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Fom: torahweb@torahweb.org to: weeklydt@torahweb.org date: Mon, Aug 6, 2018 at 8:44 PM subject: Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski - There IS a Solution

**Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski**  
**There IS a Solution**

Emotional disorders may be roughly classified into two groups. (1) Disorders thought to be primarily of biochemical origin, such as depression and related conditions. These are generally treated with psychotropic medications, and the results are often dramatic. (2) Disorders thought to be of psychological origin, which may not respond to medication, and whose treatment is primarily psychotherapy. Of course, there are hybrid cases where both factors are involved.

Psychotherapy may be prolonged. Typically, the therapist seeks to uncover experiences in the client's past which may have impacted on one's emotions. Using various techniques, the therapist tries to correct faulty impressions and undo their effect.

While the majority of clients are satisfied with the results of therapy, there is still an appreciable number who feel that the therapy leaves something to be desired. Although the primary symptoms were relieved, they may complain of a poorly defined residual uneasiness if not frank depression, which does not respond to anti-depression medication. This may affect domestic and social relations as well as education and occupation.

While the presenting symptoms may improve, it is clear that the client is still not back to 100% emotional health, and the therapist realizes that there is little more he can do. He may begin to think of the client as having a personality disorder, albeit not well-defined. I found myself diagnosing many clients as suffering from "low self-esteem." In 1978 I wrote a book, *Like Yourself, and Others Will, Too*, aimed at improving one's self concept. Conventional wisdom is that low self-esteem is generally due to poor parenting, i.e., failure of the parents to show adequate appreciation of the child, or deprivation of love due to circumstances, such as parental absence or illness. There are a host of negative occurrences that can cause a child to lose faith in oneself. Therapy may be able to reinterpret traumatic events and build self-confidence.

I tried my utmost to help people overcome their low self-esteem, but I was only partially successful.

However, I had to come to terms with my own low self-esteem. The problem here was that I could not point to any factors which I could incriminate as causative. I had a wonderful childhood, and my parents were extremely loving and caring. In addition, I had a nanny, a childless woman who "adopted" me and saw to it that I lacked for nothing. The sun rose and set on me. I was bright and succeeded at everything I did. I was a chess champion at age eight. I was specially promoted several times and graduated high school at sixteen. I should have felt on top of the world.

Instead, I felt I was unlikable. I had to do things that would make people appreciate me. I became a "people-pleaser." I did some crazy things to gain attention. My sensitivity was extreme. When I gave sermons on Saturday, I was dependent on the accolades from the worshippers. If they were not forthcoming, I was crushed. But the approval and recognition I received from my accomplishments gave me only momentary relief.

I graduated medical school with honors. I became director of the psychiatric department of the hospital I wrote many books, but nothing changed. The feelings of unworthiness ate away at my guts. This was an enigma, and there was nothing I could do to shake off this feeling.

At about age sixty, I came across a novel interpretation of a verse in Psalms (118:12) by Rav Simcha Zissel Ziev, a foremost mussar authority. Conventional wisdom is that the yetzer hara is a force created by Hashem to deter people from observing the Torah. The yetzer hara operates by tempting people to violate the Torah, and we must do battle all our lives to resist the wiles of the yetzer hara. Torah-observant people follow a life style of obedience to Hashem's dictates. One can rather easily identify the ideation wrought by the yetzer hara. When a person feels tempted to partake of non-kosher food, or to work on Shabbos, to steal, to have a forbidden relationship or to do anything that the Torah forbids, one can be aware that this is the work of the yetzer hara and one can utilize the Torah tools to resist it.

Rav Simcha Zissel's unique contribution is that in addition to tempting a person to violate the Torah, the yetzer hara may delude a person to think poorly of oneself. There is no frank violation of the Torah in this, and as with every delusion, one is taken-in by this false belief.

A poor self-image is the source of many evils. Rabbeinu Yonah says that gaavah, the worst personality trait, is a defense against a poor self-image. The person creates grandiosity to counteract his low self-esteem (Rabbeinu Yonah Al haTorah). The desire to control others is also the same. Having power over others may reduce the feeling of inferiority, and this is responsible for many marriage problems. Some people lie to inflate their ego.

Both underachievement and overachievement maybe due to low self-esteem. The underachiever lacks self confidence and resigns oneself to failure. The over-achiever seeks to prove that she/he can excel. Any grade less than 100% is taken as evidence of one's inability to perform properly.

There is a paradox of low self-esteem. Highly gifted people may have a lower self-esteem than less-endowed people.

Rav Simcha Zissel's insight explains this phenomenon. A person with meager personality strengths is not going to be given a whopper of a yetzer hora, whereas someone with great assets may be given a more powerful challenge. Hence, the more capable person may actually have deeper feelings of inferiority.

Personal achievements may not eliminate the pain of a poor self-image. One industrialist who was a pillar of the community, confided, "One wall in my house is covered with tributes and plaques. They mean nothing to me."

Indeed, the suffering we experienced and are commemorating on Tisha B'Av has its origin in a poor self image. The spies of Moses said, "We saw giants in Canaan, and we felt as tiny as locusts, and that's how we appeared to them." The Chiddushei Harim said, "The way you feel about yourself is how you assume others perceive you."

Simcha is essential for true avodas Hashem. The yetzer hara scores a major triumph by making a person feel unworthy, which deprives one of simcha.

A psychotherapist can help you deal with those reality factors that are causative of low self-esteem that I mentioned earlier, but he/she cannot help you in the battle with the yetzer hara. It is crucial that when you find yourself with feelings of unworthiness and inferiority that you remind yourself that this is the work of the yetzer hara to disable you. Use the sifre mussar to counteract this.

Always remember the words of the Talmud, "Beloved are the people of Israel, for they are described as the children of Hashem" (Pirkei Avos 3:18). The yetzer hara is at work 7-24-365 to make you forget this. Don't allow it to succeed. Pray to Hashem for His help in resisting the wile of the yetzer hara. More divrei Torah, audio and video shiurim from Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

More divrei Torah on Special Topics

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### **VaYigdal Mosheh on Elul**

**Rav Mosheh Twersky HY"D**

January 3, 2018 Shofar During Elul

In Pirkei d'Rabi Eliezer (perek 46), Chazal say that a shofar was blown on Rosh Chodesh Elul when Moshe Rabbeinu went up to Har Sinai (for the final 40 days). This is the source for blowing shofar during the month of Elul. The text of this Chazal as brought by a number of the Rishonim (see Radal there) is with the following expression, "it was established that shofar should be blown in Elul in order so that Klal Yisrael should do teshuvah and to befuddle the Satan."

The concept of confusing the Satan appears in Maseches Rosh Ha'Shana (16b) as the reason for why we blow the shofar twice on Rosh HaShana. Tosafos explains there that the Satan gets all worried that it is the day of "and on that day a great shofar will be blown", which is a reference to l'asid lavo when Hashem will completely eradicate the Satan. Because of this confusion, the Satan is withheld from expressing any words of prosecution against Klal Yisrael. How are we to understand this, though? That just because l'asid lavo when a great shofar will be blown and the Satan will be eradicated so every time he hears the shofar on Rosh Ha'Shana he mistakenly thinks that the time of l'asid lavo has arrived? Does it make sense that the Satan would fall for such a trick for so many thousands of years?

Rav Yisrael Elya Weintraub zt"l explained that the irbuv ha'satan (confounding of the Satan) is not simply that he gets tricked into thinking that the sound of the shofar on Rosh Ha'Shana is the shofar of l'asid lavo. Rather, the proper understanding of it is as follows. The very first Yom Kippur – which was the culmination of Moshe Rabbeinu's final 40 days on the mountain and when we received the second luchos – was a chazarah l'techiyah (lit. "a return to life", resurrection). Yom Kippur is the one day of the year when there is a revelation of the 13 middos ha'rachamim, which is essentially a function of the way that Ha'Kadosh baruch Hu will conduct the world in acharis ha'yamim (lit. "the end of days"). However, this once a year revelation is not absolutely confined only to Yom Kippur. The Ramban makes it clear that "sprouting" of this special Divine light begins already from Rosh Ha'Shana, as Chazal tell us that the blowing of the shofar moves Ha'Kadosh baruch Hu, as it were, to rise from his thrown of judgement and sit on his thrown of mercy. A facet of the quality of techiya characteristic of Yom Kippur is also carried in the power of the shofar (according to one opinion, akeidas Yitzchak was on Yom Kippur).

So, what confuses the Satan is not simply the sound of a shofar blowing that he mistakenly thinks is the shofar of l'asid lavo. Rather, it is the fact that when we blow the shofar on Rosh Ha'Shana there is an actual revelation taking place that is akin to the Divine Direction of l'asid lavo, and that is

why the Satan thinks that it might actually be that acharis ha'yamim has arrived! The very force that the Satan senses on Rosh Ha'Shana when we blow the shofar is indeed that force that is eventually going to eradicate him, so he really has no way of knowing whether that time has actually come or not. That is what the "confounding of the Satan" is all about.

What emerges, then – based on the words of the Pirkei d'Rabi Eliezer – is that this special revelation of the Divine Direction of l'asid lavo actually begins its first sprouting and shining through in Elul, as Chazal say that even in Elul the blowing of the shofar contains this quality of confounding the Satan. And there is a direct connection between the two purposes of blowing the shofar during Elul that the Rishonim's text of the Pirkei d'Rabi Eliezer delineated: a) so that Klal Yisrael should be moved to do teshuva, and b) the Satan should be confused. For it is only through the deliberate effort to go through the teshuva process that we merit that the shofar-blowing should generate this special revelation of Divine Direction of l'asid lavo.

(From Reb Avraham Twersky)

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Why We Don't Blow Shofar on Shabbos

Shofar on Rosh Hashanah. The power of it is simply unfathomable. Chazal tell us that it splits the Heavens and goes through all of the upper spheres until it reaches the Kisei HaKavod, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu gets up, as it were, from His Throne of Justice and instead sits on His Throne of Mercy. On the Day of Judgment!

The mefarshim are practically open-mouthed in trying to understand why Chazal decreed that we do not blow shofar on Shabbos. How could it be that someone who wants to blow shofar — with all the awe of judgment — might desecrate Shabbos in the process by carrying it in a public domain? There's practically no chance it could happen.

The Aruch L'Ner made a calculation that the most catastrophic years for Klal Yisrael throughout history were those years when the first day of Rosh Hashanah fell out on Shabbos, as Chazal say that a year that does not start off with tekias shofar is a terrible portent for that year.

Furthermore, just imagine that the only shofar available in the whole world is in a tree. It's only a Rabbinic prohibition to climb the tree on Shabbos. Would it not be worth it to have one Jew be the sa'ir la'azazel and climb the tree so that Klal Yisrael will have tekias shofar? And yet the halachah is clear that it is forbidden!

So, how are we to understand this?

Since the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai — when we said naaseh v'nishma — we assess anything and everything from a Torah perspective. Namely, how does this relate to the fulfillment of mitzvos?

We have physical eyes so we cannot see it — perhaps we can understand it, maybe, but we don't see it — but the fact is, the most destructive force in the entire universe is an aveirah. Not only a violation of a Torah prohibition but even a Rabbinic prohibition.

An aveirah is far more destructive than the most powerful nuclear bomb.

That is why, despite the indescribable positive power and benefit we get from tekias shofar, in the final analysis it is not worth forgoing the violation of even a d'Rabbanan for it.

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Quotables Every minute of Rosh Ha'Shana carries the value of many hours during the rest of the year.

Provided courtesy of VayigdalMoshe.com

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### **On Not Being A Victim**

Britain's Former **Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Making a series of programmes for the BBC on morality in the twenty-first century, I felt I had to travel to Toronto to have a conversation with a man I

had not met before, Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson. Recently he has recently become an iconic intellectual for millions of young people, as well as a figure of caricature and abuse by others who should know better.[1] The vast popularity of his podcasts – hours long and formidably intellectual – suggests that he has been saying something that many people feel a need to hear and are not adequately hearing from other contemporary voices. During our conversation there was a moment of searing intensity. Peterson was talking about his daughter Mikhaila. At the age of six, she was found to be suffering from severe polyarticular juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Thirty-seven of her joints were affected. During her childhood and teen years, she had to have a hip replacement, then an ankle replacement. She was in acute, incessant pain. Describing her ordeal, Peterson’s voice was wavering on the verge of tears. Then he said:

One of the things we were very careful about and talked with her a lot about was to not allow herself to regard herself as a victim. And man, she had reason to regard herself as a victim ... [but] as soon as you see yourself as a victim ... that breeds thoughts of anger and revenge – and that takes you to a place that’s psychologically as terrible as the physiological place. And to her great credit I would say this is part of what allowed her to emerge from this because she did eventually figure out what was wrong with her, and by all appearances fix it by about 90%. It’s unstable but it’s way better because of the fact that she didn’t allow herself to become existentially enraged by her condition ... People have every reason to construe themselves as victims. Their lives are characterised by suffering and betrayal. Those are ineradicable experiences. [The question is] what’s the right attitude to take to that – anger or rejection, resentment, hostility, murderousness? That’s the story of Cain and Abel, [and] that’s not good. That leads to Hell.

As soon as I heard those words I understood what had led me to this man, because much of my life has been driven by the same search, though it came about in a different way. It happened because of the Holocaust survivors I came to know. They really were victims of one of the worst crimes against humanity in all of history. Yet they did not see themselves as victims. The survivors I knew, with almost superhuman courage, looked forward, built a new life for themselves, supported one another emotionally, and then, many years later, told their story, not for the sake of revisiting the past but for the sake of educating today’s young people on the importance of taking responsibility for a more human and humane future.

But how is this possible? How can you be a victim and yet not see yourself as a victim without being guilty of denial, or deliberate forgetfulness, or wishful thinking?

The answer is that uniquely – this is what makes us Homo sapiens – in any given situation we can look back or we can look forward. We can ask: “Why did this happen?” That involves looking back for some cause in the past. Or we can ask, “What then shall I do?” This involves looking forward, trying to work out some future destination given that this is our starting point.

There is a massive difference between the two. I can’t change the past. But I can change the future. Looking back, I see myself as an object acted on by forces largely beyond my control. Looking forward, I see myself as a subject, a choosing moral agent, deciding which path to take from here to where I want eventually to be.

Both are legitimate ways of thinking, but one leads to resentment, bitterness, rage and a desire for revenge. The other leads to challenge, courage, strength of will and self-control. That for me is what Mikhaila Peterson and the Holocaust survivors represent: the triumph of choice over fate.

Jordan Peterson came to his philosophy through his own and his father’s battles with depression and his daughter’s battle with her physical condition. Jews came to it through the life-changing teachings of Moses, especially in the book of Deuteronomy. They are epitomised in the opening verses of our parsha.

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; and the curse, if you do not heed the commandments of the Lord your

God, but stray from the way I am commanding you today ... (Deut. 11:26-28)

Throughout Deuteronomy, Moses keeps saying: don’t think your future will be determined by forces outside your control. You are indeed surrounded by forces outside your control, but what matters is how you choose. Everything else will follow from that. Choose the good and good things will happen to you. Choose the bad, and eventually you will suffer. Bad choices create bad people who create bad societies, and in such societies, in the fullness of time, liberty is lost. I cannot make that choice for you.

The choice, he says again and again, is yours alone: you as an individual, second person singular, and you as a people, second person plural. The result was that remarkably, Jews did not see themselves as victims. A key figure here, centuries after Moses, was Jeremiah. Jeremiah kept warning the people that the strength of a country does not depend on the strength of its army but on the strength of its society. Is there justice? Is there compassion? Are people concerned about the welfare of others or only about their own? Is there corruption in high places?

Do religious leaders overlook the moral failings of their people, believing that all you have to do is perform the Temple rituals and all will be well: God will save us from our enemies? Jeremiah kept saying, in so many words, that God will not save us from our enemies until we save ourselves from our own lesser selves.

When disaster came – the destruction of the Temple – Jeremiah made one of the most important assertions in all history. He did not see the Babylonian conquest as the defeat of Israel and its God. He saw it as the defeat of Israel by its God. And this proved to be the salvaging of hope. God is still there, he was saying. Return to Him and He will return to you. Don’t define yourself as a victim of the Babylonians. Define yourself as a free moral agent, capable of choosing a better future.

Jews paid an enormous psychological price for seeing history the way they did. “Because of our sins we were exiled from our land,” we say repeatedly in our prayers. We refuse to define ourselves as the victims of anyone else, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, fate, the inexorability of history, original sin, unconscious drives, blind evolution, genetic determinism or the inevitable consequences of the struggle for power. We blame ourselves: “Because of our sins.”

That is a heavy burden of guilt, unbearable were it not for our faith in Divine forgiveness. But the alternative is heavier still, namely, to define ourselves as victims, asking not, “What did we do wrong?” but “Who did this to us?”

“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse.” That was Moses’ insistent message in the last month of his life. There is always a choice. As Viktor Frankl said, even in Auschwitz there was one freedom they could not take away from us: the freedom to choose how to respond. Victimhood focuses us on a past we can’t change. Choice focuses us on a future we can change, liberating us from being held captive by our resentments, and summoning us to what Emmanuel Levinas called *Difficile Liberte*, “difficult freedom.”

There really are victims in this world, and none of us should minimise their experiences. But in most cases (admittedly, not all) the most important thing we can do is help them recover their sense of agency. This is never easy, but is essential if they are not to drown in their own learned helplessness. No one should ever blame a victim. But neither should any of us encourage a victim to stay a victim. It took immense courage for Mikhaila Peterson and the Holocaust survivors to rise above their victimhood, but what a victory they won for human freedom, dignity and responsibility.

Hence the life changing idea: Never define yourself as a victim. You cannot change your past but you can change your future. There is always a choice, and by exercising the strength to choose, we can rise above fate.

[1] The fact that he has been accused of being an anti-Semite makes me deeply ashamed of those who said this. There is enough real antisemitism in the world today for us to focus on the real thing, and not portray as an enemy a man who is a friend.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com> reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com  
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha RE'EH **Rabbi Wein's** Weekly Blog

There are many things in life that appear to be simple and logical to one person and yet remain beyond the understanding of one's companion, friend or acquaintance. To our great teacher Moshe, someone who is blessed with the immense powers of prophecy and who is spiritually able to communicate with Heaven almost at will, the mission of life and of the Jewish people is simple and visible to all. It is to obey and treasure the laws and values that are represented in the Torah as elucidated and explained by Moshe to the entire congregation of Israel. All these rules and values are, in his opinion, self-evident and visible to all. The choices that are presented to the people are stark and clear. They are between life and death, eternity and passing trends. It is all so simple to the prophetic eyes of Moshe. Part of his frustration with the Jewish people is their inability to see things as he sees them and to understand the challenges of life and history, as he perceives them. Oftentimes geniuses are not necessarily the best of teachers because they cannot understand why the students are so dense and do not understand what is so patently obvious. The Torah reading this week, and the entire book of D'varim as spoken and taught by Moshe, is an expression of this frustration of the great and the holy, who see the obvious but are unable to make others see it easily as well. The Jewish people, who heard the words of Moshe over three millennia ago in the desert of Sinai, had to appreciate and believe his message because of their faith in him and in the experiences of Godly revelation that they had witnessed and in which they had participated. They had to believe in the future that had not yet arrived and had to make their choices based on faith in that future alone. In our time, well over 3000 years later, we need not rely solely on the prophetic advice and the words of Moshe, but rather we have the benefit of thousands of years of experience and history. We can look back and correctly assess the choices made by the Jewish people over all these millennia of its existence. We can judge which decisions were wise and which were foolish, which led to survival and eternity and which led to destruction. Because of this ability to read and know our history, one would think that we could choose wisely based on facts and experiences that are self-evident and obvious to serious students of our past. Yet, the Jewish people have a propensity to make bad choices and to ignore the clear lessons of our history. Therefore, the statement of Moshe that we should see clearly even today the choices that face us and the decisions that we perforce are bound to make, our past should teach us in which direction these decisions should go and what pitfalls we should avoid. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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The Timeless Rav Hirsch - Parshas Reeh ravadlerstein@torah.org  
<ravadlerstein@torah.org> Thu, Aug 25, 2011 at 2:13 PM Reply-To:  
editor@torah.org, ravadlerstein@torah.org To: ravhirsch@torah.org

**The Timeless Rav Hirsch by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein**

Parshas Reeh

The Pitfalls of Private Spirituality I

You shall not do like everything that we do here today, every man what is proper in his eyes. You will not have come to the resting place or to the heritage that Hashem your G-d gives you.

The restrictions are puzzling. The quest to connect with G-d is widespread – at times, almost universal. Yet, feelings of spiritual elevation are often fleeting and ephemeral. We would think that the Torah would encourage us to act on any impulse to draw close to the Shechinah through a korban. Instead, the Torah erects huge obstacles in front of bamos, the private altars which were the most convenient way for a person to bring an offering to Hashem. They were so popular that even the better kings had trouble eliminating them.

Somehow, the Torah is not as enamored of them as we would be. Yet, the Torah does not ban them altogether, but subjects them to a confusing list of requirements and limitations.

Let us first examine what might be objectionable about a bamah, and why the Torah curtailed their use.

The spiritual quest is so personal that nothing can externally differentiate a healthy turning towards G-d from a perverted one. The individual standing in front of a private altar – a bamah – may very well direct his heart to the One G-d of Israel. On the other hand, he may be serving the “spirits of the fields.” In other words, he may find his sense of spirituality fulfilled in aligning himself with forces of Nature, as do so many. Rather than seek out the transcendent Source of Nature, he becomes deflected by and mired in Nature, thus trading in G-d for paganism.

The Torah knows of only one way to insure that an offering binds a person to the True G-d, rather than something warped. The full range of korbanos can only be brought in the place designated as a National Sanctuary of His Torah. Someone standing there cannot help but be reminded of the roots of Jewish service of G-d in the national revelation at Sinai, where G-d reached out to an entire nation. Moreover, moving closer to G-d is not a free-for-all, but follows a script. We only get where we want to go by scrupulously following the guidelines of the Torah. Both factors – the national experience and the guidance of the Torah – come together at the place picked by Hashem to be the sanctuary of His Torah.

While this idea rings true, it creates more problems than it solves. Why, then, not ban bamos altogether? Why allow them during the period before the establishment of the National Sanctuary? Why is the license limited (in the case of individuals) to voluntary, free-will offerings, but not the obligatory chatas and asham? Why does this change for the community, which can bring certain obligatory offerings on a central, national bamah (as in Shiloh, Gilgal, Nov and Givon)?

Ultimately, the National Sanctuary serves to draw together every aspect of our national existence – all our possessions, all our talents, all our plans and goals, and all our citizens. All things come together under its roof; there all things are directed to a higher purpose. Only the content of Hashem's Torah and the guidance that flows from it can do the job. Every aveirah distances a person from his Creator. It works at cross-purposes to the mission of the Sanctuary, which brings all things and all people closer to Hashem. The antidote to that distance must be built upon a foundation of submission to His Will and His dictates, i.e. the Torah and its authority. It cannot be found in the realm of human choice and volition.

All central places of avodah differed from the ones that eventually stood in Yerushalayim. The latter were selected by HKBH Himself. The others were chosen by Man. Thus, they could not be genuine Sanctuaries of the Torah, with its demand for obedience to laws laid down by G-d. They were Sanctuaries – but not Sanctuaries of the Torah. They were unsuited to bring about the return of the sinner to his previous place of closeness to G-d. No place could be this Sanctuary of Torah, save for the one chosen entirely by Hashem.

The individual who approaches with his chatas or asham to be readmitted to Hashem's presence must find Him at His Sanctuary of the Torah. No other place will do; the teshuvah procedure requires the combination of presence of the Shechinah and the centrality of the Torah. According to one opinion, even the community as a whole has no recourse except to this one, special place. The tzibbur does not differ from the individual in this regard. Only in one area does it differ. Korbanos that are joined to specific calendar times may be brought on the central, national bamos that preceded the one in Yerushalayim. The nation as a whole responding to a time-specific demand by G-d is itself enough evidence of standing ready to do whatever it is that Hashem asks of them!

What role, then, did all the other bamos – national and private – serve? If they could not be Sanctuaries of the Torah, what ideal did they manifest? We could explain as follows: The Torah, which makes myriad specific demands

upon us, finds expression in a specific place – moreover, a place entirely of His choosing. One important concept does not need to be tied to a specific place. The existence of G-d Who fills the universe should not be tied to the specific. All places, in theory, are equipotent as places to turn to Hashem and find Him, providing that Man has prepared himself adequately. Bamos, then, could stand in many places, even those chosen by Man. There, people could bring free-willed offerings, nedarim and nedavos, which gave voice to seeking a closer relationship with Him. The bamah could be a Sanctuary to Hashem, just not to Hashem and His Torah.

One bit of irony caps the process of moving from bamah to permanent National Sanctuary. In the end, Hashem made His choice clear. In selecting what we call the Temple Mount, Hashem brought history full circle. The single place on earth He chose to represent the national calling of the Jewish people – and in a larger sense, the mission of all humanity – took us right back to the beginning of time, when all stood in close proximity to G-d. On that spot Adam and Noach brought offerings expressing the aspirations of mankind as a whole; on that spot Avraham established the special relationship with the future Jewish people through the Akeidah. That place perfectly served two different messages, which in the end can come together: “Torah will go forth from Tziyon,” as well as “My house will be a house of prayer for all the nations.”

1. Based on the Hirsch Chumash, Devarim 12:9

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### Parsha Parables

#### By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha - Parshas Reeh Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Joy of Shlepping  
This week the Torah teaches us the laws of ma'aser sheni. Ma'aser sheni constitutes a tithe in which the apportioned produce is consumed by the owner. It is not necessarily distributed to the poor or the Levite like other tithes. However, there is one requirement. The entire tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem. That being the case, the owner of 10,000 bushels would have to haul 1,000 bushels to Jerusalem to be eaten. That may be quite a difficult task. So the Torah has a way out. “And if the road will be too long, because you will not be able to carry it (the produce) as the place where Hashem chose to rest His name is far from you(r home) – then you may exchange (the produce) for money. You shall take the money instead to Jerusalem and spend it on, cattle, flocks, wine or other alcoholic beverages whatever your heart desires and eat it before Hashem (in Jerusalem) and rejoice with your family” (Deuteronomy 14:24-26). Thus the Torah teaches us that the owner can redeem the produce through money and spend the money on any food items in Jerusalem, avoiding an arduous chore of shipping the food to Jerusalem. The money will help stimulate the economy of the Holy City, thus establishing a protocol that has lasted centuries – supporting the merchants of Jerusalem. Yet if you analyze the actual wording in the Torah you will notice something strange. The Torah does not say, “if you will not be able to carry it because the road will be too long, then you can redeem the fruit with money.” The Torah seems to reverse the cause and effect. It tells us that “if

the road will be too long, because you will not be able to carry it...” (Deuteronomy 14:24). It seems that the Torah is saying that the road is long because you cannot carry it. Isn't the opposite true? If the road is long, it is not \_because\_ you cannot schlep, you \_cannot\_ schlep because the road is long. Why did the Torah reverse the phrase? Perhaps the Torah is telling us a subtle message. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein once met an affluent Jew whose father came to these shores long before laws were passed to guarantee that a person could remain Shabbos-observant in the workforce. The man's father went from job to job, having been told not to report on Monday if he would not come to work on Saturday. The old man was persistent and never desecrated the Shabbos. Yet his son was not observant at all. Reb Moshe asked him point blank. “Why is it that your father kept the mitzvos with great sacrifice, but you did not follow in his footsteps?” The businessman answered with complete honesty. “It's true that Pop did not miss a Shabbos or even a prayer. But before he did a mitzvah he would give a krechitz and declare, ‘Oy! Iz shver tzu zain a frummer yid (It is terribly hard to be an observant Jew!)’ After years of hearing my dad complain, I decided that the burden would be too much for me to bear. I decided never to permit myself to attempt those difficulties and I gave up religious observance.” After hearing this story, I thought, homiletically, that perhaps the Torah is telling us an important message in the psyche of mitzvah observance. “The road will be too long, because will not be able to carry it.” No one says the road is too long because of sheer distance. It is too long because you do not want to carry the load. If one, however, carries his package with joy then the road is not a long one. If one decides that he is carrying a heavy burden, then the road, no matter the distance, will always be too long. Rabbi Feinstein commented that no matter how difficult a mitzvah seems, if one observes it with a smile, with joy and with pleasure, he will be able to carry the mitzvah for long distances. He will not only carry it a long distance him or herself, he will carry it for generations to come. Good Shabbos The author is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore. Copyright © 1998 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc. Drasha © 2018 by Torah.org.

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From: Chanan Morrison <[ravkooklist@gmail.com](mailto:ravkooklist@gmail.com)> reply-to: [rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com](mailto:rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com) to: **Rav Kook List** <[Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com](mailto:Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com)> date: Wed, Aug 8, 2018 at 2:05 AM subject: [**Rav Kook Torah**] Re'eih: Open Your Hand Generously

#### Re'eih: Open Your Hand Generously

“When... any of your brothers is poor, do not harden your heart or shut your hand against your needy brother. Open your hand generously, and extend to him any credit he needs to take care of his wants.” (Deut. 15:7-8) Rav Kook taught that the true goal of tzedakah is not to assist the poor, but rather to refine the character traits of the person giving. After all, if the purpose was to help the poor, God could have provided other means for their support without having to rely on the generosity of society.

“The clearest proof that poverty exists in order to perfect society is the fact that it is a constant and common phenomenon... Thus it must have a clear purpose and design by Divine Providence.” “Without a doubt, [assisting] the needy promotes a number of virtues. It develops our traits of humanity, softens the heart's callousness, fosters our sense of generosity and empathy for others, and enables us to actualize our innate love for goodness and kindness - precious qualities that crown the human soul.” Below are two stories which illustrate Rav Kook's remarkable generosity. Both incidents occurred during the years that he served as chief rabbi of Jaffa, from 1904 to 1914. These incidents were not meant to serve as an example for others, but were simply natural expressions of the rabbi's profound caring and compassion for those who needed help.

#### The Rabbi's Salary

Rav Kook's wife once appeared before the community directorate of Jaffa, headed by Mr. Meir Dizengoff, with a serious complaint. She had not seen her husband's salary for months and had no means of support. The leaders of



the community were shocked. After investigating the matter, however, they discovered that the rabbi himself was distributing his income to the needy.

The leaders asked Rav Kook how he could act in such a manner, caring more for strangers than his own household.

Rav Kook responded simply, "My family can buy food at the local grocery on credit. Others, however, cannot do so. Who would agree to give them what they need on credit?"

From that day on, the treasurer of the community was given strict orders to give the rabbi's salary only to his wife.

The Disqualified Guarantor

In 1907, the Jaffa correspondent for the Chavatzelet newspaper published an article criticizing the Anglo-Palestine Bank (now known as Bank Leumi). Apparently, a man applied for a loan in the bank and was asked to provide eleven guarantors. The man managed to find fourteen people who were willing to sign, one of whom was Rav Kook. The bank, however, disqualified most of them - including the rabbi.

The correspondent's conclusion was that the bank deliberately discriminated against religious Jews.

A few weeks later, a rejoinder appeared in the paper. The author, almost certainly associated with the bank, argued that the bank was justified in its rejection of Rav Kook's guarantees. He wrote:

"The rabbi is extremely good-hearted and gentle by nature. The poor cling to him. The only reason there are some beggars who do not knock on his door is because they know he has no money. If they only knew that they could get money in exchange for a small piece of paper, which he can always grant them, they would give him no peace." "Besides which, [if the rabbi would be accepted as a guarantor], he would unwittingly put himself under the burden of debts, from which he would be unable to escape. Large amounts of money would be lost, and one of the following would suffer: either the esteemed rabbi - and it would be highly unpleasant for the bank to extract money from him - or the bank itself. Therefore, the bank decided unanimously not to honor the rabbi's guarantees." (Adapted from Ein Eyah on Pe'ah, pp. 308-310. Stories from An Angel Among Men by Simcha Raz, translated by R. Moshe Lichtman, pp. 344-346)

See also: Re'eh: Searching for the Temple Site

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**Weekly Parsha RE'EH Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

There are many things in life that appear to be simple and logical to one person and yet remain beyond the understanding of one's companion, friend or acquaintance. To our great teacher Moshe, someone who is blessed with the immense powers of prophecy and who is spiritually able to communicate with Heaven almost at will, the mission of life and of the Jewish people is simple and visible to all. It is to obey and treasure the laws and values that are represented in the Torah as elucidated and explained by Moshe to the entire congregation of Israel. All these rules and values are, in his opinion, self-evident and visible to all. The choices that are presented to the people are stark and clear. They are between life and death, eternity and passing trends. It is all so simple to the prophetic eyes of Moshe. Part of his frustration with the Jewish people is their inability to see things as he sees them and to understand the challenges of life and history, as he perceives them. Oftentimes geniuses are not necessarily the best of teachers because they cannot understand why the students are so dense and do not understand what is so patently obvious. The Torah reading this week, and the entire book of D'varim as spoken and taught by Moshe, is an expression of this frustration of the great and the holy, who see the obvious but are unable to make others see it easily as well. The Jewish people, who heard the words of Moshe over three millennia ago in the desert of Sinai, had to appreciate and believe his message because of their faith in him and in the experiences

of Godly revelation that they had witnessed and in which they had participated. They had to believe in the future that had not yet arrived and had to make their choices based on faith in that future alone. In our time, well over 3000 years later, we need not rely solely on the prophetic advice and the words of Moshe, but rather we have the benefit of thousands of years of experience and history. We can look back and correctly assess the choices made by the Jewish people over all these millennia of its existence. We can judge which decisions were wise and which were foolish, which led to survival and eternity and which led to destruction. Because of this ability to read and know our history, one would think that we could choose wisely based on facts and experiences that are self-evident and obvious to serious students of our past. Yet, the Jewish people have a propensity to make bad choices and to ignore the clear lessons of our history. Therefore, the statement of Moshe that we should see clearly even today the choices that face us and the decisions that we perforce are bound to make, our past should teach us in which direction these decisions should go and what pitfalls we should avoid. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael <parsha@torahinaction.com>

subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

**Shema Yisrael Torah Network**

**Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Re'eh**

**פרשת ראה תשע"ח**

**ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה**

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

*Hayom*, today. Does the word "today" hold significance? Is the choice of blessing or curse applicable only today? What about tomorrow? Will we still have the opportunity for choice? I was thinking about this question when I came across an article by a respected rabbinic author in which he explained why he was not celebrating his birthday. He attributes this to the fact that, upon perusing the Torah, one notes that the only birthday we read about is that of Pharaoh. When we think about it, the only day that we Jews seem to deem worthy of celebration is the anniversary of one's death, his *yahrzeit*. It seems strange that we neglect birthdays and instead celebrate the end of life. It definitely comes across as morbid.

The answer to this disparity should inspire us all to some degree of introspection. A birthday links us to the day of birth, the day in which we enter this world, a day that is filled with incredible potential, a day that does not denote any tangible achievement whatsoever. When we are born, we enter into a world fraught with challenge, a world that offers us no assurance that we will successfully navigate its encumbrances and emerge triumphant, either physically or spiritually. We enter into a world replete with choices, that of blessing and that of curse. It is up to us to decide between them.

On the anniversary of one's death, we (hopefully) celebrate a life of achievement, a life of accomplishment. We acknowledge and affirm his legacy as we mull over the memories imparted to us. Indeed, we can now celebrate a life well-lived.

The milestones in life – such as *Bris Milah*, *bar mitzvah*, wedding – are wonderful milestones, which everyone should be fortunate to enjoy, both individually and with family, but, at the end of the day, these are all nothing more than wonderful beginnings. A beginning, regardless of its distinction, is nothing if it does not portend a good ending. We must set goals and do whatever is in our ability to attain these goals. When we start something, we are instructed to finish it. Otherwise, we have not achieved *shleimus*, completion. What is a *bar mitzvah*, if it is nothing more than the beginning of the end? Marriage is a wonderful milestone if it leads to the building of a *bayis neeman*, a faithful home, that is loyal to Hashem.

We often fall prey to the obstacles and challenges that confront us throughout our lives, impeding our ability to attain success, reach our goals and, thus, achieve completion. Our greatest obstacle is overcoming

ourselves: fear of failure; lack of self-confidence, which cause some to give up and quit before they have even gotten started. Without persistence and commitment, success remains elusive. Others lack conviction to their goals or faith in themselves. They rationalize their mistakes/failure, or they demonstrate a lack of self-esteem, which may be coupled with a fatalistic attitude. Any of these traits might inhibit success, but the real culprit, the all-inclusive “word” which most often defines one’s ability to achieve success in life is: attitude – the position one takes in his mind based upon his awareness of what lies before him.

*Hayom*/today is reference to the day on which we embark on our journey, when we make the decision to grow, to achieve our goals. It is on that day that we must be acutely aware that before us lay two options: blessing and curse. Our attitude most often determines our ability to succeed. We should seek blessing, and never for one moment forget that curse is the other option. We must stay focused on blessing, because it is only with such an attitude that we will achieve our goals.

Is life about choices? I do not think so. Choice implies two viable options. We have no option but blessing. Curse is not an option, and, hence, not a choice.

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה

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

One would think that since Moshe *Rabbeinu* is conveying Hashem’s message to the nation, he would say: “See, Hashem presents before you today a blessing and a curse.” Why does he say “I”? He is merely Hashem’s agent. *Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, zl*, cites *Chazal (Berachos 33b)* concerning the *pasuk* in *Devarim 10:12*, “Now, O *Yisrael*, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem.” All Hashem wants of us is fear. It seems like a simple request. Perhaps for Moshe it was simple, but it is not simple for the rest of the Jewish People. The commentators explain that, indeed, for Moshe, fearing Hashem was a *milsa zutressa*, simple expectation. This is the expected answer, but it does not resolve the problem. How could Moshe present *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, as being simple – just because it was simple for him? Moshe was a unique, extraordinary individual who maintained an unparalleled relationship with Hashem – something to which no ordinary Jew can aspire.

Veritably, this question applies to outreach in general. Imagine, a distinguished lecturer stands before us and presents all of the right reasons for repenting and changing our secular, materialistic lifestyle. He explains that all of the worldly pleasures most people dream about are nothing more than fantasies, facades of reality. Nothing is of such value in this ephemeral world that it is worth giving up *chayei olam*, a life of eternity, *Olam Habba*, the World to Come, for it. It sounds good to an audience. It appears great when presented on paper, but does the speaker know what he is talking about? For all the audience knows, this man lives in poverty, in a small one-bedroom apartment, no state of the art electrical amenities – and he is telling us that a materialistic lifestyle is of no value! Let him first have and enjoy it, and then let him talk!

The flipside is the individual who expounds about the beauty and serenity of the spiritual life. He describes the satisfaction of a life surrounded by the glory of the *Shechinah*, of the pure joy inherent in being in the presence of the Eternal. Has the speaker even been “there”? To the best of my knowledge, no one who has been to *Olam Habba* has returned with a description of a “day in the World to Come.” Who is this speaker to denigrate the evils of this world, the sheer waste of anything materialistic, yet laud the splendor and glory of the World to Come? It is easy to talk the talk if one has not walked the walk.

One person, however, does fit the bill; one person has enjoyed the ultimate pleasures of this world and has, likewise, experienced the beauty of *Olam Habba*: Moshe *Rabbeinu*. He grew up in Pharaoh’s palace, amid untold wealth, physical/material splendor and opulence. He had it all, yet he realized that is of no true, enduring value in comparison to the eternal life. He saw it all, and he experienced everything. He could get up there and

declare unequivocally: “It is not worth it!” Yes, for Moshe, *yiraas Shomayim* was a simple decision, a no brainer, because he had seen everything. He knew the tremendous chasm that separates materialism from spirituality, the real from the unreal. He was the perfect person to encourage *Klal Yisrael* to choose life – a life of the spirit, a life of reality, a life of eternity. He had been there and had experienced both sides of the coin.

את הברכה אשר תשמעו אל מצות ד' אליכם

**The blessing: that you hearken to the mitzvos of Hashem, your G-d. (11:27)**

The blessing – that you listen (hearken). Should it not have written *im tishme'u*, if you will listen? *Asher*, that (you will listen), sounds as if it is referring to one’s ability to listen. I would assume that we all have the ability. It is only a question concerning our desire to listen. The Torah appears to focus on ability, rather than on desire. Perhaps the Torah is teaching us a lesson concerning listening: Listen with your heart – not only with your ears. Deep listening via the emotional compass of one’s heart allows one to hear the “sounds” of those who are unable to express themselves orally. Furthermore, most of us are too busy listening for the purpose of offering a rejoinder to try to understand the speaker’s message. It is a blessing to be able to listen, to hear beyond the sounds, to feel synchronous with the speaker.

There are people who, for various physical and emotional reasons, are unable to express themselves. It requires a gifted or very caring person to “hear” what this person is saying – even though he has not uttered a word. We all know the expression, “reading between the lines.” This applies likewise to listening beyond the words. I think this incident took place with *Horav Chaim Brisker, zl*. A man came to him prior to *Pesach* and asked if it were permissible to use milk instead of wine for the four *kossos*, cups, of wine. *Rav Chaim* asked the man, “Why would you want to use milk instead of wine?” “*Rebbe*, I cannot afford wine,” the man replied. *Rav Chaim* handed him a silver cup and said, “Take this and purchase wine for the *Seder*.”

His *Rebbetzin* observed the exchange and came over and asked her husband, “Wine is not that expensive. You did not have to give him a silver cup just to purchase wine.” *Rav Chaim* replied, “If a man is asking whether he may use milk for the *Seder*, it is an indication that he has no means to purchase chicken either. I gave him enough money to secure all of his needs for the *Seder*.”

*Rav Chaim* listened with his heart. He understood that if the man had asked for milk, it meant he would not have any meat during his meal. Our heart’s emotional compass allows us to hear what is not being articulated.

*Horav Yeshayah Bardaky, zl*, was the son-in-law of and successor to *Horav Yisrael Shklov, zl*, *Rav* of the *Ashkenazi Perushim* community of Yerushalayim, mid-nineteenth century. He was a caring *Rav*, who worried about the many trials and tribulations that his community was experiencing. First and foremost was the economic challenge of living in Yerushalayim during this difficult period. People were literally starving to death. There was little food and no money. People literally went from door to door begging. *Rav Yeshayah* understood their plight and went out of his way to address their needs.

Now for the story: One *Erev Shabbos*, a poor man appeared at his door and shared with him the fact that he did not even have a slice of bread for *Shabbos*. *Rav Yeshayah* wanted to help the man, but, he too, had no money. It is not as if the *Rav* were paid. Poverty did not distinguish between *rabbanim* and community. They all starved, but the poor man had to turn to someone. Who else but the *Rav*?

*Rav Yeshayah* gave the man a small silver candlestick, saying “Go and sell this, and you will have sufficient funds to feed your family.” The man thanked the *Rav* profusely and left. A few weeks went by, and the man was at the door again, asking for alms. *Rav Yeshayah* gave him his other candlestick. The *Rav* now had nothing. It was not long before the poor,

wretched man was back at the Rav's door seeking alms. The Rav told him that he no longer had anything. In order not to allow the man to leave his home empty-handed, however, he removed his *shтреimel*, fur hat (which was probably the only one that he possessed), and handed it to the man, saying, "Take this; perhaps you can sell it and use the funds to sustain yourself."

The man took the *shтреimel* and slapped the Rav on the face! This unparalleled act of insolence was accompanied by disparaging and shameful words leveled at the Rav for not doing more to help him. No adequate words can give meaning to what took place. Rav Yeshayah was a man known for his empathy, a righteous and caring person who certainly did not deserve this. He did not react to the man's humiliation of him. Indeed, when those who observed the scene demanded that he do something about what had just occurred, he replied, "If a Jew can act with such overwhelming bitterness, it is clear that he is hurting terribly. He is in such pain that he has lost his equilibrium." In other words, he had lost his composure, his self-control. Here we see how a *gadol* listened with his heart. He understood that no person in the right frame of mind would act with such impudence against the hand that had fed him. He was probably so morose that he had become temporarily unbalanced. How could he be faulted for his actions? A *gadol baTorah* looks at and notices the little things, the ones which the average person does not see.

Some individuals are seriously challenged, unable to express themselves; these people have feelings, but they are beyond our ability to discern. Someone who is mentally challenged has no way to share his emotions with us. We do not know what goes on in the mind of one who is so challenged. Rabbi Yaakov Bender is *Menahel* of Darchei Torah, a *yeshivah* in Far Rockaway, that in addition to serving its mainstream student body, goes out of its way to reach out to students of varied backgrounds and learning disabilities. This story is about Shai, a young boy who was unable to join in regular classes due to his mental challenges. Nonetheless, his father would bring him to Darchei once each week to interact with the boys, so that he might be exposed to Jewish learning. It was on one particular Sunday that Shai was in school when, during recess, the fifth graders were playing a baseball game. Shai was included as an honorary member of the team.

The game was getting intense. It was the bottom of the ninth inning, bases were loaded, and Shai was up at the plate. Understandably, he knew nothing about the game, other than what he had observed when his "friends" played. He barely knew how to hold a bat in his hand. Nevertheless, Shai took bat in hand and began to swing wildly. Strike one. Strike two. He had missed twice. Truthfully, no one expected him to connect with the ball, but, if it made Shai feel good, if it made him feel like one of the boys, then he would "play." The winning points were potentially in Shai's next swing. More than winning, the boys all collectively wanted Shai to experience something he would probably never again have the chance to experience: Driving in the winning point. Two boys came over to Shai, put their arms around him, and held the bat with him. The pitcher (who was on the "opposing" team) left the mound and moved closer to the plate. He then very slowly lobbed the baseball towards Shai's bat. The boys then guided Shai's arms through the swing, until he connected with the ball, hitting it towards the base line. The third baseman "allowed" the ball to continue past him. All the boys began to chant, "Run, Shai, Run," as they encouraged Shai to run the bases.

Shai began to run. Legs pumping, arms flailing, with no sense of direction, but guided by his friends, Shai ran, to the encouragement of "Run, Shai, Run." When he missed first base, one of the boys caught him and turned him around, so that he could touch first base. He was shown in which direction to run – and he ran. He was never so excited in his life. He rounded the bases with everyone (on both teams) yelling, "Go for it, Shai!" When he came into home plate – all of the boys, both teams, were clapping and screaming, "You won the game!" He was hoisted upon their shoulders, as they all danced.

It was a glorious day for Shai. He had become part of the team; he had contributed to others. It elevated his personal esteem. You see, Shai – like all boys and girls whose lives confront challenge – have emotions, have feelings. They are often unable to express these feelings. Thus, it is difficult to "hear" them. These boys, however, listened; they heard, and, as a result, they not only helped Shai, but they changed their own lives and became better people.

לא תאמץ את לבבך ולא תקפוץ את ירך מאחזיך האביון

**You shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother. (15:7)**

*Tzedakah tatzil mimaves*, "Charity saves one from death." Does this mean that one who gives charity will live forever? No. It is a powerful *segulah*, merit of good fortune, which may come in handy. It might very well be that one merit the individual needs to push him over to "life" side. A simple, practical analogy quoted by *Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl*, illuminates this concept. Two misers were talking to one another. Reuven said to Shimon, "How miserable we are. Indeed, we have no *Olam Hazeh* (we do not allow ourselves to enjoy the pleasures of this world), and we have no *Olam Habba* (we are unworthy of reaping reward in the World to Come). We walk around in ragged clothes, eat foods that are easy to come by or leftovers from other people, we do not go anywhere for fear it might cost us. *Olam Habba*? We will not be allowed to get through the door. After all, what have we done to gain entrance?"

Shimon replied, "You are wrong. As far as this world is concerned, there is no greater pleasure than living a parsimonious lifestyle. Knowing that we are not wasting a penny generates such a good feeling. As far as *Olam Habba*, you are correct, it is a problem, but I have devised a way to circumvent the problem. I took an oath never to stretch out my hand to anyone, for anything. *Nu?* If I cannot stretch out my hand, I can hardly give *tzedakah*."

Reuven countered, "What makes you think that your ruse will be accepted in Heaven? If you die before me, I implore you to appear to me and tell me what happened."

Shimon left this world, and, after some time, he appeared to Reuven in a dream. His appearance was not good, his face quite darkened. It did not appear that he had been accepted in the Paradise he was seeking to enter. "Apparently, your ruse did not work," Reuven commented.

"Well, it would have worked, had the Tribunal not recalled an incident that had occurred years earlier. I had gone to the beach to swim. I was swimming in the water when suddenly, the water became a whirlpool, sucking me in. I thought for sure that this was it; I was going to drown, when I sensed someone swimming towards me. He stretched out his hand to reach me, and I, in turn, stretched out my hand to connect with his. He saved my life.

"The Tribunal asked why I had violated my oath not to stretch out my hand. My response was simple: 'My life was in danger. Had I not stretched out my hand, I would have drowned. My oath did not include matters of life and death.' The Tribunal asked me, 'Do you disregard Shlomo *Hamelech's* maxim *Tzedakah tatzil mimaves*, "Charity saves (one) from death" (*Mishlei* 12:2)? Are you not aware that the poor man who is seeking alms benefits his benefactor even more than what the benefactor does for him?"

"There you have it. If you decide to take the oath not to stretch out your hand, I suggest that it is best that you stay away from the water. You never know when you will need someone's help."

This story is obviously anecdotal, but its message is very real. We have no idea concerning the benefits of sharing our good fortune with others less fortunate. It is much better to share and never have to discover what could have happened as a result of our non-compliance.

*Va'ani Tefillah*

ולמלשינים אל תהי תקוה – *V'lamalshinim al tehi sikvah*. **And for the slanderers let there be no hope.**



Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, observes that the text of this *brachah*, blessing, has been changed from the original (apparently, there were a number of variations of this blessing). Based upon the *Rambam (Seder HaTefillos)*, the original text was: *V'lameshumadim al tehi sikvah*. *Meshumadim* refers to those who apostatized themselves and joined the new religion which was originally Judeo-Christian and, over time, became Christianity. These Jews converted and became members of the church. Understandably, this text did not find favor in the eyes of the church fathers. Acquiescing to their pressure, the term *meshumadim* was changed to *malshinim*, with the heretics and converts becoming slanderers. This does not mean that the apostates did not slander; they certainly did. These converts did everything in their power to subvert Torah Judaism, with slander being on top of their list of evil. One wonders: If their newly-formed religion was so true and wonderful, why did they care if the "original" and its followers continued to live in peace? Ostensibly, it is as we have said time and again: falsehood hates the truth. They cannot coexist. The mere fact that the truth exists and thrives undermines the falsehood by revealing its hypocrisy and deception.

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**What is kosher behavior?**

**Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

8/9/2018, **ל"ה באב תשע"ח**

*In this week's D'var Torah for Re'eh, the Chief Rabbi explains that we must reach out with a hand of friendship to everybody, even those beyond our social circles.*

We can learn a wonderful lesson from the stork. The Torah in Parashat Re'eh tells us about the laws of Kashrut. As is well known, when it comes to animals, there are two 'Simanim' – two signs, of being kosher. The animals need to have parted hooves and they also need to chew the cud.

With regards to fish, there are also two signs; fins and scales. But when it comes to birds, no signs are given. Instead the Torah provides for us a list of all the 'treif' (non-kosher) birds. If a bird is on the list we cannot eat it, if it is not on the list, it is kosher.

One of the birds that is featured on the list is the 'Chasida' - the stork. The Gemara in Masechet Chulin (Daf Samuch Gimel amud Alef) tells us that the stork is called 'Chasida' because it is righteous and because it is selfless. It is an exceptionally kind bird.

But there is a problem, because the Ramban tells us that there is a common denominator amongst all birds which are not kosher. He tells us that they all have a cruel streak in their nature and some of them are out-rightly birds of prey. So how is it possible therefore that the 'chasida', this pious stork, is actually 'trief'?

The Chidushei Harim, the founder of the Chassidic sect of Gur in the nineteenth century, gives a beautiful explanation. He tells us that the 'chasida' - the stork, is indeed selfless and kind-hearted, however, only to birds of its own feather. Towards other birds and other creatures, it acts with cruelty and distain. As a result it is not kosher.

The Chidushei Harim goes on to tell us that the laws of Kashrut in our Parasha do not only relate to what we can and can't eat, but they tell us about us, ourselves. We shouldn't lead a stork-like existence. In the event that our compassion and selflessness extends only to those within our own limited social clique, those within our own echo chamber, then ultimately, that is a 'treif' form of existence.

In order to be kosher, we ourselves need to recognise the image of God within the soul of every human being and to reach out with kindness toward one and all.

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland. **חדשות ערוץ 7**

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Ohr Somayach

Insights into Halacha

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

**Ohr Somayach :: Insights Into Halacha**

**The Double-Header Haftarah**

**For the week ending 3 September 2016 / 30 Av 5776**

**Rabbi Yehuda Spitz**

Directly due to the interesting circumstances of this week, Parshas Re'eh / Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Elul, an unusual occurrence will transpire in a fortnight on Parshas Ki Seitzei: a double haftarah. Not a printing mistake, this double haftarah will actually be recited by the vast majority of Ashkenazic congregations worldwide.

Many do realize this special occurrence even exists. In fact, one recent time this occurred, when I mentioned the uniqueness of this situation to the gabbai on that Shabbos itself, he responded that he had never heard of a double haftarah! He maintained that at the hashkama minyan, filled with Bnei Torah, not a single one pointed out such a thing! [No, I did not daven Haneitz that Shabbos.] I had to show this ruling to him explicitly in both the Mishnah Berurah and the Tukachinsky Luach Eretz Yisrael, before he consented to allow the Baal Koreh to read both haftaros. However, his skeptical response was quite understandable, as the previous occurrence of a double haftarah to that Shabbos was fourteen years prior!

Haftarah History

To properly understand why there can be a double haftarah, some background is needed.

The haftaros were established when the wicked Antiochus (infamous from the Chanukah miracle) outlawed public reading of the Torah. The Chachamim of the time therefore established the custom of reading a topic from the Nevi'im similar to what was supposed to be read from the Torah.[1] Even after the decree was nullified, and prior to the Gemara's printing, this became Minhag Yisroel.

Most haftaros share some similarity with at least one concept presented in the Torah reading. The Gemara Megillah (29b - 31a) discusses the proper haftarah readings for the various holidays throughout the year. The Pesikta (an early Midrash cited by many early authorities including Tosafos and the Abudraham)[2] continues the teachings of Chazal as to the proper haftarah readings starting from the Fast of Shiva Assur B'Tamuz.

During the 'Three Weeks' from 17 Tamuz until Tisha B'Av, we read 'Tilasa D'Paranusa', 'Three Readings of Punishment'. After Tisha B'Av (starting with Shabbos Nachamu, dubbed so due to its haftarah, Nachamu Nachamu Ami) until Rosh Hashanah, 'Shiva D'Nechemta', or 'Seven Readings of Consolation' are read.[3] This is followed by a reading of Teshuva,[4] during the Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, aptly named 'Shabbos Shuva', for its repentance themed haftarah starting with 'Shuva Yisrael'. The AbuDraham, as well as Rabbeinu Tam, conclude that these special haftarah readings are so important, that they are never pushed off!

Head To Head Haftaros

Our dilemma arises when that rule goes head-to-head with another rule. The Gemara (Megillah 31a) states that whenever Rosh Chodesh falls out on Shabbos, a special haftarah is read: 'Hashamayim Kisi', as it mentions both the inyanim of Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh.[5] If Rosh Chodesh falls out on Sunday, then on the preceding Shabbos the haftarah of 'Mochor Chodesh' is read, as it mentions the following day being Rosh Chodesh.

The \$64,000 question becomes, what happens when Rosh Chodesh Elul falls out on Shabbos or Sunday? Which ruling trumps which? Do we follow the Gemara or the Pesikta? Do we stick with the 'Shiva D'Nechemta' or the special Rosh Chodesh reading?

The answer is that there is no easy answer! In fact, the Mordechai[6] cites both as separate, equally valid minhagim, with no clear cut ruling! So what are we supposed to do? Which minhag do we follow?

Sefardic Selection

The Beis Yosef[7] writes that the ikar halachah follows the Abudraham as he was considered an expert in these topics. Consequently, in the Shulchan Aruch,[8] he rules that on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Elul only that week's haftarah of consolation, 'Aniyah So'arah' is read. This would also hold true if Rosh Chodesh fell on Sunday, that only that week's haftarah of consolation would be read, and not 'Machar Chodesh'. [9] This is the general Sefardi ruling on this topic.[10]

Ashkenazic Action

Yet, the Rema, citing the Sefer Haminhagim of Rav Yitzchak Isaac Tyrnau (Tirna), a contemporary of the Terumas Hadeshen and Maharil (late 1300s - early 1400s), argues

that since the special reading of Shabbos Rosh Chodesh also contains words of consolation, it is therefore the proper reading, even for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Elul.[11] Moreover, this reading is mentioned specifically by the Gemara as the proper reading for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, with no special dispensation given for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Elul. Additionally, since it is recited more often (as Shabbos Rosh Chodesh falls out at least twice a year) one will fulfill the Talmudic dictum of 'tadir v'sheino tadir, tadir kodem'[12], that preference is given to the more common practice, by reading this haftarah instead.[13]

Parenthetically, and conversely, if Rosh Chodesh would fall out on Sunday, all would agree that only that week's haftarah of consolation would be read, as there is no conciliatory theme in 'Mochor Chodesh'.

#### Ground Rule Double

However, by maintaining the Rosh Chodesh priority, it would seem that we would miss out on one of the 'Shiva D'Nechemta', as there are not enough weeks before Rosh Hashanah to fit in all seven of these special haftaros when one of the haftaros [occurring when Rosh Chodesh falls out on Parshas Re'eh] is taken up by 'Hashamayim Kisi'. Yet, the Pesikta and Rishonim stressed the importance and necessity of each and every one of them being read.

Therefore, the Sefer Haminhagim maintains that we need to make up the missing haftarah, and it is done as an addition, on Parshas Ki Seitzei, two weeks later. The reason is that the haftarah of Parshas Re'eh, 'Aniyah So'arah' in the original Navi (Yeshaya Ch. 54: 11) follows consecutively after the haftarah of Parshas Ki Seitzei, 'Runi Akara' (Yeshaya Ch. 54: 1). Therefore, this solution turns two separate haftaros into one long double header[14] and thereby fulfills everyone's requirement to hear all seven of the Conciliatory Haftaros.

This resolution of having a double-header haftarah on Parshas Ki Seitzei when Rosh Chodesh Elul falls out two weeks earlier on Parshas Re'eh is cited and actually codified in halachah by many authorities including the Rema, Levush, Matteh Efraim, Magen Avrohom, Chayei Adam, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and, as mentioned previously, the Mishnah Berurah and Tukachinsky Calendar[15] is the definitive Ashkenazic ruling. Sefardim, on the other hand, do not have this interesting occurrence, as they follow the Shulchan Aruch's rule of never pushing off any of the 'Shiva D'Nechemta', and thereby never having the need to double up haftaros.[16]

One need not worry about flipping pages to keep up with this double haftarah; it can be easily found in its full (combined) glory as the singular haftarah of Parshas Noach, as one of the topics mentioned in it is a reference to the Great Deluge, referred to as the 'Mei Noach'.

Those who miss this unique opportunity should not fret too much, as we don't have to wait an additional fourteen years to have a Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Elul. In fact, aside for last year and this year, it will fall out several times over the next eight years.[17] Hopefully by then the gabbai will remember that double headers are not exclusively reserved for ballgames.

The author wishes to thank R' Yoel Rosenfeld and R' Shloime Lerner for raising awareness of this unique issue, and serving as the impetus for my interest and research in this topic.

[1] As per the *Tosafos Yom Tov (Megillah, Ch. Bnei Ha'Ir, Mishnah 4 s.v. l'chisidran)* citing the *Sefer Hatishbi (Shores Petter)*. A similar background is given by the *Abudraham (Seder Parshiyos V'Haftaros)*.

[2] Including the *Machzor Vitry (261 - 262)*, *Abudraham (ibid.)*, the *Mordechai (Megillah, end Ch. Bnei Ha'Ir 831, end s.v. haghah)*, *Tosafos (Megillah 31b s.v. rosh)*, *Ran (ad loc.)*, and *Rashba (ad loc.)*.

[3] See *Machzor Vitry and Abudraham (ibid.)* for two separate reasons why the *Shiva D'Nechemta* are in its specific order.

[4] Although the *Pesikta*, according to the *Abudraham*, maintains that there should be two haftaros of repentance, common minhag is that only one, *Shuva Yisrael*, is read on a Shabbos. The other, *Dirshu Hashem Bi'Heematzto*, is read on *Tzom Gedalyah* (by *Mincha*) instead. [This is especially important, as the *Gemara Rosh Hashana 18a* explains that this is referring to the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*.] See *Tosafos (ibid.)*, *Tur (Orach Chaim 428: 8)* and *Beis Yosef (ad loc. end s.v. uma"sh)*.

[5] See also *Shu"t Noda B'Yehuda (Tinyana, Orach Chaim 11)*.

[6] *Mordechai (ibid.)*.

[7] *Beis Yosef (Orach Chaim 425: 1 s.v. uma"sh)*, *Abudraham (ibid.)*.

[8] *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 425: 1)*.

[9] See however *Shu"t Divrei Malkiel (vol. 3: 27)*, who opines that for *Sefardim* it is possible that 'Machar Chodesh' would still be the proper reading as it mentions the 'Kevius of Rosh Chodesh in its proper time'.

[10] See *Kaf Hachaim (Orach Chaim 425: 13)*, *Shu"t Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi (7)*, *Shu"t Yechaveh Daas (vol. 3: 45)*, *Rav Mordechai Eliyahu's Darchei Halacha glosses to the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (128: 5)*, and *Yalkut Yosef (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 581, par. Ode B'Hilchos Chodesh Elul 7)*. The *Rambam (Hilchos Tefilla Ch. 13: 14)* actually implies this way as well.

[11] *Rema (Orach Chaim 425: 1 & in Darchei Moshe ad loc.)*, based on the *Sefer Haminhagim* (whom he refers to as 'Minhagim Shelanu', beg. Ch. Minhag shel Rosh Chodesh Elul v'Erev Rosh Hashana). He mentions that several other *Rishonim*, including the *Ohr Zarua*, *Mahar"i Weil*, and the *Tur* rule this way as well.

[12] See, for example, *Brachos 59b*, *Megillah 29b*, *Pesachim 114a*, *Sukka 54b & 56a*, and *Zevachim 91a*.

[13] These additional reasons were not written by the *Sefer Haminhagim* himself, but are found in the *Haghen* there (90), as well as in the works of later authorities mentioned in this article.

[14] For more on the topic of the halachic feasibility of combining two haftaros of the 'Shiva D'Nechemta', see *Terumas Hadeshen (vol. 2, Psakim U'Ksavim 94)* and *Shu"t Tzemach Tzedek (126)*.

[15] Including the *Levush (Orach Chaim 425: 2 & 581: 1)*, *Matteh Efraim (581: 5)*, *Sha'arei Efraim (Sha'ar 9: 23)*, *Magen Avrohom (425: 1)*, *Machatzis Hashekel (ad loc.)*, *Ba'er Heitiv (425: 2)*, *Derech Hachaim (Sha'ar Hakollel 8)*, *Shulchan Atzei Shittim (Krias HaTorah 6)*, *Chayei Adam (vol. 2, 118: 16)*, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (128: 4)*, *Mishnah Berurah (425: 7)*, *Luach Eretz Yisroel (5775 and 5776, Elul, Parshas Ki Seitzei)*, and *Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin's Ezras Torah Luach (5775 and 5776, Elul, Shabbos Parshas Re'eh s.v. Shacharis and Parshas Ki Seitzei)*. See also *Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 425: 5 & 428: 7)* and *Shu"t Minchas Chein (vol. 2, Orach Chaim 23)*.

[16] In many *Sefardic* congregations, on *Parshas Re'eh* the first and last pasuk of "HaShamayim Kisi" is still read (as well as the first and last pasuk of "Mochor Chodesh" if applicable), as otherwise, they would not have read it at all this time around. See *Rav Mordechai Eliyahu's Darchei Halacha* glosses to the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (128: 4)* and *Yalkut Yosef (ibid.)* who cite such a minhag, in order to at least catch some of "HaShamayim Kisi" (and "Mochor Chodesh"). For *Ashkenazim* who end up reading both haftaros, there is no need to do so.

[17] According to *Rabbi Dovid Heber of the Star-K* and author of *Shaarei Zemanim*, for most *Ashkenazic Kehillos* this double haftarah is actually read 70 times in the *Tur's (Orach Chaim end 428) 247-year cycle*, making it overall not that uncommon. In fact, with the similar calendar setup of 5775 and 5776, this will actually occur in back to back years.

For any questions, comments or for the full *Mareh Mekomos / sources*, please email the author: [vspitz@ohr.edu](mailto:vspitz@ohr.edu). Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority. L'iluy Nishmas the *Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda*, and l'zchus for *Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam and her children for a yeshua teikef u'miyad!* *Rabbi Yehuda Spitz* serves as the *Sho'el U' Meishiv* and *Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim*. He also writes a contemporary halacha column for the *Ohr Somayach* website titled "Insights Into Halacha" For any questions, comments or for the full *Mareh Mekomos / sources*, please email the author: [vspitz@ohr.edu](mailto:vspitz@ohr.edu). © 1995-2017 *Ohr Somayach International*