

BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAESCHANAN Shabbos Nachamu - 5762

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] To: ryfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vaes'chanan "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vaes'chanan This Dvar Torah is reprinted with permission from Mesorah Publications / ArtScroll, from "Rabbi Frand on the Parsha". Order "Rabbi Frand on the Parsha" direct from the publisher at a 10 percent discount, and ArtScroll will donate a portion of your purchase to Torah.org. Please follow the link: <http://www.artscroll.com/linker/torahorg/link/Books/frph.html> or call 1-800- MESORAH (1-800-673-6724) during regular business hours and mention Torah.org

The Easy Commandment Honor your father and mother, as the L-rd your G-d has commanded you, so that you may live long. (Devarim 5:16)

Why should we honor our fathers and mothers? The Torah gives us one reason in Parashas Shemos (20:12), "So that you may live long." In Parashas Vaes'chanan, however, the Torah gives an additional reason, "As the L-rd your G-d has commanded you." What is the significance of this additional phrase?

The Meshech Chachmah refers to the Talmud Yerushalmi that considers honoring parents an "easy commandment." Every person understands that debts have to be repaid. If someone lends you \$100,000 when you need it, you would be only too happy to repay the money once you have enough of your own. It would not be a hard thing to do.

By the same token, every person also understands that he has a moral obligation to repay his debt of gratitude to his parents. After all, the cost of raising a child must be at least between \$100,000 and \$200,000. Not to mention the time, effort and energy parents invest in their children. Therefore, the least people can do is honor their parents. It is not a hard thing to make such a small payment on such a large debt. The Torah tells us here that this is not the proper motivation for honoring parents. It is not the self-evident obligation to make at least a small payment on a debt owed the parents. It is an obligation incumbent on us solely because "the L-rd your G-d has commanded you" to do so.

The Torah waited until Parashas Vaes'chanan to make this point, because it becomes most clear after forty years in the desert. During those years, raising children was easier than it ever was, before or since. They did not have to be fed. There was manna from heaven. They did not need to be given to drink. There was water from Miriam's Well. They did not need new shoes and clothing all the time. Nothing ever wore out. Most likely they didn't need orthodontic braces either, because life in the desert was paradise. And still, the Torah demanded that parents be honored. Clearly, the obligation was to obey Hashem's commandment rather than repay a debt of gratitude. By the time the Jewish people had lived through the era of the desert, they could relate to the mitzvah of honoring parents as an independent obligation. How far does this go? How much do you have to do for your parents? The Talmud responds (Kiddushin 31a) to this question with the famous story about a non-Jew from Ashkelon by the name of Dama bar Nesinah.

The Sages once needed a stone for the Urim v'Tumim, and they heard that Dama had exactly the stone they needed. A delegation came to see him and offer to pay him a princely sum for the stone. The stone was in a strongbox, with the key under his father's pillow. Dama did not disturb him.

"I cannot help you," he told the Sages. "My father is sleeping, and I wouldn't disturb his sleep."

The Sages left.

A year later, a perfect red heifer, suitable for a parah adumah, was born in Dama's herd. The Sages came to purchase it.

"How much do you want for it?"

"I know that you would give me any price I ask," he replied. "But I only want the amount of money I lost by not waking my father last year." This story establishes the parameters of the mitzvah of honoring parents. The Talmud uses this story to establish the parameters of human nature.

As parents get older, they can become querulous and demanding. They can test the patience of their children. Sometimes, honoring parents under such circumstances can take a lot of patience and forbearance. Is there a limit to such patience? How much patience can be expected of a person? Is there a point where a person is allowed to run out of patience and be exempt from this mitzvah?

This is what the story about Dama bar Nesinah teaches us. The Sages were offering him a huge sum of money for the single stone they needed for the Urim v'Tumim. He knew that if he could only get the key, the money would be his. What thoughts must have gone through his mind? Maybe I'll make a little noise and he'll wake up. Maybe I'll slide my hand under the pillow very slowly so that I'll be able to get the key without waking him up. He must have been very tempted. But he didn't give in. He was able to honor his father even under such circumstances. This was the extent of what human nature is capable. It follows, therefore, that if Dama bar Nesinah could have the forbearance to forgo such a huge sum of money and allow his father to sleep, certainly a descendant of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov can find it in himself to honor his parents under any and all circumstances.

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From: Mordechai.Kamenetzky@torah.org To: drasha@torah.org Subject: RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY'S DRASHA -- Parshas Voeschanan -- Don't Forget -- In Parshas Voeschanan we find the very famous portions of the Torah that are imbedded in the soul of the nation: The Ten Commandments and the Shema Yisrael. Although every word of the Omnipotent carries equal force, these commanding portions are better known, if not better observed, by the nation.

But powerful as they are, they were not given in a vacuum. Moshe forewarns the nation not to forget the message of Sinai and to impart its message and its relevance to future generations. "Only beware for yourself and greatly beware for your soul, lest you forget the things that your eyes have beheld and lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children and your children's children" (Deuteronomy 4:9). In order to comprehend the posuk, it must be separated into two distinct parts. "Beware not to forget the things that your eyes have beheld from your heart all your days." In addition, the Torah adds, "you shall teach the Torah to your children and children's children."

Nevertheless, the grammar is surely questionable, "lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children." In its simplest form, the verse seems at best contradictory. Look at the words. Beware that you do not remove the teachings from your heart and make them known to your children. How is that possible? If one removes the teaching from his own heart, how

can he pass it to his children? The Torah should have overtly inserted some phrase or word clarifying the transition.

The perplexing composition in its simplest form surely leaves for a creative interpretation, perhaps the omission of the transitional word lends itself to a drash that deviates from the obvious meaning.

Thousands of people receive this weekly D'var Torah. In return, I receive many stories for possible use as anecdotal parables. Here is one from the archives.

Junior came home from day camp one day without towel.

"Where is your towel?" asked his mom.

"I don't know," he sighed. "I could not find it after swimming. Maybe someone took it."

The mother was irate. "Who could have taken your towel? It was a great towel! Junior you would never take someone else's towel. You know I raised you differently than that. Right?"

A few moments later, she was on the phone with the day camp director.

"Hello. There is a young thief in your camp!"

"How so?"

"My son had a towel stolen from camp! He brought it in today and it was nowhere"

"Calm down," came the voice on the line. "I am sure that no one stole it. Please describe the towel to me."

"Sure I can! It was white and big. You could not miss it. It had the words Holiday Inn emblazoned on it!"

The Leket Amarim interprets the verse in its purest and most simplistic form, revealing a deeper meaning that belies the simplicity of the verse.

"Only beware for yourself and greatly beware for your soul, lest you forget the things that your eyes have beheld and lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children and your children's children."

Often when it comes to our actions, we forget the principles that we were taught as youngsters, but we remember them when chiding our children and pontificating.

We may give our children a speech about honesty and integrity, and only minutes later command them to tell a caller on the telephone that, "my father is not home."

We may give speeches about integrity and corporate greed only to have pushed our own portfolios in a certain direction through creative manipulation.

And so, the Torah warns us not to forget its principles for ourselves yet to teach them to our children. Consistency is the message of the moment. For yourself. For your children. For eternity. Good Shabbos

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From: ohr@ohr.edu Sent: Monday, July 15, 2002 7:50 AM To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Va'etchanan

* TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion

Parshat Va'etchanan

Too Jewish?

"Surely a wise and discerning people are this great nation!" (4:6)

A true story.

A well-

known Orthodox Rabbi was invited to a dinner at Buckingham Palace. The Rabbi replied that we would be honored to accept the invitation but he feared that his kosher dietary requirements would make it impossible for him to attend. The palace replied that far from being too much trouble they would be happy to supply whatever food he needed and together with appropriate supervision.

The Rabbi happily accepted the invitation and a mashgiach (kosher food supervisor) was appointed to take care of his needs. In order to be unobtrusive, food was selected that appeared to be the same as that for the other guests.

Before the other guests arrived, the mashgiach showed the Rabbi where he would sit. The mashgiach lifted a plate. Superficially it seemed identical to the other hundreds of plates in the dining hall.

However on its underside was affixed a discrete sticker. The mashgiach had bought an entire new set of plates and cutlery.

Everything had been toveled (purified in a ritual bath) and labeled.

The Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Charles and others of the royal family entered the room. Everyone rose. The meal began in an atmosphere of stately grandeur. The Rabbi was not the only Jew at this dinner but he was certainly the most conspicuous in his large black kippa.

Immersed in conversation as the first course came to its end, the Rabbi suddenly noticed the lights dimming. "What's happening?" he asked the famous pop-star sitting to his right. "Oh, I can see you haven't been to one of these before. What happens now is that everyone changes tables. That way everyone gets a chance to meet everyone." The pop-star may have noticed the cloud that momentarily passed across the Rabbi's sunny countenance, but certainly he had no idea of its cause.

The Rabbi was now faced with a problem. He realized that he would have to carry his entire place-setting to his next location. To the bemused smiles of his fellow guests he proceeded to gather up his plates and silverware and carry them ceremoniously to their next location.

Palace dinners are not short affairs. While carrying his decreasing number of plates between the fifth and sixth courses, one of the other Jewish guests hissed at him under his breath. "Will you please stop that! I've never been so embarrassed in my life." "I'm sorry" said the Rabbi "but I keep kosher." "Well, make an exception!" said the other. The Rabbi stuck to his guns. For all twelve courses.

At the end of the meal, the guests all lined up to take leave of their royal hosts. As the Rabbi was shaking Prince Charles' hand, the prince said "Excuse me, but I couldn't help noticing that you were carrying your dishes around the room." "Yes," said the Rabbi "I did it because of the Jewish dietary laws." "Yes," said the Prince "I know about kosher food, but I didn't know it extended to the plates as well. How interesting! Please tell me more..."

By this point, the master of ceremonies had come over to see what was holding up the line. In order to continue their discussion, the Prince beckoned the Rabbi to step out of the line and join him.

So there they were. The Rabbi and the Prince. Shaking the hands of the guests and discussing the laws of kashrut. Finally it came the turn of the Jewish guest who had objected to the Rabbi's behavior to shake the hand of the Prince. As he was doing this, he mentioned confidentially to the Prince "I'm Jewish too."

"Really?" said the Prince, "I didn't notice you carrying your dishes..."

When we keep the Torah properly with all its details, non-Jews know instinctively we're doing what we're supposed to - and they respect us for it. When we try and water down our Judaism to conform to our own preconceived secular standards, there will always be a voice asking us where our dishes are.

Source: Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair (C) 2002 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved. At Ohr Somayach/Tanenbaum College in Jerusalem, students explore their heritage under the guidance of today's top Jewish educators. For information, please write to info@ohr.edu

From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network [shemalists@shemayisrael.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2002 5:18 PM To: Peninim Parsha Subject: PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM PARSHAS VAESCHANAN

So that you will fear Hashem, your G-d. (6:2) Do we really fear Hashem, or do we get anxious only when something happens which

reminds us that Hashem might be disturbed by our actions? Indeed, do we really understand the meaning of yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven? Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, gives us a penetrating analogy which goes to the heart of our deficit regarding yiraas Shomayim. A Jew gets into a car in which three men are riding they beckon him to join them. Suddenly, one of them pulls out a pistol, while the second brandishes a knife with a long, sharp blade. The third traveler tells him he is taking the last ride of his life. They tie up his hands and feet, as they continue to threaten him. The Jew is far beyond the point of fright. He realizes that these men are gangsters who mean business. They are serious about killing him. The car pulls off the main highway and turns onto a deserted road. After traveling a few miles, the car comes to a stop and the frightened Jew is dragged out. With murder in their eyes, the three gangsters approach the hapless Jew. Instead of killing him, however, they suddenly change their facial expressions. No longer are they stern and mean looking. Now they are smiling. "Our intention was to scare you, to put the fear of G-d into you, so that you will have some idea what awaits you at the Heavenly Tribunal, or even on Rosh Hashanah. We pass before Hashem as sheep to the slaughter. Some will make it, while others will die. Do you ever think about it? Well, now you will have some idea about the meaning of fear." What would you, dear reader, say would be his instinctive reaction at this moment? Chances are, he will breathe a sigh of relief, color will return to his face, and the terrible fear that moments ago overcame him would now subside. Indeed, in a few days, life would resume as before, with business as usual. What about the fear that these would-be robbers sought to implant in his mind? How can he revert to living in the same manner with his attitude to life as before? His response might be: "Good question - Hashem is merciful and compassionate. I will work things out with Him. He is not like those blood-thirsty gangsters who just want to rob and kill. Hashem cares." What a compelling analogy! This demonstrates how far we really are from true yiraas Shomayim. His reaction should have been a complete about-face. He should tremble when he davens, the fear of Hashem encompassing his total being. After all, did he not just have a taste of what may lie in store for him? Regrettably, this is human nature. We become shaken by events that frighten us generally and personally. The effect does not last very long. We find ways to rationalize the vicissitudes of life that confront us from time to time. Instead of taking heed and deriving a lesson from the experience, we find ways to ignore it and justify our actions. Forcing an individual to confront his fear of G-d can be a frightening experience; ignoring it can be devastating!

So that you will fear Hashem, your G-d. (6:2) Yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, takes on many forms, depending primarily upon the individual's background and his depth of understanding of its critical significance in regard to religious observance. In other words, one who is not a yarei Shomayim cannot be truly observant. Under normal circumstances, we would submit that the erudite scholar -- whose perspective regarding yiraah, fear, is profound -- exemplifies this virtue. Yet, at times, specifically the common, simple Jew -- whose commitment to Hashem is unequivocal and whose emunah, faith and trust in Hashem, is not open to compromise -- stands out as the benchmark of a yarei Shomayim. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites a poignant story which demonstrates the lengths to which a simple Jewish couple went in order to preserve their religious commitment. Their awe of Heaven and total commitment to Hashem's word guided them throughout life, building their strength to triumph over the challenges to their spiritual dimension. This couple lived in a small town on the East Coast, far-removed from the spiritual centers of the large metropolis. Indeed, few Jews lived in their town. Certainly, they were among not more than a handful of observant Jews. Unfortunately, they had not been blessed with children to carry on their legacy. They only had one another. They aged peacefully, and one day the husband was stricken with a massive coronary and died. Having nowhere to turn for a Jewish burial, the widow got in touch with the Chevra Kaddisha, Jewish Sacred Society of Williamsburg, New York and asked them to attend to her husband's remains. She wanted a

simple, Jewish burial, steeped in the Torah tradition. They came the next day: one solitary station wagon with a makeshift place in the back for the deceased and two seats in the front, for the driver and the widow. This was to be the funeral cortege. This is how they lived: simple and austere; this is how he died: without fanfare. Just before her husband's body was lowered into the ground, the widow went over and whispered the following to her husband: "Hershel, Hershel! You are now ascending to the Heavenly Throne. You probably think they will demand of you to tell why you did not have any children to transmit your legacy. I am telling you that you really have nothing to worry about. After all, you know that during the forty years that we were in Russia, there was no way for us to get to a kosher mikveh. By the time we moved to America, I was already past my child-bearing years. Therefore, do not worry; Heaven will not be upset with you." Imagine, these simple Jews who lived together in Russia for over forty years, then moved to a small town in America where there was no Jewish community; yet, they observed every mitzvah, regardless of its difficulty. They gave up having children because they could not observe taharas ha'mishpochah, the laws of family purity. This can only occur when people maintain emunah peshutah, simple -- but unequivocal -- faith in Hashem. They understood that the true quality of life in this world can only be experienced when one fulfills the will of Hashem. When you think about it, these people were far from simple: they were giants!

You shall teach them thoroughly to your children. (6:7) Two words - V'sheenantam l'vanecha, and "you should teach them thoroughly to your sons," describe and define parents' obligation to provide a Torah education for their sons. It seems like a simple mitzvah, but, in truth, it is awesome, at times overwhelming, and never-ending. Sending one's son to school is not sufficient. A parent must not view Torah education as a spectator responsibility, but, rather, as a proactive obligation in which he must involve himself in every aspect of his child's educational development. As the Baalei Mussar, ethicists, say, a parent must be mashkia, immerse himself, into his child's education. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates a number of powerful narratives to support the overriding significance of a parent's involvement in his child's Torah education. The Chidushei HaRim zl, the first Gerer Rebbe, sadly buried all of his children, b'chayav, during his lifetime. He was strong and resolute, maintaining his state of mind, despite these mind-boggling tragedies. When his thirteenth son, who was an incredible genius, passed away, the Rebbe was inconsolable. He wept and grieved without stop. Regardless of what people would tell him, his bereavement was unrelenting. One of his close chassidim went over to the Rebbe and said, "Rebbe, when the velt, world/the average person, will see your unmitigated outpouring of grief, your ceaseless weeping, it might cause a terrible reaction. They will never be willing to be consoled. They will say, 'We are no different than the Gerer Rebbe.'" The Rebbe responded, "You are probably thinking that I am weeping over the loss of my precious son. You should know that while my heart is broken and grief-stricken, this is not the reason that I am weeping uncontrollably. I cry because with the passing of my youngest son, I have forever lost the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of V'sheenantam l'vanecha. Especially with such a brilliant son, to whom I could have transmitted kol ha'Torah kulah, the entire Torah." It is well-known that the Rebbe was consoled by the remnant that was left over - his brilliant grandson, Yehudah Leib, who became the legendary Sefas Emes, who carried on and transmitted the legacy of Gur. Yet, this does not detract from the harrowing pain sustained by the Rebbe. We derive from this narrative two compelling lessons: The enormous significance of a parent's responsibility to teach and see to the Torah education of his children. We also have but an inkling of the Gerer Rebbe's spiritual plateau. Thirteen sons! Can one even begin to imagine the tragic loss and the ensuing emotional devastation? There is no doubt that the Rebbe felt the same loss that any ordinary person would feel had he been confronted with this crushing tragedy. He also, however, felt the loss of the v'sheenantam, something that the average person would not feel nor understand. He understood the responsibility and obligation that a parent has toward his child. He appreciated the

privilege of fulfilling this mitzvah, and, consequently, he bemoaned the loss of this privilege. In his preface to his sefer, the Shvus Yaakov relates that as a young boy he was stricken with a dread disease and was near death. His father, overcome with emotion, went to the shul and opened up the Aron Kodesh. With heartrending tears, he entreated Hashem for his young son's life. He bent his head into the Aron Kodesh and cried out, "Hashem! If a decree has been issued against my son, please transfer it to me, and permit him to live. He has an insatiable desire to study Torah. Please let him learn." Shortly thereafter, the Shvus Yaakov showed signs of improvement. As his strength began to return, his father suddenly became ill. It seemed as if one was connected with the other. The stronger the child became, the weaker the father became, until, as the child became fully cured, the father's life ebbed completely away. The father was a true moser nefesh, sacrificed himself, so that his son would be able to grow in Torah scholarship. If the above rings true for a healthy child, how much more so should one's commitment to Torah chinuch apply if the child has special needs. The Chafetz Chaim notes that Chushim ben Dan was deaf. Yet, Dan had more nachas from one son than Benyamin had from his ten sons. The Chafetz Chaim suggests that this was due to Dan's total commitment to his son. He said, "Hashem has granted me a child that is physically challenged. I will overcome this challenge and fulfill my responsibility as a father." We forget that it is usually not the child's acumen or physical abilities that determine his success. It is the parents: their determination, their commitment, their unrelentless efforts that their child succeed. If this is true during the school year, how much more so is this demanded of the parents during vacation, when free time and boredom prevail. We submit that there is another aspect of a child's educational development that is imperative for parents to appreciate: relationship. We live in a time when everybody is busy. Earning a living is no longer a forty-hour a week endeavor. First, the cost of living has risen. Second, people are obsessed with "keeping up with the Joneses." Business can go on twenty-four hours a day via electronics. For those who live in a major Jewish metropolis, every night demands our presence at one or more affairs. Then, if there is an opening in our schedules, we have to make time for our own personal /spiritual development. Every Jewish community has a number of shiurim, Torah classes, which we can and should attend. Where does that leave our children? We send our children to the finest schools; provide them with after-school learning; see to it that they have the necessary tutorial help, if needed. We even spend time with them - learning and reviewing their studies. All this is very important. But, when do we spend time with our children? Just plain time - shmoozing, getting to know each other, finding out if anything bothers them. This is what is missing. On Shabbos, most of us are too tired to talk, and if we do talk it is usually about our children's studies. What happened to just spending quality time with our children? Far be it from my suggesting playing ball with them, but a walk once each week just to talk, to show that we care, would go a long way towards preventing problems which might arise later as they mature. While it is certainly imperative that we focus on the v'sheenantam, we must not simultaneously lose sight of the vanecha!

In loving memory of our dear Mother & Bubby Mrs. Chana Silberberg Zev & Miriam Solomon & Family

From: RABBI RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM LIST
 [parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il To:
 Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il Subject: Shabbat Shalom:
 Parshat Vaetchanan by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin
 Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vaetchanan (Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11) By
 Shlomo Riskin
 Efrat, Israel - Perhaps the most well - known verse of the entire Torah -
 the first verse we teach our children as they learn to speak and the last
 verse we recite with our loved ones on their death-beds - is "Hear O
 Israel the Lord is One" (Shema Yisrael), the source of which is to be
 found in this week's Torah portion. In order to understand the meaning
 of this verse in terms of its historical significance and implications, it is
 important to cite a poignant Talmudic passage describing the last

moments of the life of the great Rabbi Akiba: "When the Romans took out Rabbi Akiba for execution, it was the precise time for the recitation of the Shema. They combed his flesh with iron combs and - (at the same time he was enduring such excruciating pain) - he recited the Shema (accepted upon himself the yoke of the heavenly kingdom). His disciples said to him, "Does the Almighty expect dedication even to such an extent, in such a state of extremity?" He replied, "all of my life I was pained by the words 'You shall love the Lord your G-d. with all your soul - even to the extent of giving up your soul.' When would I have the opportunity of fulfilling this command? And now that the opportunity has arrived for me, shall I not fulfill it?" And he (recited the Shema), lengthening the word "one" (Echad) until his soul expired (B.T. Brachot 61b)".

Aside from the exquisite depth of religious passion which informs this account, there is one glaring structural question which cries out from the text: Why does Rabbi Akiba recite the Shema twice? He "accepted the yoke of the heavenly kingship" when his executors began tearing out his flesh, inspiring the amazement of his disciples. Why does he repeat it again, with the expiration of his soul?

Allow me to suggest three possible reasons, each based upon a variant interpretation of this complex and far - reaching verse. The first emanates from a fundamental - and bitter - dispute between Rabbi Akiba and his teacher Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakai. The Talmud records that at the end of the Second Temple period, when the Holy Temple was about to be burnt to the ground, Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakai left Jerusalem to meet with the Roman General Vespasian with a compromise: "Allow me to continue to survive in Yavneh with a Sanhedrin, and I will relinquish national sovereignty in Jerusalem." Apparently, Rabbi Yohanan emphasizes the command to live by the commands of G-d, the necessity for the Jewish people to at least survive, and fear the dangers of extinction which might be the tragic result of continuing the war against Rome. Rabbi Akiba, one generation later, vigorously disagreed with his master. He went so far as to ascribe to Rabbi Yohanan the verse from Isaiah, "G-d sometimes turns wise people backward, and transforms their wisdom into foolishness" (B. T. Gittin 57b). He went on to organize the rebellion of Bar Kochba in an attempt to re-capture sovereignty over Israel. Apparently Rabbi Akiba believed that Jewish dominion over Israel was a necessary precursor to "repairing the world under the Kingship of G-d" - and was worth the sacrifice of individual Jewish lives.

>From this perspective, Rabbi Akiba repeats the verse of the Shema with his dying breath: the first time he recites it, he is personally fulfilling the daily morning commandment to accept Divine Kingship, whereas the second time, he is leaving a crucial legacy to further generations. The Shema is, at least according to the Midrash, an expression of faith in the ultimate acceptance of ethical monotheism - a G-d of justice, compassion and peace - by all of society. This message will emanate from Jerusalem to the world (Isaiah 2, Micah 4) once the Jews are able to live in peace and security in Israel, their national homeland. Hence Rabbi Akiba is declaring with his dying breath to all future generations - "Hear, Oh Israel, the Lord (who is now only) our G-d (recognized only by us), the Lord (will eventually be recognized by the entire world) as one." In effect, it is Rabbi Akiba's teaching that urges us not to compromise on our national sovereignty over Jerusalem which will bring peace and redemption to the world.

The second explanation speaks to the fact that Rabbi Akiba's attempt at rebellion against Rome turned out to be an abject failure; Bar Kochba is killed in battle, a dead messiah can obviously not be considered a messiah by definition (Maimonides, Laws of Kings, 11, 12), and the Jews are to be scattered throughout the globe for the next 2,000 years. Why did this tragic failure occur? The Talmud explains that it was because the generation was not worthy of redemption, because the disciples of Rabbi Akiba did not respect each other sufficiently (B. T. Yebamot 62b; the Gaonim suggest that the 24,000 disciples of Rabbi Akiba died in the rebellion against Rome, perhaps interpreting askera from sikarus or sword). Hence with Rabbi Akiba's dying breath he teaches future generations the vital importance of unity and respect among Jews as a necessary condition for redemption:

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is One" - and just as our G-d is one, so must we strive to be united as one in mutual love and respect. We must, after all, walk in G-d's ways.

And finally Rabbi Akiba may be using the Shema to explain to his disciples the source of the strength and fortitude which enabled him to overcome the searing pain of the iron combs tearing out his flesh. As the Sacred Zohar explains, the only reality in the world, the true source of all essence and existence, is the one G-d who suffices the entirety of reality. This is the true meaning of the Shema. And if the individual can garner the spiritual power to truly internalize this message of monotheism - the only reality and truth is the one, all - encompassing G-d and His will - he will remain impervious to any false reality which the enemies of G-d and goodness may try to inflict upon him.

Shabbat Shalom. <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm> Ohr Torah Stone Colleges and Graduate Programs Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Chancellor Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Dean

From: elaine@jewishdestiny.com Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2002 6:37 PM Subject: RABBI WEIN'S WEEKLY COLUMNS

Parsha Archive July 19 2002 VAETCHANNAN This Sabbath is traditionally called the "Sabbath of Comfort." It invariably falls in the week after the Fast of the Ninth of Av and when the words of comfort of the prophet Isaiah are read as the maftir in the synagogue, and thus, in its simplest form the name "Sabbath of Comfort" derives. But there is a deeper look at the concept of comfort and consolation that this Sabbath, in fact all Sabbaths, represents. Since grief, pain, disappointment and loss are all part of the story of every human being, it is remarkable how little attention most people pay to the necessity of dealing with misfortune - of how to achieve comfort and consolation. We are all actively engaged in attempting to avoid problems and pain - and correctly so - but deep down within our being we know that no human escapes tasting the bitter cup that life always brings with it. So it would be of aid to all of us to investigate how to deal with sadness and bring consolation and closure. Judaism considers the comforting of others to be an obligatory commandment - a mitzva.

The Talmud points out that G-d Himself, so to speak, came to comfort Yitzchak after the death of his father, Avraham. Thus our tradition of imitating our Creator, so to speak, naturally encompasses this process of comforting others. There are two components of "Jewish comfort." One is the empathy and sympathy expressed to the bereaved by fellow human beings. Sharing the burden is an essential part of comforting others, for it allows a sense of belonging and support to form in the psyche of the one stricken. In fact, that is the greatness of faith in the Creator in all such instances - the realization that one is never alone and abandoned. Even "in the shadow of the valley of death... - ...You are with me." Whether through silence or conversation, the sense of the caring concern of others, sustains and comforts.

Thus having the ultimate and eternal Other care and understand, at a level far beyond our abilities, our troubles and travails is in Jewish tradition the strong and basic foundation of comfort and consolation. And this idea is reflected repeatedly in the words of Isaiah, where the Lord is portrayed as the ultimate comforter and champion of Israel and even though He has visited troubles upon the Jewish people, His hand of comfort, so to speak, is never far removed from us. All seven haftarot of the weeks between Tisha B'Av to Rosh HaShana are taken from the book of Isaiah's prophecies and the representation of G-d as being the comfort of Israel is Isaiah's greatest gift to Israel's posterity. The other aspect of the Jewish concept of comfort is the ability to accept even the hardest of fates and to persevere and rise again.

Tradition teaches us that upon hearing bad tidings one should recite an acknowledgment of G-d's true judgments. Acknowledgment of G-d in the affairs of humans, in our life-cycle events, our careers, our triumphs and seeming defeats is a fundamental tenet of Jewish behavior. Jews always believed that life and death both came from the hand, so to speak, of the Creator.

Thus the unpleasant, the tragic, the inexplicable and seemingly unjust, all become more bearable because of the Jew's ability to accept G-d's will and therefore justify the otherwise unjustifiable and thereby attain a

measure of solace and comfort. Bearing grudges, especially against G-d, is invariably aggravating and self-destructive. Giving insipid and feel-good answers to explain G-d's behavior and explain or marginalize the Divine Presence in tragedy is demeaning to Jewish tradition and faith. Acceptance of G-d's will and the appreciation that G-d need not "think" or "behave" according to our finite minds and standards opens the way for closure and consolation.

Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

From: chrysler [rachrysl@netvision.net.il] Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2002 5:16 PM To: Midei Parsha Subject: Midei Shabbos by RABBI ELIEZER CHRYSLER

Vol. 9 No. 41 This issue is sponsored anonymously
Va'Eschanan (Shabbos Nachamu) Zochor and Shomor In Parshas Yisro, where the Torah describes the first Luchos, it connects Shabbos with the Creation ("because in six days G-d created the Heaven and the earth ..."). Here, where it describes the second Luchos, it connects it with Yetzi'as Mitzrayim ("And you shall remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and G-d took you out from there ..."). Based on this dual connection, the Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim explains that Shabbos has two distinct sides to it, and that those sides are based on the two reasons that the Torah presents for Shabbos in the two respective Parshios. To remind us of the glory of the Creation, the Torah commands us 'Zochor' (the Mitzvah of Kidush and Kovod Shabbos). And as a reminder of our freedom from slavery, it commands us 'Shomor' (the Mitzvah of desisting from work). * The Ramban however, disagrees. He maintains that the purpose behind Shabbos is solely to remind us of the Creation, as the Torah writes in Yisro. Stopping work on Shabbos reminds us that that is what G-d did. He created the world and stopped the creation on Shabbos. And the fact that He stopped the Creation, is the surest proof that He is its Creator. And if He is the Creator, then He is its Master, and there is no other. The problem with this however, lies in the difficulty in visualizing the Creation (which we did not witness). That is why the Torah connects Shabbos here with the miracles of Egypt, something that we did witness. So the Torah orders us to recall those miracles. From there, it is but a short step to arrive at the realization that it is only the Creator of nature who is able to manipulate it in the way that G-d did in Egypt. In other words, remembering 'Yetzi'as Mitzrayim' is but a means of remembering 'Ma'aseh Bereishis'. Perhaps, we might add, the Torah initially wrote "Zochor", presenting Shabbos as Zeicher le'Ma'aseh Bereishis, at Har Sinai, when Yisrael were on a high, and confronted by G-d's Majesty. That is when they were able to digest the message directly. And it was only after the sins of the Eigel and the Meraglim, when they had fallen from their high level, and had become de-spiritualised, as it were, that He added "Shomor". That was when G-d presented Shabbos as a Zeicher li'Yetzi'as Mitzrayim - when they were no longer sufficiently sensitive to appreciate G-d as the Creator unaided. With this explanation, as well as with that of the Ramban, the problem posed by the Or ha'Chayim is automatically resolved. The Or ha'Chayim asks why, seeing that G-d said 'Shomor and Zochor simultaneously', the Torah did not insert Shomor in the first Luchos, and write "Zochor ve'Shomor es Yom ha'Shabbos le'Kadsho"? According to the Rambam, 'Zochor' and 'Shomor' are two separate issues, whereas according to the Ramban, they are two separate stages, as we just explained. * Rabeinu Bachye cites the Gemara in B'rachos (20b) to explain "Shomor" and "Zochor" from a Halachik viewpoint. The Gemara there states that the Torah needs to write "Shomor", in spite of having already written "Zochor", to teach us that women are obligated to observe the Mitzvos of Kidush and Havdalah (contained in 'Zochor') no less than that of 'Shomor'. That is because we would normally have exempted them from any Mitzvas Asei connected with time (to which category 'Zochor' belongs). However, since they are obligated to observe all Mitzvos Lo Sa'aseh (to which group 'Shomor' belongs), they are included in 'Zochor' too. And this in turn, is because the Torah compares 'Zochor' to 'Shomor' (as Chazal have said "Shomor" and "Zochor" were said simultaneously), to obligate whoever is included in the one, to observe the other, too. This

explanation does not however, deal with the dual message of Yetzi'as Mitzrayim and the Creation, as the previous explanations do. * The Mechilta extrapolates from "Shomor" and Zochor" the obligation to observe Shabbos before the day of Shabbos actually enters, and after the day terminates. In other words, they teach us the Mitzvah of 'Tosfos Shabbos' (adding time at both ends of Shabbos, one at either end of Shabbos), though according to some opinions, this is merely 'an Asmachta' (a Rabbinical injunction which is hinted in the Torah). This is strangely puzzling, since one normally remembers something that has passed and awaits something that has yet to occur. In that case, the Mechilta should rather have inverted the D'rashos ('Zochreihu le'acharov' and 'shomreihu lefonov'). Indeed, the Rashbam in Parshas Yisro cites numerous examples of 'Zochor' in the Torah, which always come to recall events of the past before concluding that here too, "Zochor es Yom ha'Shabbos" is an injunction to remember the first Shabbos of the Creation. After all, the Torah does go on to present this as the main objective of the Mitzvah of Shabbos, as we explained earlier. Whereas the Chizkuni, in one of his explanations, interprets "Shomor" as an injunction to await the Shabbos eagerly before it enters, like Rabbi Yanai, who used to don his Shabbos clothes before greeting the Shabbos with the words 'Come oh bride, come oh bride!' No doubt however, the Mechilta inverted the D'rashos, in keeping with the order used by the Torah, first "Zochor" and then "Shomor". For sponsorships and adverts call 651 9502

From: Kollel Iyun Hadaf [kornfeld@netvision.net.il] Sent: Wednesday, July 17, 2002 11:59 AM To: daf-insights; Yehudah Landy; Avi Feldman; DPKINZ@aol.com Subject: Insights to the Daf: Bava Basra 121-125 INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim daf@dafyomi.co.il, <http://www.dafyomi.co.il>
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Bava Basra 121

THE "YOM TOV" OF THE FIFTEENTH OF AV

QUESTION: The Gemara cites the Mishnah in Ta'anis (26b) which states that "there were never such good days for Yisrael as the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kipur, for on those days the daughters of Yerushalayim would go out with borrowed white clothing in order not to embarrass those who did not have their own." The Gemara discusses why the fifteenth of Av is such a special day. One of the reasons that the Gemara gives is that on that day, it became permitted for members of different Shevatim to marry each other. The RASHBAM (DH la'Vo) explains that marrying out of one's Shevet was prohibited for the generation that entered Eretz Yisrael. The reason for that prohibition to prevent the land that was given to each Shevet from being transferred, through inheritance, to a different Shevet; if a woman, with no brothers, would marry a man from a different Shevet, then the land that she inherited from her father would pass to her husband upon her death. According to this reason, what was so special about the fifteenth of Av? Why was the annulment of this prohibition cause for festivity?
 ANSWER: The MAHARSHA (Chidushei Agados) answers that, as the Gemara implies, the fifteenth of Av was a joyous day primarily for the women of Yisrael. Until that time, a *man* was permitted to marry a woman from a different Shevet, because his family inheritance would not go out of his Shevet as a result of his marriage to a woman from another Shevet. A woman, on the other hand, who had a family inheritance was *not* permitted to marry a man from another Shevet, because doing so would cause her family inheritance to go out of her

Shevet. The fifteenth of Av, therefore, was a joyous day for women in general because they were now permitted to marry without this restriction.

The PNEI SHLOMO adds to the Maharsha's explanation. He says that this explanation can be used to explain the words of TOSFOS in Ta'anis (30b, DH Yom) who states that the day on which the Shevatim were permitted to marry into one another was a "YT" (sic). It is not clear what Tosfos is saying by adding this comment, as the Mishnah itself says that this day was a Yom Tov. The Pnei Shlomo suggests that "YT" is not the abbreviation for "Yom Tov," but rather for "Yom Tovasan" -- *their Yom Tov*, referring to the day that was good for the daughters of Yisrael, since they were not permitted to marry men from any tribe.

The Maharsha continues and says that according to the following reason that the Gemara gives for the festive nature of the fifteenth of Av -- that it was then, in the period of the Sho'etim, that the other Shevatim were permitted once again to marry with the Shevet of Binyamin, this was also a cause for celebration specifically for the women, because the ban was only on women from other Shevatim marrying men from Binyamin. Men had always been permitted to marry women from Binyamin. (Y. Marcus)

Bava Basra 121b

THE MOTHER'S ROLE IN HER SON'S TORAH STUDY QUESTION: Rabah and Rav Yosef state that the reason why the fifteenth of Av is a "Yom Tov" is because on this day each year the cutting of the wood for the Mizbe'ach in the Beis ha'Mikdash was completed. RABEINU GERSHOM explains that this was a joyous occasion because during the season of cutting the wood, the people had less time to learn Torah. From the fifteenth of Av, when the season of cutting the wood ended, they had more time for learning Torah. Therefore, this day was celebrated as a festive day.

The Gemara continues and says that from the fifteenth of Av onward, when the summer nights are long, someone who is "Mosif" -- who adds to the time that he learns Torah at night -- will be rewarded by "Yosif" -- by Hashem adding more time to his life. Someone, though, who is not "Mosif," who does not add to the time that he learns Torah at night, will be punished by "Yasif," by being destroyed. Rav Yosef explains that this means that his mother will bury him, meaning that he will die prematurely. The RASHBAM (DH Mai Yasif) explains that as a punishment for not learning Torah, he will reach only half of his full life-span.

What is the significance of Rav Yosef's statement that specifically this person's mother will bury him? Why does he not state simply that the person will die young?

ANSWERS: (a) The MAHARSHA explains that a mother has a special role in ensuring that her son learns Torah. He cites the Gemara in Sanhedrin (70b) which explains the verse in Mishlei (31:1), "... the words with which his mother rebuked him." Shlomo ha'Melech's mother exhorted him not to be like other kings who drink wine and become intoxicated. The Gemara there explains that when Shlomo ha'Melech married the daughter of Pharaoh, she draped over the window a sheet with images of stars on it in order to make him think that it was night, even though it was already morning. As a result, Shlomo ha'Melech slept four hours into the day (which is the daily practice of other kings). Since he did not make up for those four hours by learning Torah during the four extra hours of the winter night, his mother reprimanded him. We see from there that a person's mother is responsible to oversee that he learns Torah. If a person does not learn more Torah each night after the fifteenth of Av passes, his mother is considered responsible for this. As a punishment to *her*, her son will die before she dies and she will have to bury him.

(b) The VILNA GA'ON (to Yoreh De'ah 245:20) gives a different reason for Rav Yosef mentions the person's mother. He cites our Gemara as the source for the ruling of the RAMBAM (Hilchos Talmud Torah 2:2) and the SHULCHAN ARUCH (YD 245:11), who rule that one is obligated to teach Torah to children not only during the day, but also during part of the night, in order to educate the children about the importance of learning Torah at night.

The Rambam understood from our Gemara that even young children must increase their nighttime Torah study after the fifteenth of Av. He inferred this from the fact that Rav Yosef says that "his mother will bury him." The Vilna Ga'on asserts that because the mother is mentioned, this proves that the Gemara is referring even to young children, presumably because the mother has a special responsibility to care for young children. (Y. Marcus)

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Bava Basra 123

AGADAH: HOW THE JEWISH PEOPLE ARE SAVED FROM THEIR ENEMIES QUESTION: The Gemara explains the words of Yakov Avinu to Yosef, "I have given you an extra portion more than your brothers, which I took from the Emorite with my sword and with my bow" (Bereishis 48:22). Yakov certainly was not saying that he literally used his sword and bow to obtain the land, because we are taught not to trust in our bow or sword, as the verse says, "For I will not trust in my bow, and my sword will not save me" (Tehilim 44:7). Rather, "my sword" refers to "Tefilah," prayer, and "my bow" refers to "Bakashah," request.

The YOSEF DA'AS cites the BEIS YAKOV (Parshas Vayechi) who says that even though the literal meaning of the verse is also true (and Yakov did fight physically with his sword and bow), nevertheless his fighting certainly was accompanied by his spiritual efforts -- his Tefilah and Bakashah.

What is the meaning of these two metaphors? What does it mean that Yakov acquired land through his Tefilah and Bakashah?

ANSWERS: (a) The MAHARSHA explains that prayer, which is compared to the sword, is what protects the Jewish people against the onslaught of Esav. Esav received a blessing from his father, Yitzchak, that he would live by his sword (Bereishis 27:40). The Midrash explains the verse, "The voice is the voice of Yakov, but the hands are the hands of Esav" (Bereishis 27:22), to mean that when the voice of Yakov, the Jewish people, is strong in Torah and in prayer, the hands of the descendants of Esav cannot harm the descendants of Yakov. The "sword" of Tefilah is Yakov's defense against Esav's sword. The Maharsha explains that the word "b'Kashti," or "with my bow," is similar to the word "Bakashah," or "request." Yishmael received the blessing that he would be an archer who hunts with his bow (Bereishis 21:20). The "Bakashah," the supplications of the Jewish people to Hashem, is their protection against the "Keshes," the bow, of Yishmael (see Parshah Page, Chayei Sarah 5758).

(b) The MESECH CHOCHMAH (Bereishis 48:22) discusses another facet of the analogy of prayer and request to the sword and the bow. "Tefilah" refers to the fixed prayers of the liturgy, established by the Sanhedrin for all to say. "Bakashah" refers to the private and personal supplications of an individual to Hashem. When reciting the prayers established for the Tzibur, the individual fulfills the Mitzvah of prayer even if his Kavanah is lacking; b'Di'eved, if one has proper Kavanah for only the first Berachah of Shemoneh Esreh, he has fulfilled his obligation. An individual's personal prayer, though, requires Kavanah throughout the prayer and none of it can be said without Kavanah. Moreover, the Gemara in Ta'anis (8a) says that prayers which are said alone are accepted by Hashem only if they are said with full and complete Kavanah. Prayers which are said together with a Minyan are accepted by Hashem even if the individual is not totally concentrating; through the merit of the Tzibur with whom the individual is praying, Hashem is merciful and accepts the individual's prayers.

The Meshech Chochmah explains that this is why Tefilah is compared to the sword. A sword is effective due to the sharpness of its blade, and even if the warrior using the sword does not put a lot of energy into striking with his sword, the sword can still inflict maximal damage. An arrow, in contrast, is not an effective weapon in itself. Its effectiveness comes from the strength which the archer puts into it by pulling the bow and aiming the arrow. Public Tefilah, like a sword, is effective due to its own intrinsic strength and the strength of the merits of the Tzibur, and it reaches Shamayim even without a high level of Kavanah. Private prayer, in contrast, are like a bow; the effectiveness of private prayer depends upon the Kavanah of the person praying. (See also MEROMEI SADEH, BEN YEHOYADA.)