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Philosophy or Prophecy?

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi **Lord Jonathan Sacks**

What was the first commandment? On this there are two fascinating disagreements in Judaism. One was between Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) and the author of the Halakhot Gedolot, written in the period of the Gaonim, probably by R. Shimon Kayyara (eighth century), that for the first time enumerated in a systematic way the 613 commands. The other was between Maimonides and the poet and thinker Judah Halevi (c. 1080-c.1145). These were two different arguments, and they touched, as we will see, on fundamentals of faith.

The first is simply this. Maimonides counts the opening line of the Ten Commandments, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery," as a positive command, to believe in God.1 The Halakhot Gedolot does not count it as a command at all. Why not?

Nahmanides (1194-1270), in defence of the Halakhot Gedolot,2 speculates that its author counted among the 613 commands only the specific laws enjoining us to do this or avoid doing that. The commands are rules of behaviour, not items of faith. Faith in the existence of God, or acceptance of the kingship of God, is not itself a command but a prelude to and presupposition of the commands. He quotes a passage from the Mekhila:

"You shall have no other gods besides me." Why is this said? Because it says, "I am the Lord your God." To explain this by way of a parable: A king of flesh and blood entered a province. His servants said to him, "Issue decrees for the people." He, however, told them, "No. When they accept my sovereignty, I will issue decrees. For if they do not accept my sovereignty, how will they carry out my decrees?"

According to Nahmanides, the Halakhot Gedolot must have believed that the verse, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" is not itself a command, but a statement of why the Israelites should be bound by the will of God. He had rescued them, liberated them, and brought them to safety. The first verse of the Decalogue is not a law but a statement of fact, a reason why the Israelites should accept God's sovereignty.

Thanks to the archeological discoveries about which I wrote in the previous

Covenant and Conversation, we now know that the biblical covenant has the same literary structure as ancient near eastern political treaties. These treaties usually follow a six-part pattern, of which the first three elements were [1] the preamble, identifying the initiator of the treaty, [2] a historical review, summarising the past relationship between the parties, and [3] the stipulations, namely the terms and conditions of the covenant.

Seen in this context, the first verse of the Ten Commandments is a highly abridged form of [1] and [2]. "I am the Lord your God" is the preamble. "Who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" is the historical review. The verses that follow are the stipulations, or as we would call them, the commands. If so, then the Halakhot Gedolot as understood by Nahmanides was correct in seeing the verse as an introduction to the commands, not a command in its own right. That is the first disagreement.

The second was between Maimonides and Judah Halevi. For Maimonides, the first command is to believe in God, creator of heaven and earth:

The basic principle of all basic principles and the pillar of all sciences is to realise that there is a First Being who brought every existing thing into being. . . If it could be supposed that He did not exist, it would follow that nothing else could possibly exist. If however it were supposed that all other beings were non-existent, He alone would still exist. . . To acknowledge this truth is a positive command, as it is said: "I am the Lord your God" (Ex. 20:2, Deut 5:7).3

Judah Halevi disagreed. Halevi was not only the greatest of medieval Hebrew poets, he also wrote one of Judaism's theological masterpieces, The Kuzari. It is framed as a dialogue between a rabbi and the King of the Khazars. Historically, the Khazars were a Turkish people who, between the seventh and eleventh centuries, ruled a considerable area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, including southern Russia, northern Caucasus, eastern Ukraine, Western Kazakhstan, and northwestern Uzbekistan.

Many Jewish traders and refugees lived there, and in 838 the Khazar King Bulan converted to Judaism, after supposedly holding a debate between representatives of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths. The Arabic writer Dimashqi writes that the Khazars, having encountered the Jewish faith, "found it better than their own and accepted it". Khazaria thus became, spiritually as well as geographically, an independent third force between the Muslim Caliphate and the Christian Byzantine Empire. After their conversion, the Khazar people used Jewish personal names, spoke and wrote in Hebrew, were circumcised, had synagogues and rabbis, studied the Torah and Talmud, and observed the Jewish festivals.

The Kuzari is Judah Halevi's overarching account of Judaism, cast in the form of an imagined conversation between the King and a rabbi that led to the King's conversion. In it, Halevi draws a portrait diametrically opposed to Maimonides' account. Judaism, for Halevi, is not philosophical but counter-philosophical. It's not about abstract concepts but about concrete experiences: the taste of slavery, the feeling of liberation, the realisation on the part of the people that God had heard their cry and set them free. The God of Abraham is not the God of Aristotle. The prophets were not philosophers. Philosophers found God in physics and metaphysics, but the prophets found God in history. This is how Halevi's rabbi explains his faith to the king of the Khazars:

I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, who led the children of Israel out of Egypt with signs and miracles; who fed them in the desert and gave them the land, after having brought them through the sea and the Jordan in a miraculous way. . . (Kuzari I:11)

He goes on to emphasise that God's opening words in the revelation at Mount Sinai were not, "I am the Lord your God, creator of heaven and earth" but "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Kuzari I:25). The covenant God made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai was not rooted in the ancient past of creation but in the recent past of the exodus.

What is at stake in this difference of opinion between Maimonides and Halevi? At the heart of Judaism is a twofold understanding of the nature of God and His relationship to the universe. On the one hand God is creator of the universe and the maker of the human person "in His image". This aspect of God is universal. It is accessible to anyone, Jew or gentile. Aristotle arrived at it through logic and metaphysics. For him, God was the "prime mover" who set the universe into motion. Today, many people reach the same conclusion through science: the

universe is too finely tuned for the emergence of life to have come into being through chance. Some arrive at it not through logic or science but through a simple sense of awe and wonder ("Not how the world is, but that it is, is the mystical" said Wittgenstein). This aspect of God is called by the Torah, Elokim. But there is a quite different aspect of God which predominates throughout most of Tanakh. This is God as He is involved in the fate of one family, one nation: the children of Israel. He intervened in their history. He made a highly specific covenant with them at Sinai – not at all like the general one He made with Noah and all humanity after the Flood. The Noahide covenant is simple and basic: it involved a mere seven commands. The Sinai covenant, by contrast, is highly articulated, covering almost every aspect of life. This aspect of God is signalled by the use of the four-letter name for which we traditionally substitute the word Hashem.⁴

Maimonides, the philosopher, emphasised the universal, metaphysical aspect of Judaism and the eternal, unchanging existence of God. Judah Halevi, the poet, was more attuned to the particularistic and prophetic dimension of Judaism: the role of God in the historical drama of the Jewish people.

Maimonides was the greatest halakhist and philosopher of the Middle Ages, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that here, at least, the Halakhot Gedolot and Judah Halevi were closer to the plain sense of the text. Even the greatest thinker is not right all the time, which is why Judaism remains a conversation scored for many voices, each with its own insight into the infinite inflections of the Divine word.

1 Maimonides, Sefer haMitzvot, positive command 1.

2 Nahmanides, Hasagot to Sefer haMitzvot, ad loc. This is not Nahmanides' own position. In his Commentary to the Torah (to Ex. 20:2), he counts the first verse of the Decalogue as a commandment in its own right, adopting a view similar to that of Maimonides.

3 Mishneh Torah, Yesodei ha-Torah, 1:1-5.

4 On the two aspects and names, see Kuzari IV:1-3; and Ramban to Exodus 3:13.

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Va'ani Tefillah Parshiyos in 5773 on the Shema Pt. 1

Va'ani Tefillah Shmini 5773

Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad. Hear O' Yisrael, Hashem, our G-d, Hashem is One.

This is Klal Yisrael's most seminal verse, its most powerful prayer. It is a declaration of who we are and in Whom we believe. Before I begin to explain its meaning and message, I take the liberty of quoting a passage from the Kaliver Rebbe, Shlita, in his introduction to his book Shema Yisrael. This volume, which is a collection of testimonies concerning the Kiddush Shem Shomayim, Sanctification of Hashem's Name, evinced by the victims and survivors of the European Holocaust, is fittingly named Shema Yisrael. These words are the clarion call of the Jewish People whose belief in Hashem is unequivocal.

The Rebbe says: "Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad, Our hearts will never accept any G-d other than the Creator of the Universe. I do not think that even the angels in Heaven believed that, after all the calumnies against Am Yisrael during the Holocaust and after all the bloodshed and the agonizing deaths of millions - that after all this, the Jewish People would still stand forth as the torchbearers of faith in G-d, declaring, 'Despite it all, we have not forgotten Your Name!' With perfect faith we still shout forth from the depths of our hearts, 'Shema Yisrael.'"

This should give all of us something to consider when we say Shema Yisrael.

Va'ani Tefillah Tazria 5773

Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad. Hear O' Yisrael Hashem is Our G-d. Hashem is One.

The quintessential seminal verse of Judaism is: Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad. The actual verse is the last four words. Shema Yisrael is a declaration, an announcement which affirms our faith in Hashem and proclaims His Unity. Emunah, faith in Hashem, is a personal thing. It is an emotion connected to the heart. Why is it necessary to call out to Yisrael to listen? One should simply express his personal emunah with Ani Maamin, "I believe that Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One."

Horav Leib Chasman, zl, explains that a Jew's obligation extends far beyond his

personal faith. It is a Jew's responsibility to "sing Hashem's praises" to all Jews. He must strive to let it be known to all of his brothers and sisters that Hashem is Our G-d. Shema Yisrael! I want all of you to hear! Judaism does not belong to one individual or one group. It belongs to all of us; thus, it is our collective responsibility to see to it that the clarion call of Shema Yisrael reaches everywhere and penetrates everyone's heart.

The Mashgiach emphasizes this idea further by admonishing those who, upon establishing organizations and institutions for the purpose of disseminating Torah and for the spiritual betterment of Klal Yisrael, refuse to include anyone who either does not exactly conform to his myopic perception of Torah and mitzvos or does not fit into his selective clique. In such instances, it is not about Torah, but rather, it is about them. These organizations and establishments are nothing more than the products of overactive egos. Shema Yisrael teaches us to be inclusive - not restrictive.

Va'ani Tefillah Emor 5773

Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad.

Krias Shema is a mitzvah - just like other mitzvos. If so, why is a brachah, blessing, not recited prior to performing this mitzvah? Why should Krias Shema be different than Hallel and Megillah? This question applies even according to those who deem the recitation of the three parshios, chapters, of Krias Shema to be Rabbinically ordained, since Hallel and Megillah are also Rabbinic decrees; yet, we recite a blessing.

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, explains that the essence of the mitzvah of Krias Shema is Kabbolas Ol Malchus Shomayim, accepting upon oneself the yoke of Heaven. This is primarily the intent and focus of the first pasuk. If one were to simply read the words of Shema Yisrael: Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad, without the accompanying kavanah, intent and devotion necessary to the acceptance of Hashem's existence and Oneness, His sovereignty over the world - he would not have fulfilled the mitzvah. In other words, the mitzvah is not just the reading - but the kavanah. The mitzvah of Shema is: Hear, listen, intellectualize and grasp it in your mind! Mere kria, reading, is nothing. The rest of Krias Shema does not carry such stringency. Thus, if one were to read the words without concentrating on their meaning and message, he would still be fulfilling the kria, reading. That is all that is necessary.

Since the kavanah transforms Krias Shema into a mitzvah, no blessing is required. One does not bless for kavanah, because it is not a physical action. Blessings are a requisite for a maaseh ha'mitzvah, a mitzvah which demands a physical act. This is why we do not say a brachah over the mitzvah of tefillah. Prayer is actually an avodah b'lev, action expressed through the heart, via one's proper kavanah.

Va'ani Tefillah Behar Bechukosai 5773

Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu... V'ahavta.

Horav Yehudah Assad, zl, explains this as a two-part process. First, one believes b'emunah peshutah, with simple faith, as a result of his upbringing. His father and mother inculcate him with faith in the Almighty. Thus, a child grows up believing in Hashem, as a result of listening to his parents and accepting their teachings. As he grows older and develops greater proficiency in Torah scholarship, he begins to question his beliefs. He is now ready for the dialectic and analytic approach: to ask; listen; and to digest the answer. As a result of his newly-discovered answers, his understanding of Hashem achieves new profundity and broader acceptance within his psyche. This new approach enables him to develop a deep love for Hashem, something which had been unrealistic earlier. Without cognition, one cannot truly love. Blind love, which is not founded in reason, can, under duress, be forgotten. On the other hand, one cannot achieve understanding until after he has had the basic exposure from his parents to emunah peshutah.

This is the meaning of Shema Yisrael: First, one must listen to his parents and imbibe their teachings concerning Hashem. After he has studied Torah and developed a deeper understanding of the Almighty, he will have risen to the level of v'ahavta es Hashem, loving Hashem as a result of a deeper understanding of His ways.

Va'ani Tefillah Bamidbar 5773

Shema Yisrael.

Hear O' Yisrael! These words convey a powerful message. We go through life deceiving ourselves, refusing to concede that perhaps we might actually be

wrong. This presents two problems. First, it impairs our relationship with our peers. A person who cannot face the reality that he could be wrong has a serious problem. The second - and primary - problem is with regard to our relationship with Hashem. One who cannot own up to his indiscretions presents an insurmountable barrier between himself and Hashem. The stellar dialogue between Hashem and man is: Shema Yisrael! Listen! Wake up and hear what is going on! There can be a relationship only when we are willing to hear what Hashem has to say to us. As Horav Shlomo Freifeld, zl, points out, we must be willing to listen to each other, but first, we must tune in to ourselves. Yes, we must listen with honesty, with humility, with courage and without fear - ready to accept what we "hear" and willing to do something about it. We must listen to who we are, what our goals are, and how we expect to achieve them. Otherwise, we go through life fooling ourselves and destroying our relationship with Hashem.

Va'ani Tefillah Naso 5773

Hashem Elokeinu - Hashem is our G-d.

Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, explains that the possessive expression of Hashem Elokeinu has two perspectives. First, He is ours in the sense that a child would say, "He is my father," a term which denotes His special interest in people and His special interest and benevolence towards them. Second, we are "His" in the same sense that one refers to his employer, which denotes that all of our interest is surely on Him. Therefore, this reciprocal expression bespeaks our connection to Him and His connection to us. The Almighty bestows holiness and blessing upon us, and we direct our praises, gratitude and all of our hearts' thoughts towards Him. He acquires us as His People, and we acquire Him as our Father, Protector and King, forever. This is all because "Hashem" means forever. Whatever commitment we make must be an everlasting one - because that is the type of bond Hashem has established with us. Thus, Hashem Elokeinu is the proverbial two-way street: We do ours, and He does His.

Va'ani Tefillah Behaloscha 5773

Hashem Echad, Hashem is One.

Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, explains that the Oneness of G-d denotes many principles. There is no other G-d - but Hashem. No other Being possesses intrinsic existence. Hashem alone is the truth, and nothing else is as true as His existence. All things exist due to Him.

He is One in managing the Universe. He is one forever. Everything will one day cease to exist - but Hashem. He is One in all His deeds. He is truly just and kind in everything that He does. He is One in His perfection. No one can ever remotely compare to Him in kindness or in any other attribute of perfection. He stands alone.

He is one in all thoughts and deeds. He is the one purpose of our lives, and we love and serve Him with all of our thoughts and deeds.

He is One everywhere, north and south, east and west, and throughout the entire universe: He sees everywhere; His power is everywhere; and His kindness is everywhere. He is One in this world, and He is One in the Afterlife. This gives us a small idea of the meaning and power of One.

Va'ani Tefillah Shlach 5773

Hashem Echad - Hashem is One.

We note that the daled at the end of the word Echad is written in a larger "font" than the rest of the letters. This is done to insure that it not be misread as a reish, which would form the word acheir, other (gods). Likewise, in the word acheir of the pasuk, lo sishtachaveh le'il acheir, "Do not prostrate yourselves to an alien god" (Shemos 34:14), the reish is written in a large font, to avoid the error of reading the reish as a daled, which would form the word echad. This would imply that a Jew should not bow down to the True One G-d.

In his commentary to Sefer Devarim 6:4, Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, comments, the reish of the polytheistic thought is accommodately rounded, while the daled which expresses the Jewish truth is sharply angular. This intimates that, with the loss of a little sharpness/acuity, the echad, one, becomes acheir, alien. The message is quite clear and concise: Hashem Echad is a sharply defined concept. There are no "grays," no other possibilities. It is this way - and only this way.

Va'ani Tefillah Korach 5773

Shma Yisrael

The ayin, last letter of the word Shema, is written in a larger size than the other letters. We, thus, have two letters written in the larger font: daled of Echad; and

ayin of Shema. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains the reason for the large ayin is that it places emphasis on the meaning of the word shema, hear. If the ayin were to be mistaken for an aleph due to the similarity in sound, it would result in the word she'ma, perhaps indicating that one is not really certain of the statement he is making.

The combination of these two large letters, ayin and daled, spell out the word eid, which means witness. To paraphrase Rav Hirsch, "The contents of Shema Yisrael are a testimony by Klal Yisrael to Klal Yisrael, and everybody who utters it stands forth thereby as a testimony of G-d to himself and to the world." Furthermore, he adds that the emphasis on the letter ayin, which means eye, is to underscore that the nation was an eyewitness to the Giving of the Torah.

Va'ani Tefillah Balack 5773

Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad.

It is difficult - perhaps impossible - for man to grasp the meaning of Hashem's Oneness. The idea that Ein Od Milvado, "There is no One other than He Alone," is something we say, but we do not really understand. In his commentary to the pasuk of Shema in the Torah, Rashi teaches us its meaning: Hashem, Who is our G-d - now, for He is our G-d; only Yisrael recognizes Hashem as Sovereign of the Universe. In the future, however, the entire world will come to acknowledge Hashem as G-d. He will be the only accepted Deity. Even the Christian and Muslims, who maintain some belief in G-d, combine Him with other entities. This is called shituf - partnership. Hashem has no partners. One day, even these nations will come to accept this verity.

Shema Yisrael means that we believe today with emunah sheleimah, complete and perfect faith that there is no entity other than Hashem. Ein Od Milvado; "One day, this belief will become universal." Ba'yom ha'hu yiheyeh Hashem Echad u'Shemo Echad, "One day, there will be no evil, no yetzer hara, evil inclination, and people will finally see the truth." In the meantime, we are alone.

Va'ani Tefillah Pinchas 5773

Vahavta es Hashem Elokecha.

And you shall love G-d, your G-d.

Ahavas Hashem, loving G-d, is a logical consequence of Hashem Echad, Hashem is One. As Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains, we infer the unity of the purpose of all of life from the Oneness of G-d. We prove our love of G-d, our worship of Him in thought and conviction, by mustering for this purpose every aspect of our lives, including our bodies and physical desires and all of the means at our disposal. Thus, whatever "portion" we receive in life, be it positive or less-than-positive, we must apply ourselves to accepting our allotment with love.

B'chol levavcha is written in the plural, which Chazal use to infer that one must serve Hashem b'shnei yitzrecham with both good and evil inclinations. The same One G-d Who has imbued us with a good inclination, with the capacity to respond to the beauty of all things good and noble, has also implanted within us a yetzer hora, including the capacity to be swayed by the allure of sin, baseness, and vulgarity. If evil were to hold no charms for us, if the thought of sin were to be so contrary to us that we would be repulsed by it, and the urge to do good would not involve self-denial and self-discipline, then, of course, we would do no evil; we would do only good. Hashem gave us the opportunity to overcome the evil inclination, and thereby warrant just reward for our good deeds. This is the meaning of loving G-d with all of our heart - with both inclinations. We do not ignore the evil; we are aware of it. We triumph over it.

Va'ani Tefillah Matos Masei 5773

Vahavta es Hashem, Elokecha. You should love Hashem, your G-d.

The first step towards loving Hashem is to love His people, who love Him and cling to His Torah. Thus, explains Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, the ways and lifestyle of the Torah observant Jew should be the central focus of our admiration and our primary interest. We should love His genuine people with all our heart and soul. We should seek the company of Torah sages and cling to them. How true is the above observation? How can one claim to love the Almighty if he has a disdain for those who serve Him? To love His people means to love everything about them - even their individual idiosyncrasies concerning genuine mitzvah observance; their choice of fashion, etc. The spectrum of Hashem's People is wide and encompasses an entire world of Torah Jewry from all walks of life.

Va'ani Tefillah Devarim 5773

V'ohavata es Hashem Elokecha - You shall love Hashem, your G-d.

Sefer Halkrim writes that true unadulterated love exists only when it is focused on one subject. Love that is spread over two or more subjects is incomplete. Therefore, we are commanded to love Hashem - who is Echad, One.

In the preface to his Shev Shmaita, Horav Aryeh Leib HaKohen, zl, applies this idea to make a powerful observation. In the parsha of Akeidas Yitzchak, when Hashem instructs Avraham Avinu to sacrifice Yitzchak (Avinu), He says, "Please take your son, your only one, whom you love." After the "aborted" Akeidah, Hashem said, "For now, I know that you are a G-d-fearing man, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me." Prior to the test, Hashem mentions Avraham's love for Yitzchak; after the test, Yitzchak's singularity is mentioned, but not Avraham's love. What catalyzed the change? This was, in effect, the actual test. Hashem saw that Avraham's love was divided between the Divine and his son, Yitzchak. By asking Avraham to sacrifice Yitzchak, Hashem was seeking to complete Avraham's love. Avraham successfully withstanding the test was indicative that his love for Hashem was now complete, since Avraham was able to quell the love he harbored for Yitzchak. Therefore, after the test, the Torah no longer mentions Avraham's love with regard to Yitzchak.

Va'ani Tefillah Vaeshcan 5773

V'ahavta es Hashem Elokecha - You shall love Hashem, your G-d.

In Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 2:1, the Rambam writes: "It is a mitzvah to love and fear the Almighty, as it says, V'ahavta es Hashem Elokecha; "You shall love Hashem, your G-d." And it also says, Es Hashem Elokecha tira, "You should fear Hashem, your G-d." Apparently, Rambam feels that the mitzvah to love Hashem precedes that of yirah, fear. There is, however, a pasuk in Devarim 10:12, V'atah mah Hashem Elokecha sho'el meimach, ki im l'yiraa es Hashem Elokecha... u'l'ahavah oso, which clearly places fear before love. How do we reconcile the pasuk cited by the Rambam with that of the Torah in Parashas Eikev?

Horav Akiva Eiger, zl, distinguishes between two forms of fear: yiraas ha'onesh, fear of punishment; yiraas ha'romemus, fear of Awe. The fear one has of punishment is on a lower level than love. Fear of Hashem's pre-eminence, awestruck by His Omnipotence, follows love. The pasuk in Parashas Eikev, in which fear precedes love is addressing punitive fear. Rambam, however, speaks concerning yiraas ha'romemus, fear of Awe.

Va'ani Tefillah Eikev 5773

You shall love Hashem, your G-d.

Ahavas Hashem, yiraas Shomayim, loving G-d and fearing Heaven, are unique mitzvos which are expressed by individuals, each in his own manner. There is one commonality that courses between these two mitzvos: sincerity. Let me explain. The Steipler Gaon, zl, would often emphasize the tremendous need for chizuk, strengthening. He would say, "Ahavas Hashem and yiraas Hashem are mitzvos in the Torah just like any other mitzvah. Why should we not apply ourselves to them as well?"

The Steipler then added that these two mitzvos stand out in the sense that lishmah, performing the mitzvah for the mitzvah's sake - with no ulterior motive - is a defining factor in their performance. Concerning other mitzvos, the person may perform the mitzvah, but does one know his real motivation? It could be for personal satisfaction, to impress others, to get attention. The mitzvah is executed, but it is missing the lishmah imperative. Loving G-d, and fearing G-d are essentially 'lishmah' mitzvos. One who does not act with sincerity does not manifest true love. One who does not fear with sincerity does not manifest true fear.

Va'ani Tefillah Reeh 5773

V'ahavta es Hashem Elokecha b'chol levavcha, u'b'chol nafshecha u'b'chol me'odecha. You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your resources.

Chazal question the need for adding b'chol me'odecha, "all of your possessions," since it has already stated b'chol nafshecha, "with all of your soul." If one is enjoined to relinquish his life out of love for Hashem, surely it goes without saying that Hashem takes precedence over his worldly possessions. They reply that (sadly) there are people for whom their life and health take a backseat to their money. The pursuit of the holy dollar rises above all, but after all is said and done, the majority of people are sane; thus, they value their lives over their

money. If so, why does money precede life in the sequence of the pasuk? Usually, the pasuk will work its way down, with the last subject being a greater novelty than its predecessor. Having to part with one's possessions is certainly not as great a sacrifice as giving up one's life. While some people may disagree, they are certainly not in the majority.

Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, explains that those individuals who value money over their lives are not people who do not care about their lives. They certainly care about their lives - just as well as everyone else. It is just that they go overboard concerning their wealth. Thus, the Torah is teaching us that even those individuals who are afflicted with an unusual lust for money - they, too, must give it up for Hashem.

Va'ani Tefillah Shoftim 5773

B'chol levavcha u'b'chol nafshecha.

The Talmud Berachos 61b relates that when the Tanna Rabbi Akiva was led to his execution, it happened to be z'man Krias Shema, the appropriate time for reciting Krias Shema. The Romans began to scale his skin with metal combs. As he endured indescribable pain, he recited Krias Shema and was mekabel, accepted upon himself, ol malchus Shomayim, the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom. His students asked him, "Rebbe, ad kan? Until even now?" In other words, "It is enough." Rabbi Akiva replied, "My entire life I was troubled concerning this pasuk (b'chol levavcha u'b'chol nafshecha), which implies that we must love Hashem - even when He takes your life from you. Now that I have the opportunity to fulfill this pasuk, I should not fulfill it?"

Rashi explains the students' question as: How did you achieve such a sublime spiritual plateau in which you maintain your sense of devotion to Hashem amidst joy and gladness of heart, despite being subjected to excruciating pain and deprivation. Rabbi Akiva replied, "My entire life I aspired for this moment." This means, explains Horav Zalmen, zl, m'Vilna, my fear of this moment did not just begin. No! I have been living with it, practicing the feeling of having a sharp blade across my neck, feeling the anxiety of being moments before a painful death. Every time I recited Krias Shema, this is what went through my mind. In fact, the image of death amidst the pain is for me very real, for I lived through it many times. Now that everything for which I had aspired and practiced is becoming a reality, should I not fulfill it?"

Rav Zalmen relates the well-known incident that occurred during the Spanish Inquisition concerning the righteous mother, whose two young sons were slaughtered before her eyes. She looked Heavenward and declared, "Hashem, my G-d, I have always loved You, but it was not totally complete because I shared my love with my two sons. Now that it has been decreed upon me that I should be left bereft of my sons, I turn all of my love to You." This is the meaning of b'chol, "with all," levavcha, "your heart," and with all your soul.

Va'ani Tefillah Ki Seitze 5773

B'chol levavcha u'b'chol nafshecha u'b'chol meodecha.

In the ascending sequence of values, one would assume that wealth precedes life, with people caring much less about their financial portfolios than their lives. Rashi comments that, regrettably, this is a misconception. There are individuals for whom mamonom chaviv aleihem yoseir migufam, material wealth is more valuable to them than their life. Thus, u'b'chol meodecha is last in the sequence. Interestingly, in the second parsha of krias shema, momentum is made concerning material bounty. There it says merely, b'chol levavchem u'b'chol nafshechem. Why is this?

Horav Yosef Engel, zl, quotes a distinguished sage who distinguishes between the plural, community, and the singular, the individual. For communal funds, money belonging to a group carries the same weight as nefashos, lives. Therefore, in the second parsha which addresses the community, the concept of b'chol meodechem is included under the purview of b'chol nafshechem. The first parsha, however, which addresses the individual, splits up the two.

Rav Engel supports this idea from the Sefer HaChinuch which distinguishes between communal funds and private funds with regard to the laws of moseir, one who tattles to the government and causes Jewish money to be taken away. One who damages communal funds or hurts a community as a whole, performed acts tantamount to harming their lives. This should be a wake-up call to those whose sense of propriety concerning the community's finances is limited to their personal needs.

Va'ani Tefillah Ki Savo 5773

U'Chol Meodecha - and with all your possessions.

In an alternative exposition, Rashi explains that the word meod is related to middah, measurement. The phrase u'chol meodecha is now interpreted as, "and with all your measures," meaning that one's love for Hashem should not wane, regardless of what "measure," treatment, we receive. This applies both to what we perceive to be good and bad treatment, generously or poorly.

We must manifest our love for the Almighty in times of joy and in times of pain and misfortune. They are both derived from the same Source. To accept the good without the bad would seem to indicate that either we do not believe they are both from the same Source, or that we disagree with the decision that would cause us to have stress and pain. We do not give orders; we take and accept whatever Hashem gives us, with the belief that this too is good.

Chazal say it very simply: "It is incumbent on a man to bless G-d for the evil in the same way as for the good." Whatever comes from Hashem is inherently good, but, due to our limited physical vision, we are unable to see the bigger picture, to realize that in the great scheme of things what appears bad is truly good.

Va'ani Tefillah Nitzavim Vayelech

b'chol meodecha - with all your possessions.

Rabbi Reisman - Parshas Vaeschanan 5775

Let's move to a thought for Shabbos Nachamu. The Chida mentions that we find in Sefer Daniel that there are Arba'a Malchios, there are 4 kingdoms of our Galus. They are; 1) Bavel who destroyed the first Bais Hamikdash, followed by 2) Paras Umadai, which was the time of the Galus, followed by 3) Yavan the Greeks in the beginning of the Bayis Sheini, followed by 4) Edom, our present Galus.

Why isn't Mitzrayim one of the Malchios of our Galus. After all, didn't we go to Galus in Mitzrayim first? The Chida says that Mitzrayim is the Maasei Avos Siman L'banim for all the Galusin. Beraishis 46:8 (וְאֵלֶּה הַמַּצְרִימִים מִצְרַיִם מִצְרָיִם מִצְרַיִם מִצְרַיִם). The word (מִצְרַיִם) are the initials of the 4 Galusin, Bavel, Edom, Yavan, and Madai. There is more. Klal Yisrael went to Mitzrayim 4 times. The Shevatim went down first as it says in Beraishis beginning of Perek 42 (כִּי יֵשׁוּבְךָ בְּמִצְרַיִם) to try to get food, then they went a second time together with Binyamin. Then Yosef revealed himself. The third time they went down as it says in Beraishis 46:27 (כֹּל-יְשׁוּבֵי מִצְרַיִם לְבֵית-יַעֲקֹב הַבָּאִה מִצְרַיִם, שְׁבָעִים). The 4th time is after Yaakov Avinu is buried and they came back to Mitzrayim. So the Shevatim arrived in Mitzrayim 4 times.

The Chida says that those 4 times are K'neged the 4 Galuio's. The first of (יֵשׁוּבְךָ בְּמִצְרַיִם) when they went to Mitzrayim to try to find some type of rescue during a time of Tzarah is Galus Bavel when a Yid went to Bavel and there was something there, that Klal Yisrael could regroup.

The second is the Galus of Madai, that is when they went down with Binyamin. It started off very bitterly but during that Galus, Yosef revealed himself. The same thing of the Galus of the 70 years the time of Madai. During that time Reshus was given to build the Bais Hamildash. During that time the miracle of Purim took place, during the Galus. That is the second time they went down. When they went down the second time you remember from Chumash the Shevatim drank wine together with Yosef. A Remez to the drinking of wine on Purim. They brought down Binaymin, a Remez to Mordechai Hayemini from Sheivet Binyamin.

The third Galus when they went down with the (שְׁבָעִים נָפְשׁוּ) is a symbol for Galus Yavan. A time of danger of assimilation. We find that Yaakov was afraid when they would come down that Mitzrayim was greeting them happily and eagerly. There was a danger of assimilation. The Misyavnim, the third Galus.

Of course the 4th Galus our present Galus, is the longest and the most difficult. The 4th time the Shevatim went down was by Kevuras Yaakov.

After Yaakov was buried they went back down and then the Kushi Hashibud began shortly thereafter. That is a difficulty of this Galus, the most difficult of all. But of course in every Maaseh Avos Siman L'banim there is a lesson of Nechama here as well. Just as in Mitzrayim Klal Yisrael called to the Ribbono Shel Olam and as the Posuk says in Shemos 2:25 (וַיְבִיחֵם אֱלֹהִים) He brought the Galus to the end. As long as they resisted the Lo Shinu Es Shemam, Lo Shinu Es Lishonam, as long as they resisted the assimilation, they had the Geula. So too, we find Nechama in the hope for a Geula and the Yetziya from the 4th Galus like the Yetzia from Mitzrayim, like the Yetzia from that 4th Galus, one full of miracles and joy. So a thought for Shabbos Nachamu.

Moving on to a thought for Tu B'av. It is very confusing what is the Mayla, what is the benefit of Tu B'av. I just Davened Mincha and we missed Tachanun. Already a benefit and it is not even Tu B'av yet. What is the lesson of Tu B'av?

We know that on Tu B'av it was a day of Shidduchim, a day that Klal Yisrael were involved heavily in finding Shidduchim. That is a nice thing. How does that fit in with Tu B'av?

In the Afikai Mayim on Yimai Hamitzarim, which are the Shiurim of Rav Moshe Shapiro at the end on page 414 there is an explanation. He says Tu B'av is not so much a Yom Shidduchim as a Yom of Tefilla. What happened? On this day, Klal Yisrael realized that the 40th year of Maisai Midbar of those that were supposed to die would not die. It was a reprieve from the Gezaira that for 40 years as it says in Bamidbar 14:34 (אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם-יּוֹם לְשָׁנָה יוֹם לְשָׁנָה) there would be death in the Midbar. Although they could have realized it on Yod B'av right after Tisha B'av but Chazal explain that that realization came on Tu B'av. On Tu B'av they realized the power of the Koach of Tefilla. That even after a Gezaira L'ra is made, HKB"H turns it around. The Rambam writes in Pirush Hamishnayos on the last Mishnah in Maseches Taanis which talks about Tu B'av, that they had a certain confidence that they can Daven and that HKB"H looks at them favorably, and that we take as well.

In learning Berachos Daf 32, I came across a Pnei Yehoshua. The Pnei Yehoshua says Vaeschanan that Moshe Rabbeinu Davened 515 Tefillos. What is 515 and when did they take place? Were they 515 Tefillos spread over two days or three days? The Pnei Yehoshua makes a calculation. He calculates all the Davenings back from Vaeschanan, all of the weekday Davening as there are no Bakashos on Shabbos. He says that if you take 3 Tefillos a day, Shacharis, Mincha, and Maariv excluding the Tefillos of Shabbos and Yom Tov, the 515 Tefillos bring you back to Tu B'av. On Tu B'av even Moshe Rabbeinu realized something that he didn't fully appreciate, the Koach Hatefilla. He Davened that the Gezaira against him would also be overturned and three times a day he Davened a Tefilla. So Tu B'av is a day not only of Tefilla but a beginning of a series of Tefillos.

When we Daven for something 5 times, 15 times, or 20 times we get tired and we think that Hashem is not listening. Moshe Rabbeinu 515 Tefillos. We too, as it says in Tehillim 27:14 (תְּזַכֵּנוּ וְנִצְמַח לְבָבִי; וְנִתְחַזַּק, אֶל-יְיָ) Chazal Teitch (אֶל-יְיָ) when you Daven to Hashem and you are not answered (תְּזַכֵּנוּ וְנִצְמַח לְבָבִי; וְנִתְחַזַּק, אֶל-יְיָ) find strength. As the Rambam says and see that Tefillos can be Poel even if it is many Tefillos. That is the Koach of Tu B'av a Koach to be Mechazeik ourselves in the Koach Hatefila. A very special opportunity.

Tomorrow morning Vesikin is about 5:50 in the New York area. It is a good day to get up early and Daven, to Daven a Vesikin Davening. If you don't usually Daven Vesikin the first time you do it is certainly gives you an extra feeling, an extra Hergeish. Do it and make it a special Davening. Daven for the things you need, things your Chaveirim need. IY"H your

Tefillos should be answered. With that I wish everyone a joyous Tu B'av, a meaningful Shabbos Nachamu, and a Heilige Shabbos Kodesh. A Good Shabbos to all.

The word meodecha is closely related to middah, measurement, which leads Chazal to interpret b'chol meodecha as, "with all your measures," with whatever treatment you receive - whether it seems good or bad. Accept it and serve Hashem; nonetheless, Chazal state, "It is incumbent on a man to bless G-d for the evil in the same way as for the good." There is a classic story which, because it is well-known, is often not appreciated as well as it should be. Perhaps repeating it in this venue will catalyze a deeper understanding of its message.

Two brothers who later became famous as distinguished Torah giants, Horav Pinchas and Horav Shmelke Horowitz, came to the Mezritcher Maggid for guidance in chassidus. They inquired about the nature, goals and objectives of chassidus. Chassidic philosophy focuses greatly on simchah, joy, and the need for infusing every aspect of life with joy. They asked the Maggid how it was possible to thank G-d equally for bad and for good. The Maggid replied, "Go to my Zushia (a reference to Horav Zushia m'Annipole), and he will answer your question."

Rav Zushia was a unique individual, who spent most of his day engrossed in Torah study in the Maggid's bais hamedrash. He was beset with a number of serious physical maladies that caused him constant pain. He was destitute. In addition to it all, his wife was notorious for her ill treatment of her husband. Yet, Rav Zushia remained the paragon of joy. Rarely was a smile absent from his face.

The two brothers presented their question to him, with the addendum that the Maggid had suggested that he could enlighten them. He looked at them and said, "I have no idea why the Maggid would send you to me. This is a question for someone who has endured pain and deprivation. I can attest that I have never suffered in my life. I have truly been blessed with everything that I need."

When the brothers heard this they understood why the Maggid had sent them to Rav Zushia. Hashem expects us to be so faithful that we are actually unable to discern between what appears to be bad or good. If it comes from Hashem - it must be good.

Va'ani Tefillah Haazinu 5773

V'hayu ha'davarim ha'eileh asher anochi metzavcha hayom al levavecha. Let these matters which I command you this day, be upon your heart.

Retaining the Torah's words on our heart, the metaphoric seat of our emotions, allows these words to govern our emotions. This way, explains Horav Menachem Mendel, zl, m'Kalish - we are in charge of our emotions - not vice versa. Veritably, unless one comes to know G-d through His Torah and mitzvos, he cannot really attain true lasting love for Him. Since this love must be able to endure and transcend the vicissitudes of life, if it is not the product of - and tempered by - the Torah, it will not abide. The Kotzker Rebbe, zl, posits that al levavecha, "on your heart," should be interpreted figuratively: lay these words upon your heart, like a weighted stone. Thus, during an auspicious moment of inspiration, the heart responds/opens, responding to the stimulus, and these "words" of Torah will enter it. Interestingly, the Torah, which is a body of intellectual knowledge, is to be placed on the heart, the seat of emotions. Should it not be otherwise - whereby the Torah rests on one's mind? Apparently, it goes without saying that Torah connects with the mind. The concern is that it also connect with the heart, so that it governs one's emotions and desires as well.

Metzavecha hayom - I command you this day. What is the significance of hayom, "this day"? The Chafetz Chaim explains that one must view himself as if he is the only person in the universe; as if Hashem's mitzvos apply only to him; as if the Torah is the only Book he has; and if that is his last. Thus, one will certainly not squander his time and, instead, apply himself to mitzvos and Torah study. This is what is meant by hayom: You - and only you - on this day - and only on this day - with this Book - and only this Book - on this day - and only on this day - because today might be your last day - tomorrow you might no longer be alive. Do it now!

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subject: **Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein**
Weekly Parsha

VAETCHANAN – NACHAMU

Moshe's final heartfelt appeal to the merciful God of Israel is somehow refused and of no avail. He will not be allowed to enter the Land of Israel. One can only feel the bitter disappointment and frustration that he must have experienced at this response. Nevertheless, he continues in his role as teacher and leader of Israel even until his final day.

The balance of this book of Dvarim is taught to his people and to all eternity after he is aware that the greatest ambition of his life – entering the Land of Israel – has been denied to him. Though he will refer to this matter a number of times throughout this book of Dvarim, there is no further evidence of any resentment on his part to the will of God, as expressed to him in the Torah reading of this week.

Even though he was apparently answered in the negative this did not affect his attitude towards the Jewish people, let alone the God of Israel. Apparently he is comforted by the fact that he was answered and that all doubts were removed as to his status and future. The rabbis of the Talmud have taught us that there is no greater satisfaction than when all doubts regarding a given situation are removed. Even a negative response contains within it a certain measure of satisfaction at the resolution of a doubtful issue.

Moshe will be joined to his people for all eternity even though he will not be privileged to enter the Land of Israel with them. And this half-full glass should suffice to bring him comfort and contentment.

On the surface there appears to be relatively few times in our painful history of exile and persecution when comfort and contentment are afforded to us. We have to make do with glasses that are only half-full, physically speaking.

However, the Jewish people always had an overflowing cup when it came to spirit, holiness and Torah scholarship. This was always our vessel of hope and optimism.

The Jewish people always believe that there are better days ahead. That belief alone sustains us through the darkest of times and the most perilous of situations. Hope for the future is the greatest tool for consolation in the present. Our generation has lived to see a physical and spiritual rebirth of the Jewish people, unimagined a century ago.

But there were people then who dreamt that such a rebirth was not only possible but that it actually would take place. It was this belief, illogical as it appeared at that time, which was the source of comfort and consolation to a stricken people. It is only when grief and disappointment create a lack of hope and commitment to a better future that any meaningful form of consolation and healing is prevented.

These weeks of consolation and preparation for the great days that soon will be upon us should strengthen us in our resolve and spirit.... and will truly remain a great source of consolation for Israel and the Jewish people.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

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Dishes, Detergent and Malachos

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

The Aseres Hadibros include the mitzvah of Shabbos, providing the opportunity to continue our discussion from parshas Pinchas.

Question #1: Washing dishes

"Whenever I ask my son to help wash the dishes on Shabbos, he claims that it is prohibited. Is he pulling my leg in his attempt to avoid family responsibilities?"

Question #2: No detergent

"Is it prohibited to wash clothes on Shabbos if I do not use detergent?"

Question #3: Six in one!

Can six people consecutively launder a garment?

Three weeks ago, we began our discussion about the melacha of melabein. We learned that there is a dispute among rishonim whether this melacha should be defined as laundering or as bleaching, although in practical terms, the halachos remain the same either way, and it is prohibited min haTorah to launder or to

bleach on Shabbos. We also discovered that there are numerous ways that one can violate this melacha, such as by soaking, scrubbing, wringing, or rinsing, and, according to some authorities, even by brushing a garment. At this point, we will continue our discussion where we left off.

Washing dishes

There is no prohibition of melabein for soaking, scouring, or cleaning a hard substance such as wood or metal. This is because the grime lies on top of the material and is not absorbed inside or between the fibers. This is the reason why it is permitted to wash dishes on Shabbos, provided that one does not squeeze a cloth or something similar in the process.

One may explain the difference between fabrics, that are included in the melacha of melabein, and hard substances that are not, in the following way. All melachos involve changing an object to make it more useful for mankind. In the instance of most melachos, this involves some type of physical or chemical change to the object upon which the melacha is performed. Regarding some melachos, such as trapping, carrying and selecting, no real physical or chemical change occurs in the item, but there is a difference in utility. The undomesticated animal was useless to mankind, and trapping made it available for mankind. Prior to removing the bad part of the item, one could not eat or use this food, and selecting made it useful. In carrying, the most difficult of the melachos to explain conceptually, the item is made useful by changing its location.

By the way, if we remember the dispute between Rashi and the Rambam that I mentioned earlier, the approach of the Rambam allows an easier explanation why washing dishes is not included under the melacha. According to the Rambam, the av melacha is bleaching, or changing the color of the fiber or fabric. All laundering changes the inherent appearance of the cloth, and, in this way, the toladah, laundering, is similar to the av melacha, bleaching. However, dirt on top of a plate does not change the inherent appearance of the plate – one merely needs to scrape off the leftover food on its surface, and the plate is clean. This contrasts with laundering cloth, where the dirt is embedded in the fiber.

All or nothing?

Does one violate melabein only if one performs all of the above-prohibited activities (soaking, scrubbing, wringing, and rinsing), or even if one performs any one of them? A ramification of the second approach is that cleaning an item only a bit violates melabein, despite the fact that the garment is still dirty.

The halacha is that each of these stages constitutes infringements of melabein min haTorah, and this is true even if one does not add any detergent to the water. In other words, although one ordinarily uses detergent to launder clothes, and without detergent the clothes are usually not clean, since performing each of the above-mentioned laundering steps does clean the garment a little bit, that is sufficient to contravene the Torah law of melabein.

Six in one

Thus, theoretically six different people could each be doing a different activity to a garment or cloth, each one violating the melacha of melabein min haTorah!

The first one brushes the garment, removing some of the dirt. The second one places the garment in a bucket to soak it. The third one scrubs the garment on a scouring board; the fourth squeezes water out of the garment; the fifth rinses the garment clean; and the sixth bleaches the now clean garment.

Cleaning versus cooking

Since the halacha is that each of the laundering stages constitutes a Torah violation of melabein, we are faced with an interesting contrast between the melacha of melabein and that of cooking. The halacha is that someone who began cooking food, but the food is not yet cooked to the point where it is edible, has not yet violated the melacha min haTorah, but only a rabbinic injunction. Violating the melacha min haTorah requires that the food is cooked enough to make it edible. Yet, soaking an item of clothing contravenes the prohibition of laundering, even though removing it from the water without any other cleaning process may still leave the garment too soiled to wear. Why is there a difference between laundering, which one violates even if the item is still not fully clean, and cooking, which one violates only when the item is cooked? The answer appears to be that cooking an item to the point that it is still inedible does not benefit mankind, since no one will eat it. On the other hand, although most people do not enjoy wearing dirty clothing, it is more pleasant to wear

clothes that are somewhat laundered than clothes that are completely filthy. In other words, although laundering something a little bit made the item cleaner, cooking it a little bit did not make it edible.

According to the Rambam's approach in the dispute over the definition of melabein, the distinction between laundering and cooking is more easily understood. The av melacha, in his opinion, is bleaching, which means that the basic melacha is changing the coloring, not cleaning it. Laundering is a toladah because it changes the appearance of the cloth. Thus, each stage of melabein changes the appearance of the cloth, which is the nature of the melacha.

Wringing versus stirring

At this point, we should discuss the following interesting phenomenon. When discussing the prohibition of wringing laundry on Shabbos, the Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 9:11) states the following: "One who wrings out a garment until he extracts the water that is absorbed inside it desecrates Shabbos for laundering, since wringing is necessary (mitzorchei) for laundering just as stirring is necessary (mitzorchei) for cooking."

This is certainly an unusual statement. Why does the Rambam need to compare wringing water to stirring food in order to explain why it is prohibited on Shabbos? And, the Rambam uses a very interesting term to describe this relationship -- the word mitzorchei, which he uses in only three contexts in his entire thirty chapters of the laws of Shabbos. Aside from using this term here to describe wringing laundry and stirring food, he uses it also in the context of meleches tofeir (Hilchos Shabbos 10:9 and Magid Mishnah, Kesef Mishneh, and Mirkeves Hamishneh ad locum; Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim 340 and Elyah Rabbah 340:14) .

Perhaps one could say that since wringing out water looks different from other laundering acts, one might think that it is not prohibited under the heading of this melacha. However, this is probably not what was bothering the Rambam. My proof is that there are many other melacha activities that do not look like the av melacha under which they are listed. For example, weeding is prohibited min haTorah because it is an aspect of plowing, notwithstanding that weeding does not look at all like plowing. It violates plowing because weeding prepares the ground to allow growth, which is the same concept involved when plowing. Similarly, pruning trees is prohibited as a subheading of planting. Although pruning appears to be the exact opposite of planting, since it is a method of having vines and trees grow better it is included under planting. In these instances, a melacha is performed because the goals of pruning and weeding are respectively similar to planting and plowing. Thus, we see that melacha prohibitions are often categorized by their purpose. Yet, in these instances, the Rambam finds no need to compare weeding or pruning to stirring, nor does he use the word tzorchei to describe what they do.

A possible approach to explain the Rambam is that both wringing and stirring are done after the basic melacha has already been performed. If you are stirring a cooking pot, someone already placed a pot of food on a fire, thereby violating the melacha of cooking. The Rambam is pointing out that stirring a pot is a full violation of cooking on Shabbos – and that we do not mitigate liability for this act on the basis that someone else already performed the actions necessary to cook this food.

Similarly, a person can wring out clothes only when someone else already soaked them in water – which, in and of itself, constitutes laundering according to halacha. Thus, one might contend that the wringer did not violate the melacha (Nimla Tal, meleches melabein #18; meleches tofeir #26).

Separate melacha

Heretofore, we have been assuming that wringing out clothes, socheit, is a subcategory of melabein. Actually, there is a dispute among tana'im concerning this matter. Indeed, most tana'im, including the anonymous author of the Mishnah, consider squeezing to be not its own melacha but a toladah of one of the other 39 melachos listed in the seventh perek of mishnayos Shabbos. (According to most rishonim, this violates the melacha of laundering, whereas the Ramban [Shabbos 111a, as understood by the Magen Avraham end of chapter 302 and Shu't Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim #159:20] explains that it violates the melacha of dyeing; cf. Lechem Mishneh, Hilchos Shabbos 9:11, who understands that the Ramban agrees with the other rishonim that it is prohibited because of melabein.) However, the tanna, Rabbi Yishmael, the son of Rabbi Yochanan ben Beroka, contends that squeezing is a completely

separate av melacha (Yerushalmi, Shabbos 7:2), although it is not explained in halachic sources why he feels this way. (Nimla Tal Melabein #24 suggests some possible approaches.) The Gemara notes that the Mishnah disagrees with Rabbi Yishmael, the son of Rabbi Yochanan ben Beroka, since, according to him, there are forty melachos, and the Mishnah counts only 39.

39 or 40?

But wait one moment! I thought there were 39 melachos. How can a tanna have 40 melachos?

The answer to this question lies in a passage of Gemara (Shabbos 49b) that says as follows:

What is the basis upon which it has been established that there are 39 melachos?

...Rabbi Yehonasan, the son of Rabbi Elazar, told them, "This is what Rabbi Shimon, the son of Rabbi Yosi ben Lekunia, said: 'They correspond to the thirty-nine times that the word melacha is written in the Torah!'" Rav Yosef then asked, "Is the pasuk (Bereishis 39:11, regarding Yosef), Vayavo habaysa laasos melachto, included in the count or not?" To this, Abayei replied, "Let us bring a sefer Torah and count how many times the word melacha is mentioned in the Torah." Rav Yosef replied that Abayei had misunderstood his query. Rav Yosef knew that the word melacha shows up in the Torah a total of forty times. When the tanna'im use the word melacha to count melachos, they are counting only instances when the word melacha in the Torah actually refers to work being performed. Rav Yosef's question was whether the count of the Shabbos melachos included the pasuk regarding Yosef (which may be using the word melacha in a borrowed sense), or whether that pasuk was not included in the count, but instead they were counting a different pasuk, the one that concludes the construction of the Mishkan, which reads, Vehamelacha hoyso dayom. In the latter pasuk, also, the word melacha does not really mean work, but means the materials assembled for the work of the Mishkan. The tanna of the Mishnah, who counts only 39 melachos, felt that one of these places should not be included in the count of the melachos regarding the laws of Shabbos. The Gemara there remains unresolved which of these two pesukim is included in that count and which not. However, it is quite clear that the tanna quoted in the Yerushalmi, Rabbi Yishmael, the son of Rabbi Yochanan ben Beroka, counted both pesukim, thus reaching a total of 40 melachos.

At this point, let us return to our opening questions:

Question #1: Washing dishes

"Whenever I ask my son to help wash the dishes on Shabbos, he claims that it is prohibited. Is he pulling my leg in his attempt to avoid family responsibilities?"

Washing dishes on Shabbos is certainly permitted, as long as one does not use an item that might involve squeezing. (Details of that question we will leave for a different time.) It is safe to assume that your son's motivation here is not halacha but laziness.

Question #2: No detergent

"Is it prohibited to wash clothes on Shabbos if I do not use detergent?"

As we now know, one can violate the prohibition of melabein min haTorah without use of detergent.

Question #3: Six in one!

Can six people consecutively launder a garment?

The simple answer is, "Yes."

In conclusion

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Shemos 20:10) notes that people mistakenly think that work is prohibited on Shabbos, in order for it to be a day of rest. He points out that the Torah does not prohibit doing avodah, which connotes hard work, but melacha, activities or actions which bring purpose and accomplishment. Shabbos is a day that we refrain from constructing and altering the world for our own purposes. The goal of Shabbos is to allow Hashem's rule to be the focus of creation, by refraining from our own creative acts (Shemos 20:11).

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subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

Parshat Vaetchanan (Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11)

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – "When it shall be difficult for you, all of these words [Heb:

"devarim"] will find you at the end of the days, and you shall return to the Lord your God and hearken to His voice" [Deut. 4:30].

Curiously, our Sages refer to Tisha b'Av as a festival, a "Mo'ed". How could this be? After all, it is the date on which both Temples were destroyed! And in contrast to the other fast days marking the destruction of Jerusalem, which span "merely" from sunrise to sunset, Tisha b'Av lasts for an entire 25 hours, during which time we express an intensity of mourning for Jerusalem unmatched during the rest of the year.

The paradoxical quality of this utterly solemn yet fundamentally celebratory day finds practical expression in Jewish Law, where Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of Shulchan Aruch, rules that on Tisha b'Av, we do not recite the somber supplication prayers of Tachanun, or the penitential Selichot that define our other fast days, "because Tisha b'Av is called a 'Mo'ed'" [festival, based on a homiletic explanation by our Sages to Lamentations 1:15].

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, in his Aruch Hashulchan, explains that the basis for this festival-like quality of Tisha b'Av is the Divine promise that, ultimately, days of mourning will be transformed into joyous festivals and holidays [cf. Zech. 8:19].

I would like to suggest a complementary view of why Tisha b'Av is seen in a celebratory light, based on a verse from this week's Torah portion, Va'etchanan. Moses provides a quintessential outline of Jewish history: settlement of Israel, corruption and idolatry, assimilation, destruction and exile.

But these tragedies will be followed by our eventual return to God and His land, because "the Lord your God is a compassionate God who will not forget the covenant with your forbears which He has sworn to them" (Deut. 4:25–31, 38). Indeed, we read these very verses on the day of Tisha B'Av itself, the day on which we commemorate the destruction of the Temples, the loss of our national sovereignty; and we remember at the same time that although our sacred shrines and even our sacred cities were destroyed, our nation was not!

And so the seed for our ultimate rejoicing on the Ninth of Av is firmly planted in the ringing declaration, "when it shall be difficult for you, these words [Heb.: "devarim"] will find you...and you shall return" (Deut. 4:30). The promise of Tisha B'Av is the fact that even as God allowed the temple's "wood and stone" to be destroyed, He kept the Jewish people and our covenant alive, promising ultimate return and redemption.

I translate the Hebrew "devarim" in this context as "words" – the words of the Torah will find you in the depths of your exile and will cause you to still retain your identity as Jews even without your homeland and Temple – because the relationship between Israel and the words of the Torah is the true miracle of Tisha B'Av. It is what enabled us to live despite the physical destruction; no mortal force could ever destroy the Divine words! The parchment may burn to the ground, but the letters fly aloft and live eternally. The letters lived – and so the nation lived – despite the physical destruction of Tisha B'Av.

I first learned to translate it that way in 1965, when Lincoln Square Synagogue was in a small apartment on the West Side of Manhattan (150 West End Avenue, 1D). I began to notice a middle-aged gentleman enter the back of the synagogue towards the end of the Torah reading, remain standing near the door, and quickly leave after the sermon. On the Sabbath of Va'etchanan, he came towards the beginning of the reading – and as the aforementioned words were read, he fled from the synagogue in tears.

I ran out after him, and caught up with him. I discovered that his name was Wolf Reichard, and that he came from a family of pious Satmar Hasidim. After living through the hell of Auschwitz, he gave up on God. Nevertheless, when our apartment synagogue opened up, however, he became strongly attracted to the services, almost despite his present self but in deepest recognition of his truest self.

Wolf explained that when he heard the Torah reader call out, almost specifically to him, "When it shall be difficult for you, all of these words will find you...and you shall return," he knew he could no longer escape his past or his future destiny. From then on, he came to shul not only every Sabbath (from the beginning of services) but also every morning.

In our generation, one's estrangement from Judaism is more likely to be the result of a thoroughly assimilated upbringing than persecution and theological

rebellion. The spiritual decimation of the Jewish People in contemporary diaspora is truly worthy of mourning.

But on this Sabbath of Comfort ["Shabbat Nachamu"] we can find solace that the words of the Torah have the power to find every Jew, no matter how disconnected from his or her roots, and inspire them back to the destiny of the Jewish People. Indeed, embedded within the destruction symbolized by Tisha b'Av is God's promise of return and redemption.
Shabbat Shalom

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

OU Torah

Va'etchanan: Shattered Tablets

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

We were young then. They were old—in our eyes, very old.

We were the students, barely out of high school and studying in the beit midrash of our yeshiva in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Some of us were on the path toward rabbinic ordination, but most of us were simply spending a year or two prolonging our religious studies and wondering what to do with our lives.

They were the elderly residents of an institution just across the street from our study hall. It was called the "Home for the Sages of Israel." It occupied a timeworn building, which consisted of several dormitory rooms, a kitchen and dining room, and a synagogue that served the dual purposes of prayer and Torah study. Some of the men actually lived there, but my impression is that most of them lived elsewhere and used the institution as, what today would be called, an adult day care center."

My friends and I had very little interaction with the elderly men. 18-year-olds have little patience for the aged, and in most ways, despite our immersion in religious studies, we were typical 18-year-olds.

From time to time, however, we would venture across the street and spend some time in the old men's company. On those occasions, we would come away saddened. Many of the men were simply asleep, sprawled out on the benches that lined the walls of the sanctuary. Others were daydreaming, surrounded by clouds of cigarette smoke, impervious to the dangers of smoking that were not yet public knowledge at that time. Few were open to conversation of any sort. We soon discovered that those who were open to conversation were in one phase or another of senile dementia.

We came away disheartened. We had anticipated the opportunity of engaging "Sages of Israel" in dialogue. We had hoped to imbibe some of their learning and wisdom. Instead, we were confronted by broken men, broken by the ravages of age, exacerbated by their experiences during the Holocaust, from which they had barely escaped little more than a decade before.

As budding Talmudists, we debated amongst ourselves as to what our attitude should be toward these unfortunates. We knew passages in the Talmud that addressed the sad situation that we faced. We recalled the passage in Tractate Berachot 8b, which reads, "Be sensitive with regard to the old person who has forgotten his learning under duress, for we are taught that the Tablets, and the shattered Tablets, were placed side-by-side in the Holy Ark." Rashi comments that the "duress" mentioned in this passage can refer either to illness, dementia, or to the pressures of life. He adds that by "sensitivity," the Talmud means to command us to revere the sage who has lost his learning and not merely "sympathize" with him. Shattered Tablets deserve the same deference as the Holy Tablets themselves.

Our discussion persisted even after we returned to our study desks. We found ourselves wondering about forgetfulness, and its causes and possible benefits.

We were familiar with the rabbinic teaching that if we would not be blessed with the ability to forget, we would be paralyzed by the memories of our personal tragedies and traumas. But the men we met that day forgot not only their many sufferings. They also forgot their learning, their wisdom, their positive experiences, and often even the memories of their dearest loved ones.

I still vividly recall the frustration we all felt at our inability to understand what benefits might be derived from their state of total forgetfulness. We were forced

to resign ourselves to add this frustration to the theological frustrations we all confront when we ask, in one way or another, "Why do the righteous suffer?" Remember, however, that we were 18-year-olds. We were blessed with the resilience—some might even say the *naïveté*—with which young people are endowed: we dismissed our theological quandaries and proceeded to wonder how we could avoid the fate of the old men in the building across the street. "Isn't it a mitzvah," one of us volunteered, "to do all that one can to avoid forgetting one's learning?" He was referring, of course, to a verse in this week's Torah portion, Va'etchanan (Deuteronomy 30:23-7:11).

The verse reads: "But take utmost care and watch your souls scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes. Lest they be removed from your heart all the days of your life. And make them known to your children and to your children's children." (ibid. 4:9).

We all recalled that verse, and those of us who were able to remember it verbatim did so with special emphasis upon the phrase "all the days of your life."

We further recalled the special emphasis that the Talmudic Sage, Rabbi Meir, gave to this verse:

Rabbi Dostai ben Yannai said in the name of Rabbi Meir: "One who forgets even one thing of his Torah learning, Scripture regards him as if he had endangered his soul, for it is said, 'But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes.' One might think that this applies even to one who finds his studies too hard to remember. Therefore, the verse adds, 'Lest they be removed from your heart all the days of your life.' Thus, one does not endanger his soul unless he deliberately removes teachings from his heart." (Ethics of the Fathers, 3:8)

Later that day, some of us shared our sophomoric reflections with the rabbi who was our *mashgiach ruchani*, our spiritual advisor. He listened with a smile and suggested that we return to the old age home and get to know one of the residents there, a man named Reb Yankele.

Few of us were eager to return to the depressing scene that we had encountered. Thankfully, I was one of the few who returned willingly, and it was that day that I met Reb Yankele for the first time. I had several subsequent "discussions" with him, which consisted mostly of my listening to him and struggling to sort out nuggets of genius and wisdom from incoherent ramblings.

Reb Yankele was one of those uniquely talented individuals who knew, not only every word of the Babylonian Talmud, but exactly where on the page that word appeared. He spoke only Yiddish, and for all intents and purposes, still resided in the Lithuanian shtetl from which he escaped.

We were introduced to him, he offered us some of the biscuits and vodka that nourished him for the entire day, and we asked him for the secret of his uncanny ability to remember so much of his learning.

Most of his reply was incomprehensible; that is, it was incomprehensible to us. But here is the phrase that did come through, clearly and unforgettably: "Ever since I was a yingele, a young boy, I prayed that I would remember, and I prayed that I would forget. I prayed that I would remember my Torah learning. I prayed that I would forget everything that would interfere with my ability to remember my Torah learning. Now, I remember little of my past. I recall none of the details of my rescue from the Nazis. The Master of the Universe heard my prayers. If you come to visit me again tomorrow, I will not remember you, but I will remember the Torah passages that we discussed."

The incident that I have related to you, dear reader, is one of my most precious memories. I certainly do not remember every word of Talmud I ever studied. But I will never forget my first encounter with Reb Yankele, whose full name was HaRav HaGaon, the truly great rabbi, Yaakov Safsal, of blessed memory. Blessed memory, indeed.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

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Drasha - Parshas Vaeschanan

Don't Forget

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

In Parshas Va'eschanan we find the very famous portions of the Torah that are imbedded in the soul of the nation: The Ten Commandments and the Shema Yisrael.

Although every word of the Omnipotent carries equal force, these commanding portions are better known, if not better observed, by the nation.

But powerful as they are, they were not given in a vacuum. Moshe forewarns the nation not to forget the message of Sinai and to impart its message and its relevance to future generations.

"Only beware for yourself and greatly beware for your soul, lest you forget the things that your eyes have beheld and lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children and your children's children" (Deuteronomy 4:9).

In order to comprehend the posuk, it must be separated into two distinct parts.

"Beware not to forget the things that your eyes have beheld from your heart all your days." In addition, the Torah adds, "you shall teach the Torah to your children and children's children."

Nevertheless, the grammar is surely questionable, "lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children." In its simplest form, the verse seems at best contradictory. Look at the words.

Beware that you do not remove the teachings from your heart and make them known to your children. How is that possible? If one removes the teaching from his own heart, how can he pass it to his children? The Torah should have overtly inserted some phrase or word clarifying the transition.

The perplexing composition in its simplest form surely leaves for a creative interpretation, perhaps the omission of the transitional word lends itself to a drash that deviates from the obvious meaning.

Thousands of people receive this weekly D'var Torah. In return, I receive many stories for possible use as anecdotal parables. Here is one from the archives.

Junior came home from day camp one day without towel.

"Where is your towel?" asked his mom.

"I don't know," he sighed. "I could not find it after swimming. Maybe someone took it."

The mother was irate. "Who could have taken your towel? It was a great towel! Junior you would never take someone else's towel. You know I raised you differently than that. Right?"

A few moments later, she was on the phone with the day camp director.

"Hello. There is a young thief in your camp!"

"How so?" "My son had a towel stolen from camp! He brought it in today and it was nowhere"

"Calm down," came the voice on the line. "I am sure that no one stole it. Please describe the towel to me."

"Sure I can! It was white and big. You could not miss it. It had the words Holiday Inn emblazoned on it!"

The Leket Amarim interprets the verse in its purest and most simplistic form, revealing a deeper meaning that belies the simplicity of the verse.

"Only beware for yourself and greatly beware for your soul, lest you forget the things that your eyes have beheld and lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children and your children's children."

Often when it comes to our actions, we forget the principles that we were taught as youngsters, but we remember them when chiding our children and pontificating.

We may give our children a speech about honesty and integrity, and only minutes later command them to tell a caller on the telephone that, "my father is not home."

We may give speeches about integrity and corporate greed only to have pushed our own portfolios in a certain direction through creative manipulation.

And so, the Torah warns us not to forget its principles for ourselves yet to teach them to our children. Consistency is the message of the moment. For yourself.

For your children. For eternity

The author is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

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Rav Kook Torah

Psalm 122: The Peace of Torah Scholars

The concluding passage of tractate Berachot teaches a remarkable insight into the nature of peace:

"Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Haninah: Torah scholars increase peace in the world. As it says, 'All of Your children (banayich) are students of God; great is the peace of Your children' (Isaiah 54:13). Read this not banayich — 'Your children' — but rather bonayich — 'Your builders'." (Berachot 64a)

Considering the vast number of disagreements and differences of opinion among Torah scholars, Rabbi Haninah's statement seems, well, counterintuitive. Do scholars really increase peace in the world? And why did Rabbi Haninah insist that they are 'builders'? What does this tell us about scholars and peace?

True Peace

People mistakenly believe that peace in the world means that everyone will share common viewpoints and think the same way. So when they see scholars disagreeing about an issue, this appears to be the exact opposite of peace.

True peace, however, comes precisely through the proliferation of divergent views. When all of the various angles and sides of an issue are exposed, and we are able to clarify how each one has its place — that is true peace. The Hebrew word shalom means both 'peace' and 'completeness.' We will only attain complete knowledge when we are able to accommodate all views — even those that appear contradictory - as partial perceptions of the whole truth. Like an interlocking puzzle, together they present a complete picture.

When Torah scholars broaden knowledge and provide new insights, they contribute to the increase of peace. We need to recognize that "all of Your children are students of God." All views, even those that seem contradictory, in fact help reveal knowledge and truth. For this reason, Rabbi Haninah emphasized that scholars are like builders. A building is erected from all sides, using a variety of materials and skills. So too, the whole truth is constructed from diverse views, opinions, and methods of analysis.

Peace and Tranquility

Curiously, the Talmud brings Rabbi Haninah's observation and then quotes from Psalms:

”הֲיָ שְׁלוֹם בְּחֵצְיֶיךָ, שְׁלוֹם בְּאַרְמוֹתֶיךָ.”

"May there be peace in your courtyard and tranquility in your palaces" (122:7).

What does this verse add? And what is the difference between peace (shalom) and tranquility (shalvah)?

According to Rabbi Haninah, no talent or study should be ignored. Rather, we need to discern its inner meaning and thus determine its proper place. If there appear to be inconsistencies between different methods, we must seek out their inner kernel. Once we grasp the inner truth in each concept, all conflicts will be resolved, and our wisdom will be expanded and enhanced.

It is precisely this idea that the verse teaches. The verse speaks of two levels: the surrounding grounds, and the inner palace. It specifically uses the word cheil — the fenced-in area surrounding the Temple's outer courts — to describe the lower level. The Hebrew word chayil means 'strength' or 'activity.' Thus the first level refers to the realm of life and vigorous activity, which is blessed — not with monotonous sameness — but with a multitude of competing forces. All of this turmoil has value when it leads to a unified goal — "peace in your courtyard."

The inner palace, on the other hand, is not the place for the clamorous discord of clashing forces. It is the place of quiet wisdom, the source of inner truth for the conflicting views in the outer courtyard. Here reigns a serene understanding — "tranquility in your palaces."

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, pp. 397-398)

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