



BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAESCHANAN - 5784

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from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

date: Aug 15, 2024, 8:19 PM

Rabbi Michael Rosensweig

Cultivating an Intimate Bond with Hashem Through Tefillah

Cultivating an Intimate Bond with Hashem Through Tefillah
The pesukim that precede and introduce the second rendition of the aseret ha-dibrot in Vaetchanan understandably focus on the unique bond that defines the relationship between Hashem and Benei Yisrael. Examining these pesukim rigorously affords an indispensable opportunity to better illuminate the dynamic of that bond, and to more effectively facilitate its attainment.

The Torah twice utilizes the term "mi goy gadol" to convey Am Yisrael's singular status that justifies this sui generis link. While the second use of this expression (Devarim 4:8)

explicitly develops the role of the Torah, the legal and spiritual constitution of Klal Yisrael, as the foundation of this inimitable bond - "u-mi goy gadol asher lo chukim u-misphatim tzadikim ke-kol ha-Torah hazot asher anochi notein lifneichem ha-yom", the first application (4:7), which actually projects the intimacy of the relationship - "ki mi goy gadol asher lo Elokim kerovim eilav ka-Hashem Elokeinu bekol kareinu elav" is decidedly ambiguous.

It is noteworthy, that Ramban (4:6-8, see also Kli Yakar) strikingly perceives both verses as a testament to the inherent and profound impact of Torah law - "ve-amar ki be-chukim u-be-misphatim tolot gedolot...ve-od she-heim toelet gedolah she-ein kemotah she-Hashem yihiyeh karov lahem be-kol keraam eilav...". However, most of the parshanim projected distinctive themes for these two pesukim. While there were commentators (Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Chizkuni, see also Rav Hirsch) who emphasized Hashem's general responsiveness to the laments, requests, needs, and wants of Am Yisrael, Chazal (Rosh Hashana 18a, Yerushalmi Berachot 9:1), Unkelos, Yonaton ben Uziel (Devarim 4:7), and Rambam (Introduction to Mishneh Torah, after the minyan ha-katzar) focused specifically on the vehicle and institution of tefillah.

The Talmud (Rosh Hashana 18a, Yevamot 49b) cites our verse to prove that notwithstanding the more selective implication of the pasuk in Yeshayah - "dirshu Hashem be-himazo" (which begins the minchah haftarah of a tzom and that defines the period of Aseret Yemei Teshuvah) - the fate of Am Yisrael is never beyond repair - "gezar din shel tzibur...af al pi shenechtam nikra". Thus, our intimate bond ("ki mi goy gadol asher lo Elokim kerovim eilav ka-Hashem Elokeinu") is not only attested to by past successes in prayerful petition ("bekol kareinu eilav"), but also constitutes an ongoing havtachah, an eternal binding commitment! [It is noteworthy that the "kirvah" and "keriah" in our pasuk resonates in the very next verse in Yeshayah - "kerauhu bihiyoto karov"!]

The Griz (al ha-Torah) invokes our pasuk and the Talmudic passage in Rosh Hashana to underscore the difference between Jewish and non-Jewish prayer. [However, he specifically emphasizes the very concept of a communal entity and communal prayer - "de-inhu lav tzibbur". See also Rinat Yitzchak on Devarim 4:7 regarding Taanit 8a - "ein tefilato shel adam nishmaat ela im kein meisim nafsho bekapo". In my view, the special status of tefilat Yisrael, reflected by the principle and singular status of tefillah be-tzibur, also reflects upon individual prayer and differentiates it, as well, from the petition of other peoples and nations. The status of prayer during Aseret Yemei Teshuvah requires clarification but reinforces this theme, as well. I hope to elaborate this theme elsewhere.] Yerushalmi Berachot (9:1) invokes our pasuk to declare that while the distance between heaven and earth is vast indeed, it constitutes no impediment to the efficacy of even silent (individual) prayer ("adam nichnas

le-beit hakeneset u-mitpalel be-lachash ve-Hakadosh Baruch Hu ma'azin tefilato").

Targum Unkeles and Targum Yonaton ben Uziel explicate the focus on tefillah. The typically terse Unkeles is exceedingly expansive in this context. He doubles his reference to prayer. Not only do the words "bekol kareinu eilav", a testament to the singular relationship, signify tefillah - "bekol idan de-anachnu metzalyan kadmohi", but the very methodology and manifestation of bonding with Hashem- "kerovim eilav" - is itself identified as through the medium and vehicle of crisis prayer - "le-kebala tzelotei be-idan akteih"! [The emphasis on tefillah be-eit tzarah is reminiscent of Rambam's comments in Hilchos Ta'anit 1:1-2 and Ramban's view in Sefer Hamitzvos (aseh no. 5) that only crisis prayer is biblically obligated.] [On Unkeles's view, see also his comments on Bereishit 48:22 - "be-charbi ubekashti" - which he renders "be-tzeloti u-be-vaoti". Meshech Chochmah op. cit. posits that these represent routine and crisis prayer respectively. Based upon the paradigms of cherev and keshet, he speculates that greater intention and focus is required for crisis prayer! See also Unkelos' perspective on tefillah referred to in my TorahWeb article on Beshalach 2024. I hope to broaden my presentation on Unkelos' position elsewhere.]

Rambam's view of the prominence of this verse and the eternal promise of prayer is particularly significant and expansive. [One may speculate whether the polar opposite presentations of Rambam and Ramban regarding the connection of prayer to this pasuk is related to their debate in Sefer Hamitzvos, aseh no. 5.] In his introduction to the Yad (post minyan mitzvot hakatzar), he asserts, based upon our pasuk, that Hashem's intimate presence and particularly Divine salvation is always accessible to Am Yisrael ("vehayah karov le-shavateinu"). [This assertion is linked to and exemplified by a brief analysis of the rabbinic mitzvah of keriat ha-megilah. I think it is conceivable that Rambam may also have been inspired to link these themes by the comment in Megilah 11a- "Rav Masna patach pitcha le-parshata de-megillah mikra 'ki mi goy gadol..."] He meaningfully adds that this receptivity to our urgent needs, embodied by the imperative to publicly read Megillat Esther, tasks us with thanking, blessing, and praising Him ("kedai le-varcho, u-lehalelo"), but also further demands that we publicize and educate future generations regarding this authentic tenet rooted in our verse in Vaetchanan ("u-kedai lehodia le-dorot habaim she-emet mah she-hivtachtanu ha-Torah 'ki mi goy gadol...be-kol kareinu eilav"). [See Chidushei ha-Grim, Devarim 4:7 for a similar assessment of Rambam's view.]. It is unsurprising that Rambam both codifies the passage in Rosh Hashana 18a (Hilchos Teshuvah 2:6) and praises Unkelos' interpretation of "kerovim eilav" ("beur sheimot kodesh ve-choh", see Torat ha-Rambam on Devarim 4:7, p. 92).

It is self-evident that the prominence and efficacy of tefillah is a major theme on Tisha B'Av. The pesukim in Eichah, the content of the kinnot, the tefillot and keriat ha-Torah on this day repeatedly underscore Hashem's eternal commitment to Am Yisrael, notwithstanding grim circumstances and grave disappointments. Divine accessibility and receptivity to repentance and tefillah is axiomatic, it stands at the center of our efforts during this extended period of aveilut yeshanah u-derabim (Yevamot 43b) - mourning the past, lamenting the present, but confidently aspiring to a maximalist future. On the pesukim (Eichah 3:20-21) "zachor tizkor ve-tashuah alai nafshi; zot ashiv el libi al kein ochil", Meshech Chochmah explains that while it is foolish to shed tears on a lost cause, confidence in the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash and Yerushalayim, embodying the restoration of maximal Jewish life, an eternal principled promise, is always worth prayers and tears. Moreover, he further notes that precisely the capacity to shed tears over the churban is itself a catalyst to ensure and speed the renewal of national halachic life. [See my TorahWeb article on Tisha B'av as a "moed" for a potential explanation of this theme.] This additional, singular dimension is encapsulated by the statement (Ta'anit 32b) "kol ha-mitabel al Yerushalayim zocheh ve-roeh be-simchatah" and numerous other rabbinic aphorisms. Thus, Eichah Rabbati (1:23) asserts "amar Hakadosh Baruch Hu le-Yisrael be-sechar otah habechiyah ani machnis galuyoteichem". In this respect, the proper perspective on tears and petition actually galvanizes hope and confidence- "al kein ochil". We may suggest that our verse in Va'ethanan, highlighting prayer and reliance on Hashem as both the expression and foundation of our intimate Divine "kurvah" bond, accounts for this acute impact. We are presently deeply ensconced in a national eit zarah, in which the tefillah and tachanunim have been particularly accentuated. While the multifaceted structure and complex process of tefillah, characterized by the triad of praise, petition, and thanksgiving (shevach, bakashah, hodaah - see Rambam beginning of Hilchos Tefilah) is essential to its aspirational efficacy, the emphasis on petition that bares our vulnerability, promotes true introspection, and that underscores our absolute dependence and reliance upon Divine providence, is particularly crucial. This focus has facilitated a critical dimension of clarity that has enabled us to maintain our emotional, spiritual, and halachic equilibrium in a climate of crisis. Recognizing that ein lanu lehishaein ela al avinu shebashamayim, that our eternal, intimate relationship with Hashem is the exclusive foundation of our individual and national lives, has provided stability and direction as we focus on constructive ways to contribute to a successful national outcome, to the attainment of a confident and maximalist halachic future for Am Yisrael. The principle of "kerovim eilav" attested to and accomplished by "be-kol kareinu eilav", a timeless formula, remains an enduring linchpin of our

personal and national identity, a source of inspiration and an effective program for spiritual success.

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from: **The Rabbi Sacks Legacy** info@rabbisacks.org

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZT"L

date: Aug 15, 2024, 11:15 AM

subject: The Idea that Changed the World (Va'etchanan)

The Idea that Changed the World

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l

It is one of the great stories of all time, and Moses foresaw it three thousand years before it happened. Here he is speaking in this week's parsha:

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are about to enter and possess. Take care to keep them, for this will be 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!" For what other nation has decrees and laws as just as this Torah that I am setting before you today? Deut. 4:5-8

Moses believed that there would come a time when the idea of a nation founded on a covenant with God would inspire other nations with its vision of a society based not on a hierarchy of power but on the equal dignity of all under the sovereignty and in the image of God; and on the rule of justice and compassion. "The nations" would appreciate the wisdom of the Torah and its "righteous decrees and laws". It happened. As I have argued many times, we see this most clearly in the political culture and language of the United States.

To this day American politics is based on the biblical idea of covenant. American presidents almost always invoke this idea in their Inaugural Addresses in language that owes its cadences and concepts to the book of Devarim. So, for instance, in 1985 Ronald Reagan spoke of America as "one people under God, dedicated to the dream of freedom that He has placed in the human heart, called upon now to pass that dream onto a waiting and hopeful world."

In his Inaugural in 1989, George Bush prayed:

"There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people. Help us to remember it, Lord. Amen."

In 1997, Bill Clinton said:

"The promise we sought in a new land we will find again in a land of new promise."

George W. Bush in 2001 said:

"We are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in His image."

In 2005, as he commenced his second term as President he declared:

"From the day of our Founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and

matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of Heaven and earth."

In 2009 Barack Obama ended his speech with these words:

"Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations."

This is explicitly religious language, without parallel in any other democratic society in the world, and it reads like a sustained Midrash on Deuteronomy.

How did it happen? It began with the invention of printing by Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz 1439, followed in England in 1476 by William Caxton. Books became less expensive and more accessible. Literacy spread. Then in 1517 came the Reformation, with its emphasis on the individual rather than the Church, and on sola Scriptura, the authority of "Scripture alone."

Then came the translation of the Bible into the vernacular. We tend to forget that the Hebrew Bible is a subversive work. It is not a book that preaches submission. It speaks of prophets unafraid to challenge kings, and of Saul who lost his throne because he disobeyed the word of God. So the authorities had good reason for the Bible not to be available in language people could understand. Translating it into the vernacular was forbidden in the sixteenth century. In the 1530s the great Tyndale translation appeared. Tyndale paid for this with his life: he was arrested, found guilty of heresy, strangled, and burned at the stake in 1536.

However, as contemporary tyrannies have discovered, it is hard to stop the spread of information that new technologies make possible. English Bibles continued to be printed and sold in massive numbers, most notably the Geneva translation of 1560 that was read by Shakespeare, Cromwell, Milton, and John Donne, as well as by the early English settlers of America.

The Geneva Bible contained a commentary in the margin. Its comments were brief but sometimes explosive. This applied in particular to the story of the Hebrew midwives, Shifra and Puah (Exodus chapter 1) - the first recorded instance of civil disobedience, the refusal to obey an immoral order. Pharaoh had instructed them to kill every male Israelite child, but they did not. Commenting on this, the Geneva Bible says "their disobedience in this was lawful." When Pharaoh then commands the Egyptians to drown male Israelite children, the Geneva Bible comments: "When tyrants cannot prevail by deceit, they burst into open rage." This was nothing short of a justification for rebellion against a tyrannical and unjust king. The Tyndale and Geneva Bibles led to a group of thinkers known as the Christian Hebraists, of whom the most famous - he has been called Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi - was John Selden (1584-1654). Selden and his contemporaries

studied not only Tanach, but also the Babylonian Talmud, especially tractate Sanhedrin, and Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, and applied Judaic principles to the politics of their day. Their work has been described in a fine recent study, *The Hebrew Republic*, by Harvard political philosopher Eric Nelson. Nelson argues that the Hebrew Bible influenced European and American politics in three ways. First, the Christian Hebraists tended to be republican rather than royalist. They took the view – held in Judaism by Abarbanel – that the appointment of a king in Israel in the days of Samuel was a (tolerated) sin rather than the fulfilment of a mitzvah. Second, they placed at the heart of their politics the idea that one of the tasks of government is to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor, an idea alien to Roman law. Third, they used the Hebrew Bible – especially the separation of powers between the king and the High Priest – to argue for the principle of religious toleration.

It was this historic encounter between Christians and the Hebrew Bible in the seventeenth century that led to the birth of liberty in both England and America. The Calvinists and Puritans who led both the English and American revolutions were saturated in the politics of the Hebrew Bible, especially of the book of Devarim.

In fact, the modern world offers as near as history comes to a controlled experiment in liberty. Of the four revolutions that mark modernity, two, the English (1640s) and American (1776), were based on the Hebrew Bible, and two, the French and the Russian, were based on secular philosophy, Rousseau and Marx respectively. The first two led to liberty. The second two ended in the suppression of liberty: in France in the Reign of Terror (1793-94), in Russia in the form of Stalinist Communism.

Appreciating the contribution of the Hebrew Bible to liberty, John Adams, second President of the United States, wrote: "I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation. If I were an atheist, and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilising the nations." John Adams' letter to François Adriaan van der Kemp (16 February 1809)

The irony is, of course, that there is nothing like this in the political discourse of the contemporary state of Israel. The politics of Israel is secular in its language and ideas. Its founders were driven by high ideals, but they owed more to Marx, Tolstoy or Nietzsche than to Moses. Meanwhile religion in Israel remains sectarian rather than society-building. To be sure, there are those who fully realise the significance of Sefer Devarim and the politics of covenant for the present State. The pioneer was the late Professor Daniel Elazar, who devoted a lifetime to rehabilitating Judaic political theory. His work is continued today, by among others, the scholars of the Shalem Center.

The significance of this cannot be sufficiently emphasised. Whenever in the past Jews lost their religious vision, or when religion became a divisive rather than a uniting force, eventually they lost their sovereignty also. In four thousand years of history there has never been, in Israel or outside, a sustained secular Jewish survival.

How ironic that the political culture of the United States should be more Judaic than that of the Jewish state. But Moses warned that it would be so. Keep the Torah's laws carefully, Moses said, "for this is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations." Moses knew that Gentiles would see what Jews sometimes do not see: the wisdom of God's law when it comes to sustaining a free society.

Israeli politics needs to recover the vision of social justice, compassion, human dignity and love of the stranger, set forth by Moses and never, in all the intervening centuries, surpassed.

Previous

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l was a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and the moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks, please visit www.rabbisacks.or...

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date: Aug 15, 2024, 12:19 PM

THE GREATEST SOURCE OF COMFORT

Around the Year with Reb Meilech by Yisroel Besser

Shabbos Nachamu is a Shabbos that brings comfort. Each and every year, as the period of bein hamet For more info see [httpzarim](http://zarim) and Tishah B'Av comes to an end, the voice of Hakadosh Baruch Hu rings out once again. "Nachamu, nachamu ami," He calls out, His voice bringing comfort and hope, now as then. But how do we actually take comfort, if the reality that caused us to mourn has not changed? We cried because the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, and now, after Tishah B'Av, it has not yet been rebuilt. What is the source of this burst of simchah and comfort? The pasuk addresses this, says the Sfas Emes. "From where will you take comfort, My people? From the fact that this comes from Me, Elokeichem, your God. The awareness that it is He and only He Who plans, decides, and acts, that all sorrow and anguish are also a result of His precise, per For more info see [httpfect](http://fect), compassionate design — this brings comfort.

The word "nachamu" is doubled, because there is one measure of comfort one takes in the awareness that even difficult situations come from Him, but there is a second por For more info see [httption](http://tion) of nechamah that comes from the assurance that whatever He does is for our ultimate good. Yes, we still see churban, but a deeper look allows us to reflect upon where

it all comes from, and to take heart in this: It is from our loving Creator, Who seeks only to benefit us. This knowledge itself brings comfort and joy. Reb Shmuel Munkes was one of the close chassidim For more info see httpdim of the Baal HaTanya, a spirited man of great depth. He came into the beis medrash one morning and announced that a fire had consumed his house, deFor more info see httpstroying all his possessions. Somehow, he had scraped together a few coins and gone to buy a bottle of mashFor more info see httpkeh, whiskey, which he put on the table. He invited the assembled chassidim to join him in drinkFor more info see httpping l'chaim, and they looked at him oddly. He had just lost all his possessions, yet he was clearly in high spirits. He poured a l'chaim for each of the chassidim and then started to dance, singing a niggun to the words, "shelo asani goy." Reb Shmuel's friends wondered if the tragedy had affected him — perhaps he had lost his grip on realFor more info see httpity and he didn't realize what had happened to him? Reb Shmuel saw the expresFor more info see httpsons on their faces and he exFor more info see httpplained his joy. "Imagine I was not a Yid," he said. "Just imagFor more info see httpine this would have happened to me. I would have lost everyFor more info see httpthing, every possession and every object, and if my god was material, then it too would have been consumed. But thankfully," Reb Shmuel's face brightened, "I am a Yid, my God is alive and well, and no fire can affect Him. He remains as powerful and good today as yesterday, and therefore I dance, shelo asani goy!" This is the nechamah we receive on this Shabbos. Yes, the Beis HaMikdash still lies in ruins, but ElokeFor more info see httpchem, the King and Creator Who made us His and gave Himself to us, is as present and primary as ever. The moment of greatest connection between the Ribbono Shel Olam and us came at Har Sinai, when He presented Himself to us with the word Anochi (Shemos 20:2): Anochi Hashem Elokecha, I am Hashem, your God. Later in the Torah, Hashem speaks of times of great concealment using that very same word, v'Anochi astir hastir panai bayom hahu, And I will surely have concealed my face on that day (Devarim 31:18), teaching us that the light and darkness are conFor more info see httppected, two perspectives of the very same reality. Therefore, the Navi tells us, in the name of HashFor more info see httpem, Anochi, Anochi Hu minachemchem, I, only I, am He Who comforts you (Yeshayah 51:12), using the same word twice. It is the awareness that it is the very same Anochi, at times of great revelation and at times of great conFor more info see httpcealment, that is the greatest source of comfort

from: Daryl Michel <daryl@bircas.org>
date: Aug 15, 2024, 7:43 AM
subject: Parshas V'eschanan 5784
PARSHAS V'ESCHANAN 5784

THE ULTIMATE EMUNA

By Rabbi Moshe Krieger, Yeshivas Bircas HaTorah

Be careful and guard yourself very much, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and children's children. The day that you stood before Hashem, Your G-d, at Chorev... (Devarim 4:9-10). The Ramban (ibid.) states that this verse imparts to us one of the most fundamental principles of Judaism, that every Jew saw Hashem face to face as He gave the Torah at Mt. Sinai. The verse goes on to warn that we must never forget this awesome revelation, and we must pass it on to our children. The Rambam (Yesodei HaTorah 8:1) writes that the ultimate proof that Moshe was a true prophet was at Mt. Sinai, where every Jew saw that Hashem gave Moshe the Torah. Even after all the miracles Moshe had done during the Exodus and at the Red Sea, there was still room for skepticism. After Mt. Sinai, their faith was free of any doubts. Moshe Rabbeinu told the nation that from the revelation at Sinai, they could reach a level where the fear of Hashem will be on your faces and you will never sin (Shmos 20:17). Harav Aharon Kotler asks that if Matan Torah is so important, why are there no mitzvos to remind us of it? For example, we have a mitzvah to speak about the Exodus from Egypt every day. In addition, many mitzvos remind us of the Exodus. We have Pesach, and the Pesach seder in particular. The parshiyos inside our tefillin speak about the Exodus. The mitzvah to redeem the first born reminds us that Hashem redeemed our first-borns on the night that the Egyptian first-borns died. But why isn't there a command to speak about Matan Torah every day? Even if it is one of the Six Remembrances (that appear in most siddurim at the end of Shacharis), there is no command to actually say these words. And why aren't there mitzvos to serve as a reminder of Matan Torah? There is the Shavuos festival, but in commanding this festival, the Torah makes no mention of Matan Torah. Harav Kotler answers that the Giving of the Torah requires no special reminders because Hashem put this power of reminding into the Torah itself. Toiling in Torah gives us all the light and revelation that we received at Sinai. Torah study imparts to us crystal clear faith. The Ibn Ezra (Tehilim 19:8) explains that this is the intent of Dovid Hamelech's words: The Torah of Hashem is perfect, it restores the soul. What does Torah restore to the soul? It restores emuna. Toiling in Torah over time will remove any doubts one may have in emuna. Such a person needs no other demonstrations of the truth of the Torah. Rav Moshe Sternbuch notes, however, that this power of the Torah to affect a person applies only when he learns Torah with the understanding that these are the words of Hashem. As the sages state (Brachos 22), just as the Torah was given amid awe and fear, so too it should be learned in this way. If we learn Torah with the recognition that these are Hashem's

words and they possess intrinsic holiness, this should arouse in us a sense of seriousness toward our learning. To the extent that we do this, we merit the awesome effect that the Torah had at its Giving on Mt. Sinai. Learning Torah with this awareness is a tikun for one of the sins that led to the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. The sages say that people were not careful then about the brachos said before learning Torah (Nedarim 81a). Their neglect of these brachos was because they did not sufficiently realize that they were learning the words of Hashem (see Ran, *ibid.*). In these days, this should be our tikun. Rav Sternbuch adds that when the noted Rav David Freedman of Karlin would learn Torah, he would place a sign before his eyes with the words, *Sh'visi Hashem knegdi tamid* (I have placed Hashem before me at all times). Rav Freedman would say that it is forbidden for one studying Torah to forget for even a moment that he is studying the very words of Hashem. Harav Moshe Shapira was known as a giant in all sections of Torah, and an indefatigable speaker who gave shiurim before diverse audiences, teaching subjects that ranged from the revealed to the hidden secrets of the Torah. In addition, he taught groups of Jews from the former Soviet Union who had little or no background in Torah study. He was often asked why he devoted so much time to teaching these Jews, who were only at the beginning of their development in Torah. It seemed as though he was vastly overqualified for teaching such basic subject matter. Wouldn't his time be better spent teaching subjects that very few had mastered as well as he? In most of the shiurim I give, he would answer, *I'm not sure if people understand me, and there are probably others who don't need me at all. When it comes to Jews who lack the most elementary background in Yiddishkeit, I know that my teaching can make the proper effect. When I face my final judgment, I know that this will be appreciated. When these Jews would come to him with questions about emuna, he would always reply: First, let's learn Gemara. These are the words of Hashem and we'll get connected to Him. Afterwards, if there will be any questions in emuna, we can deal with them. May our Torah study bring us to crystal clear faith!* _____ Rav Kook on Va'etchanan: Prolonging Shema Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org> Thu, Aug 15, 4:19 AM (21 hours ago) Rav Kook Torah Va'etchanan: Prolonging Echad *שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל: ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, ה' אֶחָד*. Judaism's most important prayer is the Shema, the declaration of faith that encapsulates the essence of our belief. At its heart is the word *אֶחָד* (echad) - "God is one." The Sages provided detailed instructions how to pronounce this pivotal word: "All who prolong the word echad will have their days and years prolonged. Rabbi Acha bar Ya'akov taught: One should prolong the final letter, the 'ד' (Dalet). Rabbi Assi added: Provided that one does not slur over the middle letter, the 'ח' (Chet)." (Berachot 13b) Why should the

word echad be stretched out? And what is the significance of the letters Dalet and Chet? God's Reign Over All Events The Talmud instructs us to pronounce the word echad long enough that we can mentally picture God's reign over the entire cosmos: all that is above, all that is below, and the "four sides of the heavens." When we declare God's oneness in the Shema, we acknowledge His complete control of the universe. While His reign may be expressed in a spatial sense, we can also cultivate a deeper awareness of God's providence as it is present in every event that takes place in the world. We may divide up the universe into three functional categories: The initial causes that set the myriad actions and events of the world in motion. The final goals that are the fulfillment of the original causes. The intermediate means and processes that lead from the initial causes to the final outcomes. God's reign encompasses all three categories. He rules over the heavens, the realm of initial causes. His control extends to the earth, where these causes find their completion and fulfillment in the realization of Divine purpose. And Divine rule also includes the intricate network of intermediate means and events. The Sages referred to these means as "the four sides of the heavens," since they form an intermediate stage connecting the heavens (the initial causes) with the earth (the ultimate goals). This is a profound message of the Shema. By recognizing this underlying unity, we acknowledge that all of the various events in the world - even though they appear to be dispersed and disconnected, like the four sides of the heavens - are in fact part of a single, Divine purpose. Everything is directed toward a higher goal, toward that which is ultimately good and elevated. Emphasize the Dalet, but Remember the Chet Why should we prolong the pronunciation of the letter Dalet when reciting the Shema? The significance of the letter Dalet lies in its numerical value (Gematria), which is four. Dalet symbolizes the four directions, the diverse intermediate means in the universe. By emphasizing the Dalet, we reflect on how these means are not random or disconnected, but integral parts of a greater purpose, connected to the unified goal of creation. Still, the 'heavens' and the 'earth' should not be ignored. To truly appreciate the intermediate means, we must contemplate the profound Divine counsel that directs all events toward their purpose. And we should consider the value of the ultimate goal, as it unfolds and is revealed in all its splendor. Thus, the letter Chet needs to be articulated clearly. Chet has a numerical value of eight; it corresponds to the seven levels of heaven (shiv'ah reki'im) together with the earth. These eight levels represent the various stages, from the initial cause to its final, practical fulfillment. To "swallow up" the Chet would be to overlook the importance of the initial cause and the final goal. In doing so, the intermediary events would lose their true significance, necessary steps in the fulfillment of a higher purpose. (Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I p. 71; Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 245)

Ksav Sofer - It's All One Inbox **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein**
<ravadlerstein@torah.org> Thu, Aug 15, 11:36 AM (13 hours ago) to targumim Top Banner logo Ksav Sofer By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein To Dedicate an Article [click here](#)
Parshas Vaeschanan It's All One print I am Hashem Elokecha who has taken you out of the land of Mitzrayim.[1] A medrash finds the origins of the Shema in this opening pasuk of the Aseres Hadibros. Hashem opened, by saying, "Hear Yisrael! Hashem Elokecha took you out of Egypt." The Bnei Yisrael responded with, "Hashem is One!" Moshe reacted with, "The Name of the kavod of His kingship is forever!" What could this possibly mean? We can find the answer in the gemara[2] that contrasts our reaction to disturbing news in present times and in the future. In our day, when we hear such tidings, we pronounce the berachah of dayan ha-emes. We accept Hashem's din, and justify it. We cannot always understand it, but we are confident that He never acts unjustly. After our future redemption, however, we will react to such news the same way we do to joyful news. We will praise Him for His goodness, and His sharing that goodness with us mortals. We will fully understand that everything He does is not only just, but is for the good. Another way of looking at this is that the apparent difference between Hashem's din and His rachamim will disappear. We will fully understand that it is all rachamim. Today, we can utter the words as fact, but we certainly can't process the bad times as a Divine favor. In our pasuk, "Hashem Elokecha" invokes Names of both rachamim and din. The Bnei Yisrael felt the brunt of din for many long years in Mitzrayim. In their redemption, they experienced His rachamim. Both din and rachamim played a role. How did the Bnei Yisrael react to Hashem's pointing to both of His midos? They said, "Hashem echad!" Hashem is truly One. There is no difference between these seemingly opposite manifestations. The pain and suffering were actually a chesed. Through them, they were refined, purified, turned into a people who were capable of receiving the Torah a short seven weeks after the Exodus. Moshe reflected on their reaction. If they can understand that there was no essential difference between Hashem and Elokim, then the true Name of the kavod of His kingship – the four-letter Name of rachamim – can be declared forever. We can see this thought reflected in our haftarah. "Nachamu, nachamu ami." A person who suffered terribly will often be comforted with the passage of time. His consolation, however, is not complete. Memories of his past prevail still trouble him; the sting is not fully eliminated. Yeshayah here tells the people that they can expect a two-fold consolation in the end of days. With the dawn of redemption, they will be consoled for the horrors of millennia of galus. Moreover, they will come to understand the purpose of that exile, and how it was necessary for their survival as a people. They will grasp its role in addressing their sins. Without the kapparrah that galus

brought, their sins would have demanded their extinction. Thus, the navi continues: "Proclaim to her that her time of exile has been fulfilled, that her iniquity has been fully discharged." Why? Because the travail of galus was "received from the hand of Hashem." People can be punished in two different ways. One kind of punishment is a targeted one. Hashem sends some onesh to the transgressor. A second kind does nothing of the sort. It merely leaves the sinner to his own devices, to contend with the myriad dangers that are part of human existence. Hashem removes his special assistance in dealing with these challenges. It is only a matter of time before one of the vicissitudes of life catch up with him. The first kind is preferable, because it brings kapparrah to the sinner. It was specially designed to expiate the sin. Surviving the second kind, however, does not bring kapparrah, since the specific experience the sinner endured was a matter of happenstance. Yeshayah stresses that the sins of Klal Yisrael have been paid up in full, because the punishment that it endured was directly from Hashem's hand. He continues, "double for all her sins." Because galus was visited upon us directly from His hand, He has given Klal Yisrael a double nechamah. We will be overjoyed at the coming of redemption, and even able to make peace with the long road that preceded it. Nachamu, nachamu ami. Devarim 5:6 ↑ Berachos 54a ↑ Ksav Sofer © 2023 by Torah.org.

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Halachik Man... and Beyond Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Our people are facing a gut-wrenching decision and an unimaginable dilemma. There are currently 116 hostages imprisoned in Gaza, who have suffered through over 300 days of unspeakable cruelty and torture. They are citizens of our state, and we have a national and moral responsibility to bring them home. It appears as if the only way they can be released is through a ceasefire agreement with Hamas murderers. The only path to their release is a treaty with monsters whose hands are stained with the blood of thousands of Israelis. On the other hand, if we don't finish this just and moral war, these maniacs will regroup, re-entrench themselves, and recover their capacity to attack us. We have invested far too much effort and suffered far too much loss of life to leave this incredibly important job unfinished. Our survival depends upon it. There have been countless shiurim delivered surrounding the halachot of pidyon shevuyim (redeeming captives) and how it impacts our difficult dilemma. Of course, each shiur concludes in the same manner: the conventional or typical halachik guidelines of pidyon shevuim are not applicable to this situation. There are broader issues at play such as the morale of the country which would be lifted by freeing hostages after their prolonged suffering. Improved national morale is a strategic asset, especially after such a long and draining war. Alternatively, a hostage release will cause

deep anguish to families of fallen soldiers for whom anything less than total victory makes their sacrifice feel hollow. The long-term effects of a hostage exchange are also frightening, as any deal will release hundreds if not thousands of murderers who will execute future attacks. Of course, international opinion must also be factored in as we desperately need the support of our allies, many of whom demand a hostage exchange. None of these factors appear in the gemara in Gittin which discusses releasing captives, and these issues are similarly absent from the ensuing discussion in the Rishonim and Acharonim. Ultimately the sheer diversity of complicating factors renders the direct application of the halachot impossible. In 1976 when initially asked about releasing Israeli hostages held in Entebbe, HaRav Ovadia Yosef concluded that there was no indisputable halachik mandate and that the decision must be taken by military and political experts. Whatever these experts felt was best for our country would be halachikally mandated. Of course, Hashem provided a miracle and liberated our hostages through the heroism of the IDF. The very fact, however, that there are so many shiurim being delivered about the halachot of pidyon shevuyim, even though the halachot are “inapplicable”, reflects a broader phenomenon. We are becoming more committed to halachik observance, but less sensitive to employing non-halachik reasoning. Our default and sometimes only response is halachik assessment. Sometimes halacha has little to say and we must apply different analysis. Halacha-Ization of Religion Over the past several decades halachik observance has b”h spiked in the Orthodox community. More people are keeping halacha more strictly than in previous generations. In part, the stiffening of halachik standards was a reaction to the rupture in our masorah caused by 19th and 20th century secularization and by the Holocaust. Professor Chaim Soloveitchik claimed that traditionally, halachik information was delivered through a mimetic tradition whereby practices and teachings were passed down through generations by example and through oral transmission. Mitzvot and minhagim were learned through observation and participation. When this mimetic transmission ruptures halachik practice is reconstructed through books and texts in a more formalized and codified manner. The widespread availability of seforim and effortless exchange of information facilitated by the internet, have each contributed to the surge in halachik commitment. Yet, primarily because halacha has been centered, other forms of religious calculus have become neglected. There are questions which lie beyond the domain of strict halachik categories. Rabbi Soloveitchik authored a landmark philosophical sefer entitled “The Halachik Man” describing a religious Jew as someone who approaches life through the lens of Halakha, allowing it to shape their worldview, ethics, behavior, and decision making. It was a supremely important work when first published in 1959 and articulates crucial and timeless elements of Jewish

faith and practice. However, 75 years later it is fair to question whether we have become imbalanced “Halachik Men” who ignore or even stifle other forms of religious processing. Moral Instinct Parshat V’etchanan describes the value of “lifnim mishurat hadin” or preserving the moral spirit of halacha, not just the legal mandates: ס’ה יניעב בוטהו רשיה תישעו. Though we are commanded to adhere to a comprehensive system of 613 mitzvot many issues transcend the boundaries of strict halachik parameters. The value of lifnim mishurat hadin demands that we don’t just consider what we are obligated to do but also ponder what we ought to do morally and ethically. Hashem imbued us with ethical spirit and inner moral compass, and He wants us to employ them to navigate issues which halacha doesn’t directly address. The Flagpole and the Plumbing Forty years ago, as a young semicha student at Yeshiva University I walked home one wintry evening as the flagpoles high above the street were swaying dangerously in the wind. A young boy rushed over to me asking whether he had a chiyuv or a halachik obligation to notify the police. I responded that I didn’t know whether he had a chiyuv but it was certainly a good idea. Not every good idea is grounded in halachik demands. Fast forward about 35 years later, when I visited a community for Shabbat which, evidently, was struggling with plumbing complications in their shul, caused by paper towels and wipes being flushed down the toilet. In response, the bathrooms were plastered with signs warning that disposing non-flushables is considered theft or gezeilah as it would clog the pipes and require costly maintenance. I remember how disappointed I was that the signs implored proper behavior based upon avoiding gezeilah rather than because of common courtesy and decency. As halachik commitment has increased, the halacha-ization of Orthodox Judaism has also increased, sometimes obscuring other important forms of religious reasoning such as moral instinct and menshlichkeit. Halacha and Geulah This halacha-ization of Judaism has also impacted the way we analyze the redemptive process. Redemption is a new experience about which we have little tradition or masorah to guide us. Simply defaulting to halachik concepts to process the mysteries and demands of geulah is insufficient. Mori V’Rabbi HaRav Amital was staunchly opposed to conditioning our love for Israel and our commitment to settling the land upon the existence of a mitzvah to live in Israel (the Ramban asserts a mitzvah whereas the Rambam omits mention). Hypothetically, if there weren’t a mitzvah to settle Israel would living in Israel be less important? At this stage of history our relationship with Israel and with Jewish history can’t be reduced to purely halachik calculus. More is demanded of us, and it lies beyond halacha. I am similarly disappointed when the discussion surrounding Yom Ha’atzmaut is pitched entirely around the halachot of reciting hallel. The micro question of hallel is important and should be analyzed through halachik processing. However, there are

many who choose not to recite Hallel who still deeply identify with Israel and its redemptive potential. You cannot quantify participation in our joint historical project through halachik calculation. Navigating redemption requires different compasses. Halacha can't always guide us. Sensitivity to Jewish history comes from our ability to hear the silent music of past generations, its gentle strains resonating within every Jewish heart and our newly established homeland. Contraction or Expansion The gemara in Berachot (8a) claims that תיב ברחש מוימ הכלה לש תומא עברא אלא ומלועב אוה דורב שודקהל ול ויא שדקמה דבלב. After the destruction of the Mikdash, Judaism retreated into the insular study halls of Torah and the bracketed performance of mitzvot. Fortunately, Torah and mitzvot are vast, infinite, and self-sufficient. For centuries we constructed a rich and robust religious experience based solely upon that “small” but vast world of the Beit Midrash. Not only is halachik commitment foundational to religious experience but without strict and unflinching halachik observance we would not have survived, nor would we have retained our national identity. We would not have outlasted exile without passionate devotion to halacha. Now that we have returned to Israel, even though we haven't fully returned to a Mikdash-like state, many Jews, particularly in Israel, are experimenting with religious expression outside of Torah study and formal mitzvot. What role does commitment to land and history play within religious consciousness? Now that we live in a broader Jewish society, what role does music and art play in amplifying the Jewish spirit and, ultimately, in enriching

Meshech Chochmah on Vaeschanan **Rav Immanuel Bernstein** <ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com> Thu, Aug 15, 6:59 AM (18 hours ago) MESHECH CHOCHMAH
 Vaeschanan Shabbos and Yetzias Mitzrayim וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצִיאֲךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִשָּׁם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה עַל כֵּן צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֵת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Hashem, your God, took you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; therefore, Hashem, your God, has commanded you to make the Shabbos day. (5:15) Many mefarshim raise the question: In what way is the day of Shabbos a remembrance of our leaving Mitzrayim? As we know, and as the Aseres Hadibros state explicitly in Parshas Yisro,[1] Shabbos commemorates the fact that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. That is something which preceded all of history, including our redemption from Mitzrayim! Creation and Supervision The Meshech Chochmah explains. The full meaning of remembering that Hashem created the world is recognizing that He continues to control it and to supervise the actions of those that He created. This is the basis of Torah, reward and punishment, for which reason one who publically and deliberately desecrates Shabbos is considered as one who has abandoned all of Torah.[2] However, all of this brings us

to a simple question. Given that awareness of Hashem as Creator and Supervisor of the world is of relevance to every human being, why is it that only the Jewish people have been commanded to keep the Shabbos? Evidence and Experience The answer, says the Meshech Chochmah, is that since keeping Shabbos represents testimony that Hashem created the world, it was entrusted to the Bnei Yisrael; for they themselves are the testimony! All the miracles which accompanied the Jewish people upon their leaving Mitzrayim – from the ten plagues to the splitting of the Yam Suf to their miraculous sustenance in the wilderness with the manna and water from Miriam's well, surrounded by the Clouds of Glory – all this provided graphic evidence of Hashem's mastery of the world, which is in turn testimony to Him as its Creator. Therefore, our pasuk states that we should remember that we were slaves in Mitzrayim and the wondrous way in which Hashem brought us out; for the principles to which this bears testimony are the reason Hashem has commanded us – alone – to keep the Shabbos. Shabbos and Yom Tov With the above idea in mind, we will appreciate that although both Shabbos and Yom Tov are kept exclusively by the Jewish people, it is not for the same reason. The Yamim Tovim of the Torah commemorate things which relate exclusively to Jewish history, hence, they “naturally” belong exclusively with the Jewish people. Shabbos, on the other hand, relates in principle to all of mankind, yet was given only to the Jewish people. This is the intent of the statement of Chazal that Hashem said to Moshe, “I have a good gift in My treasure house, it is called Shabbos.”[3] The selection of the Jewish people alone to be the recipients a gift which could have been given to other nations as well gives it the designation of a “good gift” to them. This basic difference between Shabbos and Yom Tov expresses itself in a number of ways, for since Yom Tov is based on the experiences and relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem, their mark can be found in those days in a way which is inappropriate for Shabbos. Thus, for example, the very designation of the seventh day of the week as Shabbos both precedes and exists independently of the Jewish people, while the designation of which day is Yom Tov, through determining which day the new month begins, is in the domain of the Beis Din. Likewise, although all melachah (creative labor) is forbidden on Shabbos, those melachos which are required for food – and by extension, to related needs – are permitted on Yom Tov. Since Yom Tov receives its sanctity from Yisrael who have themselves been sanctified by Hashem, their basic food requirements also supersede the sanctity of the day. This is not so with regards to Shabbos, which has been sanctified directly by Hashem. Non-Jews and Melachah With this in mind, the Meshech Chochmah presents a fascinating answer to a question that may be raised on a statement of Tosafos. The halachah states that if a Jew passes away on Shabbos, he cannot be buried on that day, even by a non-Jew,

as this involves melachos which are forbidden on Shabbos. Tosafos[4] explain that even though, as rule, a non-Jew may perform melachah for a Jew if it is for purposes of a mitzvah, nevertheless, when it comes to the question of burial, we are sensitive to another concern – respect for the deceased, and it is degrading for someone to be buried through the violation of Shabbos, even if done by a non-Jew. Asks the Meshech Chochmah: If a person passes away on Yom Tov, the halachah states that he needs to be buried that day by a non-Jew.[5] Why, in that case, are we not concerned for the degradation that comes with being buried through the violation of Yom Tov, exactly as Tosafos told us we are concerned regarding Shabbos? The answer lies in the fact that the central idea of Shabbos, i.e. recognizing Hashem as Creator and Controller of the world, relates in principle to all nations of the world, as we have discussed. Therefore, even though it has been “gifted” to the Jewish people, and a non-Jew has no personal obligation whatsoever to refrain from melachah, it nevertheless remains a degradation for a person to be buried through melachah performed by anyone on that day, even a non-Jew. The ideas of the Yamim Tovim, on the other hand, have no relevance whatsoever for a non-Jew nation, even in principle. Accordingly, if a non-Jew performs melachah as part of the burial, there has been no infraction of Yom Tov on any level and hence, there is no element of degradation at all for the Jew over having been buried through melachah on Yom Tov. [1] Shemos 20:11. [2] Chullin 5a. [3] Beitzah 16a. [4] Bava Kama 80b s.v. omer. [5] Beitzah 6a.

from: Alan Fisher <afisherads@yahoo.com> date: Aug 15, 2024, 7:38 PM subject: **Potomac Torah Study Center:** Devrei Torah for Shabbat Vaetchanan 5784 Potomac Torah Study Center Vol. 11 #45, August 16-17, 2024; 12-13 Av 5784; Vaetchanan; Shabbat Nachamu Note: Tu B’Av is Monday, August 19 Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) at www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives. Hamas continues to manipulate the media while pretending to negotiate with Israel. Hersh Polin Goldberg, cousin of very close friends of ours and a U.S. citizen, remains a captive. Concerns are increasing that fewer than half of the hostages may still be alive. We continue our prayers for the hostages and all our people stuck in Gaza. May Hashem enable us and our people in Israel to wipe out the evil of Hamas, protect us from violence by Hezbollah and other anti-Semites around the world, and restore peace for our people quickly and successfully. After Moshe’s rebukes (Mussar) in Devarim and the tragic reminders of the Three Weeks, Shabbat Nachamu and Tu B’Av (next Monday) come as welcome relief. Moshe repeats the Ten Statements in Vaetchanan, with some changes in emphasis. For example, Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

observes that the statement about Shabbat in Shemot focuses on remembering Shabbat to commemorate the creation of the world. In Devarim, the focus of Shabbat is to extend a day of rest every week to all humans and animals, to remember the Exodus. Here the focus is on relations between each of us and fellow living creatures (humans and animals), a focus that connects with the emphasis in Tanach on caring properly with others, especially those less fortunate than we are. Rabbi David Fohrman and his fellow scholars at alephbeta.org provide another example of how incidents in the lives of our ancestors frequently come back as mitzvot in the Torah. In chapter 7, Moshe reminds us that in Canaan, they will encounter seven larger and stronger nations (several the same ones with whom Yaakov and his family interacted). The word the Torah uses for marriages, “I’hitchatein,” means intermingling among people. The prohibition on intermarriage really means that B’Nai Yisrael are to keep separate from other nations. The danger of intermarriage is that the family from the non-Jewish spouse will influence the Jewish spouse and his or her relatives to adopt the foreign practices, something that opens a path to idolatry. This warning links back to Bereishis 34, when the son of the leader of Shechem kidnaps and rapes Yaakov’s daughter Dinah, then brothers Levi and Shimon deceive the men of Shechem (to have them all circumcise themselves) and murder them while they are in pain after the surgery. Shimon and Levi take property from the people of Shechem, and that property includes idols. This danger is why Moshe repeatedly commands the people to destroy all property of other nations. Foreign influences (idolatry) can affect the Jews through many paths as long as the people live among other nations – and marriage is only the most obvious danger. While Vaetchanan and Tu B’Av celebrate marriage, it is only Jewish marriage, not intermarriage. Yaakov is furious with Shimon and Levi – and fears that the larger nations will attack his small family. Once Shimon and Levi destroy all the spoils that they took from Shechem, Hashem puts fear of B’Nai Yisrael in the hearts of the Canaanite nations, and this fear protects Yaakov and his family. In ancient times, political marriage and intermingling of the tribes was a way to increase the strength of relatively small nations. Moshe warns B’Nai Yisrael that being a small nation is not a reason to be afraid – when Jews follow the mitzvot, God protects the Jews. Moshe warns the people that Hashem’s protection is much stronger than any protection that they could gain from intermarriage with non-Jews. This policy, which Jews have largely followed for more than 3000 years, is a key factor in the survival of Israel and Jews for so many years. Moshe’s warning and the lesson from Hashem’s protection remain relevant today. Despite overwhelming odds, Israel defeated the combined Arab nations in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973. The inability of a hundred million Arabs to defeat Israel in these wars gave a sense of superiority to Israel – a reputation that has benefitted the

country during most of the past decades. The vicious attack of Hamas on October 7 damaged Israel's reputation for top security and ability to learn in advance and counter what our enemies plan. Since October 7, we have seen an explosion of anti-Semitism in most parts of the world. Our enemies – including most of the press in the United States – claim that Israel has stolen land from the “Palestinians” and are aggressors in Gaza and other non-Jewish neighboring countries. Woke elements in the United States have been teaching young people that Israel is an evil country trying to take over land that does not belong to us. The situation on many college campuses and in graduate schools is that Jewish students do not feel safe. Indeed, a court earlier this week ruled that UCLA has failed to protect its Jewish students and must implement policies and protections to ensure the safety of Jews on campus. Similar lawsuits are in litigation against several other universities. The situation for Jews at universities is so severe that I am reprinting an extremely important essay by Rabbi YY Jacobson, “The Arab-Israeli Conflict Is Not Territorial: Why Are We Afraid to Speak Truth?” This essay, which includes an outstanding article on Israel's right to the land by Harvard Professor Emerita Ruth Wisse, was in the Internet Parsha Sheet (parsha.net) last week for Devarim. Professor Wisse has another article on the current situation in the Wall St. Journal on August 15, 2024 (editorial section), and everyone should read that piece as well. Rabbi Jacobson and Professor Wisse explain why Israel has a legal claim to the land of Israel and why the term “Palestinian people” only came into use after Israel won the Six Day War in 1967. The people who claim to have a claim to our land as “Palestinians” never made that claim while Jordan controlled much of Israel. Jewish claims go back approximately 3500 years. Moshe's warnings to our people are as important today as they were when Yehoshua led our ancestors into the land that Hashem had promised to our Avot. We should follow Moshe's words, increase our dedication to the mitzvot, and trust in Hashem's protection. With Hashem's help, and with Jews doing our part, we can keep Israel secure and work for a better future. We must ensure that our children and grandchildren learn and believe this message. Shabbat Shalom, Hannah and Alan

**Peninim Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parashas Va'eschanan**

ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך ויום השביעי שבת לד' אלקיך
Six days shall you labor and accomplish all your work. But the seventh day is Shabbos to Hashem, your G-d. (5:13,14)

The group of friends with whom one surrounds himself speaks volumes about his true character. Such friends often share similar values, interests and beliefs. By observing the dynamics in these relationships, we are able to gain insight into a person's priorities and attitudes. Furthermore, friends

significantly influence a person's priorities and actions. This impact can be either positive or negative. The litmus test of a person's true identity may be determined by his circle of friends. With this idea in mind, the Bais Av (Horav Elyakim Schlesinger) explains the verse we recite in the Friday night zemiros, K'challah bein reiosehah meshubatzah, “Like a bride bedecked among her companions.” All brides appear to be the same. They are all bedecked in similar garb, white gown, veil, tiara. How does one determine if the kallah, bride, is a common girl of average background, means and outlook, or if she is a remarkable young woman whose values and demeanor are extraordinary, whose yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, is special? Look at her friends. Observe the other young women in her inner circle, and you will have an idea concerning the kallah's true character. The proof is in the friends.

A similar idea applies to the observance of Shabbos Kodesh. Everyone is dressed in his Shabbos finery. Whether the suit is black, blue or none at all, everyone appears different on Shabbos. How does one determine the true character of one's beliefs concerning Shabbos? How does one know if the superficial Shabbos observance one sees is authentic, if his religious demeanor is genuine, or a cover that camouflages his true character? Look at his demeanor during the weekdays preceding and following Shabbos. Are his weekday activities both mundane and religious, consistent with his Shabbos portrayal? Is he sincere? Genuine individuals typically exhibit congruence between their weekday actions, values and beliefs and those of Shabbos. If one wants to determine authenticity – check the “before and after” to ascertain the true character of the “during.”

While I typically select a story that coincides with the dvar Torah, the following story which demonstrates both adherence to shemiras Shabbos and genuine commitment to mitzvos, was too good to pass up. The Rav of one of the shuls in Petach Tikvah, Horav Aharon Beifus, zl, was an outstanding talmid chacham, whose brilliance in Torah was matched by his gentle spirit and genuine love for all Jews – regardless of their background or level of religious observance. The Beifus' had a home that manifest Torah and yiraah, fear of Hashem. The harmony that reigned was an example for others to emulate. Sadly, their home lacked the noise that young children growing up provide, since Hashem had not blessed them with their own biological progeny. The Rav's many talmidim and friends served as his larger family.

The Beifus' sincerity in serving Hashem had a positive effect on those around them. Their genuine desire to be close to Hashem served as an example for the most secular Israeli to emulate. Thus, when one of their neighbors, a liberal, non-practicing Israeli, decided to do some carpentry in his apartment one Shabbos morning, it troubled Rav Beifus

greatly. The sound of the drill was shattering the peaceful quiet that should prevail during Shabbos day.

The Rav was unable to tolerate the blatant chillul Shabbos, so he walked up four floors to the man's apartment and knocked on the door. When the man answered the door, the Rav began with "Shabbat shalom." He then continued in his signature sweet voice and respectfully asked if there was any way the man could refrain from publicly desecrating Shabbos, "People are going back and forth, and the sound of the drill on Shabbos disturbs its sanctity. It is offensive to anyone who is observant." The sweet, sincere tone of the Rav impacted the man, and he agreed to put away his drill until after Shabbos. Indeed, the man was so impressed by Rav Beifus' demeanor that he decided to go to shul the following Shabbos – and the Shabbos after that. This about-face continued progressively until the man and his family became fully observant – all because the Rav was sincere, genuine and respectful.

Now, for the rest of the story. Rav Beifus' Rebbetzin passed away several years before her husband, leaving him to fend for himself. As difficult as it was at first, it became even more complex when the Rav became physically ill and also began to suffer from mild, cognitive impairment. In his last weeks on this world, his physical health deteriorated considerably, and his nephews took turns sitting by his bed as he came in and out of consciousness. The end was clearly nearing, as his breathing became more and more labored. Suddenly, completely out of the blue, the Rav struggled to sit up straight and declared, *Ich hub gekoift kartlech far di proste concert*, "I purchased tickets to the immodest concert." As soon as the words left his mouth, he lay back down, closed his eyes, and returned his holy neshamah to its Source.

The nephews were clueless as to the meaning of their uncle's parting words. They were certain it was significant, but, since people might not understand and attribute it to his declining health, they decided to remain mum about it. Somehow the story leaked out and spread quickly – everyone hypothesizing about the meaning of the Rav's words.

One Rav with whom Rav Beifus had been close explained the meaning of his last words. Several years earlier, the city of Petach Tikvah was hosting a massive concert featuring a world-famous celebrity, whose crude stage antics bordered on the lewd. Obviously, he was catering to an audience that would appreciate his raunchy behavior. Unfortunately, when impurity invades an area, it impacts everyone – secular and observant. The thought that thousands would attend this public chillul Hashem, a venue which would remain with them, impairing their sense of decency, was too much for the Rav to tolerate. He immediately ran to the ticket office and used up every penny of his savings to purchase all the tickets to the show!

Shortly afterward, Rav Beifus visited the Steipler Gaon, zl, and confessed to (what he thought might have been) the "crime." After all, he had purchased all the tickets to an event that breached every boundary of the laws of tznius, moral modesty. The Steipler listened and replied, "Those tickets are your entrance to Gan Eden!"