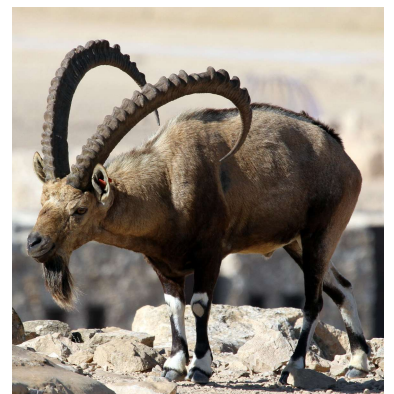
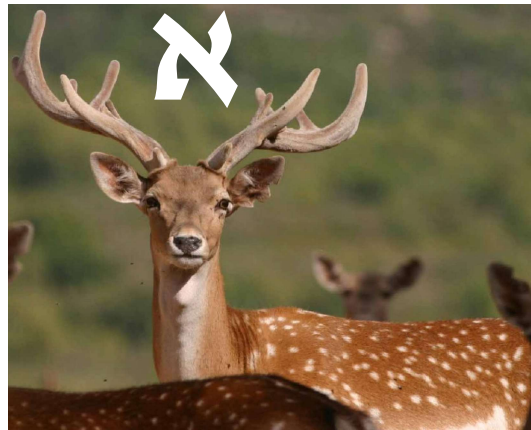


PHILOTORAH

לה"ו

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח מִהֲרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם,
רְפוּאָת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף לַפְּצוּעֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה, וּלְנִפְגְּעֵי מַעֲשֵׂי טְרוֹר וְאַנְטִישִׁמְיוֹת
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁהֵם - עִם שְׂאֵר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן.

**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.**



אֵל וְצִבִּי וְיוֹזְבוֹד וְאַקוֹ וְדִישָׁן וְתֵאוֹ וְזִמְרָה: זְבָרִים יִדֶּה

YERUSHALAYIM in/out for **R'EI**

Shabbat M'vorchim Chodesh Elul (Thu-Fri)

כ"ה מנחם אב ה'תשפ"ו • August 7-8, '26



6:56PM

Plag

6:06PM



8:09PM

R' Tam

8:42PM

Use the Z'MANIM link for other locales

PhiloTorah (318r) - 1 - all at once file



month is on Wednesday, 8:38pm - 12 hours before the announced time. It happens.

Shabbat M'vorchim

This Shabbat, Parshat R'ei, we bench Rosh Chodesh Elul. R"Ch Elul is always two days in our fixed calendar - the 30th of Menachem Av and the first of Elul. This year on Thursday and Friday.

רֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ אֶלּוּל יִהְיֶה בְּיוֹם חֲמִישִׁי וּבְיוֹם
הַשְּׁשִׁי הַבָּא עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְטוֹבָה:

Notice b'Yom Chamishi but BaYom HaShishi. I don't know if all calendars do it, but Yom HaShishi is a copy of the way Friday is called in the opening account of creation.

R'ei is most often Rosh Chodesh Benching, but 28% of the time it is Rosh Chodesh.

The Molad of Elul is on Thursday 8 hours 15 minutes.

הַמּוֹלָד יִהְיֶה בְּיוֹם חֲמִישִׁי, חֲמֵשׁ-עֶשְׂרֵה
דְּקוֹת אַחֲרֵי שְׁמוֹנֶה בְּבוֹקֶר.

The Molad is announced in what is called Jerusalem Solar Time. In clock time, the Molad of Elul 5786 is 8:59am.

The molad that we announce at R"Ch benching is the Molad Emtza'i, based on the average of the time it takes the moon to cycle through its phases. The actual molad (New Moon) this

ANI L'DODI V'DODI LI

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine..." This quote from Shir HaShirim (6:3) is the well-known by its Rashei Teivot which spell ELUL. The phrase describes the mutual love between G-d and the People of Israel, which serves as an encouraging basis of our Elul-time task of sincere repentance.

Other phrases from Tanach are also associated with ELUL.

Notable among them are two other phrases which join ANI L'DODI to represent the three kinds of acts that help us avert an evil decree,

T'SHUVA (repentance),
T'FILA (prayer),
TZ'DAKA (chesed).

One of the p'sukim in the Torah that deals with the topic of T'shuva indicates G-d's help in the process: U'MOL HASHEM ELOKECHA **ET L'VOVCHA V'ET L'VAV** ZARECHA - And HaShem your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your offspring, to love HaShem your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live. This pasuk (D'varim 30:6) is read on the Shabbat before Rosh HaShana and contains a four word sequence - **ET L'VAVCHA**

V'ET L'VAV - whose initials spell ELUL.

The pasuk in Megilat Esther which contains an ELUL features inter-personal acts of kindness:

(...LAASOT OTAM... Y'MEI MISHTEH V'SIMCHA UMISHLO'ACH MANOT)

ISH L'REI-EIHU
U'MATANOT LA-EVYONIM

And here are a few more -

Vayikra 12:8 & 5:7 - **ECHAD L'OLAH**
V'ACHAD L'CHATAT and **ECHAD**
L'CHATAT V'ECHAD L'OLAH

Two types of sacrifices for different kinds of sins. The Chatat is for SHOGEV violation of some prohibitions; the Olah for non-fulfillment of positive mitzvot. Both failings must be on our Elul agenda!

Prayer is an essential element of Elul. In Divrei HaYamim Alef 29:13 we find, "Now therefore, our God, we thank you, and praise your glorious name." With ELUL embedded therein: V'ATA ELOKEINU MODIM **ANACHNU LACH**
UM-HAL'LIM L'SHEIM TIFARTE-CHA.

And look at this pasuk from Yirmiyahu (31:33), with ELUL embedded in it too:

...KI **ESLACH LA'AVONAM ULCHATATAM LO EZKOR OD.**

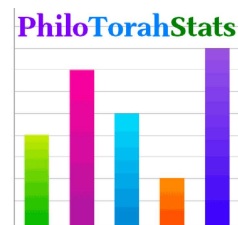
"...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will no longer remember their sin."

Yirmiyahu 12:15 shows us the other part of "Return". And it shall come to pass... and have compassion on them, and will bring them back, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.

V'HAYA ACHAREI NATSHI OTAM
ASHUV V'RICHAMTIM
VAHASHIVOTAM
ISH L'NACHLATO V'ISH L'ARTZO

The gimatriya of the word **ELUL** is 67. So is the gimatriya of **KOL TUV** - all good.

R'EI



47th of the 54 sedras;
4th of 11 in D'varim

257.8 lines in a Torah (rank: 4th)

20 Parshiyot - 5 open; 15 closed

126 p'sukim - ranks 13th (1st in D'va.)

Same number of p'sukim as Lech L'cha, but Lech L'cha ranks 23rd in size (lines), compared with 4th for R'ei - Interesting

1932 words - ranks 7th (first in D'va.)

7442 letters - ranks 7th (first in D'va.)

Relatively long p'sukim like most sedras in D'varim (hence, increase in rank from p'sukim to words/letters)

MITZVOT

55 of 613; 17 positive, 38 prohibition

That's almost 9% of the Torah's mitzvot; only Ki Teitzei (74) & Emor (63) have more mitzvot than R'ei

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 - 17 p'sukim - 11:26-12:1

[S> 11:26 (3)] After setting down the fundamentals of Judaism (including the formative history of the Nation, Aseret HaDibrot, Sh'ma, Brachot & Davening, and more) in the first three sedras of D'varim, Moshe Rabeinu proceeds with the "Tachlis" part of the Book - mitzvot. The sedras of R'ei, Shoftim, and Ki Teitzei contain 170 mitzvot, the greatest number of mitzvot for three consecutive sedras. They are 3 of the top 6 mitzva- sedras of the Torah.

Blessing = keeping the mitzvot;

Curse = not keeping them and turning to idolatry.

These are the simple equations that Moshe presents here and that Yehoshua will again present when the People stand on Har G'rizim and Har Eival. And what we will find in Ki Tavo.

SDT: Note the phraseology in the opening p'sukim: the Blessing - THAT you will keep the mitzvot. The Curse - IF you won't... There is an implied "recommendation" (and a hopeful assumption) for us to choose Blessing. (Similarly, "And you shall choose Life" in Nitzavim.) The Bracha, of course, WHEN you choose it... good things will happen. The curse, IF (not assumed) you are misguided enough not to choose the bracha and the path of Torah and mitzvot...

[S> 11:29 (23)] The Nation was born in Egypt, had its infancy in the wilderness, and will grow and flourish in the Promised Land. "These are the mitzvot to be preserved in the Land..."

Note that not all of the mitzvot that follow are Land-of-Israel-related, yet it is possible to suggest - as the Sifrei, Rashi and Ramban do (among others), very strongly - that ALL mitzvot were meant to be observed in Eretz Yisrael.

Furthermore, Sifrei (quoted by commentaries) says: You must keep mitzvot meticulously in Chutz LaAretz so that they will not be new

(unknown) to you upon your return to the Land. This means that a Jew living outside Eretz Yisrael who is - for example - totally Shomer Shabbat, meticulous in observance, tends to be machmir in many areas of Shabbat (and other mitzvot)... is basically practicing how to keep Shabbat so that when he comes to live in Eretz Yisrael, he will be able to keep Shabbat in the PLACE that it was meant to be kept.

Baseball analogy...

Why would a very talented baseball player with the opportunity to play in the majors, choose to play for a class A minor league team? Especially when he is major league level where the salaries (reward) are amazingly greater than in the minors.

Carrying the analogy a bit further, let's say that the player has a strong reason to play in the minors - for example, he has elderly parents whom he must be close to and help when called upon, and a major league commitment and schedule would make that difficult. Would such a player at least dream and aspire to the time when things might change and allow him to accept the major league offers? 🏈

Sites, altars, idols, etc. of the nations in Eretz Yisrael are to be destroyed [436, A185 12:2]. However, we must be careful not to do the same to G-d [437, L65 12:4] - this mitzva includes the

prohibition of erasing G-d's Holy Names.

While THEIR places are to be eliminated, THE Place (site of the Mikdash) is to be the focal point of Jewish spiritual life and energy. All sacrifices and offerings are to be made there and only there, at the first festival encountered [438, A83 12:5]. It is on those occasions (the Shalosh Regalim, the three Pilgrimage Festivals) that sacred foods (such as Ma'aser Sheni, Neta Reva'i) are eaten in Jerusalem (but not just then - any time is good). Things won't be as "do your own thing" as they are in the wilderness. Soon we will be entering the Land for a more "permanent", down to earth life.

MITZVAnotes

There is a fairly common situation with the Torah's mitzvot, of a positive command and a prohibition basically saying the same thing. We have a mitzva to fast on Yom Kippur and a prohibition of eating and drinking on Yom Kippur. Same thing (in practice, but different in motivation and KAVANA). We may not do Melacha on Shabbat and we must abstain from Melacha on Shabbat. Same thing (in practice, but different in motivation). In R'ei, we are commanded to "cancel" uncollected loans at the end of Sh'mita year. And we are forbidden from collecting loans after the Sh'mita year has past. Same thing (in

practice, but different in motivation). There are many examples of these "two-sides of the same coin" mitzva pairs. And there are reasons for the positive mitzva and a "partner" prohibition.

But let's take a look at another aspect of mitzva pairs. Less common than the perfectly matched positive mitzva and prohibition, is the pair of mitzvot that overlap, but not completely. Take a look at [438], the mitzva to fulfill a pledge of a korban or other donation to the Beit HaMikdash. There is a partner prohibition (in Ki Teitzei) which forbids delaying the fulfillment of a pledge to the Mikdash. These mitzvot do not perfectly align. To fulfill the positive mitzva, one must "pay up" by the next Regel. However, one is not in violation of the prohibition unless three Regalim have past since the pledge. This means that a pledge to the Beit HaMikdash made during Aseret Y'mei T'shuva, for example, should be fulfilled on Sukkot. If so, then the person is fulfilling an ASEI and also not in violation of a LAV. If he doesn't fulfill the pledge until Pesach, then he has NOT fulfilled the positive mitzva, but neither has he violated the prohibition. If Isru Chag Shavuot comes and he still hasn't fulfilled the pledge, then he is in violation of the LAV (because three chagim have passed).

Levi - Second Aliya - 18 p'sukim - 12:11-28

There (in Eretz Yisrael), a special place will be designated for the bringing of all offerings. There, spiritual rejoicing will take place, and there, we shall help the Levite and the less fortunate to also have cause to rejoice. It will be forbidden to bring sacrifices anywhere else [439, L89 12:13]. All Korbanot are to be brought only at the Mikdash [440, A84 12:14] (another matched mitzva-pair). Only those consecrated animals that become unfit for the Altar due to blemishes must be redeemed [441, A86 12:15] (without an invalidating blemish, a consecrated animal may NOT be redeemed) and then may be eaten as "regular" meat. The animals' blood, of course, may not be consumed.

It is forbidden to eat Ma'aser Sheni outside Yerushalayim, neither of grain [442, L141 12:17], nor of wine (or grapes) [443, L142 12:17], nor olive oil (or olives) [444, L143 12:17]; nor (for a kohein) to eat sacred firstborn animals outside of Yerushalayim [445, L144 12:17], nor the more sacred sacrificial meat outside of the Temple courtyard [446, L145 12:17], nor eat the meat of an Olah (completely-burnt offering) at all [447, L146 12:17], nor other korbanot before their blood is properly applied to the Altar [448, L147 12:17], nor eat First Fruits before they are placed in front of the Altar [449, L149 12:17].

Deep breath. The previous paragraph lists 8 mitzvot that all come from a single pasuk (12:17). (We sometimes refer to this pasuk as the Nolan Ryan pasuk, since its 8 mitzvot is so many more than the second place pasuk, just as Ryan's seven no-hitters are by far, more than any other pitcher's.) Here too is an example of how we would be lost in trying to understand all that this pasuk is commanding us, without the Oral Law. It is important to remember that this is not rabbinic interpretation nor extension that we are dealing with; it is Torah as much from HaShem as Matza on the Seder night or Shofar on Rosh HaShana. That which we are taught from the Oral Law - as Torah Law - is part of Torah MiSinai, just like the Written Word.

All of the above-mentioned foods are to be eaten where they are supposed to be eaten. Be careful not to forget the Levi, the gifts due him, and other forms of help [450, L229 12:19].

[S> 12:20 (9)] "When G-d will expand your borders as promised..."

Notice that the Torah speaks of prosperity immediately following the portion about generous charity-giving and concern for others. This is G-d's "illogical" promise: the more you give, the more you will have.

If and when we desire to eat meat (other than the sacred meat of korbanot), we may do so anywhere we choose, but we must properly

slaughter the animals we eat first [451, A146 12:21].

SDT: In the pasuk commanding Sh'chita, G-d says "(slaughter the animal) as I have commanded you." Yet we do not find the details of Sh'chita in the Written Torah. This is one of the sources for the concept that the Torah consists of a Written Word and an Oral Law - both the Word of G-d, and both inseparable from each other.

Non-sacred meat does not have the same restrictions as sacred meat (i.e. ritual impurity - yours or the animal's - is not an impediment to eating it). Many other halachot, of course, do apply.

An animal must be killed before its meat is taken. This is the universal prohibition (it is both one of our 613 and one of the 7 Noahide Laws) of "Limb from a living animal" [452, L182 12:23], EIVER MIN HACHAI. Furthermore, blood must be removed from meat before we may eat it.

Korbanot shall be brought from all over (even from outside of Israel) to the "Place of G-d's choosing" - the Mikdash [453, A85 12:26]. These korbanot shall be offered on the Mizbei'ach, the blood sprinkled thereon, the meat (when permitted) to be eaten there.

Be careful to do all that G-d asks, so that things will be good for us and our children.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 22 p'sukim - 12:29-13:19

[S> 12:29 (4)] Repeat warning: Do not get interested in the idolatrous practices of the nations whom we will replace in the Land, lest we too anger G-d and be punished by Him.

We shall do all that we are commanded, neither adding to [454, L313 13:1], nor diminishing from [455, L314 13:1] Torah & mitzvot.

MITZVAnotes

The twin prohibitions of neither adding nor subtracting from the Torah, are mentioned in Va'etchanan and again here 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 - but don't do it - it would not be BAL TOSIF.) 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.)

[P> 13:2 (5)] If (when) there arises among us a prophet or dreamer - even one who performs miracles or signs to back up his words - who prophesies in the name of idolatry, it is forbidden to listen him [456, L28 13:4]. This is to be viewed as a test by G-d of our faith in Him. We must be true to G-d, follow Him, revere Him, keep His mitzvot,

serve Him, and cling to Him. The above-mentioned false prophet shall be put to death for his attempts to turn us away from G-d. We thus uproot evil from our midst.

[S> 13:7 (6)] If any fellow Jew (even a close relative or beloved friend) tries to entice us to idolatry of any type (familiar, exotic, or foreign), we must show no love to such a person [457, L17 13:9], nor suppress our hatred of him [458, L18 13:9], nor rescue him from danger [459, L19 13:9], nor speak on his behalf in court [460, L20 13:9] nor refrain from speaking against him [461, L21 13:9].

The Torah must be very clear and strong in these commands, because it has become second-nature (hopefully) for us to love our fellow, not hate him, and try to save him. But not in this case. These mitzvot stand in stark contrast to the mitzvot from K'doshim (and other places) which command love of fellow Jew, not to hate him, to save him from danger, etc. These mitzvot (from this week's sedra) underline the seriousness with which the Torah treats the enticer to idolatry. He is a cancer in our midst that must be removed.

But rather, the enticer shall be put to death by stoning (after trial and conviction), the accusing witnesses initiating the execution. And (it almost goes without saying that) it is forbidden to entice a fellow Jew to

leave G-d and worship idols [462, L16 13:12].

[S> 13:13 (7)] If we find out that an entire city is being enticed to idolatry, we must very carefully investigate the matter. This command is generalized to require thorough examination and questioning of witnesses in all types of cases [463, A179 13:15]. If the charges are substantiated, the population of the "city gone astray" (IR HANIDA- CHAT) is to be killed by sword, the possessions of the people are to be burned, and the city itself destroyed [464, A186 13:17]. The city may not ever be rebuilt [465, L23 13:17] (unless security considerations indicate otherwise). No one may benefit from anything from the city [466, L24 13:18] so as not to provoke G-d's anger. Proper fulfillment of these and other mitzvot will find favor in G-d's eyes.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 21 p'sukim - 14:1-21

[S> 14:1 (2)] As "G-d's children", it is forbidden to gash oneself (for idolatrous purposes or to mourn the dead) [467, L45 14:1] nor tear out one's hair in grief [468, L171 14:1].

[Mitzva [467] also prohibits factionalization of the community when it is detrimental to Jewish unity - two totally different mitzvot attributed to the same source.]

It is our destiny to be the chosen from among the nations of the Earth.

[S> 14:3 (6)] It is forbidden to eat “any abomination”, defined here as the meat of a korban that had become “disqualified” [469, L140 14:3].

The Torah next lists 10 types of mammals that are kosher (3 domestic, 7 wild), and then gives signs to determine a kosher animal (split hoof, cud-chewing). This is followed by four examples of animals we may not eat.

NOTE that in Sh'mini, the first place where kosher and non-kosher animals are presented, only the same four non-kosher animals are named.

Also **NOTE**, the kosher domesticated animals are very familiar to us: Cow, Goat, Sheep. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan z"l identifies the seven wild kosher animals (Chayot T'hortot) as gazelle, deer, antelope, ibex, chamois, bison (or wild ox, maybe water buffalo), giraffe. In his footnotes, he brings different opinions about the Hebrew terms for different animals. Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, on the other hand, translates very few of the animals and birds mention in this parsha, and leaves all the rest in transliteration only. He defends his refusal to translate some of the animals because a mis-translation (which he considers very likely) can result in someone eating non-kosher.

[S> 14:9 (2)] Fish with scales and fins are permitted to be eaten; that which has no scales (or fins) is forbidden to

us. Scales (that are easily scraped off without damaging the skin of the fish) determine the kashrut of a fish.

Note: The term "scales" can be misleading. In fact, different fishes have different types of scales - of four types, only two types are the signs of a kosher fish.

[S> 14:11 (11)] We may eat kosher birds. We are therefore obligated to examine and determine the kosher status of a bird we would like to eat [470, A150 14:11] (The corresponding mitzvot for the other types of animals have been counted as mitzvot from Shmini.)

The Torah lists 21 types of birds that are forbidden.

(Don't confuse the term species with type. Torah types do not necessarily conform to modern taxonomy.)

The characteristics of kosher and non-kosher birds are NOT mentioned in the Torah (unlike those of mammals and fish). The Gemara gives us guidelines to distinguish between kosher and non-kosher birds. Practically speaking, neither the list nor the guidelines are what determine which birds we eat. MASORET (tradition) does. Basically, we do not trust ourselves to be able to properly identify the birds named in the Torah (modern Hebrew sometimes does not match Biblical or Mishnaic Hebrew - this is one problem). If we have a

tradition in our communities that a particular type of bird is kosher, then we may eat it. Otherwise we take the cautious position of SAFEK (doubt) and choose to be strict with ourselves. A Masoret for some partridge and pheasant species have been recently confirmed. These birds now join chicken, duck, goose, (some pigeon and dove) on the kosher birds list. Note, however, that some of the 'new masoret' (it's not the oxymoron that it seems to be) have not yet been accepted by some kashrut organizations.

It is also forbidden to eat non-kosher locust and other winged insects [471, L175 14:19].

Even though we may eat meat, it is forbidden to eat of an animal that died other than by sh'chita. This is the prohibition of N'VEILA [472, L180 14:21]. Benefit may be derived from N'VEILA but not from milk-meat mixtures (when cooked together).

Although this third occurrence of BASAR B'CHALAV teaches the prohibition of benefit from cooked together meat-in-milk mixtures, it is not counted as a separate mitzva, but is included in the prohibition of eating M-in-M from Ki Tisa. We have three p'sukim that each teach a prohibition - cooking, eating, benefit - but in counting mitzvot, Meat-in-Milk is not counted as one mitzva or three, but as two of the 613 - one prohibition to

cook meat and milk together, and one prohibition that forbids eating and/or deriving benefit from meat and milk that has been cooked together. (It is the third occurrence that "links" us to the teaching from the Oral Torah, that benefit is also forbidden - in contrast to most other forbidden foods that are only forbidden to eat but one may derive other benefits from them. Hence the third pasuk.)

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 8 p'sukim - 14:22-29

[P> 14:22 (6)] (Approx. 2% of the yield of a crop is given to a Kohen as T'ruma. One tenth of the remainder is separated as Ma'aser to be given to a Levi.) One tenth of what is left is separated as Ma'aser Sheni [473, A128 14:22], which remains the possession of the owner but is sacred and must be brought to Yerushalayim and eaten (t)here in a state of ritual purity. If the amount of Ma'aser Sheni is great, a person is permitted to redeem the produce for fair market value plus a fifth (i.e. 1/4 is added, that amount becoming 1/5 of the total). If one redeems the Maaser Sheni of his neighbor, no one adds one fifth.

(This is not a loophole that takes advantage of the Torah's intent; rather it is an option the Torah recognizes.)

The proceeds of the redemption are to be spent on food and drink in Yeru-

shalayim. Again the Torah reminds us to care of the Levi, who has no property of his own.

(Ma'aser Sheni applies in years 1, 2, 4, 5 of the Shmita cycle.)

[S> 14:28 (2)] In the 3rd (& 6th) year of a Shmita cycle, the second tithe is to be given to poor people [474, A130 14:28]. This generous act of tzedaka will be rewarded by G-d's blessings. (Note the ratio of years of Maaseir Sheni and Maaseir Oni. And the order.)

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 18 p'sukim - 15:1-18

[S> 15:1 (6)] If Shmita year passes, repayment of personal loans may not be demanded [475, L230 15:1]. This rule applies when both lender and borrower are Jewish. Loans due from a non-Jew must be collected [476, A142 15:3], but it is a mitzva (required) to cancel the personal debt of a fellow Jew following the Shmita year [477, A141 15:3]

(Again we see an example of a positive mitzva and a prohibition that say the same thing).

If the Jewish People follow the Torah and mitzvot properly, we will be blessed by not having poverty among us. We will also dominate among the nations of the world.

[S> 15:7 (5)] However, when we are confronted with poverty, we must not hold back generous support of those in

need [478, L232 15:7]. Rather it is a great mitzva to give tzedaka and support those less fortunate than ourselves in a giving and dignified manner [479, A195 15:8]. Be especially careful not to withhold loans to the poor because the Shmita year is approaching [480, L231 15:9]; if the poor person cries out to G-d, He will hold you accountable for not helping. Be generous in areas of tzedaka and Chessed, thereby meriting blessing from G-d. Poverty will be a "fact of life" under normal circumstances; give tzedaka freely.

Although a lender must void a debt after Sh'mita year passes (unless he has executed the PROZBUL document, by which he is considered to have turned over his debts to a Beit Din for collection, in which case Sh'mita does not cancel such loans), the borrower may/should - offer to repay the loan. The lender is obligated to tell the borrower that the loan has been canceled by Sh'mita, and the borrower is supposed to say that he would like to give the money back to the lender anyway (as a gift). The lender can accept the repayment in that case, and the borrower is considered to have acted in a proper Jewish manner. The borrower who "takes advantage" of the Sh'mita-voiding of a debt is considered to have behaved in an improper and un-Jewish manner.

[S> 15:12 (7)] If a Jew becomes an

indentured servant to a fellow Jew, he shall work no more than six years and he shall be freed in the seventh. One must not send the freed EVED IVRI away empty-handed [481, L233 15:13] but rather he shall be given a generous allotment upon discharge [482, A196 15:14] (again, a double-sided mitzva).

Using this double-sided mitzva as an example (not all are explainable in this manner) If we had only the prohibition of sending the EVED IVRI away empty-handed, a shekel might suffice to avoid violation of the mitzva. That meager amount certainly does not suffice for the fulfillment of the positive command.

We are to remember that we were AVADIM in Egypt and that G-d redeemed us and expects us to be sensitive to those less fortunate than ourselves. If the EVED IVRI does not want to be released, his ear is ceremonially pierced and he remains in his master's service until Yovel. Do not be stingy with the servant, for he has served you hard and long.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 22 p'sukim - 15:19-16:17

[S> 15:19 (5)] Firstborns of cow, goat and sheep - if they are male - are sacred (if unblemished); they may neither be worked [483, L113 15:19] nor benefited from [484, L114 15:19], such as shearing the wool for personal use. They are to be given to a Kohen as

one of his Torah-granted gifts (after taking care of the animal for its first 30 or 50 days of age, depending upon the type of animal). They are to be eaten by the kohen and his family after being brought as a korban - within a year, unless "unfit for the Altar", in which case they are the Kohen's property, to do with as he pleases.

[P> 16:1 (8)] Preserve the spring month and bring Korban Pesach. This is a reiteration of the mitzva to adjust the calendar when necessary, by adding a month - a second Adar - to keep Pesach in the spring.

Chametz is forbidden on Erev Pesach afternoon [485, L199 16:3]. This is a separate prohibition, and of a lesser status (based on comparing punishments for violation), to the prohibition of Chametz on Pesach itself.

The Chagiga cannot be left over beyond two days [486, L118 16:4]. KP cannot be brought on a private altar [487,* 16:5].

***This mitzva is not on Rambam's list - the ONLY mitzva on the Chinuch's list that Rambam does not count. The other shoe drops in Haazinu.**

[P> 16:9 (4)] Count seven weeks until Shavuot; this is the OTHER Omer mitzva (in addition to counting 49 days - it's why we count days & weeks). Next, a mention of Sukkot and then the command to rejoice on the Festivals [488, A54 16:14]. Appear in the Mikdash and bring korbanot on

Chagim [489, A53 16:15]; do not appear there empty-handed [490, L156 16:16].

Haftara - 12 p'sukim - Yishayahu 54:11-55:5

One of the shortest haftarot of the year

We have the hopeful message that G-d will take back the exile-afflicted people of Israel in great splendor. It is also a prophecy of a time when our enemies will not succeed against us. Spiritual thirst and hunger will be tended to and all will be good for us...

IF we will listen to G-d. There it is. The same deal as in the sedra. A deal repeated over and over again. A deal that is so simple, we should only be able to exercise our Free Will and keep our end of the covenant.

Bringing the Prophets to Life

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

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

Words of Prophetic Comfort

**R'El - 12 p'sukim
- Yishayahu 54:11-55:5**

In his study of the seven haftarot of consolation that follow Tish'a b'Av,

the Avudraham [14th century, Seville] submits that the very opening words of each haftara reflects an ongoing theme of Yishayahu's visions of comfort. The first haftara demands that prophets cry out to the nation to be comforted: NACHAMU NACHAMU AMI, while the second haftara begins with Israel's response that there could be no Nechama for them because: AZAVANI HASHEM - G-d had abandoned them! And yet, despite the prophet's assurances that G-d could never forsake His children, and despite the fact that the very last message the navi gave to his nation was KI NICHAM HASHEM TZIYON - G-d has comforted Zion... Yishayahu realized that Israel had remained in grief! And, for that reason, he opens his vision of the third haftara with the words: ANIYA SO'ARA, LO NUCHAMA - Israel remains unconsolable.

But why was that true? Why was there no comfort for Israel in the promises of Hashem?

Rav Yigal Ariel points to Yishayahu's prophetic promises of a glorious future and wonders: "Why should Israel be comforted?" Or, more specifically: "Why should future generations of Israel be comforted through hearing the promises of a future glory?" After all, even if they return to the "good old days", even if they live to see the fruition of Yirmiyahu's plea CHADEISH YAMEMU

K'KEDEM [Eicha 5:21] they would find themselves facing the same challenges of earlier generations - including the real possibility of repeating the same sins which would lead to the same punishments!

In response to that fear, the navi depicted a future for Israel that would be clearly different from that of past centuries. The reality of this promised future would be one far superior, far more glorious and even more miraculous than the world that was. Rav Ariel points to Yishayahu's promise: V'CHOL BANAYICH LIMUDEI HASHEM [v. 13], as the birth of new generations who would be imbued with, and inspired by, G-d's teachings. The navi guarantees that the future would not be a "repeat" of Israel's mistakes but would, instead, be a world that would build an idyllic future on which "all your children shall be disciples of Hashem."

Rav Moshe Lichtenstein, however, suggests a different understanding of the Yishayahu's promise of comfort for Israel. The last haftara, Rav Lichtenstein says, finds Israel's inconsolability based upon their assumption that Hashem had abandoned them, VATOMER TZIYON: 'AZAVANI HASHEM'. The navi succeeded in comforting them by assuring them that G-d would never do so - as reflected in his closing words: NICHAM HASHEM ET TZIYON.

This week's haftara, however,

addresses a second concern of the nation. Realizing the poverty and lack that galut would bring, the people rightfully wonder how they could ever survive such an experience. No longer do they doubt Hashem's relationship to His nation but they do doubt whether they could endure such years of scarcity - as the opening words describe Israel as ANIYA SO'ARA, poor and turbulent. How beautifully does Yishayahu relieve their concerns by promising future prosperity and success, including precious stones and "windows of jasper" [54: 11-12].

The divine words of the prophets respond to the needs of the people... and their concerns. Messages of comfort may not reach each generation in every era. But the simple knowledge that there WILL BE a future for Israel is, indeed, a source of comfort.

Perhaps, that is why we stand here today, living in the same land, speaking the language and thanking the same One G-d, some 2700 years after Yishayahu offered those prophetic promises! ★

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

EIKEV

<> plus one Unexplained

Common factor between No'ach and Moshe

40 days and 40 nights. Six times in Eikev when Moshe tells the people of his ascents of Har Sinai. Four times in No'ach related to the timings of the Flood.

R'EI



Upper-left is a chabad.org picture of Har G'rizim and Har Eival <> CI = R'EI ANOCHI. C = see, I = ANOCHI <> Negated plus/minus is the prohibition of adding to or subtracting from the Torah - Bal Tosif and Bal Tigra <> Negated eraser is the prohibition of erasing any of G-d's seven names <> The slice of bread with a clock face could be LECHEM HAPANIM, except that there is no mention of it in R'ei. Here it represents the time in the morning of Erev Pesach that is the deadline for eating Chameitz - which does fit in R'ei <> Tzedaka box is for the mitzva of giving tzedaka and for several other related mitzvot from R'ei <> The giraffe gets two thumbs up for chewing its cud and having split hooves. It is kosher (and yes, we do know exactly where in its neck to shecht it) <> The camel, on the other hand, is Xed out, indicating that it is a B'HEIMA T'MEI'A <> The desert locust has 'Yes, but...' above it, because some types of locust and grasshoppers are kosher, others are not, (the desert locust is considered kosher) and most Jews do not have a tradition as to how to identify the kosher kind <> Pastrami on rye with a pickle, represents meat that we are allowed to eat (as opposed to sacred meat of korbanot, which is very strictly regulated, and as opposed to meat we may not eat - EIVER MIN HACHAI, N'VEILA, T'REIFA, B'HEIMA T'MEI'A, nonkosher fish, non-kosher

birds...) <> In addition to the prohibitions of non-kosher food, we have a positive command to check for the kosher signs of our food. Since the mitzva counted in R'ei relates to birds, the bird-watcher was chosen to represent this mitzva. Checking the kashrut of food we buy and restaurants we eat in, is within the spirit of these mitzvot <> The hand taking money from a wallet represent the mitzvot related to lending money to our fellow Jews <> The stalk of wheat represents the mitzvot related to agricultural produce. That it is standing straight up is meant to resemble the numeral 1. With the dot before the one we have .1 or one tenth, 10%, representing Maaser Shen, one of the mitzva-topics in R'ei <> The burning tree represent the destruction of AVODA ZARA which we are commanded to do in Eretz Yisrael <> The sword is used to kill the people of an IR HANIDACHAT, a city that goes over to idolatry <> Symbols of the three Regalim, as presented in the sedra <> The smiley is for the mitzva of SIMCHA on Yom Tov <> Super attorney Matlock, his assistant and his investigator represent the mitzva to meticulously examine and cross-examine witnesses <> newborn lamb represents the mitzva of B'CHOR B'HEIMA T'HORA, the firstborn (male) of a kosher domesticated animal, i.e. cow, goat, sheep <> Vampire bat is in the ParshaPix

because it is the ATALEIF, one of the non-kosher birds (flying animals) AND because of the repeated mention in the sedra of the prohibition of eating blood <> Kiddush cup is a KOS, which is one of the non-kosher birds <> The right triangle with the right angle marked C... C = see = R'El. The Hebrew for perpendicular or right-angled (also vertical) is ANACHI, spelled the same as, and sounding similar to ANOCHI... <> Hoopoe bird, DUCHIFAT, one of the non-kosher birds on the Torah's list (and the national bird of Israel) <> Former prime minister and president of Israel, Shimon Peres a"h - only person to serve as both - PERES is one of the birds listed in the sedra <> lower-right is the blue marlin, determined to be kosher, as opposed to the swordfish which is not kosher <> an old Indian head nickel with a buffalo on the back (a kosher animal) <> Yishayahu 55:1 (a pasuk in the haftara of R'ei) - Ho! All who thirst, go to water, and whoever has no money, go, buy and eat, and go, buy without money and without a price, wine and milk. The milk, wine, and water <> the word AM (nation) in light purple (SEGOL) is for AM SEGULA, the Chosen People <> the earpod is an OZNIYA spelled with an ALEF. If you exchange the AYIN (eye) for an ALEF, the spelling works <> not BA but BO? If you figure that one out, please let me know <> two new Unexplaineds

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

Judaism's Social Vision

R'EI

If you seek to understand Judaism's social vision, look at its anti-poverty legislation:

If there be a poor person among your kinsfolk in any of your towns in the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not harden your heart or close your hand toward your brother in need. Open your hand generously and freely lend him enough to answer all his needs. Be vigilant: let your heart not whisper a depraved thought: 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is close', making you miserly toward your brother in need, giving him nothing. He will cry out to the Lord about you, and you will be held guilty. Give to him generously, and do not let your heart begrudge it, for by merit of this the Lord your God will grant you blessing in all your work and all your hands' endeavours. There will never cease to be poor people in the land. And so I command you: open your hand. (D'varim 15:7-11)

Ostensibly the passage is about the cancellation of debts in the seventh year (sh'mita, the year of "release").

The Oral Tradition, however, extended it to the laws of tz'daka - the word usually translated as "charity", but which also means "distributive justice, equity". The rabbis interpreted the phrase "sufficient for his needs" to mean the basic requirements of existence: food, clothing, shelter and so on. "That which he lacks" was understood as referring to a person who was previously wealthy but has now become impoverished. He too must be helped to recover his dignity:

It is related about Hillel the Elder that, for a certain poor man who was of good family, he bought a horse to ride on and a slave to run before him. When on one occasion he could not find a slave to run before the man, he [Hillel] himself ran before him. (Ketuvot 67b)

The force of this passage lies in the fact that Hillel himself was notoriously poor, yet he gave of his money and time to help a rich man who had lost his money regain his self-respect. This double aspect is evident throughout the laws of tz'daka. On the one hand, the laws are directed to the brute fact of poverty. No one must be deprived of basic physical necessities. On the other, they address with astonishing sensitivity the psychology of poverty. It demeans, embarrasses, humiliates, shames. Tz'daka, ruled the rabbis,

must be given in such a way as to minimize these feelings:

When Rabbi Yannai saw a certain man giving a coin to a poor person in front of everyone, he said: It would have been better not to have given it to him than to have given it and put him to shame. (Chagiga 5a)

In a famous passage, Rambam describes the eight levels of charity:

There are eight degrees of charity, one higher than the other.

The highest degree, exceeded by none, is that of one who assists a poor person by providing him with a gift or a loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him find employment - in a word by putting him in a situation where he can dispense with other people's aid. With reference to such aid it is said, 'You shall strengthen him, be he a stranger or a settler, he shall live with you' (Vayikra 25:35), which means: strengthen him in such a manner that his falling into want is prevented.

A step below this is the one who gives alms to the needy in such a way that the giver does not know to whom he gives and the recipient does not know from whom he takes. This exemplifies doing a good deed for its own sake. One example was the Hall of Secrecy in the Temple, where the righteous would place their gift clandestinely and where poor people from noble

families could come and secretly help themselves to aid. Close to this is dropping money in a charity box...

One step lower is where the giver knows to whom he gives, but the poor person does not know from whom he receives. Thus the great Sages would go and secretly put money into poor people's doorways...

A step lower is the case where the poor person knows from whom he is taking, but the giver does not know to whom he is giving. Thus the great Sages would tie coins in their scarves, which they would fling over their shoulders, so that the poor could help themselves without suffering shame.

Lower than this, is where someone gives the poor person a gift before he asks.

Lower still is one who gives only after the poor person asks.

Lower than this is one who gives less than is fitting, but does so with a friendly countenance.

The lowest level is one who gives ungraciously. (Hilchot Matenot Ani'im 10:7-14)

This exquisitely calibrated ethic is shot through with psychological insight. What matters is not only how much you give, but also how you do so. Anonymity in the giving of aid is essential to dignity. The poor must

not be embarrassed. The rich must not be allowed to feel superior. We give, not to take pride in our generosity, still less to emphasise the dependency of others, but because we belong to a covenant of human solidarity, and because that is what God wants us to do, honouring the trust through which he has temporarily lent us wealth in the first place.

Especially noteworthy is Rambam's insistence that giving somebody a job, or the means to start a business, is the highest charity of all. What is humiliating about poverty is dependence itself: the feeling of being beholden to others. One of the sharpest expressions of this is to be found in Birkat HaMazon, when we say, "We beseech You, God our Lord, let us not be in need of the gifts of men or of their loans, but only of Your helping hand ... so that we may not be put to shame nor humiliated for ever and ever."

The greatest act of tz'daka is one that allows the individual to become self-sufficient. The highest form of charity is one that enables the individual to dispense with charity. From the point of view of the giver, this is one of the least financially demanding forms of giving. It may not cost him anything at all. But from the point of view of the recipient, it is the most dignifying, because it removes

the shame of receiving. Humanitarian relief is essential in the short-term, but in the long-run, job creation and economic policies that promote full employment are more important.

One detail of Jewish law is particularly noteworthy: even a person dependent on tz'daka must himself or herself give tz'daka. On the face of it, the rule is absurd. Why give X enough money so that he can give to Y? Giving to Y directly is more logical and efficient. What the rabbis understood, however, is that giving is an essential part of human dignity. The rabbinic insistence that the community provide the poor with enough money so that they themselves can give is a profound insight into the human condition.

Jewry has had many distinguished economists, from David Ricardo (whom Keynes called the greatest mind that ever addressed itself to economics), to John von Neumann (a physicist who, in his spare time, invented Game Theory), to Paul Samuelson, Milton Friedman, and Alan Greenspan. They have won an astonishing 38% of Nobel prizes in the field. Why should this have been so? Perhaps because Jews have long known that economics is one of the fundamental determinants of a society; that economic systems are not written into the structure of the universe, but are constructed by

human beings and can be changed by human beings; and thus that poverty is not a fact of nature but can be alleviated, minimised, reduced. Economics is not a religious discipline. It is a secular art and science. Yet, deeply underlying the Jewish passion for economics is a religious imperative:

There will never cease to be poor people in the land. And so I command you: open your hand generously to your kinsmen, your poor and needy, who share your land. (D'varim 15:11)

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) What is the difference between giving someone a gift and giving someone an opportunity?
- (2) What are your thoughts on Rambam's list of eight levels of giving? Would you want to add any levels, or re-order it? Why/why not?
- (3) Why might it matter how help is given, not just whether it is given in the first place?

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Haftara

Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander
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The Unity of the Gemstones

R'EI

Our haftara opens with a glittering metaphorical description of the glory of the Messianic age:

Oppressed and storm swept, never comforted; behold: I am paving your ground with garnet, lapis lazuli your foundations. I am fitting your windows with kadmah, your gates with glowing granite, marking your borders with stones men covet. (Yishayahu 54:11–12)

The many gemstones referenced here have more than the simple connotations of wealth and luxury. When we read this description our memories are directed to the jewel-bedecked CHOSHEN, the breastplate which lay on the heart of the Kohen Gadol. The identities of the gems mentioned by the Torah in both that context and this one together hold a secret about the convergence of the physical and the spiritual in our lives.

The Choshen worn by the Kohen Gadol in the Mishkan displayed twelve gemstones, and each was meant to represent one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Each stone, like each

of the tribes and each individual human being, had its own color, character, and temperament, highlighting how God embraces and celebrates our unique differences. Some of us shine like rubies; others are tough like diamonds. But all Jews stood equally beloved before God as the Kohen gadol carried us, in all our variety, upon and within his heart.

The two final gemstones enumerated by the Torah as being embedded in the Choshen represented the tribes of Yosef and Binyamin. The Hebrew words for these gems are SHOHAM and YASH'FEH, traditionally identified as onyx and jasper (Sh'mot 28:20). These two stones, placed side by side in the Choshen, are referenced again in a Talmudic discussion of our haftara, specifically of the phrase: “I am fitting your windows with kadkod” (v. 12). When looking at this phrase in Hebrew, V'SAMTI KACHOD SHIMSHOTAYICH, it seems clear that the word KADCHOD - kadkod, which we have not translated, refers to a specific type of stone. But to which one is unclear.

The Gemara (Bava Batra 75a) links this uncertainty to a dispute attributed, according to one tradition, to the ministering angels Micha'el and Gabri'el, and according to another tradition, to two Amoraim from the Land of Israel: Yehuda and Chezkiya, the sons of Rabbi Chiya. There in

Israel or in the heavens, the angels quarrel over the true identity of the KADKOD: One claims that it is another name for SHOHAM [onyx], while the other identifies it as YA-SH'FEH [jasper]. Finally, God is asked to settle this geological debate, and He rules: “It is similar to both this and that.” In other words, the KADKOD is a melding of both the SHOHAM and the YA-SH'FEH stones, a mixture of onyx and jasper.

What is so significant about the identification of the KADKOD, to the point where it is necessary to call upon God Himself to settle the debate? In his commentary to the Talmudic story, R. Shmuel Eidels (Maharsha) draws our attention back to the fact that these stones represent Yosef and Binyamin in the breastplate. The synthesis of these two stones, the Maharsha argues, symbolizes a deeper blending of the natures of these tribes: the partnership between the physical and the spiritual.

In rabbinic literature, the two characters Yosef and Binyamin are said to reflect these two sides of the redemptive process. Yosef is tasked with the physical salvation of the Jewish people, since in the biblical story he tends to the physical and financial needs of his brothers in Egypt. Later, the Sages refer to the idea of a “Mashiach ben Yosef”, a

messiah from the tribe of Yosef who, like his forebear, ensures that the physical and material infrastructure of the Jewish people is developed and redeemed. Binyamin, on the other hand, carries the role of spiritually uplifting Jewish society. The tribal inheritance of Binyamin includes the land on which the Beit HaMikdash was built, containing the Holy of Holies. Through his connection to that hallowed ground, the site of God's residence in this world, Binyamin and his representative stone stand for spiritual rejuvenation.

By identifying the KADKOD as onyx and jasper together, God challenges us to work for the admixture of those two stones and the qualities they represent. For true redemption necessitates the combining of the physical and the spiritual facets of existence. Sanctity can only have meaning for our lives when it is given a home in the real world; and the mundane becomes significant when it is imbued with a higher, more sacred reality.

We live in a miraculous generation, one in which we are privileged to constantly witness and participate in the melding of the sacred and the everyday in all aspects of Jewish life. The combination of physical and spiritual advancement in the modern Jewish state propels us towards the redemption represented in our

haftara by the KADKOD. We live at a time when we can see Jewish soldiers standing on the front lines of battle to protect our nation from harm. They are bringing tzitzit, tefillin, and sefarim along with them to their bases, tanks, and armored personnel carriers. They are sending countless sheilot, halachic questions, to their rabbinic authorities to ensure they conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the dictates of the Torah. Throughout the duration of this war, we have seen numerous grassroots initiatives emerge throughout Israel and the Diaspora in both the physical and spiritual realms, from food collection to clothing distribution, to tzitzit tying, to the recitation of Tehillim.

In all these phenomena, we see the synthesis of our physical and spiritual needs come to life, paving the way towards the redemption we so eagerly await. May the onyx and the jasper continue to join together into a beautiful duet of the sacred and everyday that enters every corner of our existence. And may God save us, physically and spiritually, from all those who wish to do us harm. 🕊️



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Take-Away from a Sofer

This PTDT will be part educational and part Mussar; it won't be easy to swallow. Put differently, it will be part brain-to-brain and part heart-to-heart.

Shortly after the opening p'sukim of R'ei, the Torah tells us that when we enter Canaan and conquer it, we must get rid of the Avoda Zara that is there.

Then the Torah says: LO TAASUN KEIN LASHEM ELOKEICHEM - You shall not do so to HaShem, your God.

The plain understanding of this pasuk is that we must destroy the trappings of idolatry, but we may not similarly destroy that which belongs to HaShem. We are taught from the Oral Law that this pasuk forbids erasing HaShem's Names - referring to the Seven Names that may not be erased.

This prohibition is one of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah, one of the 365 prohibitions.

Not only are these names not to be erased - they require special intention when a Sofer writes them. Before writing one of HaShem's

names, a Sofer is supposed to say - L'SHEIM K'DUSHAT HASHEIM, for the sake of the sanctity of the Name. The ideal situation is the Sofer's saying this every time he writes one of HaShem's name.

If a Sofer writes HaShem's name without saying L'SHEIM K'DUSHAT HASHEIM, even once, there is a question as to whether the Sefer Torah (if that is what he is writing) is kosher or not. And this is a defect that cannot be detected by examining the writing.

(Halachic sources discuss the validity of the Name is the Sofer made a declaration that all Names that he will write during this session are hereby sanctified. All seem to agree that L'CHATCHILA, initially, ideally, the Sofer must say L'SHEIM each time he writes the name.)

The previous paragraph is in parentheses because I want to focus on the paragraph before it.

And here is my train of thought...

We are not all Sofrim, but we all (should be) davening and making brachot. And in doing that, we say HaShem's names many, many times.

Just the brachot we recite in the morning - Netilat Yadayim, Asher Yatzar, Elokai, Birchot HaTorah, Birchot HaShachar - we say G-d's name 40 times, not counting MELECH CHAI V'KAYAM, a nickname to avoid

saying one of His Names before washing.

Let's take a quick look at the week-day Amida. First word of the introductory pasuk - ADO-NOI. Then nineteen brachot with at least one HaShem. But there are so many more. First brachot has eight more Sheimot. And another 27 in the rest of the Amida. That's 47. I can keep on counting for you, but that's not necessary for what I am about to say.

Before I do, let me make something very clear. I am about to borrow something from the Sofer that is not the same when said, in contrast to writing. But the idea is there.

Imagine if we were required to pause briefly before saying G-d's name in davening and brachot, every time we are about to say His Name, to think for a fraction of a second that I am about to mention G-d's name - a name I avoid saying because of its holiness when I am not davening, making brachot, or reading the Torah. And imagine if not focusing on the Names would invalidate the davening or bracha that I'm saying. And even if that is not exactly so, imagine that not saying His Names with special kavana is considered disrespecting Him.

When I spoke about this idea in one of my Zoom Shiurim, I said right up front that I was talking primarily to myself and hopefully others would hear me

talking to myself and take some of what I'm saying to heart. Same goes for these written words. I am writing them to reinforce my resolve to daven slower, use a siddur even for parts I know by heart. To pay attention to His Name and its meaning of ADNUT, His being the Master of the Universe. Different meanings for some of His other names and nicknames (KINUYIM). If you are reading what is essentially a personal diary or journal entry and if you take something positive away from it - wonderful.

(Off the record, it has been five days since I started paying more attention to what I say in prayer and brachot. It isn't easy. But it is worth the effort. Thanks for reading over my shoulder.)

PTDT

P.S. I wrote this PTDT and then before I uploaded it to the website I davened Mincha and Maariv. And that got me thinking that what I'm suggesting above is not easy at all. So here's a suggestion. Focus on the three most neglected, said on automatic pilot, rushed through words we say to G-d - BARUCH ATA HASHEM. (We'll work on ELOKEINU MELECH HA-OLAM at another time.)

In both davening and brachot, these three words are said a lot. Each time, think that G-d is the source of all blessing. That's BARUCH. Think that we have a personal relationship with

Him that allows us to address Him in second person familiar. That's ATA. And think that His Name is sacred and that it means that we recognize Him as the Master of the Universe. I think this is a good first step. All it takes is a few extra seconds and it is the respectful way to speak to Him. B'hatzlacha.

Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



R'EI

Holy Ambiguity

Everybody wants to proudly be aware and declare who they really are. We readily identify people by certain realities in their lives: male or female, lefty or righty, Red Sox fans (good) or Yankee fans (bad). *Ed. note: Giants fan, even better.* Let's make believe for the moment that we're only dealing with binary possibilities. So, we try to pigeon hole ourselves into these categories, but then we encounter someone who suggests that we get in touch with our 'feminine side' or we notice that we throw with our left hand but bat from the 'right side' (like me and Ricky Henderson). It can get complicated.

This complexity is also noted within Jewish tradition; this reality is clearly built into the fabric of our religion and

lifestyle. Rav Soloveitchik famously pointed out the reality of duality in his analysis of Adam 1 and Adam 2 from the differences in the Creation accounts from chapters 1 and 2 of B'reishit. That was in *The Lonely Man of Faith*. However, he also wrote *Halchic Man*.

In *Halachic Man* (Hebrew 1944, English 1980), he posits that there are two categories of humans trying to understand or interact with reality: Homo Cognitivus (cognitive or intelligent person) and Homo Religiosis (religious or spiritual person). The HC individual attempts to understand reality through scientific observation and inquiry. The HR personality, on the other hand, is driven by the religious and mystical impulse to transcend physical reality and strive for an esoteric spiritual existence.

Then the Rav describes the synthesis of these two archetypes into Halachic Man, who analyzes the physical reality to make life decisions which are based upon a Jewish legal reality which nature has dictated. Example: One observes a beautiful sunrise and immediately declares: Time to daven!

Observation of reality triggers Halachic reactions.

This week's Torah reading seems to anticipate these categories described by Rav Soloveitchik. We are told to be very careful about our behavior

(specifically: Don't self-mutilate). Then God declares: For you are a people consecrated to the Eternal your God: the Eternal your God chose you from among all other peoples on earth to be the treasured one. (D'varim 14:3)

In other words: Your behavior must be special (usually expressed as 'holy') because you are very special (Hebrew: SEGULA, perhaps 'precious') to Me.

Immediately after this declaration the Torah informs us about eating meat. What's the connection between being carnivorous and being holy or special?

Well, in the pre-modern world eating meat was very special and relatively rare (which is how I like my meat). I've mentioned in a previous article that the term for good news in Hebrew is BESOROT TOVOT. The term for news (BESOROT) probably is based on the word BASAR for meat. Also, in this week's parsha we have the third appearance of the law about not eating meat with dairy, and each of those instances is in close proximity to the listing of the three pilgrimage festivals (Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot). Why? Because, I believe strongly, in the ancient world most of our ancestors only ate meat on CHAGIM.

However, there's one other issue in play here. Until this section about the

Kosher animals, the Torah seems to have only allowed the consumption of meat as part of a sacrifice. Here, before the Jews' entry into the Holy Land we introduce the concept of BASAR TA'AVA ('meat of desire' or 'meat of appetite').

On a logical level, this makes a lot of sense. In the Desert, the Jews all lived within a few minutes walk from the Mishkan, where the sacrifices were offered. However, in Eretz Yisrael most Jews would live quite distant from the religious center, first in Shilo and then in Yerushalayim. Having to shlepp to the Temple for a corned beef sandwich was not reasonable. Hence, the introduction of BASAR TA'AVA, or non-holy meat consumption.

But how should we view this innovation? Was this a concession based upon a relaxation of the spiritual level attained in the desert encampment or was this, perhaps, a presentation of the 'norm' of Jewish life?

Was there, perhaps, a dichotomy? Is the Torah presenting two possibilities? Even though the Jews, for practical reasons, were going to be permitted to eat 'normal' Kosher meat, perhaps we're still being warned to be cautious in our interactions with the world and its pleasures. Maybe, the 'special' Jews would refrain from eating meat except in the holy Temple precinct.

Again, we do list the Pilgrimage festivals soon after the rules of meat consumption.

Is this, perhaps, similar to the NAZIR? 'Special' people who refrain from haircuts, wine and ritual impurity. Curious, our Sages define SIMCHA (joy) as including wine and meat.

What's the point? I believe strongly that the Torah gives us choices. We can freely choose to be a version of Homo Religiosis, who may become a NAZIR or refrain from eating meat except when connected to the Temple offerings, or we can freely choose to be the Halachic Human who is integrated into the world at large but carefully maintains Halachic norms.

Anyone who claims that there is only one path is either a fan of the Mandalorian ('This is the Way') or belongs to a cultish version of Judaism. Our communities thrive when we have this marvelous mix of outlooks and even lifestyles in our society.

A demand of total conformity is just unhealthy to the body politic. I'm not saying let 'a thousand flowers blossom' (a la Mao). We do have standards of Halacha and Midot. However, we're also not (or, at least, shouldn't be) strict conformists. I'm a bit disappointed when I join a minyan and everyone looks exactly the same

(except for me, and at one such minyan factory, it was clear that they waited for an eleventh Jew, so as not to count me for the minyan).

I love that our parsha can be read to mean: Be yourself! I have this bad feeling that when we don't think for ourselves, we might stop thinking at all. 🙏

Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison -
www.ravkooktorah.com

Private and Public Redemption

Summary: The initial redemption at night was an inner freedom, while the departure during the day symbolized the full, public realization of their liberation.

When Did the Exodus Occur?

At what time of day did the Jewish people leave Egypt? The Torah appears to contradict itself regarding the hour of the Exodus. In D'varim 16:1 (Parshat R'ei) we read, "It was in the month of spring that the HaShem your God brought you out of Egypt at night." Clearly, the verse states that the Israelites departed in the night.

However, the Torah previously stated in Bamidbar 33:3 that they left during

the daytime: “On the day after the Pesach sacrifice, the Israelites left triumphantly before the eyes of the Egyptians.”

So when did they leave – during the night, or in broad daylight, “before the eyes of the Egyptians”?

Two Stages of Redemption

The Talmud in B'rachot 9a resolves this apparent contradiction by explaining that both verses are correct. The redemption began at night, but it was only completed the following morning.

After the plague of the first-born struck at midnight, Pharaoh went to Moshe, pleading that the Israelites should immediately leave Egypt. At that point, the Hebrew slaves were free to depart. Officially, then, their servitude ended during the night.

However, God did not want His people to sneak away “like thieves in the night”. The Israelites were commanded to wait until daybreak, before proudly quitting their Egyptian slavery. Thus, the de facto redemption occurred during the day.

Night and Day

Rav Kook explained that there is an intrinsic correlation between these two time periods – night and day – and the two stages of redemption.

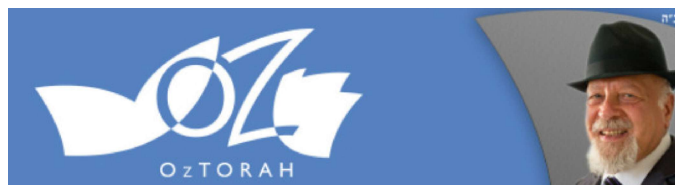
The initial redemption at night was an

inner freedom. Egyptian slavery was officially over, but their freedom was not yet realized in practical terms. The joy of independence, while great, was an inner joy. Their delight was not visible to others, and thus corresponded to the hidden part of the day – nighttime.

The second stage of redemption was the actual procession of the Jewish people out of Egypt. This was a public event, before the eyes of Egypt and the entire world. The consummation of their freedom took place at daybreak, emphasizing the public nature of their liberation from Egyptian bondage. As the sun shone, “the Israelites marched out triumphantly” (Sh'mot 14:18).

Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 316-317.

Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I pp. 43-44



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

R'EI

Free Choice

The gift of free will with which the sidra opens sounds so wonderful: "everything is up to you", it proclaims.

"You have two choices, life and

death, blessing and curse - the choice is yours!"

If only it worked like that.

We do not ask to be born, nor do we generally have control over our death. These are not matters of choice at all. They are imposed upon us.

Other things are foisted upon us too - our genetic inheritance and often our cultural milieu too.

We almost feel like echoing Omar Khayyam: "The moving finger writes - and having writ moved on".

Is this free will concept some cruel joke?

Is it that we have free will in theory but no free will in actual fact?

That cannot be what the Torah has in mind.

The theologians offer countless answers. The most straightforward is probably that of Rambam in the Eight Chapters on Ethics.

He says that physical facts like when we are born and whether we will be tall or short are beyond our control.

What is, however, up to us is our moral life. God determines whether we will be tall; we decide whether we will be good.

The quantity of our life is up to God: its quality is up to us.

Clearing Out the Sanctuary

Chapter 12 of D'varim tells us to clear out the sites where idolaters worshipped their gods.

We also have to cut down the graven images of their gods and destroy their names... but the chapter adds, "You shall not do so to the Lord your God" (D'varim 12:1-4).

Rashi explains this proviso as a prohibition of destroying the Name of God or removing a stone from the altar or the forecourt.

The circumstances of modern Jewish life give this Rashi a special pertinence.

So often it happened that in the interests of appearing "with it" we allow the name of God to be pushed into a back corner of the synagogue.

"Come to shule to meet your friends", we tell people - but what we prefer not to say too loudly is, "Come to shule to meet your God!"

We make it easier for people by downgrading the cornerstones of the Jewish sanctuary - "Don't worry too much about being kosher... in food, in deed, in business, in public life, in human relationships!"

We should be making more demands,

setting some standards, insisting on criteria.

By cheapening, trivialising and vulgarising Jewish life we give away our dignity and sell our heritage for a mass of pottage. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

R'EI

The entire [Torah] that I command, you shall observe and perform. Do not add anything to it. Do not take anything out of it (13:1).

Yet nevertheless, the Rabbis instituted numerous mitzvot (for example netilat yadayim), g'zeirot (such as stam yayin) and takanot (for example taking the arba'a minim on all days of Sukkot and not just on the first day). Thus Rashi explains that "do not add to it" refers specifically to an act or a behavior that intrinsically changes the defined form of a particular mitzva. For example, adding a parasha to the existing four to the tefillin, or adding an extra item to the arba'a minim and, as the Chinuch explains, wilfully incorporating these extras as part and parcel of the performance of that mitzva.

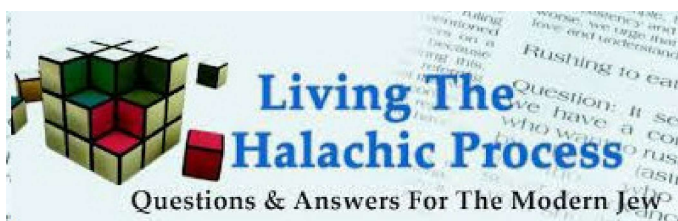
The S'forno brings a fundamental

insight in explaining this prohibition. He explains "Do not add anything to it" as meaning that one may not "improve" the Torah by using one's sense of 'being good' by adding new commandments for His service. For what human intelligence considers an honor to G-d may be an abomination in His eyes.

In today's terms, the S'forno's explanation could refer to behaviors that signal virtue in some influential societies today. An example is not eating meat, restricting one's diet to vegetarian food only. Vegetarians justify their practices in many ways. Some emphasize that their regimens avoid unnecessary harm and suffering to animals. Other stress that vegetarianism decreases the market demand for cattle, and thus reduces the global-warming inputs of methane. They are also groups that point to the unnecessary pressure on land for increased cattle farming at the expense of oxygen-creating tropical rain forests. And finally, many people feel uncomfortable about eating meat, especially those that have witnessed slaughtering at close quarters.

So the individual person that goes vegetarian would be unlikely to find Torah teachings blocking his way; not in this day and age where there is no Korban Pesach, for example. The Torah does not force people to eat

meat if they don't want to. However, as this parasha expounds, the Torah explicitly does permit eating meat even for secular purposes (12:20), as long as the animal is slaughtered correctly (12:21; Rashi), and is of a permitted species (14:4-8). Claiming that the practice of not eating meat is within the framework of Torah law and should be standard practice would be adding a virtue-signalled element to the Torah. The vegetarians may think it's the right thing to do. However, the Torah would not accept their sanctimonious gestures when they impose their ways on others in the name of the Torah itself. G-d has His reasons for permitting the slaughter of cattle and eating meat, even if we don't understand them. It is on us to accept that what humanity may consider an honor to G-d may be the very opposite when imposed as a Torah value, and, following the S'forno, is an example of the prohibition of "Do not add anything to it." 🌿📖



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

Shofar Blowing During Elul

Question: What is the reason for blowing shofar during the month of Elul, and what halachot do I need to know about it?

Answer: The minhag is an old one, which the Tur¹ cites based on Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer.² The reason recorded there is connected to the historical event when Moshe went up to Har Sinai to receive the tablets a second time, which took place on Rosh Chodesh Elul. This was accompanied by the blowing of the shofar to warn the people that Moshe was leaving and that they must not make the type of mistake they made the first time with the Golden Calf.

Of course, our minhag extends the blowing of the shofar beyond Rosh Chodesh to the entire month of Elul (minus Shabbat and the day before Rosh HaShana). There are two further reasons that explain the extension of the minhag. One is that Elul is a time when T'shuva³ is appropriate, and the shofar helps rally people to this end. The connection between T'shuva and shofar is evident from the pasuk:⁴ "Shall a shofar be blown in a city and

¹. Orach Chayim 581.

². 46.

³. Repentance.

⁴. Amos 3:6.

the nation will not tremble?”⁵ A final idea that is suggested is that blowing the shofar confuses the Satan as to when Rosh Hashana will be.⁶

These reasons complement each other. The first establishes the significance of the starting date, the second extends it past Rosh Chodesh,⁷ and the third explains why it is appropriate only until Rosh HaShana and not until Yom Kippur, which is the end of the period of T'shuva.

During Elul, we blow one series of blasts. The minhag is not to be so careful to ensure that the blasts are halachically valid. Apparently, the view is that any reasonable reminder of T'shuva, of a hint of Rosh HaShana, and/or of the events of the historical Rosh Chodesh Elul is sufficient.

There is a significant difference between Ashkenazic and S'fardic practice regarding this minhag. Ashkenazim blow the shofar at the end of Shacharit, although there was once a minhag to do so in the evening as well.⁸ S'fardim do it during Selichot instead. This is consistent with their minhag to start Selichot in the beginning of the month of Elul. In fact, the Tur presents the two practices together, as both are linked

to the special nature of Elul, which makes the joining of the two appropriate.

The fact that Ashkenazim blow the shofar in shul in the morning is significant according to two prominent, recent poskim. Rav Moshe Feinstein⁹ explains that we do it specifically during the day, and not after Ma'ariv, because of sources that indicate that the first half of the night is not an auspicious time to make supplications. The Tzitz Eliezer¹⁰ posits that the minhag applies only in shul, as is the common practice, and need not be fulfilled by one who missed shul. He explains that the historical shofar blowing was a public event and that the aforementioned pasuk that indicates the T'shuva-powers of a shofar also refers to the blowing in a city, not in the home. Therefore, most women, who are not usually present in shul daily, do not generally hear shofar blowing during Elul, which is perfectly acceptable.

There are different opinions and minhagim regarding on which of the two days of Rosh Chodesh Elul we should start the minhag. Some of the arguments relate to the day that Moshe went to Har Sinai for the 40-day period or how many days of

⁵ *Tur* op. cit.

⁶ *Ibid.*

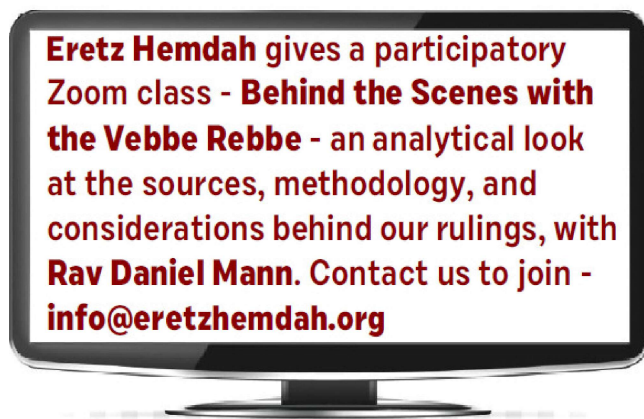
⁷ See *Prisha*, ad loc.

⁸ See *Tur* op. cit.; Rama, *Orach Chayim* 581:1.

⁹ *Igrot Moshe*, *Orach Chayim* IV:21.

¹⁰ XII:48.

shofar blowing we are interested in having.¹¹ In any case, the more prevalent minhag is to start on the second day of Rosh Chodesh, which is the first day of Elul, but either minhag that is practiced locally is acceptable.¹²



Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at
Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe
Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

R'EI

In the latter part of our Parsha, we learn about the Mitzva of Tzedakah. The verse teaches us that the world was created with the haves and the have-nots as it says, KI LO YECHDAL - "For the poor shall never cease out of the land" (15:11).

This imperfection in the world creates the basis for the Mitzva of Charity.

Why did G-d create such a cruel

world where there are those who need to beg for survival?

G-d, in his infinite wisdom, gives mankind a hand in building and sustaining the world. It is only through acts of Chesed performed by Man that the perceived imperfection is erased, and the world becomes whole again.

Avraham stands as an example of excellence of the attributes of Chesed, Tz'daka and kindness in all forms. In the throes of great physical pain, he searched in the hot blazing desert for the opportunities to fulfill this mission. Why does the Torah wait until after his circumcision to describe the degree of self-sacrifice with which Avraham performed the Mitzva of Tz'daka?

Rabbi M. Shapiro quotes a Midrash telling what Avraham said to himself. "Before my circumcision many wayfarers passed my tent, now that I have been circumcised, they have ceased." Why? The neighbors of Avraham stopped coming because they thought he was now too different from them; he would no longer be interested in helping them. Avraham demonstrated that this was not the case. While there are many reasons to separate people by geography, we must realize that, when it comes to kindness and pity,

¹¹. See Bach, Orach Chayim 581, and Magen Avraham 581:2.

¹². Igrot Moshe op. cit.

there are no boundaries and there are no divisions. The Talmud in Gittin notes that we are obligated to sustain the non-Jewish poor together with the Jewish poor.

Avraham pointed out that while there is a distinction between people and valid reasons to maintain uniqueness, there is a practical need to be generous and helpful to all, Kiddush Hashem - "Sanctification of G-d's name".

Surely through such commitment to chessed we are not only partners with G-d in building the world, but we will also hasten the redemption of our people and the restoration of Israel's glory. 🏰

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

R'EI 5784

On the opening verse in the Parsha (11:26), the Torah states, "See, I (ANOCHI) present (NOTEIN) before you today (HAYOM), a blessing and a curse." Let us reflect upon a few questions raised by the Vilna Gaon (Iturei Torah, D'varim, p. 81). He asks:

(1) Why does the text employ the word ANOCHI for "I" and not the more common word, ANI?

(2) Why is the verb NOTEIN in the grammatical present? Were not the

mitzvot already given forty years earlier? And

(3) why stress that the commandments, the object of the "blessing and curse", are conferred upon the people, HAYOM, today?

To these questions, the GR"A offers a remarkable worldview which addresses the difficulty a person faces when, with the advent of the month of Elul, he is enjoined to begin the process of T'shuva and struggle mightily with its implementation.

To begin with the second question first, we note the following: There is a nasty tendency for a person, burden by past transgressions, to conclude that he is incapable of changing his previous sinful habits. His life is deemed worthless, spoiled and squandered. Thus, the Torah states, NOTEIN; just think of the present. Do not take some perverse satisfaction in the fact that, mired in past behavior, it makes little sense to try and improve. The imperative implicit in the word NOTEIN, asserts that man, notwithstanding whatever may have occurred, always has a choice. And now is the time to make that choice and reject past errant behaviors and make a new start.

On this first observation of the Gaon, we may add this clever tactic employed by the yetzer hara to derail us. Not only should we not allow our past misdeeds to discourage and

deter us from improving, but we should also not permit our past missed opportunities to do likewise. Many experience intense distress when reflecting on the many times a certain initiative, a promising possibility was fretted away for all the wrong reasons. Here too, the Gaon would no doubt advise: NOTEIN, just focus and attend to the present. The popular adage, not to "cry over spilt milk" is more than apt. To believe that missed opportunities means that you're an abject failure is to fall into the clutches of the yetzer hara and become paralyzed in what you believe to be an inexorable past of sins of commission and omission.

Of course, it is certainly necessary to investigate one's past in order to effectively and successfully move beyond, but to drown in past defeats is a treacherous ploy of the yetzer hara. Indeed, what a sad commentary on a life that should always hold out the potential of a refreshing renewal and yet feels imprisoned by the mistakes and misses of yesterday!

Secondly, to the third question and pursuant to the GR"A's point above, the inclusion of the word HAYOM, comes to drive home the ever-resilient hope and strong faith that, as the well-known cliché has it, "Today should be the first day of the rest of your life." Again, a person must never allow his past - whether it be filled with sins of commission or

omission - to hang like the proverbial "albatross around his neck" preventing him from moving forward with his life. The GR"A puts it quite clearly. If, as Chazal state (D'varim, Sifrei 58) that the mitzvot should be as new to you as if you heard them today, then your life should be no different. One who truly repents, says the Gaon, is comparable to a convert who begins his life anew as a newborn (Y'vamos 22a).

There is another insight explaining the inclusion of the word HAYOM, one which offers a very different take on the emphasis of today. There is a clever fanciful tale told about some of the henchmen of the Satan who are arguing about the best way to entice man to sin. One suggestion was to convince him to steal. After all, everyone covets and wants something they don't have. "No", responds the group. People who steal are often caught, and because of the anticipated penalties and punishments, not many will be ready to transgress such a sin. Another proposal was to urge people to lie. Most people are uncomfortable with the truth; it's painful and embarrasses them. They will certainly end up fibbing. Again, the group rejects this possibility as well. People are afraid to lie because it might ruin their reputation; it'll put them to shame.

Round and round, more suggestions were offered and all were vetoed until

one little devil made a proposal to which everyone unanimously agreed. He said: "Convince everyone to perform acts of kindness and charity, to forgive and be merciful to others. But... tell them to do it all... tomorrow!"

The common cliché, "Don't put off to tomorrow what you can do today" is a truism that best sums up this additional reason explaining why the Torah emphasizes HAYOM. Of course, Chazal put it far more sharply and succinctly when they stated: "If not now, when!" (Avot 1:14). Do what you can do today and begin the T'shuva process even with the smallest of deeds. What begins HAYOM translates into major accomplishments in the long-term. Attend to the seemingly trivial mistake. Look for the new opportunity regardless of age, health or knowledge. It must all begin with HAYOM.

And now, to address the first question, the Gaon maintains that with the use of ANOCHI, HaShem assures the troubled Jew that in his contending with his yetzer hara, He will be there to help him overcome and vanquish those toxic temptations that resist any meaningful character and religious betterment. As the Talmud pledges (K'dushin 30b), even as the Evil Inclination arises to overwhelm a person every day, HaShem remains forever present to

prevent the yetzer hara from succeeding.

Rav Soloveitchik, in his brilliant analysis of the Aseret HaDibrot, explains there (Sh'mot 20:2) why HaShem introduces Himself as ANOCHI, as opposed to ANI. When employed, ANI requires a grammatical predicate, "I went shopping"; ANI cannot stand alone. ANOCHI, however, is a statement of identity, all of its own, "It is I!" When HaShem spoke with Israel for the first time at Sinai, He said, "It is I, ANOCHI! You know Me. I was with you in Egypt; I was with you at the Splitting of the Sea. We know each other. ANOCHI!"

So too, banking off the insight of the GR"A, the Torah is telling the Jew that in his interminable battle against the yetzer hara, a person is never alone! HaShem, as ANOCHI, stands to both protect and support the frail Jew, enabling him to overpower the Evil One and emerge better and greater!

Such is the encouragement we all need and seek as we begin the arduous, but necessary, task to seriously introspect and engage in genuine T'shuva - repentance. 🙌



מִלֵּבָד עֲלֵת הַתְּמִיד וּבִמְנוּחָתוֹ תַעֲשֶׂה
תְּמִיבָם יְהִי־לָכֶם וְנִסְכֵיהֶם:

You shall offer this up besides the continual burnt offering and its meal offering they shall be unblemished for you, as well as their libations.

This indicates a numeric equivalence between the daily sacrifices and the Korban Pesach. Of course, being a GM doesn't prove anything, but it does call to our attention the fact that the daily T'MIDIM are crucial to all of us as a People, and the Korban Pesach is essential to us as individual Jews.

RED ALERT! R'EI

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

DIVREI TORAH

- “See (singular), I am giving to you (all, plural) today a Blessing and a Curse” (11:26). Many commentators write about the change in person. Why does Hashem address Himself at first to each individual Jew and then immediately refer to them as a collective group? The Vilna Gaon states that each person should see himself as pivotal: being able to tip the scales of good and bad for the entire nation. He should view himself as essential in the bigger picture

R'EI

GM In Parshat R'ei (and other places), we find the command to bring the Korban Pesach (D'varim 16:2) -

וּבְבוֹחַת פֶּסַח לֶה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ צֹאן וּבָקָר
בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחֹר ה'
לְשֹׁכֵן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם:

"You shall slaughter the Korban Pesach to HaShem, your God, [of the] flock, and [the Festival sacrifices of the] cattle, in the place which HaShem will choose to establish His Name therein."

Note: Even though the pasuk only mentioned Korban Pesach, the Chagiga is included because of the word BAKAR, cattle. KP can only be brought from lambs or kids, both of which are included in the term, TZON. Mentioning BAKAR, then, includes the other korban of the Chag.

The gimatriya of this pasuk is 3163, which matches another pasuk that deals with korbanot - namely, Bamidbar 28:31 -

when Hashem judges the collective nation of Israel. The Chatam Sofer also hits upon this point: See, each individual should realize his importance in the broader view. Each day, a person has to decide and choose how he should conduct himself. In Pirkei Avot (2:5), Hillel the Elder said: Don't be so sure of yourself until the day you die." Hillel cautions each person not to rely on your past; you have to confront your temptation each day. The road to a Blessing and the road to a Curse are in front of us each day of our lives. We decide each day anew.

- Moshe emphasizes the necessity of ridding Canaan of all its idolatry: the idols themselves and the apparatus associated with the worship of idols. After fighting with Canaanites, it is necessary to expel them from Canaan. Bnei Yisrael will live in their cities and homes, and then confront the task of destroying whatever exists that was involved with idol worship. The fear was that Jews would become influenced by the idol worship of the non-Jews or any vestiges of their religion that would be left behind. Unfortunately it didn't happen the way that was planned. The Canaanites were defeated, but the Jews were not able to expel them from the Land. The Canaanites remained and continued their idol worship. And they influenced the Jewish people to accept their idolatry. When the Greeks invaded

and conquered Eretz Yisrael, many Jews became Hellenized. Yes, some Jews were able to remain strong in their Jewish faith. Consistently throughout our history, outsiders were able to win over many Jews, including in America.

- I mentioned recently about why Hashem does not name Yerushalayim as the capital city, home of the Holy Temple. The source to my previous comments was the the Rambam's Guide for the Perplexed 3:45. The special place was known to Avraham who foresaw it in prophecy as Mt. Moriya. And it was known to Moshe who referred to it as the place where Hashem will choose. The Rambam gives three reasons why the Torah is not specific in identifying the place: The non-Jews would fight over possession of the hilltop. Secondly the non-Jews might want to destroy the place entirely. And thirdly, and most importantly, that if mentioned, the Jewish tribes would fight over who gets it in their possession. I would add that when King David asked to identify it, it was presented to him as a riddle. He was told that the Holy Temple would straddle the border between two tribes. King David had to determine that it would be in the tribal section of Binyamin, straddling the border with the tribe of Yehuda.

- The details concerning Mitzvot are

sacred. Just as one does not add a detail to a work of Mozart or to a painting by Van Gogh, so too do we not embellish or detract from a divine Mitzva. Twice in the Torah does the Torah state this prohibition. The first time is in D'varim 4:2, when Moshe tells us not to add or subtract from any Mitzva. And now in this Parsha, Moshe repeats the prohibition within the context of imitating religious rituals of other people. The Netziv wrote a Responsum to a Rav in the United States. The question was about a celebration involving the inauguration of a new Sefer Torah. During the festivities, it is common practice to take out the existing Torahs from the Ark and allow them to receive the new Torah by dancing with them all. The questioner was taken aback by taking out the Torahs to dance and not to read from one of them. He was asking why shouldn't we read from one of them. It was a festive occasion on a Sunday morning. The Netziv wrote it would be inappropriate to read from the Torah on a Sunday because it was a Christian practice to publicly worship on Sunday morning. It would be adding to the Mitzva by imitating a non-Jewish ritual.

- Our Sages teach us that we are not permitted to erase the name of Hashem, which includes all seven names that are used in the Torah: the YUD-HEI-VAV-HEI name, Ado-nai,

Ei-l, Elo-ah, Elo-him, Shad-dai, and Tziva-ot. The Rogachobi Gaon, Rabbi Yosef Rozin, conducted himself in a stringent fashion in this matter. Whereas people normally wrote Baruch HaShem atop a written paper, he would not do it, for fear of violating this law. In contrast to this, the Gerer Rebbe would write B"H on every sheet he wrote, to justify that this was not a violation. Years ago, I got into the habit of writing BS"D which stands for "With the help of Heaven" atop my written sheets. I wished to avoid the whole matter and yet acknowledge that this was an issue.

- The Torah states that we should not cut ourselves... because of a dead person. This was a common practice in the non-Jewish world at that time. The Ramban commented that the Torah did not prohibit one from crying at the time of experiencing the loss of a loved one. This is a natural and normal reaction. When the two sons of Aharon died during the festive celebration of the inauguration of the Mishkan, he was complimented by exhibiting control when Aharon was silent when confronted with his monumental loss. There the Ramban wrote that Aharon was quiet, but was crying over his loss. An excessive mournful response would be inappropriate, but crying is expected and normal. Human beings need to express our emotions; this is

positive and normal. At a Shiva visit decades ago, I was visiting a friend who lost his single, 37 year old brother. Everyone was crying when a 7 year old nephew asked poignantly: why are you crying. My father taught me that all that Hashem does is good. So why are you crying when Hashem took away Uncle Yitzchak. His father immediately responded “I am not crying because Hashem took Uncle Yitzchak. I am crying because I will miss Uncle Yitzchak.”

- Moshe reviews the kashrut laws of identifying which animals, fish, and poultry are kosher and which are not. But it was not a simple process. Here the Torah will actually name ten kosher animals, besides repeating to us the symbols of kashrut for each. For all that the Torah does to be explicit in teaching us what we need to know, then why are we not able to clearly understand the identity of each animal and bird. We also have problems in identifying each fish. Is the giraffe really kosher? It depends: is it the Zemer that is mentioned in 14:5? When my wife and I were in Santiago, Chile, we saw a strange fish. It looked like a big ugly eel. The Chilean Jewish community sent it to Israel and to Rabbi Heinemann in Baltimore. Both sources agreed that it truly was a kosher fish. (I wouldn't eat it: too ugly!). But here we are in the 21st century and still not able to clearly identify what the Torah states.

Take a look at the Artscroll Chumash. They do not translate these animals into English because they admit that we are not sure.

- MIDRASH. D'varim Rabba 4:5. The Rabbis say: You find occasions when a man listened to his wife and lost thereby, and when a man listened to his wife and profited thereby. For example, Adam listened to his wife and lost thereby. Adam listened to his wife and ate the forbidden fruit. Rabbi Yitzchak said: This is compared to a king who said to his servant: “Do not taste any food until I return from my bath. The king's wife said to the servant: Taste the dish so that the king will not need to add salt or sauce. The king returned and saw his servant smacking his lips. The servant said that the king's wife gave it to him. The king exclaimed: And you listened to my wife instead of listening to me! And Adam was punished. The case of a man who profited by listening to his wife was Avraham who listened to his wife when she proposed he marry an additional wife when she was barren. And Avraham also listened to his wife when she told him to expel Yishmael (with Hashem's orders).

Questions by RED

From the text

1. On which mountains will the B'rachot be said? And the Curses? (11:29)
2. What must be done to places of idol worship? (12:2)
3. What kosher signs are there for a) animals, b) fish, and c) birds? (ch. 14)
4. What special sacrifices are brought on Pesach? (16:1-6)
5. What special Mitzva do we have on Yom Tov?

From Rashi

6. Why did Hashem create a miracle to cross the Jordan River? (11:31)
7. How were Bnei Yisrael allowed to eat meat in the desert? (12:20)
8. Why would Hashem allow a false prophet to perform a miracle? (13:2)
9. Why are the verbs for giving Tz'daka written twice in the verse? As in NATON TITEIN? (15:10)
10. The Torah states that Bnei Yisrael left Egypt at night (16:1). But they left at midday the next day. Explain.

From the Rabbis

11. What forms of Ma'aser are given in the 7 years of a Sh'mita cycle?
12. What is the only type of bird that is called a TZIPOR in Hebrew? (Ha'amek Davar)

13. Why is there no mention of Rosh HaShana or Yom Kippur in the list of holidays at the end of this Parsha? (Ramban)

Midrash

14. What is the common trait of a forbidden animal and bird?

Haftara - Yishayahu

15. Why will non-Jewish nations come to praise Israel?

Relationships

- a) Basmat - Yishmael
- b) Avraham - Midiyan
- c) Nachshon - Elazar
- d) Boaz - Oved
- e) Levi - Yocheved

ANSWERS

1. B'rachot on Mt. G'rizim. Curses on Mt. Eival.
2. They must be destroyed.
3. a) animals must have split hooves and chew their cud. b) Fish must have fins and scales. c) birds must not be on the non-kosher list in the Torah.
4. The Pesach sacrifice and the Chagiga.
5. Simcha
6. To give a sign to Bnei Yisrael that as they will cross the River easily, so they will be able to conquer Canaan with ease.
7. Only if they brought a Sh'lamim (peace offering) sacrifice , then they could eat that meat.
8. To test Bnei Yisrael if they would follow him.
9. To tell us that we should repeatedly give to a person, even if they ask repeatedly.
10. Pharaoh gave them permission to leave during the night before.
11. Years 1, 2, 4, and 5: Ma'aser Rishon and Sheini. Years 3 and 6: Ma'aser Rishon and Ma'aser, Ani (to the poor). Year 7: no Ma'aser.
12. A kosher bird.
13. There is no pilgrimage to Yerushalayim for those two holidays.

14. They are all predators, scavengers, or cruel.

15. Because Hashem glorified Israel, during Messianic times.

Relationships

- a) Daughter & Father
- b) Father & Son (from Ketura)
- c) Uncle & Nephew
- d) Father & Son
- e) Father & Daughter