

[CS - late breaking addition:

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subject: Rav Frand - Don't Take Advantage of the Mother Bird's Compassion: **Shiluach Hakan Part 1**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1435 – Paying a Worker on Time- A Mitzva D'Oraisah. Good Shabbos.

One of the more famous mitzvos in Parshas Ki Seitzei is the mitzva of shiluach hakan. There is a negative Torah prohibition of taking chicks or eggs in the presence of the mother bird. "If a bird's nest happens to be before you on the road, on any tree or on the ground – young birds or eggs – and the mother is roosting on the young birds or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother on the young. You shall surely send away the mother and take the young for yourself..." (Devorim 22:6-7) Therefore, you must first send away the mother bird, before taking the chicks or eggs. As a reward for the performance of this mitzva, the pasuk says: "It will be good for you and you will have a long life."

The Avnei Nezer explains why the Torah says to send away the mother bird. Really a person should not even have an opportunity to take the mother bird, because the mother should fly away as soon as a person approaches her nest. That is the nature of birds – they fly away at the first sight of an approaching human being. However, this bird will not instinctively fly away. She wants to protect her brood. She has mercy and concern for her chicks.

The Avnei Nezer writes that a person's entire ability to take the mother bird is enabled by her acting with compassion for her offspring. Once she demonstrates this emotion of compassion, she is no longer just an animal. She has elevated herself by demonstrating a higher emotional concern for others, namely her children.

The sefer Bei Chiya from Rav Elisha Horowitz (from Five Towns) relates this to a pasuk in Parshas Noach, "Kol remes asher hu chai, lochem yihyeh l'ochla." (Everything that lives shall be for you to eat) (Bereshis 9:3) After the flood, the Ribono shel Olam gave man dominion over the entire animal kingdom. While Adam and Chava were vegetarians, Noach and his offspring were permitted to eat meat, chicken, etc. Whatever crawled on the earth was given to them to eat – because 'man' was on a higher spiritual level than the animal kingdom. Man can kill a cow, he can kill a chicken, he can kill whatever he wants. But only three pesukim later: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of G-d He made man." (Bereshis 9:6). You can't kill a human being. You do not have dominion over other human beings because man is a Tzelem Elokim (in the Image of G-d). An animal is not a Tzelem Elokim. Man is on a higher level than animals, and therefore animals are available for man's enjoyment.

What does the term Tzelem Elokim mean? The Abarbanel on Chumash relates the expression Tzelem Elokim to the term tzel (shadow). A shadow follows a person. The reason a person is a Tzelem Elokim is because he needs to try to follow the Ribono shel Olam like a shadow follows a person. How does a person follow the Ribono shel Olam? "Is it then possible to cling to the Shechina? How can a person 'walk in His ways'" (as implied by the mitzva "and you shall walk in His ways" (Devorim 28:9))? The Gemara (Shabbos 133b) explains how we can walk in His ways: Just as He is merciful, so too, you be merciful... A person needs to emulate Hashem's attributes of kindness and mercy. That is how we become a Tzelem Elokim.

If so, now we can appreciate the Avnei Nezer even more. When that mother bird has mercy on her children, she is now acting more G-d-like. The only reason the bird is under man's dominion is because it is spiritually inferior to man; it is not a Tzelem Elokim. But once a bird acts altruistically, it becomes – at least slightly – G-d-like, and therefore, we are not permitted to take advantage of it.

"In Order That It Will Be Good for You": Shiluach Hakan Part 2

I would like to share another thought about shiluach hakan:

There are two mitzvos about which the Torah says, "in order that it will be good for you and you will have long life." One of them is the mitzva of sending away the mother bird. The other one is the mitzva of honoring our parents. Apparently, there is some kind of similarity between these two mitzvos.

The Talmud Yerushalmi in Masseches Peah expresses this idea in even sharper form: "The Torah equates the easiest mitzva with the hardest mitzva. The easiest mitzva is shiluach hakan. The hardest mitzva is kibbud av v'eim. By both, it is written, "you will be rewarded with long life."

We need no explanation for why kibbud av v'eim is amongst the hardest of mitzvos to keep. We all know very well that we have such close relationships with our parents that there are certain liberties we take with them. We don't always afford them the honor they deserve. Sometimes we lose our patience with our parents. Sometimes we speak disrespectfully to them. And the list goes on. Clearly it is among the hardest of mitzvos to properly observe – to the extent that the Gemara famously says (Kiddushin 31b) that Rabbi Yochanon, who was an orphan from birth, stated, "Lucky is the person who never saw his parents." In other words, he was saying that he was fortunate to never have faced the difficult test of properly honoring his parents.

I recently saw a psak from Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zt"l. In Israel, the law is that an adopted child, upon turning twenty years old, is allowed to look up the identity of his birth parents. Rav Shteinman was once asked if such a child should indeed try to find out who his birth parents are so that he is able to fulfill the important mitzvah of kibbud av v'eim. Rav Shteinman answered that the adopted child should not seek out such information. He advised, in effect, that ignorance is bliss. "If you don't know who your parents are, that is preferable because this is an impossible mitzva to fully observe properly."

So the question is, what is this apparent connection between such a hard mitzva and such a very easy mitzva? Shiluach hakan only requires taking a broomstick, banging on a tree, and chasing away the mother bird. It doesn't cost a penny, unlike mitzvos like esrog and matzah. Literally, it is amongst the easiest of all mitzvos!

Why do both of these mitzvos have this reward of "arichas yomim" (long life)? At first blush, it seems that they both are about rachmanus (having mercy). True kibbud av v'eim is not standing up for your father when you are ten years old. True kibbud av v'eim is when your father is eighty-five years old, is very difficult to take care of, and you need to wheel him every Shabbos in a wheel chair. That is true kibbud av v'eim. Why does a person do that? It is out of rachmanus. He realizes what his parents have done for him over his life. He has rachmanus on them.

Shiluach hakan is also about midas harachmanus. I don't want the mother bird to suffer by seeing me take her chicks. This is what both the Rambam and the Ramban say about the purpose of this mitzvah – to teach us to have mercy on birds so that we will have mercy on people as well. It is not that the Torah has compassion for birds per se. However, this teaches us to be compassionate in general. The similarity between these two mitzvos seems to be that they are both mitzvos of rachmanus. The Torah likes people who are merciful. Therefore, the reward for both is long life.

However, this is all well and good for those who learn like many Rishonim that shiluach hakan is about rachmanus. But the Zohar says that shiluach hakan is not about rachmanus. On the contrary, according to the Zohar, the mitzva of shiluach hakan is about achzariyus (cruelty)! According to the Zohar, the intention is to make the poor mother bird suffer and fly away, helpless to save her chicks. Why in the world would there be such a mitzva that seems to fly in the face of the entire Torah outlook? The Zohar says that the bird will be so upset that it will fly away to the "Angel appointed over birds" and complain. The bird will thereby arouse the mercy of the Ribono shel Olam. The Ribono shel Olam views Klal Yisrael as "His chicks." The bird's crying will reach

the Kisay Hakavod (Throne of Honor) of the Almighty, and hopefully will arouse His mercy on behalf of Klal Yisrael and lead to Him rebuild the Beis Hamikdash. So writes the Zohar.

According to the Zohar, shiluach hakan and kibbud av v'eim are not similar mitzvos. They are opposite mitzvos. One of them is about rachmanus – making sure that everything is well with one's elderly parents. The other one is about achzariyus! If so, the Vilna Gaon says, that is why the reward for shiluach hakan and kibbud av v'eim are the same. It is because faithful observance of both a "merciful mitzva" and a "cruel mitzva" demonstrates the nature of our commitment to Hashem and his mitzvos.

People have different natural inclinations. Some people find certain mitzvos very easy. For others, the same mitzvah is very difficult. Some people love having company for Shabbos. They are conversationalists, they are gregarious, they love having guests around their Shabbos table. Some people are shy or are not very articulate. They find it very difficult to host company for Shabbos. But sometimes it is necessary for a person to go against his natural inclinations and proclivities and do a mitzva anyway.

There are people who are naturally compassionate, naturally rachmonim. For them, kibbud av v'eim is a piece of cake. It is a mitzva that 'speaks to them.' But for such a compassionate person to go over to that poor bird, sitting there taking care of its brood, and chase it away, is very difficult. But if the Torah says that is how he must act, he does so anyway.

On the other hand, there are people who don't mind inflicting pain on a "poor stupid bird." "I don't care." However, for him, kibbud av v'eim is much more difficult because he does not have those natural feelings of rachmanus.

The Vilna Gaon explains that the avodas ha'adam (man's service) (to the Almighty) in this world is not merely doing the mitzvos that he likes or enjoys or come easy to him. If someone really wants to show his devotion to the Ribono shel Olam, he needs to both do the mitzvos that are in line with his natural inclinations and those that go against his grain.

That is why these two mitzvos both have the same reward. Someone who does both of these mitzvos – representing polar opposites of human inclinations (rachmanus and achzariyus) – is not merely doing so because he likes to do them, but rather, he is doing them because the Ribono shel Olam said to do them. At the end of the day, that is what it is all about.

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Ki Teitzei

by Rabbi Berel Wein

The parsha of Ki Teitzei contains the second most numerous count of mitzvot in the Torah, topped only by the count of mitzvot in the parsha of Kedoshim in Chumash Vayikra. The commentators to the Torah discuss why these mitzvot that first appear in Ki Teitzei, all of whom are ultimately derived from the granting of the Torah at Mount Sinai almost forty years earlier, find their place in the Torah here in Moshe's final oration to the Jewish people.

Their approach to the issue differs. Some are of the opinion since many of these mitzvot are related to war, settling the land, domesticated human life and the like they appear here because of the impending life altering change for the Jewish people. From a miraculous existence in the desert to a more natural and normal society living. They were now in their own land with all of the changes and problems that such a radical shift of circumstances implies.

Others merely say that this is an example of the Talmudic dictum that the Torah is not bound in its teachings and text to any narrative time line; there is no chronological order to the Torah. Even though these mitzvot appear to us in writing here for the first time in the Torah text, they were essentially already taught to the Jewish people in the desert long before by Moshe.

There are other explanations to the placement of these mitzvot here in our parsha advanced by many of the great commentators to the Torah. All possible explanations are valid and they are not mutually exclusive.

If I may be bold enough to add my insight to this matter as well, I would say as follows: The Jewish people are now about to become a nation and to establish their own government in the Land of Israel. They will have to fight many battles, bloody and painful, to establish their right to the Land of Israel and to establish their sovereignty over the territory that it encompasses.

They will need an army, a civil government, a judicial system, an economy and labor force and all of the other necessary trappings that accompany nation building and establishing a territorial entity and effective government. In the face of these demands it will be likely that they will think that they may discard the spiritual yoke of the mitzvot imposed upon them at Sinai.

It will be easy to say that mitzvot were necessary in the Sinai desert where no other demands on our time, energy and service existed for us. But now we have more pressing business at hand and therefore the punctilious observance of mitzvot is no longer required of us.

Moshe comes in this parsha, in the midst of his valedictory oration to the Jewish people, to remind them that mitzvot and Torah are the only effective guarantee of Jewish success and survival even while engaged in building and defending Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

Moshe in effect says to them: "Here are some more mitzvot that will help you succeed in building the land and your sovereignty over it." Moshe's message is as germane to our time as it was to the first Jews who arrived en masse to settle in the Land of Israel thirty-three centuries ago.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

Letting Go of Hate

Ki Teitzei

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness . . .

Martin Luther King

I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain.

James Arthur Baldwin

There is a verse in Ki Teitzei that is momentous in its implications. It is easy to miss, appearing as it does in the midst of a series of miscellaneous laws about inheritance, rebellious sons, overlaid oxen, marriage violations and escaping slaves. Without any special emphasis or preamble, Moses delivers a command so counterintuitive that we must read it twice to make sure we have heard it correctly:

Do not hate an Edomite, because he is your brother.

Do not hate an Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land.

Deut. 23:8

What does this mean in its biblical context? The Egyptians of Moses' day had enslaved the Israelites, "embittered their lives", subjected them to a ruthless regime of hard labour and forced them to eat the bread of

affliction. They had embarked on a programme of attempted genocide, Pharaoh commanding his people to throw “every male [Israelite] child born, into the river” (Ex. 1:22).

Now, forty years later, Moses speaks as if none of this had happened, as if the Israelites owed the Egyptians a debt of gratitude for their hospitality. Yet he and the people were where they were only because they were escaping from Egyptian persecution. Nor did he want the people to forget it. To the contrary, he told them to recite the story of the Exodus every year, as we still do on Passover, re-enacting it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread so that the memory would be passed on to all future generations. If you want to preserve freedom, he implies, never forget what it feels like to lose it. Yet here, on the banks of the Jordan, addressing the next generation, he tells the people, “Do not hate an Egyptian”. What is going on in this verse?

To be free, you have to let go of hate. That is what Moses is saying. If they continued to hate their erstwhile enemies, Moses would have taken the Israelites out of Egypt, but he would not have taken Egypt out of the Israelites. Mentally, they would still be there, slaves to the past. They would still be in chains, not of metal but of the mind – and chains of the mind are the most constricting of all.

You cannot create a free society on the basis of hate. Resentment, rage, humiliation, a sense of injustice, the desire to restore honour by inflicting injury on your former persecutors – these are conditions of a profound lack of freedom. You must live with the past, implies Moses, but not in the past. Those who are held captive by anger against their former persecutors are captive still. Those who let their enemies define who they are, have not yet achieved liberty.

The Mosaic books refer time and again to the Exodus and the imperative of memory: “you shall remember that you were slaves in Egypt”. Yet never is this invoked as a reason for hatred, retaliation or revenge. Always it appears as part of the logic of the just and compassionate society the Israelites are commanded to create: the alternative order, the antithesis of Egypt. The implicit message is: Limit slavery, at least as far as your own people is concerned. Don’t subject them to hard labour. Give them rest and freedom every seventh day. Release them every seventh year. Recognise them as like you, not ontologically inferior. No one is born to be a slave.

Give generously to the poor. Let them eat from the leftovers of the harvest. Leave them a corner of the field. Share your blessings with others. Don’t deprive people of their livelihood. The entire structure of biblical law is rooted in the experience of slavery in Egypt, as if to say: you know in your heart what it feels like to be the victim of persecution, therefore do not persecute others.

Biblical ethics is based on repeated acts of role-reversal, using memory as a moral force. In the books of Shemot and Devarim, we are commanded to use memory not to preserve hate but to conquer it by recalling what it feels like to be its victim. “Remember” – not to live in the past but to prevent a repetition of the past.

Only thus can we understand an otherwise inexplicable detail in the Exodus story itself. In Moses’ first encounter with God at the Burning Bush, he is charged with the mission of bringing the people out to freedom. God adds a strange rider:

I will make the Egyptians favourably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. Every woman is to ask her neighbour and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters.

Ex. 3:21-22

The point is twice repeated in later chapters (Ex. 11:2, Ex. 12:35). Yet it runs utterly against the grain of biblical narrative. From Genesis (14:23) to the book of Esther (9:10, Est. 9:15, Est. 9:16) taking booty, spoil, plunder from enemies is frowned on. In the case of idolaters, it is strictly forbidden: their property is cherem, taboo, to be destroyed, not possessed (Deut. 7:25; Deut. 13:16).

When, in the days of Joshua, Achan took spoil from the ruins of Jericho, the whole nation was punished. Besides which, what happened to the gold? The Israelites eventually used it to make the Golden Calf. Why

then was it important – commanded – that on this one occasion the Israelites should ask for gifts from the Egyptians? The Torah itself provides the answer in a later law of Deuteronomy about the release of slaves:

If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free. When you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today.

Deut. 15:12-15

Slavery needs “narrative closure”. To acquire freedom, a slave must be able to leave behind feelings of antagonism to his former master. He must not depart laden with a sense of grievance or anger, humiliation or slight. Were he to do so, he would have been released but not liberated. Physically free, mentally he would still be a slave. The insistence on parting gifts represents the Bible’s psychological insight into the lingering injury of servitude. There must be an act of generosity on the part of the master if the slave is to leave without ill-will. Slavery leaves a scar on the soul that must be healed.

When God told Moses to tell the Israelites to take parting gifts from the Egyptians, it is as if He were saying: Yes, the Egyptians enslaved you, but that is about to become the past. Precisely because I want you to remember the past, it is essential that you do so without hate or desire for revenge. What you are to recall is the pain of being a slave, not the anger you feel towards your slave-masters. There must be an act of symbolic closure. This cannot be justice in the fullest sense of the word: such justice is a chimera, and the desire for it insatiable and self-destructive. There is no way of restoring the dead to life, or of recovering the lost years of liberty denied. But neither can a people deny the past, deleting it from the database of memory. If they try to do so it will eventually come back – Freud’s “return of the repressed” – and claim a terrible price in the form of high-minded, altruistic vengeance. Therefore the former slave-owner must give the former slave a gift, acknowledging him as a free human being who has contributed, albeit without choice, to his welfare. This is not a squaring of accounts. It is, rather, a minimal form of restitution, of what today is called “restorative justice”.

Hatred and liberty cannot coexist. A free people does not hate its former enemies; if it does, it is not yet ready for freedom. To create a non-persecuting society out of people who have been persecuted, you have to break the chains of the past; rob memory of its sting; sublimate pain into constructive energy and the determination to build a different future.

Freedom involves the abandonment of hate, because hate is the abdication of freedom. It is the projection of our conflicts onto an external force whom we can then blame, but only at the cost of denying responsibility. That was Moses’ message to those who were about to enter the Promised Land: that a free society can be built only by people who accept the responsibility of freedom, subjects who refuse to see themselves as objects, people who define themselves by love of God, not hatred of the other. “Do not hate an Egyptian, because you were strangers in his land,” said Moses, meaning: To be free, you have to let go of hate.

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Ki Seitzei

Benevolent Association

In this week’s portion, the Torah commands us with quite a tall order. Because of flagrant ingratitude, in which Ammonites and Moabites forgot the kindness of our father Avraham toward their forebear Lot, we are commanded not to allow them to join in marriage into our nation. The directive does not preclude Ammonites and Moabites from converting or marrying other Jewish converts. It also does not prohibit Ammonite women converts from marrying into the fold. It does prohibit the direct descendants of Avraham, who epitomized kindness and

gratitude, from marrying Lot's male descendants who were so cruel to the Jewish people.

The Torah tells us in the exact way their ungraciousness manifested itself. "Because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt, and because he hired against you Bilaam son of Beor, of Pethor, Aram Naharaim, to curse you" (Deuteronomy 23:5). But in an atypical deviation from the initial narrative, the Torah inserts the following verse: But Hashem, your God, refused to listen to Balaam, and Hashem, your God, reversed the curse to a blessing for you, because Hashem, your God, loved you" (Ibid v.6). The Torah then continues to conclude the directive: "You shall not seek their peace or welfare, all your days, forever" (ibid v. 7).

Why does Hashem interject the story of His compassionate intervention into the prohibition? The Torah previously detailed the story of the talking donkey, the interceding angel and Balak's subsequent failure to curse the Jews. Why interject G-d's love in halting Bilaam's plans when the Torah is presenting a reason not to marry Moabites? It has no bearing on the prohibition.

A classic story of a new immigrant's encounter with the American judicial system involved an old Jew who was called to testify.

"Mr. Goldstein," asked the judge, "how old are you?"

"Keyn ayin horah, eighty three."

"Just answer the question, Mr. Goldberg. I repeat. How old are you?"

Goldberg did not flinch. "Keyn ayin horah, eighty-three."

"Mr. Goldberg," repeated the judge, "I do not want any prefixes or suffixes. Just answer the question."

But Goldberg did not change his response.

Suddenly Goldberg's lawyer jumped up. "Your honor," he interjected. "Please allow me to ask the question. The Judge approved and the lawyer turned to Goldberg.

"Mr. Goldberg. How old are you, Keyn ayin Horah?"

Goldberg smiled. "Eighty three."

In what has become a tradition of the Jewish vernacular, perhaps originating with the above verses, no potential calamity is ever mentioned without mentioning or interjecting a preventative utterance of caution.

"I could have slipped and chas v'shalom (mercy and peace) hurt my leg."

"They say he is, rachmana nitzlan, (Heaven save us) not well."

"My grandfather tzo langa yohrin (to longevity) is eighty-three years old," of course, suffixed with the ubiquitous "keyn ayin horah!"

An ever present cognizance of Hashem's hand in our lives has become integrated into traditional Jewish speech patterns. Thank G-d, please G-d, and G-d willing pepper the vernacular of every Jew who understands that all his careful plans can change in the millisecond of a heavenly whim. And so, beginning with Biblical times, there are no reference to occurrences of daily life found in a vacuum. They are always surrounded with our sincere wishes for Hashem's perpetual protection and continuous blessing.

Good Shabbos

Maran Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook ztz"l – 90 Years Since His Passing

Rabbi Eliezer elamed

Revivim

In recent generations, human consciousness has developed and expanded greatly * Alongside scientific developments, the movement of Enlightenment and Haskalah crystallized in Western Europe * Many religious people saw in the arrogance of the Enlightenment and Haskalah movement to change the world, a defiance toward Heaven * Rabbi Kook explained in the essay 'Ha'Dor' ('The Generation') that those who abandon Torah in the new generation believe in the values of truth and goodness * Therefore, one must turn to the people of the new generation with appreciation for their aspirations and desires * Specifically through Torah guidance, it is possible to strengthen all the new ideas, refine them from impurities, and realize them in the most correct and positive way * In order to return Israel and the world in

repentance, Torah study in these generations must be with awareness of the general vision of repairing the world that the Torah contains

In this column I will attempt to point out the enormous contribution of Maran Rabbi Kook in building emunah (faith) and Torah in the modern era, in which darkness and light are intermingled – the most terrible horrors of exile of the 'Footsteps of Mashiach' and the 'Ingathering of Exiles', and the establishment of the State of Israel and the 'Atchalta de'Geulah' (the beginning of Redemption).

The Modern Era

In recent generations, through the development of natural sciences, man, society and culture – human consciousness has developed and expanded greatly. Many natural phenomena that were not understood by man, were researched and became understood and explained. Thanks to scientific development, agriculture developed and food became abundantly available, production of clothing, furniture and houses improved considerably, and vaccines and medicines were found for diseases that were previously incurable. Thanks to all these, today the average person can live long and in comfortable conditions, more than the greatest kings in the past.

The Movement of Enlightenment and Haskalah Alongside the scientific developments, the movement of Enlightenment and Haskalah crystallized in Western Europe, which strove for renewal (modernity) from the belief that man, through his thought and initiative, can change the world for the better, and solve all the problems facing him. By virtue of it, great ideas developed for repairing society, such as: liberalism, democracy, socialism and communism, national movements, and even fascism, and Nazism. These ideas brought about extreme changes in the orders of society, and led to the transition from monarchical rule to democratic rule, that grants rights to man and citizen to express his talents in all fields, or to dictatorial rule that was intended "to repair the world." These movements greatly accelerated the development of science and economics, and in turn, strengthened the social ideas and the need to implement them.

The success of the Enlightenment movement in strengthening initiative, creativity, research and development among the peoples of Europe and North America, created extreme wealth that was invested in accelerating the development of science and economics, and in producing sophisticated weapons. By use of them, they took control of countries and continents around the world, exploited the natural resources and the people who lived in them, and imparted to them their culture, each movement in its own way.

Man's Place and the Crisis of Faith

Many of the early thinkers and researchers of the Enlightenment and Haskalah movement, such as Descartes, Leibniz and Newton, believed in God. However, the accepted religious conception, which emphasized man's insignificance, opposed the Enlightenment movement, and in counter-reaction, caused many supporters of the Enlightenment movement to distance themselves from religion. Subsequently, the position crystallized in the Enlightenment movement that religion is harmful and blocks the development of humanity, and instead of obeying religious laws, one should invest effort in social changes, in scientific research and in technological development, in order to redeem man from poverty and deprivation, and allow him to express his full powers.

The Reaction of Religious People

On the other hand, many religious people saw in the arrogance of the Enlightenment and Haskalah movement to change the world a defiance toward Heaven, since in their opinion, man's role is to obey God, and pray to Him that He redeem man, and the world. Many warned that the audacity to undermine the orders of the world would cause disasters. Criticism of religious institutions would lead to heresy against God, and to an outbreak of evil impulses that cannot be controlled; rebellion against monarchy would dissolve society and cause bloodshed, and strengthening individual rights would dissolve the family, and threaten social cohesion. Therefore, man must place God at the center (theocentrism), diminish himself before God and the institutions that

represent His leadership, and not place himself at the center (anthropocentrism).

The Justice in the Claim of Religious People

There was justice in the criticism of religious people, since the Enlightenment movement gave birth to communism, fascism and Nazism, movements that advocated heresy against God and presumed “to repair the world,” but in practice, caused terrible injustices and the murder of hundreds of millions of people. The capitalist-liberal movement, which did not inscribe heresy against God on its banner, and did not cause terrible disasters, caused many troubles as well. For example: the enslavement of hundreds of millions of people to the control of the wealthy and corporations; the enslavement of many peoples to the control of Western peoples, while harming national and cultural identities, weakening the institution of the family, eroding man’s security, his values and his faith, and turning man into a lonely individual, facing life’s challenges.

The Changes Caused by the Enlightenment Movement

While striving for “liberty, equality and fraternity” the Enlightenment movement brought about extreme changes in human and social life. By virtue of it, kingdoms fell, and in their place, arose states that tried to realize the values of Enlightenment and Haskalah, with their positive and negative aspects. From the value of ‘liberty’ developed the liberal, democratic, capitalist and ‘post-modern’ movement, including the severe extremes in them. From the value of ‘equality’ developed the socialist movement, and from its extremism, the communist movement. From the value of ‘fraternity’ developed the aspiration to establish nation-states, and from its extremism, developed the fascist and Nazi movements.

In the Principled Argument the Enlightenment Movement was Correct Nevertheless, in the primary argument about man’s place, the Enlightenment movement was right. This is because the Torah is what taught that man was created in the image of God, and it is what placed man at the center by the very fact that all its commandments and instructions are directed toward him, and it taught that God placed upon man the responsibility to guard the world, to lead it with righteousness and justice, and to perfect it until its redemption. Therefore, the justified criticism of religious people was not able to stop the Enlightenment movement.

Analysis of the Character of the New Generation

Arising from this, Maran Rabbi Kook explained in the essay “Ha-Dor” (‘The Generation’), that those who abandon Torah in the modern era are completely different, for in all generations those who abandoned Torah were those who were drawn after their evil inclination, stole and robbed, betrayed and committed adultery. In contrast, those who abandon Torah of the new generation believe in the values of truth and goodness, and sometimes are even ready to dedicate their lives for their realization. They believe that man can develop and understand more, be more moral, more creative and happier. But according to what they were accustomed to hear, they grasped religion as one that deals with diminishing man and turning him into an obedient follower and not an initiator, and focuses on particular laws without setting a vision for repairing the world. Therefore, many of them abandoned religion and were drawn after ideas that captured their hearts, without it occurring to them that, specifically through Torah guidance, it would have been possible to strengthen all the new ideas, refine them from impurities, and realize them in the most correct and positive way.

Repentance

Therefore, Rabbi Kook wrote that the new generation will not be able to repent through threats of punishment in this world or the next world, and thereby suppress the new ideas that stir his thought and heart. This is because “even if he wanted to adopt a submissive, humble, or deferential posture” he would not be able to withstand it, because it is against his nature. “He will not be able to return out of fear,” meaning threats of punishment, “but he is very capable of returning from love” to the great vision. Therefore, one must turn to the people of the new generation with appreciation for their aspirations and desires. “To them, we must teach a living Torah, from the Source of Life, ways of ethics full of light

and joy, words of grace and good sense, refined and purified... from the treasury of life, for Torah of life.” “We will walk before them in a pillar of fire of Torah and knowledge of the holy ones mighty of heart” (Eder HaYakar p. 115).

The Key to Repair through Refining Faith

Maran Rabbi Kook explained (Orot, Zeronim, ‘Yisurim Mamrikim’) that all the confusions and complications in human life stem from lack of understanding in the concept of Elokut (Godliness). And this is the spiritual root of the prohibition “You shall have no other gods before Me.” When emunah (faith) is defined in a narrow way, it does not contain all the ideas that are revealed in the world, and a collision is created between general faith and various ideas, which have truth and goodness in them, and their root is in Elokut. This collision creates sufferings, tears, crises and wars within man’s soul and in all humanity, endlessly.

Therefore, we must accustom ourselves to refine faith in the One God, who has no definition or boundary, and His closest definition is shleimut ain sof (infinite perfection), because no faith in a finite and defined idea will express complete faith. Therefore, it is also necessary that there will always be additional renewals of movements that reveal faith endlessly. Likewise, it is necessary that faith come to expression in the infinite moral aspiration that is in man (essay, “Daat Elokim”).

Seeing the Light and Goodness in Different Movements “From this pure faith we can see the light of God that is revealed in all the new movements, and those destined to be founded, out of a quest for truth and goodness, for ‘in everything there is a spark of light, the inner divine spark shines in each of the different beliefs.’” Therefore, instead of opposing them, we will increase Israel’s unique light, with all its depth and breadth, and from this, we will see how every good spark in every movement stems from its source. Then, from all the sparks, light and life will be enhanced to all of Israel, and hearts thirsty for light will no longer err in foreign fields, but will look and see that, specifically from connection to the faith of Israel, they will merit to realize all their aspirations (Orot, Zeronim, ‘Le’Milchemet Ha’Dayot ve’Ha’Emunot’ p. 131).

The Role of Torah Scholars

In order to return Israel, and the world, in repentance, Torah study in these generations must be with awareness of the general vision of Tikun Ha’Olam (repairing the world) that the Torah contains, and from deep understanding that this great vision is revealed through all the generalities and particulars of the Torah (Orot Ha’Teshuva 4:10). This is because “within all the particulars together, is found the divine soul of perfecting the world, in life, in matter, and spirit, in society and the individual, and consequently, the light penetrates and descends also in each and every particular” (Orot Ha’Tora 2:2). Through this, not only will all the achievements of natural and spiritual sciences not interfere with the revelation of faith and be an obstacle to it, but they will strengthen and elevate the revelation of faith. From studying the generalities and particulars of Torah as one, it will also be clarified that all the moral ideas that the new generation aspires to, come to full and corrected expression through Torah guidance.

In order for Torah scholars be able to reveal the light contained in the Torah, they must stop fearing great and new ideas. And as Maran Rabbi Kook wrote (Ikvei Ha’Tzon, ‘Ha’Pachad’), that in order to absorb the great light that begins to shine in the ‘End of Days’, in the ‘Footsteps of Mashiach’, one must remove the fear and weakness that especially righteous and pious people who are fearful to guard the precious tradition, suffer from. “Then courage will be established in the setting of holiness, and thought will flourish” (more on this in “Peninei Halakha: Emunah Ve’Mitzvoteyha” 30:1-7).

Only When Jews Do

by Jonathan Rosenblum
Mishpacha Magazine

Only wars involving Israel command worldwide attention

We have already devoted one lengthy column to Omer Bartov's July 15 piece in the New York Times, "I'm a Genocide Scholar. I Know It When

I See It" ("Genocide, Not," Issue 1071). And we do so again not because Bartov's original essay was so powerful, but because it was sure to attract substantial attention, due to being prominently featured in the Times and because of Bartov's Israeli background.

Indeed, the essay is remarkable primarily for how flimsy it is. Bartov's summary reliance on the agreement of other "genocide scholars" with his conclusion constitutes the weakest form of argument — that from authority. And that weakness is compounded when the experts cited include such figures as the UN's Special Rapporteur on Palestine, Francesca Albanese, and South Africa's complaint to the International Criminal Court.

Bartov's more-than-3,000-word essay is part of an ongoing onslaught on Israel in the Times. (Mitchell Bard has suggested the paper should consider adopting the crusaders' Jerusalem cross as its new logo.) Along with Bartov's piece, the Times published another long article arguing that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu is deliberately prolonging the war in Gaza to preserve his coalition.

That article did not even attempt to demonstrate that Israel's goal of removing Hamas from Gaza is either illegitimate or could have been achieved sooner. Further, it did not address Israel's significant achievements over the past year and a half: the dramatic degradation of the Hezbollah threat, and the major setback dealt to Iran's nuclear ambitions, chief among them.

The Times recently broadcast around the world a front-page photo of an emaciated infant child in Gaza, as emblematic of the widespread starvation there. And even when it was established that the infant in question suffered from cerebral palsy, and that the photo in question was cropped from a larger one including the infant's healthy, well-fed older brother, the Times could not muster an apology, only "added context" to the photo and an exculpatory statement that there are, in any event, other starving children in Gaza.

JEFFREY HERF, a professor of modern European studies who has written extensively on the Holocaust, took Bartov to task for having lent academic legitimacy to the old Soviet propaganda tool of labeling Israel's defensive wars as genocidal. Bartov, he charged, had remarkably written about the Gaza war as if there were only one party. Omitted was any context for Israel's actions, including Hamas's explicitly genocidal goal of reclaiming the entirety of Israel and killing its entire Jewish population, and its actions on October 7 in pursuit of the goal. Nor did Bartov mention that Hamas is the only party that benefits from civilian casualties in Gaza, and that it has deliberately pursued a strategy to maximize those casualties, which it could end by surrendering and going into exile, as Arafat and the PLO did from Lebanon in 1982.

Both Herf and Major John Spencer stressed how weak is Bartov's effort to prove any genocidal intent on Israel's part — a couple of statements by right-wing politicians, who do not command any troops or issue battlefield orders, and Netanyahu's reference to Hamas (not the Palestinians) as "Amalek." Bartov, Spencer writes, has "not even tried" to show genocidal intent on the part of Israel.

In a play on Bartov's title, he entitled his response to Bartov, "I'm a War Scholar. There Is No Genocide in Gaza." Spencer heads the Modern War Institute at West Point. He has trained military units in urban warfare for decades and taught military strategy and the laws of warfare for years. Most relevant, he has embedded with IDF forces in Gaza four times since October 7.

He writes: "I have reviewed [IDF] orders, watched their targeting process, and seen soldiers take real risks to avoid harming civilians.... Israel has taken extraordinary steps to limit civilian harm. It warns before attacks. It opens safe corridors and pauses operations so civilians can leave combat areas.... I have seen missions delayed or canceled because of children nearby. I have seen Israeli troops come under fire and still be ordered not to shoot back because civilians might be harmed....

"Israel has delivered more humanitarian aid to Gaza than any military in history has provided to an enemy population in wartime," including millions of vaccine doses, fuel for hospitals and infrastructure, and it has facilitated the delivery of 1.8 million tons of aid, mostly food. It has

increased the flow of clean water, and even allowed 36,000 Gazans to seek medical treatment abroad.

The laws of war, Spencer points out, do not prohibit war. Rather they require distinguishing between combatants and noncombatants, a distinction Hamas does everything possible to obscure; requires commanders to take precautions to protect civilian life; and to make sure that the force employed is proportional to the objective.

"I have watched the IDF do exactly that. I have seen restraint, humanitarian aid, and deliberate compliance with legal standards, often at tactical cost," he concludes.

WHILE MUCH of the critique of Bartov's article has rightly centered on his accusation of Israeli genocide, there is another aspect of his essay that I wish to address: his indulgence in what Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin long ago labeled the "de-Judaization of the Holocaust."

He notes that "scholars of genocide" have been nearly unanimous in their condemnation of Israel's actions in Gaza, whereas those whose focus is on the Holocaust have been far more hesitant, out of a concern that "genocide" not become a synonym for "a lot of people were killed." As a consequence, Bartov charges, Holocaust scholars risk "retreat[ing] into some ethnic ghetto in which the study of the Holocaust began its life at the end of World War II — as a marginal preoccupation by the remnants of a marginalized people." He prefers to see study of the Holocaust integrated into the broader category of genocide studies with its concern with universal justice and the promotion of "tolerance, diversity, anti-racism, and support for migrants and refugees."

Bartov accuses Israel of using the Holocaust to cover the crimes of the IDF and, in the same vein as Thomas Friedman, who once described Israel as "Yad Vashem with an army," views Jews, in general, as being obsessed with the Holocaust. The claim that Israel faces a "Nazi-like enemy" in Hamas is nothing more than "propaganda," Bartov asserts.

Presumably, Bartov is aware of the close collaboration with Hitler by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini. The latter was one of the spiritual fathers of the Muslim Brotherhood, of which Hamas is an offshoot. And while Hamas may lack the Nazis' capacity for the efficient extermination of tens of thousands of Jews in a day, does anyone doubt that it would gladly do so if it could? The euphoric celebration of October 7 reflects a hatred of Jews equal to that of the Nazis.

Israel's determination to uproot and destroy Hamas, whose leaders repeatedly declare its intention to repeat the massacres of October 7, is prudential, not obsessional. Bartov says that Hamas had not constituted an effective fighting force for nearly a year. So what? Does he deny that if Hamas remains in place, it will reconstitute itself, build new tunnels, and do everything possible to fulfill those promises?

Similarly prudential is Israel's insistence on taking seriously repeated Iranian threats to wipe it out, especially when Iran was poised on the knife's edge of obtaining nuclear weapons. One lesson of Jewish history is: When your enemies proclaim the desire to kill you, believe them.

IN ANY EVENT, the de-Judaization of the Holocaust and its reduction to just another subcategory of genocide has proven a colossal failure. Witness the world's almost complete silence in the face of real genocides — the slaughter of 800,000 Tutsis by machete-wielding Hutus over a month in Rwanda in 1994; or the murder of 200,000 to 400,000 black Muslim farmers in Sudan's Darfur province by their Arab co-religionists, the Janjaweed, between 2002 and 2004.

In our own time, repeated Russian war crimes in the form of drone and missile attacks on purely civilian targets, such as hospitals, in Ukraine, and China's concentration camp-like enclosures in which a million Muslim Uyghurs are held have not engendered demonstrations anywhere in the world.

The leveling of multiple cities in Iraq in the battle against ISIS; the hundreds of thousands killed in wars in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan have never been the subject of campus protests of any kind, even though the casualties dwarf those in Gaza.

Ironically, then, even when no special status is granted to the Holocaust, it all comes back to the Jews. Only wars involving Israel command worldwide attention; only Israel's attempts to defend its citizens in the wake of a massacre by an enemy that has declared its intent to repeat

such massacres again and again attract mass demonstrations against Israel and Jews in cities around the world and provoke attacks on Jews and Jewish businesses.

TOWARD THE END of his essay, Bartov frets that Israel will lose its moral claim to existence based on the Holocaust. But it is not the Holocaust that gives legitimacy to the world's only majority Jewish state, though the Holocaust might be adduced as an argument for the existence of at least one such state in which Jews can find a safe haven.

Even without reliance on the Hashem's Biblical promise of the Land, the Jews are the oldest indigenous people in the Land, able to trace their continuous existence in the Land back over 3,400 years. When Jews first started to return to the Land in significant numbers, they did not come back as foreign conquerors but as people who had prayed for that return over nearly two millennia of exile.

And far from conquering the Land as colonizers, they purchased it from the local landowners — a frequently overlooked fact — paying \$1,000 per acre for malarial, nonarable land, at a time when prime farmland in Iowa sold for less. They made that land bloom, and, as a consequence, began to attract Arabs from southern Syria as well to a place that had previously been sparsely populated.

Bartov warns that Israeli Jews must undergo a paradigm shift and recognize that there is no solution to this conflict other than an agreement to share the Land in some form. But when have the Jews ever refused to divide the Land? In 1948, Jews accepted the UN partition plan; the Arabs rejected it and embarked on a war to drive the Jews from the Land in its entirety.

Even after the 1949 armistice agreement, the Arab states refused to negotiate over refugees or anything else, for doing so would constitute recognition of Israel's existence. Even if every refugee were returned to his former home, it would mean little unless they returned as conquerors, "without the Israeli flag flying on a single square meter of our country," said one prominent Arab thinker.

At the Camp David conference in 2000, President Clinton's CIA director, George Tenet, could not believe the generosity of Prime Minister Ehud Barak's offer. Yet Yasser Arafat left the conference without putting forth a single proposal or counteroffer. Bill Clinton summed up the failure of Camp David during the last presidential election cycle: "The Palestinians don't want a state; they want to kill Israelis and make Israel uninhabitable."

Israel is entitled to make sure they do not succeed.

Some Shatnez Basics

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1:

What is the difference between "hair" and "wool"?

Question #2:

Can mohair and cashmere be shatnez problems?

Question #3:

"What does a shatnez tester look for?"

Foreword

"The importer told me that the garment was made from a blend of hemp and wool, which should involve no shatnez concern. As there was no authorized shatnez tester in town, I did what I thought was the next-best thing — I brought the garment to a local observant tailor, to have him check it. He carefully checked the threads and guaranteed me that the garment contained no linen. Only after I wore the garment many times did I meet a great Torah scholar and mention this incident in passing. The talmid chacham told me that I should not be so certain, and he offered to compare the material in my garment to linen threads he had available. And indeed, it was clear that he was correct. The threads in my garment were made from wool and linen, not hemp, and I had been violating a Torah prohibition the entire time!"

Does this story sound contemporary and familiar? As a matter of fact, this story happened in 1650 in the city of Vilna -- twenty years before the Dutchman van Leeuwenhoek invented (or at least began using) the microscope. In those days, the only "scientific" means of checking whether a material was linen or hemp was to take a sample and see if a

candle would get it to burn, since hemp is more flammable than linen (Rama, Yoreh Deah 302:2). Others opposed the reliability of this test (Piskei Teshuvah 302:1, quoting Shu"t Penei Yehoshua).

Thus, we see that shatnez problems are not exclusively a result of modern manufacture. However, in modern clothing one may find shatnez in everything from sweaters and skirts to scarves; and from bedding and button loops to baseball gloves.

Before delving into contemporary questions, we must first understand some of the laws taught in this week's parsha. The prohibition of shatnez exists only if the garment is made from a blend of sheep's wool and linen, but wool of other species does not make shatnez. Thus, wool made of camel's, rabbit's or goat's hair mixed with linen is not shatnez (Mishnah, Kilayim 9:1; see Rambam, Hilchos Kilayim 10:2). ("Wool" is simply hair that is soft and can be used as cloth.) The Mishnah (Kilayim 9:2) records that certain combinations, such as silk and wool, were prohibited because of mar'is ayin, since this raises suspicion or may be misinterpreted that someone is wearing shatnez. However, the Rishonim already conclude that this concern exists only when the material that may be confused with wool or linen is not commonly obtainable, but that no prohibition of mar'is ayin exists once people become familiar with its availability (Rosh, Hilchos Kilayim).

Most people are surprised to discover that a garment made of a blend of linen and either mohair or cashmere is not shatnez! Why is this? Because neither mohair nor cashmere are made from sheep's wool, but from the hair of goats! Mohair is processed from the hair of an Angora goat. Although goats of this variety are now raised around the world, originally they were developed in Turkey. (The current capital of Turkey, Ankara, used to be called Angora.)

Cashmere is the wool of the Kashmir goat, which was originally native to central Asia, as its name indicates. Thus, if no sheep's wool thread was mixed into the mohair or the cashmere, the existence of linen in the garment will not make it shatnez.

The Majority Rules

By the way, a garment could contain both linen and sheep's wool and still not be shatnez! How could this be?

When a thread is spun from a mix of fibers, the halachic status of the thread is determined by what composes most of the thread's fiber content and ignores the existence of other fibers inside the thread (Mishnah Kilayim 9:1). The minority of fiber is halachically bateil, or nullified, to the majority fiber content in the thread. Thus, threads spun from a mix of mostly cotton fiber with some linen fiber are considered cotton and can be used lechatchilah in a woolen garment. Similarly, a garment consisting of threads made of a blend of mostly mohair, but including some sheep's wool fiber, that is woven or sewn with linen threads is not shatnez and may be worn.

Here is a very practical example of this case — in a dress that was tested recently in a shatnez laboratory:

A knit dress whose content label listed 70% wool and 30% silk, which should not be a shatnez problem, was brought to a shatnez checking service. The tester noticed that the front panel of the dress was made of thread that was a blend of linen and cotton fibers. (Note that the label did not acknowledge that there was either linen or cotton in the garment.) If the cotton fiber was the majority, there would be no halachic problem with this garment, since this would be considered a cotton thread. However, if the majority component of the threads was linen, the garment would be shatnez.

Here is another case where the halacha is more complicated:

The label of a sweater brought to a shatnez checking service accurately described its content as: 28% viscose, 20% nylon, 15% lamb's wool, 15% cotton, 10% polyester, 6% metallic fiber, 3% cashmere and 3% angora. A decorative cloth ornament, whose content was not included on the label, was sewn onto the sweater. The shatnez checker tested the ornament and discovered that it was made of a blend of linen and cotton fiber, where linen was the majority. Thus, the decorative fabric was halachically considered linen. Since the material of the main sweater included wool, there might be a shatnez problem. However, it is possible that there is no shatnez problem here because the wool in the sweater

fabric was a minority component. Thus, although there was both linen thread and wool fiber in the garment, it would not be shatnez.

Why did I say only that "there might be a shatnez problem?"

The authorities dispute whether shatnez exists when there is noticeable wool fiber in a thread that is made mostly from a different fiber. The Rosh (Shu"t 2:5), Mishnah Rishonah and Tiferes Yisrael (both to Kilayim 9:1) consider this shatnez, since the wool is noticeable; whereas the Chazon Ish (Yoreh Deah 181:9) rules that this is not shatnez, contending that the definition of a thread is its majority component, and that the minority wool component of the thread is bateil. In the case at hand, the wool may be noticeable in the thread, since there is a sizable amount of lamb's wool in a blend that contains many clearly non-wool type fibers. Thus, it may indeed be that according to the Rosh the wool is not bateil in this case, and this sweater is therefore shatnez. On the other hand, according to the Chazon Ish, since most of the fiber in the thread is not wool, the wool component of the thread is bateil, and the sweater is not shatnez.

Hanging by a Thread

Linen or wool fiber is bateil only as fiber. However, a thread of linen that is woven or otherwise attached into a woolen garment renders the garment shatnez, and there is no bitul (Rosh, Hilchos Kil'ei Begadim #5 quoting Tosefta; Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 299:1). Even a single linen thread in a large woolen garment renders the entire garment shatnez. In addition, if a spun linen thread is mixed into a larger thread of non-linen, the linen thread is not bateil and there is a shatnez problem min haTorah, even if there is only one linen thread in a large garment.

This distinction is extremely important, as we see from the following case:

A 100% pure wool sweater contained a long green thread knotted into its seam. The green thread consisted of a cotton braid, which was not mentioned on the label, but this does not present a problem. However, the core of the cotton braid contained a linen thread. Thus, the 100% pure wool sweater contained a linen thread. (We will soon see that, according to many authorities, this particular sweater was not shatnez for a different reason.)

What if they do not touch?

If a garment contains wool thread on one side and linen in a different place -- so that the wool and linen do not touch, is the garment shatnez?

This issue is disputed by the Rishonim. The Rash (Kilayim 9:1, 9) one of the early Baalei Tosafos (this is Rabbeinu Shimshon, author of the Tosafos commentary to Zera'im, Taharos, Pesachim and Kesubos, and should not be confused with the more frequently quoted Rosh, Rabbeinu Asher, who also authored commentaries on the Mishnah, Gemara and Halacha, and lived somewhat later than the Rash), rules that shatnez requires that the linen and the wool actually touch, but that one is permitted to wear a garment containing wool and linen threads that are on different parts of the garment. According to the Rash, the prohibition of shatnez is that there is a "combination" of wool and linen, but this is avoided when the wool and linen are separated by other materials.

Based on this Rash, a common custom was to attach a linen atarah to a wool talis by having cotton cloth act as the "mechitzah" between the wool and the linen.

However, the Rambam rules that wool and linen threads on different parts of a garment constitute shatnez min haTorah. In his opinion, the Torah prohibited a garment containing both wool and linen, even if the linen and wool themselves do not touch. Thus, according to the Rambam, the separating cotton does not change the garment from being shatnez, and wearing the above-mentioned talis is a mitzvah haba'ah be'veirah.

Similarly, whether the wool sweater with the cotton green thread containing a core that is a linen thread is shatnez or not is dependent on this dispute between the Rash and the Rambam, since the linen thread does not touch the wool but is surrounded by cotton. According to the Rambam, wearing this sweater involves a Torah prohibition of shatnez, whereas according to the Rash, it is permitted!

How do we rule?

The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 299:2) rules like the Rambam that a garment is shatnez even if the wool and the linen threads are separated by other materials. Thus, Sefardim, who follow the Shulchan Aruch's rulings, are certainly prohibited from wearing this sweater. Among Ashkenazi authorities, the Rosh, the Rema (Yoreh Deah 299:2), the Magen Avraham (9:8) and the Elyah Rabbah (Orach Chayim 9:6) rule like the Rash, whereas the Mishkenos Yaakov (Yoreh Deah Shu"t #70) Shenos Eliyahu (9:1)=[1], and Artzos Hachayim rule like the Rambam. I note that Rav Chayim Kanievski notes that the prevalent practice is to rule like the lenient opinion (Derech Emunah, Hilchos Kilayim, Hilchos Kilayim 10:41).

What have we learned?

1. We have learned that shatnez exists only when there is sheep's wool, but not when the wool is from other species, and that therefore pure cashmere or mohair blended with linen is not a shatnez concern.

2. We have also learned that some testing for shatnez existed even before the microscope, but there was halachic controversy concerning whether this testing was reliable.

3. In addition, we have learned that threads spun from a mix of cotton and linen fibers are considered cotton when it is the majority fiber, and when blended in a woolen garment are not shatnez. However, threads of linen woven into a garment that is a cotton/wool blend is shatnez, even when the blend is mostly cotton thread.

4. We have also discussed an early halachic controversy whether shatnez is prohibited when there are linen and wool threads in the same garment, but they do not touch one another.

One Without the Other is Insufficient

by Jonathan Rosenblum

Mishpacha Magazine

All the skill and training and bravery in the world without the requisite Divine assistance will prove inadequate

Elul is a month not only of preparation for new beginnings, but also an occasion for taking stock of the year that is ending — acharis hashanah.

Over the past 12 months, Israel's military and intelligence achievements have stunned the world. First came the simultaneous explosion of 3,000 beepers in the hands of Hezbollah fighters and the subsequent explosion of the group's walkie-talkies the next day. As far as I know, no one has fully explained how Israeli operatives managed to convince Hezbollah to purchase thousands of ticking time bombs. But doing so forced Hezbollah head Hassan Nasrallah to call Hezbollah's senior leadership to an in-person meeting, at which nearly all of them, including Nasrallah, were eliminated by Israeli bombs.

Similarly, at the start of the "12-day war" with Iran, Israeli intelligence succeeded in luring all of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) senior air force commanders to a meeting in a reinforced location, which was soon thereafter reduced to rubble, leaving no one to order reprisal ballistic missile attacks against Israel — of which Iran had promised 1,000 — that night.

The same night, the Israeli Air Force, operating with pinpoint intelligence, succeeded in killing most of Iran's senior nuclear scientists in their beds, while leaving their apartment buildings, and in some cases even the rest of their apartments, intact. Over a period of at least three years, the Mossad, operating within Iran, managed to create an entire drone factory. On the night of the initial Israeli bombings, those drones were used to take out missile launchers and anti-aircraft batteries. These achievements and many others of the IDF will be studied in military academies for decades to come.

MY CONCERN, however, is not with recounting the skill of the IDF and intelligence services, but rather in how we should discuss those awe-inspiring achievements without falling into the trap of a kochi v'otzem yadi ("my might and the strength of my hand [did all this]") mindset that erases Hashem from the picture, on the one hand, and that of treating dismissively the bravery and skill of Israel's intelligence operatives, on the other hand. (The latter danger exists with respect to the bravery and sacrifice of all IDF combat soldiers defending our borders.)

The issue is of particular concern for those, like myself, who consume vast amounts of news and analysis from nonreligious sources, and then attempt to distill that information for a wide audience. Should I add the words b'siyata d'Shmaya to every description of favorable results? Must every column conclude by reminding readers, "We have no one upon whom to rely other than our Heavenly Father," as was standard in another religious weekly for which I once wrote?

How we think about current events and how we discuss them are of crucial importance, as they shape mindsets. For instance, when Boaz first appears in Megillas Rus, he greets those harvesting his fields, "May Hashem be with you," and they reply, "May Hashem bless you" (Rus 2:4). The Yerushalmi (Shekalim 5:1) describes these words as an innovation of Boaz and his colleagues on the Sanhedrin, and lists this rabbinic decree as one of three to receive explicit affirmation from the Heavenly Court.

Rav Yosef Lipowitz, in his commentary Nachalas Yosef on Megillas Rus, explains that the use of Hashem's Name in everyday speech and the most mundane conversations elevates man by expressing Hashem's desire to dwell among us. The rabbinic ordinance was designed to instill the awareness that Hashem interacts moment by moment with His creations and that we live in His Presence.

"By teaching people to greet their fellow man with Hashem's Name, they restored human dignity and brought out the Divine image in them," writes Rav Lipowitz.

OBVIOUSLY, NO COLUMN will resolve all questions touching on the relationship of hishtadlus and bitachon that have occupied the greatest Jewish minds for millennia, and certainly not one authored by me. At most, I hope to provide food for further thought.

The haftarah read the week of the outbreak of "12-day war" says, " 'Not through military might and not through strength, but through My spirit,' said Hashem, Master of Legions." Rashi understands "My spirit" to mean, "I will place my spirit upon Darius and he will grant you permission to rebuild the Temple and he will do whatever is necessary to that end and cover all the expenses from his own treasury...."

In other words, one of the ways that Hashem operates in history is by placing ideas in a person's head. Sometimes those are good ideas; sometimes disastrous for the one making the decision. Robert Wistrich, the great modern historian of anti-Semitism, once described to me how when the Nazis took the final decision to murder the entirety of European Jewry at Wannsee, Hitler, whose strategic cunning had until then been almost perfect, embarked on the disastrous Operation Barbarossa and invaded Russia, where the German forces became bogged down in bitter winter fighting and ended up suffering calamitous losses, from which they never recovered.

Hashem may plant ideas in a person's mind for good or bad. But the receptacle is not irrelevant. Hitler's evil intent determined the idea of invading Russia.

As a young boy, I once saw a TV interview with Louis Nizer, a famous trial lawyer and author of *My Life in Court*. The interviewer asked whether he had ever experienced a sudden flash of insight in preparation for a trial. He responded, "Many times. But never on the golf course. Only when I'm at work in my study."

The quality and capacity of the vessel also determines the nature of the Divine assistance received. As the Rambam writes in a different context, a person will experience Hashgachah, Divine providence, to the degree that he has perfected his knowledge of G-d (Moreh Nevuchim III:51).

Nowhere is the connection between the recipient's preparation and effort and the degree of insight granted him clearer than in Torah learning. Those deeply involved in Torah learning often have the feeling of an insight entering their mind from a different realm. But again, that does not happen to one who has not learned a great deal or who is not immersed in his learning. Preparation, native ability, and effort all play a role, though it is difficult to say in what percentage in any particular case.

The Gemara in Niddah(70b) advises one who wants to gain wisdom to maximize his time in sitting, i.e., learning Torah, and minimize the time spent in business activities. But, the Gemara notes, many followed that

path and did not rise to the heights of wisdom. In that case, the Gemara continues, they should seek mercy from the One Who is the repository of all wisdom. From this, the Gemara concludes, we learn that one without the other is not sufficient.

The Gemara then applies the same principles to accruing wealth. If one wants to become wealthy, it advises, he should be honest in all his business dealings. And if that does not work, let him seek mercy from the One Who possesses all wealth. By implication, in that case, too, one without the other is insufficient.

Thus, in both the spiritual realm of Torah learning and the more natural realm of wealth acquisition, there are certain activities that make success more likely. But, in the end, one needs siyata d'Shmaya, Heavenly assistance, as well.

If a loved one is undergoing a dangerous operation, we pray that the surgeon prove to be a good shaliach. But we do not just randomly pick the name out of the phone book, on the grounds that he is nothing more than a Divine messenger. We will call Rabbi Firer or one of the many other experts in medical care in our community, and inquire how many times a particular surgeon has performed the operation in question and what has been his rate of success. In short, we assume that his quality as an instrument of Hashem will be dependent on his training and preparation for the operation and the degree of his skill.

Similarly, a commander planning a military operation requiring great bravery, perfect timing, and meticulous planning will seek out a team of elite forces possessing those qualities in spades. Those qualities are not incidental to the requisite siyata d'Shmaya; indeed they may well be the precondition for it.

But at the same time, only a fool would fail to acknowledge the chance of failure, even with a superior squad and seek mercy from the One Who holds the reins of success or failure in His hands.

Should we ever fall into the trap of attributing the successes of Israel's soldiers or our intelligence services solely to their superior talents and training, let us contemplate that the same intelligence services that racked up amazing success after amazing success over the past year also failed to pick up and prepare for Hamas's assault on October 7. And the IDF that has performed at such a high level in Gaza and Lebanon is the same IDF that inexplicably took over six hours to arrive in numbers on the Gaza border to turn back Hamas's assault.

All the skill and training and bravery in the world without the requisite Divine assistance will prove inadequate.

Coldplay, the US Open & Being Caught on Camera: Spiritual Lessons of a Surveillance World

By Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

Each year, our shul coordinates a men's Mevakshim trip to New York to meet diverse Roshei Yeshiva, Rabbanim, and community leaders—to listen, learn, challenge, and grow. Before each interaction, I ask for permission to record the conversation. Some say absolutely, others are more hesitant, and many say it's okay but only for the group and not for public distribution.

When we sat down at ArtScroll headquarters with my friend, Rabbi Gedaliah Zlotowitz, I asked for permission to record. He not only allowed it, but he also used the question as an opportunity to tell a story he heard from his father and to transmit an important message.

Each summer, the Zlotowitz family would go on a trip with the Feinsteins. One summer, they went to Niagara Falls. As is customary and necessary, on the Maid of the Mist boat tour, the Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Dovid zt"l, was wearing a poncho and hood to stay dry. Given his attire, Rav Meir Zlotowitz z"l asked the Rosh Yeshiva if it was okay to take a picture together.

The Rosh Yeshiva said it was fine and went on to explain: "I don't do anything in my life that, if someone took a picture, I would be embarrassed. If you wouldn't want a picture taken of it, don't do it." He added, "And I don't say anything that would get me in trouble if it got out. If you wouldn't want it to get out, don't say it."

Long before the advent and ubiquity of technology, our rabbis cautioned:

הַסֵּתֶמֶל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְּבָרִים וְאִי אֶתָּה בָּא לִיְדֵי עֲבֵרָה, דַּע מָה לִּמְעַלָּה מִמֶּךָ, עֵינֵי רוֹאֶה וְאָזְנוֹ שׁוֹמֵעַת, וְכָל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ בְּסִפְרָא נִקְטָבִין

Be mindful of three things and you will not come to sin: Know what there is above you—an eye that sees, an ear that hears, and all your deeds are recorded.

For all of history, our ancestors had to imagine what it meant for everything you say and do to be recorded. Our generation needs no imagination. We live in a time in which, whether we give permission or not, we are being recorded. In the aisles of the supermarket, at the airport, everywhere we go—even just stepping outside—cameras are tracking our every move. Our emails, texts, and phone calls are not truly private or confidential. Our online activity and browsing are never fully anonymous or incognito.

If the Rosh Yeshiva's message was true before this reality, it is all the more true now. If you wouldn't want a picture taken of what you are doing, don't do it. If you wouldn't want what you are saying to be made public, don't say it.

Last week at the US Open in New York, after a five-set thriller, Polish tennis pro Kamil Majchrzak had the best victory of his life. Before leaving the court, he walked toward the stands to interact with fans. Noticing a boy waving, he took off his hat, signed it, and went to give it to him. But before the boy could take it, a man grabbed the hat, stuffed it into his wife's bag, and walked away—leaving the boy heartbroken.

The internet went to work identifying the man as a Polish tycoon and successful CEO, then proceeded to publicly shame him for his deplorable behavior. Despite going viral, rather than apologizing, he doubled down and issued a statement: "Yes, I took it. Yes, I did it quickly. But as I've always said, life is first come, first served... If you were faster, you would have it... I remind you that insulting a public figure is subject to legal liability. All offensive comments, slander, and insinuations will be analyzed for the possibility of taking the matter to court."

In July, at a Coldplay concert, the CEO and Head of HR of a technology company learned the lesson of "an eye sees, an ear hears, and all our actions are recorded" the hard way. Their relationship, caught on camera, went viral and cost them their jobs—and his marriage.

These very public stories, among others, should not only shock or amuse us. The awareness that what we do is seen and recorded—down here and Above—should also sober us.

But, the knowledge that what we do matters doesn't only have to scare us; it can and should also motivate and inspire us.

In 2007, an employee of a New Jersey Dunkin' Donuts named Dustin Hoffmann (not the actor) made news when the store was nearly robbed by a serial thief who jumped on the counter, grabbing cash from the register. The twenty-something Hoffmann fought back. Grabbing the man's arm with one hand and a large coffee mug with the other, he repeatedly smashed the crook's head with the mug and successfully thwarted the crime.

When later asked about the incident, Hoffmann said that what galvanized him into action was YouTube: "What was going through my mind at that point," he said, "was that the security tape is either going to show me run away and hide in the office, or whack this guy in the head. So I just grabbed the cup and clocked the guy pretty hard!" He then added, "There are only a few videos like that on YouTube now, so mine's going to be the best. That'll teach this guy!"

The Midrash on Ruth teaches:

The Torah teaches us Derech Eretz—that when a person does a mitzvah, he should do it with a happy heart. For if Reuven had known that God would write about him, "And Reuven heard and saved him (Yosef) from their hands," he would have brought Yosef back to his father on his shoulders. If Aharon had known that God would write about him, "Behold, he will come out towards you and be happy in his heart," he would have come out with drums and musical instruments to greet Moshe. If Boaz had known that God would write about him, "And he picked for her roasted corn," he would have served her fatted calves.

Rav Yaakov Kaminitzky zt"l explains that the Midrash doesn't mean to imply that the prospect of going viral would have changed their

behavior. It wasn't ego that was the issue—it was the opposite: their extreme humility. These great men thought of themselves as small, insignificant personalities on the great world stage. They saw their behaviors as small acts of kindness, no big deal, not worth noticing, and certainly not worthy of recording. They failed to recognize the cosmic impact and lasting influence our small deeds can have, and how they are documented for posterity.

We correctly think of Elul, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur as days of judgment—a time to recognize that all of the mistakes we have made have been recorded and we are accountable for them. But it is also a time to remember and focus on the fact that our good decisions, kind deeds, and positive moments matter. We aren't small or insignificant.

An eye sees, an ear hears, and all of our actions are recorded. Don't do anything you wouldn't want recorded. But also know that our best moments and deeds are going viral right now in Heaven. Keep them coming.

Parashat Ki Tai'tzai

by Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Spiritual Lighthouses

Despite our differences here in the medina, there is at least one common issue that draws us together.

I can best explain this by an incident that occurred years ago, when my wife and I were (spectators) on the ski slope on Mount Hermon in the upper Golan 2000 meters above sea level (Yerushalayim is 800 meters above sea level). Suddenly a cloud descended over the entire area and visibility was only about one meter.

The locals informed us that the condition could continue for several hours, while we had to return to Tzfat shortly. The drive down the mountain at near zero visibility was challenging, where one mistake could be the last. Toda laShem we made it, obviously!

The connection: All of us in Eretz Yisrael, from newly arrived to Israeli old timers are surrounded by a clueless cloud as to what tomorrow could bring. The possibilities are endless, and it makes sense only to us who realize that the situation was brought about by HaShem in order that we become aware that our destiny is in His hands, exclusively.

But there are spiritual lighthouses to strengthen us along the way, and I submit one of them.

Shlomo HaMelech states in Mishlay (13,20):

הוֹלֵךְ אֶת חֲכָמִים יִחְכֵּם, וְרֵעָה כְּסִילִים יִרְעֶה

"He who walks with the wise will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm".

The message is clear – choose only good and clever people as friends.

Cicero the Roman is credited with a similar thought: "Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are". And its corollary "Tell me who your enemies are, and I will tell you who you are", which is the subject of this week's message.

The Gemara (Gitin 56b) recounts Rabban (a title reserved for the head of the Sanhedrin) Yochanan ben Zakkai's secretive exit from the besieged Yerushalayim in order to meet with the Roman general Vespasian.

When Rabban greeted him with the title "king", Vespasian showed his annoyance at this false title. Rabban explained that he was a king or will soon be one, and as they were speaking a messenger arrived from Rome informing Vespasian that Caesar had died and the Senate had appointed him as emperor. Vespasian was taken aback and asked Rabban how he knew of this development?

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai responded that it is obvious that you will conquer Yerushalayim; and our tradition, based on verses, teaches that only a great monarch (king) could have control over the holy city when the Jews are in galut.

This is a powerful statement about the unique status of Yerushalayim and Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael. It declares that even when we are punished for our sins, HaShem chooses only the elite of enemies (major leagues) to implement the divine decree.

Our Enemies Throughout History

Throughout the centuries of our galut, Yerushalayim was ruled over by powerful, influential kings.

After the fall of Rome came the Byzantine emperors: Constantine, Julian, Theodosius the second, Justinian and Heraclius.

Followed by Early Muslim Caliphates. In 637 CE, Jerusalem was conquered by the Rashidun Caliphate under Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab. Followed by a succession of Islamic dynasties, including the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, and the Fatimid dynasty.

Then came the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem (1099-1187 CE). Its first ruler was Godfrey of Bouillon, followed by His brother, Baldwin I. Crusader rule lasted for nearly a century until the city was recaptured by Saladin, founder of the Ayyubid dynasty and the first Sultan of both Egypt and Syria. He unified the Muslim territories of Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and parts of Arabia, which had been fragmented under different rulers.

Then the city was captured by the Ottoman Turks during the Ottoman-Mamluk War of 1516-1517. The Ottomans, led by Sultan Selim I, defeated the Mamluk Sultanate in a series of battles. After the decisive Ottoman victory at the Battle of Marj Dabiq in August 1516, the Ottoman forces advanced and conquered much of the Levant, including Jerusalem.

This marked the beginning of a 400 year long period of Ottoman rule over Jerusalem, until the British captured the city in 1917 during World War I, and were given the status of mandate government under King George V (reigned 1910), followed by Edward VIII (reigned 1936, but abdicated after less than a year) and the last mandate King George VI.

Conclusion:

It is beneath HaShem's and Am Yisrael's "dignity" to permit His chosen people to deal with the minor leagues of history. Remember: "Tell me who your enemies are, and I will tell you who you are",

Our first nemesis was the super-power — Egypt, which fell to the bottom of the sea while we were singing with Moshe in praise of HaShem.

We fought and destroyed the two kings Og and Sichon, who protected the eastern approaches to Eretz Yisrael and then we destroyed the 31 city-states in the land.

We fought Bavel, and we were conquered by them and by the Persians. We fought Greece and then Rome and one can now see them in our Yerushalayim museums.

We were degraded by the Byzantines and the Christian popes and European kings.

We suffered under the Turkish caliphate and after that we succeeded in expelling the brutish-British from our land.

We met them all and we wrote the history books.

Our Enemies Today

In our time the "influential" kings are: Salman of Saudi Arabia, Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar, Charles III of the United Kingdom, Emperor Naruhito of Japan, Abdullah II of Jordan and Mohammed VI of Morocco, so, I don't see any reason to worry.

In reality, we are forever governed by the King of Kings, before whom the mightiest emperors crawl on their knees.

PART TWO – THE MITZVA TO ERADICATE ALL SEMBLANCE OF AMALEK IN THE PARASHA

Halacha recognizes two types of war – milchemet mitzva (obligatory war) and milchemet reshut (optional war).

Milchemet mitzva is defined by Rambam as the war against the seven Canaanite nations led by Yehoshua bin Nun in Eretz Yisrael; war against any enemy which is threatening Jews, and war against Amalek.

Since milchemet mitzva does not need the consent of the Sanhedrin, the king or government may declare war and draft soldiers. Two options are offered to the enemy: either to leave the area completely or remain as our slaves; or to wage war, in which case we would destroy every man, woman and child of that nation.

Milchemet reshut is a war of expansion for territorial or economic interests and conditional on the consent of the Sanhedrin. If the enemy rejects our conditions for peace, we are required to destroy all the men, but not the women and children.

Our parasha begins with milchemet reshut and ends with milchemet mitzva against our sworn enemy Amalek.

51 "Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: 'You will cross the Jordan into Canaan, 52 And you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you and possess it. Destroy all their carved images and their cast idols and demolish all their high places. 53 Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess. 54 Distribute the land by lot, according to your families. To the larger give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller a smaller one. Whatever falls to them by lot will be theirs. Distribute it according to your ancestral tribes. 55 But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those who will remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you anguish, you in the land where you live. 56 And then I will do to you what I plan to do to them.'

We were commanded to liquidate the enemy as a preemptive act, for in accordance to their religious faith and culture they are devoid of any and all feelings of human compassion and will have no mercy on our women and children.

The great Yehoshua, who followed Moshe Rabbeinu as the religious and military head of the Jewish nation, gathered together the nation's rabbis and tribal heads to instruct them how to lead the nation after his demise. The Jewish people had liberated five tribal areas, leaving seven more which were to be conquered and settled after the demise of Yeshua bin Nun.

Yehoshua said:

After a time and the Lord had given Israel respite from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then a very old man, 2 summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials and said to them: "I am very old. 3 You have seen what the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the Lord your God who fought for you. 4 Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain—the nations I conquered—between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea in the west. 5 The Lord your God himself will push them out for your sake. He will drive them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the Lord your God promised you.

6 "Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. 7 Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. 8 But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now.

9 "The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. 10 One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised. 11 So be very careful to love the Lord your God.

12 "But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, 13 then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you.

14 "Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. 15 But just as all the good things the Lord your God has promised you have come to you, so he will bring on you all the evil things he has threatened, until the Lord your God has destroyed you from this good land he has given you. 16 If you violate the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the Lord's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land He has given you."

HaShem, through both Moshe and Yehoshua, directed the Jewish people how to deal with the enemies in Eretz Yisrael. It is a question of "either them or us". There is no third alternative. We cannot live with the enemy nor share the land with him, in any generation. To do so would

be an ungrateful act of disloyalty to HaShem and a disruption of the heavenly plans which HaShem has set into motion for His people Yisrael.

In the War of Independence, we had the opportunity to execute a population exchange, when we gathered in hundreds of thousands of Jews who were thrown out from Moslem lands, in exchange for the Arabs who were here. Had the government abided by the letter and spirit of the Torah, we would not be in the position we are in today.

The opportunity presented itself again during the Yom Kippur War, when we could have rid ourselves of the hostile Arab population; but again, the leaders did not have the courage to walk in the ways of the Torah.

What would Moshe and Yehoshua say to the idea of freeing hundreds of murderers, as our leaders are willing to do today?

It would not be wrong to say that Moshe and Yehoshua would claim that the rightful place for these murderers is neither to be free nor to be in prison. Their place is to be in Gehennom now.

We are not permitted to test HaShem. However, the longer we live, the more the truth of His commandments become revealed in our day-to-day life. It is not only the rasha (evil person) who denies the words of Hashem, but also the well-meaning righteous fool.

Shabbat Shalom,
Nachman Kahana

Chief Rabbi Mirvis Ki Teitzei

Coincidence?

Every coincidence issues a call to us.

We learn this from a fascinating mitzvah in Parshat Ki Teitzei. “Ki yikareh katzipor l'fanecha”, if by chance you come across a bird's nest and you want to take the eggs or the young, then “shaleach t'shalach et ha'eim”, you must surely send the mother bird away so that it won't witness this scenario.

But, there seems to be a misspelling. 'Yikareh', if just by chance you come across the nest, it should have been spelt: 'yud-kuf reish-hei' from the word 'mikreh', it happened by chance. But instead, it is spelt 'yud-kuf-reish-alef' from the root 'koreh', to call.

So, what the Torah is saying to us is that this bird's nest is issuing a call to us. This coincidence is letting us know that Hashem has made it happen so that there will be an opportunity for you to perform a mitzvah. In Jewish tradition there's actually no such thing as a coincidence because everything comes from Hashem. Everything that happens is His intention for what should transpire, as part of the divine plan. And what we recognise here is that coincidences - or what we call coincidences - present great opportunities.

We can see this from the way that the Torah goes on to describe the result of this mitzvah, “l'maan yitav lach v'arachta yamim”, “so that it will be good for you and you will have length of days”.

You will find that if you squeeze every opportunity out of all that you experience in life, it will be good for you - it will enhance your existence. You will have arichat yamim, you will be able to make the most of every day's opportunities.

How blessed we are that Hashem enables us to deepen our experiences and enhance our lives in the most unexpected of ways.

Shabbat Shalom

Rav Kook Torah

Ki Teitzei: Rationale for Mitzvot

Are we capable of understanding the true reasons for the Torah's commandments? Or should we be satisfied with the simple rationale that we perform mitzvot in order to fulfill what God wants us to do?

“If you come across a bird's nest ... You must first send away the mother, and only then may you take the young.” (Deut. 22:6-7)

At first glance, the mitzvah to chase away the mother bird seems clearly to be an expression of Divine compassion for His creations. In fact, that is exactly what Maimonides wrote in his Guide for the Perplexed (III:48). However, we find the Talmud (Berachot 33b) explicitly states:

“One who says in his prayers, ‘May Your compassion extend to us as it does for the mother bird’ ... should be silenced.”

Maimonides explained that this Talmudic statement is according to the opinion that we should not to seek explanations for mitzvot. According to this position, the Torah's mitzvot may only be understood as an expression of God's Will and His divine decrees, and are beyond the grasp of the human intellect.

Two Forms of Serving God

It is possible, however, to offer an alternative explanation. When we serve God with our minds and intellect, it is proper to seek rationale for mitzvot. Such pursuits contribute to the intellectual realm, to the realm of Torah study. Understanding is achieved empirically, as we try to discern the underlying principles from the myriad details. It is thus fitting to analyze each individual mitzvah, and attempt to understand its function and rationale; and each individual analysis will then contribute to our overall understanding of the Torah.

Yet, we also seek perfection in our emotional service of God. And in the emotional realm, the details tend to obstruct and confuse. Especially when we serve God in prayer, our incentive should be a general desire to fulfill God's Will. This universal motivation, simple and uncomplicated, applies equally to all mitzvot.

The distinction between our intellectual and emotional service of God surfaces in the difference between Torah study and prayer. One who prays, “May Your compassion extend to us as it does for the mother bird,” is confusing what should be the straightforward, simple emotions of noble service with complex calculations regarding the underlying rationale of mitzvot. Such in-depth analyses may be appropriate in our investigative efforts when studying Torah, but they obstruct the purer, more natural service of God that is appropriate when praying.

Investigations into the reasons for mitzvot belong in the philosophical inquiries of the Guide for the Perplexed. One who does this during prayer, however, “should be silenced.”

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of David ben Pincus, David Wolnerman.

Double Vision

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way, when you came forth out of Egypt; how he attacked you on the way and struck at your rear those who were feeble [...] (25:17-18).

This week's parsha ends with a short retelling of the story of Amalek attacking Bnei Yisroel after leaving Mitzrayim, and the exhortation that we never forget what they did to us. Rashi (ad loc) explains that the word “korchah – attacked you” has its roots in the Hebrew word “kor,” which means cool. In other words, they cooled off the Jewish people. Meaning, until now the other nations were afraid of the Jewish people and wouldn't fight them, but when Amalek came and attacked them it “cooled them off” and showed the other nations that it was possible to fight Bnei Yisroel.

Rashi continues with the following analogy: There was a bath that was scalding hot, to the point that it was unusable. One fellow came along, jumped into the bath, and got severely burned. However, since he had bathed in it, he succeeded in cooling it sufficiently to be usable for others. So too, Amalek attacked us and cooled us to the point where other nations were now able to conceive of the idea that they too could fight us.

Superficially, this sounds like an acceptable way of looking at what Amalek achieved. But if we probe just a bit deeper we begin to see how perplexing the logic behind this analogy really is. Amalek came and fought with Bnei Yisroel and Amalek was decimated. Wouldn't their epic failure serve as an incredible statement and proof of the power of Bnei Yisroel? In fact, logically, this story seems to convey quite the opposite – that the Jewish people are absolutely not to be messed with. Amalek's defeat literally showcased the power and might of the Jewish people! What can Rashi possibly mean that “they cooled us off?”

When Bnei Yisroel left Mitzrayim they were supposed to get the Torah and go right into Eretz Yisroel and begin the era of messianic times with

Moshe as King Moshiach. The splitting of the Red Sea, according to Chazal, reverberated across the world to the point that everyone was aware of it. The Jewish people were supposed to lead a revolution against idol worship and fulfill Avraham's vision of monotheism for the world. We were supposed to bring everyone back to Hashem. When we left Mitzrayim, we were on an unstoppable mission of bringing the world to its final resolution.

Then Amalek came and made an incredible statement. They attacked knowing that they would be annihilated – which was EXACTLY their point. Their startling statement was: This world is not worth living in if it is to be the world of the Jewish people – we would prefer to die than live in a world where God is revealed and relevant. This is a powerful statement (and the obvious precursor to suicide murderers), and resembles those who perform self-immolation to bring attention to their cause; suicides are powerful arguments against the status quo. Amalek succeeded in saying that there is an alternative to living in this world according to the vision of the Jewish people.

What Rashi means by “they cooled us off” is that other nations then contemplated whether or not our vision was right for them. Once Amalek attacked, we no longer had the overwhelming singular truth of our world vision because Amalek succeeded in placing doubt in other people's minds. Even though they lost terribly, they succeeded in raising the question as to whether or not this world was worth living in if it was a world according to the Jewish vision. They gave credence to other nations; allowing them to consider fighting us and our vision for the world. This was a devastating loss of credibility – something we can never forgive.

Family Interest

You shall not lend upon interest to your brother; [...] to a stranger you may lend upon interest; but to your brother you shall not lend upon interest (23:20-21).

This week's parsha contains the prohibition of lending money with interest to another Jew. It is prohibited to charge interest or pay interest to another Jew. Yet at the same time, the Torah makes it very clear that it is permissible to lend money to non-Jews and charge them interest. In fact, Maimonides (Yad – Malveh Veloveh 5:1) rules that it is a positive commandment to charge non-Jews interest. This dichotomy in lending practices has often been used as a pretext to attack Jews all over the world during the last two millennia.

In truth, the laws against charging interest and paying interest require a deeper understanding. As an example: Reuven needs money to pay for his daughter's wedding, and he happens to know that his friend Shimon has a lot of money sitting in the bank earning 2% interest. Reuven wants to borrow some of that money but he feels very uncomfortable asking Shimon, especially knowing that Shimon would be losing that two percent interest that the bank is paying him. Reuven also realizes that he is already asking for a big favor because he knows that Shimon is taking a bigger risk by withdrawing it from the bank and lending it to him. Moreover, by Shimon lending Reuven the money and thereby losing his two percent earned interest, Reuven now feels like a charity case.

In reality, Reuven would MUCH prefer to pay interest so that he isn't uncomfortable asking Shimon for the loan and isn't made to feel like he is receiving charity; so why should Reuven not be allowed to pay interest?

The answer is that the Torah is teaching us that paying interest between two Jews isn't appropriate. Why not?

Let's say that a person's mother needed money; would a healthy person charge his own mother interest? Or his son, or a brother? Of course not. Functional families are devoted to each other even at a cost. Moreover, a son asking his parents for a loan doesn't feel like he is receiving charity by not paying interest. The Torah is teaching us that the reason you aren't allowed to charge interest isn't because one should take advantage of another; the reason is because one Jew is obligated to treat another as family. This is why the Torah characterizes the borrower as family (23:20-21), “You shall not lend upon interest to your brother; [...] to a stranger you may lend upon interest; but to your brother you shall not lend upon interest.”

This also explains why it is not only okay to charge non-Jews interest but actually a mitzvah to do so. We need to internalize that they aren't our family. Obviously, we shouldn't charge exorbitant interest, just something reasonable that they are happy to accept. Non-Jews understand that they aren't family and they, in fact, are more comfortable asking for a loan and paying interest because otherwise it would be like receiving charity.

Rabbi YY Jacobson from LAST WEEK

If Judaism Is Immutable, How Can It Be Relevant?

A Tale of Two Torahs: The Timeless and the Timely

The King's Torah's

In this week's Torah portion, Shoftim, the Torah teaches us a fascinating mitzvah concerning every Jewish King:

Deut. 17:18 And it will be, when he sits upon his royal throne, that he shall write for himself a copy of this Torah on a scroll from [that Torah which is] before the Levitic kohanim.

19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the Lord, his G-d, to keep all the words of this Torah and these statutes, to perform them.

Asks the Talmud:[1]

Every Jew is obligated to write a Torah Scroll (Sefer Torah), as the Torah states explicitly[2] (“And now, write for yourselves this song, and teach it to the Children of Israel. Place it into their mouths, in order that this song will be for Me as a witness for the children of Israel.” The Talmud[3] understands it as an obligation to write the entire Torah).[4] If so, why does the Torah give a separate mitzvah for the king to do this? The Talmud explains that the Torah is instructing the Jewish leader to write not one, but two Torah Scrolls. One travels with him wherever he goes, and one remains permanently at home, in his private treasury.

But why? What's the point of the king having two Sifrei Torah?[5]

Timeless and Timely

There is, perhaps, a profound message here.[6] The Leader must hold on to two Torahs, as it were. One remains in his treasure chest; the other travels with him wherever he goes, in the words of the Mishnah:[7] “He goes to battle, and it goes with him; he enters the palace and it enters with him; he sits in judgment, and it sits with him. He sits down to eat, and the Torah is there with him.”

There are two elements to Torah: On one hand, Torah represents the unwavering truth that remains unchangeable, unbendable, and un-phased by the flux of time, space, and history. Shabbos never changes. Tefilin, matzah, shofar, sukkah, mikvah, mezuzah, the text of Torah, the bris milah—these are eternal, unchangeable, Divine laws and truths. The same delicious or horrible “stale” matzah we ate 3300 years ago in the desert we still eat in the 21st century in New York, Miami, and Los Angeles. The same ram's horn we blew two millennia ago is still blown today the world over. The same tzitzis, the same Shabbos, the same Yom Kippur, the same kosher laws, the same conversion laws, the same Torah.

But there is another element to Torah—its ability to give perspective and guidance to each generation according to its unique needs, challenges, struggles and experiences. Each generation is different. The issues that plagued us a half-century ago are not the issues we confront today, and conversely; today we have dilemmas never experienced before in history. Our bodies, psyches, souls, sensitivities, and environments are different. Our world has changed in significant ways. Torah must also be a blueprint and luminary to the unique journeys of each milieu, to the climate of each generation, to the ambiance of every era, to the sensitivities of each age, to the yearnings of every epoch.

The prophet Isaiah says:

My Lord has granted me a tongue for teaching, to understand the need of the times, to give knowledge to those who thirst for knowledge.

A Jewish leader—and every one of us is a leader in our way—must have two Torahs. One Torah remains immune to change. One pristine Torah Scroll never leaves the ivory tower of the king's treasury house. It speaks of truths of life and of G-d that are timeless. It transcends borders of time, geography, and people.

The Kilogram

There was a recent report concerning 'The Kilogram' in Paris. 'The Kilogram' is a calibrated weight by which all other kilograms in the entire world are measured. It is kept in triple layered glass casing, to ensure that it is in no way influenced by the elements. Unfortunately, scientists are afraid that this standard kilogram has been losing some mass over the years. This, at least theoretically, -has ramifications for all types of commerce throughout the world. The pure kilogram standard must never become corrupted!

The famous Maggid of Dubno once told the story of a country boy whose fame as an archer had spread far and wide. A delegation of the finest archers traveled to his farm estate to see for themselves if the rumors were true. As they approached the estate, they observed hundreds upon hundreds of trees, each one painted with a target, and in the center of each bullseye, there was a single arrow. Amazed at the sight, they asked the lad how it was that he had become such a fine shooter. He replied plainly that he would shoot the arrow first, and then paint the target around it.

This is the error some make with Torah. You can't just keep on adjusting Torah to your predefined positions and desires. If Torah is truth, it is true in all times and in all places. If it is not true, who needs it all together?

But it is not enough to just teach a timeless Torah. A leader must also find in Torah the language of G-d to this particular generation, to this individual person, to this unique situation, to this singular struggle, to this mindset and weltanschauung. Torah has the capacity to speak to the timely as much as to the timeless, to the modern as much as to the ancient, to the future as much as to the past, to the things that are always in flux as much as to those that remain unchangeable.

To Find Your Bio in Torah

This is also the deeper meaning of the Torah's words: "And it shall be with him and he should read it all the days of his life in order that he learn to fear G-d, to observe all the words of this Torah..."

The Torah is telling us more than just the fact that the king has to read the Torah throughout the days of his life. The actual literal translation reads: "He should read in it all the days of his life." This means that the Jewish leader must be able to see in Torah a perspective for "all the days of his life," for everything that transpires in his life and in the life of his people. He has to read in it (v'kara bo) his entire biography (kol yemei chayav), all the events of his life. Every new situation has a perspective from Torah, guidance from G-d's blueprint for life.[8]

The Balance

It is not always an easy balance. How can the same Torah address both the timeless and the timely? If it was relevant 3000 years ago how can it still be relevant today?

The answer is: Since the Torah comes from the Creator of the world, He embedded into the Torah all the changes, developments and fluctuations of history. The Torah is the Divine blueprint not only for timeless truths, but also for timely issues and questions—it speaks to each generation addressing its dilemmas and concerns.

The late Israel Shenker, a New York Times reporter, interviewed the Lubavitcher Rebbe for his 70th birthday. Here are his words published in April 1972, in The Times:

"To the suggestion that his orthodoxy marks him as a conservative he [the Rebbe] objected, saying: 'I don't believe that Reform Judaism is liberal and Orthodox is conservative. My explanation of conservative is someone who is so petrified, he cannot accept something new. For me, Judaism, or halacha [Jewish religious law], or Torah, encompasses all the universe, and it encompasses every new invention, every new theory, every new piece of knowledge or thought or action.

"Everything that happens in 1972 has a place in the Torah, and it must be interpreted, it must be explained, it must be evaluated from the point of view of Torah even if it happened for the first time in March of 1972."

These are the "Two Torahs" a Jewish king—and by extension every Jewish parent, teacher, and leader—must possess.

[1] Sanhedrin 21b

[2] Deuteronomy 31:19

[3] Nedarim 38a

[4] The Rosh (Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel, c.1250-1328) writes (Laws of Sefer Torah 7:1) that in previous eras, the Torah scroll was the only text that Jews could use for study, since it was forbidden to write down the Oral Law. Nowadays, however, when it is permissible to write down the Oral Law, and the Torah scroll is stored in the synagogue for public readings rather than used as a study text, the obligation to write a Torah scroll encompasses the obligation to purchase other holy books (seforim) which can be used for study.

Some halachic authorities understand this to mean that there is no longer an obligation to own or write a Torah scroll and that the obligation is fulfilled in its entirety by owning other holy books, e.g., a Chumash, Mishnah, Talmud, Code of Jewish Law, etc. Other authorities say that the Rosh meant that the obligation to write a Torah scroll still exists, but that in addition to this, one must also purchase other holy books.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe once explained a fascinating insight. We don't find any record that upon receiving this mitzvah the Jews en masse wrote hundreds of thousands of Torah scrolls! Nor do we find historically that many people commissioned the writing of their own scrolls. Why not? The Rebbe concluded, that since the main purpose of the Torah Scroll is to read from it, one can fulfill one's obligation through the Torah scroll that is owned by the community.

In addition to the fact that, as a member of the community, he owns a part of the Torah scroll, the Rebbe proved from various sources that he can also be considered a full owner during the time that he actually reads from it – that is, when he receives an Aliya. It is an unspoken agreement that whenever anybody is called to the Torah, all of the community members temporarily give that person full ownership of the Torah for the duration of that aliyah. When the Aliya is over, he then "returns" the ownership to the entire community.

Although ownership of a Torah scroll is not enough to fulfill the mitzvah, but rather the person must commission a scribe to write it for him or write it himself, in the case of scrolls written for the community, we consider the scribe an agent of the entire community. In addition, if the Torah needs to be corrected – something which is a frequent occurrence – the scribe who does the corrections is seen as an agent of the entire community. Thus, even those who were not yet born when the Torah was written have a part in the writing.

This answers the above questions and also explains how we can all fulfill this mitzvah today—even according to the opinions that one must actually write one's own Torah scroll and not simply be a partner. (For all the sources, see Likkutei Sichos vol. 23, p. 24, and all references noted there.)

In addition, the Lubavitcher Rebbe initiated campaigns to unite all of Jewry in this mitzvah by having as many Jews as possible purchase letters in Torah scrolls. Separate scrolls are written specifically to unite Jewish children.

[5] Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (1785-1869), the famed chief Rabbi of Brody, Galicia, and other Rabbis, offer the following insight into these two Sefer Torahs. The Torah describing the appointment of the King uses the double language of "Som Ta'sim," You shall surely place upon yourselves. The Rabbis infer from here that the fear of the King must be upon the people.

On the other hand, at the end of the section dealing with the monarchy, the Torah emphasizes concern "That his heart not become haughty over his brethren and that he does not turn from the commandment right or left" (Deut. 17:20). This almost seems to contradict the earlier language. Should the king be humble or powerful?

Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The Jewish Monarch must act like a king when he is in front of the people, but he is not allowed to let his heart get carried away. He must remember who he is and remember who the Only real King is.

Rabbi Shlomo Kluger says that this is what is meant by the fact that the King writes two Torah scrolls for himself - one with which he goes out and one which remains at home. When he goes out, he must wear the Torah of "You shall surely place upon yourselves a King," he must act

like a King and instill awe like a King. But when he returns home and settles down into the privacy of his own abode, he must be aware of the Torah that is hidden away at home. That is the Torah of "Lest his heart be lifted above that of his brethren."

[6] The following explanation is based on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's explanation on the difference between the Torah of Moshe and the Torah of Aaron, between "Emes" and "Chesed," Sichas 13 Nissan, Parshas Shmini, 5748 (1988), published in Sefer Hasichos 5748 vol. 2, and in Likkutei Sichos Parshiyos Shmini.

[7] Sanhedrin 21b

[8] This is the interpretation of the Chasam Sofer Parshas Shoftim.

Parshat Ki Tetze: A Seamless Torah – Sin Leads to Sin in Lore and in Law

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

"When you go forth to battle...and you see among the captives a beautiful woman and you desire her.... When a man has two wives, one the beloved and the other the hated.... If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son..." (Deuteronomy 21:10–18)

Every once in a while, a strikingly semantic connection and allusion helps us to understand how the Bible is truly a magnificently seamless unity, in which a proper reading of a passage in one of the biblical books sheds brilliant light on a heretofore hidden meaning in another one of the biblical books. An example of this may be found in the beginning of our Torah portion.

Ki Tetze opens with war and the possibility of an Israelite soldier marrying a captive war bride. He is forbidden to do so, however, until he first brings her home, observes her in her most unattractive state as she mourns her family for a full thirty days – shaven head, long fingernails – and, if at the end of that period his ardor has not flagged, he may have her converted and marry her.

We next read of a man with two wives, a loved one and a hated one; if the eldest son is the son of the hated wife, the father is forbidden to favor the younger son of the beloved wife and bequeath the double portion to him rather than to his firstborn.

The third section concerns the rebellious son, a glutton and a drunkard, so disobedient to his mother and father that they are required to bring him to the High Court, where he could be condemned to death.

Rashi, citing the Midrash, weaves a profound, psychologically oriented narrative thread connecting these seemingly disparate rulings:

The Torah is making a concession because of man's evil inclination, for had God not permitted the [gentile war bride] he would have married her nonetheless. However, if he does marry her, in the end he will come to hate her. He will rue the day that he gave up his family and traditions because of her, the excitement he had previously felt would turn to resentment as the Torah writes immediately afterwards: "If a man has two wives, one beloved and another hated," and ultimately, he will parent a rebellious son by her. It is for this reason that these sections are put in juxtaposition (Rashi, Deut. 21:11).

Three stages: first, overwhelming attraction to an inappropriate woman for the wrong reasons, and then, after the heat of lust turns into a dying ember, you end up hating her and hating the child born of that union. The hapless and despised child, cheated out of his rightful birthright through no fault of his own, will then assume the despicable characteristics of the rebellious son. In effect, Rashi connects these three laws by presenting the dynamics which form a dysfunctional family, leading to criminal behavior on the part of the offspring.

And it seems to me that in addition to the psychological underpinnings of the sequence of the incidents, this biblical passage also resonates with seminal occurrences in the life of our patriarch Jacob back in the book of Genesis, and sheds important light on the tensions and mishaps which shaped our patriarchal forbears and their children. Let us first review the precise words of the second ruling in Ki Tetze:

"If a person has two wives, one beloved and one hated, and both the beloved and hated wives have sons, but the firstborn is that of the hated one, then it shall be when he makes his sons inherit his property, he may

not declare the son of the beloved the firstborn before the son of the hated, who is the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the first; the right of the firstborn is his." (Deut. 21:15–17) Now didn't Jacob have two wives? And didn't he love one of them and hate the other, with the Torah itself testifying that Leah felt "hated" (Gen. 29:31)? And didn't he bequeath to Joseph, the son of the beloved wife, Rachel, a double portion, while overlooking the inheritance due to his first-born, Reuven, the son of the hated wife?

Generally speaking, and most justifiably, the story of Jacob and Rachel is viewed by the world as one of the most magnificent love stories in literature. His very first meeting with Rachel is an expression of love at first sight, when this unlikely scholar and tent-dweller exhibits superhuman strength by dramatically and single-handedly rolling away the heavy stone covering the well where Rachel had arrived to water her father's flocks. And the seven years of work that Laban asks from Jacob in return for his daughter's hand pass "like a few days" for this man in love. But he is tricked into a marriage with "the other sister, Leah," a woman he married under false pretenses, and who is therefore an inappropriate mate for him.

The Bible – and especially the Midrash – helps us to see the terrible tragedy suffered by Leah, which was not unlike what could be in store for the hapless captive woman. After her marriage, "God saw that Leah was hated (senu'a) and He opened her womb" (Gen. 29:31). The word "senu'a" that appears in Genesis is repeated in our portion which speaks of the eldest son of the hated (senu'a) wife. (A wife who is cast aside in favor of another woman always feels herself to be hated if she doesn't feel really beloved.) The Torah goes on to describe the birth: "And Leah conceived and bore a son; she called his name Reuven [literally, behold, a son] because she said, 'God has seen into my affliction (be'onyi), for now my husband will love me'" (Gen. 29:32).

Leah emerges as a dignified heroine, bearing in silence the brunt of her husband's rejection. She publicly fulfills the role of matriarch, bearing and raising the founders of six tribes of Israel and dutifully catering to and advising her husband whenever she is approached by him. God has seen "into her affliction," has heard the stifled sobs into her pillow at night, has glimpsed the river of silent tears which has been her only comfort. God Himself tries to make up for her unearned misery by making her fruitful and, conversely, by blocking the womb of the beloved Rachel.

And what of Reuven? He is the dignified son of a dignified mother, who sees but does not speak; who understands but does not complain. He feels his mother's pain and therefore he gathers the aphrodisiac mandrakes for his mother as a gift (Gen. 30:14). And later on, when his rival Joseph – his younger brother, son of Rachel, who has unfairly been given favorite son status – is cast into a pit, it is Reuven who attempts to extricate him and save him from death. But just as his mother Leah was rejected by his father, he, Reuven was rejected by his siblings! (Reuven initially wanted Joseph to be freed entirely, and apparently, they refused to listen to him. See 37:21–22, Nahmanides ad loc., and 42:22.)

And remember the third incident in our Torah reading. An inappropriate marriage will lead to a cheated, "hated" son, who will express his resentment by becoming rebellious. Reuven sins with his father's concubine Bilha. To be sure, our sages modified the harsh literal meaning of the biblical text in describing the nature of that sin. "And it came to pass...that Reuven went and lay with Bilha, his father's concubine" (Gen. 35:22). Our oral tradition insists that Reuven did not actually sleep with Bilha, but – when, after the death of Rachel, Jacob moved his couch into Bilha's tent – Reuven switched his father's couch into Leah's tent in order to save his mother from another act of brazen humiliation. "If my mother's sister was a rival to my mother, shall the bondmaid of my mother's sister be a rival to my mother?" cried out Reuven, according to the Midrash. "Thereupon he [Reuven] rose and transposed his couch" (Shabbat 55b). But, however we understand the situation, Reuven rebelled against his father Jacob!

Perhaps Jacob understands the positive motivation behind Reuven's rebellious action – that in this perverse way of taking his father's concubine he was crying out to become his father's true heir and

continuation, and thus recognizes his own guilt in having rejected his biblical firstborn. After all, despite the egregious sin, the Torah records that “Jacob heard” of the mishap, does not comment, but then our Masoretic tradition leaves an empty space, which apparently hints at Jacob’s rage, guilt, and perhaps tears – as well as his ultimate decision to remain silent. Finally, the story concludes “And the children of Jacob were twelve” (Gen. 35:23). Reuven is not rejected by his father. He is forgiven – and Talmudic law ordains that “if the parents of a rebellious son forgive him, he is forgiven” (Sanhedrin 88a).

Apparently, the Torah recognizes the complexity of relationships of individuals caught in circumstances beyond their control – and the familial suffering which often results. Jacob was Laban’s victim, as were Leah and Rachel. Reuven suffers the fallout brought about by the situation of a long-barren favored wife who suffers an untimely death.

And it is even more complex than this. Following the incident of Reuven’s sinful act, Jacob finally is able to return to his father’s house, to Isaac, “in peace” (Gen. 23:21). Jacob absented himself from his father for more than two decades – and then wanders about in Shekhem even after he leaves Laban – at least partially because he felt guilt-ridden

about his having deceived the patriarch in order to receive the paternal blessings. But now he has the courage to confront his father. He now can legitimately expect that just as he forgave Reuven his transgression because Reuven had wrongly been treated as the “hated” son, so Isaac would forgive him – Jacob – because Jacob, too, had been rejected by Isaac as the “hated” or, at least, rejected son.

Hence the legal material in our portion resonates with the previously recounted tragedy of Jacob’s family – and attempts to legislate a lifestyle intended to prevent such future occurrences. Our Bible is a magnificent unity from Genesis to Deuteronomy of connections, reverberations and repair between the generations.

Shabbat Shalom

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