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From: cshulman@gmail.com

BS"D

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from: Aish.com <[newsletterserver@aish.com](mailto:newsletterserver@aish.com)>

date: Jul 22, 2020, 4:31 PM

subject: Advanced Parsha - Devarim

Children Are a Gift

Devarim (Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22)

Jul 19, 2020 | by **Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

The Jewish People, Rahsi informs us, were not very happy with the blessing Moshe gave them. "May God, the Lord of your fathers," he had said, "add a thousandfold more like you and bless you as He spoke to you."

"Only that and no more?" the people responded. "Is that the full extent of your blessing? Hashem blessed us (Bereishis 32:13) to be 'like the dust of the earth that is too numerous to count.'"

"You will surely get the blessing Hashem gave you," Moshe replied. "This is just my own personal blessing to you."

What exactly was Moshe's reply? What additional benefit would the Jewish people derive from his blessing of a thousandfold increase if they were already receiving Hashem's blessing of virtually limitless increase?

The Chasam Sofer explains that Moshe was testing them. Why did they want children? Was it because children were useful, because they help carry the household burden, provide companionship and are a source of security in old age? Or is it because each child is a spark of the Divine, a priceless gift from Heaven, a piece of the World to Come?

So Moshe gave the Jewish people a test. He blessed them with a "thousandfold" increase in their population. If they had wanted children for their usefulness alone, they would have said, "Thank you, but that's enough already! A thousandfold will suit our purposes just fine. We have no use for any more right now." But that was not what they said. They wanted more children. They wanted children "too numerous to count." Obviously, they

were not thinking about their own material and emotional needs, but about the transcendent blessing that each child represents, and so, they proved themselves worthy of Hashem's blessing. Hundreds of years earlier, these two conflicting attitudes toward children had already become an issue. Yaakov and Eisav had made a division. Eisav was to take this world, and Yaakov was to take the World to Come. When Yaakov came back from Aram, Eisav welcomed him at the head of an army four hundred men strong. In the tense early minutes of the confrontation, Eisav noticed Yaakov's many children. "Who are these children?" Eisav asked. "These are the children," Yaakov replied, "that Hashem graciously gave to your servant."

The Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer expands the dialogue between Yaakov and Eisav and reveals the underlying argument.

"What are you doing with all these children?" Eisav asked. "I thought we made a division, that I would take this world and you would take the World to Come. So why do you have so many children? What do children have to do with the World to Come? Children are a boon in this world!"

"Not so," Yaakov responded. "Children are sparks of the Divine. The opportunity to raise a child, to develop a Divine soul to the point where it can enter the World to Come, is a privilege of the highest spiritual worth. That is why I have children."

Yaakov wants children for their own sake, but Eisav views them as an asset in this world. Children are an extra pair of hands on the farm. They can milk the cows and help with many other chores that need to be done in agrarian societies.

Modern man has progressed beyond agrarian life. He has moved off the farm and does not have such a need for children anymore. In fact, he has made a startling discovery. Children are a tremendous burden. They are expensive, time consuming and exasperating. Who needs children?

But what about companionship? Loneliness? No problem. Modern man can get a dog. Dogs are wonderful. Instead of coming home to a house full of clamoring, demanding, frustrating children, he can come home to an adoring, tail-wagging dog who will run to bring him his slippers and newspaper. So why does he need children? This is the attitude of Eisav adapted to modern times.

Yaakov, on the other hand, understands that the purpose of children is not for enjoying this world or for making our lives easier. Each child represents a spiritual mission, a spark of the Divine entrusted to our care and our guidance, an opportunity to fulfill Hashem's desire to have this soul brought to the World to Come.

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from: Rabbi Sacks <[info@rabbisacks.org](mailto:info@rabbisacks.org)>

date: Jul 22, 2020, 3:23 PM

subject: Followership (Devarim 5780)

**Covenant & Conversation**

Finding Faith in the Parsha with **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

**Followership**

In the last month of his life, Moses gathered the people. He instructed them about the laws they were to keep and reminded them of their history since the Exodus. That is the substance of the book of Devarim. Early in this process, he recalled the episode of the spies – the reason the people's parents were denied the opportunity to enter the land. He wanted the next generation to learn the lesson of that episode and carry it with them always. They needed faith and courage. Perhaps that has always been part of what it means to be a Jew.

But the story of the spies as he tells it here is very different indeed from the version in Shelach Lecha (Num. 13-14), which describes the events as they happened at the time, almost 39 years earlier. The discrepancies between the two accounts are glaring and numerous. Here I want to focus only on two.

First: who proposed sending the spies? In Shelach, it was God who told Moses to do so. “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Send men...’” In our parsha, it was the people who requested it: “Then all of you came to me and said, ‘Let us send men...’” Who was it: God or the people? This makes a massive difference to how we understand the episode.

Second: what was their mission? In our parsha, the people said, “Let us send men to spy out [veyachperu] the land for us” (Deut. 1:22). The twelve men “made for the hill country, came to the wadi Eshcol, and spied it out [vayeraglu]” (Deut. 1:24). In other words, our parsha uses the two Hebrew verbs, lachpor and leragel, that mean to spy.

But as I pointed out in my *Covenant & Conversation* for Shelach Lecha, the account there conspicuously does not mention spying. Instead, thirteen times, it uses the verb latur, which means to tour, explore, travel, inspect. Even in our parsha, when Moses is talking, not about the spies but about God, he says He “goes before you on your journeys—to seek out (latur) the place where you are to encamp” (Deut. 1:33).

According to Malbim, latur means to seek out what is good about a place. Lachpor and leragel mean to seek out what is weak, vulnerable, exposed, defenceless. Touring and spying are completely different activities, so why does the account in our parsha present what happened as a spying mission, which the account in Shelach emphatically does not?

These two questions combine with a third, prompted by an extraordinary statement of Moses in our parsha. Having said that the spies and the people were punished by not living to enter the promised land, he then says:

This is very strange indeed. It is not like Moses to blame others for what seems to be his own failing. Besides which, it contradicts the testimony of the Torah itself, which tells us that Moses and Aaron were punished by not being permitted to enter the land because of what happened at Kadesh when the people complained about the lack of water. What they did wrong is debated by the commentators. Was it that Moses hit the rock? Or that he lost his temper? Or some other reason? Whichever it was, that was when God said: “Because you did not trust in Me enough to honour Me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them” (Num. 20:12). This was some 39 years after the episode of the spies. As to the discrepancy between the two accounts of the spies, R. David Zvi Hoffman argued that the account in Shelach tells us what happened. The account in our parsha, a generation later, was meant not to inform but to warn. Shelach is a historical narrative; our parsha is a sermon. These are different literary genres with different purposes.

As to Moses’ remark, “Because of you, the Lord was incensed with me,” Ramban suggests that he was simply saying that like the spies and the people, he too was condemned to die in the wilderness. Alternatively, he was hinting that no one should be able to say that Moses avoided the fate of the generation he led.

However, Abarbanel offers a fascinating alternative. Perhaps the reason Moses and Aaron were not permitted to enter the land was not because of the episode of water and the rock at Kadesh. That is intended to distract attention from their real sins. Aaron’s real sin was the Golden Calf. Moses’ real sin was the episode of the spies. The hint that this was so is in Moses’ words here, “Because of you, the Lord was incensed with me also.”

How though could the episode of the spies have been Moses’ fault? It wasn’t he who proposed sending them. It was either God or the people. He did not go on the mission. He did not bring back a report. He did not demoralise the people. Where then was Moses at fault? Why was God angry with him?

The answer lies in the first two questions: who proposed sending the spies? And why is there a difference in the verbs between here and Shelach?

Following Rashi, the two accounts, here and in Shelach, are not two different versions of the same event. They are the same version of the same event, but split in two, half told there, half here. It was the people who requested spies (as stated here). Moses took their request to God. God acceded to the request, but as a concession, not a command: “You may send,” not “You must send” (as stated in Shelach).

However, in granting permission, God made a specific provision. The people had asked for spies: “Let us send men ahead to spy out [veyachperu] the land for us.” God did not give Moses permission to send spies. He specifically used the verb latur, meaning, He gave permission for the men to tour the land, come back and testify that it is a good and fertile land, flowing with milk and honey.

The people did not need spies. As Moses said, throughout the wilderness years God has been going “ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go” (Deut. 1:33). They did however need eyewitness testimony of the beauty and fruitfulness of the land to which they had been travelling and for which they would have to fight.

Moses, however, did not make this distinction clear. He told the twelve men: “See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified?” This sounds dangerously like instructions for a spying mission.

When ten of the men came back with a demoralising report and the people panicked, at least part of the blame lay with Moses. The people had asked for spies. He should have made it clear that the men he was sending were not to act as spies.

How did Moses come to make such a mistake? Rashi suggests an answer. Our parsha says: “Then all of you came to me and said, ‘Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us.’” The English does not convey the sense of menace in the original. They came, says Rashi, “in a crowd,” without respect, protocol or order. They were a mob, and they were potentially dangerous. This mirrors the people’s behaviour at the beginning of the story of the Golden Calf: “When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered against Aaron and said to him...” Faced with an angry mob, a leader is not always in control of the situation. True leadership is impossible in the face of the madness of crowds. Moses’ mistake, if the analysis here is correct, was a very subtle one, the difference between a spying mission and a morale-boosting eyewitness account of the land. Even so, it must have been almost inevitable given the mood of the people.

That is what Moses meant when he said, “because of you the Lord was incensed with me too.” He meant that God was angry with me for not showing stronger leadership, but it was you – or rather, your parents – who made that leadership impossible.

This suggests a fundamental, counterintuitive truth. There is a fine TED talk about leadership.[1] It takes less than 3 minutes to watch, and it asks, “What makes a leader?” It answers: “The first follower.”

There is a famous saying of the Sages: “Make for yourself a teacher and acquire for yourself a friend.”[2] The order of the verbs seems wrong. You don’t make a teacher, you acquire one. You don’t acquire a friend, you make one. In fact, though, the statement is precisely right. You make a teacher by being willing to learn. You make a leader by being willing to follow. When people are unwilling to follow, even the greatest leader cannot lead. That is what happened to Aaron at the time of the Calf, and in a far more subtle way to Moses at the time of the spies.

That, I would argue, is one reason why Joshua was chosen to be Moses’ successor. There were other distinguished candidates, including Pinchas and Caleb. But Joshua, serving Moses throughout the wilderness years, was a role-model of what it is to be a follower. That, the Israelites needed to learn. I believe that followership is the great neglected art. Followers and leaders form a partnership of mutual challenge and respect. To be a follower in Judaism is not to be submissive, uncritical, blindly accepting. Questioning and arguing are a part of the relationship. Too often, though, we decry a lack of leadership when we are really suffering from a lack of followership.

[1] Derek Sivers, ‘How to Start a Movement.’

[2] Mishnah, Avot 1:6.

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years.

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com  
from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>  
to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com  
subject: [Rav Kook Torah]  
Devarim: Moses Speaks!

### **Rav Kook Torah**

The Merchant and the King

The Book of Deuteronomy is essentially a collection of Moses' farewell speeches, delivered to the Jewish people as they prepared to enter the Land of Israel. The eloquence, passion, and cadence of Moses' discourses are breathtaking. One can only wonder: is this the same man who claimed to be "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue" (Ex. 4:10)?

The Sages were aware of this anomaly. The Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 1:7) offers the following parable to explain how eloquence is a relative matter: "This is like a man selling purple cloth, who announced, 'Purple cloth for sale!'

Hearing his voice, the king peeked out and called the merchant over.

'What are you selling?' asked the king.

'Nothing, Your Highness.'

'But before I heard you call out, 'Purple cloth for sale,' and now you say, 'Nothing.' What changed?'

'Oh no!' exclaimed the merchant. 'I am selling purple cloth. But by your standards, it is nothing.'

The same idea, the Midrash concludes, may be applied to Moses and his speaking abilities. When standing before God, Creator of the faculty of speech, Moses announced, "I am not a man of words" (Ex. 4:10). But when it came to speaking to the Jewish people, the Torah records: "These are the words that Moses spoke."

Who May Be a Prophet?

In order to properly understand Moses' claim that he possessed inferior oratory skills, we need to examine a basic question regarding the nature of prophets and prophecy.

In the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides describes the prerequisite character traits and intellectual qualifications to be a prophet. He then writes:

"One who has perfected himself in all of these traits and is in perfect health – when he enters the Pardeis [i.e., when he studies esoteric wisdom] and is drawn to those lofty and abstract matters... immediately the prophetic spirit will come to him." (Yesodei HaTorah 7:2)

This description seems to indicate that prophecy is purely a function of one's moral and spiritual preparation. Once one has attained the necessary spiritual level, he automatically merits prophecy.

However, Maimonides later writes that those who strive to attain prophecy are called "the sons of prophets" (see 2 Kings 2:15). Despite their intense efforts, they are still not full-fledged prophets. "Even though they direct their minds, it is possible that the Shechinah will inspire them, and it is possible that it will not" (ibid. 7:5). This statement indicates that attaining prophecy is not dependent only upon one's initiative and efforts. Even those who have attained the appropriate spiritual level are not assured that they will receive prophecy.

How can we reconcile these two seemingly contradictory statements?

Natural or Supernatural?

Many aspects of the spiritual realm parallel the physical world. We find that the physical world is largely governed by set laws of nature and physics. Only on occasion does Divine providence intervene in the rule of nature. The same holds true for the hidden resources of the soul. There are set, general

rules that govern their functions. But there are also situations that go beyond the natural faculties of the soul.

We may thus rephrase our question as follows: is prophecy a naturally occurring spiritual talent for those who prepare themselves appropriately? Or does it fall under the category of the supernatural, dependent upon God's will at that time, when He chooses to perfect the world by way of prophetic message?

Ruach HaKodesh and Nevu'ah

To resolve this dilemma, we must distinguish between two types of prophecy. The first is an inner revelation in one's thoughts, called ruach hakodesh. This is naturally attained Divine knowledge, a result of the soul's nobility and its focus on lofty matters. This level of prophecy is a natural talent that God established within the soul.

There is, however, a second type of prophecy. This is nevu'ah, from the word niv, meaning 'expression' or 'utterance.' Nevu'ah is the consummation of the prophetic experience; prophecy goes beyond thought and is concretized in letters and words. This form of prophecy is not a natural faculty of the soul. It reflects a miraculous connection between the physical and spiritual realms, a supernatural phenomenon of Divine Will commanding the prophet to relay a specific message to the world.

We may now resolve the apparent contradiction in Maimonides' writings.

When he wrote that the prophet will automatically attain prophecy, Maimonides was referring to the prophetic insight of ruach hakodesh. From his description, it is clear that he is speaking about a prophecy experienced mentally:

"His thoughts are constantly attuned to the holy. They are bound under God's Throne, to grasp those holy and pure images, perceiving God's wisdom [in all aspects of creation]."

When, on the other hand, Maimonides spoke of nevu'ah, he wrote that even though the prophet directs his mind, he will not necessarily merit prophetic communion with God. This form of prophecy is dependent upon God's Will, and not on the soul's natural talents.

Moses' Mistake

Now we can better understand Moses' claim that he was not "a man of words." Moses was certainly aware of his stature as a prophet. Maimonides teaches that a prophet "recognizes that he is no longer as he once was; but rather that he has been elevated above the level of other wise individuals." Moses was aware of his spiritual level - but only as one worthy of ruach hakodesh, of a prophetic mental state. He assumed that the greater level of nevu'ah would be similarly recognizable by one who merited it. Since Moses did not sense this level of prophecy within himself, he declared that he was not a "man of words" - i.e., one meriting prophecy expressed in speech. Moses' reasoning, however, was flawed. The inner prophecy of thought is a natural talent of the soul and the result of the prophet's spiritual efforts; thus the prophet is aware that he merits ruach hakodesh. The external prophecy of nevu'ah, on the other hand, depends on God's Will, according to the dictates of Divine providence at that time. The first level is comparable to the laws of nature in the world, while the second is like supernatural miracles performed on special occasions. Thus nevu'ah does not reflect the inner qualities of the prophet's soul.

God's response to Moses is now clearer. "Who gave man a mouth? ... Who made him blind? Was it not I, the Lord?" (Ex. 4:11) The world has two sides, the natural and the supernatural. The mouth is part of the natural realm, whereas blindness is a special condition. Both, God told Moses, come from Me. Just as you attained the natural level of ruach hakodesh, so too, it is My will that you will be granted the supernatural level of nevu'ah.

The Prophetic Nature of Devarim

One final question: why is it that the Midrash only clarifies Moses' oratorical skills in the book of Deuteronomy? The answer to this question is to be found in the difference between the prophetic nature of Deuteronomy as opposed to the other books of Moses.

Regular nevu'ah occurs in this fashion: the prophet would first hear God's message, then the Divine Spirit would come over him, and he would relate what he had heard. The prophecy of Moses, however, was totally different. The Shechinah would "speak through his throat," even as he spoke to the people. Moses was merely a mouthpiece for the Divine Presence.

As a result, the first four books of the Pentateuch do not demonstrate Moses' oratory talents. The book of Deuteronomy, on the other hand, is a reflection of Moses' talents in the same way that the prophetic books of other prophets reflect their individual style of speech.

Were it not for Deuteronomy, we could have taken Moses' claim at face value and understood that he was literally "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue." But after reading the eloquent discourses of sefer Devarim, we realize that Moses was in fact referring to his prophetic abilities. Moses meant that he was unworthy of verbal nevu'ah. With regard to ordinary speech, however, Moses was only "heavy of mouth" in comparison to the King of the universe.

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*From: Chaim Shulman*

*Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski's 80th Yahrzeit is this Sunday 5 Av 5780. The following was an article written by my maternal grandfather Rav Michel Kossowsky zt"l, a nephew of Rav Chaim Ozer, who was at Rav Chaim Ozer's petira in Vilna in August of 1940.*

SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH OBSERVER 1960 (and reprinted in 1964)

#### **Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski**

(On his twentieth Yahrzeit, 5 Av 5700 - 5720)

By **Rabbi Dr. Michel Kossowsky**



[Rav Michel Kossowsky zt"l on left with Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski zt"l center]

ON FRIDAY morning, the 5th of Av, in the year 5700 (9th August, 1940), in a little summerhouse on the outskirts of the city of Vilna departed this life the last Rav of Vilna and the last in the line of "Chachmei Vilna" —

#### **HA'GAON REB CHAIM OZER GRODZINSKI.**

Dark clouds covered the horizon of Vilna Jewry, which was tense with foreboding. The city had only recently again changed its political regime - for the third time in ten months. When Polarta fell in September 1939, Vilna together with the whole of Eastern Poland, was occupied by the Russians and incorporated into the Soviet Union. That was part of the infamous friendship. pact between Hitler and Stalin who divided between themselves the wreckage of Poland.

A month later Russia let it be known that she had "donated" Vilna and its environs to the then independent and neutral Lithuanian Republic, as an expression of "true friendship". In return, however; she demanded militia bases in Lithuania. Thus Vilna became part of the free and sovereign Republic of Lithuania. The citizens of Vilna and particularly the Jewish population greeted this happy change in their fortunes with great rejoicing. Tens of thousands of refugees from the Soviet part of Poland risked their lives to smuggle across the newly-established and faintly-marked border, in order to find safety and political asylum in the freedom of Lithuanian democracy.

However, eight months later, in June 1940, a well-prepared Communist coup d'état took place, and Lithuania became a Communist Republic. Vilna again became Part of the Soviet Union and the N.K.V.D. (the dreaded Russian Secret Police) reoccupied their headquarters in Pohulanka Street.

The thousands of refugees from the former Russian territory were in a state of panic, and the rest of the Vilna population also lived in constant fear.

#### **A CENTRAL FIGURE**

In this general confusion and bewilderment, everyone's eyes instinctively turned to the central figure of Vilna Jewry, the Gaon Reb Chaim Ozer, who for half of a century was the spiritual leader and spokesman of world Jewry. The knowledge that Reb Chaim Ozer was here and was in contact with the rest of the world, gave confidence and a certain sense of security. For many years all had grown used to the idea that if any trouble happened they would go over to "the Rebbe", or, as others called him, "Reb Chaim Ozer", or; just "Chaim Leizer" as the broad masses of ordinary people used to refer to him endearingly, and he would give the right advice or find a way out.

Few knew how gravely ill the Gaon was already then, because, notwithstanding his failing health, he worked tirelessly. Dozens of people passed through his room daily and everyone came out with his request fulfilled as far as possible.

The war had created new complications and raised colossal problems, and Reb Chaim Ozer was the person around whom all those in need, individuals as well as institutions, grouped. He was the only contact with the free world, and with world Jewry.

#### **THE LAST MOMENTS**

A few weeks before his death, Reb Chaim Ozer moved to his summer residence (Datche) at the garden-suburb "Magistratzke Kolonie". The last few days he felt very weak and was confined to his bed. A silent fear gripped the members of his closer circle who realised the situation. The town did not know yet what the true position was.

At his death-bed, in the early hours of that Friday, except for the doctor and nurse, there were present also his Rebbetzin and the writer of this article. On the porch a few of his intimate Rabbinical friends were crying as they recited prayers.

The news of his death spread like wild fire and plunged Vilna Jewry into deep mourning. A sense of having been orphaned overtook all of them. Suddenly everyone felt lonely and forlorn in a stormy, perilous world. The tremendous impact which the news of his death had made was the greatest measure of the position which Reb Chaim Ozer had occupied in Jewry. Porters and cart-drivers together with Rabbis and Yeshiva students, learned people and "balebatim", as well as ordinary folk and the man in the street, all were utterly shocked and distressed.

The little summer house soon was overflowing with masses of people who were streaming in from town in an incessant procession. A meeting of Rabbis was hastily convened to work out the plan of the funeral. The body was taken back to his residence in town, in Zavalna Street and during that Saturday, the lamented "Shabbat Chazon", thousands of mourners passed through the house where the body lay, while minyanim changed uninterruptedly, during the day and the night, to recite psalms and appropriate prayers.

The gigantic funeral procession next morning was the greatest and also the last Jewish mass-demonstration which Vilna witnessed.

The fifty thousand people who followed the cortege included Rabbis from the whole of Lithuania, and the funeral orations which were delivered on the way and at the graveside, lasted almost the whole day.

Although the Communist authorities had prohibited demonstrations of this nature, they must have realised the strong feelings of the Jewish Community and did not hinder the funeral procession in any manner.

The People's Militia, with red armbands on their sleeves, accompanied the procession all along its mournful route and helped to keep order.

All the grief that had welled up in Jewish hearts at that time and the grave foreboding of the impending horror, were given vent in bitter lamentations at

the parting of their beloved leader who, from now on, would entreat before the Throne of the Almighty for the people whom he led and for whom he cared and on whose behalf he spoke during the glorious half century of his Rabbinate.

#### RABBINIC DYNASTY

Reb Chaim Ozer was born in the year 5623 (1863) in the little townlet of Ivie, near Vilna. His father, Rabbi David Shlomo Grodzensky (Z.L.) and his grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Leib Grodzenski (Z.L.) had occupied between them the Rabbinical post of that community for a period of over eighty years. Together with the fifteen years during which my late father, Rabbi Isaac Kossowsky (Z.L.) who was a son-in-law of Rabbi David Shlomo (Z.L.) was Rabbi in Ivie, this distinguished family formed a Rabbinic dynasty in the same community for the period of a full century without interruption.

#### THE ILUI

While he was still a young boy and studied under his father, the little Chaim Ozer became famous as a prodigy and was known in the whole district as the "ilui" (genius) of Ivie. At the age of twelve he went to the neighbouring town of Eishishok where at that time there was a "kibbutz" of young men who were renowned as "gdolim" in Torah.

When he became Bar-Mitzvah there, he was invited to deliver a discourse in accordance with the time-honoured custom. Instead, however, he offered to be examined in any place of the two classic Talmudic commentaries: "Ket-zot-Ha'choshen" and "Netivot Ha'mishpot."

The scholars of Eishishok were astounded to hear how the little Bar mitzvah boy recited by heart without stumbling and without stopping, whole pages of these two great works.

From Eishistok he went to the Yeshiva of Volozhin, where he studied under the Gaon Reb Chaim Brisker, (Z.L.) The deep friendship which developed between the great Master and the great disciple, continued throughout the many years during which they were both the spiritual leaders of world Jewry.

#### THE LEADER

The Ray of Vilna, Reb Elie Leizer (Z.L.) who was a son-in-law of the famous Gaon and saint Reb Yisroel Salanter (Z.L.) took the renowned "Ivrie ilui" as husband for his daughter. When Reb Elie Leizer passed away, a few years later, Reb Chaim Ozer was invited to accept the vacant post. He was then the youngest among the Rabbis of Vilna. Nevertheless, he soon became recognised as the spiritual leader of "Yerushalayim D'Lita", the city of scholars and writers, "lomdim" and "gaonim". This position he maintained until the last day of his life.

However exalted that position might have been, Reb Chaim Ozer was more than just the Rav of Vilna. He was also more than just a Gaon, however great that designation is. There was in him an exceptional combination of rare "gaonut", deep wisdom, love of Israel, saintliness and humility, an understanding of politics, a remarkable sense for communal activity, an inborn quality for leadership and organisation, lovable character and endless patience.

Little Wonder, therefore, that in a short time he became one of the chief leaders of Russian and world Jewry, although that period, before the first world war, was rich in great scholars much older than he.

The Rabbi who sought a reply to a difficult Halachic question and the businessman who needed advice in a complicated business matter, the communal worker who was worried about a serious communal problem and the Rosh Yeshiva who needed help for his Yeshiva, an ordinary Jew who was in need of assistance and the Yeshiva student who wanted to talk in learning all came to Reb Chaim Ozer's hospitable door and all were received with the same cheerful and encouraging smile.

He dealt with everybody at the same time and all found satisfaction in their quest.

Whoever had the privilege of witnessing a busy morning in Reb Chaim Ozer's home, will never forget that picture.

All the rooms of the spacious apartment were full of all kinds of people, local and from outside. Amongst them Reb Chaim Ozer moved about with

hasty little steps, radiating warmth and pleasantness all around him and talking with everybody at the same time.

Here he was engaged in a learned discussion with a group of Rabbis and at the same time he would be listening to the Talmudic discourse of a visiting Yeshiva Student; presently he was in consultation with communal and congregational leaders and yet found time to whisper advice to a troubled individual.

Next moment he was unobtrusively pressing a handful of money into the hand of a needy Jew and managed to dictate to his secretary a number of letters on various subjects in his succinct masterful Hebrew style.

Nobody felt slighted.

On the contrary, everyone had the impression that he received full attention and everyone was enchanted with Reb Chaim Ozer's Personal charm, his "gaonic" sense of humour - subtle and refined, his outstandingly quick grasp and phenomenal memory, which enabled him to grasp everything at the same time.

He said of himself that, until his very advanced age, he did not know what forgetting was.

Numerous stories are told about his exceptional memory. The following interesting episode is a characteristic example.

Reb Chaim Ozer had a notebook in which he kept a record of the many charitable funds which passed through his hands. One day this precious notebook got lost and all efforts to discover it were in vain, much to the distress of all members of the household.

Reb Chaim Ozer then sat down and reconstructed from memory all the complicated accounts which had occupied many pages. The final total was correct. Some time later the book was found and it then appeared that Reb Chaim Ozer did not even change the order of the various amounts and had almost photographically reproduced the whole book.

I remember an episode when I sat together with a group of Rabbis in Reb Chaim Ozer's house and, as usual, the conversation turned on some Talmudic subject. In the course of the discussion, Reb Chaim Ozer took out a book from the shelves and pointed out to us a certain reference, which explained the problem under debate. Closing the book, he remarked with a smile that he last saw this reference while still a young boy in his native Ivie. That had been fifty years before!

The way he remembered people was staggering. Persons who had not seen him for thirty years told me that the moment they entered his room, quite unexpectedly, he cheerfully got up to meet them, calling them by their first name as if he had parted with them only yesterday!

#### FATHER OF YESHIVOT

During the first world war, when he fled together with many thousands of other Jewish refugees into central Russia, he became a one-man relief organisation there. With the aid of American Relief Funds he set up a network of "Refugee Chedars" (Chedars or Talmud-Torahs for refugee children), and people's restaurants in dozens of towns where the refugees concentrated. The Yeshivot and their leaders as well as countless individuals were supported by him. He also exercised considerable political influence in those turbulent years which preceded the Russian Revolution.

In the period between the two world wars, Reb Chaim Ozer was considered the leader and spokesman of religious Jewry. He particularly devoted himself to the fostering of Torah-education and became literally the father of the Yeshivot.

Together with the "Chofetz-Chaim" (Z.L.) he founded the "Vaad HaYeshivot" in Vilna and helped to establish a wide network of preparatory Yeshivot (Yeshivot Ktanot) in towns and villages in Eastern Poland, Polesie and Volynia. At the same time he was the supreme authority and "Posek Achron" in all Halachic questions and his ruling was considered the authoritative Din.

Amidst the thousands of problems to which he had to turn his attention, he managed to publish the three volumes of his great work "Achiezer", a compilation of Responsa on various Talmudic topics in which his "gaonic"

erudition and sharpness of mind appear in all their glory. Unfortunately, a considerable portion of his writings still remained in manuscript.

Immediately after his death, initial arrangements were made for the publication of the remainder of his writings as well as of his letters which had an outstanding historic importance. His faithful secretary, Rav Alter Voronovsky, took up the project diligently. However, shortly thereafter came the Nazi invasion and with it the end of all plans.

The name of Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzenski (Z.L.) the Gaon of Vilna of our generation, is deeply engraved in the hearts of Torah-Jewry and his memory will live for generations after.

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Devarim (Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22)

How To React To Criticism

by **Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein**

Winston Churchill once wrote: "Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfils the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things."

In a recent behavioural study, titled: "Behavioral Obligation and Information Avoidance", a group of students watched a fake documentary about a serious disease called "TAA Deficiency". The students weren't informed that TAA Deficiency was fictional; instead, they were given the option of providing a cheek swab to assess their risk of developing the disease. Half the students were told that if they ever developed TAA Deficiency, then the treatment would involve a two-week course of pills. Of this group, 52% agreed to provide the diagnostic cheek swab. The other half of the students were told the treatment would require taking the pills for the rest of their lives. Just 21% of this group agreed to the swab.

The implication of the study is clear - people are resistant to feedback that may oblige them to do something difficult or unwelcome.

Criticism and words of rebuke are particularly difficult to deal with. Implicit in these is the message that we need to change our ways, to modify the way we act. And nobody likes to be told they're doing the wrong thing. We'll do anything rather than admit that. Rather than hear the raw truth, we'll curate perfect online identities, seeking affirmation from friends who often aren't even acquaintances - that we are accomplished, beautiful, morally upstanding, that our lives are perfect.

The problem is, our minds are wired to reject or deflect negative feedback. If there's something wrong with us, something that - if we were aware of it - could push us to improve ourselves or address the problem directly, we'd rather not know about it.

This is unfortunate, because if it comes from the right place - if it's constructive, and done in the right way, at the right time - criticism can be enormously powerful in driving positive personal change and advancing human achievement.

At the moment, we are immersed in the "Three Weeks" of national mourning. It is the time when we remember the destruction of the two Temples and the exile of our people. This period climaxes on the 9th day of Av - Tisha b'Av - when we undertake the only 25-hour fast of the year besides Yom Kippur. Fasting is not normally associated with mourning. On the contrary, a person who is sitting shiva is not supposed to fast - so why do we fast on this day? The Rambam (Laws of Fasts 5:1) says we fast on days of national mourning "in order to awaken the hearts [of people], to open the paths of repentance and to be a remembrance of our misdeeds and those of our fathers, which are like ours now ..." From the Rambam it is clear that the purpose of fasting is to catalyse the process of reflection, introspection and repentance.

Interestingly, fasting is not only the culmination of the Three Weeks - we also kick off this period with a fast day, the Fast of Tammuz. We see that

repentance, the process of mending our destructive habits, returning to a state of moral and spiritual purity, is an instrumental part of the Three Weeks.

Viewed in this light, Tisha b'Av and the Three Weeks are a time of national reawakening. And, crucially, it's a national reawakening sparked by national rebuke and criticism. The Torah portion we read this week is Devarim, in which Moshe delivers his final address to the nation before passing. He begins this speech not with words of encouragement or affirmation, but, surprisingly, with words of reproof. We continue in this vein by reading Chapter 1 of Isaiah, in which the criticism and rebuke comes on even stronger. The Prophet Isaiah, who lived during the time when the First Temple stood, delivers a stinging critique of the people of his generation, calling on them to repent and return to God.

It's no coincidence that these are the Torah passages we read before Tisha b'Av every year, because they are a reminder that this is a period not just of mourning, but of national rebuke - the Three Weeks are a call to action in which we are reminded where we have strayed as a nation, and shaken from our complacency. In particular, we reflect on, and try to correct, the sin which caused the destruction of the Second Temple and the ensuing exile - divisiveness and baseless hatred between Jews.

Being able to hear criticism is crucial to the repentance process. The Rambam lists 24 traits which impede teshuva, and among them is hatred of rebuke. When we bring ourselves low through poor decisions and negative patterns of behaviour, rebuke and criticism can be decisive in arresting the slide and getting our lives back on an upward trajectory. This was the role the prophets performed throughout the ages; this was Moshe's focus during his last days; and as the Rambam points out, this is an important task of any spiritual leader to this day - to be the voice of conscience, the voice guiding us back to the good.

But, what lies at the heart of the idea of rebuke and reproof? What lies at the heart of the process of teshuva - of repentance? Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz says it is all about guiding us back to the truth. In life, we can make moral mistakes, and those mistakes can permeate our actions, and indeed our entire way of life. The process of going through the experience of reproof and then repentance is a process of returning to the truth. Reproof - and again, it needs to come from the right place, from a place of care and concern - can help us snap back to reality. It can begin breaking the bonds between our misdeeds and our pure, essential selves, and guide us back to truth.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz brings a fascinating Midrash demonstrating that rebuke is about guiding a person back to the truth, back to reality. The Midrash says when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he rebuked them for the way they had treated him all those years before, and the brothers were in turmoil and unable to respond. The problem is, nowhere in the text did Joseph directly rebuke his brothers for what they did to him. He merely said: "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?"

Rav Shmuelevitz explains the rebuke is contained in the simple words: "I am Joseph." Rebuke is about reconnecting us to the truth. He was pointing out to them that their lives had been based on a terrible mistake. When Joseph had related his dreams to them many years before about how they would one day bow down before him, the brothers felt threatened. According to Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, their concern was that Joseph would oppress them and lord over them, and they therefore perceived him as a threat to the family. To protect the family, they sold him into slavery in Egypt, separating him from his father, and causing untold grief. But, when Joseph says: "I am Joseph", he demonstrates to them that their fears were unfounded, because now indeed he does have power over them, and rather than using that power in a destructive fashion, he is in fact using it to help them - to rescue them from famine, to save the family. The rebuke reconnects the brothers to the truth. It is delivered quietly and subtly, but not any less powerfully. And the brothers' stunned silence confirms that, as they reflect on the weight of their actions.

The Three Weeks and Tisha b'Av are likewise a time to quietly and humbly reflect on our mistakes - on where we have fallen short of our potential as individuals and as a nation - and to use that as a springboard for turning things around. It is particularly a time to reflect on how we, as a nation, can find each other in love, respect and unity. This Shabbat - the Shabbat right before Tisha b'Av - is called Shabbat Chazon, "The Shabbat of Vision". The name comes from the opening words of the passage we read from the Book of Prophets this Shabbat: "Isaiah's Vision". Rav Hirsch says the word for vision, chazon, is derived from three other words, meaning "to divide", "to penetrate", and "chest". He explains that if you combine all three of these words, chazon signifies penetrating into the heart of a person - examining what lies beneath the surface, undertaking deep introspection so we can figure out where we are going wrong, and how we can improve. This is the work of Tisha b'Av and the Three Weeks. We don't just go through the motions of fasting, we don't just undertake a series of empty rituals. We ponder the meaning of our existence, we ponder the shape of our lives, and we specifically ponder the spiritual causes of the destruction of the Temple and ensuing exile. And we do so not alone, but together, as a nation. This is a time of national repentance, when we draw on the energy of being part of the Jewish people, and of our shared national destiny. It's a time to reflect on where we have come from as a nation and what we can do to move forward together. Absorbing criticism is never easy for anyone. But, when we read those strong words of Moses and Isaiah this Shabbat, let's remember the power of rebuke to kickstart that journey.

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from: Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky <rmk@torah.org>  
reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org  
to: drasha@torah.org  
date: Jul 23, 2020, 2:12 PM  
subject: Drasha - The Usual Suspects

Drasha By **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya  
Parshas Devarim

The Usual Suspects

This week's portion discusses an array of issues, among them entering and conquering the land of Canaan, which was to occur shortly. The lands that the Israelites passed on their quest to conquer Canaan were inhabited by various tribes and nations: some of them Israel was allowed to conquer, while other lands were forbidden.

Even while nearing Canaan, there were nations the Israelites were warned not to provoke or attack.

Moshe tells the people, "Hashem said to me, 'You shall not distress Moab, and you shall not provoke war with them, for I shall not give you an inheritance from their land. For to the children of Lot have I given Ar as an inheritance. The Emim dwelled there previously, a great and populous people, and tall as the giants. They, too, were considered Rephaim, like the giants; and the Moabites called them Emim.'" (Deuteronomy 2:10-11). There seems to be an important discussion about the land of the Giants.

Moshe refers to the Emim, who live in the land that was allocated to Avraham's nephew Lot. The verse seems to extend itself by explaining that the people living there are not Rephaim, rather they are Emim, who are often referred to as Rephaim, because they have Rephaim-like attributes.

However, Moshe explains to his people that those giants are not really Rephaim, rather they are actually Emim. Obviously, this whole identification process is a bit confusing. Rashi helps us understand the issue. "You might think that this is the land of the Rephaim which I gave (promised) to Abraham (Gen:15:20), because the Emim, who are Rephaim, dwelt there formerly (and they are one of the seven clans whose land you were to possess), but this is not that land, because those Rephaim I drove out from before the children of Lot and settled these in their stead" cf. Rashi on Deut. 3:13.

Rashi explains that though the land of the Rephaim was promised to Abraham, and as such should be rightfully inherited by the Jews, the land of Ar was not promised to Abraham. Ar was promised to Lot. If the Children of Israel expected to inherit Ar based on the fact that giants who were called Rephaim live there, Moshe corrects their misunderstanding. "You see," explain the commentaries, "these giants are really not the Rephaim variety of giants. They are the Emim variety. The original Rephaim were long gone and replaced. The Jews were promised the land of the Rephaim and not of Emim, who both resemble and are referred to as Rephaim."

Truth be told, all this seemingly irrelevant classification must have relevance to us students of the Torah. Why, otherwise, would the Torah spend so much time and verbiage on it? Why would it warn us not to confuse the Emim with Rephaim? It should just say, "Keep out of Ar, it goes to Lot!"

This story is true, I altered the details to spare the concerned.

Many years ago, during an extreme heat wave, a certain food manufacturer was cited by the Department of Health and the USDA for having an infestation of a particular species of a moth in its manufacturing facility. Immediately, the board of directors sent its representatives to inspect the factory as well. After all, having insects in the plant were very bad for business. Not only could the government shut them down, they were a health hazard as well! A team of inspectors came to the plant to see how they should address the problem.

While going through the factory, a Vice-President popped the lid off a container of raw nuts. Like a tornado rising, a swarm of insects emerged from the bin. Shocked and dismayed, he called over one of the workers. "Do you see this?" he shouted. "Look at these flies!"

"Don't worry, sir," smiled the worker. "Those ain't the government flies. Those are the regular flies!"

Often we view adversaries in one fell swoop. An enemy is an enemy is an enemy. A giant is a giant is a giant.

Perhaps the Torah painstakingly teaches us that every nation has an accounting. Some the Israelites were allowed to inherit. Some they were allowed to attack. Others they were to avoid. Still others the Israelites were allowed to confront and not physically harm.

As Jews, we must be careful not confuse the Emim and the Rephaim, the Edomites with the Ammonites, or the Sichons, or the Ogs or even the icebergs with the Greenbergs. We may not want to see differences in a world that wants to see black and white. But the Torah teaches us this week that no two nations are exactly the same. And no matter how tall they may appear, no two giants are alike.

Good Shabbos

This week's Drasha / Faxhomily is Dedicated by the Hirsch & Friedman Families, in memory of Henry Hirsch. The Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation are the prime supporters of Faxhomily World-Wide Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc. If you enjoy the weekly Drasha, now you can receive the best of Drasha in book form!

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Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org>

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from: Rabbi Yochanan Zweig <genesis@torah.org>

reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org

to: rabbizweig@torah.org

date: Jul 23, 2020, 11:55 PM

Rabbi Zweig on the Parsha

By **Rabbi Yochanan Zweig**

Parshas Devarim

That's Not What Friends Are For

The Talmud identifies the episode of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza as the incident which precipitated the destruction of Jerusalem. An individual who made a banquet sent an attendant to invite his friend Kamtza. However, the attendant erred, inviting Bar Kamtza instead. When the host saw Bar Kamtza sitting amongst the guests at his banquet, he proclaimed “Let see that man is the enemy of that man. What are you doing here?” He subsequently proceeded to evict Bar Kamtza. The Talmud relates that to avenge his public humiliation, Bar Kamtza went to the Roman authorities and slandered the Jews, which ultimately resulted in the tragic destruction of Jerusalem{1}. The aforementioned narrative is an illustration of the fact that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed as a result of “sinas chinam” – “baseless hatred{2}.” What is baseless hatred? Unless a person has psychopathic tendencies, why would he hate for no reason?

The host’s reaction, “Let see that man is the enemy of that man” requires further elaboration. The general interpretation of this passage is that Bar Kamtza is the host’s enemy. Why would the host refer to himself in the third person, as “that man”? Furthermore, if this is an example of baseless hatred, the host’s reaction should be visceral; why does he speak in an analytical tone, “Let see”? Finally, why is it Kamtza and Bar Kamtza who are denoted as being responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem? Should not the host be held accountable rather than Kamtza?

A person usually does not harbor feelings of hatred for another human being unless he perceives that that individual has either harmed him or possesses something which he deserves. However, there is an exception to this norm which has unfortunately divided Jewish communities throughout the world from the time of their inception; that is, the perception that a person’s friends may not associate with his enemies, and for them to do so would be considered betrayal. A person with such a perception expects his friends to feel the same disdain for his enemies as he does, to hate his enemies simply because he does; this is “sinas chinam” – “baseless hatred”.

The original dispute in the Talmud was between Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, as indicated by the host’s reaction “Let see that man (Bar Kamtza) is an enemy of that man (Kamtza)”; the host is not referring to himself in the third person, rather he is referring to his friend Kamtza. Therefore, the host does not react emotionally, but with the intellectual understanding of a person who maintains the perception that since Bar Kamtza is an enemy of his friend Kamtza, he too should hate Bar Kamtza. It is for this reason that the Talmud states that Jerusalem was destroyed because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza; it was their dispute coupled with Kamtza’s insistence that his friends not associate with Bar Kamtza which precipitated the host’s sinas chinam.

1.Gittin 55b

2.Yoma 9b

It’s Your Responsibility Too

“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Yisroel...”(1:1)

Sefer Devarim begins with Bnei Yisroel at the threshold of Eretz Yisroel.

The entire Sefer spans the last five weeks of Moshe’s life and records the rebuke that Moshe gave to Bnei Yisroel prior to his death. Parshas Devarim enumerates a list of places where Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisroel{1}. The Midrash notes that there is no historical basis upon which to substantiate the existence of these places, rather their names are veiled allusions to all of the transgressions perpetrated by Bnei Yisroel while they were in the desert{2}. Rashi comments that Moshe only alluded to the transgressions, rather than mentioning them explicitly because of the dignity of Bnei Yisroel{3}.

Throughout the earlier sections of the Torah we find Bnei Yisroel harshly castigated for these inappropriate actions and their transgressions magnified. Why is this rebuke different than those delivered in earlier parshios?

The verse emphasizes that Moshe spoke “to the entire nation of Israel” – “el Kol Yisroel{4}.” Rashi cites the Sifri who explains that everyone had to be present, for if Moshe had only rebuked some of Bnei Yisroel, those who were not present would have claimed that had they been there, they would have been able to defend themselves from Moshe’s accusations. Therefore, it

was necessary for the entire Bnei Yisroel to be present, so that no one could exclude himself from Moshe’s critique{5}. Again we find an element of this rebuke which does not exist in any prior castigation.

In order to explain the aforementioned difficulty, it is first necessary to address another problem. The Midrash interprets the names of the places where Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisroel as an allusion to their sins. Among the sins recorded are the complaints which occurred immediately after leaving Egypt, the spies’ evil speech, the golden calf, dissatisfaction with the manna, and Korach’s rebellion. Almost all of these transgressions were not committed by the people who stood before Moshe, rather by the “dor hamidbar”, the generation of people in the desert who were no longer living. Why did Moshe castigate the people for the sins of the earlier generation? According to Torah law, an individual can be held accountable for the sins of his parents only if he continues in their evil path. If he does not follow in the evil ways of his parents, he is not held accountable for their behavior{6}. However, this law is only true on an individual level. On a national level, responsibility for the transgressions of earlier generations is always borne by the citizens of the nation, even if the citizens have no connection to the misdeeds of their ancestors. The reason for this is that a citizen of a nation is part of the same constant entity as that to which his predecessors belonged. He is a shareholder in the unchanging corporate entity which defines the nation, and as such, is responsible for any transgressions or atrocities perpetrated by the national entity. Culpability is not dependent upon whether or not the individual was involved in the misdeed.

Moshe was teaching the generation entering Eretz Yisroel that it was their responsibility to rectify the damage caused by their predecessors. They could not disassociate themselves from the actions of their ancestors by claiming that they were not pursuing the misdeeds of the earlier generations. Moshe was addressing them as the inheritors of the corporate entity of Israel, not as the children of the generation that left Egypt. Consequently, since they were not the perpetrators of these acts, they were not subject to the same harsh castigation as the earlier generation, and these acts were not magnified as they were in earlier sections of the Torah which addressed the perpetrators directly.

It is specifically this form of rebuke which required the presence of the entire nation. Since they did not perpetuate the acts for which Moshe was criticizing them, they could have had the misconception that as long as they themselves did not engage in the same grievous behavior, they could not be held accountable for those sins. Therefore, Moshe required that all of Bnei Yisroel be present so that he could explain to them that their culpability stemmed from their national responsibility, and as such, they were required to rectify the wrongdoings of their ancestors.

1.1:1 2.Avos D’Rav Nosson 34:1 3.1:1 4.Ibid 5.Ibid 6.Berachos 7a, Rashi Shemos 34:7

[http://torahweb.org/author/rsch\\_dt\\_special.html](http://torahweb.org/author/rsch_dt_special.html)

**Piskei Halacha on Coronavirus Shaylas from Rav Hershel Schachter shlita**

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Should the Beis Hamikdash not be rebuilt, we will fast on Shiva Asar B’Tamuz. As a result of the ongoing danger of Coronavirus, there are many who are still uncomfortable davening indoors, and have been following the medical recommendation to convene in outdoor venues. Although davening with a minyan has great value, it does not take precedence over safety, or over the importance of fasting on Shiva Asar B’Tamuz. As there is a clear concern of dehydration when spending time outdoors in the hot summer months, if one feels that as a result of their davening outdoors they may be required to drink on Shiva Asar B’Tamuz, it would be best to daven at home without a minyan. In areas where the heat is significant, it would be best not to conduct minyanim at all under these conditions, as they would place



people in a position of either endangering their health or of compromising the fast.

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The period of mourning beginning on Shiva Asar B'Tamuz (The Three Weeks), is patterned off of the classical laws of Avelius when mourning a deceased parent. When mourning the loss of a parent, we have a custom to abstain from listening to joyful music. However, one would be allowed to listen to music if they felt it was needed to help assuage their personal feelings of anxiety or depression. At the current time due to the ongoing pandemic, the entire world is in a state of uncertainty and concern.

One who feels compelled to listen to music in order to help alleviate their tension or pressure would be

allowed to do so. This would especially apply to Erev Shabbos, when listening to music would create a

positive frame of mind in anticipation of Shabbos.

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Ashkenazic custom is to refrain from laundering clothing from Rosh Chodesh Av through Tisha B'Av (the Nine Days). A medical professional or anyone else who is concerned about the spread of infection on their clothing, may launder their clothing even during this time period.

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There are many communities who have been curtailing their tefillah b'tzibur in order to limit the amount of potential exposure between participants. On Tisha B'Av, they may daven maariv and shachris b'tzibur and then continue as a community with the recitation of Eicha and Kinnot via zoom in each individual home.

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Due to the need for social distancing during the current pandemic, there is a concern about adequate spacing in shuls for the Yamim Noraim. Minyanim will probably have to abbreviate the davening in order to accommodate the many who will be in need of an indoor space to daven. If need be, all of the Piyutim can be deleted as well as some of the extra shofar blowing that we have the custom to do throughout the davening. (The basic shofar blasts are the ones after maftir and those included in the chazaras Hashatz). Should there be a need to abbreviate the Pesukei D'zimra as well, one must still make sure that it is done based on the rules of priority that govern the Pesukei D'zimra. Either way, if the congregation will be convening after reciting Pesukei D'zimra on their own, they cannot begin from "Hamelech" or "Shochen Ad" but rather from Nishmas which is considered the beginning of the paragraph.

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B'Inyanei Tefilah (in Hebrew) - at

<http://torahweb.org/torah/docs/rsch/RavSchachter-Corona-42-July-12-2020.pdf>

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It is Rabbinically forbidden to wash oneself with either hot or cold water on Tisha B'Av, unless it is for the purpose of removing dirt from one's body (which includes washing hands when waking up in the morning). Individuals who have been vigilant in following the updated CDC recommendations would be allowed to wash or sanitize their hands on Tisha B'Av as they otherwise would. There is no allowance for those who have disregarded the CDC recommendations as this would be categorized as rechitzah which is Rabbinically prohibited on Tisha B'Av.

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from: Rabbi Berel Wein <genesis@torah.org>

reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org

to: rabbiwein@torah.org

date: Jul 22, 2020, 6:22 PM

subject: **Rabbi Wein - A Lasting Edifice**

Parshas Devarim

A Lasting Edifice

Our great teacher Moshe begins his final oration to the Jewish people in this week's Torah portion. He reviews for them the history of his stewardship of the Jewish people over the past 40 years. He recounts the miracles and tragedies that befell the Jewish people, from the Exodus from Egypt until the very day that they now stand at the banks of the river Jordan preparing to enter the land of Israel. It is a very detailed oration. Apparently, all the major events and issues, the highs and lows of the sojourn of Israel in the desert of Sinai, are remembered and recounted. He spares no detail or criticism as to what went wrong, and at the conclusion of this book, his love for the Jewish people is fully on exhibition by the manifold blessings that he bestows upon them.

Moshe mentions the heroes that arose to champion the cause of Torah and the Jewish people at moments of crisis, and he also tells us of those who fell short, i.e. how their acts of commission or omission led the Jewish people astray. He points out that heavenly guidance nurtured the Jewish people during this entire long span and assures them that the Creator will not abandon them in the future. But he also says that the Creator will hold them responsible for their behavior and their loyalty to Torah. What is striking to me is that Moshe omits any mention regarding the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle from his recollection of the history of the Jewish people in Sinai. Yet, in the text of the holy Torah itself, a great deal of space and detail is devoted to this subject. All the commentators are hard-pressed to understand why many eternal commandments are merely mentioned or hinted at, while the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle occupies a great deal of space and detail.

Though I have not found many Torah commentaries that discuss this omission, I have myself have thought about it at some length. I think that Moshe is communicating to us a subtle but vital lesson that will enable the Jewish people to survive national loss and destruction, exile and dispersion, and yet be able to rebuild itself physically and spiritually. Moshe is teaching us that all physical structures, though they are the holiest of all human endeavors endowed with godly spirit, so to speak, they are nevertheless only temporary.

The Mishkan/Tabernacle lasted for hundreds of years in the desert and at Shilo in the land of Israel, but it eventually disappeared. The First Temple stood for 410 years but it too became only ruins. The Second Temple, which Herod rebuilt in enormous splendor and was one of the wonders of the ancient world, stood for 420 years. But it also was destroyed and disappeared. It is not the physical structure of buildings that has preserved the Jewish people until our very day. It is, rather, the Torah, its values and commandments, its worldview and systems of life that have enabled the Jewish people to survive and eventually prosper and rebuild themselves. It is no accident that the majority of Jewish scholars follow the opinion that the third Temple will not be built by human beings, because it has to be eternal, and all human construction, no matter how grand, noble or lofty still remains only a temporary structure. Moshe, in his oration, speaks not only to his generation but to all later generations of the Jewish people. He does not dwell on physical structures which are always subject to ruin and replacement, but on the spiritual greatness of the eternal Torah that the Lord has bestowed upon the Jewish people.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael <parsha@torahinaction.com>

subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

**Shema Yisrael Torah Network**

**Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Devarim**

**פרשת דברים תש"פ**

**ויחי בארבעים שנה... דבר משה אל בני ישראל**

**It was in the fortieth year... when Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisrael. (1:3)**

*Rashi* comments, “This teaches us that Moshe *Rabbeinu* did not rebuke them until immediately before his death.” *Rashi* continues that Moshe derived this from Yaakov *Avinu*, who also waited until he was on his deathbed to rebuke his sons. Yaakov said, “Reuven, my son, why did I not rebuke you earlier? It was so that you should not leave me and join up with Eisav, my brother.” This comment begs elucidation. Reuven was a holy person who, for the slightest vestige of sin, sat in sackcloth and fasted for a lengthy period of time. To say that rebuke would drive him to leave the *Shivtei Kah*, tribes of Hashem, and join Eisav, his uncle, is to suggest that he was quite far from virtuous. Furthermore, if Yaakov believed that rebuke could generate such a negative reaction from Reuven, can we even begin to imagine the negative effect it would have on us?

To have a better perspective concerning the spiritual descent that a degrading experience can catalyze, we turn to *Chazal*, *Chagigah* 5b: “*Rebbi* (Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi*) was holding a *Kinos*, Book of Lamentations, in his hand. He read it. When he reached the *pasuk*, ‘He has thrown *Yisrael* from the Heavens to the earth,’ it (the Book of *Eichah*) fell from his hand. He exclaimed, ‘Indeed (they have fallen), *m’eigra ramah l’birah amikta*, from a high roof to a deep pit.’ What is it that *Rebbi* saw in the falling book that illuminated his understanding of the *pasuk*? *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*, explains that he realized that the book’s place in his hand or on the floor was irrelevant to its condition. Where the book was situated was not the issue, but rather, how it arrived there. It was the fall that damaged the book. (Being on the floor did not damage it – the fall did.) Likewise, the tragedy of *Klal Yisrael* is not where they are now in *galus*, exile; rather, it is the downfall and shock of the abrupt decline, “from on high to down low,” that battered them terribly. “He has thrown (*Yisrael*) from the Heavens to the earth.” The change of location from Heaven to earth did not impact *Klal Yisrael* as profoundly as much as the fall itself.

Coping with adversity, especially if it is sudden, can have a devastating transformative effect on a person. The tribe of Dan rejected Shlomis bas Divri’s son, and, when no one supported him, he blasphemed. In one split second he lost his worlds: this world; and the World-to-Come. He could not handle the fall. The Jewish People did not react much better when Moshe *Rabbeinu* (according to their erroneous calculation) was late in returning from Heaven. When the *Satan* depicted for them an image of Moshe on his deathbed being transported by angels, they lost it. Their spiritual descent resulted in the Golden Calf, for which we are still paying to this very day.

We all confront situations that can – and do – engender a spiritual descent. Some can succumb to a free-fall and have great difficulty returning. Others fight every step of the way, grasping at anything they can, to prevent their fall from causing serious, lasting damage. A person must be constantly on guard when he confronts a challenge, a period of adversity, lest he be caught off guard and edge too close to the precipice. The plunge is far more damaging than where one lands. One can always climb back up – unless – the fall in and of itself has caused him to lose his nerve, to be deprived of his self-control. Once his presence of mind has been impugned, he will have neither the desire nor the willpower to climb back up and return to his original spiritual status. A spiritual wound requires time to heal. We must give the person who has fallen time – support, comfort – and encouragement. To turn our back on him is to encourage spiritual suicide. It is all about time, patience and perseverance.

*Horav Sholom, zl*, of Probisht (Father of *Horav* Yisrael Rizhiner) was wont to say, “When a garment becomes soiled with mud and one hurries to clean it (while the mud is still moist), he will cause the stain to soak deeper, as it becomes absorbed in the fibers of the cloth. Rather, he should wait until the mud becomes completely dry, and then, with light rubbing it will all come off without leaving a mark.” People are not much different. Give them time and support – they will return – as long as they know that they are wanted.

תתקרבון אלי כלכם ותאמרו נשלחה אנשים לפנינו ויהפרי לנו את הארץ  
**All of you approached me and said, “Let us send men ahead of us, and let them spy out the land.” (1:22)**

The *chet ha’meraglim*, sin of the spies, is recorded in the annals of our nation’s history as one of its most egregious sins. It was the precursor of what became our national day of mourning, *Tishah B’Av*. The ring leaders received their due punishment immediately. The rest of the nation, which capitulated to their self-imposed anxiety, saw their punishment carried out over the next thirty-eight years as they perished in the wilderness. What aggravates the sin most is that the spies were all men of repute, distinguished Torah leaders and princes of their individual tribes. How did such spiritual giants fall so low, from a spiritual zenith to such a nadir of depravity, that they lost their portion in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come?

*Horav Mordechai Schwab, zl*, quotes *Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl*, who quoted his *Rebbe*, the *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, that any question concerning taking action, undertaking an endeavor, attempting to understand what is taking place in his life, whether it is a question that is spiritual or physical/material in nature, one should turn to the Heavenly Throne and listen to what Hashem has to say. Understandably, this is a metaphor for the Torah, for Hashem and the Torah are one. In other words: the answer/explanation to all one’s issues and questions are to be found in the Torah. To put it in every-day terms: consult a *tzaddik*, righteous person, who is well versed in the Torah and seek his guidance. Everyone should have a *rebbe*, for a *rebbe* is one’s connection to Heaven. His *rebbe* is the conduit for Hashem’s Heavenly guidance on earth.

*Rav Schwab* sums it up succinctly. One who seeks to follow the will of Hashem, to serve the Almighty with a complete and perfect heart, must first determine the *ratzon*, will, of Hashem. The individual who first decides to act on his own, without turning to and asking for rabbinic/Torah guidance, is no longer able to listen properly with a captive ear, since his personal, vested interests stand in the way. It is similar to seeking guidance once one’s mind is already made up. He does not want advice. He wants a blessing that will coincide with his preconceived decision. A Jew’s goal must be to live *chaim birtzonon*, life in accordance to Hashem’s will. One who lives according to Hashem’s will never suffers from life’s ambiguities, because his trust in Hashem enables him to rise above them with the knowledge that this is what Hashem wants; this is what He asks of us. We abide by His will.

A young *ben Torah* was growing spiritually, both in his erudition and *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven. He was on his way to achieving an enviable level of spiritual integrity. He married a wonderful, young, like-minded woman, and together they set their minds towards establishing and building a *bayis ne’eman b’Yisrael*, a home true to Hashem and His dictates. Then tragedy struck when their oldest child, a sweet girl of three years old, became terminally ill. Back and forth went the rollercoaster of hope and depression. Treatment, remission, treatment. *Tzedakah*, charity; *tefillah*, prayer; *teshuvah*, repentance; visiting *tzaddikim*, holy men, to petition their blessings, torrents of tears storming the Heavens – all were heard; the answer, however, was “no.” The young child returned her pure soul to its Source.

During the *shivah*, seven-day-period of mourning, the young parents stoically sat on the ground and spoke with the many visitors who had come to comfort them. One *rav*, who was exceptionally close with the father, asked, “How were you able to maintain your emotional stability, as well as your spiritual devotion amid the rollercoaster of pain, then hope, just to have it shattered by fear and resignation?” The father replied, “I had one very low moment during which I was about to throw in the towel and give up on everything, when I met a Jew leaving the hospital who took one look at my face and asked, ‘What is wrong?’ I told him. He said, ‘Let me share my story with you.’

“One of my sons was gravitating away from religious observance. I turned to a *Rosh Yeshivah* who is very successful in bringing back these lost souls. He spent much time and expended even more energy to convince my son finally to return to the *Yiddishkeit* in which he was raised. He saw the light and became a firm, committed *maamin*, believer in Hashem. He married a young woman who was also a *baalas teshuvah*, penitent, and they moved to

*Tzfas*. Within a few years, they became the parents of two healthy children. When their third child was born, the little boy displayed physical signs that all was not right. The doctors placed the infant into the neonatal intensive care unit and attempted to save his life with all the tools of modern science. “The parents poured out their hearts to Hashem, Who, on the seventh day of the infant’s life, brought him Home to Him. The *halachah* states that, for a Jew to arise from *Techiyas Ha’Meisim*, Resurrection of the Dead, he must have a *bris*, be circumcised. Thus, prior to the infant’s burial, he had to have a *bris*. The *mohel*, circumciser, performed the ritual at the cemetery, after which my son was asked, ‘What name are you giving your son?’ He thought for a moment, and, with tears streaming down his face, declared, ‘I want to name him *Ratzon Hashem*.’ This is the name that symbolizes one’s willingness to accept Hashem’s decree regardless of its difficulty to understand. If this is the will of Hashem, I accept it with love!’ That man’s story guided us through our travail.”

Now that we have digressed and talked about a *rebbe*’s guidance, and the Jew’s willingness to accept what he is served throughout life as being the will of Hashem, we return to our original question, “Where did the *meraglim*, spies, go wrong?”

*Rav Schwab* explains that despite the spiritual plane which each of the *meraglim* achieved, *Moshe Rabbeinu* was still the *gadol hador*, the Torah giant of the generation. They should have consulted with him; they should have asked him, “What is the *ratzon Hashem*?” He was their quintessential *Rebbe*. They should have turned to him for guidance and inspiration. They did not, and, as a result, we observe *Tishah B’Av*. One added note: One may have a *rebbe* from whom he derives knowledge, but if the *rebbe* is nothing more than the fountain from which the student’s knowledge is derived – but otherwise, there is no relationship – he is not a student. If a *rebbe*/student relationship exists without such a bond, the student will go off on his own whenever the opportunity presents itself – as it did when the *meraglim* buckled under pressure.

*Ri Mikorvil* (quoted by *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz*, *zl*) rules that while one must interrupt his Torah study for the sake of burying the dead, he may not do so if it means interrupting his study with his *rebbe*. If he does so, it is considered as if he shed *blood*. The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that while one may attain knowledge through his own learning, he has no path to grow and develop if he is not in communion with his *rebbe*. Therefore, the time he takes from the *rebbe/talmid* relationship is time of spiritual growth and development, thus precluding the student from achieving his true nature and magnitude. This is similar to shedding blood.

In order for a *talmid* to develop this relationship and benefit from it, he must have a profound perception of who his *rebbe* is – as a person in his own right and vis-à-vis his *talmid*. He must see his *rebbe* as a mentor who guides him in this world, affording him an opportunity to merit a place in the World to Come. In other words, he must appreciate his *rebbe*. I may add that this bond is reciprocal. Just as a pupil cannot really survive without his *rebbe*, so too, would the *rebbe* be hard-pressed to exist without his student. They are each indispensable to one another.

*Horav Shlomo Freifeld*, *zl*, a *Rosh Yeshivah* who excelled as a *rebbe*, would say, “The most honest gauge of a *talmid*’s success is not how much he has learned or how he behaves; it is the *amitus*, authenticity, of his relationship with his *rebbe*.” He understood that the *rebbe/talmid* relationship is sacrosanct; without a *rebbe*, one is not connected to the *mesorah*, tradition, chain of transmission of the Torah from generation to generation, from *rebbe* to *talmid*. The following vignette underscores this idea.

A new *bachur*, student, arrived at the *yeshivah* (Shaar Yashuv), and *Rav Shlomo* began to learn with him privately. Every morning following *Shacharis*, the morning service, they would learn *Mishnayos Meseches Zevachim* which deals with the intricacies of the ritual sacrifices offered in the *Bais Hamikdash*. After a few months, the student had become proficient in the *Mishnayos*. Nonetheless, *Rav Shlomo* continued to learn. This troubled the *bachur*, because he felt the *Rosh Yeshivah*’s time was valuable

and could be put to better use by his learning with a student whose background was deficient. He asked *Rav Shlomo*, “Why does *Rebbe* not spend his personal time with those *bachurim* who could use a bit more instruction in their lessons?”

*Rav Shlomo*’s response is classic. “I have high hopes for you, but until we have a personal relationship, you are not my *talmid* – and if you are not a *talmid*, you will not grow!”

Another classic, which every *rebbe* should savor. A secular Jew once visited and found the *Rosh Yeshivah* surrounded by *talmidim* (which was common). “Are they your students?” he asked. “No” was his reply, “they are my partners.”

*Chazal* (*Moed Kattan* 17a) quotes a criterion as the barometer for determining a *talmid*’s appreciation of his *rebbe*: “If (in your eyes) the *rebbe* is like a Ministering Angel, then learn Torah from him.” Simply, this means the student must be in awe of his *rebbe*. *Horav Shmuel Rosenberg*, *zl*, *Rav* of Undsdorf, explained this practically. *Chazal* teach that a *malach*, angel, does not perform more than one mission at a time, so that he be completely focused on and committed to his Heavenly mission (so to speak). Likewise, the *rebbe* who wants to reach his students, who wants to see them achieve *shleimus*, perfection, cannot be busy with other things. His focus should be entirely on his students.

*Horav Bunim*, *zl*, *m’Pshischa* explains this practically. Is anyone able to even begin fathoming the spiritual plane of a *malach*? An angel is so far beyond us that, as mortals, we do not begin to understand anything about them. This is how a student should view his *rebbe* – as an individual who is spiritually distant from him. There is one caveat: a *rebbe* can bring himself close to his *talmid*, and thereby close the gap, in order to enhance the relationship – when necessary/appropriate.

אנה אנחנו עלים. אחינו המסו את לבבינו... ואמר אליכם לא תערצון ולא תיראון מהם  
**To where shall we ascend? Our brothers have melted our hearts... then I said to you, “Do not be broken and do not fear them.” (1:28,29)**

Fear can do terrible things to a person. Fear is the antithesis of hope. Hope is the cure for fear. *Chazal* (*Berachos* 10a) teach, “Even if a sharp sword is resting on the neck of a person, he should not despair of Heavenly mercy.” One can *chas v’shalom*, Heaven forbid, be at the threshold of death – he should still hope; he should not throw in the towel and give up hope. Indeed, we experience every moment of life because Hashem wants us to experience it. We are alive during our present fearful state because Hashem wants us to live. Who are we to give up hope? If He would not want us to be here – we would not be here. It is as simple as that.

Interestingly, concerning the above *Chazal* (one should not despair even when the sharp blade is poised over his throat), we are not enjoined to pray. We are, instead, told not to give up hope. What does “not give up hope” mean? The *Baal Shem Tov* teaches that while prayer is most certainly critical and beneficial at all times, *Chazal* are telling us not to despair. This means we should maintain our *bitachon*, trust, in Hashem. Prayer is certainly a mainstay, but it should not take the place of *bitachon*. *Tefillah* that is not buttressed with *bitachon* is missing its most essential ingredient. The *Baal Shem Tov* was wont to exhort his *talmidim*, students, to believe in themselves. Hashem believes in us, otherwise, we would not be here. We should at least appreciate His faith in us by having faith in ourselves.

*Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein*, *Shlita*, observes that the *perek*, chapter, in *Sefer Tehillim* in which *David Hamelech* details some of his most distressful and agonizing moments is *Perek* 38. Some notable quotes are: “Your arrows were shot at me”; “My bones have no peace”; “My wounds are putrid and enflamed”; “I am bewildered and stooped, numb and greatly broken”; “My heart is engulfed with distress”; “I have no friend and companions”; “Enemies seek to harm me and speak maliciously”; “I expect misfortune, and pain always awaits.” Nonetheless, *David* says, “I became like one who does not hear and whose mouth cannot reply, G-d, all because of my hope in You.”

The distinction of this *perek* is that in all of *Sefer Tehillim*, 150 *perakim*, this is the only one which David begins with: *Mizmor l'David l'hazkir*, “A Psalm by David, to remember” (to review and say in times of trouble). (Veritably, *Perek 70* also begins with *l'hazkir*, to remember, how Hashem saved and protected him from his pursuers and detractors.) Why would David seek to underscore the bitterness, grief, misery and heartbreak that he had experienced in his life – to the point that he encourages us to remember, to recite this *perek* during moments of distress?

Rav Zilberstein explains that David turns to us all and declares: “Have you ever heard of a Jew called David *Hamelech*? He received the monarchy forever. He merited to have a son, Shlomo, who was the wisest of all men, who built the *Bais Hamikdash*.” David was an author, a Psalmist, a poet, a king. *Moshiach Tziddkeinu* descends from him. He is the fourth leg of the Heavenly Chariot, *David Malka Meshicha*. He certainly was one of the most prodigious, successful personages in the annals of Jewish history. Yet, he suffered so much. All of *Perek 38* relates his bitter suffering. He never lost hope. His suffering catalyzed his distinction. Thus, we are impelled to remember and inscribe on our hearts this chapter, because it teaches us that no situation, however bleak, is hopeless.

Fear destroys. Fear is, unfortunately, contagious. When a nation is gripped with fear it cannot function; it cannot think properly. What would be considered cogent during a period of calm suddenly becomes devoid of perspective. When fear takes hold of a person, he becomes overwhelmed. As a result, decisions which he would normally produce with ease, he struggles to make, or his decisions are nonsensical.

*Acheinu heimasu es levaveinu*; “Our brothers have melted our hearts.” Our nation that was liberated from Egypt, walked through the dried bed of the Red Sea, triumphed over Amalek, lived on Heavenly bread – but was overcome with *bechayah shel chinam*, unwarranted weeping. Why? The hearts of *Klal Yisrael* had been melted by fear.

In *Likutei MoHaran* (11:48), *Horav Nachman Breslover, zl*, writes *K'she'adam tzarich laavor gesher tzaar meod – ha'klal v'ha'ikar shelo yispacheid klal*; “When a person must cross an exceedingly narrow bridge, the general principle and the essential thing is to not frighten yourself at all.” The narrow bridge is daunting; it is scary, but, if you want to cross it, you cannot surrender to your fears. Rav Nachman’s words are the basis of a song which became very popular. In the song, the reference is, *kol ha'olam kulo*, “the entire world is a narrow bridge.” In an emboldened move, the Israeli tank corps made their attack across the Suez Canal during the *Yom Kippur War*. As they began their advance towards the bridgehead on the canal, Ariel Sharon, the commander at the time, broadcast the song over all the radios and interiors of the attacking crews. The word, the lyrics, the tune, the hidden meaning, electrified the men until they all sang together, easing their fear and trepidation upon entering the battle.

What is the message of this sweet story? The world is compared to a narrow bridge. Life is filled with narrow bridges, highs and lows, fears and celebrations, pain and anxiety, happiness and joy, sickness and health and then the greatest challenge: mortality. Interestingly, the song compares the world to a narrow bridge. Is that the only dangerous place that inspires fear? A bridge is the symbol of a journey, of movement. The message is powerful. Yes, we are faced with fear, but we must move on. One does not stop in middle of a bridge out of fear. He should try to reach the other side as quickly as he can. This teaches us to work through our fears; do not ignore them, but certainly do not stop along the bridge. Move on! With *bitachon* in Hashem, we can overcome the fears and traverse the bridge. To weep for no warranted reason is certainly not the way to cross the bridge. That was their mistake in the wilderness. We now have *Tishah B'Av* to reflect on our fears, so that we triumph over them as we prepare for an end to the mourning with the advent of *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*.

*Va'ani Tefillah*

*ועל נפלאותך שבכל עת – V'Al Nifleosecha she'b'chol eis. And for Your wonders and favors in every season.*

Actually, we experience three forms of miracles: First are overt miracles – which are extraordinary events that we are able to acknowledge without question. These are supernatural occurrences which are beyond our ability to comprehend – let alone explain. Then there are those events which are accepted as natural, which occur all the time. These revealed, unambiguous experiences, which we have convinced ourselves as natural, are, in effect, miracles. Finally, are those wonders which Hashem performs for us on a regular basis, of which we are unaware. These hidden Heavenly acts are unrecognizable, because we are unaware that they took place to the point that we do not recognize – thus, do not acknowledge – our good fortune. We have a flat tire on the way to an event/trip, which results in our missing the event or arriving too late. When word reaches us that something went wrong on the trip, we feel good, thankful we missed it. Only now do we realize that the flat tire was a Divine gift. Indeed, one only has to ask those who came late to work at the Twin Towers, for whatever reason, on September 11, 2001.

ע"ה Shelley Horwitz - לע"נ רוזה רחל בת ר' משה אריה-ע"ה נפ' ח' אב תשנ"ו  
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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

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**Ohr Somayach :: Talmud Tips :: Shabbat 135-141**

**For the week ending 25 July 2020 / 4 Av 5780**

**Rabbi Moshe Newman**

**The Umbrella-Tent**

**“A folding chair is permitted to open on Shabbat.” \* Shabbat 138**

The Torah forbids making an *ohel* — a tent-like structure — that is of a permanent nature (not intended to be taken down that day or very soon). The Rabbis made a decree to prohibit even a temporary *ohel* so as not to come to (mistakenly) transgress the Torah prohibition against making a permanent *ohel*.

Our gemara teaches that opening a folding chair on Shabbat is permitted although this act creates a sheltered space underneath the seat part of the folding chair. It follows that in this case the prohibition against making an *ohel* on Shabbat does not apply. Does this mean that it is also permitted to open an umbrella on Shabbat? (Of course, it would not be permitted to carry the umbrella outside on Shabbat in a place where there is no *eiruv*.)

While a few *poskim* have permitted using an umbrella on Shabbat, the vast majority have prohibited opening it on Shabbat. And this is the widespread and accepted *halacha*. Why is opening an umbrella “worse” than opening a folding chair? One reason is that the *ohel* of the chair is meant to sit upon and not to serve as shelter for underneath it. Another reason is that the folding chair simply slides open and stays that way by its nature, whereas the rods of the umbrella need to be affixed open as an *ohel* by means of a mechanical process. (See *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 315:7* and the *Bi'ur Halacha* there, and *Shemirat Shabbat K'Hilchata 24:15* and footnote 53 for a more detailed treatment of this subject.)

Regarding the question of whether one may use on Shabbat an umbrella that was open before Shabbat, there are also two main reasons to not allow this. One is the issue of *marit ayin* — that an onlooker may see this act and mistakenly think that it is permitted to open an umbrella on Shabbat. A second reason is that a person is considered as continuously making a new *ohel* as he walks, making a new protected space under the umbrella in any new space he occupies.

**Torah Together \* Shabbat 147b**

Rabbi Nehorai would say, “Exile yourself to a place of Torah study; do not say that it will come to you, that your colleagues will preserve it for you. Do not rely only on your own understanding.” (*Avot 4:14*)

This *mishna* is cited on our *daf* in relation to an unfortunate event involving Rabbi Elazar ben Aroch. Our *gemara* tells of a time when he travelled to a