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Re'eh

Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger **The Secret for Achieving Unity**

The fresh pain of our own infighting, especially during the month of Av, makes the comforting words of the neviim that we read during these weeks seem so far away and out of our reach. That notwithstanding, we are committed to underscoring the teachings that do embrace rather than distance, that respect rather than demonize. It is in this regard that our parsha presents to us a refreshing teachable moment.

Perhaps it is instructive that the mesora embedded the prohibition against behaviors that may create fissures within the community, "lo siggodidu", within the restrictions against self-mutilation out of grief. The literal reading of "lo siggodadu" (14:1) bans the early Semitic practice of cutting oneself and views it as an overreaction, or at least as a poorly directed reaction, to loss. According to Ibn Ezra this is the meaning of the introductory phrase of the pasuk, "You are children of Hashem", i.e. our belief in His concern for us should blunt the depth of our reaction to tragedy.

However, the mesora teaches that "lo siggodidu" also rules against establishing "agudos agudos", factions and walls within a community. That means that whereas we are all encouraged to maintain authentic and well-based customs and practices, we must refrain from doing so within a community that has a decidedly different observance. Refraining from putting on tefilin on chol hamoed in a bais hamedrash in Yerushalayim, despite one's personal practice, is the classic modern illustration of the mesorah's principle. Clearly, maintaining one's practice of putting on tefilin on chol hamoed when it does not set one apart from the community is mandated. Yet even a firmly based communal legacy must be set aside if it would create the image of two groups distinguishing themselves in their observance.

It follows that months of in-depth study or the correct commitment to "tribal" or family legacy are all left behind, for the moment, if it would

diminish another genuine legacy uniformly practiced by a community. Indeed in a community where differing practices have already taken hold, perhaps by the sudden merger forced upon us, prevailing opinion encourages maintaining varying practices even in public. Apparently in that situation it is believed that valuing variety and diversity will result, and in fact generate, the respect for one another that is otherwise communicated by acquiescing to the established communal approach.

Now we can appreciate how the mesorah connects the introductory phrase, "You are Hashem's children" to the substance of this meaning of "lo siggodadu". Children who are interested in their parents' legacy, in its entirety and completeness, learn to include all those who behave as children in some significant measure. They learn to understand, sometimes with sacrifice and hurt, their siblings' contribution in the reconstruction and evaluation of a heritage. Just as an estate is no longer as it is pulled or peeled apart, so to one's spiritual bequest is only as complete as it is inclusive of those who value that inheritance. I believe that is why the Torah calls itself "morasha lekehillas Yaakov".

What is the secret of holding it all together despite the passion appropriately invested in one's beliefs? What is the secret that continually eludes our people time and time again and that could at least soften the rhetoric and lower the volume? That secret is remembering at all times, "banim atem laHashem".

The illustration of the towering saint, Rav Kook, is so very instructive. He was censured and condemned by leading personalities of his time for his benevolence to those who were not religious. He boldly responded that he is able to find a kernel of truth in any position held by his brethren notwithstanding how far from correct their lifestyle or their position may be. Rav Kook would then address that kernel of truth, nurture it, develop it and ultimately include it.

Perhaps that is the essence of "talmidei chachamim marbim shalom baalom". Talmidei chachamim, our Talmudic scholars, turn nights into days in their well-practiced skill of studying varying Talmudic positions in order to understand the truths of all positions. It is with that skill that Rav Kook reduced the fierceness of dissent and built upon it with optimism and love.

Finally, the haftorah describes times to come: "...I will make your windows like jewels and your gates like gems and your borders like precious stones." When we value meaningful diversity and allow it to enrich us and make us deeper, then that which separates us becomes indeed prized gems. We have come to expect that when we find beauty in our clanish boundaries, moshiach has come. How we must pray that we will learn this in time to bring him speedily.

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Judaism's Social Vision **Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

If you seek to understand Judaism's social vision, look at its anti-poverty legislation. "If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tight-fisted toward your poor brother. Rather be open-handed and freely lend him sufficient for his needs in that which he lacks. Be careful not to harbour this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land." (Deut 15: 7-11)

Ostensibly the passage is about the cancellation of debts in the seventh year (shemittah, the year of "release"). The oral tradition, however, extended it to the laws of tzedakah - the word usually translated as "charity" but which also means "distributive justice, equity". The rabbis interpreted the phrase "sufficient for his needs" to mean the basic requirements of existence: food, clothing, shelter and so on. "That which he lacks" was understood as referring to a person who was previously wealthy but has now become impoverished. He too must be helped to recover his dignity: It is related about Hillel the Elder that, for a certain poor man who was of good family, he bought a horse to ride on and a slave to run before him. When on one occasion he could not find a slave to run before the man, he himself ran before him. (Ketubot 67b)

The force of this passage lies in the fact that Hillel himself was notoriously poor, yet he gave of his money and time to help a rich man who had lost his money regain his self-respect. This double aspect is evident throughout the laws of tzedakah. On the one hand, they are directed to the brute fact of poverty. No one must be deprived of basic physical necessities. On the other, they address with astonishing sensitivity the psychology of poverty. It demeans, embarrasses, humiliates, shames. Tzedakah, ruled the rabbis, must be given in such a way as to minimize these feelings: When Rabbi Yannai saw a certain man giving a coin to a poor person in front of everyone, he said: It would have been better not to have given it to him than to have given it and put him to shame. (Hagigah 5b)

In a famous passage, Maimonides describes the eight levels of charity: There are eight degrees of charity, one higher than the other.

The highest degree, exceeded by none, is that of one who assists a poor person by providing him with a gift or a loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him find employment – in a word by putting him in a situation where he can dispense with other people's aid. With reference to such aid it is said, 'You shall strengthen him, be he a stranger or a settler, he shall live with you' (Lev. 25: 35), which means: strengthen him in such a manner that his falling into want is prevented.

A step below this is the one who gives alms to the needy in such a way that the giver does not know to whom he gives and the recipient does not know from whom he takes. This exemplifies doing a good deed for its own sake. One example was the Hall of Secrecy in the Temple, where the righteous would place their gift clandestinely and where poor people from noble families could come and secretly help themselves to aid. Close to this is dropping money in a charity box...

One step lower is where the giver knows to whom he gives, but the poor person does not know from whom he receives. Thus the great sages would go and secretly put money into poor people's doorways...

A step lower is the case where the poor person knows from whom he is taking, but the giver does not know to whom he is giving. Thus the great sages would tie coins in their scarves, which they would fling over their shoulders, so that the poor could help themselves without suffering shame.

Lower than this, is where someone gives the poor person a gift before he asks.

Lower still is one who gives only after the poor person asks.

Lower than this is one who gives less than is fitting, but does so with a friendly countenance.

The lowest level is one who gives ungraciously. (Mattenot Ani'im 10: 7-14)

This exquisitely calibrated ethic is shot through with psychological insight. What matters is not only how much you give, but also how you do so. Anonymity in the giving of aid is essential to dignity. The poor must not be embarrassed. The rich must not be allowed to feel superior. We give, not to take pride in our generosity, still less to emphasise the dependency of others, but because we belong to a covenant of human solidarity, and because that is what God wants us to do, honouring the trust through which he has temporarily lent us wealth in the first place.

Especially noteworthy is Maimonides' insistence that giving somebody a job, or the means to start a business, is the highest charity of all. What is humiliating about poverty is dependence itself: the feeling of being beholden to others. One of the sharpest expressions of this is to be found in the Grace after Meals, when we say, "We beseech You, God our Lord, let us not be in need of the gifts of men or of their loans, but only of Your helping hand . . . so that we may not be put to shame nor humiliated for ever and ever." The greatest act of tzedakah is one that allows the individual to become self-sufficient. The highest form of charity is one that enables the individual to dispense with charity. From the point of view of the giver, this is one of the least financially demanding forms of giving. It may not cost him anything at all. But from the point of view of the recipient, it is the most dignifying, because it removes the shame of receiving. Humanitarian relief is essential in the short-term, but in the long-run, job creation and economic policies that promote full employment are more important.

One detail of Jewish law is particularly noteworthy: even a person dependent on tzedakah must himself or herself give tzedakah. On the face of it, the rule is absurd. Why give X enough money so that he can give to Y? Giving to Y directly is more logical and efficient. What the rabbis understood, however, is that giving is an essential part of human dignity. The rabbinic insistence that the community provide the poor with enough money so that they themselves can give is a profound insight into the human condition.

Jewry has had many distinguished economists, from David Ricardo (whom Keynes called the greatest mind that ever addressed itself to economics), to John von Neumann (a physicist who, in his spare time, invented Game Theory), to Paul Samuelson, Milton Friedman and Alan Greenspan. They have won an astonishing 38% of Nobel prizes in the field. Why should this have been so? Perhaps because Jews have long known that economics is one of the fundamental determinants of a society; that economic systems are not written into the structure of the universe, but are constructed by human beings and can be changed by human beings; and thus that poverty is not a fact of nature but can be alleviated, minimized, reduced. Economics is not a religious discipline. It is a secular art and science. Yet, deeply underlying the Jewish passion for economics is a religious imperative: "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land."

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit www.chief Rabbi.org.

http://www.ou.org/jewish_action/article/charity_in_a_changed_economy_an_interview_with_rabbi_hershel_schachter

Jewish Action Sept. 2011

Charity In a Changed Economy:

An Interview with Rabbi Hershel Schachter

By Gil Student

JA: How much money should one give to tzedakah?

RHS: If one can afford it, the recommended amount is one-tenth of one's annual earnings, which includes salary and interest earned. There are different opinions as to whether the one-tenth is applied to the total earned [aside from withheld taxes] or to the remainder after essential living expenses. I think the general practice follows the first opinion. Of course, this applies only if one can afford it. If one cannot afford to give one-tenth of his income to tzedakah then he should not.

The Gemara (Ketubot 50a), quoted by the Rambam (Hilchot Arachim 8:13), seems to say that the maximum one may give is 20 percent, because if one gives too much, one may become poor and dependent on the charity of others. In another place (Hilchot Matnot Ani'im 7:5), the Rambam sets the recommended amount, rather than the maximum, as 20 percent. Yaakov Avinu said (Bereishit 28:22) that from everything he

will earn “*aser a’asrenu lach*,” he will give one tenth and then another tenth. The Chofetz Chaim (Ahavat Chesed II 50:2) resolves this contradiction regarding whether 20 percent is the maximum or the recommended amount. According to the Chofetz Chaim, if poor people are knocking at one’s door asking for donations, if one can afford it, then one should give up to 20 percent. But if people are not asking for that much then the recommended level of giving is 10 percent.

JA: When giving tzedakah, can people decide entirely on their own whom to give?

RHS: A person does have some *tovat hana’ah*, the right to decide whom to give the money, but not that much. The mishnah in Pirkei Avot (3:8) tells us that we are only trustees of HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s money. We shouldn’t act as if it is ours. “*Ten lo mishelo she’atah veshelcha mishelo*, Give to Him what is His because you and yours are His.” Everything belongs to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*—our bodies, our souls, our wisdom and our property. We should act as if we are just trustees giving out His money. That is why we must follow the instructions of the Chumash (Devarim 15:7), quoted in the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 251:3), regarding priorities for whom to give more and whom less.

The Rambam (Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 7:7) quotes Tehillim (75:21) “*Al yashuv dach nichlam*, Do not send a poor man away embarrassed.” If a poor person asks for tzedakah for himself, you must give him something. But you do not have to give him a hundred dollars; you can give him just one dollar. You have a little *tovat hana’ah*. You have the right to choose whom to give a lot and whom to give a little.

This rule does not apply to a person collecting for an institution. You can choose not to give tzedakah to an institution because you want to donate elsewhere. Some people respond with a check to every solicitation letter they receive. I don’t. I throw out most of these letters. I’m not obligated to send money to an institution or to a person I’ve never heard of. If a poor person is standing in front of you, then you have to give him something. If a person is collecting for someone else or for an institution, or if he or even a famous *rav* sends a letter rather than comes himself, then the rule does not apply, and you are not obligated to give anything.

JA: What are the priorities for determining whom to give more?

RHS: The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 251:3), based on Biblical and Talmudic sources, states that poor relatives come first, next come neighbors, then people in the same city [*aniyei ircha*], and then the poor in Israel [*aniyei Eretz Yisrael*]. The Chatam Sofer (VI:27) gives precedence to the poor of Yerushalayim over those from elsewhere in Eretz Yisrael, and then the poor people who live in other parts of the world.

The question is what does “precedence” mean? Does it mean you give everything to the poor people in your family? The commentaries assume that this is not the case. The Chatam Sofer (II: 233-234) writes that you give half of your tzedakah money to family and divide the other half among other poor people. Others think that you have to give more than half to those who take precedence. The Aruch HaShulchan (Yoreh Deah 251:4) says a little more than half—51 percent. The Pitchei Teshuvah (251:2) quotes an opinion that states you should give three-quarters to those with precedence and one-quarter to the rest. The Chachmat Adam (145:5) and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein say that the split is two-thirds/one-third.

Here is an example following this last opinion: Assuming I have \$1,000 to give to tzedakah, if I have a relative who needs \$667, I give it to him. The maximum is \$667; but if he needs less, I give him less. Once my relatives are taken care of within the amount of \$667, I give up to two-thirds of the remaining money to needy neighbors. And of the remaining money, I similarly give up to two-thirds to *aniyei ircha*. And so on, through the list of priorities.

However, *aniyei ircha* does not refer to the poor people of your city literally. I live in Manhattan. Are all the poor people in New York

considered my *aniyei ircha*? I don’t think so. Years ago, the cities were small and *aniyei ircha* were the people you knew. Today, *aniyei ircha* are the people with whom you associate, with whom you have a *kesher*. There are so many shuls in New York, but I don’t daven in all of them. There are so many *mikvaot* in this city, but my family only uses one. The shuls and *mikvah* from which my family benefits are considered *aniyei ircha*. The yeshivot where I, my children and my grandchildren learned, even in distant cities or countries, are considered *aniyei ircha*. The institutions with which I have a connection are *aniyei ircha*, and those with which I have no link are *aniyei ir acheret* [the poor of another city].

JA: Is it better to give to poor people far away so they can eat or to a local yeshiva so it does not close down?

RHS: That is a very serious question. For many years, the American community was supporting its own yeshivot and sending its surplus tzedakah money to Eretz Yisrael. Now we realize that there is no surplus money and yeshivot in America are closing. I think that our local yeshivot take precedence over *aniyim* in another city. Let other people take care of the *aniyim* in the other city until we can support ourselves and educate our children.

JA: Should someone who receives tuition assistance give tzedakah priority to those yeshivot?

RHS: Definitely. One who is receiving a tuition scholarship should certainly give tzedakah money, if he has any to give, to the institution offering him the discounted tuition. He should give his own money or raise funds from others to try to return the amount of the tuition break.

JA: Is it tzedakah to give to a yeshiva that pays higher wages than was standard in the past?

RHS: I think it is considered tzedakah. Years ago, many yeshivot and day schools had under-qualified teachers. Those teachers knew how to speak Hebrew and read a little Chumash, but they were lacking in knowledge and often observance. Many of them were not even *shomer Shabbat*. What kind of a positive religious influence can such teachers have on children? We would prefer to have observant and learned teachers but such people can go into many other fields. We expect a little *mesirut nefesh* [sacrifice] on the part of Jewish educators, but we can’t expect that much. Since they can go into other professions and make more money, we have to make *chinuch* appealing. If we do not pay decent salaries, we are not going to get good teachers.

JA: Is it considered tzedakah to give money to people who can work but choose not to?

RHS: There is absolutely no *mitzvah* of tzedakah in this case. The *mitzvah* of tzedakah is to give to a poor person. Someone who has the ability to earn a living is not considered poor. I am not obligated to give him tzedakah just because he decided to retire at the age of twenty.

Rabbi Gil Student writes frequently on Jewish issues and blogs at TorahMusings.com.

<http://rabbikaganoff.com/archives/1587>

RabbiKaganoff.com

The Torah Writings of Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff shlita

A few weeks ago, the main office of the Yated Neeman received the following communication:

“The Yated has numerous, excellent weekly columns that deal with halacha issues. I want to suggest a topic that I, and probably many others as well, would like to see clarified. The topic is *sheimos*.

“Among the questions I have on the subject are: What items constitute *sheimos*? What is the halacha concerning books containing words of Torah written by people who reject Torah? May I discard the booklets the children bring home from school or a newspaper that contains Torah articles into the regular trash? Does it make a difference if the item was produced knowing it would soon be disposed? May wedding invitations contain *pesukim*?”

“Thanking you so much in advance,
“Yaakov Wolff”* (Name has been changed as requested by the correspondent.)

Indeed, in our time there is a huge proliferation of printed divrei Torah. Are we required to place all of these items in sheimos? As always, it is not the purpose of our column to determine the halacha for our readers; each person should refer his/her own shaylos to one’s rav. Our purpose here is to introduce the subject and the issues involved.

As an introduction to Mr. Wolff’s questions, I will analyze the halachic sources, which divide sheimos items into two basic categories:

- I. Items that include Hashem’s name
- II. Holy writings that do not include Hashem’s name

ITEMS THAT INCLUDE HASHEM’S NAME

In Parshas Re’eih, the Torah commands: Destroy all the places where the gentiles that you are driving out worshipped their gods, whether they were on high mountains or on hills, or beneath any leafy tree. Raze their altars, smash their pillars, burn their idolatrous asheirah trees, and demolish the images of their gods. Obliterate the names (of their deities) from that place. Do not do this to Hashem your G-d!” (Devarim 12:2-4) This last verse teaches that, just as it is a mitzvah min haTorah to destroy idols and everything associated with them, so too it is a Torah violation to destroy anything containing Hashem’s name (Shabbos 120b; Rambam, Hil. Yesodei HaTorah 6:1).

When the Torah states: Obliterate the names (of their deities) from that place. Do not do this to Hashem your G-d, it prohibits erasing or obliterating something containing one of Hashem’s holy names, specifically referring to the seven sheimos she’einam nimchakim, the seven names of Hashem that may never be erased (Shavuos 35a). These names are the names of Hashem that we are careful not to pronounce except when reciting a prayer, but instead modify their pronunciation; for example, we say Elokim, Hashem, or Keil. When an item containing one of these names can no longer be used, it must be treated in a very special way, as we will see shortly.

As an extension of this prohibition, Chazal prohibited destroying other holy writings, including commentaries, halacha, and other Torah works (see Rambam, Hil. Yesodei HaTorah 6:8). The precise details of how to dispose of these items are sometimes disputed.

SHEIMOS VERSUS GENIZAH

In Yiddish, holy items that require halachically-approved disposal are called sheimos, a truncating of the phrase sheimos she’einam nimchakim, names that may never be erased. The customary Hebrew word used in this context, genizah, means the place where these items are placed. Thus, one term describes the basis for the sanctity of these items, whereas the other depicts their treatment. To maintain the connotations and uses of both terms, I will use the word “sheimos” to refer to the items themselves that have sanctity and the word “genizah” to describe how these items are handled when no longer usable.

RULES OF SHEIMOS SHE’EINAM NIMCHAKIM

One may not erase the seven sheimos she’einam nimchakim even to repair a sefer torah. For example, if a sofer errantly wrote one of these names in a place where it does not belong, one may not simply erase the name to render the sefer torah kosher. Instead, some opinions allow one to surgically split the thickness of the parchment on which he wrote the holy name in a way that removes the holy name intact. This is an extremely delicate task since one must remove the complete intact name no matter how deeply its ink has seeped into the parchment. This piece of parchment containing the holy name must now be placed in genizah. In order to write on the parchment where this name was located, the sofer sands it to restore its texture.

WHAT IS GENIZAH?

What is the proper way to perform genizah?

Worn out sifrei torah should be placed in earthenware vessels and then buried (Megillah 26b). Placing them inside these vessels forestalls the

decomposition of the sifrei torah for a long time. Indeed it is a tragedy that Hashem’s name becomes obliterated, even in an indirect way, and the mitzvah commands us to delay their decay for as long as possible. They should be buried near a talmid chacham, or at least near someone who studied halacha and other basic Torah.

GENIZAH OF PRINTED SEFORIM

Do printed seforim require the same standards of genizah that the Gemara requires for a sefer torah?

The poskim dispute whether printed seforim also need to be protected in earthenware vessels before they are buried. The Be’er Sheva requires them to be buried inside earthenware vessels, as does the Keneses Yechezkel (Shu”t Be’er Sheva #43, quoted by Magen Avraham 154:9 and Shu”t Shvus Yaakov 3:10; Shu”t Keneses Yechezkel #37, quoted by Rav Shlomoh Eiger in his notes to Yoreh Deah 282:10). The Keneses Yechezkel adds that packing them inside wood boxes is as acceptable as burying the sheimos in earthenware. Both of these authors rule that printed seforim must be packed properly before burial, even those without Hashem’s name.

On the other hand, the Pri Megadim (commenting on this Magen Avraham) notes that the custom is to bury worn-out printed seforim without placing them inside vessels, and to insist on this special treatment only for hand-written nevi’im and kesuvim (used temporarily predominantly for haftarah and megillos) that are written on parchment. Thus we see that there is a dispute whether printed seforim must be packed in earthenware or other similarly protective ways before burial; the Be’er Sheva and Keneses Yechezkel requiring it, and the Pri Megadim not.

What is the accepted halachic practice?

The Mishnah Berurah (154:22, 24) quotes only the Pri Megadim, accepting that printed seforim, even those bearing Hashem’s name, do not have the full level of sanctity of hand-written seforim; he does not even mention the disputing opinions. My impression is that this is the practice usually followed by those who bury genizah: hand-written Sifrei Torah, mezuzos, tefillin, megillos and naviim are specially packed before burial in earthenware, wood, or glass containers; whereas worn-out, printed seforim are simply placed in bags or cardboard boxes and buried.

At this point, we can address specific aspects of Mr. Wolff’s questions: “What is the halacha concerning books containing Torah words written by people who reject Torah?”

NONBELIEVERS

Despite the serious transgression of destroying Hashem’s name, names written by a Jew who rejects Torah belief have no sanctity min haTorah (Rambam, Hil. Yesodei HaTorah 6:8). If the texts including these names were written by such a Jew, or if the text contains sacrilegious or heretical ideas or references, one should destroy them (see Shabbos 116a; Gittin 45b).

GENTILE WRITINGS

Torah writings authored by a gentile that contain no heretical beliefs should be placed in genizah (Gittin 45b; Rambam, Hil. Yesodei HaTorah 6:8). Those that contain heresy should be destroyed.

HOLY BOOKS THAT DO NOT INCLUDE HASHEM’S NAME

Destroying Torah writings that do not include Hashem’s name is prohibited mi’darabanan (see Rambam, Hil. Yesodei HaTorah 6:8, based on Shabbos 115, 116). Thus, Mishnayos, Gemaras, and most parts of commentaries on Tanach, Gemara, Halacha and Aggadah are considered sheimos only mi’darabanan since it is unusual to find Hashem’s names in them.

Reference notes that are incomprehensible on their own are not considered divrei torah and may be placed in the regular garbage (Shu”t Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:75).

PRINTED WORKS CONTAINING DIVREI TORAH

Is there any halachic difference between a printed sefer, which has kedusha, and a printed work on a non-holy subject that happens to contain some divrei torah or quotations from Chazal?

THE WRITER'S INTENT

Some halachic authorities maintain that if a printer or writer did not intend to produce seforim or divrei kedusha, then the resultant product has no kedusha (Shu"t Ein Yitzchak 5:7-9; Chazon Ish, Yoreh Deah 164:3 s.v. ve'im; see also Shu"t Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 1:172). According to this approach, a book published on a non-Torah subject that includes some divrei torah need not be placed in genizah when it wears out. This lenience applies only to items that do not contain one of the seven names of Hashem (Shu"t Meishiv Davar 2:80).

NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

If a newspaper or magazine contains divrei torah, does this require it to ultimately be placed in genizah?

Based on much of the above-discussion, the Melameid Liho'il (2:89) rules that non-Hebrew publications containing Hashem's name may even be respectfully burnt. He contends that since the printer did not realize he was printing anything holy, the magazine has no kedusha. There is therefore no requirement to dispose of these items in genizah. He does insist that they not be treated disdainfully, and in his opinion, burning these publications, so as not to treat them as regular garbage, constitutes treating them with adequate respect.

WHY ONLY NON-HEBREW?

The Melameid Liho'il assumed that someone printing a non-Hebrew work would never have assumed that he was printing something holy. If the same assumption can be made regarding a Hebrew publication, then his line of reasoning would follow there as well. (Other reasons, beyond the scope of this article, are mentioned to distinguish between works written in Hebrew and those written in other languages, see for example, Shu"t Rama #34; Shu"t Chavos Ya'ir #109.)

A FRUM HEBREW NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE

Can we make the same assumption concerning a frum Hebrew newspaper? Does the printer think that there is no kedusha in what he is printing? Or, should we assume that since most frum newspapers contain some divrei torah, the printer realizes that he is printing divrei torah; thus, those parts of the newspaper or magazine should be placed in genizah.

The written opinions I have seen on this subject vary. Most contemporary poskim rule that one is not required to put a newspaper containing divrei torah into genizah; it is satisfactory to wrap the paper or simply the divrei torah before disposing of them in the garbage (Rav Elyashiv and Rav Vozner, quoted in Ginzei HaKodesh pgs. 154, 236). This approach accepts that these divrei torah were printed without intent to make them holy. However, they should be wrapped first so that they are not treated with disdain.

A minority opinion contends that one must place the divrei torah sections of these newspapers in genizah (Ginzei HaKodesh pg. 154, quoting Rav Nissim Karelitz). I have noticed that some chareidi newspapers in Israel print a note on the page when there is a dvar torah on the page, calling the reader's attention to the fact that this page requires genizah. Apparently, these publications follow the stricter of the rulings cited above.

PERMANENCE

Several earlier authorities imply that divrei torah intended to be temporary do not have kedusha (see Shu"t Ayn Yitzchak #5:7; Shu"t Meishiv Davar 2:80). The line of reasoning here is that since the printer does intend to create permanent Torah works, the items do not become holy. This approach explains the common practice of photocopying Torah quotations for one time use without exerting major effort to retrieve the items for genizah. I leave it to the reader to discuss with his rav whether he may follow this approach.

INVITATIONS

At this point, let us address the next question on Mr. Wolff's list: "May wedding invitations contain pesukim?"

Two different halachic concerns are involved when one prints a pasuk or statement of Chazal on an invitation. The first issue is that many people will not realize that this invitation may not be disposed in the garbage, a contemptuous finale for holy writings. (Although the printer may not intend to print this for holy purposes, this only permits not placing the invitations in genizah. As I mentioned above, they may not be placed directly in the regular garbage.) Thus, the person ordering the printing of these works is guilty of causing the destruction of holy writings.

A second halachic concern is that one is only permitted to create written Torah works in order to learn Torah, but not as a decoration. (This is a lengthy subject that I discussed in an article published several years ago.) Thus, a decorative, non-educational use of pesukim or maamarei Chazal violates the halacha.

HOW MUCH OF A PASUK IS CONSIDERED TO BE DIVREI TORAH?

Granted that writing a pasuk on an invitation will make the invitation into sheimos, how much of a pasuk requires genizah? In a different context the Gemara rules that even three consecutive words of a pasuk should be treated as holy writings (Gittin 6b).

SOLUTION

Although people are fond of quoting or paraphrasing scriptural blessings or prayers in an invitation, we see that one may not use parts of pesukim or statements of Chazal for this purpose. However, there is a simple solution to this desire: one may paraphrase a pasuk on the invitation in a way that it is no longer considered holy writings. Take, for example, the announcement: Naaleh es Yerushalayim al rosh simchaseinu, "We will place our memories of Yerushalayim above our celebrations." Although this quote is reminiscent of Tehillim 137:5, it is not an exact quotation, nor does it contain three consecutive Scriptural words. Similarly, one may print on an invitation, Yom zeh asah Hashem nismecha v'nagila bo, "This day was made by Hashem. We shall rejoice and celebrate on it." Although very similar to the pasuk we recite as part of Hallel, Zeh hayom asah Hashem nagilah v'nismecha bo (Tehillim 118:24) the words of the original pasuk have been transposed so that there are no longer three consecutive words from the original!

Similar concerns to those regarding wedding invitations may apply sukkah decorations bearing verses and statements of Chazal, notwithstanding their proliferation. Some authorities feel that since the decorations are intended to last for more than one year, there is a reason here to be lenient. Those who follow the stricter approach should utilize the same advice given above concerning pesukim on invitations: Do not quote three consecutive words of a pasuk in a straight line. Again, I refer the question to your own rav.

Thousands of pages of Torah rattle off presses and home and business printers every day, spreading Torah to every corner of the globe. By disposing of this material appropriately, we help ensure that this glory of Torah does not lead to its desecration.

from: genesis@torah.org reply-to: genesis@torah.org to: rabbiwein@torah.org date: Wed, Jul 31, 2013 at 7:05 PM subject: Rabbi Wein - Parshas Reeh

Rabbi Berel Wein

Parshas Reeh The Jewish Calendar Moshe seemingly interrupts his long oration to the Jewish people about their history and destiny with a surprising review of the year's calendar holidays. The calendar has always been central to Jewish life and survival. Under the dark regime of Stalin, Soviet Jewry was forbidden from owning or possessing a Jewish calendar.

The depths of loyalty of Soviet Jewry, to their inner faith, is seen in the fact that somehow millions of Soviet Jews still knew when the Jewish holidays – especially Simchat Torah – would occur. For the calendar is the rhythm of our lives and evokes with it memory, hope and a feeling of the timelessness of Jewish life and its traditions.

As such, the mere existence of the Jewish calendar posed a threat to the atheistic, cruel Communist regime that ruled then over a large part of humankind. The calendar in Jewish life and thought does not really only mark the passage of time gone by. Rather, it focuses on time that is yet to come, on the future, which can somehow always be brighter than was the past.

One of my younger grandchildren proudly told me that he had calculated how many years in the future a certain anomaly on the Jewish calendar, regarding erev Pesach, would occur. I bless him that he lives to see it but he is already certainly enthusiastic about the prospect and looks forward to its happening.

The calendar supplies us with a vision of the future and allows us the ability to feel that we are masters of our own fate and that we can, by our own efforts, be influential in determining our destiny.

The Jewish calendar is a progression of one holy day to the next holy day. We are always on the way to celebrate and commemorate our obligations to serve our Creator. Though there have been numerous sad days introduced into our calendar since the times of Moshe, the Jewish calendar still remains one of upbeat spirit and joy, family and hospitality, compassion and appreciation of life and its bounties.

The parsha of Re'eh always falls in the month of Elul, leading to the glorious month of Tishrei with its days of awe and compassion and the celebration of Torah and its commandments on Succot. The review of the Jewish year, which occupies a great deal of the subject matter of this week's parsha, is therefore most fitting for it prepares us not only for the coming month but for the coming year generally.

Though the future is always inscrutable, we can nevertheless be comforted and feel secure by the consistency of our calendar, which has marked the journey of the Jewish people through time and centuries. The Jewish calendar reminds us daily of our uniqueness as a people and of the eternity of our Torah and our faith. It thus fits rather neatly into Moshe's overall message to the Jewish people as recorded for us here in the book of Dvarim. The passage of time itself is one of the life's gifts bestowed upon us by our Creator.

Shabat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

Home In My Opinion THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS **Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog** THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Though Thomas Jefferson was undoubtedly a great intellect and a skilled political leader, I have never been given to carefully dissect his writings in order to discover subtle philosophical nuances and deeply hidden meanings. Usually, for me, only Torah contents are worthy of such scrutiny, for their messages are eternal and relevant for all times, circumstances and every generation - and indeed every individual must fathom deep meaning from them for one's time and place. However I have always been struck by Jefferson's phrase "the pursuit of happiness" as it appears in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America. He proclaimed in that document that life and liberty are the basic and inalienable entitlements – absolute and automatic – of all human beings having been created equal by God. But he apparently held that happiness is not such a given and automatic state of entitlement for human beings and their affairs. So he only proclaimed that the new country would strive to guarantee for its citizens merely the right to pursue happiness. There is no outside power, governmental or otherwise, that can truly promise and achieve happiness for human beings. For happiness is a spiritual emotion and character trait of the soul and not of

the body. In the realm of spirit there are no outside forces that can aid an individual in his or her quest for spiritual fulfillment. We can only pursue happiness; there is no promise or guarantee that we will ever truly achieve it. Much of the problems that now afflict human society here in Israel and in the Western and even general world stem from the confusion of physical comfort and luxury living with the concept of happiness. Though no one willingly preaches illness and poverty as a way of life – the idea of bodily self-mortification passed from the scene in Europe in the late Middle Ages, though it still resonates within certain Catholic orders even today – yet it is a fact of life that good health and a modicum of comfortable living are necessary in order to help generate a feeling of inner happiness. But these are obviously only means to an end – a combination of tools to use to try and fashion happiness in our lives. They are definitely not the end in itself. But for many in our world these means and tools have become the end – the goal. They will always be engaged in the tiring pursuit of happiness without ever having the ability to obtain for themselves that spiritual moment of true happiness.

King Solomon in Kohelet stated: "All of the ways and words of the world are exhausting." And so they are. We are comparable to the greyhound dog in training, for the dog chases the mechanical rabbit that it will never catch up to. There can be little wonder that our world is plagued by depression and frustration, violence and bitter divisions. No matter how diligent we may be in our pursuit of happiness and contentment, that pursuit is doomed to end in failure. Now that the month of Elul is here with us it is only natural that we should consider and assess our true spiritual state of being. We all have problems that confront us - family, health, finances, etc. – that disturb our pursuit of happiness and contentment. But King David, who had more than his expected share of problems and disturbances exclaimed in Psalms: "Were it not for the Torah of Yours that gladdens me I would be lost in the poverty of troubles that surround me." King David explains to us that only in the pursuit of Torah and spirit, in the eternal view and perspective that only Torah can provide for the Jewish soul, can one escape the poverty and depression of the empty soul and the spiritual void that can never encompass true happiness. When the Torah bids us that on Succot, that one "should be decidedly and completely happy," it is not asking the impossible of us. It has provided for us in the month of Tishrei sufficient mitzvot and spiritual exultation to feed our soul and fill our spirit. In apparently discarding and departing our homes and physical comforts temporarily we grant ourselves the ability not only to pursue happiness but to actually achieve it, albeit in a fleeting and impermanent manner. But in being granted the right to pursue happiness we should persist in that wearying pursuit, for again in the words of the great rabbis of the Mishna: "A moment of spiritual happiness in this life is greater than all of the rewards of the World to Come." Shabat shalom Berel Wein

from: Shlomo Katz <skatz@torah.org> reply-to: skatz@torah.org, genesis@torah.org to: hamaayan@torah.org date: Wed, Jul 31, 2013 at 5:05 PM subject: **HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parshas Reeh**

Parshas Reeh Ashrei! Volume 27, No. 42 27 Av 5773 August 3, 2013
"If there should arise in your midst a prophet . . ." (13:2)

The Gemara (Bava Batra 12a) teaches: "A wise man is greater than a prophet." R' Avraham son of the Rambam (1186-1237) explains: The prophet referred to by this statement is not one of the prophets of the 24 books of Tanach, for they were all wise men and women in addition to being prophets, and they were certainly greater than someone who is only wise, but not a prophet. Rather, this statement refers to the many people mentioned in Tanach who experienced prophecy briefly, although they were not necessarily wise (see Shmuel I 19:20-21). Why is a wise man superior to them? Because he does not need them, but they do need him; without the wise man's wisdom and Torah knowledge, these "part-time" prophets would have no inkling of what is expected of them in this world. Such a prophet is even required to stand in the presence of a wise man, for there is no level higher than that of a Torah scholar. Knowledge of Torah is the ultimate purpose of

creation, as Hashem told the prophet (Yirmiyahu 33:25), “If not for My covenant [being kept] day and night, I would not have created heaven and earth.” For the same reason, even a king is required to have a Sefer Torah with him at all times. (Igrot R’ Avraham ben Ha’Rambam, No. 7)

“Aser t’aser / You shall surely tithe the entire crop of your planting, the produce of the field, year by year.” (14:22)

The Gemara (Shabbat 119a) comments on the opening words of our verse: “Aser bishvil she’titasher” / “Give tithes [charity] so that you will become rich.”

R’ Yitzchak Shmelkes z”l (rabbi of Lvov, Galicia; died 1905) asks: How can this be reconciled with the mishnah in Pirkei Avot (ch.1), “Do not be like servants who serve their master in order to receive a reward”?

He answers: The verse is teaching that one should give charity in the hope that he will thereby be given more money so that he can give more charity. (Bet Yitzchak) *****

“You shall surely give him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him, for in return for this matter, Hashem, your Elokim, will bless you in all your deeds and in your every undertaking.” (15:10)

R’ Aharon Lewin z”l Hy”d (the Reisher Rav; killed in the Holocaust) writes: This verse is teaching that the degree to which one’s giving tzedakah is considered a complete mitzvah depends on his attitude when he gives. Do not act haughtily toward the beggar and do not make him feel like you are giving begrudgingly. Rather, as we learn in Pirkei Avot (ch.1), “Let your house be open wide and let the poor be members of your household.”

R’ Lewin writes further: We read in Vayikra (25:37), “Do not give him your money for neshech / interest, and do not give your food for marbit / increase.” On the peshat level, this is a commandment not to charge interest. However, R’ Lewin quotes R’ Moshe Cheifetz z”l (Italy; 1664-1711) who writes that the word “neshech” can also be taken literally, meaning “a bite.” Says R’ Cheifetz: When you give tzedakah, do not accompany your gift with “biting” words. Similarly, R’ Lewin writes, the word “marbit” is used in Shmuel I (2:33) to mean, “the greatest people in a household.” Thus, the verse in Vayikra can be read, “Do not give him your money with biting words, and do not give your food making the recipient feel as if you are a far greater person than he.” (Ha’drash Ve’ha’iyun)

The above-mentioned R’ Cheifetz writes further: It is not uncommon that beggars knock on our doors with a sense of entitlement. After all, they say, you have a mitzvah to give me tzedakah! Rather than having the desired effect, however, this causes people to want to withhold charity. And, when an unusually generous person does invite a pauper into his house, the pauper soon acts like he is king of the manor. In the verses quoted above, the Torah exhorts us to pay no attention to any rudeness on the beggars’ part. Rather, we are called upon to strengthen ourselves and give tzedakah with a good heart and a shining countenance, for that is Hashem’s desire. (Melechet Machshevet: Parashat Behar)

from: **Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald** <ezbuchwald@njop.org> via
njop.ccsend.com date: Mon, Jul 29, 2013 at 3:10 PM subject: Weekly Torah
Message from Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald
Re’eh 5773-2013

**“How Far Must We Go to Avoid Evil?”
by Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald**

In this week’s parasha, parashat Re’eh, we learn of the Biblical command that the People of Israel must destroy all vestiges of pagan and polytheistic worship, whenever they are found.

The Torah, in Deuteronomy 12:2 reads, “Ah’bayd t’ah’b’doon eht kohl ha’m’koh moht ah’sher ah’v’do shahm ha’goyim, ah’sher ah’tehm yohr’sheem oh’tahm et eh’lo’hay’hem, ahl heh’hah’reem hah’rah’meem, v’ahl ha’g’vah’oht, v’tah’chah kohl aytz rah’ah’nahn,” You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations that you shall possess worshiped their gods: on the high mountains and on the hills, and under every leafy tree. The Torah, in Deuteronomy 12:3, follows with specific demands that the Israelites break apart all the pagan altars, smash their pillars, and burn their sacred trees in fire. The idolatrous carved images must be cut down, and the Israelites shall obliterate their names from that place.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch asserts that the first task of the Israelites when they reach the land of Israel, is to clear the land of all traces of polytheism. “The land is to be the land of the One G-d and His Torah. It may bear no reminder of any contrary way of looking at the world and life.”

The Talmud in Avodah Zarah 45b, cited by Rashi, notes that the double language of “Ah’bayd t’ah’b’doon,” You shall surely destroy, underscores that every trace must be eradicated. It is not sufficient to chop down an idolatrous tree, even its roots must be removed from the ground. Hence, Jewish law instructs the Jews to

destroy every vestige of idols in their homeland, by burning or grinding them down, and dispersing their remains in the wind.

Although the command to destroy idols applies wherever Jews reside, its application is far more stringent in the land of Israel. Outside of Israel, Jews are only required to demolish idols when they happen upon their worship. In the land of Israel, however, the Jews are required to track down and uncover every trace of idolatry in order to destroy it.

The Sefer Ha’Chinuch notes that the worship of pagan idols could not be tolerated alongside the worship of the Al-mighty G-d in the Promised Land, and that the requirement to completely eradicate idol worship is meant to make their coexistence impossible.

One might assume, then, that converting a place of idolatry into a place of monotheistic worship would be encouraged. The Abarbanel, however, states that this is not the case. Buildings that were used for pagan worship need to be completely destroyed, lest they continually call to mind, pagan worship. All remnants of idolatry must be entirely eradicated.

The requirement to destroy any trace of pagan or polytheistic worship raises fundamental questions and issues with which traditional Jews grapple even in contemporary times, even in the absence of actual pagan gods and idolatry.

Looking back upon the more than three thousand year old mission of the Jewish people to enlighten the world with their good and noble deeds and to perfect the world under the rule of the Al-mighty, it seems that remarkable progress has been made. After all, much of Western society has adopted the values of the Torah. The classical authorities even look upon the rise of Christianity and Islam as a way of bringing Jewish values to the world. Many of the barbaric practices of ancient times have been eliminated, primarily because of the influence of the Torah, as filtered through these Christian and Muslim “vehicles.”

In light of these remarkable achievements, Jews could very well pat themselves on their backs and announce, “Mission accomplished!” That, however, would be too facile. Although we see that monotheism has taken root in much of the Western world, and that the moral and ethical values of the Torah have been widely adopted through the broad acceptance of “Judeo-Christian values,” we encounter the rise of new types of “paganism,” resulting in equally disastrous consequences in modern times.

Despite the great advances of the modern era, modern technology has transformed killing into an efficient and pernicious “art form,” one that can destroy many times the numbers of lives that were terminated by the use of ancient conventional weapons such as swords, bows and arrows. The breakdown of the human family is becoming more and more evident in contemporary times. Sexual profligacy and the increasingly common abuse of adults and children has become epidemic. The values that are transmitted through contemporary media are far from Torah values. And, we see, in many respects, the crumbling of the moral and ethical fabric of society, from both a social and economic perspective.

The question then remains, based on the Biblical injunction to destroy idols, how far must contemporary Jews go to separate from the new paganism, from this new evil—an evil that not only confronts us, but seems bent on consuming us?

Do those who wish to avoid the destructive powers of the contemporary idols need to separate themselves totally, or can there be compromise?

Perhaps, to those who view the intensity of the moral and ethical breakdown as a pernicious “epidemic,” their conclusion has been that it is necessary, as in all medical epidemics, to avoid all contamination. For this reason, they have chosen to, as much as possible, close themselves off hermetically, to protect themselves, so that “survivors” will be in the position to treat the victims who have not separated themselves.

The danger, however, in closing oneself off completely from the outside world, is the possible loss of balance, and the likelihood of becoming radicalized. The hermetically-sealed life may result in the loss of much of the goodness that may be gained by living a more balanced lifestyle. Exposure to the good things that have not been corrupted in the secular society, will be impossible.

Although this issue cannot be resolved in a brief discussion such as this, we must all take note, that it is necessary to protect ourselves from the blandishments of society and contemporary idolatries that surround us. Jews must make every effort to maintain their high ethical and moral standards, guarantee for their children an intensive Jewish education, and strive assiduously to avoid being “contaminated.”

For those who are not currently protected, it may very well be time to seek protection.

May you be blessed.

from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> via madmimi.com date: Thu, Aug 1, 2013 at 10:04 AM subject: Advanced Parsha - Re'eh

The Rewards of Outreach by Rabbi Ozer Alport

The Torah is stricter regarding the treatment of the Meisit - inciter - than it is with any other transgression. The Torah specifically instructs us not to have any mercy on him and not to attempt to prove his innocence, concepts which aren't found by other suspected sinners (Deut. 13:7-11).

The Alter of Kelm points out that this stringency is even greater when one considers that in reality, the inciter didn't accomplish anything. Although he attempted to convince another Jew to worship idolatry, he was unsuccessful. The other person turned him in and refused to listen to him. Even so, the desire to sway another person from the Torah's path is so severe that it receives this stringent penalty.

Rashi writes (Exodus 20:5) that God's reward for those who listen to His commandments is 500 times greater than the punishment meted out to sinners. Many times, a person who is engaged in kiruv - Jewish outreach - invests valuable time and energy trying to educate another person, only to find that his efforts are completely unsuccessful.

As frustrating as this experience must surely be, the Alter of Kelm offers inspiring words of comfort and consolation based on the aforementioned principles. If God reserves His most severe and stringent punishments for one who merely tries to persuade another Jew to leave the Torah path, how much more must be the immense reward lying in store for a person who tries, even unsuccessfully, his utmost to draw someone closer to their Creator!

ASSISTING THE POOR

The Torah exhorts us to have compassion upon the poor (Deut. 15:8). The Talmud (Bava Basra 10a) records that a wicked Roman nobleman named Turnus Rufus asked Rebbe Akiva, "If your God cares for poor people so much, why doesn't He provide for them?" Rebbe Akiva answered that God allows them to remain poor to provide us the merit of giving them charity.

The Alter of Kelm questions Rebbe Akiva's explanation. Although the mitzvah of giving tzedakah is certainly a great one, aren't there enough other commandments that we can do? What is so unique and special about giving charity, and why must the poor suffer to enable us to specifically perform this mitzvah?

The Alter explains that the mitzvah of tzedakah serves an irreplaceable function. Although one fulfills the technical letter of the law by distributing charity to those in need, in order to perform this mitzvah at its highest level a person must do more than this. It isn't sufficient to give charity simply because God commanded us to do so and we want to perform His will. A person dispersing tzedakah should feel the pain and plight of the poor as if it were his very own. Just as a person who feels his own hunger naturally responds by feeding himself, so too should we strive to identify with the pauper's anguish to the point that we would be moved to assist him even if we weren't obligated to do so.

Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Meisels, the Rav of Lodz in Poland, was renowned for his concern for the poor and downtrodden. On one fierce winter day, he knocked on the door of a wealthy, but stingy, man in his town to solicit a donation. After exchanging greetings, the man gestured that Rabbi Meisels should enter, but he remained outside and began his appeal. The rich man was puzzled by the rabbi's behavior, but he attempted to listen out of respect. After a few minutes he grew so cold that he was unable to continue. He interrupted the rabbi and begged him to come inside.

The sagacious rabbi explained, "I am here to collect money for a family which can't even afford to build a fire on a day like today. If we enter your warm home, you won't be able to relate to their suffering. Only by discussing their plight here at your door are you able to understand the magnitude of their pain." Appreciating both the rabbi's wisdom as well as the extent of the family's anguish, the miser gave a generous donation.

It is difficult for most of us to relate to the daily suffering that many unfortunately know. Now that we understand that empathizing with their plights is an integral part of giving tzedakah, we should try our utmost, whether by volunteering at a soup kitchen or by walking through the park on a bitter winter night, to work on personally experiencing and feeling their pain. Our desire to generously assist them will naturally follow, and in so doing, we will be helping not only the poor but also ourselves.

MOURNING FOR A PARENT

The Torah prohibits (Deut. 14:1) various forms of mourning the death of loved ones. Why is the mourning period for the more natural and frequent loss of a parent

longer (12 months) than that for the unnatural and seemingly more traumatic loss of a child (30 days)?

This question was raised when Rabbi Yitzhak Hutner and Rabbi Pinchas Teitz went to comfort Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik when he was mourning the death of his wife. Rabbi Hutner suggested that with the death of a parent, a person becomes more removed from his connection to the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, which requires additional mourning. Rabbi Teitz pointed out that all other relatives can be "replaced" - a person can remarry, have additional children, or gain new siblings through his parents having children. The only relative for whom there can be no substitute is a parent, and this unique status merits additional mourning.

Rabbi Soloveitchik posited that the question itself contains the answer. Because the death of other relatives is less natural, our Sages were concerned that a person may overdo his bereavement if he was permitted to absorb himself in his grief, so they limited the mourning period to 30 days, a concern which isn't applicable to the natural death of a parent.

Finally, Rabbi Yosef Sorotzkin (Meged Yosef) suggests that a person needs the advice of his parents for his entire life. When a parent dies, a child must focus on remembering and internalizing their values and priorities, which will guide him for the rest of his life. He does so by mourning the loss and focusing on the memories for an entire year, for this period contains all of the festivals and different periods in life through which a person passes.

WHY MOURNING?

The Torah prohibits extreme forms of mourning the death of loved ones (Deut. 14:1). Since the laws of nature dictate that every living thing will eventually die, why is human nature to mourn the loss of a loved one, sad as it may be, with such intensity when we mentally recognize that death is inevitable?

In his work *Toras HaAdam* on the laws of mourning, Nachmanides offers a fascinating explanation for this phenomenon. When God originally created the first man, Adam, He intended him to be immortal and created him with a nature reflecting this reality. When Adam sinned by eating from the forbidden fruit, he brought death to mankind and to the entire world.

Nevertheless, although this new development completely changed the nature of our life on earth, it had no effect on man's internal makeup, which was designed to reflect the reality that man was intended to live forever. Although our minds recognize that people ultimately must die and we hear about death constantly, our internal makeup remains as it was originally designed. We expect our loved ones to live forever as they were originally intended to do, and we are therefore plunged into intense mourning when confronted with the reality that this is no longer the case.

This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/tp/i/pp/165901366.html>

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