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and Tefillin: The Sanctity of the Jewish Home
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Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Korban Pesach and Tefillin: The Sanctity of the Jewish Home

"Vshamarta es hachuka hazos - You should observe this law." There is a dispute whether this pasuk is referring to the law of the korban Pesach or the law of Tefillin, since the previous pesukim speak of both of these mitzvos and therefore it is unclear which this pasuk is addressing. There are strong links between the Mitzvos of korban Pesach and Tefillin. They are both remembrances of yetzias Mitzrayim. The primary theme of the first two parshios of Tefillin is yetzias Mitzrayim, with a description of korban Pesach playing a prominent role. Tefillin are not only a way to remember yetzias Mitzrayim, but also reinforce a primary theme of korban Pesach. One's home is a theme that permeates the observance of korban Pesach, particularly the first one that was brought in Mitzrayim. The halachos of korban Pesach revolve around the home. The blood is placed on the doorpost, the meat is eaten inside the house, and nobody may leave the house until morning. The offering of the korban Pesach is consumed by family units and neighbors. Even in subsequent generations the preparation for Pesach focuses on removing chometz from one's home.

The significance of the Jewish home connects the beginning and the end of Sefer Shemos. The Jewish People are described as the "beis Yaakov - the house of Yaakov" in the opening pasuk of Sefer Shemos. The sefer concludes with "beis Yisroel - the house of Israel" seeing Hashem's Glory resting on the Mishkan. The goal of Sefer Shemos is to transform the Jewish home into a place worthy of the Divine Presence. Hashem's presence is not relegated to the Mishkan, rather the Mishkan serves as a model for sanctity in every home. The celebration of Pesach involves not only visiting the Beis HaMikdash but also the preparation of our homes as smaller Mishkans. Just as the flour offerings in the Beis HaMikdash are free of chometz the entire year, during the week of Pesach our homes are elevated to the status of a mikdash and all of the chometz must

be removed. Similarly, the first korban Pesach didn't require an actual mizbeach since the doorpost to every home served that purpose.

In addition to our actual homes serving as places for the Shechina to dwell, we carry with us two smaller "houses" that embody the same ideals as the Beis HaMikdash. The Tefillin are referred to as "batim - houses." These "houses" must be square similar to the mizbeach of the Beis HaMikdash. Just as the Mishkan, and later the Beis HaMikdash, housed the words of Torah found in the Luchos, so too the batim of the Tefillin house the parshiyos that speak of our commitment to the words of the Torah. Chazal teach us that all parts of Tefillin must be made from Kosher animal products just as the Mishkan had to meet this requirement. The batim of the Tefillin and our homes on Pesach remind us that Hashem can rest his presence anywhere. The Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash inspire us to find Hashem in our own homes and family life. As we look at our miniature Mishkan tied to our arms and placed on our heads we remember the message of the korban Pesach. We must find Hashem everywhere and at all times. We can transform the "house of Yaakov" into a "house of Israel" in which we can always see the Divine Presence resting. Copyright © 2016 by TorahWeb.org. All rights reserved.

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>

to: ravfrand@torah.org

date: Fri, Jan 15, 2016 at 12:05 AM

subject: Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Bo

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #930 – Eating Matzo An Entire Pesach – A Mitzvah? Good Shabbos!

Revenge Against Their Idols Is Part of the Catharsis

This week's parsha contains the pasuk: "I will pass through the land of Egypt on this night and I will smite every first born in the land of Egypt and amongst all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments, I am Hashem." [Shmos 12:12].

Rashi elaborates on the type of judgement to be executed on the Egyptian gods: "Wooden idols rotted, and metal ones dissolved and melted to the ground."

The famous Dayenu song which is part of the Pessach Haggadah lists the various kindnesses the Almighty did for us during the course of the events of Yetzias Metzraim [the Exodus]. One stanza reads, "Had He executed judgments against the Egyptians, but not upon their gods, it would have sufficed for us". All the other praises we enumerate there can be shown to directly benefit us. However this stanza "had he not (executed judgment) against their gods" seems to be an exception. Does it make a difference to us that the Almighty went ahead and melted their metal idols or made their wood idols rot?

This is something that was strictly the battle of the Ribono shel Olam. It is not on par with giving us the Egyptian's wealth, splitting the sea, causing us to pass through it on dry land, etc. which all directly benefited the Jewish people. What benefit was there for us, we must ask, that G-d "acted again st their idols"?

The sefer Ikvei Erev speculates that while Jews were enduring the terrible enslavement in Egypt they also probably had to put up with theological abuse from the Egyptians who would ask them, "Nu, where is your G-d?" We can imagine the taunting and the teasing that the Jews suffered at the hand of the Egyptian pagans: "You must have picked the wrong god! Where is he? We picked the right god because we are the task masters and you are our slaves! We torture and oppress you and yet 'There was neither sound, nor response, nor listener' [Melachim I 18:29]"

So on that night of Yetzias Metzraim, when the Jews left and the Egyptians were mourning the loss of their first born, they were also crying and looking at their melted idols in front of them. That gave us the opportunity to say: "No, we were right all along, and you were wrong." There is a certain sweetness to that revenge. Have you ever been struck by the expression we say in davening "Revenge before our eyes the revenge of the spilt blood of your servants"? Is it not sufficient that the Almighty will give the Nazis what they deserved and the Ukrainians what they deserved and the Lithuanians what they deserved and the Polish what they deserved (and the list goes on and on and on)? Why does the revenge need to take place before our eyes? The answer is that it is because

that is part of the therapy. This is part of the catharsis – not only that it should happen, but that I should see it and that I should be able to say, "No, we were right all along."

This is why we include in the Dayenu thanks also for executing judgment on their gods. Those years of verbal abuse that we suffered can be somewhat mitigated when everyone now sees for themselves who is truly the Master of the Universe.

The Exodus Came Wrapped, With A Ribbon On Top

The pasuk says, [Shmos 13:4] "Today you are leaving in the month of spring." Rashi comments: "Did they not know in which month they went out?" Moshe Rabbeinu was not a weather man. The Children of Israel did not need him to tell them what month of the year it was or what the weather was like outside. Rashi answers, "Rather, this is what Moshe was telling them: See the kindness that He bestowed upon you that He took you out in a month which is fitting for departure – no hot sun, nor cold, nor rain." Most people feel that spring is the most beautiful season. We do not need the heater anymore. We do not yet need the air conditioning. It is beautiful. Moshe wanted the people to know how much the Master of the Universe loved them. He took them out in the most perfect time of the year, as is alluded to in Tehillim 68:7 "He takes out prisoners when it is fitting" – meaning the month in which it is fitting to go out. This is what Moshe was instructed to tell them.

Consider the following: For how long did they need the benefit of going out in the springtime? Chazal say that once they arrived in Succos, a distance of only 120 mi -- which is not a long trip -- they already had the Clouds of Glory. These Ananei HaKavod were climate controlled chambers that kept them cool in the summer and warm in the winter. They did not need to worry about heat or wind or any weather related issue. This spiritual bubble, as it were, is like going out in one's car: When it is hot, we turn on the air conditioner. When it is cold we turn on the heater. So what difference would it make if they would have been taken out of Egypt in the summer when it would be 106 degrees? Who cares? They did not even need to pay for the gas and the electric bill!

What then is the great deal about emphasizing to the Children of Israel G-d's kindness and concern for them that He took them out of slavery in the "month of the spring"? It was a matter of days until they arrived in Succos. Furthermore, let us relate this to the closest historical parallel to the Yetziyas Metzraim. Let us think about the people who unfortunately experienced the Holocaust and the Concentration Camps. When the doors finally swung open and the Jews were finally let out of the Camps and were told "You're free", did it make the slightest difference what month it was? As it happened, it was in July 1944, but who really cared? People who were emaciated and starving who had witnessed the most horrible conditions for so many years would not think twice about celebrating their freedom even if it came in the middle of the Polish winter (as was the case with Auschwitz (January 1945)

What is the meaning of G-d's insistence to impress the people that He was taking them out "in a month that is pleasant"? Rav Simcha Zissel says that the Almighty is making a point here. This is the way He does things. "When I do a Chessed, I do it in the most perfect manner." That is the way the Ribono shel Olam bestows chessed. He bestows chessed in the fullest sense of the word. The best analogy is the following: Have you ever bought your wife an expensive piece of jewelry? When you go to the jewelry store, they have little plastic bags where they keep the jewelry. Let's say you buy your wife a \$3000 pair of earrings. They come in this little bag. You go to your wife. She is making Pessach. She has worked like a dog. You want to lift her spirits. You take out that little plastic bag and say, "Here, Happy Pessach!" No one does that!

What do you do? You have this nice beautiful box. The box itself might cost a few dollars. You gift wrap the box and then they put a bow on top. You bring it into your wife and say, "Have a Good Yom Tov, sweetheart." Who needs all this? The answer is that when you want to do something nice for a person, when you want to show a person that you love them, you do not take the earrings out of a cheap little plastic bag and say "Here. Take the earrings." This is what the Ribono shel Olam did for Klal Yisroel. Of course, practically, it made little or no difference to the Jewish people when they got out of Egypt. It would not have mattered to them whether it was Nissan or Teves. In a matter

of days, the whole matter would be moot anyway. But the Almighty wanted to show Klal Yisrael how much He loved them. The chessed He does for His nation is complete to the n-th degree. It comes with a ribbon on top. That is a demonstration of the Love the Almighty has for Klal Yisrael.

This is why Pessach is the only Yom Tov where the Torah stresses it must come out in a certain season. "Observe the month of the spring" [Devarim 16:1]. This is a halacha. This is the motivation of the entire Jewish calendar system which requires a lunar leap year, to synchronize our calendar with the solar year so that Pessach always falls out in the spring time. L'Havdil, the Moslem holy month of Ramadan can come out in the winter, fall, summer, or spring because the Moslems do not have a solar-lunar correction built into their calendar.

It is important to ensure that Pessach always comes out in the spring because this is a profound and everlasting message to the Jewish people regarding G-d's love for them and His testimony that He cherishes them. When He gives us a gift, it does not come in a plastic bag. It comes with all the trimmings. For all generations, we need to remember G-d's love for us at the moment of Yetziyas Metzraim. This is one of the central themes of the remembrance of Yetziyas Metzraim. This is also why we read Shir HaShirim on Pessach – representing the Love Song between the Almighty and His beloved nation. This is why Pessach must come in the spring – "the month in which it is appropriate to go out".

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffiman; Baltimore, MD dhoffiman@torah.org RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Questions or comments? Email feedback@torah.org. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing.

From: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, Jan 14, 2016

The Spiritual Child

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

The American writer Bruce Feiler recently published a best-selling book entitled *The Secrets of Happy Families*. [1] It's an engaging work that uses research largely drawn from fields like team building, problem solving and conflict resolution, showing how management techniques can be used at home also to help make families cohesive units that make space for personal growth. At the end, however, he makes a very striking and unexpected point: "The single most important thing you can do for your family may be the simplest of all: develop a strong family narrative." He quotes a study from Emory University that the more children know about their family's story, "the stronger their sense of control over their lives, the higher their self-esteem, the more successfully they believe their family functions." [2]

A family narrative connects children to something larger than themselves. It helps them make sense of how they fit into the world that existed before they were born. It gives them the starting-point of an identity. That in turn becomes the basis of confidence. It enables children to say: This is who I am. This is the story of which I am a part. These are the people who came before me and whose descendant I am. These are the roots of which I am the stem reaching upward toward the sun.

Nowhere was this point made more dramatically than by Moses in this week's parsha. The tenth plague is about to strike. Moses knows that this will be the last. Pharaoh will not merely let the people go. He will urge them to leave. So, on God's command, he prepares the people for freedom. But he does so in a way that is unique. He does not talk about liberty. He does not speak about breaking the chains of bondage. He does not even mention the arduous journey that lies ahead. Nor does he enlist their enthusiasm by giving them a glimpse of the destination, the Promised Land that God swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the land of milk and honey.

He talks about children. Three times in the course of the parsha he turns to the theme:

And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this rite?' you shall say . . . (Exodus 12:26-27)

And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt' (Exodus 13:8) And when, in time to come, your child asks you, saying, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him . . . (Exodus 13:14)

This is wonderfully counterintuitive. He doesn't speak about tomorrow but about the distant future. He does not celebrate the moment of liberation. Instead he wants to ensure that it will form part of the people's memory until the end of time. He wants each generation to pass on the story to the next. He wants Jewish parents to become educators, and Jewish children to be guardians of the past for the sake of the future. Inspired by God, Moses taught the Israelites the lesson arrived at via a different route by the Chinese: If you plan for a year, plant rice. If you plan for a decade, plant a tree. If you plan for a century, educate a child.

Jews became famous throughout the ages for putting education first. Where others built castles and palaces, Jews built schools and houses of study. From this flowed all the familiar achievements in which we take collective pride: the fact that Jews knew their texts even in ages of mass illiteracy; the record of Jewish scholarship and intellect; the astonishing over-representation of Jews among the shapers of the modern mind; the Jewish reputation, sometimes admired, sometimes feared, sometimes caricatured, for mental agility, argument, debate, and the ability to see all sides of a disagreement.

But Moses' point wasn't simply this. God never commanded us: Thou shall win a Nobel Prize. What he wanted us to teach our children was a story. He wanted us to help our children understand who they are, where they came from, what happened to their ancestors to make them the distinctive people they became and what moments in their history shaped their lives and dreams. He wanted us to give our children an identity by turning history into memory, and memory itself into a sense of responsibility. Jews were not summoned to be a nation of intellectuals. They were called on to be actors in a drama of redemption, a people invited by God to bring blessings into the world by the way they lived and sanctified life.

For some time now, along with many others in the West, we have sometimes neglected this deeply spiritual element of education. That is what makes Lisa Miller's recent book *The Spiritual Child*, [3] an important reminder of a forgotten truth. Professor Miller teaches psychology and education at Columbia University and co-edits the journal *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*. Her book is not about Judaism or even religion as such, but specifically about the importance of parents encouraging the spirituality of the child.

Children are naturally spiritual. They are fascinated by the vastness of the universe and our place in it. They have the same sense of wonder that we find in some of the greatest of the psalms. They love stories, songs and rituals. They like the shape and structure they give to time, and relationships, and the moral life. To be sure, sceptics and atheists have often derided religion as a child's view of reality, but that only serves to strengthen the corollary, that a child's view of reality is instinctively, intuitively religious. Deprive a child of that by ridiculing faith, abandoning ritual, and focusing instead on academic achievement and other forms of success, and you starve him or her of some of the most important elements of emotional and psychological well-being.

As Professor Miller shows, the research evidence is compelling. Children who grow up in homes where spirituality is part of the atmosphere at home are less likely to succumb to depression, substance abuse, aggression and high-risk behaviours including physical risk-taking and "a sexuality devoid of emotional intimacy". Spirituality plays a part in a child's resilience, physical and mental health and healing. It is a key dimension of adolescence and its intense search for identity and purpose. The teenage years often take the form of a spiritual quest. And when there is a cross-generational bond through which children and parents come to share a sense of connection to something larger, an enormous inner strength is born. Indeed the parent-child relationship, especially in Judaism, mirrors the relationship between God and us.

That is why Moses so often emphasises the role of the question in the process of education: "When your child asks you, saying..." – a feature ritualised at the Seder table in the form of the Mah nishtanah. Judaism is a questioning and argumentative faith, in which even the greatest ask questions of God, and in which the rabbis of the Mishnah and Midrash constantly disagree. Rigid doctrinal faith that discourages questions, calling instead for blind obedience and

submission, is psychologically damaging and fails to prepare a child for the complexity of real life. What is more, the Torah is careful, in the first paragraph of the Shema, to say, "You shall love the Lord your God ..." before saying, "You shall teach these things diligently to your children." Parenthood works when your children see that you love what you want them to learn.

The long walk to freedom, suggests this week's parsha, is not just a matter of history and politics, let alone miracles. It has to do with the relationship between parents and children. It is about telling the story and passing it on across the generations. It is about a sense of God's presence in our lives. It is about making space for transcendence, wonder, gratitude, humility, empathy, love, forgiveness and compassion, ornamented by ritual, song and prayer. These help to give a child confidence, trust and hope, along with a sense of identity, belonging and at-home-ness in the universe.

You cannot build a healthy society out of emotionally unhealthy families and angry and conflicted children. Faith begins in families. Hope is born in the home.

[1] Bruce Feiler, *The Secrets of Happy Families*, New York, William Morrow, 2013.

[2] *Ibid.*, 274. Feiler does not cite the source, but see: Bohanek, Jennifer G., Kelly A. Marin, Robyn Fivush, and Marshall P. Duke. "Family Narrative Interaction and Children's Sense of Self." *Family Process* 45.1 (2006): 39-54.

[3] Miller, Lisa. *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*, New York, St Martin's Press, 2015.

From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, Jan 14, 2016

Peninim on the Torah
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Bo

And so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made a mockery of Egypt. (10:2) We celebrate the exodus from Egypt annually on Pesach, when we recall the many miracles which Hashem wrought for us. Veritably, the Exodus was a seminal event, second in importance only to the Giving of the Torah. What happened at that time to our forebears carries weight for us to this very day. After all, had they not been liberated from the Egyptian bondage, where would we be today? Indeed, it makes sense for children to celebrate their parents' wedding anniversary. Had their parents not wed, the children would never have been born. Therefore, the parents' wedding celebration is not only an event for the parents to mark; it also touches on the lives of their children.

While it is important that the wedding itself be celebrated and remembered, should the menu that was served that night be equally as important? Should it be a primary part of remembrance of the occasion? Is it important whether they served chicken or fish, steak or sushi that night? The important thing is that the parents were married that night - not the menu! Likewise with events surrounding the Exodus; we are grateful that we left Egypt, but why are we so strongly commanded to tell over the story at such great length, relating everything that took place - every plague, every detail? Is that not similar to ruminating over the menu at one's parents' wedding, when all that is really important is celebrating the actual event?

Horav Simcha Wasserman, zl, explains that this teaches us an important lesson concerning yetzias Mitzrayim: It is not a series of events that took place thousands of years ago which has some remote relationship to us. No! These events happened to us and their effect on us continues to this very day. In his commentary to the Torah, Ramban writes that one of the reasons the Torah discusses so many of the events which occurred during the Egyptian exodus (in minute detail) is that they teach us the fundamentals of emunah, faith in Hashem.

We witnessed Hashgachah, Divine Providence. The world does not run like a machine. Hashem interacts with Creation/nature. He is in control of every aspect of the world's functioning. He controls everything in the world, in our lives - everything. He takes an interest in what takes place. He is concerned. When Moshe Rabbeinu predicted that an event would occur - it happened exactly as he said it would. Nothing "just happened." Hashem made it happen! Ramban says that every event that happened is an essential lesson in emunah. Every event is demonstrated in such dramatic terms, so that it sinks into our

minds and we constantly remember it. The miracles of Egypt are analogous to the wedding! The miracles and wonders that accompanied us then continue to chaperone us to this very day. The names of the miracles might change, but their Source is the same.

"B'chol dor va'dor chayav adam liros es atzmo ki'ilu hu yatzah mi'Mitzrayim"; in every generation, a person is obligated to view himself as if he (personally) went out of Egypt (Hagaddah Shel Pesach). We, too, experienced the process of Redemption. We, too, should be grateful for it. We must learn from every event that took place then - because it happened to us. It was our wedding too! In order to learn the lessons, we must focus on each one. They are much more than just the menu. They are the wedding.

Our emunah in Hashem is incredible. Emunah is our light. A Jew who does not have it is in the dark. With it, we are able to see, to keep on going in the midst of the greatest and most palpable darkness. The fact that Jews who survived the Holocaust were able to rebuild their lives is a tribute to their emunah. Those who lost it, sadly had their light extinguished. With emunah, they were able to see the future amidst the overwhelming darkness of the present. Thus, they were able to "dust themselves off", pick themselves up, rebuild, and raise new families to believe in Hashem. They knew there was a reason for the tragedy. Hashem was with them throughout, and He had a reason. One day the light that we have now will shine brighter as it illuminates the answers to all of our questions.

Emunah keeps us going. It is the engine that drives our lives. It is the reason that so many of our own people envy us. We can see. Sadly, they refuse to put on the lenses of emunah. So they go through life existing, without meaning, envious that we have it and they do not. All they have to do is light the match. It is there within them as well. Sadly, they would rather stay in the dark and denigrate those who have taken the initiative, those who refuse to walk blindly.

This is the only way a Jew can live. Horav Yissacher Frand relates ("Listen To Your Messages") hearing the remonstrance of an observant pharmacist in Brooklyn who asked, "What should I do? I see the worst forms of sickness. I dispense drugs for the worst types of diseases - not just strep throat and ear infections. It is so difficult. Why is this happening? Why should people suffer so much? I recently filled a prescription for a young father suffering from end-stage terminal cancer who said, 'I am teaching my five-year-old son to recite Kaddish yasom!' I went to shul this morning, and I cried throughout the entire davening." I read this story, and I realized that, amidst his terrible physical and emotional pain, the father could think of nothing else other than imbuing his young son with love and respect for Hashem, teaching him how to say Kaddish, how to exalt and sanctify the Almighty. That defines emunah. That father was not living in darkness. He saw the light, and he was transferring it to his son!

This is how people live in the Holy Land amidst terror attacks. Their deep-rooted emunah illuminates their lives, as they continue to learn and review the lessons of yetzias Mitzrayim. I write this on my father's fiftieth yahrtzeit. He was an individual of enormous faith. Otherwise, how could he, together with my mother, rebuild their lives, be the progenitors of three children, so soon after losing everything: family, friends and all material assets during the Holocaust. They had the light of emunah to guide them through the darkness that had enveloped so many others. Fifty years ago, the chance that those three children and their broken-hearted mother would "make it" was very slim. The emunah with which our mother raised us kept us going through thick and thin. My father may physically have been gone, but his legacy of faith illuminated our lives. Today, as he gazes down from his rightful place in Gan Eden, he sees that his emunah paid off. Indeed, I feel strongly that he saw this all through his life, during the years of terror, followed by the years of extreme material challenge. He saw the light at the end of the tunnel. That is emunah.

People wonder why Hashem has not wrought miracles of the caliber that were manifest in Egypt. A well-known incident which occurred with Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, sheds light on this query. An assimilated Jew approached Rav Yisrael and told him that his daughter, who was an accomplished dancer, had asked him, "We are always relating miracles which occurred thousands of years ago. Why do we not see miracles today?"

[Veritably our lives are filled with miracles. They are covert and require one to open his eyes in order to see them. Someone who keeps his eyes shut or has myopic or distorted vision - due to his desire to see only those things that

support his perverted sense of morality and culture - sees either only what he wants to see or sees nothing at all.]

Rav Yisrael did not immediately respond, but he waited until the man began bragging about his daughter's extraordinary dancing ability. Rav Yisrael said, "I have difficulty believing that your daughter is such a consummate dancer. For all I know, she does not even know how to dance."

The father said, "Rebbe, I am telling you the truth. My daughter is a magnificent dancer."

Rav Yisrael countered, "If she is that good, let her come and dance for me."

The father said to his daughter, "I would like you to put on a show for the Rabbi, so that he will believe me that you dance."

The girl replied indignantly, "I should dance because some Rabbi does not believe I know how to dance? Let him look at my diploma from the most prestigious school of dance. I am certainly not going to dance just for him!"

Rav Yisrael was waiting for this likely response. Arrogance often accompanies a lack of observance. The assimilated (frequently) look askance at their observant brothers and sisters because, otherwise, they are the ones who are out of place.

We can ask the skeptics: "What do you want? Hashem should come dancing into Vilna, making overt miracles, because one non-believer does not believe that He can perform miracles?"

That you may know that I am Hashem. (10:2)

We live in an era which may be characterized as "inexplicable." When we look around the world and we open our minds to confront reality, it is obvious that Klal Yisrael - both as a nation in general and the individual Jew in particular - is not winning a popularity contest. Indeed, this is the way it was in Egypt. The Egyptians despised the Jews. Yet, they were not prepared to let us leave their country. "Good riddance" was not enough for them. Their deep-rooted hatred for us and for everything that we represented stoked their desire to keep us as slaves, make our lives miserable, and remind us at every juncture that we belonged to them.

Hashem employed ten plagues as a form of punishment to encourage Pharaoh to release us. When these messages did not work, because Hashem did not want them to work, the Almighty simply took us out of Egypt. The time had come, and nothing within Pharaoh's power could prevent the redemption of the Jews from Egypt from occurring. Did it have to happen this way? It is not as if this was the only time our People had experienced hardship and exile. Galus Bavel, the Babylonian exile, some nine centuries after the Egyptian exodus, was certainly no picnic. Yet, Hashem took us out by "encouraging" Koresh, King of Persia, to issue a proclamation throughout his kingdom to allow the Jews to return home. Moreover, he opened up his coffers and offered them financial assistance in rebuilding the Bais HaMikdash. Would it have been so bad if Hashem would have, likewise, manipulated Pharaoh's mind in our favor?

Obviously, Koresh's positive thinking was the result of Divine machination. Why did Hashem not employ the same maneuvering to ease the Jews out of Egypt?

In Rav Avraham Pam's, zl, "Parsha Thoughts," redacted by Rav Shalom Smith, the Rosh Yeshivah quotes Horav Shlomo Kluger, zl, who writes in his Imrei Shefer that, had the liberation from Egypt occurred in some positive way, with Pharaoh acting as the great liberator, friend of the Jews, it would have created a situation in which we would remain indebted to him forever. Despite all of the evil and cruelty that he and his henchmen committed against us, we are a unique people for whom hakoras hatov, gratitude, courses through our veins. It is an inherent part of our psyche. Thus, our deep sense of gratitude would have made us feel beholden to Pharaoh. Hashem would never have accepted this approach. There is no way that we could ever feel anything positive about that evil person and his perverted nation.

Hashem took us out of Egypt so that we would be a nation for Him. If we maintain any sort of allegiance to anyone else - for whatever reason - it detracts from our service to Hashem, because we no longer recognize Him as our Savior. Thus, the more Pharaoh was afflicted with plagues, the greater was his obstinacy until the final makkah, the smiting of the firstborn, overwhelmed him. This is the idea behind zeichar l'yetzias Mitzrayim, a remembrance of the redemption from Egypt. We must constantly reiterate the fact that what we are is all due to the fact that Hashem took us out of Egypt. We owe Him - and only Him. The redemption of the nation from its Babylonian exile was quite different.

First, it involved only a limited number of Jews. Even though we returned home, we still remained under gentile domination. The Second Bais HaMikdash was an impressive and inspiring sight to behold. Nonetheless, it paled in comparison to its predecessor. Therefore, since the redemption was not that compelling, it was permissible to also maintain a sense of gratitude to Koresh to some degree.

The Rosh Yeshivah continues by drawing a parallel between geulas Mitzrayim and our Final Redemption, which will be heralded by Moshiach Tzidkeinu. Egypt serves as the prototype geulah for us. Just as there were no benevolent nations at that time who were prepared to help us, likewise, we will be redeemed in the End of Days by Hashem - Alone. We will not need all of the great talkers/politicians who, when they need our votes, assert, "Israel, Israel!" When the truth becomes clear, we will see that we have only Hashem to thank - no one else.

With this insight, we are able to gain a better understanding of the implacable hatred that exists in today's world toward the Jews and their country. Hashem does not want us to harbor any feelings of gratitude toward the gentile nations. They never really cared for us. They supported us only because they needed our support. We are, otherwise, inexplicably reviled. Now, we have an explanation; Hashem want us to ingrain in our minds that, Ein lanu l'hisheain ela al Avinu she'ba Shomayim. "We have no One other upon whom to rely other than our Father in Heaven."

This is what is alluded to by the pasuk's conclusion, "That you may know that I am Hashem." We must know that it is only Hashem Who redeems us - no one else. Our gratitude must be focused on the True Source of our redemption: Hashem. _____

From: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> date: Wed, Jan 13, 2016 at 4:32 PM Advanced Parsha – Bo

Blood on the Door

by Rabbi Ozer Alport Parsha Potpurri

Bo(Exodus 10:1-13:16) Blood on the Door God instructed Moshe (Ex. 12:13) to command the Jewish people to place the blood from their Passover sacrifices on their doorposts to serve as a sign so that He would pass over their houses without harming them. As God clearly knew who was in each house, why was the blood necessary? Rabbeinu Bechaye posits that the blood that the Jews placed on their doorposts wasn't some magical sign which intrinsically protected their homes from the plague. Rather, the blood symbolically demonstrated the Jews' faith that God would protect and redeem them. They trusted God to the point that they were willing to sacrifice one of the deities (a sheep) of their Egyptian masters and publicly display it without any fear of retribution. It was this unequivocal demonstration of faith which provided the merit for their protection and salvation.

SAVED FROM DARKNESS Rashi writes (Ex. 12:6) that when the time came for God to fulfill the vow that He swore to Avraham to redeem his descendants, He saw that the Jewish people didn't have any mitzvot to perform to merit their redemption, so He gave them the mitzvot of circumcising the males and of offering and eating the Pesach-sacrifice. If the time came for God to keep His promise, why didn't He have to fulfill it even if the Jews didn't have sufficient merits? Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, in Ayeles HaShachar, explains that although God certainly would have fulfilled His promise to redeem the Jews at this time, there are many possible forms of redemption. Rashi writes (Ex. 13:18) that only one out of five Jews merited being saved from Egypt, with the other four-fifths dying during the plague of darkness. Had it not been for the additional mitzvot that God gave the Jews, perhaps an even smaller number of Jews would have been redeemed in fulfillment of God's promise. Additionally, other miracles of the redemption, such as the level that they reached in seeing the Divine presence at the Red Sea weren't included in His promise and were only received through their actual merits.

NEXT TO LAST The Tosefos Yom Tov writes (Demai 7:3) that some people ask a powerful question based on the prophetic verse in Chagga'i 2:9: "the glory and honor of the last Beit Hamikdash will be even greater than that of the first." This verse is referring to the Second Holy Temple in Jerusalem, which was destroyed almost 2,000 years ago. In referring to it as the "last" one, it seemingly indicates that there won't, God forbid, be another Temple ever built. The Tosefos Yom Tov answers that many times the word "last" doesn't mean the

final one. Rather, it refers to the last one vis-a-vis the first one, even though there may indeed be others that come after it. Although this sounds a bit foreign grammatically, he cites two places where the Torah uses such language. One is in Exodus 4:8-9 (the other is in Genesis 33:2), in which God tells Moshe that if the Jews won't believe the first sign, they will trust in the last sign. God adds that if they won't believe the "last" sign, they will surely believe the third one in which Moshe will turn the water of the river into blood. The Kehillas Yitzchok brings a clever hint to this proof from our parsha (Exodus 12:13) "vehayah hadam lachem l'ot al havatim," which literally means that the blood of the Passover-sacrifice will be a sign on the doors for God to skip over that house. However, it can also be understood as stating that the blood (which was the third proof of Moshe's legitimacy) will be a sign for you regarding the Temples, as if anybody attempts to prove from Chagga'i 2:9 that the second Temple was the final one, we may now answer that the blood mentioned in our verse proves that it isn't so.

THE CHAMETZ EXILE The Midrash teaches (Eichah Rabbasi 1:28) that the Jews were punished and sent into exile for eating chametz on Pesach. Where is there any hint in the Torah that this transgression is punishable with national exile? The Vilna Gaon (Genuzos HaGra) brilliantly points out that in the entire Torah, the word venichreta, which means that a sin is punishable by karet, always has the same cantillation, which is called tavir - broken. This alludes to the fact that somebody who commits such a sin will be spiritually broken and cut off from God. There is one exception. On the verse (Ex. 12:15) which says that any person who eats chametz on Pesach will be spiritually cut off - the cantillation on the word "venichreta" is called גרשיים sending away This alludes to the fact that in contrast to every other sin which is punishable by karet, the punishment for eating chametz on Pesach is geirushin - exile and spiritual divorce.

From: Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein <ravadlerstein@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: mchochmah@torah.org date: Thu, Jan 14, 2016 at 11:05 AM subject: Meshech Chochmah - Parshas Bo

Meshech Chochmah

by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

Parshas Bo

Jewish Ideas Matter Moshe called to all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Draw forth and take for yourselves one of the flock for your families and slaughter the korban Pesach.

[Dedicated to the memory of Rav Yehudah Cooperman z"l, whose incisive notes to Meshech Chochmah opened up the sefer to many who otherwise would have hit insurmountable obstacles.]

Meshech Chochmah: The difference between the faith of Jews and everyone else is as simple as the difference between the mind and the heart. Matters of the heart – emotions – are built upon the tangible and palpable. The heart is moved by what it experiences. We attach labels to some of those stirrings, and speak of love, and beauty, and courage. Ancient man sanctified the various forces that raged with him by deifying them. Each force became a different god. Hence, there was a god of love and a god of beauty and a god of courage. A human who excelled in one of these forces was known as a son of the equivalent god.

To this day, the world of strong emotions buttresses the belief systems of other people. The artwork and tapestries with which they adorn their holy places tap into the emotional responses of the viewers/worshippers, increasing their attachment to each particular faith.

Avraham's way was different. He comprehended that G-d is not part of the created world in any way. He is not a force, such as we see applied to material things. He is without boundaries, limits or restraints. He cannot be comprehended or understood; if He could, He would perforce have to have some commonality with the physical world. His existence is necessary, and all existence is contingent upon Him. He brings everything into existence from absolute nothingness. His Oneness is unique, unlike anything else known to man.

All these notions are discernable intellectually, but not emotionally. Nothing that we touch or feel propels them. They exist in our rational selves. To get there,

we had to elect the dictates of the mind over those of the heart. Our understanding of G-d is a product of cognition. Its depth is such that, as Rabbenu Bachya ibn Paquda[2] puts it, only the philosopher or prophet can grasp it fully. Nonetheless, all of Israel fully believes in His existence and His Oneness, despite these being entirely conceptual notions. They disparage the alternative notions that are sourced in emotion, seeing them as part of a limited, changeable physical creation, which is nothing but a tool in the Hand of its Creator.

What role did Hashem assign the palpable and emotional experiences that are part of the nature He created, so that they would not interfere with what we are to know through the intellect alone? Surely they hold great promise to us as well! We find the mission of the emotions fulfilled through Torah. He created a Torah of great complexity, which would bolster the intellectual side of man, and hence give it prominence over what his heart might suggest and his imaginative faculty might formulate.

He also apportioned the various emotions to different mitzvos. Love would be channeled into love for his fellow man, and to cement the family relationship and the commitment to peoplehood. Revenge would be focused on enemies of G-d. Loving-kindness would be directed to other people.

Every emotion that typically resides within the human heart is given its due. Beauty is appreciated on Sukkos, when we take the esrog, the "fruit of the beautiful tree." Significantly, it is savored only for a week – after which it is discarded, unlike other mitzavah material, teaching us something about appreciating the esthetic, but not overvaluing its importance.

The roles of mind and heart are memorialized in the garb of the kohen gadol. On his forehead – the seat of the intellect – he wore the tzitz, upon which was emblazoned *kodesh le-Hashem*/ sanctified to Hashem. Man's rational faculties are to be kept holy, directed to his Torah study and his prayer, and free of competing influences that would lead him astray from his focus on Hashem. On the *choshen*/ breastplate, however, the kohen gadol carried the names of the *shevatim*/ tribes of Israel. Man's heart and all the forces within it are directed to the mitzvos, the majority of which serve the unity of the nation, like the *beis hamikdash*, and the ten portions that go to the kohen, the Levi, and the poor. Effectively, we as a people have crowned the head to be the king over all other parts of the body! We have opted to follow the rational faculty, through which we discern the absolute Oneness of Hashem, something that cannot be directly experienced. We place our trust in our *sechel*; we succeed in obeying it even when that means disregarding the most deep-seated emotions. Thus, entire communities of Jews have walked to their deaths at times rather than renounce their firm belief in the nature of G-d, although this is something that cannot be felt and cannot be adequately described.

We acquired this ability at the Reed Sea, when they jumped into the sea, offering their lives, in their minds, in support of their belief in Him, refusing to reach an accommodation with the Egyptians. We can paraphrase what Chazal[3] say about Yehuda, and apply it to Klal Yisrael as a whole: "How did the Jews merit kingship? Because they jumped into the sea." In other words, the Bnei Yisrael merited that the head, the *sechel* would rule over all the emotions when they jumped into the sea, indicating that they employed their *sechel* to comprehend the Oneness of G-d.

It is for this reason that Chazal instruct us[4] that the most impoverished man in Israel must lean at the seder in the manner of free people. Our exodus from Egypt turned out to be impermanent. We subsequently lost our freedom and our land at times. Nonetheless, every Jew on the night of the seder is indeed a free man. He has escaped the agenda of the emotions, and transcended the limits imposed by his physical nature. He has merited kingship – the coronation of the *sechel* over all his other parts.

Therefore our *pasuk* commands "draw...and take." Draw yourselves away from the way others approach the world, yielding to the dictates of emotions and imagination. Take those emotions and employ them in the life of the family and in the love of fellow. Take a sheep "for each father's house,"[5] which because of its size have to be shared with neighbors. The point of this is to stimulate the unity of the entire nation, not just small groups. Therefore, women participate even though ordinarily exempt from time-bound mitzvos. All of Israel can fulfil its obligation with a single offering – because joining them together is part of the goal of this first mitzvah that the nation participated in. In performing this

avodah, all the feelings are channeled to the mitzvah, so that they are not free to challenge the faith of the mind, and demand visualization and concretization of G-d.

If you ask, how is it that all of Israel can rise to this lofty level? The Torah supplies the answer. "You shall touch the lintel and the two door-posts with some of the blood." Those three parts of the doorway correspond, Chazal tell us,[6] to Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, from whom we derive our *emunah*.

[1] Based on *Meshech Chochmah*, *Shemos* 12:21 [2] *Chovos Halevavos*, *Shaar HaYichud*, chap. 2 [3] *Tosefta Berachos* 4:16 [4] *Pesachim* 99B [5] *Shemos* 1:3 [6] *Shemos Rabbah* 17:3

From: Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-to: rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com to: Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Wed, Jan 13, 2016 at 3:46 AM subject: [Rav Kook Torah] Bo: Two New Years - Nisan and Tishrei

Bo: Two New Years - Nisan and Tishrei

The first mitzvah given to the Jewish people was to establish their own calendar. The Jewish calendar, based on the lunar cycle, starts with the month of Nisan in the spring, when the Israelites left Egypt.

"This month will be for you the head month, the first of the months of the year." (Ex. 12:2) There is, however, another start of the Jewish year - Rosh Hashanah, on the first of Tishrei in the fall.

So when is the true New Year, Tishrei or Nisan?

Also: why is the Jewish calendar based on the cycles of the moon, while the non-Jewish Gregorian calendar is based on the 365-day cycle of the sun?

Two Paths

There are two paths of spiritual growth available to humanity. The first path utilizes mankind's natural integrity, as it says, "God made man straight" (Ecc. 7:29). This path does not require extraordinary effort - as long as the soul has not been sullied with corrupt acts. To maintain this basic decency, it is sufficient to comply with the seven laws of the Noahide Code. This code prohibit actions which only those who have debased their innate goodness would desire - such as murder, theft, and idolatry.

The second path is special to the Jewish people. It requires constant, daily effort, by studying Torah and fulfilling its 613 mitzvot. This path involves the transformation of our human nature to a holy, angelic one; it cannot be attained without significant time and effort.

The Jewish people merited this path when they accepted the Torah. At Mount Sinai, they were adorned with crowns - a metaphor for this higher path of spiritual perfection.

Two Forms of Providence

Corresponding to these two paths of spiritual growth, there are two ways in which God governs the universe. The first form of Divine rule is according to the attribute of Judgment, which measures the merits of each individual. This form of providence corresponds to the natural integrity of all human beings. The second form of Divine order is a supernatural rule. Due to the extraordinary effort of the Jewish people to perfect themselves, they merit miraculous Divine providence. Thus we find that Moses pleaded at Sinai that they should merit special Divine protection: "May I and Your people be distinguished from every nation on the face of the earth" (Ex. 33:16).

This Divine rule takes into account how each individual connects and contributes to the universe as an organic whole. Why is this a supernatural governance of the world? Its goal is to reveal the underlying unity of all creation. Since everything is working towards the same goal, even opposites blend and complement each other, acting in 'unnatural,' miraculous ways. Fire and water, land and sea, are equals; each is willing to perform the work of the other in order to attain the common goal.

Tishrei and Nisan, Justice and Mercy

Now we can understand why there are two New Years in the Jewish calendar. Tishrei and Nisan correspond to these two forms of Divine rule. The rabbis explained that God decided to create the world in Tishrei, but the actual creation took place in Nisan (*Tosafot* on Rosh Hashanah 27a). We find a similar statement in the Midrash, distinguishing between God's initial plan for the world and its actual creation:

“God desired to create the world with the attribute of Justice. But He saw the world could not exist solely on that basis, so He blended the attribute of Mercy with that of Justice.” (Pesikta Rabbati 40) The initial creation of Tishrei is rooted in the attribute of Justice. Each individual is judged on the basis of how he fulfills his purpose in life. The creation of Tishrei relates to the natural Divine order and the natural level of spiritual completion that is the lot of all of humanity.

The actual creation in Nisan, on the other hand, reflects the attribute of Mercy. This aspect of creation goes beyond the personal judgment of Tishrei, transcending the rule of natural law.

Nisan is the month of the miraculous Exodus from Egypt. It is the time of supernatural providence, when individuals are measured according to their connection to the overall purpose of creation. During Nisan, the Jewish people left Egypt and prepared to unite as a nation with a common goal of serving God. Why does the month of Nisan reflect the attribute of Mercy? Even with some minor merit we become worthy, since we are connected to the underlying unity of the universe. This connection is through Torah and mitzvot, as we transform our individual nature to align with the overall pattern of Divine Will. Thus, “All of Israel have a share in the World to Come” (Sanhedrin 10:1).

The Sun and the Moon

So why is the Jewish calendar based on the moon?

The sun has its own light, which it projects effortlessly. This corresponds to the natural integrity of all peoples. The moon, on the other hand, is constantly changing, waning and waxing in its attempts to reflect the light of the sun. This corresponds to the constant efforts of the Jewish people to attain their unique level of perfection through Torah and mitzvot.

In the future, however, this will change. The sun and the moon will shine equally, and all of the months will be illuminated with the light of supernatural Divine rule.

(Adapted from Midbar Shur, pp. 11-18)

From: Rabbi Berel Wein <genesis@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: rabbiwein@torah.org date: Thu, Jan 14, 2016 at 11:05 PM subject: Rabbi Wein - Parshas Bo

Parshas Bo

Hardening The Heart

As the drama of the Exodus from Egypt draws nearer its climax in this week's Torah reading, one cannot help but be struck by the stubbornness of Pharaoh in the face of all of the plagues visited upon him and his nation. His advisers had long before told him that all was lost and that he should cut his losses quickly by freeing the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. This seemingly wise and rational counsel was rejected by Pharaoh out of hand.

Pharaoh sees himself as a godlike figure, omniscient, supremely brilliant and all knowing. He is trapped in a propaganda web of his own making – he can never admit to being wrong or to having made an error of judgment or policy. In the course of human history this has often been the fatal error made by dictators who were always supremely confident in their arrogance and who never acknowledged their mistakes.

Just recall the mass murderers and dictators of our past century – Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Arafat, etc. None of them ever admitted to error and all of them led their people to disaster and untold suffering. This was the arrogance of power overwhelming rational thought and nullifying good strategic planning. There is also an arrogance of intellect. The intellectuals amongst us, who always know what is best for everyone else, are never reticent about rendering opinions on all issues and policies. Again, the fact that they have been wrong – dead wrong – so many times in the past causes them no inhibition in advancing their current viewpoints.

The Torah seems to attribute Pharaoh's continuing folly of unreasonable stubbornness, to God, so to speak, 'hardening his heart.' This implies that somehow Pharaoh's freedom of choice was diminished and he could not have capitulated to the demands of Moshe even if he had wished to do so. This philosophic and theological difficulty has been dealt with by the great commentators of Israel over the ages, with varying theories offered and advanced.

It seems from many of their opinions that at a certain point in human decision-making, a tipping point is achieved when the leader can no longer admit to error and remain the leader. 'Hardening' the leader's heart means there is an unwillingness to give up one's position of power. Very few leaders in the history of humanity have willingly surrendered power.

Simply rising to a position of leadership, let alone absolute and dictatorial power, almost automatically 'hardens one's heart' and limits one's choices and policy options. The Torah blesses a generation that is privileged to have a leader that is capable of admitting sin and error and can offer a public sacrifice in the Temple in atonement.

The greatness of King David lies not only in his heroic spiritual and physical accomplishments as king of Israel but in his ability to admit to personal failings and errors of judgment. Pharaoh is incapable of such self-scrutiny and realistic humility. His lust for power has 'hardened his heart' beyond the power of recall. He has doomed himself as have so many of his ilk over the centuries.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

From: Rabbi Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Tue, Jan 12, 2016 at 8:49 AM subject: The Creation of the "Permanent" Calendar

The Creation of the "Permanent" Calendar

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

When the Torah commands us to create a calendar, it includes two different responsibilities: First, to have Rosh Chodesh and the length of each month determined on the basis of when the new moon appears, and, second, to have the holiday of Pesach fall in the spring and the holiday of Sukkos in the autumn (in the northern hemisphere). Thus, we have two separate and very different requirements, one of having the months determined by the moon, which is a little more than every 29½ days, and having years that coordinate with the seasons, which follow the solar year, which is a bit less than 365¼ days.

To accomplish that the dates and holidays should fall according to the seasons, the halacha is that some years have 12 months, or approximately 354 days, and others have 13 months, or approximately 384 days. This ensures that the holidays fall in their appropriate seasons. The mitzvah of the Torah is that the head of the Sanhedrin should be in charge, every month, to decide whether a month is 29 days long or 30, and of deciding whether a year should have an extra month. In the latter case, he appointed a special committee, comprised of members of the Sanhedrin, to review the relevant information and determine whether the year should be 13 months (a leap year) or only 12 (a common year).

By the way, after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the main Beis Din was not located in Yerushalayim, but wherever the Nasi of the Jewish people resided, as long as it was in Eretz Yisrael. This included several communities at various times of Jewish history, including Teverya, Yavneh, and Shafram. 1 Indeed, during this period, if the head of the Beis Din was in the Diaspora and there was no one of his stature remaining in Eretz Yisrael, the special Beis Din met outside the land of Israel. 2

Initially, all these decisions were made by the heads of the Sanhedrin, and, indeed, when Moshiach comes, we will again have this system. This was the system in place for thousands of years – from the time of Moshe Rabbeinu until about 250 years after the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash. At that time, the head of the Sanhedrin, Hillel Hanasi (not to be confused with his ancestor, Hillel Hazakein), realized that, because of Roman persecution, the Sanhedrin's days were numbered and it would be necessary to switch to a different system for determining the calendar. Hillel Hanasi implemented a temporary Jewish calendar, which is the one that we currently use. Although many people refer to it as a “permanent calendar,” it will be in use only until we again have a Sanhedrin, which will then be in charge of the calendar.

Hillel's calendar kept the same basic structure of 29- and 30-day months and 12- and 13- month years, but it is based purely on calculation and not on observation. The two major changes in this new calendar are:

(1) A Leap of Fate The leap years now occur following a regular pattern of seven leap years and 12 non-leap (usually called "common") years in a 19 year

cycle. The third, sixth, eighth, eleventh, fourteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth years of the cycle are always leap years, and the rest are common years. This year is the nineteenth year of the cycle, and thus is a leap year.

(2) The Haves versus the Have-nots The length of most months is now predetermined. Tishrei, Shvat, Adar Rishon (which exists only in a leap year), Nissan, Sivan and Av always have 30 days; whereas Teiveis, regular Adar (in a common, non-leap year), Adar Sheini (in a leap year), Iyar, Tamuz and Elul are always only 29 days long. The two months of Cheshvan³ and Kislev are the only months whose length varies, sometimes 29 days and sometimes 30.4 A year in which both Cheshvan and Kislev have only 29 days is called chaseirah, lacking or defective; one in which Cheshvan has 29 days and Kislev has 30 is called kesidrah, as expected or regular; and one in which both Cheshvan and Kislev have 30 days is called sheleimah, full or excessive.

The terms chaseirah, kesidrah, and sheleimah apply in both common and leap years.⁵ Thus, in the new calendar, all common years are either 353 days (if both Cheshvan and Kislev have 29 days), 354 days (if Cheshvan has 29 days and Kislev has 30) or 355 days (if both Cheshvan and Kislev have 30 days); all leap years are either 383 days (if both Cheshvan and Kislev have 29 days), 384 days (if Cheshvan has 29 days and Kislev has 30) or 385 days (if both Cheshvan and Kislev have 30 days). Since Adar in a common year always has 29 days, Adar Rishon always has 30 days, and Adar Sheini always has 29 days, like the regular Adar, the addition of an extra month of Adar in a leap year always adds exactly thirty days.

(Because the nineteen-year cycle synchronizes the lunar calendar with the solar year, the Hebrew and English dates of births, anniversaries and other occasions usually coincide on the nineteenth anniversary of the event. If yours does not, but is off by a day or two, do not fret. Your record keeping is accurate, but the cycle of nineteen years only relates to whether it is a leap year, not to whether the years are of the exact same length. The lengths of Cheshvan and Kislev are determined by other factors, and this will affect whether your 19th, 38th or 57th birthday or anniversary exactly coincides with its Hebrew/secular counterpart, or whether it is slightly off.)

The new calendar bases itself on an estimate, an average time that it takes the moon to revolve around the Earth. This molad calculation is that each new moon appears 29 days, 12 hours, and 793 chalakim (singular: chelek) or 793/1080 of an hour after the previous new moon. Once one knows when the new moon, called the molad, occurred on the previous Rosh Hashanah, one could now add either 12 or 13 times the above figure and determine the time of the molad in the next year, which is the most important factor in determining the date of the next Rosh Hashanah. (The term chelek, used on Shabbos Mevorchim when announcing when the molad is, equals 1/1080 of an hour, or 3 and 1/3 seconds.)

There is one other factor: Sometimes Rosh Hashanah takes place not on the day of the molad, but the next day, because the molad occurred on the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah and would not be visible in Eretz Yisrael until the next day. When Rosh Hashanah was determined by the observation of witnesses, this information was important not only in determining when Rosh Hashanah falls, but also for interrogating potential witnesses testifying to the appearance of the new moon. However, Hillel's calendar is no longer dependent on witnesses, Rosh Hashanah is still not established on a day when the molad falls on its afternoon, but is postponed. Based on this information, one can determine which day should be Rosh Hashanah in the coming year.

Another major innovation

Did you ever notice that Yom Kippur never falls on Friday or Sunday? If it did, we would observe two consecutive days that both have the stringency of Shabbos. Indeed, when the calendar was based on observation, this could and did happen.⁶

However, Hillel Hanasi's calendar included some innovations that were not part of the earlier calendar. His calendar does not allow Yom Kippur to fall on either a Sunday or a Friday, thus avoiding the difficulty of having two Shabbos-like days fall consecutively. Hillel Hanasi's calendar also does not allow Hoshana Rabbah to fall on Shabbos, which would cause the cancellation of the Hoshanos ceremony. As long as the calendar was determined on the basis of eyewitness testimony, it was halachically more important to have Rosh Chodesh fall on its correct day than to be concerned about difficulties created when certain

holidays fall on or next to Shabbos.⁷ However, once we are fulfilling the mitzvah in a less-preferred way with Hillel's "permanent" calendar, keeping Yom Kippur from falling on Friday or Sunday, and Hoshana Rabbah from falling on Shabbos, are factors to be included in establishing the calendar.

In order to accommodate these innovations, Rosh Hashanah could fall only on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Shabbos, since if it falls on Sunday, Hoshana Rabbah falls on Shabbos; if Rosh Hashanah falls on Wednesday, Yom Kippur falls on Friday; and if Rosh Hashanah falls on Friday, then Yom Kippur falls on Sunday. This would mean that when Rosh Hashanah in the coming year would naturally fall on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, an extra day is added to the calendar to make sure that Rosh Hashanah falls on Monday, Thursday or Shabbos instead.⁸ This calendar concept of guaranteeing that Rosh Hashanah not fall on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday is called "lo adu rosh", meaning that the beginning of the year, Rosh Hashanah, does not fall on ?, the first day of the week, Sunday; ?, Wednesday; or ?, Friday. It is predominantly for this reason that there was a need to have Cheshvan and Kislev sometimes 29 days and sometimes 30, in order to make the exact length of the years flexible.

Although the innovation of adding one day to the year so that Rosh Hashanah not fall on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday seems relatively simple, it sometimes leads to more complex considerations. In some years, adjusting Rosh Hashanah to avoid Sunday, Wednesday and Friday creates a problem in the year before or the year after. Since Hillel Hanasi's calendar did not allow a common year to be longer than 355 days and a leap year to be shorter than 383 days, the only way to avoid problems is to plan the calendar an additional year in advance and adjusting the calendar appropriately. In order to accommodate all these various calendar requirements, Hillel Hanasi established four rules, called dechiyos, which, together with the sod ha'ibur calculation and the 19 year leap year rotation, form the basis for determining our calendar.⁹

To explain how this works, let us choose a sample year in which the molad calculation for Rosh Hashanah fell on Wednesday evening, and Rosh Hashanah therefore falls on Thursday, which is what we would expect. However, the next year's molad for Rosh Hashanah falls on Tuesday less than two hours before the end of the day. Although the molad falls on Tuesday, it is too late in the day for this molad to be visible in Eretz Yisrael, and therefore, Rosh Hashanah cannot occur before Wednesday. However, since Rosh Hashanah cannot fall on a Wednesday because of the rule of lo adu rosh, it must be pushed off to Thursday, or two days after the molad. For this reason, that year must have an extra day. However, each year is limited how long it may be. In order to accommodate the proper dating of the second year, the year prior would have to have more days than the calendar allows. In order to resolve this, the year before is made longer than necessary. What is happening is that one Rosh Hashanah is postponed to allow that the next Rosh Hashanah should fall out in an acceptable way.

As I mentioned above, although the leap years follow an absolute nineteen-year cycle, whether the year is chaseirah, kesidrah, or sheleimah is determined by the other factors we have noted, and therefore does not follow the nineteen-year pattern. Rather, one first calculates when Rosh Hashanah should fall out based on the sod ha'ibur, checks the rules of the dechiyos to see what adjustments need to be made, and then determines on which day Rosh Hashanah should fall. As a result, whether the year in question needs to be chaseirah, kesidrah, or sheleimah requires calculating not only this year's schedule, but also the coming year's calendar requirements.

Based on all these calculations, there are seven prototype years for a common year and seven for a leap year that fulfill the calendar rules. Each of these fourteen prototype "years" is called by a three letter acronym in which the first letter identifies the day of the week of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, the second letter denotes whether the year is chaseirah, kesidrah, or sheleimah, and the third letter identifies the day of the week of the first day of Pesach. No letter is used to denote whether the year is common or leap, because this is understood by knowing how many days of the week Pesach follows Rosh Hashanah. In a common year that is kesidrah, Pesach falls two days later in the week than Rosh Hashanah, and in a leap year, it falls four days later, the two additional days being the extra two days that the extra month of Adar Rishon, thirty days long, adds to the day of the week count. Of course, these

calculations must be adjusted one day in either direction, if the year is chaseirah or sheleimah. Either way, calculating how many days are between Rosh Hashanah and Pesach tells us whether it is a common or leap year, so there is no need to include this in the acronym.

Thus, this year 5776 is known as ??? because Rosh Hashanah fell on Monday (?), it is a sheleimah (?) year in which both Cheshvan and Kislev contain 30 days, and the first day of Pesach falls on Shabbos (?).

At this point, we have the basic information to figure out how our calendar operates. Although we may not realize it, we actually already have enough information at our fingertips that we could already calculate the calendars for the coming years – indefinitely.

Conclusion

We understand well why our calendar involves use of the solar year – after all, our seasons, and the appropriate times for our holidays, are based on the sun. But why did the Torah insist that our months follow the moon? It seems that we could live fine without months that are dependent on the moon's rotation around the earth!

One answer to this question is that the waxing and waning of the moon is symbolic of our own our relationship with Hashem – which is sometimes better and sometimes less so. However, we know that we can always improve that relationship, just as the moon after its waning and almost disappearing always renews itself.

1 Rosh Hashanah 31b 2 Berachos 63a; Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 1:8 3 Although the correct name of the month is Marcheshvan, we will follow the colloquial use of calling it Cheshvan. 4 Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh 8:5 5 By the way, because Kislev is sometimes 29 days and sometimes 30, the last day of Chanukah is sometimes on the second day of Teiveis, and sometimes on the third. 6 She'iltos of Rav Acha'ei Geon, #67; Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 5:21; Ha'emek She'eilah ad loc., Note 22. 7 Ha'emek She'eilah ibid; Gri"z, Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh 8 Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh 7:1. 9 Because these dechiyos are extremely technical, I did not explain all of them.

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Parshat Bo by Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

At the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Moshe and Aharon warn Pharaoh that a plague of locusts will descend on Egypt the following day. Moshe and Aharon leave, but Pharaoh's servants, fearing the total destruction of Egypt, convince Pharaoh to bring them back. The Torah relates the following exchange between Moshe and Pharaoh: "So Moshe and Aharon were returned to Pharaoh and he said to them, 'Go and serve G-d, your G-d; which ones are going?' Moshe said, 'With our youngsters and with our elders shall we go; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flock and with our cattle shall we go, because it is a festival of G-d for us.' He said to them, 'So may G-d with you as I will send you forth with your children. Look! The evil intent is opposite your faces. Not so; let the men go now. Serve G-d, for that is what you seek.' And he drove them out from Pharaoh's presence." (Shemot 10:8-11)

Abarbanel finds the exchange very confusing and offers a number of different ways to interpret both Moshe and Pharaoh's words. From verse eleven it is clear that Pharaoh was willing to let the men go. By asking which ones are going he may have been referring to a select group of men. Abarbanel is puzzled by Moshe's response. Instead of listing every group he should have simply said that everyone is going. Abarbanel answers that Moshe was unsure of what Pharaoh actually meant. He may have been referring only to the males, or perhaps he was asking if females were included as well. Similarly, he may have been distinguishing between adults and children. Finally, he may have been distinguishing between the people and their animals. As a result, Moshe had to enumerate each specific group. Abarbanel initially interprets Pharaoh's response, "So may G-d with you as I will send you forth with your children" as a sarcastic rejoinder, meaning "I have no intention of sending your children, and certainly none of the other groups either!"

Pharaoh then says, "Look! The evil intent is opposite your faces." Abarbanel offers three possible explanations of Pharaoh's words:

Pharaoh felt that they simply wanted to flee; that evil intention could be seen on Moshe and Aharon's faces. The evil intent that Pharaoh was referring to was his own. He was telling Moshe and Aharon that his anger could very well flare up against them and he would kill them with the sword, as he sensed that the people intended to flee. As mentioned above, Pharaoh's rejoinder was sarcastic. He had no intention of sending everyone and he was contemptuous of Moshe's arrogance in including the other groups. His statement, "Look! The evil intent is opposite your faces" is actually directed towards his servants who had urged him to listen to Moshe and Aharon. He is telling them to look at the evil in the dishonest and duplicitous requests of Moshe, and to stop blaming him (Pharaoh) for what had befallen Egypt. Finally, Pharaoh's last statement, "Not so; let the men go now. Serve G-d, for that is what you seek" also has three interpretations:

If it is actually true that you have no intention of fleeing, then go with the men only, as this is what I believe you really want. Pharaoh's previous statement, "So be G-d with you as I will send you forth with your children" was actually not meant sarcastically. He did intend to send the children also. However, now, by saying 'Not so' he is changing his mind; only the men can go. The entire exchange between Pharaoh and Moshe was similar to a bargaining session between a buyer and seller. Each comes with an extreme position, and eventually they meet in the middle. Moshe starts out by asking that everyone go. Pharaoh starts out by referring to only a select group of men — no old men and no children. They finally compromise: all the men — young, old and children — can go. Since Pharaoh feels that he has been more than generous, there is nothing more to be said, and he dismisses them curtly. © 1995-2016 Ohr Somayach International