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RE'EH SHABBAT MEVARCHIM

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The Lord is my Light and my Salvation

by Chief Rabbi Sacks

Psalm 27, which we read between Rosh Chodesh Ellul and Shmini Atseret, is one of the most sublime expressions of trust in all of literature: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?' In Latin translation – Dominus illuminatio mea – it is the motto of Oxford University.

One sentence in particular is haunting and enigmatic: 'Were my father and my mother to forsake me, the Lord would take me in.' What is the Psalmist referring to? The idea of both parents abandoning a child is alien to the Jewish mind. The Torah contains a law that assumes this possibility: the law of the 'stubborn and rebellious child'. Yet so far-fetched was it that, according to the Talmud (Sanhedrin 71a), Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: 'There never was and never will be' a case in which this law was applied.

Yet there was a child abandoned by its parents – and we read about it on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. After the birth of Isaac, Sarah told Abraham to send Ishmael – Abraham's son by Sarah's handmaid Hagar – away (Gen. 21). He was reluctant to do so: 'The matter distressed Abraham greatly'. Yet G-d told him: 'Whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says.'

So Hagar and Ishmael were sent away into the desert near Beersheva. Eventually their water ran out. Hagar knew that in the scorching sun the child was going to die. She placed him under a bush for shade and sat at a distance, weeping, unable to watch his death. G-d 'heard the boy crying'. An angel called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, 'Do not be afraid; G-d has heard the boy crying there where he is.' She opened her eyes, saw a well of water, and gave Ishmael a drink. The passage concludes: 'G-d was with the boy as he grew up.'

The rabbis added a fascinating comment (Bereishit Rabbah 54: 13). The ministering angels objected when they saw G-d about to save Ishmael. 'Master of the universe, how can you send water to Ishmael whose descendants will one day kill Your children through thirst.' G-d replied: 'What is he now: innocent or guilty?' 'Innocent', they replied. 'I judge a person only by what he is now, not what he will be in the future', said G-d.

The implications are extraordinary. Isaac, not Ishmael, was chosen to carry on the covenant of Abraham. G-d told Abraham that he should listen to Sarah and send Ishmael away. Yet G-d did not reject him. He sent him water. He saved his life. He was with him as he grew. He rejected the view of the angels that Ishmael should be condemned for what his descendants would one day do to the Israelites. And this too is surprising: that many of the great sages of the Mishnaic and Talmudic eras were named Ishmael.

G-d rejects no one who calls to Him in truth.

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**Giving With a Smile
by Yehonasan Gefen**

Re'eh(Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17)

Giving With a Smile

The Torah portion discusses the mitzvah of charity and promises a special blessing to one who fulfills this mitzvah with joy: "You will surely give to him [the poor man] and you should not feel bad in your heart when giving him, because of this thing (davar hazeh) HaShem, your God will bless you in all your deeds and your every undertaking." (1) The Talmud elaborates on the number of blessings one receives when he gives charity: "Rebbi Yitzchak says, 'one who gives a prutah(2) to a poor person is blessed with six blessings and one who speaks kindly to him [whilst giving the prutah] is blessed with [an additional] eleven blessings.'" (3) The Gra explains that these 17 blessings are alluded to in the verse - the Torah says that a person will receive the blessing, "because of davar hazeh" - the word hazeh is gematria (numerical value) of 17, thus alluding to the maximum amount of blessings one can receive if he gives charity in the optimum manner.(4) However, this Talmud seems difficult to understand. It says that a person receives nearly double as many blessings for speaking in a friendly manner as for giving money. Being friendly is a good form of behavior but why does the Talmud consider it so much greater than providing a poor person with the money he so desperately needs? The Rabbis discuss a similar issue that can help us answer this question. It says, "One should greet every man with a friendly countenance... if a person gives to his friend all the gifts in the world, but his face is sullen, it is considered as if he gave nothing. But one who greets his fellow with a friendly countenance, even if he gave him no gifts, it is considered as if he gave him all the best gifts in the world." (5) The Sifsei Chaim explains that what people want more than anything is for others to show an interest in and care about them. A gift is merely an indication that the giver thought about the needs of his fellow and how he could give him joy. However, without an accompanying show of warmth the main purpose of the gift is lost because the person does not feel as if he is being genuinely cared about.

In contrast when a person is friendly to his fellow even without giving any gifts, then he is providing him with his primary need, the desire to feel cared about.(6) This explanation can also be used to answer our question. A person who gives charity with a friendly attitude is giving much more than money, he is nourishing the poor man with a sense of importance by showing that he is cared about. We learn from here how showing an interest in our fellow is one of the greatest possible acts of kindness that we can perform, even surpassing giving charity. There are Rabbinical sayings that stress the importance of being friendly. The Talmud tells us that Rav Yochanan Ben Zakkai greeted everyone before they could greet him.(7) Rabbi Dan Roth explains what we can learn from this: Rav Yochanan Ben Zakkai was the greatest Sage in his time and was the Nasi (Prince), the highest ranking position amongst the Jewish people. And yet, despite his high rank and prestige, he never failed to greet other people first. He recognized the power of a friendly greeting. Wishing someone 'good morning' shows that you acknowledge who he or she is. In a world where people are often not appreciated enough, by greeting someone we show that we see him as something of worth. This applies to everyone and especially to those people that we tend not to notice or acknowledge such as taxi drivers, street cleaners and security guards.(8) The following true stories demonstrate how important it is to learn from Rav Yochanan Ben Zakkai. A Jew was working in a meat-packing plant in Norway. Towards the end of the day he went into one of the freezers to do an inspection. The freezer door slipped off its safety latch and closed, trapping the man in the freezer. He tried banging on the door and yelling but no avail. Most of the workers had already gone home and the sound was muffled anyway by the heavy freezer door. He was in the room for five hours and on the verge of death. Suddenly the door opened. The security guard put his head in and came to his rescue and saved his life. The security guard was later asked why he thought to open that freezer door. He explained, "I have been working here for thirty-five years. Hundreds of workers come to this plant every day. This Jew is the only one who says hello to me in the morning and good-bye in the evening. All the other workers treat me as invisible. Today he said hello, but I never heard the good-bye. I wait for that hello and good-bye every day. Knowing I never heard it, I realised that he must be somewhere in the building so I searched for him." (9) A simple 'hello' and 'goodbye' were so important to this security guard that he waited for them every day. We should strive to be like the Jew who greeted him so regularly and not like everyone else who treated him as if he did not exist. It should be noted that being friendly does not merely constitute a praiseworthy act; rather it is an obligation that is incumbent upon every Jew. Rav Elyahu Dessler points out that the Mishna in Ethics of the Fathers which tells us to greet people in a friendly manner is said in the name of Shammai. It would have seemed more appropriate for Hillel, who is associated with kindness to express this idea, than Shammai who is known for his stricter approach.(10) Rav Dessler explains that this comes to teach us that greeting our fellow in a friendly way is an obligation.(11) Moreover, the Gemara states that anyone who knows that his friend regularly greets him should strive to be the one to initiate the greeting. Moreover, if his friend greeted him first and he does not return the greeting then he is called a thief.(12) Rav Dessler explains that when one refrains from returning his friend's greeting, he is stealing his self-worth and this is a terrible sin. We have seen how there is a clear obligation to show warmth in our interactions with our fellow man and that by doing so we can give him a true sense of self-worth. How can a person strive to improve in this vital area of Divine Service? It is recommended to notice anyone in our neighborhood who does not seem to know many people and to try to befriend them. This applies especially to new members of the community who naturally feel unknown and unimportant in their new neighborhood. But it is even worthwhile to say a friendly word to anyone in the community with whom we have thus far not made any effort to do so.

NOTES 1. Re'eh, 15:10. 2. That is a very small amount in the currency that was common in Talmudic times. 3. Bava Basra, 9b. The parentheses are used to explain the Gemara according to the understanding of the Gra. See the next source. 4. Quoted in Tallelei Oros, Devarim A, p.261. 5. Avos d'Rebbi Nossan, Ch. 13. 6. Sifsei Chaim, Moadim, 3rd Chelek, p. 275, footnote 11. 7. Brachos 17a. 8. Roth, Relevance, p.170-1. 9. Kaplan, Impact, p.76. 10. This encapsulates an emphasis on giving exactly what one deserves, without giving extra leeway. 11. Michtav M'El'yahu, Chelek 4, p.146-7. 12. Brachos, 6b.

from **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** ryfrand@torah.org Tue, Aug 23, 2011 at 11:38 AM subject Rabbi Frand on Parshas Re'eh This Dvar Torah is reprinted with permission from Mesorah Publications/ArtScroll, from "Rabbi Frand on the Parsha 2". Order "Rabbi Frand on the Parsha 2" direct from the publisher at a 10 percent discount, and ArtScroll will donate a portion of your purchase to Torah.org: www.artscroll.com/linker/torahorg/link/Books/frp2p.html Good Shabbos!

The Tree Hugger

"At the end of seven years, you shall institute a sabbatical year." (15:1)

Rabbi Mordechai Gifter related that during a shemittah (sabbatical) year, the Ponevezher Rav zt"l once walked over to a tree, gave it a hug and a kiss, and said, "Good Shabbos to you."

Using his dynamic style, the Ponevezher Rav taught us the amazing concept of shemittah. For an entire year, all the fields and orchards in Eretz Yisrael experience a Shabbos similar to the Shabbos we experience once a week. If we are fortunate enough to be in Eretz Yisrael during shemittah we should feel the holiness descend onto the Land just as we feel the holiness of Shabbos.

There is another aspect to shemittah that bears mention here. Physical objects generally do not contain holiness. A person has to consecrate an object in order to bring holiness to it. During shemittah, however, all fruits and vegetables grown in Eretz Yisrael are automatically sanctified simply because they grew from the holy land. As you drive through the country, every orange, esrog, and cucumber you see growing contains holiness.

I find a need to stress the extraordinary holiness of Eretz Yisrael because the secularist governments leading the State of Israel for nearly 60 years have made concerted efforts to eradicate any holiness associated with the Land, and unfortunately they have been highly successful in doing so. A visitor to modern-day Israel is likely to miss the kedushah of the Land, unless he or she makes a concerted effort to experience the holiness therein.

Following the signing of the Oslo Accords, National Public Radio broadcast a report about Israel. The report focused on the contrast between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. One of the people interviewed said, "Tel Aviv is a normal city, unencumbered by history. Tel Aviv is like Miami!"

To prove the point of the interviewee, the reporter visited Tel Aviv on a Friday afternoon and recorded the sounds one can hear on a typical Tel Aviv street. Indeed, when you close your eyes and listen to the recording, you can easily mistake it for downtown Baltimore, or any other city in the United States. They played a few moments of rap "music" — if you can call it music — blaring from the boom box of a group of teenagers hanging out on the street. "This is so normal," the reporter declares.

They went on to describe Jerusalem on a Friday afternoon. "Orthodox Jews, many of them dressed in broad-brimmed hats and long caftans, scurry through the streets preparing for the upcoming Sabbath."

Jerusalem, the report implies, is not normal. Jerusalem is a city that must carry the weight of thousands of years of history and theology on its shoulders.< br> Tel Aviv is a modern city. Tel Aviv is a "normal" city. Jerusalem is not.

Truthfully, attaining "normalcy" was the stated goal of secular Zionism. Early Zionist leaders considered the verse, "We will be like all the other nations" (I Shmuel 8:20), their mantra. They developed the country through the blood, sweat, and tears of the Kibbutz movement, but all the while envisioned a country whose cities would look like all the "normal" cities in the world.

What they did not realize was that if Tel Aviv would look like Miami, their descendants might decide that it is not worth living in Tel Aviv if they could just as well move to Miami. And that is exactly what happened.

A reporter once traced the descendants of several of the founders of the Zionist state — names like Herzl, Ben-Gurion, Jabotinsky, and others — and found that over seventy-five percent — seventy-five percent! — of their descendants live outside Israel.

To paraphrase Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, former Rav of Atlanta, Georgia, who now spends most of the year in Eretz Yisrael:

They abandoned the kibbutz in droves, physically and spiritually, for the less austere life — and ultimately the greater comforts and material opportunity — of Canada and the United States. The most sacred tenet of the secular Zionist canon — settling in Israel — is utterly ignored. As the secularists painfully realize, Yerida (emigration) from Israel is primarily a secular phenomenon, while Aliyah (immigration) to Israel is primarily Orthodox.

Realistic estimates show that there are close to half-a-million Israeli expatriates now living in the West. Those raised on a religion-less diet abandon Israel for the West, but those raised on mitzvah observance apparently do not find it difficult to abandon the luxuries of the West for a less-comfortable life in Israel.

This trend results in an interesting juxtaposition: You can hear Hebrew spoken in electronics stores on 42nd Street in New York or on Pico Boulevard in Los Angeles, while English is spoken in Israeli yeshivos such as Brisk and Kerem B'Yavneh.

The Orthodox in Israel today ask a troubling question of the secularists: Who are the real Chovevei Zion? Who really loves Zion?

Only those who observe Torah and mitzvos want to live in Israel. Only they are willing to live in the "abnormal" land.

Eretz Yisrael is not normal. It is not "normal" to have to consider fruit holy simply because it grew in a certain year. But that is what Eretz Yisrael is all about. Moreover, that is what being a Jew is all about. A Jew is encumbered by history. A Jew is encumbered by theology. It is not surprising that those who don't realize the significance of being Jews are not interested in living in a country that was, is, and will always be, encumbered by history and theology.

Ironically, the segment of society that secularists consider "abnormal" is willing to live in Israel, the abnormal country.

An article in The New York Times documented the secular reaction to American olim (immigrants) to Israel. The spirit of the article was that secular Israelis could not understand how a sane individual who was living in the United States, had a livelihood in the United States, and owned a house in the United States, could come to the ridiculous conclusion that is worthwhile to pack up all his belongings and move to Israel.

In the eyes of secular Israelis, people who make aliyah from North America nowadays must be out of their minds, the article concluded.

In a sense, the secular Israelis are correct. People who are willing to give up living in the lap of luxury in favor of a land with far less material opportunity simply because it is a mitzvah to do so are not normal. But only abnormal people can live in an abnormal land.

It might have seemed strange to see the great Ponevezher Rav hugging a tree. The Ponevezher Rav was not involved in Green Peace or any other "save the earth" movement. He had a message to impart with his unconventional behavior. Eretz Yisrael is a land governed by abnormal

standards, and it can only be inhabited by people who are equally "abnormal."

It is that abnormality we should all admire and for which we should all strive.

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28 Av 2001 5761 **Reeh 5771 10th yartzeit**
HaRav Avrohom Yaakov Pam ZT"l

By Rav Nochum Eisenstein, Lakewood, NJ

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A hesped is generally delivered at a funeral. What purpose does the hesped serve?

Over the last few weeks the newspapers have reported several tragedies. One was of a helicopter crash in the Grand Canyon killing a number of young people and leaving one in critical condition. The second was of a suicide bombing in Yerushalyim that killed and injured many people. Our emotions were stirred by these tragedies: the senseless killing of innocent people by a terrorist, and the untimely deaths of those vacationing individuals. We were shocked and stunned by what had occurred, and only slowly did we return to our normal lives. Then last week we received the news of the petira of Harav Hagaon Rav Avraham Yaakov HaKohen Pam Zt'l.

In 64 years of teaching, Rav Pam had produced literally thousands of talmidim. His productive life of nearly 90 years was involved in countless projects benefiting Klal Yisrael. He selflessly gave his time to the many people seeking his sagely advice and his birkas Kohen. He involved himself in so many mosdos that it is almost unimaginable that one person should be able to carry such a load. Indeed, just a few weeks ago he attended a parlor meeting for the benefit of Shuvu although his weakened condition required ambulance transport. But this did not deter him.

Anyone who ever met Rav Pam could not help but recognize his modesty. Although he was a great person, one of the gedolei hador, his humility was striking, his simplicity remarkable, and his honesty and integrity impeccable. He displayed remarkable sensitivity for other human beings, and the ahavah that he transmitted could be touched with

your hands. His sense of halacha and its practical application was quite accurate and was that of gadlus.

The Gemara tells us that one of the reasons children die young is because of tears not shed on the petira of an adam kasher (a righteous person). The death of a child naturally arouses crying, and those tears come to make up for the tears that should have been shed for the adam kasher. Even if Rav Pam had he been only an adam kasher, withholding tears certainly is something to be concerned about. All the more so because he was a gadol.

The other recent tragedies that have befallen us are, after the shock wears away, of a personal nature. The helicopter crash filled our heart with sorrow for the families that are suffering so terribly from the disaster. The bombing no less invokes strong feelings within us. Ultimately, however, only the families are left weeping. The petira of Rav Pam, on the other hand, is not (except for the family) a personal loss; it is rather a national calamity for Klal Yisrael.

In the Hagadah we say "in every generation the non-Jews plot to annihilate us, but Hashem miraculously foils their devious plots." Our existence in golus is a nes. The Gemara expresses this with the example of one sheep among seventy wolves. The survival of that sheep is nothing but a miracle. Hashem does not make miracles at random, however. We definitely need zechusim to entitle us to miracles. Some people merit parnassa on their own zechus, while others benefit from prior generations (zechus avos). But most of us can claim to merit miracles only through the zechus of the gedolim. Chazal explicitly state that our gedolim are guardians of the Jewish people. Solely in their zechus people have parnassa, get well, live longer, etc.

The Chazon Ish is well known to have said that as long as Rav Shimon Shkop, the Grodner Rosh Yeshiva, was alive, Hitler ym's could not have succeeded in his vicious plan to make the world Judenrein. The zechus of R. Shkop's Torah would have been sufficient to prevent the genocide. A cousin of mine, a member of the Benedikt family, who had close ties to the Chazon Ish, related the following. The Chazon Ish once told him that he was unaware of the extent of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis against our People because Hashem had hidden it from him. He first learned of the situation when General Himmler ym's was in Egypt on his way to Eretz Yisrael. Through his tefilos, the Chazon Ish was able to stop him. Historians are of course baffled why Himmler did not enter Eretz Yisrael because, strategically, there was nothing interfering with his plan. We, however, know the answer: the Chazon Ish's tefillos. Every gadol that leaves this world is accordingly of great concern to us all.

In a discussion with one of my rabbeim on that Taanis Esther on which Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l was niftar, my rebbe mentioned that now Rav Moshe had become "history." What he meant was that we all know that the Vilna Gaon was a great gaon and tzaddik. He outshone all the other gedolim of his time and even of previous generations. His life was full of kedusha. We as well know of the Chafetz Chaim who was closer in time to us. But we have seen neither with our own eyes; we only can visualize what they were. Rav Moshe now joins them, my rebbe told me. As long as he was alive, we were able to see what a Torah giant is. We saw gadlus, the extensive and intensive Torah he knew. His ahavas HaTorah, his love for learning, was insatiable. We saw humility, honesty, and, above all, a normal human being.

We imagine that a gadol is someone who is not an average person, that there is something special about him. Although this is certainly the case, gedolim indeed are normal people. They live normally and have feelings like all people. They raise families and engage in all types of activities, but with a Torah approach. Every move they make is according to halacha and with complete sensitivity to other peoples' feelings. It is sometimes hard to imagine such a person in the world in which we live. As long as Rav Moshe was alive it was not difficult to imagine because we saw it in front of our eyes. Now all that we have left are memories and the rest is left to our imagination. He is now "history."

Rav Pam personified these ideals. He was a gadol. He worked tirelessly for Klal Yisrael. He was a role model of what a Torah Jew looks and acts like. His petira leaves a void in a double sense. First, who will give his birkas Kohen? Who will answer all those people who need advice; who will take his place in all of the work for the Klal. Second, where can we find another role model of his caliber?

A hesped has several goals. One is an appreciation of the niftar. Second, the hesped evaluates the extent of our loss. Some points have already been discussed, although Rav Pam's involvement in so many projects makes it difficult to evaluate fully the exact magnitude of our loss. Third, a hesped arouses us to cry and shed tears so that we should not be guilty of allowing a gadol to pass without feeling the sorrow of our great loss.

Rav Pam spoke at the last Agudah convention about being honest in business, not cheating our fellow Jew or the government. The chilul Hashem from having the front page of one of the leading newspapers displaying the picture of a frum Jew either indicted or accused of embezzlement or any other form of cheating is beyond excuse.

We are confident that Rav Pam will be a melitz yosher for us as he was when he was with us. May his petira be the last, and may we all be zoche to bilah hamaves lanetzach umacha Hashem dimah m'al kol panim.

http://www.oukosh.org/index.php/articles/single_print/10264

The Birds of the Bible, or, Solving the Mystery of Which of the Species Are Kosher and Which Are Not

By: Rabbi Chaim Loike

In the books of Leviticus (Ch. 11) and Deuteronomy (Ch. 14), the Bible discusses the species of animals, fowl, and fish which are kosher and can therefore be consumed. The Bible identifies two characteristics through which kosher mammals can be identified: chewing the cud and having split hooves. The kosher species of fish are likewise identified by two characteristics; fins and scales. While the majority of mammalian species are not kosher, the majority of avian species are kosher. Instead of detailing characteristics through which the kosher avian species can be identified, the Bible lists 24 avian species which are not kosher, indicating that all the other avian species are kosher. Any bird that is not on the list of twenty-four forbidden species is considered kosher. Theoretically, if a person encountered a bird which could not be identified, but the person knew this bird was definitely not one of the forbidden avian species, it would be permissible to consume the bird.

According to the biblical legend, when Moses was explaining to the Jewish people the methodologies through which kosher and non-kosher birds could be identified, he presented each species and, pointing to the representation, told the people that the bird was permitted or forbidden. For thousands of years, since the time of Moses, there was what was known as the mesorah, oral guidelines passed from master to pupil through which the kosher birds could be identified. Over the millennia some of the features through which the kosher and non-kosher birds could be discerned were forgotten. In modern times, there is no one alive who can identify all of the twenty-four avian species identified in the Bible as non-kosher. As a result, when a new species of bird is encountered, it cannot always be declared kosher since there is the possibility that it might be one of these species forbidden in the Bible. All that remains of the mesorah, are the few birds which are known not to be on the list of birds forbidden in the Bible.

The Orthodox Union has researched and documented many of the birds which have traditionally been accepted by the Jewish community as kosher. Symposia and conferences have been organized, and numerous articles have been published in this effort to establish which birds can be certified as kosher. Many birds have been certified kosher, at least in name, since ancient times. Goose and duck were probably consumed by the Jews of Egypt prior to the Exodus. Chicken was

consumed since the time of the Second Temple. Pigeons, doves, sparrow and quail were consumed by the Jewish people while they sojourned in the Sinai Desert. There are other birds such as partridges and songbirds which have been consumed for thousands of years, their consumption originating in a time when people still recognized the forbidden birds listed in the bible.

It is sometimes difficult to identify the birds described in the bible. It is known that quail were accepted as kosher since ancient times, with two biblical narratives detailing the consumption of the quail in the time of Moses and the Exodus. Before the Orthodox Union was able to determine the identity of the biblical kosher quail, it was necessary to research much more than the name. There are nearly fifty avian species which are called quail; these species are extremely varied being divided among a dozen genus, including Old World quail (coturnix), tree quails (dendrortyx), mountain quail (oreortyx), crested quail (callipepla), banded quail (philortyx), bobwhite quail (colinus), wood quail (odontophorus), singing quail (dactylortyx), ocellated quail (cyrtornyx), tawny faced quail (rhyncortyx), quail plover (ortyxelos) and button quail (turnix).

Throughout the world a number of species of quail have been domesticated. However, the only North American quail which has historically been commercially raised for meat in the United States is the bobwhite quail (particularly *Colinus virginianus*). This quail is not a true quail, sharing little with the European quail other than size. From a scientific perspective there is no reason why genetically unrelated birds on both sides of the Atlantic should share the name quail. There are a number of theories as to why bobwhite quail and the other North American species of quail were designated as quail. Most likely it was the settlers who longed for memories of the Old World, who named species and lands after those they had left behind. The North American birds which were called quail were similar in size and habit to the quail the settlers had known in Europe. When the North American quail-like birds were first encountered they were called quail, and they have been called by this name ever since.

From a kosher perspective, since the bobwhite quail is known not to be a true quail and it was never certified as kosher, there was no way to classify the bird as kosher because it could be one of the twenty-four avian species specifically forbidden in the Bible. In recent years the coturnix quail began to gain in popularity, being raised by a number of hatcheries throughout the United States. For years it was rumored that the coturnix quail was the biblical quail, the very quail which had been consumed and certified kosher since the time of the bible. There were a number of Jewish communities, which had consumed quail prior to the Second World War. These communities could only consume the quail if they had been able to ascertain that this quail was not one of the forbidden avian species. Of all the rabbis who had ever learned the mesorah how to identify the biblical quail, one survived the Holocaust. This rabbi, Rabbi Zweigenhaft, had been well respected in Europe and considered an authority in Poland and Germany on the identification of numerous kosher species including kosher quail.

Along with Rabbis Protovin and Polachek, I went to visit Rabbi Zweigenhaft and to document which quail were accepted in Europe by the pre-war Jewish communities. More than a dozen breeds of coturnix quail were presented and Rabbi Zweigenhaft explained the methodologies through which the kosher and non-kosher quail could be identified. He also explained that the quail known as the Pharaoh quail (coturnix coturnix) was the bird which was consumed by the Jewish people in the biblical narrative of the Exodus. The words of Rabbi Zweigenhaft were documented and then compared to the ornithological accounts of the distribution of coturnix quail in Europe. I visited the American Museum of Natural History, where the curator, Dr. Peter Capainolo, gave a guided tour of the thousands of specimens which the museum had collected (kept in vaults beneath the museum). The

anatomy of the birds in the museum's collection was compared to the information obtained from Rabbi Zweigenhaft. The actual quail shown to Rabbi Zweigenhaft were compared to those in the museum's collection, with the utmost attention being paid to regional variations and similar species. The Orthodox Union needed to be certain that in addition to being able to identify the kosher quail, the kosher quail once identified would not be confused with any similar, yet non-kosher species.

The final piece of the puzzle was presented by Rabbis Ari Greenspan and Ari Zivotofsky, who discovered archeological evidence that the Pharaoh quail was the quail which the Jews consumed in the two narratives of the Bible. Although the wild populations of the Pharaoh quail have been much reduced, they still migrate from Africa to Europe through the Sinai, as they did in the biblical narrative. Some people refer to the Pharaoh quail as the migratory quail, since they are one of the few species of quail which are migratory. Remarkably well-preserved pictures were found in Egyptian pyramids of migrating quail being harvested by the Egyptians. The clarity of these images left no doubt that the birds were the quail described by Rabbi Zweigenhaft. Once the Orthodox Union was certain which of the coturnix quail species were consumed since biblical times, the bird was certified as kosher. Quail and quail eggs are now found on the menu of some of the finest OU certified restaurants.

The research into the identification of kosher birds is not yet complete. There are other birds which are not certified as kosher, but there is evidence that they were accepted as kosher by some Jewish communities at some point in time. Among the birds currently being researched by the Orthodox Union are species of pheasant, partridge, peacock and guinea fowl (also known as the African chicken). In all of these instances, rabbis in Israel and America are searching for people to conclusively identify the birds which were consumed in the recent past and accepted as kosher by the rabbinic authorities.

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Re'eih 5771

Rabbi Berel Wein 25 Av 5771 / 25 August 2011 Jerusalem Post
IT IS NOT GOING TO GO AWAY Friday, August 26, 2011 In
spite of all policies, agreements, hopes and wishful thinking, it should be
obvious that the Israeli-Arab dispute is nowhere near solution or
accommodation. It really is not about borders, land swaps, or even
begrudging acceptance of the two-state solution to the dispute. It is
something far deeper, religious in nature and hardened over centuries of
behavior and custom.

It basically is that the Jew, the dhimmi, the infidel, has no right to rule
over territory that was once under Moslem sovereignty and certainly no
right to rule over Moslem people themselves. The inability of Israel, over
these many decades, to face up to this fact has, in fact, only prolonged
and deepened the conflict and made the problem more intractable. It
is in reality a biblical epic that we are currently experiencing, not a nice
modern day dispute that lends itself to creative diplomacy and
realpolitik. In a completely secular world there is no room for biblical
epics. The world – and much of the Jewish world as well – believes that
the Bible is a story book and that little of it is applicable today. So,
we find ourselves applying the wrong antibiotic to counteract the true
bacteria of hatred and violence that is playing itself out in front of our
bewildered eyes. In an op-ed-article that appeared in Haaretz, the writer
stated in the article that “we are all people.” And that is the crux of the
matter. As long as the Jews are not recognized as “people” this dispute is
simply not going to go away anytime soon. Religion, per se, is an
ambiguous creature. It can be and has been an enormous force for good

in human history. However, in the hands of zealots and fanatics, it can be misconstrued and seen as a most destructive force. The extremists in the world of Islam have created a situation of hatred and violence, not only against Israel and the Jews but also against Christians, especially the Copts in Egypt, as well as against Hindus in the Pakistan - India conflict which continues to simmer after decades. And to further muddy the waters, the violence in Iraq and Afghanistan is essentially a continuation of the millennia old wars between the Shiite and Sunni brands of Islam. Syria is engulfed in a rebellion against Alewite rule – also a form of heresy to Sunni Moslems – and Libya has degenerated into basic tribal warfare. And all of this is going on without taking into account Iran’s determination to define the Arab world in purely Shiite terms and Al Queda’s attempts to assert Sunni hegemony over all of mankind. This is not an essentially pretty picture of the Moslem world and its faith, as is currently revealed and practiced in universal society. This is religion run amuck, as much a danger to itself as to others. Yet the world is hesitant to call these forces to account for their behavior and fanatical beliefs. Whistling past the graveyard now only guarantees more pain, suffering and bloodshed in the future. Because of all of the above, I think it is safe to say that these problems are not going to be ameliorated quickly. It took centuries for the religious wars of Europe and Christendom to end. The Arabs are not going away nor are they likely to have an immediate epiphany and change of heart regarding Israel, the Jews, the Copts, the Hindus, and America, etc. This is going to be a very long haul for all concerned. All of the peace plans and agreements fostered until now have proven to be worthless and, in fact, counterproductive to any form of true peace. The change of heart necessary to create a climate of compromise and accommodation is simply not in the offing in the Moslem world as a whole and certainly not in the Middle East. This bitter truth may sadden us but the Talmud teaches that there is no joy equal to the removal of all doubts and the ability to see a problem realistically - without wishful thinking and false assessments. The Oslo Agreements, the Wye Agreements, the Hebron Agreement, the fleeing from Lebanon, the Gaza disengagement, all stand out today as bad decisions and examples of woefully poor judgment by world and Israeli leaders. We hoped that these gestures would make the hatred and violence go away. Unfortunately, they did not. It will take a long time and a major change in attitudes and circumstances for hatred and violence to even begin to diminish. Biblical epics last for centuries, not just for months and years. Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein Rabbi Wein 25 Av 5771 / 25 August 2011

Weekly Parsha

RE’EIH

Friday, August 26, 2011

The Hebrew word re’eih, which serves as the title of this week’s Torah reading, has many layers of meaning attached to it. In its simplest understanding it means “see.” There are English translations of the word that have expanded the definition of the word to mean “behold.” In truth, the Torah demands of us more than simply eye vision. We are challenged to see the physically unseeable and to deal with abstractions of thought and policy and make them real. So re’eih is as much a state of mind and contemplation as it is one of actual eyesight. That is why the Torah states that we should somehow see and behold possible blessings and curses in our future – successes and failures. The human eye cannot discern blessings or curses. What sometimes appears to be a wonderful idea, a great blessing, a most correct policy may, in fact, turn out to be a cursed disaster. And the opposite is also true. An event or idea that appeared to be a negative may yet be most positive in the future. King David makes us aware of this in his famous verse, “The stone that was rejected by the builders initially has now become the corner stone itself.”

So when the Torah bids us “re’eih” – see the future, so to speak, it cannot expect us to do so wisely and intelligently unless it supplies us

with corrective lenses that will enable us to do so. And as the Torah itself reiterates time and again, it is the observance of Torah laws and a fealty to God that enables us to visualize the blessings that await us and the pitfalls that await those who deviate from tradition and Jewish values.

For a long period of its history the Jewish people had the advantage of having prophets who saw the future, the right and wrong, the good and the bad, for them. But we must note that the Jewish people frittered away this gift simply by ignoring what the prophets had to say. As the prophet states: “And I made your young men prophets but you ordered them to desist from prophesying.” It is common in human nature to stumble along sightless rather than to glimpse the future good. Truly seeing the future imposes obligation and a change in lifestyle and behavior patterns that one is loath to fulfill. And, since it is also very difficult for humans to admit past or present error, the chances for unpleasant happenings in the future because of improper present behavior and policies are omnipresent. The entire book of Dvarim is essentially devoted to this issue – the sad consequences of bad behavior and how this affects future generations. Moshe’s frustration is almost palpable in his warnings to Israel. If there was ever anyone who could see and behold it was Moshe, the greatest of all prophets. Every parent is aware of this sad frustration when one is aware of an erroneous decision by a child but is powerless to prevent its occurrence and its consequences. We can only hope that the eyesight of our generation will improve. Shabat shalom.

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Rabbi Yakov Haber

Kosher Inside and Out: a Recipe for Teshuva

Based on a shiur on Tisha B'Av heard from Rav Aryeh Leib Shapiro shlit"א, Menahel Ruchani of Yeshivas Ponovezh ITz'irim (any errors are the writer's alone) Parshas Re'eh reviews the kosher species in the animal, bird, fish, and insect kingdoms. Greater specifics are given for the kosher animals detailing the ten species of kosher domesticated and non-domesticated animals. The Torah restates the two kosher signs for animals: cleft-hooves and regurgitation and re-swallowing of food, or the "cud".

Vilna Gaon notes that one kosher sign, the split hooves, is external, and one kosher sign, the "chewing of the cud", is internal. Cleft-hooves, the external sign, are only suitable for walking, not hunting, not kicking, just walking. Chewing the cud, the internal sign, indicates that the animal eats according to its needs and chews and chews until every last bit of nutrition is extracted from the cud. In other words, that animal acts in a non-aggressive, non-desirous manner. Ramban (Shmini) explains that Hashem only permitted those animals which exhibit "good middos" not the aggressive, desirous animals of prey whose consumption would spiritually implant within us similar qualities.

The Gaon further elaborates based on the Midrashim which compare the four malchiyout to the four animals which bear only one kosher sign. Bavel, Yavan, and Madai are parallel to the gamal, the arneves and the shafan which have the internal kosher sign but not the external one. Edom is parallel to the chazir which possesses the external kosher sign but not the internal one. A famous teaching compares Edom/Eisav to the chazir who proudly displays the external kosher sign in attempting to lure the Jewish people to follow its ways. The first three kingdoms, although displaying intense wickedness, had certain internal redeeming qualities. Edom was the opposite. Outwardly, they appeared cultured but were internally morally corrupt. A frightening parallel existed in the inheritors of the Edomite kingdom, the German Third Reich and the Nazi hordes and their helpers whose outward "culture" was world famous but whose inner moral depravity surfaced in the Holocaust.

The Talmud (Yerushalmi Yoma 1:1, 4b and Bavli Yoma 9b) states that the first Beit HaMikdash was destroyed because of the violation of the three cardinal sins of arayos, avoda zara, and murder. But yet, since their sins were revealed, their time for redemption was revealed as well - exactly 70 years, after which the exile ended.

By contrast, during the period of the second Beit HaMikdash, the people, notes the Yerushalmi, "toiled in Torah and were meticulous in mitzvos." Why, then, was the second Beit HaMikdash destroyed? The Yerushalmi answers that "they loved money and hated one another" in contrast to the period of the first Beit HaMikdash whose people "relied on G-d" (Bavli Yoma 9b). Similarly, the Midrash notes that even the idolatrous Achav was victorious in battle since the Jews treated each other lovingly. Since the sin of the Jews of the second Beit HaMikdash was not revealed, the end of their exile was not revealed. (See Bavli Yoma 9b; the Yerushalmi seems to have a different version of this statement).

How can it be stated that the Jews during the first Temple period "relied on G-d"? To worship idols? To commit incest and adultery? Furthermore, what does the Gemara mean that the sin of the Jews during the second Temple period was not revealed? The Yerushalmi and Bavli reveal it as baseless hatred!

The Gra explains that the nature of the sins was very different. The yeitzer hara for arayos and avoda zara was supernaturally great during the first Temple period. The Gemara in Sanhedrin even records that the Anshei Knesset HaG'dola prayed for the elimination of the yeitzer hara for idolatry and the lessening of the yeitzer hara for arayot. Internally, though, we are taught, regarding their middos, they "relied on Hashem." This is what the Yerushalmi means by stating that "their sin was revealed," meaning, internally, their character traits were basically good, but externally their conduct was despicable. By contrast, the people of the second Beit HaMikdash acted in exactly the opposite way. Externally, their conduct, at least in adam laMakom, was perfect; they were "z'hirin b'mitzvos", but, internally, their middos were highly deficient, which expressed itself in terrible conduct bein adam lachaveiro. "They loved money, and hated each other." [1] Their sin was not revealed, meaning, the source of their sins was their internal defective middos. Outwardly, they seemed to be acting properly. For this reason, the Gemara (Yoma ibid.) concludes: "better is the fingernail of the earlier ones than the stomach of the later ones." According to the Gaon, this is not just a statement comparing a smaller part with a larger part of the anatomy. The nail is a revealed part of the body; this is parallel to the kosher sign of split hooves. The stomach is hidden; this is parallel to the kosher sign of chewing the cud. The Gemara is telling us that the outward conduct of the Jews during the first Beit HaMikdash, although sinful, was better than the inner, rotten middos of the Jews during the second Beit HaMikdash.

This duality of internal middos and external action is a central theme in avodas Hashem. Indeed, the Torah "summarizes" what is expected of us as servants of G-d in a verse in Parshat Eikev, made famous by the Mesillas Yesharim: "What does G-d ask of you, but to fear Hashem, to walk in His ways, to love Him, to serve Him wholeheartedly, and to keep all of His mitzvos..." Four out of the five directives focus on internal middos, emotions, or thoughts; only one addresses "keeping all of the mitzvos." Of course, perfect middos alone, not translated into action both in keeping the bein adam laMakom and mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro, are suspect and incomplete. But, if the actions are solely external with corrupt or even imperfect middos, then these middos will serve as the primary cause of much sin.

We have past the somber period of the Three Weeks, the mournful climax of Tisha B'av, the redemptive holiday of Tu B'Av, and are now reading the seven prophecies of consolation leading us through the month of Repentance of Elul and the days of Din v'Rachamim of Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. Let us all incorporate within ourselves the message of the destruction of both of the Batei Mikdash underscoring the utter centrality of both the external observance of mitzvos, but, even more importantly, the development of proper middos. Of course there is a symbiosis between the two. As Seifer HaChinuch writes often: "after the actions go the thoughts." Proper middos are not developed in a vacuum. They are fostered by actions expressing those middos (see Michtav Mei'Eliyahu by Rav Dessler, Kuntres HaChessed for example) and by learning about the centrality of being samei'ach b'chelko and avoiding excess, of avoiding jealousy, of soft-spoken speech and soft rebuke, of concern for other's property and feelings. May we merit teshuva sh'leima and the return of the Beit HaMikdash.

[1] Noam Elimelech explains that as a result of the Anshei Knesses HaGedola's prayer, the irrational desire for idolatry was converted to an irrational desire for money!

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from Mordechai Tzion mororly@bezeqint.net ravaviner-owner@yahoo.com toravaviner@yahoo.com date Tue, Aug 23, 2011 at 4:59 PM subject [ravaviner] Re'eh 5771 - #200!!!
Parshat Reeh 5771 - #200

Ask Rav Aviner:
Rav Shlomo Aviner

mororly@bezeqint.net Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com *** Mazal Tov!!!- This is the 200th Parashah Sheet!!! *** Dedication Opportunities Ha-Rav Aviner is set to publish a variety of new books in HEBREW. You can be a meaningful partner in these projects by dedicating a book, or part of a book, in memory or in honor of someone. Payment may be made over time. Please be in touch with Rav Aviner or with me if you are interested in this opportunity. The upcoming books are: 1. Commentary on all of "Orot" of Maran Ha-Rav Kook – 10 volumes in honor of Gimmel Elul (Rav Kook's Yahrtzeit) 2. Commentary on the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch vol. 1- sources, contemporary questions, halachic discussions, etc. (there is also the opportunity to sponsor this project).

On the Parashah... Why did Moshe Rabbenu Desire so Strongly to enter Eretz Yisrael? [Sichot Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah – Parashat Re'eh]

Moshe Rabbenu yearned to enter Eretz Yisrael. Our Rabbis ask in the Gemara (Sotah 14a): "Why did Moshe desire to enter Eretz Yisrael? Was it to eat the fruit, or to be satiated from its goodness?!" The Tur (Orach Chayim 208) cites a version of the blessing recited after eating the fruits of "The Seven Species," as follows: "Ve-Nochal Mi-Piryah Ve-Nisba Mi-Tuva - we shall eat from its fruit and be satiated from its goodness." The Tur objects, based on the above Gemara, because this version stresses the fruit of Eretz Yisrael, rather than the Land, from which it comes. And it is the Land that we must covet, so that we may fulfill the Mitzvot which are linked to it (The Torah Temimah on Devarim 3:25 also raises this issue). The Bach (ibid. and in Mishnah Berurah #50) shudders at the Tur's opinion, vehemently stressing that one must understand the sanctity of the fruits of Eretz Yisrael: The Divine Presence rests its holiness over the entire Land of Israel. The mountain, the hills, and the even fruits of Eretz Yisrael are imbued with the Divine Presence! The Chatam Sofer also refers to the fruit of Eretz Yisrael as "its holy fruits" (Chidushei Chatam Sofer on Sukka 36a). The Gemara explains why Moshe Rabbenu desired so much to enter Israel: "Rather he said: Israel has been commanded many Mitzvot, and they can only be fulfilled in Eretz Israel. I wish to enter the Land so that all of them will be fulfilled through me." We must understand what Moshe Rabbenu is saying. Some people are not accurate in their reading of Chazal's words, and deduce from here that the importance of Eretz Yisrael is not inherent but comes from its unique Mitzvot: Shemita, Terumot and Ma'asrot, etc. Maran Ha-Rav Kook explains in the last chapter of the introduction to "Shabbat Ha-Aretz" that the Land is not holy on account of the Mitzvot. On the contrary, the Mitzvot are a product of the holiness of the Land. The Land is in and of itself holy. There is a halachic expression: "Mitzvot dependent on the Land." The Mitzvot are dependent on the Land, i.e. the holiness of the Land. There is no such opposite expression of the "Land dependent on the Mitzvot." It does not exist, not in the Torah, not in Chazal, not in the Rishonim and not in the Acharonim. Fortunate are we who possess the holiness of the Land, and from it, the Mitzvot.

If so, how do we understand the Gemara's statement about Moshe Rabbenu? Answer: The "goodness" which he desired is not in the physical sense but in the spiritual sense! Usually people understand Moshe Rabbenu's words in the Gemara to mean: "I wish to enter the Land so that I will be able to fulfill all of the Mitzvot there," but that is not what the words say. This is an error. He was not concerned about himself as an individual. Rather he understood the holiness of the Land, and its ability to perfect the Mitzvot. Moshe Rabbenu therefore desired to lead the Nation of Israel into Eretz Yisrael in order to attain this supreme spiritual level of fulfilling the Mitzvot there.

Rabbi Shlomo Aviner

Rav Aviner on... **Matchmaking Talk – Part 2**

Part 1 is at <http://www.parsha.net/pdf/devarim/Eikev71.pdf>

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah- Ekev 5771 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Is it permissible to wed a young woman who talks non-stop? Certainly. After all, she just doesn't want to differ from our Sages' dictum (Kiddushin 49b) that ten measures of talk descended to the world, and nine were taken by women and one by men. It creates a pleasant atmosphere of talk in the house.

Is it permissible to wed a young woman who is taciturn? If you both sit and are silent, then apparently neither of you is talkative. You therefore have to prepare topics for conversation. Does that seem artificial? Where is it written that it's forbidden to be artificial? The head-covering, the shirt, and electricity are artificial. A lot of things are artificial. Even the Talmud did not descend ready-made from heaven. The Rabbis put it together in their wisdom based on the word of G-d. The young woman will learn to talk. These are things that you learn.

Is it permissible to wed an impoverished young woman? It's recommended. A wealthy girl is accustomed to a lavish way of life, and when she doesn't have it, she suffers. She may not make demands, but she still suffers. By contrast, a poor young woman is used to living modestly and won't suffer from it. Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah once asked his father about two matches that had been suggested to him: A wealthy young woman and a poor one. If he married the wealthy young woman, he'd be able to learn Torah in peace but would not be able to give her everything she wanted, while if he married the poor one she would already be used to living modestly but he would have to worry about earning a living. Maran Ha-Rav Kook told him that he should decide by himself. In the end, Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda decided to wed the poor young woman (Tzvi Kodesh, pp. 152-157).

Is one allowed to wed a girl who is not pretty? Certainly. After all, the chapter of Mishlei that we sing on Shabbat night, "Eshet Chayil", states: "Grace is false and beauty is vain. A woman who fears Hashem is the one who shall be praised" (31:30). If you marry a pretty young woman, you won't be able to sing "Eshet Chayil"... The philosopher Walter was asked: "What is beauty?" and he replied: "It depends on whom you ask. If you ask a black man, he will respond: 'A black woman'. If you ask a Japanese man, he will reply: 'A Japanese woman'. If you ask a bull, it will reply: 'A cow'. If you ask a toad, it will reply: 'A female toad'. And if you ask a philosopher, he will answer 'Incomprehensible gobbledygook!'" We learn in the Talmud (Ketubot 16b-17a): "What should one sing as he dances before a bride at her wedding? Beit Hillel said: 'What a lovely, righteous bride!' Bet Shammai asked them: And if she is lame or blind, should you say, 'What a lovely, righteous bride?' The Torah says, 'Distance yourself from a lie' (Shemot 23:7). Beit Hillel replied, 'According to what you say, if someone made a bad purchase in the marketplace, should his acquaintances praise or disparage it when speaking to him? I would say that they should praise it.' Based on this our Sages said, 'One should always attune himself to his fellow's concerns.'" Maharal comments that beauty and truth are subjective. The groom doesn't love his wife because she is beautiful. She is beautiful because he loves her.

Is one allowed to wed a woman who limps? Where is it written that it is forbidden to limp? Even our Forefather Yaakov limped for a while.

And if she's missing a finger? That's nonsense. It makes no difference. She doesn't put on Tefillin.

And if she's missing a hand? What's the problem? But how will she take care of a baby? What - are there no husbands with two left hands?

Is one allowed to wed an angry woman? That's a virtue. With an angry wife, you'll learn humility, and thanks to her you'll win a place in the World-to-Come.

Is one allowed to marry a disorganized woman? Why not? You keep things organized and that way you'll learn humility. One time a woman wrote me that her daughter was disorganized, and that in all her life she had never seen such disorganization as with her daughter. Whenever she would go to her daughter's for a visit, she would find pots lying on the floor with food from the preceding Shabbat that had already gone bad,

and also, the whole house was sticky. It was literally Sedom and Amarah after they were overturned. She asked me to write a letter about the value of cleanliness and order, which she would then pass on to her daughter. I wrote it and I gave it to her. One day I was invited to the daughter's house, and in the middle of the meal the daughter told me: "You wrote a letter to my mother about cleanliness and order, and she gave it to me. Only then did I [Rav Aviner] notice that her house was an indescribable mess. Until then I hadn't noticed, because that house was so full of love and joy..."

Is it permissible for a groom and bride to marry when their fathers have the same name? Certainly. This prohibition is mentioned in the Testament of Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Chasid (#23 and brought in Pitchei Teshuvah, Even Ha-Ezer 2:107 and Yoreh Deah 116:6). There is a dispute whether the Testament of Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Chasid only obligates his own offspring or everyone. The Noda Bi-Yehudah (Second Edition, Even Ha-Ezer #79) wrote that this "prohibition" is not mentioned in the Gemara and it is not possible to add prohibitions which are not found in the Gemara. The Rebbe of Sanz did not agree, and said that everything in the Testament of Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Chasid applies to everyone (Shut Divrei Chaim, Even Ha-Ezer #8). Some authorities advise in such a case that one of the fathers add to his name, and then there won't be an issue. Maran Ha-Rav Kook wrote three responsa on this subject at the beginning of Shut Ezrat Cohain (#5-7). He says that being particular about this issue only necessary when someone is suggesting a match, because it is possible to suggest many other people. If the couple meets on their own, however, it is different because it is not easy to meet someone to marry. Maran Ha-Rav Kook also said that this does not apply in Israel, since the merit of Eretz Yisrael protects one from such spiritual matters. He mentioned the Gemara in Berachot (44a) that there was one city in Eretz Yisrael called Gufnit that had eighty pairs of brothers who were cohanim married to sisters, who were the daughters of cohanim. We see that they were not worried about "pairs" (a spiritual concern) since they were in Eretz Yisrael. In general, one who is not concerned about such matters is not affected by them. Furthermore, if a couple has an inclination and desire to marry, there is no concern. In sum: There is nothing to worry about. If you add a name, then there is no problem according to all opinions.

And we can mention that when they were writing the Tana'im for Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski, who is solely referred to as "Chaim," the question arose as to how to write his name since he was given other names at birth: "Shmaryahu Yosef Chaim." The Chazon Ish said: Who said that we should reveal his other names? They didn't have to do so! As is known, Ha-Rav Kanevski is the son-in-law of Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, and Ha-Rav Kanievski's mother, the wife of the Steipler, was concerned that the other side would be particular about them having the same name, and she therefore brought up the issue at the Tana'im. The Chazon Ish, however, was not concerned since the son-in-law and father-in-law each had additional names - Ma'aseh Ish vol. 7 pp. 130-131. Does one have to wed the daughter of a Torah scholar?

One should marry a Torah scholar's daughter (Shulchan Aruch, Even Ha-Ezer 2:6). Alternately, she, herself, can be like a Torah scholar.

Once, children were like their parents, so much so that our Sages said that one who marries a woman should check up on her brothers (Baba Batra 110a). Nowadays, when siblings aren't identical, we don't insist on this point. The main thing is that she herself should be steeped in Torah wisdom. The Chassidim are more strict regarding marrying the daughter of a Torah scholar, and the non-Chassidim are less strict. All the same, the traits of the woman herself are what is most important, for a person marries his wife, and not his parents-in-law, however important and great they may be.

from genesis@torah.org reply-to genesis@torah.org to weekly-halacha@torah.org date Thu, Aug 25, 2011 at 5:05 PM subject Weekly Halacha - How Long Must the Tzitzis Strings Be?

Weekly Halacha
by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt
How Long Must the Tzitzis Strings Be?

Question: How long should the tzitzis strings (on a tallis gadol or katan) be? Is a tallis kosher if one or more strings tears either partially or completely?

Discussion: Once the tzitzis strings are looped through the hole on the corner of the garment and knotted, the length of the strings — from the top of the first knot to the end of the string[1] — should be no less than 11.4 inches[2]. The first third, approximately, is the gedil, the top segment which is composed of wound and knotted strings, and the lower two thirds, where the strings hang loose, is the anaf[3]. But the strings need to be no less than 11.4 inches in length only when they are attached initially to the garment. Attaching strings that are shorter than the prescribed length onto the garment renders the tallis pasul. If, however, the strings were the proper length when attached to the garment but only later were cut or shrunk, the tallis is still kosher as long as the anaf is at least 1.9 inches[4] long. See tomorrow's Discussion for the details. The following rules apply to tzitzis strings that fall short of the original requirement:

If one — but not more — of the eight strings snaps off completely and loses its anaf entirely, the tallis remains kosher l'chatchilah and the proper berachah is recited when it is donned[5].

If more than one of the eight strings snaps off completely, or even if more than one string is less than 1.9 inches long, the tallis should no longer be worn[6].

If one or two of the eight strings shrank but is still at least 1.9 inches long, the tallis remains kosher l'chatchilah and the proper berachah is recited over it.

If three or more (or even all eight) strings shrank but are still at least 1.9 inches long, the tallis remains kosher, but it should be replaced or repaired. If, however, this is the only tallis available, it may be worn and a berachah may be recited over it[7].

Note: Our discussion pertains to strings that were cut, got torn or shrank in the anaf portion of the string. However, if even one string was severed at the point where the tzitzis are attached to the garment (until after the first knot), the tallis is pasul[8].

Question: What are the correct dimensions for a tallis katan?

Discussion: There is a wide range of views among the poskim regarding the proper length and width of a tallis katan: Some hold that there is no minimum at all and a tallis katan of any length or width is acceptable[9], while others require an extremely long tallis katan that will reach below the knees[10].

The view of most poskim, however, falls somewhere in between these two extremes. The general consensus[11] is that it is appropriate for a God-fearing individual to wear a tallis katan which is two amos long and one amah wide. Using the middle-of-the-road view as to the exact length of an amah, it follows that the preferred tallis katan is at least 42.5 inches long [front edge to back edge[12],] and 21.3 inches wide[13].

While this is the preferred size, Mishnah Berurah[14] rules that one may wear a tallis katan which is only one and half amos long by three-quarters of an amah wide — 32 inches long by 16 inches wide[15].

Note: Chazon Ish[16] rules that each side (shoulder) of the tallis katan by itself must be wider than the opening for the neck. If, for instance, the opening is 15 inches wide, then each side of the tallis must be at least 15 inches wide, for a total of 30 inches. Most other poskim do not mention this requirement.

1. The section of string between the hole and the first knot does not count towards the minimum length of the tzitzis strings.
2. O.C. 11:4, based on the measurements of the Chazon Ish. According to the calculations of Harav A.C. Naeh, the length may be no less than 9.5 inches.
3. O.C. 11:14. See Shiurin shel Torah 6, who writes that the third-to-two-thirds ratio need not be exact.
4. According to the measurements of the Chazon Ish. According to Harav A.C. Naeh, it is about 1.6 inches.
5. O.C. 12:1. It is commendable, however, to repair such strings immediately; Eishel Avraham, O.C. 12 and Kaf ha-Chayim 12:12. See also Mishnah Berurah 15:3.
6. Depending on the exact method used for attaching the tzitzis to the garment, it is possible that a tallis will remain kosher even if more than one (or even four) strings snapped off completely. We refer here to the case where the method is unknown, e.g., a tallis that was bought with the tzitzis already attached to the garment.
7. Mishnah Berurah 12:11 and Beir Halachah, s.v. v'halachah.
8. Mishnah Berurah 12:13; Chazon Ish, O.C. 3:6, 13.

9. Aruch ha-Shulchan 16:5; Hisorerus Teshuvah 3:38. See Igros Moshe, Y.D. 3:52-2 for an elaboration.

10. The view of the Gaon of Vilna, as quoted by his disciples; see Keser Rosh 4, and Da'as Torah 16:1. See also Kaf ha-Chayim 16:2, quoting the Arizal.

11. See Mishnah Berurah 16:3; Chazon Ish, O.C. 2:9; 3:31.

12. Whether or not the neck opening is included in the minimum size is disputed by the poskim. Mishnah Berurah (8:17, 16:4) holds that it does not count, while Chazon Ish (O.C. 3:30) rules that it does, and that there is no need for stringency on this issue.

13. We have calculated the amah according to the measurements in Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:136. According to Chazon Ish, the preferred size is 48 by 24 inches, while according to Harav A.C. Naeh, 38 by 19 inches will suffice.

14. 8:17, 16:4.

15. According to Harav A.C. Naeh, the minimum size would be 30 by 15 inches.

16. O.C. 2:9, 3:31. See also Igros Chazon Ish 1:10.

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To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date Thu, Aug 25, 2011 at 8:14 PM

Peninim on the Torah
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Re'eh

See, I present before you today, a blessing and a curse. (11:26)

Sforno interprets this pasuk to be a reference to the fate of Klal Yisrael's being characterized by extremes. He writes: "Look and perceive that your affairs (as a nation) are not of an average nature, as is the case with other nations. This is because, indeed (in your case), I present before you today a blessing and a curse." These are two extremes, since the blessing represents good fortune beyond that which is adequate, on a level which is exceedingly good. The curse is one which brings about diminishment to such an extent that even a state of sufficiency becomes unattainable: both of these - blessing and curse - are 'before you' - attainable, based upon your choice.

The fate of other nations is not one of "either/or": full prosperity or extreme devastation. Theirs is not a condition of extremes: blessing or curse. They have "grey" areas in which neither is the blessing complete, nor is the curse that extreme. Not so Klal Yisrael, who are unlike other nations. As the people of G-d, our lot is destined to be uncommon. There is no middle road for us. It is either blessing or curse; nothing is in between. This idea is signified by the word Re'eh, "See!" which intimates that something novel, a new idea, is being introduced.

Sforno explains that the choice is ours. It is lifneichem, "before you." Do we choose to hear the word of G-d, or not? Torah brooks no compromise. One either listens and is, therefore, blessed, or one chooses to ignore the commandments and is, therefore, the recipient of curse. It is as simple as that.

Horav Arye Leib Bakst, zl, derives an important principal from Sforno. Since we are neither measured on an intermediate level, nor are we rewarded/punished on an average level, we must choose to serve Hashem through the medium of extreme. Thus, our she'ifah, striving, in ruchniyos, areas of spirituality, must be to the extreme. We do not seek simply to fulfill our responsibility; we seek to excel. Chazal, cited by Tanna D'bei Eliyahu 25, say, "A man is obligated to say (to demand of himself); 'When will my deeds reach those of my forebears?' Clearly, our predecessors had a stronger, closer, more disciplined attitude towards Torah study and mitzvah performance. Our attitude should not be any weaker, nor should our achievements be less than theirs. We must demand of ourselves to go farther, higher, stronger.

While we may discover a number of citations in Chazal that encourage us to be mistapek b'muat, satisfied with a little, this applies only in connection with gashmiyus, physicality and materialism. In the area of spirituality, one should never be satisfied - period. This is not a matter of discretion, but rather, a demand. In the realm of the spiritual, one either grows higher, or he descends lower. There is no status quo.

When Potifar's wife attempted to seduce Yosef HaTzaddik, he told her, "Hashem has a practice of revealing Himself at night to the beloved ones of my father's house." Yosef was intimating that by consorting with her, he would lose out on this incredible opportunity. Rav Bakst explains that Yosef was not simply pushing her off. He was serious. His striving was to be like the Patriarchs to whom the Shechinah appeared. Therefore, he could not contaminate himself to her. Yosef was spared from falling into the abyss of sin, because he had his sights on the zenith of spirituality. If one does not want to fall into the nadir of sin, he must keep his sights on the summit of spirituality. It is a clear choice.

The Rosh Yeshivah quotes the Mashgiach, Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, who went through a period during which he lost his appetite. He traveled to Koenigsburg to seek the medical opinion of a distinguished physician. He asked the physician "Is this really an illness? After all, I do eat." The physician replied that, indeed, it was a serious illness, since eating without an appetite does not achieve its objective. Likewise, Rav Bakst comments, spirituality without desire, ambition, striving for distinction, will not succeed.

Horav Meir Chadash, zl, Mashgiach of Chevron/Slabodka encouraged his students to complete Shas, the entire Talmud. One of his most distinguished students, the renowned Maggid, Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, related that he would frequently walk with his rebbe back and forth in the bais hamedrash. As they walked, engrossed in Talmudic discussion, the Mashgiach still noticed everything that was taking place in the study hall. Once, during their walks, the Mashgiach asked Rav Sholom, "Will you complete Meseches Bava Basra this z'man, semester?" Rav Sholom was shocked. Bava Basra was the longest Meseches in the Talmud. There was no way he could complete in in time, and he told this to the Mashgiach. The Mashgiach's response was, "Learn diligently all week, and then come back to me at the end of the week."

At the end of the week, Rav Sholom returned and told the Mashgiach how much he had learned. Obviously, in order to make his rebbe happy, he had really pushed himself. The Mashgiach took everything in stride and accepted the number of blatt, pages that he had covered and said, "From here on in, you must cover that number every week!" Rav Sholom mused, "I completed the Meseches four times and was subsequently tested on it by the Rosh Yeshivah."

The Mashgiach would make heavy demands of his students, because he knew that they could succeed. They needed to be motivated. He was their motivation. He would constantly reiterate, "Move forward! Use every minute! Cover ground! Know Shas!" He was wont to ask his students, "What page are you in Shas?" His point was to teach them that they had to raise the bar; Shas had to be their goal. They should settle for nothing less. "The happiest man is he who knows Shas!" was one of the Mashgiach's favorite quotes.

The concept of constantly raising the bar in his goal of spiritual achievement is something that each student in Telshe saw and sensed in his daily relationship with the Rosh Yeshivah, Horav Chaim Stein, zl. Since Peninim is written approximately two months before it appears in circulation, I write this shortly after the petirah, passing, of the Rosh Yeshivah. Having known him for over fifty years, I am amazed at his breadth of knowledge and total recall. Torah was as much a part of him as the air that he breathed. As he prodded himself more and more to achieve greater goals in his knowledge of Torah, he inspired his students to do the same. He was relentless in his drive for excellence and in his passion for knowledge. He could not fathom bitul Torah, wasting time from Torah study. After all, how does one squander life? Perhaps this is why he was blessed with such longevity. Life meant so much to him, because each day allowed him to study more Torah.

See, I present before you today, a blessing and a curse. (11:26)

Much has been written by the commentators to explain the message of this pasuk. Horav Yosef Chaim, zl, m'Bagdad, the Od Yosef Chai, offers a practical exposition of this pasuk which is especially relevant to those who are experiencing what they interpret as brachah or kelalah. The journey that each human being is compelled to undertake, the journey called life, is fraught with challenges. For some, good fortune is exactly that: good. For others, however, who find it difficult to grapple with the yetzer hora, evil-inclination, during times of plenty, good fortune is not necessarily good. It might be the source of an individual's downfall. Likewise, there is what we often define as curse: travail; pain; misery; financial hardship; tzaar gidul banim, difficulty in raising our children. These are all challenges, but are they curses? It depends upon the individual.

In any event, life has its challenges - both good and bad. How does one address the issues? How does one confront the challenges? Rav Yosef Chaim comments that the answer is in the pasuk: Hayom, "Today." It is all about today. One must acknowledge and absorb that all we really have before us is "today." Do not worry about the future. Do not concern yourself with: What if? What will be? Address the "here" and "now." Veritably, all we really have is the hayom, "today," which is before us.

This perspective on life is vital. At times, when a person is the recipient of Hashem's beneficence, blessed with wealth, health, mazel and brachah, the yetzer hora has a field day. It convinces him that it is all here to stay; he has got it made. He is revered, admired, envied and sought out. The yetzer hora wants all of this good fortune to go to his head, so that it can convince him to act foolishly, arrogantly, contemptuously, and to rebel against the Almighty: Vayishman yeshurun va'yuvaat, "And Yeshurun became fat and kicked" (Devarim 32:15). Prosperity brings about dissolution. People are prone to indulge themselves, satisfying all of their lusts, when they have the wherewithal to carry out their fantasies. This is not a hypothesis. It is a lamentable reality. How does one shelter himself from the curse of vayishman? How does one prevent himself from falling into the challenges that accompany "good fortune"?

Hayom, "Today". Get it through your mind that one is assured only of today. Tomorrow, it might be all gone, or even worse, the person might be gone. How many of the high and mighty fell prey to the economic crisis that reverberates until this very day? Upon encountering the obstacles surreptitiously laid before us by the yetzer hora, we should focus on hayom, remembering that we must live wisely today, because we are not assured of a tomorrow.

Likewise, when one is confronted with life's vicissitudes, the pain and misery of illness, financial crisis, issues with children or even parents, one should apply the word hayom as a source of encouragement. Why worry about tomorrow when one knows not what will be today? In the Talmud Sanhedrin 100b, Chazal say, Al tatzair tzoras machar, ki lo seida mah yeled yom. "Do not be distressed by tomorrow's troubles, for you do not know what will occur today." Shema Imachar einenu, "Perhaps by tomorrow one will not be alive, and it turns out he was grieving over a world that was not his." He worried about tomorrow's troubles, when, in fact, he never lived to see that day. It is all about acknowledging hayom. Hashem tells us that Re'eh, "See, I present before you, hayom, today." That is all you have to concern yourself with - today. This concept will serve as a beacon of light to illuminate your lives, both in times of blessing and during periods of curse.

An episode which occurred concerning the Chafetz Chaim is applicable to this exegesis. It took place during one of the dark, dreary nights of World War I. A group of Radiner Jews came to their revered rebbe, depressed by the events of the war and how it was taking its toll on the Jewish community, both physically and emotionally. The Chafetz Chaim listened to their outpouring of grief, and -- in his calm, sweet voice -- assured them. "Why do you worry? What do you fear?"

He proceeded to quote Chazal in the Talmud Avodah Zarah 8a, who relate that come nighttime Adam HaRishon had become very depressed. He thought that he had caused darkness to envelop the world, shrouding the light that had accompanied him throughout the day. "The world is returning to tohu va'vohu, astonishingly emptiness, with darkness over the deep." He began to fast and weep the entire night. As soon as the dawn broke with the rise of the morning star, he realized that this is the way of the world.

The Chafetz Chaim explained that Adam grieved for only one night, because he feared that the darkness would not end. He thought that the light was gone forever. There would be no end to the darkness and desolation. Once he realized that light follows darkness, he no longer worried. The setting sun, with its impeding glooming darkness, is part of a cycle of life. "My friends," asked the Chafetz Chaim, "the present darkness that encapsulates the world - is it the first one that we as Jews have endured? From our earliest days of nationhood, we have been shrouded in darkness. What has kept us going? The light at the end of the tunnel. We know that there will always be light. Every period of gloom has been followed by light. So, why is this darkness any different? The war will end, and there will once again be light." He was teaching them about the hayom factor, an idea which generates hope and instills confidence.

Perhaps we must focus on another word of this pasuk, Anochi, "I," Hashem, as the underlying source of reassurance and inspiritment. Let me explain with the following story: A blaze broke out in a small town in Russia. Many homes belonging to both Jew and gentile were completely destroyed. After the fire was extinguished, everyone made an assessment of the damages. Life had to go on. This is how people lived in Pre-World War II Europe. A fire meant that everything was destroyed. There was no insurance. Yesterday was gone. They had to look forward to tomorrow. One Jew walked over to the mound of ash that had once been his home. At first, he stared at the rubble. Then, in a loud voice that resonated to all

those in his proximity, he recited the blessing She'lo asani goi, glorifying Hashem for not making him a gentile

Those who heard this incantation emanating from this broken Jew conjectured that he had lost his mind, or was, at least, seriously depressed as a result of the fire. How is not being created as a gentile connected to the tragedy that had befallen him? When the man who had made the blessing noticed that those around regarded him as being slightly bent out of shape, he looked at them and explained, "My friends, please do not look at me as having lost my mind. I am as rational as you. Perhaps even more rational. The blessing that I recited was made with a clear and lucid mind, recognizing, perhaps for the first time, the full meaning of the blessing. My entire life I have recited this brachah without giving a second thought to its penetrating meaning. Did I realize my good fortune at being a Jew? No! I would recite this blessing in much the same manner that I daven everything else, with very little feeling and less aforethought. Now, however, as I see what has happened to our gentile neighbors, I fully begin to understand the tremendous bliss inherent in being a Jew.

"My gentile neighbor lost everything: his house, his clothes, furniture, indeed, his entire fortune. He is left penniless, with nothing. Even his godhead, which had been situated above his cabinet, was burnt. He is left bereft of all his earthly possessions. I, on the other hand, also lost all of my material possessions, but I still have Hashem! I have something that the goy does not have: the Ribono Shel Olam! Do you wonder why I am so enthusiastic about reciting the blessing?"

In the course of life, one invariably experiences brachah and kelalah. The doses and frequencies vary, but no one escapes kelalah, and everyone, in one way or another, encounters brachah. We often forget the Source of these Heavenly communiqu'ns. Everything has its purpose. Everything has its reason. They all come to us from Anochi - I/Hashem. If we remember the Source of the brachah, it is much easier to deal with the challenges it engenders. When we acknowledge that the kelalah is Hashem's way of sending us a message, it becomes much more palatable. Re'eh Anochi - remember the Source!

You shall not eat any carcass; to the stranger who is in your cities shall you give it that he may eat it, or sell it to a gentile, for you are a holy people to Hashem, your G-d. (14:21)

The Torah enjoins us not to eat of a neveilah, carcass of an animal that died without shechitah, ritual slaughter. The pasuk concludes: "For you are a holy nation." This implies that neveilah is prohibited due to our kedushah, holy status. Sforno comments that neveilah is not an abomination like the eating of non-kosher animals. It is prohibited because it lacks shechitah. For a nation whose status in life is sanctity, it is demeaning to partake of such an animal.

Rashi cites the Sifri that has an alternative understanding of this pasuk. He was probably bothered by the question that is posed by many commentators: Why is the fact that we are an am kadosh, holy nation, at the end of the pasuk, separated by the dispensation allowing for neveilah to be consumed by the ger toshav, alien convert, and nachri, gentile? If am kadosh is the underlying reason for forbidding us from eating prohibited foods, then it should follow after the next pasuk of Lo sevashel gedi ba'chaleive imo, "Do not cook a kid in its mother's milk." Apparently, am kadosh is not connected with maachalos asuros, prohibited foods. Sifri explains the injunction of am kadosh as reference to sensitivity training. Kadesh atzmecha b'mutar lach, "Sanctify yourself by refraining from or doing something that is technically permissible." As an am kadosh, we are required to be sensitive to the rigorous demands that others place upon themselves. Thus, we should not act leniently in the presence of those who have placed strictures upon themselves. It indicates a lack of respect for the individual. The demands of holiness are such that one must always be cognizant of another person's self-proclaimed prohibitions. If that is what he wants to do; if this is how he wants to live, so be it. To ridicule him by acting permissively shows a lack of mentchlichkeit, humanness.

A similar idea is expressed by Sforno in his commentary to Vayikra (22:2) regarding safeguarding the sanctity of offerings and Terumah. V'yinzaru mikdoshei Bnei Yisrael, "They [the Kohanim who become tamei, spiritually contaminated] shall withdraw from the holies of Bnei Yisrael." A Kohen who becomes contaminated must withdraw from all aspects of service, lest he disqualify the offerings that the Jewish People have sanctified. Sforno comments: "Let them not think that on account of their exalted status, the holy things of Klal Yisrael may be considered as chullin, profane, to them." This is similar to the halachah in the Talmud Moed Kattan 16a, where Chazal distinguish between a cherem, ban, imposed by a teacher and one imposed by a student. In the former case, the ban must be respected by the disciple as well. In the latter case, however, although the ban remains in effect, the teacher is not required to heed it.

We derive from this halachah that degrees of stringencies in law exist in which one might erroneously assume can be likened to degrees of sanctity. Just as the disciple's authority does not bind the teacher in the ban, one might think that the

stature of holiness declared by the ben Yisrael, regular Jew, over an animal or object should not be binding to the Kohen, due to the Yisrael's inferior status in relation to the Kohen. Therefore, the Torah makes a point to accentuate that this analogy is incorrect and that the sanctity of all things is binding on the Kohen as well. If a Kohen does not honor the Yisrael's sanctified object, it is fitting for the Kohen who profaned it to be punished.

Why would someone ignore the self-imposed strictures of another person? What possesses a person to be so spiteful? If an individual seeks to elevate himself spiritually, to accept upon himself rigorous demands, should it bother me? Should I go out of my way to show that I do not agree with him? It all originates with envy. If someone who is just like me wants to impose chumros, stringencies, upon himself, the yetzer hora, evil-inclination, within me says: "He thinks he is better than you. Who is he to think so? You are just as frum, observant, as he." This is how it begins. We all know how it ends.

Did it ever enter our mind that the fellow who imposed strictures upon himself did so after much introspection? Perhaps he knows himself, and this is what he feels he needs to do. To impugn the integrity of his strictures, to put him down as being insecure and different - to oppose him by acting in an insensitive manner to him by making a point of eating or drinking in front of him a food or beverage that we know he has prohibited himself - shows a lack of kedushah on our part. Imagine the hurt that we cause, the discouragement that results from our actions. Imagine if he is a baal teshuvah, penitent, who is trying to grow spiritually, and our put-down just let the air out of his spiritual ascent. Regrettably, this happens more often than we care to consider.

Sensitivity training goes hand in hand with religious observance. Regrettably, some of us take it for granted that if we are frum, we are "holier than thou." Consequently, we have license to do whatever we want, including expressing our disdain for another person's practice, shortcomings, or even physical or emotional shortcomings. Anyone who possesses the slightest modicum of intelligence knows this to be untrue. Yet, this does not prevent the self-righteous from offering their sanctimonious, judgmental views of people - regardless of whom they hurt.

Some stories remain with me; their impact is such that I often repeat them. This is one of them: Every day, the gadol hador, preeminent leader of Torah Jewry in Pre-World War II Europe, Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, zl, would walk home after his shiur, lecture, accompanied by his students. One day, while walking home, a teenager approached Rav Chaim Ozer. In a stammering voice, he asked directions to an address that was some distance away from where they were at that time. Surprisingly, the gadol hador accompanied the young man. It was a cold, frigid day with a howling wind blowing in their faces, but if Rav Chaim Ozer was walking, the students accompanied him.

Finally, they reached the destination, and now they had to turn around and walk to Rav Chaim Ozer's home. They began to think to themselves with faint bitterness. Rav Chaim Ozer was not a young man, and every minute of his time was valuable. Why did he waste forty-five minutes walking in the bitter cold, when he could easily have given the boy directions? What is the worst that would have happened? He would have had to ask someone else. Nu. What is so bad about that? Finally, one of the older students conveyed what was bothering them to Rav Chaim Ozer.

The rav looked at his students and explained the following: "You must have noticed that the boy had a serious stuttering problem. He has difficulty speaking, and he was clearly embarrassed to ask the one question that he did ask. Had I simply given him directions to the street that he sought, he would have been forced to stop a number of times to ask again to confirm the directions. This would mean more contact with people, more stuttering, more humiliation. I would not allow a young Jewish child to be so humiliated. Not if I could help him. This is why I walked him to the house that he sought" The venerable gadol hador taught his students a most valuable lesson: the importance of being sensitive to the needs of our Jewish brethren.

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