

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet
Vayelech

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TERUAH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Rosh Hashanah is called in the Torah “yom teruah” – the day of the sounding of the teruah. This refers to the shofar sounding which serves as the special ritual commandment that dominates the Rosh Hashanah holiday.

The Talmud teaches us that the teruah sound must be preceded by a tekiah – a straight unbroken sound – followed by another tekiah. Though the teruah is placed at the center and, in reality, is the focus of the shofar service, the exact sounding of the teruah is a matter of halachic debate.

The Talmud records that there is a difference of opinion as to whether the sound of the teruah is one of a deep heartrending sigh or whether it is a staccato sound of a wail or a call to arms. The Talmud reaches a compromise on this question. Both the deep sigh sound which is now called shevarim and the wailing staccato sound which now assumes the name of teruah, are sounded.

Even though the shevarim sound has this different name it is, in reality, technically a teruah as far as the Torah is concerned. I find it interesting to note that the Talmud chose not to make a definite decision regarding the sound of the teruah and included both – shevarim and teruah – in the order of the shofar service.

I think that this seeming indecision on the part of the Talmud comes to teach us an important lesson regarding the message of the shofar on the holy day of Rosh Hashanah.

The sound of the shevarim is the sound of sadness, lost opportunity, regret and even tragedy if you will. The rabbis of the Talmud stated that a deep gut-wrenching sigh breaks a person in half, physically and mentally. It is a sigh of mourning, of events that have troubled us and made us feel depressed.

The past year has been replete with such troubling moments, again both personally for all of us and nationally for the people and state of Israel. Somehow we had hoped for better. Beset by economic and security woes, feeling uneasy and uncertain about our future, buffeted by events over which we feel that we had no control, we stand before God humbled and without real confidence.

The deep sigh that emanates from within our souls is matched by the sound of the shevarim, the deep sigh that comes forth from the hollow of the shofar. We appeal to God to help us because we fear that we are broken in spirit, will and ability. We are only able to break our bodies and visions with a deep sigh, the sound of shevarim. God wants our hearts and they are only available once we have forfeited our unwarranted hubris and arrogance.

Better a deep inner sigh than a public boast. How many seemingly great and powerful people were brought low this year and publicly humiliated! We cannot come to an encounter with the Lord, so to speak, unless we are first broken and humble.

The staccato sound of the teruah conveys a different message. It is also a wail of mourning. But in another context, it is also a call to arms, a rallying sound for a charge to be mounted against the foe. Judaism is a religion of balance and equity. We must sigh but not always. Even in the depths of troubles and uncertainty, we are bidden to continue to struggle and not to abandon the field.

The Torah tells us that the ancient army of Israel went into battle to the sound of the teruah that urged them forward. Victories are not won with broken hearts alone. Yehoshua is commanded many times to be strong and powerful and not to give in to moments of defeat and frustration. There are no easy victories in life, in a family or a community or a nation. Life is a constant daily struggle and the teruah comes to rally us to strength, loyalty, determination and ultimate triumph.

This staccato sound of the teruah must be included in the shofar service, for otherwise we will be tempted to give up and allow ourselves to

become completely defeated. I think the rabbis of the Talmud included both sounds of the teruah – the shevarim and the teruah – in the shofar service to indicate this need for correct balance in approaching our service to God and humans. Humility and strength, a broken heart and a stiffened resolve to improve is the message of the teruah to us.

Chag sameach.

Shana tova.

Weekly Parsha :: VAYELECH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

This week’s parsha is the one with the fewest psukim/verses in the Torah. Nevertheless it is one of the most powerful parshiyot in the Torah. Moshe’s final message on the day of his death combines warnings of dire fears and predictions, and of hope, confidence and holy vision.

The final parshiyot of the Torah - Nitzavim, Vayelech, Haazinu and Zot Habracha - are to be viewed as one message. For the purpose of our Torah readings, they appear as different and separate parshiyot but they are in reality one unit. The common denominator that binds all of these seemingly disparate and even contradictory messages together is the realization of the uniqueness of Israel and of Jewish experience and survival.

This is the point that Moshe stresses above all others. The Jewish people are special, and every Jew is special. No matter how much individual Jews, and the nation generally, may wish to escape their special role and place in the human story, they will eventually be unable to do so successfully.

Terrible events, glorious achievements and triumphant moments fill Jewish history. All of these serve to reinforce the idea of uniqueness, chosenness if you will, which is the integral ingredient of the Jewish story.

This week’s parsha speaks to us about calamitous events that will have befallen us but promises that, somehow in the end, the Lord will make it all come right. Israel will return to its land and to its God, will observe and treasure His Torah and fulfill its manifest destiny of being a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.

But the road to this final glorious destination is strewn with pitfalls and detours, mistakes and betrayals. Moshe does not offer up any honey-coated formulas for survival. He does not propose instant solutions or original panaceas. He tells the Jewish people how hard and long the road back home, physically and spiritually, will be.

The almost brutal honesty of his description of the problems and situations that Israel will have to overcome lends veracity and confirmation to his final message of blessing and confident hope.

In this season when we ask God to grant us a good and healthy year, we should be wary of asking Him for a free lunch. We must offer, in return for God’s gifts, our own commitments for a strengthened Torah presence within us and within our homes. We must commit to a renewed loyalty to the Jewish people and to Torah values as enunciated to us throughout the ages, and a feeling of solidarity with the land and people of Israel.

We cannot merely ask God for more without also exhibiting our willingness to contribute in every way that we can to the great goals of Jewish destiny. God’s blessings are assured but only if we are willing to work to achieve them. Nitzavim, Vayelech, and Haazinu all precede Zot Habracha. There are no shortcuts to get to the blessings, but we will surely arrive there in this coming good year that the Lord bestows upon us.

Shabat shalom.

Shana tova.

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Vayelech
For the week ending 4 October 2008 / 5 Tishri 5769
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
OVERVIEW

On this, the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent throughout the camp, bidding farewell to his beloved people, encouraging them to keep the faith. Moshe tells them that whether he is among them or not, Hashem is with them, and will vanquish their enemies. Then he summons Yehoshua, and in front of all the people, exhorts him to be strong and courageous as the leader of the Jewish People. In this manner, he strengthens Yehoshua's status as the new leader. Moshe teaches them the mitzvah of Hakhel: That every seven years on the first day of the intermediate days of Succos, the entire nation, including small children, is to gather together at the Temple to hear the King read from the Book of Devarim. The sections that he reads deal with faithfulness to Hashem, the covenant, and reward and punishment. Hashem tells Moshe that his end is near, and he should therefore summon Yehoshua to stand with him in the Mishkan, where Hashem will teach Yehoshua. Hashem then tells Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land, the people will be unfaithful to Him, and begin to 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, and that they will be hunted by all. Hashem instructs Moshe and Yehoshua to write down a song - Ha'azinu - which will serve as a 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 Aron (Holy Ark), so that no one will ever write a new Torah Scroll that is different from the original - for there will always be a reference copy.

INSIGHTS

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, yingele?" asked the Rabbi, his eyes shining with sympathy and concern. "We were playing..." The child struggled to speak between sobs. "We were playing hide and seek...and I was the one who was supposed to go hide..." The boy looked up into the Rabbi's face. "Yes, I'm listening," said the Rabbi. "So I went and hid but...but..." The child broke down again in gales of sobs. "Tell me what happened," said the Rabbi softly. Finally, the boy managed to finish the 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 very good company." The child heaved a little, his tears abating. The Rabbi looked into the child's eyes and continued: "You're in very good company indeed. G-d feels a lot like you. Not many people are coming to look for Him."

This world is like a cosmic game of hide-and-seek. We are given an invitation to this world; the invitation is called life. This invitation itself is a challenge: 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 and "false leads" which can take us away from 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 that is guaranteed to allow us to unmask Him and the purpose of our existence. This manual is called the Torah.

When we keep the Torah we see our "Host" more and more clearly. But if we don't keep the Torah, He will hide himself more and more deeply, and finding Him will be very difficult indeed.

"I will surely hide My face."

In the Hebrew language, the emphatic "to surely do" something is expressed by the repetition of the verb. In other words, the literal translation of the phrase "I will surely hide My face" is "Hide, I will hide My face."

The very structure of the Hebrew language gives us an insight into this "hiding." There are two kinds of concealment. One is a concealment where you know someone is there but you just can't see him. The other is a concealment where you don't even know if he is there at all. In this second type, the very fact of his being hidden is concealed. This is the ultimate hiding, where the very hiding is hidden.

When we are aware that G-d has "hidden" from us, He is not really concealed, because we realize that our hiding from Him has been reciprocated by His hiding from us. And so, we humble ourselves and return to Him, imploring his forgiveness. However, when the hiding is itself hidden, and we think that this is the way the world is supposed to be, then we are in big trouble because nothing awakens us to return to G-d. We think to ourselves, "This is the way things are supposed to be, isn't it?"

Ignorance, they say, is bliss. But only while we're ignorant of our ignorance. One day we will all wake up in the real "Supreme" court and we will then have to pay the price for our years of "bliss." On Yom Kippur we have a chance to shake ourselves out of our self-inflicted ignorance. 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.

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum **PARSHAS VAYEILECH**

Moshe went and spoke these words to all of Yisrael. (31:1)

Moshe Rabbeinu was the quintessential leader. His behavior throughout his life; his reaction to dealing with the Jewish People teaches us many lessons concerning leadership. His demeanor on the last day of his life is perhaps the most telling example of leadership and sensitivity to one's flock, imparting lessons for leaders, teachers, parents, and anybody who is in a position in which his actions influence others. The parsha commences on the last day of our leader's life, a day that he was acutely aware was looming closer, a day which he senses has finally arrived. He was to bid farewell to the flock which he had nurtured for the past forty years. Veritably, his initial charges were no longer present, having themselves perished throughout the forty year trek in the wilderness. He was speaking to the next generation, the children, many of whom witnessed much of the travail and triumph that accompanied the nascent Jewish nation on their journey from Egypt to the Holy Land.

What did Moshe do on this last day of his life? He paid a visit to the people, walking through the camps of all twelve tribes, to bid them farewell. The Ramban explains that he came to comfort them: "I am old. Do not be afraid. It will be good." He came to encourage them, to empower them, to continue on into Eretz Yisrael under Yehoshua. He had reached the end of his life. It was time to say goodbye. This is a Jewish leader. He thinks not of himself, but solely of his people. Sforno goes even further in his explanation of this final day of Moshe's life. He interprets va'yelech as indicating arousal, animation, stirring oneself into action. Moshe felt it necessary, on this last day of his life, when he certainly had other things to occupy his mind, to comfort and encourage the people who were devastated by the thought of losing their leader. Moshe's imminent death cast a cloud over the state of joy that should have prevailed in the camp. After all, they had just entered into the Covenant with Hashem. It was essential that this be a time of great exultation for Klal Yisrael, regaling in the notion of their relationship with the Almighty. Moshe could not allow his impending death to cast a pall over the people during this auspicious moment. He, therefore, roused himself to strengthen their resolve, to elevate their spirits, to enkindle them with renewed enthusiasm by reassuring them that Hashem will never forsake them. He would guide them into the Holy Land through the proxy of Yehoshua's leadership.

How did Moshe convince them? What did he say to hearten them, to lessen the pain? Sforno explains that Moshe focused on three ideas: He had lived a long life, a life of productivity. No one lives forever. He had lived; he had accomplished; he was obligated to move on. Second, even if he were to live, his advanced age would prevent him from maintaining his hectic schedule. His vigorous leadership would not be the same. He

could not continue at the pace to which they had become accustomed. Last, since the Heavenly decree was that he not enter into Eretz Yisrael, by continuing to live, he would be delaying their crossing over into the Holy Land. He did not hurt them in any way.

Incredible! This is what Moshe was thinking about on the last day of his life. How far are we from even understanding such an exalted plateau of leadership and caring. Moshe is secondary to the people. His feelings, his emotions, his goals and objectives yielded to the needs of the people. Perhaps it is deeper than the above. As the quintessential leader of Klal Yisrael, Moshe did not have any personal emotions, goals or objectives. He lived entirely for the nation. He did not acquiesce to their needs; rather, their needs were his needs. Their needs and his needs became one and the same. Thus, on the last day of his life, his thoughts revolved only around them.

There is more, however, to Moshe's leadership. The Midrash Rabba, Parashas Chukas, relates that Hashem asked Moshe on what premise he wanted to enter Eretz Yisrael. The Midrash explains this with an analogy. The king's shepherd took the sheep out to graze. The shepherd was overwhelmed by a band of robbers, and the sheep were seized. Later on, the shepherd sought to return to the palace of the king. The king told him, "If you enter the palace at this time (with the sheep still captive), you will be entering with the reputation of the shepherd who lost the king's sheep." Similarly, Hashem told Moshe, "Your reputation now is as the great leader who led the Jews out of Egypt only to bury them all in the wilderness during his forty-year leadership. If you enter into Eretz Yisrael while your flock remains buried in the wilderness, it will support the notion that the dor ha'midbar, generation of the wilderness, has no portion in the World to Come. Therefore, you should stay here and be buried with them."

The Midrash teaches us that Moshe's entreaties would have accessed his entrance into Eretz Yisrael. Hashem was prepared to forgive his involvement in the mei merivah, waters of dispute, when he struck the stone, causing it to bring forth water, rather than speaking to it as he had been instructed. He did not enter the land because of his responsibility as a leader not to abandon his people - even in death - so that he would bring them into the World to Come. We now have an inkling of the qualities inherent in a Torah leader. Moshe Rabbeinu taught us by example. He set the standard for others to emulate.

You shall read this Torah before all Yisrael, in their ears...Gather together the people - the men, the women, and the small children...so that they will hear and so that they will learn. (31:11,12)

As Moshe Rabbeinu prepared to take leave of his people, he commanded them to assemble. During this gathering which is referred to as the mitzvah of Hakhel, in which Moshe-- and afterwards the king-- would read from passages that reiterate our allegiance to the Almighty, the Covenant and reward and punishment from Sefer Devarim. The commentators explain that since the Jewish people were distinguished from the nations of the world due to our affiliation to the Torah, it is fitting that everyone - men, women and children - come together as a national affirmation that the Torah is our guide, our majesty, our splendor. Since this took place during the mitzvah of Hakhel, we wonder why they were instructed concerning the reading of the Torah before they were enjoined in the mitzvah of Hakhel. It makes sense that first they were told to assemble and then they were instructed concerning what they should do once they assemble. The sequence seems to be out of order.

The Gerrer Rebbe, zl, the Imrei Emes, explains that the actual assemblage of Klal Yisrael in a cohesive, affable and comradely manner is, in itself, Torah. When Jews gather together as one, k'ish echad b'lev echad, as one man with one heart, when harmony and love reign, when divisiveness and discord is nonexistent, that is Torah. Each Jew has the ability to reach out and help another Jew. That is the essence of Torah. Therefore, the Torah introduces the Hakhel experience after it mentions the mitzvah to read the Torah. This teaches us that the mitzvah of Hakhel is not merely a prerequisite for the reading of the Torah. It is the Torah! The reading is in addition to the gathering. It is the convocation

in its own right that achieves distinction. The reading of the Torah adds to it.

This was Moshe's lesson on his last day on earth. This was his "good-bye," his farewell remarks. "Get along, see eye to eye, maintain genial relationships, harbor no animus towards one another. This is the foundation stone upon which the mitzvos of the Torah are based."

Apart from its significance as a mitzvah in its own right, the love one should manifest for his fellow Jew is an integral component in the complete fulfillment of all mitzvos. Horav Yehoshua, zl, m'Belz, comments that unfortunately an aveirah, transgression, is performed very simply, without much effort or concentration. A mitzvah, however, takes considerable effort and extreme concentration in order to carry it out bishleimus, to perfection. One must be sure that his mind is free of any alien thoughts or intentions that might cause him to deviate from the proper kavanah, concentration and devotion, to the mitzvah. He must see to it that it is performed l'shem Shomayim, for Heaven's sake, with the proper enthusiasm, passion, and fervor. There should not be any vestige of personal pomposity. When we take all of this into consideration, performing mitzvos to perfection is quite difficult. Therefore, continues the Belzer, at the moment one performs a mitzvah, he should express that this is being carried out in the name of all Klal Yisrael-- and for all Klal Yisrael. By acting in conjunction with the rest of the nation, his mitzvos become inclusive, thereby incorporating the intentions and devotions of all of Klal Yisrael. Together our mitzvos become complete. My mitzvah completes that of my fellowman, as well as his acts on my behalf.

Horav Elimelech, zl, m'Lizensk, visited a small town and stayed there for a short visit. When the townspeople saw that the great sage was departing, they surrounded his coach and walked along with it, accompanying it out of town. After a few moments, Rav Elimelech descended from the coach and joined them. Seeing this, the people asked, "Why did the Rebbe alight from the coach? This is why we gathered here to accompany his honor out of the city." Rav Elimelech replied, "I saw an incredible outpouring of religious fervor to perform the mitzvah of levayah, accompanying me out of the town. I asked myself, "Is it possible that people are performing such an important mitzvah with such devotion and enthusiasm, and I should not be a part of it? I decided to join in the mitzvah with my fellow Jews."

Behold, your days are drawing near to die. (31:14)

The concepts of life and death, as perceived by the non-Torah believing society, are different than the way in which the Torah defines these two contrasting states. The world around us defines life as maintaining a regular pulse and respiration. One breathes - he is alive. The Midrash Tanchuma teaches that a rasha, evil/wicked person, is considered dead, despite his respiration and healthy appearance. According to the Midrash, life means much more than simple respiration. The Midrash explains that a rasha forfeits the status of being considered among the living because he sees a sunrise and does not bless Hashem; he eats and drinks and does not recite a brachah, blessing. His physical body may be alive, but his spirit is dead. This is an incredible statement. Clearly, one who eats without paying his respects to Hashem is wrong; one who has risen in the morning and not recited a blessing of gratitude to Hashem is an ingrate. His life is impaired; he is considered as if he is dead. His spirit lacks life. Upon reading this Midrash, one is confronted with Chazal's understanding of life and death. Is this really the factor that determines if one is alive or dead? Should the rasha's status of "death" not be defined by his evil nature and actions? Are we to disregard the fact that he steals, cheats, and commits a plethora of infamous acts and transgressions? Should they not be the primary cause of his "death"?

Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, zl, explains that such reasoning is based upon our own misguided perception and understanding of life in general. We are blessed with the ability to think, to understand, to perceive. We have the ability to recognize the beauty, depth and complexity of the universe, an ability which should trigger a more profound realization of Hashem's greatness and His role as the Designer and Creator of all that exists. As a result of this impetus, one should be spontaneously moved to express his gratitude and praise to Hashem for these gifts.

We are besieged with the miracles of daily life on a constant basis. We witness the unified interaction of the forces of nature, all coming together to serve Hashem and to perform His will. Seeds grow into plants, babies are born and grow. Our hearts beat incessantly as our lungs and other vital organs are working continually, so that we may live. Anyone who is complacent concerning these occurrences, who does not respond to these stimuli by praising Hashem, is considered to be spiritually comatose. He is in a state similar to death.

The rasha who does not appreciate Hashem's gift of life, not only misses out on living life to the fullest, but he actually does not live life at all. To live life one must appreciate it. To really appreciate life, one must pay gratitude to the Creator. It all works in a cycle. If part of the cycle is missing, the person is dead. Just like that! Those of us, however, who understand that Hashem renews Creation every day appreciate every sunrise, reflecting upon its meaning. We recognize that every heartbeat is a gift. Just ask someone who was fortunate enough to "come back" from a heart attack. He no longer takes each heartbeat for granted. One who acknowledges and appreciates the regeneration of life truly experiences life and its pleasures. Rav Henoch cites Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl, the Alter m'Slabodka, who suggests that we take the lesson derived from observing an infant as it begins life in this world. At first, the infant stares blankly into space, unable to focus. Slowly, by the third month, he or she is able to focus on moving objects, although real perception has not yet materialized. He or she begins to grab for objects, even though they lack meaning and are still a blur. Soon, the infant coos and makes other sounds, turns over, smiles, sits up, begins to talk, walk and develop a complete assortment of motor and mental skills and achievements. At each stage, the parents are excited, overjoyed and awed with the almost daily developments. They value every nuance of their child's development. Gratitude to Hashem is an accepted reality.

Even as adults, we go through these transformations on a constant, daily basis. When we are asleep, our bodies slow down, our metabolism is no longer in first gear and our conscious function is completely immobilized. Yet, every day we wake up in the morning, open our eyes and a new day, a new life begins. Is that so different from the development of a child? Therefore, why do we take it for granted and not acknowledge Hashem with an excitement that parallels that of parents with a newborn infant? The Alter emphasizes the need for all of us to acknowledge, appreciate and express our gratitude to Hashem for everything He bestows upon us - daily - constantly - always. Last, our degree of vibrancy and life is commensurate with our understanding and appreciation of Hashem's blessing. It is only through such recognition that we achieve viability and a sense of being.

And it will say on that day, "Is it not because my G-d is not in my midst that these evils have come upon me?" But I will surely have concealed My face on that day because of all the evil that it did. (31:17, 18)

The pasuk prophesies Klal Yisrael's reaction to the terrible punishments meted out against them. The people then acknowledge that these punishments do not "just happen." They are deliberately designed. It would seem that acknowledging that their suffering is the result of Hashem distancing Himself from them would constitute some sort of repentance. Surely, it is the beginning of repentance. Why then does Hashem repeat in the next pasuk that He will conceal Himself from them? They made the move. Do they not deserve a chance? The Ramban explains that while their actions reflect a sort of repentance, it lacks authenticity. It falls short of genuine repentance because, although they acquiesce their guilt, they are not yet prepared to confess and offer unfeigned repentance. Teshuvah denotes more than recognizing one's sin and realizing that it has distanced him from Hashem. This is only the first step in a long process of "return." Unless one has "returned" completely to Hashem, his teshuvah is fractional.

This state of flux, in which a person gropes his way toward teshuvah, presents a dilemma in which one may well find his life filled with contradiction, such that he is torn between conflicting goals. This continues on until his return is complete, and the ambiguity of his state undergoes a dramatic change. The individual who is going through the

process of change understands that undertaking only part of what Judaism demands is self-deceiving. On the other hand, complete commitment is a move of such compelling finality that the mere thought traumatizes him. Let us face it, radical change is not a simple matter. It creates a host of problems and issues.

While every baal teshuva undergoes his or her personal transition, there is one common denominator between them all: the recognition that teshuvah is a process wherein each stage is a rung on the ladder of faith, each one bringing the penitent closer to the top with the acute recognition that each rung is not an end in itself, but one more step up the ladder. The flip side of this is the tendency that some have to forever remain on the ladder without reaching any specific destination. This, of course, leads to a confused self-image and is in direct contradiction to the transition process. The purpose of this process is transformation, not aimlessness and ambiguity. One must never lose sight of the real goal; embracing Judaism in its totality - all 613 mitzvos.

Our pasuk addresses the initial awakening. It is a great start, but only a start. The decisive point is not the awakening, it is the affirmation that one accepts upon himself to grow, to do, to act, to plod on until he reaches the summit. Yes, some of us wake up - but, regrettably, we go back to sleep. Once the process begins, it must be continued until it achieves fruition.

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

The prophecy concerning Klal Yisrael's spiritual future was indeed grim with its downslide into sin and provocation of Hashem. There was one positive note, however; the Torah will never be forgotten. Regardless of how far they slip into the nadir of depravity, how distant from Hashem they are through assimilation, there will always be a resurgence of Torah learning which will ultimately bring them back. Many will be lost, but not all. The Torah will never be forgotten.

Everybody has his unique story about someone who returned to a life of observance after years, even generations, of alienation. The following story may be added to that wonderful collection of inspirational narratives. A number of years ago, Elie Weisel traveled to Saragossa, Spain, a city that was a thriving center of Jewish life during the Middle Ages. This all came to an end during the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. Taking in all of the tourist attractions, he was standing in front of the local cathedral when a man came over and offered to be his guide. Apparently, he took great pride in his community and wanted to show it off. As they became involved in a conversation, Weisel mentioned that he was a Jew and even spoke Hebrew. The man's eyes lit up: "There have been no Jews in Saragossa for almost 500 years, and I have been waiting to meet one so that I could ask for help. Could I impose on you to come to my home? I have something I want to show you." Weisel agreed, and they were off.

As he waited in the third floor apartment for the man to bring out his "treasure," Weisel noticed a number of Christian religious figurines and paintings. This was clearly the home of a devout Christian. The man came out of his study carrying a yellow parchment that had been wrapped in linen cloth. It was the fragment of a testament written some five centuries earlier. With a shaky voice, Weisel read the following: I, Moshe, the son of Avraham, forced to break all ties with my people and my faith, leave these lines to the children of my children and to theirs, in order that on the day when Yisrael will be able to walk again, its head held high under the sun without fear and without remorse, they will know where their roots lie. Written at Saragossa, this ninth of the month of Av in the year of punishment and exile.

Weisel offered to buy the document, but the man demurred, saying that it was a family heirloom that had been passed down through the generations. The man asked Weisel to explain the meaning of the document. In response, Weisel gave the man a lesson in Jewish history, Spain, the Marranos, the expulsion and eventual assimilation. The man begged him to read the document again, and they bid each other goodbye.

A few years later, Weisel was walking down the street in Yerushalayim when a man came over to him and asked, "Do you remember me?" He

seemed to look familiar, but Weisel could not place him. He also spoke fluent Hebrew which made it more difficult. Then the man looked him in the eye and with tears rolling down his face, he said, "Saragossa." Weisel just stood there in shock and disbelief, as he saw the transformation. The man invited him to his home where he saw religious pictures. This time, they depicted Jewish scenes. Right in the middle of the wall in an ornate, beautiful frame was the "document" that had turned around his life. As Weisel got up to leave and bid farewell to his new friend, the man said, "By the way, I never told you my name." He waited a few seconds, smiled, and then said, "My name is Moshe ben Avraham."

Throughout Jewish history, there have been those who have left and those who have returned. Ultimately, all return through one way or another. How much more reason at this time of the year to reach out to someone. It might catalyze their return.

Malchuscha malchus kol olamim

Your kingdom is a kingdom spanning all eternities.

In his Sefer Halkarim, Horav Yosef Albo, zl, writes that appellations such as gibor, strong and melech, king, in reference to Hashem are not synonymous in any manner with the true concept of gevurah, strength, or malchus, monarchy, as it applies to Hashem. Nonetheless, we employ these terms as a means of relating His awesome strength and unparalleled monarchy to the human mindset. People understand the word "strong" or "king." Therefore, we use these terms. They are only relative to the "real thing," which is indescribable. This is why we previously said, Kavod malchuscha yomeiru, u'gevurascha yedabeiru, "Of the glory of Your kingdom they will speak, and of Your power they will tell."

Why? L'hodia livnei adam gevurosav u'kavod hadar malchuso, "To inform human beings of His mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of His kingdom."

These terms serve one purpose: Availing human beings the opportunity of having an inkling of Hashem. Veritably, Malchuscha, Your kingdom, is malchus kol olamim. The monarchy that exists throughout the many "worlds" is but an extension of Your Heavenly kingdom.

Sponsored in loving memory of our Father and Grandfather Mr. Alex Shapiro Eliyahu ben Yaakov z"l niftar first day of Rosh Hashana 5745 "His life was a symphony of song to Hashem" Katia and Fred Bolotin & Family Joy and David Schwartz & Family Leora and Reuven Mandel

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky (TorahWeb Foundation)

The Secret of Yiras Shomayim

The obligation to have yiras Shomayim - fear and awe of Heaven - is one of the most fundamental mitzvos in the Torah. While this mitzvah is incumbent upon us at all times, during the period of Aseres Ymei Teshuva we are required to intensify our devotion to this ideal. The phrase that we use to refer to this period of time - "Yamim Noraim / Days of Awe" - emphasizes the greater obligation of yiras Shomayim that exists during these days. How do we achieve this lofty goal?

In Parshas Vayelech Hashem gives us the mitzvah of Hakhel, i.e. once every seven years the entire Jewish people must gather in the Beis Hamikdash to hear the words of the Torah read. The Torah states explicitly that a primary goal of Hakhel is to instill yiras Shomayim in ourselves and our children. How does Hakhel facilitate this?

The true secret of yiras Shomayim can be found in Parshas Yisro immediately following matan Torah (Shemos 20:17). Here, Moshe explained to the Jewish people that Hashem had them go through the overwhelming experience of maamad Har Sinai to instill yiras Shomayim in them. In future generations, this experience would be replicated through the mitzvah of Hakhel.

How so? The Ramban in Parshas Teruma describes the role of the mishkan (and eventually the Beis Hamikdash) as being the physical location wherein the events of matan Torah are perpetuated. The focal point of the mishkan, and later the Beis HaMikdash, was the Kodesh Hakadashim which housed the luchos, a tangible reminder of matan Torah. As such, gathering the entire Jewish people to hear the Torah

read in the Beis Hamikdash is endowed with the ability to have the same affect as standing before Har Sinai[1].

It behooves us during the period of the Yamim Noraim to increase our level of yiras Shomayim. Unfortunately, we no longer have the Beis Hamikdash as a vehicle to assist us, but we still do have the study of Torah. By dedicating ourselves during these days to Torah study we can get a glimpse of the Divine Presence, enhance our yiras Shomayim, and thus properly experience the Yamim Noraim. In the merit of our rededication to yiras Shomayim may we once again experience the Divine Presence shining in the Beis Hamikdash.

[1]Even today's public reading of the Torah is a partial reenactment of maamad Har Sinai. As such, many people follow the custom to stand during krias HaTorah just as the Jewish people stood as they received the Torah at Har Sinai.

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h a a r e t z

Portion of the Week / 'Fear, awe and joy'

By Benjamin Lau

Although we have already moved into the new Jewish calendar year of 5769, this week's Torah reading still ties us to the tail end of 5768, which was a shmita year (a sabbatical year, when the land lies fallow). Moses commands Israel to conduct a special ceremony once every seven years, immediately following the end of the shmita, at the Sukkot festival: "And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing" (Deuteronomy 31:10-12).

The Hakhel (assembly) ceremony was held when the Temple still stood. Moses, a man of vision, sees an Israelite society inhabiting the length and breadth of the Promised Land. The distance of many from the Temple and the seat of justice (the Sanhedrin) will, Moses envisages, create a situation whereby Jews, although tied to the land and their livelihood, will be cut off from the world of the spirit and Torah. The Hakhel ceremony is intended to strengthen the hold on these spiritually distanced Jews during their sojourn in Jerusalem and to burn into their memory an awareness of their cultural identity.

Maimonides discusses the ceremony ("Hilkhos hagigah"): "The public reading and the blessings are in Hebrew. Converts who do not understand Hebrew must prepare their hearts and must listen with fear, awe and joy - as was the case on the day that the Torah was granted to us at Sinai. Even great Talmudic scholars who know the entire Torah must listen very carefully and those who do not understand the readings must listen with their hearts, for the purpose of the readings is to reinforce authentic religious belief. Those present must imagine that they are now being commanded to observe Judaism's laws, that God is talking to them at that moment and that their monarch is a messenger charged with the task of delivering God's words to the nation."

In the seventh century B.C.E., Manasseh ascended the throne of Judah, ruling for 55 years. His reign was characterized by a loss of Jewish identity, the penetration of Assyrian culture and the abandonment of Judaism's laws. His son, Josiah, sought to restore Israel's connection with its authentic culture. He asked his priests to examine the Temple's physical condition, and Hilkiah the high priest made an exciting discovery: "And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.... And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes" (2 Kings 22:8-11).

After generations of spiritual distancing, a Torah scroll was uncovered. According to many scholars, the Bible is describing the discovery of the Book of Deuteronomy in the Temple. Josiah was visibly moved because he understood how far removed he was from the Torah's principles. But his attempt to promote a religious awakening failed; the break with

tradition was too deep, and it was too late to reconnect the people with its spiritual legacy.

Time of soul-searching

This Sabbath is Shabbat Teshuva (Sabbath of Repentance), based on the Haftarah's first verse: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God" (Hosea 14:2). The period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is one of individual soul-searching, although it can include national soul-searching. Many kibbutzim hold a collective soul-searching assembly on the eve of Yom Kippur. I have adopted this custom in my own Jerusalem congregation; each year we meet on Yom Kippur eve for a colloquy where Zionists of every stream engage in an "Israeli soul-searching." Leading intellectuals serve as "high priests," suggesting an appropriate direction. In the Hakhel ceremony, the king is the nation's leader, defining the basic principles that unite the nation, determining the vision and reminding everyone of the road map.

How to mold all the various and feuding factions into a single entity? The late Teddy Kollek, a long-serving mayor of Jerusalem, made it his life's mission. But he chose to focus on pragmatic aspects; in his eyes, creating a large zoo and a huge shopping mall would shatter social barriers. He was proven correct. Jerusalem's Tisch Family Zoological Gardens (popularly known as the Biblical Zoo) is a place where ultra-Orthodox, Arabs and those from the center of the Israeli map can meet; they all have children who need an occasional break. Israelis of all types also flock to the Malkha Mall. Kollek managed to create a common consumer and recreational denominator, but neither the zoo nor the mall can serve as a meeting place that will reinforce national solidarity. We need something on a higher level. We must create a Shabbat that is not based on outings to malls that exploit helpless workers. We must renew the Jewish people's language, which contains all the elements of our national life. We must demand that our schools offer a curriculum with a solid Jewish core that is not merely the sum total of matriculation examination credits.

Yom Kippur can raise us to these loftier levels in Israel. It has the right element of tranquility, the right mood, the right atmosphere of serious-mindedness. May we be privileged to gather together in our own public meeting place on this holy day, and may we draw from it the energies we need to continue our long journey.

Rav Kook List **Rav Kook on the Torah Portion** **The Holy King**

The days from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur are called "Aseret Y'mei Teshuvah," the Ten Days of Repentance. During this period, our relationship with God changes, as reflected in two changes in the daily prayers:

Instead of "the Holy God," we say "the Holy King."

Instead of "the King Who loves kindness and justice," we say, "the King of justice."

What is the significance of these changes?

Divine Rule

God governs the world in a different fashion during the Ten Days of Teshuvah. During the year, His rule is revealed through the attribute of Elokut (Godliness); but during this special time, He rules with the attribute of Malchut (Kingship). What does this mean?

A king judges his subjects according to their current state, deciding who deserves punishment and who deserves reward. In the Divine rule of Malchut, evil is not tolerated.

In the elevated Divine view of Elokut, on the other hand, everything has an ultimate purpose. God's praise, the Sages taught, also comes from the wicked [Shemot Rabbah 7]. It may be beyond our limited understanding, but also evil serves a purpose in the world. Ultimately, the wicked through their free will only bring sorrow upon themselves.

During the rest of the year, God permits evil, so that the wicked will have the opportunity to repair their evil during the Ten Days of Teshuvah. We refer to God during the year as the "Holy God," since even base and wicked actions will lead to holy goals. This form of Divine rule emphasizes God's kindness and forbearance, and our prayers speak of God as "loving justice and kindness."

During the Ten Days of Teshuvah, however, God is revealed as the "Holy King." The time has arrived for the wicked to mend their ways. If they fail to repent, they will be dealt with the attribute of mishpat, exacting judgment. During these ten days we experience God's providence as a King who rejects all evil, and thus refer to Him as "the King of judgment."

[adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I pp. 272-273]

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: RavKookList@gmail.com

Hama'ayan

Edited by Shlomo Katz (torah.org)

Parshas Vayeilech - Time for Teshuvah

5 Tishrei 5769, October 4, 2008

Today's Learning: Bechorot 7:2-3 O.C. 203:4-6 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Gittin 85 Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Nedarim 21

Every year, the first ten days of the month of Tishrei are set aside as the "Aseret Y'mei Teshuvah" / "Ten Days of Repentance." R' Avraham Halevi Horowitz z"l (16th century; father of the Shelah Hakadosh) explains that this period was designated as the time for teshuvah because Rosh Hashanah is the anniversary of [man's] creation. Our Sages teach that G-d knew at the time of creation that mankind could not be perfect and would sin. Therefore, He created the concept of teshuvah even before He created the physical world. However, writes R' Horowitz, it would not have been seemly for Rosh Hashanah itself to be the day of forgiveness; after all, that is the day of judgment. Therefore, Hashem has given us a period after the day of judgment to mitigate the harshness of the judgment through repentance. This is the meaning of the verse (Yeshayah 55:6), "Seek Hashem when He can be found." When "can He be found"? When He created the world!

Therefore, continues R' Horowitz, on each day of the Ten Days of Repentance, one must turn aside somewhat from his mundane affairs - or even better, at night, when he is in any case free from the interference of other people - to reflect on his sins and confess about them. This should be done with crying, tears and heartbreak as if a close relative had died, as we read in Tehilim (119:136), "My eyes shed streams of tears because they did not keep Your Torah." A repentant person should not underestimate the importance of tears, for our Sages have taught that the "Gates of Tears" are never locked. (Emek Berachah p.200)

"Hashem, your G-d -- He will cross before you; He will destroy these nations from before you . . ." (31:3)

In light of this promise, why did Bnei Yisrael carry weapons in their war against the Seven Canaanite Nation? R' Dov Berish Gottlieb z"l (Sieniawa, Poland; died 1801) explains:

Sometimes there is a state of "hester panim" (literally, "concealing of the face") in which, because of a sin, man is abandoned to the forces of nature and chance. Therefore, one who goes to battle without weapons is endangering his life and is called a fool. We find similarly that Yaakov Avinu was afraid lest a sin cause him to fall into the hands of Esav (see Rashi to Bereishit 32:10). Accordingly, one must guard himself against accidental injury lest at that moment G-d is hiding from him because of some sin. Even the smallest sin can cause Hashem to hide Himself and, if at the moment that a person is distant from G-d, some misfortune occurs, a person can be in danger. The remedy is that in every time of trouble, a person should repent to remove the hester panim from himself. (Quoted in Shomer Ha'pardes: Yesodei HaTorah V'ikarei Ha'dat p.113)

"Hashem spoke to Moshe, 'Behold your days are drawing near to die.'" (31:14)

When R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin z"l (died 1898) was rabbi of Shklov, Lithuania, he was oppressed terribly by certain members of his community. Once, as he finished delivering his daily Talmud lecture, two strangers entered. R' Yehoshua Leib greeted them and asked, "What can I do for you?"

"We wish to hear words of Torah from you," they answered.

R' Yehoshua Leib directed the visitors to take the midrash Yalkut Shimoni from the bookshelf and to choose a paragraph that they wished him to explain. They did so and chose the following midrash:

"Behold, a tzaddik is paid on this earth" (Mishlei 11:31) - this is Moshe, about whom it is said, "Behold your days are drawing near to die."
"Despite the wicked one and the sinner" (Mishlei, ibid.) - this is Korach and his followers.

"What is the connection between the quoted verse in Mishlei, the verse from our parashah, and Korach?" the visitors wanted to know.

R' Yehoshua Leib explained as follows: There are two ways that a person's time can come. Some complete their life's work while still young and move on to the next world, while other people die of old age without having completed their missions. In Moshe's case, the Torah testifies (Devarim 34:7), "His eye had not dimmed and his vigor had not diminished." Clearly then, Moshe did not die of old age; rather, his mission was complete - the time during which he was meant to lead the Jewish people had ended.

But Moshe could have complained, "I was cheated out of those days when Korach and his followers rebelled against me and I was not recognized as leader!" This is the message of the midrash: The tzaddik is paid his full time on earth. If Moshe's time to die was drawing near, it is "despite the wicked one and the sinner." Moshe's suffering at the hands of Korach was already taken into account.

R' Yehoshua Leib concluded: Anyone who wants to inflict suffering on a tzaddik should know this! Nothing that the wicked do has any impact on the tzaddik in the end. In Hashem's "books," it is all accounted for. (Quoted in Yalkut Lekach Tov p.186)

The midrash lists ten verses that refer to Moshe's death, and Chazal say that there were ten events that contributed to the decree that Moshe would not enter Eretz Yisrael. However, the decree was not sealed until Hashem saw that Moshe was putting off praying for a reprieve. Although Moshe did pray 515 prayers that he be allowed to enter the Land, he waited too long.

The implication is, says R' Eliyahu Lopian z"l, that if Moshe had prayed immediately, Hashem would have relented. We should learn from this that we should not put off praying when a need arises. We should pray immediately. (Lev Eliyahu Vol I, Shevevei Ohr No. 175)

"But, conceal I will have concealed My face on that day because of all the evil that [Yisrael] did, for it had turned to gods of others." (31:18)

R' Nachman of Breslov z"l (1772-1810) teaches: There are two levels of hester panim. When G-d merely hides Himself, it is difficult to find Him, but it is possible if one looks hard enough. And, since one knows that G-d is hidden, one can motivate himself to seek Him.

Sometimes, however, G-d conceals the fact that He is concealed. [In this case, we do not realize that He is hiding and that He has abandoned.] This is a greater tragedy because, when we don't realize that He is concealed, we are not motivated to search for Him. (Likutei Moharan I 56:3)

"So now, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to Bnei Yisrael . . ." (31:19)

R' David Hakochavi z"l (Provence; 13-14th centuries) writes: The received tradition teaches that this verse commands each person to write a Sefer Torah for himself. The purpose of this mitzvah is clear - the Torah is the necessary tool in order for a person to perfect himself, and, surely, no craftsman would attempt to practice his craft without his tools.

Chazal state that each person must write his own Sefer Torah, even if he inherited one from his father. The reason, explains R' Hakochavi, is that it is human nature to value more that which one has made by himself. (Sefer Ha'battim: Migdal David, Sefer Mitzvah No. 16)

Is the Shemittah Over?

With the arrival of Rosh Hashanah this past Monday evening, the shemittah year ended. However, as discussed below, the laws of shemittah will continue to affect the diets of Jews in Eretz Yisrael for several more months.

First, as explained in prior issues, produce of the seventh year is subject to kedushat shevi'it / sanctity of the seventh year. Such produce may be eaten by humans or used for certain other limited purposes. It may not be sold, except in limited quantities, and the money obtained for its sale takes on kedushat shevi'it as well. Any produce or money that was subject to the restrictions of kedushat shevi'it during the seventh year remains subject to kedushat shevi'it after the seventh year and the same limitations on its use apply.

Second, each species of produce of the shemittah year is subject to biur (literally, "destruction") when that species is no longer available in the wild. (This mitzvah does not actually involve destroying the produce, but rather, declaring it hefker / ownerless, just as one may do at "biur chametz" according to the letter of the law.) For most common species, the time for biur occurs in the year after shemittah, not during the shemittah itself. For some species, the time for biur is as late as next summer.

Third, if one plowed his field or fertilized it during the seventh year so that it will be fit for planting in the post-shemittah year, he is penalized may not plant the field in the post-shemittah year. One may not rent it from him in order to plant it; rather it must lie fallow. However, if he died, his son may plant it. In contrast, if one removed the thorns from his field in the seventh year to prepare it for the post-shemittah year, or he removed stones from it, even though one is not allowed to do this, he is not penalized and he may plant it in the post-shemittah year. The difference between the two cases is that the former refers to a person who performed actual farm work - therefore he is penalized - while the latter did not do farm work, per se.

Finally, as discussed previously, our Sages instituted a rabbinic prohibition on eating certain produce - called "sefichin" - that grew in the wild during the shemittah year. This was done to discourage farmers from planting secretly and claiming the produce had grown on its own. Sefichin remain prohibited until enough time has passed in the post-shemittah year for that species to have grown. If one is in doubt whether the produce before him is sefichin of the seventh year or is new growth of the post-shemittah year, then he may be lenient after Chanukah but must be stringent before Chanukah. (Sources: Rambam; Sefer Ha'shemittah; Shemittah 5768: A Practical Guide)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics (le'hagdil Torah u'leha'adirah), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at Torah.org start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the Hamaayan page.

Meaningful Goals Create a Meaningful Life

by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin (aish.com)

How to accomplish a lot in life.

The most accomplished people in the world are experts at setting and reaching goals. Learn from them. All great people are great because they have made meaningful goals and took action to reach those goals. All joyful great people are among the happiest people in the world because they enjoy all that they are doing to achieve their meaningful goals.

Two people might be busy for the same amount of time. But the person who knows what he wants to accomplish will accomplish more within that time. Clarity of goals gives you added incentive and motivation.

When you know your priorities in life, you focus your attention on those priorities. This leads to more focused words and actions. When you know your target, you can improve your aim. When you know where you want to go, you can reach your destination. And when you enjoy the journey, you will have added energy to do what it takes to get there.

The ability to set a goal and follow through is one of the most essential skills that a person can have. Having a strong desire to reach a goal is a main factor in reaching it.

People tend to accomplish more when they write down their goals. This is especially important when they have a number of meaningful goals.

If you knew that you could reach whatever goals you wrote down, what goals would you add to your list?

If you haven't written a list of goals yet, it's a good idea to stop reading and write down a goal. Choose a goal that would make you feel wonderful if you reached it. But don't just write down goals just for the sake of having a list of goals. You must also have a strong desire to reach those goals, to avoid being distracted from achieving them. For a start, you can even write down a small goal that is easy to accomplish. Make a goal to call someone who would appreciate hearing from you, and then call them up. Make a goal to write to someone who would appreciate receiving a letter, and then write that letter. Another possible goal is to go to a store and buy something that you need.

Thinking of these small actions as goals and then actually doing them adds to your ongoing list of goals that you have reached!

It's important to be clear about the goal of your goals. Why do you want the goals that you want? In what other ways can you reach the goals of your goals?

When you have an intense will and desire to reach a goal, you will be more likely to reach it. You will find the right people to help you. You will gain the knowledge and skills that you need. You will find a teacher, mentor, or coach to help you.

Believe in your ability to make and reach goals. How do you gain this belief? Through life experience. Remember a time that you managed to accomplish something you had thought was impossible. Even if you needed to exert a lot of effort, that experience is a lifetime resource. It is a clear proof that you can do something if you are determined to do it. After setting a goal, plan how to reach that goal. Some people make goals and sincerely wish to achieve those goals, but because they didn't make a plan, they didn't take the steps necessary to reach their goals.

Be aware of possible obstacles that could prevent you from reaching your goals. Plan what to do to get past the obstacles. If you tried a plan that didn't work, then make another plan.

If that doesn't work out, make another plan until you are successful. Be open to the feedback you receive from every plan that doesn't work. This experience will give you more wisdom and knowledge. With perseverance, you will end up accomplishing and achieving many worthwhile things throughout your life.

Which of your goals will add to the happiness and joy in your life and the lives of others? Which goals will add to your sense of meaning and fulfillment?

Someone who accomplished a lot in his life told me the following story:

I used to feel a tremendous sense of pressure to accomplish major things. I was very aware of the accomplishments of people I respected and admired, and I kept thinking that I hadn't accomplished enough. I spoke to someone who was helpful in assisting people to make and reach life goals.

"It's highly commendable that you have a strong drive to accomplish," he said to me. "But are you clear about what you would need to accomplish in order to stop being so hard on yourself?"

"Not exactly. But I know that what I have already accomplished isn't significant enough. I keep telling myself that if I don't accomplish more, I will consider my life a failure," I confessed.

He suggested that I create spirit-centered goals. He clarified, "It takes time until you reach material goals. And many goals need other people's help in order to reach them. When it comes to spiritual goals, the very first day that you are clear about your goals and you write them down, you will experience a shift in consciousness.

"When you actively pursue your spiritual goals, you can transform your feelings of failure to a feeling of value. You stop thinking of yourself as a finite being who is only on the planet for a short while, with a life that is full of frustrations and disappointments. Your spiritual self is connected with the Creator. You have a sense of infinite and eternal."

After the first week of greater spiritual clarity, I found that my entire life was so much more meaningful. Before, I was never really satisfied with any accomplishment. Now I began to experience a deep sense of serenity.

I realize that there is always so much more to do. But I live in the present moment. I have long-term goals, but I experience life moment by moment. My added awareness of the Creator and His love for me has given me a new lease on life.

Excerpted from Rabbi Pliskin's new book **TAKING ACTION** (Artscroll). Laziness and procrastination prevent a person from accomplishing and reaching meaningful goals. "Zrizus" - alacrity -- is the antidote that will enable you to increase your joyful willpower. This book is a must for anyone who wants to utilize more of his potential.

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TALMUDIGEST :: Gittin 86 - 90

For the week ending 4 October 2008 / 5 Tishri 5769

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK - Gittin 86a

What is the status of a Jewish child born out of wedlock? Contrary to the gentile definition of such a child as a bastard, the Torah does not consider such a child a mamzer unless its parents were forbidden in relations punishable by death or extirpation.

Nevertheless, we do find some consideration for avoiding suspicion of fathering a child out of wedlock.

Should a man write a get to his wife but delay delivering it to her for an extended period of time, he can no longer make use of this "old get" for the purpose of divorce. This ruling of Beit Hillel in our mishna is based on the fear that the wife will conceive a child from her husband during the interim and it will then appear to people that this took place when they were no longer married as mistakenly indicated by the date of the get.

Rashi explains that despite the fact that the child born out of wedlock is not a mamzer and has no halachic limitations on whom he can marry, such status is nevertheless considered as being flawed because it is the product of a forbidden premarital relationship.

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

"Whoever divorces his first wife even the altar sheds tears for him."

Rabbi Elazar - Gittin 90b

**Please address all comments and requests to
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