

BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON RE'EH - 5763

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From: torahweb@zeus.host4u.net Sent: August 20, 2003
Subject: Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - Even If at First You Don't Succeed <http://www.torahweb.org/>

RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN
EVEN IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED

Among the fifty-five mitzvos found in Parshas Re'eh, six are devoted to the maisis - the individual who entices another Jew to worship idolatry. The Torah was most severe in its treatment of the maisis. The maisis is subject to capital punishment by stoning and many exceptions to the judgment process were practiced. Usually, the testimony of witnesses who were planted without the knowledge of the criminal and were unseen by him is unacceptable. Normally, it is mandatory that the two witnesses warn the criminal of his crime and the exact punishment he will receive. The Rambam in Hilchos Sanhedrin (11:5), based upon the gemara Sanhedrin (66b) writes that in the case of the maisis, the witnesses may be hidden and testify without having given any warning.

In all other circumstances, if one is tried in a capital case and found to be innocent, and someone afterwards claims that they have new evidence to convict, the trial is not reopened. This is based upon "do not execute the righteous" (Shemos 23:7). However, in the case of the maisis, he is returned to trial. Conversely, if one is found guilty in all other areas of Jewish law, and on the way to the execution someone comes forth claiming new exonerating evidence, we return the condemned to the courtroom, even many times, in an attempt to save his life, as it says (ibid) "do not execute the righteous". We do not, however, return the maisis. Finally, a Jew is required to love each and every Jew, even a criminal. The maisis, however, is an exception, as the Torah states (Devarim 13:9) "you shall not accede to him", understood by our Rabbis to mean, you shall not show any love or compassion towards him.

The Alter of Kelm makes a startling observation. The severe treatment of the maisis is "ki be'kaish l'hadichacha" - since he tried to make you abandon Hashem. Even though he did not succeed, the very attempt is enough of a heinous crime to strip the perpetrator of all of his rights. Conversely, imagine the good that is in store for one who attempts to bring another Jew closer to Hashem and the tradition; even if he does not succeed, the process itself is most rewarding. As the Talmud (Yuma 76a) teaches, the measure of Hashem's beneficence is greater than his measure of retribution.

The virtue of reaching out and inviting another Jew to become familiar with his or her tradition is praiseworthy all year long. However, during the month of Elul it is especially significant. The Tur (Or Hachaim) writes in the name of Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Yehoshua, how unique the Jewish people are! Ordinarily an individual on trial for his life, does not bathe, nor personally

groom themselves, nor dress in their fine attire. The Jewish people bathe and celebrate their day of judgment with optimism. Reb Yisroel Salanter zt"l explains this phenomenon. Based upon the response of the Shunnamite woman, when asked, "Can something be said on your behalf to the king?" (Melachim II, 4:13) understood by the Zohar to mean, can something be said on your behalf to the King of Kings? She responded, "I dwell among my people", which is understood as her saying "Do not single me out. Moreover, I derive my comfort and redemption by being connected to and an integral part of my people". While the fate of each individual may be in jeopardy, the survival and success of Klal Yisroel has been assured. Thus, the most prudent thing an individual can do at this time of year is to connect themselves to their people, thereby riding the victorious coat-tails of Am Yisroel. Most certainly a sure way of connecting oneself to the Klal is to bring others under the wings of the Shechina.

Often, outreach professionals, as well as individuals, will reflect upon sincere efforts that have not yet born fruits. These efforts can include many hours of trying, cajoling, studying, and spending Shabbos and yom tov together, but still to no avail. Understandably, frustration can set in. To combat that frustration, the inference from the maisis must be kept in mind -the effort to bring another Jew closer has great intrinsic value independent of the result.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2002/parsha/rwil_reeh.html

TorahWeb from last year
RABBI MORDECHAI WILLIG
BLESSING OR CURSE

Parshas Reeh opens with a stark choice offered by Hashem: blessing or curse. The same word (reeh) and a similar choice are found in Parshas Nitzovim (30:15): life and good, or death and evil. Why does the negative alternative deteriorate from curse to death?

The Meshech Chochma (30:11) attributes this change to the intervening mitzva of teshuvah (30:1-10). Violations of Torah law are punished by a curse, but are not fatal. Hashem recognizes human frailty, and does not impose a death penalty for a momentary lapse.

The mitzva of teshuvah, which offers a remarkable opportunity to eliminates one's sins, is a two-edged sword. If one fails to repent, he is punished not only for the original aveira, but also for not doing teshuvah. Since one can repent at any time, the failure to do so cannot be viewed as a momentary lapse. Therefore, the penalty for one's persistent refusal to repent is referred to as death.

On that very day, when we were given the mitzva of teshuvah (P.N. 30:11), the life and death choice was presented (30:15). Moreover, on the same day, the two contrasts- life and death, and blessing and curse – were juxtaposed (30:19). This teaches that it is the failure to do teshuvah which increases the punishment. Remarkably, Parshas reeh is always read on the Shabbos before the beginning of Elul. At this point in time, before the month of teshuvah the negative choice is called curse. Nitzavim is always read on the last Shabbos in Elul. At this stage, after failing to do teshuvah in the month designated for it, the negative choice is called death.

One whose good and bad deeds are equal of Rosh Hashana is given a suspended sentence until Yom Kippur. If he does not repent, he is sealed in the Book of Death (Rambam Teshuvah 3:3). The Lechem Mishna asks, why does he deserve death? He answers that the failure to repent in the ten days of teshuvah is itself a sin which seals his fate.

On Yom Kippur itself, when teshuvah is more readily accepted, the failure to do teshuvah is an even greater sin. In the Meshech Chochma's formulation (30:20), one who does not repent would be better off if there was no Yom Kippur, or if he died on Erev Yom Kippur. The expression "din vecheshbon" (Avos 3:1) refer, respectively, to the original aveira and the lack of teshuvah, and the latter sin is greater.

This dual expression reflects the nature of the two sins. Hashem ultimately judges the original error of commission, often the result of a fleeting error of judgment. The more grievous error of omission, the persistent, and therefore calculated failure to do teshuvah is subject to a cheshbon (accounting) with more drastic consequences.

During the month of Elul, ushered in by Parshas Reeh, every Jew must make a cheshbon hanaefesh (a self-accounting) which is a prerequisite to teshuvah. The customary shofar is a wake-up call to use the special opportunity of Elul, lest the unwillingness to seize the opportunity be held against us. This call is especially critical this year, when Elul begins while many are in vacation areas which are not so conducive to teshuvah.

In the month of Av, we conclude Eicha by beseeching Hashem - bring us back to You and we shall return. In Elul this is insufficient. Since the time is so propitious for teshuvah, we must take the initiative. Hence, Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li, whose acronym is Elul.

II The opening of Parshas Reeh promises blessing if we listen to, i.e. observe, Hashem's mitzvos. However, Chazal, commenting on a pasuk read later in Elul consider one who learns and teaches Torah and observes mitzvos to be cursed if he had the ability to strengthen others but did not do so. The Yerushalmi (Sotah 7:4) illustrates this point with the following incident. During his reign, Menashe destroyed all the sifrei Torah in Israel and led the people astray. During the subsequent reign of Yoshiyahu, a sefer Torah was found, open to the pasuk, "Cursed is the one who will not uphold the words of this Torah (27:26). Yoshiyahu tore his garments and exclaimed, "Alai lehakim", it is incumbent upon me to uphold. He led an unprecedented teshuvah movement which forestalled the process of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash (Melachim II, 22 and 23). This spiritual revival was cut short by the untimely death of Yoshiyahu, to which the entire fourth pasuk of Eichah is devoted (Rashi 4:1). Rashi notes that the other sons of Tzion are included in the perek. This appears to be an understatement. Except for one reference to Hashem's anointed being trapped (4:20), the entire perek bemoans the fate of Am Yisrael. Why is this called a lament over Yoshiyahu? Moreover, why did he deserve such special recognition if all he achieved was a relatively short delay of the churban?

The last two pesukim refer to the destruction of the second Bais Hamikdash, and the fact that the exile of Edom is the final one (Rashi 4:21, 22). Why is this incorporated into the lament over Yoshiyahu, immediately after the reference to him as Hashem's anointed?

The answer to these questions is the incredibly long-lasting effect of Yoshiyahu's teshuva movement. In the fifteen subsequent years of his reign, an entire generation was returned to Torah. Even his wicked successors could not eradicate this influence. Thus, the "precious children of Tziyon" (4:2) owed their exalted state to Yoshiyahu, and the lament for them is a lament for him as well.

When the initial exile took place, the Torah scholars and leaders established themselves in Bavel (Melachim II 24:16). These great men, who developed only because of Yoshiyahu, later led the movement to rebuild the Bais Hamikdash. Since the second Bais

Hamikdash was built because of the influence of Yoshiyahu, its subsequent destruction is bemoaned in the pasuk following the one which describes the king's untimely death. And the promise of no future exiles, which heartens us during these difficult times in Eretz Yisroel, is a dramatic capstone, a measure of consolation in the face of destruction, and the culmination of the amazing influence of Yoshiyahu on Jewish history throughout the ages. While individuals do not wield as much influence as monarchs, their decisions can also have long-term impact. In effect, every person should say – alay l'hakim, it is incumbent upon me to influence my family and community, now and forever. Only then can he truly be blessed.

As we usher in and proceed through Elul, we are required to make two cheshbonos, accountings. First, we must improve ourselves and repent for our misdeeds. Then, we must analyze how we can uphold Torah and mitzvos for others as well. May we all merit the dual bracha of asher tishme'u, that you observe, and asher yakim, that you uphold the words, and the mitzvos, of our holy Torah.

<http://www.aish.com/>
DID YOU HEAR THE BOMB LAST NIGHT?

RABBI ERIC COOPERSMITH

I had just ended a conversation with a colleague in Los Angeles when I heard the unmistakable explosion. It was without a doubt a huge bomb, and it was close by.

I live in the neighborhood Arzei Habira, approximately 100 meters from where the attack took place.

It was a suicide bomber in the midst of a jam-packed #2 bus taking mostly families back from prayers at the Western Wall, a popular pastime during summer vacation. It's the bus I take home every night from my work at Aish HaTorah which is located in Old City's Jewish Quarter.

After insuring that all my kids were home safe, I ran out to the site of the attack.

You do not want to go to the site of a terrorist attack if you don't have to.

Two years ago I was forced to look for my 14-year-old son amongst the victims of a deadly attack in Beit Yisrael, a neighborhood that is right next to where last night's bombing took place. It was Saturday night and my son went to pray at a shul on the street that was bombed. He wasn't home yet.

I will never forget the sight of a paramedic approaching a three-year-old boy blown 50 feet by the impact of the blast and then turning away to help others after he realized the boy was dead. That scene put me into shock. I later found my son who was, thank G-d, fine.

I did not want to go to a similar scene unless it was necessary, but on the other hand, you can't be on the doorstep of a deadly terrorist attack and not go to see if your help is needed.

Although I was there within two minutes of the blast, there were already many emergency and police personnel on the scene. I blessed their dedication and decided the best thing I could do was step back and get out of their way.

Standing there absorbing the scene, I felt so helpless. I could not help those suffering immediately in front of me, and I could not think of a way to stop the insane path of the Road Map. America goes to war against terror and then pressures Israel to make a deal with Mahmoud Abbas who repeatedly states that he has no intention of dismantling the terror groups responsible for the murder and maiming of thousands of innocent people -- and scores of children in last night's attack.

But we can do something about it; we must do something about it. It is not hopeless; we can change the situation.

When Joshua came to conquer the land of Israel, he sent two spies who ended up being hidden and protected by Rachav, a prostitute.

Our sages teach us that Rachav heard about G-d's miraculous redemption of the Jewish people in Egypt and His splitting of the Red Sea. She heard the meaning of these two events, integrating the reality that the G-d of the Jewish people exists and that He is the one and only G-d to whom we should give our allegiance.

Rachav made that decision upon hearing of those events when they first occurred, but trapped in the depravity of Jericho, she was unable to fully act upon her decision until 40 years later when G-d brought the Jewish people into the land. The two spies sent by Joshua came to her house and made a pact to save her and her family. In the end, her family was saved and she married Joshua. All of this was orchestrated by G-d because of the decision she had made 40 years earlier.

Rachav shows us that decisions create realities, but sometimes they take time to come to fruition. She heard the underlying message of events and made her commitment.

Will we?

It's easy to feel that the situation is hopeless and give up. Rachav shows us that we always have the power to make decisions and the Almighty will move mountains in order to bring our decisions to fruition.

We can still hear the echoes of last night's bomb that killed 20 innocent people. Listen to its message and make a decision to be different. The story of Rachav teaches us that our genuine commitment will make a difference.

The Talmud lists a number of calamities that will befall the Jewish people in the period leading up to the Messianic era. It ends with a statement that we have no one to rely on except our Father in Heaven.

The Brisker Rav explains that many people mistakenly believe that this concluding statement is the anti-dote to the calamities listed -- there is no one to rely on except our Father in Heaven. He points out that this is actually part of the same list and is, in fact, the culmination of the calamities, not their antidote. One of the greatest tragedies is for the Jewish people when beset with crises to respond by saying, "All you have to rely on G-d." Yes, we need to rely on the Almighty, but we also need to hear the message and undertake, at the very least, the decision to change. I heard the bomb last night.

I just hope I truly heard it.

From: RABBI RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM LIST [parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: August 21, 2003 To: Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Reeh by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Reeh (Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17) By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse. The blessing, when you internalize (heed) the commandments of the Lord your G-d. And the curse, if you do not internalize (heed) the commandments of the Lord your G-d." (Deuteronomy 11:26,27)

Two problems face us as we read these verses, one textual and the other existential. The textual issue is based on the lack of parallelism: "the blessing, when (asher) you internalize, the curse if (im) you do not internalize;" we would expect to find consistency, either "when. when" or "if you do., if you do not" in both instances!

The existential issue hits us hard, especially in Israel during these fateful but difficult times. We have lost more than eight-hundred Israelis during these last three years in the Oslo war, either

soldiers in the line of battle or innocent victims at home, at school, at a bus stop, who were targeted by inhuman suicide bombers.

Many if not most of these were our best, our brightest and our most deserving of reward in accordance with the opening verses of our Torah portion; how can we possibly explain the many instances of suffering and pain on the part of so many virtuous souls who certainly internalized the commandments of G-d. I believe that the precise Biblical language reveals a profound truth about Torah commandments and human affairs. After all, the Torah iterates and reiterates that the Almighty gave us His laws "for your good;" proper ethical conduct ensures a well-ordered social structure devoid of aggression and violence, and the Sabbaths, Festivals and ritual purity provide for a stable and inter-generational familial nucleus united by meaningful occasions of joy, study and song. Hence an immediate blessing always comes immediately with the performance of the commandment; "the reward for a commandment is the very fulfillment of the commandment, built-in!"

In the instance of transgressions, there is also a built-in punishment; evil bears bitter fruit, the sinner is eventually discovered, unfaithfulness and deception destroys relationships and undermines families. However, unlike the blessing, the "built-in" curse is often not experienced until later on, sometimes not until the last years of the transgressor. Hence the adverb used by the Torah is not when, which connotes immediacy, but is rather "if you do not internalize the commandments," then the curse will come, but not right away.

The underlying assumption of this interpretation is that aside from the natural cause and effect of our actions, the Almighty does not extrinsically reward the righteous or punish the sinner in this world; one does not have the right to expect that if one is an honest businessman, one will be guaranteed great profits, or if one observes the Sabbath, one will live a long and healthy life. This world, according to many of our Talmudic Sages, is a world of freedom of choice for every individual. If the righteous would consistently be rewarded with long life, good health and a large bank account and the sinners would die at an early age in poverty, choosing to follow the commandments would be a no-brainer. Indeed, the only guarantee that the Almighty makes is the eternity of the Jewish people and our ultimate success in redeeming the world. As far as everything else is concerned, "not on individual merit does the length of one's life, the number and quality of one's children and the extent of one's sustenance depend, but rather on luck (mazal) do these things depend" (B.T. Moed Katan 28a).

A seminal incident in my life, which in large measure was the catalyst for my decision to make aliyah, magnificently explains this particular theological position (which is by no means unanimously accepted by our Sages). In the fall of 1970 I was in the (then) Soviet Union on a mission from the sainted Lubavitcher Rebbe (of blessed memory) to establish four underground Yeshivot - in Moscow, Leningrad (sic), Rega and Vilna. The Sabbath in Rega found me in a large, cavernous and almost empty Synagogue (perhaps thirty Jews in a Sanctuary that could easily seat a thousand) surrounded by four KGB agents. The gabbai whispered in Yiddish, "We will wait for you after the services in the basement. We are thirsty for Torah. But meet us without your friends."

At 12 p.m. sharp the Prayers ended, my "guardian satans" left (probably for lunch), and I descended to a darkened basement; fifteen men and two women were expectantly standing around a table set with bottles of vodka and honey cake. The gabbai requested that I make Kiddush (over the vodka, apparently), and give a Torah thought (d'var torah), after which we all sang a song and danced a dance. This procedure - vodka, honey cake, Torah

thought, song and dance - was repeated nine times. By that point two things happened: the Soviet Union, which had until then resembled black Tisha B'Av, turned into pink Purim, and I had no more Torah thoughts to present on that week's reading. The Torah reader, Reb Yisrael Feedman, helped me out. He began by asking how the Torah could command the Jews to pay a workman his wages as soon as the day ended. After all, the Talmud explains a child's premature death in the midst of honoring his father and the cruel torture of a pious religious Sage at the hands of the Romans, with the statement: "There is no reward for the commandments in this world, only in the world to come." (B.T. Kiddushin, 39b) So how can G-d expect us to reward our workmen at the end of each day when He Himself only rewards us at the end of our lives?

Reb Yisrael answered his own question. We are not day laborers vis a vis G-d; we are rather project managers. Our lives must be dedicated to the one unique project we are best qualified to execute in order to make the world a better place. And a Project Manager is always paid only on completion of the project. The commandments have their own built-in rewards and punishments. As far as other, external rewards are concerned, they come only after we conclude our life's project - in the life after life known as the world to come. Hopefully we are each busily occupied in doing the project we are most capable of doing for the greater glory of tikkun olam (world perfection). Shabbat Shalom.

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at: <http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm>
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From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network
[shemalists@shemayisrael.com] Sent: Thursday, August 21, 2003 11:48 AM To: Peninim Parsha
PENINIM ON THE TORAH
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM
PARSHAS RE'EH And you shall serve Him and cleave to Him. (13:5) "How does one 'cleave' to Hashem," ask Chazal in the Talmud Sotah 14a, "when He is described as an eish ochlah, consuming fire?" (Devarim 4:24) Chazal answer that the Torah enjoins us to cleave to Hashem's way. Mah hu - af atah. Just as He supplies clothes for the unclothed, visits the sick, comforts mourners and buries the dead, so should you do the same. I wonder. It should be easy - especially if doing so is considered following in the footsteps of the Almighty. We do not, however, see people lining up to clothe the needy, visit the ill and infirm, bury the dead and comfort those who are left behind? No! It is not easy. It is not geshmak, pleasant. Very little kavod, honor, accompanies these tasks. It is not pleasant going to a nursing home. It is not pleasant going to a hospital. It is surely not pleasant preparing the dead for burial. It is difficult to find the right words to comfort a mourner. There are no plaques given out to acknowledge these acts of kindness. I guess that is why Hashem does it. Those few who do not need their lives to be pleasant at all times follow in His footsteps. The rest of us wait for the plaques.

Having said that, I was thinking about what motivation could prompt those who really want to act kindly to be able to overcome the discomfort. The Jewish community is blessed with a host of well-meaning organizations that perform all sorts of kindness for the unfortunate. The same people are always involved. Can we change this unfortunate reality?

I recently read about a gentleman who, although he was a successful businessman, gave up literally every minute of his

spare time to assist in building the Sephardic Bikur Cholim in New York. He wrote in his diary shortly before his untimely passing what it was that inspired him to become so involved: "I went on a Bikur Cholim visit last week. The lady had cancer. Her husband could not handle it and had left her. One of her children was autistic. While I sat with her and talked, she held her autistic son in her loving arms and described her nightmare of a life to me. While she was talking, her healthy three-year-old daughter began to cry. 'Why was she crying?' I asked myself. 'Was it because her mommy was spending so much time with her brother? Was it because she knew that mommy was sick and might one day die? Was it because she missed her daddy who ran off one day - never to return? Or was she simply hungry or tired?' I did not know why she was crying, but I did know one thing for sure - her mother could not help her. She had more than her hands full. I tried to calm down the little girl and tell her, 'It will be all right.' I was lying. That night as I lay down in bed, I could not sleep. The little three-year-old girl's crying kept me awake. My mind just would not let go of her.

"I could not help hearing her cries. I knew then that I had to do something to alleviate those cries. I could not let her cry forever. As I write these sentences, I am crying. I am not sure if I am crying with her or for her, but, I cannot stop hearing the cries." So wrote Joseph Beyda. We must listen to the cries. Of course, it is not pleasant to go where the cries are overwhelming, where the pain is constant and debilitating. If we allow ourselves to hear the cries, we will eventually become the people we could be - the people Hashem wants us to be. After all, He wants us to cleave to Him, to follow in His ways. He always hears the cries.

It is the great people who are involved in acts of kindness. Perhaps it is the acts of kindness that make them great. Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, was exemplary in the application of the principle of mah Hu af atah to his own life. His acts of kindness were legendary. He did not merely delegate others to act; he personally participated in all areas of assistance to others. Already in his younger years he had become a gabbai, official, of the Chevra Kadisha, sacred burial society. Before long, he became the yosheiv rosh, head, of the chevra. In his position, he fought energetically and faithfully to see to it that the burial traditions of the Yerushalayim community were upheld. Although he was the head of the chevra, he did not see this office as a ceremonial position of honor or prestige. He continued to personally participate in the taharah, purification, and burial of the deceased. Mah Hu af atah.

There was one area in which Rav Yosef Chaim exemplified: visiting and giving solace to the terminally ill. In one of the small, vaulted alleyways of the Old City, there was a hospice for the terminally ill. Medicine in those days was not what it is today. The miserable, emaciated patients - who were relegated to a living purgatory on this world - had no reprieve from their unrelenting pain and depression. Even their relatives found visits to this institution too much to bear. To observe a loved one in overwhelming pain and suffering can be a devastating experience. The only ray of sunshine these pitiful souls could look forward to was a visit from Rav Yosef Chaim. He made it his business to frequent the hospice regularly and to sit by the bedside of each patient, providing much-needed words of comfort and encouragement. He found the time; he found the strength; he found the right words, because he was following in Hashem's footsteps.

But this you shall not eat from among those that bring up their cud or have a completely separated hoof...(14:7)

The criteria for identifying the kosher animal is repeated once again in Parashas Re'eh, thus emphasizing the significance of

kashrus. Two identifying characteristics of kosher animals are mentioned: they chew their cud; and they have completely split hooves. In the entire creation, just four animals have only one kosher sign. The overwhelming majority have neither sign. Only the One Who created these animals can make such an undisputed statement. As the Alter, zl, m'Kelm notes, this attests to the Divine authorship of the Torah. No human author would publicly make a claim that could be refuted. Yet, there are those who are still foolish enough to claim that Moshe Rabbeinu was not merely the lawgiver - he was the lawmaker.

Interestingly, in citing these animals, the Torah mentions the kosher sign first, then mentions that they lack the second sign. If they are indeed not kosher because they lack the second kosher sign, should that not be emphasized first? The Kli Yakar explains that the presence of their kosher sign adds an insidious element to their non-kosher status. He cites the Midrash that compares Edom/Eisav to a pig which presents its cloven hooves in an attempt to delude people into thinking that it is kosher. In reality, the fact that it does not chew its cud is the reason it is declared not kosher. It puts on a good show, presenting itself as kosher. In truth, it is all a sham - just like those chameleons who attempt to deceive people with their acts of piety while concealing their inner evil. This, in essence, makes them much worse than those who have no shame and publicly manifest their sinful behavior.

Horav Avraham Pam, zl, cited in The Pleasant Way, explains that a person also needs two kosher signs to declare him an adam kasher, an expression found in the Talmud denoting a righteous and upright person. The two signs are gut tzu Got and gut tzu leit; he performs those mitzvos that are bein adam laMakom, between man and G-d, and those mitzvos that are bein adam lachaveiro, between man and his fellow man.

Regrettably, just like the pig that exhibits his one kosher sign, there are Jews who go to great lengths to fulfill the obligation between themselves and G-d and totally ignore the other side of the coin. They spare no expense when it comes to purchasing the most beautiful Tefillin, the most beautiful Esrog. They make sure that everyone knows this. Otherwise, what value would their "public" display of devotion have? They pray with great intensity and devotion, seeing to it that they are among the last to complete Shemoneh Esrai, all the time making sure that everyone is aware of their devotion to prayer. Yet, when it comes to dealings between themselves and other people, they are sorely lacking. They will destroy anyone who has the nerve to compete with them in commerce or other pursuits. They are never present when a member of the community is down and out and must be helped. Suddenly, they have other commitments. They mistreat their wives and children and everybody who gets in their way, but they daven a long Shemoneh Esrai and buy a beautiful Esrog. Thus, their kosher sign is of the same significance as that of the pig - worthless!

This deficiency is much worse when it is manifest by a Jew who possesses one kosher sign than by a Jew with none. A Jew who does not act in accordance with the dictates of the Torah is simply not a Torah Jew. Hence, we do not expect as much from him in the way of ethical behavior. When someone expounds the Torah way of life, however, when he arrogantly publicly displays his frumkeit for all to see, we expect him to maintain exemplary ethical conduct with his fellow man. Indeed, such a person undermines and even humiliates the very Torah that he emphatically claims to observe.

Rav Pam asks a noteworthy question. If true ethical behavior is inextricably bound with one's relationship with Hashem, how is it that we meet gentiles that are fine, honest, decent, well-mannered human beings who perform kindness in a manner becoming the most righteous person? They certainly do not

observe mitzvos bein adam laMakom, according to the standard demanded of a Jew. Rav Pam explains that their meritorious conduct is manifest only under normal conditions. Under extenuating circumstances, however, when they are under duress or in pain, their personality flaws appear. They become angry and irrational, acting in a cruel and selfish manner. The gentile world has yet to produce anyone who can compare with our gedolei Yisrael, Torah leaders, who exemplify ethical conduct even under the most stressful situations. Such zachus hanefesh, purity of spirit, is possible only by one who exemplifies total commitment to the entire Torah.

Last, a ben Torah who spends his days and nights immersed in the sea of Torah should see to it that he expends the same time and energy in going beyond the letter of the law to fulfill mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro that he does for mitzvos bein adam laMakom.

You shall tithe the entire crop of your planting. (14:22)

Chazal teach us aseir bishvil shetisasheir, "tithe so that you will increase your wealth." There is a distinct corollary between the mitzvah of tzedakah, charity, and wealth. One who gives will be worthy of receiving. One who does not give has no merit for which to receive. When we think about it, what really is wealth? Better yet, how do we estimate one's worth? Usually, the idea of evaluating one's worth is a reference to his financial assets. Actually, that approach identifies a very limited perspective of one's true worth.

We measure one's worth in spiritual terms. It is not what we have that matters. That can all change in an instant. What counts is who we are. One can amass great wealth but still remain a pauper in character, still have little value in terms of what he provides for others. One who assumes his responsibilities in life has worth. A person should ask himself: What am I worth to my community? What am I worth to my family? What am I worth to myself? What am I worth to Hashem? If a person can find a positive value in all these questions, then he has value. If his responses are negative, then of what value is all the wealth he has amassed? He is truly destitute.

One of the great millionaires of the early twentieth century writes in his autobiography that when he was yet a young man he had accumulated his first million dollars. Excited, he went to his father and shared with him his good fortune. His father was a wise man and told his son, "I am not impressed." The son was taken aback. "Father," he said, "I am not yet thirty years old, and already I have made my first million - and you are not even happy?"

"No, my son," answered his father. "I am not impressed. What I want to know is how you will spend the money you have earned." Money is intrinsically neither good nor evil. It has potential to be both. It can be used for the greatest good, or it can catalyze the most devastating evil. It all depends upon how it is used. We can act in indifference, with interference, or with intelligence. The manner in which we apply our wealth will define our morality and ethicality, indicating our true net worth.

His requirement whatever is lacking him. (15:8)

While we are not obligated to make the supplicant wealthy, we are enjoined to see to it that he receives his due in accordance with his needs. Everybody's needs are different. One who had previously been wealthy and lost everything cannot subsist on the meager alms that would suffice for one who had always been poor. The Torah is probably the only ethical system that takes the poor man's self-esteem - his present frame of mind - in account when it prescribes the manner in which we are to sustain him. We have to make a person feel good about himself by assessing him

according to his self-image. If he was once wealthy, he should not be treated like a beggar. Return him to his previous station in life. Even if he was used to receiving a certain amount of kavod, honor, because of his previous financial position, he must be accorded the same honor as before. We must feel for him. Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, relates that in the shul of Horav Meir Michel Rabinowitz, zl, in Vilna, there was a certain wealthy member who would give large donations to the shul every Shabbos when he received the shishi, sixth, aliyah. Shishi was considered the preeminent aliyah, and he received it weekly because of his large contributions. After awhile, he lost all of his money due to a bad investment. He could no longer contribute in the manner that he did before. The gabbaim who were in charge of giving out the aliyos felt that to continue giving him shishi would be self-defeating, since he could no longer contribute the large sums he had before.

Rav Meir Michel refused to defer to the gabbaim's demand. Instead, he insisted that the individual receive his shishi as before, despite his inability to contribute to the shul in his previous magnanimous manner. He cited the above pasuk to substantiate his ruling. He felt that once a person had become used to a certain lifestyle, to deprive him of what he once had was to divest him of a part of himself.

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<http://www.artscroll.com/parashah.html>

Parashah Talk Parshas Reeh

Excerpt from Pirkei Torah,

by RABBI MORDECHAI GIFTER

The blessing: that you hearken to the commandments of Hashem, your G-d... And the curse: if you do not hearken to the commandments of Hashem, your G-d... When Moshe spoke about the berachah, he said, "that you hearken"; however, when he spoke about the curse, he said, "if you do not hearken. What was Moshe's intent in changing from "that" to "if"?

Rashi writes that the berachah will come in order "that you hearken to the commandments of Hashem." In other words, the purpose of the Torah's berachos is to further enable us to serve Hashem. Indeed, Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 9:1) writes: "We have been promised in the Torah that if we fulfill the mitzvos joyously and faithfully, and constantly exert ourselves over its [the Torah's] wisdom, then all those things that distract us from fulfilling the Torah – such as sickness, war, famine, and the like – will be removed from us. [We shall merit] all good things that strengthen and enable us to fulfill the Torah. We shall have adequate sustenance, peace, and considerable wealth – all so that we should not have to work for our physical needs, and thereby be free to learn Torah and perform mitzvos..." This concept, however, is not true of the kelalah, the curse, for the kelalah does not come in order to cause us to further sin, and therefore Moshe did not say "that you do not hearken."

Another explanation is that the entire creation is an act of chesed: Hashem desired to bestow chesed, and He therefore created the world as a means to do so. Ramchal (Mesillas Yesharim Chapter 1) explains that even though Hashem wishes to bestow only good, He has structured the creation in such a way that man must work to receive this good. The good is already in existence: it just lies waiting for man to perform the right deeds to gain access to it. Thus when we fulfill a mitzvah, we do not create the reward, but access the pre-existent good. Hence the Torah says: "The blessing: that you hearken to the commandments of Hashem," meaning that the blessing already exists, and we have only to "hearken to the commandments of Hashem" to attain it.

This concept, however, does not apply to sin and its subsequent curse. Hashem does not desire to curse the sinner, and, therefore, the curse does not lie waiting for man to sin. Instead, the sin itself causes the kelalah, a situation which occurs only "if you do not hearken to the commandments of Hashem."

From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: August 21, 2003 To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Re-ey WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5763

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights
A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav
WHICH FESTIVE OCCASIONS MAY A MOURNER ATTEND?

When a close relative passes away, the family is required to sit shivah, followed by a three-week period of less "severe" mourning called sheloshim. One who loses a parent observes a full year of mourning, starting with the day of burial(1) and ending twelve months later.(2) This extended period of mourning, known as "twelve months," was instituted by the Sages in order to pay proper respect to parents. Since a child is obligated to honor parents even after their death, the mourning period for parents is longer than for any other relative.(3) [A child should not mourn for "twelve months" if a parent explicitly requested that he not do so.(4)] One of the main features of this extended mourning period is the restriction on attending festive meals which take place outside of the mourner's home.(5) In the view of the Rabbis, partaking of festive meals outside of one's home is inappropriate for one who is in mourning. But what exactly constitutes a festive meal and what does not is a subject of much debate among the Rishonim and is further complicated by the various customs which have evolved over the years. What follows is an attempt to clarify the sources so that the reader can present his specific case to his rabbi for a ruling.(6)

Note: Our discussion only covers the mourning period known as "twelve months." The laws for shivah [or sheloshim for a parent(7)] are stricter and are not the subject of this discussion.

THE VIEWS OF THE RISHONIM

There are different views among the Rishonim(8) as to the type of meal which is restricted. [Note that only the meal is restricted. It is clearly permitted for a mourner to attend a bris, a pidyon ha-ben or any other mitzvah ceremony (other than a wedding) before the meal begins.(9)] The following are three main views:

1. The restriction applies only to meals which are strictly of a social nature and have no religious significance (seudas ha-reshus). Any mitzvah celebration, e.g., a wedding, bris, bar mitzvah, etc., may be attended.(10)
2. The restriction applies [mainly(11)] to meals of mitzvah celebration such as weddings, bar mitzvahs, brisim, etc. This is because the mitzvah itself lends a festive atmosphere to the occasion. There are two exceptions: 1) Weddings - if the absence of the mourner will cause great distress to the groom or bride and mar their simchah(12); and 2) A meal which the mourner is obligated to eat, such as Korban Pesach or ma'aser sheini during the time of the Beis ha-Mikdash.(13)
3. The restriction applies only to weddings [or Sheva Berachos] and remains in effect even if the absence of the mourner will cause distress to the groom or bride.(14) Other mitzvah celebrations, such as a bris, pidyon ha-ben, bar mitzvah or siyum, are permitted.(15)

THE VIEW OF THE SHULCHAN ARUCH

Shulchan Aruch deals with this issue from two different angles. First, the Rama rules that the basic halachah is a compromise between the second and the third views listed above. Thus he rules that all mitzvah celebrations - other than weddings - may be attended [as in the third view], and even a wedding may be attended if the simchah will be marred by the mourner's absence [as in the second view].

But after positing all of the above, the Rama goes on to say that it has become the custom that a mourner does not attend any meal outside of his home, neither meals of a social nature [as in the first view] nor any type of seudas mitzvah, including a bris or a pidyon ha-ben. While the Rama's custom is recorded in all of the later poskim and has become the accepted minhag Yisrael, there are conflicting opinions as to whether the custom covers all meals outside the home or whether there are some exceptions. Some poskim mention a siyum(16) or a seudas bar mitzvah(17) as exceptions,(18) while others specifically include them in the Rama's ban and prohibit attending them.(19)

The Rama's custom notwithstanding, it is clear that a mourner is not forbidden to eat a meal outside of his home if otherwise he would not have a place to eat. Thus it is permitted, for example, to invite an out-of-town mourner who needs a place to eat,(20) or to invite a mourner's family for supper when circumstances have made it difficult for them to prepare their own food.

DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF IT IS SHABBOS OR YOM TOV?

Some poskim(21) maintain that the Rama's custom of not eating meals outside of the mourner's home applies only to weekday meals; on Shabbos it is permitted to attend certain meals,(22) e.g., a bris, a seudas Shabbos or a group seudah shelishis.(23) Other poskim do not agree with this leniency and do not differentiate between Shabbos and weekdays.(24) But most poskim agree that a relative who is a mourner(25) - whose absence from a simchah will surely be felt or noted by the participants - may attend any meal on Shabbos, even a Sheva Berachos meal. This is because it is prohibited to make a public display of mourning on Shabbos.(26) If people will notice that a relative who should be there is not present, it is as if the "mourning" is taking place publicly.(27)

WHERE NO MEAL IS SERVED

The Shulchan Aruch quoted above discusses only attending a meal outside of the mourner's home. There is no mention, however, about partaking in a simchah where only refreshments or snacks are served. Harav S.Z. Auerbach was asked whether the Rama's custom refers only to meals eaten outside of the home or also to attending a kiddush or a simchah where refreshments are served. He answered that a mourner is permitted to attend such a kiddush or a simchah, congratulate the celebrants, partake minimally of the food and then leave.(28) He noted that even such limited participation should be avoided if there is dancing or music being played.

Harav Auerbach added that it is permitted to attend in this limited fashion, only in order to celebrate a simchah or a mitzvah observance. It is prohibited, however, for a mourner to attend any function whose purpose is purely social. Thus it is prohibited for a mourner to invite people to his house, or to go to other people's homes, for a social gathering even if no meal is served.(29)

ATTENDING A WEDDING SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

As previously stated, a mourner may not attend a wedding celebration. Nor may he enter a wedding hall while a wedding is taking place, even if he will not be eating there or actively participating in the wedding.

There are three views quoted in Shulchan Aruch(30) about attending the chupah only(31): Some allow it; others allow it only if the chupah takes place outside of the wedding hall, e.g., in a shul [or outdoors]; others prohibit even that,(32) and require the mourner to stand outside the shul [or hall] while the chupah is taking place.(33)

Upon consultation with a rabbi, there could be room for leniency to allow the following mourners to attend a wedding:

1. Parents and grandparents of the groom and bride.(34)
2. Siblings [who have been living together in one home].(35)
3. A shoshvin (one who escorts the bride or groom to the chupah).(36)
4. For the sake of family harmony (shalom bayis).(37)
5. If otherwise there will be no minyan at the wedding.(38)
6. The mesader kiddushin.(39)
7. A cantor, sexton, musician, photographer, or anyone whose livelihood depends upon being present.(40)
8. In certain unique situations, when the absence of a relative will seriously interfere with the happiness of the groom or bride.(41)

Rama quotes a view that any mourner may attend a wedding if he serves as a waiter(42) and does not partake of the food while in attendance at the wedding dinner. It has become customary that only relatives rely on this leniency.(43)

FOOTNOTES: 1 Mishnah Berurah 568:44. 2 During a leap year, no mourning is observed during the thirteenth month; the restrictions end after twelve months. 3 Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:255. See Nekudos ha-Kesef Y.D. 402 on Taz 9. 4 Shach Y.D. 344:9. 5 It is permitted to take part in any meal (except a wedding) which takes place at the mourner's home; Rama Y.D. 391:2. When possible, Sheva Berachos should be avoided as well; see Pnei Baruch, pg. 214, note 30, and pg. 460; Nishmas Yisrael, pg. 294. 6 Each case must be evaluated on its own merit, as sometimes there are extenuating circumstances, such as family obligations or shalom bayis issues, which may affect the final decision. 7 Sheloshim observed for other relatives generally follows the same guidelines as the "twelve months" for a parent. 8 There are also various interpretations among the latter authorities in explanation of the views of the Rishonim. Here, we have followed mainly the interpretation of the Aruch ha-Shulchan.

9 Geshet ha-Chayim 21:8-5. 10 Smag, quoted in Beis Yosef Y.D. 391, but not directly quoted in Shulchan Aruch. 11 Apparently, this view also holds that festive meals of a social nature are prohibited [since this is stated explicitly in Moed Katan 22b], but it still maintains that mitzvah celebrations are stricter. 12 Ra'avad, quoted by Rama, as explained by Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 391:5. [The actual situation

described in the source deals with the wedding of an orphan.] See, however, Noda b'Yehudah Y.D. 1:100, who maintains that this exception applies only if the wedding will otherwise be canceled. 13 Accordingly, this exception does not apply nowadays. [See Radvaz on Rambam, Hilchos Aveil 6:6 for an explanation.] 14 Ramban, as explained by Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 391:6. If the mourner's absence will cause the wedding to be canceled, it would be permitted to attend; ibid. 15 Nimukei Yosef, quoted by Rama Y.D. 391:3. According to this opinion, attending a bris is questionable, since it is debatable whether or not a bris is considered a festive occasion; Rama, ibid. 16 See Shach Y.D. 246:27, as apparently understood by Rav Akiva Eiger, Dagul Mirevavah and Pischei Teshuvah in Y.D. 391. See also Geshet ha-Chayim 21:8-6; 22:2-6. According to this view, it is permitted to attend a melaveh malkah whose purpose is to raise funds for charity if no music is played; She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 212:1; Nishmas Yisrael, pg. 274. 17 See sources quoted in note 115. This applies only to the meal that takes place on the day of the bar mitzvah or if the bar mitzvah boy recites a drashah. [Contemporary poskim note that nowadays the custom is to be stringent concerning a bar mitzvah; Pnei Baruch, pg. 224, note 63.] 18 Provided that no music is played; She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 212:1. 19 Chochmas Adam 161:2; Derech ha-Chayim; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 212:1; Tuv Ta'am v'Da'as 3:86. But even according to this view it is permitted to attend a siyum if the mourner himself is the mesayem (Beis Lechem Yehudah Y.D. 391:2; see Mishnah Berurah 669:8), or if the siyum is being held in memory of the deceased (Nishmas Yisrael, pgs. 261-262). 20 See Da'as Kedoshim Y.D. 391, who permits eating in a hotel. 21 She'elas Yaavetz 2:180; Rav Efrayim Z. Margalioy, 26; Kol Bo, pg. 361; Geshet ha-Chayim, pg. 233. 22 But a Sheva Berachos, etc., is prohibited even according to this view. 23 Eating these meals in the company of friends enhances the special Shabbos atmosphere. If the purpose of the meal is purely social, however, it may be prohibited according to all views. 24 Pischei Teshuvah 391:2 and 4; Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:161. Seemingly, this is also the view of all the major poskim who do not differentiate between Shabbos and Yom Tov. 25 Or a close friend; Tzitz Eliezer (Even Yaakov 56). 26 Even during the shivah or sheloshim. 27 She'elas Yaavetz 2:180; Rav Efrayim Z. Margalioy, 26; Pischei Teshuvah 391:4; Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:161. There is an opinion (Shach Y.D. 393:7) that holds that a public show of mourning is only prohibited during the Shabbos of the shivah. If so, this leniency does not apply; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 65:66. 28 Minchas Shelomo 2:96-12. According to Harav Auerbach's opinion, apparently, it is permitted to attend any simchah where no actual meal is served. While there certainly are sources upon which this decision may be based (see Teshuvah Me'ahavah 3:77-1), it is not clear whether all poskim are in agreement; see Igros Moshe Y.D. 3:161 who allows attending a shalom zachar only if the mourner's absence will be noticed. 29 This ruling is based on the words of the Shulchan Aruch and Taz Y.D. 385:1, Teshuvos Binyan Olam 62 and Geshet ha-Chayim 21:7-9. 30 Y.D. 391:3. See Aruch ha-Shulchan 12. 31 Chupah means the actual ceremony [even though music is being played; Shevet ha-Levi 1:213]. It does not include the reception after the chupah. 32 Unless the mourner is honored with reciting a berachah under the chupah. 33 While there is no clear decision or binding custom, the Rama seems to rule according to the second view, and Geshet ha-Chayim 21:8-4 writes that this has become the custom. 34 Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 391:10; Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:171 and O.C. 4: 40-16 [who permits parents to attend a child's wedding even during shivah]; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 65:66 and Tikunim u'Miluim) concerning Sheva Berachos. 35 Gilyon Maharsha Y.D. 391:1. 36 Some poskim permit a shoshvin to attend the wedding but not to partake of the food, while others allow him to eat if he also "serves a little bit." 37 Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:255; Tzitz Eliezer (Even Yaakov 56-9). 38 Rav Akiva Eiger; Y.D. 391:3. 39 He should not, however, partake of the meal; Kol Bo, pg. 360. 40 See Kol Bo, pg. 360; Geshet ha-Chayim 21:8-3; Pnei Baruch, pg. 227, note 73. 41 Tzitz Eliezer (Even Yaakov 56). Not all poskim agree with this leniency. 42 A "waiter" means serving the entire meal, just like any other waiter who is employed by the caterer; Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Pnei Baruch, pg. 216, note 35. 43 Geshet ha-Chayim 21:8-11. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright © 2003 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross+@torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

From: RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG [tsc@bezeqint.net] Sent: August 21, 2003 Subject: [Par-reg]Parshat Re'ay / shiur
The following shiur discusses the connection between Parshat Re'ay and the city of Jerusalem, and is dedicated in memory of those who died on its streets in this week's horrific terror attack. May G-d bless His city with "menucha v'nachala" (see 12:9-10); and His people with "I'shchino ti'drshu" (see 12:5).

THE TANACH STUDY CENTER [<http://mail.tanach.org/>] In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag
PARSHAT RE'AY - "ha'MAKOM asher yivchar"

To our surprise, the city of Jerusalem (by that name) is never mentioned in Chumash. However, the underlying concept of that eternal city emerges as a major theme in Parshat Re'ay. In the following shiur, we uncover

the 'foundations of Jerusalem' in our study of the Torah's repeated use of the phrase: "ha'makom asher yivchar Hashem" [lit. the site that G-d will choose], and its thematic significance.

INTRODUCTION When we speak of Jerusalem, we usually relate to either one of its two aspects: a) its geographic location b) its function as the national center of the Jewish Nation.

Even though Chumash never informs us in regard to its precise location, its function as a 'national center' for the Jewish Nation unfolds as a fundamental theme in Sefer Devarim. To understand how and why, we must begin our shiur by returning to our analysis of the CHUKIM & MISHPATIM section of the main speech of Sefer Devarim.

Recall from our introductory shiur on Sefer Devarim that the main speech of Sefer Devarim (chaps. 5-26) discusses primarily the mitzvot that Bnei Yisrael must keep when they enter the land (see 6:1), to establish themselves as an "am kadosh". This speech divides neatly into two distinct sections: I - "Ha'MITZVA" (6:4 - 11:31) II- "Ha'CHUKIM v'ha'MISHPATIM (12:1 - 26:19)

The MITZVAH section, we explained, contains primarily mitzvot and repeated reminders ("tochaychot") regarding the proper attitude towards G-d ("ahavat Hashem"/ e.g. 6:5,10:12,11:22), while the CHUKIM & MISHPATIM section contains the more practical laws that Bnei Yisrael must keep when setting up their nation in the Land. These 'practical laws' begin in Parshat Re'ay (see 12:1) and continue all the way until the laws of "bikurim" in Parshat Ki-tavo (see 26:1-15). As this section is the Torah's largest corpus of laws, we should expect for its manner of presentation to be significant. As we shall now discuss in greater detail, the very first primary topic of this section just so happens to be "ha'makom asher yivchar Hashem". Therefore, we begin our study with an analysis of how the Torah first presents these laws:

HA'MAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM Let's read the opening psukim of the CHUKIM & MISHPATIM section, noting the progression of the commandments and the development of its main topic: "THESE are the 'chukim & mishpatim' which you must observe in the LAND WHICH HASHEM IS GIVING YOU... : * You must totally destroy all the sites where the nations worshiped their idols... on the high hills and mountains... you must ERADICATE THEIR NAMES from this place. * DO NOT WORSHIP YOUR GOD IN THIS MANNER (in multiple places of worship/ read carefully!). * Rather, at the SITE WHICH GOD WILL CHOOSE - HA'MAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM - amongst all your tribes, - LASUM ET SHMO SHAM; - "I'shichno ti'DRSHU u'ba'ta shama" * THERE you must bring all of your offerings and tithes etc. Eat and rejoice there in front of your Lord... * ... After you cross the Jordan and enter the Land and find rest from your enemies and enjoy security, then - HA'MAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM L'SHAKEYN SHMO SHAM - bring THERE everything I command... * Be careful not to offer your sacrifices anywhere that you want, rather at HA'MAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM, only THERE may you bring your offerings... (see 12:1-14)

Note that the first commandment - to destroy all places of idol worship in order to eradicate the NAMES of other gods from your land - serves as a 'pre-requisite' for the commandments that follow: to establish a central SITE IN WHICH GOD'S NAME WILL DWELL. This obligation - to transform Eretz Canaan into a land in which G-d's Name (i.e. reputation) becomes known - emerges as the first topic of this section. This goal is accomplished not only by ridding the land of the names of OTHER gods (12:2- 3), but also by establishing a national religious center - i.e. HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM L'SHAKEYN SHMO SHAM - a vehicle through which this goal can be realized. In relation to the framework of the main speech, this opening commandment is quite appropriate, for Bnei Yisrael are about to enter and conquer the Promised Land in order to establish G-d's special nation. Therefore, it is significant that the opening commandment be to rid the land from the names of other gods, while establishing a site in which G-d's NAME will become known.

A RECURRING THEME Not only is - HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM - repeated several times in the opening "parshia" (i.e. chapter 12), this phrase is mentioned some TWENTY times throughout the entire CHUKIM & MISHPATIM section of the main speech (chapters 12-26)! As illustrated in the following table, not only is it the FIRST topic of this section, it also develops as a recurring theme. The table below summarizes each mention of the phrase "ha'makom asher yivchar Hashem" together with its related topic:

PEREK/pasuk	TOPIC
=====	=====

12:5,11,14,18,21,26 The place to bring all "korbanot"

14:23,24,25 The place to eat "maaser sheni"

15:20 The place to eat "bchor b'heyma"

16:2,6,7,11,15,16 The site for "aliya l'regel" on the holidays

17:8,10 The seat of the Supreme Court

18:6 The service of the Leviim

26:2 The place to bring one's 'first fruits'

A NATIONAL CENTER A quick glance at this table immediately shows that the purpose of this site is not only to offer 'korbanot'; rather it emerges as a National Religious Center. These mitzvot in Sefer Devarim facilitate the establishment of this center, for in order to fulfill them, one must frequent this site on numerous occasions during the course of the year! First and foremost, every individual is obligated to make a pilgrimage to the site on the three agricultural holidays ("aliyah l'regel" / chapter 16). Moreover, one is obligated to visit this site whenever he must offer a "korban" (be it "n'dava" or "chovah"). The farmer must bring there not only his first fruits ("bikurim"), but also 10% of his harvest to eat and share at this site ("maaser sheni"). Likewise, the shepherd must bring not only the first born animals ("bchor"), but also 10% of his entire flock ("maaser b'heyma")! Furthermore, the Supreme Court for all judicial and halachik judgment must be located at this site. Thus, this site - HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM - is much more than a location to bring "korbanot". It unfolds as the National Center of the Jewish people.

What is the purpose of this center? How should it function? One could suggest that the establishment of this site would greatly facilitate the development of Am Yisrael as G-d's special nation. The establishment of this center, and the obligation of every individual to frequent this site, ensures the unity of the people and of the religion. Without such a center, within several generations it would be more likely that we would find twelve different religions rather than twelve tribes. This center was to serve as a center not only for gathering and offering "korbanot", but also for justice, judgment, Torah education, and culture - a site that would enhance the spirituality of each individual. To prove this point, let's take a closer look at the mitzvah of "maaser sheni": "You shall set aside every year a tenth of the yield of your field. And you should eat this tithe in the presence of your Lord 'baMakom asher yivchar Hashem l'shakeyn shmo sham"... IN ORDER THAT YOU LEARN TO FEAR GOD forever..." (14:22)

The Torah commands us to tithe ten percent of our produce, and eat it (or share it) within the confines of that center - an act that we are told will teach us to fear G-d. But why should simply 'eating food' at this site cause one to fear G-d? To understand why, we must conjecture as to how this site was to develop.

THE SITE / THE TEMPLE / AND JERUSALEM Even though it is not explicitly stated, it is implicit that the Bet Ha'Mikdash [Temple] was to become the focal point of this national center - for the simple reason that Devarim commands us to bring our "korbanot" there. [These are obviously the same korbanot as described in Sefer Vayikra.] However, "maaser sheni" itself is produce, and not an animal offering (i.e. it doesn't require a mizbayach). Nevertheless; the Torah demands that we eat this "maser" at this site. This implies that there must be an additional area surrounding the Mikdash where this "maser" can be eaten (which Halacha defines this as the area within the walls of the CITY that surrounds the Bet HaMikdash - the same law that applies to eating the meat of the "korban shlamim".] But when one eats his "maser" within the walls of this city, other people will be there as well. Let's review who else should be in this special city on a daily basis. First of all, the Torah designates 'civil servants' who are to officiate and administer the Bet Ha'Mikdash - i.e. the "kohanim" and "leviim" - whose entire lives are dedicated to the service of G-d. There will also be the judges and scholars of the supreme court system, populating this 'holy city' surrounding the Temple, infusing it with an atmosphere of "kedusha" (sanctity). Therefore, the experience of eating "maaser sheni" in this 'holy' city, mingling there with the kohanim, leviim, and Torah scholars, while sharing one's food together with family and the needy (see 14:25-27), would create an environment that enhances one's "yirat shamayim" - the fear of G-d. Note how Chizkuni's interpretation of the pasuk re: "maser sheni" reflects this same idea: "...when you will go up [to this site] to eat your maser sheni, you will see the priests officiating and the levites singing... and the Sanhedrin sitting in judgment and teaching laws..., and thus learn [from them] how to fear your G-d." (14:23, see also Seforno) **A PROOF FROM HAKHEL** This obligation to frequent HAMAKOM ASHER YIVCHAR HASHEM culminates every seven years with the "Hakhel" ceremony, where the entire nation - including the women

and children - gather to hear the Torah at this very same site. Here, once again, we find "yirat Hashem" - the fear of G-d - as the primary purpose: "... every seventh year... when all Israel gathers before Hashem "ba'Makom asher yivchar", you shall read this Torah (Sefer Dvarim) in the presence of all Israel. Gather ("hakhel") the people, men, women and children and the strangers, that they may hear and so learn TO FEAR THE LORD and to observe... Their children too ... shall hear and learn TO FEAR GOD as long as they live on the Land..." (see Devarim 31:10-13) Not only do we find once again the site "hamakom asher yivchar Hashem", we also find the purpose of this gathering to instill the fear of G-d in those who gather. As you review the above psukim, note as well the similarities to Ma'amad Har Sinai. This beautifully supports Ramban's interpretation that the underlying purpose of the Mikdash was to perpetuate the Sinai experience (see Ramban on Shmot 25:1 /and TSC shiur on Parshat Terumah).

To conclude our discussion of the 'function' of this site ["hamakom asher yivchar..."], we return to Torah's special use of the word "makom" in a very similar context in Sefer Breishit.

BACK TO SEFER BREISHIT Review the story of Yaakov's dream at the beginning of Parshat Va'yetze (i.e. Breishit 28:10-22), noting not only the word "ha'makom" (five times) but also its theme. At the conclusion of this episode, Yaakov vows that upon his return to this site ["ha'makom"], he will establish a Bet Elokim - a House for G-d. Here, we already find a thematic connection between the word "ha'makom" and the Mikdash. Similarly, in the story of the "akeyda" (see Breishit chapter 22) the Torah uses the word "makom" to describe that site. [See 22:2,3,4,9,14.] Recall as well how Avraham Avinu names this "makom" - "Hashem yireh" (see 22:14), a site that Chazal later identify as the very same mountain where the Bet Ha'Mikdash was built in Yerushalayim. In fact, in Divrei ha'yamim we are informed that Shlomo ha'melech built the Bet ha'Mikdash on Har ha'Moriah, the site of the "akeyda" (see II D.H. 3:1-3).

Even though it is not clear where Yaakov's dream took place, the Torah's use of the word "makom" in both stories, and their common theme certainly support Chazal's conclusion that both events happened at the same site (see Rashi 28:11), which later became the Bet ha'Mikdash in Yerushalayim.

HOLY GROUND OR HOLY PURPOSE Our analysis thus far demonstrates how the Torah puts more emphasis on the 'function', than the location, of this site. In fact, the Torah appears to be rather evasive in regard to where this site is actually to be located (see below). However, this very point may be very fundamental towards our understanding of Jerusalem. The site is special because of its function - to serve as a national center, to promote the reputation of G-d's Name ["shem Hashem"] among all mankind. This emphasis is important, for man is very vulnerable towards focusing on the holiness of a site rather than the holiness of its purpose. [Sort of like dovening TO the "kotel" instead dovening AT the "kotel", or saying tehillim TO "kivrei tzadikim" instead of AT "kivrei tzadikim".] For this reason, most all of the later prophets rebuke the people for misunderstanding the Temple in this manner. Take for example Yirmiyahu chapter 7 (in case you are not familiar, read 7:1-28, see also the first chapter of Yeshayahu). This rebuke does not imply that there is no value to holy sites. Precisely the opposite, the physical location is important for it provides a vehicle to promote its purpose. Yet, it always remains cardinal not to allow the holiness of the site to override the holiness of its purpose. [For a nice perspective on the balance between these two ideas, see Tehillim 51. I realize that this is a 'touchy' topic, so I'd rather you base your conclusions of David ha'Melech's explanation, rather than my own.]

JERUSALEM / SEEK AND FIND As we have shown, Sefer Devarim never specifies the precise geographic location of where this site is to be, i.e. where the permanent Bet HaMikdash is to be constructed. Instead, the site is consistently referred to as "the one which G-d will choose" ("HaMakom asher yivchar Hashem"). However, in Parshat Reay we do find a very obscure hint regarding how we are to find this site: "I'shichno ti'drshu, u'bata shama" - (see 12:5) G-d will only show us the site if WE look for it. This 'hide and seek' type relationship is reflective of every Divine encounter. To find G-d, man must SEARCH for Him. According to these psukim in Parshat Re'ay, this principle applies to the nation in same manner as it applies to the individual. [As we say in the daily Ashrei: "karov Hashem l'chol kor'av" - G-d is close to those who call out to Him.] When Am Yisrael as a nation, begins a serious search for G-d, then G-d will show them the proper location to build the Mikdash. The generation of Yehoshua, despite their military conquests, did not succeed in establishing

the permanent Mikdash (after conquering the Land). Instead, they erected the temporary Mishkan in Shilo. There it remained, quite neglected, during the entire time period of the Judges. After the city of Shilo was destroyed by the Philistim (during the time of Eli / see Shmuel chapters 4-6) both the Mishkan and the "aron" wandered from site to site. It was only during the time period of David ha'melech that Bnei Yisrael actively aspired to build the Mikdash. For example, when David became king over all of Israel (see II Shmuel 5:1-9), his first act was to conquer the city of Jerusalem. His next project was to gather the nation in order to bring the "aron" (the holy ark) to his new capital city (see II Shmuel chapter 6). Note how Divrei ha'yamim describes how David explained his plan (and the reason) to the nation: "David said to the entire congregation of Israel: If you approve, and this is from G-d (the events of David's rise to power), let us go forward and invite all our brethren in the land of Israel, together with the KOHANIM and LEVIIM and gather together, IN ORDER TO BRING BACK to us G-d's HOLY ARK - 'ki lo DRASH'NU'HU b'yemei Shaul' - for during the time of Shaul WE DID NOT SEEK IT" (I Divrei Hayamim 13:2-3) [Note the use of the shresh "d.r.sh." here and in Devarim 12:5]

David Ha'melech notes how the "aron" had been neglected during the generation of Shaul at the national level. In contrast to Shaul, David ha'melech considered bringing the "aron" to Yerushalayim as his highest national priority. After the "aron" finally arrived in Jerusalem, the next step in David's master plan was to build a permanent house for the "aron", i.e. the Bet Ha'Mikdash in Yerushalayim: "When the King was settled in his palace and G-d has granted him safety from his enemies [he'niach lo m'kol oyvav m'saviv], the King said to Natan the prophet: Here I am dwelling in a HOUSE of cedar wood, while the 'aron' is dwelling only in a TENT!" (see II Shmuel 7:1-2) [Note again the textual parallel to Devarim 12:10-11]

Even though G-d informed David that Am Yisrael would have to wait another generation before the Temple could be built (in the next generation by his son Shlomo, see II Shmuel chapter 7), its precise site was already designated in David's own lifetime (see I Divrei Ha'yamim 22:1). In fact, David ha'melech himself prepared all the necessary building materials (see the remainder of that chapter). If you read the above sources carefully, you'll see that the underlying reason for G-d's decision to delay its construction for one more generation stemmed from the need to wait until its 'function' - to make a Name for G-d - could be properly fulfilled.

JERUSALEM TODAY As we have seen in our study, according to the guidelines of Sefer Devarim - 'Jerusalem' is destined to become more than just the city that houses the Temple. Ideally, Jerusalem should become the National Cultural and Religious Center of the Jewish people, while making a Name for G-d. This aspiration is found in the prophecies of most all of the later prophets. For example: "For Jerusalem will be called the city of Truth ("ir ha'emet"), and the mountain of the Lord of Hosts - "har ha'Kodesh" (see Zecharya 8:3).

"For out of Zion will come forth Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (see Isaiah 2:3).

Today, be it for halachic, technical, or political reasons, we are not permitted to rebuild the Bet HaMikdash. Until the proper time comes, this aspiration remains our national dream and an everlasting prayer. Nonetheless, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem as our National Center - a city of Truth, Justice, and Sanctity - is not only permitted, it is our duty. In our own generation, G-d has opened for us a historic opportunity. The achievement of this goal remains our national responsibility.

shabbat shalom,

menachem

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