

Coming Up...

Full details of all our events are available on our Facebook page, or call the Bayit on 0208 209 1319 to speak to one of the team.

- Applications for key roles in svivot for 5776 are open online! To be part of the lifeblood of Bnei Akiva across the country, visit www.bauk.org
- Shabbat UK is on 23rd-24th October... Take the opportunity to be part of this amazing event, support communities and represent Bnei Akiva! To find out more or get involved, speak to Rav Ari, or email rav@bauk.org

FROM AKKO TO EIN GEDI TO TEL AVIV... ISRAEL MACHANE 5775!



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Shabbat Nachamu



Shabbat Lashem 'שבת לה

ואתחנן Va'etchanan

What Can We Justify?

Ben Davis

This weeks parasha opens with a brief but dramatic scene between God and Moshe. I suppose we have usually understood this scene as one of teshuva. By this I mean that perhaps instinctively, we view Moshe's prayer as one of forgiveness. Through teshuva, Moshe aims to have his punishment revoked thereby enabling him to enter Eretz Yisrael.

However, Professor Yishayahu Leibowitz does not understand this encounter in the above way. Instead, he views it as an argument. Leibowitz holds that Moshe is not after forgiveness or atonement. Rather, Moshe is out to rescind a punishment that he believed was never legitimate in the first place. Leibowitz cites a magnificent Midrash which also portrays Moshe's supplication as a confrontation: (Please excuse the *poor* 'artistic license' I have taken for the script.)

Moshe is pleading with God to have his life lengthened so that he may enter the Land of Israel.

God: You [Moshe] want life?! Did I tell you to kill that Egyptian?! (God recalls the episode in which Moshe kills an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite.) What grounds do you have for asking Me for more life when you, through your own will, have taken the life of another?!

Moshe: You're punishing me for that?! Yes God, I have taken the life of another without your instruction, but this man was beating an Israelite. In other words, God, I have justification for my actions. But You - You slaughtered *all* of the first born of Egypt, many of whom had not sinned at all. You destroyed many, yet I am to die for one?

God: *Ata domeh li?! Are you comparable to me?! I am the One who makes life and who takes it. Can you create life?! So how can you be entitled to take it?*

Leibowitz often presses us to ask ourselves crucial moral questions. In this instance he forces us to consider the following: even if we are confident that we really are morally justified in taking the life of another, may we do so? Perhaps having moral justification to end life (if it at all possible to arrive at such a thing) is never sufficient to be able to permit us to do such an act. For, by what right may we appropriate the power of taking life for ourselves? It is a power that belongs exclusively to God.

Ben Davis is in Shevet Hagevurah and is the Sgan of Bet Chalutzim Machane 5775

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Editor's Corner

Shalom!

Shabbat shalom to everyone in Wales and Holland on Summer Machane! We are having an amazing time, with trips and incredible tochniot and are learning loads!

Our Kaytana Madrichim are heading to Israel, to volunteer in an absorption centre in Bnei Brak, as well as having fun and educational experiences!

Shabbat shalom to our five Israel Machane groups who have been learning all about Am Yisrael, b'Eretz Yisrael, v'al pi Torat Yisrael!

Shabbat Shalom!

THIS WEEK'S SHABBAT TIMES

	🕒	🌅
London	20:36	21:45
Manchester	20:52	22:08
Birmingham	20:43	20:05
Cambridge	20:34	21:55
Leeds	19:35	22:04
Liverpool	20:52	22:15
Caerwys	20:52	21:15
Arcen	21:07	22:26
Jerusalem	19:01	20:16

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Insight and Inspiration on the Parasha

Rav Ari Faust, Rabbinical Shaliach

The Shema: Breaking it Down

Here at Bnei Akiva we have brought the issue of Tefilla to the forefront of our educational goals. I personally believe that it is not enough to be taught to know how to *daven*, it is crucial to be given the opportunity and encouraged to love Tefilla as well. This is true, in my opinion, about the performance of all מצוות, but considering how much of our time Tefilla takes up each day, it is important that it is not just be a repetitive exercise, but also a meaningful one. Our *parasha* features one of the central parts of our Tefilla, the Shema. The Shema is comprised of three sections (see Talmud Berachot 13a):

Section One:

This section, found in our *parasha*, is “שמע” and “ואהבה”. This section describes how Hashem is “One” –the “One and Only”; He is the ultimate timeless reality within whom we all exist and who brings us all into being. There are philosophers who have believed that reality is cruel, cold and impersonal and we should spend our lives just trying to fend for ourselves. Judaism has a much more hopeful and optimistic view on reality and believes that our reality is one of caring, giving, love and empathy. We are here in order to do good – to give. By doing good we are aligning ourselves with the themes of reality and thus connecting to Hashem. Hashem empowers us to set aside our ego and realize that we are unique individuals created with a specific purpose, and with something special to give to reality. This belief about reality is the basis to truly love Hashem, all of creation and ourselves “with all of our heart, and with all of soul and all our wellbeing” (Devarim 6:5). We need to contemplate these ideas in order to really internalize and live them, by studying Torah and by reciting The Shema every morning and night (v. 7), and by wearing תפילין on our arm and head (v. 8) and posting מזוזות at our doorposts (v. 9) to serve as constant reminders of the amorous relationship between us and Hashem.

Section Two:

Here we read, “יהיה אם שמוע” (Devarim 11:13-21). After affirming that we all play a central role in reality through doing good, in this section we internalize that our actions count for something. There is significance to our decisions and thus there are ramifications. We could say that the decisions of a regular person do not have such a large sphere of influence, their mistakes do not affect so badly. On the other hand, the actions and decisions of someone in a position of great power and responsibility bear far greater consequences. Judaism believes that every person is great and is in a position of power and responsibility, and thus our decisions and actions count. When we make the right decision we advance the world, and create harmony – “I will give the rain of your land in its season, the first rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your corn, and your wine, and your oil. And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied” (v.14-15) – but when we make the wrong decision we interrupt this harmony. Judaism believes that the world is eternally getting better and that process incremental process of improvement is occurring through our positive decisions.

Section Three:

This section discusses the portion of ציצית (Bamidbar 15:37-41). This is read as part of The Shema because the ציצית remind us of all the מצוות and because of the remembrance of מצרים מצרים – the Exodus from Egypt – that we recite every morning and night (Berachot 12b). Thematically, יציאת מצרים follows the development of the other sections of the Shema. יציאת מצרים was not merely a historical occurrence, and not only significant by virtue of it being the birth of our nation. יציאת מצרים is a foundation of our faith, and a basis for Jewish practice. The concept of personal dignity and liberty is the cornerstone of our lifestyle. Slavery is not only physical, but it is psychological and spiritual as well. Judaism doesn't only believe in the uniqueness of every person and their greatness, it also believes in our ability to achieve that greatness. Regardless of background, knowledge or past experiences, there is nothing which inhibits a person from making the right decision – there is nothing that prevents someone from making the here and now better than it is.

The Shema is a declaration of our belief in Hashem - His Oneness, and our love towards Him. But it is also a declaration of Hashem's belief in us, and how much He loves us. The great Chasidic Master, Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen MiLublin has said that “when a person believes in Hashem, he must immediately believe in himself”. It is thus appropriate that The Shema continues to be the anthem of Jewish faith.



Yavneh

Hannah Sherrard

Hannah Sherrard is in Shevet Eitan and is Sganit of Mill Hill Bnei Akiva