



BS"D

To: parsha@parsha.net
From: cshulman@gmail.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYEISHEV - 5776

In our 21st year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to parsha-subscribe@yahoogroups.com 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

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

from: Kol Torah Webmaster <webmaster@koltorah.org>
to: Kol Torah <koltorah@koltorah.org>
date: Thu, Dec 3, 2015 at 6:55 PM
subject: Kol Torah Parashat VaYeishev 2015

Yosef, Divine Intervention and Gaza Rockets by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Introduction – Yosef Claims to Know God's Will

Yosef makes the astounding claim that Hashem sent him to Mitzrayim to provide food for his family. Yosef makes this assertion twice – once when he reveals his identity to his brothers (BeReishit 45:8) and yet again when consoling his brothers after Ya'akov Avinu's death (50:20). A major question, though, is what convinced Yosef that this indeed was Hashem's will. After all, unlike the Avot, Yosef never received a direct prophecy from Hashem. How was Yosef privy to God's intentions?

This poignant question has extraordinary ramifications for us. For if Yosef can discern God's will without the benefit of a direct communication, then we too might be able to discover Hashem's Will even in an age when we do not enjoy the benefit of Nevu'ah or even a Bat Kol (heavenly voice; as was common during the times of the Gemara).

Yosef's Sweet Smelling Caravan

An answer to our query emerges from an analysis of an intriguing comment made by Rashi. The Pasuk (37:25) records the contents of the cargo carried by the caravan that transported Yosef to slavery in Mitzrayim. The load consisted of fragrant smelling spices such as balsam and lotus. Chazal and Rashi wonder why the Torah records what seems to be a trivial detail that appears to be entirely irrelevant to the story. Why does Hashem feel that it is important for us to know the cargo contents of the caravan?

Rashi (ad. loc s.v. UGemaleihem Nos'im; citing BeReishit Rabbah 84:17), following Chazal, offers an intriguing answer. He explains that normally Arab caravans carried foul smelling items such as resin and tar. Hashem arranged that the caravan transporting Yosef would carry spices so that Yosef need not suffer from the malodorous wares.

Rashi's comment is quite puzzling. Yosef is transported to Mitzrayim to live a miserable life as a slave. Yosef's privileged life as the favored son of Ya'akov Avinu was transformed instantly to a wretched existence. Why is Hashem's arrangement for the caravan to carry sweet smelling spices to help Yosef a significant manner? Poor smelling cargo would have been the least of Yosef's newly encountered problems.

The situation would seem analogous to someone who, God forbid, was kidnapped by ISIS and Hashem arranged for the vehicle transporting the victim to ISIS held territory to be pleasant smelling. What benefit does the victim in such horrific circumstances have from the pleasant smell?

Discerning Divine Involvement

An answer to our question is that Yosef was a highly intelligent person, described by Onkelos and Rashi (commenting on BeReishit 37:3[1]) as such. Accordingly, Yosef realized that it was entirely out of character that a Yishma'eli caravan was carrying sweet smelling spices. Yosef pondered the matter and realized that it was Hashem sending him a subtle message that He is with Yosef and He had orchestrated his sale to Egypt.

Thus, Yosef in his wisdom discerned the subtle message sent to him by Hashem and told his brothers with confidence, despite the absence of divine revelation, that it was Hashem who devised his sale to Egypt.

We find a similar pattern regarding Eli'ezer's encounter with Rivkah. The stunning and extraordinarily improbable fact pattern led even the impious Lavan and Betu'eil to conclude that "MeiHashem Yatza HaDavar," "the matter stemmed from Hashem" (24:50)[2].

Similarly, the Gemara (Moed Katan 17a) relates the following:

"There was a young Torah scholar who acquired a bad reputation (rumors were circulating that he was misbehaving in his personal life). Rabi Yehudah said: 'What shall we do regarding this case? Shall we excommunicate him? The rabbis need him (Rashi: he was their teacher). Shall we not excommunicate him? A Chillul Hashem will ensue.' He asked Rabbah bar Chanah: 'Did you hear anything about such a case?' He answered him: 'Rabi Yochanan taught: Malachi (2:7) states: 'The Kohen's lips safeguards knowledge and people seek Torah from his mouth, for he is like an angel of Hashem.' That means: If the teacher resembles an angel, Torah may be sought from his mouth, but not otherwise.' Thereupon Rabi Yehudah excommunicated him. Subsequently, Rabi Yehudah became deathly ill and the rabbis made him a sick-call, among whom was also that young scholar. When Rabi Yehudah saw him, he laughed. He said to Rabi Yehudah: 'Is it not enough that you excommunicated me, you also laugh at me?' Rabi Yehudah answered him: 'I do not laugh at you, but in the World to Come I will be proud to say that I was not biased even towards so great a man as you.'

When Rabi Yehudah died, the young scholar came to the Beit Midrash and asked to be released from the ban[3], and the Chachamim answered him: 'There is not here a man equal in esteem to Rabi Yehudah to excuse you. Go to Rabi Yehudah Nesi'ah, and he may discharge you.' He went to him. Rabi Yehudah Nesi'ah said to Rabi Ami: 'Go and examine his case, and if found favorable, absolve him.' Rabbi Ami did so, and was about to excuse him when Rabi Shmuel bar Nachmeini arose and said: 'Even when the maidservant of the house of Rebbi excommunicated someone, the sages respected it for three years, how much more so should we respect Yehudah our colleague.' Rabi Zeira said: 'How did it happen that this elder came today to the Beit Midrash (study hall) after an absence of several years? It is evident that the young scholar should not to be released from the ban.'"

Accordingly, one may discern Hashem's subtle involvement even when it comes without prophetic revelation. Just as Yosef, Lavan and Rabi Zeira realized the involvement of the divine hand, we too are called upon to discover Hashem's involvement today, despite the passing of more than two thousand years since the termination of the prophetic age.

The Miraculous Survival of the Jewish People

The Aruch HaShulchan (Orach Chaim 219:2) beautifully applies this idea to the experience of the Jewish People during the past two thousand years of exile:

“Our very existence and survival stems from miracles and not the natural order of events as we thank Hashem [in the Modim prayer] ‘Al Nisecha SheBeChol Yom Imanu,’ for His daily miracles. A discerning individual who ponders the history of the Jews through our long exile and dispersion will realize that Hashem resides amongst us [to ensure our survival] in accordance with the promises He set forth in the Torah. Prime example of these promises are the Pasuk ‘VeAf Gam Zot BiHeyotam BeEretz Oyveihem Lo Me’astim VeLo Ge’altim Lehafair Beriti Itam’, ‘but despite all these [sins] while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not despise them nor reject them to destroy them and cancel the covenant I made with them’ (VaYikra 26:44[4]) and the Gemara (Megillah 29a) which states that ‘Galu LeBavel Shechinah Imahem,’ ‘they were exiled to Babylon the divine presence remains with them.’ It is evident to all[5] that the survival of the Jewish People is not natural by any stretch of the imagination. Even during generations that do not excel in fulfilling the Torah’s commands, the divine presence has not abandoned us, in keeping with what is written ‘HaShochein Itam Betoch Tum’otam,’ ‘who resides amongst them in their impurity’ (VaYikra 16:16). Nonetheless He does [sometimes] punish us as stated ‘Yasor Yisrani Kah VeLaMavet Lo Netanani,’ ‘He has made us suffer but has not allowed our demise’ (Tehillim 118:18). This describes our situation both as a nation and as individuals.”

Three Categories of Miracles

Aruch Hashulchan continues and distinguishes between three types of divine intervention and our three expressions of gratitude to Hashem for each. Miracles that contravene the laws of nature such as those involved with our Exodus from Egypt demand the recitation of the Berachah of “SheAsah Nissim,” “who made a miracle [either for our people or an individual]”[6]. In the prayer of Modim, we thank Hashem for the “routine” miracles such as our earning a livelihood[7] and everyday survival. Birkat HaGomeil is reserved for those occurrences which are somewhat in between these two extremes. It is recited when one is saved without a violation of the laws of nature but rather is saved by a miracle which “somewhat deviates from the boundaries of naturally occurring events into the realm of a miraculous nature.”

Contemporary Application – Rockets from Gaza

The official website of the Israel Defense Forces (accessed on July 7, 2015) stated that “since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, terrorists have fired more than 11,000 rockets into Israel. Over 5 million Israelis are currently living under threat of rocket attacks.”

Let us ponder this phenomenon for a moment. Eleven thousand rockets landed in the ten years from 2005 to 2015 – what would one expect the casualty rate from such unrelenting fire to be? In the normal course of events there would be thousands killed and severely injured and billions of dollars of financial loss sustained. While there is, tragically, some loss of life, limb and property, these numbers are dramatically lower than one would expect. As I see it, divine intervention to preserve His people as set forth in the Torah is the only reasonable explanation for this phenomenon. Coincidence, Israel’s security skill, or poor abilities of Arab terrorists can explain one or a few incidents. These are all inadequate and unreasonable explanations for ten years of unremitting yet, for the most part, unsuccessful attacks.

Rav Binyamin Yudin of Fair Lawn, New Jersey noted in July 2014 that we find many times in the Torah that we gain insight from evildoers such as Bil’am. Similarly, Rav Yudin cited Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan who in defending Hamas firing weapons at Israel explained that Hamas does not intend to kill Israelis: “They say ‘Hamas bombs as well.’ Yes it bombed, but how many people were killed? There are no casualties. How can this be?”

Rational individuals recognize the foolish nature of Erdogan’s comments.

Nonetheless, Erdogan does correctly identify a most unusual phenomenon that, in the words of the Aruch HaShulchan, “deviate from the boundaries of naturally occurring events.” The rational explanation of ten years of rocket fire and an extraordinarily low casualty rate is divine intervention.

Conclusion - Identifying Hashem’s Intervention

Even in a time when Hashem does not perform open miracles and prophetic communication is absent, a thinking individual can and should discern divine providence. When the inexplicable occurs, whether it is a Yishma’eili caravan transporting sweet smelling spices or Yishma’eilim firing countless rockets at the children of Ya’akov and doing relatively little damage, it is incumbent upon us to recognize the hand of God. Yosef, whose sophistication, insight and discerning eye in economic matters brought him worldwide recognition and acclaim, unabashedly and frequently spoke to all he encountered of Hashem, whose involvement Yosef discerned using the same sophistication and discernment he brought to economics. We Jews today are called upon to do no less.

[1] Which describes Yosef as the Ben Zekunim and favored child of Ya’akov. Onkelos and Rashi interpret Ben Zekunim as “Bar Chakim,” wise.

[2] Moed Katan 18b endorses Lavan and Beteil’s reaction as legitimate.

[3] Presumably due to the lack of solid evidence of his guilt.

[4] The centrality of this Pasuk is underscored by the fact that it is incorporated into the daily Tefillah in the Sephardic Siddur.

[5] Even the skeptical (though Philo-Semitic) author Paul Johnson at the conclusion of a nearly six hundred page work A History of the Jews marvels at the survival and continued thriving of the Jewish People, especially “when all those other ancient people were transmuted or vanished into the oubliettes of history.” Johnson even considers the possibility of divine providence being the explanation of this incredible phenomenon. He concludes, though, that the fulfillment of the Biblical promises may have emerged from the powerful dynamic of human confidence produced by the Biblical predictions. I find this an entirely unconvincing explanation. If the Biblical prophecies are a product of human authors seeking to inspire human confidence, then why does the Torah include predictions of some of the most awful punishments (as presented in the Tochachot of VaYikra Perek 26 and Devarim Perek 28) and why have they most definitely been fulfilled during many tragic episodes culminating in the Holocaust?

[6] Rav Hershel Schachter ruled that a congregant of Congregation Shaarei Orah, the Sephardic Congregation of Teaneck, who inexplicably survived a very severe automobile accident should recite this Berachah when passing the accident site.

[7] Many friends with whom I have confided share my experience of discerning Hashem’s involvement with our efforts to sustain our families. This idea is expressed by Chazal (Pesachim 118a) “Kashin Mezonotav Shel Adam KeKeri’at Yam Suf,” “man’s sustenance is as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea.”

Rabbi Reisman - Parshas Vayeishev 5773

Under the Chuppah and during Sheva Berachos we make a Beracha that refers to the couple as (רעים תשפחה רעים האהובים, קשפמהר יצירך בגן עדן מקדם). We refer to them as (רעים), as friends. What is the concept of (רעים) as opposed to Yedidim or Chaverim. There are many phrases in Lashon Kodesh for friends. What is the uniqueness of the expression of (רעים)?

Rav Schwab in his Sefer Mayan Bais Hashoeva page # 95 in this week’s Parsha finds a Makar, an incredible insight into the understanding of the word (רעים) for friends. We find during the episode of Yehuda and Tamar, where Yehuda leaves a Mashkon with Tamar. He leaves a few personal items with Tamar as a guarantee that he will pay what he promised, the payment being a goat. When Yehuda gets home, the Posuk says in 38:20 וישלח יהודה את-גדי העזים, ביד רעהו העדלמי) לקחת הערבונו, מיד האשה; ולא, (ביד רעהו העדלמי, לקחת הערבונו, מיד האשה) Maybe he just sent him as a car service to bring a goat to such and such. No, the Posuk says that he told him the story. He told him that this woman has his personal items which I left with her and I owe her the (רלא, מצאה) (גדי העזים). Well, maybe he didn’t tell his friend the whole embarrassing story. Obviously not. Because when his friend comes back and says that he couldn’t find this woman, Yehuda says to desist from searching further for her because it will be a Bizayon, it will be a terrible shame. It’s clear that this friend knew exactly what the story was. Yet we find that if the story is revealed it would be a terrible shame to Yehuda. As the Gemara says in Maseches Bava Metzia 59a 14 lines from the

top, (נוה לו לאדם שיפיל עצמו לכבשן האש ואל ילבין פני חבירו ברבים), Tamar would rather be killed than to reveal the story. If so, we see that this (רעהו העדלמי) was a very special friend to Yehuda. He was someone to whom Yehuda felt comfortable telling his failing. Telling him something that he did that would be a shame to him. Says Rav Schwab, that the word Rai'a for friend refers to that type of a friend. The type of a friend to whom a person "Yecholam L'sapeir Lo Gam Aveiros" someone to whom you can reveal your shortcomings, your mistakes, and your out and out sins and he would still be helpful to you. That is the expression of Rayim or Rai'a for friend.

It is a bit of a Pele. That the word for friend in Hebrew Rai'a (Reish Ayin) are the same Osios as the word Ra (bad or evil). They seem to have absolutely no connection. According to his explanation though they do have a connection. A friend, a true friend is someone to whom you can reveal the Tzad Ra, the bad things you have done and he will be helpful to you. Not that he will help you continue to do Aveiros but his friendship will not be shaken. So with this we have an understanding of the depth of (שפוח תשפוח רעים האהובים). We refer to a couple as (רעים). When a couple get married they get married as they say that it is for the good or the better. They get married for whatever may come their way. Invariable, human beings have shortcomings. The point of (רעים) is the point to stand up and protect someone who has a shortcoming, has a failure, even an out and out Aveira and to be helpful to the person. This is one idea for Bain Adam L'chaveiro from this week's Parsha.

I would like to shift to a second issue. This is a totally different issue and is related to one of the great philosophical questions which the Rishonim debate and for which the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh in this week's Parsha is often quoted. I would like to give you the outline of this Machlokes, something which I might have discussed in previous years but this year I would like to add an insight from Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman on this Machlokes.

This Machlokes is based on the fundamental issue of whether one human being can do harm to another human being if it was not something that was Bashert, that had to happen. What I mean to say is this. There are two fundamental principles in Yiddishkeit which seem to contradict each other. One is the idea that it says in Maseches Chullin 7b 5 lines from the bottom (אין אדם נוקם אצבעו מלמטה אלא א"כ מכריזין) (עליו מלמעלה). That no human being comes to any type of harm unless it is Hashem's Gizaira, unless it is Bashert. There is another separate principle which is the principle of Bechira, free will. Which states that any human being has Bechira, free will to do an Aveira or not. Well, it is an Aveira for Reuvein to hit Shimon and cause him pain. Reuvein raises his fist and is about to hit Shimon, at this moment does Reuvein truly have free will? What happens if it not Bashert for Shimon to suffer pain at this moment. Reuvein in his Rishus is doing an Aveira and choosing to hit him. What happens? Do we say that if Reuvein hit Shimon it must be that it would have happened to Shimon anyway because no human being suffers pain unless there is a Gizaira (מלמעלה) and had he not chosen to hit him Shimon would have fallen perhaps and would have had a bloody nose on his own. Or do we say no, the principle of Bechira is such that it allows one human being to cause another human being pain. This is a tremendous Machlokes. The main opinions on both sides that are usually quoted are the Rambam and the Sefer Hachinuch who maintain that it is impossible to harm someone unless that harm had to come his way. They both say this in regard to Issur of Nekama that one may not take revenge against someone else because says the Rambam and the Chinuch that person did not truly cause you harm. They bring as a Raya to this Dovid Hamelech's statement in Shmuel Bais 16:10 (וְיָרֶן אֶמֶר לוֹ קָלֵל). When Shimi Ben Gaira caused Dovid Hamelech pain Dovid Hamelech said (וְיָרֶן אֶמֶר לוֹ קָלֵל). The pain came from Hashem not from him. So this is one side, the opinion of the Rambam and the Chinuch. That no human being can be hurt by another human being unless it is Bashert.

On the other hand, the Shittah of the Alshich in his Peirush on Sefer Daniel I believe, says that it is not so. That the principle of Bechira takes precedence. He brings from an incident in Daniel which it happens to be in the Metzudas Dovid who brings it as well. They maintain that it is not so. That a human being can cause harm which is not Bashert. Often quoted in this dispute is the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh in this week's Parsha. When Yosef was thrown into the Bor that was full of deadly snakes and scorpions that could have killed him. The question the Ohr Hachaim poses is what did they gain, as the brothers said we will not kill him so let's throw him into a Bor. So they threw him into a pit that has deadly snakes. The answer that the Ohr Hachaim presents is the following. He says that a human being can cause another human being harm even if he is undeserving. Therefore, the Shevatim could kill Yosef even if he does not deserve to be killed, even if it is not Bashert. However, by throwing him into the Bor they are putting him in a place of Nechashim V'akrabim, snakes can't do harm unless it is Bashert. Unless it is a Gizaira Min Hashem. Therefore, by throwing him into the Bor they said if he does not deserve to die he will not die. This is the general Machlokes with the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh being quoted in this week's Parsha because he presents one side which is the Shitta of the Alshich.

Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman in his Peirush on the Parsha and he alludes to his Sefer Yimaleh Pi Tehilasecha Cheilek 2 in which he elaborates on this point. He makes a beautiful Peshara, a middle ground between the two Shittos. We know that the world was created with a Shutfus a combination of Din and Rachamim. Typically, HKB"H deals with human beings with Rachamim, with a Midda of mercy. However, we know, that if a person goes into a place of danger, a Makom Sakanah then he puts himself in danger. Why? If it is not Bashert that he should die then he won't die. The answer is that in a Makom of Sakanah he is judged with the Middas Hadin. He suddenly falls into a new reality a reality of a world with Middas Hadin. There, a person who is totally a Tzaddik would come out unharmed, however, someone who is borderline in his observance of his merits in heaven who would not be harmed otherwise can be harmed because he goes into a Makom Sakana. Says Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman when a person raises his hand to harm someone else he transfers that person from a place of Middas Harachamim to a place of Middas Hadin. He cannot harm him if the person should not be harmed at all. This is because of our principle that without a proper Bashert, Din Min Hashamayim, then a person cannot be harmed. Yes by raising his hand against his friend a person makes it more likely that a person would be harmed because he shifts that person from Middas Harachamim to a point where he is judged by Middas Hadin. This is the wonderful insight. Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman answers another Kasha with this but it is sort of a middle ground, an insight between the two Middos that is Mistaveir.

Let me share with you a thought regarding Neiros Chanukah. There is a basic idea found in many Chassidische Seforim that the 36 candles (the 36 lights) of the Menorah correspond to the 36 hours of the original light. The original Ohr when Hashem said (וַיְהִי-אוֹר) a special light was created. What we call a Meor Hamakif, a light that has incredible powers to give insight to the human being who uses it. That Ohr existed for the 12 hours of Friday day and the 24 hours of Shabbos. After which on Motzoei Shabbos it disappeared. It disappeared forever and will come back IY"H with the coming of Moshiach and this Ohr Hatzafun, this Ohr which is hidden will return to the world. Today we live in a world of a very primitive light. A light which allows us to see Chitzonios and not Penimios. A light which allows us to see a physical thing, the physical world and not the spiritual world.

The 36 Neiros of Chanukah are lights of that original light. A light which if seen properly and perceived properly can give a person a tremendous Koach Har'i'ya. A power to see more, to see more in Ruchniyos, to appreciate more in spiritually. That is the spiritual message of the 36 Neiros of Chanukah. Chanukah falls on the longest nights of the year. The nights in which we are most desperate for the Ohr Hamakif, for that original light. Torah She'bal Peh is supposed to be learned at night. Lo Imri Layla Ela L'girsu. The longest nights are the nights of Choshech where the Torah She'bal Peh that we learn should count to the Ohr Hatzafun. It should be that on Chanuka more learning and not less learning is done. When the Neiros are lit someone takes time to sit and learn and to spend his time properly on Chanukah.

I recently saw in the Mishna Sachir on Chanukah from the Sefer Amudehu Shivah a beautiful Remez to this. What is the Remez to the Ohr Hatzafun, the Ohr that was hidden? The Remez in the Chumash is in the fact that in every one of Hashem's creations it says Hashem commanded (וַיְהִי-בֶן) and it was so. Except for (וַיְהִי-אוֹר). When Hashem created light the Posuk does not say (וַיְהִי-בֶן). The reason for this was that it didn't remain (בֶּן) the way it was originally said. So (וַיְהִי-בֶן) would refer to the Ohr Hamakif the original Ohr, but there is no (וַיְהִי-בֶן). Later when Aharon lights the Menorah it says in Bamidbar 8:3 (אָהֳרֹן, וַיַּעַשׂ בֶּן). Aharon did so. Of course he did so, however, it is a Remez to (וַיְהִי-בֶן) of the original creation. If so, the Ohr of Chanukah is an Ohr that should be used for an appreciation of the Ruchniyos, the spiritual world was hidden from us. The spiritual world which we don't see.

In line with that, there is a Maharal in Parshas Vayeishev where Rashi in 37:33 tells us that the Shevatim when they decreed that Yosef's sale must remain a secret (וַתִּפְּרֹשׂ וַתִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה עִמָּהּ). They took Hashem as a Shutuf as the 10th man so to speak with the 9 Shevatim that where there. Reuvein had returned to his father as Rashi explains in 37:29 (וּבְמַכְרֵהוּ לֹא הָיָה שָׂם, שֶׁהִגִּיעַ יוֹמָ לִילָךְ וּלְשֹׁמֵשׂ אֶת אַבְיָו). So to complete the Minyan they used Hashem. There is an incredible line in the Maharal in his Pirush on Rashi. He says that it is not only the Shevatim. Every one of us has the ability to L'shateif HKB"H Imo. We all walk with HKB"H. If we would perceive the Ruchniyos around us we have the ability to make HKB"H a partner in the things that we do. What an incredible line.

Rav Schwab writes that when we finish Shemoneh Esrei we say (עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹמֵ בְּיָרְמִיּוֹ). And say Amen. Who are we talking to? We are finishing the quiet Shemoneh Esrei! Rav Schwab brings from Kadmonim that we are saying it to the angels that accompany every human being. We don't see the angels and we don't sense the angels. But if we can sense Ruchniyos and we make an effort to sense Ruchniyos (וְאֶמְרֵנוּ אַנְגְּלֵינוּ) we see angels around us. If we do see angels around us then our Davening is different and our learning is different. That is the secret of the Ohr

Hamakif, the Ohr Hatzafun, the Ohr which the Chanukah lights are supposed to hint and be Merameiz to.

With that thought I wish everyone a wonderful Shabbos and a meaningful Lichtege Chanukah. A Chanukah that truly lights up our days. This year, Chanukah has two Sundays. For the working people that is two opportunities to put in some extra time L'kavod Chanukah in the Bais Hamedrash. A Guttan Shabbos to all.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting the following items:

**Halacha Hotline of the Five Towns
Under the Leadership of Rabbi Binyomin Forst
The Halachos of V'sein Tal U'matar 5776/2015**

Beginning Ma'ariv this coming Motza'ei Shabbos (Saturday night), December 5th, we say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah in the b'rachah of Bareich Aleinu, instead of V'sein Br'achah.[1],[2] If one did not say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah as required, the correct procedure is dependent upon when one realizes one's omission, as follows:

If one realized one's omission before saying Hashem's Name at the end of the b'rachah of Bareich Aleinu (i.e., Baruch Attah Hashem), one should go back to the words V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah and continue from there.[3]

If one already said Hashem's Name at the end of the b'rachah of Bareich Aleinu, one should not go back to V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah; rather, one should continue davening (praying) as usual until the b'rachah of Shema Koleinu. In the b'rachah of Shema Koleinu, one should insert the words V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah just before the words Ki Attah Shomei'a Tefilas, and continue davening from there.[4]

If one did not say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah before the words Ki Attah Shomei'a Tefilas but realized one's omission before saying Hashem's Name at the end of the b'rachah of Shema Koleinu (i.e., Baruch Attah Hashem), one should say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah and continue with Ki Attah Shomei'a Tefilas.[5]

If one already said Hashem's Name at the end of the b'rachah of Shema Koleinu, one should say the words לַמְדֵינִי חֻקֶיךָ (Lam'deini Chukeycha),[6] then say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah, and continue with Ki Attah Shomei'a Tefilas.[7]

If one already finished the b'rachah of Shema Koleinu but realized one's omission before beginning the b'rachah of Retzei (that is, the next b'rachah), one should say the words V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah at that point and continue with the b'rachah of Retzei.[8]

If one already began the b'rachah of Retzei and realized one's omission before saying the "Yih'yu l'ratzon..." that immediately precedes Oseh Shalom at the end of Sh'moneh Esrei,[9] one should go back to the beginning of the b'rachah of Bareich Aleinu and insert V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah in the proper place in the b'rachah of Bareich Aleinu.[10] One should then continue davening from there, saying all the br'achos that follow Bareich Aleinu in the regular order, despite having said them already.

If one did not realize one's omission until one said the "Yih'yu l'ratzon..." that immediately precedes Oseh Shalom at the end of Sh'moneh Esrei, even if one did not take three steps back, one must repeat the entire Sh'moneh Esrei from the beginning, and insert V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah in the proper place in the b'rachah of Bareich Aleinu.[11]

Prior to Ma'ariv on January 4th (within 30 days from December 5th), if one is unsure whether or not one said V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah, one must assume one did not say it, and follow the guidelines above. (See, however, one exception, below.) Beginning with Ma'ariv on January 4th, one may assume that one said V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah as required.[12]

It is possible to "train" oneself to say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah to ensure that one will say it every time one davens (prays) Sh'moneh Esrei. One does so by saying v'es kol minei s'vu'asah l'tovah v'sein tal u'matar livrachah 90 times. If one "trains" oneself and later davens Sh'moneh Esrei and is unsure whether or not one said V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah, one

may assume that one said V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah as required (but see note.)[13]

Prior to Ma'ariv on January 4th, if long after finishing Sh'moneh Esrei[14] one is unsure whether or not one said V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah, but one knows for certain that one intended – before starting Sh'moneh Esrei – to say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah as required, one may assume that one indeed said V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah. If, however, one became unsure during Sh'moneh Esrei or immediately after finishing Sh'moneh Esrei, one must assume one did not say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah, despite having intended – before beginning Sh'moneh Esrei – to say it.[15]

[1] Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 117:1. In Israel, more rain is required (Mishnah Berurah 117:5), so the requirement to say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah begins much earlier, at Ma'ariv of the night of Marcheshvan 7. In the Diaspora, however, we begin saying V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah at Ma'ariv of the sixtieth day (inclusive) from Tekufas Tishrei (S.A. O.C. 117:1; M.B. 117:4). (Tekufas Tishrei is the halachic Autumn Equinox, which is different than the astronomical Autumn Equinox.) This year, which precedes a secular leap year, Tekufas Tishrei fell out after nightfall on October 7, which coincided with the night of Tishrei 25. The sixtieth day from Tishrei 25 (inclusive) is Kislev 24. Thus, we begin to say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah at Ma'ariv of Kislev 24, which is at Ma'ariv on December 5th.

[2] We continue saying V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah until Peasch (Passover).

[3] M.B., end of 117:15; Bi'ur Halacha 114:6 s.v. B'makom Shenizkar, citing P'ri Megadim.

[4] S.A. O.C. 117:5; M.B. 117:15-16. See note 7.

[5] See Bi'ur Halacha ibid.

[6] [Once one says Hashem's Name at the end of the b'rachah, one should be required to finish the b'rachah by saying the concluding words "Shomei'a Tefilah," so as not to say Hashem's Name in vain. However, there is a pasuk (verse) in Tehilim (Psalms 119:12) that – in its entirety – consists of the words בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' לַמְדֵינִי חֻקֶיךָ (Baruch Attah Hashem Lam'deini Chukeycha). Thus, saying the words Baruch Attah Hashem can be considered the start of the recitation of that pasuk, which may be finished by saying the concluding words לַמְדֵינִי חֻקֶיךָ (Lam'deini Chukeycha). After doing so, one may then say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah and continue with Ki Attah Shomei'a Tefilah.]

[7] M.B. 117:19. [This allowance, which is not agreed to by all Poskim (halachic authorities), is allowed only in this case, since if we were to not allow it remedying the omission would necessitate going back to Bareich Aleinu and repeating many b'rachos (per the halacha presented below in the article). This allowance is not allowed in the case (mentioned earlier in the article) in which one did not say V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah in the b'rachah of Bareich Aleinu and realized one's omission after having said Hashem's Name at the end of the b'rachah of Bareich Aleinu, since the person has the ability to rectify the omission by merely inserting the words V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah in the b'rachah of Shema Koleinu, without repeating any b'rachos. See Ishai Yisrael n.e. chapter 23, note 175.]

[8] S.A. ibid.

[9] This Yih'yu l'ratzon is sometimes referred to as the "second Yih'yu l'ratzon" to distinguish it from the first Yih'yu l'ratzon, which is proper to say before the beginning of Elokai Netzor.

[10] S.A. ibid.

[11] S.A. ibid.; M.B. 117:18.

[12] See S.A. O.C. 114:8. The reason is that after 30 days have gone by, we assume that one became accustomed to reciting the newly required text; see M.B. 114:37 with Sha'ar Hatziyun 114:28. If one serves as the Sh'liach Tzibbur (Chazzan) during the 30 days, the cutoff date could be earlier; see Kaf Hachayim 114:51.

[13] M.B. 114:40. The Chasam Sofer rules (cited in M.B. 114:41) that one should practice 101 times. The Mishnah Berurah (ibid.) rules that it is preferable to do so, but that if one practiced only 90 times one may consider oneself to have trained oneself properly.

[14] It is not clear how to define "long after finishing Sh'moneh Esrei" (Sh'miras Shabbos K'hilchasah vol. 2, chap 57 note 17).

[15] M.B. 114:3. See, however, Sh'miras Shabbos K'hilchasah (vol. 3, page 74 – comments on chap. 57 note 17) where he challenges this part of this ruling and opines that perhaps if one did not become unsure until after one finished Sh'moneh Esrei – even immediately afterwards – one may assume that one indeed said V'sein Tal U'matar Livrachah.

info@halachahotline.org

417 Beach 9th Street, Far Rockaway, New York, 11691

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com

subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel Wein
Vayeshev

Our father Yaakov finally makes it home to the Land of Israel, the land promised by God to his ancestors...that their descendants would inherit and dwell therein. Rashi, according to rabbinic tradition, portrays our great patriarch as somehow viewing his return to the Land of Israel as being the final chapter in his difficult and turbulent life.

The Land of Israel, so to speak, is perceived by him to be a place where serenity and quiet retirement can be achieved. However, as he will find out in the tragic events that will unfold regarding Yosef and his brothers, dwelling in the Land of Israel is certainly no guarantee of peace and quiet. It is a place of challenge and constant demands, and of personal and national difficulties and struggles.

It never was meant to be viewed as a giant retirement community for the Jewish people. Even though the Torah will refer to it as being a place of "rest and inheritance" it was always intended to be a place of accomplishment and progress, of holiness and service.

To achieve holiness and to be of true service to God and human beings requires constant effort and sacrifice. It is not an easy road to traverse.

Yaakov saw the Land of Israel as a place of refuge, serenity and quietude. The Lord apparently did not agree with that assessment.

The Jewish people will have to be formed into a nation, with the Land of Israel being viewed as its home base. Nation-building is never an easy task and the symbol for the difficulty of this task in Jewish life will be the return of the Jewish people to their ancient and rightful homeland, the Land of Israel.

Currently, part of the difficulty with regard to the attitude of many Jews towards the state of Israel, with all of its imperfections and difficulties, is due to the misreading of the promise inherent in the creation of a Jewish national entity in the Land of Israel.

Many saw it as somehow being the solution to all Jewish problems, a place that would somehow guarantee eternal happiness. Political Zionism taught that the creation of such a state would reduce anti-Semitism throughout the world. If anything, the Jewish state and its mere existence have exacerbated this scourge of anti-Semitism. It now disguises itself as anti-Israel but all of us know what is really meant.

The return of the Jewish people in our time to their ancestral homeland has not brought about the creation of utopia. Rather it has placed before us a great number of challenges – financial, familial, and spiritual – and many difficult dilemmas.

The State of Israel has not turned out to be the supreme retirement home that we envisioned while living in the Diaspora. Instead, it is a real place with real problems because it contains real people. It is engaged in constructing a real society that will embody the holiness of Jewish tradition and the practicality of the world in which we live. If we view it correctly and resolve not to see it through falsely nostalgic eyes, we will prosper as did our father Yaakov long ago.

Shabat shalom

Weekly Blog :: Rabbi Berel Wein
Fascinations

Parts of the Moslem world are currently experiencing a morbid fascination with death – their own and that of others. There is no long-term strategy to the terror that grips Western society and all of us here in the State of Israel. Stabbing a soldier or running down a policeman or pedestrian with an automobile has no strategic value and, in reality, accomplishes nothing for the cause of the perpetrator.

Killing one-hundred-twenty-nine innocent people in Paris in no way induces France to be more lenient and accepting of any Moslem caliphate. In fact, as we are witness, it does just the opposite, only hardening French opposition to the idea of a caliphate and to the acceptance of more Moslems into France itself.

The same thing is undoubtedly true here in Israel. The murder of innocent Jews, by people who are well aware by now that they will probably die in committing that act of murder, has no strategic value and gains nothing substantial for the Palestinian cause. Yet, logic plays no part in any of this.

Constant religious incitement, demonizing the "other," promising eternal reward and purely religious hatred all play into this current wave of terror. Why should children who are barely teenagers attempt to kill people whom they do not know and who have never directly harmed them? This is all part of this mental and spiritual fascination with death.

The killers are not soldiers who are trained for war and killing. In the famous words of Gen. Patton in World War II, "the object of war is not to die for your country, it is to make the enemy die for his country." But that type of logical thinking wanes in the face of this utter attraction to death and its expected rewards.

Part of the task of religion is to teach a person how to live a meaningful life coupled with an understanding that there is a spark of eternity within all of us that will exist after our physical demise. The Torah is a book of life, and living remains the supreme value in Jewish thought and law. Though the Jewish people have a long history of martyrdom, it is the productivity and holiness of good living that remains the focus of all of the commandments and values that constitute traditional Jewish life. We all recognize that death is inevitable and must always be reckoned with, but it certainly is not something desirable – a goal to be pursued and treasured.

The fascination of Jewish life is with living. This is the emphasis that is present in all of the books of the Bible and is the core value in Jewish tradition. From this stems the Jewish attitude towards family, procreation and generations. Though we are well aware of the past and in fact are bidden to study it and know it, our attraction is always with the future.

The Talmud puts it succinctly and positively: "Tomorrow the Temple will be built." We are absorbed with how and when that will occur but it is the appeal of life in progress, with its concept of redemption and hope that drives the Jewish society here in Israel and the world over to persevere and eventually to triumph.

I have no idea how to eradicate this cult of death, which seems to permeate so many of our enemies. It is caused by incitement against anyone who does not believe as they believe and justifies the most brutal and heinous acts of murder of innocents. The fact that it is somehow malevolently intertwined with distorted religious beliefs only makes the problem greater. If, as is clear from the events of the past few weeks, that the murderers are not afraid of death and are in fact captivated and accepting of it in almost joyful belief, then our weapons to defeat them are truly impotent.

It is difficult to defeat an enemy whose young people are willing to sacrifice their lives because of perceived religious beliefs, the belief that somehow death is more noble than life and murder is somehow a solution to the world's problems.

The fact that almost no moderate voices are heard in the Moslem world today to oppose this type of mindset is very disturbing and frightening. Only when human beings actually get down to the task of making something of their lives, of living for goals and with a vision of generations yet unborn, can we hope that somehow this fascination with death will be transformed into an appreciation of life and the realities that exist and govern us.

Shabbat shalom

from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

to: weekly@ohr.edu

subject: Torah Weekly

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayeshev
For the week ending 5 December 2015 / 23 Kislev 5776

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights

Train Spotting

"In order to save him (Yosef) and to return him to his father..." (37:22)

Every British schoolboy knows the legend of King Canute (995-1035) who stood facing down the sea and commanded it not to come any further. He ended up with wet feet and a lot of royal egg on his face.

It's like trying to stop a runaway train hurtling toward the end of the line by standing in front of it and valiantly raising your hand and saying, "I command you stop." All that will do is cause a rather nasty mess on the tracks.

You'd do much better (and save the railway company a large cleaning bill) by trying to find the place where you can divert the train to a harmless siding so that it can dissipate its speed and come to a slow stop.

People are a lot like trains.

When someone is utterly determined to do something wrong, the worst thing you can do is to stand on his tracks and put out your hand to stop him.

You're liable to get run over verbally — or worse.

You have to divert him slowly from his lethal trajectory.

This is exactly what Reuven did to save his brother Yosef.

The brothers hated Yosef and were determined to kill him. Had Reuven tried to stop them by telling them to spare him, such was their hatred that they would have ignored him. Rather, he diverted their energy into a less lethal plan. He persuaded them to dispose of Yosef without having blood on their hands, by putting him into a pit full of snakes and scorpions. Then Reuven,

bit by bit, would mollify their evil intent and spirit Yosef away — back to his father.

Much more effective than trying to stop a runaway train...

Sources: based on the Ralbag as seen in Talelei Orot

© 2015 Ohr Somayach International - all rights reserved

from: Shabbat Shalom shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU

Orthodox Union / www.ou.org

Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column Vayeshev

"Man Plans, God Laughs"

You thought your life would run smoothly, right? We all do. Then, something comes off, tragic or happy, which proves to us that life is not smooth at all, and probably is not supposed to be.

Somehow, each of us has a personal script which envisions what our lives will be like in the near and even distant future. I remember a friend from college who had his life planned out. He knew who he was going to marry, what his career path would be, where he would live, and which friends would be loyal to him.

My friend, like all the rest of us, soon found out that life had many surprises in store for him. His fiancé ended their relationship, he was offered a very different job than that which he was trained for, he moved to a part of the country he had previously never heard of, and his friends soon became but memories.

There is a passage in Psalms 30, and it is one of my favorite biblical quotations, which says this better than I can. It reads, "I said in my tranquility (shalvi), I shall never fall down."

Of all the fifty-plus weekly Torah portions, it is this week's parasha (Vayeshev) that conveys this message most powerfully, in a manner designed to leave an impression upon us all.

"And Jacob dwelled..." Rashi comments that Jacob sought to dwell in shalva, tranquility. He thought that he had finally made it home, the dwelling place of his fathers, and that his encounters with Laban and Esau were now over. It was clear sailing from here on in.

But wouldn't you know, his troubles with Joseph soon "jumped on him". He never anticipated that his life would be completely disrupted and changed forever because of his favorite son and his internal family dynamics. From this point on, Jacob experienced no tranquility; only surprises, which eventually climaxed in exile to Egypt. Not only could he not live in the land of his fathers, but he was destined not even to die there.

There is a Yiddish saying which captures this lesson in four brief words: "Mentsch tracht, Gott lacht." Literally, this means, "Man plans, God laughs." I have seen it paraphrased as, "Man proposes, God disposes."

At this point, dear reader, I want to introduce to you the second most important traditional Jewish biblical commentator. In previous columns, I have referred to Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, who is unanimously acclaimed as the chief traditional commentator. Second to him is Ramban, Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, or Nachmanides.

Ramban uses the narrative of Joseph's search for his brothers and their plot to sell him into slavery as a primary example of how man's plans usually go awry. He, too, formulates a four-word phrase which conveys this idea, but his is in Hebrew: "Hagezera emet, vehacharitzut sheker." This means that God's design is true while man's efforts are futile. Sounds pessimistic, but it has the ring of reality.

Ramban points out that Joseph was sent by Jacob to the brothers but could not find them. Ordinarily, if he would be convinced that his search for them would be unsuccessful, he would have returned home. But lo and behold, a strange man (an angel, according to rabbinic legends) appeared on the scene and guided Joseph to his brothers, who promptly sold him to the next passing caravan.

This lesson is a profound existential one for all of us. But it has needed implications for the way we tend to raise our children in this day and age. Many of us parents are guilty of trying to arrange our children's lives so that they will never experience problems or difficulties. We are protective to a ridiculous extreme in the hope that our children will never have to face the challenges and obstacles which we faced.

But we delude ourselves and, more importantly, are not fair to our children. Their lives will contain unpredicted and unpredictable circumstances, negative and positive, and we cannot make their lives fool-proof.

How much better off they would be if we taught them not how to avoid problems, but how to cope with problems. Problems are unavoidable. They are the very stuff of life. A good parent, and a good teacher, conveys the lesson that life will have its challenges, but that these challenges can be met and that, by meeting them, the individual grows.

We, as observers of current youth, particularly in the Jewish community, have identified a sense of entitlement in our children. They feel entitled to leisure and comfort and an environment free of restriction. We would well-advised to dispel this sense of entitlement, and instead enable them to face the unanticipated surprises that life has in store for all of us.

from: Shabbat Shalom shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org

subject: Shabbat Shalom from the OU

Orthodox Union / www.ou.org

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

How to Change the World

In his Laws of Repentance, Moses Maimonides makes one of the most empowering statements in religious literature. Having explained that we and the world are judged by the majority of our deeds, he continues: "Therefore we should see ourselves throughout the year as if our deeds and those of the world are evenly poised between good and bad, so that our next act may change both the balance of our lives and that of the world." [1] We can make a difference, and it is potentially immense. That should be our mindset, always.

Few statements are more at odds with the way the world seems to us most of the time. Each of us knows that there is only one of us, and that there are seven billion others in the world today. What conceivable difference can we make? We are no more than a wave in the ocean, a grain of sand on the seashore, dust on the surface of infinity. Is it conceivable that with one act we could change the trajectory of our life, let alone that of humanity as a whole? Our parsha tells us that, yes, it is.

As the story of Jacob's children unfolds, there is a rapid rise of tension between his children that threatens to spill over into violence. Joseph, eleventh of the twelve, is Jacob's favourite son. He was, says the Torah, the child of Jacob's old age. More significantly, he was the first child of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel. Jacob "loved him more" than his other sons, and they knew it and resented it. They were jealous of their father's love. They were provoked by Joseph's dreams of greatness. The sight of the many-coloured robe Jacob had given him as a token of his love provoked them to anger. Then came the moment of opportunity. The brothers were away far from home tending the flocks when Joseph appeared in the distance, sent by Jacob to see how they were doing. Their envy and anger reached boiling point, and they resolved to take violent revenge. "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a wild animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

Only one of the brothers disagreed: Reuben. He knew that what they were proposing was very wrong, and he protested. At this point the Torah does something extraordinary. It makes a statement that cannot be literally true, and we, reading the story, know this. The text says, "And Reuben heard and saved him [Joseph] from them."

We know this cannot be true because of what happens next. Reuben, realizing that he is only one against many, devises a stratagem. He says, Let us not kill him. Let us throw him alive into one of the cisterns and let him die. That way, we will not be directly guilty of murder. His intention was to come back to the cistern later, when the others were elsewhere, and rescue Joseph. When the Torah says, "And Reuben heard and saved him from them" it is using the principle that "God accounts a good intention as a deed." [2] Reuben wanted to save Joseph and intended to do so, but in fact he failed. The moment passed, and by the time he acted, it was already too late. Returning to the cistern, he found Joseph already gone, sold as a slave. On this, a midrash says: "If only Reuben had known that the Holy One blessed be He, would write about him, 'And Reuben heard and saved him from them,' he would have lifted Joseph bodily onto his shoulders and taken him back to his father." [3] What does this mean?

Consider what would have happened had Reuben actually acted at that moment. Joseph would not have been sold as a slave. He would not have been taken to Egypt. He would not have worked in Potiphar's house. He would not have attracted Potiphar's wife. He would not have been thrown into prison on a false charge. He would not have interpreted the dreams of the butler and baker, nor would he have done the same two years later for Pharaoh. He would not have been made viceroy of Egypt. He would not have brought his family to stay there.

To be sure, God had already told Abraham many years earlier, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there" (Gen. 15:13). The Israelites would have become slaves, come what may. But at least they would not have had this happen as a result of their own family dysfunctions. An entire chapter of Jewish guilt and shame might have been avoided.

If only Reuben had known what we know. If only he had been able to read the book. But we never can read the book that tells of the long-term consequences of our acts. We never know how much we affect the lives of others.

There is a story I find very moving, about how in 1966 an eleven-year-old African-American boy moved with his family to a hitherto white neighbourhood in Washington. [4] Sitting with his brothers and sisters on the front step of the house, he waited to see how they would be greeted. They were not. Passers-by turned to look at them but no one gave them a smile or even a glance of recognition. All the fearful stories he had heard about how whites treated blacks seemed to be coming true. Years later, writing about those first days in their new home, he says, "I knew we were not welcome here. I knew we would not be liked here. I knew we would have no friends here. I knew we should not have moved here ..."

As he was thinking those thoughts, a woman passed by on the other side of the road. She turned to the children and with a broad smile said, "Welcome!" Disappearing into the house, she emerged minutes later with a tray laden with drinks and cream-cheese and jelly sandwiches which she brought over to the children, making them feel at home. That moment – the young man later wrote – changed his life. It gave him a sense of belonging where there was none before. It made him realise, at a time when race relations in the United States were still fraught, that a black family could feel at home in a white area and that there could be relationships that were colour-blind. Over the years, he learned to admire much about the woman across the street, but it was that first spontaneous act of greeting that became, for him, a definitive memory. It broke down a wall of separation and turned strangers into friends.

The young man, Stephen Carter, eventually became a law professor at Yale and wrote a book about what he learned that day. He called it *Civility*. The name of the woman, he tells us, was Sara Kestenbaum, and she died all too young. He adds that it was no coincidence that she was a religious Jew. "In the Jewish tradition," he notes, such civility is called "hessed – the doing of

acts of kindness – which is in turn derived from the understanding that human beings are made in the image of God."

"Civility", he adds, "itself may be seen as part of hessed: it does indeed require kindnesses toward our fellow citizens, including the ones who are strangers, and even when it is hard."

"To this day", he adds, "I can close my eyes and feel on my tongue the smooth, slick sweetness of the cream cheese and jelly sandwiches that I gobbled on that summer afternoon when I discovered how a single act of genuine and unassuming civility can change a life forever."

A single life, says the Mishnah, is like a universe. [5] Change a life, and you begin to change the universe. That is how we make a difference: one life at a time, one day at a time, one act at a time. We never know in advance what effect a single act may have. Sometimes we never know it at all. Sara Kestenbaum, like Reuben, never did have the chance to read the book that told the story of the long-term consequences of that moment. But she acted. She did not hesitate. Neither, said Maimonides, should we. Our next act might tilt the balance of someone else's life as well as our own.

We are not inconsequential. We can make a difference to our world. When we do so, we become God's partners in the work of redemption, bringing the world that is, a little closer to the world that ought to be.

[1] Hilkhoh Teshuvah 3:4. [2] Tosefta, Peah 1:4. [3] Tanhuma, Vayeshev, 13. [4] Stephen Carter, *Civility*, New York: Basic Books, 1999, 61-75. [5] Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5 (original manuscript text).

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks or to subscribe to his mailing list, please visit www.rabbisacks.org.

<http://rabbiarikahn.com/>

Echoes of Eden

Rabbi Ari Kahn on Parsha

Parashat Vayeshev 5776

Family Dynamics

It all happened so quickly: Yosef, the maligned and hated brother, approached. The brothers' enmity rapidly metastasized, and they began to talk about murder. For his part, Yosef felt love and kinship toward his brothers – all his brothers - but his love was repaid with jealousy and hatred. How had it come to this?

Click to delete Years earlier, their father Yaakov had fallen in love with one woman. He worked for years to earn her hand in marriage, and endured all sorts of abuse for the love of his life: Although Rachel was all he had ever wanted, somehow Yaakov ended up with four wives, twelve sons and one daughter. There had always been jealousy and competition among the women who had come into Yaakov's life, and the jealousy and competition carried on to their children, though the field was never an even one: It comes as no surprise that Yosef, the son of Yaakov's beloved wife Rachel, was the favored one, the golden child. And yet, there is something unusual about the verse that describes this favoritism: The Torah tells us that "Yisrael loved Yosef" more than all his other children, rather than "Yaakov loved Yosef." In general, the name Yisrael signifies the more public, tribal or national aspects of our patriarch's life, whereas Yaakov, the name with which he was born and raised, reflects the more personal aspects of his life as a brother and a son, a husband and a father. [1] In using the name Yisrael to describe the unique relationship with Yosef, the Torah gives us insight into the reasons for his preferential treatment: Yisrael loved Yosef because he saw his leadership potential. [2] He knew that Yosef would excel as a leader of the nascent nation.

With this in mind, Yosef's behavior may take on a different complexion: From a young age, Yosef used his favored status to chastise his brothers and to report on their behavior to their father. Specifically, it was the sons of Leah who were subjected to Yosef's critical eye; their mistreatment of the sons of the "concubines" [3] was something Yosef could not accept. To Yosef's mind, all of Yaakov's sons were equal; all his brothers deserved love and respect.

Yosef had been his mother's only child for many years. When his brother Binyamin was finally born, the age difference between them must surely have made closeness difficult. Yosef must have craved the affection and camaraderie of his paternal brothers – and therein lay the rub: Some of his brothers, the sons of Leah, considered their own status to be higher than that of the sons of the "maidservants" Bilhah and Zilpah, and

lorded it over them, throwing the weight of their greater numbers around: Leah had six sons, whereas each of the other wives had only two. This Yosef could not abide; he saw no justification for this caste system among brothers, and he took his complaints to his father.

The sons of Leah jostled for position, attempting to establish themselves as the most important faction, and as the most important sons. Only one person stood in their way: Yosef, the favored son. Yosef's first "sin" was that he was the son of Yaakov's favored wife. Adding insult to injury, Yaakov made no secret of the fact that he considered Yosef different than all the others; notwithstanding our distinction between the various aspects expressed by the use of his different names, the other brothers simply felt rejected and unloved in comparison. And then, Yosef rubbed salt in their wounds: He sided with the sons of Yaakov's "concubines," protecting the weak and outnumbered brothers from the taunts and abuse meted out by the sons of Leah, who were desperate to prove their superiority. In Yosef's earliest display of leadership, he may have overlooked the fact that his largesse toward some of his brothers came at the expense of others: The sons of Leah may have been on a lower rung than the sons of Rachel, but they were adamant that the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah must occupy an even lower rung than they. Yosef, though, would not have it.

The atmosphere in Yaakov's home was bristling with internecine rivalry and fraught with constant jockeying for position, power, status – and the love of their father. When the brothers set out with the flocks, Yosef was not among them; his job was somehow connected, but somehow disconnected, from the others'. Yaakov then sends Yosef out to find and check up on the brothers and report back to him. And so, the brothers see Yosef in the distance, his bright coat of many colors looking more and more like a target painted on his back. The sons of Leah – presumably led by Shimon and Levi, who had recently "solved" a different family problem in the very same geographic area through bloodshed - articulate a plan: "Let's kill Yosef."

How did the other sons react? Their silence is deafening, but perhaps understandable. First and foremost, we cannot help but imagine their shock. Yosef had been their protector, their leader, their brother in every sense of the word. Could they have considered standing up to the sons of Leah? They had never been able to do so before; certainly now, when the brothers had a murderous gleam in their eyes, this was no time to develop a backbone. Could they have refused to cooperate? Perhaps they did a cynical, Machiavellian cost-benefit analysis of the situation: If they acquiesce, if they join forces with the sons of Leah, they might lose their brother Yosef – but they would gain six brothers in his place, and they would no longer need a protector. The days of being tormented, second-class members of the family would be over. In the "moment of truth," they say nothing, and, in their silence, they silently acquiesce to the murderous plan.

Then, an unexpected voice speaks up: Reuven, Leah's oldest son, the eldest of all the brothers, weighs in against murder, and instead advises his brothers to throw Yosef into a pit. A plan crystallizes in his mind: First, calm the rabble; then, save the would-be victim. Reuven knows a thing or two about impetuous behavior; he himself had recently been guilty of shooting from the hip and acting on impulse. In what may have been the opening salvo in the battle for position within the family, Reuven climbed into bed with Bilhah in order to make a statement regarding status: The concubines were no more than chattel; they were not "real" wives, as was his mother Leah. As Yaakov's property, the concubines would be inherited by his successor – in this case, he himself, as firstborn son. Reuven hoped to dispel any uncertainty regarding the proper order of things now that Rachel had passed, but his behavior, born of jealousy, fear of rejection and a lust for power, had been disastrous. Reuven had learned the hard way that a rash decision taken in the heat of the moment could wreak havoc not only on himself but also on the entire family dynamic. And so, he suggested that his brothers learn from his mistake: Rather than making a snap decision to murder, he advocates a slower, more deliberate course of action.[4]

Reuven may have had an additional reason for stepping in as he did: When Yosef told them about his dreams, the entire family figured into the narrative. Reuven was as much a part of it as all the other brothers – despite the fact that his recent behavior might easily have led to his banishment. When Yosef recounted the sheaves and the stars prostrating themselves before him, Reuven heard a personal message of inclusion that was far from obvious. Yosef related to all of the brothers in the same way – despite the heinous crime Reuven had recently committed, despite the fact that Shimon and Levi, Reuven's own brothers, no longer deferred to his authority as firstborn. When all the brothers heard Yosef's dreams, they came away with a very different message than did Reuven: They heard Yosef laying claim to leadership, but Reuven heard, before anything else, a personal message of redemption. Despite the sins they had committed – Reuven, Shimon and Levi were still, in Yosef's worldview, part of the family.[5] Perhaps saving Yosef was Reuven's way of expressing gratitude for Yosef's inclusive approach. On the other hand, Reuven was desperate to regain his footing, and to work

his way back into his father's good graces; perhaps Reuven hoped that saving Yosef would be his way back into their father's heart.

Unfortunately for them both, before Reuven could implement his plan, Yosef was snatched from the pit and sold off to Egypt; the brothers all assumed that he would never be seen or heard from again. The family that returns home to their father is broken, and as we recreate this scene in the weekly Torah reading each year, we wonder - year after year, generation after generation: When will our family finally become whole?

For a more in-depth analysis see: <http://arikahn.blogspot.co.il/2015/11/audio-and-essays-parashat-vayeshev.html>

[1] Unlike Avraham and Sarah, whose earlier names were never used again after God bestowed their new names upon them, Yisrael and Yaakov are both used at various junctures for the rest of his life. For this and other reasons, it is understood that each name reflects a distinct and co-existent aspect of his identity.

[2] Bereishit 37:3

[3] Bereishit 37:2

[4] See comments of Seforno Bereishit 37:21

[5] See Bereishit Rabba 84:15, and comments of Alshech Bereishit 37:21

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

reply-to: ryfrand@torah.org,

to: ravfrand@torah.org

subject: Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Vayeshev

File Away This Thought For Next Succos

The parsha of Yehuda and Tamar is one of the more troubling incidents in the Torah. Yehudah had a son, Er, who married Tamar and died. Then – following an ancient tradition of "Levirate Marriage" (as the Ramban explains) – Yehuda gave Tamar Er's brother, Onan, in marriage. Onan also died, just as his brother Er did. At this point, Yehudah was hesitant to give his third son, Shelah, to Tamar and advised her to live in her father's house "until Shelah grew up".

The Torah says that some years later, Tamar became impatient for Yehudah to keep his implied promise to give her Shelah as a husband: "So she removed her widow's garb from upon her, covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself; and she sat at a crossroads which is on the road toward Timnah, for she saw that Shelah had grown, and she had not been given to him as a wife." [Bereshit 38:14]

As the narrative continues, Yehudah did not recognize her and thought she was a zonah [harlot]. He had a relationship with her by which she became pregnant, and we know the rest of the story. Rashi points out that Tamar did something here that was totally out of character. She disguised herself as a zonah and seduced Yehudah to have relations with her. How could this righteous woman do such a thing? Rashi explains that she was so passionate about becoming the mother of Yehudah's family's offspring that she abandoned all natural modesty and deceptively seduced Yehudah. She deceitfully made herself available to him "for the Sake of Heaven" (I'Shem Shamayim) – because she wanted to have children tracing themselves back to his lineage.

In Tamar's mind, Yehudah had rejected her. He did not intend to give her Shelah, so therefore she would never be the mother of his children or grandchildren. Because of her passion to become that matriarch, she took matters into her own hands and "hifkeerah atzmah eitzel Yehudah" [she made herself "ownerless" to Yehudah].

The commentary Bnei Yissaschar offers a beautiful insight (which is primarily related to the holiday of Succos). In perhaps the most famous of all the Hoshanos that we recite on Succos – Om Ani Chomah – the alphabetically arranged paragraph begins as follows: Om Ani Chomah [Nation that declares 'I am a wall!']; Barah kaChamah [Brilliant as the sun]; Golah v'Surah [yet exiled and displaced]; Damsah l'Tamar [likened to Tamar (literally "to a palm tree")]. . .

The Bnei Yissaschar notes: The Jewish people proclaim, "The Almighty is throwing us out of His House. We are in exile. We do not have a Bais

HaMikdash. Apparently, He does not want us. However, we are like Tamar. In spite of the fact that she felt shunned by the House of Yehudah, since she so strongly desired to have children from him, she made herself "ownerless" towards him. This is what we do. We have been kicked out of His House, but we still have a passion and a longing for Him such that we are willing to become (fifth phrase of the alphabetic listing) HaHarugah Alecha [murdered for Your sake].

Write down this vort and file it away so that you will be able to say it in your Succah next Succos.

A Friend In Whom You Can Confide Your Embarrassing Deed Is A Friend Indeed

The Torah says that Yehudah had a relationship with Tamar, thinking that she was a zonah: "So he turned to her to the road, and said, 'Prepare please, let me come to you', for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, 'What will you give me if you come to me?'" [Bereshis 38:16] She was in fact, playing the role of the zonah and asked Yehudah what he would pay her for her services. Yehudah promised to send her a young goat from his flock. But Tamar told him that she wanted a deposit to back up his promise: She specifically asked for his signet, his wrap, and the staff that was in his hand. Yehudah gave them to her, had relations with her, and she conceived by him.

Later, Yehudah sends a young goat with his friend, Chirah the Adullamite, to deliver to the zonah as promised and to retrieve the personal items, which he deposited with her. Lo and behold, Chirah cannot find her. He inquires of the people and is told that there was no zonah in town.

Of course none of us would ever be caught in such a situation. But let us imagine that one would have found himself in such an indelicate situation as Yehudah was facing. Isn't this something a person would take care of by himself, rather than going to a trusted friend and asking him to find the zonah he hired, pay her off, and retrieve his pledge? A person does not ask for such a favor even from a trusted friend! How did Yehudah do this? The answer is that the Torah is revealing something that is so true. The Torah says "Yehudah sent the young goat through his friend the Adullamite..." [Bereshis 38:20] This person was ray-ay-hu – his friend. The definition of a friend is someone who you can tell, "I had an illicit relationship with a zonah, I have to pay her off. Do me a favor and take the money to her." This is the definition of a friend.

The Rambam, in his Mishna Commentary to Tractate Avos, on the Mishna that advises, "Acquire a friend," writes as follows: A person should have a friend that he can fully trust and not hide anything from. He should not have to guard himself in the friend's presence in either speech or action. He should be able to tell the friend all his personal matters – the good and the unseemly – without fearing that he will think less of him or tell others about them.

This is the definition of friendship – "You are so close to me and I trust you so much that I can even open up to you and tell you the worst things about myself without feeling self-conscious and without fearing that I will lose you as my friend."

Here is something else to take note of the next time you are called upon to speak at a Sheva Brochos:

The fifth bracha of the Sheva Brochos, recited at a meal during the week of a wedding begins: Sameach t'Samach Re'yim ha'Ahuvim, k'Samechacha yetzircha b'Gan Eden m'Kedem [Gladden the beloved companions as You gladdened Your creature in the Garden of Eden from aforeside.] Have you ever wondered why it is we refer to the Groom and the Bride as "Re'yim ha'Ahuvim" [beloved companions]? The bracha is directed at the Chosson and Kallah. We pray that their relationship should be the type of relationship that is "Re'yim ha'Ahuvim". (The Chosson and Kallah should not try this during Sheva Brochos. First, they need to build the relationship. However...) If a person builds a relationship with his wife and he has a successful marriage, he should be able to come home some day and tell his wife "I did the stupidest thing... I did something so stupid, so bad, and so

ugly today..." And his wife will accept him because she knows that this "stupid act" is only part of a much bigger picture. This is a good friend. This is a ray-ay-hu.

Such was Yehudah's friend, Chirah -- ray-ay-hu ha'Adulami. Yehudah was literally one of the premier sons of Yakov Avinu, if not the premier son. He has a relationship with a zonah and he tells Chirah "take the money to her". How does he do that? It is because he was a good friend and with a good friend one can do that. If a person is lucky in life, his spouse may be that friend. If he is even luckier, maybe he also has somebody else who can fill that role. This is what the Mishna says in Avos: Acquire for yourself a friend. Try to get a friend who will stick with you through thick and thin. Whatever may occur, he will stand by you. We hope that every Chassan-Kallah will merit having the mutual relationship of Ray'yim Ahuvim.

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

RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org

subject: TorahWeb

The TorahWeb Foundation Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg What Has Real Value?

At the beginning of Parshas Vayeishev, Yosef has two dreams. In the first one, Yosef and his brothers are making bundles in the field when suddenly the bundles of the brothers surround Yosef's bundle and bow down to it. In the second dream, the sun, the moon and the stars all bow down to Yosef. The Torah tells us that the brothers responded to these two dreams in two very different ways. After hearing the first dream, they hated Yosef even more than before - "Vayosifu od s'no oso." But after the second dream, it says, "Va'yekan'u vo echav" - the brothers felt jealous of him. Why the difference? Why did they feel jealousy only after the second dream?

The Beis Halevi explains that Yosef's two dreams focused on two different aspects of Yosef's future domination over his brothers. The first dream was about financial success. In that dream, Yosef saw that he was going to become wealthy and his brothers would be dependent on him for their sustenance. That is why the dream is about bundles of grain which symbolize material prosperity, and the bundles of the brothers are bowing to Yosef's bundle, as if to say that the brothers will be dependent on Yosef, that they will need him financially.

But in the second dream, Yosef sees that he is going to surpass his brothers on a spiritual plane. The sun, the moon and the stars - all celestial bodies - symbolize the world of ruchniyus. Yosef was saying that he was going to be the spiritual leader, the carrier of the mesorah, for the entire family. That is why the brothers were jealous only after the second dream because material success does not elevate a person. It is not intrinsic to the person; rather it is external to him, and as such it is not something to be jealous of. In the first dream, the brothers were bowing only to Yosef's bundle, not to Yosef himself, because Yosef's wealth was external to him. That is why the brothers did not feel any jealousy toward Yosef. They felt only hatred. But in the second dream Yosef was talking about spirituality. He was saying that he would be greater than his brothers in his Torah learning, in tzidkus. These are qualities that affect the person himself; they transform him and make him special. That is why in the second dream, the sun, the moon and the stars were bowing to Yosef himself, because that dream was implying that Yosef was going to become a greater person, that he was destined to achieve a higher spiritual level than his brothers. And that is why the brothers were jealous of Yosef because special qualities in ruchniyus are intrinsic to a person. They raise him to a higher level and are something of real value.

This idea of the Beis Halevi should give us pause. It challenges us to reevaluate our perspective on life. What gets us excited - the latest iGadget on the market, a new luxury car, or a novel interpretation of the Ramban on the parsha? Whom do we admire - the rich and famous, the heroes of the gridiron, or the businessman who finds time to learn in the Beis Medrash at night after putting in a full day at the office and the individual who selflessly gives of himself to do chessed in the community?

Our accomplishments in ruchniyus transform us as human beings. They make us better people. When we see someone who davens with kavanah, someone who has exemplary middos, or someone who cherishes his involvement in Torah and mitzvos, we should feel jealous of him and want to emulate him. Kin'as sofrim tarbeh chochmah. Jealousy can sometimes be a positive character trait, but only when it gets us to run after things of real value.

Copyright © 2015 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/>

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites

The Jerusalem Post

By Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Failure is not an orphan - Parshat Vayeshev

12/03/2015

The infinite respect we have for our holy forefathers leads us to shy away from dealing with their sins and mistakes. But this is not the way of the Torah.

In this week's portion we read about a chain of tragic mistakes that were made by great people, founders of the Jewish nation, our forefather Jacob and his sons.

The infinite respect we have for our holy forefathers leads us to shy away from dealing with their sins and mistakes. But this is not the way of the Torah. With real intent, honesty and courage, the Torah tells us also about their mistakes so that we know that they were not superhuman heroes, but people capable of making mistakes. Their greatness lies in that they recognize the error of their ways and try to fix them.

Already at the beginning of the portion, we read about Jacob's preferential treatment of Joseph, the son of his beloved wife Rachel, whom he treated better than his other sons, the sons of Leah, the woman he married due to trickery. This favoritism was woven into a special item of clothing for Joseph – a coat of colored stripes – which displayed Joseph's superiority over his brothers. This discrimination leads to the deterioration of the already-charged relationships between Joseph and his siblings

The sages of the Talmud inferred the following incisive moral from this story: "A man should never single out one son among his other sons, for on account of the two selas' weight of silk, which Jacob gave Joseph in excess of his other sons, his brothers became jealous of him and the matter resulted in our forefathers' descent into Egypt." (Talmud Bavli, Tractate Shabbat, page 10) When we continue reading the portion, we encounter Joseph, the beloved son, degrading his brothers and speaking badly of them to their father Jacob. In the Midrash, our sages describe in great detail how Joseph tended to make up stories about his brothers and make them look bad in the eyes of their father.

As we continue reading, we reach the worst part of the story: the sale of Joseph into slavery by his brothers.

This act, a reaction to the blatant preferential treatment of Joseph over his brothers and to Joseph's arrogant behavior, is not even slightly justified anywhere in Jewish sources. On the contrary, the sale of Joseph is considered unequivocally and patently disgraceful.

What are we to learn from these stories? The Egyptian exile is one of the topics most discussed in Jewish philosophy and legend. The best of thinkers pondered the following issues: Why was it decreed that Am Yisrael (the

People of Israel) must first suffer exile before becoming a nation? What are we to learn from the fact that our national narrative begins with exile and slavery in a foreign land? One of the great biblical commentators from approximately half a century ago was Don Isaac Abravanel (The Abarbanel, commentator, statesman, and economist, served as Portugal's and Spain's finance minister before being expelled with all other Jews in 1492, and then serving as finance minister in Naples, Italy.) When he debated the questions dealing with the Egyptian exile, he wrote an amazingly simple answer. There is no point, the Abarbanel claimed, in asking why Am Yisrael was enslaved in Egypt when the background leading to it is clear and known. If Jacob had not favored Joseph; if Joseph had not been arrogant with his brothers; if the brothers had not sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt – the whole sad story of the exile in Egypt would have been prevented.

The Abarbanel's message in one word is: responsibility.

Often, we search for reasons for different events.

We sometimes even create complicated theories in order to find an explanation for things that occur. But the best thing to do is to search and ask ourselves if we acted as we should have. Are we free of guilt? Have we not misunderstood reality or made a mistaken determination? And then the next step: How can we correct this? What must we improve so that next time the results will be better? The fact that man is a creature with a moral consciousness brings us to live life with a sense of purpose.

We are here to act, initiate, advance and repair.

The deep sense of satisfaction we feel after doing something beneficial and good is proof that this is what we were meant to do. Awareness of responsibility and its accompanying significance is a necessary condition for reaching our greatest purpose in life as thinking and feeling people, as moral human beings.

Shabbat shalom.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and holy sites.

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com>

to: Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com>

subject: [Rav Kook List]

mailing list: rav-kook-list.googlegroups.com

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Vayeshev: The Conflict between Joseph and Judah

Having overcome the difficult challenges posed by Esau and Laban, Jacob looked forward to more peaceful times. But intense resentment among his sons shattered these wishful hopes, and led to the sale of his favorite son, Joseph, as a slave in Egypt.

How could the brothers sell Joseph, and even consider killing him? Is it possible that they were motivated by petty jealousy over a colorful coat? Also, is there a connection between the story of Joseph and the holiday that falls out this time of the year — Chanukah?

Integration versus Separation

The root of the disagreement among the brothers was in fact ideological.

There were two schools of thought in Jacob's family, one championed by Joseph, the other by Judah. Joseph stressed the mission of the Jewish people as "a light unto the nations." In order to fulfill this goal, Joseph felt that we must interact with the nations of the world and expose them to the monotheistic teachings of Judaism.

Judah, on the other hand, was concerned about the negative influences when intermingling with pagan cultures. He emphasized the separate sanctity of the Jewish people, "a nation that dwells alone" (Num. 23:9). Judah feared that Joseph's philosophy of openness and integration would endanger the future of the Jewish people. But how to safely neutralize this threat?

Simon and Levy, who had already fought against assimilation when they decimated the city of Shechem for kidnapping Dina, planned to simply kill Joseph. Judah objected, "What profit is there if we kill our brother?" (Gen. 37:26). The true danger is not Joseph, but his school of thought. Let us put

his theories to the test. We will sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites, and let him assimilate among the nations. Then all will see where his ideas lead to.

The Tabernacle and the Temple

These conflicting views are reflected by the contrast between the Mishkan (Tabernacle) in Shiloh and the Temple in Jerusalem. In Shiloh, offerings could be eaten outside the walls, as long as the city of Shiloh was in sight. Temple offerings, on the other hand, could only be eaten within the Temple walls. Why this difference?

For Joseph, the primary mission was to publicly demonstrate the sanctity of Israel and educate the nations. Thus, the holiness of the Shiloh Tabernacle — in Joseph's portion — spread beyond its walls. The Temple in Jerusalem, however, was located in the land of Judah and followed his view. It is necessary to build walls and restrict the dissemination of Torah, in order to protect the sanctity of the Jewish people.

The Hellenists versus the Hasmonean Priests

The holiday of Chanukah commemorates a similar struggle, the conflict between those seeking integration with the rest of the world, and those striving to preserve the distinct sanctity of the Jewish people. The Hellenistic Jews demanded adoption of Greek customs, the prevalent culture of the day. They claimed to be following Joseph's path of openness. Their slogan was, "Write on the ox horn that you have no share in the God of Israel" (Vayikra Rabbah 13:5). Why an ox horn? This is an allusion to Joseph, who was compared to a powerful ox (Deut. 33:17).

The Hellenists called for the people to continue in Joseph's path of openness and assimilation.

However, they ignored Joseph's underlying goal, to educate the nations. The Hellenists "broke down the walls of my towers." They breached the walls protecting Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, and allowed the idolatrous nations to defile the holy Temple.

The Hasmonean priests, kohanim from the tribe of Levy, naturally followed the path of Judah and Levy, that of separation. As kohanim, they benefited from the special sanctity of priesthood separating them from the rest of the Jewish people. The ultimate victory for the Hasmoneans was the discovery of a ritually clean jar of oil, with the seal of the High Priest intact. This jar of pure oil was a sign that the inner sanctity of Israel remained undefiled by pagan contact.

In the future, the nations will recognize the necessity for the walls of the House of Jacob that separate the Jewish people from the other nations. The nations will accept upon themselves the mitzvot of the Torah, while the entire Jewish people will be elevated to the level of kohanim. Then the Jewish people will relate to the nations of the world in a fashion analogous to the current connection of kohanim to the rest of the Jewish people.

(Gold from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Shemuot HaRe'iyah 10, 5630 (1929))

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com

from: Yeshiva.org.il <subscribe@yeshiva.org.il>

reply-to: subscribe@yeshiva.org.il

Of Donuts

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: **Challah on donuts**

"Is there a requirement to separate *challah* from donuts?"

Question #2: **Frum cousin**

"I have noticed that a cousin of mine eats donuts only as part of a meal. Is there a *halachic* basis for his practice?"

Question #3: **Holy bagels**

"May I use bagels for *lechem mishneh* on *Shabbos*?"

Question #4: **Hamotzi while traveling**

"I will be spending *Shabbos* in a place where there is no kosher prepared food. I will have access to a grill, but no other cooking facilities. If I bake small loaves of bread in a pan on top of the grill, will that qualify as *hamotzi* for the *seudos* of *Shabbos*?"

Question #5: **Waffling along**

"A friend of mine just purchased a factory that manufactures waffles. Does he need to have *challah* taken? The factory is located in a rural area, where there is no Jewish population."

Introduction:

There is a widespread practice of preparing and serving donuts on Chanukah, notwithstanding that most of us would be better off if we consumed only the holes. (Of course, the Israeli version is hole-

less, which precludes this solution. I presume that the holiness of the Land is used to compensate.) The oil in the donuts is to remind us of the miracle that occurred when one day's supply of oil for the menorah in the *Beis Hamikdash* burnt for eight days. (Perhaps we are hoping for a reverse of this miracle — that the weight gain from consuming donuts for eight days should disappear in one day. After all, *Beis Shammai* is of the opinion that we reduce the number of lights kindled through Chanukah.)

To understand the issues raised by our opening questions, we must delve into the issue of the definition of bread, particularly for the three different *mitzvos* mentioned: the separating of *challah*, the *brochah* of *hamotzi*, and the fulfillment of *lechem mishneh*, having two loaves at the *Shabbos* repasts. (Please note: This entire article will use the word *challah* to refer to the Torah's mitzvah of setting aside a sample of dough to be given to a *kohen*, or to be burnt if the dough is *tamei*. I am not referring to the unique bread that is customarily served at *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* meals, which has come to be called *challah*, although this is, technically, a misnomer.)

Separating *challah*

We will begin our discussion with the laws of *challah* taking, since this will make it easier to present the *halachic* literature on the other topics.

The Torah describes the mitzvah of *challah* in the following passage:

*When you enter the land to which I am bringing you, it will be that, when you eat from the bread of the land, you shall separate a terumah offering for G-d. The first dough of your kneading troughs shall be separated as *challah*, like the terumah of your grain shall you separate it (Bamidbar 15:18-20).*

The Torah requires *challah* to be taken from your kneading troughs, from which we derive that there is no requirement to separate *challah*, unless there is as much dough as the amount of manna eaten daily by each member of the Jewish people in the desert. *Chazal* explain that this amount, called *ke'shiur isas midbar*, was equal to the volume of 43.2 eggs. In contemporary measure, we usually assume that this is approximately three to five pounds of flour. (For our purposes, it will suffice to use these round figures. I encourage each reader to ask his own *rav* or *posek* for exact quantities.)

The requirement to separate *challah* depends on the ownership of the dough at the time it is mixed, not on who mixes it. In other words, if a Jew owns a bakery, there is a requirement to separate *challah*, even if his workers are not Jewish. Similarly, if a gentile does the kneading in a Jewish-owned household, nursing home or school, one must separate *challah*. And, conversely, there is no requirement to separate *challah* at a bakery owned by non-Jews even if the employees are Jewish. When there is a definite requirement to separate *challah*, one recites a *brochah* prior to fulfilling the mitzvah. As with all blessings on *mitzvos*, the *brochah* begins *Baruch atoh Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha'olam asher kideshanu bemitzvosav vetcivanu*. There are different opinions and customs as to the exact text used in concluding this *brochah*. Among the versions I have seen: Some conclude *lehafrish terumah*, others *lehafrish challah*, and still others *lehafrish challah min ha'isa*.

Getting battered

Is there a requirement to separate *challah* when one is mixing a batter, as opposed to dough? The answer to this question is that it depends. When the finished product is baked in an oven, there is a requirement to separate *challah*, whether or not it was originally dough or a batter (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 329:2). Similarly, dough or a batter baked in a frying pan or a "wonder pot" (a pot meant for baking cakes on top of the stove) is also *chayov* in *challah* (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 329:2). (Again -- bear in mind that there is a requirement to separate *challah* only when there are at least three pounds of flour in the batter, a circumstance that is unusual when baking on a household stovetop.)

Waffles, which are baked from batter poured into molds, are *chayov* in *challah* (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 329:5). However, pancakes, which are made by pouring dough directly onto a stovetop or a frying pan, are exempt from *challah* (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 329:5), even should one make a large quantity. Why are waffles included in the requirement to take *challah*, but not pancakes? After all, both are made from loose batters and then cooked.

The *rishonim* explain that when processing a thin batter without an oven, the finished product requires *challah* only when it has a bread-like appearance, what the Gemara calls *turisa denahama*, which it receives when baked in a mold (*Tosafos, Brochos* 37b s.v. *Lechem*). When a batter is neither baked in an oven nor poured into a mold prior to being baked, it does not form a *turisa denahama*. Therefore, pancakes, which are made from a batter, are not baked in an oven and are not poured into a mold, never form a *turisa denahama*, which is a requirement for them to become *chayov* in *challah*.

The waffle factory

At this point, we can address one of the questions that was asked above: "A friend of mine just purchased a factory that manufactures waffles. Does he need to have *challah* taken? The factory is located in a rural area where there is no Jewish population."

The *Shulchan Aruch* rules that one is required to separate *challah* from waffles. Since a factory uses more than five pounds of flour in each batch of waffle mix, one should separate *challah* with a *brochah*, even though there are no Jews involved in the production. Ideally, arrangements should be made to have a *frum* person present during production to separate *challah*. Alternatively, there are methods whereby *challah* can be separated by appointing a *frum* person who is elsewhere as an agent for separating *challah*, but the logistics that this requires are beyond the scope of this article.

Sunny dough

All opinions agree that dough baked in the sun is not obligated in *challah* (*Pesachim* 37a). Also, a batter prepared in a frying pan that has some water in the bottom of the pan is *patur* from *challah* (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 329:2), since this is considered to be cooked batter rather than baked bread.

Holy donuts

At this point, we can begin to explain whether donuts require the separation of *challah*. Donuts are made from dough with a reasonably thick consistency that is then deep-fried, or cooked in oil (these are two ways of saying the same thing). Cooking is not usually considered a process that creates

bread. The question is whether the requirement to take *challah* exists already because it is mixed into dough, or only if one intends to bake the dough.

According to one approach in the *rishonim*, one is obligated to separate *challah* from any dough that meets the size (43.2 eggs) and ownership (Jewish) requirements mentioned above, regardless of whether one intends to bake, cook or fry the dough afterwards (*Rabbeinu Tam*, as understood by *Tosafos*, *Brochos* 37b s.v. *Lechem* and *Pesachim* 37b s.v. *Dekulei alma*). Since the Torah requires separating *challah* from *dough*, one can argue that one is required to separate *challah* even from dough that one does not intend to bake into bread, but to cook in water as pasta or *kreplach*, or in oil as donuts. According to this approach, a Jewish-owned pasta factory is required to separate *challah* for the macaroni, spaghetti and noodles that it produces. (Note that some authorities who accept *Rabbeinu Tam*'s basic approach that any dough is obligated in *challah* exempt dough manufactured for pasta because of other reasons that are beyond the scope of our topic [see *Tosafos*, *Brochos* 37b, s.v. *Lechem*, quoting *Rabbeinu Yechiel*].)

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah* 329:3) concludes that dough that one intends to cook or fry is exempt from the requirement to take *challah*, ruling against *Rabbeinu Tam*. However, the *Shach* contends that one should separate *challah* without a *brochah*. Again, this would be required only if someone prepared a dough containing at least three pounds of flour. The *Shach* would hold this way also regarding other products that involve cooked or fried dough, such as *kreplach*. Thus, a caterer, restaurant or hotel cooking a large quantity of *kreplach* for a communal Purim *seudah* should have *challah* taken from the dough, in order to take into consideration the *Shach*'s position.

So the simple answer to the question, "Is there a requirement to separate *challah* from donuts?" is that there is such a requirement if more than three pounds of flour are being used. However, no *brochah* should be recited when separating *challah*, even when using a large amount of flour, since most authorities exempt dough that one intends to cook or fry from the requirement of taking *challah*.

Hamotzi

Having established some of the rules germane to the requirement to separate *challah*, do the same rules apply when determining what items require *hamotzi* before eating them? This is itself a subject that is disputed. Some authorities contend that the rules for *brochos* are identical to those applied to separate *challah*, whereas others (*Tosafos*, *Pesachim* and *Brochos* 37b s.v. *Lechem*) rule that one does not recite *hamotzi* before eating bread unless another requirement is met – that the product has a bread-like appearance (*turisa denahama*). The *halachic* basis for drawing a distinction between the mitzvah of *challah* and the *brochah* requirements is that the requirement to separate *challah* is established at the time the dough is mixed, whereas the *halachic* determination of which *brochah* to recite is created when its preparation is complete (*Rabbeinu Yonah*, *Brochos*; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 168:13).

Most authorities conclude that the correct *brochah* prior to eating a dough product that is cooked or fried is *mezonos*. According to this opinion, the correct *brochah* to recite before eating donuts or cooked *kreplach* is *mezonos*. (Sometimes *kreplach* are baked, which might change the *halachah*.) However, there is a second opinion that rules that the correct *brochah* to recite on these items is *hamotzi*, because they are all made from dough. According to this latter opinion, one is required to wash *netilas yadayim* prior to eating these items and to recite the full *birchas hamazon* (*bensching*) afterwards.

How do we rule?

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayim* 168:13) and the *Rema* (ibid.) both follow the majority opinion that the correct *brochah* prior to eating a dough product that is cooked or fried is *mezonos*.

However, the *Shulchan Aruch* also cites the minority opinion that one should recite *hamotzi* prior to eating a cooked dough product. He concludes that, to avoid any question, someone who is a *yarei shamayim* should eat a cooked dough product only after making *hamotzi* and eating a different item that is definitely bread. This way the G-d fearing person avoids all *halachic* issues. (It should be noted that some authorities question this solution, since *pas habaah bekisnin*, a dough-based snack food, requires a *brochah* even when consumed in the middle of a meal. Those eager to pursue this question are referred to the *Magen Avraham* [168:35] and the *Machatzis Hashekel* [ad loc.])

We are now equipped with enough information to answer another of the questions asked above: "I have noticed that a cousin of mine eats donuts only as part of a meal. Is there a *halachic* basis for his practice?"

Indeed, there is. According to the *Shulchan Aruch*'s recommendation that a *yarei shamayim* eat cooked dough foods only after reciting *hamotzi* on a different food that is definitely bread, your cousin is following the approach advised by the *Shulchan Aruch* to cover all the bases. As explained above, although the cousin's practice is not *halachically required*, it is the recommended approach.

Holy bagels

At this point, let us return to another of our original questions:

"May I use bagels for *lechem mishneh* on *Shabbos*?"

To answer this question, let us spend a moment researching how bagels are made. The old-fashioned method of making bagels was by shaping dough into the unique bagel with-a-hole circle, boiling them very briefly and then baking the boiled dough. Modern bagel factories do not boil the dough, but instead steam the shaped bagels prior to baking them, which produces the same texture and taste one expects when eating a bagel, creates a more consistent product and lends itself more easily to a mass production process. In either way of producing bagels, the *halachah* is that their proper *brochah* is *hamotzi* because they are basically baked products (*Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 168:14). Since *halachah* treats them as regular bread, they may be used for *lechem mishneh* on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. So, although bagels and donuts often share a common shape, they do not, in this case, share a common *halachic* destiny.

Hamotzi while traveling -- Holy breads

At this point, let us examine one of the other of our original questions: "I will be spending *Shabbos* in a place where there is no kosher prepared food. I will have access to a grill, but no other cooking facilities. If I bake small loaves of bread in a pan on top of the grill, will that qualify as *hamotzi* for the *seudos* of *Shabbos*?"

The question here is whether bread "baked" on top of a grill qualifies as bread for *hamotzi* and *lechem mishneh*.

We can prove what the *halachah* is in this case from a passage of Talmud. The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 37a) quotes a dispute between Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakeish whether bread baked in a pan or pot is *chayov* in *challah* or not. According to Rabbi Yochanan, all such bread is *chayov* in *challah*, whereas according to Reish Lakeish, it is *chayov* in *challah* only if the pan is preheated and then the dough is placed inside; however, if the dough is placed into a cold pan which is then heated, there is no *chiyuv* *challah*.

Although *Rabbeinu Chananel* rules according to Reish Lakeish in this instance, most *rishonim* rule according to Rabbi Yochanan, and this is the conclusion of the *Shulchan Aruch*. The *halachic* conclusion is also that this bread requires the *brochah* of *hamotzi* (*Rema Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 168:14). Furthermore, most authorities understand that the dispute between Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakeish is when one is attempting to make bread out of a *batter* by baking it in a pan on top of the fire, but that all opinions agree that dough baked on top of the fire is definitely treated as bread. Therefore, we can answer this question positively. One may produce bread this way and use it for the *Shabbos* meals, including *lechem mishneh*.

Conclusion

We have discovered that there are a variety of regulations that define whether something is *chayov* in *challah*, requires *hamotzi* and may be used for *lechem mishneh*. When baked in an oven, it is treated as bread for all these *mitzvos*. This is true when it is made from dough or a batter and then goes through a baking process, even if not in an oven.

On the other hand, a batter that is subsequently cooked or fried is not considered bread for any of these purposes.

In between, we have our donuts, which, although made from dough, are cooked. One should take *challah* from them without a *brochah*, assuming that there is sufficient quantity to create a *chiyuv*. For *brochos* purposes, we usually consider them *mezonos*, although there is a basis to be more stringent and to eat them always within a meal, to avoid getting involved in a *halachic* dispute. Since we have spent most of our article discussing the mitzvah of *challah*, we should note the following *Medrash* that underscores its vast spiritual significance: "In the merit of the following three *mitzvos*, the world was created – in the merit of *challah*, in the merit of *mezonos*, and in the merit of *bikkurim*" (*Breishis Rabba* 1:4). May we all be blessed with a happy and healthy Chanukah!!