



יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו וא'להי אבותינו שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים,
 רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לפצועי המלחמה, ולנפגעי מעשי טרור ואנטישמיות
 בישראל ובכל מקום שהם - עם שאר חולי ישראל. אמן.

**May HaShem protect our soldiers; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured;
 may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel; may He end these wars with
 total success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever we are.**

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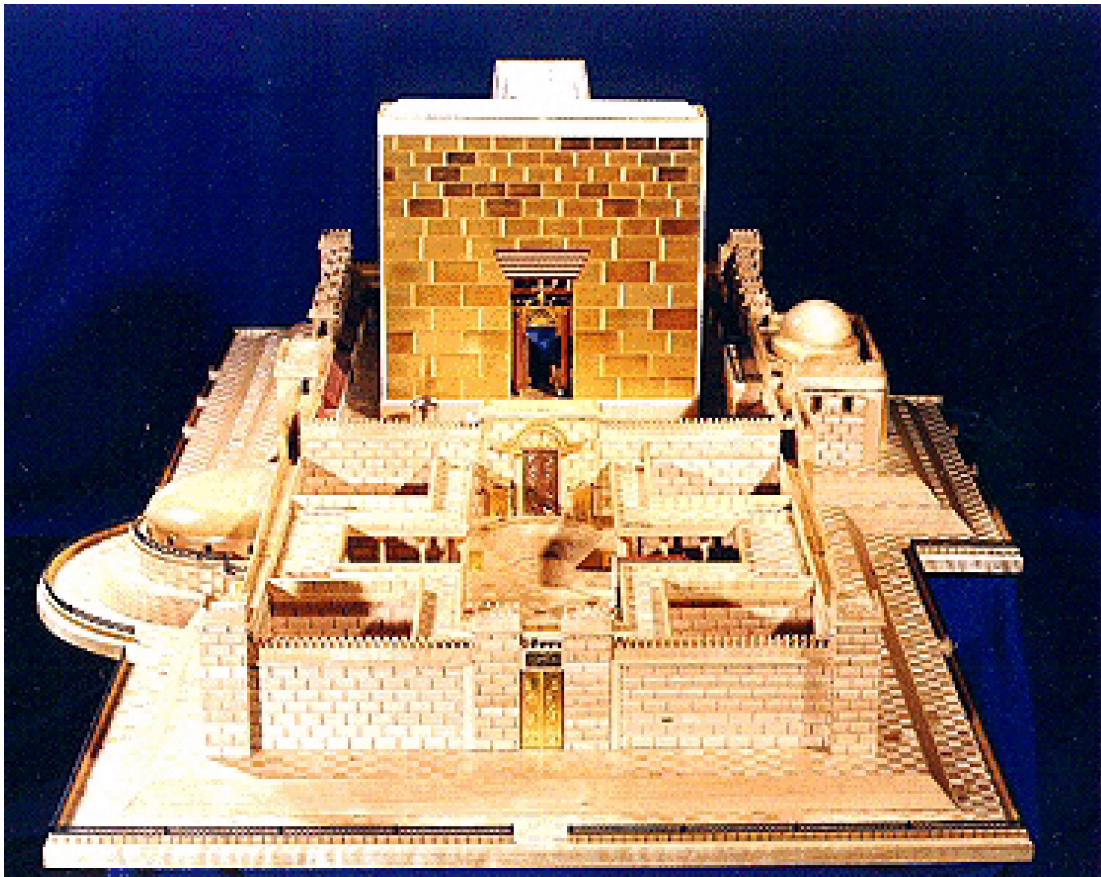


Photo of the amazing model of the Beit HaMikdash by Catriel Sugarman

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YERUSHALAYIM in/out for VA'ETCHANAN SHABBAT NACHAMU

י"א מנחם אב ה'תשפ"ו • July 24-25, '26

 **7:07PM** Plag **6:15PM** •   **8:22PM** R' Tam **8:53PM**

Use the Z'MANIM link for other locales

PhiloTorah (316nach) - 1 - all at once file



KIDDUSH L'VANA

Those who follow Minhag Yerushalayim on the issue of Kiddush L'vana will have already said it on Motza'ei Shabbat Chazon.

Most people wait for after Tish'a b'Av to say KL.

When said right after Tish'a b'Av, it is preferable to have washed one's hands fully (unlike what is done on Tish'a b'Av itself) and broken one's fast. Preferable, but not absolute. If washing and eating something is not practical, KL can be said while still fasting.

When Tish'a b'Av is Thursday (as it is this year), some say to wait until Motza'ei Shabbat Nachamu for Kiddush L'vana - the setting is more appropriate for KABALAT P'NEI HA-SH'CHINA.

Others (the ARI Z"l for one) say that saying KL right after the fast (Thursday night) shows our faith and trust in the coming of the Mashiach because the renewal of the Moon is a symbol of the renewal of the Kingship of the House of David.

Whichever works for you, just remember to say Kiddush L'vana this month - and all months.

Minhag Yerushalayim, largely based on the teachings of the Vilna Gaon, favors Z'RIZIM - do a mitzva as soon as possible; do not push it off.

The standard practice is based on the mood of the day and the setting. Gathering outside after davening on Motza'ei Shabbat, still in one's Shabbat clothes and mood, is a nice setting for Kiddush L'vana which is described as Greeting the Divine Presence.

On a practical note, Thursday night is the eve of the 10th of the month. Motza'ei Shabbat is the eve of the 12th of the month. Last opportunity for KL this month is all night of Tuesday to Wednesday.

The more one delays KL, the greater the risk of running out of nights. In Israel, it is unlikely, at this time of year, that we will run into cloudy nights that will present a problem for KL. But other locations might be different.

Shabbat Nachamu

It is appropriate to up Oneg Shabbat a notch on Shabbat Nachamu because it is the first of the seven Shabbatot of Nechama between Tish'a b'Av and Rosh HaShana.

What does upping Oneg Shabbat a notch look like? A special side dish, a fancier dessert, a special drink... more z'mirot - use your imagination.

VA'ETCHANAN NACHAMU

45th of 54 sedras;
2nd of 11 in D'varim



Written on 249 lines in a Torah
ranks 7th in the Torah.

21 parshiyot; 5 open, 16 closed,
7th (tied with Ki Tavo)

122 p'sukim - rank: 17th
(2nd in D'varim) same as Vayak'hel &
Ki Tavo - but larger than either

1878 words; rank: 10th (2nd in D'va.)

7343 letters; rank: 10th (2nd in D'va.)

Va'etchanan's p'sukim are longer
than average, hence the jump in rank
from 17th for p'sukim to 10th for
words and letters. And its many
parsha-separating blank spaces is
responsible for its rise in rank for
lines

MITZVOT

12 of 613 mitzvot:
8 positives, 4 prohibitions

plus many more mitzvot which are
counted elsewhere - this is so for
several sedras, but it really shows for
Va'etchanan (e.g. Aseret HaDibrot in
Yitro has 14 mitzvot, repeated here
but not counted here - and there are
more)

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.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the
Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND
Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI;
L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek &
pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya - 11 p'sukim - 3:23-4:4

[S> 3:23 (7)] Moshe Rabeinu continues
his farewell words to the People. He
tells them that he had asked G-d to
rescind His decree banning him from
entry into the Land of Israel.

SDT: The Baal Shem Tov commented
that Moshe, who had learned the
entire Torah, Written Word and Oral
Law, from G-d Himself, used the
words "You have begun to show me
Your greatness..." The more one
learns Torah, the more one learns
about G-d, the more one will realize
that he has just begun to understand
Who G-d is.

Albert Einstein put it this way - "What
you know is a drop; what you don't
know is an ocean."

G-d refused this request and forbade
Moshe to ask again. Moshe ascended a

mountain from where he saw the Land. G-d then told him to transfer the leadership to Yehoshua.

[P> 4:1 (24)] He (Moshe) proceeds to review the laws and statutes (Torah and mitzvot) by which the people are now to live... in Eretz Yisrael.

Neither should the Torah be added to nor detracted from.

[These mitzvot are counted in R'ei. Strange that they are counted the second time they occur and not the first time, which would be expected].

Another warning against idolatry follows. Then, "And you who cling to G-d are all alive today". (This is one of many hints to T'CHIYAT HAMEITIM in the Torah.)

MITZVAnotes

The twin prohibitions of neither adding nor subtracting from the Torah, are mentioned in Va'etchanan and again in R'ei (where they are counted among the 613). The Vilna Gaon points out that the plural form is used one time and the singular form is used in the other case. This, he says, alludes to two different aspects of these prohibitions. It is forbidden to add to or subtract from a particular mitzva - for example, one may not take 5 species or 3 species on Sukkot for the fulfillment of the mitzva of "Lulav & Etrog". (If you add something to the Arbaa Minim to

beautify them - (don't do it) - it would not be BAL TOSIF - only when your intention is L'SHEIM MITZVA.) Nor may one add or subtract to the total of the mitzvot. To treat a Rabbinic mitzva as a Torah law, or vice versa, would be an example of the other aspect of these prohibitions.

The spirit of these prohibitions (if not the actual definitions) would include treating (or teaching) a CHUMRA as if it were required, or vice versa (claiming that something that is prohibited is "only" a chumra or custom, when it is a halacha). Aside from people who intentionally do this, it is more common to find people doing it one way or the other inadvertently, either because of ignorance or because of a sincere (but slightly misguided) desire to enhance the observance of mitzvot. This is especially important for parents and teachers of young children. Don't say ASUR if you mean, strictly speaking, it isn't actually forbidden, but it is considered a proper thing to abstain from doing such and such. It sounds more complicated, but it is more "honest" and therefore it is the more proper way to transmit Torah to your children and students. (Obviously, when a child is very young, you have to simplify matters. But don't forget to upgrade the child's level of understanding as he or she grows older.)

Levi - Second Aliya - 36 p'sukim - 4:5-40

Once again, Moshe emphasizes that mitzvot are meant to be kept in Eretz Yisrael. (This not only applies to Land-related mitzvot, but to the entire range of mitzvot.)

There is repeated reference in the book of D'varim, and especially in Parshat Va'etchanan, to Eretz Yisrael being THE reason for our having been taken out of Egypt, formed into a Nation, and given the Torah and mitzvot.

Prolonged exile has taught us that the Torah can be kept, must be kept, no matter where a Jew finds himself. This was one of the reasons that the Torah was given at Sinai, prior to entry into the Land. On the other hand, one should not lose sight of the fact, repeated often by Moshe Rabeinu in D'varim, that G-d has always intended us to observe His mitzvot IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL. Are there more mitzvot to keep in Israel than outside? YES. But maybe more significantly, every mitzva - even those that are performed all over the world, can reach their full potential ONLY in Israel. This is a message that each of us has to realize, understand, and internalize. Then we must spread this message to family and friends abroad who feel that they "have everything we need to be fully Jewish" in their respective religious

communities around the world. AND the vital significance of Torah AND Israel to our lives as Jews must be taught to those less committed Jews here in Israel and abroad.

On the other hand, we must not forget that Israel today is not the realization of The Dream, but rather a significant step on the road to the Complete Redemption, the restoration of Zion and Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash, and the coming of Mashiach. This idea helps us refocus after the mourning period that ends with the 10th of Av, and is an appropriate theme to usher in the periods of Consolation and T'shuva.

We must be careful to preserve and perform the mitzvot because (among other reasons) it is the mitzvot that project Judaism as an intelligent religion to the nations of the world. This in turn, sanctifies G-d's Name. We must be extremely careful to remember and transmit to our children, the "Sinai Experience".

Moshe Rabeinu describes for the new generation the details of Matan Torah. He includes a specific warning against the potentially idolatrous thoughts caused by the combination of the magnificent, tangible universe in which we live, and the invisible, intangible G-d.

A primary cause of idolatry is the natural human tendency to relate

better to the concrete, visible, tangible rather than something abstract and intangible. The Sun is in the sky. It's hot, full of energy, gives us light, and sustains life as we know it. People found Sun-worship easier to accept than the worship of He Who created the Sun and everything else, but cannot be seen. True worship of the One G-d was what Avraham and Sara taught many people. And, as OR LAGOYIM, a light unto the nations, it is what we are supposed to teach and show the world.

G-d had taken us out of Egypt in order to make us His Nation. He got angry at me, says Moshe, and forbade me to enter the Land. Again, Moshe warns the People against abandoning the covenant with G-d after his (Moshe's) passing.

[P> 4:25 (16)] The next portion is read on Tish'a b'Av morning (in addition to Shabbat Nachamu with the whole sedra)... In spite of the many warnings against idolatry, Moshe prophesies (predicts) that there will come a time when the People will turn from G-d and be exiled from their Land. It will then come to pass that the People will seek out G-d and return to Him. Moshe emphasizes the uniqueness of the People of Israel and their special relationship with G-d and beseeches the People to remain faithful to Torah and mitzvot. One can hear a pleading in his voice, as if he is begging the people not to go in the direction of his prophecy.

This theme is oft-repeated in the Torah. Do what G-d asks of you. Don't turn away from Him. If you remain faithful to Him, wonderful things will happen to and for you. If you turn away from Him, terrible things will happen. You will turn away from Him; terrible things will happen; and then you will turn back to Him... We have the ability to skip the bad stuff - LET'S!

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 9 p'sukim - 4:41-49

[P> 4:41 (9)] Although the cities of refuge will not function as such until conquest and settlement of Eretz Yisrael, Moshe (with enthusiasm to do G-d's bidding, even though he knows what's coming soon thereafter) designates the 3 cities on the East Bank of the Jordan - Betzer in the Mishor Wilderness area for Reuven, Ramot in the Gil'ad area for Gad, and Golan in the Bashan area for Menashe.

These (the mitzvot about to be presented) were taught by Moshe to the People following the Exodus in the lands on the East Bank of the Jordan.

(Note the detail in the description of the location of the people, the repetition of their successes in conquering the "east bank" lands. It seems meant to be encouraging to the people for what lies ahead.)

V'zot HaTorah... said when the

Torah is lifted, comes from D'varim 4:44. In the Siddur, the words **AL PI HASHEM B'YAD MOSHE** are added. That phrase appears four times in Bamidbar, but 9:23 seems to be the one from which it is taken. (Some say V'zot HaTorah without the added words in order not to recite partial p'sukim. And some say the whole pasuk 9:23, which ends with **AL PI HASHEM B'YAD MOSHE**.)

R'VI'I - Fourth Aliya - 18 p'sukim - 5:1-18

[P> 5:1 (5)] Moshe begins the review of mitzvot with a restatement of the Aseret HaDibrot. He emphasizes that the Covenant at Sinai was not just between G-d and the previous generation, but between G-d and all generations of Jews to come.

MITZVAnotes

The most well-known difference between the two presentations of the Aseret HaDibrot is the SHAMOR V'ZACHOR of Shabbat. Generally, ZACHOR is interpreted as referring to the positive mitzvot and aspects of Shabbat, whereas SHAMOR is a command to preserve Shabbat by not violating the prohibitions. The traditional minimum of two candles for Shabbat (although one candle satisfies the requirement of halacha), are said to represent these two facets of Shabbat. It is this intertwined nature

of the positive aspects of Shabbat and its prohibitions that is "responsible" for Kiddush on Friday night being obligatory upon women. Rather than treat Kiddush as a pure "time-related positive mitzva" which would (probably) mean that women would be exempt (as they are from the mitzva of Sukka, for example), Kiddush is viewed as part of the whole Shabbat package, which means full and equal obligation for men and women - across the board. The two sides of Shabbat were commanded B'DIBUR ECHAD (in a single Divine utterance) and are inseparable.

On a hashkafa level, we can see the prohibitions of Shabbat as more than a restrictive list of DON'Ts. Abstinence from Melacha can be seen as Dayan Grunfeld z"l puts it in The Sabbath -- as laying G-d's gifts of creative activity to us at His feet (so to speak) in homage to the Creator and Master of All. This, on a weekly basis, so that we will not take these gifts for granted nor assume that our abilities and talents are self-produced. There is a subtle difference between not doing Melacha and abstaining from Melacha. If we understand and appreciate the distinction, our Shabbat observance and enjoyment can be greatly enhanced. Shabbat is more than just "don't do this; don't do that!"

MITZVAnotes

The Aseret HaDibrot in Yitro contains 14 of the 613 mitzvot. (The 2nd commandment has four prohibitions related to idolatry, the 4th has two mitzvot related to Shabbat, and one each from the other 8.) The first nine commandments in Va'etchanan contain the same 14 mitzvot as their counterparts in Yitro. Those mitzvot are counted from Yitro. The 10th is worded differently here and is counted separately (in addition to "Thou shalt not covet") as the prohibition of "lust and unhealthy desire" [416, L266 5:18]. Although the first part of the tenth commandment (in Va'etchanan also uses the term V'LO TACHMOD (covet), the second part introduces a new term which deals exclusively with thoughts and feelings; its counterpart in Yitro involves acting on those feelings. V'LO TIT'AVEH in a way, completes a set of prohibitions, that starts with obviously sinful acts - murder, stealing, etc. to a feeling in the heart (LO TACHMOD) which can, and often does, lead to acts which are "milder", but nonetheless "problematic". For example, if a person is jealous of a friend's cellphone - the iPhone 87 (the one that can core a apple - let me know if you know what this parenthetical comment means), and comments about it often enough, the friend might just feel uncomfortable enough to give it to the jealous friend.

Nothing wrong, per se, in complimenting someone's phone, but in this case it is part of the prohibition of LO TACHMOD. And V'LO TIT'AVEH is the feelings even without anything else happening as a result of the envy.

The Aseret HaDibrot lay out in the following manner:

[S>5:6 (5)] ANOCHI and LO YIH-YEH, which we consider the first two DIBROT are contained within a single parsha s'tuma. [S>5:11 (1)] The prohibition against taking G-d's name in vain (vain oaths) is its own parsha s'tuma. [S> 5:12 (4)] The Shabbat commandment is its own parsha s'tuma. Shabbat's commandment is a P'tucha in Yitro. [S> 5:16 (1)] Honoring parents is a s'tuma. [S> 5:17 (1/4)] Do not murder, [S> 5:17 (1/4)] And do not commit adultery, [S> 5:17 (1/4)] And do not steal (kidnap), [S> 5:17 (1/4)] And do not bear false witness. These four dibrot are each a separate parsha s'tuma, all in the same pasuk! Interesting, that in Yitro, they were LO, LO, LO, LO - but here in Va'etchanan, they are LO, V'LO, V'LO, V'LO [S> 5:18 (1/2)] And do not covet another man's wife and [S>5:18 (1/2)] and do not lust after anything that another person possesses are each a s'tuma, from the same pasuk, and counting as a single (the 10th) dibra (or dibur) [416, L266 5:18].

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 5:19-6:3

[S> 5:19 (15)] Moshe next reminds the People that those who were present at Matan Torah were afraid to continue hearing G-d's Voice and agreed to listen to the words of a true prophet speaking in G-d's Name in lieu of direct communication. (Actually, take a look at the pasuk right before the Aseret HaDibrot and you'll see that Moshe Rabeinu was saying the same thing "right up front".)

This episode is crucial to our understanding of the Chain of Tradition and the method of transmission of the Oral Law. It made not only Moshe Rabeinu vital to our hearing and understanding of G-d's Word, but so too the Moshe Rabeinus of every generation. This is so for prophets, during the period of prophecy, and by the Sages throughout the generations.

Moshe emphasizes that G-d agreed to the People's request.

And yet again, Moshe links observance of mitzvot with the only proper environment for Jewish life - Eretz Yisrael.

This is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances that HaShem, your God, commanded to teach you, **to perform in the Land...** into which you are about to pass, to possess it...

And you shall, [therefore,] hearken, O Israel, and be sure to perform, so that it will be good for you... a land flowing with milk and honey.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 22 p'sukim - 6:4-25

[P> 6:4 (6)] The first portion of this Aliya is the first parsha of SH'MA. "...HaShem is One." This statement of Jewish faith is also considered the mitzva to believe in the unity and uniqueness of G-d [417, A2 6:4].

Note that G-d's unity is also part of the mitzva to believe in Him [25, A1 Sh'mot 20:2], but warrants its own mitzva to emphasize this essential element of belief, in contrast to many other religions.

"Love" G-d with your entire being [418, A3 6:5]. (Many mitzvot, Jewish practices and especially the ATTITUDE with which we do mitzvot are all considered manifestations of Love of G-d.) We must study and teach Torah [419, A11 6:7] (for practical purposes AND purely for the sake of learning). We are to recite the Sh'ma twice daily [420, A10 6:7], wear T'filin on the arm [421, A13 6:8] and front-center on the head [422, A12 6:8], and put Mezuzot on our doorposts [423, A15 6:9].

SDT: The mitzva of learning and teaching Torah can be fulfilled with one's head, one's intellect. Tell someone a Dvar Torah and you both have

fulfilled V'SHINANTAM L'VANECHA. But, tell that same Dvar Torah in an animated way that shows love of Torah and that ignites the emotion of the listener, so that he not only adds to his knowledge of Torah, but his excitement and enthusiasm for Torah and Mitzvot has increased, then you have fulfilled an additional mitzva, V'AHAVTA ET HASHEM ELOKECHA, to love G-d with all your heart (based on Sefer HaChareidim).

We can generalize this aspect of AHAVAT HASHEM to include all mitzvot. Shabbat, for example. Someone can go through all the motions and not violate the Shabbat; but do it with love and that fulfills V'AHAVTA, in addition to the mitzvot and details of Shabbat.

SDT: Requited Love

Although the opposite (unrequited) is more well-known and used, we have a beautiful example of the two-way love that the title implies. In this week's sedra, we find the first passage of the SH'MA, with the command to love G-d. Chazal composed a bracha to precede the Sh'ma in Shacharit - AHAVA RABA. Before we recite our command to love HaShem, our Sages state that G-d loves us with a deep and eternal love (RABA and OLAM, depending on your nusach). The bracha concludes with BARUCH... He who chose His nation Israel, with love.

[S> 6:10 (6)] Now, another warning. You'll go into Eretz Yisrael, have big homes filled with all good things, that you did not work for... Still remember that G-d took you out of Egypt... don't turn away from Him...

It is said that a wealthy person has a harder time with faith in G-d than a poor person. A poor person tends to turn to G-d, to complain, but also to express his faith that his lot will improve. The wealthy tend to pat themselves on the back and take credit for that which he should be thanking G-d. Generalizations, of course, but something to think about, nonetheless.

[S> 6:16 (40)] Do not test G-d... (as you did repeatedly in the Midbar). Understood as the prohibition of overly challenging a true prophet and demanding signs from him (beyond what is reasonable to determine his claim as a true prophet) [424, L64 6:16]. Keep the mitzvot... be straight with G-d... so that things will be good for you in Eretz Yisrael... (there it is again!)

[S> 6:20 (6)] When your child will ask you tomorrow... tell him "we were slaves to Par'o in Egypt and G-d took us out... and He commanded us... and it will do us good to listen...

Sound familiar? one of the questions of a child that mold the form of the Seder.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 11 p'sukim - 7:1-11

[S>7:1 (11)] Finally, Moshe tells the People that the nations in Eretz Yisrael that we will encounter are mightier than Israel. But G-d will give them over into Israel's hands. We are required to destroy the "Seven Nations" [425, A187 7:2], not to show mercy to idolaters in the Land [426, L50 7:2], and certainly not to intermarry with them [427, L52 7:3] or any other non-Jews.

Regardless of how secure one is in one's belief, intermarriage and other close contact with other cultures will have an adverse effect upon the Jew and on the Jewish People. In addition to the Torah-prohibition of intermarriage, there are many Rabbinic prohibitions geared to restrict social contact with non-Jews.

We must destroy the idolatry in the Land. We must always keep in mind the basis upon which G-d has built His relationship with us.

It is because of G-d's love for us and His promises to our ancestors that He has taken us out of Egypt.

Know that G-d is trustworthy to keep His promises and reward those who properly follow His ways, as well as punish those who do not. The sedra ends with a 'command' to keep the Torah.

The final 3 p'sukim of the sedra are reread for the Maftir.

Haftara - 26 p'sukim - Yeshayahu 40:1-26

First of the 7 Haftarot of Consolation, (all of which come from Yeshayahu from ch.40 and onward). Yeshayahu as a prophet of destruction and Divine punishment for faithlessness, can be seen in ch.1 which was the haftara last Shabbat (Chazon), and in subsequent chapters through 39. With our haftara this week, ch.40, we see another side of the prophet. G-d commands the prophets (through Yeshayahu) to bring the message of comfort and the end of Babylonian captivity. How appropriate a choice for the post-9Av haftara.

Bringing the Prophets to Life

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

From Galut to Ge'ula

SHABBAT NACHAMU
- 26 p'sukim - Yeshayahu 40:1-26

After the first thirty-nine p'rakim of Sefer Yishayahu, chapters that primarily focus upon Israel's past sins - their moral and religious transgressions that led them astray, the 40th perek - this week's well-known haftarat 'Nachamu' - marks the beginning of Yishayahu's prophecies

of comfort, that continue through the last twenty-six chapters of the sefer.

The nevu'ot that fill these last p'rakim speak of the future redemption of the nation, of their eventual release from foreign oppression and even the promise of Israel's return to their homeland. Indeed, powerful words of comfort and solace for the people.

And yet, it is not difficult to understand the efficacy of such comforting prophecies when they were addressed to a generation that preceded the galut and the destruction of the Bet HaMikdash, by 150 years!? Why, after all, would Yishayahu dismiss the problems of his own time and, instead, prophesy comforting visions of forgiveness for sins - not yet committed and a return to a land in which they currently dwelled?

The solution to this seeming enigma can be found by a simple review of Israel's history. Yishayahu served as Hashem's prophet during the era of Assyrian domination over Shomron and Yehuda. It was during the Assyrian invasion that the Northern Kingdom was exiled and many of the Judean cities were devastated. As a result, the population in the Yehuda feared their own exile - especially when the Assyrian hordes besieged Yerushalayim itself. In this light, we better understand the reason for Yishayahu's nevu'ot and the value of

his comforting words to his generation.

However, we might appreciate the depth of Yishayahu's message in this nevua, the opening to the visions of comfort, and why it is so fitting as being the first of the prophecies of consolation.

HaRav Ya'akov Meidan turns to the disagreement found in the G'mara [Sanhedrin 97b] between the great scholars of the first Tannaitic era, Rav and Shmuel. In discussing what G-d would demand of His nation in order to bring about their final redemption, Rav submits that there is but one way that could bring the GE'ULA. He states: "all depends upon repentance and worthy deeds", T'SHUYA and MA'ASIM TOVIM. On the other hand, Shmuel disputes the idea that there is but one way to bring redemption, arguing that "It is enough for the mourner [Israel] to endure his period of mourning."

According to Rav Meidan, the exceptional approach of Shmuel was one that Yishayahu preached throughout these chapters of comfort, pointing to the navi's recurring depictions of Israel's years of suffering and repression, and, in contrast, descriptions of their glorious future. Such visions were certainly powerful promises of relief for the Israel and comfort, as well. But beyond that, the navi's assurance

that Ge'ula would come as a result of their suffering - even if the entire nation did not return to G-d in complete penitence - was powerful consolation for the nation! Certainly, we must strive to return to G-d and His mitzvot, but Yishayahu's prophecies implanted real hope in the future generations, that Hashem understood Israel's misery and regards their extended anguish as reason for their liberation.

Today we look back some 2000 years after Shmuel articulated his understanding of bringing redemption, and in doing so, we fully understand - and even witnessed - the years of torment and harassment, years of banishment, pogroms and ghettos. Perhaps, we would never be able to imagine being worthy for redemption. But the Tana Shmuel told us (as explained by the Yad Rama) that "complete repentance is not a prerequisite for redemption; the very suffering of our exile atones for the Jewish nation!

And so, you now understand why Shabbat Nachamu is truly a Shabbat of comfort and hope. ★



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

D'VARIM-CHAZON

and two Unexplaineds

This is ADOM is a reverse-language Unexplained. This is = ZEH; ADOM = red. Together - ZERED, a placename mentioned three times in the sedra.

R is a placename too. AYIN-REISH. Pronounced in my Brooklyn-Hebrew accent, just like the letter R.

VA'ETCHANAN



Plus and minus in a negation circle is for the prohibitions of adding to the

Torah or detracting from it <> Mitzva to designate cities of refuge - 3 on the east side of the Jordan (and 3 on the west side) <> LUCHOT in the TORAH on an open Gemara on top of the mountain stands for the repetition of the Aseret HaDibrot and reminds us that the whole Torah - Written and Oral - was given by G-d at Sinai, not just the Big Ten <> Mezuzah is one of the mitzvot from Va'etchanan, from the first parsha of the SH'MA <> Shabbat candles for SHAMOR and ZACHOR. They are contained B'DIBUR ECHAD, in one speech-bubble <> Hearing ear represents SH'MA, not just the well-known one, but the many times the Torah commands us to listen (and understand - this is an important aspect of SH'MA) <> Warning lights for Moshe's warnings to us to remain faithful to HaShem and not to be confused by what we witnessed but cannot totally comprehend <> Big number one is for HaShem Echad, as well as the other pasuk that emphasizes G-d's Unity, 4:35, EIN OD MI-L'VADO ...there is none besides Him <> The reminder-finger is for the command to never forget the Sinai experience and to pass on the memory to future generations <> Seder plate for the Chacham's question and the answer of We were slaves to Par'o in Egypt... both of which are found in Va'etchanan <> speaker and an Xed out video monitor: On that great day

of Revelation at Sinai, we HEARD what G-d said, but we did NOT SEE any image of Him. Mentioned more than once, and is a reason for Moshe's deep concern and warnings to the people <> a face in the clock face is for the term PANIM BIFANIM <> telescope is for Yeshayahu's words at the end of the Haftara: Lift your eyes heavenward and see Who created these... Also for Moshe's warning lest we lift our eyes heaven-ward and see Sun, Moon, etc. and worship them <> seven pens are for the 5 PENs in the sedra and another two U'FENs <> Grasshopper - K'CHAGAVIM, like grasshoppers, appears only twice in Tanach - in Parshat Shlach and the haftara of Va'etchanan <> Extended pinky is for V'ZOT HATORAH... The words are from Va'etchanan <> The pinky is ZERET in Hebrew, so it also is for the same word in the haftara. ZERET = 607. and 4 for the other four fingers and you have 611 - TORAH <> And so is the level, which is PELES, also in the haftara <> The Raven saying Nevermore from the poem by Edgar Allan Poe - the word PO is not a rare word in the Torah, but its two occurrences in Va'etchanan are significant <> Compass directions are numbered in the order in which they occur in the pasuk. It's a different order in p'sukim elsewhere <> building is LEV YERUSHALAYIM - from the haftara <> the guard is for the many times in

Va'etchanan that words with the root and meaning of SHAMOR occur <> the aerial view of Mevasseret Zion (mentioned in the haftara) <> The strange equation, $10 = 13 = (14)+1$ reads as follows: 10 DIBROT consist of 13 p'sukim and contain 14 mitzvot (counted in Yitro) and a 15th mitzva counted from Va'etchanan <> SHIN-MEM-AYIN is SH'MA, but also stands for S'U MAROM EINEICHEM... Lift your eyes heavenward (from the haftara of NACHAMU (and also stands for Shacharit, Mincha, Arvit) <> and so too for the telescope <> Same as SHIRA, T'FILA, and NETANYA - VA'ETCHANAN has a numeric value of 515. That is the traditional number of times that Moshe asked HaShem to be let into Eretz Yisrael. G-d repeatedly said NO. Side point. The Jewish Agency in New York was located at 515 Park Avenue for a long time. Just an observation. SHIRA = 515; T'FILA (no YUD) = 515. NEYANYA = 515. No connection except for the number <> Grapevine's first syllable - that would be the GE of GEFEN. This is the correct pronunciation of the word from the Nachamu haftara (Yishayahu 40:3) - GIMEL with a SEGOL, YUD, ALEF. Many people mispronounce the word as GEI, letting the YUD turn the SEGOL vowel into a TZEIREI sound. But the YUD does not affect the GIMEL-SEGOL <> The missing poster with BET SHIN KAF MEM LAMED VAV.

This is for the BARUCH SHEIM K'VOD MALCHUTO L'OLAM VA'ED, which is "missing" from the first passage of SH'MA, as it appears in the sedra <> Now we know where the sun rises - MIZRACH is east. But in Va'etchanan, we find that direction expressed as MIZRACHA SHAMESH and MIZRACH SHAMESH. And so we see that the sun does rise in the east <> 3 with : - 2 with T - The word SH'MA - SHIN-MEM-AYIN occurs in Va'etchanan, by itself, five times. Three times the SHIN has a SH'VA under it - SH'MA. Twice, there is a KAMATZ under the SHIN - SHAMA <> plus two new Unexplaineds.

לע"נ
הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה ז"ל
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

The First Commandment

VA'ETCHANAN

One of the most profound disagreements in Judaism is the one between the Rambam and R' Yehuda HaLevi on the meaning of the first of the Ten Commandments.

For Rambam (1135-1204), the first command is to believe in God, Creator of Heaven and Earth:

The basic principle of all basic principles and the pillar of all sciences is to

realise that there is a First Being who brought every existing thing into being. If it could be supposed that He did not exist, it would follow that nothing else could possibly exist. If, however, it were supposed that all other beings were non-existent, He alone would still exist ... To acknowledge this truth is a positive command, as it is said: "I am the Lord your God". (Sh'mot 20:2, D'varim 5:7, Hilchot Y'sodei haTorah 1:1-5)

R' Yehuda HaLevi (c. 1080 - c. 1145) disagreed. The greatest of medieval Hebrew poets, HaLevi also wrote one of Judaism's philosophical masterpieces, The Kuzari. It is framed as a dialogue between a Rabbi and the King of the Khazars. Historically, the Khazars were a Turkish people who, between the seventh and eleventh centuries, ruled a considerable area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, including southern Russia, northern Caucasus, eastern Ukraine, Western Kazakhstan, and northwestern Uzbekistan.

Many Jewish traders and refugees lived there, and in 838 the Khazar King Bulan converted to Judaism, after supposedly holding a debate between representatives of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths. The Arabic writer Dimashqi notes that the Khazars, having encountered the Jewish faith, "found it better than their own and accepted it".

Khazaria thus became, spiritually as well as geographically, an independent third force between the Muslim Caliphate and the Christian Byzantine Empire. After their conversion, the Khazar people used Jewish personal names, spoke and wrote in Hebrew, were circumcised, had synagogues and rabbis, studied the Torah and Talmud, and observed the Jewish festivals.

The Kuzari is R' Yehuda HaLevi's philosophy of Judaism, cast in the form of the imagined conversation between the king and a rabbi that led to the king's conversion. In it, HaLevi draws a portrait that is diametrically opposed to what would later become Rambam's account. Judaism, for HaLevi, is not Aristotelian but counter-Aristotelian. The God of the prophets, says HaLevi, is not the God of the philosophers. The key difference is that whereas the philosophers found God in metaphysics, the prophets found God in history.

This is how HaLevi's rabbi states his faith in The Kuzari:

I believe in the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, who led the Children of Israel out of Egypt with signs and miracles; who fed them in the desert and gave them the land, after having brought them through the sea and the Jordan in a miraculous way ... (Kuzari I:11)

He goes on to emphasise that God's opening words in the revelation at Mount Sinai were not, "I am the Lord your God, Creator of Heaven and Earth" but "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Kuzari I:25).

HaLevi lived before Rambam. Ramban (R' Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) lived after, but he too disagreed with Rambam's interpretation of the opening verse of the Ten Commandments. His objection is based on a passage in the Mechilta:

"You shall have no other gods besides Me." Why is this said? Because it says, "I am the Lord your God." To give a parable: A king of flesh and blood entered a province. His servants said to him, "Issue decrees for the people." He, however, told them, "No. When they accept my sovereignty, I will issue decrees. For if they do not accept my sovereignty, how will they carry out my decrees?"

According to Ramban, the verse, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" is not a command, but a preliminary to the commands. It explains why the Israelites should be bound by the will of God. He had rescued them, liberated them, and brought them to safety. The first verse of the Decalogue is not a law but a statement of fact, a reason why

the Israelites should accept God's sovereignty.

Thanks to a series of archaeological discoveries in the twentieth century, we now know that Ramban was right. The biblical covenant has the same literary structure as ancient near eastern political treaties, of which the oldest known are the "Stele of the Vultures" (before 2500BCE), recording the victory of Eannatum, king of Lagash, over the people of Umma, both in southern Mesopotamia, and the treaty of Naram-Sin, king of Kish and Akkad, with the people of Elam (c. 2280BCE). Other, later treaties have also been discovered, involving Hittites, Arameans, and Assyrians. One details a pact between the Hittite king Hattusilis III and the Pharaoh Rameses II, regarded by some scholars as the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

These treaties usually follow a six-part pattern, of which the first three elements were

[1] the preamble, identifying the initiator of the treaty,

[2] a historical review, summarising the past relationship between the parties, and

[3] the stipulations, namely the terms and conditions of the covenant.

The first verse of the Ten Commandments is a highly abridged form of [1]

and [2]. "I am the Lord your God" is the preamble. "Who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" is the historical review. The verses that follow are the stipulations, or as we would call them, the commands. Ramban and the Midrash are therefore correct in seeing the verse as an introduction, not a command.

What is at stake in this difference of opinion between Rambam on the one hand, R' Yehuda HaLevi and Ramban on the other? At the heart of Judaism is a twofold understanding of the nature of God and His relationship to the universe. God is Creator of the universe and the maker of the human person "in His image". This aspect of God is universal. It is accessible to anyone, Jew or Gentile. Aristotle arrived at it through logic and metaphysics. For him, God was the "prime mover" who set the universe into motion. Today, many people reach the same conclusion through science: the universe is too finely tuned for the emergence of life to have come into being through chance (this is sometimes called the Anthropic Principle). Some arrive at it not through logic or science but through a simple sense of awe and wonder ("Not how the world is, but that it is, is the mystical" said Wittgenstein). This aspect of God is called by the Torah, Elokim.

There is, however, a quite different

aspect of God which predominates throughout most of Tanach, the Hebrew Bible. This is God as He is involved in the fate of one family, one nation: the Children of Israel. He intervenes in their history. He makes a highly specific covenant with them at Sinai - not at all like the general one He made with No'ach and all humanity after the Flood. The Noahide covenant is simple and basic. The Sages said it involved a mere seven commands. The Sinai covenant, by contrast, is highly articulated, covering almost every conceivable aspect of life. This aspect of God is signalled by the use of the four-letter name for which we traditionally substitute (since the word itself is holy and could only be pronounced by the Kohen Gadol) the word Hashem.

Rambam, the philosopher, emphasised the universal, metaphysical aspect of Judaism and the eternal, unchanging existence of God. R' Yehuda HaLevi and Ramban, the one a poet, the other a mystic, were more sensitive to the particularistic and prophetic dimension of Judaism: the role of God in the historical drama of the covenant. Both are true and valid, but in this case, HaLevi and Ramban are closer to the meaning of the biblical text.

Judaism needs both voices: the philosopher who teaches us to seek God in creation, and the prophet who

teaches us to find Him in history. But when the Torah introduces the Ten Commandments, it begins with a hint to the story of our redemption before the command of law, a reminder of the journey from liberation to the constitution of liberty.

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) Have you ever learned something in history that felt personal to you? Did it impact how you absorbed the information?
- (2) If you could travel back to witness any moment in Jewish history, which one would you choose?
- (3) What is the difference between knowing facts and possessing wisdom?

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Haftara

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Comforting God

NACHAMU

NACHAMU NACHAMU AMI – “Comfort, comfort My people” (Yishayahu 40:1). With these words we begin the SHIV'A D'NECHEMTA, the seven haftarot of consolation that carry us from Tish'a b'Av to Rosh HaShana.

At the very outset, it is striking that the word NACHAMU is repeated. This doubling is not unique to our haftara. Across these seven weeks, words of consolation repeatedly appear in pairs. The haftara for Sho-f'tim opens, “It is I, I who comfort you” (51:12), while the haftara for Nitzavim declares, “I shall rejoice, rejoice in the Lord” (61:10). This insistent language of consolation demands explanation.

At a basic level, the repetition denotes intensification. The coming redemption will be so all-encompassing and overwhelming that the words must double to match its scale. But I believe there is an even deeper message embedded here: the word NACHAMU appears twice because there are two distinct parties in need of comfort.

The first, obviously, is the Jewish people. We are the ones who were exiled, who watched the Temples burn, and who have carried the painful weight of that loss and subsequent persecutions across centuries. But there is a second party in need of consolation, and that is God Himself. Because we have been taught that the Divine Presence goes into exile whenever the Jewish people go into exile. This is stated plainly in the Gemara: “Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: Come and see how beloved the Jewish people are before the Holy One, Blessed be He. For

every place to which they were exiled, the Divine Presence went with them” (Bavli Megila 29a).

The Midrash makes this point even more poignantly: "The Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'If a man's wife dies, who must be comforted? Is it not the man himself? So too here: Zion is imprisoned in darkness; it is I who must be comforted. Comfort Me, comfort Me, My people'" (Yalkut Shimoni, Yishayahu 443). Read this way, the verse is not merely an instruction to the prophet to console the nation; it is God turning to His people and asking to be consoled by them.

On a more mystical plane, the trauma of destruction and exile causes a divinely imposed bifurcation in the perceived wholeness of God. One aspect of the Divine remains transcendent in the heavens, while another aspect descends to dwell closely with the Jewish people, accompanying them through every trial. Tradition describes these as the masculine and feminine dimensions of the Divine: Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the transcendent, masculine dimension, remains above, while the Shechina, the immanent, feminine dimension, dwells below with the Jewish people in exile, seemingly torn from one another.

Recognition of this rift is woven throughout our prayers. One place

where it is quietly encoded is in our Shabbat amidot. In the Kedushat HaYom of the evening Amida, the text concludes with V'YANUCHU VAH ("and they shall rest within her"), focusing on the feminine dimension of the Divine. During the morning service, we say V'YANUCHU VO - "and they shall rest in him". Finally, at Mincha, as Shabbat begins to reach its spiritual pinnacle, the two dimensions are drawn together in a blessing that opens "You are One and Your Name is One" and ends with the collective plural: V'YANUCHU VAM, "and they shall rest within them". That moment, tucked into the fading light of Shabbat afternoon, evokes the ultimate reunion of the Divine. Every week, we rehearse in miniature the cosmic reunification we await in full.

The message of NACHAMU NACHAMU is therefore twofold: Our comfort must be directed toward the Jewish people and toward God simultaneously. Both must be redeemed. The uniqueness of our relationship with God lies precisely in this mutual resilience; in His refusal to abandon us, even in the face of the darkest challenges.

This is the misconception that the doubled word protects us from. When we endure difficult times - and our history has known more than its share - it does not mean that God is

ignoring us. It does not mean that we have lost the capacity to reach upward and be heard. The line of communication may be strained by pain, but it persists. The connection was never severed. God did not remain behind in Jerusalem while we were banished to Babylon and Spain and Poland; He came out into the dark alongside us. He shares our pain and awaits our return, echoed in the words of Psalm 91 (v. 15): "I will be with them in distress."

This is both a demanding idea and a liberating one. It means we are not mere petitioners standing outside a closed door, hoping someone inside will notice our cries. We are active partners in a relationship that has been strained but never severed. Consolation will not simply be handed down to us from a distance; it is a collaborative act - something we offer to God as much as we receive from Him.

Shabbat Nachamu opens with a double call because two entities must be renewed: the Jewish people and God. And when they are finally reunited, the final redemptive process will have arrived. 🌍



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

A different SH'MA

SH'MA is spelled SHIN-MEM-AYIN. Aside from SH'MA referring to the SH'MA that we say in Shacharit and Arvit every day, there are other meanings to the acronym SH'MA.

One of them is SHACHARIT, MINCHA, and ARVIT. They are not the topic of this PTDT. Neither is the SH'MA we recite (at least) twice daily. There is a different meaning for the SH'MA acronym which we will get to towards the end of this PTDT.

Among other topics in this week's sedra, Moshe Rabeinu seems to be anxious and insistent about warning the people about Avoda Zara (idolatry). Specifically, he says to the people (and all of us, as well) that during Revelation at Sinai, we had heard G-d's voice but had not seen any image of him. I would add that as human beings, we have a difficult time dealing with the Invisible, Intangible characteristics of HaShem. So be very careful not to worship images of any sort. It seems that it is a temptation to do so, not necessarily to replace G-d but even to give oneself a physical focus for worship.

Then he adds (4:19) - And lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and see the

Sun, and the Moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, which HaShem your G-d assigned to all peoples under the entire heaven, and be drawn away to prostrate yourselves before them and worship them.

With the warning against venerating the heavenly bodies, perhaps one would think that looking at the sky and studying the heavenly bodies might not be a good idea.

Comes the Navi Yishayahu in this week's haftara and says (40:26) -

S'U MAROM EINEICHEM - Lift up your eyes on high and see, who created these, who takes out their host by number; all of them He calls by name; because of His great might and because He is strong in power, no one is missing.

Pondering the heavenly bodies, studying them and nature in general - can be a way of getting to know the Creator better and appreciate all that He did and does for us.

I would like to add another warning to that of Moshe's concerning pondering the heavenly bodies or any other aspect of nature.

Moshe's fear was that people might come to worship this or that element of nature. Mine is that people will look at nature and consider it as having nothing to do with G-d. Science is science. Nature is nature. And Torah

is something else entirely. Science and nature are physical things in this world. G-d is in the spiritual and religious world. Don't mix the two.

WRONG. Oh, so wrong. I have to be careful here not to go on and on about this topic - maybe some other time I will. But for now, let me quote and explain a mishna in Pirkei Avot which was in this past Shabbat's perek in Israel but is in Va'etchanan's perek in Chutz LaAretz.

The mishna is in the 3rd perek; the numbering of the mishnayot within a perek differ, so I can't really tell you which mishna number it is. In fact, it might not help to tell you that the mishna is in the name of Rabbi Yaakov because some versions attribute the teaching to a Rabbi Shimon. But if you are looking it up, hopefully you will find it.

Rabbi Shimon (or Rabbi Yaakov) says: A person who is walking on the road and reviewing (a Torah topic, in his head), **UMAFSIK MIMISHNATO** and he interrupts his learning and says, What a beautiful tree that is or what a beautiful field that is - the verse in the Torah indicates that he is putting his life in jeopardy.

The standard understanding of this mishna is that Torah learning should not be interrupted for anything else, even the admiration of nature.

Another way of understanding this

mishna (which I came up with on my own many years ago and then saw it in Ethics from Sinai by Irving M. Bunim) is to view the person walking on the road and learning Torah in a broader sense, as a Jew who is walking on the road of life learning and living Torah, UMAFSIK MIMISHNATO - let's say, and he shuts off his Torah mind when he admires nature, not as the Creation of HaShem but as just nature, science, biology, et al. Such a person puts his life in jeopardy.

And what verse is the mishna talking about? It doesn't say in this mishna, but I would suggest it is the passage of Moshe's concern that the people will begin to venerate nature at the expense of their faith in G-d. Because that passage from our sedra also has a flip side. Lest a person look towards the heavens and see the Sun or the Moon... and go in the other direction - not see them as G-d's creations.

Let's run with this for a moment. With the danger of overdoing one's admiration in the direction of idolatry or going the other way and disconnecting nature and the study of science from one's Torah study, maybe it is better not to get involved in the sciences.

Comes the prophet Yishayahu in this week's haftara, the very last pasuk, where he says: S'U MAROM EINEICHEM... (there's your other

SH'MA) Lift up your eyes on high and see, who created these, who takes out their host by number; all of them He calls by name; because of His great might and because He is strong in power, no one is missing. **PTDT**



Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



SHABBAT NACHAMU

Go Tell It on the Mountain

Forty-six years ago I made Aliya, and my first Shabbat in Eretz Yisrael was Shabbat Nachamu. My small family was assigned an apartment in the Merkaz Klita (Absorption Center) in Mevaseret Tziyon. It was a wonderful community of new OLIM with a marvelous view of the road up to Yerushalayim. But I was caught off guard when that week's Haftora was chanted, because it contained the following verse:

Ascend a lofty mountain, O herald of

joy to Zion; Raise your voice with power, O herald of joy to Jerusalem; Raise it, have no fear; Announce to the cities of Judah: Behold your God! (Yeshayahu 40:9).

Many of you already know that the words 'herald of joy to Zion' in Hebrew is Mevaseret Tziyon. The 'coincidence' and the powerful message were overwhelming and I started to cry. Another, slightly less new immigrant from Los Angeles, put his hand on my shoulder and told me, 'You'll get used to the magic.' I'm not sure I ever did.

For those keeping score at home, the term MEVASERET also has cool translations into Greek and Old English. In Greek, it's 'euangelion' (or evangelism); in Old English it is 'godspel' which later becomes 'gospel'. The term (and the concept) travels well.

Before we dive deeper into this powerful and, clearly, inspiring expression, I think that it's cool that Yeshayahu could be both the prophet of destruction in last week's Haftora, CHAZON, and the herald of hope in this week's Haftora NACHAMU, NACHAMU. I know that there's a popular school of thought that these are two different prophets, but I'm traditional and think that he was just extremely talented and, therefore, versatile.

So, what does MEVASERET really

mean? Or what does it imply?

In modern Hebrew, people often wish one another: B'SOROT TOVOT! This means good news or glad tidings. But how did the root BASAR (BET-SIN-REISH) come to mean happy news? I mean, it's the same root as 'meat'.

It seems that in the ancient world 'good news' precipitated eating meat (BASAR). It seems that the eating of meat in the ancient world was quite rare (as opposed to 'well done', JK). I feel confident that the three times in the Torah that the prohibition of 'don't cook meat in its mother's milk' appears in close proximity to the list of the three Festivals, isn't a coincidence. It is because most Jews in ancient Yisrael only ate meat on the CHAGIM. Again, not very often.

So, perhaps, good news is very much related to BASAR, and its consumption. That would seem to be the idea behind the Rabbinic statement: There is no joy without meat and wine.

But why is the term for announcing the 'good news' in the feminine? Rashi points out that later in the book of Yeshayahu (52:7) we have a reference to a masculine harbinger. Rashi assumes that if the Jews are worthy the redemption will be swift through a male messenger, but if we are less worthy, the redemption will come more slowly through a female reporter.

On the other hand, the Radak suggests that a female messenger is used because the ultimate redemption of Israel will be announced gently and in a comforting manner, contrasting with the harsh masculine delivery of wartime announcements. While Shadal avers that in ancient Israel women bore the news. Some things never change.

However, my favorite approach is that of the Malbim. He wrote:

The description here is of Zion herself as the herald, and so, too, Jerusalem. It says - you Zion the herald go up on a high mountain and you Jerusalem raise your voice with strength, don't be afraid lest the thing which you announce not come to pass, because it certainly will come. Not only this, but also say to the cities of Yehuda 'here is your God' as if you are pointing to something which has already come and exists. (I already explained that in Zion was the seat of the king, the Sanhedrin and the place of the Holy Temple, while in Jerusalem the masses of regular people dwelt.) Zion announces that God has returned His Presence to Zion and the kingship and the kehuna to the Jewish people. Therefore, the prophet advised her to ascend a high mountain. Jerusalem announces the ingathering of the exiles, therefore the prophet advised her to raise her voice in strength in order that those

driven away hear and be gathered from the four corners of the heavens.

Communities and municipalities in Hebrew are always presented in the feminine form. Throughout Jewish history great Jewish cities were called IR V'EIM B'YISRAEL ('a city and mother in Israel').

So, Jerusalem herself declares the upcoming redemption and return of God. This is critical to understanding our long term relationship with our Holy City. We take our cue from the municipality itself.

Recall Zecharia's vision of redemption: This is what the Eternal, Almighty says: Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. The city's open places will also be full of boys and girls playing again (8:4-5).

I know most of Yerushalayim right now looks like a building site, but no one can deny that the city is alive and vital. And, yes, filled with grateful retirees (like me!), and boisterous exuberant children. I catch myself smiling when I go by playgrounds filled with noisy kids.

On Tish'a b'Av most of the sadness revolves around the destruction of Yerushalayim. I know there are many references to disasters for Jewish communities around the world, but

the initial focus of the book of Eicha and the Kinot is on Yerushalayim. So, it's so profoundly fitting that the focus of the comfort and reconciliation also zeroes in on our eternal, beloved Yerushalayim.

It should come as no shock, therefore, that our greatest expectation and desire is for: Yet again there shall be heard, In the cities of Yehuda and in the streets of Yerushalayim. The sound of joy and the sound of gladness. The voice of the groom and the voice of the bride (Yirmiyahu 33:10-11).

Can't you just feel that it's on the way! 🌸

Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison -
www.ravkooktorah.com

Introducing Prayer with Praise

Summary: Prayer does not effect a change in God; prayer effects a change in us.

Moshe's Prayer

The Torah records Moshe's pleas for permission to enter the Land of Israel:

O God, Eternal! You have begun to show me Your greatness and power.

What force is there in heaven or earth that can perform deeds and mighty acts as You can? Please, let me cross over and see the good land... (D'varim 3:24-25)

Rabbi Simlai, in the Talmud, analyzed this prayer and drew out its structure, noting two distinct parts:

Praise – “You have begun to show me Your greatness...”

Petition – “Please let me cross...”

This, Rabbi Simlai explained, is a model for all prayers. One should begin with praise of God, and only afterward present one's requests.

We need to understand this model. Is it simply a matter of etiquette, just as one would flatter a mortal king before making a request? Or is there a deeper significance to this protocol for prayer?

How Does Prayer Work?

Rav Kook explained that the requirement to precede prayer with God's praise relates to the very foundations of prayer and its efficacy. Following this format prevents us from grossly misinterpreting the mechanics of prayer.

One might think that prayer is some sort of magic loophole built into the framework of Divine providence, and that by pleading our case it is possible to cause God to change His

mind. The notion that we have the power to change God's will, however, is untenable.

Rather, prayer is a wonderful gift that allows us to change and refine ourselves. Prayer does not effect a change in God; prayer effects a change in us. It is only by virtue of the soul's moral and spiritual elevation that prayer has the power to annul harsh decrees. We cannot change the basic universal order manifested in a particular decree. But we can change ourselves. Then, as a result of our transformation, the decree is no longer relevant.

Thus it is advisable to introduce every prayer with praise of God. Such praise affirms God's eternal nature and ensures a correct understanding of how prayer works.

Even Moshe

It is striking that Rabbi Simlai's insight was gleaned from examining a prayer of Moshe. One might consider himself above making such a mistake regarding the nature of prayer. Yet we find that even Moshe, despite his unparalleled grasp of spiritual matters, took care to introduce his request with praise of God. Certainly we should follow Moshe's lead, thereby ensuring that we correctly recognize the true nature of prayer.

*Sapphire from the Land of Israel.
Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 147*

The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

Five things about the Ari Hakadosh

Translated by Janine Muller Sherr

1) This week was the *yahrzeit* of the Arizal – Rabbi Yitzchak Luria– who passed away 454 years ago on the fifth of Av at age 38. He was a great Kabbalist who delved into the esoteric dimension of the Torah which later influenced the development of Chasidic thought. On that day, many people have the custom to light a candle in his memory, study his teachings, and visit his grave in Tzfat.

2) He explained that everything he was able to achieve was due to his joyful observance of the mitzvot. In other words, he didn't perform the mitzvot out of a sense of obligation but from his strong desire to connect to the Infinite Light.

3) His students related that he could have relied on heavenly guidance to explain the holy Zohar – the foundational text of Jewish mysticism that has traditionally been attributed to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Instead, he told them that he chose to toil and study with devotion in order to achieve the deepest mastery of this holy text on his own.

4) He lived in Tzfat for only two years but it was there that he initiated a revolutionary approach to Judaism. On Friday evening – toward sunset – he and his peers would dress in their Shabbat finery and walk into the fields to welcome the Shabbat Queen with joy. The prayers he composed for this occasion laid the foundation for the Kabbalat Shabbat service that we continue to recite on Friday night to this day.

5) He modified the traditional prayer book by integrating deep Kabbalistic meditations and kavanot (intentions), but one line that appears in his siddur and is also engraved on his tombstone – can be adopted by everyone. He requested that we should recite the following verse before our morning prayers: “Behold, I take upon myself the commandment of ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

May his memory be a blessing.

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by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

VA'ETCHANAN

The SH'MA - Not as Easy as We Thought

The SH'MA accompanies us through life. It is the first Jewish expression of hesitant childhood, and the final affirmation of Judaism at the moment of death.

Our Hebrew knowledge may be infinitesimal, but we can always recognise the ancient words of the SH'MA.

We may not be too certain about the nuances of its theology, but we know there is something precious beyond rubies in its unambiguous assertion that God is One.

However, BS Jacobson, author of the stimulating work, "Meditations on the Torah" (BINA BAMIKRA), draws our attention to the logical problems inherent in the famous first sentence, which says, "The Lord is our God, the Lord is One" (D'varim 6:4).

If, he says, God is one and universal, how can we claim Him as merely our God, the God of Israel, and by implication the God of no other people?

Jacobson cites a Midrash (Yalkut Shim'oni 833; cf. Mechilta on Sh'mot 23:17) that explains that this verse does not represent an exclusive possessive claim by Israel, but an indication of special responsibility: though God is universal, it is incumbent upon us particularly to stand for and profess the unity of His name.

Rashi, basing himself on the Sifrei, another ancient midrashic work, attempts to solve the problem by finding two stages in the verse: "The Lord is our God" speaks of the here and now, and "The Lord is One" speaks of the future.

"The Lord, who is now acknowledged only as our God and not the God of other peoples", he says, "will in time to come be the One Lord", and all peoples will know Him and call upon His name (Tz'fanya 3:9, Z'charya 14:9).

Jacobson adds a fascinating additional interpretation proposed by Solomon Ephraim Lencziz, author of the popular commentary, "K'li Yakar". Lencziz points out that the verse uses the two main Divine names, "HaShem" ("The Lord") and "Elokim" ("God").

Traditionally the first stands for the Divine attribute of mercy and the second the attribute of justice. But not until the end of history will the Almighty's name be one (Z 14:9).

Lencziz quotes the Talmudic statement (P'sachim 50a) that this world and the World to Come are different: in this world a person who hears good news says, "Blessed be He who is good and does good" and on bad news, "Blessed be the True Judge"; in the World to Come one will always say, "Blessed be He who is good and does good".

Rashi explains that in the World to Come there will be no bad news. Lencziz says that in today's world many are overwhelmed by "bad news". They see a conflict between the Divine mercy and justice, and turn away from God and religion.

In time to come, however, there will be no "bad news"; there will be no questioning of His judgment or rebellion against Him, and (as the High Holyday prayer, V'YE'ETAYU, puts it), "All the world will come to serve Him and bless His glorious name". -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

VA'ETCHANAN

*When tomorrow your son asks you:
'What are the... laws and ordinances
that ... our G-d has commanded?'*

You shall answer: 'We were slaves to Par'o in Egypt and G-d took us out of Egypt with a strong hand... G-d commanded us to perform all these laws... to fear G-d, for our good, so that we may live... and He will treat us kindly, if we are careful to perform the commandments as He has instructed us' (6:20-25).

The question and answer appear to be mismatched. The son seeks detailed information on the Torah's demands. The words 'our G-d' indicate the son's commitment. But the father's answer does not appear to answer the son according to his question. He does not recount a single specific commandment. Instead, he explores the roots of the experiences of his people with the Creator, recounting the Exodus, and uses it to stress that the observance of the commandments is the key to G-d's continued goodwill. Why not a direct answer: Shabbat, Kashrut, honoring parents, and so on?

The use of the second word above - 'tomorrow' - suggests an answer. Rashi, following the Mechilta, renders the Hebrew word MACHAR to mean 'in the future' - not necessarily the same day. That may indicate the following:

In recounting the educational advancements of Yehoshua ben Gamla, the Talmud (Baba Batra 21a),

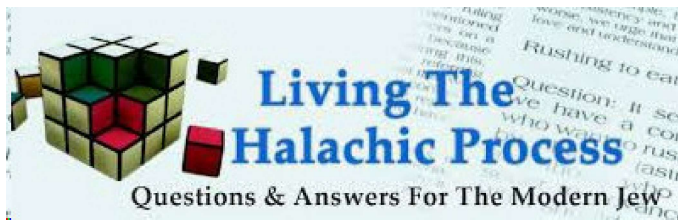
implies that the best age for child to start to receive his first intensive Torah education is at age six. If that is postponed for a decade, the young man may simply 'rebel and walk out'. That is probably because he has reached an age where he has become too critical and cynical to let the Divine-originated scheme of things flow into him without resistance.

But a youngster's lifelong commitment must never be taken for granted - even with a good basic Torah education acquired in childhood. If his further education 'tomorrow' - at age sixteen - is not correctly handled, he might still go back on his commitment and 'rebel and walk out'. It is therefore essential that the father/educator manages to get behind the son's question and think for himself: 'What is he really asking?'

That could be a meaning of the word MACHAR - 'in the future' - when he is a mature teenager, and begins on his own account to reassess the body of information fed to him in his childhood. That is what the son is doing in asking: 'What are the... laws and ordinances that ... our G-d has commanded?' And the father/educator must read that question for what it is.

Thus the Torah is telling the father/educator to put it all into a perspective that the son will appreciate. G-d, who created the universe, has a

special relationship with His People which he showed demonstrably in the Exodus and more subtly today. And it is on both the father (/educator) and the son to do their bit (as equals) in working with the Creator to ensure that this relationship will continue... And with that knowledge, his Torah studies will continue to further heights... 🌱📖



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Reciting the Three Parshiyot of Sh'ma Before Davening

Question: If I wake up soon before the end-time of reciting K'RI'AT SH'MA (sof z'man K'RI'AT SH'MA), must I say all three parshiyot before davening? After all, regarding the third parasha, the Torah does not write, "... and when you rise"!

Answer: Actually, according to

Torah law, one is not required to recite the Parashat Tzitzit, the third parasha of K'RI'AT SH'MA, at all. It is one way to fulfill the mitzva of mentioning Y'TZI'AT MITZRAYIM¹ daily,² but this can also be accomplished in other ways³ and, ostensibly, at different times.

However, the gemara⁴ tells a story that complicates the matter. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi would teach Torah publicly from early morning, in a manner that did not give him a chance to first daven or recite K'RI'AT SH'MA. In the midst of his lectures, he would cover his face and recite the first pasuk of K'RI'AT SH'MA in order to fulfill the mitzva of K'RI'AT SH'MA in an abbreviated manner without disturbing his teaching. The gemara continues that he also would teach a halacha in which he could mention Y'TZIAT MITZRAYIM "at its time" – that is, the time of K'RI'AT SH'MA.⁵ This seems to indicate that mentioning Y'TZI'AT MITZRAYIM, which we fulfill with Parashat Tzitzit, should also be done before SOF Z'MAN K'RI'AT SH'MA.

However, there are also indications that one does not have to recite Parashat Tzitzit before SOF Z'MAN

¹. Liberation from Egypt.

². See *Berachot* 12b.

³. See *Berachot* 21a.

⁴. *Berachot* 13b.

⁵. Rashi ad loc.

K'RI'AT SH'MA. For example, during the parts of the tefilla before P'sukei d'Zimra in the beginning of Shacharit, we recite the first pasuk of SH'MA.⁶ The Rama⁷ recommends the minhag to say, BARUCH SHEM K'VOD... following the pasuk, as usual. This indicates our interest that it serve as a fulfillment of K'RI'AT SH'MA, which is worthwhile since SOF Z'MAN K'RI'AT SH'MA sometimes passes before we reach K'RI'AT SH'MA in the davening.⁸ Notably, this arrangement does not cover the requirement to mention Y'TZI'AT MITZRAYIM.⁹ We must note, however, that this is what is advised in order to deal with the chance that one will miss SOF Z'MAN K'RI'AT SH'MA. When one expects to miss it, he should say all three parshiyot of SH'MA before the end-time of K'RI'AT SH'MA comes.¹⁰

Interestingly, although there are different sources for reading each of the three parshiyot, the Rambam¹¹ discusses them as one unit, which is compatible with the mishna¹² that explains the order of these parshiyot. The Bi'ur Halacha¹³ similarly posits

that even if one recites the three parshiyot when they are not sandwiched between the birchot K'RI'AT SH'MA, he should not speak even between the parshiyot.

Fulfilling the mitzva of K'RI'AT SH'MA at its time by reciting it before davening is less than a perfect solution for several reasons, some of which can be remedied by waking up a little earlier. It is not ideal that when one recites K'RI'AT SH'MA in its normal place in davening, before the Amida, he is not simultaneously fulfilling the mitzva of K'RI'AT SH'MA,¹⁴ and certainly if it is too late at that point to do so. Also, it is generally problematic to recite the full text of K'RI'AT SH'MA, which includes a reference to tefillin, without having tefillin on,¹⁵ and this is usually the case for those who recite a last-minute K'RI'AT SH'MA. If, however, one is unable to both put on tefillin and make it to K'RI'AT SH'MA on time, he can recite K'RI'AT SH'MA anyway.¹⁶ Therefore, if one is able to start davening before sof z'man K'RI'AT SH'MA but will not get to

⁶. Most of our *siddurim* follow the *minhag* to recite the entire first *parasha* at that juncture (see *Magen Avraham* 46:16).

⁷. *Orach Chayim* 46:9.

⁸. *Mishna Berura* 46:31.

⁹. The *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *Orach Chayim* 46:9, claims that this is not a concern because the Exodus is referred to early on in *P'sukei D'Zimra*.

¹⁰. *Pri Chadash*, *Orach Chayim* 46:9; *Chayei Adam* I:8:7; and *Mishna Berura* 46:31.

¹¹. *Kri'at Shema* 1:2.

¹². *Berachot* 13a.

¹³. 66:5.

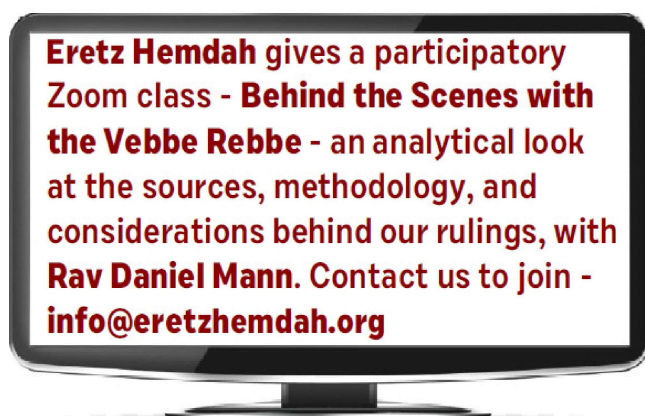
¹⁴. *Mishna Berura* 46:31.

¹⁵. *Berachot* 14b.

¹⁶. *Mishna Berura* 58:5; see *Yechaveh Da'at* VI:2.

K'RI'AT SH'MA on time, he should make the effort to at least put on tefillin before reciting K'RI'AT SH'MA.

Another matter to consider is Birkat HaTorah. One may not learn before saying Birkat HaTorah, and it is debatable whether reciting K'RI'AT SH'MA in order to fulfill that mitzva is tantamount to learning.¹⁷ It is thus preferable to say Birkat HaTorah beforehand.



Dvar Torah by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

VA'ETCHANAN-NACHAMU

NACHAMU NACHAMU... "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people saith your G-d" (Yishayahu 40).

These words are found in the beginning of our Haftora this week. That is why this Shabbat is called Shabbat Nachamu.

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni) on this pasuk says: "May it be a comfort for those above and for those below, for the living and for the deceased, for this world and the world to come." The Midrash seems to be giving over a very important message. Unless consolation or comforting is total, there is no real comfort at all. To comfort a person half-heartedly is no consolation.

In fact, another Midrash points out that when Yishayahu said the words "comfort ye, comfort ye", the Jews wanted to kill him. It is only after he completed his words with "this is what G-d says" were the people satisfied.

The Jews at the time were so distraught and in such despair that nothing short of a direct message of comfort from G-d himself would soothe their pain. Similarly, at a Shiva home, we must be aware to say the right things to comfort the mourner. In Avot D'Rav Nissin (chapter 14) we are told that when Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai lost his son, many came to console him. Rabbi Eliezer pointed out how Adam HaRishon lost his son Abel. Others mentioned Aharon's personal tragedy of losing two children, Others mentioned Iyov's loss. Upon hearing this, Rabbi Yochanan chastised them by having to be

¹⁷. See Shulchan Aruch and Rama, Orach Chayim 46:9; see B'Tzel HaChochma I:1.

reminded of other people's tragedies. Finally, Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya told Rabbi Yochanan through parable. "I will tell you what your situation is comparable to. It is comparable to a king who entrusts an invaluable treasure to one of his subjects. The person prays every day that all should go well so that he can return the treasure intact. The same is with your son. G-d gave you a valuable treasure to maintain, a young Torah scholar. You are fortunate indeed to have been able to return this treasure intact." Rabbi Yochanan responded, "Rav Elazar, my son, you have comforted me as a comforter should."

Rav Elazar focused on the deceased and his penetrating words offered complete comfort.

Comforting is an art; however, we hope that we will no longer need such comfort in the future, that it will become a lost art. 🏠

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

VA'ETCHANAN-NACHAMU 5785

The Wholeness of Incompleteness

How are we to understand the message of nechama, consolation, which follows the mournful Tish'a

B'Av commemoration? Here is one of many explanations.

Our Parsha begins with the plaintive prayer of Moshe to Gd, pleading to be allowed to enter Israel. The request is not granted. Or, is it? True, Moshe would not cross the Jordan, but Gd does beckon him to ascend the mountain and from there, view the entire Land (3:27). But according to our Sages, HaShem showed Moshe much more. He gifted him with the prophecy to see all the events which were destined to occur to Israel until the end of days (B'rachot 32b, Sifrei 357). And Moshe was consoled. How can this to be understood?

Additionally, another question. Moshe persisted and prayed 515 tefillot to HaShem to be able to enter Israel (Yalkut Shimoni, Vayeilech, 940). To this, the Midrash (D'varim Rabba 11:10) adds that Moshe said, "'Master of the world, if I myself cannot enter Eretz Yisrael, at least let me enter like an animal of the field to roam the land.' HaShem said, 'Do not entreat me any longer.' Then Moshe pleaded, 'Let me be in this world like a bird that flies to the four corners of the world.' Again, HaShem told him, 'Do not pray to me anymore.'" Rav Shach asks: Why did Moshe Rabbeinu wish to remain in the world like an animal or a bird? What quality of life would that be? He answers that every living being has a specific mission in life

through which the honor of HaShem is increased and spread. Even though a huge reward awaited Moshe in the eternal world, he understood a still deeper truth. If we are created to fulfill the will of HaShem, then every moment, every breath, every act of service is priceless! Even a bird fulfills HaShem's will. Moshe wasn't asking for honor or fame; he just wanted one more chance to serve his Maker. Any mission; any form, even as a simple creature in the field. And, again, when HaShem refused his request, and Gd afforded him the great vision of the future, Moshe apparently was comforted. Why?

Rav Soloveitchik zt"l, has poignantly noted the great paradox of man: that the greater the goal, the loftier the ambition - the greater the likelihood of failure. In man's efforts to reach the unreachable - to scale the highest peaks - he will inevitably experience defeat. And this is not necessarily as tragic as it sounds. As one colleague once put it: "The unfinished work of one person may be infinitely more important than the completed task of another. All great figures in history have been failures in the short run, heroes in the long run." Consider: David beseeched, "One thing I ask of Gd, it is this that I seek, to dwell in the house of HaShem all the days of my life ..." And yet, the construction of the Beit HaMikdash would not be his to build. Avraham dreamt of

seeing the fulfillment of Gd's promise of having a family whose numbers would compare to the stars of the Heaven and the sands of the sea. But the realization of that pledge would be denied him.

"(Indeed), the measure of a person, as we Jews have understood it, is not whether he finishes his assignment - who does? - but whether he has a task that is too noble, too daring, too lofty for any one person to complete within a lifetime." R. Tarfon said it well (Pirkei Avot 2:21), "It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to stand aside from it..."

Moshe longed to enter the Promised Land, and his consolation would be in being granted the great vision to see how all his efforts would eventually play out in history, how his unfinished work would be completed by future generations - by a Yehoshua, by a Shlomo HaMelech, by a Rabbi Akiva, and ... by us! And while we are not granted such a prophecy as was gifted to Moshe, we must also believe that no prayer ultimately goes unanswered, that no tear shed is ever in vain, and that all our sacrificing is not for naught. All our unmet goals, all our incomplete tasks, all our unfinished aspirations, can still - and must - inspire others to grasp the baton from our tired and wrinkled hand and boldly continue on.

This insight may also explain the

strange juxtaposition of Moshe's setting aside the AREI MIKLAT (cities of refuge) on the east side of the Jordan and the well-known verse, "And this is the Torah which Moshe set before the children of Yisrael" (4:44). Often when contemplating the vast enormity of the Torah, both in its never-ending gushing forth of information along with its unfathomable depths, we feel completely at a loss to even begin to understand its complexities and wisdom. And if, by some measure, we could manage to comprehend some of this sacred knowledge, how much of the totality of Torah could we ever hope to grasp in our finite years in this world? Enter Moshe, and in one of his last actions prior to his death, he arranges for the three cities of refuge on Eiver HaYarden even though they would not become operative until the remaining three in Israel proper would be set up. As the Talmud relates (Makot 10a), Moshe declaims, "A commandment that is possible to fulfill, I shall fulfill."

Moshe's extraordinary celebration of the "part", of the "portion", elevated a sobering reality to a truism of rich meaning. To wit: that there is a certain poignant "wholeness" to "incompleteness". Even if we will never - by definition - ever able to comprehend the infinite entirety of Torah, whatever limited amount we are able to understand, that accom-

plishment is accorded a "wholeness" for which we are rewarded. Much like the partial, incomplete designation of the AREI MIKLAT by Moshe, the deed was nonetheless a great mitzva. Indeed, this "fragment" - "this [too] - V'ZOT HATORAH - is the Torah which Moshe set before the children of Yisrael."

In this regard, the meditation by the poet Eugene O'Neil on the meaning of success and failure is most apt. Although perhaps a bit on the severe side, it nevertheless captures this very idea. "The tragedy of life is what makes it worthwhile. I think that any life which merits living lies in the effort to realize some dream, and the higher that dream is, the harder it is to realize. Most decidedly we must all have our dreams. If one hasn't them, one might as well be dead. The only success is in failure. Any man who has a big enough dream must be a failure and must accept that as one of the conditions of being alive. If ever he thinks for a moment that he is a success, then he is finished."

And so, Moshe, in his waning days, remains unsatisfied, forever longing, still dreaming the great dream, with his mission to enter the Promised Land unfulfilled, and yet, in the depth of his great saintly soul, he no doubt experienced - fortunately by the voice of the Almighty - the wondrous consolation of the sacred wholeness of the incomplete.

Rav Yaakov Haber tells of his once conversation with HaRav Shach zt"l: "I have often told the story of my visit, a few years ago, to Rav Eliezer Shach of blessed memory. He was around one hundred years old at the time. After our discussion he asked me what sefer I was holding in my hand. I showed him the sefer; it happened to be one of the classic volumes of Rav Tzadok HaKohen. The Rosh Yeshiva told me that he never learned any of the works of Rav Tzadok, and as he spoke, he began to cry. He explained that he no longer had the strength to study anything new and that made him cry. At one hundred years old, after mastering most of Torah, after studying for five generations with the greatest Gedolim and after building one of the greatest Yeshivot on the face of the Earth, he cried because he didn't have the strength for something new." And yet, and yet, the Torah greatness of Rav Shach is the stuff of legend.

Did Moshe also cry? Perhaps. But, precisely because of his categorical faithfulness to HaShem, even in death, he remains the greatest of all our prophets and teachers!

Our Haftora this Shabbat begins with the famous words of Yeshayahu (40:1), NACHAMU, NACHAMU AMI - "Comfort, Comfort My People ..." After the destruction of the Temple,

we were comforted once. For the second and ultimate nechama, we are still waiting. But, Be"H, it will come! The Talmud tells (B'rachot 6b) us that each person is charged to place just one block into the building of the Beit HaMikdash. Your brick, my brick - that's all, just one brick of the total - and together, over time, with all the small single bricks taken together, the redemption will surely come!

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## Sparks of Compassion

From Rav Elimelech Biderman's Torah Wellsprings (Va'etchanan 5785), the following Torah insight: It states in this week's Parsha (4:30), BATZAR L'CHA... When you are in distress and all these things have befallen you, at the end of days..." The Chesed l'Avraham of Radomsk zt'l, explains, BATZAR L'CHA, when it appears to you as though it is a tragedy. However, B'ACHARIT HAYAMIM, at the end of days, you will see that it was all chesed, all for your good. Then it will be like someone who finds a treasure. He writes, "Just as when one finds a large treasure, he is thrilled, so too, a person will rejoice at the misfortunes he had to endure in the past. He will then understand how all that transpired was for the good." Therefore, it states (Yeshayahu 40:1) NACHAMU NACHAMU..., "Comfort, comfort My nation, says your Gd."

YOMAR is written in future tense, and is a soft-spoken expression (YOMAR, in contrast to Y'DABEIR. (ELOKIM is HaShem's name that represents MIDAT HADIN, strict justice. Thus, YOMAR ELOKEICHEM means that in the future, people will say and understand that even the din was all kindness. It was a hidden treasure, all for our good.

Rav Biderman continues: "It states, (4:34), Everything HaShem, your Gd, did for you ... before your eyes.' Rebbe Boruch'l of Mezhibuzh zt'l, explains that the hardships of exile are L'EINECHA, to your eyes, how you perceive them. In actuality, they were all for the good. There will come a time when we will recognize this. It states (4:7), For which is a great nation that has a Gd Who is close to it...' The Sfas Emes taught, ELOKIM K'ROVIM EILAV tells us that even when HaShem treats us with the attribute of ELOKIM, which is midat hadin, even then, it is all good, because, HaShem is close to us. It is all love, and for their good. As it states (Tehillim 73:1), ACH TOV L'YISRAEL ELOKIM, which indicates that even when it is ELOKIM, the attribute of din and harsh justice, even then, it is only goodness for Yisrael. The word CHEIMA, anger, is the acronym for (Tehillim 33:5) CHESED HASHEM MAL'A HA'ARETZ, HaShem's kindness fills the Earth."

The above, of course, is a very wonderful and true observation. However, to sustain such a belief in the face of so much hardship and suffering is exceedingly difficult. In a powerful essay by Rav Aharon David of the Mir (D'vorim, Gilyon 38), the following fundamental idea is explained, which I present in brief with my own small additions.

R. Eliahu Palombo (19th c., Turkey) in his Yad HaMelech on Rambam's Mishneh Torah (Hilchot Y'sodei Ha-Torah 7:4), asks as follows: If, as the Talmud states (P'sachim 117a) that prophecy can only be conferred upon a person if and when he experiences simcha, profound joy, how then was Yirmiyahu able to compose Megilat Eicha, the prophetic book which laments the destruction of the First Temple - clearly one of extreme sadness? Rav David attempts to answer the question by posing another. In Eicha (2:19), we read: KUMI RONI BALAYLA - Arise, sing in the night." If the context is one of grief and crying, why does the prophet employ the word RONI which means singing? Rav Shimshon Pincus (Shiurim b'Tefila, RINA, OT YUD) proposes that HaShem's mercy for us is so ubiquitous that if we are perceptive enough, we can discern this love and compassion even amidst the harshest of circumstances. Among the many proofs for this assertion is the very text of Eicha

itself. In the third perek, there are 12 verses which strike a completely different tone. (3:21-32)

But this do I call to mind; Therefore I have hope:

The kindness of the Lord has not ended, His mercies are not spent.

They are renewed every morning - Ample is Your grace!

"The Lord is my portion", I say with full heart; Therefore will I hope in Him.

The LORD is good to those who trust in Him; To the one who seeks Him;

It is good to wait patiently; until rescue comes from the Lord.

It is good for a man, when young; to bear a yoke;

Let him sit alone and be patient; When He has laid it upon him.

Let him put his mouth to the dust - There may yet be hope.

Let him offer his cheek to the smiter; Let him be surfeited with mockery.

For the Lord does not Reject forever, But [He] first afflicts, then pardons in His abundant kindness.

This message of hope amid despair is obviously not an easy religious belief to implement, especially when one is in the painful throes of some stressful and heartbreaking situation.

But our great moral teachers have taught us that there are always enough sparks of salvation, small clandestine miracles, which if we but open our eyes and souls to see, can enable us to sing even in the dark nights of affliction and misery - KUMI RONI BALAYLA.

In fact, a strong argument can be made that the common theme of six events (Taanit 30b-31a) that occurred on the 15th of Av - TU b'Av, which the Mishna describes as one of the most joyous days in the Jewish year (Taanit 4:8), is this message of recurring hope and reconciliation. For example, even in the wake of the horrific slaughter of Beitar (by the Romans in 135ce), one of the six events associated with TU b'Av, the thousands upon thousands of dead corpses did not decompose and were given a dignified burial. Remarkably, as the Talmud states (B'rachot 48b), the 4th blessing in the Birchat HaMazon was actually enacted to commemorate this miracle. But why? The answer: to remind the Jew when he concludes a meal - which means every day - that even when catastrophe strikes and unspeakable devastation occurs, HaShem performs a miracle to let us know that He is here, and it is this ever-present Divine Immanence that merits a special blessing - HATOV V'HAMEITIV, HaShem, Who is good and does good [for all]!



Here in Israel and for Jews throughout the world, we are presently experiencing onslaughts of hatred and worse, the levels of which are unprecedented. And yet, as so many have attested in amazingly true stories, HaShem's Presence can be felt in the smallest of ways, shining through the lattices of current events - little miracles, Divine smiles, unexpected rescues - all to assure us that He has and will never abandon our people!

And that is our consolation for this Shabbat Nachamu. 🙌



## VA'ETCHANAN

**GM** One of the best-known p'sukim in all of Torah, and all of Tanach - eh, not one of the best-known - The Best Known Pasuk is D'varim 6:4 in Va'etchanan -

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:

*Hear, O Israel: HaShem is our God;  
HaShem is one.*

The gimatriya of this pasuk is 1118. There are four other p'sukim in Tanach with that gimatriya, including T'hilim 20:10 -

יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעַה הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ  
בְּיוֹם-קִרְאָנוּ:

*HaShem, save [us]; may the King answer  
us on the day we call.*

Is there another pasuk that is used to call out to God, more than SH'MA YISRAEL? Probably not.

Speaking of 1118, watch this:

Now follow this:

The fingers of the hand are BOHEN (thumb), ETZBA (index), AMA (middle finger), K'MITZA (ring finger) and ZERET (pinky).

בהן - אצבע - אמה - קמיצה - זרת

Gimatriya: 2+5+50 (57), 1+90+2+70 (163), 1+40+5 (46), 100+40+10+90+5 (245), 7+200+400 (607).

Add them up: 1118. The five fingers of the hand that Ashkenazim cover their eyes with for SH'MA add up to the same number as the gimatriya of the pasuk we say with covered eyes.

S'fardim cover their eyes differently - they put the tips of the thumb and pinky on the inner corners of the eyes and position the other three fingertips on the forehead in the shape of a SHIN (for Sh'ma). The



S'faradi custom really makes this an amazing GM.

One more for this GM. The AT-BASH gimatriya of Sh'ma Yisrael... is 2283. One of the p'sukim whose regular gimatriya (MISHPAR GADOL) is 2283 is D'varim 28:2 (Ki Tavo) -

וּבָאוּ עֲלֶיךָ כָּל-הַבְּרָכוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְהִשְׁתַּכֵּחַ  
כִּי תִשָּׁבַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

*And all these blessings will come upon you and cleave to you, if you obey the Lord, your God.*

Res Ipsa Loquitur

**GM** Here's an in-sedra Gimatriya Match. D'varim 4:38 in Va'etchanan -

לְהוֹרִישׁ גּוֹיִם גְּדֹלִים וְעֲצָמִים מִבְּךָ  
מִפְּנֵיךָ לְהַבְיֵאֵךְ לְתֶת-לָךְ אֶת-אֶרֶצָם  
נְיֻלָּה פֶּיּוֹם הַיּוֹם:

*To drive out from before you nations greater and stronger than you, to bring you and give you their land for an inheritance, as this day.*

One of many p'sukim that speak of God's giving us the Land of Israel.

But the following pasuk, also in Va'etchanan, indicates the oft-repeated condition for our continued dwelling in Eretz Yisrael. D'varim 6:13

אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִירָא וְאֶתוֹ תַעֲבֹד  
וּבְשִׁבוֹ תִשָּׁבַע:

*You shall fear the Lord, your God,*

*worship Him, and swear by His name.*

The GM at 3119 does not prove the concept; it just points to it with a numerical pointer. But the idea is repeated many times over in the Torah.

## RED ALERT!

VA'ETCHANAN-NACHAMU

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)  
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -  
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

## DIVREI TORAH

- Moshe's final plea to Hashem occurs in the beginning of this Parsha. He wants to cross into the Promised Land, but not as the leader. He wants to see the wonderful land promised to his people. Chizkuni (Chizkiyahu ben Mano'ach, French rabbi of the 13th century) wrote that Moshe said that there are many Mitzvot that can only be observed in Eretz Yisrael. He desired to observe these Mitzvot. Hashem responded to him that if He allowed Moshe's request, then everyone else would say that Moshe was concerned only for himself. Better he should stay east of the Jordan and care for the generation of the Spies. Hashem was confident in Yehoshua, Kalev, Elazar, and Pinchas to lead the next generation to a new life in Israel.

- The Torah specifically states that we should not add or subtract from any of the Mitzvot (4:2). Rashi's examples are not to make 5 species among the Lulav and Etrog, or to make 5 corners of Tzitzit et al. The Chizkuni rejects those examples and wrote that when Hashem said that it is time to enter Canaan, the people added that they should send Spies, causing an entire generation to die. Then, when Hashem said not to enter, some people went forward into the Land. They were killed by Canaanites and Amalekites. Why did the Chizkuni reject Rashi's comments? It was to allow our Sages to establish fences to safeguard the Mitzvot.

- The sin of Baal P'or occurred with the new generation. A terrible display of sexual immorality and idolatry happened without any reason or cause. Bnei Yisrael had just spent 38 years of Torah observance and Torah learning. They failed at Shitim with P'or! The result was the death of 24,000 men. More important was that they showed Moshe, Hashem, and all of us a dismal picture of the future of the nation. The slightest temptation will be impossible to withstand. With all that Hashem had done for them in the desert, they could not control themselves to live a holy and pure life. This will cloud Moshe's feelings about the nation's future after his death.

- And He chose his offspring after him... (4:37). This statement explicitly makes it clear that Avraham's descendants through only Yitzchak and Yaakov will inherit all that is Avraham's. The spirituality with exclude the "8 nations". It will exclude Yishmael, Eisav, and the other 6 nations that came from the Avraham-Ketura union. What happened in later years rejected this statement. Islam would later claim that Yishmael inherited the spirituality of Avraham. Christianity, which our Sages claimed that they are connected to Eisav, clearly state that God took away the Chosen National status of Israel and transferred it to the Christian people. All of this took place in order to reject this Torah statement.

- SHAMOR ET YOM HASHABBAT... Guard the Sabbath Day. This is a clear change from the Ten Commandments from 40 years earlier. There it reads ZACHOR, Remember the Shabbat Day. Our Sages place these two together as if there were never any time separated them. The Chizkuni reinterpreted the word. When Yaakov first heard Yosef's dreams, the Torah states that "and his father SHAMAR the matter." Most commentators define the word SHAMAR to mean anticipated. He looked forever to the dreams coming true. This generation never heard the word ZACHOR. They

anticipated and looked forward to the arrival of Shabbat each week.

- Mezuzot are a constant reminder of Hashem's presence in our lives. Just like Tzitzit. Hashem is aware of our need to be constantly reminded that we are Jewish. T'fillin also serve that purpose. In fact, in origin, the command to wear T'fhillin was applicable all day long. Tzitzit was difficult to fulfill exactly due to the question of the source of the Techeilet (bluish) dye. It is making a comeback in our day. There is an interesting difference in the Halacha of Mezuzah. Outside of Israel, you have 30 days to put up Mezuzot from the time you moved in to the residence. In Israel, the requirement is immediate. The day you move in, you must put up the Mezuzot. In Israel when you move in, you are HOME.

- The question of the Chacham, the wise son is in this Parsha. When stated next to the evil son's, we see the similarity. Upon close analysis, the differences are clear. Firstly, the wise son mentions Hashem's name. The evil son has removed Hashem from his rhetoric. The wise son sincerely wants to know the reason for each Mitzva. When he states "you" in his question, he is not separating himself from the Jewish community. He expresses himself in this fashion because he was not there when Hashem made these commandments. But let's not dismiss the evil

son completely. He is present at the Seder table along with his family.

- MIDRASH. The numerical value of the Hebrew word Va'etchanan is 515, indicating that Moshe prostrated himself in the dust and offered 515 distinct prayers, crying out to Hashem, begging Him like a poor person begging for unmerited mercy.

## Questions by RED

### From the text

1. What in particular was Moshe asking for in the beginning of this Parsha? (3:25)
2. After years in Exile, what will happen to the Jewish people? (4:25)
3. Where in the Torah is there the Mitzva to believe in Hashem? (5:6)
4. What is the reason here for the Mitzva of Shabbat? (5:15)
5. With whom may we not intermarry? (7:3)

### From Rashi

6. Why did Moshe think that Hashem would now allow him to enter Eretz Yisrael? (3:23)
7. How many years after entering Eretz Yisrael was the First Temple destroyed? (Rashi on Daniel 9:14)
8. Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael about the laws of Shabbat before the Revelation at Sinai. When did that happen? (5:12)

9. When in history will we NOT be the only people to believe in Hashem? (6:4)

10. The Torah says to place a Mezuza on your gates. The gates of what? (6:9)

### From the Rabbis

11. Why is it not permitted to add or subtract to the Mitzvot in the Torah?

12. Why is there a greater fear in the Torah that the children and grandchildren of that generation might reject Hashem? (Chizkuni)

13. Moshe set aside the three Cities of Refuge east of the Jordan. Who established the three Cities of Refuge west of the Jordan?

### Midrash

14. How can a person cling to Hashem?

### Haftara - Yishayahu

15. What is the main message of the seven Haftarot from Tish'a b'Av to Rosh HaShana?

### Relationships

- a) Menashe - Chushim
- b) Lemech - Tzila
- c) Yefet - Ashkenaz
- d) Gershon - Livni
- e) Amram - Elazar

## ANSWERS

1. Just to enter and see the Promised Land.

2. Jews will repent and return to Eretz Yisrael.

3. "I am the Lord your Hashem."

4. To remember that we were once slaves in Egypt.

5. With any non-Jew.

6. Because Moshe had already conquered the lands of Sichon and Og; so he was already in Eretz Yisrael.

7. 850 years. The Temple was built after 440 years of being in Eretz Yisrael, and lasted 410 years.

8. At Mara (see Sh'mot 15:25)

9. In the days of the Final Redemption.

10. The gates of your courtyard, your province, and your cities.

11. It would say that the Torah is not perfect.

12. The current generation actually experienced Hashem's miracles. For the next generation, it is history and not firsthand experience.

13. Yehoshua

14. By helping to support Torah scholars.

15. To give Bnei Yisrael comfort and consolation after the destruction of the Holy Temple.

## **Relationships**

- a) First Cousins,  
son of Yosef and son of Dan
- b) Husband-Wife
- c) Grandfather & Grandson
- d) Father & Son
- e) Grandfather & Grandson