

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAESCHANAN - 5759

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From: Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky[SMTP:rmk@torah.org] Drasha Parshas Vo'eschanan -- Mountain of Faith Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

There is a fascinating sequence of verses in this week's portion which tell us that it is our responsibility to remember more than just the Commandments, but the manner in which they were given. Moshe exhorts the nation, "Now, Israel, listen to the decrees and the mandates that I teach you to observe. You shall not add to them nor subtract. See I have taught you decrees and ordinances as Hashem commanded me." Moshe warns the nation to "safeguard and perform them, for they are your wisdom and discernment in the eyes of the nations who will hear all the decrees and declare that surely this is a wise and sagacious nation" (cf. Deuteronomy 2:1-9). What follows is a warning to remember the scenario of Sinai. And though its remembrance would seem much less significant than that of the observance of the laws themselves, the Torah uses stronger terminology in reminding us. "Only beware for yourselves and heed your very souls, lest you forget the words that your eyes saw and lest you remove them from your heart. You must make them known to your children and your children's children the day you stood before Hashem at Chorev" (Deuteronomy 2:9-11). Moshe continues to remind the Jews of the fiery scenario and the awe-filled events of the revelation at Mount Sinai. What bothers me is a simple question. If Moshe already impressed upon his nation the importance of the actual laws, if he already explained to them that it is those commands that will inspire other nations to marvel at the brilliance and veracity of the Jews, then why is the scene at Sinai such an integral part of the faith? Why is the warning both to the Jews and their souls seemingly stronger concerning the revelation scenario, greater than that of the admonition to obey the complex laws of the Torah?

A prominent Rosh Yeshiva lived next door to the simple clerk of his celebrated yeshiva. The Rabbi had scores of people visiting him asking him advice for the most difficult complexities, Talmudic or otherwise. The clerk did his job in the yeshiva office and attended to the needs of the Rosh Yeshiva, faithfully and devotedly. Both of them had sons. The revered Rabbi's son did not follow in his father's footsteps. He became a professor, in a secular university, something that brought consternation to his father. As a young man he began to shine in the yeshiva world and was well on his way to become a Torah luminary. One day, after the Rosh Yeshiva's son, attired in the casual uniform of a secular intellectual, visited his father at the Yeshiva, an intellectual debate ensued between the two. When the professor left, the Rosh Yeshiva had let out a short sigh of frustration, whispering something about the difficulty in raising children to follow one's ideals. One of the rabbis in the Yeshiva approached his mentor. "Rebbe," he meekly began. "I don't understand. The secretary of the Yeshiva merited to have his children become brilliant and devoted Torah scholars. What did he do so special that his sons are so strongly committed to Torah study?" The Rosh Yeshiva did not let him continue. "I do not know for sure," he answered. "But one thing I can tell you. At my Shabbos table I was discussing questions on Maimonides writings and Talmudic difficulties. He was singing zemiros (songs of faith and devotion)."

The Torah exhorts us to keep the laws as they will inspire others to marvel at Jewish wisdom. But Moshe adds the finality of the argument. Do not ever forget that we stood at Mount Sinai, saw the fire and heard G-d's voice! The intellectual analyzing, even actual observance, is, of course, of utmost importance. But nothing supercedes the simple faith of the G-d fearing Jew who traces his steps to the foot of the mountain. The Chasid Rav Yosef Ya'avetz. one of the great rabbis who was exiled during the Spanish Inquisition, writes that Jews whose observance was based on intellectualism withered in the face of Torquemada's torments. The simple Jews with simple faith remained loyal and steadfast throughout. It is obviously important to think, to rationalize and to perform. But Moshe tells us to watch ourselves and our souls lest we forget what really happened some 3,300 years ago. Because when look for the bottom line, it's at the bottom of the mountain.

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il] * TORAH WEEKLY *
Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat Va'etchanan ... Insights

The Missing Link "I am Hashem, your G-d..." (5:6) Why did G-d give the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone? Why not on one big stone? The commandments on the first tablet are between Man and G-d. "I am Hashem...You shall not recognize the gods of others in My Presence...You shall not make a carved image..." The second tablet, however, contains commandments between Man and his fellow: "You shall not murder; and you shall not commit adultery; and you shall not steal..." But why do they need to be on a separate slab? What difference does it make that the second five commandments concern man and his fellow? They're all commandments, aren't they? Nothing we do affects G-d. If we fail to do one of the mitzvot, G-d doesn't get angry. G-d has no human traits whatsoever, be they physical, emotional or spiritual. All we can know about G-d is that He is. The commandments that G-d gives us between us and Him are for one reason only: To connect us to Him, to bring us closer to Him. From His perspective, however, they do nothing for Him. Where our fellow beings are concerned, however, mitzvah failure (murder, theft, etc.) affects them greatly. For this reason, the Ten Commandments are divided onto two tablets. Those commandments between Man and G-d affect Man, but not G-d. Those between Man and Man affect both sides. This link, this mutuality between the active party and the recipient, is alluded to by the linking of the second five commandments together with the conjunction "and." "You shall not murder; and you shall not commit adultery; and you shall not steal..." When we damage the relationship with our fellow, it doesn't just affect ourselves, it impacts him as well. We are linked together. * Mahalal, Drash al HaTorah; Rabbi Dovid Orloffsky

Haftorah: Yishayahu 40:1-26 The Shabbos immediately following Tisha B'Av is called Shabbos Nachamu The Shabbos of Consolation. It takes its name from the first word of this week's Haftorah -- "Comfort, comfort my people says your G-d." The Prophet reminds the people that the time of the Exile of Jerusalem has come to an end. The Midrash tells us that Hashem asks Avraham to comfort Jerusalem, but he does not succeed. He is followed by Yitzchak and Yaakov and Moshe who are also unsuccessful. Finally Hashem Himself comes to comfort the Holy City.

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Good Shabbos Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Mazel Tov to Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Fuchs upon the birth of a baby boy! If you would like to hear a lecture by Rabbi Kamenetzky, send a blank e-mail to rmkshuir-subscribe@jif.org.il Drasha, Copyright (c) 1999 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc. Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a Project of the Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation. Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Associate Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore, <http://www.yoss.org/>. Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway learn@torah.org 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B <http://www.torah.org/> Baltimore, MD 21208 (410) 602-1350 FAX: 602-1351

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il]
Simcha's Torah Stories Parshat Va'eschanan 5759

IS MORE REALLY BETTER? How did you do on the test, Avi? I got an 80, Chaim. That's good. What did you get Chaim? 85. That's better than 80. That's right, more is better.

A short time later . . . Come, Steve, let's trade baseball cards. I have over 100 cards in my collection. One hundred cards. That's nothing! I have 250 cards. Wow, Steve. Your collection is better than mine. You have more cards. That's right! More is better!

A short time later . . . What flavor ice cream did you get Freddie? Chocolate. What did you get Max? I got two dips. Mocha and vanilla. Two dips! You got more ice cream than I did. Your cone is better than mine. That's right, more is better.

A short time later Avi is walking along thinking to himself . . . More is better. More is better. More is better. I have been hearing that expression quite a bit. The more you have of something, the better off you are. Hmmm. I have an idea.

Avi arrives home. Dad! I'm home! Avi! Great to see you! How was your day? Great, Dad! I really learned a lot today. What did you learn Avi? One of the things I learned is that "more is better." The more you have of something, the better off you are. I have a brainstorm. Great! Let's hear it! How many tzitzis (corner fringes) are on your tallis? Four. Let's add a fifth one. After all, more is better. Hmmm. I have another idea Dad. Yes, Avi. Next Succos, instead of waving four types of plants - esrog (citron), lulav (palm), hadassim (myrtle), and arovos (willow), let's add a fifth type. After all, more is better. Hmmm. Avi, what you are saying is not exactly true. What do you mean Dad? It may be true that more is better when it comes to test scores and baseball card collections, but mitzvos are different. The Torah gives us precise instructions how to perform a mitzvah; exactly how much of each component to use. How do you know that Dad? It is in this week's parsha, Avi. Moshe Rabbeinu, our teacher Moses is speaking to the Jewish people just before they are about to enter the Land of Israel after their forty years in the desert. He tells them (Devarim 4:2), "You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor shall you subtract from it . . ." Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, who is known to us as Rashi explains that we are cautioned against doing exactly what you suggested, Avi, having five tzitzis instead of four, or adding a fifth plant to the lulav group. So you see, when it comes to mitzvos, more is not necessarily better. Mitzvos are a precise science. The instructions must be followed very carefully. It's like driving a car, Dad. You can't drive too fast or too slow. Exactly, Avi. Or like eating dinner. If you eat too little, you won't have enough energy. And if you eat too much, you will be sick. You've really got the hang of it. I'm learning exactly how to understand the exactness of a mitzvah. Exactly!

Simcha's Quiz Question of the Week In your cellar, there are three light switches in the OFF position. Each switch controls one of three light bulbs on floor above. You may move any of the switches but you may only go upstairs to inspect the bulbs one time. How can you determine the switch for each bulb with one inspection?

Answer to last week's quiz question: A rich old man had three sons. When he died, he willed his 17 camels to the sons, to be divided as follows: the first son gets half of the camels. The second son gets 1/3 of the camels.

The third son gets 1/9 of the camels. The sons are sitting there trying to figure out how this can possibly be done, when a very old wise man goes riding by. They stop him and ask him to help them solve their problem. Without hesitation he divides the camels properly and continues riding on his way. How did he do it?

The Answer! The old man temporarily added his camel to the 17, making a total of 18 camels. $1/2 = 9 \frac{1}{3} = 6 \frac{1}{9} = 2$ for a total of 17. He then takes his camel back and rides away.

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From: Zomet Institute[SMTP:zomet@virtual.co.il] Shabbat-B'Shabbato - Parshat Va'etchanan SHABBAT-ZOMET is an extract from SHABBAT-B'SHABBATO, a weekly bulletin distributed free of charge in hundreds of synagogues in Israel. It is published by the Zomet Institute of Alon Shevut, Israel, under the auspices of the National Religious Party. Translated by: Moshe Goldberg A MITZVA IN THE TORAH PORTION: IS IT A MITZVA TO WRITE A MEZUZA? By Rabbi Binyamin Tabory

The obligation to place a mezuzah in a doorway is given in the verse, "and write them on the mezuzot of your house and in your gates" [Devarim 6:9]. The exact wording of the verse, "and write them," might be taken to imply that we are required to write a mezuzah, and not only to put it in the doorway. However, in the title of the laws of mezuzah, the Rambam writes that the obligation is "to place a mezuzah at the entrances." In addition, he emphasizes that a blessing is recited when the mezuzah is installed, and not when it is written, because "it is the placing of the mezuzah which is the mitzva." The Talmud Yerushalmi rules that there is also a blessing, "to write a mezuzah," but this does not necessarily obligate us, as the Yerushalmi in many cases gives a blessing to be recited during preparation of a mitzva. Examples are the making of a succa or the preparation of a lulav. Thus, they might list a blessing even if the writing of the mezuzah is not a mitzva in itself. According to the Tur, "It is a positive mitzva to write the passages of 'Shema' and 'Vehaya im shemoa' and place them on the post of the entrance" [Yoreh Dei'ah 285], implying that the writing is also a mitzva. Thus, later commentators discuss whether someone can fulfill the mitzva by buying or inheriting a mezuzah without writing his own (Imrei Bina), or if there is a preferred mitzva to appoint a specific messenger to write a mezuzah (Chovat Hadar).

Women are required to perform the mitzva of mezuzah, since this is not a time-bound prohibition. The Talmud adds that those who observe the mitzva of mezuzah have been promised the blessing, "so that your days will be long" [Devarim 11:21]. Since women also need this blessing, they are also obligated by the mitzva, even though they are not required to perform the mitzvot of studying Torah and Tefillin, which appear in the same passage. The Rambam ruled that women are not permitted to write a mezuzah, in spite of the fact that they are required to perform the mitzva. This corresponds to his opinion, that writing a mezuzah is not a mitzva in itself. However, this ruling is hard to reconcile with those who feel that writing a mezuzah is also a mitzva, since in this case the women would be obligated by a mitzva that they are not able to perform.

"Look how the behavior of the Almighty is different from the behavior of a human being. With respect to a human being, the king sits inside and his guards remain outside to protect him. The Almighty does the opposite: his servants sit inside, and He guards them from the outside, as is written, 'G-d watches over you, G-d is your shade, at your right hand' [Tehillim 121:5]" [Menachot 33b].

From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom List[SMTP:parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Shabbat Shalom: Va'etchanan By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel | This Sabbath, the Sabbath immediately following the Tisha

B'Av Memorial of the destruction of both Holy Temples, is called Shabbat Nachamu or the Sabbath of Comfort. The name is derived from the first words of the prophetic passage (haftarah) which we read following the Torah portion: "Nachamu Nachamu Ami - Be comforted, be comforted, My people" (Isaiah 40). But how can the prophet Isaiah command the nation to take comfort? Comfort is a request from G-d, a hoped for calming of the spirit, an anticipated relief of a soul in distress. When an individual is in mourning, G-d forbid, his friends leave him with the prayer "May the Almighty comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem" How is it possible for the Jews to be commanded to be comforted? In order to understand the parameters of this commandment to be comforted it is necessary to understand the genesis of a little known holiday, generally overlooked even by Jews seriously committed to the Hebrew calendar, which almost always comes out the same week as the Sabbath of Comfort: Tu B'Av, or the festival of the fifteenth day of Av. The last mishnah in the Tractate Taaanit (26b) describes the festivity of Tu B'Av in a rather startling manner: "There were no happier festivals for Israel than Tu B'Av and Yom Hakippurim. On these days the young women of Jerusalem would go out à dancing in the vineyards. And what would they say? Young man lift up your eyes and decide which woman you will choose (to marry)" Apparently Tu B'Av was a veritable Sadie Hawkins day in which young women would propose to young men. The Talmud goes on to explain what happened on the fifteenth day of Av to have caused it to be eternalized in such a way. Rav Yehuda suggests that it was the day in which the various tribes were permitted to intermarry with each other; Rav Yosef maintains that after the tribe of Benjamin sinned heinously with the concubine they were again permitted to intermarry with the rest of the Israelites; Rabbah says it was the day in which the generation of the desert all died out; Rav Matanah remarkably declares it was the day that the dead of Betar, after the abortive Bar Kochba rebellion, were granted permission for burial. It was specifically on that day that the Sages of Yavneh decreed that we add a blessing to the Grace after Meals in praise of the G-d "Who is good and Who does good". The concluding opinion is given by Rabba and Rav Yosef who teach that Tu B'Av was the day when they stopped chopping wood for the holy Temple Altar because the barks of the trees were no longer dry enough. The Great Rabbi Eliezer explains that after the fifteenth day of Av the rays of the sun become weakened and therefore the wood is no longer dry (BT. Taanit 30b). Fascinatingly enough all of these reasons have a common theme when we look at them in depth which not only ties them together but which also links Tu B'Av to Yom Kippurim. Judaism is first and foremost a religion of singular faith and optimism; we believe in the constant possibility of development and change for the better. This is the fundamental message of Tshuva or repentance; it is because our G-d has such faith in human nature that he gives us the great gift of Yom Kippur or the Day of Forgiveness which provides everyone with the yearly opportunity of starting a fresh slate. Herein lies the profound linkage between the festive days of Yom Kippur and Tu B'Av. The symbol of change rooted in nature is the waxing and the waning of the moon and the differences of the relative strength of the sun as it spreads its rays over the children of the earth during the various and changing seasons. The profound joy at every wedding ceremony and especially at every birth is our deep faith that new beginnings harbor new possibilities and that every new birth bears the anticipation of new leadership which may reform the world. >From this perspective we understand why both Yom Kippur and Tu B'Av are celebrated by proposals of marriage. And indeed Tu B'Av is defined as having been the day on which the tribes were permitted to intermarry, the time of forgiveness for the tribe of Benjamin and the emergence of the new generation which entered the Promised Land. Tu B'Av, therefore, represents our faith in the future and our constant reliance that the Almighty will fulfill His guarantee of ultimate redemption. It is only on the basis of such faith in defiance of experience that we can possibly understand a blessing of thanksgiving to the G-d "Who is good and Who does good" on the occasion of permission to bury our dead after we lost a rebellion against Rome. And, logically enough, our Sages maintain that this too happened on the fifteenth day of Av. A beautiful Hassidic story is told of

two disciples of a Rebbe who would always visit their Master during the festival of Sukkot. They stopped off each year at an inn which was owned by a couple who were unfortunately childless. On one particular year the owner of the inn requested that the disciples petition their Rebbe to pray that his wife become pregnant and of course they agreed to do so. One can imagine their surprise to find the wife of the innkeeper parading around the grounds of the inn with a gleamingly new and expensive baby carriage in anticipation of her impending conception. The following year they again set out to visit the Rebbe and arrived at the inn amidst the great merriment of the circumcision of the innkeepers eight-day-old son. They were treated as the most honored guests, with one hassid serving as the Kvater (God-father) and the other as Sandek (the one who holds the baby). But the Sandek had tears in his eyes during the ceremony, and without even staying the night insisted on a private audience with the Rebbe the very next day. "It isn't fair", remonstrated the hassid. "The Rebbe doesn't even know the innkeeper, who has only been married for ten years; I, the trusted disciple of the Rebbe all my life, have been married for fifteen years without the joy of a child despite the Rebbe's prayers on my behalf". The Rebbe took the hand of the hassid in his own and looked deeply into his eyes. "But in all these fifteen years that you have been asking me to pray for you, did you ever purchase a baby carriage?" The prophet Isaiah commands the Jewish people to become comforted. Judaism commands us to have faith, to walk around with an empty baby carriage because we know that the Almighty will keep His promise and grant us a future. It is especially important that we hear this commandment after the fast of Tisha B'Av when we mourn Jewish exile and persecution. The only antidote to the fast of Jewish tragedy is our faith in Jewish future redemption. And although close to 2,000 years of Jewish generations wandered the globe with an empty baby carriage, with our return to the Jewish State we have begun to enjoy the promised fruit of our faith. "Be comforted, be comforted, My people".

Shabbat Shalom You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: /www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Dean Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean

From: Aish HaTorah[SMTP:aishlist@mail.netvision.net.il] Aish HaTorah: SHRAGA'S WEEKLY PARSHAT V'ETCHANAN

"DON'T ADD OR SUBTRACT" A king calls in his trusted minister and says: "I have an important mission for you to perform. Go to the neighboring kingdom and meet there in the palace with their leaders. But remember one thing - under no circumstances must you remove your shirt during this meeting. Now go and do as I say." The minister sets off on his merry way and soon arrives at the neighboring kingdom. There he heads straight for the palace where he meets with the King. In the midst of their discussion, he sees some of the king's officers pointing and laughing at him. "Why are you laughing?" asks the visiting minister. "Because we've never seen someone with such a pronounced hunchback as yourself," they say. "What are you talking about? I'm not a hunchback!" "Of course you are!" "No I'm not!" "We'll bet you one million dollars that you are!" "Fine - I'll gladly take your bet." "Okay, so take off your shirt and prove it." At which point the minister remembers the parting words of the king... "under no circumstances must you remove your shirt during the meeting." Yet, the minister reasons, a million dollars would certainly bring added wealth to the king's coffers. I know I'm not a hunchback, so I'll surely win the bet. Of course, under these circumstances the king would approve... The minister removes his shirt and proudly displays his perfect posture. With pride in his achievement, he holds out his hand, into which is placed a check for one million dollars. The minister can barely contain his excitement. He quickly ends the meeting and runs back to give the wonderful news to his king. "I earned you a million dollars!" exclaims the minister. "It was easy. I only had to remove my shirt to prove that I wasn't a hunchback." "You did what?!" shouts the king. "But I told you specifically not to remove your shirt. I trusted that you'd follow instructions and I bet the other king \$10 million dollars that he couldn't get

you to remove your shirt!"

In this week's parsha, the Torah tells us "Do not add or subtract from the mitzvahs." (Deut. 4:2) Jewish law is a precise metaphysical science. If a Jew refuses to give charity, there is a blemish on the soul. If a Jewish community drives on Shabbat, igniting a combustion engine, it violates the verse in the Torah: "You shall light no fire on Shabbat." (Exodus 35:2) Yet on another level, the effect is much greater. A community driving on Shabbat eliminates the necessity to live together in a single neighborhood. There is no longer a need for the neighborhood Jewish school, Jewish bakery, Jewish shoe repair, etc. We become spread throughout the vast suburbs and our children are absorbed into the melting pot of secular norms and attitudes, The experience of growing up in a Jewish community is lost. Of course, we are talking here about a national standard. For an individual, however, Judaism is not all-or-nothing. A person must strive to do their best, and no more can be expected of them. Judaism is a process, a journey, where every step counts. But on a national level, we can't allow lower standards to be "institutionalized." That would compromise the standards to which we all aspire. The strength of Jewish law is it's belief that human needs and desires remain consistent throughout history. History shows that once Jewish law is held up to redefinition for every family, every society, every generation, it ceases to be effective. The floodgates of "redefinition" open, and the system falls apart. Certainly there are a variety of factors, but should it be any surprise that a 60 percent intermarriage is ravaging our people? "You have witnessed what God did with those who followed after alien worship - how they disappeared from your midst. But you who cling to God - you are all alive today." (Deut. 4:3-4)

Intuitively, it is understandable why not to subtract from the Torah. But why can't we add to the mitzvahs? Isn't doing more always better? Consider a great work of art. Would you consider adding a few notes to a Bach fugue, or some brushstrokes to a Rembrandt portrait?! Adding to the mitzvahs is not serving God - it is serving oneself with what "feels good" spiritually. Perfection, by definition, cannot be improved upon. Additions to Torah law is an unacceptable implication that God is lacking. It is self-worship of one's own creativity. Furthermore, the same subjective judgement which decides to add, is that which eventually lead one to subtract. In the Garden of Eden, the snake is trying to entice Eve to eat from the Tree. "Did God really say not to eat from the Tree?" queries the snake. "Absolutely," says Eve. "God said we can't eat it, and we can't even touch it." At that point, says the Midrash, the snake pushes Eve so that she brushes up against the Tree. "See that!" says the snake. "You touched the Tree and nothing happened. God didn't really mean what He said. You touched it, now go ahead and eat it." And Eve ate. Those who add, will come to subtract.

The verse in Psalms 19:8 declares: "Torat Hashem Temimah" - the Torah of God is complete. Maimonides codifies this concept (Foundations of the Torah 9:1-2): "The Torah explicitly states that its mitzvahs will remain binding forever, with neither change, addition nor subtraction... Therefore, if any person will arise - whether Jew or non-Jew - and will perform signs and wonders, saying that God sent him to either add or subtract a mitzvah from the Torah, or explain it differently than our tradition from Moses, or claim that the mitzvahs were given to Israel for only a limited time and not for all generations - then we immediately know he is a false prophet. In all such cases, we know that such a prophet is speaking presumptuously in God's Name, making up something not told to him by God. For God Himself told Moses that these commandments are for us and for our children forever." For just as adding one wire to a transistor radio means it no longer can pick up reception, so too we mustn't tinker with Jewish law. The mitzvahs of God are perfect. The masterpiece is marred just as much by adding as by subtracting.

SHABBAT SHALOM, RABBI SHRAGA SIMMONS Sources: - Chafetz Chaim, 20th century Poland - Kli Yakar, 16th century Prague - Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, 20th century Israel Check out the new Shraga's Weekly web page at: <http://www.aish.edu/parsha/shragasweekly/current.htm> (C) 1998 Aish HaTorah International - All rights reserved. Rabbi Shraga Simmons - ssimmons@aish.edu Home Page: <http://www.aish.edu>

From: Aish HaTorah[SMTP:aishlist@mail.netvision.net.il] Aish HaTorah: APPEL'S PARSHA PAGE PARSHAT V'ETCHANAN by Rabbi Yehuda Appel Aish HaTorah Cleveland

At the end of World War Two, Winston Churchill was asked if he was concerned about how historians would view his role in the war. He replied that he wasn't the least bit concerned, saying that, "history shall be kind to me, for I shall write it." Ultimately, Churchill's words came true; his history of World War Two became one of the most popular books on the subject. The attempt to shape and influence events is part and parcel of the human saga. All of us want to be players in the game of life. But while we can in fact influence events, we cannot control their final outcome. Ultimately, all is in the hands of the Almighty.

A central focus of this week's Torah portion, V'etchanan, is the ban on idolatry. The Israelites are absolutely forbidden from worshiping or even making graven images. They should not intermarry with the surrounding nations lest they be drawn after their idolatrous ways. Jews are forbidden not only from making likenesses of other gods, but Jews may not even make an image which symbolically represents G-d Himself. This stricture is so great that a Jew should rather die than participate in pagan worship. Why is idolatry seen as such a severe transgression? Some commentators see the Torah's stricture against making a graven image as a preventive law, to avoid the possibility that people will mistakenly come to worship this image as G-d Himself. The Ibn Ezra notes that our relationship with the Almighty is direct - without any intermediaries. The use of an image - even as a mere symbol to represent the Divine - would constitute an intermediary and is thus forbidden.

The commentators give another reason for the Biblical disdain of idolatry: It is perversion of the metaphysical order. Judaism teaches that we must subordinate our will to the Almighty's will. The nature of pagan worship is just the opposite. It is an attempt to influence and ultimately control spiritual forces. Jewish tradition says our purpose in this world is to achieve moral growth by emulating the Almighty's behavior - not to influence spiritual forces into helping meet our own egotistical desires. In other words: Idolatry is wrong because it is false! A graven image is an inanimate object incapable of accomplishing anything. There is nothing "real" behind the wood and stone. Compare this to the Almighty Who is responsive to one's needs and holds the keys to all success and failure. Says the Talmud: "The seal of G-d is Truth." Similarly, revisionist history is the wrong approach. We cannot escape "reality" with the stroke of a pen. So too with the Creator of the universe. We must strive not to fashion G-d in our own image, but rather to fashion ourselves in the image of G-d.

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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5759 SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS VAESCHANAN By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

But you shall greatly beware for your souls (4:15) SHELLED EGG, PEELED ONION, or PEELED GARLIC CLOVE LEFT OVERNIGHT

Several Biblical injunctions are derived from the warning to "beware for your souls", including the Biblical prohibition of placing oneself in any type of life-threatening situation(1), e.g., walking dangerously near the edge of a roof, exposing oneself to a disease, etc. In addition to such obviously dangerous acts, our Sages warned against other dangers which are not understood today, such as the well-known injunction against eating meat and fish together. Although we cannot define the resultant danger in terms of medical science, we accept and adhere faithfully to our Sages' warning that eating fish and meat together is a danger(2). Another practice involving food which our Sages considered dangerous is eating a shelled egg, peeled

onion, or peeled garlic clove(3) that was left overnight. Although this practice is less widespread than the universally accepted restriction against eating meat and fish together, the Talmud(4) maintains that a ruach ra'ah, literally a bad spirit or a "spirit of impurity", rests upon these three foods when peeled and left overnight, similar to the "spirit of impurity" that rests on one's hands during nighttime sleep. One who eats these foods after they were left overnight, states the Talmud, endangers his life. Moreover, he will be judged by the Heavenly Court as a person who took his own life(5). In view of the severity of both the offense and the punishment, it is difficult to understand why certain communities do not comply with this restriction. How can they ignore such frightening consequences? There is a basic difference, however, between the two prohibitions mentioned above. The prohibition against eating meat and fish together is quoted by the Shulchan Aruch as practical Halachah(6). All Jews - without exception - are obligated to follow the rulings of the Shulchan Aruch, whether scientifically understood or not. The prohibition against eating the three peeled foods, however, is omitted by many of the Rishonim(7) and the Shulchan Aruch, probably because they held that the particular "spirit of impurity" in question was no longer prevalent in their times(8). Thus, in many communities this practice is not followed, and, indeed, many people have never heard of it. But in many other communities, the practice is in force, to one degree or another. While omitted by the Shulchan Aruch, the warning against eating these three peeled foods is cited by some Rishonim(9), and recorded as practical Halachah by several of the later authorities, among them the Pri Chadash, Shulchan Aruch Harav(10), Aruch ha-Shulchan(11) and Ben Ish Chai. The following discussion, therefore, applies only to those whose custom is to observe this practice, or to those who would like to adopt it.

MUST EVERYONE OBSERVE THIS PROHIBITION? Whoever comes from a family that adheres strictly to this custom, should definitely continue to do so, since it has a Talmudic source and is surely not less valid than any other well-founded custom. The poskim differ as to whether or not one who never followed this practice is required to adopt it. Some rule that the practice is mandatory(12), others recommend adopting it(13), while others do not require following it at all(14). The prohibition applies even when the peeled food items were wrapped, sealed, and stored in a closed pot or container, or were placed in a refrigerator(15).

THE PROHIBITION APPLIES ONLY WHEN... The entire egg, onion, or garlic clove was peeled. If even a minuscule part of it was left unpeeled, or even if the root hairs on top of the onion or garlic remain, the food is not considered to be "peeled" and the prohibition does not apply(16); The egg, onion, or garlic was kept separate from any other food. If, however, it was mixed together with other ingredients, e.g., with vegetables, tuna fish, or mayonnaise, it is permitted(17). The egg, onion, or garlic clove was peeled with the intent of using it immediately and it was then left overnight, or if it was peeled in order to be used the next day. If, however, it was shelled or peeled with the express intent of being frozen and used at a later date (as many large companies or bakeries do), it is permitted(18). Dried egg powder does not fall into the category of "shelled eggs" and is permitted(19). The egg, onion, or garlic clove is uncooked. When it is cooked, roasted, or fried, several poskim hold that it may be left overnight(20). The egg, onion or garlic is left the entire night. If it is left for only part of the night, it is permitted(21).

B'DIEVED IF THESE ITEMS WERE SHELLED or PEELED and LEFT OVERNIGHT, WHAT CAN BE DONE? Some poskim hold that b'dieved, one does not have to be stringent and the peeled foods should not be thrown away(22). Most other poskim, however, hold that even b'dieved these items should not be eaten(23). Some poskim hold that cooking or soaking the peeled items in vinegar removes the "spirit of impurity" from them and they may then be eaten(24). Other poskim do not mention this leniency. Washing the peeled foods does not alter their status - they still may not be eaten(25).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Berachos 32b; Rambam, Hilchos Rotzei'ach, 11:4; C.M. 427:5. 2 Pesachim 76b. 3 Some people are stringent with radishes also, but this stringency has no apparent source. 4 Niddah 17a. 5 Rashi, ibid., as explained by Aruch l'Ner. 6 O.C. 173 and Y.D. 116:2. 7 Such as the Rif, Rambam, and Tur. 8 Explanation offered by Teshuvos Pri ha-Sadeh 3:61-2 and others, based on Yam Shel Shelomo (Chulin, Kal ha-Basar 31) and Tosfos Yoma 77b, who state that ruach ra'ah is no longer prevalent in our midst. 9 See Tosfos Shabbos 141a, Tosfos Beitzah 14a, Rosh Beitzah 1:21,

Smak 171, Leket Yosher Y.D. pg. 6, who all record this prohibition as being applicable. See also Mordechai (Shabbos, ha-Motzi Yayin) who quotes the Maharam of Rotenburg as doubting if this prohibition is presently applicable. 10 Hilchos Shemiras ha-Guf 7. 11 Y.D. 116:22. 12 Teshuvos Beis Shelomo Y.D. 189, quoted in Darkei Teshuvah 116:74; Teshuvos Mharsham 4:148 (see also Da'as Torah O.C. 513:6), Klausenberger Rebbe (quoted in Shemiras ha-Guf v'ha-Nefesh chapter 3) in addition to all the authorities mentioned above who quote this warning as practical Halachah. See also the episode with Harav Y. L. Diskin, quoted in Misgeres Zahav 99:1. 13 Chafetz Chayim (Likutei Halachos, Niddah 17a, Ein Mishpat 7); Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:20; Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky (quoted by Harav C. Kanievsky in Shemiras ha-Guf v'ha-Nefesh 3:1); Yabia Omer Y.D. 2:7. 14 Teshuvos Yad Meir 19, quoted in Darkei Teshuvah 116:74, based on the previously mentioned argument that nowadays, this ruach ra'ah is no longer prevalent. In addition, all the other poskim who do not mention this warning, including later authorities such as the Chochmas Adam, Pischei Teshuvah and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, must be included in this category. 15 Niddah 17a; Shulchan Aruch Harav, ibid. 16 Niddah 17a (see Yaavetz and Aruch l'Ner); Shulchan Aruch Harav, ibid. 17 Smak 171; Zivchei Tzedek 61, quoted in Kaf ha-Chayim O.C. 504:1 and Y.D. 116:92; Ben Ish Chai (Pinchas 2:14); Chazon Ish (quoted by Harav C. Kanievsky in Shemiras Haguf v'ha-Nefesh 3:5 and in Orchos Rabbeinu 1:209); Yabia Omer Y.D. 2:7; mi-Beis Levi 3:46. [Some mention that even if the item was salted, it is also sufficient (Ta'amei ha-Minragim, Likutim 16). One may rely on this when a large amount of salt [or sugar] is involved; Minchas Yitzchak 6:75.] 18 Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:20. 19 Darkei Teshuvah 116:74 quoting Degel Efrayim 28; Yabia Omer Y.D. 2:7; Shevet ha-Levi 6:111. According to the previously mentioned Igros Moshe, this would also be permitted. See, however, Har Tzvi Y.D. 74 who does not cite this leniency. Harav S.Y. Elyashiv is quoted (Yashiv Moshe, pg. 159) as permitting onion powder when mixed with other ingredients. 20 Darkei Teshuvah 116:74 quoting Beis Shelomo Y.D. 189; Aderes (Kuntres Over Orach 4); Shevet ha-Levi 3:169. There are others (see Darkei Teshuvah and Minchas Yitzchak 4:108), however, who hold exactly the opposite - the prohibition applies to cooked items only while raw items may be peeled and left overnight. 21 Klausenberger Rebbe, ibid. is unsure of this halachah, but he states that it is not customary to be stringent when these items were peeled and left for only part of the night. 22 Chazon Ish (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu 1:210). Yaskil Avdi 8:14-4 allows these items to be used for a Shabbos meal. See also Sdei Chemed (Lamed 41:31) and Minchas Yitzchak 2:68 and 9:28. 23 Birkei Yosef Y.D. 116:10; Shem Aryeh Y.D. 56; Chelkas Yaakov 4:12; Klausenberger Rebbe, ibid. (who opines that various severe stomach ailments are a result of being negligent about this prohibition) and all the poskim mentioned above who quote this practice and do not differentiate between l'chatchilah and b'dieved. 24 Kaf ha-Chayim 116:93. 25 Artzos ha-Chayim O.C. 4:32; Klausenberger Rebbe, ibid.

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Parashat Vaetchanan - Shabbat Nachamu OU Torah Insights Project Parashat Va'etchanan - Shabbat Nachamu July 24, 1999 Rabbi Joel Landau

When the prophet Yirmiyahu describes the iniquities of the Jewish people, he says, "Jerusalem has sinned a sin." The prophet Yishayahu, referring to the Jews' suffering, says, "She has received double for all her sins." And when Yishayahu speaks about redemption, he says, "Comfort, comfort my people." The double nature of these verses ("sinned a sin;" "double for all her sins; "Comfort, comfort") emphasizes that man constantly functions on two levels, spiritual and physical, the Midrash observes. Everything we do impacts on both our relationship with G-d and our relationship with the world around us. This concept also apply to the Jews as a nation. Just like the individual Jew, the Jewish people constantly functions on these two levels. On the one, hand, our national focus is toward our relationship with G-d alone, as articulated by the infamous Bilam: "Behold, it is a nation that dwells in solitude, not to be reckoned among the nations." On the other hand, as Yishayahu puts it, we are mandated to be a "light unto the nations." The sins of the Jewish people, both as a nation and as individuals, occur on these same two levels. G-d conveys through Yishayahu, "Children have I raised and exalted, but they have rebelled against Me....They have forsaken Hashem, they have angered the Holy One of Israel and have turned their back to Him." At the same time, the prophet declares, "How the faithful city has become a harlot. She had been full of justice, but now murderers.... Your princes are...associates of thieves, each of them loves bribery." Sins against G-d; crimes against man. Divine punishment was thus dealt measure for measure. G-d severs His relationship with us. "Your worthless meal-offering...is an incense of abomination to me.... My soul detests your new moons and holidays.... When you spread your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you....I will not listen, G-d

declares through the Prophet. On the physical level, he declares, "Your country is desolate, your cities burned with fire. As for your land, strangers consume its yield." Fortunately, the redemption, too, shall have these dimensions. Our spirituality will be restored and "the Glory of Hashem will be revealed and all flesh together will see that the mouth of Hashem has spoken." So, too, our physicality will be restored: "As for your ruins and desolations...you will now become crowded with inhabitants.... For Hashem will comfort Zion,...He will make her wilderness like Eden,...joy and gladness will be found there, thanksgiving and the sound of music." Too many of us lose sight of the importance of our dual role and responsibilities as Jews. Instead, many people focus on either a man-man relationship or a man-G-d relationship. This approach is clearly wrong. Judaism is a package deal. In order to be a good Jew, it is essential to perfect a relationship with G-d as well as one with fellow men. It may be possible to be a good person without being a good Jew, but one cannot be a good Jew without being a good person. Only when this concept is internalized can our redemption materialize. Rabbi Joel Landau Rabbi Landau is rabbi of Congregation Beth Jacob in Irvine, California. OU.ORG Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America Please send comments to webmaster@ou.org

From: Kenneth Block [SMTP:kenblock@worldnet.att.net] Parshat V'eschanan Shabbat Nachamu Rabbi Aron Mirocznik Young Israel of Ocean Parkway 11 Av 5759 July 24, 1999 Daf Yomi: Rosh Hashana 20

Today's Torah Reading begins with Moshe Rabeinu relaying how he prayed to G-d for admission into Israel: "Va'eschanan el HaShem b'ais ha-hee" - and I prayed to G-d at this time. This is a rather uncommon verse. The usual word for prayer is 'espalal', not the rare term 'eschanan'. The question then is, what is the Torah trying to tell us by using the term 'eschanan'? The Midrash on this week's parsha points out and answers this by explaining that the numerical value of "Va'eschanan" is equal to 515. This teaches us that Moshe Rabeinu beseeched G-d with 515 separate prayers and supplications to be allowed to enter Israel. At first glance this seems very strange. We all know that ultimately Moshe never gained entrance to the Holy Land. Basically, we are being told how unforgiving G-d can be. 515 times Moshe begged the Al-Mighty to be able to enter Israel, and no less than 515 times were his petitions rejected. This story is certainly no honor for Moshe Rabeinu and is a rather depressing tale. Furthermore, there is another peculiarity about this Shabbos. This week is called 'Shabbos Nachamu' - the Shabbos of Consolation. We are comforted and consoled on this Shabbos after the trauma of the destruction of the Bais HaMikdosh, which occurred this past week on the Jewish calendar. In truth there is no reason for this Shabbos to be treated any differently than those of the past few weeks, when we were in a state of mourning. The Bais HaMikdosh was destroyed in 70 CE, nearly 2000 years ago. As of last week it was destroyed and as of this week it has yet to be rebuilt. We do not deserve to be comforted this Shabbos any more than last week. So why is this Shabbos considered the Shabbos of Consolation?

To answer these important questions, let us consider the different ways people react to a loss. First of all some people may accept their loss, choosing to cut themselves off from the past and simply move on. Others, even as they attempt to adjust, try to remember what they had before the loss, hoping that they may realize that original state once again. Which way is desirable? The Midrash in Eicha Rabosi comments on this with an interesting parable. There was once a proud city that was taken captive. Some of its members immediately chose to conform to their captors - in no time they were assimilated. Others clung to their history, setting aside one day a year to reflect upon and remember their past. Years later the city was freed. Those who clung to their past were then able to rebuild their city, reestablishing their unique culture. However, the memory of the others was lost forever. This is an important lesson for us today when it comes to dealing with our loss of the holy Bais HaMikdosh. As the Midrash tells us, we cannot simply disengage from our heritage and choose to simply move on with our lives. If we G-d forbid act in this fashion then eventually the

importance of our heritage will be forgotten. However, if we choose to remember the greatness of the Bais HaMikdosh then we will merit to see its reestablishment.

There is another fascinating Midrash that comments on this theme. The Midrash tells us of one of the prayers of Moshe Rabeinu in which he said, the bones of Joseph (which I myself have guarded and brought out of Egypt) are destined to enter Israel - so why not I. To this G-d responded, He (Joseph) who gave honor to the land shall enter the land. He (Moshe) who did not, shall not enter it. At first reading, this is shocking. How is it possible that Moshe Rabeinu dishonored Israel - surely no man has appreciated its holiness more than he! But the Midrash backs up its shocking accusation. It explains that when Moshe saved the daughters of Yisro (Exodus 2:19) they referred to him as an "ish mitzri" - an Egyptian. One would think that Moshe would have vehemently protested at this mistake, but the Midrash notes that Moshe simply said nothing, thus ignoring his Jewishness. This is what G-d was referring to when he said that Moshe had failed to honor the land. To the non Jew Israel has little significance, but to the Jew it is his soul. When Moshe ignored his Jewishness, he had in effect ignored the holy land. Consequently, he was to be denied its access. (Please note that the ultimate explanation as to why Moshe was not allowed into Israel is an exceedingly complicated one. This episode of the Midrash is only a rationalization of why the particular 'Bones of Joseph' argument was rejected. There are 514 other arguments that need to be understood before we can truly grasp why Moshe did not get his most heartfelt wish granted.)

This Midrash is reminiscent of the earlier one which explained why we must cling to our past - for if we do not we cannot realize our original station. Moshe had forgotten his heritage and Israel, and would therefore not see the holy land. This is why the Torah chooses to tell us the extent to which he prayed to G-d even though Moshe's prayers were ultimately rejected - to teach the severity of disengaging from who we are. Once we forget our past it will be too late for the future. However, if we cling to our past and hope for its return we will merit to see its rebirth. It is therefore no wonder that we call this week the Shabbos of Consolation. The past few weeks we have been in a state of mourning over the Bais HaMikdosh. We have not eaten meat. We have not listened to music. In other words we have clung to our heritage by mourning the destruction of the Bais HaMikdosh. It will be in this merit, that we shall ultimately see its reestablishment. Yes, unfortunately the Bais HaMikdosh is still not standing. However, we read the Parshat of V'eschanan today (which is always read on Shabbos Nachamu), showing us that if we remember the Bais HaMikdosh we will see the day when it shines once more in Jerusalem. Have we remembered the Bais HaMikdosh? The answer is absolutely. We have mourned for three weeks, culminating with the fast of Tisha B'Av. We are now assured to obtain our original state of when we had the Bais HaMikdosh. Indeed this Shabbos is Shabbos Nachamu - the Shabbos of Consolation.

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From: Rabbi Yisroel Ciner ciner@torah.org Parsha-Insights V'eschanon

This week we read the parsha of V'eschanon. Amongst the many basic principles of Judaism that are contained in our parsha is the prayer with which we begin and end each day in addition to being the last words that a Jew is supposed to utter on this earth--"Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokainu Hashem Echod {Hear/Accept Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One} [6:4]." In this proclamation is included three fundamental aspects of Judaism. 1) The very mention of Hashem proclaims the belief in a Supreme Being--the existence of G-d. 2) Elokainu--He is our G-d. The belief in Hashem's active involvement in all that transpires in this world--hashgacha pratis {individualized Providence and supervision}. 3) Echod--he is One. The absolute unity of Hashem. If this is a pronouncement of one's belief, why does it begin with the words "Shema Yisroel"? Wouldn't the words "ani maamin {I believe}" be a much better opening for the statement of beliefs

which follows?

Rav Leib Chasman explains that a person must realize that the Torah was not given just to him. Shema Yisroel! One must do the utmost to spread the idea of Hashem to all of Israel. One who was able to influence others and didn't is held responsible for the errors that their ignorance led them to. We don't live in a vacuum. To quote the Boy Scouts of America, we must leave the area around us cleaner than the way we found it.

Rashi sees in this passuk {verse} a reference to the world at large recognizing Hashem. He explains in the following way: Hashem, who is presently our G-d, will ultimately become One, the G-d of all the nations. As the prophet Zecharya stated: "On that day Hashem will be one and His name will be One [14:9]." The Kli Yakar brings the Talmud [Pesachim 50A] which offers a fascinating insight into this. In this world, when something 'good' happens we bless Hashem as a Good Being who does good. When something 'bad' happens we bless Hashem as being a just judge. Being that we can have no understanding of Hashem Himself, any name that we give to Hashem is actually a description of the way that He is connecting to us. We therefore have different names for Hashem based on our (mis)perception of Him acting with either compassion or justice. It was and is these seemingly contradictory occurrences in life which (mis)lead many to believe that there are two distinct and separate forces which rule this world. In this world, Hashem's name is not echod--one. However, in the blinding clarity of the World to Come, one will be able to see that every occurrence was nothing but an act of compassion. There were no contradictions whatsoever. No separate forces at all. "On that day Hashem will be one and His name will be One [14:9]." This level was attained even in this world, the world of illusion, by Rabi Akiva, one of the greatest of our Sages. The Talmud [Berachos 61B] relates that the Romans caught Rabi Akiva teaching Torah, an infraction which was punishable by death. The torturous death they decreed upon him was to tear the flesh from his body using combs of steel. As the executioners began their service, Rabi Akiva began his service... He began to recite the Shema Yisroel. His holy neshama {soul} left this world as he pronounced the word "echod". Echod. To Rabi Akiva, even as he was being tortured to death, there were no contradictions. Hashem's name was already Echod.

According to the Kli Yakar, that is the pronouncement of faith that one makes by reciting the Shema Yisroel. Not just the three beliefs mentioned above but also the belief that only good comes from Hashem. That which we perceive as bad is only a misconception and a misunderstanding of what is actually occurring. Hashem echod.

One might wonder, being that the Shema Yisroel is so loaded with affirmations of our faith, why doesn't it have a profound effect on us?

The Chofetz Chaim gives a fabulous parable of a wealthy man who was traveling for a number of weeks and left his servants a detailed list of tasks that he wanted them to accomplish during his absence. In order that not even a single item be neglected, he ordered that the list be read daily. Upon his return he immediately summoned his servants and asked if they had done as they'd been instructed. They proudly answered that they had. Taking a quick look around, the wealthy man was shocked to see that not a single assignment from his list had actually been performed. He again summoned his servants and angrily asked again if they had followed his instructions. They again unabashedly assured him that they had. They had read the list at least twice a day...

The Rashi quoted above, however, if understood simply, seems to be explaining the Shema Yisroel as saying that ultimately the entire world will accept Hashem's majesty. If so, it follows logically that the continuation of the Shema Yisroel will contain a reference as to the way to spread Hashem's name.

The words immediately following "Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokainu Hashem Echod" are "V'ahavta ais Hashem Elokecha {And you shall love Hashem, your G-d}." The Sifri explains: Cause Hashem to be loved by others, as was done by the Patriarch, Avrohom. A hint to this is revealed by the Baal HaTurim who points out that the letters of "v'ahavta" are the same letters as "ha'avot", the Patriarchs. Avrohom, with his acts of kindness, spread the word of Hashem. People saw him and understood that they were

seeing a G-dly individual. An individual who through his connection to Hashem had been transformed.

Every person must ask himself: Am I doing the same? Do the people that encounter me at work, on the road, on the subway, on the street, in my synagogue and in my home walk away with the feeling that they have just met a person who has been transformed through his connection to Hashem? Are we fulfilling the mitzva of "v'ahavta"--Causing Hashem to be loved by others?

My wife recently flew back home to Israel from the States. When I met her at the airport, she told me how there was a whole group of non-Jewish teenagers on the flight who really stood out by their being so respectful and well behaved. Is that what people say about us? Are we a pleasure to fly with? (Maybe don't answer that last question...)

"V'ahavta"--Causing Hashem to be loved by others. That was the way of Avrohom and those are the footsteps which we are commanded to follow. It is those footsteps which will lead toward the culmination of "Hashem echod"--of the whole world recognizing Him--may it happen speedily in our days.

Good Shabbos, Yisroel Ciner

This is dedicated in the memory of my wife's grandmother, Nechama bas Moshe Yitzchak, a"h. TNZB"H

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From: Rabbi Lipman Podolsky [SMTP:podolsky@hakotel.org.il]

Subject: Parshas Va'eschanan Anti-Semitism

As we prepare to mourn the tragic destruction of our Bais HaMikdash, and the incessant suffering caused by nearly two thousand years of exile and dispersion, it pays to address the subject of the most irrational racial hatred known to man, anti-Semitism. For years Jews have been seeking ways to alleviate the symptoms of anti-Semitism, and to become fully accepted in the eyes of the nations. Many and sundry solutions have been proposed. But the oldest, and most enduring, is clearly that of the reform movement. The theory is that the more we look and act like our gentile neighbors, the more we will blend in and achieve acceptance. By speaking their language, wearing their clothes, joining their guilds, and sometimes even converting to their religions, we would attain full equality and respect. This theory was first formulated by the Hellenists, 2,500 years ago, and has since been recycled and regurgitated in one form or another to this very day. The only problem is that it doesn't work. After twenty-five centuries of assimilation, one thing is clear: the more you emulate the nations, the more likely you are to become lost among them. Assimilation breeds destruction. Thus the "silent holocaust" that is currently decimating so many of our brothers and sisters. Furthermore, never did this theory actually produce the respect and acceptance for which it was intended. In the twenties, the Jews of Germany were fully accepted in all walks of life. They were utterly indistinguishable from their Aryan neighbors. Yet, when they got a little too close for comfort, the Nuremberg laws were enacted to ensure that they kept their distance. Jews were no longer permitted to marry gentiles. Assimilation -- and acceptance -- came to a standstill.

One of the greatest Torah sages in the generation before the Holocaust made a frightening prediction. Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk, mere decades before World War II, observed: As a result of the reform proclamation "that Berlin is Jerusalem... then shall tempestuous storm winds come, and utterly uproot them... (Meshech Chochmah, Parshas Bechukosai)." At a time when Jews were ostensibly accepted everywhere with not a storm cloud on the horizon, the Jewish soul was crying from within. Their temporary acceptance into gentile society was only a facade. Ultimately it would crumble into the worst display of anti-Semitism the world has ever seen.

Paradoxically, on the other hand, the tighter we cling to our Jewishness, the more admiration we procure. As our Parsha teaches: "See, I have taught you statutes and laws, as Hashem, my G-d, has commanded me, to do so in the midst of the Land to which you come, to possess it. You shall observe and perform them, for it is your wisdom and your discernment in the eyes of the nations, who shall hear all these statutes and who shall say, Surely a wise and discerning people is this great nation (Devarim 4:5-6)!" Thus, the way to ensure both Jewish continuity and Jewish security is one and the same: To adhere to the age-old principles outlined in our Torah. There is no substitute.

We surely have no need to emulate our neighbors. The only system of thought/religion/philosophy/life that contains all the answers is the Torah. I meet many wayward souls, unaffiliated Jews who have searched high and low, far and wide, for the meaning of life. Only after their introduction to authentic Torah Judaism do they realize how silly they have been. The treasure was buried in their own back yard all along. The Torah contains it all. From ethics to economics, from medicine to meaning, the Torah is sublime. One need only delve to reveal. And when we strive to fulfill the mission for which we were destined -- to serve as a moral beacon for the nations (Yeshaya 42:6) -- then will we earn that ever-elusive respect. For there is much reason to admire our heritage, past, present and future. But why take it from me? Listen to the words of a gentile leader, John Adams, the second president of the United States: "I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation. If I were an atheist and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations. If I were an atheist of another sect... I should still believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate for all mankind the doctrine for a supreme, intelligent, wise almighty sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization... they are the most glorious nation that ever inhabited this earth. The Romans and their empire were but a bauble in comparison to the Jews. They have given religion to three quarters of the globe and have influenced the affairs of mankind more, and more happily, than any other nation, ancient or modern (John Adams, Letter to F. A. Van der Kemp, 1808)." I wish he was running for president!

This is the natural, gentile response to Jews who live a true Jewish lifestyle. By clinging to Torah, we undo the destruction. "It is a tree of life to those who cling to it (Mishlei 3:18)!" Torah is our life; we need look no further. "Delve in it! Delve in it! For all is in it (Avos 5:22)."

We would like to express our gratitude to the Adam Smith Company which has so generously donated the computer center at the Yeshiva in memory of HaRav Aryeh Bina zt"l, founder of Yeshivat Hakotel. This enables us to communicate this sicha to you each week - "Iehagdil Torah ulehaadira". (c) 5759/1999 by Lipman Podolsky and American Friends of Yeshivat Hakotel

From: Mordecai Kornfeld[SMTP:kornfeld@netvision.net.il]

Subject: Insights to the Daf: Rosh Hashanah

INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim daf@dafyomi.co.il, <http://www.dafyomi.co.il>

ROSH HASHANAH 11 (2 Av) - dedicated l'Ilyu Nishmas Lipa ben Aryeh ha'Kohen on his Yahrzeit ROSH HASHANAH 12, 13, 14, 15 (3-6 Menachem Av) - dedicated by the wife and daughters of the late Dr. Simcha Bekelnitzky (Simcha Gedalya ben Shraga Feibush) of Queens N.Y. on his upcoming second Yahrzeit (7 Av). Well known in the community for his Chesed and Tzedakah, he will be remembered by all who knew him. Now is the time to help the Dafyomi Advancement Forum continue its unique Harvatzas Torah! Send a tax-deductible contribution to D.A.F., 140-32 69 Avenue, Flushing NY 11367, USA

Rosh Hashanah 12 IN WHAT MONTH WAS THE WORLD CREATED? QUESTION: The Beraisa says that the Chachmei Yisrael count the number of years since Creation in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, who says that the world was created in Tishrei, but they calculate the Tekufah from Nisan, like Rabbi Yehoshua. Is this ruling not self-contradictory? How can they rule like both Rabbi Eliezer, who says that the world was created in Tishrei, and like Rabbi Yehoshua, who says that the world was created in Nisan? ANSWERS:

(a) RASHI and TOSFOS explain that the Chachmei Yisrael agree with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua, who says that the world was created in Nisan. This is evidenced by the fact that they count the Tekufah like Rabbi Yehoshua, and the calculation of the Tekufah affects the times of the

Molad and Birkas ha'Chamah (the blessing recited upon seeing the sun when it reaches the same position that it was in when it was created). The only reason why the y rule that we count the number of years of the calendar from Tishrei, like Rabbi Eliezer, is because Tishrei is a more important time since it is considered Rosh Hashanah for various matters (Shemitah, Yovel, Orlah, Ma'aser, etc.), as the Gemara (8a) derives from verses. The RITVA learns like Rashi and Tosfos, that the Chachmei Yisrael agree with the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua. However, l'Halachah, the Ritva rules that we follow the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer even for calculation of the Tekufah, because Rav (27a) states that the world was created in Tishrei, and Rav has the authority to dispute a Beraisa ("Rav Tana Hu u'Palig"). That is why we say, in the Shemoneh Esreh of Rosh Hashanah, that "this day is the beginning of Creation," following the opinion of Rav (who rules like Rabbi Eliezer) that the world was created in Tishrei.

(b) RABEINU TAM (27a, cited by Tosfos DH k'Man) says that even Rabbi Yehoshua, who says that the world was created in Nisan, agrees that Hashem *wanted* to create the world in Tishrei. This explains why, even according to Rabbi Yehoshua, we say in the Shemoneh Esreh of Rosh Hashanah that "this day is the beginning of Creation" -- Hashem *planned* the Creation for Tishrei. That, too, might be why we count the years from Tishrei even though we rule like Rabbi Yehoshua, for that is the time at which Hashem originally *planned* to create the world. (Alternatively, Rabbi Eliezer, might agree with Rabbi Yehoshua that the world was *planned* to be created in Tishrei but was actually created in Nisan. The only argument is whether we consider the Creation, with regard to counting the years, to be at the time that Hashem planned to create the world, or at the time that he actually created it. Accordingly, both Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua agree that we calculate the Tekufah from Nisan, and the only argument is how to count the years. If so, we effectively rule like Rabbi Eliezer, since we count the years from Tishrei.)

(c) RABEINU CHANANEL is not bothered by the contradiction in the ruling of the Chachmei Yisrael. He says that regarding matters related to the moon, we count from Tishrei, like Rabbi Eliezer, and regarding matters related to the sun, we count from Nisan, like Rabbi Yehoshua. What does Rabeinu Chananel mean? How can we count the Molad of the moon from Tishrei, saying that the moon was created in Tishrei, while at the same time we count the Tekufah from Nisan, saying that the sun was created in Nisan? Rav David Metzger, in his annotations to the commentary of Rabeinu Chananel, writes that Rabeinu Chananel seems to be of the opinion that the Birkas ha'Chamah is *not* a blessing recited when the sun returns to the position it was at when created. There is no blessing of that sort. How does Rabeinu Chananel understand the Gemara in Berachos (59b) which mentions says that the Birkas ha'Chamah is to be recited when the "sun is in its Tekufah" ("Chamah b'Tekufasah")? Rabeinu Chananel there records two opinions of what Birkas ha'Chamah means. The first explanation is like Rashi explains there, that Birkas ha'Chamah is the blessing recited when the sun returns to the position at which it was when it was created, which is actually our Girsas in the Gemara in Berachos. The second opinion is based on the Yerushalmi (Berachos 9:2). The Yerushalmi says that the Birkas ha'Chamah is recited when the sun reappears after not being visible for three consecutive days (due to cloud cover, for example). That is what "Chamah b'Tekufasah" means, and not that the sun is in its original position. According to this second explanation, the calculation of the Tekufah is not related at all to the blessing of Birkas ha'Chamah. According to Rabeinu Chananel, the Beraisa here in Rosh Hashanah which does not consider it contradictory to count Nisan as the first month for Tekufah and Tishrei for the Molad follows the opinion of the Yerushalmi, that there is not Berachah recited when the sun returns to its original spot. (There are those who took Rabeinu Chananel's position about Birkas ha'Chamah into account Halachically. According to the grandson of the Maharal, the Maharal did not recite Birkas ha'Chamah with Hashem's name (Rebbi Akiva Eiger OC 229). Similarly, the Sheyarei Keneses ha'Gedolah (ibid.) writes that they had a Minhag in his community not to recite the Birkas ha'Chamah at all.)

As far as the Molad or Tekufah is concerned, it does not make a difference what is considered to be the beginning of the year. That is, the world was created in Tishrei like Rabbi Eliezer. When the Beraisa says that the Chachmei Yisrael counted the Tekufah of the sun from Nisan, it means that we consider the Tekufah of Nisan to be the first of the four Tekufos of the year. We calculate the Tekufah starting from when Tekufas Nisan *would have been* in the Nisan before Creation (see Rambam Kidush ha'Chodesh 9:3). As for the Molados, these are calculated from the Tishrei (actually, from Tishrei of the year *before* the Tishrei of Creation, see TOSFOS 8a DH li'Tekufas). This approach also answers a question of Tosfos (8b). Tosfos asks how could Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer argue when the sun and moon were created. It is obvious that they were created in Nisan, because we can examine the astronomical factors and see that if they were created in Tishrei, the sun and moon would be in different places than they are now. How could Rabbi Yehoshua argue about that? The answer is that their argument has absolutely no bearing on the actual time of the Molad or Tekufah. Why, though, should we calculate the Tekufah from the Nisan before Creation, extrapolating back from Tishrei? Why do we not simply calculate the Tekufah and Molad from Tishrei, when the world was created? The RAN asks this question (3a of the pages of the Rif). He explains (as does the Mefarsh on the Rambam, Hilchos Kidush ha'Chodesh 9:3) that Nisan is a more preferable time from which to calculate the Tekufah, because it is brighter at that time of year, and all of the produce is beginning to grow.

ROSH HASHANAH 17 & 18 (8, 9 Av) - these Dafim have been dedicated by Rabbi Eli Turkel of Ra'anana, Israel, to the memory of his father, Reb Yisrael Shimon ben Shlomo ha'Levi Turkel (Yahrzeit: 10 Av).

Rosh Hashanah 16 THE FIRST OF TISHREI -- THE DAY OF JUDGMENT QUESTION: We learned earlier (Daf 10b) that the Tana'im, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua, argue whether the first of Tishrei was the day on which the world (referring to Adam ha'Rishon) was created or whether the world was created on the first of Nisan. If the world was created (and Adam ha'Rishon was granted atonement for his sin) on the first of Tishrei, as Rabbi Eliezer maintains, it is clear why every year the inhabitants of the world are called to task on that day (see Vayikra Rabah 29:1). However, if the world was created in Nisan, as Rabbi Yehoshua maintains, then why was the first of Tishrei designated as the time to be judged for the year's deeds? ANSWERS: (a) The RAN suggests that since Yom Kipur was chosen as the Day of Atonement (because Hashem exonerated the Jews of the sin of the Golden Calf that day), Hashem chose a date nine days earlier as the day to begin preparation for Yom Kipur through penitence and introspection. Perhaps, he adds, Hashem's

"change of attitude" that led to the exonerated of the Jews at Sinai actually began on the first of Tishrei. (b) RABEINU TAM (TOSFOS 27a, DH k'Man) explains that even according to Rabbi Yehoshua, Hashem "planned" to create the world at the beginning of Tishrei. Thus, the first of Tishrei commemorates even more of a beginning than the actual beginning of Creation -- it marks the "planned" beginning of Creation. (See also OR HA'CHAIM, Bereishis 1:1, #16.) (c) Since the autumnal equinox occurs at (or close to) the beginning of Tishrei, this point in time -- when days and nights are of equal length -- may easily be regarded as a starting point in the yearly astronomical cycle. However, the days are also of equal length at the vernal equinox, which is at the beginning of Nisan (the "first" month)! Why is that not as appropriate a starting place as its fall counterpart? Perhaps the reason is because Tishrei is the beginning of the rainy season in Eretz Yisrael (as our Gemara says here, and in Ta'anis 2b), marking the start of the agricultural year. Fields were sown during Tishrei in preparation for the first rains of the season (Berachos 36b; see Rashi here, DH Afla). Crops grew and blossomed through the winter, bore fruit in Nisan, and were left to dry until the beginning of Tishrei (Rashi to Devarim 25:11), at which point a new cycle would begin. This certainly makes it a more fitting occasion for the yearly judgment of man's destiny and sustenance than the first of Nisan. This may have been what Rav Sherira Gaon (cited in the Tosfos Yom Tov's introduction to Rosh Hashanah) had in mind when he wrote that Maseches Rosh Hashanah precedes Ta'anis since Rosh Hashanah immediately precedes the growing cycle, which is discussed in Ta'anis. (See also Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch in Horeb, para. 166 and footnote.) (d) The Torah tells us that Nisan should be the first of months of the year (Shemos 12:2). The RAMBAN explains that the purpose of making Nisan the first of months is in order to commemorate Yetzi'as Mitzrayim. If so, even though the beginning of Nisan is a more appropriate time for Rosh Hashanah according to Rabbi Yehoshua's opinion, since that was the day of the world's creation, nevertheless that would have detracted from Nisan's status as the "month of the Exodus." If Rosh Hashanah would be celebrated in Nisan, people would not realize that it is only because of "Yetzi'as Mitzrayim" that Nisan is always counted as the first of the months. Hashem, therefore, "moved" the date of Rosh Hashanah to the other equinoctial month, Tishrei. The peculiar situation of having the year begin in the "seventh" month would enhance, rather than diminish, the commemoration of the Exodus! (M. Kornfeld)

16b VISITING ONE'S REBBI ON THE FESTIVAL QUESTION: Rabbi Yitzchak teaches that there is an obligation to visit one's rebbi on the festival. This obligation is learned from the words of the Shunamite woman's husband, who asked his wife (Melachim II 4:23), "Why are you going to him (the prophet, Elisha) today? It is not Rosh Chodesh, nor is it Shabbos!" From here, says that the Gemara, we learn that one is required to visit his rebbi on Rosh Chodesh and Shabbos. Why does Rabbi Yitzchak say that one is obligated to visit one's rebbi on the "festival" ("Regel"), when the verse from which this obligation is derived mentions only Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh? ANSWERS: (a) The RITVA (here and in Sukah 27b) addresses this question. He says that there are three different requirements. (1) If one's rebbi is in the same town, then one is required to visit him every day. (2) If one's rebbi is outside of the town, but within the Techum Shabbos (2000 Amos), then one is required to visit him only on Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh. (3) If one's rebbi lives beyond the Techum Shabbos from one's town, then he is required to visit him only on the festival (such as during Chol ha'Mo'ed, when there is no Isur Techum, or he goes before Yom Tov). In Melachim, Elisha was outside of the town, but within the Techum Shabbos, and that is why the husband of the Shunamite woman mentioned only Rosh Chodesh and Shabbos. Rabbi Yitzchak, when he taught this Halachah, did not mention the requirement to visit one's rebbi every day when his rebbi lives in the same town, because everyone is heedful of that requirement (since not much effort is required in traveling); he mentioned only the Halachah with regard to Rosh Chodesh and Shabbos because when the rebbi lives outside of the town, people neglect the requirement to go visit him. (b) The MAHARSHA (Sukah 27b) says that if one is required to visit his rebbi on Rosh Chodesh, then certainly one is also required to visit his rebbi on Yom Tov, even though the verse does not specifically mention Yom Tov. (The Maharsha does not address why Yom Tov is left out of the verse.) (c) The TUREI EVEN and the VILNA GAON (Seder Olam Raba ch. 3, see Rav Reuven Margulies in "Olelos," #13) points out that it is strange that the verse mentions Rosh Chodesh before Shabbos. It should have mentioned Shabbos first, since Shabbos comes more frequently than Rosh Chodesh. It must be, they contend, that the word "Shabbos" in the verse refers to Yom Tov (as we find elsewhere, such as in Vayikra 23:16). (d) Although ideally one should visit his rebbi every day (in order to learn Torah), doing so is not always possible because a person is occupied with his work. Therefore, only when one is not working is he required to visit his rebbi. We see this from the verse in Melachim, since the Shunamite woman's husband implied that on days that women do not do Melachah (Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh, as is the custom for women to refrain from Melachah on Rosh Chodesh), she would visit the rebbi. This implies that on days when men do not do Melachah (Shabbos and Yom Tov), they should visit the rebbi. Women, on the other hand, are not free during a Yom Tov since they take care of the cooking and other responsibilities even on Yom Tov. They are only available to visit the rebbi on Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh (ETZ YOSEF, citing the IYEI HA'YAM). (e) The CHANUKAS HATORAH (Rosh Hashanah 16b) explains that since it is inappropriate for a woman to visit the rebbi when his Talmidim are there (see Kidushin 81a), the only time she would be obligated to visit the rebbi is when the Talmidim are not there. Thus, the Shunamite woman's husband asked her why she was going to the prophet when it was not Rosh Chodesh or Shabbos -- days on which the Talmidim are not at their rebbi's, but are at home. The verse implies that she would have no obligation to visit the rebbi on the festival. Why not? It must be because the Talmidim visit the rebbi on the festival. It must be that there is an obligation to visit the rebbi on the festival! (f) RAV YONASAN EIBESHITZ (Ya'aros Devash 1:12 and elsewhere) explains that when the Beis ha'Mikdash was standing (such as in the time of Elisha and the Shunamite woman), everyone would go greet the presence of the Shechinah in Yerushalayim. They would visit the rebbi only on Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh, when there was no requirement to go to Yerushalayim. After the Churban, though, the practice was instituted to visit the rebbi in place of going to Yerushalayim, because a Talmid Chacham reflects the presence of the Shechinah. (See also ARUCH LA'NER, and MALBIM to Melachim II 4:23, who explain similarly.) (g) The NODA B'YEHUDAH (OC II:94) says the opposite. When the verse mentions Rosh Chodesh and Shabbos, it also means to include Yom Tov; it is referring to all days that have additional Kedushah (as is indicated by the additional Korban that is brought, the Korban Musaf), and on those days the rebbi's

ability to affect his Talmidim is heightened, and thus there is a practice to visit the rebbi on those days. However, there is no obligation to go on "all" of those days, because then one would be visiting his rebbi more often than he would be visiting the Shechinah (on the three Regalim), and it is not proper for the honor of the Shechinah to be less than the honor of one's rebbi (Kidushin 33b). The obligation to visit one's rebbi can apply only as much as one is obligated to visit the Shechinah, but not more. Therefore, the Gemara says that one is obligated to visit his rebbi on each of the three Regalim. Based on this, the Noda b'Yehudah explains that today, when the Beis ha'Mikdash has not yet been rebuilt, there is no obligation to visit one's rebbi (unless, of course, one is going with the purpose to learn Torah from him) on the Regel, since there is no obligation to visit the Shechinah at the Beis ha'Mikdash, and the honor of one's rebbi should not be greater than the honor of the Shechinah. Therefore, the TUR and the SHULCHAN ARUCH omit this Halachah, since they record only the Halachos that were relevant in practice in their days, when the Beis ha'Mikdash was not standing. The RAMBAM, though, includes this Halachah (Hilchos Talmud Torah 5:7), because he writes all of the Halachos which are relevant when the Beis ha'Mikdash is standing. (See also MAHARATZ CHIYUS here; CHIDUSHEI GE'ONIM in the Ein Yakov; EINEI SHMUEL for other approaches; see also DIVREI SHALOM 2:25.)

SIGNING AND SEALING QUESTIONS: Rabbi Yehudah, quoted in the Beraisa (16a), tells us that Hashem inscribes the judgment passed on every person on Rosh Hashanah, and He seals their fate on Yom Kipur. Rav Kruspeda'i (16b) tells us that three ledgers are opened on Rosh Hashanah: Tzadikim are inscribed and sealed for life immediately on Rosh Hashanah, Resha'im are inscribed and sealed for death immediately on Rosh Hashanah, and Beinonim (who have just as many Mitzvos as they have sins) are inscribed for their fate on Yom Kipur, according to the fate they merited. (a) Why do we continue to pray to be "written" for long life after Rosh Hashanah, in the prayers that we add to the Shemoneh Esreh during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah? Whatever was written has already been written! We should be praying to be "sealed" for a long life, since sealing is all that remains for Yom Kipur. (b) Rabbi Yehudah (16a) says that everyone's fate is "inscribed" on Rosh Hashanah and "sealed" on Yom Kipur. Later (16b), Rav Kruspeda'i tells us that Tzadikim and Resha'im are both inscribed and sealed on Rosh Hashanah, while Beinonim are inscribed on Yom Kipur! Neither the dates of inscription nor the dates of sealing conform to each other! Granted, Rabbi Yehudah of the Beraisa may not be discussing "all" Jews, but rather a specific group. However, Rav Kruspeda'i does not list "anyone" who is inscribed on Rosh Hashanah and sealed on Yom Kipur! The wicked and righteous are inscribed and sealed on Rosh Hashanah, and the others are not even inscribed until later! (c) Rav Kruspeda'i states that the righteous and wicked are inscribed and sealed for their fates on Rosh Hashanah. When it comes to the intermediate people, the Beinonim, he says that there is a delay until Yom Kipur, when their fate is "inscribed". There is no mention of a "sealing" for the intermediate class. What is the reason for this omission? When does their sealing take place? (This question is posed by the RAMA MPANO in Ma'amar Chikur Din, part 3, ch. 20.) ANSWERS:

(a) The answer to the first question may be learned from a statement made in the Zohar (Vayechi 220a). The Zohar asks why is it that there is a ten-day interval between the writing of man's judgment and its sealing? Why is it not signed immediately? The Zohar answers that when a judgment is only "written", it can still be "torn up" and rewritten. (Indeed, we ask Hashem numerous times in the liturgy to "tear up" any evil decrees against us.) However, after a Divine decree is sealed, it is very difficult to have it rescinded. This is why there are ten days intervening between the "writing" and the "sealing." The days enable people to make one last effort to repent and beseech Hashem to "rip up" any unfavorable decree that may have been passed against them, and to replace it with a more favorable decision. (See also Bi'ur ha'Gra, end of OC #582.) (b) The Zohar cited above (answer (a)) provides a partial answer to this question as well. The fate of the Beinonim is written first on Rosh Hashanah and again on Yom Kipur (if it is "torn up" in between), at which point their fate is sealed. If so, it is to the Beinonim that Rabbi Yehudah refers when he says that "they are written on Rosh Hashanah and sealed on Yom Kipur." The RAMA MIPANU in "Asarah Ma'amaros" (cited by MAGEN AVRAHAM, end of OC 582) explains that the fate of "all" people, and not just Beinonim, is sealed on Yom Kipur. When the Gemara says that Hashem seals the fate of the Tzadikim and Resha'im "l'Alter," it does not mean that their fate is sealed on the day it is written. Rather, it means that it is sealed "l'Atar," in their place (i.e., in the same book in which they were written on Rosh Hashanah), but the actual seal is applied only on Yom Kipur. The VILNA GA'ON (Bi'ur ha'Gra, end of OC #582; Likutei ha'Gra with Be'er Yitzchak, p. 350) also suggests that all of mankind is sealed on Yom Kipur. He points out that a novel approach to this question may lie in a comment made by TOSFOS here (DH V'NECHTAMIM). A practical question may be asked on the Gemara's assertion that the righteous are always sealed for life on Rosh Hashanah and the wicked for death. We see many cases which seem to contradict this assertion. There are numerous righteous people who suffer greatly year after year, or who die, and there are many wicked people who are granted life and prosperity year after year! Tosfos explains that when the Gemara here speaks of three ledgers and a yearly judgment, it cannot be referring to a person's fortunes or well-being in this world. Rather, each man is being judged for his status in the World to Come, where the righteous and wicked alike will be given what they earned during their worldly lifetimes. Every year on Rosh Hashanah the righteous are inscribed for "life" -- meaning "eternal" life in the World to Come, and the wicked are inscribed for "death" -- in the World to Come. TOSFOS HA'ROSH explains why it is necessary to judge a person's status in the World to Come while he is still in this world. The Torah (Devarim 7:10) tells us that Hashem "repays evildoers to their faces, to destroy them." RASHI there explains that this means that if a wicked person happens to be deserving of reward because of some good deed that he may have done, Hashem makes sure to repay him in this world. This is done in order to "destroy them," so that they will not have any merits left over that must be rewarded in the World to Come. Accordingly, a person's ultimate status in the World to Come is indeed relevant to his physical fate in this world. If a person is designated as righteous as far as the World to Come is concerned, then he is punished in this world for his sins, as explained above. If he is designated as wicked, then he is rewarded for his good deeds in this world. When a person's future in this world is decided, it is thus important for Hashem to evaluate whether he is destined to end up in Gan Eden or Gehinom. This evaluation, says Tosfos, also takes place on Rosh Hashanah, when man's fortunes for life during the coming year are being planned. Does Tosfos mean that the fates of our physical lives are

not decided at all on Rosh Hashanah? This contradicts a very common theme in the Tefilos of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kipur, in which we say, "Concerning the fates of the countries of the world, it is decided on this day which will have war and which will have peace..." (Zichronos prayer of Rosh Hashanah Musaf); "Who will live and who will die... who [will perish] by water and who by fire..." (u'Nesaneh Tokef). The VILNA GA'ON explains that it is not Tosfos' intention to reject the idea of a yearly judgment for man's physical fate during the coming year. Rather, he means to say that there are *two* separate judgments that take place on Rosh Hashanah. One is to decide people's physical fate in this world for the new year, and the other, to decide his spiritual fate in the World to Come. We may now answer our question. The Gemara's two statements are referring to two different judgments, the Vilna Ga'on asserts. Man's fate for the *World to Come* is decided in one step -- for the completely wicked and completely righteous on Rosh Hashanah, and for the intermediate people on Yom Kipur. When it comes to man's *physical* fate in this world, though, *everyone's* fate is inscribed on the same day -- Rosh Hashanah. Hashem then has mercy and gives *all* of mankind until Yom Kipur to "appeal," through penitence, whatever evil decrees may have been decided against them on Rosh Hashanah.

(c) The PNEI YEHOShUA suggests a brilliant answer for why no date of "sealing" is mentioned for the Beinonim. The Gemara later (17b) explains the verse in Tehilim (62:13), "You show kindness, Hashem, for you repay each man according to his actions." How can it be called "showing kindness" if Hashem gives every person exactly what he deserves? The Gemara answers that Hashem initially pays each person according to what he deserves. Ultimately, though, Hashem sees that the world would not be able to exist under these circumstances, and He judges the person with kindness and mercy. This statement of the Gemara's is puzzling. What is meant by "initially" and "ultimately?" When do these two stages of man's judgment take place? The Pnei Yehoshua suggests that the reference is to the days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kipur. On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem judges man according to what he deserves on an absolute scale of strict justice. In His mercy, however, he delays acting on that judgment until Yom Kipur, to afford people the opportunity to repent and thus have the original decision revised. The Gemara tells us that "the seal of Hashem is Truth" (Shabbos 55a). "Truth" refers to strict justice. Accordingly, the Pnei Yehoshua explains that it is appropriate to say that Hashem "seals" the judgment of the wholly righteous and wicked, for these are decreed through the strict letter of the law. The "seal of Hashem" (i.e. Truth) can thus be said to have been applied to them. However, the Beinonim were given a grace period of ten days during which to build up merits to influence the outcome of their judgment. Since the attribute of mercy is involved with them, the Gemara does not use the term "seal" for them, for the "seal" of Truth has the connotation of absolute, strict judgment, and the Beinonim are judged with mercy and forbearance until Yom Kipur. (According to this explanation, it is not clear why Rebbe Yehudah, in the Beraisa on 16a, *did* assert that the fate of man is "sealed" on Yom Kipur, even though it follows a ten-day grace period.)

Rosh Hashanah Chart #4 Daf 17b

THE THIRTEEN ATTRIBUTES OF HASHEM'S MERCY(1)

PHRASE IN THE PASUK	(A) RABEINU TAM	(B) R. NISIM GAON	(C) ARIZAL	(D) SEFER CHASIDIM	(E) ABARBANEL
1) Hashem(2)	1	-	-	-	1
2) Hashem	2	1	-	-	2
3) Kel	3	2	1	-	3
4) Rachum	4	3	2	1	4
5) v'Chanun	5	4	3	2	5
6) Erech Apayim	6	5	4, 5	3	6
7) v'Rav Chesed	7	6	6	4	7
8) v'Emes	8	7	7	5	8
9) Notzer Chesed	9	8,	8,	6	9
la'Alafim(3)		9(5)	9(5)		
10) Nosei Avon	10	10	10	7	--
11) va'Fesha	11	11	11	8	10(6)
12) v'Chata'ah	12	12	12	9	--
13) v'Nakeh	13	13	13	10	11
14) Lo Yenakeh	-	-	-	-	12
15) Poked Avon Avos	-	-	-	-	13
16) v'Salachta la'Avoneinu(4)	-	-	-	11	-
17) ul'Chatoseinu	-	-	-	12	18)
u'Nechaltanu	-	-	-	13	-

FOOTNOTES: (1) There are many opinions concerning which words in the verse refer to which Midos of Rachamim and exactly what those Midos are. Here we will list the main opinions that enumerate the Thirteen Attributes. For an in-depth discussion of the Midos, see Tomer Devorah (Rav Moshe Kordova), and Sifsei Chayim (Rav Chaim Friedlander). The lists in this chart were researched by RAV YAKOV TAVIN. RABEINU TAM and RABEINU NISIM GAON are cited by TOSFOS, the ARIZAL and SEFER CHASIDIM (#250) are cited by the KORBAN NESANEL on the Rosh (1:6:3). (2) Shemos 34:6. (3) Shemos 34:7. (4) Shemos 34:9. (5) Rabeinu Nisim Gaon and the Arizal maintain that Notzer Chesed is one Midah, and la'Alafim is a separate Midah expressing Hashem's magnanimity in multiplying His kindness two thousand times more than His attribute of strict justice. (6) The Abarbanel counts these three phrases as expressing one Midah -- Hashem's forbearance of all of our sins.

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il] Rosh Hashana 16 - 22 Parshas Va'etchanan

Happy Birthday World "Today is the birthday of the world" say Jews in their synagogues on Rosh Hashana after hearing the shofar. What exactly do we mean by "birthday of the world?" There are four different times of heavenly judgment during the year, says the mishna. On Pesach judgment is passed on the fate of grain, on Shavuot wheat and fruit, on Succot rainfall and on Rosh Hashana mankind. The timing for the first three judgments is readily understandable. Pesach Shavuot and Succot are all critical times agriculturally, and Heavenly judgment therefore relates to

that crop, or nutrients associated with that part of the year. But what does the first day of Tishrei, Rosh Hashana, have to do with judgment of man more than any other date? Rabbeinu Nissim (Ran) cites a midrash which supplies the answer. The world was created, says Rabbi Eliezer (Rosh Hashana 10b), in Tishrei. The first day of creation, says the midrash, was really on the 25th day of Elul, so that the first of Tishrei -- the sixth day of creation -- was when man was created. Since the purpose of creation was man, we equate his birthday with the birthday of the world. The midrash goes on to describe the hour by hour creation of man and his first day of life. The first seven hours of that day were spent on planning and implementing man's creation. In the eighth hour he was brought into the Garden of Eden and in the ninth he was commanded to refrain from eating from the Tree of Knowledge. In the tenth hour he sinned and in the eleventh he stood in judgment. In the twelfth hour he was reprieved. Hashem then said to him: "This will be a sign to your descendants. Just as you stood in judgment before Me on this day and gained a reprieve, so will your descendants stand before Me on this day and be reprieved." Since all this took place on the first day of Tishrei, this day is the day when all of mankind stands in judgment, praying for a repetition of the original reprieve. There is even a sign in the stars, adds Ran, to confirm that Tishrei is the month of judgment. The mazal for this month -- the Zodiac sign -- is moznayim (Libra), a constellation of stars which seem to form a scale. The scale symbolizes justice and communicates that in this month man's merits and shortcomings are weighed on the Heavenly scales. *Rosh Hashana 16a

Days of Fasting or Days of Joy? "Thus spoke Hashem," says the Prophet Zecharia (Zecharia 8:19) "the fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth will be for the House of Yehuda holidays of joy and celebration." "How can the same days be both days of mournful fasting and of joyful celebration?" asks the gemara. The answer given is that when Jews enjoy peace -- when they have the Beit Hamikdash -- these days that were fast days after the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash will be days of celebration in which it is forbidden to fast or eulogize. But when they lack that peace -- when the second Beit Hamikdash will no longer stand -- they will revert to the status of fast days. This is the biblical and Talmudic background for the four days in the year when Jews fast in mourning for the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. The fast of the fourth month is the 17th of Tammuz when the walls of Jerusalem were breached by the Romans; the fast of the fifth is the 9th of Av when both the first and second Beit Hamikdash were destroyed; the fast of the seventh is the 3rd of Tishrei when the leader of the Jewish remnant in Eretz Yisrael, Gedalia ben Achikam, was assassinated; and the fast of the tenth month is the 10th of Tevet when the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem began. Maharsha wonders at the gemara's problem with the same date being described both as an occasion for mournful fasting and joyous celebration. Don't they refer to two different stages of history -- the exile period of Zecharia when they still fasted for the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash and the joy-inspiring future of a rebuilt Beit Hamikdash? The explanation is that our Sages were troubled by the implication in the prophet's words that once these days would become days of celebration with the building of the second Beit Hamikdash they would remain so forever. We know that this is not so, because the destruction of that Beit Hamikdash returned these days to the status of fast days. The gemara therefore must resolve this by explaining that mourning or joy was at the outset made conditional on whether there is peace. But why is the term peace used to describe the existence of the Beit Hamikdash and the lack of peace its destruction? Here the Maharsha calls our attention to the closing words of the above mentioned passage "and you shall love truth and peace." The second Beit Hamikdash was destroyed, say our Sages (Mesechta Yoma 9b) because of the sin of unwarranted hatred of one Jew toward another. If there will be peace amongst Jews, says the prophet, there will be a Beit Hamikdash and you will celebrate these days. But if there shall be no such peace, the Beit Hamikdash will be destroyed and they will be days of mournful fasting. *Rosh Hashana 18b

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