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ON **EIKEV** - 5771

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Covenant and Conversation - Ekev 5767
Geography and Destiny

The Torah is a work of wondrous depth and subtlety, so much so that we can easily miss some of its most profound intimations. There is a fine example in this week's sedra. It concerns the character of the land of Israel. Ultimately, however, it is a haunting glimpse into the nature of Jewish destiny itself, then and now.

If we were to ask ourselves what picture we have of the promised land, from the beginning of the exodus until now, the answer is simple. Israel is the land "flowing with milk and honey." (Incidentally, the mid-20th century scholar R. Reuven Margoliot, once pointed out that when the land of Israel is praised in the Torah, it is always in terms of its vegetation, never in terms of its animal products. Why then is there an

apparent exception in the case of the most famous phrase of all, the land "flowing with milk and honey"? The honey referred to, he notes, is not from bees but from the date palm. On that, many commentators concur. Margoliot's radical suggestion relates to "milk". We know from many texts that Israel was famed for its grapes and wine. But the biblical yayin, "wine", standardly refers to red wine. Chalav – the word we translate as "milk" – says Margoliot, means white wine, and is called chalav because of its milky appearance).

Even the spies, despite their gloomy report, cannot deny its fruitfulness: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit." Early in this week's sedra Moses delivers a magnificent poem to this effect: "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land -- a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey, a land where bread will not be scarce, and you will lack nothing." Thus far the promised land conjured up in our imagination is indeed a land of promise, another Eden, an earthly paradise. However, as the lawyers say: always read the small print.

It comes several chapters later and is fateful in its implications. For the first time in forty years, Moses uses a quite different tone when speaking about the land of Israel:

The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your G-d cares for; the eyes of the Lord your G-d are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.

The point is made briefly, almost in passing, yet it makes all the difference. It is indeed a fine land, but . . . It is not like other fine lands. Civilisation began when human beings first turned from hunting and gathering to agriculture and the domestication of animals. This led to the first concentrations of population, the birth of cities, then city states, then nations and empires. The Torah sketches this process in broad outlines. It began in Mesopotamia, in the fertile plain between the Tigris and Euphrates, and then in Egypt, in the Nile delta. These were ideal places for the development of agriculture because water was supplied by rivers, and irrigation was a simple matter of making ditches and channels. Water, on which crops depended, was reliable (the one danger in the low-lying lands of Mesopotamia was of floods – hence the presence of flood narratives, not only in the Torah but in all literatures of that place and time).

The land of Israel, says Moses, is not like that. It is not a fertile plain. It is a land of hills and valleys. It depends on rain – and rain in the Middle East, then and now, is unpredictable. Suddenly, in this discordant note, we recall a whole series of earlier episodes in the book of Bereishith in which we read the words, "and there was a famine in the land." This led, first Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob and his children, into a series of journeys and exiles (the Book of Ruth begins with another famine, which forces Elimelech and his family to the land of Moab). Life in Israel will never be as stable, permanent and secure as it is elsewhere. Those who live there are vulnerable, if to nothing else, then to periodic drought. They will exist in a permanent state of insecurity, never knowing in advance whether the seeds they plant will grow or not. Israel is the land of promise, but it will always depend on He-who-promises.

Is Geography destiny? Judah Halevi thought so. He writes, in *The Kuzari*:

We do not find in the Bible, "If you keep this law, I will bring you after death into beautiful gardens and great pleasures." On the contrary, it is said, "You shall be my chosen people, and I will be a God unto you, who will guide you . . . You shall remain in the country which forms a

stepping-stone to this degree, i.e. the Holy Land. Its fertility or barrenness, its happiness or misfortune, depend upon the divine influence which your conduct will merit, whilst the rest of the world will continue its natural course. For if the divine presence is among you, you will perceive by the fertility of your country, by the regularity with which your rainfalls appear in their due seasons, by your victories over your enemies in spite of your inferior numbers, that your affairs are not managed by simple laws of nature, but by the divine will. You will also see that drought, death, and wild beasts pursue you as a result of disobedience, although the whole world lives in peace. This shows you that your concerns are arranged by a higher power than mere nature.” [Kuzari I: 109]

Unpacking this in non-mystical terms, we can say that the character of a country – its topography and climate – affects the kind of society people build, and hence the culture and ethos that emerge. In Mesopotamia and Egypt, the most powerful reality was the regularity of nature, the succession of the seasons which seemed to mirror the slow revolution of the stars. The cultures to which both places gave rise was cosmological and their sense of time cyclical. The universe seemed to be ruled by the heavenly bodies whose hierarchy and order was replicated in the hierarchy and order of life on earth. This is the mindset of the world of myth.

Israel, by contrast, was a land without regularities. There was no guarantee that next year would be like this, or this year like last; no certainty that the rain would fall and the earth yield its crops or the trees their fruit. Thus in Israel a new sense of time was born – the time we call historical. Those who lived, or live, in Israel exist in a state of radical contingency. They can never take the future for granted. They depend on something other than nature (even Ben-Gurion knew this. He once said: “In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles”). To put it at its simplest: in Egypt, where the source of life was the Nile, you looked down. In Israel, where the source of life is rain, you had no choice but to look up.

This is a theme we have met before. In the course of the first war the Israelites had to fight for themselves, against Amalek, we read:

As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites prevailed, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites prevailed.

On this, the Mishnah comments:

Did the hands of Moses make or break [the course of the] war? Rather, the text implies that whenever the Israelites looked up and dedicated their hearts to their father in heaven, they prevailed, but otherwise they fell.

Israel – the land “that drinks rain from heaven” – is a place whose inhabitants would be ever mindful of their dependence on the fact that “the eyes of the Lord your G-d are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end”. It is the place where you have to look up to survive.

And so it was. Israel’s existence as a nation in its land was never secure. Its greatest moment, under King Solomon, did not last. Immediately after his death, the people split into two kingdoms, neither of which could, or did, sustain their independence for long.

Israel is by its very nature a vulnerable place, a strategic location at the meeting point of three continents, always at the mercy of surrounding empires but never the basis of an empire itself. Thus were the terms of the covenant – and the prophetic interpretation of history – set from the outset. Israel would have to depend on exceptional strength on the part of its inhabitants. It was never big enough to sustain a large population. The prophets knew that the very existence of Israel as a sovereign nation was predicated on a people lifted to greatness by a sense of mission and high ideals.

Every individual would count. Therefore every individual had to feel part of the whole, respected and given the means of a dignified life. Injustice, gross inequality, or a failure of concern for the weak and

marginal, would endanger society at its very roots. There was no margin for error or discontent. Without indomitable courage based on the knowledge that G-d was with them, they would fall prey to larger powers. When the prophet Zechariah said, “Not by strength nor by might but by My spirit, says the Lord” he was formulating an axiom of Jewish history. There neither was nor would be a time when Israel could rely on numbers, or vast tracts of territory, or easily defensible borders. So it was then. So it is now.

We do not live in an age of prophets. Yet Israel exists today in the same circumstances as those which gave birth to the prophets. As I write these words, the state is 55 years old. But it is also more than three thousand years old. The terms of its existence have not changed. Israel always longed for security but rarely found it. Neither its climate nor its geography were made for an easy life. That is the nature of Jewish faith – not security but the courage to live with insecurity, knowing that life is a battle, but that if we do justice and practice compassion, if we honour great and small, the powerful and the powerless alike, if our eyes do not look down to the earth and its seductions but to heaven and its challenges, this small, vulnerable people is capable of great, even astonishing, achievements.

When Moses told the Israelites the full story about the land, he was telling them – whether or not they understood it at the time – that it was a place where, not just wheat and barley, but the human spirit also, grew. It was the land where people were lifted beyond themselves because, time and again, they would have to believe in something and someone beyond themselves. Not accidentally but essentially, by its climate, topography and location, Israel is the holy land, the place where, merely to survive, the human eye must turn to heaven and the human ear to heaven’s call.

<http://shmuz.com/> Parshas Eikev

Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier

Earning a Living: The Great Life Test

“Who feeds you manna in the wilderness, which your forefathers knew not, in order to afflict you and in order to test you to do good for you in the end?” – Devarim 8:16

For forty years living in the midbar, the Jewish people ate man. The Torah explains that one of the reasons that the man was given to the Klal Yisroel was in order to test them. The Siforno explains the test: “Will you do His will when He gives you your sustenance easily without pain?”

It seems that the Siforno is telling us that the fact that the Jewish nation didn’t have to work was one of the great trials that they faced.

This Siforno is very difficult to understand. We know that HASHEM metes out many life tests. But where have we seen that not having to struggle is a challenge? How could the fact that it was easy to make a living be a nisayon?

Moishe and the monopoly game This question can be answered by focusing on why HASHEM wants man to work? The ox was created to plow, the donkey to haul loads, the beaver to dam streams. But, man was created for a very different purpose. Man was not created to be a beast of burden. So, why does HASHEM want man to work for a living?

One of the reasons can be best understood with a moshol. Imagine that a man recognizes that his eight-year-old son has difficulty getting along with his peers. The little boy is constantly getting into fights, and in general seems to miss social cues. The school psychologist tells him that his son has social integration issues. He just doesn’t understand the rules of social conduct.

The father, takes it upon himself to help his little Moishe become a mensch. As part of the plan, he takes time off from work and invites Moishe and his friends to a play date. There they are on the floor playing Monopoly. At a certain point during the game, an ambulance passes,

siren blasting, and as all the boys look to the window, the father notices Moishe reach into "the bank" and take out a five hundred dollar bill. The father doesn't say anything. A few moments later, the door bell rings. Again, all the boys look up, and Moishe meanwhile reaches into the box and takes out two thousand dollars. When this happens again a few moments later, the father asks Moishe to join him in the kitchen.

"Moishe," says the father, "I couldn't help but notice that some of the money that belongs in the bank somehow ended up in your pocket. Could you explain this to me?"

"Sure," Moishe answers. "You see, last night I heard you and Mommy talking about how you need a lot of money. So here, I took this for you!"

While the sincerity of the little fellow might be touching, he is missing the point. The only reason the father was involved in this activity was to teach him how to be a mensch. The father doesn't need the money, and certainly isn't taking time off of his busy day to earn "Monopoly money." But Moishe in his naiveté missed the entire point of the exercise.

This is an apt moshol to man working. HASHEM doesn't need man to work to earn a living. HASHEM has lots and lots of money. HASHEM created the situation that man has to work to allow him to have to earn his daily bread. Now man is dependent. Now man is without, and now man can go through one of the greatest of life's tests: how will he go about this activity called earning a living? Will he be honest? Will he be ethical? When he has difficulty in earning a living, will he learn to trust in HASHEM, or will he make that ultimate mistake thinking it is the sweat of his brow and the strength of his hand that earns him his bread?

Man needs needs This seems to be the answer to the Siforno. The generation of the midbar was on a lofty plain. They had received the Torah from HASHEM and were living in a virtual yeshiva. While the mon took care of their daily needs, it was also as a great social experiment: would they attain the same closeness to HASHEM without having to earn a living? Would they still reach out to HASHEM if they didn't lack? Would they still come to recognize their dependence upon HASHEM if they didn't need to struggle to survive? The mon was a test to see if they could reach greatness without the normal life settings – without needs.

How is not having to work for a living considered a life test? This concept has great relevance in our times when we are seeing tests of faith all around us. And we see many fall. Many fall prey to materialism; many fall prey to the great race to acquire more; and even more fall to the understanding that it is my efforts that earn me my daily bread. One of the results of this fallacious thinking is the questionable ethics that we see being practiced.

The sad reality is that lying, cheating, and stealing amount not only a lack of morality; it's a waste of the great opportunity of life. HASHEM doesn't need our money. HASHEM hand-crafted situations that allow a person to grow — to become a mentch. If he engages in dishonesty in the marketplace, it is ultimately himself that he is robbing because the entire scenario was only created to allow him to become great.

When I stop to understand that HASHEM doesn't need me to work, but has put me in this very situation to allow me to grow, that changes the way that I deal with the entire concept of working for a living, and greatly impacts the methods I employ in doing so.

For more on this topic please listen to Shmuz #39 - I Need, Needs

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12:46 PM subject Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski - Are We Derelict in Teaching?

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski Are We Derelict in Teaching?

Moses said, "v'atoh Yisroel mah Hashem elokecha sho'el mei'imach, key im l'yirah es Hashem elokecha, lolech es bechol derachav u'l'ahava Oso v'la'avod es Hashem elokecha b'chol levavcha u'b'chol nafshecha - What does Hashem ask of you, only to be in awe of Hashem, to go in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve Hashem with all your heart and with all your soul" (Devarim 10:12). This verse establishes yiras Hashem (awe of Hashem) and ahavas Hashem (love of Hashem) as the fundamentals of Yiddishkeit.

After stating this, Rambam asks, "v'heach hi haderech l'ahavaso v'yiraso? B'sha'ah she'yisbonein ha'adam b'ma'avav u'beruav haniflam hagedolim v'yireh meihem chochmaso she'ein loh erech v'lo keitz, meyad hu oheiv... - How are yiras Hashem and ahavas Hashem to be achieved? When a person contemplates the wonders of Hashem's creations, one is immediately moved to love and awe of Hashem" (Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah 2:2). Rambam is apparently addressing the question, how can a person be commanded to love? One cannot generate an emotion at will.

The commentary (Peirush) on Rambam explains that Rambam is redefining ahava to mean not only love, as that of a parent to a child or between spouses, but ahava can also mean "adoration." Awareness of the marvels of creation leads to adoration of Hashem.

But when do we implement Rambam's dictum? When do we teach our children about the marvels of creation that will bring about the requisite yiras Hashem and ahavas Hashem, both of which are prerequisites to study and observance of Torah?

The reciting of Shema is a mitzvah d'Oraysa – Biblical commandment, and should be preceded by a beracha just as tefillin and tzitzis are. Yet, we do not recite a beracha, "Who has commanded us to recite the Shema." Rather the first berachais an appreciation of nature. "Mah gadlu ma'asecha Hashem, kulam b'chochmo asisa, mal'a ha'aretz kinyanecha - How great are your works, Hashem, You made them all with wisdom, the world is full of Your possessions." It is evident that the sages emphasized the appreciation of Hashem's marvelous creations as the introductory beracha to the Shema, which is the declaration of yiras Hashem and ahavas Hashem.

Dovid Hamelech says, "Hashomayim mesaprim k'vod Keil - The heavens declare the glory of Hashem," (Tehillim 19) and after several pesukim of testimony to the wonders of creation, abruptly switches to "Toras Hashem Temima - The Torah of Hashem is perfect." This leaves no doubt to the importance of appreciation of Hashem's creations as a precursor to Torah.

There are some youngsters who have difficulty grasping Talmud, and when they find themselves unable to understand the first shiur, they may despair of succeeding in understanding Talmud. Perhaps if the first shiur of the day was in appreciation of the wonders of Hashem's creation, their interest would be stimulated and they would be encouraged to learn.

There is a precedent to this. The Talmud says that before Rabbah began teaching Torah, he would tell the students something cheerful to put them in an upbeat mood, and only thereafter would he lecture on the intricacies of Torah (Shabbos 93a).

If yeshivos would follow Rabbah's practice, and make the first shiur of the day an exposition on the wonders of creation, they would be implementing Rambam's teaching on the fundamentals of yiras Hashem and ahavas Hashem and setting a mood in which all students could participate.

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from TorahWeb torahweb@torahweb.org to
weeklydt@torahweb2.org date Thu, Aug 18, 2011 at

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The Best Business Deal

"It was at the end of forty days and forty nights that Hashem gave me the two stone Tablets, the Tablets of the covenant." (9:11)

The Yalkut Shimoni relates that Rabbi Yochanan and Rav Chiya bar Abba were once walking from Teveriah to Tzippori. En route, Rabbi Yochanan pointed to a field on the side of the road and said, "That field was mine, but I sold it because I wanted to study Torah."

A while later they passed an olive grove, and Rabbi Yochanan said once again, "I owned that grove, but I sold it so that I would be able to study Torah."

When R' Yochanan repeated this statement yet again as they passed a vineyard, Rav Chiya bar Abba began to cry.

"Why are you crying?" asked R' Yochanan.

"I am crying because you left nothing for your old age," replied Rav Chiya bar Abba.

"You are bothered by the fact that I sold something created in six days, and bought something that took forty days to impart?" wondered R' Yochanan. "The world was created in only six days, but the Torah was given in forty days and forty nights."

The Midrash concludes that when R' Yochanan passed away, the people of his generation eulogized him with the pasuk, "Were any man to offer all the treasure of his home" for the love of Torah... (Shir HaShirim 8:7).

We all know the importance and value of Torah study. Baruch Hashem, we live in a generation when almost all frum Jews take Torah study seriously. But do we consider it the love of our lives? Is it foremost on our daily agenda?

What would happen if your boss came in one day and said, "Can you do us a favor and stay late tonight? I am willing to pay you three times your regular wage to put in a few hours of overtime today."

Most of us would probably jump at the offer. But just one second. You won't be able to make it to your Daf Yomi shiur if you stay late.

"Well, it is only this one night," you might think to yourself. "How can I pass up such a wonderful opportunity?"

The Midrash is telling us that if we trade physical possessions for Torah, we are making a great business deal. We are trading something that was created in six days, for something that was given in forty days!

Rabbi Yaakov Dovid Wilovsky, known as the Ridvaz, had a very interesting life. Born in Lithuania in 1845, he eventually resided in Chicago for some time, but then immigrated to Eretz Yisrael and lived out his days in Tzefas.

One day a man walked into a shul in Tzefas and saw the Ridvaz hunched over, crying bitterly. The man ran over to the Rav to see if he could help him. "What is wrong?" he asked with concern.

"Nothing is wrong," replied the Ridvaz. "It's just that today is my father's yahrtzeit."

The man was astounded. The Ridvaz's father must have passed away more than half-a-century earlier. Could the Rav still cry such bitter tears for a relative who had passed away so long ago?

"I was crying," explained the Ridvaz, "because I was remembering the deep love of Torah that my father possessed."

The Ridvaz illustrated his point with a story.

When I was six years old, my father hired a private tutor to study Torah with me. The learning was going well, but my father was very poor, and after a while he could no longer afford to pay the tutor.

One day, the tutor sent me home with a note, reminding my father that he owed two months' worth of back wages. He gave my father an

ultimatum. If my father could not come up with the money, the tutor would have no choice but to stop studying with me.

My father was distraught. He really had no money for anything, let alone private tutoring. But he could not bear the thought that I would stop learning.

That night in shul, my father heard a rich man conversing with his friend. He said that he was building a new house for his son-in-law, and he just could not find bricks with which to build the chimney.

My father had heard enough. He rushed home and painstakingly dismantled the chimney of our house, brick by brick. Then he delivered them to the rich man, who paid him a large sum of money.

Elated, my father hurried to the tutor and paid him his back wages, plus wages for the coming six months.

"I remember the bitter cold of that winter," the Ridvaz continued. "Without a chimney, we could not light a fire, and the whole family suffered miserably from the cold."

But my father felt that he had made a good business decision. All the suffering was worthwhile if I could study Torah.

Fortunately for us, we no longer have to watch our families shiver from the bitter cold of winter in order to study Torah.

All we have to do is make sure that we view the world correctly: to consider that trading something created in six days for something created in forty days is the best business deal we could make.

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You can be a meaningful partner in these projects by dedicating a book, or part of a book, in memory or in honor of someone. Payment may be made over time. Please be in touch with Rav Aviner or with me if you are interested in this opportunity. The upcoming books are: 1.

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halachic discussions, etc. (there is also the opportunity to sponsor this project).

Satmar Rebbe

Q: How should one relate to the Satmar Rebbe and Ha-Rav Elchanan Wasserman, who scorned Maran Ha-Rav Kook?

A: They erred severely in this area, but we are still obligated to honor them (Shut Radvaz 4:187. Ma'amrei Ha-Re'eiyah, p. 56. See Shut Bnei Banim 2:34).

Satmar Book

Q: I have a Satmar book with quotes against the State of Israel. Should I throw it in the garbage?

A: No. It also contains sacred words. Place it in the Geniza.

Obligation to Hate

Q: Is there an obligation to hate those Jews from Neturei Karta who visited Iran?

A: G-d forbid. One must love every Jew. But it is permissible to wage war against their opinions. They are confused.

Neturei Karta

Q: There are Rabbis from Neturei Karta who participated in a Holocaust Denial Conference in Iran, and other Rabbis called to excommunicate them. What is Ha-Rav's opinion?

A: Do not excommunicate. Those Rabbis who participated are abnormal.

Counting Neturei Karta in Minyan

Q: Is it permissible to count someone from Neturei Karta in a Minyan?

A: Of course! There is no question here.

Satmar Shul

Q: If there is no other Minyan, is it permissible to daven in a Satmar Shul, even though they are against the State of Israel?

A: Yes. Do not excommunicate people.

Praying for the Health of a Neturei Karta

Q: One of the leaders of Neturei Karta is very ill and is in the hospital. Should we pray that he dies? After all, he has blood on his hands for actively supporting our enemies?

A: We should certainly pray for his recovery. He is in the category of a confused person.

Rav Aviner on...

Matchmaking Talk

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah- Ve-etchanan 5771 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Is one allowed to wed a newly religious person?

Certainly. There's no problem with it. See Rambam (Hilchot Teshuvah, chapter 7), who says that if someone becomes religious, that person is not second class. Quite the contrary. G-d loves him dearly and all his sins are wiped out. It is even forbidden to mention anything at all about his background. It's true that there is a controversy in the Talmud about what is better – a newly religious person or completely righteous person. There are advantages to both

Is it permissible to wed a girl who has committed many sins?

Repentance blots out everything. Yehoshua Bin Nun wed Rahav, who was entirely corrupt from head to toe (Zevachim 116b). Yet she repented and converted to Judaism and he married her. Eight kings and prophets emerged from that match (Megilah 14a). Even the prayer "Aleinu", written by Yehoshua, contains a sentence attributed to Rahav: "For Hashem is G-d in Heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other" (Yehoshua 9:11).

Is one allowed to wed a girl if one of her parents is problematic?

I cannot answer since I am biased. I have one grandfather who married the daughter of a thief and another grandfather who married the daughter

of a murderer. This is not Lashon Ha-Ra since everyone knows them:

The first is Yitzchak Avinu and the second is Yaakov Avinu. What fault does the young man bear and what is his sin? One must be judged on his or her own merit.

Is one allowed to wed a convert?

Yes. Boaz wed a convert and the result will be the Messiah. Ploni Almoni didn't want to wed a convert, and he lost out (see Rut Rabbah 7:6, 9 and Eim Ha-Banim Semeichah, pp. 263-5). A person who converts is like a newborn baby. Is there any problem with marrying a woman who was born?

Is one allowed to wed a girl whose father is a non-Jew?

The Talmud (Yevamot 45a) tells of a person who approached a rabbi and asked him, "What is the law regarding someone born of a non-Jewish father and a Jewish mother?" The rabbi answered, "He's kosher." "If so," he replied, "Give me your daughter for a wife." The rabbi answered, "No. Even if this person were as great as Yehoshu Bin Nun, I wouldn't give him my daughter for a wife, even though he is kosher." His students asked him, "So what should this person do?" and he replied, "Either he should wed a woman who similarly has a non-Jewish father, or he should go someplace where people don't know him and there he should marry whomever he pleases."

The illustrious Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky expressed surprise at this idea (in his "Kehilot Yaakov" on Yevamot 4:44), stating that it seems to prove that one is allowed to hide a significant blemish, such as being the son of a non-Jew. He responds that since it was ruled that the son of a non-Jewish father and a Jewish mother is a kosher Jew without limitations (Rambam, Hilchot Isurei Bi'ah 15:3), his non-Jewish father is not considered a serious blemish that one must reveal. See the work "Ve-Ha'arev Na" by Ha-Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein (vol. 2, pp. 188-190) about a boy who the morning after his wedding is visited by an Arab who informs him that he is his father-in-law. Obviously the groom was filled with trepidation, but Rav Zilberstein ruled, based on the preceding principle, that after the fact, his wedding does not constitute a mistaken [hence nullified] transaction.

Is it permissible for someone to wed a girl who was born to parents who did not keep the laws of Family Purity?

The Chief Rabbi of Israel, Ha-Rav Isser Yehuda Unterman, told a story: "There was once a girl to whom two matches were suggested. The one was steeped in Torah learning, but his parents had conceived him without observing the Laws of Family Purity. The second was not steeped in Torah but he had no blemish involving the laws of Family Purity. A great rabbi ruled that the first was preferable, 'because the Torah he had learned had cleansed his blemish.' We may derive from this that the virtue of Torah overrides the blemish of not keeping the family purity laws." (from a booklet which I believe quoted the Chazon Ish).

It is further told about a father who asked the Satmar Rebbe, "My daughter was offered a boy who is newly religious. What does the Rebbe have to say about that?" The Rebbe asked, "Is he learned in Torah?" and the father replied that he was. So the Rebbe told him, "If so, there is no problem. "G-d is the hope [Hebrew "Mikvah", also meaning "ritual bath"] of Israel' (Yirmiyahu 17:13) – Just as a ritual bath purifies the impure, so does G-d purify Israel" (Yoma 8:9). If the boy learns Torah, it is better than any Mikvah" (see the brochure "Kehilat Yisrael"). The most important principle in matchmaking is the mnemonic "Mi Va-Mi", literally "Just who are they?" but also short for "Your deeds [ma'asecha] will draw you near [yikrevucha] and your deeds [uma'asecha] will distance you [yirachakucha]" (Sefer Chupat Chatanim, Rabbi Rafael Meldola, laws of matchmaking, p. 11).

Is it permissible to marry a divorcee?

A divorced woman is perfectly fine.

Obviously, one has to clarify carefully the background behind the divorce, but being divorced is not a stigma. Quite the contrary. In most cases, the woman is a great heroine. She has been through suffering that has cleansed her. She has suffered loneliness which has prepared her for true friendship. She has borne, alone, the burden of educating children. One has to marry a woman with fine character traits, and if she is divorced, so be it.

Is one allowed to marry a widow?

Yes. Of course, one might ask, "Maybe she still loves her previous husband?" Perhaps, but if she has decided to remarry, that is a sign that she has moved on. It is very important to know that widows and widowers who decide to marry must remove the past from their hearts and take a new lease on life.

Is one allowed to marry a girl who already has one or two children? If the children are small, that is certainly very good. You will be their father in every sense of the word. It is more complicated if they are older. Sometimes this creates tension, and preliminary psychological counseling is necessary.

Is one allowed to wed a woman older than oneself? Where is it written that the man has to be older than the woman? People say that women mature more quickly than men, just as we see that Bat Mitzvah age precedes Bar Mitzvah age. When a couple is very young, this makes a difference, but with older couples, it doesn't.

Is one allowed to wed a girl from a different ethnic group?

All Jews are equal. There is no meaning to the fact that one is from one ethnic group and the other is from another. Yardsticks of compatibility include age, intellectual level, outlook on life, mentality, character, etc. Even when Israel was divided up tribally, they still intermarried. For example, Manoach's father was from the Tribe of Dan and his mother was from the Tribe of Yehudah (Bamidbar Rabbah 10:5). Only during the generation that entered the Land was a restriction placed on marital choice: when a family only had a female to inherit the land (as with the daughters of Tzelofchad), the women were asked to wed within their tribe, in order to keep land inheritances from moving from one tribe to another. Apart from that, however, there was no limitation on marital bonds between tribes (see Baba Batra 120a). All the more so in our own day, where tribal division has disappeared. We mustn't invent insignificant differences between ethnic groups.

(To be continued next week)

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

It is also permissible for Imma to get Angry

We are not angels, only human beings. We sometimes unjustifiably get angry at our children, but it is not the end of the world. We also respond without thinking.

When we respond in anger, the anger is not at the child, rather it is at ourselves. Do not be alarmed. An infrequent event will not leave a scar on the child's education.

Education is not built upon infrequent occurrences, and it is not destroyed by infrequent non-education. Education is continuous toil. The essence is that there is love, love in one's heart and expressions of love. And this love is equal to all of the reprimand. It also better than a flood of reproofs.

Love is the foundation. Without love – there is no child.

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet

HaMaayan / The Torah Spring - Parshas Eikev

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The Land of Israel

What's Under the Hood?

Volume 25, No. 46 20 Menachem Av 5771 August 20, 2011

Today's Learning: Tanach: Iyov 21-22 Mishnah: Eruvin 4:6-7 Daf Yomi (Bavli): Chullin 55 Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Pesachim 32

This week's parashah speaks extensively of the praises of Eretz Yisrael. R' Chaim Palagi z"l (1788-1868; chief rabbi of Izmir, Turkey) writes: The sefer Reishit Chochmah [quoting the midrash Kohelet Rabbah] notes that Tanach uses similar terminology to describe the human body and the earth. This is because, just as a person's limbs and organs differ in their qualities, so do various parts of the world differ in their qualities. Some produce iron, some copper, some silver, some gold, and some produce gems. In contrast, Eretz Yisrael's worth is not determined by the minerals it produces, but rather by the fact that it is infused with the Shechinah, which is more precious than gems.

Why then, asks R' Palagi, does our parashah (8:9) seem to praise Eretz Yisrael as: "A Land whose stones are iron and from whose mountains you will mine copper"? He answers: The correct interpretation of this verse is that, after the Torah praised the Land, it added that if we do not observe the mitzvot, the Land will not produce fruits, as if it was made of iron or copper. The reason for this is that Eretz Yisrael does not produce fruits naturally, as do other lands. Rather, as we read later in the parashah (11:13-14), "It will be that if you listen to My commandments . . . then I shall provide rain for your Land in its proper time, the early and the late rains, that you may gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil."

R' Palagi adds in the name of his son, R' Yitzchak Palagi [z"l]: In the verse quoted above, the Hebrew word "Avanehah" / "its stones" has the same letters as "Bana'ehah" / "its builders." The initial letters of the Hebrew phrase, "Avanehah barzel u'mei'hararehah tachtzov" / "its stones are iron and from its mountains you will mine [copper]" spells "Avot" / the Patriarchs. And, "barzel" / "iron" is the initial letters of Yaakov Avinu's four wives: Bilhah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Leah. This teaches that Eretz Yisrael is built on the merits of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. (Artzot Ha'chaim p.26)

"You shall remember the entire road on which Hashem, your Elokim, led you these forty years in the Wilderness so as to afflict you, to test you, to know what is in your heart, whether you would observe His commandments or not." (8:2)

What does it mean that Hashem tests a person? After all, Hashem knows in advance what the outcome will be! R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban; 1194-1270) explains: Hashem presents people with challenges in order to reward them, for even though Hashem knows that someone is capable of withstanding a particular challenge, a person who merely has the potential to do something heroic is not as deserving as someone who has actually done something heroic. Indeed, Hashem only tests those who can pass the test. Why then is it called a "nisayon" / "test"? Because, from the perspective of the person being tested, it is a test, for he has free will and does not know in advance how he will perform.

For this reason, Ramban continues, Bnei Yisrael were tested in the desert [as our verse relates], i.e., so that they could be rewarded for tolerating the inconveniences of, and frightening times in, the desert. Thus we read (Yirmiyah 2:2), "So said Hashem, 'I remember for your sake the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, your

following after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.'" [See below] In addition, Ramban writes, a person who withstands a test is deserving of reward because, through his heroism, Hashem's Name is sanctified and other people are led to love and fear Him. (Sha'ar Ha'gmul)

Did Bnei Yisrael really pass their test in the desert? Surely they complained a great deal!

R' Yoel Sperka shlita (Detroit, Michigan) explains: Commentators ask why the Torah identifies all of the places where Bnei Yisrael camped in the desert, and they answer that the Torah is informing us that Bnei Yisrael followed the Clouds of Glory to a series of extremely inhospitable places. And, while the Torah tells us that some of Bnei Yisrael complained on some occasions and were punished for their complaints, those were the only times that they complained. Overall, Bnei Yisrael did, in fact, follow Hashem through the desert and tolerate all of the inconveniences that they encountered. (Chazon Yoel, note 182)

R' Mordechai Yosef Leiner z"l (1801-1854; the Izbica Rebbe) writes that a person sometimes faces a challenge which he cannot pass, as was the case when Yehuda encountered Tamar (Bereishit 38:15). (Mei Ha'shiloach: Pinchas)

What is the purpose of such a test? In fact, a challenge that cannot be passed is not considered a test. Rather, the test is how a person will react to his failure. In Yehuda's case, the test was whether he would confess and spare Tamar's life (as he ultimately did). (Heard from Rabbi Aharon Lopiansky shlita)

In other cases, the test may be whether a person allows himself to become depressed by his "failure," or whether he uses his fall as an opportunity to strengthen his prayer and Torah study. (Ayin Tovah)

"He afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you the mahn that you did not know, nor did your forefathers know, in order to make you know that not by bread alone does man live, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d does man live." (8:3)

As related in Parashat Beshalach, Hashem did not feed Bnei Yisrael the mahn until they cried for food. R' Dr. Avraham J. Twerski shlita explains that had Hashem anticipated all of the Jewish People's needs -- for example, had He provided the mahn before they were hungry -- they would never have developed trust in Him. This, writes R' Twerski, is an important principle in parenting as well. If parents anticipate the needs of their child and provide for them before the child has had an opportunity to identify those needs, the child may never learn that his needs will be met. A child must be allowed to feel his needs. When the parents respond in a way that meets those needs, then the child learns to trust his parents. (Successful Relationships p.32)

"You should know in your heart that just as a father will chastise his son, so Hashem, your God, chastises you." (8:5)

R' Itamar Schwartz shlita (Yerushalayim) observes that many people have difficulty serving Hashem with the feeling known as "yirat ha'onesh" / "fear of punishment," because they find that attitude depressing and would prefer to think of Hashem as a loving G-d. Our verse teaches, however, that these two feelings are one and the same. Why does a father chastise his son? Because he loves him. When one takes this view, R' Schwartz writes, yirat ha'onesh becomes inspirational, not debilitating. (B'lvavi Mishkan Evneh vol.2 p.178)

"For if you will observe this entire commandment that I command you, to perform it, to love Hashem, your Elokim, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him." (11:22)

The midrash Sifrei teaches: "To walk in all His ways"--This refers to the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy in the verses (Shmot 34:6-7), "Hashem, Hashem, Kel, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth, etc." We read further (Yoel 3:5), "It will be that anyone who calls in the Name of Hashem will escape." The

midrash asks: How can a person be called in Hashem's Name? [The midrash reads the verse as if it says: "It will be that anyone who is called in the Name of Hashem will escape."] Rather, says the midrash, just as Hashem is compassionate, so you should be compassionate; just as Hashem is gracious, so you should be gracious; and you should perform acts of kindness for all people. The midrash continues by quoting the verse (Yeshayah 43:7), "Everyone who is called by My Name and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have fashioned, even perfected."

R' Aharon David Goldberg shlita (Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio) writes: The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy are significant for two reasons. First, they are the attributes through which Hashem bestows mercy on the world. This is alluded to by the verse from Yoel. Second, they are the attributes through which a person can emulate the Creator. This is alluded to by the verse from Yeshayah, which teaches that man is fashioned in G-d's image. (Ve'halachta B'drachav al Tomer Devorah p.92)

Pirkei Avot

Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in the Bet Hamikdash: . . . (8) the people stood crowded together, yet prostrated themselves in ample space; . . . (10) no man ever said to his fellow, "There is insufficient space for me to stay overnight in Yerushalayim." (Chapter 5)

R' Yisrael Dan Taub z"l (1928-2006; the Modzhitzer Rebbe) observes that we find a similar phenomenon in connection with other aspects of the Bet Hamikdash as well, for example, in the Kodesh Hakodashim / Holy of Holies. Our Sages say that the Aron Hakodesh / Holy Ark took up no space; it stood in the center of a room 20 amot / cubits wide, but if one measured from each side of the Aron to the nearest wall, the resulting measurement would be 10 amot.

We find that Eretz Yisrael has the same character. The Gemara (Gittin 57a) teaches that the Land of Israel is called Eretz Tzvi / the land which resembles a gazelle. One characteristic of a tzvi, the Gemara says, is that its hide shrinks when it is removed from the animal so that it seems too small to have come off of the animal. So, too, Eretz Yisrael appears too small to hold all of the Jewish People, yet it seems to expand to accommodate all who settle there.

Why is this? R' Taub explains that wherever one finds holiness, there he will find a blessing that allows him to be satisfied with less. This is reflected many times in the Torah, for example, in Devarim (12:7), "You shall eat there [in Yerushalayim] before Hashem, your G-d, and you shall rejoice with your every undertaking, you and your households, as Hashem, your G-d, has blessed you." When you eat "before Hashem," your happiness is guaranteed. This is reflected also in the construction of the Mishkan, where Moshe had to announce that no more donations should be brought. The more one connects himself to Hashem--the "Ein Sof" / "Limitless One"--the more one finds that his belongs are not bound by ordinary limitations. (Yad Le'banim)

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Rabbi Wein -- Parshas Eikev @torah.org to rabbiwein
Rabbi Berel Wein

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The main topics that Moshe discusses in Dvarim are reflected in this week's parsha in detail. These topics are the status of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel and the cardinal sin of worshipping strange gods and foreign ideologies. Moshe points out that the sojourn of the Jewish people in its promised homeland is not at all one of guaranteed permanence.

The Land of Israel itself, seemingly, has something to say about who resides within its confines. It is most inhospitable to those who violate God's basic moral code, and the dire consequences that occur when immoral and pagan behavior occurs there are inevitable and unavoidable.

Rambam, in his Moreh Nevuchim, relates most prohibitions listed in the Torah to the general principle of avoiding idolatrous behavior. Idolatry is so attractive to humans that the Torah has to resort to great and repeated lengths to separate the Jew from those beliefs, behaviors and ideas.

We are witness to Jewish behavior throughout history that always seems to fall back into idolatrous behavior. Sometimes the idols are made of stone and wood, sometimes they are human beings who advertise themselves as gods or superhuman savants of holiness - and sometimes they are ideologies and utopian promises that only lead to tragedy and disillusionment.

But, they are all paganism and are forbidden by Torah edict and values. The last century brutally illustrated to us the cost of following strange gods and false utopian ideologies. Moshe's warning to his generation resonates down the millennia to reach our ears as well. Types and forms of idols may come and go in human history but the presence of idolatry and its attendant consequences remain constant in all generations.

Moshe appeals to three factors that can save the Jewish people from losing its presence in the Land of Israel. They are 1) historical experience, 2) common sense, and 3) obedience to God's commandments. Historical experience abundantly shows the errors of following other value systems than the Torah. Paganism, Hellenism, the Sadducees, Jewish Christianity, Karaism, false messianism, uncontrolled mysticism, secularism, the Enlightenment, Marxism, nationalism, assimilation, Reform, humanism, etc. have all had their moment on the Jewish stage and have disappeared or changed.

Many Jews are now searching for the new idol that will bring us hope and salvation. They are doomed to disappointment. The brilliant and wise nation of Israel needs to use a little common sense sometimes. Following policies and ideas that have never yet worked for us should no longer be accepted and trumpeted as somehow being valid and useful. Common sense should teach us who are those that are for us and those that are against us, no matter what their protestations of affection for us may be.

Forsaking Jewish tradition, halachic observance and the Torah's value system only brings us grief and angst. These factors that Moshe outlines for us constitute the blueprint for Jewish survival in the Land of Israel and in the world generally. These are matters not to be taken lightly nor stepped upon casually by the heel of our foot - but rather they are the key to our future and ultimate success.

Shabat shalom.

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Jerusalem Post

Rabbi Berel Wein

THE MOON

Friday, August 19, 2011

Mankind has been fascinated by the moon since the time of creation. It has a gravitational effect upon our world through tides of the sea and other natural phenomena. It is the subject of poetry and song and at one time it was thought to contribute to mental lunacy and insanity. It became a staple for creating calendars and its process of waxing and then waning every month has given rise to philosophic, religious and social interpretations. The moon may be smaller than our sun but its place in human minds and cognizance is more fixed than that of the sun. It transfixes us. Humans have been able to reach it and walk upon it and attempt to explore it, but strangely enough that momentous human accomplishment did little to dispel the aura of mystery and challenge that the moon engenders within human beings. We revel in and appreciate its presence but we are also in awe of its existence and perplexed as to its actual purpose. It remains the single most important celestial creation as far as human thought and imagination is concerned.

Various lunar descriptions have entered every known language of the human race. It can readily be seen by the naked eye, and unlike stars and planets its form is readily discernible. The sun is too bright to look at and the stars and planets are too distant from us to be able to hold our interest and imagination. But the moon is part of our world as is no other celestial creation. It is natural therefore that our rabbis saw the moon as a symbolic creation. We are all aware of the parable in Midrash that the sun and the moon were originally to be of equal size and brightness. The moon complained to God that "two kings cannot share one crown." The moon apparently meant to dispossess the sun of its glory but the Lord ordered the moon to diminish itself instead. The moon became the symbol of unwarranted jealousy and the example of the negative consequences the jealous one brings upon one's self. The moon is also the symbol of reflected light, in effect allowing the light of the sun to reach us even at night when the sun is not visible in our part of the world. If Moshe was likened to the sun than his student and disciple Yehoshua was likened to the moon. Reflected light is also light but it is not of the caliber and strength of original light. The Jewish calendar is basically a lunar calendar of 354 days with corrections built into it to prevent it from being completely inconsistent with the solar calendar of 365 days per year. Thus we have seven leap years with an additional leap month included in every nineteen year cycle. This is to insure that Pesach always falls in the month of springtime in the Land of Israel. Others, such as the Moslems, also follow a lunar calendar but have no method of reconciliation with the solar year. The "new moon" that marks the beginning of every lunar monthly cycle is celebrated as a minor holiday in Jewish ritual and society. As a result of all of this, it is also perfectly understandable why the rabbis saw fit to compare the Jewish people to the moon. The Jewish people are seen as being the

reflection of the Divine light that fuels the continuity of our world. The Torah that we possess, given to us by God at Sinai, is the perfect reflection of its Giver and of His guidance to us in all human affairs. The Jewish people, as the possessor of God's Torah, are likened to the moon, so to speak, in its relationship to the sun – seemingly, God Himself. The rabbis, acknowledging that the moon waxes and wanes every month, related this to the fate of the Jewish people – of the constant change and the ups and downs of Jewish history. It also came to symbolize the strength and resilience of the Jewish people - that there would always be a moon and that it would always rise again, even if for a period of time its appearance was not seen. Thus a special ceremony celebrating the appearance of the new moon has become part of Jewish liturgy. The ceremony is a reaffirmation of Jewish continuity and eternity. We recite that “David, the king of Israel is yet alive and exists.” The spark of eternity that exists within the Jewish people still fuels our path towards our future. The moon has much to teach us. Shabat shalom. Berel Wein

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Hullin 46a-b - **What is "Glatt Kosher"?** August 11, 2011

What is "Glatt Kosher"? On today's daf (=page) we learn that Rava taught: If two lobes of the lungs adhere to each other by fibrous tissue, they cannot be checked to render the animal permitted. This is so, however, only if the lobes were not adjacent to one another, but if they were adjacent it is permitted, for this is their natural position. A normal set of animal lungs contains a number of lobes - three on the left side and two on the right side - aside from the two larger lobes at the bottom. It is a common occurrence for viscous mucus to leak from one lobe and thicken on another one of the lobes. There are two main approaches in the rishonim in explanation of these adhesions. According to Rashi, they are indicative of a hole in the lung of the animal that has been covered by hardened mucus, and the animal cannot be permitted because a hole in the lung indicates that the animal is a terefah - it is terminally ill, and therefore not kosher. Tosafot argues that this is a normal occurrence and does not indicate that the animal had a hole in its lung. Nevertheless, when the adhesion breaks off it will cause a hole to be formed in the lung, and the animal is therefore viewed as already considered a terefah. The Gemara's ruling is that the animal's lungs cannot be checked, that is, even if they are filled up with air to see whether there are holes, since we already know that there is either already a hole or there is bound to be one in the future, checking for a hole is moot. According to the view of modern medicine, adhesions on the lungs stem from infections. The most common situation is when the animal suffers from infections in the chest membrane. When that occurs, the body secretes substances to build up the internal tissues. Appropriate care and avoidance of cold can significantly lower the incidence of such adhesions in animals. The Shulhan Arukh (Yoreh De'ah 39:4, 10, 13) rules that we do not distinguish between thick and thin adhesions - all are considered to be problematic and the animal is rendered a terefah that cannot be checked. The term "Glatt" refers to this ruling, since the animal's lungs are required to be totally smooth. The Rema disagrees and suggests that thin adhesions can be squeezed or peeled off, after which the lungs can be checked for holes. This essay is based upon the insights and chidushim of Rabbi Steinsaltz, as published in the Hebrew version of the Steinsaltz Edition of the Talmud. To learn more about the Steinsaltz Daf Yomi initiative, click here. To dedicate future editions of Steinsaltz Daf Yomi, perhaps in honor of a special occasion or in memory of a loved one, click here.
