



BS"D

To: parsha@groups.io

From: Chaim Shulman
<cshulman@gmail.com>

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAESCHANAN - 5786

parsha@groups.io / www.parsha.net - in our 31st year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha+subscribe@groups.io. Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com. A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net>. It is also fully searchable.

In memory of **Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov**
To sponsor a parsha sheet contact cshulman@gmail.com
(proceeds to tzedaka)

Table of Contents:

- R' Mordechai Katz in Lilmod U'LeLamed
- R' Hershel Schachter - Love of Hashem
- R' Yeruchom Levovitz - Joy of Kabalas Ol Malchus Shamayim
- R' Elchanan Samet YHE on Material Wealth and Its Dangers
- Brisker Rav & Rav Chaim on Kriyas Shma
- R' Soloveitchik on Kavana in Brachos (R' Nisson E. Shulman)
- R' Kook on Loving God With All Your Might
- R' YY Jacobson on As the Play Comes to an End, Don't Opt Out.

LILMOD U'LELAMED

Stories of Mussar Relating to the Parsha

By Rabbi Mordechai (Muttty) Katz (founder of JEP)

LIFNIM MISHURAS HA'DIN

In this parsha, we are confronted by an apparent redundancy. We find several admonitions throughout the parsha commanding us to observe the laws taught by Moshe. Then, towards the end of the Parsha, we are told, "And you shall do that which is right and good in the eyes of the L-rd." (Devarim 6:18). What new instruction does this verse add? Why would the Torah, which does not contain any unnecessary material, repeat a warning that has apparently appeared earlier?

Two famed commentators, Rashi and Ramban, explain that this verse contains a new, additional command. In their view, doing "right and good" means going above and beyond the letter of the law in serving Hashem and in aiding one's fellow man.

This willingness to go beyond the strict requirements of propriety is termed "Lifnim Mi' shuras Ha'Din". Lifnim Mi' shuras Ha'Din implies a great inner devotion to do what is right and good. The person who does this shows that he acts not only out of a sense of duty, or to gain

rewards, but also out of a sincere desire to do Hashem's bidding for its own sake. Rabbi Yochanan maintained that the city of Yerusholayim was destroyed centuries ago because its populace at that time was not sufficiently willing to act Lifnim Mi' shuras Ha'Din. (Bava Metzia 30b).

One who insists on contributing only the minimum amount possible for charity, or who gives his parents and teachers only the barest respect, or who spends only a minuscule portion of the day learning Torah may be adhering to the letter of the law, but he could certainly do better. (Ran, Nedarim 8a). On the other hand, those who go out of their way to care for the poor and give of their free time to help a needy friend, are certainly of a very high caliber.

Our sages have provided stirring examples of how one can act Lifnim Mi' shuras Ha'Din.

The story is told of a man who came to the Brisker Rav before Pesach. "Can I use milk instead of wine for the Arba Kosos?" he asked.

The Brisker Rav did not reply. Instead, he removed five rubles from his own pocket and gave the money to the man. The Rav's wife, puzzled but not begrudgingly, asked him, "Would not one ruble have been more than enough money for him to buy wine?"

"Perhaps," said the Rav. "But from his question, I understood that he had no money for meat either, for one cannot eat meat and use milk for the Arba Kosos at the same time. I, therefore, gave him enough money to buy both wine and meat for his Pesach meal."

In this act the Brisker Rav displayed both great perception and great righteousness towards his fellow man. Rav Yisroel Meir Hacohen, better known as the Chofetz Chaim, was a great Sage who authored the Mishna Berurah and many great ethical works. He chose for himself the life of a poor teacher rather than that of a highly respected member of the Rabbinat. This decision led to many difficult moments for his family who struggled to survive. Their plight was alleviated by a legacy left by one of the Chofetz Chaim's aunts. With the 150 rubles left to him in her will, the Chofetz Chaim was able to open a small grocery store which he hoped would provide a sufficient income for his family. The day-to-day management of the store was assumed by his wife, while the Chofetz Chaim himself pored over his Torah volumes in a side room. From time to time, he would emerge to assist his wife. Word soon spread that the great Torah leader occasionally made an appearance, and this guaranteed an unusually large number of customers in the store. Business was booming, but the Chofetz Chaim looked distressed.

"What is wrong?" asked his wife. "Haven't we earned more than enough to provide for our Shabbos needs?"

"That is just what concerns me," he replied. "We have more than we need, but how are the other stores in the area faring? Aren't we taking away business from them? That is hardly fair!"

And so, to ensure that his fellow storeowners would not suffer because of his fame, the Chofetz Chaim insisted that his store close early. That way, the other storeowners would recapture a portion of their lost business. The Chofetz Chaim did not have to do this under the strict guidelines of the law, but he felt that it was proper for him to do so even though it meant a loss of money to himself.

It was this same righteousness that made him feel distressed when a customer paid him for a herring and then walked out without the fish. The Chofetz Chaim could not recall who this customer was, and he

could not locate him. A lesser individual might have let the matter rest there, but not the Chofetz Chaim. The next day, he decided to give, at his own expense, a free herring to every customer who entered the store. That way, he reasoned, the customer who had walked out might indeed receive his herring after all. This, truly, was acting Lifnim Mi'shuras Ha'Din.

The righteous say little and do much. (Bava Metziah 87) Happy are those that observe justice, that execute righteousness at all times. (Tehillim 106:3) The righteous are greater in death than in life. (Chullin 7)

MEZUZAH AND TEFILLIN

The words of Hashem are our holiest possession. In the Shema, part of which is contained in this Parsha, we are told to bind them as a sign on the hand, between our eyes, and to write them on the doorposts of our homes. These instructions refer to the Tefillin of the Hand, the Tefillin of the Head, and the Mezuzah on our doorpost. Each of these contains a portion of Hashem's teachings to Yisroel. As a result, they serve as a link to Hashem, a constant reminder that we are guarded by His presence and that it is our task to perform His mitzvos. (Rambam, Perek 6, Hilchos Mezuzah, Halachah 13).

Onkelos ben Kalonymos was a close relative of the Roman Emperor and was not Jewish. He was attracted by the beauty of Judaism, and having sampled its teachings, decided to convert. The Emperor did not look upon this development kindly, considering it a threat to his own paganism. Consequently, he sent several groups of soldiers to Onkelos, demanding his return to Rome.

One group of soldiers was particularly determined to carry out the Emperor's charge. They came to Onkelos' house and insisted that he accompany them. His words of praise for Judaism and his new life had no effect upon them at all. They almost dragged him out of the door.

Suddenly, though, Onkelos insisted that they stop. He went over to the doorpost of his house, raised his hand, and placed it on a small box attached there. He then removed his hand and kissed it. The soldiers gazed at him in astonishment. Onkelos smiled. "Do you see the difference between your human ruler and my G-d?" he said. "A human emperor stays inside his house and his guards stand outside to watch over him. But my G-d stays at the door of the house and guards all the common people inside. For this little box is a Mezuzah, and G-d's holy words are inside it, protecting those Jews who live in the house."

These words had a dramatic impact upon the soldiers. They had never before heard of such a leader, such a Supreme Power, and they, too, converted. The Emperor's command went unfulfilled. (Avodah Zarah 11a). And Onkelos the convert became one of the great names in Jewish history known to this very day as the author of the Targum Onkelos (Megillah 3a).

Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi told the king in response to a Mezuzah he gave as a gift: "The gift you sent me is so valuable that it will have to be guarded, while the gift I gave you will guard you, even when you are asleep!" He who wears Tefillin ... is like one who has built an altar and has offered a sacrifice. (Berachos 15) The tefillin are called Pe'er—"Glory", as it is written, pe'er kha chavosh alekha—"thy glory (Tefillin bind around thy head). (Moed Katan 15) I have heard many righteous sages say that "when they tied the knot of the tefillin, on their left hand, they were tying multitudes of Jews to Hashem." (author of Siddur Lev Sameach)

RAV SCHACHTER ON THE PARSHA (vol.1)

Insights and Commentary Based on the Shiurim of **Rav Hershel**

Schachter Adapted by Dr. Allan Weissman

<https://tinyurl.com/RavSchachterontheParsha>

Reprinted with permission

PARSHAS VA'ESCHANAN

LOVE OF HASHEM

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ד' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ.

And you shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your resources. (Devarim 6:5)

WHAT IS the connotation of "with all your heart and with all your soul"? It means that a Jew's love for Hashem

must be primary compared to his love for others. Therefore, if one is married and his wife does not want to observe taharas hamishpachah, he cannot view himself as being unable to observe this mitzvah of the Torah. He must love Hashem more than his beloved wife. The institution of ben sorer umoreh (the rebellious son) also conveys this idea. If the son is a transgressor of aveiros, the parents should not cover this up and protect him, but should bring him to the beis din for punishment.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (71a), according to one opinion, teaches that ben sorer umoreh never actually happened, but it is still written "on the books" to teach its moral lesson. The theoretical possibility of the fulfillment of this mitzvah teaches the lesson that parents are obligated to have more love for Hashem than for their own son. The incident of the Akeidah also teaches this lesson; although we have love for our children, our spouses, and others, we must have more love for Hashem than any other being. Midrashim say that on the occasion of the Akeidah, Avraham was trembling, conflicted due to his natural paternal human emotions. Yet, he knew he had to do the will of Hashem; his intellect dictated to him that he must perform the Akeidah.

Though extremely difficult, Jews throughout the generations have followed in the footsteps of Avraham, being willing to demonstrate that their love for Hashem is greater than the love they had for their own lives, sacrificing themselves al kiddush Hashem. During the period of the Ba'alei HaTosfos, the Crusaders traveling through France and Germany pressured many Jews to convert to Christianity on the pain of death. The Da'as Zekeinim MiBa'alei HaTosfos (Bereishis 9:5) refers to the very common practice of parents slaughtering their own children, first reciting the berachah, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו על השחיטה, because of the fear that they might convert to save themselves. [Others argued that although one is certainly obligated to surrender his own life al kiddush Hashem under these circumstances, one is not permitted to kill himself or to commit murder out of fear that the victim will not be able to withstand the test of religious persecution.]

The practice of the Ba'alei HaTosfos was based on the Akeidah, from which we see that we are obligated to make this ultimate sacrifice out of love for Hashem. One is obligated to love all his fellow Jews, based on וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ (Vayikra 19:18), but not all to the same extent. One must love his own family more than he loves his neighbor's family. Nevertheless, one's commitment to Hashem must take precedence even over his love for his own wife and children, because one must love Hashem "with all your heart."

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (78a) discusses a case in which ten people beat someone, one after the other, causing his death. The majority opinion among the Tanna'im holds that they are not subject to the death penalty, while Rabbi Yehudah ben Beseira rules that the last one is liable because he hastened the person's death. The Gemara explains that both opinions expounded the same passuk, "ואיש כי יכה כל נפש אדם מות יומת" – "And if a man strikes all human life, he shall be put to death" (Vayikra 24:17). The disagreement revolves about how to translate the words "כל נפש" – "all life." According to the Chachamim, it means "entire life," so that the assailant is not liable unless he kills someone who otherwise would have lived. According to Rabbi Yehudah, this phrase implies "כל דהו" – "anything that is life." Thus, if ten people hit the victim sequentially, it is the final assailant who is culpable for shortening his life, even though the victim would have died anyway from the previous assaults.

Rav Chaim Volozhiner (Nefesh HaChayim, sha'ar 2, perek 15) sees a connection between this Gemara's understanding of "כל נפש" and the similar phrase in the passuk, "to love Hashem, your G-d, and to serve Him with all your heart [an allusion to tefillah, the avodah of the heart] and – בכל נפשך – with all your soul" (Devarim 10:12). One should strive to cleave to Hashem with "all his soul," but at the very least, to see to it that "part of his soul" connects itself to Hashem with every word of tefillah. According to the view that "כל נפש" means "anything that is life," when the passuk taught, "And you shall love Hashem, your G-d, בכל נפשך," does that not imply that one needs to love Hashem only with "a part of his soul"? The explanation is that in the passuk, "ואיש כי יכה כל נפש אדם," the word "כל" refers to the last "anything that is life," not the first. Even according to this view, then, it is with this "last part of his soul" that one must express his love for Hashem.

Given the mitzvah to love Hashem with literally "all our soul," or, according to the other opinion, with the "last part of our soul," where is there room for "ואהבת לרעך כמוך," to love our wives, our children, and other Jews? The answer, as the

Chovos HaLevavos (Sha'ar Ahavas Hashem, perek 2) explains, is that the love we have for them should be viewed as part of "אהבת ד'": "If you love anything else, it should be [love] wherein you find favor before Him, so that [this love] is actually a branch of your love [for Hashem]." Hashem wants us to feel that we are all part of one large family, and so we demonstrate our love for Hashem by showing love to all our fellow Jews.

Does one have to love his children who are non-observant to the same extent as he loves his observant children? Showing love to the non-observant children may lead them to repent, and showing enmity toward them may push them further away, but the parent need not have the feeling of unlimited and unconditional love toward all his children equally. The love is supposed to be part of one's love for Hashem, not a separate love. The love of others cannot serve as a contradiction to one's love of Hashem. That is what the Akeidah teaches us – that one must love his family as a chelek of "אהבת ד'," so that if Hashem commands one to slaughter his child, that is what he is supposed to do.

The Ran (Peirush Al HaTorah) presents a fantastic chiddush regarding the Akeidah. He posits that Hashem never, in fact, commanded Avraham to perform the Akeidah. The passuk says, קח "נא" – "Please take your son" (Bereishis 22:2), and Chazal interpret, נא

is nothing other than an expression of request" (Sanhedrin 89b). The Ran explains that Hashem showed Avraham that it would please Him if Avraham would "forgive" His promise "כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע" – "since through Yitzchak will offspring be considered yours" (Bereishis 21:12), and offer Yitzchak as a korban. If Avraham would have responded that he could not perform the Akeidah because Yitzchak was his only child and he had already been promised that his progeny would be only through this child, it would not have been considered sinful or worthy of any punishment. Nevertheless, Avraham found it in his heart to go ahead with the Akeidah, simply to fulfill the desire of Hashem.

Thus, continues the Ran, the main point of the Akeidah is to show just how far the love of Hashem reaches in the hearts of those who love Him. Here, Avraham demonstrated that he had more love towards Hashem than the love he had for Yitzchak, described as "את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת" – "your son, your only one, whom you love." This is the mitzvah of "אהבת ד'". How does one demonstrate that he loves his spouse or his parents? If he knows that a certain activity would please them, he does not wait until they ask it of him directly, but instead does it voluntarily.

The Gemara in Shabbos (23a) discusses how we are able to say "אשר יקדשנו במצותיו וצונו" in the berachah recited upon lighting the Chanukah neiros, since this mitzvah was never commanded by Hashem, but is rabbinic in origin. The Rambam (Hilchos Berachos 11:3) brings the first passuk cited by the Gemara in its explanation: "לא תסור" – "you shall not deviate from the word that [the chachamim] will tell you" (Devarim 17:11). This implies that every rabbinic command or prohibition is subsumed under this mitzvah d'oraisa. The Ramban (Sefer HaMitzvos, Hasagos, shorash 1:13), however, adopts the second passuk brought by the Gemara to provide for a Biblical connection: "שאל אביך ויגיד וזקניך ויאמרו לך" – "Ask your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you" (Devarim 32:7).

We may ask a basic question. How can this passuk serve as the source of the binding force of all mitzvos derabbanan if this passuk is itself not one of the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos of the Torah? Why are we obligated to follow the rabbinic laws if there exists no command in the Torah to do so? Rav Elchonon Wasserman Hy"d (Kuntres Divrei Sofrim 1:17)

explains that in the view of the Ramban, the real source of the obligation to observe all the mitzvos derabbanan is the fact that they represent "רצון ד'" – the will of Hashem, although He did not explicitly state these directives in the Torah.

In other words, it is the passuk, "ואהבת את ד' אלקיך," that obligates us. It demands of us not only an obligation of the heart, but an obligation of the body as well. We must demonstrate through action that we love Hashem, and this is done by engaging in activities that we know would please Him, even if He did not instruct us to do them. Thus, the passuk "שאל אביך ויגיד" teaches us to follow the instruction of the talmidei chachamim throughout the generations. Since it is the case that "הסכימה דעתן לדעת המקום" – "their thinking is in accord with the thinking of the Omnipresent" (Yevamos 62a), they will know what it is that we should volunteer to do in order to demonstrate that we really do love Hashem.

When the Mishnah in Avodah Zarah (2:5) cites the passuk, "כי טובים מיין" – "for Your love is better than wine" (Shir HaShirim 1:2), in relation to the rabbinic prohibition against gevinas akum (gentile-

made cheese), it expands upon this point. Chazal teach us that Hashem appreciates our observance of Rabbinic Law more than He appreciates observance of Torah Law. The Gemara explains that דדיך – “Your love” – refers to “the words of Your beloved ones,” the chachamim, which are more pleasant than “the wine of Torah,” the Written Torah itself (Avodah Zarah 35a). This is because it is specifically through the observance of mitzvos derabbanan that we demonstrate that we love Hashem, for we are engaging in practices that He has not commanded, simply in order to please Him. There are those who invent new minhagim, thinking that adopting these new customs is the way to please Hashem. Yet, it is only the talmidei chachamim, who are fully knowledgeable in “the letter of the Law,” whom we should rely upon. It is they who will have a sense of “the spirit of the Law,” to be able to determine which practices would please Hashem and which would not.

The Joy of Kabalas Ol Malchus Shamayim

Translated and adapted from

Limudei Musarei Hatorah maamarim from **Rav Yeruchom Levovitz** zt”l (the Mirrer Mashgiach in Europe) as recorded by his son Rav Simcha Zissel Levovitz

Parshas Vaeschanan contains the Shema, which is our ultimate declaration of accepting the yoke of heaven. Rav Yeruchom Levovitz, the Mirrer Mashgiach, offers a profound way to understand this concept. We often misunderstand what a yoke actually means. We think of it as heavy packages that a king forces his lowly servants to carry. The Mirrer Mashgiach teaches that this perspective is completely wrong. The true yoke is the internal nature of kingship itself. A king carries the biggest yoke of all because he isn't free in his actions, and he must carefully weigh every word. This isn't an external burden. It's his very essence. When Bnei Yisrael accept the Torah, they aren't just carrying a heavy package. They act as kings who are directly attached to the ultimate King. This deep connection completely redefines how we view compulsion. We usually view being compelled as a state of forced coercion. Rav Yeruchom argues that absolute compulsion is actually the highest spiritual peak. When Hashem entirely compels you, you don't even recognize any other reality. Your personal will perfectly merges with Hashem's will, creating a state of absolute joy. We see this in the siddur regarding the heavenly hosts.

ששים ושמחים לעשות רצון קונם *They are glad and joyous to do the will of their Creator*

They are the most compelled beings in creation, yet they are completely joyful. This explains why Avraham Avinu demanded an oath from Hashem. He wanted an oath because an oath represents the ultimate compulsion. By making Hashem swear, Avraham permanently secured this deeply compelled, joyful state for his descendants. This also explains why Hashem sometimes brings sufferings of love to a completely righteous person. These sufferings aren't a punishment. They act as a focused tool to push the person away from worldly distractions and directly into this compelled state of pure connection.

The Mirrer Mashgiach beautifully connects this directly to the Shema. The Sifrei asks how we actually accept Hashem's kingship when we say the Shema. שמע ישראל השם אלקינו השם אחד *Hear O Yisrael Hashem is our God Hashem is one*

ואהבת את ה' *And you shall love Hashem your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your resources*

Love isn't just a side detail. It's the very essence of the yoke itself. You can't truly accept His kingship without (i) immense joy, (ii) deep love, and (iii) a feeling of total sweetness. Serving Hashem without joy means you haven't truly accepted the yoke at all. That's why the severe curses of the Tochachah come upon a person.

תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב *Because you did not serve Hashem your God with joy and a good heart*

We can achieve this joyous acceptance by recognizing that all of creation is completely unified. Rav Yeruchom explains that the universe is entirely integrated from the lowest inanimate stone to the highest angel. There is no real separation anywhere in creation. All creations are included within each other, and the exact same divine wisdom connects everything. When we recognize this absolute unity, we realize that everything is deeply connected under Hashem's rule. We don't view the Torah as a foreign burden. We embrace it as our royal essence. This deep understanding makes Bnei Yisrael sing with joy, exactly as we say in the siddur.

ומלכותו ברצון קבלו עליהם וכו' משה ובני ישראל לך ענו שירה בשמחה רבה וכו' *And His kingship they willingly accepted upon themselves etc Moshe and Bnei Yisrael answered to You with a song of great joy etc*

Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (office@etzion.org.il)

This parasha series is being dedicated in memory of Michael Jotkowicz, z”l.

PARASHAT VA-ETCHANAN

Material Wealth and Its Dangers

By Rav Elchanan Samet

a. TWO SEEMINGLY SIMILAR PASSAGES

Sefer Devarim is the book of preparation for entry into the Promised Land. This is evidenced both by the halakhic parashot that are situated at its core as well as by the later parashot, which deal with the covenant sealed on the plains of Mo'av and - especially - by Moshe's great monologue in the early parashot of the Sefer. Eight times during the course of parashot Va-etchanan and Ekev, Moshe describes the imminent encounter with the land. This encounter is described from different aspects, each description accompanied by mitzvot and warnings related to the theme of that description. Here we shall compare two such descriptions, one in parashat Va-etchanan (6:10-15) and the other in parashat Ekev (8:7-20).

The general framework of these two parashot is similar: i. Both consist of a lengthy introductory sentence followed by the primary section of the parasha. ii. The introductory sentence in each case begins with similar wording: "And it shall be when Hashem your God brings you to the land..." (6:10), and "When Hashem your God brings you to the land..." (8:7). Likewise, the introductory sentences also conclude in a similar manner: "And you shall eat and you shall be satisfied." Between the opening and the conclusion of the introduction we find a description of all the good that awaits the nation in the land. iii. The primary section of both parashot opens with the same warning: "Guard yourself lest you forget God," and in both we are reminded that it is God Who "took you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery." The reason that may lead

to forgetting God is the great goodness showered upon them in the land. iv. Corresponding to the warning about forgetting God, both parashot contain a contrasting positive mitzva: in parashat Va-etchanan (6:13) we are told, "You shall fear Hashem your God," while in parashat Ekev (8:18) Moshe commands, "You shall remember Hashem your God." v. Both parashot conclude with a warning about going after other gods, and the threat of being punished with annihilation for this sin.

Thus the parallel between these two parashot exists both in their general structure and in the linguistic similarities found in corresponding places within their common structural framework. Whenever it appears that the Torah is repeating itself, we need to look for the differences between the seemingly similar passages. It is these differences that help us discern the uniqueness of each parasha, indicating the special significance and the innovation in each.

It is not difficult to discern the basic general difference between the two parashot under discussion, a difference which in turn gives rise to all the more detailed differences: these two parashot describe two different stages in the encounter between Am Yisrael and their promised land. In parashat Va-etchanan we find a description of the initial encounter with the land, immediately following the conquest, when Israel inherits and possess all the material assets that have been created in the land by the nations that had dwelled there until the conquest. Parashat Ekev, on the other hand, describes the encounter with the good land itself, with the natural qualities that provide the basis for successful agriculture (the growth of the seven species), building and economic growth, which come in the wake of conscientious hard work on the part of Bnei Yisrael who put the good of the land to good use. Although both parashot describe material abundance and the plentiful blessings that await the nation in their land, they are different types of abundance, from different sources, and given to Israel at different stages in the process of their settlement in the land. As a result, the danger of religious corruption that this abundance may cause, as warned by the Torah, is also different in each case, as is the prescribed precautionary commandment. Let us look at these differences in more detail, dividing our discussion into a treatment of the encounter with the land on one hand and an analysis of the Torah's warnings about the results of that encounter, on the other.

b. CONQUERING THE LAND

"Hear, O Israel: You are passing over the Jordan today to go and possess nations greater and mightier than you... Know this day that it is Hashem your God Who passes before you, a consuming fire, He shall destroy them and He shall defeat them before you; you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly as God has told you." (9:1-3)

Bnei Yisrael were not brought to an empty land, covered with wild forests. They were brought to an inhabited land where nations with a material culture more highly developed than their own were living. The battle against these nations for the conquest of the land, if it lasted a long time and if it was conducted with difficult and great effort, would leave in its wake scorched earth and utter destruction of that entire material culture. But the Torah promises a great and QUICK victory for Israel over those nations. Indeed, the conquest in the days of Yehoshua is described as realizing this promise: most of the cities of the land fell into Israel's hands in their entirety, and in a speedy process of conquest. This was meant to work in Israel's favor,

easing their task of conquest and settlement of the land and introducing them into a life of material abundance immediately upon their arrival. Therefore the Torah commands, in the parasha dealing with "when you approach a city to wage war" (20:14), that "All the spoil you shall take to yourself, and you shall eat the spoil of your enemies which Hashem your God has given to you," and later on the nation is commanded not to destroy fruit-bearing trees during the siege of a city, "for you shall eat of them" (following the conquest); "you shall not cut them down" (ibid 20:19).

In parashat Va-etchanan, in the section under discussion, the Torah describes the great advantage in possession of the land achieved in this manner. It is not the good of the land itself that is pointed out here (for in the initial stage of the conquest this is of lesser significance), but rather the good that man has created upon it: "Great and good cities... and houses full of all types of good." In the corresponding parasha in Ekev, it is specifically the good of the land itself that is described, and also twice: "When Hashem your God brings you to the good land... and you shall bless Hashem your God for the good land which He has given you."

The abundance enjoyed by the nation in the land is also different in each of these two parashot. While in parashat Ekev water is provided by the land itself, in a natural manner (through the "rivers and streams that flow and the fountains in the valleys and mountains"), in parashat Va-etchanan the water comes from wells that have been dug out by the previous inhabitants of the land. While in parashat Ekev we are told that the land brings forth seven species of agricultural produce (requiring man to invest effort in their cultivation until he is able to eat his bread in abundance), in our parasha there are "vineyards and olive trees" just waiting for Israel. It is not the SPECIES of fruit that are important here, but rather their situation: they are already planted and are ready for use and consumption. In parashat Va-etchanan there is mention of "great and good cities, and houses full of all types of good" that the inhabitants of the land will leave behind them. This is not mentioned in the corresponding parasha in Ekev, for these are not qualities of the land itself. On the other hand, Ekev mentions the iron and copper found in the ground; these need to be mined. This, obviously, has no place in the description in Va-etchanan. The root "ch-tz-v" (to mine, dig) is reserved there for the wells of water dug out of the rocks by the previous inhabitants of the land.

To conclude the comparison between the two passages which describe the material abundance of the land, let us turn our attention to one stylistic phenomenon which exists in both and which illustrates the special subject dealt with in each. In both parashot a certain word or phrase is repeated in a fixed place – at the beginning of the sentence or at its conclusion, such that the repetition echoes in the ears of the listener like a hammer. In parashat Ekev it is the word "land" (eretz) that repeats itself at the beginning of five sentences (e.g. "a land of streams ... a land of wheat...") and thus determines the subject of the parasha: "the goodness of the land." In parashat Va-etchanan it is the phrase "which you did not ..." that occurs at the conclusion of four consecutive sentences (e.g. "great cities which you did not build, houses full of all kinds of good which you did not fill..."), determining that the special subject of this parasha is the material abundance that is being given to the nation as a free gift, without any effort being required on their part.

c. LEST YOU FORGET GOD

What the Torah warns about in both parashot is "lest you forget God," and both mention the ingratitude that such forgetting would entail, for it is God who took the nation "from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery." But a close examination reveals that the reason for this forgetting is different in each parasha, and therefore it also has a different result.

In parashat Ekev we find an account of the process that may bring about the forgetfulness of ingratitude, an account that is lacking in Va-etchanan: a person who makes use of the good of the land and cultivates it diligently will become wealthy and live a life of luxury. This will not happen immediately, but rather at the conclusion of the process of settling down in the land. (Attention should be paid to the contrast between "YOU SHALL BUILD good houses and dwell in them," in parashat Ekev, and "great and good cities which YOU HAVE NOT BUILT and houses full of all kinds of good which YOU DID NOT FILL," in parashat Va-etchanan.) The wealth and economic luxury achieved through human effort bring one to a sense of pride - "and your heart will be haughty" - and the tendency to attribute all this success to oneself - "and you shall say in your heart, My power and the strength of my hand have made me all this might." The practical result of this is first of all that one forgets God, "failing to observe His mitzvot" - neglecting the yoke of mitzvot, as we read in parashat Ha'azinu (32:15) "And Yeshurun grew fat and kicked." It is only at a later stage that this process leads to following after other gods. What is the reason for forgetting God in parashat Va-etchanan? The Torah does not specify, but the reason is clearly not pride (for what reason can there be for pride in wealth that one did not create oneself?), nor neglect of the mitzvot. In our parasha the Torah reaches the stage of idolatry much faster. If we compare the formulation of the Torah's warning against idolatry in both parashot, we find an important difference:

Va-etchanan (6:14): "You shall not go after other gods IN THE PATH OF THE NATIONS WHO ARE AROUND YOU"
Ekev (8:19): "And it will be if you forget God and go after other gods and serve them...."

The Torah's concern in Va-etchanan is that the material culture which Israel will inherit in the land of Canaan will lead to an acceptance of the religious culture with which it is bound up. Together with the "great and good cities" and "the houses full of all kinds of goodness," Bnei Yisrael might also accept Ba'al and Ashtoret, the gods of Canaan, and the pagan concepts that are part and parcel of the material culture. In every Canaanite home there were idols of gods, and many Canaanite cities boasted pagan temples. The material culture of Canaan was saturated with pagan worship.

It is now clear what concern the Torah is voicing here: the inheritance of a material culture (Canaan) by a nation with a relatively inferior material culture (Israel) may turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory. Feelings of inferiority and insignificance may lead the victorious nation to enter the materially richer culture of the defeated nation, adopting it wholeheartedly, including its religious aspects. The defeated nation could then say, "They beat us, but they accepted our philosophy." Such a process has occurred more than once in human history.

Therefore the Torah demands of Israel that a distinction be made between the good cities, the houses full of all types of good, and the entire Canaanite infrastructure - all of which are given to Israel out of God's kindness - and the beliefs and philosophies of the

Canaanites and their tangible expression. At the conclusion of parashat Va-etchanan (7:1-8) we find the direct continuation of our discussion:

"When Hashem your God brings you to the land to which you are coming to possess it, and He will drive out many nations before you... seven nations more numerous and mightier than you... You shall utterly destroy them... and have no mercy on them. So shall you do to them: you shall destroy their altars and break down their images, and cut down their asherim and burn their idols with fire. For you are a holy nation to Hashem your God; Hashem your God chose you to be for Him a special nation out of all the nations upon the face of the earth. God did not desire you and choose you of all the nations for your great numbers - for you are the smallest among the nations - but rather because of God's love for you..."

Thus, it is true that the nations that you are about to possess do have an advantage - they are greater and mightier than you. But you are a holy nation to God, and He has chosen you from among all the nations. On the strength of that superiority you are destined to be victorious over all these nations, and therefore take care that you do not lose your advantage over them - your sanctity.

What is the precaution that the Torah suggests against the possibility of deterioration in each of the parashot? In parashat Ekev the answer starts to be hinted at even before the possibility of the deterioration is explicitly discussed (8:10): "And you shall eat and you shall be satisfied, AND YOU SHALL BLESS HASHEM YOUR GOD for the good land which He has given you." In the corresponding place in parashat Va-etchanan, we are told simply, "And you shall eat and you shall be satisfied," with no mention of blessing God for this goodness. The reason for this difference lies in the fact that God's blessing in having given us the good land, which is the source of all the wealth and ease which we have attained, is indeed a measure of guarantee against pride and forgetting God's mercies, but it has no power to protect the nation against the influence of pagan culture. An additional precaution provided by the Torah in parashat Ekev against man's pride and forgetting God is the mention of God's mercies towards Israel during their desert wanderings (8:15-16): "...Who leads you in the great and terrible desert, with poisonous snakes, scorpions and drought with no water, Who brought out water for you from the rock of flint, Who fed you manna in the desert..." The Ramban (8:18) interprets this as teaching,

"If you think 'My power and the strength of my hand made all of this might for me,' remember God Who took you out of Egypt - there you had no power nor strength in your hands at all. And remember also that in the desert, where you had no means to survive, God performed all that you needed. Thus, this might, which you have achieved by your own strength - it is God Who gives you the strength with which to do it."

This precaution, too, lacks the power to protect against the influences of pagan culture against which the Torah warns in parashat Va-etchanan. In our parasha there is no suitable precaution other than complete cleaving to God (6:13): "YOU SHALL FEAR Hashem your God, and you shall serve HIM, and you shall swear IN HIS NAME." From this verse we learn the prohibition of fearing other gods, the prohibition of serving them and that of swearing in their names.

A practical precaution against the influences of pagan Canaanite culture is found in the continuation of the parasha, and it is repeated

several times in Sefer Devarim: the destruction of the pagan nations, the shattering of their altars and the burning of their idols. These acts are a precondition to ensure that Israel will in no way remain "stuck" to the spoils.

d. A SOCIETY OF LUXURY

From our study here we may draw conclusions that apply to our days as well, and the society of luxury in which we live. Economic abundance, wealth and ease for the individual and society as a whole present two hidden dangers. One danger applies to the individual who has earned his wealth through his own efforts - a positive phenomenon in its own right - and that is the danger of pride and a feeling of human power, which distances the memory of God's mercies towards him. There is nothing wrong with the joy of creating and doing, and pride in the success and achievements that come in the wake of diligent and careful labor. But only a hair's breadth separates this joy and pride from a forbidden and negative type of pride. This hair's breadth is a person's constant memory of the true source of all his achievements: God's mercy towards him.

And thus the Ran, in his tenth derasha, interprets the verses in parashat Ekev (8:17-18), "And you shall say in your heart, My power and the strength of my hand have made me all this might. And you shall remember Hashem your God, for it is He Who gives you strength to perform might." If a certain power or talent exists within you, remember Who gave it to you. As the verse teaches, "For it is He Who gives you STRENGTH to perform might." It does not say, "Remember that it is Hashem your God Who gives you the might" - for this would deny the power that a person indeed has, as the means for gathering wealth. In other words, when a person remembers and recognizes the source of his strength and talents and Who it is that has shown him so much mercy so far, he may truly declare with joy, "My power and the strength of my hands (which are a gift from God) have made me this might!"

The other danger, which characterizes our generation, is that the society of abundance in which we live connects with many different cultures, making them into a single global culture. There is tremendous benefit in this: without any need for war and for "eating the spoil of our enemies" we are able to enjoy every cultural achievement from every part of the world; it arrives at our doorstep - or straight into our homes - without any effort on our part. The question posed to us is to what extent we are capable of drawing a distinction between material culture which improves our "quality of life," and the spiritual values of the creators of that culture. The ability to draw this distinction in our generation, and the knowledge of where exactly the line is to be drawn, is one of the most complex and difficult tasks that we face. This is because Western culture is not a pagan culture as was the Canaanite culture in its time. Some of the spiritual values of Western culture fit in with the Torah and are indeed nourished by it. Nevertheless, other values stand in clear contrast to our Torah. We may run away from this task by closing ourselves off from any manifestation of this culture. But someone who seeks to address it, to extract its good while rejecting its negative elements, must pay attention to the Torah's warning in our parasha.

(Translated by Kaeren Fish) <http://www.vbm-torah.org>

Adapted from

Brisk on Chumash by Rav Asher Bergman

והיו הדברים האלה אשר אנכי מצוך היום על לבבך "And these words that I command you today shall be upon your heart" (6:6)

What exactly does the Torah call upon us to do in this verse?

It appears that this is a positive commandment not to allow the words of the Torah to be forgotten, but rather to keep them "upon our hearts." The Sages (Avos 3:8; Menachos 99b) tell us that one who purposely — meaning, through negligence — forgets his Torah learning has violated a negative commandment: "Beware, and guard yourself greatly, lest you forget the things..." (Devarim 4:9). The requirement of our verse, then, is a positive commandment that corresponds precisely to this negative one. (It is not uncommon for the same act to be mandated by both a positive and a negative commandment.)

In Keser Rosh, Rav Chaim is quoted as asserting that the obligation to take care not to forget one's Torah knowledge applied only in the days when Torah was studied by heart. This is because the mitzvah applies specifically to study of the Oral Torah, as can be seen from the Sages' own language: "Anyone who purposely forgets part of his Mishnah has violated a negative command." The word "Mishnah" — beyond referring to the specific compilation of Tannaitic rulings by Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi — refers more broadly to the laws of the Oral Torah, transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation. In such a case, forgetting even a single piece of information or detail could mean an irreversible loss to the entire corpus of Torah knowledge. Now that the Oral Law has been committed to writing, however, the prohibition against forgetting no longer applies in the same way: since everything is recorded, what one person or generation forgets can always be reclaimed by another. The following verse states, וישננתם לבניך — "And you shall teach them to your children" (6:7). The word the Torah uses for "teach" here is unusual: וישננתם. Rashi explains that it should be understood as "to sharpen" — meaning that the words of the Torah should be sharp and clear in our minds. Targum Onkelos, however, translates it as וישננתם the term used elsewhere to describe the teaching and transmission of the Oral Law, sharing a root with the word "Mishnah" (in Aramaic, מתנייה). This verse, then, calls upon us to transmit the knowledge of the Torah to future generations of students. ("Your children," here, refers not to biological sons but to students, as Rashi points out; the obligation to teach Torah to one's own sons appears later, in 11:19.) This supports the idea developed above — that the Torah's primary intent in this passage is to exhort us to preserve the tradition of the Oral Torah, carefully maintaining and transmitting it forward. The Talmud (Sotah 37a) writes that each mitzvah of the Torah was reinforced with a fourfold covenant obligating the Jewish people "to learn, to teach, to keep, and to do" that commandment. The commentators grapple with the meaning of "to keep" — is this not the same as "to do"? Based on what we have established above, we might suggest that "keeping" refers to the further requirement that, after learning and teaching a mitzvah, one retain that knowledge and not allow it to be forgotten.

— Brisker Rav, Rav Velvel Soloveichik zt"l

והיו הדברים האלה אשר אנכי מצוך היום על לבבך "And these words that I command you today shall be upon your heart" (6:6)

Rashi comments on the word "today": "Let the words of the Torah not be in your eyes like an old royal edict, to which people no longer

attach much importance, but rather like a new royal edict, which everyone runs to hear."

Rav Chaim explained Rashi's comment as follows. A person's position and responsibilities in life change from time to time; today's mission is not necessarily identical to yesterday's or tomorrow's. Too often, a person becomes entrenched in a particular routine or frame of mind that may have been appropriate at one point in his life but has since become irrelevant — or even harmful. This verse teaches that a person should constantly reexamine his way of life, making sure that he is fulfilling the will of God as it expresses itself in the present moment: "today."

— Toras Chaim, from Rav Chaim Brisker

וקשרתם לאות על ידך והיו לטטפת בין עיניך וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך
"And you shall bind them as a sign upon your arm... and write them upon the doorposts of your houses and gates" (6:8–9)

These verses establish the mitzvot of tefillin and mezuzah. In both, portions of the Torah are written on parchment and placed accordingly — the tefillin bound on the arm and head, the mezuzah affixed to the doorpost. Yet the Torah describes the two mitzvot differently: with tefillin, the Torah emphasizes their placement — binding them on the arm — while with mezuzah, the Torah emphasizes the writing of the words. Why does the Torah present these two mitzvot in such different terms?

Examining the halachos governing the writing of the tefillin and mezuzah parchments reveals a basic difference between the two. With tefillin, the mitzvah of writing seems to consist of excerpting particular passages directly from the Torah, exactly as they appear there. With mezuzah, by contrast, the writing constitutes a new, independent text: the words are, of course, taken verbatim from the Torah, but they are not written as exact replicas of how they appear there. For instance, the passages in a mezuzah are written as "closed paragraphs" (פרשיות סתומות) (Rambam, Hilchos Mezuzah 5:2), though they appear as "open paragraphs" (פרשיות פתוחות) in the Torah itself. The tefillin passages, however, must be written exactly as they appear in the Torah — three open paragraphs and one closed — or they are invalid (ibid. 2:2). A further proof: certain letters in the Torah bear small "crowns" (תנין) atop them. When the tefillin passages are written, the very same crowning system used in the Torah is applied (ibid. 2:8); the mezuzah parchment, however, follows an entirely different set of crowns (ibid. 5:2).

This distinction explains the difference in the Torah's language regarding tefillin and mezuzah. The writing of the tefillin parchment is, in effect, identical to the general act of writing a Sefer Torah — so the Torah does not stress the writing of tefillin, but rather their placement. The writing of the mezuzah parchment, by contrast, involves a new and independent form of writing, and for this reason the Torah emphasizes the writing of these parchments rather than their placement.

— Brisker Rav

The Role of Kavana in Brachos

Adapted from a lecture by **Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"l**

Summarized by **Rabbi Nissan Eḡ Shulman**

Parshas Vaeschanan contains the first parsha of Krias Shema, the central expression of kavana and kabalas ol malchus Shamayim.

This provides an appropriate setting for the Rav's broader analysis of kavana in brachos, where intention does not merely accompany the mitzvah but helps determine the halachic character of the words themselves

The Gemara Berachos 12a states פשיטא היכא דקא נקיש כסא דחמרא בידה וקסבר דשכרא הוא ופתח ומברך אדעתא דשכרא וסיים בדחמרא יצא דאי נמי אם אמר שהכל נהיה בדברו יצא דהא תנן על כולם אם אמר שהכל נהיה בדברו יצא
If a person holds a cup of wine but thinks that it is beer, he begins the bracha intending to conclude דברו נהיה בדברו, the bracha for beer, but before reaching the חתימה he realizes that he is holding wine and concludes בורא פרי הגפן; The Gemara says that he has certainly fulfilled his obligation, even had he completed the bracha with דברו נהיה בדברו he would have fulfilled his obligation, since the Mishnah teaches ועל כולם אם שהכל For all foods and beverages, if he recited דברו נהיה בדברו, he fulfilled his obligation

Thus, although he initially intended to conclude with דברו נהיה בדברו, his original kavana does not invalidate the bracha, since that bracha would also have been effective for wine; The Gemara then considers the reverse case

אלא היכא דקא נקיש כסא דשכרא בידה וקסבר דחמרא הוא ופתח וברך אדעתא דחמרא וסיים בדשכרא מאי בתר עיקר ברכה אוליגן או בתר חתימה אוליגן
If he holds a cup of beer but thinks that it is wine, he begins the bracha intending to conclude בורא פרי הגפן, but then realizes his mistake and concludes correctly with דברו נהיה בדברו; The words he actually recited were correct, but while saying אתה השם אלקינו מלך העולם he intended to recite the wrong bracha; The Gemara asks whether we follow the עיקר עיקר, the opening of the bracha together with the intention accompanying it, or the חתימה, the conclusion that he actually recited correctly

The Ordinary Din of Kavana in Mitzvos

The Gemara's question is difficult; There is a general dispute whether כוונה, whether a person must intend to fulfill a mitzvah when performing it; For example, a person may perform the physical act of a mitzvah without intending to fulfill his obligation, such as one who blows shofar merely to produce musical notes, or one who is compelled to eat matzah on Pesach without intending to fulfill the mitzvah Tosfos and Rabbeinu Yonah therefore ask why the Gemara is concerned with the person's initial thoughts while reciting the bracha; He ultimately recited the correct words, שהכל נהיה בדברו; According to the view that כוונה, מצות אינן צריכות כוונה, his mistaken intention should seemingly make no difference

Even according to the view that כוונה, מצות צריכות כוונה, however, the question remains difficult; The ordinary requirement of kavana in mitzvot is כוונה, the intention to fulfill one's obligation; Here the person certainly intended to fulfill the mitzvah of reciting a birkas hanehenin

שהכל נהיה בדברו, בורא פרי הגפן, בורא פרי האדמה, are not separate mitzvot in the way that matzah, shofar, lulav, tefillin and tzitzis are separate mitzvot; The kiyum is the recitation of the appropriate birkas hanehenin before deriving benefit from this world; The same general כוונה לצאת therefore applies to all these brachos

He intended to recite a birkas hanehenin, and he ultimately pronounced the correct text; Why should it matter that he first intended to conclude דברו נהיה בדברו rather than דברו נהיה בדברו; The question is therefore sharper than the question of Tosfos

Tosfos asks according to the view that mitzvot do not require kavana; We may ask even according to the view that mitzvot do require kavana, since the person intended to fulfill the same general kiyum of birchos hanehenin and ultimately recited the proper text; We must therefore conclude that the Gemara is addressing a different type of kavana

Kavana Creates the Status of Bracha

There is a special din of kavana in brachos that is unrelated to the general rule of מצות צריכות כוונה; The pasuk in Tehillim says ברוך אתה השם ברוך אתה השם Blessed are You Hashem, teach me Your statutes Tosfos discusses a version of birkas haTorah that concludes ברוך אתה השם המלמד תורה לעמו ישראל אבל לא גרס למדני חקך שאין זו ברכה אלא Tosfos writes The text למדני חקך should not be used, since it is not a bracha but a request made by David

Some Geonim, however, had a nusach that concluded with למדני חקך; According to that nusach, Chazal incorporated the words of a pasuk into the text of a bracha; When a person recites Tehillim and says ברוך אתה השם, he is learning Torah shebichsav The words are then a pasuk, not a bracha; Were every recital of those words automatically a bracha, it would be forbidden to recite the pasuk as part of Tehillim, because it would constitute a bracha she'einah tzrichah; When the same words are recited as the conclusion of birkas haTorah according to that nusach, however, they become a ברכה של דוד, the formal text of a bracha

The distinction depends on the speaker's kavana; The words alone do not determine whether the statement is a pasuk or a bracha; When recited as Torah shebichsav, they remain a pasuk

When recited with the intention of making a bracha, they acquire the status of a bracha; This demonstrates a unique din in brachos; Kavana does not merely allow the person to fulfill his obligation Kavana determines the halachic identity of the words themselves; Without kavana לשם ברכה, the recital of a nusach that can have another meaning may not become a cheftza of bracha at all; This distinction also affects the nature of an improper recital of Hashem's Name The unnecessary utterance of Hashem's Name is associated with the issur of אלקיך תירא; An unnecessary bracha, however, involves the more severe issur of לא תשא שם אלקיך לשווא; What transforms the words into a bracha is the intention to recite them as a bracha

That kavana can therefore transform the utterance from the unnecessary mention of Hashem's Name into a bracha levatalah; The decisive factor is not merely the מטבע, since the same words may function either as a pasuk or as a bracha; Their halachic character depends on kavana

Two Elements of Kavana in a Bracha

The Gemara teaches an additional din; It is not enough that a person generally intends to recite some bracha; He must also know which bracha he is reciting

There are therefore two elements (i) כוונה לשם ברכה, the intention that the words should be recited as a bracha (ii) כוונה לשם אותה ברכה, the intention to recite this particular bracha

If a person intends to recite שהכל נהיה בדברו but actually says להנניח תפילין, the words cannot become the bracha he intended to make; The identity of the bracha is produced through the relationship between the words and the kavana accompanying them; This is comparable to Tefillah, which is עבודה שכלל

If a person lacks the necessary kavana in Avos, his Tefillah lacks an essential element of Tefillah; This has nothing to do with the general dispute whether mitzvos require kavana; Even according to the view that mitzvos ordinarily do not require kavana, Tefillah still requires kavana because kavana is part of the very definition of עבודה שכלל

The same principle applies to brachos; Without the required kavana, the bracha may not be a bracha at all; In the general din of מצות צריכות כוונה, the required intention is לזאת כוונה

In brachos, the special kavana requires the person to know that he is reciting a bracha and which bracha he is reciting; This kavana creates the cheftza of bracha and makes the words into a cheftza of bracha

The Parallel in Shemoneh Esrei

In Shemoneh Esrei, the special kavana of המלך לפני כעומד is required in the first bracha, Avos; Throughout Shemoneh Esrei, however, a person must also know which bracha he is reciting; If, while reciting תקע בשופר, he believes that he is reciting ולירושלים עירך ברחמים תשוב, the recital lacks the kavana required for that bracha

The same text, ברוך אתה השם למדני חקך, can be either Torah shebichsav or a bracha, depending on kavana; Likewise, the words of Shemoneh Esrei become the particular brachos of Tefillah through the kavana that gives them their identity

Kavana in a bracha is indispensable because it is part of the cheftza of bracha

Applying the Principle to Wine and Beer

We can now understand the Gemara's question; When a person holds wine but initially intends to conclude with שהכל נהיה בדברו, his kavana is not defective in a way that can invalidate the bracha; שהכל נהיה בדברו is effective for wine בדיעבד

His initial kavana is therefore a valid kavana for a bracha over the wine, even though he ultimately concludes with the more specific words בורא פרי הגפן; The reverse case is different; He holds beer but intends to recite בורא פרי הגפן

That kavana is not appropriate for the item before him, since בורא פרי applies specifically to wine and does not include beer; Although he corrects himself and concludes with שהכל נהיה בדברו, his kavana during שהכל נהיה בדברו was directed toward a bracha that could not apply to the beer; If he had actually completed בורא פרי over beer, there would be no question that he had not recited the proper bracha

The Gemara's uncertainty arises because the actual words were corrected before the specific חתימה was recited; While saying the universal opening ברוך אתה השם אלקינו מלך העולם, he had the wrong specific kavana; The question is whether the required אותה ברכה must already accompany the פתיחה, or whether it is sufficient that the correct specific kavana accompanies the חתימה

The Universal Opening and the Specific Conclusion

The first portion of a short bracha is universal ברוך אתה השם אלקינו מלך העולם The same words appear in every short bracha; The brachos become distinct only in their conclusions, such as בורא פרי הגפן or שהכל נהיה בדברו; One may therefore argue that the kavana required during שהכל נהיה בדברו is also general

At that stage, it may be sufficient to have כוונה לשם ברכה, an intention to recite a bracha; Only when the bracha reaches its distinctive conclusion must the person have כוונה לשם אותה ברכה, the intention to recite the particular bracha appropriate to the food; According to this approach, the bracha over the beer is valid

The person had general kavana for a bracha during the universal opening and the correct specific kavana when he recited שהכל נהיה בדברו This is בטר חתימה אזלינן

Alternatively, the specific identity of the bracha may need to be present from its beginning; Even though the opening words are common to all brachos, the person may need to say them with kavana for the particular bracha he is about to recite; Since he intended בורא פרי הגפן while saying over beer, his bracha may be disqualified despite his correct conclusion This is בטר עיקר ברכה אזלינן

The Gemara restates the question אלא היכא דקא נקיש כסא דשכרא בידיה וקסבר דחמרא הוא פתח וברין דאעתא דחמרא וסיים בדשכרא מאי בטר עיקר ברכה אזלינן או כוונה לשם ברכה He had כוונה לשם ברכה, but he may have lacked פתיחה, so that the recital of ברוך אתה השם אלקינו מלך העולם must already be directed toward the particular bracha; Or, because the opening text is identical in

all brachos, is a general כוונה לשם ברכה sufficient until the distinctive חתימה

This is Rashi's pshat, other Rishonim explain the sugya differently
The Apparent Proof from Yotzer Or

The Gemara attempts to resolve the question from a braisa שחרית פתח ביוצר אור וסיים במעריב ערבים לא יצא פתח במעריב ערבים וסיים ביוצר אור יצא ערבית פתח במעריב ערבים וסיים ביוצר אור לא יצא פתח ביוצר אור וסיים במעריב ערבים יצא כלול של דבר הכל הולך אחר החתום

In Shacharis, if a person began with the intention of reciting יוצר אור but concluded with the text of מעריב ערבים, he did not fulfill his obligation; If he began with the mistaken intention of reciting מעריב ערבים but concluded correctly with יוצר אור, he fulfilled his obligation; The reverse applies in Maariv

The braisa concludes that everything follows the חתימה; According to Rashi, פתח refers to the intention accompanying the beginning of the bracha, while סיים refers to the conclusion actually recited; Thus, if a person begins Shacharis with the correct kavana for יוצר אור but actually concludes with the wrong text, his correct initial kavana cannot compensate for the incorrect bracha he recited

Kavana without the proper text is ineffective; If he begins with the mistaken kavana for מעריב ערבים but catches himself and concludes correctly with יוצר אור, he has recited the proper bracha despite the incorrect kavana during the opening; This appears to prove that the opening requires only a general לשם ברכה כוונה, while the specific חתימה is required at the חתימה

The same reasoning applies in Maariv; If he intends to recite מעריב ערבים but concludes with יוצר אור, he has recited the wrong bracha and does not fulfill his obligation; If he begins with the mistaken kavana for יוצר אור but concludes correctly with מעריב ערבים, he fulfills his obligation The braisa therefore appears to establish החתום אחר הולך כלול של דבר הכל הולך אחר החתום
The governing rule is that everything follows the conclusion

If so, the same should be true in the case of wine and beer; As long as the person recites the correct text of דברו נהיה, his mistaken specific kavana during the opening should not invalidate the bracha
Why the Proof May Be Rejected

The Gemara rejects this proof; The brachos of יוצר אור and מעריב ערבים are brachos aruchos that both open and close with ברוך; At the conclusion of יוצר אור, a person says ברוך אתה השם יוצר המאורות ברוך אתה השם המעריב ערבים; At the conclusion of מעריב ערבים, he says ברוך אתה השם המעריב ערבים Although he lacked the proper specific kavana during the initial ברוך אתה השם, he had the correct kavana when reciting the concluding ברוך אתה השם; The din may indeed require לשם אותה ברכה ברוך אתה השם; The braisa does not prove that specific kavana is unnecessary at the beginning

It may prove only that, in a bracha aruchah containing a second formulation of ברוך אתה השם, the proper kavana at the conclusion can give the entire bracha the status of the correct bracha; The requirement is that the bracha acquire its identity through kavana; That kavana may be effective when attached either to the initial ברוך אתה השם or to the concluding ברוך אתה השם

Partial Kavana in Kriyas Shema, Tefillah and Brachos

This differs fundamentally from the ordinary kavana required for a maaseh mitzvah; When a person eats a kezayis of matzah, he cannot intend to fulfill the mitzvah for only half of the kezayis; When he hears shofar, the kavana must accompany the required maaseh mitzvah The ordinary requirement of מצות צריכות כוונה relates to the kiyum of the person performing the mitzvah and therefore accompanies the act through which the mitzvah is fulfilled; Yet we find that partial kavana is sufficient in Kriyas Shema, Tefillah and brachos; In Kriyas Shema כיון

If he directed his heart during the first pasuk, he fulfilled the requirement of kavana

In Tefillah יצא באבות לבו כיון אם If he directed his heart during Avos, he fulfilled the requirement of kavana

In a bracha aruchah, the proper kavana may likewise be present at either the initial or concluding formulation of אתה השם; These forms of kavana are not merely לצאת לשם; In Kriyas Shema, the kavana constitutes עול מלכות שמים

In Tefillah, it constitutes לפני השכינה; In brachos, it gives the words the identity of the particular bracha being recited; Once the required kavana attaches to the essential portion of the recitation, the entire text becomes a cheftza of Kriyas Shema, Tefillah or bracha

This is not merely a kiyum hagavra that would require kavana throughout the entire act; Rather, the kavana defines the halachic character of the recitation itself; Accordingly, the braisa concerning Shacharis provides no conclusive proof concerning the short bracha over beer

The initial formulation of אתה השם ברוך may have been defective because it was accompanied by the wrong kavana; The long bracha nevertheless acquired its proper identity through the concluding formulation of ברוך אתה השם, where the person had the correct kavana

The Question of Malchus

The Gemara then raises a further difficulty; The concluding ברוך אתה השם differs from the opening formula in one important respect; It contains Hashem's Name but does not contain Malchus, the words מלך העולם Whether the concluding formula can independently give the recitation the status of a bracha may therefore depend on the dispute between Rav and Rav Yochanan; According to Rav אינה הזכרת השם אינה כל ברכה שאין בה הזכרת השם אינה A bracha that does not contain the mention of Hashem's Name is not a bracha According to Rav, Malchus is not indispensable; The concluding words ברוך אתה השם יוצר המאורות contain the essential element of a bracha; The proper kavana at that point can therefore give the entire recitation the status of the correct bracha

According to Rav Yochanan, however, אינה ברכה כל ברכה שאין בה מלכות אינה A bracha that does not contain Malchus is not a bracha

The initial formula contains both Hashem's Name and Malchus ברוך אתה השם אלוקינו מלך העולם יוצר אור

The concluding formula contains Hashem's Name but lacks Malchus ברוך אתה השם יוצר המאורות

The ending can ordinarily serve as the חתימה of a bracha whose valid פתיחה already contained Malchus; But if the initial פתיחה was defective because it lacked the proper kavana, how can the concluding formula create the bracha when it lacks Malchus

הניחא לרב דאמר כל ברכה שאין בה הזכרת השם אינה ברכה שפיר אלא לרבי יוחנן According to Rav, the concluding formula can itself function as the essential formulation of bracha; According to Rav Yochanan, however, the concluding formula lacks Malchus and cannot independently become a bracha; How, then, can the correct kavana at the חתימה repair the defective kavana of the פתיחה

[The shiur continues; this summary is an excerpt]

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

date: Jul 23, 2026, 2:17 PM

subject: **Rav Kook on Va'etchanan: Loving God With All Your Might**
Va'etchanan: Loving God With All Your Might

"You shall love the Eternal your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deut. 6:5)

What does it mean to love God מאדך מאדך — "with all your might"? The Talmud offers two explanations for this phrase.

Thankfulness, Even in Misfortune

The first explanation is that, in every situation (מִקְדָּשׁ) that God places us, we should sincerely thank (מִקְדָּשׁ) Him. From here we learn that one should recite a blessing over bad news as well as good news. When hearing about death, financial loss, or other tragedies, we need to acknowledge that God is the true Judge.

How is it possible to thank God for tragedy? And why is this a form of loving God?

A self-centered individual will look at all circumstances only in the context of his own narrow interests. From this viewpoint, good and bad are measured purely by selfish criteria.

However, those who can internalize the dictates of their intellect, and who love that which their mind tells him to love, will have a drastically different outlook on good and bad. Happiness and pleasure are not limited to how events affect them or their immediate surroundings. As a result of their love of the Infinite, they judge every situation, every circumstance, in terms of the klal — the community, the nation, the universe, all of creation, and beyond.

In the overall picture, evil does not exist. What appears to be evil and bad in a narrow outlook, will ultimately result in greater good in the broader view. If we live our lives following this insight, we will understand that while a certain situation may be difficult on a personal level, our private suffering enables positive repercussions for the klal.

With All Our Possessions

The Sages gave a second explanation for “all your might”: to love God with all of your money. We should serve God with all of our possessions.

How does this relate to the first explanation, that we should express gratitude to God in all circumstances of life?

An individual who chooses to reject all material possessions, spurning all wealth and comfort in pursuit of an ascetic lifestyle, is living an extremely limited existence. He is incapable of truly appreciating the value of life. What is life worth when it is restricted to poverty and hardship? We can only attain a full measure of love — for life, for the universe, and for God — when we seek to live life to its fullest, albeit in accordance with God’s will.

Life is expanded and enriched through material possessions. Money and possessions are called meod (‘very’), as they serve to intensify the living experience. Wise individuals, living a full, intense life, are deeply aware of the importance of life. They recognize the greatness of the klal and are willing to sacrifice their lives out of love for God. The richness of their life strengthens their dedication to truth and justice, according to what benefits the klal. Their souls are full of emotion and feeling, and they can truly feel gratitude for all circumstances of life, whether or not they are in their own personal best interest.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 301-302. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, p. 328)

Summarized from **Rabbi YY Jacobson** rabbivy@theyeshiva.net

Thu, Jul 23, 2026 at 2:11 PM

As the Play Comes to an End, Don’t Opt Out - Tisha B’Av Essay

Ready for the Final Bow

A Sea of Tears

There is a moving Chassidic story about two great spiritual masters, the Vorker Rebbe, Reb Yitzchak Kalish, and his close friend the Kotzker Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern. When Reb Yitzchak passed away and did not appear to his friend even once in a dream, the Kotzker ascended to the heavens to find him. He was directed to a dark forest, and beyond it, to an endless sea whose every wave broke with a quiet sob. There, at the shore, stood Reb Yitzchak.

"Why have you not come to visit me?" the Kotzker asked.

"Do you know what sea this is?" Reb Yitzchak replied. "It is the sea of tears, which gathers all the tears of Hashem's people. When I found it, I swore I would not leave its side until Hashem dries every tear."

An Enigmatic Statement

The Yerushalmi (Yoma 1:1) states: Every generation in which the Beis HaMikdash is not rebuilt is considered as though that generation destroyed it.

This is a difficult statement. Many generations were filled with extraordinary tzaddikim, wholly devoted to Hashem. Is it fair to say each of them bears responsibility for the Mikdash's destruction, simply because it wasn't rebuilt in their time? And if taken literally, doesn't it mean the generation that finally merits the rebuilding must somehow surpass every generation before it?

An Accumulating Story

The Sefas Emes (Rav Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger) offers an answer, one echoed often by the Lubavitcher Rebbe: the merits of every generation join together, each contributing its share to the rebuilding. No single generation could ever be worthy of redemption on its own; rather, the "building" continues throughout the entire golus, and every generation that fails to add its portion is the one considered to have held it back.

Jewish history isn't a set of disconnected episodes. It is a single, unfolding story, and we are never merely study its early chapters from a distance — we carry them forward within us.

Picture someone spending years building a massive bonfire, stacking the logs, soaking them in kerosene, so that all it will take is a single match. He does everything except strike that match. Now someone else arrives and says: if he couldn't light it, how could I? But the truth is, he was never meant to. The match was left for someone else to strike.

Every Tear Remains

Every tear, every act of faith, every quiet sacrifice of the Jewish people across two thousand years still exists, gathered like drops filling a single vessel. We are not trying to fill a vessel that others failed to fill — we are adding the very drop that brings it to overflowing.

Every grandmother who lit Shabbos candles with tears on her cheeks, every ancestor who left everything behind rather than abandon his faith, every night of Torah learned after an exhausting day, every act of kindness shown to someone unlike ourselves — all of it entered that vessel, and none of it was lost.

Don't Run

So which generation does the Talmud mean — the one considered to have destroyed the Mikdash? It is the generation that gives up: the one that says, "I am no longer part of this story," and lets the ongoing journey from exile to redemption grind to a halt.

The Sefas Emes reframes the phrase: not that the Mikdash was not rebuilt in its days, but that it was not built with its days — with the devotion and good deeds of each day as it passed.

Backstage, Cheering

Rabbi Sholom Moshe Paltiel once shared a story from visiting a Holocaust survivor, Irving, in the hospital. Irving recalled his mother's parting words before their family was separated: life, she told him, is like a play. Every person has a role, as did their parents and grandparents before them, all the way back to Avraham and Sarah. When your part ends, you don't disappear — you move backstage, watching, cheering, helping however you still can.

"Don't give up," she told him. "Play your role. I promise, you won't be alone — we will be with you forever, watching from backstage."

At the shiva after Irving's passing, Rabbi Paltiel added the ending to that story: at a play's close, every actor returns to the stage for a final bow. So too, every soul that ever lived will one day return, reunited with those they loved.

That is what the Talmud is telling us. Every soul who ever lived helped build the Third Beis HaMikdash, then stepped backstage so the next generation could continue. They never truly left.

Now it is our turn to strike the match — to finish the play, so that every soul waiting backstage can step forward and take its bow.