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**The TorahWeb Foundation**  
**Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky**  
*Loving Hashem*

The degree to which the mitzvah of ahavas Hashem is fundamental to a life of Torah and mitzvos is captured in its expression in krias Shema as well as its presence in our tefillin. As we enter our homes and kiss the mezuzah we once again acknowledge the centrality of ahavas Hashem in our lives. How do we practically fulfill this core mitzvah?

There are several important aspects of avodas Hashem that are vehicles for a proper fulfillment of ahavas Hashem in our daily lives. The Rambam in the end of Hilchos Teshuva equates loving Hashem with knowing Hashem. Just as the love one feels for another person increases the better one gets to know that person, so too the more we know Hashem the more intense our love for Him becomes. How do we attain this knowledge requisite knowledge of Hashem?

The Rambam explains that by delving into His wisdom we can know Hashem, and that wisdom is composed of two parts. First, by studying the intricacies of His creation we can attain a greater understanding of Hashem and thereby enable our love of Him to grow. In Sefer Hamitzvos the Rambam highlights that Hashem revealed the second aspect of His knowledge to us in His Torah. The greater understanding of Torah one achieves, the more one knows, and thereby loves, Hashem. This relationship between ahavas Hashem and talmud Torah appears in the Shema itself. The Sifrei, as quoted by Rashi, notes that immediately after the Torah commands

us to love Hashem we are instructed to immerse ourselves in talmud Torah. It is only through a deep commitment to talmud Torah that one can reach the lofty goal of ahavas Hashem.

We usually associate ahavas Hashem with mitzvos bein adam lamakom. And yet, even our service bein adam lachaveiro depends upon internalizing our love for Hashem. Chazal interpret the mitzvah of "v'holachta b'drachav - to walk in the path of Hashem" as the source for the mitzvah of chessed; Hashem performs countless acts of chessed and we are supposed to imitate Him. We naturally look to imitate those whom we admire. As such, by following the example of Hashem and performing acts of kindness we express our love and admiration for Him.

Ahavas Hashem also expresses itself in merging our bein adam lamakom with our bein adam lachaveiro. Chazal teach us that part of ahavas Hashem is to bring others to love Hashem. One who exemplifies ahavas Hashem and is pleasant to other human beings will encourage others to lead their lives in a similar manner. We are commanded to love Hashem with all our hearts, our souls, and our possessions. This intense love comes about from our pursuit of the knowledge of Hashem, and it is this love that results in our performance of chessed and sets the tone for our interpersonal behavior. On a personal note, I am writing this dvar Torah as I am returning from being menachem avel two families who lost sons in Gaza. These kedoshim, as well as our other brothers who gave their lives for the entire Jewish people, have fulfilled ahavas Hashem and ahavas Yisroel in the ultimate sense, "bechol nafshecha - with your entire soul." These young men sacrificed everything so that the Jewish people can live in safety and security. As we approach Shabbos nachamu, we extend our comfort to all of the grieving families and pray that Hashem will comfort His people by rebuilding the Beis Hamikdash and thus enable us to once again know Him even more and serve Him with maximal love.

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Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

Erev Shabbat Shalom from Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh!

**Haftorah: "Herald of Zion" and "Herald of Yerushalayim"**

Hamashgiach **Harav Avraham Rivlin**, shlita

2003

In the famous prophecy: "Comfort, comfort my people," G-d turns to His prophets and tells them to call upon a third party to herald the consolation of Yerushalayim: "Ascend upon a high mountain, O herald (of) Zion (mevasseret Zion); raise your voice with strength, O herald (of) Yerushalayim (mevasseret Yerushalayim)." (Yeshaya 40:9)

Who are mevasseret Zion and mevasseret Yerushalayim; are Zion and Yerushalayim the heralds themselves or the ones being heralded? Are Zion and Yerushalayim one and the same, or are they separate? If they are separate, why is mevasseret Zion supposed to ascend a high mountain, whereas mevasseret Yerushalayim is to raise her voice?

Targum Yonatan, and other commentators following him, explains that the call in the pasuk is directed to the prophets, who are commanded to herald Zion and Yerushalayim about their redemption: "Ascend upon a high mountain the prophets who herald Zion." (Rashi quotes the Targum verbatim, while Metzudat David adds: "...the prophets who herald Zion of the redemption.") Why are the prophets referred to in feminine form, "mevasseret," and not mevaserei, as in the pasuk, "How pleasant are the footsteps of the herald (mevasser) ... announcing peace, heralding good tidings." (Yeshaya 52:7) Ibn Ezra writes: "The meaning [of the feminine form] is the community (edah - which is a feminine word), and not an actual woman." He can be understood based on Metzudat David, who adds a word in his interpretation, and answers that the call is directed to the "community (edah) of prophets," and this community is called by the prophet, "mevasseret Zion."

Da'at Mikra writes:

You – the woman who is appointed to herald to the inhabitants of Zion who is coming to her (i.e., G-d)...The prophecy uses the metaphor of a human king who returns to his country at the head of his army after he was victorious in his battles, and he send before him heralds to announce to the people of his city that he is coming shortly. They would send women to announce because the women do not go out to battle ... or perhaps because women's voices are generally louder than men's. (He cites there other references to female heralds.)

Rashi, who cites the pasuk from ch. 52, answers: "If they merit – it will be quick like a male; if they do not merit – it will be weak like a female, and he will delay his footsteps until the destined time." Rashi alludes here to the pasuk in Bamidbar (11:15), "If this is how You (at) deal with me," and to the Sifrei that he cites there: "Moshe's strength was weakened like a female when G-d showed him the punishment that he was going to bring upon them." [Therefore Moshe spoke to G-d in the feminine form.] The terms mevasseret Zion and mevasseret Yerushalayim come to allude to the well-known idea that the redemption and its circumstances depend on Israel's spiritual level: "I am Hashem, in its time I will hasten it." (Yeshaya 60:22) As Chazal comment: "If they do not merit – in its time; if they merit – I will hasten it." (Sanhedrin 98a) [See what I wrote about this based on the principle of "fluid prophecy," in my sefer, "Yonah: Prophecy and Rebuke, p. 230. Note Rav Dessler's comment there on p. 130 that "merit" and "do not merit" depend on the purity and zakkut of Bnei Yisrael, and not on some random decree from above.]

However, there is another group of commentators who explain that Yerushalayim and Zion are the heralds themselves. Radak writes: "Since Yerushalayim is the primary element of Eretz Yisrael, and so, too, Zion, since they are both one city, therefore they are depicted in the prophecy as if they are heralding the other cities." The Malbim similarly writes: "He depicts as if Zion itself will be the herald, and so, too, Yerushalayim." According to this explanation, the continuation of the pasuk is very well understood. Yeshaya turns to Yerushalayim and to Zion to announce to the other cities of Yehuda, "Behold, your G-d [has come]!" (According to the earlier explanations, the heralds of Zion and Yerushalayim are to say that G-d is coming to Yerushalayim itself and not to the other cities of Yehuda.) This call is an inevitable result of the very fact that Yerushalayim itself is redeemed.

We can now explain the pasuk based on the difference between Zion and Yerushalayim. The famous source for the two names is in Yeshaya's vision of the end of days: "For from Zion the Torah will come forth, and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim." (Yeshaya 2:3) The Malbim writes about this:

"From Zion" – where the seat of the Sanhedrin was, and of the high priest and the Davidic dynasty; "the Torah will come forth" – to the entire world, as it says, "If a matter of judgment is hidden from you ... you shall rise up and ascend to the place that Hashem ... shall choose." This was only in Zion."and the word of Hashem" – that is prophecy; "(will come forth) from Yerushalayim" – because that is where the prophets would gather, drawing the Divine spirit from the entire city, because the prophets would not sit in the lishkat hagazit.

Based on this he explains our pasuk, as well:

Zion – the seat of the king and the Sanhedrin and the place of the Temple was there; Yerushalayim – the common people sat there. Zion will announce that He returned His Presence to Zion, as well as the kingdom and the priesthood, and therefore, the metaphor is used, "Ascend upon a high mountain" (since we are talking of high and lofty things). Yerushalayim will announce the ingathering of the exiles, and therefore he uses the metaphor, "raise your voice with strength," so that the dispersed will hear and gather from the four corners of the earth."

Here the redemption takes a more common nature. One the one hand, it belongs to the nation as a whole, yet, on the other hand, it is not as

outstanding and elevating as the renewal of the kingdom, the Temple and the priesthood. Therefore, it is not necessary to ascend a mountain, but it is necessary to raise voice with great strength.

Rav Kook writes: "The two goals that crown Knesset Yisrael are 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' The character of the kingdom is expressed through Zion ... although the sanctly dwelling is in Yerushalayim." (Olat Re'iyah II p. 87) In a different formulation, he is quoted that "Zion symbolizes the kingdom in Israel, and Yerushalayim the sanctity in Israel." (Cited by Rav M.Z. Neriyah, Moadei Re'iyah, p. 602. Also cited in "Degel Yerushalayim," in Ma'amarei Re'iyah p. 333.)

Based on this Rav Kook explains that mevasseret Zion, which aspires to the return of the kingdom to Israel, must ascend a high mountain and not suffice with requests for a national homeland like all the other nations, since Am Yisrael is not like all the other nations. (Cf. Yaakov Herzog, "Am Levadad Yishkon," p. 59: "Political Zionism maintains that the concept, "A nation that dwells by itself," is an abnormal concept, while, in truth, is the natural state of Beit Yisrael.") Our nationalistic aspirations are not the same as those of any other nation, for a State and independence, but rather a sacred matter that affects the entire world. (Cf. Rav Kook, Orot p. 112 and on.) On the other hand, mevasseret Yerushalayim, which talks of the return of sanctity to Israel, is already standing on a high mountain and speaks on behalf of G-d, but its voice is weak, and therefore it must raise its voice and to speak unhesitatingly to the nation as a whole and to the other nations.

Either way, from Zion and Yerushalayim will come forth a loud voice to all the cities of Yehuda: "Behold, your G-d [has come]!"

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"**You Are All Alive Today**"

**Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli zt"l**

"Do not add on to that which I am commanding you and do not detract from it ... Your eyes have seen ... for every man who followed Ba'al Pe'or, Hashem, your G-d, destroyed from your midst. You have clung to Hashem, your G-d; you are all living today" (Devarim 4: 2-4). What is the connection between not adding to or detracting from the Torah and Ba'al Pe'or, an unseemly form of idol worship, whose classic service is defecating on the idol? Also, isn't the contrast between the lowly Ba'al Pe'or and those who cling to Hashem extremely obvious! It is also difficult to understand the draw of Ba'al Pe'or, which Bilam figured could entice many Jews, considering that Bilam understood so much about Hashem.

A philosopher asked one of the rabbis about the logic of the mitzva of mila (circumcision), where one makes changes in the body that Hashem gave us. The rabbi proceeded to illustrate how there are all sorts of things in the world that are made useable or improved by human intervention, and this applies to a man's body as well (Bereishit Rabba 11:6).

What should a person's approach be? Is he intended to fight his tendencies? Is that which is natural better, and fighting to change it is just tampering with something good? Is it even realistic to fight something inborn? The Jewish approach is that we are supposed to perfect our nature, not accept it as is. We believe this can be accomplished because in addition to the nature we clearly see, there is a more internal nature that yearns to be the way Hashem wants us to be.

The philosophy of Ba'al Pe'or is to be happy with and proud of "what you are." Bilam knew that Hashem is holy but said that that is fine for Hashem but people cannot and therefore need not strive to be like Him. He said: "Let my soul die the death of straight people" (Bamidbar 23:10). Yes, he argued,

when one is dead and the body stops working, that is the time to be holy. The Torah provides an exact blueprint for developing a person. That which needs to be restrained, the Torah tells us to restrain. That is why we are commanded not to add or detract from the Torah. Following the Torah lifestyle, as it is given, promises spiritual tranquility, harmony between a person's powers, stability, and contentment. Our eyes saw what happened to those who took on the approach of Ba'al Pe'or or that what one feels like doing is what he should be doing. They reached destruction. Those who clung to Hashem are alive today.

Look at the life that is on display in contemporary society. Its idols, whether they are soccer players or movie stars, lose their charisma after a certain age, and they are thrown away unwanted to the side. In our Torah world, there are no two separate worlds for the old and the young. The aura of the old gives meaning to the young. The freshness of youth can be preserved in the old. "All of you are alive today."

\* From "Chemdat Yamim" Parsha Sheet

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

**Weekly Blog :: Rabbi Berel Wein**  
***This One Feels Different***

I have been present in Israel for a number of wars that this small, grave country has been forced to endure. Even before I made Aliyah, I was present here during the first Gulf War when Saddam Hussein rained SCUDs on a then defenseless population here in Israel. Since then I have lived here as an Israeli resident and citizen during the first and second intifada, the second Lebanon war, the reassertion of Israeli security in the West Bank, and the two previous Gaza conflicts.

Coming as I do from an American background where, during my years in the United States, I never experienced an air raid siren or any other overt acts of war, dealing with war here in Israel took some adjustment – physical, emotional and intellectual. But over the years and through the experiences of having to deal with actual wars, I felt that I adequately adjusted to this situation fairly well.

No one enjoys hearing the wail of the air raid siren but I, like all other Israelis, have accepted that this still is unfortunately part of our experience in attempting to live in our homeland and in fulfilling our destiny as a people. So, to me, the events and the feelings and emotions of the past wars became a unit – there was a certain likeness about them that almost made for familiarity and sameness. One almost knew what to expect from our side and from the enemy. There was a predictability to the dance of death and destruction that was taking place. It almost made these past wars ordinary in spite of their tragic costs and disturbing consequences.

However, this Gaza war feels far different to me. I don't know why that is and I cannot even define or explain how it feels. But take my word for it, it feels very different. It was and is full of surprises and twists and turns. A war that began with the kidnapping and murders of three young Israeli yeshiva students and has since escalated into a large number of deaths and untold property destruction, seemed to have a magnetic force all its own.

No massive deterrent force was able to prevent the arrival and escalation of the war. Cease-fires were proclaimed a number of times only to collapse in the rubble of hate and indiscriminate rocket fire. Hamas infiltrated Israel a number of times using a labyrinth of tunnels that it had developed under Gaza and Israeli territory over the years.

Thousands of rockets have been fired from Gaza at Israel. Almost all of them

were either shot down by Israel's Iron Dome defense system or fell relatively harmlessly in open areas. In the Second Lebanon War, Hezbollah fired hundreds of rockets to the Israeli north with apparently far greater effect on the Israeli population than the thousands of rockets that Hamas has fired at Israel in this last war.

We have suffered many dead and wounded amongst the forces of the Israel Defense Force. The bravery of the soldiers themselves has been matched by the tragic stoicism and inspirational demeanor of the families of the dead and wounded soldiers. Almost everyone seems to realize that this time we really had or have no other choice but to fight for our survival and security.

There are very few illusions left in Israeli society about the world that we live in and the surrounding neighborhood where we exist. Only the very hard Left, the radical nihilists that somehow always seem to exist in a democratic society and really work to destroy it, still demand that Israel commit national suicide so that the rest of the world will finally be rid of 'the Jewish problem.'

Though there are still differing opinions regarding the conduct and eventual outcome of the war – and certainly about "the day after" – I have never experienced a sense of common purpose and the will to deal with the consequences of this war, whatever that may be, as exists today in Israeli society.

It may be a sad commentary that it took the murder of three innocents and a bloody war to achieve this common feeling that we are all in this to the end. But, this is the case now. Our fortitude and grim determination, which is clearly present in today's Israeli society, will see us through to better days and greater achievements. It is never easy to recover from a war, not for the soldiers, civilians and nations involved. But out of the wreckage of this war perhaps the destruction of the Gazan tunnels will be the light at the end of our own tunnel that can lead to a better time of security and calm. Shabat shalom

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**Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel Wein**  
***Vaetchanan***

In this week's parsha the Torah records for us the revelation at Sinai and a restatement of the Ten Commandments. The text of the Ten Commandments as recorded in this week's parsha differs somewhat from the text of the Ten Commandments as they appear in parshat Yitro. These differences are commented upon and explained to us in the Talmud, Midrash and in the later commentaries to the Torah.

The major discrepancy in text concerns the description of Shabbat. Whereas in parshat Yitro we were commanded zachor - remember – the Shabbat to sanctify it, here in parshat Vaetchanan we are told to safeguard – shamor – the Shabbat and not to desecrate it by performing forbidden acts of work. The Talmud teaches us that these two words – zachor and shamor - were uttered at Sinai, so to speak, simultaneously in one breath.

There are a number of lessons to be learned from this explanation of the rabbis as to why there are two different texts advanced in the Torah regarding Shabbat. One of the lessons is that words, no matter how holy and precise they may attempt to be, are still insufficient to convey the breadth and scope of eternal values and spiritual holiness.

Again, words, no matter how beautiful and varied they may be, constrict us and always leave room for misinterpretation and ambiguity. There are truly no words, which by themselves can convey the concept of the serenity, holiness and spiritual and physical uniqueness of Shabbat. So we are forced to say that different words have to be said and heard in a simultaneous fashion in order for the listener to begin to grasp the true value in

understanding Shabbat.

Another important lesson to be learned from the duality of expression regarding Shabbat is that there is an intrinsic combination of values in the holiest day of the week. The serenity and spiritual quality of the day cannot be achieved simply by discussing it or spiritually and theoretically identifying with it. It is the forced abstinence from the mundane activities of the every day week – the restrictions, if you will – that contribute mightily to the positive feeling and emotional peace of the day of Shabbat. Without shamor, zachor remains an unachievable goal. And without zachor – the wine of kiddush, the special bread and meals of the day, etc. – shamor - become very burdensome and unattractive.

So therefore these two facets of Shabbat must be enjoyed and enforced in a simultaneous fashion in order for the true meaning of the day to take hold within the body and soul of the Jew. The observance of Shabbat therefore is a matter of intellectual and emotional sophistication. A Shabbat without restrictions is meaningless. It is just another Tuesday. A Shabbat without prayer, Torah study, proper dress, food and physical pleasure and relaxation lacks vitality and negates the holy spirit of the day.

It is the dual nature of Shabbat that gives it its special character and holy demeanor. Therefore the rabbis correctly taught us that zachor and shamor were communicated to us at Sinai as one statement and package. Therein lies the magic of the holy day of Shabbat.

Shabat shalom

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from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>  
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**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Va'etchanan**  
**For the week ending 9 August 2014 / 13 Av 5774**  
**by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com**  
**Insights**

*Letter to the Future*

*"...And with all your soul..." (6-5) — Rashi: "Even if He takes away your soul."*

I am writing this on Rosh Chodesh Av 5774.

They say that a week is a long time in politics and no one can predict what will have transpired by the time you read this a few weeks hence. In a way, writing a weekly column is like writing a letter to the future.

And the future always has the wisdom of hindsight – which I lack.

As I write this, the IDF is shelling and fighting in Gaza. There is no end in sight to the Operation Protective Edge. Daily casualties rise. And the righteous hypocrisy of the world's press and its leaders, almost without exception, reaches new heights.

It was Connor Cruise O'Brien who remarked, "Anti-Semitism is a light sleeper." It's certainly scratching its sleepy head and waking up all over Europe. I'm not sure who is more vulnerable: the citizens of the south of Israel who have 15 seconds to run to their shelters, or the Jews of Paris and London, May G-d protect us all!

Suddenly the world seems a much more dangerous place than it did a few weeks ago. And yet, should we be surprised?

The default position of Jewish history has always been discrimination, dislike, exile and sometimes holocaust. If there have been periods of relative calm and peace, these are the exceptions and not the rule.

The "Halacha" says that Esav hates Yaakov. Why should we expect any better from him and his media circus?

We all want to sit under our fig tree and bring up our families in peace. We all want to have nachat from our children and the ripe old age to enjoy it, but twice a day we remind ourselves that it may not be that way:

*"...And with all your soul..." (6-5) — Rashi: "Even if He takes away your soul."*

And in this lies our strength.

As Shakespeare put it, "Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once. (Act 1, Scene 2, Line 32 of "Julius Caesar")".

And death for a Jew is but a portal to a great palace of light.

A Jew lives in this world, but not for this world.

We sold our part in this world to Esav. It belongs to him. All we have of this world is the permission to create our portion in the next.

We are not a nation that glorifies death. We don't strap a make-believe explosive belt onto our toddlers and send them off to kindergarten with their sandwiches in the morning. Our definition of martyrdom is when a Jew has no choice but to give his life for kiddush Hashem. That word — martyrdom — had been pirated and distorted by the Islamists to mean the desire to commit suicide while taking as many innocent people as you can along with. That's not martyrdom, that's murder.

Being a Jew is about keeping Shabbat; being a Jew is about learning Torah; being a Jew is about being kind and unselfish.

But being a Jew is also about being prepared to give one's life if necessary, to make the ultimate sacrifice if that is the will of G-d.

"Even if He takes away your soul."

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**Orthodox Union / [www.ou.org](http://www.ou.org)**

**Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column**

***Va'Etchanan, Shabbat Nachamu: "Answering Unanswered Prayers"***

Did you ever really pray for something you wanted? I mean, really fervently, desperately, pray hard for something that was vitally important to you?

If you did, and I think we all pray this way at moments of urgency, you violated an anonymous piece of wisdom:

"Be careful what you pray for, because you just might get it."

I have not been able to determine who said that. But I know clearly what he meant. In my own life, I have had more than one occasion to look back at answered prayers, which achieved what turned out to be very trivial objectives. And I have certainly been disappointed in prayer, only to learn that in the long run, I was much better off without the benefits of whatever I prayed for so earnestly.

We think we know what is good for us, we think we know what we need, but we really don't. Often, we are much the better for having certain prayers rebuffed, and we frequently discover that the things we thought were important are not important at all.

In the Torah portion that we read in the synagogue this week, Parshat Va'etchanan, Moses confides to us how he powerfully beseeched the Almighty, begging Him to reverse His decision to frustrate Moses' greatest dream, that he be permitted to enter the Promised Land. Moses uses a synonym for prayer, *chanan*, which connotes imploring, pleading for the undeserved favor, *matnat chinam*.

But Moses is denied his dream. His petition is torn up in his face. His is the archetypal unanswered prayer.

Joel Cohen, in his book *Moses, a Memoir*, puts these poignant words in the mouth of Moses:

"I lowered my knees and begged Him once again. I could muster no tears this time... I needed badly to reach and walk about the land He promised to Abraham for us, so long ago... My work is incomplete. My prophecy has achieved no reality for me in my lifetime... There will be no future for me.

My staff, the instrumentality of miracles against His enemies, is powerless against His will.”

Beautifully put, by this author of a book I recommend to you all.

What are we to learn from the story of the unanswered prayer of the humblest, but greatest, of men? Many things, in my opinion.

We learn that the gates of prayer are not always open. In the words of the Midrash, they are sometimes open but sometimes closed. And we are not to rely upon them exclusively. Rather, we are to do our own part to achieve our objectives in mundane ways.

Judaism insists upon a balance between faith in the divine and the exercise of practical human effort. It acknowledges that while there must be “bitachon”, trust in the Lord, there must also be “hishtadlut,” old-fashioned hard work on our part. As the rabbis have it, never rely upon miracles. We can never allow prayer to become a substitute for our doing all we can do. We must not simply expect the Almighty to achieve Jewish sovereignty for us, but must do our parts politically and militarily. We cannot expect manna from heaven, but must earn our livelihoods by dint of the sweat of our brow. And when we are ill, yes, we must pray, but we must also diligently seek out competent medical assistance.

There are other lessons, to be sure, to be learned from the unanswered prayer of Moses. His grave remains a secret, so that it not become a shrine and that he not be idolized or heaven forbid, deified. For another important lesson about prayer from the Jewish perspective, is that we pray to the One Above only, and not to saints and holy men, be they alive or be they dead.

Cemeteries are not synagogues.

By not granting Moses his request, the Master of the Universe was in effect telling him that he did all that he could, and that no more is expected of him. Humans are expected to do all they can, and not necessarily to accomplish everything.

“It is not necessary for you to complete the task, but neither are you exempt from doing all that you can.”

Moses is being told, “You did all you could, even if you did not achieve all of your personal ambitions.” No human is complete, no man is perfect. And then there is a final lesson, one that we learn from the very fact that Moses persisted in his prayer, although he knew well that his request would be spurned. He modeled the importance of hope, even in the face of impossible odds.

Jewish history contains a long list of Moses-like figures, whose vision it was to enter the Holy Land. They include men like the Gaon Elijah of Vilna, who longed to spend the last years of his life in Eretz Yisrael. And closer to our time, the great sage Yisrael Meir Kagan, the Chofetz Chaim, prayed and carefully planned to live out his life in Israel.

Ironically, they, like Moses, had their dreams frustrated by the Hand of Providence. Like Moses, they were ready to try almost anything to realize their ambitions. And like Moses, who was told that he would not enter the land but his disciple Joshua would, various leaders of Jewish history, however reluctantly, took comfort in the fact that their disciples realized their dream in their stead.

This is possibly the most important lesson of all. When our prayers go unanswered for ourselves, they may yet be answered for our children and grandchildren.

Unanswered prayers are mysteriously answered, in inscrutable and unpredictable ways.

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**Orthodox Union / www.ou.org**  
**Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**  
*The Fewest of all Peoples*

Buried inconspicuously in this week’s parsha is a short sentence with explosive potential, causing us to think again about the nature of Jewish history and the Jewish task in the present.

Moses had been reminding the new generation, the children of those who left Egypt, of the extraordinary story of which they are the heirs:

Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? (Deut. 4: 32-34)

The Israelites had not yet crossed the Jordan. They had not yet begun their life as a sovereign nation in their own land. Yet Moses was sure, with a certainty that could only be prophetic, that they were a people like no other. What has happened to them was unique. They were and are a nation summoned to greatness.

Moses reminds them of the great revelation at Mount Sinai. He recalls the Ten Commandments. He delivers the most famous of all summaries of Jewish faith: “Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” He issues the most majestic of all commands: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” Twice he tells the people to teach these things to their children. He gives them their eternal mission statement as a nation: “You are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.” (Deut. 7: 6)

Then he says this:

The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you are the fewest of all peoples. (Deut. 7: 7)

The fewest of all peoples? What has happened to all the promises of Bereishit, that Abraham’s children would be numerous, uncountable, as many as the stars of the sky, the dust of the earth, and the grains of sand on a seashore? What of Moses’ own statement at the beginning of Devarim: “The Lord your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as numerous as the stars in the sky” (Deut. 1: 10)?

The simple answer is this. The Israelites were indeed numerous compared to what they once were. Moses himself puts it this way in next week’s parsha: “Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky” (Deut. 10: 22). They were once a single family, Abraham, Sarah and their descendants, and now they have become a nation of twelve tribes.

But – and this is Moses’ point here – compared to other nations, they were still small. “When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you ...” (7:1). In other words, not only were the Israelites smaller than the great empires of the ancient world. They were smaller even than the other nations in the region. Compared to their origins they had grown, but compared to their neighbours they remained tiny.

Moses then tells them what this means:

You may say to yourselves, “These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?” But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. (Deut. 7: 17-18) Israel would be the smallest of the nations for a reason that goes to the very heart of its existence as a nation. They will show the world that a people does not have to be large in order to be great. It does not have to be numerous to defeat its enemies. Israel’s unique history will show that, in the words of the prophet Zechariah (4:6), “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

In itself, Israel would be witness to something greater than itself. As former Marxist philosopher Nicolay Berdyayev put it:

I remember how the materialist interpretation of history, when I attempted in my youth to verify it by applying it to the destinies of peoples, broke down in the case of the Jews, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint . . . Its survival is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon demonstrating that the life of this people is governed by a special predetermination, transcending the processes of adaptation expounded by the materialistic interpretation of history. The survival of the Jews, their resistance to destruction, their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions and the fateful role played by them in history: all these point to the particular and mysterious foundations of their destiny.[1] Moses' statement has immense implications for Jewish identity. The proposition implicit throughout this year's Covenant and Conversation is that Jews have had an influence out of all proportion to their numbers because we are all called on to be leaders, to take responsibility, to contribute, to make a difference to the lives of others, to bring the Divine presence into the world. Precisely because we are small, we are each summoned to greatness.

S. Y. Agnon, the great Hebrew writer, composed a prayer to accompany the Mourner's Kaddish. He noted that the children of Israel have always been few in number compared to other nations. He then said that when a king rules over a large population, he does not notice when one dies, for there are others to take his or her place. "But our King, the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He . . . chose us, and not because we are a large nation, for we are one of the smallest of nations. We are few, and owing to the love with which He loves us, each one of us is, for Him, an entire legion. He does not have many replacements for us. If one of us is missing, Heaven forbend, then the King's forces are diminished, with the consequence that His kingdom is weakened, as it were. One of His legions is gone and His greatness is lessened. For this reason it is our custom to recite the Kaddish when a Jew dies." [2]

Margaret Mead once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Gandhi said: "A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history." That must be our faith as Jews. We may be the fewest of all peoples but when we heed God's call, we have the ability, proven many times in our past, to mend and transform the world.

[1] Nicolay Berdyayev, *The Meaning of History*, Transaction Publishers, 2005, 86.

[2] Quoted in Leon Wieseltier, *Kaddish*, London : Picador, 1998, 22-23. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks or to subscribe to his mailing list, please visit [www.rabbisacks.org](http://www.rabbisacks.org).

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### ***What Happens When We Do Something Wrong?***

**By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

*Since the Aseres Hadibros which include the laws of Shabbos are in Parshas Va'eschanan, we have an opportunity to discuss what happens when we do something wrong on Shabbos.*

#### Question #1: Cholent caper

Shimon looks rather sheepish when he asks this shaylah on Shabbos morning: During the night, he tasted the cholent and decided it needed some extra spices. Without thinking, he added some pepper and garlic powder, which is clearly an act of desecrating Shabbos. Can the cholent be eaten, or is it prohibited to benefit from this melachah?

#### Question #2: Bad advice

"My main mutual fund has performed wonderfully over time and I am very satisfied with it. However, I recently read a transcript in which the fund manager, who is probably Jewish, referred to investment discussions with his staff on Friday night. I am concerned that I may be benefiting from chillul Shabbos that he performs in the course of researching venture possibilities for the fund. Must I pull my money out and look for another investment vehicle?"

#### Question #3: The unrepentant knitter

Yehudis seeks guidance for a real predicament: "I have a non-observant relative who loves to knit and is presently knitting a baby blanket for my soon-to-be. I am certain that she is doing some of this on Shabbos. If we do not use her blanket she will be very upset -- and she will notice if we fail to use it. What may we do to avoid antagonizing her?"

Each of these actual shaylos involves the same halachic issue: May one benefit from work performed on Shabbos? Although we certainly discourage any type of desecration of Shabbos, the current question is whether something produced on Shabbos may be used afterwards. This question is discussed in the Gemara in several places, which cites a three-way dispute among tanna'im concerning food cooked by a Jew on Shabbos. Each of the three opinions focuses on a different issue. The question in practical halachah is whether or not we are concerned about these reasons and to what extent. Briefly put, these are the three issues:

#### I. Intrinsically prohibited

Some contend that food cooked in violation of Shabbos becomes a substance that we are prohibited to eat min hatorah. Those who rule this way maintain that food cooked on Shabbos is non-kosher.

#### II. The sinner goes to the penalty box!

Others maintain that Chazal penalized a person who intentionally desecrated Shabbos by banning that individual from benefiting from his misdeed. Although the food is still considered kosher, there are restrictions as to who may eat it and when.

#### III. Defer benefit!

A third opinion contends that, to avoid profiting from the sin performed, one cannot benefit from an item created through Shabbos desecration until after Shabbos.

Let me explain the differences among these three approaches.

#### I. Intrinsically prohibited

Rabbi Yochanan Hasandlar contends that not only does the Torah forbid desecrating Shabbos, but it also bans benefiting from something created in defiance of Shabbos. For example, food cooked on Shabbos is forbidden and will never become permitted for use by anyone. If this food subsequently became mixed into otherwise kosher food, the same laws apply as any situation when non-kosher became mixed into kosher food. However, Rabbi Yochanan Hasandlar prohibits the food only when it was produced in intentional desecration of Shabbos. An item created through negligent violation of Shabbos (shogeig) is treated more leniently.

#### II. The sinner goes to the penalty box!

Rabbi Yehudah follows a more lenient approach, prohibiting the sinner from using items made on Shabbos as a penalty created by the Sages, but not because the food is intrinsically non-kosher min hatorah. Chazal created this penalty so that the perpetrator should not benefit from his misdeed. For this

reason, Rabbi Yehudah prohibits the item permanently but only to the person who desecrated Shabbos. Several authorities rule that this prohibition applies also to the members of his household (Graz, 253:24; Kaf Hachayim 318:11). Furthermore, the equipment used to cook the food on Shabbos must be koshered before it may be used again, since it has absorbed taste that is forbidden to him (Magen Avraham 318:1, quoting Rashba) and his household (according to the Graz and Kaf Hachayim). Other people may use the item after Shabbos is over.

#### Negligent desecration

Thus far, we have discussed what happens when something was prepared in intentional defilement of Shabbos. However, what is the halachah if someone violated Shabbos unintentionally (beshogeig)? According to Rabbi Yehudah, one may eat the food after Shabbos is over. If the sin was performed unintentionally, no distinction is made between the person who violated Shabbos and anyone else -- we do not penalize the perpetrator after Shabbos is over. But Rabbi Yehudah requires that we defer the benefit until after Shabbos.

### III. Deferring use

The third opinion, Rabbi Meir, is more lenient. He agrees that no one may benefit from an item created through intentional desecration of Shabbos on Shabbos itself. However, once Shabbos is over, the item may be used. Furthermore, only something produced in intentional defiance of Shabbos may not be used. The results of shogeig, negligent, violation of Shabbos are permitted for use and even for consumption. Although violating Shabbos is a most severe desecration, the Torah did not ban benefiting from the crime. The Sages did not prohibit a product that results from a misdeed, but merely postponed using it until after Shabbos so as not to benefit from the sin, and this, only when the sin was performed intentionally.

To review, Rabbi Meir makes no distinction between the violator himself and others. He also contends that there is no prohibition at all against using an item negligently prepared on Shabbos. Thus, Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehudah are in dispute concerning two key points:

- (1) Whether or not the results of negligent violation of Shabbos are permitted. Rabbi Meir permits their use immediately whereas Rabbi Yehudah prohibits their use until Shabbos is over.
- (2) Whether or not food prepared in intentional desecration of Shabbos may be used after Shabbos by the desecrator. Rabbi Meir permits their use, whereas Rabbi Yehudah prohibits it.

#### How do we rule?

Most halachic authorities rule according to Rabbi Yehudah, although there are several who follow the more lenient opinion of Rabbi Meir (Gra, Orach Chayim 318). (Notably, the Rosh, in Bava Kamma 7:6, rules according to the stricter approach of Rabbi Yochanan Hasandlar; however, in Chullin 1:18 he seems to conclude otherwise.)

#### What is the legal definition of “negligent”?

Before we rule on our opening cases, we need to know what defines whether an activity is considered shogeig (negligent) or whether it qualifies as meizid (intentional).

Negligent violation (shogeig) includes someone who forgot or was unaware that it is Shabbos, or forgot or was unaware that the activity being performed is forbidden on Shabbos. Someone who was told in error that the particular activity is permitted is also considered shogeig. Even if a competent scholar was asked and he erred and permitted something forbidden, the action is still considered a violation and one may not benefit from the results until Shabbos is over (Magen Avraham 318:3). As I mentioned above, in any of these situations, one may use the item after Shabbos ends.

#### Example:

Devorah discovered that she prepared food on Shabbos in a way that the Torah prohibits. Since she was unaware of the halachah, this is an act of

shogeig, and the food may be eaten after Shabbos, but not on Shabbos, according to Rabbi Yehudah.

#### An intended beneficiary

As I explained above, Rabbi Yehudah maintains that a person who desecrated Shabbos intentionally may never benefit from the result, while others may benefit after Shabbos. Is the halachah different when the item was made to benefit someone specific? For example, if a Jew cooked for a guest on Shabbos, may the guest eat the food after Shabbos is over? Why should the intended beneficiary be treated more stringently than anyone else?

#### Not only Shabbos

To understand the background behind this question, we need to clarify some related issues. I mentioned above that Rabbi Yehudah prohibits the sinner from ever using an item that resulted from his desecration. This rule is not limited to Shabbos, but also applies to other areas of halachah. Here is an example:

#### Ein mevatein issur lechatchilah

Although prohibited substances that spill into food are sometimes nullified, this applies only when the mixture occurred inadvertently. One may not deliberately add prohibited food to kosher food in order to nullify the banned substance. This prohibition is called ein mevatein issur lechatchilah. Bitul is something that happens after the fact and cannot serve as a premeditated solution.

What happens if someone intentionally added a proscribed ingredient? Is the food now prohibited?

Indeed, the person who added the forbidden component may not consume it. This law is derived from the rules of Shabbos. Just as the intentional Shabbos desecrator may not benefit from his misdeed, so, too, the deliberate contaminator of kosher food may not consume the mixture (Gittin 54b). Therefore, if the CIA (Cashrus Intelligence Agency) detects the misdeed, the perpetrator will be banned from benefiting from the resultant product.

#### Already added

Because of the above rule, if an amount of non-kosher food too great to be nullified fell into food, one may not add extra kosher food or liquid in order to nullify the prohibited substance. This act is also prohibited under the heading of ein mevatein issur lechatchilah. Here, too, someone who knows that this act is prohibited and intentionally added permitted food to nullify the forbidden component may not consume it because he violated ein mevatein issur lechatchilah (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 99:5). However, if he did this negligently, he may use the finished product.

All these rulings derive from the laws of Shabbos that we discussed before. The person who added the product intentionally, knowing that this is prohibited, is comparable to someone who knowingly desecrates Shabbos, and may not benefit from his misdeed. However, the person who was unaware that his act is prohibited qualifies as a shogeig and may use the product. (Note that although on Shabbos we sometimes make a distinction between using the food on Shabbos and using it after Shabbos, no such distinction applies in the case of ein mevatein issur lechatchilah.)

#### Don't add water!

The following case explains this last situation more clearly. Mrs. Smallminded discovers that she inadvertently added a non-kosher ingredient to the huge pot of soup she is preparing for a family simcha. Realizing her error, she calls her rav, who concludes that the ratio of kosher to non-kosher in her soup is insufficient and that therefore the soup is not kosher. Unwilling to discard all her efforts and ingredients, Mrs. Smallminded adds water to the soup until there is sufficient kosher product to nullify the non-kosher ingredients. As mentioned above, this act is prohibited as a violation of the rule ein mevatein issur lechatchilah. If Mrs. Smallminded was

unaware that she was forbidden to add water, she qualifies as shogeig and may eat the soup. However, if she was aware that this was prohibited and she intentionally ignored the halachah, she may not eat the food, for this would allow her to benefit from her deliberate misdeed.

What about her guests?

Let us assume that Mrs. Smallminded realized that she was not allowed to add water, but did so anyway. Later, she has pangs of conscience about her misdeed. As I mentioned above, Mrs. Smallminded may not eat the soup. What about her guests? May they eat the soup because the non-kosher ingredient is indeed bateil, or are they also prohibited from eating it? The halachah is that the intended beneficiaries may not eat the soup. Since all of Mrs. Smallminded's family members and guests are intended beneficiaries, none of them may eat the soup (Rashba, Toras HaBayis 4:3, page 32; Tur Yoreh Deah 99). However, some authorities contend that this applies only if those people knew that the water was being mixed in for their benefit, as I will explain.

Not aware of the bitul

This leads us to a new question: What if the intended beneficiaries did not know that the item was being added for their benefit? Some authorities rule that in this last situation the intended beneficiary may use the product (Maharshal; Taz 99:10). However, many authorities conclude that they are still prohibited from using it. Furthermore, most rule that if a store added prohibited substances to kosher food in order to sell it to Jewish customers, no Jewish customers may consume the finished product since they are all considered intended beneficiaries (Shu't Rivash #498; Rabbi Akiva Eiger). According to this, Mrs. Smallminded's guests would be forbidden from eating her soup even though they were unaware of what she did.

You might ask, why are they being penalized from eating the luscious soup when they were completely unaware of her intent to violate the law? After all, not only did they not intentionally violate any laws, they did not even know what Mrs. Smallminded was doing in the kitchen!

The overambitious butcher

It is easiest to explain this ruling by examining a case discussed by earlier halachic authorities. A town butcher had mastered the proper skills to be a qualified shocheit, but had never passed the next step – being licensed to be a bodeik, the person who checks after the shechitah to ascertain that the animal contains no imperfections that render it tereifah. Nevertheless, this butcher-shocheit performed the shechitah and the bedikah himself, thereby overextending his "license." The shaylah was whether the meat could be eaten anyway, based on the halachah that if one cannot perform bedikah the animal is ruled kosher, since most animals are kosher.

The posek of the generation, the Rivash, ruled that no one may eat the meat. Although it is indeed true that if a bedikah cannot be performed the meat is kosher, one may not intentionally forgo the bedikah. The Rivash forbids the meat of the above-mentioned butcher-shocheit because of the principle of ein mevateilin issur lechatchilah, and rules that no one may use the meat, since all of the butcher's customers are intended beneficiaries of his violation. This is true even though the customers certainly did not want the butcher to forgo a proper bedikah. We see that when prohibited food is prepared for someone else, the authorities forbid the intended beneficiary from eating the food, even when he did not want the bitul to transpire.

An intended Shabbos beneficiary

Having established that mixing food in violation of halachah prohibits the resultant product, we now need to determine the law on Shabbos. Does halachah ban the intended beneficiary from benefiting from the item produced on Shabbos, even if he/she did not want the item prepared on

Shabbos?

The late halachic authorities dispute this question, some contending that since one cannot use the item until Shabbos is over, there is less reason to prohibit the intended beneficiary (Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham 318:2, based on Beis Yosef, Yoreh Deah 99). Others conclude that food cooked on Shabbos for customers remains prohibited forever since they are all intended beneficiaries (Shu't Ksav Sofer, Orach Chayim #50). If this question happens to you, I refer you to your rav or posek.

Answering our shaylos

At this point, let us try to resolve the different shaylos that I mentioned before.

Question #1: Cholent caper

Shimon negligently added spices to the cholent on Shabbos. Can his family still eat the cholent, or is it prohibited due to the prohibition of benefiting from melachah performed on Shabbos?

According to most authorities, the halachah follows Rabbi Yehudah and therefore this cholent would be prohibited, but only until Shabbos is over. However, some late authorities rule that, under extenuating circumstances, one may rely on those who accept Rabbi Meir's more lenient approach (Mishnah Berurah 318:7). According to this approach, one could permit even Shimon to enjoy his cholent on Shabbos if there is not enough ready food for the family.

Question #2: Bad advice

Mutual funds and Shabbos

Our second question was: "My main mutual fund has performed wonderfully over time and I am very satisfied with it. However, I recently read a transcript in which the fund manager, who is probably Jewish, referred to investment discussions with his staff on Friday night. I am concerned that I may be benefiting from chillul Shabbos that he performs in the course of researching venture possibilities for the fund. Must I pull my money out and look for another investment vehicle?"

Although we do not want to encourage anyone to desecrate Shabbos, there is, strictly speaking, no violation incurred in benefiting from this investment for an interesting reason. The prohibition of using something made on Shabbos applies only to an item that was actually created or transformed because of the desecration of Shabbos. Thus, the question applies to food made edible or clothing manufactured because of the Shabbos desecration. However, the fund manager's desecrating Shabbos does not create any object, so that even the strictest opinion of Rabbi Yochanan Hasandlar would not prohibit the money earned by the fund.

Notwithstanding that there is no halachic concern here, one is still entitled to discuss what is really a hashkafah question: Do I want to make profit that results, albeit only partly, from a Jew being mechaleil Shabbos? After all, Hashem provides livelihood and perhaps I should steer away from building my nest egg from someone's chillul Shabbos. I refer our readers who might have such a question to their own rav.

Question #3: The unrepentant knitter

Now let us now examine our third case above: Yehudis has a non-observant family member who has knit a baby blanket on Shabbos. May Yehudis use the blanket?

Assuming we follow Rabbi Yehudah's approach, the main question here is whether an intended beneficiary is prohibited forever from use of an item made in violation of Shabbos. Since most later authorities permit this benefit, I ruled that she could use the blanket.

Conclusion

Observing Shabbos is our acknowledgement that Hashem created everything and brought the Creation of the world to conclusion on the seventh day.



Shabbos is His statement that His creating the world was complete, and our observing Shabbos recognizes this. When we bring our workweek to a close, we thereby note Hashem's supremacy and the message of Shabbos. Unfortunately, not all our brethren understand this message, thus leading to many of the shaylos that we discussed in this article. We hope and pray that all Jews soon understand the full beauty of Shabbos.

[http://www.ou.org/holidays/tu-bav/rav\\_shlomo\\_aviner\\_on\\_tu\\_bav/](http://www.ou.org/holidays/tu-bav/rav_shlomo_aviner_on_tu_bav/)

**Orthodox Union / www.ou.org**  
**Rav Shlomo Aviner on Tu B'Av**  
**June 30, 2006**

Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel stated, "Israel had no holidays as joyous as Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur, when the young women of Jerusalem would go out and dance in the vineyards" (Mishna Ta'anit 4:8).

Our sages compared Tu B'Av to Yom Kippur, no less. What is so special about this day – the fifteenth day of the month of Av – which makes it deserving of such a noble comparison? We know that on Yom Kippur the second set of Tablets were given to Moshe Rabeinu, and Gd forgave the Jewish People the sin of the Golden Calf. Therefore this day, the day we received the Ten Commandments for the second time, has always been a day of forgiveness and rejoicing for us (see Rashi on Ta'anit 28:2).

The Talmud (in Baba Bathra 121a) gives six reasons for us to rejoice on Tu B'Av:

1. On this day, the tribes were granted permission to intermarry. In the first generation to enter the Land of Israel and to receive their portion of land, women who inherited their fathers were not allowed to marry out of their tribe, so as not to allow land belonging to one tribe to pass over to another. On Tu B'Av, the next generation of women were granted permission to marry whomever they desired, as the limitation on the first generation had expired. Unfortunately, today we still suffer from ethnic jealousy, and there are still Jews who consider it a tragedy if their offspring marries a Jew of another ethnic group.

2. The tribe of Benjamin was allowed to marry other tribes. In the civil war following the incident of "Pilegesh Bagiv'a," the tribe of Benjamin was almost wiped out, except for six hundred young men who managed to escape.

But the People of Israel took an oath at Mizpeh that they would not allow their daughters to marry anyone from the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 21). Later, when they realized that the tribe was in danger of extinction, they regretted the oath and looked for a way to allow the Benjaminites to marry and maintain themselves as a tribe. It was decided that no one would willingly give his daughter to a Benjaminite, but neither would he prevent him from "running off" with her. The men found out where the girls of Shiloh went to dance, and "carried them off," with the tacit agreement of the girls and their parents. Thus the tribe of Benjamin was saved from extinction.

3. The "Desert Generation" ended.

Following the Sin of the Spies, when the people of Israel cried that they would not go to the Land of Israel, the whole generation of Israelites who had left Egypt was sentenced to die in the Desert.

Every year until the fortieth year, on the eve of the Ninth of Av, Moshe Rabeinu would command them, "Go out and dig!" They would go out of their desert camp, dig themselves graves, and sleep in them overnight. The next morning, a messenger would proclaim, "Let the living separate from the dead!" About fifteen thousand men would have died that night; the others would return to the camp for another year.

In the last, fortieth year, no one died. At first they thought that they might have counted the days wrong, and so they slept in their graves the next night, too. This went on until the fifteenth of Av, when they finally realized that no

more people would die, and they declared that day a day of celebration (Talmud Yerushalmi, Ta'anit 4:6). (The reason they had not realized that the forty years were up was that they mistakenly counted forty years from the Sin of the Spies but, actually, the year they left Egypt was counted as the first year of the decree.)

In addition, all those years, Gd did not appear to Moshe Rabeinu in a prophecy, but rather communicated with him through the Urim and Tumim (Ta'anit 30:2).

This is like a couple who are angry with each other and write notes because they are not on speaking terms. On Tu B'Av of the fortieth year, Gd again began to speak to Moshe Rabeinu directly.

4. Yeravam Ben Nevat, the first king of the break-away Kingdom of Israel, feared that if Jerusalem, political capital of the Kingdom of Judah, continued also to serve as the spiritual capital of all Israel, it would weaken his sovereignty and eventually cause his downfall.

Therefore, he set up 'border policemen' to prevent anyone from the Kingdom of Israel from crossing over into the Kingdom of Judah and going to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem (I Kings 12). One of the last kings, Hoshea Ben Ela, annulled this decree on Tu B'Av, and allowed the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Although he was not known as one of the most righteous kings, this act of Hoshea was a noteworthy one (see Rashi on Ta'anit 31:1). In quantity, the number of mitzvot he did may not have been great, but in quality, this act of his was quite remarkable (see Rambam, Hilchot Teshuva 3:2).

5. Those who were killed at Beitar were buried.

At the end of the Bar Kochba revolt, the Romans conquered the city of Beitar and murdered thousands of Jews, leaving their corpses strewn all over. The Romans, who were bent on breaking the Jews' spirit, would not even allow them to bury their dead (Gittin 57-58; Ta'anit 31:1). Nothing could take the spirit out of the remaining Jewish soldiers more than the sight of their friends lying dead on the ground beside them. (This is something like what we experienced during the Yom Kippur War.)

In Beitar, miraculously, the bodies did not rot or smell during the prolonged period before Tu B'Av, when they were permitted to be buried.

On that day, our sages added another blessing to the Grace after Meals, "HaTov V'HaMeitiv": "HaTov – for the miracle of the bodies not emitting bad odors, and HaMeitiv – for they were permitted to be buried" (Brachot 48b). This blessing was added to honor the memory of Bar Kochba's fighters.

Whenever we eat bread, we recite this blessing, honoring the fighters despite the fact that the revolt itself was unsuccessful and we suffered great losses.

What connection is there between the tragedy of Beitar and the Grace after Meals? This same question may be asked about other blessings of the prayer. The first blessing, "Who sustains all life" is indeed a fitting blessing. But in the second paragraph, we thank Gd for giving us the Land of Israel, Brit Milah, and the Torah. What do these have to do with food? And in the third section, we pray, "Please have mercy on Israel, and on Jerusalem, and on the Kingdom of David, and on the Holy Temple."

The fourth section begins with thanksgiving for the burial of the corpses of Beitar. All of the above are important, but what connection do they have with the Grace after Meals?

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk explains that they remind us why we eat. We need strength so that we may strive on behalf of the common good, the Nation of Israel. By reciting the Grace after Meals, we attempt to sanctify the act of eating and to channel the strength it gives us into uplifting activity. Mentioning Torah, Eretz Israel, Jerusalem, and the Kingdom of David help us to utilize our strength to rebuild the Land and Jerusalem.

For that reason, our leaders composed these blessings. Moshe Rabeinu, who led us in the desert for forty years, composed the first blessing. Joshua, who brought us into the Land of Israel, composed the second. David and Solomon composed the blessing, "Who builds Jerusalem." Each one is a step

above the other (see Meshech Chochma to Deut. 8:10; Rav Kook, Siddur Olat Re'eya I, p. 361-3).

The fourth blessing, composed by our sages in honor of the dead of the Bar Kochba Revolt, represents another stage: Despite the traumatic defeat, we were not totally annihilated.

Divine Providence is particularly evident in the miraculous preservation of the corpses of Beitar until the time when they were finally brought to burial. The Bar Kochba Revolt was but another phase in the battle over Eretz Israel and Jerusalem. Even though it ended in defeat, we will eventually triumph in our battle. As Rav Kook wrote to his beloved Bnei Akiva, "Rabbi Akiva was full of enthusiasm and dedicated to strengthening every vision of redemption and renewal of Jewish life in Eretz Israel.

He supported the Bar Kochba Revolt and treated it as if it might be the Redemption (see Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 11:3). It is precisely because the revolt failed then, Bar Kochba was killed, and Jewish independence was lost, that we are certain that Rabbi Akiva's vision will one day come true.

"Failure will not overtake us a second time. It was not for nothing that the Nation of Israel fought for its very existence. Eventually, we shall be victorious; the day is fast approaching." (Ma'amarei Re'eya, Letter to Bnei Akiva, p. 203). The process of Redemption and Renewal today is simply a modern version of the Bar Kochba Revolt. The nation is re-awakening, and this time we shall certainly succeed, with the help of Gd.

6. No more trees were cut down for use on the Holy Altar.

The wood used to fuel the Holy Altar was dried, since fresh logs might contain worms. After Tu B'Av, the days become shorter and the sun is no longer strong enough to dry out freshly cut logs. Therefore, no more trees were cut down after Tu B'Av, and the day was nicknamed, "Axe-breaking Day" (Ta'anit 31a; Rashi op. cit.).

This, too, reminds us of our dedication to the Holy Temple. The Talmud tells us of the family of Salmai of Netofa: Once, the wicked rulers (the Romans) passed a law forbidding Jews to bring logs for the Altar to the Holy Temple. They stationed guards at checkpoints along the main roads, just as (the Kingdom of Israel's) Yerov'am ben Nevat had done, to prevent Jews from coming to the Temple.

What did the Gd-fearing men of that generation do? They made ladders out of the logs, and carried them on their shoulders. When the guards asked them, "Where are you going?" they answered, "To bring doves from our dovecotes down the road, using the ladders on our shoulders." As soon as they passed the checkpoint, they dismantled the ladders and brought the logs up to Jerusalem. These people deserve to be remembered as "Tzaddikim (righteous men) of blessed memory" (Ta'anit 28a).

Even under duress and persecution, we remained faithful to Jerusalem and to the Holy Temple.

All of the six incidents which are commemorated on Tu B'Av have one thing in common: On this day, different segments of the Jewish Nation were united:

Jews of different families and tribes were permitted to marry each other.

The tribe of Benjamin was once again allowed to marry women of other tribes, thus preventing them from extinction, despite the grave sin they had committed.

The Nation of Israel showed its commitment to the Land of Israel and the Holy Temple.

The Generation of the Desert ceased to die, and the sin of the spies was forgiven.

The border policemen preventing Jews from the Kingdom of Israel from coming to Jerusalem were sent away. As a result, the ties between the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah and the Holy Temple were re-established.

The corpses of Beitar were brought to burial, honoring the memory of these freedom-fighters who gave their lives to regain a sovereign state and the freedom to worship Gd as they chose.

Trees were no longer cut down to be burnt on the Altar. This custom of donating logs affords another opportunity to illustrate the dedication shown by righteous Jews even when they were persecuted.

"Who can compare to Your People, Israel, a singular Nation in the Land" (II Samuel 7:23): Domestic harmony within the Nation, and harmony between the Nation and its Land are really one and the same. In the Land of Israel, they become one People (Zohar, Parshat VaYikra 93b; the Natziv, Shivat Zion, vol. II; Eim HaBanim S'meicha, p.321).

Tu B'Av is the opposite of Tisha B'Av. In contrast to the baseless hatred that brought about the destruction of the Holy Temple and the Exile, the events commemorated on Tu B'Av revolve around love and unity among different sectors of the nation, and our deep connection to Israel and the Holy Temple. Tu B'Av is a day of renewal of ties among the nation, and Yom Kippur is a day of renewal of our ties to the Holy One of Blessed Name. On this day, we turn over a new leaf.

There is a famous story about the Ba'al Shem Tov, who sent his disciples to learn how to repent by following the example of a very simple man. They saw him standing in prayer, holding two notebooks, and speaking to Gd, "Master of the Universe, in this notebook I have recorded the many sins which I committed this past year. And in the other notebook I have recorded all the suffering and troubles you brought upon me. I will forgive You for all the troubles if You forgive me for all my sins!"

He then threw both notebooks into the fire. This should serve as a model for all our relationships – with our friends, our spouses, and so on. We must learn to throw all the notebooks into the fire, and begin anew.

This is also why it is fitting for Yom Kippur to be the "Wedding Day" of Israel to the Lrd, and Tu B'Av to be a day for Jewish weddings. Therefore, "Israel had no holidays as joyous as Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur.