

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET  
ON PARSHAS KI SAVO - 5756

B'S'D' "Then you shall call out with a loud voice..." (26:5)

It's three o'clock in the morning. Your wife has just gone into labor. The doctor is looking concerned. You grab the phone and ring an adam gadol (great Torah scholar) and ask him to daven (pray) for your wife. He tells you not worry. He gets up and davens for your wife.

After a difficult labor your wife presents you with a beautiful baby boy. Mother and baby are fine. It's now Tuesday morning.

On Friday night you see the adam gadol in shul and invite him to the Shalom Zocher (traditional welcoming of the baby boy). He says to you "When you're

wife went into labor, you called me at three in the morning to tell me. But when she gave birth you wait till the Shalom Zocher..."

A farmer understands that without rain and sun his crops will fail.

Thus, he prays to Hashem for the success of his produce; he prays fervently and with great motivation.

When all is harvested, he brings the Bikkurim (first fruits) to the Beis Hamikdash in Jerusalem. He then makes a declaration -- a brief sketch of Jewish history -- outlining the unfailing kindness of Hashem to His people. Rashi, quoting the Talmud (Sotah 32b), writes that this declaration must be made in 'a loud voice.'

With that same fervor and intensity that we seek help and assistance, we must offer thanks and recognition. If we put a heart-felt three-in-the-morning call to the Master of the World for urgent help, let us thank Him with that same urgency and depth of feeling.

In the name of Rabbi Yosef Tzeinvort, heard from Rabbi Yehoshua Bertram Curses and Blessings

"And it will be that if you will not listen..."

There are 98 curses in the Tochacha (rebuke) in this week's parsha, which detail what will happen to the Jewish People if they stray from the Torah. After a wedding, we make a week of Sheva Berachos (festive meals) for the newly-married couple. Why specifically a week?

During the week of Sheva Berachos, there are two meals a day, and at each meal seven blessings are recited. Seven multiplied by two, multiplied by seven is ... 98!

May it be through the blessings of the establishment of a new Jewish home that all the curses and suffering of our long night of exile will come to an end! That again we will hear in the cities of Yehuda and the suburbs of Yerushalayim the voice of joy, the voice of happiness, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride!

Based on Chidushei HaRim in the Gnizei HaChasidim in Iturei Torah Hands Up!

"And the Kohen shall take the basket from your hands...." (26:4)

The hands are different from all the other limbs. All the other limbs of the body are fixed and static, whereas the hands may be lowered below the feet or raised higher than the head.

The same is true on an allegorical/ethical level. Man can lower his hands, can perform all the greatest sins possible. He can murder, steal. Everything can be done with the hands. We talk of having 'blood on our hands' and 'dirty hands'.

On the other hand, the hands, when raised up, can perform the holiest acts. When the Kohen blesses the people he raises his hands. The hand gives tzedaka (charity). The hand puts on tefillin. We extend 'the hand' of friendship and assistance.

The handiwork of a person is symbolized by the acquisitions that the labor of his hands have brought him. For this reason, the first of his fruits must be made holy as Bikkurim. Because the beginning always influences what follows it. Thus, every beginning needs to be made holy, because when the beginning is holy, everything that follows it will also be holy. When the hands are raised above the head, when their direction is heavenward, then the head and the body will inevitably follow after them. Adapted from Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin

Haftorah: Isaiah 60:1-22 In this, the last of the seven Haftoros of

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Torah Weekly - Ki Savo \* TORAH WEEKLY \* Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiros Parshas Ki Savo For the week ending 16 Elul 5756 30 & 31 August 1996 Ohr Somayach <http://www.ohr.org.il>

Overview - When the Bnei Yisrael dwell in the Land of Israel, its first fruits are

to be taken to the Temple and given to the Kohen in a ceremony which expresses recognition that it is Hashem who guides the history of the Jewish People throughout all the ages. This passage forms one of the central parts of the Haggadah that we read at the Seder. On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and the seventh years of the seven-year cycle of tithes, a person must recite a confession that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate people in the prescribed manner.

With this mitzvah Moshe concludes the commandments that Hashem has told him to give to The Jewish People. Moshe exhorts them to walk in Hashem's ways, because they are set aside as a treasured people to Hashem. When the Bnei Yisrael cross the Jordan River they are to make a New Commitment to the

Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah written on them in the seventy primary languages of the world, after which they are to be covered over with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes will stand on Mount G'rizim, and half on Mount Eval and the Leviim will stand in a valley between the two mountains and recite twelve commandments and all the people will answer "Amen" to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed on the Bnei Yisrael. These blessings are both physical and spiritual. However if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe detail a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.

Sorry To Wake You Up, But..."

Consolation, the prophet Isaiah calls on Jerusalem to arise from the pain of darkness and shadow, and to shine to the world in her full glory. The light of redemption, both physical and spiritual, is being radiated on her. Her long-banished

children are returning, and in their wake are the nations of the world who have acknowledged Hashem, and that the Jewish People are his emissaries. This redemption, unlike those that have preceded it, will be the final and complete one. "Never again will your sun set, nor your moon be withdrawn, for Hashem shall be unto you an eternal light, and ended will be your days of mourning.

Walls of Protection "The sons of strangers will build your city walls..." (60:10) As far as the Jewish People are concerned, they really didn't need city wall at all. For no man would dare to wage war on them, and thus they did not

need fortresses and strongholds. However, the 'sons of strangers' -- non-Jews who had accepted upon themselves the seven Noachide laws -- they certainly needed the walls. For according to the Rambam, the law of the ger toshav (non-Jew who has accepted the seven Noachide laws) is only applicable during that time when the custom was to have city walls.

Therefore "the sons of strangers" built the city-walls so that they would have the status of gerim toshavim. For once they achieved this status, the Jewish People have a mitzva to provide for their sustenance and welfare. A wall can be more than just a protection against enemies...

Sing, My Soul!

Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table  
throughout the generations.

Kol Mekadesh - "Whoever Keeps Shabbos..."

His (the Shabbos observer) reward is great in accordance with his deed.

Each man to his camp, each man to his banner.

scharo harbayh me'od al pi po-olo,

ish al machanayhu v'ish al diglo

One who honors Shabbos through enjoying it, say our Sages (Shabbos 118a), will be rewarded with an inheritance without boundaries. This reward is measure for measure. Just as he did not set limits on his enjoyment of the holy day and even defied the restriction of time by adding on time to the Shabbos, so will his "reward be great in accordance with his deed" and will be without limits.

Such a boundless reward will render it unnecessary for any Shabbos observer to in any way impose on the domain of another. Each will have all he requires and will be content to be "in his camp with his banner."

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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NCYI Weekly Divrei Torah Parshat Ki Tavo

Parshat Ki Tavo 16 Elul 5756 Saturday, August 31, 1996

Guest Rabbi: Rabbi Natan Morowitz - Young Israel of Tzfon Netanya, Israel

The Jewish People are about to enter Eretz Yisrael after wandering in the desert for forty years.

The first two years we know about, being well aware of the problems and wars they experienced during those years.

However, the middle thirty-seven years are shrouded in mystery.

The Torah gives us no description of the wonderful Yeshivot that most probably existed at that time, the scholarship- or even a description of the piety of a generation that was privileged to experience miracles each and every day.

What a generation that must have been! But, again, no record.

No biographical sketches, total silence.

Why? Perhaps the answer is given when we read, that after

receiving the Torah, a special command had to be "Enough of your dwelling by this mountain" (Deut. 1:6).

A year at Mt. Sinai is needed to charge your spiritual batteries, but now you have to move forward and be ready to conquer the land. The purpose of receiving the Torah is for you to be able to bring and observe those mitzvot in Eretz Yisrael.

As long as the Jews moved closer to their eventual goal of conquering and entering the Land of Canaan, it was important for us to know of their progress. However, the thirty-seven years of merely wandering from station to station waiting for one generation to die off in order that a new generation would be able to enter Canaan wasn't too important. Those wanderings are read in the portion of Masei and it is a custom to read about all the 42 stations with one aliyah. We do not divide the reading between different people. It isn't necessary to dwell on these stations since they were moving nowhere.

When my wife and I, with our family, made aliyah some seventeen years ago, we met a couple who were brought up in a small city in the Mid-West. They weren't religious and came from a very secular background. My wife and I just couldn't understand what brought them to Israel. Finally we asked, and their answer was very simple and straightforward: "We wanted to be part of Jewish history and not just observers".

When we think of what future generations of Jews will be reading, I have a strong feeling that almost all of the history of this era will be centered on Israel.

The scholarship of the Jews in America and, especially, recent publications and translations are extremely exciting but still the books and Torah literature coming from the Yeshivot in Eretz Yisrael will be the ones that will be studied.

In the portion of Ki Tavo one again begins to appreciate the centrality of Eretz Yisrael in Jewish thought.

The People in Israel are standing not very far from the Jordan River. They look across and see vast areas of bleak sand and stone, little vegetation, and many dried out river beds. No rain has fallen for weeks and the land looks totally parched. As soon as they cross the river, they know that they will be on their own. No miraculous stone to provide them with all their water, and the "Manna" will be part of their past. There must have been total fear. This was a generation brought up to look upon miracles as something that was normal. To them, food coming from the heavens would be more normal than seeing food growing from the ground. Now everything would change.

Suddenly they receive a new command, one whose very nature carried an optimistic note.

While fearing what the future will bring in this bleak environment, the Nation receives their command, "When you come to the land that G-d gives you and you conquer and divide it, then you must take the first fruits and bring it to the place I have chosen."

In essence G-d is saying, don't worry, in another fourteen years you will be ready to bring your first fruits. Keep your faith. In a short period of time you will be celebrating the bringing of the first fruits. Your problems are temporary - I, G-d, am committed to your future. This is really the essence of modern day Israel. Who would have ever dreamed that from this harsh and difficult land we would become major exporters of fruits, vegetables and flowers. A land with minimum water supplies has been able to absorb in a period of three years over 600,000 immigrants.

In the city of Netanya where I live, thirty-three percent of the population consists of new immigrants from the Commonwealth of Nations. This does not include a large number of Ethiopians and others who moved here.

Were this to occur in any other country, it would be a total disaster. Riots would take place demanding the cessation of immigrants from coming into the country and there would be economic chaos.

Yes, we have problems. All our schools, hospitals, social services, etc., are overcrowded but, in a few years, we will again be able to return to the Israeli form of normalcy.

We started our Young Israel shul and no one really believed that we would ever find the financing to build a shul. However, we had faith and are now close to finishing this building.

There is hardly an institution in Israel which, when they started, knew how they would be able to achieve success.

Once you cross the river, and enter Eretz Yisrael, you know that there is a different set of rules. Not always is logic and feasibility the criteria for actions.

Even the act of taking of the first fruits to Jerusalem took courage. Those are your first fruits. Before refrigeration you were eating dried and old fruits and grains. Wouldn't you love to taste your first grapes. Are they sweet? Is your crop meeting standards? However, again we are told "separate them". But it has to be brought to Jerusalem.. It's a difficult trip. No late model cars were available. You went by foot, cart and donkey, all the time going uphill. You had to sleep in the open, no hotels. It wasn't easy leaving your family- who would take care of the sheep? However, all of this is still tied in with your faith.

Who could bring the first fruits? It had to be someone who owned land in Eretz Yisrael. A convert can bring it if he owns land in Israel. But someone who lives in the Diaspora does not have the privilege. I don't believe that even those of us living in apartment homes in Israel could bring their "Bikurim" since you had to own a minimum of two or possibly three trees.

However, above all remember: If you hesitate to come and live in Israel read the shortened declaration the Jew made when he brought his first fruits to the Kohain. Firstly - I have come to the land that HaShem swore to give to us. An Aramean tried to destroy my forefathers. He descended to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number and there he became a nation. The Egyptians mistreated us. G-d saw our oppression and with a strong hand took us out of Egypt. He gave us this Land and I bring You the first fruits and place it before You and prostrate myself before You.

I came to this Land for only one reason. You gave it to us. For years, nations of the world tried to destroy our people. We were driven from one land to the next. We prospered and we brought commercial and cultural success in every land that we lived in. However we were never accepted and most often driven from the land.

Finally G-d gave us the opportunity to return. Some had the fortitude and faith to decide to leave the countries in which they were privileged to live, in the "Sheina Galus", the beautiful diaspora.

They came to the land. It wasn't always easy, but now we look back and say how fortunate we are to have been able to achieve the dream of our fathers and live in our own State and in our own land, the land which G-d gave us. "Now I bring to You and even to myself the fruits of the land." The joy of being in the land that was promised to us and in which we can fulfill the mitzvah of settling in Eretz Yisrael is one of the most beautiful rewards we can hope to achieve.

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion  
Ki- Tavo

Our Sidra contains a description of the ceremony of offering the first-fruits of the land of Israel, and gives the prayer that was to be recited by each person as he made his offering. One peculiarity of this prayer, is the way it singles out two miracles in particular - Jacob's deliverance from Laban and the Exodus from Egypt. Why were these and only these to be mentioned? The Sicha concludes that they had a special relevance to the ceremony of the first-fruits, and it analyses the significance of this offering and its counterpart in our own time.

**TWO MIRACLES** Our Sidra begins with the procedure to be followed when bringing the first-fruits to the Sanctuary as an expression of thanksgiving to G-d: "And you shall speak and say before the L-rd your G-d: 'An Aramite destroyed my father, and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number... And the L-rd brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.... And he has brought us into this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now behold I have brought the first-fruit of the land which You, O L-rd, have given me. ...'" The phrase "an Aramite destroyed my father" is taken (by Rashi and others) to refer to Laban's intention to destroy Jacob and hence the whole Jewish nation. Thus the bringing of the first-fruits was accompanied by his acknowledgment of G-d's deliverance in saving the nation from destruction, once at the hands of Laban and again by the Egyptians, and of His grace in bringing them to a land "flowing with milk and honey." But if the intention of this prayer was to mention G-d's kindness, why were only these two instances cited? There were many other saving miracles - the division of the Red Sea, the battle with the Amalekites, the Manna and the Well in the wilderness, the wars with Sichon and Og, etc. Perhaps we might argue that only Laban and the Egyptians threatened the total extermination of Israel, and so the deliverance from these two adversaries was more fundamental than from any of the other miracles. But even on this reasoning, there would still be a serious omission: The delivery of Jacob and his children from his brother Esau. Had Esau acted as Jacob feared ("lest he come and smite me, the mother with the children") there would equally have been nothing left of the Jewish people. What is also strange is that Rashi does not raise this question. For the omission presents a difficulty in the literal understanding of the text, and it is the burden of Rashi's commentary to deal with all problems at this level. And from Rashi's silence on the point, we can conclude that there is in fact no problem - that we, by our reasoning or by taking into consideration Rashi's previous remarks, can understand why Jacob's deliverance from Esau was inappropriate to the prayer said over the first-fruits.

**REAL AND POTENTIAL DANGER** Perhaps the explanation is that Esau did not constitute a real danger. For when he met Jacob, after their years of estrangement, he did him no harm. The threat he posed lay in Jacob's mind, in his anxiety and apprehension. Laban, it is true, also did no harm to Jacob. But his intention to do so was accounted by G-d as if he had actually done what he planned. Rashi, in explaining why the Torah says of Laban "an Aramite destroyed my father" instead of "an Aramite sought to destroy...." says, "Because he intended to do it, G-d accounted it to him as though he had actually done it, for as far as the nations of the world are concerned, the Holy One, Blessed be He, reckons intentions as deeds." This also explains the emphasis of the verse of the fact that Laban was an Aramite. On the other hand, Esau was a Jew, albeit an apostate. As a result, his intention to harm Jacob was considered as a possible rather than an actual danger, and Jacob's deliverance on this occasion does not merit special mention in our prayer of thanksgiving. Yet we are still left with a dilemma. Either it is right that we should mention deliverance only from a situation of real danger in which case we should include only the deliverance from Egypt (where the Jewish nation was afflicted and oppressed). For in the last analysis, Laban did no actual harm to Jacob. And if G-d counted his intention as if it had been realized, this only applies to Laban's punishment, and has no bearing on the situation of Jacob. Or, on the other hand, we should mention all the kindnesses of G-d,

even if they only took the form of deliverance from possible danger; in which case we should include the episode of Esau in our prayer. We are forced to conclude, then, that the two saving miracles against Laban and the Egyptians (and only they) have a special connection with the command to offer up the first-fruits of the Land.

**A PLACE OF SETTLEMENT** The offering of the fruits became obligatory on the Israelites only after they had entered the Land, conquered, allocated and settled it. From this we can see that the commandment was not simply a thanksgiving for G-d's gift of the Land, but primarily for having settled in it as a permanent home. It was only then that they could rejoice in it with an easy mind; only then that they brought the first-fruits. The fruit expressed gratitude for the "land flowing with milk and honey" and for the chance of inhabiting it permanently "to eat from its fruits and be satiated with its goodness." It was therefore to emphasize this point that two examples were chosen where our ancestors were living in a place of permanent settlement and where - from that seeming security - enemies arose to destroy them and were defeated by G-d. These two cases point firmly to the gift of a permanent land ("And He has brought us into this place") from which there arises only goodness and sustenance. It was precisely these two examples, Laban and Egypt, where the miracle took place where those ancestors had made a settled home. Jacob stayed in Syria 20 years, and the Israelites lived in Egypt for 210 years. And the wording of the prayer, "An Aramite destroyed my father, and he went into Egypt." Emphasizes at the outset how it was that from the very places of settlement the threat of destruction arose. On the other hand, Esau confronted Jacob when he was traveling, and the other miracles that were sent to the Israelites came when they were journeying out of Egypt or wandering in the wilderness. They have no relation to that special feeling of gratitude that the Israelites expressed on coming to a settlement in a land that was theirs that overflowed with goodness.

**THE OFFERING AND THE PRAYER** What is the Chassidic analysis of the offering of first-fruits? It is explained in Or Hatorah that the fruit of a tree is akin to the soul as it is enclined in the body, and that offering up the first- fruit is an act whose significance is the binding of the incarnate soul with its source in G-d. It is written in Hosea, "I saw your fathers as the first-fruit of the fig-tree." So too is the "father" of the soul - its heavenly source - like a first-fruit. This binding of the soul to its source has two parts: The raising of the earthbound (the offering of the fruit) and the drawing down of the heavenly (the accompanying prayer). Thus the prayer suggests the idea of the drawing down of the holy. Jacob's journey to Laban was a descent (from the spirituality of Beersheba to the corruption of Haran) and so too was the Israelites' journey to Egypt. And it was these two descents which precipitated the two great acts of grace and deliverance which saved the Jewish people from destruction. The significance of this extends to the life of every Jew. It is not enough for the Jew to rest content with his own spiritual ascent, the elevation of his soul in closeness to G-d. He must also strive to draw spirituality down into the world and into every part of his involvement with it - the world of his work and his social life - until not only do they not distract him from his pursuit of G-d, but they become a full part of it. These are his first-fruits, and by dedicating them to sanctity he is fulfilling the purpose for which the world was created, to be made by man into a dwelling-place for G-d.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. XIV, pp. 93-98.)

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Torah Insights for Shabbat Parashat Ki Tavo 5756

16 Elul, 5756 - August 31, 1996

As we approach Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgement, many of us begin a battle within ourselves. On the one hand, we understand intellectually the need to reflect on our lives and on our lifestyles. On the other hand, the inertia of our "being" curtails deep reflection and, consequently, often prevents change. An insight offered in this week's parshah provides an extra measure of motivation to become "new and improved" for the New Year.

The Torah gives us 248 "positive" commandments and 365 "negative" commandments. While it is without question that we owe unswerving loyalty to each and every mitzvah, nonetheless, Hashem, chose to emphasize certain mitzvos. In Parshas Ki Savo, Hashem proscribes twelve actions with the statement, "Cursed is the one who..." Not only are these twelve actions prohibited, but the one who transgresses them carries the label "cursed"! The last of these curses is given to someone "who does not fortify the words of the Torah to insure their fulfillment." In the Talmud Yerushalmi, Rabbi Shimon ben Tachlifa understands this verse to refer to the need to establish a beis din, a religious court of justice. The Ramban adds that fortification includes the establishment of a king and a beis din who have the ability and the power to strengthen Torah observances among those who are not presently upholding its precepts. The beis din's role is amplified by a Gemara which explains that before each of these curses was stated to Klal Yisrael, as they stood on Mount Grizim and Mount Eival, a blessing was given to those who fulfill these mitzvos. Not only does one fulfill a mitzvah by observing these commands, but he is also labeled "blessed" by G-d. The Chafetz Chaim emphasizes the unique opportunity each Jew is presented in his own community. By generously supporting the day schools, yeshivos and kollelim in one's community, one receives the badge of honor "blessed." Moreover, this opportunity begets an awesome responsibility. We can and must reach out to all of our bretheren who have not been fortunate enough to experience and explore the beauty of Torah and its way of life. We must support outreach organizations not just with our money, but also with our time and effort. We must bring our fellow Jews into our homes and show them the beauty of a Torah lifestyle. With this badge of honor, the G-dly label of "blessed," as motivation, we can break the inertia of our "being" and take monumental strides toward fortifying the Torah and its observance among acheinu benei Yisrael. We can then approach Rosh Hashanah with more hope that we will merit the seal of life. Rabbi Nisson Dov Miller Rabbi Miller is Rabbi of Congregation Etz Chaim, Sharon, Massachusetts

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AISH HATORAH'S Shabbat Shalom Weekly

Elul 16, 5756 August 31, 1996

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Aish HaTorah -- Applying the Wisdom of the Torah to Everyday Life!

BS"D TORAH PORTION: Ki Tavoh, Deuteronomy 26:1 -- 29:8

This week's portion includes: Bringing to the Temple as an offering the first fruits of the Seven Species special to the land of Israel, Declaration of tithes, The Almighty designating the Jewish people as His treasured people (Deut. 26:16 -19), The command to set up in the Jordan River and then on Mount Ebal large stones which had the Torah written upon

them in 70 languages, The command to have a public ratification of the acceptance of the Law from Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal; The Torah then

sets forth the blessings for following the Law and the curses for not following it, and concludes with Moshe's final discourse.

DVAR TORAH: based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

In the section of reproof for not fulfilling the commandments, the Torah states, "Because you did not serve the Almighty, your G-d, with joy and with a good heart when you had everything..." you will receive retribution. Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelm asked, "Isn't this an extremely severe penalty for not reaching a high level?"

The rabbi went on to explain that "if people give thought to what it means to fulfill the Almighty's will, they would carry it out with joy and enthusiasm. However, if someone lacks joy when he does the Almighty's will, it will eventually lead to his not fulfilling the other commandments. Therefore, joy is a key attribute and is fundamental for the observance of

the entire Torah."

To tell someone: "Either feel joy or you will be punished," is more likely to have a negative effect than a positive one. A person cannot be forced into feeling sincere joy. However, the stronger your awareness of the greatness of the Almighty, the size of His universe, the length of eternity, and the benefits of observing His mitzvot, the greater will be your joy when you carry out the Almighty's will.

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Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Kalman Packouz  
3414 Prairie Avenue Miami Beach, Florida 33140

Torah Forum

Date: Sun, 2 Jun 1996 14:43:02 -0500 (CDT)  
From: treister@interaccess.com (jeremy treister)  
Subject: Typing "Hashem" on the net

I've noticed that in the past few months Orthodox Jews have begun to type the three letter common English name for Hashem on the Internet. People used to always type "G-d" without the "o". Did a well known rabbi recently posken ?issue a rulingX on this? Is it because it is not being printed out, rather it is a digitally a series of 1's and 0's. Do people do this now with the assumption that it will not be printed out? If this is printed out, I thought that it should be buried like other holy text. Jeremy Treister  
treister@interaccess.com

Date: Wed, 31 Jul 1996 21:31:47 -0400 (EDT)  
From: "Hillel E. Markowitz" <hem@icf.hrb.com>  
Subject: Typing "Hashem" on the net  
treister@interaccess.com (jeremy treister) asked: ...

This is a common thought and has actually become part of the soc.culture.jewish FAQ on the usenet newsgroup. There is no kedusha to the English word "god" whether it is capitalized to mean Hashem or not capitalized to mean some avoda zara ?idolX. Rav Soloveitchik Z'L many many years ago walked into a high school class wrote the word in big letters on the board at Maimonides High School in Brookline and erased it to drive home this point. Many people put the "-" in just to show that a reference to Hashem is being made as opposed to some other usage as a sign of respect. It is no more than a personal chumra.

Hillel (Sabba) Markowitz Im ain ani li, mi li?  
H.E.Markowitz@hrb.com V'ahavta L'raiecha kamocho

Date: Thu, 8 Aug 96 20:42:38 EDT  
From: frisch1@MIT.EDU (Jonathan Katz)  
Subject: Typing "Hashem" on the net  
Bill Bickel writes ...

Actually, I believe that this is the case. Technically, the name of G-d is holy only when written in lashon ha-kodesh (the holy language) of Hebrew. In fact, this has to be the case. Or else, how do we know that a word we are using (in English) does not mean "G-d" in some other language? Or, for that matter, that it never meant "G-d" in any language?! To go even further, what if I decide to start speaking my own language and define my own words to mean "G-d". Would people then have to be careful using these words as well?

Let's take this even further. Assuming that the word "G-d" (in English) has holiness because it refers to G-d, what about words like "the All-powerful", "the Almighty", even words like "out Father" (when referring to G-d). Do we need to write these like "Alm-ghty" as well?! Come on... The simple fact is, there are many words which refer to G-d, and many which mean "G-d". But G-d himself only has 7 (?) names - and those names are the

only ones which have any kedusha. And even then, only when written in Hebrew. Jonathan Katz frisch1@mit.edu 410 Memorial Drive, 233F Cambridge, MA 02139

Date: Thu, 8 Aug 1996 17:33:03 -0700  
From: "Y. Adlerstein" <yadler@mail1.deltanet.com>  
Subject: Typing "Hashem" on the net Hillel Markowitz wrote:  
>There is no kedusha to  
>the English word "god" whether it is capitalized to mean Hashem or not  
>capitalized to mean some avoda zara ?idolX. Rav Soloveitchik Z'L many  
>many years ago walked into a high school class wrote the word in big  
>letters on the board at Maimonides High School in Brookline and erased it  
>to drive home this point. Many people put the "-" in just to show that a  
>reference to Hashem is being made as opposed to some other usage as a  
>sign of respect. It is no more than a personal chumra.

While the preponderance of evidence seems to negate any kedusha in a plain-wrap word for "deity" that is not an exact translation of one of the seven NAMES of G-d, I don't think that it is fair to call it nothing more than a personal chumra. As one of the gedolim of the last generation, Rav Soloveitchik could certainly pasken any way he wanted, and demonstrate his psak dramatically. But others (and at this point, a very large part of the population, if not the majority, have assumed this chumrah) follow different piskei halacha. See, for example, the last paragraph of Shu"t Achiezer 3:32, and Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim, v. 4 pg. 69 and the sources he cites. Yitzchok Adlerstein

End of Torah-Forum  
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"ml@etzion.org.il" "yhe-parsha@jer1....  
YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH PROJECT  
(VBM)

PARSHAT HASHAVUA  
PARSHAT KI-TAVO  
by Menachem Leibtag

In memory of David S. Reece a"h, upon his yahrzeit - Rhoda L. Reece, Pamela Reece, Debi and Howard Reece and Family, and Ruchie and Yosef Gove and Family

In honor of the Bar Mitzva of my son Ariel Natan ben Chanaya Yisrael, who will b'ezeras Hashem be laining Parshat KiTavo - Andrew Klein  
In honor of the "ufruf" this Shabbat of David Schorr.  
Mazel Tov to the Schorr and Dweck families.

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In Parshat Ki-tavo, the main speech of Sefer Dvarim reaches its conclusion. This week's shiur discusses three topics which relate to this finale:

1. The last two mitzvot of the main speech (26:1-15);
2. Moshe Rabeinu's concluding remarks (26:16-19);
3. The purpose of "tochacha" which follows (27:1-28:69).

THE TWO LAST MITZVOT OF THE MAIN SPEECH

Recall [as usual] the basic structure of the main speech in Sefer Dvarim (chaps. 5->26):

- \* Introduction - the events at Ma'amad Har Sinai (chap. 5)
- \* The MITZVAH section - (chapters 6->11)
- \* The CHUKIM u'MISHPATIM section - (chapters 12->26)

The past three shiurim have discussed the progression of the mitzvot in the CHUKIM u'MISHPATIM section. This section begins (in Parshat Reay) with the commandment to establish the National Center at HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM, continuing with many of

its related mitzvot, such as:

- \* The obligation to bring all korbanot there;

- \* The obligation to eat "maaser sheni" there;
- \* The mitzva of "aliya la'regel" to that site;
- \* The mitzva to establish the supreme court there; etc.

Parshat Shoftim continues with mitzvot relating to national leadership and then discusses various mitzvot relating to war and murder. Afterward, Parshat Ki-teyze continues with a myriad of mitzvot, relating primarily to civil laws (i.e. "bein adam l'chaveiro").

Parshat Ki-tavo opens with two mitzvot which conclude the CHUKIM u'MISHPATIM section:

1) MIKRA BIKURIM (26:1-11)

The special proclamation which one must declare when he brings his "bikurim" (first fruits) to the MAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM (= the Beit HaMikdash).

2) VIDUUY MA'ASER (26:12-15)

The special proclamation which one must declare once every three years, the year in which "maaser sheni" must be given to the poor INSTEAD of bringing it to eat in HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM (see 14:22-29)

Considering that both of these mitzvot relate to HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM, they SHOULD have been included in Parshat

Reay, for that Parsha discusses all the other mitzvot relating to the Beit HaMikdash! In fact, MIKRA BIKURIM could have been included immediately following the laws of Shavuot (see 16:9-12 & Shmot 23:14-19, especially 23:19!). Similarly, VIDUUY MA'ASER could have been included with the laws of "ma'aser sheni" (see 14:22-29).

Why then does Sefer Dvarim 'save' them for the conclusion? MATCHING BOOKENDS

One could suggest that these mitzvot act as 'bookends' for the CHUKIM u'MISHPATIM section, for it begins AND ends with mitzvot that emphasize HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM, just as parshiot SHMA and V'HAYA IM SHMO'AH act as 'bookends' for the MITZVA section that emphasize "ahavat Hashem" (see shiur on Parshat V'etchanan).

In addition to this explanation, we must also explain why SPECIFICALLY these two mitzvot - MIKRA BIKURIM and VIDUUY MA'ASER

- are chosen to form the closing 'bookend'.

These two mitzvot are unique, for BOTH include a PROCLAMATION in which we thank God for giving us the LAND!

1) MIKRA BIKURIM

"You shall then recite: ...and God brought us to this place and gave us this LAND, a land flowing with milk and honey, therefore I now bring my FIRST FRUITS of the SOIL which You have given me." (26:9-10)

2) VIDUUY MA'ASER

"When you set a side your maaser... you shall declare before Hashem: I have given... Look down from heaven and bless Your people Israel and the SOIL You have given us, a LAND flowing with milk and honey, as you swore to our fathers." (26:12-15)

Both declarations not only thank God for the Land, but also recall the covenant which God made with the Avot. [In viduuy maaser this is explicit (see 26:15), in mikra bikurim this is implicit for it clearly relates back to Brit Bein Ha'tarim - see Further Iyun Section.]

The nature of these declarations are significant for the primary purpose of the main speech was to teach Bnei Yisrael the various laws which they must keep when they enter the LAND.

Recall the introductory pasuk to mitzvot of the main speech:

"And THIS is the MITZVAH, CHUKIM u'MISHPATIM that God has commanded me to impart to you, to be OBSERVED IN THE LAND

that you are about to enter and conquer..." (6:1)

[See also 5:28 and first shiur to Sefer Dvarim.]

Considering that the PURPOSE of the entire speech is to teach Bnei Yisrael the mitzvot which they must keep upon entering the LAND, it is only appropriate that the final mitzvot include a declaration in which we thank God for the LAND which He has given us!

This interpretation also helps us understand why each of these two declarations relate to God's covenant with the Avot concerning the Promised Land. By recalling that covenant, not only do we thank God for fulfilling His promise to our forefathers, we also remind ourselves of the reason WHY he gave us the land, i.e. to become a great nation which will represent Him. [See Breishit 12:1-3 and shiur on Parshat Lech Lcha.]

Therefore, these declarations take on additional significance, for they remind us of the purpose of all the mitzvot of the main speech in Sefer Dvarim, i.e. to help Bnei Yisrael become an "am kadosh" (a holy nation), a model for all nations to follow.

THE FINALE - MOSHE'S CONCLUDING REMARKS

This very theme is also found in Moshe Rabeinu's concluding remarks of the main speech:

"On this day, God commands you to observe these CHUKIM u'MISHPATIM... God has affirmed this day that you are His "AM SEGULA" (treasured nation) and He will set you high above all nations that you shall be, as He promised, a "GOY KADOSH" (a holy nation)... (26:16-19)

Moshe concludes the main speech by reiterating the primary purpose for keeping these mitzvot - in order that Am Yisrael become an AM KADOSH - a holy nation, worthy to represent God. BACK TO HAR SINAI

Moshe's concluding remarks also include a striking parallel to God's original charge to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai. Recall that when Bnei Yisrael first arrive at Har Sinai, God summons Moshe to the mountain and proposes a special covenant with Bnei Yisrael:

"And now, if YOU WILL LISTEN TO MY VOICE and KEEP MY COVENANT, then you shall become for Me a "SEGULA" amongst all the nations... and you shall be for me a kingdom of priests and a "GOY KADOSH"... (Shmot 19:5-6)

This proposal, which actually forms the prelude to the Ten Commandments, explains the primary purpose of Matan Torah - that Am Yisrael become a GOY KADOSH to represent God.

Now, at the conclusion of the main speech, in which Moshe Rabeinu repeats those mitzvot which were ORIGINALLY GIVEN AT HAR SINAI (immediately after the dibrot - see introductory shiur), we find this very same theme repeated:

"And God has affirmed this day that you are, as He promised you [at Har Sinai!], His AM SEGULA, who shall OBSERVE all of His commandments, and that He will set you, in fame and renown and glory, high above all the nations that He has made; and that you shall be, as He promised [at Har Sinai!] a GOY KADOSH..." (26:18-19)

Moshe's concluding remarks are quite appropriate, for the purpose of the mitzvot, which he has just completed teaching Bnei Yisrael, are to help Bnei Yisrael become a SEGULA and an AM KADOSH; just as He had originally promised them at Har Sinai! THE PROPER BALANCE

Moshe's concluding remarks also beautifully tie together the two main sections of the main speech. Recall that the MITZVA section, whose primary topic is "ahavat Hashem", opened with the commandment to love God - "bchol Ivavcha uvchol nafshecha" - with all one's heart and with all one's soul. Now, at the conclusion

of the CHUKIM u'MISHPATIM section, Moshe explains how these two sections relate to each other:

"The Lord your God commands you this day to keep these CHUKIM u'MISHPATIM; observe them faithfully - "bchol ivavcha uvchol nafshecha" - with all your heart and with all your soul..." (26:16)

The practical mitzvot of the CHUKIM u'MISHPATIM section, must be kept with proper attitude, as explained in the MITZVA section.

#### THE TOCHACHA - THE COVENANT AT ARVOT MOAV AND HAR EIVAL

This thematic and textual parallel to "Ma'amad Har Sinai" continues in the parsha which follows the conclusion of the main speech:

"Moshe and the elders charged the people, saying: Observe everything that I command you today... for when you cross

the Jordan, you must erect large stones and coat them with plaster [in order that] you shall write on them all the words of this Torah [the mitzvot of Sefer Dvarim]... erect these stones on Har Eival... And you shall build there a MIZBAYACH... (note parallel to Shmot 20:22), and you shall offer upon it OLOT and SHLAMIM... (Dvarim 27:1-8)

A very similar ceremony took place forty years earlier at Maamad Har Sinai, immediately after Moshe teaches Bnei Yisrael the laws which God gave him after the Ten Commandments:

"And Moshe came [down from Har Sinai] and told the people all of God's commandments and the MISHPATIM... Moshe then wrote down all of God's commandments. Then, he woke up early in the morning and built a MIZBAYACH at the foot of the mountain and erected twelve large stones... and they offered OLOT and SHLAMIM..." (Shmot 24:3-8)

Likewise, there is a "tochacha" which is to be read at that ceremony (see Dvarim 27:11-28:69) on Har Eival, just as there was a "tochacha" which was read at Har Sinai (Vayikra 26:3-46, see also 25:1).

Thus, this ceremony which Bnei Yisrael must perform on Har Eival, which includes writing down and teaching the mitzvot of Sefer Dvarim, building a MIZBAYACH, and offering OLOT and SHLAMIM, parallels the covenantal ceremony which took place at Maamad Har Sinai when Bnei Yisrael proclaimed "naaseh v'nishma (see Shmot 24:3-11).

The reason for this parallel is quite simple: Because this generation (which is about to enter the Land and fulfill these mitzvot) was not present at the original ceremony, a NEW ceremony is required in which the new generation can re-affirm their commitment to their covenant with God.

#### TODAY

It is not often in our history that one generation is given an opportunity to fulfill a destiny which was originally planned for an earlier generation. Aware of this potential, Moshe encourages the new generation in the desert to rise to the challenge of setting up an AM KADOSH in the Promised Land, as God had originally planned for the generation of their parents.

Moshe's challenge in his speech to the new generation, although some three thousand years old, takes on additional significance today, as our own generation has been given the potential to fulfill this very same destiny.

shabbat shalom, menachem

#### FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. Based on the above shiur, why do you think Chazal chose the proclamation used in "Mikra Bikurim" for the fulfillment of "sipur yitziat mitzraim" in the Hagada of Pesach?

B. Carefully compare the declaration in MIKRA BIKURIM to God's covenant with Avraham Avinu at Brit Bein Ha'Btarim" (Breishit chapter 15), the original covenant which God made with him which includes God's promise of the Land to his offspring. [See especially Breishit 15:7-21. Relate also to Dvarim 1:7-11! - Moshe's opening remarks in his introductory speech.]

C. Note in Sefer Yehoshua (4:1-10), how many stones are taken from the Yarden. What is done with these stones?

How does this relate to Shmot 24:3-10?

See Yehoshua 8:30-35. Is this the fulfillment of the mitzvah in Dvarim 27:1-11? Why is this mitzvah only performed after the battle against Ha'Ai?

What other parallels are there in Sefer Yehoshua to the generation of Yetziat Mitzraim?

Relate especially to chapters 3 & 5!

The Weekly Internet  
P A R A S H A - P A G E

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by Mordecai Kornfeld  
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This weeks teaching is dedicated in memory of Fishel Yitzchok ben Shmuel Zisblatt by his family. His Yartzheit this year is Shabbos Parashat Ki-Tavo (16 Elul). YOU CAN DOWNLOAD OUR "INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF" AND "QUESTIONS OF THE DAY" FOR CHULLIN 2-13 NOW, AT THE \*Dafyomi \*Advancement \*Forum WEBSITE:

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We'd like to help you study -- you can now email me either directly or via our Website any QUESTIONS you have on the DAF! (Questions & answers will be posted on the Web for public viewing unless requested otherwise.)

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Parashat Ki-Tavo 5756

#### PUNISHMENT AND BLESSING

Ezra the scribe instituted the public reading of the Tochechah (a list of punishments reserved for sinners) in Vayikra (26:14-43) before Shavuot, and that of Devarim (28:15-68) before Rosh Hashanah. Why is that? In order that the past year finish along with all of the curses associated with it.... Is Shavuot, then, a New Year's day? Yes, it is. As the Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 16a) states, "There are four periods when the world is judged; on Pesach... on Shavuot... on Rosh Hashanah... and on Succot..."

(Gemara Megillah 31b)

Our custom is to read a Parasha that does not mention Tochechah the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah [and to read the Tochechah \*two\* weeks before Shavuot and Rosh Hashanah,] in order not to read Tochechah immediately prior to Rosh Hashanah.

(Tosafot ad loc., s.v. Kelalot)

How does reading Tochechah before Rosh Hashanah herald a year of blessing? If anything, it would seem as if we are "ushering in" Tochechah, rather than "ushering them out," as can be judged from the reasoning of Tosafot. An answer to this question may be deduced through a thorough examination of the Gemara, quoted above, that provides the source for this custom.

#### II

A number of questions may be asked on the words of the Gemara.

(1) Firstly, why do we read specifically the \*Vayikra\* set of Tochechah before Shavuot and the \*Devarim\* set before Rosh Hashanah? (2) Secondly, if

there are actually four Rosh Hashanah's in the Mishnah, why did Ezra institute to "end the year and its Tochechah" before only two of them? (3) Finally (as Maharatz Chayot points out), it was once customary among the Jews of Israel to read much smaller weekly Torah portions. Because of this, it took them about three years to finish the entire Torah (Megillah 29b). How would the Jews of Israel fulfill Ezra's institution of reading the Tochechah before Rosh Hashanah? They only read each set of Tochechah once in three years!

These questions lead us to a new understanding of Ezra's institution. Perhaps Ezra did not mean for us to break from our normal routine and read Tochechah when Rosh Hashanah approaches. Rather, he ruled that in the course of our weekly readings, we should \*not\* read the Tochechah immediately \*after\* the start of a new year, as starting a year with Tochechah would be a bad omen. He therefore proposed that when, in the

course of our weekly Torah readings, the reading of the Tochechah coincides with a New Year's holiday, we should advance the reading of the Tochechah to the Shabbat \*before\* the New Year.

(1) This explains why the Tochechah of Vayikra are associated with Shavuot and those of Devarim with Rosh Hashanah. During the course of the yearly cycle of Torah readings, these Parshiot would normally be read immediately before or after those holidays. (2) For the same reason, there is no need to mention Succot or Pesach in Ezra's institution. The Tochechah wouldn't normally be read after those holidays in either case. (3) Finally, those who read the Torah according to the triennial cycle could also keep Ezra's institution. If the Tochechah, in such a cycle, was to be read shortly after a Rosh Hashanah, it would be pushed up and read earlier. Ezra made no institution bidding us to \*arrange\* to read the Tochechah before Shavuot or Rosh Hashanah!

It is now understandable why reading the Tochechah before a holiday is a sign that the New Year will be blessed. The Tochechah must be read shortly before or after the holiday in either case according to the yearly Torah reading cycle. Therefore, reading it before the holiday, as opposed to after it, saves us from "starting the year with Tochechah." This is indeed a way to usher in a year of blessing!

### III

This explanation provides at least a superficial appreciation of Ezra's institution. A more in-depth understanding may be gleaned from the following Midrash:

When the Bnai Yisroel heard the 100-less-two punishments of Devarim, aside from the 49 of Vayikra, their faces blanched. They exclaimed, "Who can survive all of these!" Moshe Rabbeinu calmed them, saying, "...You've already sinned terribly [in the desert], yet you see that you have not been destroyed! "

Why were the gentiles destroyed while we were not? Because when the gentiles are punished they do not turn to Hashem. Instead, they rebel out of suffering. When the Jews are punished, however, they humble themselves and pray to Hashem.... In this manner the Tochechah preserves our spiritual integrity.

(Midrash Tanchuma, beginning of Nitzavim. See Rashi ad loc.)

It is necessary to suffer physical torment in order to be humbled. The prudent do not have to be punished -- simply considering the wrath of Hashem humbles them and turns their hearts to their creator in prayer. This may be the message of Ezra's institution. Read the Tochechah, and arouse the Jews to repent, before Rosh Hashanah. If they repent properly, they will truly be granted a year of prosperity! As depressing as it may be, it is worthwhile to read the Tochechah before Rosh Hashanah. (Our custom is to

read the Tochechah two weeks before the holiday, as Tosafot pointed out. Perhaps this is in order to give us time both to repent and to overcome the depression associated with the Tochechah.)

May we merit to conclude this year and its punishments and to start a new year of blessings and joy!

### IV

We may add one more observation. The number of punishments mentioned in Devarim, according to the Tanchuma, is "100-less-two." This strange implies that there are not simply "98" punishments listed but rather 100, two of which are somehow different from the others. The K'li Yakar (beg. of Nitzavim) explains brilliantly that the two "missing" ones are those of Devarim 28:61 : "Aside from these, Hashem will bring upon you any sickness and any punishment that is not written in the Torah." The "sickness" and the "punishment" of this Pasuk are at the same time written, and yet left unwritten. They are the two that have been removed from the count of one hundred!

With this in mind, we may suggest that just as Ezra instituted the reading of the Tochechah of Vayikra before Shavuot in order to arouse us to take heed of the 49 punishments and repent so, too, the 49 days of the Omer-count which culminate in Shavuot remind us of these 49 punishments. Similarly, just as Ezra's reading of the Tochechah in Ki-Tavo before Rosh Hashanah reminds us to take heed of the 100 punishments and to repent so, too, the 100 blasts of the Shofar heard on Rosh Hashanah remind us of the same theme!

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- "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Ki Savo -

Linkage Between Sinas Chinom and Absence of Simcha  
?Between Needless Hatred and Absence of JoyX

At the end of the Tochacha ?verses of rebuke in our ParshaX, the pasuk ?verseX says that these ninety-eight terrible curses come "as the result of your not having served the L-rd, your G-d, with joy and with good spirit (b'simcha u'tvuv leivav) when you had and abundance of everything" ?Devorim

28:47X. This is an unbelievable statement. It seems harsh that such terrible curses should

befall the Jewish people, just because people are lacking what seems to be a "hidur mitzvah" ?glorification of a mitzvah, which is not absolutely necessaryX of observing commandments in a state of joy.

Moreover, there is another difficulty: Our Sages tell us that the Tochacha that we find at the end of Sefer Vayikra ?LeviticusX corresponded historically to the events of the First Temple period; this Tochacha -- in Parshas Ki Savo -- is referring to the period leading up to the destruction of the Second Temple. We all know that the Sages tell us that the reason the Second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed was because of baseless hatred (sin'as chinam). So these two teachings of Chaza"l, our Sages, seem contradictory. What was the reason for the destruction of the second Temple -- Was it 'baseless hatred' or was it 'failure to serve G-d with joy'?

Perhaps there is no contradiction. The Torah is referring to the underlying cause of the churban Bayis Sheni ?destruction of the Second TempleX. The underlying cause of the churban Bayis Sheni was lack of Simcha ?joyX. Failure to serve G-d with joy, in turn, leads to Sinas Chinam.

What does this mean? Chaza"l say that Talmidei Chachomim ?scholarsX increase peace in the world. How is this done? I once saw, written in the name of

Rav Chatzkel Abramsky, z"tl, that a person who is a Talmid Chachom, in the real sense of the word, is a person who is at peace with himself. He is happy and satisfied with what he is accomplishing in life. As a result, he exudes his inner happiness and inner peace and that has an effect on other

people.  
When a person is happy with himself, the feeling is contagious. He is willing to share that peace and that happiness. Those feelings affect other people. When a person is not happy with himself, he is miserable and he dislikes other people's happiness or success. Just as happiness rubs off, so too unhappiness rubs off and such a person cannot be satisfied with anyone else's success.

Chaza"l are telling us that because you were not happy with your lot and you were not b'simcha, therefore the consequence is baseless hatred. When a person is not happy with himself, he cannot tolerate others having any kind of happiness either.

There is thus no contradiction. The Second Temple was destroyed because of Sinas Chinom, but Sinas Chinom results from people who are not happy with themselves, are not b'simcha, and are not doing mitzvos b'simcha.

A Tale of Two Tochachas

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Chaza"l in many places contrast the Tochacha of Parshas Ki Savo with that of Parshas Bechukosai ?end of Leviticus, as aboveX. There is a significant difference between the two. At the end of the Tochacha of Parshas Bechukosai, the Torah ends the Curse with words of consolation: "And I will remember for them my covenant with Yacov, and even my covenant with Yitzchak, and even my covenant with Avraham I will remember, and I will remember the Land" ?Vayikra 26:42X.

The Tochacha in this week's Parshas Ki Savo, however, ends off on a terrible note. "The L-rd will return you to Egypt in boats along the path that I said to you 'You will no longer see it'; and you will be offered for sale to your enemies for slaves and handmaidens AND NO ONE WILL EVEN WANT TO BUY YOU

(v'ein koneh)." ?Devorim 28:68X. That is how the Tochacha ends.

This is strange. At least the Tochacha in Bechukosai ends on a positive note. G-d promises us that He'll remember us. The Tochacha in Ki Savo ends

with the ominous promise "You'll be sold and people won't even want to buy you".

The Zohar HaKodosh writes: "This question was asked in the study hall - how

come the Tochacha in this week's parsha has no consolation at the end and the Tochacha in the book of Vayikra has a consolation at the end?"

Rav Shimeon Bar Yochai provides an answer. The Tochacha in Sefer Vayikra

needs a consolation, but the Tochacha of this week's Sedra needs no consolation, because included in the words of this week's Tochacha we already have the biggest comfort.

What is this big comfort? The Zohar HaKodosh explains that the Tochacha in

Parshas Bechukosai contains the terrible words "And if you will walk with me

out of happenstance (keri) so too I will walk with you in a wrath of happenstance (keri)" ?Vayikra 26: 27-28X. My relationship to you, G-d tells

the Jewish people, will be reciprocal. If you show no concern for My 'needs', I will show no concern for your needs. This week's portion,

however, has the comforting expression "The L-rd will smite you..." ?Devorim

28:27X - G-d Himself will smite you. This is this biggest consolation.

What is the Zohar HaKodosh saying? Rav Meir Bergman says that the worst thing that can happen to the Jewish people is that they can be left on their own. If Klal Yisroel, the Nation of Israel, acts as if the Ribono shel Olam

?Master of the WorldX is not an integral part of their life, then the Ribono shel Olam's response will be "I'm going to step back and I'm going to let

Teva (nature, statistics) take its course. Teva will take care of you."

This is

terrible. When that happens, the bond between G-d and Klal Yisroel is broken. There is no longer that closeness.

However, when the Ribono shel Olam 'smites,' even though it is a 'klap,' a smack - that in itself is a consolation, because at least we know that there is that relationship. Albeit it is a relationship of punishment, but it nevertheless is a relationship. Who feels more alone? The child who gets spanked when he misbehaves, or the child who has no father, Heaven forbid, to spank him?

The Tochacha in Bechukosai is the story of a people without a father, Heaven protect us; a father who stands in the background and lets whatever that happens, happen. The Tochacha of Ki Savo, however, is "The L-rd will smite you" - I'll 'klap' you, but at least you will know that there is someone concerned and taking care of you. Hitting you, but taking care of you, nevertheless.

The Talmud says in Brachos ?7bX. "A Psalm of David (Mizmor l'Dovid) when he

was fleeing before Avsholom, his son". ?Tehillim 3:1X The Gemara asks, should we call this a Mizmor (Psalm of praise) of Dovid? It should be called a Dirge of David (Kinah L'Dovid)! The Gemara answers that when G-d

had prophesized to Dovid, "Behold I will raise up evil against you from the midst of your house" ?Shmuel 2 12:11X, Dovid feared that it would be a slave

or a mamzer, but when he saw it was his own son, Avshalom, he was greatly relieved and said a Psalm to G-d.

Rabbi Yonason Eibshitz explains in his Yearos Dvash that for a slave or a Mamzer to rebel, that is Teva -- that's natural. The last thing Dovid HaMelech ?The KingX wanted was that his relationship with G-d would be a Teva relationship, subjecting him to the whims and statistics of nature.

However, if his own son rebels, it is apparent that the punishment came from the 'Hand of G-d'. The fact that G-d Himself is doing the punishing, Himself, is the biggest consolation and source of comfort.

That is why Chaza"l tell us that the Tochacha of Parshas Ki Savo needed no consolation. Since it was clear that G-d, Himself, was administering the punishment, we need no consolation. The Tochacha of Vayikra, however, where

G-d 'steps aside' and lets nature take its course, needs consolation.

The Kotzker Rebbe, zt"l, once said that the month in which the most tragedies befell the Jewish people is called, of all things, the month of "Av" (father). The Kotzker explained that from a smack, one can recognize a father. From our extraordinary national tragedies we have built-in consolation -- we know we still have a Father in Heaven who is concerned with our behavior.

HALACHA FOR 5756

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SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS KI-SAVO

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

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

Accursed is the one who moves the boundary of his fellow... (27:17)

Lo- Sasig: Unfair Competition

QUESTION: Is it permissible to open a competing store or business in the same vicinity as an existing establishment owned by another Jew?

DISCUSSION: When dealing with the delicate issue of competition,

the Halacha takes into account both the consumer and the proprietor. For the consumer's protection, the Halacha encourages fair competition to keep the prices down and to ensure a plentiful supply of high quality goods. To protect the proprietor, the Halacha prohibits unfair business practices and puts limits on competitors who would wish - in Halachic terms - to "enter their boundary." The following is a general description of the Halachos governing competition. In reality, however, each situation is unique. When a dispute arises, it must be brought before a local Bais Din for resolution.

Any local resident(1) may open a competing store or business, even if the two establishments are next-door to each other and the new one will cut into the old one's profits(2). The competing business may lower its prices or advertise in order to lure customers away from the existing business(3).

Although it is permitted to compete this way even L'chatchilah(4), there are some Poskim(5) who hold that it is Middas Chasidus not to ruin another person's livelihood even when permitted according to the basic Halachah. In larger cities and in growing neighborhoods, however, it is not Middas Chasidus to refrain from opening a competing business when there is room for both businesses to prosper(6).

There are several exceptions to the Halachah outlined above: If a customer has already entered a competitor's store, one is not allowed to lure him to his own establishment(7). Similarly, many Poskim hold that it is prohibited to actively pursue a client, even a non-Jew, if the client has already built up a close business relationship with a competitor (e.g., an insurance agent with his client or a tailor with his customer(8). Although it is permissible to lower one's prices in order to compete, it is prohibited to lower the price drastically below the going rate. Since the intent of the drastic reduction is to drive the competition out of business, it is prohibited to do so(9).

Many Poskim hold that there is another exception to the Halacha that allows a competitor to open a store or a business. They(10) hold that this may be done only if the existing business would survive, even though it is presently losing money. If opening a second store, however, would result in putting the existing store out of business, then the second store may not open its doors. Even if the owner of the existing store has another business that could support him, and even if he is independently wealthy, it is still prohibited to compete against him if it would force this particular business to shut down completely. Although there may be other Poskim(11) who do not agree with this limitation and hold that a local resident may compete even if it causes the existing store to go out of business, Harav Moshe Feinstein ruled clearly in accordance with the first view(12).

The Halacha stated thus far applies only to a local resident who wants to compete with an existing business. A non-resident may not compete with an existing business(13). If, however, the non-resident's competition will result in prices being lowered or in superior products being provided to the local populace, competition is allowed according to the guidelines detailed above(14).

#### FOOTNOTES:

1 In certain situations it may not be clear who a "local resident" is. This is an issue for the Bais Din to decide.

2 CM 156:5, based on Bava Basra 21a.

3 CM 228:18.

4 Shu"t Chasam Sofer CM 61.

5 Shulchan Aruch Harav (Hilchos Hasogas Gevul 13), based on

Rambam Hilchos Dayos 5:13.

6 Harav Yaakov Blau in Pischei Choshen (Gneiva pg. 262). Note that concerning all these Halachos, there is no difference between an observant or a non-observant Jew - Shu"t Ksav Sofer CM 20.

7 Shu"t Chasam Sofer CM 79; Pischei Teshuva 237:3. It is prohibited, therefore, for a taxi or a car service to pass by a Jewish-owned bus stop in order to solicit passengers, even if the taxi or car service is cheaper. A free ride, however, may be offered - even though that would cause a loss to the bus company - ruling of the Bais Din Machon L'ahorah, Monsey N.Y. (Maishiv B'halacha vol. 17. pg. 13.)

8 Based on Teshuvos Rashba 6:259, Rama CM 156:5 and the general consensus of the Poskim. If the competitor offers a better price, and the customer is a Jew, there are some Poskim who allow it. A Rov needs to be consulted, since there are several factors involved in this sensitive issue.

9 Pischei Choshen (Geneiva pg. 270-272) based on Shu"t Divrei Chaim 1:19; Shu"t Maharam Shik 20; Aruch Hashulchan 156:11 and other Poskim. According to the Poskim quoted later (footnote 9-10) this practice is surely prohibited.

10 Shu"t Chasam Sofer CM 61 and 118, quoted in Pischei Teshuva CM 156:3. Note that whenever competition is clearly prohibited, it is also prohibited for anyone to patronize that establishment - Pischei Choshen pg. 262.

11 This seems to be the view of Shu"t Bais Efraim CM 26-27 and other Poskim quoted in Pischei Teshuva CM 156:3. There are several Batei Dinim in Eretz Yisrael who rule this way, see Piskei Din Rabbanim (vol. 4 pg. 9; vol. 8 pg. 82). When this situation arises, there are several other factors to consider, which cannot be detailed here. A Bais Din must be consulted.

12 Igros Moshe CM 1:38 (see also CM 2:40-2) concerning a case in which members of a Shul broke off from the existing Shul and established their own Minyan. This action proved disastrous to the livelihood of the Rov of the existing Shul and radically lowered his Shul's property value. Rav Moshe ruled that it was forbidden for anyone to establish another Shul in the same neighborhood, even if their reason for breaking away was because of a difference in Nusach or style of Davening, and even if they disliked the practices of the present Rov.

13 Our discussion here centers on retail trade. Wholesale and mail order business, or a business which by its nature does not serve the local population exclusively but attracts customers from afar, may compete anywhere, see CM 156:7, Sm"a 20, and Pischei Teshuva 9. Note, also, that if there are others not under the control of Beis Din who are competing anyway, all competition is permitted - Shu"t M'harshdam CM 407.

14 Rama CM 156:7 and Aruch Hashulchan 11.

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DRASHA PARSHAS KI SAVO -- THE TODAY SHOW 8/30/96  
Volume 2 Issue 46

Today. It's a powerful word. It is used by doctors to define the exact moment their patients are to stop over-indulging, smoking, and drinking. It is used by accounts receivable to exact when they want their bills paid. Most importantly, it used by the Torah in describing what it wants from our attitudes. This week the Torah portion tells us, Deuteronomy: 26:16: "Today Hashem commands you to perform these decrees and statutes." There is obviously a deeper connotation. The commandments were not given on the day that Moshe is reading this week's portion. They were given forty years prior. Rashi quotes the Midrash Tanchuma: "Every day the Torah should appear to us as if it were given today." Thus, forty years later Moshe commands his people

that today Hashem commanded us to observe the Torah.

With that beautiful interpretation of "today," in mind, I would like to shed a new perspective on a verse at the very end of this week's portion.

Moshe calls the nation together and reminds them of the miraculous events that transpired during the exodus from Egypt. He discusses (Deuteronomy 29:1-3), "the great wonders, signs, and miracles that your eyes beheld." Then he adds something shocking. "But Hashem did not give you a heart to understand or eyes to see until today."

What can the word "today" mean in this context? Did the Jewish nation not have the heart to appreciate the value of splitting the Red Sea forty years back? Did they not revel in the miracle of Manna from its first earthly descent decades previously? How can Moshe say that they did not have eyes to

understand until today?

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz\* once gave an ethical discourse on inspiration and outcome. He told the story of three friends who were discussing the diligence of Talmudic sages of yesteryear. Upon hearing of the of one particular Gaon's remarkable achievements derived through tremendous constancy and unrelenting Torah study, one of the boys ran straight from the table to the Bais Medrash (Study Hall) where he began a marathon of Talmudic

learning. For one year the young man refused to speak anything but Torah. He

eventually became one of the leaders of his generation.

After the eloquent story, one of Rabbi Shmuelevitz's students asked him, "I think the story was amazing. But the boy who ran from the table forgot to bentsch (say grace after meals)!" Rav Chaim smiled at the pointed question. Then he nodded. "You are right. He did not bentsch. But had he stopped to recite the grace after meals along with its required preparations, he would never have returned to the Bais Medrash with the same enthusiasm."

Perhaps Moshe is telling his nation the secret of eternal inspiration. One may experience miraculous events. He may even have the vision of a lifetime.

However he "will not have the heart to understand or the eyes to see" until that vision is today. Unless the inspiration lives with him daily, as it did upon the moment of impact. Whether tragedy or blessing, too often an impact becomes as dull as the movement of time itself. The promises, pledges, and commitments begin to travel slowly, hand-in-hand down a memory lane paved

with long-forgotten inspiration.

This week Moshe tells us that even after experiencing a most memorable wonder, we still may, "not have the heart to discern nor the eyes to see."

Until we add one major ingredient. Today.

Dedicated by Gisele & Ira Beer in memory of Gisa Meyers

\* Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (1902-1979), was Rosh Yeshiva of Dean's of the Mirror

Yeshiva of Jerusalem. In addition to his prolific knowledge of responsa and his

brilliant Talmudic dissertations, he was a master of ethical insights and discourses. Some have been translated into English and are available as Sichos Mussar, Reb Chaim's Discourses (c) 1989 Mesorah Publications.

Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a Torah Facsimile on the Parsha which is a project of the Henry & Myrtle Hirsch Foundation

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Parashat Ki Tavo: The Lesson of the Stones

by Aaron Weiss

Moshe commanded that when B'nei Yisrael first enter Eretz Yisrael, they take twelve large stones and set them up as a monument on Mount Eival. The wording of the commandment is repetitious to the point that it seems the commandment was stated twice.

" $\cong 2\Delta$  And it will be on the day that you cross the Jordan to the land that Hashem your G-d is giving you, you will set up for yourself large stones, and you will cover them with plaster.  $\cong 3\Delta$  And you will write on them all the words of this Torah in your crossing, so that you come to the land that Hashem your G-d is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as Hashem the G-d of your fathers told you. ?Dvarim, 27:2,3X

" $\cong 4\Delta$  And it will be when you cross the Jordan, set up these stones that I am commanding you today on Mount Eival, and cover them with plaster.

$\cong 5\Delta$  And build there an altar to Hashem your G-d, an altar of stones, do not raise iron to them.  $\cong 6\Delta$  Of whole stones build the altar of Hashem your G-d, and you will offer on it "Olot" sacrifices to Hashem your G-d.  $\cong 7\Delta$  And you will slaughter "Shlamim" sacrifices and eat there, and you will be happy before Hashem your G-d.  $\cong 8\Delta$  And you will write on the stone all the words of this Torah explained clearly. ?Dvarim, 27:4-8X"

The Avrabanel points out that not only does the commandment seem to be written twice, once in psukim  $\cong 2\Delta$  and  $\cong 3\Delta$ , and once in psukim  $\cong 4\Delta$  through  $\cong 8\Delta$ , there are also a number of differences between the two repetitions.

In the first repetition: "you will set up for yourself large stones", in the second: "set up these stones".

In the first: "you will write on them all the words of this Torah in your crossing", in the second "in your crossing" is omitted and is replaced by "explained clearly".

In the first: "on the day that you cross the Jordan", in the second "when you cross the Jordan".

In the first: "so that you come to the land that Hashem your G-d is giving you", in the second no mention is made of this.

In the first: after "you will cover them with plaster" comes "you will write on them all the words of this Torah", and in the second between these two actions comes the commandment to build an altar and offer sacrifices. In the first no mention is made of where the monument should be erected, in the second it is to be on Mount Eival.

Based on these differences the Avrabanel explains that there is in fact no repetition here, but rather two different things are being described. The first two psukim are describing what B'nei Yisrael would normally do when they enter Eretz Yisrael. Like any invading army sure of victory, they would set up a monument to testify to their fame and power, such as the romans did on the highways and in the cities of the countries they conquered. Therefore the Torah writes "you will set up for yourself", as a description, and not a commandment (lashon tzivui). They would take large stones and build a monument. They would cover it in plaster so that they could write on it, and engrave on it the story of their exodus from Egypt, the happenings of their forty year journey through the desert, as well as their recent conquest of the kingdoms of Sichon and Og. The Torah therefore writes, "so that you come to the land that Hashem your G-d is giving you". This does not mean that they will enter into the land in the merit of erecting these stones. It is rather a phrase that qualifies "all the words of this Torah". B'nei Yisrael will write the whole "torah" of ~~their crossing, from the time they left Egypt until entering the land of~~ Israel.

However, the Torah commanded that since B'nei Yisrael were going to erect this monument, instead of erecting it for their own vanity's sake, they should do so for the sake of the mitzvah, and the honor and glory of Hashem. Hashem therefore commanded that as soon as they first enter the land, while they are crossing the Jordan, they take these stones, make them

into an altar, and offer sacrifices, to show that the conquest of Eretz Yisrael is in the name of Hashem. Then the altar should be taken apart and the stones taken to Mount Eival, and there be set up as a monument. Erecting the monument on Mount Eival shows that the monument, and the conquest it symbolizes, is a part of the covenant concluded there between Hashem and B'nei Yisrael. For the same reason they should not write only the story of their wanderings and victories, but the whole Torah, which includes both their story and all of the mitzvot.

The lesson of the Avrabanel's analysis is clear. There are numerous things that we do for ourselves. The example of the monument teaches us that we need to stop and take stock of our actions and see how we can change them so that they are not done solely for our own benefit, but also l'shem Shamayim. We might not change only what we do, but also how we do it.

When viewed in the context of the psukim that precede and follow the mitzvah of the stones, the analysis of the Avrabanel renders a different lesson. According to the Avrabanel, the monument that B'nei Yisrael would have erected would be for their own vanity's sake. However, from the two psukim that describe the way they would have erected the monument this doesn't seem to be the case. "Hashem your G-d" is mentioned twice, and "as Hashem the G-d of your fathers told you" seems to be the way B'nei Yisrael view the gift of Eretz Yisrael, and it would follow that they also see the connection between Eretz Yisrael and the other things that "Hashem the G-d of their father's told them". In fact, even the stories of "their crossing", the exodus from Egypt, the forty years in the desert, and the conquest of the kingdoms of Sichon and Og, are all stories of the miracles of Hashem.

If B'nei Yisrael were planning on erecting the monument "l'shem Shamayim", then what is the difference between what they would have done, and the way they were commanded to do it by Hashem?

The section of psukim that precedes the mitzvah of the stones is the introduction not only to that mitzvah, but to the rest of the parasha as well. "This day Hashem your G-d commands you to do all of these strictures and laws, and you shall keep and do them with all of your heart and all of your soul. Today you have made Hashem pledge to be a G-d for you

and to go in His ways and keep His strictures, commandments, and laws, and obey his word. And Hashem has made you pledge today to be a treasured nation for him, as He has told you, and to keep all of his commandments." (This translation follows Rashbam and R. Yehuda Halevi.)

These words are the introduction to the covenant that Hashem made with B'nei Yisrael on the banks of the Jordan, just before they crossed into Eretz Yisrael. Included in the covenant are the mitzvah of the stone monument on Mount Eival, the blessings and the curses on Mount Grizim and Mount Eival, and the blessings and curses that make up the "tochacha" (all of chapter 28). This introduction describes the nature of the covenant. The covenant has two parts. one part is that we must keep all of the mitzvot of the Torah, and Hashem in turn gives us the mitzvot to keep. The second part is that Hashem pledges to be our God, and we in turn pledge to be Hashem's treasured nation.

It is the second part of the covenant that is a new stage in the relationship between us and Hashem. Up until this covenant, we were commanded to make Hashem our G-d, (Anochi Hashem Elokecha), and we were promised that we would be Hashem's treasured nation (Shmot 19:5). After forty years in the desert B'nei Yisrael were ready to take the next step. In this new covenant each side agreed to accept the role set for it by the other. In other words, the relationship is no longer dependent on other factors, but rather exists for its own sake. Hashem is not our G-d because we keep the mitzvot, and we are not His treasured nation because we keep the mitzvot. We keep the mitzvot because they were given to us by Hashem to

keep, and we are Hashem's treasured nation in the same way Hashem is our G-d, unconditionally.

The difference between the way B'nei Yisrael would have erected the monument, and the way they were commanded to do it by Hashem, is the difference between the B'nei Yisrael as they were in the desert, and B'nei Yisrael at the final stage of the covenant, immediately before the blessings and curses on Mount Grizim and Mount Eival.

Before the covenant B'nei Yisrael would have erected the monument l'shem Shamayim, but it still would have been "you will set up for yourself". It would have been a mitzvah, but not a part of anything larger. Rather it would be "so that you come to the land that Hashem your G-d is giving you". To receive the gift of Eretz Yisrael they need to recognize that Hashem is giving it to them so they can use it in His service.

After the new covenant, which began a new relationship with Hashem, the monument was erected not so that Hashem would find B'nei Yisrael fitting to enter the land, but as a part of that relationship, out of a desire to bring honor and glory to the name of Hashem. The same is true of all the other mitzvot. We do not do them to strengthen our relationship with Hashem, but rather because of that relationship. Each mitzvah takes on new meaning because it is now connected to every other mitzvah. (In much the same way, Chazal tell us that after the covenant of Mount Grizim and Mount Eival, the mitzvot of each Jew are connected to the mitzvot of every other Jew.) Its significance is changed, and the way we go about it changes too. After the covenant, setting up the stones was accompanied by "Olot" sacrifices and "Shlamim" sacrifices and "you will be happy before Hashem your G-d." When a mitzvah is the expression of our relationship with Hashem it brings not only a reward, but joy as well. Shabbat Shalom.

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YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH  
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PARASHAT KITAVO  
SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A  
Parashat Bikkurim  
Summarized by Rav Eliyahu Blumenzweig

Many diverse commandments are included in the category of "mitzvot ha-teluyot ba-aretz" (commandments dependent on - i.e. which are to be fulfilled only in - Eretz Yisrael). In the case of some of these, e.g. the mitzvot pertaining to the libation offerings, there is no clear logical connection to Eretz Yisrael, and in some cases the connection is not even made explicit in the Torah.

The mitzva of bikkurim (the offering of the first-fruits), which is mentioned in our parasha and which is obviously included in the category of the "mitzvot ha-teluyot ba-aretz," is different in both respects. Firstly, the issue of bikkurim is discussed explicitly and in great detail in the Torah. And secondly, aside from the clear connection of this mitzva to Eretz Yisrael, the very fulfillment of the mitzva involves an expression of this connection - i.e. in the prescribed recitation over the bikkurim: "My father was a wandering Aramean... The Lord freed us from Egypt... He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey, wherefore I now bring the first fruits of the soil which You, O Lord, have given me" (Devarim 26:5-10).

The unusual detail of this mitzva and the extra emphasis on its connection with Eretz Yisrael call for an explanation.

"And it shall be when you come to the land..." - Bnei Yisrael's entry into the land poses a serious, three-fold danger:

Firstly, their wanderings in the desert had inculcated in them a strong consciousness of their complete dependence on God - an awareness that, without Him, they would not be able to exist at all. For forty years they had wandered in the desolate wilderness, with all their needs miraculously taken care of through God's performance of miracles. This Divine assistance was an integral part of every aspect of their lives, from the bread and meat that they ate to the pillar of fire that led them by night and the pillar of cloud by day. Each person was clearly and unquestionably aware that his entire existence was dependent on God, and that without Him he would be nothing. The entry into the land threatened this clear consciousness. Now each person would inherit his portion of the land and would start to live a natural life, according to natural laws and regular processes. In such a situation, one can easily lose his feeling of dependence on God and start to feel that he relies completely on himself - that one's sustenance depends only on his own efforts, that his entire existence depends on his own abilities and endeavors, and that he rules his own fate. The danger of descent into apostasy is not far off.

Secondly, there lurks a danger from the communal point of view. The nation now entering its land will build its own social framework, with a governing body and all the attendant institutions. The individual may start to perceive himself as being dependent on the social authorities and rulers of the state, viewing them as the determining factors for all that happens in his life. After all, the government provides all his needs and requirements, it is the supreme power ruling his life, and he is completely dependent on it. Here, therefore, the danger tends towards idolatry.

Thirdly, the relationship between man and nature and his feeling of connection with it may lead to paganism. The earliest symptoms of paganism involved a perception of powerful natural forces as supreme, ruling powers. Man, who throughout his life depends on natural forces - the fertility of the ground, the dew of the heavens, the light and warmth of the sun - feels within himself the authority of nature. He experiences first-hand the tremendous powers which lead, rule and direct the course of his life, all of humanity, all of creation. Indeed, although the yetzer ha-ra (evil inclination) towards idolatry ceased to exist long ago, this particular aspect of it - the perception of nature as a supreme, central power - still exists today. This paganism has never disappeared.

The mitzva of bikkurim comes to counter this three-fold danger, for the entire mitzva aims to inculcate in the individual a strong feeling that his entire life is dependent on God, and that without Him he is nothing.

With regard to the first and the third danger, the Jew is obligated to bring the first produce of his land, the harvest of the success of his efforts, to God's Temple. Here he is commanded to proclaim that it is neither by virtue of his abilities and his activities nor thanks to the powerful forces of nature that all this bounty is his, but rather because of God's generosity. This declaration at that location heightens his feeling that it is God who watches over him, He rules him and He gives him life.

The lengthy recitation also guards him from the second

danger. The Jew recounts the history of the nation from its very creation, describing how the nation has been directed by God from that time until the present.

Hence, in the recitation over the bikkurim the individual emphasizes his state of lowliness and helplessness when bereft of Divine assistance and left to direct his own life. He implores God to watch over him from His holy abode, to bless him and his efforts, and he emphasizes his critical need for God's help, his connection to his Creator.

The above idea is also expressed in our recitation of Selichot.

There are two contrasting themes running through the Yamim Nora'im (High Holy Days). On one hand, we emphasize the lowliness and weakness of man, comparing him to a worm beside the King of Kings. On the other hand, it is man himself who coronates the King of Kings. This great power rests in his hands.

In our Selichot we emphasize the first aspect - not from a negative point of view, i.e. the helplessness of man, but rather from a positive point of view, i.e. the crucial need for a relationship with God and our dependence on Him, which are also emphasized, as we have explained, in the recitation over the bikkurim.

The Jew is required to inhabit the most lofty abode of connection to God - not with a feeling of spiritual luxury, not out of an aspiration for spiritual ease and comfort, but rather out of pure necessity. This need arises out of the awareness that without a total connection with the Creator, without the closest possible relationship with Him, man has no existence at all.

(Originally delivered on Shabbat Parashat KiTavo 5731. Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

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## THE LAST COMMANDMENTS IN THE TORAH

by Rabbi Yehudah Shaviv

This week's Torah portion starts with the last two mitzvot in the Torah, bikurim, offering the first produce of the land in the Temple, and vidui, an affirmation of the proper performance of the mitzvah of maaser. The Ramban comments: "Moshe has now finished explaining the Torah and describing all the mitzvot that G-d commanded him" [Devarim 26:16]. The portion of Vayeilech also contains two more commandments, that of Hakhel (gathering the nation once every seven years) and the requirement for each Jew to write his own Torah scroll, but these can be viewed as general mitzvot that encompass the entire Torah. Hakhel calls for a renewed acceptance of the Torah by the entire nation and writing a scroll is a personal reaffirmation of a link to Torah.

Why are the two mitzvot of bikurim and vidui last? Rabbi D.Z. Hoffman points out that "the covenant in Shemot also ends with the commandment of bikurim" (see Shemot 23:19 and 34:26). However, in that case the mitzvah appears together with the laws of the Jewish holidays, while in this week's portion it appears alone.

In looking at the Torah as a whole, it would seem that putting the mitzvah of bikurim last has an aspect of coming full circle, since this commandment is the first one to be performed from produce of the land (see Terumot 3:6-7). As opposed to other mitzvot connected to the land, such as terumah and maaser, bikurim is similar to a sacrifice, but it is brought from the vegetable kingdom and not from animals.

We should also remember the first sacrifice described in the Torah: "Kayin offered a sacrifice to G-d from the fruits of the land" [Bereishit 4:3]. But his sacrifice was not accepted by G-d, although the reason for its rejection is not given. It may be that Kayin belittled the importance of a

sacrifice and offered only the worst fruits from his harvest. In the Midrash, Kayin is compared to "one who has a lease on property, who eats the best fruit himself and gives the owner the leftovers" [Bereishit Rabba 22:8]. This is in contrast to Hevel, who offered "from the best of his sheep and their fatty portions" [4:4]. In the end, Kayin's sacrifice led to a curse for himself and for his land.

When the Jew who harvests land in Eretz Yisrael performs the mitzvah of bikurim, he is in a way atoning for the sin of the first farmer. While Kayin simply offered "from the fruits of the land," the mitzvah of bikurim requires an offer "from the FIRST fruit of the land" [Devarim 26:2]. In this way, the Jew recognizes the good that was done to him personally in his fields and to the nation as a whole in being redeemed from Egypt. After the farmer has given all the required gifts from his harvest, he can ask to have his request fulfilled: "Bless your nation Yisrael, and the land which You have given us" [Devarim 26:15]. The land will no longer be cursed as it was in the time of Kayin but blessed instead.

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Selected, translated and arranged by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz

"And you shall say before HaShem your G-d: I have removed the sacred (foodstuffs) from (my) house, and I have also given it to the Levi and to the stranger, to the orphan and to the widow, according to all of Your commandment(s) with which You have charged me; I have not disobeyed Your

commandments and I have not forgotten." (26,13)

Rash"i (based on the Sifri) explains: I have not forgotten - to say a brocho (blessing) on the separation of ma'asros (tithes).

The Chidushei HaRi"m expresses surprise at this, for the brocho is a Rabbinical (command, so) how is it possible to explain that the possuk (of the Torah) is (referring to) the brocho.

Further, our Sages have said (Pesachim 7b) "All the mitzvos, a person says a brocho on them before (ovair) doing them; what is the implication that this (word) 'ovair' has a connotation of 'before - in advance'? As it is written 'And Achima'etz ran . . . and he overtook (vaya'avov) the Ethiopian.' (Shmuel 2; 18,23)" Now (the dictum) that we must say the brocho before doing

(the mitzvos) is the statement of (Rav Yehudah in the name of Shmuel, who is) an amora (Rabbi of the era of the gemora); why is it appropriate to explain his language by (referring to) a possuk?

However, the point being made is that a person should be aroused within his heart to say a brocho whenever he merits to come forward to serve before HaKadosh Boruch Hu, with every mitzvah (that he does). For this reason, Shmuel used the term 'ovair' - before doing them, and did not use the term 'kodem' (which is more customary) in order to hint at how great this inspiration should be, as (we find that) 'Achima'etz ran,' (and) even though he was running, he then made an even greater effort to overtake the Ethiopian. A person must similarly make the (special) effort (to arouse) his heart (and realize) 'I will be declaring His praise,' with enormous fervor, being aware of how precious it is to serve HaShem.

This is how it used to be before our Sages instituted (the obligation) to say a brocho; every Jewish person would sense (this responsibility) and give praise from his heart. This is (what the Torah is referring to when it dictates) 'I have not forgotten - to say a brocho.'

However as the human spirit declined, and (people) did not sense this as they had (previously,) our Sages instituted the obligation to say a brocho on each mitzvah.

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"And HaShem will disperse you among all the nations, from the end of the earth to the (other) end of the earth . . ." (28,64)

The Psalmist appealed with regard to this saying "Until when, HaShem, will You hide eternally . . . I recall how momentary . . ." (Tehillim 89, 47-8)

The Maggid of Dubnow comments that this can be illustrated (if we consider) our tradition that the punishments which we receive from HaShem are only,

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way of a parable, like a father who gives his son potions and medicines to assuage his illness and to bring him a cure. He forbids him from having any rich, tasty food, so that it will not harm him while he is receiving his medication.

(We can thus understand) the difference between the punishment and anger which a master displays towards his servant, and (the affliction) which the father (meets out) to his son. For the anger towards the servant is an eternal anger.

However, the affliction of our Father Above, may He be Blessed, towards us is only like the affliction of the father towards his son, which is only transitory, until he is cured. It appears that he is angry (with him), but after the medications have achieved their effect, the 'anger' turns to great love, the 'punishment' to beneficence, and the 'embittering' to indulging.

However, this only applies if the lad is cured. But if he refuses to fulfill the prerequisites of the medication, and does not take them in the necessary manner to preserve himself, then the father's anger will be an eternal anger and a genuine anger, and the afflictions will be genuine, since everything that he did for the good (of his son) has been overturned. . .

Thus it says: "Until when, HaShem, will You hide eternally . . ." that Your anger will be genuine and eternal, since it has had no effect on us, and we have not yet turned from our evil ways. And for this reason it continues: "I recall how momentary . . ." (how short is the human lifespan, and how little time is left to us to mend our ways DR).

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Message from the Haftorah Parshas Ki Savo

Yeshaya 60:1

This week's haftorah brings us to the final dimensions of the consolation of the Jewish people. The prophet Yeshaya shares with us a glimpse into the glorious era of Mashiach and reveals Hashem's indescribable sensitivity towards His chosen nation. Yeshaya begins, "Rise and project your light, towards the radiance of Hashem shines upon you." (60:1) In the days of Mashiach, the Jewish people will be privileged to reflect the light of Hashem unto the nations of the world. Yeshaya continues, "The nations will walk with your light and the kings to the brilliance of your radiance.

Lift your eyes and see all of them coming to you; your sons will come from afar and your daughters will be accompanied by the kings of the world." (60:3-5) The darkness and confusion which continuously plague society will finally be lifted and the entire world, nations included, will come to

Jerusalem in streams to discover the truths of Hashem and His Torah. Instead of the all too familiar sight of the Jewish people being forced into exile the tables will now be turned. Not only will the nations release the Jewish people and allow them their return to Israel, they will personally escort the Jewish people back to their homeland. And to complete the process, the nations will display personal interest in the Jewish people's traditions and homeland and

will flock to Israel in appreciation for all that the Jewish people represent. The influx will be so overwhelming that the Jewish people will wonder if they are imagining these sights or if, in truth, the world has made a full turnaround.

The prophet continues, "Their multitudes of camels will cover your streets...Everyone will come from Sh'va carrying gold and incense. All the choice sheep of Kedar will gather to you .... to be offered on My altar and accepted with desire." (60: 6, 7) The nations of the world will sincerely appreciate the value of service to Hashem and will continuously approach Him

with their abundance of sacrifices. Instead of their ruthless campaign over the past thousands of years to destroy and secure the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash they will finally realize its spiritual significance and will utilize it to capacity. The prophet adds, "And foreign nations will build your walls and their kings will contribute the funds." (60:10) Even the demolished walls of Israel's cities will be rebuilt by her oppressors, nations who previously acted so foreign to the Jewish people.

Hashem explains the reason for this unexpected reversal and says, "For in My anger I smote you and with My desire I will have compassion for you." (60:10) Needless to say, the experiences of the Jewish people are unparalleled by any other nation. Their extent of decline, persecution and tragedy covers the pages of world history with awesome proportions. This is because they, and only they, are the direct subject of Hashem's disturbance and anger. Unlike the nations of the world who are generally ignored by Hashem the Jewish people are in His constant focus. But this is only the first part of the story. Because, in these very same proportions the Jewish people are, and will be, the direct subject of Hashem's concern and compassion (see Metzudos Dovid). Therefore Hashem pledged to reverse the Jewish people's unpleasant past and

replace it with their glorious future. Hashem committed to undo all of His people's negative experiences and to replace them with indescribable positive ones. The Jewish nation has not forgotten their pain and shame of exile and this feeling must be rectified. Hashem, therefore, informs them that their return from exile will be through none other than those very same nations who were responsible for the Jewish exile. They will personally escort the Jews back to their homeland with dignity and respect, and will actually anticipate with glee the special opportunity of joining the Jews in the land of Israel. Regarding this, Yeshaya says, "And the sons of your past oppressors shall humbly walk to you and all of your previous scorners shall prostrate themselves before you." (60:14) In fact, as we cited earlier, these very same nations and sovereigns who previously labored so diligently to tear down the

walls of Israel will now personally rebuild them. The prophet completes the picture and states in the name of Hashem, "In place of copper I will bring gold, in place of steel I will bring silver. I will convert your previous tax collectors into peaceful acquaintances and your oppressors into charitable associates." (60:17) Hashem's compassion for His people knows no bounds and demands that even their financial oppression must be rectified. Therefore in place of the oppressors' unwarranted tax collections from the Jewish people, these same oppressors will offer the Jews an abundance of personal monetary gifts. All the stolen Jewish wealth will be graciously returned tenfold and in addition these same collectors will generously contribute considerable financial resources to the Jewish people. (see Radak, Malbim) The sum total of Hashem's restoration plan for the Jewish people is described by Yeshaya in the following verse, "Instead of your previous status, forsaken and despised I shall establish you the majesty of the world, the joy for all generations." (60:15)

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Weekly Dvar Torah: Parshat Ki Tavo, 5756

Rabbi Moshe Shulman

#### "THE DIALOGUE OF THE 7 HAFTOROT OF COMFORT"

During these weeks we read 7 Haftorot from the prophet Isaiah, 7 beautiful pictures of comfort and hope, messages of future Redemption, and Messianism. They are meant to carry us out of the gloom and melancholy of Tisha Ba'av, to the beautiful heights of Redemption on Rosh Hashanah, when we declare that G-d is King and Master over the entire world.

But why these particular passages? They don't even appear in the order of the

chapters of Isaiah. Why read them out of sequence?

Perhaps hidden in all 7 of these prophecies is the secret. Together they tell a story. They tell the story of how we indeed manage to move from a Tisha Ba'av to a Rosh Hashanah!

Look at the first verse of each of the Haftorot, in sequence:

1.NACHAMU NACHAMU AMI - YOMAR ELOCKEICHEM

"Be comforted, be comforted, will the Lord say."

2.VA'TOMER TZION AZAVANI HASHEM VA'HASHEM SH'CHACHANI

"And Zion said: G-d has forsaken me, G-d Has forgotten me."

3.ANIYA SO'ARA LOH NUCHAMA

"Like a storm-tossed ship, she refuses to be comforted."

4.ANOCHI ANOCHI HU MENACHEMCEM

"It is I, it is I - Who comforts thee."

5.RONI, AKARA LOH YALADA, PITZCHI RINA VE'TZAHALI

"Sing, O barren one, break forth into song, and cry aloud."

6.KUMI ORI KI VA ORECH U'CHVOD HASHEM ALAYICH ZARACH

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

7.SOS ASIS BA'HASHEM, TAGEL NAFSHI BE'ELOKEL...

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my G-d."

These selected chapters form a dialogue between the prophet, or G-d, and Israel. First, the prophet speaks in the name of G-d: "Be comforted will the Lord speak."

And Israel's response:

"G-d has forsaken me, G-d Has forgotten me." and "Like a storm-tossed ship, she refuses to be comforted." No message from the prophet can lift up the broken spirit of the Jew after the Destruction of the Temple, and the devastation of the Jewish Nation. No words of "NACHAMU" seem to speak to that empty soul!

Then G-d Himself responds:

"It is I, it is I - Who comforts Thee." Therefore - "Sing, O barren one, break forth into song, and cry aloud." "Arise, shine, for thy light is come" G-d Himself, as it were, comforts the people.

And indeed to this message the people respond - "I will, indeed, rejoice in the Lord" - for the Lord Himself comforts.

This is the key to the eternal boundless hope of the Jewish people!

Destruction after destruction, Israel could have said many times: "G-d Has forsaken me. G-d Has forgotten me." And yet we continue to have faith. We continue to yearn for the future. We continue to dedicate our lives, and the lives of our children to a life filled with Torah, with G-d, and with Messianic hope. The secret: "It is I, It is I Who comforts Thee" - That quiet voice telling us - G-d not only has not forsaken us - but G-d is with us, even in Exile!

IMO ANOCHI BETZARA - "I am with them in their hardship." GALTA SHECHINA IMAHEM - "The Divine Presence went with them into exile."

Picture the scene: The Temple of Solomon is destroyed, the breastplate of the High Priest silenced forever. No more fire emerging from Heaven to light the Altar. Never again will the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies and emerge, bringing the message of forgiveness. In the eyes of the people, G-d was burnt along with the Temple!!

"And Zion said: G-d has forsaken me."

EICHAH? Not "How did it happen?" They knew only too well how it happened. EICHAH - "How can we go on?" How can the Jewish people continue without G-d? What meaning is there for our lives after the destruction?!

"And Zion refused to be comforted."

After the expulsion of the Jews from England, and from Spain; after the Chmelnitzki pogroms; after the Cossack massacres; after the Holocaust - How can we go on? Where is G-d?

"And Zion said: G-d has forgotten me."

Yet the Jewish people continued. They ultimately understood that G-d did not forsake His people - He went with them into Exile! The prophet Yechezkel saw a vision - The throne of G-d emerging from the Temple Mount, and travelling - EASTWARD, towards Bavel - G-d accompanying the Jews into

exile!

"It is I, it is I who comforts thee."

The Jew did not turn his back on G-d, because He always knew that G-d had not turned His back on the Jew! In every exile, in every Diaspora, the Jews carried G-d, and Torah, with them.

The greatest optimist of all time was Rabbi Akiva, who witnessed the burning of the Temple and who saw the impact of the destruction watching a jackal emerge from the ruins of the Holy and Holies. It was Rabbi Akiva who laughed in joy at that scene, because he knew that if the prophecy of destruction was fulfilled, the prophecy of redemption would be as well. After the destruction is over, the next step would be redemption.

It was Rabbi Akiva who said, about Yom Kippur: "Happy are you O Israel: before whom are you purified? Before your father in Heaven."

It has been suggested that Rabbi Akiva stated these words of comfort the very first Yom Kippur after the Destruction. The Jews, despondent and broken, saw no reason to celebrate Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur had always been a Temple service. Where were the goats? Where were the white garments of the High Priest? Without the Temple, there can be no Yom Kippur. And Rabbi Akiva's response - You stand before G-d, even without the Temple. Rejoice - you will be purified, only now you stand before G-d instead of before the High Priest.

How much hope and optimism was necessary to utter those words?

"Sing, O barren one, break forth into song, and cry aloud."

Parshat Ki Tavo tells of the consequences which would befall the people if they rejected G-d: Sickness, war, devastation, destruction, and exile. But the following portion, Nitzavim, tells of Redemption: "And G-d will return you from the exiles; no matter how spread out the Jews are G-d will bring them back." The Jew always found comfort, because G-d was with him, even in times of sorrow.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

Certainly no generation knows this better than ours. After Auschwitz, Treblinka, the Warsaw Ghetto, how easy it was to look back and say: "G-d has forsaken me. G-d has forgotten me." Yet, somehow we always managed to find trust in G-d. We always knew that despite the hardships - He was with us, helping us, strengthening us. It isn't easy. But it is the secret of our survival. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my G-d." We always managed to find some glimmer of hope, some reason to live, and build for the future. The Mirrer Yeshiva, which escaped during the war to Shanghai, and later found its way to New York, and to Israel. New Yeshivot, rising up in the new communities in North America, and Israel, to replace the ones that were destroyed. Rebuilding, and strengthening, always knowing that G-d is with us.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my G-d."

May we continue to grow in strength and hope, and may the Redemption of our people continue to unfold before us.