



# TORAT HABAYIT

THE JOURNAL OF BNEI AKIVA UK



**RELATIONSHIPS IN JUDAISM  
CHIDDUSH**

**VOLUME 3 ISSUE 2  
MARCH 2021 - ADAR 5781**



# Contents

Volume 3 Issue 2

March 2021 - Adar 5781

2     **Editorial**

4     **Introduction from the Mazkirut**

## **RELATIONSHIPS IN JUDAISM**

5     **Marriage in Judaism**

*Ben Rothstein*

11    **Shalom and Our Relationship with Eretz Yisrael**

*Rav Joel Kenigsberg*

## **CHIDDUSH**

14    **Misseducation**

*Dania Mann-Wineberg*

17    **Channah, Hashgachah and Tefillah b'Et Tzarah**

*Michael Kay*

26    **Yom Haatzmaut Address 5780**

*Rafi Cohen*

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Torat HaBayit is the journal of Bnei Akiva UK, which aims to stimulate ideological debate within the movement and to inform the wider community of the issues at the cutting edge of the contemporary consciousness of the Jewish people.

*Front Cover Artwork © 2020 Chana Be'eri.*

# Editorial

כל אהבה שהיא תלויה בדבר, בטל דבר, בטלה אהבה. ושאינה תלויה בדבר, אינה בטלה לעולם. איזו היא אהבה התלויה בדבר, זו אהבת אמן ונתן. ושאינה תלויה בדבר, זו אהבת דוד ויהונתן.

***“All love that depends on a something, [when the] thing ceases, [the] love ceases; and [all love] that does not depend on anything, will never cease. What is an example of love that depended on a something? Such was the love of Amnon for Tamar. And what is an example of love that did not depend on anything? Such was the love of David and Jonathan.”<sup>1</sup>***

Our personal relationships are intrinsic to every interaction we have in this world. In understanding how we relate to the people and world around us, we learn more about ourselves, our place in the world and what God wants from us. This is the truth understood by King Solomon, when he used the metaphor of deep love and sexual yearning between a young couple to describe the relationship of Israel with God.

The modern Western world has put ever greater focus on our relationships and how they are conducted. The #MeToo revelations in 2018 highlighted the culture of harassment and abuse in the media, politics and elsewhere and forced us to consider the fundamental dynamics of how relationships are conducted in the society in which we live. Unfortunately, this is not something from which the Jewish community is immune. A particularly painful reckoning has been happening in the numerous communities where Shlomo Carlebach’s music and Torah inspire many, but who struggle with a legacy that also caused hurt to many women.<sup>2</sup>

However, our tradition contains a strong relationships ethic, one based on unconditionality, mutual commitment and consent. This is perhaps summarised best in the *Mishnah* from *Pirkei Avot* quoted above: ‘[all love] that does not depend on anything, will never cease’. There is a growing conversation around relationships in the Orthodox world. As a movement which defines itself by the “synergetic relationship between the modern world and Torah values/*Halacha*”<sup>3</sup>, we believe in learning Torah and using that knowledge to contribute to debate in modern society. This journal seeks to explore that Jewish perspective on relationships, with the hope that it leads to greater discussion in the *tnuva* and the wider community on how we relate to those around us.

Our contributions include *Ben Rothstein’s* exploration of the values underlying the Jewish model of marriage and *Rav Joel Kenigsberg’s* discussion of the concept of ‘*Shalom*’ as a central element of relationships.

This is not nearly a comprehensive discussion of relationships in Judaism. The hope is that this small contribution to the topic will spark conversation within our community on a whole host of

<sup>1</sup> *Mishnah Avot*, 5:16. Trans. Kulp, J., *Mishnah Yomit*.

<sup>2</sup> For a thoughtful discussion on how we respond to allegations of Carlebach’s sexual harassment, see Rafi Cohen’s article “*Sing To Hashem A New Song: The Carlebach Dilemma*”, *Yediot*, (2018). [baukyediot.wordpress.com/2018/01/05/sing-to-hashem-a-new-song-the-carlebach-dilemma](http://baukyediot.wordpress.com/2018/01/05/sing-to-hashem-a-new-song-the-carlebach-dilemma)

<sup>3</sup> Bnei Akiva Standing Orders, A5.

questions around relationships in Orthodox society. In particular, it is important to acknowledge where this journal is lacking by focusing on heterosexual relationships. Our community urgently needs to consider the implications of our relationship and marriage-centric society for Orthodox LGBT+ people and needs to find ways of making that society genuinely LGBT+ inclusive.

This year's *Torat HaBayit* sees the return of the *Chiddush* section of the journal. Bringing together a range of perspectives on certain, specific topics remains central to the format of *Torat HaBayit*. However, the journal aims to be a home for Bnei Akiva's learning and discussion more generally, and to provide a space for serious ideological debate in the movement.

The *Chiddush* section features *Michael Kay's* thoughtful look at *Tefillah b'Et Tzarah* in the Book of Samuel, which is particularly resonant at this time of global *tzarah* (distress). *Dania Mann-Wineberg* writes beautifully of the challenges women face trying to learn Torah, and the need for positive educational leadership. Finally, as is traditional for *Torat HaBayit*, we have included the Yom Haatzmaut address from Mazkir *Rafi Cohen*.

Enormous thanks go to all the writers in this year's volume of *Torat HaBayit*. The quality of the writing is exceptional and shows that Bnei Akiva remains at the forefront of Torah learning in the Anglo-Jewish community.

Particular acknowledgement must be made to Chinuch Worker 5780 Chana Be'eri for her front cover design, and for all the work she put into this publication, seen and unseen.

*Torat HaBayit* is written in the spirit of 'stimulating ideological debate'. All views expressed in this journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of Bnei Akiva. It is hoped that through reading this journal, people will consider and discuss the topics contained herein. If you have any thoughts, comments or questions on this edition, or if you would be interested in being a part of the editorial team for next year, please email [torathabayitba@gmail.com](mailto:torathabayitba@gmail.com).

Happy reading!

**Kobi Be'eri**, Editor





Shalom Chaverim,

**'Said Rabbi Abba: "Said Shmuel: 'For three years *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* disagreed. These said "the *halachah* is in accordance with our [opinion]' and these said 'the *halachah* is in accordance with our [opinion]'. A Divine Voice emerged and said 'These and those are the words of the Living God. However, the *halachah* is in accordance with *Beit Hillel*.'" Since both these and those are the words of the Living God, why did *Beit Hillel* merit [to have] the *halachah* in accordance with them? Because they were pleasant and did not take offence, [and when teaching *halachah* they would] teach their statements and the statements of *Beit Shammai*. Moreover, they prioritised the statements of *Beit Shammai* to their statements.'**<sup>4</sup>

Discussion, debate and disagreement are no strangers to Judaism - we all know the old joke of 'two Jews, three opinions'. It comes, therefore, as little surprise when faced with the Talmudic statement that *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* disagreed for three years. We acknowledge, respect and encourage debate and discussion as a religion, and indeed as a *tdua* in this very journal, recognising that there are multiple points of view, ideas and truths, all of which are "the words of the Living God". In order to develop and move forward it is critical that we discuss our ideology and values, and how fortunate we are that our *tdua*, in its ninth decade, is still going strong in the realm of ideological discussion.

Perhaps we should be more proud, however, of the way in which our chaverim engage in debate with one another. Our Sages teach that the *halachah* follows *Beit Hillel* due to the manner in which they disagreed, with the pre-eminence of mutual respect. This is a value which our *madrichim* teach and nurture at Sviva and Machane, thereby empowering the *chanichim* to healthily engage in sophisticated discussions, and a behaviour which they themselves actualise.

Within an ideological movement, there is always a risk that discussion, debate, and disagreement fall away in favour of the development of an echo-chamber. It is clear however, from this journal that this is not the case for Bnei Akiva. Our *bogrim* fiercely demonstrate that even within the 'constraints' of our ideology there are multiple vantage points and voices, illustrating that which our Sages taught, 'No two prophets prophesy in the same style'.<sup>5</sup>

May we as *tdua* continue to debate and discuss, disagreeing only for the sake of Heaven, and in doing so educate, inspire, and empower each other. In this way, '*aloh naaleh*', we shall surely go up.

*Bevirkat Shalom leTorah vaAvodah,*

**Daniel Ross**  
Chinuch Worker

**Nathan Daniels**  
Mazkir

<sup>4</sup> *BT Eruvin*, 13b. Translations adapted from *William Davidson Talmud*, Koren Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> *BT Sanhedrin*, 89a.

# Marriage in Judaism

**Ben Rothstein**

**T**O GIVE an accurate portrayal of the Torah Weltanschauung on marriage, it will be necessary to examine the information explicated by the Torah on the subject. Five of the seven blessings recited at the wedding ceremony intentionally direct the audience to the story of creation, as recounted in the opening chapters of Genesis, by employing verbs such as *y-ṣ-r* (יצר), meaning to form, and *b-r-* (ברא), meaning to create. With this in mind, it appears that the Torah values intended to inform upon a marriage can be found within these verses.<sup>6</sup>

## The Creation Narrative

Looking at the creation narrative, the first and most basic responsibility given to the human being is found immediately after their creation. God commands them **וַיְבָרֵךְ אֱתָהֶֽם** (emphasis mine), 'to be fruitful and multiply and fill the land.'<sup>7</sup> Not only is this the first direct interaction between God and the human He has created, but it is also described as a blessing which God bestows upon them.<sup>8</sup> This mitzvah also has a

further extension which entails surprising halachic ramifications:

'One who is half-slave and half-free...is unable to marry a maidservant, as he is already half-free, and is unable to marry a free woman, as he is already half-slave. Shall he remain idle? Surely the world was only created for [the mitzvah of] being fruitful and multiplying, as it says "Not for empty space did He create [the earth], [but] for dwelling [*shevet*] did He form it." Rather, due to the improvement of the world, we force his master [to] make him a free man.'<sup>9</sup>

The Mishnah above details the law in a case where two partners jointly own a slave, one of whom then frees his portion of the slave. This leaves him in a state of limbo, unable to participate fully in either realm of society due to his divided status. However, so great is the commandment of procreation (here referred to as *shevet*) that it forces the other master to free his portion of the slave as well.<sup>10</sup> The verse used in this Mishnah is an elaboration on the theme of *pru urvu* found in Isaiah<sup>11</sup> and is used elsewhere in the Talmud to demonstrate the significance of this mitzvah. For example, an old Sefer Torah may not be sold, not even in order to purchase a new one. However, there are two exceptions: one may sell a Sefer Torah in order to learn Torah and in order to get married. The Talmud elaborates: in order to study Torah, the sale is

[Ed. note. Weltanschauung – philosophy of life, world outlook].

<sup>6</sup> The author would like to thank Rabbi Reuven Taragin for introducing him to many of these sources. The author also recognises that he is singularly ill-equipped to approach this topic, being unmarried at the time of writing.

<sup>7</sup> *Genesis*, 1:28.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Mishnah Gittin*, 4:5.

<sup>10</sup> This in spite of the positive commandment **לעלם בהם תעבדו** found in *Leviticus* 25:46 proscribing the emancipation of a Canaanite slave.

<sup>11</sup> *Isaiah*, 45:18.



permitted, as study of Torah brings one to action. In order to marry, the sale is permitted, because of the mitzvah of *shevet*.<sup>12</sup> Tosafot cite these two cases as evidence that this is a '*mitzvah rabbah*', a great commandment, such that we force slave-owners to enable their slaves to fulfil it and seemingly it shares parity with the mitzvah of studying Torah.<sup>13 14</sup>

However, the relationship between a man and a woman is intended to surpass simple propagation of the species. This can be inferred from the fact that the human *adam* was commanded with the mitzvah of *pru urvu* before the separation of man and woman into separate entities, thus this relationship must be for a purpose beyond that.<sup>15</sup> All of creation is described as 'good' (*tov*) numerous times,<sup>16</sup> with the completion described as 'very good' (*tov meod*).<sup>17</sup> This sets the scene of the created world ostensibly as one of goodness, where everything is as it should be; making it all the more shocking for something to be described as 'not good' (*lo tov*). The only thing that is negative in creation is the human being: 'It is not good for the human to be [lit. the being of the human] alone; I shall make for it an *eizer kenegdo*.'<sup>18 19</sup> There is some existential negative aspect to being alone, which can be resolved by the creation of an *eizer kenegdo*. As mentioned already, this cannot simply be the necessity to procreate as the

commandment of *pru urvu* was given before this declaration. There are two suggestions as to what the nature of this *lo tov* is, which I will present here and with which I will attempt to explain two different, but essential, functions of marriage.

### The Utilitarian Model

The 19<sup>th</sup> century commentator Netziv suggests that indeed the human being was created, like all other creations, with the ability to reproduce. However, this was not sufficient for the human.

'[What is] not good [is] that the female, like with the other creations, would not [function as] an *eizer* in all walks of life, she only being present before him at the time of copulation.'<sup>20</sup>

The purpose of distinction of the human being into two separate entities is to facilitate further achievement of tasks and goals that would otherwise be unattainable. Thus, one purpose of marriage is that of a unit of two combining to help each other achieve their respective goals, as a synergetic relationship, in that the combined result of their actions is greater than the sum of their individual abilities. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains this in the same way, that any mission is too much for one individual to

woman, as they could have simply reproduced asexually (*Ramban on the Torah, Genesis, 2:18 s.v. לא טוב היות האדם לבדו*).

<sup>12</sup> *Babylonian Talmud (BT) Megillah, 27a.*

<sup>13</sup> Tosafot, *BT Bava Batra, 13a s.v. שנאמר לא תהו בראה*.

<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to note that the word used by Isaiah to describe this 'empty space' without dwelling is 'תהו', the same word used in *Genesis* to describe the primeval state of the universe at the beginning of creation. This reinforces the idea that the entire purpose of creation was to culminate in the human being, and without this all other creations are rendered null as the primeval state of creation.

<sup>15</sup> Nachmanides implies that had this been the sole function, God need never have separated man and

<sup>16</sup> *Genesis, 1:4,10,12,18,21.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid. 1:31.*

<sup>18</sup> The exact translation of the phrase *eizer kenegdo* is very unclear, thus I have left it untranslated. Suffice to say it certainly does not mean 'helpmeet'.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid. 2:18.*

<sup>20</sup> Berlin, N.Z.Y., *Haamek Davar, Genesis, 2:18 s.v. לא טוב היות האדם לבדו*.

accomplish alone and by necessity two must combine their efforts to succeed.<sup>21</sup> In a similar vein, Abraham Ibn Ezra sources this *lo tov* from the verses in Ecclesiastes:

‘Two are better than one, by which they have good reward for their toil. For if they should fall, the one will raise his companion; but should the one fall, there is no second to help him up.’<sup>22</sup>

A key aspect of the Torah’s recording of the actions performed by the founding members of Judaism is to facilitate learning from their actions.<sup>23</sup> With this in mind, the relationships between the *Avot* and *Imahot*, upon examination, can yield insights into their dynamic, where we observe this principle of two personalities combining to achieve their maximum potential. To begin with Abraham and Sarah, we may examine the incident of the visit of the angels.<sup>24</sup> Abraham is the extrovert, sitting ‘at the entrance of the tent’, despite it being ‘the heat of the day’, in order to welcome guests into his tent.<sup>25</sup> The verb *m-h-r* (מהר), denoting speed and haste, appears three times in just two verses, giving the reader an impression of the activity present in Abraham’s household under his instruction.<sup>26</sup> The root *l-k-h* (לקח), meaning

to take, also appears four times in the narrative (verses 4, 5, 7 and 8) and the root *r-w-š* (רוץ), to run, twice (verses 2 and 7), to the same end. Sarah, on the other hand, is the introvert, who is described as ‘behold, [she is] in the tent.’<sup>27</sup> This more than simply describes her whereabouts, but in fact denotes her character: she assumes the passive role in the relationship between herself and Abraham. Conversely, in the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah, it is the latter who assumes the extroverted role. Rebekah is introduced with the word *יצאת*, meaning ‘she [was] going out’, a defining character trait.<sup>28</sup> In the following verses, she goes to fill up water in order to quench the thirst of the weary traveller she has just met (his identity and mission unbeknownst to her), as well as the thirst of his camels, before inviting him in.<sup>29</sup> In this way she emulates the kindness of Abraham, who similarly fed the travellers he encountered (their identities and missions unbeknownst to him) and invited them in. The verb *m-h-r* reappears twice here (verses 18 and 20), pointedly directing the reader to view her as a continuation of Abraham’s legacy, especially relevant in context, showing her as the ideal wife for Isaac. Furthermore, Rebekah deviates from the betrothal type-scene as she, not the

<sup>21</sup> Hirsch, S.R., *The Hirsch Chumash, Genesis*, 2:18, based on *BT Yevamot*, 63a.

<sup>22</sup> *Ecclesiastes*, 4:9-10. The next verse is discussed in the section following this.

<sup>23</sup> Both in terms of emulating them and learning from their faults (see Hirsch in *The Hirsch Chumash, Genesis* 25:27). This is not the place for an extensive discussion on the topic of criticising the *Avot*, however, for an interesting presentation of the topic within an educational context the reader is directed to Wolowelsky, J.B., ‘Kibbud Av and Kibbud Avot: Moral Education and Patriarchal Critiques’, *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, 33, 4 (1999), p.35–44.

<sup>24</sup> *Genesis*, 18:1-15. The author acknowledges and expresses thanks to R’ Efroni Schlesinger for this model of relationships in the Biblical narrative.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 18:1 and Rashi s.v. פתח האהל. This is especially supported by the Rabbinic contextualisation found in *BT*

*Bava Metzia*, 84b, that this was the third day after Abraham’s circumcision and so God made the climate unusually hot to motivate Abraham to stay inside and recover. Undeterred by this discomfort, Abraham eagerly seeks out his next opportunity to welcome guests into his home.

<sup>26</sup> *Genesis*, 18:6-7. Although the second instances are both commands given by Abraham, this should be understood as if he himself were hurrying through instructing others (Shadal s.v. וימהר).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 18:9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 24:15.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 24:18-20, 25.



bridegroom, is the one to draw the water from the well; this emphasises her role as the active partner in her marriage to Isaac.<sup>30 31</sup> In contrast, Isaac himself is not present at *his own* betrothal scene! This presents him as a much more passive character, about whom very little is said overall. At the beginning of his life, in what is perhaps Isaac's most well-known episode, that of the *Akeidah*, he is presented as bound and passive, and at the end of his life, in Jacob's deception, he is blind and unaware of what is taking place around him. Thus, we see the way in which basic personality traits are combined to form the unit of a married couple in the lives of our ancestors.<sup>32</sup>

### The Companionship Model

The above idea can be developed further, to suggest that in fact this functional, utilitarian partnership is intended to provide the basis for a much deeper form of connection; one of

intense friendship or perhaps 'love'. Returning to the verses quoted earlier from Ecclesiastes, the following verse expresses this idea:

'Two are better than one, by which they have good reward for their toil. For if they should fall, the one will raise his companion; but should the one fall, there is no second to help him up. Also, if two should lie down [together], then [it will be] warm for them (emphasis mine); but for the one – how will he become warmed?'<sup>33</sup>

The Hebrew words 'וְחֶם לָהֶם' indicate not only literal warmth, but figuratively refer to a sense of camaraderie and companionship,<sup>34</sup> in this instance built upon the technical ability to achieve more as a unit. In other words, building a sound foundation in marriage upon the basis of mutual assistance allows for, and even facilitates, the development of a feeling of closeness.<sup>35</sup> Nachmanides

<sup>30</sup> Alter, R., *The Hebrew Bible, Vol 1. The Five Books of Moses – A Translation with Commentary* (2019), p.79.

<sup>31</sup> It is likely that Rebekah was brought up to be headstrong by her mother, who was the head of the household (Berlin, N.Z.Y., *Haamek Davar, Genesis 24:28 s.v. (וּתְרִץ)*. See also Samuel, M., *Nashim Nistarot BaTanach – Imahot* (2012), p.61-69.

<sup>32</sup> The marriages of Jacob in the framework of this model also require examination but that is beyond the scope of this article. Briefly, one can understand that Jacob and Esau (who may have been intended for the spiritual and physical halves of the nation of Israel respectively), two brothers, are intended for the two sisters Rachel and Leah (hence *Rashi* on *Genesis*, 29:17). Jacob is the introvert (ibid. 25:27 'יֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים', 'the one who dwells in tents') and Esau the extrovert (ibid. 'אִישׁ שָׂדֵה', 'a man of the field'). Correspondingly, Rachel is introduced to us as tending to her father's flock (despite the fact that she had (at least paternal) brothers (ibid. 30:36 and 31:1), though it is possible that at this point they were not yet born) and bringing it to a well, which puts us in mind of Rebekah's outgoing nature. By implication, Leah remains the passive individual, intended for Esau. However, this balance is upset by the selling of the birthright (ibid. 25:33), after which Jacob assumes both his own role and that of Esau and consequently

ends up married to both wives. There is more to be said about the specific actions taken by these individuals and the reader is encouraged to look into this matter further.

<sup>33</sup> *Ecclesiastes*, 4:9-11.

<sup>34</sup> '[וְחֶם]' in Brown, F. et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1906), p.328. Although here BDB cites this instance as a literal meaning of the word, it certainly can be understood additionally in a figurative sense.

<sup>35</sup> It must be noted that this mutual assistance is not for personal gain but rather should be focussed on a common goal - God. When two individuals are invested in a relationship for purely selfish reasons then said relationship only lasts as long as it remains profitable for both parties. When two individuals share a common goal, they can unite over it and come together for a higher purpose; as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote: 'Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction.' The first blessing at the *sheva brachot*, the festive meal of a wedding, is 'שֶׁכֵּל בְּרָא לְכָבוֹדוֹ', 'that everything was created for [God's] glory'. This is especially necessary at a wedding, to remind the bride and groom that even the creation of *adam*, the complete human being that they are now

develops this theme, stating that the splitting of the human being was for each half to consciously choose to love the other:

'And the second [half of *adam*] was [already] created as an *eizer*, but the holy One, blessed be He, saw that it would be good [*tov*] that the *eizer* stand opposite him, that he may see [the *eizer*], and separate from and (re)connect with it as he wishes.<sup>36</sup>

Nachmanides suggests that what God achieved through the distinguishing of the human *adam* was not the *eizer* element of a spouse, but rather that of *kenegdo*; by being separated and choosing to join together, a deeper connection with the spouse is formed. Another way of putting it is that a person will only love that which he or she chooses. A more common expression of this idea is found in the Talmud with regard to Torah study: "Rav said: a person only learns Torah from the place that his heart desires."<sup>37</sup> Only from the place that a person chooses does his or her connection to Torah, and indeed a spouse, grow and develop. Chizkiah bar Manoach, in his commentary *Chizkuni*, similarly writes that the purpose of showing *adam* all the animals before dividing it, even though God had already pronounced that its loneliness was not good, was in order for *adam* to feel this loneliness and thus come to appreciate the separation of a spouse.<sup>38</sup>

This leads on to an extensive discussion within the commentators about the initial creation of *adam*. The Talmud relates:

'Rav Yehudah raised a contradiction: it is written "And God created the *adam* in His image",<sup>39</sup> and it is written "male and female He created them".<sup>40</sup> How is this [possible]? Initially, God thought [lit. it ascended as a thought] to create two [beings], but ultimately one [being] was created.<sup>41</sup>

This already demonstrates the tension between the complete *adam* being comprised of a man and a woman and the need for separation between these two elements. An individual should love a spouse whom he or she chooses, whilst at the same time experiencing a sense of reconnection. This idea is also found in an oft-quoted line of the Zohar, 'all those spirits and souls, all of them contain a male and a female that are joined together as one.'<sup>42</sup> The Zohar goes on to say that each half finds its complementary spouse and they reconnect to form one body and one soul, as the soul was initially. This naturally leads to a feeling of incompleteness and longing for a spouse, as one looks for an item that has been lost.<sup>43</sup> Nachmanides connects these feelings to the statement made immediately after the creation of *isha*: 'Therefore shall *ish* leave his father and mother and cling to his *isha*, that they may be as one flesh.'<sup>44</sup> He comments that it was for this purpose that the *isha* and the *ish* were formed from the same being (*adam*); 'he will desire for her to be with him always, as it was [when they were] *adam*.'<sup>45</sup> The Talmud goes as far as to consider this longing a Godly trait:

becoming, was undertaken for God's glory, and this attitude must be preserved in the marriage in order for it to be successful and productive.

<sup>36</sup> Ramban on the Torah, Genesis, 2:18 s.v. לא טוב היות האדם לבדו.

<sup>37</sup> BT Avodah Zarah, 19a.

<sup>38</sup> Chizkuni, Genesis, 2:18 s.v. לא טוב היות האדם לבדו.

<sup>39</sup> Genesis, 1:27.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 5:2.

<sup>41</sup> BT Ketubot, 8a.

<sup>42</sup> Zohar I, 91b.

<sup>43</sup> BT Kiddushin, 2b.

<sup>44</sup> Genesis, 2:24.

<sup>45</sup> Ramban on the Torah, Genesis ibid. s.v. על כן.



'[Rabbi] arranged for his son to marry into the household of Rabbi Yosei ben Zimra. They arranged for [Rabbi's son] twelve years to go [and study] in the study hall [before the marriage]. They passed [the bride] in front of him, he said to them "let them be six years". They passed her in front of him [again], he said to them "I shall marry her [now] and then go [and study]". [Because of this,] he was embarrassed [to see] his father, [his father] said to him "my son, you have your Creator's disposition; initially it is written, "You will bring them and You will plant them [on the mountain of Your inheritance]",<sup>46</sup> but ultimately it is written, "and they shall make for Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."<sup>47 48</sup>

Initially, at the Song of the Sea, the Israelites sing that God will lead them to the mountain of His inheritance, that is Mount Moriah, where He will establish a temple for them. However, God was 'impatient', longing for the Jewish people, anthropomorphically speaking, and so desired that they make a sanctuary for Him in the desert, the Tabernacle, before they arrived in the Land of Israel. In this way, when Rabbi's son experienced a longing for his bride, he was in fact engaged in an act of *imitatio Dei*, for which his father praised him.

Rabbi Isaac ben Moses Arama, in his philosophical commentary *Akeidat Yitzchak*, comments that these two aspects of marriage are to be found within the two names of the first woman. The term *isha* is analogous with that of *ish*, in that together the *ish* and *isha*

form a complete *adam*.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, the name תְּהֵא, the Torah informs us, is because she is the 'אִם כָּל חַי',<sup>50</sup> 'the mother of all life'. These two names denote the two purposes for which a marriage is intended: firstly, the need to procreate, but secondly, an element unique in its complexity to human beings, that of the relationship between spouses.

### Conclusion

To conclude this discussion in philosophical terms, within Judaism it would appear that marriage serves both an ontic and ontological function; the very nature of our reality demands propagation through union, and yet *homo religiosus* is subject to experiencing the dualism of forming one complete *adam* with a second individual, an intuitive absurdity, yet one with which he is nonetheless tasked. As he navigates this metaphysical manifestation analogous to the physical fulfilment of the *mitzvah of pru urvu*, it falls to each individual to pursue this higher form of integration with another as a fulfilment of the Divine will and thus to form the most Godly of creatures, the human being; the *adam*.

■ BEN ROTHSTEIN attended Yeshivat Hakotel and is currently studying Ancient Languages at UCL. He was elected to be a Nivchar Hanhalla for 5780 and 5781. Ben has held several Machane tafkidim, most recently as Sgan on Aleph Winter Machane 5781.

<sup>46</sup> Exodus, 15:17.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 25:8.

<sup>48</sup> BT Ketubot, 62b.

<sup>49</sup> See also BT Sotah, 17a and Rashi ibid. s.v. שְׂכִינָה בִּינִיהָם.

<sup>50</sup> Genesis, 3:20.

# Shalom and Our Relationship with Eretz Yisrael

**Rav Joel Kenigsberg**

IF WE were to choose one word to define successful relationships, many of us would probably choose the word 'shalom'. The concept of *shalom* – peace and harmony, is ubiquitous amongst our sources. Whether it be *shalom bayit*, *shalom* between nations, *shalom* between man and Hashem – peace is an essential requirement for any relationship to flourish and in many cases the end goal of the relationship itself.

There is a statement of *Chazal* highlighting the quality of *shalom* which appears as the concluding passage of a tractate four times throughout the Talmud - at the end of *Brachot*, *Nazir*, *Yevamot* and *Keritot*:

אָמַר רַבִּי אֱלֶעָזָר אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא: תְּלַמְדֵי  
חֲכָמִים מְרַבִּים שְׁלוֹם בְּעוֹלָם, שְׁנֵאמַר:  
"וְכָל בְּנֵיךָ לְמוֹדֵי ה' וְרַב שְׁלוֹם בְּנֵיךָ"

'Rabbi Elazar said [that] Rabbi Chanina said: Torah scholars increase peace in the world, as it is stated: "And all your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isaiah, 54:13).<sup>51</sup>

The Aruch LaNer,<sup>52</sup> in his commentary at the end of *Masechet Yevamot*, gives a fascinating reason as to why this passage appears four times, and why specifically at the end of these four *masechtot*.<sup>53</sup> The four-fold repetition

serves to allude to four different types of relationships in the world, all of which require *shalom* to prosper. The first three, he writes, are basic human and interpersonal relationships which we might have expected: *bein adam lamakom* – the relationship between man and Hashem, *bein adam lechaveiro* – the relationship between people, *bein Ish leIsh* – the marital bond between husband and wife. Each of these is, directly or indirectly, the subject of the material of one of the above tractates.

*Brachot*, with its discussion of *Kriat Shema*, *tefillah* and *brachot* describes the tools whereby we are to forge a relationship with Hashem. *Yevamot* represents the harmony created in interpersonal relationships, with the *Yibum* ceremony as a paradigm for chessed to others by the one who performs it. Taking the vow of a *Nazir* is, as stated by *Chazal*, a recommended response to witnessing the *Sotah* ceremony in the *Beit Hamikdash*, something which would come about through a lack of harmony in the marital relationship.

The fourth type of relationship is somewhat surprising. The passage above comes at the end of *Keritot* in order to symbolize the requirement for peace in the relationship between *guf* and *nefesh* – body and soul. This *masechet* teaches about those transgressions which would be punishable by *karet* – spiritual excision – the outcome of which would be a complete disconnect between the physical and the spiritual. This statement comes to remind us to perform mitzvot in a way which would ultimately lead to harmony between the two.

Although not defined as a relationship on interpersonal terms – the question of how we view the interaction between physical and spiritual is one that has long been debated and has many implications on both a philosophical and practical level.

The dichotomy is reflected in two of the steps defined by the Ramchal in *Mesillat Yesharim*. In chapter 13 the Ramchal defines the

<sup>51</sup> BT *Brachot*, 64a; *Yevamot*, 122b; *Nazir*, 66b; *Keritot*, 28b.

<sup>52</sup> Rav Yaakov Ettlinger, 1798-1871.

<sup>53</sup> Aruch LaNer points out that the word בניך is also an acronym for the names of these masechtot: בְּרִיתוֹת, בְּרִיתוֹת, בְּרִיתוֹת, בְּרִיתוֹת.

attribute of פְּרִישׁוּת, abstinence. He writes that 'a person should abstain from any worldly matters that are unessential'.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, the only worldly matters to be engaged in are those which are essential and which one cannot by any means live without. The physical world emerges as a challenge, a temptation and somewhat of a *bedieved*.

However, in chapter 26 the Ramchal discusses the level of קְדוּשָׁה, holiness. Here he writes that 'even his physical deeds truly become matters of holiness',<sup>55</sup> citing the eating of korbanot as one example. Here, it seems that physical pursuits are not necessarily in contradiction with spiritual ones – they may even serve to complement one another.

One of the earliest forms of this debate revolves around the place of material pursuits such as earning a livelihood. Are these part of an ideal way of living or are they only required in less than optimal conditions? Should one's time only be devoted to learning Torah or is there a place for engagement with the world at large as an ideal? These questions are complex and remain to a large degree unresolved. But let us examine the way this debate emerges from the Gemara in *Masechet Brachot*. Two *tannaim*, R' Yishmael and R' Shimon bar Yochai, cite opposing views regarding the resolution of two seemingly contradictory pesukim:

תְּנוּ רַבְּנַן: "וְאַסַּפְתָּ דַּגְנְךָ" מִה תִּלְמוּד לומר? — לְפִי שְׁנַאמֵר: "לֹא יִמוּשׁ סֶפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ" — יְכוּל דְּבָרִים כְּכַתְּבֵן, תִּלְמוּד לומר: "וְאַסַּפְתָּ דַּגְנְךָ" — הִנְהַג בְּהֵן מִנְהַג דְּרַף אֶרֶץ, דְּבָרֵי רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל.

רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי אומר: אֲפֹשֶׁר אָדָם חוֹרֵשׁ בְּשַׁעַת חַרִּישָׁה, וְזוֹרַע בְּשַׁעַת זְרִיעָה, וְקוֹצֵר בְּשַׁעַת קְצִירָה, וְדָשׁ בְּשַׁעַת דִּישָׁה, וְזוֹרֵה בְּשַׁעַת הַרוּחַ, תּוֹרָה מִה תִּהְיֶה עֲלֶיךָ? אֵלֵא בְּזִמְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹשִׂין רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁל מְקוֹם — מִלְּאֲכָתָן נַעֲשִׂית עַל יְדֵי אַחֲרִים, שְׁנַאמֵר: "וְעַמְדוּ זָרִים וְרַעוּ צֹאנֵכֶם וְגו'", וּבְזִמְנֵי שְׂאִין יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹשִׂין רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁל מְקוֹם — מִלְּאֲכָתָן נַעֲשִׂית עַל יְדֵי עַצְמָן, שְׁנַאמֵר: "וְאַסַּפְתָּ דַּגְנְךָ". וְלֹא עוֹד אֵלֵא שְׁמִלְאֲכָתָן

אַחֲרִים נַעֲשִׂית עַל יְדֵן, שְׁנַאמֵר: "וְעַבְדְתָּ אֶת אוֹיְבְךָ וְגו'".

'The Sages taught: What [is the meaning of that which] the verse states: "And you shall gather your grain?"<sup>56</sup> Because it is stated: "This Torah shall not depart from your mouths, [and you shall contemplate in it day and night]"<sup>57</sup> I might [have thought] that these matters are [to be understood] as they are written; [one is to literally spend his days immersed exclusively in Torah study. Therefore,] the verse states: "And you shall gather your grain, [your wine and your oil,]" assume in their [regard], the way of the world; [set aside time not only for Torah, but also for work]. [This is] the statement of Rabbi Yishmael.

Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai says: Is it possible that a person plows in the plowing season and sows in the sowing season and harvests in the harvest season and threshes in the threshing season and winnows in the windy season, [as grain is separated from the chaff by means of the wind, and is constantly busy;] what will become of Torah? Rather, [one must dedicate himself exclusively to Torah at the expense of other endeavors; as] when Israel performs God's will, their work is performed by others, as it is stated: "And strangers will stand and feed your flocks, [and foreigners will be your plowmen and your vinedressers]"<sup>58</sup> When Israel does not perform God's will, their work is performed by them [themselves, as it is stated:] "And you shall gather your grain." Moreover, [if Israel fails to perform God's will,] others' work will be performed by them, as it is stated: "You shall serve your enemy [whom God shall send against you, in

<sup>54</sup> R. Moshe Chayim Luzzato, *Mesilat Yeshtarim*. Trans. Leibler, Y., Feldheim Publishers, (2004), p98.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p177.

<sup>56</sup> Deuteronomy, 11:14.

<sup>57</sup> Joshua, 1:8.

<sup>58</sup> Isaiah, 61:5.



hunger, in thirst, in nakedness and in want of all things]”.<sup>59 60</sup>

The two *tannaim* argue over the context of the *passuk* from *Keriat Shema* 'וְאַסְפֹּתָ דְגַנְךָ', 'and you shall gather your grain'. Is this describing a desirable reality, as R' Yishmael suggests, or is it a form of punishment, as stated by R' Shimon bar Yochai? According to R' Shimon bar Yochai the worldly - the engagement with the physical - is part of a forced reality which is far from optimal. Physical and spiritual need to be managed, but they do not seem to exist in a harmonious relationship. In R' Yishmael's view however, it seems that there can quite easily be *shalom* between them.

The Chatam Sofer qualifies the argument in a way that sheds new light on the whole discussion. He says R' Yishmael was only making his claim regarding *Eretz Yisrael*. The idea that וְאַסְפֹּתָ דְגַנְךָ is an ideal practice is said in *Eretz Yisrael* where the very act of harvesting grain and working the land is, in itself, a mitzvah. Physical actions themselves can be an expression of a spiritual pursuit. In a familiar lexicon we might call it *Torah vaAvodah*. In the land of Israel the physical becomes sublime. The Chatam Sofer continues:

’וכאלו תאמר לא אניח תפילין מפני שאני עוסק בתורה? הכא נמי לא יאמר לא

אאסוף דגני מפני עסק התורה . ואפשר אפילו שארי אומנויות שיש בהם ישוב העולם הכל בכלל מצווה'

'And would one say 'I will not put on Tefillin because I am engaged in learning Torah'? So too, one should not say 'I will not gather my grain because I am engaged in Torah'. And it is possible that other livelihoods which contribute towards the building of society are also included in this mitzvah.'<sup>61</sup>

In *Orot Eretz Yisrael* Rav Kook explains that *Eretz Yisrael* is not just a piece of property, it is imbued with a far deeper and intrinsic significance.<sup>62</sup> The words of the Chatam Sofer can help us appreciate that one of the special qualities of the land of Israel is that it is the place which brings about harmony in the relationship between body and soul, between physical and spiritual. *Eretz Yisrael* is the place where the physical itself is invested with holiness and where worldly pursuits and spiritual matters can become synonymous.

■ RAV JOEL KENIGSBURG has been the Rav Shaliach of Bnei Akiva UK since 5780. He is also Shaliach for Mizrahi UK and Rabbi of Magen Avot.

<sup>59</sup> Deuteronomy, 28:48.

<sup>60</sup> BT Brachot, 35b.

<sup>61</sup> Chatam Sofer, Commentary to BT Sukkah, 36a.

<sup>62</sup> Orot Eretz Yisrael, Chapter 1.

# Misseducation

**Dania Mann-Wineberg**

**Y**OU CAN be anything you want to be,  
As long as it can be done with modesty.

Think of Devorah sitting under a tree,

On second thoughts, she's an exception to the rules, sorry.

Visiting a boys' school, for '*tefillah* with meaning',

Just ignore the sexist posters they've taped to the ceiling.

Jokes about domestic abuse, during *davening* in our view,

'I think they're funny', says a girl, 'and kind of true'.

Inside outside,

Outside in.

You're not a body, you're a *neshamah*,

But it's your fault when men sin.

Dancing with a *Sefer Torah*, what beautiful dedication.

Wait, it's women doing it? What's their real motivation?

They want to learn *gemara*? This gets even more suspicious!

It's a feminist agenda, anything else is fictitious.

She started wearing trousers? Off the derech! What a shame,

How can men and women be remotely the same?

When the latter have all these uncontrollable emotions,

We can't have eidim who cry, creating such commotions.

It's men who are level-headed, their leadership we require,

But remember there's only one thing they really desire.

Which they can't control, it's simply not their fault.

They're pretty much disgusting, but this will magically halt,

The second you get married, *Harei At Mekudeshet li*.

Don't want children - what's wrong with you?

You'll change your mind, you'll see.

Unhappy marriage? We'll need one of them to free us,

But let's face it it's probably her fault for not adhering to *tznius*.

If you're *shomer negiah* you're like a shimmering pearl,

And if there's one thing worse than a drunk boy, it's a drunk girl.

Women are nurturers, you're here to make men better,

And regarding contraception, good luck getting a *heter*.

'*Mesorah*'! It's their battle cry,

Justifying oppression where *halachah* can't apply.

Clinging to Torah, we desperately try.

Are those women getting emotional again? \*sigh\*

All of these opinions, expressed over many years

By Teachers, *Rabbanim*, 'role models' and peers.

Chipping away at *neshamot* every single day.

'It's for your own good', they confidently say.

Seemingly oblivious to the damage and guilt

That a slow cascade of comments has gradually built.

*Kiruv* in reverse, so many people you've taken,

The Torah value of *Chessed* apparently forsaken.

And then out of the darkness comes a sliver of light,

Words of *chizzuk* and support, making chests feel less tight.

Being taught by women who are also Torah giants,

Realising learning doesn't have to be an act of defiance.



You can be anything you want to be,  
You can learn and do *mitzvot* with intellectual honesty.  
You can work and be ambitious, yet still be guilt-free,  
Following the Torah, promoting bodily autonomy.

Speaking in public should not come with shame,  
Your photo should be printed alongside your name.  
You can change perceptions which should be outdated,  
Without the fear of being excommunicated.

*Mesorah* is a chain, we're all an important link,  
But it's not supposed to strangle us, before we get a chance to think.  
The chance to connect to *Hashem*, not a luxury, a right.  
To be taken seriously, no-one should have to fight.

All of these opinions, expressed over many years  
By Teachers, *Rabbanim*, role models and peers.  
Building up *neshamot* every single day,  
It takes bravery to stand up and pave the way.

Jewish educators, you have a great responsibility,  
Throwaway comments can become etched in memory.  
Will you contribute for better or for worse?  
Will you choose to inspire or instead to coerce.

■ DANIA MANN-WINEBERG grew up in Manchester and learnt at Yavneh Girls' High School before spending a year at Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim (MMY). She is currently studying Medicine at the University of Manchester and was a Nivcheret Hanhallah 5780.

# Channah,<sup>63</sup> Hashgachah and Tefillah b'Et Tzarah in the Book of Samuel

**Michael Kay**

*It will help to read through Chapters 1-2 and 4-7 of I Samuel before reading this article, or to have a Tanach open while you read it!*

**T**HIS ESSAY will focus on the opening episode of the Book of Samuel: the story of Channah and her prayer, and how it relates to central themes in the *sefer*.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> [Editor's Note: While the editorial practice in *Torat HaBayit* is to anglicise Biblical names, due to the nature of this article focusing on two Biblical characters, and by the author's request, חנה has been transliterated as *Channah* and שמואל as *Shmuel*. The eponymous *Sefer of Tanach* will be referred to as the Book of *Samuel*.]

<sup>64</sup> Thanks to various friends and family who discussed ideas and drafts of this, and Kobi Be'eri for organising *Torat HaBayit* and carefully editing this piece. I also never would have understood *Sefer Shmuel* this much without my chavruta Benji Miller. Finally, as my grandmother would say, תודה לאל - על הכל.

Looking back over Samuel, Channah's story seems almost out of place. It involves no grand stories of kings or nation-wide questions of leadership. Indeed, the most obvious reason for its inclusion seems to be as a prelude to Shmuel's life. With the issue of Channah's infertility answered by her piety, it makes sense that her narrative is included to reflect on her resultant child, Shmuel. Not least because he continues to become one of Israel's most successful religious and national leaders.<sup>65</sup>

The *sefer* itself stresses the most obvious issue with this answer, namely that individual religious success is, well, individual - not inherited. The fact that there is no parental guarantee of righteousness is emphasised with its two opening leaders, Eli and Shmuel. Eli's sons are 'lawless men, they did not recognise God',<sup>66</sup> while Shmuel's 'did not follow his ways. They were swayed by bribes and they perverted justice.'<sup>67</sup> Moreover, R' Nathaniel Helfgot observes that, later in Chapter 16 David emerges out of 'relative obscurity [with] no mention of his mother, detailed description of his family [or even if they are] well connected or influential.'<sup>68</sup> He notes that such an initial absence of background information is also true of Abraham and Moses. The effect of this is that we see each is 'chosen by God to be the leader not because of family connections, nor any other extraneous factors, but solely

<sup>65</sup> Compare Judges, 20:1, where the tribes gather for a civil war in Mizpeh, to *I Samuel*, ch.7, where they are united for a national process of *teshuvah*.

<sup>66</sup> *I Samuel*, 2:12. Translations in this article are either from Scherman, N., *The Artscroll English Tanach* (1996), or the author's own. The Hebrew here seems to purposefully play with this. The 'בני עלי' take more after the similar sound of 'בני בליעל' - 'lawless men' than the father they are being linked to.

<sup>67</sup> *I Samuel* 8:3. That one good king or leader will not necessarily bear another is a key issue of the chain of leadership in *Neviim Rishonim*. It sees the challenge as new for every generation.

<sup>68</sup> Helfgot, N., *Mikra and Meaning*, (2012), p.194.

because of his personality and his deeds.<sup>69</sup> By extension, attributing Shmuel's success to his parentage would diminish his own achievements and make them unrelatable. This would tarnish one of the most precious messages of the gritty and honest portrayals of characters in Tanach: that all of us 'can become as righteous as Moses',<sup>70</sup> as Shmuel, as Channah.

If the story of Channah is not to introduce or explain that of Shmuel's, why does it open the *sefer*? I would like to suggest Channah's narrative is essential (not chronologically, but) thematically to understand one of the key themes of the *sefer*. It is important to see *Sifrei Neviim* not as records of history, but texts canonised because they express a prophetic message relevant to all generations.<sup>71</sup> In Samuel, a number of episodes involving *tefillah* in a time of distress (*tefillah b'et tzarah*) help explore how we connect to God and His involvement in the world.

### Tefilla b'Et Tzara

Maimonides provides a useful model for understanding prayer in a time of distress in his *Hilchot Taanit*. There, he describes it is a Torah mitzvah לְזַעֵק, to literally 'cry out' and sound trumpets publicly for all troubles that come upon a community. Coupled with fasting, this should spur people to realise that their troubles are a result of their sins and mistakes. But by performing introspection and *teshuvah*, they can address these issues and help the troubles to pass. However, if people see troubles as pure 'happenstance'

they will miss that they are a sign from God *leDarchei teshuvah*, 'to ways of repentance'. This will cause them to continue with the same actions and bring more ills upon themselves. He continues later to state this is equally true on an individual level.<sup>72</sup>

Each step along the way, we can see that prayer in a time of distress helps realistically remind us of two central theological beliefs. These are that God has the power to and does change things in the world,<sup>73</sup> and that our actions and behaviour can influence the extent of this. Since we are inclined to see events in the world as chance, the use of explicit acts like *shofar* blowing and fasting helps remind us of the former. This allows us to relate to troubles as signs for *teshuvah* and repentance and admit we have made mistakes. Prayer here is an ideal fulfilment of this realisation, both encouraging genuine introspection required for change and bringing us closer personally to God. Though there are numerous philosophical questions that could be raised, the idea we can influence God's actions makes *teshuvah* real and relevant in our own lives. This is especially because it provides a clear-cut way of constantly relating to God, and states and encourages moral behaviour as the only thing worth rewarding. In the reverse, not seeing God's hand is a dire kind of blindness, theologically because one does not realise a large religious truth, and practically because this will apparently lead to things worsening for you. R' Moshe Feinstein highlights how important prayer in a time of distress is when he says that even non-Jews are obligated to pray in times of distress. This is because it fulfils the Noahide law to believe in one God

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p.195.

<sup>70</sup> Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Teshuvah, 5:2.

<sup>71</sup> See 'Introduction to Neviim Rishonim' from R. Menachem Leibtag ([tanach.org/navi/navintro1.txt](http://tanach.org/navi/navintro1.txt)) for a further explanation.

<sup>72</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Taanit, 1:1-3, 9.

<sup>73</sup> A philosophical discussion of the problems of evil, free will and determinism that inevitably rise are all valid but beyond the scope of this essay. For the most part, *Samuel* seems to take a rather clear-cut 'bad behaviour, bad result' (and vice versa) approach to the matter.



and expresses the fundamental belief that 'only the Holy One Blessed Be He gives success and cures the sick'. As a consequence, 'anyone who does not pray is like one who does not believe [in God]'.<sup>74</sup>

We will be exploring *tefillah b'Et tzarah*, and how it demonstrates how one relates to God as a primary theme of Chapters 4-6 and 7 before returning to reconsider the story of Channah.

### The Incorrect Way to Connect to God

Chapters 4-6 in Samuel, as a unit, could be titled 'how not to connect with God'. There are two episodes in this Unit centred around communal distress: the Israelites' war with the Philistines and the havoc that trails the *aron* in Philistine lands. In both, the Israelites and the Philistines mistakenly view their gods in a largely physical way. The result is a limited view of God's involvement in the world. As mentioned above, this means they fail to recognise God's hand and providence in events and meaningfully respond to it, violating a central belief in Judaism. By placing these narratives together and drawing a number of parallels between them, the *sefer* condemns the Jews' behaviour for being the same as the polytheistic Philistines.

Both groups struggle to connect their troubles with their wrongdoing. The text painfully teases the Jews on the cusp of the required realisation when they ask 'Why did God smite us today before the Philistines?'.<sup>75</sup> Yet instead of turning to self-introspection and *teshuvah* for the 'idol worship' and 'bad sins', they resort to superficial action, bringing the *aron* from Shiloh. For this reason, *Malbim* compares them to 'a sick person who cannot even recognise his

pains';<sup>76</sup> they fail to see their military failure is a result of their religious and moral failure. A similar blindness is clear in the Philistines when they transfer the *aron* to two more cities after the initial punishment in Ashdod. The *aron* is almost viewed like a noisy dog in the neighbourhood, an issue easily resolved by moving it to another city. Yet this is incongruous with the reality of the objective issues of their idol worship and having the *aron* at all. The extent of this worldview is epitomised when (despite the plagues starting in Ashdod, Gath and Ekron following the arrival of the *aron*) the Philistine priests suggest the plagues could still simply be 'chance that befell us'.<sup>77</sup>

On a practical level this enables the cycle of lack of realisation and worsening troubles we outlined above to continue. The Unit is fascinating though because it delves into how such a worldview is the consequence of relating to God physically.

Perhaps the most significant parallel is the way both groups treat the *aron* not as a religious object, but as a physical representation of God himself. This is first demonstrated in chapter 4 after the Jews' initial defeat. Recognising that, had God been with them they would have won, they resolve to bring God בְּקִרְבָּנוּ, 'in our midst' and to their aid. Yet the way they do this is not through prayer or *teshuvah* as discussed above. Instead they decide: 'Let us take (נִקְחָה אֵלֵינוּ) the Ark of the Covenant of God that he may come in our midst and save us from the hand of our enemies!'. The *passuk* stresses the physical way of thinking: God will be in their midst if they simply bring the *aron*

<sup>74</sup> Feinstein, M., *Igrot Moshe*, OC 2:25.

<sup>75</sup> *I Samuel*, 8:3.

<sup>76</sup> *Malbim* on *I Samuel* 4:3.

<sup>77</sup> *I Samuel*, 6:9.

into their camp.<sup>78</sup> When we begin chapter 5, a mirror image is used to reflect this same attitude in the Philistines. Just as the Jews 'נִקְחָה', take the *aron* from the House of God in Shiloh, we are told ' וַיִּקְחוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים אֶת־אֲרוֹן ' The Philistines took (וַיִּקְחוּ) the *aron* of God and brought it to the House (Temple) of Dagon'.<sup>79</sup> This seems counterintuitive at first. Why would you bring one god into the house of another? Yet this act shows the Philistines' understanding of their gods; to the Philistines, gods are undifferentiated, they are simply bringing another one into the pantheon.

### The Consequences of a Physical World View for the Philistines

The Unit continues to spell out the limited view of God's power and accessibility in the world that results from viewing God physically. A polytheistic system that has idols for gods inherently loses the notion of omnipotence (and objectivity) central to monotheism. Indeed, as Dagon's decapitation before the *aron* of God makes clear,<sup>80</sup> idols cannot protect themselves, let alone a nation. This leads the Philistines to say the 'God of Israel[s] hand has been hard against us and against Dagon our god'.<sup>81</sup> The mentioning of 'us' and 'our god Dagon' in the same exclamation draws a clear equivalence between the helplessness of the Ashdodites and their gods. This helps explain why, despite being an issue involving their gods,

the Philistines turn twice to 'civil governors'<sup>82</sup> for resolution and only bring their 'priests and sorcerers' into the picture in chapter 7.<sup>83</sup> This, perhaps, is also why it is not unreasonable for the Philistine priests to suggest that successive plagues might be beyond the power of a god and simply 'chance'.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, saying God's help comes largely through the *aron* makes God suddenly seem distant. What worth or hope does an individual's prayer have if they are not near the *aron*?

A quote from Rav Soloveitchik helps explain why such a worldview is so incongruous to Judaism's notion of prayer. We turn to God not 'with the nonsensical power of interfering with Divine designs' but because at moments when everything is at once a blur and still, we realise and 'acknowledge [our] helplessness and poverty, [our] dependence and indebtedness to God'.<sup>85</sup> The Philistines' turning to their civil officers alone for help misses that 'A king is not saved by a great army... sham is the horse for salvation, despite its strength it provides no escape'.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, viewing God's help as coming through the *aron* denies something we say in *Ashrei* every day: "לְכֹל־קִרְאָיו לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר קָרַב ה' 'קִרְאָהוּ בְּאֵמֶת', 'The Lord is close to all who call upon Him, to all who call in truth'.<sup>87</sup>

### Chapter 7 - Getting it right

Understanding this, we can now appreciate how the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter shows a paradigm shift in the Jews' behaviour that addresses the

<sup>78</sup> *Malbim* on *I Samuel* 4:3 expands this to note they are at fault for thinking the *aron* has some strength and power of its own, rather than being simply a means to God's support.

<sup>79</sup> *I Samuel*, 5:3.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 5:4.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 5:7.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 5:8, 11. The term 'סְרִנִי' is more commonly translated as 'lords'.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 7:2. That they turn so late to their religious leaders also seems to indicate how little they view things through a religious lens.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 6:9.

<sup>85</sup> Soloveitchik, J.B., *Halakhic Morality*, (2017), p.78.

<sup>86</sup> *Psalms*, 33:16-17.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 145:18.

mistakes of chapters 4-6. This is essential because it provides a positive model that we can aspire to and learn from nationally when we also encounter communal distress. In the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter, the nation's distress comes again in the form of the Philistines' military power. Yet this time, instead of failing their religious requirements, the people fulfill all of them. They acknowledge their mistake, declaring 'we have sinned to God!'.<sup>88</sup> They banish the idea of idols and polytheism by removing the 'Baalim and the Ashtaroth and serv[ing] God alone'.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, they fast and submit themselves to Shmuel's judgement.<sup>90</sup> *Rashi* furthers the idea of entire societal repentance by writing that Shmuel judged 'between each man and his fellow on monetary matters or on sins they have done'.<sup>91</sup> It is said full *teshuvah* is when one behaves correctly in a situation where they once failed. This time when the Philistine troops are marching forwards, the Jews ask Shmuel to 'cry out on our behalf to God, our God, that He save us from the hand of the Philistines'.<sup>92</sup> This request fulfils their obligation of turning to God in a time of distress and proves their belief in God's power and involvement in the world.

The whole account of the fighting in chapter 7 is important in also encouraging us to see God's hand behind positive events. A historical observer watching the battle and years of national security that follow it might understandably have thought it was the result of particularly good fighting. This is why books of *Neviim* are so important. We are told that the Philistines were 'וַיִּהְיוּ וַיִּנְגַּפוּ', 'confounded and defeated',<sup>93</sup> not

because of mighty fighters, but because 'וַיִּרְעַם ה' בְּקוֹל־גְּדוֹל', 'God thundered against them'.<sup>94</sup> This is made all the more Divine since this defeat is described even before we read that 'the men of Israel went out from Mizpa [to fight]'.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the reason why the Philistines were 'humbled and no longer continued to enter the borders of Israel' (allowing an unprecedented stretch of national safety) is not because of particularly good border control but because 'the hand of God was against the Philistines'.<sup>96</sup> It is worth noting though that the *pessukim* mentioned above would not have just sprung into the minds of the people living these events. Rather, Shmuel actively communicates<sup>97</sup> this message to the people by building the monument of אֶבֶן הָעֵזֶר 'The Stone of Help' by the battlefield following the victory.<sup>98</sup> His dedication of the monument then is still true today. For all our communities' and nation's successes we should remember "עַד־הַנֶּה עֲזָרְנוּ ה'", 'God helped us until here'.<sup>99</sup>

### The Story of Channah

Having considered chapters 4-7, it will now be far easier to see the significance of Channah's narrative and the example it sets. Indeed, her profound awareness of God's involvement in the world and her turning to God through heartfelt prayer at the moment of distress set a gold standard to bear in mind throughout the rest of the *sefer*.

<sup>88</sup> *I Samuel*, 7:5.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 7:4.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 7:6.

<sup>91</sup> *Rashi* on *I Samuel*, 7:6.

<sup>92</sup> *I Samuel*, 7:8.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 7:10.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 7:11.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 7:13.

<sup>97</sup> Shmuel's efforts show such recognition as a key responsibility of religious leadership and the core lesson of this episode.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 7:12.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*.



## Channah and Prayer

The first thing we can learn from Channah's narrative is what prayer can and should be like. In the previous episodes, prayer was physical, superficial, or born out of fear during a national emergency. Channah's is deeply personal and sincere. In a manner we all recognise ourselves (and unlike most of our formalised davening today), Channah asks to be seen individually by God: 'if you will surely see the suffering of your maidservant'.<sup>100</sup> Her use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person ('if you') also makes clear she sees her prayer as a living address with a very real listener. That she does not feel the need for 'her voice to be heard',<sup>101</sup> moving only her lips, shows an intense concentration: her conversation with God seems almost more real than her actual surroundings.

Though simply moving the *aron* or an idol is impersonal, *tefillah* cannot be. We are told in *Masechet Taanit* that *tefillah* is an עבודת לב, roughly translated as a 'service performed in the heart'.<sup>102</sup> It requires genuine effort and *avoda* (we are familiar with its other translation) 'work' to plumb and draw out what is truly in the 'heart'. The beauty of this challenge is that it provides a mode of communicating with God that is much more real and much more affecting. Accordingly, Channah's use of 'poured out' in 'I have poured out my soul before God' carries implications of personal exposure and vulnerability, but also deep catharsis.<sup>103</sup>

What is important is not only how Channah prays, but also when she prays. This is most remarkable when she prays from a pit of

despair where it would be easy for one to think that God has forsaken them. Not only has she remained infertile for years, but she is also 'taunted'<sup>104</sup> by her co-wife Peninah. The depth and length of her emotional pain and distress is clear in how 'year after year' it affects her to the extent she 'would cry and not eat'.<sup>105</sup> A great sense of isolation is also apparent when her husband Elkanah's loving plea, 'Am I not better to you than ten children?'<sup>106</sup> is met with only silence. Yet at the centre of all this, Channah decides to do the equivalent of going alone to shul or the *Kotel*, she ascends to the Tabernacle in Shiloh to pray. On the flipside, it is also easy to forget God when things are going so well, we have nothing large to pray for. Unlike the previous episodes, Channah's prayer is not limited to necessity. Instead, Channah once again exemplifies piety when, finally able to bring Shmuel to the *Mikdash* in Shiloh, she launches into a ten-line prayer simply because of her joy and gratitude.<sup>107</sup>

Channah demonstrates how true an expression of ourselves prayer can and should be, at our brightest joys and at our sharpest sorrows.

## Channah, Divine Providence and *Teshuvah*

The second key message of Channah's narrative is the overwhelming need to see God's presence and involvement in our individual lives. Like in chapter 7, we are prompted to see Channah's infertility is not the result of biology but because 'God had closed her womb'.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, her conceptions are not chance but because 'God

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 1:11.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 1:13.

<sup>102</sup> *BT Taanit*, 2a.

<sup>103</sup> *I Samuel*, 1:15.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 1:7.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 1:8.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 2:1-10.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 1:6. Especially given the other episodes discussed, a sin explaining Channah's suffering or need for *teshuvah* is noticeably absent. I would like to tentatively suggest this absence may express that sometimes we really do not know why righteous people suffer.

remembered her.<sup>109</sup> Such a view of the world is blatantly lost to the Philistines who think it is possible their sequence of plagues is 'chance.'<sup>110</sup> Similarly, if the Israelites in Chapter 7 automatically saw God's hand, then it would not be necessary for Shmuel to make monuments like *Even HaEzer*. Yet this is a given for Channah. Indeed, the direct causality of her statement to Eli 'This is the child that I prayed for, and God granted me my request'<sup>111</sup> shows a worldview where God's involvement seems obvious. What is striking is that what Channah sees and wants us to see is that this is true for everything, not just her one answered prayer. So, she declares 'God brings life and gives death, He lowers to the ground and raises up'. It is God who decides life, prosperity, strength, fertility<sup>112</sup> - everything: big and small, good and bad. The use of present tense verbs throughout Channah's prayer in the second chapter - 'God *impoverishes* and *makes rich*'<sup>113</sup> also tells us to see this as a continuous process occurring all around us, all the time.

How Channah names her son also shows seeing God's providence is not an end in itself.<sup>114</sup> If it were, we might expect the main message behind her son's name to be "For God answered me" or "heard me" or "gave to me". Surprisingly, it is Channah who is the subject, the main actor, of her son's name: 'For *I requested* him from God'.<sup>115</sup> This focus is repeated in the seemingly superfluous sentence ending 'God granted me my request *that I asked of him*'.<sup>116</sup> Channah stresses here not God's omnipotence, but the individual's act of turning to God. Quite

movingly, this makes Shmuel the physical embodiment of asking from God and being answered. However, as we know, our prayers are not always answered. Indeed, this is even implicit in Channah's conditional opening to her first prayer 'If...you will give your maidservant offspring.'<sup>117</sup> We see then that the act of asking, having a living relationship with God, is what makes seeing God's providence meaningful.

There are a number of lessons we can take away from this.

In the Book of Samuel, Divine providence does not mean we are helplessly doomed to a Divine determinism. Rather, true prayer in a time of distress involves acknowledging God's centrality in existence as a fundamental and ever continuous process of *Teshuvah*: introspection and rededication to God. This helps us become better, more ethical people and in turn influences God's actions. This perhaps explains why Channah is successful this time that she prays. Asking for a son so that he may be given to serve 'God all the days of his life' ultimately sanctifies her deepest wish as a way of serving God.<sup>118</sup>

Channah exemplifies a world view that is almost electric and alive with holiness. It is no surprise then that her unprompted total recognition of God and sincere individual prayer so starkly contrast the episodes we examined at the start. Channah's piety is extraordinary. But what is equally extraordinary is our own ability to connect and **שוב**, 'return' to God with as much joy, emotion, and sincerity as she does. It is of

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 1:19. As with the Israelite's military success in Chapter 7, this remembering occurs even before we are told Channah 'conceived' in the following verse.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 6:9.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 1:27.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 2:1-10.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 2:7.

<sup>114</sup> As a contextual point, characters in Tanach frequently give names that reflect a larger message they want to communicate, not least because it sticks with their child for the rest of their life!

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 1:20.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 1:27.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 1:11.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

course not easy to pour out one's soul, let alone before others. But Channah serves to show how we can and should all pray. Part of the reason I wrote this piece is because the image of Channah, standing in total *kavanah* (concentration), keeps entering my mind as I stand to *daven* these days. Despite all the difficulties of current circumstances, it is a unique chance we have, to stand in the silence of a room that moment before stepping back for the Amidah and realise that we are truly alone with God. We similarly have a rare slowing of the usual rush of life, maybe just enough to reflect on things more than usual.

The final and largest question I would like to pause over is that of *hashgachah* - Divine providence. One might say that the overly clear-cut nature of Divine providence in the Book of Samuel is too perfect; bad behaviour always seems to be punished, and good behaviour rewarded. If in our world this is often not the case, does this make the *sefer's* reality unrelatable to our experiences and impossible to learn from? I would like to tentatively suggest two answers to this significant problem. The first is that Channah's narrative implicitly acknowledges the problem of evil. Unlike all the other episodes, a sin explaining Channah's suffering or need for *teshuvah* is noticeably absent. Maybe this is to express that sometimes we really do not know why righteous people suffer. The second answer is that maybe Samuel was written precisely because it is easy to see many events in life as 'chance that befell us.'<sup>119</sup> Consider this: at the time that the *Sefer* was first written and read, did good people never find their harvest spoiled, or unethical people never find themselves with great health and wealth? Perhaps the prophetic message to be taken away is not that reality then was

magically different, but that we sometimes should look to see Hashem's hand despite the murkiness and uncertainty of life.

Finally, I would like to suggest that, like our *tefillah*, our experience of Tanach too should be an *עבודת שְׁהִיא בְּלֵב*, a 'service performed in the heart'. I hope this essay has demonstrated a lesson one of my teachers this year has often repeated: the true meaning and message of Tanach is discovered not through reading, but through studying the text. Only through the *avodah* 'work' of carefully reading passages, pausing over seemingly strange or superfluous words, will the colourful and rich world of meaning become clear. As importantly though, this work should be *בְּלֵב*, 'in the heart'. I do not think anyone reading the *pessukim* about Channah's prayer should be surprised that the raw emotion resonates obviously across the millennia. Times may change but being human does not.

I think there is also great value in the Book of Samuel opening with a regular person grappling with life and God. It shows that, despite on the surface discussing leaders and nations, what we are ultimately concerned about is the religious questions and human experience we all have in our daily lives. Tanach is like the shifting surface of the sea: it is alive and calls to us in all the nuances and complexities of life and our relationship with God. To all our fears, sorrows, questions and joys. But this is only if we let it, only if we realise there is something profound and true to be felt and learnt as we read it.

*Some suggested questions for further study:*

1) *In what ways are our actions today similar to that of the Philistines? How are they not? Is*

<sup>119</sup> I Samuel, 6:9.

*this a bad thing? [What would the author of Samuel have said? How would you reply?]*

*2) In what ways have our actions in the face of plague today similar to that of the Philistines? How are they not? Is this a bad thing? [What would the author of Samuel have said? How would you reply?]*

*3) Do you think you could daven like Channah the next time you said the Amidah? Why? Why not?*

*4) How would the message of Channah's story be different if she had not conceived? Would it still be worth including in Tanakh? Why? Why not?*

■ MICHAEL KAY grew up in South Hampstead and attended City of London School for Boys. He has been a Rosh Sviva and was recently a madrich on Machane Ari 5780. He is currently studying in Shana Bet at Yeshivat Har Etzion.

# Yom Haatzmaut Address 5780

**Rafi Cohen**

*This article is a lightly edited version of the Mazkir's speech at Bnei Akiva's Yom Haatzmaut celebration this year. We thank Rafi for letting us include it here.*

**C**HIEF RABBI Mirvis, Your Excellency Ambassador Regev, honoured friends, and Chaverim of Bnei Akiva.

I never imagined that a Mazkir of Bnei Akiva would have to say, 'no you can't come to celebrate Yom Haatzmaut with us', so instead I say, 'we are coming to celebrate Yom Haatzmaut with you!' Thank you for joining us.

In these difficult times we hope you will still be able to mark Yom Haatzmaut as a special and important day. Dress in blue and white! Sing an impassioned Hallel tomorrow morning as we just did this evening! Wave an Israeli flag out your window! Even from our isolation, let us step out of reality and imagine that we are together with our brothers and sisters marking this day all over Israel.

We live in a world where it is not easy being a young ideological Jew. Time and again society has reconfigured itself to attack the

different forms of Jewish identity – as a nation we were exiled, as a faith we were persecuted, as a people we were murdered, and as a moral light in a sea of tyranny we are condemned. But in the last century, Bnei Akiva has shown us that there is nothing more important in this world than being a young ideological Jew. This is because wrapped up in Bnei Akiva's ideology of Torah vaAvodah there is one vital, inescapable characteristic – **Achrayut**, the importance of taking responsibility.

Judaism is not a religion of rights. Our faith does not let us sit back, expecting everything to be given to us on a silver platter. From Tzedakah to education, even Brit Milah, our laws and customs are not based on what any individual has the right to, but rather on what every individual has **Achrayut** for, what we have responsibility for.

It is a fallacy to believe that responsibility comes only with power and position. In fact, Tanach contrasts two people, both described as an 'אִישׁ', with wholly opposing levels of power, each of whom takes responsibility in their own way. One is well known. Mordechai is described as an 'אִישׁ יְהוּדִי', 'a Jewish man'.<sup>120</sup> Mordechai saw his **Achrayut** clearly, persuading Esther to seek an audience with the king, thereby saving the Jewish people from destruction.

The other *Ish* was arguably even more vital. Mordechai may have saved the Jewish people, but without this *Ish* there would have been no Jewish people in the first place. And his contrast to Mordechai is so different that we never even learn his name.

The three defining elements of the Jewish People, namely nationhood, the Torah and

<sup>120</sup> *Esther*, 2:5.



the land of Israel, all followed after the Exodus from Egypt. But why were the Bnei Yisrael in Egypt at all? Yaakov and his family only went down to Egypt because they had food during the famine. Egypt had food only because Yosef interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and stockpiled during the years of plenty. And Yosef was in Egypt only because on one fateful day his brothers sold him into slavery. But what if Yosef had never met his brothers that day? Pharaoh's dreams would not have been interpreted, Egypt would not have stockpiled, Yaakov and his family would likely have starved in Canaan. No slavery, no Exodus, no nation, no Torah, no Land. It all hinges on Yosef meeting his brothers, and it very nearly did not happen.

That day Yaakov gave Yosef a mission to find his brothers

'וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ מֵעֵמֶק חֶבְרוֹן וַיָּבֵא שָׁכְמָה'

'He sent Yosef from Emek Chevron and he arrived in Shechem.'<sup>121</sup>

'וַיִּמְצְאוּהוּ אִישׁ וְהָנָה תְּעָה בַּשָּׂדֶה'

'And an *Ish*, a nameless individual, found Yosef lost in the fields.'<sup>122</sup>

Yosef wasn't going to make it; he was going to miss his date with destiny!

'וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ לְאָמֹר מִה־תִּבְקֶשׁ'

'The *Ish* asked Yosef, 'what are you looking for?''<sup>123</sup>

Yosef explained that he couldn't find his brothers. The man, who knew where they were, sent Yosef in the right direction. And Jewish history played out as we know it had to, resulting ultimately in *Am Yisrael, beEretz Yisrael, al pi Torat Yisrael*. This stranger, taking **Achrayut** for a lost boy, ensured the birth of the Jewish People.

The fact that those in positions of power and influence within a community need to take responsibility, as Mordechai did, is obvious. But *Pirkei Avot* reinforces the requirement for even the nameless 'אִישׁ' to fulfil their **Achrayut**. 'הַשְּׂתַדְלַל לְהִיּוֹת בְּמָקוֹם שְׂאִין אָנְשִׁים, 'אִישׁ', 'In a place where no one is an *Ish* strive to be an *Ish*.'<sup>124</sup> In a place where no one puts in the work behind the scenes, in a time where no one steps back to see the bigger picture, be prepared, and strive to be that person who takes responsibility.

**Achrayut** has been the driving call of Bnei Akiva throughout the decades. Time and again, Bnei Akiva has lived up to these responsibilities. In 1929, when Yechiel Eliash ז"ל reestablished Bnei Akiva in Israel, in the face of opposition from the adult bodies of Religious Zionism, he wasn't waiting for the realisation of 'the right for the youth to take part', he took responsibility – **Achrayut**. Arie H Handler ז"ל, founder of Bachad and the transformative figure in the early years of Bnei Akiva UK, didn't wait for anyone to cry out that the rights of young Jews in Nazi Germany were not being upheld, he took responsibility – **Achrayut**, saving many, bringing them to the UK and establishing the pioneering agricultural ventures of Bnei Akiva.

In 1946, when the British threatened to stop Jews establishing new communities in our homeland it was the youth of Bnei Akiva, many no more than 15 years old, who took responsibility – **Achrayut**, to rebuild Biryah and other villages.

In 1948 Esther Cailingold ז"ל, a young Bnei Akiva Madricha from London, could not leave it to others to fight for independence. To her it was her responsibility – her **Achrayut**, to fight for the Jewish presence in the Old City

<sup>121</sup> Genesis, 37:14. Author's own translation.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 37:15.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> *Mishnah Avot*, 2:5.

of Jerusalem, and she fell heroically defending it.

Yehuda Avner ל"ר, having already helped establish Kibbutz Lavi, took responsibility – **Achrayut**, to return to the UK to serve Bnei Akiva for two years as Mazkir. He never stopped living with responsibility towards Israel and diaspora Jewry, serving under five prime ministers of Israel, then as Israeli Ambassador to the UK and Australia.

In the 1970s the youth of Bnei Akiva collectively took responsibility – **Achrayut**, for the Refuseniks trapped behind the Iron Curtain. They protested and smuggled them supplies until they were able to make Aliyah.

Marc Weinberg ל"ר, Mazkir in 1999, didn't wait for others to build Religious Zionist communities for him to move into, he saw it as his responsibility, his **Achrayut**, to build new communities, both here and in Israel.

Yoni Jesner ל"ר, a young Bnei Akiva Madrich, never once thought of abandoning the young Jews in his native Glasgow. Even when he went to spend time studying in Israel, he saw it as his responsibility – his **Achrayut** to invest time and effort in his community, producing an entire curriculum before he left, ensuring that someone was always there to educate them.

And today? True to this tradition, Chaverim of Bnei Akiva do not wait for anyone else to tell us what we have a right to – we know what our **Achrayut** is. So, to the Chaverim of Bnei Akiva I call on you to continue taking **Achrayut**. Whether you are Madrichim at Sviva, whether you are on the technical Tzevet on Machane, whether you are a Boger, whether you are on the Mazkirut. Whatever your Tafkid, continue with your **Achrayut** to live an ideological life, to educate others, to

lead our Religious Zionist community, to build up the State of Israel.

To all those taking this responsibility right now, to all our incredible *chayalim* serving in the IDF; to our Madrichim, Sganim and Roshim throughout the country who spend so much time each week educating their peers and the children of their communities; to all my Madrichim who have instilled in me my strong ideology, and to all my Chanichim who will take up this mantle, to all of you wherever you are, thank you.

In recent months, faced with the closure of Svivot, Hachsharah and Israel Machane, Chaverim of Bnei Akiva came together in the spirit of **Achrayut** to create a new type of camp, an online Machane. For over 30 days, Machane Aviv has provided over 200 Chaverim of Bnei Akiva with a daily schedule, regular *tefillah*, over 50 hours of Torah study, peer-led learning opportunities, supper quizzes, escape rooms and classic Bnei Akiva games remastered for Zoom. There was *Ruach*, singing and *Mifkad*. A social environment for young Religious Zionists to come together, learn, debate, and have fun.

It is moments like this, seeing Chaverim taking responsibility, becoming the **איש** which make me proud to be a BAnik.

And if you feel hesitant, distant or 'not involved enough', if you feel that it's not your place to take responsibility, I invite you to join us and do so. In Lecha Dodi, we say the words: **הַתְּנַעֲרִי מֵעָפָר קוֹמִי**, 'rouse yourselves, shake off the dust of complacency'.<sup>125</sup> **הַתְּנַעֲרִי** shares its root with the word **נָעַר** – a youth. **הַתְּנַעֲרִי** – become youthful once again, become a BAnik, an **איש** and join us in our mission of Torah, *Avodah* and Aliyah.

**הַתְּנַעֲרִי** – be a BAnik, let us show our children what it means to proudly live a **Torah**

<sup>125</sup> Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz

lifestyle, in homes built on **Torah** values. התְּנַעֲרִי – be an אִישׁ and show our chanichim true **Avodah**, what it means to volunteer, to contribute, to think about others first. התְּנַעֲרִי – let us take responsibility for our homeland, to educate, to contribute, to build and to protect Israel, and above all to make **Aliyah**. None of these things are rights which we can demand. They are all responsibilities for us to fulfil.

I call on the whole community to answer the prophetic cry, קוּמוּ וְנַעֲלֶה צִיּוֹן, 'Rise and let us go up to Zion.'<sup>126</sup> As we say in the Bnei Akiva anthem Yad Achim, בְּלֵב אַמִּיץ וּבְעֶזְרַת ה', עָלֵה, נַעֲלֶה,<sup>127</sup> with a brave heart and the help of God, I know that we, and along with us the entire Jewish community and the State of Israel, will surely rise. All we have to do is follow in those well-trodden steps of those BANiks who came before us. All we have to do is try to be the *Ish* and take responsibility – **Achrayut**.

■ RAFI COHEN began his Bnei Akiva journey aged six at Mill Hill Sviva, where he eventually rose through the ranks to become the Rosh. He has attended every Machane possible as both a chanich and as a tzevet member and has been an Israel Machane madrich. After spending a year on Torani learning in Yeshivat Hakotel, he studied Mechanical Engineering at UCL and was elected Rosh

Nivchar in 5777. Rafi completed his second year on the Mazkirut in 5780, having held the positions of Svivot and Hadracha Director and Mazkir, and is training as a Jewish Studies and Science teacher at JFS.

<sup>126</sup> *Jeremiah*, 31:6.

<sup>127</sup> Bnei Akiva Anthem, Rabbi Moshe Zvi Neriah





**BNEI  
AKIVA**  
UNITED KINGDOM



BNEI AKIVA UK, 2 HALLSWELLE ROAD, NW11 0DJ  
0208 209 1319, WWW.BAUK.ORG, INFO@BAUK.ORG