

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet

Behar Bechukosai 5783

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from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> via
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subject: Rabbi Mordechai Willig - Unbounded Sanctity

Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Unbounded Sanctity

I I will place My sanctuary among you... I will walk among you (Vayikra 26:11,12)

The Seforno explains this to mean: My presence will dwell among you wherever you are, as it was destined before the [sin of the golden] calf, as He said (Shemos 20:21), "Wherever I mention My name I will come to you and bless you". The Seforno renders "wherever I mention My Name" to refer to the houses of Hashem, such as a beis hamedrash where Torah is learned (see Oz Vehadar edition footnote 39). Hashem is saying as follows: I will not be limited to one place only, as it was in the Mishkan and in the Mikdash (as it says in Shemos 25:8, "They shall make a sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them"), rather, I will walk among you and My glory will be seen wherever you are. My holy upper presence (Tehillim 46:5) is wherever the righteous of the generation will be.

Elsewhere (Shemos 25:9; 31:18) the Seforno explains that the Mishkan was necessitated by the sin of the golden calf; ideally, there is no need for the Mishkan because Hashem's presence is everywhere, as the beracha in Parshas Bechukosai states. Nevertheless, even in the ideal eschaton, there will be a third Beis Hamikdash, but for a surprising reason: "the nations shall know that I am Hashem Who sanctifies Am Yisrael, as My Mikdash will be among them forever" (Yechezkel 37:28). The Malbim explains this to mean that Hashem's presence will Divine Presence will dwell upon all of Am Yisrael so much so that they themselves will not need the sanctity of the Mikdash. The Mikdash will exist only so that the nations will know that Hashem sanctifies Am Yisrael.

II "May it be Your will, Hashem, that Your city will be built speedily in our days, and give us our portion in Your Torah" (Avos 5:30). The more familiar version of this statement, recited after Shemoneh Esrei, substitutes "The Beis Hamikdash" in place of "Your city". The juxtaposition of the tefilla for the Beis Hamikdash and the tefilla for our portion in Your Torah requires explanation.

Rav Chaim Ya'akov Goldvicht (Asufas Ma'arachos, Shavuos p.154) refers to the very beginning of Parshas Bechukosai, which states the prerequisite for the ensuing berachos: "If you will follow My decrees" (26:3). Rashi explains this to mean, "that you will toil in the [study of] Torah". Only by immersion in Torah study can one earn the beracha of the Divine Presence dwelling within him. Moreover, as Tosafos (Bava Basra 21a) cites from the Sifri,

the very purpose of going up to Yerushalayim is to learn to fear Hashem always (Devarim 14:23). When one would see the great sanctity and the kohanim doing the avoda, he would serve Hashem better and learn Torah. While staying in Yerushalayim to consume his ma'aser sheni, he would see everyone serving Hashem and he, too, would focus on fear of Hashem and learn Torah.

When we pray for the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash, we immediately add, "and give us our portion in Your Torah", since this is the ultimate purpose of the Beis Hamikdash. Rav Goldvicht cites the Gemara (Berachos 58a) which states: eternity (netzach) refers to Yerushalayim and glory (hod) refers to the Beis Hamikdash. The sanctity of Yerushalayim flows from the power of Torah. The sanctity of the Torah flows from the inner Divine Presence ("I will build a Mishkan in my heart") which is eternal, and thus eternity refers to Yerushalayim. The sanctity of the Mikdash, by contrast, is only the outer revelation of our inner sanctity. We pray that Hashem appear, and reveal His glory upon us in the eyes of all living (Musaf on Yom Tov), as the Malbim explains. The glory of the Beis Hamikdash is not eternal, as we no longer have it. When we pray for its return, we hasten to add a prayer for our share in the eternal Torah.

III Next Friday is Yom Yerushalayim, 28 Iyar. I was privileged to be a student of Rav Goldvicht in Kerem B'Yavne when Yerushalayim was reunited on that day in 1967. One week later, on Shavuos, the Old City and the Kosel Hama'ravi were opened to the public. The talmidim of Kerem B'Yavne who were not in the Army held a mishmar in Heichal Shlomo and marched, and danced, to the Kosel for Musaf. The unforgettable experience culminated with the partially fulfilled prayer, "bring us to Tziyon Your city with joy and to Yerushalayim with eternal happiness." Only "Your Beis Hamikdash" was missing. The euphoria of the event, and the miraculous turnaround from open threats of annihilation to a stunning military victory in six days, preoccupied all of us. We were taken to Ke'ver Rachel and Me'aras Hamachpela, sites we had never expected to see in our lifetime just weeks earlier. A lavish se'udas hoda'ah was held in the Yeshiva. It was then that Rav Goldvicht cautioned us to have a proper perspective. Surely there is an obligation to thank Hashem for the miracles, and to be inspired by our newfound closeness to the site of the Beis Hamikdash. However, as our daily tefilla states, and as the Seforno and the Malbim explain, studying Torah is an even higher level. It is an internal and eternal sanctity, our share in Hashem's Torah. The Rosh Yeshiva quoted the Gemara (Makkos 10a): one day in Your courtyards is better than a thousand (Tehillim 84:11). Hashem said [to David Hamelech]: one day that you learn Torah before me is better than a thousand

offerings that your son Shlomo will sacrifice before Me on the mizbeach. This demonstrates that Torah learning is a higher value than the Avoda in the Beis Hamikdash. The heady days of June 1967 are but a memory, however glorious and unforgettable. The city and land of Hashem, reunited and liberated, suffer from terror and divisiveness which did not exist back then. The glory is not eternal. This week's parsha begins with toiling in Torah, and its berachos culminate in the personal sanctity of Torah, which is not bounded by time or place. This week's perek in Pirkei Avos adds the prayer for our share in Torah to the prayer for the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash. As we celebrate Yom Yerushalayim and Shavuos, may we merit the speedy fulfillment of both these prayers.

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>
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subject: Rav Frand - The "Chok" Aspect of Diligent Torah Study

Parshas Bechukosai

The "Chok" Aspect of Diligent Torah Study

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1204 – **The Friend Who Reneged on their Power Ball Agreement. Good Shabbos!**

The pasuk at the beginning of Parshas Bechukosai says: "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and do them" (Vayikra 26:3). Rashi explains that "Im b'chukosai teilechu" (If you walk in my statutes) cannot be referring to Mitzvah observance in general because that is mentioned elsewhere in this pasuk. Rashi says that the expression means "she'ti'heyu ameilim b'Torah" (that you should be diligent in your study of Torah).

This seems to be a very strange drasha. The word chok and the phrase "ameilus b'Torah" do not seem to be related. Chukim are those mitzvos which, at first glance, seem to have no rhyme or reason. Shatnez is a chok. Why can't a garment contain wool and linen together? The Ribono shel Olam knows. He has His reasons. We accept that. The ultimate chok, the paradigm of all chukim, is Parah Adumah (the Red Heifer). There is no sense to this law—at least to us human beings. The prohibition of eating pig is a chok. The laws of Kashrus are chukim. On the other hand, ameilus b'Torah is diligently pursuing the understanding of Torah. It is an intellectual pursuit requiring intense mental effort. Learning and understanding Torah is not a chok. Why do Chazal and Rashi define b'chukosai teilechu as ameilus b'Torah?

Rav Simcha Zissel gives the following answer in his sefer on Chumash: When the Torah refers to ameilus b'Torah being a chok, it is referring to the transformative properties of Torah. Learning Torah does something to a person. Torah learned properly changes the person. He becomes a different person. There is no other academic discipline that

has this property. If a person is "amel in Physics" or "amel in Economics," it does not change the nature of the person. Even if someone is an "amel in Philosophy," it still does not affect his nature. To wit, there were great philosophers, who, on a personal level, left much to be desired.

When Chazal say that "you should be ameilim b'Torah" here, they are referring to this mystical power of Torah to change people. The pasuk is referring to that "chok." If that is the case, then merely quickly "learning up" a blatt Gemara or merely being ma'aver sedra and reading the Targum without knowing what you are saying is a fulfillment of the Biblical Mitzvah of learning Torah – I am not denying that – but the power of Torah to transform the person requires a different level of learning. That is ameilus b'Torah. That is shvitzing over a Daf of Gemara. That is sweating hard to understand a Tosfos.

That is why, for instance, Rav Chaim of Volozhin writes in his sefer Safre De'tzneusa, as follows: "I heard from the mouth of the holy Gaon of Vilna that many times malachim (angels) came to his doorway to offer to freely transmit to him the secrets of Torah, without any effort or intensive study on his part at all. However, he refused to listen to them." The Gaon said "no thanks" to these malachim who were anxious to share Torah secrets with him without his having to expend any effort to acquire this knowledge.

If a malach came to me one night and wanted to share "Torah secrets" with me, I would tell him "Be my guest!" But the Gaon, who was the personification of a Torah genius, wanted to have the ameilus b'Torah. He refused to accept a "free pass" to the acquisition of Torah knowledge. That is what makes a person different.

The Taz says in Shulchan Aruch that the bracha we recite every morning before learning Torah is "... asher kidishanu b'mitzvosav v'tzivanu LA'ASOK b'Divrei Torah." La'asok means to be diligently involved or engrossed. The more common language would be "LILMOD (to learn) Torah." The Taz explains the connotation of the word La'Asok. Chazal really want us to put effort – blood, sweat, and tears – into our Torah study endeavors. Only then will the Torah student experience the mystical power of Torah to transform him. This is the interpretation of Im b'chukosai teilechu – she'ti'heyu AMEILIM b'Torah.

The Message of Shmitta For Contemporary Society

After spelling out the rewards that come in the wake of "If you will walk in the ways of my statutes..." (Vayikra 26:3), the Torah begins the Tochacha itself with the words "And if you will not hearken unto Me..." (Vayikra 26:14). The Torah lists terrible curses that will befall Klal Yisrael if they do not keep the Torah's commandments. And then the pasuk says, "Then the land will finally have its Sabbaticals." (Vayikra 26:34).

It seems from this pasuk that the Tochacha occurs because the Jews did not observe Shmitta (the Sabbatical year).

Since the land was not allowed to lie fallow for the entire year as intended, the Jews will be exiled from their country and the land will finally lie fallow for many years, as a compensation.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky asks a simple question: Who mentioned Shmitta anywhere in this parsha? Shmitta is not specifically mentioned in Parshas Bechukosai – neither in any of the listed mitzvos that we are supposed to keep, nor in any of the listed aveiros that we should avoid transgressing. Suddenly, when commenting on the after-effect of the punishment (exile), the Torah comments “Then the land will have its Shmitta.” This seems surprising. The Torah here in Parshas Bechukosai never said that they didn’t keep Shmitta!

Not only that, but Rashi makes the calculation that from the entire time the Jews came into Eretz Yisrael, they NEVER kept Shmitta. That is incredible! How can it be that all those years they never kept Shmitta?

Rav Yaakov has a very beautiful approach to answer these questions. Rav Yaakov says that Parshas Behar and Parshas Bechukosai should really be read as one unit. Parshas Behar begins with Shmitta and then continues with Yovel (the Jubilee year). Next it continues with the halacha of cheating (Ona’ah). Then the Torah goes off on a tangent. But we should really focus on the beginning of Parshas Behar, which talks about Shmitta and then avoid getting distracted by all the intervening topics. Then, at the beginning of Parshas Bechukosai the Torah continues, “If you walk in the ways of my statutes...,” which Chazal say teaches us “You should be amelim b’Torah.”

In an agrarian economy (which was Jewish society – and virtually all society for that matter – in Biblical times), when you take off an entire year, what on earth do you do with your time? Remember the economy was 99% based on farming. The Torah says “stop farming” every seven years. Stop doing what you are doing. In years 49 and 50, “stop farming for two years straight.” What in the world are you supposed to do during Shmitta and Yovel? The answer is “You should be amelim in Torah.” That is why the Torah gave us a mitzvah of Shmitta.

Imagine if that were the situation today. Imagine if every seven years everyone would need to stop working. What are you supposed to do with your time? In those days, you could not even go onto the Internet – there was no Internet! What was there to do? The answer is that this is the way the system was set up. The system was set up so that every seven years, all of Klal Yisrael goes to Kollel. That is the way it was supposed to work.

The trouble is that we get sidetracked with all the intervening topics in Parshas Behar and we lose the main flow. The way it is supposed to really read is the mitzvah of Shmitta and then right after that “you should be amelim in Torah” – because that is what you are supposed to do during the seventh year. And then the Torah says, if you did not do that (“If you hearken not to Me...”) and you did

not take advantage of the Shmitta, in other words, by doing what you are supposed to be doing during that year, THEN the land will take its Sabbaths. Parshas Behar and Parshas Bechukosai are meant to be read together. The Torah is saying to take off a year. Sit and learn that year. Be amel in Torah during that year. If you wasted the year (or you worked during the year), you will be exiled in punishment and then the land will get its rest.

Rav Yaakov further explains that when Rashi says they did not keep Shmitta for the whole 490 years they were in Eretz Yisrael, it does not mean that they didn’t observe the law to abstain from agricultural work on the land. It means they didn’t use their free time during Shmitta as they were supposed to!

What is the takeaway lesson from this parsha here in the United States of America in 2023 when there is no Shmitta, and no one is taking off a year from their work? The lesson is how to make use of our time when we have the opportunity to not work – a legal holiday, a Sunday, or whenever it is. We don’t have a Shmitta but we have mini-Shmittas every week! Chazal say that we have Shabbos for people to learn on Shabbos. In America, we need to take advantage of our “Shabbos sheni shel galiyos” (Sundays).

What could be a more important message as we approach the holiday of Shavuot? Take advantage of the free time that we always have, and put that time to good use. This is what the Torah wanted out of Shmitta and this is what the Torah wants out of our vacations as well.

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Home Weekly Parsha B’HAR – BECHUKOTAI Rabbi Wein’s Weekly Blog

These two parshiyot together form the final bookend of the book of Vayikra. This conclusion of Vayikra is a rather somber one, with the dominant theme being the prediction of Jewish dereliction from Torah values and practices and the resultant exile from their land and sovereignty. Yet in these parshiyot there are also promises of prosperity and well-being and successful Jewish life.

The Torah generally conforms to such a pattern of great blessings and stern warnings. It really allows the Jews very little middle ground in which to maneuver the private and

national lives of Israel. Our entire history is one of great vacillation between exalted and miraculous moments and dire events.

This certainly is true regarding the story of the Jewish people and the Jewish State over the past century. Our tears are always mixed with joy and our joy is always laden with a heavy dose of accompanying tears. The Torah's message to us is that life constantly presents different emotions and scenarios that are rarely if ever completely positive or completely negative.

Perhaps this is one of the meanings of the words of the rabbis of the Talmud that everything that Heaven does has good within it. Even if the general event may be deemed to be a negative one, there always is a kernel of good buried within it. So, our parshiyot reflect this duality of blessing and accomplishment as well as of defeat and hardship. This duality also applies to our daily dealings with others. Always try to see the good lurking within another person whenever possible – though I admit that there are situations that make it look impossible to do so. This has always been a premier Jewish trait. The rabbis in Avot taught us that every person has his moment so to speak. Seizing and exploiting that moment is the main accomplishment.

But that requires a sense of realism. We cannot fool ourselves into thinking that everything is always correct and well with ourselves and our society, nor can we be so pessimistic and down on the situation that it precludes honest attempts at improvement. The balance of hope and warning that these concluding parshiyot of Vayikra exude is an important lesson and guidepost.

This lesson lies embedded in another teaching of the rabbis in Avot: "It is not incumbent upon you to complete the entire task at hand, but neither are you free to discard it entirely." Reality dictates to us that we face our world and its dangers squarely and honestly. But we should not abandon hope and the effort to improve our lot.

We believe that positive effort and wise decisions, coupled with faith and tradition allow us to survive and prosper. Therefore at the conclusion of the public reading of these mixed messages at the end of the book of Vayikra we rise and strengthen ourselves "Chazak chazak v'nitchzeik."

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

Family Feeling

BEHAR, BECHUKOTAI

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

I argued in my Covenant and Conversation for parshat Kedoshim that Judaism is more than an ethnicity. It is a call to holiness. In one sense, however, there is an important ethnic dimension to Judaism.

It is best captured in the 1980s joke about an advertising campaign in New York. Throughout the city there were giant posters with the slogan, "You have a friend in the Chase Manhattan Bank." Underneath one, an Israeli had

scribbled the words, "But in Bank Leumi you have mishpacha." Jews are, and are conscious of being, a single extended family.

This is particularly evident in this week's parsha. Repeatedly we read of social legislation couched in the language of family:

When you buy or sell to your neighbour, let no one wrong his brother.

Lev. 25:14

If your brother becomes impoverished and sells some of his property, his near redeemer is to come to you and redeem what his brother sold.

Lev. 25:25

If your brother is impoverished and indebted to you, you must support him; he must live with you like a foreign resident. Do not take interest or profit from him, but fear your God and let your brother live with you.

Lev. 25:35-36

If your brother becomes impoverished and is sold to you, do not work him like a slave.

Lev. 25:39

"Your brother" in these verses is not meant literally. At times it means "your relative", but mostly it means "your fellow Jew". This is a distinctive way of thinking about society and our obligations to others. Jews are not just citizens of the same nation or adherents of the same faith. We are members of the same extended family. We are – biologically or electively – children of Abraham and Sarah. For the most part, we share the same history. On the festivals we relive the same memories. We were forged in the same crucible of suffering. We are more than friends. We are mishpacha, family.

The concept of family is absolutely fundamental to Judaism. Consider the book of Genesis, the Torah's starting-point. It is not primarily about theology, doctrine, dogma. It is not a polemic against idolatry. It is about families: husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters.

At key moments in the Torah, God Himself defines His relationship with the Israelites in terms of family. He tells Moses to say to Pharaoh in His name: "My child, My firstborn, Israel" (Ex. 4:22). When Moses wants to explain to the Israelites why they have a duty to be holy, He answers, "You are children of the Lord your God" (Deut. 14:1). If God is our parent, then we are all brothers and sisters. We are related by bonds that go to the very heart of who we are.

The prophets continued the metaphor. There is a lovely passage in Hosea in which the prophet describes God as a parent teaching a young child how to take its first faltering steps: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son ... It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms ... To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them." (Hosea 11:1-4).

The same image is continued in rabbinic Judaism. In one of the most famous phrases of prayer, Rabbi Akiva used the words *Avinu Malkeinu*, “Our Father, our King”. That is a precise and deliberate expression. God is indeed our sovereign, our lawgiver and our judge, but before He is any of these things He is our parent and we are His children. That is why we believe divine compassion will always override strict justice.

This concept of Jews as an extended family is powerfully expressed in Maimonides’ *Laws of Charity*:

The entire Jewish people and all those who attach themselves to them are like brothers, as [Deuteronomy 14:1] states: “You are children of the Lord your God.” And if a brother will not show mercy to a brother, who will show mercy to them? To whom do the poor of Israel lift up their eyes? To the Gentiles who hate them and pursue them? Their eyes are turned to their brethren alone.[1]

This sense of kinship, fraternity and the family bond, is at the heart of the idea of *Kol Yisrael arevin zeh bazeh*, “All Jews are responsible for one another.” Or as Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai put it, “When one Jew is injured, all Jews feel the pain.”[2]

Why is Judaism built on this model of the family? Partly to tell us that God did not choose an elite of the righteous or a sect of the likeminded. He chose a family – Abraham and Sarah’s descendants — extended through time. The family is the most powerful vehicle of continuity, and the kinds of changes Jews were expected to make to the world could not be achieved in a single generation. Hence the importance of the family as a place of education (“You shall teach these things repeatedly to your children ...”) and of handing the story on, especially on Pesach through the Seder service.

Another reason is that family feeling is the most primal and powerful moral bond. The scientist J. B. S. Haldane famously said, when asked whether he would jump into a river and risk his life to save his drowning brother, “No, but I would do so to save two brothers or eight cousins.” The point he was making was that we share 50 per cent of our genes with our siblings, and an eighth with our cousins. Taking a risk to save them is a way of ensuring that our genes are passed on to the next generation. This principle, known as “kin selection”, is the most basic form of human altruism. It is where the moral sense is born.

That is a key insight, not only of biology but also of political theory. Edmund Burke famously said that “To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind.”[3] Likewise Alexis de Tocqueville said, “As long as family feeling was kept alive, the opponent of oppression was never alone.”[4]

Strong families are essential to free societies. Where families are strong, a sense of altruism exists that can be

extended outward, from family to friends to neighbours to community and from there to the nation as a whole.

It was the sense of family that kept Jews linked in a web of mutual obligation despite the fact that they were scattered across the world. Does it still exist? Sometimes the divisions in the Jewish world go so deep, and the insults hurled by one group against another are so brutal that one could almost be persuaded that it does not. In the 1950s Martin Buber expressed the belief that the Jewish people in the traditional sense no longer existed. *Knesset Yisrael*, the covenantal people as a single entity before God, was no more. The divisions between Jews, religious and secular, orthodox and non-orthodox, Zionist and non-Zionist, had, he thought, fragmented the people beyond hope of repair.

Yet that conclusion is premature for precisely the reason that makes family so elemental a bond. Argue with your friend and tomorrow he may no longer be your friend, but argue with your brother and tomorrow he is still your brother. The book of Genesis is full of sibling rivalries but they do not all end the same way. The story of Cain and Abel ends with Abel dead. The story of Isaac and Ishmael ends with their standing together at Abraham’s grave. The story of Esau and Jacob reaches a climax when, after a long separation, they meet, embrace and go their separate ways. The story of Joseph and his brothers begins with animosity but ends with forgiveness and reconciliation. Even the most dysfunctional families can eventually come together.

The Jewish people remains a family, often divided, always argumentative, but bound in a common bond of fate nonetheless. As our parsha reminds us, that person who has fallen is our brother or sister, and ours must be the hand that helps them rise again.

[1] *Mishneh Torah*, *Laws of Gifts to the Poor*, 10:2.

[2] *Mechilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai to Ex. 19:6*.

[3] Edmund Burke (1729–1797). *Reflections on the French Revolution: The Harvard Classics*, 1909–14.

[4] *Democracy in America*, Chapter XVII: Principal causes which tend to maintain the democratic republic in the United States.

Shabbat Shalom: Behar-Bechukotai 5783 (Leviticus 25:1-27: 34)

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers.” (Leviticus 25:23)

“You must not defile the Land upon which you live and in the midst of which I (God) dwell, since I (God), dwell in the midst of the children of Israel.” (Numbers 35:34)

The sacred Zohar teaches that the nation Israel, the Torah, and the Holy One Blessed be He are one. This suggests that the eternal God may be experienced and apprehended through those phenomena which are also perceived to be eternal. Since the covenantal nation Israel is eternal (by Divine oath, Genesis 15) and since the Torah is eternal,

Israel, the Torah and God are inextricably linked by virtue of their common eternity.

The land of Israel shares in this feature of eternity. The earth's perennial cycles of birth, growth, decay, death and rebirth, express a movement of re-generation and renaissance which informs the very nature of the most primitive form of life. There are intimations of immortality in the earth's movement from life to life: a fruit falls from the tree when it no longer requires the physical sustenance provided by attachment to the branch, and the tree re-births (regenerates) its fruit in the spring. The trees shed their leaves and fruits onto the earth, and when they decompose and merge with the earth, that very earth provides the necessary nutrients for the tree to continue to grow and bear fruit in the future. Plants leave their seeds in the ground, these continue to sprout plant life from the earth after the mother herb has been taken and eaten. And so the cycle of life, decay, death and rebirth is grounded in the eternal, infinite and natural dimension of the earth. In the words of the wisest of men, "one generation passes away and another generation arrives, but the earth abides forever" (Ecclesiastes 1:3).

In a more national sense, it is the Biblical tradition to bury our dead in the earth, and specifically in the land of Israel. The Biblical idiom for death is, "And he was gathered to his nation, or his family," for if one is buried in one's homeland, one's physical remains merge with the physical remains of one's family members, of those who came and died before as well as of those who will follow in the future.

Furthermore, the land of Israel is invested with a special metaphysical quality which is inextricably linked to Knesset Yisrael, historic Israel. The first Hebrew, Abraham, entered into the Covenant between the Pieces – the Divine mission of a nation founded on the principles of humans created in the image of God and the right of freedom for every individual – in the City of Hebron, and God's promise of world peace and messianic redemption will be realized in the City of Jerusalem. The Cave of the Couples – Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah – was the very first acquisition by a Jew of land in Israel as the earthly resting place for the founders of our faith. At the very same time, it is also the womb of our future, a future informed by the ideas and ideals of our revered ancestors. "Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged; parents are the pride of their children". (Proverbs 17: 6)

It is for this reason that the Talmud maintains that only in Israel is there a true and authentic "community" (B.T. Horayot 3) – for only in Israel do we see the footprints of historic Israel, the sweep of the generations, the "common unity" of tradition, from Abraham to the Messiah; Israel formed, prophesied and taught its eternal traditions and continues to live out its destiny within the land of Israel.

Moreover, the eternal Torah is rooted and invested in the very earth, stones and vegetation of the land of Israel. This is true not only in terms of the Biblical covenantal promise which guarantees our constant relationship and eventual return to Israel; it is also true because of the myriad of mitzvot (commandments) embedded in its bedrock, its soil, and its agricultural produce. The seventh Sabbatical year provides free fruits and vegetables for anyone who wishes to take them; the "corners" of the field actually "belong" to the poor every day of the year, and they may come and reap their harvests; tithes from the land's produce immediately go to the Kohen – Priest-teachers, the Levite Cantors, and the poor who share in the land of the rest of the nation. The land of Israel itself cries out to its inhabitants in the name of God: "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers" (Leviticus 25:23). Hence God Himself, as it were, becomes inextricably linked – even "incorporated" or "in-corporeal-ized", if you will – within the peoplehood, the land and the Torah of Israel, the very objects and subjects which express God's will and out of which our essence and destiny is formed. Indeed, historic Israel, the land of Israel, the Torah of Israel and the Holy One Blessed be He, God of Israel and the universe are truly united in an eternal bond.

Shabbat Shalom

<https://en.yhb.org.il/revivim1043/>

The Mitzvah of Military Service versus Torah Study Revivim

By Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Yeshiva Har Bracha

In military service, two great mitzvot are fulfilled that are equivalent to the entire Torah – saving Israel from its enemies, and settlement of the Land * Torah study is crucial for the existence of the nation of Israel, and must be assigned regular and serious frameworks, but it does not override the mitzvah of military service * Nevertheless, in a situation where there is no security necessity to mobilize all yeshiva students, a handful of elites should be allowed to continue studying, so they can grow to become rabbis and public leaders

Q: Is the recent government proposal to exempt Haredi men from the age of twenty-one from military service correct according to Halakha?

A: It is appropriate to preface that the answers to all fundamental questions are found in the Torah, and if we look deeply, we will find that all our problems stem from the fact that we deviated from the path of the Torah. For example, in recent generations the question of whether to immigrate to Israel had arisen. There were Jews who despaired and preferred to assimilate, and there were those who, for various religious reasons, believed that for the time being, they should not immigrate to Israel. Had we fulfilled the great mitzvah and immigrated to Israel,

millions of Jews would have been saved from murder and extermination. The question of military service, which has preoccupied us for many years and caused social and political crises, also stems from a lack of understanding of Torah. This is the meaning of what our Sages said: “Be careful in Torah study, for an error in it, counts as deliberate sin” (Avot 4:13).

In the military service, two major mitzvot are fulfilled that are equivalent to all the mitzvot in the Torah: saving Israel from its enemies, and settling the Land.

The Mitzvah of Army Service – Saving Israel

Concerning the saving of a single Jew, we were commanded: “You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:16), Shabbat is profaned for this, and our Sages said in the Mishnah: “Anyone who sustains one soul from the Jewish people, the verse ascribes him credit as if he sustained an entire world” (Sanhedrin 4:5). All the more so is the obligation to save a community of Jews, and for this purpose not only is it a mitzvah to desecrate Shabbat, but also a mitzvah to endanger lives, as we have learned, that in order to save even the property of a community living on the borders, Shabbat is desecrated and lives are endangered (SA, OH 329:6). All the more so is it a duty in order to save all of Israel. And in our times, it is a definite milchemet mitzvah (an offensive war), as Rambam wrote: “What is considered as milchemet mitzvah?... a war fought to assist Israel from an enemy which attacks them” (Laws of Kings 5:1), and this mitzvah requires self-sacrifice, and overrides an individual’s duty to protect his life (Maran Rabbi Kook in Mishpat Kohen 143; Responsa Tzitz Eliezer 13:100).

The Mitzvah of Settling the Land

The second mitzvah is the mitzvah of Yishuv Ha’Aretz (settling the Land of Israel), as written: “And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have assigned the land to you to possess...” (Bamidbar 33: 53-54). Our Sages said that this mitzvah is equal to all the mitzvot (Sifre, Re’eh 53). This mitzvah also overrides pikuach nefesh (preservation of human life) of individuals, since we were commanded to conquer the Land and the Torah did not intend for us to rely on a miracle, and seeing as in every war there are casualties, the mitzvah to conquer the Land obligates us to risk lives for it (Minchat Chinuch 425 and 604; Mishpat Kohen p. 327). All the more must we fight to protect regions of the country that are already in our possession, and every soldier who serves in the IDF is a participant in this great mitzvah.

The mitzvah of Yishuv Ha’Aretz is incumbent upon the Jewish people in every generation, as Ramban and many other poskim wrote. Only due to inability, seeing as we lacked the military and political possibility to settle the Land, we were unable to concern ourselves with its settlement during our long exile. Indeed, there are those poskim who believe that in the opinion of the Rambam, since the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, there is no

mitzvah to conquer the Land. However, everyone admits that in the Rambam’s opinion, there is a mitzvah to live in the Land of Israel, and consequently, if after Am Yisrael lives in the Land, enemies come to conquer regions already in our possession, the mitzvah of Yishuv ha’Aretz requires us to fight to protect them, since it is forbidden to give parts of the Land of Israel to Gentiles (Davar Yehoshua 2, OC, 48; Milumdei Milchama 1; Peninei Halakha: Ha’Am ve’ Ha’Aretz 4: 2).

Conflict between Talmud Torah and Enlistment in the Army

With all the enormous importance of the mitzvah of Talmud Torah, it does not override the mitzvah of enlisting in the army. This is not just because of the well-known rule that any mitzvah that cannot be done by others, overrides Talmud Torah (Moed Katan 9a), since this rule also applies to private mitzvot, such as the mitzvah to pray, build a sukkah, grant a loan, and receive a guest. The mitzvah of enlisting in the army is much more important, because the existence of all of Israel depends on it.

We also find that the disciples of Yehoshua bin Nun and King David went out to war, and were not concerned about bitul Torah (wasting Torah study time). Furthermore, the Book of Bamidbar is called the ‘Book of Pikudim’ (census), because in it, all the male soldiers who were about to conquer the Land, are numbered.

Concerning what is said in the Talmud (Bava Batra 8a), that Torah scholars do not need guarding, the meaning is that they are exempt from guarding mainly intended to prevent theft. However, when Israel needs to be protected from its enemies, there is a mitzvah to save Jews, as is written: “You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:16), and in pikuach nefesh – it is a mitzvah of the eminent Torah scholars first (Mishnah Berurah 328: 34).

The Importance of Torah Study by Yeshiva Students

Nonetheless, the mitzvah of Talmud Torah is equivalent to all the mitzvot, and there is no mitzvah that in the long run, protects and maintains the people of Israel more than it. Therefore, along with the mitzvah to serve in the army, there is a necessity to include in the life order of every Jew, years in which he devotes himself to the best of his ability, to the study of Torah. This is what our Sages said: “Studying Torah is greater than saving lives” (Megillah 16b), because saving lives concerns the current salvation of a human body, while Talmud Torah revives the soul and body of the Israeli nation for the long term. Therefore, even though in practice, whenever there is a need to engage in saving lives, saving lives overrides Talmud Torah, it is necessary to devote quality time to Torah study.

The Mitzvah of Recruitment, and the Mitzvah of Developing Torah Scholars

In practice, the mitzvah to enlist in the army applies to all of Israel, including those who wish to study Torah in yeshiva. True, when there is no security necessity to recruit

all the young men without exception, as was the case in the War of Independence, it is a mitzvah to postpone the recruitment of those interested and suitable for rabbinical positions, so they can study diligently and excel in the Torah, and when they become rabbis, contribute with their education and Torah to the strengthening of Jewish awareness, the security of Israel, and to settlement of the Land, as is the case within the 'Atuda Tzeva'it' (Academic Reserve Program), where talented soldiers study in order to later contribute more to the army.

And although there are great Torah scholars who combined military conscription in their first years of study in the yeshiva, nevertheless, many of those who deserve to be rabbis will be able to contribute more with their Torah to the people of Israel if they postpone their conscription, as long as they continue to develop their Torah studies in the yeshiva.

On the Condition They Appreciate the Mitzvah of Army Service

It is important to note that this contribution of Torah students can take place on the condition that the students treat with great respect the mitzvot of the soldiers who stand guard over our nation and our country, because only Torah learning stemming from this position can contribute to uplifting the spirit and heroism of Clal Yisrael. On the other hand, Torah study that denies the sanctity of the mitzvot of the soldiers is fundamentally unfounded, similar to the study of one who disbelieves in the mitzvot of Shabbat.

Agreement and Criticism of the Haredi Position

In light of this, we have no disagreement in principle with the Haredi public about the need to postpone the recruitment of diligent yeshiva students who are destined to become rabbis and educators. The appropriate postponement for teachers is a few years, whereas the appropriate postponement for rabbis is several years.

The criticism is in two areas: first, that those who study in yeshiva should study the Torah correctly, and consequently, respect the mitzvah of enlisting in the army. Second, only a few percentages that the public needs to postpone the draft in order to grow in Torah, as a kind of 'reserve', are permitted to postpone the draft; the rest, even if they study diligently, must fulfill the mitzvah of enlistment.

The Concern and the Solution

Indeed, one can understand the Haredim who fear that military service will cause a spiritual decline to the point of abandoning Torah and mitzvot. If this is the case, then it is an existential problem which cannot be compromised. However, the solution is not cancelation of the mitzvah, rather, in an effort to create a military path that does not endanger the spiritual future of the soldiers. Just as Jews are forbidden to violate Shabbat in order to go to synagogue, even when the concern is that not going to synagogue will cause them to leave religion, similarly, it is

forbidden to evade the mitzvah of army service because of this fear. Already today, students of the Hesder yeshiva have reasonable conditions that are adapted to the lifestyle of the religious public.

The Absurd Assumption

The argument of those opposed to the recruitment of Yeshiva students into the army is also based on the mistaken assumption that half of the members of the National- Religious public become secular, while among the Haredi public there is almost no abandonment of religion. But this assumption is so far-fetched, that it is hard to believe that there are rabbis who repeat it over and over again.

The problem is that it is indeed difficult to give exact numbers, because it is difficult to define who was religious from the start, and who became secular. In addition, both religious and Haredi society are made up of different groups. In the end, there is no big difference in the dropout rates, and this, in wake of the Haredi public's agreeing to forgo an entire package of elementary mitzvot in order to keep their children within the Haredi framework. On the other hand, in the National-Religious public there are parents whose religious identity is quite weak. In light of this, the success of National-Religious education is enormous.

Even if in practice as a result of the observance of all the mitzvot, including recruitment to the army and Yishuv Ha'Aretz, the rate of deserters was significantly higher (as it was, to a certain extent, in the previous generation) – we would have had to fulfill all the mitzvot, and put more effort into education in order to adhere to the entire Torah, without neglecting any mitzvah. All the more so, when keeping them is not harmful, but beneficial.

Respect for Torah Scholars

During the days of counting the Omer, we must strengthen our respect for each other, especially among Torah scholars. Nonetheless, this does not demand concealing words of Torah, or agreeing to a mistaken opinion, but rather, to respect one another. In other words, even when one thinks that Torah scholars are making a serious mistake in the foundations of the Torah, one must continue to honor them for their dedication to Torah and all their good characteristics, and try to learn from them as much as possible.

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Parshiot BEHAR-BE'CHUKOTAI

by Rabbi Nachman Kahana

The challenges facing our generation

The "Tochacha" (reproach and admonition) in parashat Be'chukotai

Midrash Raba (Noach, chap 34):

עלובה העיסה שנחתומה מעיד עליה שהיא רעה – אמר רבי חייא רבה
Wretched is the bread whose baker testifies that it is bad.

In Parashat Noach (ibid), HaShem, the Creator of all things and their inherent natures, testifies:

כי יצר לב האדם רע מנעוריו

The nature of man is evil from birth.

Parashat Be'chukotai, which we will read this Shabbat, contains the harsh rebuke and warning (Tochacha) regarding the fate of the Jews if we repudiate our covenant with HaShem by not upholding the Torah.

The list is horrific. We will experience disease, starvation, military defeat, foreign subjugation, exile and more. These are terrible curses, but there are worse things that we have experienced in our history.

Why does the Tochacha omit the ravages of the Shoah, and what Christianity and Islam will have done to us in the years of our exile?

Why were we not warned about the Germans and their cohorts, who – in their insatiable hunger and unquenchable thirst to annihilate the entire Jewish people – invented and carried out historically unprecedented, apocalyptic, and satanic deeds.

We were dragged from our houses to the train station where they piled us into cattle-cars to be transported for days to unknown destinations without space, air, water, or food. When the trains arrived, the living were forced down with whip lashes and vicious dogs, stripped naked, branded with numbers, led into gas chambers, and then reduced to ashes. Our hair became raw material and our gold teeth sold to rich American financiers. Why were we not threatened that we would be turned into human skeletons to work for the Germans until our souls could not take it anymore? We would be subject to medical experiments by highly trained doctors, then thrown into open pits like refuse that needed to become invisible.

Why are these things not included in the threats regarding what would befall us if we repudiated our covenant with HaShem?

Answer:

Had the Torah spelled out in gory detail what awaits us if we reject the covenant, the naïve Jewish mind would have concluded that these verses are like “crying wolf”, meant only to frighten us with false alarms, because human beings could not possibly descend to such bestial and sadistic depths. So, the naïve Jewish mind would have rejected the entire Tochacha as unrealistic and not serious. However, the Germans and their allies were not demented or deranged; they were humans quite in control and very focused. Even capable of perpetrating these exact acts today, but it will not happen. For if in the last 2000 years, HaShem our “Father and King” (ונכלמ וניבא) related to us more as King than Father, the miraculous establishment of Medinat Yisrael is HaShem’s unequivocal signal that “Father” has replaced “King”.

We are now in the era of:

ם (תהילים כב) המלוכה. ומושל בגוי' כי לה

For dominion belongs to Hashem and He rules over the nations.

המלוכה (עובדיה 'ועלו מושיעים בהר ציון לשפט את הר עשו. והיתה לה

א) Those who have been saved shall go up to Mount Zion to judge Mount Esau, and kingdom shall be of HaShem.

Zecharia 14 - And HaShem will be acknowledged as King over all the earth; on that day HaShem will be one and his name one.

Heart, Soul, and Might

Jewish history is a 3300-year bewildering succession of human events beyond reason and logic.

It involves shattered hopes that turned into salvation. Exile that exhausted our strength, but with perseverance turned into redemption, and mighty despotic rulers opposed by lonely men of faith who breathed hope and uplifted the spirits of the downtrodden. The nation, beloved and chosen by HaShem, whose martyrs at the hands of gentiles number in the many millions, nevertheless changed the world by creating “conscience” which led the gentiles from paganism to recognizing the omnipotent, invisible Creator.

When viewed out of the box, the long arduous journey of Am Yisrael along the circuitous pitfalls of history is the unequivocal proof that there is a purposeful goal-orientated Creator who guarantees the eternal existence of the Jewish nation, even if we fall short of His demands.

Now to the realities of our contemporary lives. How can we know where HaShem is.

I submit:

The Gemara in Sanhedrin 97a:

תנא דבי אליהו ששת אלפים שנה הוא עלמא שני אלפים תורה שני אלפים תורה שני אלפים ימות המשיח ובעוונותינו שרבו יצאו מהם מה שיצאו

In the yeshiva of Eliyahu it was revealed that this world will exist for 6000 years, divided into three groups of 2000. The first 2000 will be a period of “tohu” (desolation, waste, emptiness, worthlessness) when cultures were being developed along the lines of the most debase instincts of man. Paganism and idolatry will capture the minds and hearts of humanity.

The second 2000 years will be centered around HaShem’s revelation to His chosen nation, and from us to the far corners of humanity.

The last 2000 years, of which we are a part, is the period of violent preparation for the Mashiach and his ultimate appearance.

The Jewish nation, beginning with our forefathers and mothers ’til this day, lived and are living through all three periods, each in a magnificent fashion weave together miracles and human effort.

The second sentence of Kriy’at Shema reads:

כל נפשך ובכל מאדך יהי בכל לבבך וב-ואהבת את ה' א

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

I submit that “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” pertain to three different phases of Jewish history:

1- There are choices in life which are determined by one’s subjective evaluation of the facts and the alternatives at hand, and other choices which are immediate and reflexive, stemming from the deepest recesses of one’s soul. A man can meet 100 women in his quest for a wife and feel nothing; then he meets “the one” and becomes engulfed with the feeling that he has found his soulmate. This applies, as well, to an ideology or great moral issue where many people remain unmoved, but one particular individual feels an inner compulsion to become involved.

2- After the initial meeting between man and his woman or man and his ideology, there is a desire that the relationship develop and advance. He sends her flowers or devotes time and energy to the ideology of his initial attraction. If the relationship stagnates with no apparent progress, he might choose to leave the object of his attention or perhaps continue in the hope that eventually there will be mutuality.

3- If he continues, this unrequited relationship might cause him great anguish. The woman of his life can be cruel and heartless, or the moral ideal to which he has dedicated his life could cause him to be harshly punished. At this point one can choose to leave the relationship or to continue despite the hurt and anguish.

The Midrash relates (Otzar Ha’Midrashim, Eisenstein; Pesikta 884) that prior to presenting the Torah to the Jewish people, HaShem offered the Torah to the 70 basic races. The children of Esav refused when they became aware of the prohibition of murder, as did the children of Yishmael because of the prohibition against dishonesty, and all the other races for their particular reasons. But when offered the Torah, our ancestors, even before learning the Torah’s demands, replied spontaneously and unanimously na’aseh ve’nishma — “we shall do and we shall understand.”

To return to the second sentence of Kriy’at Shema:

לְהֵיבֹן לַבִּבְרָה וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ וּבְכָל חַיְהֶיךָ

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

The intent of the first phrase, “with all your heart” is the compelling need to have God in one’s life, which expressed itself with the spontaneous and unanimous acceptance of Hashem’s Torah – na’aseh ve’nishma — “we shall do and we shall understand.”

For over 2500 years we have been serving HaShem in unparalleled loyalty with no explicit reciprocity as existed at the time of the prophets. We desire that our relationship with our Father in Heaven develop in mutuality; but there is silence at the other end. We feel that the relationship is not developing; nevertheless, we continue to loyally worship HaShem in total love and faith. This is the intent of the second phrase, “with all your life.”

Despite our total submission to God, our relationship has caused us untold anguish and pain throughout the two millennia of galut, leading to the unspeakable Shoah. Yet we continue without weakening our resolve to cling to HaShem at all costs. This is the intent of the third phrase, “with all your might.”

Now it all comes together.

The initial 2000 years of creation saw humanity develop in atheistic narratives or pagan theologies. Towards the end of this period, Avram from Aram (Iraq) entered upon the world’s stage to reveal the existence of an intelligent single Creator of all that exists. His teachings were accepted by many to the point that Hashem saw him worthy of being called Avraham, the spiritual father of many nations. This was the period of “with all your heart,” as stated in the Kriy’at Shema.

In the second 2000 years, HaShem appears more open towards humanity when he revealed His Torah and performed unprecedented miracles for Am Yisrael. It is the period of the two Batei Mikdash when our relationship with the Almighty became more tangible, as HaShem “dwells” in the Temples of Yerushalayim. This is the second period “with all your soul” in Kriy’at Shema.

The 2000 years following the destruction of the second Bet Hamikdash and our exile, and subsequent uprooting to galut is one of great dedication to HaShem, accompanied by the suffering that our faithfulness brings upon us. This is the third phrase “with all your might” in Kriy’at Shema.

In conclusion:

The challenges facing our generation are the return to Eretz Yisrael and continuing from the point in history when our independence was terminated by the now non-existent Roman empire.

Jewish life in the last 2000 years in galut, including contemporary communities, has been the struggle for physical and religious survival. In contrast, our lives in Eretz Yisrael are guaranteed by HaShem’s promise demonstrated through daily miracles.

Our efforts as a society are committed not merely to survival but to “flourishing” in every way. We here are preparing the way for the physical exodus from foreign lands, and spiritual exodus from foreign cultures and beliefs. In human terms, a metamorphosis cannot occur in one or two generations. The rust and crust have to be removed in phases in order to bring out the inherent spiritual and physical characteristics which were dominant in the students and soldiers of David Hamelech and will soon shine again in our children.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

The midrash at the beginning of this week’s parsha mentions that the details of all mitzvos were taught at Sinai, making this topic extremely timely...

Miscellaneous Mitzvah Matters

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Choosing your Mitzvos

“I don’t have enough money for all the mitzvah objects that I need. Which should I purchase?”

Question #2: Extra Mezuzos

“I have extra mezuzos. May I use them for tefillin?”

Question #3: When Do We Recite a brocha?

“Why don’t we recite a brocha when we put tzitzis onto a garment, yet we recite a brocha when we affix a mezuzah to a door?”

Introduction

The first two of our opening questions deal with a very interesting issue: Are there hierarchies among our mitzvot? In other words, are some mitzvot more important than others?

We do not usually attempt to judge which mitzvah is more important, since it is our obligation to observe all the mitzvot to the best of our ability. Nevertheless, there are occasional circumstances when we must decide which mitzvah is more “valuable.” One example when this could happen is when we must choose between observing one mitzvah and another. The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 34b) discusses a situation in which one has to choose whether to spend Rosh Hashanah in a place where there is someone to blow shofar, but no Rosh Hashanah davening, or in another place where there is Rosh Hashanah davening, but no shofar. The Gemara concludes that it is more important to spend Rosh Hashanah in a place where there might be an opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of shofar, than to go somewhere else where there will definitely be davening but no shofar blowing. This is because *safek d’oraysa*, a possibility of fulfilling a mitzvah *min haTorah*, carries more weight than definitively fulfilling that which is required only *miderabbanan*.

Yerushalmi

A more revealing and detailed discussion is in the Talmud Yerushalmi, at the very end of Mesechta Megillah, which quotes a dispute between Shmuel and Rav Huna concerning someone who has only sufficient money to purchase either tefillin or mezuzah, but not both. The question debated in the passage of the Yerushalmi is: Which mitzvah is it more important to fulfill? The explanations provided in this passage of the Yerushalmi provide insight into other mitzvot, should these rules need to be applied. For example, should someone have to choose between purchasing the four species for Sukkos or materials for a sukkah, which takes precedence? (For simplicity’s sake throughout the rest of this article, I will refer to the purchasing of the four species for Sukkos as simply the mitzvah of “lulav.”) Or, should one have to choose between purchasing a lulav or purchasing tefillin, which takes precedence? This passage of Yerushalmi provides foundation for subsequent halachic discussion on these issues.

Let us quote the passage of the Yerushalmi:

Tefillin and mezuzah, which comes first? Shmuel said, “Mezuzah comes first.” Rav Huna said, “Tefillin comes first.” What is Shmuel’s reason? Because mezuzah applies on Shabbos and Yom Tov. What is Rav Huna’s reason? Because tefillin applies to people traveling on the seas and in deserts. A *beraisa* (teaching of the era of the Mishnah, but not included in the Mishnah) supports Shmuel, which says that if tefillin have worn out, one may use its *parshiyos* (written parchments) for mezuzah, but one may not use a mezuzah for tefillin, since we have a general rule that one increases but does not decrease sanctity.

To explain the Yerushalmi’s conclusion: The mitzvah of tefillin requires use of four sections of the Torah, two in *parshas Bo*, and two others, the first two of the three *parshiyos* of *kerias shma*, which are from *parshas Va’eschanan* and *parshas Eikev*. A mezuzah includes only these last two sections of the Torah. May one take the pieces of parchment that were used as a mezuzah and use them for tefillin, or vice versa -- if they were used for tefillin can they be used for a mezuzah?

Understanding Shmuel

Shmuel contends that since mezuzah applies every day of the year, it is a greater and holier mitzvah than tefillin. The Gemara quotes two ramifications of this ruling:

(1) Should one be able to fulfill only one of these two mitzvot, mezuzah is preferred.

(2) *Parshiyos* once used for tefillin may be used for a mezuzah, but a mezuzah may not be used for *parshiyos* in tefillin. Since mezuzah is a holier mitzvah, using a mezuzah for tefillin decreases its sanctity, which is not permitted. This is because of a general halachic rule, *maalin bekodesh velo moridim*: something may be elevated to a use that is of greater sanctity, but it may not be reduced to a lower level of sanctity. For example, a *kohein gadol* can never return to being a *kohein hedyot*, a regular *kohein*. Since the *beraisa* quoted by the Yerushalmi states that one may not use mezuzah *parshiyos* for tefillin, the conclusion is, like Shmuel, that mezuzah is more important.

There is a question on Shmuel’s explanation. In what way does mezuzah apply on Shabbos and Yom Tov, when one is not permitted to put a mezuzah on a door on either of these holidays, because of the *melacha* involved? The answer is that, if someone is required to affix a mezuzah but did not, he is not permitted to spend Shabbos in that house unless he has nowhere else to live (see *Pri Megadim*, *Orach Chaim*, *Eishel Avraham* 38:15; *Aruch Hashulchan*, *Yoreh Deah* 285:5). In other words, although one may not install a mezuzah on Shabbos or Yom Tov, the mitzvah still applies on those days.

Understanding Rav Huna

Rav Huna explains that on days that one is obligated to wear tefillin, there are no exemptions from that responsibility. On the other hand, someone who has no residence is not obligated in mezuzah. In theory, one can exempt oneself from the mitzvah of mezuzah by avoiding

living in a residence. Therefore, tefillin is a greater mitzvah than mezuzah.

This has two ramifications:

(1) Should one be able to fulfill only one of these two mitzvos, tefillin is preferred.

(2) A mezuzah may be used for parshiyos in a pair of tefillin, but parshiyos used for tefillin may not be used for mezuzah. Since tefillin is a holier mitzvah, using parshiyos of tefillin for a mezuzah decreases their sanctity, which is not permitted.

How do we rule?

The Rosh (Hilchos Tefillin, Chapter 30) rules that the mitzvah of tefillin is more important, and this approach is followed by the Tur, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 38:12), the Rema (Yoreh Deah 285:1) and the later authorities. The Rosh explains that tefillin is more important because a mitzvah de'gufei adif, literally a mitzvah of your body is more important. What does this mean?

One early acharon, the Beis Hillel (Yoreh Deah 285), understood the Rosh to mean that the mitzvah of tefillin is more important because one puts tefillin on his body, as opposed to mezuzah, which is on one's house, not body. Based on his reason, the Beis Hillel concludes that tefillin is more important than sukkah or lulav, since neither of these mitzvos is performed on one's body to the extent that tefillin is. Once the Beis Hillel is discussing which mitzvos are "more important," he discusses whether tefillin is more important than tzitzis or vice versa, concluding that tefillin are more important, since the name of Hashem is in the tefillin.

However, most authorities understand that the Rosh means something else. They explain that the mitzvah of tefillin is inherently obligatory, whereas the mitzvah of mezuzah is circumstantial. Every weekday there is an obligation for every adult Jewish male to don tefillin. The mitzvah of mezuzah is not inherently obligatory, but is dependent on one's living arrangements, and can be avoided completely (Gra; Rabbi Akiva Eiger, in his notes to Shulchan Aruch and Responsum 1:9; Aruch Hashulchan, Yoreh Deah 285:5). Furthermore, according to most authorities, mezuzah is obligatory min haTorah only if one owns the house in which he lives.

A big difference between these two approaches is germane to the mitzvos of lulav and sukkah. According to the Beis Hillel, these mitzvos carry less weight than tefillin. However, according to those who disagree with him, both of these mitzvos are inherently obligatory, just as tefillin. This would mean that, regarding the Rosh's criterion, all three of these mitzvos should be treated on an equal footing, and we would need to find other criteria to decide which of them is more important.

Tefillin or Sukkah?

Rabbi Akiva Eiger notes that the above-discussed passage of Yerushalmi provides an answer to this question. There it

stated that a mitzvah that occurs more frequently should be prioritized over one that occurs less frequently. Tefillin is far more frequently observed than either sukkah or lulav, and, therefore, should be treated with more priority than they are.

However, notes Rabbi Akiva Eiger, this question is usually moot for the following reason: When one has a mitzvah that he is obligated to observe immediately, he does not wait to fulfill it. Therefore, any time other than erev Sukkos, one who needs to choose between these mitzvos should use the funds to acquire tefillin, since he has that responsibility immediately, and the mitzvos of Sukkos will wait. If the situation occurs during chol hamoed Sukkos, the priority will be: sukkah, tefillin, lulav. This is because the mitzvah of sukkah is, at the moment, definitely min haTorah, whereas even those who wear tefillin on chol hamoed accept that it is disputed whether there is a mitzvah to wear them on chol hamoed. Therefore, sukkah, which is definitely a requirement min haTorah on all seven days of Sukkos, takes precedence over tefillin. Since the mitzvah of taking lulav is min haTorah only on the first day of Sukkos, but afterwards is required only midrabbanan (unless one is in or near the Beis Hamikdash grounds), tefillin will have precedence over lulav for those who wear tefillin on chol hamoed, which is the assumption that Rabbi Akiva Eiger makes.

Tefillin versus tzitzis

Rabbi Akiva Eiger agrees that tefillin is more important than tzitzis, but for a different reason than that provided by the Beis Hillel. Tzitzis is like mezuzah – there is only an obligation if he has a four-cornered garment, but it is not an automatic requirement. Although one is obligated to place tzitzis on any four-cornered garment that one owns and wears, one can avoid wearing four-cornered garments more easily than one can avoid living in a house that one owns. On the other hand, a man is required to wear tefillin every weekday.

Difficulty with the Rosh

Notwithstanding that all later authorities conclude that tefillin is considered a more "important" mitzvah than mezuzah, a difficulty is presented by the Rosh's conclusion. Why would he rule according to Rav Huna, when the Yerushalmi's conclusion is, like Shmuel, that mezuzah is a more important mitzvah?

The answer is that the Talmud Bavli (Menachos 32a) states the following: "A sefer Torah that wore out, or tefillin that wore out, cannot be used for a mezuzah, because one is not permitted to reduce something from a greater sanctity to a lower one." Thus, we see that the Bavli ruled according to Rav Huna, that tefillin is a greater mitzvah than mezuzah, and the halacha follows the Bavli over the Yerushalmi (Beis Yosef, end of Orach Chayim, Chapter 38).

Practically speaking

The Magen Avraham (38:15), one of the major halachic authorities, notes that, although the mitzvah of tefillin is

more important than mezuzah, in practice it might be better for someone to purchase mezuzos. Someone might be able to coordinate his schedule such that he can borrow tefillin from other people when he needs them for davening every day, something impractical to do with mezuzos. Thus, if he can thereby observe both mitzvos, he should purchase the mezuzos to allow this. This ruling is followed by the later authorities (Shulchan Aruch Harav; Mishnah Berurah; Aruch Hashulchan).

Nevertheless, the rule has not changed: Someone who will be unable to observe the mitzvah of tefillin should purchase tefillin first and wait until he has more resources before he purchases mezuzos (Shulchan Aruch Harav; Mishnah Berurah; Aruch Hashulchan).

Choosing your mitzvos

At this point, we can now address our opening question: “I don’t have enough money for all the mitzvah objects that I need. Which should I purchase?”

The halachic conclusion is:

He should first see which mitzvos he can fulfill without purchasing them. For example, he might be able to borrow tefillin, and he also might be able to use someone else’s sukkah. If he lives near someone else who is observant, he should be able to fulfill the mitzvah of lulav with someone else’s lulav. In earlier generations, it was common for an entire community to purchase only one set of four minim, and everyone used that set to fulfill the mitzvah. Mezuzah is more difficult to observe with borrowed items, and, therefore, he might need to purchase mezuzos ahead of tefillin, lulav, or sukkah, notwithstanding that they are obligatory mitzvos to a greater extent than mezuzah is.

Furthermore, which mitzvah he will need to observe first might be a factor, as we saw from Rabbi Akiva Eiger’s discussion about someone who needs to purchase tefillin, sukkah and lulav.

When Do We Recite a brocha?

At this point, we can discuss the third of our opening questions: “Why don’t we recite a brocha when we put tzitzis onto a garment, yet we recite a brocha when we place a mezuzah on a door?”

This question is raised by the Magen Avraham, in his commentary on the following words of the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 19:1): “Until one dons the garment, one is exempt from putting tzitzis on it. For this reason, one does not recite a brocha when one places the tzitzis on the garment, since the mitzvah is only when you wear it.”

The Magen Avraham (19:1) asks why we do not recite a brocha when putting tzitzis onto a garment, yet we recite a brocha when we affix a mezuzah to a door? The Magen Avraham answers that the reason is practical. Usually, one moves into the house first, before he installs the mezuzah, and, since he already lives in the house, he is responsible to have a mezuzah on the door. Thus, placing the mezuzah on the door is the fulfillment of the mitzvah and warrants a brocha. On the other hand, one does not usually place

tzitzis on a garment while wearing it, but before he puts it on, when there is no obligation yet to fulfill a mitzvah.

Based on his analysis, the Magen Avraham rules that should any of the tzitzis tear off a garment while someone is wearing it, and he attaches replacement tzitzis while he is still wearing it, he should recite a brocha prior to attaching the replacement. The brocha he would recite in this instance is *Asher kideshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu la’asos tzitzis*, which translates as a brocha “to make tzitzis,” a text that we do not have recorded by any earlier authority.

Notwithstanding his conclusion, the Magen Avraham rules that this is not the preferable way to act, but, rather, he should remove the tzitzis once they become invalid and attach replacement tzitzis without a brocha. On the other hand, the Magen Avraham contends that if a mezuzah falls off or becomes invalid, the occupant is not required to relocate until he can replace the mezuzah. The difference between the two cases is how much *tircha* the person is required to undergo – one is required to remove a pair of tzitzis, which is a simple act, but not required to relocate himself and his family until he has a chance to replace or reattach the mezuzah.

The Magen Avraham then suggests that if someone affixed a mezuzah before he moved into a house, he should not recite the brocha when he affixes the mezuzah, but when he moves in he should recite the brocha, *Asher kideshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu ladur babayis sheyeish bo mezuzah*, “to live in a house that has a mezuzah,” again, a new text of a brocha not recorded by any earlier authority.

The Birkei Yosef (Orach Chayim 19:2) disagrees with the Magen Avraham, contending that we should not create texts of brochos that we do not find in early sources. In regard to the Magen Avraham’s question, why do we recite a brocha upon affixing a mezuzah but not upon placing tzitzis, the Birkei Yosef provides a different answer: Chazal required a brocha on the last act that you do to fulfill a mitzvah. In the case of tzitzis, it is when you put on the garment. In the case of mezuzah, it is when you affix it. However, if there is a mezuzah on the door already, one does not recite a brocha upon moving into a house, since one did not perform any act to fulfill the mitzvah.

Conclusion

A famous quotation from a non-Jewish source is: “Is G-d more concerned about what comes into our mouth or what comes out?” This question assumes that some of Hashem’s mitzvos are more “important” for us to observe than others. The Torah’s answer is that it is not for us to decide which of the mitzvos is more important. One grows in one’s relationship with Hashem through each opportunity to perform a mitzvah.

Rabbi YY Jacobson

The First Manual for Addicts

“My Contract Preceded His Contract”

Regression

The portion this week, Behar, is “the poor man’s portion.” It is dedicated entirely to the poor. In Behar, the Torah legislates numerous majestic and sometimes breathtaking laws in order to protect and assist the poor person.

Among other items it discusses a regression in poverty: a person becomes so desperate that he is forced to sell his ancestral field or farm in the land of Israel; worse, a person is compelled to sell a home used for work in the fields; worse, the situation grows so difficult, a person is forced to sell his residential home.

Worse yet, the circumstances are so dire that he sells himself as a slave to another Jew. (This can usually only be for a maximum of six years. Even if he insists to remain longer, he must leave during the year of Jubilee, which came about every 50th year. If Jubilee comes around in two years, he goes free then. [1] A Jew can’t sell him as a slave for more than 50 years.[2])

Worst is the following situation described in Leviticus (Behar) chapter 25 verse 47:

וְכִי תִשָּׂא יַד גֵּר וְתֹשֵׁב עִמָּךְ וּמָדַד אֶחָיד עִמּוֹ וַנִּמְכַּר לְגֵר תּוֹשֵׁב עִמָּךְ אוֹ לְעֵקֶר מִשְׁפַּחַת גֵּר.

If a resident non-Jew gains wealth with you, and your brother becomes destitute with him and is sold to a resident non-Jew among you or to an idol of the family of a non-Jew.

In this case, he did not only sell himself to another Jew, where at least the culture and lifestyle are similar; but he sold himself as a slave to a non-Jew, where the entire lifestyle is different.[3] The Torah then goes on to command his next of kin to redeem him from his master, by compensating the master for the money he paid to purchase the Jew and thus setting the slave free.

אֶחָדִי נִמְכַּר גְּאֻלָּה תְּהִיָּה לוֹ אֶחָד מֵאֶחָיו יִגְאֻלֵּנוּ: אוֹ דָדוֹ אוֹ בֶן דָּדוֹ יִגְאֻלֵּנוּ אוֹ מִשְׂאֵר בְּשָׂרוֹ מִמִּשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ יִגְאֻלֵּנוּ אוֹ הַשִּׁיגָה יָדוֹ וַנִּגְאָל:

After he is sold, he shall have redemption; one of his brothers shall redeem him. Or his uncle or his cousin shall redeem him, or the closest [other] relative from his family shall redeem him; or, if he becomes able to afford it, he can be redeemed [through his own funds].

בֵּן תְּהִיָּבֵל הוּא וּבָנָיו עִמּוֹ וְאֵם לֹא יִגְאָל בְּאֵלָה נִיָּצָא בִּשְׁ:

And if he is not redeemed through [any of] these [ways], he shall go out in the Jubilee year, he and his children with him.[4]

In other words, according to Torah law, the Jewish slave can never sell himself for eternity. Redeemed or not, when Jubilee comes around, the Jewish slave automatically goes free.[5]

Absentee Father?

When the Torah mentions the relatives who are to redeem the Jew who sold himself, the Torah enumerates first the brother of the slave, then, the uncle, the cousin, followed by any other relative.

But there is a blatant omission here: The one relative who should have been mentioned first. The father.

The Torah also omits the mention of a mother and sisters. Yet this is understood, for in most cases the mother and sisters were being supported by their husbands. They lacked the means to redeem the slave. The Torah also omits the slave’s son. This too can be explained by the fact that the father usually supports the son, not vice versa.[6] But why is the father not mentioned?

There is another question: The Torah enumerates the relatives who ought to redeem the slave in this order: brother, uncle, first cousin, any other next of kin, and finally the slave himself.

The reason why the Torah feels it necessary to enumerate all the family members instead of just saying "anyone of his family" is to teach us that there is an order of responsibility on who is to redeem the slave. The closest relative, a brother, must be first to step up to the plate.[7] Then the uncle; then the first cousin, etc.

Accordingly, if the slave obtains the means to redeem himself, it is his responsibility to redeem himself before anyone else. If you have the money to give yourself freedom, you can’t ask your brother or uncle to do it for you. If so, the Torah should have mentioned first the option of the slave redeeming himself. And yet, in reality, he is mentioned as the last option: After mentioning all the relatives, the Torah concludes “if he becomes able to afford it, he can be redeemed [through his own funds].” [8]

The Disease

Each law in the Torah, even those not presently applicable, represents a truth that applies to all times, peoples, and places.

The above law is no different: though today—150 years after the Civil War which began in April 1861 and claimed 620,000 lives plus the US President—no one in the civilized world can sell himself as a slave, the concept behind this biblical law applies in our age as well, maybe even more than ever.

Today we also sell ourselves as slaves. There are people, young and old, women and men, teenagers and adults, who reach a place in life where they do not own themselves any longer. Something else owns them entirely. They have no control over their lives. They are addicts. Addiction is not a bad habit exercised frequently; it is a disease. The addiction OWNS the addict. He does not own himself or herself any longer.

Addictions come in many forms: drugs, alcohol, gambling, nicotine, sexual addictions, food, etc. We become addicts usually due to a profound void, or some major trauma or pressure in life. Sometimes it begins with fun and entertainment, but soon the innocent fun lover has become a slave to his or her addiction.

Powerlessness

Someone, who has an alcohol and gambling addiction, once shared with me what prompted him into recovery. He was in Atlantic City in a casino gambling away his fortune. It was late afternoon, he was drinking wine and gambling.

A man approached him and said: Do you know it's Yom Kippur today?!

He suddenly realized that it was the time for the Neilah prayer, the fifth and final holiest service of the holiest day of the year. This gave him a sudden clarity that he was powerless over his gambling habit. It catapulted him to seek help.

That is why the first step of the 12-step program for recovery is: "We admitted we were powerless over our addiction—that our lives had become unmanageable." The first step toward liberation is to realize you are a slave; you really do not own yourself any longer. You have been sold.

The Role of a Father

Comes the Torah and tells us that it is our responsibility and privilege to help and redeem the addict, the slave, from his incarceration. The brother, the uncle, the cousin, or any relative must not spare money, time, and effort to help the addict set himself or herself free.

Yet the Torah neglects to mention the possibility of his father being the redeemer. Because if he had a father—a true father, a father who would have been there for his son in the way the father is supposed to be—this would have not come about.

We are not referring only to a biological father, but to an emotionally present father. A father is not only someone who gives his child food and shelter and takes him to his first baseball game or (l'havdil) to the synagogue on Sabbath. A father is not only the one who is responsible to pay the bills. That is, of course, part of fatherhood. But it is not the essence of the father.

What is a father? A father is the one who gives inner confidence to his children. The father, if he lives up to his calling, imbues in his children the conviction that they are great human beings, who can stand up to any challenge they encounter on the winding journey called life and live life to the fullest. Father is the one who empowers his children to know the depth of their dignity, the power of their souls, and the ability to forge their destiny successfully.

This is not a blame game. Sometimes the father tried hard and really meant well. He may have simply not had the tools to be there for his child in the way the child needed it, to provide him/her with the attachment the child desperately craved. Maybe the father never had a father to mentor him. Sometimes the father fulfilled his duty, but other circumstances have traumatized the child. Some fathers are incredible role models and leaders, but a perpetrator has laid waste to the brain of the child. Yet, the Torah is saying, the full emotional presence of a father (and of course a mother) achieves miracles—and it is never too late to be a father, because, at any and every age, we all need a loving and empowering father.

Joseph did not lose his dignity and did not sell his soul to Potifar's wife because "he saw the visage of his father." He felt the presence of a father who believed in him even when

he did not believe in himself. Never underestimate the power of a parent's deep and unwavering attachment, even if a situation seems dismal. Trauma is the absence of attachment; true and attuned attachment creates miracles.

I Want a Father

I heard the following story from Rabbi Sholom Ber Lispker, spiritual leader of The Shul in Bal Harbor, Florida. A man requested a meeting with him, during which he unraveled the following tragic story. He was married, with a teenage son in the house. Yet he grew bored with his wife, fell in love with another woman, and ultimately divorced his wife.

After the divorce, the boy remained with his father and treated the new woman who would come visit his father often very disrespectfully, blaming her for the destruction of the family unit. The child, for good reason, spoke very obnoxiously to her.

When the father proposed to her, she made a condition. She would not marry him unless his teenage son would move out of their home in Bal Harbor, Florida. She does not want to see the face of that boy again.

The father, who is extremely wealthy, called in his child. He handed him an envelope with \$20,000 cash; gave him the keys to a new Ferrari; gave him a few credit cards for use, to be paid for each month by the father, and finally, he gave him keys to a beautiful flat on the ocean. The father then silently added one stipulation: Son, all of this is yours; take it and enjoy, but you can't step foot into this house anymore... if you need me, give me a call, and I will come to visit you.

The boy took the cash, the credit cards, the keys, and threw them back at his father, and said: "I don't want your money, your car, your houses, your richness. All I want is a FATHER!"

Now, he was coming to Rabbi Lispker, to ask him what to do.

This is the tragedy of a father who never had the time or the courage to communicate to his child that one feeling: I am here for you. All of me, all of the time; I believe in you. You are truly awesome. You are a gift from G-d and I love you and remain proud of you.

A father is the one who communicates to his child the message the Baal Shem Tov's father, Rabbi Eliezer, shared with his five-year-old son before he died: "You need not fear anyone or anything in this world, but G-d."

Dad, Where Are You?

This is why there is no mention of the father in the process of redeeming the addicted slave. Had this addict had a "father," or had the child had the ability to feel and experience his father, he would not find himself in his current situation. The reason a child can become such a tragic slave is that he did not have a presence in his life who taught him about his Divine inner strengths, powers, and majesty. The greatest tragedy, said Chassidic master

Rabbi Aharon of Karlin, is when a person forgets that he is a prince, a child of G-d.

If you believe you are a prince, you can withstand the greatest temptations; if you think you are valueless, the smallest temptations can drive you to the abyss.

Or perhaps he had a father who gave it all. But the child was so hurt that he shut out his father, he can't even feel his father. This only means that the father must never take it personally, and maintain an even stronger attachment.

In the End, It's Up To You

We can now appreciate why the Torah leaves the option of the slave redeeming himself for the last because in his current situation, he is incapable of freeing himself. He is powerless.

But we must help him go free. The addict is powerless over his problem, hence his closest family members are commanded to come to his rescue; brothers, uncles, cousins, or any relative.

But ultimately they are only catalysts. They cannot solve his problem; they can only help him see his own situation with clarity. They can give him the support he needs to HELP HIMSELF. If he does not make the decision to set himself free from the shackles of addiction, nothing can save him.

This, then, is why the Torah lists the enslaved person as the final prospect; his family can help him realize his problem and provide adequate support, but ultimately only he holds the key to his freedom. In the end, the addict himself or herself must find the resources to go free.

The Source of Freedom

But CAN the addict free himself? How can he or she liberate themselves from their addiction or any other situation which seems to be all-powerful?

Comes the Torah and concludes:

לִי בְנֵי-יִצְחָק בְּשֵׁנֵת הַיָּבֵל, הוּא וּבְנָיו עִמּוֹ. כִּי--לֹא יִגָּאֵל, בְּאֶלֶה-יָאֵם הוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: אֲנִי, ה'--עֲבָדַי הֵם, אֲשֶׁר--יִשְׂרָאֵל, עֲבָדִים אֲלֵקִיכֶם.

On Jubilee, he will automatically go free. He and his children with him. Because the children of Israel are servants to ME, they are My servants; I have taken them out of Egypt.

Here is where the Torah reveals the true source of our freedom. How can the slave automatically be freed on the Jubilee year? The answer is: "The children of Israel are servants to ME, they are My servants." We have only one master, G-d, and any subsequent sale to another master is merely superficial; it's not a real sale.

In the words of Rashi: "Shtari Kodem." G-d says, "My contract precedes your contract." The divine contract proclaiming that He owns each of us precedes the contract of the slave owner. I may sign a contract with you for my house, but there is one problem: someone else has a previous contract!

I may sell my soul to addiction; I may sell my mind, heart, and schedule to addiction. But before all of the addiction

began, my soul already belonged to G-d. On my deepest level, I am Divine. I am not an addict. I am a mirror of infinity, a fragment of G-d. My addiction may be powerful but it cannot penetrate the essence of my being. My being belongs to G-d. There is a core self, sacred and wholesome, which is more powerful than all my trauma, abuse, and addiction.

All the addictions and desires that control me are ultimately external. Each and every one of us has only one true allegiance: Our oneness with the Infinite One. Thus, in the end, a "jubilee" will come and set us free.

The Camel

A mother and a baby camel were lying around, and suddenly the baby camel asked, "mother, may I ask you some questions?"

Mother said, "Sure! Why son, is there something bothering you?"

Baby said, "Why do camels have humps?"

Mother said, "Well son, we are desert animals, we need the humps to store water and we are known to survive for weeks without water."

Baby said, "Okay, then why are our legs long and our feet rounded?"

Mother said, "Son, obviously they are meant for walking in the desert. You know with these legs I can move around the desert better than anyone does!"

Baby said, "Okay, then why are our eyelashes long? Sometimes it bothers my sight."

Mother with pride said, "My son, those long thick eyelashes are your protective cover. They help to protect your eyes from the desert sand and wind as you trek hundreds of miles."

The Baby, after thinking, said, "I see. So the hump is to store water when we are in the desert, the legs are for walking through the desert, and these eyelashes protect my eyes from the desert. If so, what in heaven's name are we doing here in a cage in the Bronx Zoo?!"

We were not made to be locked in a cage. We were meant to be free. G-d's contract precedes every other "contract" you might make in life, including those in which you sell yourself to the tyrants of addiction.

Yogi Berra

In 1973 the New York Mets struggled in last place in the National League Eastern division midway through the season. The team's colorful manager, the legendary Yogi Berra, had done wonders in the past, leading the team to its first-ever World Series championship in 1969, but this season looked to most observers like a wash. Asked by a sports reporter for one of the New York papers if the season was over for the Mets, Yogi responded with what has become one of his most famous "Yogi-isms," a declaration that put an exclamation point on what was to be one of the most exciting comebacks in sports history: "It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over!"

As history shows, it indeed wasn't over. Yogi Berra's New York Mets went on to take the National League East division and capped off the season by winning the National League Pennant and going to their second World Series contest.

In your life "it ain't over" until G-d says it's over—and G-d says it's not over until you win. Your moral and spiritual victory is guaranteed, because "My contract precedes any other." [9]

[1] Obviously, the sale had to reflect this fact. If Jubilee was close, the price was less.

[2] According to Torah law, Jews observed two special years Shmita (Hebrew: שמיטה, literally "release"), and Yovel, or Jubilee. 14 years after the Jews entered the land of Israel and finished conquering and dividing the land, they began counting every seventh year. The seventh year of the cycle was called shmitah, during that year the land is left to lie fallow. All agricultural activity—including plowing, planting, pruning and harvesting—is forbidden by Torah law. Other cultivation techniques—such as watering, fertilizing, weeding, spraying, trimming and mowing—may be performed as a preventative measure only, not to improve the growth of trees or plants. Additionally, any fruits which grow of their own accord are deemed hefker (ownerless) and may be picked by anyone.

After seven shmitos, 49 years, comes the 50th year known as Yovel or Jubilee. This year has all of the laws of a regular shmitah year, plus all slaves are set free and all fields soils are returned to their ancestral owner.

[3] According to Jewish law, only a man can sell himself as a slave, never a woman.

[4] Though his children were not sold into slavery, the master is obligated to support them throughout the ordeal (Rashi). Hence in a sense, they too are under his authority.

[5] This is referring to a situation where the non-Jew is living in the Holy Land under the jurisdiction of a Jewish State, and hence is obliged by the Torah law.

[6] In the case where the son is supporting his father, we can assume that if he didn't help his father out and allowed him to sell himself into slavery he probably won't redeem him. If he sold him once, he will sell him twice. But a father on the other hand, even if he sat by idly and let his son be sold into slavery, once he sees him in slavery, his fatherly love - which is a lot stronger than a son's love to his father- is aroused and surely he would make the effort to redeem him. Yet, the Torah chooses not to mention that option.

[7] According to Jewish law, if there is a father with means, he has the first responsibility to set his son free since he is closest in kin. Which only exacerbates the previous question of why the Torah omits the mention of a father.

[8] One possible answer is that according to natural circumstances, it is the most unlikely that the slave himself will find the means to set himself free. For if he would

have any money he would not be forced to sell himself for the sake of money. Hence the Torah gives that option last since it is the most unusual.

[9] This essay is based on a talk delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Shabbos Parshas Behar 5723, 1963. Published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 17 Parshas Behar.

Parshas Behar-Bechukosai

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Chana Necha bas Yaakov.

Brotherly Love

If your brother becomes impoverished and his hand falters in your proximity, you shall hold on to him [...] (25:35).

A puzzling Midrash Tanchuma discusses the concept of having the responsibility to help a poor person. The Midrash states that if we don't help a poor person now, the following year he will need a lot more help (very similar to what Rashi comments on our possuk; see Rashi ad loc). The Midrash ends by saying that if we neglect to fulfill our responsibility to help we are actually robbing the poor.

This Midrash statement requires clarification: Why is it that if we don't help a poor person he will need exponentially more help later? Perhaps we can reasonably assume that he will need twice as much help (last year's shortfall and this year's shortfall), yet Rashi says that not helping immediately will cause the future need to be more than five times the present need. How can this be true?

Additionally, how is not giving charity equal to stealing from the poor? It seems very difficult to equate not giving charity with stealing when one is a sin of omission and the other is a sin of commission.

We find a remarkable Gemara (Brachos 6b) that discusses an enigmatic admonition from the prophet Yeshaya: "What you have stolen from the poor is in your houses" (Yeshaya 3:14). Rashi (Brachos 6b) explains that the Gemara wonders why we are singling out stealing from the poor. After all, stealing from the rich is also a terrible sin! Additionally, it doesn't even make sense to expend the effort to steal from the poor; how much can one realistically take? (As the famous bank robber Willie Sutton supposedly answered when asked why he robs banks: "because that's where the money is.")

To explain what it means to steal from the poor the Gemara says, "This is referring to a situation where one greets you and you ignore him." Obviously, this is improper, even boorish, behavior; but why do Chazal refer to this as stealing? What in fact did you actually take?

The answer is that you took his self-respect. By ignoring his friendly overture you actually made a very clear statement about what you think of him – that he isn't an entity worthy of a response. You denigrated his very existence. Obviously, this is very painful for anybody to experience, but it is particularly devastating to a poor

person who already feels depressed about his situation and his stature.

The possuk in this week's parsha instructs us very explicitly on how we should view a fellow Jew who has fallen on hard times, "If your brother becomes impoverished [...]." In other words, we have to treat someone who needs our help as we would a blood brother. When a person helps his brother, he does not consider it charity; a person ought to consider it a privilege to be able to help his family because he wants to see them succeed. A child who receives help from his parents isn't made to feel like a charity case. Quite the opposite, he feels love and support, and ultimately validation, from his parents.

When we ignore the needs of a poor person we are taking away his self-esteem, and telling him that he isn't worthy of our help. Destroying a person's self-respect will predictably lead to dire consequences. A person with low self-esteem has no interest in improving his situation because he feels inadequate, incapable, and unworthy of better circumstances. This is why if you don't help a poor person the following year it becomes exponentially worse; destroying his self-esteem creates a devastating downward spiral.

Therefore, when we give charity, we must make every effort to ensure that the recipient doesn't feel like a charity case; he must feel that it is our honor to be able to help because we believe in him and respect him. If a person knows that he has a backer who believes in him, he will inevitably "pull himself up by the bootstraps" and improve his own situation. The Torah is teaching us that the antidote to poverty is creating a relationship with someone who needs our help. Ultimately, this validation enables them to help themselves.

Jewish American or American Jew

If you walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them [...] (26:3).

The second parsha of this week's double parsha Torah reading delves into great detail about the rewards for following the commandments and the absolutely horrific consequences for not doing so. Interestingly, Rashi (ad loc) actually redefines walking in the statutes as being deeply immersed in the study of Torah. Likewise, when the Torah begins to describe the tragic consequences of not listening to Hashem (see 26:14 and Rashi ad loc), Rashi comments that these terrible punishments come as a result of not being deeply immersed in Torah study.

Yet when the Torah explains why all these terrible consequences will eventually befall the Jewish people, the Torah explicitly, and repeatedly, lays the blame on Bnei Yisroel for not keeping the laws of Shemittah (see 26:34-35 ad 26:43). In fact, Rashi himself goes through the calculation of the years of exile to reconcile it exactly with the amount of Shemittah years Bnei Yisroel didn't keep while in Eretz Yisroel, and states that this inexorably led to the expulsion of Bnei Yisroel from Eretz Yisroel (see Rashi

26:35). So why does Rashi feel compelled to cite the sin of not being immersed in Torah study as the key failing that led to the exile of Bnei Yisroel when it seems to contradict what the Torah outright tells us?

As explained in prior editions of INSIGHTS, the key test in leaving Egypt was whether Bnei Yisroel identified themselves as Jews or as Egyptians. This is why they had to place the blood on the doorways of their houses; to visibly declare that it was a house of proud God fearing Jews. This explains many of the details relating to who left Egypt and who didn't.

Perhaps the greatest spiritual test in the history of the Jewish people has been that of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The clearest example is the ubiquitous adoption by the Jewish community of the surrounding secular culture. A simple but telling proof is the obsession with sports. While our Jewish institutions (shuls, schools, mikvaot, etc.) have to beg people to attend their functions, these very same religious Jews clamor to spend \$4,000 for a seat at a playoff basketball or football game.

Historically, Jewish exile has brought Jews closer to one another and caused them to identify themselves in a distinctly Jewish manner. A prime example of this was the development of a uniquely Jewish language by which to communicate. In European countries there was Yiddish, in the Spanish countries there was Ladino, and in Iran it was a Judaeo-Farsi dialect. In other words, and for a variety of reasons, we chose to culturally identify as Jews.

Today, Jews are more comfortable identifying with sports teams. We wear clothes and other memorabilia carrying our "home team" colors and logos. We proudly adorn our children with team jerseys of the local sports' "heroes." Some of us go so far as to obtain significant sports memorabilia and decorate the walls of our homes with it. This odd behavior is unique to the current American (and perhaps western society) exile. Can anyone possibly imagine our great grandparents in Europe wearing a sports jersey of the Polish national team? They would probably look at you cross-eyed and say, "What connection do I have to a couple of crazy goyim kicking a ball down the field like six year olds?"

The entire purpose of Hashem throwing us into exile is to bring us closer as a people; to learn to take care of one another, reinforce within us the unique qualities we have as Jews, and make us appreciate who we are. After all, nothing brings us together more than a mortal enemy and an existential threat. Today we have lost sight of this ideal; is it any wonder it has led to one of the greatest spiritual holocausts in the history of the Jewish people? We are embracing the surrounding non-Jewish cultures and ideals and it is killing us.

This is what Shemittah was supposed to reinforce. While we don't work the fields or harvest the fruits, we are brought closer as a nation, and a familial feeling is developed. Anybody can walk onto anybody else's field

and take whatever he needs, as if it was one of their closest relatives property. Just as I would be comfortable walking into my sister's home and opening the refrigerator to see what she had to eat, so too I can pick my neighbors fruit. Shemittah provides a sense of shared space like one big family.

This is also the reason that Shemittah causes all personal loans to be cancelled. After all, if my brother can't pay me back would I really want to pressure him? Would I ever dream of charging my mother interest on a loan?

The fact that Bnei Yisroel didn't keep a single Shemittah means that they were estranged from one another. Naturally, the consequence for this lesson not learned is to be exiled and forced to learn how much we need each other. Unfortunately, only by being thrown to the wolves of

the nations of the world, where we are constantly hounded for being who we are, do we learn how badly we need one another as Jews.

Rashi is saying that if we had only immersed ourselves in Torah we could have avoided all the pitfalls. That alone would have been enough to establish our unique cultural and familial bond. We would then understand that we are a unified nation; and that would have been the basis on which to build a cohesive and supportive society. As Chazal teach us; the study of Torah builds unity – Talmidei Chachamim bring shalom to the world (Brachos 64b). Had we properly devoted and immersed ourselves in Torah we would have avoided the need for the punishment of exile.

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה