

# PHILOTORAH

לה"י

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו וא'להי אבותינו שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים, רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לחולי קורונה - בישראל, בעם היהודי, ובעולם, ולנפגעי מעשי טרור ואנטישמיות - בכל מקום שהם, עם שאר חולי ישראל. אמן.

## וארא שבת מברכים



Yerushalayim in/out times for VA'EIRA (m'vorchim)

כ"ח טבת ה'תשפ"ג • January 20-21, '23

4:27 PM Plag 3:56 PM • 5:41 PM R' Tam 6:19 PM

For other locales, click on Z'MANIM link

PhiloTorah (130vaei) - 1 - all@once file

## Shabbat M'vorchim

This Shabbat (Va'eira) we bench Rosh Chodesh Sh'vat, which is on Monday, January 23rd.

R"Ch Sh'vat is always one day (in our current fixed calendar), because Tevet always (in our current fixed calendar) has only 29 days.

רֵאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ שֶׁבֶט יִהְיֶה בַּיּוֹם שְׁנִי  
הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְטוֹבָה:

The molad is on Motza'ei Shabbat 23h 56m 10p

**p is for parts, chalakim - there are 18 chalakim in a minute, which means a part, cheilek, is 3 and a third seconds.**

הַמּוֹלַד יִהְיֶה בְּלֵיל רֵאשׁוֹן, חֲמִישִׁים וְשֵׁשׁ דְּקוֹת וְעֶשְׂרֵה חֲלָקִים אַחֲרֵי אַחַת-עֶשְׂרֵה.

**Note that Motza'ei Shabbat is usually called LEIL RISHON in the wording of the molad announcement.**

The announced molad translates to Israel Standard (Winter) Time as 11:36pm.

The actual molad is at 10:54pm (only 42 minutes earlier than the molad based on average).

If we had a Sanhedrin today and we

did Kiddush HaChodesh using eyewitness testimony to the first visibility of the lunar crescent, then witnesses would probably see the molad on Sunday evening, shortly after sunset - weather permitting. This would mean that Rosh Chodesh would be proclaimed on Monday morning right after sunrise.

So, for this month, the calculated R"Ch and the Sanhedrin declared R"Ch would match. This is not always the case.

## Rosh Chodesh Sh'vat

... has two claims to fame.

It was Beit Shamai's opinion (which we don't follow) that Rosh HaShana for trees be on R"Ch Sh'vat. Beit Hillel, as we know, 'won' the argument and TU BiSHVAT (the 15th of Sh'vat) is Rosh HaShana La-ILANOT.

As recorded in the beginning of the Book (and Parsha) of D'varim, Moshe began his 37-day review of all the mitzvot of the Torah and the history of the 40 years of wandering in the Midbar. He was speaking to the people who would be entering the future Eretz Yisrael a bit more than a month after his death.

This makes R"Ch Sh'vat another day of Receiving the Torah.

# V'A'EIRA



14th of 54 sedras;  
2nd of 11 in Sh'mot

Written on 221.8 lines in a Torah; (16th)

16 parshiot; 8 open, 8 closed

121 p'sukim - ranks 20th (4th in Shmot)

1748 words - ranks 15th (3rd in Shmot)

6701 letters - ranks 17th (3rd in Shmot)

P'sukim are above average in length

## MITZVOT

No mitzvot are counted from Va'eira.

The past 18 sedras (from Nitzavim thru Va'eira) - that's one third of the sedras of the Torah - have a total of 5 mitzvot. That will be changing next week.

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P>] and [S>] 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



Towards Improved Layning & Davening Enunciation

Va'eira has the classic examples of incorrect accenting changing the meaning of the word. I refer to the Terms of Redemption:

v'ho-tzei-TI, v'hi-tzal-TI, v'ga-al-TI, v'la-

kach-TI, v'hei-vei-TI (not v'ho-TZEI-ti, etc.)

Each of these words (and many others in Tanach and davening) is a verb in past tense form that is switched to future by the VAV HAHIPUCH.

v'ho-TZEI-ti would mean 'and I took you out'. Not correct. When G-d told Moshe to say that to the people in His name, it hadn't happened yet.

v'ho-tzei-TI means '(and) I will take you out.' So too for the other Lishonot of Geula.

If these words are misaccented by the BK (baal korei or baal k'ri'a), he is supposed to repeat the p'sukim with the correct accents (MILRA rather than MIL'EIL).

In the Sh'ma, we find several words commonly misaccented (especially by native English speakers): v'a-hav-TA, v'di-bar-TA, v'na-ta-TI... to name a few.

To be clear: Saying v'a-HAV-ta in Sh'ma distorts the meaning of the pasuk and casts doubt on the validity of the fulfillment of the mitzva. Thankfully, one gets away with careless pronunciation, according to some authorities. But it is very important to say the Sh'ma and all of davening properly and with good kavana.

## Kohen - First Aliya - 12 p'sukim - 6:2-13

A long **SDT**: (a term just like front

back-axle) The two most common names of G-d in the Torah are E-LO-HIM and A-DO-NAI (as an act of respect for G-d's sacred names, these two are generally pronounced ELOKIM and HASHEM respectively, when referred to other than in prayer or Torah reading). ELOKIM is usually considered to be G-d's name of strict judgment, whereas HASHEM carries the connotation of Divine Mercy (and other meanings). Notice that in the accounts of Egyptian oppression, the predominant name of G-d is Elokim (especially in 2:23-25).

Exile is certainly associated with the stricter side of G-d's treatment of His People. If the quality of mercy were dominant, we would be redeemed and restored to our Land - or perhaps we would acclimate too well to conditions and lose our yearning for redemption. (See what has happened in modern times when exile is accompanied by G-d's Midat HaRachamim and Jews are quite comfortable, and therefore, complacent - a regrettable state of affairs. Comfortable is not bad; complacent is - it means "contented to a fault".)

In the opening pasuk of this week's sedra, we find the unusual combination of both names. It is ELOKIM Who speaks to Moshe, G-d Who has judged and treated the People strictly and harshly. And G-d Who is also speaking harshly to Moshe for his outburst at the end of Parshat Sh'mot - why did you make it worse for the people...

However, His message to Moshe is "I am HASHEM" (which comes with VAYOMER, the softer "say", rather than VAIDABEIR, the harsher "speak" which began the pasuk). And His words of hope and promise to the People begin with the same declaration, "I Am HASHEM". In this context, we are told that G-d will take the People out of Egypt, save them, redeem them, take them unto Him, be our G-d and ultimately bring us into - and give us - the Promised Land. These stages of redemption are summed up with the reiteration of the statement, "I Am HaShem." It is as if G-d is saying to the down-hearted People: "until now you've experienced Me as ELOKIM, but rest assured that you will now see Me as HASHEM - the G-d of Mercy - in full measure. The Egyptians on the other hand are being punished by the hand of G-d as ELOKIM (see 5:15).

[S> 6:2 (8)] The sedra begins with G-d speaking to Moshe Rabeinu and telling him of the promises He had made to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Also, G-d tells Moshe that He has heard and is responding to the cries of the People of Israel.

Therefore, G-d will take the People out from under Egyptian oppression, will save them from bondage, and will redeem them with His might. He will then take the People to Him as a Nation and be our G-d. He will then bring us into Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe relates this to the People, who

are too exhausted from their labors to listen.

[P> 6:10 (3)] G-d then tells Moshe to go to Par'o and demand the People's release. Moshe questions how Par'o can be expected to listen, if the People (Moshe's own people) themselves didn't listen to him.

**SDT:** Moshe's KAL VACHOMER is interesting. Moshe blamed himself for the people not listening to him - because I have a speech impediment (or something to that effect). If this is so, then the KAL VACHOMER works. If my own brethren didn't listen to me, how am I to expect Par'o to listen. But the Torah tells us the reason the people didn't listen - they were exhausted and oppressed. If that is so, then the KAL VACHOMER doesn't hold up.

Aside from the validity (or otherwise) of the KAL VACHOMER, there is an interesting lesson that we can learn from Moshe (one of many, many, many, many...). There was a poor communication between a leader and his people. And this leader took the blame to himself. Parent-child communication? Don't jump to find fault with the child - he's not respectful; he's difficult to deal with; he's not tuned in... Rather examine yourself as the parent. Did you say something harshly when it could have been said softly? Were you clear in what you wanted from the child? Was your request fair or unreasonable? Same thing for teacher-student situation. The kids are dumb; they don't pay enough

attention... No, rather ask yourself as the teacher - was I clear? Was I understandable? Did I explain things well? Was I receptive to questions? Did I handle them well?

Yes, it isn't always that simple - sometimes (often), the problem is on both sides. But we should learn from Moshe Rabeinu to examine ourselves first before we look to blame the other.

[P> 6:13 (1)] (Over Moshe's objections, so to speak,) G-d reiterates to Moshe and Aharon, that they are to tell the People as well as Par'o that the People will be leaving Egypt.

Note that this last pasuk of the first Aliya is one whole parsha. Single-pasuk parshiyot seem to say, LOOK AT ME a little harder and understand some special point. Perhaps, G-d is saying to Moshe - all your hesitations and protestations aside, it is time for TACHLIS. You and Aharon are going to tell/command the people and Par'o about leaving Egypt. Period (full-stop).

## Levi - Second Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 6:14-28

[S> 6:14 (15)] The Torah begins to enumerate the names of the tribes and family groups. It is obvious that the intention here is not to review the whole of the nation, but rather to focus on Moshe & Aharon. The Torah starts the list with Reuven and Shimon, and when it gets to Levi, there is much more detail. In this brief

section, we meet many of the "main personalities" of the rest of the Torah. The Torah is also giving us the ability to continue to draw the timeline of Jewish history, by giving us the ages at death of Levi (we already know the ages of the previous generation - Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov), his son Kehat, and his son Amram. That brings us to Moshe and Aharon. We are also introduced to Korach and his sons and Aharon and his family.

**SDT:** On the Torah's HU AHARON U MOSHE, Rashi points out that sometimes (34 times) Moshe is mentioned first, and sometimes Aharon is mentioned first (4 times in Tanach), to teach us that they were equals. (On some levels, but on others, Moshe Rabeinu was obviously on a higher level.)

## Shlishi - Third Aliya - 9 p'sukim - 6:29-7:7

[S> 6:29 (2)] After the "digression" of the previous passage, the Torah now repeats that G-d is sending Moshe to Par'o and that Moshe continues to "object" because of his speech impediment. (But this time, the fact that the people didn't listen is not mentioned.)

Rashi says that G-d did not repeat the command, nor did Moshe repeat his objection. The Torah is putting us back where we left off before the genealogical data were presented.

[P> 7:1 (7)] G-d tells Moshe that Aharon will do the talking, that Par'o will refuse the repeated requests to free the People, and that He (G-d) will take His people out, and that it will be clear to Egypt (and everyone else) that it is indeed G-d Who is doing everything. Moshe and Aharon do as G-d instructs them; they are 80 and 83 years old respectively.

**Observation** When the Torah is specific about ages, it usually is meant to give us an accurate way of constructing a timeline. Perhaps too, in this case, the Torah is pointing out something that we saw very often in the book of B'reishit - namely, the prominence of the younger brother over the older one. (But without the jealousy or its problems, this time.)

## R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 28 p'sukim - 7:8-8:6

[P> 7:8 (6)] G-d tells Moshe and Aharon, that when Par'o asks for a sign, Moshe shall tell Aharon to throw down the Staff before Par'o and it will turn into a TANIN. Moshe and Aharon appear before Par'o and do as G-d has told them.

**WHAT'S A TANIN?** Rashi says that TANIN is NACHASH, i.e. snake or serpent. Not everyone see it that way. When G-d first had Moshe throw his staff down, it changed into a NACHASH, a snake. Now with Par'o, it changed into a TANIN. Strong possibility is that we

are talking about a crocodile (a fellow reptile to the snake), venerated and worshiped by Egypt. Many Pharaohs identified with the crocodile as the king of the Nile.

**SDT:** Baal HaTurim points out that the pasuk says: G-d says to Moshe that when Par'o will ask for a sign, you (Moshe) shall tell Aharon to take your staff and throw it (on the ground) in front of Par'o; it shall become a TANIN. It didn't say: AND it will become a Tanin. He explains that the staff was thrown down and then he was to command it to become a TANIN. And that's what happened, to show Par'o the power of speech that G-d has given to Moshe. In other words, the staff did not change upon being thrown down. It changed by a spoken command. That carries a pointed message to Par'o that his wizards aren't even in the same league with Moshe and Aharon.

Par'o calls his wizards who are able to duplicate (sort of) what Aharon does; however, Aharon's staff (note: not his TANIN, his staff) swallows those of the wizards. Nonetheless, Par'o refuses to listen to Moshe and Aharon, as G-d had said.

[S> 7:14 (5)] G-d then instructs Moshe to go to the river (the Nile) in the morning, where Par'o will be, and to bring the Staff with him. Moshe is to say to Par'o that G-d has sent me (Moshe) to tell you (Par'o) to release the People and you have refused until now. "With this will you know Who

G-d is..." Moshe (actually Aharon) will be striking the water of the river, turning it to blood and killing all the fish in it.

[S> 7:19 (7)] Following the official warning to Par'o, G-d tells Moshe to tell Aharon to take the Staff and strike the waters of Egypt. Moshe and Aharon do as instructed and the waters turn to blood, the fish die, and the Egyptians cannot drink the water. Par'o's wizards again duplicate what was done, causing Par'o to remain stubborn. Egyptians are forced to dig for water (and/or buy water from the Israelites). This first plague lasts 7 days.

[P> 7:26 (15)] G-d next instructs Moshe to go to Par'o (at his palace) and warn him that if he does not let the People go, Egypt will be smitten by a plague of frogs. Aharon is to raise the Staff above the river, which he does, and the land is blanketed by frog(s). The wizards are again able to replicate this plague with their magical powers (not that they needed more frogs). Par'o calls to Moshe and Aharon to pray to G-d that the frogs be removed, promising that he will let the People go into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to G-d. Moshe asks Par'o when he wants the frogs to leave. (A strange question, to which Par'o gives a stranger answer). Par'o says "tomorrow", to which Moshe responds "so be it. And that will serve as proof of G-d's powers".

**SDT:** Why would Par'o ask for the plague to be withdrawn on the following day? He and his people were certainly suffering and would want to rid themselves of the frogs as soon as possible. Par'o (still refusing to see the plagues as Divine, and assuming that there was some natural explanation for them) figured that Moshe came before him when he (Moshe) knew that the frogs would leave. Moshe would give the impression that he (in the name of the G-d of Israel) had power over the frogs. So Par'o tried to trick Moshe by asking the unexpected - do it tomorrow. Moshe's answer was that doing so would demonstrate that it was truly G-d's power that was being observed.

Egypt saw itself as great because of the Nile and because of the fertile land created by the waters of the Nile. The first plague smote the water. The second was a plague that came from the river and attacked the land. The third smote the land itself.

## Chamishi 5th Aliya - 12 p'sukim - 8:7-18

So it happens, and after the frogs are gone, Par'o reneges on his promise, as G-d had said he would (an oft-repeated phrase indicating G-d's active role in the events of the Exodus).

[S> 8:12 (4)] G-d tells Moshe to tell Aharon to strike the dust of the earth

(no warning to Par'o this time). The resultant plague of lice was not able to be matched by the wizards, who acknowledge G-d's might. Par'o, however, remains stubborn.

[S> 8:16 (13)] G-d sends Moshe to warn Par'o about the next plague (swarms of insects or wild animals, depending upon which opinion you follow). New element with this fourth plague - the obvious contrast between Egypt and the Jews.

There was always a contrast between the Egyptians and the Jews - Egyptians had no water during the first plague; the Jews had water. The Midrash even says that if a Jew and an Egyptian drank from the same cup, the Jew would be drinking water and the Egyptian would have blood.

Similarly, the Jews did not suffer the plagues and the Egyptians did. Yet it seems that G-d had different messages for each of the plagues. (Or each set of three plagues.) AROV was the first plague that the distinction between Goshen and the Jews on one hand, and the land of Egypt and the Egyptians on the other, was so sharp and obvious. (And that Par'o was well aware of the differences.)

## Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 26 p'sukim - 8:19-9:16

And so the AROV descend upon the land. Par'o calls for Moshe and gives permission for the people to sacrifice

to G-d in Egypt. Moshe says that it must be in the Midbar.

Par'o agrees on the condition that Moshe pray for the removal of the plague. Afterwards, Par'o reneges.

[P> 9:1 (7)] G-d next sends Moshe back to Par'o to repeat the demand for the People's release and to warn him of the consequence of his refusal this time - DEVER. And so it happens that the Egyptian livestock all die, with not a single loss to the Jews. Par'o checks this, yet he still remains stubborn.

[P> 9:8 (5)] The sixth plague (boils) is brought upon Egypt without warning. Although his people are being seriously beaten, Par'o continues to resist (from this point on, with G-d's "help").

[S> 9:13 (9)] Moshe is next sent to warn about the seventh (and very powerful) plague.

**SDT:** In warning about HAIL, G-d says (through Moshe) that this time, I will send ALL my plagues... The Vilna Ga'on explains that G-d uses 3 main weapons, so to speak, to punish those who violate His commands - Fire, Water, and Wind. For example, to destroy Dor HaMabul, G-d used Water. To disperse Dor HaP'laga, He used Wind, and to destroy S'dom, His main weapon was Fire. The plague of Blood used Water. Plague 6 was the burning Fire of Boils on the skin. The locust came on the Wind. But Hail consisted of the whole arsenal - the Hail itself was Water, it had Fire in it, and the Hail was accompanied by

strong Wind - hence the phrase: All My plagues.

## Sh'VII Seventh Aliya - 19 p'sukim - 9:17-35

The threat/warning about hail continues. Never has hail like this been seen. There is also a challenge to the Egyptians in that G-d is allowing servants and animals to be saved by taking them indoors.

[P> 9:22 (14)] Moshe raises his hand heavenward and the hail falls. It is extremely destructive, but some plants survive (because they were young and supple), as do the animals of those Egyptians who heeded Moshe's warning to bring them indoors. Par'o admits that he has sinned and grants Moshe's demands, if only the hail will stop. When Par'o sees that the hail and thunder have stopped, he yet again reneges, as G-d has said he would.

MAKOT to be continued next week - Same time, same station...

## Haftara 23 p'sukim - Yechezkeil 28:25-29:21

The haftara begins with the prophecy of redemption (as does the sedra). The main connection to the sedra is that the haftara speaks of the downfall of Egypt, albeit at a different time in history. We also find in both the sedra and the haftara, the extreme arrogance of the Pharaoh. A pattern can

definitely be seen. Egypt mighty, only to fall hard; Israel to be restored to its glory.

## Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

*Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)*

### Va'eira

In previous essays, I have pointed out that the prophetic messages found in the weekly haftarot can be better understood by taking note of the prophecies that preceded, and/or followed, those nevuot. This certainly is true of this week's haftara, a selection taken from 29th (and the end of 28th) chapters in Sefer Yechezkel. Although the prophecy focuses on the future collapse of the Egyptian Empire, it is only the last part of an entire section of prophecies that predicts the collapse of Israel's surrounding neighbors, many of whom were adversaries, and often oppressors, of the Israelite Kingdoms.

Starting from the twenty-fifth chapter of the book, we read these "predictions of doom", frightening forecasts that are directed to the nations of Ammon, Moav, Edom, P'lishtim, Tzor and Tzidon. Rav Amnon Bazak makes note of the fact

that these predictions are not set in chronological order, but rather, similar to other like-themed prophecies, were all included in this one section. Rav Bazak also explains the logic of why this section appears only after the painful descriptions of the horrific punishments that would be meted out to Israel, including the eventual destruction of the Beit HaMikdash and the Judean Kingdom. He suggests that the prophet feared that the Jews might see the dark prophecies of their exile as a desecration of Hashem's name - i.e. Chilul HaShem - mistakenly believing that their defeat was "proof" of the power of the foreign "gods" over HaKadosh Baruch Hu. As a result, Yechezkel goes on to forecast the eventual collapse and disappearance of Israel's antagonists as well, dispelling the false belief of the exiled nation. It is at this point, after the navi reviewed the destiny of these rivals, that he dedicates three separate chapters to the fate of Egypt - the first of which, is the haftara of Parashat Va'eira.

Last week's parasha focused upon Egypt's oppression and enslavement of B'nei Yisrael and this week's parasha concentrates on Hashem's plans to free His people and, at the same time to punish the evildoers and teach them of G-d's justice. Rav

Barak makes us aware of the fact that Yechezkel's prophecy directed against Par'oh, was spoken on the twelfth of Tevet in the reign of King Tzidkiyahu (29:1) which marked a full year (and 2 days) after the Babylonians had laid siege to Yerushalayim. The harsh words directed against the Pharaoh (PAR'OH HAFRA) were the result of his failure to keep the alliance he had made with Judea and help them to repel the Babylonian onslaught.

The similarities between Egypt's sins in Yechezkel's time, and their future punishments, are what connects the haftara to the parasha. Egypt's bravado and reliance on the Nile that we read in the haftara, as well as Pharaoh's boast that he, a god, had formed the Nile, mirrors the Torah story of Pharaoh's boast that he did not "know" HaShem - and, therefore, had no reason to obey Him. The subsequent punishments that 'plagued' Egypt were G-d's response to Par'oh's denial of HaShem, as the text repeatedly explains "so he/they shall know that I am Hashem." Indeed, many of the plagues targeted the revered gods of Egypt: the Nile (blood and frogs), the animals (pestilence), the crops (locusts, hail) and the first-born. Chazal may have also seen in Yechezkel's declaration that Hashem promised that Egypt

would become SH'MAMA, a desolate land, for forty years, as another connections to Israel's experience, as it brings to mind the forty years that Israel spent in the desolate desert in their escape from Egypt.

In summation, the rabbinic decision to have this nevu'a read for this specific parasha reflects our belief that HaShem remembers, rewards and punishes, even after many generations. Immoral actions that are passed on from generation to generation mirrors a basic flaw in the basic belief of a corrupt culture. Such behavior, must be repaired.

Or HaShem will "repair" it as only He can. ★



**ParshaPix**  
explanations



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

## SH'MOT



Unexplaineds

Shrek's donkey, Donkey, stands for the donkey who transported Moshe and family from Midyan to Egypt.

The mohel's shield for the MILA performed by Tzipora on one of her sons...

Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy and Kermit the Frog might have been for

Aharon talking for Moshe. I don't remember for sure. Might have been something else.

There is a cat in mid-yawn.

## VA'EIRA



7 of the 10 images from the Davka Judaica graphic of the 10 plagues (the final three plagues are in Parshat Bo) **K** the MATEH, Moshe's Staff. It is burping because IT (not the TANIN it had changed into) ate the staffs of the wizards **K** The Torah tells us that the frogs (plague 2) were in the ovens of the Egyptians, producing a Kiddush HaShem and a lesson to us that G-d is still in charge of nature - He renews, every day, the acts of Creation. There is a picture of an oven in the shape of a frog. Not

exactly as the pasuk indicates, but I couldn't resist this one **K** Four wine cups for the Four Terms of Redemption **K** Logo of the SSSJ - Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. Let My People Go **K** Pictorial representation of Par'o's heart strengthening **K** Emblem of the Hogwarts School. Par'o's wizards might have been dropouts from Hogwarts since they were not able to cope with the plague of KINIM (lice) **K** Crocs, for crocodile, as in the staff-turned-to-TANIN and possibly participants in AROV **K** C is the symbol for carbon, the main (only?) ingredient in the furnace soot that Moshe and Aharon used to bring about the plague of SH'CHIN **K** Flag of Vietnam. The key makes it KINAM (key-Nam), a.k.a. KINIM, plague #3 **K** Elazar ben Aharon HaKohein married one of the daughters of PUTI'EL; they had Pinchas. Elazar's wife was BAT-POOH-T-L **K** Sports teams' logos for AROV. Detroit Tigers (baseball) **K** Cincinnati Bengals (football) **K** Memphis Grizzlies (basketball). Grizzlies logo is most appropriate symbol for a plague in Egypt because Memphis was the name of an ancient capital of lower Egypt **K** Chicago Bears (football) **K** Boston Bruins (hockey) **K** Charlotte Hornets (basketball), according to the opinions that AROV was swarms of harmful insects **K** Note: in choosing sports team logos for AROV, I stayed away from the many options whose logos had the wild animals in them. I wanted to make it more challenging **K** Pic of snow cone - in Hebrew, BARAD, plague #7, with the fire in them **K** Lentils, arrow pointing to a single lentil, ADASH, from Rabbi

Yehuda's "code" **K** Uzi and an L, combining to UZIEL **K** The frog who thinks that the capital of France is Madrid is a DUMB TZ'FARDEI'A (old joke) **K** Letter E on a date ITAMAR **K** Livni for the son of Gei-r'shom **K** PAR (bull) with a ring in its nose makes PAR'O **K** LEVII, which looks like LEVI

with an extra I - which could easily be a typo, is really L E and Roman numerals for 7 - read it as: ELISHEVA, wife of Aharon HaKohen **K** 100°C and 212°F are the temperatures at which water BOILS, as in the plague of SH'CHIN. Boils, get it? **K** that leaves two Unexplaineds and one riddle for you to solve. **K**

לע"ו  
הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה  
ז"ל  
**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ז"ל**

## Spirits in a Material World

### Va'eira

The Torah sometimes says something of fundamental importance in what seems like a minor and incidental comment. There is a fine example of this near the beginning of this parsha.

In the previous parsha, we read of how

Moshe was sent by God to lead the Israelites to freedom, and how his initial efforts met with failure. Not only did Pharaoh not agree to let the people go; he made the working conditions of the Israelites even worse. They had to make the same number of bricks as before, but now they had to gather their own straw. The people complained to Pharaoh, then they complained to Moshe, and then Moshe complained to God. "Why have You brought trouble to this people? Why did You send me?" (Sh'mot 5:22)

At the beginning of Va'eira, God tells Moshe that He will indeed bring the Israelites to freedom, and tells him to announce this to the people. Then we read this:

So Moshe told this to the Israelites but they did not listen to him, BECAUSE THEIR SPIRIT WAS BROKEN AND BECAUSE THE LABOUR WAS HARSH (6:9).

The phrase above in UPPERCASE seems simple enough. The people did not listen to Moshe because he had brought them messages from God before which had done nothing to improve their situation. They were busy trying to survive day by day. They had no time for utopian promises that seemed to have no grounding in reality. Moshe had failed to deliver in the past. They had no reason to think he would do so in the future. So far, so straightforward.

But there is something more subtle

going on beneath the surface. When Moshe first met God at the Burning Bush, God told him to lead, and Moshe kept refusing on the grounds that the people would not listen to him. He was not a man of words. He was slow of speech and tongue. He was a man of "uncircumcised lips" (Sh'mot 6:30). He lacked eloquence. He could not sway crowds. He was not an inspirational leader.

It turned out, though, that Moshe was both right and wrong, right that they did not listen to him, but wrong about why. It had nothing to do with his failures as a leader or a public speaker. In fact, it had nothing to do with Moshe at all. They did not listen "because their spirit was broken and because the labour was harsh". In other words: If you want to improve people's spiritual situation, first improve their physical situation. That is one of the most humanising aspects of Judaism.

Rambam emphasises this in *The Guide for the Perplexed*. The Torah, he says, has two aims: the well-being of the soul and the well-being of the body. The well-being of the soul is something inward and spiritual, but the well-being of the body requires a strong society and economy, where there is the rule of law, division of labour, and the promotion of trade. We have bodily well-being when all our physical needs are supplied, but none of us can do this alone. We specialise and exchange. That is why we need a good, strong, just

society.

Spiritual achievement, says Rambam, is higher than material achievement, but we need to ensure the latter first, because "a person suffering from great hunger, thirst, heat or cold, cannot grasp an idea even if it is communicated by others, much less can he arrive at it by his own reasoning." In other words, if we lack basic physical needs, there is no way we can reach spiritual heights. When people's spirits are broken by harsh labour they cannot listen to a Moshe. If you want to improve people's spiritual situation, first improve their physical conditions.

This idea was given classic expression in modern times by two New York Jewish psychologists, Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) and Frederick Herzberg (1923-2000). Maslow was fascinated by the question of why many people never reached their full potential. He also believed - as, later, did Martin Seligman, creator of positive psychology - that psychology should focus not only on the cure of illness but also on the positive promotion of mental health. His most famous contribution to the study of the human mind was his "hierarchy of needs".

We are not a mere bundle of wants and desires. There is a clear order to our concerns. Maslow enumerated five levels. First are our physiological needs: for food and shelter, the basic requirements of survival. Next come safety

needs: protection against harm done to us by others. Third is our need for love and belonging. Above that comes our desire for recognition and esteem, and higher still is self-actualisation: fulfilling our potential, becoming the person we feel we could and should be. In his later years, Maslow added a yet higher stage: self-transcendence, rising beyond the self through altruism and spirituality.

Herzberg simplified this whole structure by distinguishing between physical and psychological factors. He called the first, Adam needs, and the second Abraham needs. Herzberg was particularly interested in what motivates people at work. What he realised in the late 1950s - an idea revived more recently by American-Israeli economist Dan Ariely - is that money, salary, and financial rewards (stock options and the like) is not the only motivator. People do not necessarily work better, harder, or more creatively, the more you pay them. Money works up to a certain level, but beyond that the real motivator is the challenge to grow, create, find meaning, and to invest your highest talents in a great cause. Money speaks to our Adam needs, but meaning speaks to our Abraham needs.

There is a truth here that Jews and Judaism have tended to note and live by more fully than many other civilisations and faiths. Most religions are cultures of acceptance. There is poverty, hunger, and disease on earth because that is the way the world is; that is how God made

it and wants it. Yes, we can find happiness, nirvana, or bliss, but to achieve it you must escape from the world, by meditation, or retreating to a monastery, or by drugs, or trance, or by waiting patiently for the joy that awaits us in the world to come. Religion anaesthetises us to pain.

That isn't Judaism at all. When it comes to the poverty and pain of the world, ours is a religion of protest, not acceptance. God does not want people to be poor, hungry, sick, oppressed, uneducated, deprived of rights, or subject to abuse. He has made us His agents in this cause. He wants us to be His partners in the work of redemption. That is why so many Jews have become doctors fighting disease, lawyers fighting injustice, or educators fighting ignorance. It is surely why they have produced so many pioneering (and Nobel Prize-winning) economists. As Michael Novak (citing Irving Kristol) writes:

Jewish thought has always felt comfortable with a certain well-ordered worldliness, whereas the Christian has always felt a pull to otherworldliness. Jewish thought has had a candid orientation toward private property, whereas Catholic thought - articulated from an early period chiefly among priests and monks - has persistently tried to direct the attention of its adherents beyond the activities and interests of this world to the next. As a result, tutored by the law and the

prophets, ordinary Jews have long felt more at home in this world, while ordinary Catholics have regarded this world as a valley of temptation and as a distraction from their proper business, which is preparation for the world to come.

God is to be found in this world, not just the next. But for us to climb to spiritual heights we must first have satisfied our material needs. Abraham was greater than Adam, but Adam came before Abraham. When the physical world is harsh, the human spirit is broken, and people cannot then hear the word of God, even when delivered by a Moshe.

Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev said it well: "Don't worry about the state of someone else's soul and the needs of your body. Worry about the needs of someone else's body and the state of your own soul."

Alleviating poverty, curing disease, ensuring the rule of law, and respect for human rights: these are spiritual tasks no less than prayer and Torah study. To be sure, the latter are higher, but the former are prior. People cannot hear God's message if their spirit is broken and their labour harsh.

#### Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) Which is most important to you, your physical wellbeing, or your mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing?
- (2) Does Judaism focus equally on the

physical as the spiritual? Why?

- (3) How can we be activists to help people with both their physical and spiritual wellbeing?

יהי זכרו ברוך

# PTDT

## PhiloTorah D'var Torah

### How many terms?

Ask people why do we have four cups of wine at the Seder and you will likely get the answer - corresponding to the four terms of redemption.

There are actually other reasons for four cups, but let's stay with the popular answer of K'NEGED ARBA L'SHONOT GEULA.

The first three terms clearly belong to the Seder night. V'HO-TZEI-TI, V'HI-TZAL-TI, V'GA-AL-TI. I will take you out from under the culture of Egypt; I will save you from their enslavement; I will redeem you...

These three terms are found in one pasuk - Sh'mot 6:6.

The fourth term follows in the next pasuk (6:7) - V'LA-KACH-TI, and I will take you to Me as a nation. This part of the prophecy relates to the Sinai experience and Matan Torah - not

part of the Exodus itself.

Or maybe that's not correct. Our receiving the Torah and entering into a covenant with G-d is a major reason in His taking us out of Egypt.

So adding V'LA-KACH-TI the the first three terms, is appropriate.

We'll get back to that second pasuk of the prophecy in a moment.

When we speak of the four terms of redemption, we also acknowledge that there is a 5th term. V'HEI-VEI-TI - and I will bring you to Eretz Yisrael is also a major reason for G-d's having taken us out of Egypt, as well.

Actually, a fifth cup - corresponding to this fifth term is filled - we call it KOS SHEL ELIYAHU. The fact that the fifth cup is not a full member (yet) of the cups of wine we drink at the Seder is because of our long exile. And we can also say it is not yet drunk, because of the Sin of the Spies - which caused the Eretz Yisrael component of the prophecy to have its delays, problems, and difficulties.

We are getting there, though. And as more and more Jews come on Aliya and more and more Jews in Israel (and elsewhere) commit themselves to Torah, we'll be drinking a fifth cup some time in the future (near, we hope).

Now we are up to five terms of redemption.

I submit that there are really eight terms of redemption within the three-pasuk prophecy from the beginning of Va'eira. They might not call for differentiation at the Seder, but we definitely need to focus on them to see and understand the whole process.

The pasuk that begins with G-d's promise to take us to Him as His Nation - V'LAKACHTI - is immediately followed by V'HAYITI LACHEM LEI-LOKIM. This is our side of the covenant with G-d. We become His nation and He becomes our G-d. In the bigger picture, this definitely warrants our attention. And in that same pasuk, we have another important aspect of our redemption - VIDA-TEM, and you shall know that it was HaShem who took us out of Egypt. Par'o was not the Abe Lincoln of his day; G-d took us out.

This element in the whole picture is so important, that the first thing (and not too much more) that we heard directly from G-d, was ANOCHI... I am HaShem your G-d who took you out of Egypt... In the context of our becoming a Nation, G-d's Nation, knowing that He took us out seems to be more important than His having

created the world and everything in it.

Now we come back to V'HEIVEITI, the fifth term which has become the seventh term because of the counting of V'HAYITI and VIDA-TEM among the terms of redemption.

And this seventh term is followed by an eighth term, no less important than its partner term in the third pasuk of the prophecy.

V'NA-TA-TI OTAH LACHEM... And I will give the Land to you as a MORASHA.

As important as it is that G-d made promises to our forefathers, it is vital that we understand that we are not only dealing with G-d keeping His promises - enthusiastically or reluctantly - but with His intention to give the Land of Israel to us.

This is not just a prophecy to the generation which came out of Egypt. It is a prophecy to all Jews throughout all the generations. That means to us. You and me.

B'CHOL DOR VADOR... in every generation, we must see ourselves having come out of Egypt; having received the Torah at Sinai and having entered into an Eternal Relationship with HKBH; and having been brought to Eretz Yisrael - time

and again and today and tomorrow, and having been given this Land for ever and ever, for us to live in it and live Torah lives therein.

Three terms of Redemption belong to Seder night. Three further terms are for Shavuot - Z'MAN MATAN TORATEINU. And two more terms are also associated to Shavuot - YOM HABIKURIM.

*Walk through the Parsha*

with **Rabbi David Walk**



## Hardening Pharaoh's Arteries

Va'eira

Don't you love it when the bad guy gets his (or her, I'm thinking of you, Cruella!) comeuppance? I definitely do, ever since I was a little boy watching cowboy movies from the back seat of my parents' car at the Drive-In, but we called it the open-air theater, for some reason. So, there should be unalloyed joy as Pharaoh and the Egyptians (sounds like a rock band) get what's coming to them for oppressing our ancestors so many centuries ago. But there's a fly in the ointment. What's going on with the hardening of Pharaoh's heart?

Shouldn't he have the opportunity to let the Jews go?

Let's begin with Rashi who gives the two most famous approaches to the issue. Rashi begins, 'it is better that his heart should be hardened in order that My signs may be multiplied against him so that you may recognize My divine power... the Holy One, blessed be He brings punishment upon the nations so that Israel may hear of it and fear Him.' In other words, this view is that Pharaoh and the Egyptians were not a major issue to God in this scenario. Many observers are disturbed by the unfairness of this position.

Rashi himself brings an alternate approach that God only hardened Pharaoh's heart after the first five plagues. So, really Pharaoh brought this upon himself. The Rambam gives his spin on this viewpoint: There are verses which imply withholding Teshuva is a direct punishment for multiplying their iniquities... For these reasons, it is written in the Torah (Sh'mot 14:4), "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." Since, he began to sin on his own initiative and caused hardships to the Israelites who dwelled in his land... Therefore, The Holy One, blessed be He, hardened his heart (Laws of T'shuva 6:2).

So, Rashi presents both sides of the

argument. First, it's great to see the bad guys go down, and, then, he presents the issue of fairness. Eventually, he concludes that Pharaoh is being fairly punished for his previous behavior.

But maybe there's another way of understanding this scenario. Perhaps, the best way of dealing with the issue is psychologically. Professor Everett Fox suggests: When one notes the pattern within - that Pharaoh does the hardening at the beginning, God at the end - the intent begins to become clear. The Plague Narrative is a recounting of God's power, and Pharaoh's stubbornness. The model is psychologically compelling: Pharaoh becomes trapped by his own refusal to accept the obvious. Despite the prophetic idea that human beings can be forgiven, we find here another one - that evil leads to more evil, and can become petrified and unmovable.

So, Pharaoh to a certain extent, becomes a victim of his own machinations. What began as a state policy to control this large minority from becoming powerful enough to bring down the regime, actually causes the entire kingdom to fall. He becomes the perpetrator of his own nightmare.

Rav Sacks z"l beautifully expresses

this idea: We lose our freedom gradually, often without noticing it. That is what the Torah has been implying almost from the beginning... We sometimes forget, or don't even know, that the conditions of slavery the Israelites experienced in Egypt were often enough felt historically by Egyptians themselves... That is what the Torah means when it says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Enslaving others, Pharaoh himself became enslaved. He became a prisoner of the values he himself had espoused.

If Pharaoh is a victim, he's a victim of his own machinations. It's very easy to just say that Pharaoh did it to himself. He brought the whole empire down through his slavish devotion to the policy plan. We become enmeshed in our own snares. Fair enough, we often believe our own rhetoric. It's just that most of us aren't absolute rulers of vast empires. Our stubbornness, therefore, has limited ramifications.

There is another slightly different perspective on this issue which is worthy of our attention. Rav Avraham Twerski z"l was, of course, not only a Tzadik and a Talmud Chacham, but a world-famous psychiatrist and authority on addiction. He noted: Although we all read the Torah, no

one understands the saga of the Exodus as someone familiar with addiction. Pharaoh is warned of serious punishment if he does not allow the Israelites to leave, but he rejects the warning. Then the punishments begin... This continues for nine punishments, and each time there is a promise on which he reneges. Only when all first-born die does Pharaoh surrender. So familiar. "I promise to stop", followed by continuation of the addictive behavior. Only a disastrous rock-bottom brings him to his senses. I watch people in the synagogue who wonder, "Could anyone be so obstinate, to fail to recognize that his behavior results in destruction?" We know.

When one understands the iron grip of addiction, then the behavior of Pharaoh follows an all too familiar spiral of self-deception and self-destruction. In this final scenario, I'm not sure exactly how to understand God hardening Pharaoh's heart. Maybe it just means God was allowing natural tendencies to play out.

So, like my childhood persona, let's root for the good guys, but let's also be mature enough to consider the sorry plight of the villain trapped in a web of his design. 🕸️

*Ed. note: There is yet another way of*

*understanding G-d's hardening of Par'o's heart. If Par'o would have caved after the first number of plagues, it would not have been a Free Will decision of his. Rather, it would be giving in to save himself (and his people), against his true will. By hardening his heart to resist the pressure of the plagues, G-d was restoring Par'o's ability to exercise his Free Will to either let the people go or to keep them enslaved. According to this way of looking at things, G-d's hardening Par'o's heart gave Par'o the opportunity to keep his promises... or not. He chose not. He was not forced keep his promise because of the plagues; he was given a free choice. And therefore, he is held liable for his actions.*

## **Walk thru Davening** *with Rabbi David Walk*

### **Blessing of Praise**

#### **BARUCH SHE'AMAR - part 2**

In our previous article, I discussed the two-part format of the BARUCH SHE'AMAR prayer. The first half is a poem about 'blessing God'. In this piece, I'll examine the second half, which, I believe strongly, is the original prayer. This section of our prayer was probably written by the Men of the Great Assembly, in the centuries before the Common Era. That's because it follows the formal structure of Blessings written by this august group.

This section begins with six-word formula of blessings easily recognized by all traditional Jews: BARUCH ATA HASHEM ELOKEINU MELECH HA'OLAM, Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God, King of the Universe. This famous format always raises the question: How do we have the CHUTZPA to bless God? Well, it's common to sidestep this problem by explaining that we're not blessing God, per se, we are declaring that God is the source of all blessing in the cosmos. An alternative is to claim that we are utilizing the normative meaning of the BARUCH, which is to increase. In other words, it's a request addressed to God begging that the Divine Presence be increased in this realm.

So, let's render this phrase: O Eternal, Who is our God, increase Your Presence in this realm over which You are the King.

The middle section of our long blessing, which ends with another BARUCH ATA HASHEM, has three parts. Here is my translation of the first one: The God who is our compassionate Parent is LAUDED by His PEOPLE, is ACCLAIMED and GLORIFIED by His PIOUS ONES and SERVANTS.

There seems to be a lot of repetition

in that sentence, but allow me to clarify. There are three different groups of people proclaiming three different types of praise. Let's begin with the verbs of acclaim, which are in UPPERCASE in the previous paragraph. According to the Etz Yosef, laud or HALLEL is listing the specific items we're praising God for, like this morning's sunrise or our health. The acclaim or SHEVACH are expressions of appreciation and love for God because of the incredible things performed. Finally, the glorification or P'IER expresses our understanding of the significance of the wonders performed.

These praises are proclaimed by three different groups of individuals, which are also in UPPERCASE The first group, AMI, are those who recognize the national or ethnic connection between all Jews. Next, we have the pious ones or CHASIDIM, not to be confused with the modern religious group, are those who are committed to perform every Halachic point comprehensively. Finally, we have the servants of God, AVODAV, who are always aware of their subservient connection to God our Monarch. Every group does their best to adulate our Lord.

However, undoubtedly, many of us feel inadequate to the task. What do I

do if I can't find the words? Well, the paragraph provides the answer: Quote the poetry of King David. Indeed, the main content of the P'SUKEI D'ZIMRA are the Psalms of King David. Hopefully, we recite these poems with an eye toward discovering our own thoughts on the greatness of God.

Rav Soloveitchik in his explanation of this paragraph said, 'In Psalms we say, 'Who can express the mighty acts of HASHEM? Who can declare all His praise?' (T'hilim 106:2)... The question then is, how can mortal man with his limited vocabulary even attempt to engage in such praise? How are we allowed to praise Him in our prayers? The answer is implicit in these words of our text. By invoking King David, we rely on his precedent through his composition... we are then permitted to use his words to praise God ourselves. (Rav, Rosh HaShanah Machzor, p. 200-201)

The second section of this blessing's body is our commitment to fulfill the task begun by the individuals mentioned previously. It's all well and fine that there are groups praising God, but now we personally assume that responsibility as well. Every Jew is required to individually express their awe before the Infinite, the Omnipotent. By reciting these

various forms of praise, we are, simultaneously declaring that God is our Sovereign.

The final section of the body of this blessing makes the bold proclamation that God is Unique, the One and only God in the Cosmos. Now, assuming that this blessing was indeed written in the couple of centuries before the Common Era, then this declaration was truly significant because polytheism continued to thrive in the countries where the Jews resided. But what does it signify for us who have generally never met a pagan? It is still extremely important to declare that the central force and focus in our lives remains God. We may work hard or have other forces at play in our lives, but God remains the core of our being, our sense of spiritual self.

The BARUCH SHE'AMAR blessing is called a B'RACHA ARUCHA, a 'long blessing', because it has another BARUCH ATA HASHEM at the end. Here we recite MELECH M'HULAL BA'TISHBACHOT, King, Who is lauded (M'HULAL) with acclaim (TISHBACHOT). Well, of course we praise with praises, don't we? What's the point exactly? God is praised without our saying a word. The ever creating, all powerful God is objectively being praised by the

Divine handiwork itself. The greatness of God is manifest without us opening our mouths. 'The heavens declare the honor of God, and the expanse of the heavens tells of His handiwork' (T'hilim 19:2).

The existential reality is that 'God is lauded' always, but that in no way relieves us of the duty to proclaim the Divine greatness, always and strenuously. We have the need to add our feeble efforts to those of the Universe itself. We are duty bound to contribute TISHBACHOT, acclaim.

This remarkable and beautiful blessing begins the daily endeavor to laud our Lord and Maker. This effort is completed by another blessing which closes this section of our daily prayers. That blessing is called YISHTABACH, and we shall turn our attention to that prayer next. ❤️

## Rav Kook Torah

by Rabbi

Chanan Morrison • [www.ravkooktorah.com](http://www.ravkooktorah.com)



## Shabbat M'vorchim

On the Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh, the new Hebrew month, we announce the new month with a special prayer, called Birkat HaChodesh. We pray that the coming month will be a time of good health, peace,

and blessing.

The first paragraph of Birkat HaChodesh is an ancient prayer composed by third-century scholar Abba Arikha ('Rav'), founder of the famed Babylonian academy of Sura. Here is the text of Rav's prayer, as recorded in the Talmud (B'rachot 16b)

"May it be Your will, the Eternal our God, to grant us

long life,

a life of peace,

a life of good,

a life of blessing,

a life of sustenance,

a life of vigor of the bones,

a life marked by reverence of Heaven and dread of sin,

a life without shame and embarrassment,

a life of riches and honor,

a life in which we may be filled with love of Torah and awe of Heaven,

a life in which You will fulfill all of our hearts' desires for good."

While the prayer does mention love of Torah and awe of Heaven, most of the requests appear to refer to life's material aspects: sustenance and physical vigor, riches and honor.

Were these wishes foremost in the prayers of that pious scholar?

## **The True Meaning of Rav's Prayer**

Rav Kook taught that we should be careful not to understand the requests of Rav's prayer in a superficial way. The focus is not on material blessings but spiritual goals. Each request relates to some aspect of spiritual growth and reaching our life's higher mission.

"May it be Your will... to grant us long life" – CHAYIM ARUKIM. A long life does not mean long in years, but long in content and accomplishments. This is a preamble for the requests that follow.

"A life of peace" – CHAYIM SHEL SHALOM. This refers, not only to peaceful relations with others, but to our own inner peace and harmony. We should not be stymied by internal qualities – flawed character traits, confusion, intellectual blunders – which undermine our efforts to grow spiritually.

"A life of good" – CHAYIM SHEL TOVA. No, this is not a request for good times and affluence. This is a spiritual request, a prayer that all external factors which affect us, should influence us in good directions and positive ways.

**“A life of blessing” – CHAYIM SHEL B'RACHA. Not blessings that we receive, but blessings that we give. May we bring blessings to the world through our actions: helping the needy, consoling the broken-hearted, and providing moral leadership and direction.**

**“A life of sustenance” – CHAYIM SHEL PARNASA. A prayer that all our needs be met – physical, psychological, and spiritual.**

**“A life of vigor of the bones” – CHAYIM SHEL CHILUTZ ATZAMOT. In a Talmudic discussion in Yevamot 102b, Rabbi Elazar surprisingly noted, “This is the best blessing of all!” Physical vigor and energy are important in life; but is this the most important blessing that one can ask for?**

**Rav Kook explained that CHILUTZ ATZAMOT refers to our mindset and outlook. We pray that we should be willing and eager to undertake our spiritual mission, our special service of God. We should not feel that Avodat Hashem is a burden. This is the ultimate blessing, for the goal of all blessings is the path itself: our service of God. As the Sages wrote, we should seek “God’s mitzvot, and not the reward for observing His mitzvot.”**

**“A life without shame and embarrassment” – CHAYIM SHE-EIN BAHAM BUSHA UCHLIMA. No one is perfect. We all have shortcomings and weaknesses, a source of embarrassment. But our lives as a whole – the choices we make and the actions we take – should be without shame, a reflection of our better qualities. We should be able to look at our lives with pride and satisfaction.**

**“A life of riches and honor” – CHAYIM SHEL OSHER V'CHAVOD. Sometimes wealth can change a person, undermining his integrity, befuddling his values, blinding him to his true goals. Therefore we ask that our wealth be bound with true honor, namely, our values and higher goals.**

**And finally, we ask for “a life in which You will fulfill all of our hearts’ desires for good” – CHAYIM SHEYIMALEI HASHEM MISHALOT LIBEINU L'TOVA. Why tack on at the end, “for good”? Sometimes people wish for things – personal gain, material wealth – which they think will be good. We pray that our hearts’ desires will be for that which truly is good, complementing the ultimate goal and the greatest good.**

*Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. II, pp. 121-123*



## G-d's Reply to Moshe's Cry

Va'eira 5780

Moshe cries out to G-d, "...why have You done evil to this People...?" (Sh'mot 5:22). Hashem replies to him "and I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak, and to Yaakov as KEIL SHADAI..." (6:3). What did G-d mean by this statement?

Moshe could not comprehend why the cruel Egyptian slavery was intensifying after G-d had promised him that redemption was near and he would become the redeemer of the Jewish People. Thus G-d responded with His Divine Name of KEIL SHADAI. The root of this Name of G-d is DAI which means sufficient and enough. G-d has placed precise limitations on every aspect of Creation and He has constrained and limited Himself, as it were, to allow the world to exist.

In Kabala this concept is called SOD HATZIMTZUM which means the Secret of Exact Limitations. G-d was conveying to Moshe that every aspect of the Egyptian oppression was under His direct control and every part of it had a purpose. The increase in the harshness of the Egyptian slavery that Moshe complained about was in reality the harbinger of redemption.

We are required to emulate G-d's ways as the verse states "and you shall go in His ways" (D'varim 28:9). My Rebbe, Rav Pam explains that there is an aspect of this SOD HATZIMTZUM embodied in G-d's name of SHADAI that has great relevance to Torah Teachers. Because a Torah Teacher may feel that by teaching Baalei T'shuva, he may be limiting his own opportunities for personal spiritual growth. The teacher would much rather teach a shiur that would allow him to attain higher levels of Torah Study. Why should he teach on an elementary level when he could be teaching advanced Talmud with Tosefot? Teaching on a lower level seems to be a sacrifice of talent and intellectual creativity.

The answer to this is SHADAI - we must emulate G-d, Who's essence is limitation for the benefit of mankind. So too, a Torah Teacher, like G-d, must be willing to LIMIT himself in order to build a future of the Jewish People by teaching Baalei T'shuva. Could there be a greater expression of "and you shall go in His ways" than that?

Tehillim 89 states "The world is built on Chesed." G-d is called in Kabala EIN SOF - without any limitations. Yet He has limited Himself, in order to create a world whose very purpose is Chesed, to give us the awesome opportunity to earn Olam Haba by completing G-d's unfinished world.

Our task in life is to emulate G-d, which is especially relevant regarding acts of

Chesed such as relinquishing time, money, and even Torah study for the benefit of others. But how much must we be willing to give of ourselves for our fellow Jews? To answer this profound question, Rav Pam would quote Mishlei 16:9, "A person's heart will plot his way, and G-d will set his steps on the right road." If a person truly labors for the sake of G-d, he will be worthy of Divine Assistance to do what is right as the Talmud in Shabbat 104 elaborates. **ESP**

## **CHIZUK *and* 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*

### **Va'eira 2016**

Young love, first love, filled with true devotion. Young love, our love, we share with deep emotion.

These lyrics from a popular folk song in the 1950s, poignantly describe how one's first love tends to be the most intense, the most passionate.

Before you impatiently blurt out: "How does this have anything to do with Chizuk & Idud"?!

I hasten to point out that the oft used Mashal, simile, describing the matrix of intimacy, love and commitment

between the Almighty and the Jewish People as a romantic connection (ANI L'DODI V'DODI LI, V'EIRASTEECH LI L'OLAM), is used to describe our connection with the land as well. To quote from R. Soloveitchik's poetic formulation: "The union of the people of Israel with the Land of Israel is comparable to a marriage... a union of rocky hills and sandy trails with a people whose future destiny is to this day bound up with the state and welfare of the land" (Reflections of the Rav, p. 121).

In this week's parsha we read: "I will bring you into the Land which I swore to give to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. I will give it to you as a Morasha (heritage or inheritance)", Sh'mot 6:8. According to the simple understanding of MORASHA as inheritance, our verse makes reference to two distinct promises: The first is that of entering into the Land, which will then be followed by a second stage relating to the more distant future. Here we are to imagine the rosy image of a homeland transformed into an inheritance or heritage, as it is peacefully passed down from one generation to another. (Rabbenu B'chaye makes the point that MORASHA does not mean inheriting the land but rather bequeathing it and transmitting ownership over to one's children).

The Talmud (Pesachim 49b) teaches us, however, that the word MORASHA should be read as if it were written with an ALEF, thereby spelling the word ME'ORASA - betrothed. According to this suggested reading, the structural makeup of the verse should be understood rather differently: The verse does not contain a lineal progression from near to the more distant future, but rather works backwards in time, beginning with a depiction of the future, the verse returns from there to the present. The Talmud's suggestion would have us understand the promise encapsulated in this verse as speaking not only of the future but of the present as well. The verse declares us to be currently betrothed to the Holy Land, notifying us that we shall consummate this figurative marriage sometime in the future when we are to enter into and possess the land.

This is not to be seen as a whimsical or playful D'rasha, but rather as an important educational statement of purpose: Being engaged brings anticipation of the next moment. - One should see the Land and the Torah, which are referred to as MORASHA-ME'ORASA, not as something ancient but as something fresh and exciting.

We must always have the land in our minds, just as one's beloved always appears in one's heart, relating to its welfare with both passion and commitment.

This transplanting of MORASHA for ME'ORASA has additional ramifications. A YERUSHA is something that falls into one's lap. A romantic connection, on the other hand, requires effort - one must woo a beloved. So, too, with Torah and the land of Israel: Torah must be acquired through diligence and study, and as our Rabbis teach us, the acquisition of Eretz Yisrael is fraught with difficulties.

All of this notwithstanding, the Torah chose to write MORASHA; why could it not have written ME'ORASA explicitly? We may suggest that our foundational connection to the land is built upon the characteristics of an inheritance and heritage. Returning to the words of R. Soloveitchik, one major aspect of our relationship with the land markedly diverges from that of a human relationship:

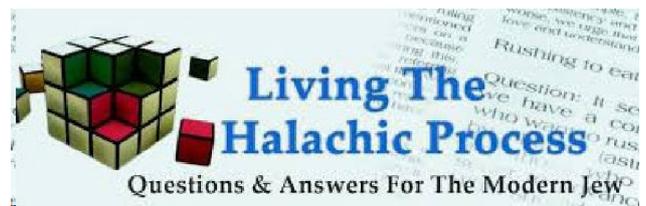
"In a human marriage, divorce or death can sever the relationship. The bond between the Land and the People, however, is for all time."

As the Netziv writes, once the land is defined as our Morasha, this entails

the understanding that even if we are exiled from it, it will forever remain ours. Even in exile we always turn and pray to it, never letting the land out of our minds. We know that ultimately we will return.

Returning to the original verse, Sh'mot 6:8, G-d promises us V'HEIVEITI ETCHEM - and I will bring you to the Land. From the Pesach Hagada we learn that four cups of wine are drunk to commemorate the /four expressions of Geula - V'HOTZEITI, V'HITZALTI, V'GAALTI, V'LAKACHTI. Yet, we do not drink a 5th cup because V'HEVEITI was not fully fulfilled. This is alluded to at the Seder with the goblet of wine is set aside for Eliyahu HaNavi, the precursor of the Mashiach, for in Messianic times the 5th cup will finally be drunk.

If only we were to truly cherish our Land as we would a valuable inheritance and relate to it as we would to a dear beloved, this day could be brought nearer! 🏠🔥



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## Cutting Down Fruit Trees for Recreational Purposes

**Question:** May one cut down a fruit tree in order to make room for improvements to his backyard for recreational purposes, such as to put in a pool or a basketball court?

**Answer:** The Torah forbids cutting down fruit trees,<sup>1</sup> which is the strictest application of the concept not to be destructive.<sup>2</sup> It is thus not surprising that the gemara and poskim identify “non-destructive” cases in which it is permitted to cut down fruit trees.

The gemara<sup>3</sup> grants permission in the following cases:

- 1) The tree no longer produces a kav (a relatively small amount) of fruit.
- 2) It is worth more for wood than for fruit.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Devarim 20:19.

<sup>2</sup> See Rambam, *Melachim* 6:8.

<sup>3</sup> Primarily *Bava Kama* 91b-92a.

<sup>4</sup> See Rashi ad loc.

3) It is significantly damaging a more valuable tree.

4) It is damaging someone else's property.<sup>5</sup>

The Rosh<sup>6</sup> deduces from the above that one may cut down a fruit tree if he needs to use its location, which the Taz<sup>7</sup> applies to building a home. Most poskim rule that this includes expanding a home, at least when the addition is objectively more valuable than the tree.<sup>8</sup> However, the gemara tells of an Amora's son who died because he cut down a fruit tree prematurely, and Rav Yehuda HaChasid also warned about it. Therefore, even when it is apparently permitted, some prefer that the work be done by a non-Jew<sup>9</sup> and/or that the tree be transplanted rather than disposed of.<sup>10</sup>

To what extent can we rely on the Rosh's thesis that making room available for something else is a legitimate excuse for cutting down a fruit tree? The Beit Yaakov<sup>11</sup> claims that Tosafot and others disagree with

the Rosh. The Meishiv Davar<sup>12</sup> adds that it is difficult to be certain that after cutting down the tree, the building project will actualize. However, many Acharonim<sup>13</sup> strongly reject the Beit Yaakov and adopt the leniency of the Rosh/Taz.

How important must the need for the spot be? Although the gemara's cases do not refer to huge benefits (e.g., the fruit is worth less than the wood), they relate to situations in which the tree's existence itself is relatively directly wasteful. In contrast, in the Rosh's case (and yours), the tree is fully viable; it simply precludes another future use of the area. It is therefore not surprising that some authorities who accept the Rosh's view say that the need must be substantial. For example, the She'eilat Ya'avetz<sup>14</sup> writes about a shul that was too small and needed to be extended to an area occupied by fruit trees. The Chavot Ya'ir,<sup>15</sup> while allowing cutting down a fruit tree that darkens one's house, forbids doing so just to create a place

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<sup>5</sup>. *Bava Batra* 26a.

<sup>6</sup>. *Bava Kama* 8:15.

<sup>7</sup>. *Yoreh Deah* 116:6.

<sup>8</sup>. See *Chayim Sha'al* I:22; *Yabia Omer* V, *Yoreh Deah* 12.

<sup>9</sup>. *Yabia Omer* *ibid.* Non-Jews are not commanded on the matter and should not be subject to negative consequences.

<sup>10</sup>. *Chatam Sofer*, *Yoreh Deah* 102.

<sup>11</sup>. *Shut* 140.

<sup>12</sup>. II:56.

<sup>13</sup>. See *Chayim Sha'al* *op. cit.*; *Yabia Omer* *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup>. I:76.

<sup>15</sup>. 195.

to walk around or to simply increase space and light there. Several Acharonim, including important poskim such as the Aruch HaShulchan<sup>16</sup> and Yabia Omer,<sup>17</sup> adopt this middle-of-the-road approach.

Appraising the cases you raised is tricky. On the one hand, building a swimming pool or a basketball court is expensive. Consequently, if one wants to build such a structure, it shows how important it is to him,<sup>18</sup> in which case the existence of a fruit tree should not preclude the project. On the other hand, some poskim<sup>19</sup> indicate that the value of the change should be an objective one that applies to the average person. Swimming pools and basketball courts are not likely to qualify in that regard (even if we focus on the positive and permitted uses of those facilities). It is difficult to ignore the warning that one who uses honest but faulty judgment in this case could be punished severely (as mentioned above<sup>20</sup>). Another factor is that it might be possible, even if less convenient, to build what is desired without cutting down the fruit tree.

Therefore, we suggest that if you are willing to have a professional, preferably a non-Jew, transplant the tree, you may do so.<sup>21</sup> Otherwise, we would have difficulty permitting removing the fruit tree unless we were convinced that the benefit/need and the lack of an alternative were absolutely clear.



## From the Pen of Rabbi Nachman HaKohen Kahana

Va'eira

Among the divergent ingredients that HaShem introduced into His "questionable creation" called "Man", was intelligence and logic. "Questionable creation"? The Midrash relates that HaShem concurred with angels if it was wise to create an entity who would be called Adam and would possess the

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<sup>16</sup>. *Yoreh Deah* 116:13.

<sup>17</sup>. Op. cit.

<sup>18</sup>. See *Minchat Asher, Devarim* 33.

<sup>19</sup>. See *Yabia Omer* op. cit.

<sup>20</sup>. See also *Shut Chatam Sofer, Yoreh Deah* 102; *She'eilat Ya'avetz* op. cit. is more extreme regarding this issue.

<sup>21</sup>. See *Chatam Sofer* ibid; *She'eilat Ya'avetz* ibid.

freedom to do evil if he so chose? The angels had diverging opinions.

At the end of the deliberations, HaShem did create Man, who could not refrain from sinning more than an hour or two after creation, and then found himself and all future humanity expelled from Paradise and subject to death. HaShem's rationale for creating Man was that He could contain the iniquities of humanity for the sake of the mitzvot and Torah way of life that Am Yisrael will accept.

So Man, as logical entities, seeks order and stability in his surroundings which would permit him to understand from where he came and more important to predict where he is destined to go.

However, HaShem holds the reins of power to limit Man's acquisitiveness and invention through a weapon called "confusion".

In Jewish history, we perceive examples of Hashem's supra-natural intervention in the ongoing history of Am Yisrael when "confusion" reined among our leaders. Just as the captain of a ship permits a midshipman to handle the wheel, but in rough weather the skipper "takes over".

Examples:

1- Bridging the last two parshiot of Sh'mot and Va'eira is the scenario where Moshe is despatched by HaShem to demand that Par'o free immediately millions of his Jewish slaves. Moshe

knew at firsthand that it would be a mission fated to fail, which indeed turned out to be a disaster for the Jews. Moshe is confused and questions the Almighty why he was sent when the outcome would obviously be devastating for the millions of HaShem's own nation? Confusion and perplexity!

But little to Moshe's knowledge was that HaShem was signalling an oncoming unnatural act of salvation.

2- What was our father Avraham experiencing while walking towards Mount Moriah with Yitzchak in order to fulfill Hashem's command to offer up his son as a sacrifice? Confusion! For did not HaShem promise that Yitzchak would be Avraham's heir in establishing the Jewish nation? But Avraham could not have known that at the outcome of the experience Hashem would rescind His command to sacrifice Yitzchak and would bless Avraham's Jewish descendants for all time, as stated (B'reishit 22,16-18):

Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.

Yitzchak experienced confusion when the wells of water he had dug were

repeatedly destroyed by Avimelech's people. Ya'akov cannot understand the path that his life was taking, when the holy man (of the tent) was forced to live for 20 years in galut with the evil Lavan. Followed by the terrifying meeting with Eisav where Yaakov prepared in three different ways - prayer, gifts and war. And then the 20-year estrangement from his beloved son Yosef. Confusion preceding a great salvation of HaShem.

At the Red Sea the newly freed slaves and their leader Moshe were confused and bewildered as to what path to chose, when HaShem commanded them to enter the churning waters of the sea. Again human bewilderment preceding Hashem's supra-natural salvation.

So was it with Queen Esther as related in the Gemara (Megila 15b). The profound feelings of rejection and confusion expressed by her entering the inner chamber of Achashveirosh and called out the pasuk in T'hilim 22,2:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And in the last century, the Shoah, which is beyond the understanding of our spiritual leaders, followed by the establishment of the Medina marking the beginning of the oncoming great salvation.

In our time the cacophony of opinions among religious leaders on most subjects leaves one with confusion. It is probably the foremost reason for young

people leaving a life of Torah and mitzvot and asking "where is Hashem?"

History teaches that human intelligence cannot provide us with clarity when the forces of confusion band together; and this occurs prior to a period of supra-natural events when HaShem, as it would be, is telling our leaders to curtail their activities and give room for the great miracles which HaShem alone will shortly provide for His Chosen People.

The narrative in the Pesach Haggada makes no mention of Moshe Rabbeinu. To the contrary, it emphasises that HaShem alone brought the Jewish nation out of Egypt.

There was total confusion and consternation among the people. 80% of the nation were dying because of their refusal to leave, and the surviving 20% saw no choice but to depart into the threatening desert wilderness. There was confusion and perplexity; the options of not following Moshe into the desert or following Moshe held little promise for the future.

It was on this background that HaShem alone suspended the "Laws of Nature" which He Himself had mandated for this world.

We can extrapolate from the Exodus experience to our own today. the options which are available for the Jews in galut are becoming fewer: to remain in galut with a questionable future or to

leave - but leave to where? And the options for us here in the holy land are drawing further away from peace and tranquility.

This is the perfect background for HaShem to hasten the final redemption of our nation, may it be very soon.



## GOD & RAV KOOK

The name of the sidra literally means "And I appeared". Since God has no corporeality or physicality it cannot mean that human beings are able to see God's appearance. But many things on earth, many aspects of earthly culture, are perceptible refractions of God.

Rav Kook, the poet-philosopher and chief rabbi of the Holy Land, said that special people can perceive spiritual things wherever they look. The great artists, musicians and writers are spiritually sensitive.

Rav Kook himself saw spiritual light in great works of art like the Rembrandts at the National Gallery in London, which he visited when he was in England during the First World War.

No wonder there is criticism of people who do not want Israeli

children to learn "secular" subjects; Rav Kook would have said that you can often find the holy in the supposedly unholy.

## PLAGUES FROM GOD

The Almighty gave ample warning of the coming plagues (Sh'mot 8). In the Torah text it says that God would lift His finger in order to bring about the plagues.

Why not His full hand?

The references to God's finger and hand are of course metaphorical (Targum Onkelos makes this clear by adjusting the terminology to "a plague from before the Lord"), but even so we wonder why in acknowledging the Divine might the Egyptian magicians only say "finger" and not "hand".

One possibility (Ramban) is that the magicians were belittling God and telling the Egyptians not to take Him too seriously.

Another approach is to say that God was not employing His full might against Egypt. It was bad enough for Egypt to receive His finger of punishment: how much worse it would have been if He had come down more harshly and used His full power. **OZ**

# HAAMEK DAVAR

- Dr Jacob Solomon

## VA'EIRA

G-d's call to Moshe to inform Am Yisrael in Egypt of His plan for them, ends with:

*"I will give you [the Land] morasha, as a heritage. I am G-d" (6:8).*

The Ha'amek Davar pays attention to G-d's referring to the Land as MORASHA, a heritage, instead of the more usual Y'RUSHA, an inheritance. MORASHA relates to the verb L'HORISH, to cause one to inherit, instead of LARESHET, to inherit. The Ha'amek Davar thus explains that the relationship of Am Yisrael to the Land is more than mere inheritance. Not only is it something that connects with us, but there is a something in us that connects with the Land. It is not simply living in the land, but belonging to the Land. It is the Land that G-d in His Wisdom determined to be the place of His destiny for Am Yisrael. Even when Am Yisrael has not yet taken possession of the Land or even been anywhere near it, it connects with them, their prayers, and their aspirations. It is though they are magnetically attracted to the Land, and the Land magnetically attracts them. Perhaps like birds' homing instincts: wherever they are

in Chutz LaAretz, their instincts are such that if they are not in Israel, they are not at their final, final destiny.

The word MORASHA occurs once elsewhere in the Torah: "The Torah is what Moshe commanded us. It is a MORASHA, a heritage, to the Congregation of Yaakov" (D'varim 33:4). Applying the Ha'amek Davar's explanation, it is more than a mere possession; it is the Torah that G-d in His Wisdom determined to be the source of wisdom, inspiration, and guide to the ultimate destiny of Klal Yisrael. "Engage with it, engage with it... and look into it..." (Avot 5:22), and for millennia, Jews have been feeling at home doing just that and finding it the powerhouse of their success and daily lives. G-d designed the Torah to suit Klal Yisrael. Like the Land, for uninterrupted generations people of Am Yisrael have been 'magnetically' drawn and inspired to the Torah and its teachings, which in turn they have continued to reapply to the realities and needs of their generation and environment. The Torah, like Eretz Yisrael, is part of them, even if they are not present with it at a particular moment. As long as it is suitably presented, even the less well-informed Jewish person's soul responds... Like a bird returning from a long migration, with the sense of

being back at the spiritual home.

And perhaps we can take this idea one stage further. There is a triangle: Am Yisrael, Torat Yisrael, and Eretz Yisrael. As Rav Kook expounds, all are required for Am Yisrael to achieve their ultimate world purpose and destiny, in drawing the entire Creation to the Almighty (c.f. Yeshayahu 49:6). And to help us, G-d creates the magnetism, the homing instinct, of MORASHA: connection to the Torah and connection to the Land that still pulls us even where we may resist the pull... 🌸

## Menachem Persoff

from Va'eira 5779

In Parshat Va'era we read of how Hashem hardens Par'o's heart, apparently blocking the possibility that Par'o would release the Hebrew slaves. This act raises the question of free choice: For how could G-d who so desires repentance (Yechezkeil 18:23) now punish Par'o with horrendous plagues when He (Hashem) had directly strengthened Par'o's resistance to responding positively to Moshe's demands?

Notably, Resh Lakish commented that Par'o simply exhausted the given opportunities to repent, after which Hashem then closed the door to Teshuva.

Following Rambam, however, Par'o and his people were punished for their excessive and unwarranted crimes committed against the Hebrews, even before Par'o was coerced by G-d.

For Rav J.B. Soloveitchik, Hashem did not actually prevent Par'o from releasing the Jewish slaves: He just made it extremely difficult for Par'o to arrive at that decision because, as the sovereign power, Par'o held that the Egyptian economy was totally dependent on the slave labor. However, Hashem dispelled that myth by bringing about the latter plagues that destroyed Egypt's crops, thus proving to Par'o who was really in control of Egypt's destiny. Par'o, in essence, would now have to live with the consequences of his recalcitrance - a lesson, it appears, for all time. **MP**

## The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

### Aviv Kochavi bids farewell to the IDF

*Translation by Yehoshua Siskin*

Aviv Kochavi, Chief of Staff of the IDF, is retiring after 40 years of military service. This is an appro-

appropriate moment to quote an excerpt from his new book, "Achareicha" - "Follow You", a title that evokes "Follow Me", the unofficial motto of the IDF. The book was just published the other day and contains insights into effective leadership from which all of us, not only military commanders, can learn.

"Why did Cain kill Abel?" Kochavi asks. "Because his sacrifice was not accepted by God. In other words, because he did not receive recognition. Recognition is the 'mental oxygen' and prime motivator of human beings.

An experiment was once conducted in a factory of the Western Electric Company near Chicago, Illinois. Researchers periodically changed the conditions of the workers -- increasing or decreasing the amount of light and changing the temperature in the factory during certain hours, altering break times and their duration, and providing food during breaks, among other innovations. The productivity of the workers increased with nearly every change in working conditions, which led to a significant and far-reaching conclusion: It was the special attention given to the workers by the experimental team and factory management that led to an increase in productivity.

Every human being has a basic need for recognition. Recognition nourishes self-confidence. People stand tall and shine when they are recognized and those who are not feel small and fade away.

As a battalion commander, I adopted the practice of sending handwritten letters of appreciation. More than once, I saw them hanging on the wall of a tank maintenance facility or office. As Chief of Staff, I adopted the additional practice of having a conversation with every fighting force that crossed the border to engage in military action, upon their return.

Recognition of others means taking the time to listen, to pay attention, to respond to requests, to encourage feedback, to reassure and show interest. Recognition can be expressed in speech, in writing, or may come down to a single glance."

Thank you Lieutenant General Kochavi for this insight and for the last 40 years.

To receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's daily WhatsApp: [tiny.cc/DailyPortion](https://tiny.cc/DailyPortion)

## **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

*Graciously shared with PhiloTorah*

Va'eira

"And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov, by the name of KEIL SHAKAI, but my name HASHEM (ALEF-DALET-NUN-YUD), I did not make myself known to them" (6:3).

There are those commentators that interpret the verse that a certain attribute of G-d which was not revealed to the forefathers, was revealed now to Moshe. Rashi explains it as the attribute where G-d did not fulfill promises to the forefathers, yet, to Moshe, G-d did fulfill promises. Ramban felt that although miracles did occur during the period of the forefathers, they were camouflaged as part of the natural order and thereupon, not noticeable. However, for Moshe, real supernatural miracles did occur.

Weren't the Avot on a higher spiritual level than Moshe? A question asked by Rabbi Moshe Mirsky.

The Midrash Rabbah (6:4) answers that exactly since the Avot were on a higher spiritual level, they believed in G-d even without being exposed to

supernatural miracles. None of them questioned G-d even when faced with so many challenges and hardships. However, Moshe's first and foremost question was "What is His name?"

This shows that the faith of the Avot was stronger than that of Moshe's, and precisely because of this, the Hand of G-d was more apparent in Moshe's time, when it was most needed.

Indeed it seems that when the Hand of G-d is less recognizable, there is a greater opportunity for man to use his free will to discover G-d and realize His Presence. It was for grasping this opportunity that our Avot were praised.

This sheds an optimistic light on our experience in the Exile. Just as the times of the Avot, lacked the appearance of supernatural miracles, so too in our lives. However, in contrast to the Avot, many within the people of Israel today, have lost the faith in G-d. We should learn how to view our current condition with a sense of challenge as well as with a sense of joy, to be in a similar situation as our great Avot. 🏹

# The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

*Va'eira 5782*

## The Proper Rebuke

The Parsha opens with Gd (ELOKIM) speaking (VAYDABER) to Moshe and saying (VAYOMER) to him, "I am HASHEM" (6:2). The use of different verbs for "saying" along with the text's employing different names for Gd are both significant.

Typically, VAYDABER conveys a measure of harsh admonition, while VAYOMER denotes much softer communication. Likewise, ELOKIM generally refers to Gd's uncompromising justice, while HaShem speaks to Gd's attribute of mercy and compassion. How may this be explained?

The Netziv offers the following insight. Gd was upset with Moshe, both for protesting against His perceived actions in allowing Israel to suffer as well as for wondering why he was sent in the first place (5:22). Hence, the opening phrase, ELOKIM speaks (VAYDABER) rebukingly to Moshe for his lack of complete faith. And then, immediately, switches to a milder form of speech (VAYOMER) and changing His Name in the process (now, it's HASHEM).

There is a critical lesson to learn from this description of HaShem's behavior towards Moshe. Clearly, there are times when we must rebuke, correct and

reprimand others for some wrong or misbehavior. How does one accomplish this in a way that the well-intentioned reproof doesn't backfire and lead to animosity and verbal reprisals? The answer is that with every reprimand must come words of kindness and empathy. If the person you are scolding knows that the words are coming from a place of genuine concern and love, it will be received in the right spirit. What is essential is to realize that your love must be displayed and validated not only by what you say but - more importantly - in how you say it.

## Plan A and Plan B

Here are two questions which may have one answer:

One: Why does Moshe propose to Par'o that the Israelites leave Egypt for just three days (5:3 and 8:23)? Was there ever any intention of them returning? And if not, was it proper for Moshe to engage in such chicanery?

Two: The Yerushalmi (Rosh HaShana 3:5), based upon the verse in 6:13, tells us that even before the onset of the plagues, Moshe is told by HaShem to teach the people the laws of freeing slaves. Why? They were not the task-masters!

The entire drama of the events leading up to the climactic Exodus contained a number of fundamental and eternal lessons for the Jewish People. One of them was the absolute conviction that

no human being ought to be a slave to another. A person created in the Divine image is free, and to treat anyone otherwise contravenes G-d's Will. This principle became hardwired into our collective psyche and explains, in part, why we have always been the champions of the downtrodden throughout the ages. Thus, at the very outset, Moshe commands the People about the manumission of slaves.

Now, there was a Plan A and a Plan B about how the People would gain this freedom. Plan A was to have the most powerful potentate of the ancient world - Par'o - publicly declare that slavery was wrong. This acknowledgement would begin by allowing the Jewish People to leave Egypt for three days and celebrate with G-d. Par'o would in effect be saying that while he may be a supreme ruler, he was not a god. According to this narrative, the People would indeed return (Moshe then was not deluding anyone), and Egypt would then begin a slow but peaceful learning curve ultimately leading to a complete rejection of the entire Egyptian pantheon and an acceptance of HaShem as the omniscient and omnipotent Only One.

Unfortunately, Par'o rejected Plan A, and we all know the rest of the story.

That Plan B was recorded in our Torah has this lesson to teach: At the end of the day, there are certain sacred and absolute truths about life, ethical and

moral rules, which, when followed, make every moment a wonderful and meaningful experience. There are religious precepts that, when observed, release an ecstatic joy that elevates man to unimaginable heights of spirituality.

That is the ultimate goal, and mankind is destined to eventually acknowledge these truths. In fact, this is what the messianic era is all about. But how we will come to recognize and live by these great verities - how long it will take and what difficulties we will have to face - will depend upon us. There is always a Plan A and Plan B, much like the fateful decision that faced Par'o of old. Let's just hope we're not as foolish and stubborn as our ancient adversary and make the wrong choice.

## Brotherly Love

Many of our commentators have offered various explanations as to why the Torah, at the outset of the Exodus drama, details the genealogy of Moshe (see 6:12-28). The Rav offers this important observation.

HaShem's original intention was to have only one messenger - Moshe - to act as His agent in the redemption of His People. Moshe reluctantly agrees. Both he and Aharon appear before Par'o and their mission meets with disaster. Par'o blasphemes Gd and makes it even more onerous for the People to make their tally of bricks.

At this point, Moshe turns to HaShem

and again expresses his unwillingness to approach the king. If the People will not listen to him, what hope does he have of convincing Par'o? HaShem responds by telling Moshe that Aharon will accompany him. But there was much more at play in Aharon's partnering with his brother. Now, that role would be shared with Aharon. This is why the Torah emphasizes (6:26) that it was both Aharon and Moshe who were to speak before Par'o. As Rashi comments, they were both equal.

The sharing of the role of the redeemer was an extraordinary event. "It was unique that a brother would surrender part of his role to another brother." As such, the Torah wanted to tell us "who these brothers were; what family did they come from that might have led one brother to relinquish his place in Jewish history in order to allow his brother to share the title with him. That is why the Torah concludes the lineage description of Shevet Levi with Moshe and Aharon."

One might ask: What really made this Tribe so unique? More, why does the Torah tell us how long Levi lived? Indeed, he survived all of his brothers. Why? Could there have been some critical message that only he could best transmit to his brothers and their descendants?

The Book of B'reishit is rife with the story of brothers fighting and contending with one another: Kayin and Hevel, Yitzchak and Yishmael, Yaakov

and Eisav, Yosef and his brothers. This often-bitter dissension would have to end if the People were to be redeemed. Levi was one of the prime instigators in the sale of Yosef. Why then should his great-grandson, Moshe, on the very night of the Exodus, assume total responsibility to find and carry the bones of Yosef out of Egypt (Sh'mot 14:19)? Apparently, says the Rav, Levi regretted his early hatred and began to admire and revere his younger brother, Yosef. This genuine and deep affection - the critical element in brotherly love - was clearly passed down through the generations. Moshe understood how important it would be for him, a descendant of Levi, to personally remove Yosef's remains for burial in Israel.

And it was this very commitment to the supreme ethic of brotherhood solidarity and fraternal admiration that allowed Moshe to happily share the role of redeemer with his older brother.

This lesson should not be lost upon our generation in which, notwithstanding our disagreements, our unity and solidarity must be preserved. The example of Moshe and Aharon is an ethical and communal leitmotif worthy of emulation.

# Afterthoughts

- Yocheved Bienenfeld

**...DAVAR TZIVA L'ELEF DOR;  
B'DVAR HASHEM SHAMAYIM NA'ASU**

ZICHRU L'OLAM B'RITO, DAVAR TZIVA L'ELEF DOR - remember His covenant forever, the word He commanded for 1000 generations. (Divrei HaYamim Alef 16:8)

CHESED HASHEM MAL'A HA'ARETZ, BID'VAR HASHEM SHAMAYIM NA'ASU - the kindness of HaShem fills the earth. By the word of HaShem, the heavens were made. (T'hilim 33:6)

We are told by Chazal that HaShem "looked" into the Torah in order to create the world; the Torah was the blueprint of Creation. I see this hinted to in a combination of the above two verses.

In explaining the verse ZICHRU L'OLAM B'RITO, DAVAR TZIVA L'ELEF DOR', Rav Shimon Schwab (Rav Schwab on Prayer, p.135) says that DAVAR refers to the Torah and we are required to remember His covenant, the Torah that He commanded for 1000 generations. If I may be permitted to use this definition of DAVAR in another place, the verse in T'hilim when it says CHESED HASHEM MAL'A HA'ARETZ, B'DVAR HASHEM SHAMAYIM NA'ASU,

beyond stating that it was that the kindness of HaShem fills the world, it also tells us that B'DVAR HASHEM SHAMAYIM NA'ASU - the heavens were created through Gd's Torah.

Along the same lines, it's possible to understand the following verse in T'hilim, HASHEM MALACH, GEI'UT LAVEISH, LAVEISH HASHEM OZ HIT'AZAR. AF TIKON TEVEL BAL TIMOT - HaShem has begun His reign; He has girded Himself with majesty; Gd has clothed Himself, He has girded Himself with strength; now the world of men, too, shall be firmly established and sway no more (T'hilim 93:1) in a similar way. Rav Schwab refers to Rav S.R. Hirsch's explanation of OZ as meaning "invincible", something which cannot be overcome (T'hilim 8:3) "which is why the Torah is called OZ." If we take the word OZ to refer to the Torah, then this verse from T'hilim can be understood thusly: Gd has begun His reign... and girded Himself with Torah ('that source of strength that none can withstand' - S.R. Hirsch). Given what we are told, that Gd looked into the Torah and created the world, this tells us that it was with OZ, that AF TIKON TEVEL BAL TIMOT, He then set up the world so that "it would not sway". He created the world with Torah.

# Insights into Halacha

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## SH'NAYIM MIKRA V'ECHAD TARGUM

There is a well known Gemara in B'rachot [8a-b, in the statement by Rav Huna ben Rabbi Yehuda in the name of Rabbi Ami] that states "A person should always complete his [study of the] parasha with the congregation - [by studying] SH'NAYIM MIKRA V'ECHAD TARGUM. Anyone who does this will have extended days and years." Learning the text of the weekly parasha twice along with the targum once is a segula for long life.

What many do not know is that this statement of Chazal is actually codified in halacha.

Baal HaTurim famously comments that this halacha can be gleaned from the first verse in Parshat Sh'mot: V'EILEH SH'MOT B'NEI YISRAEL - "And these are the names of Bnei Yisrael". The Baal HaTurim remarks that this passage stands for (ROSHEI TEIVOT) -

V'ADAM ASHER LOMEID HASEDER  
SH'NAYIM MIKRA V'ECHAD TARGUM  
B'KOL NA'IM YASHIR, YICHYEH  
SHANIM RABOT ARUCHIM L'OLAM

"And the person who learns (or sings) the weekly parsha SH'NAYIM MIKRA V'ECHAD TARGUM in a sweet straight

voice, will live many long years (have an extremely long life).

## Translating 'Targum'

Now that we have seen that that such a great reward awaits those who strictly adhere this, there is only one thing left to ascertain: What precisely is the Mitzva? Obviously, it means to recite the weekly Torah portion twice, plus targum once; but what exactly does targum refer to, and what is its purpose?

This is actually a dispute among the Rishonim. Several are of the opinion that the purpose of targum is that it is not just a simple translation, but also adds layers of explanation to every word. Consequently, according to this opinion, the purpose of reading the parsha with targum is to learn the Torah in a way that allows us to understand it better. Practically, according to the Tur and Shulchan Aruch, this means that targum here would mean learning the parsha with Rashi's commentary, as it is the best commentary to unlock the pshat of the Chumash.

Others maintain that the halacha is referring to the targum as we know it: Targum Onkelus, as the Gemara in Megila states that this translation of the Torah was actually given to us by Moshe Rabbeinu. The Rema held that therefore reading Targum Onkelus is like reading from the Torah itself, and hence is preferable for performing this Mitzva. Accordingly, by reading the parsha with

its original targum, we are re-presenting the Torah weekly in the same manner as it was given at Har Sinai.

...

The Shulchan Aruch cites both opinions and rules that one can fulfill his obligation with either one, Targum Onkelus or Rashi. However he concludes that it is preferable to do both, as that way one can satisfy both interpretations.

The Taz explains that if someone does not understand either one, he can read the original Tzennah U'Renna... to enable his understanding, and with this he fulfills his targum obligation. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and Mishna Berura rule this way as well. In this vein, several contemporary authorities, including Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Moshe Sternbuch, ruled that nowadays one may perform his targum obligation by reading an English translation of Rashi's commentary, if that is the way one best understands it.

## **Before the Seuda**

The Shulchan Aruch rules that the proper time to fulfill this Mitzva is from the Sunday of the week when a given parsha is read (although some, including the Mishna Berura, maintain that one may already start on Shabbat afternoon after Mincha, over the course of the whole week and preferably finishing before the Shabbat day meal. However, it is important to note that this is only

Mitzva Min HaMuvchar. The Mishna Berura rules that one should not push off his Seudat Shabbat past CHATZOT just to finish SH'NAYIM MIKRA before the seuda. Likewise, if one is having guests over for the seuda, he should not make them wait just so he can finish SH'NAYIM MIKRA before the seuda.

However, there are many authorities who hold that optimally, it is preferable to complete SH'NAYIM MIKRA on, or at least finish, by Erev Shabbat.

## **What time is Mincha?**

The Shulchan Aruch adds that if one has not yet finished SH'NAYIM MIKRA before the seuda, then he has "until Mincha" to finish, and if not, the Wednesday of the next week, and concluding that b'dieved one has until Shmini Atzeret / Simchas Torah to catch up for the whole year.

The Shulchan Aruch's enigmatic choice of words led to an interesting dispute among authorities: What did the Shulchan Aruch mean by "until Mincha"? Some posit that he was referring to a personal Mincha, meaning that a person can finish this Mitzva up until he himself actually davens Mincha. Others maintain that his intent was until the time of Mincha, meaning Mincha Gedola, the earliest time that one may daven Mincha. A third approach is that it refers to the time when Mincha is davened in the local shul. A fourth opinion is that it is referring to Mincha Ketana, two and a half halachic hours

before sunset, the optimal time for davening Mincha. Interestingly, there does not seem to be any clear cut consensus on this issue.

## One Small Step For Man...

Another issue that raises much debate among the halachic decisors is what the proper order and way to fulfill SH'NAYIM MIKRA V'ECHAD TARGUM is, and at which points one may stop; whether pasuk by pasuk, section by section, parsha by parsha, or all at once. There does not seem to be a clear consensus on this either. Although for many, to clear a time block to do SH'NAYIM MIKRA at once may be difficult, it might be a good idea to follow the Mishna Berura's advice and employ the Vilna Gaon's method of immediately after one's daily Shacharit, doing a small part every day (i.e. on Sunday do up to Sheini; on Monday up to Shlishi, etc.). By following this technique one will have finished this Mitzva by Shabbat, every week.

## Just Do It!

Many contemporary authorities are at a loss to explain the perceived lackadaisicalness that many have concerning this Mitzva. These Gedolim, including Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Shmuel HaLevi Wosner, and Rav Ovadia Yosef, ZICHRONAM LIVRACHA, as well as did YBLCH" T Rav Moshe Sternbuch, and, stressed its significance, and decried

the fact that it seems to have fallen into disuse, with several averring that there is even a Mitzva of chinuch for a parent to teach SH'NAYIM MIKRA's importance to his children! So, although there is halachic discussion as to what constitutes the proper order and way to fulfill this Mitzva, nonetheless, one shouldn't lose sight of the forest for the trees; the most essential point is that one should actually make the effort to do it. Who would willingly want to turn down a promise by the Gemara for an extremely long life?!

**Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.**

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz's English halacha sefer, "Food: A Halachic Analysis" (Mosaica/Feldheim) containing over 500 pages featuring over 30 comprehensive chapters discussing the myriad halachic issues pertaining to food, is now available online and in bookstores everywhere."

## VA'EIRA

**גמ** The famous prophecy that G-d sent Moshe to deliver to the People, consists of three p'sukim - the first concerns the Exodus, the second the Sinai experience, and the third - Eretz Yisrael. Here is Sh'mot 6:7, the middle part -

וְלִקְחוּזֹתֵי אֶתְכֶם לִי לֶעֶם וְהִיִּיתִי לָכֶם  
לְאֱלֹהִים וַיִּדְעֵתֶם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִתְּנוּת סְבִלּוֹת מִצְרַיִם:

*I will take you to Myself as a nation, and I will be to you as a God. You will know that I am HaShem your G-d, the One who is bringing you out from under the Egyptian subjugation.*

That's the prophecy and here is the beginning of the fulfillment of that prophecy - Sh'mot 19:4 -

אַתֶּם רֵאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם  
וְאֲשֶׁר אָתְּכֶם עַל-כַּנְּפֵי זְשָׁרִים וְאֶבְרָא  
אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי:

*'You saw what I did in Egypt, carrying you on eagles' wings and bringing you to Me.*

The p'sukim are a GM at 4934.

What else is with 4934?

The RASHBAM passed away. Rambam was 39 years old (just like Jack Benny). 4934 is a semiprime being the product of 2 and 2467.

**גמ** G-d promised to bring us to Eretz Yisrael and to give the Land to us. Sh'mot 6:8 -

וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר זָשָׂאתִי  
אֶת-יָדִי לָתֵת אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק  
וְלְיַעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֹתָהּ לָכֶם מִוְרֶשֶׁה אֲנִי  
ה':

*I will bring you to the land regarding which I raised My hand, [swearing] that I would give it to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. I will give it to you as a heritage. I am God.*

As I've written often, the search for Gimatriya Matches is blind - meaning

the TES program I use allows me to highlight from the text, use its numeric value as the search parameter, and receive, in response, words, p'sukim, and phrases that have the same gimatriya. Most significant results are full p'sukim. Second to that are Neat Partial P'sukim (NPP), which read as a complete statement. In the case of the above pasuk from Va'eira, with a gimatriya of 6869, only one other pasuk in Tanach matched. Yehoshua 22:9 -

וַיָּשָׁבוּ וַיָּלְכוּ בְנֵי-רְאוּבֵן וּבְנֵי-גָד וַיִּזְעְזְעוּ  
עִשְׂבֵי הַמִּדְבָּר מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִשְׁלַח  
אֲשֶׁר-בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְלֶכֶת אֶל-אֶרֶץ  
הַגִּלְעָד אֶל-אֶרֶץ אֲזוּזֹתָם אֲשֶׁר  
נְאֻזְזוּ-בָהּ עַל-פִּי ה' בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה:

*And the children of Reuven and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Menashe returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the country of Gil'ad, to the land of their possession, of which they were possessed, according to the word of HaShem through Moshe.*

With only these two p'sukim sharing 6869 as their gimatriya, it is extra (don't know the right word) nice that there is something significant to point out.

The pasuk from our sedra speaks of our being brought to the Land of Israel. The pasuk from Yehoshua includes in Eretz israel, not only K'naan, but also the territories of Gil'ad, the area giving to the two and a half tribes to settle.

6869 is a prime number.