

פרשת פרה

In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein *A Tale Of Two Brothers*

On my recent trip to the United States my wife and I had, on a number of occasions, to use the services of a private car service. My wife, being a much friendlier and decidedly more social person than I am, was successful every time in eliciting the full life story of each of the drivers who drove us to our requested destination. All of the drivers were courteous, respectful and skilled at their chosen line of work.

One of the drivers was a young Jewish man, a college graduate who told us that he was raised "Reform" by his family. He said that he had a younger brother, a current college student, who just returned from a visit to Israel on a Birthright Mission program. He said that his brother was very impressed by his visit and now was starting to look into Judaism and his heritage more seriously.

He has enrolled in a number of Judaic studies classes and has told his family that upon graduation he intends to move to Israel, marry there and make his future there "with the rest of the Jews." My wife and I naturally gushed over this news and asked him if he himself intended to also visit Israel. He told us that since he had already finished school he was not entitled to a Birthright trip and doubted that he would ever visit Israel. Even though he bragged about how successful his car service business was, he apparently never considered spending any of his own money on a visit to Israel - even though he did tell us about expensive vacations that he had taken to South America.

He then informed us that he had recently become engaged to a non-Jewish woman and that they were going to marry in June. He said that his family wanted the woman to convert to Judaism and that he had broached the subject with her.

The woman he intended to marry was an atheist, he told us, and she said that becoming Jewish would in no way compromise her beliefs or non-beliefs since most of the Jews she knew had no firm beliefs about God or any theology. He said that he brought her to his Reform rabbi who agreed to perform the ceremony even prior to her conversion.

The rabbi was very impressed by the sincerity of her atheistic beliefs. Nevertheless the rabbi said that he would not perform the wedding ceremony in the sanctuary of the temple but only outside on the lawn since the woman was not yet officially converted. The driver said that he was "praying for nice weather." I wonder who his bride was "praying" to for a fair weather day.

The cavalier attitude towards the whole matter by the young Jewish man and apparently by his Reform rabbi saddened me deeply. It provided me with a microcosm of what is happening to the American Jewish community, which is rapidly disappearing, abetted by the failure of Reform and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Conservative rabbis as well, in attempting to stem this tide of disaster. It was a very depressing car ride for me for I knew that this scenario was no longer an exceptional case in Jewish America.

The influence of the State of Israel is crucial to the survival of Jews and Judaism in the Diaspora. Even those pockets of Orthodox religious Jewish life in America, which had previously been convinced that Israel is not a key ingredient in their lives, are beginning to see things in a different light. For many in European Jewry, suffering intensely under growing open anti-Semitism, public and official, Israel is viewed as being its insurance policy. It is a haven to escape to, if and when the necessity arises. American Jews still feel much more secure and therefore their attitude towards Israel is much more guarded and ambivalent. Hardly more than twenty percent of American Jews have ever visited Israel and the more assimilated American Jews become the more distant their relationship with Israel becomes.

The key to helping American Jews counter assimilation and alienation from Judaism is having them feel more Jewish – in establishing a strong sense of Jewish self-identity within themselves and their families. One undeniable fact about at least visiting and hopefully eventually living in the Land of Israel is that it certainly makes one feel more Jewish. People who feel Jewish eventually begin to search and find a way back to Jewish life and Torah values.

The story of the two brothers I outlined above shows how true this is and how necessary the relationship to Israel is, for Jewish communities in the Diaspora threatened with assimilation and eventual extinction.
Shabat shalom

Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein *Ki Tisa*

Moshe is absent from the people of Israel for forty days. This seems to trigger a disastrous turn of events that results in the incident of the Golden Calf. Why is Moshe's absence such a cataclysmic event in the evolving story of the constant and continuing backtracking of Israel from its Sinai commitment? After all, every rabbi is entitled to a vacation away from his flock.

The commentators to Torah over the centuries have long debated the issue of the absence of Moshe and its connection to the sin of the Golden Calf. Many saw it as a sign of immaturity on the part of the people, in thinking that Moshe was their security blanket and that they could not serve God without his help and intervention. Others interpreted Moshe's absence as a separation trauma in which Israel believed that Moshe, after being in Heaven once already, so to speak, could not readjust to earthly existence and would perhaps never return.

This would have signaled to the people that Torah and God's commandments were heavenly, other-world issues that could have no daily relevance to their mortal existence upon earth. This is an idea that the Torah itself has to constantly counteract – that the Torah is not in Heaven and it is not for Heaven. It is for humans and intended to direct us in our earthly existence. The rabbis taught us in the Talmud that the Torah was not given to celestial angels. It was given to fragile, vulnerable, sinful human beings.

Moshe is not blamed for his absence. After all, he followed God's commandment to remain on the summit of Mount Sinai after the granting of the Torah to Israel. He certainly cannot be faulted for obeying the commands of the Lord. Yet his absence seems to be a contributing factor in the grievous sin of the Golden Calf.

I think that Moshe's absence, which after all was occasioned by a command from God, was not really the main problem that troubled the Jewish people. Rather, it was the choice of Aharon and Chur to replace him that proved troubling, as events later proved. Chur was too strong a person and, in his confrontation with the people, was killed. Aharon was too accommodating and compassionate a person and in his goodness and identification with the people and their demands he contributed to the sin of the Golden Calf.

Moshe was the perfect blend of strength and compassion. The rabbis criticized King Saul for being too strong on one occasion and too weak and compromising in another situation. A leader must encompass within one's personality both strength and compassion, firmness and the ability to compromise. The greatness of a leader is determined by the ability to be firm when necessary and accommodating when that occasion arises.

Moshe was and is the prime example of such leadership qualities. He fights a civil war against the architects of the Golden Calf and at the same time pleads the case for forgiveness of the Jewish people from God. It is the absence of such a perfectly balanced personality, which can destroy the leader of a people.

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Insights

A Nation Of Presidents

"I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people." (22:9)

A former president of the United States once asked his Israeli counterpart how things were going.

"I have many problems," said the Israeli. The American president replied, "You think you have problems? You are the president of 8 million people, while I am president of 180 million."

To which the Israeli president replied, "Mr. President, you are president of 180 million people. I, however, am the president of 8 million presidents!"

"I have seen this people, and behold! it is a stiff-necked people."

The Torah itself calls the Jewish People a stiff-necked people. Sometimes this obstinacy can be for the good and sometimes for the not-so-good.

Stubbornness can be an extremely dangerous trait, for it can foil any attempt to improve our situation. Stubbornness enters a person's mind and blinkers him from any other possibility other the one on which he has set his mind.

Thus, in the incident with the golden calf with all its severity, the Torah doesn't focus on the sin itself, rather on the obstinacy that it revealed. A negative action can always be atoned for and repaired, whereas implacable wrong-headedness allows no place for the way of return.

However, there is also a positive side to being stubborn. In a certain concentration camp there was one particularly sadistic Nazi officer. One day he ordered a Jew to follow him to the top of a nearby hill. He indicated a cloud of dust rising on the distant Eastern horizon. "Do you know what that is?" "No," replied the Jew. "That is the Russian Army. In a couple of hours they will be at the gates of the camp. The war is over for you. I want you to eat this piece of ham now, or I will shoot you." The Jew refused on the spot without batting an eyelash. And the Nazi shot him also without batting an eyelash.

Edward Gibbon in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" writes that of all the nations that Rome subjugated, the only people that clung successfully to its beliefs was the Jewish People. All of Rome's other vassal states managed to infiltrate the Roman gods into their pantheon without batting an eyelash. The Jews, however, were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for what they believed.

That intransigence is imbued in the spiritual genes of our people.

Source: Based on Rabbi Simcha Zissel from Chelm

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum **Parshas Ki Tisa**

I have filled him with a G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and knowledge. (31:3)

Rashi explains that chochmah, wisdom, refers to the knowledge one receives from others. Tevunah, which is defined as insight, is the product of the ideas one develops from his own wisdom. In the context of the construction of the Mishkan, daas, which is translated as knowledge, refers to the Ruach HaKodesh, Divine Inspiration, with which Betzalel was imbued. Accordingly, daas, knowledge, is on a higher cognitive level than tevunah, insight. This does not, however, appear consistent with the sequence which appears in the Shemoneh Esrai. We recite thrice daily, Ata chonein l'adam daas, u'melameid le'enosh binah, "You graciously endow man with wisdom and teach insight to frail man." Chaneinu meitcha deiah, binah, v'haskel. "Endow us graciously from yourself with wisdom, insight and discernment." Furthermore, one who lacks daas is considered among the most unfortunate people, as Chazal say, Mi she'ein bo daas, "One who does not possess daas"... They go on to list this person's insufficiencies which result from a lack of daas. Yet, the Torah lists daas last, with Rashi

interpreting it as Ruach HaKodesh. This seems to indicate a fairly high level of cognition. How are we to understand this?

Horav Aizik Ausband, zl, explains that the term daas originates from the idea that one person knows more than someone else. Thus, knowledge is understood as a breadth of understanding that goes beyond that of others. Therefore, the level of daas and its concomitant meaning change with the subject matter. When comparing the daas of an adult to that of a child, the adult's ability to distinguish between Shabbos and weekdays already attributes to him - although it does not necessarily speak highly of - his level of erudition. Since he is only being judged in comparison to a child, he needs to know very little to know more than the child. Betzalel's daas, however, is being compared to that of the rest of the nation. He stood above them, since he had achieved the level of Ruach HaKodesh.

And (they) fashioned it into a molten calf. (32:4)

Aharon HaKohen knew that Moshe Rabbeinu would return at the designated time. The people were impatient, thinking that their leader was not returning. To stall for time, Aharon instructed them to bring their gold, which he, in turn, threw into the fire. The Egyptian sorcerers, included amongst the eirav rav, mixed multitude, who joined the Jewish People when they left Egypt, employed their knowledge of the occult to create the calf. The Talmud Sotah 13a says that an amulet with the letters ali shor, "rise up ox," engraved on it was in the possession of the Jewish People. Moshe had used this amulet to retrieve Yosef's coffin from within the waters of the Nile River. It was this amulet which they flung in the fire, that caused a calf of gold to emerge. The question that presents itself is quite simple: If the amulet's lettering consisted of "rise up ox," why did a calf materialize? If the amulet did the trick, then a golden ox should have appeared. Alternatively, since Moshe had caused a man to emerge, the molten gold should have produced a human being - not an animal. Furthermore, after seeing how they had created a molten idol, how could the people declare Eileh elohecha Yisrael, "These are your g-ds, Yisrael!" Clearly, they must have understood that this molten image had no Divine powers.

Horav David Chanania Pinto, Shlita, quotes his son, Rav Rephael, who gives a practical analysis to explain why the image that emerged from the fire was a calf - not an ox. Hashem took pity on the kavod, esteem, of Yosef HaTzaddik. Imagine if an ox - not calf -- would have emerged from the fire. The ox is the symbol of Yosef. In short, the 'Shor' HaZahav, "Golden Ox" would have been called Yosef HaTzaddik! Out of respect for the saintly Yosef, Hashem arranged for a calf to materialize. This idea applies as well to explain why a man was not created. He would instantly have been given a name.

Rav David applies this logic to explain why the people, upon seeing the Golden Calf, immediately began to chant, "These are your gods, Yisrael." It was the eirav rav who made this declaration - which was true. The Golden Calf was not their creation. It was the creation of the Jews. The eirav rav would have produced an ox or a man. A calf most certainly was not their intention.

Rav David quotes the Be'er Mechokeik who writes: "There are times when a person is unaware of what is going on within himself. An entire inner revolution is taking place - and he has no idea why it is happening. He is filled with tension and is quite uptight. Indeed, when the eruption occurs, he has no idea that something is happening within him. He is still only at the saf ha'hakarah, threshold of consciousness. We refuse - or are afraid to delve deeper - to penetrate the depths of our psyche to understand what is taking place.

This is what took place concerning the Jewish people. They wanted an ox, and a calf emerged. Now what? Did they allow themselves a moment to think, to question this turn of events? What is happening here? We were supposed to get an ox - not a calf. Something out of the ordinary is occurring. We must stop to digest what is happening. That would have been the proper course to take. This is the approach that one who is not driven by passion would have taken. What did they do? They immediately declared, "These are your gods, Yisrael!" Why? Because they could not deal with decision-making. They were afraid to confront their own issues. They knew something was amiss, but they were not prepared to respond to

the problem. An intelligent reaction - in which they would think about what was happening, and perhaps discover its hidden meaning and message - was too much for them. They reacted immediately, closed the book - so to speak - and made their decision.

We make up our minds too quickly. We hear a shmuess, ethical discourse, a powerful, emotion-filled lecture. We are impressed, even moved, but before we allow ourselves to think about its personal message, we conclude that it is not for us. The speaker does not mean us, he is referring to someone else. Close the book; move on. If we allow ourselves the luxury of thinking, we will realize that everything has relevance. The message is not exclusive. It is general. Whoever is willing to listen can better himself. Some of us are either too frightened or too arrogant - to accept the fact that it might also concern us.

He said, "It is not the sound of shouting of might nor the sound of shouting of weakness; a distressing sound do I hear." (32:18)

Yehoshua informed Moshe Rabbeinu that he heard the sound of battle in the Jewish camp. Moshe Rabbeinu replied that battle sounds consist of either the sound of victory or the sound of defeat. The sound that he heard was much different. It was the sound of blasphemy and vilification, which distresses the soul of everyone who hears it. In other words, Klal Yisrael had sinned, and the sounds that they were hearing were the sounds of blasphemy. The Chafetz Chaim, zl, explains that Moshe was actually critiquing Yehoshua for not yet being able to discern between sounds. A leader must be acutely aware of the intimation of each sound. The people were conveying a message. A leader must be able to distinguish between the sounds of battle and the sound that accompanies the revelry of avodah zarah, idol-worship.

In his addendum to the Chafetz Chaim, Horav Shmuel Greineman, zl, writes that he found a Midrash in Sefer Bamidbar 20:3, Vayarev ha'am im Moshe, "The people quarreled with Moshe." The Midrash says: "When Miriam passed, Moshe and Aharon were occupied with her. Meanwhile, the people were thirsty and sought relief. Once Miriam had died, her merit, through which the nation had received water, was gone. When Moshe and Aharon saw the nation converging on them, Moshe said to Aharon, "Tell me, what type of gathering is this?" Aharon immediately replied, "Are they not the descendants of the Patriarchs, individuals who act kindly, the sons of individuals who act kindly; surely they have come to perform chesed, kindness, with Miriam." Moshe replied, "Are you unable to discern between 'gatherings'? This assembly is not an assembly for takanah, for constructive purposes. This gathering is bent on destruction. If there had been a positive reason for this assembly, they would have come in a dignified manner, with officers and individual leaders at the head of each group. Instead, whom do we see at the forefront? The rabble-rousers. And you feel that they are coming as a gesture of good faith? No. They are coming to spur dissent and usurp the leadership."

A leader must be able to "split hairs" when it comes to emotion. He must understand what message his congregants are conveying to him - even if they do not articulate it. He must distinguish between "sounds": between strength and weakness; between joy and depression; between success and failure. A leader must understand the needs of his flock and the underlying reason for their "gatherings." Often, meetings are organized with a deep-rooted agenda, the goal of which is far from constructive. Sadly, at times, most of those involved in the meeting have no clue concerning its true motive.

Individuals declare that they want change; they are seeking to raise the standards of observance, to guard against incursion, to elevate the banner of Torah; to increase achdus, unity, among all members of the community. The Torah leadership of a community must be aware of their true intentions. It might be sincere, but then, it might very well be nothing more than a sham, an opportunity to convene a group to ratify a self-proclaimed proposal, which will serve as a medium for rubber-stamping their own misguided policies.

They protest, claiming that their goal is sincere: unity among Jews - regardless of background and religious affiliation. Are they really seeking to unify, or is it nothing more than a ploy to create greater discord and make the Torah-observant seem cold, dispassionate and unyielding?

A true leader develops a mindset geared towards his congregation. He understands them and empathizes with their needs. His mind revolves around them as he thinks only of them. As a parent understands the individual sounds/cries/laughter of his/her child, so, too, is a Torah leader able to distinguish between the cries of his congregation. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that the Rosh Yeshivah of Ponevez, Horav David Povarsky, zl, was such a leader.

Upon arising from his sleep one day, the Rosh Yeshivah swallowed an antibiotic pill which the doctor had prescribed for him. The pill, which should have immediately gone down his esophagus, became lodged in his trachea. The Rosh Yeshivah began to choke, as he attempted to cough up the pill. The students who were there immediately took hold of him and made every maneuver to help extricate the pill. It took ten minutes for the pill to finally be expelled.

Rav Povarsky was visibly shaken by his ordeal. His reaction is a lesson in leadership: "I feel bad for those who had to watch my travail. They must have been so scared." Imagine, an individual who, while he was choking, thought of nothing else other than the emotions coursing through the minds of his students. This was a person who thought not of himself - but of his students, a true leader. This is, however, not all. After the ordeal, the Rosh Yeshivah explained in what merit he was saved. "If chas v'shalom, Heaven forbid, the pill would not have been expelled, I would not have made it to the yeshivah in time for davening. I was well aware that Horav Shach, the Rosh Yeshiva, was ill and would not attend davening. I, therefore, prayed to Hashem, entreating Him, 'If Rav Shach was out, and I would be unable to come to davening, what image would the Yeshivah have, if the two Roshei Yeshivah were not there.'"

This is what went through Rav David Povarsky's mind as he choked on a tablet. He disregarded his pain, the danger in which he was in - everything. He thought only of the Yeshivah!

He said, "Not a sound shouting strength nor a sound shouting weakness; a sound of distress do I hear." (32:18)

Yehoshua heard the sound of celebration over the Golden Calf. He erred in mistaking the sounds of joyful rebellion for a response to an aggressive attack. Moshe Rabbeinu corrected him, explaining that it was clear from the sound that it was far from a response to war. The sounds to the discerning ears of our quintessential leader meant that the ultimate tragedy had struck the nation: they had rebelled against Hashem. Moshe's lengthy response to Yehoshua seems questionable. He said, "Not a sound of strength, nor a sound of weakness, but a sound of distress do I hear." Could he not just have said, "I do not hear a sound of strength"? Why did he deliver the whole speech? Furthermore, as cited by Ramban from Midrash Koheles 9:11, Moshe rebuked Yehoshua, saying, "One who will one day exercise leadership over the nation, is unable to discern between sounds?" Why does this indicate a deficiency in Yehoshua's ability to lead the nation? Does just the fact that he thought the sound that he heard was a sound of victory serve as a reason for rendering him unfit to lead the nation?

Horav Avigdor HaLevi Nebentzhal, Shlita, explains that there is much more to the dialogue than a simple critique of Yehoshua's auditory skills. We find that, with Klal Yisrael's acceptance of the Torah, the people were liberated from their subservience to both the nations of the world and the Malach Ha'Maves, Angel of Death. Jewish mortality had reached the same level that had existed prior to the sin of Adam HaRishon, Primordial Man. Chazal derive this from the homiletic rendering of the word charus, v'hamichtav michtav Elokim hu, charus al haLuchos, "And the script was the script of G-d, engraved on the Luchos" (Ibid. 32:16).

Chazal say, "Charus, engraved, do not read it as charus, engraved, but rather, as cheirus, liberated. This teaches us that through the vehicle of Mattan Torah, the Giving of the Torah, the Jewish nation was granted freedom from subservience to the nations of the world. Indeed, had Moshe not been compelled to shatter the Luchos, no nation could ever harm us, and we would have prevailed over the Angel of Death."

We now understand what Moshe was intimating to Yehoshua. If the Jewish People were on their newly-acquired spiritual perch, then there could not be heard any sounds of war - be it victorious or defeat. No nation

could rise against them. They had received the Torah and were now freed from external dominance from the nations of the world. "Yehoshua! Do you not know this? War cannot exist in the Jewish camp if the people still remained on the level of Kabbolas HaTorah, Receiving the Torah. If it is true as you contend, however, that there are sounds of war emanating from the Jewish camp, then something is terribly amiss. We have a serious problem. Clearly, the Jewish People have sinned and have deviated from the Torah."

Moshe's intention was not to insinuate to Yehoshua that he was unfit to lead the nation; rather, he was saying that, as a leader, he should be acutely aware that, post-Mattan Torah, there can no longer be any sounds of war - unless...

I implore! This people have committed a grievous sin. (32:31)

What did Moshe Rabbeinu mean by this statement? Of course the people had committed a grave sin. There was no question about this. On the contrary, by restating the offense, he was essentially adding insult to injury. In his Ohaiv Yisrael, the Apter Rav, zl, explains that when a person commits an aveirah, sin, the greatest punishment is the realization that he has sinned against Hashem. This does not come immediately, but, after introspection, he becomes cognitive of Hashem's eminence; and thus, the sin which he has committed takes on a different guise. How could he have sinned against the One Who gave him everything - Who continues to sustain him? He begins to realize that, by commission of this sin, he has distanced himself from the Source of all sanctity. He will slowly develop a sense of shame, which will ultimately lead to regret and remorse. He will then accept upon himself not to sin again. Indeed, one who finds himself on the level of this approach will benefit much more than if he were to experience the harshest punishment.

This is what Moshe said to Hashem. Ana chatah ha'am chataah gedolah, "The nation has sinned egregiously" - and they know it. What greater shame can there be? What punishment supersedes the pain they must sustain, knowing that they have sinned against their great Benefactor? The shame they are experiencing upon confronting the sin will certainly catalyze such regret that this will never happen again. For this reason, they deserve forgiveness and pardon.

How fortunate is one who achieves such a level of reflection, in which the very fact that he "sinned" is sufficient punishment for him. The realization of the blemish created by the sin, and the distance it accords the sinner in his relationship to Hashem, comprise all of the punishment the person needs.

Whenever Moshe would go out to the Tent, the entire people would stand up and remain standing, everyone at the entrance of his tent. (33:8)

Midrash Tanchuma derives from here that one must stand up and show respect to an old man, a scholar, Av Bais Din; Head of the Rabbinical Court, and a king. He must remain at attention until the individual whom he is honoring walks out of sight. One Tanna adds that as a result of this halachah, if one of these individuals would notice a large group of people near his intended walking path, he should alter his route, so not to disturb them, since they would have to stop whatever they were doing in order to show him respect. A second Tanna disputed this notion, contending that on the contrary, he should make a point of going past them. When people observe a righteous man, the image is indelibly engraved onto their hearts and minds, elevating them spiritually. The Chida, zl, writes that the purpose of venerating talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars, is not that they require the honor. It is due to the Torah which they have studied. By honoring them, one honors the Torah, thus facilitating his Torah observance. It is not about the man, but about his Torah.

With this in mind, we understand why one gives respect to a talmid chacham even if he is himself greater than he. The Chafetz Chaim would give kavod to younger, less knowledgeable rabbanim, despite his personal ill health and weakness.

While it may be difficult for some people to give kavod to someone whom he feels is not yet worthy of it, it is clearly deplorable to degrade a Torah scholar. Furthermore, not only does he infringe the laws of respect, but he also harms himself and creates a negative atmosphere for his children. A child growing up in a home in which his father lacks kavod haTorah, in a

home in which a child will often be relegated to listening to his father abuse rabbanim, will sadly see his son follow in his footsteps.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites the Ben Yehoyada in his commentary to the Talmud Shabbos 119b concerning the meaning of the pasuk: 'Al tigu b'meshichai,' eilu tinokos shel bais rabban; 'u'binvial al tareiu,' eilu talmidei chachamim. "Dare not touch My anointed ones" - this refers to young children in school; "and to my prophets do no harm," which is an allusion to Torah scholars. The Ben Yehoyada questions the use of al tigu - "dare not touch," regarding to children, and al tareiu, "do not harm," concerning Torah scholars. He explains that the raah, acting harmfully, which is written concerning Prophets means humiliation. "Do not humiliate My Prophets." Take great care not to offend, hurt the feelings, or cause them any shame. This idea does not apply to children. No one should trouble himself to embarrass a child.

The Ben Yehoyada adds the "clincher." One who shames a talmid chacham, who denigrates a sage, will eventually be the cause of ra, evil, touching his children. When young children observe a lack of respect of scholars; when they see adults knock the rabbi or Rosh Yeshivah; when children see their parents' lack of respect for a Torah personality - they will eventually follow suit.

Rav Zilberstein shares the story of a young, pre-Bar-Mitzvah yeshiva student who was both brilliant and diligent. His desire to learn more and more was outstanding. This was a boy who could not wait to go to school, who jumped out of bed the moment the alarm clock rang - in short, the perfect student, a rebbe's dream. One day, however, it all changed. The alarm rang and he continued sleeping. After a while, his mother went to his room to check on him. Something must be wrong. Her son never slept in.

"Come, get up, it is time to go to school," the mother said to her son. "I am not in the mood" was the boy's response. Something was terribly wrong. This was unusual. The father was called. Perhaps he could clear up the problem. The boy's father had as much success as his wife. Their son absolutely refused to go to school. It made no difference to him if he slept in - or not.

The parents turned to the rebbe. Perhaps he could help. His relationship with his student/their son was close. He might be able to discover what had entered their child's mind. The rebbe gladly came over to the house, infused with self-confidence. He would inspire the boy with hope. He would succeed in getting him to return to school. He tried, once, twice, a number of times - all to no avail. The child had lost his interest in Torah.

Parents do not give up. A rebbe does not give up - that is, if they are genuine. They worked together in order to achieve a breakthrough. Finally, the young boy opened up and related a frightening, but regrettably all-too-common story: "The other day I saw one of the distinguished talmidei chachamim of our community, who also happens to be the Rav of a shul, walking home. Behind him were a group of youths making fun, catcalling and denigrating him. I decided then and there, that if this was the reward for spending a life studying Torah - I want out! Better I should remain at home, sleep and play, than attend cheder."

The young boy then turned to his rebbe and said, "The other day you pleaded with me to return to cheder. You claimed that I was a wonderful student who would one day grow up to be a distinguished Rav or Rosh Yeshivah. I thought to myself, 'My rebbe is cursing me! He wants me to be like that hapless Rav who was disgraced by supposed bnei Torah! If this is the case - I am not interested.'"

When one acts harmfully towards Torah scholars, he creates a situation in which this harm will touch his children. Regrettably, this is an issue that has come to the fore time and again, as young people become "turned off". While a number of issues have colluded to catalyze this tragedy, one of the reasons that always seem to pop up is: I lost all respect for the rabbi, Rosh Yeshivah, etc. From where does such an attitude originate? When young people listen to adults who are either malcontented, insecure, egomaniacs who are jealous of others, or talk with derision regarding Torah leaders, their words "touch" the children. If Torah is to mean something, its disseminators must be held in the greatest esteem. There is, however, one catch: they must be worthy of such respect.

Va'ani Tefillah

V'kabtzeinu yachad mei'arba kanfos ha'aretz.

And you shall gather us together from the four corners of the earth.

The word kanaf is rarely used to describe the "corners" of the world. It is used with regard to Tzitzis, Al kanfei bigdeihem, "On the corners of their garments." The proper word should have been either ruach, direction, or katzeh, edge/cover. Kanaf at the edge of a garment is the corner. It also relates to the fringes, the Tzitzis that we place on the kanfei bigdeihem. How does this fit into the idea of the ingathering intimated by the prayer of v'kabtzeinu yachad? There is diversity among the Jewish People. I am using "diversity" to describe the difference of opinions that exist in the Torah observant camp. Diversity is good as long as everyone adheres to halachah and are focused l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven. Otherwise, it is not diversity, but a breach of opinion. There are also those Jews who, regrettably, due to assimilation and alienation are "hanging by the fringes." We pray to Hashem that all Jews unite under one banner - Him. We also pray that even those who have strayed so far that they are nothing more than "fringe Jews," just hanging on, should begin to see the light, to return and embrace their national and personal heritage.

l'zechar nishmas our husband, father, grandfather - HaRav Daniel ben HaRav Avraham Aryeh Leib Schur, Horav Doniel Schur Z"L, niftar 21 Adar 5766. t.n.tz.v.h. sponsored by his wife, sons, daughters and all his family

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Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column, Parshat Ki Tisa

"The Inevitable Comedown"

It was over 40 years ago, but I remember the feelings very well. They were overwhelming, and were not dispelled easily.

It was just after I had completed all of my course requirements and dissertation defense in the process of obtaining my doctorate in psychology. Like any graduate school experience, this was the culmination of several years of study and hard work. The ordeal was now over, and a celebration was in order.

And celebrate I did, together with my wife, my young children, several other students, and assorted friends. But then, the celebration was suddenly over. I found myself inexplicably moody and depressed. A sense of emptiness enveloped me. At first I thought it was just a result of a transition from a state of being busy to a state of boredom.

However, the feelings lingered for quite some time. I tried to rid myself of my moodiness in various ways, and it must have been difficult for those close to me to be around me. Luckily, the feelings were soon gone, as suddenly and as mysteriously as they had come.

Quite a while later I learned that this curious phenomenon was very common. When people achieve great accomplishments, having put great effort and toil into them, they experience a sense of exhilaration and excitement. A "high". Soon afterwards, and often very soon afterwards, there is a "comedown" from that "high".

It is as if, now that the goal with which one had been long preoccupied was reached, life had become meaningless. There is nothing further to do, no ongoing purpose. A pervasive sense of emptiness ensues.

The struggle to fill that emptiness is fraught with danger. In my own case, the emptiness thankfully passed in relatively short order, with no harm done, and no unusual "acting out" on my part. But others in similar predicaments frequently attempt to fill that emptiness in ways which result in great, and sometimes tragic, difficulties.

The psychological mechanism I have just described helps to explain a most puzzling event in this week's Torah portion, Ki Sisa (Exodus 30:11-34:35). I refer, of course, to the episode of the Golden Calf.

Just a few short weeks ago, in the Torah portion of Yitro, we read of how the children of Israel experienced the most momentous occasion in human history. The Almighty revealed Himself to them at Mount Sinai in an awe inspiring atmosphere of thunder and lightning. They heard the voice of God, and they were spiritually elevated by His revelation. They were, almost literally, on a "high".

Moses then ascends Mount Sinai, and remains there for 40 days and 40 nights. During that time, the people come down from their "high". His disappearance mystifies them, they become impatient and irritable. We can empathize with their sense of emptiness, although we are shocked by the manner in which they choose to deal with that emptiness.

"When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people came together unto Aaron, and said unto him: 'Up, make us a god'... And all the people broke off all the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron...he... made it a molten calf and they said: 'this is thy god, O Israel'... He built an altar before it... And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to make merry.'" (Exodus 32:1-6)

What a comedown! How can one explain a process of spiritual deterioration as drastic as this? Just weeks ago the Jewish people were on the highest possible level of religiosity and commitment to the one God. Now they are dancing and prancing before a golden idol. Is this not inexplicable?

Yes, it is inexplicable, but it is a common human phenomenon. People are capable of attaining greatness, but they are not as capable of sustaining greatness. They can achieve "highs" of all kinds, but they cannot maintain those "highs". There is an inevitable "comedown".

This concept is so very well expressed in the following verse:

Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?

Who may stand in His holy place?" Psalms 24:3

Homiletically, this has been interpreted to mean that even after the first question is answered, and we learn "who may ascend the mountain", the question still remains: "Who can continue to stand there?" It is relatively easy to ascend to a high level; much more difficult is remaining at that high-level and preserving it.

My revered colleague, one of the most insightful spiritual thinkers of our age, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, believes that the best example of deterioration following an exciting climax is the experience of childbirth itself. He points to the phenomenon known as "postpartum depression". A woman, a mother, has just experienced what is probably the highest of all "highs", the emergence of a child from her womb. But quite commonly, that experience is followed by a sense of depression, which is sometimes incapacitating, and sometimes even disastrous.

The physiological process of giving birth calls upon the utilization of every part of the mother's body, from her muscles and nervous system to her hormonal fluids. Her body has exerted itself to the maximum. In the process she has achieved the greatest of all achievements, the production of another human being.

But soon afterwards when the body, as it were, has nothing left to do, she feels depleted and empty. She can easily sink into a depression, sometimes deep enough to merit a clinical diagnosis of "postpartum depression".

This is an important lesson in our personal spiritual lives. Often we experience moments of intense spirituality, of transcendence. But those moments are brief, and transitory. When they are over we feel "shortchanged", and we despair of ever returning to those precious experiences.

We must take hope in the knowledge that almost all intense human experiences are transitory, and are followed by feelings of hollowness. We can ascend the mountain, but we cannot long stand there.

We must humbly accept our descent, our frustrating failures and limitations, and persist in climbing the mountain. Ups and downs, peaks and valleys, are to be expected in all aspects of our life.

We will experience "highs", but we must expect the inevitable "comedown". And we must "hang in there", and try and try again to recapture those "highs".

This is the lesson of this week's Parsha. Our people ascended a spiritual mountain. They then descended into an orgy of idolatry. But then they persisted and with the assistance of God's bountiful mercy, and as we read later in the Torah portion, received this divine assurance:

"And he said, behold, I make a covenant: Before all Thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth... And all the people... Shall see the work of the Lord..." (Exodus 34:10)

Two Types of Religious Encounters

Framing the epic events of this week's sedra are two objects - the two sets of tablets, the first given before, the second after, the sin of the Golden Calf. Of the first, we read:

"The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of G-d, engraved on the tablets."

These were perhaps the holiest object in history: from beginning to end, the work of G-d. Yet within hours they lay shattered, broken by Moses when he saw the calf and the Israelites dancing around it.

The second tablets, brought down by Moses on the tenth of Tishri, were the result of his prolonged plea to G-d to forgive the people. This is the historic event that lies behind Yom Kippur (tenth of Tishri), the day marked in perpetuity as a time of favour, forgiveness and reconciliation between G-d and the Jewish people. The second tablets were different in one respect. They were not wholly the work of G-d:

Carve out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.

Hence the paradox: the first tablets, made by G-d, did not remain intact. The second tablets, the joint work of G-d and Moses, did. Surely the opposite should have been true: the greater the holiness, the more eternal. Why was the more holy object broken while the less holy stayed whole? This is not, as it might seem, a question specific to the tablets. It is, in fact, a powerful example of a fundamental principle in Jewish spirituality.

The Jewish mystics distinguished between two types of Divine-human encounter. They called them *itaruta de-l'eylah* and *itaruta deletata*, respectively "an awakening from above" and "an awakening from below." The first is initiated by G-d, the second by mankind. An "awakening from above" is spectacular, supernatural, an event that bursts through the chains of causality that at other times bind the natural world. An "awakening from below" has no such grandeur. It is a gesture that is human, all too human.

Yet there is another difference between them, in the opposite direction. An "awakening from above" may change nature, but it does not, in and of itself, change human nature. In it, no human effort has been expended. Those to whom it happens are passive. While it lasts, it is overwhelming; but only while it lasts. Thereafter, people revert to what they were. An "awakening from below", by contrast, leaves a permanent mark.

Because human beings have taken the initiative, something in them changes. Their horizons of possibility have been expanded. They now know they are capable of great things, and because they did so once, they are aware that they can do so again. An awakening from above temporarily transforms the external world; an awakening from below permanently transforms our internal world. The first changes the universe; the second changes us.

Two Examples. The first: Before and after the division of the Red Sea, the Israelites were confronted by enemies: before, by the Egyptians, after by the Amalekites. The difference is total.

Before the Red Sea, the Israelites were commanded to do nothing:

"Stand still and you will see the deliverance G-d will bring you today . . . G-d will fight for you; you need only be still." (14:13-14).

Facing the Amalekites, however, the Israelites themselves had to fight:

"Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose men and go out and fight the Amalekites' (17:9).

The first was an "awakening from above", the second an "awakening from below."

The difference was palpable. Within three days after the division of the Sea, the greatest of all miracles, the Israelites began complaining again (no water, no food). But after the war against the Amalekites, the Israelites never again complained when facing conflict (the sole exception - when the spies returned and the people lost heart - was when they relied on hearsay testimony, not on the immediate prospect of battle itself). The battles fought for us do not change us; the battles we fight, do.

The second example: Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle. The Torah speaks about these two revelations of "G-d's glory" in almost identical terms:

The glory of G-d settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day G-d called to Moses from within the cloud. Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of G-d filled the tabernacle.

The difference between them was that the sanctity of Mount Sinai was momentary, while that of the tabernacle was permanent (at least, until the Temple was built, centuries later). The revelation at Sinai was an "awakening from above". It was initiated by G-d. So overwhelming was it that the people said to Moses, "Let G-d not speak to us any more, for if He does, we will die" (20:16). By contrast, the tabernacle involved human labour. The Israelites made it; they prepared the structured space the Divine presence would eventually fill. Forty days after the revelation at Sinai, the Israelites made a Golden Calf. But after constructing the sanctuary they made no more idols - at least until they entered the land. That is the difference between the things that are done for us and the things we have a share in doing ourselves. The former change us for a moment, the latter for a lifetime.

There was one other difference between the first tablets and the second. According to tradition, when Moses was given the first tablets, he was given only Torah *shebikhtav*, the "written Torah". At the time of the second tablets, he was given Torah *she-be'al peh*, the Oral Torah as well: "R. Jochanan said: G-d made a covenant with Israel only for the sake of the Oral Law, as it says: 'For by the mouth of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel'" (Ex. 34:27).

The difference between the Written and Oral Torah is profound. The first is the word of G-d, with no human contribution. The second is a partnership - the word of G-d as interpreted by the mind of man. The following are two of several remarkable passages to this effect:

R. Judah said in the name of Shmuel: Three thousand traditional laws were forgotten during the period of mourning for Moses. They said to Joshua: "Ask" (through *ruach hakodesh*, the holy spirit). Joshua replied, "It is not in heaven." They said to Samuel, "Ask." He replied, "These are the commandments - implying that no prophet has the right to introduce anything new." (B.T. Temurah 16a) "If a thousand prophets of the stature of Elijah and Elisha were to give one interpretation of a verse, and one thousand and one sages were to offer a different interpretation, we follow the majority: the law is in accordance with the thousand-and-one sages and not in accordance with the thousand prophets." (Maimonides, Commentary to the Mishneh, Introduction)

Any attempt to reduce the Oral Torah to the Written - by relying on prophecy or Divine communication - mistakes its essential nature as the collaborative partnership between G-d and man, where revelation meets interpretation. Thus, the difference between the two precisely mirrors that between the first and second tablets. The first were Divine, the second the result of Divine-human collaboration. This helps us understand a glorious ambiguity. The Torah says that at Sinai the Israelites heard a "great voice *velo yasaf*" (Deut. 5:18). Two contradictory interpretations are given of this phrase. One reads it as "a great voice that was never heard again", the other as "a great voice that did not cease" - i.e. a voice that was always heard again. Both are true. The first refers to the Written Torah, given once and never to be repeated. The second applies to the Oral Torah, whose study has never ceased.

It also helps us understand why it was only after the second tablets, not the first, that "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of Testimony in his hands, he was unaware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with G-d" (34:29). Receiving the first tablets, Moses was passive. Therefore, nothing in him changed. For the second, he was active. He had a share in the making. He carved the stone on which the words were to be engraved. That is why he became a different person. His face shone.

In Judaism, the natural is greater than the supernatural in the sense that an "awakening from below" is more powerful in transforming us, and longer-lasting in its effects, than is an "awakening from above." That was why the

second tablets survived intact while the first did not. Divine intervention changes nature, but it is human initiative - our approach to G-d - that changes us.

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit www.chiefrabbi.org.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Ki Sisa

Shabbos Is Both A Mitzvah And A Present

This week's parsha contains the Torah's first elaborate discussion of the mitzvah of Shabbos [Shmos 31:12-17]. Among other things we are taught: "The Children of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath an eternal covenant for their generations. Between Me and the Children of Israel [Baynee u'bein Bnei Yisrael] it is a sign forever..."

The Mechilta in Parshas Ki Sisa states that the words Baynee u'bein Bnei Yisrael imply that Shabbos is a covenant between G-d and the Jews, to the exclusion of being a covenant between G-d and idolaters. Now this seems peculiar. We do not need a special drasha [exegesis] to teach that a Gentile is not commanded to observe the Sabbath. We know that there are 7 Noachide laws, none of which involves a Gentile keeping Shabbos.

In fact, by Shabbos there is a unique prohibition. The Talmud [Sanhedrin 58b] teaches that not only is a Gentile not commanded to observe Shabbos, but on the contrary, a Gentile is not permitted to purposefully keep Shabbos! So the question is, why does the Mechilta find it necessary to marshal a special pasuk "Baynee u'bein Bnei Yisrael" to tell us that the mitzvah of Shabbos only applies to the Jewish people?

Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapira wants to answer this question by referring to a teaching of the Brisker Rav [Rav Yitzchak Ze'ev haLevi Soloveitchik]. The Brisker Rav analyzes the text of the Shabbos morning Amidah which reads: "And You did not give it, Hashem our G-d, to the nations of the lands, nor did You make it the inheritance, our King, of the worshippers of graven idols. And in its contentment the uncircumcised shall not abide - for to Israel, Your people, have You given it in love, to the seed of Jacob, whom You have chosen." This is a very elaborate liturgy.

The Brisker Rav notes that the Rambam writes in his Mishna Commentary on Tractate Terumos that when a Gentile who has a crop and separates Terumah from it (even though he is not obligated to do so), the separation is valid and what he has taken off has the status of Terumah. The Rambam further writes in his Mishna Commentary that a Gentile who performs any of the commandments, receives some reward as one who "is not obligated but nevertheless fulfills". In other words, if we were to see a Gentile putting on Tefillin, he has fulfilled a mitzvah and gets "some reward".

However, the Brisker Rav points out, Shabbos is not like that. Shabbos is two things: It is a mitzvah [commandment] and it is a matanah [gift]. The Talmud [Shabbos 10b] quotes the Almighty telling Moshe "I have a wonderful present in my Treasure House and its name is Shabbos". The present was given to the Jewish people. Any nation that was not a recipient of this present is not able to observe Shabbos and even if they go through the motions of observing it, they have not fulfilled any mitzvah.

Tzitsis is not a present. Matzah is not a present. Tefillin is not a present. Shabbos is! The novelty of the idea of the Brisker Rav is that in order to fulfill the mitzvah of Shabbos, one needs to be included among the recipients of the present. This idea is emphasized in the above quoted portion of the Shachris Amidah on Shabbos.

It is for this reason that a Gentile may not observe Shabbos. He is taking something that doesn't belong to him!

Rav Moshe Shapira suggests that this is precisely what the above referenced Mechilta means. Baynee u'Bein Bnei Yisrael means "it is my present to you" -- to the exclusion of a Gentile who is not even eligible to receive reward as one who is not commanded but observes.

Rav Shapira relates a story that took place in St. Petersburg in Czarist Russia. There were a number of very wealthy Jews who had contracts with the government and they had to come to St. Petersburg, the capital of Czarist Russia, for business. This gathering took place around the High Holidays so these very wealthy Jewish businessmen were all in the Russian capital for Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur. Of course, they gathered together and made a minyan. On Yom Kippur, as is customary in many

places, they auctioned off the Aliyahs. When it came time for Neilah, they sold the Pesicha [honor of opening up the Aron] for Neilah. The bidding started at 500 ruble, a tremendous amount of money. The bidding went higher and higher until a certain Baron Ginsberg, a famously wealthy Jew, bid 2000 rubles.

Rav Moshe Shapira, who wrote up this story, writes that 2000 rubles in Czarist Russia is the equivalent today of a hundred thousand dollars. He describes that when Baron Folk heard that Baron Ginsberg bid 2000 rubles for "Pesicha l'Neilah" he rose to his feet and bid 2500 for the honor! Going once, going twice, going three times, Pesicha l'Neilah is sold to Baron Folk. Baron Folk then turned to the Jew sitting next to him and asked him "What is 'Pesicha l'Neilah'?" The person next to him was astonished. "You just bid 2500 for 'Pesicha l'Neilah' and now you ask what it is?" Folk answered: I do not know what Pesicha l'Neilah is, but I know that Baron Ginsberg is a good businessman. If Baron Ginsberg wants to give 2000 ruble for Pesicha l'Neilah then I want it because it must be a good business deal. He became Baron Ginsberg because he is a shrewd business man. He knows a good deal when he sees one. If he wants it, I want it more.

"I have a good present in my Treasure House." G-d tells us he has a wonderful present. "Shabbos is in my vault. It is very valuable." If G-d calls it a "matanah Tova" (good present) then we have something very special. L'Havdil it is like Baron Ginsberg. If he calls something good it must be good. Certainly, if the Almighty calls something good, it must be good!

When we have experienced Shabbos virtually all our lives, then as Shabbos rolls around again we think, "Ok, here comes another Shabbos." We never appreciate what we have while we have it. Shabbos is something that comes with a Certification. It is like when one buys a gem and he receives a certificate from the Institute of Gemology stating the value of the gem. Shabbos comes with G-d's Certificate stating its worth: "A good present I have in my Treasure House."

Shabbos Observance and Shabbos Anticipation

I would like to share another story I saw in the Sefer Otzros HaTorah:

A Jew named Rav Simcha Kaplan was a Rabbi in Tzfas. He learned in the Mir Yeshiva in Poland and he recalls the following story. He used to board by a couple who lived near the Mir Yeshiva. One Friday morning, he heard the wife repeat to her husband several times "Make sure you come home early for Shabbos." He had been living with them for some time and he had never heard this warning from her before. Simcha Kaplan got up, went to Davening, went to the morning learning Seder, he returned home in the afternoon. He saw that the wife was waiting by the window and she was full of anxiety. He asked her, "What are you so worried about?" She says "I'm worried about Shabbos!" He said, "It is not going to be Shabbos for another 4 hours, what are you so worried about?"

She responded with the following story: We were childless for many years. Finally, we had a child. We raised the child, but he was sickly. He did not grow, he did not eat, he was weak, he did not walk until he was much older. He was very frail. We consulted with the doctors here in Mir. They sent us to a specialist in Vilna who told us that the child had a heart problem. The specialist said "There is nothing I can do for this child. He will only live a couple of more years. There is nothing more anyone can do for this child. Do not waste your money. Do not waste your time. You will only have the child for a couple of more years."

They were heart-broken. Someone advised them that on the way back from Vilna to Mir, they should stop in Radin and ask the Chofetz Chaim for a blessing. This was late in the life of the Chofetz Chaim. He was already very weak and was not seeing people. They were not able to arrange a visit. However, there was a young man who was married to the granddaughter of the Chofetz Chaim who happened to know the woman in the story, the mother of the frail child. She pleaded with this grandson and he was able to get them into see the holy sage.

They told the Chofetz Chaim their tale of woe and begged him to do something for them. The Chofetz Chaim said "There is nothing I can do for you. I am very sorry." The grandson who had accompanied them to see his wife's grandfather then yelled out, "but it is their only child!" The Chofetz

Chaim said, "It is an only child? Then I will tell you what to do!" He spoke to the mother and said "I want you to accept upon yourself from this day on that every Erev Shabbos by noon you will have the table already set for Shabbos and have the candles ready to be lit. I want that from the time you light Shabbos candles, nobody in the house will do any melacha [forbidden labor]." (Even though according to the strict law, when a woman lights candles 18 minutes before sunset, other members of the household can still do melacha until sunset.) The woman readily accepted this proposal.

By the time they arrived back in Mir — a two day journey from Radin — the child was already showing signs of improvement. He started eating, he started gaining weight, and so forth. They brought the child back to the doctor in Mir and he was astounded by the improvement. He insisted they go back to the specialist in Vilna to show him the child and paid for their journey. The specialist saw the child's improvement and refused to believe that it was the same child.

But this story is somewhat perplexing. Why is it that the Chofetz Chaim only seemed to have mercy for the child when he heard that it was an only child? What if she had 10 other children? Would the Chofetz Chaim not have been sympathetic to the plight of the parents and the sickly child in that situation? Furthermore, what kind of "segulah" is this business of being ready for Shabbos at mid-day, several hours before the halachic arrival of Shabbos? The whole story requires explanation!

I heard an explanation of what this story is all about from Rav Mannis Mandel. Rav Mandel said the Chofetz Chaim was not a Chassidic Rebbe and he was not a miracle worker. But the Chofetz Chaim understood the meaning of a pasuk in Chumash. "And the Children of Israel shall observe the Shabbos (v'Shamru), to make the Shabbos an eternal covenant for their generations (l'Dorosom)..." [Shmos 31:12]

Rav Mannis Mandel explains that the word "v'Shamru" has two meanings. It can mean you have to OBSERVE it (meticulously) or it can mean you have to ANTICIPATE it (as in the pasuk "And his father SHAMAR es haDavar" [Bereshis 37:11]). The Chofetz Chaim interpreted: You want "l'Dorosom" — the preservation of your generations (through this only child). If this child will not live, then you will not have future generations. But the Torah says that if v'Shamru there will be l'Dorosom — future generations. Therefore, fulfill "v'Shamru" according to both meanings. The simple interpretation of v'Shamru is observing it. When you light candles, no one in your house should do any more melacha. But beyond that, v'Shamru also means to anticipate it. From noon on, I want you to expect and anticipate the Shabbos. Therefore, the table must be set and the candles need to be ready.

This is why the woman stood at the window. It was 12:00 o'clock and sunset was not until 5:00 o'clock. She was anxious -- where is my husband? What was her problem? The answer is because she accepted upon herself to do more than merely observe the Shabbos. She needed to anticipate the Shabbos as well. That is the interpretation of the story: She fulfilled both aspects of "v'Shamru." Therefore, they saw in their family "l'Dorosom" (future generations).

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Rabbi Mordechai Willig The TorahWeb Foundation

Lift Your Head

Hashem said to Moshe, "When you will raise the head of Bnei Yisrael (Shemos 30:11,12)." The verse (Tehilim 3:3) "Many say of my soul, 'There is no salvation for him from Hashem forever'" speaks of the nations of the world who say, "A nation that heard at Sinai, 'I am Hashem your G-d, you shall not have other gods' (Shemos 20:2,3), and forty days later said 'These are your gods, Yisrael' (32:4), can they have salvation? There is no salvation for him [Yisrael] forever!" But You, Hashem, are a shield for me, the One who raises my head (Tehilim 3:4); we were guilty of a capital offense punishable by severing of the head, but You protected us and

instead raised our head through Moshe as it says, "When you will raise the head"

- Tanchuma 4

Am Yisrael was despondent after committing the sin of idolatry a mere forty days after kabolas HaTorah. The nations scoffed at us, predicting that we could never be saved. Yet, after our precipitous decline from the highest spiritual point in our history to the depths of sin and despair, Hashem, through Moshe, raised our heads. He commanded us to build the Mishkan, using our shekalim to achieve atonement for our sins, including the Golden Calf.

The Tanchuma interprets the pesukim in Tehilim as referring to the personal sin of David Hamelech as well.

Many (Do'eg and Achitofel) say of me, "One who captured the sheep and killed the shepherd (i.e. who married Batsheva and killed her husband Uriah and Am Yisrael by the sword of war), can he be saved from his son Avshalom (Tehilim 3:1)? There is no salvation for him (David) forever!" But You, Hashem, are a shield for me, in the merit of my ancestors, as You said to Avraham, "I am a shield for you" (Bereishis 15:1). I was guilty of an offense punishable by severing of the head, but You raised my head through Nossan the prophet. When I said, "I have sinned to Hashem" he said "So, too, Hashem has set aside your sin, you shall not die" (Shmuel II, 12:13).

David Hamelech was undoubtedly devastated when he recognized and confessed to the enormity of his sin. His enemies were certain that his punishment, the rebellion of Avshalom, would be fatal. But Hashem protected David from Avshalom and restored his kingdom. His confession granted atonement for his sin and He merited an eternal dynasty.

David was not in a state to sin with Batsheva, as it is written (Tehilim 109:22) "My heart, i.e. my evil inclination, has died within me. Am Yisrael were not in a state to sin by worshipping the Golden Calf, as it is written (Devarim 5:26) "Would that their hearts be theirs to fear Me and observe all My commandments forever." Then why did they in fact sin? So that if an individual sins we tell him to learn from David; if the community sins we tell them to learn from Am Yisrael. Hashem decreed that they sin and repent to demonstrate that repentance is always possible (Avodah Zarah 4b, 5a, Rashi).

Am Yisrael was guilty of idolatry and David's sin bordered on immorality and murder. If teshuva is effective for the three cardinal sins for which one must give up his life, it can certainly atone for lesser sins.

When a person sins, the yetzer hara says to him, "Your situation is hopeless. There is no point in attempting to correct your mistake. Since you are rare spiritually doomed, continue in your sinful ways and enjoy life. You have nothing to lose." Parshas Ki Sisa combats this insidious notion. The Tanchuma (3) interprets Ki Sisa in the future tense. When we read it every year, it is as if Moshe stands there and raises our heads. The eternal lesson of the atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf is that no situation is hopeless!

Every person has moments of spiritual angst. Some commit serious sins, other lesser ones. Many realize that they are not davening and/or learning Torah properly. Most recognize that they are not actualizing their full potential, neither in serving Hashem nor in helping other. The Satan says "It is too late to change or improve." When this happens we must remember the timeless message of Ki Sisa. In the absence of prophecy, we must, with the help of our spiritual leaders, lift up our own heads. Despair is a tool in the arsenal of the yetzer hara, and must be avoided in all circumstances.

Individually, we must emulate David; collectively we must emulate Am Yisrael who atoned for their grievous sin by building the Mishkan with their shekalim. By overcoming the yetzer hara and lifting our heads, may we speedily merit the coming of Mashiach ben David and the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash.

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Rav Kook List Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Ki Tissa: Wealthy and Wise

After forgiving the Jewish people for worshipping the golden calf, God commanded Moses to quarry the stone for carving out a second set of luchot ha-brit:

"Carve out two tablets for yourself just like the first ones. I will write on those tablets the same words that were on the first tablets that you broke." (Ex. 34:1)

Why did God tell Moses to carve out the stone "for yourself"? In what way did these tablets belong to Moses?

The Talmud explains that Moses was to provide the material for the tablets from his own supply of precious stone. According to the Midrash, a sapphire quarry was located directly underneath Moses' tent. Moses, it turns out, was fabulously wealthy.

That Moses was rich is not incidental. The Sages learned from his example that wealth is a prerequisite for prophecy (Shabbat 92a). It is logical that a spiritual leader must be wise. But why should he be affluent?

Harnessing Wealth to Elevate Society

There is a high correlation between personal success and effective leadership. An insolvent individual will have difficulty gaining the people's approval and respect.

When the world is in a more perfected state, wealth is less significant. It is just one of many qualities that contribute to a person's ability to influence others. The sin of the golden calf, however, brought about a major deterioration in the world's spiritual level. With the descent from the first set of luchot to the second, wealth became a prerequisite for successful leadership. This quality joined the other attributes and abilities needed in a communal leader.

In the generations after Moses, wealth continued to serve as a crucial buttress for Torah leadership. The Talmud mentions two other pivotal leaders of the Jewish people who combined preeminent scholarship and great wealth:

"From the days of Moses until the days of Rabbi [Yehudah HaNasi, the compiler of the Mishnah], and from the days of Rabbi until Rav Ashi [the principle redactor of the Talmud], we do not find Torah and greatness in one individual." (Gittin 59a)

'Greatness' here refers to wealth. Why did the Sages use the word 'greatness'? They wanted to emphasize that this was not simply a matter of affluence. These three Jewish leaders - Moses, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, and Rav Ashi - were distinguished by a quality of greatness that contributed to their extraordinary impact on the people. They themselves were impervious to the temptations of wealth. They were able to harness this resource for its holiest task - to elevate the entire nation.

Moses' sapphire quarry, as described in the Midrash, is an apt metaphor for the ideal role of wealth. Moses' supply of rare sapphire stone was the vessel that carried God's message from Sinai. So too, the wealth of prominent leaders can function as the material basis for guiding and inspiring the people.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV, p. 235)

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Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Using a Refrigerator on Shabbos or Yom Tov

Question: What must be done on Friday to prepare the refrigerator to be used on Shabbos or Yom Tov?

Discussion: Some refrigerators and freezers are equipped with a switch that automatically turns the fan off when the door is opened. This switch must be inactivated before Shabbos.

Some refrigerators have an ice and/or cold water dispenser. The ice dispenser goes into action when the lever is pressed. This switches on a motor that turns an auger in the ice storage bin. The auger forces the ice out the door into the awaiting cup. In the case of a water dispenser, pressing the lever triggers a switch that opens an electronic valve to let water into a "water chilling chamber" located in the refrigerator. The

pressure of the incoming water pushes out the already chilled water in the chilling chamber. This chilled water flows out the door to the user. In either case, one is directly switching on an electric valve or motor by pressing back the lever, an action which is prohibited on Shabbos.¹

Automatic ice makers are common features on newer model refrigerators/freezers. It is clearly forbidden on Shabbos to activate the automatic ice maker mechanism that produces the ice. In addition, it is strongly recommended not to remove any ice from the ice bin on Shabbos, since doing so could possibly trigger the mechanism that produces the ice. This is certainly true for those models that have an infrared sensor that measures the volume of the ice bin.

On some refrigerator models a digital readout may be illuminated to indicate the cabinet temperature and the setting, or an alarm is set to warn that the door has been left open for too long or that the temperature is rising too high. Some top of the line models may have a sensor that illuminates the refrigerator when someone comes in close proximity to it, sensing motion or even body heat. Obviously these enhancements would have to be disabled for Shabbos or Yom Tov use.

Many refrigerators have a light bulb that goes on when the door is opened. The bulb must be loosened or removed before Shabbos. Alternatively, one could stick a piece of strong adhesive tape over the control knob, which will prevent the light from being switched on when the door is opened.

If the fan switch or bulb was not disconnected before Shabbos, one may not open the refrigerator on Shabbos even if all of his Shabbos food is stored inside. Although one does not intend to turn on the light or to switch off the fan, since these devices will necessarily be activated,² it is considered as if he expressly intended to do so (pesik reisha).³ Similarly, if the refrigerator was opened and it was discovered that one had inadvertently turned the light on or the fan off, the refrigerator door may not be closed, since closing the door will shut the light or activate the fan.

Question: Are there any solutions for one who forgot to disconnect the light or switch before Shabbos?

Discussion: If there is a non-Jew available, one may ask the non-Jew to open and close the refrigerator for him. This is permitted because one may instruct a non-Jew to do an action which is only prohibited to the Jew because it is pesik reisha.⁴ Preferably, the non-Jew should not be told that the light will turn on or off when he will open or close the refrigerator door.⁵

The non-Jew may not be instructed to remove the bulb from the refrigerator or to shut off the switch which regulates the fan. One may, however, hint to the non-Jew that if the bulb or switch is left in its present state, the Jew would not be able to open the refrigerator door for the rest of Shabbos.⁶ Under extenuating circumstances, when the main foods prepared for Shabbos are in the refrigerator and the non-Jew failed to follow the hint, some poskim permit instructing the non-Jew to deactivate the bulb or the switch.⁷

If a non-Jew is not available, then in the case of the automatic fan, there is nothing that can be done. In the case involving a light bulb, there are poskim who allow instructing a minor to unplug the refrigerator while the motor is not running.⁸ Another suggestion endorsed by some poskim is to ask a minor, who is unaware that the bulb will turn on when the door is opened, to open the door so that he can take out food for his own consumption. Once the door is opened, the rest of the food can be taken out as well.⁹

Question: Are there any restrictions on opening the door of the refrigerator on Shabbos to remove the food?

Discussion: There is a widespread and unresolved debate among many poskim regarding opening a refrigerator door on Shabbos. When the refrigerator door opens, warm air enters the cabinet, causing the refrigeration cycle to begin earlier than it would have had the door remained closed. Some poskim prohibit opening the refrigerator unless the compressor motor is already running,¹⁰ while others permit opening it at all times.¹¹ Some poskim recommend avoiding the problem by opening the door in an unusual manner (shinui), such as using one's elbow. As

there is no clear-cut ruling or binding custom,¹² one should conduct himself according to the ruling of his rav.¹³

- 1 This paragraph and other technical information in this Discussion have been copied from Kashrus Kurrents (online).
- 2 This is forbidden even if one is uncertain whether or not he disconnected the switch or the bulb; Rav S.Z. Auerbach in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 10:15, note 45, and Shulchan Shelomo 316:6-2.
- 3 This is considered pesik reisha d'nichah lei, since had it not been Shabbos, one would definitely want the light bulb to go on; Minchas Shelomo 1:91.
- 4 Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:68, based on Mishnah Berurah 253:99; 259:21; 277:15; 337:10. There are minority opinions that are more stringent; see Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 253:104. See also Mishnah Berurah 253:51.
- 5 Rav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 31:1, note 1; Shulchan Shelomo 253:31.
- 6 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 31:1.
- 7 Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:68.
- 8 Har Tzvi (Harari Basadeh) 1:151; Rav S.Z. Auerbach in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 10:14.
- 9 Rav S.Z. Auerbach in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 10:14, note 41. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Meor ha-Shabbos, vol. 4, pg. 223) does not agree with this leniency.
- 10 See Har Tzvi 1:151; Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:68; Chelkas Ya'akov 3:179; Minchas Yitzchak 2:16.
- 11 See Minchas Shelomo 1:10-1; Tzitz Eliezer 8:12, 12:92. Rav M. Feinstein is quoted (The Shabbos Kitchen, pg. 222) as ruling leniently on this issue.
- 12 Rav Y.Y. Weiss (Kol ha-Torah, vol. 42, pg. 14) rules that a child under bar mitzvah may be asked to open the refrigerator at all times even according to those who forbid an adult to do so. See Mishnas Rav Aharon, O.C. 4.
- 13 Our Discussion covers electric refrigerators that operate on a compressor system. The halachah is more stringent concerning gas-powered refrigerators, such as the ones found in recreational vehicles or trailers.

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Writing the Wrong Way

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Writing in the Air

“May I communicate with someone on Shabbos by making the motions of writing the letters?”

Question #2: Frosty Writing

“May I write my initials on a frosty window on Shabbos?”

Question #3: Asking a Gentile to Write.

Elishava plans to attend a seminar related to the latest advances in her profession as a speech therapist. Part of the seminar will be given on Shabbos. May she ask one of the non-Jews attending the class to take notes for her?

Writing and erasing are two of the thirty-nine melachos of Shabbos that were performed in the building of the Mishkan. Each board used in constructing the Mishkan was marked so that it would be returned to its correct place when the Mishkan was reassembled (Rashi, Shabbos 73a; Gemara, Shabbos 103b). (The Talmud Yerushalmi [Shabbos 12:3] emphasizes the importance of each board being kept in the same place.) The numbers written on the boards were also sometimes erased, if a mistake was made. Thus, both writing and erasing are included among the melachos, since any important activity performed while constructing the Mishkan defines a category of work prohibited on Shabbos (Bava Kama 2a).

It is important to note that the erasing performed in the Mishkan was done specifically with the intention of rewriting. For this reason, erasing is a violation min haTorah only if one intends to rewrite or intends to effect

some other direct, positive result (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 11:9; however, cf. Tosafos, Shabbos 73a s.v. hakosheir.)

Other writing was performed in the Mishkan when the names of the shevatim were engraved on the choshen, and also when calculating the donations and where they were used (Shu't Avnei Nezer, Orach Chayim 199:10). Since our parsha discusses the donations and the construction of the Mishkan and also discusses the writing on Luchos, we will avail ourselves of this opportunity to discuss some of the halachos that pertain to writing and erasing.

Writing, when it is written with a permanent ink or dye on a surface that will hold the writing permanently is prohibited on Shabbos min haTorah. If the writing will not last permanently, the prohibition to write or to erase is only miderabbanan.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED PERMANENT WRITING?

Some poskim contend that writing is permanent if it will last until after Shabbos (Rambam and Magid Mishnah, Hilchos Shabbos 9:13). Others contend that it is considered permanent if it lasts the length of time people usually write notes (Rashba, Shabbos 115b, cited by Bi'ur Halacha 340:4, s.v. Bemashkin). According to both opinions, writing that disappears after a few hours is prohibited only miderabbanan.

Writing on one's hand is prohibited min haTorah, even though it eventually disappears (Mishnah, Shabbos 104b). This is because the writing, itself, would be permanent, if it were not for the body's warmth dissolving the ink. It is therefore treated as if it has been written permanently and then subsequently erased by body temperature.

IS IT PERMITTED TO WRITE ON A FROSTY WINDOW?

Although the Torah's prohibition is violated only with permanent writing, Chazal prohibited temporary writing. Therefore, it is prohibited to write in spilled liquid that is lying on the table, in sand, or in the frost on a window (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 340:4 and commentaries).

IS IT PROHIBITED TO WRITE LETTERS IN THE AIR?

This is permitted, since no letters are being formed at all, even temporarily (Rama 340:4).

DISAPPEARING INK

Question: I was once told that there is no Torah violation in writing a message on Shabbos with ink that appears now, but will disappear shortly. Is this true?

As we mentioned above, there is no Torah violation in writing with ink that will disappear within a few hours. This halacha has major ramifications when dealing with the needs of a Jewish hospital. Recording data is necessary, but if disappearing ink is used until after Shabbos, the prohibition is only miderabbanan. Poskim rely on this, if a hospital cannot employ sufficient non-Jewish staff.

INVISIBLE INK

Does writing with an ink that cannot be read violate Shabbos?

Although it would seem that this is a modern shailah and a modern invention, we will be surprised to discover that this shailah is at least 1,800 years old. The Gemara tells us the following story, “Rabbi Chiyah bar Abba said ‘The people who live in the East are very clever. When they want to send a secret, they write the message with “Mei milin” (an ink that is not automatically legible). Subsequently, they pour a specially formulated ink on the paper, and presto! The message becomes legible!’” (Yerushalmi, Shabbos, Chapter 12).

The Gemara then asks, “If someone wrote this way on Shabbos, has he violated a Torah prohibition?” The Gemara concludes that pouring the ink violates a Torah prohibition on Shabbos because this makes the writing legible. Whether the first step violates Shabbos is disputed by the poskim. Shu't Har Tzvi (Yoreh Deah 230) rules that it is prohibited min haTorah, whereas Pri Megadim (340:3 in Mishbetzos Zahav) rules that it is prohibited only miderabbanan.

This dispute has an interesting ramification. If this writing is prohibited only miderabbanan, writing that cannot be read immediately does not

violate a Torah violation. Therefore, taking a photograph on film or recording information on a computer disk does not violate Shabbos min haTorah (Har Tzvi).

PHOTOGRAPHY ON CHOL HAMOED

Another difference in halacha between these poskim would be whether taking photographs is permitted on Chol HaMoed. In general, one is prohibited on Chol HaMoed from doing activities considered melacha unless they fulfill some Yom Tov or Chol HaMoed need, or they will avert financial loss. These rules notwithstanding, it would appear that according to Pri Megadim, one would be permitted to take photos on Chol HaMoed, since there is no melacha being performed. It would seem that this leniency would not exist according to Har Tzvi, and photography would be permitted on Chol HaMoed only if it somehow enhances the Yom Tov. According to both opinions, developing the photographs would not be permitted on Chol HaMoed, unless Yom Tov was thereby enhanced.

LET THEM EAT CAKE

Is it permitted on Shabbos to eat cake that has icing in the form of letters on top, since I am erasing the letters when I eat it?

Again, a seemingly very contemporary shailah goes back hundreds of years. The rishonim record a Shavuos celebration, for which cakes were decorated with the letters of the alef-beis and certain tefillos and words of bracha. In a special Shavuos ceremony, these cakes were served to the young children who were just beginning to learn Torah. The children would read the letters and the brachos, and then they would be rewarded by being served the special cake (Rokei'ach #296). The question was why eating the letters does not violate erasing on Yom Tov, since writing and erasing is prohibited on Yom Tov, just as it is on Shabbos (Mordechai, Shabbos #369).

Various reasons are suggested why this minhag does not violate the halacha. Some contend that eating is not considered an act of erasing (Taz 340:2), whereas others contend that the melacha of erasing does not apply to food (Shu't Maharshag 2:41).

Others permit eating the cake for a more complicated reason that requires an introduction. Although eating the cake must result in the erasure of the letters, the person eating did not have intention of erasing. This is halachically categorized as a situation of a "psik reisha," meaning that a prohibited consequence will definitely result from an act that is otherwise permitted. A psik reisha is usually prohibited; thus, in this case, although eating the cake would otherwise be permitted, its consequence, the erasing, is problematic.

Although a psik reisha is usually prohibited, when combined with other mitigating factors it is sometimes permitted. In this instance, there are several different reasons why no melacha min haTorah applies. Although the activity should still be prohibited miderabbanan, when several such mitigating factors combine, we are lenient.

The rationale behind this "heter" is that Chazal forbade certain activities to prevent one from violating, chas veshalom, a Torah law. However, when there are several different reasons why the Torah law is not violated, there is no need to prohibit this activity.

When someone eats letters, there are three different mitigating factors, each of which, on its own, removes the erasing from being a Torah violation.

First, the Torah law of erasing on Shabbos is violated only when one intends to write on the erasure, as mentioned above. Obviously, someone who eats letters cannot subsequently write on the "erasure."

Second, Torah laws are violated only when the melacha has a positive result. In the case of erasing, a positive result would be that one can now write on the erasure, or that a mezuzah is rendered valid by the erasure. However, eating the cake does not result in any positive results from the erasure.

Third, this is not the way one usually erases. The halacha is that doing any melacha in an atypical way lessens the prohibition from a Torah violation to a Rabbinic injunction.

Therefore, since the erasing is unintentional, performed not in order to write, destructive, and an unusual way to erase, the resultant indirect

erasing is permitted. This is the rationale applied by many poskim to explain the Shavuos custom cited above. According to this approach, it is permitted to eat the icing on a cake that includes lettering, without concern over whether one is changing or rendering the letters illegible in the process.

However, others rule that, although one should not eat these pieces of cake, it is permitted to serve the cake to the children and allow them to eat it themselves (Mordechai, Shabbos #369). Halachically, I need not prevent a young child from doing a prohibited activity for his own benefit (Yevamos 114a). According to this approach, only a child would be permitted to eat the letters on the cake, but not an adult (Rama 340:3).

Mishnah Berurah follows a compromise position between these two opinions, permitting someone to eat the cake while disregarding where the letters are, but suggesting that, when slicing the cake, one should cut between the letters and not through a letter. As we will explain, cutting between the letters is not considered erasing according to most opinions.

MAKING AN IMPRINT IN LIFE

Most shoes and boots have a manufacturer's trademark or name engraved on the heel. Is it permitted to traverse snow or mud on Shabbos, knowing that I am making an imprint while I walk? Isn't this writing on Shabbos?

The contemporary poskim discuss this shailah, and permit it for the same reasons that one was permitted to eat the lettering on the cake. For one thing, I am not intending to write; and for a second, it is not the normal way of writing letters; and for a third, most people consider the imprint in the mud or snow to be "damaging." There is another mitigating factor here, in that the writing is temporary. Since walking is more of a necessity than eating cake, the poskim rule that one is permitted to walk on snow or mud and ignore the imprint made by the shoe or boot.

WHAT AN EXQUISITE MOUTH-WRITING YOU HAVE!

The following tshuvah shows up in early sixteenth century halachic literature. A scribe was writing exquisitely beautiful sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos. Unfortunately, this scribe had lost his hand in an accident and had taught himself how to write beautiful graphics with his quill in his mouth. Certainly, the he was an incredibly talented individual, and many people were using sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos written by this scribe. However, the shailah was raised as to whether these were kosher.

A great posek of the era, Rav Menachem Azaryah of Fanu (Shu't # 38) ruled that all the sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos written by this scribe were invalid. His reasoning is that halacha recognizes only items written with one's stronger hand. For this reason, someone who places a quill in his mouth on Shabbos and writes has not violated a Torah prohibition, since this is not the way people usually write (Mishnah Shabbos 104b). (It is prohibited miderabbanan to write this way on Shabbos.) Thus, even if someone has taught himself how to write beautifully by holding the pen in his mouth, it is not considered writing by the Torah, and does not fulfill the mitzvah of "writing" sifrei Torah, tefillin and mezuzos.

Similarly, writing done by a right-handed person who writes with his left hand is not considered writing. For this reason, the Gemara rules that someone who writes with his left hand has not violated a Torah prohibition of writing on Shabbos (Shabbos 103a). (Again, this is prohibited miderabbanan.)

A WRITING COURSE

At this point, I would like to address the last of our opening questions: Elisheva plans to attend a seminar related to the latest advances in her profession as a speech therapist. Part of the seminar will be given on Shabbos. May she ask one of the non-Jews attending the class to take notes for her?

According to most poskim, this is prohibited on Shabbos or Yom Tov, since a Jew may not ask a non-Jew to do work for him that would be prohibited min haTorah for a Jew. This is because the non-Jew becomes your agent, and you are not permitted to have an agent work for you on Shabbos, even if the agent is not Jewish. Thus, it appears that Elisheva will not be able to have notes taken for her by her non-Jewish colleague.

However, according to the Minchas Yitzchak, there is a very simple solution to this problem. If Elisheva pays the non-Jew to do the work and specifies that it makes no difference whether the non-Jew performs the work on Shabbos or a weekday, then there is no halachic problem at all, even if the non-Jew did the work on Shabbos or Yom Tov. The reason is that once you pay the non-Jew, he is no longer working as your agent, because he has his own interest in doing the work. I am still not permitted to ask him to do the work specifically on Shabbos, but as long as he has the

option to do the work on a different day, there is no problem if he actually does it on Shabbos (Shu't Minchas Yitzchak 5:36).

CONCLUSION

Creating a beautiful Shabbos entails much planning and organization. The melachos of writing are a prime example of how a person must be fluent in all the halachos of Shabbos in order to understand its far reaching ramifications. Studying all the melachos of Shabbos helps us appreciate Shabbos more, and to get the maximum joy out of this special day.

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