

Weekly Parsha Bechukotai
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The final portion of this third book of the Torah contains an ominous tone. This is because of the vivid description of evil events that will befall the Jewish people when they desert their Godly mission and sink to the level of the societies that surround and outnumber them. The Torah promises us that such behavior and attitudes will surely lead to disaster, exile and persecution from the very societies that the Jews try to emulate.

All Jewish history bears testimony to the accuracy of the words that exist in this week's portion of the Torah. And the way the Torah presents these events, which will occur in the future, is not in the necessary framework of punishment but rather in the inevitable picture of events that inexorably lead to consequences. It is not God Himself, so to speak, that is punishing the Jewish people but rather it is the Jewish people itself that is doing the punishing. This is a logical and even an avoidable result of past behavior and misguided attitudes and beliefs. This is a very important lesson for Jews to understand.

Behavior, speech, attitudes and beliefs always have consequences in the real world in which we live. They are not to be taken lightly and not to be shrugged off as just being examples of the fallible nature of human beings. We are not allowed to dig a hole under our seat in the boat. The words of the prophet Jeremiah ring true today as they did thousands of years ago: "the fathers ate sour grapes and therefore the children of later generations will have their teeth set on edge." One has to be blind to history or even to current events not to realize the lessons involved and described in this week's Torah portion.

The Torah will expand upon this much later towards the end of the fifth book of the Torah. We will be presented with a full and graphic picture of the cruelty of humanity towards the Jewish people over the centuries until our day. Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman in his commentary to Torah explains that this week's portion and its predictions referred to the destruction of the first Temple and the relatively short exile of the Jewish people after that in Babylonia.

The later section, towards the end of the Torah, refers to the destruction of the second Temple and the long and seemingly endless exile that follows upon its demise. The latter exile, which was, and to a certain extent still is, a long and difficult one to endure, one that has cost countless generations of Jews their lives and their futures and others their spiritual heritage and legacy, seems to have little if any redeeming features.

And yet the remarkable fact of Jewish history is the vitality and productivity of the Jewish people in exile, suffering persecution and living under adverse circumstances. This resilience is also reflected in the prophecies of the Torah regarding the eternity of the Jewish people and its eventual return to both its physical national heritage and spiritual greatness.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

Evolution or Revolution? (Behar 5779)
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

There are, it is sometimes said, no controlled experiments in history. Every society, every age, and every set of circumstances is unique. If so, there is no science of history. There are no universal rules to guide the destiny of nations. Yet this is not quite true. The history of the past four

centuries does offer us something close to a controlled experiment, and the conclusion to be drawn is surprising.

The modern world was shaped by four revolutions: the English (1642–1651), the American (1776), the French (1789), and the Russian (1917). Their outcomes were radically different. In England and America, revolution brought war, but led to a gradual growth of civil liberties, human rights, representative government, and eventually, democracy. On the other hand, the French revolution gave rise to the "Reign of Terror" between 5 September 1793, and 28 July 1794, in which more than forty thousand enemies of the revolution were summarily executed by the guillotine. The Russian revolution led to one of the most repressive totalitarianism regimes in history. As many as twenty million people are estimated to have died unnatural deaths under Stalin between 1924 and 1953. In revolutionary France and the Soviet Union, the dream of utopia ended in a nightmare of hell.

What was the salient difference between them? There are multiple explanations. History is complex and it is wrong to simplify, but one detail in particular stands out. The English and American revolutions were inspired by the Hebrew Bible as read and interpreted by the Puritans. This happened because of the convergence of a number of factors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the Reformation, the invention of printing, the rise of literacy and the spread of books, and the availability of the Hebrew Bible in vernacular translations. For the first time, people could read the Bible for themselves, and what they discovered when they read the prophets and stories of civil disobedience like that of Shifrah and Puah, the Hebrew midwives, was that it is permitted, even sometimes necessary, to resist tyrants in the name of God. The political philosophy of the English revolutionaries and the Puritans who set sail for America in the 1620s and 1630s was dominated by the work of the Christian Hebraists who based their thought on the history of ancient Israel.[1]

The French and Russian revolutions, by contrast, were hostile to religion and were inspired instead by philosophy: that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the case of France, and of Karl Marx in the case of Russia. There are obvious differences between Torah and philosophy. The most well-known is that one is based on revelation, the other on reason. Yet I suspect it was not this that made the difference to the course of revolutionary politics. Rather, it lay in their respective understandings of time.

Parshat Behar sets out a revolutionary template for a society of justice, freedom, and human dignity. At its core is the idea of the Jubilee, whose words ("Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof") are engraved on one of the great symbols of freedom, the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. One of its provisions is the release of slaves:

If your brother becomes impoverished and is sold to you, do not work him like a slave. He shall be with you like an employee or a resident. He shall serve you only until the Jubilee year and then he and his children shall be free to leave you and return to their family and to the hereditary land of their ancestors. For they are My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves... For the Children of Israel are servants to Me: they are My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt – I am the Lord, your God. (Lev. 25:39–42)

The terms of the passage are clear. Slavery is wrong. It is an assault on the human condition. To be "in the image of God" means to be summoned to a life of freedom. The very idea of the sovereignty of God means that He alone has claim to the service of mankind. Those who are God's servants may not be slaves to anyone else. As Judah Halevi put it,

“The servants of time are servants of servants. Only God’s servant alone is free.”[2]

At this distance of time it is hard to recapture the radicalism of this idea, overturning as it did the very foundations of religion in ancient times. The early civilisations – Mesopotamia, Egypt – were based on hierarchies of power which were seen to inhere in the very nature of the cosmos. Just as there were (so it was believed) ranks and gradations among the heavenly bodies, so there were on earth. The great religious rituals and monuments were designed to mirror and endorse these hierarchies. In this respect, Karl Marx was right. Religion in antiquity was the opium of the people. It was the robe of sanctity concealing the naked brutality of power. It canonised the status quo.

At the heart of Israel was an idea almost unthinkable to the ancient mind: that God intervenes in history to liberate slaves – that the supreme Power is on the side of the powerless. It is no accident that Israel was born as a nation under conditions of slavery. It has carried throughout history the memory of those years – the bread of affliction and the bitter herbs of servitude – because the people of Israel serves as an eternal reminder to itself and the world of the moral necessity of liberty and the vigilance needed to protect it. The free God desires the free worship of free human beings.

Yet the Torah does not abolish slavery. That is the paradox at the heart of Parshat Behar. To be sure, it was limited and humanised. Every seventh day, slaves were granted rest and a taste of freedom. In the seventh year, Israelite slaves were set free. If they chose otherwise they were released in the Jubilee year. During their years of service they were to be treated like employees. They were not to be subjected to back-breaking or spirit-crushing labour. Everything dehumanising about slavery was forbidden. Yet slavery itself was not banned. Why not? If it was wrong, it should have been annulled. Why did the Torah allow a fundamentally flawed institution to continue?

It is Moses Maimonides in *The Guide for the Perplexed* who explains the need for time in social transformation. All processes in nature, he argues, are gradual. The foetus develops slowly in the womb. Stage by stage, a child becomes mature. And what applies to individuals applies to nations and civilisations:

It is impossible to go suddenly from one extreme to the other. It is therefore, according to the nature of man, impossible for him suddenly to discontinue everything to which he has been accustomed.[3]

So God did not ask of the Israelites that they suddenly abandon everything they had become used to in Egypt. “God refrained from prescribing what the people by their natural disposition would be incapable of obeying.”

In miracles, God changes physical nature but never human nature. Were He to do so, the entire project of the Torah – the free worship of free human beings – would have been rendered null and void. There is no greatness in programming a million computers to obey instructions. God’s greatness lay in taking the risk of creating a being, *Homo sapiens*, capable of choice and responsibility and thus of freely obeying God.

God wanted humankind to abolish slavery, but by their own choice, in their own time. Slavery as such was not abolished in Britain and America until the nineteenth century, and in America, not without a civil war. The challenge to which Torah legislation was an answer is: how can one create a social structure in which, of their own accord, people will eventually come to see slavery as wrong and freely choose to abandon it?

The answer lay in a single deft stroke: to change slavery from an ontological condition to a temporary circumstance: from what I am to a situation in which I find myself, now but not forever. No Israelite was

allowed to be treated or to see him or herself as a slave. They might be reduced to slavery for a period of time, but this was a passing plight, not an identity. Compare the account given by Aristotle:

[There are people who are] slaves by nature, and it is better for them to be subject to this kind of control. For a man who is able to belong to another person is by nature a slave.[4]

For Aristotle, slavery is an ontological condition, a fact of birth. Some are born to rule, others to be ruled. This is precisely the worldview to which the Torah is opposed. The entire complex of biblical legislation is designed to ensure that neither the slave nor their owner should ever see slavery as a permanent condition. A slave should be treated “like an employee or a resident,” in other words, with the same respect as is due a free human being. In this way the Torah ensured that, although slavery could not be abolished overnight, it would eventually be. And so it happened.

There are profound differences between philosophy and Judaism, and one lies in their respective understandings of time. For Plato and his heirs, philosophy is about the truth that is timeless. For Hegel and Marx, it is about “historical inevitability,” the change that comes, regardless of the conscious decisions of human beings. Judaism is about ideals like human freedom that are realised in and through time, by the free decisions of free persons.

That is why we are commanded to hand on the story of the Exodus to our children every Passover, so that they too taste the unleavened bread of affliction and the bitter herbs of slavery. It is why we are instructed to ensure that every seventh day, all those who work for us are able to rest and breathe the expansive air of freedom. It is why, even when there were Israelite slaves, they had to be released in the seventh year, or failing that, in the Jubilee year. This is the way of evolution, not revolution, gradually educating every member of Israelite society that it is wrong to enslave others so that eventually the entire institution will be abolished, not by divine fiat but by human consent. The end result is a freedom that is secure, as opposed to the freedom of the philosophers that is all too often another form of tyranny. Chillingly, Rousseau once wrote that if citizens did not agree with the “general will,” they would have to be “forced to be free.” That is not liberty but slavery.

The Torah is based, as its narratives make clear, on history, a realistic view of human character, and a respect for freedom and choice. Philosophy is often detached from history and a concrete sense of humanity. Philosophy sees truth as system. The Torah tells truth as story, and a story is a sequence of events extended through time. Revolutions based on philosophical systems fail because change in human affairs takes time, and philosophy has rarely given an adequate account of the human dimension of time.

Revolutions based on Tanach succeed, because they go with the grain of human nature, recognising that it takes time for people to change. The Torah did not abolish slavery, but it set in motion a process that would lead people to come of their own accord to the conclusion that it was wrong. That it did so, albeit slowly, is one of the wonders of history. Shabbat shalom

Shabbat Shalom: Behar (Leviticus 25:1-26:2)
By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, telling him to speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you come to the land that I am giving you, the land must be given a rest period, a sabbath to God. For six years you shall plant your fields, prune your vineyards, and harvest your crops, but the seventh year is a sabbath of sabbaths for the land...” (Leviticus 25:1–5)

The Torah portion of Behar opens with the fundamental laws of Shmitah, the seventh year of rest for the land of Israel, paralleling the Sabbath day of rest for every Jew. During these days, when the issue of land is the ultimate question on everyone's mind – for what is the issue of peace and war in Israel if not land – we have to remind ourselves of the seeming impossibility that, despite almost two thousand years of exile, the Jews never stopped dreaming of their return to the Land of Israel; and indeed we have returned in our generation. Was it something miraculous and mystical that sustained this relationship of a people to land for so long? And if it was, wherein lies the origin of this unique relationship?

Ordinarily, Jewish law divides along two lines: requirements between human beings and God, and requirements between one human being and another. But there is also a third realm: the requirements of a Jew toward his/her land. In fact, the very climax of the book of Leviticus emphasizes precisely this third realm, *bein yehudi l'artzo*, between the Jew and his land, replete with laws of the tithing of produce, the necessity of allowing the land to lie fallow during the Sabbatical year, and returning all property to its original owner in the jubilee year.

But in order to grasp the full symbolism of a Jew's relationship to a land, and how this land is at the crux of our experience as Jews, we must take note of a much earlier biblical incident at the very dawn of our history, when our first patriarch purchased a plot for his wife's gravesite, paying an astonishingly high sum for a relatively tiny piece of land.

Abraham's purchase of this property does not only provide us with biblical evidence that our deed to Hebron reaches back to our earliest beginnings; it unites our history with a specific parcel of earth, a grave site for our first matriarch Sarah, inextricably linking the founders of our faith-nation with the land of Israel in an eternal bond, within the boundaries of God's initial covenant with Abraham, a bond of eternity!

This purchase of land indelibly establishes for us the special commitment which the Bible expects a husband and wife to have for each other, a commitment which extends beyond physical life and even translates into a significant monetary expenditure. The sages of the Talmud derive our form of religio-legal obligatory engagement, *kiddushin* (with a ring or an object of material value), from Abraham's purchase of the plot of land that would serve as Sarah's cemetery plot (*Kiddushin* 2a). The Talmud deduces the "taking" of marriage from the "taking" of the land. Thus, *halakha* creates a metaphoric parallel between marriage, land and eternity, alluding to the unique and magnificent ideal that we must develop an eternal relationship of love and commitment to our land paralleling the eternal relationship of love and commitment to our spouse.

In order to understand what it means to be "engaged or married" to the land, let's first isolate three elements of marriage, and then trace these elements back to our portion of Behar. First of all, marriage contains the physical or sexual component, called "entrance" (*biah* in Hebrew), which expresses the exclusivity of the love relationship. Second, there are the fundamental monetary obligations the couple has to one another, specifically outlined in the Bible (*Ex. 21:10*) and clearly delineated in the fifth chapter of the tractate *Ketubot*. Third, the Torah essentially sees marriage as an eternal relationship. Abraham's obligations to Sarah continue even beyond her lifetime, as we have seen, and the prophet Hosea describes God's engagement to Israel: "I shall consecrate you unto Me forever" (*Hosea 2:21*). Although divorce is an allowable option if there is no better solution, the rabbinic view at the conclusion of the Tractate *Gittin* remains operative: "Even the altar of the holy Temple weeps when a husband and wife are divorced" (*Gittin* 90b). Undoubtedly, the ideal is the eternal relationship, and even when psychologies collide, biology heals: For the birth of a child, and the

eternal potential of this new creature continuing after the death of each spouse, soon asserts the true continuity of the marital relationship.

We find that these three elements relate to the land of Israel as well! "When you come into the land," utilizes the the verb whose very root refers to sexual relations specific to husband and wife (*biyah*). And when we're told to hallow the fiftieth year (*Lev. 25:10*), the word the Torah employs is '*kiddashtem*' – the same term which is the rabbinic expression for marriage. The Torah parchment unfurled in Behar seems to weave a mystical marital canopy uniting the nation Israel with the land of Israel.

Second, no sooner have we entered the land than the Torah instructs us concerning our obligation to that land (much like the obligations a husband has to a wife): for six years we are obligated to plant the fields, prune the vineyards, and harvest the crops, "but the seventh year is a sabbath of sabbaths for the land...you may not plant your fields, nor prune your vineyards...since it is a year of rest for the land" (*Lev. 25:4–5*). The land must lie fallow every seventh year when its produce belongs to the poor who eat freely from the crops. And, in a veritably uncanny, human fashion, resembling the husband-wife relationship, the land responds to our actions, or our lack thereof. If we maintain our obligation to the land, the land will respond to us with abundant produce. If not, the land will grow desolate, for "as long as the land is desolate it will enjoy the sabbatical rest that you would not give it when you lived there" (*Lev. 26:35*). In other words, the land will lie fallow and unproductive. Hence, a relationship of mutuality exists between Israel and its land.

Third, just as there is an eternal aspect to marriage, there is also an eternal aspect to the land. During the jubilee, the fiftieth year, the Torah commands that land one may have been forced to sell returns to the original owners (*Lev. 25:13*). This is called redemption of property (*geulat karka*). Land remains in the family for perpetuity even when dire circumstances force a sale. The eternal link between the land and its owners is the issue addressed in the haftara of Behar when Jeremiah, the prophet of the destruction of the holy Temple, redeems his uncle Hananel's land for him. Despite the destruction at hand, Jeremiah knows that eventually the Jews will return to the land. God's promise of an eternal covenant is paralleled in the eternal rights of a family toward its finished property.

Throughout the world, people love the land in which they are born, a love so central that one's homeland is called in most vernaculars "motherland" or "fatherland." These terms are absent in the Hebrew language; our relationship to the land is not one of son or daughter to father or mother, but is rather akin to that of husband to wife or wife to husband. May we be worthy of the land and may the land properly respond to our love and commitment to it in this generation of return and redemption.

Shabbat Shalom!

Bechukotai: Eternal Inheritance Rav Kook Torah

The warnings-rebukes of *Bechukotai* are harsh. Grim admonitions of war and famine, exile and persecution if the Jewish people will refuse to listen to God and keep the Torah. Yet, in the midst of all the darkness, a ray of light glimmers.

"I will make the land so desolate that [even] your enemies who live there will be astonished. I will scatter you among the nations, and keep the sword drawn against you. Your land will remain desolate, and your cities in ruins." (*Lev. 26:32-33*)

The Ramban noted that a remarkable blessing lies hidden among all of these punishments.

“What it says, ‘your enemies who live there will be desolated’ (וְשָׂמְרוּ אֶת-אֲרָצְכֶם הַשְּׂבִיבִים בָּהּ - עֲלֵיהֶם אֲבִיבִיכֶם הַשְּׂבִיבִים בָּהּ) - this is, in fact, good news. It proclaims that during all of our exiles, our Land does not accept our enemies.

“This is an amazing proof and promise to us. For throughout the settled world, you will not find a good and spacious land that was always settled, and yet is devastated to the extent that the Land of Israel is now. Since we left the Land, it has not received any other nation or people. All attempt to settle it, but none succeed.”

When the Ramban arrived in Eretz Yisrael in 1267, he witnessed the Land’s desolation with his own eyes. As he wrote in a letter to his son:

“What can I tell you about the Land? It is much abandoned and greatly desolate. The holier the place, the more profound the destruction. Jerusalem is devastated the most, and the area of Judah more than the Galilee.”¹

“An Inheritance to Israel”

Rav Kook noted that another verse alludes to this special connection between the Land and the Jewish people:

“[God] struck down great nations and slew mighty kings... all the kingdoms of Canaan. And He gave their land as an inheritance, an inheritance to Israel, His people.” (Psalms 135:10-12)

“נְחֻלָּה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמוּ - וְנָתַן אֶרֶץ נְחֻלָּה”

Why did the psalmist repeat, “an inheritance, an inheritance to Israel His people”?

This, Rav Kook explained, refers to two great kindnesses. First, God delivered the Land of Israel from the Canaanite nations to the Jewish people. This was not a temporary conquest, but a nachalah, an eternal inheritance.

And what about the second kindness? God imprinted a special character on the Land. Due to its unique holiness, the Land is not suitable for any other nation. It is forever “an inheritance - an inheritance exclusively to Israel, His people.”

As a result of this special connection between the Land and the people, we possess a clear sign to know when Israel’s redemption is at hand. Rabbi Abba in Sanhedrin 98a taught that when the Land of Israel gives its fruit in abundance, that is an overt sign that the end of Israel’s exile draws near. As it says,

“And you, mountains of Israel, will give forth your branches, and bear your fruit to My people of Israel, for they will soon be coming.” (Ezek. 36:8)

(Adapted from Olat Re’iyah vol. II p. 83)

See also: Bechukotai: Why Exile?

¹ Kitvei HaRamban 1:368.

In 1867, exactly 600 years later, Mark Twain toured the Middle East. The famous American author described the country he saw in his travelogue:

“The further we went the hotter the sun got, and the more rocky and bare, repulsive and dreary the landscape became... There was hardly a tree or a shrub any where. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country. No landscape exists that is more tiresome to the eye than that which bounds the approaches to Jerusalem.” (The Innocents Abroad, p. 555).

Drasha Parshas Behar
Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Blind Faith

The commandment of Shemita is a test of our faith and an examination in our true belief in the Almighty’s ability to sustain us. The Torah commands us that every seven years we must let the land of Israel lie fallow, with no harvesting or planting of crops. But Hashem promises us that if “you shall perform My decrees, and observe My ordinances and perform them, then you shall dwell securely on the land. The land will give its fruit and you will eat your fill; you will dwell securely upon it” (Leviticus 25:18-19). Rashi explains the blessing “even if you eat only a little, it will be blessed in your stomach.” The little you eat will grow into a bounty of satiation. But after assuring us that our little will feel plentiful the Torah talks to the naysayers. The Torah talks about that

group of people. “If you will say – What will we eat in the seventh year? — behold! We will not sow and not gather in our crops!” Hashem assures them as well. “I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year and it will yield a crop sufficient for the three-year period.” (Ibid v.20-21)

The Kli Yakar and a host of other commentaries ask. Why should a Jew ask that troubling question? Didn’t Hashem command his abundant blessing in the sixth year? Didn’t the little bit of food leave them satisfied? Why do they have concern about the ensuing years?

My dear friend Rabbi Benyamin Brenig of Golders Green, London recently related this wonderful story to me: Reuvain and Shimon were two men, who lived on opposite ends of town. They each inherited a fortune of gold. Each of them decided to bury their fortunes in their backyards. They wanted to make sure that they would have something to sustain them in their old age. On their respective properties, they each picked a landmark, paced twenty steps due north and dug a large hole.

Reuvain, the more nervous of the two, was careful to make sure that no one was watching. Every other second he glanced furtively over his shoulder to make sure that no one saw him bury the treasure. No one did.

Shimon, by nature, was trusting and carefree and he was not so careful. He was not worried that anyone would steal his fortune. But he was wrong. He was spotted by a nosy neighbor, who was also a thief.

In the middle of the night, the thief dug up the fortune. Out of mercy, he left few coins at the bottom of the pit, and removed the coins. He refilled the hole and packed the ground perfectly as if nothing was disturbed. Then he took off with the fortune.

Reuvain’s fortune, however, remained intact. But he was, by nature, a worrier. And so, the next day he decided to dig up the hole to make sure that the gold was still there. Accidentally, he counted only fifteen paces from his landmark and dug. There was nothing there. Reuvain was frantic. Someone must have seen him dig the pit, he figured. For the rest of his life, he worried. On his property, he had a pit filled with gold coins, but all Reuvain did was worry!

Shimon on the other hand had nothing but the remnants of a few coins. Everything else was stolen. But he never checked the fortune, and was merrily content, assured that when the time would come he could dig up the pit and retrieve his fortune. Reuvain, the millionaire, died heartbroken and frantic. Shimon, the man with but a few coins left for his old-age lived his life content as if he was the wealthiest man in the world.

The Torah tells us about the different types of blessings. For the faithful, Hashem says, “I will command my blessing in the sixth year,” in which Rashi assures us that even a bit will feel like a bounty. But we must acknowledge that despite Heavenly assurances, there are those who always worry. They need to see the money! They ask, “What will we eat in the seventh year? Behold! We will not sow and not gather in our crops!” Hashem must assure them that he will increase their bounty in a way that is visible to them.

Some of us can believe without seeing immediate results. We can sleep well, with full satisfaction on empty stomachs. The greatest expression of faith is when we do not see the blessing, but we feel it in our hearts and even in our stomachs. That blessing transcends tangibility, and the fear of deficiency. I think that is a noble goal.

For the rest of us, those who keep looking over their shoulder and check their fortunes every day, they need a different type of blessing. Sometimes we dig for tangible salvation, even though the treasure is sitting undisturbed in our own backyard.

Dedicated by Aleeza & Avi Lauer and Family, in memory of Avi’s father, Rabbi Elias Lauer – Harav Eliezer Ben Aharon Dovid, A”H, on the occasion of his yartzeit, 26th day of Iyar, and in memory of Avi’s grandfather, Aaron Lauer – Ahron Dovid Ben Eliezer, A”H, on the occasion of his yartzeit, 28th day of Iyar.

Good Shabbos!

Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"א

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Kids Playing and Torah Learning

Q: Is it proper and healthy for a child to learn a lot of Torah and limit playing, if this is his desire?

A: Certainly, if this is truly HIS desire, and not that he is pressuring himself or being pressured by others (Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein's son related that one time when their family was in a bungalow colony in the summer, he was learning Torah with his father and they heard children outside taking a ride on a horse and carriage. He father stopped the learning and told him to go and take a ride on the carriage, so that he would not feel that learning Torah was preventing him from playing if he wanted to).

Reading During Class

Q: I am learning in a college and attendance is required. Is it permissible for me to read something else during a class?

A: Ask directly at the college.

Choosing a Teacher

Q: Which teacher is preferable to hire – a veteran teacher who will be insulted if not hired, or a younger teacher who will be more helpful to the school?

A: Great general principle: The teacher is for the students and not the students for the teacher.

Learning Emunah or Gemara

Q: Which is greater – learning Emunah or Gemara?

A: One needs both of them.

Text Message During Tefilah

Q: If my mom calls and I am in the middle of Davening, is it permissible for me to send her a text message to tell her that I am Davening?

A: Yes. Just as it is permissible at certain times during Davening to greet someone out of respect or awe.

Nefesh Ha-Chaim

Q: Is it true that one should only learn Sha'ar Dalet in Nefesh Ha-Chaim?

A: One should learn the entire book. It is very important (see Ha-Rav's Commentary on Nefesh Ha-Chaim).

Learning Sefer Ha-Tanya

Q: Is it good for a Yeshiva student to learn Sefer Ha-Tanya?

A: 1. It depends on his age. 2. After learning Nefesh Ha-Chaim. 3. Ask your Rabbi in Yeshiva.

Healthy Soul in a Healthy Body

Q: Is the source for the expression "A healthy soul in a healthy body" from our Sages or from the non-Jews?

A: It is from the Romans: Mens Sana In Corpore Sano. We say: A healthy body for a healthy soul. Rambam, Hilchot De'ot 4:1.

Expression on Ascending to the Temple Mount

Q: Someone mentioned ascending to the Temple Mount. I said: Hashem have mercy. Someone then said to me that I should not use this expression because it is only permissible for a Rabbi to use it. Is this correct?

A: It is clear that you are not saying it in your name but in the name of the Rabbis.

Hilchos Sefirah

8217. There are several reasons for the Simcha of Lag Ba'omer;

1) On Lag Ba'omer the talmidim of Rebbi Akiva stopped dying. (Mishna Brurah 493:MB8)

2) It is the Yahrzeit of Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai and on this day he revealed the Zohar. (Sdei Chemed, Chida, Bnei Yissaschar, Chayei Odom, Aruch Hashulchan, Kaf Hachaim)

3) On Lag Ba'omer Rebbi Akiva gave Semicha to his five remaining talmidim who did not die, and through whom Torah was disseminated, (among them Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai).(Sdei Chemed, Chida, Kaf Hachaim, Pri Chodosh)

4) On this day The Mann began to fall for Klal Yisroel in the Midbar (S'U Chasam Sofer YD 233)

8218. This Thursday, the 18th of Iyar, will be Lag Ba'omer. One does not say Tachnun on Lag Ba'omer (or at Mincha on erev Lag Ba'omer). Some also do not say Lamenatzeach or have aveilim daven for the amud. Shulchan Aruch w/Mishnah Brurah 493:2, Piskei Tshuvos 493:9

OU Torah

The Time of Your Life

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

It is a lesson I first learned in a course I took on the skills of interviewing long ago. The instructor taught us that the way to really size up a candidate for a job is to determine how he uses his time. He taught us that one question designed to assist the interviewer to make that determination is, "Where do you see yourself in five years?"

I have since had decades of interviewing experience in many diverse settings and have developed a set of other questions, all intended for the same objective. They include, "What do you do in your spare time?", "How would you spend your time if you won the lottery and no longer had to work for a living?", and, in academic or rabbinic interviewing, "How would you use your time if you were given a sabbatical leave from your position?"

It is this last question which brings us to this week's Torah portion, Behar. In the very beginning, we read of the mitzvah of letting the land lie fallow (unsown) every seven years, which is the sabbatical year; also known as shemita. "But in the seventh year the land shall have a Sabbath of complete rest, a Sabbath of the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard." (Leviticus 25:4)

The Torah spells out quite clearly what can and cannot be done in the way of tilling the soil. Indeed, there is an entire Tractate of Mishnah and Jerusalem Talmud which gives specific and detailed guidelines relating to the land and the produce of the shemita year. I have always been intrigued and even a bit mystified, however, by the fact that, to my knowledge, nothing is said about what the farmer is supposed to do with his spare time that year.

Imagine a farmer who has been working industriously, 24/6, for six years. Then, as Rosh Hashanah of year seven approaches, very little work is permitted to him, and he becomes a gentleman of leisure. How does he use his time?

It is inspiring to note that there are pious farmers in Israel nowadays who scrupulously observe shemita. And it is interesting that they indeed create structured programs for their "leisure" time that year. They study Torah, particularly the sections related to agriculture. They travel to farms across the country teaching less knowledgeable farmers halachot pertaining to farming. They even spend time updating their own technical agricultural skills.

There is a lesson to be learned here. The Torah legislates that the land needs a sabbatical year to lie fallow in order to renew itself. We must come to the realization ourselves that we too need a sabbatical year, but for us staying fallow is not our mission. Rather, it is to use such a time for physical, intellectual and spiritual reinvigoration.

The Torah continues to prescribe yet another "leisure" year, a sabbatical year after seven sabbaticals years, called the Jubilee year. "And you

shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: each of you shall return to his holding and each of you shall return to his family.” (Leviticus 25:10) The personal, spiritual meaning of the fiftieth year of life was brought home to me recently. I have been re-visiting the writings of Hillel Zeitlin, a victim of the Holocaust. Zeitlin was a journalist, philosopher, and mystic who wrote a number of poems in the form of prayers, or perhaps prayers in the form of poems. One is entitled “On the Threshold of My Erev Shabbat”.

He writes in anticipation of his fiftieth birthday when he is about to enter the sixth decade of his life. “Life is like the days of the week, each decade a day. The seventh decade/day is our soul’s Sabbath, and we are granted but seven days. I am at the brink of Friday, Erev Shabbat, for my tired spirit. I pray that my Friday be a proper preparation, that I can use it for personal repair. For five days I have wandered, nay strayed. This day I hope to re-discover the path, and return before Sabbath Eve’s suns sets.”

The journey of Zeitlin’s life was a tortuous one, and its theme was perpetual search. He wandered from shtetl and cheder to Western European philosophy; from secular Zionism to Chassidism; from Warsaw’s literary circles to its shtieblach; and ultimately to Treblinka. But his poetry, especially the one I translated above, displays an exquisite time-consciousness, an awareness of how fleeting our lives are, and we must work hard to fill them with meaning.

Every seventh year is a sabbatical for the soul, and every fiftieth year, a time to recognize that we are past the zenith of our arc of life.

Fortunately, we have an even more frequent gift of time, and it is our weekly Sabbatical, Shabbat Kodesh, the Holy Sabbath. In the cycles characterized by the number seven, we have seven years, seven sets of seven years, and the seven days of the week. Jewish mysticism offers us a multitude of meanings for the number seven, but this much is not mysterious: There is a rhythm to our lives, and part of that rhythm calls for regular times for reflection and renewal. The intervals between such moments vary greatly in their duration. It is up for us to make the most of those moments, whether they last a day or a year.

I once heard a wise man, Rav Elya Lopian, say: “Modern man is convinced that ‘time is money’. Spiritual man knows that ‘time is life’”.

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Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Torah Message – Behar 5779-2019

“Wronging One Another, the Torah’s Unique Viewpoint”

(Revised and updated from Behar 5760-2000)

In this week’s parasha, parashat Behar, we twice encounter the mitzvah of אִנְיָוָה —o’na’ah, the prohibition against wronging others.

The first reference to this prohibition is found in Leviticus 25:14, in which the Torah declares: אַל תּוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת אֶחָיו , Do not hurt or grieve one another. Three verses later, in Leviticus 25:17, the Torah seemingly reiterates: Do not wrong one another, fear your G-d, for I am the L-rd your G-d.

According to tradition, these separate statements represent two different types of o’na’ah, of hurting another person. The first,—ona’at mamon, is a statute against taking unfair advantage of others in business, while—ona’at d’varim, prohibits hurting others with words in interpersonal relationships.

Both these laws are quite remarkable, and underscore the Torah’s exceptional sensitivity, particularly during common human interactions.

According to Jewish law, business people are forbidden to deceive others by offering merchandise of inferior quality or insufficient quantity. The Torah, in fact, declares such sales invalid.

Clearly, widespread dishonesty in business can undermine a nation’s economic system. But, when compared to other systems, the Torah’s perception of honesty is radically different and dramatically expansive. The Torah understandably, not only condemns and prohibits outright cheating and dishonesty, but also declares exacting excessive profit illegal.

Furthermore, the Torah not only sets limits on profits, but, remarkably, sets limits on losses as well. The Torah, in fact, sets rates on both profits and losses. Thus, if a storekeeper overcharges a buyer by more than one sixth the value of an object, or 16 2/3%, the sale is invalid and the article may be returned by the buyer. If the price is one sixth less than the object’s actual value, then the seller may invalidate the sale, because merchants, as well, need not lose more than a sixth of the object’s value. This law not only applies when buying and selling merchandise, it also prohibits excessive profiteering when hiring a worker or renting an animal or equipment. While the Roman law, known as “Laesio Major,” also prohibits profiteering, it allows huge profits of up to one half the object’s value.

Business practices and values in Judaism are quite unique and significantly different from the general secular business values that are practiced today. The attitude in much of the contemporary western world is “Caveat Emptor,” “Let the buyer beware.” In effect, we cynically declare, “Tough luck, buddy! Next time be more careful. In the future, do some comparison shopping to make sure that you know the true value of what you purchased!”

Jewish law, on the other hand, is based on honesty and justice, values that must be practiced by all—both the buyer and the seller. However, if, before the transaction, the buyer had the opportunity to discern the true value of the object and much time has elapsed without any complaint, then the buyer may not return the item. Also, if the seller clearly declares that he or she intends to profit more than one sixth, and the buyer knows this and nevertheless proceeds with the purchase, the transaction cannot be reversed.

As one would expect, the rabbis declare that o’na’at devarim, hurting people with words in interpersonal relationships, is worse than o’na’at ma’mon, taking advantage of others in business, because money can be replaced, but shame can never be undone. The Talmud, in Baba Metzia 58b, therefore boldly declares that one who embarrasses a fellow human being in public is regarded as a murderer.

The Talmudic discussion continues to record a long list of actions, many of which are astonishingly revolutionary, that are forbidden because they may result in the embarrassment of another person. For instance, a person may not inquire the price of an article from a storekeeper if he or she has no intention of buying the article. Once the transaction has been completed, one may not “comparison shop” at other venues to determine whether they had gotten a good price, unless they will be using that information to evaluate whether that particular store might have better prices, and will use that information in determining whether to buy there in the future. The reason for this is that when simply inquiring for a price, the seller is often misled into thinking that the inquirer is genuinely interested in making a purchase, and the letdown causes unwarranted pain to the store owner by having created a false sense of anticipation.

The laws of o’na’ah, of not wronging others, are indeed compelling and comprehensive. They also include special sensitivity toward a penitent, a—Ba’al T’shuva. One may not hurt a penitent by saying: “Remember your previous deeds when you weren’t religious.” There is a particularly strong prohibition against reminding a convert of his/her non-Jewish ancestry. In fact, one who wrongs a convert in business or in speech actually violates three Torah prohibitions.

We see that Jewish law maintains that those who are especially vulnerable must be particularly protected from abuse. That is why the Talmud states that while people should always check their deeds when evil befalls them, it is forbidden to even suggest to those whose lives are filled with suffering and misfortune, that they should check their deeds, as the possible cause of the evil. The rabbis learned that while it may be difficult for someone who is suffering to pray, the cries of one who is pained from being unjustly wronged are listened to with particular attention by G-d, and will definitely provoke a response from heaven.

That is why, as a derivative of the laws of o’na’ah, the Rabbis declared that one must be particularly careful not to wrong one’s wife, or cause undo pain to young children, who are also extremely vulnerable. One is not permitted to say even truthful things that are hurtful, not only

because of the laws of—loshon ha'ra, speaking evil, but also because of wronging the next person.

The Torah maintains, for instance, that anyone who curses another person, not only violates the prohibition of cursing, but also violates the prohibition of o'na'ah. Sending an invitation to a potential guest to attend a —simcha, when it is known that the invitee is scheduled to be out of town, and will be unable to attend the celebration, also falls under the category of o'na'ah, since it is done in the hope of obtaining a gift without having to host the person for the celebratory party. One is prohibited to give advice that one knows is bad or incorrect. That is why Leviticus 25:17 concludes with the words, וְיִרְאֵהְךָ לֵאמֹר לֹא תִירָא , You shall fear G-d.

Once again, we witness the Torah's remarkable and insightful directives that transform lives and societies. Two little words, לֹא תוֹנוּ —Lo to'nu, thou shall not wrong your fellow person, just two little words, go a long way to redefine proper behavior in a G-dly society.

May you be blessed.

The festival of Lag Ba'Omer (literally the 33rd day of the counting of the Omer) will start on Wednesday night, May 22nd, and continue all day Thursday, May 23rd, 2019. The Omer period, starts from the second night of Passover and continues for 49 days through the day before the festival of Shavuot. The 33rd day, Lag Ba'Omer, is considered a special day of rejoicing because, on that day, the students of Rabbi Akiva ceased dying and because it marks the anniversary of the passing of the great Talmudic sage, Rabbi Simon bar Yochai.

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The Call of the Shofar

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

The blowing of the shofar plays a prominent role in Halacha and in Jewish History. There are two occasions when we are commanded to sound the shofar. In last week's parsha we read about the mitzvah of tekias shofar on Rosh Hashanah, and in this week's parsha we are instructed to blow the shofar on Yom Kippur of the fiftieth year, signifying the beginning of Yovel. There are two historical events associated with the blowing of the shofar: first, a mighty shofar blast was sounded as Hashem descended on Har Sinai to give us the Torah. Second, we yearn for the sounding of the shofar that will signify the ingathering of our exiles and the ultimate redemption.

Although Tekias shofar on Rosh Hashannah and on Yom Kippur of Yovel are two different mitzvos, they are connected. Chazal derive numerous halachos based on the premise that these mitzvos are related to one another. The shofar of Har Sinai and of the final redemption are also linked to one another. In our musaf on Rosh Hashanah we reference pesukim that mention the shofar. Specifically, it is the pesukim of the shofar at Har Sinai and the shofar of the future that make up the primary theme of the bracha of Shofaros on Rosh Hashana. Is there an underlying theme that connects the mitzvos of shofar and the historical events associated with the shofar blowing?

In Parshas Behar the shofar sounds as a calling for all of the servants to return home as free men. The transformation at Yovel is not only physical, but also spiritual. The Torah bemoans the state of servitude for we are "servants of Hashem, not of other human beings." The essence of Yovel is the ability to begin again as servants of Hashem, and this is precisely what occurs on Rosh Hashanah. During the year, we become enslaved to many "masters"; we are slaves to the pursuit of worldly matters. On Rosh Hashanah we are given the opportunity to break these bonds and become free once again. Chazal emphasize that only one who is involved in the pursuit of Torah is truly free. Although we were physically freed from slavery on Pesach, a freedom that doesn't have a commitment to the service of Hashem merely substitutes servitude to Pharaoh with a life of bondage to physicality. True freedom was only attained when the Torah was given to us amidst shofar blasts on Shavuot. The Jewish People is still in a state of servitude due to the constraints that our current reality puts on or avodas Hashem. When the shofar will sound heralding the final redemption, our freedom will be

complete and we will once again become exclusively "servants to Hashem."

What is it about the sound of the shofar that symbolizes freedom in the spiritual sense? Chazal note that the sound of the shofar sounds very similar to the noise made by a donkey. The Gemarah even discusses the halachic implications of one who heard the shofar, yet does not even realize it was a shofar and mistakenly thought it was a sound emanating from a donkey. Is it totally coincidental that a shofar and a donkey emit almost an identical sound? Historically, there have been several events involving a shofar and a donkey. Akeidas Yitzchak began with Avraham and Yitzchak traveling on a donkey and culminated with the offering of a ram in the place of Yitzchak. A major theme of tekias shofar revolves around the merit of the akeida, and we invoke this merit as we blow the shofar of a ram. The shofar of Har Sinai was the culmination of yetzias Mitzrayim. The events leading up to leaving Mitzrayim began with Moshe returning to Mitzrayim from Midyan and the Torah tells us explicitly that he travelled on a donkey. The shofar of the final redemption heralds the coming of Moshiach who the Navi foretells will arrive riding on a donkey. What is the meaning of this connection between a shofar and a donkey that repeats itself so often?

A first-born donkey is holy, thus making a donkey the only non-kosher animal that can attain kedusha. Although externally a donkey is not kadosh, it has an inner holiness that is masked by its outside features. Similarly, Chazal describe how every Jew ultimately wants to do Hashem's will; although we appear to be servants of the outside world, our true allegiance is to our real Master. The shofar is a mitzvah that we perform using our internal strength; rather than using our external body parts, we blow from our innermost selves and declare our desire to be servants of Hashem. At Har Sinai, and at the end of days, the Jewish People declared and will declare again that like the donkey and the shofar, our innermost beings are holy. Like the slave who is freed from his external yoke on the Yom Kippur of Yovel, each of us is freed on Rosh Hashanah from the multiple forms of servitude that prevent us from reaching our innermost potential. As we continue the countdown to Shavuot, i.e. the shofar of Har Sinai, let us prepare to hear the shofar of Moshiach heralding a world totally dedicated to avodas Hashem.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Behar

Inappropriate Bitachon & A Story of Improper Farewell Gifts

The Appropriate Time and Place for Not Having Bitachon

Parshas Behar begins with an extensive treatment of the halachos of Shemitah and Yovel [the Sabbatical and Jubilee years]. The Torah promises that those who keep the laws of Shemitah will be blessed with a bumper crop in the sixth year to compensate for the lack of harvest in the seventh year.

Immediately after the section dealing with Shemitah/Yovel we read [Vayikra 25:25], "If your brother becomes impoverished and sells of his ancestral heritage, his redeemer who is closest to him shall come and redeem his brother's sale." There is a halacha in the Torah that if a person really falls on hard times and then, as a measure of last resort, needs to sell his ancestral property in Eretz Yisrael, ideally, a relative who can afford to do so should come and try to buy back the family property from the purchaser.

We wish to explain two things. First, why does this parsha immediately follow the laws of Shemitah? Second, the Medrash comments on the words, "If your brother becomes poor," by stating, "About this case it is written, 'Happy is he who understands the poor person.'" [Tehillim 41:2] Why does the Medrash make this comment on this particular pasuk? How does this relate to a person who understands the plight of the needy?

I saw a drasha quoted in the name of "Rav Yaakov, Dayan of the Holy Community of Vilna." This individual is Rav Yaakov Yosef [1840-1902] who later became the one and only Chief Rabbi of New York City. He was an outstanding Talmid Chochom and a gifted speaker. He

came to New York from Vilna during the late 1800s. The intense difficulties he encountered there drove him to his grave and no one ever assumed the position of Chief Rabbi of New York City again.

He delivered this drasha in 5645 (1885), to a "Somech Noflim" organization in Vilna, before he came to America. He expounded on both of these points: The explanation of the juxtaposition of the Sabbatical year with the situation of one who becomes poor, as well as its relevance to the pasuk in Tehillim "Ashrei maskil el dal". He explains a phenomenon which we are all aware of – namely, that human beings are capable of contradictory emotions. We can feel one way one day, and a totally different way another day. At the same time, we can have great fear and great confidence. Sometimes we are extremely happy; at other times, we are extremely depressed.

Among the contradictory emotions that people are capable of feeling are the emotions of bitachon[confidence] and daygah [anxiety]. One day we can feel confident that the Ribono shel Olam will take care of us and that whatever happens to us is ultimately good for us. "I have nothing to worry about because the Almighty is in charge of my life – whatever happens will be for the best." On the other hand, we can feel terribly unsure of ourselves and we can worry about everything. There are people who have a greater tendency to one attribute than the another. Some people feel they can never have enough money because "who knows what is going to happen to me tomorrow." Even if I have enough money for myself, I need money for my children. Even if I have enough for myself and my children, I want to leave something over for my grandchildren. Some people are never satisfied. They are always worried. What is going to be? What is going to be?

On the other hand, some people are so serene about life. They can literally not know the source of their next meal, but they approach that fact with calm and equanimity. Rav Yaakov Yosef says that usually a person worries about himself. However, the same person is a master of confidence about someone else. Regarding myself, "I need to worry about my retirement, my children and my grandchildren." However, when I am approached about a family in the community who is in dire straits, who is going to be foreclosed and who cannot put food on the table for the children, the attitude is "Nu – Hashem will help, we need to have bitachon!"

This phenomenon is not uncommon. Says Rav Yaakov Yosef – if truth be told, it should be the exact opposite. Regarding oneself, a person should have confidence that the Ribono shel Olam will take care of everything; regarding one's neighbor, one should not be such a "ba'al bitachon."

I once heard in the name of a great person that every middah a human being can experience has its proper time and place. If so, what is the proper time and place for the middah of kefirah [heresy – saying there is no G-d]? Such an emotion exists. When is a person supposed to use it? This great person said that this emotion is appropriate for your friend's problems. Upon hearing about your friend's financial or other problems, you should not proclaim, "There is a G-d in this world. He will take care of him!" Rather, this is the appropriate time for heresy, agnosticism, and questioning whether G-d will in fact take care of him! That is when you should be thinking, "I cannot rely upon G-d. I need to take care of this fellow myself!"

Rav Yaakov Yosef explains that this is the interpretation of the Medrash. The citing of the pasuk "Happy is the one who understands the poor person" in connection with the pasuk "When your brother becomes poor..." teaches that a person needs to understand the plight of the poor. In other words, I know what it means not to have food on the table; I know what it means not to be able to pay the mortgage; I know what it means that my children will not be accepted into school because I cannot pay the tuition. I know his situation, and I do not say "Don't worry, the Almighty will take care of you."

Rav Yaakov Yosef further explains the juxtaposition between the parsha of Shemithah and the parsha of "When your brother becomes poor..."

The meforshim say that Shemithah is the prototype of bitachon in the Torah. A person needs to realize that his livelihood comes from the Ribono shel Olam. To prove it, for one year out of seven, he does not

plant anything, and nevertheless he survives. After Shemithah, a person can proclaim "I have bitachon. I put my money where my mouth was. I did not plant. I had full faith in the Almighty and I did what he asked me to."

When the Shemithah year ends, after a person celebrates his successful survival of the "Shemithah test," perhaps he will hear about someone who is hard on his luck. Times are so bad for him that he needs to sell his house. Should the post Shemithah farmer say to this bankrupt person "Don't worry! See, I was not worried. I took off a year from planting and it worked for me!?" The Torah says, "No." A person needs to understand the plight of the poor (be 'maskil el dal'). Regarding yourself, bitachon is most appropriate. Regarding someone else's problems, skepticism regarding help from the Almighty is appropriate.

Do not pat yourself on the back and bask in your having had success with your Shemithah experience. Regarding your fellow man, understand his plight, put aside the attribute of bitachon and bring out the attribute of theological doubt. Regarding somebody else, the proper attitude is "I need to provide, and if I do not, who will provide for him?"

The Reward Does Not Fall Far from the Apple Sanctity

A person by the name of Rav Asher Anshel Eckstein, a Dayan in the Belzer Community in Jerusalem, told over the following story, which he heard with his own ears from the family members involved in the story.

Parshas Behar contains the mitzvah of Shemithah. On the seventh year a person may not plant, and anything that grows needs to become ownerless (hefker) after a certain point. What is even more amazing is that any produce that grows on its own in the Sabbatical year is sanctified (kodesh). In chutz L'Aretz, these laws do not directly affect us, but imagine this: A cucumber that is kodesh! A cucumber peel that is holy! An apple peel that needs to be treated with sanctity, as if it was a sefer!

This is an amazing thing. All the produce that grows in the seventh year must be treated with holiness. The story is as follows:

A woman in the holy city of Jerusalem had a housekeeper who was a foreign national, not an Israeli citizen, not Jewish, simply a non-Jewish foreign worker. She had been working for this Jewish woman for some time. One day she said to her employer, "I am leaving Israel, I am going back home to my native country." The Jewish homemaker wanted to give her long time housekeeper a going away present as a token of appreciation for her many years of good service.

She searched her house high and low for some kind of appropriate gift but could not find anything that seemed suitable. Finally, she told her: "You know what, I would like to show my appreciation for your years of loyalty to our family – please take this bag of apples for your family." This was not much of a going away present, but it was all she had at the moment when she needed to come up with something.

The homemaker's husband came home a short time later and his wife told him "Our cleaning lady is going home to Thailand, so I gave her a bag of apples as a going away present." He was horrified: "You gave her a bag of apples? It is Shemithah! Those apples have kedusha, how can we give her the apples? She does not know how to handle fruit with Shemithah sanctity properly. Furthermore, Shemithah fruit may not be taken to chutz l'Aretz. They must stay in Eretz Yisroel!"

The wife said, "Oh, my gosh! I forgot! I will run after her and get back those apples. I know what bus she takes. I will run to the bus stop and catch her." She ran out of her house, ran to the bus stop just as the bus with her cleaning lady was pulling away from the stop. People asked her, "What is the problem?" She answered that she needed to catch someone on that bus. They told her that the bus took a circuitous route and that if she ran ahead to another stop, not far away she could expect the bus to be there in ten minutes.

She ran huffing and puffing to that next bus stop and once again, as soon as she got there the bus started pulling away. She started waving frantically to the bus that she needed to get on. The Israelis on the bus saw her waving and yelled to the bus driver "Atzor! Atzor!" [Stop! Stop!]. Finally, the driver stopped the bus and the breathless housewife boarded the bus. She looked around and finally spotted at the back of the

bus her housekeeper from Thailand! She ran over to her and the housekeeper started crying! The housekeeper tearfully said, "I'm sorry! I am sorry! Here it is!"

Apparently, the homemaker took her own going away present. She went into the woman's jewelry box and took her most expensive jewelry. She assumed that her employer was running after her to get her jewelry back. She said, "Here is the jewelry! Here are the apples! Just don't tell the police!" The Jewish woman said, "Okay. I won't tell the police."

Because of being particular about the sanctity of Shemitah fruits – that they should not be abused and should be treated with Shemitah sanctity – the Ribono shel Olam rewarded this woman on the spot, and she was able to get back the jewelry that she had not yet discovered was missing.

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**Behar (Diaspora): True freedom
Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

Those who acquire slaves, acquire masters for themselves.

That is how the Talmud explains the concept of the 'eved ivri', the Hebrew slave which is referred to in parashat Behar. Actually, such a person was far from being a slave – he was more like a daytime worker with many privileges. Parashat Behar gives us a mitzvah relating to the 'yovel', the jubilee year, 'ukratem dror' you must proclaim liberty for every person in the land. It was a year through which the people were going to experience their freedom, and as a result they needed to free their slaves. Rashi explains that this even included a slave who had not yet served the regular six years. It also included one who had elected to stay on beyond six years! All slaves had to be freed.

The Pnei Yehoshua gives a beautiful perush. He tells us that in order to experience and appreciate our freedom, we needed to give freedom to others. You can only truly value freedom for yourself if you value the freedom that others are entitled to.

We find the same principle in other areas of human activity. For example with regard to the concept of honour, in Pirkei Avot the question is asked "eizehu mechubad", who is an honourable person? And the answer is "hamechabd et habriyot" – it's somebody who honours others. You are the most honourable person if you respect the honour that's due to other people.

Perhaps the finest example of all comes from the name 'Moshe'. Why was Moses given that name? The Torah says "Ki min ha'mayim meshitiyhu", it is because he was drawn out of water – Pharaoh's daughter saved his life, when as a baby he was taken from the waters of the Nile. But in that case, his name should have been 'Mashui' – 'the one who was drawn'. 'Moshe' means the one who draws others out! This indicates that Moshe would receive inspiration from his own experiences having been drawn out but also devote his life to draw others out of water and out of trouble. This is what inspired him to lead our people through the waters of the Red Sea and also to draw water out of a rock for the people to drink.

He felt that he had been saved only so that he might use his capacity to save the lives of others.

Therefore we learn that you are truly free if you give freedom to others. You are only truly honourable if you honour others. You can only truly experience and appreciate life if you give life to others. Therefore what defines us as human beings is not so much what we have, but rather what we give to the world around us.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

חדשות ערוץ 7

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Behar: Predicting the Sabbath

Ben-Tzion Spitz

Envisioning the end is enough to put the means in motion. - Dorothea Brande

In the Torah portion of Behar, God instructs Moses to relay the commands of the Sabbatical year, among a slew of other related and unrelated commandments. The Sabbatical year was the divine decree that in Israel, in the Promised Land, the fields needed to lay fallow every seventh year. Every seventh year the farmers were given a divinely mandated break from plowing, sowing and working their fields. The farmers who followed God's directive were blessed with abundant crops.

The Berdichever mentions a related verse:

"And you (Moses), speak to the Children of Israel: My Sabbaths they should guard."

The verse is unusual in two regards. It singles out Moses with the pronoun "you" – usually God just says to Moses "speak." The second curiosity is God referring to the Sabbath as His – "My Sabbaths."

The Berdichever resolves these peculiarities by citing a Midrash. The Midrash tells how while the Jews were still enslaved in Egypt, besides pleading to be freed, Moses also requested that the Jewish slaves be granted a day of rest every seven days. Moses intuited that the Jewish people and man in general needed a weekly period of rest. Hence, when God speaks with Moses about this particular commandment, about the Jews taking a day of rest, God addresses him as "you" – acknowledging this idea of Moses which anticipated the command God would eventually give the Jewish people.

However, God also wanted to underline that the Sabbath is not merely a day of rest for the weary, that it is not just a good idea which Moses thought of, recognizing our need. God is saying that we need to observe a weekly Sabbath even if we are not "weary" from our labors. We need to observe the Sabbath first and foremost because God commanded it. Hence, God refers to the divinely ordained day of rest as "My Sabbaths." It's not a human invention. It's not just because it's a good idea. There is something deeper and divine in abstaining from labor on God's Sabbath.

Moses had the uncanny ability to predict God's establishment of the Sabbath. He understood the fundamental aspect of this particular commandment.

May we embrace the Sabbath, take a break from our labors, imbibe the rejuvenating powers of this special day and get physically, spiritually and emotionally recharged on a weekly basis.

Dedication - To Jerry Posner's father on his 100th birthday! Mazal Tov!

Shabbat Shalom

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**Parashat BEHAR: Giving charity to guarantee dignity
Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz**

The 'highest level' of charity per Maimonides is not to support the poor financially, but to prevent a person from becoming poor.

In this week's Torah portion, Behar, we read one of the most important commandments, perhaps the one that most characterizes the "If your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you, you shall support him [whether] a convert or a resident, so that he can live with you" (Leviticus 25, 35).

Halachic midrash on the book of Leviticus, called Sifra, or Torat Kohanim, calls our attention to the fact that the verse does not talk about a person who loses everything and is defined as "poor." Based on the midrash, this verse is talking about a person who is in financial decline. Anyone who is familiar with economics knows how hard it is to stem such a decline.

The midrash says: “If your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you – Do not let him decline. To what is this similar? To a person falling off a mule. He is still seated – someone catches him and sets him straight; if he falls – five people cannot lift him” (Sifra, Behar, Ch. 5).

The words “his hand falters” perfectly expresses his hold weakening. This person, who was a successful businessman or farmer, suddenly lost his grip. His income is in danger and he is worried about the future. We Jews are called upon to help in such a situation – to hold him up. We are commanded to lend a hand, hold him up, prevent the collapse.

The Rambam (Maimonides, the great halachic authority from the 12th century) wrote in Mishneh Torah that there are eight degrees in the commandment of charity. The first and most important of these is based on the verse we are discussing:

“The highest level beyond which there is none is a person who supports a Jew who has fallen into poverty [by] giving him a present or a loan, entering into partnership with him, or finding him work so that his hand will be fortified so that he will not have to ask others [for alms]. Concerning this he states: “You shall support him, the stranger, the resident, and he shall live among you.” Implied is that you should support him before he falls and becomes needy” (Mishneh Torah, Halachot of Gifts for the Poor, Chapter 10, Halacha 7).

The purpose of the commandment of charity is not just to save the life of the poor. Of course, there are situations in which help is urgently needed; what we term “pikuach nefesh.”

But the commandment of charity deals with a value beyond the life of the poor person. It deals with his dignity and the dignity of every person – a Jew, a stranger, or a resident.

Therefore, the “highest level,” in the words of Maimonides, is not to support the poor financially, but to prevent a person from becoming poor, to prevent the collapse, to lend a hand so he does not reach the point of being needy.

Maimonides states that we have never seen nor heard of a Jewish community that does not have a charity box. The commandment to give charity is not just a personal one, but is an inextricable part of Jewish community: the community worries about all its members being able to support themselves respectfully.

This week’s Torah portion provides us with a value system relevant to every Jew, Jewish community and Jewish state. Questions of economics and profit are not detached from considerations of values. A person, community, or state that adopts Jewish values and acts in accordance with them prioritizes all members of their community having the ability to support themselves. Thus, they guarantee a person’s dignity and liberty as it is reflected in the Torah and in Jewish tradition throughout the generations.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Shema Yisrael Torah Network
Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Behar
פרשת בהר תשעט

והעברת שופר תרועה... ביום הכפורים תעבירו שופר בכל ארצכם...
וקראתם דרוור בארץ

You shall sound a broken blast on the Shofar... on Yom Kippur you shall sound the Shofar throughout the land... and you shall proclaim freedom throughout the land. (25:9,10)

The *mitzvah* of sounding the *Shofar* on *Yom Kippur* of the *Yovel* – fiftieth year – is unlike the *mitzvah* of sounding the *Shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*. The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains that on *Rosh Hashanah*, the purpose of the *Shofar* is to help us focus on the *Akeidas Yitzchak*, Binding of Yitzchak Avinu, thus encouraging us to think of his extraordinary *ahavas Hashem*, love for the Almighty. We, too, should learn from his example and thus imbue ourselves with love for Hashem, thereby increasing our merits on this day when all of Hashem’s creations are judged. On *Yom Kippur* of the *Yovel*, however, the sounding of the

Shofar is to publicize the right to freedom, which the slaves now have earned.

The *eved Ivri*, Hebrew indentured slave, goes free during the *Yovel*. The *Shofar* blast is his signal. It also provides the owner with an important message. He has benefited from the services of his *eved* for some time – and rightfully so. After all, he did pay a pretty penny for the right to have him as his *eved*. No one enjoys giving up a good thing, but nothing goes on forever. The moment of freedom has arrived for the *eved*. It is now time for the master to let him go. The *Shofar*’s message is quite simple: This is taking place throughout the land. You are not the only one who is losing the services of his *eved*. Everybody is! We are all in this together. The mere fact that he is not alone engenders within the master a sense of limited acquiescence that, at first, might seem to be reluctance, but, in the end transforms to acceptance with the awareness that it is happening throughout the land.

The *eved* also requires a reminder that it is time to move on. During the previous few years, he has come to admire and look up to his master. He has become a part of his family. Indeed, when things were not going his way and life seemed cruel, his finances in the red zone, the master came to his rescue and bailed him out. He would not mind remaining in this warm, welcoming, supportive household. The *Shofar* reminds him that it is time to move on, to go home and rebuild his life.

In conclusion, the *Sefer HaChinuch* teaches us that the sounding of the *Shofar* on the *Yom Kippur* of *Yovel* presents a message of solidarity. The master is informed that this is taking place all over the Land, and the *eved* discovers that he is not the only one being freed. To paraphrase the words of the *Sefer HaChinuch*, *Ein davar she’yechazek libos bnei adam kemo maaseh ha’rabim*, “As there is nothing that strengthens the hearts of people like the action of many”; this truth cannot be overemphasized. The mere thought that one’s actions can inspire and impact the lives of many is compelling. Everyone wants to inspire and bring merit to the many. Indeed, *Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zl*, would implore those who went to pray at the gravesites of the *tzaddikim*, righteous persons, to plead for him that he merit to continue being *mezakeh es ha’rabim*. The question is: How do we define *ziku ha’rabim*? How “many” comprise *rabim*? The manner in which *Rav Shteinman* defines the criteria for *ziku ha’rabim* is indicated by the following vignette.

A *rav* who served as *chazzan*, led the services, in a small *shul* in Bnei Brak was offered the opportunity to perform in the same capacity in another, much larger, congregation. The new *shul* was greater both in quantity of worshippers and in quality. In a synagogue in which the *davening* is on a higher, more intense level, the *chazzan* plays a critical role in the High Holy Days prayer service. He was tempted to leave his current position, but the *gabbaim* in charge of the *shul* were quite adamant in their reluctance to allow him to depart. He decided to seek the counsel of *Rav Shteinman*.

Rav Shteinman asked the *Rav* which *shul* would have an easier time finding another *chazzan*. His response was the larger *shul*, since it was a prestigious *minyana*, both in size and character of its worshippers. When *Rav Shteinman* heard this, he replied, “If this is the case, you must remain at the smaller *shul*.”

Hearing this, the *Rav* countered, “The purpose of leading the services is *ziku ha’rabim*. Obviously, the opportunity to bring merit to the many increases manifold at the larger *shul*.” *Rav Shteinman*’s reply should serve as a lesson and definition of the principle of *ziku ha’rabim* for us all. “Who told you that *ziku ha’rabim* is determined by numbers?” *Rav Shteinman* asked. “*Ziku ha’rabim* is ascertained by where a person is needed most, where his impact will be greatest.” *Rav Shteinman* compared this to an opportunity to render a lecture/class/study group for a large prestigious group, as opposed to a small, less-distinguished and sought-after group. Obviously, the larger group has no dearth of applicants for the job, while the smaller one must work at locating an impressive lecturer. *Ziku ha’rabim* demands that one go where he is most needed! *Rav Shteinman* added, “The rule concerning *ziku ha’rabim* is: The criteria for *avodas HaKodesh*, holy/spiritual service (on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*) is dependent on, and

determined by, what Hashem will gain, where *kavod Shomayim*, glory of Heaven, will increase the most. (In other words, it is not about you/us – it is only about Hashem).”

Zikui ha'rabim is the primary motivating factor in undertaking to enter the field of *klal work*, ie. community service. *Zikui ha'rabim* is comprised of two words – some focus on the *rabim*, many, while the more idealistic place the emphasis on the *zikui*, bringing merit. *Rav Shteinman* taught – go where you are needed most, where your contribution will have the greatest impact. It is not all about numbers. It is about reaching out and helping our brothers and sisters wherever they are.

In the last few years, the clarion call for minorities has been that their “lives matter.” In our own religious camp, with its diversity of backgrounds, the opportunity for outreach is often determined by numbers. Is it worth my time to travel to a small town to teach a group of Jews, or should I devote my talents to the larger community? Does the prisoner incarcerated for a serious crime deserve the same attention as the Jew: living in a fine Jewish community, going to *shul* and doing all of the “right” things? I think so, because it is not about numbers. In the city there are, *baruch Hashem*, many talented *talmidei chachamim* who are available to teach. Communities that have prisons are usually a couple of hours drive from the bastions of Torah. An added disadvantage is that the people living in small, distant communities or incarcerated in prison are not as *geshmak*, pleasant, pleasing, edifying, stimulating (I can go on, but I believe the reader understands.) It all depends on why we go, and for whom: is it for ourselves; or for Hashem?

One of the legendary *mezakah es ha'rabim* was *Horav Aryeh Levin, zl*, an individual who earned the appellation *Tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, warranted the respect of all Jews – both observant and those not yet observant; he was progenitor for generations of *gedolei Yisrael*. He was officially the *Mashgiach* of *Eitz Chaim Yeshivah*, but his distinction came from his outreach to the chronically ill patients who were quarantined due to the contagious nature of their illness, and for his extraordinary care, love and outreach to the Jewish prisoners incarcerated under the British Mandate. To quote a prisoner, “His eyes illuminated the darkness of our cells... for he was a bridge to the past generations, a link of prayer with the Almighty.”

In 1965, timed to coincide with *Rav Aryeh's* eightieth birthday, a group of veteran resistance fighters – dating back to the Mandate period – gathered together with their families in the courtyard of the old central prison to pay tribute to the man who meant so much to them – without whom they would not be here today – both spiritually and physically. *Rav Aryeh* rose to say a few words: “The significance of this assembly is that it has brought friends together... It particularly makes my heart glad to see the families of the prisoners, especially the young children, since I have always loved small children.” He stopped for a moment, then added, “I do not know if I will be privileged to be with you again like this. All I ask is that you tell your children: ‘There was an old Jew in Yerushalayim who loved us very much.’” With that, he burst into tears, and, among the thousands of people assembled in his honor, not a dry eye was to be found.

Rav Aryeh resuscitated these men, giving them a new lease on physical life, while introducing them to the life of the spirit. He did this with love – a love that was reciprocated. It was not only the prisoners who benefitted from his extraordinary, selfless love. It was the lepers living in the leper hospital – twelve Jewish patients surrounded by 300 Arab lepers. *Rav Aryeh* was not permitted to make physical contact with them; thus, he merely sat there and read from the *Chumash* with *Rashi's* commentary, explaining the laws, giving insight into the narrative and making the Torah come alive to these Jews who themselves were more dead than alive.

The living conditions were subhuman, filled with morass and neglect. He became involved in the lives of the patients, gave them hope filled with love. He sought kosher food for them, with his *rebbezin* preparing the meals that he carried to them. He did not fear the contagious nature of the disease, because “those on their way to perform

a *mitzvah* are not harmed.” He did not reach the “masses.” He did not make tapes, write books, have an internet site. He reached the few that no one was interested in reaching. His idea of *zikui ha'rabim* was to act on behalf of those in need – who have little hope of having someone reach out to them. He was real, placing the needs of his beneficiaries above his own.

ושבתם איש אל אהזתו ואיש אל משפחתו תשובו

Each of you shall return to his ancestral heritage, and each of you shall return to his family. (25:10)

Freedom is a precious commodity of which not all people are availed. Thus, when one who had heretofore been a slave to a master, one whose life was essentially not his own, the first thing to enter his mind, the first thing for which he would yearn, would be: freedom; return to his family; his home; his original lifestyle. Yet, the Torah teaches us otherwise: “Each of you shall return to his ancestral heritage.” Does property precede family? Does material sustenance come before freedom? *Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl*, explains this from a practical point. People often lose their freedom as the result of a hungry family and a lack of financial source of sustenance to support it. Under such circumstances, a person can be driven over the edge to do the unthinkable. The *eved Ivri*, Hebrew bondsman, did just that. Pressed with overwhelming debt and no avenue of income; children who were starving and no source of food from which to feed them, no roof over his head; he opted for a life on the other side of the law. Once he was caught, he was compelled to return the money that he had stolen. Alas, it was gone. He was not stealing so that he could deposit money into a savings account. He stole for food. It was now gone. Since he had no funds with which to make restitution, he was forced to sell himself as a slave.

Now, the *eved* is free to return, but to what? A life of hunger, bitterness, with no place to call home. It is not as if he earned extra money these past few years that he had been a slave. He arrived with nothing but debt. He leaves (hopefully) having paid up his debt. Certainly, he did not earn any extra money. He enters poor and exits poor. At least until now, he had a roof over his head and a few dollars which will probably not go very far. Is this the meaning of freedom? If this is freedom, he would rather remain a slave than go through the maelstrom of poverty again.

This is why the Torah emphasizes his return to his ancestral heritage. The mere fact that he has an address to which he can return gives him an identity. He may be poor, but, at least, he has a roof over his head. Thus, the Torah focuses on what has greater meaning to the returning slave. Freedom with no place to settle will only make the person more self-conscious and miserable, thus undermining whatever freedom he has gained.

וזרעתם את השנה השמינית

And you shall plant during the eighth year. (25:22)

Shemittah observance tests one's spiritual devotion, as well as his emotional stability. It is difficult to observe the farmers around you planting and harvesting (either they are non-observant, or they rely on various dispensations), while your field lays fallow. It is hard to subsist on contributions from others who understand, respect and admire your commitment. One who is patient, who rises to the *Shemittah* challenge, who perseveres despite the taunting of others, however, will be blessed with extraordinary *siyata diShmaya*, Divine assistance. Not only will he not lose out as a result of his commitment to *Shemittah*, it will also be the source of newly-found wealth which might not have occurred had he denied Hashem's ownership of the Land. Indeed, this is the crux of *Shemittah* observance. Does one acknowledge Hashem's sovereign ownership of the Land (and everything else for that matter), or does he think that it is his? It is difficult to part with something for which one has worked hard to earn and purchase. Judaism is all about obedience to Hashem. This *mitzvah* is a test of one's obedience.

The fact that one who observes *Shemittah* receives enormous *siyata diShmaya* is supported by a plethora of stories attesting to this

verity. The following is one related by *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein* in his *Mitzvos B'Simchah*. A recent *baal teshuvah*, penitent, lived near the Jordan Valley and was a successful farmer who owned an enormous amount of land. Since he was a recent *baal teshuvah*, the *Rav* of his community was hesitant to relate to him all of the stringencies involved in observing *Shemittah*.

This sincere *baal teshuvah* did not wait to be told about a *mitzvah*; he was on a path of discovery, seeking out every opportunity to serve Hashem in any way. When he heard about *Shemittah*, he studied everything he could about the *mitzvah*; its philosophy, its ethical and spiritual underpinnings, and its *halachos*. When he was informed that his many fields would have to lie fallow, he embraced the idea and even complained to the *Rav* for not informing him of this special *mitzvah*. The *Rav* justified his reluctance, saying, "I figured when you would hear that your fields would have to shut down for *Shemittah*, you might balk. I am proud to say that I was wrong!"

The man observed *Shemittah* with every stringency. He supported himself with investments that he had made. Once *Shemittah* ended, and it was *Rosh Hashanah* of the eighth year, he approached the agricultural department and asked for seeds, so that he could now plant his fields. They looked at him incredulously, "Now you come for seeds? The planting season was months ago. All the farmers (apparently they had not observed *Shemittah*) came months ago to pick up their seeds. Why did you not come earlier?" they asked.

"I observe *Shemittah*, followed by *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Succos*. Today is the first day that I am able to plant my field."

"We understand. Nonetheless, it does not alter our response. We have only one type of seed remaining: celery. If you want to plant celery, you are welcome to take home the celery seeds." "Fine," he said. "I will take whatever you have available."

No one needs acres upon acres of celery. Yet, he planted celery wherever he had land. Hashem did the rest. That year he had a bumper crop, with the celery growing unusually large. Farmers from all over came to stare at the amazing celery that was growing in his fields. Obviously, it was a miracle. So what? They asked. Who needs so much celery?

Hashem had other plans. That winter, Europe was struck by an unusual freeze that destroyed, among others, the celery crop. This created a serious problem for those Europeans who loved to partake of a hot soup in which celery was a primary ingredient. This was especially true during the cold winter months. After exhausting all available sources for celery, the European wholesalers contacted the Israeli agriculture department and asked if they had celery. At first, they said, "No," but then one of the inspectors remembered the observant Jew who had planted his fields with celery, producing enough celery to feed all of Europe.

The reader can imagine what happened. Our observant farmer, who had "invested" in the *mitzvah* of *Shemittah* and relied on Hashem to take care of him, sold every last stalk of celery. Hashem's promise to bless those who observe *Shemittah* was realized. The man took his profits, sold his fields, and moved to the city. He opened up a textile factory which was equally blessed – all due to his *Shemittah* observance.

וכי ימוך אחיך ומטה ידו עמך והחזקת בו

If your brother becomes impoverished and his means falter on your proximity, you shall strengthen him. (25:35)

Strengthening a Jew who is confronted with economic challenges is a practical *mitzvah*. After all, if we ignore our brother's plight, what good is our personal *frumkeit*, religious observance? A Jew whose observance is predicated upon his relationship with Hashem, while he simultaneously ignores the challenges that his brother must confront, is deluding himself. We are all one family. One cannot expect his brother to derive satisfaction from one son, when that very same son ignores the adversity suffered by his own brother.

There is yet a deeper understanding of the *mitzvah* of supporting a fellow Jew who has come on hard times. As noted by the

Bais HaLevi, when one supports the poor he fulfills a number of *mitzvos*. As a result, the *ani*, poor man, becomes a *cheftza shel mitzvah*, the vehicle through which the *mitzvah* is performed. During those moments that he asks for and receives alms, he is very much like an *Esrog*, *Lulav*, *Shofar*, etc., The *mitzvah* is being performed through him.

When *Succos* is over and we no longer require the services of the *Succah* or Four Species, they no longer retain the *kedushah*, sanctity, which had been infused them during the Festival. The *Succah's* sanctity is the result of its connection with the *Yom Tov*. Once the Festival has concluded, so, too, does the *Succah's kedushah*. The poor man retains his *kedushah* throughout the *tzedakah* dialogue. Thus, just as it is prohibited to cover the blood of a slaughtered fowl (*kisui ha'dam*) using one's foot, because it is not respectful (being that the blood of *kisui ha'dam* is a *cheftza shel mitzvah*), so, too, it is forbidden to be lax in extending our utmost respect to the poor man who stands before us. After all, he is a *cheftza shel mitzvah*.

Va'ani Tefillah

את צמח דוד עבדך מהרה תצמיח – *Es tzemach David avdecha meirah tzatzmiach*. The offspring of Your servant, David, may You speedily cause to flourish.

A storekeeper from a small village came to the city to purchase wares to sell in his town. After he compiled a large order, he informed the wholesaler that he wanted to charge the bill. Apparently, he did not (at the time), have sufficient funds to pay the bill. He promised to make payment as soon as he returned home. The wholesaler refused to accept his excuse, claiming that this was not the first time that this had happened. In fact, a number of orders had been sent to the storekeeper for which he still owed payment. The storekeeper began to cry, explaining that his children would perish from hunger if he did not earn a living. He badly needed the proceeds of the sale of this order. "I promise that I will pay you back every penny!" he cried. The wholesaler gave in and sold him the merchandise.

When his fellow merchants heard that the wholesaler had deferred to the pledge of the storekeeper, they began to berate him. "How could you do this?" they asked. "We would never trust that man again. He has broken his word too many times." During the exchange between the various wholesalers, another dealer, who was not from that area, entered the room. After listening to both sides, he turned to the storekeeper and said, "I suggest that you purchase a small amount of merchandise – only as much as you have available cash. Take it home, make your profit and return to buy more. This way you will have no debts, and you will slowly build up your credit rating." The storekeeper listened to his advice and, over time, emerged as a successful merchant.

The *Chafetz Chaim*, זל, explains that we/*Klal Yisrael* have a similar problem. We ask for the long *galus*, exile, to end. We promise to repent and correct our ways. We do not, however, keep our collective word. We submit all forms of excuses, but, at the end of the day, they are only excuses. We do not keep our word, because we accept too much upon ourselves. Instead, we should begin by correcting the more simple transgressions, such as *lashon hora*, slanderous speech, and similar sins resulting from a vulgar lifestyle. Thus, slowly we will get back on our spiritual feet to stand before Hashem, worthy of His Redemption.

We ask Hashem to send the offspring of David *Hamelech* (*Moshiach Tziddkeinu*), using the term *tzemach* which also means offshoot, a sprouting or flourishing plant. As a plant begins as a tiny shoot and grows, we ask Hashem's "patience" as we begin to return slowly – *mitzvah* by *mitzvah* – until we have the spiritual capital to be worthy of *Moshiach*.

Dedicated in memory

Mrs. Seliga Ahuva (Schur) Mandelbaum

זליגה אהובה בת הרב דניאל ע"ה ל"ג אייר תשנ"א

□ תנו לה מפרי ידיה ויהללה בשערים מעשיה

by her extended Schur family

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

This time of year is an interesting one. For the next several months or so, already starting right after Pesach, and lasting all the way almost up until Tisha B'Av, the Jewish world will not be aligned. No, I am not referring to constellations, but rather to the weekly parasha. A simple innocuous question of "What's this week's parasha?" will elicit a different response depending on where in the world the question is being asked. This is because the parasha will not be the same regularly scheduled one in Chutz La'aretz as it is in Eretz Yisrael.

Truthfully, this type of dichotomy actually happens not so infrequently, as it essentially occurs whenever the last day of a Yom Tov falls on Shabbos. In Chutz La'aretz where Yom Tov Sheini is halachically mandated,[1] a Yom Tov Krias HaTorah is publicly leined, yet, in Eretz Yisrael (unless by specific Chutznik minyanim)[2][3] the Krias HaTorah of the next scheduled Parasha is read. This puts Eretz Yisrael a Parasha ahead until the rest of the world soon 'catches up', by an upcoming potential double-Parasha, which each would be read separately in Eretz Yisrael.

The reason for this current interesting phenomenon is that this year 5779 / 2019, the eighth day of Pesach, observed only outside Eretz Yisrael, fell out on a Shabbos. On this Shabbos / Yom Tov the communities of the Diaspora leined the Yom Tov reading of 'Asser Te'asser' (Devarim, Parashas Re'eh, Ch. 14: 22), whereas in Eretz Yisrael, communities read Parashas Acharei Mos, the next parasha in the cycle, as Pesach has already ended for them.

Calenderical Conundrum

Although this calenderical conundrum occurs not infrequently, it generally only takes about a month for the rest of the world to "catch-up" to Eretz Yisrael. But this year, 5779 / 2019, in what is inexplicable to many, is that this odd alignment with Eretz Yisrael being a week ahead continues for quite a while, with the world only realigning by Matos / Masei - around Rosh Chodesh Av - a divergence of over three months (!) with Eretz Yisrael out of sync with the rest of the world, all the while passing over several potential double-Parasha catch-up points. In Eretz Yisrael, Matos and Masei will be read separately on consecutive weeks, while in Chutz La'aretz they will be combined and read on a single Shabbos. The last time a split of this magnitude occurred was in 5776 / 2016, and before that, twenty-one years prior in 5755 / 1995.

Many ask [in fact, this author has personally been asked this literally dozens of times over the last few weeks], why not catch up right away by Acharei Mos / Kedoshim or Behar / Bechukosai? Or even Chukas / Balak? Why should three separate double parshiyos be passed over, with the world only amalgamating on the fourth possibility months later? In layman's terms, why should we wait so long for the whole world to be realigned?

Moreover, this causes all sorts of halachic issues for travelers to and from Israel during this time period - which Parasha should they be reading? If / how can they catch up? Although technically-speaking, since Krias HaTorah is a Chovas Hatzibbur, a communal obligation, one is not actually mandated to 'catch-up', but is rather yotzei with whichever Kriah is publicly correctly being read.[4] nevertheless, commonly, special minyanim are set up expressly for this purpose. Many Yeshivos double-up the Parasha when most of the bochorim return from Chutz La'aretz in order to catch them up. In fact, several shuls in Eretz Yisrael, such as the renowned Zichron Moshe 'Minyan Factory', offer a solution by hosting weekly "catch-up minyanim", featuring the Torah reading of each previous week's Israeli Parasha, which is the Chutznik's current one, until the calendars re-merge. But those flying back to Chutz La'aretz would presumably not have such a 'safety-net' to fall back on.

Although some cite alternate minhagim,[5] nevertheless, it is important to note that nowadays this long Parasha split is indeed Minhag Yisrael, as codified by the Knesses Hagedolah, Magen Avraham, and Mishnah Berurah.[6] [7] We should also realize that back then travel to and from Eretz Yisrael was far less of an issue, as since undertaking the trip would take several months, missing one Parasha would be the least of one's worries. But to properly understand the 'whys' of this fascinating dual dichotomy, one must first gain an understanding of the Parasha rules and setup. In fact, this is not a new question, as several early Acharonim, including the Maharit,[8] Rav Yosef Tirani, addressed this exact issue almost 500 years ago.

Managing Mnemonics

While it is true that technically Eretz Yisrael does not have to take Chutz La'aretz into account, to slow down or join parshiyos together due to their independent luachs (or to be grammatically correct, 'luchos') and cycles, as Eretz Yisrael's is indeed deemed the *ikar kriah*,[9] nevertheless, there is more to the story.

The Tur, when codifying the halacha, sets four necessary sign-posts in relation to parshiyos, time of year, various Yomim Tovim. He also offers special codes, mnemonics, as to remember the proper order of parshiyos as they relate to. In a regular year, he writes, 'Pikdu U'Pischu'. This refers to Parashas Tzav being Shabbos Hagadol directly before Pesach.[10] However, in a leap year, like ours - 5779 / 2019, the mnemonic is 'Sigr U'Pischu', Parashas Metzora is right before Pesach. The other three are: 'Minu V'Atzru', Parashas Bamidbar is directly prior to Shavuot, 'Tzumu V'Tzalu', the fast of Tisha B'Av is directly before Parashas Va'eschanan (also meaning that Parashas Devarim is always Shabbos Chazon and Va'eschanan always Shabbos Nachamu), and 'Kumu V'Tik'u', that Parashas Netzavim is before Rosh Hashanah.[11] These mnemonics, denoting the four specific rules, or more accurately, necessary points of parasha alignment (or realignment) during the year, are accepted lemaaseh as halachah pesukah by all later authorities.[12]

Bamidbar = Buffer Zone

Several of these rules directly affect our split situation. Tosafos, and later seconded by the Levush,[13] states that since Parashas Bechukosai contains *tochachah* (rebuke), there must be a noticeable "buffer week" [practically, Parashas Bamidbar] between its reading and Shavuot. This is because we pray that a year and its curses should end, in order to usher in a new year with its blessings.[14] This is apropos for Shavuot as it is Rosh Hashanah for Peiros Ha'Ilan, tree fruits (see Gemara Rosh Hashanah 16a). Therefore, Bamidbar must be the stand-alone "buffer week" before Shavuot, in order to emphasize that we are getting Bechukosai in just before Shavuot.

Accordingly, the Maharit, citing Rav Yissachar ben Sussan, one of the foremost experts on intercalation of the Jewish calendar and its minhagim, in his renowned sefer Tikkun Yissachar, explains that if Chutz La'aretz would catch up to Eretz Yisrael prior to Shavuot, then Parashas Nasso (the Parasha following Bamidbar) would be read on Shabbos Erev Shavuot, as it will be in Eretz Yisrael, and then all of Klal Yisrael will miss the 'buffer week' from the *tochachah* of Bechukosai. Therefore, he avers, it is more important and preferable that at least Chutz La'aretz fulfill this dictate than it is that they catch up to Eretz Yisrael.[15]

So it turns out that the issue it is not why Eretz Yisrael doesn't simply slow down for Chutz La'aretz, but rather that Chutz La'aretz will not speed up to catch up to Eretz Yisrael. This 'Buffer Zone' preference answers up for Acharei Mos / Kedoshim and Behar / Bechukosai. However, there is still the subject of not catching up by Chukas / Balak. Pondering the Pearls of Parashas Pinchas

The Maharit, and later the Knesses Hagedolah, explain that since Chukas and Balak are not commonly read together, whereas Matos and Masei are (there is an important reason for this, addressed a bit further on), we do not simply combine the former, as opposed to the latter, just in order to save what amounts to a discrepancy of one week.

The Bnei Yisaschar[16] adds an additional reason. He explains that whenever possible, we attempt to ensure the public reading of Chalukas Ha'aretz, the apportioning of Eretz Yisrael, during the period of communal mourning known as Bein Hametzarim,[17] colloquially called 'The Three Weeks'. This period commemorates the heralding of the beginning of the tragedies that took place prior to the destruction of both Batei Hamikdash, from the breaching of the walls of ancient Yerushalayim on the 17th of Tamuz, until the actual destruction of the Beis Hamikdash on the Tisha B'Av.

The reason for these readings, which are found in the parshiyos of Pinchas, Matos, and Masei, to be leined specifically then, is to remind us of Hashem's promise, that although we are currently in golus, exile, nevertheless, 'le'ailah techalek ha'aretz', we will still inherit Eretz Yisrael.

A similar assessment is given by the Minchas Yitzchak,[18] albeit regarding Korbanos, especially the Korban Tamid, which is also detailed in Parashas Pinchas. He explains that the Korban Tamid protected Klal Yisrael from sinning with Avodah Zarah.[19] When the Korban Tamid was no longer offered, it enabled the Yetzer Hara'ah of Avodah Zarah to strengthen; and it was due to this sinning that eventually led to the Beis Hamikdash's destruction.

As such, and since we no longer have Korbanos, but at least we still have their recital, in the vein of 'v'neshalmah parim sifoseinu', that our tefillos are their current replacement,[20] the leining of the Korbanos is specifically read during the Three Weeks, when we are mourning the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. This serves to embolden and enable us to fight the reasons and causes for its destruction, and allow its rebuilding.

An additional point the Bnei Yisaschar raises is that Parashas Pinchas contains the Parashas HaMoadim, the reading detailing all the Yomim Tovim and their observances. He explains that this is also an apropos reading for the Three Weeks, to comfort us in our time of mourning. This is as the Navi Zechariah (Ch. 8: 19) prophesized that when the Geulah comes, this period will be turned into one of great rejoicing ('l'sasson u'lsimcha ul'moadim tovim').

For all of the above-mentioned reasons, it is simply not worthwhile for Chutz La'aretz to make Chukas and Balak into a double Parasha merely to catch up to Eretz Yisrael, since if it would, then Parashas Pinchas will not fall out in the Three Weeks. Therefore, it is proper for Chutz La'aretz to wait and not catch up to Eretz Yisrael until Matos / Masei, thus ensuring that Parashas Pinchas be leined during Bein Hametzarim, and enabling us to glean and appreciate its veiled significance and promises for the future.

The Code for Consolation

The Maharit continues that the reason why Matos and Masei are generally combined is to a similar, yet reverse, reason to Bamidbar. As the Tur wrote, the code for this time of year is 'Tzumu V'Tzalu', the fast of Tisha B'Av is directly before Va'eschanan. This is not merely by chance.

Parashas Va'eschanan contains the pesukim of 'Ki Soleed Banim U'vnei Vanim V'noshantem Ba'aretz' (Devarim Ch. 4: 25), which although not a pleasant reading, as it is a tochachah (rebuke),[21] nevertheless, Chazal[22] glean that there is a hidden message of redemption buried within. V'noshantem in Gematria equals 852, letting us know that after 852 years of living in Eretz Yisrael, the Galus would start. Yet, we find that the Galus actually started two years early, after 850 years. This is because Hashem did not want us to have to destroy us (ad loc. verse 26), and therefore, as a kindness, brought the Exile two years early, to ensure Klal Yisrael's survival.

Therefore, explains the Maharit, we commonly join up Matos and Masei to make certain that Parashas Va'eschanan is always immediately following Tisha B'Av as Shabbos Nachamu, thus offering us a message of consolation even amidst the destruction.

In conclusion, although it may seem complicated and confusing, on the contrary, each calenderical calculation is clearly consistent with the

clarion call of our Chazal - Parasha combination and separation, synchronized to showcase hope and consolation when we need it most, as well as serve as a buffer from condemnation.

The author wishes to thank Rabbi David Heber of the Star-K, author of Shaarei Zemanim, for his assistance with this article.

This article was written L'ilui Nishmas Asher Zelig ben Zev a"h, my wife's grandfather, Mr. Arthur Graff, who was niftar yesterday - 17 Iyar and L'zechus Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah teikifu miyad!

[1] As addressed at length in a previous article titled 'Rosh Hashanah: The Universal Two Day Yom Tov, (and why Yom Kippur is Not)'.

[2] Although the famed Chacham Tzvi (Shu"t 167), and later the Shulchan Aruch Harav (Orach Chaim 496, 11; although he also cites that 'yesh cholkim', nonetheless, according to the common consensus, this first opinion is ikar - see also vol. 1, Mahadura Tinyana 68) ruled that even one merely visiting Eretz Yisrael over Yom Tov should keep only one day of Yom Tov like the natives (to paraphrase: 'when in Israel, do as the Israelis do'), nevertheless, the vast majority of halachic authorities, including the codifier of the Shulchan Aruch himself (Shu"t Avkas Rochel 26) and even the Chacham Tzvi's own son, Rav Yaakov Emden (Shu"t Sheilas Yaavetz vol. 1: 168), maintained that visitors' status is dependant on whether or not their intention is to stay and live in Eretz Yisrael, or to return to Chutz La'aretz, known as 'im da'atam lachzor' (see next footnote at length). We do however find that the one-day shittah is defended by the Aderes (Sefer Shevach Haaretz, 35) and Shoel U'Meishiv (Shu"t Mahadura Telitai vol. 2: 28), and heavily implied by the Anei Nezer (Shu"t Orach Chaim 242: 27 and 33; 539: Hashmatos to Hilchos Yom Tov, 48 - end; he maintains that 'da'atam lachzor' should not apply even for visitors from Eretz Yisrael who are staying in Chutz La'aretz over Yom Tov) This shittah has also found support in certain Rishonim, including Rabbeinu Chananel's understanding of Rav Safra's opinion (Pesachim 51b - 52a), and the Ra'avan (Pesachim 162: 2; see Even Shlomo's commentary 37). Although, as shown later on, most contemporary authorities do not rule this way, nonetheless, Chabad chassidim generally follow the shittah of their Alter Rebbe, the Shulchan Aruch Harav, and only keep one day in Eretz Yisrael, no matter how long they intend on staying. Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky (Ir HaKodesh V'Hamikdash vol. 3, Ch. 19: 8) reports that his grandfather-in-law, the Av Beis Din of Yerushalayim for the latter part of the nineteenth century, Rav Shmuel Salant zt"l, was notified for this shittah as well. However, since he did not want to argue on his Rabbeim, including the Pe'as Hashulchan (see next footnote) who mandated visitors keeping Yom Tov Sheini, Rav Salant ruled that a Ben Chutz La'aretz should keep Yom Tov Sheini lechumrah, a shittah nowadays commonly referred to as 'A Day and a Half'. This refers to being makpid on not doing any Melachah De'oraysa on the second day, but also not doing the unique Yom Tov Mitzvos, i.e. making Kiddush etc. Rav Yosef Dov (JB) Soloveitchik zt"l (as cited in Nefesh HaRav pg. 84) was also known to be a proponent of this shittah, reporting that it was also the preferred shittah of his grandfather, Rav Chaim Soloveitchik zt"l of Brisk. [However, in this author's opinion, the misnomer for this shittah, 'A Day and a Half' is somewhat troublesome. Anecdotally, years ago, I met an older relative here in Eretz Yisrael on Yom Tov Sheini and noticed that she was performing Melachah. When I asked her about it, she innocently replied that her Rabbi told her to keep 'A Day and a Half'... and it was already after noon...] For more on Rav Shmuel Salant's shittah, see the annual Tukachinsky Luach Eretz Yisrael (Chol Hamoed Sukkos, footnote), Shu"t Lehoros Nossan (vol. 11: 26), Toras Rabbeinu Shmuel Salant (pg. 120), and Aderes Shmuel (Piskei Rav Shmuel Salant zt"l; Hilchos Yom Tov 129, and in footnotes at length, ppg. 131 - 135).

[3] Although there are those who want to prove that the Shulchan Aruch meant to rule that a visitor to Eretz Yisrael should only keep one day, as in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 496) he only mentions visitors from Eretz Yisrael in Chutz La'aretz, who need to keep a two-day Yom Tov like the locals, nevertheless, he personally put that notion to rest in his Shu"t Avkas Rochel (26), where he explicitly ruled that the Yom Tov observance of visitors to Eretz Yisrael is dependent on whether they are planning on staying or not. Other poskim who rule this way include the Rav Yaakov Emden (Shu"t Sheilas Ya'avetz vol. 1: 168), the Pe'as Hashulchan (Hilchos Eretz Yisrael 2: 15, 21), the Chida (Shu"t Chaim Sha'al vol. 1: 55, and Birkei Yosef, Orach Chaim 496: 7), Mahari Chagiz (Shu"t Halachos Ketanos vol. 1: 4), the Pri Ha'adamah (vol. 3, pg. 17b; citing 'kol Rabbaney Yerushalayim'), Shaarei Teshuvah (496: end 5; he makes a sikum of the shittos), Chayei Adam (vol. 2, 103: 4), Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 496: end 5), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 13), Kaf HaChaim (ad loc. 38), and Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky (Ir HaKodesh V'Hamikdash vol. 3, Ch. 19: 8). The vast majority of contemporary poskim rule this way as well. See Shu"t Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim vol. 3: 73 and 74 and vol. 4: 101), Orchos Rabbeinu (new print - 5775 edition, vol. 2, Ch. 'Yom Tov Sheini'; citing the Chazon Ish and Steipler Gaon), Shu"t Seridei Aish (new edition; vol. 1, Orach Chaim 51: 1), Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak (vol. 4: 1 - 4), Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchaso (pg. 108, footnote 5; citing many Rabbanim including the Tchebiner Rav, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, and Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, whose teshuvah is printed in the back of the sefer), Shu"t Shevet Halevi (vol. 5: 64), Shu"t Mishnah Halachos (vol. 4: 83), Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer (vol. 9: 30), Halichos Even Yisrael (Moadim vol. 1, pg. 287 - 288), Shu"t Yaskil Avdi (vol. 4, Orach Chaim 26), Shu"t B'tzeil Hachochmah (vol. 1: 60), Shu"t Yabea Omer (vol. 6, Orach Chaim 40: 1 - 3), Shu"t Ohr L'Tzion (vol. 3: Ch. 23: 5), Shu"t Knei Bosem (vol. 1: 28), Chazon Ovadia (Yom Tov, pg. 133: 12), and Yalkut Yosef (Moadim, pg. 460).

[4] See Halichos Shlomo (Moadim vol. 2, Pesach Ch. 10: 22) and Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchaso (Ch. 9: 13 - 17) at length, quoting Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach, and Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv; this is in contrast to the ruling of the Rema (Orach Chaim 135: 2; citing the Ohr Zarua, vol. 2, Hilchos Shabbos 45) regarding if an entire tzibbur did not lein one week, that they would be required to make it up the next week along with the current Parasha. See also Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky's authoritative Luach Eretz Yisrael (5775; Minhagei Hashanah, Nissan: footnote 6). Although Tosefos Maaseh Rav (34) relates that when the Vilna Gaon was

released from jail, he read all four of the parshiyos he missed at one time, on the other hand, when someone pointed this Maaseh Rav out to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, after telling a questioner that he is not obligated to find a double-parasha-ed minyan as leining is a Chovos Hatzibbur, Rav Shlomo Zalman retorted rhetorically, 'do you truly believe that you are on the Vilna Gaon's level to perform all of the Minhagei HaGr"a?!(Halichos Shlomo, ad loc. footnote 90). However, regarding a mix of Bnei Eretz Yisrael and Bnei Chutz La'aretz traveling on a boat together, with no minyan of each, see Shu"t B'tzeil Hachochma (vol. 1: 7), Shu"t Ba'er Moshe (vol. 7: pg. 228), and Yom Tov Sheini Kehilchaso (Ch. 9: footnote 42 - citing Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky and Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv; and Miluim 14) regarding the different variables and scenarios and what to do in each case.

[5] For example, the Abudraham (Seder HaParshiyos s.v. eilu) mentions Shlach and Korach are combined as regular double-Parshiyos; which to the extent of this authors' knowledge is not currently practiced. In a similar vein, the Maharit (see following footnotes) mentions that in a year such as ours, the minhag in Syria was to catch up by Chukas / Balak. He bases it on the Tikkun Yissachar, who mentions a certain Chacham, Harav Saadya Dayan Tzova (presumably a Dayan in Aram Tzova – Aleppo, Syria), who combined Korach and Chukas, an interesting combination that, as the Tikkun Yissachar notes, the rest of the world never combines. However, my esteemed father-in-law, Rabbi Yaacov Tzvi Lieberman, informed me based on his years of learning in Kollel there, that the Chaleb (Syrian) community in Mexico City still follows this unusual combination of Korach and Chukas.

[6] Knesses Hagedolah (Orach Chaim 428, Haghos on Tur s.v. kische'ira), Magen Avraham (ad loc. end 6; citing the precedent and rulings of the Maharit and Tikkun Yissachar; see following footnotes), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. end 10).

[7] In an interesting side point, the Gemara (Megillah 29b) mentions an alternate minhag, that of the Bnei Maarava (Eretz Yisrael), 'D'maski L'Deoraysa B'ulas Shnin', that they only complete the Torah every three years, as opposed to our common minhag of every year. Lest one thinks that this minhag was only extant during Talmudic times, as the Rambam (Hilchos Tefilla Ch. 13: 1) already wrote in the 1100s that it is not the minhag pashut, on the other hand we find that famed traveler Binyamin of Tudela (Masa'os Rabi Binyamin M'Tudela; Adler / London edition pg. 63) related that in the early 1170s, in Egypt there were two different co-existing Kehillos, that of the mainstream community finishing the Torah annually, and that of the Bnei Eretz Yisrael, splitting each parasha into three and only concluding the Torah every three years. Indeed, we do find differing views of the parshiyos and their keviyus in the works of several Rishonim. For example, the Chida, at the end of his Shu"t Chaim Sha'al, quotes Kitzur Teshuvos HaRosh as cited from sefer Chazei Hatenufa (54), that the main point is to ensure that the Torah is completed every year. Hence, it is within the rights of 'Chacham B'Iro' to decide where to stop, as in his opinion, our parasha setup is not halacha kavua, but rather minhag. The Ohr Zarua (vol. 2, Hilchos Shabbos 45 s.v. maaseh) seems to concur with this assessment as well, stating that there is no keviyus which parasha must specifically be leined on which Shabbos. Yet, it must be stressed that this is not the normative halacha. Thanks are due to Rabbi Moshe Taub for pointing out several of these important sources.

[8] Shu"t Maharit (vol. 2, Orach Chaim 4), also quoting the Tikkun Yissachar (pg. 38 a -b), based on Tosafos (Megillah 31b s.v. khalos) and the Levush (Orach Chaim 428: 4).

[9] The Tikkun Yissachar (pg. 32b) explains that as Eretz Yisrael observes Pesach for seven days, exactly as prescribed in the Torah, as opposed to Chutz La'aretz, which observes an eight-day Pesach due to Rabbinic decree (as detailed at length in previous articles titled: 'Rosh Hashana: The Universal Two-Day Yom Tov (and Why Yom Kippur is Not)' and 'One Day or Two? What is a Chutznik in Eretz Yisrael to Do?'), which in turn pushes off the calendar, the Eretz Yisrael Luach is deemed the ikar one and 'Bnei Ha'Ikari'im' certainly do not have to be concerned with the calendar of 'Bnei Ha'Minhag'.

[10] According to the Abudraham (pg. 372, Seder HaParshiyos), and Tikkun Yissachar (pg. 38a), and cited lemaaseh by the Levush (Orach Chaim 428: 4), Knesses Hagedolah (ibid. s.v. shittah 44), and Elyah Rabbah (ad loc. 5), the reason why Parashas Tzav generally falls out on Shabbos Hagadol, the Shabbos immediately preceding Pesach, is that it mentions the halachos of Kashering Keilim (Vayikra Ch. 6: 21), albeit regarding the Korban Chata'as, as 'haga'alas keilim chometz lamud m'Korbanos'. Although in a leap year Parashas Metzora is

usually read directly before Pesach, it is also in sync, as it mentions 'kli cheres yishaver', which is quite apropos for Pesach as well.

[11] According to the main commentaries on the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, 'Pikdu' means 'commanded', hence it is referring to Parashas Tzav, which also means 'command'. 'Pischu' is referring to Pesach. 'Sigr'u' means 'closing', referring to Parashas Metzora, as a Metzora must be closed for at least a week. 'Minu', 'count', refers to Parashas Bamidbar, which deals mainly with the counting of Bnei Yisrael. 'Atzru', 'stop', refers to Shavuos, by referring to its name that it is called by in the Torah, 'Atzeres'. 'Tzumu', 'fast', refers to the fast of Tisha B'Av. 'Tzulu', 'daven', refers to Parashas Va'eschanan, as it starts with Moshe Rabbeinu's entreaties to Hashem. 'Kumu', 'stand', refers to Parashas Nitzavim, literally 'standing'. And 'Tik'u', 'blow' refers to Rosh Hashanah, when the Mitzvas Hayom is to blow the Shofar.

[12] These mnemonics are cited and accepted lemaaseh by all later authorities as well, including the Shulchan Aruch, Levush, and Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 428: 4).

[13] Tosafos (Megillah 31b s.v. khalos), and later seconded by the Levush (Orach Chaim 428: 4).

[14] 'Tichleh shana u'kloseha, tachel shana u'birchoseha'. See Gemara Megillah (31b).

[15] Interestingly, and on a side point, this setup might cause a world-record for longest Krias HaTorah, a potential whopping 335 pesukim, in the following scenario. Some 'Chutzniks' go to Eretz Yisrael next year for Shavuos. On Erev Shavuos, in Chutz La'aretz they lein Bamidbar and in Eretz Yisrael they lein Nasso. Anyone who does this will miss Bamidbar, so they might make a special minyan for these visitors. The Kohen would lein all of Bamidbar and the Kohen aliyah of Nasso. The other six aliyos would be the rest of Nasso as usual. The grand total of Bamidbar (159 pesukim) plus Nasso (176 pesukim) equals 335 pesukim – a potential new record! Thanks are due to Rabbi Dovid Haber of the Star-K and author of Shaarei Zmanim, for pointing this out.

[16] Bnei Yissachar (vol. 1, Maamarei Chodshei Tamuz - Av, Maamar 2: 2).

[17] This three-week season is referred to as such by the Midrash Rabbah (cited by Rashi in his commentary to Eichah Ch. 1, verse 3).

[18] Minchas Yitzchak al HaTorah (Newer edition, vol. 2 pg. 185, Parashas Pinchas s.v. uvazeh).

[19] He proves this from different maamarei Chazal from Taanis (26a), Yoma (62b), Sanhedrin (56b), as well as the Kli Yakar (Pinchas Ch. 28: 4). His actual maamar was explaining why the fact that Batlu HaTamid on Shiva Asur B'Tamuz is reason enough for fasting.

[20] Hoshe'a (Ch. 14: 3). See also Gemara Taanis (27b), Megillah (31b), and Yoma (86b).

[21] In fact, it is also the Kriah for Shacharis on Tisha B'Av itself [see Rema (Orach Chaim 559: 4)], thus making it read twice in the same week, perhaps to let its hidden message sink in.

[22] Gemara Sanhedrin (38a), cited by Rashi on the pasuk. See also Sifsei Chachamim (ad loc.).

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda, and l'zchus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam and her children for a yeshua teikef u'miyad!

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For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

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לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה