Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet EIKEV 5785

[CS Late-breaking dvar torah
Parashah Rabbi Yissocher Frand
THE CHALLENGE OF HAVING IT ALL
Rabbi Frand on the Parashah
המאכלך מן במדבר אשר לא ידעון אבתיך למען ענתך ולמען נסתך להיטבך באחריתך
The One Who feeds you manna in the desert... in order to test you (Devarim 8:16)
Everyone knows that life is a test. We struggle to make a living, to raise our children, to build up our communities. Nothing comes easy, and our test is to deal with the hardships and frustrations in the best way possible.
But what if our livelihood were served up to us on a silver platter? How wonderful that would be! No more worries about how to pay for the children's tuition or the new roof. What if everything we needed came to us like manna from heaven? Would we consider this a test? Hardly. We would consider it a blessing. The To- rah, however, seems to say otherwise.
No sooner had the Jewish people come forth from Egypt that they com- plained (Shemos 16:3), "If only we had died by the hand of God in the land of Egypt when we were sitting beside the fleshpots, when we ate our fill of bread; now you have brought us out into the desert to let the entire congre-gation starve to death."
"Behold, I will rain down bread from the heav ens on you," Hashem replied (ibid. 16:4). "The peo- ple shall go out to collect their daily portion every day, in order to test whether or not they will follow My Torah."
The commentators wonder what kind of test this is. What could be better than having everything you need delivered to your doorstep every day? This is a test? This is a blessing! Rashi explains that Hash-
em was referring to the lawsthat govern the manna. One could not store away any manna for the next day. One had to collect a double portion on Friday. And so forth. This was the test Would the Jewish people observe the laws of the manna scru- pulously?
This test is also mentioned in Parashas Eikev, "The One Who feeds you manna in the desert... in order to test you." Sforno explains that the test is to see if the Jews would still follow the Torah when they do not have to worry about their livelihood.
Yes, there is a great test in "bread rain- ing down from heaven." Affluence with- out effort is a dangerous thing. It comes with a great amount of leisure time and freedom of action. What do we do with that leisure time and that freedom of action? Do we use our leisure time and free- dom of action to taste the forbidden? This is the great test of the manna.
We are all aware of the test of poverty. We are all aware of the trials and tribulations of being poor. However, says Sforno, affluence also comes with great temptations. It puts a tremendous responsibility on a person. This is the test of the manna, and it is the test for many Jews in these affluent times.

[CS Late breaking addition:
from: RIETS Kollel Elyon from RIETS Bella and Harry Wexner Kollel Elyon Substack <riets@substack.com>
date: Aug 14, 2025, 8:10 AM
subject: **Ekev: The Beginning of Blessing**
Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman
The first blessing of the Birkat HaMazon is known as Birkat HaZan. As the Arukh HaShulchan (Orach Chaim 187:2) points out, it is a multi-faceted prayer, praising the Source of both life-sustaining necessities and life-enhancing luxuries, and praying as well that His kindness will continue. The Talmud (Berakhot 48b)attributes its authorship to Moses himself, who instituted the prayer upon witnessing the gift of the manna. Rishonim (see Chiddushei HaRashba and Shittah Mekubetzet to Berakhot; see also Hasagot HaRamban L'Sefer HaMitzvot, shoresh 1) note that this poses no contradiction to the biblical origin of Birkat HaMazon; while the obligation is indeed d'orayta, the actual format of the berakhot was developed later, beginning with Moses' formulation of Birkat HaZan (See Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 187; note also R. Baruch Hass, Mishnat Baruch, Berakhot 16a). The Mabit (Beit Elokim, sha'ar ha-yesodot ch. 61) contends that there is every reason to assume that Moses' berakhah was identical to that recited today; even verses that appear in Psalms could just as easily have been revealed to Moses before they were to King David. (See Prishah, 187:2, Rosh, Ber. 7:22 and Ma'adanei Yom Yov #70, and Chazon Ish, Orach Chaim 28:8.)
It is readily understood that Moses wished to lend specific form to the biblical imperative of reciting a berakhah upon completing a meal; the particular timing, however, has invited some commentary. Certainly the Jewish people had eaten many times before, and the Divine source of that sustenance could not have escaped Moses' notice. In fact, the manna seems an inappropriate choice to motivate this berakhah, in that it itself apparently fell short of the standards required for Birkat HaMazon, not being one of the five types of grain (although the Torah does use the word lechem; see Chiddushei HaRitva, Kiddushin 37b. See, however, R. Yosef Engel, Gilyonei HaShas to Berakhot, based on R. Chaim Yosef David Azulai, Nachal Kedumim, Ex. 40:23. See also R. Yochanan Shteif, Chadashim Gam Yeshanim to Berakhot, citing Nachmanides).
As such, a debate exists as to the proper preceding berakhah for the manna. R. Chaim Chizkiyahu Medini (S'dei Chemed, ma'arekhet ha-khaf, klal 100; see also B'nei Yisaschar, ma'amarei shabbat ma'amar 3) felt that no berakhah was made on manna. R. Avraham Danzig (Chayyei Adam) was convinced that if any berakhah at all was made, it was certainly not the standard "ha-motzi". The Rama of Panu (ma'amar shabatot #5) writes that the proper berakhah was "ha-motzi lechem min ha-shamayyim". R. Yehudah HaChasid (Sefer Chasidim #1640) suggests"ha-notein lechem min ha-shamayyim", while the Resp. Torah L'Shmah (#63) has "ha-mamtir lechem min ha-shamayyim". (See also R. Meir Blumenfeld, Resp. Perach Shoshanah #35;. R. Shimon Pollack, Resp. Shem MiShimon II, 202; Piskei Teshuvah #280, quoting Siftei Tzadik, Parshat Beshalach; R. Shalom Krausz, Shut Divrei Shalom V, 9; R. Shlomo Zalman Braun, She'arim Metzuyyanim B'Halakhah to Berakhot; R. David Yoel Weiss, Megadim Chadashim to Berakhot at length; Gilyonei HaShas, Berakhot; R. Eliezer Yehudah Waldenberg, Resp. Tzitz Eliezer XII, 1; Tzintzenet HaMan (in R. Aryeh Mordechai Rabinowitz's Sha'arei Aryeh) #45; Ta'amei Minhagim, inyanei Shabbat p. 144,

citing Mirkevet HaMishnah to Mekhilta, Beshalach p. 66a; R. Menashe Zilber, Marpei L'Nefesh, Berakhot 48b; and R. Aharon David Gross, V'Darashta V'Chakarta to Beshalach, p. 143.)

What, then, distinguished the falling of the manna in such a manner as to prompt Moses to compose this text? The Mabit suggests that the overtly miraculous nature of this event gave rise to a fear in Moses' heart that the Jewish people were to be sustained only through Moses' personal merit; and upon his passing, such miracles would cease, leaving the nation of Israel to go hungry. He thus responded to this concern by instituting a prayer that beseeches God to continually provide for His creations.

R. Nachum Meir Bronznick (Birkat HaMazon V'Nuschah: Iyyunim V'Peirushim, p. 9) suggests another relevance to Moses' timing. The prayer's composition came on the heels of another enactment of Moses. The Talmud (Yoma 75a) states that initially, the behavior of the Jewish people in the desert was like that of a chicken searching around in the garbage; their eating was purely life-sustaining, lacking any sense of order or system (k'viyut). At the time of the manna, Moses instituted that meals should have set times. Part of the defining element of a meal that warrants Birkat HaMazon is that it not be a snack, lacking in importance or dignity, but a set meal, a seudat k'viyut. Prior to the period of the manna, this ingredient was lacking; only when k'viyut was established was Birkat HaZan truly relevant.

Indeed, the connection between k'viyut and Birkat HaZan is more clearly emphasized when it is considered that this berakhah is, more than any of the other berakhot, closely intertwined with the process of zimmun, which itself typifies k'viyut. The Talmud relates a dispute as to the boundaries of zimmun; according to one opinion, the entire Birkat HaZan is included. This concept plays a role practically in a number of ways. When one wishes to participate in a zimmun but to continue eating, he is obligated to pause first and listen to the zimmun. According to the Shulchan Arukh (Orach Chaim 200:2) he need only wait until HaZan begins; the Rama, however requires listening to the entire berakhah before proceding. [This dispute stems from an earlier argument in Berakhot46a; note, though, Bayit Chadash and Beit Yosef, who suggest that the pause is to display involvement in the zimmun and the question is how much is necessary in order to clearly indicate this.] Further, even when all involved are bentching together, Birkat HaZan figures prominently in the zimmun. The Mishneh Berurah (Orach Chaim 183:28) requires that all participants listen to the leader's recitation of the first berakhah, pronouncing the words along with him; the Magen Avraham prefers the position of the Tashbetz, who instructs the participants to be silent for this berakhah and fulfill their obligations by listening to the leader (shomea k'oneh). In either case, both views place Birkat HaZan prominently within the zimmun process, and many authorities take up the question of why more care is not taken that zimmun is always performed in this manner. (See R. Yitzchak Leibes, Resp. Beit Avi II, 6; R. Ya'akov Yechiel Traube, Resp. Avnei Ya'akov 31:1; R. Eliezer Yehudah Waldenberg, Resp. Tzitz Eliezer XVI, 1; R. Yisrael Avraham Alter Landau, Resp. Beit Yisrael #29; and R. Ovadiah Yosef, Resp. Yabbia Omer I, 11:6-10.)

R. Ze'ev Nachum Borenstein (Resp. Agudat Ezov57:2) offers another perspective on the connection between man and this berakhah. Moses felt that the basic sustenance enjoyed by humans until then warranted no special berakhah; the God who would create a world and populate it must keep that population alive for the creation to have any purpose. The manna, however, is representative of a higher level of Divine involvement in the lives of the Jewish people. Indeed, the Talmud states that the manna was given in no more than daily portions so that the relationship with God would be constantly felt and desired, rather than the detachment that would come from a longer-lasting supply. It is this holy relationship, rather than the basic gift of food, that is actually commemorated by this berakhah.

With this approach, R. Borenstein offers an interpretation of a puzzling comment of Rashi. In interpreting a statement in the Talmud, Rashi appears to rule that an individual (without a mezuman) should not recite Birkat HaZan (Berakhot 46a; see Tosafot, s.v. u'l'man.) If indeed this berakhah is focused on the Divine connection, perhaps this comment can be understood. In the Mishnah (Avot 3:4), R. Shimon states that three who eat, and have words of Torah among them, are as if they ate from "the table of God". According to R. Ovadiah of Bartenura, the "words of Torah" are the words of Birkat HaMazon. Thus, the Birkat HaMazon of three takes upon an especially Divine aspect, and it is to that that the Birkat HaZan is particularly attuned.

In explaining the biblical origin of Birkat HaMazon, the Talmud (Berakhot 48b) derives two concepts in dealing with the verse, v'achalta v'savata u'beirakhta et Hashem Elokekha, "and you shall eat, and be satisfied, and bless Hashem your God." The opening phrase, v'achalta v'savata u'beirakhta, is the source for Birkat HaZan, while the closing phrase, et Hashem Elokekha, refers to the concept of zimmun. The authors of the Tosafot (Berakhot 46a, s.v. ad; see also Hagahot HaGra to 48b), however, relate the reverse text, with the first half of the verse mandating zimmun, and the phrase et Hashem Elokekha referring to Birkat Hazan (Note R. Yechezkel Landau, Tzlach to Berakhot, and, at length, R. Ya'akov Grendash, Shoshanat Ya'akov to Berakhot.) R. Chaim Tzvi Brida (Otzar Chaim to Berakhot) comments on the appropriateness of such a derivation. The essence of Birkat HaZan is not merely the appreciation of the food, but a focus upon the Source of that food, and an understanding and valuing of the Divine-human relationship.

The focus upon God directly is evident as well from an alternative text allowed by the Talmud (Berakhot 40b; see Orach Chaim 187:1 and Resp. Rav Poalim III, 7.): "Brikh Rachmana Malka, Mareih d'hai pita - Blessed is God the King, Master of this bread." A dispute exists as to whether or not it is necessary to conclude with the phrase"Brikh Rachmana d'zan kulah - Blessed is God who feeds all." (See Shulchan Arukh ibid, as well as R. Shalom Mordechai Schwadron, Da'at Torah to Orach Chaim, and R. Yitzchak Harari, Resp. Zekhor L'Yitzchak #51.)

Many commentators note that this berakhah refers to God in lashon nistar, in third person, while later berakhot involve a direct second person address (lashon nokhach) such as Nodeh Likha. An explanation commonly offered (see Otzar HaTefillot; Haggadat Beit Ya'akov; and R. Tzadok HaKohen, Tzidkat haTzaddik p. 247) is that the first berakhah, composed before entry to the Land of Israel, was farther removed from the Divine presence and thus not privileged to address God directly; while later berakhot benefit from holiness of the Land of Israel and do have this opportunity. Such a detail would seem to place the first berakhah at a disadvantage when compared with other berakhot. Further, one might assume that the second berakhah, expressing gratitude for the Land, should precede that which mentions the food that comes from the Land. Nonetheless, writes the Bayit Chadash, Birkat HaZan is given precedence in light of its

authorship, i.e. Moses as opposed to his student Joshua (who composed the second berakhah, Birkat HaAretz) [As to whether or not one who inverts the order of the berakhot fulfills his obligation, see R. Shmuel Abuhab, Resp. D'var Shmuel #147; R. Shlomo Kluger, Resp. U'Bacharta BaChaim #52; and R. Eliezer Yehudah Waldenberg, Resp. Tzitz Eliezer XIII, 15.] .

However, in light of the above, it is perhaps possible to suggest an additional element. Birkat HaZan, in essence, is not discussing food in itself, but is focusing our attention on the relationship that exists between the Provider of all food and His creations. This berakhah, which we have seen transcends mere sustenance in favor of k'viyut, of an established, ongoing relationship of permanence, of importance and dignity, directs our attention to the reality that all that we benefit from in this world is colored and granted significance by the nature of He who bestows it. Before we mention the Land of Israel, before Brit, Torah, and the Kingdom of David, this primary introduction is indispensable. The eloquent words of Moses masterfully set the stage for the rest of Birkat HaMazon, indeed for all berakhot and their subjects.

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[CS Also: YUTorah in Print

The Great Wall of Israel

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

The wall was not built for the builders, but for those who would come after, who might never see it completed. This required faith in a future unknown and patience that stretches beyond a lifetime."—The Great Wall of China, Franz KafkaThe construction of the Great Wall of China stands as one of humanity's most awe-inspiring feats. This project unfolded across centuries, a slow-burning testament to endurance. Launched in the 7th century BCE, it reached completion only in the 17th centuryCE. The heart of this vast endeavor spanned close to three hundred years, from the 14th to the 17th century, weaving together vision and relentless will across generations.

The Wall demanded immense patience and vision. Those who toiled on the Wall spent years separated from their families, laboring on a monument they would never see finished in their lifetimes. As the years stretched on and the Wall remained unfinished, the builders fought against fatigue and the crushing weight of endless labor. As Kafka wrote,"The completion of the wall was less a matter of engineering than of sustaining belief, of preserving a collective will through centuries, against the weariness of time."This was a project not only of stone and mortar, but of human spirit—woven from steadfast hope and the quiet determination to build something beyond their own time. The Great Wall of China teaches us that grand historical projects demand time, vision, patience, and flexibility. Things built to last are never rushed; they are patiently forged in time.

Carving HistoryOur people now embark on a project greater than the Great Wall of China—not forged from stone and mortar, but carved deep into the fabric of history. We are not masons shaping rock, but craftsmen shaping destiny. This is the greatest enterprise in the story of humankind.

In Parshat Va'etchanan, Moshe highlights one of Hashem's most extraordinary miracles: "Has it ever happened that God took a nation from among another people and transported them en masse to a new land?" The journey of an entire nation from Egypt's depths to a distant land was a living testament to Hashem's steadfast embrace of Jewish destiny.

That relocation from Egypt to Israel unfolded through profound divine intervention—miracles splitting seas and parting heavens. It was meant to transpire in less than a year, yet because of desert rebellions and trials, it stretched over forty years. Still, in the vast sweep of history, forty years is but a brief moment. This relocation was swift and miraculous.Taming the FrontierOnce we arrived at our destination, progress slowed considerably. In Parshat Eikev, Hashemcautions that the land will not be settled all at once, but gradually and deliberately—each small step making way for the next. Had we rushed to settle it quickly, the frontier would have been too dangerous, and we risked being overwhelmed by the wild beasts of the field. By advancing slowly, expanding the frontier bit by bit, we were able to firmly establish our presence.

But it was not only the beasts that threatened us. Building a nation meant confronting tangled rivalries and navigating the unpredictable challenges of settling unfamiliar territory and creating new institutions. Settling the land piece by piece gave the people the time to adapt, unify, and build the essential frameworks—local governance, shared laws, and social cohesion. Had we rushed toclaim the land, these fragile foundations would have collapsed. Settling the land of G-d took time.

The Shadow of the BeastsHistory is repeating itself. Once more, our people are moving from every corner of the globe. Though Hashemhas yet to miraculously gather us all at once, millions have begun the long walk home. Now, as in times past, the process of settling Israel unfolds slowly. We face countless obstacles—challenges that won't be overcome quickly or easily. We are building the great wall of Jewish history and destiny—and it will take time.

As then we face the beasts of the field—hostile enemies who commit grievous and heinous violence in the name of God—they are sworn to our destruction. There will be no immediate decisive victory. It is painfully clear that, short of an act of Hashem, it will take generations to subdue them and quell their hatred of us. In the current political and cultural climate, their hatred shows no signs of fading. It will require profound cultural change and sustained, robust defense of our nation to stand firm against these beasts of the field.Just the same, many countries that once prowled like wild beasts have now stilled their claws, no longer striking at our borders. We are gradually making headway, convincing our neighbors that we harbor no grand imperialist designs but instead seek their welfare. The frontier is slowly transforming—its wild edges softening into a landscape more tame and inviting. Many of the former beasts no longer snarl at us.

Generations Needed to HealHowever, we aren't just facing external beasts of the field. Inside, stubborn creatures linger—internal challenges that gnaw away at our strength and slow our progress.

Returning after two thousand years—carried across vast stretches of time, continents, climates, and cultures—is no simple feat. We face many internal challenges that demand resolution. Again, unrealistically, we expect it all to unfold overnight, within our

own lifetimes. For many of the thorny internal challenges that confront us, clear resolution will likely remain out of reach for generations yet to come.

There are four internal challenges—social, political, and religious—that deeply divide our nation. Firstly, we continue to search for a way to harmonize the religious sector with the non-observant community. This challenge has become easier to manage, as much of the broader Israeli secular population now feels a strong connection to religious and Jewish tradition. Much has changed since the earliest generations of secular Israelis, who were often hostile to religion and aimed to erase any trace of the old galut Jewish identity. While we have made significant progress, many issues remain unresolved.Of course, the most urgent socio-religious challenge today is integrating the Charedi community into the broader fabric of Israel. The deep pain surrounding non-Charedi conscription reflects a broader concern: Will the Charedi see themselves fully as part of the Israeli people, even while preserving firm cultural boundaries? As their population grows, this question takes on existential weight for both Charedi and non-Charedi alike. Resolving it will likely require multiple generations and the influence of social and economic realities larger and stronger than ideology.

The third issue we face is how to balance democracy with a Jewish state. A purely democratic system risks diluting Israel's Jewish character. Preserving Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people is vital to our history and identity. If that means making some compromises to democracy, it is a necessary and worthwhile exchange.Finally, we are striving to establish a fairer and more equitable balance of power, ensuring that no branch of government holds excessive control or leverage. The recent social unrestsurrounding judicial reform revealed just how unbalanced our political system is—and how many deep ethnic tensions simmer beneath the surface of this political debate.There will be no swift or final victories on these fronts. Instead, like the Great Wall, our progress will come in layers—walls upon walls—built patiently over time. This is a project that spans generations, demanding endurance, faith, and steady hands.The writer is a rabbi at the hesder pre-military Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, with YU ordination and an MA in English literature. His books include To Be Holy but Human: Reflections Upon My Rebbe, HaRav Yehuda Amital, available at mtaraginbooks.com]

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Ekev

by Rabbi Berel Wein

Even though Moshe in his review of the life of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai over the past forty years recounts all of the miracles that occurred to them, he does so not for the purpose of narrative but rather to teach an important moral lesson for all ages. And that stark lesson is that after all of the miracles that God may perform on our behalf, our fate is in great measure in our hands. And the lesson of all of Jewish history is summed up in the verse "For not by bread alone – even miraculous bread such as the manna itself – shall humans live by but rather by the word of God, so to speak, - the values, commandments and strictures of Torah shall Jews live." All attempts to avoid this lesson, to substitute other words, ideas and ideologies for the words of Torah have turned into dismal failures. But reliance upon miracles is just as dangerous a path. My teachers in the yeshiva would say to us then pious young men that prayer helps one to become a scholar in Torah. But they emphasized that sitting and studying Torah for a protracted time with concentration and effort may help even more in the quest for true Torah scholarship. Moshe uses the constant miracles of the desert to drive home the point that much of the responsibilities of life are in our hands and our decision making processes. In essence the clear conclusion from his oration is that God helps those who help themselves.

In our post –Tisha B'Av mood and run-up to Elul and the High Holy Days it is important to remember how much of our fate truly lies in our own hands and actions. The small choices that we make in our everyday lives add up to our life's achievements and accomplishments. That is what Rashi means when he states that "these are the commandments that one grinds under with one's heel – ekev!" The small things that we think to be unimportant at the moment often translate themselves into major decisions and sometimes even irreversible consequences. The question always before us is do our actions measure up to the standards of God's word, so to speak. We live not "by bread alone" or by miracles alone, but by our own choices and our own very behavior and deeds. While recently driving on a New York City highway – an exercise in patience and utter futility – I missed the exit that I was supposed to turn off on. Miles and a quarter of an hour later I was able somehow to retrace my journey and exit at the proper place. I felt that it was a miracle that I was able to do so. In fact, however it was my negligent choice of not exiting correctly from the highway originally that forced the necessity of the occurrence of this "miracle" upon me. Moshe teaches us that this is truly a daily occurrence in our lives. His message to us is as clear and cogent today as it was to our forbearers in the desert of Sinai long ago.

Shabat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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The Morality of Love

Eikev

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Something implicit in the Torah from the very beginning becomes explicit in the book of Devarim. God is the God of love. More than we love Him, He loves us. Here, for instance, is the beginning of this week's Parsha:

If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep His covenant of love [et ha-brit ve-et ha-chessed] with you, as He swore to your ancestors. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers.

Deut. 7:12-13

Again in the Parsha we read:

To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the Lord set His affection on your ancestors and loved them, and He chose you, their descendants, above all the nations - as it is today.

Deut. 10:14-15

And here is a verse from last week's:

Because He loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, He brought you out of Egypt by His Presence and His great strength.

Deut. 4:37

The book of Deuteronomy is saturated with the language of love. The root a-h-v appears in Shemot twice, in Vayikra twice (both in Leviticus 19), in Bamidbar not at all, but in Sefer Devarim 23

times. Devarim is a book about societal beatitude and the transformative power of love.

Nothing could be more misleading and invidious than the Christian contrast between Christianity as a religion of love and forgiveness and Judaism as a religion of law and retribution. As I pointed out in my earlier Covenant & Conversation for Vayigash, forgiveness is born (as David Konstan notes in Before Forgiveness) in Judaism. Interpersonal forgiveness begins when Joseph forgives his brothers for selling him into slavery. Divine forgiveness starts with the institution of Yom Kippur as the supreme day of Divine pardon following the sin of the Golden Calf.

Similarly with love: when the New Testament speaks of love it does so by direct quotation from Leviticus ("You shall love your neighbour as yourself") and Deuteronomy ("You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your might"). As philosopher Simon May puts it in his splendid book, Love: A History:

"The widespread belief that the Hebrew Bible is all about vengeance and 'an eye for an eye,' while the Gospels supposedly invent love as an unconditional and universal value, must therefore count as one of the most extraordinary misunderstandings in all of Western history. For the Hebrew Bible is the source not just of the two love commandments but of a larger moral vision inspired by wonder for love's power."[1]

His judgment is unequivocal:

"If love in the Western world has a founding text, that text is Hebrew."[2]

More than this: in Ethical Life: The Past and Present of Ethical Cultures, philosopher Harry Redner distinguishes four basic visions of the ethical life in the history of civilisations.[3] One he calls civic ethics, the ethics of ancient Greece and Rome. Second is the ethic of duty, which he identifies with Confucianism, Krishnaism and late Stoicism. Third is the ethic of honour, a distinctive combination of courtly and military decorum to be found among Persians, Arabs and Turks as well as in medieval Christianity (the 'chivalrous knight') and Islam.

The fourth, which he calls simply morality, he traces to Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He defines it simply as 'the ethic of love,' and represents what made the West morally unique:

"The biblical 'love of one's neighbour' is a very special form of love, a unique development of the Judaic religion and unlike any to be encountered outside it. It is a supremely altruistic love, for to love one's neighbour as oneself means always to put oneself in his place and to act on his behalf as one would naturally and selfishly act on one's own."[4]

To be sure, Buddhism also makes space for the idea of love, though it is differently inflected, more impersonal and unrelated to a relationship with God.

What is radical about this idea is that, first, the Torah insists, against virtually the whole of the ancient world, that the elements that constitute reality are neither hostile nor indifferent to humankind. We are here because Someone wanted us to be, One who cares about us, watches over us and seeks our wellbeing.

Second, the love with which God created the universe is not just Divine. It is to serve as the model for us in our humanity. We are bidden to love the neighbour and the stranger, to engage in acts of kindness and compassion, and to build a society based on love. Here is how our Parsha puts it:

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty and awesome God who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. So you must love the stranger, for you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deut. 10:18-19

In short: God created the world in love and forgiveness and asks us to love and forgive others. I believe that to be the most profound moral idea in human history.

There is however an obvious question. Why is it that love, which plays so great a part in the book of Devarim, is so much less in evidence in the earlier books of Shemot, Vayikra (with the exception of Leviticus 19) and Bamidbar?

The best way of answering that question is to ask another. Why is it that forgiveness plays no part – at least on the surface of the narrative – in the book of Bereishit?[5] God does not forgive Adam and Eve, or Cain (though he mitigates their punishments). Forgiveness does not figure in the stories of the Flood, the Tower of Babel or the destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain (Abraham's plea is that the cities be spared if they contain fifty or ten righteous people; this is not a plea for forgiveness). Divine forgiveness makes its first appearance in the book of Exodus after Moses' successful plea in the wake of Golden Calf, and is then institutionalised in the form of Yom Kippur (Lev. 16), but not before. Why so?

The simple, radical, answer is: God does not forgive human beings until human beings learn to forgive one another. Genesis ends with Joseph forgiving his brothers. Only thereafter does God forgive human beings.

Turning to love: Genesis contains many references to it. Abraham loves Isaac. Isaac loves Esau. Rebecca loves Jacob. Jacob loves Rachel. He also loves Joseph. There is interpersonal love in plentiful supply. But almost all the loves of Genesis turn out to be divisive. They lead to tension between Jacob and Esau, between Rachel and Leah, and between Joseph and his brothers. Implicit in Genesis is a profound observation missed by most moralists and theologians. Love in and of itself – real love, personal and passionate, the kind of love that suffuses much of the prophetic literature as well as Shir HaShirim, the greatest love song in Tanach, as opposed to the detached, generalised love called agape which we associate with ancient Greece – is not sufficient as a basis for society. It can divide as well as unite.

Hence it does not figure as a major motif until we reach the integrated social-moral-political vision of Deuteronomy which combines love and justice. Tzedek - justice - turns out to be another key word of Deuteronomy, appearing 18 times. It appears only four times in Shemot, not at all in Bamidbar, and in Vayikra only in chapter 19, the only chapter that also contains the word 'love.' In other words, in Judaism love and justice go hand in hand. Again this is noted by Simon May:

[W]hat we must note here, for it is fundamental to the history of Western love, is the remarkable and radical justice that underlies the love commandment of Leviticus. Not a cold justice in which due deserts are mechanically handed out, but the justice that brings the other, as an individual with needs and interests, into a relationship of respect. All our neighbours are to be recognised as equal to ourselves before the law of love. Justice and love therefore become inseparable.[6]

Love without justice leads to rivalry, and eventually to hate. Justice without love is devoid of the humanising forces of compassion and mercy. We need both. This unique ethical vision – the love of God for humans and of humans for God, translated

into an ethic of love toward both neighbour and stranger – is the foundation of Western civilisation and its abiding glory.
It is born here in the book of Deuteronomy, the book of law-as-love and love-as-law.
[1] Simon May, Love: A History (Yale University Press, 2011), 19-20.
[2] Ibid., 14.
[3] Harry Redner, Ethical Life: The Past and Present of Ethical Cultures, New York, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.
[4] Ibid., 50.
[5] I exclude, here, midrashic readings of these texts, some of which do make reference to forgiveness.
[6] Loc. Cit., 17.

Parshat Ekev: Is Judaism an "All or Nothing" Proposition?
Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone
"All the commandment [sic – singular] which I command you this day shall you observe to do them, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Eternal swore unto your fathers." (Deuteronomy 8:1)
Back in New York when I was rabbi at Lincoln Square Synagogue, the "612 Club" was a sarcastic reference to young and not-so-young singles in the religious community who kept the 613 commandments – except for those pertaining to sexual morality! The truth is that in the modern world, we often find a split down the middle between two groups of Jews: there are those who "major" in ritual law but will find ways to justify cutting corners in ethics, while there are those who would never take an unjustified dime from a customer but will never be caught within shouting distance from a synagogue.
What are we to make of these different approaches to the commandments: those who grab onto the ritual, those who only major in the ethical norms, and those who pick and choose from within each category?
The verse we quoted above from Parashat Ekev provides us with a direction for further study. The holy Or HaChayyim (Rabbi Chayyim Ibn Attar, 1696–1743) insists that this verse cannot merely be a repeat of the opening admonition of the portion wherein we are told to "hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, then the Lord your God shall keep with you the covenant" (Deut. 7:12). After all, our biblical portion opens with the word judgments (mishpatim) in the plural, whereas our verse in question is in the singular, "all the commandment." The strange construction of our verse must contain an important message in and of itself.
The Or HaChayyim explains that what the singular word "mitzva" signifies is that every single commandment is intimately connected to the many commandments. The Torah is not a menu of options from which God suggests that we pick and choose. The commandments are interlocked and interdependent.
Further evidence for this idea is demonstrated by the very fact that the Talmudic sages divide the 613 commandments into 248 positive commandments, corresponding to the 248 bodily organs, and 365 negative commandments, corresponding to the 365 bodily sinews. After all, a wise individual understands that he must take proper care of his entire organism if he desires physical well-being. It would make no sense to wash one's hands constantly to guard against infection without similarly guarding what one eats to keep the calorie and cholesterol numbers down. Everyone understands the interconnected relationship of our bodily organs; so too, it borders on spiritual blindness to dramatize one mitzva and then turn around and ignore a commandment that one believes may require too much of a personal sacrifice. And the fact that all commandments are called one command in the verse, and that we are exhorted to observe those "in order that you may live," testifies to the interrelatedness of the commandments and their parallel to the human organism.
From this perspective, the verse is teaching that once we begin to choose between various commands, we are leaving ourselves exposed to certain spiritual viruses which may prove to be lethal to our souls. And the sad truth is that the "supermarket" optional form of Judaism, which characterizes so much of Western culture, has hardly proven itself to be a sufficient barrier against assimilation.
This interlocking theory of the commandments, however, can lead an individual to the conclusion that Judaism is an all-or-nothing "proposition": If I can't keep it all, I might as well keep nothing at all. If I cannot keep the Sabbath, or if I can't begin it on Friday at the right time, then I might as well throw in the towel regarding kosher food and sexual morality as well. After all, I don't want to be a hypocrite!
Let it be clearly understood that hypocrisy does not apply to an individual who keeps some rules of morality or some ritual observances, but not all of them all of the time; such a person is merely being inconsistent, and – as Matthew Arnold observed – the only truly consistent person is one who is dead. If one claims to be 100% when one is not, then one is a hypocrite; if one doesn't do everything that one should all of the time, one is merely expressing the frailty of his humanity. And would any logical individual claim that if someone is guilty of an occasional untruth, he might as well forget about truth and morality in all of his interpersonal relationships? Much the opposite: he should continue to strive as much as possible for greater and greater consistency in his actions. And perhaps this is the real meaning of the singular form with which our verse opens: "All the commandment shall you observe to do them" – if you can't keep all of the commands, at least keep one commandment!
And as far as the parallel to the human organism is concerned: if an individual is blind in one eye, does that justify taking out the other? Or, if a person does not have the use of his hands, should he forgo his legs? Each commandment is precious and stands on its own, independent of the others. Indeed, Maimonides teaches (Commentary on Mishna, end of Makkot) that it is sufficient for an individual to observe just one commandment properly and he will merit the world to come!
Postscript
I know a family here in Efrat, completely religious and devoted to the Torah, who grew up in a small town in the Midwest. When I marveled at how a family from such a non-Jewish environment could have grown up with such Jewish commitment (all of the siblings are committed Jews living in Israel), I was told the even stranger fact that their father, who had studied in a Polish yeshiva, had been forced to work on Shabbat in order to keep his job (a not uncommon situation in America of the early twentieth century). Nevertheless, he insisted that the entire family attend synagogue Friday evening, and enjoy a festive meal with Kiddush, zemirot (songs of praise), and Torah interpretations. Saturday morning their father would rise at sunrise to pray alone, and – before leaving for work – would kiss them with tears coursing down his cheeks, blessing them with the wish that they

would never have to desecrate the holy Sabbath in their lifetimes. Upon his return, he would share the third Sabbath meal with them, and – as a family – they would chant the Havdala prayer at the conclusion of the holy day. Apparently, his blessing bore sweet fruit. In this case, the sacred tears of a sincere Jew who tried to keep the mitzva of Shabbat as best as he could soared heavenwards to God and inwards to the souls of his children and, happily, his children's children.

Shabbat Shalom

[Rabbi YY Jacobson

The Chips of Your Life Will Make You Rich

Why Would Moshe Make Money from Carving the Second Tablets?

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

Moses' Wealth

In this week's Torah portion, Eikev, Moses recounts the dramatic tale of how, following the Revelation at Sinai, G-d carved out Two Tablets, engraved them with the Ten Commandments, and presented them to Moses on Mt. Sinai. When Moses descended the mountain, however, he observed that the Israelites had created a Golden Calf as an idol. Moses seized the Tablets and smashed them before their eyes.

After a confrontation with G-d, Moses persuades Him, as it were, to forgive the Jewish people for their betrayal. G-d instructs Moses to carve out a second pair of tablets, to replace the first smashed ones.

In Moses' own words:

עקב י, א-ב: בָּעֵת הַהִוא אָמַר יְהוָה אֵלַי, פְּסָל-לְךָ שְׁנֵי-לוּחֹת אֲבָנִים כָּרִאשֹׁנִים, וַעֲלֵה אֵלַי, הָהָרָה; וְעָשִׂיתָ לְךָ, אָרוֹן עֵץ. וְאֶכְתֹּב, עַל-הַלֻּחֹת, אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים, אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל-הַלֻּחֹת הָרִאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ; וְשַׂמְתָּם, בָּאָרוֹן.

At that time, the Lord said to me, "Hew for yourself two stone tablets like the first ones and come up to Me onto the mountain…"[i]

The Sages, always sensitive to nuance, focus on the word "for yourself" ("lecha"), which seems superfluous and even misleading, as though these tablets were being carved for Moses himself. The verse could have stated, "Carve two stone Tablets." What does it mean, "Carve for yourself?"

The Talmud[ii] deduces that Moses was permitted to keep the chips of the second Tablets, hewed from sapphire. As Moses hewed the stone into Two Tablets, all the leftover chips became his. Indeed, the Hebrew word for "hew," pesal, also means the leftover chips, the refuse (pesoles). This, says the Talmud, transformed Moses into a very wealthy man.

נדרים לח, א: אמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא, לא העשיר משה אלא מפסולתן של לוחות, שנאמר: "פסל לך שני לוחות אבנים כראשונים", פסולתן שלך יהא.

Talmud Nedarim 38a: Moses became wealthy only from the waste remaining from hewing the Tablets of the Covenant, as it is stated: "Hew for you two tablets of stone like the first" (Exodus 34:1). "Hew for you" means that their waste shall be yours. (As the tablets were crafted from valuable gems, their remnants were similarly valuable.)

רש"י תשא לד, א: פסל לך: הראהו מחצב סנפירינון מתוך אהלו, ואמר לו הפסולת יהיה שלך, ומשם נתעשר משה הרבה.

Rashi: G-d showed Moses a sapphire mine from within his tent, and He said to him, "The [sapphire] chips shall be yours," and from there Moses became very wealthy.

This is a strange commentary. What is this, a business deal? Moses, you carve out the second Tablets, and you get a cut! It seems distasteful that Moses is making money from the sacred Tablets containing the Ten Commandments! If G-d wanted Moses to be wealthy, He could have found many a way.

Besides, why did Moses need the money anyway? Living in the desert for his entire life, receiving all of his needs directly from G-d, did he need savings for a rainy day?

I will present two insights from two great spiritual masters. (The first comes from the third Rebbe of Chabad, the Tzemach Tzedek, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch (1789-1866); the second—from his grandson, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber Schneerson (1860-1920), known as the Rebbe Rashab.)

The Refuse, Not the Essence

Torah confers upon a human being a richness and royalty. Some 3,400 years ago, at the foot of a lone mountain, the Jewish people received a gift that transformed their life and destiny for eternity. The Torah imbued Jewish life with the dignity of purpose and the grandeur of the infinite. The Torah saturates every moment with ultimate meaning; it grants the Jewish heart, the Jewish home, and the Jewish community — rich and poor alike — a taste of heaven.

Yet the richness of Torah, the wealth that comes along with a Torah life, is merely the "pesoles," the "refuse" of Torah, the leftover "chips." It does not capture the essence of Torah. What is the essence of Torah and its Mitzvos? They are the expression of the Divine, the voice of ultimate truth, transcending all material and spiritual benefits of this world or the next world, for G-d transcends and precedes all benefits. Torah is our opportunity to touch the Divine in His essence, to reach beyond all our limitations and unite with G-d. What value is there to the richness that Torah confers upon my life—stability, meaning, purpose, consistency, focus, inspiration, discipline, depth, passion, family, faith, conviction, love, etc.—to the truth that Torah allows me to go beyond all of existence and touch the Creator Himself?[iii]

The richness of Torah pales in comparison to the core truth of Torah itself. The richness of Torah is how it benefits me, in this world or the next. But what value does that have relative to Torah itself—the ultimate truth which transcends even the highest actualization and fulfillment of "I."

The Chips of Your Life

We now come to the powerful insight of the Rebbe Rashab.[iv]

The second Tablets differed drastically from the first. As the Torah relates, the first Tablets were created by G-d himself, while the second were hewed by a human being—Moses. He is the one who carved out the stone into Tablets; only then did G-d inscribe on them the Ten Commandments.[v]

This reflected the difference within the Jewish people before and after the creation and worship of the Golden Calf: Initially, the Israelites were heavenly, pristine, and sacred, hence they were capable of receiving Heavenly Tablets, crafted in Heaven. After they tasted sin and endured spiritual failure, they could only receive the second set of Tablets, which were man-made and were inferior to the first. In the process of failure and rehabilitation, we confront our darkness, weakness, and vulnerability. We are no longer a clean slate of heaven; instead, we have much "pesoles," refuse, sediments, and filth to deal with. Comes the Torah and teaches us a powerful life lesson: It is from the "chips" of the second Tablets that Moses acquired his greatest wealth. The first Tablets had no "chips," no refuse and waste. Heaven knows not the pain of failure, the filth of promiscuity, the

misery of anxiety, the abyss of addiction. The Second Tablets, in contrast, had many a chip. They represented our confrontation with addiction, shame, and deception.

Moses was a "wealthy" man. But his true wealth came only from the second Tablets—from the light and truth that is generated when we confront our darkness and we transform it into light. When we gaze at our "chips" and turn them into Divine Tablets. It is from the confrontation with our inner gravel and trauma that we discover our profoundest richness and our deepest truths. It is when we can look at our proclivity to depression, despair, and capitulation, and use it as a springboard for awareness, that we grow to discover an inner wealth not available in the heavenly, pure and holy first Tablets given by G-d himself to pure and innocent people.

Despite the unparalleled richness of Moses' soul, his deepest richness came from dealing with the "pesoles," with the refuse, sediments, and gravel of his people. This is the wisdom and depth that emerges from life's "dirt" and grime, from amid struggle and inner strife.

As growing human beings, we must never run from our inner refuse, and from the refuse we see in others. Like Moses, our truest wealth will come when we discover and extract the sparks hidden in the "chips" of the human

[i] Numbers 10:1.

[ii] Nedarim 38a

[iii] This insight comes from the work Beurei HaZohar (by the Tzemach Tzedek Parshas) Noach p. 19

[iv] In a Chassidic discourse he said in 1908. Maamar Ki Sisa 5668 (1908).

[v] Exodus 32:16. Deuteronomy 10:1. See Yalkut Shimoni Remez 392.]

Mezuzah Mystery

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question: The Pantry Predicament

Several frum families have recently moved to an apartment complex where the residences are virtually identical. Each apartment has a small pantry off the kitchen, and we need to know whether its door requires a mezuzah, and if so, where to place it. Each family has asked this question from its posek and collectively there have been four completely different answers.

A. Sarah was told that she should place a mezuzah on the righthand side of the door as one enters the pantry from the kitchen.

B. Rivkah was told to place the mezuzah on the opposite side – on the righthand side as one leaves the pantry to reenter the kitchen.

C. Rachel was told that she does not need a mezuzah at all.

D. Leah was told to place two mezuzos, one on each side.

How can there be four different opinions how to place the mezuzah? Furthermore, since we know that one always places the mezuzah on the righthand side entering the room (Yoma 11b), why were Rivkah and Leah told to put mezuzos on the left side?

The "Ten Commandments" of Mezuzah

The laws governing where one places a mezuzah are indeed complicated. The Rambam (Hilchos Mezuzah 6:1) codifies ten necessary requirements that must be fulfilled for a house or room to be obligated to have a mezuzah. The first of his ten rules is that the room must have a minimum area of four amos by four amos (which is about fifty square feet). In the Rambam's opinion, it is not necessary that each side be at least four amos wide – if the room or building's area is at least sixteen square amos one must place a mezuzah on its entrance. Thus, according to the Rambam's opinion, a room that is three amos wide but six amos long requires a mezuzah.

However, the Rosh and others disagree, contending that a room three amos wide and six amos long does not require a mezuzah since it does not have four amos in each dimension. In other words, he contends that a normal living area must be at least four amos per side.

Although the authorities accept the Rambam's position as primary halachic opinion, and therefore one is required to place a mezuzah at the doorway to a room that is sixteen square amos even if it is narrower than four amos (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 286:13), we do not recite a beracha when placing only this mezuzah. Instead, one should recite a beracha prior to placing a mezuzah on a different doorway that all authorities require a mezuzah, and after installing that mezuzah, put up a mezuzah on the door of the room that is narrower than four amos (Shach). (This is the general rule that is applied to any case when there is a safek whether one must install a mezuzah. One does not recite a beracha, but it is optimal to place this mezuzah immediately after putting a mezuzah on another doorway that requires a beracha, thereby including the safek situation with the beracha.)

The Gemara (Sukkah 3a) says that a house smaller than four amos squared is considered too small to qualify for what the Torah calls a house, which affects many laws, including that it does not require a mezuzah (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 286:13). A house this small is not large enough for human habitation.

However, there are several important discussion points:

What if the "house" is not meant for general habitation, but is intended for a specific use, for which it is indeed suited, notwithstanding that it is smaller than four amos squared? There are authorities who contend that an area smaller than four amos squared that is suitable for its intended purpose requires a mezuzah. According to those who accept this latter idea, since a pantry is suitable for human use even when it is smaller than fifty square feet, this pantry area requires a mezuzah (Chamudei Daniel, quoted by Pischei Teshuvah). This explains why Sarah was told that she should place a mezuzah on the righthand side entering the pantry. The rav she asked follows the approach of the Chamudei Daniel (see Chovas Hadar of Rav Yaakov Blau, page 38, who cites several other authorities who accept this approach).

Are you Coming or Going?

At this point, I want to explain the answer Rivkah received, which was that one should place a mezuzah on the right entranceway reentering the kitchen from the pantry. Many authorities do not accept the approach of the Chamudei Daniel, contending that since Chazal ruled that a house smaller than four amos squared does not require a mezuzah, this is an inviolate rule, without exception. However, some authorities maintain that although a room this small never requires a mezuzah in its own right, when it connects to a larger room that requires a mezuzah, the doorway between them requires a mezuzah as an entrance to the larger room (Rabbi Akiva Eiger). They contend that if we were to remove the pantry, the doorway to the pantry would still serve as an entrance to the kitchen, and as such it requires a

mezuzah. In this case, the mezuzah should be placed on the righthand side entering the kitchen and not entering the pantry.

No Mezuzah Need Apply

At this point, we will explore a third approach to the above question. Rachel's rav ruled that her pantry doorway requires no mezuzah on either side. This is because he agrees that there is no requirement to place a mezuzah entering the pantry notwithstanding that it is suitable to its purpose, since it is smaller than four amos squared. He also holds that there is no requirement to place a mezuzah entering the kitchen. Whereas Rabbi Akiva Eiger contends that we remove the pantry from the picture and still require a mezuzah because the doorway between the two rooms qualifies as a door entering the kitchen, this third approach understands that the doorway must be viewed exclusively as the entrance to the pantry and not to the kitchen. If the pantry is too small to necessitate a mezuzah, then this doorway does not require a mezuzah at all (Da'as Kedoshim 286:13).

Double Duty

What remains is to explain the answer that Leah received that one must place a mezuzah on both sides. This rabbi appears to be concerned that perhaps the Chamudei Daniel is correct that one must install a mezuzah on the right side entering the pantry, and perhaps Rabbi Akiva Eiger is correct that one must install a mezuzah on the right side entering the kitchen. Although many authorities object to this approach of having mezuzos on both sides (Shu"t Maharam Shik, Yoreh Deah 287), there are authorities who see no problem with having mezuzos on both sides when it is uncertain which side should have the mezuzah (see Shu"t Binyan Tzion 1:100). I would like to note that most authorities object to placing mezuzos on both sides of an entranceway.

Mezuzah Rewards

We touch the mezuzah whenever we enter or exit a building to remind ourselves of Hashem's presence, which is a physical and spiritual protective shield. Whenever passing a mezuzah, we should remind ourselves of Hashem's constant protection.

Chief Rabbi Mirvis

Eikev

A singer or a Rabbi?

Who has an easier time, a singer or a Rabbi?

I've noticed that when singers perform, the audience wants to hear the melodies and the songs that they're familiar with. In fact, if a renowned singer were to miss out from a performance one of their most popular songs, the audience would be angry because they have come to hear what they've heard dozens of times before.

They love it, they love the repetition! But, when a Rabbi is preparing a sermon, a drosha or a shiur, he is under pressure to provide fresh insights, to deliver new ideas. People in his congregation are likely to be disappointed if they hear something that they have heard before. There's a very relevant peirush of Rashi at the commencement of the second paragraph of the Shema which we read in Parshat Eikev.

The Torah says: "vehaya im shamua tishmau" – "and it shall come to pass when you hear what you have heard before". Rashi tells us that when it comes to the teaching of Torah, it's important that we do hear what we have heard before.

Historically there were two different customs with regard to public Torah reading. There was the triennial system – where it took three years to go through the whole Torah and then there was the annual system where parsha after parsha were read within one year, with Simchat Torah at the end – which is what we do to this day. But why did our Rabbis choose the latter over the former?

Shul services would have been quicker with a triennial system because we would only be reading a third of what we read right now from the Torah! But the answer is that repetition is so important. We need to constantly be aware of Torah and so year after year we read the same portions, we hear the same ideas.

Of course, we should recognise that "shivim panim b' latorah" – "there are seventy angles to the Torah" but whilst we need to gain fresh depths, the material remains the same. Mitzvah number 613 is "ve'ata kitvu lachem et hashira hazot" – "we must write this song". This mitzvah is about writing a Torah but we refer to Torah as a song. Because the song of Torah is such that we should constantly want to hear it again and again.

Therefore, Rabbis have an advantage over singers because we have both repetition and fresh insights! As a result, may we continuously always succeed in uplifting our communities and may the Jewish nation only go from strength to strength. Shabbat Shalom.

Rav Kook Torah

Eikev: What Does God Want of You?

In a famous verse, Moses exhorted the people to acquire reverence for God:

וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל — מָה ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ שֹׁאֵל מֵעִמָּךְ?

כִּי אִם לְיִרְאָה אֶת ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בְּכָל-דְּרָכָיו, וּלְאַהֲבָה אֹתוֹ ...

"And now, Israel, what does the Eternal your God ask of you? Only this: to be in awe of the Eternal your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him." (Deut. 10:12)

What is awe of God? And why is it so central to our spiritual life?

Two Forms of Awe

There are two levels of reverence: Yirat Shamayim ("awe of Heaven") and Yirat Cheit ("fear of sin," or, more accurately, repulsion from sin).

They share the same root of reverence, but they differ in focus. Yirat Shamayim is primarily a mindset, an inner orientation born from awareness of God's infinite greatness.

Yirat Cheit, on the other hand, is reverence expressed in deed and action, the practical rejection of anything that defiles or distances us from God. Deep reverence for the Creator awakens an equally deep recoil from sin.

Reverence and Love

Reverence (yirah) and love (ahavah) appear to be opposites: Love draws us toward what is good and holy, while reverence turns us away from what is corrupt and degrading.

In truth, they are intertwined. Our attraction to good heightens our distaste for evil, and our avoidance of evil safeguards our path toward higher yearnings.

The Talmud (Shabbat 31b) relates that when a certain scholar passed by, Rabbi Elazar said, "Let us stand in honor of this God-fearing man." Although the man was a scholar of stature, Rabbi Elazar singled out his reverence of God as the more fundamental trait.

The True Foundation of Wisdom

Rabbi Elazar would say: “The Holy One has only awe of Heaven in His world.”

This striking statement leads us to a profound question: What purpose did God have in creating the world? We cannot answer by imagining that creation brought God some gain or improvement. Before creation, His perfection was complete, lacking nothing.

The benefit in creating the world can only be understood in the creation of a limited, finite reality. That which is finite is naturally drawn toward the Infinite. The very limitation of all things in their value and purpose is the highest good the universe receives from its Creator. For the loftiest relationship to God begins with the awe that comes from sensing our own smallness before His boundless greatness.

It is from these feelings of reverence that all positive yearnings and love are born.

When we cultivate such wisdom — contemplating the Infinite in order to awaken awe — a lofty Yirat Shamayim leaves its deep imprint on the soul. When the mind’s inner image of reverence expresses itself in the realm of action, it produces Yirat Cheit, a revulsion of sin. And from this foundation of awe springs Ahavah: an intense love for God, a longing to contemplate His light and ways, His mitzvot and His Torah.

This is the precise sequence Moses set before the people:

- “To be in awe of the Eternal your God” — Yirat Shamayim
- “to walk in all His ways ” — Yirat Cheit
- “and to love Him” — Ahavah

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

Ekev

It’s the Little Things that Count

Therefore it shall come to pass, if you fulfill these laws, and keep, and do them, then Hashem your God shall keep with you the covenant and the kindness which he swore to your fathers (7:12).

This week’s parsha begins with outlining the basis of our relationship with Hashem; if we keep the mitzvos Hashem will keep the covenant and kindnesses promised to our forefathers. Rashi (ad loc), surprisingly, says that the mitzvos that are being referred to here are those that we trample underfoot – in other words, this refers to mitzvos that we feel are insignificant.

Mizrachi (ad loc) wonders why Rashi is limiting the fulfillment in the verse to those types of mitzvos. In fact, it seems contrary to the simple reading of the verse! What compelled Rashi to explain the possuk in this manner?

Imagine for a moment, that you received a call from your neighbor at two in the morning begging you to come over because his wife had unexpectedly gone into labor and they needed someone to come over right away to stay in the house with the other young children. Undoubtedly, you, like most people, would respond in the affirmative and immediately make your way over there.

Now imagine receiving a call at two in the morning from this very same neighbor, but instead he asked you to go to Walgreens to pick up a jar of pickles and then go to 7-Eleven to get some ice cream for his wife who suddenly had an intense craving for pickles and ice cream. In this scenario you would hardly be as accommodating. You might just begin to wonder whether or not your friend had lost his mind, and you would surely question the long term viability of this friendship.

Yet, for some reason, a wife has no qualms about asking her husband to get out of bed at two in the morning and pick up items that would satisfy her cravings. Why? The answer, of course, lies in the nature of the relationship. When you are closely connected to someone you might ask things of them that seem insignificant because they know if the situation were reversed you would do the same for them.

This applies to our relationship with Hashem as well, and particularly in how we fulfill the mitzvos. Obviously it is crucially important to fast on Yom Kippur, but does that really comment on the strength of the bond as it relates to fulfilling all that Hashem desires of us? Not really. In fact, there are many marginally connected Jews who fast on Yom Kippur, but otherwise do very little else that Hashem asks of us throughout the year.

Observing, in particular, the mitzvos that one would tend to see as trivial is the real indicator of the strength of our bond with Hashem. That is why it is the observance of these mitzvos that guarantees that Hashem will fulfill the covenant that he promised our forefathers.

Living for Martyrdom?

And it will come to be, if you diligently listen to my commandments which I command you this day, to love Hashem your God […] (11:13).

Rashi (ad loc), quoting the Sifri, explains that the rewards bestowed upon one who follows all of the mitzvos come as a result of loving Hashem. In other words, one is not supposed to do the mitzvos in order to receive reward, but rather to fulfill the mitzvos out of love for Hashem. Rashi continues, “One should not say ‘I will study Torah in order to become rich; I will study in order to be called a Rav; I will study in order to receive reward […]’ but rather all that one does should be done out of love.” Rashi is clearly articulating that we do the mitzvos because we have a relationship with Hashem, not because of the reward.

This is akin to what Chazal teach in Pirkei Avos (1:3), “Antignos of Socho used to say: ‘Do not be as servants who serve the Master to receive reward. Rather, be as servants who serve the Master not to receive reward.’”

The trouble is that Rashi ends his comment on this verse with a very perplexing statement, “and in the end the honor will surely come.” Therefore, even though one isn’t supposed to focus on the reward for doing the mitzvos, one shouldn’t worry as the reward will surely follow. Rashi is seemingly undoing the lesson that he just taught! It’s almost as if we are supposed to do all the mitzvos “altruistically” – wink, wink – knowing all the while that, ultimately, we really are receiving a reward.

If we aren’t supposed to do the mitzvos in order to receive the reward, then what’s the point of making assurances that in the end you will receive it? Aren’t we supposed to grow to a level where we aren’t doing the mitzvos for the reward?

The answer lies in understanding why people commit acts of martyrdom and self-sacrifice. Why, to a lesser extent, do so many people practice hero worship, create fan clubs, and walk around dressed as comic book and movie characters? The answer is that they are seeking recognition. There is a gnawing emptiness in their lives that they seek to fill, and being recognized in such a way gives meaning to their lives. True, this meaning is pretty shallow, but it creates a fleeting moment of relevancy for the person.

In an extreme example, one may actually commit self-destructive acts to fill this void. In fact, the more seemingly altruistic and

self-sacrificial the act is, the more recognition they receive. Paradoxically, it seems that it is the survival instinct that drives this bizarre behavior. Thus, how does someone become immortal and live forever in the hearts and minds of others? By sacrificing themselves for the cause.

Judaism abhors this behavior (a clear reason why Christianity was a nonstarter alternative). Our whole understanding of why the world was created is based on the bestowal of good on mankind. The highest level of good is an immortal relationship with the Almighty. Therefore, everything that we do is out of love for Hashem, not out of compulsion to achieve recognition for ourselves. The word korban is commonly translated as sacrifice, but this is not really an accurate translation. The word korban comes from the root word "karov – to be close." Meaning, the highest level of service to Hashem was a way to achieve a closer relationship.

How do we know that we are in a relationship with Hashem and that it isn't merely a Master ordering His slaves to be obedient? How do we know that Hashem doesn't want us to act in a self-sacrificing way? Because, as Rashi points out, the motivation for the mitzvos must be our love for Hashem. Still, you might ask, but who's to say that this is a two-way relationship, perhaps it is like idol worship and is entirely one-way?

Because Hashem assures us that the reward is going to come in the end. Just like in a healthy marriage we (hopefully) don't act in a quid pro quo manner, that is, we don't expect the wife to make dinner for her husband because he did the shopping and now she feels obligated. We all want our spouses to do things for us out of love, not obligation. That is why Rashi finishes with "in the end the reward will come." Knowing that Hashem is interested in rewarding us tells us that we are in a loving relationship and not in an altruistic, self-sacrificial one.

[CS Also:

Michal Horowitz

Eikev 5785: Eternal Lessons from the Shema

In Parshas Eikev - which is replete with the admonishments, teachings, exhortations, mussar, love, and direction of Moshe Rabbeinu, relayed to the nation in the last month of his life - Moshe reviews a theme he has already taught us in Va'Eschanan.

In last week's parsha, in the Shema, Moshe commands us: וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם עַל־לְבָבֶךָ, and these words that I command you today shall be upon your heart, וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתֶךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמֶךָ, and you shall teach your children and speak of them, when you sit in your house and when you walk on your way, and when you lay down and when you arise (Devarim 6:6-7).

Here we have the imperative to place the words of Torah upon our own hearts - internalizing them and living by them - and to teach our children and students (see Rashi to 6:7), so that they too learn, live and love Torah.

And then in Eikev, Moshe once again commands us: "And you shall place these words upon your heart and your soul… וְלִמַּדְתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת-בְּנֵיכֶם, לְדַבֵּר בָּם, בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתֶךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ, וּבְשָׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמֶךָ, and you shall teach them to your children, to speak of them, when you sit in your house and when you walk on your way, when you lay down and when you arise" (11:19).

Later in Devarim, on the last day of his life, Moshe once again stresses the importance of one generation teaching, and transmitting, the masorah to the next generation. זְכֹר יְמוֹת עוֹלָם בִּינוּ שְׁנוֹת דֹּר וָדֹר שְׁאַל אָבִיךָ וְיַגֶּדְךָ זְקֵנֶיךָ וְיֹאמְרוּ־לָךְ - Remember the days of old; reflect upon the years of generations. Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will say to you (32:7).

Klal Yisrael is commanded to become a nation of teachers, and to ensure that each generation passes on the Torah to the next.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z'l writes, "This emphasis on education has given Judaism, from the very beginning, a future orientation that is unusual among the great religions of the world. Jews have always cared about children and placed them as their highest joy. Rather than look back to a vanished past, they have looked forward to a distant but promised future. A people that places children at the apex of its agenda does not grow old. It learns to see the world through the eyes of a child - with hope and wonder and aspiration unsullied by cynicism and despair…

"So it was at virtually every period of Jewish history and almost every place where there was a Jewish community… By 15th century, Spanish Jewry had long passed its Golden Age. The Spanish equivalent of Kristallnacht - synagogues set on fire, Jewish businesses looted, and Jews killed - took place in 1391. From then until their expulsion in 1492, Jews lived under the shadow of persecution. Their civil rights were curtailed. They were constantly urged to convert to Christianity…. At the height of this crisis, a gathering of Jews was convened at Valladolid, Spain, in 1432. It ordained a series of taxes on meat, wine, weddings, and circumcisions, to raise funds for public education:

'We also ordain that every community of fifteen householders [or more] shall be obliged to maintain a qualified elementary teacher to instruct their children in Scripture. They shall provide him with sufficient income for a living in accordance with the number of his dependents. The parents shall be obliged to send their children to that teacher, and each shall pay him in accordance with his means. If this revenue from the parents should prove inadequate, the community shall be obliged to supplement it with an amount necessary for his livelihood in accordance with the time and the place.'

"Until modern times there was no parallel to this Jewish insistence on education as the fundamental right and duty of every person, every child…

"The Mesopotamians built ziggurats, the Egyptians build pyramids, the Greeks built the Parthenon, and the Romans the Coliseum. Jews build schools. That is why we are still here. That is the secret of our immortality" (Covenant & Conversation, Deuteronomy, p.101-104).

I once heard a beautiful insight related by Rabbi Shay Schachter, in the name of the great tzadik, Rav Meir Shapiro of Lublin zt'l. In the Book of Esther, the pasuk tells us:

וַיְסַפֵּר הָמָן לְזֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וּלְכָל־אֹהֲבָיו אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֲכָמָיו וְזֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ אִם מִזֶּרַע הַיְהוּדִים מָרְדֳּכַי אֲשֶׁר־הַחִלּוֹתָ לִנְפֹּל לְפָנָיו לֹא־תוּכַל לּוֹ כִּי־נָפוֹל תִּפּוֹל לְפָנָיו - And Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and to all his friends all that had befallen him, and his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the seed of the Jews, you will not overcome him, but you will surely fall before him" (Esther 6:13 - the Divine coordination of the fact that this is verse 6:13 should not be lost to us…).

Rav Meir Shapiro of Lublin explains that the advisors and Zeresh were saying to Haman: אִם מִזֶּרַע הַיְהוּדִים - if at a time like this - a time of persecution and terror, a time of destruction and fear - the Jews are still teaching their children, if they are investing in the future, the seed of their nation, the זֶרַע הַיְהוּדִים, then you will

never defeat them. Haman's friends and family were saying to him: "The Jews understand that the secret to their survival lies in the future, the seeds whom are the children they plant, and then nurture through education. Hence we are forced to recognize that they are - and will always remain - an eternal people. Against such a nation your nefarious plans will never succeed."

"And you shall teach your children/students, and you shall speak of them, when you sit in your home and when you walk on the way…" Such is the strength of our people, such is the secret to our survival, and thus we will merit to remain strong and eternal, from generation to generation.

בברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום,

Michal]

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