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To: parsha@groups.io
From: Chaim Shulman
<cshulman@gmail.com>
& Allen Klein
<allen.klein@gmail.com>

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>

org to: ravfrand@torah.org

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subject: Rav Frand - Future-Based Judgement or Present-Based Judgement: The Ben Sorer U'Moreh vs. Yishmael Parshas Ki Seitzei

Future-Based Judgement or Present-Based Judgement: The Ben Sorer U'Moreh vs. Yishmael

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1391 – Shalom Aleichem – Before or After Kiddush?

Good Shabbos

Parshas Ki Seitzei contains the very hard to understand parsha of the Ben Sorer U'Moreh (the wayward and rebellious son). We know the basic halachos: For approximately three months from the time of his thirteenth birthday, a young man steals food and wine from his father. Without going into all the technicalities of the parsha, such a boy is executed by Beis Din to preempt the possibility of him growing up to engage in much worse criminal activities. In the words of Rashi here: The Ben Sorer U'Moreh is judged based on "his ending" (i.e., what would be his ending if he were allowed to live). We

prefer to "put him to death while innocent, rather than wait and put him to death when he is already guilty."

Note that the Gemara in Sanhedrin (71a) says that these are theoretical halachos which teach a homiletic lesson (lamah nichteve? Drosch v'kabel schar.), but which never actually happened throughout Jewish history.

Rav Eliyahu Mizrachi, in Parshas Vaera, asks a very famous question on this idea cited by Rashi, that a Ben Sorer U'Moreh is judged now based on his future deeds: In Parshas Vaera, the malach (angel) told Hagar that Hashem heard the cry of her son, Yishmael (who was dying of thirst), "b'asher hu sham" (as he was there). (Bereshis 21:17) The Medrash relates that the malachei hasharays (ministering angels) questioned, as it were, the Judgment of the Almighty: "Master of the Universe – what are You doing? This Yishmael will have descendants who will cause Your children to die by thirst; why are You providing a well for him?" Our current suffering from Yishmael's descendants only strengthens their question! The Almighty responded to the malachim: Currently, what is he – righteous or wicked? The malachim had to respond that at that point he was righteous, to which the Almighty responded that He only judges man based on his actions at a particular point in time, not based on Hashem's foreknowledge of future actions. This is the connotation of the expression "b'asher hu sham" (i.e. — as he was there, at that time).

Rav Eliyahu Mizrachi points out the contradiction: By Ben Sorer U'Moreh, the young man is judged based on what will become of him eventually. However, Yishmael was given a pass since at the time of judgement he was still not guilty of his future crimes.

There are many answers given to this question. One answer is that Yishmael – the individual – never made Jews die of thirst. Only his descendants sank to that level. However, the Ben Sorer U'Moreh himself will become a danger to society.

I saw another answer in a sefer called Bei Chiya, which was written by a Rav in the Five Towns (Rav Elisha Horowitz). He suggests an answer based on a Gemara in Rosh HaShanah (18a), "Rabbi Meir used to say you can have two people who fall ill with the same illness or two people who are accused of identical crimes, who are both on the gallows – yet one will descend (i.e., get better) and one will not descend (i.e., will die from his illness). Likewise, one person will be hung, and the other person will not be hung. Why? It is because this one prayed and his prayers were answered, and the other one prayed and his prayers were not answered. This one prayed a tefilah sheleimah (a complete, sincere prayer) and the other one did not pray a tefilah sheleimah."

Even though both had the same illness and faced the same verdict, one of them was saved by virtue of his tefilah sheleimah and the other one, who did not pray a tefilah sheleimah, went to his death.

The Bei Chiya asks: How does the Gemara know that this was the crucial factor that explained the distinction between the

fate of these two individuals? Why doesn't the Gemara attribute it to other zechusim (merits) that one had vis-a-vis the other? Why attribute it to prayer rather than to charity or to other positive attributes which might also explain the difference?

This Gemara teaches us an idea that is essential for us to know, especially at this time of year. Prayer is all-powerful. Sometimes zechusim cannot save a person and other things cannot save a person, but the Almighty placed in His world, within the metaphysical laws of spirituality, the fact that tefilah helps rescue man from crises. Statistically, these two individuals should have met the same fate. However, the power of prayer of one of them tipped the scales for him, and that saved the day.

The Bei Chiya suggests that this is the difference between Yishmael and the Ben Sorer U'Moreh. Theoretically, Yishmael, too, should have been judged "al shem sofo" (based on the future actions of his offspring) just like the Ben Sorer U'Moreh. But Yishmael cried out to Hashem! He davened. This, in fact, is emblematic of the power of the nation of Yishmael, going all the way back to their founding ancestor. When the aspect of koach hatefillah comes into the equation of two individuals facing identical statistical possibilities, all bets are off. Theoretically, a person could be judged "al shem sofo," as we see by the Ben Sorer U'Moreh. However, if concurrently, while a person is being judged, he reaches out to his Father in Heaven with the pure cry of a child reaching out to his father, the tefillah can overpower any other factor. This should be a lesson to us during these holy days. Elul is a preparation for the Yomim Noraim (High Holidays). When people ask me, "What should a person be concentrating on during these days?" I answer that a person should try to learn how to daven better. That is what the Yomim Noraim are about: "Seek out Hashem when He is to be found, call out to him when He is near." (Yeshaya 55:6). It is all about davening. Pardon the mundane analogy, but there is such a thing in baseball known as "spring training." A fellow has to get his timing right in order to hit. There are six weeks of spring training because that is what it takes to get into shape. L'havdil elef alfei havdolos, that is the way it is with Elul. It is the time that we need to prepare for the Yomim Noraim. How do we do this? We do with the power of tefilah. We do it by trying to daven a little bit better and a little bit slower. We read sefarim about davening. At the end of the day, the difference in fate between one man and the next may very well be that "this one prayed a tefilah sheleimah and this one did not pray a tefilah sheleimah."

One Set of Measures for Yourself and Another Set for Everyone Else

The Torah says "You shall not have in your house a measure and a measure – a large one and a small one. A perfect and honest weight shall you have..." (Devarim 25:14-15). It is prohibited to possess dishonest weights and measures. A

person must have the same set of measuring utensils for himself and for his customers; the same set for his "good customers" and for his "bad customers". No cheating is permitted!

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, ob"m, quotes a very meaningful insight from Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. The Kotzker says that when the Torah insists that a person may only possess one set of measures, the Torah is not only talking about commercial scales and tape measures. A person needs to have one set of standards. It is forbidden to have one set of standards for yourself and another set of standards for someone else.

Rabbi Twerski writes: Take the very common statement: I am a very strong person when it comes to my convictions. A person is proud of that when he says it about himself. However, the same convictions, when found in someone else, may elicit the evaluation, "This person is obstinate and obstructive." When I am doing it, it is because I am a person of principle. When the other person does it, he is stubborn! Similarly, when someone says about himself, "I can be flexible and tolerant", he thinks that this is an admirable character trait. And yet when he sees the same behavior in someone else, he comments: This person is spineless and drifts with the wind. So too: "I am frugal" but "He is a miser."

This is what it means to have two sets of standards. What I do is always right, and I admire that in myself. Yet the very same type of practice in a different person elicits the harshest of evaluations: Despicable!

It is very easy to fall into this trap. I can look at someone and instantly react, "That is not the proper way to behave". But then I catch myself and ask, "But how do I act?" This is what the pasuk is saying: You should not have in your house two sets of measures – one for yourself and one for somebody else. A person needs to be consistent – one set of measures for both yourself and for everyone else.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem

DavidATwersky@gmail.com

Edited by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD

dhoffman@torah.org

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Ki Seitzei is provided below:

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subject: R' Willig - My Friend and Neighbor, the Rosh Hayeshiva zt"l

Rabbi Mordechai Willig

My Friend and Neighbor, the Rosh Hayeshiva zt"l

I

We are forbidden to marry the descendants of Amon and Moav forever (Devarim 23:4). The Torah explains the reason:

"Because they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you left Egypt" (ibid. 23:5). Why such a severe punishment for a sin of omission?

The Ramban explains that Amon and Moav were recipients of the chessed of Avraham Avinu, who saved their father (Lot) and mother from the sword and captivity (Bereishis 14:16) at the hands of the four kings (ibid. 14:12). Moreover, in the merit of Avraham, Hashem saved them from the upheaval, i.e. the destruction of Sedom (ibid. 19:29).

The Ramban (Bereishis 19:29) adds that Avraham risked his life to pursue the four kings in order to save Lot. He did so as an act of hakaras hatov, as Lot had performed an act of chessed for him, accompanying him to an unknown destination (Bereishis 12:4). Lot's descendants, the nations of Amon and Moav, were likewise dutybound to reciprocate and perform an act of chessed by providing bread and water to Avraham's descendants. Failure to do so was a very serious infraction and resulted in a prohibition for us to marry them.

II

My close friend and neighbor, Harav Avrohom Ausband zt"l, Rosh Hayeshiva of Telz-Riverdale, passed away last Thursday. In the spirit of hakaras hatov, I would like to share some perspectives particularly relevant to this audience, direct and indirect talmidim and followers of our great rebbi, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"l.

Rav Ausband learned for three years with our rebbi's first cousin and namesake (known as "Rav Berel") in Yerushalayim, whose hashkafas olam was different from and often even opposed to that of our rebbi. A lifelong and staunch supporter of his rebbi's Brisker tradition and the values of his ancestors in Telz and in his birthplace of Cleveland, Rav Ausband's ahavas Yisrael knew no bounds. For example: At a pidyon haben, the Rosh Hayeshiva met Zev Karasick and heard about our rebbi's famous derasha at Zev's own pidyon haben. He asked for a recording and expressed his appreciation in a letter dated Chanukah, 5779, from which I quote: "I listened to the recording several times, and I find the thoughts expressed therein fundamental and truly special. May we merit to live up to the ideals that he expressed by devoting ourselves to doing our part in ensuring the perpetuation of the mesores haTorah for all generations!"

Rav Ausband's "part" extended well beyond the talmidim of his yeshiva in Riverdale. In January 2017, he met a group of

YU students, led by me and Rav Etan Schnell, during our bein hasemesterim break. In his remarks, he quoted the Chafetz Chaim, who valued every moment of life as an opportunity to serve Hashem. Our talmidim were very impressed by his personal interest in each one, as well as by the thundering responses at the Mincha minyan in his yeshiva. A picture of the Rosh Hayeshiva with the guest talmidim adorned the cover page of the next Telz yeshiva newsletter.

III

The Riverdale community in general, and my shul, The Young Israel of Riverdale, in particular, owe a debt of hakaras hatov to the Rosh Hayeshiva zt"l. He had very close relationships with many YU alumni and was not deterred at all by the type or size of their yarmulka. He gave a regular shiur for doctors, most of whom learned in YU. He respected their brilliance, and they were in awe of his.

About twenty years ago, Rav Ausband helped organize a kollel, for which he assumed responsibility ever since. Kollel members have established chavrusas and shiurim, enhancing Torah learning in our shul, and the kollel wives, by deed and example, have had a very positive impact.

About five years ago, the Rosh Hayeshiva arranged an hour-long morning chabura in our shul. At present, thirty to forty baalabatim learn b'chavrusa from 6-7 A.M. every weekday, followed by Shacharis. Rav Ausband was extremely proud of this initiative, which he correctly described as "transformative," and he constantly extolled the dedication of the "kollel boker wives."

All this began when the yeshiva moved to Riverdale forty years ago this week. At his levayah, I recounted his very first derashah in Riverdale, which took place at a siyum Mishnayos in our shul on motza'ei Shabbos, 7 Adar II, 1984.

The Gemara (Megillah 13b) tells us that when Haman's lot fell on Adar (Esther 3:7), he was overjoyed, as it was the month in which Moshe died. But he didn't know that while Moshe died on the seventh of Adar, he was also born on the seventh of Adar. What does this mean?

The Maharal (Ohr Chadash op. cit.) explains that Moshe represented all of Am Yisrael. His passing in the twelfth and final month of the year indicated the end of Am Yisrael, Haman's very goal. However, Moshe's birth on the seventh of Adar shows that his passing on that same date is not an end, but a completion. When the beginning and end join together, there is a completion, as in a round ball. This is what Moshe meant when he said, "Mal'u yamai - my days are complete" (Sotah 13b; see Bereishis 29:21). Hashem completes the years of tzaddikim from day to day and month to month (see Shemos 23:26). When there is a completion, there can be no end.

Moshe led Am Yisrael in the desert for forty years. So too, Rav Ausband led the yeshiva in Riverdale for exactly forty years. His passing is not an end, but a completion.

IV

Finally, a personal hakaras hatov. The Ausband family moved into an apartment down the hall from ours just before Pesach in 1984. We were close neighbors, in both senses, for forty years. The positive impression the Rosh Hayeshiva and his family made on ours is incalculable. My children admired him, learned from him, and were transformed and elevated by his direct and indirect influence. We shared in each other's simchas and losses throughout the years.

The very last wedding the Rosh Hayeshiva attended - less than three days before his passing - was that of our grandson. He danced with three generations of Willigs with characteristic gusto. Those moments, captured on video, deepen both our sense of appreciation and our sense of loss.

The next day, my son Moshe had a lengthy conversation with Rav Ausband. His final sentence was, "Your father wrote in his Haggadah, in describing our relationship, 'The land was tranquil for forty years' (Shoftim 5:31)." We lived - both personally and communally - in peace and harmony for forty years. His passing leaves a gaping hole in our family, community, and the entire olam hatorah.

Much, much more can be added to this brief tribute to a great man. As hakaras hatov, he would certainly want us to repay his Torah and chessed by strengthening our own. May his unique and unforgettable personality inspire us to serve Hashem, as he did, with all our might.

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Sichot Rashei HaYeshiva 5784 (en) Ki Tetze |

An Ammonite, and not an Ammonitess; a Moavite, and not a Moavite

Harav Yaakov Medan

Tanakh 10.09.2024

Summarized by Shmuel Goldberg Translated by David Strauss
The Midrashic Exposition and its Difficulty

Among the multitude of mitzvot in Parashat Ki Tetze is the prohibition to enter into marriage with Ammonites and Moavites:

An Ammonite or a Moavite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to the tenth generation shall none of them enter into the congregation of the Lord forever; because they met you not with bread and with water on the way, when you came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against you Bilam the son of Be'or from Petor of Aram-Naharayim, to curse you. Nevertheless, the Lord your God would not listen to Bilam; but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing to you, because the Lord your God loved you. You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever. (Devarim 23:4-7)

On the face of it, the meaning is simple and so is the prohibition: the Ammonites and the Moavites, who had just recently failed to meet the Israelites with bread and water, are

punished with an absolute prohibition for Israelites to marry them.

But Chazal taught us that the prohibition is more limited, in accordance with the well-known midrashic exposition brought by Rava in the name of Amasa:

I have this tradition from the court of Shmuel the Ramatite: An Ammonite, but not an Ammonitess; a Moavite, but not a Moavite. (Yevamot 77a)[1]

We often encounter midrashic expositions of Chazal that don't seem to fit the plain meaning of the verses, and this is one such puzzling instance. The entire Torah is formulated in masculine terms, because those are also the terms that are used when addressing everyone, men and women. How then is it possible to derive that the prohibition here is specific to male Ammonites and Moavites? Do'eg the Edomite's objection to the derivation seems to be on point:

But if so, a male mamzer [is forbidden to enter the congregation], but not a female mamzeret! (Yevamot 76b) Clearly, we do not expound the verse as teaching that the prohibition of marrying a mamzer (one born of a prohibited relationship) applies only to males, just because the Torah uses the masculine term (Devarim 23:3). Thus, it is not clear why such expositions are accepted in order to exclude an Ammonitess and a Moavite. The difficulty is exacerbated when we consider the fact that the relevant verses are adjacent to each other: Why would we say that one verse was formulated in the masculine because it does not apply to females, while the verse that immediately precedes it is not expounded in that manner? Moreover, Ammon and Moav were born from the union of Lot and his daughters – and so they should be considered mamzerim!

The Decision

Before we relate to the foundation of the exposition, and how we think it should be understood, it is important to remember that while this interpretation was subject to disagreement, ultimately it was accepted as halakha in a most unambiguous manner. The context in which the exposition appears, along with the aforementioned objection of Do'eg the Edomite, is a Talmudic passage that describes a discussion regarding David's lineage and qualifications that was conducted between King Shaul and his advisors.

After the slaying of Goliath, the prophet recounts that King Shaul turned to Avner and asked him about David's roots: And when Shaul saw David go forth against the Philistines, he said to Avner, the captain of the host: Avner, whose son is this youth? And Avner said: As your soul lives, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said: Inquire you whose son the lad is. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Avner took him, and brought him before Shaul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Shaul said to him: Whose son are you, you young man? And David answered: I am the son of your servant Yishai, of Beit-Lechem. (I Shmuel 17:55-58)

Shaul's initial question seems incomprehensible: surely, he already knew David, as we hear in the previous chapter that David played music before him to remove the evil spirit from him, and further: "And David came to Shaul, and stood before him; and he loved him greatly; and he became his armor-bearer" (I Shmuel 16:21). Why does Shaul have to investigate who David is, when David had already been his faithful servant for some time?

Because of this difficulty, Rabbi Yochanan (Yevamot 76b) understood the question not as about David's father, something that Shaul already knew, but rather as seeking to discover whether he was a descendant of Peretz or of Zerach – that is to say, whether or not he was fit to be king. The Gemara then reports that this question triggered an objection on the part of Do'eg the Edomite:

Do'eg the Edomite then said to him: Instead of inquiring whether he is fit to be king or not, inquire rather whether he is permitted to enter the congregation or not! What is the reason? Because he is descended from Ruth the Moavite. (Yevamot 76b)

What does it matter, asks Do'eg, whether or not David is eligible for kingship, when it is not at all clear whether he is even entitled to be part of the congregation of Israel? In response, it is explained that Avner cited the halakha that it is specifically a male Moavite who is disqualified from entering the congregation of Israel, but not a Moavite. However, several objections are raised against this exposition, including the one cited above:

Avner said to him: We learned: "An Ammonite, but not an Ammonite; a Moavite, but not a Moavite!"

But in that case "a mamzer" would imply: But not a female mamzeret!

It is written mamzer, [which implies] anyone objectionable. Does then "Egyptian" exclude an Egyptian woman?

Here it is different, since the reason for the Scriptural text is explicitly stated: "Because they met you not with bread and with water." It is customary for a man to meet [wayfarers]; it is not, however, customary for a woman to meet [them].

The men should have met the men and the women the women! He [=Avner] remained silent. (Yevamot 76b)

Avner resolves the objections regarding why we do not expound the words "mamzer" and "Egyptian" in the same manner, and finally answers that the derivation of the law regarding a Moavite is actually not from the fact that Ammonite and Moavite are mentioned in the masculine, but from the explanation given for the prohibition: The Ammonites and Moavites were forbidden to enter the congregation of Israel because they did not meet them with bread and water; since the typical practice would be for men to meet wayfarers, the Ammonite and Moavite women were not expected to meet the Israelites with bread and water, thus they did not sin and the prohibition is not directed toward them. But in the wake of this argument, Do'eg objects that the Moavite

woman could have met the Israelite women – and in response, Avner does not answer, but remains silent, apparently because he has no answer.

The discussion does not stop here, however. The passage continues with the report that Shaul ordered Do'eg to go to the beit midrash, and the discussion took place there as well: Thereupon, the king said: "Inquire you whose son the lad is." Elsewhere he calls him youth (na'ar), and here he calls him lad (elem). It is this that he implied: You have overlooked (nit'alma) a halakha; go and inquire in the beit midrash! There he was told: An Ammonite, but not an Ammonite; a Moavite, but not a Moavite. Do'eg submitted to them all those objections, and they were silent. He desired to make a public announcement against [David]. Immediately [he was answered]: "And Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Itna the Israelite, who went in to Avigayil the daughter of Nachash" (II Shmuel 17:25), while elsewhere it is written [that Amasa's father was] "Yeter the Yishmaelite" (I Divrei Ha-Yamim 2:17). Rava said: This teaches that he girded on his sword like a Yishmaelite and exclaimed: Whoever will not obey the following halakha will be stabbed with the sword; I have this tradition from the court of Shmuel the Ramatite: an Ammonite [is prohibited] but not an Ammonite; a Moavite, but not a Moavite! (Yevamot 76b-77a)

Do'eg raised his objections in the beit midrash as well, and there too he was answered with silence. However, although the verbal discussion may have ended like the previous one with Avner, this time Amasa came to the rescue to prevent David being declared unfit to enter the congregation of Israel: he "girded on his sword" and threatened that anyone who did not accept the exposition would be "stabbed with the sword," declaring that he had a tradition from the prophet Shmuel that indeed the prohibition does not apply to an Ammonite or a Moavite.

We know of another case in which halakha was decided in a violent manner: on that "day" when, according to the Mishna, eighteen issues were decided upon in accordance with the opinion of Beit Shammai (Mishna Shabbat 1:4-11);[2] the Yerushalmi (Shabbat 1:3) states that the disciples of Beit Shammai "stood against them with swords and spears," and in that way the decisions were reached in their favor.

Indeed, if we consider the dispute between Do'eg and Amasa, we see a lot of similarity between it and the main points of the disputes between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai. The approach of Beit Hillel was to expound the verses – Hillel came up from Babylon and brought with him seven exegetical rules (Tosefta, Sanhedrin 7:11) – and similarly, Do'eg objected to the ruling because it is difficult to justify expounding "an Ammonite, but not an Ammonite; a Moavite, but not a Moavite," just as there is no similar exposition of the masculine terms "mamzer" and "Egyptian." On the other hand, Beit Shammai tended to expound less and relied primarily on the accepted tradition in the Land of Israel – similar to Amasa, who established a

halakha based on a tradition he received from the court of the prophet Shmuel. It is interesting to note that in both cases, despite all the difficulties and objections, ultimately even those who disagreed had to accept the tradition and rule accordingly.

The Basis of the Exposition

There is thus no alternative but to accept this exposition, since it was handed down by way of tradition; however, the question regarding the logic of the exposition did not disappear. How did Shmuel's court know that this is the law?

It appears that the court of Shmuel learned from the court of Boaz, who married Ruth. Boaz understood that this is what should be expounded, and then he also introduced the halakha before ten men (Rut 4:2). But the question still remains: How does the exposition work? Why, and what is the force behind it?

I will not burden the reader with too many examples, but as with many other midrashic expositions, it seems that here too, the verse upon which the exposition is based is only a cover for the true content of the exposition. The exposition is based on Chazal's solid recognition that it is unthinkable that Ammon and Moav should be completely detached from God's congregation without any hope extended to them. It was clear to them that there must be an opening. A similar idea was suggested by Rav Kook (Middot Ha-Ra'aya, midat ahava, 6) regarding the wiping out of Amalek. He derived from a careful reading of the verses that we are commanded to wipe out the memory of Amalek specifically from "under heaven" (Devarim 25:19), but above heaven, the memory of Amalek is not wiped out.

His words are supported by the statement of Chazal that "descendants of Haman studied Torah in Bnei Brak" (Sanhedrin 96b). Who are these descendants of Haman who studied Torah in Bnei Brak? Elsewhere it is spelled out in detail where the various Sages sat:

"Justice, justice shall you pursue" – You shall follow the scholars to their academies: R. Eliezer [ben Hyrkanus] to Lydda, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai to Beror Chayil, Rabbi Yehoshua to Peki'in, Rabban Gamaliel [II] to Yavneh, Rabbi Akiva to Bnei Brak... (Sanhedrin 32b)

It stands to reason that it was none other than Rabbi Akiva who emerged from the seed of Amalek, and taught Torah in Bnei Brak.

The idea that even Amalek has a window of hope is also found in the words of Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos Melakhim 6:4), who rules that even when Israel goes out to fight Amalek, they must first offer them peace on condition that they accept the commandments.

So too regarding our matter: it was unthinkable to Chazal that the Torah detached Ammon and Moav from sanctity forever; there must be a window of hope.

But how did Chazal know what that window was; how did they conclude specifically that the women of these nations are permitted to enter the congregation of Israel? On the face of it,

it would have been possible to come up with other escape hatches for Ammon and Moav; nevertheless, Chazal concluded that the window expresses itself in the fact that Ammonite and Moavite women were never forbidden – because that was the reality. Chazal understood that the Torah must be explained based on the word of God that finds expression in history.

After Boaz witnessed the act of kindness performed by Ruth, it seemed to him unimaginable that the Torah would not allow her to enter the congregation, as he said to her: "And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to you all that you say; for all the men in the gate of my people know that you are a virtuous woman" (Ruth 3:11). The word of God that is revealed in reality and in history is also an interpretive consideration, in whose light the Torah must be interpreted.[3]

There is Always Hope

Chazal bring the principle that there must always be hope in other places as well. The Mishna in Sanhedrin lists various people who do not have a share in the World-to-Come. Among others, Rabbi Akiva mentions the descendants of Korach, but Rabbi Eliezer disagrees:

The company of Korach is not destined to ascend [from the earth], as it is written: "And the earth closed upon them" – in this world, "and they perished from among the congregation" – in the World-to-Come. These are the words of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Eliezer said: Of them it is written: "The Lord kills, and makes alive; He brings down to the grave, and brings up." (Mishna Sanhedrin 10:3)[4]

Elsewhere, Rabba bar Bar Chana relates that he saw the place where Korach and his company were swallowed up, where it is still possible to hear them declaring: "Moshe and his Torah are truth, and we are liars" (Bava Batra 74a). Repair is always possible; even after they descended to the grave, in the end, they recognized their sin and error.

The source that Rabbi Eliezer cites is found in Chana's prayer, which is read as the haftara on the first day of Rosh Hashana: "The Lord kills, and makes alive; He bring down to the grave, and brings up" (I Shmuel 2:7). Shmuel was a descendant of Korach (I Divrei Ha-Yamim 6:18-23). It is stated about the members of Korach's company that they went down into the pit (Bamidbar 16:33),[5] and it stands to reason that Chana would allude to them in her prayer.

On the first day of Rosh Hashana, after reading about the birth of Yitzchak,[6] we read Chana's prayer as the haftara. The reason these passages are read is that, according to Rabbi Eliezer, "on Rosh Hashana, Sara, Rachel, and Chana were remembered" (Rosh Hashana 10b).

But beyond that, there is also a substantive-thematic connection between Chana's prayer and Rosh Hashana.

Chana's prayer includes all the principles expressed in the U-Netaneh Tokef prayer, which was established thousands of years later:

Who will live and who will die; who will die at his time and who before his time; who by water and who by fire, who by

sword and who by beast... who will enjoy tranquility and who will be distressed, who will be impoverished and who will be enriched, who will be degraded and who will be exalted. (Rosh Hashana Machzor)

The fear of judgment is indeed great, but nevertheless, it is important to remember that even in the U-Netaneh Tokef prayer, two options are always presented: for calamity, God forbid, or for good; there is always hope. There is nothing that cannot be repaired. In this context, it is important to remember and internalize the many graces of God. It is always possible to make amends, and God's salvation can arrive at any moment. In the approaching days of mercy and forgiveness, we must remember this message: There is always hope.

[This sicha was delivered by Harav Yaakov Medan on Parashat Ki Tetze 5782.]

[1] Rabbi Yochanan cites this exposition in the name of Avner without the attribution to Shmuel (Yevamot 76b).

[2] According to the Yerushalmi (Shabbat 1:4), the discussion dealt with fifty-four issues, and as it is stated there: "It was taught: eighteen things they decided, in eighteen they were a majority, and in eighteen they were divided."

[3] This statement summarizes both the shiur kelali that I delivered this week (The Background of the Enactment Regarding Wednesday; 10 Elul 5782) and the discussions I had in its wake with the other Ramim in the dining hall.

[4] Similar disputes are found there regarding other people as well, such as the generation of the wilderness and the ten tribes. I have focused on the descendants of Korach because, as noted in the following paragraphs, they are connected to the prophet Shmuel, and thus also to Rosh Hashana, which we will soon be celebrating.

[5] These verses underlie the exposition of Chazal (brought by Rashi, Bamidbar 16:7) according to which Korach saw by prophetic vision that the prophet Shmuel would descend from him and would be equal in importance to Moshe and Aharon, and therefore he said to himself: On his account I shall escape punishment. That is to say, Korach initiated the dispute because he knew that Shmuel would descend from him and thought that he would be saved on his account.

[6] The goal is to read on Rosh Hashana about Yitzchak, from his birth to the Akeida. Since Rosh Hashana was extended to two days, we divide the reading between the two days, and thus on the first day we read about his birth, and on the second day about the Akeida.

Rav Yaakov Medan joined the first class at Yeshivat Har Etzion in 1964. He served in the IDF in the Airborne Nachal Infantry unit in the Hesder Program. Rav Medan teaches Tanakh at Yeshivat Har Etzion and at numerous Yeshivot hesder and colleges throughout the country, and is considered one of the outstanding educators of Tanakh today. In 2000, Rav Medan served as a Board member of the school for conversion of the Ne'eman Committee and was awarded the Avichai Prize. Rav Medan serves as a Ram for fourth-year

students at Yeshivat Har Etzion, teaches Tanakh and Jewish Thought at the Yeshiva and Herzog College. In 5766, Harav Yaakov was inaugurated, together with Harav Baruch Gigi, as Rosh Yeshiva, alongside the founding rashei yeshiva, to be joined in 5769 by Harav Mosheh Lichtenstein.

from: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein**

<ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com>

date: Sep 12, 2024, 7:14 AM

subject: Meshech Chochmah on Ki Seitzei

1. Amoni and Moavi

לֹא יָבֵא עַמּוֹנִי וּמֹאָבִי בְּקִהְלֵהָ

An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of Hashem (23:4)

To Whom does the Prohibition Extend?

Our pasuk states that although descendants from the nations of Amon and Moav can convert to Judaism, they cannot marry in to the Jewish people. There is a well-known qualification regarding this prohibition, namely, that it only applies to male descendants of these nations, not to the females. As the Gemara puts it:[1]

עמוני – ולא עמונית, מואבי – ולא מואבית

An Ammonite [is forbidden to enter] – but not an Ammonitess; A Moabite – but not a Moabitess.

In terms of reading the pasuk, the Meshech Chochmah notes the two terms “Amoni” and “Moavi” could be understood in one of two ways:

If the reference is to the nation, then the use of the masculine form is generic, and it will include all members of that nation, including females.

If the reference is to an individual from those nations, then the use of the masculine form is specific, in order to restrict the message to males and not to females.

Practically, both possibilities exist, which makes it impossible to tell whether or not females are excluded from the prohibition. However, says the Meshech Chochmah, while this lesson may not emerge from the terms themselves, it can still clearly be perceived from reading the pasuk.

A Point of Order within the Pasuk

We note that the Torah mentions Amon first in the prohibition and then Moav. This ordering of the two nations requires contemplation, for we would have expected it to be the opposite. This is true for two simple reasons:

The Torah records the birth of Moav from Lot's older daughter before that of Amon from his younger daughter.[2]

While in the Wilderness, the Jewish people encountered Moav before Amon.[3]

Why, then, does the Torah mention Amon first?

In truth, there is a more compelling reason for the Torah to have mentioned Amon first. The Malbim[4] demonstrates from many instances in the Torah that the order of terms within a

pasuk will be to first mention the more intuitive idea and then to progress from there to the more novel idea.[5] In light of this, let us consider which of these two nations we would have considered more likely to be forbidden. Upon reflection, the answer is clearly – Moav!

The Torah presents two reasons for the prohibition:[6]

They did not greet the Jewish people with bread and water when they came out of Mitzrayim.

He [Balak] hired Bilaam to curse the people.

Of these two reasons, whereas the first may have applied to Amon as well, the second was undertaken only by Moav, represented by Balak. As such, Moav would seem much more deserving of disqualification than Amon! Moreover, although not explicitly mentioned in the pasuk, there was another episode that caused great damage to the Jewish people specifically involving the females of Moav – the episode of Baal Peor! Based on all this, the order of the two prohibited nations in the pasuk should seemingly have been reversed: First Moav – the more obvious candidate, and then Amon, the less obvious one! Why does the pasuk not mention the greater chiddush second, as it generally does?

The answer, says the Meshech Chochmah, is that the pasuk does mention the greater chiddush second, not in terms of who is prohibited, but in terms of who is permitted. Once we understand that the terms “Amoni” and “Moavi” refer specifically to the males and not the females, then indeed we have a progression of chiddush: Not only with regards to Amon are the males prohibited while the females are permitted, but even with regards to Moav it is only the males who are forbidden and not the females! This is a truly amazing situation, as noting the order of the words in the pasuk gives us insight as to which direction to take in translating them.

2. Internal and External Lashon Hara

כִּי תֵצֵא מִחֲנֹהֶה עַל אֹיְבֶיךָ וְנִשְׁמַרְתָּ מִכָּל דְּבַר רָע

When you go out in a camp against your enemies, you shall be guard yourself against every evil thing (23:10)

The Sifrei on our pasuk relates the term “דבר (thing)” to the word “דיבור – speech,” explaining that the pasuk is coming to forbid evil speech. To what type of “evil speech” does this refer and why is it stated specifically within the context of a camp of war?

Two Sources for the Prohibition of Lashon Hara

Additionally, although the Yerushalmi, too, cites our pasuk as a source for the prohibition against lashon hara,[7] it also cites the pasuk in Vayikra[8] “לא תלך רכיל בעמך” – Do not go as a talebearer among your people.” Why do we need two sources to prohibit the same aveirah?

The Meshech Chochmah explains that the two sources refer to two different types of lashon hara:

The pasuk in Vayikra refers to lashon hara that Jews tell among themselves (“among your people”).

Our pasuk refers to lashon hara that Jews tell their enemies.

This second category includes anything which could harm the Jewish people if their enemies hear of it. In the context of war, it includes any information which could place the Jewish camp at risk, such as its numbers, plans etc. This is also the intent of the Sifrei when it states that our pasuk comes to forbid “evil speech,” and for this reason, the prohibition is mentioned “when you go out in a camp of war.” Moreover, this gives us deeper insight into the pasuk that follows, which states that if a person should become tamei or needs to perform his bodily functions, he is to leave the camp. The point is that, barring such reasons, the members of the camp should not leave, as they can run the risk of capture by the enemy and may be forced to give up sensitive information regarding their comrades.

This second form of Lashon Hara not only places the Jewish people at risk, but is also implicated as a cause for them being deserving of exile. Thus, in our very first exile in Mitzrayim, Moshe exclaimed that he finally understood why his brothers were in exile when Dasan and Aviram threatened to inform Pharaoh that he had killed the Egyptian the day before.[9] Likewise, the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash was brought about by Bar Kamtza slandering the Rabbis before Caesar that they refused to offer a sacrifice that was contributed by Rome.[10]

Two forms of Atonement

Taking this idea one step further, the Meshech Chochmah notes that Chazal have identified the offering of the ketores (incense) as a form of atonement for lashon hara.[11] The ketores itself is offered in two locations:

On a daily basis it is offered in the Heichal (Main Sanctuary). Once a year, on Yom Kippur, it is offered in the Kodesh Hakodashim (Holy of Holies).

The daily offering comes to atone for lashon hara spoken among Jews. The yearly offering, on the other hand, comes to atone for lashon hara spoken to non-Jews. This type of lashon hara can bring about a chillul Hashem (desecration of Hashem’s Name), a sin which the Yerushalmi[12] states is equivalent in severity to that of avodah zarah. Hence, like avodah zarah, even a thought to commit this sin that is never actually expressed requires atonement. For this reason, the atonement for this type of lashon hara takes place in the Kodesh Hakodashim, the innermost place where Hashem – Who Alone knows man’s thoughts – resides.

[1] Yevamos 77a. [2] Bereishis 19:37-38. [3] Devarim 2:9 and 19. [4] Commentary to Vayikra 5:4. [5] A concept referred to in the Gemara as “לא זו אף זו.” [6] Pasuk 5. [7] Peah 1:1. [8] 19:16. [9] See Rashi to Shemos 2:14. [10] See Gittin 56a. [11] Zevachim 88b. [12] Nedarim 3:9.

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<http://www.journeysintorah.com> Journeys in Torah 2/4 Rechov Yitzhok ben Nachum Bayit Vegan 90045 Israel

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

date: Sep 12, 2024, 11:15 AM

subject: Two Types of Hate ☁️ (Ki Teitse)

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZTL

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Two Types of Hate

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives. "I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah." – Rabbi Sacks

This year's series of essays and videos were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks zt"l in 5771 (2010–2011). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new Family Edition (2024) to inspire intergenerational learning.

It is by any standards a strange, almost incomprehensible law.

Here it is in the form it appears in this week's parsha:

Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. When the Lord your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land He is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under the heaven. Do not forget.

Deut. 25:17-19

The Israelites had two enemies in the days of Moses: the Egyptians and the Amalekites. The Egyptians enslaved the Israelites. They turned them into a forced labour colony. They oppressed them. Pharaoh commanded them to drown every male Israelite child. It was attempted genocide. Yet about them, Moses commands:

Do not despise an Egyptian, because you were strangers in his land.

Deut. 23:8

The Amalekites did no more than attack the Israelites once[1], an attack that they successfully repelled (Ex. 17:13). Yet Moses commands, "Remember." "Do not forget." "Blot out the name." In Exodus the Torah says that "God shall be at war with Amalek for all generations" (Ex. 17:16). Why the difference? Why did Moses tell the Israelites, in effect, to forgive the Egyptians but not the Amalekites?

The answer is to be found as a corollary of teaching in the Mishnah:

Whenever love depends on a cause and the cause passes away, then the love passes away too. But if love does not depend on a cause, then the love will never pass away. What is an example of the love which depended upon a cause? That of Amnon for Tamar. And what is an example of the love which did not depend on a cause? That of David and Jonathan.

Avot 5:19

When love is conditional, it lasts as long as the condition lasts but no longer. Amnon loved - or rather lusted after - Tamar because she was forbidden to him. She was his half-sister. Once he had had his way with her, "Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her." (II Sam. 13:15). But when love is unconditional and irrational, it never ceases. In the words of Dylan Thomas, "Though lovers be lost, love shall not, and death shall have no dominion."

The same applies to hate. When hate is rational, based on some fear or disapproval that – justified or not – has some logic to it, then it can be reasoned with and brought to an end. But unconditional, irrational hatred cannot be reasoned with. There is nothing one can do to address it and end it. It persists.

That was the difference between the Amalekites and the Egyptians. The Egyptians' hatred and fear of the Israelites was not irrational. Pharaoh said to his people:

'The Israelites are becoming too numerous and strong for us. We must deal wisely with them. Otherwise, they may increase so much that - if there is war - they will join our enemies and fight against us, driving [us] from the land.'

Ex. 1:9-10

The Egyptians feared the Israelites because they were numerous. They constituted a potential threat to the native population. Historians tell us that this was not groundless. Egypt had already suffered from one invasion of outsiders, the Hyksos, an Asiatic people with Canaanite names and beliefs, who took over the Nile Delta during the Second Intermediate Period of the Egypt of the Pharaohs. Eventually the Hyksos were expelled from Egypt and all traces of their occupation were erased. But the memory persisted. It was not irrational for the Egyptians to fear that the Hebrews were another such population. They feared the Israelites because they were strong.

(Note that there is a difference between "rational" and "justified". The Egyptians' fear was in this case certainly unjustified. The Israelites did not want to take over Egypt. To the contrary, they would have preferred to leave. Not every rational emotion is justified. It is not irrational to feel fear of flying after the report of a major air disaster, despite the fact that statistically it is more dangerous to drive a car than to be a passenger in a plane. The point is simply that rational but unjustified emotion can, in principle, be cured through reasoning.)

Precisely the opposite was true of the Amalekites. They attacked the Israelites when they were "weary and weak".

They focused their assault on those who were "lagging behind." Those who are weak and lagging behind pose no danger. This was irrational, groundless hate.

With rational hate it is possible to reason. Besides, there was no reason for the Egyptians to fear the Israelites anymore.

They had left. They were no longer a threat. But with irrational

hate it is impossible to reason. It has no cause, no logic. Therefore it may never go away. Irrational hate is as durable and persistent as irrational love. The hatred symbolised by Amalek lasts “for all generations.” All one can do is to remember and not forget, to be constantly vigilant, and to fight it whenever and wherever it appears.

There is such a thing as rational xenophobia: fear and hatred of the foreigner, the stranger, the one-not-like-us. In the hunter-gatherer stage of humanity, it was vital to distinguish between members of your tribe and those of another tribe. There was competition for food and territory. It was not an age of liberalism and tolerance. The other tribe was likely to kill you or oust you, given the chance. But within two or three generations the newcomers acculturated and integrated. They were seen as contributing to the national economy and adding richness and variety to its culture. When an emotion like fear of strangers is rational but unjustified, eventually it declines and disappears.

Antisemitism is different. It is the paradigm case of irrational hatred. In the Middle Ages Jews were accused of poisoning wells, spreading the plague, and in one of the most absurd claims ever – the Blood Libel – they were suspected of killing Christian children to use their blood to make matzot for Pesach. This was self-evidently impossible, but that did not stop people believing it.

The European Enlightenment, with its worship of science and reason, was expected to end all such hatred. Instead it gave rise to a new version of it, racial antisemitism. In the nineteenth century Jews were hated because they were rich and because they were poor; because they were capitalists and because they were communists; because they were exclusive and kept to themselves and because they infiltrated everywhere; because they were believers in an ancient, superstitious faith and because they were rootless cosmopolitans who believed nothing. Antisemitism was the supreme irrationality of the Age of Reason.

It gave rise to a new myth, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a literary forgery produced by members of the Czarist Russia secret police toward the end of the nineteenth century. It held that Jews had power over the whole of Europe – this at the time of the Russian pogroms of 1881 and the antisemitic May Laws of 1882, which sent some three million Jews, powerless and impoverished, into flight from Russia to the West.

The situation in which Jews found themselves at the end of what was supposed to be the century of Enlightenment and emancipation was stated eloquently by Theodor Herzl, in 1897:

We have sincerely tried everywhere to merge with the national communities in which we live, seeking only to preserve the faith of our fathers. It is not permitted us. In vain are we loyal patriots, sometimes superloyal; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow citizens; in vain do we strive to enhance the fame of our native lands in the arts

and sciences, or her wealth by trade and commerce. In our native lands where we have lived for centuries we are still decried as aliens, often by men whose ancestors had not yet come at a time when Jewish sighs had long been heard in the country . . . If we were left in peace . . . But I think we shall not be left in peace.

This was deeply shocking to Herzl. No less shocking has been the return of antisemitism to parts of the world today, particularly the Middle East and even Europe, within living memory of the Holocaust. Yet the Torah intimates why. Irrational hate does not die.

Not all hostility to Jews, or to Israel as a Jewish State, is irrational, and where it is not, it can be reasoned with. But some of it is irrational. Some of it, even today, is a repeat of the myths of the past, from the Blood Libel to the Protocols. All we can do is remember and not forget, confront it and defend ourselves against it.

Amalek does not die. But neither does the Jewish people. Attacked so many times over the centuries, it still lives, giving testimony to the victory of the God of love over the myths and madness of hate.

[1] Of course, there were subsequent attacks by Amalek (including, according to tradition, in Bamidbar 21:1) but the decree to obliterate Amalek was issued after their first attack.

from: **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

date: Sep 12, 2024, 7:00 PM

In Memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz ZTL

subject: Tidbits for Parashas Ki Seitzei

Parashas Ki Seitzei • September 14th • 11 Elul 5784

LeDavid Hashem Ori is added to the end of Shacharis. It is also added to the end of Minchah (Nusach Sefard) or Maariv (Nusach Ashkenaz).

The final opportunity for Kiddush Levana is late Tuesday night, September 17th at 2:38 AM EST.

Selichos begin on Motzaei Shabbos Parashas Nitzavim-Vayeilech, September 28th.

Rosh Hashanah begins on Wednesday evening, October 2nd.

Yom Kippur begins on Friday evening, October 11th.

As the precarious situation in Eretz Yisrael unfortunately continues, each person should increase reciting tehillim and performing other mitzvos as a zechus for the many Acheinu Beis Yisrael in travail and captivity as well as for the soldiers in battle.

Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Bava Basra 81 • Yerushalmi: Challah 44. The siyum is next Thursday, mazal tov! Masechta Orlah begins next • Mishnah Yomis: Bava Kama 10:6-7. The siyum is next Monday, mazal tov! Masechta Bava Metzia begins next • Pirkei Avos: Perek 2 Oraysa: Next week is Succah 52b-54b. The siyum is next Thursday, mazal tov! Masechta Beitza begins next.

Ki Seitzei: The firstborn son's double share of inheritance • Ben Soreir u'Moreh • Burying the dead • Tzitzis • Holiness in the Jewish camp • Kidnapping • Remember what Hashem did to Miriam • Protect widows and orphans • Penalty for causing embarrassment • Remembering Amalek's actions after we left Mitzrayim • See Taryag Weekly for the various mitzvos.

Haftarah: The haftarah of Rani Akarah (Yeshaya 54:1-10) comforts the city of Yerushalayim. The Navi tells Yerushalayim that although she is currently like a barren woman, at the time of the future redemption, her children will return in droves, requiring her borders to be expanded to accommodate them.

Parashas Ki Seitzei: 110 Pesukim • 27 Obligations • 47 Prohibitions

1-3) Keep the laws of a captured Yefas To'ar. Do not sell her or use her as a maidservant. 4-5) Hang the corpse of an executed blasphemer and worshiper of avodah zarah, but do not leave it hanging past nightfall. 6) Bury all executed sinners the same day. 7-8) Return lost items; do not look away from returning them. 9-10) Help your fellow load and unload his animal; do not ignore him. 11-12) A man or woman may not wear clothing designed for the other gender. 13-14) Do not take a mother bird together with her eggs or chicks. Instead, send away the mother first. 15-16) Place a fence around your rooftop; remove hazards from your property. 17-18) Do not plant kil'ayim (mixture of seeds) nor benefit from it. 19) Do not plow with two different animal species together. 20) Do not wear shatnez. 21) Acquire a wife through kiddushin. 22-23) A Motzi Sheim Ra on his wife must retain her as a wife; he may not divorce her. 24) Beis Din shall mete out the death penalty of stoning. 25) Do not convict an involuntary sinner. 26-27) A M'aneis must marry his victim and pay a fine; he may not divorce her. 28) A Jewish-born woman may not marry a Petzuah Dakah or C'rus Shofchah. 29) Do not marry a Mamzer or Mamzeres. 30) A woman may not marry a male descendant of Amon and Moav. 31) Do not forge peace with Amon and Moav. 32-33) Do not distance yourself from third generation descendants of Edom or Mitzrayim. 34) A tamei with tumas haguf may not enter Machane Levi. 35-36) An area should be set aside outside the encampment for relieving oneself and each person should have a tool to bury the waste. 37-38) Do not return a runaway servant who has escaped to Eretz Yisrael, or even speak harshly to him. 39) Do not have marital relations without kiddushin and nisu'in. 40) Do not sacrifice an animal that was once traded for a dog, or which was remitted as payment to a harlot. 41-42) Do not collect interest from a Jew. However, do approach a non-Jew for collection of debt. 43-44) Do not delay fulfilling vows; fulfill all promises. 45-47) A worker may eat from the produce with which he is working. Though he may not eat more than his fill. 48) Divorce by way of giving a get. 49) Do not remarry your

divorced wife after she has married another man (and was divorced or widowed from him). 50-51) A Chassan should not take a leave (unexcused) from his wife during the first year of marriage; he should remain in close proximity to her. 52) Do not take food preparation items as collateral. 53) Do not remove Tzara'as signs from the body. 54-56) Do not grab collateral from a debtor. Collateral should be returned as needed, do not withhold it. 57) Pay a worker the same day. 58) Do not accept testimony from a relative. 59) Do not deviate from true justice, even to benefit orphans. 60) Do not take collateral from a widow. 61-62) Leave forgotten bundles in the field and do not retrieve them. 63-64) Beis Din shall mete out the malkos punishment, but not more than lashes assessed to him. 65) Do not work a muzzled animal in a field. 66-68) A yevamah may not marry anyone else; her late husband's brother shall marry her or perform chalitzah to release her. 69-70) Save a life that is being threatened, even by killing the pursuer; have no mercy on the pursuer. 71) Do not own inaccurate scales and measures. 72-74) Remember Amalek and destroy all of their descendants; never forget their attack.

“זָכוֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֵק”

“Remember that which Amalek did to you” (Devarim 25:17) This mitzvah to remember Amalek's attack upon the fledgling Jewish nation follows immediately after the prohibition of utilizing inaccurate weights and measures to cheat a customer. Rashi explains that this teaches us that being dishonest in business results in the punishment of being attacked by enemies. Rashi in Parashas Beha'aloscha, however, implies that the cause of Amalek's attack was a lack of emunah in Hashem. How does this align with Rashi's explanation in our Parasha?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains that one who succumbs to the sin of theft once or twice has allowed his desires to get a hold of him. However, a person who operates his entire business using inaccurate scales and measures is far worse. Aside from the thievery, he is displaying a complete lack of faith in Hashem's ability to provide for him through honest means. The use of dishonest weights is thus a symptom of the root problem of an absence of emunah, which is the reason for Amalek's attack as stated by Rashi in Parashas Beha'aloscha.

from: **Ohr Somayach** <ohr@ohr.edu>

date: Sep 12, 2024, 1:10 AM

subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Ki Teitzei

A World of Potato Peels

“It shall be, that when Hashem gives you rest from all your enemies all around, in the Land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you as an inheritance to possess it...” (25:19)

In the death camp, for two whole years they hid the little boy in the roof of the hut. All they could give him to eat were potato peels.

One day, the secret trap-door to his hiding place opened up and a smiling face said, “You can come out now! It’s over. The war is over!” The little boy refused to come out. He said, “I’m not coming out until you promise me that if I come out, I will still get my potato peels.”

In a sense, we are that little boy.

We have lived so long in darkness and in captivity that our horizons have shrunk, our aspirations have dwindled. We have no idea what it will be like when the Mashiach comes, but when he arrives, all the things that made us happy and that we clung to will seem no more than potato peels.

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/torah/our-mission/2024/09/11/>

Our Mission

By **Rabbi Reuven Taragin** - 9 Elul 5784 – September 11, 2024 0

Biglal Avot

The What

Earlier pieces in this series explained how we view the world and ourselves. Though these topics are a critical part of our foundational perspective, they are more about the big picture and less about the details of our mission. We saw that the world and man were created for the glory of G-d’s name, but how do we glorify His Name? Our world is the corridor where we gain entry to the next one, but what actions here earn us entry into the next world?

We saw that Hashem created us with the ability (and free choice) to accomplish and grow, but what are we meant to achieve? In what ways are we meant to grow?

Mitzvot

The first answer to this question is obviously mitzvah observance. When Hashem created the first man, He immediately began issuing directives – He commanded Adam to eat from all the trees except the Eitz HaDa’at (Bereishit 2:16-17). Later, he commanded Noach to build and enter the ark with his family and the animals (6:13-21 and 7:1-4) and Avraham to leave his home for Eretz Cana’an (12:1-3). Hashem also commanded less righteous individuals. He commanded Paroh and Avimelech to return the wives of the Avot and Lavan to stay clear of Yaakov.

Beyond these particular situational directives, Hashem gave the world seven broad principles He expects all people to observe. These “Noahide Laws,” which include prohibitions against idolatry, murder, and theft, aim to set man on the right path and remind him that he lives in Hashem’s world and is indebted to Him.

At Har Sinai, Hashem gave 606 additional mitzvot to the Jewish people. In addition to the general and basic mitzvot that direct all humanity, Hashem gave us, His chosen people, a detailed system that relates comprehensively to all aspects of our life in this world: our relationship with Hashem, our relationship with others, and our personal growth. Roughly

speaking, He made us responsible for Torah (study and personal growth), Avodah (serving Hashem), and Gemilut Chasadim (care for others) (Avot 1:2).

Fulfilling these mitzvot and studying the Torah that presents them is the most basic part of our mission and responsibility. Goals

Our life includes more than just fulfilling mitzvot. We also have goals we aim to achieve. The Ramchal makes this point at the beginning of his Mesillat Yesharim, which he opens by emphasizing the importance of clarifying and knowing what our responsibilities and goals should be in this world. He refers to both duties and goals because our life includes both. In addition to our obligation to fulfill mitzvot, we should also have additional goals.

The Ramchal speaks about the goal of entering Olam Haba (the world to come) and the ideal spiritual pleasure we enjoy there. We need to remember that the pleasures of this world pale in comparison to those of the next one. This realization should focus us on earning our place in the next world and keep us from overindulging in the non-spiritual pleasures of this one.

In addition to seeking entry into the next world, we also seek the redemption of this one. We daven daily for the redemption and ingathering of the Jewish people, the restoration of the Davidic monarchy, and the rebuilding of the Beit HaMidkash, and we yearn for Moshiach’s arrival. These events will enable the Jewish people, as a community and as individuals, to live life in this world more ideally and change how the world sees us and themselves.

Rav Reuven Taragin is the Dean of Overseas Students at Yeshivat Hakotel and Educational Director of World Mizrahi - RZA. He lives with his wife Shani and their six children in Alon Shvut, Israel

<https://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/lost-and-found-3/2024/09/12/>

Lost And Found

By **Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser** - 9 Elul 5784 – September 12, 2024

You shall not see the ox of your brother or his sheep or goat cast off and hide yourself from them; you shall surely return them to your brother” (Devarim 22:1)

Our sages tell us that one of the most effective ways for man to gain Heaven’s favorable judgment is to grant merit to the community, by helping, contributing, and empathizing with those who are in need.

This is the fundamental doctrine of the *pasuk*. The Chofetz Chaim comments that the laws of returning a lost object apply even if its value is nominal, and one must return it even one hundred times. If this is the law for a trifling, how much more meaningful it is to return a human being who has strayed from the proper path of Torah and *mitzvos*.

The Medrash relates that Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem, “Master of the world, how will the person who killed another individual unintentionally find his way to the city of refuge [the fate of the person who has committed an unintended murder]?” Hashem instructed Moshe to prepare the way for the unintentional murderer, so that he should not be accosted by the “avenger of blood,” by putting up signs that direct the person to the cities of refuge. We learn from here that just as Hashem is good and just to ensure the safety of the individual who killed unintentionally, He is certainly compassionate towards the ordinary people, as it says (*Tehillim* 25:9), “Hashem leads the humble with justice.”

HaGaon Rav Shalom Elyashiv expounds that the signage was in order to assure that the involuntary murderer could access the city of refuge without delay. Despite the fact that the individual took the life of another person, it is nevertheless a mitzvah to assist him. How much more so must one help an innocent individual who needs guidance to walk in the ways of Hashem. Even if the person thinks he is conducting himself properly, but you know he is wrong, you must correct him.

We are commanded to emulate Hashem, as it says (*Shabbos* 133b), “Be similar to Him.” That is to say, just as Hashem helps us through life, as we say in our daily morning prayers, “... He prepares the footsteps of man,” so too we have an obligation to help others spiritually and in material ways. Rav Dovid Braverman notes that we say in the *Selichos*, “we shudder and tremble before the day of Your coming.” We are fearful of standing before Hashem on the Day of Judgment, when we ask Him for blessing, success, health and livelihood for the coming year. We then add in our requests, “*l’maancha Elokim chayim* – for Your sake, living G-d.” We are not, in fact, entreating for all this beneficence for ourselves. For when one is concerned about the members of his community, to return those souls who are lost, then he demonstrates that he is indeed working for Hashem’s sake.

The great Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, *rosh yeshiva* of Chevron, remarks that there are two types of lost items. One is an object, lost by its owner, that is lying abandoned somewhere. The other is, as Dovid HaMelech describes (*Tehillim* 119:176), “I have strayed like a lost sheep, seek out Your servant ...” It doesn’t matter how far the sheep has wandered from the flock. When the sheep hears the shepherd’s flute, he will be found. Dovid HaMelech says to Hashem: I am like a lost sheep that can’t find its way back, but You, Hashem, know where I am. Seek out Your servant and show me the way to return to You.

A young Torah scholar had been living in Yerushalayim before his marriage where he learned with a young man who needed personal and spiritual inspiration. After his marriage, the Torah scholar moved to Haifa, and he was only able to maintain intermittent contact with the young man. When it became apparent after a few months that the young man needed a closer relationship with his mentor, the *kollel*

yungerman invited him to come to Haifa immediately. They walked the empty and desolate streets of Haifa immersed in deep conversation, but the young man remained despondent and unmotivated.

Finally, the *kollel yungerman* said to him: I am a Karliner *chassid* and Rav Aharon HaGadol M’Karlin composed a *niggun* in honor of Shabbos, called *Kah Echsof*. The song has a number of stanzas, and its underlying theme expresses the soul’s desire to be close to Hashem. “Come let us sing together. Let us call out to Hashem, *Ribbono Shel Olam*, that our *neshamos* long for Him.”

As the *kollel yungerman* began to sing, the young man’s eyes lit up. The song opened his heart, and the two sang with great feeling and emotion. Suddenly, they noticed someone watching them. Crying, the man approached them and begged, with tears in his eyes, “Can I record you? I would very much like to have this song recorded.”

“Why?” they asked, and he began to tell his story.

“My mother was born in the city of Karlin, and in her home they sang this wondrous *niggun*, *Kah Echsof*, with great feeling and joy every Shabbos. However, when she moved to Haifa, she abandoned Yiddishkeit. The only connection she preserved was this *niggun* which she would sing to my brother and me when we were young. My mother passed away many years ago, but the *niggun* is engraved in my bones, and I am very moved to hear it.”

“So why do you want to record it?” they asked.

“Right now,” said the man, “my brother is in the *bais refuah* Rambam in Haifa. He is terminally ill and has only days left to live. I know without a doubt that hearing this *niggun* from my mother will give him extraordinary happiness before he leaves this world.”

“There is no need to record it,” said the *kollel yungerman*. “We will go together with you and also be able to fulfill the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*.”

The three proceeded to the *bais refuah*, where they began to sing the soulful tune of *Kah Echsof*. They sang with deep emotion, and suddenly the patient opened his eyes and tears trickled down his face.

When the duo finished singing, they left and began to walk towards the bus station, when they heard the brother of the ill patient in pursuit, calling out to them.

“My brother died,” he notified them, “but thankfully he was escorted by a song that is filled with longing and desire for the *Ribbono Shel Olam*.”

It’s amazing to think about it. Although the mother had abandoned Yiddishkeit and had given her children a totally secular education, the song of Shabbos that she had heard in her father’s home and transmitted to her children made an impression. Such is the power of a holy *niggun*.

from: Rabbi Efreim Goldberg <reg-brsonline.org@shared1.ccsend.com>

reply-to: reg@brsonline.org
date: Sep 11, 2024, 11:49 AM
subject: Rav Weinberger on BTB, a Rotisserie Chicken, Your Future Self and More.
September 10, 2024
ז' אלול ה' אלפים תשפ"ד

A Shul Built Thanks to a Rotisserie Chicken
By Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

One day in 2022, Azriel was minding his own business when he got a call from Charlotte. She introduced herself as the president of Congregation Anshei Shalom, a large Conservative Temple in Century Village in West Palm Beach, Florida and she asked him to come to a meeting of her board. Despite not having any idea why he was called, Azriel agreed to attend the meeting.

It turns out, CAS may have been a large temple in square footage but was shrinking and now fairly small in membership. They used to have 1,000 members but were now at the point that they couldn't put a minyan together even counting men and women combined. There are 2,000 yearzeit plaques on the walls and essentially that is where nearly all their membership is today.

The board was interested to find out if the growing orthodox population in the area was interested in renting space for their services. The chapel has a separate entrance and separate bathroom facilities enabling two groups to simultaneously use the campus while maintaining their separate identity and function.

Azriel listened to the proposal and responded that he is just a simple Jew, not any sort of macher or leader in Century Village and that he lives a mile and a half away, probably too far to even be able to attend Shabbos services. He said, "I love you with all of my heart, not as cousins but as my brothers and sisters. However, the likelihood of Orthodox people renting space at the Temple is very remote." He explained that they could try to work something out but that a long-term deal to share space was very unlikely. They ended the meeting with the possibility of continuing the conversation but pessimistic they would work something out.

Azriel went to his Orthodox shul the next morning for davening and told some of the chevra there about this meeting.

One friend advised to go back to Charlotte and offer her 1 million dollars to purchase the shul and the campus. The man said he would back up the finances.

Azriel called Charlotte and set up a meeting with the board for the following week. They sat down and he asked them how much would they want for the building. They explained that they had actually done an appraisal and it was worth \$6 million. Azriel turned to them and said, I don't know about that but I will give you \$500,000. Additionally, he told them that he would keep every single dedication plaque in the building and would maintain the yearzeit lights on the thirteen memorial boards. The current temple would be able use the

building through the end of the year and the new group would take over January 1. Lastly, he agreed that the large Israeli flag would continue to fly outside the building.

A week later, Charlotte called Azriel to inform him that the board had accepted the offer. Overjoyed, he was prepared to wire over the half million dollars and close the deal.

If only it was that simple. The United Civic Organization of Century Village, where the campus is located, held their board meeting. The president of Century Village got up in front of the whole crowd and said that they have heard that some unknown guy by the name of Azriel has purchased the CAS building for \$500,000 and that Century Village is opposed to this sale. He proclaimed that they will do everything in their power to stop the sale and take over the building by themselves. He insisted they will knock down the building and put up a shopping center there and to comply with the deed restriction set up by the original builder of all the Century Villages providing that there has to be a house of worship there, Century Village will put in a Presbyterian church in one of the storefronts.

Charlotte and Azriel got wind of what happened and the efforts to interfere with the sale they had agreed upon. The two had the same exact thought. Rather than conduct a sale that could be overruled, Azriel and his friends would all join CAS as members, he would then run for and get elected president, and CAS could keep its name and change its charter. Azriel, of course, had his motivations, but Charlotte, too, was devoted to the continuation of the shul, the yearzeit lightings, the dedication plaques, and that all of the investment in Yiddishkeit that previous members there had put in for over 50 years.

At this point, Charlotte said to forget about the \$500,000 and just give \$100,000 to pay out CAS's outstanding bills and obligations. Azriel wired the money and he and his chevra officially took over the board.

At the next Century Village United Civic Organization meeting, Azriel took the microphone and explained to the crowd that he had been elected the President of the Board, there would be no sale of the CAS building, and that services and the shul would continue. Everyone clapped and that put that whole issue to rest.

In December, Azriel met with Charlotte for the handover of the keys to the building. She gave him the keys and told him that she only ended up using \$45,000 of the money to pay the bills.

She then proceeded to hand him back \$55,000.00.

In the end it cost a grand total of \$45,000 for a campus that occupies over eight acres of land, includes a main sanctuary that seats 750, with two kitchens, a large social hall, and several offices. There is a large library and beis medrash. The story of Congregation Anshei Shalom is extraordinary but there is one question that was still left to be asked. Azriel wanted to know, why him? How did Charlotte find him and why was he the one she called, seemingly out of the blue,

about the possibility of an Orthodox congregation renting space?

Azriel moved to Century Village around ten years ago. He met a neighbor, Janet, who told him about a kosher bakery at BJs on State Rd 7 in Royal Palm Beach. Janet would buy her Shabbos challah there and, she added, once she's there she would buy the rotisserie chicken for Shabbos from there as well.

Azriel couldn't understand. Janet, at the time was close to 90 years old. She would shlep five miles for kosher challah and yet she had no problem eating treif chicken? Azriel had an idea. He would go to Glicks in Delray each Friday morning to buy food for Shabbos and food for the following week. He started picking up a chicken for Janet each and every Friday and leaving it on her door handle for Shabbos.

Every Monday night, Janet played in the same mahjong game with Charlotte. One week, Charlotte is describing how her temple is hemorrhaging members and in financial trouble. She shares that since so many Orthodox Jews are moving in, maybe they would be interested in the space, she just wishes she knew someone to call about the possibility of renting.

Janet says, I know just the person, I have an amazing neighbor who is so kind and thoughtful, he picks up a kosher chicken for me each and every week.

For \$45,000, a large Orthodox shul now hosts three weekday Shacharis minyanim, two weekday Mincha/Maariv minyanim, two Shabbos morning minyanim, Daf Yomi shiurim, and so much more... all because a simple Jew cared about his neighbor and brought her a chicken weekly.

The word Elul, the month we find ourselves in, is an acronym for many phrases and pesukim. Perhaps the most famous, Ani l'Dodi v'Dodi li, I am to my Beloved and my Beloved is to me, reflects our special loving relationship with our Creator and the effort we are instructed to make during this time of year to come closer and closer with Him. Less famous but as important is the acronym, taken from the words of Megillas Esther, "ish l'reiehu u'matanos l'evyonim, a person to their friend and generosity to those who need." This time of year is also dedicated to coming closer with one another, displaying care, concern, connection, and community. How devoted are we to our neighbors, without caring if we are similar or different? Are we generous with those who may feel isolated or alone?

A single parent was recently telling me how few invitations he has received since his divorce and how alone the children and he feel.

Caring about our neighbors is the right thing to do, but it is also what Hashem looks for and loves, His children caring for one another. We describe Hashem as tzilcha, our shadow. His attitude towards us is a shadow, a reflection of how he sees us act towards other. If we want Him to judge us favorably and show devotion to us, we need Him to see us devoted to and caring about our neighbors.

For the cost of a rotisserie chicken, we can create and show love, to an entire community.