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**Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

This week's parsha begins the seven-week period of consolation and condolence that bridges the time space between Tisha b'Av and Rosh Hashana. In order to properly prepare for the oncoming year and its challenges one must first be comforted by the vision of better times ahead and the belief in one's ability to somehow overcome those omnipresent challenges. Healing occurs when one believes that there is yet a future ahead.

All medical doctors agree that hope and optimism on the part of the patient are great aids in the process of recovering from illness or injury. If we would not have time and vision to recover from the sadness before the advent of the High Holy Days then those most meaningful days of our year would clearly be diminished measurably in our minds and hearts. Throughout the book of Dvarim, Moshe's pain at not being allowed to enter the Land of Israel is manifestably present. But Moshe is strengthened, and even somewhat consoled, by his vision of his student and loyal disciple, Yehoshua, succeeding

him in the leadership of Israel, and in his firm conviction that the people of Israel will successfully conquer and settle the Land of Israel.

Comfort and consolation come in varying forms. What comforts one individual may not be effective for another. But again, all agree that such consolation is a necessary ingredient in the restoration and rehabilitation of those who were depressed and saddened. There is no substitute for consolation and healing. Otherwise, it is impossible to continue in life. The parsha also deals with the Ten Commandments of Sinai. I have often thought that the repetition of this subject, which seemed to be adequately covered once in the Book of Shemot, teaches us an important lesson, which again may serve to be a source of consolation to us.

The "first" Ten Commandments was given at the beginning of the Jewish sojourn in the desert of Sinai. There was no Golden calf, no complaints about the manna, no spies, no Korach, no plagues of snakes – nothing had yet occurred to diminish the light and aura of Sinai. In such a perfect society, there is no reason not to recognize the values and laws of the commandments as being valid and even necessary in practice. But now Moshe stands forty years later, after all the disappointments and rebellions, the backsliding and the pettiness, the death of an entire generation, and reassures us in the "second" Ten Commandments, that all those values and rules have not changed at all. The lesson of the immutability of Torah and Halacha is engraved upon the Jewish heart and mind.

Many things have happened to the Jewish people since Moshe's speech before his death. Many have mistakenly thought that all the changes in technology, economies, world orders, etc. have made the Ten Commandments, Torah and Halacha somehow less relevant.

Moshe stands and speaks to us to remind us that the basic anchor of Jewish life, and in fact of all world civilization, lies in those words of Sinai. Everything has changed but human beings have not changed. And neither has God's instructions for us.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

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Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vaetchanan (Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11)

By **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Efrat, Israel – "And we dwelt in the valley, opposite the Temple of Peor" (Deuteronomy 3:29)

The contents of the final book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, are almost sandwiched between two curious references to a detestable idol: Baal Peor. At the conclusion of the first part of Moses' farewell speech to the Israelites, the text informs us that when Moses relinquished the baton of Jewish leadership to Joshua, "the Israelites had settled in the

valley, opposite the Temple of Peor” (Deuteronomy 3:29). Then at the closing of the book, in a poignant passage summarizing Moses’s life, the text reads: “And He [God] buried [Moses] in the valley in the Land of Moab opposite the Temple of Peor; no human being knows his burial place until this day” (Deut. 34:6).

Is it not strange that the only real landmark by which to identify Moses’s grave is “opposite the Temple of Peor”? What makes these references especially startling is the disgusting manner in which this idol was served: by defecating in front of it! What kind of idolatry is this? And what type of repulsive individuals would it be likely to attract?

Furthermore, the Sages of the Talmud (B.T. Sanhedrin 106a) suggest that when Balaam advised the Moabites on how to vanquish the Israelites, he suggested that they bring Moabite women to entice the Israelites and then assimilate them into their culture. In effect, Balaam was explaining that, although no external soothsayer or prophet could get the Almighty to curse Israel, the Israelites could in fact curse themselves out of existence through sexual licentiousness with gentile women. And so, “the Israelites dwelt in Shittim, and began to engage in harlotry with the daughters of Moab” – but God was not angry at them. It was only when “they became attached to Baal Peor that the wrath of God flared up against them” (Numbers 25:1-3). Sexual immorality led to idolatrous worship of Peor – and it was this idolatry that would ultimately ruin Israel.

What is it about Peor that is not only abominable but also so dangerous?

Balaam’s advice causes the Israelites to degenerate to lower and lower depths and the sexual debauchery becomes interchanged and intermingled with the worship and joining “together” with Peor. At this point, God tells Moses to take all the leaders of the nation and to slay them under the rays of the sun; but no sooner does Moses give this command than an Israelite (Zimri ben Salou, a prince of the tribe of Simeon) cohabits (joins together with) the Midianite princess Cosbi bat Zur – a flagrant and disgustingly public act of rebellion against Moses, his teaching and his authority. It appears as though Jewish history was about to conclude even before it had a chance to begin – when Phinehas steps in and saves the day. Phinehas seems to have been the antidote to Balaam, who, as we know from our text, was the son of Beor, strikingly similar to Peor (and in Semitic languages “b” and “p” can be interchangeable). It clearly emerges from the Talmudic discussion (B.T. Sanhedrin 64a) that Peor is the nadir – the lowest depth – of idolatrous practice. Is defecating before an idol the worst expression of idolatrous behavior?

The first two chapters of the Book of Genesis begin with two stories of the creation of the human being. Rav Soloveitchik describes these as two ways of looking at human personality: the first he calls homo natura, natural man, the human being as an inextricable part of the physical and animal world. This is

mechanistic man, scientifically predetermined and pre-programmed, devoid of freedom and so (ironically) freed from responsibility.

The second aspect of the human personality is introduced in the second chapter of Genesis with God’s breathing the breath of life, a portion of His very essential self (as it were), His soul, into the clay body He has just formed. This results in homo persona, a vitalistic and free human being, responsible for his actions and charged with the obligation to perfect, or complete, God’s imperfect and incomplete world.

And God created homo persona! Homo persona is given the command to refrain from eating the forbidden fruit, to control his physical drives and impulses, to recreate himself as well as the world around him.

Peor says that man must give back to God his animal and physical excretions, that man cannot be expected to rise above his nature and become God’s partner. Moses taught, on the other hand, that man can and must enable, uplift and sanctify his material being until he can truly see himself as “only a little lower than God, crowned with honor and glory.”

Moses and Phinehas are the antithesis of Balaam and Peor, and so Moses is buried opposite Peor.

Shabbat Shalom!

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### **Drasha**

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

Parshas Vaeschanan

Living Proof

When relating the greatness of Jewish revelation, Moshe tells us something unique about our heritage. In fact, it is a powerful detail that separates us from any other civilization on the face of this earth.

He says: “For inquire now regarding the early days that preceded you, from the day when Hashem created man on the earth, and from one end of heaven to the other end of heaven: has there ever been anything like this great thing, or has anything like it been heard? Has a people ever heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and survived?” (Deuteronomy 4:34)

What strikes me as odd is the latter part of the verse the words “and survived.” Isn’t the great claim that Jews heard Hashem speak not through an intermediary but rather directly to them at Sinai?

Why then does Moshe add the words, “and survived?” Isn’t our direct conversation with the Almighty absolute proof of undeniable Divinity? And though the commentaries point out that survival after such revelation is surely miraculous, survival after revelation surely does not sound as powerful as the revelation itself.

Moshe could have just as well stated, “Has there ever been anything like this great thing or has anything like it been

heard? Has a people ever heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire as you have heard?"

That alone should prove our unique qualities to any skeptic. Obviously, the addendum, "and survived!" adds a unique Jewish perspective.

The prospective employee walked in to the president's office seeking a job. After an extensive interview, the fellow was offered a job with a decent salary.

"Are there health benefits?" he asked.

"No, young man," the president responded, "we do not offer health benefits."

"Oh," the young man countered, "in my last job we had a full medical and dental package! Tell me," he added, "is there sick pay?" "I'm sorry son," responded the boss, "in this company, you get only paid for the days you work!"

"Well," protested the eager want-to-be worker, "in my last job they gave me two weeks sick pay! But tell me," he offered, "are there paid vacations?"

"I'm sorry," the boss responded once again, "there are no paid vacations, but you can have a week off in August without pay!"

"What?" retorted the astonished young man. "In my last job we each had one-month paid vacation! Well, are there year-end bonuses at least?"

"NOOO!" the prospective boss bellowed, tired of the young man's questions.

"Do you give us a car?" the prospective employee pursued. Again, this time quite emphatically, the boss responded, "No!"

At this point, the president of the company did not let his prospective continue his inquisition; instead, he asked one simple question of his own.

"I don't understand," he said. "If your last employer gave you full health benefits, sick days, paid vacations, cars, and end-of-year bonuses, why in the world would you want to switch to this company?"

The young man shrugged. "My old company went bankrupt two weeks after it started!"

Moshe Rabbeinu asks Klal Yisrael the 4,000 year-old question. While many nations tell stories about great miracles that occurred to the founders, never is there an entire race who can say "my grandfathers and grandmothers witnessed the miracles!"

Judaism is the only religion that proudly declares that 600,000 adult men, and an equal or greater number of women and children, stood at Mount Sinai and saw God speak to them directly. They passed on that great vision to their children, and their children to their children, until this very day. "It is not an esoteric fable," says Moshe, "They lived!" The vision of Sinai is not ancient history. The vision is alive!

Others tell tales of miraculous events witnessed by a handful of disciples who left no descendants. Maimonides traces history from the foot of Sinai to the footstools of the Talmud!

Thus Moshe declares to his people a message that as relevant to us as it was them in the arid desert some 3,312 years ago. There is no nation on the face of this earth, which claims to have experienced multitudes of miracles occur to masses of people — all of whom lived to pass the revelation to their children's ears.

Yes, in other cultures, there may be tales of a few miraculous events attributed to a few people. But when you dig for the roots and the original protagonists, you won't find them they went bankrupt.

(c) 2000 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Larry Atlas in memory of David Atlas

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## **Mezuzah Mysteries**

**By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

### Question #1: The Pantry Predicament

Several frum families have recently moved to an apartment complex where the residences are virtually identical. Each apartment has a small pantry off the kitchen, and we need to know whether the pantry doorway requires a mezuzah, and if so, where to place it. Each family has asked this question from its posek, and collectively there have been four completely different answers.

A. Sarah was told that she should place a mezuzah on the righthand side of the door as one enters the pantry from the kitchen.

B. Rivkah was told to place the mezuzah on the opposite side – on the righthand side as one leaves the pantry to reenter the kitchen.

C. Rachel was told that she does not need a mezuzah at all.

D. Leah was told to place two mezuzos, one on each side. How can there be four different opinions how to place the mezuzah? Furthermore, since we know that one always places the mezuzah on the righthand side entering the room (Yoma 11b), why were Rivkah and Leah told to put mezuzos on the left side?

### Question #2: Kitchens and Living Rooms

Reuven just moved into a new house where the entrances to several rooms are really openings in the walls, rather than full doorways, as is not uncommon in modern houses. Do these entrances require a mezuzah?

### The "Ten Commandments" of Mezuzah

The laws governing where one places a mezuzah are indeed complicated, and we remind our readers to ask his or her posek what to do in each specific situation. The Rambam (Hilchos Mezuzah 6:1) codifies ten necessary requirements that must be fulfilled for a house or room to be obligated to have a mezuzah.

1. The room must have a minimum area of four amos by four amos (which is about fifty square feet). In the Rambam's opinion, it is not necessary that each side be at least four amos wide – if the room or building's area is at least sixteen square amos one must place a mezuzah on its entrance. Thus, according to the Rambam's opinion, a room that is three amos wide but six amos long requires a mezuzah.

However, the Rosh and others disagree, contending that a room three amos wide and six amos long does not require a mezuzah since it does not have four amos in each dimension. In other words, the Rosh contends that a normal living area must be at least four amos per side.

The authorities accept the Rambam's position as the primary halachic opinion, and therefore one is required to place a mezuzah at the doorway to a room that is sixteen square amos even if it is narrower than four amos (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 286:13). Nevertheless, one does not recite a beracha when placing only this mezuzah. Instead, one should recite a beracha prior to placing a different mezuzah on a doorway that all authorities require a mezuzah, and after installing that mezuzah, put up a mezuzah on the door of the room that is narrower than four amos (Shach). (This general rule applies in any case when there is a safek whether to install a mezuzah. Do not recite a beracha, but, optimally, place this mezuzah immediately after putting up a different mezuzah that requires a beracha, thereby including the safek situation.)

Let us now return to the rest of the Rambam's Ten Mezuzah Rules – that is, the ten necessary conditions that require a house or room to have a mezuzah.

2. The entrance must have sideposts on both sides. I will soon explain what this means.

3. The entrance must have a mashkof, that is, something that comes down vertically, similar to the way a lintel functions as the top of a doorway.

4. The room or house must be roofed. An enclosed yard or porch without a roof does not require a mezuzah, although sometimes the doorway to an unroofed yard or porch functions as an entrance to the house and requires a mezuzah for this reason. However, a doorway of an unroofed room or building that is not an entranceway to a house does not need a mezuzah.

5. In the Rambam's opinion, a mezuzah is required only when the entrance has a door. This is a minority opinion; most Rishonim contend that the lack of a door does not absolve the requirement of a mezuzah. The accepted conclusion is to install a mezuzah in a doorway that has no door, but not to recite a beracha when doing so (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 286:15). (Again, the best option here is to place this mezuzah immediately after putting up a mezuzah in a place that all opinions require one, recite a beracha on that mezuzah and then immediately install the mezuzah on the doorway that lacks a door.)

6. The sideposts of the entrance are at least ten tefachim tall, which is between about 32 and 38 inches.

7. The house or room does not have the sanctity of a shul or beis medrash. The Rambam contends that a beis medrash is exempt from mezuzah. Nevertheless, most authorities rule that a beis medrash should have a mezuzah; accepted practice is to place a mezuzah on a beis medrash without a beracha. Common practice today is to treat a shul as a beis medrash and, therefore, to place a mezuzah on its door without a beracha.

8. The house or room is intended for human habitation. For example, stables and barns are absolved of the requirement of mezuzah.

9. The house or room is meant for an honorable use, as opposed to a bathroom or similar rooms, where we do not install a mezuzah.

10. The room or house is intended for permanent use. For example, do not install a mezuzah on a sukkah.

Having covered the basic rules of mezuzah, we can discuss these rules in more depth and resolve the pantry predicament mentioned above. The Gemara (Sukkah 3a) rules that a house smaller than four amos squared is too small to be considered a house, which affects many laws, including that it is exempt from mezuzah (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 286:13). Such a house is too small for habitation.

However, there are several important discussion points:

What if the "house" is not meant for general habitation, but is intended for a specific use, for which it is indeed suited, notwithstanding that it is smaller than four amos squared? Some authorities contend that an area smaller than four amos, but suitable for its intended purpose, requires a mezuzah (Chamudei Daniel, quoted by Pischei Teshuvah). Those who accept this position require a mezuzah on a pantry smaller than fifty square feet,

since it is suitable for its specific use. This explains why Sarah was told that she should place a mezuzah on the righthand side entering the pantry. The rav she asked follows the approach of the Chamudei Daniel (Chovas Hadar, page 38, cites many authorities who rule this way).

Are you Coming or Going?

At this point, I want to explain the answer Rivkah received, to place a mezuzah on the right entranceway reentering the kitchen from the pantry. Many authorities do not accept the approach of the Chamudei Daniel, contending that since Chazal ruled that a house smaller than four amos squared does not require a mezuzah, this is without exceptions. However, some authorities maintain that, this room never requires a mezuzah in its own right, when it connects to a larger room, the doorway between them requires a mezuzah as an entrance to the larger room (Rabbi Akiva Eiger). If the pantry were to disappear, that doorway would serve exclusively as an entrance to the kitchen, and, as such, it requires a mezuzah already. In

this case, the mezuzah should be placed on the righthand side entering the kitchen, and not the righthand side entering the pantry.

#### No Mezuzah Need Apply

At this point, we will explore a third approach to the above question. Rachel's rav ruled that her pantry doorway requires no mezuzah on either side. This is because he agrees that there is no requirement to place a mezuzah entering the pantry, notwithstanding that it is suitable to its purpose, since it is smaller than four amos squared. He also holds that there is no requirement to place a mezuzah entering the kitchen. Whereas Rabbi Akiva Eiger contends that we remove the pantry from the picture and require a mezuzah, this approach understands that it is viewed exclusively as an entrance to the pantry, not to the kitchen. If the pantry is too small to necessitate a mezuzah, then this doorway does not require a mezuzah at all (Daas Kedoshim 286:13).

#### Double Duty

What remains is to explain the answer that Leah received that one must place a mezuzah on both sides. This rabbi holds that perhaps the Chamudei Daniel is correct to install a mezuzah on the right side entering the pantry, and perhaps Rabbi Akiva Eiger is correct to install a mezuzah on the right side entering the kitchen. Although many authorities object to having mezuzos on both sides (Shu"t Maharam Shik, Yoreh Deah 287, see also Chovas Hadar), there are authorities who see no problem with having mezuzos on both sides when it is uncertain which side should have the mezuzah (Shu"t Binyan Tzion 1:100).

#### What Type of Sidepost is this?

At this point, let us discuss Reuven's question. In contemporary residences, the entrance of many of the rooms is often not via a door, but through an entranceway. Does such an entrance require a mezuzah? These doorways take many different forms. Sometimes there is a full doorway without a door, the entrance way being structured simply by having an opening in a wall. This type of entrance is exceedingly common as the opening between a living room and a dining room.

In a second option, the entranceway is formed by having a wall separate the room on one side, whereas the other side of the entrance is a straight wall with no distinguishing feature [K1]. To determine whether these entrances require a mezuzah we need to discuss three of the above-mentioned rules categorized by the Rambam.

The first point is that since these entrances do not have doors, we do not recite a beracha even in a situation when we decide that we should place a mezuzah on the doorway. As I mentioned above, most authorities require a mezuzah in this case, but out of deference to the Rambam (rule #5) who rules that such a doorway does not require a mezuzah, we do not recite a beracha.

Our next germane question is whether the entrance has a mashkof (rule #3), meaning something similar to a lintel that makes the entrance appear like a doorway. As I mentioned above, an entrance must have a mashkof, a type of lintel at its top, to require a mezuzah.

#### What is a mashkof?

When building a house, one must be certain that the part of the building above a door or a window is properly supported so that it does not tumble down on its inhabitants, something that will ruin the contractor's reputation and potentially could hurt someone. A lintel is the architectural piece that provides this support. The lintel itself usually rests its own weight and that which it supports on sideposts.

The laws of mezuzah do not require that the sideposts or the lintel actually carry the weight of the area above the door. It is adequate if the sideposts and the mashkof, or lintel, only accomplish an aesthetic function of giving the entrance the appearance of a doorway. However, when there is no mashkof at all, that is, nothing comes down vertically to give the appearance of a lintel, there is no requirement to install a mezuzah, even when there are two proper sideposts and even when there is a door.

In modern construction, most doorways to kitchens, living rooms, dining rooms, and dens have a piece of wall that protrudes down from the ceiling to give the appearance of a mashkof. This is for aesthetic reasons – to provide more of a sense that this is a separate room. However, when the ceiling above the room's entrance is a horizontal plane without anything protruding downward to form a mashkof, there is no requirement to install a mezuzah even when the entrance has all the other appurtenances of a door.

Reuven ended up showing his new house to his rav, so that he could get a clear psak.

His rav pointed out that the entrance to Reuven's kitchen has no mashkof, and therefore there is no requirement to place a mezuzah there. However, both the entrance to his living room and the opening between his living room and dining room do have a section like a wall coming down from the ceiling to form the appearance of an entranceway. This qualifies halachically as a mashkof.

#### Is this considered a sidepost?

The rav then examined the other room entrances to see if they required mezuzos. At this point, we need to examine the situation, quite common in modern construction, when there is no sidepost that supports a lintel, but there is an end of a wall that provides some of the aesthetic appearance that there is an entrance to the room. To understand whether this is considered a sidepost for the purposes of requiring a mezuzah, I will quote a passage of the Gemara:

"Ameimar said: An entranceway formed by a corner (in Aramaic de'ikarna) requires a mezuzah. Rav Ashi said to Ameimar: 'But it has no sidepost!' To which Ameimar retorted,

'these [that is, the corners of the wall] are its sideposts'" (Menachos 34a).

What is meant by "an entranceway formed by a corner"?

A Sidepost Created by the End of a Wall

The Rosh (Hilchos Mezuzah #14) explains that the case is where one entire wall of the room or house is missing, and thus the entranceway is created by the wall ending, rather than the existence of an actual door. This is exactly what we find in modern construction, where the entrances to kitchens, dining rooms, living rooms, dens, and hallways are often created without a proper entranceway, but simply by a wall. Rav Ashi rules that since these rooms have no sideposts on that side, there is no requirement to place a mezuzah. Ameimar disagreed, contending that the "ends" of the walls qualify as sideposts. Both scholars agree that if one side of the entrance does not have the end of a wall, but is a continuing wall, that there is no sidepost on that side. Does this automatically remove the requirement of mezuzah? For this we need to examine a different passage of Gemara.

Later in its discussion, the Gemara notes that this is a matter disputed by Tannayim, the Sages contending that there is obligation of mezuzah unless the entrance has both sideposts, and Rabbi Meir requiring a mezuzah when the solitary sidepost is on the right side, but not when there is only a sidepost on the left side.

Do we rule like the Sages or like Rabbi Meir?

The Rambam (rule #2) concludes like the Sages, and, therefore, in his opinion, one needs a mezuzah only when there are two sideposts. This is also the conclusion of the Shulchan Aruch. This approach exempts both the entrance to Reuven's kitchen and the entrance to his dining room from the mitzvah of mezuzah. (We noted above that his kitchen did not require a mezuzah anyway because of the lack of a mashkof.)

However, most authorities rule that if there is a right sidepost one should place a mezuzah there, albeit without a beracha. So now Reuven has his answer: The rooms where there is a right sidepost upon entering require a mezuzah without a beracha, whereas those where there is no right sidepost do not. Mezuzah Rewards

Aside from fulfilling a mitzvah commanded by Hashem, the mezuzah reminds us of Hashem's presence, every time we enter and exit our houses. We touch the mezuzah whenever we enter or exit a building to remind ourselves of Hashem's constant presence and protection. The mezuzah is thus a physical and spiritual protective shield. In addition, the Gemara teaches that someone who is meticulous in his observance of the laws of mezuzah will merit acquiring a nice home (Shabbos 23b). We thus see that care in observing this mitzvah not only protects one's family against any calamity, but also rewards one with a beautiful domicile. May we all be zocheh to always be careful in our observance of the laws of

mezuzah and the other mitzvos, and reap all the rewards, both material and spiritual, for doing so!

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## COVENANT & CONVERSATION

### The Right and the Good - VA'ETCHANAN

#### Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZT"L

Vaetchanan image wrong way right way signpost ethics morality good bad direction signs

Buried among the epic passages in Va'etchanan – among them the Shema and the Ten Commandments – is a brief passage with large implications for the moral life in Judaism. Here it is together with the preceding verse:

Be very vigilant to keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and the testimonies and decrees with which He has charged you. Do what is right and what is good in the Lord's eyes, so that it may go well with you, and you may go in and take possession of the good land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give you.

Deut. 6:17-18

The difficulty is obvious. The preceding verse makes reference to commandments, testimonies, and decrees. This, on the face of it, is the whole of Judaism as far as conduct is concerned.

What then is meant by the phrase "the right and the good" that is not already included within the previous verse?

Rashi says it refers to "compromise (that is, not strictly insisting on your rights) and action within or beyond the letter of the law (lifnim mi-shurat ha-din)." The law, as it were, lays down a minimum threshold: this we must do. But the moral life aspires to more than simply doing what we must.[1] The people who most impress us with their goodness and rightness are not merely people who keep the law. The saints and heroes of the moral life go beyond. They do more than they are commanded. They go the extra mile. That, according to Rashi, is what the Torah means by "the right and the good."

Ramban, while citing Rashi and agreeing with him, goes on to say something slightly different:

At first Moses said that you are to keep His statutes and his testimonies which He commanded you, and now he is stating that even where He has not commanded you, give thought as well to do what is good and right in his eyes, for He loves the good and the right.

Now this is a great principle, for it is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man's conduct with his neighbours and friends, all his various transactions and the ordinances of all societies and countries. But since He mentioned many of them, such as, "You shall not go around as a talebearer," "You shall not take vengeance nor bear a grudge," "You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbour," "You shall not curse the deaf," "You shall rise before the hoary head," and the like, He went on to state in a general way that in all matters one should do what is good and right, including even compromise and

going beyond the strict requirement of the law... Thus one should behave in every sphere of activity, until he is worthy of being called “good and upright.”

Ramban is going beyond Rashi’s point, that the right and the good refer to a higher standard than the law strictly requires. It seems as if Ramban is telling us that there are aspects of the moral life that are not caught by the concept of law at all. That is what he means by saying “It is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man’s conduct with his neighbours and friends.”

Law is about universals, principles that apply in all places and times: Do not murder. Do not rob. Do not steal. Do not lie. Yet there are important features of the moral life that are not universal at all. They have to do with specific circumstances and the way we respond to them. What is it to be a good husband or wife, a good parent, a good teacher, a good friend? What is it to be a great leader, or follower, or member of a team? When is it right to praise, and when is it appropriate to say, “You could have done better”? There are aspects of the moral life that cannot be reduced to rules of conduct, because what matters is not only what we do, but the way in which we do it: with humility or gentleness or sensitivity or tact.

Morality is about persons, and no two persons are alike. When Moses asked God to appoint his successor, he began his request with the words, “Lord, God of the spirit of all flesh.” (Num. 27:16) On this the Rabbis commented: what Moses was saying was that each person is different, so he asked God to appoint a leader who would relate to each individual as an individual, knowing that what is helpful to one person may be harmful to another.[2] This ability to judge the right response to the right person at the right time is a feature not only of leadership, but of human goodness in general.

Rashi begins his commentary to Bereishit with the question: If the Torah is a book of law, why does it not start with the first law given to the people of Israel as a whole, which does not appear until Exodus 12? Why does it include the narratives about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the patriarchs and matriarchs and their children? Rashi gives an answer that has nothing to do with morality – he says it has to do with the Jewish people’s right to their land. But the Netziv (R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin; 1816-1893) writes that the stories of Genesis are there to teach us how the patriarchs were upright in their dealings, even with people who were strangers and idolaters. That, he says, is why Genesis is called by the Sages “the book of the upright.”[3]

Morality is not just a set of rules, even a code as elaborate as the 613 commands and their rabbinic extensions. It is also about the way we respond to people as individuals. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is at least in part about what went wrong in their relationship when the man referred to his wife as Ishah, ‘woman,’ a generic description, a type. Only when he gave her a proper name, Chavah, Eve, did he relate to

her as an individual in her individuality, and only then did God make “garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.” (Gen. 3:21)

This too is the difference between the God of Aristotle and the God of Abraham. Aristotle thought that God knew only universals not particulars. This is the God of science, of the Enlightenment, of Spinoza. The God of Abraham is the God who relates to us in our singularity, in what makes us different from others as well as what makes us the same.

This ultimately is the difference between the two great principles of Judaic ethics: justice and love. Justice is universal. It treats all people alike, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, making no distinctions on the basis of colour or class. But love is particular. A parent loves their children for what makes them each unique. The moral life is a combination of both. That is why it cannot be reduced solely to universal laws. That is what the Torah means when it speaks of “the right and the good” over and above the commandments, statutes, and testimonies.

A good teacher knows what to say to a struggling student who, through great effort, has done better than expected, and to a gifted student who has come top of the class but is still performing below their potential. A good employer knows when to praise and when to challenge. We all need to know when to insist on justice and when to exercise forgiveness. The people who have had a decisive influence on our lives are almost always those we feel understood us in our singularity. We were not, for them, a mere face in the crowd. That is why, though morality involves universal rules and cannot exist without them, it also involves interactions that cannot be reduced to rules.

Rabbi Israel of Rizhin (1796-1850) once asked a student how many sections there were in the Shulchan Aruch. The student replied, “Four.” “What,” asked the Rizhiner, “do you know about the fifth section?” “But there is no fifth section,” said the student. “There is,” said the Rizhiner. “It says: always treat a person like a mensch.”

The fifth section of the code of law is the conduct that cannot be reduced to law. That is what it takes to do the right and the good.

[1] See Lon Fuller, *The Morality of Law* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969), and Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein’s much reprinted article, “Does Jewish Tradition Recognize an Ethic Independent of the Halakhah?” in *Modern Jewish Ethics*, ed. Marvin Fox (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975), pp. 62–88. [2] Sifre Zuta, *Midrash Tanhuma and Rashi to Numbers ad loc.* [3] Ha-amek Davar to Genesis, Introduction.

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Fw from [Hamelaket@gmail.com](mailto:Hamelaket@gmail.com)

**Rabbi Yochanan Zweig**

This week’s Insights is dedicated to the memory of an individual who was instrumental to the development of the Yeshiva’s campus: Mr. Sami Rohr of blessed memory.

**An Eternal Present**

### **I beseeched Hashem at that time [...] (3:23).**

This week's parsha opens with Moshe recalling when he implored Hashem to allow him to enter Eretz Yisroel, and how Hashem became angry with him and rejected his request. Rashi (ad loc) points out that the word for implore in Hebrew is a derivation of the word "chinun," which means to ask for a gift. Rashi goes on to explain that, while the righteous could ask Hashem to give them what they deserve based on their good deeds, the righteous request that Hashem give them "gifts for free" instead. However, this notion requires further clarification.

Shlomo Hamelech writes, "he that abhors a gift will live" (Mishlei 15:27). This principle is further clarified by Chazal who deride receiving gifts by saying, "When those who receive gifts became numerous, the days became few and years short, as it is written, 'He who hates gifts shall live'" (Sotah 47b). Several Talmudic sources likewise indicate that one must be careful not to receive gifts. Therefore, asking for a gift seems to go against the very nature of what Judaism stands for! So why does Rashi say that the righteous ask Hashem for a gift? In truth, Shlomo Hamelech's principal of abhorring gifts needs to be more fully understood. Are we to believe that a person shouldn't accept a gift from his parents or spouse? Should he really abhor the pen holder that his child will inevitably bring home from kindergarten and proudly present to him as a gift? Like every part of the Torah, the explanation lies in a close reading of the verse. Shlomo Hamelech says that abhorring a present will enable a person to "live." What did he mean? As Ramchal explains in the beginning of the Derech Hashem, the Almighty created the world in order to give man the ultimate "good." The very essence of this structure requires us to earn this "good" through a system of making decisions that will result in reward or punishment. Ramchal goes on to explain that the reason Hashem didn't just bestow this "good" on mankind is because that would be akin to receiving charity. Therefore, Hashem gives the opportunity to earn this reward, so that we feel it is truly ours and a product of our efforts. This "product of our efforts" is what gives our existence meaning; thus, it allows us to feel that we exist.

When a person receives a gift it takes away from his feeling of existence, and this is why it is embarrassing; it is as if we are not able to provide for ourselves. This is why Shlomo Hamelech said, "he who abhors a gift will live." Providing for oneself is what affirms that our existence is justified.

The only exception to this is receiving gifts based on a relationship. There is no issue when receiving gifts from one's parents, spouse, or children because those gifts are an expression of love. In fact, receiving this expression of love is an incredible validation of oneself. This is what the righteous are asking for; "Hashem please give me a gift as an expression of our close relationship, not merely because I have earned it like a paycheck." Receiving a gift from Hashem is an

incredible affirmation of the relationship, which is what every tzaddik desires – a close relationship with Hashem.

Wholly-ness

Hear, O Israel: Hashem our God, Hashem is One (6:4).

Toward the end of this week's parsha, we have perhaps the most famous possuk in the entire Torah: "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad" (6:4). This verse constitutes what amounts to the Jewish pledge of allegiance, as it were, and is recited (at least) twice daily.

Rashi (ad loc) interprets this possuk in a novel way; "today Hashem is our God and not the God of the other nations of the world, but in the future He will be recognized by all the nations of the world. This is in accordance with the possuk 'On that day, Hashem will be One and His Name One'" (Zecharia 14:9). Seeing as the shema is a Jewish affirmation of faith it seems a little odd that we place such an emphasis on what the rest of the world does or does not believe.

Meaning, declaring that Hashem is our king fulfills the requirements of a pledge of allegiance. But why should "our" shema focus on the prophetic vision regarding the future religious beliefs of the rest of the world?

Ramchal, in his introduction to what is probably his most famous work, the Messilas Yesharim (Path of the Just), makes a remarkable statement: "The essence of all this (i.e. cultivation and correction of character traits) is that a person conforms all his actions and traits to what is just and ethical. Our sages have summarized this idea: 'All that is praiseworthy to the doer and brings him praise from others' (Avos 2:1). That is to say – all that leads to the essence of the true good, namely strengthening of Torah and repairing the brotherhood of nations."

We see from here a very fundamental element of Jewish philosophy, and one that people often overlook. One of the major reasons that we have to instill in ourselves proper character traits and conduct ourselves in an ethical and just manner is to impress upon the rest of the world the value of Hashem's way of life as proscribed to us through the Torah. The reason for this, as explained by Ramchal in the Messilas Yesharim, is to bring unity to the world. In other words, when there is a recognition that "our" God's way of living is the proper way to live, we bring recognition to the world of the One True God. Recognizing that we (i.e. the entire world) are all children of Hashem will bring unity to the world. That is, all the nations will then know that the entire world is really just one large "family."

This is why the shema contains the prophetic vision of the future. We must certify daily that we accept this responsibility to make Hashem known to the rest of the world. We cannot merely focus on ourselves; we have to undertake the mission of unifying the world with the recognition of the One True God. This will herald in the time of the ultimate redemption

and this is why this parsha is read following Tisha B'Av. May we be zocheh to achieve this redemption speedily in our days.

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Parashat Va'etchanan 5756 - "The double motif of Shema"

The Weekly Internet

P A R A S H A - P A G E

by **Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld**

of Har Nof, Jerusalem

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This week's Parasha-Page has been dedicated by Rabbi Dr. Eli Turkel, to the memory of his father, Israel (Reb Yisroel Shimon) Turkel, O.B.M.

Parashat Va'etchanan 5756

### THE DOUBLE MOTIF OF "SHEMA"

Hear O Israel ("Shema Yisroel"), Hashem is our L-rd, Hashem is One! Love Hashem with all your heart, all your soul and all your wealth...Teach the words of the Torah to your children; speak them while sitting at home and while on the road, when you go to sleep and when you rise. (Devarim 6:4,5,7)

The above verses from this week's Parasha begin the prayer known as "Keriyat Shema". Reading the Keriyat Shema twice daily constitutes a biblical injunction. The Gemara tells us why this particular selection is read as the first of the three selections that comprise the Keriyat Shema:

Said Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korhah: Why is Shema Yisrael read before V'haya Im Shamoah? Because it is necessary to first accept upon ourselves Hashem's sovereignty [by saying "Hear O Israel..."] before we accept upon ourselves to fulfill His commandments [in V'haya Im Shamoah]. (Mishnah, Berachot 13a)

The Mishnah makes it clear that the primary emphasis of the verses of Shema Yisrael is that we are accepting upon ourselves Hashem as our King.

### II

However, the Gemara later in Berachot points out what would appear to be an entirely different theme in Shema Yisroel:

Said Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai: It is appropriate to read Shema Yisrael before V'haya Im Shamoah because Shema Yisrael instructs us to learn the Torah ourselves, while V'haya tells us to teach it to others [and one cannot teach the Torah before learning it one's self - Rashi]. (Berachot 14b)

From this it would appear that the keynote of Shema Yisrael is that we must learn the Torah. As the Gemara (ibid.) continues, the two sources do not disagree; Shema Yisrael underscores *both* the theme of accepting Hashem's sovereignty and of learning His Torah.

The Torah-learning theme that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai attested to is again evident in a statement he himself made elsewhere.

Said Rav Yochanan in the name of R' Shimon bar Yochai:

One who reads Shema Yisrael morning and evening has fulfilled the injunction thatt "the words of this Torah shall not move from your mouth (Yehoshua 1:3)". (Menachot 99b)

Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai is telling us that Shema Yisrael not only *bids* us to learn the Torah -- it is a self-fulfilling lesson! The biblical requirement to recite Shema twice daily is not only meant to remind ourselves of our obligation to learn Torah. It is actually starting us on our way, providing us with a minimal amount of Torah study through reading Shema itself. Similarly:

When a child begins to speak, it is incumbent on his father to teach him two verses [in order to begin him in the study of Torah -- Shenot Eliyahu to Berachot 3:3]: "Moshe gave us the Torah, it is the legacy of the Jewish People (Devarim 33:4)": and "Hear O Israel..." (Sukkah 42a)

Shema Yisrael is the archetypal Torah-learning.

### III

The two motifs encapsulated in Shema Yisrael are reflected in the blessings we recite before saying Shema Yisrael in our daily prayers. In the morning, Shema is preceded by two blessings: The first ("Yotzer Or") describes the grandness of the celestial bodies which constantly bear witness to the exalted nature of their Creator. This is a proper blessing for the aspect in Shema Yisrael that emphasizes accepting Hashem's sovereignty -- a lesson that may be learned through reflecting on the heavenly bodies (see Tehillim 19:2; Parasha-Pages for Sukkot and Vayishlach 5756).

In the second blessing ("Ahava Rabba") we beseech Hashem to teach us His Torah. This corresponds to the second aspect of Shema. (The Gemara in fact tells us that this prayer serves not only as a blessing upon the recital of Shema, it serves as a blessing upon Torah learning in general as well (Berachot 11b)). The same two themes repeat themselves in the blessings that precede the evening recital of Shema ("HaMa'ariv Aravim" and "Ahavat Olam").

It may be shown that these two themes are actually one and the same. As the Midrash tells us:

We are told to love Hashem (Devarim 6:5)-- but how does one bring himself to love Him? The verse provides the answer: "The words of the Torah which I command you today shall remain in your hearts...(ibid 6:6)" -- through this, you will come to recognize the Creator and cleave to His ways. (Sifri, Devarim #33, quoted in part by Rashi to Devarim 6:6)

Learning Hashem's Torah is a direct path towards developing a love for Hashem and accepting His sovereignty. When we see the beauty of the Torah's laws and its outlook on life, we appreciate the love that Hashem has bestowed upon us by giving us His Torah and we show our love for Him in return. This is why the pre-Shema blessings on the Torah (Ahava Rabba in the morning and Ahavat Olam at night) both begin with an emphasis on the love that Hashem has shown us.

#### IV

The Torah learning involved in reciting Shema is poignantly described by the Maharal (16th century Prague):

Pronouncing the words of the Torah alone is not the desired goal. The main goal of learning Torah is understanding what is learnt, and it is normally impossible to \*fully\* understand any part of the Torah.

Reading the Shema however, is different. Although, Shema too, is a selection from the Torah, it is meant to be \*read\* although it ought to be understood as well, nevertheless, reading it alone is the most important part of the Mitzvah -- which is why we refer to it as "the \*recital\* of Shema ("Keriyat Shema"). When one enunciates the Shema properly, it is therefore Torah learning of the highest level [i.e., it is comparable to learning any other portion of Torah with the highest level of understanding!] (Maharal in "Netivot Olam", Netiv Ha'Avodah Ch. 9)

One source for Maharal's words is undoubtedly the Gemara's statement (Berachot 10b) that one who reads Shema as required by the Torah is performing a greater Mitzvah than learning Torah. Aren't we told that learning Torah is the greatest of Mitzvot (Pe'ah 1:1) -- how can the Mitzvah of reading the Shema surpass it? It must be that reading the Shema is a higher level of \*Torah-learning\*!

But why is the reading of Shema unique in this respect? Aren't there other portions of the Torah that must be read on various occasions (such as Viduy Bikkurim, Viduy Ma'asrot, Parashat Zachor, Parashat Sotah and Birchat Kohanim)? Why is it not said about them as well that reading them is reater than Torah-learning, according to the Maharal?

The answer to this question is that each of these selections are read only because the message contained in its text is appropriate to the situation during which it is read -- whether that message is a declaration, reminder, curse or blessing. We are not reading them as "portions of the Torah," but as statements specific to the circumstances with which they are dealing.

The reading of Shema, however, is different. Since the nature of its message is, as we have explained, "Learn Torah!" its very \*reading\* is meant as a Torah-learning experience as well. This is why simply \*reading\* the words of Shema can be considered a fulfillment of the biblical injunction to \*learn\* Torah!

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HALACHA FOR 5756 SELECTED HALACHOS  
RELATING TO PARSHAS VA'ESCHANAN By Rabbi  
Doniel Neustadt

For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Safeguard the Sabbath day... you shall not do any work... (5:12-14).

#### **Crockpots on Shabbos**

QUESTION: Is it permitted to place food in a crockpot on Friday afternoon in order for it to be cooked and warm for Shabbos?

DISCUSSION: There are basically two kinds of crockpots on the market. One(1) is designed as a free-standing pot which is filled with food and then placed on top of the heating element. The heating element does not encircle the pot at all. This type of crockpot may be used on Shabbos as long as the food in the pot is half-cooked(2) by the time Shabbos arrives(3).

The other type of crockpot(4) consists of a pot holding food which is inserted into another, bigger pot. The outer pot completely surrounds the inner pot (insert) on three sides. The heating element is built into the walls and base of the outer pot.

The Halachic concern pertaining to this type of crockpot is the rabbinic prohibition of Hatmana, insulation. The Rabbis forbade the insulation of all foods, even prior to Shabbos, if the insulation will add heat to the food(5). Contemporary Poskim debate whether inserting the inner pot into the outer pot is considered "insulating" it, which is forbidden by the Rabbis, or not. There are three areas of dispute which we will attempt to describe briefly :

There are Rishonim who hold that it is forbidden to place a pot - even on Friday - in burning coals. It is considered as if the coals are insulating the pot. In their view, the only permissible way for a pot to be left on a fire is to place the pot on a grate, over the fire, not "in it"(6). Other Rishonim argue and hold that as long as the top of the pot is uncovered "and air can get to it," the pot is not considered to be insulated.

Although the Rama(7) rules according to this view, it is not clear if he considers it sufficient that the top is uncovered so that "air can get to the pot," or if he would require that the sides be exposed as well. Thus, some Poskim(8) understand the Rama to hold that when a pot is surrounded on three sides ?as is a crockpotX, even if the top is not covered, it is still considered insulated, since no air can reach the sides of the pot.

The second issue to consider concerns the proximity between the outer and the inner pots. There is usually a small air pocket which separates the two pots. It is questionable whether this small space is sufficient to consider the insert as being physically separate from the outer pot and thus not being insulated by it, or if the outer pot is so close to the insert that it is insulating it(9).

The third issue to consider is whether Chazal prohibited insulation when its purpose is not to warm the food but to cook it. Since a crockpot is used for cooking, not for warming, it has been suggested that the rabbinic decree would not apply.

What do contemporary Poskim rule? Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv rule stringently on all of the points listed

above and do not allow the use of this type of crockpot on Shabbos. Harav S. Vosner and Harav C.P. Scheinberg rule leniently and permit this type of crock pot to be used(10). There are reliable sources who report that Harav M. Feinstein had also ruled leniently concerning this type of crockpot.

Harav Elyashiv, though, suggests a simple solution for those that want to use this type of crockpot. He suggests placing several stones(11) between the insert and the outer pot. This way, the insert will rest on the stones and not on the floor of the outer pot. Since the stones will raise the insert above the rim of the outer pot, the sides of the insert will be exposed to the air. In this fashion, no violation of Hatmana will occur.

Simply putting silver foil between the insert and the outer pot does not resolve the problem of Hatmana.

Distributed by: \* The Harbotzas Torah Division of Congregation Shomre Shabbos \* 1801 South Taylor Road \* Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118 \* HaRav Yisroel Grumer, Marah D'Asra

FOOTNOTES:1 Produced by Westbend, Inc. and others. 2 In time of urgent need, if it is cooked a third of the way through it is also permissible. 3 Note that we are not discussing removing and then returning the pot on Shabbos, nor are we discussing stirring or removing food from this pot on Shabbos. 4 Produced by Hamilton Beach, Rival and others. 5 For the reasons behind this rabbinic decree, see Shabbos 34a and Mishnah Berurah 257:1. 6 The Mechaber 253:1 rules like this opinion. According to the Chazon Ish 37:19, the Halacha is like this view. 7 OC 253:1. This is the Halachah according to the Mishnah Berurah. 8 This is clearly the understanding of the Pri Megadim 259:3 in explanation of the view of the Rashaba and the Taz. There is some uncertainty as to the view of the Chayei Adam and the Mishnah Berurah on this issue, see Otzros Hashabbos pg. 256 for a lengthy analysis. 9 See Shaar Hatzion 257:43. 10 Responsa from all of the quoted Poskim are published in Otzros Hashabbos pg. 514-522. 11 A more practical choice - in lieu of stones - would be to crumple large piece of silver foil into balls.

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NCYI Divrei Torah 5756 VaEtchanan Parshat VaEtchanan Shabbat Nachamu

Guest Rabbi: **Rabbi Yaakov Feitman**

Young Israel of Beachwood, Ohio

Parshat Vaetchanan and Shabbat Nachamu are forever intertwined.

In our Chumashim. On our calendars. In our hearts. What is the inner meaning of this eternal bond? There are six opinions in the commentaries about the relationship between the two sets of Luchot the stone tablets of Torah and the two versions of the Ten Commandments printed in the Chumash:

- 1) The Ibn Ezra cites several of these opinions. The first is that the words on the original Luchot were the ones we find in Parshat Yitro and those on the second Luchot were those we read in our Parsha, Vaetchanan. This is also the opinion of the Maharal (Tiferes Yisrael, 44) and the Netziv.
- 2) The second is that one of the Luchot had the first set (Yitro) engraved into two columns and the second of the Luchot had the second set (Va'etchanan) engraved in two columns as well.
- 3) The third is that the first set was on one of the Luchot and

the second set was on the other.

4) The Ramban and the Alshich HaKodesh hold that both of the Luchot were identical, using the text we find in Yitro, but Moshe Rabbeinu explained the Ten Commandments using the changes we find in this week's Sedra. For instance, when he told Klal Yisrael about Shabbat, he added the word Shamor from Va'etchanan to teach them about the prohibitions of Shabbat in addition to Zachor which conveys the positive commandment to make Kiddush.

5) Rashi (according to one version) holds that both sets contained composite of Yitro and Va'etchanan, using combination words such as zachorshamor.

6) Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky is of the original opinion that Shamor was written in both sets (for a more in depth review of these various opinions, see Shaarei Aharon, pages 157-159). According to all opinions, however, even those who hold that the text of the Luchot was identical, the physical Tablets were different. Of the first Luchot, the Torah testifies that they were "the work of G d" but the second Luchot were the work of man and only the writing was G dly. The Malbim and the Netziv explain that the reason for this change from the first to the second Luchot related to the reduction of Klal Yisrael's spiritual level after the sin of the golden calf. Before the sin, spirituality triumphed over the material world and the Luchot untainted by sin would have constituted an eternal unforgettable reservoir of knowledge, understanding and inspiration. In the presence, however, of a sin as momentous as that of the golden calf, this lofty Madregah could not be maintained and the Luchot produced exclusively by G d had to be destroyed. It would seem, therefore, that the second Luchot, when compared with the first, constitute an ongoing indictment of the people of Israel. Their very existence, apparently inferior to their predecessors, cry out that we have sinned and fallen from the noble place our Creator planned for us. But there is another side to this story. One of the sources commonly cited to prove that the first Luchot exhibited the words in Parshat Yitro and the second the words in Va'etchanan is the following extraordinary Gemara (Bava Kamma 55a): Rav Chanina Ben Agul asked Rav Chiya bar Abba: why does it not say Tov ("good") in the first of the Ten Commandments but it does in the second? Rav Chiya bar Abba answered, before you ask me why it says Tov ask me if it says Tov, for I do not know if it says Tov or not. Go to Rav Tanchum ben Rav Chanilai who studied under Rav Yehoshua ben Levi who was an expert in Aggadah. He went to him and he answered "because they were destined to be broken. . . And if they were destined to be broken, what effect would that have on the word Tov? Rav Ashi answered "G d forbid that goodness should end for the people of Israel." Major commentaries (see Pnai Yehoshua and Maharatz Chayos to Bava Basra 113a) struggle with this Talmudic riddle. Could it be that major rabbis of the Talmud would be unfamiliar with

simple verses in the Torah? Indeed, some Rishonim (see Tosfot ibid) come to that conclusion. Another approach, however, reinterprets Rav Chanina's question as dealing with the issue we discussed above. Are the Asarat HaDibrot we read in our Parsha the ones which were carved on the second Luchot or not? If that was the question, then one indeed requires an "expert in Aggadah" not just one who knows Chumash (see Pachad Yitzchak to Shavuot 12:2 and 18:18; Rabbi Reuven Margolios, HaMikra VeHaMesorah, pages 7-9). In any case, one conclusion which may clearly be drawn from this discussion is that, while the second Luchot were clearly on a lower Madregah than the first, they were able to include the word Tov (in the Mitzvah of honoring parents it says "LeMaan Yetev Lach" it will be good for you) while the first Luchot, which were destined to be broken, could not. The Maharal, in his commentary on the Talmud, explains that Bnai Yisrael, before the sin of the golden calf, paralleled the level of Adam HaRishon the First Man in that their level was more angelic than human. The Madregah known as Tov, however, relates to human beings, with all their frailties, who live in this world, sin, repent and achieve goodness in the Next World where their sins are ultimately forgiven. In the words of the Maharal: "For all of Israel has a share in the World to Come. Even those who sin receive their punishment in this world but they have a share in the World to Come." Thus we see that there is something about the second Luchot which, while reflecting imperfection, allows through its human element for repentance and renewal.

Rabbi Gedalya Schorr, ZT"L, refers to this as this great power, the power to push aside the darkness and concealment and to reveal the light was not in the first Luchot. So what is the special Nechama the consolation which the prophet offers us this Shabbat? The Yalkut notes the double consolation and tells us it corresponds to the double sin and the suffering which resulted. But what is this dual consolation? One of the interpretations is given by the B'nei Yissachar (page 116b) in the form of a parable. A patient suffers from a near fatal fever and all medicines and therapies have failed. The doctors have given up hope and called for vidui (confession) and for the family to gather round. Despite the physicians having given up, the patient rallies, the fever breaks and his life is spared. But he is extremely weak, drained by the experience, unbelieving that he is actually cured. The less experienced physicians are alarmed at the patient's weak condition and wish to medicate him further but the more seasoned ones know better. They know that at the moment of near death, there is no fever and no disease, no illness and no malady. It is the near death experience which leaves the person weak indeed; but it is the weakness of the newborn baby, a frailty which brings with it the blessing of rejuvenation and new life. The prophet is told to console the people with the knowledge that G-d knows that their remorse

has been so great, their anguish over the loss of their holy places and even holy self has been so profound that they were considered nearly dead from the experience. That itself is their cure and salvation. But when they are told the good news, they cannot believe their ears. They deny the possibility, they reject the happy tidings. Then they are told that it was the depth of their punishment, the torment of their pain itself which has saved them. Programs such as the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous have discovered only recently what the Torah has always taught us that usually someone cannot be motivated to pick himself up until he has hit rock bottom. Although at the moment of impact, that moment is the nadir the worst second in a life replete with failure in retrospect it will be viewed as the turning point toward salvation. It is thus the bottom and the most important of steps to the top. The loss of the first Luchot was a devastating blow to the people who had left Egypt, walked through the Red Sea and stood under the mountain to receive the Torah. But it was also the moment they were assured of an enduring Tov in their eternal lives. As they hit the rock bottom of idolatry and other sins, they saw the potential for an eternal Tov which would come to them in the form of Luchot formed by a human hand, a hand extended to them in love and willingness to accept their repentance. The bond between Va'etchanan and Nachamu is that which makes us most human and Jewish. It is the ability to triumph over sin and death, loss and destruction. And to be consoled that our suffering has not been in vain. Goodness has been preserved forever. And it will be ours.

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**B"H Torah Studies Adaptation of Likutei Sichos by Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks** Chief Rabbi of Great Britain 5756

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion - VAESCHANAN

The 9th of Av is the date on which both Temples were destroyed. Each year, on the subsequent Shabbat, we read as our Haftorah the famous passage of consolation from Isaiah "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people."

The Midrash tells us that this is, literally, a two fold consolation for the loss of the two Temples. And yet, would not one have been sufficient?

For the First Temple saw a greater revelation of the Divine Presence than the Second, so that our grief and our consolation for its loss encompasses our feelings for the Second Temple. The Sicha, however, argues that there was something unique about the Second Temple, and that this has repercussions for our daily religious life. At the heart of its analysis is the distinction between two different approaches to G-d: Through righteousness and through repentance.

ONE CONSOLATION OR TWO?

This week's Haftorah, the first of the "Seven Weeks of Consolation" after the 9th of Av, begins with the words "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people."

The Midrash explains that this apparent repetition refers in fact to two consolations and two tragedies: The loss of the First and Second Temples.

But this is not as simple as at first sight. The idea of consolation is that, when a calamity befalls a man, even though a second person may not be able to restore his loss, he still gives comfort by his sympathy.

And if the man has sustained not one loss but two, then he can certainly be comforted twice over.

But in the case of the Temples, the consolation lies in the fact that a Third Temple will be built to replace those that were destroyed. And since the First Temple was greater than the Second in the revelations it housed and the miracles it witnessed, replacing it would, in itself, be replacing the Second Temple as well.

The First contained all that was in the Second, and more. So it follows that the consolation for the loss of the First would in itself include consolation for the loss of the Second.

The answer is, that though the Second Temple was, in absolute terms, less exalted than the First, it still had certain unique virtues. Thus, the Talmud interprets the verse, "Greater shall be the glory of the latter house than the former," to refer to the Second Temple, which was greater than the first in its size and duration.

This is why there will be two consolations, for the Third Temple will combine the virtues of both its predecessors.

#### Tabernacle and Temple

To understand what the unique virtue of the Second Temple was, we must first see the way in which a Temple as such went beyond the Tabernacle that accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness. Both were "dwelling places" of G d's presence. But the Temple was a permanent dwelling, the Tabernacle a temporary one.

For, there are two elements in drawing down a high degree of holiness to this world:

(i) where the holiness is apparent in the physical, but it does not actually transform it. This is a manifestation of the power of the spirituality, in that it can even permeate so gross a being.

(ii) where the holiness actually transforms the physical; that the material becomes, as it were, a "vessel," or receptacle, to holiness. This is an even stronger revelation, whereby the "light" not merely affects, but intrinsically changes, the physical.

Similarly, the Tabernacle was holy: "And they shall make Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst."

Its sanctity extended even to the curtains, the beams, and the ground on which it rested. But these were not the source of its holiness. The source was in the revelation from Above, the infinite light of G d which shone within it. That is why, when

the Tabernacle was moved, its previous resting place ceased to be holy ground. For its holiness was not from itself: It lasted only as long as the Divine Presence rested there.

But the sanctity of the Temple was vested in the physical materials from which it was built. Even after its destruction, the ground on which it rested was, and still is, sacred.

This is the inner meaning of the fact that the Temple was built by Solomon. For in his reign, "the moon reached its fullness," in the words of the Zohar.

The sun gives light; and moon reflects it. And in spiritual terms, G d is the source of light, and the earth receives it. Whereas the Tabernacle had the sanctity of G d's light, the holiness of the Temple lay in the very material of which it was constructed, in the things of the earth which were dedicated to G d. It was as the "moon" which receiving G d's light and reflecting it outwards to the whole world.

#### REFLECTED AND GENERATED LIGHT

But there is a difference between the moon as it is now, and as it will be in the World to Come.

Now it draws its radiance from the sun. But in the future world, "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun." It will shine, not with reflected light, but with its own.

And this is paralleled by the difference between the two ways that the world and its beings are purified and transformed.

We may be changed by a light that comes from above, as a pupil learns from his teacher. He may come to understand what he has been taught, to the extent that, through his own efforts, he reaches the very essence of the subject. But still he is a reflection of his teacher. He is like the moon, shedding a light that came to him from elsewhere.

We may, on the other hand, be changed by a light from within. When a person, for example, returns to G d after forsaking His will, he does not do so because of any revelation from Above. On the contrary, at the point of return, he is far from visions of G d. He does so because of a prompting from within. For every Jew, in the true depths of his being, seeks to do G d's will: It is merely that sometimes his inclinations get the better of him, and hide his real nature.

The essence of the Jew is that he is part of G d. And the change that he brings to his life when he returns to G d is from within, in the strictest sense. He penetrates the surface of his inclinations, and finds G dliness at the core of his self. "All flesh shall see . . . for the mouth of the L rd has spoken." He reaches the word of G d through his flesh itself, through seeing the real nature of his existence. Such a person is like the moon of the World to Come. The light he casts is from the fire that burns within him.

#### The Word, the Command, the Return

There are therefore three stages:

Receiving light from elsewhere, reflecting it, and generating light from within.

They are mirrored by three facets of Judaism:

Torah, the commandments (Mitzvot) and the act of return (Teshuvah).

Torah is the word of G d, the light from Above. Even though, when we learn Torah, we become united with it, Torah is always the giver of light and we are always the recipients. In our learning we add nothing to it, we merely strive to uncover what was already there.

But through the Mitzvot, we both receive and give light. By wearing tefillin or tzitzit we turn parchment and wool into holy objects. By abdicating our egos in favor of G d's will, we refine the world: "The Mitzvot were only given so that, by them, all creatures should be purified."

Whereas the Torah exists eternally in itself, the Mitzvot need the partnership of man. The Torah, although it speaks of the physical world, does not enter into it. But the commandments require physical acts and objects, and they change the fabric of the world. The Torah is like the "light of day" which illuminates but does not change that upon which it shines. But the commandments are like the "light of a lamp" in which wick and oil are turned into flame. Nonetheless, the Mitzvot are still a reflected light. They need, first, the word of G d who commands them.

But the ba'al teshuvah the person who returns to G d has shut himself off from the word of G d, and returns because of a flame within himself that refuses to be separated from its source.

By the mitzvot a Jew sanctifies only what is permitted to him. But by teshuvah he sanctifies his whole past life, lived in the realm of forbidden acts. His past sins become his merits. And this is the unique virtue of the act of return: It sanctifies not only a part, but the whole of experience.

#### The Second Temple

We are now able to understand the unique significance of the Second Temple.

During the period of the First Temple, the Jewish people were in general at the level of "righteousness," living a life of obedience to G d's commandments. The light it gave to the world was a reflection of the will of G d.

But the Second Temple belonged to a time of repentance and return. The world was being sanctified from within, through Israel's own spiritual resources. Thus it is significant that its building was ordered by Cyrus, the king of Persia, a non Jew. This is why we needed two consolations, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people."

For the two Temples each had its own distinctive virtue. The revelations of G d's presence which belonged to the First were greater, but those of the Second were more inward. They issued from the very texture of the physical world.

Thus the Talmud says that the greatness of the Second Temple lay in its size (space) and its duration (time). For it drew its sanctity from man's own efforts to purify his finite world, not from G d as He is above space and time.

The consolation will be the Third Temple, in which the light from above and the light from within will combine.

#### WHAT CAN BE LOST, AND WHAT CANNOT

All inner meanings of the Torah have their reflection in Halacha (Jewish law).

We can see that the land of Israel had a greater sanctity during the First Temple than during the Second. For to take one example when Rosh Hashanah fell on Shabbat, the Shofar was blown throughout the land in the First Temple times, but in the Temple alone in the time of the Second.

On the other hand, the land lost some of its sanctity with the destruction of the First Temple, but none with the loss of the Second.

The laws attaching to the land of Israel show that the First Temple conferred a more intense holiness; the Second, a more permanent one. This can be compared to the two sets of tablets on which Moses received the Ten Commandments. The first set was the more miraculous: But they were broken. The second were not. So too the First Temple conferred greater holiness on Israel, yet when it was destroyed that sanctity was removed. But the holiness of the land in the time of the Second Temple persists for all time.

By reading this week's Haftorah, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people," we remember not only what was lost, but what survives. The generation of righteousness may belong to the past and the future. But the generation of return is a present possibility. It is the enduring heritage of the Second Temple. And by turning possibility into fact we bring close the time of the Third Temple the twofold and final consolation.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. IX, pp. 61 70.)