

**Kol**

**קול**

**Mevaseret**

**מבשרת**

A Compilation of  
Insights and Analyses  
of Torah Topics

by the students of  
**MICHLELET MEVASERET YERUSHALAYIM**

Jerusalem, 5779

**Editors in Chief:**

Tamar Dimbert • Miriam Michaels • Rivka Miriam Reiffman

**Editorial Staff:**

Hadassah Black • Zahava Brown • Chaya Gertsberg  
Odelia Glausiusz • Ayelet Gross • Neima Inslicht  
Jaclyn Kholodenko • Ayala Miller • Tova Miller

**Faculty Advisor:**

Rabbi Eliezer Lerner

© 2019 / 5779 – All rights reserved

Printed in Israel

# מכללת מבשרת ירושלים

## Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim

Rabbi David Katz, *Director*

Mrs. Sharon Isaacson, *Asst. Director*

Mrs. Sarah Dena Katz, *Asst. Director*

Derech Chevron 60  
Jerusalem 93513

Tel: (02) 652-7257 / US Tel: (212) 372-7226  
Fax: (02) 652-7162 / US Fax: (917)-793-1047

[office@mmy.org.il](mailto:office@mmy.org.il)

**U.S. Mailing Address**

500 W. Burr Blvd  
Suite #47  
Teaneck, NJ 07666

[www.mevaseret.org/mmy](http://www.mevaseret.org/mmy)

**HaDaF Typesetting**

[HaDaF.Dovid@gmail.com](mailto:HaDaF.Dovid@gmail.com)

# CONTENTS

<b>Letter from the Editors .....</b>	<b>7</b>
--------------------------------------	----------

## **Introduction**

<i>Rabbi David Katz .....</i>	<b>8</b>
-------------------------------	----------

## תנ"ך

### **Haftarah of Parshat Miketz**

<i>Miriam Brickman.....</i>	<b>13</b>
-----------------------------	-----------

### **Gold: Flashy or Forbidden?**

<i>Zahava Brown .....</i>	<b>17</b>
---------------------------	-----------

### **Haftarah of Rosh Hashana**

<i>Julia Fendelman .....</i>	<b>23</b>
------------------------------	-----------

### **Introduction to True Wisdom:**

#### **An Analysis of the First Chapter of Mishlei**

<i>Odelia Glausiusz.....</i>	<b>27</b>
------------------------------	-----------

### **The Tapestry of Torah:**

#### **Transitions from One Chumash to the Next**

<i>Neima Inslicht .....</i>	<b>33</b>
-----------------------------	-----------

### **When G-d says "No":**

#### **Moshe, David and the Litmus Test of Leadership**

<i>Tehilla Katz .....</i>	<b>39</b>
---------------------------	-----------

### **A Seven-Tier Saga of the Supernatural ציאה**

<i>Ayala Miller .....</i>	<b>49</b>
---------------------------	-----------

### **The Common Thread**

<i>Daphna Ziffer.....</i>	<b>57</b>
---------------------------	-----------

# הלכה

## צידת צבי

*Sarah Berman and Shira Siegel* ..... 63

## Pouring the Tea:

### צביעה באוכלין

*Kayla Evans, Tamar Klajman, and Aviva Stieglitz*..... 69

## Can I Vaccinate? Can I Not?

*Shira Kalnitz*..... 73

## Beit Hamikdash – To Build or Not to Build

*Suzanne Rabinovitch*..... 79

## תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם

*Rivka Miriam Reiffman* ..... 87

# מחשבה

## You are What You Eat:

### Food for Thought

*Adina Drapkin* ..... 93

## Tikkun HaMiddot:

### It Starts with Anava

*Talia Goodkin* ..... 103

## Crying Out to Hashem During Tefillah

*Sivan Hakakian* ..... 113

## Galut vs. Geula:

### The Torah's Hidden Messages

*Shaina Levin*..... 117

## Are We Missing Something?

### Counting the Letters of the Torah and the Preservation of the Mesorah

*Shoshana Reichman*..... 123

# Faculty

## **Marriage and Kri'at Yam Suf**

*Rabbi Jesse Horn*..... 133

## **Between Heaven and Earth**

*Gavriela Lawee (assistentit)*..... 139



## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

The last mitzvah in the Torah is the mitzvah to write a sefer Torah:

וְעַתָּה כָּתְבוּ לָכֶם אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת וְלַמּוֹדָה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁמָּה בְּפִיהֶם  
לְמַעַן תְּהִיָּה לִי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And now, write for yourselves this song, and teach it to the Children of Israel. Place it in their mouths, in order that this song will be for Me as a witness for the children of Israel (Devarim 31:19).

According to Rabbeinu Asher, this mitzvah includes the writing and purchasing of sefarim. Over the course of the year, the students of MMY fulfilled this mitzvah by expressing divrei Torah in writing. We are proud to present this year's Kol Mevaseret "sefer".

The journal in your hand is the result of much effort by many individuals who deserve recognition. First and foremost, we thank הקב"ה for enabling us to spread His Torah through this journal. We extend a thank you to all the rabbanim and mechanchot who taught, inspired, and mentored us over the course of our *shana baaretz*. We speak on behalf of everyone when we thank them for enabling us to learn and grow as much as we did; our achievements are largely due to their guidance.

In particular, we owe much hakarat hatov to Rabbi Lerner, who has not only been a tremendous influence on us throughout the year but also oversaw the Kol Mevaseret operation from start to finish. This project would never have come to fruition without his guidance and encouragement. We also thank the authors for their major contributions to this journal. Acharon acharon chaviv: We gratefully acknowledge our amazing editorial staff, who worked with enthusiasm, diligence, and a smile to enhance this volume.

Sincerely,

The Kol Mevaseret Editors 5779

# INTRODUCTION

We are excited to present the new edition of Kol Mevaseret for 5779. Traditionally, the journal appears at the end of our academic year and serves as the “closing presentation” for the experience our students have just had in the “desert” that is their *shana ba’aretz*. In a way, Moshe Rabbeinu’s closing speech in *Parshat Haazinu* is, *l’havdil*, a “Kol Mevaseret” for that generation before they enter their new reality.

After the song of *Shirat Haazinu*, Moshe Rabbeinu states (*Dev-arim* 32:46-47):

שימו לבבכם לכל הדברים אשר אנכי מעיד בכם היום אשר תצום את  
בניכם לשמור לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת. כי לא דבר רק הוא מכם  
כי הוא חייכם ובדבר הזה תאריכו ימים על האדמה אשר אתם עברים את  
הירדן שמה לרשתה.

The simplest understanding is that Moshe is once again reinforcing the need to keep the mitzvot, especially in terms of meriting to live in Eretz Yisrael. Rashi explains that when Moshe says it is not a *דבר רק*, no small matter, he is emphasizing that it is something that is worth all of the *יגיעה*, the toil, which is exerted.

The Netziv has an added perspective. If Moshe is only restating that mitzvot need to be kept, it is obvious that this is not a *דבר רק*, and there is no need to emphasize this point. In addition, *יגיעה* is a term used for talmud Torah, as opposed to general mitzva observance. What is the significance of this final instruction at the end of Moshe’s life as he presents the completed sefer Torah to the Jewish People?

The Netziv explains that the key phrase is *דברי התורה*, as opposed to just *תורה*. Now that the written Torah text has been completed, Torah is much more than just a list of ethics and morals and generalities regarding mitzva observance. Of course all of this is critical and by definition not a *דבר רק*. At this stage however, Moshe wants to emphasize the need to toil in talmud Torah and focus on



textual nuances, language skills, and potential derivations beyond the *pshat* of the simple text. Moshe's parting message is that this special focus on the text is a gift from Hashem to the Jewish People and we are charged to delve into it: **כי הוא מכם כי הוא הייכם**. Serious talmud Torah is not a light matter; it is not a **דבר רק**, and this special and unique quality is reserved for the Jewish People.

The Netziv notes that this special aspect of talmud Torah is particularly connected to living in Eretz Yisrael. Intense talmud Torah has the ability to protect us from the negative influences of the society that we live in.

Kol Mevasseret represents the parting experience for MMY 5779. It contains beautiful Torah ideas and messages. But like its MMY beit midrash experience, the MMY 5779 student body is also honored to share their textual insights – insights that are a product of the skills that were developed and honed through toil and difficult (but rewarding) work over the course of this past year – specifically in Eretz Yisrael. This accomplishment is not merely an intellectual exercise. The Netziv's explanation serves as our beacon, focusing on the special spiritual bond with the Almighty that is expressed via each letter and each nuance uncovered in the incredible present that is His **דברי התורה**. The Torah text, with all of its complexity, is our very essence and the toil that it takes to try to master it, is performed with spirituality and love.

We are honored to share our students' toil and efforts with the general public **להגדיל (דברי ה) תורה ולהאדירה**.

Rabbi David Katz



---

תנ"ך

---



## **Haftarah of Parshat Miketz**

In the chapter before the haftarah for Parshat Miketz, David Hamelech dies and his son Shlomo Hamelech becomes his successor. Hashem appears to Shlomo in a dream and asks what gift Shlomo would like to receive from Him. He requests the wisdom to know right from wrong. Hashem is so pleased with Shlomo's response that He not only gives Shlomo wisdom, but riches and honor as well. Right after this episode (Melachim I 3:5-14) is the haftarah of Miketz, where we see the direct fulfillment of Hashem's promise to Shlomo.

Two women who are zonot come to Shlomo: "The first woman said, "Please, my master! This woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. On the third day after I was delivered, this woman also gave birth to a child. We were alone; there was no one else with us in the house, just the two of us in the house. During the night this woman's child died, because she lay on it. She arose in the night and took my son from my side while your maidservant was asleep, and laid him in her chest; and she laid her dead son in my chest. When I arose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, it was not the son I had borne."

The other woman interjects saying, "No, the live one is my son, and the dead one is yours!" Shlomo asks for someone to fetch him a sword. He says, "cut the live baby in half and give half to one and half to the other." One woman jumps up and says, "Give her the live child, only don't kill him"; and the other woman says, "It shall be neither yours nor mine; cut him in two!" Shlomo said "Give her (the first one) the live child, and do not put him to death; she is his mother." The haftarah concludes, "When all Israel heard the decision that the king had rendered, they stood in awe of the king; for they saw that he possessed divine wisdom to execute justice."

In the beginning of the haftarah (Melachim I, 3:15) the pasuk says והנה חלום, "and behold it was a dream". By using the word,

“hinei”, we see that Shlomo knew his dream was true. Rashi writes: “Shlomo was able to hear birds chirping and understand them; dogs barking and understand their language”. Rashi also comments on the words *ויעש משתה*, “And [he] made a feast”. “Out of his heart’s happiness [he celebrated] because he realized that his dream was true.”

To gain a better understanding of the story with the two zonot, we should look at Kohelet Rabbah (10:16:1). The midrash explains that the reason both of these women were so desperate to have a living child, was because they were both potential yevamot. This child would be their only offspring, and the woman judged to be childless, would have the status of a yevamah. She would be dependent on the chalitzah of her brother-in-law before she could remarry.

To make things even more complicated, the Meiri (Yevamot, ch. 2 intro.) suggests that these two women were mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. It would make sense, then, that the daughter-in-law would fight through thick and thin to present the baby as hers. If she couldn’t prove the child was hers, it would mean that the child was her brother-in-law. She would need to wait until he grew up and was able to do chalitzah before she could remarry.

While the first zonah is presenting her case to Shlomo, she specifically says *ואתבונן אליו*, “when I looked at him closely” (Melachim I 3:21). We can learn the definition for the word *ואתבונן* from a similar derivation of the word found in Yeshayahu 14:16, *יתבוננו*.

According to Metzudat Zion and Rashi on that pasuk in Yeshayahu, the word *יתבוננו* means looking closely. The zonah who was presenting the case to Shlomo, looked extremely carefully at the child and that was how she was able to tell that it wasn’t her son. When it came time for Shlomo to make the final decision (3:27), both Radak and Rashi (quoting Makkot 23b) say that a bat kol came down and confirmed Shlomo’s decision. In the following pasuk, the Navi relates that all of Bnei Yisrael agreed that Shlomo is the rightful king and that his wisdom comes from Hashem.

The following chapter begins: *ויהי המלך שלמה מלך על כל ישראל* “King Solomon was now king over all Israel.” The Metzudat David explains that from then on, all of Bnei Yisrael accepted him with love,

acknowledging his great wisdom. Rashi writes that when they saw Shlomo's wisdom, everyone rejoiced in his kingship. The Radak contrasts these early years of Shlomo's reign with those of his father, David. Shlomo was able to establish his kingship over the entire nation from early on, since everyone recognized that his judgements are based on Divine wisdom.

This whole story of Shlomo's dream and then his newfound wisdom is very similar to that of Yosef's in parshat Miketz (Bereishit 41). Just as Shlomo awakens from a dream at the beginning of the haftarah, so to Pharaoh awakens from a dream in parshat Miketz, where Yosef is then summoned to interpret it. Both Yosef and Shlomo are given knowledge that was well beyond those living in their generations. They both have to "solve cases" on their own in a public forum, relying only on the wisdom Hashem granted them.

This particular haftarah is rarely read because it normally falls out on Chanukah, but on the off-chance it's read, it's around the period of Chanukah. This time of year is all about seeing the light in the darkness. Both Shlomo and Yosef were given a light from Hashem, wisdom. Aside from being the light of their generations, their particular generations were seen as "light" filled generations before darkness. After Shlomo's kingship the kingdom splits and it all goes downhill from there. Yosef is living during the time period right before Bnei Yisrael become slaves in Egypt. Sometimes in life a person might feel that at such a high, nothing could go wrong, but the higher up one goes, the bigger the fall is on the way down.

There are times in our generation when we feel the darkness of galut. It is sometimes difficult to see the light, especially when we don't have a tangible relationship with Hashem. I think the message from this haftarah during this specific time period, is to be the Shlomo and Yosef of our generation. We need to be the light during the time of darkness. When people feel down and are dealing with challenges in their lives we have to try to pull people out of the darkness and remind them of all the good happening around them.

Hopefully if we're all able to be a light in this world, we will shine bright enough to make a permanent light that'll last forever, bringing unity amongst Bnei Yisrael and the building of third Beit HaMikdash.





## Gold: Flashy or Forbidden?

There is a custom to refrain from wearing gold on Yom Kippur, to avoid any reminder of *chet ha'eigel*. On the other hand, gold is used in many good ways in Tanach, including the construction of the vessels in the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash. What is the proper understanding of the connotation of zahav? Is it inherently positive or negative? To understand the essence of zahav let us take a look at the first time it is mentioned in the Torah.

שם האחד פישון הוא הסבב את כל־ארץ החוילה אשר־שם הזהב: וזהב הארץ  
ההוא טוב שם הבדולח ואבן השהם.

The name of one is Pishon; that is the one that encompasses all the land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; there is the crystal and the onyx stone. (Bereishit 2:11-12)

In describing the rivers coming out of Gan Eden it mentions that in Havilah, there is gold. Why? For what purpose? In addition, why does the next pasuk need to continue by stating that the gold was “good”? The Malbim (Bereishit 2:12) suggests as follows:

וזהב: ומבאר עוד שאין חפץ גם בזהב מצד עצמו רק מצד ענין אחר  
מצטרף עמו, כי לולא היו בני אדם משתגעים לבקש אבנים טובות ופנינים  
ולקנות אותם בזהב, לא היו צריכים אל הזהב, כי האוכל והמוון ההכרחי  
לאדם יושג בקל ע"י עבודת האדמה ולמה לו לחפור את הזהב ולמסור  
נפשו עליו, רק מה שזהב הארץ ההיא טוב, הוא מפני ששם הבדולח ואבן  
השהם אשר יבקשו בני אדם, ויצטרך להם הזהב לעשות בו מקנה וקנין  
ותמורתו אבני חפץ ואבן השהם, וגם הבדולח ואבן השהם אין להם יקר  
מצד עצמם, שאם היו נמצאים בכ"מ כמו שימצאו האבנים לא היו יקרים,  
וחשיבותם הוא רק מפני שרק שם הבדולח ואבן השהם, ולכן הם יקרים  
מפני מעוט מציאותם.

The Malbim explains that gold wasn't something people would necessarily dig for. They worked the land to get their food and would use less precious gems as trading tools for cattle and property. Thus, the gold must have had some significance in order for the pasuk to mention its presence.

The Penei David (Bereishit 2:12) writes:

וזהב הארץ הוא טוב שם הבדלח ואבן השדה: וזהב הארץ ההיא טוב.  
אמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה אין תורה כתורת ארץ ישראל ולא חכמה  
כחכמת ארץ ישראל וכו'... דזהב תורה שבעל פה וכסף תורה שבכתב  
ובילדותו שלא הותר לכתוב תורה שבעל פה העיקר היה ללמוד מקרא  
ולדרוש מתוכו בי"ג מדות שהתורה נדרשת לכך הכסף תורה שבכתב קונה  
את הזהב תורה שבעל פה ... ורבותינו זכרונם לברכה אמרו שם הבדלח  
ואבן השדה מקרא משנה תלמוד תוספתא אגדה והוא על דרך הזהב קונה  
את הכסף לכך הקדים וזהב הארץ ההיא רמז לתורה שבעל פה.

The Penei David explains homiletically that gold refers to the Oral Torah, and it is listed first because of its great value. Just like one can acquire other precious stones with gold, so too, through the Oral Torah one can come to properly understand the Written Torah.

At *chet ha'eigel*, the Jews approached Aharon, demanding that he make a god for them. In order to delay the process, Aharon told them to take their wives' jewelry.

ויאמר אלהם אהרן פרקו נזמי הזהב אשר באוני נשיכם בנים ובנותיכם  
והביאו אלי: ויתפרקו כל־העם את־נזמי הזהב אשר באוניהם ויביאו  
אל־אהרן:

Aharon said to them, "Remove the golden earrings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them [those earrings] to me." And all the people stripped themselves of the golden earrings that were on their ears and brought them to Aharon. (Shemot 32: 2-3)

The Ramban (Shemot 32:2) states:

פרקו נזמי הזהב בחר זהב ולא כסף, בעבור שהוא מורה על מדת הדין,  
ומראהו כמראה אש. וכמו שאמרו עוד (יומא מה.) זהב פרוים שדומה לדם  
פרים. ולכן נעשה בית הקרבנות כלו זהב, וכן מזבח הקטורת, וכן  
הכרובים, ודרשו בהם (מכילתא יתרו י:ג) שאם עשאן של כסף הרי הן  
כאלוהי כסף ואלוהי זהב. וגם דמות עגל בזהב יותר מן הכסף.

The Ramban explains that Aharon tells them to take nose rings made of gold and not silver, because gold signifies *midat hadin*. That is also why much of the Mishkan (and the Beit HaMikdash) was made of gold.

Furthermore, in the making of the aron, the pesukim mention gold frequently.

ועשו ארון עצי שטים אמתים וחצי ארכו ואמה וחצי רחבו ואמה וחצי קמתו:  
וצפית אתו זהב טהור מבית ומחוץ תצפנו ועשית עליו זר זהב סביב: ויצקת  
לו ארבע טבעת זהב ונתתה על ארבע פעמתי ושותי טבעת על צלעו האחת  
ושותי טבעת על צלעו השנית: ועשית בדי עצי שטים וצפית אתם זהב:

They shall make an ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold; from inside and from outside you shall overlay it, and you shall make upon it a golden crown all around. And you shall cast four golden rings for it, and you shall place them upon its four corners, two rings on its one side, and two rings on its other side. And you shall make poles of acacia wood and you shall overlay them with gold. (Shemot 25:10-13)

Why was aron covered in gold? Rav Hirsch writes (Shemot 25:17-20) that the appearance of the golden cover of the aron with the golden keruvim guarding the aron which enclosed the Torah in its walls, preached the words Hashem spoke to Yehoshua.

רק חזק ואמץ מאד לשמור לעשות ככל התורה אשר צוך משה עבדי אל תסור  
ממנו ימין ושמאל למען תשכיל בכל אשר תלך: לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה  
מפיך והגית בו יומם ולילה למען תשמר לעשות ככל הכתוב בו כי אז  
תצליח את דרכך ואז תשכיל: הלא צויתך חזק ואמץ אל תערץ ואל־תחת כי  
ה' אלקך בכל אשר תלך:

Just be strong and very courageous to observe and do in accordance with all of the Torah that Moshe My servant has commanded you. Do not stray from there right or left, in order that you succeed wherever you go. This book of the Torah shall not leave your mouth; you shall meditate therein day and night, in order that you observe to do all that is written in it, for then will you succeed in all your ways and then will you prosper. Did I not command you, be strong and have courage, do not fear and do not be dismayed, for Hashem your God is with you wherever you go. (Yehoshua 1:7-9)

These words of Hashem are the gold-like qualities of strength and firmness, the keeping and carrying out of the Torah, which should be studied at every moment. Seeing the aron of gold makes

the viewer feel overwhelmed by these strong qualities and reminds us of being close to Hashem and keeping His mitzvot.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim (Shemot 25:11) explains:

וצפית אתו זהב טהור מבית ומחוץ תצפנו וגו'. כי על שהיה נעשה מעצי שטים הרומז על היצר הרע כאמור רק שצריך להפכו לטוב לעבוד בו עבודת ה' כאמורם (ברכות נד.) בשני יצריך ביצר טוב וביצר רע לזה הזהירה התורה לצפות אותו זהב טהור מבית ומחוץ שלא יראה שום בחינה מבחינת היצר הרע לא מבפנים ולא מבחוץ כי אם בעבודה הטהורה השלימה הבאה בכוחות היצר הרע המכונה על שם הזהב.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim explains that cedar wood signifies the yetzer hara. The aron is made of cedar wood, but is covered on the outside and inside with gold, so only the gold is seen. This is to show the Jews that only through avodat Hashem from the inside out, can one overcome the yetzer hara to shine bright like the gold.

The Meshech Chochma (Shemot 25:10-13) explains:

הנה בארון לא נצטוו על זהב טהור רק ארון וכפרת, אבל הור והבדים אם כי לא יסורו ממנו, אינן רק זהב לא טהור. והוא כי הטהרה הוא ההכנסה לכור לצורפן וכמפורש בירושלמי דשקלים פ"ז הל' ג' ונמצא דההכנסה לכור הוא כמו עבוד בעור, לכן הארון עצמו הוא כמו עור הקלף שכותבין עליו תפילין שצריך עבוד לשמה. אבל הור והבדים המה כעור הבתים שלשיטת רמב"ם אין צריך לעבדם לשמה משום שהעבוד אינו מוכרח כמו שמפורש בבאורי הגר"א, לכן לא היה צריך להתיכן לשם ארון העדות. והכרובים לא ה' צריך לכתוב שהם של זהב טהור כיון שהם מקשה מגוף הכפרת והכפרת היה זהב טהור א"כ גם הכרובים הם זהב טהור כמו"ש רבינו בפ"ג הל"י מהלכות בית הבחירה גבי נרות המנורה יעו"ש.

The Meshech Chochma writes that the Torah instructs us to use pure gold for the aron itself and *kaporet*, but regarding the *badim* and the *zer*, it only says to use gold. The term "*tahara*" refers to placing the metal into a melting pot to be purified, similar to properly preparing and tanning animal hides for tefillin. The aron itself is like the klaf used for tefillin, which need to be prepared "*lishma*". The *badim* and *zer* are like the leather for the boxes for the tefillin that do not need to be prepared "*lishma*".

The Kli Yakar (Shemot 25:11) writes:

והנה הצפוי נזכר ב"פ כדי להבדיל בית מחוץ כי מתחילה אמר וצפית אותו זהב טהור מבית. ואח"כ אמר ומחוץ תצפנו ולא הזכיר זהב טהור מחוץ

אע"פ שבלי ספק היה הכל מזהב טהור מ"מ לא הזכיר זהב טהור אצל החוץ כי כל אומן דרכו להדר את הכלי מבחוץ יותר ממה שמהדרו בפנים מפני הרואים, ועל כן לא הוצרך להזכיר זהב טהור כ"א אצל מבית אבל מחוץ אין אני צריך להזהיר שיהיה הצפוי גם כן מן זהב כי ק"ו הוא מן הפנים ולהורות נתן בלבם שכמוהם יהיו עושיהם כי כל לומדי התורה צריכין ביותר אזהרה על טהרת הלב הפנימי שאינו נראה בלתי לה' לבדו אבל על חיצונם אין צריכין כל כך אזהרה כי כל אדם דרכו להדר את עצמו כדי למצוא חן בעיני אדם.

The Kli Yakar raises an interesting point. Why does the Torah mention pure gold only in the description of the inner layer of the aron and not of the outer? The aron represents those who learn Torah. They are required to be to excel and be internally pure-hearted and not just externally groomed.

The Rambam (Hilchot De'ot 5:9) writes:

מלבוש תלמיד חכם מלבוש נאה ונקי. ואסור לו שימצא בבגדו כתם או שמנונית וכיוצא בהן. ולא ילבש לא מלבוש מלכים כגון בגדי זהב וארגמן שהכל מסתכלין בהן. ולא מלבוש עניים שהוא מבזה את לובשיו אלא בגדים בינונים נאים.

In discussing the types of clothes for Torah scholars, the Rambam mentions that they shouldn't wear clothes trimmed with gold, like the clothes of the king. Gold has a prominent "personality"; it's very bold, and needs to be contained. One could say this is why these scholars can't wear gold. It is fitting for a king to wear bold colors, for he is a leader, a prominent figure. A talmid chacham, however, needs to remember why he is learning Torah; not for personal gratification, but because Hashem commanded him to do so.

It would seem that while gold has taken on the role of teaching the Jewish people lessons, there is just something potentially negative about it. It is up to us to choose and uplift it, utilizing it to serve Hashem.



## Haftarah of Rosh Hashana

Sefer Shmuel opens with the story of Elkana, a Levite living with his two wives in the mountains of Ephraim. Chana, the first wife, is childless, while Penina, the second wife, has children. The story of Chana and Penina seems to parallel the story of Sarah and Hagar (Bereishit 16). As the Malbim explains (Shmuel I 1:2):

שם אחת חנה, במה שלא אמר שניהם בה"א הידוע שם האחת כמשפט הלשון  
מורה שנשא את חנה קודם והיתה תחלה אחת בנשואיה, ואחר כך נשא את  
פנינה עליה (וכמו שבארתי כלל זה בפירוש התורה בכמה מקומות) ויצדקו  
דברי רז"ל שכאשר ראתה חנה כי עקרה היא, יעצה אותו ויקח את פנינה  
עליה אולי תבנה ממנה, כמו שעשתה שרה עם הגר.

Chana was similar to Sarah in the sense that she was the primary wife. It wasn't until after it became clear that she couldn't have children that Penina was brought into the family, upon Chana's suggestion.

The Navi describes how Elkana would regularly go to the Mishkan in Shiloh to offer korbanot. When Elkana distributed the meat of the korbanot to his family, he would give portions to Penina and all her children. Chana received a special portion from Elkanah due to his love for her and in sympathy of her barren status. Elkana clearly understood that Chana was unhappy, and therefore tried to cheer her up with an extra nice portion of the korban. After all, Chana was his favorite wife.

Penina, on the other hand, would taunt Chana about the fact that she was childless. Given that Penina was openly the secondary wife and Elkana clearly favored Chana helps us gain a better understanding of where Penina's cruelty originated. Metzudat David (Shmuel I 1:6) explains Penina's tormenting:

(א) וכעסתה צרתה. פנינה צרתה, היתה מכעסת אותה, בדברים: (ב) גם כעס.  
רוצה לומר: וחוזרת ומכעסת פעמים רבות: (ג) בעבור הרעמים. בכדי שתהיה  
חנה זעופה וקצופה: (ד) כי ה' סגר רחמיה. רוצה לומר: ובוז היה מקום

לפנינה להכעיסה, וכמו שאמר רבותינו ז"ל (ילקוט שמעוני רמז עז):  
 שאמרה לה בדרך לעג, כלום קנית מעפורת לבנך הגדול, או חלוק לבנך  
 הקטן. והיא גם היא נפשה מרה לה בעבור עקרותה, ונזה הדבר להכעיסה.

Once more, we see parallels to the story of Sarah and Hagar who also had a famous wife-versus-wife feud (Bereishit 16:4-6).

Elkana gets involved but his response, however, is a bit dismissive. Again we are reminded of Avraham's brief response to Sarah regarding Hagar, which was essentially, "Do whatever you want." (Bereishit 16:6) In both stories, the husband doesn't seem to fully comprehend the extent of the emotional trauma that his wife is undergoing.

For the first time in Tanach, the concept of silent prayer appears. Chana extends a heartfelt plea to Hashem wherein she promises that, if she were to be blessed with a child, she would designate him to Hashem by making him a nazir (Shmuel I 1:11). In this outcry, she refers to herself three different times as "your maidservant". Mahari Kara (Shmuel I 1:11) comments:

ונתת לאמתך זרע אנשים אמר ר' שמואל בר נחמני למה כתי' בפסוק ג'  
 פעמים אמתך כנגד ג' מצוות ששנו רבותי' שהן מתות עליהן גדה חלה  
 הדולקת הנר. ולא עברתי על אחת מהם.

The phrase corresponds to the three mitzvot that women deserve to die for if they are not performed properly: *niddah*, *[hafrashat] challah*, and *hadlakat haner [shel Shabbat]*. Chana is expressing her commitment to Hashem by reminding Him that she kept all three of the mitzvot. Similarly, Sarah was known for her overflowing challah dough batches and long-lasting neirot shabbat (Bereishit Rabbah 60:16; Rashi, Bereishit 24:67).

Eli Hakohen witnesses Chana's strange form of tefillah and accuses her of being drunk, but she explains her actions and Eli blesses her that her tefillot should be answered. Sure enough, Chana conceives upon the family's return from Shiloh. As she promised, Chana brings the boy to the mishkan as an apprentice under Eli. She names him Shmuel: "because I asked for him from Hashem." (Shmuel I 1:20) It should be noted that Shmuel and



Yitzchak Avinu were both born into their destinies. Even before they are born, we are informed of their great future.

Shmuel eventually becomes one of the greatest Neviim. Before this, Chana extends one final tefillah that will go down in history as a moving expression of *hoda'ah* (and arguably one of the best *kumzitz* songs ever). In what is known as “Tefillat Chana”, she praises Hashem that there is no *kedusha* that compares to His, nor is there any “rock” like Him (Shmuel I 2:2). Radak expands on the tefillah:

אין קדוש כה. שהתפללתי בבית מקדשו ונשמעה תפילתי:

כי אין בלתך. ידעתי כי אין בלתך שראוי להתפלל לו ועל כן עלי לומר  
אין קדוש כה:

ואין צור כאלקיני. אין חזק כאלקיני שהופך הטבעים ברצונו כי הייתי עקרה  
ולא היה בטבעי ללדת.

He explains that when Chana refers to Hashem as *Tzur* (rock), she is praising His strength, particularly the way that He changed nature in order to allow a once barren woman to give birth. Sarah also had a famous reaction to the news of her impending miraculous pregnancy, yet in her case, it's an exclamation of almost disbelief (Bereishit 18:12). Both women recognize a change in nature attributed to such news. Chana makes a point of saying, “Of course barren women can give birth if Hashem allows it”, whereas Sarah's response emphasizes the unlikely change of nature.

It is now evident that the story of Chana fits nicely with the Torah reading for Rosh Hashana. A childless woman is victimized by a secondary wife for her status, but is rewarded with a son who grows up to be a heroic figure in the Jewish nation.



## **Introduction to True Wisdom:**

### **An Analysis of the First Chapter of Mishlei**

Mishlei's opening pasuk introduces its author – שלמה בן דוד מלך ישראל –. As a book of proverbs describing, prescribing, and understanding wisdom, it is of utmost importance to have an author of immense wisdom in order to avoid hypocrisy and falsity, and to allow the reader to trust its statements. Who better to write this sefer than Shlomo, a king described in Melachim I (5:11) as ויחכם מכל האדם – wiser than all men?

Yet the integrity of this sefer is such that whilst the importance of the pursuit of wisdom is greatly emphasized, it is simultaneously acknowledged and even stressed in its opening chapter, almost as a prerequisite, that wisdom goes deeper than ability and knowledge. Wisdom is multi-faceted, and can be attributed not only to those with advanced cognitive abilities, but also to those who are aware of their limits, and of the importance of applying knowledge and heeding rebuke.

Wisdom, in other words, comes with both humility and responsibility. It is thus that Mishlei states ולתת לפתאים ערמה לנער דעת ומזמה, “for endowing the simple with shrewdness, the young with knowledge and foresight”, as well as ישמע חכם ויוסף לקח ונבון תחבלות יקנה, “The wise man, hearing them, will gain more wisdom; the discerning man will learn to be adroit” (Mishlei 1:4-5). It is both the simple and the young, as well as the wise man and the discerning man, who can gain wisdom from learning Mishlei.

The very nature in which Mishlei is written is an indicator that wisdom also requires the patience and ability to see things beyond their face value. Rashi comments on the first word, משלי, that all of the author's words are “illustrations and allegories.” This medium of narration thus perfectly fits the purpose of the sefer itself, as it requires one to think – Mishlei is rendered a sefer which cannot

merely be read but must be studied in depth. The use of parables also enhances the efficacy of the messages relayed.

The Malbim on the word *משל* writes that in order to effectively teach “unknown, obscure and profound things,” the author will create a proverb based on “known things,” such that the “hidden, unknown analogue may be glimpsed through the clothing of the parable.” Use of the word ‘glimpse’ is important here; it should not be assumed that understanding these parables is meant to be easy. Rather, many of them may be open to more than one interpretation, and thus, discerning the author’s true intentions requires time, effort, and the patience to reread the same sentence multiple times.

A more crucial message, another prerequisite to attaining wisdom, can be found in 1:7 – “The fear of Hashem is the beginning of knowledge.” It is interesting to note that the word *דעת*, knowledge, as opposed to *חכמה*, wisdom, is used here. A possible interpretation is that even before beginning to pursue wisdom, a person must attain the basic understanding that human intellect is finite. In Moreh Nevuchim (2:24:4), the Rambam writes, “Man’s faculties are too deficient to comprehend even the general proof the heavens contain for the existence of He who sets them in motion.” Rather, Hashem “gave man power to know the things which are under the heavens.”

This explains the pasuk in Tehillim (115:16), “The heavens are the heavens of Hashem, but the earth He has given to mankind.” We can gain knowledge, and indeed should work to gain knowledge. Yet Mishlei’s vital cautionary message is that knowledge must coincide with humility. It would be arrogant to assume that we can understand everything, and thus, only those who truly awe G-d can become truly wise. Moreover, it is a G-d-fearing person who will recognize that the secret to true wisdom is found in the Torah.

In pasuk 8, the parable format begins to become more apparent: *שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל תטש תורת אמך* – “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and do not forsake the Torah of your mother.” The question arises: why ‘the instruction’ of your father, yet ‘the Torah’ of your mother? Rashi explains that *מוסר אביך* refers to what Hashem gave Moshe both in writing and orally, thus affording the father the

more technical role of rebuke and training in Torah. **אִמֶּךָ**, however, is linked by Rashi to the word **אִמְתְּךָ**, meaning “your nation,” the nation of Israel. This is a startling comparison, suggesting that it is the Torah of the mother which keeps the Jewish nation alive.

Rashi also quotes Yechezkel (19:2): “what a lioness was your mother!” where Rashi comments: **כְּמֵה הִיְתָה חֲשׁוּבָה אִמֶּךָ** – “how esteemed is your mother,” denoting how praiseworthy this comparison is. Thus, not only is it simply the mother’s biological ability to bear children which upholds the nation, but also her strength and bravery in protecting those children.

Moreover, throughout Mishlei, Shlomo compares the Torah to “a good woman.” It is evidently a uniquely female attribute which allows the words of Torah to truly permeate the soul. That a father’s role is instruction in Torah suggests that the mother’s role is far less tangible, but it is perhaps she who has the ability to foster a love for Torah, and an atmosphere of Torah, which instruction alone cannot relay. Torah has to be lived as well as learned, which is the crux of Shlomo’s comparison. That he brings both of these directives in pasuk 8 is a reminder that true wisdom is cultivated only when all aspects of Torah are absorbed.

Having explained the importance of hearkening to the words of Torah, Shlomo then introduces the centrality of the Torah through a beautiful metaphor: **כִּי לִוִּית חֵן הֵם לְרֹאשׁךָ וְעִנְקֶיךָ לְגִגְרֹתֶיךָ** – “for they shall be a graceful wreath about your head, a necklace on your throat” (Mishlei 1:9). Thus, not only should the words of Torah accompany you wherever you go, but the comparison to beautiful adornments suggests that a person who is well-versed in Torah and has truly imbibed its teachings will carry himself differently. It implies that those who are knowledgeable in Torah attain a new level of dignity and grace, an almost royal bearing, for they have acquired a wisdom which transcends material boundaries.

Rashi explains that the word **גִּגְרֹתֶיךָ** is written in the plural because, in a literal sense, the trachea is composed of many rings. Understood in this way, referencing the word ‘neck’ in its biological form suggests that Torah is literally a lifesource, a G-dly amulet

sustaining our lives. As Shlomo later writes: עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה – “[Torah is] a tree of life to those who grasp it” (Mishlei 3:18). It is apparent that Torah is a lifesource not only in this world, but also in the next.

Its eternal nature is emphasised and threaded throughout the whole of Mishlei, and is further alluded to in this perek, where Shlomo derides those who choose to ignore the Torah and its teachings. He uses the allegory of plunderers whose “feet run to evil and make haste to shed blood” (1:16) as a warning against foolish naivety.

The simple but powerful pasuk: כִּי חָנָם מִזֹּרֶה הָרֶשֶׁת בְּעֵינֵי כָל בֶּעַל כָּנָף – “In the eyes of every winged creature, the outspread net means nothing” (1:17), is an illustration that whilst the wiles of sinners are enticing, ultimately their aim is merely to use seduction as a trap. Yet not only does this backfire on those who fall into the trap, but on those who set the trap as well, as is written (1:19): כֵּן אַרְחוֹת כָּל בָּצֵעַ בָּצֵעַ – “Such is the fate of all who pursue unjust gain; It takes the life of its possessor.”

The word *nefesh* is used here as opposed to the word *chaim*, indicating that whilst one can technically live in this world as a sinner, one’s soul, one’s essence, cannot survive. They will not live in the world to come, a loss which far outweighs the material treasures which trickery, murder and deceit can attain in this world.

It is thus that Shlomo scorns those who “love being simple,” and “fools who hate knowledge,” (1:22) for their outcome will ultimately be the same as sinners. He uses highly emotive language and stirring imagery to stress the missed opportunity of those who reject the Torah’s teaching, writing, “Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded... also I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock... when your fear comes like a storm, and your calamity comes like a tempest” (1:24-27). These pesukim are evidently designed to shock the reader into action, to illustrate that they will, with certainty, regret ignoring the voice of Torah which “cries aloud in the street utters her voice in the squares” (1:20).

On the pasuk (1:31) ויאכלו מפרי דרכם וממעצתיהם ישבעו – “Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be filled with their own devices,” Rashi explains ‘the fruit of their way’ to mean that the fruit of the troubles that befall them they shall eat in their lifetime, but the principle of their suffering is reserved for them in gehinnom. Thus, the complacent have a similar fate to the wicked. Not only do they lose out on a full and rich life in this world, but they lose out on life in the world to come as well.

Evidently, Shlomo is coming to stress in the opening chapter through setting up the importance of pursuing wisdom, and through emphasising where wisdom is found, that Torah is akin to life itself, and if you do not chase after its teachings and live according to its instruction, you have missed a vital and precious opportunity. A similar message can be found in Midrash Tanchuma (Parshat Shemini ch. 11). Chazal tell a story of a pious son dealing with a drunken father. In a final attempt to reform his father from a life centred around alcohol, the son states, “it’s not wine that brings pleasure, but Torah and mitzvot, for wine exits from the body and misery enters the heart, this one leaves and that one comes. But the Torah and the mitzvah are pleasure and simcha in this world and in the world to come.”

This statement relays a profound insight into the transitory, fleeting nature of material pleasures, in contrast to the firm, everlasting nature of a life lived with true purpose and meaning. It is this message which the opening chapter of Mishlei relays, allowing it to function as a wake-up call, as it becomes evident that wisdom accompanies only those whom tirelessly pursue and imbibe the Torah’s teachings. The final pasuk (1:33), functions as a reassurance that Sefer Mishlei will help and guide you: ושמע לי ישכן בטה ושאנן מפחד רעה – “But he who listens to me shall dwell safely, and shall be at ease without fear of evil.”

And so, the person studying this sefer must read on.





# The Tapestry of Torah:

## Transitions from One Chumash to the Next

There are many times in the Torah where it seems like there is no connection from one topic to the previous one. However, if one searches for explanations to these supposed “non sequiturs,” the Torah masterpiece is further revealed. In this article, I would like to attempt to explain the transitions between the sefarim of Chumash.

### Sefer Bereishit and Sefer Shemot

Sefer Shemot starts with a list of the names of Bnei Yisrael that went down to Egypt. The following pasuk states that Yosef, his brothers, and the entire generation passed away. וימת יוסף וכל אחיו וכל הדור ההוא (Shemot 1:6). These two pieces of information, however, were already stated earlier. In Bereishit (46:8-27), the Torah lists not only the sons of Yaakov, but their wives and children, and later in Bereishit (50:26), the death of Yosef is recorded: וימת יוסף בן מאה ועשר שנים ויחנטו אתו וישים בארון במצרים.

Clearly, Yosef's experience is related to the slavery in Egypt. The pasuk singles out Yosef from his family by stating, ויוסף היה במצרים (Shemot 1:5). The following pasuk, וימת יוסף וכל-אחיו וכל הדור ההוא, (1:6) again singles out Yosef, specifically mentioning his death, followed by the deaths of his brothers and the entire generation. To understand this strange beginning, one must examine Yosef's life.

Yosef is seen as the prime example of the successful Jew in galut. He becomes viceroy of Egypt, feeds all of Egypt during a famine, and arranges for his family to live in the most fruitful land in Egypt - Goshen. Indeed, it states that Bnei Yisrael were prosperous and multiplied in the land of Egypt: ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד (1:7). However, a quick turn of events occurs once a new king is appointed over Egypt. The next pasuk states:

ויקם מלך חדש על מצרים אשר לא ידע את יוסף – “A new king was appointed over Egypt who did not know Yosef” (1:8). How is it possible that this new king did not know Yosef, the previous viceroy of Egypt, who ensured that all of Egypt did not starve! Surely, when a new leader of a country begins his rule, he is aware of his country’s recent history.

This cryptic statement must be foreshadowing the horrible slavery that ensued shortly afterward. When Bnei Yisrael were comfortable and prosperous in Egypt, they misled themselves: all of their efforts to achieve greatness ultimately failed. Yaakov was very concerned about this before he went down to Egypt, seeking Hashem’s assurance that He will not abandon His people.

This message can be applied to our generation as well. Even though we like to think of ourselves as successful human beings capable of changing the world, we must realize that when we live in a foreign land, we cannot achieve as much greatness as we can in our own land. The Jewish people ultimately thrive when living in their own country.

## Sefer Shemot and Sefer Vayikra

The end of Sefer Shemot and the beginning of Sefer Vayikra tell the story of the dedication of the mishkan and the giving of the laws of korbanot to Moshe to pass on to Bnei Yisrael. The pasuk states that Moshe is not able to enter the mishkan: **וְלֹא יָכַל מֹשֶׁה לָבוֹא אֶל אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד** (Shemot 40:35). This is also the case in the first pasuk of Vayikra, where it says that Hashem spoke to Moshe **מֵאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד** – *from the מוֹעֵד אֹהֶל*, implying that Hashem was speaking to Moshe, who was outside the Ohel. What is so significant about Moshe not being able to enter the Ohel Moed?

The Rambam explains that the purpose of korbanot was to wean Bnei Yisrael off of idol worship in order properly engage in avodat Hashem.

Thus the very act which is considered by the Heaven as the greatest crime, is the means of approaching G-d, and

obtaining His pardon for our sins. In this manner, evil principles, the diseases of the human soul, are cured by other principles which are diametrically opposite. (Rambam Moreh Nevuchim 3:46)

When Hashem gave the commandment of *korbanot*, He wanted to change the slave mentality of Bnei Yisrael. Bnei Yisrael were not used to thinking for themselves.

Using *korbanot*, G-d wanted to shatter the ideology that Bnei Yisrael had been subjected to in *Mitzrayim*. It is specifically mentioned that even Moshe was not allowed to enter the *Ohel Moed*. The *Mishkan* was not just for the leaders, but for all of Klal Yisrael; to bring their own *korbanot* and to act as a free people. Hashem desired that all of Bnei Yisrael should know that each person has a personal share in Judaism, to bring his own *korban*, to think for themselves.

## Sefer Vayikra and Sefer Bamidbar

The end of Sefer Vayikra details the laws of giving *maaser*, while Sefer Bamidbar begins with a census of Bnei Yisrael. Although these two topics are often glossed over, an important lesson can be gleaned from their juxtaposition.

The *Akeidat Yitzchak* (72:1) on Bamidbar explains that one of the reasons for counting Bnei Yisrael and including all the minute details of the counting in the Torah was to show the importance of the individual in the eyes of Hashem. He refers to the comparison of the Jewish people to the stars of the sky.

In that analogy, every member of Bnei Yisrael is important. Stars and constellations are all individually counted by Hashem. "Who counts the number of the stars and calls each one by name?" (*Tehillim* 147:3). It is not enough to be aware of the total number of Israelites. The Torah wishes to highlight the individual significance of each person, treating each Jew like a star in the sky; it assigns each Jew an important role in the scheme of things. With the commandment of giving *maaser*, the Jewish people learn the value of

being humble in G-d's eyes, וכל מעשר הארץ מזרע הארץ מפרי העץ לה' הוא (Vayikra 27:30). Even though it is important for people to take pride in their accomplishments, it is vital to recognize that all of one's efforts would not be realized without Hashem's mercy.

## Sefer Bamidbar and Sefer Devarim

Sefer Bamidbar concludes with the daughters of Tzelafchad being assigned the portion of land in Eretz Yisrael that had belonged to their deceased father. The first perek of Sefer Devarim begins with Moshe's rebuke and advice for Bnei Yisrael as they enter the Land of Israel for the first time, unaccompanied by Moshe. Why is there this specific transition between the last two sefarim of Chumash?

Looking closer at Moshe's rebuke to Bnei Yisrael, one can see that his rebuke is centered around what the new generation of Bnei Yisrael, born in the desert, should be wary of as they prepare to enter the land. The Seforno (Devarim 1:5) writes that since Moshe gave up hope of crossing the Yarden, he wanted to remind the people of the covenant between them and G-d at Chorev, review parts of the Torah that would be pertinent to moving into Eretz Yisrael, and warn them against repeating the sins of the previous generation that prevented them from going into the land. Included in the list of sins is the story of the meraglim.

The meraglim were sent to Eretz Yisrael to scout out the land in preparation for conquest. Although their reports of the land started on a positive note, וגם זאת חלב ודבש הוא (Bamidbar 13:27), they quickly turned into a harsh criticism of the land, giving Bnei Yisrael reasons why they should not attempt to conquer the land ושם ראינו (Bamidbar 13:33) את הנפילים בני ענק מן הנפילים ונחיינו כחגבים וכן היינו בעיניהם.

However, the attitudes of the daughters of Tzelafchad were diametrically opposed to those of the meraglim. They pleaded with Moshe to let their father earn a right to an inheritance in the land of Israel, seeing the land not through the lense of attaining person-

al gain, but for the potential the land could have to benefit the Jewish people for years to come. By juxtaposing the story of how Bnot Tzelafchad earned the right to their father's inheritance, with Moshe's rebuke of the meraglim, the Torah comes to teach us an important lesson. Although one may have individual concerns about fulfilling the will of Hashem, it is important to look past those personal qualms and view the bigger picture of how it will affect the nation of Israel.

By looking at the transitions between the sefarim of Chumash, we see how the Torah shows us how to find harmony in our lives of avodat Hashem. The Jewish people struggled with finding confidence in their own abilities and the abilities of their nation. Throughout their journey, they discovered lessons of being humble in the eyes of G-d, investing in the greater community of the Jewish people, and serving G-d in the proper way.



## When G-d says “No”:

### Moshe, David and the Litmus Test of Leadership

In the vast tapestry of Tanach, one of the saddest and most confusing enigmas is that of Moshe Rabbeinu being denied access to the Land of Israel. It seems like the cruelest of ironies. This is the man who has brought the Jewish people out of Egypt, who leads them on their wanderings through the desert for 40 years. He is the leader who counsels, teaches and prays on Am Yisrael's behalf. He is the faithful shepherd who searched for Yosef's bones when everyone else was collecting wealth. All he desires is to cross the Yarden and fulfill the mitzvot of the Land of Israel. This is denied to him.

Moshe pleads numerous times to Hashem to change his mind. In his final speech at the end of his life, he says (Devarim 3:23-26):

ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההוא לאמר: אעברה נא ואראה את הארץ הטובה אשר  
בעבר הירדן הזה הטוב הזה והלבנון: ויתעבר ה' בי למענכם ולא שמע אלי  
ויאמר ה' אלי רב לך אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד בדבר הזה:

I pleaded with Hashem at that time, saying....

The language used here is that of begging, of desperation, yet Hashem responds harshly:

But Hashem was wrathful with me on your account and would not listen to me. Hashem said to me, “Enough! Never speak to Me of this matter again!”

The Torah's final pesukim present a devastating picture; Moshe Rabbeinu on Har Nevo looking over Eretz Yisrael – looking at a land so tantalizingly close and at a future he would have no part of.

And Hashem said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, ‘I will assign it to your offspring.’ I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you shall not cross there.” (Devarim 34:4)

This image is haunting and raises many questions. How could the greatest leader, sin to the point where G-d denies his greatest

wish? How could the man who pleads with G-d for others have his humble pleas for mercy for himself ignored?

Having raised these points, another Jewish leader comes to mind. He too is denied his greatest wish. More than anything, David Hamelech wants to build the Beit Hamikdash. While on the run from Shaul, he and Shmuel learn Torah all night about the location of the future temple. (Zevachim 54) As he says in Tehillim (27:4):

אחת שאלתי מאת ה' אותה אבקש שבתי בבית ה' כל ימי חיי לחוות בנעם  
ה' ולבקר בהיכלו:

One thing I ask of Hashem, only that do I seek: to live in  
the house of Hashem all the days of my life, to gaze upon  
the beauty of Hashem, to frequent His temple.

On the very eve of being told to go ahead with his building plans, Natan Hanavi brings David a new message from G-d: Stop! Do not proceed. The Temple will be built by your son. (Shmuel II 7:12-13)

כי ימלאו ימך ושכבת את אבתך והקימתי את זרעך אחרך אשר יצא  
ממעריך והכינתי את ממלכתו: הוא יבנה בית לשמי וכנגנתי את כסא ממלכתו  
עד עולם:

How could David Hamelech, the prototype for all future Jewish kings, be denied this opportunity?

This essay will examine Moshe and David, their many similarities, and will endeavor to prove that this refusal of their greatest wish is no sign of weakness, but is rather a testimony to their greatness as leaders.

Moshe and David have many similarities, aside from both being leaders:

1. Both come from families of Jewish nobility – Moshe from the tribe of Levi, leader of the children of Israel in Egypt, and David from the tribe of Yehudah and the family of Yishai.

2. Both are the youngest in their family.

3. Moshe and David both have physical characteristics that the Torah takes note of. Moshe himself describes himself as **כבד פה** – “heavy of mouth and heavy of speech.” (Shemot 4:10) David is described as **אדמוני עם יפה עינים וטוב ראי** – “ruddy-cheeked, bright-eyed, and handsome” (Shmuel I 16:12).



4. Both are shepherds in their youth.

5. When David is anointed as king, Shmuel was sure that David's older brother Eliav will be anointed until Hashem corrects him. (Shmuel I 16:6). Moshe himself expresses his dismay when he is appointed leader, instead of Aharon his older brother. (Rashi, Sehmot 4:10)

6. Both David and Moshe flee from the kings they served, who now seek to kill them – David runs away from Shaul, (Shmuel I 19:10) and Moshe from Paro (Shemot 2:15). Both return to become leaders.

7. Both experience rebellions from members of their own families. David from his sons, Avshalom and Adoniyahu, and Moshe from Korach, his cousin.

8. Both commit a sin which has grave consequences for their future. Moshe with Mei Meriva (Bamidbar 20:1-13), and David with Batsheva (Shmuel II 11:2-27).

9. Both appoint their successors in their lifetimes: Moshe appoints Yehoshua (Devarim 31:3), and David anoints Shlomo. (Melachim I 1:39).

It is no coincidence that both men are among our greatest leaders. So why are they denied their greatest wish?

The facts of Mei Meriva are tragic. In the desert of Kadesh, Miriam's death leaves a waterless void and a disgruntled nation. Still mourning the loss of their sister, Moshe and Aharon are faced with an angry mob, screaming for water to quench their thirst.

ולא היה מים לעדה ויקהל על משה ועל אהרן; וירב העם עם משה ויאמר  
לאמר ולו גוענו בגוע אחינו לפני ה': ולמה הבאתם את קהל ה' אל המדבר  
הזה למות שם אנחנו ובעירנו:

... If only we had perished when our brothers perished at the instance of Hashem! Why have you brought Hashem's congregation into this wilderness for us and our beasts to die there? (Bamidbar 20: 3-5).

These are familiar words, and a familiar scene. It is what happens next (20:8-11) that makes this complaint different from the other times the people had complained.

קח את המטה והקהל את העדה אתה ואהרן אחיך ודברתם אל הסלע לעיניהם ונתן מימיו והוצאת להם מים מן הסלע והשקית את העדה ואת בעירם: ויקח משה את המטה מלפני ה' כאשר צוהו: ויקהל משה ואהרן את הקהל אל פני הסלע ויאמר להם שמעו נא המרים הנן הסלע הזה נוציא לכם מים: וירם משה את ידו ויך את הסלע במטחו פעמים ויצאו מים רבים ותשת העדה ובעירם:

After having been commanded specifically to speak to the rock, Moshe loses his temper with the people and hits the rock with his stick. Water gushes out, more than enough for the people and their livestock. The people are satiated but G-d is furious. The repercussions are not long in coming (20:12):

ויאמר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן יען לא האמנתם בי להקדישני לעיני בני ישראל לכן לא תביאו את הקהל הזה אל הארץ אשר נתתי להם:

But Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon, "Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them."

Moshe cannot enter the land that he loves so much. No amount of pleading will change this. The die has been cast.

Here lies the root of the confusion that has confounded the commentators for centuries. Why is Moshe punished so severely? There are many answers as to what exactly was so wrong.

Rashi gives the simplest and most logical answer. Moshe is punished for hitting the rock instead of speaking to it as he had been commanded.

Rambam (Shemoneh Perakim 4) suggests that he is punished for his anger at the people ("Listen you rebels").

Ramban (quoting Rabbeinu Chananel) believes Moshe's mistake lay in his rhetorical phrase, "Shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?" – thus implying that salvation would come through human hands instead of G-dly intervention.

Abarbanel has a completely different viewpoint and says Moshe and Aharon are being punished for previous sins – Aharon for making the *eigel* and Moshe for sending the spies.

None of these answers, however, explain the severity of his punishment.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks offers a revolutionary explanation for the events of Mei Meriva. He begins by quoting a Gemara (Avodah Zarah 5a) which contains the following statement of Resh Lakish:

What is the meaning of the verse, "This is the book of the generations of Adam"? Did Adam have a book? Rather, it teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Adam (in advance), each generation and its interpreters, each generation and its sages, each generation and its leaders.

Leadership in Jewish history, like anything, is a constant, evolving phenomenon over time. Unlike Christianity or Islam, which has one centrist founder who has dominated its history, Judaism has a different *modus operandi*. We have the Avot and Imahot who introduced monotheism to the world and set the blueprint for every Jew to come. Moshe and Yehoshua led the people in the desert and into the new land of Canaan. The Shoftim served as equal parts spiritual leaders and military commanders. Shaul, David, and the kings of Yehuda turned Bnei Yisrael into an established people with a fortified homeland, national pride and protected borders.

The Nevi'im served as a medium between Hashem and the people, beseeching the people to repent. Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Anshei Knesset Hagedola served as the transition period from a world where G-d spoke to us to a world where we would now speak to G-d. The Tannaim and Amoraim, the Geonim of Bavel, every man and woman who has taken up the mantle of Jewish leadership to this day have all been vastly different in personality and actions from their predecessors.

This is for a very simple reason: the Jewish people are constantly evolving. And every generation brings new challenges and changes. The generation of Yehoshua was entirely different to the generation of Shmuel and thus required different guidance.

ירובעל בדורו כמשה בדורו, בן בדורו כאהרן בדורו, יפתח בדורו  
כשמואל בדורו.

Yerubaal in his generation is like Moshe in his generation; Bedan in his generation is like Aharon in his generation; and Yiftach in his generation is like Shmuel in his generation (Rosh Hashanah 25b).

In Rabbi Sack's words,

Each age produces its leaders, and each leader is a function of an age. There may be – indeed there are – certain timeless truths about leadership. A leader must have courage and integrity. He must be able, say the sages, to relate to each individual according to his or her distinctive needs. Above all, a leader must constantly learn (a king must study the Torah “all the days of his life”). But these are necessary, not sufficient, conditions. A leader must be sensitive to the call of the hour – this hour, this generation, and this chapter in the long story of a people. And because he or she is of a specific generation, even the greatest leader cannot meet the challenges of a different generation. That is not a failing. It is the existential condition of humanity.

With this in mind, let us re-examine the story of Mei Meriva. It is no coincidence that Moshe observes precedent and hits the rock, just like he had done so nearly 40 years before in Rephidim when Bnei Yisrael first complained about their thirst in the desert. (Shemot 17:1-7). This time, however, there are serious repercussions. Why? What Moshe fails to understand is one crucial detail, which is the reason why here he is commanded to speak instead of to strike: The generation he now faces in Kadesh is not the same generation as the one in Rephidim.

Rabbi Sacks explains that the people who complained at Rephidim were fresh out of Egypt and still had the mentality of slaves. Slaves understand that a stick is to hit, and that is how obedience is compelled. Therefore, G-d wanted Moshe to hit the rock. However, the nation standing before Moshe at Mei Meriva is a new people entirely. Most have been born in the desert and have the mentality of a free people. Someone who is free can respond to rhetoric, not the rod. What had worked 40 years before is now ineffective. That is why Moshe is given different instructions, but he reverts to the previous model. As Rabbi Sacks says,

What Moshe failed to hear – indeed to understand – was that the difference between G-d's command then and now (“strike the rock” and “speak to the rock”) was of the

essence. The symbolism in each case was precisely calibrated to the mentalities of two different generations. You strike a slave, but speak to a free person.

This is a new generation replete with new characteristics and thus requires a totally different *modus operandi*. This is a generation that now needs a Yehoshua, instead of a Moshe. In testimony to his greatness, Moshe understands this implicitly and later takes the initiative and asks G-d to appoint a successor.

וידבר משה אל ה' לאמר: יפקד ה' אלקי הרוחות לכל בשר איש על העדה:  
אשר יצא לפניהם ואשר יבא לפניהם ואשר יוציאם ואשר יביאם ולא תהיה  
עדת ה' כצאן אשר אין להם רעה:

Moshe spoke to Hashem, saying: “Let Hashem, Source of the breath of all flesh, appoint someone over the community: Who shall go out before them and come in before them, and who shall take them out and bring them in, so that Hashem’s community may not be like sheep that have no shepherd.” (Bamidbar 27: 15-17)

This is why Moshe cannot enter Eretz Yisrael – not as a cruel punishment but as a fact of his mortality. A new chapter awaited the Jewish people, with different events and challenges. Only a new leader could cross the Yarden with them and guide them as they would conquer the seven nations. With this novel perspective, Rabbi Sacks shows us that leadership is not always a case of seeing it through to the end. For each of us, there is a Jordan we will not cross, however long we live, however far we travel. “It is not for you to complete the task,” said Rabbi Tarfon, “but neither are you free to disengage from it.” (Avot 2:16). But this is not inherently tragic. What we begin, others will complete – if we have taught them how.

Once we understand this, we can revisit the events of Shmuel II, where Natan tells King David that he is forbidden to build the temple. This must have been a crushing blow. David amasses gold and silver from all his battles to be used for the Beit Hamikdash; he attempts twice to move the Aron, (succeeding on the second attempt) and fights to secure Israel’s borders, so that he can build in peace. Nevertheless, he is denied the opportunity. Natan does not give a

reason for G-d's refusal to let him build, but David does. In Divrei Hayamim (I 22:6-10), he explains to Shlomo:

My son, I wanted to build a House for the name of Hashem my G-d: "But the word of Hashem came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and fought great battles; you shall not build a House for My name for you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight: But you will have a son who will be a man at rest, for I will give him rest from all his enemies on all sides; Shlomo will be his name and I shall confer peace and quiet on Israel in his time: He will build a House for My name.'"

How is one to understand the phrase 'you have shed much blood?' This seems remarkably unjust; as all David's military accomplishments had been by G-d's command. He manages to subdue the Plishtim, a feat unmatched since the days of Shimshon. He avenges his servants honor with Amon, attacks Moav and manages to conquer the city of Yevus-the site of the future Beit Hamikdash. Radak offers the opinion that David spills innocent blood too, that of Uriah and the civilians who are casualties of war, and he also accepts responsibility for the deaths of the Kohanim of Nov. Regardless, just like in the case of Moshe, the 'punishment' does not seem to fit the 'crime'.

However, with the benefit of Rabbi Sacks' explanation, it all becomes clear. The temple is meant to be a paragon of peace. It can only function in an era where the people put down their swords and return to the Beit Midrash. It needs a king who will bring Am Ysrael into a golden age, spiritually, culturally and aesthetically. The Mikdash needed a Shlomo, not a David. Indeed, this is the case, "And Yehuda and Israel dwelt in safety, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan to Be'er Sheva, all the days of Shlomo" (Melachim I 5:5).

Is David angry or resentful at the Divine will? Not at all. Like Moshe, he understands that the greatest test of leadership is stepping aside and giving way to someone else, and allowing a successor to complete the task. This is the greatest display of their

---

greatness. Neither Moshe nor David is lost from history by not accomplishing their perceived tasks. Far from it. Though they never fulfill their original dreams, to this very day, their influence is felt – in the prayers and psalms they composed, in the Torah and lessons they taught and in the way they shaped all future leaders to come.





## **A Seven-tier Saga of the Supernatural צִיָּאָה**

Sefer Shemot introduces us to one of the most awesome displays of power and might. The entire story of Yetziat Mitzrayim is filled with supernatural occurrences and miraculous events. I would like to suggest that Hashem's wonders began even before the Nile turns to blood, with prior scenes that some may not include in the 'main part' of Yetziat Mitzrayim.

There appears to be a progression, building in intensity, throughout the story, from nature in its conventional form, to the introduction of the supernatural. The miracles that occurred seem to become ever more apparent, transforming from hidden *nissim* and building towards world revelation!

This progression can be formulated into a format consisting of seven levels:

1. Within the realm of nature
2. A singular experience outside of nature
3. Beyond nature in an open setting
4. Non-replicable *nissim*
5. Two-fold *nissim*
6. Post-Egypt
7. World impact

Level 1:

**Within the Realm of Nature**

Chazal tell us that women in Mitzrayim would regularly give birth to six children from a single pregnancy. To Bnei Yisrael, this was considered 'normal'. Scientific evidence only further highlights this

miraculous event. Even with modern medicine, the first surviving set of sextuplets (6 babies) – the Dilley sextuplets – was only born in 1993. Additionally, the probability of quintuplets (5 babies) occurring naturally is a mere 1 in 55,000,000 births, never mind sextuplets.

Another subtle miracle that occurred was the survival of baby Moshe in the basket placed in the river. The Zohar relates how he merited Divine protection from the potentially dangerous creatures that lurked within the waters. When retelling the story, one could easily fail to see the significance of this ‘minor’ point, which is absolutely crucial to the entire Redemption.

## Level 2:

### A Singular Experience Outside of Nature

This next level moves into what we consider to be miraculous. However, this event occurred only to one individual. The Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 2:5) asks what the significance of the word *אֵלַי* is in the pasuk (3:2) concerning the interaction with Moshe and the burning bush? The midrash answers that Moshe was not alone during this discovery of the *sneh*, but it was visible only to Moshe and not to any of the others that were also present.

Furthermore, another question is asked: Why did Hashem choose a thorn bush with which to converse with Moshe Rabbeinu?

רבי אליעזר אומר, מה הסנה שפל מכל האילנות שבעולם, כך היו ישראל  
שפלים וירודים למצרים לפיכך נגלה עליהם הקדוש ברוך הוא וגאלם,  
שנאמר (שמות ג, ח). וארר להצילו מיד מצרים.

Rabbi Eliezer responds by stating how the thorn-bush is the lowliest of all trees in the world which corresponds to the lowly, downtrodden position that Bnei Yisrael were in. Hashem specifically chose this form to relate how, despite the position that Bnei Yisrael had fallen to, He would still redeem them. This takes Yetziat Mitzrayim to the next stage where the extent of the miraculous has become much clearer but was visible only to one individual.

### Level 3:

#### Beyond Nature, in an Open Setting

We begin to see *nissim* unfolding as we move onto the signs of Aharon and Moshe and the initial plagues. Moshe and Aharon, following Hashem's instructions, show multiple signs to Paro. His magicians proceed to partially replicate them, until Aharon's staff swallows the staffs of the sorcerers.

Now we come to the main event – the beginning of the ten *makkot*. Rashi (7:19) describes the extent of the first plague of blood how it manifested itself not only in the Nile, but even in the bathhouses and the drinking vessels.

Rav Hirsch notes (7:20) that Aharon's waving of his staff in all directions highlighted that this was not a mere coincidence or a rare natural phenomenon, but a specific *nes* from Hashem.

The next plague was one of frogs. Rashi (7:29) describes how the frogs actually entered the bodies of the Egyptians, going into their intestines and croaking there.

Rav Hirsch (7:27) takes the *nes* to another level by describing the nature of the frog. The term **צפרדע**, he elaborates, is a combination of **צפר** (morning) and **דע** (knowing). A **צפרדע** is usually noisy at night and becomes more timid at the first rays and sounds of the morning light. These frogs were out during the day and night, going against their natural tendencies and behavior.

These three scenarios mark the next level. They were visible to everyone, including Bnei Yisrael and the Egyptians, although Paro's magicians were able to partially duplicate them.

### Level 4:

#### Non-Replicable Nissim

These next four *makkot* indicate a shift from the prior ones. The Torah (8:14) describes how the magicians were unable to replicate the Plague of Lice.

Regarding the fourth plague, Rashi (8:17) notes that all the wild beasts, snakes and scorpions came together in one great mixture (even though in the wild they would attack each other).

In the plague of *dever*, the Chizkuni (9:3) interestingly remarks that even those animals that had been saved previously from the other plagues, now also died.

The final *makkah* in this category is shechin – boils. The Rashbam (9:9) interprets the word *porai'ach* (9:9) as being chemically active, producing spontaneous growth of bacteria.

Overall, these *makkot* have moved to a realm beyond the capacity of even the expert magicians – the power now lay clearly within the hand of Hashem.

## Level 5:

### Two-Fold Nissim

This next category of *nissim* had a double nature present in their properties and effects. These *makkot* not only were incredible *nissim* on their own, but they included an additional factor rendering them even more intense.

The first of these was *barad* – hailstones. It is described by the Ibn Ezra (9:24) as being: פלא בתוך פלא – A wonder within a wonder. Rashi expands (9:24) on this concept by relating how the hail was in fact mingled with fire and yet it did not melt. Hashem performed an additional *nes* on top of a *nes* by suspending the forces of nature to allow two elements, almost exact opposites in their properties, to combine into a single entity.

*Arbeh* – locusts: The Torah describes that the plague occurred by the means of an extraordinary easterly wind that blew all day and all night, to bring the locusts to Egypt.

*Choshech* – darkness: This plague had an exclusive two stage process. Rashi (10:22) explains that the plague increased in intensity. For the first three days, no one could see. During the

next three days, they weren't able to move. The Ramban (10:23) adds that the darkness was not merely an absence of light, but was a thick mist that descended from the heavens, distinguishing every flame.

Lastly was *makkat bechorot* – killing of all the firstborns of Mitzrayim: This plague was the pinnacle of all the *makkot* and was the final act of might that even Paro, with his hardened heart, could no longer ignore. Rashi (12:29) describes that not only did the firstborn Egyptians die, but even those who were not native to Egypt, were also included in the death sentence. This final plague completes the two-fold *nissim*.

## Level 6:

### Post-Egypt

Bnei Yisrael are finally freed from their bondage but Yetziat Mitzrayim is still not complete. Miracles occur now outside of the setting of Mitzrayim, increasing in magnitude and affecting an entire nation.

The two miracles that occurred on their journey towards Yam Suf were a pillar of protective cloud and a pillar of guiding fire. The Midrash (Tanchuma, Bamidbar 2) describes some of the extraordinary properties of these pillars; the cloud encircled Bnei Yisrael, guarding them from the harmful ground creatures, leveling the ground, protecting them from the elements, as well as serving as a guide during the day. The pillar of flame, on the other hand, lit their way at night and frightened off any of the nocturnal creatures of the desert. Rashi (13:22) further describes how they were never once in a vulnerable position, even during the transition of the cloud to fire and vice versa as the pillars would combine and overlap.

In addition, when the threat of the attacking Egyptians arose, the cloud and fire pillars formed extra protection. The cloud turned

the ground into mud and the pillar of fire caused it to boil, burning the horses' hooves (Rashi 14:24).

These *nissim* were visible to everyone, helping and afflicting entire nations. They occurred outside of Mitzrayim showing Bnei Yisrael that Hashem had not abandoned them but would continue to protect them as His people.

## Level 7:

### A Worldly Impact

The final and largest *nes* occurs during Kriat Yam Suf, the greatest and last miracle of the Yetziat Mitzrayim saga. Rashi (14:21) describes the magnitude of Kriat Yam Suf as a miracle, not only for two nations in conflict, but an amazing planetary revelation. Not only did Yam Suf split, but every sea, river, ocean and even puddle in the world split in two simultaneously!

Throughout this process of seven steps, the intricacies of miracles through Yetziat Mitzrayim have become more revealed, increasing in intensity and magnitude.

Some may argue that the scenarios in level one are hardly *nissim* at all. Rav Dessler in *Michtav MeiEliyahu* relates a *mashal* – A grave holds a person whose life has left him and whose body disintegrates with each day until nothing of his former self remains. However, imagine if one day muscles would slowly begin to regrow, skin would miraculously repair itself and organs would begin to function once more until this person climbed out of his grave and walked about the Earth. Any witness would scream of the power of *techiyat hameitim* and wholeheartedly praise Hashem.

This occurs every year with the return of spring – a flower will die and shrivel until almost nothing remains but a rotting skeleton, and yet it will undoubtedly bloom once more with time.

We are no longer privileged enough in our modern age to witness a blatantly open miracle such as Kriat Yam Suf. Nevertheless,

the very world we stand on, breathe on and use, is teeming with *nissim* and you need not look further than the working of your own body.

May we merit seeing the *nissim* of Mashiach unfold before our eyes, *b'miheirah b'yameinu*.





## The Common Thread

Throughout Tanach, we find that different character traits or roles are attributed or assigned to various groups or *shevatim*. One particularly interesting group is Bnei Rachel: beauty is valued and evident in their leadership roles. The pesukim often mention beauty and clothing when talking about the leaders from Bnei Rachel. What is the connection between Bnei Rachel, specifically Yosef, Shaul, and Esther, clothing, and leadership?

Yosef is born into a leadership position. He is the firstborn to Rachel, Yaakov's favorite wife. Yaakov gives Yosef special privileges and positions of leadership through the gift of the *ketonet passim*. Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon writes in his article "The Fall and Rise of Yosef", that the *ketonet passim* "represents power and nobility". (See Rashi 37:3). Eventually the brothers' jealousy overwhelms them. Yosef is sold into slavery and his beloved cloak is dipped into blood and sent back to Yaakov. This focus on the *ketonet passim* indicates that there must be some connection between Yosef's leadership and his clothing.

When Yosef becomes viceroy of Egypt, the Torah again mentions his clothes. Firstly, when Yosef is summoned to interpret Paro's dream he is given new clothes to wear (41:14). Shortly afterwards, he is provided with royal clothing, befitting his new position as viceroy.

Shaul, from Shevet Binyamin, is also a descendant of Rachel. In a pivotal story during the Shaul's pursuit of David, David cuts off a piece from Shaul's cloak (Shmuel I 24:25). According to the Midrash (Shocher Tov 57:3), whoever would cut Shaul's cloak would usurp his position. This is a further indication of the connection between Bnei Rachel's power and their clothing.

In Megillat Esther there is great focus on the physical. Esther starts off as a very passive leader. Rav Aharon Lichtenstein

("Learning from Esther," VBM) describes Esther as a passive maiden who does not deviate from her cousin's instructions one iota. In fact, the Megillah emphasizes Esther's passivity until the middle of the story (Esther ch. 4) where she begins to take charge.

Mordechai becomes aware of Haman's decree and dons sackcloth. Esther responds that Mordechai must put on nice clothes, but he refuses. Esther seems to be encouraging Mordechai to deal with this major problem, but Mordechai will not accept the offer. Refusing the clothes denies him entry into the king's palace. Instead Esther has to become the active leader. Eventually Esther agrees to take responsibility instructing Mordechai to declare a three day fast, even though it was the holiday of Pesach (Esther Rabbah 8:7). Esther undergoes a key transformation, becoming a very active leader who is able to take the drastic decision of overriding a major chag, in order to save her people.

So what is the connection between Bnei Rachel, clothing, and leadership? The key difference in these three stories is that Yosef was born into leadership, lost it, and then gained it back. Shaul was given leadership at a young age, but eventually loses it. Esther on the other hand starts with no leadership role and only reluctantly accepts it. Additionally all these stories have a key component of clothes involved when the leadership is received or lost.

Bnei Rachel are known for two main traits: beauty and silence. Clothing connects to both of these. The Shulchan Aruch in chapter 262 says that one should wear nice clothes on Shabbat out of respect. Being in a position of leadership requires one to dress a certain way and Bnei Rachel understood its importance. Rambam (Hilchot Deot 5:9) writes that a talmid chacham should wear nice clothes. In fact, he cannot leave his house in shabby clothing. The outward appearance is a reflection of one's inner self. Rav Belsky in the Ein Yisrael writes: "Not only must one's clothing present the proper image to the world, but just as important, a person must live up to that image". Bnei Rachel truly embody this.

According to Rav Hirsch (Bereishit 37:34) clothing hides the inside. Rav Hirsch notes this by comparing the words **בגד** and **בוגד**. Rav Hirsch understands Bnei Rachel's emphasis on clothing as a type of silence. It is no coincidence that Bnei Rachel's stone on the Choshen is a Jasper or in Hebrew **ישפה**, which can be divided into the two words **יש** **פה**, there is a mouth. The leaders who generally come from Bnei Rachel are often quiet, but when they do use their voice, it makes a large impact.

In Yirmiyahu (31:15-17) Rachel's cry is listened to and Hashem says that Bnei Yisrael will return **ושבו בנים לגבולם**. While Bnei Rachel are different than the stereotypical Shevet Yehuda leader, they are still strong and great leaders. We see that there is more than one manner of successful leadership.



---

הלכה

---



## צידת צבי

מי איכא בכולי שבת פטור ומותר והאמר שמואל כל פטורי דשבת פטור  
אבל אסור בר מהני תלת דפטור ומותר צידת צבי וצידת נחש ומפיס מורסא.

The gemara (Shabbat 3a) describes the three actions where one is not only patur but the action is also mutar, different than the usual rule where one is patur yet the action is assur. They are: trapping a deer, trapping a snake, and *mafis morsa* (popping a pimple).

Later on in the gemara (106b), there are two mishnayot that present several examples of trapping a deer, where one is chayav<sup>1</sup>. How are the characteristics of trapping in these mishnayot different from those in the above gemara (3a)?

In order to fully evaluate these issues, there are two main aspects of trapping deer that require consideration. The first aspect is *tzeida gemura*, the full melacha of trapping. The second is *machshava l'tzeida*, the thought and intent of trapping. By assessing these two concepts, the apparent contradiction will be clarified.

The first of the two major aspects of the melacha which affects the prohibition of tzeida is the requirement of *tzeida gemura*, a complete act of trapping. If one partially traps the deer, it is

---

<sup>1</sup> These are the cases depicted in the mishnayot:

- a. A man locks his door after a deer runs in the house - chayav.
- b. If two people lock the door – patur. However, if two people lock the door because one could not do it alone, both are chayav.
- c. If one person sits in the doorway but does not fill it, and a second comes and sits next to him and fills it – the first man is patur, the second is chayav.
- d. A man sits and fills the doorway and second man comes to sit next to him – even if the first man leaves, he is chayav and the second man is patur. [The second man is similar to a person who locks his house and finds out afterwards that, from before Shabbos, there was a deer inside.]

not halachically considered trapping and is therefore not included in the melacha at all. Tzeida by definition requires a full, complete act.

Rabbeinu Chananel (Shabbos 3a) addresses this idea. He explains that Shmuel's comment of the three actions that are patur and mutar are only applied to situations where there is an action and a *melacha gemura*. He limits the permissibility of the melacha of trapping deer to cases where the act is incomplete.

The Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 10:19) describes a case of someone who chases a deer to into a "traklin," a large area. The deer is not yet fully trapped, since it will still take considerable effort to have the deer in hand. This is not "tzeida gemura."

The second major aspect of the melacha is "machshava l'tzeida," the thought and intention of trapping. The Magen Avraham (316:11) presents the second case of the second mishna on 106b. If one person sits in the doorway and fills it completely, even if a second person comes and sits next to the first, the first person is liable and the second is exempt. The second person is exempt even if the first person ultimately leaves.

The mishna then equates this case to one of an individual who locks his house and later finds out that a deer was trapped inside from before Shabbat. Rashi comments based on this second point of the mishna that the second individual who sits in the doorway is only "watching" the deer and not trapping it – similar to a case of one who locks his house and the deer was trapped inside from the day before.

The Magen Avraham then quotes the Ran, who explains that adding extra shmira onto something already watched is allowed. Following this logic, this case would definitely be mutar. The second person is simply adding a layer of shmira onto the initial shmira of the first person sitting in the doorway.

He then quotes the Ramban, who explains that when the first person sat in the doorway, he only finds out afterwards that the



deer was trapped inside the house. This person is allowed to remain in the doorway until dark because the actual melacha of trapping preceded the individual's knowledge of the trapping.

This last point of the Ramban highlights the underlying idea behind all of the Rishonim: the intention of the individual locking his house, and thereby trapping the deer, is significant. Therefore, if the individual has no prior knowledge of the deer in his house when he locks it, it is as if the individual hasn't done the melacha of trapping at all.

The Rashba (Shabbos 107a) discusses both of the above issues, "tzeida gemura" and "machshava l'tzeida." He begins by quoting a Tosefta (13:6) that depicts the following scenario: one man sits at the entrance of a house and another man then traps a deer inside the house. The first man is chayav and the second is patur.

The Rashba explains that this case is synonymous to the scenario of one man locking the house and another adding a second lock. The first is chayav, and the second is patur, because the second man did not do the literal act of trapping. He simply added "shmirah al shmirato" – a protection on top of the original protection.

Additionally, the Rashba paskens that one who locks his house with a tied up deer inside is not transgressing any melacha. His locking was performed b'heter to protect the belongings of his house, which also includes the deer.

The Rashba then continues quoting the Tosefta. This case is that of a man sitting at the entrance of his house, and only after he sits does he find out that a deer is inside. He is patur, as the trapping took place before the knowledge of the trap. This is even true if once he finds out about the deer, he has the intention of keeping it trapped. The action began b'heter, and thus the act as a whole is mutar. He is not adding to the trap.

However, the Rashba suggests that this act is *patur aval assur* because there is a possibility it was not trapped beforehand.

Therefore, his continuation in sitting on the doorway is an act of *tzeida*. Following that, the Rashba quotes the opinion that it is truly *patur u'mutar*, for the knowledge came second after the act.

The Yerushalmi, quoted and paskened by the Rashba, is in direct contrast to the *psak* of the Ran, quoted in the Magen Avraham. The Yerushalmi allows one to lock his house with a deer inside as it is done for the safety of his belongings. This is allowed even if he intends to trap the deer. Conversely, the Ran explains that it is a *psik reisha*<sup>2</sup>, thus one should not be lenient and should make sure not to lock the door.

In the examples mentioned on 106b the halacha is *chayav* because they each fulfill the conditions required to constitute the whole *melacha* of trapping. However, the *gemara* on 3a states that trapping deer is *patur u'mutar* when the *melacha* lacks either *tzeida* *gemura* and/or *machshava l'tzeida*.

The Mishna Berura (316:25) paskens that the second individual who sits next to the first individual in the house opening can stay seated in the opening, even if he intends to continue to trap the deer. The second individual's actions are *mutar*, for he isn't doing any new action. The second individual is simply continuing to guard the deer which was already trapped.

Similar to the Ran's challenge on the Rashba, the Mishna Berura adds that a person may not lock his house in order to guard the possessions inside if he knows that a deer is inside. It would be a *psik reisha*, which is *asur* from the Torah, even if the person's intention is to guard his objects.

---

<sup>2</sup> This case is a "*psik reisha d'nicha lei*" which is a category of *melachot* where a permissible action inevitably causes a forbidden action, and that forbidden action has an outcome that benefits the person. Here, for example, a man simply locks his house (a permissible action), but by doing that, he traps the deer (a forbidden action), which is to his benefit.

Lastly, the Mishna Berura writes that if a person is sitting in the doorway, filling only half of it, and a second person comes to fill the rest, the second person is chayav because he causes the tzeida gemura, making it a full melacha of trapping.



## Pouring the Tea

The gemara (Shabbat 75a) records a machloket between Rav and Shmuel concerning which melacha is violated if one slaughters an animal. Rav says: חייב משום צובע. Shmuel says: נטילת נשמה. The gemara concludes that according to Rav, he is liable even for tzoveah as well as for נטילת נשמה. Where is there a deliberate action of dyeing when slaughtering an animal? Rav explains that when killing an animal, the person wishes for the neck area to be dyed with blood so that it will have a fresher look and thus be more appealing to buyers.

With regards to the melacha of *dosh*, we have the principle of קרקע בגדולי קרקע. The melacha applies only to things which grow from the ground. Based on this, the Tosafot Rid (Shabbat 75b) asks why the gemara doesn't respond to Rav with אין צביעה באוכלין – there is no dyeing with food? Just as גדולי קרקע is a category, so too food should be considered a category.

The Tosafot Rid answers that the gemara didn't apply this concept to food, since food isn't an important enough category within מטלטלין. There is a clear distinction between things that are גדולי קרקע and things that aren't. Thus, it is appropriate to have the concept of קרקע בגדולי קרקע, אין דישה אלא בגדולי קרקע, but food is not deserving of its own category. According to the Tosafot Rid one cannot dye food on Shabbat.

Nevertheless, there are many other poskim who are of the opinion that אין צביעה באוכלין. The Chatam Sofer comments on the next sugya in the gemara regarding the melacha of עיבוד. Just as there is the principle of אין עיבוד באוכלין, we can deduce from their juxtaposition that אין צביעה באוכלין. The Shibolei Haleket writes that דרך אין צביעה באוכלין, expressing his agreement with the Yerei'im on this matter. He suggests that when one is coloring food with food, it is completely permissible. However, if one of the components is not food, the psak may change.

For example, one must be careful not to wipe his fingers on a napkin after eating strawberries, in case the residue colors the napkin. Due to the particularity of the language of the Shibolei Haleket, one may suggest the use of the word דרך means that one's intention plays a key role in determining whether or not you would be liable. On the other hand, as it is not normal to intentionally color one food with another food, in most cases this would be permissible. If, however, you have the intention to color your food, it would be prohibited.

However, the Avnei Nezer points out that the term אין צביעה באוכלין was actually coined by the Shibolei Haleket and not used by the Yerei'im. The Yerei'im only discusses being careful about wiping residue off one's fingers, not the general concept of צביעה באוכלין. He concludes that since we have the opinion of the Tosafot Rid expressly saying there is צביעה באוכלין, one should be stringent and follow him. However, normative halacha follows the psak of the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 320:19-20) that אין צביעה באוכלין.

One might also suggest that Rav and Shmuel agree that אין צביעה באוכלין, but they argue whether the animal hide is presently considered food.

The above sources understood that the machloket between Rav and Shmuel is based on the question of צביעה באוכלין. The Pri Megadim on the other hand, interprets the dispute in a different fashion. He suggests that the argument is based around kavana: whether one has the intention to color the neck or not. He argues that Rav claims that when one slaughters an animal with the intention to sell it, inherent in that action is also the intention to color the neck to ensure it looks fresh..

Shmuel disagrees. Just because one slaughters the animal, it does not mean he automatically also has the intention of dyeing the neck. Accordingly, if you have the intention to color your food then it is prohibited to do so. However, since it isn't the norm to color with food, אין צביעה באוכלין. The Ben Ish Chai has a similar opinion to the Pri Megadim, saying that as soon as you have the intention to color the food, it becomes prohibited for you to do so.

Based on all these views, one can conclude that there are three ways to interpret this machloket: (1) Is there a prohibition of צביעה באוכלין? (2) Is the animal hide considered אוכל? (3) Is the intention to dye inherent in the definition of the melacha of צובע?

Until now, we have been discussing solid food, but does this also apply to liquids? In the Mishkan, the dyes used were in a liquid form and therefore may be more problematic than solid dyes. The Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 9:14) says it is not permissible to make any sort of dye or paint. Extrapolating from this, the Ben Ish Chai states that one should be more careful about tzoveah with liquids than with solids.

Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yabia Omer II O.C. 20) has an extensive teshuvah discussing our topic. He suggests that אין צביעה באוכלין applies only when both the coloring agent and the item being colored are edible. In the case in the gemara, even if one agrees that the hide is technically food, the blood is certainly not, and therefore, according to Rav, he is liable for tzoveah.

The Yalkut Yosef says explicitly that just as אין צביעה באוכלין, so too אין צביעה במשקין. He explains that syrups used to add flavor to drinks, which also happen to change the color of the drinks, are permissible. While there are those who are more stringent in regards to putting the syrup in first, then adding the water, so that a new color isn't being created just an old one is diluted, there is no need to be machmir in this way.

A similar question arises regarding diluting wine with water, whether it's necessary to add water to the wine or whether it is equally permissible to add the wine to the water.

In conclusion, there is no tzoveah when it comes to edible liquids that are added for taste. Tea and coffee are thus not problematic and may be added to the water. Although one may opt to take a more machmir stance, and pour the hot water from a kli sheni on the tea sense or coffee, the Mishna Brurah (318:39) writes that the optimum method for preparing tea is to add the tea sense to the hot water. In the Shaar Hatziyun he notes that one should not be concerned about tzoveah since אין צביעה באוכלין.





## Can I Vaccinate? Can I Not?

There is a contemporary halachic discussion as to whether or not one is required to vaccinate to prevent illness. Due to recent outbreaks of measles, mumps, and chicken pox in Orthodox communities in both Israel and America, the issue of vaccination has come to the forefront of the Orthodox Jewish community. Vaccinations have been a source of confusion and contention, primarily from studies allegedly linking the MMR vaccine to the recent rise of autism. Additionally, some fear that vaccinations come with potential side effects or complications, while others fear that unless everyone is vaccinated, we may never eradicate harmful and fatal diseases.

Before discussing the actual halacha of vaccinations, it is important to note that there is a mitzvah in the Torah (Devarim 4:15) to guard one's health: וּנְשַׁמְרֶתֶם מְאֹד לְנַפְשֵׁיכֶם – “And you shall watch yourselves very well.”

In an article, “What Does Jewish Law Say About Vaccination,” Rabbi Yehuda Shurpin writes:

Guarding your own health doesn't only make sense, it's actually a *mitzvah*. This means that even if you don't want to do it, for whatever reason, you are still obligated to do so. The Torah teaches us that our body is a gift from G-d, and we are therefore not the owners of it and shouldn't cause it any damage. It is not enough to deal with health issues as they arise; we must take precautions to avoid danger.

The final chapter of the *Code of Jewish Law* [Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 427] emphasizes that “just as there is a positive commandment to build a guardrail around the perimeter of a rooftop lest someone fall, so too are we obligated to guard ourselves from anything that would endanger our lives, as the verse states, [Devarim 4:9] ‘Only guard yourself and greatly guard your soul.’ As an example of this ruling, Rabbi Moshe Isserles

(known as the Rama), one of Judaism's outstanding halachic poskim, writes [on Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 116:5], that when a plague breaks out in a city, the inhabitants of that city should not wait for the plague to spread. Rather, they, with some exceptions, are obligated to try and flee the city at the onset of the outbreak."

It would seem that there is no difference between running away from a city when there is an epidemic and getting a vaccination.

There are additional halachic obligations as well. Rabbi Yair Hoffman writes<sup>1</sup>:

The verse in Parashas Ki Seitzei (Devarim 22:2) discusses the mitzvah of hashavas aveidah, returning a lost object, with the words, "V'hasheivoso lo," "and you shall return it to him." The gemara in Sanhedrin (73a), however, includes within its understanding of these words the obligation of returning "his own life to him as well." For example, if thieves are threatening to pounce upon him, there is an obligation of "V'hasheivoso lo." In other words, this verse is the source for the mitzvah of saving someone's life. It is highly probable that it is to this general mitzvah that the Shulchan Aruch refers in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 325. This is certainly the case with vaccinations, because vaccinations save lives.

But when there is no epidemic the question of getting a general vaccination seems a little more complex. Are you allowed to put yourself in danger for a greater good?

Rav Asher Weiss writes<sup>2</sup>:

It would therefore seem perfectly obvious that there is a *mitzvah* to vaccinate children in order to prevent them from contracting terrible diseases. However, some cast aspersions and claim that since vaccination sometimes causes children to become sick, it is improper to endanger the children in the immediate term in the attempt to prevent future disease and danger.

---

<sup>1</sup> [theyeshivaworld.com/news/headlines-breaking-stories/520608/anti-vaxxers-and-halacha-2.html](http://theyeshivaworld.com/news/headlines-breaking-stories/520608/anti-vaxxers-and-halacha-2.html)

<sup>2</sup> [torahmusings.com/2019/04/is-it-permissible-to-refrain-from-vaccinating-children/](http://torahmusings.com/2019/04/is-it-permissible-to-refrain-from-vaccinating-children/)

However, in my humble opinion, this claim is completely and totally devoid of substance, because all studies that were done responsibly establish beyond the shadow of a doubt that, with the exception of mild side-effects, it is not at all common for vaccines to have severe ramifications, and there are no known cases where death was caused by vaccination for certain, even though hundreds of millions of children have been routinely vaccinated. On the other hand, as the number of people who do not vaccinate increases, danger increases as well; if many people refuse vaccination, there is a risk that epidemics will break out and cause mass fatalities, as happened before these vaccines were developed.

Certainly one is obligated to undergo a procedure that entails some risk in order to treat a disease that is liable to place him in great danger; the disagreement was only about the parameters of the principle that one places his own life ahead of another's life ("*chayecha kodmin le-chayei chavercha*"), but it is obvious that all would agree that when it comes to his own life, he is obligated to place himself in remote danger in order to save himself from proximate danger.

Likewise, in the present case, a person is obligated to vaccinate his children because vaccination is not dangerous at all, except in extraordinarily rare cases, whereas lack of vaccination endangers those very children. This is all the more certain given that lack of vaccination constitutes public endangerment."<sup>3</sup>

In *Contemporary Halakhic Problems* vol. 7, Rav J. David Bleich notes that "vaccinations are not without serious, albeit rare, side effects. That is equally true of even the most commonplace drugs, including aspirin and Tylenol." The Ramban in *Torat Ha-Adam* says "There is naught in medicaments but anger; that cures this one kills that one." Rav Bleich explains:

The potency of a drug renders its efficacious; it is that self same potency that, on rare occasions, also causes

---

<sup>3</sup> See also Tiferes Yisrael, Yoma 8:3

danger. Fortunately, the risks associated with inoculation against childhood diseases are so extremely remote as to fade into insignificance when measured against the dangers of non-inoculation... In recent years, there have been a number of outbreaks of childhood diseases in several Orthodox Jewish communities in which a significant number of children were not immunized. In 2001 there was an outbreak of measles among unvaccinated children. In 2009 there were multiple instances of mumps in Orthodox summer camps, which upon the return of children to school in the fall, spread further within the community. During the fall of 2011 there was an outbreak of measles in Orthodox enclaves in Brooklyn. In 2013 a measles outbreak erupted in Borough Park and was traced to an unvaccinated youngster who contracted measles during a visit to England and upon his return to his country transmitted the disease to other unvaccinated family members.

Rav Bleich ultimately shares many different approaches as to why vaccinations are not only recommended, but are a halachic responsibility for parents to vaccinate their children and themselves. The *Nemukei Yosef* says that “there are dangers so remote as to be of such little significance that they do not require the matter of *shomer peta’im Hashem* to justify their assumption. When the danger is so far-fetched and so statistically insignificant a person cannot plead that he may avoid a mitzvah because he is unwilling to rely on his *shomer peta’im Hashem* (Hashem protects the unwise).”

Rav Bleich opines that the harm of the vaccination is so insignificant and is for a much greater and healthier purpose. “Childhood vaccinations are not accompanied by any significant danger.”

The author then states:

The perfection of vaccines that immunize against disease results in a situation in which failure to vaccinate is tantamount to willfully exposing oneself to *tzinim pachim*. Once Divine Providence has made a vaccine safely available, any misfortune resulting from failing to avail oneself of immunization is to be attributed to human negligence rather than to divine decree. Exposure to the disease without immunization is equivalent to exposure to the elements without protection. Allowing a child to be exposed to the ravages of communicable disease is no

different from exposing a child to tzinim pachim. Any resultant harm is not at the hands of Heaven but is *derech ikesh* for which the parent bears full responsibility.

In Rabbi Tatz's book, *Dangerous Disease & Dangerous Therapy*, he writes:

All parents have an obligation to vaccinate as this is normative practice throughout the world, and is included in the parents' basic obligation to care for their child... Additionally, Rav Elyashiv is quoted as ruling that parents of vaccinated children can insist that all other children in the class be vaccinated as well, so as to limit their exposure to disease.

Today, the risk of side effects from vaccines are minimal for the majority of people, and the danger is miniscule in comparison with the danger of not being vaccinated. To protect one's health, to protect the health of others, to save one's own life, to protect the greater good, to take prevention in avoiding danger...these are all considerations one must take into account.

The majority of Poskim rule that parents are obligated to vaccinate their children as this is normative behavior in today's society and NOT to do so is irresponsible and negligent behavior.



## **Beit Hamikdash: To Build or Not to Build**

I have been taught my entire life that the third Beit Hamikdash will be created during the times of Mashiach, when Hashem allows the structure to descend from the Heavens. More recently, I became aware that this idea was not that simple, but in fact very complex”.

In Parshat Terumah (Shemot 25:8), Hashem commands Am Yisrael: **וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וּשְׁכֵנְתִי בְתוֹכָם** – “And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.” Rambam in Sefer Hamitzvot (Mitzvat Asei 20), as well as the Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 95) and others count the building of the Beit Hamikdash as a mitzvah.

Furthermore, the performance of approximately 200 other mitzvot, (about one third of our 613) are dependent on the existence of a Beit Hamikdash! If we have a mitzvah to build a Beit Hamikdash, and so many other mitzvot are dependent on its existence, why are we not building it?

The starting point for the answer begins with a question: Which comes first – the arrival of the Mashiach or the building of the Beit Hamikdash?

If Mashiach comes first and the Beit Hamikdash is dependent on his coming, our question is resolved. We are not fulfilling the mitzvah of building the Beit Hamikdash today because we must wait for the arrival of Mashiach.

But is this correct? Although we have a number of prophecies regarding the End of Days (see Yeshayahu 2:1, 11:11), we find conflicting sources whether the prophecies predict the coming of Mashiach first or the building of the Beit Hamikdash first.

Rambam (Hilchot Melachim 11:1) writes:

המלך המשיח עתיד לעמד ולהחזיר מלכות דוד לישנה לממשלה הראשונה.  
ובונה המקדש ומקבץ נדחי ישראל.

Mashiach will arise and re-establish the monarchy of David as it was in former times. He will build the sanctuary and gather in the dispersed of Israel.

The Rambam states that it is Mashiach's job to rebuild the Beit Hamikdash, implying that Mashiach must come into power before the building process. However, the gemara (Megillah 17b-18a), in discussing the order of the brachot in Shemoneh Esrei, explains:

וכיון שנבנית ירושלים בא דוד שנאמר אחר ישובו בני ישראל ובקשו את  
ה' אלקיהם ואת דוד מלכם. (הושע ג:ה)

And once Jerusalem is rebuilt, David (Mashiach) will come, as it is stated: Afterward the children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their G-d and David their king.

Here the gemara states the opposite; the Beit Hamikdash being built is actually a catalyst for the coming of Mashiach. The Rambam (ibid. 12:2), however, puts in a disclaimer to his approach:

But regarding all these matters and similar [order of events in *acharit hayamim*], no one knows how it will be until it will be. For these matters were unclear to the Nevi'im. The Sages, as well, did not have a tradition regarding these matters... We should not dwell on these matters, as they do not result in either the fear or love of G-d.

We must accept the fact that the answer to our previous question is unclear. We are not certain whether the arrival of Mashiach or the building of the Beit Hamikdash will come first.

We are left with yet another crucial question: Who actually will build the Beit Hamikdash? Many of us have been told when we were younger that for each mitzvah we do, Hashem builds another brick of the Beit Hamikdash in shamayim. But is it so clear that Hashem will even be the one building it? Perhaps it is up to man to be build it on earth. After all, man has the ability to fulfill all other mitzvot. It appears that this a matter of dispute between the Rambam and Rashi. The Rambam (ibid. 11:4) writes:



אם עשה והצליח ובנה מקדש במקומו וקבץ נדחי ישראל הרי זה משיח בודאי. ויתקן את העולם כלו לעבד את ה' ביהוד שנאמר כי אז אהפך אל עמים שפה ברורה לקרא כלם בשם ה' ולעבדו שכם אחד.

If he succeeds in his efforts and defeats the enemies around and builds the sanctuary in its proper place and gathers the dispersed of Israel, he is definitely the Mashiach.

If according to the Rambam, one of Mashiach's jobs is to build the Beit Hamikdash, he is clearly of the opinion that it will be built by humans. On the other hand, Rashi writes (Sukkah 41a, Rosh Hashana 30a):

דאין בנין ב"ה דוחה י"ט ה"מ בנין הבנוי בידי אדם אבל מקדש העתיד שאנו מצפין בנוי ומשוכלל הוא יגלה ויבא משמים שנא' (שמות טו) מקדש ה' כוננו ידיך.

A person is not allowed to build a Beit Hamikdash at night or on Yom Tov, but for the future Beit Hamikdash this rule doesn't apply, because Hashem is building it, as it says in Shemot: "The Sanctuary, which Your hands, Hashem, established."

Rashi explicitly states here that the third Beit Hamikdash will be built by Hashem. Let us consider the ramifications of each side of this dispute. According to Rashi, to regain the Beit Hamikdash, we need to wait for Mashiach and then watch it descend from the sky.

Additionally, we never have to worry about it being destroyed like the past Batei Mikdash, as this one will be built by Hashem and will therefore be eternal. However, rejecting the Rambam's approach also means that we cannot be proactive in building the Beit Hamikdash, and we therefore wonder how we are to go about fulfilling the mitzvah of building the Beit Hamikdash.

Although it seems that Rashi disagrees with the Rambam, when we look further into the sources, even Rashi appears to assign the task of building the Beit Hamikdash to human hands. Rashi, in his commentary on Yechezkel (43:11) which refers to the dimensions of the Beit Hamikdash, writes: ילמדו ענייני המדות מפיך שידעו לעשותם לעת קץ. The Navi is instructed to provide us with the

dimensions of the Beit Hamikdash so that we will know how to build it in the future.

We are now left with the task of reconciling not only the dispute between the Rambam and Rashi, but also the apparent contradictory opinions of Rashi and himself. There are at least two different approaches to resolving these issues.

The Maharam Schick (Responsa Y.D. 213) refers to the gemara (Sanhedrin 98a) which quotes a phrase from a pasuk from Yeshayahu (60:22) regarding the ultimate Redemption: **בעתה אחישנה**. This is seemingly contradictory, as Hashem is saying that He will hasten its arrival at its time. The gemara explains: **זכו אחישנה לא זכו בעתה**. If they merit it, I will hasten its arrival. If they don't merit it, it will take place at its designated time.

The Maharam Schick suggests that there are possible scenarios. If we are not so worthy of the coming of Mashiach, Hashem will bring it at its set time and we will have to build the Beit Hamikdash ourselves (Rambam's approach). However, if we merit it, Hashem will bring Mashiach before the deadline and the Beit Hamikdash will descend from the sky.

On the other hand, many mefarshim present the possibility of a combination of the two opinions of Rambam and Rashi. The Lubavitcher Rebbe offers his opinion based on a Rambam in Hilchot Beit Habechirah (1:4) that states:

בנין שבנה שלמה כבר מפרש במלכים. וכן בנין העתיד להבנות אף על פי שהוא כתוב ביחזקאל אינו מפרש ומבאר. ואנשי בית שני כשבנו בימי עזרא בגורו כבנין שלמה ומעין דברים המפרשים ביחזקאל

The building which Solomon built has already been described in Sefer Melachim. Similarly, the Temple which will be built in the future which is mentioned in Yechezkel is not described clearly or completely. The people of the Second Commonwealth built their Temple like Solomon's with some of the features described explicitly in Ezekiel.

Based on this Rambam, the Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that just like with Bayit Sheni, where we had to open the Tanach in

order to know how to build the Beit Hamikdash, the same will be true regarding Bayit Shlishi. We will build what is clear based on the text, and Hashem will finish building the rest. In other words, we will be the “stage 1” builders of the Mikdash, and Hashem will then come in and build “stage 2”. According to the Rebbe, the third Beit Hamikdash will be in line with both the Rambam’s and Rashi’s opinions, and both man and Hashem will build it.

Similarly, the Arvei Nachal writes that the third Beit Hamikdash will be built by both us and Hashem, albeit in a different way. He quotes the Navi Yeshayahu (62:6):

עַל חוֹמוֹתַי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם הַפְקַדְתִּי שׁוֹמְרִים כָּל הַיּוֹם וְכָל הַלַּיְלָה.

Upon your walls, Jerusalem, I have set watchmen, all day and all night.

The Arvei Nachal (Derasha Parshat Shelach) says that we are the *shomrim* to which the pasuk refers. Every Jew contributes to the building of the third Beit Hamikdash. Every mitzvah we perform ‘adds another brick’ to Hashem’s structure of the Beit Hamikdash in shamayim.

On the flip side, however, with every sin we commit we are also taking away a brick from the structure. Therefore, the Arvei Nachal says that when the pasuk says *shomrim*, it’s referring to our responsibility of not only to bring about the rebuilding of the third Beit Hamikdash, but of also being the watchmen over it. We protect the Beit Hamikdash every day by ensuring that the people around us, as well as ourselves, are building the Mikdash through mitzvot, and not destroying it through sinning.

Rav Kook holds a different position. He writes (עין איה ברכות) that regarding all locations in Israel, we conquer the land in order to attain it. However, the land for the Beit Hamikdash cannot simply be conquered. Just as when David Hamelech conquered all of Israel, he specifically bought Har Hamoriah from Aravna Heyevusi (Shmuel Bet 24:24) in order to build the Beit Hamikdash, Har Habayit must be attained in the same way. Rav Kook continues to explain that in order to do this, the other nations of the world must

be willing to give the land to us with recognition that we are entitled to it. Unfortunately, we are not in the place and time where this appears realistic.

In practical terms, how should we act on this matter? Rabbi Chaim Jachter writes<sup>1</sup> that when asked, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, would quote the Rambam that Mashiach will build the Beit Hamikdash, and said that this shows that those who want to build the third Beit Hamikdash today are incorrect.

Rabbi Jachter also writes that Rav Yehuda Amital once responded with Rav Kook's assertion that Divine Providence works through the Halacha. Therefore, if there currently exists halachic impediments to rebuilding the Beit Hamikdash, this indicates that the Divine will does not want the Beit Hamikdash to be built today through human hands. We know from previous sources mentioned that this is indeed the case.

R' Akiva Eiger asserts that we must consider the opinion of the Raavad (Hilchot Beit Habechirah 6:14) that Har Habayit is no longer holy, and korbanot cannot be offered on Har Habayit before the arrival of Mashiach (who will re-sanctify the area).

Rav J. David Bleich points out the general inability to resolve halachic disputes concerning the Beit Hamikdash due to the lack of a tradition on how to conduct the Temple ritual. Only with the arrival of Mashiach will this tradition be renewed.

It is now clear that the building of the third Beit Hamikdash is a complex topic, with many facets and points to address. We have touched upon many of the main issues and the Torah and Rabbinic opinions on them, allowing us to understand that building the Beit Hamikdash is not as simple as pulling out the yellow tape and hammering away.

Rather, we must take a look at ourselves and understand that the existence of the next and last Beit Hamikdash is in our hands, dependent on our choices and actions.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Can we offer Korbanot today?," Kol Torah vol. 10, 5761/2000.

---

May we continue to constantly develop ourselves as members of Bnei Yisrael and strive for the fulfillment of our mitzvot in order to *literally* build the third Beit Hamikdash, *bimheira beyameinu*.



## תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם

It's Rosh Chodesh and you didn't have enough time to daven Musaf after Shacharit. It's already time to daven Mincha. Should you daven Mincha first or Musaf first?

Halacha, like all legal systems, operates based on a series of rules. Once one understands the rules that a system operates with, one can understand the system better and apply general rules to specific cases.

There is a rule in halacha that if one is presented with a mitzvah that is more common and a mitzvah that is less common, one performs the more common mitzvah first – תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם. Therefore, in the Mincha vs. Musaf case mentioned above, one would daven Mincha first because it is a daily obligation (Brachot 28a; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 286:4). From where does the rule of תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם originate?

The Torah states (Bamidbar 28:23), מלבד עלת הבקר אשר לעלת – “You shall present these in addition to the morning portion of the regular burnt offering.” This pasuk comes after the delineation of the Korbanot unique to Pesach. The Torah then explains that the Korban Tamid must also be brought.

The Mishna (Zevachim 10:1)<sup>1</sup> codifies תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם bringing proof from the korbanot, referencing the above pasuk:

כל התדיר מחברו, קודם את חברו. התמידים קודמים למוספין, מוספי שבת קודמין למוספי ראש חדש, מוספי ראש חדש קודמין למוספי ראש השנה, שנאמר (במדבר כח), מלבד עלת הבקר אשר לעלת התמיד תעשו את אלה.

Anything that is [offered] more frequently than something else, precedes it [when both are offered]. The Tamid precede the Musaf offerings; the Musaf offerings of Shabbat precede the Musaf offerings of Rosh Chodesh; the Musaf

---

<sup>1</sup> This concept is also applied in a sugya in Zevachim (89a), debating the proper order for the Korban Tamid and Korban Musaf on Pesach.

offerings of Rosh Chodesh precede the Musaf offerings of Rosh HaShanah, as it says: (Bamidbar 28:23) "You shall offer these in addition to the Olah of the morning, which is for a continual Olah."

Since the Korban Tamid is brought every day, it takes precedence over the Korban Musaf for Rosh Chodesh, which is brought once a month. The gemara (Horayot 12b) specifies the source of the mishnah's concept of **תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם**:

מנא הני מילי אמר אביי דאמר קרא (במדבר כח, כג) מלבד עולת הבקר אשר לעולת התמיד. מכדי. כתיב עולת הבקר, עולת התמיד למה לי. הכי קאמר רחמנא כל דתדירה קדמה.

From where are these matters derived? Abaye said: It is as the verse states: "Beside the burnt-offering of the morning, which is for a daily burnt-offering" (Numbers 28:23). Once it is written: "The burnt-offering of the morning," why do I need: "A daily burnt-offering"? Clearly the reference is to the daily burnt-offering of the morning. This is what the Merciful One is saying: Any matter that is more frequent takes precedence. Since it is a daily offering, it is more frequent. Therefore, it precedes other offerings

The gemara (Zevachim 91a) adds an important qualification. The rule that **תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם** only applies if one of the mitzvot in question is obligated to be fulfilled more frequently than the other. If one of the mitzvot in question is not obligated to be fulfilled more frequently, but rather happens to occur more frequently, the rule of **תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם** cannot be applied.

Therefore, between a Korban Shelamim and a Korban Chatat, the rule of **תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם** does not apply. Even though the Korban Shelamim is more prevalent (because one could donate the korban whenever he wished), neither is commanded to be brought more frequently than the other.

A more practical example of **תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם** is discussed in Mishnayot Pesachim (10:2) regarding the order of brachot during Kiddush on Leil Haseder:

מזגו לו כוס ראשון, בית שמאי אומרים, מברך על היום, ואחר כך מברך על היין. ובית הלל אומרים, מברך על היין, ואחר כך מברך על היום:



The first cup [of wine] would be mixed; Beit Shammai says, "He recites a blessing for the day [first], and afterwards recites a blessing over the wine." But Beit Hillel says, "He recites a blessing over the wine [first], and afterwards recites a blessing for the day."

The gemara (Pesachim 114a) explains the reasoning behind Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel. Beit Shammai argues that we are having wine because of the obligation of kiddush on Pesach, therefore, the bracha on the day should come first. Beit Hillel invokes the rule of תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם (Since the bracha on wine is more frequently required than the bracha of kiddush, the bracha of wine should come first). The gemara concludes that the halacha is like Beit Hillel.

תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם is also a factor in determining in the following cases:

Regarding the order of brachot in kiddush on the first night of Sukkot: According to the rules of תדיר ושאינו תדיר, תדיר קודם, one should say the bracha of *shehecheyanu* before the bracha of *leishev basukkah* because one is obligated to say the bracha of *shehecheyanu* more frequently than one is obligated to say the bracha of *leishev basukkah*. However, since the bracha of *shehecheyanu* in this case is on both the kiddush and the mitzvah of sukkah, the rules of תדיר קודם do not apply, as one is only obligated to say the bracha of *shehecheyanu* once one says the other brachot (*borei pri hagafen, mekadesh Yisrael vehazmanim, and leishev basukkah*). (Sukkah 56a, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 643:1)

A man should put on his tallit before his tefillin because the mitzvah of tallit applies every day, whereas the mitzvah of tefillin occurs less frequently (one is not obligated to perform the mitzvah of tefillin on Shabbat and Yamim Tovim). (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 10:2)

When saying Birkat Hamazon on a Yom Tov that falls out on Shabbat, one is obligated to mention the *me'ain hame'ora* for both Shabbat (*Retzei*) as well as Yom Tov (*Ya'aleh V'Yavo*). Since one is obligated to include *Retzei* more frequently than *Ya'aleh V'Yavo*, one recites *Retzei* first.



---

מחשבה

---



## **You are What You Eat:**

### **Food for Thought**

Judaism, a religion that seeks to reveal and understand the deeper meaning of every aspect of life, is intrinsically connected to the concept of food. Food has naturally been an important facet of life ever since mankind was created. It provides vital nutrients and energy, and also allows for one's growth, development, and productivity.

Nowadays, whether it's shopping for Pesach or researching the nearest Chabad house for a vacation, food is continually on our minds. As a basic necessity, it makes sense that much of our lives is spent thinking about or eating food. Thus, as something we spend so much time on, our relationship with food must possess a serious and deep meaning. What is it that is so profound and significant about food?

Firstly, one must understand the origin of food itself, and gain a historical perspective on our source of sustenance. The first mention in Torah regarding the concept of food is found in toward the very beginning of Sefer Bereishit (1:11):

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים תְּדַשָּׂא הָאָרֶץ דֶּשֶׁא עֵשֶׂב מְזִירֵעַ וְרֹעַ עֵץ פֶּרִי עֵשֶׂה פֶּרִי לַמִּינֵהוּ  
אֲשֶׁר זֶרַעוּ בּוֹ עַל הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי כֵן:

And G-d said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it."

Hashem ordained that the world be filled with plants, trees, and other sources of sustenance from which one could derive food to eat. Food became the essential thing that would allow us to live as ovdei Hashem.

Interestingly, Rashi (on the same pasuk) explains that ideally, G-d would have created the tree itself to taste exactly like the fruit it produced. One would have potentially been able to eat the bark of the tree and be completely satisfied. Instead, G-d created the tree to

produce fruit, making the fruit, that tastes entirely different from the tree itself, the sustenance from which a human could derive benefit from. Why, though, did G-d not choose to create the ideal tree, a tree from which we could take more complete advantage of for our own good? Surely, we would have benefited more from it!

The Pachad Yitzchak (Shavuot #13, 22) explains that in a perfect, ideal world, every means towards something would be equally important as its end (i.e. baking a cake would be as important as having the cake made; trying to find *matzah* to eat would be as important as fulfilling the *mitzvah* of eating *matzah* itself). In reality, however, we put a great focus on the end (i.e. one won't have the cake if he doesn't bake it; one won't fulfill the *mitzvah* of eating *matzah* until he eats it). Although it's important to try, the end result is what really counts. If one does not see an end result, the effort put in is viewed as worthless.

We see this concept manifested in the way G-d created the tree and its fruits. The fruit is the end result we put emphasis on, while the tree is the vehicle used to reach the goal of producing fruit. (One exception to this is talmud Torah, whereby every step is significant. Even taking a sefer off from a shelf counts as learning Torah.) A reason why G-d determined that fruits taste different than the tree itself is so we could realize the importance of the fruit, the end goal that we strive to achieve.

While this is a general lesson in life, we see that the actual way that G-d created fruit beholds great significance. The agricultural design that we're familiar with was purposefully constructed in order to teach us a more profound lesson, the lesson that the fruit is the treasure that lies beneath the sand, and digging it out is only a means towards the goal, but not equal to the goal itself.

It is also important to note Adam HaRishon's relationship to the tree and other sources of food in general. In Bereishit (1:29), it says:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי כָל  
הָאָרֶץ וְאֵת כָּל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּו פְּרִי עֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ.

G-d said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food."

The Or Hachaim explains that Adam was indeed allowed to eat from every tree that produced fruit, except from the *etz hada'at*. Why is it that Adam HaRishon was forbidden from eating from the *etz hada'at* when the *pasuk* clearly stated “and every seed-bearing tree... they shall be yours for food”? He answers that the *etz hada'at* was not a fruit bearing tree, unlike all other trees that were created. The *etz hada'at* represented perfection; the tree itself was the fruit, the “ideal” tree mentioned before. It was the ultimate symbol of the ideal, where the means towards something are as important as its end product.

Why was Adam forbidden from eating from the tree? What was G-d trying to teach when creating the *etz hada'at* and making it forbidden? The Midrash Tadshei explains that the underlying reason was to teach that man has to separate himself from a hedonistic lifestyle.

Man's natural tendency is to follow his inclination and pursue whatever he desires. The *etz hada'at* represented the idea that man cannot have whatever he wills. Ultimately, G-d is in control of the world, and not man. By separating Adam from the mindset that he alone runs his life, and that he can do whatever he pleases, a precedent could be set for the rest of mankind to abide by whatever G-d decrees. By holding himself back from the *etz hada'at*, Adam was supposed to have realized that G-d is in complete control, and thus form an everlasting relationship with Him as his creator. Adam's choice of eating from the *etz hada'at* was an expression of the power of the evil inclination, the *yetzer hara*, deviating from the will of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

From then on, food took on an extra layer of meaning – it represents the ability to choose morality or immorality. Food can be misused and abused, but it can also create harmony with others, and with Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Now that we have discussed the origin of food and some of the lessons we learn from it, how can one relate to it today? Food is defined as any nutritious substance that people or animals eat or drink in order to maintain life and growth. This embodies the physical aspect of food, and we can relate to it because without it, we would cease to exist.

How can we spiritually relate to food and form a deeper connection with it? The answer, on a simple level, is that food is a gift G-d graciously gave to us, from Him to His creation. It is not merely a regular physical entity, but also beholds a deeper spiritual significance as it allows us to serve the Almighty. Rav Melamed (Peninei Halacha Brachot) alludes to this point, explaining that we eat food to give us strength and put us in a better mood. This, in turn, allows us to better serve G-d, fix the world by delving into the Torah's value system, and become a light amongst the nations.

The Rambam discusses health matters towards the very beginning of his Mishneh Torah, emphasizing the need to treat our bodies well. The only way one can fulfill halachot or mitzvot is if one keeps his body in optimal shape. We must use physicalities such as food to elevate our being in order that we can serve G-d better.

The Rambam also answers a theoretical question that is linked to this idea: Should a person separate himself from all physicalities so that he doesn't become burdened with them? The Rambam (Hilchot Deot 3:1-2) rejects this idea, for everything that was given to us can be used for the greater good. We must take the common physicalities of this world and elevate them, but at the same time not become too engrossed in them. We cannot become too sensitized to food, but must use it to optimize our full potential.

The idea that food is of spiritual significance can be taken to an even deeper level. To prelude this point, one must first understand how something as independent and transcendent as the neshama can be contained inside the physical entity which is our bodies.

In *Asher Yatzar*, the bracha we say to give thanks to G-d for good health, we refer to G-d as *ומפליא לעשות* – “and acts wondrously”. What is this wondrous act that G-d does for man? The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 6:1) explains that the wonder that G-d does for us is that He allows for our neshama to exist within our physical bodies. The way we allow for our neshama to exist within the body is by keeping our bodies alive, and thus eating food is an action that allows for something as otherworldly as our neshama to exist.



Rabbi Akiva Tatz (*Worldmask* ch. 12) explains that the normal, natural state of these two entities would be for physical bodies and spiritual neshamot to be inherently separate. However, G-d deemed it that they would be combined, and the way we connect the two is by eating food and keeping our bodies functional so that our neshamot can remain in these adverse conditions. Therefore, explains R. Tatz, the body is the *kli* (vessel) through which the neshama expresses itself, and the food we provide our bodies with determines how one can allow the neshama to express itself in the right way.

If our body is in a healthy state, the neshama can receive messages and process them correctly. If our body is in a broken state, then the neshama will not be able to process messages and information correctly. One must recognize that he must take care of the vessel which contains his neshama, and provide himself with nourishment.

The *Nefesh Hachaim* describes this exact idea, as he explains that the human body is a microcosm of the entire universe. Meaning, just as the human body holds within it a *neshama*, so too the physical world holds within it a neshama: Hashem. Thus, just as humans need to eat in order to maintain the connection between the body and the neshama, so too the world must also “eat” in order to maintain its connection with Hashem.

The way this is achieved is through *korbanot*, the offerings of which we directly connected the physical world to G-d in the heavens. The root word of *korbanot* is “*karav*,” which means to “come close,” because these sacrifices were what brought the world closer to Hashem. The fact that we lack the ability to bring *korbanot* nowadays is reflected in the world’s distance from Hashem since the destruction of the second Beit Hamikdash. We should thus realise the importance of our *tefillot*, which, serving as a replacement for *korbanot*, can connect us to Hashem in a deeper way than we might realise.

Food, too, is manifested in the physical world with everlasting significance, as we have many restrictions and limits that must be considered every time we come into contact with it. This is widely known as *kashrut*, and the most obvious idea behind it is self-control

and discipline. Judaism, through the dietary laws of kashrut, injects meaning into something as commonplace and instinctive as eating. Many of the restrictions placed on different foods, though, are actually placed to protect us from potential harm.

We may wonder: What non-kosher foods are truly harmful? The rest of the world eats them and are seemingly not harmed. What is it that we are being protected from? The answer comes with two different, but connected, aspects of why we have restrictions in the first place. The first aspect is, as the Abarbanel explains, that non-kosher food is not physically detrimental, but rather spiritually detrimental. This can be seen through the concept of limiting ourselves to what G-d ordains, so that we don't fall into the ideology that we can do whatever we want.

The Ramchal in *Mesilat Yesharim* explains that non-kosher foods are terrible to ingest because doing so distances one from Hashem and chases the kedusha that is relevant inside that person. When we deviate from G-d's will even the slightest bit, we set into motion a series of sinful behavior that will ultimately rid ourselves of the purity that we each behold. Thus, limiting what we can eat allows us to strengthen our relationship with Hashem. This will refine a person and instill self-discipline.

The second aspect is as the Ramban explains, that each animal represents a different trait, a different middah that can be defined as bad or good. As he explains, we are what we eat. If one eats from a non-kosher animal that has a negative middah, it will become ingrained in his personality and become a part of him. This can be seen, for example, through the types of birds and animals we are not allowed to eat. The non-kosher birds are generally predators. This applies to other animals as well, as we are not allowed to eat carnivores or scavengers.

We are commanded not to eat those animals possessive of a harsh nature so that we don't absorb those qualities into our personalities. The types of animals we eat are chosen in part for their symbolism. We can now understand that restrictions on food were enacted in order to prevent us from distancing ourselves from G-d.

Additionally, there are certain health provisions with regards to food that are important to discuss. Rav Shlomo Wolbe in his sefer *Alei Shor* (vol. 2 p. 244), describes how different taavot (desires) are actually needed in order for a person to survive. An example of this is the taava to eat an immense amount of food when hungry.

However, as Rav Wolbe explains, one must control his taavot, restrain them from overcoming him, and only use them in the right place and at the right time. This notion can be seen in regards to food. A person, when desiring food, can easily let this taava overcome him and cause him to overeat, which would be detrimental to his physical health. When a person can control that taava and only eat the right amount he needs and when he needs it, he can maintain a healthy and productive livelihood. This idea is expounded upon in *kri'at shema*, as we say everyday (Devarim 11:15-16):

ונתתי עשב בשדך לבהמתך ואכלת ושבעת: השמר לך פן יפתה לבבך  
וסרתם ועבדתם אלהים אחרים והשתחוויתם להם:

Here, Hashem is warning a person who becomes satiated by the food He provides them. Rashi explains on these pesukim – שאין אדם מורד בהקדוש ברוך הוא אלא מתוך שביעה – “that a person does not rebel against the Holy One, Blessed is He, except as a result of being satiated”. Meaning, a person tends to only turn to G-d’s help when he is in need, but when he is fully satiated and feels as if he can manage on his own, he tends to turn away from G-d, which ultimately leads to the trait of ga’avah.

Thus, the reason why these two pesukim are juxtaposed is precisely to warn a person against becoming overly satisfied, which can ultimately lead a person to haughtiness, as it says in the pasuk ... ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה' אלוֹקֶיךָ... – “and your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem your G-d...” (Devarim 8:14). We must understand that our food is a gift from G-d, and when we are satiated we should praise Hashem for His benevolence.

We can see a clear connection between Rav Wolbe’s explanation regarding the taava of overeating and the interpretation of Rashi in relation to a person who turns away from G-d when fully satisfied. A person should not only control himself from overeating

because of potential health problems, but also because of the possibility that allowing oneself to become fully or even over-satisfied can lead a person to stray from the hand of G-d. This is just another of the many ways in which we can derive important lessons from food.

Rav Melamed (Peninei Halacha Brachot), reflects this point in his explanation of why we have a bracha achronah, a blessing after we eat food. He questions why we say a bracha achronah after something we ate when we already made a bracha rishonah beforehand. Seemingly, saying a bracha achronah is redundant!

The answer is that the bracha achronah is a reminder that G-d's ultimate providence is what allowed for our satisfaction. Without the bracha achronah, we can unfortunately fall into the faulty mindset that we do not need G-d's help to keep us satiated, and thus we must remember to always say a bracha achronah for each and every food.

One may wonder: If we have an specific avodah that is required from us before and after eating, what is the avodah we are to be doing during the actual act of eating? Like everything a person is involved in, one must always think about why he is doing what he is doing. In this case, one must think: Is he eating because he loves food itself and would do anything to get a taste of its deliciousness, or is he eating to give him energy in order to serve G-d, so that he can be the best eved Hashem he can be?

Naturally, because we are so dependent on food for our survival, people tend to adopt the first mindset. A person should, however, try to have his thoughts line up with the second mindset, so that he can give the proper thanks to Hashem for not only making his sustenance taste good, but also providing him with the energy to serve G-d in a better and more loving way.

In this way, one won't eat like a regular person who merely seeks physical pleasure from the food. Rather, his eating will have a spiritual aspect; he will relate to the immense depths and recognition of the greater purpose the food he is eating truly serves.

Amongst the many individualistic qualities and benefits that food possesses is the role food serves as the ultimate social agent.

Food brings people together; an important quality that food provides is creating hospitality, warmth, and affection towards others.

Avraham Avinu regularly took in travelers and guest for meals, fulfilling the mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim*. He even interrupted a conversation between himself and G-d in order to tend to three travelers who suddenly appeared. Avraham provided them with a feast out of pure kindness. Avraham teaches us that opening one's home to guests and feeding them is greater than being in Hashem's presence, for it is G-d's will that we tend to the needs of others.

This is an incredible moral lesson learned in relation to food, and shows us how much good we can truly do with the food Hashem blessed us with. On top of that, food creates the ultimate bonding experience with others. We should take every piece of energy we get from food and actualize it into our *avodat Hashem*, and part of that is by taking the food we were given and providing others with it, thereby creating everlasting connections and relationships.

We must continue to realize the value of food, and understand why exactly G-d ordained that this would be the sustenance by which His creations would live by, and not take it for granted. Within every aspect of food lies a deeper meaning. When a person is hungry for a morsel of bread, this is a reflection of his *neshama's* craving for closeness to his Creator.

We must understand that the highest forms of life don't only derive their survival from the sustenance of the lowest forms of life, but rather also from the help of G-d. When we eat the food and kosher animals that Hashem granted us, we must use the energy gained from it to perform *mitzvot* and do good in the world. In doing so, one will elevate the divinity that is the essence of the sustenance he is eating, utilizing its true purpose. Through this realization, we will be able to impact the world and our own lives in ways we may have never envisioned.



## **Tikkun HaMiddot:**

### **It Starts With Anava<sup>1</sup>**

The word ‘middah’ literally translates as ‘measure’. Everyone must ensure that they possess the right amount of each middah, within the boundaries provided by the Torah. Hashem commands us: *vehalachta bedrachav*, to “go in His ways” (Devarim 28:9). The Rambam understands this as a mitzvah asheh which is fulfilled by modelling Hashem’s behaviors (Sefer HaMitzvot mitzvah aseih 8).

The gemara (Yevamot 109b) states, “Anyone who says, ‘All I do is learn Torah’ doesn’t even have the Torah.” The Shlah (Vayikra 1:18) explains that the very reason we were sent to this world was *tikkun hamiddot*, to fix defects in our character traits.

The ideal measure for all middot, as the Rambam explains, is to be balanced in the middle. One of the two middot which are exceptions to this rule, where a person should go to the extreme of ridding themselves of the middah completely, is ga’avah (Rambam, Hilchot De’ot 2:3). The word ‘ga’avah’ translates as pride, arrogance, and egotism. In Mishlei 16:5, Shlomo states that “the abomination of Hashem are all who are proud of heart.” The *Orchot Tzadikim* (Sha’ar Haga’avah) quotes various pesukim which demonstrate the enormity of ga’avah, with comparisons such as serving idols (Sotah 4b) and having every type of forbidden relationship (Vayikra 16:27).

David HaMelech writes (Tehillim 101:5): “the haughty of eye and the broad of heart I cannot tolerate.” The Shechina cannot dwell with a person who is haughty. Perhaps we can understand that ga’avah is a negative and an immoral middah, but why is it so abhorrent to the extent that Hashem cannot be with one who is haughty?

To find the essence of a word or concept, one must look at the first place it is mentioned in Torah<sup>2</sup>. The first sin appears in

---

<sup>1</sup> I thank the teachers and fellow students in MMY who shared with me many of the insights mentioned in this article.

Bereishit (ch. 3), mere hours after man and woman were created (see Sanhedrin 38b). The pasuk states: **וַתֵּרָא הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לִמְאֹכַל** – “The woman saw that the tree was good for eating.”

Chava views the etz hadaat, the one forbidden tree, as ‘tov’, mirroring the language used by Hashem in creation. Chava’s attitude epitomizes ga’avah. This first sin provides us with the paradigm of all sin: deciding for yourself what’s right and wrong.

The presence of ga’avah in Chava’s mindset cannot be underestimated. The ramifications of its manifestation, in enticing Adam to sin, radically altered the future of mankind. (Ramchal, *Derech Hashem* I:3:5)

As we progress through the parsha, this mentality of Chava continues to be apparent. The pesukim state (4:1-2)

וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת ה'׃  
וַתִּסַּף לֵלֶדֶת אֶת אָחִיו אֶת-הֵבֶל וַיְהִי הֵבֶל רֹעָה צָאן וְקַיִן הָיָה עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה׃

According to Rashi, Chava says: “I acquired a person with Hashem”. ‘Et’ is the word usually used before the object of the sentence. Rather than denoting togetherness with G-d, she is implying that she is the higher power, viewing Hashem only as a tool to enable her to reach her desired goal. Her motivation for having a child is to ‘acquire’ a person of her own.

This could also explain why no reason is given for Hevel’s name, and why he is literally “empty”. Chava’s craving to create something of her own and feel a sense of personal ownership has already been satisfied with the birth of Kayin, and Hevel is simply an extra.

Inevitably, Kayin who is conceived on this premise and raised in such an environment is affected by his mother's feelings of entitlement. Chava’s trait of ga’avah continued with Kayin. He also did what he saw to be fit, taking matters into his hands for his own personal gain, and became the first murderer.

The following examples provide further insight into how all sins branch from ga’avah. Firstly, ga'avah leads to lashon hara. One of the reasons a person contracts *tzaraat* is because of *gasut haruach*

---

<sup>2</sup> See Rav Tzadok HaKohen, Pri Tzaddik vol. 1, L'Rosh Chodesh Kislev, section 5.



(Arachin 16a and Vayikra Rabbah 17:3). Lashon Hara is often found in someone who is too full of himself. You don't talk about people unless you believe that you are better than them. The word 'se'it,' one of the types of tzaraat, means 'height'. This type of physical swelling on the skin illustrates the inflated ego that is the cause of this lashon hara (Shavuot 6b).

Secondly, when you believe that you are in control, and events do not occur the way you had planned, it will lead to anger. In addition, Orchot Tzadikim (Sha'ar Haga'avah) explains how ga'avah leads to ta'ava, lust, and jealousy. Because the proud person's heart is expansive and desires everything, it encourages him to steal.

Rav Elyakim Krumbein (Sicha on Anava -VBM) writes: "The whole idea of working to achieve tikkun repair is based on the premise that at present, all is not right with oneself... A powerful drive for spiritual progress can grow only from the soil of humility." He defines arrogance as the "nemesis of mussar". As mentioned earlier, our goal is tikkun hamiddot, to repair the flaws in our character traits. Only without ga'avah can we fulfill our mission in this world. For a person to rid themselves of ga'avah, he must first know how to identify it. How does one detect any traces of ga'avah within himself?

In Mishlei (16:5), it is written, "the abomination of Hashem are all who are proud of heart." The Orchot Tzaddikim (Sha'ar Haga'avah) notes that even if a person does not elevate himself externally through speech or actions, but is only proud of heart, he is still considered an abomination.

Rav Krumbein writes that a good friend once told him, "Do you know what ga'avah is? It's when you're in a room full of acquaintances, and you go through them in your mind, saying to yourself: I'm smarter than this one, I'm a better friend than that one, I'm more industrious than the next, etc." Putting others down by highlighting their flaws, even within our own minds and hearts, is ga'avah.

Thus far, it is evident that we should rid ourselves of ga'avah because of its inherent evil. By definition we are striving for its opposite, humility. But how do we know that anava is inherently good?

Adam's name shares a *shoresh* with 'adame l'Elyon', 'I will make myself similar to the Almighty' (Yeshayahu 14:14). Our role in this world is to emulate Hashem. In order for the world to be created, for Hashem to give His goodness to another, Hashem engaged in *tzimtzum*, contracting Himself (Etz Chaim, Arizal, Heichal A"K, anaf 2).

Furthermore, Hashem conceals Himself behind the physicality and natural order of the world. The Creator of all in existence, Who is the most deserving of credit and honor, masks Himself behind His creations. Since each person is a *tzelem Elokim*, this state of existence must be part of our very essence.

The word 'Adam' also shares a *shoresh* with the word 'adamah', ground. We are like the ground, and should view ourselves as lowly beings. The Torah, from which all existence emanated (Zohar 1:133b:8), was given on a low, humble mountain (Sotah 5a) and in the month of Sivan which shares a gematria with the word 'anav' (Biale Rebbe). Eretz Yisrael, the land designated to the Jewish people by Hashem, is humble in the sense that its own natural water sources are not vast enough to adequately provide for the whole land, and we are therefore fully reliant on Hashem for rain. (Seforno and Chizkuni, Devarim 11:11)

The Mizbeach, the center of connection between us and Hashem, is also symbolic of humility. Throughout the year, chametz is rarely placed upon it (Vayikra 2:11, 6:9-10). Chametz, which is literally 'filled with hot air', represents the inflated ego. In this vein, the holiday that requires the most physical effort is Pesach, where we are required to search for, burn, and rid ourselves completely of this one thing: chametz – ga'avah.

How do we rid ourselves of ga'avah and accustom ourselves to an existence of anava? In Pirkei Avot (3:1), it is written:

Reflect upon three things and you will not come to sin: Know from where you come, and to where you are going, and before Whom you are destined to give an account and a reckoning. From where did you come? From a putrid drop. And where are you going? To a place of dust, worms, and maggots. And before Whom are you destined to give an account and a reckoning? Before the King of kings, the Holy One Blessed be He.

In Yeshivat Kelm, they considered honor as a hindrance to one's growth. The Alter of Kelm despised honor, ensuring that he was never referred to with a title of honor. Instead, they would use the term '*erlich*' which means a person of integrity. That was the goal.

Rav Krumbein writes that "ga'avah is the compulsive quest for honor."

A Jew, in particular, knows that the Master of the Universe has great expectations of him. How could such weighty, spiritual demands be made of anyone other than a being with a Divine soul, with the profound potential for a lifetime of moral feeling and activity, a being of the utmost significance? If I truly believe what I profess to believe, I don't need anyone's approval. Compliments and recognition are irrelevant. The inner richness of one's personality is more than sufficient; the only concern is – am I doing enough? Am I fulfilling my destiny?"

A humble person recognizes that his worth is independent of any external approval, and is therefore not distracted from achieving his goal of cleaving to Hashem.

A person who desires personal honor believes that his good is his own doing. Rather than rejoicing at their own personal honor, people should seek to bring honor to Hashem through their actions, and when they receive honor they should rejoice at the fact that they have drawn others closer to Him.

There is a mitzvah for the kohen to remove from the mizbeach the ashes that remained from the previous day's korban (Vayikra 6:3-4). The Sefer Hachinuch (mitzvah 131) explains that this is in order to beautify the fire. Even so, why out of everyone should the holy kohen who works in the innermost chambers of the Beit Hamikdash be the one to effectively 'take out the garbage'? According to Rabbeinu Bechaye (6:3), this is to humble the kohen. A person, especially the kohen who works within the holiest places, should not feel too great to do something small.

In Yeshivat Kelm, instead of having hired help, all the maintenance within the yeshiva was done by the talmidim. The dirtier and more disgusting the job, the more they considered it a privilege.

A story is told of a newly married kollel member who approached Rav Mordechai Gifter zt"l. He complained that his wife

wants him to take out the garbage which was obviously beneath his dignity as a ben Torah. The next morning the young couple heard a knock on their door, and opened it to find none other than Rav Gifter standing there with a smile on his face as he said, "I'm here to take out the garbage. It's not beneath my honor." Often, greatness is defined by the willingness to take on even the most menial of tasks.

Once Bnei Yisrael finished building the Mishkan, Moshe gives them a bracha (Shemot 39:43). Rebbetzin Shira Smiles (Torah Tapestries) explains that seeking out a bracha from people, especially from a tzaddik, when beginning any project, reminds that individual that his future success is not dependent on his investment. Rather, the project will only be accomplished with help from Above.

The same idea can be applied to any bracha which we say even on a regular basis. According to the Rashba, "Baruch Atah Hashem" translates as "Hashem, You are the Source of all blessing" (Responsa 5:51). When we say a bracha we are testifying that everything comes Hashem.

When involved in any activity, a person should use phrases such as "b'ezrat Hashem" and "im yirtzeh Hashem" (Shelah, Behaalotcha). By doing so, one reminds himself or herself that his or her own success is dependent only on Hashem.

Does being humble mean I am a nothing? If I need to completely rid myself of ga'avah, and be totally humble, then where do I fit in? Rabbi Tatz writes (*Worldmask*):

And here is the paradox. While man asserts his independence, he is nothing, merely a small bundle of protoplasm asserting the scope of his smallness. But when he annuls his independence, negates his ego, he melts into the reality of a greater Existence and thereby achieves real existence.

Rabbi Tatz notes that Moshe was "*anav meod mikol adam*" (Bamidbar 12:3), the most humble person. Moshe was the one who spoke "*panim el panim*" with Hashem (Devarim 34:10), being the only navi to have clear prophecy. As the Tanya explains (perek 19), each soul's natural ultimate desire is nullification of independent existence by being one with Hashem. Negating the ego, and being a

conduit through which Hashem's light is revealed in this world, is the only way one "achieves real existence."

In Megillat Rut, Malbim (4:5-6) explains that the potential redeemer of Rut refused to redeem her because his field would have taken the name of Rut's deceased husband, Machlon. Ironically, by giving up this major chessed opportunity in order to preserve his own name, he is referred to only anonymously by the term 'ploni almoni' (Megillat Rut 4:9).

This starkly contrasts to Rut who leaves all she has as a Moabite princess (Rut Rabbah 2:9) in order to fulfill a major chessed and accompany Naomi on her return journey to Beit Lechem. And what is her reward? A megilla named after her is read every year on Shavuot, and she becomes the matriarch of the Davidic dynasty.

Ramban (Bereishit 1:26) explains that man's body is formed from the earth and that his neshama is formed by Hashem. In order to survive in this world in an existence of G-dliness, we need both aspects together.

We are called Adam not just because we come from the ground, but because we are similar to the ground (Rav Wolbe *Alei Shur* vol. 2) The letters in the word adam are the same letters as those in the word me'od. Like the ground, we have boundless potential; there is no limit to what we can achieve. Hashem created nature in a way that growth and life, with their limitless potential, stem from the lowliness of the earth.

Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa said, "A person should have two pieces of paper, one in each pocket, to be referenced as necessary. On one of them 'The world was created for me,' and on the other, 'I am dust and ashes'." The two are synonymous; my own greatness can only come about if I realize how small I am compared to the Ribbono Shel Olam.

The world of physicality parallels the spiritual realms (Zohar). While on an MMY trip, I reflected on how, at the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth, we have the ability to float. Only there is such a natural phenomenon found. And if a person goes to the lowest point on earth but still holds onto traces of haughtiness, then they won't totally appreciate the beauty of the floating experience.

If a person tries to stand in the Dead Sea, asserting their own dominance and not having full bitachon, then they will either sink in the thick mud or will be scratched by the sharp salt rocks.

Humility has a wholly positive effect when it is complete, with no trace of ga'avah. Only with full bitachon will a person be able to float. Precisely when we lower ourselves are we are lifted. [Significantly, the lowest point below sea level is found in Eretz Yisrael, a land totally dependent on Hashem.] The lower we are, the more humility we have, the more Hashem will lift us up to be close to Him.

Parshat Terumah begins (Shemot 25:2), **דבר אל בני ישראל ויקחו לי**, תרומה מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו תקחו את תרומתי say to 'take' a donation for the Mishkan? Surely it would have been more appropriate to say to 'give' a donation? Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Darash Moshe*) answers that "Only someone who thinks of his money as a trust fund that Hashem has put under his care and which is to be used only for the purposes Hashem designated, is worthy to have a share in the Mishkan."

Not only does this provide yet another example which demonstrates the centrality of humility in having a relationship with Hashem, but we learn something even more powerful. Even by donating to the Mishkan, we are in actuality, taking, because everything we have truly belongs to Hashem.

Although it might be a misconception, an *anav* has the healthiest self-esteem. Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin writes that you are required to believe in yourself as much as you believe in Hashem (*Tzidkat HaTzadik*). If you recognise that everything you have is from Hashem, and He is your 'battery pack', then believing in yourself is believing in Hashem's abilities to do all, including providing you with exactly the tools you need.

Only once we recognize Hashem's greatness, and that all our power is from Him, will we be able to give to others. We need to remember that no matter how much light a flame shares, its own light will not be diminished (Rashi, Bamidbar 11:17). A flame is able to give and give whilst still maintaining its existence as a flame, as long as it is always connected to the wax, its source. So too, as long as we are connected to the Source, to Hashem, will have the ability

to give to others. Not only does giving not diminish us in any way, the opposite is true. Our act of giving light has now created more light.

Western self-centred (ga'avah-fueled) society makes futile attempts to achieve happiness. The attempts are futile because true happiness comes from humility, the antithesis of ga'avah. If you go through your day without feeling entitled, that you are deserving of certain things, then you will be genuinely grateful for every single thing that comes your way. Since you will view all that you receive to a gift, you will be in a constant state of simcha!

We see this idea expressed in Devarim (26:11) when Bnei Yisrael were given the mitzvah of bikkurim, to bring the first fruits to Hashem. Only once we feel gratitude by bringing the bikkurim can we reach *וּשְׂמַחַת בְּכָל הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ* – “and you shall rejoice in all the good that Hashem has given to you.” Only once we have gratitude can we have true simcha.

I witnessed a living example of this concept from Tammy Karmel, a holy woman who suffers from the debilitating disease ALS. In the recorded video (when she was still able to speak) she advised that you should “have zero expectations,” and “look at yourself as a *bat yachida*,” in terms of realizing that you have everything you need, and what other people have is not relevant to you and cannot affect you. “If you develop yourself for that, then you’re ready for life. If not, for disappointment.” Tammy said that every time she swallows she says thank you to Hashem, and multiple times throughout the video she expressed her deep, genuine simcha.

Humility provides a life of *menuchah hanefesh* and tranquility, since a person who realizes that he has only limited understanding of the way Hashem runs the world and that Hashem knows what is right and good for them, will not be frustrated by anything externally negative or disruptive that comes his way. Everyone benefits from the *anav*, but the *anav* is the one who benefits most because he enables himself to have the ultimate pleasure of being *daveik* to Hashem.





## **Crying out to Hashem During Tefillah**

A key element and main factor in our connection and relationship with Hashem is tefillah. Tefillah is something very special that we do three times a day, and it is during tefillah where we get to stand before our Creator and acknowledge His awe, praising Him for all the good He has done in our lives, personally and as a nation.

The gemara (Bava Metzia 59a) relates that at times the gates of tefillah are closed:

אמר רבי אלעזר מיום שחרב בית המקדש ננעלו שערי תפלה ... ואף על  
פי שננעלו שערי תפילה, שערי דמעות לא ננעלו, שנאמר שמעה ה'  
תפילתי ושועתי האזינה אל דמעתי אל תחרש.

R' Eliezer said: since the day of the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash the gates of tefillah are closed, and even though the gates of tefillah are closed, the gates of tears are not closed, as it is said: Please Hashem listen to my requests and turn to them but please don't be deaf to my tears.

What does this mean? The gates of tefillah are locked but the gates of tears are open? Why are tears so special, and what difference does it make to Hashem?

According to the Zohar (Zohar Chadash, Ruth 429)

אלא ודאי הרי למדנו, כל השערים ננעלים ונסגרים, ושערי דמעות אינם  
נסגרים, ואין דמעה אלא מתוך צער ועצבות ... ותפלה ההיא נכנסת לפני  
המלך הקדוש ... ואדם ההוא או תפלה ההיא אינם חוזרים ריקם, והקב"ה  
מרחם עליו, אשרי חלקו של אדם ההוא ששופך דמעות לפני הקב"ה  
בתפלתו ... בדמעות מתעוררים והולכים הלב והרצון וכל הגוף.

Tears that come from sorrow and sadness during prayer, come right in front of Hashem and the prayer does not return unfulfilled because Hashem is merciful upon emotional tefillot. Blessed is a person in this world who cries to Hashem during tefillah because tears wake up our heart, willpower, and body.

Additionally, רבינו בחיי writes (Bereishit 1:18):

והדמעה בשעת התפלה קרבן כנגד ניסוך המים, ואמרו שער דמעות לא  
ננעלו, כי המים מדת החסד.

When one cries during tefillah, it's as if one is performing the water libation, and the gates of tears aren't closed because water is a midah of chessed.

Although the gates of tefillah are locked at times due to our sins as a nation, if one cries out to Hashem during tefillah with tears of total submission, these tears break through the barrier between us and Hashem, allowing our prayers to go straight through the gates of tears and directly to Hashem. When people cry to their Creator while davening, they are vulnerable; they are crying with all their heart. Interestingly, בכי (cry) has the same gematria as לב (heart) (*Meaningful Prayer vol. 2*).

In addition, crying during tefillah shows that you are stepping down and humbling yourself, sincerely admitting that Hashem is all-knowing. He is the Mastermind behind every beautiful thing in this world. He is the only one that can help you and comfort you in times of tribulations and sorrow. Once you recognize this truth, Hashem will accept your prayers because Hashem is merciful.

But how should we feel when we sincerely daven to Hashem with copious tears and our prayers appear to go unanswered? Were the gates of tears closed for us?

Rav Avraham Chaim Feuer tells the story of a widow who approached Rav Aryeh Levin and asked him to explain to her how despite her many tears and prayers and tehillim, the life of her late husband was not spared. Were all of her tears in vain? Were they wasted?

Rav Aryeh Levin replied that her tears were in fact not in vain. She simply cannot realize their value during her life in this world. But when the woman will ascend to Heaven she will learn that Hashem collected all of her tears, and when some harsh and evil

decree looms over the Jewish people, her tears will play a role in rendering the decree null and void.<sup>1</sup>

We may not always understand how Hashem reacts to our tearful prayers, but we should know that He is always listening.

---

<sup>1</sup> [chizukshaya.com/2009/09/yom-kippur-tefila-the-value-of-tears.html](http://chizukshaya.com/2009/09/yom-kippur-tefila-the-value-of-tears.html)



## **Galut vs. Geula:**

### **The Torah's Hidden Messages**

One of the most central parts of Judaism is our longing for the geula; mourning our exile and praying for the Redemption.

What is the purpose of galut and what is the geula the Jewish people excitedly await?

The destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash was not our first exile. Chazal noted that in between Parshat Vayigash and Parshat Vayechi, the sefer Torah lacks the usual break or separation between parshiyot. Rashi (Bereishit 47:28) explains:

למה פרשה זו סתומה? לפי שכיון שנפטר יעקב אבינו נסתמו עיניהם ולבם של ישראל מצרת השעבוד, שהתחילו לשעבדם.

When Yaakov Avinu dies, the eyes and hearts of Bnei Yisrael were blocked because of the misery of slavery. The lack of separation between parshiyot Vayigash and Vayechi hints to Bnei Yisrael's slavery and galut. Galut, evidently, is a situation in which the eyes and heart are blocked.

Why is a sefer Torah written in paragraphs, with spaces between parshiyot? Rashi (Vayikra 1:1) quoting Chazal, explains that the purpose of these spaces is to allow time for Moshe to pause and reflect. How much more so, is this necessary for an average person. Through pausing and thinking over his Torah study, a person can connect to its essence so that his learning doesn't remain on an external level.

Why is there no pause before starting Parshat Vayechi? In Galut Mitzrayim, Paro wanted to work the Jews so hard that they would have no time to think, no possibility to pause to contemplate about spiritual matters.

Galut can be defined as the "shortness of breath." When Moshe first attempts to speak with Bnei Yisrael, the Torah tells us (Shemot 6:9):

וידבר משה כן אל בני ישראל ולא שמעו אל משה מקצר רוח ומעבדה  
קשה:

Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel, but they did not  
hearken to Moses because of [their] shortness of breath and  
because of [their] hard labor.

The Jews were able to see only the physical world, but not “the  
breath of His mouth”, the spiritual parts of the world. In galut, we  
become preoccupied. We sometimes lose sight of our true tasks and  
we find it difficult to connect. How can Klal Yisrael reveal the inner  
essence of the world and Hashem's presence?

Sefer Yeshayahu (11:9), explains what will happen at the times  
of geula:

לא ירעו ולא ישחיתו בכל הר קדשי כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ה' כמים לים  
מכסים:

They shall neither harm nor destroy on all My holy mount,  
for the land shall be full of knowledge of the Lord as water  
covers the sea bed.

The word ים in the pasuk refers to the sea bed, which holds the  
water of the sea. Just as this sea bed is covered with water, so too  
will the world be covered with knowledge of Hashem at the time of  
geula. The gemara (Chullin 127a) says that everything that exists  
on land also exists in the sea. There are mountains, rocks, vegeta-  
tion and creatures in the sea, but none of them are as important as  
the water. The water is the part that is visible and the sea bed is  
only the vessel holding the water.

At the time of Mashiach, the world will be full with the aware-  
ness of Hashem, and physical things will diminish in comparison.  
We will realize that this world is just the vessel containing and  
revealing Hashem's glory. The world is the most visible to us at first,  
but once we find Hashem's presence in the world, the external  
reality becomes insignificant. geula is when the physical world will  
become the mere outline for the awareness of Hashem.

Galut and geula have similar roots, except that an *alef* is add-  
ed into the root to form the word geula. Now we only see the  
physical world, but when Mashiach comes, we will find *alef*. The

letter alef stands for “*alufo shel olam*”. Geula is an internal change when the heart and eyes are opened, and we regain the ability to connect to Hashem on an extremely deep level.

The days of redemption, geula, and the arrival of Mashiach are a wondrous time and people have tried to understand what they will be like. Zechariah HaNavi (9:9) describes Mashiach differently than we would imagine:

גילי מאד בת ציון הריעי בת ירושלם הנה מלך יבוא לך צדיק ונושע הוא  
עני ורכב על־חמור ועל עיר בן־אתנות:

Mashiach will be wearing a poor person's clothing, and he will be riding a donkey which is less dignified to ride than a horse. There will be a transformation at the times of Mashiach. The depth and spiritual aspects of the world will be revealed to us and we will recognize how trivial the external features of the world really are.

What is the purpose of the time period of Bein Hametzarim (between the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz and the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av)? It's a specific time that Hashem designated to express the pain and difficulties in our lives. We think about these difficulties and realize that the reason we struggle is because in the hidden galut, we lack the natural emunah and closeness with Hashem.

Chazal (Yerushalmi 1:1) say that any generation that the Beit Hamikdash was not rebuilt in its time is considered as if they destroyed it. We should not only mourn over the destruction that happened in past, but also mourn over what we lack.

A Jew's essence is a connection to Hashem (*chelek Eloka mi-ma'al*). As Jews, we need the Beit Hamikdash to let us actualize that connection. The Yerushalmi is teaching us that we should think deeply about our current struggles and express the desire for clear emunah and closeness to Hashem which we lack in galut.

Chazal gave us the halachot of *zeicher l'churban*, not only to remember the destruction of the Temple, but also to show us a general way of life, to be happy with the good we still have, even in galut. We have the Torah, mitzvot and holidays, and even though Hashem is hidden, His Shechina is still in the world with us.

Accepting this joy with open arms, brings Klal Yisrael closer to Hashem.

Craving and yearning for the Beit Hamikdash during our time of galut connects us to Bnei Yisrael's spiritual closeness at the time of the Beit Hamikdash. In Bava Batra (60b), Chazal teach that whoever mourns for Jerusalem merits to see its joy. This point is emphasized and made clear in Sefer Yeshayahu (66:10):

שמחו את ירושלם וגילו בה כל אהביה שישו אתה משוש כל המתאבלים עליה:

This pain that we feel proves that we are still intrinsically close to Hashem because we yearn to feel the ultimate openness and closeness with His Shechina.

When the Romans entered the Beit Hamikdash, the *keruvim* were embracing one another (Yoma 54b). However, the gemara Bava Batra (99a), relates that the *keruvim* only faced each other when Klal Yisrael were doing Hashem's will. How were the *keruvim* embracing if horrible destruction was occurring?

Hashem is showing how, within the destruction and exile, there is still a closeness there. We are still connected with Hashem, except now our love and closeness is concealed. However, our intrinsic essence is a deep connection with Hashem which is brought out when we long for Hashem in galut.

In Parshat Vayeitzei (Bereishit 28:10), the Torah says: **ויצא יעקב** חרנה מבאר שבע וילך חרנה. Why does it need to say that Yaakov Avinu left Be'er Sheva? Obviously if he went to Charan then he left Be'er Sheva! Rashi explains that the glory and splendor of a tzaddik becomes more evident when he leaves:

**ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע:** לא היה צריך לכתוב אלא וילך יעקב חרנה, ולמה הזכיר יציאתו, אלא מגיד שיציאת צדיק מן המקום עושה רושם, שבזמן שהצדיק בעיר הוא הודה הוא זיוה הוא הדרה, יצא משם פנה הודה פנה זיוה פנה הדרה וכן (רות א ז) ותצא מן המקום, האמור בנעמי ורות.

When a tzaddik is physically there, it might be difficult for the people of the city to accept aspects of his conduct, but once he leaves, his internal influence that he radiated in the city is appreciated even more. Now that we don't have the Beit Hamikdash, our



mourning and longing brings us to that deep love for Hashem, the type of love that the *keruvim* showed. Our connection to the Beit Hamikdash is at an inner level because it is the deep intrinsic connection between Hashem and His people.

We all struggle in life, and with struggles come emotional stress. Since happiness connects us to Hashem, we should be happy, but also realize that Hashem gives us difficult situations for a reason. A hard life is still a life. We should recognize the legitimacy and vitality of pain in life and express our feelings to Hashem. By doing this, our dependence on Hashem becomes more apparent. Our longing for ultimate closeness with Him is imperative for us. Undergoing hardships helps us achieve a special closeness to Hashem.

Through all the yearning, we realize the reality of geula within us. The letters in the word תמוז when rearranged form an acronym for זמני תשובה ממשמשין ובאין – “times of teshuva are approaching”. The letters in the word אב similarly can hint to אלול בא – “Elul is coming.”

Once bein hametzarim and Tisha B'av, the ultimate day of mourning, pass, there are seven weeks of haftarot referred to as *shiva d'nechemta*. These haftarot all come from Sefer Yeshayahu and the prophecies of comfort are preparation for the time of Mashiach, and the ultimate closeness to Hashem. Mourning the destruction leads to emunah and strength.



## **Are We Missing Something?**

### **Counting the Letters of the Torah and the Preservation of the Mesorah**

Is the sefer Torah that we read from in shul exactly the same text as the Torah that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote down?

Hashem gave the text of the Torah to Moshe Rabbeinu; that is the foundation of the Jewish nation. It was passed down from generation to generation; from Moshe to Yehoshua, who in turn transmitted it to the Zekeinim, then to the Nevi'im, then to the Anshei Knesset Hagedolah (Pirkei Avot 1:1). It is our guidebook for life.

The Torah, as a physical text, has many unique aspects. In order to safeguard the mesorah and preserve the text of the Torah as much as possible, there are specific ways a sofer must write a sefer Torah. Masechet Sofrim mentions many of these unique aspects. For example, The letter ך of גִּחֲזֹן (Vayikra 11:42) must be larger than the other letters because it is the middle letter of the Torah (Sofrim 9:2). Another example is that שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל (Devarim 6:4) should be at the beginning of the line and the word אֶחָד should be at the end of the line (Sofrim 9:4).

A major aspect of the text of the sefer Torah is the division into two types of paragraphs, known as *petuchot* and *stumot*. This refers to how the line ends, and how and where spaces are placed at the end of each section of the Torah. The songs in the Torah, Az Yashir and Haazinu, are also formatted in a special way so that the words appear widely spaced out. These are just a few of the many examples of writing a sefer Torah that require preservation through the mesorah.

It is the eighth of the Rambam's Thirteen Principles of Faith to believe that the Torah is from Hashem. We believe that the Torah

was given to Moshe and he acted as the scribe. Every letter and word of the Torah are equally essential. It may seem that “Anochi Hashem Elokecha” is more foundational than other words of the Torah. However, all parts are given from Hashem, and are therefore equally fundamental.

How crucial is the accuracy of the text? By taking a look in the gemara (Eruvin 13a), it seems that it is extremely important. The gemara states that by adding or omitting even a single letter, it is considered as if you have destroyed the world. Rashi gives examples of how a missing or additional letter can completely change the meaning of the text. Removing an א from אמת, meaning truth, creates the word מות, death. Another example Rashi brings is adding a ו to the word וידבר, creating the plural וידברו, which suggests there are many gods speaking, thus proving the power of an additional or missing letter.

We are therefore left with a question: How accurate has the transmission of the Torah text been throughout the ages? It appears that even in the times of the Beit Hamikdash, the sifrei Torah were not identical (Sofrim 6:4). Three sifrei Torah were found which had multiple differences between them. The people of this time decided the best way to create a definitive text was to write the text based on the principle of majority. Thus, when faced with variant spellings, they followed the spelling that appeared in the majority, i.e., two of the three texts.

The early Sages were called Sofrim, as they would count all the letters in the Torah. For example, they identified the ו of גחון as the middle letter and דרש דרש as the middle words of the Torah, as we are taught in the gemara in Kiddushin (30a). Rav Yosef raises a dilemma, which highlights the uniqueness of the Sofrim. Which side does the ו of the word גחון belong to – the first or second half of the Torah? The Sages responded: Let us bring a Torah scroll and count the letters, as was done in a similar situation in a previous generation. Rav Yosef said to them: אינהו בקיאי בחסירות ויתרות אנן לא בקיאינן –

“They were experts in the exact spelling of the words. We are not.” This helps prove that we cannot achieve complete accuracy in the Torah text as it is not in our capabilities. The Amoraim were not able to do so; how much more so are we unable to reach such a level in our times.

If we are not experts, perhaps we are to question whether all of our *sifrei Torah* are *pasul*. In differentiating between a *sefer Torah* that is *pasul* and one that is not *pasul*, the Rambam lists characteristics that would not invalidate a *sefer Torah*:

If one was not careful in regard to the crowns, writing all the letters correctly, writing the lines close together or far apart, extending the lines or shortening them, the scroll is fit for use, since he did not join any letter to another, omit or add a letter, change the form of any letter, or make any variation in regard to which paragraphs should be open and which closed (*petuchot* and *stumot*). (Hilchot Tefillin u'Mezuzah v'Sefer Torah 7:9)

Two *halachot* later, Rambam goes through the characteristics that would invalidate a *sefer Torah*. He writes:

If the scribe wrote a word defectively, or wrote a word traditionally pronounced differently to the way it is written, according to the traditional pronunciation, such as if he wrote *ישגלנה* instead of *ישכבנה*, or *ובטחורים* instead of *ובעפולים*, the scroll is not fit for use. This would also include if the scribe wrote an open (*petucha*) section as if it were a closed section (*stuma*), or vice versa, and if the scribe wrote one of the songs like the ordinary text, or an ordinary section in the form of one of the songs. (Hilchot Tefillin u'Mezuzah v'Sefer Torah 7:11)

The Rambam is harsh in his language and says if a *sefer Torah* has any characteristics that he listed as making it unfit, it does not have the holiness of a scroll of the law, rather it is like any one of the *Chumashim* that children learn from.

This rule of accuracy also applies for *tefillin*, as it contains part of the text of the Torah. The Rosh (Hilchot Tefillin) explains that when it comes to *tefillin*, one must be exceedingly careful and must

read it over carefully because if there is even one missing or additional letter, it is *pasul*.

What is the rule if one finds a mistake while reading a *sefer* Torah? The Rama (O.C. 143:4) rules that one takes out a new *sefer* Torah only if there is a major mistake, such as a missing word. However, if it is just *chaseirot* or *yiteirot* (an alternate spelling with missing or extra letters), one does not take out a new *sefer* Torah because our Torah text is not exact. The Rama agrees with the *gemara* Kiddushin that we are not experts in the text of the Torah, but that does not invalidate the 'kashrut' of the *sefer* Torah.

If there are indeed questions about the accuracy of the text, how did we arrive at the Torah text that we all use today?

Aharon ben Moshe ben Asher was a tenth century *sofer* who lived in Teveria. Ben Asher codified all of the text of the Torah. This text is called the Ben Asher Codex or as many know it today, the Aleppo Codex. The Aleppo Codex is one of the oldest manuscripts we have of the Torah. The Rambam (Hilchot Tefillin u'Mezuzah v'Sefer Torah 8:4) considered the text to be authoritative and used it as the definitive basis for determining the *petuchot* and *setumot* paragraphs.

The history of the codex is fascinating. The codex was purchased by the Karaite Jewish community of Jerusalem, where it was safely guarded for many years. During the first crusade, the shul that was housing the codex was destroyed so the codex was sent to Egypt. It finally made its way to Aleppo, a city in Syria, where it remained for around 500 years and where it received its name.

In 1947, there was Arab rioting against the Jews and the shul in Aleppo where the codex was housed was burned down. For many years, the codex was thought to be lost until it reappeared in 1958. It was smuggled into Israel by a Syrian Jew by the name of Murad Faham. They found that parts of the codex had been lost and only

a minority remained. The Aleppo Codex is now on display in the Israel Museum.

What is the proper way of writing a sefer Torah? If there is a debate as to how it should be written, whom do we follow? The Meiri (Kiryat Sefer 2:3) has a remarkable ruling that any place that the gemara learns a practical *halacha* based on a spelling of a word but our mesorah has a different spelling, we follow the gemara's spelling.

There are a few times throughout history in which people have tried to change the format of the Torah. The Maharam Chalava (Reponsa 144) was asked whether we are allowed to change the layout of Parshat Naso to be like that of Haazinu.

The Maharam answered that one may certainly not! The majority of sifrei Torah do not follow that format and therefore a sefer Torah with that layout would be pasul. The Maharam said that if they want to, they can lengthen the letters so that the line is still filled with letters and the name of the nasi is at the beginning of the line, but they cannot add spaces like Haazinu.

The torah states (Devarim 31:18):

ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת ולמדה את בני ישראל שימה בפיהם  
למען תהיה לי השירה הזאת לעד בבני ישראל:

We learn from this pasuk that there is a mitzvah to write a sefer Torah. How can it be a mitzvah to write a sefer Torah if we do not know what a kosher sefer Torah is? The Sha'agat Aryeh (#36) accepts this claim. He writes that nowadays, the mitzvah of writing a sefer Torah is only *mi'd'rabbanan* so it will not be forgotten.

The Aruch Hashulchan (Y.D. 270:13) disagrees with the Sha'agat Aryeh. He says that it is a mitzvah *mi'd'oraita* to write a sefer Torah. If we are to say that whenever there is an uncertainty in the text one is not obligated, this would apply to many mitzvot, for example, tefillin. The halacha is that in a case of doubt, we follow the majority opinion and the accepted tradition.

[The mitzvah is to do it to the best of one's ability. This concept was similarly applied to the keilim of the Beit Hamikdash which were meant to be exact in their measurements. However, there was no technology in those days to make sure they were exact, so how can Hashem command this? Hashem wanted Bnei Yisrael to do it to the best of their abilities!]

What about Nach? Do we view Nach like the Torah when it comes to the importance of each letter and in the ways it becomes pasul? The gemara (Megillah 18b) raises an apparent contradiction between two beraitot. The first beraita, which says that a Megillah is fit even if whole verses are missing, is referring to a case where only a portion of material is missing. The second beraita, which says that a Megillah with blurred or torn letters is unfit, is referring to a case where this is present throughout the whole of the Megillah. Either way, it is clear that the Torah is considered to be different and we stricter regarding a sefer Torah than a sefer of Nach because the Torah was given directly by Hashem to Moshe.

What are our sifrei Torah like today? It is now clear that there is a set mesorah, but are there differences in that mesorah? There are three types of sifrei Torah: Ashkenazi, Sefardi and Teimani. Between Sefardi and Ashkenazi sifrei Torah, there is one difference (of one letter); it is found in sefer Devarim (23:2):

לא יבא פצוע דבא וכוות שפכה בקהל ה' (אשכנזי)

לא יבא פצוע דכה וכוות שפכה בקהל ה' (ספרד)

The Teimani sefer Torah has nine differences among the letters and two differences among the petuchot and setumot. This leads us to the following question: What if an Ashkenazi is called up for Torah reading at a Sefardi shul or vice versa, does he make a bracha? Furthermore, what if an Ashkenazi or Sefardi is called up to read from a Teimani sefer Torah; is the sefer Torah considered pasul for him and can he make a bracha? These questions were addressed by Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yechaveh Daat 6:56). He concludes that an Ashkenazi does indeed make a bracha on a Sefardi sefer



Torah and vice versa. Although using a Teimani sefer Torah presents greater difficulties, there is a sufficient basis to permit its use by non-Teimanim as well.

One can glean from this topic the beauty of the Torah and the strength of our mesorah.



---

# FACULTY

---



## **Marriage and Kri'at Yam Suf**

R' Yossi Bar Chalafta was once asked how Hashem occupies His time since the completion of the six days of creation. He responded, "Hashem sits and makes matches; man and wife, women and husband ... and it (matchmaking) is (as) difficult for Hashem (as) Kri'at Yam Suf" (Bereishit Rabbah 68:4).

Although intuitively we may understand the difficulties in creating and sustaining a successful marriage, his statement is particularly perplexing. Not only does there seem to be no substantive connection between marriage and the splitting of the Yam Suf, but also the notion that something is difficult for Hashem seems to border on heresy, for it undermines Hashem's omnipotence. Is it really 'difficult' for Hashem to do anything? Seemingly, neither arranging marriages nor splitting the Yam Suf should be difficult for Hashem.

Presumably a look at the the Kri'at Yam Suf narrative will enable us to better understand what R' Yossi Bar Chalafta might have intended.

There is one unmistakable pasuk which celebrates the exceptional feat of Kri'at Yam Suf, "And they believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant," (Shemot 14:31). Yet upon greater reflection, one may wonder why only now did Bnei Yisrael discover this? What did they think about Hashem up until this point? Had they not witnessed all ten plagues? How could seeing the ten plagues not lead to a complete belief in Hashem and Moshe His servant?

In truth, this question is comprised of two distinct parts. Firstly, what did Bnei Yisrael actually think? How else could they

have explained all of the supernatural events they witnessed? However, secondly, and perhaps more powerfully, how did they miss the point? How could they have been so inaccurate in their perception as to think that this was anything other than Hashem redeeming His people as He had promised?

The Ramban (Shemot 14:10-11) addressing how Bnei Yisrael on the one hand cry out to Hashem for salvation, while on the other hand, complain to and about Moshe, suggests that Bnei Yisrael may have suspiciously thought that Moshe had taken them out of Egypt selfishly, just to rule over them.

Even though Moshe had performed undeniable miracles in Egypt, indicating that he was operating with Hashem, they rationalized that it was perhaps only because he was an excellent magician, or alternatively, that Hashem had wanted to punish the Egyptians.

Yet, whatever Bnei Yisrael's understanding truly was, this still only answers the first question. We now know what they thought; how they interpreted the previous events. However, the second question still remains; how did they miss the point? What was it about Bnei Yisrael that led them to such a cynical, pessimistic and erroneous conclusion?

Perhaps the greatest insight to Bnei Yisrael's mentality at the time is offered by the Ibn Ezra (Shemot 14:13). When dealing with why Bnei Yisrael did not fight the oncoming attacking Egyptian army at Yam Suf, especially taking into account how Bnei Yisrael significantly outnumbered the Egyptians, the Ibn Ezra explains that Bnei Yisrael were a broken nation, lacking confidence due to their previous status as slaves.

He explains that although physically capable of military triumph, mentally they were completely unprepared to defend themselves against their former taskmasters. Although Bnei Yisrael may have significantly outnumbered the Egyptians, from a psychological

standpoint, they did not have the strength of character to confront their enemy.

Having established an understanding of Bnei Yisrael's deep-rooted slave mindset, one may further appreciate how it crippled their ability to recognize Hashem's engagement in their national salvation until this point. Because they were so broken, they were unable to conger up the optimism and confidence needed to recognize that Hashem was redeeming them.

Among other things, the ten plagues serve as the beginning of a process of educating Bnei Yisrael to whom Hashem is. However, even after these ten plagues, Bnei Yisrael were still not completely convinced of Hashem's desire to redeem them. Bnei Yisrael's weak psychological state, caused by their slave mentality, paralyzed their ability to see Hashem's hand clearly, and it was not until the Kri'at Yam Suf that they were able to do so.

In order to help Bnei Yisrael grow into a nation with the correct theological and religious perspective, Hashem needed to perform numerous miracles and plagues, and ultimately split Yam Suf. Perhaps one may label this accomplishment as difficult for Hashem. Kri'at Yam Suf was in fact difficult because it required Hashem to subtly navigate Bnei Yisrael into accomplishing something while at the same time not inhibiting or limiting their free-will, for Hashem did not want to force them into belief.

When self-control is given to another party, enabling that party to self-govern itself, without re-claiming that self-control, it is more difficult to achieve the desired outcome. Nothing is more difficult for Hashem than encouraging and directing growth without controlling the people along the way.

Kri'at Yam Suf epitomizes how, via Hashem's indirect guidance, Bnei Yisrael freely chose to transform from a nation unable

to see Hashem properly during the ten plagues, into one that genuinely “believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant.” It was Hashem using His indirect, not direct, guidance that made Kri’at Yam Suf so difficult.

Based upon the above understanding of how Kri’at Yam Suf was successful, we can explain why Kri’at Yam Suf serves as the paradigm comparison to the difficulties of marriage. Because marriage’s greatest challenge is for two self-governing people with complete free-choice to be willing to develop and grow into whatever it takes to achieve success, it is difficult for Hashem to arrange.

Just like Bnei Yisrael needed to be directed into a certain mindset for success in both belief and outlook, so too every couple needs to be directed into developing a mindset in which a successful marriage can be obtained.

However, beyond the overall greater aforementioned theory of how Kri’at Yam Suf is similar to marriage, there may be additional details which further support R’ Yossi Bar Chalafta’s comparison. Marriage requires the ability to be flexible and adapt to a new environment. Perhaps this is captured by the liquidity of water, which takes the shape of its container; a quality necessary to perform Kri’at Yam Suf.

Marriage requires a concerted effort to break from one’s natural status and elevate oneself in order to achieve success. Perhaps this too is captured by the water, which defied gravity and stood up to form walls. Lastly, marriage requires the ability to move aside in order to allow for one’s spouse’s needs and desires. Perhaps this is captured by the water splitting, allowing Bnei Yisrael to pass through.

Beyond Hashem’s challenge in arranging successful matches, which is difficult due to man’s free choice and power of self-determination, the splitting of the waters of the Yam Suf also symbolizes



---

some of the attitudes needed for a successful marriage: flexibility, adaptability and the ability to move aside and allow for one's spouse's needs and desires.



## **Between Heaven and Earth**

Of what does the Torah speak? Certainly it speaks of people, of forefathers and foremothers; it speaks of commandments, of actions to do and actions to refrain from doing; it speaks of morality, of wrong and right, of good and evil. In fact, this last aspect, the moral aspect, may be the one that connects the first two: the stories and the commandments. The word טוב appears in the Torah 230 times. The word רעה appears 107 times, הרעה 81, הרע 62, and רע 74. Clearly these concepts are crucial to the message the Torah wishes to convey.

Yet, tucked away at the beginning of Bereishit and in the middle of Vayikra we find an unusual phrase that appears only twice within all of Torah – לא טוב. What is the difference between not good and evil? How can we understand a concept with a definition telling us what is it not, but not what it is? What can we learn from this exceedingly rare phrase about who we are and how we should relate to our place in the world? In order to answer this question, I wish to explore the two stories where the phrase לא טוב is mentioned, and in light of the similarities and differences, suggest a possible understanding of this somewhat amorphic phrase.

The first time the phrase לא טוב appears is when the Torah describes the creation of man, and by doing so, revealing man's nature. Man is created from "the dust of the Earth" into which Hashem blew "the breath of life" (Bereishit 2:7). The duality in the creation of man is reflected in the duality of man's essence. He is made from the low and lifeless earth but contains a soul from Hashem. The name he is given, Adam, reflects the dominance of the earthly aspect of mankind. Adam is put in the garden "to till it and tend it" (2:15), and is commanded to eat from all the trees of the garden except for the עץ הדעת טוב ורע, the tree of knowledge of good and bad (2:16-17).

At this stage of the story, he is completely passive, silent in word and in action. He does not respond to Hashem's direct speech to him, and perhaps in light of this silence, Hashem says: **לא טוב היות האדם לבדו אעשה לו עזר כנגדו** (2:18).

What's wrong with Adam when he is alone, and how is giving him an **עזר כנגדו** a solution?

First, the animals are brought before Adam. This meeting arouses the first action that mankind is described as doing in the Torah: assigning names. The act of naming reflects in large measure some of man's unique abilities, as opposed to the rest of the animal kingdom: speech and understanding different essences. The meeting with the animals concludes with Adam's understanding that he cannot find within them an **עזר כנגדו**, precisely because they lack the human abilities that allowed him to name them.

This is the beginning of Adam's understanding of his unique human essence: he shares with the animals the earthly aspect, but his *nishmat chayim* sets him apart from them. And so, Hashem must take from Adam himself, the unique mixture of earthliness and G-dliness, the material to make a proper **עזר כנגדו** for him. Adam's self-understanding is deepened when he meets **אשה**, and he exclaims: **זאת הפעם עצם מעצמי ובשר מבשרי לזאת יקרא אשה כי מאיש לקחה זאת** (2:23). This sentence, the first quote of humankind in the Torah, exemplifies Adam's greater understanding of himself and his nature.

The phrase **זאת הפעם** clearly distinguishes between the animals, and the **אשה**, saying, this time something is different. However, he still does not acknowledge the aspect that distinguishes him and **אשה** from the animals. Rather, he describes only that she is flesh from his flesh **בשר מבשרי**. While naming the new creation **אשה**, he, **אדם**, also names himself **איש**. As mentioned earlier, naming reflects an understanding of the thing that is being named, and by such Adam reflects a sufficient degree of self-awareness to name himself.

This self understanding peaks in the story of the *etz hada'at*, where the relationship between the earthly aspect of humankind and the heavenly aspect of humankind are explored by Chava and,

indirectly, Adam through the dialogue with the snake. The snake begins the dialogue with Chava with the false claim that Hashem commanded that it was forbidden for Adam and Chava to eat from any of the trees in Gan Eden (3:1). In a deeper sense, the suggestion that humans are restricted from eating from any of the trees in Gan Eden would mean that they are purely earthly beings, unworthy of tasting the fruits in Hashem's garden. When Chava replies that they are permitted to eat from the trees, except for *etz hada'at* (3:2-3), the snake takes the opposite extreme and suggests that if so, perhaps they are heavenly beings, with so much potential to be G-dly that **ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם והייתם כאלוקים** (3:5).

Adam and Chava were allowed to roam around Gan Eden with one condition: not to eat from the *etz hada'at*. Disobeying this commandment was a move of the first humans towards the heavenly aspect of their essence: we want to be like Hashem. The respective punishments of all the characters are in accordance to the nature of this mistake. The snake becomes physically bound to the ground **על תלך**, **גחנך תלך**, and Adam is given the task of working the earth, a constant reminder of his earthly nature **אוררה האדמה בעבורך ... עד שובך** **אל האדמה ... כי עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב** (3:17-19).

The punishment of death both reminds man of his limits, and also of the lowly source he was made from and that one day he will return to. It is possible to see these "punishments" as a way to teach the first humans, and all those who would follow, the essence of their being, in order to create a proper relationship between them, Hashem and the world.

This reading of the story sheds new light on the phrase **לא טוב**. What was so "not good" about man when he was alone? He did not know who he was. This was not evil but confusion, a lack of clarity and of self-understanding. Therefore, the tree of knowledge is called **עץ הדעת טוב ורע**, the ability to distinguish between good and bad. **לא טוב** is in neither of the categories of knowledge, it is a lack of knowledge. As the pasuk describes, the **לא טוב** was the outcome of **היות האדם לבדו**. When he was alone, Adam is like the *adama* itself:

still, silent, lifeless. It is only when Adam breaks out of his solitude that he begins to gain self-awareness.

First, he meets the animals and names them. He reveals his ability of speech and understands that he is unlike the rest of the animal kingdom; he cannot find within them an עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ. When Chava is created, he deepens his understanding, realizing that she is מִבֶּשֶׂר including the same duality that he does. Yet it is only through the incident of the etz hada'at that his essence becomes clear. Man has a place in Gan Eden, but this is only if he makes clear that he knows his place. Once man tries to ascend beyond his capacity, Hashem has to teach him a lesson: you are not like me. You come from the earth, and you will return to the earth, and all your days you will work the earth.

The second place where the phrase לא טוב appears is in Yitro's suggestion to Moshe to appoint judges, וַיֹּאמֶר חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה אֵלָיו לֹא טוֹב וַיֹּאמֶר חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה אֵלָיו לֹא טוֹב (Shemot 18:17). Despite the many differences, reading this story in light of the explanation offered above with regards to Bereishit, will allow for a deeper understanding of its significance. Adam may be the first human figure in the Torah, but Moshe is without doubt the main one, spanning four of five books of Torah. Like Adam, Moshe was in many ways alone throughout his leadership of Bnei Yisrael, as the following pesukim describe: וַיִּגַּשׁ מֹשֶׁה לַיהוָה אֵל ה' (Shemot 24:2) and לֹא אוֹכֵל אֲנִי לִבְדִּי לִשְׂאֵת (Bamidbar 11:14).

And, if we are dealing with figures that straddle heaven and earth, what better example is there than Moshe? On the one hand, וְלֹא קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה (Devarim 34:10). His nevuah was unlike that of any other human to have ever lived, speaking to Hashem in the closest way possible וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת רִעְקוֹ (Shemot 33:11). At Har Sinai, the entirety of Bnei Yisrael stayed at the bottom of the mountain except for Moshe: וּמֹשֶׁה עָלָה אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים (19:3). He is even mentioned next to Hashem with regards to the emunah of Bnei Yisrael after leaving Egypt and Kri'at Yam Suf – וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּה' וּבַמֶּלֶךְ עַבְדּוֹ (14:31). "they had faith in Hashem and in His servant Moshe"

However, the danger of Bnei Yisrael getting too carried away with their vision of Moshe as אִישׁ הָאֱלֹקִים (Devarim 33:1) was real. Therefore, the Torah emphasizes the human aspects of Moshe on several occasions. Moshe's request to fully understand Hashem: כַּבֹּד אֶת כְּבוֹד (Shemot 33:18) is met with the response לֹא תוּכַל (33:20). When Bnot Tzelafchad come to Moshe with the request to receive an inheritance, Moshe has to clarify with Hashem the proper response to a situation. Moshe is punished for מִי מְרִיבָה, and is not allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael, despite his tefillot and tachanunim. Even the description of Bnei Yisrael's reaction to Hashem splitting the sea through Moshe and his staff reiterates that Moshe is first and foremost a servant of Hashem.

Yitro's suggestion to appoint judges can also be seen as a situation where Moshe's human limitations are emphasized. The action of judging in the Torah has strong connection to G-dliness; judges themselves are called אֱלֹהִים in certain places, such as, אִם לֹא, וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֲדֹנָיו אֶל (Shemot 22:7) and הָאֱלֹהִים וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֶל הַדָּלָת אוֹ אֶל הַמְּזוּזָה (21:6). As the only judge of Bnei Yisrael, the balance between G-dliness and human nature is tipped to one side in this situation.

Therefore Yitro tells Moshe לֹא טוֹב הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה. His suggestion that Moshe cannot continue to be the only judge of Bnei Yisrael highlights Moshe's limitations: כִּי כְבוֹד מִמֶּךָ הַדְּבָר נִבּוֹל תִּבּוֹל ... (18:18). The term נִבּוֹל תִּבּוֹל, "you will surely wilt" echoes the earthly essence discussed in Bereishit. Moshe is a natural creature with limitations, and therefore, similarly to a plant, he too can 'wilt'. Yitro is not belittling Moshe's importance or implying that he should not have a special place in the judicial system. Rather, he suggests that כָּל הַדְּבָר הַגָּדוֹל will be judged by Moshe, but the smaller cases will be judged by others.

The Torah connects the story of Adam as well as Yitro's suggestion to Moshe with the rare phrase לֹא טוֹב, which can be seen as an expression of a state of confusion, specifically regarding one's exact place in relation to Hashem and other creatures. לֹא טוֹב הָיִיתָ הָאָדָם לְבָדוֹ.

because he needs an עזר כנגדו to expose his true essence or keep in balance the different aspects of his nature. In the case of Adam, Chava helped Adam understand his superiority to the animal kingdom on the one hand, yet in the following pesukim, through Chava and the snake, understand that it was impossible for him to reach the place of והייתם כאלוקים. In the case of Moshe, Yitro was an עזר כנגדו who suggested a change in Moshe's leadership that would tweak for the better the balance between the two aspects that make up humankind.

This may leave us with two points to ponder. Firstly, these stories are a reminder of our essence as humans: we are made of רוח נשמה and עפר האדמה, and we must not neglect either side of our physical and spiritual DNA. Secondly, we can and should be the עזר כנגדו for those surrounding us, inspire them to fully be in touch with their neshama, and be there for them when they are feeling low and earthly. May we strive to live like Moshe, who was very much an איש אלוקים, but still be an איש.