

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet

שבת פרשת ראה

Weekly Blog :: Rabbi Berel Wein *A Stiff-Necked People*

The Jewish nation is described in the Torah as being a stiff-necked people. In the context of that particular Torah discussion this description of the people of Israel is not necessarily a complimentary one. It refers to the stubbornness of the generation of the desert of Sinai and their rebellious nature in constantly refusing to abide by God's will and to accept Moshe's authority and rule.

Neither plagues nor wars, natural disasters such as serpents and poisonous snakes and supernatural punishments, seem to break their stubborn nature. That generation of the desert of Sinai, those who left Egypt, stood at the revelation of Torah at Mount Sinai, survived on manna from heaven and water from the rock, still never lost their attachment to the culture and slavery of Egypt.

At every turn in the desert we read that they complained and said: "Let us turn our heads round and travel back to Egypt." Part of the nature of stubbornness is the inability to admit past error and to recalculate decisions, attitudes and policies. In the case of the generation of the desert of Sinai, this trait of stubbornness led to tragic consequences.

This generation, which possessed such greatness – the rabbis characterized that generation of the desert of Sinai as being a generation of great knowledge and superior potential wisdom – somehow doomed itself to destruction because of its stiff-necked stubbornness and preconceived negative attitudes. Because of this history of Jewish stubbornness, the phrase "a stiff-necked people" has entered the Jewish lexicon as a very negative trait.

Yet, in the long view of Jewish history over the millennia of its troubles and travails, exiles and persecutions, it is clear that it is this very nature of Jewish stubbornness that has preserved us until this day. Only a stiff-necked people could have survived and retained its identity, its faith, its culture and its vision of eventual destiny over so many years and obstacles. We are alive simply because of the fact that we are a very stubborn people. Only a stubborn people would have survived the destruction of its Temple and exile from its land and still somehow returned to build it anew after so many years of absence and distance.

A stiff-necked people refuses to succumb to passing fads and imagined political correctness. A stiff-necked people realizes that a small minority can hold correct views and beliefs while more often than not overwhelming majorities are wrong in their policies and faiths.

The great rebbe of Kotzk phrased it correctly and pithily: "Truth can never be outvoted." So the trait of stubbornness and being stiff-necked has enabled the Jewish people to survive long and bitter centuries of exile and to restore itself to its land, independence and influence. It certainly has served us well through our travels in world history.

The Jewish people, especially here in Israel have exhibited tremendous fortitude, determination and resolute stubbornness over the past few weeks of our struggle with Hamas. Innumerable rockets have fallen on the Jewish population in the Land of Israel without breaking our spirit or crippling our justified response. It is not only the Iron Dome antimissile system that has protected us, though one should be awestruck at its efficiency and abilities, but it is the iron will and stubbornness of the Jewish people that has also protected us in this hour of need.

Other civilian populations have succumbed to such bombardments. In World War II, Poland and the Netherlands were broken by the Luftwaffe. However, Great Britain survived the Blitz and later the V1 and V2 rocket attacks even though it suffered more than sixty thousand civilian casualties therefrom. But this ability is currently doubtful, at least in the eyes of this observer of the current world.

Little such fortitude remains in Western society today. There are very few stubborn people left on the globe generally. But the trait of stubbornness has survived well and healthy within the people of Israel. It is undoubtedly

part of our DNA makeup. Applied correctly and in proper measure and fitting circumstances, stubbornness and being stiff-necked can be a great virtue, a most positive character and national trait.

The world looks at us as being too stubborn and unreasonable. In a culture where moral equivalency prevails and there is no right or wrong, the world is disturbed by our stubbornness and by our refusing to somehow just let things be, even when our very existence is challenged by the actions of a murderous enemy.

If our enemies and our friends as well would but look at our history and our accomplishments they would realize the positive nature of our stubbornness and respect us for it instead of criticizing us. So we will undoubtedly continue to be a stiff-necked people.

Shabat shalom

Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel Wein *Re'eih*

The use of the verb re'eih by the Torah to begin this week's Torah reading indicates that the seemingly complicated and abstract choices in life regarding faith and doubt, good and evil, right and wrong and life and death are really simple ones. The word re'eih denotes something that can be seen with the naked eye and needs no great thought or judgment to identify it.

The Torah implies here that life can indeed be a matter of simple correct choices that in reality are not difficult to make. But how can these simple choices truly be seen and discerned? We are witness to the fact that a great deal of humanity, if not even the majority, makes very wrong choices in personal and national life.

War, strife, angst and disputes govern human life and have done so for millennia. All of these are undoubtedly wrong choices but if it is so simple and clear as to what the correct choice should be, then why do humans continue to make wrong and harmful choices? So it is difficult for us to completely understand why the Torah should, almost cavalierly, say that if one but sees with one's own vision, one will unerringly make a correct choice in life.

The Torah seems to indicate that the choices in life are stark and clear and that there is very little if any grey area surrounding or encompassing these issues. Would that this would be true. But all of us are aware that there are great complications in life and that easy choices are rare and not very forthcoming.

I think that the "seeing" part of decision-making that the Torah envisions here extends to a knowledge and view of past events and of history generally. The Torah in essence tells us to look at what has gone before us, to see what decisions were made then and what the results of those decisions were, before making any current choices or decisions.

Not knowing the past always blinds the present and dims the future. Look at what happened to millions of Jews who abandoned their faith and observances, with their absent generations and the misfortune that they brought upon themselves and the Jewish people generally. Be aware of those who placed their faith in Western civilization and not in the God of Israel or the destiny of the Jewish people.

See how unforgiving history is of wrong decisions and of the pursuit of vanity, the lure of passing political correctness and of the faddish culture of the time. See and understand the fate of those Jews who no longer considered themselves Jewish but were destined to nevertheless be Jewish by the definition of a hateful anti-Semitic society.

In the eyes of history and of non-Jewish society there are no liberal or conservative, wealthy or poor, observant or less observant Jews. There are only Jews. This is a clear lesson of history that literally shouts at us and waves itself in front of our eyes. The Torah is therefore completely correct in using the verb re'eih in dealing with the pivotal decisions of life that

Jews and Jewish society are always faced with. Good vision and knowledge of the past will always help us find the right path for us and for all of Israel.
Shabat shalom

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Re'eh
For the week ending 23 August 2014 / 27 Av 5774
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights

School For Kindness

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

In the first, second, fourth and fifth years of the seven-year shemittah cycle, Jews living in Eretz Yisrael were instructed to separate a tenth of their crops, and bring it to Jerusalem to eat. In the third and sixth years of the cycle, that tenth was given to the poor instead.

One might ask: "Why weren't the landowners required to first share with the poor and only subsequently to enjoy their produce in Jerusalem?"

The Rambam writes that one must give tzedaka charity with a joyous countenance, and that giving with a disgruntled demeanor negates the mitzvah. It is not enough to do chessed (kindness), one must love chessed.

More than any other positive mitzvah, writes the Rambam, tzedaka is a sign of the essence of a Jew. By commanding us to bring one tenth of our crops to Jerusalem to rejoice there, G-d taught us two vital lessons. One: that our material possessions are a present from G-d and He can dictate how we use that material bounty. Two: that using material wealth in the way prescribed by G-d generates feelings of joy and sanctity.

Once we have internalized these lessons in the first two years of the cycle, we can offer that bounty to the poor in the third year — not perfunctorily, but with a true love of chessed.

Source: Rabbi Zev Leff in Shiurei Bina

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Rabbi Hershel Schachter

The Meaning of Am Hanivchar; the Source of Anti-Semitism
The TorahWeb Foundation

The Torah mentions several times that Bnei Yisroel are the am hanivchar. What exactly does that mean? Does it mean that just like parents sometimes favor one child over the others Hashem favors Klal Yisroel, and therefore we can get away with all kinds of mischief? This is clearly not the intention! First of all, the Gemorah points out (in the first perek of Messechet Shabbos) that the chumash clearly teaches us that it is improper for parents to have a favorite child, and the Torah clearly implies that all of the trouble surrounding mechiras Yosef and galus Mitzrayim came about because Yaakov Avinu treated Yosef differently than the other brothers.

Furthermore, our tradition has it that Bnei Yisroel are held to a higher standard than the umos ha'olam (see the midrash quoted by Rashi in Parshas Toldos on the possuk, "v'yitain lecho Elokim"). In general, one who is closer to Hashem has a greater degree of hashgocha protis both l'tav and l'mutov (good and bad); on the one hand the possuk tells us "raglei chassidov yishmor", i.e. that Hashem will protect one who is closer to Him in an unusual fashion; and on the other hand Hashem is m'dakdek im tzaddikim k'chut ha'sarah. For example, even with the ten explanations quoted by the Ohr Hachaim Hakaddosh we still don't know the exact nature of Moshe Rabbeinu's aveira which prevented him from entering Eretz Yisroel; all we know is that if anyone else would have done the same thing that Moshe Rabbeinu did, it probably would not have even been considered an aveira; but since he was so much closer to Hashem he was held to a much higher standard.

So what does it actually mean when the Torah tells us that Am Yisroel is the am hanivchar? The simple understanding seems to be that Bnei Yisroel are obligated to serve as an ohr lagoyim - a light unto the nations, as the novi Yeshaya mentioned on several occasions. Even before yetziyas Mitzrayim Hashem referred to Bnei Yisroel as "beni bechori - my first

born child". Does that possuk mean to say that all the nations of the world are bonim lamokom and Bnei Yisroel is the first born? The mishna in Pirkei Avos clearly rejects this understanding and states that only Bnei Yisroel have the cherished status of bonim lamokom. Only the neshomos of Bnei Yisroel carry in their "spiritual DNA" the middos of elokus in a manner similar to children carrying the physical DNA of their parents. The neshomos of umos ha'olam are fundamentally different, and as such the Zohar teaches us that when a nochri is misgayer it is literally true that ger sh'nisgayer k'koton sh'nolad domibecause his old neshoma is replaced with a new one.

The notion of Bnei Yisroel being the first born, the bechor, means that just as a first born child is expected to help his parents raise their younger children, so too Bnei Yisroel are called upon to influence the other nations of the world. The avos, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, were proactive in publicly preaching the lessons of monotheism. Apparently this charge was conveyed to Avrohom Avinu by Hashem when he told Avrohom, "V'nivrichu becha kol mishpichos ho'adoma" that all of the other families of the world should join along with you, just as one would graft a branch from one tree onto another (See Rashbam that the root of the word "v'nivrichu" is the word havracha, grafting).

After all of the shevotim were born, Yaakov Avinu understood that his responsibility to serve as an ohr lagoyim no longer required him to be proactive but should be fulfilled in a more passive fashion. Specifically, we can succeed in impressing upon all the nations of the world the values of honesty, integrity, and decency by acting properly ourselves and thus serving as a good example.

The Torah tells us in Parshas Ki Savo, "v'holachta bid'rachav" that we should preserve our tzelem Elokim by going in the ways of Hashem and then "when all of the nations of the world will see that you have succeeded in preserving your tzelem Elokim, they will learn from you how to act with yiras Shomayim" (see Aderes Eliyahu). The umos ha'olam also have tzelem Elokim and they can preserve that tzelem Elokim by following the ways of Hashem.

Hashem selected one nation to serve as a role model for all the others regarding how to go in His ways. The novi Yeshaya says, "am zu yotzarti", i.e. that the am ha'nivchar was a distinct creation of Hashem. According to nature, Klal Yisroel really should not exist, since the Chumash tells us that the imahos were akoros (unable to bear children), and the Talmud tells us (in Yevomos perek He'oreil) that Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov were akorim as well. As such, the whole existence of Klal Yisroel is l'maaleh min hatevah.

This probably explains the mysterious phenomenon of anti-Semitism which persists throughout all generations. A body naturally rejects foreign objects (and therefore when surgeons do an organ transplant they have to be concerned about the organ being rejected), and Klal Yisroel does not fit in to the natural system which makes up the rest of the world; Klal Yisroel was created as a separate yitzira which is l'maaleh min ha'teva. Thus we can understand quite well why all of the nations of the world, which are all part of teva, would naturally reject the "foreign body" of Klal Yisroel which does not fit in with the natural scheme of things!

We ought to cherish and appreciate the responsibility of being the am hanivchar, i.e. serving as the ohr lagoyim - the role model for all other nations.

Editor's note: for further discussion on the topic of Am Hanivchar by Rav Schachter see the following:

Are We Still the Am Hanivchar?

Am Hanivchar

The Temple and the Mikdash Me'at

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Orthodox Union / www.ou.org

Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column

Re'eh: "What's Missing in this Picture?"

The old and crumbling building housed a synagogue that was a "gift" from Joseph Stalin to the Jews of Odessa. Historically, Odessa was a metropolis

with a large Jewish population and many dozens of synagogues of all types. With the advent of the communist regime, and especially under Stalin's heavy fisted rule, almost all of those synagogues were closed down.

However, for some reason, Stalin permitted the Jewish community to preserve this one synagogue. For many decades, it was the only Jewish house of worship that was permitted in the entire city. It still functions today and is located in a sleazy section of the city, not far from the waterfront.

In 1991, at exactly the time of the outbreak of the Gulf War, I was sent as a delegate from the Jewish community of Baltimore to the Jewish community of Odessa. The Iron Curtain had recently fallen, and many Jewish organizations were eager to do what they could to help formerly isolated Jewish communities in the former Soviet Union. My assignment was to visit the city of Odessa and determine how the Baltimore community could be helpful materially and spiritually.

I vividly remember my first morning in Odessa, when I first visited that old shul. I was surprised that there were quite a few people who were present but was disappointed when I realized that they had no clue about the prayer services. They had come to light *yahrzeit* candles in the small chapel attached to the main sanctuary. Memorializing their dear departed loved ones was part of their religious consciousness, but prayer was not something that survived seventy years of communist domination.

However, with about fifteen or twenty men, and five or six women, you can figure out enough about prayer to join in the services. Some were foreign visitors like me, but others were Jews who had somehow held on to the rudiments of our tradition in spite of their many trials and ordeals.

It was a Thursday morning, and they removed a *Sefer Torah* from the Ark and read from it. In many ways, the scene resembled most other synagogues on an early weekday morning. But my companion and I were haunted by a strong sense that something was missing. For a while, we could not quite put our finger on what that was. Suddenly, and simultaneously, it dawned on both of us that there was no *tzedakah* box, or collection plate, within which to collect even a few coins for charity.

Communism had successfully expunged the practice of charity from the value system of these noble Jews. The time-honored Jewish practice of *tzedakah* was gone. After all, from the Communist perspective, it made no sense to give some of one's own property or possessions to another person. For his own survival, he had learned to carefully hoard everything that he had managed to accumulate. The notion of voluntarily giving it away to another was unimaginable.

Every year, as this week's Torah portion, *Parshat Re'eh* (Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17) approaches, I envision the picture of that old shul with the missing charity box. For it is in this week's parsha that we read in exquisite detail about the mitzvah par excellence, *tzedakah*:

"If there is a needy person among you...do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman. Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for what ever he needs...Give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return the Lord your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings. For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land, which is why I command you to open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land." (Deuteronomy 15:7-11)

I remember reflecting that frigidly cold morning upon my good fortune in having grown up in a very different old synagogue in Brooklyn. I recall my grandmother giving me a small allowance every Friday and carefully instructing me to put aside some of the coins she gave me to insert in the pushka, or charity box, in shul every weekday morning. I especially remember how we young boys would fight over the privilege of taking the charity box around to all those in attendance and collecting their contributions. I cherish the memory of the old man who would chant in singsong fashion as we paraded around the shul the keywords of the above quotation: "*Pato'ach tiftach et yadcha lo, open, yes open, your hand to him,*" dramatically enacting the verse by clenching and unclenching his fist. How sad that the tyranny of Communism had deprived these old Jews of Odessa of such childhood memories.

So fundamental is the mitzvah of charity that Maimonides writes that we must be more careful about this good deed than about any other. He bases his opinion upon the statement in the Talmud that declares that this one mitzvah is equivalent to all others.

With typical eloquence, Maimonides writes, "For the throne of Israel will not be firmly established, nor will true belief prevail, without the power of charity...Nor will Israel attain redemption by any means other than by acts of charity."

Maimonides continues his discussion of the preeminent status of the mitzvah of *tzedakah* by asserting that compassion for others is the very hallmark of a member of the Jewish people. If one encounters a person who is not charitable, he must suspect that perhaps such a person is not of Jewish descent. Charity, in our contemporary jargon, is hardwired into the genetic structure of every Jew.

With this background, I can continue to narrate the rest of the story of that wintry morning in old Odessa town. I asked permission from the oldest Jew present, who seemed to be the unofficial leader of the small group of elderly participants in that memorable Thursday morning service, to teach a few words of Torah. I took out a Chumash and read to them, in Hebrew, words from this week's Torah portion that I quoted above. I then translated them into Yiddish, which many there were familiar with, and asked that someone further translate the words into Russian. I promised them that if they would designate a small cardboard box which was lying in a corner as a temporary *tzedakah* box, I would hasten to see to it that a proper silver ornamental pushka would be delivered to them from my community back in Baltimore.

I continue to treasure the letter I received soon after my return to the United States. It thanked me and the members of my community for the silver pushka. The letter was signed by a committee of three, and concluded with the assurance that by the time that Friday morning rolled around each week, the *tzedakah* box was full, and its proceeds were distributed to the needy so that they could celebrate Shabbat befittingly.

I must confess that that letter made me feel both proud and powerful. Proud to have been privileged to teach a bit of Torah to such a special group of people, and powerful because it took Heshy Weinreb but five minutes to undo decades of Joseph Stalin's repression and tyranny.

**Orthodox Union / www.ou.org
Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
*Defining Reality***

One of the gifts of great leaders, and one from which each of us can learn, is that they frame reality for the group. They define its situation. They specify its aims. They articulate its choices. They tell us where we are and where we are going in a way no satellite navigation system could. They show us the map and the destination, and help us see why we should choose this route not that. That is one of their most magisterial roles, and no one did it more powerfully than did Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. Here is how he does it at the beginning of this week's parsha:

See, I am setting before you today the blessing and the curse—the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. (Deut. 11: 26-28)

Here, in even more powerful words, is how he puts it later in the book: See, I set before you today life and the good, death and the bad... This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore choose life so you and your children after you may live. (Deut. 30: 15, 19)

What Moses is doing here is defining reality for the next generation and for all generations. He is doing so as a preface to what is about to follow in the next many chapters, namely a systematic restatement of Jewish law covering all aspects of life for the new nation in its land.

Moses does not want the people to lose the big picture by being overwhelmed by the details. Jewish law with its 613 commands is detailed.

It aims at the sanctification of all aspects of life, from daily ritual to the very structure of society and its institutions. Its aim is to shape a social world in which we turn even seemingly secular occasions into encounters with the Divine presence. Despite the details, says Moses, the choice I set before you is really quite simple.

We, he tells the next generation, are unique. We are a small nation. We have not the numbers, the wealth nor the sophisticated weaponry of the great empires. We are smaller even than many of our neighbouring nations. As of now we do not even have a land. But we are different, and that difference defines once-and-for-all who we are and why. God has chosen to make us His stake in history. He set us free from slavery and took us as His own covenantal partner.

This is not because of our merits. “It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land” (Deut. 9: 5). We are not more righteous than others, said Moses. It is because our ancestors – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah – were the first people to heed the call of the one God and follow him, worshipping not nature but the Creator of nature, not power but justice and compassion, not hierarchy but a society of equal dignity that includes within its ambit of concern the widow, the orphan and the stranger.

Do not think, says Moses, that we can survive as a nation among nations, worshipping what they worship and living as they live. If we do, we will be subject to the universal law that has governed the fate of nations from the dawn of civilization to today. Nations are born, they grow, they flourish, they become complacent, then corrupt, then divided, then defeated, then they die, to be remembered only in history books and museums. In the case of Israel, small and intensely vulnerable, that fate will happen sooner rather than later. That is what Moses calls “the curse.”

The alternative is simple – even though it is demanding and detailed. It means taking God as our sovereign, judge of our deeds, framer of our laws, author of our liberty, defender of our destiny, object of our worship and our love. If we predicate our existence on something – some One – vastly greater than ourselves then we will be lifted higher than we could reach by ourselves. But that needs total loyalty to God and His law. That is the only way we will avoid decay, decline and defeat.

There is nothing puritanical about this vision. Two of the key words of Deuteronomy are love and joy. The word “love” (the root a-h-v) appears twice in Exodus, twice in Leviticus, not all in Numbers, but 23 times in Deuteronomy. The word “joy” (root s-m-ch) appears only once in Genesis, once in Exodus, once in Leviticus, once in Numbers but twelve times in Deuteronomy. Moses does not hide the fact, though, that life under the covenant will be demanding. Neither love nor joy come on a social scale without codes of self-restraint and commitment to the common good.

Moses knows that people often think and act in short-term ways, preferring today’s pleasure to tomorrow’s happiness, personal advantage to the good of society as a whole. They do foolish things, individually and collectively. So throughout Devarim he insists time and again that the road to long-term flourishing – the ‘good,’ the ‘blessing,’ life itself – consists in making one simple choice: accept God as your sovereign, do His will, and blessings will follow. If not, sooner or later you will be conquered and dispersed and you will suffer more than you can imagine. Thus Moses defined reality for the Israelites of his time and all time.

What has this to do with leadership? The answer is that the meaning of events is never self-evident. It is always subject to interpretation. Sometimes, out of folly or fear or failure of imagination, leaders get it wrong. Neville Chamberlain defined the challenge of the rise to power of Nazi Germany as the search for “peace in our time.” It took a Churchill to realise that this was wrong, and that the real challenge was the defence of liberty against tyranny.

In Lincoln’s day there were any number of people for and against slavery but it took Lincoln to define the abolition of slavery as the necessary step to the preservation of the union. It was that larger vision that allowed him to say, in the Second Inaugural, “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds ...” He

allowed neither abolition itself, nor the end of the Civil War, to be seen as a victory for one side over the other but instead defined it as a victory for the nation as a whole.

I explained in my book on religion and science, *The Great Partnership*, that there is a difference between the cause of something and its meaning. The search for causes is the task of explanation. The search for meaning is the work of interpretation. Science can explain but it cannot interpret. Were the ten plagues in Egypt a natural sequence of events, or Divine punishment, or both? There is no scientific experiment that could resolve this question. Was the division of the Red Sea a Divine intervention in history or a freak easterly wind exposing a submerged and ancient river bank? Was the Exodus an act of Divine liberation or a series of lucky coincidences that allowed a group of fugitive slaves to escape? When all the causal explanations have been given, the quality of miracle – an epoch-changing event in which we see the hand of God -- remains. Culture is not nature. There are causes in nature, but only in culture are there meanings. Homo sapiens is uniquely the culture-creating, meaning-seeking animal, and this affects all we do.

Viktor Frankl, the psychotherapist who survived Auschwitz, used to emphasize that our lives are determined not by what happens to us but by how we respond to what happens to us – and how we respond depends on how we interpret events. Is this disaster the end of my world or is it life calling on me to exercise heroic strength so that I can survive and help others to survive? The same circumstances may be interpreted differently by two people, leading one to despair, the other to heroic endurance. The facts may be the same but the meanings are diametrically different. How we interpret the world affects how we respond to the world, and it is our responses that shape our lives, individually and collectively.

That is why, in the famous words of Max De Pree, “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.”[1]

Within every family, every community, and every organisation, there are trials, tests and tribulations. Do these lead to arguments, blame and recrimination? Or does the group see them providentially, as a route to some future good (a “descent that leads to an ascent” as the Lubavitcher Rebbe always used to say)? Does it work together to meet the challenge? Much, perhaps all, will depend on how the group defines its reality. This in turn will depend on the leadership or absence of leadership that it has had until now. Strong families and communities have a clear sense of what their ideals are, and they are not blown off-course by the winds of change.

No one did this more powerfully than Moses in the way he monumentally framed the choice: between good and bad, life and death, the blessing and the curse, following God on the one hand, or choosing the values of neighbouring civilizations on the other. That clarity is why the Hittites, Canaanites, Perizzites and Jebusites are no more, while the people of Israel still lives, despite an unparalleled history of circumstantial change.

Who are we? Where are we? What are we trying to achieve and what kind of people do we aspire to be? These are the questions leaders help the group ask and answer, and when a group does so together it is blessed with exceptional resilience and strength.

[1] Max De Pree, *Leadership is an Art*, New York, Doubleday, 1989.

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

Drasha Parshas Parshas Reeh

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

The Meat of the Matter

In this week’s portion, the Torah allows us to partake in our material desires, but only according to Torah proscriptions. The Torah clearly allows the consumption of meat, albeit with a few caveats. The Torah states “If the place that Hashem, your God, will choose to place His Name will be far from you, you may slaughter from your cattle and your flocks that Hashem has given you, as I have commanded you, and you may eat in your cities according to your heart’s entire desire. Even as the deer and the ayal are eaten, so may you eat it, the contaminated one and the pure one

may eat it together: Only be strong not to eat the blood -- for the blood, it is the nefesh -- and you shall not eat the nefesh with the meat" (Deuteronomy 12:21-23).

Nefesh has various meanings, simply stated it is the life force of the animal — perhaps what we would call “the soul of the matter.” Clearly, the consumption of blood is a despicable act in the Torah view (a fact conveniently overlooked by the centuries of libelers who had us drinking, mixing, baking and cooking with it.) In addition, the process of extricating all blood from the animal is clearly and intricately defined through the Talmud and Shulchan Aruch. However, delineating the prohibition as one of combining the consumption of the nefesh with the meat surely goes beyond the prohibition of eating or drinking blood.

Surely there is a deeper connotation to the prohibition of the strange concoction of nefesh and meat.

Rav Yehuda Laib Chasman was considered to be one of the luminaries of the mussar movement. Before he immersed himself completely in the world of Torah and mussar, he had a business that sold flour to bakers. He would devote a portion of his day to his business and the remaining time he would spend at the famed Talmud Torah of Kelm under the tutelage of Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv, the illustrious Alter of Kelm. One day on the way into the Yeshiva, Rav Ziv called Reb Yehuda Laib over to the side and pointed to the white powder that covered the sleeve of his jacket. Rabbi Chasman took this observation to be a clear moralistic evaluation.

“Rabbi Ziv is pointing out that the flour is becoming part of me. If it is already all over my garments, and it is still with me when I leave my store, then it has become too much a part of me.”

With that, he made a personal decision that changed his life completely. He returned home, and figured out together with his wife that the amount of their current assets would more than cover any outstanding debts and allow them to sustain themselves. They sold the business, and Rabbi Chasman enrolled full-time at the Volozhiner Yeshiva, eventually emerging the great luminary whom we all revere.

Some of us like meat: whether it is the actual beef or the proverbial materialistic affairs in which we indulge. And that’s OK to a point. After all, we are only human.

But the Torah tells us to be careful to separate the soul from the meat. The holy from the mundane. It wants us to understand that other than the quest for the prime rib, which we wish to consume, there are more noble pursuits that should consume us. Therefore, the Torah tells us to clearly delineate the difference and tells us that although we may indulge in worldly pleasure we should be careful not to allow the soul to become devoured with the meat. Thus, it clearly commands, “Do not eat the nefesh with the meat.” A good meal is totally permissible. It even lifts the spirit. However, materialistic indulgences as such should surely never become our obsession or sole desire. For then, it will become part of our nefesh. It will become tantamount to our soul desire.

Good Shabbos

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D'var Torah

Parshas Reeh

The Only Reason I Have Eyes Is For You!

See I place before you today blessing and curse. The blessing that you listen to the commandments of HASHEM your G-d that I command you today, and the curse if you do not listen to the commandments of HASHEM your G-d and you turn away from the path that I command you today to go after other gods that you did not know. (Devarim 11:26-2)

Why is that we are asked to see the blessing and the curse? Why don't we just focus on the positive? Let us all just put on rosy glasses and seek only the good. Why must we study both the blessing and the curse? I think the answer is easy and complex.

It seems the entire goal of the Torah from creation to the end, (and by implication the ideal of teaching) is to impress the eyes, and change the way we see things, the way we perceive reality.

It is no coincidence that the conclusion of the entire Torah is "...and all the great awe, which Moshe performed before the eyes of all Israel. (Devarim 34:10-12) Rashi chimes in here: before the eyes of all Israel: This expression alludes to the incident where his heart stirred him to smash the Tablets before their eyes, as it is said, "and I shattered them before your eyes" (Devarim 9:17). And the Holy One Blessed is He gave His approval, as Scripture states, "[the Tablets] which you shattered" (Shemos 34:1); G-d said to Moshe, "Well done for shattering them!" Moshe is actually congratulated for having done a noble deed by smashing the holy Tablets. Why is he deserving of praise? before the eyes of all Israel: [This expression alludes to the incident where] his heart stirred him up to smash the tablets before their eyes, as it is said, "and I shattered them before your eyes" (Deut. 9:17). - [Sifrei 33:41] And [regarding Moses shattering the Tablets,] the Holy One Blessed is He gave His approval, as Scripture states, "[the first Tablets] which you shattered" (Exod. 34:1); [God said to Moses:] "Well done for shattering them!" before the eyes of all Israel: [This expression alludes to the incident where] his heart stirred him up to smash the tablets before their eyes, as it is said, "and I shattered them before your eyes" (Deut. 9:17). - [Sifrei 33:41] And [regarding Moses shattering the Tablets,] the Holy One Blessed is He gave His approval, as Scripture states, "[the first Tablets] which you shattered" (Exod. 34:1); [God said to Moses:] "Well done for shattering them!"

It's also no mistake that the concluding verses that celebrate Moshe for having smashed the Tablets are also a farewell tribute to Moshe. Who was more valuable in the universe than Moshe!? What was more valuable in the world than the Tablets!?

Why is it that Moshe's burial place purposefully obscured? Why is he is not mentioned but once in the Haggadah of Pesach, and even then he is referred to as "servant of HASHEM"?!

There is a little big weakness in the human spirit seeks to rear its ugly head. It is a tendency for idolizing the symbolic value over substance. It's an appetite for a spiritual security that leads us to institutionalize objects, and even ideas, like all styles "isms".

One of my great Rebbeim once told me pithily more than 30 years ago when we learning Musar together, "The problem with the "Musar Movement" is that it became a movement!" It's hard, neigh impossible, to bottle and preserve fear of Heaven.

Just as a nation can fall prey to attaching itself to a Golden Calf, it will likely attach over importance to the Holy Tablets and worship them as well. People will want to cleave to Moshe, even after his death, like a charm or a god if his burial place is known.

Moshe forever impressed the eyes of a nation with his shocking demonstration. Attention was diverted from the less important Tablets and turned back to the real and ultimate value HASHEM! In that first slight deviation, the path that swerves to curse is paved. That clear contrast; defining blessing and curse, right vs. wrong, true or false cannot be blurred with uncertainty. Only then can our focus be responsibly trained on the promise of blessing.

Pardon me for referring to an oldies tune with worthy words. "I only have eyes for you". Simply, one says to his beloved, "I use my eyes to appreciate you alone!" Nice! The deeper- Chassidic approach is that to HASHEM we acknowledge "the only reason I have eyes is for You!"

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Hama'ayan - Parshas Reeh

Edited by Shlomo Katz.

Today's Choice

Our parashah opens: "See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse." R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z"l (1910-2012; Yerushalayim) asks: Why does the verse say "today"?

He explains: If a person remembered everything that ever happened to him and all of Hashem's kindness to him, he would stop at nothing to be able to devote all of his energies to serving Hashem with all his heart. However, man's nature is that, although when he is first saved from danger he thanks

Hashem profusely, he soon returns to his routine and forgets Hashem's kindness.

This, writes R' Elyashiv, is the meaning of the verse (Devarim 32:18), "The Rock gave birth to you forgetful, and you forgot Kel Who brought you forth." G-d gave man the ability to forget as an act of kindness; otherwise, life would be unbearable. Without forgetfulness, man would remember at every moment every terrifying experience he had ever had and every mistake he had ever made. Who could bear such a burden? Forgetfulness allows man to put those thoughts behind him. For the same reason, G-d decreed that one's memory of the deceased would diminish with time.

R' Elyashiv continues: Hashem gave man the power to forget as an act of kindness, but man uses that power to forget Hashem. That is why our verse says "today." At all times, one must remember that Hashem has placed before him a choice between receiving a blessing or a curse. Man must remember "today" and every day so that he chooses properly. (Kitvei Ha'GRYS: Avot Vol. II p. 274)

"If there shall be a destitute person among you, . . . you shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother. . . You shall surely give him [literally, 'give, you shall give him'], and let your heart not feel bad when you give him." (15:7, 10)

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (rabbi of Rzeszow, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) writes: The Gemara (Berachot 10b) teaches: "If one has a Torah scholar as a guest in his house and allows the scholar to benefit from his (the host's) property, it is as if he (the host) offered a Tamid offering in the Bet Hamikdash." What, asks R' Lewin, is the purpose of the words, "in his house"? He explains:

We learn in Pirkei Avot (Ch.1): "Let your home be wide open and let the poor be members of your household." This is a message to the many people who give charity generously but never allow the poor into their homes. Rather, collectors and beggars must stand in the front hall and receive their donations there. Even if they are given food, they must eat it standing at the door or even outside the house. This is not proper; rather, says the Mishnah, "Let your home be wide open and let the poor be members of your household."

But what about the carpet and the couch? What if the poor track mud or snow into the house? King Shlomo already answered these questions in Mishlei (31:20-21--in the description of an Eishet Chayil / "Woman of Valor"), "She spreads out her palm to the poor and extends her hand to the destitute. She fears not snow for her household, [though] her entire house is clothed [i.e., upholstered] in scarlet wool."

If this is how one must treat an ordinary charity collector, how much more so a Torah scholar! This is what the Gemara means when it says, "If one has a Torah scholar as a guest in his house . . .," not merely at the door.

The importance of the attitude with which one gives charity is taught in our verses. Not only must one give, one mustn't feel bad when he gives. To the contrary, one must speak gently to the beggar and console him over his troubles and embarrassment. (Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun)

From the same work . . .

There are two attitudes that can lead one to give tzedakah / charity. One can feel sorry for the downtrodden pauper and give him charity as an expression of mercy. Such charity certainly is a worthy deed, but it is not the highest form of tzedakah. The highest form of charity is to give because it is a good deed; it is G-d's Will and His commandment to us.

R' Lewin continues (citing his grandfather, R' Yitzchak Shmelkes z"l): One advantage of giving tzedakah just because it is a mitzvah rather than because one feels pity is that the feeling of pity wears off eventually. Moreover, when we see that poverty is widespread, we become insensitive to it. Not so if one gives charity to fulfill the Will of G-d. That Will is unchanging, and so one's charity will be unending. This is the teaching of our verse: "Give, you shall give him." Say Chazal: You shall give to a pauper repeatedly, even a hundred times. How can you train yourself to do this? "Let your heart not feel bad when you give him" – don't give because you feel bad, but because G-d commanded it.

"You are children to Hashem, your G-d." (14:1)

R' Yisroel Meir Kagan z"l (the Chafetz Chaim; died 1933) writes: Imagine that someone ("Reuven") has a son who behaves improperly. Imagine further that another person ("Shimon") gossips about Reuven's errant son and publicizes his misdeeds. Reuven would be justifiably angry at Shimon. Reuven (the father) would say, "Even if you meant well, you should have rebuked my son privately rather than humiliating him publicly. Moreover, I know that your intentions were not pure; rather, you enjoy seeing other people's shame."

Our verse teaches that we are children to Hashem. The Torah means this literally; Hashem's love for us is similar to a parent's love for a child, even an errant child. Therefore, Hashem "rejoices" when good things happen to us, and He is "pained" when we have troubles. Let us imagine, then, how He "feels" when someone shames a fellow Jew! (Shemirat Ha'lashon: Sha'ar Ha'tevunah ch.5)

"You shall rejoice on your festival . . ." (16:14)

R' Eliyahu Shlomo Raanan z"l Hy"d (1934-1998; murdered by Arab terrorists in his home in Chevron) writes, citing the medieval work Orchoh Tzaddikim:

One must rejoice on Shabbat, Yom Tov and Purim, all of which recall the Exodus and other miracles that He performed wondrously for His chosen ones. Therefore, one should rejoice in his heart as he recalls G-d's kindness and His great goodness toward those who do His will. Because of this, we prepare fine delicacies and finer suits, and drink wine which gladdens the heart. The key, however, is not to rejoice over "havalim" [loosely translated: "mundane trivialities"] but rather one should channel the joy toward loving G-d and reveling in the mutual love between G-d and His people. One should also reflect at this time on the ultimate pleasure that will be attained in Olam Haba and should yearn for it. The purpose of all of this, however, is not for one's personal enjoyment but to further promote one's service of Hashem.

Continuing this theme, R' Raanan cites R' Nachman of Breslov z"l (1772-1810; chassidic rebbe): When one performs a mitzvah with joy, it is a sign that he is whole-heartedly allied with Hashem. The Arizal (16th century; the foremost teacher of kabbalah in post-Talmudic times, many of whose teachings have become incorporated into daily halachic practice) confided to a friend that all that he attained was because he rejoiced at performing mitzvot more than one would rejoice at finding a treasure. It was in this merit, said the Arizal, that the gates of the Heavens were opened for him and he understood what he understood.

R' Nachman adds: One must never become distracted for a moment from true rejoicing, which means rejoicing that one is associated with G-d and rejoicing in whatever good attributes one possesses himself, even if the only good in a person is that he performs mitzvot on a daily basis. (Quoted in Neshamah Shel Shabbat p.24)

Shemittah

This coming year – 5775– will be a shemittah / sabbatical year, when certain agricultural activities are prohibited in Eretz Yisrael. Beginning this week, approximately 30 days before the shemittah begins, we will devote part of each issue to legal and philosophical aspects of the shemittah year. The following laws are taken from Chapter 1 of Sefer Ha'shemittah, by R' Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky z"l (1872-1956), a prominent halachic authority in Yerushalayim, perhaps best known outside Israel for his work Gesher Ha'chaim on the laws of mourning.

1. [Early halachic sources proposed a number of different methods for calculating when the shemittah year will occur.] The universally accepted method today is to divide the years since creation by seven (e.g., 5775 ÷ 7 = 825). Poskim / halachic authorities now agree that we should not even consider this a matter of doubt, but rather a definite calculation. [Ed. note: In a future issue, we will discuss the implications of treating the calculation as a matter of doubt.]

2. In the time of the Bet Hamikdash, certain activities in the fields were prohibited by halachah le'Moshe mi'Sinai / oral tradition received by

Moshe at Mount Sinai beginning thirty days before the shemittah [corresponding to this coming Tuesday]. In certain types of fields, plowing was prohibited from the preceding Shavuot or even the preceding Pesach. Today, when we have no Bet Hamikdash, working the fields is permitted until Rosh Hashanah, except that planting trees and grafting onto trees must be completed 44 days before the shemittah. This allows 14 days for the sapling to take root and 30 days [of growth, so that it is considered a tree that grew before the shemittah]. This rule was instituted so that one who sees young plants will not suspect their owner of having planted them during the shemittah.

One should not plant any tree [during these 44 days], not in a field, nor in a courtyard, not even in a planter. If one did plant, he should uproot the tree. But, if he did not uproot it, the fruits are permitted to be eaten.

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at Torah.org start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the Hamaayan page.

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Rabbi Yochanan Zweig - Parshas Reeh

Don't Give It Personally

"Rather, you shall open your hand to him; you shall lend him his requirement..."(15:8)

The Torah instructs us to be open-handed with our destitute brethren. Initial assistance should be in the form of a gift.¹ However, continues the verse, if the recipient is reluctant to receive a gift, we should offer assistance in the form of a loan, thereby allowing him to maintain his dignity. The next verse warns that although the seventh year of the Shemittah cycle cancels all outstanding debt, we should not be deterred from issuing the loan.² Why does a person who has already shown his willingness to assist the destitute without any compensation require a warning not to hesitate if the assistance is in the form of a loan?

When a person gives a gift he experiences a sense of expansiveness. Often it is this feeling of magnanimity which motivates his actions. When the assistance is provided as a loan, the sense of magnanimity is lessened. Furthermore, if eventually the loan is cancelled, the recipient does not attribute his good fortune to the actions of the lender. Rather than the lender being perceived as a benefactor, he senses that the recipient has taken advantage of him. Since this is a less than satisfying experience for the lender, the Torah must reiterate that the focus of his actions should be the well-being of the needy and not his own personal satisfaction.

Consequently, money should be lent unhesitatingly even when the seventh year is pending.

1. See Rashi 15:8 2. 15:9

That's What Friends Are For

"This is what you shall not eat...the chasidah..." (14:12,18) The Ramban teaches that the birds which we are prohibited to eat exhibit negative character traits, and therefore, consumption of those birds would infuse these traits into the person's character.¹ In light of this, it is difficult to reconcile the Ramban's teaching with the Talmud's explanation of the name "chasidah", one of the prohibited birds, so called for the "chesed" - "kindness" which it displays towards its friends.² How could kindness be considered a negative trait?

An answer is given in the name of the Kotzker Rebbe. Since the bird only performs acts of kindness for those whom it considers to be its friends, this is a negative trait. One should be sensitive to anyone in need, not exclusively to friends.

However, this answer does not completely solve the problem. According to the Kotzker Rebbe's explanation, why does the Torah define the bird by the positive acts that it does, rather than by its negative trait, the chesed which it does not do?

Perhaps the Talmud is teaching us that since the bird considers that which it does for its friends to be a chesed, this is a negative trait. One should view that which he does for his friends as an expression of his commitment to the relationship, not as a charitable act.

1. See Ramban Parshas Shemini 11:13, these are birds that exhibit cruelty.

2. Chullin 63a.

Body And Soul

"You are children to Hashem, your G-d - you shall not cut yourselves..." (14:1) The Torah juxtaposes the statement "banim atem laHashem" - "you are children to Hashem" to the prohibition "lo sisgodedu" - "you shall not lacerate yourselves". Rashi explains that since we are Hashem's children we should not deface our bodies.¹ The Talmud teaches that there are three partners in the creation of a human being, the father, the mother and Hashem. Parents supply the child with physical characteristics and Hashem supplies the child with a soul.² Why does the verse describe our relationship with Hashem as His children in the context of safeguarding our physical form?

From the expression "lo sisgodedu" the Talmud derives the prohibition against separate factions observing divergent Halachic practices within the same community ("aggudos" - "groups").³ Since the prohibitions against lacerating ourselves and having separate factions are both derived from the same expression, a unifying thread between them must exist. What do they have in common?

In the first paragraph of the Shema we are commanded to teach our children Torah, "veshinantam levanecha".⁴ Rashi comments that "your children" refers to "your students" for a person's students are considered as his children. To support this notion Rashi cites our verse in Parshas Re'eh, "banim atem laHashem" - "you are children to Hashem".⁵ How does this verse indicate that a person's students are his children? It is apparent from Rashi's comments that he understands that through the study of Hashem's Torah we become His students, and can therefore be referred to as His children.

The Mishna teaches that a person is obligated to return his teacher's lost object prior to returning an object lost by his father, for his father provides him with a finite existence while his teacher offers him an infinite existence.⁶ The Torah taught by his teacher not only guarantees the soul an infinite existence, but also elevates the body given to him by his father from a physical and finite state to a spiritual and eternal state.

Although Hashem is clearly the source of the soul, Torah study enables the body to be perceived as a product of the same source. This message is punctuated by the commandment against lacerating our bodies because we are Hashem's children; through Torah study we become His students and thereby His children, body and soul. The reconciliation between body and soul is the ultimate proof that we emanate from one source. Since only the Torah is able to accomplish this reconciliation, it is of the utmost importance that the Torah itself be viewed as emanating from one source. Any action distorting this truth undermines the efficacy of the Torah to unite and reconcile all apparent divergent forces in creation. It is therefore self-evident that separate factions observing divergent Halachic practices within the same community cannot be tolerated.

1. 14:1 2. Niddah 31a 3. Yevamos 13b 4. 6:7 5. Ibid 6. Bava Metziah 33a

Known for his brilliant and thought-provoking lectures, Rabbi Zweig has inspired thousands through his teaching and widely disseminated recordings. His keen, analytical approach challenges students of all ages, giving them a greater understanding and love for Torah. In 1974 he founded the highly successful Talmudic University in Miami Beach, Florida, and continues to serve as the dean today. Ordained at Ner Israel Rabbinical College, he was a devoted student of Rabbi Yaacov Yitzchak Ruderman, z"l and Rabbi Yaacov Weinberg z"l. While in Maryland, he also attended John Hopkins University and studied law at University of Maryland. Rabbi Zweig is a much sought after lecturer and speaker; in recent years he has been a scholar-in-residence in over fifty national and international cities.

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Re'eih: Searching for the Temple Site

Surprisingly, the Torah never spells out exactly where the Temple is to be built. Rather we are instructed to build the Beit HaMikdash "in the place that God will choose":

"Only to the place that the Eternal your God will choose from all your tribes to set His Name - there you shall seek His dwelling place, and go there." (Deut. 12:5)

Where is this place "that God will choose"? What does it mean that we should "seek out His dwelling place"?

The Hidden Location

The Sages explained that the Torah is commanding us, under the guidance of a prophet, to discover where the Beit HaMikdash should be built. King David undertook the search for this holy site with the help of the prophet Samuel.

Why didn't the Torah explicitly state the location where to build the Temple? Moses certainly knew that the Akeidah took place on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, and he knew that Abraham had prophesied that this would be the site of the Beit HaMikdash.[1]

Maimonides (Guide to the Perplexed III: 45) suggested that Moses wisely chose not to mention Jerusalem explicitly. Had he done so, the non-Jewish nations would have realized Jerusalem's paramount importance to the Jewish people and would have fought fiercely to prevent it from falling into Israel's hands.

Even worse, knowledge of Jerusalem's significance could have led to infighting among the tribes. Each tribe would want the Beit HaMikdash to be located in its territory. The result could have been an ugly conflict, similar to Korach's rebellion against Aaron's appointment to the position of High Priest. Maimonides reasoned that this is why the Torah commands that a king be appointed before building the Beit HaMikdash. This way the Temple's location would be determined by a strong central government, thus avoiding inter-tribal conflict and rivalry.

"Between His Shoulders"

In any case, David did not know where the Beit HaMikdash was to be built. According to the Talmud (Zevachim 54b), his initial choice fell on Ein Eitam, a spring located to the south of Jerusalem. Ein Eitam appeared to be an obvious choice since it is the highest point in the entire region. This corresponds to the Torah's description that

"You shall rise and ascend to the place that the Eternal your God will choose" (Deut.17:8).

However, David subsequently considered a second verse that alludes to the Temple's location. At the end of his life, Moses described the place of God's Divine Presence as "dwelling between his shoulders" (Deut. 33:12). What does this mean?

This allegory suggests that the Temple's location was not meant to be at the highest point, but a little below it, just as the shoulders are below the head. Accordingly, David decided that Jerusalem, located at a lower altitude than Ein Eitam, was the site where the Beit HaMikdash was meant to be built.

Doeg, head of the High Court, disagreed with David. He supported the original choice of Ein Eitam as the place to build the Temple. The Sages noted that Doeg's jealousy of David was due to the latter's success in discovering the Temple's true location.

The story of David's search for the site of the Beit HaMikdash is alluded to in one of David's Songs of Ascent. Psalm 132 opens with a plea: "Remember David for all his trouble" (Ps. 132:1). What was this trying labor that David felt was a special merit, a significant life achievement for which he wanted to be remembered?

The psalm continues by recounting David's relentless efforts to locate the place of the Temple. David vowed:

"I will not enter the tent of my house, nor will I go up to the bed that was spread for me. I will not give sleep to my eyes, nor rest to my eyelids - until I find God's place, the dwellings of the Mighty One of Jacob." (Ps. 132: 3-5)

David and Doeg

What was the crux of the dispute between David and Doeg? Doeg reasoned that the most suitable site for the Temple is the highest point in Jerusalem, reflecting his belief that the spiritual greatness of the Temple should only be accessible to the select few, those who are able to truly grasp the purest levels of enlightenment - the kohanim and the spiritual elite.

David, on the other hand, understood that the Temple and its holiness need to be the inheritance of the entire people of Israel. The kohanim are not privy to special knowledge; they are merely agents who influence and uplift the people with the Temple's holiness. The entire nation of Israel is described as a "kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6).

The Waters of Ein Eitam

Even though Ein Eitam was never sanctified, it still retained a special connection to the Beit HaMikdash, as its springs supplied water for the Beit HaMikdash. The Talmud relates that on Yom Kippur, the High Priest would immerse himself in a mikveh on the roof of the Beit HaParvah chamber in the Temple complex. In order for the water to reach this roof, which was 23 cubits higher than the ground floor of the Temple courtyard, water was diverted from the Ein Eitam springs, which were also located at this altitude.

Rav Kook explained that there exists a special connection between Ein Eitam and the High Priest's purification on Yom Kippur. While the Beit HaMikdash itself needs to be accessible to all, the purification of the High Priest must emanate from the highest possible source. Yom Kippur's unique purity and power of atonement originate in the loftiest realms, corresponding to the elevated springs of Ein Eitam.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Shemu'ot HaRe'iyah (Beha'alotecha), quoted in Peninei HaRe'iyah, pp. 273-274, 350-351. Shemonah Kevatzim I:745)

[1] After the Akeidah, it says:

"Abraham named that place, 'God will see'; as it is said to this day: 'On the mountain, God will be seen'" (Gen. 22:14).

Rashi explains: "God will choose and see for Himself this place, to cause His Divine Presence to dwell there and for sacrifices to be offered here."

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Parshas Re'eh

R' Netanel Gertner

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Personal choice

When Rivka was pregnant, she was in pain all the time:

וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ הַבְּנִים, בְּקִרְבָּהּ, וַתֹּאמֶר אִם-כֵּן, לָמָּה זֶה אֲנֹכִי; וַתֵּלֶךְ, לְדָרֵשׁ אֶת-ה' (25:19-20)

Chazal understand that each time she walked past a holy place, one child would agitate, and each time she walked by a place of idolatry, the other would agitate.

Not yet knowing it was twins, she could not understand what she was going through – לָמָּה זֶה אֲנֹכִי – (Literally) "Why is this happening to me?"

But her resolution was quite odd:

וַתֵּלֶךְ, לְדָרֵשׁ אֶת-ה' וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לָהּ, שְׁנֵי גֵימִים בְּבֶטֶןךָ וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ הַבְּנִים, וַתֹּאמֶר אִם-כֵּן, לָמָּה זֶה אֲנֹכִי; וַתֵּלֶךְ, לְדָרֵשׁ אֶת-ה' (25:19-20)

After learning she was expecting twins, she was no longer distressed by what bothered her earlier. This is quite odd, as seemingly, the fact she was expecting twins does not address the issue that bothered her – her pain. What was the dialogue and resolution?

R' Chaim Brown suggests a fascinating resolution. When Moshe reviews the Torah in his final speech to the people, he tells them:

וַיִּרְאֶה אֲנֹכִי נִתְּן לְפָנֶיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרִכָּה וּבְקָלָה וּבְרָצוֹן וּבְחַיִּים וּבְשָׁלוֹם וּבְחַיִּים וּבְשָׁלוֹם וּבְחַיִּים וּבְשָׁלוֹם... Good and Evil. (11:26)

The obvious meaning is that there is a choice between two archetypes: good and evil, and we are implored to choose wisely.

But there is a different implication. אֲנֹכִי means the first person, the self, "I". What kind of אֲנֹכִי do you want to be?

Tying this to Rivka's problem, R' Brown frames her problem and resolution in a different light:

לָמָּה זֶה אֲנֹכִי – where is the אֲנֹכִי in this child? Does he want to go to holy places, or serve idols? This child has no אֲנֹכִי – he is confused!

And the prophet replied to her:

שְׁנֵי גֵימִים בְּבֶטֶןךָ – It is not one confused child, it was two distinct אֲנֹכִי archetypes. With this, she was comforted. This is also the choice laid before the Jews. What's it going to be?

The limits of charity

The Torah affirms the importance of charity:

עשר תעשר – you shall tithe... (14:22)

A double statement means to repeatedly do it, an unlimited amount of times. The difficulty this poses is that the Gemara in Kesubos caps the permissible amount of charity at no more than 20% income. These are mutually exclusive concepts.

The Vilna Gaon deduces that if the Torah requires endless generosity, it can only be that the reward for charity is the ability to give more, without hindering the giver. The Gemara in Taanis therefore says that עשר בשביל – a person will never be limited in their ability to give charity over time.

Seize the day

The people are presented with a very clear choice regarding their futures:

Behold, I am giving before you today a blessing and a curse. (11:26)

Curiously, there is transition from singular – ראה – to the plural – לפניכם. The choice presented is clearly by God – why specify אָנֹכִי then; who else would be speaking? It is also given in the present tense – נתן – when it ought to say נתתי – ‘I have given’, and with emphasis on הַיּוֹם – today. Further, why is the choice לפניכם – ‘before you’, and not לכם – ‘to you’?

The Vilna Gaon explains that the choice is not a general stand alone principle; it is a personal, ever-relevant choice. Anyone, at anytime, can become something more, and can repair past misdeeds. Hashem is נתן – ‘giving’ us the choice – in the present tense. The opportunity is always there.

This is accentuated – הַיּוֹם – ‘today’; forget about yesterday. Chazal understand that a Baal Teshuva is like a newborn; a new person by turning over a new leaf.

Despite the niggling self-doubt in the recesses of the mind at the ability to change, Hashem assures that you are not alone – אָנֹכִי – ‘I am with you in the struggle’. The Gemara teaches that the evil inclination seeks to consume and destroy mankind, and without God’s help we would be powerless to resist. God is with us.

But the choice remains ours. We have to exercise our free will and make the decision. God can only present the opportunity – נתן לפניכם.

R Yitzchak Lande points out that the Torah frequently switches from plural to singular, to teach that although there is an expectation of society – every single Jew has to participate. And if society aren’t doing it, you have to do it on your own.

In a world of fugitives, the person taking the opposite direction will appear to be running away.

The Kashrus of Raisin Juice and Wine

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Since parshas Re’eih contains many of the basic laws of kashrus, I bring you a related topic:

Question #1: Kosher Conundrum

"How can two kosher, *pareve* ingredients combine to become a product that can become non-kosher?"

Question #2: Are Raisins like Cherries?

"A non-Jewish friend of mine makes her own raisin wine. Is this a *kashrus* issue like grape wine, or is it like cherry wine, which is usually kosher?"

Answer

Commercial use of raisin juice and wine

While researching this topic, I discovered that the non-Jewish world, also, uses both raisin juice and raisin wine as specialty products. I also discovered that the two items, non-alcoholic raisin juice and alcoholic raisin wine, are used in very different ways.

Raisin juice is rarely sold retail, although one might find it in a health food or other specialty store. It is used predominantly in the bakery and condiment industries as a sweetener, but since raisins contain significant levels of propionic acid, their juice also functions as a mild natural preservative. Raisin juice can also serve both as a colorant and as a humectant, which means that it helps keep the product moist. Thus, there are many different reasons why raisin juice might be added to a product,

particularly since the manufacturer is not required to list on the label that humectants, preservatives, colors or flavors were added.

Raisin wine has an ancient history as an alcoholic beverage. Indeed, raisins contain all the ingredients to make wine that grapes have, except for water, which one can easily supply. Since the skins contain the natural yeasts that will naturally convert sugar into alcohol, and approximately 2/3 of the weight of raisins is natural sugar, raisin juice can easily be fermented into alcohol. Production of raisin wine involves soaking the raisins in water with a few other winemaking ingredients and then allowing the product to age. Specialty and boutique raisin wine producers prefer, like grape winemakers, to kill the natural yeasts and then inoculate with their own yeast, so that they can produce a more predictable product; but, the other basic ingredients for producing wine are all in the raisins. Quality raisin wines are usually aged for years before they are drunk.

Both raisin wine and raisin juice can be made either by steeping the raisins in water until it absorbs the raisins’ flavor or by cooking the raisins. We will soon see that there is a *halachic* difference depending upon which way it is produced.

Is it grapy enough?

Both raisin juice and raisin wine are specialty, almost boutique, products, and therefore quality is usually the main consideration, not price. On the other hand, the *halachic* authorities were discussing a situation where, for the most part, people were less concerned about product quality than they were about an inexpensive way to fulfill the mitzvah of *Kiddush*. From the extensive literature on the subject it appears that, at times, wine was very costly, and that raisin wine was often used as an economical alternative. Thus, one of the main issues is whether there is enough grape in the final product to be considered wine. In essence, this means that much of the *halachic* discussion about raisin wine is really discussing a qualitatively different product than what one will find sold as raisin juice or raisin wine. Nevertheless, there is much germane *halachah* to be learned here, and its application comes up under very surprising circumstances.

Halachic ramifications of raisin wine

The *halachic* authorities discuss raisin wine in the following specific contexts:

1. Which *brocha* does one recite before and after drinking it?
2. Can one use it for the mitzvah of *Kiddush*?
3. May *Sefardim* use it to manufacture non-*seeder* matzohs (*matzoh ashirah*) for Pesach? (*Ashkenazim* follow the practice of using *matzoh ashirah* only for the elderly, ill and children, so it would be germane for them in these matters.) Space considerations will not allow us to discuss this particular topic in this article.
4. Is it non-kosher if a gentile handles it?
5. Will pouring it on the *mizbeiach* fulfill the mitzvah of libation, *nisuch hayayin*, pouring wine on the altar?

The last question is mentioned briefly in the *Gemara*, where it states that, *lechatchilah*, one should not use raisin wine for *nisuch hayayin*, but one who did so has fulfilled the mitzvah. We will soon discuss each of the other issues in more detail. But first let us trace the background of these questions from their original sources.

Juice from marc

The earliest *halachic* reference to “wine” made from grape derivative is in the *Mishnah* (*Maasros* 5:6), which discusses whether one is required to separate *maasros* from a beverage called *temed*, manufactured by soaking the residue of the grape crush (called *marc* in English). *Halachah* does not require separating *maasros* (of produce grown in or near *Eretz Yisroel*) until the fruit is ready for consumption, which, in the case of wine grapes, means that they have been crushed, aged and filtered. Thus, *maasros* on wine grapes will usually be separated from the completed juice or wine and presumably have not been taken from the marc, which is a byproduct. The *Mishnah*’s question is whether the “wine” created by soaking marc in water and stirring the mixture until it becomes a beverage requires the separating of *maasros*. We will return to this question shortly.

Wine from sediment

A passage of *Gemara* (*Bava Basra* 96b) quotes a dispute concerning when and whether one recites *hagafen* prior to drinking a different type of *temed*

beverage made by steeping wine sediment, rather than marc, in water. When the yield is no greater than the amount of water initially used to soak the sediment, the *brocha* is *shehakol*, because there is insufficient grape product in the beverage. When the yield is four units for every three units of water used initially, then the *temed* is considered a grape product, and its *brocha* is *hagafen*. The *Gemara* quotes that there is a dispute among *tana'im* which *brocha* one should recite when the resultant beverage contains less than four but more than three units per three units of water. The first opinion rules that the percentage of grape product soaked out of the sediment is insignificant and considered nullified in the water. Therefore, the *brocha* is *shehakol*. The second opinion considers the grape presence significant in this instance; therefore, the *brocha* is *hagafen*. The *halachic* conclusion follows the first opinion -- the *brocha* on this product is *shehakol* (*Tosafos* ad loc. s.v. *Ein*; *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 204:5, 6).

Remember that this passage of *Gemara* was discussing *temed* made from soaking wine sediment. *Tosafos* (ad locum) discusses what is the proper *brocha* on wine produced by steeping marc, the residue of the grape crush, and concludes that no distinction should be made between marc *temed* and sediment *temed* -- unless the finished product contains four units for every three units of water supplied at the beginning, the *brocha* is *shehakol*.

Marc brandy

As a curious aside, it appears that Jews were not the only people interested in producing spirits from marc. According to my desktop dictionary, one of the definitions of "marc" is the brandy produced by distilling the residue of skins and seeds after the juice has been expressed. If the dictionary has a word for this beverage, we know that enough people were producing it, and it does not appear that their interest was to produce a beverage suitable for *Kiddush*. By the way, since this product is distilled and not simply fermented, most authorities rule that its *brocha* is *shehakol*, even if it produced four units of beverage for every three units of water.

Types of marc

When the *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 204:6)* discusses the correct *brocha* to recite prior to drinking *temed*, it notes that there is a difference between marc produced in a press and that produced the old fashioned way -- by crushing the grapes by stepping on them. It notes that the marc remaining from the latter method retains a high yield from the original grapes. Therefore, the correct *brocha* for the *temed* produced by soaking this marc in water is *hagafen*, even when the yield is no greater than the amount of water originally used.

What constitutes raisin wine?

Raisin wine is not the same product as marc wine, since raisins contain more grape flavor than does marc (*Shu't Tashbeitz* 1:57). For this reason, most authorities rule that one may recite *Kiddush* on raisin wine, even when there is no increase in volume (*Shu't Tashbeitz* 1:57; *Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim* 462; *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 272:6). Therefore, quality raisin wine definitely has the *halachic* status of wine.

Raisin wine and *stam yeinam*?

Let us now examine one of the other questions I raised before: Is raisin wine or raisin juice non-kosher if a gentile handles them? Allow me to provide background to this question.

The Torah prohibited receiving any benefit from wine that was used for idol worship. *Chazal* extended this proscription by banning use of any wine or grape juice which a gentile touched, and, in some instances, even if he just moved it or caused it to move. This prohibition is called *stam yeinam*. Does this prohibition extend to raisin wine? The *Rambam (Hilchos Maachalos Asurus* 17:11) rules that raisin wine should be treated like regular wine germane to these laws. Thus, raisin juice or raisin wine produced or handled by a gentile is not kosher.

At this point, we can address one of the questions mentioned at the outset of our article.

"A non-Jewish friend of mine makes her own raisin wine. Is this a *kashrus* issue like grape wine, or is it like cherry wine, which is usually kosher?"

Yes, it is most definitely a *kashrus* concern. Raisin wine is *halachically* like grape wine, not cherry wine.

What about *bishul*?

This leads us to an interesting question. The *Gemara (Avodah Zarah* 30a) teaches that the prohibition of *stam yeinam* does not exist if the wine was cooked, *mevushal*, before the gentile handled it. According to the *Rambam (Hilchos Maachalos Asuros* 11:9), the reason for this *heter* is because no self-respecting idolater would consecrate cooked wine to his deity. (Note that others cite a different reason for this leniency.)

One of the methods of producing raisin juice or wine is by cooking the raisins at the very beginning of the production to extract the flavor and juice. Does raisin wine manufactured this way qualify as *yayin mevushal*, thereby eliminating the problem of *stam yeinam*?

The *Darchoi Teshuvah* (123:43, quoting the *Divrei Yosef*, 846:6) rules that the leniency of *mevushal* exists for *stam yeinam* when the raisin wine is cooked **after** it is produced. In other words, cooking raisins to produce wine is not considered *bishul*. Cooking raisin wine that has already been produced is considered *bishul*.

However, a very early authority, the *Sefer Hapardes Hagadol* (#266, 267), implies that raisin wine or juice produced by cooking raisins is considered *mevushal* and does not require any further processing to avoid becoming *stam yeinam*. This ruling is followed by *Shu't Melameid Leho'il* (2:53).

Kosher conundrum

At this point, I would like to address one of our original questions: "How can two kosher, *pareve* ingredients combine to become a product that can be made non-kosher?"

Let me explain how this can easily happen, and then I'll provide an instance when it did indeed occur.

Water is kosher and raisins are kosher. However, soaking the two together creates raisin juice, which is *halachically* equivalent to wine and can become non-kosher when handled by a gentile.

Now the anecdote: Companies that have kosher certification are required to supply the certifying agency with a complete list of the ingredients they use. Raisins are not an ingredient that would create a great deal of attention -- they should always be kosher, provided that provisions are made to deal with the potential for insect contamination. Therefore, the fact that a bakery owned by a non-Jew used raisins did not attract any attention. All bakeries use raisins for some of their products.

It was discovered that the bakery was soaking raisins in water and then using the liquid as an ingredient in their pastry. Indeed, this rendered the pastry not kosher, since it contained what is *halachically* non-kosher raisin juice -- and the non-kosher finished product was being sold with a *hechsher*! Since the owners of the bakery had not read this article, the compromise of *kashrus* was not their fault, and the problem was corrected as soon as it was discovered. Every *hechsher* should be careful to ascertain exactly how every bakery and condiment manufacturer under its supervision uses raisins.

Conclusion

The *Gemara* teaches that the rabbinic laws are dearer to *Hashem* than the Torah laws. In this context, we can explain the vast *halachic* literature devoted to understanding the prohibition of *stam yeinam*, created by *Chazal* to protect the Jewish people from major sins. We should always hope and pray that our food is prepared in accordance with all the *halachos* that the Torah commands us.