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In memory of Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov.

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Bechanuni Na Bezos – On Maaser and Tzedakah

Adapted by CS from article by **Rabbi Yoel Friedman**, *Machon HaTorah v'Haaretz*, Tammuz 5773

Malachi rebukes the Jewish people for straying from Hashem's statutes between the days of their fathers, and calls them to teshuvah. The first concrete step he names is the restoration of terumah and maaser, giving terumah to the kohanim and maaser to the leviyim. If Israel takes this step, they are promised a blessing without measure. The prophet Malachi does not stop at promising that giving terumah and maaser will bring rain and abundance. He goes further: **וּבְחִנּוּנִי נָא** **וְזָאת**, and test Me now with this. He explicitly invites the people to put Hashem to the test on this point. **הִבִּיאוּ אֶת כָּל הַמַּעֲשֵׂר אֶל בֵּית הָאוֹצֵר וְיִהְיֶה טָרֵף בְּבֵיתִי וּבְחִנּוּנִי נָא זֹאת אָמַר ה'** Bring all the tithe into the storehouse, and let there be food in My house, and test Me now with this, says Hashem Tzevakos, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing beyond all measure (Malachi 3:10).

Is it permitted to test Hashem regarding all mitzvos, or only regarding terumah and maaser? And if testing Him is generally forbidden, what makes terumah and maaser unique, that the prophet explicitly invites us to test Him?

A. Test Me

The Gemara in Taanis (8b) records that Rabbi Yochanan taught: what is the meaning of **עֲשֵׂר תַעֲשֶׂר** (Devarim 14:22)? *Aser, tithe, bishvil shetisasher*, so that you will become wealthy. Rabbi Yochanan later met the young son of Reish Lakish and asked him for his verse of the day. The child cited this same *aser te'aser* and explained it the same way. When Rabbi Yochanan asked how he knew this, the child answered simply: *zil nasi*, go and try it. Rabbi Yochanan pushed back: is it permitted to test Hashem? Doesn't the Torah say, *lo senasu es Hashem*, do not test Hashem? The child replied that Rabbi Hoshaya taught that maaser is an exception, as the verse states explicitly, bring all the tithe into the storehouse..

. and test Me now with this.

Rabbi Chananel explains that the derivation is not just a play on the similarity between *maaser* and *osher* (wealth), but the doubling of the verb: tithe once, and your resources will grow enough that you can tithe again. Tosafos (Taanis 9a, s.v. *aser*) bring a supporting story: a wealthy man's field produced a thousand *kor* every year, and he faithfully set aside a hundred *kor* for maaser. On his deathbed he charged his son to continue the practice. The son tithed faithfully the first year, but the second year he balked at giving up a hundred *kor* and withheld the tithe and the field's yield shrank to exactly one hundred *kor*. His relatives remarked: originally, when the field was in your hands, you were the owner and Hashem was the kohen collecting His share; now that you withheld His portion, Hashem became the owner and you were reduced to collecting the kohen's share.

B. The Prohibition Against Testing

The Gemara's question, is it permitted to test Hashem, points to the prohibition in Devarim 6:16: **לֹא תִנְסוּ אֶת ה'** אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר נִסִּיתֶם בְּמִסָּה Do not test Hashem your God, as you tested Him at Masah.

The *Derech Mitzvosecha* from the Mishneh Limelech contrasts the Rambam's view with that of the *Semag* and the *Yereim*. The Rambam (*Sefer HaMitzvos*, 64) limits this prohibition to testing the authenticity of a prophet's predictions. The *Yereim* (sec. 361) and *Semag* (4) broaden it to cover any case where a person performs a mitzvah specifically to test whether Hashem will reward him for it, as the *Yereim* puts it, a person should not say, I will do this mitzvah and see if I am blessed for it.

The *Sefer HaChinuch* (mitzvah 424) follows this broader view: one should not perform Hashem's mitzvos as a form of testing doing them to see if Hashem will repay in kind, rather than out of love and awe of Him. His reasoning: the primary reward for mitzvos is not given in this world at all, but in the World to Come, as Chazal taught, today is for doing them, tomorrow is for receiving their reward.

1. Regarding Maaser Dagan

The *Chinuch* notes that maaser is the sole exception to this rule: regarding every other mitzvah the Torah says do not test, except for maaser, because Hashem informed us that in sustaining the servants of His house through maaser, benefit and blessing come to our money regardless, unimpeded by any sin.

The *Prisha*, citing his teacher the Maharshal, explains why: giving maaser isn't really a forbidden test at all, because Hashem made an

explicit, unconditional promise, *aser bishvil shetitasher*, and a promise that is certain to be fulfilled isn't a gamble. On this view, the *ubechanuni* allowance is confined strictly to biblically mandated maaser. Where there is no Torah obligation, the ordinary prohibition against testing returns.

This raises the live question: does the exception apply only to agricultural maaser, or does it extend to maaser kesafim (monetary tithes) and general tzedakah as well?

2. Regarding Maaser Kesafim

The *Tur* (Yoreh Deah 247) writes that one should never think, how can I deplete my money to give to the poor. A person must recognize that his money isn't truly his own, but a deposit meant to fulfill the Depositor's will. He adds that this is *badukah u'menusah* tried and tested: giving tzedakah never causes loss, but brings added wealth and honor. Citing Malachi, he states that the Sages said testing Hashem is forbidden in every matter except this one.

The *Beis Yosef* raises a difficulty: the Gemara in Taanis implies that the allowance is specific to maser dagan (agricultural maaser), and does not extend to tzedakah generally.

The *Rema* (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 247:4) records both positions: (i) that it is permitted specifically for maaser dagan but not for tzedakah (maaser ksafim) (the *Beis Yosef's* view), and (ii) that testing Hashem is permitted through tzedakah broadly (the *Tur's* view).

The Pischei Teshuva explains that tzedakah broadly includes maaser ksafim. Likewise, the *Drisha* (on the *Tur* 247) says tzedakah in its standard form is maaser kesafim a tenth given as a matter of course and so both fall under a single law. He offers a second explanation as well: when a person gives tzedakah at its proper measure a tenth or a fifth of his earnings there's no reason to distinguish money tithes from agricultural tithes; the prohibition against testing applies only when no fixed measure is given at all. Whenever a person gives exactly what Hashem commanded, he merits the promised wealth. The *Shelah*, by contrast, holds that Malachi's dispensation was limited strictly to agricultural maaser; anything beyond that falls back under the general prohibition. The *Sheailas Yaavetz* (part 1, sec. 3) agrees, reasoning that *ubechanuni* overrides a biblical prohibition, which can only happen for a biblically mandated obligation and since maaser kesafim is rabbinic (or a custom falling under general tzedakah), it cannot override the Torah prohibition against testing. This can be challenged, though, from the Gemara in Makkos (23b), which lists bringing the tithe among three gezeiros made by the beis din shel matah and ratified by beis din shel maala, proving that consent from the verse in Malachi, even for tithes that were rabbinic in origin (such as Ezra's decree). This suggests the *ubechanuni* allowance held even for obligations that weren't strictly biblical. The *Radbaz* (part 3, secs. 441, 882) offers a different basis entirely: testing Hashem was permitted specifically for the sake of the poor's welfare. Normally, conditional vows carry spiritual risk, but if a person feels sluggish about giving tzedakah, he may make a firm vow to give or test Hashem's promised blessing through giving, because the immediate benefit to the poor outweighs the usual caution surrounding vows and testing.

[3. CS editor note: Likely Dependent on Whether Maaser Ksafim Di'Oraisa or Minhag

This debate whether עשר תעשר and עשר תעשר applies to Maaser Kesafim, may hinge on a deeper halachic dispute over the actual

status of maaser ksafim. What is it exactly? If maaser ksafim is a strict Torah obligation, the Navi's allowance to test Hashem naturally applies. A biblical command carries a biblical exception. Tosafos quotes the Sifrei to show that maaser ksafim is derived from the Torah's extra word "kol" in Aser Te'aser, implying a biblical status עשר תעשר את כל תבואת זרעך איתא בספרי אין לי אלא תבואה פרקמטיא וכל שאר עשר תעשר את כל תבואת זרעך (Tosafos, Taanis 9a). See similarly, Taz Y.D. 331;32. However, a majority of contemporary poskim hold that maaser kesafim isn't a biblical or even a rabbinic obligation, but rather a minhag. See Aruch Hashulchan Yoreh Deah 249; Bach, Yoreh Deah 249; Maharam of Rothenburg siman 74;.]

C. What Does Test Me Actually Mean?

The Gemara in Pesachim (8b) asks whether people on a mitzvah errand are protected from harm even if mixed personal motives ride along with the mission. It compares this to a baraisa: one who says, this coin is for tzedakah so that my son should live or so that I merit the World to Come, is nonetheless considered a complete tzaddik. Tosafos (Pesachim 8b, s.v. *sheyizkeh*) reconcile this with the well-known mishnah in Avos not to serve the Master merely to receive a reward: the mishnah's concern applies only where a person would regret his act of charity if the hoped-for benefit fails to materialize. One who wouldn't regret it either way remains a complete tzaddik regardless of outcome.

From this, Tosafos, the *Yereim*, *Semag*, and *Chinuch* draw the real boundary of the prohibition: it applies only when a person makes his performance of the mitzvah entirely conditional on receiving the reward. Giving maaser in order to become rich was uniquely permitted for agricultural maaser, and arguably for money tithes as well. But where a person is committed to performing the mitzvah regardless, and simply hopes that Hashem will show him mercy, or heal his child, or bless him in its merit, there's nothing wrong with that hope at all and this applies just as much to tzedakah and every other mitzvah.

Summary

1. *The scope of do not test*: The Rishonim disagree about whether this prohibition applies only to testing a prophet's word (Rambam), or extends to testing Hashem through mitzvah performance for material reward (*Yereim*, *Semag*, *Chinuch*).
2. *The scope of Malachi's exception*: The Acharonim disagree about how far *ubechanuni na bazos* reaches. Some confine it strictly to agricultural maaser (*Shla*, *Yaavetz*); others extend it to maaser kesafim (*Beis Yosef*); others extend it to tzedakah given in any structured, measured form (*Tur*, *Drisha*).
3. *The underlying reasons offered*: Hashem gave an explicit, unconditional promise of wealth for tithing, making it a guarantee rather than an uncertain test (*Prisha*).

The Jewish Calendar Is a Calendar of Redemption

Excerpted, translated and adapted

Rav Yitzchok Kossowsky, Shabbos U'Moed Vol 3

Rav Kossowsky, my great-grandfather, was Rav of Ivye, Volkovisk and Johannesburg and brother-in-law of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski.

Israel and the Moon

The Jewish calendar begins with a striking choice. The great civilizations of the world measured the year primarily by the sun, and Rome in particular became identified with a solar calendar and with

the world of visible political power. Klal Yisrael, by contrast, sanctifies its months according to the moon. For Rav Kossowsky, this distinction is not accidental. The sun represents visible and seemingly constant power, dominating the sky by day with a light that appears fixed and unchanging. This corresponds to the world of Eisav, the world of earthly strength and sovereignty. The moon is very different. Its light grows and diminishes, and at times it seems almost to disappear, yet its disappearance is never final. The moon returns and is renewed.

That is why the moon is the more fitting symbol of Klal Yisrael. Jewish history does not move in a straight line of uninterrupted visible success. There are periods of greatness and periods of diminution, moments when the nation shines openly and moments when its light is almost entirely concealed. Yet concealment is not destruction. The moon teaches that something can appear to vanish and nevertheless retain within itself the certainty of renewal. Rav Kossowsky develops this from the contrast between Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov has a portion not only in this world but also in the World to Come, while Eisav's greatness belongs to the realm of visible temporal power. Yaakov may pass through night and concealment, but his future is not exhausted by what can be seen in the present.

This is also the meaning of the familiar declaration associated with Kiddush Levanah

David, King of Israel, lives and endures
Malchus Beis David may disappear from visible history, just as the moon disappears from sight, but it has not ceased to exist. The Jewish calendar therefore embodies a philosophy of Jewish history. We count by a luminary whose defining characteristic is not uninterrupted brilliance, but the ability to return after darkness. That is why the lunar calendar itself becomes a calendar of geulah. The first mitzvah given to Klal Yisrael as a nation concerned the new moon

ראש חודש זה לכם ראש חדשים
This month shall be for you the first of the months

Before Klal Yisrael left Egypt, Hashem taught them to look at a moon that had disappeared and recognize the beginning of something new. That connection is especially significant because yetzias Mitzrayim itself was the first great national renewal. A people whose existence had almost been swallowed by Egypt emerged again into history. The moon was therefore not merely a convenient astronomical clock, it was the fitting symbol of a nation whose destiny would repeatedly follow the pattern of concealment and renewal.

The Calendar of Redemption

The Torah later commands שמור את חודש האביב ועשית פסח להשם אלקיך
Guard the month of Aviv and make the Pesach offering to Hashem your G-d.

This is not merely an agricultural instruction or a technical calendrical rule. The Jewish months follow the moon, while the seasons follow the solar year, and since twelve lunar months are shorter than a solar year, Pesach would gradually move backward through the seasons unless an additional month were periodically inserted. The mitzvah of עיבור השנה therefore ensures that Nisan and Pesach remain in אביב.

Rav Kossowsky sees within this halachic structure a deeper lesson. Pesach must remain connected to spring because the season itself

expresses the meaning of geulah. Winter is a time when life is hidden and the world appears barren and dormant, while spring reveals that the life concealed beneath the surface was never extinguished. So too, Klal Yisrael may pass through periods when its vitality, glory and future are hidden, but concealment is not extinction. Just as spring follows winter, geulah follows galus.

The Torah therefore requires that the festival of yetzias Mitzrayim remain permanently attached to אביב. Every Pesach proclaims that the apparent death of winter is followed by renewal, and that the darkness of galus contains within it the possibility of geulah. The calendar does more than record Jewish history, it interprets Jewish history. Its structure teaches that time is not moving aimlessly. Every year is directed toward Nisan, and Nisan toward Pesach, the month in which Klal Yisrael first emerged from bondage and entered a new national existence.

כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו נלאות
As in the days of your departure from the land of Egypt, I will show him wonders.

Yetzias Mitzrayim is therefore not only an event to be remembered, it establishes the pattern and promise of the future geulah. The command to preserve Pesach in חודש האביב ensures that this promise is renewed every year. In this sense, the Jewish calendar becomes a calendar of redemption because it continually moves Klal Yisrael from concealment toward revelation, from winter toward spring, and from galus toward geulah.

The Added Month as a Model for Galus

The most original element in Rav Kossowsky's presentation is his understanding of the added month as a model for the experience of galus. Under the ordinary order of the calendar, Adar ends and Nisan begins, and the month of geulah appears to be approaching. Yet in a leap year, Beis Din inserts another Adar and Nisan is delayed. To someone waiting for Nisan, the additional month may appear to be an interruption. The calendar seemed ready to move into the month of redemption, but instead it returns to Adar and Klal Yisrael is asked to wait again.

In reality, however, the additional month does not obstruct Pesach, it protects Pesach. Without עיבור השנה, Nisan would eventually cease to coincide with Aviv, and the festival of redemption would no longer occur in the season commanded by the Torah. The added month delays Pesach only so that Pesach can arrive at its proper time. This becomes Rav Kossowsky's model for understanding the prolonged duration of galus.

There are moments when Klal Yisrael believes that Nisan must surely be about to arrive. The darkness has lasted long enough, the suffering appears to have exhausted its purpose, and everything seems prepared for redemption. Yet another interval is added. The expected Nisan does not arrive, and the nation is asked to endure what appears to be another Adar. The calendar teaches that such a postponement need not mean that the promised destination has changed. An added Adar is not the cancellation of Nisan, it is part of the calculation that makes the true Nisan possible.

So too, the extension of galus is not evidence that Hashem has abandoned His promise. What appears to human beings as postponement may be, within Hashem's hidden direction of history, part of the preparation for geulah. The idea must be stated carefully. Rav Kossowsky is not claiming that we can explain particular tragedies or determine why redemption has been delayed. He is

drawing a symbolic lesson from the structure of the Jewish calendar. We see only that another month has been inserted, we do not see the full calculation.

The phrase סוד העיבור is therefore especially appropriate. The calculation of the calendar is itself a body of Torah entrusted to the chachamim, but it also becomes a symbol of the hidden calculation of Jewish history. Hashem knows how each additional interval contributes to the ultimate arrival of the appointed time. The calendar thus trains Klal Yisrael not to confuse delay with failure. An added month may feel like greater distance from Pesach, but in truth it preserves the possibility of Pesach. Similarly, another period of galus may appear to move history farther from redemption, while in Hashem's design it may be bringing the final geulah closer to its proper time.

This is why Rav Kossowsky connects Pesach not only with the first redemption but also with the future one כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו. Every properly established Nisan reminds Klal Yisrael that the first geulah established the pattern for the final geulah. Rav Kossowsky develops this connection between עיבור השנה, yetzias Mitzrayim and future redemption in the central portion of the essay. The lesson can be stated simply. The additional Adar does not prevent Nisan from coming, it enables Nisan to come at the right time. So too, the hidden extensions of Jewish history do not erase the promise of geulah. Although their purpose remains concealed from us, they too fall within Hashem's calendar of redemption.

Why Preserving the Calendar Became an Act of Heroism

This understanding explains why the Jewish calendar became a battlefield during periods of persecution. The declaration of Rosh Chodesh and the intercalation of the year determine the dates of the Yamim Tovim, so without an authoritative calendar, Jewish communal life cannot function properly. Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos all depend upon the sanctification of Jewish time.

But Rav Kossowsky's point goes deeper. An enemy who attacks the Jewish calendar is attacking more than a system of dates. He is attempting to sever Klal Yisrael from its own sacred rhythm and from the hope embedded within that rhythm. Rav Kossowsky recalls periods when Jewish chachamim risked their lives to preserve עיבור השנה and the fixing of the calendar. He describes the efforts made under hostile governments to maintain the correct determination of the months and years even when such activity had to be carried out secretly. Their concern was not merely astronomical precision. They understood that the calendar preserved the continuity of Jewish life and the nation's faith in its own future.

This gives new meaning to the struggle over the calendar. The ruling empire might control roads, cities and armies, issue decrees and dominate the present, but it could not be permitted to determine when Nisan would begin. That decision belonged to the Torah and to the chachamim entrusted with preserving Jewish time. By safeguarding the calendar, the chachamim declared that the empire controlled only the visible present, it did not control the destiny of Klal Yisrael. It could decree another period of suffering, force the proceedings underground and make the road to Nisan longer, but it could not abolish Nisan. It could not erase the promise of Pesach, and it could not prevent the moon from being renewed. This is where the opening symbolism of the sun and moon returns with particular force. The great empires lived by the sun and appeared to possess stable,

unchanging power, while Klal Yisrael lived by the moon, sometimes diminished, sometimes hidden, yet always capable of renewal.

The empire's strength seemed permanent and Jewish existence seemed precarious, yet history repeatedly showed the opposite. The empires passed, while the Jewish calendar remained. The very act of calculating another month, establishing another year and preparing for another Pesach became a declaration that Jewish history had not ended. Another Rosh Chodesh would come, another Nisan would come, another Pesach would come, and ultimately the geulah represented by Pesach would also come.

Rav Kossowsky describes how the preservation of Sod Ha'ibur became bound up with the preservation of national hope, particularly when enemies attempted to interfere with the calendar and the observance of Pesach.

Conclusion

Rav Kossowsky's themes ultimately form a single idea. The moon teaches that disappearance does not mean extinction, עיבור השנה teaches that delay does not mean abandonment, and Pesach in חודש החדש teaches that darkness ultimately gives way to renewal. The chachamim who preserved the calendar under persecution demonstrated that these were not merely beautiful ideas, but convictions worth risking one's life to preserve.

The Jewish calendar is therefore itself a lesson in emunah. Klal Yisrael counts by the moon because Jewish history is a history of diminution and renewal. The year is occasionally extended because even an apparent postponement can belong to the process that brings Nisan at its proper time. Pesach must always remain in אביב because the festival of geulah must forever be joined to the season in which hidden life becomes visible again.

This is the deeper meaning of סוד העיבור. Just as the full calculation of the calendar cannot be understood by looking at one month in isolation, the full calculation of galus cannot be understood by looking at one generation in isolation. We may see only another Adar, while Hashem sees the approaching Nisan. The road may be extended, but its direction has not changed. The moon will be renewed, Pesach will arrive, and the promise of geulah remains alive. Rav Kossowsky concludes by bringing together Nisan, Pesach and Sod Ha'ibur as enduring signs of Klal Yisrael's future redemption.

צפית לישוע – Waiting for Redemption

Rav Avraham Pam

In memory of HaRav Avraham Pam זצ"ל, whose twenty-fifth yahrtzeit falls on this Tuesday, 28 Menachem Av 5786

As told by Rav Frand, in 1992, Rav Pam came to Baltimore to visit his talmid Rabbi Binyomin Steinberg ז"ל, the longtime menahel of the Bais Yaakov High School of Baltimore, who was ill. Rabbi Steinberg asked his rebbe the question then occupying many minds: What was happening in the world?

Within a few months, the political order that had shaped international life for decades had collapsed. Communist rule in the Soviet Union had disintegrated, Germany had been reunited, and assumptions that had seemed permanent had suddenly become obsolete. What did it all mean?

In his characteristic manner, Rav Pam shrugged and said, "I do not know." But he added one insight: Hashem was showing us, *See, this is how it is going to happen.*

People wonder how Mashiach can come and transform the world so quickly. How can deeply rooted beliefs disappear? How can nations suddenly recognize the truth of Hashem and the unique place of Klal Yisrael? The upheavals of those months offered a glimpse of the answer. A world that had appeared fixed could change almost overnight. What seemed impossible could become reality with astonishing speed.

That insight captures one dimension of צפית לישועה. Awaiting the geulah does not mean predicting when or how it will come. It means knowing that the world is not as immovable as it appears and that Hashem can redirect history in a moment.

One of the highlights of learning in Rav Pam's shiur in Torah Vodaas was the opportunity to attend Rav Pam's shmuesen (in Yiddish) every Friday. This piece translated and adapted by CS from Atarah LaMelech edited by Rabbi Matis Blum, draws upon several of those shmuesen, translated and adopted by CS

צפית לישועה

One of the foundations of emunah is that Hashem directs the world through hashgachah pratis, and that His providence rests in a unique way upon Klal Yisrael. Yet there are two very different ways in which that hashgachah may be concealed.

Sometimes it is hidden behind the ordinary workings of nature. A father may send his young son to play while he watches him through a window. The child does not see his father, but the father sees him and carefully protects him. This is משגיח מן החלונות, providence from behind the windows.

At other times, the concealment is far more painful. The father appears to turn away. He seems unwilling to look at what is happening to his child. The child may feel abandoned, although the father has not truly forsaken him. This is מציע מן החרכים, Hashem watching through the narrow cracks.

This is essential to צפית לישועה. A person cannot genuinely await the geulah unless he believes that history is moving toward it. Events may appear fragmented, contradictory, and even hostile to redemption, but they are all parts of a process whose full design is known only to Hashem.

Peering Through the Cracks.

Shir HaShirim describes Hashem as משגיח מן החלונות מציע מן החרכים *Watching through the windows, peering through the cracks* Rav Pam explained that these words describe two forms of concealed hashgachah. At times, Hashem is משגיח מן החלונות. A father sends his young son outside to play and watches him from a window. The child may not see his father, but the father sees him clearly and carefully protects him. Hashem's presence is concealed, but His protection can still be recognized.

At other times, the concealment is deeper. Hashem is מציע מן החרכים, peering through narrow cracks. It appears as though He has turned His face away and is not watching at all. The nations seem free to act without restraint, and Klal Yisrael may feel abandoned. Yet even then, Hashem has not forsaken His people. He remains present behind the concealment, directing events toward their ultimate purpose.

This hidden direction of events is essential to צפית לישועה. A Jew can await the geulah only if he believes that history is moving toward it even when Hashem's hand cannot be seen. Events may appear fragmented, contradictory, or even hostile to redemption, yet they

remain parts of a process whose full design is known only to Hashem.

The story of Yosef illustrates this pattern. Yosef's brothers sold him because of their jealousy. Potiphar's wife caused him to be imprisoned. Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker were placed in the same prison because they had offended their master. Pharaoh later dreamed of cows and ears of grain. Each event appeared incidental and unrelated to the others.

Only afterward did it become clear that every detail was part of one design. The sale of Yosef led him to Egypt, his imprisonment brought him into contact with Pharaoh's cupbearer, and Pharaoh's dreams raised him from the dungeon to the throne. What appeared to be a succession of misfortunes prepared the way for the survival of Yaakov's family and the beginning of Jewish history as a nation. Human beings see only individual events. Hashem sees the entire sequence.

Yeshayah states ה' אלקי אתה ארוממך אודה שמך כי עשית פלא עצות מרחוק *Hashem, You are my G-d, I will exalt You and thank Your Name, for You have performed wonders, plans from long ago, faithful and steadfast*

The wonders that eventually become visible began as עצות מרחוק, plans formed long before their purpose could be recognized. What appears to us as the sudden arrival of salvation may be the conclusion of a process that Hashem set in motion generations earlier.

What Does It Mean to Await the Geulah?

Among the questions a person will be asked in the Heavenly Court is צפית לישועה *Did you await the Geula?*

The Rambam rules that it is not sufficient merely to believe that Mashiach will eventually come. A Jew must also await his coming. Belief in redemption is therefore not simply a doctrine concerning the distant future. It must shape the way a Jew understands the present.

Rav Pam explained that צפית לישועה does not require us to calculate the time of the geulah or to assign a definite redemptive meaning to every political upheaval. Indeed, when Rabbi Steinberg asked him what the extraordinary events of 1991 and 1992 meant, Rav Pam readily answered, "I do not know." Yet those events demonstrated how rapidly Hashem can overturn conditions that had appeared permanent.

Governments and ideologies that had dominated hundreds of millions of people for generations collapsed with astonishing speed. Borders shifted, nations were transformed, and ideas that had seemed immovable suddenly lost their authority. Rav Pam did not claim that these events were themselves the beginning of the geulah. He saw in them a demonstration of how the world can be transformed almost overnight.

Malachi describes the redemption as ופתאום יבוא אל היכלו האדון אשר *Suddenly, the Master Whom you seek will come to His Sanctuary*

The geulah will come פתאום. It may emerge from circumstances that appear entirely opposed to redemption. The decisive change may occur when the world seems least prepared for it. Yet it will only appear sudden to us. From Hashem's perspective, it will be the culmination of עצות מרחוק.

This is the faith demanded by צפית לישועה. A Jew looks at a confused and troubled world and refuses to believe that it has lost its direction.

He does not know how the scattered events fit together, but he knows that they do.

When Strength Is Gone

At the end of Parshas Haazinu, the Torah describes the condition of Klal Yisrael before Hashem's compassion is revealed. כי ידין ה' עמו *Hashem will judge His people and reconsider concerning His servants, when He sees that their strength is gone and that none remain protected or supported* The Ohr HaChaim explains that when Hashem sees how deeply His servants have suffered, He will declare that the measure of suffering has been filled. Their very affliction will awaken His compassion. This teaches an important principle. Human helplessness does not place redemption beyond reach. At times, it may be precisely the condition that precedes redemption.

The same idea is reflected in Hashem's promise to Yaakov והיה זרעך *Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread westward, eastward, northward, and southward*

The Chofetz Chaim explained that the two parts of the pasuk may describe successive stages. Klal Yisrael may first become כעפר הארץ, like the dust upon which all tread. Yet from that very condition will come ופרצה, an extraordinary expansion in every direction.

A generation may appear spiritually weak and undeserving. Assimilation may have consumed multitudes, and the influence of Torah may seem diminished. Yet we cannot measure a generation as Hashem does, nor can we know what awakening He may bring. When Moshe first announced the redemption from Egypt, Klal Yisrael had few merits. Nevertheless, Hashem promised to awaken them and prepare them for redemption. The prophet similarly declares *I will sprinkle pure water upon you, and you will be purified*

Hashem can arouse purity even within a generation that appears spiritually exhausted. The darkness of the present does not determine the possibilities of the future.

Signs Within the Darkness

Rav Pam saw the extraordinary rebirth of Torah after the destruction of European Jewry as a powerful illustration of this principle. The great yeshivos had been destroyed. Entire communities were erased, and an irreplaceable world of Torah and kedushah appeared to have vanished. By every natural calculation, Torah life could not quickly recover from such devastation.

Yet within a remarkably short period, yeshivos and Torah institutions arose in America and Eretz Yisrael. Survivors who had lost families, communities, and teachers devoted themselves to rebuilding. Torah, which had seemed close to extinction, flourished once again.

Rav Pam viewed this not merely as a remarkable historical achievement, but as evidence of Hashem's hidden direction of history. The same generation that had witnessed unprecedented destruction also witnessed an extraordinary renewal of Torah. The moral decline of the surrounding world should likewise not lead us to despair. Zechariah speaks of a future in which Hashem will remove הטומאה, the spirit of impurity, from the earth. Rav Pam suggested that the increasing strength of impurity may resemble the final exertion of a force that senses that its end is approaching. The darkest point of night is not proof that morning will never come. It may indicate that dawn is close.

Rav Pam did not presume to identify particular events as definite signs of Mashiach. His point was more measured. Deterioration and confusion cannot disprove our faith in redemption. Hashem has brought light from darkness before, and conditions that appear most discouraging may themselves conceal the beginnings of renewal.

Awaiting Means Preparing

צפית לישועה is therefore not passive waiting. A person who truly anticipates the arrival of a king prepares himself for the king's arrival.

Rav Pam emphasized three forms of preparation: tefillah, Torah, and chesed.

First, tefillah. Yeshayah declares על חומותיך ירושלים הפקדתי שומרים כל היום וכל הלילה תמיד לא יחשו המזכירים את ה' אל דמי לכם ואל תתנו דמי לו עד *Upon your walls, Yerushalayim, I have appointed watchmen. All day and all night they shall never be silent. Those who remind Hashem, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest until He establishes Yerushalayim and makes it the praise of the earth*

The repeated requests for geulah in our tefillos must not become empty formulas. To await redemption is to feel the pain of the Shechinah, the suffering of Klal Yisrael, and the incompleteness of a world in which Hashem's presence remains concealed.

Second, Torah. Chazal teach that one who wishes to be spared the travail preceding Mashiach should occupy himself with Torah and gemilus chasadim.

Rav Pam would look at the young men in the Torah Vodaas Beis Medrash and remind them that their learning was not only a private accomplishment. Each of them could become a source of Torah for others, as a rebbe, rav, mechanech, or Torah-committed baal habayis. Every additional measure of Torah acquired by one Jew can illuminate another Jewish soul.

נר ה' נשמת אדם

The soul of man is the lamp of Hashem

Every Jewish neshamah contains light, but that light must be kindled. Torah awakens it, nourishes it, and enables it to illuminate the world.

The spread of Torah is itself part of the preparation for geulah.

Third, we must strengthen chesed and achdus. Sin'as chinam contributed to the Churban, and ahavas chinam must help prepare for its reversal. When Jews forgive one another, overlook injuries, carry one another's burdens, and refuse to sustain machlokes, they make Klal Yisrael worthy of Hashem's compassion.

The Yerushalmi teaches that Hashem says to Klal Yisrael: When the merit of the Avos appears to have been exhausted and the merit of the Imahos has diminished, cling to chesed.

Even when other merits seem depleted, chesed remains. By showing mercy to one another, we ask Hashem to show mercy to us.

Seeing the Beginning Within the Darkness

צפית לישועה means looking at the world through the lens of emunah. It means recognizing that Hashem remains החלונות משגיח and even מצוץ מן ההרכים. He is present not only when His hand is visible, but also when history appears incomprehensible.

It means believing that the scattered events of our time belong to one Divine design, just as the seemingly unrelated events in the life of Yosef formed one unbroken chain. It means understanding that apparent weakness need not prevent redemption and that even darkness may conceal the beginnings of dawn.

Above all, it means preparing.

Every sincere tefillah for Yerushalayim, every additional word of Torah, every act of chesed, and every effort to strengthen unity within Klal Yisrael expresses genuine expectation of the geulah. We do not know when Mashiach will come, nor how the events of our time will lead to his arrival. But we know that history has a destination, and we know what Hashem asks of us while we await it. May we merit to strengthen ourselves in Torah, tefillah, chesed, and achdus, and may Hashem soon reveal the purpose concealed within all the generations of exile and enable us to greet Mashiach Tzidkeinu במהרה בימינו אמן.

from: World Mizrachi jacqui@mizrachi.org Aug 6, 2026

The Haste of Redemption

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

Many are the topics in Parshas Re'eh, including but not limited to: Moshe's urging to the nation to choose a life of Torah, which will yield Divine blessings; warnings not to stray after idolatry; the importance of serving Hashem in the place that He has chosen to rest His presence there; warnings to be on guard against a false prophet, one who sways his fellow Jews to serve idolatry, and an entire city that becomes wayward; the mitzvah to give tzedaka; forbidden and permitted animals that we may not, or may, consume; and the shalosh regalim.

In regard to Chag HaPesach and the Korban Pesach, the pasuk tells us:

לא תאכל עליו חמץ שבעת ימים תאכל עליו מצות לחם עני כי בחפזו יצאת מארץ מצרים למען תזכר את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חייך

You shall not eat leaven with it; for seven days you shall eat with it matzos, the bread of affliction, for in haste you went out of the land of Egypt, so that you shall remember the day when you went out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life (Devarim 16:3).

On the haste, בחפזו, with which we left Egypt, Rashi, quoting the Sifrei, comments:

כי בחפזו יצאת ולא הספיק בצק להחמיץ וזה יהיה לך לזכרון וחפזו לא שלך היה אלא של מצרים שכן הוא אומר ותחזק מצרים על העם וגו'

For in haste you went out of the land of Egypt. The dough that you had prepared did not have time to become leavened, so this matzah will be for you as a reminder. And the haste mentioned here was not on your part, but on the part of the Egyptians, as the verse says, So the Egyptians urged the people to hurry to send them out of the land (Shemos 12:33).

The redemption from Egypt was in haste, בחפזו, which Onkelos explains as בבהילו. The Egyptians, suddenly, with an abrupt change of heart, after centuries of slavery, decades of oppression, and months of refusal, pressed and urged us to leave their land. And though the Israelites longed for redemption, perhaps when the moment came, they were as surprised as their slave drivers. For suddenly, the yad chazakah and zeroa netuyah was outstretched to save them.

And what was the ultimate destination, to where the nation would journey when they left the land of *every male that is born shall be cast in the river* (Shemos 1:22)? As Hashem promised Moshe, the first four lashonos of geulah, *and I will take you out, and I will save you, and I will redeem you, and I will take you to Me as a nation* (Shemos 6:6-7), would be followed by a fifth promise of geulah, through which our redemption would be complete:

והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ אשר נשאתי את ידי לתת אתה לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב ונתתי אתה לכם מורשה אני ה'

And I will bring you to the land, about which I raised My hand to give to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov, and I will give it to you as a heritage; I am Hashem (Shemos 6:8).

This teaching, the haste with which the redemption occurred, should be a source of great chizuk for us all. Today, we are in a dark galus that seems endless. When, we wonder, will the redemption come? How, we muse, will it unfold? In what fashion, we hope, will we all return to our homeland?

While we continue to daven and yearn for geulah, we must strengthen our belief that when Hashem wills it, with great haste, it will occur.

In his annual teshuvah derashah, delivered in October 1970, **Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik**, the Rav zt"l, related the following:

"I heard from my father that Reb Chaim of Volozhin was once asked, 'How will the Messiah come?' He responded:

'Let me tell you the following parable, and you will understand how the Messiah will come. On an ordinary weekday, I came home from the yeshiva after morning prayers. My wife asked me, "Chaim, are you ready to eat your breakfast?" I answered her, "Relka, I have not finished preparing my lecture for today, and I cannot eat until I review the texts that I have to teach in the yeshiva."

"All right, Chaim," she says, 'let it be. While you are preparing your lecture, I will go to the market to buy a few things. In the meantime I will leave the soup cooking on the stove. Please be careful, Chaim, that it should not burn. Please be careful, I know you, and I am aware that you forget everything once you get involved in your learning.'

"My wife left for the market, and I opened my volume and started to study the appropriate texts. Suddenly, I look out the window and I see that the sun is shining with much greater brightness than ever before. What intensity! Then I hear the birds in the garden chirping a new tune, a stirring enchanted melody. I hear a commotion on the street. I look out my window and see Eli, the shoemaker, running and dancing. I call out, 'What is happening, Eli? Why is the sun so bright? What are these enchanting songs of the birds? What has happened to the trees that are suddenly blooming with new leaves? What is happening?'

"Eli looks up at me and says, 'Rebbe, don't you know? The Messiah is here!'

"Immediately, I run to my closet to get my Sabbath clothes to wear to greet the King Messiah, and I take out my suit, and to my chagrin the jacket is missing a button! Last Saturday night it fell off, and when I told my wife to mend it she said to me, 'Why the rush? You will not need it until the next Sabbath.'

"Now I have to go forth to greet the Messiah with my jacket missing a button. While I am debating with myself whether to wear this defective jacket or whether I can go to greet the Messiah with my weekday jacket, my wife comes running home. She breathlessly cries out, 'Gevalt, Chaim, where are you? The soup has burned! You forgot to turn it off!'

"At that moment, I say to her, 'You foolish woman, we are going to greet the Messiah and you are worried about the soup!? Go and dress in your finest Sabbath clothes and come with me to greet the King Messiah.'"

"This story, which I heard from my father [Rav Moshe, the son of Rav Chaim Brisker, the son of the Beis HaLevi], summarizes the whole saga of the redemption of the Jewish people. A Jew waits endlessly for the redemption, and then it comes unexpectedly. At that

moment he discovers that a button is missing from the suit he has to wear to greet the Messiah" (*The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, vol. 2, pp. 134–135).

On the occasion of the first yahrtzeit of Hersch Goldberg-Polin, Ori Danino, Eden Yerushalmi, Almog Sarusi, Alex Lubanov, and Carmel Gat ז"ל הי"ד, we contemplate the darkness of galus and continue to beseech HaKadosh Baruch Hu to send the geulah sheleimah.

And when it comes, we will all put on our Shabbos finery and go to greet the King.

May we merit the ingathering of the exiles, the blessing of everlasting shalom for our land and our holy city, and the eradication of the evil that seeks to destroy us.

And on that great day:

ויהיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד

Hashem shall be King over the entire earth; on that day Hashem will be One and His Name will be One (Zechariah 14:9).

from: RIETS Bella and Harry Wexner Kollel Elyon Substack
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Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

RIETS Kollel Elyon

Parashat Re'eh: Lo Titgod'du and the Fracturing of the Community

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

The Torah's opposition to machloket is unquestioned, though its scriptural source is less clear. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 110a) states that one who perpetuates a dispute, l'hachzik b'machloket, violates the verse following Korach's rebellion, "and he shall not be like Korach and his followers" (Bamidbar 17:5). Yet the Talmud continues that such a person may be stricken with tzara'at, language that sounds more like a consequence than a formal prohibition. Accordingly, Maimonides (Sefer HaMitzvot, Shoresh 8) understands this verse as an asmachta, a rabbinic allusion rather than the Torah's actual prohibition. He nevertheless indicates that a biblical prohibition against machloket exists elsewhere. Parashat Re'eh contains a leading candidate.

The Torah states, "You are children to the Lord your God; do not cut yourselves, and do not make a bald patch between your eyes, for the dead" (Devarim 14:1). On its plain level, the verse prohibits excessive mourning practices. The Talmud (Yevamot 14a), however, reads lo titgod'du as also prohibiting agudot agudot, the division of a community into separate factions.

R. Tzvi Zeshеровsky (Minchat Tzvi) notes a thematic connection between these two meanings. The verse begins, "You are children to the Lord your God." As Hashem's children, Jews should not respond to loss with destructive mourning; similarly, unnecessary division among His children causes anguish to their Father. A similar idea appears in R. Yitzchak of Volozhin's Peh Kadosh.

The Talmud applies lo titgod'du specifically to divergent halakhic practice. Abaye gives the example of two batei din in one city, one following Beit Shammai and the other Beit Hillel; Rava limits the prohibition to one beit din divided internally.

Two Torahs or Two Camps. The rishonim offer two basic explanations of the prohibition. Rashi and others understand the concern as creating the appearance of "two Torahs," as though different Jewish groups possess different systems of halakhah. Such

visible fragmentation can also produce a chillul Hashem, as R. Shmuel Landau notes in the Noda B'Yehudah.

Maimonides (Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim 12:14), however, appears to focus on the conflict generated when a community divides into rival groups. This is also the approach of the Sefer HaChinnukh. The Netziv (Meishiv Davar 1:17) observes that Rashi's explanation fits well with the Talmud's discussion of the different dates for reading Megillat Esther. Those variations were built into halakhah and therefore unlikely to provoke conflict, yet they could still create the appearance of two Torahs.

The Ritva connects both approaches to the verse's opening: "You are children to the Lord your God." Klal Yisrael are children of one God, a unity contradicted either by the appearance of multiple Torahs or by communal division.

The dispute between Abaye and Rava may itself reflect these two rationales. If the concern is "two Torahs," separate batei din are less troubling because each court has its own jurisdiction. If the concern is communal conflict, however, two competing courts within one community may remain problematic.

"Mishum Machloket." Maimonides' wording is significant. He does not simply describe the prohibition as engaging in machloket, but as acting mishum machloket, on account of dispute. The Radbaz (Responsa V, 1384) therefore concludes that when differing conduct will not generate conflict, the prohibition may not apply even though visible distinctions remain. Conversely, even someone who did not begin a dispute may violate the prohibition by perpetuating it for reasons rooted in the conflict itself.

The Question of Custom. If lo titgod'du is primarily about the appearance of two Torahs, differing minhagim should ordinarily pose little difficulty, since everyone understands that communities maintain different customs. If the concern is conflict, however, minhag can certainly become a source of division. Maimonides, the Sefer HaChinnukh, the Semag, and apparently the Magen Avraham therefore extend the concern to custom.

The Netziv further argues that although one must preserve personal minhag under "do not abandon the Torah of your mother," avoiding communal division can override that obligation, an issue with obvious implications for communal tefillah.

R. Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg (Seridei Eish II, Yoreh Deah 11-12) disagrees with aspects of the Netziv's approach. He maintains that lo titgod'du itself applies principally to matters of halakhah, but that a separate prohibition against strife governs divergent minhagim and may require adherence to minhag hamakom.

R. Chaim Mordechai Roller (Be'er Chaim Mordechai 4) distinguishes between recent customs and long-established ones. Well-known differences between Ashkenazim and Sefardim, for example, may be so established that they no longer create the prohibited form of factionalism.

Mitigating Factors. Many rishonim explain that the differing dates of Megillah reading are permissible because neither group considers the other wrong; each recognizes the other's practice as legitimate. If the concern is discord, mutual recognition removes much of the problem.

R. Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld adopts this principle, and R. Yehudah Leib Litwin and the Arukh HaShulchan similarly rule leniently where the differing practice is not halakhically essential.

The same question arises where a community collectively agrees to permit two different practices. Such agreement may eliminate the

danger of conflict, though it does not necessarily eliminate the appearance of two Torahs.

Likewise, if differing conduct is private or unobtrusive, the concern for discord may be reduced. Other authorities remain stringent even when the divergent practices do not occur simultaneously, apparently because they emphasize the appearance of separate Torahs.

When Both Rationales Apply. R. Moshe Halberstam (Divrei Moshe 35) suggests that both explanations may be accepted as halakhah. If so, one must avoid differentiation that either generates conflict or creates the appearance of two Torahs.

R. Mattisyahu Deutsch develops a similar approach but argues that established group customs may avoid both concerns. Where a minhag is longstanding and universally associated with a particular community, it neither suggests a new Torah nor necessarily generates conflict. He cites Emek HaTeshuvah, which suggests that *lo titgod'du* primarily binds those who are actually free to choose differently, rather than those already bound by an established communal practice.

At least according to Maimonides, then, *lo titgod'du* may be the Torah's central prohibition against communal conflict. Some suggest that he prefers this source because it teaches that even disputes rooted in genuine halakhic disagreement cannot be allowed to fracture the community. R. Moshe Weinberger further suggests that the prohibition implies an obligation to pursue dialogue and consensus wherever possible.

The very multiplicity of sources proposed for the prohibition of *machloket* ultimately underscores the same point. Rabbinic authorities repeatedly sought a precise Torah source because they regarded communal strife as fundamentally incompatible with a society governed by Torah. Even amid legitimate differences of law, custom, and circumstance, preserving the unity of Klal Yisrael remains a central rabbinic responsibility.

4. [Abridged for space]

עשר תעשר: Maaser, Tzedakah, and Awakening Rachamim

Translated and adapted by CS from

Rav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Chief Rabbi of Gilo, in Otzar Hatorah

Tzedakah & Maaser. Our parsha contains both the law of *tzedakah* and the law of *maaser*. Regarding *tzedakah*, the Torah writes: כי יהיה בך אביון מאחד אחיד... לא תאמץ את לבבך ולא תקפץ את ירך מאחיד האביון, if there is a poor man among your brothers, do not harden your heart or close your hand against him; rather, open your hand and lend him whatever he lacks. The Torah promises that this will bring blessing: כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך בכל מעשך.

The law of *maaser* appears in the same parsha: עשר תעשר את כל תבואתך שנה בשנה, you shall surely tithe all the produce of your seed, year by year. Chazal (Shabbos 119a) read the doubled language as a promise in itself: עשר בשביל שתתעשר, tithe so that you will become wealthy.

Why do *tzedakah* and *maaser* sit together in the same parsha? What connects them?

Tzedakah occupies an extraordinary place in our *avodah*. Rabbeinu Yonah places it alongside *teshuvah* and *tefillah* as one of the three forces that can overturn a decree: תשובה ותפלה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה. *Teshuvah* works because a person changes course and returns to Hashem. *Tefillah* works because it arouses *rachamim* directly. What earns *tzedakah* a place among them?

The answer is in Chazal's statement (Shabbos 151b): כל המרחם על הבריות מרחמין עליו מן השמים, whoever shows compassion to Hashem's

creatures is shown compassion from Heaven. Acting with *rachamim* below awakens the *middah* of *rachamim* above. Hashem sits, as it were, on a *kisei* of *rachamim*, and responds to *rachamim* with *rachamim*. The Chida's *tefillah* for *hagbahah* and *gelilah* expresses the same idea: he asks that our *tefillos* be brought before Hashem's throne of *rachamim*, "for every heart is pained and every head afflicted." *Tzedakah*, like *teshuvah* and *tefillah*, has the power to awaken *rachamim* in Heaven.

Blessing of Eretz Yisrael. Regarding *tzedakah* and *maaser* given from Chutz La'Aretz to the residents of Eretz Yisrael, the Satmar Rav, Rav Yoel Teitelbaum noted: in Eretz Yisrael, the Torah reading for Shemini Atzeres (which is also Simchas Torah) is וזאת הברכה, while in chutz la'aretz the reading is עשר תעשר from Parshas Re'eh. Through the *maaser* and *tzedakah* given in chutz la'aretz, blessing flows to those living in Eretz Yisrael. Jews outside the land read עשר תעשר and give their *maaser*, and through this, the Jews of Eretz Yisrael merit וזאת הברכה.

Compassion for All Creations. Rav Chaim Walkin, in his sefer Daas Chaim, points to the same Gemara in Shabbos 151b, and notes that Bava Metzia 85a extends the principle even to compassion shown toward animals. The Gemara there relates that Rabbi's years of suffering began with a calf being led to shechitah, which fled to him and cried out for refuge. Rabbi told it, זיל לכך נוצרת, go, for this is your purpose, and showed it no compassion. His suffering ended through a different incident: his maid was sweeping the house and came upon a litter of young creatures, and moved to sweep them away. Rabbi stopped her, saying ורחמיו על כל מעשיו כתיב, שבקינהו, leave them, for it is written that His compassion extends over all His works. Because he showed compassion, compassion was shown to him, and his suffering ended: כל המרחם על הבריות מרחמין עליו מן השמים.

Measure for Measure. This is not simple reward and punishment. It is *middah keneged middah* in the fullest sense. The Ramchal, in Mesillas Yesharim (ch. 19), explains that Hashem governs the world this way: one who shows compassion and *chesed* to others is himself judged with compassion, and his own sins are forgiven through *chesed*, because that very forgiveness follows the same principle. One who refuses to overlook another's wrongdoing cannot expect his own to be overlooked. But one who shows compassion to others creates, through his own conduct, the basis for Hashem's compassion toward him.

Noticing the Chesed in Front of You. There is a well-known story of the Chafetz Chaim, who once stopped to daven at a shul while traveling. When *tefillah* ended, the crowd hurried toward the door, but one elderly man was left behind, unable to walk without help. The Chafetz Chaim went over and helped him himself, and later remarked how easy it is to pursue great deeds while stepping past the simple act of *chesed* standing right in front of you.

A similar point is made in an account of someone entering a *beis midrash* full of people learning and davening, seated near someone who needed assistance. The real test was not whether anyone noticed, but whether anyone would interrupt his own learning or *tefillah* to help. *Chesed* is not only a lofty ideal or a grand undertaking. Often it is simply the act standing directly in front of a person.

Acting Like a Father. We stand now in judgment before the Ribbono Shel Olam, who seeks merits and good counsel on our behalf, and the greatest counsel available to us is simple: increase *chesed* between one person and another. In doing so we show ourselves to be among

those who have compassion on Hashem's creatures, and we can carry this into our tefillah itself, asking כרחם אב על בנים, that Hashem treat us with a father's compassion for his children, even where our own deeds have not earned us that standing. For when a person loves Hashem's children and helps them, he shows that he too carries within him the middah of a father, treating another Jew not as a stranger but as a brother, one of Hashem's own children. And it is precisely through this that he awakens כרחם אב על בנים above: כל המרחם על הבריות מרחמין עליו מן השמים, whoever has compassion on Hashem's creatures is shown compassion from Heaven.

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B'Seiver Panim Yafos

Rabbi Yisroel Reisman

Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

The Torah commands us to give tzedaka: “You shall surely give to him” (Devarim 15:10). It then adds: “Do not let your heart feel bad when you give to him, because for this thing Hashem your G-d will bless you.” The Torah promises berachah for giving tzedaka, but the Tchebiner Rav quotes the Hafla’a that this reward is specifically for giving *b’seiver panim yafos* — with warmth, encouragement, and a smile.

The Sifri, cited by the Haamek Davar, explains that “because for this thing” refers to *hadibur*, the words spoken to the recipient. Even if one cannot give money, kind words and chizuk themselves bring berachah. The ideal of tzedaka is not merely to give, but to make the recipient feel respected and valued.

With this, the Hafla’a answers Tosafos’ question in Bava Basra 8b. Beis Din may compel a person to give tzedaka, *kofin al haTzedaka*. Yet generally, Beis Din does not compel performance of a mitzvah whose reward the Torah explicitly states, and by tzedaka the Torah promises berachah. The Hafla’a answers that the promised reward is for one who gives willingly and happily. Such a person does not need coercion. The person who must be forced is not the one to whom that reward was promised.

Rav Shternbuch adds a related insight. The Gemara in Rosh Hashanah 4a states that one who gives tzedaka *al menas she’yichyeh b’ni* — so that his child should live — is a *tzaddik gamur*. Why should giving for such a purpose earn that description?

When a poor person receives tzedaka, he may feel uncomfortable. But if the giver says, “I need this zechus. Please daven that my child have a refuah sheleimah,” the recipient now feels that he too is giving something. The giver has transformed the encounter from one of dependence into one of mutual benefit. That too is *b’seiver panim yafos*.

This is especially important when people travel from Eretz Yisrael to collect tzedaka. The journey is difficult and often humiliating. When they come to our doors, even if we cannot give much, we can receive them warmly, speak kindly, offer a drink, and ask them to daven for us. The amount given is only part of the mitzvah. The manner of giving is itself essential.

The challenge is greatest when we are busy. When we are relaxed, warmth comes easily; when interrupted in the middle of something, much less so. That is when we must remember the Torah’s promise: “Because for this thing Hashem your G-d will bless you.”

Eretz Yisrael: The Kallah of Klal Yisrael. The pasuk describes Yerushalayim as “Yefeh nof, mesos kol ha’aretz.” The Gemara in Rosh Hashanah 26a notes that *nof* can also connote a kallah.

Yerushalayim is, in a sense, the kallah of Klal Yisrael.

Shabbos too is described as the kallah of Klal Yisrael. Chazal relate that Shabbos complained that every day of creation had a partner, while it had none. Hashem answered that Klal Yisrael would be its partner.

Rav Shimshon Pincus, in the name of the Gra, explains that the first three days of creation established potential, while the next three brought that potential into realization. The first day created heaven and earth; the fourth, the sun, moon, and stars. The second created the waters; the fifth, the creatures of the water and the birds. The third produced habitable land and vegetation; the sixth, mankind and animals who would use them.

Shabbos therefore asked: I too am filled with potential, but who will bring that potential into reality? Hashem answered: Klal Yisrael.

They will use the kedushah of Shabbos to come closer to Him.

The same is true of Eretz Yisrael. It contains an extraordinary spiritual potential — a closeness to Shamayim and a kedushah that can elevate one’s learning, davening, and entire avodas Hashem. Eretz Yisrael is in space what Shabbos is in time. Shabbos is the sacred time through which a Jew draws closer to Hashem; Eretz Yisrael is the sacred place.

But potential must be used. Eretz Yisrael is not merely a place to visit. Like Shabbos, it is an opportunity to connect to the Ribbono Shel Olam, to grow, and to be mis’aleh.

[Abridged for space]

from: World Mizrahi <jacqui@mizrachi.org>

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subject: HaMizrachi Parsha Weekly for Re'eh 5786

Halachic Q&A

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Nasi, World Mizrahi | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman,
Sulamot and La’Ofek

Q. For someone who opens a bank account in Israel, what does the Rabbi advise in order to avoid violating the prohibition of interest (Ribbit)?

A. In Israel, all banks have a Heter Iska. Therefore, there is no issue with using the bank, and there is no issue depositing money into savings plans that yield interest.

Furthermore, one may take a loan to build a home (as this can be viewed as an investment), for business purposes, or for acquiring items that facilitate work (such as a car, etc.). Many poskim were also lenient regarding loans for weddings and similar needs.

It is a matter of enhanced practice (hiddur) not to go into overdraft unnecessarily for household expenses (in any case, it is better to live within a balanced budget), but there is halakhic basis to rely upon even in this manner.

I have expanded on this topic extensively elsewhere; the above is a brief summary.

Q. After completing Seudat Shlishit, friends want to gather to sing songs and share divrei Torah. Nuts, fruit, and drinks are served, and they start eating before sunset. Are they permitted to continue eating and drinking these items after sunset?

A. The plain reading of the Rambam indicates that bread is required (see my book, *Halakha MiMekora: Shabbat*, in the chapter on Shabbat meals). There appears to be a good reason to be lenient regarding grain products (Mezonot). One could discuss being lenient nowadays – when many people

eat meals without bread or grain products – to permit even items requiring the Shehakol blessing. However, it is preferable to serve something more substantial than just nuts. It would be better to serve at least Mezonot; and for someone who does not want Mezonot, they should eat at least fruits or something that can be viewed as a meal of sorts.

I am planning to participate in a seminar abroad where kosher food is generally not available. Other Israelis who participated in the past arranged with the kitchen staff to prepare fish and vegetables in an oven, baked inside disposable aluminum pans and wrapped in aluminum foil. Is it permissible to eat this? Is there a problem of food cooked by non-Jews (Bishul Akum)? I do not think it is possible to enter the kitchen to turn on the oven. I plan to bring additional food from Israel anyway, so this is not strictly an emergency situation.

If everything is tightly double-wrapped in two layers, one can be lenient regarding the kosher status of the utensils/ oven.

Regarding Bishul Akum (food cooked by non-Jews): one can only be lenient if the item cooked could have been eaten raw, or if it is not fit for a king's table (Aino Oleh Al Shulchan Melachim).

Presumably, in recent years, many people eat raw salmon, so it seems one could be lenient with it. As for vegetables, one should choose items that people commonly eat raw, or prepare them in a simple way that would not be considered fit for a formal banquet/king's table.

Q. Someone planted trees on public land beyond his plot boundary (claiming he had the community committee's approval, though neither he nor the committee has proof or a 30-year-old memory from board members). The trees block the air and view of the neighbors on the floor above and in the adjacent home.

1) Is there an obligation to trim the trees so they do not disturb the neighbors?

2) Who bears the legal/labor cost, the resident or the community committee?

A. A question like this should be directed directly to a Rabbi or a Beit Din that can examine the specific details of the case.

Generally speaking, I will note that as far as I know, according to local forestry regulations, there are restrictions on pruning mature trees in any case.

Regardless, if the tree does not physically encroach onto the neighbor's property and we are dealing with such an old tree, there is no obligation to prune it except in extreme cases.

Additionally, a tree planted on public property belongs to the local authority, so the discussion should likely take place with them.

Compiled and Translated by Yaakov Panitch.

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

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subject: Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg - True Blessing

Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg

True Blessing

"See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse. The blessing - that you listen to the mitzvos of Hashem...and the curse - if you do not listen" (Devarim 11:26-28). At first glance, the language of the possuk seems asymmetrical. When discussing the curse, the Torah stipulates that it will take effect if you do not listen - im lo sish'me'oo. But when talking about the blessing, the Torah does not use the conditional word im. Instead, it says asher tish'me'oo - that you should listen. Although both Rashi and Rashbam explain that here too, the Torah means to stipulate that the blessing will be given only on condition that the Jewish people observe the mitzvos, the question remains: if both the blessing and the curse are conditional, then why does the Torah use the word im only regarding the curse?

Perhaps the answer lies in a deeper understanding of what true blessing really is. In Parshas Eikev, the Torah makes a remarkable statement. "And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d, to go in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul, to observe the

commandments of Hashem and His decrees which I command you today, for your benefit. (10:12-13)" Initially, the Torah makes it seem like Hashem is not asking much of us, but then it provides a long list of requests.

Chazal understood that the focus of the Torah's introductory statement is really the first point, namely fear of Hashem. The Torah is saying, "What is Hashem asking? Ki im l'yirah es Hashem - only to fear Hashem." And yet Chazal are troubled with this explanation. After all, is yiras shamayim such an easy level to achieve - is it such a milsahtut? But even without this interpretation, the possuk is difficult, because the simple reading of the text would seem to imply that Hashem is asking for much more than just yiras shamayim. And that long list of demands certainly is not a simple request. What then is meant by the Torah's introductory statement, "What does Hashem ask of you?"

The Ramban suggests that the Torah itself answers this question with two words: "l'tov lach - for your benefit" (10:13). In other words, it might seem like Hashem is asking for a lot, but in reality, He is not asking for much, because it is not for Him; it is for you. Hashem is giving you a blueprint for a life that is full of meaning and purpose, a life that can enrich and elevate you. Someone who is offered a lucrative position in the business world does not view all the time and effort the job entails as an inconvenience. He sees it as an opportunity to achieve the financial success his heart desires. Similarly, one who appreciates the gift of Torah and mitzvos does not view yiras shamayim and ahavas Hashem as a burden; rather, they are natural expressions of a heart that yearns to achieve its full potential.

This perhaps is what the Torah is alluding to in the beginning of Parshas Re'eh. On one level, the Torah is promising physical blessing on condition that we observe mitzvos properly. But the Torah is also making an additional statement, and that is "the blessing - that you listen to the mitzvos of Hashem." In other words, the ultimate blessing is the meaningful life that a person enjoys when he observes mitzvos properly.

The Ohr Hachaim notes that this idea is hinted to in the extra word es in the phrase es habrachta. When referring to the curse, the Torah uses the word vehaklala - and the curse. But when discussing the blessing it uses the phrase es habrachta. The extra word es implies that in addition to the physical blessing that one receives for performing mitzvos, he also receives another benefit, and that is the enjoyment he gets from the mitzvah observance itself because, as the Ohr Hachaim writes, "listening to the Torah is incredibly pleasurable and spiritually invigorating."

The month of Elul is a time to adjust our perspective and recalibrate our sense of priorities. The first step is to realize that a life of Torah and mitzvos is not a burden. It is a privilege and an opportunity that we should take full advantage of.

from: Jewish Media Resources <list@jewishmediaresources.com>

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Return to Lita

Jonathan Rosenblum

For many years, I have spent Tishah B'Av afternoons reading Holocaust memoirs. This year, knowing that I would be traveling to Lithuania immediately afterward with my son, grandson, and Rabbi Ilan Segal, a friend recommended Rabbi Ephraim Oshry's *The Annihilation of Lithuanian Jewry*.

Rabbi Oshry, a Slabodka graduate and posek in the Kovno Ghetto, later published his wartime teshuvos as *Sh'eilos U'Teshuvos mi'Ma'amakim*. His account of the destruction of Lithuanian Jewry was in some respects more horrifying than my visits to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nearly 1.5 million Jews were murdered by the Einsatzgruppen, often with enthusiastic local assistance. The killings were intimate and direct. Rav Zalman Osofsky, rav of Slabodka, was found decapitated over his blood-stained Gemara, his head placed in a window.

Yet Rabbi Oshry also records remarkable acts of generosity, mitzvah observance, and Torah learning within the Kovno Ghetto. As always, my Tishah B'Av reading left me grateful to belong to a people that endured so much and survived, together with a sense of obligation not to betray what others sacrificed to preserve.

It did not, however, make me eager to visit Lithuania. The unasked question hanging over almost every encounter was: What did your grandfather or great-grandfather do during the War?

Ponary and Vilna

Our first stop from the Vilna airport was the Ponary Forest, where most of Vilna's Jews, perhaps 70,000, were murdered in pits originally dug by the Russians for oil storage. The serenity of the vast forest contrasted almost unbearably with what occurred there. We joined a South African group in reciting Kaddish for the thousands murdered there, many of whom had no one left to say Kaddish for them.

Vilna itself confronts the visitor with the enormous gulf between the "Jerusalem of Lithuania" that once was and what remains. We visited the ohel where the Vilna Gaon was reinterred after his original cemetery was paved over, as well as the kever of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski and, elsewhere, Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz.

At Reb Boruch Ber's passing in late 1939, the Chazon Ish said that as long as he had lived, his Torah had protected European Jewry. Reb Boruch Ber himself did not rely on his learning or yiras Shamayim as guarantees of a lichte Gan Eden. Rather, he said: "I loved every Jew, and whenever I saw another Jewish person, I thought about what was good for him." That is a mindset worth emulating.

One can still locate the address where the Vilna Gaon lived, but nothing remains of his house. The same is true of Rav Chaim Ozer's home. A large hole now occupies the site of the Shulhof, the synagogue complex that housed the Great Shul and twelve kloizen, including the Vilna Gaon's. Thirty additional kloizen, organized by the city's trade societies, joined parnassah and avodas Hashem. Between 2:00 and 4:00 each morning, Reb Moshe Schwartz, a local tanner, delivered a well-attended Gemara shiur, one of many given through the night.

In Vilna's old city, we came to the square where Avraham ben Avraham, scion of the noble Potocki family, was burned at the stake for becoming a ger tzedek. Before his martyrdom, the Vilna Gaon visited him in prison. The ger tzedek asked whether he should run to his death, because one runs to perform a mitzvah, or walk slowly so as not to hasten his own death. As he was led to the stake, the Gaon is said to have called from a window: "Run."

The Vilna Holocaust Museum also makes no attempt to conceal the role played by Lithuanian commandos in the slaughter of the country's Jews.

Vilkija.

The next day brought a more personal encounter with Lithuania. My ancestor Osher Rosenblum lived in Vilkija, a village on the Nieman River near Kovno, in the mid-19th century. At the Jewish cemetery we found the headstones of Osher, his son Nosson Nota, and members of the Karnofsky family. Along the river stood a monument marking the site of the shul where my ancestors davened.

Nearby, unexpectedly, stands a Louis Armstrong Pavilion. As a poor boy in New Orleans, Armstrong had been taken in by the Jewish Karnofsky family, who fed him, employed him, encouraged his music, and advanced him the money for his first cornet. He later

wrote that they had treated him like a son and wore a Jewish star in their honor.

The pavilion was a brief respite before our final Vilkija stop: the forest mass grave where the town's Jews were murdered.

Kovno.

At the Kovno Jewish Center, we saw a very different form of Jewish continuity. Approximately 400 Israeli medical students study in the city, many with little Jewish background. The Center provides kosher food, davening, shiurim, Shabbos meals, and a Jewish home away from home.

But Kovno was also the heaviest day of the trip. At the Seventh Fort, where Rav Elchonon Wasserman Hy"d was likely murdered, we recalled his final words that those being taken to their deaths were korbanos on behalf of Jews elsewhere and therefore had to purify their thoughts. At the Ninth Fort, where most of Kovno's Jews were slaughtered, an open field marks their mass grave.

We also visited the graves of Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Spektor and Rav Avraham Dov-Ber Kahana Shapira, the *Devar Avraham*. The latter was abroad receiving medical treatment when the Nazis entered Kovno but returned rather than abandon his community. Though critically ill, he remained awake through the night in the ghetto to answer whether the Jewish Council could surrender designated Jews in the hope of saving others.

Crossing from Kovno into Slabodka, we followed the route once taken by generations of talmidim to the yeshivah of the Alter of Slabodka, Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, whose talmidim included many of the roshei yeshivah who later built Torah in America. Almost nothing remains today of either Slabodka or Reb Boruch Ber's Knesses Beis Yitzchak.

One final story captured what the trip stirred within me. Rabbi Aryeh Malkiel Friedman had sheltered Rav Elchonon Wasserman before he was seized. The Friedman parents were murdered, but their three daughters survived. One, Rebbetzin Shulamis Wolpe, was three when the Nazis captured Telz. She survived a firing squad and later hid with her mother in freezing conditions. To keep her alive, her mother cut her own wrists and gave her blood to drink for warmth. Rebbetzin Wolpe later said that whenever she failed in bein adam l'chaveiro, she imagined her mother's blood-covered finger pointing at her from Heaven and asking: "Is this why I gave you my blood?" That, ultimately, was the feeling our journey through Lithuania left behind. [Abridged for space]