

[From Efraim Goldstein efraim@aol.com]

Parshat Va'eirah 5766

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THE DEAD OF WINTER Rabbi Berel Wein

The end of Tevet and the beginning of Shevat are usually the period of the winter doldrums. Here in Israel, this year we are at least being entertained, if that be the correct word, by the activities of our political leaders as they scramble to secure their places in the forthcoming general elections. But there is already a longing within us for the springtime, for warmer weather and brighter sunshine and for the promise, hope and joy that the holidays of Purim and Pesach bring to us. Tevet is a month that has incorporated within it the tail end of Chanukah but also the sad day of fasting of the Tenth day of Tevet. Shevat however is the harbinger of the better days ahead.

The Mishna and Talmud in tractate Rosh Hashana describe Shevat as the month of the new year of the fruits of the trees. Since tithing was and yet is necessary regarding fruits grown here in our holy land of Israel, a "new year" day for fruits had to be established so that the proper tithing could be assigned to the year's fruit production. Neither tithing nor the other required agricultural "gifts" and rituals that so sanctify the produce of the Land of Israel cannot be accomplished "from the old on the new nor from the new on the old." Therefore, it is imperative to know when the old year ends and the new year begins. This is the basic reason why the Mishna and Talmud in Rosh Hashana detail for us the advent of Shevat as being one of the four "new years" in the annual Jewish calendar.

The Mishna and the Talmud there in Rosh Hashana record for us the two opinions of the Beit Shamai and Beit Hillel as to which day of Shevat begins this new year. Beit Shamai is of the opinion that it is the first day of Shevat that is the day of the new year's beginning for the laws and rituals concerning "new" and "old" fruits. Beit Hillel is of the opinion that it is the fifteenth day of Shevat that marks the beginning of that new year and Jewish law and tradition follows the opinion of Beit Hillel. Thus, Tu (15) B'Shevat is the minor holiday and day of commemoration that highlights the otherwise potentially dreary month of Shevat.

The fact that Shevat is so inextricably connected to fruit, trees and produce of the Land of Israel automatically grants it the honor of being the harbinger of the end of the days of winter and the beginning of the more pleasant and hopeful period of the springtime. The Talmud explains the reasoning and halachic grounding for both the opinions of Beit Shamai and Beit Hillel. However, both opinions concur that it is the month of Shevat that takes center stage in the emergence of the Jewish calendar from the depths of winter.

In the long winter night of Jewish exile, when the phrase "dead of winter" was often given literal meaning through the persecution of the Jews by many heartless and cruel enemies, the coming of the month of Shevat signified renewed hope for a better and more secure Jewish future. Shevat represented a turning point in time and therefore in actions and hopes. It was the source of Jewish memory regarding the Land of Israel, its trees and fruits and farmlands.

It told Jews in the far lands of their dispersion and exile that there would yet come a time that they and their descendants would yet plant trees and harvest their fruits in the Land of Israel. It reminded them of their past glories and illuminated the darkness of the winter of exile and dispersion. The custom of having new fruit, preferably from the Land of Israel itself, on one's table in the month of Shevat was an expression of longing and

love. It survived all of the years of exile because it was bound in ritual, halacha and holy commitment. It made Jewish memory of the Land of Israel imminent, omnipresent and real. The Zionist movement was built on this faith, religious memory and element. The decline of secular Zionism as an inspirational force in the Jewish world can be traced directly to its foolish abandonment of Judaism and its halacha and practices. As we emerge from the dead of winter with the coming of the month of Shevat and its new year's greetings and blessings to us, we would do well to remember the spiritual content that lies behind the arrival of this new month. Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha VAEIRA Rabbi Berel Wein

Moshe is overcome with disappointment that somehow God has not acted as predictably and swiftly as Moshe thought he would in the process of redeeming Israel from Egyptian bondage. His complaint to God that "You have not saved Your people" and that the situation has worsened instead of improving is an understandable one. Yet, even though the facts seem to bear out the correctness of Moshe's words, the Lord, so to speak, is disappointed in Moshe's statements and attitude. God longs for the attitude and faith of the Patriarchs: Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov who, when faced with disappointments, tests and reverses, never wavered or complained to Him about His as yet unfulfilled heavenly promises and commitments. That is the meaning, the Rabbis teach us, of the fact that God appeared to them in a less personal "Name" than he did when revealing Himself to Moshe.

It is precisely because Moshe achieved the level of "knowing" God through His ineffable and the most "personal" of God's names, so to speak, that Moshe is more disappointed than were the Patriarchs and allows himself to express that disappointment to the God that he feels he apparently "knows" so well. It is the greatness and personal closeness of Moshe, the greatest of all prophets, that paradoxically engenders within Moshe this feeling of depression and disappointment at the apparent delay in the implementation of God's promise to redeem Israel from Egyptian bondage. We are always more frustrated and disappointed by those that we think that we know best than we are by those who appear more distant to us.

The Talmud teaches us that Moshe's statement to God and his words of complaint would yet somehow cost him dearly. God told him that "Now you will see" the defeat of Pharaoh and Egypt but you will not live to see the entry of the people of Israel into the Land of Israel and the defeat of the Canaanites and their thirty-one kings. God, so to speak, admires patience. It is one of the attributes and virtues recorded about the Almighty in His Torah. It is God's sense of patience, so to speak, that allows for human life to exist as it does in front of us in our daily world.

In the imitation of God's ways that is the core philosophy and way of life of Judaism, patience is seen as a supreme virtue. Patience with others, with one's own family members, with one's community and even with God Himself, is an essential hallmark of Jewish thought and attitude. If we review the lives of our Patriarchs we will readily see how patient an undemanding they truly were. They never insisted on "now" solutions and served God humbly in their unshakable belief in the validity of God's commitments to them and their future generations. By leading the Jewish people, Moshe will also learn the value of patience and we will not again hear insistent demands from him for immediacy and speed in the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. Shabat shalom.

TORAH WEEKLY—Parshat Vaera
For the week ending 28 January 2006 / 28 Tevet 5766
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. G-d commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request. G-d punishes the Egyptians and sends plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a smaller scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate. After the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians concede that only G-d could be performing these miracles. Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.

INSIGHTS

Big And Great

"This was the Aharon and Moshe to whom G-d had said." (6:26)

Imagine you're walking along the street with an attaché case containing ten million dollars. Being a charitable soul, you've decided that you want to build a yeshiva, and you're on your way to donate the money. Suddenly a masked man with a stocking over his face jumps up in front of you. He grabs the suitcase from you and shouts at you, "Speak one word of lashon hara (malicious gossip) right now or say goodbye to the money!"

So what can you do? The Torah says that you have to give up all your money rather than willingly violate one Torah prohibition. You stand there and watch the masked man douse the suitcase with lighter fuel and toss a match on to it. The whole thing goes up in a short-lived but rather expensive bonfire.

A different scenario. Same attaché case, same ten million dollars. However this time no masked bandit appears. You successfully donate the money and in due course there arises a beautiful yeshiva through your efforts.

Imagine walking into the Beit Medrash of that Yeshiva late one night! 400 students are learning there. Imagine how you feel when you go to bed that night!

So let me ask you a question. Why should you feel any less when you go to bed at night having not spoken one word of lashon hara that day?

"This was the Aharon and Moshe to whom G-d had said."

Rashi explains that in some places the Torah mentions Moshe before Aharon, and in others, Aharon before Moshe. The reason is to teach us that Moshe and Aharon were considered equal.

How can that be? The Torah itself says that there will never be a prophet of the stature of Moshe. "Never again has there arisen in Yisrael a prophet like Moshe." (Devarim 34:10)

Aharon must not have been on Moshe's level of prophecy but the Torah equates him with Moshe because Aharon utilized every gift that G-d had given him to the maximum. Aharon actualized all his potential, all his unique gifts, and thus he was considered Moshe's equal.

We tend to think that we can only be great by doing big recognizable things. Like building yeshivas or being famous. The truth is that even if G-d never blesses us with the wherewithal to do BIG things, we can all be truly GREAT.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Zvi Senter, and a story in the name of Rabbi Meyer Zilberberg heard from Rabbi Dovid Kaplan)

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARSHAS VAERA

And I appeared to Avraham and to Yitzchak and to Yaakov. (6:3)

Rashi adds, "And I appeared to the Avos, Patriarchs." Ostensibly, Rashi conveys a message with these words. Do we not know that Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov are the Avos? What is Rashi teaching us? Horav Meir zl m'Premishlan offers a compelling explanation. While Avraham ho'lid, gave birth, to Yitzchak, the Patriarch, Yitzchak did not rely on his

exalted status as Avraham's son. He toiled both physically and spiritually to achieve his own individual status. He sought to become an Av, Patriarch, on his own accord - not based upon his father's zechus, merit. Likewise, Yaakov Avinu had an even greater opportunity to rely on his ancestry for distinction. He was raised by Yitzchak, and, until the age of fifteen, he even had the opportunity to learn from his grandfather, Avraham. Yet, he wanted to ascend his own ladder of spirituality. He wanted to achieve his own Av status.

This is what Rashi is telling us: "I appeared to the Avos." Each one earned his own unique status - on his own. Each one became an Av - not merely a son. There is an important lesson to be derived from this concept. Unity, community, friendship: these are all wonderful and glowing terms. They should not, however, be used as an excuse from taking a personal stand, from going forward and establishing our own personal initiative. It seems that we are always relying on the "other one" or waiting until "everybody gets together." The Avos taught us that one must act in his own right and undertake to serve the community personally. Waiting for everybody to get together or to work with a large group is often a justification for complacency. Likewise, one should earn his own distinction, rather than rely on the status of a distinguished pedigree. This is why the Avos, Patriarchs, were called "fathers."

And I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their service. (6:6)

The promise of redemption, of one day realizing an end to our tzaros, troubles, has been the source of hope that has maintained our nation during the thousands of years that we have been in exile. In a meaningful thesis on the concept of yesurim, suffering, Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, cites his father-in-law, Horav Yosef Elyashuv, Shlita, who relates in the name of Horav Yehonasan Eibshitz, zl, an important principle concerning yesurim. In the Talmud Berachos 7b, Chazal wonder how David HaMelech, who was being pursued by his son Avshalom, who sought to kill him was able to write Psalm 3 which begins, Mizmor l'Dovid b'varcho mipn'e Avshalom b'no, "A song to David, as he flees from Avshalom, his son." Why does the Psalmist use the word mizmor, a song? He should have said, Kinah l'David, "a lamentation to David." Having one's own son intent on murdering him is not a cause for song.

The Talmud replies that this may be compared to a person who has a debt. Obviously, until he pays off the debt, he is depressed. Once the debt has been satisfied, he is happy once again. Likewise, Hashem informed David HaMelech, "I will raise up evil against you from your house." David was despondent, not knowing who would be the "evil." Would it be a slave or a low, base individual who would not be compassionate towards him? When David saw that it was none other than his own flesh and blood, he was happy. Knowing that a son does not kill his father, he was able to write the Psalm as a mizmor, a song." Rav Yehonasan adds, "While Avshalom may be David's son, and a son does not kill his father, nevertheless this son was intent on killing his father. So, from what did David benefit by being pursued by his son?"

Rav Elyashiv explains that Rav Yehonasan Eibshitz is teaching us an important principle concerning avodas Hashem, serving the Almighty. There are two forms of yesurim, sufferings, that Hashem sends to man. One comes as a form of punishment, which is to purify him in order to atone for his sin. This form of yesurim is given with compassion. It indicates that Hashem still cares about him and wants to help him improve in order to return to his previous spiritual plateau.

Second, is the situation in which man has angered Hashem so much that Hashem flings him away from His Presence. Hashem wants nothing to do with this person. He is now under the domain of the laws of nature. Whatever happens - happens. Hashem will not intervene. This is similar to a father who is distressed by his son's obnoxious behavior. Having tried one form of discipline after another, the father finally gives up and throws his son out. He no longer cares. The son can now do what he wants. His father will not intervene. The bridge to return is gone.

How does one distinguish between those two forms of yesurim? How does one know if he is still under Hashem's protection? It depends on the nature of the affliction. If it is under the guise of a natural event, an illness

that is not uncommon, a disaster that falls under the heading of an accepted, natural occurrence, this is an indication that Hashem has released him. Hashem has handed him over to the realm of nature. If, however, his suffering is unnatural, if his troubles are without precedent, they indicate that Hashem has involved Himself. Hashem cares, and He wants to cleanse him of sin.

This is why David HaMelech "sang." True, he was fleeing his own son. He was in constant danger lest Avshalom capture and kill him. This fear is what gave David so much solace. There is nothing as unnatural as having one's own flesh and blood intent on murdering him. It is bizarre for a son to want to kill his father. This inanity demonstrated to David that this was a Heavenly decree. It demonstrated that Hashem still cared for him. In gratitude, he sang to Hashem. Yes, I am being chased. Yes, my life is in danger. Now, however, I know that my Father in Heaven has not forsaken me.

Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon and commanded them to be Bnei Yisrael. (6:13)

What were they commanded to do? In the Talmud Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah (3:5), Chazal comment that at this point Moshe - was instructed to command Klal Yisrael that once they were liberated and had their own home, they were to free their slaves. A very important mitzvah, no doubt, but was there no other time more suitable to inform them of this mitzvah? Surely, they must have had other actions to prioritize.

Someone who is under intense pressure, or is confronted with a distressful situation can react in either of two ways: he can either be so preoccupied with his own adversity that he has no time or patience for others; or he can identify with the plight of others. He can now feel their pain and understand their deprivation. Quite possibly, this is the underlying reason for informing Klal Yisrael of the mitzvah of shiluach avadim, emancipation of slaves - specifically at a time when they were personally undergoing great travail. This was the time when they could empathize with the slave. They knew his suffering, his humiliation, his need to be free and independent. When we undergo a painful situation, a period of travail, an illness or any difficulty, we should take advantage of the suffering and utilize it to commit ourselves to easing the plight of others in distress.

When Pharaoh speaks to you saying, "Provide a wonder for yourselves," you shall say to Aharon, "Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh - it will become a snake." (7:9)

In Hashem's conversation with Moshe and Aharon, He related that when Pharaoh says, "Provide a wonder for yourselves," Aharon should be prepared to throw down his staff. Pharaoh's selection of words is enigmatic. Why did he say, "Provide a wonder for yourselves?" Are they the ones in need of a wonder? It is Pharaoh that needs to be impressed - not Moshe and Aharon. This question is asked by the Rebbe, Horav Elimelech, zl, m'Liszensk. He notes a similar anomaly concerning the navi sheker, false prophet. In Devarim 13:2 the Torah writes, "If there should stand in your midst a prophet or a dreamer of a dream, and he will produce to you a sign or a wonder," the false prophet produces a sign for others, while the Navi emes, true prophet, produces a sign for himself. Why?

Rav Elimelech explains that the false prophet is false, and so that he cannot really produce a true wonder. All he can do is put on a show. He can provide an illusion to fool people into believing that he has supernatural powers. Everybody is fooled except for one person: the false prophet. He knows the truth. Therefore, when he tenders a sign or wonder, the only ones who are impressed are the ones whom he is attempting to fool. He is not impressed, because he knows the truth: it is all fake.

Conversely, the Navi emes, such as Moshe Rabbeinu, who facilitates the transformation of a wooden staff into a living snake, was just as captivated by this awesome wonder as everyone else. Thus, it says, "Provide for yourselves a wonder."

There is a powerful lesson to be derived from here. The true tzaddik who is petitioned for a blessing will not make empty promises in return. He will promise to supplicate Hashem, to storm the Heavens on behalf of the

petitioner, but he cannot promise what is not in his hands to accomplish. Everything is in the hands of the Almighty. We have no idea what His calculations are concerning a given situation. We can only pray and hope. We cannot promise for certain as if we have the power to carry out the promise.

The Smag writes that there is a mitzvah in the Torah that, "You should know in your heart that just as a father will chastise his son, so Hashem, your G-d, chastises you." (Devarim 8:5) We are thereby enjoined to accept Hashem's Divine decree with love, even if it is painful. This decree is the edict of a loving Father who has His reasons for meting out this decree. True, one may and should pray for mercy, but to attempt to "tie the hands of the Almighty" with demands is to attempt to undermine His will.

If so, why are we permitted to pray to Hashem to revoke a negative decree? After all, if it is all for our benefit, we should not mix in and possibly circumvent what is to be beneficial to us. The Baal HaSulam explains that the sole purpose of troubles is to purify us and purge us of anything negative in order to bring us closer to Hashem. This in itself is also the underlying purpose of prayer. Therefore, if our tefillos, prayers, catalyze the necessary transformation within us that is needed to bring us closer to Hashem, there will no longer be any need to have yesurim, painful decrees.

It is related that the Baal Shem Tov once came to visit someone who was ill and he noticed the Malach ha'Maves, Angel of Death, standing near the head of the bed. The Baal Shem Tov looked at the Angel of Death negatively as if he was about to rebuke him, chasing the angel away. At that moment, a decree came forth from Heaven declaring that the Baal Shem has lost his portion in Olam Habah, the World to Come, because he drove away one of Hashem's emissaries during a mission. Upon hearing this Heavenly report, the Baal Shem expressed his joy at now being availed to serve Hashem without reward, simply l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven. As soon as the Baal Shem said this, he was notified that in response to his selfless devotion to Hashem, his Olam Habah was being returned.

As a form of "amends," the Baal Shem explained his behavior vis-a-vis the Malach Ha'Maves. Apparently, when he went to visit the sick person he was under the impression that his illness had not progressed to the point that he was at death's door. When he saw the Angel of Death, he was taken aback with his presence, only because it now dawned on him that his friend was near death. In no way had he intended to involve himself by interfering with Hashem's decrees. He would never "impose" upon Hashem to rescind a decree. In fact, when Choni Ha'Magel drew a circle and declared that he would not leave the circle until Hashem sent rain, Shimon ben Shetach, who was the Nasi, Prince of Yisrael, said that he was worthy of being excommunicated.

In summation, tzaddikim are certainly granted awesome powers from Hashem. They, however, understand that there is a time and place for these powers to be exercised. They do not impose the rule of tzaddik gozez v'HaKodesh Baruch Hu mekayaim, "a righteous person decrees and Hashem carries out (his decree)," unless they perceive that it is spiritually correct and necessary. They are granted a sublime gift which they know how and when to use appropriately.

There shall be blood throughout the land of Egypt, even in the wooden and stone vessels. (7:19)

In Sefer Bereishis (15:14), Hashem notified Avraham Avinu, "But also the nation they shall serve, I shall judge." Hashem told him about the exile, and He gave him a timetable for his descendants' eventual release from slavery. He also added that the nation that indentured them would not go unpunished. He would deal with them. The Egyptians sustained ten plagues that devastated them and their country. Clearly, Hashem had a reason for the sequential order of the plagues. Blood was the first plague. Obviously, the first plague was to convey a powerful, defining message concerning the Egyptians' nefarious behavior and treatment of the Jews. It was to serve as an explanation to the Egyptians as to exactly wherein lay their sin and the corruption of their ways. What does the plague of blood teach? How does it set the tone for conveying to the Egyptians that what

they believed was appropriate was actually absolute evil, that what they preached was correct was totally wrong?

Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, explains that the plague of blood focused on the Egyptian mindset, revealing its hypocrisy. The Egyptians slaughtered Jewish infants, so that Pharaoh could bathe in their blood. They drowned Jewish babies, or used them as a supplement to the bricks and mortar for their construction. Can anyone think of a more heinous behavior than the brutal murder of infants? Yet, the Egyptian society did have laws and rules. They had social classes with various laws that addressed social behavior. Certainly, the country had legislation that addressed the needs of its citizenry. These laws were, to the Egyptian mindset, wellsprings of pure life-sustaining water that validated the entire Egyptian lifestyle. Apparently, their behavior vis-?-vis the Jewish slaves was not considered anomalous to their lifestyle. Their evil treatment of the Jews had nothing to do with the personal lifestyle of the Egyptians.

The Egyptians viewed themselves as citizens of a cultured nation with an affinity for the arts and sciences. Their ill treatment of the Jews neither had an effect on, nor was it a reflection of, their culture. So they thought. So they were led to believe. They thought that killing Jews was an intrinsic necessity for the betterment of their country. It did not paint them as evil. The lesson of the first plague was compelling. What the Egyptians had until now thought was pure water was far from pure - and certainly not water. The lifestyle they had adopted was a lifestyle of blood. When they saw blood in the streets, they ran home to the shelter of their private life. There, it was all water, but when they came home, they found blood. This taught them a lesson: one cannot be a partial murderer. You cannot murder in the street and be a fine, decent citizen at home. You cannot gas Jews in the concentration camp and then go home to play ball with your children. It is all murder. It is all blood. Egypt was a country replete with evil. Even what they presented as good was evil, because one is either completely good or completely evil.

An individual once lost his quarter in a pay phone. He felt that the phone company was now indebted to him. A few days later, he came upon a broken pay phone, which "allowed" him to make a free call. He felt he had the right to use the phone since, after all, the phone company "owed" him. He presented his query to the Steipler Rav, zl.: Was he allowed to make one call for free on this phone so that he would "collect" his debt from the phone company?

The Rav cited the Talmud in Berachos 5b which posits that one who steals from a ganav, thief, tastes the flavor of geneivah. In other words, while he cannot be prosecuted for his actions, his psyche has been tainted. Thus, while it was permissible to make that one call, he was nonetheless allowing himself to taste the flavor of stealing and that was unpardonable. His actions would have a devastating negative effect on his spiritual dimension.

Human nature induces us to always find a way to justify our behavior. Who would ever think of conceding error? Therefore, if something bothers us, or we are faced with a challenge that just does not seem to dissipate, we attempt to vindicate whatever action we might undertake legally, even if it is unethical. We can, however, reign over human nature. That is what a Torah life is all about.

Shortly after the Titanic tragedy, two pictures appeared in one of the national newspapers. The first showed the ship with an open gash ripped into its side, helplessly about to sink. The picture bore the following caption beneath it: "The weakness of man, the supremacy of nature."

The second picture portrayed the passengers stepping back to allow the last remaining place on a lifeboat to go to a young woman with a baby in her arms. Beneath this picture was the following caption: "The weakness of nature, the supremacy of man." Human nature does not have to control our lives. Yes, we can triumph over our natural tendencies. Torah gives us the strength and resolution to do what is spiritually and halachically correct. Therefore, we should refuse to accept the way we act until we have successfully expunged the inappropriate behavior or feelings we harbor within ourselves. By justifying it, we only fall prey to nature and allow the supremacy of the human spirit to fall into an abyss.

Va'ani Tefillah

Kol davar shehayah b'klal v'yatza liton toan echad shehu kinyano. Kol davar shehayah b'klal v'yatza liton toan acheir shelo k'inyano

Anything that was included in a general statement, but was then singled out to discuss a provision similar to the general category: Anything that was included in a general statement, but was then singled out to discuss a provision not similar to the general category:

At times a principle is singled out from among the general statement, as we find concerning nigei ohr u'basar, the various plagues affecting the skin or flesh of a person. The plagues of shechin, inflammation, or michveh, a burn on the skin, are treated as precursors of tzaraas, spiritual leprosy. Once they have completely healed and the telltale signs indicating tzaraas appear, the Kohen is asked to determine if this is a plague that renders the person tamei, ritually contaminated or not. Since they have been singled out from the klal, the general rule of nigei basar, a kula, alleviation, or leniency, is applied to them to the effect that they are to be declared tahor, ritually clean, after the first week, if they remain unchanged in color during the first week. In the case of the plagues of the flesh, a mandatory second week was imposed. Since the Torah singles them out, the chumra, stringency, which applies to the other plagues does not apply to them. On the other hand, if the principle that is singled out differs completely from the general statement, such as nigei rosh o'zakan, plagues on the head or beard, they become tamei saar tzahuv, with a goldlike hair, but not through saar lavan, white hair. This is unlike other skin plagues whereby a white hair effects tumah and a golden hair does not. Therefore, no rule of kula, leniency, or chumrah, stringency, applies to them.

l'zechor nishmas Yaakov Shimon ben Yisrael Tzvi z"l Mrs. Helen Pollack Mrs. Patti Pollack Rivki & Yossi Kornfeld ,Mendy & Raizy Pollack Yoni & Bumie Goldstein, Avi & Estee Pollack Pnina & Stephen Glassman Motti & Evy Pollack

Rav Kook List

A Wise Old Nation

Rav Kook once visited a cooperative agricultural settlement (a "kevutzah") and noticed that its members were very meticulous about their work, but not about the laws of the Torah.

My sons, he said, let me tell you a true story.

A wise, old man contracted a disease which made him forget all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The doctors with whom he consulted said: 'Nothing can be done to restore your memory. You must go back to kindergarten and start from scratch.'

So, the old man entered his local kindergarten and began learning the "alef-bet" anew. After a while, the teacher noticed that his new pupil was acting like a young child, hitting his classmates and doing other childish things. Said the teacher: 'It is true that your level of learning is like that of a child, but do not forget that you are a wise, old man.'

Rav Kook concluded,

"The same is true regarding the Jewish people. Ever since we were exiled from our Land, we have forgotten how to serve God properly, so we are starting again from scratch. Nonetheless, let us not forget that we are a wise, old nation."

[from 'An Angel Among Men' by R. Simcha Raz, translated by R. Moshe Lichtman, pp. 424-425]

<http://ravkook.n3.net> - Rav A.I. Kook on the Weekly Parasha

YatedUSA Parshas Va'eira 27 Teves 5766

There Is No Such Thing As Free Fall

by Based on an address by Rabbi Fishel Schachter

Adapted for print by M. Heimowitz

The a fortiori argument – otherwise known as kal vachomer – occupies a prominent place in Talmudic reasoning. Throughout the ages, Torah scholars have employed kal vachomer logic extensively to derive fundamentals of halacha. There is one body of halacha, however, that is not subject to kal vachomer analysis. And that is onshin, punishments.

Suppose, for instance, that aveira X carries the penalty of lashes, malkos. Aveira Y is more serious an offense than aveira X, but its penalty is undetermined. Using kal vachomer reasoning, you might infer that if aveira X is punished by malkos, then aveira Y, a more severe transgression, should certainly carry the penalty of malkos. But the Gemara says that we cannot deduce the appropriate punishment for an aveira by applying a kal vachomer: Ein onshin min hadin. In order for Beis Din to punish a person, the appropriate punishment has to be stated explicitly in the Torah. We can learn virtually any other halacha from kal vachomer – but not the laws of onshin.

The Maharsha offers a beautiful explanation for the principle of Ein onshin min hadin. If Hashem's objective in punishing a person was to exact retribution, says the Maharsha, then we could deduce the punishment for one aveira from the punishment of another, more severe aveira. But punishment is not nekama. Punishment is a purification process, an opportunity to rectify the spiritual damage caused by the aveira. The fact that aveira Y is more severe than aveira X does not mean that the punishment for aveira X is appropriate for aveira Y. Malkos may accomplish the purification process necessary for aveira X – but we have no way of knowing whether it will rectify the spiritual damage caused by aveira Y. Only Hashem knows what the objective of each particular punishment is, and because we are not privy to these objectives, we cannot decide on the basis of kal vachomer which punishments are appropriate for which transgressions.

With the Maharsha's understanding of the purpose of punishment, let us study the makah of Barad. Like every other makah, like any punishment Hashem ever brings, Makas Barad had an objective. And every aspect of Makas Barad was meticulously designed to accomplish that objective.

Makas Barad destroyed everything in the fields, the pasuk tells us. People, animals, vegetation, trees – nothing outdoors could withstand the onslaught of fire and water working in tandem. There was one exception, however. The pasuk makes a point of emphasizing that the wheat and the spelt were not hit by the barad. Why were the wheat and spelt spared? Ki afilos haina – because they were afilos, the pasuk says. Rashi offers two explanations for the word afilos. According to the first explanation, afilos means late. The wheat and the spelt ripened late, and at the time of the barad they were still soft and flexible. When the mighty hailstones hit, the tender wheat and spelt were able to bend. Therefore, they were able to withstand the barad, while the trees and tougher crops could not.

Rashi's second explanation for the word afilos is based on the Midrash Tanchuma. According to the Midrash, afilos is related to the word peleh, miraculous. It was not a natural phenomenon that protected the wheat and spelt from the barad; it was pilei pelaim.

Rashi's first explanation holds an unmistakable mussar lesson. Those who are flexible, those who can bend in the face of adversity, those who can avoid confrontation, tend to survive. Those who are determined to stand rigid, break.

But Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l sees a subtle, but powerful, mussar lesson in Rashi's second explanation. In the midst of Hashem's outpouring of wrath on the Egyptians, He saw fit to perform a miracle to protect the wheat and the spelt. Why did Hashem miraculously save the wheat and the spelt, while everything else was destroyed? Because the objective of Makas Barad was attainable without the destruction of the wheat and the spelt, says Reb Moshe. When Hashem punishes, it is for a purpose. The purpose of Makas Barad would not be enhanced by destroying the wheat and the spelt, and therefore the barad was not allowed to destroy them.

The same is true, continues Reb Moshe, for every punishment a person endures. Every type of tzaar, every bit of yissurim, and every ounce of frustration that a person experiences has an objective. If even the minutest aspect of the punishment would not have been necessary, Hashem would not have brought it.

Turning back to Parashas Vayeishev, we find Yosef experiencing terrible tzaros. But when he is sold to the Arabs, the pasuk makes a point of saying that the Arabs were transporting fragrant spices. Rashi notes that Arabs generally transported things with unpleasant odors, but because

Hashem protects tzaddikim, He arranged for these particular Arabs to carry a sweet-smelling load.

Yosef is thrown into a pit full of scorpions, his own brothers sell him as a slave, he is ripped away from his loving father in the flower of his youth, later to be falsely accused of a heinous crime and imprisoned. But the Arabs are carrying sweet-smelling spices. Ahhh, what a sweet fragrance. This is how Hashem protects tzaddikim?

Yes, says Rav Chaim Shmulevits. The mechira, the pit, the scorpions, Potiphar's dungeon – Hashem had an important purpose for all that. But that purpose was achievable without Yosef being bothered by an unpleasant odor. When Yosef smelled the fragrant spices carried by the Arabs, he realized that Hashem was taking pains not to subject him to one extra drop of suffering. He then understood that whatever he did have to endure was for a purpose, and he understood that Hashem was guiding him throughout every moment of his ordeal. And this was a tremendous comfort to Yosef.

Every punishment administered by the Ribbono Shel Olam is meted out in exactly the required dosage. At the end of Makas Barad, Moshe Rabbeinu told Pharaoh, Yadati ki terem tir'un mipnei Hashem Elokim – I know that you do not yet fear Hashem Elokim. Hashem is the name associated with rachamim, compassion, while Elokim is the name associated with din, strict justice. The Maharsham notes that every one of the makkos followed a precise formula of din and rachamim. During Makas Barad, Midas Hadin allowed the hailstones to destroy almost everything, while Midas Harachamim allowed the wheat and spelt to survive.

When we encounter the hailstones in our lives, it is crucial for us to understand that Hashem's formula of din and rachamim is perfect. Any pain Hashem causes us to experience has an objective. And Hashem spares us from any pain that is not necessary for us.

Each hailstone in Makas Barad had an address. "Stretch you hand over the heavens," Hashem commanded Moshe, "and there will be barad in all of the land of Mitzrayim, on people and on animals and on all the vegetation." Why did Hashem have to enumerate all of the targets for the barad if He already said that the barad would be in all of Mitzrayim? Because the barad only fell on specific targets, answers the Brisker Rav. It only fell on the person who was supposed to be hit, on the animal that was supposed to be hit, on the plant that had to be hit. Not just anywhere. When Moshe davened for the barad to stop, it would have been reasonable to expect that the hailstones that had already begun to fall would continue their descent. But Chazal tell us that some of the hailstones from Makas Barad are still suspended in the heavens and will rain down in the future during the period of Gog and Magog.

Hashem does not simply toss hailstones, observes the Nachal Eliyahu. Each hailstone was controlled, like a guided missile. At the point that the gezeira was halted, the hailstones were immobilized. When Makas Barad was over, it was over. No hailstones were allowed to continue their free fall by virtue of the fact that they had already left the heavens.

Again and again in Makas Barad, we find that not one extra ounce of punishment is administered to the Egyptians. At the most chaotic of times, Hashem is in full control of every aspect of what goes on in the world. There is no such thing as free fall.

And this was precisely the test of the barad. Moshe informed the Egyptians that Hashem was going to bring hail the likes of which Mitzrayim had never seen. Then he told them that only animals in the fields would die in Makas Barad. Animals that would be taken into any form of shelter would be spared. The gezeira of Makas Barad is only on things that are outdoors, Moshe explained.

Why would anyone in his right mind leave his animals outside? Yet the Egyptians were reluctant to follow Moshe's advice; only hayarei es dvar Hashem brought their animals into the houses and stables.

All along, Pharaoh and the Egyptians had maintained that the makos were a serious of bizarre quirks of nature. When they heard Moshe's warning about Makas Barad, they were skeptical. How could a simple stable provide protection from the unprecedented onslaught of fire and ice

predicted by Moshe Rabbeinu? Would it really make a difference if they had a roof over their heads, the Egyptians speculated.

It required a certain amount of emunah for the Egyptians to follow Moshe's recommendation. By doing so, they were acknowledging that Makas Barad would not be a natural phenomenon. And this is why it was so difficult for the Egyptians to take the simple precaution that would save their animals. By taking their animals inside, they were admitting that there was no scientific explanation for the makos. They were admitting that Hashem's hashgacha pratit extends to the minutest details of what goes on in the world. And they were admitting that Makas Barad was nothing short of miraculous— p'lei pelaim.

WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5766

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt, Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav SHE'AILOS U'TESHUVOS

QUESTION: What is the proper berachah rishonah over avocado?

DISCUSSION: A plant whose trunk survives the winter months and produces fruit annually is classified as a tree in regard to hilchos berachos.(1) The avocado is such a tree and its berachah rishonah, therefore, is Borei peri ha-eitz.

When avocado is eaten as part of a vegetable salad, and the majority of the salad consists of vegetables such as lettuce, tomatoes or cucumber, then a Borei peri hadamah is recited over the entire salad and no specific blessing is recited on the avocado.(2) Even if, mistakenly, one made a Borei peri ha-eitz over the avocado, he would be required to recite a Borei peri ha-adamah over the rest of the salad.(3)

QUESTION: If avocado is eaten as a spread on crackers, does it require its own berachah rishonah?

DISCUSSION: It depends if one is eating avocado spread on crackers or crackers with avocado. In other words, if the main intent is to eat crackers and the avocado is merely being used to enhance the flavor of the crackers, then only a Borei minei mezonos [and Al ha-michyah afterwards] is recited over the crackers. If, however, the main - or equal - intent is to partake of the avocado, and the crackers are merely being used as a "base" for the avocado spread, then two berachos are required - first a Borei minei mezonos on the crackers and then a Borei peri ha-eitz over the avocado.(4) [Afterwards, Borei nefashos must be recited as well, but only if at least 1 oz. of avocado was consumed.]

The same halachah applies to other foods which are not cooked together but are still eaten together, like tuna fish salad eaten along with vegetables. If the core of the meal is the tuna, and the vegetables are merely enhancers for the tuna, like diced celery or pickles that are added to perk up the flavor of the tuna, then only a Shehakol is recited. If, however, an entire salad is served with the tuna and the intent is to serve both tuna and vegetables as equally important parts of the meal, then two separate berachos are required.

QUESTION: How can one make guacamole (a semi-liquid dip made from mashed avocado, lemon juice, dressing or mayonnaise) on Shabbos?

DISCUSSION: Making an avocado dip might entail a violation of the forbidden Shabbos Labor of Tochen, Grinding. In order to avoid Tochen according to all opinions, one should mash the avocado with the handle of a fork, spoon or knife immediately before the avocado dip is to be eaten. (5) To better understand why this is recommended, we must first list three points of dispute among the authorities:

There is a dispute among the poskim as to whether or not mashing is considered grinding.(6)

There is a dispute among the poskim whether or not grinding food immediately before it will be eaten is permitted.(7)

There is a dispute among the poskim whether or not it is permitted to grind in an abnormal manner, i.e., using the handle of a knife, fork or spoon.(8)

Therefore, in order to satisfy all of the views, it is advisable to mash an avocado in an abnormal manner and to do so right before the meal. But clearly, one may rely on the authorities who allow even normal grinding right before a meal or abnormal grinding even not immediately prior to a meal.(9)

The lemon juice, dressing or mayonnaise may be poured onto the mashed avocado and mixed with it. There is no question of transgressing Lishah, Kneading, since kneading is only prohibited when liquid is used to create a single mass from loose particles, which is not the case here.

The lemon juice may also be squeezed from a fresh lemon, since there is no question of Sechitah, Squeezing, when the juice of a fruit is squeezed directly into a solid food(10) - as long as most of the juice is absorbed by the food.(11) It is forbidden, however, to squeeze juice out of a lemon into an empty dish and then add the avocado to it.

QUESTION: What are the halachos in regard to the mitzvah min ha-Torah of rising for an older person - mipnei seivah takum?

DISCUSSION: The Torah commands that one give honor to any frum Jew - man or woman(12) - over the age of seventy(13) by rising to one's full height when the older person comes within four amos (approx. 6-8 feet),(14) until the older person leaves the area of his four amos.(15) Although the older person is not necessarily a learned or distinguished person, we still recognize and pay tribute to him "because in his great number of years he has seen and recognized a bit of the workings of Hashem and his wonders, and he is thus worthy of honor."(16)

Although the halachah clearly obligates one to rise to his full height when honoring an older person, it is true that many people are not careful to fulfill this mitzvah properly and rise only slightly when an older person approaches. While some poskim attempt to justify this custom on halachic grounds,(17) it does not change the basic halachah that obligates one to stand fully in order to perform this mitzvah properly.

QUESTION: Under which circumstances is one exempt from fulfilling the mitzvah of mipnei seivah takum?

DISCUSSION: In the following cases the mitzvah of mipnei seiva takum, which requires one to rise to his full height, does not apply. Instead, the mitzvah is merely to show some measure of respect, such as rising slightly from one's seat:

When the "younger" person is also over seventy.(18)

When the younger person is a greater talmid chacham than the older person.(19)

When the younger person is an employee and standing up will require wasting his employer's time.(20)

When the older person specifically forgoes the honor that is due to him.

(21)

When the younger person is in the middle of davening and standing will disturb his kavanah.(22)

When the younger person is ill, or a mourner during shivah.(23)

FOOTNOTES:

1 Rama O.C. 203:2.

2 Mishnah Berurah 212:1.

3 O.C. 206:1.

4 Based on Mishnah Berurah 168:44, 212:6 and Igros Moshe O.C. 4:43.

5 For a halachic definition of what "immediately" means, see The Monthly Halachah Discussion, pgs. 262-263.

6 Igros Moshe (O.C. 4:74, Tochen 2) and Yechaveh Da'as 5:27 rule that mashing is not synonymous with grinding; grinding is only when an item is ground into tiny particles, like flour, not when it is mashed into one [or several] large - albeit very soft - piece. Chazon Ish (O.C. 57) strongly disagrees and maintains that mashing is a more serious transgression than plain grinding.

7 Mishnah Berurah 321:45 quotes both views and does not object to those who follow the lenient opinion. Many other poskim also rule leniently (see Pri Megadim, Shulchan Aruch Harav, Aruch ha-Shulchan and Igros Moshe ibid.), while Chazon Ish (O.C. 57) disagrees and prohibits grinding and mashing even when done immediately before the meal. See also Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 80:21 who rules stringently.

8 Many poskim, including Mishnah Berurah (321:25), Chazon Ish (O.C. 57) and Igros Moshe (O.C. 4:74, Tochen 2), rule leniently on this issue. But several others maintain that grinding abnormally is only permitted when done immediately prior to the meal; (Kaf ha-Chayim 321:37, quoting Olas Shabbos; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 80:20; Aruch ha-Shulchan 321:12; Eglei Tal, Tochen 30, 5).

9 It is difficult, however, to rely on the argument that mashing is not grinding, since Igros Moshe himself seems to rely on this argument only when the mashing is done right before the meal. See also Shevet ha-Levi 7:92 who disproves Igros Moshe's ruling from Rabbeinu Chananel.

10 O.C. 320:4.

11 Mishnah Berurah 505:5.

12 Sefer Chasidim 578, quoted by Beis Yehudah, vol. 1, Y.D. 28; Chida (Bris Olam on Sefer Chisidim); Minchas Chinuch 257:3. Yechaveh Da'as 3:72. See, however, Ben Ish Chai, Ki Seitzei 16, who quotes the Arizal who seems to hold that one need not rise for an older woman.

13 According to Kabbalah, the mitzvah begins at age 60, and several poskim rule that one should follow this opinion; see Shoel U'meishiv 3, 1-110, Minchas Chinuch 257:9 and Ben Ish Chai, Ki-Szeitzei, 12.

14 Y.D. 255:1 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 2, 4. When in doubt whether or not the individual is seventy, one should be stringent and rise; Tosfos Chayim on Chayei Adam 69:2; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Mevakshei Torah, vol. 4, pg. 249).

15 Ruling of Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Mevakshei Torah, vol. 4, pg. 249).

16 Sefer ha-Chinuch 257.

17 See Meiri, Kidushin 32b s.v. zaken, who writes that the mitzvah of mipnei seivah takum [unlike standing up for a talmid chacham] does not require one to rise to his full height. See also Teshuvos Kenesses Yechezkel 7 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 244:10-12 who attempt to justify the prevalent custom.

18 Y.D. 244:8.

19 Y.D. 244:7.

20 Y.D. 244:5.

21 See Teshuvos Radvaz 8-167 who rules that even when the older person forgoes his honor, one should still respect him by rising slightly. Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, however, rules that this is unnecessary. (Mevakshei Torah, vol. 4, pg. 249).

22 Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Mevakshei Torah, vol. 4, pg. 250).

23 Rama Y.D. 376:1. On Tishah b'Av, too, this mitzvah does not apply; Rav Akiva Eiger, ibid, quoting Shevus Yaakov.

YatedUSA Parshas Va'eira 27 Teves 5766

Halacha Talk

by Rabbi Avraham Rosenthal

Milk and Meat: Never the Twain Shall Meet "Good evening Rabbi. Can I ask you a few questions?"

"By all means, Mrs. Goldberg. I will be more than happy to help you. What is on your mind?"

"Well, I would like to get a better understanding of keeping meat and milk separate. All though this seems to be an elementary topic, it never hurts to get a refresher course once in while."

"How right you are! Halacha needs constant review if we want to do what is correct. Let us start with the basics and work from there.

THE PROHIBITION

"The Torah writes the same pasuk of "you shall not cook a kid in its mother's milk," three times. (Shemos 23:19 and 34:26, Devarim 14:21) The Gemara Chulin 108B teaches that each pasuk is informing us of a different prohibition. One pasuk teaches that we are not allowed to cook a mixture of milk and meat. Another possuk teaches that we are not allowed to eat of this mixture, and another pasuk teaches that we are not allowed to benefit from this mixture.

"Since the Torah uses the expression of "you shall not cook" to inform us of the prohibition of eating and benefiting, Chazal learned that the only situation where they are forbidden according to the Torah is if they were cooked together. However, if they were merely mixed together, they are permitted according to the Torah to eat and certainly to benefit from. However, according to Rabbinic Law, any mixture of meat and milk is forbidden to eat." (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Dei'ah 87:1)

"According to Rabbinic Law, is one allowed to benefit from a mixture of meat and milk that was not cooked together?"

"Yes. As long as there is no prohibition of basar bechalav according to the Torah, there is no prohibition of benefiting from the mixture. For example, Chazal have determined that kavush, where one food marinates in a liquid for a period of twenty-four hours, has the same effect as cooking. Therefore, if a piece of meat were to soak in milk for twenty-four hours, it is forbidden to eat according to Rabbinic Law, but one could sell or give it to a non-Jew or feed it to his dog. (ibid.)

"What can one do with basar bechalav that one may not benefit from? Can he give it to a non-Jew?"

"He cannot give it to a non-Jew, because he will benefit from the fact that the non-Jew owes him a favor. One cannot even give it to a stray animal, but rather this mixture must be disposed of. (Sefer HaKashrus 10 footnote 7, Chochmas Adam 40:2)

"Another limitation of the prohibition learned from the Torah's choice of words is what types of meat and what types of milk are included. Since the Torah writes, "a kid in its mother's milk," we learn that the meat must be from a kosher domestic animal such as a cow, sheep, or goat, and the milk must come from a similar animal. However, if the meat comes from a fowl or a non-domestic animal such as a deer, the mixture is not prohibited by the Torah, but only by Rabbinic Law. Therefore, as we mentioned, although it is forbidden to eat or cook this mixture, one can benefit from it." (Sh.A. ibid. 2-3)

"I have two questions on what you have just told me: 1) If the Torah only prohibited basar bechalav that was cooked together, why did the Sages add to this and forbid any type of mixture? 2) And if according to the Torah only the meat of a domestic animal is forbidden, why did they extend it to fowl and non-domestic animals?"

"These are both very good questions! The Gemara (Pesachim 44B) defines the prohibition of basar bechalav as a "chidush," a novelty, in that each one by itself is permitted to eat. It is only when they are cooked together that they become forbidden. Since both of these items are commonly found in every kitchen, Chazal were concerned that without extra precautions, it would be quite easy to transgress this prohibition. In addition, they extended basar bechalav to include other types of meat because of the similarity between the meat of a domestic animal and that of a non-domestic one and fowl." (Ch.A. 40:3, 18)

"Did Chazal make other decrees to prevent people from eating basar bechalav?"

"Yes. There are several.

PLEASE DON'T TOUCH

"One of these decrees is that Chazal forbade allowing meat and cheese to touch, even if both are cold. Therefore, when placing meat and cheese in the refrigerator or on the table, one must take care that they do not come in contact with each other. The reason for this is because when cold meat touches cold cheese, one is required to rinse both of them. Chazal were afraid that a person might forget to do so. (Sh.A. 91:2)

"In addition to this, since we are concerned that mistakes will be made and people will mix up the foodstuffs, one must be careful with pareve foods that they should not unwittingly come in contact with milchig or fleishig foods. This is especially true with oily or fatty foods and with foods that melt, such as milchig ice cream. In addition, any type of food that is not normally rinsed off or peeled before preparing or eating, such as a baked good, is especially problematic, since very often the situation can no longer be rectified if fleishigs or milchigs spills on it. And even if the item can be rinsed off, we are concerned that one will not do so." (Sefer HaKashrus 10:11-13)

"I remember an incident during an Erev Shabbos shopping spree where the milchig ice cream leaked out of the carton on to the bakery goods. We were told not to eat them after fleishigs."

"That is correct, assuming that we are talking about cakes and cookies. Bread, however, is a different story. Let me explain.

BAKED GOODS

"Bread is a food that is commonly eaten with both milchigs and fleishigs, and is usually expected to be pareve. Therefore, Chazal forbade baking bread with either milk or butter, or with fleishig fats. This is out of concern that someone will eat this bread with the opposite type of food. Once dough has become either milchig or fleishig during the kneading process, it is forbidden to eat, except in one of the following situations: 1) the bread has a unique shape, or 2) the bread has something on its surface which indicates that it is milchig or fleishig, such as pieces of cheese or meat, or 3) the entire bread is eaten, according to Minhag Sefard, during one meal; and according to Minhag Ashkenaz, during the meals of that day. (ibid. 15)

"This is with regards to dough that became milchig or fleishig during the kneading. However, if milchigs or fleishigs spilled onto the bread after it was baked, the bread does not become forbidden. However, one should make some type of indication in the bread that it is not pareve, or he should eat it immediately or he should divide the bread amongst different families in order that it should be eaten that day.

"All of this is in respect to bread and bread products which are normally eaten with both milchigs and fleishigs. However, with cakes, cookies and the like which are eaten for dessert and not with the milchigs and fleishigs themselves, these limitations do not apply." (ibid. 16 and footnote 37)

"If bread is meant to be pareve, is there a problem using a milchig or fleishig knife to cut bread?"

"Chazal were concerned about fatty residue on the knives and they forbade using a milchig knife for a fleishig meal, and a fleishig knife for a milchig meal. However, if one were to properly clean the knife beforehand, there is a disagreement amongst the poskim. Some write that cleaning the knife is sufficient in all situations, while others hold that this is only permissible in a difficult situation, such as if one were on a trip. The only way that one could use a fleishig or milchig knife for a meal of the opposite type according to all opinions is to stick the knife into hard ground ten times in different places. (Sh.A. 89:4, Taz 6, Nekudos HaKesef there, Chochmas Adam 40:14)

"There is an opinion that it is preferable to use a pareve knife for bread in all situations. This is for a very logical reason. If we are concerned about fatty residue, one could have a situation where a slice of bread came in contact with both fleishig and milchig knives, thus creating a potential problem." (Darkei Teshuvah 89:53, Kitzur Sh.A. of Rav Pfeifer 9:10)

AT THE TABLE

"What special safeguards did Chazal institute when eating at the table?"

"One is not allowed to eat a milchig and fleishig meal on the same tablecloth. We are concerned that the residue of the two meals on the tablecloth will come in contact with each other, creating a problem of basar bechalav. (Sh.A. ibid.) Now, although there is a lenient opinion that if one is eating on dishes and not on the actual tablecloth, one does not need to change cloths, I believe that the accepted minhag is to do so. (Pischei Teshuvah 89:4, Badei HaShulchan 102) There is also an opinion that one can use opposite ends of tablecloth for different meals and by the same token, turn the tablecloth upside-down and use the other side." (Sefer HaKashrus 10:20, footnote 48)

"What about leftover foods from a milchig or fleishig meal?"

"First let us discuss bread. We must differentiate between three categories of bread. 1) There is the loaf from which pieces are sliced, 2) the sliced pieces themselves, and 3) a piece that one took to eat and was leftover. According to all opinions, the third category cannot be transferred from a milchig meal to a fleishig

one, or vice versa. This is because we are concerned that there is milchig or fleishig residue on the bread or mixed in with the small pieces. As for the other two categories, there is a dispute amongst the poskim. Some write that category #1 can be transferred from one meal to the next, while category #2 cannot, and others write that even category #1 cannot. (Badai HaShulchan 89:99, Sefer HaKashrus 10:19, Kitzur Sh.A. of Rav Pfeifer 9:8)

"It would seem that it depends on the eating habits of that particular family. If everyone is particular not to touch the loaf of bread or the pre-cut slices unless their hands are clean, then neither is considered "left-overs" and can be transferred from one meal to another. However, if the family members are not careful, or there are small children around who do not know better or if one is having guests who might not be careful, then one must consider all the bread at the table to be milchig or fleishig, and should not eat it at a meal where the opposite is served.

"A simple solution for this problem is to cut the bread with clean hands as it is needed. That way, at least the loaf from which one cuts remains pareve. (Kitzur Sh.A. of Rav Pfeifer 9:8)

"As for other types of foods on the table, such as salads, this will also depend on a person's eating habits. If each salad has its own serving utensil, then according to the letter of the law, one does not need to be concerned that the salad in the bowl became milchig or fleishig. However, if there are no serving utensils, and people use their own cutlery to take from the serving bowl, then the salad must be considered milchig or fleishig." (Badei HaShulchan ibid.)

"What do you mean by 'according to the letter of the law'?"

"Most contemporary poskim follow the advice of the Igros Moshe (Y.D. I 38) who writes that anyone who is stringent with foods, whether bread or other items, not to eat the leftovers at the opposite meal is acting with great caution, although there is no concern according to the halachah. In addition, the Aruch HaShulchan (89:15) writes that this is the minhag which is prevalent in most Jewish communities."

MEAT AND MILK AT THE SAME TABLE

"I remember hearing something about a problem with two people at the same table, one eating milchigs and one eating fleishigs."

"Yes, that is correct. When two people are eating at the same table and one is eating milchigs while the other is eating fleishigs, they are not allowed to use the same bread, salt and pitcher. We are concerned that the residue from their food and hands will be transferred via these items. This is true even when the two diners do not know each other and there is no concern that they will share one another's food. (Sh.A. 88:2)

"However, when the two people know each other, extra precautions must be taken. They must create some type of reminder that will signal to them to keep the food separate, even if they would not share each other's portions. Once they know each other, Chazal did not make any distinctions. There are three reminders mentioned in the poskim, and any one of them may be used: 1) each person should eat on a separate tablecloth or placemat. 2) They should place between them either an object that is not usually on the table, such as a vase, or an item that is not being used during the meal, even if it is common for it to be there, such as a spare loaf of bread. Since this object must have some height to it so that it is noticeable, therefore a ring or key is not suitable. (ibid.) 3) They should sit at opposite ends of the table so that they cannot reach each other's food. (Pischei Teshuvah 88:3)

"This is the halachah when two or more people are eating at the same table. There is another halachah on the same topic that people are less familiar with. The Shulchan Aruch writes (88:1) that a person eating alone may not place meat on a table where one is eating milchigs or milchigs on a table where one is eating fleishigs. We are concerned that he might forget and partake of the other type of food. Rabbi Akiva Eiger comments on this halachah that even if one were to appoint someone else to watch him and make sure he does not eat both, it is still forbidden. In this situation, the only solution is to remove the food that he is not allowed to eat."

"I don't understand something here. If two people are eating together, it is sufficient for them to place a reminder on the table. So, why can't an individual do the same thing? Let him either place the other food on a different cloth, sit far away or place an object in between."

"You are raising an excellent point, Mrs. Goldberg! This is actually a disagreement amongst the poskim. According to some, you are correct. All one needs to do is place a reminder on the table, as we discussed, since the reminder will work for the individual as well. (Chochmas Adam 40:11) However, there are other poskim (see Badei HaShulchan 88:14 and Tzi'unim 32) who claim that a reminder will not work for an individual. This is because, a reminder is only effective if there are two elements at work: 1) the reminder itself and 2) the other person who reminds him not to partake of the wrong food. But, with an individual, there is no one else to remind him."

"If one is not allowed to place milchigs and fleishigs on the same table, does this mean that when unpacking from a trip to the grocer, I can't put the meat and cheese on the table at the same time?"

"The Shulchan Aruch says explicitly that the prohibition is limited to when one is eating. However, placing food on the same surface when not eating is permissible. Of course, one should exercise caution not to mix the foods.

"Since the only concern is when one is eating, the Aruch HaShulchan (11) adds that it is permissible for one to sit at a table without eating where milchigs is being served, even if he is still fleishig. We are not concerned that he will forget and partake of the food. Similarly, a woman who is fleishig is allowed to prepare milchig food, and there is no concern that she will forget and eat it."

WAITING BETWEEN FLEISHIG AND MILCHIG

"What is the basis of waiting after eating fleishigs before eating milchigs?"

"This is based on a Gemara in Chulin (105A) which says that after eating fleishigs, one should wait until the next meal before eating milchigs. The Tosafos and the Ra'avyah explain this Gemara, that in order to prevent people from eating the two together, Chazal forbade eating milchigs after fleishigs in the same meal. However, if one were to recite bircas hamazon or a bracha achronah, clear off the table and bring out milchigs, he could eat immediately, since this would be a different meal.

"The Rambam and the Rosh, on the other hand, explain the Gemara differently. They understand that Chazal instituted that one must wait the amount of time that people usually wait between meals. During the time of the Gemara this was six hours.

"The Rishonim mention two reasons for this decree. According to the Rambam, we wait after fleishigs because of strands of meat that may remain between the teeth. For six hours this meat has the halachic status of meat and one may not eat milchigs while having meat in his mouth. Even if one were to clean out his mouth and was 100% sure that no meat particles remained, it would still be forbidden to eat milchigs. This is because once Chazal instituted a decree, no distinctions are made, and even if the reason is not applicable the decree still stands. However, after six hours pass, the strands are no longer considered meat, and one can eat milchigs even if particles remain.

"The Tur quotes a different reason for this decree. One must wait six hours after fleishigs because it takes six hours for the meat to become digested, and until then there is a taste of meat in the mouth. Therefore one should not eat milchigs during this time."

"Is there a practical difference between these two reasons?"

"Yes. The Tur mentions two differences between these two reasons. If one chews the meat but does not swallow, according to the second reason one could eat milchigs without waiting since there is no meat to digest. But according to the first reason one would have to wait, since particles may remain in the mouth after chewing.

"Another difference is if one were to find meat between his teeth after six hours. According to the first opinion, he does not have to remove it since it is no longer considered meat, while according to the second reason, one must remove these particles before eating milchigs, since it retains its meaty status.

"The Shulchan Aruch takes both of these reasons into consideration when deciding the final halachah. Therefore, even if one only chews the meat without swallowing, he must wait six hours and if one finds meat between his teeth after six hours, he must remove it, and clean and rinse his mouth before eating milchigs." (Sh.A. 89:1, Shach 4)

"How does one clean and rinse his mouth?"

"One cleans his mouth by eating some type of food, aside from flour, dates and leafy vegetables, as these do not clean well but get stuck in the mouth. Rinsing is accomplished by drinking any liquid." (Sh.A. 89:2)

"If one only wishes to taste fleishig food and doesn't chew or swallow any meat, does he still have to wait before eating milchigs?"

"In this situation, according to both reasons, one need not wait. Since he did not chew, we are not concerned about meat in between the teeth, and because he did not swallow, there is no meat taste in his mouth. However, he must clean and rinse out his mouth before eating milchigs." (Badei HaShulchan 89:16)

"From when does one start counting the six hours?"

"Most poskim contend that one counts the six hours from when he finishes the fleishig food until he starts eating the milchig food and this is the accepted practice. However, according to one opinion (Aruch HaShulchan 89:4), there must be six hours from the end of the fleishig meal until the beginning of the milchig one." (Badei HaShulchan 89:7, based on Dagul Mervavah)

HOW MUCH IS SIX HOURS

"I've heard people say that six hours doesn't really mean six hours. Is this true?"

"There is definitely a basis for this. The Meiri in Chulin writes that one must wait "five or six hours." In addition, the Rambam writes "about six hours." On the other hand, the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema both write to wait six hours. There is also a difference of opinion among the contemporary poskim. Sefer HaKashrus (chap. 10, footnote 76) quotes Rav Elyashiv as saying that because both the Meiri and Rambam indicate the one does not need to wait a full six hours, five hours and a bit is sufficient. There is another opinion that since the time period of a half hour is

considered to be "close" to a particular time, one only need wait five and a half hours. (Yabi'a Omer I 4 and III 3) Badei HaShulchan (89:8), basing himself on the Shulchan Aruch, Rema and others, writes that one must wait a full six hours."

GERMANY AND HOLLAND

"What is the basis of the German and Dutch customs of waiting three hours and one hour respectively?"

"The custom of waiting one hour is mentioned by the Rema and is based on Tosafos' explanation of the Gemara Chulin that we quoted earlier, that it is sufficient to clean off the table and recite bircas hamazon or a bracha achronah in between eating milchigs and fleishigs. The reason they wait a full hour is an added precaution. It is also possible that the reason for waiting one hour is based on the Zohar, which says that one should not eat meat and milk in the same meal or in the same hour. (Taz 89:2, Kitzur Sh.A. of Rav Pfeifer 10:15)

The German minhag of waiting three hours is not discussed among the poskim. The Darkei Teshuvah (89:6) mentions it and it seems that the Chaye Adam (127:10) alludes to it. However, the reason behind the minhag is probably because they were accustomed to wait three hours between meals." (Jewish Dietary Laws, Dayan Grunfeld)

WAITING BETWEEN MILCHIG AND FLEISHIG

"How long does one have to wait after eating milchigs before eating fleishigs?"

"Technically speaking, one does not have to wait at all. However, it is widely accepted to wait between thirty and sixty minutes after eating milchigs before eating fleishigs. This is based on the Zohar that we mentioned earlier, that one should not eat milk and meat in the same hour. Interestingly, although Harav Yosef Karo quotes the Zohar in his Beis Yosef (Orach Chaim 173), he left it out of the Shulchan Aruch.

"According to the Shulchan Aruch (89:2), a person who finishes eating milchigs and wishes to eat fleishigs is required to clean and rinse his mouth. As I mentioned earlier, cleaning is accomplished by eating something other than flour, dates and leafy vegetables and one rinses by drinking any liquid. Also, if one merely drank milk, he does not even need to clean his mouth, only to rinse it. (Darkei Teshuvah 89:31)

"In addition to cleaning and rinsing the mouth, if one actually touched the milchig food he must wash his hands since we are afraid that there is some fatty residue stuck on them. If one ate with eating utensils, the Aruch HaShulchan (89:8) quotes the Pri Chadash that washing is unnecessary. However, the Pri Megadim (Sifsei Da'as 89:20) writes that one should be stringent where it is not difficult."

"Does one have to recite bircas hamazon or a bracha achronah after eating milchigs and before fleishigs?"

"One must keep in mind a crucial distinction between eating fleishigs and then milchigs and between eating milchigs and then fleishigs. In the former situation, one cannot eat both in the same meal even according to the Gemara. Therefore, if one ate fleishigs and enough time passed that he may now eat milchigs, he must first recite bircas hamazon or a bracha achronah. In the latter situation however, only according to the Zohar, which prohibits eating both in the same meal in all circumstances, is he required to recite bircas hamazon or a bracha achronah before eating fleishigs. However, the Mishnah Berurah (494:16) writes that this is unnecessary unless one is eating hard cheese."

"Oh, I'm glad you mentioned the hard cheese. This was another question that I wanted to ask. Is one required to wait six hours after eating hard cheese before eating fleishigs?"

"The poskim discuss cheeses that were aged for six months and that were produced with the aid of worms or maggots. These types of cheeses, like meat, stick to the teeth and since they take a long time to digest, the taste of the cheese remains in the mouth. Therefore, after eating cheeses of this sort, such as Swiss or Cheddar, one must wait six hours before eating fleishigs.

THE ANGELS ATE BASAR BECHALAV?

"While we are on the topic, let me share with you an interesting thought written by the Steipler Gaon zt"l.

"The Medrash says that when Hashem wanted to give the Torah to the Jewish People, the angels requested that they themselves should receive the Torah. Hashem answered them, that you are not worthy, because when a child comes home from school, they give him milk and he drinks; they give him meat, and he washes his hands and eats. But you ate basar bechalav, as it is written (Bereishis 18:8), 'And he took butter and milk and the calf that he prepared, and he placed it before them... and they ate.'

"This indicates that the angels ate basar bechalav and as such, they could not receive the Torah. The question is however, according to the Torah, basar bechalav is only prohibited when cooked, and we do not find that Avraham cooked the meat and milk together before serving it. If so, what did the angels do wrong?"

"The Steipler gave two answers. In his first answer he posits that in actuality, the food was cooked. This came about because the angels are beings of fire. The meat and the milk became cooked when the angels touched them!

"The Steipler's second answer was that it is more probable to say that because of the fact that the angels transgressed a rabbinic injunction, there was sufficient grounds for them not to receive the Torah. The Medrash emphasizes that Hashem told them that a child washes his hands between the milk and the meat, but you ate basar bechalav. This indicates that the complaint against them was that they did not do the rabbinic institution of washing hands between the milk and the meat."

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Jewish Nobility

by Sara Yoheved Rigler

The picture on the bulletin board of his Hebrew University office says it all. Taken shortly after the announcement that the 2005 Nobel Prize in Economics was being awarded to Prof. Yisrael [Robert] Aumann, the photo shows three generations of the prizewinner's grinning descendants, 32 people in all. In the middle, with his long white beard and white kippa, sits the 75-year-old Prof. Aumann, propping up a meter-high portrait of his beloved late wife Esther.

A few weeks later, Prof. Aumann took the entire clan to Stockholm for the prestigious awards ceremony. In addition to his five children and their spouses, his 19 grandchildren, his grandson-in-law, his two infant great-grandchildren, and his brother, the Aumann entourage included his second wife Batya, who is Esther's widowed older sister and whom he had married just a week before. Putting them all up at the exclusive Grand Hotel for ten days at \$300 a night certainly ate a chunk out of Prof. Aumann's \$650,000 prize (his half of the \$1.3 million prize shared with Prof. Thomas C. Schelling of the University of Maryland), but obviously in Prof. Aumann's system of inner economics, family togetherness is worth the cost.

How does a person attain the pinnacle of his career without neglecting his family? "Nobody gets the Nobel Prize just because he's smart. You have to work hard," asserts Miriam Aumann Baris, the professor's daughter. Her father certainly worked hard, putting in 13-hour days and traveling extensively.

"My father was much absent and he was a wonderful father," Miriam avows. "When he was here, we had a lot of concentrated father time. He took us skiing, scuba diving, hiking. Every Friday afternoon when my mother was cooking for Shabbat, he took us out so that we wouldn't bother her. And he was a great husband.

"My father and mother had a very special relationship of love and respect and joint effort," Miriam recalls. "My mother always believed in him."

When their father was lying on the couch with his eyes closed, their mother would hush the children: "Don't bother Abba. He's working." When the eminent mathematician would monopolize the bathtub and the children would complain, "What's Abba doing in there for so long?" their mother would tell them: "He's working."

Their great love affair of 45 years ended when Esther died of cancer. Once she got sick, her husband, at the peak of his career, cancelled all his travel plans. "Life stopped," Miriam remembers. "He was constantly there for her."

Dr. David Rosen, the Aumanns' son-in-law, remembers his father-in-law waiting for hours outside a doctor's office to ask a question about Esther's treatment. "He was willing to mortgage everything he owned to get her well."

Alas, Esther died six years ago. "He was devastated when she died," David recalls. "He thought that he would die of sorrow, that he couldn't live without her."

Resilience, however, is one of Prof. Aumann's cardinal traits. An avid mountain climber, thrice he's fallen and broken his leg. The first time, 30 years ago in the Yosemite Valley, the rescue team looked at the stricken climber and said, "We hope this doesn't stop you from climbing mountains." Yisrael, in agony, answered through his clenched teeth, "Don't worry. It's not going to."

After another mishap, his son Shlomo told him: "There're many more mountains left in you." Indeed, there were.

A MAN OF MANY LOVES

Prof. Aumann officially retired five years ago, but, at 75, he continues to fling himself into his quadruple loves: game theory, family, nature, and Torah. He still teaches three classes at the Hebrew University; picks up his grandchildren from kindergarten and takes them home with him when their parents are busy; skis, treks, and climbs some of the world's most beautiful mountains; and learns Torah regularly with the same study-partner he's had for 30 years.

He takes every grandchild, upon reaching 14, on an extended trip to the High Sierras or the South American jungles or Nepal, in order to share with them his own appreciation of God's wonders. Together, they ride on horseback into the wilderness, camp out in tents, and climb mountains. Five years ago, the 70-year-old Prof. Aumann scaled his highest peak: the 18,192-ft. Mt. Kala Patthar in the Himalayas.

For the bar/bat mitzvah of every grandchild, Prof. Aumann presents a set of the Talmud. He tells them: "I give you this if you promise that in a few years it won't look like it looks now." A grandson was once reprimanded by his father for eating over his book. His scholarly grandfather demurred: "Eat over your book, drink over your book, live over your book."

The professor's excursions into nature are also an expedition into the words and wonders of God. His granddaughter Shanni describes how they'll be out in the wilderness, and her grandfather will stop at a point overlooking a meandering river and explain from a mathematical and natural standpoint why the river turns and divides. Then he'll tie it all into a lesson from that week's Torah portion.

Prof. Aumann, a connoisseur of everything, connects everything to its Divine source. A wine connoisseur, whenever he puts a superior bottle of wine on the table, he recites the blessing, "He is good and does good." This was the blessing he recited publicly in front of 1400 guests while delivering his toast at the royal banquet following the Nobel awards ceremony.

TORAH AND ZIONISM

Yisrael Aumann was born to an Orthodox Jewish family in 1930 in Germany. In 1938, the Aumanns escaped to the United States, where Yisrael studied in a yeshiva day school. He credits his math teacher there, Joseph Gansler, with first sparking his interest in mathematics.

"On the Jewish side," declared Prof. Aumann in an interview*, "the high school teacher who influenced me most was Rabbi Shmuel Warshavchik... He attracted me to the beauty of Talmudic study and the beauty of religious observance. Warshavchik's enthusiasm and intensity -- the fire in his eyes -- lit a fire in me also."

For a while the young Aumann debated between becoming a Talmudic scholar or a mathematician. For one semester, he raced back and forth between the yeshiva and City College. "Then it became too much for me, and I made the hard decision to leave the yeshiva and study mathematics."

After receiving his PhD at M.I.T., he did a post-doctoral program at Princeton. In 1956, it was time to launch his career. Dr. Aumann applied to several positions in the United States and a position in Israel at the Hebrew University.

"I was offered the job here [at Hebrew University] and also several jobs in the U.S. I was really hesitating and debating in my mind whether to accept the job in Israel or the job in Bell Tel Laboratories in New Jersey, but I took the job at Bell Tel. That very evening, I knew it was a mistake. I realized if I'm going to go to Israel at all, I should go now. I shouldn't delay it. So the next morning I called them and said, 'Look, I accepted the job and I'm a man of my word, so I'm coming. But they abolished slavery with the 13th amendment. So I'll come to work for you for one year, and then my obligation to you will be fulfilled, and I'm moving to Israel.' They told me, 'Aumann, you're off the hook. You don't have to work for us if you don't want to.'"

Why did the promising young mathematician choose to come to Israel, an embattled country that was at that time all of eight years old?

"I made aliyah because... I wanted to be part of that dream."

"I made aliyah because this is a dream that the Jewish people have dreamt for thousands of years, and I wanted to be part of that dream."

It has not been easy. In 1982, the Aumann's first-born son Shlomo was killed while serving in the Israeli army during a battle with Syrian tanks.

"It wasn't a crisis of faith for one moment. We were extremely proud of him. We realized that we had brought him up to this. Israel is not an easy place to live. People get killed here. When it happens to you, it's not any different than when it happens to somebody else... This is part of the price you pay for living in Israel."

THE ROOTS OF INTEGRITY

In the world of business, people steal money. In the world of academia, people steal ideas. One of Prof. Aumann's outstanding traits is his scrupulousness to give credit to others, whether teachers, colleagues, or even students. At a press conference held the day the Nobel Prize was announced, Prof. Aumann surprised his audience by declaring that the Prize should have been awarded to someone else: "Lloyd Shapley of U.C.L.A. was worthy, and should have won. I see him as the high priest of game theory."

Prof. Aumann learned the concept of "intellectual property" from the Torah.

"There was a period 15, 20 years ago when stealing software was considered okay by many people, including many academics. There was an item of software that I needed, and I was wondering whether to 'steal' it -- make a copy of which the developers of the software disapprove. Then I said to myself, why do you have to wonder about this? You are a religious person. Go to your rabbi and ask him. So I went to my rabbi -- a Holocaust survivor, a very renowned, pious person [Rav Gustman]. Maybe there is a Talmudic rule about this kind of intellectual property

not really being property. Whatever he'll say, I'll do. The rabbi said, 'It's absolutely forbidden to do this.' So I ordered the software."*

As one who believes that God gave the Torah to the Jewish People at Sinai, Prof. Aumann has made his hardest decisions based on the directives of the Torah.

"You can be a moral person, but morals are often equivocal. Religion -- at least my religion -- is a sort of force, a way of making a commitment to conduct yourself in a certain way, which is good for the individual and good for society."*

RELIGION AND RATIONALITY

At a press conference at the Hebrew University given before he left for Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize, Prof. Aumann sat in front of a large blue banner proclaiming, "THE CENTER FOR RATIONALITY," and told a startlingly irrational story: Every male present at the Awards Ceremony, including his seven-year-old grandson, is required to wear tails and a white bowtie, provided by the Nobel Foundation.

Since the Torah forbids wearing shatnez [a mixture of linen and wool], Prof. Aumann realized that he would have to have these garments checked for shatnez. This required having the Chief Rabbi of Sweden pick up one such outfit and bring it to Israel, where it could be checked with a microscope in one of Jerusalem's many shatnez labs. The examination revealed that the tuxedos were indeed shatnez, and a team of tailors had to remove the linen threads.

Later I asked Prof. Aumann: "Shatnez is the antithesis of rationality. How do you reconcile these opposites?"

"I don't see any contradiction between shatnez and rationality," the venerable Nobel Prize winner replied. "Not everything in the world has to do with rationality. You do all kinds of things that are orthogonal."

To illustrate the meaning of "orthogonal," Prof. Aumann got up and strode to the whiteboard on the opposite wall of his office. "If you have a line," he explained, drawing a green line pointing to the right, "then you can go in the opposite direction," and he drew a brown line pointing to the left. "But you can also go off in a totally different direction," he added, drawing a purple line going straight up. "That's called orthogonal."

Returning to his seat, Prof. Aumann continued. "Shatnez is not irrational. It has nothing to do with rationality. When you sit down and play the piano, are you doing something rational? No! Are you doing something irrational? Also, no! It's orthogonal to rationality. The whole lifestyle of a religious Jew is not rational or irrational. It's a beautiful way of living."

"Shatnez is part of a big whole. It's something that you can't understand by itself. If you said, 'Just don't wear a mixture of linen and wool,' it wouldn't make any sense. But it's part of a lifestyle. As part of this lifestyle, it makes sense... To understand the Torah, you have to understand it as one whole, not separate pieces."

"If you play just one bar of music and you don't play the whole sonata, of course it doesn't make any sense. It's part of the whole sonata, that's what speaks to you."

The world got a rare glance of that "beautiful way of living" by observing Prof. Aumann in Stockholm. Although the Awards Ceremony was scheduled for late Saturday afternoon, the shortness of the Swedish winter day enabled the Aumann family to attend after the close of Shabbat. On Shabbat afternoon, they -- all 34 of them -- walked to a hotel located just 200 meters from Stockholm's Concert Hall, where the Awards Ceremony would take place. As soon as they made havdalah [the ceremony separating Shabbat from the rest of the week], the Aumanns dashed to the Concert Hall, arriving just 90 seconds before King Karl XVI Gustaf's arrival and the closing of the doors.

At the royal banquet afterwards, Prof. Aumann's entourage were served a special kosher dinner on new china plates with the obligatory royal pattern that were specially kilned for them. Their place settings were completed with newly-forged gilded silver cutlery and recently blown gold-stemmed crystal.

In a world where Jews have so often sacrificed their religious principles to fit in, we can be proud at how this noblest of Nobel Prize winners stands out.

* "An Interview with Robert Aumann" by Sergiu Hart, March, 2005, Discussion Paper #386 of the Hebrew University Center for the Study of Rationality Author Biography:

Sara Yoheved Rigler is a graduate of Brandeis University. Her spiritual journey took her to India and through fifteen years of teaching Vedanta philosophy and meditation. Since 1985, she has been practicing Torah Judaism. A writer, she resides in the Old City of Jerusalem with her husband and children. Her articles have appeared in: Jewish Women Speak about Jewish Matters, Chicken Soup for the Jewish Soul, and Heaven on Earth.

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From Chaim Shulman crshulam@aol.com
I am adding a few additional items

From Dr. Sam Friedman <nfried5884@aol.com>
Freedom

In the Torah portion, Vaeira, the process of the Jewish exodus from Egyptian slavery toward freedom moves forward quickly. Rabbi Moshe Green, in his book entitled, Impressions on the Heart, which was culled from the thoughts of Rabbi Shlomo Freifeld, (1923-1988, beloved teacher and founder of Yeshiva Sh`or YOSHUV), discusses the concept of freedom as it exists in American society, and compares it to the Torah's understanding of freedom.

Freedom in American society is usually defined "as the free reign to do as one pleases...as long as one doesn't hurt anybody." The history of American society has shown that this can lead to all sorts of problems. For instance, "Is a drug addict who has open access to heroin a free man? Is a child allowed to run wild, better off than the child who has parents that do not allow such behavior? License to do whatever one wants, whenever one wants, makes one a slave to his base desires, rather than securing liberty." "Freedom requires form. One must have definitions of what is positive, decent, and moral...Only with principles...to channel behavior...can the benefits of freedom be reaped...The Torah is the 'owner's manual' for life. The sages are teaching us that freedom starts with humbling oneself to the awesome clarity and depth of the Torah. Only within its four walls can the human spirit soar...Without real and concrete guidelines...freedom becomes meaningless...As it states in Pirkei Avos 6:2, 'One cannot be a free man unless he immerses himself in the Torah.'"

To be truly free one needs the framework of the Torah. Freedom requires a framework, and the Torah provides it. "License to do whatever one wants, whenever one wants, makes one a slave to his base desires." Without the framework of the Torah, one is not free at all.

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/>
Covenant & Conversation - Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from
Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British
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Va'era

THE ISRAELITES ARE AT THEIR LOWEST EBB. They have been enslaved. A decree has been issued that every male child is to be killed. Moses is sent to liberate them, but the first effect of his intervention is to make matters worse, not better. Their quota of brick-making remains unchanged but they now have to provide their own straw. Initially they had "believed" Moses when he told them that G-d was about to rescue them, and performed the various signs G-d had given him. Now they turn on Moses and Aaron, accusing them:

When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, and they said, "May the LORD look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

At this point Moses - who had been so reluctant to take on the mission - turns to G-d in protest and anguish:

Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."

None of this, however, has been accidental. The Torah is preparing the ground for one of its most monumental propositions: *It is in the darkest night that Israel has its greatest visions. Hope is born at the very edge of the abyss of despair.* There is nothing natural about this, nothing inevitable. No logic can give rise to hope; no law of history charts a path from slavery to redemption, exile to return. The entire sequence of events has been a prelude to the single most formative moment in the history of Israel: the intervention of G-d in history - the supreme Power intervening on behalf of the supremely powerless, *not* (as in every other culture) to *endorse* the status quo but to overturn it.

The speech that follows is breathtaking in its grandeur and literary structure. As Nechama Leibowitz and others point out, it takes the form of a chiasmus:

G-d said to Moses

[A] I am the Lord.

[B] I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as the Lord Almighty, but by my name G-d I was not known to them.

[C] I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens.

[D] Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and have remembered my covenant.

[E] Therefore say to the Israelites,

I am the Lord

[D1] and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgments. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your G-d. Then you will know that I am the Lord your G-d who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

[C1] And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hands to give

[B1] to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession.

[A1] I am the Lord.

The structure is worked out in extraordinary detail. The first and second halves of the speech each contain *exactly fifty words* in the Hebrew text. B and B1 are about the patriarchs; C and C1 about the land; D and D1 about Egypt and slavery. The first half is about the past, the second about the future. The first half refers to the Israelites in the third person ("them"), the second in the second person ("you"). The entire speech turns on the three-fold repetition of "I am the Lord" - at the beginning, end and middle of the speech. (The phrase actually appears four times, the extra mention occurring in D1. It is not impossible that this is linked to the fact that the name - which is, as we will see, the central theme of the speech - has four letters, the so-called tetragrammaton).

The entire speech is full of interest, but what will concern us - as it has to successive generations of interpreters - is the proposition signaled at the outset: "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as the Lord Almighty, but by my name G-d I was not known to them." A fundamental distinction is being made between the experience the patriarchs had of G-d, and the experience the Israelites are about to have. Something new, unprecedented, is about to happen. What is it?

Clearly it has to do with the names by which G-d is known. The verse distinguishes between *E-I Shaddai* ("the Lord Almighty") and the four-letter name of G-d which, because of its sanctity, Jewish tradition referred to simply as *Hashem* ("the name" par excellence).

As the classic Jewish commentators point out, the verse must be read with great care. It does not say that the patriarchs "did not know" this name; nor does it say that G-d did not "make this name known" to them. The four-letter name appears no less than 165 times in the book of Bereishith. G-d himself uses the phrase "I am the Lord" to both Abraham (Gen. 15:7) and Jacob (28: 13). Rashi's explanation is therefore the simplest and most elegant:

It is not written here, "[My name, The Lord] I did not make known to them" but rather "[By the name, The Lord] I was not known to them" - meaning, I was not recognized by them in my attribute of "keeping faith," by reason of which my name is "The Lord," namely that I am faithful to fulfill My word, for I made promises to them but I did not fulfill them [during their lifetime]. What then is the difference between the other names of G-d and *Hashem*?

For the sages, *Hashem* signified the Divine attribute of compassion:

G-d said to Moses, "You wish to know My name? I am called according to my deeds . . . When I judge creatures, I am called *Elokim*. When I wage war against the wicked I am called "Lord of hosts." When I suspend judgment for man's sins I am called *E-I Shaddai*. When I am merciful towards My world I am called *Hashem*.

For Judah Halevi and Ramban, the key difference has to do with G-d's acts *within* and *beyond* nature. This is how Halevi puts it in *The Kuzari*:

This is perhaps what the Bible means when it says, "and I appeared to Abraham . . . as *E-I Shaddai*" namely, in the way of power and dominion . . . He did not, however, perform any miracle for the patriarchs as he did for Moses . . . for the wonders done for Moses and the Israelites left no manner of doubt in their souls that the creator of the world also created these things which He brought into existence immediately by His will, such

as the plagues of Egypt, the division of the Red Sea, the manna, the pillar of cloud, and the like.

Similarly Ramban writes:

Thus G-d said to Moses, "I have appeared to the patriarchs with the might of My arm with which I prevail over the constellations and help those whom I have chosen, but with My name *Hashem* with which all existence came into being, I was not made known to them, that is, to create new things for them by the open change of nature.

Thus, for the Midrash, the key to the new revelation of G-d in the days of Moses was his *compassion* in responding to the cries of the oppressed Israelites. For Judah Halevi and Ramban it was the fact that the exodus was accompanied by *supernatural events* (what Ramban calls "revealed" as opposed to "hidden" miracles).

The simplest and most cogent explanation, however, is that of Rashi. Something was about to change. The patriarchs had received the covenantal promise. They would become a nation. They would inherit a land. None of this, however, happened in their lifetime. To the contrary, as the book of Bereishith reaches its close, they number a mere seventy souls and they are in exile in Egypt. Now the fulfillment is about to begin.

Already, in the first chapter of Shemot, we hear, for the first time, the phrase *am bnei Yisrael*, "the people of the children of Israel." Israel has at last become, not a family, but a nation. Moses at the burning bush has been told, by G-d, that He will bring them to "a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." *Hashem* therefore means *the G-d who acts in history to fulfill His promises*.

Throughout these studies I have tried to convey the world-changing character of this idea. What is revolutionary in Judaism is not simply the concept of monotheism, that the universe is not a blind clash of conflicting powers but the result of a single creative will. It is that G-d is *involved* in His creation. G-d is not simply the force that brought the universe into being; nor is He reached only in the private recesses of the soul. At a certain point He intervened in history, to rescue His people from slavery and set them on the path to freedom. *This* was the revolution, at once political and intellectual.

At the heart of most visions of the human condition is what Mircea Eliade (in his book *Cosmos and History*) calls "the terror of history." The passage of time, with its disasters, its apparent randomness, its radical contingency, is profoundly threatening to the human search for order and coherence.

There seems to be no meaning in history. We live; we die; and it is as if we had never been. The universe gives no sign of any interest in our existence. If that was so in ancient times, when people believed in the existence of G-ds, how much more so is it true today for those neo-Darwinians who see life as no more than the operation of "chance and necessity" (Jacques Monod) or "the blind watchmaker" (Richard Dawkins). It is against this background that myth and ritual arise as the attempt to endow the human condition with significance by re-enacting the divine drama at the beginning of creation. Human beings become like gods. A holy site becomes the centre of the universe. Ritual becomes the act through which people are transposed to time beyond time, and space beyond space. In Eliade's words: "an object or an act becomes real only in so far as it imitates or repeats an archetype. Thus reality is acquired solely through repetition or participation . . . any repetition of an archetypal gesture, suspends duration, abolishes profane time, and participates in mythical time." The mythic imagination is *an attempt to escape from history*.

In ancient Israel, by contrast, "for the first time, the prophets placed a value on history . . . For the first time, we find affirmed and increasingly accepted the idea that historical events have a value in themselves, insofar as they are determined by the will of G-d . . . Historical facts thus become situations of man in respect to G-d, and as such they acquire a religious value that nothing had previously been able to confer on them. It may, then, be said with truth that the Hebrews were the first to discover the meaning of history as the epiphany of G-d." Judaism is the escape *into* history, the unique attempt to endow events with meaning, and to see in the chronicles of mankind something more than a mere succession of happenings - to see them as nothing less than a drama of redemption in which the fate of a nation reflects its loyalty or otherwise to a covenant with G-d.

Eliade's conclusion is worth quoting at length:

Basically, the horizon of archetypes and repetition cannot be transcended with impunity unless we accept a philosophy of freedom that does not exclude G-d . . . Faith, in this context, as in many others, means absolute emancipation from any kind of natural "law" and hence the highest freedom that man can imagine: freedom to intervene even in the ontological constitution of the universe. It is, consequently, a preeminently creative

freedom. In other words, it constitutes a new formula for man's collaboration with the creation -- the first, but also the only such formula accorded to him since the traditional horizon of archetypes and repetition was transcended. Only such a freedom . . . is able to defend modern man from the terror of history -- a freedom, that is, which has its source and finds its guarantee and support in G-d. Every other modern freedom, whatever satisfactions it may procure to him who possesses it, is powerless to justify history; and this, for every man who is sincere with himself, is equivalent to the terror of history . . . Any other situation of modern man leads, in the end, to despair.

Not just then, in other words, but at all times including the present, the ultimate choice lies between *faith in the G-d of history* (who invites human beings to become His partners in the work of redemption), or the "terror of history" from which the only refuge is myth.

Where is G-d? It is a mark of how deeply influenced we have been by ancient Greece that we tend to answer this question in philosophical terms, by referring to logic (the "ontological argument") or nature (the "argument from design"). Many Jewish thinkers themselves - Maimonides is the most famous example - did likewise. Judah Halevi, however, thought otherwise. The ten commandments begin - he pointed out - not with the words "I am the Lord your G-d who created heaven and earth" but "I am the Lord your G-d who brought you out from Egypt, from the house of slavery." G-d - the One we call *Hashem* - is to be found not primarily in creation (that is another face of G-d to which we give the name *Elokim*) but in *history*. I find it moving that this is precisely what non-Jewish observers concluded. Pascal, for example, wrote:

It is certain that in certain parts of the world we can see a peculiar people, separated from the other peoples of the world, and this is called the Jewish people . . . This people is not only of remarkable antiquity but has also lasted for a singularly long time . . . For whereas the peoples of Greece and Italy, of Sparta, Athens and Rome, and others who came so much later have perished so long ago, these still exist, despite the efforts of so many powerful kings who have tried a hundred times to wipe them out, as their historians testify, and as can easily be judged by the natural order of things over such a long spell of years. They have always been preserved, however, and their preservation was foretold . . . My encounter with this people amazes me . . .

The once-Marxist Russian thinker Nikolai Berdayev came to a similar conclusion:

I remember how the materialist interpretation of history, when I attempted in my youth to verify it by applying it to the destinies of peoples, broke down in the case of the Jews, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint . . . Its survival is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon demonstrating that the life of this people is governed by a special predetermination, transcending the processes of adaptation expounded by the materialistic interpretation of history. The survival of the Jews, their resistance to destruction, their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions and the fateful role played by them in history: all these point to the particular and mysterious foundations of their destiny. More recently, the historian Barbara Tuchman wrote:

The history of the Jews is . . . intensely peculiar in the fact of having given the western world its concept of origins and monotheism, its ethical traditions, and the founder of its prevailing religion, yet suffering dispersion, statelessness and ceaseless persecution, and finally in our times nearly successful genocide, dramatically followed by fulfilment of the never-relinquished dream of return to the homeland. Viewing this strange and singular history, one cannot escape the impression that it must contain some special significance for the history of mankind, that in some way, whether one believes in divine purpose or inscrutable circumstance, the Jews have been singled out to carry the tale of human fate.

Some 3,300 years ago, G-d told Moses that He would intervene in the arena of time, not only (though primarily) to rescue the Israelites but also "so that My name may be declared throughout the world" (9:16). The script of history would bear the mark of a hand not human but divine. And it began with these words: "Therefore say to the Israelites: I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians."