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ON VAYELECH - 5762

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND ryfrand@torah.org To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYeLech "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYeLech -

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 385, Fasting On Rosh Hashana. Good Shabbos!

"Because G-d Is No Longer In My Midst" - Repentance or Excuse?

Last week, we discussed the comment of the Sforno (1470-1550) on the verses "It is not in Heaven... It is not distant from you... For the matter is very near. It is in your mouths and hearts to do it." [Devorim 30:11-13]

The Sforno explained that we have no excuses regarding doing Teshuva, returning to G-d. We cannot blame our failure to properly repent on the lack of prophets (It is not in Heaven) nor on our distance from the great Sages of the past who could properly inspire us to do Teshuva. Repentance depends on our own initiative and action.

The Beis Av suggests that the same idea could explain a very difficult verse in Parshas VaYeLech (this week's parsha). The pasuk says:

"I will then display anger against them and abandon them. I will hide My face from them and they will be (their enemies') prey. Beset by many evils and troubles they will say, 'It is because my G-d is no longer with me that these evils have befallen us.'" [Devorim 31:17]

The commentators discuss at length whether the reaction described in the verse is correct. Troubles have befallen us. Enemies surround us. We say that all this has happened because of the fact that G-d is no longer in our midst. Is this the proper thing to say, or not?

One could argue that this is Teshuva. We are recognizing that the reason why we are having a hard time is because G-d is not with us, because we are not deserving of His Presence.

But the very next verse does not seem to support this interpretation. The next pasuk begins "And I will hide My Face on that day..." [31:18]. This implies that the reaction in the previous pasuk was inappropriate. On the contrary, it causes G-d to further hide His Presence from us.

What is wrong with that reaction? Is it not appropriate to acknowledge that the reason for the trouble was because G-d was not in our midst? The answer is, that this reaction is an excuse! The excuse is that he said that his reason for not doing Teshuvah was because he did not feel G-d's presence in his midst. "There is no prophet, I live in Galus [exile], and I have not been properly inspired by the wise men to repent." These are all excuses for not returning to G-d and correcting his actions!

The Torah emphasizes that this is no excuse. The lack of all these external sources of motivation should not matter. For it is within our own mouths and hearts to do it.

The Beis Av cites a frightening story involving the Kotzker Rebbe (1797-1859). Kotzk was not a "touchy feely" type of Chassidus. It was for the elite, not the masses. The Kotzker Rebbe is called "the fiery one from Kotzk" (haSaraf m'Kotzk). He did not pull any punches. He told it like it was.

On one Yom Kippur in Kutzk, the Rebbe announced to his Chassidim "I know what you all said to G-d in your personal prayers, and I know what He answered." Upon saying this, the Kotzker Rebbe walked out of the shul.

One of the Chassidim chased after the Rebbe and challenged "OK -- what did we say in our prayers?" The Rebbe told him "You said that if we did not have such economic worries we would be able to learn better and to serve G-d. You prayed that G-d should make it a little easier to earn money and if He would do that you would even be willing to settle for less money."

Off-hand, this was a legitimate request. This was not asking for wealth. They agreed to live humbly, but they just requested that their sustenance should come a bit easier.

The Chassid confirmed that this indeed was what he asked for. And he proceeded to inquire what the Rebbe was told in Heaven about this request. The Rebbe responded that the response in Heaven was "we are not interested in your learning, we are not interested in your service -- if you want it on your own terms." In other words - if what it takes for you to function spiritually is that it has to be easier, then "keep it!" No excuses! That is the way it is, and that is the way you must function, and if you do not like it - too bad!

As I said earlier, this is very harsh, and Kotzk was not a place for

everybody. But the message is that we have to "play with the hand that is dealt us". It may not be easy and it may not be the way we would like it. The bottom line is that there are no excuses.

"G-d is not in my midst. But... if I had a prophet... If... I had a great teacher... If... I had proper role models... If I had the time... If I had the peace of mind..." All these excuses will not work! It is up to us. It is within our mouths and within our hearts to do it!

#### The Best Preparation For The Days of Awe: Try A Little Kindness

I once heard the following incident from Rabbi Kulefsky (zt"l) who personally observed it one Erev Rosh HaShannah when he was learning in Yeshivas Torah V'Daas.

Rav Shlomo Heiman (1893-1944) asked Rav Simcha Schustel and Rav Moshe Shisgal (who were two of the most outstanding students of the Yeshiva of that era) for a favor. He requested that they write L'Shanah Tova cards for him and mail them.

Rav Shlomo Heiman then told them, "and if you question - is there not anything better and more spiritual that we should be doing on the eve of Rosh HaShanah other than writing Shanah Tova cards - I have an answer for you. It may in fact not be so appropriate for me to write my own Shanah Tova cards today. However, if you will write the cards for me, then you will be doing me a great favor (Chessed) and what could be more important to do on Erev Rosh HaShanah than an act of kindness for someone else?"

In a similar vein, I heard a very poignant story from a disciple of the Klausenberger Rebbe (Rabbi Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam, zt"l 1905-1994), which involves his Rebbe. One year, right after the Holocaust, the Klausenberger Rebbe was preparing himself on Erev Yom Kippur. One can imagine the preparations that the Rebbe would engage himself in before the holy Day of Atonement. All of a sudden there was a knock on the door. A young girl came to him and said, "Rebbe, I do not have a father anymore. No one will be able to 'bless me' before Yom Kippur." The Rebbe took a cloth, placed it upon her head, and blessed her the way a father blesses his daughter on Erev Yom Kippur.

Five minutes later there was another knock on the door. It was another girl, again without a father, again with no one to 'bless her' before Yom Kippur, again with same request. Again the Rebbe went through the same routine. He took the cloth, he placed it upon her head, and he blessed her the way a father blesses his daughter.

This is what he did the entire Erev Yom Kippur until he blessed over eighty orphaned girls. This is the best preparation for Erev Yom Kippur. What could be a greater preparation for the High Holidays than to do a favor for another Jew?

Gemar Chasima Tova.

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#### RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Lasting Impressions

Most Mitzvos in the Torah are prescribed for adults. Children are taught to follow the examples of their elders who have a responsibility to

train them. However except for a handful of Mitzvos such as circumcision, teaching Torah, and a few others, very few are directed specifically for children.

This week the Torah openly instructs fathers to involve children, even toddlers, in the Mitzvah of HaKhel. Every seven years at the close of the Shmita cycle there is a gathering of the entire Jewish nation in Jerusalem. There, the King of Israel reads the entire Deuteronomy to the nation. Everyone is invited. No one is to stay home. The Torah explicitly directs men, women, children, even toddlers to make the trek to Jerusalem for this momentous occasion. This very infrequent event bore a great significance and impact on the Jewish Nation. It was at that time that the King openly reaffirmed his faith in G-d, and a multitude of Jews joined to hear, once again, the serious edicts of the Torah .

So why kids? Rashi quotes the Talmud in Tractate Chagigah: "and the children, why do they attend? To give reward to those who bring them!"

I do not understand. Did you ever go to a synagogue packed with babies, toddlers and youngsters? Is that a setting for the King of all Israel to read the most sacred covenant? Can you imagine how difficult it must have been to schlep your babies to Jerusalem, house them, feed them, and then have them sit through some boring hours-long reading of laws, admonishments, and prophecies that they cannot comprehend? How does the Torah expect the adults to hear the words and contemplate the charge of the King during this commotion? All that for an unstated reward?

Rabbi Moshe Weinberger (Congregation Aish Kodesh of Woodmere) related a moving story that he heard from an old Lithuanian Jew. This Jew survived the holocaust, Siberia and a myriad of painful experiences all with his faith intact. As a teenager, he was sent by his parents to learn at the Yeshiva in Grodno, Poland which was headed by the illustrious Torah sage Rabbi Shimon Shkopf. The Yeshiva was known to accept only the brightest, and this student, average at best, was worried that he would be summarily rejected. After three days of travel by train, carriage and foot he finally entered the portals of the Yeshiva. Rabbi Shkopf greeted the young man and invited him to his home. He could not help but notice how haggard he looked. He asked him from which city he came and surmised how difficult the journey must have been.

Reb Shimon turned to the young man and began the entrance examination. "I would like to ask you two questions," he said. In utter fear, the boy nodded his head in feigned approval. Rabbi Shkopf's face broke out with a warm smile. "When was the last time you had a hot meal, and when was the last time you slept in a warm bed?" Reb Shimon then had a piping hot meal prepared for the neophyte and a comfortable bed waiting for the new student to rest his weary bones.

"The Holocaust, made me forget the Gemorah's questions," the old man told Rabbi Weinberger. "Siberia wiped out all memories of the commentaries' questions. But never, will I forget the two questions that Reb Shimon asked as long as I am alive."

Sometimes scenarios leave greater impressions than lectures. The impact on youngsters, even toddlers, seeing millions of people united, listening to their leader read the Torah, will live on in their minds forever. That is the greatest reward a parent can have. Perhaps the adults will miss portions of the speech, but a more cogent lesson will be remembered. If you imbue your descendants with those memories, you are guaranteed that your life's goals and aspirations will be etched in their hearts for eternity.

Next time you think of sharing a trip to the ballpark or a movie with your kids, think about giving them a spiritual journey that will last a lifetime. Let them have memories of seeing , and being greeted, even blessed, by a learned Torah Scholar who could have been their grandfather. Let them see the way Matzoh was baked in the old country -- by hand -- with devoted workers who tremble from the thought of

leavened bread on Passover. Let them visit an institution of Torah study where hundreds of young scholars sit and learn Talmud. You'll not only have a wonderful time, but your kids will experience Judaism in a way that they will never forget.

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From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom  
List[SMTP:parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] To:  
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Parshat VAYELECH-SHABBAT SHUVA BY RABBI SHLOMO  
RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayelech-Shabbat Shuva (Deuteronomy 31:1-30) By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - I write these lines shortly after having been shocked and stunned at the vicious terrorist attack upon the United States of America, with the Twin Towers having collapsed and the Pentagon Building inflamed only a few hours ago. It happened while I was making a breakfast presentation "From the Front lines of the War in Israel" to a group of high-powered business people in the boardroom of Stroock, Stroock and Lavan; I had just expressed my belief that "if, in the last century, the two major threats to world stability and human freedom had come from Nazi Fascism and Stalinist Communism - and both of these had raised their weapons of destruction first against the Jews and then against the entire free world - the heir to these Evil Empires in the 21st century is Islamic Fundamentalism. Today they urge terrorist attacks against Israel, but tomorrow they will target the United States and the entire free world." Almost as on cue, the door to the boardroom was opened by a grim employee who announced the air attack on the Twin Towers, only to be followed by the news of the burning Pentagon a few moments later... We felt it was either a bad science fiction film, or the beginning of World War III...

This is our season of Tshuva, Repentance, the ten days between the Festival of the Sound of the Shofar (Ram's Horn) and the Awesome and White Fast of Atonement and Purification. Maimonides explains the symbolism of the shofar blast as a Divinely sent wake-up call: "Arise, those who are asleep, from your slumber," cast aside your specious and superficial self-satisfaction, and serve the Almighty as you were created to do!

What is the definition of this Divine service? First of all, we must blow the ram's horn and coronate our G-d as the Lord of the entire universe. That is the subject of malkhuyot, our declaration of the Kingship of the Divine, the first of the unique blessings of the Rosh Hashanah Mussaf Amidah. Why must we, the much maligned and persecuted Jewish people, be concerned about making G-d King of the Universe? Isn't it sufficient that we worry about ourselves, given that we are a fairly powerless nation and that the rest of the world demonstrates again and again how little they value our values and how deeply they despise us? The Rosh Hashanah (New Year) Prayer teaches us that we must be concerned about the world, because the member nations of our global village are inter-dependent; the precise "nature" (as it were) of the G-d who we coronate King has ultimate ramifications for every citizen in the universe. Our G-d of love and peace demands justice and peace; a god who insists on domination by the sword can only wreak havoc on society and cause human blood to fertilize the earth. We must coronate the holy Lord, who is "sanctified by righteousness."

Secondly, we must blow the ram's horn and remember our G-d of History who is mindful of individuals and nations, who bestows specific functions upon people and peoples. This is the subject of the second unique blessing, Zichronot, Remembrances: And we, the Jewish people, were charged with the mission of communicating the message of ethical monotheism to the world, of impressing upon humanity that our Parent in Heaven wishes His children on earth to establish just and peaceful

societies. And if the relatively weak and paltry Israel must see itself as the bearers of this message, how much more must the great and powerful United States of America assume this responsibility as well!

Thirdly, we must blow the ram's horn which was sounded at Sinai, where the Almighty gave His Torah to Israel and the world. This is the subject of the third unique blessing, Shofarot, which signals the absolute law of the prohibitions against murder and stealing, against adultery and the service of false gods. The seven laws of morality must be accepted by every human being if the world is to be safe for human habitation. "Turn the other cheek" is a prescription for immorality; it is the craven and puerile pluralism which refuses to take a stand against terror and thereby abandons the world to the domination of the most despicable, destructive and despotic forces of evil. Those who refuse to hate and destroy terror will themselves become victims of terror; those who are accepting of evil must ultimately take responsibility for the triumph of evil.

Tragically, the American government and its citizenry has been forced to taste the bitterness of a cowardly terrorist attack against innocent civilians whose only sin was to have left their homes in the morning to go to their place of employment. Hopefully America will strike back-forcefully and effectively. Hopefully, no one will caution America to show restraint, not to be excessive in their reaction, to hold back in order not to continue the evenhandedly expressed "cycle of violence". America and the entire free world has hopefully learned that the terrorist interprets restraint as weakness, negotiation as capitulation.

The shofar sounds include the broken, sighing sob of the t'ruah as well as the straight, exultant sound of the tikiah. We weep at the injustice and cruelty within an imperfect and incomplete world; our heart breaks over the inhumanity of human being to human being, those who have the capacity to incite and encourage suicide bombers to destroy innocent people. But the shofar is also the clarion call to war against the forces of terrorism and evil - as well as the jubilant victory shout in confidence of our ultimate vindication and triumph. The year gone by has forced both Israel and America to face the evil of Islamic Fundamentalism. America, "don't ask for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." May the coming year grant the wisdom, strength, and courage to all who revere life and freedom to join together in order to make the world safe for the peace and security which is the promise of our Day of Forgiveness and Redemption!

Shabbat Shalom

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From: listmaster@shemayisrael.com Subject: PENINIM ON THE  
TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM PARSHAS  
VAYEILECH

Hashem said to Moshe behold, your days are drawing near to die. (31:14) The Midrash asks, "Do 'days' die?" People die - not days. This refers to the righteous, who, although when they leave this world and their days are over, they still are considered alive. The righteous are considered alive, even in death, while the wicked are viewed as lifeless and dead even when they are alive." The Midrash continues explaining the difference between the righteous and the wicked in regard to the concept of life and death. The rasha, wicked person, sees the sun shine, but he does not make the blessing of Yotzeir Ohr, He creates light; he sees the sun set, but he does not make the blessing HaMaariv Aravim, who brings on evenings; he eats and drinks, but he does not have the decency to recognize the source of his food, and, consequently, he does not bless Hashem. In contrast, the righteous make a point to bless Hashem at every juncture. Wherever they eat or drink, what ever they see

or hear, they always bless the Almighty. They do not express their gratitude and recognition only during their lifetime. They even praise Hashem when they are in their eternal rest, as David Ha'Melech says in Tehillim 149, "Let the devout exalt in glory; let them sing joyously upon their beds."

From this Midrash we derive a profound lesson regarding the true meaning of life and death. Horav Meir Rubman, zl, explains that the common definition for life is one who eats, drinks, sees and hears. One who does not possess these faculties, who is totally devoid of any physical activity is, to a great extent, lifeless. The Midrash does not seem to agree with this definition. Chazal teach us that life is based upon one's active participation in blessing Hashem for the bounty that he receives from Him. In other words, it is all in the heart, the seat of emotion and feeling. One who perceives, who feels alive, blesses Hashem. One whose sensitivity is dead, who does not feel obligated to bless Hashem, has a heart that might beat, but is lifeless.

One who blesses Hashem with devotion, with a sense of recognition, accepting that whatever he possesses or is able to do, be it physical activities or simple bodily functions, which so many of us take for granted, is alive. When one blesses haphazardly, devoid of feeling and devotion, his life is very much like his blessing - lifeless.

Shlomo HaMelech in Sefer Koheles 9:4 says, "A live dog is better than a dead lion." Simply, this means that while the dog is a lowly animal compared to the "king of beasts," it is still alive; it eats and drinks, runs and plays. The lion is dead and can do nothing. The analogy to a human being is that the lowliest person, regardless of his station in life, as long as he is alive and well, is better off than someone who is not as fortunate as he.

Shlomo HaMelech uses another barometer for distinguishing between the "living" dog and the "dead" lion. He says, "For the living know they will die, but the dead know nothing at all." It all boils down to perspective. The advantage of the living is that they know that they will one day leave their earthly abode. With this thought acutely impressed in their mind, they live their life.

And many evils and troubles shall come upon them, and they shall say in that day, "Have not these evils come upon us because G-d is not among us?" And I will surely have concealed My face on that day. (31:17,18)

These two pesukim begin by asserting Hashem's anger, followed by the concealment of His countenance as a result of Klal Yisrael's transgressions. Afterwards, when the nation recognizes that its suffering is due to Hashem's concealment, the next pasuk continues with Hashem concealing Himself once again. This is enigmatic. One would think that recognition of sin is a step towards teshuvah, repentance. Surely, it should not be followed with more hester Panim, concealment of Hashem's countenance. Indeed, this is a difficult and most tragic prophecy. What could be worse than Hashem removing Himself from our midst? It is softened only with the promise that, regardless of our infamy, Torah will not be forgotten from our People. Yet, the question still remains: Why would Hashem continue His concealment after we have taken that first step towards teshuvah?

Ramban explains that Klal Yisrael's acknowledgment of their iniquity falls short of genuine teshuvah. They realize that they have erred, but they still refuse to confess and repent wholeheartedly. A half-baked teshuvah will not effect a completely favorable response from the Almighty. We will have to do better than that. Although the Torah does not indicate any new punishment, we still do not merit Hashem's return.

Sforno explains that while Hashem conceals His presence, He will always be there to protect and preserve our People. We can, and still, should pray to Him, even during moments of hester Panim. Horav Bunim, zl, m'Peshischa, addresses this pasuk homiletically, maintaining

that for a Jew to say that Hashem is not in his midst is in itself a grave sin. No Jew should ever feel alone. No Jew has the right to say that Hashem has deserted him. Even during those moments of pain, terror and affliction, Hashem is with us.

I recently saw another approach towards understanding this pasuk. The question that has occupied the searching mind for generations, from Moshe Rabbeinu to the contemporary Jew, is, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" - and vice-versa. Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem, "Horeinu na derachecha." "Let me know Your ways." Indeed, Sefer Iyov focuses on this pivotal question - with the conclusion that there is no logical answer. It is a principle of faith that Hashem is just and compassionate. Those decisions that seem severe and cruel to us are beyond our limited scope of understanding. To believe in Hashem means to place our trust in Him even at those times when doing so challenges our cognitive abilities. Just because something does not make sense to us does not mean it does not make sense. We are limited by mortal parameters; Hashem certainly is not.

Regrettably, over time, some individuals have postulated that bad things happen to good people because, at times, Hashem "loses control." He cannot be everywhere all of the time. Therefore, some situations just seem to get away from Him. Such heresy is what we have come to expect from those who have alienated themselves from Torah and, consequently, from Hashem. Moshe Rabbeinu foresaw this breakdown in Jewish faith when he said, "They will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because G-d is not among us?'" We are cautioned not to err and think that tragedy is the result of Divine shortcoming or a lack of Hashem's Providence or Omnipotence. While it is true that there is no logical explanation for the bad things that happen to good people, we must depend upon our faith. Does religion always have to be logical? If so, why is it called religion? It is logical! Indeed, as is stated in the chassidische seforim, if Hashem would have felt that it was to our advantage to understand Hashem's ways, He would have availed us the ability to do so. Apparently, the leap of faith required of us to accept and justify Hashem's actions is a necessary component in our spiritual development.

This song shall speak up before it as a witness, for it shall not be forgotten from the mouth of its offspring. (31:21)

This is the only consolation for a prophecy foretelling Klal Yisrael's slide into a life of sin and rebellion against the Almighty. The Torah might be ignored; it might even be snubbed, but it will never be completely forgotten. Throughout history, there has always been a revival of Torah study following a period when many thought that its end was near. During the Holocaust of World War II, when Europe was burning, there were those doomsayers that said the end of Torah was near. It would die with European Jewry. This was not the case. Those who miraculously survived did not give in to depression and apathy. They realized that they were spared for a reason - to rebuild the Jewish nation, to develop thriving Torah centers that would educate the next generation of observant Jews, to see to it that "it shall not be forgotten from the mouth of its offspring."

Many stories recount the hardship, the emotion, the fear and the ultimate triumph connected with the near loss of our national heritage and its rejuvenation in this country. I feel that one very poignant story, cited by Rabbi Paysach Krohn, encapsulates these emptions. He writes about a Holocaust survivor who traveled from his home in the Midwest to Monsey, N.Y., to witness his grandson putting on Tefillin for the first time. This was a very special occasion for him, one that he did not want to miss.

They went that morning to the students' minyan at his grandson's school. Three generations: a grandfather, survivor of the Holocaust; a son, who grew up in the specter of the Holocaust; and a grandson, an American boy, who was continuing the legacy of previous generations.

One can imagine the deep sense of pride and gratitude to Hashem that prevailed that morning. There was a deeper emotion, however, a pent-up emotion that lay dormant for years awaiting the moment when it could be expressed. It occurred as the young Bar-Mitzvah boy took out the Tefillin from its velvet pouch and, with the help of his father and under the watchful proud eyes of his grandfather, recited the blessing with enthusiasm and devotion, as he wrapped the Tefillin on his left arm.

Suddenly, the grandfather's eyes welled up with emotion and burst forth into tears. He did not just cry; he began to sob - loudly. For a few moments it seemed as if the grandfather's weeping was uncontrollable. After a while, he regained his composure and settled down to enjoy the simchah, special joyous moment. The grandson's rebbe took this all in. He cautiously approached the grandfather and said, "This must be a very emotional moment for you. To have survived the horrors of Hitler, to stand side by side with your son and grandson at this momentous occasion, must truly be overwhelming."

"In a way you are correct, but it was not my grandson who brought me to tears," responded the grandfather. "It is the sight of hundreds of boys davening together, raising their voices with "Amen," acknowledging the Almighty with gratitude, love and awe, that brought about my display of emotion. I remember an incident that took place back in 1945, soon after the war. I was one of the lucky ones to survive the destruction of the Vilna Ghetto. It was Simchas Torah, the festival when we rejoice with the Torah, when singing and dancing reign throughout the shul, when children joyfully dance with their flags. We had a minyan, but - there were no children. "We finished davening and were about to dance the Hakafos, traditional dance with the Sefer Torah, but - there was no Torah. No children - no Torah. The children did not survive, the Torah had either been looted or destroyed. What kind of Simchas Torah could a group of broken men have without children and without a Torah? We stared at each other in despair as the horrors of the past few years returned to haunt us.

"Suddenly, a young couple entered the shul with two little children, a boy and a girl. The poor girl's vocal cords had not developed properly, because she had been hiding in an attic for over a year, where she was only permitted to whisper quietly. We all stared at each other incredulously. We did not know who this couple was; we had never seen them before tonight. As they entered the shul, however, we realized that these children were our future. We scooped them up and, with tears of joy, we took turns dancing with them. They were our Hakafos, as we danced clutching these children to our hearts.

"As I look around this yeshivah today, and I see hundreds of living Sifrei Torah, I remember that fateful Simchas Torah. We were uncertain then of the future. We had hope, we aspired, we thirsted, but we did not know if our longing would ever achieve fruition. Today, I cry because I see that we have triumphed. We survived the horrors of the Holocaust, and we have rebuilt Torah in our communities. Today, I cry with joy and gratitude that Hashem allowed me to live to see and experience this moment."

This grandfather was one of thousands of survivors who feared that spiritual extinction would follow on the heels of the physical calamity that befell our People. They desperately worried that the Jewish nation was spiritually beyond help. It was no wonder that in the aftermath of such a cataclysmic destruction, this feeling was prevalent. Yet, there were those who remembered the pasuk. Hashem's promise that the Torah will never be forgotten. They toiled with blood, sweat and tears to rebuild the Torah centers of Europe. They undertook to build day schools throughout this country. The thriving educational institutions of today are a living testimony that the Torah will never be forgotten from our midst.

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From: Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org] To: hamaayan@torah.org Subject: HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parashat Vayeilech

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz  
Vayeilech: G-d's Concealment

Sponsored by Rona and Aaron Lerner in memory of his mother Fay Lerner a"h; Marion and Sam Markovitz, in memory of their fathers Yisroel Moshe ben Zvi Dov Markovitz a"h Rabbi Yitzchok Mordechai ben Avraham Gross a"h; Professor and Mrs. Gilbert J. Ginsburg in memory of Geulah Berachah Ginsburg Today's Learning: Bava Kamma 8:7-9:1 Orach Chaim 514:9-11 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Kamma 57

"Gather together the people - the men, the women and the small children . . ." (31:12)

The gemara (Chagigah 3a) says that the reason for bringing small children to the Bet Hamikdash for hakhel (the king's Torah reading once every seven years on the Sukkot after the shemittah) is to reward those who bring them. [The children do not understand the Torah portion which the king reads, so why else would they be brought?] R' Moshe Shick z"l (Hungary; 1805-1879) understands that the reward referred to is given in this world, and he asks: Is this a good thing? Are we not concerned that (in the words of Devarim 32:15), "Yeshurun - Israel - will become fat and kick"?

He answers: If a person has a complete faith in G-d, he will not be hurt by achieving the "good life" in this world. And, the best sign of a person's inner feelings is his children's upbringing. We read (Devarim 29:28), "The hidden [things] are for Hashem, our G-d, but the revealed are for us and our children . . ." This may be interpreted: "How can one know whether man's hidden feelings are for G-d? The answer is revealed by looking at him and, especially, his children." Therefore, a person who brings his children to hakhel may be rewarded, for this itself is a sign that he can handle that reward. (Maharam Shick Al HaTorah)

"So it was when Moshe finished writing the words of this Torah onto a book, until their conclusion, Moshe commanded levi'im, the bearers of the Ark of the covenant, saying, "Take this book of the Torah and place it at the side of the Ark of the covenant of Hashem, and it shall be there for you as a witness.'" (31:24-26)

Our Sages relate that Moshe wrote 13 Torah scrolls on the last day of his life, one for each tribe and one which he gave to the levi'im, as described in our verse. The reason one Sefer Torah was placed at the side of the Ark was so that if, at some future date, someone tried to falsify the words of the Torah, a master copy would be available with which to rebut the falsifier. This Torah was entrusted to the levi'im, for they are the keepers of the tradition, as it is written about them (Devarim 33:10), "They shall teach Your ordinances to Yaakov and Your Torah to Yisrael."

R' David Lifschutz z"l (the "Suvalker Rav"; rosh yeshiva in Yeshivat Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan; died 1993) explains further: It is human nature that one who no longer wishes to observe the Torah's laws will not simply abandon them; he will create a new religion or a new philosophy which he will claim is the Torah. [This phenomenon can be seen many times throughout our history beginning with the Gold Calf, when the Jewish people declared, "This is your god, Yisrael."] Moshe was afraid that someone would take out his Sefer Torah and, for example, erase the words "Do not" from the commandment "Do not murder" or "Do not steal." As long as the Torah remains untouched, one or two generations may stray, but their descendants will return. Once the Torah is tampered with, however, all is lost. (Tehilah LeDavid p. 18)

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by Alan Broder, [ajb@torah.org](mailto:ajb@torah.org). The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehadgil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives are available starting with Rosh HaShanah 5758 (1997) at <http://www.torah.org/learning/hamaayan/>. Text archives from 1990 through the present are available at <http://www.acoast.com/~seh/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B [learn@torah.org](mailto:learn@torah.org) Baltimore, MD 21208

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu] Sent: Thursday, September 20, 2001 5:50 AM To: [weekly@ohr.edu](mailto:weekly@ohr.edu) Subject: Torah Weekly - Vayelech

\* TORAH WEEKLY \* Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat Vayelech

**OVERVIEW** On the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent bidding farewell to his people, encouraging them to "keep the faith." Moshe tells them that whether he is among them or not, Hashem is with them. He summons Yehoshua, and in front of all the people, exhorts him to be strong and courageous as leader of the Jewish People. Thus, he strengthens Yehoshua's status. Moshe teaches the mitzvah of hakhelev: Every seven years on the first of the intermediate days of Succot, the entire nation, including small children, is to gather at the Temple to hear the King read from the Book of Devarim. The sections read deal with faithfulness to Hashem, the covenant, and reward and punishment. Hashem tells Moshe that his end is near, and he should summon Yehoshua to stand with him in the Mishkan, where Hashem will teach Yehoshua. Hashem tells Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land, the people will be unfaithful and worship other gods. Hashem will then completely "hide His face," so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at the mercy of fate, hunted by all. Hashem instructs Moshe and Yehoshua to write down a song - Ha'azinu - which will serve as "witness" against the Jewish People when they sin. Moshe records the song in writing and teaches it to Bnei Yisrael. Moshe completes his transcription of the Torah and instructs the levi'im to place it to the side of the Holy Ark, so that no one will ever write a new Torah Scroll different from the original, for there will always be a reference copy.

#### COSMIC HIDE-AND-SEEK

"I will surely hide My face." (31:18)

Once, there was a great rabbi who came upon a young child crying his heart out. "What's the matter, little one?" asked the Rabbi. "We were playing..." the child sobbed. "We were playing hide and seek; I was hiding." The boy looked up into the Rabbi's face. "Yes, I'm listening," said the Rabbi. "I was hiding, but..." "Tell me, please," said the Rabbi softly. Finally the boy managed to finish his sentence "...but nobody came to look for me!"

After a few moments, the Rabbi smiled his warm smile and said, "You know, you shouldn't feel so bad. You're in good company." The child heaved a little, his tears abating. The Rabbi continued: "You're in good company indeed. G-d feels a lot like you - He's hiding, and not many people are coming to look for Him."

This world is a cosmic game of hide and-seek: Who brought us here? Who sustains us here? What are we doing here?

To make the game more challenging, and our success more meaningful and rewarding, there are various distractions, false leads, to take us out of the game. But our "Host" has not left us without a "crib sheet" to help us navigate this ultimate virtual adventure. He has provided a clear manual which is guaranteed to allow us to unmask Him and the purpose of our existence. This manual is called the Torah.

But if we don't keep the Torah, He will hide himself more deeply; finding Him will be very difficult.

"I will surely hide My face."

There are two types of concealment. One type is where you know someone is there but you just can't see him. The other type is where you don't know if the person is there at all. In this second type, the hiddenness is itself hidden. This is the ultimate hiding.

When people are aware that G-d is hiding, then, ultimately, He is not concealed, for they will eventually find Him. However, when the hiding is itself hidden, when people don't realize Hashem is there hiding, they'll never bother to look.

Yom Kippur is a once-a-year opportunity to throw ourselves on the mercy of the King. If we search with all our hearts, we will find Him.

The Sfat Emet in the name of the Chidushei HaRim in Mayana shel Torah; a story heard from Rabbi Zev Leff

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HAFTARAH SHABBAT SHUVA: Hoshea 14:2-10; Micah 7:18-20 or Joel 2:15-27

Shabbat Shuva is the first Shabbat of the year. It is the prototype, the blueprint for the whole year. Because of this, we must be especially careful to guard its sanctity - as it is the first. The Talmud tells us that if the Jewish People had kept the first Shabbat properly, no nation or culture could have ruled over them.

Man was created on Friday afternoon in order to immediately enter into the blissful restful state of Shabbat. But before Shabbat came, Man had already sinned.

But Shabbat and teshuva, repentance, go together. Our Sages teach (Berachot 37) that teshuva, repentance, preceded the world" (Pesachim 54). Therefore, the level of a person who returns to Judaism is before the world, and thus above the world. Shabbat too has a radiance which is higher than the six days of the week - a reflection of the world to come.

The Shabbat between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is called Shabbat Shuvah, which means both "return" and "repentance." The first word of this week's haftara is "Shuvah" - "Return O Israel to Hashem, your G-d, for you have stumbled in your iniquity." If a person is found guilty by the courts, his only hope is to throw himself on the mercy of the king: so too the prophet exhorts the Jewish People to throw themselves on the mercy of the Supreme King of Kings, and beg for clemency, for He alone, in His great kindness, has the power to overrule the verdict and forgive their sins and transgressions.

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From: [chrysler\[SMTP:rachrysl@netvision.net.il\]](mailto:chrysler@netvision.net.il) Sent: Thursday, September 20, 2001 6:09 PM To: Midei Parsha Subject: Midei Shabbos Vayeilech/Yom Kippur by Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler  
Vol. 8 No. 47 This issue is sponsored l'iluy Nishmas Meshulam ben Eliezer z.l. t.n.tz.b.h.

Parshas Vayeilech Shabbos Shuvah (incorporating Yom Kipur) Returning All the Way to G-d (Adapted from the K'li Yakar)

The Gemara in Chagigah (5a) relates how Rabbi Yochanan would weep when he read the Pasuk (31:17) "And it shall be when many evils befall them ...". For what chance does a servant have whose master metes out to him many evils?

Shmuel explains there (according to the explanation of Rabeinu Tam) that this Pasuk results from the sin of failing to provide a poor man with his needs until he is in dire straits, but not before.

How can this be, asks the K'li Yakar? Is this such a terrible sin, that it should bring in its wake such harsh retribution?

In Maseches Yuma (86b), the Gemara cites Resh Lakish, who, in praise of Teshuvah, explains how it transforms sins performed on purpose, into mistakes. He bases this on the Pasuk in Hoshei'a (14:2)

"Shuvah Yisrael ... Ki choshalto ba'avonecha", on the fact that 'ovon' is a sin performed on purpose, whereas 'choshalto' implies stumbling by mistake. In order to reconcile this with another statement of Resh Lakish, where, based on a Pasuk in Yechezkel, he explains that Teshuvah has the power to turn a sin performed on purpose into a Mitzvah, the Gemara establishes the first statement by Teshuvah out of fear, and the second, by Teshuvah out of love.

The advantage of Teshuvah out of love, explains the K'li Yakar, is that someone who loves, draws close to the one he loves, whereas someone who fears, keeps his distance from the person of whom he is afraid. In other words, Teshuvah out of love removes the obstacles that separate the sinner from G-d, and bridges the gap between them that those sins created. Teshuvah out of fear, on the other hand, cannot bridge the gap completely, by virtue of the fact that the one who is afraid, chooses to retain his distance.

This also explains why the former still requires a sin-offering to atone for the Shogeg that remains. It is because a 'Korban' (whose root is the word 'Karev' to come close) brings the erstwhile sinner close to G-d. The latter does not require a Korban (since he has already drawn close to G-d on his own initiative).

Another advantage of Teshuvah that is based on love is that when one repents in this way, one encourages others to repent too (because someone who loves G-d, wants others to love Him as well). Whereas someone who repents out of fear, is only concerned with His own wellbeing, not with anybody else's, neither of his fellow-Jew nor even with G-d's.

The Gemara in Pesachim (50b) makes a similar distinction. Citing an apparent contradiction between the Pasuk in Tehilim (54:11) "Because Your kindness reaches the Heaven" and the Pasuk there (108:5) "Because Your kindness reaches beyond the Heaven", it explains that the former Pasuk refers to those who serve G-d out of fear, whereas the latter Pasuk refers to those who serve Him out of love.

In other words, those who serve G-d out of fear will receive G-d's kindness from up to the Heaven, but no higher, whereas those who serve Him out of love, will merit His kindness from a higher level still, from above the Heaven.

According to what we have just said, the Pasuk in Hoshei'a ("Shuvah Yisrael ... ") is actually exhorting Yisrael to perform Teshuvah out of love "Do Teshuvah Yisrael, up to Hashem Your G-d (and not just up to the Heaven, as you did until now) because (until now) you stumbled over your sins (i.e. they were transformed into sins by mistake, because your Teshuvah was done out of fear)". And that explains why "because you stumbled" is written in the past. That is what was; now, G-d implores us, do Teshuvah out of love, thereby wiping away every trace of your sins, for those sins to become Mitzvos.

"Take with you words", the Pasuk continues, "and return to G-d (all the way); your sins will be uplifted (turned into Mitzvos) and give you goodness, and we will pay the bulls with our lips". With such a Teshuvah, "our lips" will suffice. No sacrifices are necessary.

One more point. There is a third category of Teshuvah, and that is someone who does Teshuvah only when he is in the process of being punished. He repents only in order to rid himself of his torment, much in the same way as Par'oh did. Like Par'oh, his Teshuvah is not sincere, and no sooner is G-d's Hand withdrawn, than he returns to his former sins. This form of Teshuvah is contained in the Pesukim in Yechezkel (18:27-30).

And now we can understand what Shmuel meant when he spoke of providing a poor man with his needs when he is in dire straits, but not before.

The Pasuk to which Shmuel refers follows Yisrael's reaction to the terrible calamities that have befallen them, which they attribute to the fact that G-d is not in their midst (a form of Teshuvah), as the Torah records there. That is when G-d responds by hiding His Face from them

and by meting out to them many evils. When Shmuel speaks about providing the poor with their needs 'when they are in dire straits', he is referring to the wealthy who actually give (not to the poor)! He is referring to the sort of people who, as long as everything goes well, will turn a poor man away empty-handed. But the moment they experience Divine retribution, they suddenly open their purses. That sort of Teshuvah does not last, and the chances are that, the moment G-d responds favorably, they will continue to ignore the poor man's pleas. That is why G-d ignores their 'Teshuvah', and continues to mete out to them many evils.

Parshah Pearls Va'yeilech (adapted from the P'ninim mi'Shulchan ha'G'ro) Mind Your Own Business "And Hashem said to Moshe, Behold your days are fast approaching to die; call Yehoshua" (31:14). The Yalkut relates how, on the day that Moshe died, G-d spoke to Yehoshua. When Moshe asked him what G-d had told him, he retorted 'During the last forty years, did I ask you what G-d said to you?'

There and then, Moshe said 'Better a thousand deaths than one jealous thought!'

To explain this Medrash, the G'ro first stresses that Hashem wanted Moshe to die willingly. Moshe had already Davened five and hundred and fifteen Tefilos, in his quest to be allowed to cross the Yarden. And if Yehoshua's time to lead Yisrael had arrived, he now pleaded with Hashem, he would not mind entering Eretz Yisrael in the capacity of Yehoshua's Talmid.

And that was when Hashem decided to show Moshe that such a situation would give him no naches at all. So he instructed Yehoshua that, when Moshe would ask him about his prophesy, he should give him the reply that we quoted above.

In truth, these were Hashem's words of prophesy (not a personal statement of Yehoshua). In Moshe's mind however, they were the words of Yehoshua, and inevitably, pangs of jealousy welled up in his heart, for no more than than a fleeting moment. Long enough however, to realize the futility of entering Eretz Yisrael as a Talmid of Yehoshua.

Maybe later, Moshe would realize that Yehoshua's message was not his own, but that of Hashem. But still, he had experienced the pangs of jealousy, and that was sufficient to make him want to relinquish his hold on life, and to die willingly, exactly as Hashem had anticipated.

Idolatry and Adultery "And this people will arise and go astray after the foreign gods of the land" (31:16). The word for 'go astray' is 've'Zonoh' (which is synonymous with 'commit adultery'). The G'ro, cites a tradition from the Ge'onim, going back to Moshe Rabeinu. Every form of idolatry, they stated, was perpetrated in one way or another, in conjunction with an immoral act. And this explains why the Torah constantly uses this word in connection with idolatry (e.g. "And they went astray (Va'yiznu) after Ba'al" [Shoftim 8:33]; "And this people will arise and go astray" [Devarim 31:16]).

And that also explains why (based on the well-known connection drawn between the first Lu'ach and the second) the second commandment on the second Lu'ach, which corresponds to the second commandment on the first Lu'ach "Do not have other gods", is - "Do not commit adultery".

Armchair Torah "And this 'Song' will testify before them as a witness, because it will not be forgotten from their descendents" (31:21).

The Gemara in Bava Metzi'a (85b) relates how Rabbi Chiya worked to stop Torah from being forgotten from Yisrael. He would plant flax-seeds, and with the flax he would weave nets. He would then lay the nets as traps to catch deer. He would Shecht the deer and distribute the flesh to orphans, whilst from the hides he would make 'K'lafim' (sheets of parchment) on which he wrote the five books of the Torah. Then he would travel to a town where there were no Melamdei-Tinokos (children's Rebbes), and teach the five books to five children, and the six Sedarim of Mishnayos to six children. And he would instruct them to teach each other what he had taught them, so that by the time he paid his next visit, they would all be conversant in the five books and the six Sedarim.

The G'ro maintained that the reason that the later generations do not succeed in their Torah-studies to the degree that the earlier generations did, is because they are built on a poor foundation. The father wants his son to become a Lamdam overnight, and the Rebbe wants his wages.

For Rabbi Chiya to go to the Sofer to purchase ready-made sheets of parchment would have involved an element of 'she'lo Lishmah' (for ulterior motives), and his success would have been marred. That is why he did everything himself, to ensure that the entire operation, from planting the seeds to teaching the children, was performed Lishmah, without the slightest trace of impure motives. In this way, he succeeded in building a magnificent building on foundations of Emes.

Others cite the Ma'alos ha'Torah, who quoted his brother the G'ro. The G'ro said that, if they would construct Batei-Keneisiyos from scratch, with wood that was cut from trees that were felled with hatchets made by Jews with thoughts of 'Le'shem Shamayim' (Lishmah), then the people who Davened in those Shuls would never have foreign thoughts during Davening.

Vanquishing the Yeitzer ha'Ra "Because I know his Yeitzer (ha'Ra)" (31:21).

The Gemara in B'rachos (8a) cites Ula, who says that someone who derives pleasure from his toil is greater than someone who fears G-d.

There are some people, the G'ro explains, who derive pleasure in breaking their Midos. Overcoming their Yeitzer ha'Ra is for them a great source of joy (like the pleasures of this world which one only fully enjoys at the time that one performs them - Mishlei 13:19). Others do so because they know it is the right thing to do (for so Chazal have taught 'Reckon the benefits of performing a sin against its losses' [Avos 2:1]), but it comes only after a great struggle. With them, the pleasure comes only later.

And this is what the above Gemara means. When Chazal speak about 'Someone who derives pleasure from his toil', they are referring to someone who derives a thrill from fighting and overcoming his Yeitzer ha'Ra. And he is 'greater than someone who fears G-d', by whom they mean someone who overcomes his Yeitzer ha'Ra due to a sense of duty, induced by his Yir'as Shamayim, but from which he derives no pleasure at the time at the time that he achieves it.

The Fighters and the non-Fighters Alternatively, the Tzadikim can be divided into two groups; one which needs to fight the Yeitzer ha'Ra constantly, whilst the other does so naturally, without a fight. Each one has an advantage and a disadvantage. The first is in constant danger of being defeated in the next round of battle. As long as they live in this world, they are never secure, and it is only when they arrive in Olam ha'Ba that the battle is finally over.

The second group has no problem in this world. They have little to fear, as they know that they will win the next round whenever it confronts them. On the other hand, their reward for overcoming the Yeitzer ha'Ra (compared to the first group) is minimal.

The ideal situation though, is one where a person begins in the first group, but who works so hard to defeat his Yeitzer ha'Ra until doing so becomes second nature to him (like those who pertain to the second group).

About such a person David Hamelech wrote in Tehilim "When you eat the toil of your hands, you will be fortunate (in this world) and it will be good for you (in Olam ha'Ba)" (128:2).

And when the Gemara refers to 'Someone who derives pleasure from his toil', it is referring to someone from this category, someone who, through hard work, transferred from the first group of Tzadikim to the second. He is greater than the one who continues to toil as a member of the first group.

A Pleasurable Occupation And thirdly, the G'ro explains, the greatest conceivable pleasure in the World to Come is studying Torah. Someone who enjoys toiling in Torah derives pleasure in this world as well as in Olam ha'Ba. And it is with such a person in mind that David Hamelech wrote in Tehilim "When you eat the toil of your hands, you will be fortunate (in this world) and it will be good for you (in Olam ha'Ba)". Whereas the person who fears G-d, but does not enjoy Torah-study will derive pleasure in Olam ha'Bo, but not in this world.

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From: RABBI MORDECHAI KORNFELD Kollel Iyun  
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46-47

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Bava Kama 46b

THE LOGICAL BASIS OF "HA'MOTZI ME'CHAVEIRO ALAV HA'RA'AYAH" QUESTION: Rav Shmuel bar Nachmani teaches that from the verse, "Whoever has a claim shall approach them" (Shemos 24:14), we learn the principle of "ha'Motzi me'Chaveiro Alav ha'Ra'ayah." Rav Ashi rejects this, asking why do we need a verse to teach this? Even without a verse we would rule in accordance with this principle, based on straightforward logic! The Gemara concludes that the verse is needed to teach an entirely different Halachah.

How can the Gemara suggest that a verse is not needed to teach the principle of "ha'Motzi me'Chaveiro Alav ha'Ra'ayah" because we can derive it through logic? We find that Sumchus argues with the Chachamim and rules that "Mamon ha'Mutal b'Safech Cholkin," and the money is divided between the two claimants. We do not find that Sumchus derives this from a verse! Apparently he is basing his ruling on logic. A verse, then, is indeed needed to teach that we do not follow the logic of Sumchus but rather the logic of the Chachamim, that "ha'Motzi me'Chaveiro Alav ha'Ra'ayah!" This is especially true in a case where the Nizak makes a definite claim ("Bari") and the Mazik makes an indefinite claim ("Shema"). The Gemara itself says that Shmuel considers this a novel Halachah, that even in such a case we apply "ha'Motzi me'Chaveiro Alav ha'Ra'ayah!" How, then, can Rav Ashi say it is logical and no verse is needed? (RA'AVAD, cited by Shitah Mekubetztes; MAHARAM)

(One might suggest that Rav Ashi was asking that a verse is not necessary to teach "ha'Motzi me'Chaveiro Alav ha'Ra'ayah" according to Sumchus, since, in a case when Beis Din has reason to doubt to whom the money belongs, the money indeed is split, and in a case where Beis Din has no reason to doubt aside for the claim of the claimant ("Derara d'Mamona;" see Bava Metzia 2b, Rashbam in Bava Basra 92a, DH l'Shechitah), indeed it is unquestionably logical that we rule "ha'Motzi me'Chaveiro Alav ha'Ra'ayah" (even according to Sumchus). However, the URIM V'TUMIM (CM 24:1) rejects this approach, because according to this approach Rav Ashi and the Gemara here are assuming the position of Sumchus, while we find that Tosfos (46a, DH ha'Motzi) and many Rishonim consider the opinion of the Chachamim who argue with Sumchus to be the Halachic opinion.)

Furthermore, why does the Gemara not explain that the verse is necessary according to Shmuel to teach that we rule "ha'Motzi me'Chaveiro Alav ha'Ra'ayah" even against a Rov? (MAHARAM)

ANSWERS: (a) The RE'AH (cited by the Shitah Mekubetztes) and the MAHARAM answer that there is no implication in the verse to apply "ha'Motzi me'Chaveiro Alav ha'Ra'ayah" even in the case of "Derara d'Mamona" or the case of a Rov. That is why the Gemara asks that when there is no "Derara d'Mamona" and there is no Rov, it is obvious that the Halachah should be "ha'Motzi me'Chaveiro Alav ha'Ra'ayah."

(b) The RE'AH answers further that perhaps the Gemara considers it obvious that we do not rule like Sumchus. What this answer means, apparently, is that the Gemara knew that both the Chachamim and Sumchus base their rulings on logic, and not on verses. (The same can be said about Rav and Shmuel.)

Since we rule in accordance with the Chachamim, we are safe in saying that it is logical to apply "ha'Motzi me'Chaveiro Alav ha'Ra'ayah" even in a case of "Derara d'Mamona."

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