day, because he touched Jacob's thigh on the displaced nerve." (Gen. 32:33)

What is the meaning of this prohibition? Do we refrain from eating the sciatic nerve only to commemorate a mysterious wrestling match that took place thousands of years ago?

A Vision of Violence

At first glance, the ban on *gid ha-nasheh* appears to be yet another limitation that the Torah places on eating meat. While the Torah permits the consumption of meat, it instituted a number of restrictions: which animals may be eaten, how they are to be slaughtered, how their blood should be handled, and so on. These regulations remind us that we may not deal with animals as we wish, without regard for their welfare. On the contrary, we have moral obligations and responsibilities toward animals.

The prohibition of *gid ha-nasheh*, however, is meant to project a broader ethical aspiration, beyond the issue of how we should treat animals.

According to tradition, the stranger who fought Jacob that night was the guardian angel of Esau. Jacob's opponent symbolized the lifestyle of the hunter, a man of violence and conquest, one whose prophetic blessing was that he would live by his sword. This nighttime struggle was not a private experience, a personal event in Jacob's life. It was a vision for all times. It epitomizes our constant battle against belligerent foes who claim the right to subjugate others by virtue of their physical strength and military prowess.

This struggle appeared to Jacob in its most unadorned fashion, without any pretense of gallantry and shining swords to mask its visceral violence and naked aggression. For the truth is that all wars, no matter how 'civilized,' are nothing more than the reduction of conflict to physical force, the attempt to dominate another through violence.

If there is one area in which the human race constantly innovates, it is the art of war. Methods and tools of combat constantly grow ever more sophisticated. We have progressed from primitive spears and swords to guns and canons, and onward to modern warfare with tanks, fighter jets, and nuclear arms. And yet, the essence of war remains unchanged: a brutal contest of power between two opponents, where victory is secured by felling one's adversary.

Protesting Aggression

By not eating the *gid ha-nasheh*, we demonstrate our revulsion at unprovoked aggression and violence. Just as Jacob fought Esau's angel that night, we also oppose the cynical belief in the doctrine that might makes right. We resist the worldview that sanctifies violence as a legitimate instrument of superiority.

While nationalism provides many benefits, in its extreme form it can descend into conquest and imperialism. As Rav Kook observed in *Olat Re'iyah* (vol. I, p. 234):

"Nationalism is a lofty emotion in its natural, pristine state. But if it is not directed towards the highest goal — the aspiration of universal happiness and perfection — it will end up crossing the boundaries of morality."

We may need a strong army to defend ourselves, and we may need to slaughter animals to provide for our physical needs. But by refraining from eating the *gid ha-nasheh*, we demonstrate that our goal is not to subjugate others, whether man or beast. Even as we consume the meat of animals, we avoid the sciatic nerve that allows the body to stand upright. This is a moral sensitivity that should govern every human encounter, so that all may benefit from a Divine-spirited and harmonious existence.

[CS – late-breaking *dvar Torah*:

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

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date: Dec 4, 2025, 4:31 PM

subject: **"I have become small:" Are We the Chosen People? - Essay by Rabbi YY**

Why the Obsession with Israel?

I do not see a way of rationally explaining the obsessive hatred of Israel and Jews without the faith that Jews are G-d's chosen people to make the world a place of goodness and kindness.

The obsession with Jews, a people that does not even constitute a quarter of a percent of humanity, has been going on for almost 4000 years. It makes no sense. 500,000 people were murdered in Syria, including tens of thousands of children, and I did not hear of one demonstration. Israel went to war trying to protect its children from being slaughtered,

fighting an enemy that wants its own children to die so Israel can be demonized, and yet the Jews are condemned.

Traumatized self-hating Jews and anti-Semites even had the *chutzpah* to call Gaza a Jewish "concentration camp," when Israel expelled every last Jew from Gaza in 2005. Had the Gaza population not voted in Hamas in 2006 and chosen to spend all its resources on murdering Jews, Gaza could have been the Singapore of the Middle East. They blame Israel for having checkpoints, which only exist because, without them, there would be terrorist attacks daily. They want an airport in Gaza, so that planes can murder tens of thousands of Jews daily?

The obsession with Israel makes no sense unless you can appreciate the truth that we are G-d's people. We were chosen to serve as a light onto the nations, a Divine flame lit on the cosmic way, hence we trigger the world in unimaginable ways.

But this is not easy for Jews to accept, even though the world knows it. Virtually every other nation has perceived itself as chosen or otherwise divinely special. For example, China means "Middle Kingdom" in Chinese, meaning that China is at the center of the world; and Japan considers itself the land where the sun originates ("Land of the Rising Sun"). The British thought they were chosen, and the Muslims and Christians, of course, see themselves as chosen. And they would love hearing it. But when you tell a Jew you are chosen, he says: "Me? Never. I am just a human being."

Of course, Jewish chosen-ness cannot be racist because Jews are not a race; there are Jews of every race. What is more, any person of any race, ethnicity, or nationality can become a member of the Jewish people and thereby be as chosen as Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, Maimonides, or the chief rabbi of Israel.

Can reason alone explain how a hodgepodge of ex-slaves was able to change history — to introduce the moral Creator we know as G-d, to devise ethical monotheism; to write the world's most influential book, the Bible; to be the only civilization to deny the cyclical worldview and give humanity belief in a linear (i.e., purposeful) history; to provide morality-driven prophets; and so much more — without G-d playing the decisive role in this people's history?

But we are still uncomfortable. Why did it have to be this way? Who needs this idea that one people is chosen? It seems unenlightened. To suggest that as Jews we are somehow closer to G-d than all other nations smacks of arrogance, elitism, and prejudice.

It's because we don't understand what "chosen" means.

The Rebbe's 1798 Letter

This story takes us back some two centuries ago. In 1798, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), founder of Chabad, known as the Alter Rebbe, was arrested and charged with treason, on the basis of petitions to the Czar by opponents of Chassidism. It was a devastating moment in Jewish history. He could have been given capital punishment, heaven forbid, and that would have been the end not only of Chabad but of much of the Chassidic movement, as he was its chief defender, intellectual advocate, and most influential figure.

After 53 days of imprisonment, he was exonerated of all charges and freed. The event—celebrated to this day on the 19th day of Kislev—marked the decisive victory of the Chassidic movement and the onset of a new, expanded phase in the exploration and dissemination of the infinite spiritual depth of Judaism, embodied in Chassidism.

Upon his release, Rabbi Schneur Zalman dispatched a short but powerful letter to all his followers. It is one of the most extraordinary letters one can read. (It is published in Tanya, *Igeres Hakodesh*, chapter 2). The Rebbe suffered so much as a result of his opponents; they persecuted him and his followers even before the arrest; then came the arrest and his terrifying trial. Yet in this letter, he warns his disciples against any display of haughtiness as a result of their victory. He instructs them not to denigrate, tease, and show disdain to those who craved their downfall.

The letter opens with the verse stated by Jacob in Genesis: "I have become small by all the kindnesses and by all the truth that You have done Your servant." (This verse appears in the beginning of the Torah section of Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4-36:43), which was the Torah

reading for the Shabbat preceding the day of Rabbi Schneur Zalman's release, Tuesday, 19 Kislev, 5759-1798). The Alter Rebbe is perturbed by the obvious question. Why was Jacob humbled by all the kindness he was shown? Why did it not bolster his pride? If G-d gave this all to me, I probably deserve it!

תניא אגרת הקודש סימן ב: פ' שבכל חסד וחסד שהקדוש ב"ה עושה לאדם צריך להיות שפל רוח במאד, כי חסד דרועא ימינא. וימינו תחבקני. שהיא בחי' קרבת אלהים ממש ביתר שאת מלפנים. וכל הקרוב אל ה' ביתר שאת והגבה למעלה מעלה, צריך להיות יותר שפל רוח למטה מטה כמ"ש מרחוק ה' נראה לי. וכנודע דכולא קמ' דווקא כלא חשיב. וא"כ כל שהוא קמ' יותר הוא יותר כלא ואין ואפס וזו בחי' ימין שבקדושה וחסד לאברהם שאמר אנכי עפר ואפר. וזו היא ג"כ מדתו של יעקב... משא"כ בזלע"ז הוא ישמעאל חסד דקליפה. כל שהחסד גדול הוא הולך וגדל בגובה וגסות הרוח ורוחבו לבו.

The Alter Rebbe conveys a profound idea.

Who Chose You?

In the Jewish understanding, chosenness leads not to arrogance, but rather to humility. If it were some human king who chose us to be his special people, then your assumption would be correct — we would become elitists. When a mortal power shows favoritism towards a subject, that subject will become more arrogant as a result. The closer you are to the king, the more significant you are, and the higher respect you feel you deserve.

But we were chosen by G-d. And the closer you are to G-d, the more you sense your insignificance. While being buddy-buddy with a human leader inflates your ego, a relationship with G-d bursts your selfish bubble. Because G-d is an infinite being, and all delusions of petty self-importance fall away when you stand before infinity. Being close with G-d demands introspection and self-improvement, not smugness.

In Judaism, G-d is the core of reality—the entire reality of existence. We are all part of reality, we are all in reality; we are all part of G-d, in G-d, in reality. There is an organic oneness that unites all of existence, all of humanity, all of the cosmos—and that organic unity is what we call G-d. “Hashem Echad,” G-d is one, does not only mean there is one G-d and not twenty gods; it means that G-d is synonymous with oneness. The word G-d is another way of saying that “there is only one.” There is oneness that pervades all of existence. We are all reflections of One reality; One core. We are all manifestations—diverse expressions—of a singular reality.

To be conscious of G-d means to never allow your ego to wrap you in its superficial imagination. “Ego” stands for Easing G-d Out. When I do not realize my true greatness and value, as a reflection of G-d's infinite oneness, I must resort to my ego to feel good about myself and to put you down. Becoming G-d conscious means that at every moment I need not protect my ego, as I become completely comfortable with my true reality, as an expression of Divine light. The more G-d conscious I am, the smaller I become and the greater I become: On one level, I become nothing, as there is nothing but the organic oneness, the absolute infinity of G-d, which pervades all. At the same time, I become the greatest, as my life becomes a full and seamless expression of the higher, unifying, integrating, eternal consciousness of the eternal core of all reality.

Being close to G-d summons you to respect others more, not less. The more G-d conscious, the more loving and charitable you become, as you are aware that G-d's light pervades every person and every creature. When in the name of chosenness a person becomes bigoted, disrespectful, elitist, and arrogant, they have missed the boat. When you become aware of G-d choosing you, it eliminates the judgmentalism we resort to to protect our egos and feel better about ourselves and our place in the world. Your success never equals my failure. I reflect one aspect of G-d, as you reflect another one.

This is the idea of the Chosen People — a nation of individuals who have been given the opportunity to sense G-d's closeness, hear His truth, and relay His message to the world. All agree that it was the Jews who introduced the world to monotheism and a system of ethics and morals that has shaped the modern view of life and its purpose. And it is the survival of Judaism to this day that attests to the eternal value of this system.

Anyone from any ethnic background can convert to Judaism and become chosen. Jewish chosenness is not a gene, it is a state of the soul. Anyone

wishing to take it upon themselves is welcome -- as long as they are ready to have their bubble burst. Anyone can join this group of “chosen people” as long as they are ready to experience themselves as nothing... And that is a Jew.

And that is why so many people loathe the Jewish people.

We have been chosen to teach each and every person alive that each of them has been chosen—to serve G-d and become an ambassador of love, light, and goodness to His world.

What Did Chosen-ness Do To Us?

When I look at our people, I ask myself one question: Has our belief that we are the chosen people turned us into murderous people who feel they have the right to abuse, persecute, target, and annihilate other cultures and peoples who are different? Or has it made us feel responsible to share, give, contribute, and help others? Has the idea of Chosen People turned us into people who are never introspective, or perhaps into the most self-critical and introspective nation on earth? (Often, the worst critics of Israel are Jews!)

The true test of chosenness is how humble you are. Most Jews today have passed this test with flying colors. Their humility is so deep, it doesn't allow them to accept that they are chosen. While most other religious groups are quite comfortable claiming that they are the best, we Jews will do anything to say that we are nothing special. Now that's what we call a Chosen People!

Katonti!

This, explained Rabbi Schneur Zalman, was the hallmark of Jacob. To the self-absorbed person, a kindness from G-d is proof of his own significance and worth. To the spiritually mature person, however, a kindness from G-d is, first and foremost, an act of divine love: G-d is drawing the person closer to Him. And the closer one comes to G-d, the more one realizes one's own insignificance in the face of the divine infinity.

This is what it means to think as a Jew. When you were blessed with a gift, when you were showered with a blessing—the first instinct of the Jew is: Katonti! I am humbled.

This, the Alter Rebbe taught, must be the response of his followers to the grace they have seen: to become far more humble, authentic, and Divine. To suspend their egos and become channels for Divine oneness. When we realize we have been chosen, we cultivate a healthy confidence that comes not from ego but from humility. It is about respecting our role as Divine ambassadors for goodness and truth. Then we never duck to the pressure of those who want us to compromise our eternal mission to eliminate evil and cultivate goodness.

(My thanks to Rabbi Aron Moss for his article on the topic.)

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Vayishlach

Animal House

Hutz ‘n’ plutz. That was a fictitious name my mother would give to a place where everything was bliss and very simple. It was the home of Chaim Yankel or whoever the mythical Jewish character of a given fable lived. But believe it or not, there was a place called Huts ‘n’ plutz. Of course, the ‘n’ plutz suffix was not added, nor was the place actually called Huts in the English language. It did however take the name in Hebrew. And it was called Sukkos. And a Sukkos are huts.

After Yaakov departed peacefully from his brother, he dwelled in a place for 18 months. When he arrived he built a quasi-infrastructure — homes for his kin and sukkos, huts, for his great herd. Then he named the city. He did not call it for the homes he built, rather for the myriad structures that he built for the animals — Sukkos, Huts.

Many commentaries are puzzled as to why Yaakov chose a name representing the temporal, animal structures as opposed to calling the city Houses or Batim, referring to the permanent dwellings he erected for his kin. After all, is it not more appropriate to name a village after the human abodes as opposed to the animal ones? Some answer that naming the city Sukkos was a symbolic expression of the paradox of all worldly permanence. Yaakov was saying that every abode, from

glorious mansions to marble edifices, is only temporal. They are all Sukkos. Thus he named the town Sukkos.

My grandfather, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, once offered a very practical approach. After Yaakov constructed homes for both his children and livestock, the dominant feature of the landscape was myriad huts scattered across the countryside. Gazing at the amazingly transformed dessert, he appropriately named the town after the scene. He called it Huts.

But why tell us that? Who cares? Perhaps both questions can be answered as one.

In the northern part of Israel, Yeshiva K'far Chasidim had established itself as a prominent center of Torah scholarship. Students flocked to the Yeshiva to gain from the spiritual nourishment that the Mashgiach, Dean of Ethics, Reb Elya Lopian offered. But the Yeshiva attracted more than students seeking spiritual nourishment.

The basement in which the, pasta, flour and other dry goods were stored also attracted those seeking nourishment. It had become infested with rodents! The students decided on a simple solution to their problem of diminishing food supply and the health hazard.

They scoured the rubbish piles of the city and brought a stray cat back to the campus. Every day it would play in the yard and each evening they would bring back to the basement where it would earn its keep, receiving room and board simultaneously. Within a few weeks there was not a rodent to be found. But the cat remained. The boys lapsed in their commitment to its welfare and even forgot to feed it.

One evening it scratched on the screen door of the aged Mashgiach HaGaon Reb Elya Lopian's home. He was puzzled. Not informed about the extermination stratagem of the student body, he wondered where the cat came from. One of the younger students explained the problems of the mice and their ingenious solution. With that, the boy explained the presence of the cat that had made its way to the sage's home.

"Are there still mice?" asked Reb Elya. "No," exclaimed the student, "there hasn't been a rodent in days!" Then he smiled while looking down at the cat and added, "thanks to this fellow." "And since there are no mice, what has he been eating?" The boy just shrugged. He simply did not know. "Ahh," sighed the sage. "You have been lax in your responsibility and gratitude. I will show you how to feed a cat." With that, Reb Elya, a man in his eighties, went into his kitchen, poured milk into a saucer and placed it down for the hungry feline.

At that moment a young student named Kavinsky captured the moment on film. The picture of the white-bearded Torah giant bending down and feeding a cat remains one of the most popular pictures among thousands of youngsters in America and Israel.

It has become Reb Elya's proud testament that even G-d's simplest creatures must be cared for, even by a sage in Israel.

Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai, a Sefardic sage who lived in the latter part of the 18th century, better known as the Chida, offers a brilliant and revolutionary explanation to the peculiar name Sukkos.

(I purchased this set of the Chida's writings after being encouraged by a reader, Boruch Meir (Bobby) Ohrbach, and I am grateful for the wealth of knowledge I have since attained. Thank you!)

The Chida explains that Yaakov Avinu did something unprecedented for that era. Realizing that he would be spending a year and a half in unsheltered terrain, he built a sanctuary of protection for animals!

Others would have left them in the cold, caring selfishly for only their own welfare and that of their kin. Yaakov was proud of building huts for the animals and he expressed that pride in naming the entire city, not after the act that any husband and father would do for his family. He did not enshrine the town after his labor of love that would be personally enjoyed by members of his family.

He did not call the village Levittown or Jacobsville. He called it after the labor of love sweated for his temporal flock. He gave a name to tell the world that he not only cared for his flesh and blood. He named the town in honor of what he had done for the beings who had no one else to depend upon. He declared the compassion one must accord to the simplest beings, even a cat.

Dedicated by the Schulman family in memory of Milton Schulman of blessed memory

PARABOLIC REFLECTIONS

In Parshas Noach's Drasha I wrote, "Recently, a billion dollar project to Mars was destroyed because the language of the metric system was spoken in one factory and feet and inches were spoken in the other."

I received this brief letter from Harvey Schabes, a NASA engineer.

"Just a brief note from your friendly NASA Engineer: I am almost positive that the Mars project was in the low hundreds of millions and not billions. But what's a few million between friends."

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Vayishlach

Why Didn't Yaakov's Zechus Save His Daughter from Tragedy?

The incident with Dena in Parshas Vayishlach is very difficult to understand on many levels. "Now Dena – the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Yaakov – went out to look over the daughters of the land. Shechem, son of Chamor the Chivi, the prince of the region, saw her; he took her, lay with her, and violated her." (Bereshis 34:1-2) Of course, this was a terrible disgrace. Dena's brothers were outraged: "Shall our sister be treated like a zonah?" (Bereshis 34:31) Therefore, Shimon and Levi hatched their plot to have all the men of Shechem circumcised and then, when they were weakened from the operation, Shimon and Levi came in and killed out the entire city. This itself leaves room for a lot of discussion, and is something we have discussed over the years.

This year, I would like to share another topic, namely how did such a thing happen to the daughter of Yaakov Avinu? How was it that the zechus of Yaakov Avinu did not save his daughter from this terrible fate? There is a Medrash which addresses this. The Medrash points to a fault in Yaakov Avinu.

(Whenever Chazal point out a fault in the holy patriarchs, they are talking about the most nuanced of "aveiros" (sins). We cannot even call them "aveiros." At most, we can call them "shortcomings." We cannot project our foibles and weaknesses on Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. That would be a tragic mistake, because they are not regular people. They are the "Avos Hakedoshim" and we can't ascribe to them the base aveiros that we commit. That having been said, Chazal do point out slight imperfections in the deeds of the Avos and this Medrash is one such instance.)

The Medrash quotes the pasuk in Mishlei "Don't boast about tomorrow because you don't know what tomorrow will bring" (Mishlei 27:1), and applies it to Yaakov Avinu. In the previous parsha (Vayetzei) when Yaakov made a deal with Lavan regarding the division of the sheep, he boasted: "...my righteousness will testify that none of the sheep of Lavan will be found in my flock" (Bereshis 30:33). Supposedly, this was a very valid thing for Yaakov to say. Yaakov's righteousness, and specifically the way he dealt with Lavan all these years, was certainly beyond reproach! The Rambam cites Yaakov's work ethic towards Lavan as the paradigm of how an employee must serve his employer. Therefore, Yaakov could legitimately say "my righteousness will testify for me."

Nonetheless, regarding this comment, the Medrash says "Don't boast about tomorrow because you don't know what tomorrow will bring." The Medrash chastises Yaakov: "Don't be so confident of your righteousness; 'tomorrow' your daughter is going to go out and be violated." The simple reading of the Medrash is that the Medrash is making a play on words between the expression "v'ansa bi tzeedkasi" (and my righteousness will testify for me) and the word "va'yane-ha" (and he violated her). That is how the Medrash knows there is some kind of connection here.

Obviously, the Medrash is saying that Yaakov said something wrong here to Lavan. What could be wrong with what he said? The answer is (again this is only "the finest of finest of imperfections") that Yaakov Avinu was relying on his own accomplishments here. A person can never ever rely on his own accomplishments. A person must realize that every single day is a gift, and every single day he needs siyata d'shmaya

(Divine assistance). What happened yesterday is absolutely no guarantee for what will happen tomorrow.

When a person is so confident about the future that he can say “let my righteousness testify on my behalf for the future” that is saying that there is a level of self-confidence (bitachon-atzmi), trusting in myself rather than in the Ribono shel Olam. A person never knows. No matter what has happened in the past, a person cannot assume “I am set!” For a person never knows what tomorrow will bring.

As confident as Yaakov was about his integrity in monetary matters, he was equally confident about the chinuch (education) that he gave to his sons and daughters. “I don’t need to worry about my children because as much as I put into my work, I put into my children. I raised only righteous children! – The Shivtay Kah!” (Twelve Tribes of the L-rd). However, this can even happen to your own daughter! Such things can happen if we have too much self-reliance!

The Punishment of Miriam Bas Bilgah

At the end of Maseches Succah, the Talmud relates an incident that occurred in the time of the Second Beis Hamikdash involving a certain “Miriam daughter of Bilga” from a family of Kohanim. Miriam abandoned her religion and married a Greek officer. When the Greeks entered the Beis Hamikdash (at the time of the Chanukah story) she kicked the mizbayach (altar) with her sandal and cried out “Wolf! Wolf! How long will you continue to consume the property of Israel and not come to their aid in their time of need?” The Gemara relates that when the chachomim heard about this incident, they fined the entire mishmar of Bilga, penalizing her family’s ability to partake in the future avodah in the Beis Hamikdash.

The Gemara asks why the whole family was fined for the misdeeds of one apostate daughter in the family. The Gemara famously answers that this retribution was appropriate because “the way a child talks in the street is based on conversation she heard at home. The expression of the children comes either from their father or their mother.” Miriam’s attitude – that the offerings upon the mizbayach were just a waste of Jewish money – did not originate with her. It came from her parents. Therefore, it was appropriate to fine the entire mishmar.

I once heard an interesting observation in the name of the Satmar Rebbe, zt”l. This Miriam intermarried. She became an apostate. For that, her family was not fined. But for cursing the mizbayach and calling the korbanos a waste of money – for that the chachomim threw the book at the family! The Rebbe explained that children sometimes go off the derech. It is not necessarily the parents’ fault. She might leave her religion. She might intermarry. These events cannot necessarily be blamed on her parents. But the way she talks – that came from somewhere. She got those attitudes from her home. These are things she picked up as a child from the way she heard her parents speak.

This is a lesson of the tremendous impact of parents’ influence on their children. Everything that takes place within the four walls of our homes gets stuck to the ears of our children. We may not think that they are paying attention but everything that we say and the attitude that we have are all picked up and remain. For this, we have great responsibility.

On the other hand, it is a two-way street. This phenomenon works for bad and it works for good.

There is a famous Rashi in the beginning of Parshas Behaaloscha. When Aharon Hakohen saw that neither he nor Shevet Levi participated in the dedication of the Mishkan (along with the other Princes listed at the end of Parshas Nasso), he became depressed. Chazal say that Aharon was told “Your portion is greater than their portion – for you will light the candles (of the Menorah).” The Ramban famously says that this does not refer to the lighting of the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash but rather to the lighting of the Chanuka menorah throughout the generations until this very day, in commemoration of the heroics of the Maccabee Kohanim (who were descendants of Aharon).

The question is asked: Why is this a consolation prize? Aharon complained that he did not “contribute” as did the nessiyim (princes) who contributed personal offerings each day of the dedication of the Mishkan. This doesn’t answer the question. Where did Aharon have the opportunity to “contribute”?

The answer is: Why did Aharon Hakohen have great grandchildren who were moser nefesh for the mitzvah of lighting the menorah? From where did that come? It came from Aharon’s enthusiasm and passion for the lighting of the menorah. His inspiration to faithfully perform this mitzvah day after day is what carried on to his great grandchildren (the Maccabees) so that they too were moser nefesh to fight the wars of Hashem and clean up the Beis HaMikdash in order to light the menorah. That was Aharon’s contribution. The Ribono shel Olam told Aharon, “Your contribution is even greater than that of the nessiyim because your contribution will last throughout the generations. Therefore, you did contribute.” With that, the Ribono shel Olam appeased Aharon Hakohen.

The Sound of a Beer Bottle: A Twenty-Year Journey, One Day at a Time

By Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

Twenty years ago, a woman I knew came to me with a heavy heart. She was married to a man who had become an alcoholic. This wasn’t social drinking nor was it “a little too much at kiddush or at a simcha.” It was a pattern that was slowly hollowing out his life and his home. She was clear on what had to happen, but she lacked the courage and confidence to confront him. She asked me if I would.

As a young rabbi, I was inexperienced in this area (and most others) but I knew one thing: confrontation can humiliate or it can heal. It can push a person further into denial, or it can become the beginning of their redemption. I agreed to speak with this husband, not because I had guarantees about how it would go, but because looking away and staying silent was no longer an option.

I called him and asked if I could stop by. I didn’t spell out why, I just asked if we could catch up. I will never forget that evening: the fear I felt pulling up to his house, the tefillah I whispered asking Hashem to give me the right words. When I arrived, we sat outside. In his typical generous hospitality, he opened two beers, one for himself and one for me. On the surface, it was the picture of two people, friends shmoozing on a nice Florida evening. We spoke about work, family, life. It felt casual, unforced.

But the whole time, beneath the surface, I knew I wasn’t there just to catch up. I wasn’t there to judge him, label him, or attack him. I was there to share a truth that his wife, some close friends, and I all saw clearly, and that he, on some level, likely already knew but had not allowed himself to fully face. At a certain point, I gently steered the conversation where it needed to go.

“Look, I didn’t come here only to hang out. I came because your wife, some close friends, and I are very concerned. We see the role alcohol plays in your life, and it isn’t healthy; it has gotten out of control. This isn’t easy for me to say, but it’s harder to watch you continue this way and say nothing.” When you bring something like this up, you brace yourself for the response: “You’re overreacting. Everyone drinks. This is my business, not yours. Mind your own business. Stay out of my personal life.” You expect anger, denial, defensiveness.

This man didn’t do any of that. He didn’t blow up or storm off. Instead, he looked at me. Really looked at me. He gave me a long, strong, searching stare that made time feel like it had slowed down. It wasn’t a hateful look, and it wasn’t even particularly angry. It was the look of a man suddenly faced with a mirror he could no longer avoid. In that moment, it felt as if he was asking himself, “Is this really what people see when they look at me? Is he serious? Am I an alcoholic? Have I lost control?”

Then, without fanfare, without any dramatic declaration, he put his beer down and the sound of the glass made a clank. He did not take another sip. We continued to talk. From the outside, nothing dramatic had changed. There was no emotional explosion, no tearful promise, no big speech. But in that simple act of placing the beer down and not picking it back up, a line had been drawn. A decision had been made.

That beer was the last drink he ever took. From that day forward, he threw himself into recovery. He did not try to do it alone. He joined a recovery program. He went to meetings. He got a sponsor. He surrounded himself with people who understood his struggle and were committed to helping him heal and rebuild his life. And here is what is so remarkable: he told me that not only has he not touched alcohol since that day, but he has not even felt tempted to drink. Not once.

Twenty years ago, he put down that bottle and hasn’t picked up alcohol since, but that is far from the only change in his life. Twenty years of sobriety has meant twenty years of showing up differently for his family, for himself, for his career, and for Hashem. From the outside, it looks like he made one decision and held to it for two decades. But that is not how it really works. Recovery is not accomplished in twenty-year chunks. It can only ever be lived one day at a time.

When someone faces a destructive habit, whether alcohol, drugs, uncontrolled anger, dishonesty, impatience, or anything else, and realizes something must

change, they often hear or tell themselves, “You can never do this again for the rest of your life. You have to stop forever.” The natural reaction is panic. “The rest of my life? Never again? That’s impossible. I’m guaranteed to fail.” The phrase “for the rest of your life” feels so big, so heavy, that it nearly paralyzes the person before they even take their first step.

We simply are not designed to live for “forever.” We are only capable of living today. But if instead you say, “Don’t drink today,” something shifts. Today is manageable. Today is concrete. Today feels attainable. Whatever we need to eliminate or work on, as soon as we move it into the realm of “forever,” it feels hopeless. But when we bring it down to one more day, to today, it becomes possible.

That is the secret of recovery: one day at a time. Not, “I will never drink again,” but, “Today, I will not drink. Today, I will stay sober.” And tomorrow, with Hashem’s help, we will say it again.

You wake up in the morning and you don’t stay sober for twenty years; you stay sober for this morning, for this afternoon, for this evening. You do that enough times, and before you know it, those individual days have added up into something enormous. One day you turn around and realize that one more day and one more day and one more day without became twenty years.

When Yaakov Avinu agrees to work for Lavan for seven long, challenging years in order to marry Rochel, the Torah tells us something very surprising: “Vaya’avod Yaakov b’Rochel sheva shanim, vayihyu b’einav k’yamim achadim b’ahavaso osah.” Yaakov worked for Rochel for seven years, and they seemed to him but a few days, k’yamim achadim, because of his love for her.

At first glance, this is difficult to understand. When we long for something, when we are waiting for someone we love, time usually moves slowly. Every day feels like an eternity. When a chassan and kallah are waiting for their wedding, when someone is waiting for a refuah, when a person is waiting for vacation to start, it rarely feels like a “few days.” If anything, it feels like forever. So how could the Torah say that seven hard years passed for Yaakov “like a few days”?

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski z”l, who was a world-renowned expert, thinker, and writer on addiction and recovery, suggests a beautiful insight. He points out that the word “achadim” shares a root with the word “echad,” one. Yaakov did not live those seven years as one overwhelming, crushing block of time. He lived them as yamim echadim, one day at a time. Each day was a single unit of avodah: one day of working, one day of being one step closer, one day of commitment, one day of holding on to his love for Rochel and his trust in Hashem. Seven years is daunting. “Today” is not. When one lives in the present day, focused on what today demands, seven years can indeed pass “like a few days.”

When my friend quietly put his beer down that day, I don’t believe he was consciously committing to perfection for the rest of his life or picturing celebrating his twentieth anniversary of sobriety. He was taking the next right step. He was agreeing to face the truth, to seek help, to walk into that first meeting, to say no to the immediate urge. He was choosing to live that day differently. Hashem took that one courageous “today” and, one day at a time, turned it into twenty years.

He and I met recently to sit and talk once again and to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of that fateful conversation. He shared with me, “When I put the bottle of beer down, something happened. Something humanly unexplainable. A profound change happened instantly. The only attribute could be Hashem.

He was the catalyst that began this journey.” In recovery, step three is to submit to a higher power and trust in God for help. Twenty years ago, my friend discovered a real and raw relationship with Hashem, a genuine and ongoing conversation with the Almighty.

As I marveled at his fortitude and accomplishment, I thought to myself: every one of us has something we need to work on, a temper that flares too quickly, a tongue that speaks too freely, a laziness that holds us back, a jealousy that corrodes our happiness, a private behavior we are ashamed of. When we tell ourselves, “I must never do this again for the rest of my life,” we set ourselves up to feel crushed and defeated. We mean well, but we are thinking in terms that only Hashem can handle.

What if, instead, we thought and spoke to ourselves the way Torah and recovery both teach us to: “Today, I will be careful with my speech. Today, I will work on being more patient. Today, I will not open that site, that bottle, that door. Today, I will show up as the husband, wife, parent, friend, Jew I know I can be.” The next day, we take a deep breath, trust in Hashem and say it again. Forever is not in our hands. Today is.

If you are like the woman in this story, watching someone you love slipping into something destructive, the feeling of helplessness can be overwhelming. You look at their future, and at yours, and “the rest of our lives” feels unbearably heavy. But you are not responsible to fix the rest of their life in one action, and you are not expected to know exactly what the next twenty years will bring.

You can take one step. She took one step by reaching out and asking for help. I took one step by agreeing to have a hard conversation. He took one step by putting down that beer and walking into recovery. Each of those steps was a yom echad, a single day’s act of courage. Hashem can multiply that.

And if, in this story, you recognize yourself not in the wife but in the husband, if you sense that your drinking, or some other behavior, your private life, has become something you no longer fully control, then please hear this clearly: you do not need to promise perfection and you do not need to swear that you will never struggle again.

You need to be honest today. Today, admit that this has gotten out of control. Today, share it with someone you trust.

Today, make one phone call, walk into one meeting, send one message asking for help. Today, ask Hashem for the strength not for the next twenty years, but for the next twenty-four hours.

The yetzer hara, the voice of self-sabotage, loves the language of “forever.” It whispers, “You’ll never keep this up. You’ll fail eventually. Why even start if you can’t be perfect?” Torah and genuine recovery answer with the language of echad: not forever, but one. One step. One day. One honest conversation. One sincere tefillah. One refusal to pick up the next drink.

Twenty years ago, a wife’s fear, a husband’s hidden readiness, and one difficult but loving conversation converged on a porch. I can still hear the sound of him putting down that beer. That small, almost unremarkable motion did not just end a drink; it began a new life.

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

The New Complex

In Parshas Vayishlach, after Yaakov Avinu’s epic battle with Eisav’s guardian angel[1], where he got injured in his hip socket[2], we are given a Biblical commandment, the third and last of the whole sefer Bereishis, that Bnei Yisrael may not partake of the Gid Hanasheh, the sciatic nerve, of any animal. Additionally, there is a Rabbinic prohibition on eating from the outer sinew of the animal’s thigh tendon[3]. The Sefer HaChinuch[4] writes that this mitzvah actually serves as a constant reminder that eventually we will be redeemed from this protracted exile.

To fulfill this mitzvah properly, every last trace of said nerves and the fat covering the sciatic nerve must be removed as well. This act is called nikkur, a.k.a. treibbering, deveining, or porging the forbidden nerves and fats, and it takes an expert to do it properly[5].

Trouble was the Traveling Treibberer

One of the most outstanding experts in hilchos nikkur known was Rav Yonason Eibeshutz zt”l (1690 - 1764), one of the greatest Torah giants of his period and famed author of 89(!) works[6], including the renowned Yaaros Devash, Urim V’Tumim, and Kreisi U’Pleisi. In the latter sefer, in his commentary to the laws of Gid Hanasheh[7], Rav Yonason recorded a fascinating historical incident, which posthumously sparked a raging halachic controversy.

He related that an expert porger came to town (Prague) claiming that the sinew that Jews have been removing for centuries was the wrong one! This treibberer alleged that a different sinew was the true Gid Hanasheh. The ramifications of his claim were gargantuan, for if it were deemed accurate, consequently all of World Jewry would have chas veshalom been eating non-kosher from time immemorial! Rav Yonason writes that he showed this fellow the error of his ways as the sinew this porger was referring to was found exclusively in male animals, and could therefore not possibly be the correct one, for it states in the “SMAg (ostensibly the Sefer Mitzvos Hagadol, written by Rav Moshe of Coucy in the 13th century, Negative Commandment 139) that the prohibition of Gid Hanasheh applies to both males and females”. With his vast knowledge and expertise, Rav Eibeshutz thus averted potential communal disaster. He concludes his passage reiterating the importance and necessity of a porger’s proficiency and capability.

Kreisi Controversy

However, as many puzzled people later pointed out, this logic seemed inherently flawed, as this quote does not actually appear in the SMAg! The SMAg in his actual quote (Mitzvos Lo Sa’aseh 139) was referring to people, not animals! In other words, he wrote that women were similarly obligated in keeping this prohibition as men do[8]. They wondered, is it possible the great Rav Eibeshutz could have made such a simple mistake? And, if so, what was it that the Kreisi U’Pleisi showed this traveling treibberer that refuted his taynos? Many scholars over the years searched for a proper solution to this perplexing conundrum.

One suggestion was that the porger was unlearned, and Rav Yonason wanted to expose his ignorance and therefore set a trap and easily refute him[9]. The issue with this is that, by Rav Yonason’s own testimony, the porger was a “Talmid Chacham and expert”, which would negate this solution.

The Pischei Teshuvah[10] cites the Toldos Adam, who takes a different approach and makes an example out of this story as proof that even Gedolim can err. Following this would mean that one may not partake in eating said meat without removing both sinews. Although the Toldos Adam’s intent was merely to uncover the truth, he unwittingly fueled the fires of the Haskalah, as one of their primary goals was the undermining of Rabbinic authority[11]. In fact, this author personally heard noted historian Rabbi Berel Wein aver that the Haskalah used this story as propaganda to sway the masses.

On the other hand, many Rabbinic luminaries wrote responsae[12], including a tremendous pilpul by the Chasam Sofer[13], not only defending the Rav Eibeshutz's words from attack, but actually each citing different proofs and logic how his shittah is truly correct, that the Gid Hanesheh must be present in both male and female animals.

Several authorities[14] wrote that it must be a printing mistake and the correct point of reference was the S - H - G (ס"ה), referring to the Sefer Halachos Gedolos, a ninth century Halachic code which contains a section on hilchos treifos[15], who actually does imply that the Gid Hanasheh is found in both male and female animals. Others[16] feel that he meant "a sefer mitzvos gadol", meaning a big book of mitzvos, possibly referring to the Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzva 3), who implies this as well.

"VeHetzdiku es HaTzaddik"

However, the whole truth did not actually come out until 1930, when a rabbi in Los Angeles, Rabbi Shlomo Michael Neches, wrote in the Shaarei Tzion Torah Journal[17] that he had in his possession an original manuscript of the Kreisi U'Pleisi, and the words SMAG were crossed out by Rav Yonason Eibeshutz himself, and written on top of them were the letters S - H - N (ס"נ), which stood for Seder Hilchos Nikkur, referring to the Seder HaNikkur of the Baal Hatur[18]. There it was written explicitly that the Gid Hanasheh that both men and women are forbidden from consuming is found in both male and female animals. Finally and justly, a Gadol Hador was vindicated - 165 years after his death[19]!

Although we had to wait over a century and a half to attain clarity on this halachic mystery, it is imperative that we realize that our true mesorah (in this case - all the way back to Yaakov Avinu!) is rock solid and our chachamim are given special siyatta dishmaya to arrive at the correct halachic conclusions. It might take a century or even a millennium, but in the end we clearly see why our chachamim are called "Einei HaEidah"[20].

Postscript: Interestingly, and quite apropos, this fascinating historical episode has had a recent, and equally fascinating, addendum. Apparently, Rabbi Neches' sefarim, including his original copy of the Kreisi U'Pleisi, were donated to the UCLA Research Library. Several scholars traveled there to see Rav Eibeshutz's original amendment and came upon an astonishing discovery. It turns out that it was not the handwritten correction of that renowned Rav Yonason Eibeshutz, but that of another, later Rav Yonason Eibeshutz, who lived at least a century after the first. This second Rav Eibeshutz, a Torah scholar of note, was the Av Beis Din of Lashitz, Poland, and author of Shu"t Tiferes Yonason. Apparently, this was his personal copy of Kreisi U'Pleisi, and he was the one who made the amendment which was later proven accurate in shedding light on the original Rav Yonason's puzzling citation, and not the author himself[21]. Either way, and whichever Rav Eibeshutz, we manifestly see the Divine orchestration involved in clearing up this complicated complexity of historical record.

[1] Bereishis (end of Ch. 32). This follows Rashi's understanding (ad loc. 25, end s.v. vaye'aveik ish), based on the Midrash Rabbah (ad loc. 77: 3) and Midrash Tanchuma (ad loc. 8; who adds that the guardian angel of Eisav was Sama-el). However, there is another opinion, cited in Otzar HaMidrashim (ad loc.), that it was really the ma'alach Michael that Yaakov fought, and not Eisav's guardian angel, in order to prove to Yaakov that he had nothing to fear from Eisav.

[2] Due to the dictum of 'Maaseh Avos Siman L'Banim' [see recent article titled 'Mysterious Omens and our Forefathers'] we are still feeling the repercussions of this act nowadays. See Chofetz Chaim al HaTorah to this parsha.

[3] Gemara Chullin (Ch. Gid Hanasheh, 91a - 93b); Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 65, 8).

[4] Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 3). Several Rishonim, including the Ramban (Bereishis Ch. 32: 26), Rabbeinu Bachaya (ad loc.), Rashba (Chiddushei Agados, Chullin 91a), and Ra'ah (Pekudas HaLeviim, Brachos 33b), as well as the Midrash Rabba (Parshas Vayishlach 78, 5), also imply this message. See the Machon Yerushalayim version of Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 3, footnote 3) at length.

[5] See Shulchan Aruch and Rema (Yoreh Deah 65, 13 & 14), and their commentaries.

[6] See preface to sefer 'Chacham HaRazim - Rebbe Yonason Eibeshutz'.

[7] Kreisi U'Pleisi (Yoreh Deah 65, Kreisi 16).

[8] See for example, the Baruch Taam's glosses to the Kreisi U'Pleisi ad loc. Although others, including the Tzemach Hasadeh (on Yoreh Deah 65, pg. 41), assumed he meant the

SMAK, it is also not found there; neither is it in the Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvos (Mitzvos Lo Sa'aseh 183). See also Rav Shmuel Ashkenazi's Alpha Beta Tinyeisa D'Shmuel Ze'ira (vol. 1, pg. 195 - 196).

[9] See Hegos B'Parshiyos HaTorah by Rabbi Yehuda Nachshoni, on Parshas Vayishlach, pg. 137.

[10] Pischei Teshuva (Yoreh Deah 65, 2), citing the Toldos Adam (Rav Yechezkel Feivel Wolfe of Vilna; vol. 2, Ch. 15, pg. 237).

[11] Paraphrase from Professor Shnayer Zalman Leiman's excellent "Rabbi Jonathon Eibeshuetz and the Porger" (pg. 16). Thanks are due to Rabbi Eliezer Brodt, author of Bein Kesseh L'Essor and Lekutei Eliezer, for providing me with this important source.

[12] Including the Mahar"i Assad (Shu"t Yehuda Ya'aleh, Yoreh Deah 102), Rav Shlomo Kluger (Shu"t Tuv Taam V'Daas, Mahadura Kama vol. 1, 100) [neither of whom actually approved of the Chasam Sofer's pilpul], the Butchatcher Gaon (Daas Kedoshim, Yoreh Deah 65, Hilchos Giddin HaAssurin 4; see explanation in Gidulei HaKodesh there, 1), the Ginzei Yosef (Shu"t 96, 2, quoting the Einei Yisrael), the Mahar"i HaLevi (Shu"t vol. 1, end 36, s.v. mah shetamah), and the Arugas Habosem (Shu"t Yoreh Deah 64, 4). See also Rav Moshe Yosef Shapiro of Prague's 'Bris Avraham' (Parshas Vayishlach) who, quite thoroughly argues on the whole premise of those who questioned Rav Eibeshutz, as once the Torah wrote that Bnei Yisroel may not partake of any Gid Hanasheh, it is patently obvious that it must occur in all kosher beheimos, with no differentiation between male and female. Additionally, as the Rambam writes in his preface to his Pirush HaMishnayos regarding the Torah's 'Pri Eitz Hadar' being identified as the Esrog, once we have a Mesorah L'Doros dating back to Moshe Rabbeinu, all other so-called 'proofs' to the contrary immediately fall off. Therefore, he avers, the same would apply here as well regarding the Gid Hanasheh.

[13] Shu"t Chasam Sofer (Yoreh Deah 69), cited approvingly by the Pischei Teshuva (ibid.) and Shu"t HaRava"z (Yoreh Deah 111). The Aruch Hashulchan (Yoreh Deah 65, 25, in the brackets) might be referring to this solution as well.

[14] Including the Mishmeres Shalom (Yoreh Deah 65, Mishbetzos Zahav); Rav Avraham Shimon Traub, the Kaidan Gaon, in a new edition of Sefer Halachos Gedolos (pg. 296) that he published; the Ginzei Yosef (ibid.); and Rav Yosef Adler (cited in Shu"t Mishnah Halachos vol. 3, 67). The Tzitz Eliezer (Shu"t vol. 8, 25, 2 and vol. 18, 63, s.v.v'ani) actually prefers this amending to the later one, opining that Rabbi Neches must not have been able to read Rav Yonason's handwriting clearly.

[15] BeHa"G (61, Hilchos Treifos pg 129a; exact location cited in Maadanei Hashulchan, Yoreh Deah 65, footnote 118). Still, others feel that the BeHa"G's words are also not entirely clear that he was referring to female animals; see Haghor Rav Ezer Hildesheimer to the BeHa"G (ad loc.), Chadrei De'ah (ad loc. 8), Giluy Daas (ad loc. 7), and Daas Yonason (glosses on the recent Zichron Aharon version of the Kreisi U'Pleisi 65, 16).

[16] See Shu"t Mishnah Halachos (vol. 3, 68, s.v. u'mah). One can also infer this from the Minchas Chinuch's comments (Mitzva 3, 13).

[17] Shaarei Tzion Torah Journal (Choveret HaYovel 1930, 25) - under the title "VeHetzdiku es HaTzaddik" - "The Tzaddik Was Justified" (Devarim Ch. 25, verse 1); also printed in HaPardes Journal (vol. 4, Journal 1: 10 pg. 18 - 19). This important historical tidbit is found in Pardes Yosef (Parshas Vayishlach, 33 s.v. uv'kru"p), as well as in Torah Shleimah (Parshas Vayishlach, 169), and Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer (ibid.). It is also added as an important footnote in many recent editions of the Shulchan Aruch, some printed with the words "mitzvah l'farsem".

[18] Seder HaNikkur (Shaar HaRishon, Hechsher HaBassar 8b - exact location cited in Maadanei Hashulchan Yoreh Deah 65, footnote 118), also brought in the Tur (end Yoreh Deah 65), as well as in Rabbeinu Yerucham (Nesiv 15, 14, pg. 128b). According to Professor Leiman (cited above) the version Rav Eibeshutz showed the porger was the 1577 version with the glosses of Rav Tzvi Bochner, a master treibber and contemporary of the Rema, as there are those [see Prishah (Yoreh Deah 65, 56) and Shu"t Mishnah Halachos (vol. 3, 68 s.v. bram and s.v. mevuar)] who explain that in other versions, the words "male" and "female" are actually referring to types of muscles, not the gender of the animals.

[19] Also thereby proving that Rav Eibeshutz chose the right name for his sefer, Kreisi U'Pleisi - See Gemara Brachos (4a) and Rashi (ad loc. s.v. shekorsim).

[20] Parshas Shelach (Bamidbar Ch. 15, verse 24). Interestingly, this author has seen it averred that history has proven that in the whole sefer Kreisi U'Pleisi on all of Yoreh Deah only one (!) actual mistake was found, but it turns out that it was clearly an error in Geometry - see Kreisi U'Pleisi (Tiferes Yisrael, Yoreh Deah 190, 14) and the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch's Lechem V'Simlah (ad loc. Simlah 11). This will Bezr"H be addressed fully in this author's upcoming maamar in Kovetz Eitz Chaim (vol. 25).

[21] See Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok HaKohen Miller's maamar in Kovetz Hama'ayan (vol. 215; Tishrei 5776, pg 100 - 102), with pictures of the title page and amendment of Rabbi Neches' copy of Kreisi U'Pleisi. Thanks are due to R' Moshe Boruch Kaufman and R' Dovid Wasserlauf for pointing out this startling recent development in the saga of Rav Eibeshutz and the traveling treibber.

לע"נ

יוחנן בן יקותיאל יודא ע"ה

שרה משה בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה

ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה

אנא מלכה בת ישראל