

# SHABBAT THE VOICE OF LASHEM BNEI AKIVA UK THE MOST WIDELY DISTRIBUTED YOUTH TORAH PERIODICAL IN THE UK



Eli Gaventa | Chinuch Worker 5778

*You shall not curse the deaf man and before the blind do not place a stumbling-block. And you shall fear your G-d, [who knows your intentions]; I am the L-rd. (Vayikra 19:14)*

The following are four possible interpretations of the middle part of this verse regarding not placing a stumbling-block before a blind person.

1. "Blind" refers to an individual who cannot see, and "stumbling block" denotes a physical object, such as a stone or beam, that physically endangers the unsuspecting blind person as he walks. This is the interpretation of the Kuttim, who rejected the Oral Law's extrapolation of Biblical verses. (See Nida 57a, Chulin 3a.) The prohibition according to this approach involves taking unfair advantage of the handicap of another. The earlier prohibition against cursing the deaf would presumably be explained in a similar manner.
2. "Blind" here means anyone, even without any handicap, who does not see the stumbling block placed before him. With respect to this specific danger, he may be considered figuratively "blind." "Stumbling block" refers to a physical trap lying innocuously in one's path, such as a pit with an indiscernible covering. This approach maintains virtually the same interpretation of the term "stumbling block," and only minimally expands the definition of the word "blind," to include a person with operative vision but who cannot see the stumbling block before him. The prohibition thus comes to forbid taking unfair advantage of not only the handicapped, but anyone in a situation

where they cannot detect a given threat to their well-being.

This appears to be the approach of Targum Onkelos, who translates "deaf" and "blind" in our verse as "one who does not hear" and "one who does not see," while elsewhere he invokes the Aramaic terms for "deaf" and "blind" in his translation of these words (see Shemot 4:11; Vayikra 21:18; Devarim 15:21, 27:18 and 28:29).

3. "Blind" here refers to one lacking certain information or a proper understanding regarding a given situation, and "stumbling block" means misleading counsel given to that individual. This approach interprets both "blind" and "stumbling block" figuratively, as referring to intellectual "blindness" and a mistake resulting in some form of loss in one area or another. This is the approach taken by the Sifra in its comments on our verse. The Sifra provides three examples of such a "stumbling block": telling a kohen that a prospective spouse is permissible for him, when in fact she is forbidden to him (such as a divorcee, etc.); advising one to leave on his trip at a time when he is exposed to certain dangers, such as thieves early in the morning and sunstroke in midday; advising one to sell his field and purchase a donkey instead, only to be able to personally purchase the field. (Rashi interprets the verse likewise, citing as an example the third instance mentioned in the Sifra.) The Rambam (Lo Ta'aseh 299, Hilkhot Rotzei'ach 12:14) and Chinukh (232) adopt this view, as well.

4. The most surprising interpretation of ...continued on page 3.

# For the Land is Mine



Rav Aharon Herskovitz | Rav Shaliach

At the end of this week's parsha, the Torah concludes the discussion of forbidden relations with the following passage (VaYikra 18:24-30):

Do not defile yourselves in any of those ways, for it is by such that the nations that I am casting out before you defiled themselves. Thus the land became defiled; and I called it to account for its iniquity, and the land spewed out its inhabitants. But you must keep My laws and My rules, and you must not do any of those abhorrent things, neither the citizen nor the stranger who resides among you; for all those abhorrent things were done by the people who were in the land before you, and the land became defiled. So let not the land spew you out for defiling it, as it spewed out the nation that came before you. All who do any of those abhorrent things—such persons shall be cut off from their people. You shall keep My charge not to engage in any of the abhorrent practices that were carried on before you, and you shall not defile yourselves through them: I the LORD am your God.

Hashem here stresses the טומאה (impurity) that is caused by our actions, and repeats that such actions not only affect the land itself ("the land became defiled"), but that they cause us to be forcibly ejected from the land. What is the connection between our actions and the land? The mitzvot under discussion in the passage are not land-bound mitzvot (such as separating gifts for the Kohanim and Levi'im, or letting the land rest every seven years): why then is there such a stress based on the effects on the land?

The Ramban (18:25), in one of his well-known passages, explains that Hashem placed ministering angels "in charge", as it were, of the various lands of the world. In other words, that the interaction between Hashem and the inhabitants of different lands would not be direct. The Land of Israel, however, is

different. It is, in the words of the Ramban, the "portion of Hashem, unique to His Name", and for that reason He did not establish any intermediaries in His ruling of the land, but rather deals with it directly.

For this reason, the nation that lives in the land of Israel need be held to a higher standard: the mitzvot that we are given are intended not just to improve ourselves but also to allow us to come closer to Hashem, an intimacy that is necessary if we are to live in a land that is most directly His.

The Gemara in Ketubot (110b) states: "The Sages taught: A person should always reside in Eretz Yisrael, even in a city that is mostly populated by non-Jews, and he should not reside outside of Eretz Yisrael, even in a city

that is mostly populated by Jews. The reason is that anyone who resides in Eretz Yisrael is considered as one who has a God, and anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered as one who does not have a God. As it is stated: "To give to you the land of Canaan, to be your God"

**"The nation that lives in the land of Israel need be held to a higher standard: the mitzvot that we are given are intended not just to improve ourselves but also to allow us to come closer to Hashem, an intimacy that is necessary if we are to live in a land that is most directly His".**

(Leviticus 25:38)."

The Gemara expresses surprise at this far-reaching statement. Can it be that someone who lives out of the land of Israel is considered as if they have no God?! The response that the Gemara gives does not seem to allay the concerns we might have: "Rather, this comes to tell you that anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered as though he is engaged in idol worship. And so it says with regard to David: "For they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave to the inheritance of the Lord, saying: Go, serve other gods" (I Samuel 26:19). But who said to David: Go, serve other gods? Rather, this comes to tell you that anyone who resides outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered as though he is engaged in idol worship."

The point that the Ramban and the Gemara are trying to relay is that being present in the land

of Israel affords the ability to develop and engage in a unique connection with Hashem, one which is not accessible outside of it. This unique possibility comes, of course, with great

responsibility: in order to be Hashem's people and merit to live in His land, we are held to a higher standard. May we merit to uphold the responsibilities placed upon us.

## Dvar Halacha: Weekly Question .....

Have a question? Please email [rav@bavk.org](mailto:rav@bavk.org) or call Rav Aharon at 07976642135.

QUESTION: May one go to a wedding in during the Omer both before Rosh Chodesh Iyyar and after Lag BaOmer (but before Rosh chodesh sivan)?

ANSWER: The Shulchan Aruch and Rama bring different customs regarding the mourning practices of Sefirat HaOmer, which include restrictions on weddings (OC 493:1). The Shulchan Aruch writes that the customs begin from Pesach and end after Lag BaOmer (i.e. on the morning of the 34th day of the Omer; 493:2). The Rama both disagrees with the Shulchan Aruch regarding the status of the 33rd day itself, allowing one to get a haircut on Lag BaOmer (ibid), but also mentions that there is another custom to have the mourning practices from Rosh Chodesh Iyyar until Shavuot (493:3). In other words, there are 33 days of mourning according to both customs, but they are spread out differently.

In the situation you have described above, it would seem that attendance at both weddings might be contradictory: attending the first wedding would indicate that you are keeping what is colloquially called the "second half of the Omer", while attending the second would indicate you had already kept the "first half of the Omer." Although the Chatam Sofer (OC 142) would not allow attendance at both weddings, Rav Moshe Feinstein writes (Igrot Moshe OC 1:159) that in a place in which there is not one clearly defined "minhag hamakom" (local practice), attendance at both weddings would not be problematic. This is the situation nowadays in the vast majority of communities in the Jewish world, which have come together from a range of previously existing communities, each with their own customs. For this reason, it would be permissible to attend both weddings. (I will note that some poskim only allow attendance at the chuppah, but not the meal and dancing, see *Minchat Yitzchak* 4:84).

## continued from Front Page .....

the verse appears in a twice-repeated Beraita in the Talmud (Pesachim 22b, Avoda Zara 6b) and occupies a substantial portion of halakhic literature to this very day. That is, one may not assist one in committing a sin or cause him to sin. The examples presented in the Beraita are giving wine to a nazir to drink and offering meat taken from a live animal to a gentile for his consumption.

The figurative meaning of "stumbling block" according to this interpretation resembles its meaning according to the previous approach. The meaning of "blind," however, is far from clear. Both the culprit and victim know full well what's at stake; no one is misled. How, then, does this approach understand the word "blind" in the verse?

The Rambam addresses this issue in several

places in his works, and explains that the one assisted in his sinning is considered blind because his desire "obscured his vision," and "he does not see the truthful path." (See *Lo Ta'aseh* 299 and *Hilkhot Rotzei'ach* 12:12-14.) According to his interpretation, "blind" here refers not to visual impairment (as in the first two approaches) nor to a misunderstanding of a given situation (as in the third approach). Rather, it connotes "moral blindness," suffered by one whose drives and inclinations lure him off the proper path. Needless to say, this approach steers quite a distance from the straightforward interpretation of the verse. In any event, the significance of the prohibition according to this approach is clear. One may not assist another in committing a sin, even if he offers his help out of camaraderie, good manners, or any other noble motive.

*Adapted from a Shiur by Rav Elchanan Samet*

# Community Updates

Last February members of BNEI AKIVA SALFORD visited BNEI AKIVA AMSTERDAM to learn about their SVIVA and the values of Bnei Akiva. SAUL BISHOP and NADIA GOLDMAN write about their experiences:

"In February we flew to Holland as a representative of Bnei Akiva Salford. Our aim was to network and build a relationship between ourselves and Holland Bnei Akiva. The trip was a magnificent experience as we learnt how another Sviva was run and discovered so much about World Bnei Akiva, as well as building friendships with other madrichim who shared the same ideology as us, namely that of Torah V'Avodah.



Akiva was an amazing experience and we took so much from the trip. We picked up new hadracha skills and games which we now use during peulah. Shabbat lunch was so fun not only from trying the Deutsch delicacies but the atmosphere. We took it upon ourselves to start ruach giving them a taste of what Salford Sviva was like, the room was so alive and then they taught us Deutsch ruach!! We brought an end to Shabbat with a Tisch and Havdalah in true Bnei Akiva style, making us realise that wherever we are around the world BA is a part of us. It is something that connects us to others and as we sang the same tunes together we felt in awe of the moment."

We spent Shabbat Ha'Irgun in a youth hostel which was a new experience as in Manchester Shabbat Ha'Irgun we still sleep at home. This gave time for the Madrichim to bond whilst the Chanichim were asleep, it felt much like Machane. Spending Shabbat with Holland Bnei

This weekend Madrichim from Holland are reciprocating a visit and are spending Shabbat in HENDON BNEI AKIVA to join the Sixth Form Learning Shabbaton, led by RAV AHARON AND RABBANIT SHIRA. We hope they enjoy their stay and welcome them to Bnei Akiva UK!

## SUMMER MACHANE

Applications are now open!  
1st - 14th August 2018

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