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**BET PARASHOT SHOFTIM  
HAFTARAH**

There seems to be no real connection between the Haftarah and the Parsha. The Parsha discusses proper judgement while the Haftarah speaks about consoling the Jewish people on the loss of the Bais Hamikdash.

The Haftarah begins with the words of Hashem saying "Anochi Anochi, Who comforts you". Chazal quotes (see Yalkut Shimoni 474) Rebbe Abba in the name of Rav Shimon Ben Gamliel explaining the double expression of "Anochi Anochi". They give a mashol of a king who became enraged at his queen. He was so annoyed at her that he rejected her and banished her from the palace. After some period of time he reconsidered his actions and desired to reunite with her. He informed her of his intentions to which she consented on the condition that he doubled the amount of her "kesubah" (marriage financial agreement). Chazal conclude that this same situation exists between Hashem and the Jewish people. Hashem established His initial relationship with them when they accepted His Torah. At that time Hashem revealed Himself to His nation and proclaimed, "I am your Hashem." However, this relationship suffered much abuse and was eventually terminated. The Jewish people's behavior was so inexcusable that Hash-

em reluctantly rejected them and exiled them from Zion. Now, after so many years Hashem is displaying sincere interest in their return. Recognizing their failure during their first relationship, the Jewish nation is doubtful if this second one will be any better. Even after all the magnificent revelations at Sinai they managed to stray and forfeit their relationship. What would ensure that things would be any different this time? Hashem responds that He would increase His revelations which would guarantee an everlasting relationship with His people. The double expression of "Anochi Anochi" stands for the double kesubah that Hashem will offer.

This Chazal is very difficult to understand. Firstly, it is not accurate; Hashem did not banish us from the palace, he had the palace burnt to the ground. Next in the moshol we see some time passes and the king reconsidered his actions, yet with Hashem, it is really a very long time, and it is not over yet. We are still waiting in galus! But the biggest inconsistency is that the moshol illustrates the queen as a victim whereas it was us, the Jewish nation, that violated the agreement. We were not helpless victims but the cause for the destruction. How can we deserve not only to return to the palace, but receive a double Ketuba as well? A Ketuba is a privilege for a wife when she acts in accordance to her obligations. If a wife violates the conditions of marriage she loses her Ketuba. Yet here we see we can ask for

double when Hashem is kind enough to take us back? What is the meaning of this Chazal?

I believe this is an incredible lesson in the process of creating peace. It is the responsibility of the greater person or Being to accept the blame in order to push forward and rebuild. Even if one is in the right and taking responsibility will cost double, a real relationship with tranquility is worth it. Let the past be the past; forgive, forget and rebuild. We expend much energy on proving how we were wronged that we are left too exhausted to repair the relationship. Although Hashem was always there for us and we sinned against Him again and again, He is willing to look past our disloyalties. Hashem is willing to take us back and pay double for the sake of a tranquil and loving relationship.

At the end of Shemona Esrei we take three steps back and say "the maker of peace in the elevated world, He should make peace on us and upon his entire nation Yisrael." Clearly, peace is a creation and we therefore request that Hashem make it upon us. However, in order for peace to exist we need to be willing to take three steps backwards.

May we all pursue lives of peace at all costs and enjoy the tranquility it brings. Amen.

Aaron Lankry



NEW MINYANIM ADDED:

**EARLY MINYAN MINCHA FRIDAY**  
1:36, 2:00, 2:30, 3:00, 3:30, 4:00

**SHABBOS ZMANIM**

CANDLE LIGHTING	7:39PM
MINCHA 18 TENT	7:00PM
MINCHA TENT ALEPH	7:30PM
MINCHA BAIS CHABAD	7:49PM
SHKIYA	7:57PM
SHACHRIS VASIKIN- DAF YOMI SHIUR	5:26AM
SHACHRIS ASHKENAZ 18 MAIN	8:00AM
BUCHRIM MINYAN 20	9:00AM
SHACHRIS - YOUTH 18 UPSTAIRS	9:30AM
SHACHRIS MAIN MINYAN 18 TENT	9:15AM
SHACHRIS 20 FORSHAY BAIS CHABAD	10:00AM
<b>NEW</b> SHACHRIS 18 MAIN	<b>NEW</b> 10:15AM
MINCHA	1:45PM
PIRCHEI	2:00PM
MINCHA	6:00PM
SHIUR ON PIRKEI AVOS PERK VOV	7:05PM
MINCHA SHALOSH SEUDOS	7:35PM
SHKIYA	7:55PM
MARRIV	8:35PM 18 TENT, 8:40PM

**WEEKDAY ZMANIM**

**SHACHRIS**

20 MINUTES BEFORE NEITZ 30 ON YOM TOV

S 5:46 M 5:47 T 5:48 W 5:49 T 5:50 F 5:51

**MINCHA & MARIV**

12 MINUTES BEFORE PLAG

S 6:16 M 6:15 T 6:14 W 6:12 T 6:11

**MINCHA & MARIV**

12 MINUTES BEFORE SHKIA

S 7:42 M 7:41 T 7:39 W 7:38 T 7:36

**AUGUST 15 - AUGUST 20**

NEITZ IS 6:06 - 6:11  
PELAG IS 6:28 - 6:23  
SHKIA IS 7:54 - 7:48  
MAGEN AVRAHAM  
8:57 AM - 8:59AM  
GRA- BAAL HATANYA  
9:33AM - 9:35 AM

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**WEEKDAY MINYANIM**

**שחרית**

6:15AM	Tent 2
6:30	Tent 1
6:45	Tent 2
7:00	Tent 1
7:15	Tent 2
7:30	Tent 1
7:45	Tent 2
8:00	Tent 1
8:15	Tent 2
8:30	Tent 1
8:45	Tent 2
9:00	Tent 1
9:15	Tent 2
9:30	Tent 1
9:45	Tent 2
10:00	Tent 1
10:15	Tent 2
10:30	Tent 1
10:45	Tent 2
11:00	Tent 1
11:15	Tent 2
11:30	Tent 1
11:45	Tent 2
12:00	Tent 1

**מנחה ומעריב**

12 MIN.	Tent 2
12 MIN.	Tent 1
AT	Tent 2
10 MIN.	Tent 1
20 MIN.	Tent 2
30 MIN.	Tent 1
40 MIN.	Tent 2
50 MIN.	Tent 1
60 MIN.	Tent 2

**מעריב**

At 7:15	Tent 1
At 7:30	Tent 2
10 MIN.	Tent 1
20 MIN.	Tent 2
30 MIN.	Tent 1
40 MIN.	Tent 2
50 MIN.	Tent 1
60 MIN.	Tent 2
72 MIN.	Tent 1

**מנחה 18 ↓**

1:45	3:00	4:15	5:30	6:45	8:00
2:00	3:15	4:30	5:45	7:00	
2:15	3:30	4:45	6:00	7:15	
2:30	3:45	5:00	6:15	7:30	
2:45	4:00	5:15	6:30	7:45	

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EREV SHABBOS PLAG MINYAN 30 Dr. Frank Rd. Entrance on Humbert  
MINCHA **6:10** PLAG **6:30**



Rabbi Coren

# SHOFTIM AND ELUL

On my special voyage to the Seychelles Islands in the Indian Ocean my son told a beautiful Dvar Torah from the Chidushai Harim that I think very much ties in to the avoda for this month and to this week's Parsha.

The Midrash describes the physical systems of ants and points out that when an ant carries something and places it down, another ant won't take it away. The Midrash recognizes that ants don't have a ruler to tell them what to do yet it seems that Chazal want us to learn from this the importance of שופטים ושוטרים, the appointment of judges and policeman. It is certainly odd that the source of the dictate infers the very opposite of what it is teaching us. The implication here is that you can live a "correct" life without a judge or policeman. The Chidushai Harim's interpretation, however, provides us with a different response to this challenge. According to him, the pasuk seems to be geared not just to the Jewish people as a whole but to each individual separately. And by adding the word לך to the pasuk, it seems to be implying that we must all have a שופט and a שטר. What does this mean practically?

The Chidushai Harim explains that the behavior to be learned here is the exact reverse of what the ants are doing. His reasoning is the following: An ant steals a piece of straw or crumb from us. It then focuses on the fact that it doesn't steal one from another ant not realizing as the Gemara in Baba Kama writes that someone who steals from a stealer is actually less offensive than one who steals from the actual owner-- הגונב מן הגונב פטור מן כפל. According to the Chidushai Harim Hashem is teaching us here how easily we can blind ourselves to believe that we are pure and righteous and yet be totally missing the boat.

A similar story that I once heard about the Chazon Ish blends beautifully with this point and to the words in this week's Parsha-- כי--bribery will blind the wise one. The simple translation admonishes us to never bribe a judge. However in line with the explanation above it can also be telling us to make sure that when we're checking ourselves out and that we are not allowing any bribery from the Yetzer Hara who has many ways to trick us into thinking we're on the right path when in actual fact, we are totally distracted.

There is an amazing story about the Chazon Ish that took place in ברק. A person had a dispute regarding a monetary question between him and the Chazon Ish. The Chazon Ish insisted that they go to bais din for a resolution because he felt he was too involved in the situation and therefore is disqualified from arbitrating although he was certain that he was right. The other person felt he had to abide by the

Chazon Ish's request and they went to the local bais din. After hearing both sides, the Dayan believed that proof that the money didn't belong to the Chazon Ish could be derived from the Sefer Chazon Is. He went to the bookshelf and pulled out the sefer and showed the case and its resolution to the Chazon Ish who was happy and pleased. He told the judge, "You see, when it comes to true judgement, a person has too many personal and emotional factors involved when trying to reach a correct conclusion." Although he himself came to a conclusion on this point in his Sefer he wasn't able to see it clearly when it concerned himself.

There is a Chasidische vort that the Nesivos Shalom quotes often on the Pasuk אנוכי עומד בין ה'.

Homiletically it can be explained that the Anochi means the 'I'--our ego-- which many times stands between us and Hashem.

Elul is a time of introspection. The Piskai Teshvos quotes an explanations for the word Elul as ויאילון which is the translation of the words used by the 12 meraglim sent to the spy out the land. Hence there is a very powerful message in the word Elul to make sure we search our inner self and not be distracted and bribed by the Yetzer Hara who will promise gratifications and satisfactions just to prevent us from ever reaching the ultimate pleasure-- closeness to Hashem. The key is to make sure we aren't positioned between ourselves and Hashem by being more venerable and allowing true reflection about our lives. Are we clear about the goal of living? Are we maximizing our potential or are we killing time that can lead us to eternal pleasure?

One of the interesting sights on this gorgeous island besides its luscious waters and grand landscapes are groups of huge turtles. They are the biggest I have ever seen and certainly the closest I have ever gotten to. One of them is 120 years old; the guide said they usually live till 200. Can you imagine 200 years of eating grass, carrying an incredible load on your back and once in a while some human beings coming to marvel at your huge size and long tongue? My son said it beautifully: This turtle has אריכות ימים but doesn't have אריכות שנים. An insightful thought. Indeed, people that live without meaning are living the life of a turtle.

Elul is a time of newness, a time to of ratzon that doesn't exist all year round. Let's take advantage of it.

Shabbat Shalom

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## HAVE WE BECOME TOO TRIBAL?

### TRUE RELIGION MUST EMBRACE DIVERSITY

#### FIRST ANECDOTE:

A man goes out with a woman on their first date. For the first three hours he talks only about himself, his history, accomplishments and interests. Finally, he turns to her and says: "Enough of me speaking about myself; let me hear what you have to say about me."

#### SECOND ANECDOTE:

The rabbi was hospitalized recovering from a heart attack when the president of the congregation visited him. He said: "Rabbi, I have good news and bad news." "First the good news" the rabbi said. "On behalf of the board of directors I am here to wish you a speedy recovery."

"That's wonderful" said the rabbi, "and what's the bad news?" "The vote was 7 to 6."

#### DESPISING SINGLE STONES

This week's Torah portion, Shoftim, communicates the following commandment: "You shall not erect for yourself a pillar. This is something which the Lord your G-d despises."

The most basic biblical commentator, Rashi, explains this as a prohibition against erecting an altar of a single stone, even if the intent was to use this altar as a place where offerings were presented to G-d.

Though the Torah elsewhere clearly allows the existence of altars made of stone in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and in the Tabernacle in the desert, Rashi explains that this is only true of altars made of many stones, not of a single stone. Yet one wonders about the logic of distinguishing between an altar built of many stones that is deemed desirable by G-d vs. an altar built of a single stone which the Torah defines as an object of G-d's hate.

Does it really make a difference whether you present an offering on an altar of one stone or of many stones? Rashi explains that the difference is not intrinsic but historical. In the times of the Patriarchs, Rashi writes, they would build single stone pillars for the sake of presenting offerings to G-d, and "it was beloved by G-d." However, once the Canaanites adopted this practice and began building single-stone altars for idolatrous offerings, G-d rejected them.

Yet the question remains, why did the Canaanite idol worshippers embrace the single-stone altar? Logically, the converse should have occurred: An altar of many diverse stones seems consistent with the polytheistic approach—worshipping many diverse gods—while an altar made of one piece is more reflective of

the monotheistic Jewish faith that insists all worship must be directed to a single, universal G-d.

Why did history dictate that the pagan polytheists embraced the single-stone model?

#### SHUNNING DIVERSITY

What this prohibition against the single-stone pillar may be teaching us is that though there is one G-d, the altars constructed by man to serve Him need not—indeed should not—be of one stone, of one color, or one dimension, shape and quality.

Perhaps the greatest challenges facing humanity today is the ingrained belief by many a Muslim that those of us who do not embrace Islam as a faith and a lifestyle are infidels who need to be converted or killed. Many Muslim leaders are laying the groundwork for a grand war between Islam and the West (and of course Israel), in order to restore the world to its appropriate equilibrium, a world dominated by Islam.

On another level, and in a far more subtle and fine way, one of the challenges facing many Jewish communities today (a challenge that has pervaded the history of all religion from the beginning of time), is a sense of tribalism that found a nest among many devout Jews. This is the feeling that my way of serving G-d is the only true way, and if you have a different path, you are on the "wrong team."

Many of us feel that in the construction of the "altars," the structures in which we serve G-d, there is room for only a single stone, a single path, a particular flavor and style, to the exclusion of anything else that does not fit our religious imagination or upbringing. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely the path of paganism and polytheism that invite a singular altar, made of one stone, while the monotheistic path of a singular G-d welcomes the diverse altar, made of many distinct stones. Why?

#### EMBRACING DIVERSITY

Paganism is founded on the notion that a human being creates god in his own individual image. When G-d is a product of my image, that G-d is inevitably defined by the properties of that image. Since no two human images are identical, it follows that your god, the god of your image, cannot serve as my god as well. My god must be worshiped in my way, based on my perception of who he is and what he stands for. Therefore, my altar must be constructed of one stone: my own.

The faith of Israel - the progenitor of Christianity and Islam - on the other hand, declares the oneness of G-d and the plurality of man. The transcendental G-d of Judaism is the G-d, who not only transcends the natural universe, but also the spiritual universe articulated in every single heart, and who imparts fragments

of His truth into every human spirit. The challenge set forth by Judaism is to see G-d's image in one who is not in my image. Judaism teaches that every person knows and feels something no one else does.

None of us knows all the truth and each of us knows some of it. Like a symphony composed of many notes, each of us constitutes an individual note in the divine symphony, and together we complete the music. If G-d wanted you and me to experience Him and serve Him in the same way, one of us would be superfluous.

Diversity within religion is not only a factor we must reluctantly accept; it is a cause for genuine celebration. It grants us the opportunity to encounter G-d, since it is only in the face of the other that we can discover the part of G-d that we lack in our own face. The result of a relationship with a transcendental G-d is a growing appreciation of people's differences, not merely as tolerable, but as the essence of a rich and rewarding human and religious experience.

"Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common, celebrate it every day," a wise man once said. There is a profound truth to this: Diversity is the trace of an undefined G-d on the human species.

#### DIVERSE MODELS OF WORSHIP

This may be the reason the Torah teaches us that the altar to worship G-d must be constructed from many different stones. This represents the Jewish vision that the structures constructed by man to serve G-d ought to be diverse and individualistic.

This does not mean that G-d condones every act done in His name. The G-d of the Bible created absolute universal standards of morality and ethics that bind us all. At times, people allow evil choices to totally eclipse the trace of G-d within them. To the Jewish people, G-d presented an absolute system of Torah and mitzvos.

Yet within this framework, every human possesses his or her unique path to Truth. One of the great masters put it this way:

"The concrete laws of Torah are the same for us all, but the spiritual experience of Torah, the feelings of love and awe, contain infinite pathways, one for each person, according to his individual identity."

We may compare it to the 88 keys of the piano that lend themselves to infinite combinations. Authentic religion must welcome, not fear, diversity and individualistic expression. When you truly cultivate a relationship with G-d, you know that in the presence of other-ness, you can encounter a fragment of truth that you could never access within your own framework.



# A MAJESTIC HAIRCUT

In Devarim 17:15 the Torah tells us that we should appoint a king. The Gemara in Taanis 17a and Sanhedrin 22b says that a king takes a haircut every day, as the posuk in Yeshaya 33 says, "a king shall be seen in his glory and beauty." The question arises; does a king take a haircut on Chol HaMoed despite the fact that a common person is forbidden to take a haircut? Do we say that the king's mitzvah to take a haircut is docheh the Lo Saaseh of not taking a haircut on Chol HaMoed, or do we say that the king has the same issur as the commoner and would be forbidden to take a haircut on Chol HaMoed?

The Shailos U'tshuvos Siach Yitzchok 245 has the above chakira and explains that since the king has a mitzvah min hakabalah (Nevi'im) to be seen in his glory and beauty, the haircut will be docheh the issur of taking a haircut on Chol HaMoed which is just asur MiDeRabbanan, as the issur melacha on Chol HaMoed is a DeRabbanan. On the other hand, there are many poskim that consider melacha on Chol HaMoed a DeOraysa so a mitzvah min hakabalah (Nevi'im) would not suffice to be docheh an issur DeOraysa. The Siach Yitzchok concludes that it would seem that the king could take a haircut on Chol HaMoed based on the Ran in Yoma. The last perek says that since the five inuyim are only a DeRabbanan, it makes sense that the Mishna in Yoma 58b was maikil on a king and a bride permitting them to wash their face. Even according to the Rambam, who holds the five inuyim are Min HaTorah, it still makes sense that they were meikil for a king and/or a bride to wash their face, as the Torah gave the Chachamim the right to set the guidelines and they can be meikil as they see fit. Similarly, the Bais Yosef in Hilchos Chol Hamoed 530 says that even according to those who hold that melacha on Chol HaMoed is assur Min HaTorah, nevertheless the Torah gave the Chachamim the koach to be meikil as they see fit. The king therefore would be allowed to

take a haircut on Chol HaMoed.

The Taz in Orach Chaim 260:1 brings in the name of the Maharshal that one should not cut his or her nails on a Thursday because hair and nails that are cut do not begin to grow again until three days after they were cut. Since we don't want this to happen on Shabbos, we don't cut nails or hair on Thursday. The Machtzis HaShekel and Elya Rabba say the reason for this is that we cut the extras off our body le'kovod Shabbos, so it is not fitting that on Shabbos they should begin to grow back. We said earlier that the king takes a haircut every day, so it would stand to reason that the hair grows every day. This would seem to contradict the aforementioned Taz that says that it only grows after three days.

There are a number of answers to explain the seeming contradiction. The first answer is from Reb Yitzchok Zilbershtein in Chashukei Chemed Sanhedrin 22b that explains since a king takes a haircut every day, his hair grows quicker than a regular person who does not take a haircut every day. The second answer is also from Reb Yitzchok Zilbershtein explaining that the king, who took a haircut every day, did not cut down all the way to the bottom of his hair. He did it to look like he received a haircut a week ago, so his hair never stopped growing; whereas a regular person, who cuts his hair very short, will not have his hair grow until the third day. The third answer is based on the Elya Rabba and Machtzis HaShekel who say there is no issur that the hair should begin to grow on Shabbos. There is nothing wrong with that al pi Halacha. It is just not honorable or respectful that one who does something le'kovod Shabbos should have it start working on Shabbos. In truth, hair grows every single day a tiny drop, it is just not noticeable until three days later, which comes out on Shabbos. A king, who takes a haircut every day, will not have hair growth noticeable because he took a haircut on Friday. His Shabbos will not lose any kovod!

May we all be zocheh to once again see a Jewish king by greet-ing Melech HaMashiach!



## TODAYS KIDS KNOW BETTER THAN THEIR PARENTS

Of course, everyone who has children knows that today's youth is so much smarter than youth in previous generations. Respect for those who are older, i.e. parents, more experienced co workers etc. is begrudgingly offered - if at all.

There's so much knowledge in the air, on the internet, our youth are smarter and even (in their eyes) more experienced and worldly than ever.

But it's not limited to children. In fact 30 year olds all over the place are undoubtedly more informed and sophisticated than any 60 year old around, for sure.

Just ask them..they will tell you.

The Talmud teaches- a Zakein, an older person, deserves our respect, because, by merely living longer than us, he is worthy of getting our ears, sincerely- don't jump in before he is finished speaking.. Really listen and most of all speak nicely and with sincere esteem. "Zeh konoh chochma.." the Torah is telling us- he has earned his stripes.. Listen to him!

By not following this dictum our generation has lost something so vitally important- we are arrogant, narcissistic and self-centered in numbers we have never seen. Our Yiras Somayim has suffered- we are not the same.

But as Elul arrives, we can change for the better. We are assured of Heavenly assistance, as well.

Let us, all of us, make up right here and now to respect and try to learn from those older than us. We do not "know it all". Far from it..

Respect is a commodity that is rare in general and one that we as a people, if we make a determined effort to employ-will yield great fruits.

הוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות

Greet each person favorably, the Mishna says

Let's talk about hakaras hatov, thankfulness and being nice- yes just being nice!

Let me tell a story about an older farmer, whose young and strong children were upset because their father seemed to be sitting it out a little too much.

One of the boys had an idea.. He had seen too much, his dad didn't want to upgrade the machinery, how much more productivity they could have had... how much more money they could have made. But the stubborn old man blocked every idea. And now all he did was sit around on the porch and widdle the way the hours.

Yes it's a bit morbid the story, but here it goes.

The son took a beautiful piece of wood and built a nice bench that really had high sides around it.. Beautiful mahogany, rosewood and touches of cedar and padding too..wow It was beautiful.. A casket. But who could tell.

He convinced his father to sit in it as he rolled the convertible down the driveway to a nearby mountain.. He was ready to let his father drop down several thousand feet, to a sure death.

The top was closed, but he heard some feint knocking from inside as he approached the dangerous rocky cliff.

Opening the top, he heard his father say-"you can throw me down the mountain, but first, may I offer one last suggestion to you.

Please don't throw this fancy coffin down- save it, you may need it for your children to use - For you!

We think we are invincible.

We are confident- we have strengths, smarts and opportunities that those older than us never had and will never understand.

But it's all a facade and more poignantly not even true.

Get with the program (the Torah). Let's work on listening to and respecting those older than us.

It pays- dividends for life.

Good Shabbos!



# IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING, ANY ROAD WILL GET YOU THERE

I recently drove to a funeral at a cemetery deep in Miami. One of the other attendees asked me which route I took to get there. I thought for a moment and realized I couldn't remember. I had entered the address into Waze before I left and was so preoccupied with phone calls the whole way down, I arrived at the destination with no memory of how I got there.

When Hashem refers to the holiest place in the world, He doesn't give us an address or coordinates. He didn't offer directions or what route to take. He simply says:

כִּי אִם-אֶל-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אֲשֶׁר-יְבַחֵר ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל-שְׁבִטֵיכֶם לְשׂוּם אֶת-שְׁמוֹ שָׁם לְשִׁכְנוֹ תִדְרְשׁוּ וּבֵאתָ שָׁמָּה

Look only to the site that Hashem your God will choose amidst all your tribes to set His name there, you shall inquire after His dwelling and come there.

What is this mysterious place that Hashem wants us to find? Why doesn't Hashem provide the coordinates for it? Why not give an address for Moshe to plug into his GPS?

The Chizkuni says there was no set address as the precursor to the Beis HaMikdash, the Mishkan, moved around. The Ramban disagrees and says the adverb "there" is, in fact, referring to the Beis HaMikdash. The location isn't revealed because Hashem wants us to seek it, to calibrate our compass towards holiness and to find it. Rather than give a specific location, Hashem wants us to intuit the location of the holiest place on earth and then confirm it with a Navi, a prophet.

The Ramban offers a second understanding, explaining that the word שָׁמָּה, "there" is not referring to a geographical location, but is modifying the word "לשכנו", to feeling Hashem's presence and influence. The Torah is saying תִדְרְשׁוּ, if you want to feel Hashem in your life, seek Him, look for Him, reveal Him, connect with Him.

Uncle Moishe famously sings that Hashem is here, Hashem is there, Hashem is everywhere, but the Kotzker Rebbe disagreed. When he was yet a little boy, he was once asked where can Hashem be found, and he answered, only where you let Him in. It is up to us to have that relationship to make that connection, to see behind the curtain that

Hashem is there all along.

In Havdalah, we highlight the distinctions between several things: בין אור לחושך בין ישראל לעמים בין יום השביעי לששת ימי המעשה, between light and dark, Jews and gentiles, the seventh day and the first six. Rav Soloveitchik points out that light and darkness are clear for all to perceive. Even animals respond to the difference in these stimuli. But the Havdalah between kodesh and chol, what is holy and what is profane, is much different. It cannot be perceived or measured by the naked eye. A person needs to have a special intuition, to see with his or her heart, as this separation can only be sensed, not seen.

The Midrash (Tanchuma Vayera) says when Avraham went with his entourage to the Akeida, he saw Har HaMoriah from a distance and turned to Yitzchak and asked, what do you see? Yitzchak answered, I see a beautiful and praiseworthy mountain and a cloud envelops it. He asked Eliezer and Yishmael, what do you see? They said, we see a barren desert. He said to them, שבו, stay here with the donkey - the donkey does not see and you do not see, ואני והנער נלכה עד כה, Yitzchak and I will go until there.

The "there," was Har HaMoriah, the future site of the Beis HaMikdash. Avraham intuited holiness, Yitzchak was drawn to holiness, the others saw barrenness, they saw a desolate desert.

To be a Jew, is לְשִׁכְנוֹ תִדְרְשׁוּ וּבֵאתָ שָׁמָּה, to be able to make Havdalah, to distinguish between holy and profane, spiritual and mundane, and be drawn to holiness, to seek spirituality. A donkey sees everything as superficial, only at its surface level. A donkey wants to satisfy its appetite and to be happy. If we fail to understand certain images, ideas, media, language, behaviors are profane, they are the opposite of holiness, we are no better than a donkey. We have to see beneath the surface, to distinguish between what is holy and profane, what brings out the best in us and what satisfies a craving that is only skin deep.

We don't strive for happiness; we strive for and are to be drawn to holiness. To be the progeny of Avraham is to intuit holiness, to calibrate our compass of kedusha and go to it. To go to "there" is to see Hashem in everything. In every bite of an apple, every sunrise, every meaningful experience and every contact with kindness, you can feel Hashem. In the words of the Kotzker, let Him in, make room, invite Him into a relationship.

We are welcoming the month of Elul, which, as is well known, is an acronym for אני לדודי - I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me. When we are in a period of courtship, of falling in love, we are tidreshu, we

are drawn to the other. We keep checking our phone to see if they have called or texted, we count down until the next time we will be together, and we struggle to hang up the phone, no matter what time of night.

Dr. John Gottman, one of the greatest authorities on healthy marriage, explains what we were doing when we stayed up all night talking or finding it hard to get off the phone. He says we were drawing love maps, learning about one another, being inquisitive, we are engaging in discovery and that creates electricity, excitement and brings romance and love.

But too often, we then get married, life, children, responsibilities get in the way and we stop drawing love maps. We have no time or emotional energy to discover, to learn, to ask about the other's inner world, hopes and dreams. And that is why many marriages struggle. Gottman says continuing to draw love maps is critical to a healthy marriage. (On his website, you can download great questions couples can use to ask one another and continue to learn about one another deep into marriage.)

Hashem doesn't provide the coordinates or the address, He wants us to draw the map in our relationship, to use our spiritual intuition to find Him, and to let Him in. How? The same way we approach our other important relationships. By learning, inquiring, being curious about Hashem's "inner world."

It is time to renew our relationship with Hashem, to bring ourselves back to a time when we struggled to hang up with Him and just wanted to talk all night, finding out more, experiencing more. Relationships, both human and with Hashem, need nurturing. They are fed with a diet of time, communication and attention. Our relationship with Hashem, like all other relationships, needs all three.

When I met with the Skver Rebbe a few years ago, he asked me a lot of questions about the community - he was truly curious about what it is like here. At the end of our conversation, he said he had one more question. He turned to me and said, Rav Goldberg, are there mevakshim in Boca Raton? Does your community have seekers, people who are looking for Hashem? I was proud to give him a resounding yes, but I found it fascinating that this was his major question and it struck me, it should be the question of ourselves as well.

Are we mevakshim, are we dorshim, are we searching for Hashem by learning about Him, talking to Him, listening to Him. Over Elul and beyond, set aside time to learn daily, talk to Hashem in davening in a way you haven't in a long time. Draw your new love maps, reignite the energy and don't let your relationship remain stale.

# No One Is Above the Law

*Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

In the parsha we read the laws of appointing a king. "You shall surely set over yourself a king whom Hashem, your G-d, shall choose; from among your brethren shall you set a king over yourself; you cannot place over yourself a foreign man, who is not your brother." [Devorim 17:15].

The Torah warns that the king may not have too many horses; he may not have too many wives; he should not have unlimited wealth. In all these limitations, the Torah is concerned "Lest his heart stray" (after non-essential material possessions.) We know what can happen if a person has too many wives, as we see with the case of Shlomo HaMelech.

Chazal say that Shlomo was over-confident and said about himself "I will be able to exceed the limit without having my heart stray." He felt that these Torah laws applied to everybody else, but that he would be able to control himself. "I am not going to let it happen to me. I can have many wives. (He had 1,000 wives!) It is not going to affect me."

The Medrash says in Shir HaShirim that when Shlomo HaMelech said "I can have many and I will not stray" the letter Yud of Lo Yarbeh lo Nashim (He shall not have too many wives) came to the Ribono shel Olam and said "Look, he is not listening to this pasuk." The Medrash has very strong language here: "Let Shlomo HaMelech and a thousand like him become nullified (batel) but a Yud in the Torah will never be discarded."

The Sefer Koheles Yitzchak asks a simple question: Why was it specifically the letter Yud that came to complain? Shlomo's act of ignoring this law affected the letter Reish also and the letter Beis also of the word "lo YaRBeh lo nashim." He shares a beautiful thought. The letter in Hebrew which grammatically turns something from the past or the present into the future is the letter Yud. Ro'eh means 'to see.' Yireh (with a Yud in front of the Ro'eh) means WILL see. Ochel means eat; Y'Ochal means 'to eat' in the future.

The Yud is a letter which always makes something into the future. Shlomo HaMelech was right. He was capable of theoretically having a thousand wives and not having it affect him. But not everybody is capable of that. A person must worry about the future. Not everyone is a Shlomo HaMelech. The reason the Ribono shel Olam let this happen and let this affect Shlomo HaMelech is to prove this very point – that no one is above the law and no one can say "It does not apply to me." For with such an attitude, everything can be discarded.

Therefore, it was the Yud which represented the future which precisely formulated the problem: Maybe you, Shlomo, can get away with it – but we are talking about Kings of Israel for generations to come. They will not be able to do it.

A similar thought is found in the Gemara [Shabbos 12b]. The Sages said a person may not read by an oil-burning candle. The concern was that a person would become preoccupied with his studies and absent-mindedly tip the candle (thereby violating the prohibition of kindling or extinguishing fire on Shabbos). The Tanna Rav Yishmael learned by a candle and said "I am confident that I will not come to tip the candle." Unfortunately, he became so absorbed in his studies that he did tip the candle. He then said, "How wise are the Sages who forbade a person to read on Shabbos by candlelight." No one can say "This doesn't apply to me."

When the author of the Minchas Chinuch (Rav Yosef Babad [1800-1874]), was already an old man, a woman came in to ask him a Shaylah and she closed the door behind her. The door locked. Here he was together with a woman in a situation of Yichud. He was an old man, beyond the stage of Tayvas Nashim (strong desire). He could have very easily rationalized, "I do not need to worry about this Yichud prohibition. It does not apply to me in my stage of life." What did he do? He jumped out the window! He was so afraid of the Issur Yichud, he ran for the quickest exit which was the window.

No one is above the law. This is the lesson of Lo Yarbeh lo nashim and the misplaced confidence of Shlomo HaMelech that it did not apply to him.

Transcribed by David Twersky;  
Jerusalem

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### ELUL: THE KING IN THE FIELD

The Baal HaTanya gives the following לשמ: Before a king enters his city, its inhabitants go out to greet him and receive him in the field. At that time, anyone who so desires, is granted

permission to approach the king and greet him. He receives them, pleasantly and shows a smiling face to all . .

==== Lekuti Torah P' Re'ay Page 32,b

The rebbe said, with that image, the Alter Rebbe fanned

### UFARATZTA



the flames of the inherent love for G-d that lies hidden in the heart of every Jew.



## Rabbi Reisman

### ON THE NEED FOR POLICE

As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Shoftim. It is a very appropriate time of year. It is a time of Shoftim V'shotrim, a time of year of judgement and it is a very appropriate Parsha for this time of the year. The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh says on the Posuk found in 16:18 (שפטים ושטרים, תתן-לך) Shoftim V'shotrim Titein Lecha. Why is it one Mitzvah Shoftim and Shotrim? It should be one Mitzvah about judges and one Mitzvah about policemen. He says Im Ain Shoftim Ain Shotrim, there is no use in having judges if you don't have anyone to enforce it. If you don't have people to make sure that it is done, then it is a waste of time to have judges.

It is a Mussar. There are a lot of things that are obligations and without someone to enforce it is a waste. When Yaakov went down to Mitzrayim he sent Yehuda to prepare a Yeshiva, to prepare a Bais Hatalmud. Many ask, why did he send Yehuda? The Rosh Yeshiva is Sheivet Levi or maybe Sheivet Yisacher. Yehuda is not the Rosh Yeshiva!

They answer that the Rosh Yeshiva doesn't have to go early to open the Yeshiva. The Mashgiach, the one who is the Shoter, the one who enforces it, he has to go early. He sent Yehuda to be there beforehand. The Rosh Yeshiva can prepare Shiur in the Bais Medrash wherever he is. But you need Shotrim. Without Shotrim there are no Shoftim.

### PAYING RENT IN AN AREI MIKLAT

In this week's Parsha we have the Arei Miklat, the 42 cities of the Leviim and the 6 special Arei Miklat which are cities that are cities of refuge for someone who kills Beshogeig. I would like to share with you a thought which I had originally heard in the name of Rav Nachman of Breslov, afterwards in the name of the Gerrer Rebbe the Pnei Menachem and then the Oheiv Yisrael, all Chassidische sources and then to my surprise I see that Rav Schwab as well deals with this idea, this concept. That is, there are 6 Arei Miklat, designated Arei Miklat and 42 additional Arei Leviim that rescue someone who kills Beshogeig. Kriyas Shema, the Posuk (שמע ישראל ד' אלהינו ד' אהד) has 6 words. The Parsha of V'ahavta has

42 words. That Parsha of Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim is an Ir Miklat for somebody who wants to help himself, someone who is not capable of serving Hashem. It is hard to do Teshuva on all the things that you have done, but if you run to the Ir Miklat, if you run to Kabbalas Ol Malchus Shamayim it is something that can help you.

What is the difference between the 6 cities and the 42? One of the differences is that in the 6 cities the person who killed Beshogeig could live rent free. There were designated Arei Miklat, someone who murdered Beshogeig got first rights to live there. The other 42 cities were designated Arei Leviim, someone who came there had to pay rent. So you could imagine, if it was a wealthy man who killed Beshogeig he would run to any of the 48 cities. If it was a poor man who killed Beshogeig he would run to one of the 6 cities we he could live rent free. So too, somebody who is strong in his Avodas Hashem can find in any part of this Parsha of this Kriyas Shema his connection to the Ribbono Shel Olam. In the Mitzvah of Mezuzah, in the Mitzva of (ושננתם לבניך), wherever you want. Somebody who is weak, runs to (שמע ישראל ד' אלהינו ד') (אהד). The Yesod of Yiddishkeit is the Posuk of Shema, the 6 Arei Miklat.

I saw recently in the Tanna D'vei Eliyahu that the 48 Neviim are K'negged the 48 words of the first Parsha of Kriyas Shema. I saw this in the original source in the Tanna D'vei Eliyahu and I didn't see any Meforshim who explain this. I was wondering how could you break off 6 Neviim from the 48 to make it 6 and 42? I don't know. I was thinking perhaps 6 before Mattan Torah and 42 after. But according to Rashi's calculation Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, and Aaron were the only 5 (not 6) before Mattan Torah and not 6 before Mattan Torah. Therefore, I leave that for you to work on. If you come up with a good answer or a Mar Makom I am willing to hear it. This is the idea, the meaning I guess of wherever we will find the 48 some connection to the Arei Miklat or maybe it is the Arei Miklat that have some connection to the Neviim.

*These shiurim have been transcribed from an actual drasha. As speed is of the essence, spelling and grammar may be compromised*

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## From the Trash Heaps He Lifts the Poor

By Chaim B

He finally found work that starts early in the morning & ends in early afternoon at a good salary. The offer pleased him very much, but he passed on the job despite his dire financial situation because they did not give him enough time to daven Shacharis with a minyan. They did not care if he did not daven at all. "If I cannot daven with a minyan, then this is not for me. Is this not what we learned in shiur that if there is a flaw in ruchniyus, it is a sure sign from Heaven that this job is not for you?!" That is what he said to me.

He asked me to help him find a job. He left another job when it became clear that there was a problem with seeing inappropriate things. This too was not good for him. I know that some will say "What is the problem?" It is clear that this is not for someone who keeps Torah and mitzvos. I went with him and I helped as much as I could to get chickens for Shabbos and Yom Tov and other

things he needed during his difficult time. This challenge is not easy for a man in this situation especially when there

are children to feed. He lost his income through no fault of his own, he gave up work for the sake of Yisbarach.

About two weeks later, he called me and this time he was happy to tell me he found work that suited him, with time to daven. I was very happy that he found work after a long stretch of difficult challenges for his family.

But now the story is just beginning. A year later I happened to meet him as he passed me in the street as he was looking for someone specific to return a lost object. I asked him what he found, and

he said he found a digital wallet (of Bitcoin) and he was looking for the owner to return it. We found out that the owner died and there were no heirs. We researched the matter on the halachic level and the Rav ruled that the wallet belonged to the finder. When I asked him what do you do with a wallet when you do not know the access code? My friend replied, "The One Who gave me the wallet will also open it if He wants to, and if not, then I accept everything with love." About two weeks later we happened to meet again, and he explained that the Creator of the World sent him a messenger who reset the access code, something which is quite difficult to do and our friend became very rich. I saw that one who withstands challenges, his end is profit & greatness. *Tiv Hakehila*

## Dreamers Dreams

Dreamers Dreams are often a time when the hidden is revealed. The Sages in fact tell us that dreams have a power equivalent to one-sixtieth of prophecy. In the following incredible true story, Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser tells about one amazing dream in which a little bit of the hidden was revealed...

It was well past midnight on a particularly warm June night. Having had a busy week, I was intent on making sure that my sleep would be uninterrupted. As I drifted off, I became oblivious to the conscious world. A few hours later I began dreaming, but the dream was frighteningly real. I dreamt that I was riding in the passenger side of a car with a man whom I had never met. As he barreled down the highway, I noticed that his eyes had closed and he had fallen asleep. To make matters worse, we were quickly approaching a sharp curve in the highway. With the speeding oncoming traffic approaching

from the other side of the median, I immediately shouted, "Wake up! Wake up!" However, the driver, whoever he was, lowered his head slightly and seemed to descend into an even deeper sleep. Desperately, I shouted the first thing I could think of- "Wake up! For G-d's sake, wake up!" With those

words, I woke up in a cold sweat. Somewhat relieved that I had been dreaming and was not actually in the car, I calmed myself with the words, "It's only a dream!" I looked at the clock on my night table. It was exactly three a.m. Needless to say, the dream was a horrific experience. I decided to give tzedakah and thank the Almighty that this event had not really happened.

The next morning, I bumped into one of my closest friends. He startled me by saying, "You will never believe what happened last night. My brother called me shortly after three a.m. He was driving his car on the Long Island Expressway, returning from North Carolina. I guess the trip was too much for him and he fell asleep at the wheel. All of a sudden, he heard a voice screaming, 'Wake up! For G-d's sake, wake up!' Thank G-d he did! Boruch Hashem, he tricked the Angel of Death by executing a harrowing maneuver, steering his car around a dangerous curve on the highway.

My brother-who as you know is not a religious man-instantly, became a believer. He called me to ask if there was anything special that he should do to thank G-d for sparing him. I explained to him that it would be appropriate for him to donate money to charity." I was stunned by my friend's story. I still vividly remembered my dream and was a little shaken up because of it. I related my dream of the previous night to my dear friend; we both were astounded. (from *Stories of Inspiration* by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, page 81). Everything is real: the soul, Hashem, Torah and mitzvahs.



## The Volunteer Grocery Store Worker

Rav Ezra Attiah, zt"l, was the Rosh Yeshivah at Yeshivas Porat Yosef in Yerushalayim. One day, a young student named Ovadiah sadly informed the Rosh Yeshivah that he would not be returning to the Yeshivah. His father owned a grocery store, he explained, and he was needed to help stock the shelves. Times were hard and there simply was not enough money to hire a worker.

Rav Ezra was very distraught at this news. Ovadiah was one of the Yeshivah's top students. He had a brilliant mind and was extremely diligent. Most importantly, he truly loved learning Torah. Rav Ezra went to visit Ovadiah's father and did his best to persuade him to change his mind. He explained the importance of learning Torah and he described Ovadiah's tremendous potential to grow in learning. Although Ovadiah's father was moved, he insisted that he needed his son's help in the grocery store. There was just no alternative at this time. Rav Ezra understood that he could not persuade the father, and wished him a good day and left.

Early the following morning, when Ovadiah's father came to open his grocery store, he saw Rav Ezra standing near the door. Rav Ezra said to Ovadiah's father, "I have good news for you! I know someone who is willing to work for you for free, just so long as you allow your son to return to Yeshivah." Ovadiah's father couldn't believe what he was hearing. He asked incredulously, "Who would be willing to do such a thing?" Rav Ezra said, "I would." He took an apron that was hanging on a nail on the wall, and he put it on. As he tied the apron strings, he said, "Just show me what to do." Ovadiah's father was taken aback. Now he truly understood just how important it was to the Rosh Yeshivah that Ovadiah return to his learning. He promised Rav Ezra that he would find some way to allow his son to return to Yeshivah. Young Ovadiah went to learn, and he grew up to become the great Talmud Chacham, Rav Ovadiah Yosef! **Torah U'Tefilah.**

## The Amazing Blind Seminary Student Applicant

Rav Yoel Gold said over a story. It was seminary application time for 12th grade girls around the world, & every girl found themselves fluctuating between nerves & excitement. Sora Mindy Cynamon knew where she wanted to go, and she was ready for the interview. Sora Mindy was born blind, but she has spent her entire life rising to the challenge. She learned Braille, made friends, attended school, & overall, was a regular 18 year-old.

Her leading choice of seminary was Meohr Bais Yaakov, led by Rav Zecharya Greenwald. Knowing that Rav Greenwald gave out a printed sheet with a Pasuk & Mefarshim, commentary, to each applicant & asked her to explain it, Sora Mindy brought along a Braille sheet that she had prepared from class. She also made sure to bring along her Braille Chumash for the big day.

When it came time for her to read the Braille sheet of Mefarshim she had prepared, Rav Greenwald cleared his throat.

"I'm not sure it's fair for you to read a Meforash you already learned, while the other girls had to read a new, unfamiliar one," he said thoughtfully. "Please open your Chumash to a random page & read the Pasuk with Rashi & the Sifsei Chachamim." Sora Mindy readily agreed, and opened her Chumash to a random Pasuk. Using her fingers, she started to read the Pasuk out loud.

It was a Pasuk in Shemos, discussing Dasan and Aviram. "Return to Mitzrayim," she translated, "for all the men who sought your life are dead." She moved her fingers, ready to read the Rashi followed by the Sifsei Chachamim. Rav Greenwald knew what was about to happen. Rashi explains "dead" as "they became poor, because someone who is poor is considered like one who is dead." The Sifsei Chachamim then quotes a Gemara that says that 4 people are considered like one who is dead: a poor person, a blind person, a childless person and someone afflicted with Tzara'as. Should he stop her? But Sora Mindy was not flustered. Undeterred, she continued reading in a steady voice as if nothing had happened. Rav Greenwald was extremely impressed by her resilience in how she continued explaining the Sifsei Chachamim, even though the topic could have been an uncomfortable one for her. Rav Greenwald then explained the Gemara quoted by the Sifsei Chachamim in a way that clarified the concept of death as referring to an aspect of life that is missing. When the interview was over, he thanked Sora Mindy for coming in.

Several weeks later, Sora Mindy Cynamon received her acceptance letter to Meohr Bais Yaakov seminary. During those few weeks, Rav Greenwald had a discussion with the English principal, who is also Sora Mindy's Chumash teacher. "I heard you had an interesting experience during the interview with Sora Mindy," she said. Rav Greenwald smiled. "You could say that," he said. "It was definitely extraordinary." "Even more than you realize," her teacher said. "You see, we actually learned that Pasuk in Chumash class this year. I had orchestrated that Sora Mindy be out of the classroom the day we learned it. I thought I was protecting her. But when she came back from your interview, she said to me in her knowing way, 'You will never guess which Pasuk he asked me to read! If I had known how strong she really was, I would've done things differently.'"

That year in seminary was wonderful. Sora Mindy soaked in the learning & the fun. And then, when it was time to say goodbye, Rav Greenwald decided to tell her the truth. "Before the interview had begun, I didn't really think that our seminary was the place for you," he said. "I believed the adjustment would just be too difficult, combined with being thousands of miles away from home. "But when I saw how well you handled yourself during that interview, how composed & confident you are, I changed my mind, & I'm glad I did."

Rav Greenwald saw that not only did she have the strength, she also had the capacity to be an inspiration for all the girls, as well as an example of how one can accept life's challenges with her head held high!

**Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.**

## Free Haircuts

A barber gave a haircut to a rabbi one day. The rabbi tried to pay for the haircut, but the barber refused, saying, "You do holy work." The next morning the barber found a dozen prayer books at the door to his shop.

A policeman came to the barber for a haircut, and again the barber refused to pay, saying, "You protect the public." The next morning the barber found a dozen doughnuts at the door to his shop.

A lawyer came to the barber for a haircut, and again the barber refused payment, saying, "You serve the justice system." The next morning the barber found a dozen lawyers waiting for a free haircut.

## Healthy Languages

The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.

The French eat a lot of fat and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.

The Japanese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.

The Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.

The Germans drink a lot of beer and eat lots of sausages and fats and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.

**CONCLUSION:** Eat and drink what you like. Speaking English is apparently what kills you.

## Early Risers in Greece

Why do people dislike getting up early in Athens?

Because Dawn is tough on Greece.

## Marriage Advice

A mother was anxiously awaiting her daughter's plane. She had just come back from a far away land trying to find adventure.

As the daughter was exiting the plane, the mother noticed a man directly behind her daughter dressed in feathers with exotic markings all over his body and carrying a shrunken head. The daughter introduced this man as her new husband.

The mother gasped in disbelief and disappointment and screamed, "I said for you to marry a RICH Doctor! Not A Witch Doctor!"

## Quotable Quotes

"A modest little person, with much to be modest about."

### Winston Churchill

"I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure."

### Clarence Darrow

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it."

### Moses Hadas

"He can compress the most words into the smallest idea of any man I know."

### Abraham Lincoln

"I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it."

### Mark Twain

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play, bring a friend... if you have one."

George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second... if there is one."

Winston Churchill, in response

"He is a self-made man and worships his creator."

## Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near Hashem's altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the Halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may only have possessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two sifrei Torah, one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn't become haughty.

Neither the kohanim nor the levi'im are to inherit land in the Land of Israel, rather they are to be supported by the community by a system of tithes. All divination is prohibited. Hashem promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased's family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger.

Moshe cautions Bnei Yisrael not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to "frame" a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A kohen is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill trust in Hashem. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

### John Bright

"I've just learned about his illness. Let's hope it's nothing trivial."

### Irvin S. Cobb

"He had delusions of adequacy."

### Walter Kerr

"They never open their mouths without subtracting from the sum of human knowledge."

### Thomas Brackett Reed

"Why do you sit there looking like an envelope without any address on it?"

### Mark Twain

"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go."

### Oscar Wilde

# SHMITTA:

## The Secret of Seven

by Rabbi Doniel Baron

*The cycle of seven is the key to connecting back to the ultimate reality.*

Modern life is fast paced and multi faceted. We are overwhelmed by emails, text messages, faxes, flyers, coupons, telemarketer calls, ringtones of sundry themes, and most of all, news from every medium possible. Newspapers, the internet, messages and stock quotes glide in lights outside buildings, and now, even on flatscreens in the office building elevator, broadcasting to its captive audience. Most of the news doesn't affect us, a good percentage of the calls are unnecessary and intrusive, and the ads pushy, imposing, and non-reflective of our values.

Historically there may have been fewer daily stimuli, but they were just as overwhelming. Things we take for granted today such as plumbing, electricity, easy shelter solutions, prepared food, and of course disposable goods, involved arduous tasks. Daily life itself was both difficult and distracting for most human beings on the planet.

In different forms, man has always been overwhelmed by pressing tasks or needs. While they may have metamorphosed from things necessary for survival to entertainment and the thirst for information, things that appear urgent are always competing with things that are truly important.

**Imagine a Pause.....**

**Unplug and ask yourself what do you really care about and believe.**

Imagine if there was a way to leave it all behind for just a while. What would we do? We might find ourselves helpless and bored, and perhaps faced with the fact that without the sensory overload we are utterly alone. That without an ipod, newspaper, radio or laptop, a commute is a nightmare. Alternatively we could choose to focus on the things that we deem truly important when there's time to think about things that really matter. It could be an opportunity to ask ourselves what we really care about and believe instead of letting commercial and social enterprises with subtle or obvious agendas dictate our thoughts.

In time such a space exists. Weekly it is called the Shabbat, and in the cycle of years, it is *Shmitta*, the sabbatical year, the land's Shabbat. It is a time when normal planting and harvesting activities in the land of Israel, which for most of history was primarily an agricultural society, cease. The land lies fallow and people look inward. Worries about sowing, pruning, maintenance, reaping, market prices and other concerns become irrelevant.

*Shmitta* is a time which goes beyond its historical significance. It holds a message as relevant today as it was when we received the Torah thousands of years ago. Since *shmitta* occurs every seven years, it should come as no surprise that the inner secret of *shmitta* lies within the number seven.

**Sevens Everywhere**

Sevens abound in Judaism. There are seven cycles of seven leading up to *yovel*, the jubilee year. There are seven heavens according to Jewish tradition. The national birth of our nation on Passover is followed by seven weeks of seven days, culminating with our receiving the Torah following their conclusion. King David, the very symbol of the Jewish monarchy and the messianic era his descendent will usher in, was the seventh son of Yishai and married Bat Sheva, literally, the daughter of seven. Seven days of celebration follow a wedding, with each meal accompanied by

seven special blessings. We similarly mourn the dead for seven days. There are seven days of the week in virtually every society to this day, a phenomenon rooted in our tradition.

Why the fuss about seven?

**Homonyms and other linguistic similarities in Hebrew are no coincidence.**

A hint to the answer lies deep within the Hebrew language, as revealed in a biblical exchange between our forefather Abraham (whose seventh generation descendent was Moses, who took the Jews out of Egypt) and the Philistine king Avimelech. The Torah describes in detail how Abraham and Avimelech entered into a covenant which would also serve as testimony that Abraham's shepherds had dug a specific well whose ownership had been disputed. Abraham presented Avimelech with seven – *sheva* -- lambs, which he described as testimony that he had dug the well. The two entered into an oath, called a *shavuah* in Hebrew, and the place was therefore called *Beer Sheva* (Beersheba) on account of both the *sheva* lambs and the *shavuah*.

What was the point of seven lambs and how can we explain the similarity between the word *sheva* meaning seven and *shavua* meaning oath (as well as the seven day week and a complete seven year cycle), which is comprised of almost the same Hebrew letters?

Homonyms and other linguistic similarities in Hebrew, a language which our tradition maintains is of Divine origin, are no coincidence, especially when they are comprised of virtually the same Hebrew characters. For example the Hebrew word for ear is *ozen*. It was relatively recently that science discovered that one's ear does more than hear but also controls balance. Not surprisingly, the Hebrew word for balance is, and for thousands of years has been, *izun*, which not only sounds like the word *ozen* but is comprised of almost the same letters.

The key connection between *sheva* and *shavua* lies in the meaning of a *shavua*. A *shavua*, oath, which is typically found in court, is essentially an affirmation that one's statement today accurately describes a past event. In the case of Abraham, the oath and the city named for it to this day, would forever verify the covenant between Avimelech and Abraham. In Judaism the number *sheva* does the same thing. It is the thread that fuses things to their source.

**The Seven Day Week**

Shabbat and the seven day week illustrate this. It is nothing less than a wonder that the only temporal system for counting days that has survived history in a meaningful way is the seven day week that all governments use today. Unlike days which follow the earth's rotation on its axis, months which follow the moon's cycle, and years which parallel the earth's revolution around the sun, the seven day week has no natural parallel or astronomical basis. It seems to come from nowhere. Though used by the Hindus, Babylonians, Chinese, Romans and Egyptians, and later Christians and Moslems, who shifted the Sabbath to different days, the universal seven day system derived from Jewish practice.

**Shabbat connects us back to the source of everything.**

Its message according to our tradition is clear: six days parallel active creation of the world and the seventh parallel's God's "rest" from creation. *Shabbat*, therefore, attests to creation. It connects us back to the source of everything -- the beginning. Indeed, the word *sheva* itself comes from the word *shav*, to return.

The mystics describe the same concept in space. In a three dimensional plane, a point can expand in six opposite directions at ninety degree angles – right or left, back or front, up or down. Yet it is the point in the center, where the x, y, and z axis meet, that binds them together. In days that point is *Shabbat*, and in years, *Shmitta*.

***Shmitta***

Like Shabbat, *Shmitta* is a means for connecting everything back to its source. As we grow farther in time from the point of creation, we need *Shmitta* to bring us home. Just when creation seems a faded memory and we feel that mankind runs the world and that our brilliance has brought us whatever bounty humankind has achieved, *shmitta* brings a *Shabbat* to the land that changes everything.

According to Jewish law, fruits that grow during the special year in the land of Israel are public domain, and anyone, rich or poor can eat them. We are reminded that any personal property we have is nothing more than a Divine loan. Classic laws of property that give us comfort and delude us into thinking we run the world are suspended as debts are forgiven, and on the *yovel* following the culmination of seven *shmitta* cycles, land sales revert and property goes back to its tribal apportionment from the time Jews entered the land of Israel. *Shmitta* gives us the opportunity to melt away the distance between ourselves and creation, and to give the land back to God, thereby returning it to its source.

On a deeper level, *Shmitta* is a time for us to return to ourselves. On one hand, it reminds us of our inherent smallness and ineptitude, challenging our sense of ownership of the world. On the other, it underscores our greatness by providing a bridge that, when we contemplate the inner meaning of the year, connects us back to the awesome moments of creation and provides us with the an opportunity for intimacy with our Creator.

One who internalizes the deeper meaning of *Shmitta* has the tools to escape the cacophony of stimuli that crowd our day. We can't block out the clamor for an entire year, but we can put it into perspective. Once we contemplate the meaning of abandoning ownership of our own produce, and understand that by looking to our Creator for sustenance, the significance of the sensory overload that clutters our day fades. *Shmitta* and the message of the patterns of seven that permeate all of Jewish life provide us with a unique chance to come home.

בשמיטה"ת  
 נעלה את ירושלים - על ראש מחתנו  
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בשבת והוראה להשי"ת על כל האובה אשר גמלנו, שהחינו וקיימנו והציענו לכתוב הנה  
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## SPOTLIGHT – YESHIVAS BEIN HAZMANIM – SUMMER 5781

## RABBI NACHUM SCHEINER

ROSH KOLLEL

wrote down any questions he had, and seized the opportunity to ask the sho'el umaishiv his questions.

## CHABURA

Rabbi Yosef Fried gave a daily chabura, on a variety of exciting and intriguing topics. Here are some of the topics he covered:

- Cholov yisroel
- Listening to music
- Techeiles
- The proper brocha on pizza and mezonos bread
- Krias shma al hamitah
- Parameters of saving lives on Shabbos and yom kippur
- Sherry casks
- Cholov akum

This has really brought a great excitement to the daily learning, as many boys came after the chabura for close to an hour, well after the official learning time is over – all to discuss the topics further. This has been continuing even into the time designated for lunch and beyond, which is a clear indication of how the learning is being enjoyed by all.

The dedication of the attendees was an inspiration for all. Someone was in Monsey on vacation and came to Ohr Chaim to learn. He joined the chaburos, enjoying them so much that he came back at night as well for another chabura.

There was someone else who joined for the chabura on techeiles and got very animated, with a lively debate ensuing. Another attendee, a seasoned talmid chochom, came to the chaburos, and got involved, together with boys decades younger. The sincerity and humility of so many stripes joining together – connecting to our Torah – is a bona fide kiddush Hashem!

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Some people associate Bein Hazmanim with just sitting back and relaxing, but whoever had the opportunity to observe our 21st season of Yeshivas Bein Hazmanim, gained a new understanding of what Bein Hazmanim is all about! Throughout the last few weeks, Ohr Chaim was reverberating every morning with the melodious sounds of kol torah.

The participants included a beautiful blend of all types and stripes from across the spectrum of the community. What an inspiration to see bochurim and yungerleit from all walks of life joining forces, and sitting side by side, enjoying the words of our Torah. Many participants remarked that this learning made such a profound difference on their entire bein hazmanim.

## Live Feedback

One of the supporters of the YBH came by to see for himself what was happening, and was amazed by the dedication and devotion of the bochurim and yungerleit. He commented on how he sees such great potential and room for untold growth of more learning and shiurim in this wonderful bastion of Torah.

Recently, one of the people running the YBH noticed some new faces – a father learning with two boys. In the true friendly Ohr Chaim style, he welcomed them, and the father said they were visiting Monsey all the way from Germany (!), and heard about the learning program and came to join.

Another new boy commented that he came because he heard about the learning from his friends, as the “in place” to go during Bein Hazmanim.

Another Israeli Baal teshuva with a pony tail was learning and commented that he truly appreciated the friendly atmosphere, and overtaken by the pleasant ambiance. He exclaimed that “this is amazing and he will be back.”

Another large group came together from a yeshiva for baalei teshuva and had a very positive experience. A number of the boys commented on how everyone was so friendly and it was such a homey environment.

Another beautiful vignette: A sho'el umaishiv came by in the evening to get something, and he was that a bachur was still there from the morning, having put away his lunch and staying the entire day! He actually

# ~Night Kolloel~

## SPEECHES

Rabbi Yaakov Kapelner spoke at the beginning of the season. He discussed why Tisha B'Av is called a mo'ed, and the issur of learning on Erev Tisha B'Av.

Another great highlight of YBH has become the Q&A with HaRav Yosef Viener Shlita, Rav, Kehillas Shaar Hashamayim of Wesley Hills, with "Timely Shailos Relating to Bochorim & Yungerleit."

Some of the topics he discussed:

- Proper attire for davening
- Davening with a minyan if it will cause one to come late to yeshiva
- Baalei teshuva following the minhag of their makom or of their origin
- Listening to parents vs. going to learn in yeshiva
- Dealing with fellow students who are not acting properly

Being up to date on the news

As usual, the crowd enjoyed the candid answers to the intriguing questions, staying on much longer after the official session was over to hear more.

## Musical Event

There was an enjoyable musical event and spirited kumzitz run by Mendy Weinreb to mark the conclusion of YBH. They were also joined by members of any other shiurim at Ohr Chaim, as well as anyone else drawn to the heartfelt music. The hot buffet was also enjoyed by all. The event was further enhanced with Rabbi Ari Levitan, of Pomona, who shared pearls of wisdom on how to strengthen our Torah learning.

All in all, even with so many people who took to the road this summer, we still had dozens of participants and close to 1400 hours of Torah learning. As another season of YBH comes to a close, we thank Hashem once again for this great achievement.



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~Night Kolloel~  
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 Thursday Night August 12  
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