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To: parsha@groups.io
From: Chaim Shulman
<cshulman@gmail.com>

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>

to: ravfrand@torah.org

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subject: Rav Frand - Hashem's Hineni: A Reward

Parshas Beshalach

Hashem's Hineni: A Reward for Avraham's Heneini

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1367 An Interesting Asher Yatzar Shaila. Good Shabbos!

Hashem's Hineni: A Reward for Avraham's Heneini

The Medrash Rabba in this week's parsha (25:5) links the Divine promise of "Hinu (Behold) I will cause it to rain upon you bread from Heaven..." (Shemos 16:4) to a pasuk in Koheles (11:1) that says "Cast your bread upon the waters, for in the multitude of days you will find it." Shlomo Hamelech's metaphor teaches that we should always act now even if we do not see immediate results or benefit, because in the distant future, the value may yet be proven.

What is the connection between these two pesukim? The Medrash refers to the time when the Ribono shel Olam summoned Avraham Avinu to bring his son as an olah offering and Avraham responded 'Heneini' (Here I am!) (22:1). The Ribono shel Olam responded "Behold, with this same expression, I will repay reward to your descendants." Just as Avraham said "Heneini," so too the Ribono shel Olam announced the imminent arrival of the man with the word Hinu. (The two words are pronounced slightly differently, but they are the same Hebrew letters.)

This is the type of Medrash that, at first glance, seems like a type of "gezeirah shavah" (linking two pesukim using matching words). Obviously, the Medrash must have a deeper meaning. There must be some kind of connection between the Heneini of Avraham Avinu and the Hinu mamtir lachem lechem min hashamayim that the Ribono shel Olam said by the man.

I heard an interesting explanation of this Medrash from my son, Yakov, who heard it from Rav Avrohom Buxbaum. There is, in fact, a deep connection between these words Hinu and Heneini: When the Ribono shel Olam came to Avraham Avinu and said "Offer him there as an olah," Avraham Avinu could have protested: "I don't get this. You promised me a son. I had to wait a hundred years for him. You told me that I would have descendants from Yitzchak. You told me all of this. And now You tell me something that

contradicts all that You have told me in the past. You are now telling me to kill my son. Ribono shel Olam, what on earth do You want from me?" That is what Avraham Avinu could have said. And yet, what did he say? "Heneini." I have no questions. There was not a minute of hesitation. There was not a minute of doubt.

The Ribono shel Olam says: I am going to pay you back for that. Klal Yisrael was in the desert and they had just experienced Yetzias Mitzrayim and Krias Yam Suf. Suddenly, they wake up one day and they say: "We are hungry. We need food. We need bread." The Ribono shel Olam could have asked: Rabosai, are you forgetting? Are you forgetting what I did for you in Mitzraim? Are you forgetting the ten plagues? Are you forgetting Krias Yam Suf? And you have the audacity and the chutzpah to complain to Me and say "You took us out to let us die in the wilderness!!!!"

However, I didn't say anything, even though I would have been justified to say "You are a bunch of ingrates." Do you know why I am silent? Do you know where I 'learned that?' I learned that from Avraham Avinu. When I called him and asked him to sacrifice his son, he responded with 'Heneini.' So too, I will pay reward to his children with the exact same expression. That very word symbolizes "no questions asked, no complaints registered." I respond to his descendants the same way. I will not hold their chutzpah against them.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
Edited by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas B'Shalach is provided below: # 041 – Israel's Wars: 1948-1973, A Halachic Perspective # 084 – The Mitzvah of Krias HaTorah # 132 – Standing for Krias Hatorah # 179 – Female Vocalists: The Problem of Kol Isha # 225 – Music in Halacha # 269 – Lechem Mishnah # 315 – The Prohibition of Living in Egypt # 359 – Making Ice On Shabbos # 403 – Three Slices of Pizza-Must You Bench? # 447 – Hidur Mitzvah # 491 – The Three Seudos of Shabbos # 535 – Using P'sukim for Nigunim? # 579 – Being Motzi Others in Lechem Mishnah and Other Brachos # 623 – Kiddush or Netilas Yadayim – Which Comes First? # 667 – The Supernatural and the "Mun" dana # 711 – Shlishi or Shishi? and Other Aliyah Issues # 755 – Techum Shabbos: Wearing Your Hat to the Hospital # 799 – Kibud Av – Can a Father Be Mochel? # 843 – Shalosh Seudos in the Morning? # 887 – Rejoicing At The Death of Reshoinom -Recommended or Not? # 931 – K'rias Hatorah – Must You Listen? # 974 – Bracha of Ga'al Yisroel Before Shemoneh Esrai-Silent or Out loud? #1018 – Bracha Achrona: How Soon Must You Say It? #1062 – Shalosh Seudos: Where and With What? #1105 – The Shabbos Seuda On A No-Carb Diet #1148 – Kol Isha – Listening To A Female Vocalist on the Radio #1191 – Was Devorah Really a Dayan? How Did She Learn That Much Torah? #1235 – Are women obligated in Lechem Mishneh? #1279 – Parshas Zachor for Women After Davening & Other Krias HaTorah Issues #1323 – Lechem Mishnah: What Exactly Is the Mitzvah? Are Women Obligated? Must you Make Your Own Bracha on Your Slice? #1367 – An Interesting Asher Yatzar Shaila #1411 – Hiring a Snow Plow to Remove Your Snow-Even on Shabbos? #1455 – Should You Correct The Baal Koreh If He Makes a Mistake? #1499 – Feeding the Birds on Shabbos Shira: Good Idea or Asur? #1542 – Why We Cover the Challot at the Shabbos Meal? #1585 – Shopping for Shabbos – On Thursday or Friday? #1623 – Making Ice on Shabbos A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Echiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511, Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail [tapes@yadyechiel.org](http://yadyechiel.org) or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2023 by Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org> (410) 602-1350

Tidbits for Parshas Beshalach in memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz zt"l **Ira Zlotowitz** <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

Parshas Beshalach • January 31st • 13 Shevat 5786

Tu BiShvat, the 15th day of the month of Shevat (Tu is an acronym for tes-vav, the numerical equivalent of 15), is this Monday, February 2nd. Tu BiShvat marks the New Year for trees. In honor of this day, many have the custom to eat fruits from trees, with some specifically eating fruit of the shivas haminim or a "new fruit" that carries the requirement to recite a beracha of shehecheyanu. Reciting a shehecheyanu on fruits that are available year round may be questionable; consult your Rav. In addition, one should be cognizant of the issues of tola'im (insect) infestation in certain fruits.

Other minhagim include: some make a "seder" of sorts and eat fifteen different types of fruits, others eat esrog products on Tu BiShvat (Kaf Hachaim), and even daven for a beautiful esrog for the upcoming Succos (the Ben Ish Chai composed a special tefillah for this).

Tachanun is omitted on Tu BiShvat, as well as at minchah on Sunday, February 1st, the day prior.

Shabbos Parshas Beshalach is often referred to as Shabbos Shirah, as the Parashah contains the Shiras HaYam (Az Yashir, etc.). Many read the pesukim of the Shirah that contain Hashem's name with a special tune, and some have the custom to stand during this leining. In some congregations, the Shiras HaYam at the end of Pesukei d'Zimra is read aloud verse by verse.

There is a minhag to put out food for birds (according to many Poskim this may not be done on Shabbos itself). One reason for this is based on a tradition that birds sang Shiras HaYam along with B'nei Yisrael. Another explanation is that the birds consumed the mahn that Dasan and Aviram left to be found on Shabbos in their attempt to embarrass Moshe.

This week, the week of Parashas Beshalach, is the fourth week of Shova Vim. The final opportunity for Kiddush Levana is early Monday morning, February 2nd at 2:07 AM EST.

Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Menachos 20 • Yerushalmi: Succah 43 •

Mishnah Yomis: Temurah 2:1-2 • Oraysa (coming week): Yevamos 25b-27b • Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: 55:2-56:5

Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rebbe to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well!

Tu Bishvat is on Monday, February 2nd.

Shabbos Parashas Shekalim is in two weeks, Shabbos Parashas Mishpatim, February 14th, and is Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh Adar as well.

Taanis Esther is on Monday, March 2nd.

Purim is on Tuesday, March 3rd.

BESHALACH: Hashem leads the B'nei Yisrael in a circuitous route from Egypt • Moshe retrieves Yosef's remains for transport from Egypt • B'nei Yisrael are led by a cloud-pillar by day and a fire-pillar by night • The Egyptians pursue B'nei Yisrael • B'nei Yisrael cry out; Moshe reassures them of their impending salvation • A malach and a pillar of clouds stand between them and the Egyptians • Kieras Yam Suf (Splitting of the Sea) • The waters return and drown the Mitzrim • Shiras HaYam • Miriam's Shirah • B'nei Yisrael cannot find drinking water • Moshe sweetens Marah's bitter waters with a bitter(!) branch • B'nei Yisrael complain about the lack of food • The mahn • Mahn left over until the morning goes bad • Double mahn portion on Fridays • Some seek mahn on Shabbos and find nothing • Prohibition of leaving the techum on Shabbos • A portion of the mahn is put aside as a testimony for all generations • The people complain about not having water • Moshe strikes the rock; water pours out • Amalek attacks • Moshe commands Yehoshua to fight Amalek and Moshe davens •

Declaration of war against Amalek is commanded for all generations

Haftarah: The Parashah discusses the miraculous salvation of Kieras Yam Suf and the downfall of the wicked Pharaoh. This led to the song of praise and thanks to Hashem of "Az Yashir Moshe". The haftarah is Shiras Devorah, a song of praise to Hashem for the miraculous victory over the wicked Sisra. (Shoftim 4:4-5:31)

Parashas Beshalach: 116 Pesukim • 1 Prohibition

1) Do not leave the techum on Shabbos. Midoraysa, one may not travel beyond 12 mil (approx. 8 miles) outside his city. However, miderabanan, the techum is reduced to just 2000 amos (approx. $\frac{2}{3}$ of a mile). By making an Eruv Techumin, one can extend this boundary to one direction by an additional 2000 amos.

"אֵין קָלַי הָהָ" "This is my G-d and I will exalt Him" (Shemos 15:2)

Rashi states that during Kieras Yam Suf there was a remarkable revelation of Hashem, and every Jew was able to sense His presence, point a finger and say "this is my G-d." Rashi continues that at this moment even a simple maid servant saw what Yechezkel Hanavi, one of the greatest nevi'im, did not merit to witness in his spiritual revelation of the Maaseh Merkava. One may question that the revelation at the Maaseh Merkava was an indescribable event in a spiritual realm. How can this be compared to the physical phenomenon of the Splitting of the Sea?

Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l (Daas Torah) explains that miracles do not merely facilitate salvation, but are a revelation of Hashem in this world. The revelation to Yechezkel of the Maaseh HaMerkava was an actual revelation of Hashem's Presence and His spiritual Omnipresence. Nevertheless, the revelation at the splitting of the sea was so strong that Hashem's presence was just as obvious.

It is perhaps for this reason that during Kieras Hatorah of the Shiras HaYam, only the verses containing the name of Hashem are sung with a special niggun, as the recognition of Hashem is the ultimate purpose of this event.

Often, stories and instances of hashgacha pratis (divine providence) engender feelings of amazement and awe. These instances should be recognized as a revelation of Hashem giving us a glimpse of His Presence in our lives, to further enhance our emunah and bitachon.

Please reach out to us with any thoughts or comments at: klalgovoah.org
Ira Zlotowitz - Founder | iraz@gparency.com | 917.597.2197 Ahron Dicker - Editor | adicker@klalgovoah.org | 732.581.5830

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Our mailing address is: Klal Govoah 481 Oak Glen Road Howell, NJ 07731

from: Team **TorahAnytime** <info@torahanytime.com>

date: Jan 29, 2026, 7:46 PM

Rabbi Yoel Gold

Cornered at the Fish Grill

I was once having lunch at the Fish Grill, sitting at that corner table by the bench in the back. I was in the middle of my salmon filet, coleslaw, rice, fully settled, when suddenly, a man walks in, followed by his entire family. He looks at me and says, "Rabbi Gold?" "Yes," I respond. "I'd like this table." I said, half-smiling, "That's nice—I'd also like this table." But there was urgency in his voice. Something about the tone made me pause. I looked at him, then at his family behind him, thinking perhaps someone needed to sit urgently.

Again, he said, "I really need this table." Fork in hand, mid-bite, I hesitated for a moment, but then I said, "Okay," and I slid down the bench to another seat.

He sat down, but not where I expected. He positioned himself facing the corner, directly toward the wall. No view or eye contact. Just the wall. I continued eating, but my mind was racing. "What just happened?" I had mixed emotions. Curiosity, confusion, a bit of irritation. The whole thing felt strange. And then I saw it. He opened his backpack and carefully took out an oxygen apparatus. He plugged it in and began taking measured breaths. In that instant, everything shifted. Immediately, I felt a wave of regret and compassion. He needed that table—not for comfort, not for preference—but for dignity. He wanted privacy. He didn't want people staring. After a minute or two, once he

from: Team **TorahAnytime** <info@torahanytime.com>

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Rabbi Asher Weiss

The Supporters of Torah

When the Bnei Yisrael finally found water in the desert, it was bitter. This was not a minor inconvenience, however. They were exhausted, dehydrated, and desperate. Water meant survival, and yet, the water was undrinkable. Hashem instructed Moshe to cast a piece of wood into the water, and miraculously, the water became sweet.

The Chasam Sofer, in his Derashos, explains this episode. Water represents Torah, as Chazal teach repeatedly, "Ein mayim ela Torah—Water is a reference to Torah" (Bava Kamma 17a). Torah is the spiritual sustenance of the Jewish people. But what is the eitz, the wood? An eitz represents those who uphold Torah, the machzikei Torah. As the Pasuk says, "Eitz chayim hilamachazikim bah—Torah is a tree of life to those who support it" (Mishlei 3:18).

The Chasam Sofer explains that Hashem was showing Moshe Rabbeinu a future reality. There will come a time when there is Torah learning, but there is a lack of eitz. There will be Torah scholars, but insufficient supporters. But Torah without those who uphold it will be bitter. Torah without a support system cannot fully sustain Klal Yisrael.

And here is the point. Hashem did not explicitly instruct Moshe what to do with the wood. The Pasuk says, "Vayoreihu Hashem eitz—Hashem showed him the wood," and Moshe understood on his own to cast it into the water. How did Moshe know?

To support Torah, one must first appreciate Torah. To appreciate Torah, one must love Torah. And to love Torah, one must learn Torah.

The true Zevulun is also a Yissachar. The genuine supporter of Torah is someone who learns himself, at least to the extent that he understands the

value, beauty, and centrality of Torah in Jewish life. If a person does not learn, does not taste Torah, does not experience its depth and sweetness, how can he truly understand its importance? How can he know what he is supporting?

In my experience, the individuals who most substantially support Torah, both personally and communally, are those who learn themselves. I know many successful businesspeople and professionals who dedicate hours every day to Torah learning. Many of them learn *b'iyun*. Many review the *Daf* once, twice, even three times a day. This level of commitment is something extraordinary and admirable.

Moshe Rabbeinu understood that the wood must be placed into the water. Supporters of Torah cannot remain external. *Zevulun* must enter the *beis midrash*. Support must come from connection, from learning, from understanding.

Only one who knows Torah can truly sustain Torah. This is why the first event the Torah records after *Shiras HaYam* is this episode. Before anything else, the Torah teaches us a foundational truth: *Klal Yisrael* cannot go three days without Torah. In the merit of Torah learning, may we be *zocheh* to *beracha* in our days, to Heavenly assistance, to consolation and to redemption.

caught his breath, he turned toward me and said quietly, “Thank you so much. I’m sorry if I came across aggressive.”

My heart melted.

In a single moment, judgment turned into understanding and suspicion into empathy. A story I had written in my head was completely rewritten by reality. That is *dan l’kaf zechus*, giving the benefit of the doubt. It took all of two minutes.

We never know what another person is carrying. What looks like rudeness may be desperation. What feels like entitlement may be vulnerability.

Sometimes, all it takes is a pause, and a little humility, to realize how wrong our first assumptions can be. And just like that, the judgment dissolves.

from: YUTorah <yutorah@comms.yu.edu>

date: Jan 29, 2026, 5:19 PM

Reason Alone Falls Short

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

When the Gemara in *Kiddushin* reflects on the value of honoring parents, it presents it not as a narrow religious demand but as a foundational moral duty. *Kibbutz av va’eil* cultivates gratitude, disciplines the ego, and lays the groundwork for a value-driven society, built in layers and carried across generations.

To underscore its universal reach, the Gemara turns to a non-Jew who distinguished himself in honoring his parents. By stepping beyond the Jewish world for its example, Chazal signal that this mitzvah speaks a moral language shared by all people, a responsibility that sustains human relationships and social trust.

The name of this particular non-Jew was Dama, and he lived in Ashkelon. He owned rare and precious gemstones needed for the priestly garments in the Temple. At one point, Temple officials came to purchase these stones. The gems were locked in a chest, and the key lay beneath Dama’s sleeping father. Out of respect for his father’s rest, Dama refused to wake him to retrieve the key, even though doing so meant forfeiting a large profit. This episode captures the depth of Dama’s commitment to honoring his father. The story continues. The following year, a *parah adumah* was born into Dama’s herd—an animal that could command an even greater price than the gemstones from the year before. When the Temple officials returned, Dama said: I know that I could demand an enormous sum for this *parah adumah*. Instead, I ask only to be paid the money I lost last year when I honored my father and did not wake him.

The Gemara does not address the obvious question: why was Dama unwilling to profit from the *parah adumah*, yet willing to be compensated for the loss he absorbed the previous year when he honored his father? My Rebbe, Rav Yehuda Amital, explained that Dama’s response reflects a broader moral logic. Dama was a religious and moral person, but he did not

feel comfortable asking money for the *parah adumah*. The ceremony of the *parah adumah* made no rational sense to him, and his moral integrity did not allow him to profit from a ritual he could not honestly justify.

Honoring parents, by contrast, is entirely logical. No society can endure without strong families, and *kibbutz av va’eil* nurtures core moral traits—gratitude, restraint, and the ability to look beyond oneself.

As a man of integrity, Dama felt comfortable asking to be repaid for money he had forfeited while honoring his father. He was not comfortable demanding a higher sum for a ceremony he did not understand.

Judaism, on the other hand, is a blend of commandments—some we understand, and others whose logic remains beyond us. For this reason, before our arrival at Har Sinai, Hashem oriented us to both dimensions of religious life at Marah. He gave three formative mitzvot to prepare us for a life of command. Two were intelligible: *Shabbat*, and the establishment of a judicial system to enforce law and order. Alongside them, He introduced the ceremony of the *parah adumah*. The Mishkan had not yet been assembled, and the mitzvah itself could not yet be performed. Even so, the study of its laws impressed upon us that some Divine commands are not meant to cohere with human logic.

Living With the Illogical

These twin modes are essential to a robust and healthy religious life. Mitzvoth must speak to the human mind and register as coherent, constructive, and aligned with human welfare and growth. We believe that Hashem wills our good. Recognizing the wisdom embedded in many mitzvot allows religious observance to be experienced not as a burden, but as a force that elevates and sustains human life. Religion, however, is also transcendent—a leap into a higher realm and an encounter with the Divine Other. It does not operate solely within the frequency of human logic or comprehension. It asks for submission to a higher Being and a higher wisdom. The mitzvot we cannot understand remind us that religion cannot be reduced to human reasoning or human experience. When we attempt to do so, we rob religion of its transcendence and flatten what is meant to be an encounter with something greater than ourselves.

This second dimension of religion is especially vital in the modern context, shaped by the rise of individualism and a deep suspicion of authority. The modern world has positioned the individual mind as the seat of conscience and truth, insisting that what cannot be fully understood or proven cannot be true—and certainly cannot be binding.

That assumption threatens religious belief at its core. Faith is a leap—into a realm of Divine wisdom that lies beyond human reach. Performing mitzvot that do not make sense to us reminds us that there is truth our minds cannot decipher. There is reason we may never discover, but Divine choice is not random. If Hashem commanded it, it must be beneficial; if He forbade it, it must be detrimental.

Why Judaism Endured

Learning to balance the logical and the illogical was also central to Judaism’s survival through the tortured history of the past two thousand years. Much of Jewish life made sense from within. Our religious lifestyle ensured family orientation, personal discipline, restraint, and strong communal structures—conditions necessary for human flourishing. Judaism and *halacha* functioned as a framework for welfare, community, and values, sustaining ethical individuals and stable societies. Within the inner world of both the individual and the community, Hashem’s will felt intelligible and constructive.

The broader historical picture, however, rarely made sense. Loyalty to a covenant that brought suffering rather than security could not be justified by experience or outcomes. History more often tested that loyalty than rewarded it. Rational calculation alone would not have sustained exile; logic by itself would have pointed toward assimilation and relief. Yet Jewish life trained us to remain bound to the covenant even when it no longer appeared rational or advantageous. That balance—holding fast to reason while living beyond it—allowed us to preserve meaning and continuity amid historical forces that were often hostile.

Faith in This War

The past two and a half years have also demanded that we blend rational

understanding with the ability to persist even when events do not make sense. Much of this war is intelligible to us. Hashem has helped us defeat, and significantly set back, our enemies on multiple fronts, and the strength of our people has grown. These gains are visible and understandable, and we are grateful to Hashem for enabling them.

Yet our vicious enemies remain bent upon our destruction, and this just war has ignited rabid, often inexplicable antisemitism across many sectors. Hatred has surfaced that defies evidence and moral clarity. We confront forces that cannot be reasoned with or morally decoded, and faith can no longer rely on understanding alone. Still, there is much about our current struggle that we do understand.

Judaism has prepared us for precisely this condition: to act with clarity where events make sense, and to remain faithful where they do not—to follow Divine commands that speak to human reason, and to remain loyal even when they exceed it. That balance has shaped our religious life, sustained us through exile, and now continues to steady us as we move through history.

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

date: Jan 29, 2026, 11:16 AM

subject: **To be a Leader of the Jewish People**

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZT"ל

That day, the Lord saved the Israelites from the Egyptians. And when the Israelites... witnessed the wondrous power the Lord had unleashed against the Egyptians, the people were in awe of the Lord, and they believed in Him, and in Moshe, His servant.

And then Moshe and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord...

Exodus 14:30-15:1 The Song at the Sea was one of the great epiphanies of history. The Sages said that even the humblest of Jews saw at that moment what even the greatest of prophets was not privileged to see. For the first time they broke into collective song – Az Yashir - a song we recite every day.

There is a fascinating discussion among the Sages as to how exactly they sang. On this, there were four opinions. Three appear in the tractate of Sotah: Rabbi Akiva expounded: When the Israelites came up from the Red Sea, they wanted to sing a song. How did they sing it? Like an adult who reads the Hallel and they respond after him with the leading word. Moses said, “I will sing to the Lord,” and they responded, “I will sing to the Lord.” Moses said, “For He has triumphed gloriously,” and they responded, “I will sing to the Lord.”

Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Jose the Galilean, said: It was like a child who reads the Hallel and they repeat after him all that he says. Moses said, “I will sing to the Lord,” and they responded, “I will sing to the Lord.” Moses said, “For He has triumphed gloriously,” and they responded, “For He has triumphed gloriously.”

Rabbi Nehemiah said: It was like a schoolteacher who recites the Shema in the synagogue. He begins first and they follow along with him.

Sotah 30b According to Rabbi Akiva, Moses sang the song phrase by phrase, and after each phrase the people responded, I will sing to the Lord – their way, as it were, of saying Amen to each line. According to R. Eliezer son of R. Jose the Galilean, Moses recited the song phrase by phrase, and they repeated each phrase after he had said it. According to Rabbi Nehemiah, Moses and the people sang the whole song together. Rashi explains that all the people were seized by Divine inspiration and miraculously, the same words came into their minds at the same time.

There is a fourth view, found in the Mechilta:

Eliezer ben Taddai said, Moses began and the Israelites repeated what he had said and then completed the verse. Moses began by saying, “I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously,” and the Israelites repeated what he had said, and then completed the verse with him, saying, “I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and its rider He hurled into the sea.” Moses began saying, “The Lord is my strength and my song,” and the Israelites repeated and then completed the verse with him, saying, “The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation.” Moses began saying, “The Lord is a warrior,” and the Israelites repeated and then

completed the verse with him, saying, “The Lord is a warrior, Lord is His name.”

Mechilta Beshallach Parsha 1 Technically, as the Talmud explains, the Sages are debating the implication of the (apparently) superfluous words vayomru lemor, “they said, saying”, which they understood to mean “repeating”. What did the Israelites repeat? For Rabbi Akiva it was the first words of the song only, which they repeated as a litany. For Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Jose the Galilean, they repeated the whole song, phrase by phrase. For R. Nehemiah they recited the entire song in unison. For Rabbi Eliezer ben Taddai they repeated the opening phrase of each line, but then completed the whole verse without Moses having to teach it to them. Read thus, we have before us a localised debate on the meaning of a biblical verse.

There is, however, a deeper issue at stake. To understand this, we must look at another Talmudic passage, on the face of it unrelated to the passage in Sotah. It appears in the tractate of Kiddushin, and poses a fascinating question. There are various people we are commanded to honour: a parent, a teacher (i.e. a rabbi), the nasi, (religious head of the Jewish community), and a king. May any of these four types renounce the honour that is their due? Rabbi Isaac ben Shila said in the name of Rabbi Mattena, in the name of Rabbi Hisda: If a father renounces the honour due to him, it is renounced, but if a rabbi renounces the honour due to him it is not renounced. Rabbi Joseph ruled: Even if a rabbi renounces his honour, it is renounced. . . Rabbi Ashi said: Even on the view that a rabbi may renounce his honour, if a nasi renounces his honour, the renunciation is invalid. . . Rather, it was stated thus: Even on the view that a nasi may renounce his honour, yet a king may not renounce his honour, as it is said, “You shall surely set a king over you,” meaning, his authority should be over you.

Kiddushin 32a-b Each of these people exercises a leadership role: father to son, teacher to disciple, nasi to the community and king to the nation.

Analysed in depth, the passages make it clear that these four roles occupy different places on the spectrum between authority predicated on the person and authority vested in the holder of an office. The more the relationship is personal, the more easily honour can be renounced. At one extreme is the role of a parent (intensely personal), at the other that of a king (wholly official).

I suggest that this was the issue at stake in the argument over how Moses and the Israelites sang the Song at the Sea. For Rabbi Akiva, Moses was like a king. He spoke, and the people merely answered “Amen” (in this case, the words “I will sing to the Lord”). For Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Jose the Galilean, he was like a teacher. Moses spoke, and the Israelites repeated, phrase by phrase, what he had said. For Rabbi Nehemiah, he was like a nasi among his rabbinical colleagues (the passage in Kiddushin, which holds that a nasi may renounce his honour, makes it clear that this is only among his fellow rabbis). The relationship was collegial: Moses began, but thereafter, they sang in unison. For Rabbi Eliezer ben Taddai, Moses was like a father. He began, but allowed the Israelites to complete each verse.

This is the great truth about parenthood, made clear in the first glimpse we have of Abraham:

Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. Bereishit 11:31 Abraham completed the journey his father began. To be a parent is to want one’s children to go further than you did. That too, for Rabbi Eliezer ben Taddai, was Moses’ relationship to the Israelites.

The prelude to the Song at the Sea states that the people “believed in God, and in His servant Moses” – the first time they are described as believing in Moses’ leadership. On this, the Sages asked: What is it to be a leader of the Jewish people? Is it to hold official authority, of which the supreme example is a king (“The rabbis are called kings”)? Is it to have the kind of personal relationship with one’s followers that rests not on honour and deference but on encouraging people to grow, accept responsibility and continue the journey you have begun? Or is it something in between? There is no single answer.

At times, Moses asserted his authority (during the Korach rebellion). At

however, presents two alternative interpretations. The first reads the term as "ani ve-hu" - be with God, follow in His footsteps, the principle known as "vehalakhta bi-drakhav" or imitatio Dei. The second interprets it through the language of beauty: "na'eh, naveh" - pleasant, beautiful. This yields "hitna'eh lefanav be-mitzvot", or "make oneself beautiful before Him through mitzvot".

This second, still mysterious interpretation becomes the basis for practical halakhah. The Talmud explains its application as a mandate to use beautiful mitzvah objects: a beautiful sefer Torah, beautiful tzitzit, a beautiful lulav. It is further specified that a sefer Torah should be written "with beautiful ink, with a beautiful quill, by a skilled scribe, and wrapped in beautiful silks."

The various textual traditions in different manuscripts differ regarding which specific mitzvah objects are enumerated, and these variations carry halakhic implications.

The Quantitative Limit

Elsewhere, the Talmud establishes that hiddur mitzvah has a quantitative limit: "hiddur mitzvah ad shelish" - beautification of a mitzvah extends up to one-third (Bava Kamma 9b). The practical question immediately arises: one-third of what, and how precisely should this fraction be calculated?

According to Rashi's interpretation, the ruling addresses monetary expenditure. For example: In purchasing an etrog, a basic kosher specimen may be relatively inexpensive, while a significantly more beautiful etrog is available at a higher price. The question is whether one is obligated to spend unlimited amounts for the superior option. The Talmud's answer is negative - the obligation extends only to adding one-third.

This seemingly straightforward fraction, however, conceals considerable complexity. Two methods of calculation are considered: one may calculate one-third from the base amount (shelish mil'gav), meaning that if the base etrog costs thirty dollars, one adds ten dollars; alternatively, one may calculate from the final total (shelish mil'bar), meaning the additional amount should constitute one-third of the new total, requiring an addition of fifteen dollars to reach forty-five. The question is left unresolved, as a "teiku".

The Question of Biblical or Rabbinic Origin

The association of hiddur mitzvah with the verse "zeh Keli ve-anveihu" is the topic of debate among later commentaries, with some seeing it as the verse's actual meaning, and thus infused with the authority of Torah law; while others see it as an asmakhta - a rabbinically assigned concept attached by them to the verse, which would render the status of the concept rabbinic as well.

The problem inherent in classifying hiddur mitzvah as asmakhta lies in identifying what the verse actually means if not this. If the rabbinic connection merely attaches to rather than derives from the verse, what does "ve-anveihu" actually teach? (Davar Yehoshua 4:19). Some authorities suggest that the verse's context at the splitting of the sea describes Israel's spontaneous response to divine salvation rather than commanding future mitzvah performance, making it suitable for asmakhta without displacing any biblical teaching (Nachalat Elchanan, Parashat Beshalach). Others propose that the verse has been "given over to the sages" for interpretation in a category that does not fit neatly into the traditional distinction between biblical derivation and rabbinic asmakhta. Others still suggest that some aspect of hiddur mitzvah remains biblical while other aspects are rabbinic elaborations. (See Pri ha-Sadeh 1:2; Divrei Sofrim 55; Lehorot Natan 11:64; Kapot Temarim, beginning of Perek Lulav va-Aravah; Chatam Sofer, Shabbat 133b; Shivot Tzion 25).

The Ritva takes a position regarding the status of hiddur mitzvah based on a different consideration (Sukkah 11b): hiddur mitzvah is not me'akeiv - its absence does not invalidate the underlying mitzvah. The Ritva's proof derives from the discussion regarding whether a lulav requires agudah (bundling) (Sukkah 11a). This requirement, which stems from "zeh Keli ve-anveihu" - the desire for the lulav to appear organized and beautiful - is nevertheless not indispensable to the mitzvah's validity. The Ritva invokes a broader principle maintained by some Rishonim: biblical law does not recognize the distinction between lechatchila (optimal performance) and bedi'ev (post facto validity). According to this view, such gradations

belong exclusively to rabbinic enactments. Biblical mitzvot operate in binary fashion - either the act is valid or it is not.

Therefore, if hiddur mitzvah is not me'akeiv - if the mitzvah remains valid in its absence - it must be rabbinic in origin. The Rosh and Shulchan Aruch appear to follow this reasoning (Rosh, Bava Kamma 1:7; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 656). When confronted with the Talmud's unresolved question regarding calculation of the one-third, they rule leniently (lekula), treating the uncertainty as a rabbinic doubt (safek de-rabbanan). This lenient ruling itself implies their understanding of hiddur mitzvah as rabbinic law (See Ein Yitzchak, Orach Chaim 4; Sha'agat Aryeh 50; Tosafot, Menachot 41b; Tosafot, Sukkah 29b; Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 656; Mahersha, Shabbat 104b).

Not all authorities concurred. The Ra'avad and others maintain that hiddur mitzvah could possess biblical status (See Chiddushei Anshei Shem on Rif, Berakhot 38b in Rif pagination; Bach; Gra, Orach Chaim 656:3, following Ran; see also Roka'ach; Mahershal; Emek She'eilah, Parashat Shelach 126:5; Sha'agat Aryeh 50; Siach ha-Sadeh, Sha'ar ha-Klalim 11:7; Chik'ei Lev, Orach Chaim 17).

The Chatam Sofer addresses the specific case of writing God's Name in a sefer Torah, maintaining that beautification of the divine Name itself possesses biblical status (Gittin 20a). The phrase "zeh Keli" - "This is my God" - requires, at minimum, that the Name of God be written beautifully. Theories of Purpose: Why Beautify Mitzvot?

Beyond the technical question of biblical versus rabbinic origin lies a more fundamental inquiry: what does hiddur mitzvah seek to accomplish? Why should halakhah concern itself with aesthetic considerations? The question becomes particularly significant given Judaism's general emphasis on internal substance over external appearance, raising questions about how beautification relates to core religious values.

Analysis of the halakhic literature suggests that numerous fundamental disputes regarding hiddur mitzvah may stem from different understandings of its purpose: Is beautification merely supplementary enhancement - "icing on the cake" that does not necessarily follow the same halakhic rules as the underlying mitzvah? Or does it penetrate more deeply, becoming integral to the mitzvah itself and thereby subject to all applicable halakhic principles? Two primary theoretical frameworks emerge from the sources:

Theory One: Personal Investment and Religious Devotion

According to this approach, hiddur mitzvah reflects and shapes the individual's relationship with God and Torah. The concept operates on the level of general avodat Hashem - divine service - rather than on the level of technical mitzvah performance. The goal is not mere compliance with minimum requirements but the cultivation of genuine religious devotion. This theory finds support in other halakhic principles that similarly emphasize wholehearted engagement. The concept of "zerizin makdimin le-mitzvot" - the zealous hasten to perform mitzvot - values early performance not because earliness possesses intrinsic halakhic significance, but because it demonstrates enthusiasm. Similarly, "mitzvah bo yoter mi-bi-shlucho" - performing a mitzvah personally rather than through an agent is preferable - reflects the value of personal engagement even when delegation would be halakhically valid.

These principles establish a meta-value: religious obligations should be performed with genuine investment of self, not approached as boxes to be checked. Spending additional money, arriving early, performing the act personally rather than delegating - these behaviors signal authentic commitment to the mitzvah and, by extension, to the relationship with God. Under this theory, hiddur mitzvah's significance lies primarily in what it reveals and reinforces about the individual's religious consciousness. Even when the additional effort remains imperceptible to others - when no one knows how much extra was spent or what sacrifices were made - the act of beautification deepens the performer's connection to the mitzvah and to God. Theory Two: Public Impact and Kiddush Hashem

An alternative theory locates hiddur mitzvah's purpose in its external impact. Religious traditions across cultures have recognized that aesthetically impressive sacred spaces and beautiful ritual objects attract attention and

inspire religious feeling. While such attraction operates on a superficial level initially, it can initiate a process of deeper engagement.

According to this framework, *hiddur mitzvah* serves a purpose transcending the individual performer. Beautiful mitzvah objects create positive impressions on observers, contributing to *kiddush Hashem* - sanctification of God's name. When others witness beautiful mitzvah performance, it elevates their perception of both the mitzvah and the God in whose service it is performed.

This theory implies that *hiddur mitzvah* functions differently depending on visibility. Beautification that no observer will ever perceive may not fulfill the concept's purpose under this understanding.

Rashi and Tosafot: A Fundamental Divide

The dispute between Rashi and Tosafot regarding measurement of "one-third" may reflect this deeper theoretical divide about *hiddur mitzvah*'s essential nature.

Rashi interprets the one-third as referring to monetary expenditure. If a minimally kosher etrog costs thirty dollars and one has the option to purchase a more beautiful specimen, one must be willing to spend up to an additional third of the base price.

Tosafot understands the measurement as concerning the physical characteristics of the mitzvah object. Specifically regarding etrog, where size affects aesthetic quality, Tosafot focuses on dimensions. If one could purchase an etrog at the minimum halakhically valid size (*ke-egoz*, the size of a walnut), one should be willing to obtain one that is one-third larger in volume.

The dispute appears to reflect different conceptions of *hiddur mitzvah*'s purpose:

Rashi's monetary measurement aligns with the first theory. Monetary expenditure represents personal sacrifice and investment. The amount spent remains private knowledge - only the individual and God know the financial commitment involved. Cost becomes the metric of devotion, the tangible expression of one's willingness to sacrifice for the mitzvah.

Tosafot's physical measurement corresponds with the second theory. Visual impact depends on perceptible characteristics. Observers can see a larger etrog; they cannot see the receipt. If *hiddur mitzvah* aims to create impression and inspire others, the measurement must track observable beauty. Notably, under Tosafot's approach, actual cost becomes largely irrelevant - achieving a third greater size might require expenditure far exceeding a third due to market scarcity of premium specimens.

Reconsidering the Ritva's Proof

The theoretical framework developed above may enable reconsideration of the Ritva's proof that *hiddur mitzvah* must be rabbinic. The Ritva argues that biblical laws must be *me'akeiv* (indispensable), and since *hiddur mitzvah* is not *me'akeiv*, it cannot possess biblical status.

This reasoning assumes that *hiddur mitzvah* constitutes a technical requirement within each individual mitzvah's halakhic structure. An alternative conceptualization merits consideration: perhaps "zeh Keli ve-anveihu" establishes not a detail of particular mitzvot but rather a general meta-halakhic directive governing one's entire relationship with mitzvot. Perhaps it describes who one should be in *avodat Hashem* - an enthusiastic servant bringing devotion and care to divine service.

The Ramban develops an analogous concept regarding "va'avadtem et Hashem Elokeichem be-khol levavkhem" - "you shall serve the Lord your God with all your heart." This verse does not command any specific act but rather characterizes the proper orientation toward Torah and mitzvot in their totality.

If *hiddur mitzvah* operates on this meta-level, it does not function as a technical specification of any particular mitzvah. Rather, it mandates approaching the entire mitzvah enterprise with genuine devotion. Whatever mitzvah one engages with at any moment should emerge beautifully as a natural consequence - but the beauty is not a discrete halakhic requirement of that mitzvah's validity.

Under this reconceptualization, *hiddur mitzvah*'s non-*me'akeiv* status does not demonstrate rabbinic origin. It is not *me'akeiv* because it does not

constitute a rule about *lulav* - it constitutes a rule about the individual performing the *lulav*. If one fails to perform some entirely different mitzvah on a given day, that failure does not invalidate one's *lulav*. Similarly, if one falls short of the *hiddur mitzvah* ideal, that shortcoming does not invalidate the *lulav* - but this independence does not establish that *hiddur mitzvah* lacks biblical status.

To suggest a comparison: if one neglects *Kriyat Shema* one day of *Sukkot*, this does not impact the mitzvah of *lulav*. *Kriyat Shema* remains a biblical obligation - its neglect simply does not affect one's *lulav*'s validity because they constitute independent mitzvot. Following this logic, *hiddur mitzvah* could possess biblical status in its own domain without becoming a technical validity requirement of any specific mitzvah.

This analysis suggests that the debate over *hiddur mitzvah*'s status - biblical or rabbinic - may intersect with the deeper question of its essential nature: does it constitute a detail within individual mitzvot's halakhic structures, or does it represent an overarching principle of religious devotion that transcends individual mitzvot while informing how all mitzvot should be performed?

These theoretical questions find concrete expression in numerous practical applications and halakhic disputes. The relationship between fundamental conceptual frameworks and their practical consequences will be considered in Part II.

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

date: Jan 29, 2026, 3:55 AM

subject: **Rav Kook on Tu Bishvat**: Planting a Tree in the Land of Israel

Tu Bishvat: Planting a Tree in the Land of Israel

"At every available opportunity," Rabbi Ze'ev Gold would say, "I tell the story of the remarkable lesson I was privileged to learn from our great teacher, the gaon and saintly Rav Kook, may the memory of the righteous be a blessing."

Rabbi Gold (1889-1956), a prominent figure in the Religious-Zionist Mizrahi movement, once accompanied Rav Kook, then Chief Rabbi, to the fledgling settlement of Magdiel in the Sharon. The occasion was ceremonial: an official visit, speeches, and the planting of saplings to mark the birth of a new forest.

The air was bright. The soil was coarse and stubborn, freshly turned, clinging to boots and hems. A row of young trees waited patiently beside neatly stacked tools.

When Rav Kook was handed a sapling, Rabbi Gold expected a dignified gesture, a symbolic scoop of earth with the hoe provided. Instead, he froze in astonishment.

Rav Kook's face suddenly blazed, as if lit from within. His body trembled with intensity. He set the hoe aside. Slowly, he knelt down onto the ground. With his bare hands he broke into the soil, fingers digging into the resistant earth. Dirt clung beneath his nails. His hands shook.

Gently cradling the sapling, he lowered it into the hollow he had made. As he covered the roots with earth, he whispered words of gratitude, thanking God for the privilege of planting a tree in the Land of Israel.

Rabbi Gold watched, shaken. This was not a ceremony. This was a profound spiritual encounter.

On the return journey to Jerusalem, silence hung between them. Finally, Rabbi Gold could not contain himself.

"Rabbi," he asked, "why were you so deeply moved by the planting of a single tree? Nowadays, thank God, hundreds of trees are planted every day in the Land of Israel."

Rav Kook turned to him, his voice calm but charged.

"As I held that young sapling in my hands," he said, "I recalled the words of our Sages on the verse, 'Follow the Eternal your God... and cling to Him' (Deut. 13:5)."

"They ask: Is it possible for flesh and blood to ascend to the heavens and cling to the Shechinah, of Whom it is written, 'For the Eternal your God is a consuming fire' (Deut. 4:24)?"

"Rather," Rav Kook continued, "they teach us this: At the beginning of creation, the Holy One engaged in planting, as it says, 'God planted a garden in Eden' (Gen. 2:8). And so too, when Israel enters the Land, their first act is planting: 'When you come into the Land, you shall plant all kinds of fruit trees' (Lev. 19:23)."

Rav Kook paused.

"When I stood there, my hands holding that tender sapling and lowering it into the holy earth, these words were no longer ideas. They were reality. In that moment, I felt as though I was clinging to the Shechinah itself. I was overwhelmed with feelings of awe and reverence."

(Stories from the Land of Israel. Adapted from *Zehav HaAretz* by Rabbi Ze'ev Gold (1982); *Mo'adei HaRe'iyah*, pp. 222-223.)

from: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein** <ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com>

date: Jan 29, 2026, 6:59 AM

subject: Morals and Meanings in Beshalach

Beshalach - Staying in Touch

The Gemara[1] provides the background to the institution of reading the Torah in public on Mondays and Thursdays, indicating that this enactment goes back to the earliest days of the Jewish people in the desert. In fact, it is based on a verse in our parsha:

"And they traveled three days in the desert and they did not find water." [2] Those who expound verses metaphorically said water refers to Torah, as it says "Ho, all who are thirsty go to the water." [3] As soon as they went three days without water they instantly became weary [and complained]. The prophets among them rose and instituted that they should read from the Torah on Shabbos, Monday and Thursday, in order that they not go three days without Torah.

It is interesting to consider when exactly were these three days that led us to act contentiously through lack of learning Torah. How far into our wanderings in the desert were we? The Gemara doesn't discuss it. However, if we look at the verses in their source, we will see that these were the three days immediately following the passing of the Jewish people through the Red Sea.

This casts everything the Gemara says in an entirely new light.

The splitting of the Red Sea was one of the greatest miracles ever experienced by our people. One can only imagine the feelings of euphoria, elevation and inspiration that we felt as we passed through the sea with the water as walls on either side. Emerging on the other side, we saw that our oppressors of so many decades who had chased after us to capture and re-enslave us had been drowned and we were finally free. The feelings of inspiration from that occasion would no doubt stay with us for months—if not years—to come!

In the event, the Gemara says they lasted for three days.

The crucial lesson here is that as uplifting as any event may be, that elevation is in danger of dissipating fairly swiftly if a person does not take steps to preserve it. Returning back to one's everyday concerns can serve to dull very quickly the inspiration one felt just a couple of days ago.

Equally crucial to note, however, is the measure which was introduced as the antidote to this dissipation—the institution of regular Torah learning. How does learning Torah achieve this?

An elevating event comes from a place of elevated living. It is an experience which calls to a person to rise above his mundane concerns and lead a meaningful and idealistic existence. Once a person re-engages in his day-to-day affairs, he loses the connection with that message; he ceases "speaking that language," and hence the effects of that inspiring event are lost.

The study of Torah serves to keep a person connected to the elevated place where that event came from. It serves to maintain a consciousness that higher (and godlier) things are expected of him. Moreover, it does not make any difference which area of Torah one may be studying, for the underlying theme of all Torah study is determining how Hashem wants me to act in any

given situation, how He wants the world to look, and what I can do to help make it look that way. That awareness keeps a person logged in to the source and substance of his elevating experiences.

These verses quoted by the Gemara form the final section of the Torah reading for the seventh day of Pesach, which commemorates the splitting of the Red Sea. We may ask: Why does the Torah reading not end with the Song of the Sea itself, which was undoubtedly the high point of that occasion? Why do we continue reading about their ensuing journey in the desert where they complained? It doesn't seem relevant to the story at hand and, if anything, seems to end on a lower note!

The answer is: If we do not read those ensuing verses about how they complained within three days of crossing the Red Sea, we are in danger of losing the inspiration from reading about the crossing, as surely as they lost the inspiration at the time of the event. If we would all go home after the Song of the Sea, we would have missed out on the most important part of the message: without regular Torah learning, it won't stay with you![4]

[1] Bava Kama 82a. [2] Shemos 15:22. [3] Yeshayah 55:1. [4] HaRav Avrohom Gurwitz shlita, Va'anafeha Arzei El.

Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabbiiy@thejeshiva.net> Thu, Jan 29, 2026
The Day the Women Sang Why Does Jewish Law Oppose Men Listening to a Female Singers?

By: Rabbi YY Jacobson

9 Soldiers Walk Out

The following story became a major news item in Israel, back in September 2011, reflecting the poor communication between religious and secular Jews, allowing for stereotypes to persist.

At a military event, Jewish female soldiers began singing solo as part of a military band. Nine religious Israeli soldiers chose to leave the auditorium, based on the law in Judaism that men should not listen to women singing. Regiment Commander Uzi Kileger warned them: "If you don't come back inside immediately, you will be refusing orders and will be dismissed from the course." (According to the General Staff orders, a religious soldier is entitled not to take part in recreational activity which contradicts his lifestyle and faith, but the orders do not apply to non-recreational military events.) Indeed, four of the nine religious cadets who walked out were dismissed from their officers' course.

In much of the Israeli media, these soldiers were blasted for their "primitive behavior" and their tenacious adherence to an "orthodox custom" which denigrates women, advocating their voices to remain cloistered, so that they do not, "heaven forbid," express themselves uninhibitedly.

How sad when Jewish law is so misunderstood.

The Talmudic Source

The source of this law is in the Talmud[1] (the authoritative compilation of Jewish law, history and theology authored 1700 years ago) and in the Code of Jewish Law (known as the Shulchan Aruch).[2]

אמר שמואל, קול באשה ערוה, שנאמר כי קולך ערב ומראך נאה.

The Talmudic sage Shmuel said, the voice of a women (singing) has intimate power; as the verse states: your voice is sweet and your countenance beautiful.[3]

The Babylonian 2th century sage Samuel is referring here to the description in the Song of Songs where the lover talks about his beloved. Listen to stunning words straight out of our Bible:[4]

עֲנֵה דָוִד, וַיֹּאמֶר לֵי: קָוְמִי לְךָ רַעֲנֵתִי בְּפִתְחָת, וְלִכְיָלָה. כִּי-הַגָּהָה הַפְּתַחַת, עַבְרָה קָלָךְ לָא. הַפְּגָנִים גָּרָא אָרֶץ, שַׁתְּגַמֵּר הַגָּעֵץ; וְקֹלְכָה תַּהֲרֵר, נְשַׁמְעַבְּאַרְצָנוּ. הַפְּגָנִים גָּרָא רַעֲנֵנוּ רִתָּה; קָוְמִי לְךָ רַעֲנֵתִי בְּפִתְחָת, וְלִכְיָלָה. יְנַמְּנִי בְּחַגְגִּי הַפְּלִילָה, בְּסִירְבָּרְתָּה, קָרְאֵינוּ אָתָּה-מְרַאַתָּה, לְשִׁמְעֵינוּ אָתָּה-קָלָךְ כִּי-קָלָךְ עַרְבָּה, וּמְרַאַתָּה נָאָה.

"Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and go to yourself. For behold, the winter has passed; the rain is over and gone. The blossoms have appeared in the land, the time of singing has arrived, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree has put forth its green figs, and the vines with their tiny grapes have given forth their fragrance; arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and go to yourself. My dove is in the clefts of the rock, in the coverts of the steps; show me your appearance, let me hear your voice, for

your voice is pleasant and your appearance is beautiful!"

But wait! Just open up the weekly portion, Beshalach, and you will notice a problem. No smaller a personality than Miriam, the older sister of Moses, and a prophetess in her own right—sings in front of many men, in the presence of her own brother Moses who has no qualms about her behavior. Here is how the Torah describes it:[5]

ונתקה מרים הכביאה אחות אָהָרֹן את כהן בְּנָה וּמְצָאָן כָּל קָבְשִׁים אֲקָרְבָּן בְּתַפְתִּים בְּמַלְתָּה. וְפָעָן
לְהַמְּמָרִים שִׁירָו לְהַלְלֵי כִּי גָאָה אָהָרָן סָוִס וְלַכְבוֹד רָמָה בַּיּוֹם.

Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambourine in her hand and all the women followed her with tambourines and dances. And Miriam called to them: 'Sing to G-d, for He is most exalted; horse and rider He cast in the sea...'.

Here we have it black-and-white: Days after their departure from Egypt, as the Jews cross the Red Sea, just a few weeks away from the Revelation at Sinai, and in the presence of Moses and some one million men—Moses' older sister, the prophetess Miriam, leads all of the women in song. What happened to the admonition against women singing in public?

To be sure, the Torah has not been given yet. Nonetheless, if the Torah would define this as immodest and inappropriate behavior, how is it that at such an elevated moment they would engage in this?[6]

Let me share a fascinating insight by the Italian sage and Kabbalist Rabbi Menachem Azaryah of Fano (1548–1620), in his book *Kanfei Yona*.[7] The Rabbis of the Talmud say:

The Reason for a Law
Let's go back a step: Why does Jewish law not want the man to hear a female sing?

It is not because women's singing is somehow not up to par or unholy. To the contrary, the feminine song has an electrifying power to it, it capturing her beauty, majesty and soulfulness. True, in our society we don't pay enough homage to a woman singing because our over exposure to everything and anything often dulls our sensesto the sensations of intimate power.

Whenever you are overexposed to something, your senses become dulled to the grandeur involved.

The Torah attempts to fine-tune us to subtlety; to cultivate within us an appreciation of deep energy and soulful emotion, to detect the vibrations of the inner heart. The Torah wants us never to lose our sensitivity to the sensual energy transported in the sweet, pleasant sound of a woman singing.

As the Song of Songs puts it:

כראיני את-مراיך, השמעני את-קולד כי-קולד ערָב, וمراיך נואה

"Show me your appearance, let me hear your voice, for your voice is pleasant and your appearance is beautiful!"

Own Your Intimacy

The Torah always maintained that every human being, woman and man, has the right and duty to respect, safeguard and cherish their intimacy, their inner sacred space.[8]

A woman must own her inner intimate power; it is her secret from G-d that she ought to treat with the utmost dignity. Never should a girl or woman feel pressure that she needs to impress strangers through her body and voice. Her soul, body, and voice belong to her alone and no one else. The pressure on so many wonderful people to use their most precious selves to entice and engage deprives them of a peaceful, wholesome, and confident life. Woe to a society that indirectly teaches young women that their value and self-esteem come when members of the opposite gender are infatuated by their physique. A woman's beauty, like every person's beauty, must be owned by her, and must be preserved, protected, and nurtured with sensitivity and delicacy. It is too fine, too sacred, too subtle, to be pulled through the gutter. It is not cheap. The laws of Judaism focusing on modesty are not intended to repress the woman; they are intended to create an environment where she can be most natural and real without someone manipulating and misusing her intimacy for his selfish needs.

Women and girls should sing; their music has unique energy and power. When women begin singing, the men ought to leave the room as a sign of respect toward the woman. The man is making the statement that her intimate soulfulness does not belong to him. Music is spiritual; singing comes from the soul. And if he is going to use her singing as a tool for his

own physical enjoyment, never mind for a promiscuous thought, he is violating her dignity.

When the Veil Was Removed

Now we will understand why after the splitting of the sea Miriam and all the women sang out loud.

In the song that Moses sang with the men before Miriam, they declared: "This is my G-d!"[9]

Says Rashi: This is my G-d: He revealed Himself in His glory to them [the Israelites], and they pointed at Him with their finger [as denoted by the word: "this is my G-d"]. By the sea, a maid servant perceived what prophets did not perceive.

It was a unique moment. The inner spiritual core of the universe came to the fore. At such a moment, there is no room for distortion. When the presence of G-d is felt, when the organic unity of the universe is experienced, each of us experiences not our brute, selfish superficial self, but with our innate holiness and love. Then the intimate voice of the woman will only inspire people to greater moral and spiritual heights. Gone is the concern that someone will use a female voice for superficial and immoral pursuits. On the contrary, the voice of Miriam and some one million girls and women sublimated souls and kindled hearts.[10]

[1] Talmud Berachos 24a [2] Orach Chaim section 75 and Mishna Berurah ibid. (There are some opinions that this applies only during the reading of the Shema, see <https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%91%D7%90%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%94%D7%A2%D7%8A%D7%95%D7%95%D7%94>

[3] For a detailed halachik discussion about this, and the leniency introduced by the German Rabbis of the 19th century to listen to many women singing together, as well as the leniency to hear women singing when they are singing together with men, as well as the leniency to listen to girls younger than 11 sing, see:

girls younger than 11 sing see http://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%9C_%D7%91%D7%90%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%94_%D7%A2%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%95%D7%94
Several halachic (Jewish law) authorities are of the opinion that a recording or a radio transmitted singing voice of a woman who one does not personally know would not be actually prohibited. Others say that one should refrain from hearing a woman sing in any format through any medium. In today's time this might seem severe, but the Torah puts such enormous value on the bond between a husband and wife that it does not allow for any potential damage to a man's undivided and unequivocal devotion and attraction to his one and only partner in life. Click here for more on this subject.

The "Sridei Eish" (Rabbi Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg (1885-1966)) opines that it may be permitted for women to sing along with other men. There are also those who are of the view that the restriction against men hearing women singing doesn't apply to women who are singing in a group, since no individual is calling attention to herself.

[4] Song of Songs 2:10-14 [5] Exodus 15:20-21 [6] See the various explanations given by: The Vilna Gaon, Tzeida Laderech, and Tzafnas Paanach on the verse. The Tzaida Lederech suggests that is why the women used the drums to eclipse the singing voices. The Vilna Gaon and Tzafnas Paanach suggest that in Hebrew there is a grammatical distinction between addressing women vs. men. In English we would say, "she spoke to them," and the "them" can refer to men or women. In Hebrew we must distinguish: "To them" referring to men is "lahem;" "to them" referring to women is "lahen." What is fascinating is that the verse about Miriam states לְמִרְיָם שָׁרֵךְ, "And Miriam called to them: 'Sing to G-d,' " to them" as though she was addressing men. Indeed, say the above commentators, the women never sang, because men should not be listening to women singing. And there were plenty of men present. Miriam was telling the men to sing to G-d. The women merely played the instruments. Each of these explanations seems difficult. [7] Kanfei Yonah 4:36. The point was explained at length by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in a public address on 15 Shevat 5732 (1972), showing how Rashi clearly gives us the answer to the question. [8] Rabbi Yitzchak David Grossman, Rabbi of Migdal Haimek, once consulted the Lubavitcher Rebbe about making a choir comprised of Russian Jewish children who recently immigrated to Israel. The Rebbe encouraged the idea and shared with him how to explain to the girls that they ought not to be part of the boys' choir: "kolha azi peaharitnu met ar shiinikrit sh'at'l nash zot," איז פאהריטן מט איר שייניקיט ש'אל נשות זוט "Her voice is reflective of her beauty; in order to preserve her beauty it should not be squandered and 'free for all,' it should be arranged in this way" (where boys and girls do not perform together). [9] Exodus 15:2 [10] That is why in the seventh blessing we recite at a chupah and during the seven subsequent days we talk of the time when it will be heard in the streets of Jerusalem "the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride." We can all use a dosage of the woman's voice. We all need feminine music in our lives. Yet the world is not ready for such intense energy without protection. Can we hear the spiritual holiness in the feminine song? When the sea parted, the sea representing that which lay in the subconscious holiness of man, below the surface, parted within us and we could appreciate the spirituality of the woman, the Divine nobility stemming from her soul and body, from her music and her voice. When the sea—representing the depth of our souls—closed up again, we must be cautious not to violate the sacred energy of a woman, till the time of Moshiach when we will be ready to listen to the "voice of the bride." (See at length in the Maamar Mehrash Yishama in the Derushei Chasunah of Rabbi Schmuel of Lubavitch, the Rebbe Maharash (Derushei Chasunah pp. 82-89 and all the references noted there.)

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The Great Upside-Down 9 x 13 Pan Controversy

By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

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It is one of the most widely used, yet controversial, methods of reheating food on a blech for the Shabbos day meal. Across the country, this method is used to reheat fully cooked food every

Shabbos, and there is a debate between contemporary Poskim as to whether it is permitted. The method involves taking food out of the fridge and placing it on top of an upside-down 9 x 13 pan that is on the blech.

The Shulchan Aruch (OC 253:5) discusses the permissibility of putting fully-cooked food on top of another pot on Shabbos — the reason being is lefi sh'ain derech bishul b'kach — because it is not the normal manner of cooking. Food, even if it is dry and fully cooked, cannot be placed on a blech itself on Shabbos if it can reach a heat of Yad Soledes Bo. This is not because of the prohibition of cooking on Shabbos, but because of another prohibition called Mechzi k'mevashel — it appears like cooking.

What Kind of Pot?

But what kind of pot are we discussing? Does it have to be a pot with food in it? Or can it simply be an empty 9 x 13 pan that is put upside down on top of the blech? This very question is mired in controversy.

Some poskim, including Rav Elyashiv, zt"l (cited in Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin's *Orchos Shabbos* Vol. I p. 100) and Rav Binyomin Zilber, zt"l (1917-2008), hold that it cannot be an empty 9 x 13 upside-down pan, but rather a pot with food in it that is already on the blech. Other poskim, including Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l (cited in *Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa*, tikunim Chapter One note 112) and Rav Shmuel Vosner, zt"l (1913-2015) in his *Shaivet HaLevi* (Vol. I #91 "M'achar"), disagree and rule that it is entirely permitted. Rav Zilber in his *Az Nidberu* (Vol. III #14 "v'halom Ra'isi) cites Rav Vosner and questions how two forms of covering a flame can make it equivalent to a full pot.

The Source of the Controversy

There is an apparent contradiction in the words of the Shulchan Aruch between what he writes in *Seif Gimmel* and what he writes in *Seif Hey*. Here is the scenario presented in *Seif Gimmel*: You wake up on Shabbos morning and see that the food in your pot is burning. You are worried that it will burn even further. If you fulfill the five conditions of Chazarah, you are permitted to remove the burning pot and place an empty vessel on top of the Kirah, and then place the burning pot on top of the empty pot.

You must ensure that you do not put the pot on the ground and that the pot is still boiling. We see clearly that placing the pot containing the food (which will eventually be placed upon that empty pot) on the ground is not permitted. The only way that it would be permitted to place it on the empty pot is if the five conditions of Chazarah are met.

In *Seif Hey*, the Mechaber rules that one may place food that is cool but has been already fully cooked by Friday on top of a pot that is on the covered fire, such as bread, because this is not the manner of normal cooking.

We see from *Seif Hey* that one may place food on top of a pot without a need to fulfill the five conditions of Chazarah. How do we resolve the apparent contradiction?

The Biur Halacha's Resolutions

The Chofetz Chaim in his *Biur Halacha* ("V'yezihairshelo yasim" in *Sif Gimel*) quotes two resolutions — that of Rav Yechezkel Landau (1713-1793) in his *Dagul Mervavah* and that of Rav Yoseph Teomim (1727-1792) in his *Pri Magadim* (*Aishel Avrohom* 253:33). The *Dagul Mervavah* holds that the Shulchan Aruch is adopting the position of the *RaN* who limits the leniency found in *Seif Hay* to bread, because bread is not generally baked on top of a stovetop. However, the Chofetz Chaim points out that both the *Magain Avrohom* and the *Vilna Gaon* hold that the Mechaber rejects the view of the *RaN* and thus finds the *Dagul Mervavah*'s resolution somewhat dochaik (unindicated in the text).

The Chofetz Chaim advocates strongly for the resolution of the *Pri Magadim*. He writes that *Seif Hey* deals with placing it on top of a pot and it is not at all considered like it is on top of a covered flame (equivalent to

ketumah) or an oven with the fuel removed (*grufah*). *Seif Gimmel*, on the other hand, refers to a case where the empty pot is merely serving as a means of reducing

the heat and it is still considered on top of an oven with a covered flame (equivalent to *ketumah*) or an oven with the fuel removed (*grufah*).

Explaining the *Pri Magadim*

There is a debate between the *Chazon Ish* (OC 37:11) and other poskim as to how to understand this *Pri Magadim*. The *Chazon Ish* is of the opinion that the distinction between the two cases revolves around which heat is heating the upper pot. If the lower pot is empty, then it is the heat of the oven that is actually heating the upper pot and it is no different than a standard oven whose fire has been damped or its fuel has been removed (and it is forbidden to place a pot on it). If the lower pot is filled with food, then it is the heat of the food that is heating the upper pot and that is not a normal way of cooking. Thus, according to the *Chazon Ish*, an upside-down pot would be ineffective according to the *Pri Magadim*.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach is of the opinion that it would be effective according to the *Pri Magadim*. When asked by the author of the *Me'or HaShabbos* (see Vol. II p.557), Rav Shlomo

Zalman answered that the *Chazon Ish* did not hold that the blech is considered like *Ketumah* (an oven with reduced heat).

Conclusion

It is this author's opinion that most poskim permit using the empty, ubiquitous upside-down 9 x 13 pan to heat up cold food, notwithstanding that Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin shlita disagrees with the heter to do so.

The author can be reached at yairhoffman2@gmail.com.