



BS"D

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

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON BEHAR BECHUKOSAI - 5785

parsha@groups.io / www.parsha.net - in our 30th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha+subscribe@groups.io. Please also copy me at cshulman@gmail.com. A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net>. It is also fully searchable.

Sponsored in memory of **Chaim Yissachar z"l** ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov.
In memory of Sara Masha bat R' Yaakov Eliezer a"h, Baila bat Arye Leib a"h & Ana Malka bas Yisrael a"h.

To sponsor a parsha sheet contact cshulman@gmail.com
(proceeds to tzedaka)

[Friday night omer count will be 41 days, 5 weeks and 6 days]

Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>

Two Explanations of the "Giborei Koach" Title Given to Shmita Observers

Parshas Behar

Two Explanations of the "Giborei Koach" Title Given to Shmita Observers
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion:
#1336 – The Tochacha of Parshas Bechukosai – Should It Be Avoided?
Good Shabbos!

In Parshas Behar, the Torah says, regarding the Shmita year: "The land will give its fruit and you will eat to satisfaction; and you will dwell securely upon it. If you will say: What will we eat in the seventh year? — behold! We will not sow and we will not gather our crop! I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year and it will yield a crop sufficient for the three years. You will sow in the eighth year, but you will eat from the old crop; until the ninth year, until the arrival of its crop, you will eat the old." (Vayikra 25:19-22).

There is a famous Medrash that we have spoken about numerous times over the years. The Medrash in Vayikra Rabba quotes the pasuk in Tehillim: "Giborei koach oseh devoro" (Tehillim 103:20) referring to people of mighty strength, people of character. Who are the people this pasuk is mentioning? The Medrash says that normally a mitzvah takes a single day or a single week or a single month to accomplish. However, people sitting and watching their fields lying fallow while still paying taxes, etc. is extraordinary because it continues for an entire year. The Medrash says there are no greater "giborei koach" than these people.

Yom Kippur is hard because we cannot eat for 25 hours. But it is just one day. Pesach is hard. We can't have pizza for an entire week! But people facing great financial uncertainty for an entire year – those people are true "giborei koach!"

There is a famous question that many people ask on this Medrash: What is the big deal about this special attribute of "giborei koach" associated with Shmita observance? After all, the Torah assures us that in the year prior to Shmita (the sixth year of the seven-year Sabbatical cycle), the crop will

produce triple what it produces in a normal year (years one through five of the Sabbatical cycle).

If a person earns \$100,000 a year, and then one year, he earns \$300,000, he can go back to Kollel for two years! He has the cash-flow to cover it. He sees the money in the bank. So, if the pasuk promises a bounty crop – a bonanza of three years-worth of produce – what is the special attribute of "giborei koach," with which the pasuk praises Shmita observers?

There are many answers given to this question. I saw two answers that relate to human nature:

1. Yes, I received a bounty crop in the sixth year and I know that I am not going to starve. But in the meantime, as I watch my field, I see that (even though I did not plant during Shmita) things grow on their own. What happens to the produce that grows on its own? The poor are permitted to come in and take it. The owner sits back and watches his field, into which he has invested his blood, sweat, and tears all these years, sitting hefker (halachically ownerless), with strangers coming and taking all its produce! And guess what? They are not even saying "Thank you" because they don't need to say "Thank you" because it's hefker.

I may be a generous fellow and may even be a big ba'al tzedakah. I write out checks for charity and have the satisfaction of knowing that I am giving to worthy causes. I have that positive psychological feeling of knowing that I am doing the mitzvah of tzedakah and I receive the "thank you." People realize that I am giving them money. But it is another thing entirely to sit back and watch my produce treated as a "hefker-velt," with all kinds of people just trampling over my field taking whatever they want without even acknowledging me.

Even though one may have the \$300,000 in the bank, it is very difficult for him to sit back and let all this happen. This is the attribute of giborei koach. The other answer to this question is another great principle of human nature: how easily we forget. True, in the sixth year I earned triple what I earn in a normal year, but that was in the past. In the seventh year, I did not earn anything. People don't remember that last year they took in triple their normal income. It is the old principle of "What have you done for me lately?" We forget the good.

There is an oft-quoted parable of the dentist and the root canal. Over Shabbos, a person has a horrible tooth ache. He is in excruciating pain. He literally cannot find a place to sit in peace. On Motzai Shabbos, he calls up his dentist and tells him that he is in terrible pain. The dentist says "Come right in." "Now?" "Yes. Come in right now."

The fellow goes into the dentist's office on Motzai Shabbos. The dentist treats him and relieves the pain. The patient says to the dentist "How much do I owe you?" The dentist answers "You owe me half of what you wanted to give me before I fixed your tooth." This means that when the patient was in pain, he was willing to give the dentist an arm and a leg. "Whatever it is, I can't live like this." But after the fact, we forget that. That's the way we are. So yes, I earned the money the previous year, but that was yesterday. That was last year. Therefore, it is still very difficult for me to sit back and take with equanimity the fact that my land is now hefker.

2. The Juxtaposition of Shmita With "And When Your Brother Becomes Poor":

Immediately following the parsha of Shmita, the Torah goes into a whole downward spiral of "When your brother becomes poor and needs to sell his inheritance..." (Vayikra 25:25-28). The Torah talks about a poor person who falls on hard times. The Gemara (Eruchin 30) comments on the juxtaposition of the mitzvah of Shmitah and this downward spiral of the poor person: Come and see the severity of the prohibition of doing business with seventh-year produce: A person does business with fruits of the Shmita year and what happens to him? He falls on hard times. He needs to sell his movable objects (furniture, car, etc.) because he does not have enough money. This means that the Ribono shel Olam is sending him a message: You tried to make money by illegally selling Shmita fruit. Now look what's happening to you. If he doesn't get the message, he will not only need to sell his moveable objects, he will even need to sell his real estate. Ultimately, he will be so

poor that he will even need to sell his daughter into slavery. If he still doesn't "get it," eventually he will even need to sell himself as a slave.

This, the Gemara explains, is the juxtaposition of the parsha of Shmita and the person who falls on hard times. Rabbeinu Yakov Yosef, the one and only "Chief Rabbi of New York City" (brought over from Vilna at the end of the 1800s to serve in that position) offered another insight into this juxtaposition: If a poor person comes to you and says "Listen, I am poor. I can't make my mortgage payment. You need to help me out." Our reaction might be "Don't worry. Have bitachon (trust in G-d). The Ribono shel Olam will take care of you." However, that is not a proper reaction.

Rav Yisrael Salanter once formulated a very crucial ethical rule: Regarding another person's needs, we all need to be atheists. When someone needs help, we should not assume "the Ribono shel Olam will help." No. You need to be the one who helps. Regarding your friend's gashmiyus (material needs), the attitude must be "Maybe the Ribono shel Olam is not going to help. I need to help."

Rav Yisrael used to say that people make a mistake. Everyone worries about his own gashmiyus, but has bitachon about his own ruchniyus (confidence that everything will be okay with his spirituality). It should be the other way around. When it comes to your ruchniyus, you need to worry, and let Hakadosh Baruch Hu take care of your gashmiyus. However, regarding someone else's gashmiyus, you need to be a kofer (denier), or at least an agnostic and say "No. I need to take care of this fellow."

The Ribono shel Olam placed this needy person in your lap. Don't tell him to have faith in the Ribono shel Olam and that everything will be alright. Bitachon is for you. For the other person's problems, you need to take out your checkbook and be practical.

Maybe, says Rav Yakov Yosef, that explains the juxtaposition at the beginning of Parshas Behar. A person finished the year of Shmitah. "I didn't work a drop. I had bitachon and I made it through the year. I know what it means to live a life of bitachon. I put my money where my mouth is." Then a poor person comes to me and complains about his financial needs. I should not lecture him about my bitachon and how I spent an entire year not earning a dime. A person has a tendency, after he has gone through a nisayon and passed the test, to go to the next person and say "You must have bitachon as well."

No. That is all well and good for yourself. But when someone is in need, don't be frum on his cheshbon! Don't play the "bitachon card" on him. For him, you need to take out your checkbook.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD
dhoffman@torah.org This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion...A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

Rav Frand © 2023 by Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project
Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209
<http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

Tidbits • Parashas Behar - Bechukosai 5785

Ira Zlotowitz <iraz@klalgovaah.org> Unsubscribe
Thu, May 22, 7:01 PM (5 hours ago)

Parashas Behar - Bechukosai • May 24th • 26 Iyar 5785

This week is Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh Sivan. Rosh Chodesh is on Wednesday, May 28th. The molad is Tuesday morning at 9:14am and 3 chalakim.

Av Harachamim is recited in most communities despite Shabbos Mevorchim. (This is due to the significance of the sefirah mourning period.) The first opportunity for Kiddush Levana is Motzaei Shabbos, May 31st. The final opportunity is at 9:15pm on Wednesday night, June 10th.

In most congregations the aliyah of shelishi in Parashas Bechukosai that includes the Tochachah is taken by the baal koreh or the gabbai (in many

shuls they do so without being called up). The pesukim of the Tochachah are read in a slightly quicker and lower tone (while ensuring that the words are audible).

The Shelah writes that Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan (next Tuesday, May 27th), is an auspicious time to daven for the spiritual well-being of one's children. Therefore, many recite Tefillah HaShelah on this day. The Shelah writes that one should give tzedakah to a worthy person along with this tefillah.

Sefirah: On Friday night we count the 41st day of the Omer. Pirkei Avos: Perek 5

Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Shevuos 23 • Yerushalmi: Eruvin 56. Siyum on Tuesday, May 29th; mazal tov! • Mishnah Yomis: Avos 2:4-5 • Oraysa (coming week): Taanis 18a-20a • Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: 91:14-92:2 The Sheloshes Y'mei Hagbalah are Friday, Shabbos and Sunday. May 30th - June 9th-11th. Shavuot begins on Sunday evening, June 1st.

Summaries: BEHAR: The laws of Shemittah and Yovel • Selling and redeeming ancestral properties and homes • Helping impoverished Jews • The Jew who is sold as a slave • We are slaves of Hashem who took us out of Mitzrayim • See Taryag Section for a complete review BECHUKOSAI: Reward for following the Torah • The Tochachah, admonition against abandoning the Torah and the details of the punishment for doing so • The laws of Arachin and Hekdesh • See Taryag Weekly for the various mitzvos • Chazak Chazak V'nis'chazeik!

Haftarah: The Parasha discusses the laws of redeeming land in Eretz Yisrael from a purchaser. This chapter in Yirmiyah (32:6-27) takes place during the siege of Yerushalayim by Nevuchadnezzar. Despite Klal Yisrael being under immediate threat of exile, Hashem commands Yirmiyah to redeem his uncle's field. Yirmiyah's act displayed for all to see that despite the impending exile the land would ultimately be redeemed and the nation would return there.

Taryag Weekly:

Parashas Behar • 57 Pesukim • 7 Obligations • 17 Prohibitions 1-4) Do not work the field or trees or harvest aftergrowth or fruits during the Shemittah year. 5) Sanhedrin should count the years of Shemittah and Yovel. 6) Blow Shofar on Yom Kippur of the Yovel year. 7) Beis Din shall sanctify the Yovel year. 8-10) Do not work the field or trees during Yovel, or harvest aftergrowth or fruits. 11) Utilize halachic modes of acquisition. 12) Do not overcharge or defraud. 13) Do not harass or embarrass another. 14) Do not sell land in Eretz Yisrael in perpetuity. 15) Return all lands to their original owners at Yovel. 16) Right of redemption for one year on sold property in a walled city. 17) Do not alter the usage of properties of the Levi'im. 18) Do not lend with interest. 19-21) Do not employ or sell a Jewish slave in a degrading manner, but rather as a regular employee. 22) Retain your gentile slave. 23) Prevent a Jewish slave from mistreatment by a gentile overlord. 24) Do not prostrate on a stone floor. Parashas Bechukosai • 78 Pesukim • 7 Obligations • 5 Prohibitions 1) Fulfill monetary vows of Arachin. 2) Do not transfer kedushah between animals (Temurah). 3) Accord kedushah to a Temurah. 4) Redeem unfit Korbanos. 5) Redeem consecrated property with the Kohen's appraisal and add one fifth of the value. 6) Redeem consecrated fields at the prescribed amounts. 7) Do not re-designate a Korban. 8-10) Give Cherem consecrated items to the Kohen; do not sell or redeem them. 11) Separate Maaser Behaimah. 12) Do not redeem or sell Maaser Behaimah. For the Shabbos Table: "אֶת־כֶּסֶף לֹא־תִתֵּן לוֹ בְּקֶשֶׁךְ" Do not give him your money for interest (Vayikra 25:37) Students of the Tchebiner Rav once lent money to a local merchant with interest, using a heter iska (a halachic leniency that structures a typical loan as a business partnership). Unfortunately, the merchant fell on hard times and it became clear that the students' loan would not be repaid. The distraught students consulted the Tchebiner Rav about the matter. The Tchebiner Rav related to them that his father, the Kochav MiYaakov, noted that the language of our pasuk "Do not give your money for interest" seems incorrect. Should it not read "Do not lend your money for interest"? The Kochav MiYaakov explained that when one loans money with interest, there is a real chance that his funds will be lost; those monies will thus be 'given' and lost to the borrower. In contrast, the pasuk in Mishlei (19:16) says "He who is generous to the poor makes a

loan to Hashem; He will repay him his due". One who lends money to the poor without interest is assured that he will be repaid his due by Hashem Almighty - surely the safest investment possible.

from: sinensky3@gmail.com date: May 22, 2025, 4:59 PM
www.yu.edu/drlamm

Rabbi Norman Lamm Be'hukotai

The Jewish Center **May 27, 1967**

"In This Hour Of Crisis"

This is an hour of crisis, not only for Israel as a State but for Israel as a people. [This sermon was delivered just days before the outbreak of the Six Day War.] Our destiny, and the destiny of our children and children's children after us, is being forged by the soldiers of Israel on lonely outposts in the Gaza strip and on the heights overlooking the Gulf of Aqaba.² No Jew can afford to look upon the tense situation as an outsider. As Mordecai the Jew said to Queen Esther, highly placed in non-Jewish society and politics, *al tedami be'nafshekh le'himalet beit avikh* – do not imagine that you will find safety whilst danger befalls the rest of the House of Israel.

The Arab guns aimed at the heart of the State are aimed at our hearts. The stranglehold on the Gulf of Aqaba, the lifeline of the medinah, is a stranglehold on our throats. And the Russian contempt for the State of Israel bespeaks the old, traditional Russian contempt for all of us as Jews.

How ought we react in this grave hour? How have Jews always and should Jews now react?

The archetypal and symbolic confrontation between Israel and its enemies was that between Jacob and Esau. When Jacob, surrounded by his wives and children and his retinue, heard that the armed columns of Esau were marching towards him with vengeance in their hearts, the Rabbis tell us that he prepared a threefold strategy: *le'tefillah, le'doron, u-le'milhamah*, he prepared himself for prayer, for gifts, and for war. It is this threefold approach that must become the pattern for our attitude as well.

The *doron*, or gift, that Jacob presented to his brother was a form of legitimate appeasement of a bloodthirsty aggressor, in an attempt to turn his hatred into good will. Indeed, it happened to work with Jacob. But it cannot work for Israel today. First, you cannot placate an enemy who is implacable. Those of us who saw King Faisal on television two days ago heard him declare his avowed intention of exterminating Israel, and President Nasser said the same thing yesterday. Nothing less than that would satisfy our enemies. Moreover, Israel has nothing left to give. It has given all but the bare skeletal structure necessary for the survival of a modern country.

Hence, our *doron* must be the gift that we American Jews are going to give to the Jews and the government of the State of Israel; in other words, our accelerated participation in that great and historic venture known as the UJA. No Jew who fails to give, and to significantly increase his pledge over the past, has a moral right to be proud that he is a Jew. This year Israel faces unusual economic difficulty; the present fall-off in tourism, together with the stupendous military expenditures that it must undertake, make the situation and the need grave indeed. Those who will therefore give this year far in excess of what they gave in the past, and far in excess of what they are able to give, will be performing an invaluable service. Those who do not do so are, with all their talk, valueless for Israel. Their talk, their worry, their advice, their concern, their pride, their keeping their ears glued to the radio – all this is meaningless! The Jewish Center Family will have an opportunity on June 7th [the Salute to Israel Parade] to demonstrate the extent of its commitment. I should like to see an enthusiastic response like never before. It behooves us to give our *doron* before we are solicited, and to prepare a gift that will tell Israel that we have not faltered, and all the world that Israel does not stand alone. The second part of that strategy is *milhamah*, war. Can we participate in *milhamah* if it should be necessary?

Yes we can, and yes it is necessary. There are many ways to fight a war, many fronts, and many weapons. Our contribution, though not military, must not be under-estimated. For one thing, we must undertake an indefatigable political campaign. As members of a subculture in this great democracy, it is entirely proper that we make our opinion felt where such opinions carry

weight. We must undertake to inform, by letter and telegram, our President that we support his support of Israel, and to tell him as well as our Senators and Representatives that it was at the urging of an American Secretary of State that Israel gave up much of its precious victory in Sinai, and that the United States has treaty obligations to Israel. This is one campaign in which we can participate immediately after the Sabbath is over.

Another way of making our political influence felt, in a more social manner, will come tomorrow morning when we shall participate physically in demonstrating our support for the State of Israel. We must all take our families and be present at the "Salute to Israel Parade." Even more directly, our young people can volunteer to help in Israel. Let them be encouraged. American law forbids military service on behalf of a foreign power. But there is much urgent work to be done, taking the places of Israel's men and women who have been pressed into military service. People are urgently needed, and young people should by all means participate in the "Summer Work in Israel" program which has now been expanded, and in the "Sherut La'am" which offers one or two years of service in Israel. The medical services and all other specialties are urgently needed; but Israel even needs people just to dig trenches and build shelters.

So far, it is good to report that results have been most encouraging. Let no one henceforth speak flippantly of "the vanishing Jews of America!" The volunteer offers have been extremely heartening. I am told that only yesterday a surgeon called from San Francisco to New York to offer his services provided that his two sons would be taken with him. Of particular interest to this congregation is the fact that a brief notice pinned on the bulletin board at Yeshiva University produced, in 36 hours, more than 300 volunteers! I myself have been on the phone with a number of students, including a number of young ladies, from Yavneh, who have asked my intercession with their families to permit them to go forthwith to Israel. [Yavneh was an Orthodox college student group.] There is something ineffably precious about the Jewish soul which allows it to express its idealism so immediately and so openly. Each in his own way, therefore, can participate in this great *milhamah*.

We are an *irenic*, peace-loving people. Our hopes and prayers are for peace not only for us but for the entire world. The author of "Or ha-Hayyim" has made this comment in a beautiful interpretation of a verse in today's Sidra. We read *vi'yeshavtem la-vetah be'artzekhem*, "And ye shall dwell securely in your land," followed by *ve'natati shalom ba-aretz*, "And I shall give peace to the land." But, asks the "Or ha-Hayyim," if we already are told that God will let us dwell securely in our land, surely that includes peace, and why then repeat the promise that God will give peace to the land? In his answer he distinguishes between *artzekhem* and *eretz*: the first verse refers to security in *artzekhem*, "your land," which means the Land of Israel. The second verse, however, refers to the granting of peace in *eretz*, which should be translated not "the land," but "the world!" In addition to our own national security, we are committed to the great hope and striving for peace throughout the world.

However, when duty and destiny call upon us to work so that others might bear arms on behalf of Israel, or even, if need be, that we do so ourselves, we shall not be found hesitating or faltering! If we were a nation like unto other nations, this fight would still be noble, but natural. Our existence is at stake, and we shall not submit to the murderous ambitions of that Hitler of the Nile, to those hysterical pygmies of Damascus, or to that venal and obnoxious monarch of the desert kingdom of slave traders.⁵

But Israel is more than that. The creation of the State of Israel was the minimum act by the powers of the world by which they salvaged the barest trace of human dignity left to them. Israel is a state conceived in the ghettos of Europe, born in the death camps of Auschwitz and Treblinka, delivered in the detention camps of Cyprus, and swaddled in the rags by which the Western powers blindfolded themselves to our agony and stuffed their ears not to hear our cry of anguish.

Israel is a penance paid by Russia for Babi Yar, by England for the Struma,⁶ by the United States for its refusal to hear the cry of the refugees in time, by

the Catholic countries for the silence of the Deputy Pope, by each and every country for its own public and private crimes against the people of the Lord. When we shall, therefore, act in defense of Israel, we will be fighting not only for Israel's and our existence, but in effect for the honor of Russia and England and America and France and all of mankind, whether they know it or not, realize or not, care or not, appreciate it or not, even whether they want it or not. For we shall ever remain, as Yehudah Halevi has called us, the heart of the nations and their conscience.

Tani be'shem Rab Elazar, ha-sayaf ve'ha-sefer nitnu mekorakhin min ha-shamayim. The word and the Book were given wrapped together from Heaven. We have given the world its sefer, its Book. We shall, if need be, now defend the sefer, and the am ha-sefer (People of the Book) with a sayaf (sword) of courage and honor. For that charge and that mission is min-hashamayim, decreed from Heaven!

Finally, the third element in this Jewish strategy first taught by Jacob is tefillah, prayer. We can perform that by keeping the present situation in mind every time we speak, in our tefillot, of Jerusalem and Zion. In addition, we shall at the conclusion of services today recite special prayers for the welfare of the State of Israel.

But wedded to prayer is the concept of hope. Our prayer and our outlook must always be hopeful, never desperate.

I would like to commend to your attention an insight which speaks not only of hope but offers a perspective that goes far beyond that parochial limits of power politics. Our Sidra, in enumerating the blessings God promises us, says: u-faniti alekhem, "and I shall turn to you," ve'hifreti etkhem ve'hirbeti etkhem..., "and I shall increase you, and make you fruitful, and keep My covenant with you."

On the words u-faniti alekhem, "I shall turn to you," Rashi quotes the sages: Ipaneh mi-kol asakai le'shalem sekharkhem, "I shall turn away from all My other preoccupations in order to grant you your reward."

What a strange remark! Are we really to take that so anthropomorphically, so primitively? Is God "busy" with other matters so that He has to take "time off" in order to pay loving attention to us?

An answer is provided to us by **Rabbi Mordecai Rogov of Chicago, in his work "Ateret Mordecai."** [1965 <https://www.hebrewbooks.org/3259>] He points to the Midrash which states in the name of Rabbi Samuel b. Nachman, that God says: ki anokhi yadati et ha-mahshavot, for I know the thoughts of all men. Applying that to the story of Joseph and his brothers, the Midrash tells us that the brothers were preoccupied with the selling of Joseph, Joseph was busy bemoaning his own bitter fate, Judah was involved in looking for a wife – but ve'ha-Kadosh barukh Hu hayah asuk be'oro shel Mashiah, all this while, God was preoccupied with the light of the Messiah! Each of the actors in the great drama thought that he knew the whole story. The brothers saw this as an act of vengeance, Joseph as a bitter tragedy that had reached its nadir, Judah was altogether distracted by an extraneous matter. None of them really saw the entire episode in its true, ultimate perspective. None of them realized that God was not "busy" moving affairs as he individually saw it, but that the Almighty was simply making preparations for the ultimate development of Jewish history, leading to the final redemption. The Joseph story, even more than others, reveals how human intention and Divine design can sometimes be utterly different and yet mesh with each other, and how the Divine plan often uses humans who do not even appreciate the role that they play.

Man, by virtue of his natural human limitations, can see only a segment of reality and experience. But if man is wise, he recognizes this, and he understands that beyond his own comprehension there is a God Whose own designs defy our pitiful human attempts at probing His mysteries. We are all actors who play significant roles in a great drama; but few of us ever have any inkling of the extent and direction of the plot.

So it is with the current episode. Today the Arabs are thinking of a quick victory. Russia sees the entire incident as a chance to dislodge the United States from Vietnam. Israel views it as one great crisis that must be overcome. The United States considers it as an added complication forcing it to juggle both Near-Eastern and Far-Eastern commitments. The United

Nations regards it as a need to make up for U Thant's blunder, the biggest in the history of diplomacy. [Then-Secretary General of the United Nations U Thant was widely criticized for acceding to Egypt's May 1967 demand that UN peacekeeping troops evacuate Egypt, opening the door to war.]

But our hope and our confidence is that God will take "time out" from these individual considerations of the protagonists of the drama and ultimately reveal to us His true preoccupation: ve'ha-Kadosh barukh Hu hayah asuk be'oro shel Mashiah, that Almighty God is weaving all these political and military strands into the garment of light that the Messiah will wear, into the intricate designs by which there will come to Israel and all the world the geulah shelemah, the complete redemption.

May, indeed, all our heartache and anxiety, all our worry and preparation for war, be transcended by the yeshuah, by the great victory and salvation which will come, speedily in our day. Ve'shalom al Yisrael – and may peace arrive for Israel and all mankind.

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

date: May 22, 2025, 11:15 AM

The Limits of the Free Market (Behar, Bechukotai)

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZTL

As I was writing this essay, a newspaper headline caught my eye. It read: "The UK's richest people have defied the double-dip recession to become even richer over the past year." [1]

This is in spite of the fact that most people have become poorer, or at least seen their real income stay static, since the financial crisis of 2008. As the saying goes, "There's nothing surer: the rich get rich and the poor get poorer." It is to this phenomenon that the social legislation of Parshat Behar is addressed.

Leviticus 25 sets out a number of laws whose aim is to correct the tendency toward radical and ever-increasing inequality that result from the unfettered play of free market economics. So we have the Sabbatical year (Shemittah) in which debts were released, Hebrew slaves were set free, the land lay fallow and its produce, unharvested, belonged to everyone. There was the Jubilee year (Yovel) in which, with some exceptions, ancestral land returned to its original owners. There was the command to help the needy ("If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you" Lev. 25:35.) And there was the obligation to treat slaves not slavishly but as "hired workers or temporary residents." (Lev. 25:40)

As Heinrich Heine pointed out:

"Moses did not want to abolish ownership of property; he wished, on the contrary, that everyone should possess something, so that no man might, because of poverty, be a slave with a slavish mind. Liberty was forever the ultimate thought of this great emancipator, and it still breathes and flames in all his laws which concern pauperism."

Israel Tabak, Judaic Lore in Heine, Johns Hopkins University Press reprints, 1979, 32.

Despite the sheer antiquity of these laws, time and again they have inspired those wrestling with issues of liberty, equity and justice. The verse about the Jubilee Year, ("Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." Lev. 25:10) is inscribed on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. The international movement that began in the late 1990s and involved more than 40 nations, campaigning for cancellation of Third World debt, was called Jubilee 2000 and was directly inspired by our Parsha. The approach of the Torah to economic policy is unusual. Clearly we can make no direct inference from laws given more than three thousand years ago, in an agricultural age and to a society consciously under the sovereignty of God, to the circumstances of the twenty-first century with its global economy and international corporations. Between ancient texts and contemporary application comes the whole careful process of tradition and interpretation of the Oral Law (Torah shebe'al peh).

Nonetheless, there do seem to be some important parameters. Work – making a living, earning your daily bread – has dignity. A Psalm (Tehillim 128:2) states:

“When you eat of the labour of your hands, you are happy and it shall be well with you.”

Psalms. 128:2

We say this every Saturday night at the start of the working week. Unlike aristocratic cultures such as that of ancient Greece, Judaism was never dismissive of work or the productive economy. It did not favour the creation of a leisured class.

“Torah study without an occupation will in the end fail and lead to sin.”

Avot 2:2

Next, unless there are compelling reasons otherwise, one has a right to the fruits of one’s labours. Judaism distrusts large government as an infringement of liberty. That is the core of the prophet Samuel’s warning about monarchy: A king, he says, “will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants ... He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves” (I Sam. 8). Judaism is the religion of a people born in slavery and longing for redemption; and the great assault of slavery against human dignity is that it deprives me of the ownership of the wealth I create. At the heart of the Hebrew Bible is the God who seeks the free worship of free human beings, and one of the most powerful defences of freedom is private property as the basis of economic independence. The ideal society envisaged by the prophets is one in which each person is able to sit “underneath his own vine and fig tree” (Micah 4:4).

The free economy uses the fuel of competition to sustain the fire of invention. Long before Adam Smith, Judaism had accepted the proposition that the greatest advances are often brought about through quite unspiritual drives. “I saw,” says the author of Ecclesiastes, “that all labour and all achievement spring from man’s envy of his neighbour”. Or as the talmudic sages put it, “Were it not for the evil inclination, no one would build a house, marry a wife, have children, or engage in business.”

The rabbis even favoured the free market in their own sphere of Jewish education. An established teacher, they said, could not object to a rival setting up in competition. The reason they gave was, simply: “Jealousy among scholars increases wisdom” (Bava Batra 21a).

The market economy is the best system we know for alleviating poverty through economic growth. In a single generation - in recent years - it has lifted 100 million Indians and 400 million Chinese from poverty, and the sages saw poverty as an assault on human dignity. Poverty is not a blessed or Divinely ordained condition. It is, the rabbis said, ‘a kind of death’ and ‘worse than fifty plagues’. They said, ‘Nothing is harder to bear than poverty, because he who is crushed by poverty is like one to whom all the troubles of the world cling and upon whom all the curses of Deuteronomy have descended. If all other troubles were placed one side and poverty on the other, poverty would outweigh them all.’

However, the market economy is better at producing wealth than at distributing it equitably. The concentration of wealth in a few hands gives disproportionate power to some at the cost of others. Today in Britain it is not unusual for top CEOs to earn at least 400 times as much as their employees. This has not produced economic growth or financial stability but the opposite. As I write these words, one of Margaret Thatcher’s advisors, Ferdinand Mount, has just published a critique of the financial deregulation she introduced: *The New Few*. Equally impressive is the recent book by the South Korean economist Ha-Joon Chang, *23 Things they don’t tell you about Capitalism*. This is not a critique of market economics, which he believes is still the best system there is. But, in his words, “it needs careful regulation and steering.”

That is what the legislation contained in Behar represents. It tells us that an economic system must exist within a moral framework. It need not aim at economic equality, but it must respect human dignity. No one should become permanently imprisoned in the chains of debt. No one should be deprived of a stake in the commonwealth, which in biblical times meant a share in the

land. No one should be a slave to his or her employer. Everyone has the right – one day in seven, one year in seven – to respite from the endless pressures of work. None of this means dismantling the market economy, but it may involve periodic redistribution.

At the heart of these laws is a profoundly humane vision of society. “No man is an island.” We are responsible for one another and implicated in one another’s fate. Those who are blessed by God with more than they need should share some of that surfeit with those who have less than they need. This, in Judaism, is not a matter of charity but of justice – that is what the word *tzedakah* means. We need some of this spirit in advanced economies today if we are not to see human misery and social unrest.

No one said it better than Isaiah in the first chapter of the book that bears his name:

Seek justice, encourage the oppressed,

Defend the cause of the fatherless,

Plead the case of the widow...

Is. 1:17

Humanity was not created to serve markets. Markets were made to serve the image of God that is humankind.

Fw from allenklein@gmail.com

from: **Rabbi Efrem Goldberg** <reg@rabbiEfremGoldberg.com>

reg@brsonline.org

date: May 21, 2025, 2:32 PM

subject: **What Dave Portnoy Got Wrong, New Behind the Bima, Latest Shiurim, and More. .**

Dave Portnoy is a successful businessman with a large following online. He sold the company he founded, Barstool Sports, for \$500 million, and bought it back a few years later for \$1. Millions follow him on social media and watch his daily pizza reviews around the country, including a review of matza pizza right here in Boca Raton.

Portnoy is Jewish, something he doesn’t hide but also doesn’t regularly reference or promote. He has occasionally displayed his Judaism, such as when Chabad put Tefillin on him or more recently, when he celebrated the defeat of an MMA fighter who had praised Hitler by putting on a yarmulka and waving an Israeli flag in the front row of the match. Soon after October 7, he spoke out in support of Israel and has since then publicly defended Israel’s right to exist and to defend itself.

Yet, nothing has made Portnoy as outspoken about his Jewishness or aggressively stand up for the Jewish people like the antisemitic incident that happened at his Philadelphia bar a couple of weeks ago. Customers who order bottle service there are offered customizable letter boards, which they can ask staff members to arrange with messages of their choice. A student or two from Temple University who visited the bar asked staff members to arrange the letters on his sign into an antisemitic message including an expletive directed at the Jewish people. The incident was a staff breakdown and, more importantly, an expression of hate.

Portnoy took to his social media to communicate his outrage. “I’ve been shaking I’ve been so mad. I’m gonna make it my life mission to ruin these people, like I’m coming for your throat.” However, a few hours later, he posted another video saying he had reconsidered his approach, and instead had decided to send the young men responsible for the hate speech on a tour of Auschwitz to learn about the impact of hate.

He explained: “My initial reaction was like I’m going to burn these people to the ground, their families, everything, and it’s like you know what? Maybe that’s not the best course of action. Maybe I can use this as a teaching moment, and like before, people just are like the Jews or any group, and the hate, let’s try to like turn a hideous incident into maybe a learning experience, as cliché and very unlike me. But I talked to both the culprits, who I know are super involved in it, talked to the families. I’m sending these kids to Auschwitz. They’ve agreed to go, that’s of course, the Holocaust concentration camps...and hopefully learn something. And maybe like their lives aren’t ruined, and they think twice, and more importantly, other people

like see it's not just like words you're throwing around. So to me, that's a fair outcome of this event."

Pennsylvania Senator Dave McCormick applauded Portnoy for addressing the "horrific display of hate" and using it as an opportunity to educate about anti-Jewish violence, saying, "Antisemitism needs to be identified, called out, and crushed."

A few days later, Portnoy gave an update saying he had "revoked" the trip to Poland because at least one of the people involved "is no longer taking responsibility" for the sign.

Though he didn't end up sending the perpetrators to tour Auschwitz, the strategy of responding to antisemitism by sending antisemites for a Holocaust education is nothing new. In 2006, Mel Gibson spewed antisemitic remarks during a DUI arrest. Though not mandated by a court, Gibson met with Jewish leaders and visited the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. In 2014, two British teenagers vandalized a synagogue with antisemitic graffiti. As part of their community service, they were sent to visit Auschwitz. In 2018, Nick Conrad released a controversial music video titled "Hang White People", which contained antisemitic undertones. A French court ordered him to visit the Holocaust Memorial in Paris as part of a court ruling.

The examples could go on and on but the question is, should they? Certainly, Holocaust education is important. Keeping the legacy of 6 million martyrs alive and relevant, teaching the truth about this historically unique genocide matters. But is it the proper or effective response to contemporary antisemitism?

Dara Horn, the author of "People Love Dead Jews," thinks not. In her article, "Is Holocaust Education Making Anti-Semitism Worse? Using dead Jews as symbols isn't helping living ones," she writes: "I have come to the disturbing conclusion that Holocaust education is incapable of addressing contemporary anti-Semitism. In fact, in the total absence of any education about Jews alive today, teaching about the Holocaust might even be making anti-Semitism worse."

She writes: "The Holocaust educators I met across America were all obsessed with building empathy, a quality that relies on finding commonalities between ourselves and others. But I wondered if a more effective way to address anti-Semitism might lie in cultivating a completely different quality, one that happens to be the key to education itself: curiosity. Why use Jews as a means to teach people that we're all the same, when the demand that Jews be just like their neighbors is exactly what embedded the mental virus of anti-Semitism in the Western mind in the first place? Why not instead encourage inquiry about the diversity, to borrow a *de rigueur* word, of the human experience?"

This article was published in May of 2023, five months before the most murderous day of Jews since the Holocaust, and I fear her thesis has only been strengthened. Teaching only about the Holocaust without teaching about the Jewish people, Jewish values and ideals, Jewish contributions to the world, Jewish culture and practice only focuses on Jews as victims. But today's antisemite learns about the Holocaust and sees the Jewish people as the committer of a current genocide instead of the victim, as perpetrating a Holocaust instead of experiencing one.

Another famous Jew has been targeted with hate for his Judaism, but he has responded in a very different way. Michael Rapaport is an award-winning actor, comedian and podcaster. Since October 7 he has not only visited Israel countless times, he has relentlessly dedicated his online influence to advocating for Israel and the Jewish people. Asked about how October 7 impacted him, he said, "My Judaism has changed 100%. I am more in tune with it. I'm more proud, I'm more aware, I'm more educated. I'm more proactive in every single way possible and I'm really glad about that." Asked how his belief in God has changed, he answered: "I believe in God in a different way. I believe in Hashem in a different way. I celebrate and understand him in a different way. I think we have nothing but faith. You have to have faith. That's been one of the good things that has come from this last year for me personally." Michael Rapaport now wraps tefillin and

says about it, "Every single time is a blessing, every single time is a Mitzvah."

Certainly, we must confront antisemites, hold them accountable, throw the book at them and, when possible, seek to reform them. Educating may be a first step, but it cannot be the whole strategy. The answer is to not focus on their education, like Dave Portnoy did, but to focus on ours, as Michael Rapaport is. Our response to acts of antisemitism must be more Jewish pride, more Jewish practice, stronger Jewish identity, increased Torah observance.

Rather than reward the hateful hoodlums with a trip to Poland, Portnoy should announce he is going to Israel. He should put on a Magen Dovid necklace if not a yarmulka, hang a mezuzah on his home and office, engage his Judaism and Jewish learning in a meaningful way.

When doing one of his famous pizza reviews, before he takes a bite and gives a score, Portnoy proudly announces "one bite, everyone knows the rules." But the truth is, while everyone may know the rules, he does not follow them: he doesn't take one bite, he takes several and when the pizza tastes particularly good, he can't help himself from finishing the whole slice. Describing a relationship with Hashem, Dovid HaMelech (Tehillim 34:9) taught, Ta'amu u'ru ki tov Hashem, taste and you will see that Hashem is good. Why does he employ the word taste, why not just say see that Hashem is good? Faith begins with practice. You can't just listen, read about or think about Hashem, you must engage, act and then you will see with clarity a life of meaning, purpose and eternity. It begins with a taste, a little something and you will want more.

We must confront antisemitism but not just with stories or tours of Jewish victimhood. Instead of focusing on educating others, educate yourself, your children and Jews all around us to be living richly proud and practicing Jewish lives.

Start with one thing. Just one bite of a mitzvah and you will want more and more.

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

May 22, 2025, 3:23 AM

subject: Rav Kook on Behar: Jubilee - National Reconciliation_____

Behar: Jubilee - National Reconciliation

Rav Kook Torah

In 1751, the Pennsylvania Assembly ordered a special bell be cast, commemorating the 50th anniversary of William Penn's "Charter of Privileges." The Speaker of the Assembly was entrusted with finding an appropriate inscription for what later became famous as the Liberty Bell. The best expression of freedom and equality that the speaker could find was the Biblical verse describing the Jubilee year:

"You will blow the shofar on the tenth day of the seventh month; on Yom Kippur you will blow the shofar in all your land. You shall sanctify the fiftieth year, proclaiming freedom to all its inhabitants." (Lev. 25:9-10) The triumphant announcement of the Jubilee year, with blasts of the shofar, takes place on the tenth of Tishrei. This date is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Yet, this is a curious date to announce the new year. The Jubilee year, like any other year, begins on the first of Tishrei, on Rosh Hashanah. Why was the formal proclamation of the Jubilee year postponed until Yom Kippur, ten days later?

National Sabbath Rest

The Jubilee year is a super-Sabbatical year. Like the seventh year, agricultural labor is prohibited, and landowners forego all claims on produce grown during that year. The Jubilee also contains two additional aspects of social justice: the emancipation of slaves and the restoration of land to its original owner.

Just as the Sabbath day allows the individual to rest, so too the Sabbatical and Jubilee years provide rest for the nation. The entire nation is able to take a break from competition and economic struggle. The Sages noted that the phrase "Sabbath to God" appears both in the context of the weekly Sabbath and the Sabbatical year. Both are designed to direct us towards spiritual

growth: the Sabbath on the individual level, and the Sabbatical year on the national level.

Healing Rifts in Society

The Talmud in Rosh Hashanah 8b relates that during the first ten days of the Jubilee year, the slaves were not sent home. Nor did they work. They would feast and drink, celebrating their freedom “with crowns upon their heads.” Only after the court blew the shofar on Yom Kippur would the newly freed slaves return home.

The freeing of slaves in the Jubilee year serves as an important safeguard for social order. Societies that rely on slave labor usually suffer from slave revolts and violent acts of vengeance by the underclass.¹

Instead of attaining social justice through bloody revolt and violent upheaval, the Jubilee emancipation allows for peaceful and harmonious social change. The restoration of rights for the poor and disadvantaged becomes an inherent part of the societal and economic order.

Most significantly, during their final days of servitude, the freed slaves celebrate together with their former masters. The Torah also obligates the master to send off his servants with generous presents (מצוות העניקה). These conciliatory acts help heal the social and psychological wounds caused by socio-economic divisions and class estrangement. The national reconciliation reaches its peak on Yom Kippur, when the shofar exuberantly proclaimed freedom and equality.

Atonement for the Nation

Thus, the formal announcement of the Jubilee year is integrally connected to Yom Kippur. On that year, the Day of Atonement becomes a time of forgiveness and absolution, not only for the sins of the individual, but also for the sins of society

fw from AllenKlein@gmail.com

from: nachmankahanaweb@gmail.com

date: May 21, 2025, 2:03 PM

subject: **Rabbi Nachman Kahana** The Parsha & Current Events

Global Natural Disasters

There is an undeniable increase in global natural disasters, particularly those related to weather and climate. Key Trends: Increased Frequency, Intensity and severity especially floods, storms, heatwaves, and wildfires. Climate change is widely recognized as the main factor. Rising global temperatures lead to more intense rainfall and increased flood risks due to the atmosphere holding more moisture. Stronger and wetter hurricanes and tropical storms, with increased wind speeds and storm surges. Longer and more extreme droughts, contributing to wildfires and water scarcity. The number of natural disasters causing over a billion dollars in damage has significantly increased. In the U.S. alone, the average number of such disasters per year has risen from 3.3 in the 1980s to over 17 from 2014-2023. Floods are the most frequently occurring natural disaster globally, while wildfires are growing in scale, frequency and intensity in many regions, as well as tropical cyclones and storms. Overwhelming evidence points to a genuine and significant rise in natural disasters, largely driven by the accelerating impacts of climate change.

But the question is, the immediate cause of the increase in global natural disasters could well be climate change, but what is causing the climate change?

Prophecy The idea of HaShem's retribution towards nations who have in the past and the present harmed the Jewish people is a prominent theme throughout the TaNach linked to historical events and end-times prophecies. For example: The Covenant (Brit) with Avraham (Bereishiet 12:3): ואברהם יברכה: “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be (eventually) blessed through you.”

Zecharya 2,12: כי זה אמר ה' צבאות אחר כבוד שלחני אל הגוים השללים אתכם כי הנגע בככם נגע בבבתי עינו For this is what the Lord Almighty says, After the Glorious One has sent me against the nations that have plundered you: for whoever touches you, touches the apple of his (own) eye, I will surely raise my hand against them so that their slaves (or foreign residents) will plunder them.

Ovadya 1,15: כי קרוב יום ה' על כל הגוים כאשר עשית יעשה לך גמולך ישוב בראשך:

The day of the Lord is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.

Joel 3:1-2: כי הנה בימים ההם ובעת ההיא אֶשְׁרֹא (אשוב) [אָשִׁיב] אֶת־שְׁבוּת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם: וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וְהוֹרֵדְתִּים אֶל־עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָׁפָט וְנִשְׁפָּטְתִּי עִמָּם שָׁם עַל־עַמִּי וְנִחַלְתִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר פָּזְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם וְאֶת־אֶרֶץ חֶלְקוֹ: In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.

The prophecies of Yechezkel, Yishayahu and Yirmiyahu contain extensive prophecies against nations as a consequence of their treatment of Am Yisrael.

Consequences In the year preceding the Exodus from Egypt HaShem brought upon the Egyptians ten plagues for their part of putting into practice the deprived command s of Paro. Blood, Frogs, lice, Wild Animals, Pestilence, Boils, Hail, Locust, Darkness and the “coup de grace” – Death of the Egyptian firstborns.

We are now witnessing so-called “enlightened nations” who are threatening Medinat Yisrael with economic and political sanctions over our defensive war against Arab Islamic Nazis fueled by thousands of years of their anti-Jew hatred.

The leaders of this are the “enlightened” European nations and others – all members of the U.N. – who are now “suffering” conscious pangs for the long-suffering unfortunate peace-loving residents of Gaza. Their ranks include western nations which were once friendly but are now moving towards our worst enemies in an act of betrayal.

In this week's Torah reading, which includes the section called Tochacha (admonishment; warning of what will happen if we do not obey the Torah) that enumerates graphically one by one, the punishment HaShem has for the Jewish nation if we depart from the Torah way of life. Unfortunately, each one has come about and even some that are not mentioned on the list. We might be seeing now the beginning of the period where one evil nation wages war on another evil one, while in the background their countries are being ravaged by HaShem's manipulation of natural disasters. Time will tell. Shabbat Shalom, Nachman Kahana

Fw from AllenKlein@gmail.com

<https://en.yhb.org.il/revivim1145/>

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

The Awakening of Heresy in Recent Generations

Revivim

In recent generations, human consciousness has developed and expanded greatly, while the study and clarification of faith has not been sufficiently established to cope with this ● Many people who were accustomed to praying and fulfilling commandments in order to be saved from hunger and plague, from poverty and subjugation, felt less need to pray and fulfill commandments ● Out of concern that scientific studies might lead to heresy, there were rabbis who fought against them, but as the scientific position develops, so God's word is revealed through it with additional illumination ● The more we clarify faith and refine the guidance of the Torah, the more faith in God and His Torah will return to beat in hearts

Q: What caused most of the Jewish public in recent generations to not observe Torah and commandments as in the past, and what should we do to correct the situation?

A: Generally speaking, in recent generations, following the development of the natural sciences, human understanding, society, and human culture in all its varieties – human consciousness has developed and expanded greatly, while the study and clarification of faith (in Hebrew, ‘emunah’) has not been sufficiently established to cope with this. The more we clarify faith and refine the guidance of the Torah, the more faith in God and His Torah will return to beat in the hearts of people. I addressed this topic in the final chapter of my new book “Faith and Its Commandments” (within the “Peninei Halakha” series). Here, I will mention the part concerning the clash between

faith and science, presenting the appropriate position, alongside various arguments.

Science Replaced Religion for Those of Lower Faith

One of the things that changed in the modern era is that many natural phenomena that were not understood by humans have been researched, and have become understandable, and explainable. In the process, the value of some explanations about faith that were accepted in previous generations have been nullified.

In the past, when the skies were closed and no rain fell – wheat did not grow, water reserves were depleted, and people died of thirst and hunger. When an epidemic spread – many people fell victim without having almost any way to defend themselves against the death that lurked for them. Even in daily life, humans were exposed to severe dangers, such as snake bites and the development of infectious diseases. In distress, people turned to God in prayer for help, and religious leaders encouraged people to pray and fulfill commandments, so that God would save them.

In contrast, in recent generations, methods have been developed for storing water and transporting it through pipes, so that even during severe drought, people do not die of hunger and thirst. Thanks to scientific research, vaccines and treatments have been found for diseases that were previously incurable, and dangerous epidemics hardly ever break out. Thus, life expectancy has increased greatly. With the help of social sciences, effective methods for organizing society and economy have been developed, and methods have been developed to provide relief for mental illnesses. With the development of technology, the production of food, furniture, clothing and houses has improved greatly, to the extent that today, an average person can live longer, and in more comfortable conditions, than the great kings of the past.

In such a situation, many people who were accustomed to praying and fulfilling commandments in order to be saved from hunger and plague, from poverty and subjugation, felt less need to pray and fulfill commandments. Their feeling was that science would continue to develop until it solved all human distress, and religion would have no place in the world.

The Response of Religious Leaders

In contrast, spiritual and religious leaders correctly argued that it is impossible for science to solve all human distress, since humans aspire to lives full of boundless moral and spiritual meaning, while science can only provide comfortable living conditions, and nothing more. Therefore, such presumption will lead to bitter disappointment and severe crises, and it is the evil inclination that tempts humans to become proud and think that by their own power and might, they can understand nature and improve their living conditions.

The Appropriate Response

However, no less than criticism of the exaggerated presumption, it would have been appropriate to rejoice in the development of science, and to bless and thank God for it, since God is the one who created humans in the divine image, and endowed them with intelligence through which they can advance in understanding their world and improving their lives. Our Sages even instituted a blessing upon seeing a wise person from among the nations of the world: “Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has given of His wisdom to flesh and blood.” (Peninei Halakha: Brachot 15:18). Moreover, it would have been possible to see in all the solutions that science provided to human distress, an opportunity to rise to a higher level of faith. For in the previous situation where humans felt constant anxiety about natural disasters, most people connected to God out of fear of punishment, with a sense of coercion, that if they did not fulfill the commandments, they would be punished in this world, or the next. Only certain individuals merited connecting to God out of love. And now, thanks to technological advancements, turning to God no longer needs to be just for salvation from harm, but primarily out of pure desire, and thus we can merit a higher illumination of faith, and adherence to God. As it is said:

“And it shall be on that day, says the Lord, you will call Me ‘my husband’ and will no longer call Me ‘my master.’ And I will remove the names of the Baalim from her mouth, and they shall no longer be mentioned by their name. And I will make a covenant for them on that day with the beasts of the

field, with the birds of the sky and the creeping things of the ground; and I will break bow, sword, and war from the earth, and I will make them lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to Me forever; and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness, and with justice, and with loving-kindness, and with mercy. And I will betroth you to Me with faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord.” (Hosea 2:18-22).

The Result of the Confrontation

In practice, many religious figures continued to base their arguments on belittling man, and warned that the evil inclination is what tempts him to become proud and think that by his own power and might he can understand nature and improve his living conditions. Thus, instead of appreciating the fruits of scientific achievements and blessing God for them, they believed that one should distance oneself from science, and doubt its reliability. Meanwhile, many people who appreciated science felt that religion was not beneficial to their lives and to the world.

Confrontation between Science and Religion

Within the framework of scientific discoveries, concepts that were accepted by religious people, as well as by the rest of humanity, were rejected. For example, it was commonly thought that the sun revolves around the Earth, and scientists discovered that the Earth revolves around the sun. It was commonly thought that there are no tiny invisible creatures in the world, and it was discovered, through microscope observation, that they exist. On the other hand, various religious figures saw the scientists’ challenge to old concepts as an affront to the honor of religion, since it seemed impossible that scientists could know more than the distinguished religious scholars who lived in the past and agreed with the science accepted in their days. Not only that, but sometimes the Sages of Israel used analogies from the science that was accepted in their days to explain spiritual ideas, and when scientists refuted the old scientific positions, some saw this as an offense to their honor and to their Torah teachings, because they thought that the analogies were also Torah.

The Debate about the Age of the World

It was accepted among the Sages of Israel that the world was created less than six thousand years ago, while scientists in the fields of geology and physics claimed that the Earth has existed for billions of years. Additionally, various theories were developed about the gradual, evolutionary development of humans from lower animals like apes, while in the Torah there is no mention of this. Thus, a feeling was created as if science contradicts the Torah.

The Proper Response

There should not have been a confrontation, since the position of the Sages of Israel towards the various sciences is positive, therefore, they encouraged their students to study them (Shabbat 75a), and Rambam (Maimonides) considered the natural sciences as part of the great wisdom called “the work of creation” (Rambam in his commentary on the Mishnah, Hagigah 2:1); and the Vilna Gaon said that to the extent that a person lacks knowledge in other wisdoms, so too, he will lack a hundredfold in the wisdom of Torah, because Torah and wisdom are closely linked together (Peninei Halakha: Likutim A 1:15).

Also, there cannot be a contradiction between faith and science, since the Torah explains the idea of creation, and not the detailed process of creation. Therefore, the six days of creation can be interpreted as six eras that lasted billions of years. It is also possible to explain that the process of creation occurred gradually, as explained in the theory of evolution (Orot HaKodesh 2:537). And even the Sages of Israel said that “the work of creation” is a secret, and consequently, one should not adhere to its literal interpretation. It can also be explained that the Torah’s intention is to describe the order of the revelation of faith to humans, and therefore, it begins with the story of Adam, in whom God breathed a divine soul, and he was the first who could hear God’s voice, and choose whether to fulfill His command. And this does not negate the existence of ancient creatures from which Adam evolved.

In Practice, Confrontation Emerged

Many religious scholars, from Israel and from the nations of the world, saw in the challenge to the science that was accepted in the past, an affront to the

great religious scholars. And when the position of scientists contradicted descriptions that are apparently written in the Torah about the creation of the world, it was perceived as complete heresy. Thus, among some rabbis, the position developed that science is dangerous to religion, and it should be fought against – or at least have its status weakened. To strengthen their position, various religious figures began to collect cases where scientists were wrong, cases where scientific developments caused harm, and cases where “all the doctors” said someone would die, and that individual went to a righteous person who prayed for him, and was healed.

Moreover, out of concern that scientific studies might lead to heresy, there were rabbis who fought against them. To strengthen their position, there arose some who claimed that there is no need to study sciences, since it is possible to learn all of them from the Torah.

However, with the help of science, ways continued to be breached to enhance the human ability to create machines, accelerate agriculture, develop industry, commerce, means of transportation and communication, and accumulate immeasurable wealth. And as religious representatives intensified their fight against science, criticism of religion increased.

The Key to Correction in the Purification of Faith

Maran Rabbi Kook explained (Orot, Zeronim, ‘Yisurim Mamrikim’) that all the confusions and complications in human life stem from a lack of understanding of the concept of divinity, which is an infinite sea. Naturally, a person longs for closeness to God, and consequently is interested in defining Him. However, God is above and beyond any perception and definition. We can only grasp what is revealed to us, and therefore, what can be said about God is that He is the single source of all ideas and values, powers and creations. And anyone who tries to define God Himself, or even the entire illumination that He bestows, sins with a trace of idolatry, limits the revelation of His light to certain domains, and disowns good ideas and values that also reveal His word.

In other words, when faith is defined in a narrow way, it does not contain all the ideas that are revealed in the world, and consequently, there is seemingly a collision between faith and that idea. Thus, when religious people believe that God is revealed only through the scientific explanation accepted until now, a collision is created between faith and the new scientific positions.

However, in truth, God is above all the scientific positions throughout the generations, since in every scientific position a divine spark is revealed, as appropriate for that generation. And as the scientific position develops, so God’s word is revealed through it with additional illumination.