

BS"D



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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON **KI SAVO** - 5765

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Subject: ATERES HASHAVUA

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EMES LIYAAKOV

Weekly Insights from MOREINU

HORAV YAAKOV KAMENETZKY zt"l

[Translated by Ephraim Weiss <Easykgh@aol.com>]

In this week's parsha, we read about the mitzvah of bringing bikurim, the first fruits that must be brought to the Bais HaMikdash. Upon arriving at the Bais HaMikdash, the person offering the bikurim reads a brief paragraph, found in this week's parsha, which encapsulates the history of Klal Yisroel. We start off by mentioning that our father Yaakov was swindled by Lavan, and continue by describing our descent to Mitzrayim, and our subsequent enslavement there. Finally, we recount how Hashem redeemed us from Mitzrayim, and brought us into Eretz Yisroel.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt"l is bothered by the wording that the Torah chooses for this parsha. In recounting what Lavan did to Yaakov Avinu, we refer to Lavan as "The Aramean swindler." Why do we not refer to Lavan by name?

Rav Yaakov answers that we refer to Lavan by the name of his city, because in reality, all the people of the city were equally guilty of the fraud that was perpetrated against Yaakov. The Midrash in Bereishis Rabbah writes that Lavan told the people of Aram what he was planning, so that none of them would realize in the middle and give away the trick. The Targum Yonasan even goes as far as to say that it was the people of Aram who advised Lavan to pull the switch in the first place. Thus, it was not merely Lavan who tricked Yaakov, but was the more general "swindling Arameans."

However, we must also understand the necessity of telling over this story in the first place. What connection does it have to the bringing of bikurim? Rabbeinu Bachaya on this topic explains that the bikurim represent the ultimate level of simcha, as another successful harvest is celebrated. The farmer brings the first of his produce to the Bais HaMikdash, and sees the city of Yerushalayim in its full glory. However, he must remember that this was not always the way it was. Therefore, the farmer reminds himself that in the beginning, we had no land of our own, but rather wandered from place to place. We were enslaved in Mitzrayim, and suffered there for two hundred and ten years. However, Hashem saw our suffering, and took us out of Mitzrayim with great miracles, and brought us into Eretz Yisroel. At the time of his greatest happiness, the farmer must remember to Whom he owes all his happiness, and must give proper thanks.

May we be zocheh to once again see the miracles of geulah, so that we may rejoice and thank Hashem for all the good that we have, while bringing the bikurim to the third Bais HaMikdash, she'yibaneh bi'mihayra bi'yameinu, amen.

From: rabiwein-owner@torah.org [<mailto:rabiwein-owner@torah.org>]
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RABBI BEREL WEIN

Jerusalem Post September 23, 2005 www.rabiwein.com/jpost-index.html
SELICHOT POETRY <http://rabiwein.com/column-979.html>

The Ashkenazic Jewish world begins its recitation of selichot – the penitential prayers of the season of the High Holy Days this coming Saturday night. Our Sephardic brethren have already been reciting their version of selichot for some weeks already, since the onset of the month of Elul. All of these prayers center about the continued recitation of the thirteen attributes of the Almighty as revealed to Moshe after Israel's sin of the Golden Calf. In them, we appeal for God's mercy and forgiveness as we approach the days of judgment and awe. The custom of reciting such selichot prayers is an ancient one, dating back at least to the sixth century in Jewish Babylonia. Almost every major rabbinic figure through the fifteenth century tried his hand in composing selichot. Out of the literally thousands of poems written, a few hundred have actually been incorporated into the standard ritual of the various groupings of Jews. The Sephardim naturally favor the poems of the great Sephardic poets such as Yehuda HaLevi, Avraham ibn Ezra, Shlomo ibn Gavriel (Gabirol) and Donash ibn Lavrat. The list of Ashkenazic poets of selichot poems includes Rashi (Rabi Shlomo ben Yitzchak), Rabi Shimon of Mainz, Rabenu Tam (Rabi Yaacov ben Meir, Rashi's grandson, Rabi Shmuel ben Meir (another grandson of Rashi)) and other notable French, German and Austrian scholars. Suffice it to say, the rabbinic elite, the great men of Israel, all took part in this project of selichot poetry and prayer.

Poetry was once an important aspect of Jewish religious life. It was also part of Jewish culture. In the world of the Sephardim during the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry and thereafter, Hebrew poetry flourished. The great Hebrew poets of Spain mentioned above did not restrict their poetic talents to liturgy and sacred poems. They also wrote secular and general poems, even about romance and nature. However, poems of this nature were practically unknown in the Ashkenazic Jewish world until the time of the Haskala in the nineteenth century. Poems of secular or even general nature were never accepted in Ashkenazic religious circles as being necessary or even positive. The fact that most if not all of the poets of the Haskala were no longer observant Jews undoubtedly colored this attitude of rejection of all secular poetry. In the religious world of Ashkenazic Jewry, poetry was strictly restricted to those of a spiritual and liturgical nature. The nature of poetry itself was far different in the Ashkenazic world than amongst the Sephardim. Style, elegance of phrase and meter, and the rhythm of the sound of words combining with each other were all hallmarks of the Sephardic poetry, expressed even in their religious and liturgical poetry. Learned and ethical content were stressed in the Ashkenazic poetry, and style took a back seat to substance. However, both in Sephardic and Ashkenazic selichot poetry, the use of acrostics, alphabets and biblical quotations as being the chorus of the poem, all are usual components. The name of the poet himself is often hidden in the poem itself by the use of those devices just mentioned. Also, the poem always contained an intriguing mystery of authorship and other subliminal messages waiting to be deciphered by those who read and recited the poem as part of the selichot services.

In the Ashkenazic world, there were three main compilations of selichot that became fixed in tradition over the years. One is called the liturgy of Lithuania and is the one basically in use in the Lithuanian yeshivot and the non-Chasidic synagogues of Jerusalem and the world. The second compilation is that of Poland and is used extensively by the differing Chasidic groupings. There is also a compilation that follows the liturgy of the holy Ari (Rabi Isaac Luria of sixteenth century Tzfat) that is used by

certain Chasidic groups. The Sephardim also have many variations of their basic selichot liturgy, depending upon their original countries of origin. The choice of which poems to include in the liturgy of the selichot service is apparently one left to the popularity of the poem and/or the poet in the eyes of the worshippers. The liturgical poem, Keter Malchut (The Crown of Royalty) written by Rabi Shlomo ibn Gabirol is recited on the night of Yom Kippur in many Sephardic congregations. This long poem of approximately one hundred stanzas is one of the true classics of all Hebrew poetry, both in stylish elegance and holy content. Selichot provided an outlet to the genius and creativity of the Jewish muse.

Weekly Parsha September 23, 2005 <http://www.rabbiwein.com/parsha-index.html>

KI TAVO <http://rabbiwein.com/column-980.html>

This week's parsha deals with the frighteningly accurate prediction of the awful fate of the Jewish people over its long exile. The tochacha chillingly forecasts the horrors of the Holocaust and of all of the previous destructions, persecutions, pogroms and disasters that have befallen the Jews over the long centuries of dispersion. The Torah itself in a forthcoming parsha asks the obvious question: "Why all of this anger? What justifies such a fate for Israel?" In our generation there have been many Jews whose faith and Jewishness itself have been compromised or negated by the events of the Holocaust. Therefore, what message is to be gained from the detailing of all of these curses and disasters? Even more directly, what has been 'gained,' so to speak, by the actual occurrence of these events? The Torah itself is not exactly clear on this subject. It states that the abandonment of Torah by the Jewish people is the root cause for all of its troubles. Yet, many of the tragedies have befallen the Jewish people when they were, at least on the surface, a Torah abiding society. The majority of Eastern European Jews destroyed in the Holocaust were observant, traditional Jews. G-d therefore retains His inscrutable face, so to speak, and no satisfactory answer to the troubles of Israel is easily forthcoming. Part of the curse of the tochacha therefore is its apparent mystery and even unreasonableness. It is this very inexplicability that fuels the doubts and hesitations about faith and observance that pervade the Jewish world of today. The tochacha assumes the role of being the greatest of all of God's mysteries, the ultimate challenge to faith, belief and tradition. Yet, it is the very fact that the tochacha declaimed by Moshe thousands of years before the event, is so chillingly accurate down to the smallest detail that itself testifies to its Godly origin. Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) alluded to this already in the thirteenth century. How can we in the twenty-first century not be stirred by this eerie accuracy of prediction and detail? We are powerless to know the 'why' to the tochacha but we can certainly testify as to its author and source. "Is it not from the hand of G-d that good and troubles both emanate?" said the prophet Yirmiyahu. This is perhaps the ultimate comfort that we may derive from reading this sad parsha. We are like infants who do not comprehend the measures taken by our father to insure our survival. But we may be certain that we have a father who takes a direct hand in raising us. Rabbi Akiva upon witnessing the ruins of the Temple taught that just as it was apparent that the painful predictions regarding Israel had come to pass in dreadful and perfect accuracy, so too was he assured that the blessings foretold for Israel and its redemption also would be fulfilled down to the last point of detail. That view is our point of hope as well. The curses and pains of the past difficult year may disappear and the new year bring to us and all mankind the fulfillment of the great vision of redemption and peace as promised to us by the great prophets of Israel.

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From: ZeitlinShelley@aol.com Subject: Getting Ready for the Day of Judgment – by Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

Getting Ready for the Day of Judgment – Part One By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

As we get closer and closer to Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment, we try to prepare ourselves in every possible way. Of course, we engage in the making of a cheshbon hanefesh, a personal accounting, so that we may determine areas in which we need to do teshuvah, repentance, and other areas in which we need to improve. We also try to find projects of compassion and kindness for the Gemora tells us, "Kol hamracheim al habrios merachamin alov min hashamayim – Whoever has mercy on his fellow man will be shown mercy from Heaven." We also should muster the courage and strength to forgive those who have wronged us, for it is the Divine way to judge midah kneged midah, measure for measure, and therefore if we look away from the misdeeds of others, then Hashem will likewise look away from our sins.

Prayer is also most effective at this time of the year. As we know, Elul is an acronym for Ani L'dodi V'dodi Li – I am to My beloved, and My beloved is to Me." This means that if we attempt to come close to Hashem, Our Beloved, He reciprocates in full measure. Prayer is one of the most direct ways to come close to Hashem. At this time of the year, we should ask Hashem that He rev-up our teshuvah motors, as when we say in the Shemone Esrei 'V'hachazireinu b'tshuva shleima lifonecha – Give us the impetus to return to You perfect repentance."

We should also ask Hashem, heavily for forgiveness in the Shemone Esrei bracha of 'S'lach lonu.' We should pray, too, for the knowledge to know what needs to be improved and for what needs to be changed in the bracha, 'Attah chonein laadom daas.' And, when we say these prayers, we should not restrict them solely to ourselves, but rather we should pray that others as well should be motivated to repent and better themselves.

Thus far, we have covered the two of the three ingredients that repeal any evil decrees for like we say in Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur liturgy, teshuvah, tefilah, u'tzedakah maavirin es roah ha-gezeirah." We've talked about repentance, and we've covered prayer. Now let's take a serious look at the third ingredient, tzedakah.

The Gemora teaches us that "Tzedakah tatzil mimoves - Charity saves one from death." This is particularly important when we pray for life on the Yom HaDin, the Day of Judgment. Since Rosh Hashanah is also the time when Hashem distributes our annual income, it behooves us to beef up on our tzedakah output for the Torah promises us "Aser t'aser – You shall surely give tithes," which the Gemora homiletically explains "Asher bishvil shetisasher – Give tithes and you will become wealthy".

At this point one might wonder "Wait a minute! I know a lot of people who give charity diligently and are not wealthy! To the contrary, they are still struggling." This question is dealt with in several ways by a variety of commentators. The Chofetz Chaim explains that while a person might give charity, he doesn't get the Divine reward of wealth unless he gives in proportion to his means. Thus, when there is an Hatzolah appeal in shul and everyone calls out on hundred dollars, rich and poor alike, this is not the proper spirit of tzedakah. As an example, the Chofetz Chaim cites the daughter of Nakdimon Ben Gurion who was found picking barleycorns out of dung in order to survive. The Gemora asks how such a thing could have happened to the daughter of a great philanthropist. The Gemora answers indeed Nakdimon gave a lot – but not according to his ability.

The Marchazu, in his response, answers that one isn't rewarded with wealth unless he gives that charity happily. As the Torah says, "Lo yeirah levovcha bsidcha lo – Let it not hurt your heart when you give charity to him." This is indeed a great challenge for many people for, although we do

give money when people knock on the door, call on the phone, or ask us in shul, too often we give it grudgingly or with a frown. In order to receive Divine reward, we need to train ourselves to give tzedakah with a smile.

My favorite answer is the explanation of the Haslah. He explains that the blessings of wealth for giving charity are not apparent in the bank book or in one's investment portfolio. He says that the Gemora says that the reward will be 'shetisasher,' one will become 'asher,' wealthy. The Mishna says in Pirkei Avos, "Eizahu asher? Hasomeiach b'chelko – Who is wealthy? He who is satisfied with his lot." Thus, concludes the Haslah, the reward of charity is a sense of satisfaction and well being. This is indeed the prophecy in Malachi – that for giving charity, Hashem will open up the skylight in Heaven, "V'harikosi lachem bracha ad bli dai," which the Gemora explains to mean that Hashem will shower wealth upon the Baal Tzedakah until his lips will tire from saying enough. This, the Haslah says, is a poetic way of expressing an attitude of fulfillment and wellbeing.

In the zechus of our multi-pronged attempts to get ready for the Day of Judgment, may Hashem bless us all a kasiva v'chasima tova u'mesukah, that we be written down and sealed for a good and sweet year.

Getting Ready for the Day of Judgment – Part Two

By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

Last week, we discussed the powerful potency of tzedakah, both as a protection from death and as a means to become wealthy. The posuk says, "Noson titein v'lo yeirah levovcha b'sidcha lo ki biglal hadavar hazeh yivorechecha Hashem Elokecha – You should surely give to the poor and it should not hurt you to give to him for because of this mitzvah Hashem your G-d will bless you."

The Sfas Emes, Zt"l, Zy"a, sympathizes with the effort it takes to give away our money happily. After all, we work hard for our money and there never seems to be enough to go around. He gives a profound bit of psychological advice to help us give our tzedakah without pain. He suggests that we have a second wallet or purse designated solely for tzedakah. We should then remove our charity money and put it in that wallet. He explains that that won't hurt so much since it's still in our possession. (Furthermore, even if it does hurt, that's okay because the Torah just cautions us that it shouldn't hurt when we are giving it to the poor person.) Afterwards, when the poor person asks us for money, it doesn't hurt at all when we take it out of the tzedakah wallet since we've already separated and designated it for charitable purposes.

The Sfas Emes brilliantly deduces this from the language of the verse. He explains this is why the Torah says, "noson titein," in repetition; for first we should give it to our charity wallet, and then from there we should give it to the poor. The posuk then continues, if you do it in this way, "V'lo yeirah levovcha b'sidcha lo – It won't hurt you when you give it to him."

The Chida, Zt"l, Zy"a, also comments on the repetition of "noson titein." He explains that one of the most powerful ways to give tzedakah is matan b'seiser, giving in secret. Even in a case if Hashem is, chas v'shalom, angry at us, the Gemora in Bava Basra [10b] cites the reassuring verse, "Matan b'seiser yichpeh," because giving charity in secret squelches the Divine wrath.

Pure matan b'seiser is when the giver doesn't know to whom he is giving and the poor man doesn't know from whom he is receiving. Too often nowadays, people give charity but expect power in return. They want a say in how the yeshiva is run or in what direction a shul should go. Or, if they are giving to the needy, they like the feeling that the people should be indebted to them. This is not the pure spirit of tzedakah. Thus, the Chida explains, the posuk says "noson titein" to allude to the fact that there should be two separate givings. First, the one who gives the charity should give it to a gabbai tzedakah, a charity collector and, second, the charity collector gives it to the poor person. This is true matan b'seiser. The Chida offers another explanation for the repetitive "noson titein." He cites the famous question of the Rambam. If one has a hundred dollars, should he give it in entirety to one poor person or should he give one dollar apiece to one

hundred poor people? One might reason that it's better to give a hundred dollar bill to one person and make a meaningful impact but the Rambam decides to the contrary. He explains that it's better to give one dollar to a hundred people for, instead of doing one maiser mitzvah, one mitzvah action, he is doing one hundred of them. And, instead of combating his yeitzer hara once, he is conquering it one hundred times. This, explains the Chida, is another reason why it says "noson titein" to allude to the fact that one should make sure to do multiple givings.

All of us receive letters in the mail that have on the outside of the envelope a picture of a noted Rabbi or Rosh Yeshiva and a caption about some tragic story. Either they appeal for a father who is sick and unemployed or a mother is blind, or a child who never walked, etc. Even without opening them, many of us consign these letters to the trashcan. This is a great shame. For the most part, these mass mailings for tzedakah do not rely on large donations. They rely on the concept of "Kol prutah u'prutah mitztaf cheshbon gadol – Every little bit adds up to a large amount." If everyone would put in at least five dollars, each of these campaigns would be a major success.

But that's only part of the story. If we look at the annual pie chart of our budget, we will realize that a sizable slice is taken up by insurance. Medical insurance, car insurance, dental insurance, home owners insurance, and so forth. These envelopes provide us with a cheap insurance not provided by Geico or Traveler's but by Hashem Himself. When we help people overcome a variety of maladies, we are ensuring through the Divine justice of midah kneged midah, measure for measure, that we will be spared from the same such suffering.

May it be the will of Hashem that in the zechus of our new resolve to give more of our income to charity, that Hashem bless us with an even sweeter, healthier and happier new Year.

Looking Back at Hurricane Katrina

By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

Hurricane Katrina can definitely be considered an historical event. When a natural phenomenon occurs that causes such widespread loss of human life and a virtual wipeout of one of the major cities in the United States, it behooves us to take note and consider seriously its messages. Here is a very simple example. The meteorological forecasters knew in advance that this storm would be a lethal one. They issued an unprecedented order for the mandatory evacuation of 480,000 people from the city of New Orleans. They further ordered that all highways and roads should be converted into one-way thoroughfares – all pointing out of the city. Yet, many people failed to heed these urgent and desperate warnings. Many who procrastinated or turned a deaf ear to the voice of reason paid a catastrophic price. As we are in the days of Elul, rapidly approaching the Day of Judgment, we too would be wise to listen to the daily warning of the shofar blown every morning advising us, "Uru yesheinim m'shinaschem – Wake up you sleepers from your spiritual slumber." Do teshuvah, repentance. Mend relationships. Pray better. Learn more. Analyze all of your behavior.

When we hear thunder, we say a blessing. The Chofetz Chaim, Zt"l, Zy"a, wonders why we say a blessing on a scary noise. He answers that when we hear a loud bang that is not man made, it causes us to think of G-d. Anything that prompts us to think of Hashem is worthy of a blessing. In the same vein, Hurricane Katrina was a very unique bang and definitely was an act of G-d of immense proportions.

Parshas Ha'azinu is referred to as Shiras Ha'azinu, the Song of Ha'azinu. It starts off, "Hatzur tamim pa'alo – The Rock (Hashem), perfect are His works. Ki chol derachov mishpot – All His ways are just. Keil emunah v'ein avel – A faithful G-d without any crookedness. Tzadik v'yashar Hu, He is righteous and upright." The Torah tells us that Hashem's ways are perfect yet, when we look at the devastations of Hurricane Katrina, you wonder, was that perfect? Why is Haazinu called a shira, a song? It contains stories of havoc and devastation. The answer is that when we see

the Mishpat of Hashem, the Judgment of Hashem, that also is something worthy of song.

What I am about to write now will cause many of my readers to bristle. In a way, this is good – for, as Americans, we are trained with the attitude to live and let live, to respect other people’s behaviors and not to be judgmental. Furthermore, as Jews, we are first and foremost, rachmanim, a compassionate people who, when seeing an event that caused such a major loss of life in an episode that left a half a million people homeless, we correctly think in terms of care and pity. Yet, at the same time, we are taught, “V’shilumas reshaim tira – You should take note of the downfall of the wicked.” Any Bible student who saw pictures of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, with roofs peeking out from under a sea of water, could not help but equate these events to the Biblical mabul, the deluge that washed away the cities and covered the tallest mountain peaks. In explaining the mabul, the Torah says, “Ki hishchis kol bosor es darko al haaretz – For all man became corrupt on the land.” Corruption refers specifically to immoral behavior such as promiscuity, incestuous relationships, and especially unnatural behavior such homosexuality. We must know that G-d created the earth perfect. The Flood was very unnatural for G-d’s earth and it was only because people behaved in a very unnatural manner that they were punished in a very unnatural way.

Now, while the age of prophecy is over and no one knows for sure why G-d does things, we can speculate that New Orleans, which is known as sin City, New Orleans, which from the beginning of American history was the great center of brothels, New Orleans, dubbed as the ‘city of no inhibitions’ fits the Biblical bill of a place that was morally corrupt. Two days after Hurricane Katrina hit, a gathering was scheduled called the Southern Decadence, a gay assembly with a blatant expression of absolute moral perversion. When a mature person sees this, he cannot help but entertain the possibility that Hashem was sending a mabul of mayim, of water, to educate us that this is the wrong way for humans to behave.

As to the philosophical question about all of the others who suffered, this is the difficult concept. “Androlomusia ba’ah laolam v’ einu mavchin bein tov l’rah – Sometimes, because of moral corruptions, the destroyer comes and does not distinguish between good and evil.” So, while we should correctly educate our families in empathy for human suffering and provide lessons in how to extend a helping hand to the homeless and needy, we also should take note of the powerful Hand of G-d that possibly brought retribution to those who strayed from proper human behavior. This is beneficial for two reasons. Firstly, because it strengthens our yiras ha’onesh, our fear of divine retribution, which is a healthy inhibitor protecting us from sin. Secondly, it bolsters our awareness of hashgacha protis, how Hashem is overseeing all of human behavior and His strong presence can be acutely felt when such extraordinary divine manifestations occur

May it be the will of Hashem that we be spared from any suffering and be blessed with a year of good health, happiness, and everything wonderful
To be continued.

To receive a weekly cassette tape or CD directly from Rabbi Weiss, please send a check to Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss, P.O. Box 140726, Staten Island, NY 10314 or contact him at RMMWSI@aol.com. Attend Rabbi Weiss’s weekly shiur at the Landau Shul, Avenue L and East 9th in Flatbush, Tuesday nights at 9:30 p.m. Rabbi Weiss’s Daf Yomi shiur can be heard LIVE on Kol Haloshon at (718) 906-6400. Write to KolHaloshon@gmail.com for details. (Sheldon Zeitlin transcribes Rabbi Weiss’ articles. If you wish to receive Rabbi Weiss’ articles by email, please send a note to ZeitlinShelley@aol.com.)

From: Halacha [halacha@yutorah.org] Sent: Monday, September 19, 2005 10:43 AM Subject: Weekly Halacha Overview- Hefsek: The Interruption of a Beracha

RABBI JOSH FLUG

Hefsek: The Interruption of a Beracha

The Gemara, Berachot 40a, states that if one recites a beracha on a food item, and prior to eating, verbally requests something necessary to eat that food item, he is not required to recite a new beracha. If he requests something that is not necessary to eat that food item, he must recite a new beracha. This concept is known as hefsek (interruption). Rashi, ad loc., s.v. Tol, explains that if one speaks between the recitation of a beracha and the eating of the food item upon which it was recited, the beracha is invalidated. However, whatever is necessary to eat the food item is necessary for the beracha to come to fruition. Therefore, it is not considered a hefsek.

There are two approaches to understand the nature of the mechanism of hefsek. One can understand that hefsek operates by severing the connection between the beracha and the item upon which it was recited. In doing so, the beracha is prevented from ever coming to fruition, and it is considered a lost beracha. If the verbal request is for something necessary to eat the food item, it is not considered a hefsek because that type of communication maintains the connection between the beracha and the food item rather than severing it. Alternatively, one can understand that a beracha is in a volatile state before it comes to fruition. Any interruption of the beracha in this volatile state will directly destroy it. When the verbal request is for something necessary for the food item, the communication is not considered to be destructive but rather constructive, and does not destroy the beracha. This article will discuss numerous issues that may be contingent on these two understandings.

Pausing Without Interrupting

Shibalei HaLeKet no. 166, states that if one recites a beracha and then pauses a considerable amount of time before eating the food item, he must recite a new beracha, even if there was no verbal interruption. Magen Avraham 206:4, notes that R. David Avudraham (pg. 317) argues and maintains that one is not required to recite a new beracha.

This dispute might be explained based on the two understandings of hefsek. If hefsek operates by severing the connection between the beracha and the item upon which it is recited, it is arguable that an extended pause might also sever the connection even if there is no verbal interruption. However, if hefsek operates by directly destroying the beracha, the beracha can only be destroyed if an active measure is taken to destroy it. It cannot be destroyed by passively pausing, even if the pause is protracted. Mishna Berurah 206:12, rules that one does not repeat the beracha if there was an extended pause prior to eating the food item.

Interrupting a Beracha Recited After a Mitzvah

While most berachot recited on food items and mitzvot are recited prior to the action that necessitates the beracha (eating or performing the mitzvah), some berachot are recited subsequent to that action. One example is the beracha recited upon washing one’s hands prior to eating bread. [See Tur, Orach Chaim 158, who presents two reasons why the beracha is recited after washing one’s hands. First, netilat yadayim is one of the exceptions to the rule of reciting the beracha before performing the mitzvah. The rabbis instituted that the beracha should always be recited after washing one’s hands since sometimes one’s hands are too dirty to recite a beracha beforehand. Second, netilat yadayim is not an exception to the rule. The beracha is recited prior to drying one’s hands which is part of the mitzvah. This discussion will follow the first opinion.] Tur, Orach Chaim 165, quotes a dispute regarding one who wishes to eat immediately after using the restroom. According to one opinion, recitation of Asher Yatzar (the beracha recited upon exiting the restroom) between washing one’s hands and reciting the beracha of Al Netilat Yadayim constitutes a hefsek. According to another opinion, recitation of Asher Yatzar does not constitute a hefsek.

One could suggest that this dispute is contingent on the two ways to understand hefsek. In this situation, the beracha is recited after the performance of the mitzvah. According to the approach that hefsek operates by destroying the beracha, there cannot be a hefsek when it is

recited after the performance of the mitzvah. One cannot destroy the beracha by interrupting because the beracha was not yet recited. If one recites Asher Yatzar after washing one's hands, it will have no impact on the beracha of Al Netilat Yadayim that has not yet been recited. However, if hefsek operates by severing the connection between the beracha and the action upon which it is recited, there should be no difference between a situation where the beracha is recited first and a situation where the action is performed first. In either instance, the interruption prevents the connection between the beracha and the action from establishing itself. Mishna Berurah 165:2-3, notes that the most preferable option for one who wishes to eat immediately after exiting the restroom is to first wash one's hands in a way that would not be valid for netilat yadayim, recite Asher Yatzar, and then perform the mitzvah of netilat yadayim.

A Brief Interruption

R. Avraham Danzig, Chayei Adam 5:11, questions whether one can apply the principle of toch k'dai dibbur to one who speaks between the recitation of the beracha and the swallowing of the food item. The principle of toch k'dai dibbur states that when a person makes a statement, that statement can be changed or rectified within the time it takes to say three or four words. Applying the principle to hefsek would mean that if one interrupts with one or two words after reciting a beracha and then immediately eats the food item, the beracha is still valid. If one does not apply this principle, any interruption, no matter how brief would constitute a hefsek.

Perhaps the question of whether to apply the toch k'dai dibbur principle to hefsek is contingent on the two approaches presented above. If hefsek operates by severing the connection between the beracha and the item upon which it is recited, toch k'dai dibbur - which serves to extend the timeframe of a statement - can be applied to sustain the connection between the beracha and the food item. However, if hefsek operates by directly destroying the beracha, the beracha cannot be reconstituted by the principle of toch k'dai dibbur. Mishna Berurah 167:36, rules that an interruption of one word is also considered a hefsek.

A Verbal Interruption Prior to Swallowing

R. Yeshaya Horowitz, Shelah, Sha'ar Ha'otiot 58b, questions whether it is considered a hefsek if one speaks after reciting a beracha between chewing the food and swallowing it. He notes that one does not recite a beracha if one tastes food without swallowing it (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 210:2). Therefore, the beracha does not come to fruition until one swallows. If one speaks beforehand, it should be considered a hefsek. Nevertheless, R. Horowitz is reluctant to require a new beracha in this situation. Magen Avraham 167:16, questions R. Horowitz's reluctance to rule that one must recite a new beracha. If in fact the beracha does not come to fruition until swallowing, any form of speech beforehand should be considered an absolute hefsek and should require a new beracha.

Perhaps R. Horowitz's doubt is based on the two aforementioned approaches to understand hefsek. If one assumes that hefsek operates by destroying a beracha in a volatile state, then there is no room to distinguish between one who started chewing the food, and one who has not yet started to chew his food. In both situations the beracha has not yet come to fruition and remains in a volatile state. However, if hefsek functions by severing the connection between the beracha and the food item, the connection is established when one starts to chew the food item. Therefore, one who speaks while chewing will not sever the connection and the beracha will come to fruition upon swallowing the food item. The Weekly Halacha Overview, by Rabbi Josh Flug, is a service of YUTorah, the online source of the Torah of Yeshiva University. Get more halacha shiurim and thousands of other shiurim, by visiting www.yutorah.org. To unsubscribe from this list, please click here.

From: Peninim@shemayisrael.com Sent: September 22, 2005 7:24 AM
To: Peninim Parsha

Penimin on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Ki Savo

Accused is one who strikes his fellow stealthily. (27:24)

Rashi explains that b'seiser, stealthily, is a reference to lashon hora, evil speech. While this is certainly one of the most destructive forces at one's disposal, it is a transgression that is often misunderstood. There are situations in which what seems like lashon hora really is not -- and vice versa. Perhaps the following vignettes will give us a clearer perspective of the definition of this baneful sin. Horav Shlomo Lorincz, Shlita, a member of the Israeli Knesset and a close talmid, disciple, of the Brisker Rav, zl, relates that one Erev Yom Kippur he had occasion to be together with the Brisker Rav at the funeral of a distinguished Torah scholar. As they were walking behind the funeral procession, the Rav remarked, "He was a great Torah scholar, but some of his hashkafos, perspectives, were questionable." He then elaborated his concerns regarding specific hashkafos.

Rav Shlomo was surprised that of all times to speak about someone, the Rav chose Erev Yom Kippur, during the man's funeral, as they walked in the procession! Furthermore, what about lashon hora? He gathered up his courage and voiced his feelings to his rebbe.

The Brisker Rav turned to his student and explained his behavior, "First of all, you should know that the laws concerning lashon hora are very specific. If one were to question an individual's veracity regarding a business proposition, a possible partnership, or an investment opportunity, it is incumbent that the truth not be withheld due to lashon hora concerns. One must tell the truth: if the person in question is dishonest, then this must be articulated. If this halachah applies to a minor financial loss, how much more so does it apply to a spiritual perspective which can affect many more, in a much more compelling manner. Since you are a communal leader, it is essential that I apprise you of the deceased's philosophic shortcomings.

"With regard to your other question as to why I chose Erev Yom Kippur, while I am walking in the man's funeral procession, to voice my opinion about his hashkafah? The laws of lashon hora are very complicated, and when a halachic dispensation permits one to speak the truth, regardless of its disparaging implications, one must do so with only one intention: to spare someone a loss, either material or -- as in this case -- spiritual. When a person has completed an all inclusive self-analysis and, through introspection and soul-searching, has determined that he is acting only l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven, or to save someone from a financial loss, then he must come forward and speak. Otherwise, it is lashon hora.

"As I walked in the funeral procession on the day preceding the holiest day of the year, I weighed the matter in my mind. I came to a firm and clear decision. As the Brisker Rav, on this special day, I am certain that I have no vested interests whatsoever in speaking disparagingly of the deceased. Whatever I say is for one purpose: to see to it that no one is spiritually harmed by his hashkafos. Hence, I felt that I could - and should - voice my opinion."

Another episode which supports this concept occurred concerning Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl, at the first meeting to organize the Agudath Israel organization. One of the speakers at that meeting ascended to the podium and spoke disparagingly of a noted communal leader. Rav Chaim immediately arose from his seat, saying, "It is forbidden to sit here, since they are speaking lashon hora." He left the meeting and never attended another meeting.

Remarking about this incident, the Chazon Ish, zl, explained, "What was the lashon hora? After all, the meeting was for a purpose. Klal Yisrael was at a crossroads. Many Jews were falling under the influence of spiritual leftists and cripples. The speaker was attempting to make a point and get everyone's attention. What was wrong?"

"The answer is," said the Chazon Ish, "the speaker spoke with an attitude. He spoke triumphantly as if we had bested them: 'You see what they did

and what resulted from their actions.' He was overjoyed at their failure. That is not the way we speak. He should have said, 'My friends, a tragedy has occurred, a spiritual calamity is taking place. Have compassion! Let us do something!' Had he spoken like that, it would have reflected purpose. Otherwise, it was pure, unmitigated lashon hora!" I believe this story needs no explanation, since we all have something to learn from it.

And it shall be that if you hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, to observe, to perform all of His commandments. (28:1)

The pasuk enjoins us to listen to Hashem's voice, to observe and fulfill his mitzvos. The concept of "listening to Hashem's voice" appears a number of times in the Torah. What is the meaning of shmia b'kol Hashem, "listening to the voice of Hashem"? Is there some special voice that we hear? Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, gives a definitive explanation of this voice and its appeal to us.

Man is comprised of two elements: a physical dimension, represented by his guf, body, and a spiritual dimension, signified by his neshamah, soul. Man's neshamah does not desire any of the world's physical/mundane pleasures, nor can these pleasures satisfy the soul's yearning for spiritual pleasure. The soul has a single desire: to grow, to develop spiritually in order to come closer to the Almighty. We often confuse our soul's yearning with our body's physical desire. Thus, we attempt to satisfy the spiritual quest for growth with mundane satisfaction. It does not work. Regardless of how much man defers to his physical desires, he cannot satiate his neshamah.

Shlomo Hamelech says in Koheles 6:7, "All man's toil is for his mouth, yet his wants are never satisfied." Chazal analogize this pasuk to a commoner who marries a princess. He supplies her with every luxury. Yet, she remains unhappy. He would give her anything, but the one thing for which she yearns, the one thing that she desires so badly, he cannot provide. She lacks royalty. She remains a princess married to a commoner. That will never change. Likewise, man seeks to satisfy his desires with worldly pleasures. The more he has, the more he seeks. He is insatiable, because he does not feed it what it truly seeks - spiritual growth. Hence, his desires remain ungratified.

Man is constantly besieged by his desires. They always want something. We understand this to be the neshamah's discontent with its status quo. Man's neshamah is constantly calling out to him to rise up, to elevate himself, to grow spiritually. This voice, this inner calling, is what the Torah refers to as the voice of Hashem. The neshamah is a spiritual entity that is a cheilak Elokai Mimaal, minuscule part of Hashem Above. That voice calls out to us. We hear its calling, but we do not necessarily listen to its message. In order to merit Hashem's reward, we must listen to His voice as He continually calls out to us.

Hashem shall open up for you His storehouse of goodness. (28:12)

The story is told that prior to his passing from this world, the Mezritcher Maggid, zl, told his chassidim that when he dies and ascends to Heaven, he will approach the Heavenly Tribunal to petition for an end to Klal Yisrael's suffering. The Mezritcher passed from this world and -- lo and behold -- the suffering continued unabated. The chassidim were concerned. After all, their Rebbe had promised to intervene. One day, one of the Mezritcher's primary disciples went to his grave and prayed. He made a point to "remind" the Rebbe of his promise to intercede on their behalf. The next day, the Mezritcher appeared to his student in a dream and said, "True, when I was alive, I felt the pain and was sensitive to the affliction that we sustained, but now, here in Heaven, things appear much different. I see occurrences from a different vantage point. The troubles and persecutions that loom so large on the earthly horizon are really not troubles at all. I view them to be a source of comfort and salvation. Therefore, I cannot pray for you, because there really is no reason to pray."

Simply, this means that the Rebbe was now afforded a different perspective in life. He now saw life's challenges, its vicissitudes and travail from a more

"global" position. What made no sense in this world suddenly became rational and even necessary in the Eternal World of truth.

There is another approach towards dealing with issues that are overwhelming to the intellect and which certainly play havoc with our emotions. In a thesis about how we should relate to the challenges in life, Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita, cites Sefer Iyov, which is the "handbook" on relating to suffering. We all know that Iyov was a righteous, G-d-fearing individual who was subjected to incredible afflictions. He not only lost his wealth, but he also lost his children and personally became victim to a painful condition that ravaged his body. Iyov was visited by his three friends who attempted to console him, to no avail. Afterwards, Elyahu HaNavi visited him and attempted to explain his affliction on an esoteric level, also to no avail. Last, Hashem spoke to Iyov and demonstrated to him the paucity of man's understanding of the workings of the world. In the end, Iyov replied to Hashem, "Until now, I knew of You through the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You" (Iyov 42:5). The relationship that he now had with the Almighty was different. The prophetic experience that he had just undergone gave him the ability to transcend the concerns of this world. That is the pashut pshat, simple explanation.

Horav Moshe Eisemann, Shlita, suggests a somewhat novel approach that gives us something to think about concerning our affinity to Hashem. Prior to Iyov's prophetic vision, his association with Hashem had been on a purely, cognitive plane. After Hashem moved closer to Iyov and took him on a guided tour of the cosmos, granting him an unprecedented perspective, Iyov experienced an emotional closeness with Hashem to supplement his intellectual appreciation of Him. Faith and trust are emotional functions, not rational ones. When we view a situation from an intellectual perspective, everything must fit into place. There has to be a logical explanation for everything. Not so, from an emotional standpoint. Just because an idea does not fit logically does not mean that I cannot trust it. Indeed, my trust and faith help me to overcome any intellectual oddity that I might encounter. When you love someone, this love surmounts any actions that may seem irrational. Love means believing in someone even when you do not necessarily understand the basis of their actions.

Rav Frand cites Ibn Ezra's commentary to Devarim 14:1, "You are children of Hashem, your G-d, you shall not cut yourself" (as a display of mourning). He explains that now that we know that we are Hashem's children, and that He loves each of us more than a father loves a son, we are not permitted to mutilate ourselves over the death of a loved one. Even if the loss is incomprehensible, we must rely on our belief that Hashem is doing what is correct and necessary - even if it hurts. This is no different than the father who slaps the hand of his son who is about to place that hand in the fire.

Iyov still had no idea why he had been afflicted. Since he knew from Whom it originated, however, his newly-concretized relationship gave him the ability to trust and accept the situation with love. May Hashem grant us that the forthcoming New Year bring us only joy, so that this thesis remains in the abstract.

Your life will hang in the balance, and you will be frightened night and day. (28:61)

Rashi explains that as long as the Jews are in exile, they will never be certain of their safety. One minute they are secure; the next minute could be their last. This general, tenuous situation applies to earning a livelihood. They will never be sure of what will happen: Will the markets be shut down in general - or just to the Jew? This is how we have lived throughout centuries of exile, never knowing what tomorrow will bring - or if there will even be a tomorrow. Yet, we Jews have always maintained the conviction that even when the sharp blade of a sword is on our necks, we never give up hope of salvation. The following episode concerning the saintly Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, demonstrates this verity.

While interred in the concentration camp, he was subject to constant harassment by the cruel guards. In order to "clean up" the ranks and rid the

camp of the weak and ill prisoners, every few weeks the commandant would declare a selektsia, selection, in which all of those who were infirm were immediately sent to their deaths. Everyone was lined up in a single file, surrounded by the Nazi beasts brandishing machine guns. Those who appeared weak were "weeded" out from the group.

In one of the rows, the Rebbe, against all rules of the selektsia, was standing bent over in prayer. This was categorically prohibited; it was suicidal. Yet, the Rebbe, who was shortly joined by a small group of followers, was praying. What was he saying at this time, which might have been his last moments on earth? He was reciting over and over, Avinu, Malkeinu, kra roa g'zar dineinu. "Our father, Our King, tear up the evil decree of our verdict." Those surrounding him repeated the words. The Rebbe then continued with, Avinu, Malkeinu, nekom nikmas dam avodecha ha'shafuch, "Our Father, Our King, avenge the blood of Your servants that is being spilled." Avinu, Malkeinu, aseih l'maan rachamecha ha'rabim, "Our Father, Our King, act for the sake of Your abundant compassion."

Anyone who witnessed this mind-boggling spectacle could not believe his eyes. They did not seem to be in a concentration camp surrounded by death and awaiting execution. They acted as if they were in shul on Yom Kippur and were praying to Hashem! In the midst of the terror and persecution, the Rebbe was declaring that the Nazis were not in charge. They would not determine their future. Only Hashem could make that decision. This is emunah, faith, at its apex. The Rebbe and all those who sequestered themselves to recite the Avinu Malkeinu prayer were spared from death. The Nazis had their plan; Hashem had another one.

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: Thursday, September 22, 2005 1:22 PM To: yhe-intparsha@etzion.org.il Subject: INTPARSHA65 -50: Parashat Ki Tavo

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

INTRODUCTION TO PARASHAT HASHAVUA

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PARASHAT KI TAVO

"Arami 'Oved Avi"

By Rav Michael Hattin

INTRODUCTION

Parashat Ki Tavo is a lengthy section that optimistically begins with a description of the inspiring ritual of the bikkurim, or first fruits, that are to be presented by the grateful farmer at the Temple in Jerusalem. In an evocative ceremony, the fruits must be gently raised upon the shoulder and then put down next to the altar, as the farmer first experientially relives the odyssey of exile and redemption and then recites a formula that briefly outlines the history of his people. In terse but charged phrases, he is to recall their descent to Egypt and subsequent enslavement, their outcries to G-d who heard their woes and liberated them, and their eventual arrival and settlement in the land that He gave them as their eternal possession.

The parasha then continues with another agricultural observance, this time concerning the tithing of the crops. The separated tithes that had been stored up by the landowner in anticipation of an opportunity for their allocation, must be allotted to their respective recipients, whether the landless Levi or else the indigent and needy, and the landowner must then solemnly declare that he has not unlawfully withheld them from distribution. Here again, the declaration singles out the land for special mention and then concludes with a poignant prayer that G-d sustain His people upon it and grant them its bounty: "Look down from Your

holy habitation in the heavens and bless Israel Your people as well as the land that You have given us, just as You swore to our ancestors concerning a land that flows with milk and honey!" (Devarim 26:15).

THE COVENANT AND THE ASSEMBLY

The next sections, all unabashedly hopeful in tone, speak both of Israel's inseparable bond with G-d as well as of the heavy burden of responsibility that they must bear as a result (26:16-19). In essence, Moshe has now completed the review and explication of the mitzvot of the Torah, and his concluding remarks therefore concern the people's formal acceptance of the Torah's commands in a Covenantal Ceremony. "Moshe, the Kohanim and Levi'im addressed all of Israel, stating: 'Be attentive and listen, Israel, for on this day you have become a people to G-d your Lord. Hearken to the voice of G-d your Lord, perform His commands and decrees that I enjoin upon you this day'" (Devarim 27:9-10).

What follows is a description of the national assembly to be convened immediately after the people cross the River Jordan and enter the land. In the valley of Shekhem, located between the summits of fertile Mount Gerizim and barren Mount Eval, Israel is to construct a ceremonial altar. Upon the plaster that coats its uncut stones, the text of the Torah is to be clearly inscribed, in order to impress upon the people that their success in the new land will be a direct result of their fidelity to G-d and to His teachings (27:1-8). Gathered as one, the people are then to listen attentively as the Levi'im loudly proclaim the list of so-called 'Blessings' and 'Curses.' As each one of the maledictions is pronounced, they are to formally acknowledge their assent to its articles by solemnly responding 'amen!' The brief and succinct inventory of misdeeds, in the main detailing concealed infractions concerning idolatry, breaches of trust, and sexual immorality, is followed in turn by a concise passage spelling out the national blessings to be enjoyed if the people of Israel observe the Torah: international acclaim, bountiful crops and healthy offspring, crushing victory over their foes, and economic stability and expansion will be theirs (27:11-28:14). A much lengthier section, describing the dire consequences that will befall the people of Israel should they fail to hearken to the Torah's words, concludes the parasha (Devarim 28:15-69).

THE ADMONITION AND THE PARASHA'S OPPOSING THEMES

This "Tochekha" or Admonition climactically catalogues the converse of the earlier blessings. In progressively more frightful phrases, Israel's punishment, should they fail to uphold the dictates of the Torah, is spelled out. Sickness, drought, famine and defeat will overtake them, for the enemy will seize their crops, lay siege to their cities, and then cruelly exile them from their land. Israel will be violently scattered among the nations, there to serve lifeless gods of wood and stone in pathetic vulnerability. In interminable exile they will remain, until such a time as they initiate their restoration by considering their ways and remembering their God.

The overall thrust of the parasha is thus a glaring study in contrasts – the good and the bad, the blessing and the curse, the promise of life and the threat of death – all of it pivoting precariously around the pledge of the new land. Israel's ineluctable destiny, to be champions of God's teachings and exemplars of His righteous ways, will in the end be realized – either consensually through the people's judicious exercise of their own free will and consent, or else coercively through the imposition of the corrective forces that they themselves will unleash as a consequence of their own ruinous choices.

THE PASSAGE OF THE BIKKURIM OR FIRST FRUITS

This week, we will consider one single verse of the parasha, taken from the declaration of the First Fruits described above. The medieval commentaries disagree concerning the meaning of the passage, and they in turn are in opposition to the traditional interpretation of the early Rabbis. In the end, though, we will discover that the themes emphasized in the verse, according to all of the possible readings, highlight many of the larger ideas that animate the parasha as a whole:

When you enter the land that G-d your Lord gives to you, and you shall possess it and dwell in it. Then you shall take from the first of all the fruits of the earth that you shall bring from the land that G-d your Lord gives you, and you shall place them in a basket. You shall go to the place that G-d will choose to cause His name to dwell there. You shall approach the Cohen who shall be there at that time, and shall say to him: "I declare this day before G-d your Lord that I have come into the land that G-d swore unto our ancestors to give us." The Cohen shall take the basket from your hands and place it down before the altar of G-d your Lord.

You shall proclaim before G-d your Lord: "ARAMI OVED AVI. He went down to Egypt and sojourned there few in number, and there became a great, powerful and populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and afflicted us, and put upon us difficult labor. We cried out to G-d the Lord of our ancestors, and G-d heard our voice, saw our affliction, our burden, and our distress. G-d took us out of Egypt with a strong hand, an outstretched arm, awesome acts, signs and wonders. He brought us to this place, and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now I have brought the first fruits of the earth that you have given me God," and you shall put them down before G-d your Lord and prostrate yourself before G-d your Lord.

You shall rejoice in all the good that G-d your Lord has given to you and to your household, you and the Levite, and the convert that dwells in your midst (Devarim 26:1-11).

The basic schema of the rite is straightforward enough, and can be conveniently categorized into three discrete elements: 1) the bringing of the first fruits and their presentation, 2) the declaration, 3) the joyous aftermath. It should be noted that while the account of our passage is described from the perspective of the individual farmer, who brings the fruits to God's House and subsequently rejoices with family and a close circle of associated individuals, the declaration is phrased in the plural. In it, the supplicant concisely recalls Jewish national history, placing particular emphasis on the experience of the enslavement in Egypt, the Exodus, and the entry into the land. The themes of the declaration once again pivot around contrasts: few ancestors becoming a multitude, oppressed slaves achieving freedom, and homeless people acquiring a land "flowing with milk and honey."

THE READING OF THE RASHBAM

It is the opening words of the declaration in verse 5, however, that are most cryptic. "Arami oved avi" is seemingly a description of our ancestor, the very one who is immediately described as having "gone down to Egypt and sojourned there few in number..." But who exactly is this unnamed ancestor that is described as an Aramean? Here, the Rashbam and the Ibn Ezra, two contemporary rationalists of the 12th century, the former from northern France and the latter from southern Spain, disagree. Rashbam explains:

My ancestor Avraham was an Aramean, a nomadic wanderer from the land of Aram, as the verse states: "Go forth from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you..." (Bereishit 12:1). And further it states: "...and so it was that when G-d caused me to wander forth (hi'TU) from my father's house..." (Bereishit 20:13). The usage of OVeD and ToE is the same and both describe a person who is exiled, as the verse states "I have wandered (Ta'eti) as a lost (OVeD) sheep; seek out your servant!" (Tehillim 119:176), or as in "lost (OVDot) sheep are your people, for their shepherds have led them astray (hi'T'Oom)" (Yirmiyahu 50:6). This is to say that our ancestors came from a foreign land to this land, and G-d gave it to us (commentary to 26:5-10). For the Rashbam, the wandering Aramean of our passage is none other than our father Avraham. Hailing from a foreign land, from the northern reaches of the Euphrates elsewhere known as "Aram Naharaim" or "Aram that is between the rivers" (Bereishit 24:10, et al), Avraham

heard God's call and set forth for Canaan. The journey was long and arduous, and having arrived, Avraham and Sarah did not remain stationary, but like proverbial sheep they nomadically wandered the length and breadth of the central hill country. And though buoyed by the recurring Divine promises of offspring and land, those pledges remained throughout their lifetimes painfully beyond their reach. It would in fact be many centuries before their descendants began the lengthy process of possessing the land. "OVeD," then, means "wandering" and serves as an apt description of our ancestors' travails.

The Rashbam's reading is therefore about glaring contrasts: at first we were homeless nomads, exiled from our birthplace but denied a place to call our own, forced to seek refuge under the protection of foreign kingdoms that oppressed us mightily. But then G-d heard our cries, liberated us from domination, and brought us into Canaan so that we might finally strike down roots and build a state, so that finally the weary farmer might gratefully declare that "now I have brought the first fruits of the earth that you have given me God!" (26:10).

If we adopt the interpretation of the Rashbam, then we must assume that when the verse states that "My father was a wandering Aramean," and then goes on to describe how "he went down to Egypt and sojourned there few in number, and there became a great, powerful and populous nation," that the latter half of the verse is speaking figuratively. This is because although Avraham himself did briefly go down to Egypt when famine struck Canaan after his arrival (Bereishit 12:10), he did not remain there long and he and Sarah had no offspring until many years after their return. It was only his descendants that went down to Egypt for an extended stay and there became numerous, powerful and eventually the objects of Pharaoh's xenophobic zeal.

THE READING OF THE IBN EZRA

Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra provides an alternate reading, identifying the Aramean of the passage with a different ancestor of the people of Israel and providing us in the process with another aspect of what it means "to be lost":

It seems to me that the Aramean is our father Ya'acov. It is as if the passage states that "when my father was in Aram he was lost," for to be lost in this context means to be indigent and without means. Similarly, the verse states "Give strong drink to he who is lost (OVeD), and wine to those who are bitter in spirit" (Mishle 31:6). It then goes on to indicate that "He will drink and forget his poverty, and his travail will he no longer remember" (Mishle 31:7). The verse therefore should be rendered as "a poor Aramean was my father." The meaning of the matter is that I did not inherit this land from my father because he was poverty stricken when he first came to Aram. Also, he dwelt in Egypt few in number, and only afterwards became a numerous nation. You G-d brought us forth from slavery and gave us a goodly land..." (commentary to 26:5).

For the Ibn Ezra, the passage recalls the life of our father Ya'acov who was forced to flee his brother Esav's murderous wrath. Sorrowfully and abruptly, Ya'acov left behind his aged parents, heading northeastwards at his mother's behest in search of refuge in the home of his wily uncle Lavan (Bereishit 27:42-45). Arriving at Aram, Ya'acov was entirely without means, at first sustained by his mother's deceitful brother but then indentured to him in tending the sheep. Though Ya'acov acquired wives and flocks while in Lavan's employ, true security and stability eluded him. In the end, Ya'acov had to take flight from his uncle, who had brazenly changed the conditions of employment innumerable times, never failing to capitalize on Ya'acov's vulnerability.

Once again, our passage provides us with a study in contrasts, but this time it is not exile versus settlement but rather poverty versus wealth that is highlighted. The presenter of the first fruits recalls the distress of father Ya'acov, whose poverty necessarily produced dependence, and whose dependence encouraged oppression at Lavan's hands. Ya'acov did in fact go down to Egypt, after famine in Canaan forced the household to

relocate, while Yosef's position of power and authority as the Pharaoh's vizier created ideal conditions for their absorption. There the family remained, but soon the welcome of their Egyptians hosts was exhausted.

A new king arose over the Two Lands and shortly thereafter Ya'acov's descendents were cruelly enslaved. Finally, G-d heard their cries and redeemed them, eventually bringing them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Industriously, they tilled its terraced slopes and the land gave forth its bounty. Now standing before the altar, the appreciative farmer, his basket laden with a representative selection of his fields' bounty, recalled the earlier days, when poverty and indigence were his ancestor's lot. And then solemnly, he thanked G-d and prostrated himself before taking his leave.

CONCLUSION

Here, then, are two readings, one that emphasizes the precious gift of a place to call home and the other that celebrates the good fortune of prosperity and economic triumph. Both Rashbam as well as Ibn Ezra buttress their respective interpretations with other Scriptural references, but in the end their explanations really need no additional support. They are so intuitively correct that proof is unnecessary. No man who is homeless or else poor can truly be independent. And the blessing of a land, then, cannot be fully realized as long as one lives under the domination, political or economic, of overlords. The Israelite farmer, then, had much for which to be grateful. Cognizant of his ancient history of expulsion and want, he thanked G-d in sincerity for having helped him to overcome the earlier challenges.

As Moshe's life ebbs away, he is careful to not only impress upon Israel their bright future, but also to remind them of their difficult past, so that they might never lose sight of God's blessings. The land of Canaan beckons, an end at last to their own nomadic wanderings and extended state of dependence, but Israel's success upon its fertile soil will be an ongoing function of their ability to internalize the core ideas contained in the declaration of the First Fruits.

Shabbat Shalom

For questions or comments to the instructors, please write to intparsh@etzion.org.il.

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From: Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org> To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Sent: Wed, 21 Sep 2005 Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Ki Savo
WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5764

By **Rabbi Doniel Neustadt** Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav

SHE'AILOS U'TESHUVOS

QUESTION: When reciting Selichos early in the morning, should the sheliach tzibbur recite a berachah upon donning his tallis?

DISCUSSION: In many shuls, Selichos is recited early in the morning before the time period known as misheyakir, which is approximately 45 minutes(1) before sunrise. Although it is permitted to don a tallis at that time, it is not permitted to recite the berachah over it, in deference to the Rishonim who maintain that one cannot fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzis at night.(2) What, then, should the sheliach tzibbur - who is required to wear a tallis for Selichos - do? Here(3) are three possible solutions: * Borrow a tallis from another congregant [with the explicit intention of merely borrowing it, as opposed to halachically "acquiring" it] and put it on without reciting a berachah. This solution is based on the principle that one does not recite a berachah on a borrowed tallis.(4) When Selichos are over, the tallis is returned to its owner and the sheliach tzibbur can then dons his own tallis and recites the berachah.

* Use the shul's tallis without reciting a berachah over it. [Although many poskim require a berachah when a shul's tallis is worn, nowadays, the prevalent custom follows the opinion of the poskim who hold that no berachah is recited on a shul's tallis when worn by the sheliach tzibbur or by a person receiving an aliyah, etc.(5)]

* Put on his own tallis without reciting the berachah. When the time for reciting the berachah arrives, there is no need to remove and put on the tallis again; simply looking at the strings(6) and touching them(7) is sufficient for reciting the berachah

at that time. This solution is the least desirable halachically, since all too often one is distracted and forgets to recite the berachah when misheyakir arrives. This third solution should only be employed if the previous ones are not an option. [Those who recite Selichos after chatzos need not be concerned with this issue altogether; the sheliach tzibbur should wear the shul's tallis without reciting the berachah.(8)]

QUESTION: After reciting ha-motzi, must one eat a full k'zayis of bread immediately before talking or eating other foods?

DISCUSSION: One is not required to do so. After reciting ha-motzi one is required only to swallow any small amount of bread before talking or eating other foods.(9)

But though one is not required to eat a k'zayis immediately after ha-motzi, the poskim recommend that one do so if possible. This is because one is required to eat a k'zayis of bread within 3-4 minutes at some point during the meal; if not, he is not allowed to recite birkas ha-mazon even if he is satiated from the other foods eaten during the meal.(10) In addition, one who does not eat a k'zayis within 3-4 minutes at some point during the meal would be required to recite a berachah rishonah over all of the other foods eaten during the meal.(11) In order to make sure that one not forget to eat a k'zayis sometime during the meal,(12) it is recommended that one eat a k'zayis immediately after reciting ha-motzi.(13)

QUESTION: If, mistakenly, one spoke after reciting ha-motzi but before biting or swallowing even a small amount of bread, does he need to repeat ha-motzi?

DISCUSSION: L'hatchilah, one is not allowed to speak at all until after he swallows at least a small piece of bread. As stated previously, it is recommended that an entire k'zayis be eaten at this time. If, b'diavad, one spoke - even a single word - between ha-motzi and the first bite, he must repeat ha-motzi before beginning to eat if what he said was completely unrelated to the meal. If, however, he spoke about something related to the meal, e.g., please bring the salt or ketchup; please serve this individual, then ha-motzi is not repeated.(14) If, b'diavad, one spoke after taking a bite but before swallowing, he should not repeat ha-motzi before continuing to eat.(15)

QUESTION: After changing a baby's dirty diaper during a meal, does one need to wash his/her hands again for netilas yadayim?

DISCUSSION: Yes, he does. Changing a dirty diaper, as well as urinating or using the bathroom, scratching one's scalp or touching the sweaty areas of one's body, is considered a hesech ha-da'as which "cancels" the original washing of the hands. Netilas yadayim, therefore, must be repeated before the meal may resume.(16) Whether or not the berachah of al netilas yadayim must be repeated as well is a subject of much debate among the poskim. Some rule that al netilas yadayim is repeated in all of the hesech ha-da'as cases mentioned above, (17) while others require that al netilas yadayim be repeated only in some of those cases, such as using the bathroom or diapering a baby.(18) While one may follow either view,(19) the prevalent custom today follows the opinion of the poskim who hold that the berachah of al netilas yadayim is not repeated in any of these hesech ha-da'as cases.(20)

QUESTION: Does the halachah that prohibits a person who owns an animal from eating a meal before feeding his animals, apply only to the first mealtime in the morning or to any mealtime?

DISCUSSION: In order to avoid tza'ar ba'alei chayim, cruelty to animals, the halachah(21) mandates that the owner of an animal feed those animals which are dependent on him for their food(22) before taking food(23) for himself. This law applies not only to farm animals, but also to pets, birds and fish. It applies to all mealtimes - whether the owner is at home or away, on Shabbos(24) or weekday - if his mealtime coincides with the animal's feeding time, then the animal must be fed first.

Some poskim hold that it is prohibited to eat even a snack before feeding one's animals,(25) while others permit the owner to have a snack first. (26) Taking a drink before one's animal is permitted.(27) There is no requirement that the animal actually eat before the owner does; as long as food was placed before the animal, or arrangements made for the food to be brought to the animal, the owner may proceed with his meal.(28) It is permitted for one to feed his small children who cannot feed themselves before he feeds his animals.(29)

Important Note: A number of weeks ago we discussed the various opinions regarding the prohibition of chodosh and how these halachos apply in our times. We neglected to mention that keeping yoshon is much easier today due to the handbook and updates provided by Rabbi Yosef Herman (845-356- 5743). Rabbi Herman also maintains an e-mail distribution list which notifies people as to how to receive the most current guide by e-mail when it becomes available. He also uses the e-mail list to send out bulletins of yoshon information which he receives before and after the guide is published. To put one's name on the list, send an e-mail message to: chodosh-subscribe@jif.org.il.

FOOTNOTES: 1 There are several views among contemporary poskim as to when, exactly, misheyakir occurs, ranging from 60 to 35 minutes before sunrise. 2 O.C. 18:3 and Mishnah Berurah 10. 3 See Mishnah Berurah 581:6 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 5. 4 O.C. 14:3 and Mishnah Berurah 11. 5 See Beir Halachah O.C. 14:3, s.v. shalah and Halichos Shelomo 2:1-1. 6 O.C. 24:3. 7 O.C. 8:10. See Igros Moshe

O.C. 4:7. 8 See Halichos Shelomo 2:1-1 and Shalamei Moed, pg. 22. Alternatively, he could wear his own without a reciting a berachah, since in this case there is no concern that he will forget to recite the berachah when the appropriate time arrives. 9 Mishnah Berurah 167:35. 10 See Mishnah Berurah 210:1 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 10; Beir Halachah 208:9, s.v. aino; Igros Moshe O.C. 1:76. See Shevet ha-Levi 4:21 for a dissenting opinion. 11 Aruch ha-Shulchan 177:2; Igros Moshe O.C. 4:41. See V'zos ha-Berachah, pg. 71, for a dissenting opinion. 12 Another reason to eat a k'zayis at the beginning of the meal is to satisfy the opinion of the Dagul M'irvavah (O.C. 167:7) who holds that one must recite a berachah rishonah on all other foods during the meal if he did not eat a k'zayis immediately after ha-motzi. 13 Mishnah Berurah 167:35. See also Igros Moshe O.C. 5:16-4. 14 O.C. 167:6. 15 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 167:30; Aruch ha-Shulchan 167:13. See Yabia Omer 5:16 for an elaboration. 16 O.C. 164:2. Mishnah Berurah 164:8 rules that even if there was already a piece of bread in his mouth when the hesech ha-da'as took place, he may not swallow the piece until he washes again. Other poskim, however, disagree; see: Pri Megadim 7, Kaf ha-Chayim 10; Aruch ha-Shulchan 5. 17 O.C. 164:2 and a host of poskim mentioned in Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 164:10. 18 Chayei Adam 40:14; Mishnah Berurah 164:13; Aruch ha-Shulchan 164:5. 19 See Beir Halachah 164:2, s.v., lachzor; Chazon Ish 25:9. 20 Pri Megadim 170:2; Siddur Derech ha-Chayim; Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 164:2; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 40:16; Ben Ish Chai, Kedoshim 21; Kaf ha-Chayim 164:16. See also Chazon Ish 25:9. 21 Some hold that this is a Biblical prohibition, while others hold that it is a Rabbinical mitzvah; see Beir Halachah 167:6, s.v. umikal makom. 22 Thus one who owns a dog or a cat who scrounge around for their own food (and do not need to be fed by the owner), may eat before he feeds his pets; She'alas Ya'avetz 1:17, quoted in Sha'arei Teshuvah 167:2. 23 But it is permitted to eat food which does not belong to him but is given to him by others; Chasam Sofer, quoted by Ksav Sofer 32. 24 See Kaf ha-Chayim 167:54. 25 Magen Avraham 167:18 as explained by Pri Megadim; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 42:1; Mishnah Berurah 167:40; Kaf ha-Chayim 167:51. 26 Taz O.C. 167:7; Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 167:19; Nishmas Adam 5:11. 27 Mishnah Berurah 167:40. See Har Tzvi 1:90 for an explanation. See dissenting opinion in Kaf ha-Chayim 167:50. 28 See Yad Efrayim and Eishel Avraham O.C. 167:6 and Kaf ha-Chayim 167:52. 29 Igros Moshe O.C. 2:52.

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From: jmrlist@jewishmediaresources.org Date: Thu, 22 Sep 2005 10:32:33
 To: "Mailing List" <jmrlist@jewishmediaresources.org> Subject: Rosenblum in Mishpacha Magazine: "Cast your bread upon the waters"

**Cast your bread upon the waters
 by Jonathan Rosenblum**

Mishpacha Magazine

September 22, 2005 I'm currently in the process of finishing a biography of Rabbi Moshe Sherer, who headed Agudath Israel of America for over three decades. That biography could be described as an Orthodox version of Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. By unanimous consent Rabbi Sherer was one of the most effective people in recent memory, and the impact of Agudath Israel of America during his tenure was, in large part, a function of his remarkable talents. Those talents were many, and this is not the place for their enumeration. But the deeper I become immersed in this project the clearer it becomes how much of Rabbi Sherer's success was a function of good middos the respect, concern, and sensitivity he showed to others, and the dignity with which he conducted himself. Even in the decades when Agudath Israel was a small, virtually penniless organization, with a handful of employees, he was making connections with literally hundreds of politicians and key bureaucrats at all levels of government federal, state, and municipal. The files of Agudath Israel are filled with records of timely interventions by Rabbi Sherer where a single phone call to the right person achieved results worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to a particular yeshiva. The responses of those officials rarely had anything to do with the political power of Agudath Israel's constituency, from which the bureaucrats were, in any event, largely insulated. Rabbi Sherer never spoke the language of power politics, but argued each case on the merits. Rather the bureaucrats and politicians went out of their way to help many times even beyond the strict letter of their mandates -- because of the enormous respect that they had for Rabbi Sherer, who was often the only Orthodox Jew they knew. AARTS, the accreditation agency serving the American yeshivos, has brought tens of millions of dollars of federal funding into yeshiva coffers in the thirty years since its founding.

Yet AARTS would have never come into existence but for the close personal relationship between Rabbi Sherer and John Proffitt, the person in charge of accreditation agencies in the Department of Education. Over the seven years leading up to AARTS formal recognition by the Department of Education, Dr. Proffitt repeatedly exercised his discretion to waive various requirements or hasten the governmental review on behalf of AARTS. And each time, he gave the same reason: the desire to do a favor for Rabbi Sherer, as an expression of their personal closeness and mutual respect. Rabbi Sherer emblemizes the principle that good middos pay. Unfortunately, it is not too hard to find those who also demonstrate the opposite principle: Bad middos, in the end, damage their possessor more than anyone. There are those who approach life as a jungle in which it is either kill or be kill. They devote themselves to exercising control over others, and live for the joy of breaking someone else in negotiations, whether it is in business or buying a new refrigerator. Oh how they cherish their victories the fifty dollars on the price here, the hundred dollars they talked someone down there. But those precious victories are usually pyrrhic. The few thousand dollars saved over a lifetime come at the cost of gaining the name a hard person -- someone to be avoided, whether in business or shidduchim. Often those closest to such people pay the highest price, and the angry man, as Chazal say, is left only with his anger. Recently, I asked someone why they had gone out of their way to circulate a negative review of a project undertaken by a certain organization. In the course of the conversation, it became clear to me that if a certain phone call had been returned the critique would never have issued. How many times, I wondered, did parties who might well have ended up as business partners find themselves bitter competitors instead because of an unreturned phone call? (Rabbi Sherer, incidentally, was a fanatic about returning phone calls the same day, and if he could not do so, he would have one of his secretaries call to explain why.) As a beginning lawyer in Chicago, the senior litigation partner in my firm gave me an invaluable piece of advice: Don't make life miserable for your opposite counsel. If he or she asks for an extension on a brief or to defer a hearing, grant it, without making them appear before the judge, unless you have some compelling reason. Someday, he explained to me, you will need a favor from that same attorney. You might think that with fifty thousand lawyers in Chicago, you are unlikely to find yourself on the opposite side again from that particular attorney, but you will. And even in the relatively short time that I practiced, I had the occasion to learn how right he was. One of the best-selling self-help books of the 1950's was Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People. Most of Carnegie's tips are really lessons in good middos e.g., remember people's names; everybody loves the sound of their own name. Anti-business intellectuals of the time dismissed the work as indicative of the vulgarity of America, which reduced even decent behavior to the almighty dollar sign. But that was a misreading of Carnegie. Yes, treating other people well, learning how to listen to others, for example, would help one in life. But Carnegie never doubted that good middos were desirable for their own sake. Many famous Mashgichim encouraged their students to read the book. If anything, the utility of good middos was only proof that Hashem has structured the world in such a way that life becomes richer and more enjoyable the closer one follows the Divine instructions. Every time we smile, or give someone a compliment, or decide that something is more important to someone else than it is to us, we create a little pool of positivity. All those who are touched by that pool are instinctively filled with the desire to create own little pools. Those pools expand outward in concentric circles, and eventually they come back to engulf us as well. The good we do for others returns to us certainly in the World to Come, and usually in this world as well. As the wisest of all men advised: Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days, you will find it (Koheles 11:1). You are subscribed to the Jewish Media Resources mailing list. To subscribe to or unsubscribe from this list, go to <http://six.pairlist.net/mailman/listinfo/jmrlist> See our site at <http://www.jewishmediaresources.org>

From: **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column** [ShabbatShalom@ohrtorahstone.org] Sent: Wednesday, September 21, 2005 7:05 AM Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Ki Tavo by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Ki Tavo (Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8) By Shlomo Riskin "TORAH LIGHTS" WEBCAST VIDEO Rabbi Riskin's insights on the Parsha now live online @ www.ots.org.il

Efrat, Israel - "When you come to the land which the Lord your G-d gives to you as an inheritance and you inherit it... You shall take from the first of all the fruits of the earth which you shall bring from your land... And you shall respond and you shall say before the Lord your G-d: 'My father was a wandering Aramean...'" (Deut. 26:1,2,5)
 The Mishna (Bikkurim) magnificently describes the drama of the bringing of these first fruits, the massive march to Jerusalem of farmers from all over Israel with the choicest fruit and grain of their labors in their hands, the decorated market - places of

our Holy City crowned by the magnificent fruits, and the speech – song of each individual farmer as he stood in front of the Temple altar with the offering he handed to the Kohen – priest. What an impressive demonstration of fealty to the Master of the Universe, who is hereby recognized as the Provider of all produce and the Sustainer of all sustenance.

However, the drama of the first fruits seems to be emphasizing a far different truth than that of G-d, the Ultimate Benefactor. The speech-song which accompanies the first fruits – an element which is unique to this particular commandment, and is not even a factor in the giving of tithes but which is a *codicione sene qua non* with the first fruits – makes no reference to the Lord of the rains and the winds and the sun and the nutrient – filled soil which produced these luscious fruits and sustaining grains of the seven species. The clear emphasis is the arrival of the Israelites to the Land of Israel – after having been enslaved and afflicted by the Egyptians, and after the Almighty heard their prayers and took them from Egypt to Israel with great miracles and wonders.

This quintessential early history of Israel goes one step further: it is recited by the individual in the first person (“My father was a wandering Aramean... The Egyptians placed upon us a land flowing with milk and honey” Deut. 26: 4-11) and makes the individual feel that the Land of Israel is his land. It is chiefly because of the brevity and total individual identification with Israel’s historical past that these verses are co-opted by the author of the Haggadah for Passover Seder. And if the drama of the Passover meal is tailor made to express the truth that “in every generation, it is incumbent upon every individual to see himself as if he came out of Egypt,” so is the drama of the first-fruits tailor made to express a parallel truth that “in every generation it is incumbent upon every individual to see himself as if he arrived in Israel.” Indeed, just as the Passover Seder is speech plus food, so is the Bikkurim speech plus fruits; and just as the Passover Haggadah comes from the verse “And you shall tell your child, vehigadeta” so does the speech – song of the first fruits open with the words, “I told (higadeti) this day to the Lord your G-d that I came to the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give to us” (Deut.26:3).

From this perspective I can understand why the first fruits are only to be brought from the seven species which are unique and bring praise to the Land of Israel (Deuteronomy 8) and why only an individual who owns a portion of the Land of Israel and on whose portion the fruits actually grew is obligated to perform the command of the first fruits. This is totally unlike the tithes, for example, which must be given by Biblical command only on wine, grain and oil (universal staples), and by Rabbinical command on all fruits and vegetables; the first fruits are not so much about G-d’s agricultural bounty as they are about G-d’s gift of the Land of Israel to the nation of Israel. Indeed, in the eleven verses of the first fruits speech – song, the noun land, *Aretz*, appears no less than five times, and the verb gift (*natan*, by G-d) no less than seven times.

To further cement the inextricable relationship between the first fruits and the Land of Israel, Rav Elhanan Samet (in his masterful Biblical commentary) cites a comment by Rav Menahem Ziemba (Hiddushim, Siman 50) in the name of the Holy Ari that the commandment to bring the first fruits is a repair, a *tikkun*, for the sin of the scouts. Perhaps that is why the Mishnah links the command of the first fruits specifically to the fig, grape and pomegranate (“If an individual goes into his field and sees a fig, a grape- cluster and/or a pomegranate which has/have ripened, he must tie them with a cord and state that these are to be first – fruits” – Mishnah, Bikkurim 1,3), precisely the three fruits which the scouts took back with them (Numbers 13:23). And the Bible relates to the scouts on their reconnaissance mission with the very same language that G-d commands the Israelite concerning the first fruits: Moses tells the scouts “And you shall take from the fruits of the land” (Numbers 13:20), “We came to the land... and it is even flowing with milk and honey, and this is its fruit (13:27), and – in remarkably parallel fashion – G-d commands the Israelites, “And you shall take from the first of all the fruits of the land” (Deut. 26:2), “Because I have come to the land” (26:3), “And He gave to us this land flowing with milk and honey” (26:9). In effect, G-d is saying that we must bring precisely those first fruits from that very special land which the scouts rejected, or at least lacked the faith to conquer and settle. The command of the first fruits proves that we repented of the sin of the scouts.

Rav Elhanan Samet goes still one more step further. The Mishnah teaches that the first fruits are to be brought from Shavuot until Sukkot, each area in Israel in accordance to the ripening of their respective seven species. (Mishnah Bikkurim 1,10). And they are only commanded when there is a Holy Temple, and require additional offerings as well as song and over-night sleep in Jerusalem.

In effect, therefore, the first fruits are a fourth Pilgrim Festival, the Pilgrim Festival which celebrates our entry into the Land of Israel. It was just this accomplishment which was lacking in Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot – and what better way to celebrate the entry into the land than by bringing its unique fruits and reliving our entry after the exodus !
Shabbat Shalom

From: weekly-owner@ohr.edu on behalf of Ohr Somayach [ohr@ohr.edu] Sent: Monday, September 19, 2005 6:05 AM To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Ki Tavo

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/2324>

OVERVIEW

When Bnei Yisrael dwell in the Land of Israel, its first fruits are to be taken to the Temple and given to the kohen in a ceremony expressing recognition that it is G-d who guides the history of the Jewish People throughout all ages. This passage forms one of the central parts of the Haggadah that we read at the Passover Seder. On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and seventh years of the seven-year shemitta cycle, a person must recite a disclosure stating that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate people in the prescribed manner. With this mitzvah Moshe concludes the commandments that G-d has told him to give to the Jewish People. Moshe exhorts them to walk in G-d's ways, because they are set aside as a treasured people to G-d. When Bnei Yisrael cross the Jordan River they are to make a new commitment to the Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah is to be written on them in the world's seventy primary languages, after which they are to be covered over with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes will stand on Mount Gerizim, and half on Mount Eval, and the levi'im will stand in a valley between the two mountains. There the levi'im will recite 12 commandments and all the people will answer "amen" to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed upon Bnei Yisrael. These blessings are both physical and spiritual. However if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe details a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.

INSIGHTS

Sign of the times

"You have distinguished Hashem today to be a G-d, and to walk in His ways..." (26:17)

Once there was a man who had to journey many hundreds of miles. Having never ventured so far from home he was concerned that he might stray from the trail, become lost and fall prey to bandits or wild animals. He sought the advice of an experienced traveler. Maybe he should take maps and a compass? The traveler told him not to worry; all he needed to do was to make sure he memorized the name of his destination. And along the trail that he sought to follow he would find signposts clearly indicating his destination. The traveler set out with confidence. And sure enough, before long he came to a fork in the road. He looked up and saw his destination clearly indicated. Smiling to himself he took the road that was signposted. And thus it continued, day after day, whenever the traveler would come to a crossroads, he would look up at the signpost and take the road that led to his destination. He had been traveling for about a week when one day he came to a crossroads of five different trails. This one, however, was without a signpost. He was gripped with panic - which way to go? He had planned his rations carefully and he knew that he only had enough water to get him to his next destination; there wasn't sufficient to allow him to return. As fear started to gnaw at his stomach, suddenly he saw that he had been wrong. There was a signpost at this crossroads after all. It had been uprooted and was lying on its side. He rushed over to the signpost and started to replace it in its hole. His elation was short-lived however; for he realized abruptly that he had no way of knowing which way the signpost was supposed to point.

He sank to the ground dejected and despondent. Then, it struck him. He jumped up, took the signpost and oriented the name of the place from where he had come to the direction from which he had been walking. Now he knew precisely which road to take.

The Jewish People are embarked on a world historical journey. In times such as ours where nothing seems certain, it's easy to become despondent. Where is G-d? Where is sanity? Where are we going?

If you know where you've come from, you know where you're going.

The Jewish People have been given the best travel guide known to man. It's called the Torah. G-d wrote the Torah in such a way that it contains all the instructions that the Jewish People will ever need to reach their destination. The word Torah itself comes from the word meaning "instructions." The mitzvot of the Torah are our signposts in a bewildering world. If when we come to life's crossroads we pick our direction at random, we have little chance of success. However, if we orient ourselves on our past, our future is assured.

If you know where you've come from, you know where you're going.

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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