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From: cshulman@gmail.com

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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)>

to: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org)

date: Fri, Sep 19, 2014, 2:06 PM

subject: **Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayeilech**

Parshas Vayeilech contains the six hundred and thirteenth mitzvah of the Torah – the commandment to write a Sefer Torah [Devorim 31:19]. The Pnei Yehoshua cites in his commentary on Tractate Kiddushin that the fact that the number of letters in a Torah scroll is 600,000 alludes to the name Yisrael (Yud Shin Reish Aleph Lamed), which itself is an acronym for the expression: Yesh Shishim Ribbo Osios L'Torah (There are 60 myriad letters in the Torah.) It is thus not coincidental that the number of Jewish souls counted in the census of the Exodus was this same number of 600,000. That number corresponds with the 600,000 letters in a Torah scroll. The Pnei Yehoshua explains, based on the Zohar, the Shnei Luchos HaBris and many other Kabbalistic sources that every Jew has within his soul one particular mitzvah attached to one particular letter in the Torah.

Rav Asher Weiss, in his Sefer on Chumash, makes a comment that I have thought about in the past, but I never knew how to fully explain it.

Whenever I go to a Siyum Sefer Torah, I am always amazed at how much people get into the ceremony and how they manifest such sincere jubilation on that occasion. Today, thank G-d, one can open up any Aron Kodesh in virtually any shul and find a surplus of Sefrei Torah. Basically, we are talking about just adding one more Torah to an Aron Kodesh that already has more Torahs than the congregation needs.

And yet somehow, the joy of a Siyum and a Hachnosas Sefer Torah ceremony is something that touches every Jew and brings out a Simcha [jubilation] that far exceeds what one experiences on most other occasions. How does one explain this?

Rav Asher Weiss suggests that this is because of the above referenced mystical connection between a Jew's soul and the Sefer Torah, which has a letter within it which is linked to that soul. There is therefore a connection between every Jew and every Sefer Torah. It consequently becomes a personal simcha. No one ever wonders why a Jew is joyous at his own child's wedding or his own sons's Bar Mitzvah. "It is because it is me, it is my child, it is my grandchild. Of course I am jubilant."

I feel a connection to every single Sefer Torah. It is not only because now we have another Sefer Torah which we did not have before. No. It has nothing to do with that. It has to do with the mystical spiritual connection between a Jew and one of the 600,000 letters in every Torah scroll.

Using this idea, Rav Asher Weiss explains a very famous Gemara [Avodah Zarah 18a] that we recount on Yom Kippur:

Rabbi Chananya ben Tradyon went to visit Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma when the latter took sick. Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma said, "Chananya my brother, don't you know that this nation (the Roman Empire) has been empowered from Heaven for they have been allowed to destroy His House, burn His Sanctuary, kill his pious ones, and cause to perish his precious ones. Her might persists and I have heard about you that you sit and occupy yourself with Torah and gather congregations publicly to study with you. You openly display the Torah lying in your bosom. Rabbi Chananya responded, "May they have Mercy from Heaven." Rabbi Yosi answered back to him, "I have

given you a logical argument (why you should stop your public teaching) and you answer back 'They should have Mercy from Heaven.' I will be surprised if they don't burn you and your Sefer Torah at the stake..." The Talmud in fact concludes that the Romans found Rav Chananya ben Tradyon publicly teaching Torah. They took him out, wrapped the Sefer Torah around his body and burned him at the stake. They placed moist clumps of cotton on his heart to increase the pain and slow down the process of his death.

His disciples saw what he was going through and they asked him, "Rebbi, what do you see?" He responded famously, "I see the parchment being consumed but the letters are flying off and they remain." "

The response of Rav Chananya ben Tradyon regarding the letters flying off the parchment appears to be allegorical. What is the deeper meaning of this conversation?

When the students asked their teacher "What do you see?" they were asking "What is going to be the future of Klal Yisrael? The Romans are in charge. They are killing everybody. What is going to be? They have destroyed the Bais HaMikdash they are destroying everything connected with Torah. What is the future going to bring? How is Klal Yisrael ever going to survive this?" Rav Chanina ben Tradyon told them "The parchment is burning" – they can extinguish the bodies of Klal Yisrael, but "the letters are flying away" – the letters of the Torah which are linked to the souls of the Jewish people – these will remain forever. The letters flying away are a metaphor for the souls of the Jewish people which correspond, through a mystical link to the souls of every member of the Jewish people. The Romans can destroy the synagogues and the study halls and even the Beis HaMikdash. They can destroy the "body", but not the "soul". The souls of the Jewish people, like the letters of the Sefer Torah will endure forever. "...It will not be forgotten from the mouths of his descendants..." [Devarim 31:21].

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. To Support Project Genesis-Torah.org Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissochar Frand and Torah.org.

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from: torahweb@torahweb.org

to: weeklydt@torahweb.org

date: Thu Sep 13, 2018, 11:37 PM

subject: **Rabbi Hershel Schachter - The Sefer Habris**

The Sefer Habris

On the last day of his life, Moshe Rabbeinu completed the writing of the original sefer Torah. He gave that Torah to the kohanim and instructed them to place it in the kodesh ha'kodoshim near the luchos which were in the aron. At maamad Har Sinai there was a national kabbolas haTorah, which required reading from a "sefer ha'bris." Rashi (in his commentary on Parshas Mishpatim) quotes the Mechilta saying that the "sefer ha'bris" was the Torah from Parshas Bereishis until Parshas Mishpatim. At the end of the forty years in the midbar, Moshe Rabbeinu told B'nai Yisroel that from now on the sefer ha'bris consists of the entire chamisha chumshei Torah. The Gemorah (Gittin 60a) tells us that kavod hatzibbur demands that when we read kerias haTorah in shul we must use a complete sefer Torah which includes the entire chamisha chumshei Torah. Although leining from a klaf that included an entire chumash (e.g. Devarim) would be considered kerias mitoch haksav (as opposed to b'al peh), nonetheless, because the bris was made with the tzibbur on the entire Torah, whenever we lein b'tzibbur we require a complete sefer ha'bris, i.e. a klaf that includes the entire chamisha chumshei Torah.

Chazal tell us (Shabbos 88a) that a second national kabbolas haTorah took place after the occasion of neis Purim. The sefer ha'bris for that second

kabbolas haTorah was Megillas Esther. The Gemorah (Megillah 19a) tells us that if you have a Megillas Esther written on klaf together with other sifrei kisuvim, although the reading is considered mitoch haksav, even the Megillas Esther section does not have the status of sefer ha'bris since the other seforim included therein do not have the status of sefer ha'bris. Similarly, the Rambam[1] writes that if one combines Torah, Nevi'im, and Kesuvim on one klaf, since the Nevi'im and Kesuvim do not have the status of sefer ha'bris, even the Torah section loses its status of sefer ha'bris. Therefore, if a tzibbur leins from such a Tanach, although it would certainly be considered kerias mitoch haksav it will constitute a violation of kavod hatzibbur. If one reads the Megillah without a minyan it would be perfectly acceptable to read from a klaf that includes other seforim as well; only betzibbur, out of kavod hatzibbur, do we require that the Megillah we read from should have the status of a sefer ha'bris[2].

The simple reading of the chumash might imply that for the purpose of the mitzvah of hak'hel a special sefer azarah had to be used. Some rishonim[3] state this explicitly. Some[4] write that on Yom Kippur as well the special kerias haTorah that the kohein gadol read in the Beis ha'mikdash had to be from the sefer azarah. The Mishna (Sotah 32a) tells us that although, strictly speaking, on all other occasions one may recite the berachos on an aliyah in translation, for the kerias haTorah of hak'hel and that of the kohain gadol on Yom Kippur, the berachos had to be recited in the original Hebrew. These two instances of kerias haTorah are clearly Biblical mitzvos and therefore were singled out by the Mishna with respect to their berachos.

This Sifrei comments on the possuk, "me'ona Elokei Kedem" (Devarim 33:27) that at one point there was a question regarding the reading of the word: is it "mo'on" or "me'ona"? The Chachomim checked into three seforim in the azarah. Two of them read "me'ona" and the third read "mo'on", and they decided to follow the majority and established that the correct spelling of the word should be "me'ona". Why didn't the Chachomim check all of the sifrei Torah in the world to establish the correct spelling? Why did they only check the three seforim which were in the azarah? Rav Soloveitchik explained that it would appear that the halachic role of the sefer azarah is to preserve the accurate text of the chamisha chumshei Torah[5]. For that reason only the three sifrei azarah were checked into and not all the sifrei Torah in the whole world. Just as the Rambam felt that the Aleppo Codex of Ben Asher was the official accurate text of the sefer Torah during his lifetime, the halacha considers the sifrei azarah as the official text.

The Rambam[6] quotes from the Tosefta that when you have a melech and he has a mitzvah to write a second sefer Torah, that sefer Torah should be copied from the sefer azarah. Apparently any sefer Torah which is copied from the sefer azarah becomes itself a sefer azarah. It could well be that when the issue came up regarding the spelling of the word "me'ona" the original sefer azarah that was written by Moshe Rabbeinu was already in sheimos and the three sifrei Torah that they did check with were all copies of that sefer azarah.

This season of the year is a most auspicious time for each of us to recommit ourselves to upholding the Torah in its entirety and in a most authentic fashion, without distortions or misrepresentations. The best way to latch on to the authentic version of Torah is to become a talmid of one who has a masorah from someone else who in turn has a masorah etc., just as any sefer Torah copied from a sefer azarah gains the status of a sefer azarah, for the sake of preserving the authenticity of the Torah.

[1] Hilchos Sefer Torah, end of Chapter 7

[2] This is discussed further, at length, in sefer Ikvei Hatzon, chap. 23

[3] Rashi and Shita Mekubetzes, Bava Basra 14b

[4] Rashi ibid, and see Tosafos ibid 14a

[5] See Yalkut Shimoni on Parshas Vayelech, that Moshe Rabbeinu was concerned that in the future the Torah would be distorted

[6] Hilchos Melachim, beginning of chapter 3

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

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subject : OU Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Second Mountain (Vayelech 5778)

Covenant & Conversation Judaism & Torah

Lord **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

What do you do when you have achieved it all, when you have risen to whatever career heights fate or providence has in store for you? What do you do as age lengthens its shadow, the sun sinks, and the body is no longer as resilient or the mind as sharp as it once was?

That has become a major problem as life expectancy has increased in most parts of the world. There has been nothing quite like it in history. In America, in 1900, average life expectancy was around 41 years, in Europe 42.5. Today in Britain, for men it is 79, for women 83.[1] Much of that has to do with a huge reduction in infant mortality. None the less, the sheer pace in the rise in longevity – every decade since 1900, life expectancy has risen by about three years – remains remarkable. What will keep you young in spirit even if the body does not always keep pace?

The biblical case study is Moses, of whom we are told that even at the end of his life, “his eye was undimmed and his natural energy unabated.” At the opening of today’s parsha he says, “I am now a hundred and twenty years old. I can no longer come and go, and the Lord has told me, ‘You shall not cross this Jordan.’” Rashi points out that the “I can no longer” does not mean that he lacked the strength. It means that he no longer had permission. The moment had come when he had to hand on the role of leader to his successor and disciple, Joshua. He himself stayed full of vigour, as the passion of his speeches in the book of Devarim, delivered in the last month of his life, testify.

To understand what Moses epitomises at the end of his life, two closely related concepts are helpful. The first is Erik Erikson’s idea of generativity, the seventh of his eight life stages. Relatively late in life, he argues, many people’s perspective changes. They begin thinking about legacy, about what will outlive them. Their focus often shifts from self to others. They may devote more time to family, or community, or care or voluntary work. Some mentor young people who are following in their career path. They make commitments to others. They ask themselves, how can I contribute to the world? What trace will I leave on those who will live on after me? What, in the world, is better because of me?

The second and related idea is David Brook’s concept of the second mountain. Speaking to people over 70, he found that early in their lives they had identified the mountain they were going to climb. They had specific aspirations about family and career. They had a vision of the self they wanted to become. By age 70, some had achieved it and were happy. Others had achieved it only to find it not entirely satisfying. Yet others had been knocked off the mountain by misfortune.

At a certain age, though, many identified a second mountain they wanted to climb. This mountain was not about achieving but about giving. It was less about external accomplishment (success, fame) than about internal accomplishment. It was spiritual, moral; it was about devoting yourself to a cause or giving back to the community. It is often, he says, a yearning for righteousness, an inner voice that says, “I want to do something really good with my life.” This second peak, associated with later life, may well prove more significant to our sense of self-worth than the ego-driven ascent of the first mountain.

The case of Moses sets all this in dramatic perspective. What do you do if you have already achieved what no human being had ever done before or would ever do in the future? Moses had spoken to God face to face. He had become His faithful servant. He had led his people from slavery to freedom, put up with their complaints, endured their rebellions and prayed for – and achieved – their forgiveness in the eyes of God. He had been the agent

through which God had performed His miracles and delivered His word. What else is left to do after such a life?

His closest friends and allies, his sister Miriam and brother Aaron, had already died. He knew that the decree had been sealed that he would not cross the Jordan and lead the people on the last stage of their journey. He would not set foot in the Promised Land. Unlike Aaron, whose children inherited his priesthood to eternity, Moses had to live with the fact that neither of his sons, Gershom and Eliezer, would become his successor. That role would go to his assistant and faithful servant Joshua. These were, surely, huge disappointments to set alongside the momentous achievements. So, as Moses faced his own life’s end, what was there left to do? The book of Devarim contains and constitutes the answer. As it says in its opening chapter: “In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the Israelites ... On the east bank of the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses began expounding this law ...” No longer the liberator and miracle-worker, Moses became Rabbenu, “our teacher,” the man who taught Torah to the next generation.

The way he does so in Devarim is stunning. No longer, as before, does he simply articulate the law. He explains the theology behind the law. He speaks about the love of God for Israel and the love Israel should show to God. He speaks with equal power about the past and the future, reviewing the wilderness years and anticipating the challenges ahead.

Above all, coming at the subject from every conceivable direction, he warns the young people who will enter and inherit the land, that the real challenge will not be failure but success; not slavery but freedom; not the bread of affliction but the temptations of affluence. Remember, he says again and again; listen to the voice of God; rejoice in what He has given you. These are the key verbs of the book, and they remain the most powerful immune-system ever developed against the decadence-and-decline that has affected every civilisation since the dawn of time.

That last month in Moses’ life, which culminates in today’s parsha as he finally hands over the reins of leadership to Joshua, is one of the supreme instances in Tanakh of generativity: speaking not to your contemporaries but to those who will live on after you. It was Moses’ second mountain.

And perhaps the very things that seemed, at first sight, to have been disappointments, turned out in the end to have played their part in shaping this last chapter in that great life. The fact that he knew he would not accompany the people into the land, and that he would not be succeeded by his sons, meant that he had to turn into a teacher of the next generation. He had to hand on to them his insights into the future. He had to make the people his disciples – and we have all been his disciples ever since.

All of this suggests a powerful and potentially life changing message for all of us. Whatever our life has been thus far, there is another chapter to be written, focused on being a blessing to others, sharing whatever gifts we have with those who have less, handing on our values across the generations, using our experience to help others come through difficult times of their own, doing something that has little to do with personal ambition and much to do with wanting to leave some legacy of kindness that made life better for at least someone on earth.

Hence the life-changing idea: Whatever your achievements, there is always a second mountain to climb, and it may turn out to be your greatest legacy to the future.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>

reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com

subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Weekly Parsha VAYELECH**

**Rabbi Wein’s Weekly Blog**

Moshe, our great teacher and leader, the greatest of all prophets and the lawgiver of the Torah to Israel and the world, remains in his role as the greatest teacher even on his last day on earth. And the words of Moshe, as recorded for us in this week's Torah reading, are probably some of the strongest words of prophecy that exist in the Holy Scriptures.

Moshe, like all great teachers, is vividly aware of the shortcomings that exist in his classroom. He knows that his students are lazy, backsliders, uninterested in the subject being taught, and generally a sullen and rebellious lot. Yet, like all great teachers, he is full of hope and optimism regarding their eventual future and that his efforts to educate and guide them would not be a waste.

There will come a day when the students will remember what the teacher said long ago and take it to heart and apply it to life and to circumstances, both personal and national. It is this innate knowledge that every teacher has that keeps the teacher striving even in the face of difficulties.

Eventually, the lessons of life and history will sink in and the student will become aware of what the teacher was attempting to convey. Even though the student may have chosen to ignore or even forget what was taught to him for a good portion of one's lifetime, there will always be a day of recognition and remembrance.

The Talmud teaches us that the words in the message of the teacher are not truly absorbed by the student until at least 40 years later. We have teachers when we are young and then, by our very nature, we are unable to truly appreciate and internalize what we are being taught. Knowledge and facts can be taught but spirit and life wisdom are much more difficult for students to absorb.

So, the teacher is relegated to planting seeds within the student that in the fullness of time and the richness of experience will eventually blossom and become meaningful. This is exactly how Moshe phrases his prophecy in this week's Torah reading. He speaks of a far distant future, of the end of days, a time when all the human plans and certainties have been exhausted and proven to be of little value, and it is at that time that the Jewish people will seek to return to their status as a holy nation and a kingdom of priests.

They will remember the lessons that Moshe taught them in their youth and that they have so sorely neglected over centuries of exile and even of rebirth. And these lessons will now rise up before them and drive them towards eternal goals and eventual vindication and triumph.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>

date:Thu, Aug 29, 2013 at 5:50 AM

subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Vayeilech

PARSHAS VAYEILECH

You must assemble the nation, the men, and the women and the children...

so that they may hear and that they may learn and fear G-d. (31:12)

Assembling men and women is understandable, but why the children? Do they even begin to understand what this event is about? Do children understand enough that what they hear at the public reading of the Torah would move and inspire them to study the law? Perhaps if they were all alone without their parents, our questions would have some basis. The Torah wants their parents to remain with them - not like the father who comes late to davening, drops off his son and proceeds to the Kiddush club. Bringing the child in such a manner truly has very little value. Whatever the child may have picked up at the shul will quickly be forgotten as a result of the father's hypocrisy. Lasseis schar l'miveihem, "To give reward to those (parents) who bring them": These are Chazal's words. A child is inspired by the experience of standing with Klal Yisrael all together focused on the Torah. L'miveihem;

"to those who bring themselves with them" is perhaps how Chazal should be understood.

The Yerushalmi Yevamos 1:6 teaches that the mother of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya would bring his bassinet into the bais hamedrash, so that the young infant's ear would become attuned to Torah study. Why? There is no listening, no learning - just being there. Is this enough to warrant award?

Horav Yeruchum Levovitz, zl, derives a powerful lesson from here concerning the significance of chinuch, education, and when it begins. Not first grade or even preschool, but from birth, children are influenced by their environment. Children are impressionable. They hear and see. If what they hear is positive, they will acknowledge the significance of a Torah life and follow through as they grow older.

Is just bringing their children to the experience sufficient reason to reward the parents? Rav Yeruchum quotes the Alter, zl, m'Kelm. Horav Simcha Zissel Broide, who quotes the Torah's statement regarding the meisis u'meidiach, Lo sachmol v'lo sechaseh alav, "Neither shall you show him mercy nor keep silent concerning him" (Devarim 13:9). Halachah is clear that we do not seek reason for mitigating his justice. Indeed, the one who incites the Jew to worship idols is worse than the actual offender. Why?

Because "He sought to turn you away from Hashem." Influencing others to act negatively is worse than the actual perpetrator. This is true even if the inciter had been unsuccessful. The mere fact that he attempted to turn a Jew against Hashem is sufficient reason for executing him - without mercy.

We see from here how evil it is to take advantage of the unknowing and turn them away from Hashem. How much more so, observes the Alter, is the reward of one who devotes himself to bringing back the lost souls, the alienated, the assimilated, the individuals who simply never had a chance.

This is true even of those who labor in the field of outreach with no great success. Just trying is reason for reward. Heaven forbid should one even think to himself - "This is a waste - I have not succeeded in altering the course of the subject's life. He is still not observant and will probably continue living this way." It is not about success. It is all about the attempt.

Thus, the Ramban is teaching us that bringing the children to the Hakhel experience is not due to chinuch, education. It is because "bringing them" is important - not because they will listen or learn. The mere fact that one made the attempt to reach out, to bring a Jew closer to Hashem is what earns him the reward. This is a powerful message for all those who devote themselves to Jewish outreach, who devote their lives and energies toward bringing their alienated brothers and sisters closer to Hashem. Success is not the barometer of eternal reward. Hishtadlus, the actual endeavor, is what counts. Success is in the Hands of Hashem.

It will say on that day "Is it not because my G-d is not in my midst that these evils have come upon me?" (31:17)

One would think that Klal Yisrael's acknowledgment of the sins which catalyzed Hashem's wrath should be considered a sort of teshuvah, repentance. If so, why does it not inspire a reciprocal merciful response from Hashem - instead of continued concealment? Indeed, hester Panim, concealment of Hashem's countenance, is a harsh punishment. What could be worse than being ignored by the Almighty?

Ramban points out that, although the pasuk indicates feelings of introspection and an acknowledgment of shortcomings, it does not represent complete teshuvah. One is definitely on the correct road to repentance, but he is not yet there - not by a long shot. This is a remarkable statement. Perhaps it might even be too demanding. What more is expected of a person than acknowledgment of sin and concession of guilt? The individual is the recipient of Hashem's punishment, and he owns up to it, saying that - yes - I deserve this. I acted inappropriately. I am guilty of wrongdoing. Is this not teshuvah?

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, explains that teshuvah denotes much more than a recognition of sin. The realization that his behavior has created a breach in his relationship with Hashem, distancing him from the Source of all life,

coupled with his decision to refrain from any idolatrous behavior, should be the clincher. Yet, it is not. This step is only the beginning. It represents a break with the past, cutting himself off from his idolatrous behavior. Until he returns completely and totally to Hashem, however, he has only begun the journey. He has gone part of the way, perhaps the most difficult part of the trip - but he is still not there.

The Rosh Yeshivah quotes the Navi Hoshea, "Shuvah Yisrael ad Hashem Elohecha, ki kashalta ba'Avonecha. "Return O' Yisrael to Hashem, your G-d, for you have stumbled in your sins." Although we may have acknowledged that we have stumbled and that Hashem is sovereign, we still must continue our return until we return to Hashem.

V'hachazierinu bi'seshuvah sheleimah lefanecha, "And return us with a complete repentance before You." Until we reach the point that we have actually returned to Hashem, our teshuvah cannot be considered complete. We cannot have it both ways. Acknowledging that one has sinned, but not doing anything about it, impugns the integrity of the teshuvah. If you are so troubled regarding your sinful behavior, then you must return completely to Hashem. Partial return, a "u" turn, so to speak, does not make one a baal teshuvah, penitent. One either goes all of the way, or he remains a spiritual cripple.

For it will not be forgotten out of the mouth of its children. (31:21)

This promise guarantees that our People - regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves - will never entirely forfeit its calling, never totally forget its mission, until the end of time. There will always survive within us a spiritual principle protected by Hashem Himself, through which again and again we will return and achieve a spiritual renaissance. I take the liberty of paraphrasing an inspiring paragraph from Horav S. R. Hirsch's commentary to the end of this parsha. The Rav lived in Germany during a period when the reformers, heirs to the Haskalah, Enlightenment movement, ran rampage over the Torah, destroying the very foundation of our beliefs, leading thousands astray to alienation, apostasy and even the baptismal font. He fought them valiantly - and succeeded in turning the tide and saving what was left of German Jewry.

Now, thousands of years later, we look back upon these past millennia of "that" people and of "that" Book of Moses. We see how everything predicted in the text has come true in the course of time. We see how, in the end, precisely during the periods of its direct suffering, this nation wedded itself so intimately into this Law that for its (the Torah's) sake it endured a martyrdom unparalleled in world history. This Law became the "wings of eagles" upon which Divine Providence bore Yisrael, beyond all trials and tribulations, from the midst of a world that offered it only hatred and scorn, misunderstanding and embitterment, into ever-renewed vitality and vigor...

For, despite their sin, the Jewish People have carried with them into exile sparks that can spread and seeds that can germinate among all mankind. Is there a thinking man who - "after reading Moshe Rabbeinu's final declaration and reviewing the history of this nation and this Book - could refrain from acknowledging that this, precisely, is why the Law could not have been the work of Moshe - the man. It could only be the Law of G-d, of which Moshe was only a messenger, so that both the Law and the nation will remain the finger of G-d showing the way to all mankind."

Yet, after all this time, despite all of the proofs, they refuse to see that the Torah will never be forgotten. Social justice, empowerment, be like the outside world: it did not work then and it will certainly not work now. The only thing that will endure is the Torah. The sooner we all wake up and concede to this verity, the quicker Mashiach Tzidkeinu will arrive and bring an end to our exile.

Va'ani Tefillah

b'chol meodecha - with all your possessions.

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'Annapole), 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.

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Mordechai Tzion toratravaviner@yahoo.com

to: ravaviner@yahoo.com

http://www.ravaviner.com/

Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a

**Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a**

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample: Immersing a Pocketknife in a Mikveh

Q: Does a pocketknife that includes eating utensils need to be immersed in a Mikveh?

A: Yes, while it is completely opened.

Making a Pesak Halachah for the Mashiach to Come

Q: Is it possible for Gedolei Yisrael to issue a Pesak for the Mashiach to come, which will cause an awakening above and result in his coming?

A: There are those who say it is possible, but we should instead plead with Hashem and not make demands of Him (When the Chief Rabbis of Israel, Ha-Rav Mordechai Eliyahu and Ha-Rav Avraham Shapira, visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe asked them: Perhaps all of the Rabbis should gather together and issue a Pesak that the Mashiach should immediately come! Rav Eliyahu said: If you join us, we will be a Beit Din of three judges, and we can issue such a Pesak. The Rebbe replied: I have been ready to do so for some time, but I am only one, and need two others. Rav Eiyahu said: We will join the honorable Rabbi... In the book "Be-Tzel Ha-Chochma" p. 304. See also "Ha-Melech Be-Mesibo" Volume 1, pp. 59-60. And during "Chalukat Ha-Dollarim" [when the Lubavitcher Rebbe would distribute dollars bills to thousands upon thousands of people to give to Tzedakah] in the year 5750, the Rebbe said to Ha-Rav Moshe Stern, one of the great Poskim of America and author of Shut Be'er Moshe: "I have your Teshuvot, but it is not enough. You have to help bring the Mashiach.

Perhaps you should write a Teshuvah ruling that the Mashiach should come."

But in the year 5771, when the Ungvarer Rav, Ha-Rav Menashe Klein, author of Shut Mishnah Halachot, visited Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and asked him to Pasken for the Mashiach to come, Rav Elyashiv politely declined: It is impossible to issue a Pesak that the Geulah should come. But rather we must believe in it and await it).

Adopted Child

Q: Should parents who adopted a child tell him that he is adopted?

A: Eventually he will find out whether they tell him or not, and it will be a shock to him. They should therefore tell him when he is young, and he will accept it in a natural manner and grow up with this knowledge. They should emphasize: You are our child, because we chose you.

Coming of Mashiach

Q: How is it possible for us to expect Mashiach to arrive every day when our Sages tell us that he will arrive in the month of Tishrei or Nisan?

A: He can arrive other times through a miracle.

Rabbi's Blessing

Q: Is it worthwhile to travel a far distance in order to receive a Rabbi's blessing?

A: It is worthwhile to go to Shul to hear Birkat Cohanim, which is a blessing from Hashem, which is much greater than a Rabbi's blessing (It once happened that in the Beit Midrash of the Brisker Rav, Ha-Rav Velvele Soloveitchik, that there was no Cohain for Birkat Cohanim. The Brisker Rav asked for people to find a Cohain and bring him. It took about 15 minutes. Among those Davening were two Chasidim who were clearly impatient to finish Davening, but they stayed out of fear of the Brisker Rav. After the Davening, the Brisker Rav said to them: You will travel for two weeks with great difficulty and expensive in order to receive a blessing for a Chasidic Rebbe, which you have no guarantee will be fulfilled, but the Torah says "Place My Name on Bnei Yisrael and I will bless them", promising that the blessing will be realized, and you don't have 15 minutes?! In the book Meged Givot Olam of Ha-Rav Michal Zalman Shurkin Volume 1, p. 98. Ha-Rav Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinman also expressed surprise that people travel great distances to receive a blessing from a Rabbi instead of running to Shul to receive Birkat Cohanim, a blessing from Hashem. Be-Orchotecha Lamdeni p. 38).

Nickname of Prime Minister of Israel

Q: Is it permissible to refer to the Prime Minister by the nickname Bibi?

A: No. We are obligated to honor him in a similar manner as honoring the King of Israel. See Rambam, Hilchot Melachim Chapter 2 (Shut Orach Mishpat of Maran Ha-Rav Kook #144).

Yizchor

Q: I am married with many young children, Baruch Hashem. Am I obligated to go to Shul to say Yizchor for my Mother, which would entail finding someone to watch the children?

A: You can say it at home.

Judaism Outside of Israel

Q: Should we strengthen Mitzvah observance of Judaism outside of Israel or send them a message that they should make Aliyah?

A: There is no contradiction.

Cataract Surgery

Q: Should one recite "Birkat Ha-Gomel" after cataract surgery?

A: No. It is not a life-threatening situation (I saw that when Rav Aviner had cataract surgery he returned to the Yeshiva on the same day with a patch over his eye. When he removed the patch, he did not recite Birkat Ha-Gomel).

subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

**Rav Kook Torah by Rabbi Chanan Morrison**

The Source of Rabbinic Authority - Adapted from Ein Eyah on Shabbat 23a, vol. III, p. 73

The Sages instituted numerous rabbinic decrees in order to prevent violations of Torah law. For example, the Sages extended the Torah's prohibition of eating milk and meat together to include fowl, since it confused people who failed to distinguish between fowl and "real" meat. There are, however, a few cases in which the Sages went even further, and authored new positive mitzvot. The mitzvot to light Chanuka lights, to read Megilat Esther on Purim, to wash hands before eating bread - these are rabbinic enactments with no direct basis in Torah law. They are not extensions of Torah legislation or protective measures, but brand-new mitzvot.

By what right could the Sages create them?

Even more audacious, the rabbis decreed that one recites a blessing when performing these rabbinic innovations: "Blessed are You, the Eternal our God... Who has commanded us to..." When did God command us to light Chanuka candles, or read the Megila on Purim?

The Talmud in Shabbat 23a responds to this question. There are in fact two sources in the Torah for the rabbinic authority to establish new mitzvot: "Do not stray to the right or left from the word that [the high court] will declare to you." (D'varim 17:10)

"Ask your father and he will tell you; question your elders, and they will respond." (D'varim 32:7)

Why two sources?

Rav Kook explained that God-given commandments will naturally lead towards the goal of absolute good. This is understandable, as God knows the future and is aware of all implications of any decree. Man-made laws, on the other hand, even those designed by the most prescient legal scholars, will never be able to achieve the same results as a Divinely-decreed mitzva. Of course, the Talmudic Sages were blessed with ru'ach hakodesh, Divine inspiration, in addition to the logic and reasoning that are an integral aspect of the Oral Law. They used these gifts in order to attain results similar to God-given mitzvot, to further the cause of the Jewish people's perfection in both spiritual and material realms.

The Sages examined two aspects when formulating a new law:

The people's current religious and physical needs;

The desire to maintain continuity with the Jewish people's lofty spiritual heritage.

It is insufficient to take into account only immediate needs. If the people becomes estranged from its spiritual foundation, it has in fact become a different nation. Its unity and continuity are no longer assured.

Now we may understand why there are two sources authorizing the Sages to legislate new laws.

Regarding the need to address the current needs of society, the Torah commands: "Do not stray to the right or left from the word that [the high court] will declare to you." This refers to decrees of the high court, which institutes legislation dictated by the state of the people, in order to uphold observance of the Shabbat, kashrut, and so on.

But other rabbinic enactments are new mitzvot, designed to maintain our ties with our spiritual heritage - such as lights on Chanuka, reading the Megila on Purim, or washing hands before a meal, like the kohanim before they ate Terumah. Regarding the authority to enact these new mitzvot, the Torah states:

"Remember the days of old, reflect upon the years of each generation. Ask your father and he will tell you; question your elders, and they will respond." Israel's past was elevated and holy, and is the source of our future success.

"For His own nation remained God's portion; Yaakov is the lot of His heritage" (D'varim 32:9).

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com  
from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>  
to: weekly@ohr.edu  
subject: Torah Weekly

**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayeilech**  
**For the week ending 15 September 2018 / 6 Tishri 5779**  
**Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com**  
**Insights**

Getting to the Upper Third

“Gather together the nation, the men and the women and the children...in order that they will hear and they should learn...” (31:12)

Every seven years the king reads the Torah in the presence of the entire nation. This is the mitzvah of Hakhel. Even though the young children did not understand what was being read to them, their parents received reward for bringing them.

This reveals to us a major principle in the education of the young. Even though they may make a noise and be distracting to their elders, the experience for them is irreplaceable, for they feel, through osmosis, the importance to the Torah. Even though they cannot understand a word they have imbibed a vital lesson: The Torah is the life-blood of the Jewish People. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky was once visiting a kindergarten of a Torah school. Noticing that all the mezuzahs on the doors were placed on the lower third of the doorposts, he remarked, “It’s a lovely idea to put the mezuzah in a place where the children can easily reach up and touch them, but please put them where they belong, on the upper third of the doorpost, and let them use a stool to reach the mezuzah. Otherwise they will grow up thinking that you can put the mezuzah anywhere you wish. One does not raise children with untruths.”

This story can serve as a parable for our relationship to the Torah. We must go up to the Torah, not bring the Torah down to our level. Wherever the attempt has been made to make Judaism “easier,” the outcome is that people have come to despise it and reject it altogether.

We may be no more than spiritual children, but we will never grow into adults unless we look up to that mezuzah. And then, maybe one day we will be able to reach it by ourselves, unaided by a stool. But if we learn that we have to make no effort to raise ourselves up to the Torah, we will make the mistake of thinking that we are already shoulder-high to the Torah, and thus we need to make no efforts to change and improve ourselves. We will thus both debase the Torah and give ourselves no motivation to grow. We will merely sit back like self-congratulatory pygmies convinced that we are already spiritual giants.

*Sources: based on a story by Rabbi Nisson Wolpin as seen in Growth through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin*  
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From: "Avi Zelefsky" <avizelefsky@gmail.com>

Date: Oct 7, 2016 2:29 PM

Subject: **Rabbi Bezalel Rudinsky's** d'var torah for parshas vayeilech

This week’s parsha brings the positive commandment of writing a sefer torah. Hashem uses the lashon “shira” - song, to describe the torah. The rambam (hilchos sefer torah) says that the commandment to write the shira is commanding us to write ha’azinu. Since a person cannot write sections of the torah, one is required to write the entire torah.

How can we understand the rambam? What does the rambam mean that we cannot write sections of the torah? We do it for tefillin and mezuzah! It must be that the rambam means that when the torah says to write “this shira” he meant the entire torah, and we allude to the entire torah through parshas ha’azinu. But then one can ask, why did the torah allude to writing the torah with the shira? We find that the amoraim would call the torah a shira. As a matter of fact, there is a fascinating tiferes yisroel in eruchin (mishnayos eruchin perek gimmel). The tiferes yisroel asks: why is it that we find

throughout the mishnayos that there is missing text? He answers that when the children would learn the mishnayos they would memorize everything by singing the words. Sometimes the words wouldn’t fit in with the tune, though, so they deleted some words. This in itself is hard to understand, but in any event we see that the torah is viewed a shira. Why is the torah called a shira?

There is a fascinating gemarah in yuma (daf ayin) which says (this is according to rashi’s understanding of the gemarah) that everybody would bring their sifrei torah to shul on erev yom kippur so that they would be able to show off their beautiful sifrei torah on yom kippur.

What’s the p’shat in this gemarah?

Another question: why is it that today we don’t find everybody writing sifrei torah? They did back then, as we saw from the gemarah in pesachim that everybody brought their sifrei torah!

The tur brings down his father, the rosh, who answers that today our obligation lies in writing sefarim. The beis yosef asks: how can it be that the rosh would just throw away the chiyuv of writing a sefer torah? It doesn’t make sense! Rather, the p’shat in the rosh must be that we have a chiyuv to write sefarim in addition to the sefer torah. The sha’agas arye agrees with this way of understanding the rosh, and he even brings a proof to it: there is a gemarah in sanhedrin that says that one is required to write a sefer torah even if he inherited one from his father. We see from the gemarah that there is still an obligation to write a sefer torah! It is hard to say that the tur was wrong with understanding his father’s p’shat, but then again, it seems hard to learn like the tur.

The ramban asks: why is ha’azinu called a shira? There are many difficult things in that parsha; it doesn’t seem like a shira! The ramban answers: we call it a shira to tell us that we should sing it either way.

This in itself doesn’t answer the question! Why sing it if it isn’t a song?

The s’fas emes answers: The end of parshas ha’azinu says that after all the trials and pains the Jews go through, the torah will still testify for us. The torah will always be with us. The biggest shira is that the torah always lasts. This idea can give us clarity as to why we give a choson maftir. Why do we give a choson maftir? Maftir is from the least chashuva aliyos!

There wasn’t always a leining of the haftorah. The rishonim say that the haftorah was first said when there was a decree that the Jews weren’t allowed to lein. The Jews chose something from niveim that was similar to that week’s parsha. Yet, the same rishonim say that if one nowadays can’t lein the torah for some reason, he shouldn’t read the haftorah with a bracha. Why not? The same rishonim said that that is what they did back then!

One can answer that back then they didn’t make a bracha either. The reason why they said the haftorah was so they shouldn’t forget about the torah. The chachamim later came and established that one should say the haftorah with a bracha.

What is the lesson that one can draw from the Jews who couldn’t lein? The torah never leaves anybody. Every person must always know that, and if he prioritizes the torah, it will stick with him. That is why we give the choson maftir; we want to show him that he must hold onto the torah with his new life.

What is the difference between words and a song? Words come and go, but a song comes from the heart - the more it comes from the heart, the more it stays. The torah is something that every person must be passionate about the torah. How will the torah not be forgotten? By making it a shira and making it enter the heart.

That is why there is a commandment to write the torah down - it makes you feel like it is yours and makes you cherish it. The prisha explains that writing the torah is for learning. That is why we need to write sefarim, because we don’t use the sefer torah of the shul as much. Through our learning and writing down, the torah sticks to us. This explains why a person must write a sefer torah even if he inherited one.

What is the culmination of yom kippur? That we become more passionate about our service of Hashem. How did the people show their passion of

Hashem? They brought their beautiful sifrei torah - their beautiful song, and showed how much passion they had for the torah. We are now in the beginning of a new year, at the first shabbos after rosh hashana. Let's show our real passion to Hashem by learning properly and by writing down our own chiddushim.

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com  
from: Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald <ezbuchwald@njop.org>  
subject: Weekly Torah Message From Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald  
njop.org

**Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Torah Message**  
**Vayeilech-Yom Kippur 5779-2018**  
**"And Moses Went..."**

In this week's parasha, parashat Vayeilech, the Torah describes Moses' final actions before his passing.

On the last day of his life, Moses informs the people that he is soon to die. He tells the nation that Joshua will assume the leadership and that they will successfully enter into the land of Israel and inherit it. Then, standing before of all Israel, Moses appoints Joshua as his successor, whose appointment is corroborated publicly by G-d.

Parashat Vayeilech opens with the words, Deuteronomy 31:1 - and Moses went and spoke these words to all of Israel. Moses tells the people that he is 120 years old today and can no longer go out and come in. Even though G-d has forbidden him to cross the Jordan, he assures the people that G-d will cross the Jordan with them and destroy their enemies so that they will take possession of the land.

The commentators are perplexed by the term "Vayeilech," that he [Moses] went. After all, the Abarbanel, notes, that just two chapters earlier in Deuteronomy 29:1, Moses called all the people of Israel to him to speak with them. Moses says, אָהֶם נִצְּזָוִים — "ah'tem nitzavim,"—you are standing here today before the Lord your G-d. Why then does the Torah now say "vayeilech Moshe," that Moses went to talk to the people if they were already standing before him?

The Ramban suggests, that after Moses had completed what he had to say to the people, the people all returned to their tents. Now, just before he dies, Moses went to visit the people to say goodbye to them.

R. Abraham Ibn Ezra maintains that Moses went to each tribe individually, comforting them, telling them not to fear, and assuring them that G-d would keep His word. According to the Ibn Ezra, it was then that Moses conferred on each tribe its blessing, even though the blessings are not recorded until later, in Deuteronomy 33, in parashat V'zot Habracha.

The Sforno submits that Moses was concerned that the Covenant that he had renewed with the people would not be accepted joyously because the people would be distracted by mourning for his death. He, therefore, went to visit the individual tents of Israel to personally inspire the people and to comfort them.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, declares that by personally visiting the people rather than having them come to him, the entire parasha underscores the extraordinary humility of Moses.

Various Hassidic commentators read more deeply into the term "vayeilech," that Moses went. What is implied here by the term "went," say the Hassidic masters, is that Moses "went" and entered into the soul of each individual Jew. This is what is implied in Deuteronomy 31 by the phrase, אֶל כֹּל יִשְׂרָאֵל — "ehl kol Yisrael," that Moses spoke these things "to all of Israel." It teaches that Moses' spirit entered into the soul of each Jew. The real reason that no one knows Moses' burial place (Deuteronomy 34:6), is because the soul of Moses is "buried" deep in the recesses of every Jew.

It is fascinating to note that Yonatan ben Uzziel in his Aramaic translation of the Bible, explains the words "and Moses went," to mean that Moses went to the Beit Hamidrash, to the House of Study.

What is the origin of this unusual interpretation? Rashi, in Deuteronomy 31:2, concludes that when Moses says, "I am no longer able to go out and come in," he means that the well-springs of wisdom were shut off to Moses. He, therefore, went to the Beit Hamidrash, the House of Study, to be taught Torah by others.

The Ba'al HaTurim notes that before the words, "Vayeilech Moshe, "and Moses went," the previous parasha, Nitzavim, concludes with the words, the land that the Lord your G-d swore to give your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Ba'al HaTurim suggests that Moses actually went back in history to visit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in order to inform them that the Al-mighty was keeping His promise, and was going to give the land of Israel to the Jewish people through the hand of Joshua.

The confluence between the imminent death of Moses in parashat Vayeilech, and the observance of the holy day of Yom Kippur, is by no means coincidental. I have often noted that Yom Kippur is a day on which all the Children of Israel "experience" death:

On Yom Kippur there is no eating, drinking, bathing, anointing in oil, or engaging in sexual activity. The reason for this is that only one who has been dead, and comes back to life, can truly appreciate the gift of being alive.

In parashat Vayeilech, Moses teaches the people how to prepare for death by leaving the world with a sense of hope and the assurance that life continues beyond the physical life of any particular individual, no matter how great, no matter how indispensable—even Moses.

It is especially important to acknowledge on these High Holy Days that a little bit of Moses' soul is implanted in each Jew. As long as we live and loyally practice the words of Torah that were transmitted to us by the great Moses, Moses continues to live, and so do the People of Israel.

It is imperative, especially during these Holy Days, for all Jews to focus on the holy spirit of Moses that is implanted in each and every one of us. It is that monumental spiritual gift that provides true and deeper meaning to our own lives, and guarantees the eternity of the People of Israel.

Chag Samayach.

*Wishing you a Shana Tovah and a Chatima Tovah, a very Happy and Healthy New Year. May we all be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life, and may all our prayers be answered favorably. Yom Kippur will be observed this year on Tuesday evening, September 18th through nightfall on September 19th, 2018. Have a most meaningful fast.*

*The first days of Sukkot will be observed this year on Sunday evening and all day Monday and Tuesday, September 23rd, 24th and 25th, 2018. The intermediary days [Chol HaMoed] are observed through Sunday, September 30th. On Sunday evening, the festival of Shemini Atzeret commences, and is celebrated on Monday, October 1st. The final day of the festival, Simchat Torah, begins on Monday evening, October 1st and continues through Tuesday, October 2nd. May you be blessed.*

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by **Rabbi Yair Hoffman** for 5tjt.com

Three Divrei Torah for Parshas VaYeLech

September 13, 2018

This Sidra has 3 sections (Parshios).

Preparing for the new leader

In preparing for the new leader, Yeshoshua, the pasuk begins, "And Moshe went, and he said these things to all of Israel. The word "went – vayeilech" without further elaboration seems somewhat strange. Where did he go? The Sforno explains that he awakened himself to the matter. After he had completed the matter of the covenant, something that would generate much excitement – he awakened himself to the idea that his death might mar and ruin the joy of the newly made covenant with hashem. In order not to ruin that joy – he addressed the issue of his passing in a manner of comfort. We see here something extraordinary – the extent of the concern that we should have not to mar the joy and happiness of another, and the extent of Moshe Rabbeinu's selflessness. These are both important ideals.

Yehoshua and the Torah

There is a difference in the verb cases used in Moshe Rabbeinu's communication with Yehoshuah about how the nation of Israel will be brought into the land. In Pasuk 7 it says "ki attah tavoh es haAm Hazeh – you will come with this nation to the land.." In pasuk 23 it says "ki attah savih – you will bring." Why the difference? The Chezkuni explains that here in pasuk 7, Moshe Rabbeinu is speaking before all of Klal Yisroel and he wished to extend them kavod – honor. Later, he was speaking only before Yehishuah himself – so Moshe Rabbeinu spoke more precisely. We see from here two points: The first is that it is always proper to extend honor to others and the second point is that sometimes it should be extended even to the point of not being precise in one's words.

Final preparations.

Hashem tells Moshe that after he passes away, "This nation will rise and commit adultery with strange goods of the land (Dvarim 31:16)." The Ohr HaChaim questions the use of the word rise in this context. He answers that the nation of Israel will experience the challenges of havng wealth and honor. These challenges are the underlying cause of the sin – when people



are ill-prepared for these challenges. If we are aware that these two concepts wealth and honor can cause us to sin – we can better prepare to handle them. The author can be reached at [vairhoffman2@gmail.com](mailto:vairhoffman2@gmail.com)

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

**Drasha Parshas Vayeilech**

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

**School of Soft Knocks**

Parshas Vayeilech has Moshe handing the reign of power to his beloved disciple Yehoshua, who now will grasp hold of the destiny of the Children of Israel. Moshe does not leave him without first guiding him through the difficult mission of leadership. At the end of Parshas Vayeilech, (Deuteronomy 31:7), “Moshe summoned Yehoshua and said to him before the eyes of all Israel, ‘Be strong and courageous and do not be broken before them, for Hashem your G-d — it is he who goes before you.’”

The Torah does not specify what “strong and courageous” actually means. I conjured my own visions of how to be strong and courageous when dealing with a “stiff-necked” nation. It entailed exacting demands and rigid regulations. The Medrash, however, offers a totally diametric explanation. The Yalkut Shimoni, a compendium of Midrashim compiled in the Middle Ages, discusses a verse in Hoshea. “Israel is but a beloved lad and in Egypt I had called them my child.” It quotes the verse in Deuteronomy 31:7, and explains the words “strong and courageous.” Moshe explained to Joshua, “this nation that I am giving you is still young kids. They are still young lads. Do not be harsh with them. Even their Creator has called them children, as it is written, (Hoshea 11:1) “Israel is but a beloved lad.”

Can the Midrash find no better words to translate the phrase telling Joshua to “be strong and courageous” other than be patience and understanding? In which way does forbearance show strength? How does courage translate as tolerance?

In the years of World War I, a young student who was fleeing the war-ravaged city of Slabodka sought refuge in Tiktin, a village near Lomza, Poland. A prodigious Torah scholar, he compensated for room and board by becoming a simple cheder teacher. He gave his lecture in a small schoolhouse, but the townsfolk were quite suspicious. There were no shouts from inside the one-room schoolhouse as it was with other teachers; the boys seemed to be listening. Rumor had it that the young man even let the children play outside for ten minutes each day in the middle of the learning session.

They decided to investigate. They interrupted his class one morning and were shocked. The kanchik (whip) used by every cheder-Rebbe was lying on the floor near the trash bin. Upon interrogating the children the parents learned that this radical educator never used it.

Outraged, the townsfolk decided to call a meeting with their Rabbi to discuss the gravity of the situation. Who knows what ideas a teacher who would not use the kanchik was imbuing in our children? They worried.

The local Rabbi pointed to a picture of Rabbi Isaac Elchonon Spector, the leader of Lithuanian Jewry. “Do you see that picture of the Kovno Tzadik?” He asked the townsfolk. “One day thousands of homes across the world will have this young man’s picture hanging on their walls.”

The elderly Rabbi was right. The young man became the leader of a generation, teacher of thousands and dean of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath. It was the beginning of, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky’s career in education. Moshe, the guide and architect of Jewish leadership, was empowering his disciple with a message of guidance. The words “be strong and courageous” embodied leadership of love and understanding. One can not talk of forbearance and patience without talking of strength and courage. But more important: one can not show true strength and courage if he is not patient and understanding.

*Dedicated by Mr. & Mrs. Armand Lindenbaum in loving memory of Nathan Lindenbaum*

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Ohr Torah Stone <[ohrtorahstone@otsny.org](mailto:ohrtorahstone@otsny.org)>

reply-to: [yishai@ots.org.il](mailto:yishai@ots.org.il)

subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

**Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayeilech Deuteronomy (31:1- 31:30)**

**By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Efrat, Israel – “And I will surely hide My face on that day for all the evils which they shall have perpetrated, in that they have turned to other gods.” (Deuteronomy 31:18) But how do we narrow the gulf between a hidden God and a revealed God? Why does God choose to hide Himself?

Indeed, one of the thorniest theological issues in Judaism (or any religion) is how to tackle this question of a hidden God or, in more familiar terms, a world which seems absent of God’s goodness and justice, a world in which evil people go unpunished while the good tragically suffer! In his path-breaking work Faith after the Holocaust, Rabbi Eliezer Berkowitz explores this concept of God’s “hiddenness” as it appears in different contexts in the Torah. I’d like to review these in order to help us attempt a glimpse into the divine notion of justice in this world.

Our biblical text cited above sees a “hidden God” as punishment for abandoning His ways if we sin. God hides Himself, and the more we sin, the more hidden shall the face of God become. This idea of hiddenness as punishment is very logical if we posit the mutuality of the God-human relationship; the Almighty will relate to us in direct proportion to how we relate to Him. If we hide ourselves from Him, estrange ourselves from His ways of compassion and loving-kindness, so will He hide Himself from us, seem to be estranged from our tragedies and suffering.

In this manner we can begin to understand the Prophet Isaiah and the connecting relationship he posits between the God of hiddenness and the God of Salvation: “You are a God who hides Yourself, the God of Israel who brings salvation” (Is. 45:15). Earlier, the prophet declares, “And I shall anxiously await a Lord who hides His face from the House of Judah and I will hopefully anticipate Him” (8:17). Strangely enough Isaiah’s vision calls for redemption and our most anticipated yearnings as emanating from a hidden God. What can this possibly mean?

Fundamental to Jewish theology is the idea that the Almighty created an imperfect, incomplete world, “The Former of light and the Creator of darkness, the Maker of peace and the Creator of evil, I am the Lord who makes all these things” (Is. 45:7). Who will perfect and complete this world? Who will bring the Hidden God out of His hiding place? God’s human partners, created in the divine image; the human being has freedom of choice and a portion of God on High to help him make the right choice and to empower him to enthrone God and enable goodness to reign (see Aleinu, Al Kein prayer after every Amida).

When will this perfection occur? When humanity learns to live in peace, overcome the evil instinct, respect every human as being free and inviolate, and dedicate his/her abilities towards curing disease and solving problems of natural calamities, when all the wicked of the earth will turn to God and His laws. At that time God will become manifest in the world, He and His name will become One, and the world will be perfected under the kingship of the Divine.

And God created such a world because He has full confidence that His creature-partners will eventually repent, repair and perfect humanity and the world! Until this ideal state comes about – God’s face will remain hidden, His glory and goodness will not be totally in evidence.

A story is told about the Spolyer Grandfather, a hasidic master who once came upon children playing hide-and-seek and, when he saw one of the children crying, he stopped and asked, “Why the tears?” The child answered that he’d been hiding for the longest time, but no one had come to look for him. The elderly Jew looked up to heaven and cried out, “Master of the Universe, I know You’re hiding because You want us to find you, but what happens if You continue to remain hidden and Your children stop looking? Before it’s too late, reveal Yourself.” If we could address God as directly and simply as the Spolyer Grandfather, what a huge step we’d be taking towards revealing the “hidden face” of God. It is crucial, however, that we never stop looking for Him – and if we search hard enough, and understand that we must perfect ourselves even as we search for Him, we shall certainly make Him appear. And He promises, through all of our prophets, that at least a faithful remnant will never stop looking, and that we will make Him appear in a perfected and repaired world (Is. 2, Mic. 4).

Shabbat Shalom