

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Vaeschanan 5770

*Mazel Tov to Ester and Avi Bohorodzaner on the birth of a Ava Shifra !!!
Mazel Tov as well to the proud grandmother Helen Bohorodzaner, along
with all the extended family.*

The Aseres Hadibros **Rabbi Hershel Schachter (The TorahWeb Foundation)**

In the second Bais Hamikdash, the practice was to recite the aseres hadibros each morning at the conclusion of shacharis. After the destruction of the second Bais Hamikdash, a suggestion was made that we introduce this practice all over the world as well. The idea was not accepted by the rabbonim lest the masses be misled into believing that there is something more important about these pesukim than the rest of the Torah. There is a widespread practice to draw a design of the two tablets on the paroches or on the aron kodesh. One of the great Hungarian gedolim of the last century wrote that he thinks that this must have been introduced by the Reform movement. Orthodox practice is that we don't place more significance to the aseres hadibros than to the rest of the Torah. There are shuls in existence today that were built centuries ago that have the design of the aseres hadibros on them. Obviously, historically, this point is not correct. The aron kodesh in a shul is supposed to be reminiscent of the aron ha'bris in the Bais Hamikdash which contained the aseres hadibros, so apparently drawing a design of the luchos on the paroches or on the aron hakodesh does not at all imply that we are giving more significance to this part of the Torah as opposed to other parts of the Torah.

Many have a practice however, to stand during the reading of the aseres hadibros in shul despite the fact that for the rest of kriyas haTorah they do not stand. The Rambam was opposed to this practice based on the above consideration. Others have defended this practice by pointing out that we have another minhag regarding the reading of the aseres hadibros: instead of reading posuk by posuk, we divide the reading of this section by dibros. A dibra that consists of several pesukim is read in shul as if it were one posuk; and those dibros that appear in one posuk are read as if each one of them were an individual posuk. We read the aseres hadibros in shul as if we are reenacting ma'amad Har Sinai and therefore we stand just as Bnei Yisroel stood at the foot of the mountain years ago.

There are several discrepancies between the version of the aseres hadibros in parshas Vaeschanan and the version in parshas Yisro. The Talmud, however, is only concerned about the discrepancy between shamor and zachor regarding the observance of Shabbos. The Ramban in his commentary on the Torah points out that whenever the Torah quotes someone as having said something, it is not necessarily intended to be a verbatim quotation. The Torah is only interested in giving us a gist of what was said. As such, neither version of the aseres hadibros is necessarily what actually appeared on the aseres hadibros. But with respect to zachor and shamor, the Talmud feels that there is a major discrepancy. Zachor is a mitzvas aseh while shamor implies a mitzvas lo sa'aseh. These are not at all the same.

The Talmud explains that when Hakadosh Boruch Hu was proclaiming the aseres hadibros on Har Sinai, both the mitzvas aseh of zachor and the mitzvas lo sa'aseh of shamor were given simultaneously. The Talmud does not record any tradition which of the two texts actually appeared on the luchos.

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AFTER THE FAST :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The period of time that follows the fast day of Tisha B'Av is an active time for many. Vacations and trips temporarily delayed are now pursued vigorously. Purchases not made because of the "three weeks," the "nine days" and Tisha B'Av itself are now completed and life returns to a sense of normalcy. However, there is also the beginning of an upbeat mood because, glimpsed now over the horizon, is the arrival of the new year and its attendant holidays of solemnity and joy.

I have always felt that the wonder of Tisha B'Av in the Jewish world is that the Jewish people somehow continued after its destructive history. The rabbis taught the people to believe that the destruction of the Temples and even the exile and scattering of Israel over the face of the earth was not the final chapter in the story of the Jews.

They created a post-Tisha B'Av world that, while still looking backwards and never forgetting what had occurred to Israel, basically looked forward in order to create the conditions of Jewish survival, growth and dynamism. This remarkable achievement is unique in all of human history and is testimony to the covenant of eternity that controls our destiny and shapes our lives.

The Mishna and the Talmud, the basic books of Judaism and Jewish life, were created after the events of Tisha B'Av. The customs and folkways that have bound Jews together and to their tradition were created and strengthened after the destruction of the Temples. Resilience became the watchword of Jewish life.

In 1263, Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) argued against the Church in front of King James of Aragon that Jewish survival alone, over the then past millennia, was sufficient proof of the uniqueness of the Jewish people and of its covenantal nature with the Creator. "One sheep surrounded by seventy wolves!" he shouted to his adversaries, who sought to deny the right of Jewish existence and the role of Judaism in world society.

Almost eight hundred years later the same statement can and should be made with even greater emphasis. It is simply Jewish survival and resilience that puts the lie to the delegitimization campaign that is currently being viciously conducted against us. According to the script of natural history, we should no longer be here, there should be no great concentrations of Torah students and observant Jews present and there certainly cannot be a thriving Jewish state in its ancient homeland, the Land of Israel.

I think that much of the anti-Jewish world's bitterness and frustration that fuels its hatred, bias and bigotry against Jews - and especially against the State of Israel - is that there apparently is no real "final solution" to the "Jewish problem." Much of the world truly believes that if there were no State of Israel and no strong Jewish community present in the world, universal utopia will have arrived.

And, they are angry with us for not accommodating this wish, which they believe would be so beneficial for the general good of humankind. It is the resilience of the Jew more than anything else that so frustrates our antagonists and has done so for so many centuries.

There are elements within the Jewish people that seemingly are willing to accommodate the wishes of our enemies, all in the name of pie-in-the-sky humanistic, utopian ideals that never have any true relation to facts on the ground or the reality of life. Their Jewish resilience has deserted them, replaced by a vague hope for universalism and a conviction that the lamb can truly lie down with the lion - and not become lamb chops.

This misplaced "goodness" and peace mongering at all costs has exacted a heavy toll- of lives and stress in the Jewish and general world over the past many decades. The Jewish people, in the main, has rebuilt itself after the indescribable tragedies and disasters of World War II. A Jewish state exists in the Land of Israel, the Soviet Union disappeared and over a

million Soviet Jews have reattached themselves in one degree or another to their people and heritage.

There simply has never occurred such a string of events to a people after such a tragedy as was the Holocaust to the Jews. The world knows about Tisha B'Av but is ill acquainted with after Tisha B'Av. Jews see the good new year and better times on the horizon.

It is not the memorials, important as they are, that will sustain our existence in the future. It is the continued physical and spiritual growth of our nation and its institutions of learning, government and compassion that will once again be the proof of the vital resilience that is present within us. Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: VAETCHANAN :: Rabbi Berel Wein

We all believe in the power of prayer. There have been controversial but yet seemingly proven studies that have shown that somehow prayer and being prayed for are of definite physical help to the sick, the bereaved and the troubled. Yet prayer oftentimes leaves us unfulfilled and unanswered. Prayer does not seemingly avert disasters, sadness and even tragedies.

All of us face the challenge of unanswered prayer, when our hopes and requests are apparently ignored and refused by Heaven. Many times this fact of life causes a crisis of faith and belief within a person. King David in his Psalms reflects on this issue many times. The book of Iyov deals with it as well. And to a certain extent it is the main issue raised in this week's parsha.

Moshe's prayers are not answered. In fact the Lord instructs him to stop raising the issue of his entry into the Land of Israel with Heaven. There is a finality to Heaven's refusal to answer or even deal with Moshe's prayers any longer. Moshe's prayers, which have saved his people, his brother and sister and others from Heavenly wrath, are now of no effect regarding his own personal request.

The rabbis of the Talmud phrased it succinctly: "The prisoner himself cannot free himself, by himself, from his own confinement." Moshe will not lead his beloved people into the promised Land of Israel. His time is ended and his prayer will forever remain unanswered. There is therefore a note of inevitable sadness that hovers over this parsha.

Over the millennia of Jewish commentary and exposition of the Torah many reasons have been advanced as to why Moshe's prayer was so finally and flatly rebuffed. Among the ideas advanced is that the time for Yehoshua's leadership had arrived and that "the dominion of one ruler cannot overlap the dominion of his successor even by a hair's breadth."

Another thought advanced is that Moshe's generation would not enter the Land of Israel so it would be an apparent unseemly favoritism for Moshe alone to be able to do so. A third idea is that Moshe would appear to the new generation entering the Land of Israel as a supernatural figure, a type of god in a world of pagan belief that regularly deified humans, especially national leaders. Therefore, for the sake of Israel itself, he could not be allowed to lead them into the Land of Israel.

As valid as all of these ideas are, the blunt truth is that we cannot read God's mind, so to speak. Living human beings, the finite, can never grasp the Infinite One. So we must be satisfied to remain unsatisfied in our search for the reasons for unanswered prayers.

Our true refuge lies in faith and acceptance of the unknowable. This in no way weakens the resolve and necessity to continue praying. It merely lowers our levels of expectation and tempers our hubris that somehow Heaven must follow our wishes and dictates. Moshe accepts the fact that his prayers will now go unanswered. His example serves as a lesson for all of us.

Shabat shalom.

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly

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Parshat Va'etchanan

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Overview

Although Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special mitzvot. Hashem refuses. Moshe reminds Bnei Yisrael of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impresses on Bnei Yisrael that the Sinai revelation took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jews will ever claim that Hashem spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins Bnei Yisrael to "pass over" the Sinai event to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe predicts, accurately, that when Bnei Yisrael dwell in Eretz Yisrael they will sin and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but will eventually return to Hashem.

Moshe designates three "refuge cities" to which an inadvertent killer may flee. Moshe repeats the 10 Commandments and then teaches the Shema, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and thus forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The parsha ends with Moshe exhorting Bnei Yisrael not to intermarry when they enter Eretz Yisrael, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

Insights

Too Jewish?

"Surely a wise and discerning people are this great nation!" (4:6)

A true story.

A well-known Orthodox Rabbi was invited to a dinner at Buckingham Palace. The Rabbi replied that he would be honored to accept the invitation but he feared that his kosher dietary requirements would make it impossible for him to attend. The palace replied that far from being too much trouble, they would be happy to supply whatever food he needed and together with appropriate supervision.

The Rabbi happily accepted the invitation and a mashgiach (kosher food supervisor) was appointed to take care of his needs. In order to be unobtrusive, food was selected that appeared to be the same as the other guests'.

Before the other guests arrived, the mashgiach showed the Rabbi where he would sit. The mashgiach lifted a plate. Superficially it seemed identical to the other hundreds of plates in the dining hall. However on its underside was affixed a discrete sticker. The mashgiach had bought an entire new set of plates and cutlery. Everything had been toveled (immersed in a mikveh) and labeled.

The Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Charles and others of the royal family entered the room. Everyone rose. The meal began in an atmosphere of stately grandeur. The Rabbi was not the only Jew at this dinner but he was certainly the most conspicuous in his large black kippa.

Immersed in conversation as the first course came to its end, the Rabbi suddenly noticed the lights dimming. "What's happening?" he asked the famous pop-star sitting to his right. "Oh, I can see you haven't been to one of these before. What happens now is that everyone changes table. That way everyone gets a chance to meet everyone." The pop-star may have noticed the cloud that momentarily passed across the Rabbi's sunny countenance, but certainly he had no idea of its cause.

The Rabbi was now faced with a problem. He realized that he would have to carry his entire place setting to his next location. However, there was nothing for it, and to the bemused smiles of his fellow guests, he proceeded to gather up his plates, knives, forks and spoon and carried them ceremoniously to their next location.

Palace dinners are not short affairs. While carrying his decreasing number of plates between the fifth and sixth courses, one of the other Jewish guests hissed at him under his breath. "Will you please stop that! I've never been

so embarrassed in my life." "I'm sorry" said the Rabbi, "but I keep kosher." "Well, make an exception!" said the other.

The Rabbi stuck to his guns. For all twelve courses.

At the end of the meal, the guests all lined up to take leave of their royal hosts. As the Rabbi was shaking Prince Charles' hand, the prince said "Excuse me, but I couldn't help noticing that you were carrying your dishes around the room." "Yes," said the Rabbi "I did it because of the Jewish dietary laws." "Yes," said the Prince "I know about kosher food, but I didn't know it extended to the plates as well. How interesting! Please tell me more."

By this point, the master of ceremonies had come over to see what was holding up the line. In order to continue their discussion, the Prince beckoned the Rabbi to step out of the line and join him.

So there they were. The Rabbi and the Prince. Shaking the hands of the guests and discussing the laws of kashrut. Finally it came the turn of the Jewish guest who had objected to the Rabbi's behavior to shake the hand of the Prince. As he was doing this, he mentioned confidentially to the Prince "I'm Jewish too."

"Really?" said the Prince, "I didn't notice you carrying your dishes!"

When we keep the Torah properly with all its details, non-Jews know instinctively we're doing what we're supposed to, and they respect us for it. When we try and water down our Judaism to conform to our own preconceived secular standards, there will always be a voice asking us where our dishes are.

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas Va'eschanan

But you, who cling to Hashem, your G-d, you are all alive today. (4:4)

This pasuk defines the meaning of life for us. One is alive if he clings to Hashem. Anything else is simply not living. In his commentary to this pasuk, the Ohr Ha'Chaim HaKadosh writes: "If you cling to Hashem, your life has relevance and meaning." A Jew who lives a full life performs mitzvos and carries out good deeds on a daily basis. Every day he davens three times. He makes blessings prior to eating. Shabbos is a day during which he has the opportunity to taste, to revel in the pleasure of Olam Habba, the World to Come. During the course of the year he is elevated by the spiritual enjoyment that is the result of celebrating the Festivals. This is life!

Horav Avraham, zl, m'Kalisk was about to begin his daily davening in his shul in Teveriah. He was stopped by an elderly man who was being supported by a cane. "The Rebbe is about to begin davening?" the gentleman asked. "Please remember me in his prayers." The man then proceeded to tell the rav his name and that of his mother.

"What should I request for you?" the rav asked.

"Rebbe, ask that I die today!" was the man's reply. The rav looked at the man incredulously. He had heard some strange requests during his tenure as rav, but this one literally "took the cake." The man explained, "Rebbe, let me explain why my request is not that strange. I no longer see very well. My hearing is practically gone. I have no teeth. It is very difficult for me to swallow. My digestive system is shot. I can hardly walk. I feel excruciating pain in every muscle and joint of my body. I have great difficulty sleeping. My mind is rapidly losing its battle with Alzheimer's disease. Now, I ask you: What value is there to such a life?"

The rav was a compassionate person; to hear this plea for help from a broken shard of a man melted his emotions. It was not as if the man's words did not make sense. He did have a "reasonable" complaint - at least, from his limited perspective. "Tell me," the rav asked, "did you put on Tefillin today?" "Of course," the man replied. "What kind of a question is that? I put on Tefillin with the first light of the day."

The rav looked the man square in the eyes and asked, "If you live another day, will you put Tefillin on again tomorrow?"

"Definitely," was the man's emphatic response. Suddenly, the rav became very emotional, as he asked, "And you are requesting death? You should know that it is worth it for a man to descend to this world and live eighty years in pain - the pain that Iyov endured - just so that he can put on Tefillin one time in his life! To recite Krias Shema! And you are blessed that you do not have to wait eighty years - but only twenty-four hours-until tomorrow; is life not worth it?"

Thus, when we merit putting on Tefillin daily, reciting Krias Shema daily, and we are not weighed down with debilitating pain, are we not fortunate? This is the meaning of life. We cling to Hashem, and thus, our lives have meaning.

Clinging to Hashem is a full-time job. Moreover, it is a bond which, when initiated, cannot be broken. Horav Arye Levine, zl, distinguishes between the "title" given to a sinner, baal aveirah, and that given to a young adult as he enters into the yoke of mitzvos, bar-mitzvah. Baal means husband. The relationship one has with sin is similar to a husband/wife relationship. It is a bond that can be severed, as it is when a couple no longer sees eye to eye. A sinner does not remain tied to his sin. He can extricate himself from the spiritual filth that has attached itself to him. One who repents and returns to a Torah-way of life erases his past.

One who performs a mitzvah establishes a different relationship with the mitzvah. He is a bar, "son," of the mitzvah. Just as a son remains a son forever, the relationship one has with a mitzvah is an enduring bond, one that is not severed, one that continues to exist throughout his life. Horav Levi Yitzchak Berditchever, zl, would say: "One can say that he is for Hashem, or he can say that he is against Hashem. He cannot, however, say that he is not with Hashem." Our bond with the Almighty is indestructible.

Hear, O Yisrael, Hashem our G-d, Hashem is One. (6:4)

The stellar verse in Judaism is Shema Yisrael. It is the one sentence which preserves the Jewish consciousness of every Jew, regardless of how estranged he might be from the religion of his ancestors and fellow Jews. It is the first sentence a Jewish child masters as he begins his spiritual journey through life, and it is the last words a Jew utters as his soul takes leave of his mortal remains. It is the declaration the Jew has borne with him throughout his travels in exile. It is his standard of G-d. It is also the very last verity that a Jew discards as he discards his relationship with his People. Throughout history, the cry of Shema Yisrael! has exemplified Jewish faith and conviction in the Almighty. It has accompanied millions as they achieved the zenith of martyrdom. The declaration of achdus Hashem, the unity of G-d, is the very first and most basic fundamental truth for a Jew to bear in mind at all times, under all circumstances.

An awareness and constant belief in the unity of G-d is a prerequisite of Judaism, without which one is simply not a believing Jew. Why is oneness so important? It is because daily events in our lives seem to spur confusion. One moment life seems good. The next moment, we are confronted with pain. One day seems to go by successfully, while the next day can bring sorrow. Those whose perception of reality are limited by their physicality - so that they refuse to see beyond what their vision can perceive-- have a serious problem with such "inconsistency" in life. One who follows a perceptive Torah life looks through the spectrum of spirituality. As Horav Gedaliah Schorr, zl, explains, Hashem's oneness is like a light shining through a prism. Although on the outside we see many colors of the spectrum, in reality, it all emanates from a single source. Everything comes from Hashem: the good and what we perceive to be bad all have one point of origin.

Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, posits that the awareness of Hashem's unity serves also to unite all aspects of our own individual personality. Thus, all facets of our personality, with all of its seeming disparities, physical and emotional, our responses to fate and fortune, all become melded into one unity of existence and will. Whatever we are, whatever we do, whatever we possess is devoted to one and the same purpose, one and the same mission, one and the same desire: to love and serve Hashem. We seek to serve Him through all aspects of our lives: to fulfill His wishes - not our

own; to be worthy of His relationship with us. We subserviate ourselves wholly to Hashem, the one G-d, and our subservience to the one sole G-d engenders our own personal wholeness and perfection.

Rav Hirsch takes this idea to the follow-up pasuk of V'ahavta es Hashem Elokecha b'chol levavcha, "And you should love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart." The most significant and far-reaching consequence of our awareness of Hashem's unity is that we are to love Hashem "with all your heart." Chazal teach us that b'chol levavcha, "all your heart," is a reference to b'shnei yitzrecha, "with your two inclinations": with the yetzer tov, good inclination, and yetzer hora, evil inclination. How does one serve Hashem with his yetzer hora?

The yetzer hora catalyzes within us a desire to gravitate to the base, evil, ignoble, sensual and unsavory. It has been implanted within us by the same Almighty G-d Who has granted us the capacity to be drawn to all things good, right, noble, spiritual and moral. Both of these inclinations - good and evil - are manifestations of the same love of the One G-d. He has intricately woven these two capacities into our human psyche. The question that gnaws at the reader: Does the fact that He has made us susceptible to the allurements of evil not indicate a lack of love for us? After all, why would He "set us up" for failure?

Rav Hirsch explains that this susceptibility is, indeed, Hashem's ultimate kiss, the greatest expression of His love for us. In this capacity to gravitate to evil lies our greatest nobility and moral dignity. Without the capacity to be drawn to evil, we would be considered less than human, and, hence, devoid of any indication of morality or virtue. All of our essence would consist of bodily desires and actions, much like an animal. We would be attracted only to that which is in sync with our functions. We would be indifferent to anything else. Animals are predictable. They gravitate to that which is the same with intensity and immutability. The definition of doing "good" is the overpowering of one's attraction to evil, so that he acts morally and good. If baseness and evil did not charm us, if they left us indifferent or if they repelled us as something antithetical to our nature; if we were only attracted to the good, moral and virtuous, and acting out goodness did not reflect renunciation and self-control on our part, then, while we certainly would not do "evil," we would also never do "good." The good that we perform would not be our doing; it would not be a moral, free-willed human act. It would only be our bodies following their human imperative to act in conformance with our natural tendencies. Thus, the disappearance of the yetzer hora would coincide with an end to human dignity. They go hand in hand.

Indeed, none of our inclinations are in themselves "good" or "evil." All of our impulses, from the most sensual to the most moral and sublime, are defined as "good" or "evil" solely by virtue of the use to which we put them. When we are passionate for Avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty, passion is "good." When this passion is used for sensuality, it becomes the product of "evil." It all depends on how we use our intense emotions and for what purpose.

Hence, to love Hashem "with all our hearts," with both the yetzer tov and yetzer hora, means to consecrate all of our thoughts - together with our natural tendencies, aspirations and ambitions - exclusively for the purpose of carrying out G-d's will, in such a manner that it brings us closer to Him. Horav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv, Shlita, takes an alternative approach towards the manipulation of the yetzer hora for the positive service of Hashem. When we open up our eyes and see how the yetzer hora destroys people, how it takes individuals who were once decent, moral, and understanding and arouses their passions, causing them to make foolish choices and become victims of poor judgment, it serves as a wake-up call for us. We are repulsed by what we see, disgusted by the downfall and disgrace of those who have fallen prey to the clutches of the yetzer hora. In such an instance, the yetzer hora assisted an individual on the path of positive observance.

Concerning the pasuk in Ovadiah 1:1, "A vision of Ovadiah - so said Hashem Elokim about Edom," Chazal in the Talmud Sanhedrin 39b,

comments about why Ovadiah was selected to deliver Hashem's rebuke to Edom/Eisav. Hashem said, "Let Ovadiah who lived among two wicked persons (Achav and Izevel), yet was not negatively influenced by their evil ways, come and rebuke Eisav, who lived among two righteous persons, (Yitzchak and Rivkah), and was not positively inspired by their virtue."

Rav Elyashiv explains that Ovadiah's service of Hashem was catalyzed by the effects of the yetzer hora of Achav and Izevel, the king and queen who redefined evil, plunging it to a new nadir. He witnessed their malicious acts of depravity, yet was able to overcome its effect. In fact, it made him a stronger person. In contrast, Eisav retained his evil streak, despite living in close proximity to his parents, the Patriarch Yitzchak and Matriarch Rivkah. They had no positive effect on Eisav. He could have learned so much, but, instead, he rejected it all. Let Ovadiah rebuke Eisav, since, in a sense, they both battled against their environmental influences.

You shall love Hashem, Your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your recourses. (6:5)

The question is on the lips of everyone who reads this pasuk: How can this mitzvah be fulfilled? How can one be commanded to love Hashem? Love is not intrinsically connected to action. It is an emotional reaction. One either loves or does not love, but he cannot be forced to love. The Sefas Emes suggests a remarkable insight concerning the human psyche and our relationship with Hashem. The fact that the Torah has commanded us to love Hashem is an indication that imbedded deep within the heart of every Jew is a profound, innate sense of love for Hashem. It is there, and, as such, it is our mission and goal to seek it out and bring it to the surface. We are not commanded to create a new sense of love, but, rather, to unearth the original, reveal it and bring the potential to fruition. Once he has succeeded in doing that, he is overwhelmed with love for Hashem. After all, it is a part of him that has always existed.

How do we manifest our love for Hashem? Probably the most basic way is mitzvah performance - with love, passion, zeal - as if we mean it. In the preface to the Aleinu l'Shabeach, Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, quotes an incredible story from a sefer written by one of the famed vor, thirty-six tzaddikim, righteous persons, Meisharim Magid. In it, the author relates revelations which came to him via a Heavenly angel. One Erev Rosh Hashanah, the tzaddik was depressed concerning his niece, who was a kallah about to be married, when her chassan abandoned her and broke the engagement. The girl was distraught, and her uncle empathized greatly with her plight. He could not stop weeping. That Rosh Hashanah, he was visited by the angel who told him that he was being criticized in Heaven for his concern for the kallah. "You are weeping for the pain of an individual girl to whom you are related. What about Hashem Who 'weeps' incessantly over His many children who have abandoned Him?"

The tzaddik realized that he had become aware of his niece's plight only so that he should introspect and think about Hashem's pain. That is love of Hashem. If we would think about His pain over the many Jews who have assimilated and abandoned Him, things might be different. To love Hashem is to "care" about Him. It should hurt us to know that someone Whom we love is in pain.

You shall teach them thoroughly to your children. (6:7)

The individual thinks that when he spends half an hour in shul davening to Hashem, he has just performed a mitzvah. In contrast, when he takes that same half hour and spends it studying a daf, page, of Talmud with his son, it suddenly becomes a sacrifice, time taken off from his busy schedule, time during which nothing was accomplished. It is almost as if one is compelled to learn with his son. There is no one else, so it has to be him.

This is a grievous mistake. Learning Torah with one's son is a mitzvah like any other mitzvah. A person does not stare at the clock when he davens. He should, likewise, not stare at the clock, counting the minutes, when he learns with his son. The mitzvah, V'sheenantam l'vanecha, "You shall teach them thoroughly to your children," is a mitzvah just like davening, and, thus, warrants the same attitude. There has not always been a day school movement. It was Rabbi Yehoshua ben Gamla who established

schools of Torah instruction in every Jewish community. Prior to that innovation, fathers studied Torah with their children. Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, quotes the Maharal and Shalah HaKadosh, who posit that there is no replacement for a father's Torah study. It is a totally different level of kedushah, sanctity. It is Torah which is connected to Har Sinai. Teaching our children Torah is an integral part of our avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty.

In order to teach, one must be knowledgeable. Hence, V'sheentam is an exhortation to study Torah. Veritably, a Jew is supposed to study Torah during every free moment. Therefore, one who is occupied does not reject the mitzvah by working, since he is currently not free. Rav Pincus observes that one who studies Torah all day, but takes off a few moments for "down time" is nullifying the mitzvah of limud haTorah during this time. It is as if he did not listen to the blowing of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah! Torah does not just have to be studied - it has to be studied all of the time!

Rav Pincus decries the erroneously accepted premise that learning all of the time is only for the individual who is a masmid, diligent student of Torah. No, it is a mitzvah as any other mitzvah. One would never suggest that the mitzvah of Lulav does not apply to him. If he is a Jew, he has a mitzvah of limud haTorah. It just happens to be one of those mitzvos that are in force all of the time.

It seems difficult. That is why we entreat Hashem daily, V'haarev na Hashem Elokeinu es divrei Torasecha b'finu, "Please Hashem, our G-d, sweeten the words of Your Torah in our mouth." We realize that it is not easy to be dedicated to Torah learning during every waking moment. That is why, unlike any other mitzvah, we ask Hashem for Divine Assistance. Make it sweet; help us to enjoy it; make it our life. Let it be like the air we breathe, we cannot get enough of it, and we certainly cannot be without it even for a minute.

Every day, we recite a quote from the Talmud Shabbos 127a: "These are the precepts whose fruits a person enjoys in this world." Chazal go on to detail a number of wonderful acts of kindness, activities which one would assume are the most meaningful activities one can perform. They certainly are, but Chazal conclude with the words, V'talmud Torah k'neged kulam, "And the study of Torah is equivalent to them all." Apparently, all the acts of loving kindness take a backseat to Torah study. This rule was the guiding principle that shaped the life and perspective of Horav Aharon Kotler, zl. As manhig ha'dor, leader of his generation, he was confronted with questions and issues on a constant basis. The underlying principle which served as his beacon, his inspiration, was: How will this affect your/one's limud haTorah? What does the Torah say concerning this issue? It was all about the Torah, because he had no greater love.

How far did Rav Aharon's ahavas Torah, love for the Torah, stretch? Horav Shmuel Faivelson, Shlita, explains the following. Chazal teach us Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Chiya bar Abba were once walking together when they chanced upon a field. Rav Yochanan said, "This used to be my field. I sold it so that I would be able to study Torah." They later passed an olive grove, whereupon Rav Yochanan said, "This also used to be mine, but I sold it in order to continue learning Torah." This "line" went on as they kept passing properties.

Rav Chiya bar Abba began to weep. "You left yourself with nothing. What will happen to you in your old age?" he asked. Rav Yochanan cited a pasuk in Shir HaShirim 8:7, Im yitein ish es kol hon baiso b'ahavah... "If someone were to offer him all the money in the world (to tear him away from Torah) boz yavuzo lo, 'he would rebuff him in derision.'" Nothing could tear him away from learning. This is the idea behind the pasuk in Shir HaShirim which describes Klal Yisrael's love for Hashem, Ki cholas ahavah oni, "I am sick with love." What does it mean to be "sick" with love?

Rav Faivelson explains that our love for Hashem makes us act in such a manner that someone who does not understand, an outsider to Torah, might consider us foolish, not normal. Sick with love means that one is not concerned with anything except Torah. If he is lacking something, it has no

significance. In fact, he does not even notice that he is lacking. It means not noticing that you are lacking something at home. In relationship to Torah, it is inconsequential. Talmud Torah k'neged kulam means - k'neged der velt. Torah overrides everything in the world. Ki cholas ahavah oni. I am sick with love for Hashem and His Torah. Nothing else has meaning! While this plateau is unattainable by most, it should serve as the apex for which one strives in his Torah endeavor.

Rav Aharon would relate that his father-in-law, the venerable Rosh Yeshiva of Slutzk and Eitz Chaim, Horav Isser Zalman Meltzer, zl, would leave home at the beginning of the z'man, semester, and travel to the yeshiva in Slutzk. He remained there from Sukkos until Pesach - without going home to his family. He would see his wife and family only during bein hazemanim, semester break.

During one of his train rides, he met Horav Mordechai Slonimer, zl, a great tzaddik, righteous person, whose reputation for his piety was well-known. In the course of their conversation, Rav Isser Zalman divulged the reason for, and nature of his trip. When Rav Mordechai heard of Rav Isser Zalman's devotion to and love for Torah, he was so impressed that he gave Rav Isser Zalman a brachah, blessing. Rav Aharon would say that it was that brachah which was the primary factor in the outstanding harbotzas, spreading of Torah that resulted from Rav Isser Zalman's family. It was all because of his Ki cholas ahavah oni, "consummate love for Torah."

Va'ani Tefillah

You found his heart faithful before You.

In his commentary to Devarim 7:9, V'yodaata ki Hashem Hu Ha'Elokim HaKeil ha'ne'eman, "You must know that Hashem, your G-d - He is the G-d, the faithful G-d." Sforno defines ne'eman, faithful, as "Who unswervingly (keeps His word) and is unchanging." The word ne'eman, "faithful," also means something that is sure and secure, reliable and unchanging. This, explains Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, characterizes Avraham Avinu's faithfulness to Hashem. It was constant, consistent, secure and without change.

Someone once wished Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, that his son should be a G-d-fearing Jew. The venerable Rav replied, "First, let him be an ish ne'eman, a faithful Jew." Rav Yosef Chaim supported this with the fact that Hashem selected Avraham as the progenitor of the Jewish nation when he was still a ben Noach, not yet a Jew. It was after he demonstrated his unswerving commitment to Hashem in the face of life-threatening trials, miraculously emerging unscathed, that Hashem chose him and made His Covenant with him. It was only after he demonstrated his ne'emanus, faithfulness that he could go on to fearing G-d. Ne'emanus precedes all.

In loving memory Of our dear Mother & Bubby Mrs. Chana Silberberg, Chana bas Moshe Zev a"h, niftar 20 Av 5760 t.n.t.z.v.h. Zev & Miriam Solomon & Family

פרשת השבוע - פרשת ואתחנן

מאמרו של הגאון רבי זבדיה הכהן שליט"א, חבר בית הדין הרבני בתל אביב, עבור הלכה יומית

גליון זה קדוש כדון שאר דברי תורה המודפסים, נא לנהוג בו בקדושה ואחר מכן להניח בגיזה

השבת נקרא על תחנונו של משה רבנו לקדוש ברוך הוא שייתן לו להיכנס לארץ ישראל, משה מתפלל ומבקש "אעברה נא ואראה את הארץ הטובה אשר בעבר הירדן ההר הטוב הזה והלבנון

במדרש רבה (דברים פרשה י"א) נאמר, כשגזר על משה שלא להיכנס לארץ, דבר זה היה קל בעיניו, אמר, אם עם ישראל שחטאו חטאות גדולות ובקשתי עליהם רחמים מיד הקדוש ברוך הוא קיבל את בקשתי, אני שלא חטאתי מנעורי, לא כל שכן שיקבל את תפילתי ויבטל את הגזירה? מיד קפץ הקדוש ברוך הוא ושבע בשמו הגדול שמשה לא יכנס לארץ. באותה שעה לבש משה שק והתפלל באפר ועמד בתפילה ובתחנונים לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא, עד שהזדעזעו שמים וארץ וסדרי בראשית, מה עשה הקדוש ברוך הוא? הכריז בכל שער ושער של

רקיע ורקיע, ובכל בית דין ובית דין, שלא יקבלו את תפילתו של משה ולא יעלו אותה לפניו מפני שנחתם גזר הדין לפניו

הרי לפנינו כוחה של תפילה שבוקעת רקיעים, והיה צריך הקדוש ברוך הוא להישבע בשמו הגדול, ולהכריז בשבעה רקיעים, ובבית דין של מעלה, שלא יקבלו את תפילתו של משה, אבל אילולא זאת, הייתה תפילתו של משה מתקבלת, שזהו כוחה של תפילה, שהיא כחבר הבוקעת רקיעים, ועולה עד כיסא הכבוד

בא וראה עד היכן מגיע כוחה של תפילה, הכהן הגדול ביום הכיפורים בשעה שהיה בהיכל היה מתפלל "שלא תיכנס לפניך תפילת עוברי דרכים לעניי הגשם בלבד בעת שהעולם צריך לו", דהיינו, הולך לו אדם פשוט בדרך, ויורד עליו גשם, והוא פונה לבורא עולם מתוך מצוקה ומתפלל ממעמקי לבו "תפסיק את הגשם" הרי שתפילתו אמורה להתקבל, אילולא תפילתו של הכהן הגדול ביום הכיפורים בהיכל, שבאה לבטל את תפילתו של אותו הלך פשוט, ללמדנו כוחה של תפילה הבאה ממעמקי הלב

בספר "טובך יביעו" (ח"ב עמוד רפ"ו) מביא בשם החזון איש זצ"ל שאין תפילה ששבה ריקם, אין מילה של תחינה וריצוי שמוציא יהודי מפיו שלא תפעל את פעולתה, אם היום או מחר, אם בשנה זו או בשנה הבאה, או לאחר שנים רבות, אם אצל המתפלל עצמו או אצל זרעו אחריו. דבר זה צריך להיות חדור אצל כל יהודי

בירושלים חי יהודי תלמיד חכם שחזר בתשובה לפני שנים רבות, ומקורביו מספרים על יראת השמים שבו, על הצלחותיו בכל תחום, ועל כך שכל מה שהוא עושה ה' מצליח בידו, כל מפעל שהוא מייסד עולה למעלה ראש, ולכל שיעור שהוא מקים נמשכים אל אתר לומדים רבים. האיש, שמו ר' ברוך היימן, סיפר לאחרונה על הגורם להצלחותיו, וכדאי לחרוט את הדברים על לוח הלב, למען ללמד ונשכיל מכך על כוחה של תפילה

בקום המדינה, בממשלתו של בן גוריון, היה שר החינוך, בשם זלמן ארן, שהיה ממקורביו ומעריציו של ראש הממשלה דוד בן גוריון. לאותו שר חינוך, למרות שלא שמר מצוות, הייתה אישה מסורתית שהקפידה על הדלקת נרות בכל ערב שבת, ובשעת הדלקת הנרות הייתה מתפללת על בניה שיהיו מוצלחים כמו... דוד בן גוריון, שהרי הוא היה הדמות המוערכת והנערצת על בעלה כבוד שר החינוך, שסיפר תמיד על כוחו וגדולתו של האיש. לימים נפגש ראש הממשלה עם החזון איש בעניין גיוס בני הישיבות, וכשחזר ראש הממשלה מהפגישה סיפר לחברו הטוב שר החינוך מר זלמן ארן את התפעלותו מהחזון איש, וכי ראה בו דמות בעלת שעור קומה והנהגה מיוחדת. שמע זאת כבוד שר החינוך וכשבא לביתו סיפר לאשתו את דבר הפגישה של ראש הממשלה עם הרב ואת התפעלותו המיוחדת מהחזון איש, שמעה זאת אשת השר ואמרה לעצמה, אם בן גוריון מתפעל מהחזון איש ורואה בו דמות מיוחדת, יוצא מזה שהוא יותר ממנו, אם כן מדוע אתפלל בהדלקת הנרות על בני שיהיו כמותו, אתפלל ישירות שיהיו כמו החזון איש! אמרה וכך עשתה, ומאותה שבת התפללה מעומק ליבה שיהיו בניה כמו החזון איש

אני, מספר הרב היימן, נכדו של זלמן ארן, ותפילותיה של אותה סבתא אף שלא הייתה מל"ו צדקניות שבדור, פעלו את פעולתן אף לאחר שנים רבות וקרובני לתורה ולמצוות, ואף נתנו בידי את כוח ההצלחה

מסיפור זה אנו למדים את כוחה של תפילה הבאה מעומק הלב של כל אדם, כמו שאנו אומרים בתפילה "כי אתה שומע תפילת כל פה

שבת שלום

Rav Kook List Rav Kook on the Torah Portion Va'etchanan: Cleaving to God

"You, who remained attached to the Lord your God, are all alive today."
(Deut. 4:4)

What does it mean 'to be attached to God'? As the Talmud (Sotah 14a) asks, is it possible to cleave to the Shechinah, God's Divine Presence, which the Torah (Deut. 4:24) describes as a "consuming fire"?

The Sages answered:

"Rather, this means you should cleave to God's attributes. Just as God clothed the naked [Adam and Eve], so too you should cloth the naked. Just as God visited the sick [Abraham after his circumcision], so too you should visit the sick. Just as God consoled the mourners [Isaac after Abraham's death], so too you should console the mourners. Just as God buried the dead [Moses], so too you should bury the dead."

This explanation on how one may cleave to God is the very essence of the Kabbalistic study of the sephirot. What is the point in studying the intricacies of God's Names and His manifestations in holy sephirot? We learn about God's divine attributes so that we may aspire to imitate them. These studies enable us to follow in God's ways and in this way cleave to Him.

This idea - that we can only attach ourselves to God by imitating His attributes - is a fundamental concept in Judaism. Any other understanding of cleaving to God implies some degree of anthropomorphism or idolatry.

The very existence of ideals, holy aspirations, and ethics in the world and in the human soul mandates the existence of a Divine Source. From where else could they come? Our awareness of the Source of these ideals elevates them, revealing new wellsprings of light and pure life.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 297-298. Adapted from Musar Avicha, pp. 118-119)

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

Weekly Halachah

Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)
Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Shabbos Business

Question: Does the Halachah permit a business, or a store owned by a Jew and a non-Jew in a partnership, to remain open on Shabbos?

Discussion: Shulchan Aruch rules that it is permitted for a Jew and a non-Jew to form a business partnership if they stipulate at the outset that any work done on Shabbos is totally under the non-Jew's jurisdiction, i.e., that only he is responsible for the work done on Shabbos and that he is the sole recipient of that day's profits. To offset the Jewish partner's loss of profit made on Shabbos, he will receive the profits of a corresponding weekday. Entering into such an agreement is permitted even l'chatchilah, as long as these stipulations are spelled out in a legally binding contract and not merely agreed upon verbally by the two parties.¹

Mishnah Berurah (note 6) adds that if, at the end of the accounting period, the partners are unable - or unwilling - to determine the respective profits and losses of each day, they may divide the profits and losses equally between them. It is important to stress that this leniency may be relied upon only in the exact scenario described by Mishnah Berurah - that they were unable or unwilling to determine the daily profits when it came time for an accounting. But if the business was set up in a manner in which it would be impossible to determine the profits and losses of each day, then it is evident that the entire agreement is a hoax and it is not valid.²

A slightly different type of partnership permitted l'chatchilah, and mentioned by Rama, is based on the principle that the non-Jewish partner assumes no obligation to work on Shabbos. He may still elect, of his own free will, to work on Shabbos anyway. Once he does so, it is permitted for his Jewish partner to split the Shabbos profits with him. This holds true even if the non-Jewish partner understands that the Jew will be displeased if he fails to work on Shabbos and might even end the partnership. As long as the non-Jewish partner is not contractually obligated to work, such a partnership is permitted.³

But this type of arrangement is allowed only if the non-Jewish partner does the work himself. If, however, the partners employ another non-Jew to do the work on Shabbos, and he is paid with the joint funds of the partnership, he would essentially be working for the Jew as well and that would be forbidden. The only way a non-Jew could be hired to work on Shabbos for the partners would be for him to work for them during the week, get paid for a week's work, and not suffer a cut in his salary should he refrain from working on Shabbos.⁴

One additional note: When a Jew and a non-Jew enter into one of the partnerships described above so that their business may remain open on Shabbos, it is vital that the Jewish community be aware that the business is owned – at least partially – by a non-Jew. If the community is not aware of the non-Jew's stake in the business, it is forbidden to keep the business open on Shabbos.⁵

Until now, we have discussed legitimate, l'chatchilah partnerships which would allow businesses to remain open on Shabbos. But in addition to these, there are many other types of b'diavad arrangements that have been formulated over the years. In the responsa of some of the great poskim of yesteryear, we find many different types of "sale documents" and other arrangements which permit a Jewish business to remain open on Shabbos under certain, limited conditions. It cannot be stressed enough, however, that many of these loopholes and creative halachic solutions were formulated under duress, in response to the dismal conditions that existed in earlier times, when many governments did not allow Jews to own their own businesses. Grinding poverty and limited parnassah options motivated the poskim to find temporary solutions for an intolerable situation.⁶ Today, when conditions are altogether different, it is disingenuous to cite such halachic precedents.⁷ In addition, contemporary poskim are in agreement that one should do his utmost to avoid entering into any type of a "Shabbos partnership" with a non-Jew, since such arrangements are exceedingly complex⁸ and tend to lessen sensitivity towards Shabbos observance.⁹ The ones affected the most are often the members of the owner's family, who are confused about their family's operating a business on Shabbos.¹⁰ As the Chafetz Chayim himself writes in Beur Halachah,¹¹ those who are careful to keep Shabbos in its pristine form and do not look for any leniencies or loopholes, will surely be blessed with great financial success during the rest of the week. One need not rely on "Shabbos profits" to make a living.

Question: Is it permitted to buy stock shares in a public company whose board members are non-Jews who operate the company on Shabbos and Yom Tov?

Discussion: Yes, it is permitted. The poskim explain that buying shares in a company is not the same as becoming a partner in the company. Buying shares is merely a method of investing. The buyer hopes that the value of his shares will rise and enable him to turn a profit when he sells them; he has no intent or interest in becoming an owner or a manager of the business. Although all publicly traded companies must have an annual meeting where officers are elected by the shareholders, it is well known that this is merely a formality, and after all is said and done, the power to run the company remains in the hands of the board; the individual minority shareholders have no say or power to speak of. Thus, buying minority shares in a non-Jewish company which operates on Shabbos and Yom Tov is not considered as if one is becoming a partner with a non-Jew and is permitted.¹²

What about buying stock shares in a public company whose board members are non-observant Jews who operate the company on Shabbos and Yom Tov? Is that considered as if the investor is contributing to the company's finances and thereby aiding and abetting Shabbos desecrators? Most contemporary poskim rule that buying stock shares is

not considered to be aiding and abetting Shabbos desecrators as there is no shortage of investors who are ready and able to buy shares. Anyone who buys shares does so for his own investment purposes and not for the purpose of financing the company. ¹³

Question: Many banks offer a service whereby customers may instruct the bank to pay their utility or other bills on a specific date of the month. Should one refrain from using this service since a payment may be made on his behalf on a Shabbos or Yom Tov?

Discussion: There is no halachic reason not to use this service. While it is true that a payment date may fall on a Shabbos or Yom Tov, and one may not instruct a non-Jew — even before Shabbos — to perform a service on his behalf on Shabbos,¹⁴ in this case there is no action performed by a non-Jew on Shabbos; the entire process from beginning to end is automated. The bill is actually paid through a computer transaction from one account to the other. There is no halachic restriction on having a machine perform a service on Shabbos on behalf of a Shabbos-observant Jew, if the machine is programmed in advance to do so.¹⁵

- 1 Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:90.
- 2 Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:90; 2:65. See Cheshev ha-Eifod 2:6 for a dissenting opinion.
- 3 Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:90.
- 4 Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:65; Shevet ha-Levi 5:26.
- 5 Koveitz Teshuvos 3:37; Shevet ha-Levi 3:23. See Mishnah Berurah 245:10 and 15.
- 6 Seridei Aish, O.C. 23, relates that implementing these various leniencies was subject to controversy among the Rabbis of his time. He asked the Chafetz Chayim for his opinion on the matter. The Chafetz Chayim replied that since there are such serious pros and cons, he preferred to avoid taking a stand.
- 7 See Yeshurun, vol. 19, pg. 614.
- 8 Minchas Yitzchak. 9:24.
- 9 Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:55; Chelkas Yaakov 3:29, 32.
- 10 Cheshev ha-Eifod 2:6.
- 11 246:5, s.v. rak.
12 Igros Moshe, E.H. 1:7; Minchas Yitzchak 1:72; 3:1-27; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (written ruling, published in Mamon Yisrael, pg. 32). For a dissenting opinion, see Bris Yehudah, pg. 43. [Whether or not it is also permitted to buy enough shares that the board must would have to take his opinion into consideration is questionable: Although Igros Moshe, E.H. 1:7 clearly forbids doing so, he seems to have recanted in Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:54.]
- 13 Igros Moshe, E.H. 1:7; Minchas Yitzchak 5:18.
- 14 O.C. 307:2. [Although in our case there is no direct command to pay the bill on Shabbos but rather to do so on a specific date of the month, it still would be prohibited to specifically tell a non-Jew to do so, since that date will, at one time or another, fall out on Shabbos. This is halachically considered as if he instructed the non-Jew to make payment on Shabbos; based on Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:44, s.v. aval.]
- 15 O.C. 252:1.

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Vaetchanan - TU b'Av
Rabbi Asher Meir

This/next Wednesday (July 24) is Tu beAv, the fifteenth day of Av. The Shulchan Arukh mentions that we do not say Tachanun on this day (Orach Chaim 131:6). The reason is because many joyful events took place on this day over the generations (Taanit 30b; Bava Batra 121b. The latter is today's Friday's - Daf Yomi).

If we examine the various events mentioned, we find that most of them relate to two distinct kinds of joy: marriage and Torah learning.

Regarding marriage, we learn of the following occurrences: As Israel first entered the land of Israel, single daughters without brothers, who therefore inherited their fathers' portions of the land, were required to marry

someone from their own tribe, so that the land would not immediately go to the tribe of the husband. This decree was reversed on Tu beAv, and then any young woman could marry a husband of any tribe. Likewise, in the time of the Shoftim, the tribes swore that for a certain period of time none would give their daughters to a husband from the tribe of Binyamin (end of Shoftim); this oath also was rescinded on Tu beAv, so that again all tribes could freely intermarry. And in the time of the Mikdash, Tu beAv and Yom Kippur were days when single girls would dance in the vineyards, giving young men the chance to choose suitable brides.

Regarding Torah learning, we learn the following: On this day, the punishment decreed following the sin of the spies was completed; therefore, full prophecy was restored to Moshe. In addition, from this day onward the intensity of the sun diminishes and the nights begin to lengthen; therefore, a person has more energy and more time to study Torah at night, which is the ideal time for Torah study. For this reason the Rema writes that from this day onward a person is required to begin a "night seder" (Yoreh Deah 246:23.)

It seems that there is a connection between these two aspects of Tu beAv. The gemara (Yevamot 62b) states that a man who dwells without a wife is "without Torah". The Maharal explains that the Torah is man's completion, or perfection. But a person whose very self is missing or lacking can not achieve completion. Man and woman by themselves are incomplete, and achieve human wholeness only when they are joined together in marriage; therefore, a whole new dimension of Torah is opened to a person at marriage (Chidushei Aggadot).

So the two aspects of Tu beAv are complementary. This is the day which has the special property of enabling us to attain new levels of completion: the personal completion of marriage, and the spiritual completion of Torah. And these two aspects are themselves complementary, since a person's Torah is incomplete during single life, and certainly one's married life is incomplete without Torah. (See Pesachim 49a.)

Rabbi Meir has completed writing a monumental companion to Kitzur Shulchan Aruch which beautifully presents the meanings in our mitzvot and halacha. It will hopefully be published in the near future.

Rabbi Asher Meir is the author of the book Meaning in Mitzvot, distributed by Feldheim. The book provides insights into the inner meaning of our daily practices, following the order of the 221 chapters of the Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

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For the week ending 17 July 2010 / 5 Av 5770

Shavuos 21 - 27by

Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

The Oath and the "Man" * Shavuos 26a-b

If a man takes a false oath as a result of a lack of awareness the Torah requires him to bring a sin-offering as an atonement. The Torah's stress on the word man, says the Talmud, is to indicate that this responsibility applies only to when he was entirely a man at the time of the oath, completely aware of the circumstances.

The following case is cited as an example of where no sacrifice is required because the one who took the oath did so in circumstances beyond his control.

Rabbi Kahana and Rabbi Assi were both disciples of the Sage Rav. When they left Rav's presence they had a dispute as to what he had taught them. Each one of them took an oath that Rav had taught what he claimed to have heard from him. When they returned to Rav he informed them which

one was right. His disappointed colleague turned to Rav and asked: "Does this mean that I was guilty of taking a false oath?"

"No," Rav reassured him, "for your memory deceived you into believing that I had made the statement you reported. You were therefore not considered the man who is responsible for seeking atonement for a false oath taken because of a lack of awareness."

In similar fashion, if one takes an oath that he ate something because that is what his memory told him and it turns out that he did not eat it he will not have to bring a sacrifice. But if he says, "I know I did not eat it and that it is forbidden to take an oath that I ate it but I am not aware of whether there is an obligation to bring a sacrifice for such a violation" - this is a case when he is considered a man who sinned with full knowledge of the circumstances but as a result of a lack of awareness of the gravity of the sin, and such an oath-taker must bring a sin-offering as an atonement.

When Words Count as Action * Shavuos 21a

"You shall not take the Name of Hashem your G-d in vain," reads the Third commandment, "for Hashem will not absolve one who takes His Name in vain."

The stress on Hashem not absolving one who takes a false oath leads Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai to deduce that only the Heavenly Court offers no absolution, while the human court does offer him absolution through the atonement of lashes. This leads to the conclusion that taking a false oath is punishable by lashes, an exception to the general rule that lashes are never given when there is no action beyond mere speech.

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For the week ending 24 July 2010 / 12 Av 5770

Shavuos 29 - 35by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

An Ingenious Solution * Shavuos 30b

Sitting at the head of a rabbinical court, Rabbi Nachman had a problem. One of the litigants scheduled to appear before the court was the wife of Rabbi Huna. Since she was the wife of a Torah Sage there was an obligation to stand up for her honor when she entered. But if he stood up for her this would appear to be favoring her above the other litigant, something which is forbidden for a judge to do.

His ingenious solution was to instruct the court attendant to set loose a bird in his direction when the woman entered, which would force him to stand up in order to avoid this flying object. He would thus fulfill his obligation to stand up in honor of the woman while the other party would not interpret it as such.

Tosefot raises the question as to whether standing up under such circumstances is considered a fulfillment of showing respect for a Torah scholar since it is not evident that he is indeed showing his wife honor by standing up for her. One of the resolutions Tosefot suggests is that while such standing may not be a positive expression of honor, the fact that he is already standing for any reason frees him of the responsibility of making an effort to actively show her the respect she deserves.

What the Sages Say

"The wife of a Torah scholar must be shown the same respect as the scholar himself."

Rabbi Nachman - Shavuos 30b

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