



BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io
From: Chaim Shulman
<cshulman@gmail.com>

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **KI SAVO** - 5784

parsha@groups.io / www.parsha.net - in our 29th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha+subscribe@groups.io Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net> It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored in memory of **Chaim Yissachar z"l** ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov.

In memory of Sara Masha bat R' Yaakov Eliezer a"h, Baila bat Arye Leib a"h & Ana Malka bas Yisrael a"h.

To sponsor a parsha sheet contact cshulman@gmail.com (proceeds to tzedaka)

Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiyy-theyeshiva.net@shared1.ccsend.com> Thu, Sep 19, 2024 at 2:46 PM

Reply-To: info@theyeshiva.net

To: internetparshasheet@gmail.com

When G-d Wants You to Compliment Yourself Before I Confess My Sins, I Must Confess My Greatness

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

Do I Have to Tell Him?

An old German man was feeling guilty about something he had done, so he decided to go to Confession.

He said, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I feel terrible because during World War II, I hid a Jew in my attic."

The priest said, "But that's not a sin! I wouldn't feel bad about that if I were you."

"But I made him agree to pay me 50 Marks for every week he stayed."

The priest said, "Well, I admit that it wasn't the noblest thing to do, charging the man to save his life, but you did save his life, after all, and that is a good thing. Don't worry about it too much; G-d forgives."

The man said, "Oh thank you, Father, that eases my mind. I have only one more question to ask you: Do I have to tell him the war is over?"

Make a Confession!

I want to achieve an ambitious goal with this essay: I want to bring back confession to Judaism. People attribute confession to Catholicism; they think it is the job of the priests. I believe it is time to bring it back to our people. I am going to ask of each of my readers that during the following day you should make at least one confession.

Now before you dismiss my plea, allow me to explain myself. Tithing Cycle

This week's Torah portion, Ki Savo, discusses an interesting law known as "Vidui Maaser," "the Tithing Confession." In the Holy Land, tithes must be taken from one's crops, according to a set three-year cycle. During each of the three years, a portion of the produce (around 2 percent) is given to the Kohanim, the priests, who had no income of their own (due to their Temple service). This is known as terumah. Another portion of the produce (around 10 percent) was given to the Levites, who also had no income of their own, as they also served in the Temple and served as teachers. This was known as maasar reshon, the first tithing. There were other tithes that differed from year to year. Here is a quick glance:

Year 1—in addition to terumah and maser reshon, you separate a portion of the crop, known as maaser sheni. This is taken by the owner to Jerusalem and eaten there. It gave Jews an opportunity to spend time in the Holy City, contribute to its economy, and learn from its masters.

Year 2 – same as year one.

Year 3—in addition to terumah and maser reshon, a portion of the crop was separated and given to the poor, known as maaser ani (this was in addition to many other contributions made to the poor from each farm.)

Year 4 – same as years 1-2.

Year 5 – same as years 1-2, 4.

Year 6 – same as year 3.

Year 7 – This was a sabbatical year, shemita, in which no plowing or planting was permitted, and no tithes were given. That year the field was open to everybody to enjoy.

Now, on the day before Passover of year four and year seven, every owner must make sure that he has delivered all the tithes of the past three years to their proper destination—to the Priests, the Levites, and the poor. Then, on the last day of Passover of the 4th and 7th years, the farmer recites a special declaration found in this week's portion.

Let us review the text in the Torah:

כי תכלה לעשר את-כל-מעשר תבואתך, בשנה השלישית—שנת המעשר: ונתתה ללוי, לגר ליתום ולאלמנה, ואכלו בשעריך, וישבעו. ואמרת לפני ה' אלקיך בערתי הקדש מן-הבית, וגם נתתיו ללוי לגר ליתום ולאלמנה, ככל-מצותך, אשר צויתני: לא-עברתי ממצותיך, ולא שקחתי. לא-אכלתי באני ממנו, ולא-בערתי ממנו בטמא, ולא-נתתי ממנו, למת; שמעתי, בקול ה' אלקי-עשיתי, ככל אשר צויתני. השקיפה ממעון קדשך מן-השמים, וברך את-עמך את-ישראל, ואת האדמה, אשר נתתה לנו--כאשר נשבעת לאבותינו, ארץ זבת חלב ודבש. [1]

"You shall say before G-d your Lord: I have removed all the sacred portions from my house. I have given the appropriate portions to the Levite, to the convert, to the orphan and to the widow, following all the commandments You prescribed to us. I have not violated your commandments, and have not forgotten anything... I have listened to the voice of the Lord my G-d; I have done everything You commanded me..." Basically, G-d wants us to verbally declare that we have done everything right. We distributed all the produce we were required to. We tell G-d bluntly that we perfectly implemented all of His commandments on this matter.

This is, no doubt, an interesting mitzvah. G-d wants us to compliment ourselves. He wants us to declare emphatically: G-d! I did it, and I did it well!

But why? He knows we did it. We know we did it. What is the point of making this official verbal declaration?

We have no other precedent for this in Judaism—to literally compliment ourselves before the Almighty!

This Is a Confession?

What is stranger is that this recitation has a name in all of Talmudic literature: Vidui Maaser, "the Tithing Confession."

Yet virtually, this recitation is the furthest thing from a confession. A "vidui," a confession, in its classic sense, means that we admit our guilt and ask for forgiveness. We have in Judaism a number of confessional prayers (most of them will be recited on Yom Kippur, the day of confession and atonement), and they all share the same message: Ashamnu, bagadnu, gazalnu, debarnu dofi... "We are guilty; we have dealt treacherously; we have stolen; we spoke falsely, etc." We confess for the sins and errors that we committed in one form or another, we express remorse and we resolve to change in the future.

Yet in this case, we encounter a "confession" of a diametrically opposite nature. Imagine you approach your wife and say: My dear, I want to make a confession to you. Your wife's ears perk up to hear what you did this time. You continue:

"I want to confess to you today, that I am a wonderful, accomplished, flawless, magnificent, incredible, sensitive, kind, caring, handsome, and passionate husband and father. I have fulfilled all of my duties; I have been loyal to you with every fiber of my being; I have dutifully always fulfilled all my responsibilities; I forgot nothing, I did not transgress; I have been faithful and dutiful, committed and moral. Alas, I am the perfect man."

Well, call this guy any name you'd like, but for G-d's sake, it is not a confession!...

Yet, astoundingly, this is exactly what we do with the "tithe confession." Listen to the words: "You shall say before G-d your Lord: I have removed all the sacred portions from my house. I have given the appropriate portions to the Levite, to the convert, to the orphan, and to the widow, following all the commandments You prescribed to us. I have not violated your commandments, and have not forgotten anything... I have

listened to the voice of the Lord my G-d; I have done everything You commanded me." [2]

And Judaism calls this a confession, a "vidui" [3]

Perhaps if more Jews would know that this is "confession," we would not leave this art to the Catholics; the synagogue would have long lines every day of Jews coming to confess, telling us that they are absolutely perfect, impeccable, flawless, and faultless.

A Catholic boy and a Jewish boy were talking and the Catholic boy said, "My priest knows more than your rabbi." The Jewish boy said, "Of course he does, you tell him everything."

Poor Christians! They think confession is sharing all the negative stuff. Nonsense! Confession is saying how perfect you are. "I have fulfilled all of your commandments."

I'm Awesome

Yet it is in this very mitzvah of "tithing confession" that we encounter an incredible truth: It is important for people to verbalize, from time to time, how good they are, how beautiful they are, how powerful they are. Not in a generic, meaningless, and foolish way, and certainly not in a haughty way, but rather in a very specific, directed, and focused manner. There is always one area, one aspect of your life in which you are a success story. And you need to be able to see it and verbalize it. In this above law, the Jew specifies that as far as tithing is concerned, he has done a magnificent job.

And this is called "confession." Do you know why? See how the Sages, 1800 years before the development of many psychological schools of healing and therapy, taught us this potent truth: Only when I believe that I am good, I'm capable of regretting my mistakes. If I believe that I am just a dirty old rat, I can't really regret my wrongdoings, because I see them as inevitable. When I appreciate my potential for greatness, I can hold myself accountable for my errors.

Genuine confession requires not only acknowledging and confronting a mistake; it also requires a belief that you are essentially good, that you are capable of being good, and that in some areas you are exceptionally good.

If my garment is raddled with stains, and you pour some orange juice on it, it won't bother me. I may not even notice it. But if I am wearing a fresh, clean, and beautiful suit and you spill the chocolate mousse with vanilla on it, I will take note. If I consider my soul dirty and filthy, I can't even take note of my inappropriate and immoral behaviors, of my hurtful words, of my toxic thoughts; they fit right in with my distorted self. Only when I appreciate my innate dignity, majesty, and purity, can I begin to notice and feel bad about all that which tarnishes and eclipses such a beautiful life.

Have you ever heard a couple argue in the following manner? She: Darling, you are making a mistake again.

He: Of course! I am always wrong; you are always right. I am the dumb, stupid, bad, husband, who is always dead wrong.

You are the perfect wife. You are never ever wrong.

Well, we all know that no woman is pleased with this acknowledgment. Because it is meaningless and cynical. Whenever anybody says, "I am always wrong," it means "I am never wrong; you are just impossible to please." Whenever anybody says, "you are always right," it means "you are never right."

Sincere confession means that I am sometimes right. But now I am wrong. I am not always wrong; it is now that I am wrong. There is a verse in the Song of Songs: "I am dark and beautiful." [4] These are the two interconnected sides necessary for all personal growth: I am dark, I may have succumbed to darkness, but I am inherently beautiful. Hence, 1) I regret what I did. I know that it did not befit me; I am so much better. I want to fix it, because this behavior compromises my inherent beauty. [5] 2) I acknowledge that I had the power not to do it; it was not inevitable. I was capable of choosing otherwise and I regret my wrongdoing. 3) I know that I possess the power to fix it for the future. I am not a victim. [6]

To truly confess a mistake or a sin requires that I can sometimes tell G-d: I am good! I am great! I have done exactly what You wanted. I have not transgressed. And because I am capable of doing things correctly I can sincerely regret my actions when I fail to do so. The tithing declaration is called confession because it enables and gives meaning to all other confessions of repentance.

My Boy, You're Great

This truth is vital for education—in the home and in the classroom.

Your child comes home with a report card; in some subjects, he or she did great, in others—he performed poorly. We instinctively tend to focus on the negative, on what is missing, and try to fix it.

There is a more effective approach. Focus on your child's success and strengths. When you receive the report card and see what he is lacking in, don't say: "My dear angel, I see that you need help with this subject. How can I help you? What is bothering you? You are such a good boy, why are you failing in this area?"

Instead say this: "My dear, I see you are excelling in your reading skills, in science and math. I see you got an A-plus for cleanliness and organization. I see you scored really high on your skill for co-operation with friends and sportsmanship. It is obvious that when you put your mind to something, you are immensely successful at it. Now how can we apply these lessons to other areas of your education?"

Your child might be lacking in a certain behavior at home. Point out to him all the things he is doing right at home. "I notice how well-mannered you are when you eat; I noticed earlier how considerate you were when your brother asked you for the juice; I noticed how sensitive you were to your baby sister. This shows how much kindness you have in your heart." What did you accomplish? You made your child feel like a success story. You accentuated what is right with him or her,

not what is wrong with them. And you did it not in a patronizing way (you are such an angel; you are a tzaddik; you are the best kid in the world—all this is a lie. Your child is not an angel, he is not a tzaddik, and he is not the best child in the world. And your child knows it is untrue!), but in a specific, genuine and real way.

You showed him what is great about his life. How good and special and capable he or she is. Now, he has a standard for himself that will 1) allow him to appreciate why his past behavior was unbecoming and inspire him to do better. 2) You will make him believe that he is truly capable of doing better. [7]

Singing My Sins?

Here is a story:

The Baal Shem Tov once visited a town in which the people complained that their cantor behaved strangely. It seems that on Yom Kippur, he would chant the Al Chet, confession of sins, in a merry melody, rather than in a more appropriately somber tune. When questioned by the Baal Shem Tov, the cantor explained:

"Rebbe, a king has many servants who serve him. Some of them prepare the royal meals, others serve the food, while others place the royal crown on the king's head, and yet others are in charge of running the affairs of the country, etc. Each of them rejoices in his work and the privilege he has to serve and to be so close to the king.

"Now the palace also has a janitor, charged with the duty of removing the rubbish and filth from the palace. The janitor looks and deals with filth all day. He approaches it, gathers it, and removes it. Do you think that he should be depressed because he is looking at dirt all day? No! He is happy because he is also serving the king. He is removing the dirt from the king's palace, ensuring that the palace is beautiful! It is not the dirt he is focused on, it is on the King's palace and its beauty that he is occupied with."

"When a Jew sins, he amasses some dirt on his soul. When he is confessing his sins, it is not the sins, the guilt, the darkness, and the negativity, that he is focused on; it is the holiness and beauty of his soul that he is focused on. He is removing the layers of dirt that are eclipsing the soul; he is allowing his inner light to shine in its full glory. Is that not a reason to sing and rejoice?"

The Baal Shem Tov was deeply moved by this response because it captures one of his essential ideas. While other approaches in Jewish ethics focused often on the negativity of sin and its dire consequences in this world and even more in the next world, the Baal Shem Tov and the teachings of Chassidus focus primarily on the infinite holiness of every soul and heart.

"Just as when you look at the earth you can never estimate how many treasures are hidden beneath its crust, so when you look at a Jew you can never estimate how many treasures lie beneath his or her crust," the Baal Shem Tov once said.

This was one of the most important ideas of the Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760)—whose birthday we celebrate on the 18th of Elul: (18 Elul is the birthday of the two luminaries—the Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chasidic movement, and Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad (1745-1812). It is also the yartzeit of the great Jewish thinker, the Maharal of Prague (in 1609), a great-great-great-grandfather of the Alter Rebbe.)

When you encounter a fellow Jew—and that includes yourself—who may have many a blemish, and committed many a sin and mistake, don't tell him how bad he is; tell him how good he is and how good he can be; how much G-d loves him and needs him, and then he automatically he will want to remove the clouds blacking his inner sunlight.

It is interesting, that till today in most Jewish communities the confession is done with a melody: "Ashamanu, Bagadnu..." "Veal kulam Eloka Selechosh..." Our confession of sins is inspired by our tithe confession.

An Exercise

So I return to my original plea: I want each of you to make a confession today. Tell someone—your rabbi, your friend, your spouse—something very positive about yourself. One positive thing about your soul and your life. Something you are proud of. Not in an arrogant way, but as a "confession." Because when you realize how good and capable you are, you might ask yourself the question, why am I not living up to my potential? [8]

[1] Deuteronomy 26:12-15 [2] Deuteronomy 26:13-14

[3] The Sforno (the Italian Rabbi, physician, and philosopher Rabbi Ovadya Sforno, 1470-1550) in his commentary on this verse explains, that the ceremony is called "vidui" because there is an implicit tragedy that hovers over the entire ritual. We testify to the fact that "I have removed the sacred portions from my house." Why is this entire house cleaning necessary? Who should really be receiving these portions? Before the Jews made the Golden Calf, the Divine service was the duty of the firstborn in each family. As a result of the sin of the Golden Calf, the privilege went to the tribe of Levi. If we would have not sinned, then, the tithe could remain in our own home, given to the oldest of the family. Now, however, our homes cannot accept the holiness. We have to remove it from our home. This fits well with what the Sforno writes elsewhere, that if not for the Golden Calf, there would be no Holy Temple; for every home would be a Temple, an abode for the Divine presence. Now, there is a need for a spiritual epicenter in lieu of our homes. For this, we confess.

The Sforno uses this concept to explain why the word used here in the subsequent prayer is "Hashkifa" [look down] which denotes a negative gaze (as in Genesis 19:28 and Exodus 14:24). Why are we invoking this term in our prayer? It is because we are confessing the sin of the Golden Calf.

[4] Song of Songs 1:5. Cf. Likkutei Torah Shir Hashirim on this verse. [5] For an elaboration of this point, see Sichas 18

Elul 5712 (1952). [6] For an elaboration of these last two points, see Likkutei Sichos vol. 30 Miketz. [7] Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twersky in his book of Chassidic tales relates a story about his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe, "The Rusty Penny," which expresses this same idea. [8] The idea about "vidui maaser" is based on a sermon presented by Rabbi Josef B. Soloveitchik ("Bris Avos," published in his book "Chamash Derashos.") The second half of the sermon on an address I heard from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Shabbos Parshas Acharei 5748 (1988).

<https://www.jewishpress.com/>

Remembering Not To Forget

By **Rabbi Reuven Taragin** - 17 Elul 5784 – September 19, 2024

Parshat Ki Tavo – Hakarat HaTov

The parsha begins by explaining how one who brings bikkurim (first fruits) to the Mikdash declares his appreciation of Hashem's gift of the Land of Israel (26:3). By doing so, he shows that he is "not an ingrate" (Rashi).

The farmer may have been living on the land for hundreds of years and his family may have lived in Eretz Yisrael for many generations, but he still needs to thank Hashem for gifting him the land.

The parsha ends with Moshe Rabbeinu's introduction to the second covenant with Hashem. He explains that a new covenant is necessary because, in the past, the Jews did not yet fully appreciate Hashem (29:3).

Though Hashem had liberated them from Egypt and saved them at the sea, it took forty years of His constant provision for them to fully appreciate Him. This level of appreciation is a condition for the covenant and a meaningful relationship with Hashem (Rashi).

Do We Remember?

We know that Hashem returns life to us each morning, provides us with all we need, and protects us throughout each day, but we do not always show this appreciation properly? Though we proclaim (in the Modim tefillah) that "we will thank you and sing your praises for our lives are in your hands, our souls in your care, your miracles every day, and your wonders and benevolence that are with us at every moment – evening, morning and afternoon," we are not often actively conscious, reflective, and appreciative of Hashem's care for us. Parshat Ki Tavo relates to this phenomenon as well. At the end of the three-year ma'aser (tithe) cycle, we proclaim that "we have not violated any of the mitzvot and not forgotten" (26:14). Some of our mistakes reflect mistaken conscious decisions; others stem from forgetfulness or lack of consciousness. Or, as we admit in the Al Cheits, sometimes we sin "bli da'at – without thinking."

We believe that Hashem provides for us, but it is often not part of our active consciousness. We do not even need to forget because we are not reflective enough to remember.

Maximizing Miraculous Moments

This is why taking advantage of the moments when Hashem reminds us of His presence and assistance is so important. These special moments help us appreciate Hashem's more subtle and hidden role in our daily lives (Ramban, Shemot 13:16).

We experienced such a moment earlier this week.

Miraculously, thousands of beepers (and later walkie-talkies) exploded simultaneously and killed and wounded thousands of the terrorists who have been attacking us for decades.

Though the explosions were the result of much human effort and ingenuity, we know that they would not have taken place without Hashem's assistance.

What is the proper reaction to this event? Many responded by posting or liking funny memes about the situation. A little laughter in these difficult times is certainly healthy.

The more important response is appreciating and thanking Hashem for His assistance. ...

Remembering to thank Hashem is so critical at this challenging time. We have experienced much suffering over the past year, which has caused many to feel distant from Hashem and wonder if Hashem is still with us. Moments like Tuesday give us the answer and (our proper response to them gives us) the strength to deal with more difficult days.

Continuing Our Tradition

Our thanks to Hashem on Tuesday night followed the tradition of our ancestors who burst into song after experiencing Hashem's salvation at Yam Suf. Their Az Yashir did not focus on the downfall of the Egyptians but, instead, on appreciating Hashem's salvation. We, too, concentrate not on the downfall of Hezbollah or Hamas but on Hashem's assistance to us.

Though the drowning of Hashem's creatures made the angels' song inappropriate (Sanhedrin 39b), our ancestors were expected to sing because they were the ones actually saved.

With their song, they reached a high spiritual level. We, too, use their words each morning as the transition from praise of Hashem to commitment to His service.

We accentuate their song on the day they sang it as well – the last day of Pesach. Because of the death of Hashem's creations, we limit ourselves to half-Hallel, but we still say Hallel, sing and celebrate.

In fact, though we recite Az Yashir every day, we reinforce our recital on the last day of Pesach by reciting it at sea at night (a minhag some have) and singing it verse by verse in the morning. The drowning of Hashem's creatures does not keep us from expressing our thanks to Him.

Perspective

How many great miracles have we experienced over the past months? Soldiers have shared so many stories of salvation. A unit in a personnel carrier was saved after backing up to transfer tefillin. Another unit was saved by a soldier who saw a terrorist rising from a pier he was facing while davening

Mincha. These stories are Hashem's way of reminding us that He is with us.

We have also experienced much larger miracles. The unprecedented defense against hundreds of missiles and drones fired simultaneously by Iran and her proxies in April and the successful neutralization of thousands of Hezbollah missiles in August are just two of the many.

Did we "remember" to thank and praise Hashem then, and did we do so this week? Like the one bringing bikkurim, we need to express appreciation to Hashem for giving us the Land of Israel and sustaining us within it.

There are many ways to express thanks. You can dance, you can recite Mizmor L'Todah or Nishmat, you can sing His praise. Which mode you choose is less important than making sure to choose one.

Redemption

Chazal tell us that Chizkiyahu HaMelech was meant to be the Mashiach after Hashem saved him and the city of Yerushalayim from Sancheirev's army if only he had responded with song and praise (Sanhedrin 94a). Had he responded like our ancestors at Yam Suf, he would have been crowned as Mashiach.

Chizkiyahu, like us, was not "out of the woods" yet. All of Judea lay in ruins, but he was still expected to show his appreciation for Hashem's salvation with song. He did not and the Messianic age was delayed for millennia.

Our personal relationship with Hashem and our national redemption hinge on our "remembering" to respond to his salvation with song and praise.

How To Use This Shabbat To Prepare for Rosh Hashana

As we approach Rosh Hashana, the day we all pass before Hashem, we should consider the depth of our relationship with Him. Do we appreciate the role He plays in our lives? Does that help make His existence central to our consciousness? If the answer to these questions is the same as earlier this week, we have missed a golden opportunity.

Let's make sure not to let Shabbat pass without thanking Hashem for the past week's events. Let's ensure the beeper blasts inspire a better appreciation for everything Hashem does for us and His role in our lives.

We can accomplish this goal by discussing this week's events in shul and at the Shabbat table. We should take the opportunity over Shabbat to talk about the events and our lives with our children and encourage each of them to reflect upon Hashem's place in their lives.

May our efforts this Shabbat inspire us to work on the trait of hakarat hatov for Hashem and others in the weeks leading up to Rosh Hashana.

Let's make sure we continue remembering not to forget.

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/sivan-rahav-meir/ribo-new-york-and-redemption/2024/09/20/>
Ribo, New York, And Redemption

By **Sivan Rahav-Meir** - 17 Elul 5784 – September 20, 2024
It's possible to describe what happened this month in technical terms: The Israeli singer-songwriter Ishay Ribo broke a record when he appeared in Madison Square Garden in New York. His two performances there, attracting thousands, were sold out.

But it's also possible to describe what happened on a spiritual level: It's the month of Elul in the Diaspora and Jews there are eager for contact with an emissary from the land of Israel. It's a time of drawing closer to G-d, of gaining clarity, of renewed Jewish pride and identification with Israel, a time of joy, of prayer, of unity.

At these huge gatherings there were not only songs but also words of inspiration from Ribo regarding our present challenges: "I believe – and I think everyone else believes in their heart – that everything the nation of Israel is going through now is not in vain. The pain and the tears that have fallen without end will cause redemption to grow and a new world to flourish. When this happens – soon, with G-d's help – we cannot imagine how much good there will be." These words, too, and not only Ribo's famous hit songs, were applauded by thousands of Jews. Amen.

Making The Connection
74 mitzvot!

Last Shabbat we read Parashat Ki Teitze which is the parasha in the Torah that contains the largest number of mitzvot: 74 out of a total of taryag (613) mitzvot.

Let's stop for a moment and think about this, especially now in the month of Elul. The list of mitzvot in this parasha is not a long shopping list of items to "check off" when completed. The word mitzvah is not only derived from the root word, "tzivui"- commandment, it is also closely related to the Aramaic word, "tzavta" – together, which is connected to the Hebrew word, "tzevet," – staff, a group of people who work together. When a person fulfills a mitzvah, he or she is connecting to G-d and becoming His partner. This connection in itself is the greatest reward and the most incredible source of joy! Through mitzvot, a person is doing the right thing, and in this way, he is making the world right too.

The mitzvot enable us to take the most basic things of all: our bodies, our possessions, our most physical parts, and to sanctify them. For example, we can take our hard-earned money—and give it to tzedakah, to someone in need. We can find a lost item and return it to its owner; we can take tefillin straps and wrap them around our arms; we can knead dough and make the blessing of hafrashat challah (separating challah).

It is through these physical actions that we mere humans are able to bring into our world holy sparks of the eternal Light. At the end of each year, as we stand on the cusp of the year to come, it is the custom for us to take on a new mitzvah, a practical action, which will bring us more of a "tzavta" –

connection to G-d – and thus bring more holiness into our lives.

Translated by Yehoshua Siskin and Janine Muller Sherr.

fw from allen.klein@gmail.com

from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust <info@rabbisacks.org>

subject: Covenant and Conversation

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Freedom Means Telling the Story Ki Tavo

Here's an experiment. Walk around the great monuments of Washington D.C. There, at the far end, is the figure of Abraham Lincoln, four times life-size. Around him on the walls of the memorial are the texts of two of the greatest speeches of history, the Gettysburg Address and Lincoln's second Inaugural:

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right. . ."

A little way away is the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial with its quotations from each period of the President's life as leader, most famously:

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

Keep walking along the Potomac and you come to the Jefferson Memorial, modelled on the Pantheon at Rome. There too you will find, around the dome and on the interior walls, quotations from the great man, most famously from the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident . . ."

Now visit London. You will find many memorials and statues of great people. But you will find no quotations. The base of the statue will tell you who it represents, when they lived, and the position they occupied or the work they did, but no narrative, no quotation, no memorable phrases or defining words.

Take the statue of Winston Churchill in Parliament Square. Churchill was one of the greatest orators of all time. His wartime speeches and broadcasts are part of British history. But no words of his are inscribed on the monument, and the same applies to almost everyone else publicly memorialised. It's a striking difference. One society – the United States of America – tells a story on its monuments, a story woven out of the speeches of its greatest leaders. The other, England, does not. It builds memorials but it doesn't tell a story. This is one of the deep differences between a covenant society and a tradition-based society.

In a tradition-based society like England, things are as they are because that is how they were. England, writes Roger Scruton, "was not a nation or a creed or a language or a state but a home. Things at home don't need an explanation. They are there because they are there."

Covenant societies are different. They don't worship tradition for tradition's sake. They do not value the past because it's old. They remember the past because it was events in the past that led to the collective determination that moved people to create

the society in the first place. The Pilgrim Fathers of America were fleeing religious persecution in search of religious freedom. Their society was born in an act of moral commitment, handed on to successive generations. Covenant societies exist not because they have been there a long time, nor because of some act of conquest, nor for the sake of some economic or military advantage. They exist to honour a pledge, a moral bond, an ethical undertaking. That is why telling the story is essential to a covenant society. It reminds all citizens of why they are there. The classic example of telling the story occurs in this week's parsha, in the context of bringing first-fruits to Jerusalem: The Priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the Lord your God. Then you shall declare before the Lord your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous . . . So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the first-fruits of the soil that You, Lord, have given me." Deut. 26:4-10 We all know the passage. Instead of saying it on Shavuot when bringing first-fruits, we now say it on Pesach as the central part of the Haggadah. What remains remarkable is that, even in biblical times, every member of the nation was expected to know the story of the nation, and recite it annually, and make it part of his or her personal memory and identity – "My father... so the Lord brought us out."

A covenant is more than a myth of origin – like the Roman story of Romulus and Remus, or the English story of King Arthur and his ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you. Deut. 11:13-17

Covenant societies are not ethnic nations bound by common racial origin. They make room for outsiders – immigrants, asylum seekers, resident aliens – who become part of the society by taking its story and making it their own, as Ruth did in the biblical book that bears her name ("Your people will be my people, and your God, my God") or as successive waves of immigrants did when they came to the United States. Indeed conversion in Judaism is best understood not on the model of conversion to another religion - such as Christianity or Islam - but as the acquisition of citizenship in a nation like the USA. It is utterly astonishing that the mere act of telling the story, regularly, as a religious duty, sustained Jewish identity across the centuries, even in the absence of all the normal accompaniments of nationhood – land, geographical proximity, independence, self-determination – and never allowed the people to forget its ideals, its aspirations, its collective project of building a society that would be the

opposite of Egypt, a place of freedom and justice and human dignity, in which no human being is sovereign; in which God alone is King.

One of the most profound truths about the politics of covenant – the message of the first-fruits' declaration in this week's parsha – is: If you want to sustain freedom, never stop telling the story.

knights. Unlike a myth, which merely claims to say what happened, a covenant always contains a specific set of undertakings that bind

its citizens in the present and into the future.

Here for example is Lyndon Baines Johnson talking about the American covenant:

"They came here - the exile and the stranger... They made a covenant with this land. Conceived in justice, written in liberty, bound in union, it was meant one day to inspire the hopes of all mankind; and it binds us still. If we keep its terms, we shall flourish."

Covenant societies – of which the USA is the supreme contemporary example – are moral societies, meaning not that their members are more righteous than others but that they see themselves as publicly accountable to certain moral standards that are part of the text and texture of their national identity.

They are honoring the obligations imposed upon them by the founders.

Indeed, as the Johnson quotation makes clear, covenant societies see their very fate as tied up with the way they meet or fail to meet those obligations. "If we keep its terms, we shall flourish" – implying that if we don't, we won't. This is a way of thinking the West owes entirely to the book of Devarim, most famously in the second paragraph of the Shema:

If you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today . . . then I will send rain on your land in its season . . . I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

Be careful, lest you are enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you. *Deut. 11:13-17*

Covenant societies are not ethnic nations bound by common racial origin. They make room for outsiders – immigrants, asylum seekers, resident aliens – who become part of the society by taking its story and making it their own, as Ruth did in the biblical book that bears her name ("Your people will be my people, and your God, my God") or as successive waves of immigrants did when they came to the United States. Indeed conversion in Judaism is best understood not on the model of conversion to another religion - such as Christianity or Islam - but as the acquisition of citizenship in a nation like the USA. It is utterly astonishing that the mere act of telling the story, regularly, as a religious duty, sustained Jewish identity across

the centuries, even in the absence of all the normal accompaniments of nationhood – land, geographical proximity, independence, self-determination – and never allowed the people to forget its ideals, its aspirations, its collective project of building a society that would be the opposite of Egypt, a place of freedom and justice and human dignity, in which no human being is sovereign; in which God alone is King.

One of the most profound truths about the politics of covenant – the message of the first-fruits' declaration in this week's *parsha* – is: If you want to sustain freedom, never stop telling the story.

fw from allen.klein@gmail.com

www.matzav.com or www.torah.org/learning/drasha

Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Parshas Ki Savo

This week's portion discusses the entry into the land of Israel and the responsibilities that are intrinsically tied with its inheritance. There are countless blessings mentioned that follow a Torah lifestyle and unfortunately myriad curses when those values are abandoned. But after the litany of blessing and curses, Moshe tells the nation, "you have seen everything that Hashem did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and to all the land. Your eyes beheld the great signs and wonders, but Hashem did not give you a heart to comprehend, eyes to see, or ears to hear until this day" (Deuteronomy 29:2-3). Moshe was obviously referring to the day that the Jews received a Torah comprehension of events. But it defies logic. After all, what does one need to understand about wonders? Water turning to blood, supernatural invasions of wild animals, locusts, and fire-filled hail need no rocket scientist to fathom G-d's power. Surely the splitting of the sea is as amazing an event that will marvel one's eyes and stir the senses of any people.

What then does Moshe mean when he tells the nation that Hashem "did not give you a heart to comprehend, eyes to see, or ears to hear until this day" ?

Rav Noach Weinberg, dean of Aish HaTorah Institutions, tells the story of the young man who came to him in search of spiritual meaning.

The young man entered the portals of Yeshiva Aish HaTorah for a few days and then decided to leave the yeshiva in his quest for spiritual meaning across the Land of Israel. The student stopped at synagogues in Meah Shearim, visited the holy sites in Tiberias and Tzefat, and after two weeks of spiritual-hunting returned to Jerusalem and headed straight back to the Yeshiva.

"Rabbi Weinberg," he exclaimed. "I spent two weeks in travelling the length and breadth of Israel in search of spirituality, and I want you to know that I found absolutely nothing!"

Rabbi Weinberg just nodded. "You say you traveled the entire country and did not find any spirituality?"

"Yes sir," came the resounding reply. "None whatsoever!"

"Let me ask you," continued the Rabbi, "how did you find the Bafoofsticks?"

"Bafoofsticks?" countered the student. What's a Bafoofstick?"

"That's not the point," responded the rabbi, "I just want to know how you feel about them."

"About what? "The Bafoofsticks"

The young man looked at the rabbi as if he had lost his mind.

He tried to be as respectful as he could under the circumstances. "Rabbi!" he exclaimed in frustration, "I'd love to tell you how the Bafoofsticks were. I'd even spend the whole day discussing Bafoofsticks with you, but frankly I have no idea what in the world is a Bafoofstick!" Rabbi Weinberg smiled. He had accomplished his objective. "Tell me," he said softly. "And you know what spirituality is?"

Moshe explains to the nation that it is possible to be mired in miracles and still not comprehend the greatness that surrounds you. One can experience miraculous revelations but unless he focuses his heart and mind he will continue to lead his life uninspired as before. In fact, even blessings need to be realized. In offering blessing the Torah tells us, "the blessings will be upon you and they will reach you" (Deuteronomy 28:2). If blessings are upon us of course they reach you! Why the redundancy? Once again the Torah teaches us that it is possible to be surrounded by blessing and not realize it. There are people who are surrounded by health, wealth, and great fortune, but their lives are permeated in misery. They have the blessing, but it has not reached them.

We need more than physical or even spiritual blessing. We need more than experiencing miraculous events. It is not enough to see miracles or receive the best of fortune. We must bring them into our lives and into our souls. Then we will be truly blessed. Good Shabbos © 1999 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Thank You to Mr. Daniel Retter and family for your words of support and encouragement.

Good Shabbos

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

from: **Alan Fisher** <afisherads@yahoo.com>

date: Sep 19, 2024, 8:58 PM

subject: Potomac Torah Study Center: Devrei Torah for Shabbat Ki Tavo 5784

Potomac Torah Study Center

Vol. 11 #50, September 20-21, 2024; 17-18 Elul 5784; Ki Tavo

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) at www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.

Almost immediately after I sent my last posting, we learned of the brutal murder of Hersh Polin Goldberg, cousin of very

close friends of ours, and several other of our “hostages” (prisoners) that Hamas has been torturing for nearly a year. Baruch Dayan HaEmet. May the names of our victims of terror and hatred, added to the countless Jewish victims of anti-Semitism over the past 3500 years, inspire all of us to dedicate ourselves to more mitzvot. May the IDF operation in Lebanon also bring safety to northern Israel with minimal adverse consequences.

One of the first requirements for our ancestors upon entering the land of Israel is to bring a portion of the first fruits of the seven special crops associated with Israel, put them in a basket, and bring them to a Kohen at the place that God designates (the Mishkan and later the Temple) (26:1-10). When bringing this offering, the farmer recites a short statement of Jewish history, starting with the well known verse about a wandering Aramean, descent into Egypt, and becoming a nation there. The statement continues with our crying out to Hashem, who then redeemed us and gave us this land. Thanking Hashem for His blessings is always a requirement for our people.

Rabbi David Fohrman and his scholars at alephbeta.org observe that when Yaakov left Canaan to go to his uncle’s home to find a wife, as he left the country, he vowed that if God protected him and brought him back to his family in peace, he would tithe (give a tenth of whatever he had) to Hashem (Bereshis 28:20-22). Yaakov never returned to his family home in Canaan with his family complete and in peace, so he never redeemed this pledge. Moshe reminds the people and tells them that now that they are united and entering the promised land, it is time for them to redeem Yaakov’s pledge. Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander reminds us that unity among Jews is a fundamental goal and responsibility – a requirement for Israel to stay strong and defeat our enemies. Moshe’s words are as important today as they were more than 3000 years ago.

As Moshe’s narration to B’Nai Yisrael comes closer to a conclusion, he reminds the people again that they have a choice, to follow Hashem’s mitzvot and live in the land that He promised to our ancestors, or to disobey and face awful consequences. Before entering and taking over the land, Moshe insists that the people accept a new covenant with God. Moshe splits the people into two segments, one on Mt. Gerizim and the other on Mt. Ebal. Moshe has the tribe of Levi recite twelve forbidden activities that will lead to awful curses, and all the people must recite “Amen” to each of them (27:15-26). As the scholars at alephbeta.org and Rabbi Haim Ovadia observe, the common element in these curses is that they represent sneaky, secretive, destructive sins, some against God but many more against other people.

While this statement of curses is frightening, the real terror comes in 28:15-68, the tochacha with an incredible, detailed listing of horrible consequences of not following Hashem’s

laws and commandments. Rabbi Ysoscher Katz explains why this tochacha is far more frightening than the one in Sefer Vayikra. The tochacha in Ki Tavo is more than twice as long, the punishments have an element of rage and vindictiveness absent from the earlier tochacha, and this tochacha lacks the uplifting forgiveness that ends the earlier statement of curses. Anyone reading this section will quickly understand why Ki Tavo must be the worst Torah portion that any Bar Mitzvah child could have for what should be a day of celebration.

We reach Ki Tavo only a few weeks before October 7, the anniversary of the cruel attack on our people by the evil of Hamas. The explosion of anti-Semitism all over the world in the past nearly twelve months makes it seem that Israel is isolated in a world of enemies. Rabbi Yakov Nagen reminds us that Israel does, however, have many friends in the world. For example, the Islamic Fatwa Council in Iraq has forbidden any support for Hamas. The United Arab Emirates strongly supports Israel. The Avraham Accords remain solid. When Iran sent thousands of missiles toward Israel a few months into the war, Jordan participated in destroying missiles before they could reach Israel. Egypt stayed silent. Only a small number of Arab countries sided with Iran. Rabbi Nagen reinforces Rabbi Brander’s words by stating again that Israel’s success comes largely because of unity in Israel. While the world remains dangerous for Jews, there is hope among the darkness. Shabbat Shalom, Hannah and Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

fw from allen.klein@gmail.com

from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ymkaganoff@gmail.com>

reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

Rabbi Kaganoff’s Sunday night shiur

date: Sep 16, 2024, 9:56 AM

subject: Holding the Torah Upright

There is a halachic source for the mitzvah of hagbahah in this week’s parsha. The

Ramban, in his commentary on the verse, Cursed be he who does not uphold the words of

this Torah (Devarim 27:26), explains that this curse includes someone who, when

performing hagbahah, does not raise the sefer Torah in a way that everyone in the shul can see it.

Holding the Torah Upright

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Enthusiasm

“I was recently in a shul where they took out the sefer Torah, opened it and carried it all around the shul, showing everyone with a yad where the beginning of the keriah is. I had never seen this before, and was wondering if this is a common practice. Is it mentioned in halachic sources, or does it simply manifest someone’s enthusiasm?”

Question #2: Inversion

Is there any halachic basis for the custom on Simchas Torah of reversing the sefer Torah so that the writing faces away from the magbiah?

Answer:

The mitzvah of hagbahah is to raise the sefer Torah and show it, so that everyone in the shul can see the writing of the sefer Torah. The prevalent, but not exclusive, tradition among Ashkenazim is that this mitzvah is performed after each sefer Torah is read, whereas the exclusive practice among Edot Hamizrah (Jews of Middle Eastern and Sefardic descent) is that this mitzvah is performed prior to reading from the Torah.

Among the Edot Hamizrah, some open the sefer Torah and lift it up immediately upon removing it from the Aron Kodesh, whereas others first bring the sefer Torah to the shulchan and then perform hagbahah, prior to calling up the kohen for the first aliyah (Ben Ish Chai II, Tolados #16). Some even perform hagbahah both before and after the reading (ibid.; Kaf HaChayim 134:17) As a matter of curiosity, it is interesting to mention that some Chassidim and Perushim in Eretz Yisrael observe the practice of the Sefardim and perform hagbahah before the Torah is read.

As we will soon see, both customs -- performing hagbahah before the reading and performing it after the reading -- can be traced back to antiquity.

The earliest description of hagbahah

The earliest extant description of the procedure of hagbahah is found in Masechta Sofrim, as follows:

“One must raise the sefer Torah when reciting the words Shema Yisrael... and then raise it again upon reciting Echad Elokeinu gadol Adoneinu Kadosh Shemo... Immediately, [the person performing the mitzvah] opens the sefer Torah to a width of three columns and lifts the sefer Torah -- showing the writing to all the people standing to his right and

his left. Then he moves the sefer Torah in a circular motion before him and behind him -- because it is a mitzvah incumbent on all the men and women to see the text of the sefer

Torah, to bow, and to say Vezos HaTorah asher sam Moshe lifnei B’nei Yisrael” (Masechta Sofrim 14:11-14).

What are the sources for the divergent customs?

As noted by the Beis Yosef and the Gra, the Masechta Sofrim describes performing

hagbahah before keriah haTorah. Nevertheless, the venerated practice of the Benei

Ashkenaz is to do hagbahah after we read the Torah (see Darkei Moshe 147:4; the

practice is quoted at least as early as the Sefer HaItur, who lived over eight hundred years

ago). This custom is based on the Gemara (Megillah 32a) that states, “After ten people

read the Torah, the greatest of them should roll up the Torah,” which refers to hagbahah

and implies that it is performed after the Torah has been read.

Similarly, a different

passage of Gemara (Sotah 39b) mentions that the person

reading the haftarah should be

careful not to begin until the rolling of the Torah is complete.

This implies that the

hagbahah and subsequent rolling closed of the Torah is

performed immediately prior to

the haftarah, and not before the Torah is read.

Two places in Shulchan Aruch

This difference in practice resulted in an anomalous situation.

Because the Tur was

himself personally an Ashkenazi, he included the laws of

hagbahah haTorah after the

reading of the Torah, in Chapter 147 of Orach Chayim. On the

other hand, the Shulchan

Aruch, who follows Sefardic practice, mentions hagbahah

haTorah before the rules of

the reading of the Torah in Chapter 134:2, yet he also

discusses them where the Tur

placed the halachah in Chapter 147. As a result, the halachos

of hagbahah haTorah are

located in two different places in Shulchan Aruch, with the

laws of keriah haTorah

sandwiched between. Some details of the laws of hagbahah

haTorah are discussed in

Chapter 134, others in Chapter 147.

Why do Ashkenazim perform hagbahah afterwards?

Logically, it would seem that we should display the text of the sefer Torah prior to

reading the Torah, so that people observe the section that is

about to be read, as, indeed,

the Sefardim do. Why do Ashkenazim delay displaying the words of the Torah until after the reading is concluded? The authorities present the following basis for what seems to be an anomalous practice: In earlier generations, there were unlettered people who mistakenly assumed that it was more important to see the words of the Torah during the hagbahah than it was to hear the reading of the Torah. As a result, many of these people would leave shul immediately

3

after the hagbahah and miss the reading. Therefore, the practice was introduced to postpone the hagbahah until after the reading was concluded -- which now caused these people to stay in shul and hear the reading of the Torah (Sheyarei Keneses HaGedolah 134:2, quoted by Kaf HaChayim 134:17). Are there any other ramifications to this dispute? Indeed, there is another interesting ramification that results from the Ashkenazic practice of delaying the hagbahah until after the reading is concluded. Should one notice a pesul in the sefer Torah that does not require taking out another sefer Torah, but precludes reading from this sefer Torah until it is repaired, one should not recite the words Vezos HaTorah and Toras Hashem temimah when being magbiah the sefer Torah (Kaf HaChayim 134:17, quoting Shu't Adnei Paz #13). What is the proper way to do hagbahah? A sefer Torah is written on sections of parchment that are stitched together. The person who is performing hagbahah should make sure that the stitching is in front of him before he lifts the Torah, so that if the sefer Torah tears from the stress of the lifting, the stitching, which is easy to repair, will tear and not, G-d forbid, the parchment itself (Megillah 32a, as explained by the Tur; see esp. Aruch HaShulchan 147:13; cf., however, how Rashi explains the Gemara). "Reading" the Torah When the sefer Torah is raised, each person in shul should try to actually read the letters of the sefer Torah. This causes the bright, spiritual light of the Torah to reach him (Arizal, quoted by Magen Avraham 134:3). Some have the practice of looking for a word in the sefer Torah that begins with the same letter as their name (Ben Ish Chai II, Tolados

#16). In most Sefardic communities, someone points to the beginning of the day's reading while the sefer Torah is held aloft for all to see. Some congregations consider this a great honor that is given to the rav or a different scholar (Kaf HaChayim 134:13). This may be the origin of the custom that some people have of pointing at the sefer Torah during hagbahah (cf. Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez, Parshas Ki Savo, 27:26). In order to make sure that everyone sees the text of the sefer Torah, some Sefardic congregations have the magbiah carry the open sefer Torah around the shul to display its holy words to every attendee (Kaf HaChayim 134:13). In which direction is the Torah held? The usual Ashkenazic practice is that the magbiah holds the sefer Torah with its writing facing him. Some congregations have the practice that, on Simchas Torah, the sefer Torah is lifted in the reverse way, so that the writing is away from the magbiah. Most people think this is a "shtick" that is part of the Simchas Torah celebration, but this is not halachically accurate. The Bach (Orach Chayim 147) contends that the original approach was to hold the sefer Torah with the writing visible to the people -- as we do on Simchas Torah. This is because when the magbiah lifts the sefer Torah the way we usually do, his body blocks the view, and for this reason, the Maharam and other great Torah leaders held the Torah with its text away from them when they performed hagbahah. Presumably, the reason this practice was abandoned is because it is much more difficult to do hagbahah this way, and there is concern that someone might, G-d forbid, drop the sefer Torah while doing it. Nevertheless, in places where the custom is to perform hagbahah this way on Simchas Torah, the reason is to show that on this joyous occasion, we want to perform hagbahah in the optimal way. The more the merrier! The above-quoted Masechta Sofrim requires that the magbiah open the sefer Torah three columns wide. The authorities dispute whether the magbiah may open the sefer Torah more than three columns. In other words, does Masechta Sofrim mean that one should open the sefer Torah exactly three columns, or does it mean that one should open it at

least three columns, so that everyone can see the words of the Torah, but that someone may open it wider, should he choose? The Magen Avraham (134:3) suggests that one should open it exactly three columns, although he provides no reason why one should not open the sefer Torah more, whereas the Mishnah Berurah says that it depends on the strength of the magbiah -- implying that if he can open it more, it is even better. It is possible that the Magen Avraham was concerned that opening the sefer Torah wider might cause people to show off their prowess and cause the important mitzvah of hagbahah to become a source of inappropriate pride -- the exact opposite of the humility people should feel when performing mitzvos. Should you roll it while lifting? Most people who perform the mitzvah of hagbahah roll open the sefer Torah to the requisite width and then lift it, whereas others unroll it while they are lifting it, while the sefer Torah is in the air. Which of these approaches is preferred?

The Shaar Efrayim discusses this issue, and implies that there is no preference between the two approaches, whereas the standard wording of Masechta Sofrim is that one should unroll the sefer Torah first.

Reciting Vezos HaTorah
When the sefer Torah is elevated, everyone should bow and recite the pasuk (Devarim 4:44) Vezos HaTorah asher sam Moshe lifnei Benei Yisrael (Masechta Sofrim 14:14).

Indeed, the Chida cites sources who hold that since Chazal mention saying Vezos HaTorah, it has the status of a *davar shebekedushah* and can be said even if one is in the middle of *birchos keria*; as *shema* (Kenesses HaGedolah, quoted by Birkei Yosef 134:4).

Subsequently, the Chida wrote a lengthy responsum, in which he concluded that reciting

5
Vezos HaTorah does not have the status of a *davar shebekedushah*, and therefore should not be said in a place where it interrupts one's davening (Shu't Chayim She'al 1:68).

Vezos HaTorah should be said only while facing the words of the sefer Torah (Ba'er Heitev 134:6, quoting several earlier sources). If one began reciting Vezos HaTorah while facing the writing of the sefer Torah, one may complete the pasuk after the text of

the sefer Torah has been rotated away from one's view (Sha'ar Efrayim).

In many siddurim, after the sentence Vezos HaTorah asher sam Moshe lifnei Benei Yisrael is read, five words are added: Al pi Hashem beyad Moshe (Bamidbar 9:23), as if this is a continuation of the verse of the Torah. Many halachic authorities question this practice, since there is no such passage in the Torah (Aruch HaShulchan 134:3). Others are concerned, because these last five words are not an entire verse. Indeed, many old siddurim do not quote this addition, and many halachic authorities do not recite it.

Who should be honored with hagbahah?
The Gemara (Megillah 32a) states "Ten people who read the Torah, the greatest of them should roll the Torah," which refers to the mitzvah of hagbahah, since the magbiah rolls the Torah both prior to displaying it and when he closes it afterwards. The Baal HaTzur quotes two opinions as to whom the "ten people" refers. Does it mean the attendees of the current minyan, comprised of at least ten men, and that the greatest of this group should have the honor of hagbahah. Or does it mean that we give hagbahah to the greatest of the ten people who were involved in that day's reading of the Torah: the seven who had *aliyos*, the *maftir*, the *baal keria*, and the person who recited the Targum after each pasuk was read, which was standard procedure at the time of the Gemara.

The halachic authorities rule according to the first approach, that one should honor the greatest person in the shul (Gra; Mishnah Berurah 147:6). They also refer to another practice, which was to auction off the mitzvah of hagbahah to the highest bidder (Tur; Shulchan Aruch). However, where the hagbahah is not auctioned, one should provide the honor to the greatest Torah scholar in attendance (Machatzis HaShekel). The prevalent practice of not necessarily offering hagbahah to the greatest scholar is in order to avoid any *machlokes* (Shaar Efrayim; Mishnah Berurah).

Nevertheless, in a situation where no *machlokes* will develop, one should certainly accord the mitzvah to the greatest talmid chacham who can perform hagbahah properly.

The importance of performing hagbahah correctly
As we mentioned in the introduction to this article, the Ramban, in his commentary on

the verse, Cursed be he who does not uphold the words of this Torah (Devarim 27:26), explains that this curse includes someone who, when performing hagbahah, does not raise the sefer Torah in a way that everyone in the shul can see it. Apparently, there were places that did not perform the mitzvah of hagbahah at all, out of concern that people will be cursed for not performing hagbahah properly (Birkei Yosef, Shiyurei Bracha 134:2; Kaf HaChayim 134:15; Encyclopedia Talmudis, quoting Orchos Chayim). Although I certainly do not advocate eliminating the mitzvah of hagbahah, a person who knows that he cannot perform the mitzvah correctly should defer the honor. The gabbai is responsible to give hagbahah only to someone who is both knowledgeable and capable of performing the mitzvah properly.

fw from allen.klein@gmail.com
from: **Rabbi Yisroel Ciner** <ciner@torah.org>
to: parsha-insights@torah.org
date: Sep 16, 2024, 5:39 PM
subject: Parsha Insights - Spiritual Ups and Downs
Parsha Insights
By Rabbi Yisroel Ciner
Parshas Ki Savo
Spiritual Ups and Downs
print

This week we read the parsha of Ki Savo—when you will enter the Land of Israel—which begins with the commandment to bring the first fruits to the Temple in Yerushalayim. This is called the mitzvah of Bikurim. There is a passuk {verse} later on in the parsha, after Bikurim and a number of other commandments, which really hits upon an issue that I think plagues all of us to varying degrees at one point or another. “Ha’yome ha’zeh Hashem Elokecha m’tzav’cha la’a’sos es ha’chukim v’es ha’mishpatim {On this day Hashem, your G-d, is commanding you to do the laws and judgments}[26:16].” Why does the passuk say that on this day Hashem is commanding? Hadn’t most mitzvos already been given at Sinai?

The Ramban explains that Moshe had now completed his task of teaching Bnei Yisroel all of the commandments. Therefore it was only from that day that Bnei Yisroel were commanded to do all of the laws and judgments.

Rashi, however, takes a different approach. Quoting the Medrash he explains: Every day they must be like new {k’chadashim} in our eyes, as if we had just been commanded. Unbelievable. Imagine if Hashem would come forth and speak to us, giving us clear instructions as to what actions are in our

best interests. Imagine the motivation and determination that we’d have to fulfill those instructions. According to Rashi, the passuk is exhorting us to feel that way every single day—k’chadashim {like new}.

But how can we maintain that freshness and excitement—that k’chadashim? We know that we human beings have a tremendous capacity to adjust to things.

On the first morning of camp, my wife and I were woken by the sounds of birds walking on our ceiling. They were inside the building and were having quite a time on the drop-ceiling of our room. The ceiling kept sagging under their weight and we were petrified that the birds would drop through the drop-ceiling with all of their droppings in tow! I thought to myself that if this is going to be a daily ‘Close Encounter of the Fou/wl Kind’ I’m never going to get a proper amount of sleep and I simply won’t survive the summer. However, on the second day I found it far less annoying. By the third day, even though they seemed to be having quite a party up there, I simply didn’t hear it. I had gotten used to it and it no longer moved me.

If that is the nature of man, how can we be commanded to feel as if the Torah was given today—that its words are k’chadashim? How can we feel freshness in our service to Hashem? We’ve already ‘been there done that’. On whatever level of observance we’re at, we’ve done what we do perhaps thousands of times already. How can we reach the level of k’chadashim?

Rav Volbe, in his Alay Shur, deals with the cycle of spiritual ups and downs that we are all subjected to. How at times it feels fresh and exciting and at times we feel like robots, mechanically going through the motions. How we can then begin to question ourselves: Is this really me? Where have the feelings gone? If I’m feeling (or not feeling) this way then maybe this really isn’t for me...

He quotes from the Sefer Hayashar that one must realize right from the start that this is part and parcel of spiritual growth. An intrinsic part of this growth process is the ups and downs—the swings between the feelings of intimacy and the feelings of detachment. Having these feelings is as clear an indication as one can have that this is where you belong. This is for you. It would be like giving up baseball because you once got a strike while at bat. Well I guess baseball just isn’t for me... I’m clearly not cut out to be a basketball player because I missed a foul shot... It’s part of the process.

But if that is so, doesn’t the passuk become even harder to understand? If the ups and downs are inevitable and intrinsic parts of the spiritual growth process, how can I be commanded and expected to feel as if they are new? I’ve done it so many times already... I’m feeling distant and detached...

The Sefer Hayashar writes further that the factor which will determine if one is feeling intimate in his service to Hashem or detached from Him is chidush {newness}. One can make sure that his service doesn’t become rote by constantly searching

for new insights and understandings. Finding chidush in oneself and in one's service. The chidush can make everything k'chadashim.

Perhaps, that is the explanation of the commandment that we began with. We seem to be commanded to view the Torah as newly given each day. How can one possibly do that and furthermore, how can we be commanded to do something that seems to be beyond our nature and grasp?

Perhaps the commandment is in fact a very tangible one. Work at finding and infusing freshness into your fulfillment of the mitzvos. Study. Search. Open your eyes. Open your hearts. You'll thereby minimize the downs and maximize the ups—have short bouts of detachment surrounded by extended spells of intimacy.

Find chidush and you'll find the mitzvos to be k'chadashim.

Good Shabbos,

Yisroel Ciner

Copyright © 1999 by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner and Project Genesis, Inc.

The author teaches at Neveh Tzion in Telzstone (near Yerushalayim).

Parsha Insights © 2023 by Torah.org.

Do you have a question or comment? Feel free to contact us on our website.

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

(410) 602-1350

from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

date: Sep 19, 2024, 3:24 AM

subject: **Rav Kook on Ki Tavo: How to Serve God in Joy**

Ki Tavo: How to Serve God in Joy

“Because you failed to serve the Eternal your God with joy and contentment...” (Deut. 28:47)

Rav Kook was once asked: How can we awaken feelings of excitement and enthusiasm in our avodat Hashem? How do we cultivate a sense of joy in our service of God, when we observe mitzvot and study Torah?

The Answer of the Kabbalists

In his response, Rav Kook wrote:

It is difficult to properly explain this fundamental aspect of serving God in a letter. However, the primary way to kindle joy and enthusiasm is by dedicating time to rigorous study of the spiritual, non-halakhic areas of the Torah. Do not relegate it to haphazard reading. It is through this study that the soul's inner light begins to shine, and a spirit of joy and vitality infuses those who earnestly seek truth.

Nonetheless, I will share with you one central principle, though this too cannot be fully grasped without serious study and reflection. This principle can serve as a gateway to deepening your love for God and experiencing the radiant light of the holy Torah.

Clearly, if someone was granted the chance to benefit the entire world, even the most self-centered individual would eagerly seize the opportunity, devoting his heart and soul to the task.

Fatigue and weariness arise when we fail to recognize the extent of the good that we bring to the entire world through our Torah study, performance of mitzvot, Divine service, and cultivation of character traits.

For this reason, God enlightened us with the teachings of the lofty tzaddikim, the masters of Kabbalah. They deepened our understanding of the true significance of our service, clarifying how it uplifts all of creation. Nonetheless, we need to bring this abstract idea closer to our intellect. Then our motivation will be strong and our enthusiasm well-grounded.

Uplifting the Universe

We attain this profound awareness by contemplating the spiritual unity that binds the entire universe. We need to recognize that each individual soul is connected to the collective soul of all existence. Every created being draws its light and perfection from this collective soul. We have the power to increase the light in our souls through Torah study, mitzvot, prayer, and character refinement. We need to be aware that whenever we enlighten our own souls, we are benefiting not just ourselves, but the entire universe. We are bestowing perfection and life upon all creation.

Through our efforts, the righteous are strengthened in their holy service. The evil of the wicked is mitigated to some extent, and they experience stirrings of remorse and penitence. Even the animals are ennobled, according to their station. The noble holiness provided by a single soul that truly cares about all of existence helps refine and purify even those creatures inclined toward destruction. And it certainly adds dazzling light to the lofty splendor of the souls, and throughout the spiritual worlds, in their infinite beauty and sanctity.

All of this is relevant for every member of the holy nation of Israel. But it resonates with even greater significance for those who are privileged to dwell in the Holy Land.

(Adapted from Iggerot HaRe'iyah vol. I, letter 301 5670/1910)

fw from allen.klein@gmail.com

from: Rabbi Efreim Goldberg <reg@brsonline.org>

September 17, 2024

Assassination Attempts and Bucket Lists

By **Rabbi Efreim Goldberg**

“0 – 2.”

That was the defiant tweet former President Trump posted shortly after an assassination attempt on his life earlier this week, the second in less than three months.

The first time, Trump came within inches of losing his life and while the second time the would-be assassin didn't get off a shot, Trump couldn't help but feel he escaped death yet again. Reflecting on the incident, one of his sons said, “My father is running out of lives.”

The truth is one doesn't need to be a former president, a current candidate, or a target of assassins to be concerned with mortality. Many people experience the mortality alarm in mid-life, triggered by the loss of a parent, a diagnosis, a near-death experience or just general "FOGO," fear of growing old. As we age (and for some even in our youth) when we think about the dangers of this world, the uncertainty of life, the risk of illness, natural disasters, terrorist attacks and more, one can't help but spend their life thinking about their eventual death. While confronting mortality and contemplating the fragility of life can be debilitating and anxiety-producing, it can also be enormously motivating and inspiring.

The Gemara (Berachos 5a) teaches:

אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש: לעולם ירגיז אדם יצר טוב על יצר הרע, שנאמר: "רגיזו ואל תחטאו" אם נצחו — מוטב, ואם לאו — יעסוק בתורה, שנאמר: "אמרו בלבבכם". אם נצחו — מוטב, ואם לאו — יקרא קריאת שמע, שנאמר: "על משכבכם". אם נצחו — מוטב, ואם לאו — יזכור לו יום המיתה, שנאמר: "וילמו סלה".

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: One should always incite his good inclination against his evil inclination... If one succeeds and subdues his evil inclination, excellent, but if he does not succeed in subduing it, he should study Torah...

If he subdues his evil inclination, excellent; if not, he should recite *Shema*...

If he subdues his evil inclination, excellent; if not, he should remind himself of the day of death.

As human beings with an animal soul, we are drawn to the material, physical world around us. We struggle with desires, drives and appetites that relentlessly tempt us. Our rabbis teach when we feel we are in the throes and the grip of our alter ego, our animal impulse and instinct, we should follow a formula. First, try to show discipline, employ your positive inclination. If that isn't successful, engage in Torah study to ground you and calm you. If that doesn't work, say *Shema*, contemplate before Whom we must give an accounting. If we are still tempted, struggling and on the verge of indulging, the last resort is to contemplate the day of death.

(The Vilna Gaon says that the Rebbe Shimon Ben Lakish's advice is alluded to in the verse *rabos machshavos b'lev ish, v'atzas Hashem hi sakum*. The Gra notes that "*sakum*" is the acronym for *Torah, kerias shema* and *misa*.)

Death is a motivating factor. Thinking about our mortality, considering the finality of death, serve to remind us to live and live life to its fullest. Perhaps that is why Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, is in some ways a dress rehearsal for our deaths. From Kapparos, the death of a chicken to atone for our mistakes, to the wearing of the kittel, the white garment that we will literally be buried in, to the Torah reading of *Acharei Mos*, "after the death" of the two sons of Aharon, the day is replete with references to death. We read of the *asara harguei malchus*, the ten holy martyrs murdered by the romans. We recite *Viduy*, the confession that is also said by someone on their deathbed. We abstain from eating, drinking

and physical comforts and pleasures as if we are already only a soul devoid of a body. The Talmud says that *Yom Ha'Hakippurim atzmo m'caper, u'misah m'chaperes*, Yom Kippur and death atone for our mistakes.

Yom Kippur, like every encounter with death, urges us into the fullness of living. It should not be the most depressing day of the year, but rather can be our happiest if we use it to inspire our best year, a year in which we cross things off our bucket list. A bucket list is a list of goals and objectives to accomplish before we kick the proverbial bucket and it is too late. There are many books, websites and apps that encourage and promote people to create their own lists of what we want to do before we die.

There are classic lists, adventure lists, food lists, indulgent lists, and everyday lists like make someone smile, dance in the rain. Some want to skydive and others make a handmade quilt. Some want to travel to exotic locations and others taste unusual foods.

Our lists reveal a great deal about us. Confronting mortality means considering the question, what is on your list? What do you want to achieve or experience before it is too late? Does your list include making a million dollars, or making a difference? Does it include finishing a TV series or finishing *Shas*? Does it include spending time on vacations and trips or spending time with spouses and children?

Once you identify what is on your list, ask yourself, why haven't you done it yet, what is holding you back or what is in your way?

You don't need to be shot at to think about mortality.

Considering death should inspire our best life. Write your bucket list and more importantly, start checking things off.