

ALEPH MACHANE



בעקבות אבותינו

K1: Intro to theme



Aims:

1. **Introduce** the theme of Machane.
2. **Demonstrate** that the Torah is not just a book of laws but has a special moral quality too.
3. **Appreciate** the Avot and Imahot as role models for the Jewish people.

Introduction - B'ikvot Avoteinu

The phrase "B'ikvot Avoteinu" translates to "in the Footsteps of our Ancestors". We know who the Avot and Imahot were and a little about their lives and what they did, but often they remain as mythical characters from our distant past that embarked on great adventures and fanciful tales.



Throughout Kvutza on Machane we will be attempting to do two things:

1. Educate the Chanichim on the basic facts about the Avot and Imahot - who they were and what they did.
2. Invoke an enthusiasm for the study of the Avot and Imahot by bringing home the messages the Torah teaches us. We can achieve this by demonstrating the eternal relevance of our Avot and Imahot, and how they can be applied to the lives of our Chanichim.

These two points are running themes and should be incorporated into all of your Kvutzot. The particular messages you choose to emphasise are up to you; we have tried to keep the Chomer as broad as possible because we know that individuals will respond to some ideas and concepts different to others.

The Torah is not just a book of laws

DISCUSSION POINT – What is the Torah to you?

Each Chanich will have a different pre-conceived notion of what the Torah is. Below are a few examples of how diverse the Torah can be; varying from the universal narrative of creation to family drama; from national praise for Hashem to minute details of the construction of the Mishkan and Divine revelation.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקְוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל-מְקוֹם אֶחָד וְתִרְאָה הַיַּבְשָׁה וַיְהִי-כֵן:

And Hashem said: 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. (Bereshit 1:9)

וַיְחַלֵּם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם וַיְגִיד לְאָחָיו וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד שׁוֹנֵא אֹתוֹ:

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren; and they hated him yet the more. (Bereshit 37:5)

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אֲזַי יִשִּׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר: אֲשִׁירָה לַה' כִּי גָאָה גָאָה סוֹס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בָּיָם: עֲזִי וְזַמְרַת קַה וַיְהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה קִלִּי וְאֲנִיָּהוּ אֶלְקֵי אָבִי וְאֲרַמְמָנָהוּ:
Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael chose to sing this song to Hashem, and they said, "I will sing to Hashem, for He is highly exalted; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. Hashem is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation; this is my G-d, and I will glorify Him; my father's G-d, and I will exalt Him. (Shemot 15:1-2)

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Come up with a way to drill home the message of how diverse the Torah is.

One way could be to ask your Chanichim to come up with a TV advert for the Torah aimed at getting people to read it.

Another way could be to write a blurb for the Torah. You could write these pesukim out on A4 sheets and ask them to stand by the one which they think represents the Torah best and to justify their choice...

וַיַּעַשׂ בְּצִלְאֵל אֶת הָאָרֹן עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים אֲמַתִּים וַחֲצִי אָרְכוֹ וְאֵמָה וַחֲצִי רָחְבוֹ וְאֵמָה וַחֲצִי קִמְתּוֹ: וַיִּצְפְּהוּ זָהָב טְהוֹר מִבַּיִת וּמְחוּץ וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ זָרְזָהָב סָבִיב:
And Bezalel made the ark of acacia-wood: two cubits and a half was the length of it, and a cubit and a half the breadth of it, and a cubit and a half the height of it. And he overlaid it with pure gold within and without and made a crown of gold to it round about. (Shemot 37:1-2)

אֲנִכִּי ה' אֶל־לְהִידָךְ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבַּיִת עֲבָדִים לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֶל־לֵהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל פְּנֵי

I am Hashem, your G-d, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. (Devarim 5:6)

And there are many other examples, including lists of names, complex rituals and civil laws.

The very first Rashi in Chumash addresses this issue. He asks, "Why doesn't the Torah start from the mitzvah of Kiddush haChodesh (sanctifying the new month), the first mitzvah in the Torah?"

He answers that we need to know that Hashem created the world so that we can lay a proper claim to the Land of Israel. The exact answer is not particularly important for us at the moment, however the general concept is that there are things in the Torah which are not laws but are nonetheless fundamental concepts that are very important for us to know.

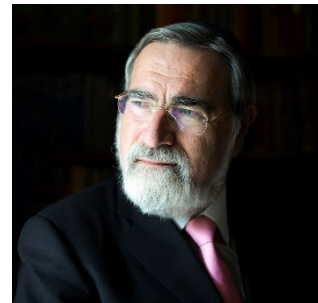


The point is that the Torah is a complete guide to life. Every aspect of a person's life should be influenced by some sort of guiding principle which we can find in the Torah. On Aleph Machane we are going to be focussing mainly on how we can learn these important guiding principles from our Avot and Imahot. It is crucial however, that our Chanichim are aware that the Torah provides a large scope for identifying guiding principles and we do not solely rely on our ancestors for them. Rabbi Sacks zt'l writes as follows, and his words serve as the perfect bridge to the next part of the Chomer:

Each of its stories has layer upon layer of meaning and significance, which we only grasp after repeated readings. Our understanding of the book grows as we grow. Each age adds insights, commentaries and interpretations of its' own. The book's literary style allows it to be read afresh in each generation. That too tells us something significant about the Torah's view of human knowledge: The truths of the human condition are simply too deep to be understood at once and on the surface. Only stories have this depth, this ambiguity, this principled multiplicity of meanings.

Most importantly, only stories adequately reflect what it is to be human. Tell a story, even to young children, and they become instantly attentive. They want to know what happens next. In logical systems, there are no surprises as to what happens next: All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal. The conclusion is already implicit in the premises. But in a story, as in life, we never know what will happen next, because human beings are free. Will Eve eat the forbidden fruit? Will Cain disregard Hashem's warning? Will Esau kill Jacob when they meet after long separation? Will Joseph's dreams come true?

(Covenant and Conversation: Genesis, pg. 7)



DISCUSSION POINT – Would story time be an effective vehicle for chinuch in Kvutza?

The Avot as role models

On Aleph we are going to be dealing with a number of the Avot and Imahot. However, before we can look at any of them individually, we have to understand exactly how it is that they are role models. There are three basic schools of thought when it comes to how to view the Avot and Imahot as role models.

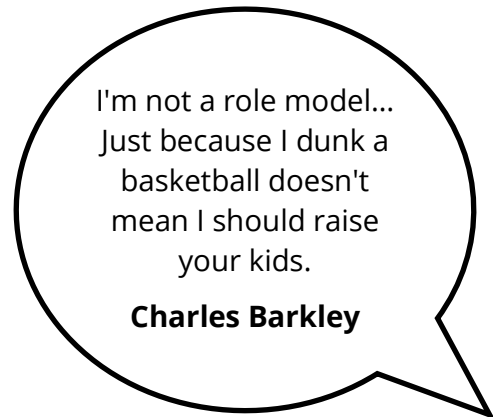
The first one seeks to apologise for them. This means that whenever there is something which seems a little bit fishy in their behaviour you should seek to cover it up and reinterpret it.

The second school views the Avot as humans who fail and sin in exactly the same way as we do. A major proponent of this is led by Rabbi Yoel bin Nun who calls this "Tanach b'gova einayim" (understanding the characters in Tanach as being people no different than us). This is a relatively modern approach.

The third and most ideal approach is that while we don't see our Avot and Imahot as angelic figures who cannot sin, they are very much human but are also very G-dly and were operating at a much higher level of G-d-consciousness than us. The implication of this is that while we shouldn't assume, they were flawless, we must also speak about them with great humility, understanding that they were truly great people. For example, the Ramban criticises Sarai for her mistreatment of Hagar. Most people tend to fall out somewhere in the middle. We realise that the Avot were human, but we shouldn't be looking to criticise them at every available opportunity; they are the founders of our people and should be treated with an appropriate level of respect.

Throughout the remaining Kvutzot, we will look at the Avot and Imahot more specifically and the character traits that they exemplify.

**DISCUSSION POINT – Before this Kvutza, how did you relate to the Avot and Imahot?
Was this a result of early education?**



Trailblazers

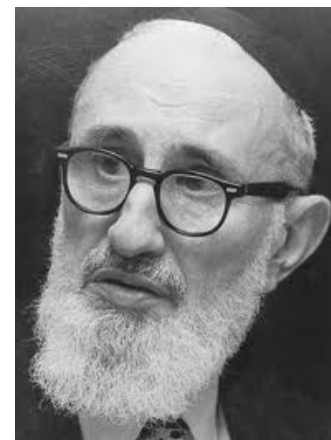
There is a famous doctrine called "maase avot siman l'banim", which means that the actions of the Avot are an omen for the children. Ramban writes that

everything that happened to the Avot happened again to the Jewish people later on in history:

Let me tell you a general rule in all these Parshiot about Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, and it's a massive idea - the Rabbis put it very simply...everything that happened to the fathers is a sign for the children. Therefore, the Torah wrote loads about the stories of the journeys and digging of the wells...and the onlooker might think they are extra, and a bit pointless, but they all come to teach about the future.... (Ramban Bereshit 6:12)

Rav Soloveitchik zt'l said the following in a lecture in 1975:

"The Patriarchic Covenant ... imparts teachings to the Jewish people by example rather than by prescription. While the Sinaitic Covenant tells the Jew what to do and how to act as a member of the covenantal community, the Patriarchal Covenant addresses the 'I' awareness of the Jew, teaching him how to experience his Jewishness. It sensitises him in specifically Jewish ways: it expresses attitudes, ideals, and sentiments which still speak to us. It guides our feelings and consciousness rather than our physical acts.



...Our sages teach: Our father Abraham was tested with ten trials [of faith and character] and he withstood them all, demonstrating the extent of Abraham's love of G-d. [Avot 5:4] These ten trials, with the climactic Akeida as the supreme expression of martyrdom, are the source of many Jewish traits which are still prevalent amongst our people.

This is all very well on a national level, but how does it relate to us as individuals? A good way to think of it is by teaching that the Avot were trailblazers. They were doing new things, charting a new path. But those paths were strewn with obstacles; the lives of the Avot were anything but smooth. The Torah records how they overcame those trials and tribulations. Whenever we are stuck in a similar situation, we should realise that our forefathers have been in the same place too. It would be wise for us to look at how they reacted and behaved and to attempt to learn from these as best we can. We can see our own lives echoed in the lives of the Avot if we just look hard enough, as Rav Soloveitchik continues:

In studying their life experiences... during our impressionable childhood and throughout our adult years, we absorb their values and nuances of feeling into



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our Jewish consciousness. 'Every Jew should ask himself, when shall my deeds be like those of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?' [Tana D'bei Eliyahu Rabba 25]"
(Reflections of the Rav. vol. 2 - pg.68)

DISCUSSION POINT – Have you ever felt like you are walking in the footsteps of our ancestors?

Middah Spotlight:

At the end of each Kvutzah, we're going to put some information about a particular Middah (ethical value) to focus on relating to that particular character. As we noted, the stories in Bereshit can give lots of ethical inspiration and we should highlight that.

In this Kvutzah we'll just introduce that basic idea: it's important that we're always working on our ethical traits and trying to become a better person. Here are some interesting sources:

The Torah has quite a lot of very general ethical laws, e.g. 'Kedoshim tihiyu' ("you shall be holy"). The Rebbe of Kotzk used to say about this that G-d has enough angels who are holy. But He also wants man to strive to reach holiness.

Ramban's comments on this notion are also important. He explains that though the Torah may not explicitly prohibit poor moral behaviour, we nonetheless must also appreciate the spirit and essence of Halacha and Torah-morality.

The point is that the Torah prohibits incest and forbidden foods, while permitting marital relations and eating food and wine. So, a hedonist could find legitimacy for depravity with his/her wife/husband, become a drunkard and glutton, swear all the time – because the Torah has not explicitly forbidden this! But this verse teaches that he/she would be a scoundrel licensed by the Torah.

Summary of K1:

1. The Torah is a complex and diverse book, which can be described as a "Comprehensive Guide to Life".
2. The Avot are the role models for the Jewish people, both in terms of their humanity and personalities, and in terms of the directions their lives took.
3. This is the framework for the rest of the Chomer.



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Extra Chomer

Being Frum and Being Good: On the Relationship Between Religion and Morality

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt'l

PART 1:

G-d's Will and the Good

How are we to understand the relationship between being *frum* and being good? The answer depends, of course, on how we understand these two terms.

Popularly or sociologically defined, *frumkeit* (loosely, "religiosity") and goodness are neither quite the same nor opposed. We all know people who are absolute *apikorsim* (disbelievers) and whom we would nevertheless define as being "good" by virtue of their high moral standards. Conversely, we also unfortunately know others whom we would surely designate as *frum* (observant)—they keep *Shabbat* and are scrupulous in their *kashrut*—but who are nevertheless ruthless or dishonest in personal and commercial relations. That, of course, hardly fits our conception of goodness. So, although popularly defined, these two terms are simply independent of one another, we are concerned with philosophical rather than sociological definitions, and on that level the relation between these two terms is less certain.

DEFINING GOODNESS

Let us begin therefore with definition. Both our referents, *frumkeit* and goodness, have historically been exhaustively analyzed. In the twentieth century in particular, a whole literature—largely fathered by G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* at the turn of the century and subsequently stimulated by the school of linguistic analysis—has sought to explore and define what is "the good." For our purposes, we need not enter into the minutiae of this discussion, other than to stress a cardinal, albeit possibly obvious point: the term "good" has both a functional, pragmatic sense and a moral, axiological sense. On the one hand, it relates to the effectiveness of an object or a person; on the other hand, to its value. We may, for instance, speak of a "good" pistol which can shoot to kill efficiently, and therefore can be employed very effectively for implementing evil purposes. And straddling both spheres, the functional and the moral, there is also an aesthetic sense.

Thus, to look back at *Parashat Bereishit* (2:9), we hear first of a fruit which is *tov le-ma'akhal*, good for eating in a pragmatic sense; surely there is no moral attribute attached to that. Subsequently, we hear of *etz ha-da'at tov va-ra*, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, where the moral sense is intended. In certain verses, the meaning may be ambiguous or multiple—for instance, "*Lo tov heyot ha-adam levado*, It is not good for man to be alone" (*ibid.* 2:18). My understanding of the intent of this verse is that it is neither good psychologically nor good morally.

In our context, while being mindful of the various senses of the word, we shall be focusing primarily and directly upon the moral sense. That is, we shall try to define what we understand by a "good" person and how we relate to him or her (not in the functional sense of a "good" parent

or a "good" citizen). We understand goodness to be that which is intrinsically morally good; not something which factually is desired, but something inherently valuable and desirable.

DEFINING FRUMKEIT

Likewise, the term "*frumkeit*" or "religion" has to be thoroughly analyzed. Here, too, for our purposes I will content myself with a general concept. But even in dealing with very general terms, we surely need to differentiate between several strands. The term signifies first an existential and experiential connection to G-d—*emuna* (faith), and beyond that, *yira*, *ahava*, *deveikut* (fear, love, cleaving). Second, and this is particularly true within a Jewish and halakhic context, that relation to G-d needs to translate into an obedient and obeisant response to His normative demands. The interrelation between these two elements as being part of a single concept is made very clear in the verse in *Ekev*:

And now, O Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d demand of you? Only this: to fear the L-rd your G-d, to walk in all His paths, to love Him, and to serve the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and soul; to keep the L-rd's commandments and laws, which I enjoin upon you today, for your good. (*Devarim* 10:12)

The *gemara* understands from this verse that G-d has one fundamental demand of us: *yirata Shamayim* (fear of Heaven).

Rav Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Elazar: G-d has in this world fear of Heaven alone, as it says, "And now, O Israel, what does the L-rd your G-d demand of you? Only this: to fear the L-rd your G-d, etc." It is further written (*Iyyov* 28:28), "Indeed (*hen*), fear of G-d is wisdom," and in Greek "*hen*" means "one." (*Shabbat* 31b)

Although the *gemara* says we are dealing with a single entity, the verse seems to specify a whole list of demands: fear of G-d, walking in His paths, love, service, keeping His commandments. The reason for this is that fundamentally we can speak of one category, but one which then has several components. These components break down into the two elements that I mentioned earlier: the existential, experiential relationship to G-d (love and fear), and the response to G-d's commands (keeping His *mitzvot*). The latter takes place both in broader terms ("walking in all His paths and serving Him") and in the specific details of Halakha ("to keep the L-rd's commandments and laws, which I enjoin upon you today").

For us, it is the combination of these two elements which constitutes *frumkeit*. In the famous penultimate verse in *Kohelet*, we again find a single focus on the conjunction of these two elements:

The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Fear G-d and observe all His commandments, for this is the whole of man. (*Kohelet* 12:13)

Both the inner and outer responses to G-d's normative demands, their acceptance and implementation, are central. "Nullify your will before His will" (*Avot* 2:4), both inwardly and in terms of practice. The move from an anthropocentric to a theocentric existence is the essence of halakhic living. As the Torah, particularly in *Sefer Devarim*, repeatedly emphasizes, the central category of Judaism is mitzva. As we discussed in an earlier lecture, religious human



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existence, not to mention Jewish existence, begins with the verse (*Bereishit* 2:16): "*Va-yetzav Hashem E-lokim al haadam*, And Hashem G-d commanded the man." *Frumkeit* for us surely does not exhaust itself in an emotional experience, but also responds to a divine call and transcendental demands.

THE CENTRALITY OF COMMANDMENT

Moreover, for us, G-d's normative commandment frames the totality of our existence, even with respect to presumably "neutral" areas. I think that it is in this vein that the first commandment to Adam is to be understood. There is something strange about the formulation,

Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat of it. . . (*Bereishit* 2:16-17)

We might have expected the verse to impose certain limitations upon man, to command him merely not to eat of the tree of knowledge. He had been told a long time ago that he could eat from the rest of the trees. So why repeat this permission here—is there a mitzva to eat from the other trees?

I think that the point here is very clear. The Torah is telling us that the moment that the category of commandment appears as an essential component of human existence and experience, this fact has implications not only for *devar ha-mitzva* (obligatory actions or prohibitions), but also for *devar ha-reshut* (non-obligatory actions). So long as man does not live under the impact of "*va-yetzav*," all his actions are the product of absolute freedom (understood as taking what one likes). But the moment the category of "*va-yetzav*" presents itself, it then defines man's existence not only within the parameters of a particular commandment, but within the totality of his existence. Once there is a "*va-yetzav*," then when one imbibes of the *devar reshut*, that too becomes an act of moral choice. One now needs to ask himself: Is this particular action a *devar reshut* or does it fall under the *tzav*; is it subject to individual choice or to a divine command?

In other words, the "*va-yetzav*" addresses itself not only to the tree of knowledge, but rather to all the trees of the garden. The fact that we live, in Milton's phrase, "as ever in my great Taskmaster's eye," constantly under *tzav*, is to us the central, cardinal fact of our existence as a whole. This is what we are to understand by *frumkeit* specifically: "*Be-khol derakhekha ddehu*"—Know G-d in *all* your actions.

SOCRATES' QUESTION

However, to understand *frumkeit* in these terms, as a single concept with two components, as the abnegation of our will in response to our acceptance of G-d's normative will—this only begs the question. At the heart of the problem of the relationship between *frumkeit* and goodness, or, if you will, between religion and morality, lies the question which Socrates poses to Euthyphro. In trying to define piety, Euthyphro explains that piety is that which the G-ds want us to do. Socrates then asks him whether the G-ds love piety because it is pious, or is it pious because they love it? We can reframe the question with G-d, *le-havdil*, in the singular.

Are we to understand the content, value and significance of mitzva, of "the good," as simply deriving from the fact that G-d wants it? He may wish it for purely arbitrary reasons guided by no criteria, bound by no standards, impelled by no reasons. Or do we believe that there is some antecedent reason inherent in a particular phenomenon which "leads" or "impels" G-d to decide upon it? Are we to understand that, at the Divine level, there is a kind of moral relativism where everything is equally good or bad and G-d has chosen between them arbitrarily? Or do we believe that His will is not purely arbitrary, but rather guided by certain standards, and G-d has commanded us based on these criteria?

This question has been the subject of protracted and at times intensive controversy throughout the history of Western thought. In medieval times, William of Ockham championed the voluntarist position, namely, that G-d's will is indeed boundless and limitless, and that nothing is either good or bad but G-d's wishing makes it so. In contrast, Aquinas contended that there are inherent truths and values which are to be found in certain phenomena and that these are the subject of G-d's choice, not by accident but by dint of their very being.

Similar controversies are to be found subsequently in the seventeenth century, not only at the moral level but at the level of fact. Descartes, for instance, contended that had G-d so desired, two times two would not have equaled four. What we have here essentially is a conflict between two fundamental tendencies which, to a great extent, are rooted in different conceptions of G-d.

THE POWER AND THE BEAUTY: TWO CONCEPTIONS OF G-D

The verse says (*Tehillim 29:4*), "*Kol Hashem ba-ko'ach; kol Hashem be-hadar*—The voice of G-d is power; the voice of G-d is splendor." We perceive G-d in one sense as boundless, unbridled power. In another sense, we perceive Him in terms of values, of truth and goodness. To the extent that our perception of G-d and our relation to Him is primarily in terms of power, then surely we will regard as anathema the notion that somehow His will is guided or impelled. The sense of power is most keenly felt precisely when it is arbitrarily exercised, when one need not answer to any kind of standard, when nothing but sheer will is being expressed.

On the other hand, one thinks in terms of "*Kol Hashem behadar*." *Hadar* is presumably some kind of objective beauty, a moral beauty, a beauty of truth. If so, then one is appalled at the thought G-d could have commanded to kill as easily as He commanded not to kill.

Those who indeed relate to G-d primarily out of a sense of His awesome power and their own weakness and impotence, are perhaps likely to move in the direction of the voluntarist position. On the other hand, those who take a more rational and moral position contend that rationality and goodness are part of G-d's very essence. It is true, therefore, that certain things are simply inconceivable for Him; but this is not an external constraint, and therefore we need not be shaken by the thought that somehow His power is not boundless.

G-D'S MORAL ESSENCE

If the issues, as I have said, have been subject to protracted controversy—one writer once described the answer as being the line which divides Eastern from Western religious thought—I

think that the Jewish position is absolutely unequivocal. We indeed hold that G-d's will, His Being, is moral and rational; that He does act, and will, in accordance with certain standards. By virtue of His very essence, certain things not only shall not but cannot be willed by Him. G-d and moral evil are simply and purely incompatible.

Chabakuk (1:13) describes G-d as, "You whose eyes are too pure to look upon evil, who cannot countenance wrongdoing." But why wait until Chabakuk? The Torah itself states (*Devarim* 32:4): "A faithful G-d, never false, true and upright is He." Indeed, this position had already been assumed by Avraham. One of the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists, Benjamin Whichcote, pointed out that when Avraham questioned G-d (in his pleading against the destruction of Sodom), "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (*Bereishit* 18:25), this implied that there is a standard of justice to which G-d, *ki-veyakhol*, can be held accountable. One can ask: Is G-d's plan regarding Sodom compatible with justice? This position is likewise implicit in the recurrent formulations of the problem of *tzaddik ve-ra lo, rasha ve-tov lo*, the suffering of the righteous and prosperity of the wicked.

If we move from morality to the related sphere of rationality, these limits (so to speak) upon G-d's will are the basis of the persistent quest for *ta'amei ha-mitzvot* (reasons for the commandments) chronicled in Yitzchak Heinemann's book, *Ta'amei Hamitzvot Be-sifrut Yisrael*. The controversy over *ta'amei ha-mitzvot* has centered upon the legitimacy and

advisability of our seeking and suggesting reasons, and not upon their very existence. The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 21b) asks: Why were the reasons for the Torah not revealed? Because once they are revealed, there is a risk that someone will think he can transgress the commandment without violating the reason behind it. The Ramban was very emphatic with regard to this point:

The intention of the Rabbis [in defining *chukkim* as divine decrees for which there is no reason] was not that these are decrees of the King of Kings for which there are no reasons whatever, "for every word of G-d is pure" (*Mishlei* 30:5). [Rather, they meant] only that *chukkim* are like the enactments which a king promulgates for his kingdom without revealing their benefits to the people, and the people, not sensing these reasons, entertain questions about them in their hearts but they accept them nonetheless out of fear of the government. Similarly, the *chukkim* of the Holy One, blessed be He, are His secrets in the Torah, which the people by means of their thinking do not grasp as they do in the case of *mishpatim* (laws whose rationale is more apparent). Yet they all have a proper reason and perfect benefit. (Commentary on the Torah, *Vayikra* 19:19)

THE VALUE OF OBEDIENCE

To be sure, if we are dealing with *ta'amei ha-mitzvot*, it is conceivable that another factor comes into play. Perhaps the rationality of the commandment need not relate to the inherent value and significance of a particular *tzav*. The *midrash* relates:

What does it matter to the Holy One, blessed be He, whether we slaughter an animal from the front of the neck or its back? Rather, the *mitzvot* were given in order to purify mankind. (*Bereishit Rabba* 44:1)



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The Rambam (*Guide of the Perplexed* III:26) takes this to mean that we cannot understand the reasons for the *details* of the commandments, and perhaps there are no reasons for these. Why is *shechita* (slaughtering) from the front of the neck, and *melika* (a method of killing birds for sacrifices) from the back? As opposed to the kabbalists, the Rambam takes the position that the details of *mitzvot* perhaps have no inherent significance. It could have been just the reverse. (See Ramban, *Devarim* 22:6, for an opposing view.) But even for the Rambam, this does not mean that the concept of *shechita* per se or *melika* per se has no reason.

One might go beyond this and assume that inherently a particular mitzva does not have a reason, but it is still meaningful. Let me quote you a passage from a very fine little book by C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*:

It has sometimes been asked whether G-d commands certain things because they are right, or whether certain things are right because G-d commands them. With Hooker [a late sixteenth-century Anglican theologian], and against Dr. Johnson, I emphatically embrace the first alternative. The second might lead to the abominable conclusion (reached, I think, by Paley [late eighteenth-century]) that charity is good only because G-d arbitrarily commanded it—that He might equally well have commanded us to hate Him and one another and that hatred would then have been right. I believe, on the contrary, that [quoting Hooker], “they err who think that of the will of G-d to do this or that there is no reason besides His will.” G-d's will is determined by His wisdom which always perceives, and His goodness which always embraces, the intrinsically good. But when we have said that G-d commands things only because they are good, we must add that one of the things intrinsically good is that rational creatures should freely surrender themselves to their Creator in obedience. The content of our obedience—the thing we are commanded to do—will always be something intrinsically good, something we ought to do even if (by an impossible supposition) G-d had not commanded it. But in addition to the content, the mere obeying is also intrinsically good, for, in obeying, a rational creature consciously enacts its creaturely role, reverses the act by which we fell, treads Adam's dance backward, and returns. (p.100)

I think one can go beyond Lewis and suggest that since, as he correctly points out, one of the things which is intrinsically good is that a person accustom himself to obeying G-d, perhaps certain things might have been commanded simply in order to drill the habit into us. In fact, perhaps things were commanded precisely because there is no apparent reason for them, and therefore the habit of obedience is ingrained all the more deeply, to the extent that no reason is perceived. To what can this be compared? A sergeant in the army sometimes puts his soldiers through certain drills precisely to ingrain in them the habit of obeying a commander. He orders them to do things for which there is no apparent reason, and for which indeed there is no reason other than the fact that they develop a habit. This is not equivalent to adopting the voluntarist position. It is simply an expansion of the notion of what we are to understand by that which is intrinsically valuable and desirable.

Now, if we understand that G-d's will and His *mitzvot* are grounded in goodness, rationality and morality, then if we also submit that *frumkeit* means doing G-d's will, and that goodness is



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an integral component of that will—then of course ideal and comprehensive *frumkeit* includes goodness. It is not synonymous with goodness; it includes it, it comprehends it. To us, certainly, this is a *davar pashut*, a simple, obvious matter.

PART 2:

***Frumkeit* Devoid of Goodness**

Although this may be true theoretically, *frumkeit* is, of course, never ideal or comprehensive. We still need to ask ourselves, both philosophically and educationally: How do we regard a *frumkeit* devoid of goodness? Does it exist? Does it have merit?

TZADDIK RA, RASHA TOV

Presumably, the humanist or moralist in us is inclined to hasten to reply, "*Frumkeit* without goodness is worthless! Can someone see himself as relating only to one area of *avodat Hashem* (divine service)? He follows the dictates only of *bein adam la-Makom* (*mitzvot* between man and G-d) but not *bein adam lechavero* (interpersonal *mitzvot*)? What kind of *frumkeit* is that!?" But before we hasten to let the moralist and the humanist in us answer, as *benei Torah* we need to confront the following *gemara*:

Said Rava: Rav Idi explained this verse to me, "Say of the righteous, when he is good, that they shall eat the fruit of their doings" (*Yeshayahu* 3:10). Is there then a righteous man who is good and a righteous man who is not good? Rather [explain thus:] He who is good to Heaven and good to man, he is a righteous man who is good; good to Heaven but not good to man, he is a righteous man who is not good. Similarly we read, "Woe unto the wicked [man who is] evil; for the reward of his hands will be given unto him" (*ibid.* 3:11): Is there then a wicked man who is evil and a wicked man who is not evil? Rather [explain thus:] He who is evil to Heaven and evil to man, he is a wicked man who is evil; he who is evil to Heaven but not evil to man, he is a wicked man who is not evil. (*Kiddushin* 40a)

The *gemara* here apparently understands that the terms *tzaddik* and *rasha* (righteous and wicked) are defined by a person's conduct with respect to the area *bein adam la-Makom*. Whether he is *tov* or *ra* (good or evil) is a function of his conduct in the area of *bein adam le-chavero*. One can therefore be a *tzaddik ra* and a *rasha tov*.

"THOUGH YOU PRAY AT LENGTH, I WILL NOT LISTEN"

Nevertheless, I do not think that our instincts are all that wrong. Moreover, they are not just our instincts. It is not just the humanist in us which somehow rises against the possibility of *frumkeit* which is antithetical to and devoid of goodness. From where did Western culture absorb the cardinal truth that *frumkeit* without goodness is meaningless and at times worse, if not from Judaism? We all know the famous words of the prophet Yeshayahu:

What need have I of all your sacrifices? says the L-rd. I am sated with burnt offerings of rams, and suet of fatlings, and blood of bulls; and I have no delight in lambs and he-goats. When you come to appear before Me—who asked this of you, to trample My

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courts? Cease bringing futile oblations; your incense is offensive to Me. New moon and Sabbath, proclaiming of solemnities, assemblies with iniquity, I cannot abide. Your new moons and fixed seasons fill Me with loathing; they have become a burden to Me, I cannot endure them. And when you lift up your hands, I will turn My eyes away from you; though you pray at length, I will not listen, for your hands are stained with blood. Wash yourselves clean; put your evil things away from My sight! Cease to do evil; learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow! (*Yeshayahu* 1:11-17)

This is the prophet's message. To be sure, these verses focus primarily upon *avoda*: sacrifices, prayer, the Temple service. When these are attempted by a person devoid of goodness, they are particularly problematic, inasmuch as they entail an audacious advance towards G-d, an attempt at a rendezvous with Him. Here the governing principle is, "One may not approach the king's gate in sackcloth" (*Esther* 4:2), actual or figurative. To the extent that one penetrates (so to speak) G-d's domain, one must be not only physically but also morally pure: "Prepare for your G-d, Israel" (*Amos* 4:12)—not only in terms of clothing and physical purification, but in terms of one's inner being. Hence, we encounter in a particularly sharp form the revulsion against *avoda* which is unaccompanied by inner purity: "The offering of evildoers is an abomination" (*Mishlei* 21:27). With regard also to prayer, there is a concept of *to'eva* (abomination), a term which is not equally applicable to other *mitzvot*.

Nevertheless, the conjunction of *frumkeit* and goodness, the sense that goodness is both a component and a condition of *frumkeit*, does surely apply to other *mitzvot* as well. There is another chapter in *Yeshayahu*, which we read on Yom Kippur:

Is such the fast I desire, a day for men to starve their bodies? Is it bowing the head like a bulrush and lying in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call that a fast, a day when the L-rd is favorable? No, this is the fast I desire: to unlock the shackles of wickedness and untie the cords of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break off every yoke. It is to share your bread with the hungry, and to take the wretched poor into your home; when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to ignore your own kin. (*Yeshayahu* 58:5-7)

"HIS MITZVOT ARE THROWN BACK IN HIS FACE"

The Rambam develops the notion that when a person lacks moral consistency, then beyond a certain point one cannot see him simply as observing half of Torah but missing the other half (i.e. being *frum* but having no goodness), but in fact the absence of one component totally invalidates his performance of the other component:

How exalted is the level of repentance! Only yesterday, this [sinner] was divided from G-d, the L-rd of Israel, as it is written (*Yeshayahu* 59:2), "Your sins were dividing between you and your G-d." He would call out [to G-d] without being answered, as it says (*ibid.* 1:15), "Though you pray at length, I will not listen." He would perform *mitzvot*, only to have them thrown back in his face, as it says (*ibid.* 1:12), "Who asked this of you, to trample My courts?" and it says (*Malakhi* 1:10), "O that there were one among you who



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would shut the doors [that you might not kindle fire on My altar for no reason! I have no pleasure in you, says the L-rd of Hosts, nor will I accept an offering from your hand].” Today, [after having repented,] he clings to the Divine Presence, as it is written (*Devarim* 4:4), “And you who cling to the L-rd, your G-d.” He calls out [to G-d] and is answered immediately, etc. (*Hilkhot Teshuva* 7:7)

There is a certain situation wherein a person performs *mitzvot* and they are thrown back in his face. How are we to regard the person who relates solely to the area of *bein adam la-Makom* and is totally oblivious to the area of *bein adam le-chavero*? Is he not separated from G-d, the L-rd of Israel?

I do not want to get involved in the question, which we ought certainly to avoid, of the respective importance of *bein adam la-Makom* versus *bein adam le-chavero*. (Although if we got involved in that issue, we might look at the Rosh in the beginning of *Pe'a* who says that *bein adam le-chavero* is more important.) Regardless of that question, it seems inconceivable that a person who is lacking a whole area of *mitzvot* would not be regarded as being separated from G-d. But the question persists. How do we resolve the inherent contradiction between the *gemara* in *Kiddushin*, on the one hand, and the verses in *Yeshayahu* and the evident extension of them by the Rambam, on the other?

ACTIVE EVIL AND OBLIVIOUSNESS

I think that we have to distinguish between two kinds of obliviousness or insensitivity to the area of *bein adam le-chavero*. I find it inconceivable from a Jewish perspective to refer to a person as a *tzaddik*, albeit a *tzaddik ra*, if he is *mehader* (excessive) in the area of *bein adam la-Makom*—he has *Rabbeinu Tam tefillin*, *kaful shemoneh tzitzit* (ritual objects conforming to stringent opinions) and eats only hand-baked matza and *glatt* meat—but within the area of *bein adam le-chavero* he tramples everything underfoot. Is it really possible that a person who is a thief, murderer, liar and cheat can be described as a *tzaddik* (but a *tzaddik ra*) all because he has fancy *tefillin*?

I think the *gemara* in *Kiddushin* is referring to something else: not a person who tramples underfoot the whole area of *bein adam le-chavero*, but a person who is simply oblivious to it. He pours his energies into and concentrates upon the area of *bein adam la-Makom* to such an extent that he has neither the energy, resources, nor motivation to work within the area of *bein adam le-chavero* as well. It is in this sense that he is *ra la-beriyot* (evil to mankind). He does nothing for them. He has no social conscience and is insensitive to the needs of others. He is totally concerned with the area of being *tov la-Shamayim* (good to Heaven).

This person represents a partial and limited *frumkeit*, but a legitimate *frumkeit*. This is not to say that it is in any sense ideal, nor is it recommended. After all, we need to strive not only to be *tzaddikim* but *tzaddikim tovim*. But, insofar as it goes, it is legitimate and real. Were a person, however, to be evil in an active sense—he wrongs others, injures them knowingly, willfully, viciously—then he surely could not be defined as a *tzaddik* in any sense, and of him it is said that his *mitzvot* “are thrown back in his face.” He buys *Rabbeinu Tam tefillin* and he has *kaful shemoneh tzitzit*, “and they are thrown back in his face.”

I believe that one point should be added. I have distinguished here between a kind of *aseh ra* (actively doing evil) and an insensitivity to the area of good and evil. I believe that there is a level of insensitivity, of egocentric religiosity, of concern and involvement solely with oneself and with what one understands to be one's relationship to G-d, at which the obliviousness to others becomes so complete that passive insensitivity translates into a kind of active evil. There are areas in Halakha where a specific demand is made to do something, and where passively not doing anything is conceived as being a positive evil: "Do not stand by your brother's blood" (*Vayikra* 19:16); "You may not ignore it" (with regard to returning lost objects—*Devarim* 22:3). The rabbis extended this concept to other areas. To take one radical example, Ben Azzai says (*Yevamot* 63b) that whoever can have children and does not—he is like one who sheds blood, a murderer. He could have built, and he didn't. So there is, I believe, a level of inactivity and insensitivity at which one's mere passive absence is in itself a positive evil. I do not want now to offer any suggestions regarding where that line is to be drawn. I do believe, however, that in principle this is the case.

INTERIM SUMMARY

Thus, we need to strive first for *frumkeit* in its totality, and that of course means *frumkeit* including goodness—a goodness which, I repeat, is not synonymous with *frumkeit* but included within it. We need to strive for both components of that *frumkeit*, "Fear G-d and keep His commandments," but of course by way of understanding its scope. Our aim, both for ourselves and for our children and students, is to be formulated in terms of the *gemara* in *Shabbat* (31b): the central, overriding aim is *yirat Shamayim*, and all other values are constituent elements within it. There is educational merit in understanding that indeed there is an *unum necessarium*, one thing necessary, and this is *yirat Shamayim*. But we must simultaneously recognize that inasmuch as moral goodness is part of G-d's will, and inasmuch as *yirat Shamayim* means accepting and responding to His will, then moral goodness is part of what we understand by *yirat Shamayim* and part of what we strive for when we talk about *frumkeit*.

Nevertheless, while this aim can be easily stated, (a) its implementation is very difficult, and (b) there are a number of educational and philosophic problems which arise. Therefore, I now want to focus on those problems which I believe have specific and immediate educational ramifications.

PART 3:

Goodness Devoid of *Frumkeit*

"WITHOUT G-D, EVERYTHING IS LAWFUL"

We spoke previously of the problem of *frumkeit* devoid of goodness. Now I would like to address the reverse phenomenon: How do we relate—personally, philosophically, professionally—to goodness devoid of *frumkeit*, to a secular moral idealism?

Of course, some people question whether such a phenomenon can even exist. They argue that morality without religion is simply inconceivable, a position succinctly summarized by Ivan Karamazov (in Dostoyevsky's novel): "Without



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G-d, everything is lawful." This claim is made on a philosophical plane. Others, however, argue from a practical standpoint: even if, conceptually, goodness can exist independently of a religious outlook, on a practical level a person or a society can arrive at morality only through religion.

Regarding the philosophical argument, it is perhaps true that a strong case can be made for the notion that without G-d everything is lawful. First, one could argue that the substance of morality derives only from G-d's will; but we have already discussed this position and have established that Judaism rejects it. Alternatively, one could contend that objective goodness can exist only within a universe where one postulates the existence of G-d and the existence of man as a spiritual being. If one were to think only in secular terms, regarding man as nothing more than "a kind of combination of carbon and water" (in Bertrand Russell's phrase), then in such a universe there cannot be any good or bad because there is no ultimate end or purpose for man.

But even if one were to concur with this philosophical argument, can we factually deny that there exist people who are totally removed from religion yet nonetheless act in accordance with high moral standards? Perhaps they are logically inconsistent; perhaps if they were deeper philosophers, they would be worse people. Yet they regard themselves, and we would regard them too, as moral individuals. We cannot be oblivious to the existence of this phenomenon. How, then, do we relate to it?

IMMORAL REJOICING

Before answering this question, I would like to address the above-mentioned claim that religion is necessary in order to arrive at morality. This argument has been advanced frequently in the modern period. It is a reflection of the secularization of modern culture that religion needs to be sold to masses on the basis of its contribution to morality. In eighteenth-century England, the novelist Henry Fielding advanced this claim; in the nineteenth century, Cardinal Newman rejected it precisely because he said it was a debasement of religion: you are basing religion's legitimacy purely upon its moral significance.

Nonetheless, I encounter this argument all the time in Israel among religious educators. In order to impress upon everyone the importance of religious education, they enumerate its benefits to society. "Do you want people to be loyal citizens? Make them religious. Do you want them to be honest? Make them religious. Do you want them to have a sense of purpose in life? Make them religious." Whenever new statistics are published about the degree of sexual licentiousness or drug addiction or some other kind of delinquency within the secular schools, even within the elite schools, there is jubilation among these educators. (This is akin to the rejoicing you encounter among certain staunch advocates of *aliya* every time they read about a murder in Brooklyn or Long Beach; they make sure to republish it in their newspaper in large type.) Brandishing these statistics, they argue: "Do you see what happens in your secular education? You get drug addicts; you get thieves; you get young people stabbing each other. If you want the stabbing and the drug addiction to stop—send the kids to us and we will make *menschen* out of them."

Let me make it clear that we must categorically reject this attitude. Is this what we want? Should we be happy every time a higher degree of corruption and greater depths of delinquency are discovered in some secular school!? Who are those delinquents? Our brothers! In order to score points and to increase registration at our religious schools, are we to gloat that the system of secular education is presumably crumbling? That it no longer turns out idealists? That it only produces pragmatists? We should weep!

Thus, returning to our original question, we surely should not dismiss nor denigrate moral idealism simply because it springs (in certain cases) from secular sources. Certainly, we believe deeply that a moral idealist would be at a much higher level were his morality rooted in *yirat Shamayim*, were it grounded in a perception of his relation to G-d and of the nature of a man as a respondent and obedient being. But that surely is not to say that we therefore ought to dismiss totally the possibility or the reality of secular morality. First, we should not do this because it is simply untrue—there are genuinely moral people within the secular community. Second, we ought not do this because, after all, the results are not what we should be seeking. Whether we score points here or there is not crucial. In the process of “scoring points,” we increase *sinat achim* (fraternal hatred), we sharpen divisions, we heighten tensions; and that is, in and of itself, a moral and ethical problem.

PART 4:

Conflicts Between Religion and Morality

“THE DUNGHILL OF MORALITY”

Having addressed the phenomena of *frumkeit* devoid of goodness and of goodness devoid of *frumkeit*, I would like to move on to the next issue. I emphasized before that *frumkeit* and goodness are not synonymous; rather, goodness is ideally to be included within *frumkeit*. But if they are not to be regarded as synonymous, is there a possibility that *frumkeit* and goodness can sometimes be antonymous?

There is such a possibility, and we should confront it. At one level, there is a question as to whether the quest for morality somehow conflicts with one’s religious commitment. Some would claim that the focus on developing one’s character undercuts the central experience of one’s religious being, namely, relating directly and submitting to G-d. This point of view was expressed in early Christianity, and it reared its head again during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries within the Protestant world. In the controversy regarding salvation through faith or through works (i.e. deeds), those works which were rejected most sharply were the moral works. In this perspective, morality is regarded as an audacious human undertaking, a challenge to G-d, where one stakes out an independent moral area instead of gearing one’s entire spiritual being to submitting to G-d. Puritan preachers used to describe works as “the dunghill of morality” and regarded them simply as a spiritual abomination. For them, being good was indeed antonymous to being *frum*, because via “morality” you set yourself up as an alternative to the *eved Hashem* (servant of G-d) in you.

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This notion has a history in Christianity, but it surely has no place within our *beit midrash*. Our conception of religious life highlights man's free will and emphasizes our efforts to build ourselves spiritually. As I mentioned before, these certainly include an emphasis upon morality. Therefore, this kind of tension between morality and religion is not a significant factor for us.

THE AKEIDA

However, there is a second kind of conflict, a different sort of tension. I mentioned before that the quest for goodness is an integral component of *frumkeit*. Generally speaking, this is true. But regarding certain particular *tzivuyim* (divine commands), surely we find instances in which obedient response to G-d's normative demands stands in apparent opposition to what we conceive to be good and, if you will, to what we understand that G-d conceives to be good. Here, a problem arises: How do we relate to this?

What makes this problem more acute is the fact that it arises particularly in individuals who are morally and spiritually sensitive. Those who are relatively coarse are not concerned with these issues. Who is troubled by the command to wipe out Amalek? Those people who have succeeded in developing the kind of moral sensitivity that is important to us.

When there is a conflict between the *tzav* and the moral order, what do we do about it? For us, the answer is perhaps practically difficult, but surely it is conceptually clear and unequivocal. This, after all, is what the *akeida* (sacrifice of Yitzchak—*Bereishit* 22) is all about. Kierkegaard emphasized that the *akeida* represents a conflict between Avraham's moral sense and the divine command; as far as understanding the problem, he was unquestionably correct. On the one hand, Avraham is commanded to offer his son to G-d (which, at this point, he understands to mean "Slaughter him," not "Offer him"). On the other hand, he knows that murder is forbidden. The message of the *akeida* is clear: G-d's command takes precedence, in every respect, over our moral sensibility and our conscientious objections.

This is not to say that in such a context there is no room for moral sensibility. Surely, in relating to Halakha, including those areas which one may find morally difficult, there is some role for conscience, some role for the goodness in us, particularly in an interpretive capacity. Conscience does and legitimately can have a role in helping us to understand the content and substance of the *tzav*. In the *Midrash*, *Chazal* depict Avraham's thoughts during his three-day journey to the *akeida*. He tried to understand G-d's command: perhaps G-d meant something else. Surely, one can, and presumably should, walk the last mile in order to try in every way to avoid a conflict. But even when one has walked the last mile, at

times the conflict may remain, and—as in the *akeida*—the decisive element is clear. It was only a *tzav* of G-d, or of the angel sent by G-d, which was able to countermand the command to sacrifice Yitzchak.

The task before us is multifaceted. As those who educate towards *yirat Shamayim*, we must communicate the message of the *akeida*—boldly, loudly and clearly. On the other hand, as those who do seek to ingrain moral sensitivity in ourselves and in our children, we need not dismiss the ambivalences, the difficulties and contradictions (at the initial level, surely). We need not wish

away Avraham's three days of spiritual groping. We need not dismiss the wrestling and grappling as being a reflection of poor *yirat Shamayim*, of spiritual shallowness, or of a lack of *frumkeit*. Inasmuch as goodness itself is an inherent component of *frumkeit*, the goodness which is at the root of the problems, struggles and tensions is itself part of *yirat Shamayim*—and a legitimate part. If the sense of moral goodness is legitimate, then the questing and the grappling are also legitimate.

But, of course, the resolution must be clear, and the grappling must all be done within the parameters of the understanding that, however much I wrestle, I do not for a moment question the authenticity or the authority of the *tzav*. I do not judge G-d. I assume, a priori, that "His deeds are perfect, for all His ways are just; a faithful G-d, without iniquity, righteous and upright is He" (*Devarim* 32:4). If He commands, "Take your son and offer him as a sacrifice," then it must be good (in a sense which perhaps, at the moment, I do not understand). But within the context of my a priori obedient submission, I may try to understand. I may grope, I may ask, and I may ultimately seek resolution.

PART 5:

Risks and Priorities

INNER CONSTRAINT

I spoke before of the importance of morality and the need to emphasize it. There are, to be sure, certain risks involved. First, there is indeed a risk that if you sensitize people morally and ethically, they will then have difficulty with certain areas of Halakha. Presumably, if Elisha ben Avuya had been less sensitive to the problem of G-d's justice and consistency, then he would not have become an apostate. If Voltaire had believed from the outset in a Calvinist G-d, rather than in one who is just and decent, the Lisbon earthquake might not have unsettled him. We must be conscious of this risk.

Second, when emphasizing the relationship of goodness to *frumkeit*, we may also face the opposite kind of risk:

that one will then think that the only significance of the moral element is that it is part of the divine command. At the end of the war in Lebanon, some cast doubt on the halakhic severity of the prohibition of killing non-Jews. My colleague Rav Yehuda Amital spoke out very forcefully on this issue, and among other things, he quoted the opinion of the Ra'avan (*Bava Kama* 113a) that this is an *issur de-oraita* (biblical prohibition). I recall that someone was critical of this, and he said, "What kind of education is this? It teaches the student that whether or not he's going to kill a gentile should be dependent upon a Ra'avan in *Bava Kama!*"

There is a point to this. Emphasizing the integration of *frumkeit* and goodness harbors the risk that the inherent significance of goodness somehow will get lost. The Rambam in *Shemoneh Perakim* (Chapter Six) certainly does not favor that. He asks whether a person ideally should constrain himself from transgressing a Torah law only because of the *tzav*, the divine command, or whether he should feel that even had there been no *tzav*, he would not transgress it simply because it is bad. The Rambam answers that with regard to *mishpatim*, or areas *bein adam lechavero* (between man and his fellow), certainly a person should not feel constrained solely by

the *tzav*, but rather should feel an inner constraint because of the moral element *per se*. The conjunction of *frumkeit* and goodness can undercut this sense.

AN EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCE?

There is a third risk as well. I spoke before of accepting the problem of the *akeida*, of recognizing a certain conflict here between morality and *mitzva*, and of granting legitimacy to one's grappling with this issue. This too can present an educational problem. Let me illustrate with an incident which occurred to me during the Lebanon War.

After the massacre at Sabra and Shatila, I published an open letter to the Prime Minister. Among other things, this letter dealt with the use of force and the motivation behind it. I asked: Why was it that King Shaul was punished for not killing Agag, King of Amalek? Was it simply for not having killed the last remaining Amalekite? I suggested that he was punished not just for sparing Agag, but because the fact that he refused to kill Agag placed in a totally different light his killing of all the other Amalekites beforehand.

Shaul had been commanded to take a whole people and kill them—and this is, morally, a frightful thing. The only justification lies in it being a response to an unequivocal divine command. Therefore, if Shaul had been motivated in his actions purely by fear of G-d, by obedience to the *tzav*, then he should have followed the command to the letter. G-d didn't say, "Kill Amalek but spare Agag." Now, if he didn't kill Agag but killed everybody else, what does that indicate? It indicates that what motivated him in killing the others was not the *tzav* of G-d, but rather some baser impulse, some instinctive violence. And the proof is that he killed everyone, but spared his peer, his royal comrade. If that is the case, then Shaul was not punished for sparing Agag: rather, he had to be punished because of the Amalekites he did kill! Why? Because he killed them not purely due to a divine command (which is the only thing that can overcome the moral consideration), but rather out of military, diplomatic or political considerations.

Subsequently, I heard that a leading Religious Zionist rabbi in a prominent yeshiva had taken thirty minutes out of his *Gemara shiur* in order to attack what I had said. I called and asked him, "What did I say that merits this great wrath?" He replied, "I think it is a terrible thing to speak in this way, describing the divine command to destroy Amalek as asking a person to do something which ordinarily is not moral. This poses an ethical problem."

I said to him, "Wiping out Amalek does not conform to what we would normally expect a person to do. Normally, you should not be killing 'from child to suckling babe.' But I'm not saying, G-d forbid, that it is immoral in our case, where G-d has specifically commanded the destruction of Amalek—'A faithful G-d, without iniquity, righteous and upright is He' (*Devarim* 32:4). Although generally such an act would be considered immoral, it assumes a different character when G-d, from His perception and perspective, commands it. The same holds true of the *akeida*—it demanded that Avraham do something which normally is immoral. But in the context of the divine command, surely it partakes of the goodness and morality of G-d. We must admit, though, that there is a conflict in this case between the usual moral norm and the immediate *tzav* given here."

He said, "Yes, but you shouldn't describe it as being something which is not moral in a sense." So I asked him, "Do you agree that the *tzav* given here is something which we would not normally encourage people to do, something that we would normally consider to be immoral?" He said, "Yes, but it should not be described that way." And he added, "*Yesh kan hevdel chinukhi*—there is an educational difference."

I admit, there is something to this. The moment one speaks of a kind of clash between the demands of *yirat Shamayim* and the demands of morality—even given the qualifications which I mentioned—there is some kind of problem. There are risks in this approach.

LOVE NOT MORALITY LESS, BUT PIETY MORE

Nevertheless, I believe there is little choice. I think that the importance of moral sensibility as the grounds for moral action in our lives is of such scope, depth and magnitude that we need willingly to accept certain risks. To be sure, we should try to minimize them, but I don't think we can avoid them. We avoid them only by, in effect, almost totally neutralizing the moral element in our educational endeavors. What we need to do is not to instill morality less, but *yirat Shamayim* more.

I recall in my late adolescence there were certain problems which perturbed me, the way they perturb many others. At the time, I resolved them all in one fell swoop. I had just read Rav Zevin's book, *Ishim Ve-shitot*. In his essay on Rav Chayim Soloveitchik, he deals not only with his methodological development, but also with his personality and *gemilut chasadim* (acts of kindness). He recounted that Reb Chayim used to check every morning if some unfortunate woman had placed an infant waif on his doorstep during the course of the night. (In Brisk, it used to happen at times that a woman would give birth illegitimately and leave her infant in the hands of Reb Chayim.) As I read the stories about Reb Chayim's extraordinary kindness, I said to myself: Do I approach this level of *gemilut chasadim*? I don't even dream of it! In terms of moral sensibility, concern for human beings and sensitivity to human suffering, I am nothing compared to Reb Chayim. Yet despite his moral sensitivity, he managed to live, and live deeply, with the totality of Halakha—including the commands to destroy the Seven Nations, Amalek and all the other things which bother me. How? The answer, I thought, was obvious. It is not that his moral sensitivity was less, but his *yirat Shamayim*, his *emuna*, was so much more. The thing to do, then, is not to try to neutralize or de-emphasize the moral element, but rather to deepen and increase the element of *yirat Shamayim*, of *emuna*, *deveikut* and *bittachon*.

I have subsequently thought of that experience on many occasions. I recall once hearing someone, regarded as a philosopher of sorts, raise moral criticisms of various halakhic practices. When asked about these criticisms, I said, "I know that particular person. He doesn't look for a foundling on his doorstep every morning."

So what we need to do, I think, is not to weaken our moral sense or that of our children and students. Rather, we need to deepen and to intensify our commitment, our faith, our sense of obedience, our *yirat Shamayim*. We need to deepen our sense that G-d has nothing in this world besides *yirat Shamayim*, and that our moral conscience needs to develop within its context.

DIVISION OF RESOURCES

There is, finally, another problem—one which affects us within the Centrist Orthodox community more than others. Let me illustrate. I remember some years back, when I was still living in America, a man who had given a lot of money to the Skverer chassidic community invited my wife and myself to see their institutions. When we came to the elementary school, we saw the walls plastered with signs dealing with the *mitzvot* of *hashavat aveida* (returning lost objects), *bikkur cholim* (visiting the sick), *gemilut chasadim*, etc. I was struck by the fact that all the posters dealt with the area of *bein adam le-chavero*—not a single mention of Shabbat, *tefillin* or *tzitzit*! In any Centrist Orthodox school, you would have seen posters only on the latter subjects (to the extent that there would be posters dealing with *mitzvot* at all).

I immediately realized the reason for this difference. In the Skverer community, you had children growing up in an environment where their teachers could take Shabbat, *tefillin* and *tzitzit* absolutely for granted. That was the given; the possibility that a person would reject these never occurred to them. Therefore, they were able to focus all their energies upon those areas within which even people who are practically and philosophically committed to Shabbat and *kashrut* may nevertheless fail. This is something which we, unfortunately, cannot do. Within both our educational and political systems, we find ourselves driven repeatedly to safeguard the ritual area, which we feel is uniquely ours. We channel so much of our energies and resources into these particular elements both because they are distinctive to us, and because we feel that unless we emphasize it massively, the kids will not get it at all.

This judgment may well be correct. In part, we feel comfortable focusing on the ritual because we assume that the students can learn morality elsewhere. It is *efshar l'dasot al yedei acherim* (capable of being done by others)—they can read Camus or something similar. But we pay a great price for this. First of all, it is not always *efshar l'dasot al yedei acherim*—perhaps instead of reading Camus they will read Ayn Rand. Even if they don't, the danger exists that there will be a bifurcation between *frumkeit* and goodness within their minds and personalities. They might regard these areas as being not only distinct but disjunct. This could lead them to identify the world of Torah with only *Yoreh De'a*, *Even Ha-ezer* and *Orach Chayim* (the largely ritual areas of Halakha), while ignoring all the rest. Unfortunately, this danger is sometimes reinforced by the fact that, at times, there are indeed communities within which this impression seems to be the correct one. Certainly, we need and want to avoid this.

So, quite apart from the problems I mentioned before, for us specifically, within our community, the question of division of energy, time and resources becomes a problem in its own right. It is exacerbated by the fact that, in a certain sense, the whole concern with the moral realm is more directly related to our community's philosophy than it is to the philosophy of those on the right. I say this for two reasons. First, we are, generally speaking, more involved with the total, universal community. We feel closer to universal human values than do those on the right. Second, we tend to be more sensitive—and rightly so—to that area in our life within which the ethical is more directly significant, namely, the area of *devar ha-reshut* (where specific commands do not apply). We have a greater awareness of the significance of this area.

Defining something as *devar reshut*, of course, does not mean that this is an area which is neutral and therefore it is immaterial what you do. According to many *Rishonim*, whether a person injures himself is defined as *devar reshut*. That hardly means that a person can wantonly and willfully cut off a limb.

These factors sharpen the problem of how we are to divide our resources. On the one hand, we appreciate more fully and encounter more immediately the area of *devar reshut*, where moral factors often come into play. On the other hand, our need to focus on the area of *yirat Shamayim*, narrowly defined, is also greater. The question of division of resources thus becomes for us that much more acute.

"ONE THING G-D HAS SPOKEN, TWO THINGS I HAVE HEARD"

We have a problem that needs to be resolved differently in different contexts, as, in general, the problem of priorities and budgeting cannot be resolved from on high by some kind of universal fiat. What is important for us, though, is that we learn to avoid the implications of the question I mentioned at the outset. First, we must avoid the notion that—broadly and generally speaking (whatever may be true of a particular instance)—there can be any kind of antithesis between *frumkeit* and goodness. On the other hand, we must learn to avoid the notion that the two are simply synonymous. They are not; one is included within the other. Likewise, we must avoid the sense that we need to bifurcate these areas and therefore to grade them: this is more important and this is less. We need to have and to impart a very profound sense not only of the centrality but of the unity of Torah. "One thing G-d has spoken; two things I have heard" (*Tehillim* 62:12). There are many components, but one overriding message, and for us one overriding duty—to emphasize the interconnection between these two components, in the spirit of the *gemara* in *Kiddushin*:

Ulla Rabba expounded at the entrance to the Nasi's house: What is meant by the verse (*Tehillim* 138:4), "All the kings of the earth will acknowledge you, O L-rd, for they have heard the statements of Your mouth?" It does not say, "the *statement* of Your mouth," but rather, "the *statements* of Your mouth." [This indicates that] when the Holy One, blessed be He, proclaimed, "I am the L-rd your G-d" and "You shall have no other G-ds before Me," the nations of the world said, "He is saying this merely for His own honor." But as soon as He declared, "Honor your father and your mother," they recanted and acknowledged the first two statements.

Rava said: [This may also be derived] from the following verse (*Tehillim* 119:160): "The beginning of Your utterance is true"—the *beginning* of Your utterance but not the *end* of Your utterance? Rather, from the end of Your utterance (i.e. "Honor your father and your mother") it is evident that the beginning of Your utterance (i.e. "I am the L-rd" and "You shall have no other G-ds") is true. (*Kiddushin* 31a)

Our sense of the truth and vitality of Torah is sharpened and deepened through our recognition of its total unity. This means conceiving of the areas of *bein adam la-Makom* and *bein adam lechavero* not as different or conflicting elements, but rather as one central unity,



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K1: Intro to theme

albeit subdivided into various components. "The beginning of Your utterance is true," and "From the end of Your utterance, it is evident that the beginning of Your utterance is true."

NOTES:

1 See his articles in Yeshivat Har Etzion's Torah journal, *Alon Shevut* #100 (Kislev 5743).

2 *Ha-tzofeh*, 10/15/82, p. 5.

(Based on an address to Yeshiva University Rabbinic Alumni, November 1986 [5747].

This adaptation has not been reviewed by Harav Lichtenstein.)

K2: Adam HaRishon



Aims:

1. **Learn** about Adam haRishon.
2. **Explore** about the responsibilities of being human and an individual Jew.
3. **Discover** the Torah perspective on environmentalism.

Fact File

- 1:27 – Hashem creates a being – both male and female on the sixth day.
- 2:7 – We are told Hashem made Adam from the dust of the earth, and he blew into man's nostrils the soul of life, and man became alive.
- 2:15 – G-d put Adam in the Garden of Eden to work and guard it.
- 2:16-17 G-d instructs Adam he may eat from any tree except the tree of Knowledge.
- 2:18 – Hashem decides that man alone is bad, and he needs to create helpers.
- 2:19-20 – Hashem brought each animal to Adam who, in turn, named them.
- 2:21-23 – Hashem cast a sleep upon Adam and took flesh from his side in order to form a partner for Adam. And thus Hashem formed a woman! Adam named her "Woman" as she was taken from man.
- 3:6 – Eve gave Adam fruit from the tree of knowledge and he ate it.
- 3:8 – Adam and Eve tried to hide from Hashem.
- 3:11-14 – Hashem questions Adam about eating from the tree, and he blames Eve.
- 3:16 – Eve is punished with painful childbirth.
- 3:17-20 – Adam is punished.
- 3:22-24 – Adam and Eve are banished from Gan Eden.
- 4:1 – Adam and Eve had sons, Cain and Abel.
- 4:25 – Adam and Eve have another son, Seth.
- 5:1-4 – Brief summary of Adam's life.
- 5:5 – We are told Adam lived for 930 years.
- Adam HaRishon only appears in Parashat Bereishit.

She Made Me Do It!!!

Adam, the first man created by Hashem a mere 5781 years ago, was created from the dust of the earth. However, aside from his famous "she made me do it" line, we don't seem to know much about him; the Torah doesn't seem to divulge any personal information. The story of Adam HaRishon, is included in the Torah in order to teach us something about ourselves. We learn about what it means to be a human being and where our responsibilities should fall. Unlike our next few Ks, this K will focus on learning about a way we should live our lives as a Nation as opposed to a specific characteristic we should imitate.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Get your chanichim to write down as many facts as they can about Adam HaRishon. Let them struggle for a bit! Use this as a trigger to talk about his importance and role.

Adam HaRishon was created by Hashem on the sixth day and is essentially the father of all mankind. However, we do not believe that he was the first Jew (see K4). From Adam descended the seventy nations that populate the earth, thus, we can be reassured that every Human, no matter who or where, was created "Betzelem Elokim."

To Guard and To Work

When Adam finally awoke in Gan Eden, he was given the following instruction:

"וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיְנַחֲהוּ בְּגַן עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָּהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ."

"Hashem, G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden **to cultivate and to guard it**" (Bereshit 2:15)

Man's first instruction from Hashem is a dual task. Not only are we told to guard the land, we are also told to cultivate it, in other words get creative. In order to decipher what our actual task at hand is, we need to take a closer look at the wording of our instruction.

L'shemorah literally means 'to guard, but it can be interpreted as to protect, honour or preserve. Being a shomer (guard) implies that you are responsible for an object that is being guarded. Your role is to protect an object on behalf of its owner.

Being a shomer of the world, as Hashem asks us to do, is not simply watching out for baddies or doing shmira at night-time to protect from harm, it requires us to be active. It's like looking after a child; you don't simply watch over it, you have to look after it and make sure its needs are fulfilled.

DISCUSSION POINT – What type of things do we need to look out for in order to 'guard' the world?

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Give your chanichim an egg to look after for 10 minutes They are its shomer. Slowly present them with challenges where they have to ensure to "shomer" their egg in the best way possible and prevent it from cracking. (ALL EGGS MUST BE HARD BOILED!)

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בעקבות אבותינו - Aleph: In the Footsteps of our Ancestors

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לְדוֹד מְזִמּוֹר לֵה' הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהּ תִּבֶּל וַיִּשְׁבִּי בָּהּ:
*"A Psalm by David. The earth and all that it holds
 is Hashem's"* (Tehillim 24:1)

The world is very clearly not ours. We are very much just looking after it. Whilst we may have the right to use it, we certainly don't have the right to abuse it.

To be successful in our role as a shomer, we must realise that there can be no element of passivity in our job. We must take active jobs to ensure we are guarding what we have been left with appropriately and with the best intentions. We must be alert, looking for and dealing with potential. **Guarding does not simply expect us to merely preserve what exists already; it relies on us to ensure it is there for those who come after us.**

Having been presented with this fairly large instruction by Hashem, when we look back at the passuk where we receive this commandment, we see that there is a part 2, in the form of cultivating the land, which we interpret to mean being a creative entity that adds to the world. Our role is to ensure the world is never stationary. Yes, we are commanded to rest on Shabbat, however the Torah states explicitly that on the other six days of the week we should be working:

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלֹאכֶתְךָ

"Six days shall you labour and do all your work" (Shemot 20:9)

Work of all kinds is essential; work is our cultivating. Even if one chooses to study Torah, which is viewed as taking precedence over any other activity, one must still engage in this world and engage with work.

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בְּנוֹ שֶׁל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַנָּשִׂיא אוֹמֵר, יִפֶּה תִּלְמוּד תּוֹרָה עִם דְּרֹךְ אֶרֶץ, שְׂיִגִיעַת שְׁגִיָּה מִשְׁפַּחַת עוֹן. וְכָל תּוֹרָה שְׂאִין עִמָּה מְלֹאכָה, סוֹפָה בְּטֵלָה וְגוֹרְרַת עוֹן.

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehuda haNasi said 'excellent is the study of Torah when combined with work, for toil in them both keeps sin out of one's mind; But [study of the] Torah which is not combined with a worldly occupation, in the end comes to be neglected and becomes the cause of sin. (Avot 2:2)

We need to grow, learn and bring new ideas and concepts into the world in order to fulfil our purpose on earth, and therefore play a part in cultivating the earth as we are commanded.

DISCUSSION POINT – Based on this, is it ideal for us to all be farmers and 'cultivate the land'?

But it's beautiful enough ...

Guarding the world and ensuring its future is a logical and comprehensible idea. Although we have clarified exactly what it means to cultivate the earth as Hashem instructed us, when we read through Parashat Bereishit, we are presented with a problem.

"And Behold, it was very good" (Bereshit 1:31) - וְהָיָה טוֹב מְאֹד

If it was good when Hashem created it, why are we attempting to change it? We are merely mortal, without a doubt what we could create Hashem could do better, so why should we change what is seemingly perfect already? Why would Hashem give us this seemingly impossible task?

The way that this is answered by those greater and wiser than us, is that man's creativity and talents were factored into the word "good". When we read the passuk "And behold it was very good", part of that goodness is man's creativity and ability to develop the world.

There is a famous episode found in the Midrash Tanchuma (Tazria 5) that tells of the meeting between Rabbi Akiva and the Roman Governor of Eretz Yisrael:

Turnus Rufus: If G-d wanted man to be circumcised, why didn't he create them that way?

Rabbi Akiva: Bring me some wheat, and then bring me a loaf of bread. Which do you prefer to eat, the wheat or the bread?

Turnus Rufus: Naturally, the bread.

Rabbi Akiva: Do you not see now that the works of flesh and blood are more pleasant than those of G-d?

Although this is an extreme example, Rabbi Akiva said it himself: in creating bread, man reached a new level of grandeur which cannot be attained by any other part of creation. So too, in order to cultivate the world, we take things that Hashem has created and use them in a way that makes the world even more beautiful than it was already. Of course, Hashem could have made bread trees for us, but he wants us to be creative; it is our role, our responsibility.

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The world was created for us “to do” stuff to. Work has a dual purpose: it allows us to develop as people, and it also allows us to develop the world and perfect it, l'avdecha.



Middah Spotlight - Environmentalism

The majority of our K's intend to talk about characteristics of particular people found in Tanach and then boil down to how we can modernise and replicate these characteristics in our lives today to be better people. With regards to Adam Ha'Rishon, as we mentioned at the beginning, our focus is more on developing a way of life as opposed to a specific characteristic.

The way in which we have chosen to illuminate the idea of “shomer and l'avdecha” to our chanichim is through environmentalism which cannot be more relevant in our times. Practically, what does halacha say about environmentalism?

כִּי תִצּוֹר אֶל עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְּסָהּ לֹא תִשְׁחִית אֶת עֵצָהּ לְנֹדַח עָלֶיהָ גְרֹזֵן כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכְל וְאֵתוּ לֹא תִכְרֹת כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה לְבָא מִפְּנֵיךָ בְּמִצּוֹר: רַק עֵץ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְעַ כִּי לֹא עֵץ מֵאֲכָל הוּא אֶתוּ תִשְׁחִית וְכָרַת וּבְנִית מִצּוֹר עַל הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ מִלְחָמָה עַד רִדְתָּה: *“When you shall besiege a city a long time, and wage war to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against fruit trees... Only the trees which you know are not trees for food, you may destroy and cut them down to build siege machinery against the city waging war with you.” (Devarim 20:19-20)*

This famous commandment from the Torah really illustrates the focus that the Torah puts on protecting the environment. Back in the day the fuel of war was wood! It made fires, spears, arrows and more...yet the Torah forbids destroying the environment for it. The Rambam takes this concept further:

“This prohibition does not apply to trees only. Rather, anyone who breaks utensils, tears garments, destroys buildings, stops up a stream, or ruins food with destructive intent transgresses the command “Do not destroy.” (Hilchot Melachim 6:10)

These two sources are just the introduction to Judaism’s opinion on environmentalism; however, they very clearly and explicitly show us where Judaism stands. The above source informs us of the halacha of Ba'al Tashchit – not wasting.

This statement of the Halacha of “Baal Tashchit” – not wasting: is there really much more to say regarding Judaism’s approach to environmentalism?!

Well there is, and there are many ways to bring Ba'al Tashchit alive for your chanichim and many ways to connect this to their daily lives. Here are some examples of where halacha has been put in place to shomer the land.

- 📖 *One must not open a shop in a courtyard if the noise pollution of customers will disturb his neighbour's sleep.*
- 📖 *Threshing floors must also be kept at this distance to prevent the chaff from creating an air pollution problem for the city.*
- 📖 *Cities must be surrounded by about 2000 feet of grassland for public enjoyment (Green Belt anyone?!)*
- 📖 *Accumulated rubbish had to be dealt with and removed from Jerusalem on the day that it was created.*
- 📖 *One does not say shehecheyanu after performing shechita for the first time since an animal had to die in the process.*



Sum up:

We started off by discussing that we don't necessarily learn specific characteristic to imitate from Adam Ha'Rishon, however, we learn how to live our lives.

Hashem commanded Adam (and us) to guard the land and also cultivate it. We looked at what the word guard meant and discovered that it is an instruction to actively protect the land from any harm and to actively ensure its preservation for the future.

We looked at the second part of Adam's commandment from Hashem which told us to cultivate the land. We then discussed the importance of working to develop ourselves as people and also develop, perfect and improve Hashem's work. We discussed that we are not attempting to out-do Hashem with cultivation; he created the world in a way that we should have creative influence.



We looked at Adam's role in naming creatures and the importance a name can have in reflecting and influencing one's characteristics.

Finally, we summed up what our chanichim could take away from this K and focused on environmentalism.

Extra Chomer

THE MAN OF FAITH IN A TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik

The following two chapters are summarized adaptations of the Rav's classic essay, "The Lonely Man of Faith," Tradition, Spring 1965, pp. 5-67. While we have incorporated portions of the Rav's phraseology into our text, there is no substitute for an actual reading of the Rav's brilliant essay in its original, which is couched in his inimitable literary style. [Reflections of the Rav, Volume Two; Abraham R. Besdin]

Part I

The Basic Thesis

The history of man is a struggle of two Adams. One Adam sees his humanity realized in conquering the world, in the scientific harnessing of nature to man's service. This creative pursuit lends dignity to man and constitutes his uniqueness in the cosmos. The second Adam sees his human distinctiveness expressed in a worshipful relationship with G-d together with others in a faith - community. It is our thesis that it is the Jewish mandate to combine both proclivities. The Halakhah operates in the practical realm of reality, and an insular withdrawal from the creative act in the pragmatic world is contrary to the spirit of the Torah. Indeed, G-d wants man to function in both realms, despite his inevitable tensions and sense of uprootedness. This is his duty and destiny.

A Lonely Experience

Being people of faith in our contemporary world is a lonely experience. We live by doctrines which cannot be tested in the laboratory and are loyal to visionary expectations of a future which finds little support in present-day reality.

Our modern world is practical-minded. It reaches with confidence for distant galaxies, scoring ever - accelerating scientific breakthroughs and seeing in the here-and- now world of the senses the totality of human experience. Practical man lives in a technological world which is explained mathematically. Having victory after victory in his probing pursuits, modern man is confident, self-centred, and self-loving.

What can the man of faith, who is moved by sensitive reasons of the heart, say to a society which is governed by pragmatic reasons of the mind? It is not unusual for adherents of a particular faith to feel lonely if they are preponderantly surrounded by devotees of another creed. Abraham undoubtedly felt alone amidst his idol - worshipping neighbors. But the loneliness gripping the man of faith in the modern world is compounded, because he is confronted not only by competitive faiths, with their own forms of worship and transcendent claims, but by a pervasive and permissive culture which is ideologically secular and technologically successful. Religious faith is condescendingly regarded as a subjective palliative, but it is given little credence as a repository of truth.

We intend to define two types of man or, to be more precise, two tendencies of man - Adam I, whose creation is presented in the first chapter of Genesis, and Adam II, as portrayed in the second chapter. Adam I is technological man, whom we will call the man of dignity, "while Adam II is the "man of faith," and they both vie with each other for dominance. In our contemporary world, the man of dignity feels triumphant, while the man of faith feels besieged. We will delineate their different orientations and their points of confrontation, and show that in actuality there is only one Adam, seeking in alternating ways to assert his uniqueness in creation.

A clearer understanding of the dilemma faced by the man of faith may not solve his problems or relieve his solitude, but it will reassure him of his unique worthiness and of the objective value of his commitment. While loneliness can be discomfiting, to say the least, it can also be a source of invigoration, because feeling

outwardly rejected presses one more deeply to the service of G-d. Though lonely and solitary, we are reassured that our service is wanted and gracefully accepted by G-d in His transcendent and luminous solitude. In any case, there is cathartic relief in talking, as Elihu the son of Barachel said: "I will speak so that I may find relief" (Job 32:21).

Two Accounts of the Creation of Man

There are two accounts in early Genesis of the creation of man. We reject the theories of Bible critics who attribute these two accounts to different traditions and sources. Their hypotheses are misleadingly based on literary categories invented by modern man which are insensitive to the intellectual imagery of the Biblical story. We insist on the unity and integrity of Scripture and on its Divine character. The seeming incongruity of the two accounts, of which our Sages were aware, speaks to us not of a dual tradition but of a typological duality in the nature of man. The two accounts deal with two types of Adam, two representatives of humanity, two fathers of mankind.

Text in Genesis 1

"G-d [Elokim] created man in His image. In the image of G-d He created him; male and female He created them. G-d blessed them and said to them, 'Be fertile and multiply, and fill the land and subdue it [v'khivshuha]. Have dominion over the fish of the sea over the birds of the sky, and over every beast that walks upon the earth'" (Gen.1:27-28).

Text in Genesis II

"The Eternal G-d [Hashem Elokim] formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, and man [thus] became a living soul. The Eternal G-d planted a garden in Eden, to the east. There He placed the man that He had formed ... to cultivate it and to watch it" (Gen. 2: 7-8, 15).

Textual Variations

There are four major discrepancies between these two accounts:

1. *Man's Formation.* Adam in Genesis I was created in the image of G-d, b'tzelem Elokim, but we are not informed how his body was formed. Adam in Genesis II was fashioned from the dust of the ground, with G-d breathing into him a breath of life.
2. *His Assignment.* Adam I received a mandate from the Almighty to fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over it, *milu et ha'aretz vekhivshuha, uredu*. Adam II was charged with the duty to cultivate the ground and to watch it, i.e. - *avdah ul'shamrah*.
3. *Male and Female.* In the story of Adam I, both sexes were created concurrently, but Adam II emerged alone, with Eve appearing subsequently as his helpmate.
4. *Names of G-d.* In the first account, only the name Elokim appears, while in the second account Elokim is used in conjunction with the Tetragrammaton (Hashem).

Practical - Minded Adam I

Adam I is described as being in the "image of G-d," which Maimonides explains: "The characteristic endowment of a men tally normal human being is his intelligence. When the Torah says, 'let us make man in our image,' it refers to the human capacity to know and appreciate abstract conceptions, apart from particular physical objects" (Guide 1:1; Hil. Yesoday Hatorah 4:8).

This superior intelligence equips man to be a creative being. Man's likeness to G-d expresses itself in his striving and ability to create, to confront the outside world, to inquire into its complex workings and interpret its varied components in their interrelationships. The Divine mandate "to subdue it (nature)", limits his intellectual attention to one quest, to harness and dominate the elemental forces and put them at his disposal. It is this practical interest which arouses his will to learn the secrets of nature. He is completely utilitarian. Adam I is not drawn to nature by any exploratory - cognitive curiosity. He is, rather, nurtured by a selfish desire to better his position in relation to his environment.

This practical pursuit of man's curiosity is clearly indicated by Nachmanides' interpretation of the words "let them have dominion": "They shall rule vigorously over the fish, the birds, the cattle, and all creeping things. ... They are to rule over the earth itself, to uproot and to pull down, to dig and to hew out copper and iron. The term rediyah [dominion] applies to the rule of a master over his servant" (1:26).

Adam I is interested in just one aspect of reality and asks only one question: "How does the cosmos work?" He is not fascinated by the question "why does the cosmos function at all," nor is he interested in "what is its meaning or purpose." His sole motivation is to know how it works. He raises not metaphysical but only practical, technical questions.

Adam I Wants Dignity

Adam I wants to be a "man," to realize his humanity by being distinguishable from the rest of creation, by becoming the master over his environment. This grants him an honorable status with dignity. This is explicitly expressed in the words of the psalmist: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and dignity. Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast put all things under his feet (Ps. 8:6-7). Dignity is equated by the psalmist with man's capability of dominating his environment and exercising control over it. Nachmanides comments on this verse: "This refers to his intelligent, wise, and technically resourceful striving" (Gen. 1:26).

Man attains dignity through his majestic posture vis - à - vis his environment. The brute's existence is not dignified, because it is a helpless existence. Man of old, who could not fight disease and succumbed in multitudes to yellow fever or to other plagues, with degrading helplessness, could not lay claim to dignity. Only the man who builds hospitals, discovers therapeutic techniques, and saves lives is blessed with dignity. Man of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who needed several days to travel from Boston to New York, was less dignified than modern man, who attempts to conquer space, who boards a plane at a New York airport and takes a leisurely walk several hours later in the streets of London. We are, of course, referring to Adam I as a type representing the collective technological genius and not to individual members of the human race.

Life in bondage to insensate elemental forces is an undignified affair. Animal life is helpless and, therefore, not dignified. Civilized man has gained limited control over nature and has become, in some respects, her master and, with his mastery, he has attained dignity. One further aspect inherent to his dignity must be emphasized. There is no dignity to Adam I's status without responsibility, as with a sovereign who presides over a realm. His freedom of action and creativity of mind are employed responsibly.

Creativity in Many Areas

Adam I is engaged in creative work, trying to imitate his Creator. The one in our modern world who most characteristically represents Adam I is the mathematical scientist, who creates a formal rational world woven out of numbers and their varied interrelationships. The mathematical world, such as was created by Einstein's creative imagination in the seclusion of his study, functions with amazing precision. The modern scientist does not try to explain nature, just to record its functioning. As a creative agent of G-d, he constructs his own

world and, in a mysterious fashion, succeeds in controlling his environment through his mathematical manipulations.

Adam I's creativity is not limited to the mind. He also creates beauty with his heart, in the physical and literary arts. He also creates legal systems to govern an orderly society. There can be no dignity in ugliness and political disarray. He is this worldly minded; his conscience is energized not by the idea of the good (morality) or the true (intellectualism), but by the pleasant (aesthetic) and the functional (useful).

(It is interesting to note that Maimonides interpreted the story of Adam's sin in terms of betrayal of the intellectually true and the ethical for the aesthetically pleasant [Guide 1:2].)

Fulfilling G-d's Mandate

It is important to note that Adam I is not a rebel. He is merely carrying out G-d's mandate to him on the sixth day of creation, when G-d acknowledged his singularity by addressing him and summoning him to "fill the earth and subdue it." It is G-d who decreed that man shall not be a slave to his environment. Man, reaching for the stars, is acting in harmony with his nature, which was created, willed, and directed by his Maker. It is a manifestation of obedience to, rather than rebellion against, G-d. It was G-d who decreed that Adam I transform himself from man - slave to man - master, to venture into the open spaces of boundless exploration. Thus does man achieve dignity and majesty.

Faith-Minded Adam II

Adam the Second, like Adam the First, is also intrigued by the cosmos, to explain the mysterium magnum of existence. While the cosmos provokes Adam I to seek power and control, Adam II responds to a different cognitive gesture. He does not ask functional questions which will help him to use the forces of nature. He does not ask "how" or "what" but "why," and "who." He wonders: (a) Why was the world created, and why does nature seem indifferent and, at times, hostile to man's strivings? (b) From the depths of my being, I sense a message and challenge being directed at me. What is it? (c) Who is it who trails me steadily, like a persistent shadow, and vanishes into transcendence the instant I turn around and confront this numinous, awesome, and mysterious "He"? (d) Who is it to whom I cling in passionate all - consuming love, and of Whom I feel in mortal fear? Who is He whose life - giving and life - warming breath Adam II feels constantly, and who, at the same time, remains distant and remote?

To answer these questions, Adam II does not create a conceptual mathematical world, a useful method invented by Adam I. Adam II encounters the world directly, its color and grandeur, and bursts forth in ecstasy. "How manifold are Thy works, O L-rd. In wisdom hast Thou made them all" (Ps. 104:24).

Adam II sees the world with the natural spontaneity of a child, who seeks the unusual and wonderful in every ordinary thing and event. While Adam I is dynamic and creative, using sense data to create concepts, Adam II reacts to the as is, not in mathematical formulae but in every beam of light and blossom. He seeks, not the abstract scientific world, but the intimate qualitative world. Not to be the master of nature, but to be in the service of its Creator, that is his primary aspiration.

Adam II experiences G-d intimately. This genuinely religious experience is symbolized by the Biblical metaphor, "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." While the "image of G-d" intelligence of Adam I refers to his intellectual endowment, the "breath of life" suggests an experiential closeness to G-d. Nachmanides said: "It is stated that He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life because the soul was not formed from the [earthly] elements ... nor did it emanate from the Separate Intelligence, but it was G-d's own breath" (Gen. 2:7). The existential "I" has an awareness of this "Great Self" whose footprints he discovers along the many tortuous paths of creation.

What Motivates Adam II

Both Adams strive to be "human," to be what they inwardly perceive G-d wants them to be, namely, a human person. But their objectives and methodology differ, and their interpretive results inevitably are incommensurate. While Adam I declares his separateness and mastery over nature as the dignity and humanity he pursues, Adam II aspires, in addition, for the religious experience of sanctity, a sense of communion with the transcendent. An atheist cosmonaut, circling the earth, advising his superiors who placed him in orbit that he has not encountered any angels, might lay claim to dignity because he has courageously mastered space; he is, however, very far from experiencing holiness. He clearly typifies Adam I.

Part II

Dignity is the goal of Adam I, which he majestically achieves through his domination of nature and by harnessing its power and resources to his service. Adam II does not seek to dominate nature but to serve that mysterious "He" he perceives in creation. In a word, Adam I seeks dignity and is practical minded, while Adam II aspires for holiness and is faith-oriented. Both are responding to what they perceive as a Divine mandate to establish their singularity in the cosmos.

Adam I Needs a Work-Partner

Eve was created together with Adam I, "male and female He created them" (1:27). He was not alone even on his first day of creation.

Why does Adam I need company? Being practical-minded, he needs help in responding to an often hostile and resistant environment. Helpless individuals realize that they cannot cope with life's multifarious needs and challenges when acting alone. Partnerships are formed, contracts are signed, and treaties of mutual assistance are made. Whenever the Adam I type of man wants to work, and creative activity is his primary interest, he must unite with others for practical reasons.

The verse in Genesis (2:18), "it is not good for man to be alone [lonely]," is not applicable to Adam I, who is never lonely, because loneliness is nothing but the act of questioning one's legitimacy and worthiness. Adam I, in his majestic conquests, has no such self-doubts. He would change the verse into a utilitarian pronouncement, "It is not good for man to work alone." The words which follow, "I will make a compatible helper for him," *ayzer kenegdo*, would refer to a partner who collaborates and assists him in his undertakings. His simultaneous creation with Eve reflects his immediate need for a work partner to join him in nature's conquest and mastery.

Adam and Eve work together, yet each retains an "I" identity, not a "we" awareness. They communicate and satisfy each other's practical needs but are not bound to each other emotionally. Their inner-depth personalities do not connect. We all know relationships of this type, friendships or marriages, where a couple work and produce together but they do not coalesce; the relationship remains unhallowed. It is a surface association, in the pursuit of practical ends, not a soulful companionship, a fusion of identities. Such pragmatic relationships are best described by Ecclesiastes (Kohelet): "Two are better than one; because they have good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth and hath not another to lift him up" (4:9-10).

Adam II Needs a Soul-Mate

While dignity is achieved through man's control of the environment, for which he needs a work-partner, sanctity for Adam II is acquired through Adam's control over himself. A hallowed life is a disciplined life which

recognizes limitations. While Adam I surges forth without restraint, on the premise that whatever is possible is permissible, a sanctified Adam II confronts a Higher Will who commands him to retreat. Adam I was told to fill the land and conquer it. Dominate the fish of the sea" (Gen. 1:28) without limitation; Adam II was placed in the Garden of Eden "to cultivate it and to guard [preserve] it" (2:15). While Adam I is proud and L-rdly in his self-estimation, Adam II acknowledges his lowly origins, that he was "formed out of the dust of the ground" (2:7). He is a creature in privileged service of his Creator and is responsive to His every command. In what is essentially a religious gesture, Adam II circumscribes the range of his activities and indulgences in deference to the Divine, *va-yetzav*, "And He commanded."

Adam II profoundly feels his uniqueness, that he is alone with his sensitivities, that he is drastically different from the instinctual beasts whom he is commanded to name. "Whatever the man called each living thing remained its name" (Gen. 2:19). Naming is an act of critical classification which is based on a study of individual and group characteristics. He became aware that these life-forms do not partake of a hallowed existence. He must seek communion with intelligent, purposive beings like himself. The female who was created with Adam I would not satisfy him. She is a surface personality who, at best, can only be an associate, not a companion. It was, therefore, indispensable that Adam II, after experiencing unbearable solitude, contribute part of his being in the formation of a soul-mate, someone with whom he can communicate, a reflected counter part of himself. With her he can form a faith-community, not merely a "work-community." What is a faith-community? It is when three personae, "I," "thou," and "He" (G-d), are joined together in a covenantal commitment which is established through prophecy and prayer. Prophecy is when G-d talks to man, didactically as a teacher, prescribing through Revelation an ethico-moral code; prayer is man's worshipful response in committing himself to these norms. Thus, a dialogue is achieved. When man and woman participate in this tripartite covenant, they make a leap over the abyss separating two individuals. They are both charged with an ethico-moral mission, and in reaching out to G-d, they also reach to each other in sympathy and love, on the one hand, and in common action, on the other. While Adam I found Eve alongside him upon creation, Adam II was introduced to Eve by G-d; "And He [G-d] brought her to the man" (Gen. 2:22), and thus formed the first faith-community.

Adam and Eve, whose individual uniqueness is undecipherable to each other, in responding to G-d in prayer and commitment, overcame their loneliness with the help of the third party, G-d. In the faith-community, G-d's prophetic message demands a brotherliness between man and man, and the community of the committed becomes a commitment of friends. Thus are soul-partnerships achieved.

Elokim and the Tetragrammaton

G-d appears to Adam I in the first chapter of Genesis as Elokim, the Creator of the cosmos, of its power, natural laws, and mathematical equations. The word *Elokim*, from the Hebrew *el*, means "ruler of all natural forces" (Nachmanides, Gen. 1:1). A relationship with Elokim satisfies Adam I when, on occasion, he feels the need to acknowledge transcendence. His primary quest to master nature corresponds with his perception of the Divine Creator.

Adam II also sees Elokim in the panorama of nature and joins Adam I in proclaiming, "the heavens proclaim the glory of G-d [*El*], and the sky declares His handiwork" (Ps. 19:2). (*El* is the abbreviated form of *Elokim*.) Yet, when he turns to Him in the splendor of nature, for solace and comradeship, seeking a personal and intimate relationship with G-d, he finds Him remote. An affirmation of G-d derived from intellectual calculations, from studying the intricacy and grandeur of nature, is no substitute for an actual experience of His presence with the added elements of immediacy and certainty. Adam II seeks to apprehend G-d, not only to comprehend Him.

Abraham, the knight of faith, according to tradition, had searched for and discovered G-d in the sunlit heavens of Mesopotamia. From keen observation and philosophical analysis, he arrived at the conclusion of a unifying spiritual G-d and that all phenomena in the universe are the product of one directing intelligence.

Yet, he felt an intense loneliness until he met G-d on earth as a Father and a Friend, when G-d spoke to him and foretold a great destiny for him and for his descendants. Abraham preached the practice of righteousness in imitation of an ethical, monotheistic G-d. In referring to his earlier life in his birth place, Ur, Abraham said, "G-d, the L-rd of heaven, took me away from my father's house and the land of my birth" (Gen. 24:7). The Midrash asks, why only "the G-d of heaven"? The explanation is that "until Abraham arrived, G-d reigned only over the heavens, but with Abraham, His sovereignty was extended to earth as well" (Sifri, 313, Ha'azinu). It was Abraham who "crowned" Him G-d on earth, the G-d of men, making "His name a familiar one in people's mouths" (Rashi, Gen. 24:7; Ber. 59).

The communal encounter between G-d and man is expressed by the addition of the Tetragrammaton (Havayah) to Elokim in Genesis 2. G-d reveals Himself in the magnificence of the universe as Elokim, but what is more significant is that He is also manifest to him as a partner in the "faith-community." The name Havayah connotes an intimate experience of His presence, a communal closeness between G-d and man.

Combining Both Adams

We have been describing both Adams typologically, as though they were irreconcilable, separate persons with disparate temperaments and orientations. Actually, there is only one Adam with oscillating tendencies. The man of faith, in actuality, moves regularly between the faith-community and the work-community. He never remains totally immersed in the immediate awareness of being in G-d's presence. There is a continuous alternation between the cosmic and the covenantal, both areas being willed and sanctioned by G-d, who wants man to live creatively in this world even as he devoutly participates in the "faith-community."

This see-sawing between the cosmic and the covenantal is reflected in the structure of the berakhah (blessing), in which we address G-d in both the second and third persons. We begin the berakhah with "Blessed art Thou," addressing G-d as "Thou," signifying that we are speaking to Him directly. Actually, it is this feeling that G-d has, indeed, revealed Himself to us in our immediate experience, in His goodness, or in a mitzvah, or in the wonders of nature, which prompts our blessing in the first place. But then, as we praise Him, we become aware that He is Melekh ha-olam, King of the entire universe, that His nature and rulership extend beyond our immediate experience. He is also manifest in the grandeur of His creation, and He bids us to engage in the creative majestic community as well. We therefore move from the second-person "Thou" to the third-person "who sanctified us with His commandments," asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav.

Initially we speak of "Thou" as we feel this closeness; we enlarge our concept to acknowledge Him as "King of the universe," and then we become overwhelmed by our presumption of intimacy with "Him" who is infinite, the highest majesty and the ultimate mystery, and we withdraw our address into a respectful third - person (Nahmanides Ex. 15:26).

The Halakhah in the Practical World

The man of faith would prefer to remain withdrawn from the practical world and be engaged in day - and - night devotions. He will then find contentment in his comradeship with others of his faith - community. The Halakhah, however, commands him to leave the refuge of the faith - community and become involved in the worldly work community as a creative participant. Maimonides described the lives of the prophets, who were the ultimate men of faith, as follows: " When the prophetic communication ceased, all prophets [except Moses] returned to their daily practices and lived as others did and did not separate themselves from their wives" (Hil. Yesodei Hatorah 7:6).

But even as he is engaged in worldly pursuits, the same Halakhah does not let him forget that he is a covenantal being who will never find repose outside his G-d - awareness. He is commanded to abide by halakhic guidelines, "when you build a house" (Deut. 22:8), "when you cut your harvest" (ibid. 24:19), and "when you come into your neighbor's vineyard" (ibid. 23:25), and, at the same time, to "love the L-rd with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (ibid. 6: 5). There is not a single theoretical or

technological discovery, from new psychological insights to man's attempts to reach out to the planets, with which the Halakhah is not concerned. New halakhic problems arise with every scientific discovery. In order to render precise halakhic decisions in many fields of human endeavor, one must possess, besides excellent halakhic training, a good working knowledge in those secular fields in which the problem occurs. This is clearly illustrated in the halakhic relationship to scientific medicine. The conquest of disease is a sacred duty; and on occasions of danger to human life, piku'ah nefesh, scientific medicine is regarded as authoritative in its diagnosis of the severity of the danger to life. In fact, most mitzvot address themselves to the pragmatic world where their performance takes place.

Adam I and Adam II are truly one person. In every one of us there abides the boldly creative and the devoutly submissive. Both tendencies are sanctioned by G-d. Rejection of either aspect of humanity is tantamount to a rejection of the Divine plan of creation, about which the Torah tells us, "And G-d saw all that He created and it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

Dual Loneliness

If the man of faith remained exclusively in a cultural monastic retreat, his loneliness would be overcome by his closeness to G-d in fraternal devotion with others similarly committed. But in his involvement in the creative world, a sense of disquiet and uprootedness of spirit persists as he oscillates between two worlds. In the practical world, he lives a superficial existence; in the covenantal world, he experiences religion in depth. He is consequently denied serenity of spirit and a sense of at-home-ness in either world. This loneliness is discomfiting but inevitable.

In addition to existential loneliness, the man of faith is also subjected to social loneliness due to Adam I's condescension and his dismissal of the faith-community as superfluous and obsolete. Adam I denies that another Adam exists beside or, rather, in him. He is arrogant in his triumphs; his pride is boundless. He ignores the vital perceptions of Adam II and the significant contribution he could make to the contemporary world.

What Adam II Can Contribute

1. *Transcendental Depth.* Contemporary man is proud of his religious and cultural structures, which give dignity, pleasantness, and stability to his world. He attends lectures on religion and appreciates the ceremonial, yet he seeks, not faith, but a religious culture as a useful adjunct to life. It is not the divine but the social, not the covenantal but the aesthetic, which defines his religious devotions. Here, the man of faith can contribute depth and transcendental meaning by relating man to G-d in actual communion, by affirming Revelation and the objective reality of worship. There is more to religion than the pious gesture and the reassuring ceremonial.

2. *The Ethical Norm.* The ethical structure of the practical world cannot be upheld if not secured by G-d, the Higher Moral Will. Only the latter gives it fixity, permanence, and motivation. Rationalization and self-interest whittle away at man-derived ethics. Adam I's ethical standards are utilitarian and relativistic; they are not anchored in the absolute. The dire consequences are rampantly manifest in our modern world. Adam II would envelop ethics with G-dliness and restrain man's rampaging nature.

3. *In Crisis.* Adam I feels triumphant and self-sufficient when things go well. His world yields to his demand. In moments of insecurity and fright, however, he is hopelessly adrift and depressed. Only Adam II can pray, "Out of the depths, I call unto Thee, O L-rd" (Ps. 130:1) or echo the words of Job, "The L-rd gave, the L-rd hath taken; praised be the name of the L-rd" (Job 1:21).

Though he is often regarded as an irrelevance in the modern world, the man of faith keeps his rendezvous with eternity and persists tenaciously in bringing the message of faith to the majestic world. In this historical mission, the lonely man of faith meets the Lonely One who resides in the recesses of transcendental solitude. This is the sacrificial but privileged role of the man of faith.

K3: NOACH

SCAN ME!



Aims:

1. **Discover** two ways of understanding the life of Noach.
2. **Understand** what social justice and responsibility are in Judaism.
3. **Explore** what social responsibility on Machane could entail.

FACT FILE

- We first see Noach in Bereshit 5:28
- 6:9 We meet Noach and he was "righteous IN HIS GENERATION".
- 6:13-22G-d Tells him he is going to bring a flood and he should make an ark to save himself.
- 7: Noach is told to enter the Ark with his family and the animals. Then the flood comes.
- 8: Flood stops, a raven is sent, then the dove. Before Noach is commanded to leave the Ark. Upon he leaving he makes a sacrifice.
- 9:2 IMPORTANT COMMANDMENT, EAT MEAT AND MULTIPLY!!!!!!!
- 9:13 The rainbow appears and becomes a sign of the covenant never to destroy the world again.
- 9:20 Noach gets drunk, it all goes a bit wrong, and he tells his sons their future.

Story Recap

The story of Noach and the ark is one that we've all grown up with; we've spent many hours listening to the story and singing the songs. But what can we learn from Noach? Was he one of the greatest leaders in our history or do we view him as someone who didn't fulfil his full potential?

1. Righteous man, evil generation. Righteous man saved, evil generation destroyed.
2. Big boat. Righteous man on big boat. Big flood. Pairs (and septets) of animals. They are all saved to make the new world.
3. Noach sends dove (and ravens) to find out if water has diminished. Third time lucky. The people and the animals leave.
4. G-d promises not to destroy the world again. The rainbow is the sign.
5. Noach plants a vineyard and gets drunk. Cham sees his father Noach undressed and tells his two brothers (Shem and Yafet). Shem and Yafet cover Noach so they do not see him naked. When Noach wakes up, he curses Canaan (Cham's son) and blesses Shem and Yafet.

Noach's character

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו אֵת
הָאֱלֹקִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ נֹחַ:

"These are the generations of Noach; Noach was a righteous man, he was perfect in his generation. Noach walked with G-d. (Bereshit 6:9)



Seemingly unable to cope with witnessing the destruction of the society he had lived among, the later stages of the story, as we will see shortly, paint a different character picture.

וַיַּחַל נֹחַ אִישׁ הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּטַּע כֶּרֶם: וַיִּשְׁתֶּ מִן הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכַּר וַיִּתְגַּל בְּתוֹךְ אֹהֶלָה:

"And Noach, the man of the earth, debased himself and planted a vineyard. He drank from the wine and became drunk and he uncovered himself within his tent". (Bereshit 9:20-21)

Perhaps he sought solace from all he experienced by becoming sensually unaware via the inebriating qualities of alcohol. Whether we sympathise or not (if we are capable of imagining Noach's ordeal), by the end of the story Noach appears an undignified figure as his son discovers his nakedness and, as Rashi elucidates, humiliates him further.

Noach is described as a Tzaddik, which can be translated as a good, just, righteous man. But we then have the words "in his generation," making it sound like a back-handed compliment. How are we to understand his character?

Remember how the generations are described:

וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס: וַיֵּרָא אֶל־לֵהִים אֵת הָאָרֶץ וַהֲגִה נִשְׁחָתָה כִּי
הִשְׁחִית כָּל בָּשָׂר אֵת דְּרֹכֹה עַל הָאָרֶץ:

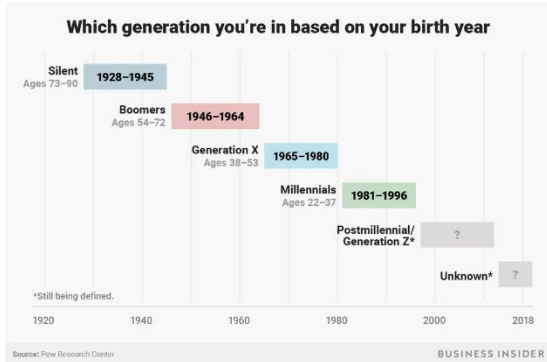
The earth also was corrupt before G-d, and the earth was filled with violence. And G-d looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And G-d said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. (Bereshit 6:11-12)

The terms which the Torah uses to describe the generation of Noach include corruption and thievery. It is a generation in which moral boundaries have broken

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Once you've discussed the story in a little detail, ask the chanichim to draw a quick sketch of the part of the story which they think is most important and ask them why they chose that particular scene...

down. The fabric of society, social justice, is non-existent. Rashi offers two opinions about "he was perfect in his generation":



*In his generations: Some of our Sages interpret it [the word בְּדוֹתָיו – in his generations] favourably: **How much more so if he had lived in a generation of righteous people, he would have been even more righteous.** Others interpret it derogatorily: In comparison with his generation he was righteous, **but if he had been in Abraham's generation, he would not have been considered of any importance.***

The opinion which states that he was righteous makes a lot of sense. He was singled out from his whole generation as worthy of being saved and witnessed a cataclysmic and singular disaster. But why would anyone compare him to Avraham unfavourably?

DISCUSSION POINT – Would you rather be the best of a bad bunch (in any category etc.) or the worst in a good group?

Noach vs. Avraham

To understand Rashi we can perform an analysis on the differing attitudes of Noach and Avraham. Noach does not act for the world around him. G-d tells him that he will cause a worldwide flood and he makes an ark only for his own salvation. He doesn't try to improve the ways of the people around him. Compare that with Avraham:

Hashem tells Avraham that he is going to destroy Sodom and Amorah and what is Avraham's response? He starts to negotiate with Hashem to save the righteous of Sodom. Unfortunately, Avraham is unable to find 10 worthy people and so Sodom is destroyed. Avraham took the responsibility to do all he could to save the people of Sodom. Noach is often compared to a person who, when he is cold, puts on a cloak; contrasted to a person (Avraham) who builds a fire.

The other opinion in the Gemara would argue that Noach rebuilds his world with vineyards. Vineyards don't symbolise sin and lack of virtue. A vineyard is a long-

term project. He was rebuilding a world, one governed by the Noachide laws that would ensure social justice.

So, in conclusion either Noach was not righteous because he wasn't socially responsible, or he was very righteous because when he had the chance, he started to rebuild the world.

Social justice in more detail

Regardless of which opinion you follow, the message of social responsibility is of paramount importance. Moreover, Noach's message of social responsibility isn't just between us and other Jews, but a universal responsibility; things like taking care of the environment together, reducing poverty, anti-genocide education programs, standing up for moral values etc. These are awareness's which are part of our universal obligation of social responsibility.

A few points in the story deepen our understanding of social justice.

First, let's examine the social injustices that were so terrible. Above, we discussed thievery and corruption. In fact, the Hebrew word used to describe their actions is **הֶמְסָה**. Rashi identifies this as robbery whilst Sforno elucidates it as theft, murder, sexual immorality and kidnapping. These sins are quite blatant, but one Midrash describes a different collapse of societal values.

If a countryman brought a basket of vegetables to market, they would edge up to it, one after the other, and abstract a bit, each in itself of little value. (Bereishit Rabba 31:5)

Acts of murder and kidnapping are highly significant on their own. Possibly the point the Midrash is illustrating is that social injustice can be the culmination of many small actions and not just blatant criminal activity. An isolated theft of a petty value is insufficient to tear apart the fabric of society but if everybody engages in it, the cumulative effect is damaging.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Pair up with another kvutsa for a game of chair ball. Pump it up. Make it really competitive. Right when it's getting going start taking away some of the rules. First let people walk a few steps with the ball. Then let them go a bit further. Then let the guy on the chair get off the chair and move around in the area of the chair. Go on like this for a while, basically until they hate it and ask to stop. Explain to them the need for rules in order for things to work.

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K3: Noach

Today, we may focus on the social injustices that rightly dominate the news such as the genocide being perpetrated by the Uyghurs, the devastating civil wars across the Middle East to name just a few.

*One of Judaism's most distinctive and challenging ideas is its ethics of responsibility, the idea that G-d invites us to become, in the rabbinic phrase, his 'partners in the work of creation'... Life is G-d's call to responsibility – **Chief Rabbi L-rd Sacks***

Individual acts of social injustice may appear to us as unfortunate but ultimately, isolated actions, such as individual cases of racial prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping add up. In fact, we can learn from the story of Noach that no improper action is too small and isolated, and we should take a stand against them all because cumulatively they can pull the threads of the fabric of society.

DISCUSSION POINT – How can we, as a tzevet, make the best positive impact in aiding these causes?

Another interesting point we can learn from the story of Noach, is how we should feel empowered to take action against social injustice. When talking about the rainbow the Torah says:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים זֶאת אֹת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין כָּל נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם לְדֹרֹת עוֹלָם:

And Hashem said: 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for generations to come. (Bereshit 9:12)

Rashi on the verse writes that some generations were so righteous that they did not need divine reminding of their obligation to combat injustice in the world. The rainbow is not simply a confirmation that G-d will never destroy the world again. It is also a reminder for humanity to tackle injustices, so we do not necessitate divine intervention again. When we see a rainbow in the sky, we should feel empowered with our responsibility to achieve a better world.

Social responsibility on Machane

There is a concept in Judaism which arises in Gemara Shavuot 39a that *"All of Israel is responsible for each other."* This message is so important for Machane; the idea that leadership isn't about having the loudest voice, it's about having responsibility for those around you. In Judaism and in life no man is an island, simply because the world cannot exist if everyone had this attitude. But, as we said, we also have to have responsibility towards the world as a whole. Rav Lichtenstein zt'l understands that G-d's command to Adam haRishon, l'Ovdah u'leShomra, to work and to guard the land, tells us that there is a universal responsibility for all mankind to help maintain and perfect the world:



When seeking to shape our personalities according to Torah values, we must relate to at least three levels of expectation and responsibility. These can be regarded as concentric circles, moving from the broader to the more specific:

- 1) *The universal demands placed upon one simply as a human being;*
- 2) *The demands of a Jew;*
- 3) *The responsibility of a ben-Torah, one who makes Torah study a central part of his life and embodies its values.*

...Here we have, then, two foci of our primary obligation: a) to guard, to have a sense of responsibility in relation to that which we have been given; and b) to work and to develop. Although Adam was commanded specifically to till and guard the Garden of Eden, I think that we would not be stretching things too far if we were to understand that this mandate applies far beyond that particular little corner of the Garden where Adam and Eve were placed. What we have here is a definition of how man is to be perceived in general: as a shomer and as an oved.

(R. Aharon Lichtenstein, By His Light, pp. 1-3)



Middah Spotlight - Social responsibility

We have already looked at the majority of this in the chomer but let's look at certain points in more details:

- 📖 There is a parable told of a man who was cold and wanted to warm himself up. He had two options: he could either buy a coat to keep himself warm or he could light a fire to keep those around him warm as well. Noach is a Tzaddik but there are two types of Tzaddik. There is the Tzaddik like Noach who walks with Hashem and then there is the Tzaddik like Avraham and Moshe who are Tzaddikim with Hashem, but also with the people.
- 📖 There is a concept in Judaism, of "כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה" - "*All of Israel is responsible for each other*". This message is so important for Machane; the idea that leadership isn't about having the loudest voice, it's about having responsibility for those around you. In Judaism and in life no man is an island, simply because the world cannot exist if everyone had this attitude.
- 📖 We also have to have responsibility towards the world as a whole as Rav Lichtenstein elucidated.

Some Related Themes in Pirkei Avot

- Nittai the Arbelite said: Keep far from an evil neighbour and do not associate with the wicked. (1:7)

BUT

- Hillel used to say: ... In a place where there are no 'people' strive to be a 'person'. (2:6)

ARE THEY DEBATING? OR ARE THEY BOTH RIGHT IN DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS?

Sum-up:

We have seen that there are two basic ways to view Noach's character, both of which relate to his attitude towards social responsibility.



We also discussed definitions of social justice and explored our obligations and responsibility to spread that justice.

Extra Chomer

Righteousness is not Leadership

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt'l

The praise accorded to Noah is unparalleled in Tanach. He was, says the Torah, "a righteous man, perfect in his generations; Noah walked with G-d." No such praise is given to Abraham or Moses or any of the Prophets. The only person in the Bible who comes close is Job, described as "blameless and upright (*tam ve-yashar*); he feared G-d and shunned evil" (Job 1:1). Noah is in fact the only individual that the Tanach describes as righteous (*tzaddik*).

Yet the Noah we see at the end of his life is not the person we saw at the beginning. After the Flood:

Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked. (Gen. 9:20-23)

The man of G-d has become a man of the soil. The upright man has become a drunkard. The man clothed in virtue now lies naked. The man who saved his family from the Flood is now so undignified that two of his sons are ashamed to look at him. This is a tale of decline. Why?

Noah is the classic case of someone who is righteous, but who is not a leader. In a disastrous age, when all has been corrupted, when the world is filled with violence, when even G-d Himself – in the most poignant line in the whole Torah – "regretted that He had made man on earth, and was pained to His very core," Noah alone justifies G-d's faith in humanity, the faith that led Him to create humankind in the first place. That is an immense achievement, and nothing should detract from it. Noah is, after all, the man through whom G-d makes a covenant with all humanity. Noah is to humanity what Abraham is to the Jewish people.

Noah was a good man in a bad age. But his influence on the life of his contemporaries was, apparently, non-existent. That is implicit in G-d's statement, "*You alone* have I found righteous in this whole generation" (Gen. 7:1). It is implicit also in the fact that only Noah and his family, together with the animals, were saved. It is reasonable to assume that these two facts – Noah's righteousness and his lack of influence on his contemporaries – are intimately related. Noah preserved his virtue by separating himself from his environment. That is how, in a world gone mad, he stayed sane.

The famous debate among the Sages as to whether the phrase "perfect in his generations" (Gen. 6:9) is praise or criticism may well be related to this. Some said that "perfect in his generations" means that he was perfect only relative to the low standard then prevailing. Had he lived in the generation of Abraham, they said, he would have been insignificant. Others said the opposite: if in a wicked generation Noah was righteous, how much greater he would have been in a generation with role models like Abraham.

The argument, it seems to me, turns on whether Noah's isolation was part of his character, or whether it was merely the necessary tactic in that time and place. If he were naturally a loner, he would not have gained by the presence of heroes like Abraham. He would have been impervious to influence, whether for good or bad. If he was not a loner by nature but merely by circumstance, then in another age he would have sought out kindred spirits and become greater still.

Yet what exactly was Noah supposed to do? How could he have been an influence for good in a society bent on evil? Was he really meant to speak in an age when no one would listen? Sometimes people do not listen even to the voice of G-d Himself. We had an example of this just two chapters earlier, when G-d warned Cain of the danger of his violent feelings toward Abel – "Why are you so furious? Why are you depressed? ... sin is crouching at the door. It lusts after you, but you can dominate it" (Gen. 4:6-7). Yet Cain did not listen,

and instead went on to murder his brother. If G-d speaks and people do not listen, how can we criticise Noah for not speaking when all the evidence suggests that they would not have listened to him anyway?

The Talmud raises this very question in a different context, in another lawless age: the years leading to the Babylonian conquest and the destruction of the First Temple, another lawless age:

Aha b. R. Hanina said: Never did a favourable word go forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, of which He retracted for evil, except the following, where it is written, "And the L-rd said unto him: Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are being done in the midst thereof" (Ezek. 9:4).

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Gabriel, "Go and set a mark of ink on the foreheads of the righteous, that the destroying angels may have no power over them; and a mark of blood upon the foreheads of the wicked, that the destroying angels may have power over them." Said the Attribute of Justice before the Holy One, blessed be He, "Sovereign of the Universe! How are these different from those?"

"Those are completely righteous men, while these are completely wicked," He replied. "Sovereign of the Universe!" said Justice, "They had the power to protest but did not."

Said G-d, "Had they protested, they would not have heeded them."

"Sovereign of the Universe!" said Justice, "This was revealed to You, but was it revealed to them?" (Shabbat 55a)

According to this passage, even the righteous in Jerusalem were punished at the time of the destruction of the Temple because they did not protest the actions of their contemporaries. G-d objects to the claim of Justice: Why punish them for their failure to protest when it was clear that had they done so, no one would have listened? Justice replies: This may be clear to you or to the angels – meaning, this may be clear in hindsight – but at the time, no human could have been sure that their words would have no impact. Justice asks: How can you be sure you will fail if you never try?

The Talmud notes that G-d reluctantly agreed with Justice. Hence the strong principle: when bad things are happening in society, when corruption, violence and injustice prevail, it is our duty to register a protest, even if it seems likely that it will have no effect. Why? Because that is what moral integrity demands. Silence may be taken as acceptance. And besides, we can never be sure that no one will listen. Morality demands that we ignore probability and focus on possibility. Perhaps someone will take notice and change their ways – and that "perhaps" is enough.

This idea did not suddenly appear for the first time in the Talmud. It is stated explicitly in the book of Ezekiel. This is what G-d says to the Prophet:

"Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against Me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign L-rd says.' And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a Prophet has been among them." (Ezek. 2:3-5)

G-d is telling the Prophet to speak, regardless of whether people will listen.

So, one way of reading the story of Noah is as an example of lack of leadership. Noah was righteous but not a leader. He was a good man who had no influence on his environment. There are, to be sure, other ways of reading the story, but this seems to me the most straightforward. If so, then Noah is the third case in a series of failures of responsibility. As we saw last week, Adam and Eve failed to take personal responsibility

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for their actions ("It wasn't me"). Cain refused to take moral responsibility ("Am I my brother's keeper?"). Noah failed the test of collective responsibility.

This way of interpreting the story, if correct, entails a strong conclusion. We know that Judaism involves collective responsibility, for it teaches *Kol Yisrael arevim ze bazeh* ("All Israel are responsible for one another" Shavuot 39a). But it may be that simply being *human* also involves collective responsibility. Not only are Jews responsible for one another. So are we all, regardless of our faith or religious affiliations. So, at any rate, Maimonides argued, though Nahmanides disagreed.[1]

The Hassidim had a simple way of making this point. They called Noah a *tzaddik im peltz*, "a righteous man in a fur coat." There are essentially two ways of keeping warm on a cold night. You can wear a thick coat, or you can light a fire. Wear a coat and you warm only yourself. Light a fire and you can warm others too. We are supposed to light a fire.

Noah was a good man who was not a leader. Was he, after the Flood, haunted by guilt? Did he think of the lives he might have saved if only he had spoken out, whether to his contemporaries or to G-d? We cannot be sure. The text is suggestive but not conclusive.

It seems, though, that **the Torah sets a high standard for the moral life. It is not enough to be righteous if that means turning our backs on a society that is guilty of wrongdoing. We must take a stand. We must protest. We must register dissent even if the probability of changing minds is small. That is because the moral life is a life we share with others. We are, in some sense, responsible for the society of which we are a part. It is not enough to be good. We must encourage others to be good. There are times when each of us must lead.**

[1] See Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim* 9:14. Also see Ramban, *Commentary* to Bereishit 34:13, s.v. *Ve-rabbim*.

K4: AVRAHAM AND SARAH



Aims:

1. **Understand** Avraham's iconoclasm (his will to stand against the beliefs of the time).
2. **Discover** Sarah's exceptional commitment to Ratzon Hashem, even at great personal cost.
3. **Explore** Avraham and Sarah's kindness and hospitality.
4. **Learn** about the middah and mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim (welcoming guests).

FACT FILE

- Avram and Sarai first appear in Tanach at the end of Parshat Noach (11:26-31).
- At the beginning of Lech Lecha they (along with Lot) go "to a place that I [G-d] will show you" and are promised a great reward (12:1-9).
- They travel around a little before hitting a famine and decide to go to Egypt.
- Avram says Sarai is his sister and Pharaoh takes her and gets struck with a plague.
- Pharaoh wasn't happy that he was tricked – Avram and Sarai were sent on their way (12:10-20).
- Avram returns to Eretz Yisrael (13:1-4).
- Lot and Avram part ways (13:5-13).
- Hashem then repeats his promises (13:14-18).
- War of four kings vs five kings, defeating Sodom and capturing Lot – Avram saves the day but wants no reward for it (14).
- G-d then has another chat with Avram and then there is the famous covenant of the parts (Brit Bein Habetarim) – nightmare inducing stuff (15).
- Avram father Ishamel with Hagar. Hagar and Ishmael then flee (16).
- Hashem changes Avram and Sarai's names and makes a few more promises. (17).
- The three angels visit Avraham etc. (18).
- The Akeidah (22).
- Sarah dies and Ma'arat Hamachpeilah is bought as a burial site (23).
- Avraham sends Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak (24).
- Avraham Dies (25).

Avraham the Believer

The Rambam describes how in the generations following Noach, the people once again reverted to their idolatrous practices. They began to follow false prophets and embarked on a cultic journey of worship; stones, rivers, the stars and the heavens were all deified.

It is into this society that Avraham is born. But his attitude is different from that of his contemporaries: he



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looks at the world around him and concludes that there must be some sort of being behind the scenes making everything work:

In the morning when he saw the sun rise in the east, he thought "This is a great power; it must be the king who created me". That whole day he prayed to the sun. In the evening, upon seeing the sun set and the moon rise, he said "Surely this one rules even that other power to which I prayed, for it no longer shines". All night he prayed to the moon. In the morning, upon seeing the darkness pass and the east light up, he said "Surely all these have a King and Ruler Who directs them". When Hashem saw Avraham's longing for Him, He appeared to Avraham and spoke with him. (Zohar 1:86a)



We see from this ma'amar Chazal that Avraham was not happy to just go about his life in an unthinking fashion. He wanted to question the world around him and ultimately to strive for a deeper truth, an explanation at the heart of the mystery of the cosmos.

DISCUSSION POINT – Do you feel the desire to understand the universe?

But he was not willing to keep his insights to himself. There are many Midrashim which document his iconoclasm (rejecting and fighting against the strongly held beliefs of the time). The most celebrated is Bereishit Rabbah 38:8 which tells of Avraham's smashing the idols and blaming it on the biggest one. He is taken to Nimrod, the local monarch, who forces him to bow to the fire. Avraham responds that it would be better to bow to the water, for it extinguishes the fire. Nimrod says fine – bow to the water! Avraham keeps this chain of logic through clouds, wind, and humanity (rock, paper scissors as a proof for the existence of Hashem). Eventually Nimrod has had

You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life.

– Winston Churchill

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Get some pictures of famous protest movements and individuals; Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, the #occupy! Movement and ask the chanichim if they know who these people and groups are. If there was one thing about the world that they could protest what would it be? Make a movement name, get some slogans and placards and see how far you get...

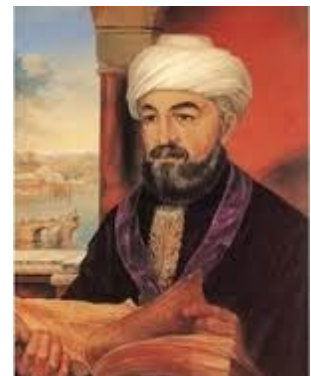
enough and just throws Avraham into the fire, but he is miraculously saved from its flames.



These stories highlight just how counter cultural Avraham was (ancient hipster?). The salient point here is that the Jewish people were founded as a protest movement. The world around Avraham was unsatisfactory; it was founded on lies and dishonesty. Part of our mission statement as a people is to follow along in our forefather's footsteps and point out to the world when it is moving in the wrong direction.

Avraham and Sarah – Models of kindness

Rambam (Matanot l'Aniyim chap. 10) writes that being stingy is not a Jewish characteristic, Avraham exemplified charity and giving to others. But what exactly is this kindness? How would we go about defining the word itself?



If we look at the events which occurred in Avraham's life, we can get a little closer to answering the question. Avraham is sitting out in the midday sun, simply waiting for guests to arrive. We have a tradition that Avraham and Sarah's tent was open on all sides this made it as welcoming as possible.

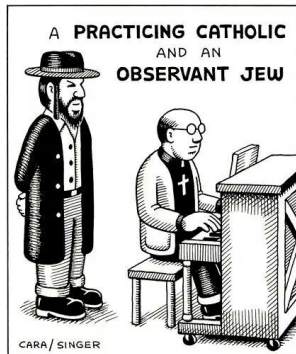
Often people don't really want to accept help from us because they think we don't really want to offer it. Avraham and Sarah sent out a clear message to everyone around them that they were more than willing to help. They went on to offer their guests a truly sumptuous meal, filled with delicacies, despite promising very little. This is another method of putting people at ease. If you tell them that you are going out your way for them, then they will feel uncomfortable, but if it is presented as no problem at all then your guests will feel better.

DISCUSSION POINT – Has the last year made you realise how much you've missed having guests?

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It is right in the middle of this story of hospitality that Hashem praises Avraham's righteousness and informs him of the potential impending destruction of Sodom. Avraham is given an opportunity to beseech Hashem to be merciful. This too is an expression of Avraham's kindness, but perhaps better defined as: "awareness of the other." What this means is that the "kind" person is always aware of what is going on around him, the thoughts and feelings of the people in his sphere of influence. As above, the person who is truly aware attempts not just to give things to other people, but also to make them comfortable in receiving those things. So too, Avraham cares about the people of Sodom as he would his own family and therefore prays on their behalf.

This also explains all the Midrashim about how many converts Avraham and Sarah made. Right as they are beginning their journey to Israel, the passuk (Bereishit 12:5) says that they brought all the "souls which they made in Charan" with them. The various Midrashim describe their thousands of disciples, and how they were able to unite the whole world.

This is all part of the same thing; if you see everyone around you worshipping idols, you do not sit down and say "it's their right to do as they please" – you attempt to help them and bring them back to the proper path.



The main point is that kindness requires a little more thought than we normally assume. We tend to think that if we give tzedakah and offer people favours we have done our bit. True kindness requires us to truly step into the life of the "other", to attempt to decipher exactly what it is that they need, not just the standard stuff that we assume it's the "kind" thing to do.

What about Sarah?

Despite Sarah being a little bit absent from this K, that is not to say that she was merely Avraham's sidekick. Chazal teach us that Sarah had a higher degree of prophecy than Avraham (Shemot Rabba 1:1), and both were equal in their charitable deeds and were a blessing for the world (Midrash Shocheh Tov, Mishlei 31). Therefore, despite Sarah largely staying out of the limelight during her lifetime

(an entire Parasha is named after her in death), she was no less important than Avraham.

Sarah's infertility

We know that Sarah was barren, despite her tefillot, and it was because of this that Sarah, at immense personal cost instructed Avraham: "Behold, G-d has prevented me from giving birth. Please come to my handmaid [Hagar], perhaps I will be built up through her." (Bereishit 16:2) She thought that if she was unable to give birth, the legacy of Avraham and her monotheism, and Hashem's promise to regarding Avraham's descendants would nevertheless continue, albeit not directly through her.



How much courage, humility, acceptance and inner strength are necessary for such a suggestion! Imagine the years of struggle and challenge, of partnership with Avraham, of working at his side, attempting to educate the masses and spread monotheism throughout Canaan, without the support of family or friends – and then relinquishing her position as biological matriarch of the Jewish nation and giving it over to a handmaid! Sarah embraces this idea simply because this is what needs to be done right now. Ego doesn't matter; "I" don't matter. It's simply about doing the right thing.

This solution is not the most pleasant, nor an option for the typical woman. But for a woman such as Sarah, possessed with such inner strength, acceptance of G-d's plan, and a clear determination to do what's right no matter how uncomfortable, this was a possibility.

Yishmael and Yitzchak

As well-intentioned as Sarah was, things didn't turn out as wonderful as initially planned. As soon as Hagar married Avraham, she conceived, and as a result started demeaning Sarah:

[Hagar] would say (about Sarah): "This woman – she looks righteous, but she must not be. How many years is she married to Avraham and has not conceived. Whereas I have conceived in one night." (Bereishit Rabba 45:4)

Years later, Avraham and Sarah eventually did give birth to their son, Yitzchak. He grows up in the same environment as Yishmael, who at this point is involved in dangerous and immoral behaviour. Sarah again approaches Avraham:

And Sarah said to Avraham: "Send out this handmaid and her son, because her son will not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak." And this thing was very bad in the eyes of Avraham about his son. And G-d said, "Everything Sarah says to you – listen to her voice. For by Yitzchak your seed shall be called." (Bereishit 21:10-12)

Chazal provide us with the backstory of this conversation, highlighting that Sarah was not acting out of personal vindictiveness, but quite the opposite:

Yishmael was building altars and offering sacrifices for idol worship. Sarah said, "What if Yitzchak, our son, learns from him? There will be a great desecration of G-d's Name!"

Avraham said, "Now that we have brought Hagar in and made her a lady, how can we drive her out? What will people say of us? There will be a desecration of G-d's Name!"

Sarah said, "In that case, if we're both talking about a desecration of G-d's Name, He must decide between your words and mine."

And G-d said, "Everything Sarah says to you, listen to her voice." (Tosefta – Sota 5:7)



Avraham, the pillar of kindness, openness and acceptance, saw the immediate impression that this expulsion would create upon the neighbours and followers they had influenced. Sarah was able to see beyond the immediate, to the more far-reaching effects of Yishmael remaining in the home of the forefather of the Jewish people. If Yitzchak would be influenced by this person, the Jewish nation would be in danger! This is a far more devastating desecration of G-d's Name! Sarah, with clear-sighted vision and a discerning ability to analyse and prioritise,

was able to establish the foundations of her home and nation with determination and strength.

DISCUSSION POINT – Does your environment influence you?

Middah Spotlight – Hachanasat Orchim

וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהֵי ה' בְּאֵלֶינִי מִמְּרָא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פְּתַח־הָאֵהָל כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם: וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עָלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיִּרְץ לִקְרַאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה:

"And G-d appeared to him in Elonei Mamrei, while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. And he lifted his eyes and saw, behold, three men were standing before him. And he saw, and he ran towards them from the entrance to the tent, and he bowed down to the ground." (Bereshit 18:1-2)

Notes:

- 📖 Rashi says it was on the third day following Avraham's Brit Milah – the most painful day.
- 📖 It was the hottest time of the day.
- 📖 Yet, Avraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent, waiting and even hoping for someone to pass by so he could invite them in for a pit stop.
- 📖 We know from the rest of the story that the 3 men were angels, but at this point they appeared to be "men."
- 📖 Even so, Avraham ran towards them and bowed to them, before inviting them in.
- 📖 And what activity did he stop to go and greet these men? He was talking to Hashem!
- 📖 Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, "Welcoming guests is greater than greeting the Divine Presence." [Avraham was standing before G-d and he noticed some guests approaching.] He said to G-d, "If I have found favour in Your eyes, please do not leave me" (Bereishit 18:3) [i.e. "Please wait while I go and greet the guests"] (Gemara Shabbat 127a)

Halachot (From the Chofetz Chaim, based on the actions of Avraham):

- One should seek out guests and treat them with great warmth.
- The host should treat all guests the same, irrespective of wealth or importance.
- When guests arrive, one should immediately allow them to wash or rest if they need.



Awesome game stolen from an awesome tv show

Party quirks is a great game in a number of situations. Basically, you select one person to host an imaginary dinner party. Every 45 or so seconds he welcomes a new "guest" to his party. The guests (other chanichim) have been given a job/role/personality to act out, and it is the host's task to work out what they are pretending to be, but only through talking to them in the way that a dinner host would talk to his guests, so by asking questions like "do you want some soup" or "how's the wife?". This fits in here because we have hospitality for guests with secret identities, and the concept of trying to figure out what is going on in a person's life and how best to cater for them.

Sum-up:

We have seen that part of Avraham's uniqueness lies in the fact that he was able to do what he thought was right even when everyone else was doing something else. We can also see this from Sarah, and her willingness to sacrifice her own visions for the betterment of the Jewish people and the fulfilment of the Divine Will in this world.

Although it is not covered in the chomer, it is vital to remember the relevance of these qualities and traits to our activities within Bnei Akiva. We are a movement which is not afraid to turn around to the wider world and say that we want change. This is what makes youth movements so vital and dynamic. Young people are not stuck in a certain routine, a certain way of doing things. The fact that something has always been done means nothing to a young person.

Another part of Sarah's greatness is a quality she shares with her husband: kindness. We saw that kindness is not a universal set of actions that can be applied to any person. Each person needs their own particular things and should be catered for individually.

Extra Chomer

Princess of Her People and the Entire World

Rav Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook

Universal Message

G-d changed both Avraham and Sarah's names: Avram to Avraham, and Sarai to Sarah. What is the significance of this name change? The Talmud in Berachot 13a explains that both changes share a common theme.

The name Avram means "father of Aram." At first, Avraham was only a leader of the nation of Aram, but in end, he became a spiritual leader for the entire world. Thus, he became Avraham — "Av hamon goyim," the father of many nations.

The name Sarai means "my princess." In the beginning, she was only a princess for her own people. In the end, though, she became Sarah — "the princess" — the princess of the entire world.

In other words, the teachings of Avraham and Sarah were transformed from a local message to a universal one. Yet the Talmud tells us that there was a fundamental difference in these name changes. One who calls Avraham by his old name has transgressed a positive commandment. No such prohibition, however, exists for using Sarah's old name. Why?

Abraham's Thought, Sarah's Torah

Rav Kook distinguished between the different approaches of these two spiritual giants. Avraham's teachings correspond to the philosophical heritage of Judaism. He arrived at belief in the Creator through his powers of logic and reasoning, and used arguments and proofs to convince the people of his time. As Maimonides (Laws of Idolatry 1:9,13) wrote, "The people would gather around him and question him about his words, and he would explain to each one according to his capabilities, until he returned him to the way of truth."

The Torah of Sarah, on the other hand, is more closely aligned with good deeds, proper customs, and practical mitzvot. Thus, the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 60:15) emphasizes the physical signs of her service of G-d — a cloud hovering at the entrance to the tent, a blessing in the dough, and a lamp burning from one Sabbath eve to the next.

The philosophical content of Judaism is universal in nature. Avraham's ideals — monotheism, chesed, helping others - are relevant to all peoples. It is important that Avraham be recognized as a world figure in order to stress the universal nature of his teachings. He must be called Avraham, "the father of many nations."

Practical mitzvot, on the other hand, serve to strengthen and consolidate the national character of the Jewish people. From Sarah, we inherited the sanctity of deed. These actions help develop the unique holiness of the Jewish people, which is required for the moral advancement of all nations. In this way, Sarah's Torah of practical deeds encompasses both the national and universal spheres. Sarah, while "the princess" of the world, still remained "my princess," the princess of her people.

(Gold from the Land of Israel pp. 51-52. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 69)

K5: YITZCHAK AND RIVKA



Aims:

1. **Discover** what happened in the lives of Yitzchak and Rivka.
2. **Understand** why their achievements are important.
3. **Analyse** the challenges of Jewish continuity.

FACT FILE

- Yitzchak is a different figure to Avraham, just as Rivka is a different figure to Sarah. There are very few specific things that Yitzchak and Rivka did. The main thing they did was follow in the footsteps of Avraham and Sarah – B'ikvot Avoteinu.
- 22: The Akeida.
- 24: Avraham sends Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak.
- 24: Rivka passes Eliezer's tests with flying colours.
- 24: Rivka is "brought into Sarah's tent."
- 26: He moves to Gerar just like his father where he re-digs his father's wells and, like Avraham, lies and says that his wife is his sister.
- 27: He is tricked and blesses Ya'akov.

Yitzchak: "Hello, my name is Yitzchak."

Man 1: "Yitzchak?! Really?!"

Man 2: "Go on, tell us a joke!"

Man 3: "Oh I love jokes!"

Yitzchak: "Well I actually do know one that's pretty good. There was this mollusc, and he walks up to this sea cucumber. Normally, they don't talk, sea cucumbers, but in a joke everyone talks. So, the sea mollusc says to the cucumber...NEEEEEEMOOOOO!"

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Play Chinese Faces. Everyone sits in a circle but facing outwards. The person starting makes a particular action, involving facial contortions to the person next to them. That person needs to pass it around the circle until it gets all the way back to the beginning. Compare the two. Hilarity should ensue. You can also play other games like chair races; they may not be so interesting for the people in the middle but without them it would be impossible to play.

Yitzchak

The main events of Yitzchak's life are:

1. The Akeida;
2. His father's servant finds him a wife;
3. He moves to Gerar and behaves just as Avraham did vis-à-vis his wife;
4. He re-digs Avraham's wells;
5. He is tricked and gives Ya'akov the Bracha.

Though there seems to be a lot here, Yitzchak remains a shadowy figure, obscure and incomplete, inviting inquiry and a desire to know more about the man behind the story. What stands out most is that nothing stands out! It almost seems that the nature of his

actions (almost more like non-actions) seem banal and certainly not worthy of Avot-status.

In almost all those five events, Yitzchak appears to either be passive, or he was acted upon by others and had little scope for initiative. His actions seem to be vague and were more a response to other circumstances thrust at him. Lots of what he does is as original as Martin Luther King's name – he just copies his father! He gives the impression of being almost a non-entity, who might be called the son of his father or the father of his son, as opposed to one of the Avot in his own right.

He dug the wells his father had already dug; he experienced his own variation of his father's encounters with Avimelech and with Pharaoh.

Who was Yitzchak?

We must understand Yitzchak's life in its context. His life does not seem to have been an easy one. Being a son of Avraham, with all the weight of that heritage on his shoulders, he would need to be an

Consider the postage stamp: its usefulness consists in the ability to stick to one thing until it reaches its destination.

-Josh Billings

extraordinary person to be known in his own right. History is full of many overwhelming fathers who seem to fill the entire space and leave no room for their sons to assert themselves.

DISCUSSION POINT – Can you think of any famous people where two generations were great?

This puts into context Yitzchak's life: the mission he undertook was not to be the novel, superman-esque hero that Avraham was, rather it was an equally noble and worthy one - to carry on. The task of the "successor" has always been one of the most unrewarding of all tasks in history. While it is true that "all beginnings are difficult", continuation can be even more challenging. The capacity to persist is no less important than the achieving of power to begin with. In all the significant revolutions in history, it is evident that the first generation, the revolutionaries themselves or the "founding fathers", usually have to contend with formidable circumstances.

However, the verdict of history concerning their success, whether it was a glorious victory, merely a passing episode, or whether it has a lasting impact, the verdict

lies with their successors – the generation that must stabilise and consolidate the revolution. This second generation has to bear the brunt of the backlash from displacing the old order and the relentless struggle without the original zeal and ardour.

Yet the second generation is not credited with the same glorious qualities – the sons' task is to hold steady, not to create. Avraham dug wells and creates a new ideology and set of values. Time, enemies, and habits gradually fill and block these wells. It is then Yitzchak's task to go back and dig the wells again, to release the living waters and let them flow again. Yitzchak's place is of utmost value and significance.



The verse, *"These are the generations of Yitzchak... Avraham begat Yitzchak"* (Bereishit 25:19) contains deeper meaning in that although Avraham and Yitzchak may be worlds apart and Avraham towers over Yitzchak both in personality and in the magnitude of his actions, they are nonetheless together as one – Yitzchak not only justifies Avraham, but establishes him forever. By virtue of Yitzchak, Avraham's legacy is made what it is. Yitzchak was different but no less important because of it. His worthy destiny was to be the one who carried on.

This message is especially apt in today's world where the most visible role-models for young people are celebrities. Although some celebrities do incredible work, the emphasis is on appearance, and we see them doing one-off events, a far cry from the long-term day-to-day commitment we learn from Yitzchak Avinu.

Rivka

Just as Yitzchak carried on the legacy of Avraham, so too Rivka continued and established Sarah's legacy.

The Torah tells us that after meeting Rivka, and hearing Eliezer's account of his journey to find her, *"Isaac then brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rebekah as his wife. Isaac loved her, and thus found comfort after his mother's death."* (Bereishit 24:67) The commentators all understand this passuk to allude to Rivka taking Sarah place in all that entailed; she accepted her role as one of the Imahot. Rashi is perhaps most explicit in spelling this out, quoting from Bereishit Rabba (60:16):

He brought her into Sarah's tent, and Rivka became the embodiment of Sara his mother. As long as Sara was alive, a perpetual light illuminated the tent from

one Erev Shabbat to the next, a blessing was upon the dough, and a cloud rested upon the tent. When Sarah died, these things ceased. When Rivka entered that tent, they returned..."

Rivka's Character

Additionally, Chizkuni explains the second half of the passuk – *"and thus found comfort after his mother's death"* – to be a further link between Sarah and Rivka. Yitzchak was comforted when he saw that Rivka had the virtues of his mother. With that in mind let's explore Rivka's character.

Part One – Camels

Let's start at the beginning. Avraham sends Eliezer, his servant, to find a wife for Yitzchak. Eliezer, feeling the weight of his mission, beseeches Hashem for a sign to confirm that he has found the right women for Yitzchak:

"Let the maiden to whom I say, 'Please, lower your jar that I may drink,' and who replies, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels'— let her be the one whom You have decreed for Your servant Yitzchak. Thereby shall I know that You have dealt graciously with my master." (Bereshit 24:14)



As it turns out, Rivka rises to the occasion:

"Drink, my Lord," she said, and she quickly lowered her jar upon her hand and let him drink. When she had let him drink his fill, she said, "I will also draw for your camels, until they finish drinking." Quickly emptying her jar into the trough, she ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.' (Bereishit 24:18-20)

Rivka quickly, and repeatedly, makes the effort to give the camels water to drink, even though she certainly didn't need to, nor did she have to refill the trough herself. Nonetheless she demonstrated her incredible selflessness and giving personality.

Part Two – That bracha shtick

Another occasion in which Rivka's Middot are demonstrated in a brilliant fashion is the giving of the bracha to Ya'akov. We will look at in more depth in the next K,

but b'kitzur Rivka sees what needs doing for the betterment of the future of the Jewish people, and makes sure that it happens and Ya'akov receives the bracha.

DISCUSSION POINT – On Machane and beyond, is it always good to personally make sure things go how they should, even if not everyone is on the same page?

Yitzchak and Rivka in summary

We have seen from this K, the seemingly uneventful lives of Yitzchak and Rivka, yet we now know that they played a crucial role specifically by not doing anything earth-shattering.

As Rav Michael Hattin puts it:

"From a purely structural perspective, it is therefore clear that Yitzchak and Rivka, in contrast to their predecessors and successors, are more transitional figures. Their mission is neither to smash the cherished idols of an unmindful society, nor to transform fractious individuals into the cohesive kernel of a nation, but rather to serve as the indispensable link between those two stages. As such, theirs is a trial of trust, a test of faith, the struggle to remain steadfast even in the face of strident opposition and the ostensible unraveling of Avraham and Sarah's legacy."

Jewish continuity

The British Jewish community, estimated in the 1950s to number some 450,000 individuals, had declined by the late 1990s to 280,000. This means that the Jewish community has lost ten Jews a day, every day, for more than forty years. From 1985-90, 57% of U.S. Jews married non-Jews. Only a small percentage of the couples planned to raise their children as Jews. In Britain, during the same time period, 44% of Jews married non-Jews.

It's also important to remember some other factors, including low birth rates in non-Chareidi communities, and of course more positive ones like Aliyah. But even after factoring those in, this is really happening, and we are losing the battle to maintain our people.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Devise a policy to stop British Jewry from declining. Discuss the major issues affecting the community and see if you can come up with a hypothetical strategy for combating those issues. Then you can write letters to the Board of Deputies and we can send them off.

Have we forgotten the message of Yitzchak? Our task as committed Jews is not just to innovate, but also to strengthen and maintain our people and help other Jews re-dig those wells of our ancestors.

How can we ensure that the "Yitzchak" side of us is manifested?

Some suggestions:

- Aliya – does this solve the problem? Is this the only reason to make Aliyah?
- Are our grandchildren more likely to be Jewish if we make Aliya?
- Jewish pride?
- Awareness of Jewish history?
- Education, education, education?



Finally, let's read this passage to scare us about what the future might hold if we don't start acting:

Middah Spotlight - Tradition

Tradition in Pirkei Avot

1:1 – *Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly.*

3:17 – *Rabbi Akiva said: ... Tradition is a safeguarding fence around the Torah...*



Why is it that the recorded ethics of Judaism are preceded by a recounting of the Mesorah. Surely it is the laws which are passed down by tradition, and this Mishnah should preface the other books of Mishnah!? What do you think?

A common and important answer is that we know that halakha follows the rabbis, but we may not have thought that ethics also does. However, to some extent Judaism has an everlasting ethical vision which gets passed down from Sinai, and about which the rabbis all share their personal insight and we learn from.

SUMMER MACHANE 5781

Aleph: In the Footsteps of our Ancestors - בעקבות אבותינו

K5: Yitzhak and Rivka

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

One of the key things we can learn from Yitzhak is how to cope with being the following act to great people. We should not be scared of following their ways. In fact, look at modern schools of Judaism. All have started with one remarkable figure that has moulded a community. Take the Ba'al Shem Tov and Chasidut; the Ari and Kabbala; Reb Chaim Soloveitchik and 'Lomdus'; Rav Soloveitchik and YU/Modern Orthodoxy; Rav Kook and Religious Zionism; The Rebbe and Chabad etc. All these have been Avraham-Yitzchak stories. Even Bnei Akiva has one of these stories to some extent with some of our recent role models, such as Rav Neriya, Aryeh Handler (see photo) and Nathan Daniels.



DISCUSSION POINT - Is tradition 'out-of-date' and 'behind-the-times'?



"You can call it oral tradition if you want to, but I still say it's gossip!"

Sum-up

We have seen that continuing in the same path as those who came before us is just as vital a task as is the innovation that they achieved. British Jewry is in a state of decline, and it is important that we realise that we are always going to be fighting an uphill battle.

It is important at this point to realise that the situation in Israel is very different. Recent statistics have shown that Jews in Israel are flourishing and progressing in ways that Jews in the diaspora are not.

SUMMER MACHANE 5781

Aleph: In the Footsteps of our Ancestors - בעקבות אבותינו

K5: Yitzchak and Rivka

Extra Chomer

First Follower: Leadership Lessons from a Dancing Guy

Derek Sivers

If you've learned a lot about leadership and making a movement, then let's watch a movement happen, start to finish, in under 3 minutes, and dissect some lessons:

A leader needs the guts to stand alone and look ridiculous. But what he's doing is so simple, it's almost instructional. This is key. You must be easy to follow!

Now comes the first follower with a crucial role: he publicly shows everyone how to follow. Notice the leader embraces him as an equal, so it's not about the leader anymore — it's about them, plural. Notice he's calling to his friends to join in.

It takes guts to be a first follower! You stand out and brave ridicule, yourself. Being a first follower is an under-appreciated form of leadership. **The first follower transforms a lone nut into a leader.** If the leader is the flint, the first follower is the spark that makes the fire.

The second follower is a turning point: it's proof the first has done well. Now it's not a lone nut, and it's not two nuts. Three is a crowd and a crowd is news.

A movement must be public. Make sure outsiders see more than just the leader. Everyone needs to see the followers, because new followers emulate followers — not the leader.

Now here come two more, then three more. Now we've got momentum. This is the tipping point! Now we've got a movement!

As more people jump in, it's no longer risky. If they were on the fence before, there's no reason not to join now. They won't be ridiculed, they won't stand out, and they will be part of the in-crowd, if they hurry. Over the next minute you'll see the rest who prefer to be part of the crowd, because eventually they'd be ridiculed for not joining.

And ladies and gentlemen that is how a movement is made! Let's recap what we learned:

If you are a version of the shirtless dancing guy, all alone, remember the importance of nurturing your first few followers as equals, making everything clearly about the movement, not you.

Be public. Be easy to follow!

But the biggest lesson here — did you catch it?

Leadership is over-glorified.

Yes it started with the shirtless guy, and he'll get all the credit, but you saw what really happened:

It was the first follower that transformed a lone nut into a leader.

There is no movement without the first follower.





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Aleph: In the Footsteps of our Ancestors - בעקבות אבותינו

K5: Yitzchak and Rivka

We're told we all need to be leaders, but that would be really ineffective.

The best way to make a movement, if you really care, is to courageously follow and show others how to follow.

When you find a lone nut doing something great, have the guts to be the first person to stand up and join in.

K6: YA'AKOV AND EISAV



Aims:

1. **Explore** Ya'akov and Eisav's personalities
2. **Appreciate** how the key features of Ya'akov and Eisav's personalities are embodied in the "Yisrael" figure.
3. **Relate** "Yisrael" to Religious Zionism and Bnei Akiva's ideology.

FACT FILE

- Ya'akov and Eisav were 2 very different brothers – Bereishit (25)
- The sale of the birthright (25:29-34).
- Eisav marries: (26:34-35).
- The blessing swip-swap (27).
- Ya'akov's dream of the angels and ladder while the stones join. (28:10-22).
- Ya'akov meets Rachel and wants to marry her but is tricked into marrying her sister before eventually marrying her as well. They each give birth (loads of babies!) (29-30).
- Ya'akov runs away from Lavan (31).
- Eisav comes to attack Ya'akov so Ya'akov prepares for battle and fights with an angel (32).
- Eisav's chronicles (36).
- Ya'akov's chronicles (37:1-4).
- Ya'akov's favourite son – Yosef was taken in chains and sold (and bought by a captain named Potiphar!!!!) (37:25-37).
- Ya'akov blesses all his children before dying (49) and then mourned by all of Egypt.

Ya'akov and Eisav: two peas in a pod?

Our story begins under familiar circumstances. Yitzchak and Rivka were at first infertile, but Hashem answers their prayers and Rivka conceives. However, as we all know, Rivka was pregnant with twins. Pained by her pregnancy, she went to Hashem to find out what was going on. Hashem gave her a cryptic answer:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לָהּ שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם בְּבִטְנָךְ וְשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים מִמֶּעֶיךָ יִפְרְדוּ וְלֵאמֹר מְלֹאָם יֵאָמֶן וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צָעִיר:
"And Hashem said to her: Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be separated from your bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." (Bereshit 25:23)

And so it was that these two kids started out in life together, as Rashi points out, indistinguishable in their actions. But, as they grew, their paths diverged:

Rashi comments:

...When they got to 13, one turned to the Beit Midrash and the other turned to idols. (Rashi on Bereshit 25:27)

As Chazal portray the story, Eisav became your classic chav whilst brother Ya'akov was a pure and uncomplicated man, an *ish tam* – *simple man*, and more concerned with learning Torah.

Then it gets a little bit funky. Ya'akov and Eisav in a nutshell:

Under somewhat suspicious circumstances, Ya'akov exchanges some lentil soup for the birthright with his brother. Ya'akov later masquerades as Eisav to trick Yitzchak, who was blind by now, to give him the firstborn's blessings (which now belonged to Ya'akov, although Yitzchak wasn't to know). Eisav was not best pleased, as he wanted that blessing. Fleeing Eisav, Ya'akov runs off and spends a few years in Lavan's home where he faces some shenanigans from his uncle when he tries to marry Rachel. Many children, wives, concubines and much hard work later, he sets off home. Unfortunately for him, Eisav had laid on a welcoming party consisting of an army of men. However, after some careful preparation by Ya'akov, the twin brothers meet, embrace and kiss each other... The End!

Despite this apparent happy ending to the story, this still leaves a couple of major questions unanswered (This part of the chomer is based on an article by Rav Yoel bin Nun entitled "Yedei Eisav – Kol Ya'akov", published in his book on Sefer Bereishit, "Pirkei Avot"):

- ❏ If Eisav was such a badman, why did Yitzchak like him so much to the extent that he preferred him over Ya'akov?
- ❏ When Yitzchak found out he had been tricked, why did he not try to reverse it? Instead, he told Eisav it was too late and gave Eisav (surely the victim) a rather crushing bracha.

Yitzchak's Vision

Let's first try to understand why Yitzchak loved Eisav so much despite our negative view of him. Yitzchak was a farmer, the first of the forefathers who really tried to settle the land. He did not have it easy: the Philistines drove him out and stole his wells. In the face of these challenges, Yitzchak wanted to have some strength. His son, Eisav, who lived by the sword (and would later lead an army of 400 men and conquer Har Seir), was the perfect candidate to defend the family. As the firstborn, Yitzchak would have seen him as the strong military leader, vital to lead the family.

SUMMER MACHANE 5781

Aleph: In the Footsteps of our Ancestors - בעקבות אבותינו

K6: Ya'akov and Eisav

HADRACHA HOT TIP

In your teams have a debate about the relative worth of having a physical fighter-type person or a more scholarly and gentler person as the leader of the Jewish people. One madrich should go with each group for five-ten minutes to prepare an argument. Basic pointers:

Eisav: A natural nation, living on the field, by the sword, without ethics and boundaries. A strong kingship (established 8 generations before Am Yisrael did).

Ya'akov: A people lacking in physical strength, using trickery and always holding onto his brother's ankle. He has spirituality yet lacks roots on the field and the land.

Eisav was essentially a conqueror, who was establishing the family empire. Ya'akov, however, appeared to be the priest, the prophet and the spiritual part of the family.

In Yitzchak's eyes, Ya'akov was serving an important role, but he was not worthy of the blessings. These personal, familial considerations would reflect themselves in the running of the people which would eventually form; similar to what we saw in K1 – that which happened to the Avot are due to happen to their children; traits and roles which expressed themselves in a "family" setting would again express themselves in a "nation" setting.

As far as Yitzchak saw, Eisav would be the Prime Minister, the Chief of Staff doing the realpolitik, while Ya'akov would be the frum son, learning Torah, perhaps the "Chief Rabbi" of the family, guiding Eisav's hand in the path of Torah.



DISCUSSION POINT – Is it important to have both military and spiritual might?

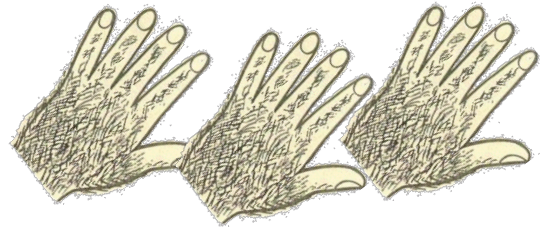
However, Eisav was not all that Yitzchak thought him to be. Chazal tell us that Eisav murdered at the age of 15, and that Avraham died early so he would not hear of the evildoing of his grandson (he committed 5 evil sins on the day of Avraham's death). Rivka also knew a bit more than her husband (remember what Hashem told her earlier about two nations emerging?). She could see that Eisav was not fit to lead the nation and receive the blessings, being the bad boy that he was. She saw that it had to be Ya'akov, due to his moral and ethical character, despite him being deficient in other, more practical areas. Lesson learned: communication in marriage is key.

Before we attempt to assemble a solution, we can also return to the other question: why did Yitzchak not try to retract his mistake in giving the blessings to Ya'akov?

In order to answer this question, let's remember Yitzchak's response when Ya'akov came to him:

וַיִּגַשׁ יַעֲקֹב אֶל-יִצְחָק אָבִיו וַיִּמְשָׁהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר הַקֵּל קוֹל
יַעֲקֹב וְהַיָּדַיִם יְדֵי עֵשָׂו:

"And Ya'akov drew close to his father, who felt him and said, 'The voice is Ya'akov voice, but the hands are Eisav's hands.'" (Bereshit 27:22)



He was perplexed and may even have thought that his fighter-son Eisav had now taken on the moral, "frum" side of Ya'akov. Yitzchak was delighted to be blessing his "new son" and was sure that this was the will of Hashem.

Only later, when the real Eisav turned up, did Yitzchak realise that he had got the whole story wrong. It is clear from the Torah that Ya'akov was the intended recipient of the blessing. Yitzchak accepted this after he had worked out what had happened.

But as we discussed above, Yitzchak rightly knew that the "frum", Torah-learning son would not be appropriate to lead Am Yisrael. Instead, Ya'akov had needed to disguise himself to be someone he was not, as Yitzchak knew that the blessings could only go to someone with the necessary physical strength.

The problem is that Ya'akov received the blessings under false pretences! He was not a fighter – he was just wearing fancy dress when he tricked his father! How could this be right?

Ya'akov the trickster

A study of the subsequent episodes in Ya'akov's life, however, reveals that the tricking of Yitzchak was only the beginning of a complete transformation of personality:

- 📌 He lived with Lavan for 20 years, as a manual labourer, on the land, i.e. living an Eisav-like life! He faced the challenges of physical enslavement and succeeded. Yet he kept his values as a "pure man, a tent-dweller".

- 🔊 However, this was not enough. Ya'akov was not yet a fighter like brother Eisav. Remember he was someone who was always fleeing wars, not fighting them!
- 🔊 Several of the commentators (Ramban and Rashbam) even tell us that he was trying to flee the fight with Eisav and avoid a confrontation just before they met.
- 🔊 Worry not, Ya'akov did change even more...
- 🔊 While Ya'akov was preparing to meet Eisav, he found himself face-to-face with some wondrous man. Yet instead of running away, as you may have expected from his previous history, Ya'akov fights to the bitter end and succeeds, coming out unscathed (apart from a dodgy sinew in his thigh).

Only at this stage in the development of his character is Ya'akov considered a new man and merits a new name:

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד שְׁמֶךָ כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹקִים וְעִם אָנָשִׁים וַתִּוְכַל:
"And he said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Ya'akov, but Yisrael - for you have striven with Hashem and with men and succeeded'".

Only now does Ya'akov really merit Yitzchak's bracha, now that he has shown that he can use the hands of Eisav, while keeping the voice of Ya'akov. It is clear that the "person" whom Yitzchak blessed was neither Ya'akov nor Eisav, rather it was this magical mixture.

The moral, religious Ya'akov was not compromised, but gained the physical strength of Eisav through long, hard struggles. Only now is Yisrael born! From this point on, Ya'akov is often referred to as Yisrael, to reflect the transformation of his personality.



The modern Jew

Just like Ya'akov, who is initially described as an 'אִישׁ תָּם, יֹשֵׁב אֵהָלִים' - a Torah scholar, who was involved in spiritual matters yet impotent as a fighter and a defender, Am Yisrael had a similar fate during its 2,000 years of exile. Jews spent much of their time and effort learning Torah in yeshivot from North Africa to Eastern Europe, from central Asia to France. For the most part, they had no means of self-defence, shown by

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HADRACHA HOT TIP

It is at this point that you announce the "winner" of the competition. The most important thing though is to show them that in fact we try to synthesise the two different people, Ya'akov and Eisav together become Yisrael. Try and link it back to Bnei Akiva. We are an ideological movement and this particular kvutsa is a perfect example to explain that ideology.

Medinat Yisrael and defend it." We totally reject this stance and believe that the spirituality of Ya'akov is not inconsistent with the physical strength and prowess of Eisav.

It is not incidental that our people are named after the "Yisrael" figure – and we have reached those heights before...but not for about 2000 years. However, in the last century we are starting to experience a Ya'akov – Yisrael transformation. At the beginning of the end of the long night of exile, we are starting to relive this unique combination, and to merit the brachot of Yitzchak.

Yitzchak's description of 'הקל קול יעקב, והידיים, ידי עשו' – the voice being the voice of Ya'akov, and the hands, the hands of Eisav, is our aim, our guide for life. We must seek to build our nation and the State of Israel according to Eisav's abilities, with our hearts and minds guided by Ya'akov's Torah.

It is these values that make Bnei Akiva so unique – we believe that the ideal is the "Yisrael" model. Today that may mean serving in the army alongside

the countless episodes of persecution, most starkly during the horrors of the Holocaust, as six million were led like sheep to the slaughter.

This period of "impotent" exile is an important part in Jewish history. Rav Kook compares the nation to Ya'akov, arguing that we needed this period just as Ya'akov did, to consolidate our foundations, even though we had neither a land nor physical strength. Conversely, if we only had physical strength, how could the Jewish nation possibly build a state according to the moral values of the Torah?

From when the burgeoning ideology of Zionism became increasingly popular amongst secular Jews throughout the Diaspora in the late 19th Century, up until today's flourishing state, many have mistakenly tried to separate the Ya'akov and the Eisav figures amongst our people. We regularly hear voices saying, "Let the religious sit in their Beit Midrash learning Torah, while the secular can build up



Yeshiva/Midrasha study. We are not apologetic about putting aside our Gemara and leaving the Beit Midrash to defend our country. Rather, should we need to, we go into battle unashamedly – Tanach in hand (The IDF gives each soldier a Tanach at their swearing-in ceremony).



Nonetheless, our newfound military might often challenge our Torah-based sensitivities. But hey, nobody said it was easy...

Yitzchak's blessing to us is **to use the hands of Eisav as necessary, but to guard the voice of Ya'akov throughout.**

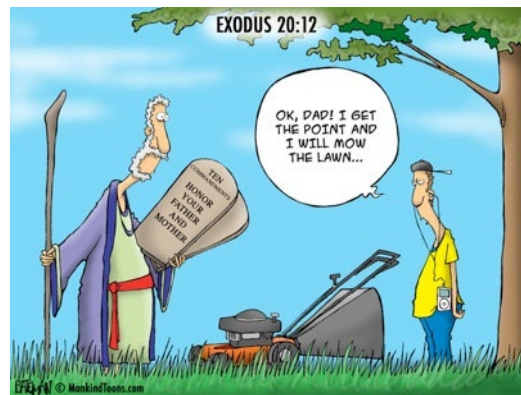
DISCUSSION POINT – Is Hesder justifiable? Bear in mind that the army service is considerably shorter than that of a standard Israeli.

Middah spotlight: Kibbud av va'em

"And Eisav hated Jacob because of the blessing that his father had blessed him, and Eisav said to himself, 'Let the days of mourning for my father draw near, I will then kill my brother Jacob.'" Bereshit 27:41)

Notes:

- 📖 Now Eisav wasn't a goody by any stretch of the imagination, but he did love his dad!
- 📖 He wants to wait until Yitzchak dies before killing Ya'akov.
- 📖 He also decides to find a new wife from the daughters of Yishmael because of the pain his marriages to Canaanite women caused his father.
- 📖 *Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said, "All my days, I did not serve my father with one-hundredth of the honour with which Eisav served his father. When I would serve my father, I would wear [ordinary clothes, even if they were] dirty, yet when I went out in the street I put on clean clothes. In contrast, Eisav specially dressed in royal garments when he served his father." (Devarim Rabba 1:14)*



- 📖 The proof is that in passuk 27:15 Rivka gives Ya'akov Eisav's best clothes to dress up in. These were the clothes that Eisav would always wear to serve Yitzchak.

Halachot (Adapted from Rabbi J.I. Schochet on chabad.org):

- Both men and women are obligated to honour and revere their parents.
- One must honour and respect grandparents, older brothers and older sisters.
- It is also the duty of children to arouse their parents for the performance of any religious duty (which might otherwise be neglected) as all are equally bound to honour Hashem.
- When a child sees their parent violate the Torah they must not say to him "You have violated a command of the Torah"; they should rather say: "Is it not written in the Torah thus and thus?", speaking to them as though they were consulting them instead of admonishing them, so that the parent may correct themselves without being put to shame.
- The Torah is rigorous not only with respect to one who strikes or curses their parents but also with one who puts them to shame. For one who treats them with contempt, even by using harsh words against them, or even by a discourteous gesture, is cursed by Hashem, as it is said: "*Cursed be he that dishonours his father or his mother.*" (Devarim 27:16)



Sum-up

We have seen that Ya'akov and Eisav in their early lives represented two different types of people. As Ya'akov grows older though, he manages to synthesise these two contrasting poles. We tried to relate this to modern Jewry, when we are finally leaving the walls of the ghettos, built no more around our homes than they were in our hearts, and becoming a people once again.

Extra Chomer

The Ideology of Hesder

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt'l

Half a dozen years ago, advocacy of the cause of yeshivot hesder before the American Jewish public would have seemed largely superfluous. The impact of the Yom Kippur War was then still strong, the memory of hesderniks' role within it still vivid, the halo of the heroic student-soldier yet fresh. The religious community, in particular, took great pride in a clearly perceived kiddush Hashem. Almost everyone had seen some striking picture or heard some moving story: of boys (they really were not much more) who had gone into battle wearing tefillin; of a group which had stunned its brigadier by inquiring, during a nocturnal lull in the Sinai campaign, whether and when they would be provided with a lulav and an etrog; of another which, after a disheartening day on the battlefield, improvised Simhat Torah dancing and hakafot by the banks of the Suez Canal. Almost everyone had read comments of leading Israel Defense Forces commanders praising the courage and commitment of bnei yeshivot, noting both the inspirational qualities which had done so much to boost collective morale and their vital role in the forefront of the actual fighting. And there was, of course, the litany of suffering, the grim statistics of the yeshivot's highly disproportionate casualties, to attest to that role. Within the context of pervasive sadness and pride, the ideological presentation of hesder seemed largely unnecessary. The reality spoke for itself.

Today, thank G-d, such a presentation is in order. Time has healed many wounds and dimmed many memories. Above all, it has opened fresh vistas and posed new challenges, these hopefully unrelated to the battlefield. We have seen the first glimmers of peace; and, for the moment at least, the country appears relatively secure. And as our sense of danger is dulled, as our roseate hopes lull us into a sense of imagined security, as the perception of just how close Syrian armored columns had come to swooping down upon the Galil and beyond becomes blurred - hesder and its cause evidently needs, if not an advocate, at least an expositor. This brief essay is therefore presented as a modest exposition of the essence of hesder and its significance - at least as viewed from the perspective of Yeshivat Har Etzion.

The typical graduate of an Israeli yeshiva high school is confronted by one of three options. He can, like most of his peers, enter the army for a three year stint. Alternatively, he can excuse himself from military service on the grounds that torato umnuto, "Torah is his vocation," while he attends a yeshiva whose students receive the Israeli equivalent of a 4-D exemption. Finally, he can enroll in a yeshivat hesder, in which case, over roughly the next five years, he will pursue a combined program of traditional Torah study with service in the Israeli army. While at the yeshiva, he will learn full-time (hesder is not an Israeli R.O.T.C.), but there will be two protracted absences from it, one of nine months and the other of six months, for training and duty.

Of these three courses, hesder is, in one sense, perhaps the easiest. Properly speaking, however, it is also the most arduous. The advantages, judged from a student's perspective, are fairly clear. Most obviously, the tour of actual army service is shorter. While a student is tied down by hesder for almost five years, he only spends, unless he becomes an officer, about sixteen months in uniform. Most important, however, hesder provides a convenient framework for discharging two different - and to some extent conflicting - obligations. It enables him, morally and psychologically, to salve both his religious and his national conscience by sharing in the collective defense burden without cutting himself off from the matrix of Torah. Socially - and this of course has religious implications as well - hesder offers him a desirable context as, even while in the army, he will often be stationed with fellow hesderniks. And hesder enables him, pragmatically, to keep his future academic and vocational options open. Unlike his peers at non-hesder yeshivot, he can, upon completing the hesder program, legally pursue any course of study and/or employment within the mainstream of Israeli society.



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These are legitimate and even important considerations. But they are not what hesder, ideally considered, is all about. Properly understood, hesder poses more of a challenge than an opportunity; and in order to perceive it at its best we need to focus upon difficulty and even tension rather than upon convenience. Optimally, hesder does not merely provide a religious cocoon for young men fearful of being contaminated by the potentially secularizing influences of general army life - although it incidentally serves this need as well. Hesder at its finest seeks to attract and develop bnei torah who are profoundly motivated by the desire to become serious talmidei hachamim but who concurrently feel morally and religiously bound to help defend their people and their country; who, given the historical exigencies of their time and place, regard this dual commitment as both a privilege and a duty; who, in comparison with their non-hesder confreres love not (to paraphrase Byron's Childe Harold) Torah less but Israel more. It provides a context within which students can focus upon enhancing their personal spiritual and intellectual growth while yet heeding the call to public service, and it thus enables them to maintain an integrated Jewish existence.

To be sure, the two aspects of hesder, the spiritual and the military, are hardly on a par. The disparity is reflected, in part, in the unequal division of time. Primarily, however, it concerns the realm of value, within which two elements, each indispensable, may yet be variously regarded. When the mishnah states, "If there is no flour, there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no flour," it hardly means that both are equally important. What it does mean is that both are, in fact, equally necessary, although, axiologically and teleologically, flour exists for the sake of Torah and not vice versa. "Il faut manger pour vivre, il ne faut pas vivre pour manger," (One should eat in order to live, not live in order to eat), declaims one of Molière's characters; and so it is with hesder. The yeshiva prescribes military service as a means to an end. That end is the enrichment of personal and communal spiritual life, the realization of that great moral and religious vision whose fulfillment is our national destiny; and everything else is wholly subservient. No one responsibly connected with any yeshivat hesder advocates military service per se. We avoid even the slightest tinge of militarism and we are poles removed from Plato's notion that the discipline of army life is a necessary ingredient of an ideal education. No less than every Jew, the typical hesdernik yearns for peace, longs for the day on which he can divest himself of uniform and uzzi and devote his energies to Torah. In the interim, however, he harbors no illusions and he keeps his powder dry and his musket ready.

In one sense, therefore, insofar as army service is alien to the ideal Jewish vision, hesder is grounded in necessity rather than choice. It is, if you will, b'diavad, a post facto response to a political reality imposed upon us by our enemies. In another sense, however, it is very much l'chathillah, a freely willed option grounded in moral and halakhic decision. We - at Yeshivat Har Etzion, at any rate - do not advocate hesder as a second-best alternative for those unable or unwilling to accept the rigors of single-minded Torah study. We advocate it because we are convinced that, given our circumstances - would that they were better - military service is a mitzvah, and a most important one at that. Without impugning the patriotism or ethical posture of those who think otherwise, we feel that for the overwhelming majority of bnei torah defense is a moral imperative.

Hence, to the extent that the term hesder, "arrangement", connotes an accommodation arrived at between conflicting sides, it is somewhat of a misnomer. Hesder is not the result of a compromise between the respective positions of roshei yeshiva and the Ministry of Defense. It is rather a compromise with reality. We do occasionally argue with the generals over details and they do not always sufficiently appreciate the preeminence of the spiritual factor. The basic concern with security, however, is ours no less than theirs.

Of course, that concern must be balanced against others. Knesset Israel needs not only security but spirituality - and ultimately, the former for the sake of the latter. Those who, by dint of knowledge and inspiration, are able to preserve and enrich our moral vision and spiritual heritage, contribute incalculably



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to the quality of our national life; and this must be considered in determining personal and collective priorities. Hence, while we of yeshivot hesder, feel that training and subsequent reserve status for men should be virtually universal - spiritual specialization being reserved at most for a truly elite cadre - the length of post-training service should be justifiably briefer than that of those unable or unwilling to make a comparable spiritual contribution. The military establishment, I might add, generally understands this. Junior officers, currently concerned with keeping good soldiers in their units, sometimes complain about what they regard as this inequity. However, higher level commanders, more keenly aware of the total picture and the longer term, recognize the value of the spiritual aspect of hesder as inspirationally significant, for bnei yeshiva as well as their comrades, in the event of war. It should be emphasized, however, that from a Torah perspective, the justification for abbreviated service does not rest solely or even primarily upon the yeshiva's stimulus to bravery. It is grounded, rather, in the intrinsic and immeasurable value of Torah per se - indeed, in the faith and hope that it moves us towards the realization of the prophetic vision, "neither by force nor by might but by my spirit, saith the L-rd of hosts".

The case for hesder rests, then, upon several simple assumptions. First, during the formative post-secondary years, a ben torah should be firmly rooted in a preeminently Torah climate, this being crucially important both for his personal spiritual development and for the future of a nation in critical need of broadly based spiritual commitment and moral leadership. Second, the defense of Israel is an ethical and halakhic imperative - be it because, as we believe, the birth of the state was a momentous historical event and its preservation of great spiritual significance or because, even failing that, the physical survival of its three million plus Jewish inhabitants is at stake. Third, in light of the country's current military needs - and these should admittedly be reassessed periodically - yeshiva students should participate in its defense, both by undergoing basic and specialized training, thus becoming part of the reserves against the possibility, G-d forbid, of war, and by performing some actual service even during some period of uneasy peace. The need for such participation is based upon several factors. By far the most important is the fact that in the eventuality of war the Israeli army may very well need every qualified soldier it can muster. And lest one think that the number is militarily insignificant, let it be noted that, while indeed they may not seem all that many, nevertheless the boys currently enrolled in hesder, not to mention those who have moved on to the reserves, can man over four hundred tanks - surely no piddling figure. This factor relates to training more than to peace-time service but with respect to the latter as well both common fairness and self-respect dictate that the Torah community make some contribution even if it be justifiably smaller than others'. Moreover, the ethical moment aside, such a contribution is a matter of self-interest as well - and not only because it is, after all, our own home that we are defending. Service enables the religious community as a whole to avoid both the reality and the stigma of parasitism. It helps build personal character, on the one hand, and open channels of public impact on the other, by producing potential leaders attuned to the pulse and the experience of their countrymen. To be sure, the prospect of secular criticism should not routinely be the decisive factor in determining religious policy. Nevertheless, it cannot be totally ignored. Hazal, at any rate, did not regard hillul Hashem and kiddush Hashem lightly.

If the rationale underlying hesder is relatively simple, its implementation is anything but. I described it at the outset as the most difficult of the options open to a yeshiva high school graduate; and, seriously taken, it is precisely that. The difficulty is not incidental. It is, rather, grounded in the very nature and structure of hesder; and it is threefold. First, there is the problem of dual commitment per se, the possible loss of motivation and momentum and the division of time, energies, and attention inherent in the fusion of the study of Torah with any other enterprise, academic, vocational, or what have you. "If I had been present at Mount Sinai", said Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, "I would have asked of the Merciful One that two mouths should be created for every person, one with which to study torah and one with which to all his [other] needs" (Yerushalmi, Berachot, 1:2). His wish is deeply shared by hesderniks and their masters.

With reference to hesder, specifically, there is, however, an additional problem: the conflict of values, life style, and sensibility between bet midrash and boot camp, especially in a predominantly secular army. The danger is not so much that students will lose their faith and become non-observant. On this



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score, yeshivot hesder have a track record as least as good as their immediate Eastern European predecessors'. It is, rather, a problem of possible attrition - the loss of refinement and the dulling of moral and religious sensitivity which may result from exposure to the rougher aspects of a possibly dehumanizing and despiritualizing existence. As the Ramban (Devarim, 23:10) noted, the qualities of aggressiveness and machismo which are so central to military life naturally run counter to the Torah's spiritual discipline, and a genuine and conscious effort is needed in order to avoid moral corruption and spiritual corrosion.

Probably the greatest difficulty, however, concerns neither the practical ramification of the diffusion of effort nor the grappling with potentially inimical influences. It concerns the very essence of hesder: the maintenance of a tenuous moral and ideological balance between its two components. At issue is a conflict of loves, not just of labors. At one level, this is simply the problem of religious Zionism writ large. On the other hand, it inculcates spiritual perspectives and values which are to serve as the basis for a radical critique of a secularly oriented state and society. The problem acquires another dimension however, when that loyalty includes the readiness to fight and die. Moreover, it involves, at a second level, issues which are specifically related to a student-soldier per se. Like all yeshivot, a yeshivat hesder seeks to instill a love for torah so profound and so pervasive as to render protracted detachment from it painful - and yet it demands precisely such an absence. It advocates patriotic national service even at some cost to personal development, and yet prescribes that students serve considerably less than their non-yeshiva peers. These apparent antinomies are the result of the basic attempt to reconcile conflicting claims and duties by striking a particular balance: one which should produce an aspiring talmid hacham who also serves rather than a soldier who also learns; one which perceives military service as a spiritual sacrifice - we don't want students to be indifferent to their loss - but which proceeds to demand that sacrifice; one which encourages a hesdernik to excel as a soldier while in the army but prescribes his return to the bet hamidrash before that excellence is fully applied or perhaps even fully attained. From the yeshiva's perspectives, these antitheses are fully justified. Indeed, they constitute the very essence of hesder as a complex and sensitive balance. However, preserving that balance, with its multiple subtle nuances, entails traversing a narrow ridge - and here lies the primary difficulty, existential and not just practical, of hesder. Small wonder that many only achieve the balance imperfectly. It is, however, in those who do succeed in attaining the balance and who, despite the difficulty, are genuinely at peace with themselves, that hesder at its finest can be seen. And it is inspiring to behold.

These problems are very real. They pose a formidable educational challenge; and while they are by no means insuperable - the history of yeshivot hesder can attest to that - we ignore them at our peril. Moreover, it is precisely the adherents of hesder, those of us who grapple with its sophisticated demands on a regular basis, who are most keenly aware of the problems. Nevertheless - although stateless centuries have tended to obscure this fact - hesder has been the traditional Jewish way. This is not the place for the exhaustive analysis of proof-texts. But what were the milieux of Moshe Rabbenu, of Yehoshua, of David, of Rabbi Akiva, as Hazal conceived and described them, but yeshivot hesder? Indeed, on the Ramban's view, the institution can be traced back to our very fountainhead. In explaining why Avimelech was so anxious to conclude a treaty with Yitzchak, he conjectures that it may have been due to the fact "that Avraham was very great and mighty, as he had in his house three hundred sword-wielding men and many allies. And he himself was a lion-hearted soldier and he pursued and vanquished four very powerful kings. And when his success became evident as being divinely ordained, the Philistine king feared him, lest he conquer his kingdom.... And the sons emulated the fathers, as Yitzchak was great like his father and the king feared lest he fight him should he banish him from his land." (Ramban to Bereishit, 26:29). This account of lion-hearted avot and their sword-wielding disciples may fall strangely upon some ears. Although we don't like to admit it, our Torah world, too, has its vogues, and, in some circles, much of the Ramban on Bereishit - the real Ramban, honestly read and unflinchingly understood - is currently passé. The fact, however, remains: the primary tradition is hesder.



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The reason is not hard to find. The halakhic rationale for hesder does not, as some mistakenly assume, rest solely upon the mitzvah of waging defensive war. If that were the case, one might conceivably argue that, halakhically, sixteen months of army service was too high a price to pay for the performance of this single commandment. The rationale rather rests upon a) the simple need for physical survival and b) the fact that military service is often the fullest manifestation of a far broader value: *g'milut hasadim*, the empathetic concern for others and action on their behalf. This element defined by Hazal as one of the three cardinal foundations of the world, is the basis of Jewish social ethics, and its realization, even at some cost to single-minded development of torah scholarship, virtually imperative. The gemara in Avodah Zarah is pungently clear on this point: "Our Rabbis taught: When Rabbi Elazar ben Prata and Rabbi Hanina ben Tradion were arrested [i.e. by the Romans], Rabbi Elazar ben Prata said to Rabbi Hanina ben Tradion, 'Fortunate are you that you have been arrested over one matter, woe is to me who have been arrested over five matters'. Rabbi Hanina responded, 'Fortunate are you that you have been arrested over five matters but are to be saved, woe is to me who have been arrested over one matter but will not be saved. For you concerned yourself with both Torah and *g'milut hasadim* whereas I concerned myself solely with Torah.' As Rav Huna stated; for Rav Huna said, 'Whoever concerns himself solely with Torah is as one who has no G-d. As it is written, "And many days [passed] for Israel without a true G-d" (Divrei Hayamim II, 15:3). What is [the meaning of] "without a true G-d"? That one who concerns himself solely with Torah, is as one who has no G-d' (Avodah Zarah, 17b). The midrash (Kohelet Rabbah, 7:4) equates the renunciation of *g'milut hasadim* with blasphemy; and the gemara in Rosh Hashanah states that Abbaye outlived Rabbah because he engaged in both Torah and *g'milut hasadim* whereas Rabbah had largely confined himself to the former. When, as in contemporary Israel, the greatest single hesed one can perform is helping to defend his fellows' very lives, the implications for yeshiva education should be obvious.

What is equally obvious is the fact that not everyone draws them - and this for one of several reasons. Some (not many, I hope) simply have little if any concern for the state of Israel, even entertain the naive notion that, as one rosh yeshiva put it, their business could continue as usual with Palestinian flags fluttering from the rooftops. Others feel that the spiritual price, personal and communal, is simply too high and that first-rate Torah leadership in particular can only be developed within the monochromatic contexts of "pure" yeshivot. Still others contend that, from the perspective of genuine faith and trust in G-d, it is the yeshivot which are the true guardians of the polity so that any compromise of their integrity is a blow at national security. These contentions clearly raise a number of basic moral, halakhic, and theological issues with respect to which I obviously entertain certain views. However, I do not wish, at this juncture, to polemicize. These are matters on which honest men of Torah can differ seriously out of mutual respect and I certainly have no desire to denigrate those who do not subscribe to my own positions. What I do wish to stress minimally, however, is the point that, for the aspiring talmid hacham, hesder is at least as legitimate a path as any other. It is, to my mind, a good deal more; but surely not less.

The point can be underscored by a brief glance at the relevant prooftexts most frequently cited by rigorous critics of hesder. Of course, those who oppose it because they have little use for the state, and presume that its dismemberment would not seriously endanger its inhabitants, need not look far for support. Given their assumptions, they can draw upon a plethora of sources that stress the overriding importance of *talmud Torah* and castigate the expenditure of time upon relatively insignificant purposes. I very much hope, however, that among our critics, this is a decidedly minority view; and I prefer to address myself to the position of those who do assign a measure of value to the state - and hence, of necessity, to its army - and whom the question of military service therefore confronts as an instance of the difficult, perhaps even agonizing, choice between conflicting values. In large measure - and I, for one, regard this as perfectly legitimate - the assignment of priorities is ultimately based upon the degree of importance attached to the two realms, as this determines the readiness to take respective risks; and, as previously noted, this in turn is a function of the much broader issue of the relationship of *talmud Torah* to the rest of human life. Nevertheless, much discussion of the issue quite properly centers upon specific authoritative texts, which, for this group of critics, must be such as do not simply espouse the study of Torah but address themselves to this dilemma directly; and I would like to briefly consider the more important of these.

While most of the relevant texts are aggadic, one *locus classicus* is purely halakhic, and it may best be treated first. The gemara in Bava Batra states that *talmidei hakhamim* are exempt from sharing the cost of municipal fortifications inasmuch as they “do not require protection.” Analogously, it is contended that they should be exempt from military service. One may state, in reply, that this claim raises a very serious moral issue. Can anyone whose life is not otherwise patterned after this degree of trust and *bittahon* argue for exemption on *this* ground? Is it possible to worry about one’s economic future, in evident disregard of Rabbi Eliezer’s statement that “whoever has bread in his basket and says ‘What shall I eat tomorrow?’ is but of little faith,” and still not enter the army because one is presumably safe without it? I recall, some years back, admiring the candor of a *maggid shiur* who confided to me that he had moved from a neighborhood in which most young men served in Zahal to one in which they did not because, while he might be convinced intellectually that he ought not to serve in the army, he knew full well that he did not possess the depth of faith upon which such an exemption could only be granted. Hence, he felt too ashamed, especially as his sons were coming of military age, to remain in his old bailiwick. Perhaps not many would share this response, but the basic situation is probably not uncommon; and for many, at least, any argument based on this gemara is consequently problematic.

There is, however, no need to pursue this train of thought, for the basic analogy is quite tenuous on purely halakhic grounds. The payment in question is not inherently normative. It relates to no *mizvah* whatsoever. Rather, it derives solely from the obligation to help defray the cost of communal facilities from which one reaps benefit. This is obvious from the context; the impost is discussed in the same mishnah that deals with requiring tenants of a courtyard to pay for a gate or watchman’s booth or both in order to keep out trespassers and onlookers, and both are cited by the Rambam in Hilkhos Shekhenim. Moreover, it is reflected in the fact that the sum is prorated according to the degree of benefit involved, with those subject to the greatest risk paying the most. Hence, those who derive no direct benefit pay nothing. Tenants without cars do not generally pay for the upkeep of a building’s garage, and those who have no television sets may be exempt from sharing in the cost of a central antenna.

The situation is radically different, however, with respect to an obligation precisely rooted in the responsibility to help others qua others. Does anyone suppose that one’s duty to engage in a defensive *milhemet mizvah* “to help save [the people of] Israel from a foe who has descended upon them” is based solely upon the fact that one is presently or potentially in danger? In the context of the egocentric ethic of a Mandeville or an Adam Smith, possibly. From a Torah perspective, however, this would be strange doctrine, the more so to the extent that we correctly perceive that such action is mandated by the general norm of *gemilut hasadim* and not just the specific commandment of defensive war. Consequently, the gemara in Bava Batra provides no rationale whatsoever for totally exempting *talmidei hakhamim* from military service. *They* may not require protection but others do; and their duty to defend those who have no built-in armor remains.

A second oft-cited source is the coda of Sefer Zeraim in the Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah*. The Rambam first postulates the spiritual character of the tribe of Levi as explaining its being barred from a share in Eretz Yisrael and its spoils, and then goes on to expand upon this theme:

And why did not Levi partake of the patrimony of Eretz Yisrael and its spoils with his brethren? Because he was set apart to serve G-d, to worship Him and to teach His just ways and righteous ordinances to the masses. As it is stated, “They shall teach Jacob Thine ordinances, and Israel Thy law” (Devarim 33:10). Therefore, they have been set apart from the ways of the world: they do not wage war like the rest of Israel, nor do they inherit or acquire unto themselves by physical force. They are, rather, the L-rd’s corps, as it is stated, “I am thy portion and thine inheritance” (Bamidbar 18:20). And not the tribe of Levi alone but each and every person throughout the world whose spirit has uplifted him and whose intelligence has given him the understanding to stand before G-d, to serve Him, to worship Him, to know G-d; and he walks aright as he has cast off from his neck the many considerations which men have sought – such a one has been

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sanctified as the holy of holies, and the L-rd shall be his portion and his inheritance forever and ever, and shall grant him his sufficiency in this world as he has granted to the kohanim and the Levi'im. As David, peace be upon him, says, "O L-rd, the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup, Thou maintainest my lot" (Tehillim 16:5).

At first glance, these lines seem to sanction, in principle, a *ben Torah's* total divorce from military service. In truth, however, they are of little, if any, relevance to our subject. On one level, there arises the obvious difficulty of squaring this statement both with the Rambam's personal history and with his repeated vehement critiques of those who exploit the study of Torah to worldly advantage by abstaining from all gainful activity in the expectation that they will be supported by the public treasury. Even if we confine ourselves to this text, however, we shall find that its presumed sanction is weak, at best.

First, the initial postulate – that every Levite enjoys a dispensation from army duty has no source in Hazal. On the contrary, it contravenes the evident purport of the mishnah in Sotah, אבל במלחמות מצוה הכל יוצאין, אפילו חתן וכלה מחופתה "But in [case of] wars of *mitzvah*, all go out, even a groom from his [wedding] room and a bride from her wedding chamber." As has often been noted, if the Rambam's formulation is understood as a total bar on army service by shevet Levi, it seems, to be clearly contradicted by a gemara in Kiddushin. Would or should *Bnei Torah* readily lean upon such a thin reed in order to exempt themselves from, say, the *mitzvot* of lulav or shofar?

Second, it seems most unlikely that this statement is indeed all it is presumed to be. If the Rambam had truly intended to postulate a categorical dispensation for *bnei levi* or *Bnei Torah*, would he have presented and formulated it in this manner and context? Given his sharply honed discipline and sense of order, would he not have cited it in Hilkhhot Melakhim u'Milhamoteihem (to cite the full rubric) together with all the laws of warfare rather than as a peroration to Sefer Zeraim? The implication is clear. What we have here is a hortatory coda, analogous to the conclusions of many of the books of the *Mishneh Torah* (which, of course, is to be given full weight as such, since it is, after all, the Rambam's), but is not to be confused with a clear halakhic mandate. It provides a vivid evaluation of an inspiring personality but does not dictate how it or others should act.

Even if this contention is rejected, however, the Rambam's statement remains largely irrelevant to the contemporary problem of hesder. For it should be noted, third, that the spirituality of the Levite does not preclude military service entirely. It only absolves him from waging war "like the rest of Israel." At most, he can be exempt from the gamut of wars included within the *mizvah* of *milhamah* per se. This exemption has no bearing, however, upon his duty to help fight or prevent a defensive war that threatens the survival of his community and his peers. Is a spiritual order excused from saving human lives? To the extent that this obligation is rooted in the overall norm of *gemilut hasadim*, it encompasses everyone. The world of the *ben Torah*, too, rests upon three pillars. Of course, no one would suggest that all *bnei yeshiva* stop learning and turn to cardiology. There is, however, a clear difference between abstaining from specializing in humanitarian endeavors and forgoing a universal effort. And above all, the issue is not one of suspending *talmud Torah*, G-d forbid, but of balancing and complementing it.

Finally, even if we grant that the Rambam's statement does imply a categorical dispensation in purely halakhic terms, it remains of little practical significance. We have yet to examine just to whom it applies. A *levi* is defined genealogically. Those who are equated with him, however, literally or symbolically, are defined by spiritual qualities; and for these the Rambam sets a very high standard, indeed. He presents an idealized portrait of a selfless, atemporal, almost ethereal person – one whose spirit and intelligence have led him to divest himself of all worldly concerns and who has devoted himself "to stand before G-d, to serve Him, to worship Him, to know G-d; and he walks aright as the L-rd has made him and he has cast off from his neck the yoke of the many considerations that men have sought."

To how large a segment of the Torah community, or, *a fortiori*, of any community, does this lofty typology apply? Two percent? Five percent? Can anyone who has negotiated the terms of a salary, perhaps even of *naden* or *kest* or both, look into a mirror and tell himself that he need not go to the army because he is *kodesh kodashim, sanctum sanctorum*, in the Rambam's terms? Can anyone with even a touch of vanity or a concern for *kavod* contend this?

Lest I be misunderstood, let me state clearly that I have no quarrel with economic aspirations or with normal human foibles. Again, least of all do I wish to single out *bnei yeshivot* for undeserved moral censure. I do feel, however, that those who would single themselves out for exemption from normal duties on the grounds of saintliness should examine their credentials by the proper standard.

Two other texts on this subject may be treated more briefly. One is evidently critical of Avraham Avinu for having dispatched his students to fight:

Rabbi Abbahu said in the name of Rabbi Elazar: Why was Avraham Avinu punished and his offspring enslaved in Egypt for two hundred and ten years? Because he conscripted *talmidei hakhamim*, as it is stated, "He led forth his trained men, born in his house" (Bereshit 14:14).

The implications of this source seem clear but it, too, should not be assigned decisive weight. In the ensuing lines, the gemara quotes alternative explanations for Avraham's punishment. Moreover, the midrash cites the comments of several tannaim and amoraim who all regarded the mustering of his disciples favorably. Third, Rabbi Elazar's criticism is limited to conscription, with its almost inevitable encroachment upon personal dignity. The term he uses, *angarya*, refers elsewhere to forced labor or the requisition of goods; and a parallel explanation of Assa's punishment deals with conscription for construction without reference to military service. Hence, this gemara can only support an argument against Zahal's subjecting *bnei torah* to a coercive draft. It says nothing of their duty to serve as a matter of choice.

Lastly, we may note a more explicit source, it, too, positing a causal nexus:

Rabbi Abba b. Kahana said: If not for David, Yoav could not have waged war; and were it not for Yoav, David could not have engaged in Torah. As it is written: "And David executed justice and righteousness unto all his people. And Yoav the son of Zeruyah was over the host" (Shemuel II, 8:15-16). Why did David execute justice and righteousness unto all his people? Because Yoav was over the host. And why was Yoav over the host? Because David was executing justice and righteousness unto all his people.

Admittedly, in this gemara the case for spiritual exemption and the division of functions is apparently more clearly articulated. Here, too, however, several comments are in order. First, the gemara introduces this comment with the observation that it runs counter to the prevalent thrust of the preceding discourse. Second, the engagement in Torah of which it speaks does not refer to purely contemplative study alone but to implementation through the molding of a just and fair society. Above all, however, this source is of little use to our critics on the right because of its protagonist. If they really wish to posit David, the heroic and sensitive soldier-scholar-poet-votary so graphically portrayed by Hazal in numerous contexts, as the prototype of the contemporary Israeli *ben torah*, I shall have little quarrel with them.

There is, then, no halakhic, moral, or philosophic mandate for the blanket exemption of *Bnei Torah* from military service. These categorical claims having been laid to rest, however, and their presumed authoritative basis neutralized, we are still confronted by the practical difficulty of weighing conflicting needs – of striking a balance, on both the personal and especially the communal plane, between the spiritual and the material, and of assessing the risks inherent in pressing one at the expense of the other. And we need to do this with reference to both ideology and fact, determining not only whether hesder is



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desirable but the extent to which, in one form or another, it is feasible. On this level, that of the practical formulation of public policy rather than the principled invocation of personal prerogative, there is room for disagreement – and, quite conceivably, for pluralist solutions.

Even assuming such pluralism, however, the composition of our educational mix must be carefully considered. I fully appreciate the contribution of non-hesder yeshivot to our spiritual life; I grant that they contain some individuals who at present serve their country well by devoting themselves to Torah exclusively, and this not because they might make poor soldiers but because of their spiritual potential. Much as I would like the great majority of their students to modify their course out of personal conviction, I have no desire to legislate them out of existence or into yeshivot hesder.

I realize that some of the arguments I have raised against full exemption might be pressed by others against the abbreviation of service; and that just as I would vindicate the latter on the basis of spiritual need, so may others justify the former for the same reason. Nonetheless, I feel strongly that, at the very least, the current proportion of hesder to nonhesder yeshivot is totally out of kilter. Surely, we dare not acquiesce in the protracted spiritual desiccation of *bnei torah* at a critical juncture in their lives. However, the ethical alternative should not be a self-determined carte blanche exemption. Hesder, conceived and implemented not as a compromise but as a bold response to a difficult dilemma, should be the standard rather than the exception. It is the direction which, upon searching examination of the issue, Torah leadership should seek to promote as a norm, not as a deviation.

In making any assessment, it is important that we approach the subject with full awareness of the military ramifications - a point not always sufficiently heeded. The story is reliably told of a leading rosh yeshiva who, at the height of the controversy over *giyus banot*, "the drafting of women", back in the fifties, attended a wedding near the Israeli-Arab border in Jerusalem. At one point, gunfire was suddenly heard and he scurried under a table, exclaiming passionately, "Ribbono shel olam, I want to live! There is much torah which I yet wish to learn and create!" Whereupon a rather insensitive observer approached him and asked, "Nu, rebbe, was sagt ihr itzer wegen *giyus banot*?" (Well, rabbi, what do you say now about *giyus banot*?) And he kept quiet. I cite the story not because I favor the induction of women - under present circumstances, I very much oppose it - nor to impugn the memory of a truly great person, but in order to point out that, at a certain distance, one can lose sight of the simple truth that a Jewish soul can only exist within a Jewish body.

That nagging truth persists, however, and its appreciation is central to the understanding of an institution designed to reconcile the conflicting claims of spirituality and security, of talmud torah and *g'milut hasadim*, of personal growth and public service. The present dilemma posed by these claims is not of our choosing. The response, however, is; and, in this respect, yeshivot hesder are a conspectus of our collective anomaly: a nation with outstretched palm and mailed fist, striving for peace and yet training for war. For the foreseeable future, this is our situation. While, as previously noted, our position appears more promising than in the past, we are far from being genuinely secure and can hardly afford to weaken our defenses complacently. Hence, within the context of our "station and its duties" (to use F. H. Bradley's term), hesder is, for bnei torah, the imperative of the moment. May G-d grant us a better station. In the meantime, however, if it is to become no worse, we must keep both our spirits and our guard up. Animated by vision and yet chary of danger, we, of yeshivot hesder, pray that He may grant us the wisdom and the courage to cope with the challenges of time. Fully appreciative of both the price we pay and the value of that which we safeguard in return, we approach our task with responsibility and humility; and, impelled by both commitment to Torah and compassion for our people, we strive to fulfil it with a sense of broader spiritual and historical vision. Standing in tears atop Har Hazeitim, the bleak sight of *kol hamekudash mehavera harev yoter mehaver* stretching before him, what would the Ramban have given to head a yeshivat Hesder?

[For the completely annotated version, see the <https://traditiononline.org/the-ideology-of-hesder/>.]

K7: RACHEL AND LEAH



Aims:

1. **Learn** about the main events in Rachel's life.
2. **Appreciate** her character as someone who can transform their life through teshuva.
3. **View** Leah as representing the virtue of gratitude, and how relevant it is to our lives.

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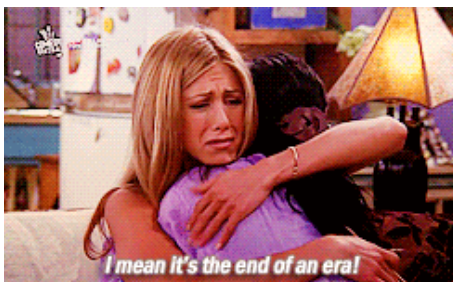
K7: Rachel and Leah

FACT FILE

- 29: Ya'akov becomes a shepherd and he meets Rachel, Lavan's daughter
- They decide to get married but he is tricked by Lavan and marries Leah, her sister, instead. Rachel gives Leah the secret signs to display to Ya'akov at the wedding to make him think that he's marrying Rachel. Rachel did not want to cause an upset and embarrass her family.
- Ya'akov then marries Rachel after working for Lavan for a further 7 years.
- 30: By now Leah has had 4 children with Ya'akov and Rachel has none. Rachel gives Ya'akov Bilha – her maidservant to bear children instead of her and Rachel may be built up through her. Leah also gives Ya'akov her handmaid, Zilpah, for the same reason.
- 30 22-24: Rachel gives birth to Yosef
- 45: 16-21 Rachel gives birth to her second son, Binyamin, before dying and being buried by the roadside in Bet Lechem.
- Today, many people flock to Kever Rachel (where she is buried in Bet Lechem) to daven.



Mama Rachel Cries



The source for this well-known and much loved song is to be found in the Midrash:

...He (Ya'akov) knew that in the future the Beit HaMikdash would be destroyed and his sons would be exiled. They would approach all of the forefathers and ask that

they pray on their behalf, but they could not help. On the path of their exile they would encounter the tomb of Rachel and she will stand and ask mercy from Hashem, saying before Him: Master of the Universe! Listen to the voice of my weeping and have mercy on my sons, or return to me my onia (trickery). Immediately, Hashem will listen to her... (Pesikta Rabbati 8)



The question is why was Rachel effective when none of the other Avot could help? We've spent so many K's talking about how epic they were; why do they fail here?

Rachel screws up

From the second that Ya'akov first lays eyes on Rachel and gives her a bit of a snog (true story), she is not exactly presented in the fairest light. The first major point of interest is her barrenness. Although she is following a proud biblical tradition in being barren, the situation is slightly different to that of Sarah and of Rivkah. When it comes to Sarah, she takes the initiative and offers Hagar to Avraham. In the case of Rivkah, Yitzchak davens for her. Rachel seeks to emulate this model by asking Ya'akov to daven on her behalf, but his reaction is quite different from his father's:

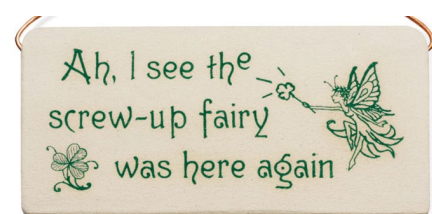


וַתֵּרָא רָחֵל כִּי לֹא יִלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב וַתִּקְנֶא רָחֵל בְּאַחֲתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל יַעֲקֹב הֲבָה לִי בָנִים וְאִם אֵין מִתָּה אֲנֹכִי: וַיַּחַר אֵף יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר הֲתַחַת אֱ-לֹהִים אֲנֹכִי אֲשֶׁר מִנַּע מִמֶּנּוּ פְרִי בְטֶן:
"And Rachel saw that she had not given birth for Ya'akov and became jealous of her sister and said to Ya'akov: 'Give me sons! And if not I am dead!' And Ya'akov became angry with Rachel and said: 'Am I in the place of Hashem, Who withheld a child from you?'" (Bereshit 30:1-2)

The reason for the difference between Yitzchak and Ya'akov is obvious; Ya'akov already has children. How is he supposed to approach Hashem and ask for a child when he already has one? Effectively what he is saying is "Hashem has no problem with me – He proved so by giving me children. The one who He is holding children from is you and you need to be the one to sort it out." It seems that he is quite justified in his anger; Rachel should be turning to Hashem – not to her husband. Instead of looking within herself she is trying to cut corners.

Rachel screws up again...

A little later, Reuven, the son of Leah, has just come back from the field where he picked some mandrakes (*mandragora officinarum*) to give to his mother. Sweet. Rachel, who slept in Ya'akov's tent most nights, went to Leah and swapped a night in



Ya'akov's tent for the mandrakes. Not so sweet. Chazal are not particularly impressed with Rachel's business-like manner here:

Said Rabbi Shimon: because she treated this tzaddik (Ya'akov) so lightly she did not merit to be buried next to him... (Bereishit Rabbah 72)



The Midrash continues like that for quite some time. Basically, they take her to town. This attitude is also hinted at, though not quite as clearly, in the well-known Midrash about how she gave the signs to Leah so that Lavan's trickery would not be found out on the wedding night, thereby shaming Leah. Now that's all fine and dandy, but ultimately she still shamed Ya'akov – he was tricked into marrying someone who he did not want and had to work seven years in return. So, she made a choice; and left Ya'akov out to dry.

So, after all this, we are no closer to answering our question – in fact we have strengthened it. Before, we just wondered why the other Avot were ineffective; now we don't understand why Rachel would have been.

DISCUSSION POINT – Is this whole question only a question because of the high level that we hold our Avot and Imahot to?

Rachel Repents

There is no explicit verse saying that Rachel realised her sins and returned to Hashem, but implicitly it is fairly clear. In both of the areas which we highlighted above (not turning to Hashem and treating her husband with disrespect) she turns things around. The first is the most obvious. When she does finally have a child, the Torah says that Hashem remembered and heard her. Obviously, he could not have done if she had not prayed. Therefore, it seems that she took her husband's advice and stopped acting like a spoiled child and entered before Hashem in honest and sincere prayer.

Said R' Avahu: the place where those who have done teshuva stand- even complete tzaddikim cannot stand. (Brachot 34b)

The second issue is also resolved later on. Ya'akov approaches his wives informing them of all the evil that their father has done to him. This is a tense moment, as they are going to have to choose between their father and their husband:

וַתַּעַן רַחֵל וְלֵאָה וַתֹּאמְרָנָה לוֹ הַעוֹד לָנוּ חֵלֶק וְנַחֲלָה בְּבֵית אָבִינוּ:

"And Rachel and Leah responded, and she said to him: 'do we still have a portion in our father's inheritance?!'" (Bereshit 31:14)

The Targum Yonatan points out that Rachel responded first and claims that Leah let her do all the talking and was happy to agree. At this moment, Rachel demonstrates her unwavering and unflagging commitment to her husband.

We can now understand why it is that Rachel is the one who is successful in her prayers, as Rav Amnon Bazak outlines:

From then on, Rachel - and specifically Rachel - has served as a powerful symbol for her descendants in exile. As if Rachel says to us, her children, I - more than anyone - know and understand what you are going through. Nobody is aware more than I of the complex workings of a person, the inner tension of conflicting interests and desires, the individual's strive for excellence and frequent moments of collapse and confusion. I, more than anyone, can assure you that just as one has the capacity to corrupt, he has the capacity to correct. There is hope for your future, my children, and, sooner or later, you will return to your homeland.

DISCUSSION POINT – What's an example from our Galut that we can see follows the rule of 'ma'ase avot siman lebanim' with Rachel?

Self-sacrifice

Another really important characteristic which Rachel demonstrates is that of self-sacrifice. When she gave the signs to Leah, so that Lavan's trick would not be recognised, she thought only of Leah's well-being. She had no idea that Ya'akov would end up marrying her too. She was prepared to sacrifice her hopes and dreams merely to prevent her sister from being embarrassed.



Leah and giving thanks

Leah can teach us a very important message which is directly transferrable to our lives, and that is how to give thanks. Leah calls her fourth son Yehuda, which comes from the root of *hoda'a* – which means thanks. Chazal interpret her as a character who appreciates that all she has comes from Hashem:

"From the day that Hashem created the world, there was no one who thanked Hashem until Leah came and thanked Him" (Gemara Brachot 7b)

There is also a Midrash about why the Torah describes Leah as having soft eyes. It says that she thought that, as the firstborn girl, she would have to marry Esav. Whenever she thought about this she would turn to Hashem in prayer. Her prayers were so effective that she was rewarded by preceding her sister in marrying Ya'akov (Bereishit Rabbah 70:16).

These two virtues are tied up together. Another translation of the word הוֹדָאָה is "admitting". It could be that real thanks is admitting that without the other person you would have nothing. Leah realises that without Hashem's input she truly would have had nothing. A person who appreciates the hand of Hashem in our lives is the same type of person who will pray to Him for salvation from a potential evil.



Rabbi Sacks zt'l writes (pg. 90 of the Cheeky Chiefy siddur) regarding the bracha of Modim:

...the blessing begins as a confession of faith and moves to thanks for Hashem's blessings which surround us continually...Nachmanides explained the difference between a "revealed" and a "hidden" miracle. Revealed miracles stand outside the laws of nature; hidden miracles take place within them. Hashem is present not only in signs and wonders, but also in the very laws that govern the universe. To see the miraculous in the everyday is part of the Judaic vision, beautifully expressed in these lines.

All too often in the modern, scientific era, we attribute the things that go on around us to the rules of nature and forget He Who Stands Behind that nature. We would do well to view Leah as a role model in this regard; someone who never forget the guiding hand of Hashem in her life.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Many of your chanichim might not want to share personal thoughts and expressions of gratitude with the group; they might not even know how to. Let them go off by themselves and write a letter to someone that they are very grateful towards. Roll that letter up and put it in a balloon. Mix all the balloons up and give one to each chanich. Ask them to pop their balloons and read the letter inside. No names have to be used, so no one needs to feel uncomfortable about sharing.

So effectively, it's a double message. The first is about true thanks; genuinely appreciating that without the people around us we would not be the same. The other is about Divine Providence; recognising the hand of Hashem in our everyday lives.

DISCUSSION POINT – What are you grateful for?

Middah Spotlight - Emunah:

In this Kvutsah we've looked at some aspects of Rachel and Leah showing what fantastic role models they are. Summing this up, along with Sara and Rivka's middot, we have:

Sarah's Middot	Rivka's Middot	Rachel's Middot	Leah's Middot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Righteousness • Prophetess • Kept Mitzvot to an exceptional level • Modest • Strong Emunah • Hishtadlut (initiative and action) • Taught Torah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chessed • Respectful & kind to people and animals • Prophetess • Spiritually sensitive • Wise, cunning, driven • Takes action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounded in this world • Considerate • Merciful • Willing to sacrifice own happiness for that of others • Determined • Hishtadlut • Emunah in Hashem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intuitive • Doesn't complain • Patient • Respected husband • Good mother • Close relationship with Hashem

Emunah in Hashem/tefilla

Bereishit 25:21 - "And Yitzchak prayed to Hashem opposite his wife because she was barren, and Hashem accepted his prayer, and Rivkah his wife conceived."

Rashi: He stood in one corner and prayed; she stood in the other corner and prayed.

As we said before, all the Imahot were barren at some stage. The question is: WHY?

The simple answer is that Hashem wanted to hear the prayers of these righteous women. Now, philosophical questions aside, the episodes concerning the prayers of the Imahot should serve as a lesson to us regarding the power of tefilla. Perhaps the fact that Hashem



wants and appreciates our tefillot should even serve as an extra motivation to pray. We should also try to replicate in our own hearts the immense emunah that the Imahot had that their prayers would be answered (though the answer may sometimes be 'No').

In other words, we should attempt to daven with kavanah! This means saying each word and (hold on to your seats) UNDERSTANDING what you're saying! (Amazing, I know)! Easy ways to do this include: reading the English, learning Hebrew, getting one of those cool Artscroll interlinear siddurim. This is perhaps one of the most important lessons you can teach the chanichim...after all, this is the first time most of them will be spending a long period of time davening three times-a-day...they might as well understand what they're saying!

Sum-up

We have seen that Rachel is an extremely relatable character - she falls down a number of times but also picks herself up and repents. Leah teaches us exactly how we should view the amazing things which we have received, from Hashem and from others, and also how to turn to Hashem and recognise his permanent place in our lives.



Extra Chomer
Prayer in the Teaching of Rav Soloveitchik zt'l

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt'l

The gemara (Shabbat 10a) teaches:

Rava observed Rav Hamnuna drawing out his prayer. He said, 'You are putting aside eternal life and involving yourself with momentary life!'

[Rashi explains: 'Eternal life' refers to Torah, whereas prayer focuses on the needs of our ephemeral physical life, such as healing, peace, food.]

And he [Rav Hamnuna] explained, 'Prayer has its time, and Torah study has its time.'

By virtue of his roots and influences, "the Rav" (as Rav Soloveitchik was known to his students) presumably belonged to the school of Rava. Obviously, as regards the mitzvot of tefilla (prayer) on the minimal halakhic level, the position of Rav Hamnuna - "Prayer has its time, and Torah study has its time" - was recognized in both Volozhin and Brisk. Halakha follows Rabbi Yochanan's opinion (Shabbat 11a) that Torah scholars' absolute exemption from prayer is limited to those, like Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, whose "Torah is their profession," i.e., those who devote all their time exclusively to Torah study. Since they are not engaged in matters of this world, they are exempt from prayer. Other than these rare exceptions, the obligation is binding and is taken for granted in the teachings of the Rav.

At the same time, in the tradition of Volozhin and Brisk the value and status of prayer - relative both to other areas of Divine service (especially in comparison to Torah study) and to the special status and importance of prayer in the popular view - were quite limited.

Volozhin and Brisk were guided by the central awareness that, in the words of the Rambam (Hilkhot Tefilla 6:8), "the mitzva of Torah study is greater than that of tefilla." In truth, the issue was never evaluated in these terms. Tefilla and Torah study were never placed on two arms of a scale with a view to comparing their respective weight. The attraction to Torah study and commitment to it were understood first and foremost on the valuational and existential levels. The obligation of conscientious study day and night, uninterrupted and unwavering, was emphasized over and over.

Few were those who would have been courageous enough to emulate the pious ones of old, of whom it is told (Berakhot 32b) that they would spend nine hours each day engaged in prayer, and nevertheless "because they were pious their Torah study was preserved and their labor was blessed." Not many believed that they could rely on this promise. In any event, I believe that in Volozhin and Brisk they neither desired nor aspired to this. The prevailing motto was, "'If you walk in my statutes' - i.e., if you labor in My Torah." The dominant emphasis was placed on the acquisition of Torah through investing supreme effort in its study.

There can be no doubt that this tradition regarding the relationship between Torah and tefilla left an indelible imprint on the Rav at the outset of his career, and had a determining influence on his way of life and also, to some extent, on his philosophy.

For a long time, at least until the end of the 1950's, the Rav would not hesitate to pray alone in order to make more time available for learning. He found support for this decision in Rav Chaim's understanding of the Rambam's approach to the laws of communal prayer. He also offered an intriguing explanation of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's opinion (Megilla 27a) that "a synagogue may be converted into a beit midrash (study hall)" (but not vice versa, because the sanctity of a study hall is greater than that of a

synagogue). According to the Rav, the sanctity and unique nature of a beit midrash are based not on our preference for the intellectual and rational aspect of our faith, but rather on the greater importance of study than tefilla on the existential plane. Nevertheless, it is clear that prayer held a central place in the Rav's spiritual world.

At the start of his career as a Torah luminary, the Rav paid special attention to the issue of prayer - both between the walls of his own beit midrash as well as from various public podiums. When his father, Rav Moshe zt"l, would invite him to deliver a guest lecture at the yeshiva in New York, the Rav regularly chose to deal with issues in Tractate Berakhot. There is clearly no need to elaborate on the place which this held in the Rav's teachings throughout his life. A brief perusal of his annual "Yahrzeit lectures" (collected in the two volumes of "Shiurim LeZekher Abba Mari Z"L") bears adequate witness to this.

Alongside Torah study, tefilla represented a central and potent ingredient in the Rav's personality and his service of G-d. Those closest to him remember with admiration not only his brilliant lectures but also the broken heart filled with longing which characterized his stance as a servant of G-d standing before his Master during the Ne'ila prayer on Yom Kippur, and the ecstasy and power which burst forth during his recitation of "Nishmat Kol Chai" at the Seder table. Anyone seeking to understand the Rav's teachings, his philosophy and his essence must therefore turn his attention to his treatment of tefilla both as a subject of study and as a state of being.

I shall deal with some of the principal points in this regard. It should obviously be kept in mind, though, that all his teachings - transmitted in great detail both orally and in writing, in the framework of Torah study and its practical application in life, all spanning many decades - cannot possibly be crammed into a single lecture.

A

The word "tefilla" is used in two different senses. One is a wider concept, referring to the contents of the siddur, the prayers which we recite in synagogue. The content of "tefilla" in this context includes the portions read from the Torah, birkat kohanim (the priestly blessing), pesukei de-zimra (songs of praise), hallel, etc.

In its narrower sense, the word "tefilla" is used to refer specifically to the Shemoneh Esrei (the "Eighteen Blessings;" also called the "Amida," or "standing prayer"). This differentiation appears in the Rambam, who distinguishes in his Mishneh Torah between the "Laws of Berakhot (blessings)," the "Laws of Reciting the Shema," and the "Laws of Tefilla." The Rav dealt at length with both areas, but we shall concentrate here on his treatment of tefilla as it refers to the Shemoneh Esrei.

Through the Rav's teachings, we may examine tefilla on three levels:

The first is that of tefilla itself, alone.

The second is an examination of tefilla as typifying a category of mitzvot.

The third level is the perspective which sees tefilla as rooted and integrated in the totality of the Rav's philosophical thought.

B

With regard to the first level, we may highlight several central elements which the Rav focused on:

1. The primary emphasis on "bakasha" (petition, request). The Shemoneh Esrei, as we know, is structured such that there is praise (shevach) at the beginning, thanksgiving (hoda'a) at the end, and requests in between. The Rav laid particular emphasis on the element of bakasha as characterizing tefilla. This in itself is not surprising, and perhaps not even innovative: the gemara itself uses the words "rachamei" and "tachanunim" (supplications) as synonyms for tefilla. According to the description which appears in the gemara (Berakhot 34a), "[During] the first [set of blessings in the Shemoneh Esrei,] one is compared to a servant who presents praise before his master; [during] the middle [blessings] he is compared to a servant who requests a favor from his master; and [in reciting] the last [blessings] he is likened to a servant who has received a favor from his master, and now takes his leave and departs." Here, too, the central element of the tefilla is perceived as residing in the dimension of request.

The Rav did not stop at emphasizing this fact, reflected as it is in the content of the tefilla itself. (The Sifri also quotes a number of verses from Tanakh which support this tripartite structure of prayer.) He also examined the question of the legitimacy of this view, and the extent to which it is necessary. This examination was carried out keeping other views in mind: mystical perspectives which highlight at length the dimension of praise, and idealistic-philosophical perspectives which regard the status of "petition" with misgivings, and perceive it as an unacceptable egocentric act: instead of a person being full of praise to G-d, he is merely concerned with his own personal cares.

The Rav completely rejected these views, insisting instead, over and over, that prayer is indeed - and must be - "supplication and request." I shall quote a few lines from his article, "Ra'ayonot al haTefilla" (Ideas on Prayer):

"As has been explained, tefilla also requires praise and thanks. Nevertheless, the vigor and power of tefilla are embedded in the bakasha. Halakha is interested in the psychosomatic human being - in his actual body. It is not pleased by an ecstatic separation of the soul from the body during prayer." [Printed in Ish HaHalakha - Galui VeNistar, p. 265]

This tone is echoed in several places and in various contexts.

2. Moreover, the Rav emphasized the view of tefilla as standing before the King. He referred not only to the outpouring of one's request, but also to the consciousness of the encounter itself. This aspect is highlighted especially in the Shemoneh Esrei, as opposed to other prayers in which we recite words before G-d against a different background. The Rambam gives expression to this idea while addressing the issue of the "preparation of the body" for prayer (Hilkhos Tefilla 5:4):

"And his heart should be turned upwards, AS THOUGH HE WERE STANDING IN HEAVEN."

Similarly, the Ramban in this regard explicitly differentiates between the Shemoneh Esrei and the recitation of the Shema (Chiddushei HaRamban, Berakhot 22b s.v. Aval). The gemara teaches (Eruvin 64a, and see Berakhot 31a) that "a drunk person is forbidden to pray," to the extent that if he does so, his prayer

is considered an abomination. The Ramban maintains, however, that a person who is inebriated is permitted to recite the Shema, and may even be obligated to do so:

"Because in 'tefilla' [i.e. the Amida,] he requires excessive concentration, FOR HE IS LIKE ONE WHO STANDS BEFORE A KING, and we know from other sources that the regulations concerning 'kavana' (concentration) are more strict with regard to 'tefilla' than with regard to the recitation of the Shema..."

The Ramban connects this to the issue of kavana. The Rav, however, saw the halakhic conclusion as more than simply a result arising from the requirement of "excessive concentration" which would prevent someone who was drunk from praying properly. He perceived tefilla as an encounter characterized principally by the "standing before the King," presenting oneself before G-d, a direct appeal to Him expressed in the language of the siddur in the second person singular. This standing before the King gives rise to both obligations: the first - deep concentration, and the second - sobriety, which a drunk cannot fulfil.

The Rav would frequently quote Rashi's comment (Berakhot 25a s.v. Aval le-tefilla) on the gemara which states that when it comes to the Shema, it is sufficient for a person to cover only his private parts and leave most of his body exposed, whereas for tefilla he must "cover his heart." Rashi explains:

"'But for tefilla' - he has to present himself as standing before the King, and to stand in fear. But the recitation of the Shema is not [considered] speaking before the King."

The Rav saw in this idea of encounter and dialogue (with consideration for the unique nature of both "the one who stands" praying and "the One before Whom he stands") the central dimension of tefilla.

3. At the same time, the Rav would frequently speak of an additional dimension of tefilla - one on which he focused extensively in his early years. As surprising as this may sound, the Rav used to address much attention to the problematic nature of tefilla: is it actually possible and feasible, permissible and appropriate, to pray?

This subject was familiar to Chazal, and to the Rishonim (medieval sages) who followed them, especially as regards the category of "praise." The gemara (Berakhot 33a) describes a certain 'shaliach tzibbur' (prayer leader) who, during his repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei, reached the words "ha-gadol ha-gibor ve-hanora" ("the G-d who is great, mighty and awesome") and then continued with a long list of additional praises: "ha-adir ve-haizuz ve-hayir'ui, he-chazak ve-ha'amitz, ha-vadai ve-hanikhbad." When he finished his Shemoneh Esrei, Rabbi Chanina scorned him:

"Do you think that you have now exhausted the praises of your Master? As for us, were it not for the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu uttered these three praises ("ha-gadol ha-gibor ve-hanora") in the Torah (Devarim 10:17), and that the Men of the Great Assembly later included them formally in the tefilla, we could not [i.e., would not have the right to] mention even those three. Why, then, did you add on so much?"

The Rav certainly identified with this approach of hesitation and restraint with regard to praise. In one of his "Yahrzeit lectures" he spoke about the recitation of the "Shir shel yom" ("Psalm of the day" - the chapter of Tehillim chosen specifically for each day of the week) as listed at the end of Tractate Sukka (55a). The Rav asked, "Why is this psalm recited specifically on this day, and that psalm on that day? What significance is there to this selection of psalms? Why could a person not recite two chapters?"

Based on these questions, the Rav developed his argument as to the problematic nature of the recital of "shevach" (praise). Perhaps the appropriate response should be silence, due to both our wonderment at G-d's greatness, as well as shame at our unworthiness?

In his essay "Ish HaHalakha" (Halakhic Man), Rav Soloveitchik examined the subject of praise in the course of his discussion of the Rambam's theory of Divine attributes set forth in his "Moreh Nevukhim" (Guide for the Perplexed). The Rambam maintains that it is preferable to altogether avoid descriptions of G-d's attributes; however, if one is already doing so, then he should word it in the negative rather than affirming a certain trait or ascribing a certain graphic description to G-d.

But according to the Rav, a person may indeed approach G-d and present his requests. Human beings who dwell in this physical world have all kinds of deficiencies, wants and aspirations, and as a result they sometimes choose to knock on the gates of Heaven, to break through the barricades, and to present themselves before G-d asking that He answer their requests.

Would we dare act in this way before a king of flesh and blood? Would we shout, demand, request and plead? Where do we find such audacity? How do we allow ourselves such "chutzpa" in our relationship with G-d?

This led the Rav to speak at length of the necessity for the existence of "permission" (a "mattir") for tefilla, something that would serve as a license of sorts, and in this regard he pointed towards a number of halakhot. For instance, it is stipulated that tefillat nedava, a "voluntary prayer" (i.e., not one of the mandatory, regular communal prayers), must include something innovative. It is not sufficient to simply repeat the tefilla which one has already recited, for this novelty serves as his "permission" to add a non-mandatory prayer.

The Rav brought another example from the Ra'avad, who held that tashlumin, a compensatory prayer, may be recited only in juxtaposition to mandatory tefilla recited at its set time. Someone who forgets to pray Mincha may make it up by reciting the Amida twice at Ma'ariv. The opening of the gates of heaven for the obligatory prayer - which a person is "permitted" to pray because he is commanded to - allows him to slip in, as it were, at the same time the tefilla which he missed. Otherwise, he would have no opportunity of presenting that missed tefilla before his Creator.

In this connection, the Rav used to quote the gemara in Berakhot (31a) which poses the question, "Can a person pray the whole day long?" and answers, "No, for as we learn from the Book of Daniel (6:11): 'Their times are three.'" The very question is not whether a person is required to pray all day long, but rather whether he is even permitted to do so.

According to the Rav, the problem here lies not in our concern for the possibility of "berakha le-vatala" (reciting blessings - which contain G-d's name - unnecessarily), but rather in the very audacity of the idea of standing before G-d the entire day. The issue is not one of 'bitul Torah' (wasting time that should be spent studying Torah) but rather a person's arrogation of the right to stand before G-d and petition Him for one's needs. A similar approach can be found in the words of Rabbi Meir in Berakhot 61a:

"A person's words before G-d should always be few, as it is written (Kohelet 5:1): 'Do not flurry your mouth and hasten your heart to issue words before G-d, for G-d is in heaven and you are on earth, and therefore let your words be few in number.'"

Admittedly, there are sources in Chazal which point to a different approach. On the verse, "Even if you offer many prayers, I shall not hear" (Yeshayahu 1:15), the Yerushalmi (Ta'anit 4:1) comments, "From here we learn that anyone who offers many prayers is answered." (I.e., in the previous quotation G-d is indicating a situation which is not the usual state of affairs - "Even..."; generally this would ensure G-d's attention.) But the Rav was inclined to emphasize the theme of refraining from excessive prayer, not only in the "quantitative" sense of "the whole day long" but also in the qualitative sense - the very directing of requests to G-d (bearing in mind the approach mentioned above, which holds that the principal component of tefilla is the "bakasha" aspect).

In this connection the Rav spoke of two types of "permission." One is to be found in tefilla itself: the praise which comprises the first three berakhot "allows" the subsequent requests. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the last berakha before the Shemoneh Esrei (which has redemption as its theme) and the tefilla itself also provides "permission" of a sort (this juxtaposition is known as "semikhat ge'ula le-tefilla"). The same applies to the recitation of "pesukei de-zimra" in the earlier part of the prayer service. The very joining of the different levels of the tefilla constitutes its "permission."

But for the Rav this was not sufficient. He sought historical and halakhic anchoring for a person's standing before G-d. In his view, if one were to evaluate purely intellectually the permissibility of prayer and petition, one would be forced to reach a negative conclusion. Nevertheless, there are precedents. "The [three] Patriarchs instituted prayer" (Berakhot 26b). The forefathers prayed; so did Moshe Rabbeinu and King David. It would seem, therefore, that even if it seems somewhat paradoxical and even if it contradicts the conclusion we would reach were we to focus on the fundamental, theological, ideological-philosophical aspects alone - it is indeed acceptable, and even desirable.

This is not all. We are in fact commanded to pray. We find in Ta'anit (2a):

"To love the L-rd your G-d and to serve Him with all your heart' ([Devarim 11:13](#)) - what is Divine service that is performed by the heart? This is tefilla."

This indicates both the obligation to pray and the permission to do so. Were it not for the obligation, there would be no permission.

In 1953, the first year in which I studied privately with the Rav in Boston, he taught Berakhot. Ever since that time I have been captivated by those issues and have even come to feel something of the sensation experienced by a person who simply stands in wonder: "What are we; what are our lives? What are we in relation to G-d?" The Rav's teachings made a deep and lasting impression on me. Later on, I had certain reservations regarding this line of thought, and even more so regarding such an existential state. Indeed, the feeling of "What shall a person complain of so long as he is alive, in light of all his sins?" (Eikha 3:39) arises in one's heart. As the midrash explains, "It is sufficient that he is alive; he should ask for nothing else beyond this." Moshe Rabbeinu's words, "And I entreated G-d at that time..." (Devarim 3:23) indicate, according to Chazal, that all is given as a free gift. G-d owes us nothing. At the same time, though, can anyone imagine that G-d would plant us on earth - weak and dependent as we are - with only Himself for us to rely upon, and then block our channel to reach Him?

Indeed, can there be any meaningful human existence, either spiritually or materially, without access to our Father in Heaven? I believe that I was not alone in recoiling from this line of thought (regarding the audacity of prayer and the need for permission); in my opinion, the Rav himself somewhat downplayed it later in his life.

The Rav dealt further with the "problematics of prayer" both in his lectures and in his writings, but the question was couched differently and his answers conveyed a different tone. I shall quote just a short excerpt, from which the question clearly emerges: How is prayer possible at all?

"To the extent that the individual approaches G-d, his finite mortal existence is negated. The finite is swallowed in the Infinite and expires in its depths. Man sometimes flees from G-d or hides from Him - "And Moshe hid his face for he was afraid to look at G-d" (Shemot 3:6) - lest he be swallowed. Man's independence and self-confidence are nullified before G-d's splendor and glory. If so, then the question arises: How can prayer exist at all? Prayer is standing before G-d, before the Divine Presence. How can a person be in G-d's presence without losing his individual existence?" ["Ra'ayanot al haTefilla," p. 244]

Here the question is directed not towards the issue of permission to pray - its legitimacy vs. the audacity which it involves - so much as towards man's very ability to pray: Is it existentially possible for a person to stand in G-d's presence?

Later on in the same work, the Rav does mention the concept of "permission" to pray, but here the principle and the answer which he suggests are different from those which we discussed previously. He maintains (p. 245) that "Halakhic thought toiled mightily to provide an answer to this question and to find something which would permit a creature of flesh and blood to approach its Maker." The Rav lists three fundamental concepts in Judaism upon which this permission rests. The latter two are the precedents set by the Patriarchs and by the Temple service, to which we shall return later. But the first concept, about which the Rav did not speak in the '50's, is as follows (ibid.):

"Prayer is a vital need for the religious individual. He cannot stop the thoughts and emotions, deliberations and troubles which surge through the depths of his soul, his hopes and aspirations, his despair and bitterness - in short: the great wealth that is concealed in his religious consciousness. It is impossible to halt the liturgical outpouring [of these feelings]. Prayer is essential. Fresh, vibrant religious feeling cannot exist without it. In other words, prayer is justified by virtue of the fact that it is impossible to exist without it."

This is not an answer to the question but rather the negation of the question's very legitimacy.

C

Until now we have dealt with the first level of examination: the attitude towards prayer itself, alone. The second level, as mentioned, looks at prayer as representative of an entire category of mitzvot. Let us turn our attention briefly to a concept which the Rav developed at length in several contexts. In Chazal's words, prayer is "avoda she-balev," "[Divine] service of the heart." This concept itself was developed extensively by the Rav, and is beyond the scope of this presentation. Inter alia, on the purely halakhic level, the Rav saw tefilla - and the Divine service which it represents - as an example, perhaps the best and most outstanding example, of a certain type of mitzva.

We rely here on the distinction pointed out by Rabbeinu Bechaye in his "Chovot HaLevavot" between "obligations of the limbs" and "obligations of the heart." The Rav emphasized that, in these two categories, there is overlap between the action (ma'aseh) required of the individual during the performance of the mitzva, and the actual fulfillment (kiyyum) and realization of the obligation itself. On Pesach, for example, the mitzva is simply to eat matza, and if the person fulfills the technical requirements, then he has fulfilled the mitzva. In mitzvot of the "obligations of the heart" variety, if the individual feels awe, love etc., then a certain type of act - even if not physical - is fulfilled.

In contrast, emphasized the Rav, there are some mitzvot which require of us a certain action - sometimes expressed externally - but whose fulfillment and realization are "in the heart" and are conditional not upon the execution of the act but rather on a certain spiritual state. The Rav found evidence of this category in various contexts. For example, the mitzva of joy on the pilgrim festivals ("Ve-samachta be-chagekha"): the eating of the festive sacrifices dictates a certain lifestyle or certain acts, but the fulfillment of the mitzva is not expressed in the eating of the sacrifices but rather in the feeling of joy which bursts forth from the heart in the wake of that act. A similar idea applies to the mitzva of mourning.

The Rav saw the central focus of this category in the area of prayer. In his introduction to "Chovot HaLevavot," Rabbeinu Bechaye included prayer in his list of "obligations of the limbs" (in contrast to the possibility raised by the "Magen Avraham" according to which the mitzva of prayer can be fulfilled through thought alone). The Rav regarded it as plainly obvious that "Divine service of the heart" takes place in the heart. But, then, how do we explain the obligation to actually articulate the prayers verbally?

And here he presents his answer: there is the "action of the mitzva," expressed in the recitation of the words (the reciting of a certain text with a certain structure, in a certain place and under certain conditions, according to all the details as they appear in the Shulchan Arukh), and there is the "fulfillment of the mitzva," which pertains to the essence of the individual, his experience of the importance of his stance before G-d and the significance of the message which he seeks to transmit to G-d.

Here, tefilla is perceived not as an individual mitzva, the halakhic substance of which is open to our investigation, but rather as representing, to the Rav's mind, the epitome of the category of mitzvot which are expressed externally but fulfilled internally, existentially, "in the heart."

D

The third level of investigation which we mentioned above forges the connection between prayer and other central philosophical and moral concerns in the Rav's thought. The Rav raised several questions in his perception of prayer. For example, in "Ra'ayonot al HaTefilla" there is a long passage which parallels another passage in "Halakhic Man" dealing with the connection between Halakha and the entire expanse of life's experience. The Rav elaborated on his opposition to the ritualistic view, according to which the nature of a person's life creates a division between the world of worship and the sphere of general activity. In contrast, the Rav emphasized the integrative, holistic and comprehensive nature of Halakha. Obviously, this is to be seen against the backdrop of what we have discussed above, i.e., the need to perceive in prayer - beyond the focused halakhic perspective - a broad and natural setting for attention to the problem which occupied the Rav extensively: the relationship between the internal and the external, between the world of emotion and the world of logic, between the world of action and the world of experience. The Rav addressed this issue throughout the range of his works.

In his treatment of prayer he also turned his attention to a subject which occupied a profound place in his consciousness: the relationship between the individual and the community. From a structural point of view, tefilla includes both individual and communal prayer. Hence, this subject presents a convenient arena for examination of both aspects: the individual - the "lonely man of faith" who stands alone before the Almighty - and at the same time the person as a member of a wider community, "communal man," "national man," an integral part of Knesset Yisrael.

Despite the fact that the simple meaning of the gemara in Rosh Hashana (34b) suggests that communal prayer is required only in order to provide an opportunity for those who are untrained in prayer to fulfill their obligation, the Rav tended to regard the balance between individual prayer and communal

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prayer as expressing two components of religious existence. (Incidentally, a similar line is adopted by the author of the "Tanya" in his "Likkutei Torah.")

Beyond this, I believe that tefilla should be seen as the focus of a subject which disturbed the Rav perhaps more than anything else: the status of the individual himself, and his stance before G-d.

As we know, the Rav spoke extensively, and in different ways, of a dialectical view of man as existing on two levels, as oscillating between two poles. On one hand, he saw man as possessing power, ability, strength and creativity; on the other hand he is a helpless creature, suspended over the abyss. He spoke of this on a number of occasions (among others during his eulogy for Rav Chaim Heller, [printed as "Peleitat Sofreihem" in "Divrei Hagut VeHa'arakha," and translated into English in "Shiurei Harav"] and in his Hebrew essay "On the Love of Torah and the Redemption of the Soul of the Generation" [printed in full in "BeSod HaYachid VahaYachad" and slightly abridged in "Divrei Hashkafa"]). He described the dialectic between "gadlut ha-mochin" and "katnut ha-mochin" which existed in the great Torah luminaries of Israel: on the one hand, he described the great intellects with which they were blessed, depicting them as giants, conquerors, creators and builders, warriors in the battles of Torah; and at the same time he pointed to their innocence, their child-like and almost poetic aspects.

The Rav gave wide expression to this (and the scope of this essay precludes the opportunity of examining this in depth) in his description of the two types of man in his essay "The Lonely Man of Faith." This dual perception of man was reflected in his view of the act of prayer. On one hand, as emphasized above, the Rav stressed the "bakasha" theme in tefilla. We come and request certain things of G-d, like a servant who comes before his master. On the other hand, the Rav emphasized no less the connection between tefilla and the sacrifices in the Temple, a connection which Chazal had already pointed out. The connection expresses itself both in terms of the source ("The prayers were instituted to parallel the sacrifices") and in terms of the characteristics of prayer and its necessary conditions (cleanliness of the body, concentration, etc.). There are even those who have compared the washing of the hands prior to tefilla to the kohanim's sanctification of their hands and feet prior to serving in the Temple.

In his treatment of this topic the Rav did not stop at a comparison of the technical details: he sharpened the view of tefilla itself as a sacrifice. Not something similar to or representing a sacrifice, but an actual sacrifice in its own right. The Rav gave expression to this view in his emphasis on the fact that even though practically human sacrifice is forbidden, in principle the individual is actually required to sacrifice himself to G-d. He saw tefilla as a state of self-sacrifice by the individual:

"Yet there is another aspect to prayer: prayer is an act of giving away. Prayer means sacrifice, unrestricted offering of the whole self, the returning to G-d of body and soul, everything one possesses and cherishes. There is an altar in heaven upon which the archangel Michael offers the souls of the righteous. Thrice daily we petition G-d to accept our prayers, as well as the fires - the self-sacrifices of Israel - on that altar ("ve- ishei Yisrael u-tefillatam be-ahava tekabbel be-ratzon"). Prayer is rooted in the idea that man belongs, not to himself, but that G-d claims man, and that His claim to man is not partial but total. G-d the Almighty, sometimes wills man to place himself, like Isaac of old, on the altar, to light the fire and to be consumed as a burnt offering." ["Redemption, Prayer, Talmud Torah," Tradition, Spring 1978, pp. 70-71]

This theme was repeated in several different contexts in the Rav's works. To some extent it is not only different from the theme of bakasha, but actually contradictory.

The Rav dwelt at length on man's dependence, a point which the Maharal saw as standing at the center of the concept of "Divine service." Man is utterly dependent, helpless. Should he become

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disconnected even for a moment from G-d, he would be unable to continue to exist. "A prayer of the afflicted when he is faint and pours out his complaint before G-d" (Tehillim 102:1), "He heeds the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer" (ibid. 18). Man pleads before G-d out of a sense of his nothingness; it is a cry of broken-heartedness. He feels that were it not for prayer he would not be able to bear his situation.

In a shiur which he delivered before the Rabbinical Council in 1963, the Rav spoke of the famous dispute between Rambam and Ramban regarding prayer. According to the Rambam, the mitzva of daily tefilla is 'de'oraita' (i.e., its source is to be found in the Torah). The Ramban, on the other hand, holds that the biblical source for prayer is limited to the obligation to pray in times of trouble (while daily prayer is mandated only rabbinically). The Rav's daring comment on this debate ran as follows: the Rambam fundamentally agrees with the Ramban. Indeed, tefilla is obligatory only "in times of trouble," but the Rambam perceives man as existing in a perpetual state of crisis. Were it not for G-d, he could not exist for a single moment, and there can be no greater trouble imaginable than a person who is, heaven forbid, disconnected from G-d. Hence, we may deduce that the individual is in a constant state of crisis and needs G-d's contact and His mercy every day. Here man appears to us as needy, weak, or - to use the imagery of "The Lonely Man of Faith" - Adam II.

In the world of sacrifices and sacred items (kodshim) the situation is entirely different. The key concept in sacrifices, the basis of the whole structure, is that of "ba'alut" (ownership, mastery), either private or communal. With a few exceptions, e.g. the "kayitz ha-mizbe'ach" (Mishna Shekalim 4:4), a sacrifice always involves ownership. The individual who brings a sacrifice is the "owner," the master; the requirement to give is addressed only to someone who is able to give. Thus, in a certain sense, man is considered to be his own master, and only because of this can he be asked to offer himself as a sacrifice to G-d.

The view of tefilla in the Rav's philosophy is therefore complex. He speaks of tefilla in terms of its dialectical character. As explained, this reflects the Rav's perception of man's status in general. To a certain degree, the Rav tended to think in terms of variety: sometimes one aspect expresses itself more strongly while at other times another aspect is dominant. The same can be said of bakashot of different types. But, ultimately, the perception of man as a complex and dialectical being remains a central characteristic in the Rav's philosophy, such that tefilla is also seen as complex and dialectical. On one hand, man has the power to give, to sacrifice. On the other hand, man's entire existence hangs by a thread; he is weak and powerless.

The Rav went further than this, though. He saw tefilla as an expression of giving, requiring total sacrifice on the part of the individual - in a certain sense to the extent of losing his very existence as an individual. But at the same time he saw tefilla as an incomparable source of gain and opportunity for receiving. This motif ran throughout his thought and his experience. On more than one occasion he mentioned that Judaism never promises instant happiness. There is no peace of mind; rather, there are requirements and demands. But this "long" road is really "short." It begins with maximalist, ultimate demands and requirements, but culminates in the genuine joy of giving.

The Rav saw man as able to find two things in prayer. In his article "Redemption, Prayer, Talmud Torah," the Rav mentioned that through prayer the individual discovers himself; he reveals his true "I." Tefilla here is depicted as standing before G-d with one's heart of hearts exposed before Him. At this point, man reveals his innermost secrets, clarifying in his own mind what his real requests of G-d are: not only those mundane concerns with which he is constantly occupied, but also those goals to which he aspires; that which is needed and that which should be needed; that which is central, that which imbues his



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life with happiness and meaning, and that which is peripheral. In the midst of these considerations, man finds his true self.

Man reveals his own self not only through the process of self-evaluation and self-revelation, but also by virtue of the fact that he has found G-d. G-d takes hold of him, as it were; He communicates with him. True life and inner happiness are derived from this connection. Tefilla opens with sacrifice; it demands much of the individual. But this very sacrifice, the individual himself, this dialectical creature required to give himself completely over to G-d - he himself reaps the full reward of his tefilla. To the extent that he rises to the demands of tefilla and is capable of combining his bakashot and his "giving" within it, he will ultimately merit not only the realization of those requests which he presented before G-d but also his own self-realization. He receives what he invested and more, on a different plane, with a different significance, with the elevation and intimacy implied in the verse, "... And you who cleave to the L-rd your G-d, you are all alive today" (Devarim 4:4).

Indeed, there is something dialectical and paradoxical here. At first, there is an experience of duality, of a torn soul, because this is man's starting point in general. It is specifically through his tefilla and his stance before G-d, and through his simultaneous (self-)sacrifice and petition that he rises and is elevated, meriting by means of his tefilla both personal growth and connection with the Master of the Universe.

In this connection, the Rav spoke of the structure of tefilla, and specifically of the final three berakhot of the Shemoneh Esrei (see "Ra'ayonot al HaTefilla", p. 256). The following quote (p. 271) is just a brief excerpt of his exposition there, and a fitting summation to this presentation:

"At the end of the tefilla we return to [the theme of the opening blessing of the Shemona Esrei,] Birkat Avot - the first approach of the worshipper to G-d. His faith in the L-rd of the world is great. His mercies have no bounds. His goodness flows from one end of existence to the other. If so, then G-d dwells within me. He is my whole being; His glory fills the world, and we know that all of existence melts away in His infinity. What is existence if not the illumination of the countenance of the Infinite? What is happiness if not the gift of G-d? What do we want, for what do we long, what do we request - if not to cleave to Him and embrace Him, as it were?"

The G-d of Avraham, the G-d of the world, who relates to all of existence, whether from inside it or from the outside, is the Master of peace, blessing and goodness. And then the individual proceeds to request [the final blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei], 'Grant peace, good and blessing, life, grace, kindness and mercy, unto us and unto all of Israel, Your nation.'

In other words, after all the wanderings and circlings [during the tefilla] from love and mercy to moments of fear and helplessness, after the descent from the heights of longing and elevation to the depths of confusion and terror, after self-nullification and self-discovery, after self-sacrifice and then the return to mundane reality - we return once again to calm and gentle existence, full of joy and security. G-d appears as a serene dwelling place, a secure habitation. The worshipper lounges in green pastures, secure in Him as a son in his father.

His torn and troubled soul finds happiness and calm. His fear and anxiety are forgotten; the terrible Mystery is gone. In their place reigns happiness, and the rush towards the Source of all existence. Man does not flee from G-d; rather, he runs towards Him, embraces Him, nestles close to the Divine Presence.



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All is surrounded by calm and peace. The blessing and bounty of the Infinite One rain down on everything; the mercies of the Holy One, Blessed be He, fall like dew on Mt. Cheron and the entire world is illuminated with the precious light emanating from the Infinite."

(Translated by Kaeren Fish and Ronnie Ziegler. Adapted from a lecture delivered at a Memorial Assembly for Rav Soloveitchik, Iyar 5756 [May 1996]. This adaptation was not reviewed by Rav Lichtenstein.)

K8: YOSEF AND THE BROTHERS



Aims:

1. **Discuss** the theme of brothers in Bereshit.
2. **Explore** what can we learn about responsibility and leadership from the brothers.
3. **View** Yosef as an inspiration for religious Zionism and modern orthodoxy.
4. **Not to sing too many Joseph songs!!!**



FACT FILE

- Yosef and his brothers are all born in Perakim 29&30 (except from Binyamin who is born in 35)
- 34:25-26 Shimon and Levi kill every male in Shechem – for abducting their sister Dinah.
- 37:1-11 this Perek begins with the chronicles of Jacob and his offspring, before Yosef having his 2 dreams that intensifies the hatred of his brothers.
- 37:12-17 Ya'akov tells Yosef to join his brothers pasteurising in Shechem
- 37:18-24 The brothers see him coming and plan to kill him and throw him in a pit, Reuven insists they don't kill him and just throw him in a pit (so he can save him later)
- 37:25-35 Yosef is sold and his brothers tell Ya'akov that a beast devoured him.
- 39 Yosef is bought by Potiphar and Yosef found favour in Potiphar's eyes and was placed in charge of his house hold. Mrs Potiphar chirpsed him and upon failing lied about him lying with her and so Yosef ended up in prison, where he was placed in charge of other prisoners.
- 40 Now into Yosef's prison cell were flung two very frightened men, one was a baker, a cook in his prime one was a butler, the Jeeves of his time. Yosef interprets the dreams and they come true.
- 41 1-36 42 1-13 Guess what? In his bed Pharaoh Had an uneasy night ... No-one knew the meaning of this dream ... Then his butler said "know of a bloke in jail Who is hot on dreams" ... "Well fetch this Yosef man, I need him to help me if he can" Yosef Solves the dream!
- 41 37-49 Yosef, you must help me further ... You shall be my number two.
- 41 50-52 Yosef has 2 sons, Ephraim and Manasseh
- 41 53-57 The famine happens and everyone come to Yosef for food
- 42 1-13 Yosef's brothers are sent to Egypt to get food, "Binyamin stays behind.
- 42 14-20 Yosef insist Binyamin is brought to him too
- 42 21-22 the brothers say their anguish is because of what they did to Yosef.
- 42 23-24 Yosef imprisons Shimon until Binyamin is brought to him
- 42 29-38 the brothers return and plead to their father that they return with Binyamin
- 43 16-34 the brothers arrive and are sent to Yosef's house, Yosef is stirred by Binyamin and goes to hide and cry.
- 44 1-15 then, unseen, Yosef nips out around the back, and planted a cup in young Benjamin's sack, who's the thief? Could it possibly be Benjamin YES YES YES!
- 45 1-15 can't you recognise my face? Is it hard to see, That Yosef, who you thought was dead, brothers, It's me.
- 45 16-24 the brothers are sent back to get their father with gifts from Yosef
- 45 25-28 -Ya'akov is happy and comes to Egypt
- 46 So Jacob came to Egypt, No longer feeling old, And Yosef came to meet him In his chariot, Of gold, Of gold, Of gold, Of gold
- 50 After Ya'akov dies Yosef assure his brothers that they are still friends, Yosef then dies too.

Brothers in Bereishit

Throughout the book of Bereishit and Shemot, the relationship between brothers is a recurring and progressing theme.

1	Cain and Hevel	Fratricide (great word)	4	Yosef and his Bros	Live together after a lot of strife and suspicion
2	Yitzchak and Yishmael	Go to their father's funeral together, and that's about it.	5	Ephraim and Menasheh	Live together harmoniously always
3	Ya'akov and Esav	HUG (after all the "I hate you and want to kill you" stuff)	6	Moshe and Aharon	Work together as leaders.

Suspicion and resentment dominate the early relationships between siblings. By the end, we reach a point of *'shevet achim gam yachad'*, brothers sitting harmoniously together. There is a gradual progression throughout all these stories of moving from bad to worse.



Let's zoom into the stories of Yosef and co. The first thing which stands out about them over the other five examples is the sheer number - 12 instead of 2.

Why is Yosef quite so hated? Was boasting about some dreams really the justification to advocate murder? It might be that the brothers realised that in every prior generation, someone is chosen to continue the covenantal line. Yitzchak was chosen over his older brother Yishmael. The same was true of Ya'akov over Eisav. In both cases the younger sibling left with the prized covenantal promise. It was not irrational to suggest that the same thing would occur with the brothers particularly when Yosef kept relaying dreams in which he lorded it over his brothers. In fact, they misunderstood the divine plan since all the brothers were to become the foundation of Am Yisrael.

It snowed last year too: I made a snowman and my brother knocked it down and I knocked my brother down and then we had tea.

- Dylan Thomas

The Torah in general has an interesting tension between patriarchal rights (what you get because of who you were born to and in which order) and merited rights

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(what you get because you deserve it). All of those chosen in Bereishit are not chosen because they were born first, but because they deserved it. This is despite the fact that monetarily they get first dibs (remember how Ya'akov "buys" the birth right from Eisav?). This trend continues throughout Chumash. Originally, all the first-born sons of Israel are supposed to be the ones to work in the temple. However, after the sin of the golden calf, the tribe of Levi earned that right and the Kohanim are therefore from that line.



HADRACHA HOT TIP

Play Giraffe in the Middle [note: this is the more kosher version to Piggy in the Middle] (throw ball around, Giraffe(s) in the middle has to catch the ball). The giraffe has been randomly selected but has the ability to rise above his given situation. The opposite is true of those who are on the outside. You can always spruce the game up – make all the chanichim act as a certain animal whilst they are playing the game. Always look to customize games; add interesting twists to make them livelier and fun. No one expects you to make up brand new games, but revamping old ones is a time-honoured BA tradition and a great hadracha technique.

There could be a number of different reasons for this tension. A particularly good one is that the Torah reflects the way society works; it reflects reality. We are all born under certain circumstances, to certain parents, in a certain place, at a certain time, in a certain social situation. These things are obviously critical in determining the direction our lives will go in, but ultimately, it is what we do and the choices that we make which affect the types of people we will become.

DISCUSSION POINT – Is meritocracy ideal?

Another reason would quite simply be that sometimes, proper breeding is a good thing. If someone is brought up in a certain way then some things later on will be easier for them. The son of a shoemaker might not be the right person to be appointed king, and equally a crown prince might not be the right person to be appointed as town shoemaker. However, there are obviously problems with this model as it induces a culture of entitlement and leads to problems of appointing the wrong people to the job just because they were born on the royal potty.

Reuven and Yehuda

Who is the leader out of the brothers? Reuven was the eldest and even after sinning by moving his father's bed (Shabbat 55b) following Rachel's death, he is still labelled as the firstborn. (Bereshit 35:23)



Yet, later as Ya'akov lies on his deathbed, he lambasts Reuven and awards the double portion usually accorded to the firstborn to Yosef instead. (Bereishit 49:4 and Bereishit 48:21)

At what point did Reuven lose his position of leadership over his brothers? Furthermore, Yehuda appears to be an intermediate leader when he vouches for Binyamin, guaranteeing his safety in Egypt. When and why did he become leader? For the first part of the story, the brothers are simply referred to as 'the brothers' or 'the men'. Only after Binyamin is accused of stealing the silver goblet and Yehuda's assurance that he would safeguard Binyamin is challenged, do we see a new way of defining the brothers. (Bereishit 44:14)

There is one crucial moment when Reuven and Yehuda both attempt to grapple with the problem that they had no food, and it is Yehuda that emerges as leader (Bereishit 42:37):

"Then Reuben said to his father, 'You may kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my care, and I will return him to you.'"

This is the last we hear of Reuven before Ya'akov addresses him on his deathbed. When the need arose to seize the responsibility and command the respect of his father and brothers, Reuven essentially blew it. Contrast this with Yehuda's attempt (Bereishit 43:8-11):

"Then Judah said to his father Israel, 'Send the boy in my care, and let us be on our way, that we may live and not die—you and we and our children. I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible: if I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, I shall stand guilty before you forever. For we could have been there and back twice if we had not dawdled.'" Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so ..."

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What is tangibly different in the requests? Reuven was unhelpful when he offered to sacrifice two of Ya'akov's grandsons but other than that the requests are broadly similar. As the Ramban says:

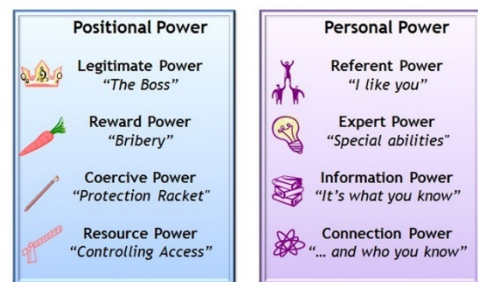
Reuven took an oath to return Binyamin to his father by saying, "kill my two sons - as your punishment will fall on me - if I do not return him." This is the same idea as what Yehuda said, "I shall bear the blame before you forever" ... And Ya'akov did not trust in Reuven, for Yehuda was the most powerful of the brothers, and for Reuven had already sinned against his father, so he did not trust him. In general, Yehuda's plan was right, to leave the old one be until there would be no food in the house, for then he would listen.



According to the Ramban the key difference was one of timing. Yehuda waited for the right time to come forward (and he didn't offer more death). Furthermore, Yehuda does not present a plan and ask permission to implement it like Reuven did. He presented the facts to Ya'akov that either they go to Egypt with Binyamin or they do not go at all. He demands a decision from Ya'akov and in doing so forces him to confront the facts. Perhaps this is why he becomes leader. He realises the hard choices that need to be made, he waits for the correct timing to make the decision and then when leadership is required when Binyamin is arrested by Yosef, he leaps forward to defend his brother.

This defence in and of itself is an impressive feat of leadership. Put yourselves in the brothers' shoes. Do they know for sure that Binyamin is innocent? After all, the goblet was found in his sack. Surely under such circumstances Yehuda would be freed of his promise to his father. If I promise my mum to look after my brother one evening and he goes and gets arrested for slapping a policeman in the face with a mackerel, then presumably I am completely blameless!

However, Yehuda does not wipe his hands of his brother and renounce responsibility (as would be his right) of Binyamin. Instead, he steps forward and demands of the second most powerful man in the whole known world that he take Yehuda instead.



DISCUSSION POINT – What kind of characteristics does Yehuda demonstrate? How are those characteristics required for leadership?

Yosef, the first and best Diaspora Jew

Yosef stands out for being a prototype of the Diaspora Jew. Of course, Ya'akov is to some extent: he has a long period of wandering in his life, and there's a lot we can learn from him about one aspect of living in exile. But Yosef is really, quite scarily... us. He lives in Egypt and goes up and up and up. The Jew is in control of the country, ever heard that one before?

But here's the thing: once again, we have to delve in and explore inside the character. How does he see the world? To answer this question, we have to look into another really exciting question which requires us to look between the lines of the story.

Why didn't Yosef write a letter home to Ya'akov!? He hasn't seen him in years. He knows that his father loves him and will miss him. It's not like he can't – after all he's got mamash power man. The Torah mentions nothing of it. One beautiful answer by Rav Yair Kahn is this:



Yosef's story is... absurd. He is a nothing, going to an everything. How does everyone else feel? All these Egyptians going slowly up the ranks... and suddenly overtaken by this random Jewish lad with a pretty face and nice voice who can interpret dreams. They must hate him! They'll be looking for every excuse they can get to depose him. Yosef, a smart guy, knows this, and he has to do everything he can to be perfect and faultless. He has to show them: I am fully Egyptian. I was an Ivri, but now I am one of you.

So, Yosef has a choice, our choice. He wants to get up in society, but he thinks he has to play the part. He must lose his tradition. He marries out. His first son is named after "forgetting all my toil and my father's house" (Bereishit 41:51). He becomes a new person. The job takes over his family. That was Yosef's choice. That's why he never makes any contact with any relatives.

DISCUSSION POINT – Does this sound familiar?

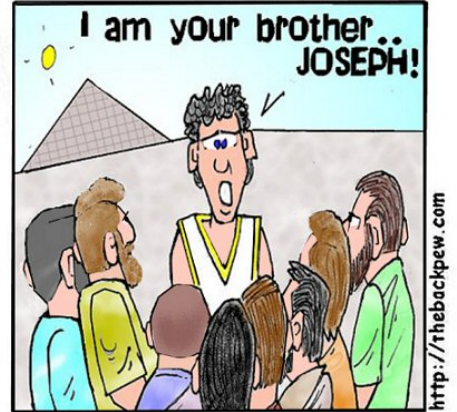
But his brothers come back and he cries, again and again. His past is coming back to haunt him. He's forced to confront his tradition and, eventually, he can't keep it in anymore. He reveals himself. The text says that the news spread quickly across Egypt – but Pharaoh, it turns out, has no problem with it, and Yosef learns he can be frum and high up in general society.

So, his is the story of the conflicted Jew in exile, standing between tradition and assimilation.

One of the shtarkest things that stand out about Yosef is the number of times Hashem's name is mentioned. Yosef is always mentioning Hashem, except for that conflict interlude:

1. When Pharaoh asks him to interpret his dream, Yosef replies that it's not really him doing it, but Hashem who will solve the mystery. He says the same when he interprets the dreams. This has such an effect on Pharaoh that even he starts talking about Hashem!
2. The names Yosef chooses to call his second son calls Egypt the land of affliction 'for Hashem has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.' His attitude towards it has changed.
3. After the reunion, Yosef tells his brothers to tell their father that "Hashem has made me master over Egypt".

THE BACK PEW - JEFF LARSON



No more frightening family disclosure has been uttered since Darth Vader proclaimed.. "Luke I am your father." in a galaxy far far away. **Ge. 45:3**

Example is not the main thing in influencing others; it is the only thing.

- Albert Schweitzer

This, of course, is the ideal. He maintained his beliefs, his Jewish values and his identity. He had some hard times and decisions but succeeded, nonetheless. Likewise, life in

England is not always easy but we, like Yosef, can live up to the challenge. He did try to credit Hashem with everything. He wasn't ashamed. This is "Kiddush Hashem" in its most pure sense. Additionally, it is clear that Yosef successfully behaved as an Or La'goyim – a light unto the nations. They would have seen him as someone who led by example, who upheld high values that others would have wanted to copy.

Yet ultimately Yosef remembered his roots in the Land of Israel. Given his position, Yosef would have had a state funeral and the Egyptians would have wanted to bury him. Yet his final words of life, request that his bones would be returned home.

As Diaspora Jews, we can certainly feel a huge affinity with Yosef. We know how hard it is to live amongst a culture which is slightly alien to our own, although we play such a major role in it. We feel this tension, just as Yosef would have done, between not wanting to appear “too Jewish” in our interactions with others on the one hand, and on the other hand, wanting to spread the message of the Torah and be a “Kiddush Hashem”. Yosef appears to have got the balance right, being a proud Jew, but he had to work for it making our people a light unto the nations and crediting Hashem with everything. When talking to our chanichim about this, we must understand that this is only one way to look at Yosef’s character. Not everyone agrees with this “assimilated” Yosef character, however, it is a good way of connecting Yosef to us, and to our chanichim.

Middah Spotlight – Lashon Harah



If we cut off our heads and put them inside the brothers (DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME), we realise something very important. It was all because of a form of lashon harah. They see their father giving something to Yosef and think “that’s not fair”. But as life would have it, we can’t see past the end of our nose. Maybe, just maybe, we’re misinterpreting things again.

But as soon as we discuss it with other people, and find that they agree, we become *sure that we are right*. It leads to strength in numbers; it is the most dangerous sort of lashon hara. Thus, our middah will be speaking well about others:

- 📖 It forms part of a prohibition in the Torah in Vayikra 19:16: “You shall not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.”
- 📖 The great advocate of not speaking *lashon hara* was the Chafetz Chayim, so called after his book, Chafetz Chayim which talks about not speaking lashon hara. In his book, he shows how people who speak lashon hara are actually transgressing 31 mitzvot at once, such as: *you shall not wrong another; you shall not utter a false report; do not place a stumbling block before the blind*, amongst others.
- 📖 According to the Gemara (Erchin 15b), it causes tzara’at. This explains why Miriam, after speaking unfavourably about Moshe, is sent out of the camp with tzara’at.



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- 🔊 In Sota 42a, we are taught that those who speak *lashon harah* are not tolerated in G-d's presence.

However, sometimes it's important to speak out and that's when things get tricky. If we're silent all the time, then anything which is wrong will never get fixed. So, here are some important caveats:

- 🔊 To help someone improve by discussing their faults with someone who can help them.
- 🔊 To prevent someone from being harmed.
- 🔊 To end a dispute between people.
- 🔊 To help others learn from mistakes people make.

We should start making a brand-new concept: Lashon Hatov: (see Rabbi Sacks - "Seeing the good in people and telling them so is a way of helping it become real"). **This is really important on Machane for the Tzevet to keep strong together. I hope that by the time we read this on camp, there will not have been any LH at all. Especially about me!**

Sum-up:

We have seen how there is a general theme within Chumash of family relationships and the problems involved with basing society on such rules. We have also seen the complex interplay between the brothers and discussed who ends up leading the brothers and why.

We have seen that Yosef is an outstanding role model to us in terms of his ability to live in a secular world and still maintain his spirituality. He is even able to influence others and has the ability to plan for the future.

Not everything we hear should we tell and not everything we know should we sell. Otherwise we'll find we've made a world without friendship, loyalty and trust; and that can't be good news in the long run.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt'l

Extra Chomer
Speech Therapy (Vayeshev 5771)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt'l

From Vayeshev to the end of the book of Bereishit we read the story of Joseph and his brothers. From the very beginning we are plunged into a drama of sibling rivalry that seems destined to end in tragedy. All the elements are there. There is favouritism. Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons. The Torah says this was because "he had been born to him in his old age." But we also know it was because Joseph was the son, the first son, of his beloved Rachel who had been infertile for many years.

Jacob gave this favouritism a visible symbol, the richly ornamented robe or coat of many colours that he had made for him. The sight of this acted as a constant provocation to the brothers. In addition there were the bad reports Joseph brought to his father about his half-brothers, the children of the handmaids. And by the fourth verse of the parsha we read the following:

When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him, *velo yachlu dabro le-shalom*. (37:4)

What is the meaning of this last phrase? Here are some of the standard translations:

They could not speak a kind word to him.

They could not speak peacefully to him.

They could not speak to him on friendly terms.

Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschütz, however, recognised that the Hebrew construction is strange. Literally it means, "they could not speak him to peace." What might this mean? Rabbi Eybeschütz refers us to the command in Vayikra 19:17:

You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely reprimand your neighbour and not bear sin because of him.

This is how Maimonides interprets this command as it relates to interpersonal relations:

When a person sins against another, the injured party should not hate the offender and keep silent . . . it is his duty to inform the offender and say to him, why did you do this to me? Why did you sin against me in this matter? . . . if the offender repents and pleads for forgiveness, he should be forgiven. (Hilchot Deot 6:6)

Rabbi Eybeschütz's point is simple. Had the brothers been able to speak to Joseph they might have told him of their anger at his talebearing, and of their distress at seeing the many-coloured coat. They might have spoken frankly about their sense of humiliation at the way their father favoured Rachel over their mother Leah, a favouritism that was now being carried through into a second generation. Joseph might have come to understand their feelings. It might have made him more modest or at least more thoughtful. But *lo yachlu dabro le-shalom*. They simply couldn't bring themselves to speak. As Nachmanides writes, on the command: You shall not hate your brother in your heart":

"Those who hate tend to hide their hate in their heart."

We have here an instance of one of the Torah's great insights, that conversation is a form of conflict resolution, whereas the breakdown of speech is often a prelude to violent revenge.



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The classic case is that of Absalom and Amnon, two half brothers who were sons of king David. In a shocking episode, Amnon rapes Absalom's sister Tamar:

Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.

Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart." And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman.

When King David heard all this, he was furious. And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar. (2 Samuel 13:19-22)

Absalom maintained his silence for two years. Then he invited all of David's sons for a feast at the time of sheep-shearing, and ordered his servants to wait until Amnon was drunk, and then kill him, which they did. Hate grows in silence. It did with Absalom. It did with Joseph's brothers. Before the chapter ends, we see them plot to kill Joseph, then throw him in to a pit, and then sell him into slavery. It is a terrible story and led directly to the Israelites' exile and slavery in Egypt.

The Talmud ([Brachot 26b](#)) uses the phrase, *Ein sichah ela tefillah*, which literally means, "Conversation is a form of prayer," because in opening ourselves up to the human other, we prepare ourselves for the act of opening ourselves up with the Divine Other, which is what prayer is: a conversation with G-d.

Conversation does not, in and of itself, resolve conflict. Two people who are open with one another may still have clashing desires or competing claims. They may simply not like one another. There is no law of predetermined harmony in the human domain. But conversation means that we recognise one another's humanity. At its best it allows us to engage in role reversal, seeing the world from the other's point of view. Think of how many real and intractable conflicts, whether in the personal or political domain, might be transformed if we could do that.

In the end Joseph and his brothers had to live through real trauma before they were able to recognise one another's humanity, and much of the rest of their story – the longest single narrative in the Torah – is about just that.

Judaism is about the G-d who cannot be seen, who can only be heard; about the G-d who created the universe with words and whose first act of kindness to the first human being was to teach him how to use words. Jews, even highly secular Jews, have often been preoccupied with language. Wittgenstein understood that philosophy is about language. Levi Strauss saw cultures as forms of language. Noam Chomsky and Steven Pinker pioneered study of the language instinct. George Steiner has written about translation and the limits of language.

The Sages were eloquent in speaking about the dangers of *lashon hara*, "evil speech," the power of language to fracture relationships and destroy trust and goodwill. But there is evil silence as well as evil speech. It is no accident that at the very beginning of the most fateful tale of sibling rivalry in Bereishit, the role – specifically the failure – of language is alluded to, in a way missed by virtually all translations. Joseph's brothers might have "spoken him to peace" had they been open, candid and willing to communicate. Speech broke down at the very point where it was needed most.

Words create; words reveal; words command; words redeem. Judaism is a religion of holy words. For words are the narrow bridge across the abyss between soul and soul, between two human beings, and between humanity and G-d. Language is the redemption of solitude, and the mender of broken relationships. However painful it is to speak about our hurt, it is more dangerous not to do so. Joseph and his brothers might have been reconciled early on in their lives, and thus spared themselves, their father, and their descendants, much grief. Revealing pain is the first step to healing pain. Speech is a path to peace.

K9: MOSHE, AHARON AND MIRIAM



Aims:

1. **Understand** how the stories of Moshe's upbringing are vital for his future leadership.
2. **Learn** about Aharon as a character.
 - Explore about peace on a national, Jewish and individual level.
 - Think of real ways to increase the peace.
3. **Discover** Miriam as a character.
 - To appreciate the deep faith that motivated her, and how that applies in our lives.

FACT FILE

Shemot

- 2: Moshe is born. Miriam hides Moshe, and watches him in the River Nile story.
- He is hidden and then protected by Miriam before being taken in by Pharaoh's daughter. He identifies with his people and kills an Egyptian and finds himself a wife!
- 3&4: The burning bush conversation. Moshe leaves to Mitzrayim to be met by brother Aharon.
- 5: Moshe and Aharon: "LET MY PEOPLE GO". This doesn't work. Instead, Pharaoh increases the slaves' workload. B"Y not happy with this. Very cross with Moshe and Aharon. Very cross indeed.
- 6: Hashem makes Moshe feel better ([sigh] uhhhh).
- Ten plagues and Yetziat Mitzrayim.
- 17: B"Y Complain to Moshe about the lack of water. War with Amelek.
- 32-34: golden calf story: Aharon tries to buy some time, Moshe saves the day back up on Har Seenai.
- 39: Kohen Gadol clothes.

Vayikra

- 8: Aharon and kohanim consecrated.
- 9: Priestly blessings and Aharon bless the B"Y.
- 10: Aharon's sons die and Kohanim are instructed not to drink alcohol at the Ohel Moed.

Bamidbar

- 1: B"Y complain (again) and Moshe despairs (again).
- 12: Miriam speaks lashon hara about Moshe to Aharon. She is separated from the encampment (rude)
- 13/14: Moshe has to deal with spies (fun times. Let's join MI5 and MI6. The pay's ok).
- 16/17: Moshe needs to deal with the Korach rebellion (happy families).
- 18: Aharon's duties are reiterated after the Korach rebellion.
- 20: Miriam dies and there is no water – Moshe needs to deal with this
- 21: Moshe has to deal with Amelek attacking (arms in the air everybody!!)
- 31: Moshe and war with Midian.

Devarim

- 4: Moshe is told he and Aharon would not be entering Eretz Yisrael.
- 31: Moshe begins to depart and gives a very long speech, summarising the past and looking to the future.
- 33: Moshe blesses the B"Y
- 34: Moshe dies (pasuk 10)

Moshe's Upbringing

Moshe is the big one. He is the model leader of Am Yisrael. He guides them through the exodus, through their stays in the desert, finally leaving them, mission completed, on the banks of the Jordan. But what is it that actually makes him so suited to be a leader? He is chosen before any of these events!



Effectively, the history of Am Yisrael in the Chumash has two halves. The first half starts with Avraham and ends at the end of Bereishit and deals with Am Yisrael as a small, nucleated family. The second half begins with the slavery in Egypt; its central character is Moshe. Moshe's backstory is very different to that of Avraham in that he actually has one. Before Moshe is chosen to be the leader we have 25 passukim jam-packed with narrative, which deal with his early life and upbringing. Compare this with Avraham, for whom the story really starts with Hashem telling Avraham to go to Israel. Why do we need all these stories about Moshe's upbringing? In this kvutsa we will aim to look at just two of these stories and establish how they are vital in terms of our understanding of Moshe as a personality, and of Jewish leadership in general.

Moshe's Parents

The Gemara (Sotah 12a) writes that after the decree of wicked Pharaoh regarding first-born males, the Jews stopped procreating; each man separated from his wife. After a little persuading from their daughter Miriam, Amram and Yocheved decide that they must re-unify, and the rest of Bnei Yisrael followed suit. (This is actually pshat (simple reading) of the passukim if you read them with a little sensitivity and ignore the chapter breaks. Look it up. Trust me it's pretty cool. It also explains why Chazal say that Yocheved was one of the midwives; they are emphasising the fact that her actions spurred the Am Yisrael on in their drive to fight Pharaoh's policy of death with a counter-policy of life)

In hadracha, we would call such behaviour rosh gadol; taking initiative. This is the trait of someone who looks around himself, realises that something needs to be done and goes ahead and does it. This is a trait which Moshe learnt from his parents, and dutifully applied later on in his life:

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Moshe is going about his business checking out the slaves when he sees an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Jewish slave. Moshe looks this way and that, sees that there is no man (*"ish"*) in the nearby vicinity and kills the oppressor. Most interpretations of Moshe's reconnaissance focus around looking for witnesses. However, there is another way to look at this.

In a place where there are no worthy people, strive to be a worthy person ("ish")...

- Rabban Gamliel, Avot 2:5

Rabbi Sacks zt'l connects the word *ish* from the passuk with the word *ish* in Pirkei Avot and writes as follows in his obituary for Marc Weinberg (Mazkir of BAUK 5759, and incredible community leader), comparing him to Moshe and the ideal laid out by Rabban Gamliel:

If he saw something was lacking or something was wrong, he would not complain. He would not wait for others to act. He would say, let me be among the first to put things right, and he brought others with him. They were inspired by his vision, his faith, his moral courage, his passion and compassion. They were drawn to him and he drew out the best in them. He made you feel the world could be a better place. He was one of the outstanding leaders of our generation.

DISCUSSION POINT – What's one area of machane that you will look out for Rosh Gadol opportunities in?

Pharoh's daughter

All too often our childhood education can prove detrimental to the way we read Chumash. We already know all the stories, so we never bother to really think about them again, to appreciate the drama of the narrative and the humanity of the tale, free from embellishments and augmentations. One of the best examples of this is the story of Moshe in the reeds:

וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֵוִי וַיִּקַּח אֶת בַּת לֵוִי: וַתְּהַר הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב הוּא וַתִּצְפְּנֶהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָרְחִים: וְלֹא יָכְלָה עוֹד הַצִּפְנִינוּ וַתִּקַּח לוֹ תִּבְתֵּן גִּמְאָה וַתַּחְמְרֶהּ בַּחֲמֹר וּבַזֹּפֶת וַתִּשֶׂם בָּהּ אֶת הַיֶּלֶד וַתִּשֶׂם בְּסוּף עַל שְׂפַת הַיָּאָר:

And a man of the house of Levi took for a wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him for three months. And when she could no longer hide him, she made him an ark

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of rushes, and layered it with clay and pitch; and she put the child in it, and laid it in the rushes by the riverbank. (Shemot 2:1-3)

We have already established what a risk Yocheved took here. When she gave birth she knew that this day would come - the day when she would have to abandon her child, and trust that he would be safe. She sends her daughter along to keep her updated with information:

וַתִּתְצַב אַחַתּוּ מֵרַחֵק לְדַעַה מַה יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ:

And his sister stood at a distance, to know what would be done to him. (Shemot 2:4)

Now put yourself in Miriam's shoes. She is standing there by the banks, praying and hoping that the baby would be safe (cue the song). She sees a figure in the distance and her heart plummets. This person is not a saviour; it is the daughter of the genocidal dictator himself, Pharaoh.

**וַתֵּרֶד בַּת פַּרְעֹה לְרַחֵץ עַל הַיָּאֵר וַנְּעֹרְתֶיהָ
הִלְכָת עַל יַד הַיָּאֵר וַתֵּרָא אֶת הַתְּבָה בְּתוֹךְ
הַסּוּף וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת אִמָּתָהּ וַתִּקְחָהּ:**

And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the river; and her maidens walked along by the riverside; and she saw the ark among the flags and sent her handmaid to fetch it. (Shemot 2:5)

Surely this is the end of the baby's short stay in this world. The reader is supposed to feel the tension of the narrative; Miriam and Yocheved's optimistic hopes, soon to be shattered by the daughter of Pharaoh. This is what makes the next passuk so remarkable:

וַתִּפְתַּח וַתֵּרְאֶהוּ אֶת-הַיְלֶד וְהִנֵּה-נֹעַר בֶּכֶה וַתַּחֲמַל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִי־לְדֵי הָעִבְרִים זֶה:

And she opened it, and saw it, even the child; and behold a boy that wept. And she had compassion on him and said: 'This is one of the Hebrews' children.' (Shemot 2:6)

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Depending on your chanichim: get them to do some creative writing. Let them pick a character from the story, Yocheved, Miriam or Bat Paro, and ask them to write a short piece based on what that person is thinking throughout the story. It could be straight up writing, or they could write some poetry, a rap, a song - whatever. They don't have to present it to the rest of the group if they don't want. Not every kvutsa will be able to do this but if you can it's really cool.

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Bat-Paroh is not someone who cares about the fact that he is a Hebrew. Ultimately, it is a boy crying. She sees a child; the child is weeping; she has compassion on the child.



DISCUSSION POINT – Is it easy to be compassionate?

This ability to see beyond the external and recognise every human as an individual worthy of respect and dignity later expresses itself in Moshe. After his crime is found out by Pharaoh he flees the country. He finds himself by a well in Midian, tired and alone:

וּלְכֹהֵן מִדְיָן שִׁבְעַת בָּנוֹת וַתְּבֹאנָה וַתְּדַלְּגָה וַתִּמְלֶאנָה אֶת הַרְהָטִים לְהַשְׁקוֹת צֹאן אָבִיהֶן: וַיְבֹאוּ הָרֹעִים וַיִּגְרְשׁוּם וַיִּקָּם מֹשֶׁה וַיּוֹשַׁעַן וַיִּשְׁקֵם אֶת צֹאנָם:

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moshe stood up and saved them and watered their flock. (Shemot 2:16-17)

Moshe does not know these girls. They are not his family. He owes nothing to them. But all of that is irrelevant. Ultimately, he sees the weak preying on the vulnerable and is stirred to act as a saviour.

Jewish Leadership

We have looked at just two stories from Moshe's past in an attempt to isolate which traits made Moshe such an exemplary leader. We do not have time to look at others, including spiritual awareness and being "in touch" with those who are to be led, but we have seen two ways which are exceptionally relevant in our day-to-day lives. Moshe learns these values from his "two mothers": Bat Pharaoh and Yocheved. The values which you learn at home prove to be instructive in terms of what type of a person you will become. In the Torah, Moshe assumes the role of "leader", and the stories from his upbringing are related to how exactly he will lead.



Middah spotlight: Humility

- We are told: "Now Moses was very humble, more so than any other man on earth." (Bamidbar 12:3)
- 'Our Rabbis taught: "A person should always be humble like Hillel and not impatient like Shammai."
- Judaism does not want arrogance, but nor does it want self-effacement. It wants somewhere in between - humility.
- Humility is being sure enough in yourself to get stuff done but being modest enough to realise where your powers come from. This is what we are told in the following verse:



וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ כַּחַי וְעַצְמִי לִי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת־הַחֵיל הַזֶּה: וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת־ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הַגִּיתָן לָךְ כַּח לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל לְמַעַן הָקִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְתָּיִךְ כִּי־וּמ הַזֶּה:
You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember Hashem your G-d, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his promise, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

It is also the meaning of this juxtaposition in Tehillim:

מָה אָנוּשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבֶן אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֵנוּ: וְתַחֲסְרֵהוּ מֵעַט מֵאַלְקִים וְכְבוֹד וְהַדָּר תִּעֲטֹרֵהוּ:
What is man that You should remember him, and the son of man that You should be mindful of him? Yet You have made him slightly less than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and majesty. (Tehillim 8:5-6)

(Man is just an animal, yet G-d has given him the potential to go so high)

There were two schools of Mussar in the Lithuanian Yeshivas: one emphasised how bad we all are, how rubbish, how much we are all filth. The other emphasised, "yo, you're AMAZING, you have so much potential and you're just... not quite reaching it. Push yourself a tad further mate, you can do it, I know you can".

So for us, we should try to realise the potential G-d has given to man to reach the skies, but, we should be modest enough to realise how and why we have that power, and not to think that we are so amazing

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less.

- C. S. Lewis

and have done it all ourselves. We stand on the shoulders of giants with the spirit of G-d, so no wonder we have a lot to expect of ourselves.

Aharon

Was Aharon just Moshe's brother and the Kohen Gadol, or did his role extend into other areas as well?

Until Aharon dies, he is portrayed in the Torah generally as Moshe's brother, spokesman, and the Kohen Gadol. However, once he dies:



וַיִּרְאוּ כָּל הָעֵדָה כִּי גִוַע אַהֲרֹן וַיִּבְכוּ אֶת אַהֲרֹן שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם כֹּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

*The whole congregation saw that Aharon had expired and they wept for Aharon for thirty days, **the entire House of Israel**. (Bamidbar 20:29)*

The Midrash describes Aharon as a beloved and exceptionally popular figure, even more so than the great leader Moshe. The people truly loved Aharon, and this can be seen by comparing the reaction of the Am Yisrael when Moshe dies:

וַיִּבְכוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת מֹשֶׁה בְּעַרְבַת מוֹאָב שְׁלֹשִׁים יוֹם וַיִּתְּמוּ יְמֵי בְּכִי אֶבְל מֹשֶׁה:
***And the sons of Israel** wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days, and the days of weeping over the mourning for Moses came to an end. (Devarim 34:8)*

They wept for thirty days for both Moshe and Aharon. But WHO wept? For Moshe it was "The Sons of Israel" but not "The entire House of Israel!" It would appear that Aharon had captured a greater popular appeal.

Rashi comments:

***"The sons of Israel":** the males. But of Aharon, because he would pursue peace and instill peace between man and his fellow man, and between a wife and her husband, it says the entire house of Israel wept for him, males and females.*

So what exactly is the trait that made Aharon so popular? What was his charm? What attracted the masses of Bnei Yisrael to him? The Mishna in Avot (1:12) tells us:

Hillel says: Be one of the disciples of Aharon. He loved peace and pursued peace; loved people and drew them close to the Torah"

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Aleph: In the Footsteps of our Ancestors - בעקבות אבותינו

K9: Moshe, Aharon and Miriam

The Alshich (A kabbalistic Rabbi from Tzfat 16th century) notes that the Mishna does not instruct us to be equal to Aharon; that would be impossible. Rather we should be one of his students, following in his ways to the best of our abilities!

DISCUSSION POINT – What's the best way to get chanichim to make up after an inevitable fight?

Peace

The Maharal (leading Rabbi of Prague, 16th century – also a kabbalist) suggests that this idea of bringing peace is the essential task of the Kohanim, and particularly that of the Kohen Gadol. As the ones who bring offerings in the Temple, priests make peace between people and Hashem. So too Aharon was able to create peace amongst the people by his various activities.



In calling a person who engages in such activities a student of Aharon, the Mishna is reminding us that this was the central mission of Aharon and all the Kohanim: to reunify those who are separated whether or not the separation was from Hashem, Torah, or other people. Aharon was the perfect example of the man of peace; he uncomplainingly played the role of his younger brother's second, he made peace with himself and with Hashem even when challenged by personal loss. G-d speaks of Aharon's superb qualities:

תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת הִיְתָה בְּפִיהוּ וְעוֹלָה לֹא נִמְצָא בְּשִׁפְתָיו בְּשָׁלוֹם וּבְמִישׁוֹר הָלַךְ אִתִּי וְרַבִּים הָשִׁיב מֵעוֹן:

The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips; he walked with me in peace and uprightness and turned away many from sin. (Malachi 2:6)

Imagine all the people living life in peace. You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will be as one.

- John Lennon

How did Aharon turn people off sinning? The Midrash in Avot D'Rabbi Natan (12:3) fills in the details of the story:

When Aharon went on his way and a wicked person encountered him, Aharon greeted him and befriended him. The next day, that man wanted to commit a sin, but thought, "Woe is to me! How will I raise my eyes afterwards and look at Aharon? I am ashamed before him, for he greeted me. And how did he keep the peace?"

When friends would fight with each other Aharon would approach each one separately, without the other one's knowledge, and say, "why are you fighting with your friend? He begged me to approach you and arrange reconciliation." With this tactic, Aharon was able to bring peace between the two people.

R. Shimon Ben Elazar says: *If a person keeps himself to himself, he is not pursuing peace; rather he should go out and actively look for ways to make peace. (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 12:6)*



Not only did Aharon love peace, but he also incessantly and actively pursued it, and this earned him the affection of ALL Am Yisrael.

Aharon's mission was to draw the people together in a peaceful way. His mission was simply drawing out a positive outlook and resolving differences between people by reminding them of the love that they feel for one another deep down. He is described as 'ohev et habriot' – a lover of people - and was very popular with the masses because of this.

He is also said to have *makrivan l'torah* – he brought the people closer to the Torah. He did not make peace between people in order to bring them closer to the Torah; it was something that he did separately and also as an effect of bringing peace.

Miriam

**וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֶחָת אֶהָרֹן אֶת הַתֵּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתִּצְאֵן כָּל הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ בַּתְּפִילִּים וּבַמְחֹלֶת:
וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירוּ לַה' כִּי גָאָה גָאָה סוּס וְרוֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם:**

Miriam the Prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambourine in her hand, and the women followed her with tambourines and cymbals. Miriam said to them: Sing to G-d, the Exalted a horse and its rider He cast into the sea. (Shemot 15:20)

Why does the Torah refer to Miriam as a prophetess? Why is she mentioned as only Aharon's sister and not Moshe's!? The Talmud (Megilla 14a) explains the historical background, going back to the time when Miriam was the sister of (only) Aharon before Moshe was born. Miriam had then boldly declared with prophetic vision, "My mother will give birth to a son who will redeem Israel..."

But why is Miriam mentioned by her special "prophetess" title only here, not in other places in the Torah? Why does the Torah find it necessary to single out Miriam's song from the rest of Israel? Isn't she already included as part of all the Am Yisrael?

To better appreciate Miriam's major contribution to the Exodus and the Redemption, let us review the details of Miriam's personal background...

Pressured by Pharaoh's decree to kill all firstborn boys, Jewish families began to break apart and Miriam's own parents Amram and Yocheved divorced. Amid all this despair and hopelessness, Miriam announced a Divine prophecy: "My mother will give birth to a son who will save Israel."



Inspired by their daughter's prophecy, Amram and Yocheved remarried. When the baby was born, the house was filled with light, and Amram kissed Miriam on the head, exclaiming: "My daughter! Your prophecy has come true!" However, three months later, when little Moishale had to be hidden in the river amongst the reeds, her father tapped her on the head demanding; "My daughter! Where is your prophecy?! 'This is why Miriam stood among the reeds "from afar to know." Watching and looking forward to the realization of G-d's promise, she remained firm in the truth of her prophecy...'

Was it all over now? Miriam's prophecy apparently went down the drain, and the Redemption was now impossible. All hope seemed lost as Moshe; the intended redeemer of Israel was doomed.

But Miriam refused to change her stance. "She remains firm and strengthens herself in her prophecy." She knew that she didn't fabricate this prediction. These were Divine and holy words and she faithfully clung to her prophecy: "My mother will give birth to a son who will save Israel."

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Miriam's song, years later, was a powerful vindication and triumph over many years of doom and gloom. Miriam rejoiced and was thankful that her prophecy was proven right.



The Torah tells us specifically that Miriam's song was accompanied by tambourines. Why do we need to know this?

"The Jewish women of that generation were confident of Divine miracles, so they took along their tambourines from Egypt" (Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 15:20).

Even during the darkest Exile, the righteous women knew that the Divine promise would be fulfilled, and they would eventually be redeemed. Moreover, those faithful women translated the hope in their hearts into action. Rather than vague wishful thinking, their belief in the Redemption was real and tangible, (as in the folk-saying: "When praying for rain, carry an umbrella!")



So why are we specifically told about Miriam's song at the sea?

Miriam and the women were fully ready and prepared for this great and auspicious moment. Having strengthened and encouraged Israel's faith during the hard-depressing times, these women deserved to herald the redemption, leaving Egypt with a song in their heart and tambourines in their hands.

HADRACHA HOT TIP

Miriam always trusted in Hashem, and never doubted for a second that things would work out – so play trust games! A couple of examples would be the "Catch Me!" game (where you fall backwards and hope to get caught) (if Covid-safe!!) or a "Golden Balls" or "X and Y" style game, where they need to discuss together and trust each other in order to get the best results.

Miriam's song was indeed different, and it therefore stands out in a class by itself! Miriam's song was not inspired after the fact, as was the singing by the rest of Israel. Rather than being a result and effect of the miracle, her song of faith was the cause and reason for the miracle itself.

DISCUSSION POINT – With a change of perspective, can we see everything as a miracle?

Middah Spotlight – Bein adam lechaveiro

We know that peace, harmony and unity are central to Judaism. Perhaps the best way we can express this is through our interpersonal relationships.

Does the world work like this? If we are peaceful in our personal relationships can that really affect the bigger picture?

"וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה'" data-bbox="643 250 886 269"/>

Love your neighbour as yourself, I am Hashem. (Vayikra 19:18)

Ibn Ezra points out that the words "Ani Hashem" at the end of the passuk are explaining the reason for "Ve'ahavta lere'ach akamocho;" that 'I am one G-d who created you.' On one level, this means that since we are all brothers and sisters, we are to get along with and show love for each other. But on another level, it is alluding to the concept that we reflect Hashem in this world, and unity amongst Bnei Yisrael allows Hashem's Shechinah to reside in this world. Similarly, it was when we put individual differences aside and we were 'Like one man with one heart' (Rashi on Shemot 19:2) that Hashem revealed Himself to us, so to speak, and gave us His Torah.

Another way we can strive to make these things more central to our lives is a focus upon spiritual goals. Rav Dessler points out that it is this which fosters peace and unity and obviates dispute, because, unlike with physical pursuits, there is enough room for each person to achieve their spiritual goals without infringing upon others.

Let's use this Kvutza to try and make our chanichim think about the relationships that they have with their families and friends so that they might realise that only through treating everyone nicely will good things happen!

Sum Up's:

Moshe's leadership is rooted in his two homes. The values which we focused on specifically are:

1. Rosh Gadol: when there is a job that needs to be done, and nobody is doing it, take the initiative.



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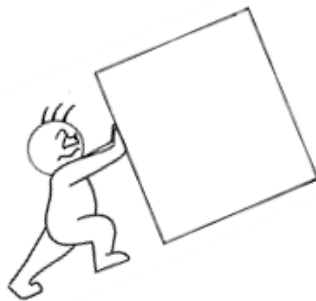
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2. Caring for everyone, regardless of birth and nationality, as personified by Aharon and Miriam.

From this chomer we see that peace, harmony, and achdut serve as key principles which have a central role in Judaism and general life, and that truth (on an individual level) can sometimes be compromised to reach that peace.

We can learn a lot from the way Aharon led his life and constantly pursued peace. We live in a world where we are constantly fighting with each other. **How can we expect there to be peace for Am Yisrael when we do not even tolerate each other?**



The Final Push

When the time comes, the last two weeks (three for us!) our chanichim have been eating, sleeping and living in the microcosm that we call Aleph Machane. Our microcosm has been built on the founding ideals of Bnei Akiva and before us, our forefathers.

Torah V'Avodah isn't just that thing we mention at mifkad; it's the message of our Avot. All of our ancestors lived and breathed Torah and this is the very essence of Torah V'Avodah; nothing in this world is mundane and we have the power to elevate it to a higher level, to sanctify it just as our Avot did.



Our Avot pave the way of Am Yisrael B'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael. They pave the footprints for us to reach our ultimate goal. Aleph Machane 5781 has shown us that if we take the lessons from our Avot and bring them into 2021, we can and will achieve *Am Yisrael B'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael*.

B'Ikvot Avoteinu is not just a theme for this Machane, it is a way of life.

Extra Chomer

Miriam's Well

Rav Michael Hattin

INTRODUCTION

Parashat Chukat, midway through *Sefer Bamidbar*, constitutes the chronological turning point of the Book. The *Parasha* begins with a lengthy description of the mysterious rites of the *para aduma* or red heifer (*Bamidbar* 19:1-22), a ceremony that restores a state of *tahara* or ritual fitness to an individual who has come into contact with a human corpse or grave. This red heifer, that has not more than even two black hairs (!), is slaughtered outside of the Israelite encampment and its blood is ritually sprinkled. The body of the beast is then set alight as cedar, hyssop and scarlet are added to the dancing flames. The collected ashes are then gathered and combined with spring water, a bundle of hyssop is dipped into the mixture, and with these waters of purification the petitioner is sprinkled on the third and seventh days. After immersion in a *mikva* at the conclusion of the rites, the supplicant is restored to a state of *tahara*, and is again able to enter the Tabernacle or Temple area, there to experience the Divine presence.

In the very next section (20:1), the Torah relates that "the entire congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and encamped at Kadesh. There, Miriam died and was buried..." As the commentaries indicate, quoting the tradition of the early Rabbis, at this juncture the Torah begins to narrate events that took place at the conclusion of the period of wandering, which had commenced almost forty years earlier with the episode of the spies. Rashi explains that the emphatic expression of "the ENTIRE congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Zin in the first month" implies that the congregation of which the Torah now speaks was whole and complete, for "the generation of the wilderness had perished, while this new generation had been separated for life" (commentary to *Bamidbar* 20:1). As if to emphasize the point, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra perceptively comments that the Torah records not a single event or prophecy that occurred in the intervening thirty eight years! The events that had transpired since the Exodus from Egypt – the revelation at Sinai and the golden calf, the building of the Mishkan and its dedication, the journey from Sinai towards the new land, the sending of the spies and the Korachite rebellion that was its aftermath – had been documented at length, but of all of these actually took place over the course of only two years!

THE NEW GENERATION

In a remarkable instant, then, the Torah proceeds from the account of the generation of the Exodus to the story of their children, who now stand ready to enter the Land. And whatever the deeper meaning of the obscure service of the red heifer, its thematic significance is immediately apparent, for the narrative of the *para aduma* offers much-needed closure to the wilderness experience and serves as a fitting transition for the account that follows. The generation that left Egypt, condemned to perish, for its lack of trust, in a drab and desolate wilderness, takes its leave in this week's Parasha; with an unexpected suddenness, the generation poised to enter the Promised Land takes its place. Solemnly, they cast off the mortal gloom associated with the demise of their parents' generation and in so doing, like the *tameh* supplicant who has been sprinkled with the restorative waters of purification, the people of Israel are restored to the healing presence of G-d.

But it will be without their old leaders that the people of Israel enter the new land, for even as they reach the arid wilderness of Zin that is on the southeastern outskirts of the Dead Sea, Miriam perishes, soon to be followed by her brother Aharon and eventually by Moshe himself. The people of Israel, thirsty and

impatient to embrace their new destiny, cried out at Zin for water and relief, and Moshe and Aharon had sought G-d's counsel. These two brothers, who had faithfully led the people since the Exodus, were told by G-d to speak to the rock so that it might give water to the parched masses, but they impetuously abrogated G-d's command and struck it instead. And in consequence, they too were doomed to not enter the land of Canaan.

THE THREE LEADERS OF ISRAEL

In essence then, the opening of the *Parasha* may be regarded as the completion of the wilderness era, as the entire adult generation of the Exodus, including its illustrious and faithful leaders, passes from the scene. Although Miriam's death is narrated first, the Torah offers us scant details about the event:

The people of Israel, all of the congregation, came to the wilderness of Zin, and the people dwelt in Kadesh. Miriam died there and there she was buried. The congregation had no water, and they gathered against Moshe and Aharon... (*Bamidbar* 20:1-2).

All we do know from the passage is that her demise takes place during the final year of the wanderings, that at the time the people are located at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, and that in the aftermath of her death the people thirst for water. Rabbinic tradition attempts to fill in for some of the obscurity by explaining the linkage between these seemingly disparate elements:

Rabbi Yose bar Yehuda says: The people of Israel had three excellent leaders – Moshe, Aharon and Miriam. Three good gifts were extended to the people of Israel on their behalf – the well, the clouds, and the manna. The well was provided due to the merit of Miriam, the clouds of glory because of Aharon, and the manna on account of Moshe. When Miriam died, the well disappeared, as it says: "The people of Israel, all of the congregation, came to the wilderness of Zin, and the people dwelt in Kadesh. Miriam died there and there she was buried." Immediately afterwards, the text states: "The congregation had no water, and they gathered against Moshe and Aharon..." When Aharon died, the clouds of glory disappeared...when Moshe died, all three were gone... (*Talmud Bavli*, Tractate *Ta'anit* 9a).

As Rashi explains on the Talmudic passage, this mysterious well was

a rock from which would issue forth water. It would roll along and accompany the people of Israel (in their wanderings from place to place). It was the very rock that Moshe struck, for it had initially refused to give forth its water on his behalf, since Miriam had died (commentary to above passage from Tractate *Ta'anit* 9a).

In other words, the Sages draw a connection between the fragments mentioned in the text: during the final year of the wanderings, Miriam died. As a result, the miraculous well dried up and the people became thirsty. But because the well only provided its waters on her behalf, it remained deaf to Moshe's entreaties (for he initially heeded G-d's command to "speak to the rock"! – *Bamidbar* 20:8). Thus, he struck it instead and, in so doing, sealed his own fate.



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THE THREE BASICS

The three basics that the Sages enumerate – the well of water, the clouds of glory and the manna – are of course the three essential items that any voyager through the desert wilderness needs for survival. One who enters its maw requires water to drink, shelter from the burning sun and dry winds, and food to eat. Rabbi Yose bar Yehuda, in linking these three essentials to Miriam, Aharon and Moshe, highlights their pivotal role in securing Israel's survival during the long and arduous experience of traversing its uninhabited expanse. The three loyal and dedicated leaders, always at Israel's side and seeking their best interests, at all times their advocates who never despair of one day reaching the new land, are transformed, in Rabbi Yose's reading, into the critical instruments that guarantee the continued existence of Israel, even as the desert dust slowly swallows up the condemned generation. In general terms, then, Rabbi Yose associates this triumvirate with food, water and shelter.

Actually, we may even consider the matter in more specific terms. Thus, the particular connection between Aharon and the "clouds of glory" becomes more intelligible when we realize Aharon's special role. After all, Aharon officiated as High Priest in the Mishkan that was also perpetually covered with a similar manifestation – the protective pillar of cloud that shielded it by day. And it was the Aharon who daily ministered at the fiery altar, just as the analogous pillar of fire hovered over the Mishkan at night (*Shemot* 40:38). It is therefore quite natural to link the clouds of glory, which according to Rabbinic tradition offered ongoing relief and protection to the weary Israelites from the harsh and inhospitable wilderness conditions, with the merit of Aharon.

As for Moshe, though it had been the people's complaints that had secured the pledge of heavenly manna, it was the lawgiver who had communicated G-d's accession and then patiently guided the people as they became familiar with the food's curious and unsettling properties (see *Shemot* 15:27-16:36). And surely no one could dispute Moshe's central role in securing the people's physical survival on several charged occasions when G-d's wrath had been kindled against them. It is entirely natural, therefore, to ascribe the gift of the manna – the potent expression of physical sustenance – to Moshe's merit. But why should Miriam have been associated with a miraculous well of water, the source of life and refreshment to the parched Israelite masses?

MIRIAM'S CAREER

In considering the lengthy career of Miriam, we note that the Torah narratives connect her with water on more than one occasion. Recall that at the beginning of the tale of the Egyptian servitude, Miriam had stayed close by her infant brother as he was pathetically placed in a basket of reeds and released into the watery grasp of the Nile. When Pharaoh's compassionate daughter soon found him, it was Miriam who had stepped forward and arranged for the child's natural mother to nurse him (*Shemot* 2:1-10). In essence, Miriam had secured Moshe's survival, even as the river threatened to destroy him.

Later on, as the people triumphantly traversed the Sea of Reeds while the menacing Egyptian hordes drowned in its depths, Moshe led them in song to the G-d who had "done gloriously, for He threw the horse and its rider into the sea!" (*Shemot* 15). And Miriam his sister took the timbrel in her hand, leading the women of Israel in a joyous refrain. Once again, Miriam's concern for the people was dramatically linked with the looming waters that had almost overcome them. Parenthetically, it should also be noted that it was in the

immediate aftermath of that momentous song that the people of Israel had first entered the wilderness and thirsted for water (*Shemot* 15:22-27), and G-d had provided for them.

We may additionally suspect whether the Sages were intrigued with the otherwise obscure name of Miriam (MiRYaM), for unlike her illustrious younger brother Moshe, the Torah nowhere provides us with the inspiration for her name. While the appellation clearly contains intimations of exaltedness or ascendancy (*ROM*), its four Hebrew consonants also include the three letters that make up the Hebrew word for water (*MaYiM*). And even as Moshe berates the people at the rock and lifts his hand to strike it, he unconsciously recalls his sister's merit, just as Rabbi Yose explained, for in that moment of anger he calls Israel "the *MoRiM*" or rebels. But the word is written deficiently, so that the letters – once the definite article "Ha" has been removed – spell the name of Miriam with exactitude (see *Bamidbar* 19:10), whose own death had been recounted scarcely nine verses earlier!

GREAT LEADERSHIP

Some of this may be unduly speculative, for the Torah does not explicitly indicate that Israel was provided with a continuous well of water by the merit of Miriam. In all probability, the Rabbinic linkage is an attempt to convey something more profound than simply narrative detail. In effect, by ascribing the well to Miriam's merit, the Sages are emphasizing the impact that her guidance had on the people of Israel. The life-giving waters that refreshed them during the entire course of their wilderness wanderings were understood by the Sages as metaphors for her inspiring words and deeds, for even as the Torah tells us relatively little about her lengthy career, she is present at the critical and tense moments when the fate of the people hangs in the balance. It is Miriam who preserves her brother who will become the future liberator and it is she who rouses Israel to song even as they reel from the staggering events at the Sea of Reeds. Like cool waters that refresh the weary and anxious traveler as he cautiously makes his way through the uncertain wilderness, Miriam buoys the people of Israel and raises their faltering spirits.

When we wonder, then, how a people survives four decades of aimless wandering even as all hope seems lost, the Sages provide us with an answer. If there is inspired and selfless leadership at the helm, if there is genuine guidance and concern and steely determination to stay the course, if the people's shepherds have a clear vision of a brighter future and can focus their constituents' eyes on that goal even as the journey seems interminably long and fraught with setbacks, then the people will survive and one day flourish. The basic needs of the people have to be met even while prosperity or tranquility are still far-off goals, and it is the duty of good leaders to make that possible.

Like all great leaders, then, Miriam, Aharon and Moshe were condemned to pass from the scene before the destination was reached, in order to drive home the point that the best of them labor for their people and care little about their own personal attainments. Whether or not these three figures reached the Promised Land did not concern them nearly as much as whether the people of Israel would one day reach it. And with that spirit of loyal service, they did their quiet work even as the people sorely tried their patience and stamina. May Israel merit having leaders of their caliber to guide them.