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In memory of Chaim Yissachar z"l ben Yechiel Zaydel Dov.

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Adapted from **Nechama Leibowitz** in *Iyunim b'Sefer Devarim* and **R' Yehuda Nachshoni** in *Hagot BiParshiyot Hatorah*

Answers to a Deceptively Small Demand

In Parshas Eikev (10:12-13), Moshe declares: ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את ה' אלקיך ללכת בכל דרכיו ולאבה אתו ולעבד את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך. לשמר את מצות ה' ואת חקתיו אשר אנכי מצוך היום *And now, Israel, what does Hashem your God ask of you but to fear Hashem your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, and to serve Hashem your God with all your heart and soul; to observe the commandments of Hashem and His statutes that I command you today, for your own good.*

The phrasing is striking. The words מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם imply that Hashem is asking for something small. The Sages in Berachos 33b focus on the opening demand, מה ה' אלקיך, and ask אטו אין ליראה את ה' אלקיך, is fear of Heaven really such a minor matter? The Gemara answers משה מילתא זוטרתא היא, for Moshe it was indeed a small matter. But this only sharpens the difficulty: why would Moshe address the entire nation from the perspective of his own singular spiritual level? Although the pasuk continues

beyond יראה, yiras Shamayim is its starting point and the focus of the Gemara. Eleven answers are presented below.

1. The Dubno Maggid in *Ohel Yaakov* cites the Vilna Gaon's image of a vessel filled to the brim: כלי המתמלא ביראה עובר על גדותיו ושופך. It overflows and spills its contents onto everything around it. Moshe's abundant fear of Heaven saturated his generation, so that they absorbed it naturally rather than having to labor for it entirely on their own.

2. The Kli Yakar answers that Moshe was speaking specifically to the דור דעה, the generation that had witnessed Hashem's wonders with its own eyes. For such a generation, yiras Shamayim was a relatively small request. The Malbim similarly explains that while Moshe and the שכניה were present among them, the awareness that Hashem was watching their actions made יראה readily attainable.

3. The Maharsha in Berachos resolves the difficulty from an experience Bnei Yisrael had already lived through: they had already stood in awe of Moshe. After Moshe descended from Har Sinai following the forgiveness of the Chet HaEgel, the Torah records: וירא אהרן וכל בני ישראל את משה והנה קרן עור פניו ויראו מגשת אליו *Aharon and all Bnei Yisrael saw Moshe, and behold, the skin of his face radiated, and they were afraid to approach him* (Shemos 34:30). This was not fear of punishment, since only Hashem could punish them, but יראת הרוממות, intellectual awe of greatness, the very kind of awe demanded here. Moshe was not asking them to acquire an entirely new emotion, but to redirect toward Hashem an awe they had already experienced, echoing the words of Berachos 28b: יהא מורא שמים עליכם: *May the fear of Heaven be upon you like the fear of flesh and blood.*

4. The Ramban finds the answer not in Moshe, but in the purpose of the request. He ties the question to the concluding words לטוב לך. Hashem asks nothing for His own sake: איננו שואל מעמך דבר שיהיה לטוב לך. *He asks nothing from you for His own need, but only for yours.* The Ramban concludes רק הכל הוא לטוב לך, the entire demand is solely for your benefit. Because it supplies no Divine need, it cannot be considered an oppressive burden. Likewise, the Daas Zekeinim MiBaalei HaTosafos explains: וי"ל דאקרא דלבתריה קאי: לשמור את מצות ה' וגו' לטוב לך כלומר אינו שואל מעמך דבר זה כי אם לטוב לך לטוב, The phrase refers to the following words, לטוב לך. Hashem does not ask this for Himself, but only to benefit you and increase your reward.

5. The Rambam, in *Moreh Nevuchim* (2:29), explains that for the spiritually upright, Torah is naturally easy to bear. Yiras Shamayim feels like a heavy yoke only to the wicked, who are ruled by their desires.

6. The Abarbanel and the Akeidas Yitzchak, Rabbi Yitzchak Arama, redefine the fear being demanded. It is neither the supreme awe of Hashem's majesty, which is a major achievement for anyone, nor the lesser fear of punishment. Rather, it is a constant awareness of Divine providence accompanied by genuine gratitude, something toward which the human soul is naturally inclined. As the Abarbanel writes: שאינו שואל דבר יכבד עליך ושהוא חוץ מטבעך אבל יש לך נטיה בטבע: Hashem asks for nothing unbearably difficult or foreign to your nature, but for something toward which you already possess a natural inclination. This makes the demand accessible to the ordinary person, not only to Moshe. The Abarbanel also understands the remaining

clauses as expressions and outgrowths of yirah and love, rather than as separate burdens.

7. Rabbi Yosef Albo, in *Sefer Ha-Ikkarim*, takes a more practical approach. True fear of Hashem is a supreme achievement, one that Avraham himself reached only after a lifetime of trials. Knowing that such a level cannot be demanded instantly of an entire nation, Hashem lowers the immediate bar: the people are asked to observe the mitzvot. This fits the continuation: ואת חקתיו אשר לשמר את מצות ה' ואת חקתיו אשר לשמר Through consistent mitzvah observance, a person gradually ascends toward yirah and love.

8. The Maharal, in *Nesivos Olam*, argues that fear of Heaven is woven into the fabric of the human being, so that its absence, rather than its presence, is the anomaly: מדת יראת שמים חסרון היא אם אינה נמצאת באדם *It is a deficiency when yiras Shamayim is not found in a person*. Yiras Shamayim is therefore not something foreign imposed upon the human personality, but a fundamental quality that properly belongs within it.

9. The Netziv, in *Haamek Davar*, answers that the pasuk is addressed to those entrusted with public responsibility. They are asked for the basic honesty and fear needed to judge and lead without favoritism. For a leader like Moshe, who had already attained the highest love of Hashem, the basic fear required for the honest exercise of public authority was, by comparison, a minor matter.

10. Nechama Leibowitz, in *Iyunim B'Sefer Devarim*, finds the answer in Moshe's character. The Torah testifies: והאיש משה ענו מאד *The man Moshe was exceedingly humble* (Bamidbar 12:3). Moshe simply did not perceive the vast spiritual distance separating him from the rest of the people. What was minor for him, he naturally assumed was minor for everyone.

11. The Toldos Yaakov Yosef, citing the Baal Shem Tov, offers a more mystical resolution. The world is filled with mundane fears, a mouse's fear of a cat being the classic example, but these are merely physical garments worn by the one true fear of Heaven. A person's task is to strip away these earthly disguises and uncover the Divine awe hidden beneath them, fulfilling the rabbinic charge: הוה ערום ביראה *Be shrewd in fear*. Once a person traces every worldly fear back to its root, he realizes that there is nothing ultimately to fear but Hashem, and every other fear loses its hold. Moshe had reached precisely this vantage point. For him, fear of Heaven was not one fear among many, but the root of them all, which is why it seemed to him like a minor matter.

Conclusion

Eleven approaches, and no single line runs through all of them, yet several patterns emerge. Some explain why yiras Shamayim was relatively attainable for Moshe or his generation: Moshe's own fear of Heaven influenced those around him (the Dubno Maggid); the generation had witnessed Hashem's wonders and lived in the presence of Moshe and the שכינה (the Kli Yakar); Bnei Yisrael already possessed a sense of awe that could be redirected toward Hashem (the Maharsha); or Moshe's humility prevented him from recognizing the distance between his level and theirs (Nechama Leibowitz). Others explain the nature of the demand itself. It is entirely לטוב and supplies no Divine need (the Ramban); it is natural and therefore not burdensome to the spiritually upright (the Rambam); it begins with an awareness of Divine providence and

gratitude already rooted in human nature (the Abarbanel); or it is attained gradually through mitzvah observance rather than demanded all at once (Rabbi Yosef Albo). Still others understand it as the basic integrity required of public leaders (the Netziv), or as the Divine root hidden beneath every worldly fear (the Baal Shem Tov). Perhaps the Maharal puts the underlying idea most sharply: מדת יראת שמים חסרון היא אם אינה נמצאת באדם *It is a deficiency in a person when yiras Shamayim is absent* (the Maharal, *Nesivos Olam*). Yiras Shamayim is not an exotic achievement foreign to the human soul, but a fundamental orientation that properly belongs within it. The wonder, on this view, is not that Hashem asks for it, but that something so basic can seem so distant.

Rav Schachter on the Parsha

Insights and Commentary Based on the Shiurim of Rav Hershel Schachter. Adapted by Dr. Allan Weissman

<https://tinyurl.com/RavSchachterontheParsha>

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PARSHAS EIKEV

TORAH AND PARNASSAH

ואספת דגנך ותירשך ויצהרך

And you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil. (Devarim 11:14)

thirteen) HE LAST of the exegetical principles through which the Torah SheBichsav is expounded) listed by Rebbe Yishmael is the rule of שני כתובים – two pessukim that contradict one another. When we are confronted with this situation, we are to enlist a kasuv hashelishi (third passuk) to help reconcile the inconsistency. The Gemara does not tell us explicitly what we should do if we come across two contradictory pessukim and there is no available kasuv hashelishi.

It seems that this question is actually the subject of a machlokes Tanna'im (Pesachim 68b; Beitzah 15b). The Gemara points out seemingly conflicting requirements of observance regarding the mitzvah of simchas Yom Tov. One passuk states, וצרת לד' אלקיך *“There shall be an assembly for Hashem your G-d”* (Devarim 16:8), which seems to describe a day that is consecrated to Hashem's service. Yet, the Torah also states, וצרת תהיה לכם *“There shall be an assembly for you”* (Bamidbar 29:35), which implies that one should observe the Yom Tov by partaking of physical delights. The question of the proper way to comport oneself on Yom Tov is therefore a case of two contradictory pessukim, where there is no third passuk to help resolve the apparent contradiction.

The opinion of Rebbe Eliezer is that in such a situation, the Torah offers a person two options. In other words, there are two ways to observe Yom Tov: או כולו לד' או כולו לכם – “[by devoting it] either exclusively to Hashem or exclusively to yourselves.” One may sit and learn Torah (and eat and drink as he does on a weekday), or he may eat and drink lavish meals (and daven and learn as he does on a weekday).

The opinion we accept l'halachah, however, is that of Rebbe Ye-hoshua, who reconciles the pessukim by compromising and there-by partially complying with both requirements: חלקו חציו לד'

החציו לכם – “Divide [the day]; half of it to Hashem and half of it to yourselves.” A portion of the day should be dedicated to the Beis HaMedrash and a portion should be devoted to physical pleasures. Interestingly, the Rambam, both in Hilchos Shabbos (30:10) and in Hilchos Yom Tov (6:19), seems to understand that the compromise of Rabbi Yehoshua must be implemented in a prescribed order on Shabbos and Yom Tov. Accordingly, on leil Shabbos and leil Yom Tov, one should daven Maariv and then eat his first se’udah. In the morning, he should daven Shacharis and Mussaf and eat his second se’udah, and in the afternoon, he should daven Mincha and eat his third se’udah. In other words, the activities of the day must alternate back and forth between those that are ‘לד and those that are לכם, in order to fulfill the halacha of החציו לד' והציו לכם.

[Rav Soloveitchik argued that it emerges from this that it is not proper to make Kiddush and eat the se’udah on leil Shabbos before davening Maariv, nor is it appropriate to eat se’udah shlishis before davening Mincha (see Mishnah Berurah 291:10-11; Ma’aseh Rav 64, 117). See Nefesh HaRav, 1994 ed., p. 158.]

With this in mind, we can understand a similar machlokes Tanna'im regarding the division of one’s time between learning Torah and earning a parnassah.

The Gemara in Berachos (35b) analyzes a pair of pessukim that seem to instruct disparate approaches and, once again, there is no third passuk in Tanach that can help resolve the conflict. One passuk states that one should engage in work that provides him with sustenance, ואספת דגנך ותיירשך ויצהרך – “And gather in your new grain, your wine, and your oil” (Devarim 11:14), but a different passuk demands the learning of Torah without interruption, לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיו – “This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth” (Yehoshua 1:8).

Here too, similar to Rabbi Eliezer above, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai maintains that a person must choose one particular path in life. Therefore, one must dedicate himself completely to learning Torah. In terms of earning a livelihood, Rabbi Shimon maintains that when the Jewish People act in accordance with the will of Hashem, they merit that אחרים על ידי אחרים – “their work is done for them by others.”

As in the machlokes discussed above, however, this method of resolving the contradiction is not the accepted opinion. Rather, we adopt Rabbi Yishmael’s view – that the Torah instructs, הנהג בהן מנהג – “Lead, together with [Torah study] a life conducted in the way of the world,” combining Torah study with the earning of a parnassah. In other words, it is self-understood that the passuk in Yehoshua requires limmud ha-Torah only during one’s free time. Just as one must obviously carve out time from his limmud haTorah for eating and sleeping, he is expected to do the same to earn a parnassah.

The Gemara concludes Many people did as Rabbi Yishmael – שמעון בן יוחאי ולא עלתה בידן – “advocates and were successful, while others attempted to follow the view of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai but did not succeed.” Rav Chaim Volozhiner (Nefesh HaChaim 1:8) writes that although Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai’s method is not for the masses, it is highly recommended for certain talented and dedicated

individuals. They can succeed by engaging exclusively in limmud haTorah and emerging as great talmidei chachamim.

This is along the lines of the comment of Rashi, quoting the Midrash, on the passuk, אדם אחד מאלף מצאתי – “One man in a thousand I have found” (Koheles 7:28). The way of the world is that one-thousand children enter yeshiva to learn Chumash, one hundred go on to learn Mishnah successfully, ten are successful in Talmud, and only one is capable of rendering halachic decisions.

In a related teaching, the Gemara in Chagigah (5b) interprets the three expressions of “tears” found in the passuk, ודמע תדמע ויתרד עיני דמעה כי נשבה עדר ד – “And I shall surely weep and my eyes will drip with tears, for the flock of Hashem is taken into captivity” (Yirmiyah 13:17), as a reference to three types of “misplaced persons” about whom HaKadosh Baruch Hu cries every day. The first is a person who belonged in the field of limmud haTorah, but instead entered a secular field; another is a person who did not belong in chinuch or rabbanus, but who nevertheless pursued those careers unsuccessfully; and a third is a communal leader who behaves arrogantly toward the community. Hashem is brokenhearted over all of these tragic situations.

Rav Soloveitchik often spoke of the idea that Hashem created every human being b’tzelem Elokim (in the image of G-d). The Jewish People – who possess a deeper degree of tzelem Elokim, as they are called banim laMakom (children of the Omnipresent) – were instructed, והלכת בדרכיו – “And you shall go in His ways” (Devarim 28:9). By observing this mitzvah, we preserve the middos Elokus (characteristics of G-dliness) that were implanted within us. The Rambam writes (Hilchos Dei’os 1:6; Moreh Nevuchim 1:54) that the reason we are presented with a description of the characteristics and actions of Hashem throughout Tanach is so that we know what the “ways of Hashem” are, in order that we imitate them.

The Rav noted that the Torah describes Hashem as being extremely creative, and we must imitate this “way of Hashem” as well. It follows, then, that if a person has been gifted with a particular aptitude, such as in music or science, he should pursue a career in which he applies that talent. He should not force himself to enter a field that does not match the gifts he was given to be creative with, but should rather select a profession that suits him.

In the famous passuk at the conclusion of Hoshei’a (14:10), the Navi states, כי ישרים דרכי ד' – “For the ways of Hashem are straight.” The use of the plural form דרכי indicates that there are many paths to serve Hashem. Chazal tell us that just as people’s faces are not similar to one another, so too, their ways of thinking are not identical (Bamidbar Rabbah 21:2; Tanchuma, Pinchas 10). This is considered a praise of the Creator. Unlike a man who mints many identical coins from one mold, HaKadosh Baruch Hu minted all men from the mold of Adam HaRishon, yet not one of them resembles the next (Sanhedrin 38a). The Creator never wanted all of us to conform to the same mold and make the exact same career choice.

In the concluding lines of Mesillas Yesharim, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto points out that someone who, out of necessity, enters into a lowly occupation can be a true chassid, just like one from whose mouth Torah learning never departs. We are taught that Chanoch was a simple shoemaker by trade. Yet, because he did his work l’sheim Shamayim, and in a scrupulous fashion, he is described by the Torah

as an unusual tzaddik (Bereishis 5:22): “And Chanoch walked with G-d” (see Yalkut Re’uveini [5644 ed.], p. 120; Zohar, Bereishis, 56b).

Hashem needs tzaddikim entering all kinds of fields to accomplish a kiddush Hashem. In this regard, the Gemara in Berachos (17a; see Maharsha, Chiddushei Aggados) records a dictum that the Rabbis of Yavneh were wont to repeat:

I [who am engaged in Torah study] am a creature, and my [less learned] friend is a creature. My work [of studying Torah] is in the city, and his work is in the field. I arise early to my work and he arises early to his work. Just as he does not distinguish himself by doing my work, so I do not distinguish myself by doing his work. And perhaps you will say that [I will receive more reward, for] I [study] extensively, whereas he [studies] only minimally. [This is not so!] For we have a tradition that both the one who does much and the one who does little [are equally rewarded], provided that each directs his heart toward Heaven.

There is nothing embarrassing about working for a living and following the words of the Gemara, הנהג בהן מנהג דרך ארץ. The program of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai is not appropriate for the masses, and therefore one who feels that he has to earn a livelihood should do so without compunction. No one should think that the talmid chacham will receive more reward. If people fulfill their designated roles in the world, by learning Torah according to their ability and by accomplishing a kiddush Hashem in their work, they will all receive proper reward.

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A. The 3 Mitzvos in Shma. The first perek of the Shma שמע ישראל and ואהבת, which is in the previous Parsha of Vaeschanan (6:4), as well as the second perek of Shma והיה אם שמע תשמעו אל מצותי which is in the upcoming Parsha of Eikev (11:13) both list three Mitzvos: Talmud Torah, Tefilin and Mezuzah.

B. Why 3 Mitzvos in Both Parshiyos. The first question is why these three mitzvos are mentioned in both parshiyos of Shma? That can be answered that they are listed in the second perek of Shema like Rashi brings from the Sifri to show they are an obligation even after we go into Galus and leave Eretz Yisroel.

And in terms of why these three mitzvos are listed in the first parsha of Shma in Vaeschanan may be because תפילין ומזוזה ומהדבקה each expresses and perpetuates יהוד הדש: Torah teaches and transmits it, tefillin bind its words to the body, and mezuzah places them upon the home.

C. Order of 3 Mitzvos. A more subtle and difficult question is why is the order of these mitzvos differs in the two parshiyos of Shema.

The first parsha of shma lists

1. the mitzvah of Talmud Torah (וְתַלְמֵד לְבְנֶיךָ וְלְבִיתְךָ) Teach to your children etc. (6:7)),
2. the mitzvah of tefillin (וְקָשַׁתָּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ וְהָיָה לְטֹטְפָה בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ) You shall bind them as a sign upon your arm, and as tefillin between your eyes (6:8)), and then
3. the mitzvah of mezuzah (וְכָתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבִשְׁעֶיךָ) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house (6:9)).

The second perek of Shema, however, lists

1. the mitzvah of tefillin (וְקָשַׁתָּם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ וְהָיָה לְטֹטְפָה בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ) (11:18)),
2. the mitzvah of Talmud Torah (וְלִמַּדְתָּם אֹתָם אֶת בְּנֵיכָם לְדַבֵּר בָּם) (11:19)), and then

3. third the mitzvah of mezuzah (וְכָתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבִשְׁעֶיךָ) (11:20)).

Why does Talmud Torah precede tefillin in the first parsha, while tefillin precedes Talmud Torah in the second?

D. Singular or Plural. There is another noticeable difference. The first chapter of Shma written in singular form (ואהבת ושננתם לבניך וקשרתם לאות על) while the second chapter of Shma is written in plural form (תשמעו ושמעתם)? Why does the Torah change from the singular to the plural? E. Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim and Kabbalas Ol Mitzvos. Perhaps the answer to these two questions lies in the fundamental distinction between the two parshiyos. The first parsha concerns Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim accepting Hashem's dominion, beginning with אחד אלקינו ה' אחד and שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד, while the second perek of Shma discusses Kabbalas Ol Mitzvos accepting the yoke of the Mitzvos (והיה אם שמע תשמעו אל מצותי).

We see this in the Mishnah in the second chapter of Berachos (Daf 13.): אמר רבי יהושע בן קרחה למה קדמה שמע לוהיה אם שמע אלא כדי שיקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים ויהיה אם שמע תשמעו אל מצותי Why does Shma precede ViHaya Im Shmoah?

So that a person should accept the yoke of the Kingdom of Hashem and afterwards accept the yoke of Mitzvos. (Brachos 13a)

F. First Parsha Coming to Accept ה' אחד in Private, Second Parsha Accepting Mitzvos Plural מלך הדרת מלך. This explains why the first chapter of Shma is written in singular form and the second chapter of Shma is written in plural form. With respect to accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, each person has to work on himself individually and privately to come to believe and have faith in Hashem. But with respect to accepting the yoke of Mitzvos, a person can fulfill this publicly within the Tzibur and the family, and in fact fulfilling Mitzvos in public is often preferable (ברוב עם) Mishlei 14:28). Therefore the first chapter of Shma which deals with accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven is in singular form, and the second chapter of Shma which deals with accepting the yoke of the Mitzvos is in plural form.

G. Order of 3 Mitzvos in Shma Regarding שמע ישראל First to Understand then to Do Simanim with Body of Oneness of Hashem. This also helps us understand why in the first perek of Shma the Mitzvah of Talmud Torah is mentioned before the Mitzvah of Tefilin. With regard to קבלת עול accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven a person must first understand with his mind through Talmud Torah that there is a G-d, and only afterwards can he fulfill with his body things that symbolize the oneness of Hashem.

But with regard to the second perek of שמע ישראל the Mitzva of Tefillin is mentioned first before Talmud Torah because regarding accepting mitzvos, one must keep the Mitzvos even if he doesn't understand the reasons or of the mitzvos or the underlying details. That is the concept of נעשה ונשמע, that one can accept the Mitzvos even before understanding the reasons. Therefore, in the second chapter of Shma the Mitzvah of Tefilin is mentioned first, since Tefilin symbolizes all the Mitzvos that a person fulfills with his body, while Talmud Torah is mentioned afterwards as that deals with the reasons and the ideology.

H. A similar explanation was given by both my grandfathers, Rabbi Yechiel Michal Kossowsky ZT'L and Rabbi Moshe Yitzchok Shulman ZT'L, as to why one first puts on the תפילין של יד (of the hand) and afterwards the תפילין של ראש (of the head), but one takes off the תפילין של ראש first, because even before understanding the reasons with our head, we must do the Mitzvos with our hands, and even if the reasons escape us we must continue to do the Mitzvos.

I. Why is Mezuzah Last Even in 2nd Parsha of Shma?? What remains to be understood is why the Mitzvah of Mezuzah is mentioned last in both chapters of Shma. Mezuzah being last in the first chapter of Shma על קבלת עול מלכות שמים is very logical, because with regard to שמע ישראל one first must believe in Hashem through Torah, then one can put a sign on one's body to show this belief (through Tefilin), and finally one can put a sign on one's home that this home houses a family that believes in Hashem.

But the second chapter of Shma, קבלת עול מצוות the Mitzvah of Mezuzah should logically belong before the Mitzvah of Talmud Torah, because one should do Mitzvos in one's house even before one understands the reasons for them. So why is Mitzvah of Mezuzah placed last even in the second chapter of Shma?

I would suggest that a Mezuzah on a house shows not only that parents keep the Mitzvos, but also that children who grow up in the house will keep the Mitzvos as well. If parents do not learn Torah and do not convey the belief in Hashem, they will not be able to instill in their children a devotion for the Torah and the Mitzvos. Therefore, even with respect to accepting the yoke of the Mitzvos, Talmud Torah is a necessary prerequisite to building a house of Mitzvos. And that is why even in the second chapter of Shma the Mitzvah of Mezuzah is placed last after the Mitzvah of Talmud Torah.

(Remarks below expanded from outline at yutorah.org)

Rav Eli Baruch Shulman

Parshas Eikev 5765 (August 2005)

A Land Whose Stones are Iron

I want to speak about the recent Gaza disengagement. In the wake of the painful scenes we have witnessed and the reports of the government's treatment of the people of Gush Katif, it is important to reflect on these events and consider how we should respond to them. But what I want to say is not immediately obvious, so allow me to arrive at it in my own way.

The Torah praises Eretz Yisrael with the seven species: ארץ חטה ושעורה וגפן ותאנה ורמון ארץ זית שמן ודבש, a land of wheat and barley, vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and date honey (Devarim 8:8).

From this pasuk, the Gemara derives the order of precedence for making a bracha. A fruit of the שבועת המינים takes precedence over other fruits. Among the seven species themselves, the fruit mentioned earlier in the pasuk generally comes first. Thus, a fig precedes a pomegranate, because the Torah says ורמון ארץ זית שמן ודבש. But which comes first, a pomegranate or a date? Although the pomegranate appears earlier in the pasuk, the Gemara gives precedence to the date.

The Gemara (Berachos 41b) relates that Rav Chisda and Rav Hamnuna were eating together when dates and pomegranates were brought before them. Rav Hamnuna recited the bracha over the dates first. Rav Chisda asked: does the rule not state כל המוקדם בפסוק זה קודם, that the fruit mentioned earlier in the pasuk takes precedence? Rav Hamnuna answered: זה שני לארץ וזה חמישי לארץ, the date is second after the second mention of ארץ, while the pomegranate is fifth after the first. The Torah divides the species into two groups: ארץ חטה ושעורה וגפן ותאנה ורמון, and then ארץ זית שמן ודבש. The pomegranate is fifth after the first ארץ, while the date, represented by דבש, is second after the second ארץ. Precedence is determined by proximity to either occurrence of the word ארץ. Since the date is second and the pomegranate fifth, the date comes first.

Rav Chisda was so impressed that he exclaimed: מאן יהיב לן נגרי, דפרזלא ונשמעיןך, who will give us legs of iron so that we may follow you and continue learning from you.

Why did he speak specifically of legs of iron?

Rabbi Berel Eisenstein, editor of the Encyclopedia Talmudit, noted that the very next pasuk states: ארץ אשר אבניה ברזל ומהרריה תחצב נחשת, a land whose stones are iron, and from whose mountains you will quarry copper (Devarim 8:9).

The Gemara (Taanis 4a) interprets: אל תקרי אבניה אלא בניה, do not read אבניה, its stones, but בניה, its children. The true iron of Eretz Yisrael is found not only beneath its soil, but in the strength of the Torah scholars it produces: כל תלמיד חכם שאינו קשה כברזל אינו תלמיד חכם, a Torah scholar who is not firm like iron is not a true Torah scholar. Similarly, Chazal explain (Brachos 63b) ברזל בברזל יחד, iron sharpens iron, as referring to two Torah scholars who sharpen one another in halachah.

Rav Hamnuna had shown that the importance of each species is measured by its closeness to ארץ. Rav Chisda therefore responded with an expression drawn from the Torah's next praise of the Land, ארץ אשר אבניה ברזל. To follow one of its iron Torah scholars requires legs of iron, the strength and perseverance to remain close to him and absorb his Torah.

The Torah praises Eretz Yisrael first for what grows from its soil, and then for what grows among its people. Its greatest produce is not only the שבועת המינים, but its בניה, people of spiritual strength who build, preserve, and transmit Torah.

Let us return to the disengagement. The controversy over disengagement really contained two separate debates, two סוגיות that must themselves be disengaged from one another.

The first was a question of security. Would withdrawal from Gaza strengthen Israel's diplomatic position, free military resources, and ease the demographic challenge? Or would it encourage terrorism, provide Hamas with a military base, expose Ashkelon, and project an image of retreat? *[In hindsight, following the events of October 7, 2023, this latter fear would prove tragically well founded]*

However passionately we may have felt, that decision ultimately belonged to the people of Israel. For the most part, it was not our sons serving in the army and protecting the communities of גוש קטיף, and we had not borne the full weight of Palestinian terror. The American Jewish community has long maintained that Israel's security decisions must be made by those who live there and bear their consequences. That remains a sound principle. The decision has now been made. Even those who opposed it must hope that their fears prove unfounded and that events vindicate the government's judgment.

But disengagement raised a second issue as well, one concerning not Israel's borders, but its character. The hostility directed toward the residents of גוש קטיף did not arise solely from disagreement over security. Much of it reflected resentment toward what these communities represented. They were not merely nominally observant, but שומרי תורה ומצוות, מדקדקים על קלה כעל חמורה, Jews whose vision of Israel's future differed radically from that of the secular governing elite. For the people of גוש קטיף, the force of that hostility may have felt shocking and deeply disillusioning. Yet this was not a new struggle. It was another chapter in a conflict over the character of the Jewish people in ארץ ישראל that began long before גוש קטיף, and even before the founding of the State.

A central ambition of secular Zionism was to create a new Jew, ככל הגויים בית ישראל, detached from the Torah and much of Jewish history. Its great irony, and irony is often another name for השגחה, was that it chose ארץ ישראל as the place in which to realize that dream.

What its founders failed to understand was that ארץ ישראל is not only a land of physical bounty, ארץ חטה ושעורה וגפן ותאנה ורמון, but

ארץ אשר אבניה ברזל, a land whose natural products include Torah, spiritual strength, and greatness in avodas Hashem. Thus, על אפם ועל חמתם, the State of Israel became the catalyst for an extraordinary flourishing of Torah, perhaps unparalleled since the days of Chizkiyahu HaMelech, together with a return to Torah reminiscent of the days of Ezra HaSofer. Across the Land there is a growing spiritual hunger that recalls the words of the Navi: הנה ימים, 'באים ושלחתי רעב בארץ לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כי אם לשמוע את דברי ה', a hunger not for bread, but for the word of Hashem.

We respond to the suffering of the people of גוש קטיף with compassion and practical support. Their pain is our pain — we must be נוסא with them, and maintain our bonds with the families and communities whose courage we witnessed in נצרים and גוש קטיף. But there is no room for despair. We have no illusions about the depth of the struggle, nor doubts about its ultimate outcome. גוש קטיף is one painful chapter in a longer struggle for the soul of the State of Israel — a State founded not merely in a land of natural beauty, an ארץ זבת חלב ודבש, but in an ארץ אשר אבניה ברזל, a land whose בניה possess the strength of iron, and in which Torah grows as naturally as its celebrated fruit.

We are confident that the spiritual destiny of ארץ ישראל will prevail, and that we will see fulfilled the promise: ושבת עד ה' אלקיך — the Jewish people will return, both to ארץ ישראל and to the Ribbono Shel Olam, until: ובא לציון גואל ולשבי פשע ביעקב, במהרה בימינו, אמן.

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Rabbi Benjamin Yudin

Birkat Hamazon: From Back to the Future

According to the Sefer HaChinuch, there are eight mitzvot in Parashat Eikev. One of them is the mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon, the obligation to recite a blessing after eating, as the Torah commands, "You shall eat, you shall be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d for the good land that He has given you" (Devarim 8:10).

At first glance, this mitzvah seems straightforward, i.e. we thank Hashem for the food He has provided. Yet the Sefer HaChinuch points out something remarkable: this is the only blessing that the Torah explicitly commands us to recite after the action it relates to. Nearly every other blessing we recite is rabbinic in origin. (The Ramban famously counts the blessing before Torah study as a Torah obligation based on the opening verses of Ha'azinu.) But as far as blessings commanded explicitly by the Torah itself, Birkat Hamazon stands alone. The Chinuch adds another fascinating insight. The word "u'verachta - and you shall bless" - does not mean that we bestow a blessing upon G-d. Hashem lacks nothing and has no need for our blessings. Rather, when we say, "Baruch Atah Hashem," we proclaim that He is the Source of all blessings. Some explain that the word berachah is related to bereichah, a flowing reservoir. We are acknowledging that every blessing in existence flows from Him.

That, however, raises a deeper question: why Four Blessings? The Gemara (Berachot 48b) teaches that Birkat Hamazon consists of three biblical blessings and one rabbinic blessing.

The Torah obligation includes HaZan, thanking Hashem for sustaining the entire world, Al HaAretz, thanking Him for the Land of Israel, and Boneh Yerushalayim – thanking Him for Jerusalem, the Beit HaMikdash, and the Davidic monarchy.

The Rabbis later added a fourth blessing, HaTov VeHaMeitiv, commemorating the miracle that followed the defeat of Bar Kochba at Betar. After thousands of Jews had been left unburied for more than two years, the Romans finally permitted their burial. Miraculously, the bodies had not decomposed. The blessing praises Hashem as haTov - that the bodies were preserved - and haMeitiv - that they were ultimately granted burial.

Yet this structure seems puzzling. If the purpose of Birkat Hamazon is simply to thank Hashem for our food, why isn't the first blessing sufficient? Once we have acknowledged that He sustains the world, why must we continue by speaking about Eretz Yisrael, circumcision, Torah study, the Beit HaMikdash, King David, and even the tragedy of Betar?

A Review of Jewish History

The Meshech Chochmah offers a profound answer. When we thank Hashem for our food, we are not merely expressing gratitude for a single meal. We are placing that meal within the larger story of Jewish history. Every time we bench, we relive the journey of the Jewish people.

The first blessing, HaZan, was instituted by Moshe Rabbeinu after the giving of the manna. It thanks Hashem for sustaining us during our years in the wilderness. The second blessing, Al HaAretz, was composed by Yehoshua after the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael. It celebrates the next stage of our national existence. The third blessing was formulated by David HaMelech and completed by Shlomo HaMelech upon the establishment of Jerusalem and the Beit HaMikdash. It reflects the spiritual pinnacle of Jewish national life. Then comes the rabbinic blessing of HaTov VeHaMeitiv. Even after the destruction of the Temple - even after the catastrophic defeat at Betar - Hashem had not abandoned His people. His providence continued to accompany them. Even in exile, miracles still occurred.

Birkat Hamazon therefore becomes much more than gratitude for nourishment. It is a compressed history of the Jewish people. Every meal reminds us not only that Hashem feeds us physically, but that He has sustained our nation spiritually throughout every chapter of its history.

Looking Back - and Looking Forward

Rav Schwab develops this idea even further through a famous passage in the Gemara (Berachot 20b).

The angels challenge Hashem with an apparent contradiction. In Parashat Eikev, Hashem describes Himself as: "The great, mighty, and awesome G-d, Who shows no favoritism and accepts no bribe" (Devarim 10:17). Yet the priestly blessing asks: "May Hashem lift His countenance toward you." How can Hashem show favor if the Torah itself declares that He does not?

Hashem answers: "How can I not show favor to Israel? I commanded them, 'You shall eat, be satisfied, and bless,' yet they bless Me even when they have eaten only a kezayit or a kebeitzah." Strictly speaking, the Torah obligates Birkat Hamazon only after one has eaten enough to become satiated. The Rabbis, however, required us to recite Birkat Hamazon even after eating the minimal halachic quantity. At first glance, that seems merely an act of extra piety. Rav Schwab suggests something much deeper.

Blessing After a Kezayit

If eating a kezayit does not ordinarily satisfy a person, why did the Rabbis choose precisely that amount and the volume to be enough? The answer lies in another verse. In Parashat Bechukotai, among the blessings promised for the future, the Torah says, "You will eat your bread and be satisfied." Rashi explains that this describes a miraculous future reality in which people will eat only a small amount and yet

experience complete satisfaction. The blessing will reside within the food itself.

This is not merely a future dream. The Gemara (Yoma 39a) tells us that during the lifetime of Shimon HaTzaddik, the Kohanim who received only a kezayit of the Lechem HaPanim often became completely satiated from that tiny portion. Some were even able to leave part of it over for later. Such a phenomenon has already existed in Jewish history.

According to Rav Schwab, when we recite Birkat Hamazon after eating only a kezayit, we are affirming our belief that this miraculous reality will one day return. We are expressing faith in the coming of Mashiach and in the rebuilding of the third Beit HaMikdash. Birkat Hamazon therefore does something extraordinary. It connects us simultaneously to our past and to our future. We begin with Moshe and the manna in the wilderness. We continue with Yehoshua entering the Land. We remember David and Shlomo building the Beit HaMikdash. We acknowledge Hashem's miracles even in the darkness of exile through the story of Betar. And finally, by blessing after even the smallest amount of food, we quietly proclaim our faith in the redemption yet to come.

A Different Way to Bench

Perhaps this should change the way we experience Birkat Hamazon. Yes, it is a prayer of gratitude for the food before us. But it is also something much richer. It is a journey through Jewish history. It is a declaration that the G-d Who sustained us in the wilderness, brought us into our land, established His Temple, accompanied us through exile, and continues to perform miracles for His people, will yet bring us to the final redemption.

A Shabbat meal may last two hours. Yet Birkat Hamazon is often rushed through in just a few minutes. The Meshech Chochmah and Rav Schwab remind us that those few minutes contain an astonishing amount of history, theology, gratitude, and hope. Perhaps the next time we bench, we should slow down just a little. After all, we are not simply thanking Hashem for a meal. We are retelling the story of the Jewish people - from the manna in the desert to the coming of Mashiach.

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subject: Cracking Open - Essay by Rabbi YY Jacobson

[Abridged]

Cracking Open - Why Breaking the Tablets Was Moshe's Greatest Accomplishment

Dedicated for a refuah shleima b'karov for Moshe ben Bachmal Esther
"The world breaks everyone, and afterward many are strong at the broken places." Ernest Hemingway

The story, recorded in both Exodus and Deuteronomy, is familiar. After the Jewish people fashioned the Golden Calf, Moses shattered the stone tablets created by G-d and engraved with the Ten Commandments. Moses then pleaded on behalf of the people, and G-d agreed to forgive them if they truly repented. Moses carved a second set of tablets, G-d engraved the Ten Commandments upon them, and Moses brought them to the people.

Yet several major questions arise.

First, why did Moses have to shatter the tablets? If he felt that the people were unworthy of receiving them, he could have hidden them or returned them to their heavenly Maker.

Second, the sages teach that both the whole tablets and the broken tablets were placed in the Ark of the Covenant.[1] The fragments of the first tablets

were carried into the Land of Israel and kept beside the second tablets in the Holy of Holies.

Why preserve these fragments in the holiest place on earth? They were a constant reminder of one of the Jewish people's greatest moral failures. Why not deposit them elsewhere or allow them to disappear from memory?[2] Finally, the Torah identifies the breaking of the tablets as the climax of Moses' life.

At the conclusion of Deuteronomy, the Torah declares:

"There arose no prophet in Israel like Moses, whom G-d knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders that G-d sent him to perform in the land of Egypt... and for the mighty hand and the great, awesome deeds that Moses performed before the eyes of all Israel."

What did Moses perform "before the eyes of all Israel"? Rashi explains:

"His heart emboldened him to break the tablets before their eyes, as it is written, 'And I broke them before your eyes.' G-d agreed with him, as it is written, 'which you broke'—יִשָּׁר כַּחךְ שִׁשְׁבַּרְתָּ, well done for having broken them." [3]

This is astonishing. After all Moses accomplished—leading the Jews out of Egypt, splitting the sea, receiving the Torah, shaping a nation, and shepherding it through the wilderness—the Torah concludes its tribute to him with the breaking of the tablets.

Even if Moses was justified, how could this tragic act represent the summit of his achievements and the final message of the entire Torah?

In the Fragments

Moses did not break the tablets merely because he was angry or had lost control. Their breaking was itself the beginning of healing.

Before the sin of the Golden Calf, the Jewish people could find G-d in the completeness of the tablets and in the spiritual wholeness they represented. After the sin, that dream had been shattered. Yet hope was not lost. They would now have to discover G-d within the broken pieces of what had once seemed perfect.

Moses was teaching one of Judaism's deepest truths: holiness can emerge not only from a spiritually perfected life, but also from the fragmented and demoralized human spirit. The broken tablets, too, contain the light of G-d. That is why both the whole tablets and the broken ones rested in the Holy of Holies. Their presence proclaimed that even from the broken pieces of life, a person can create a holy of holies.

G-d therefore affirmed Moses' decision: יִשָּׁר כַּחךְ שִׁשְׁבַּרְתָּ, *thank you for breaking them*.[4] The broken tablets, representing the shattered dimensions of human existence, have their own story to tell and their own light to reveal. Truth is found not only in wholeness, but sometimes most profoundly in brokenness.[5] There are moments when G-d asks us to serve Him with clarity, strength, and a sense of fullness. At other times, He asks us to find Him within the shattered experiences of our lives.

We pray always to possess the "whole tablets." But when we encounter the broken ones, we must not flee from them or surrender to despair. We must gather them tenderly and bring them into our own holy of holies, remembering the teaching that there is nothing more whole than a broken heart.

We naturally associate G-d with our moments of spiritual clarity. But can He also be found in the conflicts that torment us? In anxiety, addiction, confusion, despair, or pain? Can holiness be discovered in the struggle between a godless existence and a G-d-centered life?

We often associate religion only with our visibly "religious" moments.

Moses demonstrated that holiness can be carved even from a person's alienation from G-d. From psychological and spiritual brokenness, an even deeper relationship may emerge.

The breaking of our tablets can crack us open. It can strip away a false and superficial identity, humble the ego, and expose the Divine core concealed within us.

This is why the Torah concludes its tribute to Moses with this act. His greatest achievement was not only bringing the Torah down from heaven, but showing humanity what to do when the Torah has been shattered—how to gather the fragments, preserve their sanctity, and transform brokenness itself into a holy of holies.

There is light, holiness, and even joy to be discovered among the fragments.[6]

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Footnotes [1] Bava Basra 14a. [2] On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol avoided gold in the inner service because it recalled the Golden Calf. Yet the broken tablets remained in the Holy of Holies. See Ramban and Ritva to Bava Basra 14a; Likkutei Sichos, vol. 26, Ki Sisa. [3] Rashi to Deuteronomy 34:12. [4] Shabbos 87a; Rashi ad loc. and to Deuteronomy 34:12. [5] G-d told Moses that although the first tablets contained only the Ten Commandments, the second would also include Halachah, Midrash, and Aggadah. Their breaking thus led to a deeper revelation. See Shemos Rabbah 46:1. [6] Based on a talk by the Lubavitcher Rebbe delivered on 20 Av 5725, August 18, 1965, on his father's yahrzeit: "There are times when G-d wants your mitzvos, and other times when He wants your broken tablets

from: RIETS Kollel Elyon from RIETS Bella and Harry Wexner
Kollel Elyon Substack riets@substack.com date: Jul 29, 2026
Tu B'Av: **Lashon Hara and Shiddukhim**
Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman
[Abridged]

Tu B'Av: Lashon Hara and Shiddukhim

The Mishnah counts the fifteenth of Av among the happiest days of the year. The daughters of Jerusalem would dance in the vineyards wearing borrowed white garments, so that those who lacked fine clothing would not be embarrassed. They called to the young men, with different groups emphasizing different qualities relevant to marriage (Ta'anit 26b, 31a). Some differences were deliberately concealed, while other qualities were highlighted. What must be disclosed, and what may remain unsaid, is a difficult question addressed extensively by the halachic literature.

The obligation to speak. One of the most complex areas of lashon hara is *to'elet*, speech necessary for a constructive purpose. When information is needed to protect another person, disclosure may be not merely permitted but obligatory.

R. Yisrael Isser Zevulun observes that although the prohibition of lashon hara receives great emphasis, the failure to warn an innocent person of danger may be equally serious (*Pitchei Teshuvah, Orach Chayim* 156). R. Moshe Shternbuch similarly stresses that withholding necessary information can be as grave as improper disclosure (*Teshuvot ve-Hanhagot* I, 558).

This is particularly relevant to shiddukhim. Failure to disclose material information may cause lasting harm to an unsuspecting spouse. Conversely, false, exaggerated, outdated, subjective, or irrelevant information can unfairly destroy both the present shiddukh and future opportunities. The principle of *to'elet* is clear; determining which information falls within it requires careful judgment.

The question of timing. Even when information must eventually be revealed, timing remains critical. Premature disclosure may give a limited issue disproportionate weight before the couple has met. The Poskim describe this danger as *kol davar katan mekalkel*, any small matter may ruin the prospect. After the parties have recognized each other's positive qualities, the same information may be assessed in a

broader context (*Kehillot Ya'akov, Yevamot* 38; *Iggerot Moshe, Orach Chayim* IV, 118; *Even HaEzer* IV, 32:4).

The standard of *ve-ahavta le-re'akha kamokha* does not provide an automatic answer. Some would want all information in advance, while many happily married people are grateful that certain facts were not revealed before they had an opportunity to meet. However, if an issue will almost certainly prevent the marriage, delay merely causes additional pain and may constitute *ona'at devarim*.

Nondisclosure may also involve *geneivat da'at*, the creation of a false impression. If the information is so material that the other party would not have married had it been known, there may also be *ona'ah* and potentially *mekach ta'ut*, a mistaken transaction that calls the validity of the marriage into question.

No general summary can resolve these cases authoritatively. Whether disclosure is obligatory, advisable, permissible, or forbidden often depends upon the precise circumstances.

General principles. The Chafetz Chaim applies the rules of *to'elet* directly to shiddukhim. When a couple is preparing to marry, a third party should disclose a major hidden defect, including heretical beliefs or serious illness (*Hilkhot Rekhilut*, Klal 9, tziyur 3). By contrast, a trait such as naivete does not ordinarily justify unsolicited disclosure.

Nor must every perceived deficiency be volunteered. The Chafetz Chaim states that a young man's limited Torah scholarship need not be disclosed, because the other family bears responsibility to investigate. More broadly, clear harm to an unsuspecting spouse may require unsolicited intervention, while subjective shortcomings or matters reasonably open to investigation may not.

Modern circumstances complicate this distinction. A family asking whether someone is a "Torah scholar" may mean very different things: a future posek, someone respected by his peers, a person serious about mitzvot, someone who maintains regular Torah study, or one with unusual analytical ability. The respondent must understand the actual concern before answering (R. Nissim Karelitz, *Chut HaShani* 7:1).

A person may inquire about whatever qualities are genuinely important and may consult multiple sources. The Chafetz Chaim requires the questioner to explain that the inquiry is for purposes of a shiddukh, so that any negative response is clearly directed toward *to'elet*. Questions and answers must be precise rather than expressed through vague labels that can easily be misunderstood.

Medical and related matters. Medical cases depend upon recurring considerations: whether the condition is likely to affect married life, whether it may recur, whether it can be transmitted to children, and whether it would concern most people or only particular individuals. R. Nissim Karelitz rules that an illness likely to recur must be disclosed and states that any condition liable to interfere with *shalom bayit* requires disclosure. R. Moshe Shternbuch requires disclosure of significant psychological or emotional problems, except where the cause has disappeared and outstanding physicians determine that recurrence is not expected. Other Poskim distinguish among information that must be volunteered by a third party, information that need be revealed only if asked, information that the person dating must disclose personally, and matters requiring no disclosure.

R. Moshe Feinstein held that a fertility condition likely to resolve need not necessarily be disclosed, while the Tzitz Eliezer ruled that definite infertility must be revealed even by an unasked third party. A significant likelihood of transmitting a condition to children likewise requires disclosure.

As a broader guideline, R. Menashe Klein is cited as ruling that a condition need not be volunteered when it would not trouble most people. R. Yitzchak Zilberstein recommends, in appropriate cases, *megaleh tefach u-mekhaseh tefachayim*: initially reveal enough to indicate that there is more to investigate, allowing the other party to ask further questions.

Similar issues arise regarding conversion, halachic status, past misconduct, and the medical or moral history of the family. R. Yitzchak Ya'akov Weiss distinguishes between a single serious youthful transgression followed by genuine teshuvah and repeated misconduct. The former may not require disclosure, while the latter ordinarily does, even when the person has repented. Determining whether another person has genuinely changed is itself difficult. *Solicited and unsolicited information.* Many Poskim distinguish between being asked and volunteering information. Objective dangers may require proactive disclosure because of *lo ta'amod al dam re'ekha*. Subjective shortcomings may become relevant only when one party identifies them as important through a specific question.

R. Shlomo Rozner explains that before a subjective concern is raised, its potential harm is uncertain, while disclosure will certainly harm the person being discussed. R. Nissim Karelitz similarly suggests that definite danger triggers the duty to protect, while subjective concerns fall under the obligation to give sound advice, which arises only when advice is requested.

Bias, miscommunication, and former dates. The Chafetz Chaim requires that one speaking for *to'elet* not be biased against the subject. In shiddukhim, information may come from a former date, someone interested in one of the parties, or another person with a conscious or unconscious agenda. Even an unbiased source may barely know the individual. Families often give excessive weight to a tenuous acquaintance merely because that person is the only available connection.

Inquirer and respondent must also “speak the same language.” Vague questions can produce answers that fail to address the true concern. When parents conduct the inquiry, their priorities may differ from those of their child, and the respondent must consider what information will genuinely serve a constructive purpose.

When a shiddukh ends, discussing the former date is especially dangerous. Unless the person presents a danger to others, one should not describe the individual's faults to uninvolved people, including parents or a shadchan. Constructive feedback may be given in general terms to clarify what type of match would be more appropriate, but needless disparagement is forbidden.

The opposite danger arises once a relationship has become firmly established. Negative information may no longer prevent the marriage yet may weaken the couple's respect for one another and return during future moments of tension. At that stage, disclosure may produce harm without meaningful benefit.

Business or personal? Material information that would have prevented the marriage must be disclosed. A harder question concerns lesser imperfections that create an inaccurate impression but would not have changed the decision to marry. In commercial law, selling an item on a material false premise may constitute *mekach ta'ut*. Even a nonmaterial false impression may violate *geneivat da'at*. How, then, can anyone marry without disclosing every imperfection?

The Steipler explains that the commercial comparison is fundamentally incomplete. Merchandise is interchangeable; a buyer would gladly exchange a flawed item for a perfect one. A spouse is not interchangeable. A happily married person would not exchange a unique spouse for a hypothetical “perfect model.” Marriage means accepting the complete person, including strengths and limitations (*Kehillot Ya'akov, Yevamot* 38).

The Klausenberger Rebbe offers another approach. The Rama notes that later generations customarily avoid excessive scrutiny in shiddukhim where no halachic impediment exists. Those entering the shiddukh process implicitly recognize that every minor imperfection will not be disclosed, because demanding complete disclosure would make marriage impossible (*Divrei Yatziv, Even HaEzer* 15). Both approaches restore perspective. Marriage has lifelong consequences, and no information necessary for a responsible decision may be concealed. Yet investigating a spouse must not become the evaluation of a commercial investment. Human beings are unique and cannot be reduced to a list of attributes, defects, or calculations.

The laws of lashon hara protect a person from losing that uniqueness in a blur of gossip and disconnected details. Their careful application must protect innocent people from genuine harm while preserving the dignity and humanity that allow two individuals to come together as one.

from: Michal Horowitz <michalchorowitz@gmail.com>

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Eikev 5786: **A Land, and Nation, That Lives with Hashem**
By Michal Horowitz

Parshas Eikev contains some of the Torah's most beautiful descriptions of Eretz Yisrael. As Moshe Rabbeinu prepares the nation to enter the Promised Land, he does not describe merely a place of physical beauty or agricultural abundance. Rather, he describes a land whose very essence is bound to the Presence of Hashem.

כי ה' אלקיך מביאך אל ארץ טובה... ארץ חטה ושעורה וגפן ותאנה ורמון ארץ זית שמן ודבש - For Hashem, your G-d, is bringing you to a good land... a land of wheat and barley, grapevines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey from dates (Devarim 8:7-8).

The Torah continues: ואלכלת ושבעת וברכת את ה' אלקיך על הארץ הטובה אשר נתן לך - You shall eat, be satiated, and bless Hashem for the good land that He has given you (8:10).

Yet immediately afterward, Moshe issues a warning: השמר לך פן תשכח את ה' אלקיך - Beware lest you forget Hashem your G-d... (8:11).

The Torah's concern is striking. Precisely when life is comfortable, when the fields flourish, the vineyards produce fruit, and the tables are filled with blessing, a person may mistakenly believe that success is entirely the result of his own efforts. Therefore, the Torah repeatedly reminds us that Eretz Yisrael is unlike every other land.

Later in the parsha, Moshe teaches:

אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ דָּרַשׁ אֹתָהּ תָּמִיד עֵינֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּהּ מְרִשִּׁית הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרֵית שָׁנָה - The land... is not like the land of Egypt... It is a land that Hashem, your G-d, seeks out; the eyes of Hashem your G-d are always upon it, from the beginning of the year until the end of the year (11:11-12).

The Torah reminds us that if we go in the ways of Hashem in the Land of Hashem:

וְנָתַתִּי מָטָר אֲרֻצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ... וְאִסַּפְתָּ דֶגְגָּךְ וְתִירְשֶׁךָ וְיִצְהַרְךָ. וְנָתַתִּי עֶשֶׂב בְּשָׂדֶךָ לְבִהֶמְתֶּךָ וְאָכְלָתָּ - I shall provide the rain for your land in its proper time, early rains and late rains, and you shall gather your grain, your wine, and your oil. I shall place grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be satisfied (11:14-15).

And if we remain faithful to the Torah: לְמַעַן יִרְבּוּ יָמֵיכֶם וְיָמֵי בְנֵיכֶם עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר - נִשְׁבַּע ה' לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר לָהֶם כִּי־יִמִּי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ - So that your days, and the days of your children, may be increased upon the land that Hashem swore to your forefathers to give to them, like the days of heaven upon the earth (11:21).

It is the relationship between the nation, the land and HKB”H that distinguishes Eretz Yisrael from all other lands.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the Rav, zt”l, expresses this idea beautifully: "Hashra'at ha-Shekhinah, the reality of the Divine Presence, is a continuous process in Eretz Yisrael; it is part of the climate. Just as there are different kinds of climates, cold climates and warm climates, similarly there are climates completely devoid of the Divine Presence and climates very conducive to it. Just as it is natural to get up in the morning and see the sun shining or hear the rain falling, so it is natural in Eretz Yisrael to get up in the morning and find the Shekhinah. Just as one who walks out in the rain must get wet, and one who walks out in the sunshine must feel warm, so too, one who lives in Eretz Yisrael must feel and absorb the ruah ha-kodesh, must simply be saturated with kevod Elokim... "The eyes of the Lord, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year " (Deut. 11:12)... No other land in the world can imitate this quality. All one needs to do is open oneself up to the divine flow, which is like dew or a stream coming down upon the land from Heaven." (Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, The Lord is Righteous in All His Ways, ed. Jacob J. Schacter (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2006), pp.308-309.)

During our recent visit to Eretz Yisrael, we prepared for Shabbos in the shuk Machaneh Yehuda on Friday afternoon. We stood at the Kotel, humbled in tefila before Hashem. We walked through the alleyways of the Old City, where every stone whispers thousands of years of the Jewish story.

We traveled north to Teveriah and gazed upon the tranquil waters of the Kinneret, with the mountains behind them alight with the glow of the setting sun. We spent time in Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu, walking the lush and exquisite vineyards, palm-tree/date fields, and blossoming fruit trees that dot the kibbutz landscape. We walked to the nearby ma'ayan, whose cool waters flow through the heat of the Beit She'an Valley.

We gave a tremp to an IDF soldier returning home, to Be'er Sheva, for just one precious day after serving in Lebanon. We spent time in Beitar, a city pulsating with Torah learning, watching the huge, full moon slowly rise over the mountains of Harei Yehuda. We walked through the vibrant streets of Rehovot, and enjoyed pre-Shabbos shopping in the bakery, flower shop, cafe, and streets of this city.

Each place possessed its own distinct beauty. In Eretz Yisrael, there is an unmistakable awareness that this is Hashem's land. Perhaps this is precisely why the Torah tells us that Hashem's eyes are always upon the Land. The physical beauty of Eretz Yisrael is certainly manifest, but its true beauty lies in its spirituality, for it is the gateway to Heaven.

Our connection to Eretz Yisrael is not merely historical. It is not only political or emotional. It is deeply spiritual. It is woven into our tefillos, our mitzvos, our longing, and our identity as a nation.

May we soon merit to witness the complete redemption, when the Divine Presence will once again be fully revealed in Tzion, and all of Klal Yisrael

will return to our beloved Land in everlasting peace.

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Nusach of Tefillah

Rabbi Nosson Neustadt

The Jewish people are primarily divided into two sects, Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Aside from the differences between these two sects in halachah and minhag, they also have two distinct nuscha'os (formulae) for tefillah. The Poskim explain that the varying nuscha'os do not preclude each other's validity. There are basic criteria for a tefillah, as codified in the Gemara, and these criteria must be met – and are met – by all nuscha'os. But beyond that, the particulars of the tefillah actually differed from time beginning.¹⁰³ Kabbalistic sources explain that our tefillos ascend to Heaven through twelve different gates, corresponding to the twelve tribes. Each tribe davened with their unique nusach and minhagim, which were suited to the gate through which their tefillos ascended. Hence, state the Poskim, one should never deviate from the nusach of his family and community.¹⁰⁴

Although presently we cannot be certain about our lineage, and do not know if the nusach we use corresponds to the nusach of our tribe, we are enjoined to rely on the nusach of our eminent forefathers and trust that their tradition remained intact since the time they were aware of their lineage.¹⁰⁵

Accordingly, the people of each community must adhere to their traditions and not deviate from the nusach handed down to them by their forebears.

This is their guarantee that they are davening correctly.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, an Ashkenazi may not daven in the nusach of Sephardim and vice versa.

Bedieved, though, if one did daven in the other nusach, he will have fulfilled his tefillah obligation and is not required to daven again.¹⁰⁷

In cases of necessity, a person may daven with a different nusach. The Poskim list a number of situations which would warrant a change of nusach: One comes to a shul which davens with a different nusach and finds no siddurim that follow his nusach, and he does not know the tefillos by heart. If this is the only chance he will have to daven with a tzipbur, he may use the shul's siddurim and follow their nusach.¹⁰⁸ Certain parts of tefillah must be recited with the same nusach as the tzipbur. (This will be discussed at length below.) A person davening with a congregation that follows a different nusach from his own, must recite these parts of davening according to the congregation's nusach. In a school which is attended by both Ashkenazim and Sephardim it would be too difficult to instruct each group of children to follow their minhagim. Instead, the school should have everyone daven according to the nusach of the majority of the student body.¹⁰⁹

Pronunciation

Ashkenazim and Sephardim differ in their pronunciation of Lashon Hakodesh. Although these differences can be significant, both groups can be confident that they are fulfilling their obligations of berachos, tefillah, and Kerias HaTorah by adhering to their traditional pronunciation.¹¹⁰

Accordingly, the Poskim state that it is not for the individual to presume to determine which of the pronunciations is correct. Nor should the individual decide to prefer the other pronunciation over his own. Each person is expected to follow the custom of his ancestors. The Poskim explain that this is mandated by the pasuk which states תַּשׁוּב תֹרַת אִמְךָ – “Do not forsake the Torah of your mother.” The Poskim thus express themselves critically about a person who changes from his traditional pronunciation.¹¹¹

Bedieved, though, if one did change his pronunciation, he will have fulfilled his obligation and does not need to daven again.¹¹² Under pressing circumstances as well one may deviate from his traditional pronunciation.

For example, if a person was raised to read lashon hakodesh differently from his family's tradition and it is difficult for him to change back to his tradition, he may continue davening in the way he was taught.¹¹³ Yet, if he is an Ashkenazi, he should attempt to at least recite the Name of Hashem with the Ashkenazic pronunciation.¹¹⁴

Kerias HaTorah should follow the pronunciation of the congregation.¹¹⁵ If the only person available to serve as a ba'al korei is one who can only read according to a different pronunciation, it is acceptable to have him read the Torah.¹¹⁶

Regarding the reading of Parashas Zachor, the Poskim debate as to whether one can fulfill his obligation by hearing it read in a pronunciation different from his own. Some hold that, as with davening and ordinary Kerias HaTorah, one will fulfill his obligation here as well, albeit bedieved.¹¹⁷ Others hold that one can only fulfill the obligation of Parashas Zachor by hearing a reading that follows his tradition.¹¹⁸

¹⁰³ Magen Avraham 68:1 ¹⁰⁴ Arizal cited in Magen Avraham ibid. ¹⁰⁵ Teshuvos Chasam Sofer, Orach Chaim 16. ¹⁰⁶ Talmud Yerushami (Eiruv 3:9) cited by Magen Avraham ibid. (Note that our text of Yerushalmi is different than the way it is quoted by the Magen Avraham.) ¹⁰⁷ Mishnah Berurah 68:4. ¹⁰⁸ R' Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, cited in Tefillah Kehilchasah, appendix, p. 538. ¹⁰⁹ Shevet Halevi 8:20. ¹¹⁰ See Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim 3:5. ¹¹¹ Igros Moshe ibid, Halichos Shlomo, Tefillah 1:6 with Orchos Halachah 5:67; Kovetz Teshuvos 1:12. ¹¹² See Da'as Notah, vol. 1, p. 258, note 45. ¹¹³ Halichos Shlomo, Tefillah, 5, Dvar Halachah 37. ¹¹⁴ R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, cited in Yisa Yosef, Orach Chaim 2:25; see also Shevet Halevi 8:20. The reason for this is that a number of earlier authorities raised issue with the recitation of Hashem's Name in Sephardic pronunciation. Namely, it is the pronunciation of the Name with the kamatz (Ad__noi) that makes it clear that it is a reference to Hashem, while pronunciation with the pasach (Ad--nai) connotes "my masters," which could be referring to human beings. Thus, the failure to distinguish between the pasach and the kamatz actually changes the connotation of the word from a Name of Hashem, to a reference to mortals (see Rabbeinu Bachye, Bereishis 18:3; R' Ya'akov Emden in Sulam Beis Eil, in the first paragraph, immediately after the Introduction). For discussion and support of the Sephardi pronunciation, see Yalkut Yosef 5:6, with fn. 6. ¹¹⁵ See Teshuvos Vehanhagos 1:154. ¹¹⁶ Halichos Shlomo, Tefillah 5:20. See, however, Teshuvos Vehanhagos ibid., who seems to limit this leniency to situations where the ba'al korei pronounces the Name of Hashem with the Ashkenazic pronunciation. ¹¹⁷ Halichos Shlomo ibid; R' Nissim Karelitz cited in Igeres HaPurim 1, note 7. This also seems to be the opinion of Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim 3:5. ¹¹⁸ Mikra'ei Kodesh, Purim 6, note 4 (Harerei Kodesh)