

Home Weekly Parsha VAETCHANAN
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The Torah as we all well know is multilayered. The rabbis have taught us that there are seventy facets to every piece of the written Torah. We are also aware that no written word can adequately convey to us all of the nuances and possible meanings that lie embedded in the written word. The Torah requires elucidation, commentary and explanation in order for any proper understanding of its message to be gained.

The entire book of Dvarim is an elucidation and explanation of the first four books of Moshe. As such, by the inherent nature of explanation and commentary, different words and phrases will be employed to describe events and commandments that were previously mentioned in the Torah.

A prime example of this appears in this week's parsha where the Torah repeats for us the Ten Commandments revealed to Israel at Sinai. The wording here in Dvarim differs slightly from the wording recorded for us in Shemot. The Talmud in its rendition of the Oral Law states that these discrepancies – such as the use of the word shamor instead of the original zachor regarding the observance of the Shabat – indicate that these words were stated simultaneously by God, so to speak, a feat that is beyond human comprehension and ability.

The Talmud means to indicate to us with this statement that all of the possible interpretations and layers of meaning in the Torah were given to us simultaneously and at once at Sinai. Only the Oral Law and the work of the commentators to the Torah over all of the ages has revealed to us these original layers of meaning and interpretation for our study and practice. By using different words to explain what was already written, the Torah guides our understanding of the Torah only by way of the Oral Law and the great commentators of Israel over the ages.

In the final commandment of the Ten Commandments, the Torah here in Dvarim uses the word titaveh whereas in Shemot it used the word tachmode. The Torah points out to us that there are different forms of desire and wanting something. One is an impulsive, spur of the moment desire that arises out of seemingly chance circumstance – an advertisement in the media or a chance meeting or sighting. Such a desire is not planned and stems from the inherent human weakness within all of us to want to possess what we do not yet have. But there is another type of desire. It is long planned and had been part of our lives for years and decades. It borders on being an obsession or an addiction within our makeup.

Both of these types of desire can destroy a person. The Torah cautions us against these symptoms of self-destructive behavior. And by the use of these different Hebrew verbs, the Torah indicates to us that there are

different types of desires and that one must be defensive against all of them. The Talmud tells us that the eyes see and the heart thereupon desires. Guarding one's eyes guards one's heart as well. This example of the Torah's self elucidation of the matter makes the lesson clear to all and challenges us to apply it wisely in one's own life.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

The Power of Why

VA'ETCHANAN

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

In a much-watched TED Talk, Simon Sinek asked the following question: how do great leaders inspire action?[1] What made people like Martin Luther King and Steve Jobs stand out from their contemporaries who may have been no less gifted, no less qualified? His answer: Most people talk about what. Some people talk about how. Great leaders, though, start with why. This is what makes them transformative.[2]

Sinek's lecture was about business and political leadership. The most powerful examples, though, are directly or indirectly religious. Indeed I argued in *The Great Partnership*[3] what makes Abrahamic monotheism different is that it believes there is an answer to the question, why. Neither the universe nor human life is meaningless, an accident, a mere happenstance. As Freud, Einstein, and Wittgenstein all said, religious faith is faith in the meaningfulness of life.

Rarely is this shown in a more powerful light than in Va'etchanan. There is much in Judaism about what: what is permitted, what forbidden, what is sacred, what is secular. There is much, too, about how: how to learn, how to pray, how to grow in our relationship with God and with other people. There is relatively little about why.

In Va'etchanan Moses says some of the most inspiring words ever uttered about the why of Jewish existence. That is what made him the great transformational leader he was, and it has consequences for us, here, now.

To have a sense of how strange Moses' words were, we must recall several facts. The Israelites were still in the desert. They had not yet entered the land. They had no military advantages over the nations they would have to fight. Ten of the twelve spies had argued, almost forty years before, that the mission was impossible. In a world of empires, nations and fortified cities, the Israelites must have seemed to the untutored eye defenceless, unproven, one more horde among the many who swept across Asia and Africa in ancient times. Other than their religious practices, few contemporary observers would have seen anything about them to set them apart from the Jebusites and Perizzites, Midianites and Moabites, and the other petty powers that populated that corner of the Middle East.

Yet in this week's parsha Moses communicated an unshakeable certainty that what had happened to them would eventually change and inspire the world. Listen to his language:

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 miracles, 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 eyes?

Deut. 4:32-34

Moses was convinced that Jewish history was, and would remain, unique. In an age of empires, a small, defenceless group had been liberated from the greatest empire of all by a power not their own, by God Himself. That was Moses' first point: the singularity of Jewish history as a narrative of redemption.

His second was the uniqueness of revelation:

What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to Him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

Deut. 4:7-8

Other nations had gods to whom they prayed and offered sacrifices. They too attributed their military successes to their deities. But no other nation saw God as their sovereign, legislator, and law-giver. Elsewhere law represented the decree of the king or, in more recent centuries, the will of the people. In Israel, uniquely, even when there was a king, he had no legislative power. Only in Israel was God seen not just as a power but as the architect of society, the orchestrator of its music of justice and mercy, liberty and dignity.

The question is why. Toward the end of the chapter, Moses gives one answer: "Because He loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them." (Deut. 4:37). God loved Abraham, not least because Abraham loved God. And God loved Abraham's children because they were his children and He had promised the patriarch that He would bless and protect them.

Earlier though Moses had given a different kind of answer, not incompatible with the second, but different:

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me . . . Observe them carefully, for this is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

Deut. 4:5-6

Why did Moses, or God, care whether or not other nations saw Israel's laws as wise and understanding? Judaism was and is a love story between God and a particular people, often tempestuous, sometimes serene, frequently joyous, but close, intimate, even inward-looking. What has the rest of the world to do with it?

But the rest of the world does have something to do with it. Judaism was never meant for Jews alone. In his first words to Abraham, God already said, "I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you, I will curse; through you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Jews were to be a source of blessing to the world.

God is the God of all humanity. In Genesis He spoke to Adam, Eve, Cain, Noah, and made a covenant with all humankind before He made one with Abraham. In Egypt, whether in Potiphar's house, or prison, or Pharaoh's palace, Joseph continually talked about God. He wanted the Egyptians to know that nothing he did, he did himself. He was merely an agent of the God of Israel. There is nothing here to suggest that God is indifferent to the nations of the world.

Later in the days of Moses, God said that He would perform signs and wonders so that "The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord" (Ex. 7:5). He called Jeremiah to be "a prophet to the nations." He sent Jonah to the Assyrians in Nineveh. He had Amos deliver oracles to the other nations before He sent him an oracle about Israel. In perhaps the most astonishing prophecy in Tanach, He sent Isaiah the message that a time will come when God will bless Israel's enemies:

"The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt My people, Assyria My handiwork, and Israel My inheritance.'"

Is. 19:26

God is concerned with all humanity. Therefore what we do as Jews makes a difference to humanity, not just in a mystical sense, but as exemplars of what it means to love and be loved by God. Other nations would look at Jews and sense that some larger power was at work in their history. As the late Milton Himmelfarb put it:

Each Jew knows how thoroughly ordinary he is; yet taken together, we seem caught up in things great and inexplicable . . . The number of Jews in the world is smaller than a small statistical error in the Chinese census. Yet we remain bigger than our numbers. Big things seem to happen around us and to us.[4]

We were not called on to convert the world. We were called on to inspire the world. As the prophet Zechariah put it, a time will come when "Ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you'" (Zech. 8:23). Our vocation is to be God's ambassadors to the world, giving testimony through the way we live that it is possible for a small people to survive and thrive under the most adverse

conditions, to construct a society of law-governed liberty for which we all bear collective responsibility, and to “act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly”[5] with our God. Va’etchanan is the mission statement of the Jewish people. And others were and still are inspired by it. The conclusion I have drawn from a lifetime lived in the public square is that non-Jews respect Jews who respect Judaism. They find it hard to understand why Jews, in countries where there is genuine religious liberty, abandon their faith or define their identity in purely ethnic terms.

Speaking personally, I believe that the world in its current state of turbulence needs the Jewish message, which is that God calls on us to be true to our faith and a blessing to others regardless of their faith. Imagine a world in which everyone believed this. It would be a world transformed.

We are not just another ethnic minority. We are the people who predicated freedom on teaching our children to love, not hate. Ours is the faith that consecrated marriage and the family, and spoke of responsibilities long before it spoke of rights. Ours is the vision that sees alleviation of poverty as a religious task because, as Maimonides said, you cannot think exalted spiritual thoughts if you are starving or sick or homeless and alone.[6] We do these things not because we are conservative or liberal, Republicans or Democrats, but because we believe that is what God wants of us.

Much is written these days about the what and how of Judaism, but all too little about the why. Moses, in the last month of his life, taught the why. That is how the greatest of leaders inspired action from his day to ours.

If you want to change the world, start with why.

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKF_VuA.

[2] For a more detailed account, see the book based on the talk: Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. New York, Portfolio, 2009.

[3] Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning* (New York: Schocken Books, 2012).

[4] Milton Himmelfarb and Gertrude Himmelfarb. *Jews and Gentiles*. New York, Encounter, 2007, p. 141.

[5] Micah 6:8.

[6] *The Guide for the Perplexed*, III:27.

http://torahweb.org/torah/2022/parsha/rneu_vaeschanan.html

Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger Meaning and Resilience

Hundreds of times each year we collectively pronounce words from this week's parsha (Devarim 4:44), "וזאת התורה אשר שם משה לפני בני ישראל - this is the Torah that Moshe placed before the Jewish people" as we raise the Torah for all to see. What is this seemingly repetitive recitation supposed to evoke or confirm within us? Also intriguing is the placement of this pasuk, sandwiched between the record of Moshe's establishment of the Levite arrei miklat

and Moshe's review of the aseres hadibros; our earliest commentaries disagreed as to what it refers to and what it adds to either topic.

To be sure, Hashem reports to us that Moshe has indeed fulfilled His mandate to take the unique position of "Moshe Rabbeinu - Moshe our teacher". Charged by the unusual phrase for teaching (Shemos 21:1), "these are the laws that you shall place before them", his career has now come full circle with the same phrase, "this is the Torah that Moshe placed before them". It is precisely that rare description that, according to Chazal, refers to master teaching that organizes the material in a way that intrigues, informs, inspires and impresses in a lasting manner (see Rashi ad loc). Yet the questions remain: why does this appear now in this week's parsha? Why repeat it after every public Torah reading?

Rashi sees the pasuk as an introduction to the aseres hadibros (which come at the beginning of the next chapter). If that is the case, perhaps this pasuk needs to be read in conjunction with the five pesukim that follow it which briefly describe the events from the exodus from Egypt until the conquest of the eastern bank of the Yarden. The pasuk would thus be understood to be reminding us how Hashem, through Moshe, taught Torah through the various stages of our national experience: the triumphant and openly miraculous moments of the exodus, the time in the midbar when the miraculous become routine, and then during our transition into a people who had to lift the sword and later the plowshare. Thus the pasuk, read during this week's leining and recited after our reading every other week, affirms our appreciation of the Torah as that which adds meaning, direction, and mindfulness to every stage of our national experience and our personal lives.

Alternatively, the Tur and the Kli Yakar view the pasuk as referring to Moshe's designating the Levite cities, a mitzva he had just taught but whose primary application would not be relevant until well after Moshe leaves this world. Accordingly, Hashem teaches us to marvel at Moshe's deep and incessant love for His mitzvos and his dedication to teach them in every possible manner. After all, Moshe had just categorically lost his final appeal of G-d's judgment and the supreme disappointment of a lifetime was now set in stone. Nevertheless, Moshe had the eternal wellspring of resilience and unabating trust in the Almighty to pick himself up and move on instructing and guiding. This resilience, then, is also the Torah that Moshe taught, of which we can never be reminded too many a time.

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Shabbat Shalom: Vaetchanan (Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11) By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

RSR Head Shot Gershon Ellinson creditEfrat, Israel – “Comfort you, comfort you, My People” (Isaiah 40:1)

The Shabbat after Tisha B'Av is known as the Shabbat of Comfort, a phrase taken from the first verse of the

prophetic reading from Isaiah. Additionally, a most fascinating festival day – one which is unfortunately not very well known – falls just about one week after the bleak fast for the destruction of both of our Holy Temples. An analysis of this festival, known as Tu B’Av, “the 15th day of Av,” will reveal a striking similarity between it and the Shabbat of Comfort.

The conclusion of the last Mishna of tractate Ta’anit (26b) teaches as follows:

“Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said, ‘There were no greater festive days in Israel than the fifteenth day of Av and Yom Kippur, when the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in borrowed white dresses so as not to embarrass those who didn’t have their own. They would go out and dance in the vineyards. What would they say? ‘Young man, lift up your eyes and see whom you wish to choose for yourselves. Do not cast forth your eyes after beauty, but cast forth your eyes after family. ‘False is grace and vanity is beauty; a woman who fears the Lord is the one to be praised’; and the Scriptures further states, ‘Give her of the fruit of her hands and let her deeds praise her in the gates.’”

The Talmud then cites the Tosefta, which provides a more descriptive picture:

“The beautiful ones among them, what would they say? ‘Cast forth your eyes after beauty, for woman was only created for beauty.’ The ones with good pedigree, what would they say? ‘Cast forth your eyes after family, because woman was only created for children.’ The plain ones, what would they say? ‘Take your wares for the sake of heaven, as long as your adorn us with gold (and then even the plain-looking women will appear to be beautiful).”

Apparently, the 15th day of Av was a kind of Sadie Hawkins day, when the women would entice the men to marry them; and each woman would emphasize her particular quality: beauty, family or “for the sake of heaven.” And, as the Mishna concludes, it is chiefly the attributes of fear of God and performance of good deeds which truly count in assessing the proper wife.

The Talmud adds, “It is clear why Yom Kippur is a Festival, since it brings forgiveness and absolution, since it is the day when God gave the second tablets [as a sign of His forgiveness for the sin of the Golden Calf]; but what is the reason for the joy of the 15th Av?” The Talmud then gives seven possible reasons, from the suggestion that on that day members of the tribes were permitted to marry one another; to the opinion that on 15 Av, the desert generation stopped dying; to the astronomical fact that from that day on, the sun begins to lose its strength and the days begin to be shorter.

Permit me to add another possible reason, one which would also explain the unique manner in which we are to celebrate the 15th of Av.

It would be logical to assume that as Jews witnessed Jewish sovereignty going up in flames and God’s very throne smoldering, they tore their garments and sat on the

ground, sitting shiva not only for the lost lives, but also for the disappearing dream of at-hand redemption.

If the seven-day mourning period began on 9 Av, it must have concluded on 15 Av, the seventh day, about which our sages rule that “partial mourning on that day is accounted as if one had mourned the complete day.”

Hence, they rose from their shiva on 15 Av, Tu B’Av.

It was precisely on the day that their shiva concluded that our Sages ordained the merriment of Tu B’Av. This parallels the joy when the High Priest emerged unscathed from the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur; a sign that Israel had indeed been forgiven! The Holy Temple may be burning to the ground, but the Jewish nation remains alive and God’s commitment to His eternal covenant remains intact, as is clear from this week’s reading, which we also read on Tisha B’Av (Deuteronomy 4:25-32).

As the Midrash teaches, God exacted punishment from the wood and stones of a physical edifice, albeit a holy one, but He demonstrated His ultimate forgiveness by keeping His nation alive and His covenant operational. This is why and how 9 Av will one day be a day of great celebration.

God ordains Tu B’Av as a day of weddings; Judaism sees every wedding ritual as a ringing confirmation of the future of the Jewish people, as a personal commitment to continue the nation and the faith because “there will yet be heard on the streets of Judea and in the great plazas of Jerusalem, sounds of gladness and sounds of rejoicing, sounds of grooms and sounds of brides” (Jeremiah 33: 11).

Not only has our generation not been disappointed, but it is presently rejoicing in Israel’s rebirth. God has not forsaken us, and is even allowing us a glimpse of redemption!

Shabbat Shalom

Does an Elevator Require a Mezuzah?

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Many people will smile when they see this question. Others will frown. And everyone will gain from reading this article -- since this question provides an opportunity to discuss many aspects of the laws of mezuzah.

Let us start from the very beginning:

“I live in an apartment building in New York. My building does not have a mezuzah; why should my elevator?”

The questioner is, of course, correct. Assuming that his building has both Jewish and non-Jewish residents, most authorities contend that there is no requirement to install a mezuzah (Rema, Yoreh Deah 286:1; quoting Mordechai). The commentaries provide two reasons why no mezuzah is required in this instance, some explaining that the Torah never required a mezuzah on a building unless all its residents are obligated in the mitzvah (Taz, Yoreh Deah 286:2). Others absolve these buildings from mezuzah out of concern that suspicious non-Jewish residents may think the Jew is hexing them with the mezuzah (Shach, Yoreh Deah 286:6). Although some recognized authorities contend that one must place a mezuzah even in a building

shared by non-Jewish residents (Aruch HaShulchan, quoting Rashba and several others), the accepted practice is not to.

EXCLUSIVELY JEWISH

However, a building with exclusively Jewish residents must have a mezuzah on every entrance to the building, as well as on any other doorways inside the building, even if some of the residents are not yet observant. This is true notwithstanding that no one lives in the hallway or foyer. This halacha requires some explanation:

When the Torah teaches (in this week's parsha) about the mitzvah of mezuzah, it requires placing it on the side posts (mezuzos) of one's house and one's gates. A house is predominantly used for residence, while a gate is not, yet the Torah requires placing a mezuzah on the gates of a Jewish city, or on the gates leading to a Jewish house, because they are entrances to the house (Yoma 11a). Thus, if one enters one's property through a full gateway, meaning that it has a lintel and side posts, one should place a mezuzah on that entrance. This is true regardless as to how many such "gateways" one enters before one reaches the house (Rambam, Hilchos Mezuzah 6:8). Even a revolving door requires a mezuzah if it has doorposts and a lintel.

Similarly, the hallway doors of a building whose residents are all Jewish require mezuzos. Although the hallways are not suitable for dwelling, they function as entrances to the apartments, and therefore qualify as "gateways."

MULTIPLE GATEWAYS

Sometimes the entrance to a residence includes a gateway to a building's outside premises, then a gateway to a courtyard, followed by another series of doors leading into the building vestibule. If all the tenants of the building are Jewish, one must install a mezuzah on each entryway, as I explained above.

KEEP RIGHT

The Gemara teaches that one places the mezuzah on the right doorpost entering the house (Yoma 11a). Placing the mezuzah on the wrong side invalidates the mitzvah, and reciting a beracha before affixing such a mezuzah is, unfortunately, a beracha levatalah (a beracha recited in vain). Thus, it is very important to determine whether a doorway is considered an entrance to one room, or the entrance to the other, since this is the paramount consideration in determining which side post is graced with a mezuzah.

WHO IS RIGHT?

Regarding an internal house door connecting two rooms, it is usually clear whether the doorway is primarily an entrance to one room or to the other. However, there are instances when it is unclear whether the doorway is considered an entrance or an exit -- what does one do in such an instance? This question is sometimes relevant when one has a doorway connecting a living room to a

dining room. Since each situation may be somewhat different, I leave this shaylah for one to ask one's rav.

STAIRCASES

If one lives in an apartment building with only Jewish inhabitants, the doors to the stairwells also require mezuzos, just like the entrances do, since they lead to residences (see Chovas HaDor, page 45). This halacha can be directly derived from a case in the Gemara, which describes a two-family house in which an inside stairway connects the two apartments. The Gemara requires mezuzos on the entrances to the stairwells from each of the apartments (Menachos 34a as explained by Rashi). Although no one resides on the stairway, one must still install a mezuzah on its entrance since the stairwell functions as a "gateway" to a residence.

WHICH IS THE RIGHT SIDE OF A STAIRWELL?

Regarding the placement of a mezuzah on the doorway of an apartment building's stairwell, we are faced with an interesting predicament -- on which side post of the doorway does one place the mezuzah? Is the doorway serving to enter the stairwell, obligating one to place the mezuzah on the right side entering the stairwell, or is it an entrance to the floor, obligating one to place the mezuzah on the right side exiting the stairwell?

The answer to this question may at first seem strange. On the ground level, one should place the mezuzah on the right side entering the stairwell, because this is the method of entering the building. However, on the other floors one should place the mezuzah on the right side entering the floor because that doorway functions primarily as an entrance to the apartments on that floor! (Chovas HaDor, page 45). Thus, we have an anomalous situation of placing one mezuzah on the right side entering the stairway and placing others on the opposite side.

IS AN ELEVATOR DIFFERENT?

Having established that the stairwell of an all-Jewish building requires mezuzos, does the elevator of such a building require mezuzos? Do we consider the elevator doorways as "gateways" to the upper apartments of the building, just as a stairway is? Perhaps the elevators are even more of an entranceway to those apartments since people use them more frequently than the stairs! Several responsa discuss this question.

(Bear in mind that many elevators have two doorways, the stationary door that is part of the building, and the door of the elevator "cage" or platform. For purposes of this article, I will refer to the "stationary doorway" and the "platform doorway.")

EARLIEST TESHUVAH

Although people presumably asked this shaylah decades earlier, the earliest responsum I discovered on this subject is a 5724 (1964) inquiry by the Helmitzer Rebbe (of New York) to Dayan Yitzchak Weiss, then Av Beis Din of Manchester, England, and later Av Beis Din of the Eidah HaChareidis of Yerushalayim (Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak

4:93). In this teshuvah, Dayan Weiss questions whether an elevator requires a mezuzah since it constantly moves and cannot be considered a residence. He compares an elevator to a moving residence, regarding which we find a debate whether it requires a mezuzah. Rav Avraham Dovid of Butchatch, usually called “the Butchatcher,” rules that a moving residence requires a mezuzah. According to this opinion, someone who lives in a van or truck requires a mezuzah on the door, even if he constantly drives it to new locations (Daas Kedoshim 286:1)!

The Mikdash Me’at disagrees, contending that a moving residence is considered a temporary dwelling and never requires a mezuzah. In a different responsum, Dayan Weiss deliberates whether a mobile home requires a mezuzah since people often reside in them, whereas using a bus or automobile as a residence is considered temporary and does not require a mezuzah (Shu”t Minchas Yitzchak 2:82; see also Chovas HaDor pg. 37).

Dayan Weiss initially compares an elevator to this dispute between the Mikdash Me’at and the Butchacher, since an elevator is constantly moving. However, he then suggests that an elevator might require a mezuzah even according to the Mikdash Me’at, because even though the elevator moves, it is part of a residence that does not move. He compares this to the following case, which requires some explanation:

SMALL HOUSE

The Gemara rules that a house smaller than four amos squared, approximately seven feet by seven feet, does not require a mezuzah (Sukkah 3a). A space this tiny is too small to qualify as a proper residence, even for people living in impoverished circumstances. The Torah requires a mezuzah only on a doorway to a house fit to live in.

What if a room is smaller than four amos squared, but is perfectly serviceable for its function as part of a house, such as a walk-in pantry that connects to the kitchen? This room is smaller than four amos squared, and one could argue that, as such, it is absolved from mezuzah. On the other hand, one could argue that it functions perfectly well for residential use since it is part of a house that is four amos squared.

Indeed, the authorities dispute the halachic status of this pantry. Some poskim contend that this room requires a mezuzah, notwithstanding its size, since it suffices for its household purpose (Chamudei Daniel, quoted by Pischei Teshuvah, Yoreh Deah 286:11). This approach contends that although a house smaller than four amos squared is too tiny to be a domicile on its own, a room suitable for its intended use that is part of a house is not excluded from mezuzah. Dayan Weiss accepts the position of the Chamudei Daniel as the primary halachic opinion (Minchas Yitzchak 1:8).

Other authorities dispute this conclusion, contending that a room this small is excluded from the requirement of mezuzah (Daas Kedoshim 286:19). In their opinion,

affixing such a mezuzah is unnecessary and reciting a beracha beforehand is a beracha levatalah, a beracha recited in vain. (Some authorities disagree with the Chamudei Daniel’s position but still require a mezuzah on the right hand side reentering the kitchen as an entrance to the kitchen.)

HOW IS A PANTRY LIKE AN ELEVATOR?

Dayan Weiss explains that the underlying principle of the Chamudei Daniel’s position is that any part of a residence that has a domestic function requires a mezuzah. He reasons that just as the Chamudei Daniel required a mezuzah on a small pantry since it is suitable for its specific use and it is part of a residence, an apartment building elevator also requires a mezuzah since it too is suitable for its intended use and is part of a residence. He therefore concludes that the elevator platform door requires a mezuzah, although without a beracha, out of deference for the authorities who reject Chamudei Daniel’s line of reasoning. (Obviously, one should be careful to affix the mezuzah in a place where it will not be smashed each time the door closes.)

WHAT ABOUT THE ELEVATOR’S STATIONARY DOORWAY?

Does the stationary doorway entering the elevator also require a mezuzah? If it does, then one must install a mezuzah not only on the doorway of the elevator platform, but in addition on the stationary doorway of every floor! Dayan Weiss concludes that these doorways do not require mezuzos, since they are functional only when the elevator cage is opposite them, and at that moment the mezuzah servicing the platform door does double duty, fulfilling the requirement for both the platform as well as the stationary doorway. This last concept, that one mezuzah services all the elevator doors in the building, is by no means obvious, as we will soon see.

A DIFFERING APPROACH

Rav Yaakov Blau, then a Dayan of the Eidah HaChareidis, reaches a different conclusion regarding whether an elevator requires a mezuzah. He contends that the modern elevator is comparable to the case of the Gemara requiring mezuzos on the doors leading to a stairwell. Rav Blau maintains that an elevator is identical to a stairwell except that one substitutes an elevator platform for a stationary stairway (Chovas Hador, page 44). He reasons that since the primary entrance to an apartment on the upper story of a building is through the elevator, the stationary doorways leading to the elevator are therefore “gateways” to the upper apartments, no different from the stairwells, and are definitely obligated to have mezuzos.

Having concluded that the “stationary doorway” of each elevator floor requires a mezuzah, Rav Blau then addresses the question concerning which direction the mezuzah should face. Do we place the mezuzah on the stationary doorway entering the elevator or exiting it? He concludes that since the elevator’s main function is to transport

people to the upper floors, the doorway on the ground floor requires a mezuzah on the right side entering the elevator, and the other floors require one on the right side exiting the elevator.

Why are the mezuzos on different sides? Since the function of the stairs and elevator are as means to access the upper stories, one should place the mezuzah on the right side as one walks in their direction.

On the other hand, whereas Dayan Weiss contends that the platform doorway requires a mezuzah because it is part of a residence, Rav Blau rules that the platform doorway does not require a mezuzah since its function is exclusively as a moving passageway.

Thus, although both Dayan Weiss and Rav Blau require mezuzos on an elevator, they completely disagree which doorway requires a mezuzah, Dayan Weiss requiring one on the platform doorway, but not the stationary doorways, and Rav Blau concluding just the opposite, that the stationary doorways require mezuzos, but not the platform doorway. (By the way, the Helmitzer Rebbe, who asked Dayan Weiss originally, held the same way as Rav Blau.)

Indeed, since these are two independent disputes, someone could conclude that the platform doorway and the stationary doorways both require mezuzos. If one accepts Dayan Weiss's premise that the elevator requires a mezuzah because it is part of a stationary permanent residence, and one disputes his contention that the mezuzah on the platform suffices for the stationary doorway, one would conclude that both the platform doorway and the stationary doorways require mezuzos.

AN OPPOSITE APPROACH

On the other hand, one could reach the exact opposite conclusion and not require a mezuzah on any of the elevator doorways. Rav Shelomoh Zalman Auerbach (Minchas Shlomoh 2:97:23) conjectures that the elevator should be treated differently from a stairwell because the elevator is not suitable for residential use at all but only for transportation. Further, he absolves the stationary door of the building from mezuzah because it can never be used independently of the elevator. Thus, its use is also considered non-residential.

Rav Shelomoh Zalman presents another reason to absolve the stationary door from mezuzah -- as soon as the elevator changes floors, the stationary doorway becomes useless, and it therefore should not be compared to a stairwell.

In his written responsum on the subject, Rav Shelomoh Zalman concludes that it is preferable to install a mezuzah without a beracha on the right side of the stationary doorway entering the elevator on the entrance level of the building since this is the main entrance and exit into the building. The reason for his differentiation between the ground floor and the others is unclear; I have been told orally that he did not really feel that there was any necessity even for the ground floor mezuzah.

In practical terms, many follow the lenient opinions that do not require a mezuzah on either the platform doorway or the stationary doorway. Residents of a building with only Jewish inhabitants should agree to jointly ask a rav whether they are required to install a mezuzah on the doorway.

CONCLUSION

Just as a properly functioning elevator lifts us to great heights, so the properly fulfilled mitzvah of mezuzah takes us far higher. We touch the mezuzah whenever we enter or exit a building to remind ourselves of Hashem's constant presence, and it is a physical and spiritual protective shield. Whenever passing it, we should remind ourselves of Hashem's constant protection.

Perceptions

By Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Parshas Vaeschanan

Patience & Hope

Friday Night

WHAT DOES IT mean, "patience is a virtue"? As opposed to what? Sure, patience is not the easiest to acquire and often seems lacking in the world, but that doesn't mean people think it is anything less than a virtue. So why state the obvious?

Perhaps it has to do with the way that people tend to be patient when they really shouldn't be, and have no patience when they should have it. Sometimes people put up with something evil for too long, and yet run out of patience when waiting for something good to happen, like justice for example.

There are a lot of people in the world doing much evil, and getting away with it. Yes, over time good does seem to triumph, but until it does a lot of evil is done and the perpetrators often live "great" lives until their dying day. And this is often at the expense of good people, who end up living miserable lives as a result. Even Dovid HaMelech did not live to see his name cleared and his enemies taken down.[1]

Then there is the issue of redemption. How long must this final exile continue? How many times must it go south on the Jewish people? How many times do we have to get to the brink of the Messianic Era and, then watch history back down and continue as it has? How much more insanity must reasonable people put up with before God finally says "Enough is enough!"

You're not allowed to ever give up on redemption, but it is certainly understandable why many do. We've had to live through the destruction of two temples, countless pogroms everywhere we have gone, and two world wars that included a holocaust. We even have to go head-to-head with some of our own people who want to obliterate all things Jewish.

Ask any geulah-believing Jew if history should continue as is and they will give you a resounding no. Exile was great for decades, but it is souring now and people don't want to

see it get any worse. They feel they have had all they can handle and want everything to get back on course for Moshiach.

God begs to differ. If He didn't, then He would do exactly that, bring the redemption and put out the evil. But then again, we're into comfort even at the cost of tikun, and He's into tikun even at the cost of comfort. History shows who always wins this argument.

Take Egypt, for example. After 116 years of multi-generational torturous Egyptian servitude, the Jewish people finally called on God to stop it. Lo and behold, Moshe Rabbeinu showed up with promises of redemption, and everyone got excited. But rather than let us go free, Pharaoh hardened the slavery, Moshe retreated to Midian for six months, and the Jewish people became despondent. Similarly, 52 years into the 70-year Babylonian exile, Persia conquered Babylonia and Koresh permitted the Jewish people to return to Eretz Yisroel to begin construction on the Second Temple. It seemed Messianic, but when only 42,000 heeded the call and Koresh rescinded his offer, geulah seemed to get sidetracked.

When Haman quickly rose to power 18 years later and decided to exterminate the Jewish People, redemption seemed an impossibility. Only Mordechai seemed to stay with it and fought tirelessly to get the rest of the nation back on the same page. In the meantime, Haman just seemed to get more powerful...until he fell faster than he had risen and geulah happened.

The truth is, patience is much more than just a virtue. It is a survival tactic. That's why it is also one of the 13 Principles of Faith:

I believe with perfect faith in the coming of Moshiach, and though he may delay, I await him every day.

Shabbos Day

THE HEBREW WORD for patience is savlanut. It comes from the sovel, which means to carry a load, to endure something, or to suffer. Hence:

So they appointed over them tax collectors to afflict them with their burdens (b'sivlosam)... (Shemos 1:11)

Because it is amazing what a person can put up with, even physically, if there is hope. That is what the enemy tries to destroy first and completely, hope. That is why Pharaoh increased the slavery after Moshe came and restored faith in redemption, even though it meant work slowdowns and put him back.

That is what patience is, hope. The belief that the bad will end, the good will come, and that justice will be served, is what gives a person the strength to be sovel the opposite in the meantime. Destroy a person's sense of hope and they become despondent, zombie-like, kotzer ruach in Torah language,[2] as the Jewish people had become just before Moshe began to turn the tables on Pharaoh.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that this only means being broken and depressed. On the contrary, the current generation has been incredibly content for decades now.

It's just that so many have lost hope in the coming of Moshiach and the final redemption, if they had any in the first place, that they have turned their focus elsewhere. They live without a geulah consciousness, as if they no longer need it.

But we do need geulah, always. It doesn't make a difference if we are being treated badly in exile or well, we always need geulah. Being able to learn Torah and perform mitzvos properly without interference is only one aspect of geulah. It is just a means to a higher end whether talking about national geulah or a personal one. When that is enough for a person, they are also considered to be spiritually despondent.

This is because the entire time the Jewish people are exiled from their land, the Shechinah is in pain. The entire time that some Jews remain indifferent to Torah and mitzvos, the Shechinah is in pain. The entire time the Temple has yet to return to its proper place on top of Har Moriah and the Jewish people cannot serve God there, the Shechinah is in pain. And feeling no pain while the Shechinah does only exacerbates the suffering of the Shechinah.

Building a wonderful yeshivah in Chutz L'Aretz does not alleviate that. Making Shabbos with all the trimmings in exile does not remedy that. Making a lot of money and giving lots of tzedakah does not make up for that. Living as if they do is not only a mistake, it is a Chillul Hashem:

And they entered the nations where they came, and they profaned My holy Name, inasmuch as it was said of them, "These are the people of God, and they have come out of His land." But I had pity on My Holy Name, which the House of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they had come. Therefore, say to the House of Israel: God says: Not for your sake do I do this, House of Israel, but for My holy Name, which you have profaned among the nations to which they have come. And I will sanctify My great Name, which was profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst, and the nations will know that I am God...when I will be sanctified through you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you to your land. (Yechezkel 36:20-24)

Seudas Shlishis

IT IS ALSO a sure-fire way to make sure that an exile does not end well. The exile will come to an end, because they always do for believers and disbelievers alike. The only questions are, when and how, and growing anti-Semitism is usually a good indicator of the direction in which the answer is going.

Somehow people think that God will just come and get us peacefully no matter what we're doing at the time. Some kind of Divine bell will go off in Heaven signaling the end of exile, and Jews will find themselves heading for Eretz Yisroel in one way or another without any losses or regrets...despite prophetic warnings of one last biblical War of Gog and Magog.

Is it just wishful thinking, or part of having given up on the final redemption, and therefore feeling no sense of urgency to do anything geulah-oriented in the meantime? Because there are some Jews who feel and act differently, preparing for and making aliyah while they still can on their own terms.

The Malbim foresaw this back in the 1800s:

God says: Sing, Ya'akov, with gladness, exult on the peaks of the nations; announce, laud [God], and say, "God, save Your people, the remnant of Yisroel!" Behold, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, the pregnant and birthing together; a great congregation will return here. With weeping they will come and through supplications I will bring them. I will guide them on streams of water, on a direct path in which they will not stumble, because I have been a father to Yisroel, and Ephraim is My firstborn. (Yirmiyahu 31:6-8)

At the end of their exile, the oppression will be removed from them and they will be joyous because they will be on the peak of the nations. The gentiles will give them honor and they will be their leaders, instead of being disgraced and lowered among them as they were at first. "Ya'akov" will be the masses of the people, and the lesser among them. "Yisroel" are the great ones. The joyousness from being at the peak of the nations will be Ya'akov's only and not Yisroel's, because they (Yisroel) will want to return His Presence to Tzion...because they will want the true salvation of the ingathering of the exiles and the return to Tzion. (Malbim, Yirmiyahu 31:6-8)

Ain Od Milvado, Part 60

WHAT ABOUT THE War of Gog and Magog? That has to do with holy sparks as well, as explained by the Arizal:[3]

As a result of the sin of Kayin and Hevel all the souls became mixed together with the Klipos...

The word Klipos means "peels," but to make a very long and complicated kabbalistic discussion short and simple, the Klipos are the spiritual source of evil in Creation. Evil lives off the same holy sparks that good does, which is why it tries to "steal" as many as it can through people's sins.

...and this is called the mixing of good with evil. Since then, the souls have been continuously separated out from within the Klipos, like the refinement of silver from the waste.

This process of separation is called Birur in Kabbalah, and it is the main way to rectify Creation. It happens continuously, but mostly as a result of Torah learning, mitzvah performance, and suffering, that is, through mesiras Nefesh:

This separation will continue until the completion of the separation of the souls...Once all the souls are separated out completely then...the [spiritual] waste will not need to be removed through [some kind of] action, but will collapse and be absorbed [to the point] of not being visible or present. Holiness, which is life [itself], will become

separated from the spiritual waste which is called death...and will disappear like smoke.

In other words, cut off evil's access to holy sparks and they starve to death. We accomplish this by doing good and avoiding evil, and when necessary, through suffering as well. Therefore, if there is going to be a War of Gog and Magog it will be to extricate the remaining sparks left over by mankind in the Klipos when the time for redemption has come. Only then can the verse from this week's parsha be fulfilled: ain od Milvado.

1. Shabbos 30a. ↑
2. Shemos 6:9. ↑
3. Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Introduction 20. ↑

TORAH SHORTS: Vaetchanan by Rabbi Ben-Tzion Spitz

Commentary based on the Bat Ayin

Memory Power (Vaetchanan)

Memory is the cabinet of the imagination, the treasury of reason, the registry of conscience, and, the council chamber of thought. -Giambattista Basile

Moses, telling the nation of Israel about the primacy of the Torah that was bestowed upon them, adds an additional warning:

"But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live."

The Bat Ayin on the verse of Deuteronomy 4:9 delves into the spiritual dimensions of forgetfulness. He explains that our ability to remember the Torah is directly correlated to our spiritual efforts. He goes even further and states that remembering is an act of attaching oneself to what is holy, while forgetfulness is a function of arrogance and a distancing from God.

The Talmud, in Tractate Sotah 5a, in its discussion of the extreme dangers of arrogance, states that a Torah Scholar is permitted to have one-eighth of one-eighth of arrogance, namely, no more than one sixty-fourth of arrogance. However, if a person allows themselves even a fraction more arrogance, one sixty-third, then one is in trouble. Sixty-three in Hebrew letters spells the word "Gaas" which means arrogance. And once a person falls into arrogance, even though they are learned Torah scholars, they will forget their learning, they will be unable to access not only deeper levels of Torah, but they will become blind even to plain, obvious, revealed Torah. They will forget the divine content.

The Bat Ayin points out that later the Torah warns against excessive eating which also leads to forgetfulness. He quotes the Chapter of our Fathers (Pirkei Avot) that instructs one who wants to acquire Torah to reduce their eating, their sleeping, and in general, their worldly affairs. Being absorbed in the material pleasures of the world

divert and sidetrack a person from God, from His Torah, and causes one to forget what they've already learned. Holding on to one's learning is a constant effort, not only in reviewing one's material, but avoiding the pitfalls of arrogance and worldly pleasures.

May we actively remember our Torah.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To World Drowning Prevention Day. Let's be careful and attentive.

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Vaeschanan

A Different Light

This week the Jewish nation is told that they are held to a higher standard. The Torah commands us to heed its words and follow the Chukim (decrees), "for (those laws) are your wisdom and discernment in the eyes of the nations, who shall hear all these decrees and declare, 'surely a wise and discerning people is this great nation.'"

The Jewish People were the founders of moral civilization. The famed apostate Benjamin Disraeli once retorted to an anti-Semitic invective by parliamentarian Daniel O'Connell, "when the ancestors of the right honorable gentlemen were brutal savages on an unknown island mine were priests in Solomon's Temple."

This is easily understood in the context of Mishpatim, or laws that have seemingly clear reasons. The Torah's judicial system and codification of tort law are the blueprint for common law the world over. Yet the Torah does not emphasize observance of Mishpatim as such. It tells us that in order to be an example of wisdom and clarity unto the nations, we must observe the Chukim, laws that are difficult to comprehend even for those born as Jews.

The question is obvious: wouldn't the open observance of the esoteric laws of Judaism bring question if not contempt to the eyes of the nations? Why are Chukim specifically rendered as the acts that will have the world look at us and say, "surely a wise and discerning people is this great nation."

In 1993, six years after the death of my revered grandfather, a biography, "Reb Yaakov, the Life and Times of Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky," was printed by Mesorah Publications. Based on years of my uncle, Rabbi Nosson Kamenetzky's research and the fine writing of Yonason Rosenbloom, it was an instant success. The book shed unseen light on a Torah giant, perhaps never known by the masses. In addition to the splendid biographical research, the book is filled with hundreds of encounters with myriad personalities who were touched by the brilliant sage. From young children to Prime ministers and United States

Senators, Reb Yaakov was able to relate to each of them on their level.

The book also relates how Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan revealed to an Orthodox publication how surprised he had been when Reb Yaakov made a prescient prediction that the Soviet Union would cease to exist.

Our Yeshiva had purchased 10,000 volumes of the book as a fundraising -educational mailer. I did not realize that the Senator's name happened to be on our mailing list until I received a beautiful letter on United States Senate stationery. After thanking me for sending the "wonderful book," the writer said, "If I may quibble with one small point in an otherwise brilliant volume, the author reports that I was surprised by Rabbi Kamenetzky's prediction of the fall of the Soviet Union.

"Truth be told, I was never surprised by Rabbi Kamenetzky's insights. They only reaffirmed to me the age-old biblical promise that Torah knowledge is your wisdom and understanding before the nations of the world."

It was signed Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

We tend to flaunt Judaism with the reasonable laws: honoring parents, charity, and all of the basic tenets of moral life. To the outside world, however, we tend not to display the more difficult issues: Kashruth, Shatnez and the like. We are afraid that they are too bold and incomprehensible; surely they cannot designate us as a light unto the nations.

This week, the Torah tells us that there is nothing farther from the truth. It specifically exhorts us that through our Chukim we will be considered as a "light unto the nations." After we have set standards of morality and honesty we earn esteem in the eyes of the world. Then no Torah law or vision will be viewed archaic or inconceivable. We can predict the collapse of the second-most powerful nation on earth in its prime. Foreign relation experts may react with shock and surprise, but deep down they will wait for the prediction to materialize.

The Torah chides us this week that there is nothing in its writings that will embarrass us. Any command, even the most complex and difficult to comprehend, when performed with faith, honesty, and commitment, will cast us as a light unto the nations.

Good Shabbos!

As the Play Comes to an End, Don't Opt Out

A Sea of Tears & Joy

Rabbi YY Jacobson

A Sea of Tears

There is a moving Chassidic story concerning two of the great spiritual masters, Rabbi Yitzchak Kalish, popularly known as the Vorker Rebbe, and his friend, the Kotzker Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Morgenstern of Kotzk, Poland. Though their paths were vastly different, they were

nonetheless the closest of friends. So much so that even death would not keep them apart.

So, when Reb Yitzchak Vorker passed away, and a full month went by without his appearance in a vision or a dream, the Kotzker Rebbe decided to ascend to heaven in order to search for his friend in all the celestial palaces. At every place he stopped, they told him that his beloved friend, the Vorker, had been there but he had gone away.

In growing despair, the Kotzker Rebbe asked the angels, "Where is my dear friend Reb Yitzchak?" And the angels sent him in the direction of a dark, dark forest. It was the most fearsome and foreboding forest he had ever been to, but he pushed on, anxious to discover the whereabouts of his beloved friend. As he traveled deeper into the forest, he began to hear gentle waves lapping upon the shore. He reached the edge of the forest and before him lay a great and endless sea, stretching in every direction. But then the Kotzker Rebbe noticed a strange sound. Every wave as it swelled high would cry out a soft, but heart-breaking sob. The sound was terrifying, and he turned to run away, but just then he saw, standing at the edge of this wailing sea, staring at its melancholy waters, his holy friend Reb Yitzchak.

"I've been looking for you," said the Kotzker, "why have you not come back to visit me?" Instead of answering his friend, Reb Yitzchak asked him a question, "Do you know what sea this is?"

The Kotzker replied that he did not, and so Reb Yitzchak explained, "It is the sea of tears. It is the sea which collects all the tears of G-d's holy people," he said, "and when I saw it, I swore that I would not leave its side until G-d dried up all these tears."

An Enigmatic Statement

It is a strange statement in the Jerusalem Talmud:

ירושלמי יומא פרק א הלכה א: אמרו כל דור שאינו נבנה בימיו מעלין עליו כאילו הוא החריבו.

The Sages said: Every generation in which the Beit HaMikdash, the Holy Temple, is not rebuilt in its days, is considered as if it was destroyed in its days.

What is the meaning of this? Is this fair to say, that a generation which did not see the rebuilding of the Holy Temple is virtually responsible for its destruction?[1]

There have been many generations with extraordinary Tzaddikim (righteous Jews) who were dedicated to G-d and man in exemplary ways. It seems unjust to declare that each of them merited to have the Beit HaMikdash destroyed during their days, just because it was not built in their days.

What is more, if this statement is taken literally, then the generation in which the Beit HaMikdash will finally be rebuilt will somehow have to manage to be greater than any of its predecessors. For all the previous generations were considered destroyers of the Temple; yet that final generation manages to trump all other generations of Jews preceding it. That seems unfair.

Moreover, it seems discouraging to tell us, that all the previous generations, filled with so much spiritual richness, and so many great souls—they all did not merit redemption, and were considered responsible for its destruction. Is it our generation, far weaker and lower, which will merit the rebuilding? If they could not do it, how can we?

An Accumulative Story

Let me share an insight by the Sefas Emes, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Altar of Ger, Poland. A similar insight I heard numerous times from the Lubavitcher Rebbe.[2]

שפת אמת שבת דברים תרל"ד: כל דור שאינו נבנה בימיו כאילו נחרב בימיו. קשה להבין שהיו הרבה דורות צדיקי עליון שנאמר שהי' ראוי להיות נחרב בימיהם? ונראה לפרש כי כל ימי הדורות מצטרפין ומתכנסין כל ההארות של עבודת בני"י להיות ראוי לגאולה, כי היעלה על הדעת שדור הגאולה יהיו כ"כ ראוי בזכותם בלבד לגאולה? רק שזכות כל דור ודור עוזר ומביא מעט בנין בהמ"ק. והבנין נמשך כל ימי הגלות כמאמר בונה ירושלים [=לשון הווה בכל דור]. וז"ש שכל דור שאינו מסייע לבנינו. וז"ש שאינו נבנה בימיו שאין ימיו בכלל הבנין כנ"ל. וכל אדם בפרט ג"כ צריך לידע שכל מעשיו הם סיוע לבנין בהמ"ק. וכפי מה שמקבלין ע"ע עול מלכות שמים מסייעין לבנינו כמ"ש הכל מסייעין: לבנינו של מלך כו

The Talmud may be teaching us something very different—and providing us with a deeper perspective on Jewish history.

We often view history as disjointed narratives transpiring through numerous generations. Am I really connected to my great-great-grandmother who lived in Russia two centuries ago? I do not know her name, I don't have a photo of her, nor do I know anything about her. How about my great-great grandfathers who lived 800 years ago in Spain, Germany, Italy, France, or Russia?

Judaism sees history as a single book—each page continuing the story of the past, and all the chapters together create a harmonious book. History is not a combination of many "short stories," but rather it is like a single novel that consists of an aggregated narrative. Not only are we connected to our past. We keep them alive; they continue to live and function through us, genetically and spiritually.

Bringing redemption to the world, says the Talmud, will be the result of the accumulation of the achievements of the Jewish people from the time of the destruction to this very day. It is not one generation or another which does the job; each generation contributes to the work of mending our world and bringing Geulah-Redemptive consciousness to our planet.

The question of how we can do it if they did not do it, is missing the point. Imagine someone building for many years a super massive bonfire to cast light and warmth all around; this individual even pours the kerosene all over the logs, so the fire can catch easily. He just did not strike the match to light the fire. Now I come along and say, if he did not manage to light the fire, how can I?

But I was given the match. All I need to do is strike the match and the fire ascends.

Every Tear Remains

The sweat, blood, and tears of the Jewish people over the last two thousand years—as well as the laughter, the joy, the faith, and the love—is all present and accumulative, integrated like a sum in calculus, or like a vessel that is filled one drop after another, until it is full. We are not filling the vessel that previous generations could not fill; we are adding our drop of water to take it over the top.

Every generation of Jews builds the Beit HaMikdash in its day—every generation continues to fill our world with Divine light, love, hope, and healing. Every one of us, every day, builds a world of redemption, constructing part of the Holy Temple in his or her corner of the universe.

Each of us comes from generations of grandmothers who lit Shabbos candles every Friday before sunset, welcoming the holy day into their homes, as warm, loving tears flowed down onto the Shabbos table. Where did all those tears go? Do you think they faded into oblivion?

Their tears made their way into the soil of Jewish history, irrigating our souls, and giving us the strength to grow and blossom. Every tear of every Jewish mother over 2000 years became the water that was absorbed into our roots and seeds, providing us with the strength, resolve, and courage to continue to live and love. Every tear went into that vessel.

When your ancestor left Spain penniless on the 9th of Av 1492, rather than abandon his faith, it went into that vessel. When your great-grandmother cut a hole in the ice of a frozen Russian river for use as a Mikvah, it went into that vessel.

When your great-grandfather came home after a hard day and opened a book of Mishnayos and began learning Torah, it went into that vessel.

When your grandmother and tens of thousands of other Holocaust survivors valiantly tried to start all over again and to continue the Jewish story, it went into that vessel.

Every dollar that you put into a charity box goes into that vessel.

Every time you wrap tefillin, study Torah, and make a blessing, it goes into the vessel.

Every time that every one of us takes an extra minute or an extra thought to go out of our way to be considerate to the feelings of another, even if that person may not look like, dress like, or always act like we do it goes into that vessel.

It all gets added together until the vessel, or the ocean, is full—and the Beit HaMikdash is rebuilt. Redemption comes to the world.

Don't Run

So what kind of generation is the Talmud referring to when it says that if the Temple was not built in its day, it is like it was destroyed in its day?

Now that we established that the Temple must be built in every generation; each generation of Jews contributes to

the consecutive and ongoing work of healing the world, cleansing it from evil, bringing in Divine light, and rebuilding the space where the Divine presence will dwell on earth; now that we discovered that there is no one generation who build—but that every generation builds. What then does the Talmud mean? Which generation is the one who we say that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed in its time?

It is the generation that gives up on this historic mission and chooses instead to no longer care to add whatever it can to all the good that has already been accumulated before it. It is the generation that opts out of the continuous journey from exile to redemption, from darkness to light, from violence to peace, from fragmentation to unity, and from brokenness to wholeness. It is the generation that says, "I am not part of this any longer. I am done." It allows all the love, tears, kisses, and truth to stop in its tracks and not allow the train to reach its ultimate destination—the space of Geulah, of complete redemption.

Every generation in which the Beis Hamikdash is not built in its days—is the generation that does not see its days as contributing to the building of the Beis Hamikdash; it is detached from the march of Jewish history, from the dance of Klal Yisroel, from the parade of every single Jew toward Jerusalem—that generation must appreciate how detrimental and tragic its passivity can be.

The Sfas Emes plays with the words which change the meaning of the Talmud. The simple translation would be, that every generation in which the Beis HaMikdash is not rebuilt 'in its' days, is considered as if they destroyed it. The Sfas Emes translates it: Every generation in which the temple is not built 'with its' days, i.e. with the good deeds and devotion of every day, is as though they destroyed it.

Back Stage Cheering

Rabbi Sholom Moshe Paltiel, the Chabad Rabbi and Shliach in Port Washington, NY, shared with me the following personal story:

I was visiting Jewish patients in S. Francis Hospital, when I walked into the room of an elderly Jew named Irving, a Holocaust survivor, who was obviously quite sick, surrounded by his entire family. I spent some time with him. We talked about the horrors of his youth, and how he managed to survive and rebuild his life.

He told me it was his mother's words to him on the last night before they were separated. "She sat me down and said to me: Life is like a play (my mother loved the theater). Every one of us plays a part. Not just us, but our parents and grandparents, their parents and grandparents, all the way back to Abraham and Sarah. They're all part of this production. Each of us plays a part, and then, when your part is over, you go backstage. You're not gone, you're still there, looking, cheering, helping out in any way you can from behind the scenes."

And then Mama grabbed my hand, looked me in the eye, and said: "Yisroel, I don't know what's going to happen,

how long we'll be together, whether I'll survive this. But one thing I ask of you, if you survive: Don't give up, play your part. You might feel sad and lonely, but I beg of you: Don't give up. Play your role as best you can. Live your life to the fullest. I promise you, you won't be alone. Tate un ich, Babe un Zeide, mir velen aleh zein mit dir oif eibig, Daddy and me, Grandma and Grandpa, we will be with you forever, we'll be watching you from backstage."

"It was those words from Mama that got me out of bed on many a difficult morning."

By the time the man finished the story, there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

A few days later, Irving passed away. At the shiva, the family kept repeating the story about the play. It was clear they took comfort from knowing their father was still there, behind the scenes. Still, there was a profound sense of pain and loss.

They asked me to say a few words. I got up, turned to the family, and I said: "There is a postscript to the story. What happens at the end of the play? All the actors come back out. Everyone comes out on the stage to give a bow. It is a basic Jewish belief that every soul will come back and be with us once again, right here in this world. I assure you," I said, "With G-d's help, you will soon be reunited with your father."

This is what the Talmud is teaching us. Every soul which ever lived contributed to the Third Temple. Then they moved backstage to allow the next generation to continue the work. But they never really left; they are just backstage. Now it is our job to strike the match, and fill the world with light, to complete the play. When each of them will emerge from backstage and take the bow.

We're ready for the time when, as we say in the Aleinu prayer, "lecho tichra kol berech," all creations will bow to You. We're ready for the final bow.

(My thanks to Dr. Mark Rutenberg for his article on this Sefas Emes, which I used in the above essay. My thanks to Rabbi Sholom Moshe Paltiel for sharing the story).

[1] See the famous explanation of Reb Yosef Rozen, the Rogatchover Gaon, explained in Sichas 12 Tamuz 5744 (1984).

[2] See Likkutei Sichos vol. 5 Bereishis p. 34-35. Cf. Likkutei Sichos vol. 19 Nitzavim pp. 272-273. Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5748.

Office of the Chief Rabbi

Shabbat Nachamu: Three weeks of sadness require seven weeks of consolation!

26 July 2023

Three weeks of sadness requires seven weeks of consolation. That's the period of the calendar that we are in right now.

Between the fast days of Shiva Asar b'Tammuz and Tisha b'Av we have three weeks in which we contemplate so many tragedies that we experienced in our past, then for the

seven weeks between Tisha B'Av and Rosh Hashana we have the 'shiva denechamta' – the seven weeks of consolation. These commence with that great haftarah for Shabbat Nachamu which is the shabbat of Parshat Vaetchanan, starting with the words of the prophet Yeshayahu (Isaiah 40:1),

"Nachamu, nachamu ami," – "Comfort, comfort my people."

Rabbi Berel Wein explains that the reason for the double 'nachamu' is that, having experienced tragedy, we need far more time in order to derive consolation.

That's the reason, he explains, why for three weeks of pain and grief, we require more than double that period, seven weeks, of consolation.

Sometimes we can be fortunate and, even following deep grief and anguish, it is possible with Hashem's help and with a positive attitude, for us to restore our regular rhythm of life and to be consoled, but often that is simply just not the case. Just as one can knock down a building in a matter of hours but it takes months, if not years, to rebuild it, in the same way following tragedy it can take an extremely long time for us to be consoled. As a nation we continue to grieve to this day after the shoah, and following the recent pandemic we can see how our society will take a long time to pick up the pieces.

So our prayer on this Shabbat Nachamu is please Hashem, 'nachamu nachamu', give us lots of comfort, enable us where appropriate and necessary, to rebuild our lives in a satisfactory and healthy manner because we realise that even after a long period of suffering, ultimately comfort and consolation will be there.

Shabbat shalom.

Rav Kook Torah

Va'Etchanan: The Double Shema

When we recite the Shema, Judaism's central affirmation of faith, we accept upon ourselves ohl malchut shamayim, God's kingship and authority. The Torah instructs us to recite the Shema twice a day — "when you lie down and when you rise up" (6:7).

Yet one might wonder: why isn't once a day sufficient?

Public and Private Domains

When we contemplate and reflect on a concept, we deepen its impact on the soul.

The day can be divided into two distinct parts: the daytime hours, when we engage with the outside world, and the evening hours, when we retire to the quiet sanctuary of our homes. By reciting the Shema both in the morning and evening, we affirm our acceptance of God's rein and dominion throughout both parts of the day. In other words, our affirmation of the Shema serves as a guiding force in our public activities during the daytime as well as in our private lives at night.

Reciting the Shema before the day begins helps prepare us for the daytime hours, so that our social interactions and

public activities will meet the Torah's ethical standards. And the Shema of the evening is meant to infuse our private lives with holiness and purity.

Both affirmations are vital. Ethical living should not be restricted to one's private life, just as it should not be limited to the sphere of one's public affairs.

This dual recital of Shema provides an additional insight. The ethical directives for society as a whole differ from those for the individual. Public life is too varied and complex to be governed by the same guidelines that guide private individuals. Hence, the Shema of the morning is inherently different than the Shema of the evening.

The Private Service of the Kohen

This insight enables us to understand a peculiar statement of the Sages. The Mishnah teaches that the evening Shema is to be recited "after the hour when the kohanim return [from the mikveh] to eat their terumah offerings" (Berachot 1:1). In the case of a kohen who becomes ritually impure, he must immerse himself in a mikveh and await nightfall before partaking of terumah. When in fact did the kohanim become pure and could once again eat terumah? When the first stars appear in the night sky.

Why doesn't the Mishnah mention this time explicitly? Why the digression about kohanim returning home to eat their terumah?

In fact, this serves as a beautiful metaphor for the evening Shema. The primary service of the kohanim unfolds takes place the day; however, their evening meal of terumah also constitutes a form of Divine service (see Pesachim 73a).

The inspiring image of a kohen entering his home to partake of terumah corresponds to our own recitation of the evening Shema, wherein we affirm God's dominion in our

private lives. Through the recital of the evening Shema, we demonstrate that we belong to a "kingdom of priests" also in the privacy of our own homes.

The Shema of the Nation

The distinction between the evening and morning Shema, delineating our private and public service of God, has a parallel on the national level. There are times and situations in which the Jewish people must be a "people who dwells alone" (Num. 23:9) — a people separated from the other nations to safeguard their unique heritage. On the other hand, the nation of Israel is also charged to influence and uplift the rest of humanity, to serve as "a light unto the nations" (Isaiah 42:6).

The evening Shema corresponds to the distinctive spiritual life of Israel, a nation living its own existence in pure faith. The blessing recited after the evening Shema is Emet va'Emunah — "Truth and Faith." This is a time when the unique character of the Jewish people must be protected from foreign influences, much like the kohen who returns to his home in the evening, after publicly representing the community in the Temple during the day. In the privacy of his home, the kohen separates from non-kohanim as he partakes of the holy terumah offerings.

The morning Shema, on the other hand, corresponds to our national mission of proclaiming God's Name throughout the world. Consequently, the blessing recited after the morning Shema is Emet VaYatziv, where word yatziv is simply emet (truth) translated into Aramaic. We translate the Torah's message to other languages, as this is a time when its truth should be grasped by all nations of the world, inspired by Israel's acceptance of God's reign.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 173)

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה