YERUSHALAYIM in/out times for KI TEITZEI

ב”ד אלול ה’תשפ”ב

September 9-10, ’22

🕰️ 6:18PM Earliest (Plag) • 🕒 5:35PM • 🕒 7:29PM R' Tam • 8:09PM

For other locales, click on Z'MANIM link

PhiloTorah (109kite) - 1 - all@once file
**S'lichot**

Eidot Mizrach - a.k.a. S'faradim - begin saying S'lichot in the 2nd of Elul - and continue throughout the month.

Ashkenazim begin S'lichot on the Motza'ei Shabbat (or Sunday morning) before Rosh HaShana - if there will be at least four days of S'lichot. This happens when Rosh HaShana begins on a Thursday or on Shabbat.

Not this year. When R"H is Monday-Tuesday (as it is this year) or Tuesday-Wednesday, then S'lichot begins a week earlier.

This year, first S'lichot for Ashkenazim is Motza'ei Shabbat Parshat Ki Tavo, August 17th.

**L'DAVID...**

Most have the minhag to say Psalm 30 - L'DAVID, HASHEM ORI V'YISHI, twice a day, from the first of Elul through Hoshana Rabba.

Nusach Ashkenaz say it at Maariv and Shacharit, and Nusach S'fard say it at Shacharit and Mincha.

Interestingly, with the 29 days of Elul and the first 21 days of Tishrei, L'DAVID is said 100 times.

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**KI TEITZEI**

49th of the 54 sedras; 
6th of 11 in D'varim

Written on 212.8 lines; ranks 21st

44 Parshiyot; 2 open, 42 closed; rank: 1

110 p'sukim; ranks 28th (5th in D'varim)

1582 words; ranks 23rd (5th in D'varim)

5856 letters; ranks 26th (6th in D'varim)

Slightly larger than average p'sukim; below average for D'varim. Overall, an average-sized sedra. But Mitzva-wise...

**MITZVOT**

74 of Taryag - 27 ASEI, 47 LO TAASEI

Ki Teitzei has the most mitzvot (12.1% of the Torah's), most positive mitzvot (10.9%), most prohibitions (12.9%), and most parshiyot of any sedra.

The MD (mitzva density) of Ki Teitzei is 673 m/kp (mitzvot per 1000 p'sukim). This is very high, as we would expect. The whole Torah's MD is 105. Ki Teitzei is the second most mitzva dense sedra. Most dense is K'doshim, with 51 mitzvot in its 64 p'sukim, it has a MD of 797.

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**Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary**

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.
Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam’s Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

**Kohen - First Aliya**

*12 p’sukim - 21:10-21*

[S>21:10 (5)] The "beautiful captive": A Jewish soldier must resist the "normal" temptations of battle, but is permitted to take a captive woman - only according to the approved Torah procedures [532, A221 21:11].

Looking at this mitzva from both ends, we first see it as a "concession to the base inclinations of a man", in the heat of battle. On the other hand, it demands more of the Jew than is common of soldiers all over the world (obviously, not all soldiers), who are notorious for immoral behavior.

If he decides after the one-month waiting period not to marry her, he must release her without abusing, humiliating, or selling her [533, 534; L263, L264 21:14]. A Jew’s marriage to a Y’FAT TO’AR is also conditional on her conversion to Judaism. If she does not want to convert, he must release her. If she does convert and they want to marry, then it is a full, regular Jewish marriage, with K’dushin & Ketuba...

[S>21:15 (3)] A man may not favor the son of his beloved wife over his firstborn from a "less-loved" wife. (The juxtaposition of these two topics implies that marrying for the wrong motive is likely to lead to a "hated wife").

This passage is the source of the firstborn's inheritance. Ramban counts two mitzvot here - the positive command to give the firstborn a double portion and the prohibition of not giving it to him. Rambam and the Chinuch include the rules of the firstborn as part of the laws of inheritance from Parshat Pinchas and not separately here. This is just one of many examples of different countings among the Sages who attempted to identify the traditional count of TARYAG, 613 mitzvot.

**SDT:** The Vilna Gaon sees a REMEZ to the double portion of the B’chor in the letters of the word B’CHOR: BET- KAF-REISH. Each letter is double the letter before it - BET (2) is double ALEF (1), KAF (20) is double YUD (10), REISH (200) is double KUF (100). (No other letters of the alef-bet are double their predecessors.)

*If you have the right math-minded child or adult, you can challenge them to find all the letters of the ALEF-BET that are double their immediate predecessor. Rather than telling them. Then you can tie it to the sedra.*

[S>21:18 (4)] The "rebellious son" is warned by his parents to mend his ways. If he continues to defy them, violates certain mitzvot, engages in a specific sequence of actions, and if he...
is of a specific age and at a particular stage of physical development, and his parents are healthy, normal, and deemed to be on equal levels of character, then, and only then, would it be possible to execute him as a "Ben Sorer U'moreh". Although it is (almost) impossible to reach that ultimate point - and sources indicate that there never actually was a case of "the rebellious son" - this parsha serves as a stern warning to wayward children - AND their parents! Some mitzvot seem to be intended primarily as deterrent and Mussar.

Just as one example of the improbability of there actually being a BEN SORER UMOREH: the boy in question would have to be between 13 and 13¼ years old and would have to be at the beginning stage of puberty. If that three month window of time does not coincide with the onset of puberty, he cannot be an "official" rebellious son. There are so, so many other technical conditions that must be met that it seems obvious that we were not expected to actually execute a rebellious child as a BEN SORER UMOREH...

**Levi - Second Aliya**


[S>21:22 (2)] Those executed by stoning were hung after death [535, A230 21:22] for a brief period of time before sunset. They were then buried [536, L66 21:23] (with the hanging post) to avoid extra embarrassment to the Divine image in which we were all created.

The hanging of the body after execution (which is done in some cases, not all) serves as a deterrent for others and is part of the atonement process for the soul of the guilty party.

**A MINI-LESSON IN ENGLISH**

The past tense of 'hang' is 'hung' - if that which is hung is inanimate. If a person was executed by hanging, then the past tense of hang is hanged. The cattle thief was hanged for his crimes. The picture was hung on the wall. And in this case, the dead body was hung on a post shortly before sunset...

Using "Kal VaChomer" (if this is the respect shown the body of an executed felon, how much more so...), we are taught that burial, in general, and "as soon as is feasible", in particular, is the proper procedure for the dead [537, A231 21:23].

[S>22:1 (3)] One is required to return identifiable lost objects to their rightful owners [538, A204 22:1], even if doing so is difficult. One cannot ignore this responsibility [539, L269 22:3] even if it is easier to just leave the object alone.

Technically, the laws of LOST & FOUND apply to possessions of fellow Jews. However, with the potential for Kiddush HaShem and its opposite, depending upon what one does, it is important to go out of one's way to return a lost item...
to a non-Jew as well (and maybe even more so, in some cases!). This too is part of halacha, not just nice to do.

[S>22:4 (1)] Nor may one ignore a fellow's beast of burden that has collapsed under its load [540, L270 22:4]. One is required to help his fellow load his animals [541, A203 22:4].

Sefer HaChinuch points out that this mitzva-pair applies to other animals, not just donkey, and it applies to people as well, by reasoning a KAL VACHOMER. If you see a fellow human over-loaded with what he or she is carrying (or trying to carry), it is a Torah mitzva to help out. Furthermore, if you are approached by friend or neighbor who offers to help you carry some of your packages, you should consider letting him/her, rather than the typical, “It’s okay, I got it.” It allows your burden to be eased while the other person does a mitzva. Everyone benefits.

[S>22:5 (5)] Men and women may not interchange apparel [542, 543; L39,40 22:5] nor do certain things that are specific to the opposite sex.

R' Yonatan b. Uziel in his Aramaic translation/commentary on Torah, "defines" the prohibition of a woman wearing a man's garb, as the mitzvot of Talit and T'filin. Not everyone agrees, but it's something to think about; it might explain (partially) why women traditionally have not voluntarily done these mitzvot, even though there are many other mitzvot that are not obligatory on women that they have taken upon themselves.

[P>22:6 (2)] When one happens upon a (kosher) bird's nest (in the wild), it is forbidden to take the mother bird alone or with her eggs or chicks [544, L306 22:6], but one may (must? - this is the subject of a dispute with a decidedly kabalistic flavor on the side that suggests it is an imperative rather than the assumed "if you want the eggs...") take the eggs/chicks if one first sends the mother bird away [545, A148 22:7]. This is an enigmatic mitzva that defies logic. It is shrouded in mysticism, more so than most other mitzvot.

Although our Sages attribute kindness to animals as a reason for some mitzvot - e.g. not muzzling an animal that is working with food, helping to unload a beast of burden, not plowing with an ox and a donkey together - they (our Sages) were more cautious with Shilu'ach HaKen. It can be argued that it is far kinder to leave a nest alone than to chase away the mother bird. And if kindness were the issue, why does the mitzva not apply to a non-kosher bird? Or to a male bird who is tending the nest? This mitzva is more CHOK-like than other mitzvot involving animals.

Shlishi - Third Aliya
29 p'sukim - 22:8-23:7

[S>22:8 (2)] One is required to build a
protective fence around one’s (habitable) roof. It is forbidden to leave safety hazards on one’s property.

Oral law defines these mitzvot as more inclusive than just one's roof. Rabbinic law, "taking the Torah's lead", extends "safety & health" rules further into many areas. Rambam says that a person may not tell others: "Don't tell me what to do; if I want to risk my health or life, it's my business." Saying this can make a person liable to the punishment of MAKAT MARDUT (under conditions when that punishment was meted out). All Israel are reponsible for each other.

One may not plant mixed grains in a vineyard, nor may one eat the resulting products.

"Strangely", these two mitzvot - MAAKEH and Mixed Grain - share a single parsha. What connects them to each other more than other neighboring mitzvot? (Keep in mind that Ki Teitzei has the most parshiyot of any sedra. Many mitzvot are in their own parsha, so when two different kinds of mitzvot share a parsha, we have a question to ask. And for which, I don't have an answer - yet.)

Plowing with ox and donkey together is forbidden, as is the tying together of any non-compatible animals (or humans) for any purpose.

Rambam holds that the Torah prohibits any combination of a kosher and non-kosher animal, based on the fact that the Torah's example is one of each. Rambam says that combinations of two kosher or two non-kosher animals is forbidden by Rabbinic law. Many authorities challenge Rambam's distinction and say that it is all Torah law.

Furthermore, whereas most commentators attribute this mitzva to the avoidance of TZAAR BAALEI CHAYIM, the Rambam considers it as a partner mitzva (my term) to the prohibition of cross-breeding animals.

Do not wear Shaatneze, wool and linen together.

...put tzitzit on all four-cornered garments that you wear [counted back in Sh'lach].

It is a mitzva to marry according to Jewish Law and for the husband to write a K'TUBA for his wife with various promises and assurances.

The juxtaposition of tzitzit to marriage seems to be the source of the minhag of many Ashkenazi Jews of starting to wear a Talit when one marries (even though the Talit Katan is worn from early childhood). Other communities disagree with waiting until marriage to wear Talit Gadol.

If a man had falsely accused his (betrothed) wife of infidelity, he may not divorce her (unless she so desires). Penal-
ties are also paid to the girl’s family for the insult.

[S>22:20 (2)] If the betrothed maiden did, in fact, willfully, intentionally have relations with another man, and there are kosher witnesses and proper warning, and all the other rules of evidence, then she is an adulteress and can be executed (by stoning).

[S>22:22 (1)] If a man and a married woman have relations (knowing full-well the married status of the woman), and neither was forced, then they are both subject to the death penalty for adultery. [This prohibition counted from Commandment #7 in Parshat Yitro, and is repeated in Va’etchanan.]

[S>22:23 (2)] The same applies if the woman is “just” betrothed (this is more than what we call engagement, in our time). The specific incident of stoning is generalized to the mitzva upon the court to carry out the punishment of ”stoning” whenever required [555, A220 22:24].

[S>22:25 (3)] Both consenting parties to a forbidden relationship are culpable. However, if it is possible to consider the woman an unwilling participant, then she must not be punished. We must not punish anyone who might not be responsible for their actions [556, L294 22:26]. This is the source of giving people the benefit of the doubt. This does not mean that the person always deserves the benefit of the doubt. Maybe they actually sinned. The answer - it will have to be left to G-d to punish them; we are obligated to explain the situation as in this example - ”certainly the girl screamed but there was no one to save her.”

[S>22:28 (2)] A man who forces himself on an unmarried maiden must pay a fine to her father. If the girl wants to be married to the man, he must marry her and never initiate divorce (she, of course, may insist that she wants nothing to do with him and then the court will force him to divorce her, had they married) [557, 558; A218, L358 22:29].

[S>23:1 (1)] A man may not marry his father’s former wife (even after his father’s death).

[S>23:2 (1)] Castrated men (not all - it depends on how their situation happened) have marriage restrictions [559, L360 23:2].

[S>23:3 (1)] A ”mamzer” has marriage restrictions [560, L354 23:3]. A mamzer is the offspring of a union that is prohibited by the Torah, with a death penalty. This includes incestuous and adulterous relationships. He may, however, marry a mamzeret or a female convert to Judaism. And vice versa for a mamzeret.

[S>23:4 (4)] Amonite and Moabite males may not marry into the ”Congregation of G-d” [561, L53 23:4], because of the cruel, inhospitable behavior of those two nations towards Israel. And also because they hired Bil’am to “bless” us. Nor may we ever
offer those two nations peace as an alternative to war, as is required of all our other enemies [562, L56 23:7].

The Torah is giving a reason for a mitzva, something that it rarely does. We are to do mitzvot because they are G-d's commands. In this case, it is precisely the reason given for this mitzva that allowed our Sages to declare Ruth the Moavite able to marry into the Nation. It was the Moavite men who displayed that unforgivable behavior, not women, who did not "go out" and confront B'nei Yisrael.

R’VI’I - Fourth Aliya 17 p’sukim - 23:8-24

[S>23:8 (2)] OTOH, converts from Edom and Egypt are not to be discriminated against, but can fully integrate only from the third generation on [563, 564 L54, 55 23:8].

[S>23:10 (6)] A military camp must be kept spiritually and physically clean. Sanitary facilities must be provided outside the camp and soldiers must be equipped with appropriate tools for maintaining proper sanitation [566, 567; A192, A193 23:13,14].

An offshoot of this mitzva: entry to Har HaBayit (referring to the area where the Beit HaMikdash and its courtyard DID NOT stand) by people with certain types of ritual impurity is forbidden [565, L78 23:11]. (The area where the Mikdash was - or might have been - is off-limits to all t’mei’im.)

Conceptually, we must realize that G-d's presence among us is affected by our physical and moral behavior. Thus, these mitzvot have ramifications to Jewish society as a whole, and not merely in a military setting.

[S>23:16 (2)] A slave who runs from his master to us for protection, may not be returned. Nor may we abuse a slave who seeks haven in Eretz Yisrael [568, 569; L254, L255 23:16,17].

[S>23:18 (2)] Prostitution is forbidden [570, L355 23:18] and its revenues may not be used for sacred matters [571, L100 23:19]. (Some sources consider the prohibition sex between unmarried people as part of mitzva #570.)

[S>23:20 (2)] Although interest on personal loans may not be taken from a Jew, it is correct to lend to non-Jews with interest [572, 573; L236, A198 23:20,21].

Society in general accepts the reasonableness of moderate interest on loans. Since a non-Jew can charge a Jew interest, the Torah gives us permission to take interest from them. Usury, loan sharking, is universally recognized as a wrong-doing; but the ban against any interest at all is particular to us - it is as if G-d is commanding us to go out of our way to help the less fortunate in our midst.

[S>23:22 (3)] Pledges to the Mikdash must be fulfilled within the cycle of the three festivals [574, L155 23:22].
It is advisable to refrain from making promises, but once made, a person must keep them [575, A94 23:24]. (Hatarat N’darim provides an ”out” for certain ill-advised promises, within limits. Consult a Rav for specific cases.)

**Chamishi 5th Aliya**

6 p’sukim - 23:25-24:4

*S>23:25 (1)* Workers are entitled to eat of the food (that which is connected to the ground) they are working with [576, A201 23:25], but may not take any home without permission [577, L268 23:25].

*S>23:26 (1)* Workers mustn't eat while they are working [578, L267 23:26]. In other words, their right to eat [576] is restricted to their breaks.

We see a beautiful balance in the area of Torah Law as it relates to boss-worker relations. On the one hand, the worker is allowed to eat from that which he picks. On the other hand, he cannot do this while he is actually working, as this would reduce his efficiency, thereby short-changing his boss. On the other hand, the boss must provide breaks during the day, when the worker is allowed to eat. On the other hand, the worker may not take any of the fruits home with him, without permission. Talmudic law adds to this list for both sides. For example, it advises a worker not to overdo the eating, although it is permitted, lest the word get out and people will stop hiring him. Boss may not take advantage of worker, and worker may not take advantage of their boss.

*S>24:1 (4)* If a married couple wants to end their marriage, it must be done with a proper ”get” [579, A222 24:1]. If a divorcee has remarried, and is subsequently widowed or divorced, she cannot remarry her first husband [580, L356 24:4].

**Shishi - Sixth Aliya**

9 p’sukim - 24:5-13

*S>24:5 (2)* A man is exempt from military service during the first year of his marriage [581, L311 24:5], during which time he is to see to it that his wife is happy [582, A214 24:5].

This applies to Milchemet R’shut, optional wars. For Milchemet Mitzva - obligatory wars - there are no exemptions.

On another note - a husband gets a military exemption for a year, but the"seeing to it that his wife is happy" is an untimed obligation (and hopefully a great pleasure, as well).

One may not take a vessel used for preparing food as a security against a loan [583, L242 24:6]. We must be sensitive to the needs of the borrower.

*S>24:7 (1)* Kidnapping and selling the victim is a capital offense. Kidnapping is already counted as a prohibition...
from Commandment #8, LO TIGNOV (i.e. stealing a person) in Yitro. That was the “warning”; this is the notice of "punishment". Both are needed.

[S>24:8 (2)] We must not remove signs of Tzora’at [584, L308 24:8]. Always remember what happened to Miriam. [Some mitzva-counters count this ZACHOR among the 613.] What happened to Miriam is that she was punished for speaking ill of her brother Moshe and she was afflicted with Tzoraat; hence, the connection between these two p’sukim that share this parsha.

[S>24:10 (4)] We must not be overly forceful in the taking of a security from a poor person who has borrowed from us [585, L239 24:10]. We must not withhold that which has already been taken from him; if he needs it, we must return it to him [586, 587; L240, A199 24:12,13]. Another positive-prohibition pair of mitzvot.

Along the lines above, of G-d expecting (commanding) us to go way beyond the norm (of the rest of the world) in our treatment of borrowers (basically, this involves personal loans to fellow Jews - not business investments, including loans that are set up like a business deal (with a heter iska).

Let's say you lend someone money and he gives you his winter coat as a security for the loan. Repayment was due at the end of the summer, but the person was not able at that time to repay the loan. Then the winter is upon us and he still hasn't repaid the loan. You have to give him his coat back so that he won't be cold in the winter. Logical? No, not really. You lent him money. You took something in security of the loan. He hasn't given you the money yet. You shouldn't have to give him the coat back. That's the standard of regular human behavior. The nicer people among the nations of the world might also give back a needed object. But that would be their personal decision. We, the Jewish People, are required - commanded - to give it back. ASHRECHA YISRAEL.

Sh’VII Seventh Aliya
28 p’sukim - 24:14-25:19

[S>24:14 (2)] We may not take unfair advantage of our less-fortunate workers. A day-laborer must be paid on time [588, A200 24:15]. The partner-prohibition of delaying his wages is counted elsewhere.

[S>24:16 (1)] Close relatives may not testify against (or for) one another in criminal cases [589, L287 24:16]. There is also the implication here that a person will not be punished for deeds of his parents or children. This is an example (one of many) of a pasuk teaching us two or more quite different things.

[S>24:17 (2)] One must not pervert justice even on behalf of an orphan [590, L280 24:17]. Securities for a loan must not be taken from a widow [591,
Our experience in Egypt is to be remembered as the motive for many of these "sensitizing" mitzvot.

That which is forgotten in the fields after harvesting must be left for the poor; one should not return for it himself.

The previous parsha set down the rules of SHICH'CHA; this parsha adds rules for proper kind behavior when picking olives and grapes. Again we are reminded of our Egyptian experience. Even though Egypt was unspeakably cruel to us, our experience there is supposed to sensitize us to others.

The punishment of makot (whipping) is to be administered by the courts to those found guilty of sins punishable thusly, but care must be taken not to exceed the required number of lashes.

The prohibition of not exceeding the approved number of lashes, also includes the more general prohibition of striking a fellow Jew.

Do not muzzle an animal when it is working with food.

The widow of a man without offspring is forbidden to marry anyone else until... She either "marries" her brother-in-law (Yibum) or the relationship is severed by chalitza, in which case she may marry anyone else (except for a kohen).

The Torah speaks of a man dying without having a BEN. Does that mean "son" or "child"? In this case, the word BEN includes any offspring. If a man has no sons, only a daughter, and he dies, his widow is free to marry anyone except a Kohein Gadol. And she may never marry her late husband's brother.

If the deceased husband had no brothers, there is no YIBUM/CHALITZA.

In our time, there is a Rabbinic ban on YIBUM and so CHALITZA is required - no choice.

If person "A" is pursuing "B" to kill him, we must save B's life even if it means killing "A". Do not show mercy to the pursuer, "A". If it is possible to stop "A" without killing him, we must do so - to kill him would be murder - even though he forfeits his life, so to speak - because he is a RODEIF.
Mere possession of false dry or liquid measures or weights is forbidden [602, L272 25:13]. Honest weights and measures is one of the pillars of society; G-d despises those who cheat in business.

The final portion of the sedra is ZACHOR. We are commanded to remember what Amalek did to us on our way out of Egypt [603, A189 25:17]. The Jewish People as a whole are commanded to destroy the remnant of Amalek from this world [604, A188 25:18]. We (each Jew) must never forget what Amalek did [605, L59 25:19].

Technically, these mitzvot apply to the specific Amalek nation. The idea of remembering and never forgetting, however, must be extended to the Amalek-types that have plagued us throughout Jewish history.

Yeshayahu draws a comparison between the covenant that G-d made with all mankind via No'ach and the promises to the People of Israel concerning their future. Just as G-d promised never to flood the whole Earth again, so too does He promise not to rebuke and punish Israel (in the future).

Haftara 21 p’sukim
Yeshayahu 54:1-55:5

The haftara for Parshat R’ei is ANIYA SO’ARA (Yeshayahu 54:11-55:5) and that of Ki Teitzei, RONI AKARA (Yeshayahu 54:1-10). When R’ei is also Rosh Chodesh (as it was this year), the Rosh Chodesh haftara bumps that of R’ei - because there is another appropriate Shabbat to add it to the haftara, namely Ki Teitzei. If this wouldn’t be so, we probably would not have bumped ANIYA SO’ARA. This means that for this Shabbat, Ki Teitzei, we read the haftara of Ki Teitzei and follow it with that of R’ei. They are continuous in the book of Yeshayahu. And the combined reading happens also to be the haftara of Parshat No’ach (for Ashkenazim - S’faradim read only RONI AKARA for No’ach).

Bringing the Prophets to Life

Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler
Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

Ki Teitzei

I begin this week's article with a question, wondering if any others have shared my experience - or not? During my first years after our Aliya, I entered my car one day to drive my usual morning route, only to find that the road I had been traveling each morning had suddenly become a one-way street... in the opposite direction?! I read of no warnings the day before nor saw any signs as I traveled that morning - but there it was! Everything had changed overnight!
Well, whether or not you have also undergone this kind of experience, I am relatively sure that you have heard even frequent visitors to Israel remark of how there had been so much growth in the little time that they were away. Which gets me to this week's haftara.

As we marked Rosh Chodesh Elul just two weeks ago - on Shabbat R'ei - the traditional haftara of consolation was replaced by the selection read on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh. As a result, this Shabbat we add the haftara we "missed" to the usual haftara for this parasha, giving us the opportunity to read the entire perek 54 in Sefer Yishayahu (as we also do for the haftara of Parashat Noach) that is made up of both of these selections.

RONI AKARA!!!, the navi cries out to Yerushalayim at the outset of the haftara and perek itself. Describing the Holy City as an AKARA, a barren woman, Hashem is quoted as reassuring the city that, although she has been "barren" for so many years, bereft of her "children" - her population, she should now rejoice. But why? KI RABIM B'NEI SHOMEIMA… - "For the children of the barren (Jerusalem) will (yet) outnumber those of the (present) inhabited Jerusalem" - explained by most commentaries as Hashem's promise that the future population of Yerushalayim would increase significantly.

The Malbim, however, "tweaks" this common explanation with what is, I believe, an especially meaningful approach for us today. He explains that G-d comforts Israel with the promise of a renewed and repopulated Jerusalem, whose rebirth will be due to the arrival of those who were "barren" of their motherland and who will return to her and fill her streets once again. The Malbim elaborates on his unique "take" of these p'sukim by explaining that the prophet emphasizes his description of the barren Yerushalayim as a woman who LO CHALLA, never had experienced birth pains and yet, her lost brethren from the Diaspora would pour into her borders, providing her with innumerable "children" - without causing her to suffer the pains that accompany birth! The Malbim even supports this view by pointing to the p'sukim in perek 49 (v. 21 - the haftara we read for parashat Eikev), where we read of the astonished city wondering from where all of her population had suddenly appeared. "Who has begotten these?" she will ask, "For I have been bereaved and alone!"

A fair question, I believe. After all, who would ever imagine it? A quiet
18th century village with few inhabitants would overflow with a population close to one million?! Dusty roads once traveled only by caravans and camels would become streets and boulevards that would change overnight to one-way routes in order to absorb the ever increasing traffic?! And the once-barren plots of land would be humming with the never-ending sounds of heavy machinery, busily constructing more apartments to satisfy the growing demand for living space, and changing the country's horizon each month?! Indeed, could they imagine hearing Amharic, French, Russian and English - languages reflecting diverse origins - emanating from the mouths of their once "lost" brothers and sisters?!

Yes. Certainly a fair question!

And so, the next time you get a bit frustrated at the traffic tie-ups or at the cacophony of construction noises - just think of our haftara and remember the Malbim!

Or, perhaps just close your eyes and listen - you might just hear Yishayahu's words echoing in your ears.

Because they may well be the sounds of the Geula.*

The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests

Sho-f'tim

* and there are two (I think) Unexplaineds; hint for one of them: late 16th century, France.

The blood types are for the disputes and questions that are to be brought to the Sanhedrin - including BEIN DAM L' DAM

Hundreds of years ago in France, the four kings of a deck of cards represented for different actual kings: The king of spades was for King David. King of Hearts: Charles (possibly Charles-
magne, or Charles VII). King of Diamonds: Julius Caesar. King of Clubs: Alexander the Great. Since the Torah requires that our king be from our nation and not from any other, the king of spades has a YES and the other kings are all NO.

**Ki Teitzei**

Israeli tank represents the many times "army" issues are mentioned in the sedra - The Beautiful Captive, the cleanliness of an army camp, exemption from service for a groom for the first year of marriage, destroying Amalek...

[X] The Xed out noose is NOT the hanging that is meant in Ki Teitzei - rather it is the hanging of the body after execution [X] Warning lights to prevent someone getting injured from a hazard on one's property - the flip side of MAAKEH [X] Boot is for CHALITZA and the whole subject of YIBUM [X] Quail and her eggs and nest - the mitzva of Shiluach HaKen [X] CHUPA stands for several topics related to marriage [X] Garden spade is the YATEID, digging tool, that is required of soldiers to have and use for hygienic "bathroom" [X] The headstone is for the mitzva to bury our dead, and reasonably quickly [X] The donkey = many references to either donkey or other animal. The donkey gets lost, he is overburdened, he cannot pull a plow with an ox... [X] two 1kg weights obviously different - false weights and measures. Forbidden even to possess [X] Covered wagon drawn by two horses with a saddled goat tied behind the wagon is a Torah violation of plowing with an ox and a donkey together [X] Taxi driver being paid at the conclusion of a ride is a fulfillment of B'YOMO TITEIN S'CHARO, paying someone you hired, on time [X] Purim grogger stands for ZACHOR and especially wiping out Amalek [X] KEY = KI, the word that starts the sedra off and appears 50 times (including twice V'CHI) [X] T'filin are not mentioned in Ki Teitzei. Here it refers to the prohibition of a woman's wearing K'LEI GEVER, men's apparel - according to Targum Yonatan ben Uziel [X] Pawn = "Something given as security for a loan...", which is in the sedra [X] Xed out cat-o-nine-tails. MAKOT, whipping, punishment for many violations, was with a broad leather strip meant to hurt but not cut [X] two goldfish in a bowl are a pair of pets - sounds like parapets meaning MAAKEH (groan) [X] Murex Trunculus from which T'cheilet is made on a background the color of T'cheilet, for G'DILIM TAASEH LACH... [X] Bubble bath for KETZEF in haftara [X] Dove with olive branch for MEI NO'ACH in haftara [X] TAGIM, the three small marks on some letters, and the left top part of others are found on the letters SHIN, AYIN, TET, NUN, ZAYIN (spelling SHAATNEZ - in the sedra) and GIMEL and TZADI (GETZ) [X] The eye whose eyelashes were being applied with mascara represents the prohibition for a man to wear a woman's dress. SIMLAT ISHA does not only mean women's garments, but it also prohibits other...
things that are recognized as things women do and that men generally do not (can also represent what the Y'FAT TO'AR does not do during the month) ☺

Gorilla for sale: The Torah prohibits M'CHIR KELEV, which means that if a dog was "sold" by exchanging it for one or more sheep (or goats, doves...), the animals that are M'CHIR KELEV are not usable as korbanot - probably so too with a gorilla ☺ and this specific gorilla is Magila, which reminds of Parshat Zachor at the end of the sedra ☺ the flowers are Forget-me-nots, as in LO TISHKACH. Final words of the sedra ☺ the dove with the olive branch is the well-known symbol for peace, which the Torah requires us to offer other nations before going to war with them. Only Amon and Moav are not given that option ☺ And the Unexplained in the lower-right corner

לעֵזְנֵי
הָרְבָּעָה עַקְבּ בֵּית בֶּר דּוֹד אָרוֹם
ז”ל
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks *

To the Third and Fourth Generations

Ki Teitzei

There is, on the face of it, a fundamental contradiction in the Torah. On the one hand we hear, in the passage known as the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, the following words:

The Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness and truth ... but who does not acquit the guilty, holding descendants to account for the sins of the fathers, children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation" (Sh'mot 34:7).

The implication is clear. Children suffer for the sins of their parents. On the other hand, we read in this week's parsha:

Parents shall not to be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents. A person shall be put to death only for their own sin (D'varim 24:16).

The book of M'lachim records a historic event when this principle proved decisive. When Amaziah was well-established as king, he executed the officials who had assassinated his father. However, he did not kill the children of the assassins, for he obeyed the command of the Lord as written by Moshe in the Book of the Law: "Parents shall not to be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents. A person shall be put to death only for their own sin" (M'lachim Bet 14:5–6).

There is an obvious resolution. The first statement refers to Divine justice, "at the hands of Heaven". The second, in
D'varim, refers to human justice as administered in a court of law. How can mere mortals decide the extent to which one person's crime was induced by the influence of others? Clearly the judicial process must limit itself to the observable facts. The person who committed the crime is guilty. Those who may have shaped his character are not.

Yet the matter is not so simple, because we find Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel, the two great prophets of exile in the sixth century BCE, restating the principle of individual responsibility in strong and strikingly similar ways. Yirmiyahu says:

In those days people will no longer say, 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' Instead, everyone will die for their own sin; whoever eats sour grapes - their own teeth will be set on edge (31:29-30)

Yechezkel says:

The word of the Lord came to me: "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the Land of Israel: 'The parents eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As surely as I live", declares the Sovereign Lord, "you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For everyone belongs to Me, the parent as well as the child - both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die" (18:1-4).

Here the prophets were not speaking about judicial procedures and legal responsibility. They are talking about Divine judgment and justice. They were giving the people hope at one of the lowest points in Jewish history: the Babylonian conquest and the destruction of the First Temple. The people, sitting and weeping by the waters of Babylon, might have given up hope altogether. They were being judged for the failings of their ancestors that had brought the nation to this desperate plight, and their exile seemed to stretch endlessly into the future. Yechezkel, in his vision of the valley of dry bones, hears God reporting that the people were saying, "Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost" (37:11). He and Yirmiyahu were counselling against despair. The people's future was in their own hands. If they returned to God, God would return to them and bring them back to their land. The guilt of previous generations would not be attached to them.

But, if this is so, then the words of Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel really do conflict with the idea that God punishes sins to the third and fourth generation. Recognising this, the Talmud makes a remarkable statement:

Said R' Yosi b. Chanina: Our master, Moshe, pronounced four [adverse] sentences on Israel, but four prophets came and revoked them ... Moshe said, "the Lord punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation." Yechezkel came and declared, "The one who sins is the one who will die" (Makot
In general the Sages rejected the idea that children could be punished, even at the hands of Heaven, for the sins of their parents. As a result, they systematically re-interpreted every passage that gave the opposite impression, that children were indeed being punished for their parents' sins. Their general position was this:

Are not children then to be put to death for the sins committed by their parents? Is it not written, "Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children"? - There the reference is to children who follow in their parents' footsteps [literally "seize their parents' deeds in their hands", i.e. commit the same sins themselves]. (B'rachot 7a, Sanhedrin 27b)

Specifically, they explained biblical episodes in which children were punished along with their parents by saying that in these cases the children "had the power to protest/prevent their parents from sinning, but they failed to do so" (Sanhedrin 27b; Yalkut Shimoni, 1:290). As Rambam says, whoever has the power of preventing someone from committing a sin but does not do so, he is seized (i.e., punished, held responsible) for that sin.

Did, then, the idea of individual responsibility come late to Judaism, as some scholars argue? This is highly unlikely. During the rebellion of Korach, when God threatened to destroy the people, Moshe said, "Shall one man sin and will You be angry with the whole congregation?" (Bamidbar 16:22). When people began dying after King David had sinned by instituting a census, he prayed to God: "I have sinned. I, the shepherd, have done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let Your hand fall on me and my family" (Sh'muel Bet 24:17). The principle of individual responsibility is fundamental to Judaism, as it was to other cultures in the ancient Near East.

Rather, what is at stake is the deep understanding of the scope of responsibility we bear if we take seriously our roles as parents, neighbours, townsmen, citizens, and children of the Covenant. Judicially, only the criminal is responsible for his crime. But, implies the Torah, we are also our brothers' keepers. We share collective responsibility for the moral and spiritual health of society. "All Israelites", said the Sages, "are responsible for one another" (Shavuot 39a). Legal responsibility is one thing, and relatively easy to define. But moral responsibility is something altogether larger, if necessarily more vague. "Let a person not say, 'I have not sinned, and if someone else commits a sin, that is a matter between him and God.' This is contrary to the Torah", writes Rambam in his Sefer HaMitzvot.

This is particularly so when it comes to the relationship between parents and children. Avraham was chosen, says the Torah, solely so that "he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what..."
is right and just" (B'reishit 18:19). The
duty of parents to teach their children is
fundamental to Judaism. It appears in
both the first two paragraphs of the
Sh'ma, as well as the various passages
cited in the "Four Sons" section of the
Haggadah. Rambam counts as one of
the gravest of all sins - so serious that
God does not give us an opportunity to
repent - "one who sees his son falling
into bad ways and does not stop him".
The reason, he says, is that "since his
son is under his authority, had he
stopped him the son would have
desisted." Therefore it is accounted to
the father as if he had actively caused
his son to sin.

If so, then we begin to hear thechal-
lenging truth in the Thirteen Attributes
of Mercy. To be sure, we are not legally
responsible for the sins of either our
parents or our children. But in a deeper,
more amorphous sense, what we do and
how we live, do have an effect on the
future to the third and fourth
generation.

Rarely has that effect been more
devastatingly described than in recent
books by two of America's most
insightful social critics: Charles Murray
of the American Enterprise Institute,
Notwithstanding their vastly different
approaches to politics, Murray in
Coming Apart and Putnam in Our Kids
have issued essentially the same
prophetic warning of a social cata-
strophe in the making. For Putnam, "the
American dream" is "in crisis". For
Murray, the division of the United
States into two classes with ever
decreasing mobility between them "will
end what has made America America".

Their argument is roughly this, that at a
certain point, in the late 1950s or early
1960s, a whole series of institutions and
moral codes began to dissolve. Marriage
was devalued. Families began to
fracture. More and more children grew
up without stable association with their
biological parents. New forms of child
poverty began to appear, as well as
social dysfunctions such as drug and
alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancies and
crime and unemployment in low-income
areas. Over time, an upper class pulled
back from the brink, and is now
intensively preparing its children for
high achievement, while on the other
side of the tracks children are growing
up with little hope for educational,
social, and occupational success. The
American Dream of opportunity for all is
wearing thin.

What makes this development so tragic
is that, for a moment, people forgot the
biblical truth that what we do does not
affect us alone. It will affect our children
to the third and fourth generation. Even
the greatest libertarian of modern
times, John Stuart Mill, was emphatic
on the responsibilities of parenthood.
He wrote:

The fact itself, of causing the existence
of a human being, is one of the most
responsible actions in the range of
human life. To undertake this
responsibility - to bestow a life which
may be either a curse or a blessing - unless the being on whom it is to be bestowed will have at least the ordinary chances of a desirable existence, is a crime against that being.

If we fail to honour our responsibilities as parents, then - though no law will hold us responsible - society's children will pay the price. They will suffer because of our sins.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(1) What are the fundamental duties of a parent towards their children?

(2) To what extent do you think children should take responsibility for their own mistakes?

(3) To what extent do you think that all Jews should take responsibility for each other?

Ki Teitzei has more mitzvot than any other sedra - 74 of the 613. That's a whopping 12% of the Torah's mitzvot. That's 11 more mitzvot than the K2-BuzzAldrin-Avis sedra, Emor.

One can feel Moshe Rabeinu's anxiety as he gets closer to the day of his passing. This feeling began with R'ei's 55 mitzvot and didn't calm down much with Sho-f'tim's 41. But Ki Teitzei is the top.

Allow me to review a number of points about mitzvot that emerge from this mitzva motherlode.

Point: Some mitzvot are more inclusive than the Written Word would indicate. For example, we are commanded by Torah law, to bury our dead and to do so post-haste. The Oral Torah teaches us that this halacha is part of the Torah mitzva to do so with one who was executed by Beit Din for certain capital offences and hung after death for a short period of time.

Similarly, that a "Beautiful Captive" is to be married (or released) with full rights of a Jewish wife is stated in the Written Word. That the mitzva applies to all wives, is part of the Oral Law which explains that mitzva.
Point: Sometimes, words used in the presentation of a mitzva are to be generalized - and sometimes they remain very specific.

Do not plow with an ox and a donkey together, includes any two non-compatible animals for any task.

On the other hand, Shaatnez is very specifically wool and linen in a garment (or some thing that have garment-like function).

Elephant and zebra pulling a bandwagon is a Torah violation.

Wearing cotton and wool blends is totally okay - not a Torah problem, not a Rabbinic problem, not a chumra, not a minhag - nothing.

How do we know when words like donkey, ox, day, BEN (son/child) are exclusive or inclusive? We know from the inseparable component of Torah, the Oral Law. The Written Word without the Oral Law is incomplete, very often misunderstood, distorted, and sometimes perverted.

Point: Many prohibitions in the Torah come with "other side of the coin" positive commands. This should not be considered unnecessary duplication or merely for emphasis, but rather adding an important dimension to the mitzva topic. Do not free a servant empty-handed AND sent him off with a decent stake for his new free life. Qualitatively different. So much more to say...

Walk through the Parsha with Rabbi David Walk

IT'S WAR!!

This week's Torah reading begins with the Jewish nation going off to war. At the end of last week's parsha and again at the beginning of this week's, we have a few rules about how to conduct a war. This is important, because war, and violence, in general, can bring out the worst in humanity. Way before the four Geneva Conventions established international legal standards for the conduct of war, the Torah set up some guidelines. We always knew that this was important, but the present Russian behavior in the Ukraine is shocking us all over again.

All of this is very important, but throughout much of Jewish history, at least for the last 2000 years, we had no armies, therefore, no wars. Therefore, many commentaries looked at these verses allegorically. The Kli Yakar, writing in the early 17th century explains:

The verse refers to enemies in the plural, but when the verse reports that God will place the enemy into your hand, the term is NOTANO, in the singular... Rather the verse is
definitely talking about a specific, personal enemy, who earlier was referred to as one of many individual enemies. So, MI HU ZEH, VEIZEH HU? (Who is this, and who is he? Famous reference to Haman). This is none other than the inner oppressor and enemy, the SATAN, the YETZER HARA (the evil inclination), who fights against you at your most vulnerable times, especially times of war (D'varim 21:10).

One cool and important aspect of this approach is that initially the reference to the YETZER HARA is plural. Then each soldier on the front lines conquers a singular, specific enemy. This is crucial, because each one of us has our own evil inclination to combat and, hopefully, defeat. It's like standing at a buffet and watching the diners examine the choices, then check their plate, then check their waistline. Each diner has a different dietary demon to defeat. So, too, with sins, it's a smorgasbord of temptations out there. Know your particular enemy!

The Ba'al Shem Tov heartily agreed with this approach. He added that this allegory about the YETZER HARA is a warning that this fiend is ever on the prowl to entrap the unsuspecting. So, you must go to war with great speed and cunning to 'capture' the YETZER HARA, by noticing the danger and then being careful to never heed the SATAN's evil suggestions.

The Ohev Yisrael adds that this war is specifically to recollect the NITZOTZOT (sparks) which were spread throughout the world as a result of Adam and Chava's primordial sin, 'Yisrael through their MA'ASIM TOVIM ('good deeds') and pure thoughts redeem them from their imprisonment in the impure earthly realm'. It sounds like a noble quest, and we are worthy knights errant, in search of chivalrous adventure.

But later the Ohev Shalom quotes the Gemara in Chagiga (15a) about the BAT KOL (Heavenly voice) which descends pleading with the Jews to do T'shuva. The Rebbe then explains that God, in infinite compassion, deeply desires that all the sinners return to Him in truth and sincerity. This is a very sweet, but totally different scenario. Where's the swashbuckling conquest of the YETZER HARA?

It's clear that there are two visions of T'SHUVA. There is the fierce battle against the foul forces which will entice one into sin, but there is, simultaneously, a warm welcome home for the person who lost their way and wandered from the path.
L'HAVDIL (and it's clearly not an exact analogy, by any means) we should behave similarly in the war on drugs. The evil drug lords, who personify the YETZER HARA, should be treated swiftly and harshly, while addicted victims, must be treated with compassion and care.

This approach to the war against sin allows us to see the SHOFAR calls during Elul in a different light. Yes, it's the wakeup call discussed by the Rambam (Hilchot T'shuva 3:4) -

Wake up you, sleepy ones from your sleep and you who are in deep slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator. Those who forget the truth, because of the vanities of time, and throughout the entire year devote their energies to vanity and emptiness which will not benefit or save: Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds and let every one of you abandon his evil path and thoughts.

However, the Shofar is also the trumpet call to war against the YETZER HARA. I believe strongly that we need both analogies. Fight for your lives against the enemy at your gates, but, simultaneously, look to a loving, benevolent God for a warm embrace and a welcome home.

In general, I think that we, as the Jewish community, must adopt a similar approach. Never be too harsh to those who are OTD ('off the DERECH'). Don't burn bridges, and there is always a hope that our wayward friends and relatives may find their way back. Simultaneously, our own personal struggles against our own demons must be fiercely fought, tooth and nail, with the certain knowledge that the energetic enemy eternally lurks just outside our defenses. Be ever vigilant.

It's a war out there every day, and we must marshal all of our resources to win the battles we can, with the certain knowledge that the enemy will be there again tomorrow. It's great that we also know of God's love and compassion, but that faith shouldn't lessen our resolve in the face of an eternal adversary.}

Rav Kook Torah
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison • www.ravkooktorah.com

Advice for a Troubled Father

A grief-stricken father turned to Rav Kook for advice. Rabbi Dov Ber Milstein was a diligent scholar and a Chasidic Jew, the owner of a thriving lumber business in Warsaw. His two

PhiloTorah (109kite) - 23 - all@once file
younger sons, however, were expelled from their yeshiva. Influenced by socialist and Polish-nationalist friends, they had abandoned religious life. They even took part in the failed 1905 coup attempt against the Russian Tsar.

What should the father do? How should he respond to this betrayal of his values and lifestyle? Should he cut off all ties from his sons and sit shiva over their lost souls? Should he argue with them and rebuke them?

In a series of letters, Rav Kook consoled the father and offered a number of practical suggestions.

1. Don’t Reject Them

The first and most important principle is not to break off contact. Rav Kook was adamant that a parent should not sever his connection with his children, despite their rejection of their religious upbringing. “I understand well your heartache and grief”, he wrote. “But if you think, like most Torah scholars do, that in our times it is fitting to reject those children who have left the path of Torah and faith due to the turbulent currents of the era – then I say, unequivocally, this is not the path that God desires.”

We should never give up on a single Jewish soul. “A myrtle among the reeds is still a myrtle and is called a myrtle“ (Sanhedrin 44a).

2. Appreciate Their Motives

Rav Kook’s second point was that we must accurately judge the next generation and appreciate their motives. In these turbulent times of social movements and uprisings, our sons and daughters who have abandoned Judaism should be viewed as acting under duress. “God forbid that we should judge them as having rebelled willfully.” They are motivated, not by selfish desires, but by aspirations to repair societal inequalities and fight political corruption. Their yearnings for fairness and compassion are rooted in “the inner soul of Israel’s holiness that lies hidden within their hearts.”

They have been led astray, not because of hedonist passions, but because they pursue justice and kindness. If we don’t push them away, but do our best to draw them back, they will be ready to return to Judaism.

3. Support Them Financially

Practically speaking, Rav Kook advised the father “to assist them, as much as you are able, toward their livelihood and pressing needs.” It is not easy to financially support children who have rejected your way
of life. But this will maintain your connection with them, and “provide an opportunity to express words of mussar, chosen judiciously, in your letters. It is in the nature of words that come from the heart to have an impact, whether much or little.”

4. Encourage Them to Stay Connected to The Jewish People

Rav Kook further advised the father to remind his children of their Jewish heritage. Counsel them not to abandon their people due to false dreams that they will gain a secure place of honor and respect among the nations of the world. “The [nations] befriend you when it serves them, but in times of trouble, they will rejoice in your downfall.”

If you are successful in awakening a love of the Jewish people in their hearts, this will lead to sparks of faith and holy aspirations. And it may eventually result in complete t’shuva.

5. Their T’shuva will be Intellectually Motivated

Rav Kook’s final observation: our children left Judaism due to mistakes of the intellect, thinking that this way will enable them to perform greater good in the world. Their return to Judaism will not be spurred by impassioned speeches of fire and brimstone, but by an intellectual recalculation.

“We need not picture their return to Judaism as penitence accompanied by terrible anguish and the fear of utter collapse, like the common perception of ordinary t’shuva. Rather, it will be a simple reassessment, like a person who corrects a mistake in arithmetic after clarifying the numbers.”

To summarize:

Keep a connection with your children.
Recognize their positive qualities and good — if misguided — motives.
Continue to support them financially, as this concretizes your connection to them.
Encourage them to stay connected to the Jewish people.
They will return to Judaism, not through emotional pleas and feelings of guilt, but when they reassess their thinking and reconsider their decisions.

Postscript:

The father’s rabbi in Poland, the Rebbe of Porisov, instructed Rabbi Milstein to sever all contact with his two younger sons who had abandoned religion. But the father followed Rav Kook’s guidance and reconciled with his sons. He continued to
support them financially, even when they were far away in France and Brussels.

Was Rav Kook’s advice successful? What happened to the two sons?

Sadly, neither son returned to religious observance. The middle son, Shmulka, worked as an economist for the Polish bank, while the youngest son, Naftali, served as a Polish diplomat in Belgium and France.

The family, however, always stayed connected. Over time, the financial situation of the Milstein family reversed. The father’s profitable business began to fail. Instead of the wealthy father supporting his sons, his sons supported their father.

After Rabbi Milstein and his firstborn son immigrated to Jerusalem, Shmulka and Naftali continued to send money to support their father and elder brother. Naftali even visited his father in Jerusalem and bought him a large three-room apartment.

Naftali Milstein did not return to his religious upbringing, but never denied his Judaism. He wrote extensively about anti-Semitism, predicting that tens of thousands of Jews would be exterminated in Poland. Active in Jewish causes, he assisted Eastern European Jews to emigrate to South America, Canada, and Israel.

Only the eldest son, Rabbi Chaim Ze’ev, remained fully committed to Jewish observance, moving to Israel and raising many descendants who continued in his father’s path.

Adapted from Iggerot HaRe’iyah vol. I, letter 138 (19 Iyar 5668/1908). Background information from ‘A journey in the footsteps of the mysterious figures in Rav Kook’s letters’ by Rabbi Ari Shevat, Makor Rishon (Aug 14, 2018)

Chizuk ע& IDUD
Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim
by Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness
Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh

Ki Teitzei 2018

At times an individual's personal duties come into direct conflict with his communal ones. The Torah relates to one such instance in this week's Parasha, where we are taught that a Chatan is exempt from military service: "If a man marries a new wife he shall not go to the army nor shall he be assigned to it for any purpose (LO YAAVOR ALAV L'CHOL DAVAR). He shall be free for his home for one year, and he shall gladden his wife whom he has married" (D'varim 24:5). [Rashi explains that the phrase LO YAAVOR ALAV L'CHOL DAVAR,
which we translated as "Nor shall he be assigned to it for any purpose" - as referring to any army related matter. The Bi'ur understood ALAV as a reference to the Chatan himself: "The army official who passes among the houses of the individuals being conscripted for service, shall not go over to him (ALAV), for he is to be free from any obligation for the full year."

Rashi stresses that the correct meaning of the words V'SIMACH ET ISHTO, is that 'he shall gladden his wife' - and not as some had understood - that the couple should be happy together. The Torah is directing the husband to see it as his duty to make his wife happy. This domestic commandment is of such importance that it trumps the collective responsibility to contribute to the national war effort.

The exemption from serving one's country is provided so that the Chatan may bring happiness to his new bride and focus on making his marriage work.

Rabbi SR Hirsch cogently remarks that "The national welfare can only be sought in the well-being and happiness of all single individuals. Hence, every flourishing and happy home is a contribution to the realization of the good set out for the nation." The chatan's marital focus truly benefits national security!

This understanding regarding the great importance of laying a sound and solid foundation for the home, leads to the Halacha that the new husband should not absent himself from his home even for work purposes during the first year of marriage.

The energy invested in solidifying the strength of the young couple's union at its start, will yield much needed dividends in the years to come.

[HaGaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l used to tell chatanim "The army exemption lasts one year... but the end of the verse: V'SIMACH ET ISHTO - the commandment to bring joy to his wife - this stands independently, and lasts a lifetime."

As we proceed on to read the Torah's very next verse, we are jolted by the seeming incongruence between these two P'sukim. D'varim 24:6 reads: "One should not take the lower or upper millstone as security (for a loan) because it is like taking a life for security." What connection, if any, is there between this business-related directive and the army exemption granted to the new groom?

Chizkuni explains the connection thus: "After the chatan has been
given permission to be at home (for the first year) he is instructed to avoid taking as collateral the millstones of those going off to war as it is as taking the man's life as a pledge." Once the Chatan has remained home - as one of the only able-bodied young men in the area his financial situation might allow him to be in a position to extend loans to those whose position might be less fortunate as the men of the household are off at war. Ultimately, a soldier's family might be left without livelihood during wartime. Rav Amnon Bazak quotes the words of Chizkuni, concluding as follows: "Even an individual who receives an exemption for participation in war must be careful not to use this exemption to benefit at the expense of another who is answering society's call to risk his life during the war effort."

This lesson can be relevant to other battlefield exemptions the Torah mentioned in Parshat Shoftim as well. Namely one entering into a new home; or beginning to benefit from the fruits of a new vineyard who are sent back from the battlefield.

This brings to mind the last exemption granted to the ISH HAYAREI V'RACH HALEIVAV - the fearful and weak-hearted person. Our Rabbis taught us that this verse refers to one who is worried about his sins, leading to the inevitable conclusion that the Torah intended the ranks of the Jewish army to be populated by the righteous and those who are most worthy spiritually.

This assumption, that a righteous person is the one who will fear nothing, and therefore is the most suitable to go off to do battle, is such a far cry from the situation we know today, where the Chareidi position is that it is their right to demand an exemption from army service in order that they be allowed to maintain and safeguard their spiritual integrity.

The Minchat Chinuch in trying to find the common denominator to the three exemptions notes that the Torah grants the exemptions to those experiencing important transitional periods in their lives.

This comment is interesting as it leads us to one additional modern-day exemption: The exemption granted by the IDF to those coming on Aliyah. Aliyah is a major transition in one's life. It is easily on a par with a new home and vineyard, perhaps even with marriage as well. Therefore, it would seem that some of the laws applicable to the above would be applicable to the Oleh as well. Interestingly, as far as the requirements of army service, Tzahal
provides Olim with a year of acclimation, only calling them to active army service at the end of this time period.

This is a beautiful example of how the juggling of personal and national needs in the modern State of Israel is inspired and informed by the words of the Torah.

Reprinted from Living the Halachic Process by Rabbi Daniel Mann - Eretz Hemdah, with their permission [www.eretzhemdah.org]

The Timing of Selichot

Question: It is difficult for me to say Selichot late at night or early in the morning. What are the factors involved in the issue of the timing of Selichot?

Answer: Much of the issue of the timing of the minhag to recite Selichot in the days before Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur is based on kabbalistic considerations, which are not within our area of expertise. However, we can discuss the basic ideas as filtered through the poskim.

Different times of the day have different characteristics, making them more or less appropriate for certain types of religious activity. The first part of the night possesses the characteristic of din. The second part of the night is an EIT RATZON. Thus, the latter is the time when the Selichot prayers are most appropriate, as they are specially formulated to elicit mercy from HaShem.

Several classical sources and several of the piyutim themselves refer to Selichot being said at ASHMORET HABOKER, during the few hours leading up to ALOT HASHACHAR, which itself is around 72 minutes before sunrise. At this time in particular, HaShem hovers over our world, making it an EIT RATZON. There are also sources that indicate that chatzot is a special EIT RATZON. Therefore, the optimal times to say Selichot are either after chatzot or in the predawn hours. Rav Moshe Feinstein points out that in previous generations, people generally went to sleep and woke up earlier than most do today, and the predawn option was therefore more convenient and common. However, he continues, one

1. Special prayers of supplication recited at appropriate times during the year, most notably before the High Holy Days.
2. Strict judgment.
3. A time when requests are more readily accepted.
5. Liturgical pieces.
8. See Yechaveh Da’at 1:46.
should not infer a clear preference between these times from that phenomenon. Only on the first night of Selichot (for Ashkenazim), on Motza'ei Shabbat, there may be a preference to say Selichot at chatzot, when more of Shabbat’s impact remains.  

The main objection is to saying Selichot at night before chatzot, a time of DIN. Although Selichot have a special power to elicit mercy – especially the YUD GIMEL MIDOT, which is their most basic component – kabbalistic sources say that it is spiritually dangerous to recite them at a time of DIN, since it is viewed as though mercy is overstepping its bounds. Rav Feinstein is identified with the camp that does not put a strong emphasis on kabbalistic sources in making halachic decisions. He rules that even though much positive effect is missing when Selichot are recited during the first half of the night, if a feasible alternative is lacking, it is better to recite them at that time than to deprive the congregation of its inspiration in preparing for the Yamim Nora’im. Rav Feinstein prefers reciting Selichot at a change of ASHMOROT, one of which is approximately two hours before chatzot. However, other poskim counsel to avoid the strongly detrimental situation that the kabbalists describe even when there is no easy alternative. Some suggest that early night in America is not so bad because it is after chatzot in Israel. However, we attribute the times of DIN and EIT RATZON to each place according to its astronomical situation. The safer approach for those who find it impossible or at least difficult to recite Selichot after chatzot or before dawn is to do so in the morning. While it is not especially an EIT RATZON, it is not a time of DIN either, and the period of the year is itself an EIT RATZON. For many people, this is much more manageable and does not sap as much energy that could be used for other mitzvot. The general approach is that it is worthwhile to sacrifice a modest amount of quality and quantity of Torah learning in order to say Selichot. However, one has to make the difficult evaluation of whether he is capable of fulfilling his daily responsibilities while dedicating some of his physical resources to reciting Selichot at the optimal time.

10 See Piskei Teshuvot 581:(15).
11 The recitation of the Thirteen Attributes of HaShem, taken from Shemot 34:6-7.
12 See Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 581:1.
13 Igrot Moshe op. cit.
14 High Holy Days.
15 Yechaveh Da’at op. cit.
16 See ibid..
17 Rav Ovadia Yosef (ibid.) says that it is even possible to say Selichot before Mincha.
18 See Igrot Moshe’s (op. cit.) reaction to the questioner’s thesis.
19 Sha’arei Tehsuva 581:1.
YOU CAN'T OPT OUT

If you see someone's animal gone astray, you can't just hide (ignore it) (D'varim 22:1-13).

Of course you're busy. Of course you're short of time. Of course you have your own problems. Of course you don't want to get involved. But the Torah leaves no room for opting out: you can't hide or just walk past.

You must restore a lost animal to its owner, and in the meantime look after the animal.

If someone's animal has fallen over you have to help lift the animal up again (22:4).

It's not just animals that you have to concern yourself with, though that is already a unique part of Jewish ethics. It's your fellow human-being whom you must assist and support. The Golden Rule is to love a neighbour as yourself (Vayikra 19:18), equating him to yourself, seeking his welfare as you would seek your own.

Kodesh Isn't Always Good

In D'varim 22:9 we are told not to sow a vineyard with two kinds of seed PEN TIKDASH - "lest the fullness of the seed be forfeited".

Targum Onkelos thinks the root KUF-DALET-SHIN - which is usually something good and sacred - sometimes goes to the opposite extreme and means "to become defiled". Rashi translates the word as "disgusting".

Rashbam and Ramban suggest that it means "to become prohibited as if it were consecrated, which would remove it from availability to the general public".

This latter interpretation explains why Jewish marriage is KUF-DALET-SHIN - the wife is now unavailable to anyone other than her husband. Temple property is KUF-DALET-SHIN because it cannot be used for a non-sacred purpose. Shabbat is KUF-DALET-SHIN, since it is a day devoted to God and not available for weekday activities. OZ
Remember what Amalek did to you... He did not fear G-d. When G-d gives you rest from all your surrounding enemies... you shall blot out the name of Amalek... Do not forget! (25:17-19)

We read in the Hagada Shel Pesach that "in every generation they rise against us to destroy us, but the Holy One... saves us from their hands." So, out of all our enemies, why is the nation of Amalek, who himself was the grandson of Eisav, singled out as the worst of all our attackers? Indeed, as the Midrash Tanchuma derives (Ki Teitzei 11, in reference to Sh'mot 17:16), the Throne of G-d is not complete until Amalek is destroyed. In addition, "You shall blot out the memory of Amalek" is seen as a mitzva, yet in the same verse it says: "You must not forget!"

The Meshech Chochma suggests a possible translation of V'LO YAREI ELOKIM - "did not fear G-d" - as referring to the People of Israel, and in the present tense. The Meshech Chochma joins it with words that follow: "You do not fear G-d. When G-d gives you rest from all your surrounding enemies." It is then that G-d will stir the Amelekites to attack you, as He did when they were travelling in the wilderness. "Do not forget" can mean: "You must not forget G-d", and what He requires from you. But continue to live according to His teachings; do not be of those who turn to G-d only in times of trouble, and forget Him when things are going well. If you always bear this in mind, the name of Amalek will no longer be of importance; they will sink into oblivion from the beneath the heavens as G-d will have no reason to promote them to attack Israel.

Why particularly Amelek; what makes him different from other possible attackers? The Ramchal (Otzrot Ramchal 128) offers a kabbalistic dimension. Of all the negative forces on Earth, he explains, there are none so threatening to Am Yisrael as Amalek. The Amalekites' dark forces, in his words, "paralyze the fundamental forces of K'dusha and prevent connection between Israel and G-d."

As long as the channel between G-d and Israel does not function, there can be no rest for Israel. In several places elsewhere in his commentary on the Torah, the Ramchal explains that the eternity of Am Yisrael is due to the fact we are independent of the forces that see great nations rise and fall. It is our having that channel of connection with G-d that overrides those forces. Spiritually, it helps to
explain why our people, Baruch Hashem, continue to flourish after 4000 years.

Amalek's particular power to block those forces may be seen by combining his spiritual root with his behavior.

His spiritual root belonged to Avraham Avinu and Yitzchak Avinu, although modified by Eisav and his son, Elifaz (B'reishit 36:12). Thus Amalek shared much of the same spiritual root as Am Yisrael. This put him on a similar wavelength: it was the closeness of their roots that gave him the spiritual commonality to threaten the very spiritual fundamentals of the eternity of Am Yisrael. Amalek knew his "relatives", their strengths and their limitations, and which particular values and vices G-d hates most.

These were exemplified in his behavior. His behavior, it may be suggested, was Sin'at Chinam, hatred without cause: exemplified by previously attacking Am Yisrael for no reason, when they were physically weak and tired (25:18). Indeed, G-d's utter rejection of Sin'at Chinam is reflected in being a cause of the Churban Bayit Sheni. Sin'at Chinam is behaving to other people in that way that perpetuates Amalek. And those who practice Sin'at Chinam may be seen as the disciples of Amalek.

For it is that Sin'at Chinam which is implied in the way the Torah elsewhere introduces Amalek: VAYAVO AMALEK: Amalek came (Sh'mot 17:8). He fought with Israel in Refidim. Unlike virtually all the other oppressors of the Israelites, the attack had no reason, neither stated nor implied. Amalek just came. He attacked and he fought. In contrast to Par'oh and later the Canaanites, the people of Amalek had nothing to lose through the Israelites leaving Egypt, traveling through the desert and entering the Promised Land. It seems that there was only one reason that the Amalekites went out their way: hatred for the Am Yisrael. Nothing else.

There are two types of hatred. The first type is for a particular reason: real or imagined. The Egyptians could hardly have been pleased in losing their slaves. It would have been bad for their ego, and bad for their economy. The Canaanites could have hardly have been pleased in being occupied by what in their eyes was a foreign power, however justified in the eyes of G-d. And later on in our history it would be fair to say that in most cases when there were anti-Jewish decrees, the Gentiles themselves genuinely, if erroneously,
believed that the Jews conducted themselves in such a way as to be a threat to interests of other peoples and/or classes. That does not justify hatred, but at least it does not compare with the second type, Sin'at Chinam, the groundless hatred from Amalek.

The first type of hatred is therefore regrettable, but understandable. The second type, Sin'at Chinam, is of such a nature that there is no room for it in the Creation. Therefore the Torah, in the broader sense declares that such behavior must be wiped out, and that one must not forget the absolute evil of the doctrine of Amalek: Sin'at Chinam.

Ed. note: Congratulations and Mazal Tov to Dr Jacob Solomon on his receiving his hard-earned doctorate. HATZLACHA RABA.

Menachem Persoff

Parents Take Note!

This week's Parsha contains a plethora of mitzvot designed to protect family and social relationships in the new community in Eretz Yisrael. Now Bnei Yisrael will have to learn to live among themselves, respect justice, maintain their moral fiber, and take care of each other in matters related to civic life.

Notably, the Parsha opens with the topic of the beautiful captive woman whom the captor desires. Then, after the restrictions of that issue are recorded, the Parsha discusses inheritance, where a younger son is favored over the firstborn.

Then the matter of the wayward son, "disobedient and recalcitrant", is raised as another topic where the relationship between father and son is critical. In the former case, the father sees his firstborn as his heir, continuing to support the family. In the latter instance, the father sees his son as a glutton and drunkard who will ultimately squander his wealth (Sanhedrin 72a) - and possibly, he is the offspring of that captive woman!

Surprisingly, the parents must bring their delinquent son to the elders for judgment, even though close relatives are generally forbidden as witnesses. The Talmud relates, however, that the totality of the many criteria by which the child could be put to death never occurred and will never be realized in practice.

For example, the son must have just reached adolescence when he is most susceptible to awakening tendencies. Furthermore, both parents must concur that "our son does not listen
to our voice" after they chastised him in front of three people. Moreover, Rashi comments that the rebellious son is not subject to the death penalty until (a) he proves to be a thief and (b) consumes an excessive and defined amount of flesh and drink in one meal.

These seemingly unfeasible conditions do not take away from the Torah's intent. The implication (reinforced in the next pasuk that talks of a man deserving of the death penalty) is that sooner or later, the "rebellious son" will commit deeds deserving of capital punishment (ibid 71b, 72a).

Rabbi Hirsch sees in these lines a paramount lesson. Responsible for their children's education, parents must work in harmony, be consistent, treat their offspring with dignity, and promote values that negate the overriding prominence of "food and drink". Today, in our open society, where individualistic notions and entitlement are so prevalent, these words appear more appropriate than ever.

The Daily Portion
- Sivan Rahav Meir

Safety first, last, and always
Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

A few days ago, attorney Nurit Mamalia, who specializes in real estate law, was deeply moved by words from this week's Torah portion that she saw hanging in the offices of a contractor from the Shomron. In each office, a sign in full view was displayed with the following words:

"When you build a new house, you shall make a guard rail for your roof, so that you do not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone should fall from it" (D'varim 22:8).

By extension, such a warning is also applicable, of course, to those who construct the house or building itself; they should be provided with every safety measure necessary to prevent accidents.

Why don't we get excited when we put safety bars over our apartment windows? Why don't we feel holiness when we put a guard rail around our roof? In this week's Torah portion, this mitzva -- which is not sufficiently known or appreciated -- appears. How simple, yet how often it is overlooked. Someone who builds or moves into a new house must first
put a guard rail around the roof in order that no one should fall off. Our commentators explain that such a cautionary measure pertains not only to a roof, but to any potential risk to which we are exposed or for which we are responsible. We regard affixing a mezuza outside as the climactic moment upon entering a new house or office, and justifiably so. But concerning ourselves with the physical safety of those inside is a mitzva of equal importance. When it comes to our cars, we observe such safety mitzvot when we wear our seat belts, or when we check engine oil and water levels and tire pressure. In a similar vein, those with a swimming pool are cautioned to put a fence around it for the sake of children who could accidentally fall in.

When it comes to our personal safety, it is clear that the Torah does not settle for half measures that are "good enough". Instead, the Torah admonishes us with these words: V'NISHMARTEM M'OD L'NAFSHOTEICHEM" - Be VERY careful about your lives. Personal safety, represented by a guard rail on the roof - MAAKEH, is not only a mitzva, but one involving pikuach nefesh (saving life), and is thus of primary importance.

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The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

Ki Teitzei 5779

The Torah has rather strict rules about whom one may marry. One restriction appears a bit harsh. The verse states: "An Ammonite and Moavite shall not enter the congregation of HaShem ... forever. Because they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt, and hired against you Bilaam ben B'or ... to curse you" (23:4-5).

The difficulty here is two-fold. One: how can the Torah equate an unwelcoming and miserly behavior with the much more serious and severe sin of cursing the People? And two: why are the descendants of the Egyptians and Eisav, who inflicted and would inflict untold suffering upon us, not forever forbidden to marry into Israel while the progeny of Amon and Moav are?

Among the answers suggested is the fascinating explanation of the B'eirot Yitzchak. Amon and Moav were sons of Lot, Avraham's nephew, and while Lot may have been an unsavory character, he excelled in the mitzva of hospitality. The Torah relates how he was prepared to risk his own life to save the mysterious guests who showed up on his doorstep in Sodom (B'reishit 19:6-8). His descendants, no doubt inherited this exemplary chesed trait and knew well of its virtue. And yet, they chose to deliberately act against what they
clearly knew what was right, and brazenly refused their downtrodden relatives simple bread and water. True, the hiring of Bilaam to curse Israel was objectively a far more damaging deed, but, judged against Amon and Moav's ethical baseline, their act was more heinous. The crime spoke to something fundamentally flawed in their collective persona.

The lesson here is clear. Our personalities are surely complex but, upon reflection, everyone is able to detect this powerful truth. To wit: that each is endowed with certain unique abilities, gifted with a few truly remarkable ethical attributes that define who they are. Some are inclined toward charitable giving, others, hospitality. Still others are naturally inclined to offer time and assistance to people in need. The list, of course, can be quite long. The essential point is that with that blessing comes enormous responsibility. If HaShem deemed us worthy to bestow upon us such wonderful innate inclinations, we must put them to good use. We are obligated to actualize that potential good and push that inborn trait to its maximum effectiveness. If one is inherently sympathetic to another's woes, he should not ignore pain of the thou when it is inconvenient or tiresome for him to do so.

But what assuredly is worse is when, Gd forbid, a person not only ignores his wholesome attributes, but consciously acts against them. Not only has he failed to make proper use of his MIDOT TOVOT (impressively righteous dispositions), but he has debased his self-definition and, as such, altered something very fundamental about his character. By so disgracing himself, he now deserves to be treated with the greatest of disdain. In the case of Amon and Moav, the males would never be allowed to enjoy the exalted sanctity of the Jewish people through marriage.

As we approach the Days of Awe, we are enjoined to engage in some serious introspection. We often interpret that mandate as obliging us to identify our mistakes and go about correcting them. True enough, but the insight of Rav Yeruchem Goldwasser (B’eirot Yitzchak) proposes that we do something additional. Here's how Rav Soloveitchik articulated the challenge: "...each person has his own talents and role in society; in order for society to function harmoniously, each individual must play his specific role. Some people delude themselves into thinking their abilities are endless, while others are so self-effacing that they believe they can accomplish nothing. Gd wanted every Jew to realize where his strength and weaknesses are" (Chumash Masoret HaRav, Bamidbar p. 9).

Elul is that time of year that we ought to be identifying, not just our weaknesses, but - even more - our good qualities, our noble attributes as well. We certainly have them! And then, when we do, we must honestly ask ourselves whether we are utilizing these exemplary talents

PhiloTorah (109kite) - 37 - all@once file
for the good of the community. No doubt, we can all do better.

The Chofetz Chayim composed an important book, Chomat Hadat, in which he exhorted all Jews to help Klal Yisroel guard against the assimilatory secular influences threatening Jewry. He wrote at length of the need for each individual to use his strengths to the fullest to assist in this urgent campaign. If, for example, a person was blessed with the ability to speak well, let him employ that skill to give inspirational drashos in public.

This entreaty of the Chofetz Chayim is no less pertinent today. The goals may be different, but the message is the same. Do not allow your singular endowments to gather dust. Absolutely repudiate, in thought and deed, the actions of Amon and Moav. Courageously live up to your innate potential. Achieve your measure of personal greatness by exploiting your best abilities and thus make a real and incredible difference in the lives of others. Amazingly, you will discover, to your pleasant surprise, how other-directed chesed will help you deal with your failings. The positive energy generated by realizing and acting upon your wonderful qualities will ineluctably give you the strength to successfully address your mistakes and become a finer and more virtuous human being.

"A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be." --- Abraham Maslow

Afterthoughts
- Yocheved Bienenfeld

Opposites & Balance

One of the most common arguments to "prove" that the world was created by a Divine Being is the symmetry, balance, and order that exist in the universe. If we look closely, it becomes clear that the form of symmetry is not simple but quite unusual in a very fundamental sense. For rather than being two equal halves of a whole, the picture that emerges is one of opposite forces balancing out. Magnetic force, as well as electrical energy, is based upon positive and negative poles or opposite charges interacting. The atom is stable because electrons and protons are able to balance out. There is harmony because the opposites can function cooperatively. One of the fundamental laws of physics, as expounded by Sir Isaac Newton, is "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." This appears to be the way Gd created His universe.

I believe this is reflected in the spiritual, religious realm as well. We see it in our prayers; we see it in the Tanach. We see it in Gd Himself: He is called an ISH MILCHAMA - a Man of war, using the very title that indicates mercy - HaShem. This would certainly seem contradictory. We refer to Gd as HASHEM ELOKEINU, again a combination of two opposite traits. But as we
see in the Sh'ma, He is, nevertheless, ECHAD. The two aspects co-exist. The attributes of HaShem that are listed in the Shemoneh Esrei also express this. Gd is called GADOL (giving), GIBOR (holding back) and NORA (a combination of both attributes). What is interesting is that while Avraham is associated with GADOL and Yitzchak with GIBOR, it is Yaakov - who is associated with NORA, and the Zohar tells us Yaakov TUSHB'CHAN D'AVAHAN HAVA - is considered the "choicest" of the Forefathers. Why is this? Because he embodies both CHESED and G'VURA. We must conclude, then, that the co-existing of opposites is a standard toward which we should strive.

Another form of opposites can be found in our very essence: the NESHAMA within the physical GUF. The nature and needs of the body would seem to be diametrically opposed to the nature and needs of the spiritual NESHAMA. The material and spiritual are at opposite poles. And yet, that is exactly how Gd created human beings. We have a YETZER HARA as well as a YETZER HATOV. He expects us to have these two forces co-exist, one influencing the other; one serving and enabling the other, empowering each other.

We are directed, as Jews, that "the world was created for me"; and at the same time, "I am only dust". We are expected to balance the two extremes. We learn in Yish'ayahu: YOTZER OR UVOREI CHOSHECH OSEH SHALOM UVOREI ET HARA - He creates light and darkness, makes peace and creates evil (45:7). The two halves of this verse should parallel each other, one half equaling the other so that just as 'creates light' is the opposite of 'creates darkness', 'He makes peace' is the opposite of 'He creates evil'. Notice, then, that the opposite of 'evil' here is not 'good', but rather 'peace'. This means that the lack of peace and harmony is what is considered "bad".

Rav Moshe Shapiro zt"l, defines 'bad' and 'good' in an essay on Parashat Bamidbar: 'bad' is from a root (ra'u'a) connoting something shaky and unsound... meaning something that stands by itself and doesn't join with his friend...'bad' indicates a reality that considers itself totally complete so that it isn't interested and doesn't even see a need to join with a more complete system... he feels self-complete and isn't ready to go out of himself and join true completeness... The concept "good" refers to something that joins with his other and with a form of completion outside of himself... we therefore find that the definition of "good" is joining to the true reality and to the process and content of Creation." (MiMa'amakim; Bamidbar, p.53-54).

Evil, then, is when I cannot tolerate anyone or anything being different than myself in a way that disagrees with me or with my perception of the way things should be. We tend to think that peace is the absence of conflict. This is not
really true. Rather, it is the co-existence of opposites or of differing things. Musical harmony is not when all the notes are the same but when different notes blend together to produce a pleasing sound. So, too, in the real world. SHALOM comes from SHALEIM - complete. But SHALEIM is more than just 'whole'. It implies a completeness created by the harmonizing of various opposing elements.

As in all other matters, a source for this thesis can be found in the Tanach. I believe we may see a hint to the concept that we are supposed to be living in a world of contrasts and colors and we are expected to unite it all into a sensible whole from what Gd tells us in B'reishit. LO TOV HEYOT H'ADAM L'VADO. E'ESEH LO EIZER K'NEGDO - It isn't good for Man to be alone; I will make him a helper opposite him (2:18). Man was not supposed to be a single unit. Not only must he have a counterpart but that counterpart must be K'NEGDO; not a clone, not a xerox copy, but an opposite that completes him and creates a balance.

Gd created people to be different. Yaakov gives his sons different blessings, recognizing that their personalities and abilities are different from each other and that's what would create the community of Israel. We are all different, and it is supposed to be that way. The world was meant to be full of variety and diversity, and man's challenge is to find the balance and harmony in what appears to be confusion.

Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop expresses this idea in explaining the midrash about why the Torah begins with the letter BET (2) as opposed to the letter ALEF (1) (as quoted in Artscroll Aseret HaDibrot, p.26, footnote #1): "The ALEF argued that because it stands for 'oneness' and 'unity' symbolizing consistency and harmony - it is the most appropriate letter with which to keynote Creation. The Holy One Blessed be He, however, had a different thought. Better that the whole world should be created with the letter BET, the numerical equivalent of 2. 'Two' represents plurality, diversity, contrast - even conflict. And it is this that is essential to the success of Gd's plan. Namely, to establish a world full of challenge and opposition so that Man can strive to bring harmony and purpose to all the diverse elements of the universe."

Not everything will make sense to us and there will be conflicts that we can't resolve. Even if we chance upon things that we can't reconcile, opposite concepts - let alone people - ideas that we can't imagine coexisting, we need to remember that even if we don't see the possibility of harmony, Gd does. And we need to trust in that knowledge.

How peaceful.