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ON **ACHREI / KEDOSHIM** - 5773

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Of Love and Hate

Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

At the centre of the mosaic books is Vayikra. At the centre of Vayikra is the "holiness code" (chapter 19) with its momentous call: "You shall be holy because I, the Lord your G-d, am holy." And at the centre of chapter 19 is a brief paragraph which, by its positioning, is the apex, the high point, of the Torah: Do not hate your brother in your heart. You must surely admonish your neighbour and not bear sin because of him. Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against the children of your people. Love your neighbour as yourself. I am G-d. (19: 17-18)

I want, in this study, to examine the second of these provisions: "You must surely admonish your neighbour and not bear sin because of him."

Rambam and Ramban agree in seeing two quite different levels of meaning in this sentence. This is how Rambam puts it: When one person sins against another, the latter should not hate him and remain silent. As it is said about the wicked: "And Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor evil, although Absalom hated Amnon." Rather, he is commanded to speak to him and to say to him, "Why did you do such-and-such to me? Why did you sin against me in such-and-such a matter?" As it is said, "You must surely admonish your neighbour." If he

repents and requests forgiveness from him, he must forgive and not be cruel, as it is said, "And Abraham prayed to G-d . . ."

If someone sees his fellow committing a sin or embarking on a path that is not good, it is a commandment to make him return to the good and to make known to him that he is sinning against himself by his evil actions, as it is said, "You must surely admonish your neighbour" . . .

Likewise, Ramban: "You shall surely remonstrate with your neighbour" – this is a separate command, namely that we must teach him the reproof of instruction. "And not bear sin because of him" – for you will bear sin because of his transgression if you do not rebuke him . . .

However, it seems to me that the correct interpretation is that the expression "you shall surely remonstrate" is to be understood in the same way as "And Abraham remonstrated with Avimelekh". The verse is thus saying: "Do not hate your brother in your heart when he does something to you against your will, but instead you should remonstrate with him, saying, 'Why did you do this to me?' and you will not bear sin because of him by covering up your hatred in your heart and not telling him, for when you remonstrate with him, he will justify himself before you or he will regret his action and admit his sin, and you will forgive him."

The difference between the two interpretations is that one is social, the other interpersonal. On Rambam's second and Ramban's first reading, the command is about collective responsibility. When we see a fellow Jew about to commit a sin, we must try to persuade him not to do so. We are not allowed to say, "That is a private matter between him and G-d." "All Israel," said the sages, "are sureties for one another." We are each responsible, not only for our own conduct, but for the behaviour of others. That is a major chapter in Jewish law and thought.

However, both Rambam and Ramban are aware that this is not the plain sense of the text. Taken in context, what we have before us is a subtle account of the psychology of interpersonal relations.

Judaism has sometimes been accused by Christianity of being about justice rather than love ("You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"). This is entirely untrue. There is a wonderful teaching in Avot deRabbi Natan: "Who is the greatest hero? One who turns an enemy into a friend." What sets the Torah apart is its understanding of the psychology of hatred.

If someone has done us harm, it is natural to feel aggrieved. What then are we to do in order to fulfil the command, "Do not hate your brother in your heart"? The Torah's answer is: Speak. Converse. Challenge. Remonstrate. It may be that the other person had a good reason for doing what he did. Or it may be that he was acting out of malice, in which case our remonstrations will give him, if he so chooses, the opportunity to apologise, and we should then forgive him. In either case, talking it through is the best way of restoring a broken relationship. Once again we encounter here one of the leitmotifs of Judaism: the power of speech to create, sustain and mend relationships.

Maimonides cites a key proof-text. The story is told (2 Samuel 13) of how Amnon, one of King David's children, raped his half-sister Tamar. When Absalom, Tamar's brother, hears about the episode, his reaction seems on the face of it irenic, serene: Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet, now my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart." And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman. When King David heard all this, he was furious. Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad . . .

Appearances, however, deceive. Absalom is anything but forgiving. He waits for two years, and then invites Amnon to a festive meal at sheep-shearing time. He gives instructions to his men: "Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine and I say to you, 'Strike Amnon down,' then kill him." And so it happened. Absalom's silence was not the silence of forgiveness but of hate – the hate of which Pierre de

LaClos spoke in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* when he wrote the famous line: "Revenge is a dish best served cold."

There is another equally powerful example in Bereishith: Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age, and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him (*velo yachlu dabro leshalom*, literally, "they could not speak with him to peace").

On this, R. Jonathan Eybeschuetz (c. 1690-1764) comments: "Had they been able to sit together as a group, they would have spoken to one another and remonstrated with each other, and would eventually have made their peace with one another. The tragedy of conflict is that it prevents people from talking together and listening to one another." A failure to communicate is often the prelude to revenge.

The inner logic of the two verses in our sedra is therefore this: "Love your neighbour as yourself. But not all neighbours are loveable. There are those who, out of envy or malice, have done you harm. I do not therefore command you to live as if you were angels, without any of the emotions natural to human beings. I do however forbid you to hate. That is why, when someone does you wrong, you must confront the wrongdoer. You must tell him of your feelings of hurt and distress. It may be that you completely misunderstood his intentions. Or it may be that he genuinely meant to do you harm, but now, faced with the reality of the injury he has done you, he may sincerely repent of what he did. If, however, you fail to talk it through, there is a real possibility that you will bear a grudge and in the fullness of time, come to take revenge – as did Absalom."

What is so impressive about the Torah is that it both articulates the highest of high ideals, and at the same time speaks to us as human beings. If we were angels it would be easy to love one another. But we are not. An ethic that commands us to love our enemies, without any hint as to how we are to achieve this, is simply unliveable. Instead, the Torah sets out a realistic programme. By being honest with one another, talking things through, we may be able to achieve reconciliation – not always, to be sure, but often. How much distress and even bloodshed might be spared if humanity heeded this simple command.

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit www.chief Rabbi.org.

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KIRUV RECHOKIM

RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

We find in this Parsha a Posuk which forbids one to hate a fellow Jew and then commands one to rebuke a fellow Jew who commits a transgression (*VaYikra* 19:17). The Ramban, in his commentary on the Torah (*ibid.*), explains the connection between these two parts of the Posuk by saying that one should not hate someone who commits a sin, but one should rather reproach that person and show him the correct way to behave. This is the Mitzvah of *Hocheiach Tochiach*, discussed in the Gemara in *Erchin* (16b). The Ramban (*ibid.*) adds that the conclusion of the Posuk (*ibid.*) implies that one who fails to observe this Mitzvah will himself be blamed for the other person's transgressions, as suggested in the *Targum Onkelos* there (*ibid.*). This idea is supported by the Mishnah and Gemara in *Shabbos* (54b) which blames one of the *Tannaim* himself for a sin committed by his neighbor because he didn't reproach that neighbor. The Rambam (*Hilchos De'os* 9 *Perek* 6: *Halachos* 697) consequently rules that one should keep quiet when seeing another person sin, but should speak to the person nicely

and object to the sin which has been committed, rather than bear a grudge against him.

The next Posuk in this Parsha (19:18) contains the famous dictum "Ve'Ahavta L'Re'Acha Kamocha" "Love your neighbor as yourself," which, as the *Yerushalmi* in *Nedarim* (*Perek* 9 – *Halacha* 4: 30b) states, Rabbi Akiva held to be the key principle of the entire Torah. The Rashbam, in commenting on that Posuk (*ibid.* 9 *Ve'Ahavta*), writes that this requirement to love one's neighbor applies only if that neighbor is a good person. At first glance, this would seem to indicate that if one has a wicked neighbor, he may hate him, which would contradict the opening phrase of the previous Posuk (19:17), as discussed above. The Rambam (*ibid.* *Halacha* 3) rules that one is required to love every Jew as he loves himself. The *Hagahos Maimoniyos* (*ibid.* 9 *Os* 1) qualifies this, however, by limiting this requirement and stating that one must love only a fellow Jew who observes the Torah and its Mitzvos, as opposed to a wicked person whom one can hate; this too seems to contradict the prohibition to hate cited above. He resolves the problem by defining as a wicked person only one who refuses to accept the *Tochachah*, the rebuking, of another, implying clearly that one must first attempt to reproach the other person and warn him as to the correct path. Until one has done this, he must indeed love this fellow Jew, like all others; only after this fellow Jew has refused to accept this *Tochachah* may he be disliked. This idea appears to be corroborated by the *Shulcahn Aruch* (*Choshen Mishpat* – *Siman* 272: *Se'if* 11).

Interestingly, the Rambam (*Hilchos Mamerim* – *Perek* 3: *Halacha* 3) writes that certain people are in an entirely different category because they were never educated in the proper way to begin with. They are like children who were kidnapped and raised among non-Jews and therefore, through no fault of their own, they are unfamiliar with Torah and Mitzvos. Such people, says the Rambam (*ibid.*), must be encouraged to repent by attracting them to return to the Torah. We thus see that the effort must be made to engage in *Kiruv Rechokim*, to bring back those who are far off the path of Torah. In his *Sefer HaMitzvos*, the Rambam (*Mitzvas Aseh* 3) includes this idea as a part of the Mitzvah of loving Hashem; the *Minchas Chinuch* (*Mitzvah* 239: *Os* 4) equates this to saving person's life and returning to a person his lost property. In more modern times, the *Chofetz Chaim*, in an essay called *Chizuk HaDas*, among other places, writes of the tremendous importance of *Kiruv Rechokim*. The *Chazon Ish* (*Chelek Yoreh Deah* – *Hilchos Shechitah* – *Siman* 2: *Se'if* *Katan* 16) also stresses that we must all each out with words of love and try our utmost to bring people back to the light of Torah.

It is worth noting that this appears that the obligation of *Kiruv Rechokim* applies not only to the individual, but to the community as well. The Gemara in *Shevuos* (39a) learns from a Posuk elsewhere in the Torah (*ibid.* 19: 26, 37) that there is a principle called *Areivus*, which means that every Jew is responsible, like a guarantor, for every other Jew. This principle takes *Kiruv Rechokim* beyond the realm of the Mitzvah of *Hocheiach Tochiach*, because the Mitzvah implies only that one must help a fellow Jew take care of his spiritual needs. *Areivus*, however, implies that one must treat a fellow Jew's spiritual needs as if they were in fact his own needs. This explains why, as mentioned above, one can be blamed for a sin committed by another person, just as a guarantor on a loan can be forced to pay the money if the borrower defaults. The Gemara in *Sotah* (37b) implies that this principle of *Areivus* went into effect only once the Jews entered *Eretz Yisrael*, specifically, when the new Bris was established at *Har Gerizim* and *Har Eival* (*Yehoshua* *Perek* 8). This Bris, as the Torah implies (*Devarim* 29: 13-19), was established not with individuals but with the collective Jewish community, and it would thus seem that the obligation of *Areivus* is likewise a communal obligation. Indeed, *Rav Yerucham Perlow*, in his commentary to the *Sefer HaMitzvos* of *Rabbeinu Saadyah Gaon* (*Parsha* 57), points out that the *Geonim*

enumerate the law of Areivus as a Mitzvah upon the Tzibbur. Apparently, there is also this communal obligation of Kiruv Rechokim which goes beyond the individual obligation of Hocheiach Tochiach.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (Perek 5: Mishna 22) states that one who brings merit to the community will be saved from sinning himself; the Meiri there (ibid. – Beis HaBechirah) comments that this is the most righteous thing one can do. Likewise, the Gemara in Tamid (28a) indicates that one who reproaches another properly earns a place with Hashem.

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The Destiny of Difference by Rabbi Darren Blackstein

After spending much time delivering Mitzvot that inject a sense of holiness and morality into the fabric of our behavior both as individuals and as a people, the Torah returns to a familiar kind of ending of Parashat Kedoshim that we find by Parashat Shemini. Both endings emphasize our being holy unto Hashem. This holiness is manifested in our observing laws that require us to differentiate between several things. We must differentiate between domesticated animals, birds, and slithering animals; each of which may be Tamei or Tahor. In chapter 20, verse 26 the Torah tells us that Hashem states the following: We are to be holy unto Hashem because Hashem is holy and that we have been separated from the other nations to be His. What is this telling us? Hashem is holy and we seemingly acquire holiness by having been separated from the other nations by Hashem. Therefore, we are the recipients of the process of Havdalah, differentiation, as done to us by Hashem. He engaged us in the process of Havdalah, which actually gives us holiness. Now, the implication seems to be that in order to reflect this state, we, in turn, must engage in the process of Havdalah in certain areas of our behavior. We are told that this behavior will steer us away from consuming anything that is an abomination to the soul. Such behavior would, presumably, fly in the face of our being separated from other nations that don't differentiate in those matters. Therefore, our being different is preserved by our observance of these differences. But is that all it takes? Just copy some behavior and we magically become special? Rashi, on this Pasuk, quotes a beautiful Midrash. Rebbe Elazar Ben Azaryah says, "How do I know that a person should not say 'pig is disgusting to me', or 'I do not desire to wear kilayim' but rather that while he actually wants to do it, My Father in Heaven has decreed otherwise. Therefore the Torah says, 'I have separated you from the other nations to be unto Me, to be separated Lishmi- for My sake.'" Rashi seems to be using this Midrash to tell us that our being holy is truly a function of a particular mindset that, yes, is demonstrated by mirroring Hashem's behavior. When we differentiate between those various items, we do not do so out of a personal sense of repulsiveness, we do it out of a personal sense of following the pattern of separation as modeled by Hashem. It's more than obeying just because Hashem said so! Yes, it is Chok-like in nature, but as Rebbe Elazar says, it is the way we can be LiShmi— dedicated for the sake and Name of Hashem. We are to be like Hashem. Hashem engages in Havdalah and so too must we. It is the crucial element in being dedicated for His Name. This sense of LiShmi is echoed now, at this time of the year more than any other time. Amidst memorials for the Holocaust and military Korbanot, and amidst celebrations for the existence and independence of Israel and Jerusalem,

we must be guided by this sense of LiShmi— doing this LiShem Hashem. We may be tempted by extreme emotions due to the sensitivity of the issues. In order to stay loyal and faithful to our mission, let us always keep in mind that we are defined by our origin. We were separated to be dedicated to Hashem and this must be the driving force behind all of our goals.

from **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to
ryfrand@torah.org, genesis@torah.org, to ravfrand@torah.org, date
Wed, Apr 16, 2008 at 6:05 PM subject Rabbi Frand
on Parshas Achrei Mos mailed-by torah.org
Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Rabbi Frand on Parshas Achrei Mos

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 590 Sofaik Be'racha. Good Shabbos!

Rav Chaim's Request For Forgiveness

Achrei Mos is the parsha of the Yom Kippur service. The pasuk [verse] says, "For on this day, He shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you, from all your sins before HaShem shall you be cleansed" [Vayikra 16:30]. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria (in the last Mishneh of tractate Yoma [8:9]) derives the following lesson from that pasuk: Sins between man and G-d Yom Kippur atones for, however Yom Kippur does not atone for sins against one's fellow man, until he first appeases his fellow man.

The Gemara [Yoma 87a] states in the name of Rav Yitzchak "Whoever angers his friend needs to appease him." Rav Yitzchak cites as a proof a series of pasukim in Mishlei [6:1-3]: "My son, if you have been a guarantor for your friend, if you have given your handshake for a stranger, you have been trapped by the words of your mouth, snared by the words of your mouth, do this, therefore, my child and be rescued; for you have come into your fellow's hand. Go humble yourself before him and placate your fellow."

At first glance, this teaching of the Amora Rav Yitzchak seems very strange. Why do we need his exegesis from the pasukim in Mishlei to teach us the fact that one needs to appease his friend, if we have an explicit pasuk from Chumash — cited by the Tanna Rav Elazar ben Azaria -- that teaches us the same thing?

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik explained the novelty of Rav Yitzchak's teaching to his son, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, in the course of an incident that happened in Brisk. A certain butcher came to the Beis Din of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik (Rav of Brisk) and Rav Simcha Zelig (Dayan of Brisk) asking them to adjudicate a din Torah involving a sum of 3,000 rubles. Rav Chaim suggested they make a compromise (peshara), but the butcher refused. The Beis Din then heard the case and decided against the butcher. The butcher reacted angrily to this, and started yelling at Rav Chaim, calling him a thief and a murderer.

Rav Chaim answered back: When you came to this court, I suggested that you compromise with your disputant, but you refused. Since it was you who refused the compromise, it is not my fault that you have now lost 3,000 rubles. It is your own fault. The butcher yelled even louder at Rav Chaim. Rav Chaim then said, "You disrespectful one, get out of here!"

On Erev Yom Kippur, Rav Chaim told his 3 sons that he must go to the butcher and ask for his forgiveness for the harsh words they exchanged that day in court. The Rav of Brisk accompanied by his 3 sons went to the shul where the butcher davened. Everyone was davening with their tallesim over their heads so it was impossible to tell who was who. Rav Chaim went around from person to person until he finally found the butcher. Rav Chaim then said, "I want to ask your forgiveness for calling you disrespectful and sending you out of my

court." The butcher turned to Rav Chaim — right before Kol Nidre -- and said, "I do not forgive you. You are a thief and a murderer!"

Rav Chaim responded: "The halacha is that I must ask you three times in front of three people for forgiveness. I have brought my three sons here with me. Will you forgive me?" Again the response was "No!" The exchange was repeated three times and then Rav Chaim said "I have discharged my duty and am ready to leave." Before leaving he turned once more to the butcher and said, "You should know that at this point I am no longer obligated to ask for your forgiveness. In fact, you were the one who insulted me in the first place, and I had a right to respond in kind to your insolence. The only reason I came to appease you is because it is meritorious to overlook one's honor and accept embarrassment rather than cause embarrassment to others. I was not obligated to ask you for forgiveness, but I did it anyway, three times in front of three people. I am leaving. Now it is your problem!"

When they left the synagogue, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik asked his father why he went in the first place, when he never did anything wrong and it was the butcher who should have been asking for forgiveness all along.

Rav Chaim explained to his son that this was in fact the novelty in the ruling of Rav Yitzchak in Yoma. The pasuk in Achrei Mos cited by Rav Elazar ben Azaria in the Mishneh teaches that if one WRONGS his fellow man, he must ask forgiveness. The pasukim in Mishlei expounded by Rav Yitzchak teach that if one angers his fellow man — even justifiably so — he still needs to try to make peace and ask for forgiveness.

This was not the type of "mechila request" which would have held back the effectiveness of Rav Chaim's Teshuva vis a vis sins between man and G-d. Those are only for sins where you in fact harmed someone or insulted him inappropriately. Rav Yitzchak is saying a stronger teaching: Even when I am 100% right, if I utter harsh words against my fellow man, it is still appropriate for me to beg forgiveness and attempt to restore friendship between us.

This, Rav Chaim, said is the meaning of the Shulchan Aruch when it states that on Erev Yom Kippur, every person needs to ask for forgiveness from his fellow man. This halacha is difficult — if I wronged someone, why should I wait until Erev Yom Kippur to make amends? The answer is that this law is not speaking about a case where I've wronged someone. Nevertheless, on Erev Yom Kippur there is a special obligation to make peace even when, strictly speaking, no amends are called for.

This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. The halachic topics covered for the current week's portion in this series are: Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion :: Rabbi Berel Wein Israel At Sixty Five

The Jewish state celebrated its sixty-fifth Independence Day commemorations this week. Though sixty-five years occupies most of

the time span allotted to humans on this earth, in the eyes of history it is a relatively short time. Nevertheless, I think that one must marvel at what has occurred here in the Land of Israel over the past sixty-five years. And, the world has certainly changed dramatically and drastically over this period of time. The British Empire is no longer and the Union Jack does not fly over Government House in Jerusalem. The Soviet Union has also passed from the world scene, a victim of its own cruelties, ineptitude and mistaken ideology. Both England and the Soviet Union did not really wish us well, each in their own way, but the little Jewish state outlived them just as the Jewish people has outlived every world empire and utopian ideology over our thousands of years of history and existence.

While the rest of the Middle East is in a far greater mess than it was sixty-five years ago — and it was pretty messy then as well, our little country has become the mouse that roars. Almost oblivious to all that surrounds us, we have set about to the tasks of destiny that motivate us and helped create the state.

We have revived our ancient, beautiful, nuanced biblical language, created and witnessed the ingathering of millions of Jews from the four corners of the earth, wreaked an ecological and agricultural revolution in a formerly barren land that now flows with milk and honey, built a mighty defense force to protect ourselves from our still very hostile neighbors, fostered a modern economy, and stand in the forefront of every intellectual, medical and technological field in a world replete with Israeli innovations.

Who would have dreamt that these would have been the realities of the State of Israel, sixty-five years ago? Only the hateful, the alienated and the willfully blind deny Israel's achievements.

Ben Gurion famously said only a few decades ago that when Israel has a population of five million it will be secure and viable. After sixty-five years we are a nation of eight million, six million of whom are Jews. The Peel Commission in 1936 stated, with its characteristic arrogance, that the entire country of then Palestine could not support a population greater than two and a half million.

Well Israel has continually proven the experts to be wrong. Israel is not a perfect state. It has many shortcomings and at sixty-five is still only a work in progress. To paraphrase Winston Churchill it is not yet the beginning of the end but it may certainly be the end of the beginning. There are still many rough edges in Israeli society, gaps in economic and social equality, and there are major national problems in education, religious institutions and government that need streamlining and await our considered attention. But this is a great place to live. It has good climate, interesting scenery, an enormous diversity of people and ideas, and one can live a Jewish life here to the fullest.

The population is young and rambunctious, Torah study abounds everywhere, and there is a feeling of self-confidence and optimism, of satisfaction in life, of family and community that permeates all sections of Israeli society. It is a great place to visit but it is an even greater place to live and be part of the ongoing miracle of the ages which is the State of Israel at sixty-five.

The prophets of Israel told us long ago that we would eventually return home to the land promised to our ancestors by God and that we would rebuild ourselves physically and spiritually in that land. This prophecy and dream of the ages is being fulfilled slowly but surely in front of our very eyes in the State of Israel.

The prophets also taught us that those who aid and participate in this endeavor will be richly rewarded. These prophecies are also being fulfilled fully. We live in momentous times of biblical proportions. In our daily lives we tend to sublimate this knowledge and continue with our everyday lives and endure its tests. But every so often we are jolted into recognition that we live in a very special place and in a very special time of the Jewish story.

The sixty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the state is just such a memory jolt and reality check. How fortunate is our generation to celebrate this sixty-fifth anniversary here in Israel and Jerusalem. May we all yet be fortunate enough to witness the full realization of the visions of the prophets of Israel speedily and in our days.
Shabat shalom

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein
Achrei Mos – Kedoshim

To a great extent, reaction to defeat and tragedy is the true defining moment of one's inner strength and faith. Aharon's silence in the face of the loss of his two older sons is reckoned in Jewish tradition as an act of nobility and sublime acceptance of the unfathomable judgment of Heaven.

Contrast Aharon's silence and humble acceptance of fate with the response of Iyov to his troubles and tragedies. Iyov has a great deal to say, to complain against, to bitterly question and to debate almost endlessly with his companions and visitors as to the unfairness of what has befallen him.

To the human eye, we are all aware that life and its events are often unfair. There is no one that I am aware of that has successfully "explained" the Holocaust. So it seems that we are faced with two diametrically opposed choices as to the proper response to mindless fate and tragedy. Are we to remain mute and silent or are we to rail against the arrogant fate that has brought misfortune to us?

The Torah does not seem to inform us about this and in fact, as shown above, apparently even contradicts itself regarding this continually recurring facet of human existence. Yet the Torah and all of the books that it contains is one seamless whole, and the seeming contradictions lie within us and not within its holy words and exalted ideas. Thus we are brought to study this matter with greater introspection and with less judgment and personal bias.

I think that the Torah means to teach us that there is no one correct, one-size-fits-all response to the failures and tragedies of life. Aharon is correct in his response to inexplicable tragedy and so is Iyov. King Solomon correctly noted that there is a time for silence and a time for speech. So too there are people for whom mute silence is the proper response to tragedy and there are people who must give expression to their feelings of grief and frustration by words, debate and even complaint.

In most instances the rabbis of the Talmud voted for silence over speech and acceptance of one's fate over complaint and public debate. Yet the rabbis did not exclude the book of Iyov from the biblical canon of holy books. In that act of inclusion they allowed for varying degrees of response to troubles and travail.

Iyov also has a place in the pantheon of heroic human views regarding tragic events. Within limits and with a faith-based attitude one can question and complain, express wonderment and even somehow demand answers. But, deep down, all humans understand that they cannot fathom Heaven's wisdom, decisions and the individual fate that is visited upon us all. So the death of Aharon's sons serves as a template for life, a lesson for all of us.

Shabat shalom

Sefirat Ha-Omer: A Process of Individual and National Growth
Rabbi Michael Rosensweig
The TorahWeb Foundation

The Torah (Vayikra 23:9-22) presents the mitzvah of sefirat ha-omer by linking it to the korban ha-omer and the korban shetei ha-lehem, each of which brackets the counting imperative. This presentation spurred most halachic authorities to conclude that sefirat ha-omer is only a rabbinic obligation in the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple. Ameimar (Menachot 66a) explicitly argued that only days (not weeks) should be counted in the post-destruction era as a *zecher le-churban*. Rashi (s.v. Ameimar) explains that the absence of the korban ha-omer renders the mitzvah a *derabanan* (see also Baal ha-Maor and Ran, end of Pesachim). Indeed, the Tosafists (Menachot 66a s.v. *zecher*) rule that one could count sefirah during twilight (*bein ha-shemashot*) since we are lenient regarding rabbinic obligations.

Yet, the Rambam disputes this contention. He (Temidim 7:22) emphasizes that sefirat ha-omer is a biblical obligation in all eras. Evidently, he considers Ameimar's contrary view to be exceptional, as the Kesef Mishneh notes. Indeed, the midrash (Parshas Emor) and many rishonim (Chinuch and others) perceive the counting of the omer as marking a transition from *yeziat mizrayim* to *mattan Torah*, something seemingly independent of the requirement of korbanot. Moreover, the fact that the period of sefirat haomer is detailed in the parshat ha-moadim of Emor establishes it as an important bridge between the festivals of Pesach and Shavuot, as the Ramban (23:36) remarks. However, this challenges us to better comprehend the Torah's explicit connection between the mitzvah of counting the omer and these korbanot, particularly as the mitzvah applies according to the Rambam even in the absence of the korbanot.

The very presence of these two korbanot in the context of the festival chapter in Emor may provide a clue to our enigma. Typically, the details of the festival offerings are discussed in parshat Pinchas, not in Emor, as the Ramban (23:2) also notes. The Ramban (23:15) and other commentators were troubled by this exception. Perhaps these korbanot are integrated into Emor because their special features effectively embody the character of the transitions involved and, by extension, they convey the goal of the counting process and period.

The Aruch ha-Shulchan (Orach Chaim 489:3) certainly adopts this approach in his explanation of the Rambam's controversial view. He notes that the korban haomer is unusual (like the korban minchat sotah) in being a barley-based korban, while the wheat-based shetei ha-lehem serves as a sharp contrast. He posits that the transition from the crude barley staple of an animal's diet to the refined human consumption of wheat symbolizes the process of spiritual refinement and the attainment of human potential that is the *telos* of *mattan Torah* and that is achieved only by a commitment to Torah and mitzvot.

There is perhaps another dimension to this transition reflected by the timing and substance of the two korbanot. It is surely significant that the Shavuot offering of shetei ha-lehem alone consists of chametz (even korban todah only contains one part chametz; other korbanot are disqualified by the presence of any chametz), while the omer is sacrificed in the context of Pesach, the holiday that demands an absolute eradication of even the presence of chametz. The Torah appears to be conveying that while the political freedom of *yeziat Mizrayim* requires strict discipline (*shemirah* of matzah) and rejects the theme of unfettered growth symbolized by chametz, authentic growth and creativity can only really flourish in the context of the commitment to Torah.

The interaction between personal growth and the forging of a national identity based on common spiritual aspirations may also be relevant to the process of spiritual growth between Pesach and Shavuot, and highlighted by omer and shetei halechem. The gemara (Menachot 65b) establishes that each individual must count the sefirah. Some poskim

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2013/moadim/tros_sefirah.html

even conclude that the principle of shomeia ke-oneh does not apply to this personal requirement. Yet, the obligation to count is defined by the korbon ha-omer and korban shetei halachem, two korbonot tzibbur (public sacrifices). Moreover, these two sacrifices share an unusual common denominator: the requirement that they stem from the produce of Eretz Yisrael. This requirement is actually cited in the mishneh (Keilim 1:6) as exemplifying the special sanctity of Eretz Yisrael! The commentators (see Mishneh Achronah and Eliyahu Rabah and the emendation of the Gra) note that omer and shetei ha-lechem (alongside bikkurim- see Gra and Eliyahu Rabah) were selected rather than the classical mizvot ha-teluyot ba-aretz (Kiddushin 36a) such as terumot and maasrot that technically depend on the soil of Eretz Yisrael precisely because they underscore a broader principle. There is ample evidence in other contexts to suggest that the broader halachic requirement of Eretz Yisrael signifies a national dimension. It is highly appropriate then that Eretz Yisrael be featured prominently in the korbonot that mark the transition from the yeziat Mizrayim experience of a collection of individual refugees to the moment of kabbalat ha-torah, the event that established Jewish national identity - "ha-yom ha-zeh nihiyeta la-am." Perhaps the link to the two korbonot further stresses that while the act of sefirah requires the personal involvement of each individual, the ultimate purpose is to forge a nation of committed individuals that identify with the both the common and contrasting themes of these korbonot and the holidays that they represent. This message, according to the Rambam, remains biblically viable and compelling in all eras, even when the actual implementation of the korbonot is, alas, unattainable.

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Insights

G-d's Waiting Room

"When you shall come to the Land and you shall plant any food tree, you shall treat its fruit as forbidden; for three years it will be forbidden to you." (19:23)

With macabre humor, Miami Beachis called "G-d's waiting room" because it abounds with retirement homes and hotels for the elderly.

Retirement is a western concept, and one that has come under criticism from doctors in recent years. Studies have found that people who don't retire but stay involved in their work (albeit at a level that befits their age) have longer life expectancies than those who retire and relax into their "golden years".

My father, who passed away well into his ninety-third year, was a person who worked hard throughout his life and never retired. Every morning he would still go into the office and do his work. He went in later and came back earlier, but he still kept his life's routine.

Our Sages teach that G-d conceals our time of death from us so that we should remain active to the last.

The Roman Emperor Hadrian was once passing through the city of Tiberias in Eretz Yisrael. He noticed an elderly man exerting himself, tilling the soil around his fig trees.

"Saba! (Grandfather) Saba!" called out Hadrian, "Why are you working so hard? When you were young you had to toil to make a living, but now it's time to relax. Anyway, you will never live to enjoy the fruits of your labors."

The old man replied, "My task is to try and accomplish whatever my age allows. The Almighty will do as He sees fit."

"Tell me, please, Saba, how old are you?"

"I am a hundred years old."

"A hundred years old! And you actually expect to reap what you sow?"

"If I merit to eat the fruit of my labors, well and good. If not, my efforts will benefit my children just as I have benefited from the toil of my forbears."

Hadrian said, "Hear me, Saba! If you ever eat these figs that you are planting you must surely come and let me know."

In due course, the figs ripened and abounded with fruits. The old man thought to himself, "I must go and tell the emperor."

He filled a basket with figs and traveled to the palace.

"The Emperor wishes to see me," he announced to the guards and they led him before the Hadrian's throne.

"Who are you?" asked Hadrian.

"Does the emperor remember years ago in Tiberias passing by an old man tending his figs? G-d has granted me to eat of those figs that I planted. I have brought the emperor a basketful as a gift."

Hadrian turned to his servants. "Take the figs from this elderly man and refill his basket with gold coins."

His courtiers questioned the emperor's generosity, "Why such a lavish gift for an old Jew?" Hadrian replied to them, "His Creator honored him with longevity. Is it not proper that I too should accord him honor?"

The Creator does not want us to sit and read the newspapers in G-d's waiting room.

Source: Vayikra Rabba 25:5

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Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

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Parshas AchreiMos - Kedoshim

Parshas Acharei Mos

After the death of Aharon's two sons. (16:1)

The Midrash states four reasons for the untimely, tragic deaths of Nadav and Avihu. Among these is the idea that, Lo natlu eitzah, zeh mi'zeh, "They did not take counsel one from another." Ish machtaso, "Each man his firepan" (Vayikra 10:1) intimates that each one acted on his own without consulting the other. It was as if each one were to say, "I know what to do; I have no reason to mull it over with anyone else." Horav Arye Leib Bakst, zl, posits that this is how we should understand the failing of Rabbi Akiva's disciples, who also died untimely deaths. Those were the greatest scholars of their generation, twenty-four thousand devoted students of the generation's pre-eminent Torah sage. Yet, there was something about their behavior that was left wanting. Clearly, whatever sin is attributed to them is only on a relative basis, consistent with their sublime level of Torah erudition and spirituality.

Chazal say, Lo nohagu kavod zeh ba'zeh, "They did not practice/they were not accustomed to giving honor one to another." Perhaps each one held himself in such esteem that he did not feel beholden to anyone else. After all, who could advise him? Who could teach him? In Pirkei Avos 4:15, Chazal say, Yehi kavod chavericha k'mora rabbach, "The honor of your friend should be tantamount to the fear that you have for your rebbe." It should not be beneath you to consult your contemporary.

The Rosh Yeshivah explains that this is not the correct approach. From the very beginning of Creation, Hashem established a guideline of, Lo tov hayos ha'adam levado, "It is not good for man to be alone." While Judaism views this as the imperative for marriage, Rashi adds a penetrating insight into levado, "alone," explaining why it is so vital: "That they should not claim shte reshuyos b'olam, there are two authorities; Hashem is unique in the higher realms, and (He) has no mate; and this one (Adam) is unique in the lower realms, and he (also) has no mate." Indeed, even when He created primordial Man, Hashem "consulted" with His Holy Tribunal. Rashi explains that the Torah is teaching us proper conduct and the enviable trait of humility. Thus, the Greater One (in this case, Hashem) should consult and receive permission from the lesser one. This is Hashem's middah, and one must try to emulate the Almighty, because this is Divine Will. Chazal teach (Berachos 27b) that when the sages requested Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah to accept the Nesius, governing position, he replied, "I will consult the members of my household." He consulted his wife. One who is "alone", in the sense that he does not seek advice and deliberate with another individual, whom he respects, cannot achieve true success.

Rav Bakst feels this is the underlying reason that chassan domeh l'melech, "a groom is compared to a king." The word melech/maloch means to rule, to govern, with the noun translated as king. The word melech may also be derived from mamlich, to consult. A king consults his inner circle of advisors, his cabinet. One who marries is no longer alone. He is like a king who is always conferring with his advisors. As a married man, he now has a life's companion with whom he takes counsel. Those who take action, who move forward without deliberating with others, will not achieve enduring success. One must act like a monarch, who has a

circle of confidants with whom he deliberates. There is one catch: One must be astute in selecting an advisor who will be his friend, who will tell him the truth, regardless of how "brutal" it might seem at first. One who tells us what we want to hear is a poor advisor and even worse friend.

From the assembly of Bnei Yisrael he shall take two he-goats for a sin-offering. (16:5)

The Torah goes into great detail in describing the ritual of the two he-goats. One goat is "fortunate" to be selected as a korban, offering to Hashem. It is slaughtered by the Kohen Gadol, its blood sprinkled between the Batei Mikdash, Poles of the Aron HaKodesh, on the Paroches, Curtain, and the Mizbayach HaZahav, Golden Altar. This represents a fairly impressive "end" to the life of an animal. The other he-goat does not seem to fare as well. It serves as the offering sent into the wilderness, bearing the nation's sins. It is later flung off a cliff, falling to its painful death, a broken heap of skin and bones. Ramban writes that the seh l'azazel represents a sort of shochad l'Satan, bribe for Satan, to tone down his prosecuting endeavor, so that the Jewish People can achieve atonement without Satan advocating for their extinction. Indeed, after Satan has been satisfied, he himself discovers reasons to find merit for the Jewish People. It is incredible how far a little shochad will go to sway one's subjectivity.

These two he-goats were similar in every way. Purchased together, their appearance was the same. They were of equal value. Indeed, everything about them screamed, "There is absolutely no difference between the two of us, other than the fact that one is used l'Hashem and one is sent l'azazel." What lesson may be derived from this? Horav Michael Peretz, Shlita, suggests that the Torah is teaching us a crucial lesson to be implemented in our strategy to overcome the yetzer hora successfully. The most important point which we must acknowledge is to know the awesome power of our enemy. Make no mistake - the yetzer hora is crafty, filled with guile, unscrupulous, has no compassion, and takes no prisoners. The yetzer hora is bent on destroying us and has been given every possible means to do so. His arsenal is replete with every weapon for ensnaring us to do his bidding, thereby distancing us from our Maker. If we belittle the yetzer hora, if we think, "What can he do to me? He cannot sway me," then we have already lost the battle. The yetzer hora is a formidable enemy, and the sooner that we accept this reality, the better our chances are for success against him.

By comparing the two he-goats - one representing the side of Hashem and the other symbolic of Satan/yetzer hora/Malach HaMaves - we are forced to acknowledge that the forces of evil are not pushovers. Indeed, on this holy day of Yom Kippur, we are relegated to offer a bribe to Satan. We must recognize that we are up against an indomitable opponent, whose powers are frightening: "Know thine enemy!" The two goats are equal, because we must learn to "respect" the powers of the yetzer hora. Only then will we fight in earnest and - with the help of the Almighty - triumph over evil.

Parshas Kedoshim

You shall reprove your fellow. (19:17)

The redundancy of the words, ho'cheach tochiach, gives us something to ponder. Clearly, the Torah is placing emphasis on the mitzvah of tochachah, rebuke, but is it necessary to repeat the words to prove a point - or, is the Torah conveying another message? In his Drushim, the Ben Ish Chai explains this idea with an incident that occurred concerning a clever thief. A fellow was caught stealing in a country in which there was a zero tolerance law regarding theft. Anyone who was caught stealing was sentenced to death. There was no reprieve, no commutation. The form of punishment served, for the most part, as a powerful deterrent. This thief either thought he could beat the system or was in such dire need that he was willing to chance it.

When the sentence was passed by the king, the thief made a special request: Since he was a first-time offender, he was wondering if, perhaps, the king would grant him an audience for a few moments. The king was basically a decent human being who just had a low tolerance level for theft. He granted the thief his request. He would meet privately with him.

"What is it that you want?" the King asked the thief. "I have been blessed with a unique ability. I can prepare a potion that has incredible powers. It would be a sin to die and take this secret with me to my grave. I will be happy to share this exceptional wisdom with the king."

The king acquiesced to the doomed man's request. The prisoner asked for a number of ingredients which he mixed together. After his potion was completed, the prisoner asked the king for a package of seeds. Regardless of their type, if they were to be soaked in his preparation, he guaranteed that the very same day that these seeds were planted in the ground, they would sprout fruit! This was an astonishing claim, and, if true, it would be one of mankind's greatest discoveries.

The king brought the seeds and waited with baited breath for the planting to begin. Then the prisoner threw a fast one at the king.

"In order for this potion to work, one vital criterion must still be filled: the individual who plants the seeds in the ground must be one of impeccable integrity. Anyone who even misappropriated something which was not his cannot plant the seeds. The technique works only for a person who has never stolen a thing in his life. Now, we all know that I am ineligible to perform this process, so, therefore, I humbly ask the prime minister to plant the seeds."

The prime minister suddenly became "unavailable." He begged off from participating in this process. He just happened to remember that as a child he had stolen some money from his father's wallet. "Well, that excludes the Prime Minister," he said. "Let us ask the Treasury Minister. Surely, someone who is in charge of the country's finances must have a spotless record." The Treasury Minister demurred, claiming that when one works with so much money he might err in his accounting. Apparently, the prisoner was not surprised to hear this. He relentlessly kept on trying to locate that one elusive person who was worthy of planting the seeds. Alas, there was no one. Even the self-righteous King conceded that, as a youth, he had purloined a valuable wristwatch from his younger brother. At that moment, the prisoner fell on the ground before the King and began to cry bitterly. "My lord, behold what I have demonstrated before your very own eyes.

There is absolutely no one in this country - not even his royal highness, who is not in some way tainted by the scourge of theft. Why is it that among all the thieves of this country, I was unfortunate enough to get caught? Furthermore, I stole to feed my family. Others have stolen to satisfy their illicit desires."

Listening to this clever thief, the king, who was no fool, realized that the special potion was nothing more than a ploy devised to arouse his attention to a verity which he had ignored. Indeed, the thief had a legitimate claim: Was he any different than anyone else? After being warned that he would not be so fortunate the "next time," the thief was released.

The episode teaches us a powerful lesson concerning our interpersonal relationships. No one is perfect. When our anger is aroused at someone whom we feel has harmed us - physically, financially, or emotionally - we should immediately question ourselves: Are we any better? Are we all that perfect? Do we feel all that self-righteous that we can find guilt in others and nothing but innocence concerning ourselves? Additionally, how often do we anger Hashem, and He simply ignores our impudence? We criticize others, yet, we expect Hashem to overlook our faults. Hocheach Tochiach - before we confront others, let us first examine ourselves. Let us undergo some serious self-rebuke before we take it upon ourselves to find fault in others. Rebuke is repeated because the rebuke should be offered twice: once to himself; followed by the rebuke he intended to give to the other fellow.

You shall not take revenge, and you shall not bear a grudge against members of Your people. (19:18)

The Torah forbids us from taking revenge in any shape or form. Is revenge really that bad? For one individual, it might give him closure to an ordeal which he wants to forget. Another just might desire the fellow who harmed him to feel some of the emotional and physical pain which he had experienced. Some might even consider revenge to be sweet. What they do not realize is that revenge is obsessive and destructive, taking its toll on both parties. The old proverb which states, "He who seeks revenge should prepare two graves," is very true. Yet, should revenge be prohibited?

In his sefer, Devarim Achadim, the Chida, zl, quotes the Kli Yakar who explains this concept with a parable. A young child was busy building a large castle out of sand. The edifice he created was outstanding. The child was quite adept and creative. The many hours he had spent laboring in the heat had produced a result that filled him with great pride. We can, therefore, imagine the pain and anger he felt when his older brother walked by and, with the sweep of his hand, destroyed his younger brother's lavish creation.

The little boy went crying to his father, complaining bitterly concerning his older brother's act of "treachery." How could he do this to him? The child demanded that his father punish the older boy to the fullest measure of discipline. No compassion - he demanded the worst.

The father was no fool. He was acutely aware that the massive piece of architecture which was destroyed by his older son was nothing more than a sand castle. In a materialistic world, sand does not play a major role. Sand is plentiful, and anything made from it has zero permanence. The younger son was playing, not building. His edifice was no more than the product of a deft hand and an active imagination. There was nothing real to this castle - but sand. The father could hardly accede to his younger son's wishes for punishment and revenge.

The lesson to be derived from this parable is probably already clear to everyone. Life in this world is much like sand castles. We endeavor and build; we think that

we have achieved, that we are actually in control. We are, however, very wrong. Our accomplishments, our successes, our institutions and establishments are all sand castles. Nothing in this world is of lasting value, except, of course, Torah and mitzvos, and those endeavors that promote Torah and mitzvos. In our material/physical dimension, nothing really counts, because nothing is real. If someone infringes on what we view to be our "turf," they have only encroached themselves on our sand castles. They have not hurt us, because we have nothing. Taking revenge bespeaks an attitude that is antithetical to Torah. Nothing has been gained: thus, nothing has been lost.

Sadly, many of us have stigmatized vision, seeing only what we want to see, mistaking imagination for reality. Our creations are not much more than a dream; our endeavors, unless anchored in spiritual achievement, are meaningless. Everything falls under the category of sand castles.

The Kli Yakar applies this parable to explain why, when we see someone who was, in some manner, offended by his fellow man crying out to Hashem with a taaneh, complaint. "Hashem! Punish him for what he did to me," Hashem does not respond. It is almost as if Hashem is ignoring him. True, he might be justified, and his complaint valid. Yet, Hashem still does not answer. Why? Hashem is like the father who listens to his young child complain about the actions of his older brother. The father understands that there really was no sustainable damage. It was only sand castles.

We often meet individuals who have reneged religious observance with the excuse: "I have issues with religion; I have questions concerning G-d; I cannot reconcile some of the occurrences that have taken place throughout history." Who do they think they are to have questions of G-d, complaints and issues with religion? They are no different than the child who built a sand castle and whose world came crashing down when his castle was destroyed by his older brother.

I recently came across a story printed in a popular weekly periodical. The story was adapted from an Israeli Torah publication. While this is certainly not the only story of its nature, I am using it because in some way it involves the Chida. The episode took place last fall when a young couple, who direct a Jewish outreach center in Yerushalayim, were returning to the Holy Land. Upon landing and retrieving their luggage, they approached the dispatcher for a sheirut, a company which provides shared rides from Ben Gurion airport to Yerushalayim. It was early in the morning, with minimal crowds, and the dispatcher directed the couple to a waiting mini-van that was slowly filling up with passengers. When they approached the driver, he said that he would not be going to the section of Yerushalayim where they lived. They should wait for the next sheirut. Rather than get into an argument with the driver, the couple returned to the dispatcher and asked for the next van. The dispatcher would not hear of it. He had told them to go with that certain driver. He had no choice but to take them to their apartment.

They returned to the van, loaded their luggage and took their seats. The driver was not going to be very happy. The very next passenger to board the van was a young Israeli named Yoav, who had just returned from Barcelona. He was in Eretz Yisrael for a four day visit with his parents. His father had fallen ill, and he felt it prudent to come home.

The young man sat down next to the rabbi and almost immediately requested, "Rabbi, tell me a dvar Torah, Torah thought." Rabbis love sharing Torah thoughts, and what better way can there be to strike up a conversation? Since they had both just landed in the Holy Land, it made sense to focus on the unique Hashgachah Pratis, Divine Providence, which the Almighty exercises in Eretz Yisrael. This does not negate in any way from Hashem's Divine Providence vis-à-vis the rest of the world; it is just that Eretz Yisrael is, after all, unique and special. The Torah describes the Holy Land as Eretz asher einei Hashem Elokecha bah meireishis ha'shanah ad acharis shanah, "The land over which Hashem's eyes are watching from the beginning of the year until its end" (Devarim). "This means," explained the rabbi, "that the Almighty watches over the Holy Land far more directly than He does over the cities from which we have just arrived (New York and Barcelona)." While the young man listened intently, he was quick to disagree. Apparently his disagreement seemed to be spurred on by personal issues which he had with the Holy Land and with G-d. "Statistics show that at least as many people are hurt or killed in Eretz Yisrael as the result of terror attacks as we note in other countries. Despite its miniscule size and limited population, the numbers are probably greater than in other countries. I would not call that Divine Providence," the young man countered, almost with anger. "In fact, my best friend was killed in a terrorist attack."

The rabbi explained that all is not what it seems. Events occur before our eyes that are definitely inexplicable - to us. This does not mean that there is no rationale. There certainly is. We are just not privy to it due to our limited ability to grasp. Everything that occurs is part of Hashem's Divine Plan. As the rabbi was giving a

discourse on our inability to grasp Hashem's ways, he reminded himself of a story that had taken place ten years earlier.

"My wife and two of her friends went to visit a woman who had lost a son during the terror attack on the Number 14 bus in Yerushalayim. During their visit, they also met Moshe, a younger brother of the victim who related the following incredible story.

"On the fateful day that his brother had been killed, Moshe had been on a bus traveling to the north, as part of a school trip. As the bus moved smoothly along, Moshe dozed off and began to dream. Shlomo, the brother who had been killed, appeared to him in a dream clothed completely in white. He told him that he would soon be leaving this world and that he expected him to be there for their mother and grandmother, who would be heartbroken over the tragedy. Shlomo directed his brother to various places in their house where he had hidden certain valuable items. He concluded by saying that he would visit the family during the shiva, seven-day mourning period, appearing in the form of a butterfly.

"The bus stopped moving along, and Moshe woke up from his sleep. The dream that he had just experienced had left him in a state of confusion. Just then, one of the students asked the driver to put on the radio so that they could listen to some music. Exactly at that moment, the newscaster broke into the regular programming with a news alert. A terrorist attack had occurred in Yerushalayim. By the time Moshe reached his mother, she was on the way to the hospital, following a call from the police.

"Shortly after the funeral and the family began to sit shiva, a butterfly flew into the house and parked itself on a family portrait, staying there the entire week. At the end of the shiva, the butterfly flew upstairs to Shlomo's bedroom, landed momentarily on his bed and then flew off, never to return.

"Obviously, the entire occurrence had shaken the family. When Moshe shared his dream with his mother, they all decided to visit a famous Kabbalist in Tzefas. Perhaps he could unravel the mystery. The Kabbalist told the family, who happen to be descendants of the Chida, that Shlomo was a gilgul, reincarnation, of the neshamah, soul, of the Chida's father. Therefore, his life was short, since the soul of the Chida's father required very few corrections to achieve perfection."

The rabbi concluded his story to the young traveler from Barcelona by underscoring the notion that, if we take a penetrating look at life experiences, we will see Hashem's Divine Hand manipulating events. Even at a time of grave tragedy, Hashem's guiding hand is present. The young man had entered the sheirut a doubter, but left a faithful believer in Hashem. He kept repeating over and over that he was in shock. Finally, the rabbi asked him why he was shocked. Did everything not make sense?

"You do not seem to understand. This story which you related struck home. Shlomo was my best friend. I have been doubting Hashem ever since that tragic day when his life was snuffed out. His untimely death undermined my belief." Looking back, they both saw Hashem's Divine Providence. The rabbi was forced to return to the sheirut, where he met the young man, who requested a dvar Torah, which all started with Hashem's watchful eye on Eretz Yisrael. We must remember: Life is filled with what appears to be questions; serious questions. For the believer there are no questions; for the non-believer, there are no answers.

The Russian infantry was notified of the Czar's upcoming visit. An inspection of this sort was an honor, but could lead to serious problems for anyone who did not pass with flying colors. Understandably, everyone was determined to present a barracks and camp that was pristine, prepared for anything. The soldiers cleaned their armor and weapons. Everything was in tip-top shape. The day arrived, and the Czar's retinue was seen from afar. Everyone stood at attention - each soldier in accordance with rank and seniority. The tallest soldier stood in front, with the more vertically challenged finding their place toward the rear. The Czar began his inspection, walking up and down the rows of soldiers until he abruptly stopped in front of one soldier standing at the rear of the line. The Czar embraced the young man and exclaimed, "I love you, my dear soldier!"

What should be the normal reaction of this soldier? "I love you, my King. May the Czar live forever!" That is what he should declare in a loud voice. If, however, the soldier were to mumble a few words of gratitude, as he attempted to remain awake in the Czar's presence, it would have been absolutely ludicrous-- and shameful! This, explains Horav Yaakov Neiman, zl, is how many of us appear before Hashem when we recite Shema Yisrael. We have just completed the Birchos Krias Shema which describes the glory in Heaven as the Heavenly Angels prepare to greet the Creator. In the tefillah of Ahavah Rabbah, we express Hashem's great love for us. Then, comes Shema Yisrael which we mumble quickly - half asleep. Perhaps, the next time we recite Krias Shema we might think of the analogy concerning the Russian soldier.

In memory of my dear wife, Helen, Rochel bas Avraham a"h niftar 13 Iyar 5771. Dr. Jacob Massouda

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Parshat-Aharei-Mot-Kedoshim-Social-holiness-310299>

Parshat Aharei Mot Kedoshim: Social Holiness

By Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

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The list of instructions for creating a proper, humane society which appears in this week's Torah portion is written under an interesting title which needs to be clarified: "You shall be holy."

This is how the parsha begins, and it is even named this way. After this general declaration, a detailed list of instructions appears on how that holiness is supposed to be expressed in our lives: You shall not steal; neither shall you deal falsely, nor lie one to another.

And you shall not swear by My name falsely...

You shall not oppress thy neighbor, nor rob him; the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with you all night until the morning.

You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind... You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; you shall not respect the person of the poor,

nor favor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. You shall not go up and down as a talebearer among your people; neither shall you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor... You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself... (Leviticus 19, 11- 18) What is the connection between all these instructions and the title under which they appear? Why is a person called "holy" if he is one who does not steal, does not cheat, judges righteously, does not slander, does not take revenge, loves his fellow man no matter who he is? And maybe we should look more deeply into the definition of what "holiness" means? When we talk about a holy man, the more common and accepted definition is of a person who separates himself from human society, ascetic and isolated, a monk living on his own out there somewhere or deep in meditation over many years. This is the accepted meaning of the term "holy."

But the Torah teaches us that this conception is mistaken. The peak of holiness is not expressed in withdrawing from life, but to the contrary, in creating an active, social life based on moral principles. This is Jewish "holiness."

Why, then, was the title "holy" bestowed upon a moral man who positively influences society and works toward its repair? This is because "holy" indeed means withdrawal and abstinence. Not from human society, but from the egocentric conception that places man in the center of life. Such a conception causes each person to first worry about himself, bringing about a corrupt society rife with injustice. But the conception of "holiness" which places the principles of morality and justice at the center, and creates a society in which each person worries about the other, creates a wondrous, humane society composed of individuals who place utmost emphasis on the principles of honesty, fairness and morality.

This description sounds utopian, almost imaginary. We look at the society that seems to live by the rule of "survival of the fittest" and ask ourselves: Could there be a different kind of society, one based on "survival of the honest"? The concern with this question is actually one of the factors preventing the creation of this wonderful society since, although we express our expectation that everyone behave honestly, we do not focus on our own moral obligations. When each of us first expects the other to be honest, no one lives up to this expectation. The fulfillment of this vision is only possible when each of us focuses on our own moral obligations without the expectation of social payback. Only then, only in this manner, can there be a proper humane society which can be "heaven on earth."

This week's parsha proposes an opportunity to adopt these important principles, to focus on what is incumbent upon us, to be fair to each other, to our family, to the weak among us, and to create a holy society; one which is humane, friendly and fair – something that every person on earth yearns for.

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By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff
The Fruits of the Fourth Year
By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1:

Rabbi Lamdan, a local talmid chacham, asks his Rav: "I have carefully studied this week's parsha, which contains the Torah's only mention of the mitzvah of neta reva'ie (fruit that grows during the fourth year of a tree's existence). Yet, I cannot find a single allusion in the Torah to the laws of neta reva'ie as recorded by the halachic authorities! What information am I missing?"

Question #2:

Tikvah, always known for her intellectual honesty, inquires: "I feel like a hypocrite. Every day I pray for Moshiach to come and our return to the land of our fathers, and yet, I know little about the agricultural mitzvos of the Torah. If I truly hope for his imminent appearance, should I not be familiarizing myself with the laws that will apply when he arrives?"

Question #3:

When the Levy family moved into their spacious Waterbury home, they planted several fruit trees and grapevines, which are now producing luscious looking pears, apples and grapes. May they begin enjoying the fruit? Must they perform any special procedures before eating them?

What do these three questions have in common?

Understanding the basic laws of neta reva'ie and their source will enable us to answer both Rabbi Lamdan's and the Levys' questions, and at the same time will assist Tikvah in her search for truth.

First, the basics:

This week's parsha proclaims:

"When you arrive in the Land, and you plant any tree for its fruit, you shall restrict its fruit; what is produced the first three years is restricted from you and may not be eaten. And in the fourth year, all its fruit shall be holy for praises to Hashem. Only in the fifth year may you eat its fruit – therefore, it will increase its produce for you, for I am Hashem, your G-d" (Vayikra 19:23-25).

The fruit produced in the first three years of a tree's life is called orlah and is forbidden. The Torah refers to planting an eitz maachal, which I translated as a tree for its fruit, rather than a fruit tree. This is because Chazal understand that the prohibition of orlah applies only to a fruit tree planted for its fruit, and not to a fruit tree planted for a non-food purpose, such as for lumber or as a hedge (Orlah 1:1).

This rule may affect the Levys, as I will later explain.

Although the Torah states only that orlah may not be eaten, the Torah shebe'al peh teaches that one may not benefit from it either. For this reason, one may not dye one's skirt with orlah pomegranate peels, heat a house with orlah nutshells, or even feed orlah fruits and peels to animals. (In a different article, I discussed how one determines the end of the three prohibited crop years.) Although the mitzvah of orlah is obviously agricultural, it nevertheless applies to trees growing outside Eretz Yisrael.

KODESH HILLULIM – HOLY FOR PRAISES

Although the fourth year's fruit is no longer orlah, it still has a special status. When the Torah discusses this produce, it states, "And in the fourth year, all its fruit shall be holy for praises (in Hebrew, kodesh hillulim) to Hashem." As Rabbi Lamdan correctly noted, the Torah's entire description of the status of these fruits is these two words. What does this obscure phrase kodesh hillulim mean? What type of sanctity does the fruit manifest, and how does this result in praise?

REDEMPTION IS PRAISE

The Gemara explains that the sanctity of the neta reva'ie fruit prohibits one from eating it until it has been redeemed (Berachos 35a). This act of redemption is itself praise to Hashem (Rashba ad loc.).

However, Rabbi Lamdan is not entirely satisfied with this answer. He knows that one redeems neta reva'ie only if one cannot eat the fruit in Yerushalayim, an aspect that the verse does not mention. Furthermore, the verse says nothing about the method of redemption, which, in fact, has many detailed halachos, as we will see. We must research further.

MILITARY EXEMPTIONS

We find another reference that might shed some light on the nature of neta reva'ie. Concerning the individuals exempted from going to war, the Torah states: "Who is the man who planted a vineyard, but he did not yet redeem it? He shall return to his house" (Devarim 20:6). Here the Torah alludes to the redeeming of a vineyard, although it mentions no details about when and how this happens (see Rashba, Berachos 35a). Although this verse does not answer any of Rabbi Lamdan's questions, it does imply a new factor, heretofore unmentioned: that the mitzvah of neta reva'ie applies only to grapes. (In reality, the Gemara [Berachos 35a] cites a dispute whether neta reva'ie indeed applies only to grapes or to all fruits, a matter that we will soon discuss.)

Thus, our search for the sources for this mitzvah is still unresolved.

In fact, much of the law concerning neta reva'ie originates elsewhere. A mesorah, an oral tradition from Sinai, compares its sanctity to that of a different mitzvah, maaser sheni (Kiddushin 54a). There the Torah states:

“And you shall eat the maaser of your grain, your wine, and your olive oil ... before Hashem your G-d, in the place where He will choose to rest His name -- so that you will thereby learn always to be in awe of Hashem. However, when you will be blessed by Hashem your G-d such that you will be unable to carry [the maaser sheni] as far as the place that Hashem chose, then you may exchange it for money that you subsequently take with you when you go to the place that Hashem chose. You may then exchange the money for cattle, sheep, wine or anything else you desire, and you shall eat there before Hashem your G-d, and in this way, you and your family will celebrate” (Devarim 14:23-26).

THE LAWS OF MAASER SHENI

The Torah shebe'al peh teaches that “the place where He will choose to rest His name” refers to the city of Yerushalayim. Thus, we are to transport maaser sheni to Yerushalayim. However, if this is difficult, one may redeem the produce for coins instead, and the special sanctity of the maaser sheni transfers to the money. One adds an additional 25% to the money and brings it to Yerushalayim, where he purchases with it food to be eaten within the confines of the city. This acquisition transfers the maaser sheni sanctity from the money onto the food.

Whether one transports one's maaser sheni produce itself to Yerushalayim or exchanges it for money, the farmer remains with a large value that may be consumed only in Yerushalayim, a city bursting with sanctity and special, holy people. The beauty of this mitzvah is that it entices the farmer to ascend to the Holy City and be part of the spiritual growth attainable only there.

One can even look at the maaser sheni as “vacation fund” money that the Torah provides. Although the farmer may not be wealthy, when he arrives in Yerushalayim, he can eat and drink like a king!

WHAT MAY ONE PURCHASE?

The Torah specifies that once in Yerushalayim, one may exchange the maaser sheni money for cattle, sheep, wine or anything else you desire, which seems both wordy and unusual. The Torah shebe'al peh interprets this to mean that one may not purchase just any food with maaser sheni money, but only those that grow either from the ground or on it. Therefore, one may use maaser sheni money to purchase fruit, vegetables, breads, pastry, meat or poultry, but not fish, which do not grow on the ground, not salt or water, which do not grow; and not mushrooms, which are fungi and also do not grow from or on the ground.

RITUAL PURITY -- TAHARAH

Both the original maaser sheni and food purchased with its redemption money are holy and may be eaten only within the walls of the old Yerushalayim and only when both the food and the individual eating it are tahor, ritually pure.

O' MY JERUSALEM

By the way, the area of today's Old City of Jerusalem is encompassed by walls constructed by the Ottoman Turks. The Turkish walls surround areas that probably were not part of the city at the times of Tanach and Chazal, and therefore those areas do not have the halachic sanctity of the Holy City; at the same time, without any question, large sections that do have the sanctity of the Holy City are outside these walls.

CONTEMPORARY MAASER SHENI

The fact that one must be tahor to consume maaser sheni changes the way one observes this mitzvah today, when achieving this status is virtually unattainable. Since we have no ashes of a parah adumah with which to purify ourselves of certain types of tumah, we cannot eat the produce of maaser sheni, nor the food purchased with the redeeming coins, since they have the same sanctity. Because of this problem, it is pointless to purchase food with these coins, and instead, they remain unused and are eventually destroyed. To avoid excessive loss, one may redeem large quantities of maaser sheni onto a very small value within a coin: this is the way we redeem maaser sheni today. Of course, we are missing the main spiritual gain of consuming the foods in Yerushalayim, but this is one of the many reasons for which we mourn the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and pray daily for its restoration.

THE LAWS OF NETA REVA'IE

We now return to the laws of neta reva'ie. Although the Torah alludes only to the redemption of neta reva'ie fruits, the Torah shebe'al peh teaches us to apply the laws of maaser sheni to neta reva'ie, where the redemption services the grower unable to transport his produce to Yerushalayim. Similarly, one may eat neta reva'ie itself only in Yerushalayim when tahor. Someone who cannot transport it there may redeem it by transferring its kedusha, holiness, to coins. When doing this, he add 25% to the value, brings the money to Yerushalayim instead of the fruit, and there purchases food to eat in the Holy City. Just as redeeming maaser sheni still allows the grower to reap the spiritual benefits of his produce, so, too, redeeming reva'ie enables the grower to benefit from the Yerushalayim experience. At this point, we can answer Rabbi Lamdan's original inquiry. The extensive literature of the Mishnah, Gemara and halachic authorities concerning neta reva'ie

assumes that the laws of neta reva'ie derive from those of maaser sheni, and that the purpose of the redemption of neta reva'ie produce is to allow someone with a bountiful reva'ie crop to benefit from the spiritual gains of his produce.

And just as we cannot make ourselves tahor today, and therefore we cannot eat the produce of maaser sheni, we can also not consume the neta reva'ie or the food purchased with its redemption coins, since they have the same sanctity. Because of this problem and to avoid the loss that would result, we may transfer the kedusha of large quantities of neta reva'ie to a coin of small value. Again, we are missing the main spiritual gain of consuming the foods in Yerushalayim, and for this, too, we mourn the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

REVA'IE IN WATERBURY?

Having answered Rabbi Lamdan's questions and also having addressed Tikvah's concern, we will now tackle the questions raised by the Levys' trees and vines. Does someone living outside Eretz Yisrael also merit fulfilling the mitzvah of neta reva'ie on his fruit? The Rishonim debate whether this mitzvah applies in chutz la'aretz, just as the mitzvah of orlah does, or if it is treated the same as most agricultural mitzvos that are exempt in chutz la'aretz. There are three basic approaches to this issue:

1. Some authorities contend that, since neta reva'ie is an agricultural mitzvah, it does not apply outside Eretz Yisrael, which is the usual, but not absolute, rule regarding these mitzvos (see Rambam, Hilchos Maachalos Asuros 10:16). Although orlah is an exception and applies even in chutz la'aretz because of a special halacha leMoshe miSinai, an oral tradition that Moshe received at Mount Sinai, reva'ie applies only in Eretz Yisrael, since it was not specifically included in the halacha leMoshe miSinai. Those who rule this way conclude that the Torah did not extend the spiritual benefits of these mitzvos to include produce grown outside Hashem's palace. Therefore, the Levys' trees are exempt from the mitzvah of neta reva'ie and all fruit produced after the orlah years are available for consumption, without any redemption procedure.
2. On the opposite side, there are authorities who contend that the halacha leMoshe miSinai that requires that we observe orlah in chutz la'aretz also requires observing the mitzvah of reva'ie; Hashem wanted us to benefit from the mitzvah of neta reva'ie, even outside the Holy Land. Therefore, the fruit that grows on the Levys' trees and vines in Waterbury during the fourth year have the sanctity of neta reva'ie (see Rabbeinu Yonah, Berachos, Chapter 6). This is the opinion that the Shulchan Aruch follows (Yoreh Deah 294:7). (For reasons beyond the scope of this article, reva'ie applies only when we are certain that the fruit grew in the fourth year, but not when we are uncertain whether it grew in the fourth year or the fifth.)

ALL FRUIT OR ONLY GRAPES

3. There is a third opinion that contends that reva'ie applies to grapes that grow in chutz la'aretz but not to other fruits (Tosafos, Kiddushin 2b s.v. esrog and Berachos 35a s.v. ulemaan). This is based on a dispute as to whether the mitzvah of reva'ie in Eretz Yisrael applies to all fruit trees, or only to grapes (Berachos 35a). Many authorities conclude that we rule leniently regarding produce grown in chutz la'aretz and therefore absolve all fruits from neta reva'ie, except for grapes (Rama and Gra to Yoreh Deah 294:7).

Thus, according to Sefardic practice of following the Shulchan Aruch, the pears, apples and grapes of the fourth year growing in Waterbury, have the status of reva'ie and require redemption. According to the Ashkenazic practice, the grapes require redemption, but not the pears or apples.

CONCLUSION

Note that the Torah states: “And in the fourth year, all its fruit shall be holy for praises to Hashem. Only in the fifth year may you eat its fruit – therefore, it will increase its produce for you, for I am Hashem your G-d” (Vayikra 19:23-25). We see that Hashem Himself promises that He will reward those who observe the laws of the first four years with tremendous increase in the tree's produce in future years. May we soon see the day when we can bring our reva'ie and eat it while tahor within the rebuilt walls of Yerushalayim