

Kol

קול

Mevaseret

מבשרת

A Compilation of
Insights and Analyses
of Torah Topics

by the students of

MICHLELET MEVASERET YERUSHALAYIM

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

It has often been repeated to us that the central focus, the grounding aspect, of our year in seminary is the experience in the *beit midrash* – working hard to make the Torah we learn our own. Because this concept is so ingrained in us, we sometimes forget the depth that it holds. We ask Hashem every day, in the *Yehi Ratzon* following *Shemoneh Esrei*, and even during *Shemonah Esrei* in Shabbos davening, ותן חלקנו בתורתך. What does this mean?

The Eitz Yosef (in *Otzar HaTefillot*), brings two concepts from Chazal that highlight what it means to be given our *chelek* in Torah from Hashem. One idea is that at מעמד הר סיני, our *neshamot* each received our *chelek*, our specific portion, in Torah. The other is that in our mother's womb, we received our *chelek* in Torah and upon birth, forgot it. Our job in this lifetime is to rediscover it.

This stage in our lives, the seminary year, is a perfect example of this process. The first mishna in *Avot* tells us, משה קבל תורה מסיני; it details the specific process of *mesorah* that is linked, from generation to generation, teacher to student, originating at *Har Sinai*, at *Kabbalat HaTorah*, itself. Before the seminary year, before this process of making Torah our own, we related to this mishna only on a very surface level. We received Torah from our teachers, and were therefore connected to the *mesorah* as the next link in the chain. This year, however, we connected ourselves to *Har Sinai* in a completely different way. We connected not to the *mesorah* of others, but to the individual *chelek* in Torah our own *neshamot* received at *Har Sinai*; the part of Torah only we could reveal.

Chazal help us understand that this new experience of Torah is just as vital to the *mesorah* as the Torah we have been receiving from our teachers and mentors. It has been with us since before birth, and it has been part of our nation's Torah since *Kabbalat HaTorah* at *Har Sinai*. The things we discover in Torah are often called *chiddushim*, but this is misleading. Our *chelek* in Torah is not

something new; it is something ancient, something woven into our DNA and that of our nation's Torah.

What is the difference between this *chelek* in Torah and the Torah we have been receiving from our teachers? The difference is that it is ours, it is specific to our *neshama*, it was given specifically to *us* at birth. This year is perhaps the first exposure we have had to exploring the Torah that is specific to us in depth. We have each had a chance to delve into the things we connect to, the pieces of Torah that were designated to us from the beginning of our existence. The articles in this journal are just some of the beautiful Torah our class, MMY 5783, has discovered.

We ask Hashem, ותן חלקנו בתורתך, and Hashem has responded to us with a year filled with the discovery of our individual *chalakim*. We are surrounded by the most passionate and special individuals, and this year has been a gift from Hashem in that we have had the opportunity to be in this growth-filled environment. We are confident that everyone in MMY 5783 will continue to bring their *chelek* into the world and continue the *mesorah* with their own unique piece of Torah.

We thank each of the authors who spent many hours researching, learning, and writing for this journal. Each one has really poured her heart into these pieces and dedicated a tremendous amount of time and effort into expressing their *chelek* in Torah.

We also thank our editorial staff who spent a considerable amount of time making sure the author's Torah was expressed in the clearest way possible.

We, of course, could not have completed this journal or this year without all of our inspiring teachers who have really ensured that our experience in the Beit Midrash was specialized to each of our individual needs and designed to bring out our unique *chalakim* in Torah. They have been a source of support during this transitional period in our lives, and we could not have asked for a more dedicated staff.

We express our gratitude to Rabbi Lerner, who ensures that this publication comes to fruition year after year.

We finally thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu for enabling us each to discover our *chelek* in Torah and for giving us the opportunity to learn in an institution that values our individual perspectives and ideas and that allows us to develop them in an encouraging environment. We cannot be more grateful for our year in MMY, and while we are sad our year is coming to a close, we know that the Torah we have discovered here will remain a part of us and our nation's Torah, forever.

Sincerely,

The Kol Mevaseret Editors 5783
Shoshi, Nava, and Leora

INTRODUCTION

The year(s) in Israel are life-changing. We have heard this refrain over and over again, but isn't it somewhat overstated? How can one or two years, as pivotal as they may be, change one's entire life? We are all products of our nature and we are all products of our nurture which are so much deeper than any one year wherever it may be. Impact – yes, but life-changing?

The answer is obvious. Life changes are not a direct product of any one experience; growth is cumulative. Singular events can serve as a catalyst for future growth and *mitzvah goreret mitzvah*. We are not in this for the here and now, we are in this for the long term.

The mishna (Berachot 9:5) teaches us that in the Beit Ha-Mikdash all berachot ended with the phrase: “*Baruch ata Hashem elokei Yisrael min ha’olam...*” followed by the closing words of the beracha. The heretics, however, claimed that “*min hao’lam*” in the singular, meant that there is only this world and no World to Come. Chazal, therefore, changed the text to “*...min ha’olam v’ad ha’olam*” to show that there is also a World to Come. As Rav Soloveitchik explains: “Things that we accomplish in a specific space and time don't just impact a small world of the present, of this moment, of diminutive, egotistical aspirations, of death and extirpation; but a great, unending future world leading to the vision of the End of Days – eternity.”

As we approach the end of a school year, it is common to look to the next year with trepidation. Leaving the bubble and returning, ironically, into the unknown and questioning how one's learning and “newfound” spirituality are ever going to be able to continue, are normal emotions. However, if we recognize that our experiences are meant to be “*ad ha’olam*” and we work on ourselves to not just have a “*min ha’olam*” myopic view, our entire attitude can be transformed.

The above quote from the Rav is part of a speech he gave at a Mizrachi convention in January of 1944 in the middle of the *Shoah*

(and can be found in a recently published book – by OU Press - entitled “The Return to Zion”). The Rav quotes from Parshat Bechukotai that after all of the tragedies that will befall us if we don’t keep the Torah, “*v’hitvadu et avonam v’et avon avotam...*” the survivors will come to confess (and then ultimately return). Although confession is normally connected to transgression and a guilty conscience, it can be much deeper and more expansive than that. The Shulchan Aruch (YD 338:1) states that, “When a person is approaching death, say to him ‘confess before you die. Many who confessed did not pass away while many who didn’t confess passed away”. The Rav elaborates, “...a perspective of the past. Confessing means interpreting them as a visionary would, using future-oriented concepts and ideas”.

After the plague recorded in Parshat Pinchas, Moshe Rabbeinu is instructed to take a census. Rashi comments that this is comparable to a shepherd whose flock was attacked by wolves; he counts them to determine how many survived. The original source in the Midrash Tanchuma, however, records the same idea but the text reads, “how many are missing”, instead of “how many survived”. Although in 1944 it was certainly understandable to choose the Midrash’s version, mourning the missing, the Rav challenged the Mizrahi movement, in January 1944 (two months before the Nazis invaded Hungary), to also adopt Rashi’s version; how many survived. The Rav encouraged his listeners to focus on how many survived, “so that the shepherd can assemble a new flock. This is not a count of despair or hopelessness but a census of determination and firm, unshakeable resolve, of fiery faith and burning relief ... not *sifru*, count, but *se’u* ... The census commanded by the Torah must be one of firm faith and ecstatic hope, not of despair and despondency”. *Se’u* means not just to count but also to elevate, encourage and inspire.

L’havdil, in a totally different context, the concept of “*min ha’olam v’ad ha’olam*” applies to us as well. This journal is a wonderful example of current accomplishments and past experiences. It highlights what a year in MMY can provide, and the level of

scholarship and diversity of disciplines and approaches contained within, speak volumes of who MMYers are. We inherit our students from families, schools and communities and we are honored to partner with the people that helped our students develop, long before they ever stepped foot into the MMY Beit Midrash. What a wonderful “*min ha’olam*”.

“*Min ha’olam*”, however, is not enough. Everything we do must have a broader perspective of the past and be looked at as a visionary would, with a future-oriented eye. We look forward to seeing our students’ future accomplishments even as we relish in this edition of Kol Mevaseret which we know has served as a catalyst.

Se’u, MMY 5783. We count on you to elevate, encourage and inspire others everywhere you go – “*ad ha’olam*”!

Rabbi David Katz

תנ"ך

The Symbolism of Water

Each time the Torah mentions water it relates to giving or taking away life. The Torah starts off in Sefer Bereishit with the creation of the world. Before the first day of creation, the earth is all water, as it says, ורוח אלקים מרחפת על פני המים (Bereishit 1:2). On the second day of creation, Hashem separates between the water below and water above. Next, Hashem gathers the water on the ground to make room for the land.

Hashem creates and separates the water before creating any life forms because all living organisms need water to live and grow. Additionally, the land appears from within the water, only after Hashem gathers the water on earth, since water is a necessity to create and fertilize the soil that will eventually enable vegetation to grow.

During the generation of Noach, Hashem uses water to remove almost all life on earth. The people in the generation of Noach are involved in *gilui arayot*, *avodah zarah* and stealing according to Rashi (Bereishit 6:11). Hashem sees how corrupt the nation is and decides to destroy the world with a *mabul*, flood. Hashem says to Noach, ואני הנני מביא את המבול מים על הארץ לשחת כל בשר אשר בו יגוע (Bereishit 6:17). Hashem uses water as a vehicle to destroy all the people, animals and land. This aggressive and destructive usage of water reflects just how corrupt the world has become. The fact that water, specifically, is used to punish them stems from the unique quality of water.

Water is a lifesource without which nothing could survive; but, through the *mabul*, Hashem uses it *leshachet* – to destroy – all life forms which have *ruach chaim*. This phrase of *ruach chaim* emphasizes the contradictory usage of water here: to destroy life rather than provide life. Hashem uses water, for the first time since its creation, to remove the life of undeserving individuals. In order to

merit the gift of life and water's life-giving force, Hashem's creations need to follow His will.

Moreover, in Parshat Vayera, Avraham sends Yishmael and Hagar out of his house, according to Sarah and Hashem's command, providing them with **לחם וחמת מים** (Bereishit 21:14). Rashi comments that Avraham only gives them water and bread, and not gold and silver, because he "hates" Yishmael as a result of his transgressing the prohibitions of *avodah zarah*, *shefichut damim*, and *gilui arayot*. Water in this instance represents Avraham's frustration and hostility towards Yishmael as a result of all of the fundamentally anti-Torah activities Yishmael is involved in. When Avraham sends Yishmael away, he is prohibiting him from receiving an inheritance and cutting him off from the family.

After Yishmael and Hagar's eviction from Avraham's home, they run out of water and Yishmael starts dying of thirst. Hashem hears Yishmael's cries and shows them a well of water. The Malbim comments that Hashem is showing Yishmael that He is watching over him and accepts his *tefillah* (Bereishit 21:17). While Yishmael is in Avraham's house, he is sinning and not following in the ways of Avraham. However, after Yishmael leaves Avraham's house and is dying, he does *teshuva* and his *tefillot* are accepted. From that process he merits the well of water, as a source of life, by Hashem.

In Parshat Chayei Sarah, Eliezer, Avraham's servant, is sent by Avraham to find Yitzchak a wife. Eliezer chooses a water-related sign for the person who will become Yitzchak's wife. Eliezer goes to a spring where all the women go to collect water and thinks to himself that the woman who offers him and his camels water will be Yitzchak's wife. When Rivka goes to the spring (Bereshit 24:45), Rashi comments that the water rises to greet her. Eliezer sees this, and coupled with Rivka bringing him and all his camels water, he knows that she will be the right match for Yitzchak.

Eliezer uses water as a sign because he is looking for the future mother of the Jewish people. He needs someone who understands the high level of responsibility, and who will be able to give life and perpetuate Avraham and Sarah's legacy. When he sees that

the water rises to greet her, he knows that is his sign from Hashem that she is worthy to be one of the *imahot*. The water here reflects Rivka's potential to give life to the Jewish people.

The *kohanim*, in Parshat Naso, are given instructions for a case of a *sota*. A *sota* is a woman who is suspected by her husband to have been unfaithful because she was secluded with a man other than her husband after having been warned about this. In such a case, the husband brings his wife to the *kohen* who gives her *mei marim*. The *kohen* takes holy water from the *kiyor*, mixes it with earth from the floor of the *mishkan*, and dissolves the writing of these specific curses found in the Torah into the water. If she was faithful to her husband, then the water will not harm her, but if she was not faithful to him, then she will die.

Both Eliezer and the *kohanim* seem to put a lot of faith in the fact that Hashem will send them a sign through water. In Eliezer's situation, he takes the highest level of *shvuah* regarding finding Yitzchak's wife, who will be one of the mothers of the Jewish people, and uses water to fulfill his promise. The Torah guarantees that the water will correctly decide whether to let a *sota* live or die, on the basis of whether or not she violated a Torah prohibition. When the stakes are very high, we turn to water.

Moreover, in Parshat Vayeshev, after Yosef tells his brothers about his two dreams and Yaakov gives him the *ketonet passim*, they become very jealous of Yosef. When Yosef goes out to his brothers in *Dotan*, they throw him into a pit **והבור רק אין בו מים** (Bereishit 37:24). The fact that the pasuk specifies, according to Radak, that there is not any water in the pit emphasizes the idea that since the *shevatim* do not know Hashem will perform a miracle for Yosef, it is as if they killed him. In this instance, the lack of water represents death since Yosef's brothers want him dead, as it states, **ויתנכלו אתו להמיתו** (Bereishit 37:18). The *shevatim* conspire to kill Yosef when he approaches them in *Dotan*, so even though Reuven saves Yosef by suggesting they throw him into the pit instead of kill him, their original intention is to take his life away, which is further emphasized by the pasuk **והבור רק אין בו מים**.

In Parshat Shemot, Hashem tells Moshe at the *sneh* what to do when he goes to the king of Egypt in order to convince him that Hashem is the One who sent Moshe. Hashem instructs Moshe to, first, turn his staff into a snake and, second, make *tzara'at* break out on his hand. If Pharaoh still does not believe Moshe after those signs, Hashem tells Moshe to turn the water into blood. This demonstrates the power of water because Hashem tells Moshe לקלך (Shemot 4:9). If the first two signs do not work, then this is the final sign that should convince Pharaoh.

This last sign has to specifically be with water because of the unique power of water. Hashem is sending Moshe to warn Pharaoh to send Bnei Yisrael out before the *makkot* and to convince him that there is a real G-d in this world, and water is the best physical symbol to represent these ideas! Water has a holy quality and represents life and death in the Torah. Therefore, Hashem is sending Pharaoh the message that Hashem controls the world, and Pharaoh's life is in His hands. Just as Pharaoh murders Jewish boys and throws them into the Nile, so too Hashem will turn water into blood and destroy Egypt if he does not let Bnei Yisrael leave.

Pharaoh, in response to Moshe and Aharon, denies Hashem's existence and says, 'מי ה' אשר אשמע בקלו לשלח את ישראל לא ידעתי את ה' (Shemot 5:2). Pharaoh then adds more work to the load of Bnei Yisrael, causing them tremendous suffering. Bnei Yisrael's faith starts to waiver; even Moshe is frustrated and says to Hashem, ומאז באתי אל פרעה לדבר בשמך הרע לעם הזה והצל לא הצלת את עמך (Shemot 5:23). 'Since I have gone to Pharaoh,' Moshe says, 'it has been worse for Bnei Yisrael, and You, Hashem, did not save Your nation.' The suffering at this time is so grave that the nation's *emunah* is fading. As a result, Hashem instructs Moshe to say to Pharaoh, בזאת תדע כי אני ה' הנה אנכי מכה במטה אשר בידי על המים אשר בים (Shemot 7:17). Hashem declares to Moshe that with this affliction of the water turning into blood, they will know that Hashem is G-d.

Turning the water into blood is the first *makah*, and comes at a time when the Egyptians do not believe in Hashem, and Bnei Yisrael are suffering so much that they start to lose faith. The word “*teida*”, they will know, is not only referring to the Egyptians but also Bnei Yisrael. This first *makah* will make it known to everyone that Hashem is the only G-d, and is involved in their lives.

Water is specifically used for this widespread sign because Hashem turning a life force, water, into blood, which no one can survive by regularly drinking, is frightening and sends the message that Hashem is really in control. The only reason anyone is living is because Hashem wants them to. By changing the Nile into blood, Hashem publically demonstrates that if He can turn a source of life, like a body of water, which allows marine life to exist, makes the soil fertile, and satiates people, into a pool of death, where no life can survive; then so too the people of the time can be killed and destroyed by Hashem.

The most famous account pertaining to water in the Torah is probably *kri'at Yam Suf*. Moshe describes the *Yam Suf* in *Az Yashir* as being strong, and rock-like towards the Egyptians. Rashi explains that the *Yam Suf* stands up like walls and the water pushes the Egyptians against the rocky walls of the *Yam Suf* (Shemot 15:8). This description of the water is very aggressive and not how water is typically described or experienced.

Hashem is punishing the Egyptians for all the suffering they caused Bnei Yisrael and for not believing in Him even after all the *makot*. The water here is being used to take away the lives of the Egyptians in such a miraculous way. No one can deny Hashem's influence and involvement in the world. Hashem is the One who gives life and also takes it away. If the Egyptians were going to wrongly use the lives that Hashem gave them and abuse the Nile by worshipping it and throwing babies into it, then Hashem will take back their lives, specifically through that very lifesource.

Moreover, this scene of Bnei Yisrael walking through the *Yam Suf* and becoming a nation is telling of the unique quality of water. This is a global miracle which makes Bnei Yisrael into a reborn

nation. When a person converts to Judaism the last step of conversion is immersion into a *mikvah*. A *mikvah* is made from collected rain water and has the power to change a person's status from a non-Jew to a member of Am Yisrael. For Bnei Yisrael, *kri'at Yam Suf* acts as a pseudo mass conversion where they become a unified nation ruled by Hashem. The real "conversion" happens on *ma'amad har inai*, but walking through the *Yam Suf* is the beginning of that process.

Directly after *Az Yashir*, when the whole nation praises Hashem and recognizes His glory, Bnei Yisrael go to Marah where there is no water to drink because the water is bitter. Their immediate reaction is to complain, ויילנו העם על משה לאמר מה נשתה (Shemot 15:24). Hashem, through Moshe, performs a miracle: Moshe puts a piece of wood into the water and the water turns sweet.

This incident in Marah is a test for Bnei Yisrael, as the *pasuk* says, שם שם לו חק ומשפט ושם נסהו (Shemot 15:25). Hashem tests their *emunah* with the same thing He used to perform a miracle three days earlier at *kri'at Yam Suf*. The water in *kri'at Yam Suf* represents death towards the Egyptians and giving life to Bnei Yisrael; now, in Marah, Hashem is removing water, putting Bnei Yisrael in a potentially deadly experience. He is testing to see if they will still have faith in Him. Bnei Yisrael's *emunah* here is evidently low. They cannot be sustained without obvious miracles, so Hashem sweetens the water for them, giving them life despite the fact that their *emunah* does not let them merit to have all of this mercy from Hashem.

Water also functions in the Torah as a means to make a person *tahor*, pure, after they have a status of *tumah*, impurity. Rav Aryeh Kaplan explains that learning about the *avi avot* of *tumah*, the main impurity in which all other forms of impurity are rooted, can give insight into the specific *tumah* being mentioned. The *av* of *tumah* comes from *tumat hamet*, impurity from a dead body. Therefore, all forms of *tumah* are related to death in some way, and the *taharah* process involves using *mayim chayim* to counteract the *tumah*.

For instance, in the case of a person or house with *tzara'at*, a *kohen* is commanded to get wood and *shecht* a bird over *mayim chayim*. Chizkuni explains that the water is called *mayim chayim* because a person is considered dead when they have *tzara'at* and this purification process makes them alive again, so they can re-enter the camp.

The *kohanim* are commanded to build a *kiyor* outside the *mikdash*, so that they will be clean and pure before they do the *avodah* in the *mikdash*. The *kiyor* is not a mitzvah in itself, the Chizkuni comments, rather it is a *hechsher mitzvah*, something you need to do in order to perform a mitzvah. A *kohen* is required to be on a level of *kedusha* to do the *avodah*, and washing in the *kiyor* is what will elevate his status to a level that he will be able to perform the *avodah*.

In addition, if a person becomes *tameh* from coming into contact with a dead body, they need to be purified through a *parah adumah* and water. The *kohen* who deals with the *parah adumah* and helping the *tumat met* become *tahor*, also needs to purify himself with water. A person who is a *tumat met* came into contact with a dead body, so part of the purification process is to counteract that closeness to death through water, which instills life in the *tameh* person.

This further emphasizes the idea that water has a life giving quality to it. When a person or item is in a state of *tumah*, they are considered dead. And the way to get them out of this *tumah* state is through *mayim chayim* which restores life in a person and allows them to become *tahor*.

In Parshat Chukat, Miriam HaNeviah passes away, and there is no water in the camp. The nation gathers on Moshe and Aharon, and complains. Bnei Yisrael had a well of water in Miriam's merit and when she died, the well went away. The lack of water in this case directly relates to Miriam's death and causes the nation to say that if only they had died with their friends before, then they would not have to suffer now in the desert.

Moshe and Aharon gather Bnei Yisrael around a rock and Moshe says, שמעו נא המרים המן הסלע הזה נוציא לכם מים (Bamidbar 20:10). Moshe hits the rock twice and a lot of water comes out for the nation to drink. Ramban explains that when Moshe says, המן הסלע הזה נוציא לכם מים he is asking Bnei Yisrael a rhetorical question: do you, *Am Yisrael*, believe that it is within Hashem's power to bring water out of a rock or not?" Moshe calls them מורים, rebels, to emphasize that their complaining is rebelling against Hashem because it shows a lack of *emunah* in Hashem.

This miracle with the water is meant to reinforce Bnei Yisrael's faith in Hashem after their reaction to the lack of water. Therefore, when Moshe hits the rock twice, he is taking away from the purpose of the miracle. Rabbeinu Bechayei holds that when Moshe says "notzi," some people from Bnei Yisrael believe that it is through Moshe and Aharon's wisdom that water is coming out of the rock, and not from Hashem.

Furthermore, Chizkuni comments that it was imperative to Hashem that Moshe speaks to the rock, and does not hit it, so that *Am Yisrael* will see that it is Hashem who is giving them water. This miracle in *mei meriva* is supposed to be Hashem publicizing the fact that He is taking care of them in the desert and is the one who provides them life. Hashem's intention in giving them water, life, in a miraculous way is in order to ingrain *emunah* in *Am Yisrael*.

The Gemara (Bava Kamma 82a) explains that the passuk מים וילכו שלשת ימים במדבר ולא מצאו מים (Shemot 15:22) refers to the fact that Bnei Yisrael went three days without any Torah in the desert; water in this context means Torah. Because Bnei Yisrael went three days without learning Torah, they got worn out and started to complain about the bitter water in Marah. For this reason, Moshe institutes minimum public Torah learning on Monday, Thursday and Shabbat, so *Klal Yisrael* would never go another three days without Torah.

The Gemara (Berachot 61b) says that during the time of the Romans, Torah learning was outlawed, but Pappus the son of Yehudah sees Rabi Akiva publicly learning Torah. Pappus asks Rabi

Akiva “why are you not afraid of the government?” Rabi Akiva replies in the form of a *mashal*. There is a fox walking alongside a river, and the fox sees fish gathering together and fleeing from one place to another. The fox asks the fish, “why are you running away?” The fish respond that they are running away from the nets of fishermen which are being cast into the river. The fox asks if they would like to come up to dry land, and live together with the fox. The fish answer, “if we are afraid in the water, the environment we live in, how much more so we will be afraid in an environment in which we will die.” Rabi Akiva continues, “this is also true with us: if we are afraid when we learn Torah, which it says in Devarim will lengthen our days, then how much more so should we be afraid if we neglect Torah.” Rabi Akiva is drawing a comparison between a fish out of water and a Jew without Torah. Just as water sustains and nourishes a fish, so too Torah sustains the Jewish people.

Both in Masechet Bava Kamma and Masechet Berachot, Chazal teach that a Jewish person cannot survive without Torah, just as a human cannot live without water. Being that water represents life and death and that Torah is like water, it can be concluded that learning Torah is a life and death decision. Learning Torah and following in Hashem’s path is what will keep a Jewish person in this world. Hashem is the source of all life and everyone is completely reliant on His care and protection.

Parenting Through a Torah Lens

A Case Study of Yocheved, Amram, and Three Great Leaders of Bnei Yisrael

A person's life is forever changed by the experience of becoming a parent. The focus and priorities of those blessed with this gift shift from being internal to external, as their children's success and well-being become top priority. The ultimate question that stands at the forefront of this experience is: how can parents help shape happy, healthy, thriving children? Is it even within a person's control to do this? If so, what steps can be taken to ensure a desired result? The Torah is a guidebook for life, and that should include it being a parenting manual. Through its stories, the Torah teaches critical lessons about raising sons and daughters to walk the *derech of emet* and have the values Hashem wishes of us. Specifically, parshat Shemot brings the paramount example of Jewish parenting in the form of Amram and Yocheved.

If one of the most indicative measures of a parent is the deeds of their children, then surely Yocheved and Amram are two of the greatest parents in history. All three of their children, Moshe¹, Aaron, and Miriam, become wise and religious leaders of Bnei Yisrael. They bring the nation through the difficult transition from *avdut* to *cheirut*, and they hold their hands during the tumultuous years in the *midbar*. What did Amram and Yocheved do to end up with such terrific children?

¹ This essay is written with the opinion of the Midrash Rabbah (5:2) that states, אמר רבי חמא בן שתים עשרה שנה נתלש משה רבינו מבית אביו, Moshe is taken out of his parents' house at age twelve. That allows for plenty of time for his parents to raise him properly before he is shipped off to the king of Egypt's house, thereby, attributing his development, in regards to his parenting, strictly to Amram and Yocheved.

To understand Amram and Yocheved as parents, they must first be understood as individuals. The first introduction to them as a couple takes place in the pesukim of the second perek of Sefer Shemot, which describe a sparsely detailed story about a man from Levi who ‘takes’ a daughter from Levi. Together, they have a son, who we learn later is actually Moshe Rabbeinu. The two people in the pasuk are identified by Chazal as Yocheved and Amram. But, who are these mysterious married people?

The gemara (Sotah 11b) explains that the “*Miyaldot HaIvriyot*”, the Jewish midwives who are summoned to Pharaoh, are Yocheved and Miriam. As such, Yocheved is one of the people being commanded by Pharaoh to kill the Jewish baby boys. As the pasuk says, בילדכן את העבריות וראיתן על האבנים אם בן הוא והמתן אתו (Shemot 1:17). Not complying with Pharaoh’s decree takes extreme bravery and conviction, but Yocheved and Miriam let the little, male, Jewish *neshamot* live. This strength is an integral part of Yocheved’s character. It comes up again when she can no longer keep Moshe in hiding and is forced to give him up. Instead of drowning in her sorrow and surrendering her son to the Egyptians without a fight, Yocheved swallows her fears and comes up with a brilliant plan, ותקח לו תבת גמא ותחמרה בחמר ובזפת ותשם בה את הילד ותשם (Shemot 2:3) ותקח לו תבת גמא ותחמרה בחמר ובזפת ותשם בה את הילד ותשם; בסוף על שפת היאר; she places him in a basket covered in tar and lays him in the river, hoping her scheme will save her three month old son. Ingenuity and wisdom are clear in every facet of Yocheved’s being. All the stories told about her build the image of a woman with true, unbridled strength and creativity.

Likewise, Amram is a prominent figure. When described by Shemot Rabbah (1:13), Amram is called ראש סנהדרין באותה שעה. He is a leader and wise man of the Jewish people in Egypt. Even in his lowest moments, Amram still perseveres in his role as influencer of the Jews. When Pharaoh makes his evil decree to throw all the Jewish boys into the Nile, Amram separates from his wife, reasoning that it is best not to bring baby boys into the world just to have them murdered. The Shemot Rabbah explains that immediately

after Amram separates from his wife, עמדו כל ישראל וגרשו את נשותיהן, so too do all the other men of Israel separate from their wives. Every person in the nation follows his lead and trusts his decisions. Only a great man can reach such a high status and be so totally reliant upon, especially in times of crises.

These two individuals are quite remarkable. Their creativity, bravery, and leadership undoubtedly contributed to their parenting. This is evident as these traits are seen so clearly in their children. Moshe is the pinnacle of Jewish leadership, speaking with Hashem and acting as a means to lead Bnei Yisrael out of a world super-power and into freedom. Aaron deals creatively in his efforts to bring people back on the path of peace and righteousness. As *Pirkei Avot* (1:12) dictates about him, אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, אוהב את הבריות, ומקרבן לתורה. Miriam acts with great bravery and strength as she painstakingly watches her brother by the Nile and speaks up to the daughter of the king of Egypt, asking, (Shemot 2:7) האלך וקראתי לך? אשה מינקת מן העברית ותינק לך את הילד. These three unique attributes are embedded in the upbringing of three incredible children. Thus far, it is clear that to be a good parent one must first be a good person, with developed traits in line with *ratzon* Hashem. But, more than that, these refined personal traits must be passed down in the form of values to a person's children.

The nitty-gritty of child rearing is also evident in the parenting practices of Yocheved and Amram. The first instance of this practical parenting is found, not in *pshat*, but rather in the Ramban's commentary (Shemot 2:1), where it describes Amram remarrying Yocheved as a result of his daughter's *nevuah*. Marriage is a big deal in Judaism, the binding or undoing of one is not taken lightly. Yet, it seems that Amram retracts his major decision to divorce his wife in light of his daughter's prophecy. Clearly, he must be putting a lot of stock in the words of his children. As has already been established, Amram is no fool. He is a wise leader of the people during a difficult time and, as such, his decision to go after the advice of Miriam is not one made without careful consideration. The

midrash (Shemot Rabbah 1:13) tells us פְּוֹעָה, שֶׁהוֹפִיעָה פָּנִים כְּנֹגַד אָבִיהָ, that Miriam is called Puah because of the insolence she shows her father in insisting that he take back his wife and continue having children. If her father and all the men of the nation were to cease child bearing, he would be worse than Pharaoh, killing not only the boys, but the girls as well (in preventing them from having ever been born). Hearing her impeccable logic, Amram retakes his wife, and the whole nation follows. The gemara (Sotah 13a) says that Miriam actually had a real *nevuah* as a child that her mother will give birth to the savior of the Jewish people. When Moshe is born, the house fills with light, and her father comes to kiss her on the head, saying her *nevuah* has come true. However, when her mother is forced to place Moshe in the water in an attempt to save his life, Amram strikes Miriam, asking where her *nevuah* is now.

The fact that two groups of thought are brought, that of Miriam having a *nevuah* and that of her logical argument, brings an important idea to light. Amram actively listens to his daughter, regardless of whether or not he thinks the words are Divine or are simply coming from the intellect of his child. Amram is a model of a parent actively listening to his children and taking their opinions seriously. With this method, parents can ensure that their children develop confidence in their own *avodat Hashem*.

Lastly, Yocheved and Amram are parents that open their eyes and see the goodness of their children. This can be seen most obviously with Moshe, of whom it's said in Shemot (2:2), וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב הוּא. The Ramban comments that what Yocheved sees is a unique trait in Moshe, a trait that would save him from the death sentence of being thrown into the Nile. The Ramban goes on to explain, וְלִכֵּן נִתְּנָה אֵל לְבָהּ וְחִשְׁבָה מַחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּעֵינֶיהָ; she really puts in effort into coming up with ways to save him. In the end, she does all the right things, and Moshe ends up exactly where he needs to be. Every parent should routinely look at the deepest aspects of their child and try to uncover the unique seeds underneath the surface that require cultivating.

It is important to note that there are *mephorshim* who say it is out of a great *zechut* that Amram and Yocheved have such fantastic children, attributing little of their children's success to their impeccable parenting. For example in Shemot Rabbah (1:16) it states that the greatness of Moshe is attributed exclusively to the *zechut* Yocheved has for not listening to the decree of Pharoah to kill all the Jewish baby boys. For that, Hashem blesses her with the Torah, which is given through her son, Moshe. And according to the Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabbah (31), it is actually in Amram's merit that his children are so great. Hashem swears that the Torah and the *aron* will be given through Amram's children, attributing the greatness of his children and grandchildren in no way to his parenting. From these perspectives, one might say that Chazal are clearly trying to say that the greatness of one's children is in no way due to parenting, but rather they only result from the divine plan of Hashem in this world and the *zechut* of the parents of the children.

In full analysis, therefore, like everything in life, parenting looks to really be a balancing act of *hishtadlut* and Divine intervention. A person can only do his best and, at the end of the day, Hashem does the rest. Children are not clay; they cannot be molded to their parent's preferences, no matter how value oriented, open minded, and open hearted their parents seem. All that being said, there is definitely inherent value to strong, positive parenting practices, so much so that Chazal feels the need to bring down stories of parenting in *midrashim* for people to read and learn from. By employing these practices, and with patience, openness, love, and prayer, every mother and father in Klal Yisrael can be confident that they are doing their part to raise the next generation of the chosen nation. Who knows, maybe one of the parents out there right now, practicing parenting as the Torah prescribes, is even raising the next great leader of the Chosen Nation, *Mashiach*.

Avimelech, Yiftach, and Our Relationship to Hashem

The Sandwich

The tenth perek of Sefer Shoftim concentrates on an interaction between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem that is an expression of the overall pattern in Shoftim; Bnei Yisrael leave Hashem and serve other gods, Hashem casts them into the hands of their enemies, and Bnei Yisrael cry out to Hashem, asking to return to Him. Uniquely, in this perek, the pesukim reflect a dialogue between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem in which Hashem essentially asks Bnei Yisrael why He should continue to save them if they keep leaving Him. This conversation lasts several pesukim, composing the bulk of the perek's content. Why is there such a focus on this interaction between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem, and why does this conversation take place specifically now in the Shoftim story, if Bnei Yisrael have been following this pattern of behavior for the entirety of Shoftim?

Conveniently, our second question, the significance of the perek's context, sheds light on our first question – why is this specific conversation so elaborate and accentuated? The perek's context is extremely vital to understanding this. Namely, the tenth perek is sandwiched between two perakim that each surround a compelling primary personality. The ninth perek focuses on Avimelech, and the eleventh perek spotlights Yiftach. Perhaps these two perakim expand and shed light on the progression of the tenth perek – Bnei Yisrael casting Hashem away, turning to serve other gods, Hashem causing them to suffer, and finally their crying out to Hashem in response to their suffering.

How is this process reflected in the ninth and eleventh perakim of Shoftim? One can suggest that, upon close inspection, the stories of Avimelech and Yiftach, when combined, serve as a *mashal* for what is happening in the middle perek, and, by extension, all of Shoftim. Let's take a closer look at these two stories to understand how they can serve as a *mashal* for this process.

The ninth perek chronicles the story of Avimelech and Baalei Shechem. Avimelech, the son of Yerubaal and the daughter of a *pilegesh*, rises to power and generates a following by appealing to Baalei Shechem as their brother. Once he gains their support and hires additional mercenaries, he murders almost all of the other seventy sons of Yerubaal.

The one surviving son, Yotam, gives an elaborate *mashal* that equates Avimelech to a thorn bush to describe what will happen with Avimelech and Baalei Shechem. Essentially, Yotam says that if Baalei Shechem chose Avimelech sincerely and correctly, things would go well, but if they did not, a destructive fire would burn between them. After three years, Hashem causes a civil war to erupt between Avimelech and Baalei Shechem, culminating in their respective downfalls by means of fire.

After the passing of two other *shoftim*, Tola and Yair, Bnei Yisrael fall back into their pattern of *avodah zarah* in the tenth perek, and the eleventh chapter relates the story of the next *shofet*, Yiftach. The son of a *zonah*, his brothers send him away because he is not their full brother. When they need him for their war with Bnei Amon, however, they call him back for help. He ends up coming to their aid and fighting Bnei Amon. He makes a promise that if they win, he will sacrifice the first thing that comes out of his house to Hashem, which ends up being his daughter. Following the victory, he fulfills his vow. Finally, because the tribe of Ephraim gets angry that they were not included in the war, Yiftach's story ends in a civil war as well, between his family, the Gileadites, and Shevet Ephraim.

Avimelech vs. Yiftach

There are many striking similarities between Avimelech and Yiftach. Both are born to different mothers than their brothers, Avimelech to a *pilegesh* and Yiftach to a *zonah*. Both are described as attracting “*anashim reikim*” (9:4; 11:3). Both of their stories end with a civil war, and both of them involve an aspect of fire; Avimelech and the Baalei Shechem burn each other with fire, and Shevet Ephraim threatens to burn Yiftach’s home when they get angry with him for not including them in the war with Bnei Amon.

However, some key differences remain. While Avimelech makes the appeal to his brothers, and has to convince *them* to follow *him*, Yiftach is the one cast out by his brothers, and his brothers ultimately have to convince *him* to help *them*. Additionally, the *pesukim* in their respective stories regarding their ability to attract “*anashim reikim*” have very distinct differences. In Avimelech’s case, the *pasuk* states, ויתנו לו שבעים כסף מבית בעל ברית וישכר בהם אבימלך, *anashim reikim*. Avimelech *buys* the men, “*vayisror bahem*”; they follow *after* him, “*vayelchu acharav*.” However, in Yiftach’s case, the *pasuk* says, ויברח יפתח מפני אחיו וישב בארץ טוב, ויתלקטו אל יפתח *anashim reikim* ויצאו עמו. Yiftach *collects* the men, “*vayitlaktu*”; the *anashim reikim* go *with* Yiftach, “*vayetzu imo*.” Rashi also comments on the extra descriptive word, “*pochazim*,” about Avimelech’s *anashim reikim* (which does not appear in Yiftach’s story), that the men didn’t think about their actions; rather, they went impulsively, or mindlessly.

From these discrepancies, it would seem that Avimelech is more manipulative regarding his followers. He takes advantage of them; he buys them with money. *He* needs to do the convincing with his brothers. And, according to Rashi, the *anashim reikim* that follow him aren’t really putting much thought into their actions. Instead, they are merely following him because he has power and money. The Baalei Shechem follow him because he is, at face value, the natural choice for a leader; at face value, “*achinu hu*,” he is their

brother. As Yotam expresses, they don't choose him "b'tamim," they choose him thoughtlessly.

The Malbim highlights this in his commentary on "vayet libam" (9:3). Their hearts turn after Avimelech not because of any greater good for the community or any genuine thought process. Rather, they jump at the chance to be led by him because, on a superficial level, "achinu hu," "he's our brother." They don't think, and they certainly don't feel any genuine connection to him as they end up fighting him in a civil war.

However, Yiftach represents a more genuine connection. The *anashim reikim go with* him, as opposed to following after him; there is no sense of manipulation or buying. He doesn't convince anyone. His brothers come to ask *him* for help when they need him; they realize their need for him without being paid. He has the qualities and the draw of a true leader, but Bnei Yisrael don't recognize this and reject him at first.

Returning to our original question of the context of the tenth perek, these two stories bookend the interaction between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem for a reason. Together, they serve as a *mashal* for what is happening in the middle chapter, and as a paradigm for what is happening in Shoftim at large. Throughout Shoftim, Bnei Yisrael continuously reject Hashem, the true *Melech* of the world, and they turn to the worship of superficially intriguing but false gods. They turn to the Avimelechs of the world, and they don't think about what they are doing. They excuse their actions with an untrue connection, "achinu hu," and they accept what they see at face value. This is represented by the story with Avimelech and Baalei Shechem, which eventually proves to be a failed partnership that ends in bloodshed and fire.

Perhaps the story of Yiftach, on the other hand, serves as a *mashal* for Bnei Yisrael's relationship with Hashem during these times. In order to understand this, let's take a closer look at Yiftach's dialogue with the Gileadites when they ask him to come back and help him.

A Closer Look – The Malbim

The Malbim picks up on many key issues on the *pshat* of the conversation between the Gileadites and Yiftach. When the Gileadites originally turn to Yiftach, they ask him to be a “*katzin*,” an “officer”, for them (11:6), and, regarding the upcoming war, they say “*nilchama*,” plurally, “we will fight (11:6).” Later, after Yiftach responds, הלא אתם שנאתם אותי “didn’t you hate me” (11:7), the Gileadites switch their language to asking Yiftach to be a “*rosh*,” a “head” (11:8), and they say “*venilchamta*” in the singular (11:8), meaning only Yiftach will fight. Why the change between “*katzin*” and “*rosh*,” and “*nilchama*” and “*venilchamta*”? And how is this change a response to Yiftach’s remark, “didn’t you hate me”? Additionally, when Yiftach says, אנכי אהיה לכם לראש, “I will be your *rosh*” (11:9), how is this different than when Bnei Yisrael just said he could be a *rosh* beforehand (11:8), and why do they respond כדברך כן נעשה, “we’ll do as you say” (11:10)? What are they now doing according to his words that beforehand they weren’t when they said he could be a *rosh*? Finally, until the end, the Gileadites say that, only on the condition that Yiftach fights and wins, he will be a *rosh*. How then, in the end, do they establish him as a *rosh before* the winning and *before* the fighting (11:11)?

The Malbim begins his answer by highlighting the difference between a *rosh*, a ruler, and a *katzin*, an officer. A *katzin* has a greater stature in war than the rest of the army. He stands at the edge of the camp, because of his greatness in strength, wealth, or wisdom. Where a *rosh* has a deep bond with and rulership over his people, a *katzin* is only valued for his attributes that can contribute to the war. The Malbim quotes a pasuk from Yeshayahu (3:6), שמלה לכה קצין תהיה לנו, “you have a cloak so be an officer”. This pasuk emphasizes that the requirement to be a *katzin* is a coat, something external. There is no deeper involvement in being a *katzin*; it is solely based on external assets.

The Malbim continues his answer by explaining Bnei Yisrael’s first appeal to Yiftach; they ask him to be their *katzin*, and they

don't mention any reward he may get after the war. Instead, they revolve their argument around his present status as a *gibor chayil* and an asset to their war. This is why they say "*nilchama bivnei amon*," "and we will fight with Bnei Amon," in plural, because the *katzin*, unlike the *rosh*, does not take credit or responsibility for himself. There is no connection between him as an individual and the outcome of the war. In war, all are equal, and the *katzin* is set apart only for his assets.

In the Malbim's development of the dialogue, Yiftach's response exposes the superficiality of their request. When he says, "don't you hate me?", he is essentially calling the Gileadites out for acting as if they feel a genuine sense of love and connection towards him, when in truth, they are only coming to him because they need him. He says to them, "Don't you hate me? Didn't you kick me out of your house? If you had come to me in a time of peace, I could have forgiven you and seen your reconciliation as genuine. However, now you come to me when you are in pain and when you are forced to ask for my help. Why should I help you freely as if there is some covenant of love between us when there isn't?"

The Malbim describes their response in turn. They acknowledge he is right, they hated him, but now they will allow him to be their *rosh* only after he goes and fights for them. Their shift to the language of *rosh* expresses their offer of a more genuine commitment to Yiftach.

There is a caveat with this offer, however. The law of war at the time allowed that even the lowliest member of the army who would bring victory to the nation would be raised up as a *rosh* post facto and get the reward. At the end of the tenth perek, the pasuk even states, גלעד בבני עמון יהיה לראש לכל ישרי מי האיש אשר יהל להלחם. Whoever would begin to fight with Bnei Amon would only *then* become *rosh*, once the victory was already attained (10:18). Yiftach is not satisfied with this. He responds to the Gileadites, arguing that they are still not showing him a sign of love or regret of the past. If he were to fight and win, it would be no different than any member of the army who would ultimately bring victory and get the reward.

The Gileadites aren't promising him anything out of the ordinary or committing to him at all. With this promise of him becoming a *rosh* after he goes to fight, they are only upholding the standard laws of warfare.

The Malbim explains that his intention was that they should establish him as a *rosh* before the fight, and that he should go to war as a *rosh*, not a *katzin*. Bnei Yisrael's response, "*k'dvarecha ken naaseh*," "we'll do as you say," makes sense now. They're expressing their agreement to his terms. They will establish him as a *rosh* first. They will commit to Yiftach before he brings them any sort of victory. Sure enough, the pesukim state that they send him to war as a *rosh*, וישימו העם אותו עליהם לראש ולקצין (11:11). Only after the word *rosh* does it mention that they establish him as a *katzin*, "*lerosh u'lekatzin*"; their genuine commitment to him precedes his status as a *gibor chayil*.

Hashem and Us Back Then

Bnei Yisrael's conversation with Yiftach in this perek, especially through the view of the Malbim, bares a striking resemblance to Bnei Yisrael's dialogue with Hashem in the previous perek. Following the incident with Avimelech and after Tola and Yair's time as *shoftim*, Bnei Yisrael continue to revert to their unfortunate pattern of negative behavior. This time, as opposed to Bnei Yisrael's usual single choice of *avodah zarah*, the pasuk lists many different types of *avodah zarah* Bnei Yisrael begin to worship. It's as if they are desperate to worship any god besides Hashem. The pasuk (10:6) makes a point to tell us, ויעזבו את ה' ולא עבדוהו "Bnei Yisrael left Hashem and did not serve Him." They essentially cast Hashem out, in the way that Yiftach's brothers cast him out, ויגרשו את יפתח. Instead, Bnei Yisrael turn to an easier but false path, to *avodah zarah*, to the "Avimelechs" that are accessible to them. Through this casting out of Hashem, they are telling Him, "You are not our G-d," just as the Gileadites told Yiftach, "you are not our brother," (11:2) לא תנחל בבית אבינו כי בן אשה אחרת אתה.

Following the typical Shoftim cycle, Hashem gets angry and casts Bnei Yisrael into the hands of their enemies. Bnei Yisrael reach a point of *tzaar*, וַתִּצַר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל מְאֹד (10:9). Only then do they call out to Hashem and request His aid. They make a plea out of need, by force of hand, just like the Gileadites's plea to Yiftach preceding the war with Bnei Amon. Bnei Yisrael essentially ask Hashem to be their *katzin*, without committing to establishing Him as their *rosh*. Hashem responds in a similar manner to Yiftach's response. Hashem essentially says, "You left me, you cast me out. Why should I continue to save you?" Then, only when Bnei Yisrael actively remove the *avodah zarah* from their midst and begin to serve Hashem again, only when they *proactively* establish Hashem as their *rosh*, a title that requires their genuine dedication and commitment to Him, does Hashem's anger towards them ease. This parallels what takes place in the story of Yiftach; only when the Gileadites proactively, before the war, establish Yiftach as a *rosh*, does Yiftach agree to go and fight for them.

In summary, the *mashal* and *nimshal* of these three perakim is as follows. In the tenth perek, just as Baalei Shechem were drawn to the superficial but palpable charm of Avimelech, Bnei Yisrael are drawn to the physically tangible but meaningless *avodah zarah*. And, just as the Gileadites cast Yiftach, their brother, out, Bnei Yisrael ignore the true connection they have with Hashem and cast Him out. Then, when Bnei Yisrael find themselves in a place of *tzaar*, they try to enlist Hashem's help without giving any genuine full commitment to Him, as the Gileadites tried to do with Yiftach. Only when Bnei Yisrael proactively establish Hashem as a *rosh*, by destroying their *avodah zarah* and serving Hashem, does He help them. This pattern, expanded upon in chapter ten, repeats itself throughout the entirety of Shoftim.

What can we learn from this dynamic, especially as expanded upon by the 'sandwich' of these three perakim and the *mashal* and *nimshal* they teach us?

Hashem and Us Now

These perakim serve as a paradigm for our relationship with Hashem in general. Anytime we come across a complication in our *avodat Hashem*, anytime we cast Hashem out of our lives, it's easy to turn to the Avimelechs of the world, to turn to something more outwardly fulfilling, more readily tangible. However, the Avimelechs of our world are not chosen *b'tamim*. They lack genuinity. When we do this, when we choose to follow the Avimelechs, our needs are never actually met, because only an authentic commitment to Hashem can really fulfill them. Once this faulty path is taken, we find ourselves in a place of *tzaar*, of tremendous pain and suffering. At that point, we find that our only option is to ask Hashem to be our *katzin* because of His infinite capabilities. He can cure, He can save, and so we ask for His help.

However, only by establishing Hashem as our *rosh*, only by ingraining within ourselves a deep and genuine commitment to Him, can we count on His aid. There is a caveat - we have to make this commitment without conditions. According to the Malbim, the tipping point for Yiftach's acceptance of aiding the Gileadites was when they agreed to establish him as a *rosh before* the victory, to make that commitment independent of the potential outcome. When we are in a place of *tzaar*, we have to make an unconditional commitment to Hashem, before He does any healing, any saving, for us.

The story of Yiftach offers us a warning as well - don't wait until it is too late. In the Malbim's expansion of the dialogue between Yiftach and the Gileadites, he stresses that Yiftach is disappointed that the Gileadites are only coming to him in a time of *tzaar*. If they had come to him in a time of peace to make amends, Yiftach could have forgiven them. It would have been a display of true commitment to Yiftach as a *rosh*.

Similarly, we have to reach out to and commit to Hashem proactively, when we are not yet in a state of *tzaar* and when our

hand is not yet forced in any way. We must have a complete and unwavering dedication to Him in times of peace and comfort as well as times of pain and suffering. Sometimes, turning to the Avimelechs of the world may seem like an easier path to take. However, at the end of the day, that is what leads to our greatest *tzaar*. If we turn to Hashem instead, even when it is difficult to do so, not only do we ensure His help in those moments of *tzaar* later on, but perhaps we avoid the *tzaar* altogether. If we establish Hashem as our *rosh* when there is no *tzaar*, we will never have to ask Him to be our *katzin*. If we establish a deep commitment to Hashem now, He will never leave us to begin with.

Binyamin

Under the Radar but Beyond the Brothers

There is a known phenomenon that the youngest child is commonly favored by the parents. While this is not always the case, this is seen within the family dynamic of Yaakov and the *shevatim*. Yosef and Binyamin were Yaakov's favorites because they descended from Rachel. Why did the actions of Yaakov seem to reflect a greater favoritism towards Yosef when the youngest was Binyamin?

Rachel, who was the preferred wife of Yaakov, died during the childbirth of Binyamin. As she was dying, she named him *Ben-Oni*, the son of my pain, while Yaakov called him Binyamin, which alluded to his being the son of his old age, *Ben-Yamin* (Rashi, Bereishit 35:18). The midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 14:8) refers to the fact that Yaakov was 100 at that time, based on the *gematria*, בן-ימ"ן.

Although Yaakov essentially changed the name of his youngest son, perhaps Yaakov chose a similar sounding name to honor Rachel's last action and therefore serve as a constant reminder for Yaakov of Rachel's last deed and words. This, by default, would arouse grief for Yaakov whenever his youngest son was mentioned. It is therefore possible that Binyamin would have always been Yaakov's dearest child if not for the death of Rachel during Binyamin's birth.

The youngest *shevet* was definitely favored and protected by Yaakov more than the other *shevatim* (who were not the descendants of Rachel). Yaakov did not send Binyamin to *Mitzrayim* with the rest of the brothers to buy food, even though at this point Binyamin was no longer a child. Additionally when Yosef wanted (or pretended to want) to take Binyamin captive for stealing a goblet, Yehudah tried reasoning with Yosef not to, saying that Binyamin is their father's treasured child; if Binyamin is separated from his father, then Yaakov will die because of his attachment to him. This

supports the notion that Binyamin was the true favorite, for Yaakov did not die from separation and the supposed death of Yosef, but would apparently do so from the loss of Binyamin.

Yosef and Binyamin were separated during Binyamin's youth yet seemed to have a strong relationship when they were reunited. One feasible reason may be because each was the other's only full brother. Their strong relationship is portrayed in a series of exchanges, starting before they were even in contact with each other and before Binyamin knew of Yosef's whereabouts. When the *shevatim* came down to *Mitzrayim*, Yosef interrogated them about their family to try and extract information of Binyamin's well-being. He was worried that Binyamin might be mistreated just like Yosef was. To ensure that the *shevatim* were not deceiving him, Yosef held Shimon hostage until the *shevatim* returned with Binyamin.

Promptly, as soon as Yosef saw Binyamin, he ordered his men to prepare a meal to have a feast with his brothers. Interestingly, Yosef only did this once he saw his youngest brother and not when he initially saw his ten other brothers! Yosef then blessed Binyamin, saying *אלקים חנך בני* (Bereishit 43:29). "*Bn*" is a language of endearment that Yosef directed towards Binyamin. Additionally, Binyamin is the only one out of the eleven brothers who received a blessing; the rest were grilled with questions when they had arrived for the first time.

When Yosef feasted with his brothers, Binyamin received the largest portion, and when he sent the brothers on their way, he bestowed Binyamin with three hundred pieces of silver and multiple changes of clothing while the rest of the brothers received just a single change of clothing. These examples all infer a special favoritism that Yosef had for Binyamin over the rest of his brothers.

In Parshat Mikeitz (Bereishit 43:30), Yosef suddenly starts crying. According to Rashi, the tears did not come as soon as he saw Binyamin; rather they appeared during their conversation. What triggered Yosef to suddenly start crying? Yosef asked Binyamin whether he had children. Binyamin indeed had ten sons, and Yosef inquired what their names were. Binyamin listed them, and Yosef

asked the reasoning for the names. Binyamin then proceeded to explain. בלע – for Yosef was swallowed among the nations. בכר – because Yosef was his mother's eldest. אשבל – Hashem made Yosef a captive. גרא – Yosef lived in an inn. נעמן – Yosef he was very pleasant. אחי – Yosef was Binyamin's (only full) brother. ראש – Yosef was Binyamin's chief. מפים – Yosef learned from the mouth of his father. הפים – Yosef did not see Binyamin's wedding. ארד – Yosef went down to the other nations. When Yosef heard this, his emotions overtook him because he realized that Binyamin had named each of his sons in honor of Yosef. This displayed Binyamin's tremendous amount of love for Yosef even in his absence.

Following Yosef's revelation of his true identity to his brothers, Binyamin and Yosef embraced and cried. One may think they had spilled tears from the great emotions they experienced at the moment of their reuniting. In truth, they were crying for each other for they saw with *ruach hakodesh* the destruction that would happen in each other's portion in *Eretz Yisrael*. They mourned for each other, exhibiting their extensive love for each other and their greatness.

Binyamin expressed even more love and devotion; when the rest of the *shevatim* went back to their father, he remained with Yosef in *Mitzrayim*. This is the reason that Yosef sent back only ten המורים and ten אתונות, one each per brother (Midrash Lekach Tov Bereishit 45:23). The estrangement that these two brothers experienced did not affect their feelings for each other when they were reunited.

Binyamin was the only *shevet* born in Eretz Yisrael (Mechilta Yitro, בהרש ד). Apart from this spiritual merit that he received, he was a very pious and righteous person. He was the only *shevet* that did not participate in the selling of Yosef.¹ The gemara (Shabbat 55b) relates that there were four people who died only because of

¹ Many centuries later, there were the עשרה הרוגי מלכות, *ten* great leaders of the generation who were killed to atone for the brothers actions, not *eleven*.

the sin of Chava, which introduced mortality into the world, not because of their own sins; one of the four was Binyamin. Additionally, some say that one of the nine people who went up to Gan Eden during their lifetime was Binyamin (פרקי רבינו הקודש גרינהוט לקוטים ג).

Despite being in his brothers' shadows, Binyamin displayed many great character traits. Many lessons can be learned from the life and ways of Binyamin. Hopefully, one will learn from the teachings absorbed from Binyamin in order to elevate and better oneself.

Chitah and Seorah

The Brains Behind The Grains

The *shivat haminin* (seven species) are listed in Parshat Vaetchanan (Devarim 8:8), ארץ חטה ושערה וגפן ותאנה ורמון ארץ זית שמן ודבש. The first two species are *chitah* (wheat) and *seorah* (barley). Together, they shine light on a poignant message that we can all incorporate into our lives.

First, an investigation of *chitah* uncovers some unexpected life applications through looking at the various locations where the word *chitah* appears in Tanach. In Parshat Haazinu (Devarim 32:14), the pasuk says, חמאת בקר וחלב צאן עם חלב כרים ואילים בני בשן ועתודים, עם חלב כליות חטה ודם ענב תשתה חמר. On the words חטה כליות חטה, Rav Saadia Gaon comments, פנימיות המשובח שבחטה, shining light on the importance of *chitah*.

Another proof of this importance is in Yeshayahu (28:25), הלוא אם שוה פניה והפיץ קצה וכמן יורק ושם חטה שורה ושערה נסמן וכסמת גבלתו. On this pasuk, Rashi and the Metzudat David both comment on the second half of the pasuk and say that *chitah* grows in the center, and *seorah* grows around it. We see many examples in Judaism where the center is reserved for something of the utmost importance (For example, the *mishkan* in the camp of Bnei Yisrael in the *midbar*). Clearly then, by being in the center, *chitah* is of great importance.

Similarly in Shmuel I (6:13) we see the importance of *chitah*. The pasuk says ובית שמש קצרים קציר חטים בעמק וישאו את עיניהם ויראו את הארון וישמחו לראות *keilim* in the *Beit HaMikdash* and the *Mishkan* (if not, the most important) came back to Bnei Yisrael, they were reaping their wheat harvest!

Additionally, in Shir Hashirim (7:3), the pasuk says, שרך אגן, חסר אל יחסר המזג בטנך ערמת חטים סוגה בשושנים,

בטנך ערמת חטים says, “שהכל צריכין לה, “it’s something that everyone needs.” *Chitah* is essential to human life!

Interestingly, the first mention of *chitah* is in the story of Reuven and the *dudaim*. Reuven found the *dudaim* when he was walking, בימי קציר חטים, at the time of the wheat harvest (Bereishit 30:14). Time is marked by the agricultural cycle, of which *chitah* is the main aspect. It is no coincidence that the first time this phraseology is used is in connection to Reuven, the *bchor* of his family, who at that point in history, was the leader of the family as well. We see from here that there is *chashivut* and a leadership aspect as well, associated with *chitah*. To expand on this idea of leadership, we also see *chitah* in the story of Yosef’s dream, (Bereishit 37:7), והנה אנחנו מאלמים אלמים בתוך השדה והנה קמה אלמתי וגם נצבה והנה תסבינה לאלמתי, “There we were binding sheaves in the field, when suddenly my sheaf stood up and remained upright; then your sheaves gathered around and bowed low to my sheaf.” Famously, he dreams about bundles of wheat, and this dream is a *marshal* for Yosef’s eventual kingship. Again, this is a support to the notion that *chitah* symbolizes leadership and importance.

The investigation of *seorah* similarly has some life-applicable lessons. In most of the appearances of *seorah* in the Tanach, there is a more negative connotation. In Bamidbar (5:15) the pasuk speaks about the *korban* that must be brought in relation to the *isha sotah*, והביא האיש את אשתו אל הכהן והביא את קרבנה עליה עשירת, והאיפה קמה שערים לא יצק עליו שמן ולא יתן עליו לבנה כי מנחת קנאת הוא מנחת זכרון מוזכרת עון. Why does the *isha sotah* bring *seorah*? On the word “*seorim*,” Rashi comments, היא עשתה מעשה בהמה, וקרבנה מאכל בהמה. An even more negative attitude towards *seorah* is found in the Ramban on the words השעורים, וטעם השעורים, saying that the reason she brings *seorah* specifically is because it is referring to the “*se’arah*” – the “storm” – that Hashem will bring upon her and punish her with if she indeed is guilty.

This is similar to a story in Shoftim (7:3) where Gidon heard a man relating a dream he had. The man said that he had a dream of a loaf of *seorah* whirling through the camp of the *Medianites* and destroying it. Regarding this loaf of barley swirling through the air, most *parshanim* say that it refers to a סערה, a “storm,” similar to the Ramban mentioned above. This further proves how *seorah* is a negative item; something that destroys and as stated earlier, is animal-like.

Furthering the point of *seorah* being food for animals, in Yechezkel (4:12), Hashem tells Yechezkel to eat a barley cake, and to bake it on human excrement before the eyes of Bnei Yisrael, ועגת שערים תאכלנה והיא בגללי צאת האדם תעגנה לעיניהם. On the words יאכל עוגת שעורים שהוא מאכל בהמה, ועגת שערים, the Malbim says, If *seorah* reflects animalism, sin, and destruction, why is it mentioned as one of the *shivat haminim*? And, even more so, why is it continually mentioned alongside *chitah* which symbolizes importance and leadership?¹ Clearly, there must be a connection between the two! What does importance and leadership have to do with sin and animalism?

In Judaism, leadership is not about separating oneself from everything remotely negative and becoming an ascetic. As a leader, one must take his animal instinct (which we all have) and his intuition to sin, and use it for the betterment of himself and Am Yisrael. Who typifies a leader of Bnei Yisrael? David HaMelech! There is a strange midrash that compares David to Esav. The midrash notes that both David and Esav are called אדמוני, “a redhead.” When Shmuel comes to anoint David, Shmuel notices this quality in David and becomes afraid that David is a murderer like Esav. In response to his doubts, Hashem reassures Shmuel (Shmuel I16:12), וישלח ויביאהו והוא אדמוני עם יפה עינים וטוב ראי עם יפה עינים, the midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 63) comments,

¹ Four of the twelve times throughout Tanach where *chitah* and *seorah* are mentioned together as examples of the statement above are: Yeshayahu 28:25, Ruth 2:23, Iyov 31:40, Yoel 1:11.

אדמוני, אמר רבי אבא בר כהנא כאלו שופך דמים, וכיון שראה שמואל את דוד אדמוני, דכתיב (שמואל א טז, יב): וישלח ויביאהו והוא אדמוני, נתירא ואמר אף זה שופך דמים כעשו. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא (שמואל א טז, יב): עם יפה עינים, עשו מדעת עצמו הוא הורג אבל זה מדעת סנהדרין הוא הורג.

Rabi Aba bar Kahana explains that Admoni means that when Shmuel saw that Dovid was Admoni, a red head, he was afraid and said, 'Maybe he is a murderer like Eisav.' Hashem said to him, 'He is Admoni with beautiful eyes.' Hashem tells Shmuel that while Esav has killed on his own accord, David kills only when instructed by the Sanhedrin. David and Esav both had this trait of killing, but David chose to use this trait in a G-dly manner. As Rabbi David Silverberg said, "It seems that both Esav and David were born with an unusual abundance of passion, energy and zeal, as reflected by their red color. Esav channeled his passion toward sin, whereas David used his passion in the service of the Almighty, becoming a military hero who led Bnei Yisrael to victory over its vicious foes, and through poetry and song which he composed and sang to give praise to G-d."²

To further this point, the Malbim on the pasuk והוא אדמוני says,

פה הראה לו אמיתת מ"ש תחלה כי לא כאשר יראה האדם, כי דוד היה אדמוני שגברה בו האדומה והוא בטבעו מוכן לשפית דם, ומצד אחר נראה בו גם כן רושמים טובים כי היה יפה עינים וטוב ראי שזה מורה על שהוא חד העיון וטוב המזג כמ"ש הטבעיים ואם היה נשאר על ההבחנה האנושית של שמואל היה מחליט היותו בלתי ראוי, אבל ה' יראה ללבב וידע כי מטוב בחירתו יעשה אך משפט וצדקה, ובטבע האדמימות הנטועה בו ישתמש ללחום מלחמות ה' ולהכרית מעיר ה' כל פועלי און, וזה הנרצה בעיני ה' שהגם שנמצא נטיה רעה בטבעו הוא ימשול בה מצד צדקתו וטוב בחירתו.

Here the truth was shown to him, what a regular person cannot see, that Dovid was an 'admoni' in whom blood-thirstiness was strong and he in his nature was ready to spill blood, but on the other hand he also saw there were good qualities in him. His beautiful eyes and good appearance indicates that he is sharp-minded and naturally

² hatanakh.com/es/node/35143.

good-tempered, and [yet] had it been up to the human appraisal of Shmuel he would have decided that he was unworthy. But Hashem looks into the heart and knows that to the best of his ability [Dovid] would do only justice and charity. And he shall use the natural redness planted in him to fight Hashem's wars and to eradicate from Hashem's city all the proponents of violence, and this is desirable in Hashem's eyes – that even if we find an evil tendency in one's nature, they will control it through righteousness and the goodness of his choice.

This Malbim explains that David was born with an instinct to kill. But he, one of the most important leaders in Klal Yisrael, consciously decided to take this instinct and use it for the betterment of the Jewish people – to fight wars on their behalf. By David channeling his murderous instinct, he allowed for Shlomo to have the ability to build the Beit HaMikdash. Who knows where Bnei Yisrael would have been if David just pushed this desire away and didn't fight all the mighty wars for the Jewish people?

Interestingly, the story of Ruth happened in the wheat and barley season, ותרבק בנערות בעו ללקט עד כלות קציר השערים וקציר החטים (Ruth 2:23). This shows that even the birth of *meluchah* began through combining *chitah* and *seorah*. Clearly, infusing one's animal instinct within their important status makes the best recipe for leadership.

Earlier, we discussed the Rashi and Metzudat David on Yeshayahu (28:25) that say that *chitah* grows in the center, and *seorah* grows around it. *Seorah* surrounds *chitah* because *chitah* (a leader) has to use the *seorah* (the animalistic instinct) that surrounds it (internally and emotionally, or even physically), and use it to become better. So to one needs to pull the “*seorah*” in their lives into their center leadership role, and change the world through it rather than, despite or in spite of it. That is what real leadership is about, and that is what *chitah* and *seorah* so profoundly teach us.

We bring a korban of *seorah* on the second night of Pesach. From that moment, we count the *Omer* until we get to Shavuot where we bring a korban of *chitah*. On the second day of Pesach, we are taking our animal instinct, bad habits, and sinful ways, and

throughout the days when we count the Omer, we are building them up slowly but surely, trying to find ways to use our faults in a positive manner. Then, we get to Shavuot where we bring the korban of *chitah*, our korban of leadership, and now we have channeled our animal instinct in meaningful ways, and we can finally use them to influence the world.

In Judaism to be a Jew is to be a leader. We have a mission to be a קדוש וגוי קדוש, ממלכת כהנים, and an אור לגוים. How do we, who are tasked with carrying and passing on the mighty torch of Judaism, become leaders in the world? To be a leaders of the highest degree as seen through the symbolism of *chitah*, we must infuse our *seorah* (our negative aspects and struggles) to make ourselves better people. As the best versions of ourselves, we can influence the world in a more profound way, and we can be the leaders that we are meant to be as members of Klal Yisrael.

A Timeless Battle

Haman and Antisemitism

Megillat Esther narrates an inspirational story of how Hashem, through the courageous Mordechai and Esther, saves the Jewish people in Persia from total annihilation at the hands of the wicked Haman. However, how often do we take the time to dissect the character of Torah's villains and the unimaginable behavior they exhibit? Why does Haman isolate the Jews as his target? How calculated are his actions and plans? Does Haman have outside help, or does he act alone? What causes a human being to turn violent and aggressive to an entire nation? Finally, what can be learned from Haman and the genocide that can explain the timeless resentment of and action against the Jewish people? In understanding the perspective of even a small part of Haman's actions, a potential catalyst of antisemitism can be brought to light in order to better combat hatred today.

Motive

Firstly, three motives that can be attributed to fueling Haman's crusade against the Jewish people include personal hatred, historical vengeance, and public humiliation. Initially, the simple understanding of the pesukim seem to convey that Haman only hated the Jews upon finding out Mordechai's heritage after he refused to bow down to Haman: (3:6) **כִּי הִגִּידוּ לוֹ אֶת עַם מֹרְדֵכָי**. Additionally, Haman's tension with Mordechai is supported by a midrash (Aggadat Esther 5:9) that describes a previous encounter between Haman and Mordechai. The two of them were alone, and Haman ran out of food, so Mordechai sold him a loaf of bread.

However, Haman had no money to pay him back, so they wrote on the bottom of Mordechai's shoe that Haman would be his servant. This caused Haman to be in debt to Mordechai and increased the strife between them. Their complicated history contributed to an already tense situation.

However, Haman's motive cannot be attributed exclusively to personal contention. Instead, this incident only ignited his pre-existing hatred for Jews. What seemed to be a personal feud gone out of control was actually an expression of fear and anger that had been developing for generations. Haman was the descendent of Agag, the king of Amalek, who witnessed Shaul almost succeed at wiping out his entire nation according to Hashem's command. This caused fear, anger, and vengeance in Haman. He acted out of fear since he knew how Jews treated his people in the past. His anger was a possible defense mechanism for his insecurities that resulted in a kill or be killed mentality. Finally, Haman was seeking revenge for his massacred ancestors.

While Haman's personal vendetta against Mordechai and the history of Bnei Yisrael and his lineage provided several potential motives, another reason for attacking the Jews was a bruised ego. Not only did Mordechai publicly humiliate Haman by refusing to bow, but he also damaged Haman's precarious sense of pride. Throughout the Megillah, Haman displayed behavior indicative of a superiority complex. For example, when Achashverosh asked him for advice on how to honor someone, Haman automatically assumed the king wished to honor him: (6:6) ויאמר המן בלבו למי יחפץ המלך לעשות יקר יותר ממני. Another example of Haman's inflated ego is how he bragged to his friends and wife about being invited to Esther's parties: (5:12) אף לא הביאה אסתר המלכה עם המלך אל המשתה אשר עשתה כי אם אותי וגם למחר אני קרוא לה עם המלך. Therefore, when Haman's ego was challenged, and everything did not go exactly as he planned, he acted out against those he felt were challenging his superiority – the Jews.

Calculation

Second, while to a certain extent Haman seemed to have forethought and calculation, he was also rash and shortsighted. Haman casts lots in the month of Nissan (3:7), and had nearly a whole year to potentially create a detailed plan for the scheduled massacre in Adar. Part of this detailed and forethought plan is elucidated in Esther Rabbah (9:2). The midrash tells us that Haman's wife, Zeresh, encouraged him that the Jews would defeat Haman unless he acted cleverly; therefore, she suggested using gallows as an unorthodox way to kill Mordechai. This represents one aspect of a carefully calculated plan.

On the other hand, after Haman chose the date, despite his long preparation time, he immediately rushed to request permission from the King without much thought. Furthermore, the midrash (Esther Rabbah 7:11) explains that Haman rejoiced at the thought of slaughtering the Jewish people in the month of Adar, because the seventh of Adar was when Moshe Rabeinu passed away. However, he failed to realize it was also Moshe's birthday.

This highlights how Haman was too hasty in jumping to solidify his plan; as soon as he thought he had a date that would lower the morale of the Jews, he snatched the opportunity to use it, without realizing Jews had a positive association with that date as well. Finally, after Haman sent out his decree, he celebrated prematurely with the King, (3:15) *והמלך והמנן ישבו לשתות*, instead of waiting to actualize his plans. Although theoretically Haman gave careful consideration to his plans, he was also rushed and cursory in several manners.

Alone or Aided

Thirdly, although Haman acted primarily alone, he did rely on some outside help. While King Achashverosh is sometimes portrayed as having been Haman's partner in crime, he was actually quite passive and impressionable. Haman told Achashverosh that the Jews were not following the King's laws, and it was in his best interest to get rid of the nation (3:8-9). Haman even offered to pay

10,000 silver talents for the edict to be drawn up and delivered. Clearly, he knew how to manipulate Achashverosh into following his plans, making the king a passive player.

However, there are moments in the Megillah, in which Haman's wife, Zeresh, and fellow Persians did support him in his endeavors. After returning home from Esther's first party, Haman related his most recent encounter with Mordechai and his rival's refusal to bow. In response to Haman's misery, Zeresh and his friends suggested using gallows to kill Mordechai (5:14) In addition, Haman's decree for the thirteenth of Adar utilized the Persian people in the intended genocide of the Jews, (3:13) וּנְשֹׁלוּ סַפְרִים בַּיָּד הַרְצִים אֶל כָּל מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגַּ וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת כָּל הַיְהוּדִים מִנְּעָר וְעַד זָקֵן. טַף וְנָשִׁים בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בְּשָׁלוֹשׁ עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר הוּא חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר וְשִׁלְלָם לְבוֹן. Whether Haman used the Persian people to help his genocide for practical reasons or they also hated Jews, he still benefitted from outside help to some extent.

Nature or Nurture

Fourthly, Haman's murderous tendencies can be analyzed from two perspectives: nature or nurture. Haman displayed behavior on several occasions consistent with one who has superiority complex habits: Mordechai's refusal to bow threatened his ego; he was prideful when Esther invited him to her parties; Haman haughtily expected Achashverosh would want to reward him.

Furthermore, on the pasuk (Mishlei 19:25), לִץ תִּכָּה וּפְתֵי יַעֲרֹם, the midrash (Shemot Rabbah Parsha 27) suggests that the לִץ, 'scoffer', refers to Amalek. After Bnei Yisrael fled Egypt, Amalak attacked them in their weakened state and detracted from the significance of the incredible miracles Hashem had just performed for the whole world to see, essentially "scoffing" at the nation and Hashem. Consequently, as a descendent of a nation of scoffers, Haman possibly had an inborn nature to only respect himself. Even so, Haman's environment also had the potential to nurture him in aggressive conduct. As mentioned previously, being the descendant

of Amalek could have meant that Haman was just raised to hate Jews and view them as the enemy. Also, his wife and friends eagerly supported his plans, thereby reinforcing Haman's cruel behavior.

Perspective

The fifth point is a reflection on Haman's clear perspective that complete annihilation of the Jewish people is the ultimate goal. He could not have carried out this genocide without a deep, ingrained belief that the Jews did not belong and should not be kept alive. In fact, the Midrash *Shocher Tov* (2:4) explains that Haman thought Pharaoh was a fool to only kill the Jewish baby boys; rather, Haman strived to obliterate the entire Jewish nation. Clearly, his belief in destroying the entire Jewish people was a core value that dictated much of his conduct.

Antisemitism Today

Rabbi Jonathon Sacks (keynote address in September 2016), explains antisemitism and how it has manifested itself in today's world. Antisemitism is when a group fails to take responsibility for their own shortcomings resulting in scapegoating the most convenient minority, Jews. Justifying Jewish persecution has evolved over the years. In the Middle Ages, the Jewish people were faulted for not conforming with a predominantly Christian Europe. In the 19th and 20th centuries, science gave way to Racial Inferiority theories. Finally, the modern world accuses Jews of violating human rights in regards to the Middle East conflict. The concept of scapegoating, blaming a group or person for the errors or suffering of others, is not new to the Jew, whether it be in ancient Egypt or 20th century Germany. However, the refusal to take responsibility for a society's mistakes may start with Jews, but could continue to other minorities. Antisemitism acts as a warning sign for intolerance in the world that has the potential to threaten "freedom, humanity, and the dignity of difference".

Applying Rabbi Sacks's analysis of the cause and effect of anti-semitism to Haman's behavior and the early form of antisemitism he embodied, perhaps we can begin to combat the issue at its roots. Understanding how this hatred develops and how it is brought into concrete action can give us the warning signs of and the opportunity to defend ourselves against modern antisemitism.

Yosef HaTzaddik

A Lesson in Character Development

Yosef is one of the main characters in Sefer Bereishit. At a young age he had prophetic dreams, dreams that showed that it was his destiny to become a monarch. Later, after a myriad of unfortunate events, Yosef became the viceroy to Pharaoh and saved Mitzrayim as well as his family from a long and brutal famine. Beyond the surface level though, who is Yosef? What challenges did he overcome and how did he become the Yosef HaTzaddik as he is known?

In Parshat Vayeishev, along with a general description, it says (Bereishit 37:2), ויבא יוסף את דבתם רעה אל אביהם, “And Yosef brought bad reports of them to their father.” This is the first description of Yosef since his birth, and the Torah seemingly tells us something important about him: he spoke *lashon hara* to Yaakov about his brothers. Rashi notes that in the future Yosef gets punished *midah keneged midah* for reporting to his father about his brothers’ misdeeds.

Two pesukim later, the Torah tells us that the brothers hated Yosef because they saw that their father loved him more than them. This hate ran so deep that they could not even speak to him in an amicable manner, ויראו אחיו כי אתו אהב אביהם מכל אחיו וישנאו אתו ולא יכלו דברו לשלם, “And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him so that they could not speak a friendly word to him.”

This hatred that the brothers had towards Yosef was not typical sibling rivalry, often expressed with the playful teasing and fights. It was a resentment that grew from years of Yosef tattletaling to their father in addition to “winning” him over and becoming the favorite. It only got worse when Yosef told his brothers his dreams. They began not only to hate him but also become jealous of the possibility that he would actually rule over them.

Within the telling of the second dream to both Yaakov and the brothers one can uncover more about the relationship between Yosef and his father, as the pasuk (Bereshit 37:10) states, **ויספר אל אביו ואל אחיו ויגער בו אביו ויאמר לו מה החלום הזה אשר חלמת הבוא נבוא אביו ואמך ואחיך להשתחות לך ארצה**, “His father berated him. “What,” he said to him, “is this dream you have dreamed? Are we to come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow low to you to the ground?” In regards to this, to a certain extent, it reflects that Yaakov’s favoritism for Yosef had a limit, it was not boundless. Yaakov perceived that what Yosef was saying was harmful and causing strife. As a father, he had to rebuke Yosef in order to humble him.

One can discern from Yosef’s relationship with his father and his brothers, pre-slavery, some flawed traits in Yosef. He apparently speaks *lashon hara* about his brothers to his father. He hastens to inform his brothers and father about how he is going to rule over them. In addition, it seems that he lacked sensitivity in reporting to his father about his brothers as well as in sharing his dreams. When does the transformation of Yosef take place, as he is of course ultimately known as Yosef HaTzaddik?

Later, Yaakov commands Yosef to go check on the brothers, who were out shepherding in Shechem, and to bring back word of how the flocks were doing. Yosef listens to the command of his father and goes out to find his brothers. Upon reaching Shechem he discovers they are not around and then has an intriguing interaction with a mysterious man. Bereshit 37:15 reads, **וימצאהו איש ומצאהו בארץ שכם**, and **וישאלהו האיש לאמר מה תבקש**, “A man came upon him wandering in the fields. The man asked him, “What are you looking for?” One can argue that this pasuk, the consultation with this unknown and unnamed man, is the fundamental turning point in Yosef’s development.

The Ramban gives an insight into this aspect. It would have been honorable and okay for Yosef to return home, as he technically had followed his father’s commandment. Yosef, however, does not

leave. Rather he continues on the search for his brothers taking upon himself a sense of care and responsibility that he seemingly did not have in the past.

The Rashbam responds with an even stronger outlook. He states that Yosef refused to go home and was insistent on finding them as he did not want to go back to his father without news of them, even though at this point he recognized that his brothers hated and were jealous of him!

Yosef's persistence and commitment to accomplishing his mission shows a side of him that was not apparent prior to this event. The goal that Yaakov had set out for him triggered something within Yosef that set him on the right track. He began to mature and realize what his haughtiness had led to and the effect that it had on his brothers – he was determined to right his wrongs. The first step to doing so was following his father's direction to find his brothers and attempt to make amends. Knowing the way his brothers felt about him, and familiar with the dangers that lay ahead he went forth. Yosef was slowly but surely shedding the adverse features of his past self and transforming into a greater person.

Fast forwarding past a whirlwind of fascinating occurrences, we find Yosef in Mitzrayim working in Potiphar's house. In contrast to the earlier description of Yosef, here the Torah has good things to report about him. וידי ה' את יוסף ויהי איש מצליח, "Hashem was with Yosef and he was a successful man." (Bereishit 39:2) This appears to be the peak of Yosef's transformation; he persisted and became devoted to serving Hashem.

As the narrative in Mitzrayim begins to unfold there are more and more accounts of Yosef prospering and improving in the face of continuous struggle. Therefore, the sequence of scenarios that occur between him and Potiphar's wife is a notable and an equitable starting point to see his development. Once Yosef progressively moved up the rungs and was placed in charge of Potiphar's entire household, none other than the wife of his boss takes a special interest in him.

In the first encounter between the two of them, the pasuk relates, (Bereshit 39:7), ותשא אשת אדניו את עיניה אל יוסף ותאמר שכבה עמי, “And his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Yosef and said, “lie with me.” Yosef refuses to sleep with her, explaining how wrong it would be, especially after everything Potiphar has done for him. Saving the best and most important part for last, what he evidently wanted to say all along was, “and how could I possibly sin before Hashem?” Yosef recognizes that Hashem is the one who is in control and giving in to the plea *Potiphar’s* wife would be following the evil inclinations – the antithesis of Hashem’s will.

Following her failed attempt, Potiphar’s wife does not give up. The Haamek Davar (Bereshit 39:10) says that everyday she devised a new plan, a new way to try and seduce him and everyday he battled and overcame his *yetzer hara*. One day it happened that there was no one in the house. Potiphar’s wife grabbed Yosef and pleaded again for him to lie with her. This time Yosef ran from her, leaving his garment in her hands. What was going on inside Yosef’s head during this encounter?

The Gemara (Sotah 36b) quotes an opinion that Yosef came on that day with intentions of intimacy. But then an image of his father appeared to him, exhorting him not to sin. In order not to fall prey to her pleas, he distances himself and runs away. The Torah Temimah (39:8) elaborates on this viewpoint. Even though it may appear from this statement of Chazal that Yosef was very flawed, the reality is different. The Sages wish to emphasize Yosef’s righteousness. Despite the overwhelming urges of his *yetzer hara*, he was able to persevere and withstood the temptations.

Another defining trait of Yosef is how he attributed all of his successes to Hashem, quite the opposite of the apparent arrogance of his youth. Bereshit 39:3 states, וירא אדניו כי ה' אתו וכל אשר הוא עשה, ה' מצליח בידו, “And his master saw that Hashem was with him and that Hashem lent success to everything he undertook.” Rashi expands on this pasuk, saying that ה' אתו כי means that the name of Hashem was always in his mouth. In other words, whenever Yosef did anything he was constantly thinking of Hashem.

In addition, his devotion to Hashem was not limited to the way he acted and thought about his life but also how others could experience and gain from the “power” that was gifted to him. We see Yosef attribute his power of interpreting dreams to G-d (Bereshit 40:8) *לי יוסף הלא לאלקים פתרנים ספרו נא לי*, “Yosef said to them, “Surely G-d can interpret! Tell me your dreams.” At this time when the baker and cupbearer are in despair and frustration over their dreams, Yosef offers to share the knowledge that Hashem has given him. He doesn't chase after the honor and glory; he does not want the credit. Yosef wants to make it clear that it is all by the will of Hashem. Again when Pharaoh needs help interpreting his dreams Yosef is quick to explain how it is not him but Hashem. *בלעדי אלקים יענה את שלום פרעה*, “Not I. G-d will see to Pharaoh's welfare” (Bereishit 41:16).

Ultimately, it is when Yosef reveals himself to his brothers that is his greatest moment. He reassures them saying, “it was not you who sent me down to Mitzrayim but Hashem.” Yosef's brothers, were on the verge of killing him, threw him in a pit and sold him as a slave and here he is telling them that they are not to blame! It is hard to fathom that anyone would not be enraged with such things, yet Yosef is able to maintain a calm demeanor. He understood that it was part of Hashem's plan all along and his brothers were just playing their role. Here one can discern Yosef's development.

A different propitious trait of Yosef is his genuine consideration and care for people in need. The first noteworthy time this is seen is when the cupbearer and baker wake up from their dream distraught and Yosef takes notice. The pasuk states (Bereshit 40:7), *וישאל את סריסי פרעה אשר אתו במשמר בית אדניו לאמר מדוע פניכם רעים היום*, “He asked Pharaoh's courtiers, who were with him in custody in his master's house, saying, Why do you appear downcast today?” Early in the morning, upon waking up, it is often hard to take notice of others. It is therefore exemplary of Yosef that he was aware, and asked them how they were. He goes above and beyond when he offers to help and interpret their dreams in the hope that their minds would be put to rest.

Later, after Yosef interprets Pharaoh's dreams, he tells him: **וְעַתָּה יְרָא פֶרְעָה אִישׁ נְבוֹן וְחָכָם וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּ עָלָי אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם**, "Accordingly, let Pharaoh find someone who's discerning and wise, whom you can set over the land of Egypt" (Bereishit 41:33). Yosef is willing to share advice without being required to do so. He does not suggest or insist on being the one who is in charge of carrying this out. The situation here again conveys modesty and in general a sense of easygoingness and flexibility: a quality within *bein adam lachaveiro*.

An even more striking example is that Yosef never told Yaakov where he was, never sent a letter home telling him he was okay. Why didn't he do so? Yosef was a ruler in Mitzrayim, surely he had the ability to do so!

The Or HaChaim (Bereishit 45:26) says that if Yosef were to tell Yaakov where he was, he would have to explain how he got down to Mitzrayim. This would embarrass the brothers not only regarding their treatment of Yosef, but also how they misled their father. The simple passive action that Yosef took, at the expense of reconnecting to his family, in order to not cause embarrassment to his brothers is quite remarkable.

Overall, Yosef's character development throughout the years is extensive. He became more modest, humble, and empathetic. He became known as Yosef HaTzaddik.

The Significance of Kri'at Yam Suf in Yetziat Mitzrayim

Yetziat Mitzrayim is a story we learn from the time we are children throughout our entire lives. We study it each year at the *seder*, and mention it daily in *tefillah*. Perhaps because we are so familiar with it, we do not often stop to consider the story at large. What was the purpose of Yetziat Mitzrayim? What purpose did it serve in its time and what does it represent now? To begin delving into this topic, there are two noteworthy ideas worth exploring.

Firstly, in order to have *bechira chofshit*, Hashem created the perfect balance of revelation and concealment of Himself in this world (Ramchal, Derech Hashem, 2:2). It is a well known concept that when Hashem created the world, He did so in ten *ma'amarot* (Masechet Avot 5:1). In each *ma'amar*, He concealed Himself a little bit more until He reached the perfect balance where He was not too obviously revealed, but not too hidden either (Or Gedalyahu Parshat Va'era 14:28). Over time, the people of the world, and specifically the *Mitzrim*, were unable to find Hashem, as His concealment was too great. In order to counteract this mistaken outlook of the world at the time, Hashem took Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim in a very miraculous and magnified way (Ramban, Shemot 13:16). The Ohr Gedalyahu (Parshat Bo 25:50) explains how the ten *makkot* specifically peeled away each level of concealment of Hashem, created by the ten *ma'amarot*. This process rectified the world's inability to recognize Hashem's existence and involvement in the world.

Not only was Yetziat Mitzrayim a reset for the beliefs of the world at large, but the Kuzari (1:11) explains that Yetziat Mitzrayim was the foundation of our *emunah* as Hashem's nation in particular. In addition, it established and strengthened our belief that Hashem is actively involved with this world. Even after Yetziat

Mitzrayim, we have a responsibility to do *mitzvot* and learn Torah to remember the miracles that Hashem did for us then. By passing this *mesorah* down to the next generation, we ensure that everyone knows of Hashem's abilities and truth (Ramban, Shemot 13:16).

If so, if the ten *makkot* were brought to counteract the ten *ma'amarot*, and after the *makkot*, Hashem was revealed to the whole world, what was the significance of *kri'at Yam Suf*? It was unnecessary; the world's mindset was already rectified with the *makkot*! Bnei Yisrael's *emunah*, too, should have already been strengthened with the *makkot*! Why was *kri'at Yam Suf* needed before the Jews could proceed to *Matan Torah*? Clearly, there is another layer of complexity to *kri'at Yam Suf*, and this aspect of the process must have added a layer of sophistication to the Jewish nation's beliefs and their relationship with Hashem.

First of all, even though Bnei Yisrael were physically freed from the *Mitzrim*, they needed to undergo a spiritual transition in order to be ready to receive the Torah. If the ten *makkot* undid the ten *ma'amarot*, then when Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim, the world “reverted” to how it was at the start of creation. Next came *kri'at Yam Suf*, the series of miracles relating to the splitting of the sea, bringing the world to a state similar to the state of the world even *before* the start of creation! How so? As depicted in the pasuk, ורוח אלקים מרחפת על פני המים (Bereishit 1:2). Before the first day of creation, the earth was still in its *תהו ובהו* state; this pasuk explains how Hashem was “sweeping over the water”. The Maharal (Gevurot Hashem, 40) points out that water has a very particular creative quality; it is formless and takes on the shape of the “container” it occupies. Water, in its essence, is the beginning of any creative formation. Even in parshat Noach, Hashem drowned the whole world in water in order to “recreate” it, והמבול היה מים על הארץ (Bereishit 7:6).

When Bnei Yisrael passed through the *Yam Suf*, they too were completely surrounded by water. The parallel of water in these situations teaches us that Bnei Yisrael underwent the creative process of becoming a nation; no longer were Bnei Yisrael just a

group of individuals, but they became one as they walked through the *Yam Suf* (Maharal, *Gevurot Hashem*, 40). Only after becoming a nation were Bnei Yisrael ready to receive the Torah and accept their mission in this world.

Furthermore, *kri'at Yam Suf* served an additional role in that it solidified and developed Bnei Yisrael's growing *emunah* in Hashem. After crossing the *Yam Suf*, the Torah describes, וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּה' וּבַמֶּשֶׁה עַבְדֹּךָ (Shemot 14:31). However, this is not the first time that Bnei Yisrael believed in Hashem. Earlier, when Moshe showed the nation the *otot*, the pasuk states, וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֵעִם (Shemot 4:31). Evidently, Bnei Yisrael's faith by the *otot* was not strong enough to last them through hardship. We see that when Pharaoh intensified the work and forced the nation to gather their own straw, they forgot about their allegiance to Hashem and cried out to Pharaoh instead. What was the difference between Bnei Yisrael's *emunah* in *Mitzrayim* and their *emunah* after *kri'at Yam Suf*? What was lacking in the former, and why did Bnei Yisrael start believing again at *kri'at Yam Suf*?

The Rashbam says that when the pasuk states, וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּה' וּבַמֶּשֶׁה עַבְדֹּךָ (Shemot 14:31), it is highlighting that Bnei Yisrael's *emunah* became more sophisticated; after *kri'at Yam Suf*, Bnei Yisrael believed that Hashem would protect them while wandering through the desert; they would not die. That aspect of their *emunah* was lacking when they were slaves in *Mitzrayim*. There are two ways of understanding the Rashbam. Firstly, when Bnei Yisrael were in *Mitzrayim*, they were suffering horribly, but their lives were not at risk. The *makkot* simply spared Bnei Yisrael the pain and suffering Hashem inflicted onto the *Mitzrim*. Only while they were waiting at the edge of the *Yam Suf*, having no place to turn, and with the *Mitzrim* on their tails, did they feel they needed Hashem to save them from imminent danger. The type of impression this left on Bnei Yisrael was incomparable to any wonders they witnessed in *Mitzrayim*, and this led to the next level in their trust in Hashem. This newfound level of *emunah* Bnei Yisrael reached *would* persevere through hardship, unlike their *emunah* from before.

Secondly, although Hashem performed countless miracles for Bnei Yisrael in Mitzrayim, they had no way of knowing if He would continue protecting them after taking them out. However, *kri'at Yam Suf* proved that He would; this was the first grand miracle Bnei Yisrael experienced *outside* of Mitzrayim. Only after *kri'at Yam Suf* did Bnei Yisrael have the ability to trust that Hashem would continue to protect them from any dangers in the desert, and their *emunah* was able to endure any challenges they would encounter.

In addition to being the first grand miracle that actually saved Bnei Yisrael from immediate threat and the first grand miracle outside of Mitzrayim, *kri'at Yam Suf* was also a turning point in Bnei Yisrael's *emunah* because it contained aspects that were fundamentally greater than those performed beforehand. In particular, as opposed to only *punishing* the *Mitzrim*, like Hashem did in Mitzrayim, He actually *killed* all the *Mitzrim* in the *Yam Suf*. After being enslaved for 210 years, Bnei Yisrael were able to see their suffering avenged. After seeing the *Mitzrim* die during *kri'at Yam Suf*, Bnei Yisrael understood there was absolutely no way they could possibly be re-enslaved by the *Mitzrim*, and they felt the true relief of freedom.

Aside from comforting Bnei Yisrael in this way, it also intensified the nation's *yir'ah* of Hashem. Immediately after the *Yam Suf* drowned all the *Mitzrim*, the pasuk describes, וַיִּירָאוּ הָעָם אֶת ה' (Shemot 14:31). By seeing Hashem completely destroy their enemy in such a remarkable way, Bnei Yisrael increased in their *yir'ah* of Hashem as well.

Furthermore, even quantitatively, the miracles of the *Yam Suf* exceeded the miracles of the *makkot*. The *Rabbanim* in the Haggadah argue about the specific numerical value, but they all agree that *Yam Suf* was significantly more miraculous in the amount of miracles performed. Rabbi Yosef HaGlili says, Mitzrayim equals 10 and *Yam Suf* equals 50; Rabbi Eliezer says Mitzrayim equals 40 and *Yam Suf* equals 200; and Rabi Akiva says Mitzrayim equals 50 and *Yam Suf* equals 150. When the waters of the *Yam Suf* split, and stood straight up in place, it was a deviation from nature to a degree never seen before.

When the pasuk describes the water forming walls, “*chomah*” (Shemot 14:22), it demonstrates how this undermined the laws of nature that were established during the six days of creation (Maharal, *Gevurot Hashem*, 40).

Chazal point out that all of the waters of the world split at the time that the *Yam Suf* split (Rashi 14:21). This idea demonstrates the weight this miracle carried; not only were the laws undermined in this one place, they were undermined across the globe. The Meam Loez (p. 336) takes this to the next level, and says that the walls of the water stood high enough for all of the nations of the world to be able to see them. In addition to developing Bnei Yisrael's relationship with Hashem, the outstanding wonders of *kri'at Yam Suf* proved to all of the nations of the world that Hashem is the only G-d of this world and is continuously involved in running it.

As soon as they left Mitzrayim, Bnei Yisrael transitioned to a supernatural relationship with Hashem, beyond the confines of Mitzrayim. Although it developed more strongly in the desert, we see that immediately when leaving Mitzrayim, Hashem protected Bnei Yisrael with the *Amud HeAnan* and the *Amud HaAish* (Shemot 13:21). As Bnei Yisrael walked through the *Yam Suf*, the fact that Hashem protected them with supernatural means is reemphasized (14:19-20). Hashem could have achieved the same result without deviating from the laws of nature to such a great extent, but He did so in order to make a point. It was to emphasize His unconditional support of Bnei Yisrael and to prove to the nations of the world that there is a Creator who is always in control.

Furthermore, the fact that Bnei Yisrael played an active role in leaving Mitzrayim allowed them to become partners with Hashem (as opposed to just allowing Hashem to perform *nissim* for them). Hashem told Moshe, “*vayis'u*” (Shemot 14:15), commanding Bnei Yisrael to travel and move forward. Bnei Yisrael had to go *into* the water *before* it split. Hashem told Moshe to stop davening and, instead, to step into the water and trust that Hashem would provide protection (Shemot Rabbah 21:8). According to one opinion in the Gemara (Sotah 37a), Nachshon ben Aminadav was the first to do

this, and he is praised for his willingness to be the first in taking action. This is further exemplified by the resolution to a seemingly self-contradicting phrase in the pasuk: “*bayam bayabasha*” (Shemot 14:22). How did Bnei Yisrael go into the sea and simultaneously, the ground be completely dry? It is explained that the sea only split once Bnei Yisrael went into the water and put their *bitachon* in Hashem. Only once the water level reached their noses did the sea split and did they begin to walk on completely dry land (Shemot Rabbah 21:10).

The fact that Bnei Yisrael started to play a part in taking an active role in the story exhibits how they were becoming partners with Hashem. This partnership was important for Bnei Yisrael, because when people are actively involved in something, they are more invested. The investment Bnei Yisrael put into their own salvation is a manifestation of them investing in their relationship with Hashem. In all relationships, it is important that both parties give of themselves. If the relationship is one-sided, the giver will inherently feel more invested. However, if both sides give of themselves, the relationship will become more balanced and have more room to develop and flourish. That is why taking on an active role in the redemption was so vital to further developing Bnei Yisrael’s relationship with Hashem.

As explained above, *kri’at Yam Suf* played a pivotal role in creating Bnei Yisrael as a nation, deepening their relationship with and connection to Hashem because of their newfound trust, reaching a higher level of miraculous wonders, and taking on a partnership with Hashem. However, we must ask: what is the significance of Bnei Yisrael’s singing *shira* to Hashem directly after this event? Why does the midrash (Shemot Rabbah 23:4) say this was the first time anyone ever sang *shira* to Hashem in the history of the world? It cannot be that our forefathers did not thank Hashem!

The Beit HaLevi (Beshalach 15:1) explains that when Bnei Yisrael sang *shira* after *kri’at Yam Suf*, they were not only thanking Hashem for the miracles He performed for them and the *yeshuah*, but they were even thanking Hashem for the slavery itself. We see

this from the fact that *Shirat HaYam* starts with the word “*az*” (Shemot 15:1), referencing the word Moshe used when speaking to Hashem to describe his talking to Pharaoh (Shemot 5:23). Because Moshe used the word “*ume'az*” to complain about the slavery, *Shirat HaYam* starts with the same word in order to reference the past and be grateful for the slavery.

Why were Bnei Yisrael thanking Hashem for their suffering? It is important to note that through *kri'at Yam Suf* specifically, a massive *kiddush Hashem* was created. It was clear to Bnei Yisrael that without being enslaved for 210 years, this *kiddush Hashem* would not have been able to be created. Bnei Yisrael recognized this and praised Hashem for putting them through their misery *because* of its result. It is important to thank Hashem not only for the good in our lives, but the bad as well. Even when we do not have a clear vision of the greatness our suffering produces, it is still important to trust Hashem and recognize that everything He does is for the greater good, and that He has very good reasons for putting us, at times, through hardships. *Shirat Hayam* then, is the prototypical praise of Hashem.

Consequently, *kri'at Yam Suf* had significant ramifications with regards to the nations of the world and Bnei Yisrael as a nation. It proved to the world that Hashem exists and runs the world, and as Bnei Yisrael are created as a nation, it is their mission to ensure this is known generation after generation by keeping the Torah and doing *mitzvot*. *kri'at Yam Suf* was necessary even after *Yetziat Mitzrayim* because there was an added level of significance and grandeur to the miracles performed. This added layer led to the further development of Bnei Yisrael's relationship with Hashem in their *emunah* and ability to trust Him, leading them even to the point of praising Hashem with a *shira* that thanked Him for the good *and* the bad they had undergone.

The Power of Love Over Hate

The story of Bilaam with the talking donkey, Hashem's intervention, and the ultimate blessing of Bnei Yisrael creates a fascinating narrative. It is well known that Hashem speaks to Bilaam through *nevuah*. There is a famous midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 14) which states that Bilaam attains the same level of *nevuah* as Moshe! It is interesting to ponder what exactly the nature of Bilaam's relationship with Hashem is. Furthermore, if Bilaam experiences this level of *nevuah*, how can he possibly try to curse Bnei Yisrael, the beloved nation of Hashem?

We do not really know much about Bilaam. He appears in one story in the Torah where he suggests sending the daughters of Moav to lead Bnei Yisrael astray; eventually, he dies in battle. According to the *pshat* of the Torah, these few details are the extent of our knowledge about him.

Three connections can be found between Bilaam and another personality in the Torah, Avraham Avinu, that help clarify Bilaam's character – their *talmidim*, their relationship with Hashem, and their parallel journeys: Bilaam to curse Bnei Yisrael, and Avraham to sacrifice his son at Hashem's command.

In Mishna Avot (5:19), Chazal contrast the respective *talmidim* of Bilaam and Avraham Avinu, explaining that Avraham's *talmidim* enjoy this world and inherit the world to come, while the *talmidim* of Bilaam inherit *gehenom*. This comparison highlights the difference between Bilaam and Avraham; the people who learn from them differ greatly in merit and achievement. What is it about the lessons taught by Bilaam and Avraham that their students merit such different ends?

Another contrast between Avraham and Bilaam is the difference in the way Hashem communicates with each of them. Rashi (Vayikra 1:1) explains that when Hashem talks to those He loves, He calls out to them. This is how Hashem (and the angels) talks to

Avraham – it is not just a sudden appearance. Hashem calls Avraham’s name and awaits a response (Bereishit 22:11). Rashi calls it “*lashon chibah*”. In contrast, Hashem simply reveals Himself to Bilaam suddenly, which Rashi calls “*lashon tumah*”. It is clear that there is a significant difference between Hashem’s relationship with Avraham and Hashem’s relationship with Bilaam.

There is a significant contrasting between Bilaam’s journey to curse the Jewish people and Avraham’s journey to fulfill Hashem’s command at the *akeidah*. In their respective journeys, Avraham and Bilaam both encounter something that delays them on their journey. Avraham, according to the midrash (Midrash Aggadah, Bereishit 22:4:1), encounters the *Satan*: he appears as a river in an attempt to discourage Avraham from his mission. Similarly, Bilaam encounters an angel, “*L’satan lo*”, “as an adversary to him” (Bamidbar 22:22), which prevents him from continuing straight on his path. Despite these delays, they carry on. Although both are determined to complete their mission, do they have the same level of determination? What can we learn from each of their stories?

By delving further into the comparisons between Bilaam’s attempted curse and the *Akeidah*, we are able to gain insight into why it is preferable to learn from Avraham, and we can understand why the two of them have such different relationships with Hashem.

Waking Up and Saddling Their Own Donkeys

There is a fascinating phenomenon in the Torah that sheds light on and strengthens this connection between Avraham and Bilaam’s stories. There are several instances in Tanach that discuss individuals waking up in the morning. There are also a few times in Tanach where individuals of importance saddle their own donkeys or harness their own chariots. However, only two times in the entirety of Tanach do these phrases coincide. Only two times does the Tanach specifically talk about an individual who gets up in the morning and then proceeds to saddle his own donkey. And those two occurrences happen during the stories of Avraham at the *Akeidah* and the story of Bilaam!

Bereishit 22:3	Bamidbar 22:21
<p>וישכם אברהם בבקר ויחבש את חמרו ויקח את שני נעריו אתו ואת יצחק בנו ויבקע עצי עלה ויקם וילך אל המקום אשר אמר לו האלקים:</p>	<p>ויקם בלעם בבקר ויחבש את אתנו וילך עם שרי מואב:</p>

Rashi's comments on these two pesukim highlight multiple points that further emphasize the connection between them. In terms of Avraham saddling his own donkey, Rashi comments *הוא בעצמו, ולא צוה לאחד מעבדיו, שהאהבה מקלקלת השורה מכאן שהשנאה*. Avraham's *love* for Hashem is so powerful that he disregards his normal conduct. Therefore, he saddles his donkey himself in order to fulfill what is commanded to him. And with Bilaam, his *hatred* for Bnei Yisrael is so powerful that he also disregards his normal conduct and saddles his own donkey in order to curse Bnei Yisrael. Clearly, these emotions of love and hatred that compel Avraham and Bilaam greatly influence their actions. Several distinctions between these two emotions can be learned by further exploring these comments of Rashi.

For example, although Rashi uses almost identical language to describe their actions, the order in which his comment is arranged differs slightly between the two. For Bilaam, Rashi writes about the hatred Bilaam feels and then continues with the fact that he saddles his own donkey: Rashi starts with Bilaam's emotion. For Avraham, Rashi writes about Avraham saddling his own donkey and then about the love he feels: Rashi starts with Avraham's action.

Avraham	Bilaam
1. הוא בעצמו (action)	1. שהשנאה מקלקלת את השורה (emotion)
2. שהאהבה מקלקלת השורה (emotion)	2. שחבש הוא בעצמו (action)

Rashi's formulation sheds light on the vital difference between the driving force of love and hatred. While both of these emotions are passionate (as we see from Avraham and Bilaam's determination), we see that hatred is more irrational. Due to Bilaam's hatred for Bnei Yisrael, he is willing to do anything, including saddling his own donkey. Hatred is his starting point.

However, Avraham's starting point is his decision to saddle his donkey himself, and this act is an expression of his love for Hashem. He saddles his donkey himself not because of irrationality, but because his love allows him to put his own personal importance aside. Avraham's, unlike Bilaam's, actions seem to be much more measured and precise. The driving force of love allows Avraham to start from a rational place as opposed to a disproportionately emotional one.

Another tension between these two forces, love and hatred, can be found in Rashi. The same comment of Rashi that addresses Bilaam saddling his donkey, continues with the words:

אמר הקב"ה רשע כבר קדמך אברהם אביהם, שנאמר (בראשית כ"ב)
'וישכם אברהם בבקר ויחבש את חמרו'.

Rashi quotes a midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 20:12) where Hashem tells Bilaam he is a *rasha* and that Avraham has already accomplished what Bilaam is trying to do by “waking early in the morning.”

While Rashi is commenting on the phrase *אתה חבש את חמרו*, the response of Hashem to Bilaam saddling his donkey intertwines the saddling with Avraham waking early in the morning – *וישכם אברהם בבקר*. Perhaps this is because both the actions of Bilaam and Avraham, waking early and saddling their donkeys, are driven by the same *zerizut* (which in turn is driven by opposite emotions, hatred and love, as previously explained). Because of this connection between the saddling and the waking that Rashi makes, it is crucial to take note the description of Bilaam waking in the morning, *ויקם בלעם בבקר*, in order to understand Bilaam's journey and eagerness. The description of both Avraham and Bilaam waking up in the morning differs slightly. The verb choice changes – for Avraham, the verb “*vayashkem*” is used, while for Bilaam, the verb

used is “*vayakam*”. Why would this verb choice be different? Are Avraham and Bilaam similar in their waking or different?

The Gur Aryeh provides two fundamental points on Rashi’s comment that can be used to answer our question regarding Avraham and Bilaam’s waking in the morning. Firstly, the Gur Aryeh asks a vital question: why does Hashem call Bilaam a *rasha* at this point in the story? How do we know he is a *rasha*?

The Gur Aryeh answers that it is clear that he is a *rasha* because he is not described as waking with the verb “*vayashkem*.” The verb “*vayashkem*”, as translated by Rashi elsewhere (Bereishit 22:3), connotes awakening with fervor and excitement. On the other hand, “*vayakam*” does not have much significance – Rashi does not elaborate on that verb. Because of this, the pasuk implies that Bilaam simply arises in the morning as usual. Therefore, he is described as a *rasha* by Hashem, because he does not have the same level of *zerizut* as Avraham. With Bilaam, we do not see the same anticipation that Avraham feels to fulfill Hashem’s commandment.

According to this explanation, we can understand the different emotions felt by Avraham and Bilaam and their impact on *zerizut*: hate and love are clearly both powerful and passionate emotions and lead to a person acting in a manner that is not their regular conduct, as they both saddle their donkey (which is not an action someone of their stature would complete). However, the impact on *zerizut* differs: love provides someone with a certain excitement and anticipation. In contrast, hatred does not provide those same levels of eagerness and excitement that love succeeds in creating.

The Gur Aryeh’s second point gives context for the midrash that Rashi quotes. The Gur Aryeh provides the question the midrash is answering:

Because Bilaam saddles his donkey, which is out of the ordinary of his normal conduct, the emotion that causes him to saddle his donkey would also drive him to wake early in the morning. Therefore, as opposed to the previous suggestion, it is obvious that Bilaam also wakes early in the morning and has *zerizut* (like

Avraham)! If so, why does the pasuk *not* use the verb “*vayashkem*” for Bilaam if Avraham and Bilaam are equally eager to complete the action they set out to do? This is the question that the midrash quoted by Rashi answers - because Avraham wakes up early in the morning first, Bilaam does not get the recognition of having the verb “*vayashkem*”; rather, the pasuk simply describes his action as “*vayakam*”.

According to this explanation, what is it about Avraham’s ‘doing it first’ that does not allow Bilaam to be recognized with the verb “*vayashkem*” as well? An argument can be made that while Bilaam and Avraham *do* have the same level of *zerizut*, their *intentions* during the process establish different levels of recognition for their actions. Bilaam is doing his best to follow in the ways of Avraham, to arise early, in order to fulfill a certain action. However, because Bilaam is doing it out of hatred, although he may be achieving the same level of *zerizut*, his intentions are not pure in the slightest. In contrast, Avraham’s intentions years before are done out of love and are very pure. Therefore, though they both possess this value of *zerizut*, only a value that is solely *l’shem shamayim* receives true credit.

Thus, two possibilities arise from this Gur Aryeh. Either Bilaam and Avraham do not achieve the same level of *zerizut*, because they are driven by hatred and love, respectively, *or* they do achieve the same level of *zerizut*, but the hatred and love that drives them causes them to have impure and pure intentions, respectively. In either case, love as a motive clearly gains Avraham more recognition as he is described with the verb “*vayashkem*”. Bilaam, on the other hand, is described as a “*rasha*” and simply with the verb “*vayakam*”, indicating that the hatred that drives him does not place him nearly at the same level as Avraham.

Sacrificing the Animals

Towards the end of these two stories, both Avraham and Bilaam sacrifice animals. For Avraham, the animal is sacrificed in place of

his son. For Bilaam, it is to appease Hashem so he will be allowed to curse Bnei Yisrael.

The first difference between these two sacrifices is that Bilaam offers the sacrifice with an idolatrous mindset; he believes that Hashem's mind can be changed. If Bilaam does something for Hashem, Hashem will change His mind and allow Bilaam to do something else. In contrast, Avraham's sacrifice is the complete opposite of an idolatrous sacrifice. Avraham is commanded to sacrifice an animal in place of his child to demonstrate that child sacrifice is not a valid form of worship.

We can discern another difference between Avraham and Bilaam, by noticing the different use of verbs in in the pesukim describing their respective sacrifices:

<p style="text-align: center;">Avraham (Bereishit 22:13)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Bilaam (Bamidbar 23:2,14,30)</p>
<p>וישא אברהם את עיניו וירא והנה איל אחר נאחו בסבך בקרניו וילך אברהם ויקח את האיל ויעלהו לעלה תחת בנו:</p>	<p>ויעש בלק כאשר דבר בלעם ויעל בלק ובלעם פר ואיל במזבח:... ויקחתו שדה צפים אל ראש הפסגה ויבן שבעה מזבחת ויעל פר ואיל במזבח:... ויעש בלק כאשר אמר בלעם ויעל פר ואיל במזבח:</p>

For Bilaam and Balak, the only verb that is written is “*vaya'al*”. However, the verbs portraying Avraham's actions are “*vayeilech*”, “*vayikach*”, and “*vaya'al*”. With Avraham, more verbs are used to describe his actions. We once again see an impulsivity in Bilaam: “*vaya'al*”, he simply sacrifices the animal. Avraham, on other hand, is described as *walking* to the animal, *taking* the animal, and finally, *sacrificing* the animal. His act is very measured and precise, each action is carefully and consciously done.

The different behavior of Avraham and Bilaam once again emanates from the different emotions that drive their actions: love

and hate. Love leads to a much more rational approach to life. In contrast, hate leads to irrational behavior without much stability.¹

The Unknown

In both of these stories, there is an aspect that is initially unknown to the main protagonists. Avraham is commanded to sacrifice his son on the mountain that Hashem will show him. In contrast, Bilaam knows exactly where he is going, yet he does not know what Hashem will permit him to say (Bilaam acknowledges this time and again). They both set out on their missions with determination despite these unknowns. On a simple level, they both seem to have *emunah* in Hashem that He is running the show. However, on a deeper level, the fact that Avraham knows *what he will be doing* but *not where he is going*, while Bilaam knows *where he is going* but *not what he will be doing*, can challenge this assumption.

This portrays a significant difference between them. Avraham knows what he needs to do, and what is commanded of him. He understands the essence of his mission and is therefore willing to complete these actions without fully knowing how it will turn out. However, for Bilaam, he does not know the essential aspect of his mission: he does not know what he will be permitted to say! He impulsively goes to Bnei Yisrael's camp, he impulsively skips to the destination, without the most crucial details of his mission.

We learn the importance of understanding each goal and action we set out to do. We should have a plan, and understand that, while it all comes from Hashem and we may not know how the final picture will fully look, we are on a mission with set tasks of what to accomplish. We should not impulsively choose to complete some-

¹ It is true that any emotion not experienced properly can become negative, even love, and vice versa: any emotion experienced positively and utilized correctly can become positive, even hatred. However, in their most natural forms, the differences between love and hate are clear.

thing without thinking it through, because this is not the optimal way to serve Hashem.

Perceiving Kedusha

In these stories, the concept of *kedusha*, holiness, plays a significant role. Whether it is Hashem directly talking to each of them or Hashem's *shechinah* or an angel, these stories are filled with Hashem's presence.

Avraham is called by Hashem, and he swiftly sets out on his mission, awaiting guidance as to which mountain he is meant to travel to and sacrifice his son upon. Finally, after three days, *וַיִּשָּׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא אֶת הַמָּקוֹם מֵרָחֵק* (Bereishit 22:4), Avraham lifts his eyes and sees the mountain where he will be sacrificing his son. There are two very telling ideas to learn from this phrase in the pasuk. The first is that while "*HaMakom*" is simply translated as "the place", "*HaMakom*" can also be used to refer to Hashem when He seems hidden. According to this interpretation, the pasuk would mean, "And Avraham lifted his eyes and saw *Hashem* from afar." This is an inspiring trait of Avraham Avinu. While perhaps Avraham is not able to fully understand Hashem's command – why he is being commanded to kill what was promised as his inheritance – he is still able to perceive Hashem in each aspect of his life and understand that Hashem is still present, even during times of challenge.

Additionally, the midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 56:2) writes that on the way to the *Akeidah*, Avraham asks Yitzchak if he sees the mountain they are going to. Yitzchak responds that he does see. However, the servants tell Avraham they do not see. Avraham responds that "since the donkey does not see and you do not see, stay here with the donkey".

Since only Avraham and Yitzchak are able to see the mountain to which they are supposed to be traveling, only the two of them continue on. The donkey and the two men traveling with Avraham

and Yitzchak are unable to see the place – or, in the other interpretation of *HaMakom*, they are unable to perceive Hashem.

In Bilaam's story, the donkey's role and its perception of Hashem are very different. When Bilaam is on his way to Bnei Yisrael's camp, an angel appears to him. However, at first, only the donkey sees the angel. The donkey is the one veering off course, trying to avoid the angel, while Bilaam is oblivious. He becomes quickly angered and begins to hit the donkey. This causes the donkey to speak to Bilaam. Finally, Bilaam's eyes are opened to see the angel on the path.

Avraham is quickly able to perceive Hashem's presence while it takes Bilaam awhile. Additionally, a donkey appears in both stories. It would make sense that the donkeys' abilities to see Kedusha would be equal: a donkey is a donkey. However, the donkey with Avraham cannot perceive *HaMakom*, cannot perceive *kedusha*, whereas Bilaam's donkey does see the angel, does perceive *kedusha*. This sheds light on how difficult it is for Bilaam to see the angel. If even the donkey with him, who cannot see the *shechinah* in Avraham's story, is able to see the angel in Bilaam's story, then how much more so is Bilaam blinded to Hashem's presence.

This episode follows the pattern we have been seeing – Avraham's mission, which is out of love for Hashem and is *l'shem shamayim*, gives him clarity in the moment, whereas Bilaam is unable to put his hatred aside and perceive Hashem in his journey.

Another result of this pattern is Bilaam's anger. Bilaam unleashes his anger when he is unable to see the angel, and he places all the blame on the donkey. It is remarkable what anger can cause. Anger, like hatred, causes irrationality. One of the causes of anger is the lack of belief in Hashem. Anger arises when one tries to control a situation but is unsuccessful. The realization that we are not fully in control and that every situation comes from Hashem gives us peace of mind – like the peace of mind that Avraham has despite the fact that he thinks he is about to be doing the hardest thing of all, sacrificing his son.

The Anchor

Both Bilaam and Avraham are men of important status. They each travel with two men, and in both stories, Rashi comments that anyone of importance travels with two people.² Upon arising in the morning, both Bilaam and Avraham put their own importance aside to saddle their donkeys: they both teach us about the value of limiting our *gaavah*, haughtiness, in order to successfully accomplish tasks.

Both of these individuals teach us about this *middah*. However, we can also learn something else from these stories: there always needs to be something at the center of our world. This anchor is what drives all of our actions.

Gaavah is one of the worst *middot*. When we put our own importance at the center of our world, our recognition of Hashem is lessened. Truly, He should be at the center of our world. However, when Bilaam sets aside his own importance, he does not replace it with Hashem, he does not make Hashem his “anchor”. For Bilaam, while he puts his importance aside, his hatred for Bnei Yisrael is his “anchor”, the center of his world. That is why he continuously tries to curse Bnei Yisrael, even after two unsuccessful attempts!

In contrast, Avraham puts his status aside for Hashem to be at his center and his anchor. This is why Avraham is able to quickly change course when the commandment is changed. His purpose for each and every one of his actions is driven by love and directed *l'shem shamayim*. It shows each and every one of us to first put away our haughtiness - that there are more meaningful things in the world than just ourselves. From Avraham, we learn that it is crucial to have a proper anchor, a proper center to our world. Without that acknowledgement, we will be led astray even if we successfully portray humility.

² Regarding Avraham, Rashi states (Bereishit 22:3): את שני נעריי. ישמעאל ואליעזר, שאין אדם חשוב רשאי לצאת לדרך בלא ב' אנשים.

And regarding Bilaam, Rashi states (Bamidbar 22:22): ושני נעריי עמו. מכאן לאדם חשוב: היוצא לדרך יוליך עמו שני אנשים לשמשו, וחוזרים ומשמים זה את זה

Conclusion

By carefully dissecting the paralleled stories of Bilaam's curse and the *Akeidah*, it is clear what the inherent differences are between Bilaam and Avraham. Returning to the original midrash that contrasts the *talmidim* of Avraham and Bilaam, what can we learn from the differences?

Interestingly, both Bilaam and Avraham are navigating life without the Torah. For Avraham, the Torah is yet to be given, and Bilaam is not Jewish and therefore not bound by the Torah. In addition, regarding both Avraham and Bilaam, we do not know their backstories: we do not know how they discovered Hashem.

Perhaps, the universal message to all of us is that there are many ways to find Hashem in our life. However, through comparing Bilaam and Avraham's journeys, we see that Avraham's method yields positive results. He is the one we are supposed to learn from, who's *talmidim* merit *Olam Habah*, and who is called upon by Hashem with *lashon chibah*. From Avraham we learn that our actions, thoughts and intentions must always meet two criteria: they must be driven by love and directed *l'shem Shamayim*.

This is why Avraham is such a fitting antithesis to Bilaam. It is Avraham that has to learn to find Hashem on his own and to act for Hashem, without having been given the 613 *mitzvot*. It is Avraham that shows us how important a two way relationship is and that a relationship takes work: it takes precise actions, measured thoughts and ultimately, it takes endless love. Avraham shows us how much he wants a relationship with Hashem even during the times when Hashem seems hidden from him. If Bilaam is said to have the same level of *nevuah* as Moshe, which is higher than that of Avraham, imagine the potential Bilaam could reach if he were to rationally think out each of his actions and if he were to have the proper motivation.

There is one final issue to address before we accept all that we have learnt from the distinctions between Bilaam and Avraham – if Avraham shows us how to prevail without the Torah, and Bilaam shows us how we might fail without it, how does this apply to us?

We do have the Torah in our lives! We are not at all in the position of either Bilaam or Avraham. Perhaps, instead, Bilaam and Avraham can show us the two mindsets we can have *beyond* the Torah. What is our true *kavana* when we do *mitzvot*? Do we serve Hashem out of love or do we have ulterior motives?

What our intentions are beyond the physical actions we do can change the course of our lives completely. We see this with Bilaam and Avraham in a fascinating way through the way Hashem follows Bilaam's and Avraham's leads depending on their initial intentions. With both of the stories, Hashem helps them reach their desired goal. Avraham and Bilaam are accompanied by Yitzchak and Balak, respectively, who play a more passive role that helps them accomplish what they set out to do. Hashem sends them *shlichim* that further their initial intentions: Bilaam begins his journey with hatred and Hashem sends him a negative *shaliach* to help him, Balak. Avraham begins his journey with love and Hashem sends him a positive *shaliach* to aid him in accomplishing his task, Yitzchak. Our intentions will lead Hashem to send tools our way to enable us to accomplish our tasks. Therefore, it is crucial to clarify that our intentions are good.

In a beautiful full circle moment, part of Bilaam's final *bracha* to Bnei Yisrael is that they are like a lion. We see in *halacha* and in *mussar* that a lion is associated with waking up in the morning. The first thing that we should be doing in the morning, according to the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 1:1), is "*yitgaber k'ari*", "rise like a lion". It is fascinating that both Avraham and Bilaam value waking up with an objective and with a motive. Only Avraham, however, successfully builds off this value, choosing to wake up with the motive of love for Hashem, rather than hatred of Bnei Yisrael (like Bilaam). Fittingly, this is Bilaam's final blessing to the descendants of Avraham, the entirety of Bnei Yisrael. Bnei Yisrael should wake like a lion in the morning. Just like Avraham, we must wake up with a purpose and with a goal to be true *avdei Hashem*. We must understand that Hashem is asking us to serve Him and that we should serve Him out of love.

Fear and Vulnerability in Sefer Shemot

When reading through the stories in Sefer Shemot, the miracles initially seem clear and comprehensive. Pharaoh enslaved the Jews, Hashem sent plagues, and we were redeemed. However, when analyzing the stories more carefully, foundational questions emerge. Aside from understanding what actually happened during the makkot, difficulties arise in comprehending the reactions of the Egyptians to the various plagues. Contrary to what one would expect, the Egyptians didn't protest the Jewish enslavement¹, despite the fact that they were all greatly impacted by the makkot. This begs the question of what could have caused a huge, powerful nation to suppress any complaints and remain complacent with the catastrophes that occurred as a result of their leader's choices. Why didn't the Egyptians protest?

In an effort to understand this issue, certain questions must be considered. In which types of societies are citizens reticent in protesting their government? Which individuals force their peers to be quiet? What is the underlying root of silence?

The common theme present in the questions above appears to be fear. Regardless of whether this intimidation is on an individual or country-wide scale, it is continuously evident that individuals who instill fear in others cause the others to be silent.

With this in mind, it is necessary to explore why the Egyptian relationship with Pharaoh was one defined by fear. At first glance, it seems likely that they would have had a warm relationship;

¹ While we find that the servants of Pharaoh cried out against him prior to the makkat *arbeh* (Shemot 10:7), the pesukim never explicitly mention any protests by the Egyptian public.

after all, Pharaoh sustained a thriving country and provided his people with a nation of slaves for generations. Wouldn't that facilitate a strong positive relationship between ruler and subjects? After further analysis, however, it is clear that throughout the generations, the Pharaohs' outlooks on the Egyptian people were actually not as benevolent as initially thought.

This is evident in Parshat Vayigash (47:16-21). At the end of Sefer Bereishit, a famine strikes the middle-eastern world, but Egypt remains a powerful, well-fed country due to the early efforts of Yosef HaTzaddik to provide for the country. However, as the famine progresses, individual Egyptians run out of food and are forced to purchase bread from the government. Despite the initial success of this system, individuals quickly feel this financial burden and are forced to sell their land to Pharaoh in exchange for sustenance². The Midrash Sekhel Tov on Sefer Bereshit (47:20) notes that this land remains in Pharaoh's control until the downfall of Egypt, and while this comment may seem insignificant, it begins to explain why the Egyptians would have felt helpless in comparison to Pharaoh.

In the late 1990s, a research study was conducted which compared the measured emotions of low-income families who purchased homes and those who rented. While the only variable in this experiment was home ownership (net worth and building structure were kept constant), the results were staggering. Individuals who owned their homes were reported to have significantly higher life satisfaction and contribution to community affairs than their renting counterparts despite the fact that both life situations were essentially the same. Clearly, then, home ownership greatly influences the way individuals view themselves and their communities.

² Despite the painful nature of the situation, the Ramban (Bereishit 47:19) notes that when the sales took place, Yosef acted with generosity and kindness to the Egyptian people. While they wanted to sell themselves as slaves along with their land, Yosef only allowed them to sell their land.

With this finding in mind, we may better understand the mindset of the Egyptian people. During the years between Pharaoh's purchase of the land and the onset of the makkot, the Egyptians likely developed similar mentalities to the renting homeowners in the study above. They lacked a sense of permanence and the pride that comes with one's own home; did any of their actions matter if everything belonged to Pharaoh anyway? The people probably became insecure and reserved, a nation characterized by apprehensiveness.

In addition to this, some of Pharaoh's actions towards the Egyptians in the years preceding the makkot are disheartening to those experiencing their consequences. As Pharaoh becomes increasingly concerned about the size of the Jewish people, he directs a series of orders at the Jews, increasing the difficulty of their workloads. When these commands do not minimize the size of the Jewish nation, Pharaoh continues his rampage of decrees and orders Shifrah and Puah, the two midwives, to kill any Jewish baby boys as they conduct deliveries. They fearlessly refuse, so Pharaoh orders one final blow: every baby boy must be thrown into the Nile River.

When skimming through the parsha, it would seem that this is just another cruel decree against a marginalized nation given by the notoriously cruel leader. However, when analyzing the text more closely, it appears that this is actually not the case. The pasuk states (Shemot 1:22), ויצו פרעה לכל עמו לאמר כל הבן הילוד היארה תשליכהו וכל הבת תחיין תהיון, "And Pharaoh commanded his whole nation saying 'all sons born should be thrown into the river and all the daughters shall live'." The Midrash Rabbah explains that Pharaoh actually required that all baby boys be thrown into the river, whether Jewish or Egyptian, as he feared that the redeemer of the Hebrews would be born into an Egyptian family.³

³ These fears were rooted in predictions by Egyptian astrologers that the Jewish redeemer would be born to Egyptian parents. As it turns out, these predictions were not unfounded, as Moshe, the savior of the Jewish people, was raised in the palace of Pharaoh as an Egyptian prince.

Even if the Egyptians had a courteous relationship with Pharaoh up until this point, it became abundantly clear after this decree that Pharaoh's goals in leading Egypt are selfish and not for the overall benefit of the country, which would likely create strong distrust in this relationship. The nonchalant sacrifice of the baby boys is not only cruel, but also futile. If the overall aim of throwing the babies in the Nile was to prevent a Jewish redeemer's emergence (which would lead to Pharaoh losing his slave population), is it not counterintuitive to condemn Jewish boys to death, thereby eradicating the slaves himself? If the fear of Pharaoh is to lose his nation of slaves, why does he willingly kill them off? Because of the obvious nature of these inconsistencies, it is clear that the Egyptians must have sensed the unpredictable and illogical nature of Pharaoh's decisions, instilling fear and the need to stay silent and not agitate their demented leader.

Through the analysis of the Egyptian people, it is evident that their justified fears of Pharaoh prevented any sort of communication or advocacy to send out the Jews in an effort to stop the makkot. Clearly, fear of power leads to silence. However, when looking at the story a little further, it becomes apparent that fear is also frequently the source of the aforementioned abuse of power.

Sefer Shemot opens with the recounting of the Jewish people's descent into Egypt and notes that they considerably reproduce. After these statements, the pasuk mentions a seemingly irrelevant detail: a new king arises who does not know Yosef. It seems superfluous to include this fact; after all, the cycle of life ensures that as time passes, new leaders emerge. Therefore, why is it relevant that a new king takes over?

Throughout Jewish history, time periods are measured as a function of who was ruling. On the macro scale, the Jewish story is chronicled by the changes from individual leaders to judges to kings, and so on. On a more micro level, within the book of Shoftim, for example, each individual judge brings his own flavor and influence to the Jewish people. The tone of the sefer changes as the new leaders possess different qualities than those prior to them.

Similarly, the Torah's mention of new rulership insinuates this same principle; a new flavor enters Egypt with the new Pharaoh⁴, and his character traits determine how the country is run. By mentioning a new character, the Torah erases preconceived notions about the formere king and allows new first impressions to be formed. This is very significant following R' Tzadok HaKohen M'Lublin's principle (Yisrael Kedoshim, p. 67) that one's first story within Tanach provides deep insight into the person and his core values.

With this in mind, it is important to explore the new Pharaoh's first recorded statements: ויאמר אל עמו הנה עם בני ישראל רב ועצום ממנו. הבה נתחכמה לו פן ירבה והיה כי תקראנה מלחמה ונוסף גם הוא על שנאינו ונלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ.

Pharaoh's first directives to his nation shed significant light onto the motives of the increasingly harsh slavery. He explains that he must outsmart the Jewish people or else they will overpower the Egyptians and leave the land. His first decree was a defensive one, a visceral reaction to the growing population of the Jewish people. The *melech chadash* is introduced as one who runs his country on the fear of "or else"; *pen yirbeh* – lest they multiply. Pharaoh's fear of the Jewish birth rate is the foundational factor for his ruthless treatment of the Jewish people. His anxiety clouds his judgment, thereby causing him to eventually make irrational⁵, barbaric decisions directed towards the Jewish people. Pharaoh's fears of the "lest they multiply" outcome causes his definite cruelty.

After examining the thoughts and motivations of Pharaoh and the Egyptian people, the dangerous impacts of fear-based decisions are evident. While the results of each group's fear are drastically different, the underlying principle is the same; individuals who

⁴ Rashi, quoting the Gemara, suggests the possibility that this is the same Pharaoh as the times of Yosef, but that he made new decrees against the Jews. Even if this opinion is accepted, it does not affect the overall understanding of the coming idea.

⁵ As mentioned above, Pharaoh's logic in choosing to eradicate the Jewish people was faulty, as it was intended to counteract the potential of losing his slaves to mass exodus.

make decisions out of fear are significantly more susceptible to making careless choices.

As the makkot happen, Pharaoh repeatedly chooses to endure the pain associated with them instead of letting the Jews go, despite the unwise nature of this decision. Additionally, after Yetziat Mitzrayim, Pharaoh leads a chase after the Jewish people, all while knowing the imminent dangers related. Accordingly, following the simplistic definition of fearlessness, Pharaoh embodies the ideal of bravery. However, as previously discussed, Pharaoh's decisions are all rooted in fear and are not heroic at all. Thus, the popular understanding of bravery seems inaccurate.

Brené Brown, a modern day psychologist and researcher, dedicated the early years of her professional life to researching the relationship between vulnerability and one's feeling of worthiness and ability to accomplish. In her book *Daring Greatly* (p. 34), Brown explains that although bravery is often portrayed as taking great risks and making uncalculated choices, in reality, true courage presents itself as vulnerability, which she defines as "uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure."

This idea is reflected in the Ramban's *peirush* on Chumash (Shemot 12:40-42). The Ramban explains that the Jewish people were not worthy of redemption on their own merits. They joined with the Egyptians in sin and conducted themselves in seemingly unredeemable ways. However, due to their tefillot, and only their tefillot, Hashem pitied the Jews and took them out of Egypt.

At its surface, this idea reflects the powerful nature of prayer and serves as an inspirational soundbite for the importance of tefillah. However, on a more subtle level, it exemplifies the power of vulnerability. Prayer, as an institution, is unnatural and moderately awkward. By choosing to daven, an individual must get past the psychological and social barriers preventing him from exposing himself to an intangible, invisible Being and open up. There is discomfort involved and it is difficult to choose to really daven, to be present with Hashem. It requires vulnerability.

In crying out to Hashem, broken and desperate, the Jewish people consciously make the choice to exist with Him, regardless of the discomfort and risks involved. They turn to Hashem to beg for redemption despite their unworthiness, because they hold onto a sliver of hope that He still desires them. They take a leap of faith, and it works. As the Ramban says, the Jewish people are redeemed solely because of their prayer; they had the courage to ask.

Society celebrates stereotypical bravery and classical heroism, however real courage lies in one's ability to be vulnerable. While Pharaoh and the Egyptians initially overpower the Jewish people due to the fear-based choices they make, it is ultimately clear that the Jews' trust and real bravery is the impetus for their redemption. The ability to be vulnerable is what makes one truly free.

Counting Stars

In *parshat Lech Lecha* (Bereishit 15:2-5), Hashem appears to Avraham and informs him that his reward is great. Avraham responds: “What can You give me now that I am childless and all of my possessions will go to my servant?” Hashem replies that Avraham’s inheritance will not go to his servant but rather to his child. Hashem takes Avraham “outside” and tells him to look at the stars and count them, promising Avraham that his children will be numerous like the stars.

What is the meaning of *ויוצא אתו החוצה ויאמר הבט נא השמימה*? From where did Hashem take him, and why? Rashi suggests three different answers. According to the *psbat*, Hashem took Avraham outside of his tent so that he could physically see the stars. The midrashic interpretation is that Hashem was telling him to leave and ignore his astrological sign. Avraham saw that he would not have a son and that Sarah would not bear a child. Hashem would change their names and thereby change their destiny and give them a son. A third explanation is that Hashem brought Avraham outside of Earth’s atmosphere and above the stars. The word *הבט* means looking downward from above.

The Ramban quotes Rashi but interprets the midrashic interpretation differently. Rashi says that *Avram* would not have a child, but that Hashem promised that *Avraham* would. The Ramban has difficulty with this interpretation because Avram did have a son, Yishmael. The Ramban then reinterprets the midrash and says that *Avram* will not have a son as his heir because Yishmael will not be his heir. Rather, *Avraham* will have Yitzchak as his heir. Another interpretation is that the pair Avram and Sarai will not have a son, but Avraham and Sarah will have a son. The Ramban notes that the verse makes no reference to Sarah but it is the midrash that adds that Sarai will not have a child, but Sarah will. Hashem just

promises that Avraham will have a child, and at this time Avraham did not know if Sarah would have a child.

The Netziv (15:5) explains that when Hashem told Avraham to count the stars, it wasn't a promise of abundance. Hashem had already promised Avraham that his children would be many when He compared them to the dust of the earth. Here Hashem is saying that they will be prominent individuals, who will shine their light onto the world like the stars. This is different from the comparison to dust, which Avraham feared meant his children would not be important. Although all nations have some prominent people, the Jews will have many prominent men, especially in proportion to the size of their nation.

The end of the pasuk says, *וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זֶרְעֶךָ*. Rav Hirsch comments on the use of the word *כה*, and asks why Hashem had to take Avraham outside. Doesn't he already know that there are many stars, more than the human eye can count? Rav Hirsch explains that the reason Hashem took Avraham outside was to direct his gaze towards heaven. Avraham had basically accepted the fact that he would have no children, and thought that his servant Eliezer would be his heir. He lost all hope in having a child of his own, because his knowledge was limited to the physical world. Hashem takes him outside to show him that in heaven, a whole different world exists, where everything is created directly by Hashem and does not have to go through the intermediary of the laws of nature. There exists another reality that supersedes nature and anything can happen.

Looking closely at this pasuk raises a question. Why does Hashem command Avraham to count the stars? Why doesn't Hashem just tell him that his offspring will be as many as the stars?

If we look previously (13:15) where Hashem uses sand as an analogy to tell Avraham his offspring will be many, we see a similar phrase being used: *אִם יוּכַל אִישׁ לִמְנוֹת אֶת עַפְרַי הָאָרֶץ גַּם זֶרְעֶךָ יִמְנֶה*. If a man is able to count them, so too your offspring. Again, why doesn't the Torah just say your offspring will be many?

At the beginning of Bamidbar, when Hashem commands Moshe to count Bnei Yisrael, Rashi comments that Hashem counts us out of love and does so constantly. Putting these two ideas together, it appears that Hashem is telling Avraham here that not only will his offspring be many, but also He who can count Bnei Yisrael, will in fact count them. In other words, Hashem is telling Avraham that He will continuously count the numerous Bnei Yisrael as His expression of love for them.

When the angel appears to Hagar after she was sent out of Avraham's house, he tells her that her offspring will be many, but they won't be counted, הרבה ארבה את זרעך ולא יספר מרב (16:10). This is a clear contrast to Hashem's promise to Avraham; although Hagar's offspring will also be many, they won't be counted, meaning they won't be loved by Hashem.

Before meeting up with Eisav, Yaakov davens to be saved from his brother's hand and reminds Hashem of His promise that his children will be too many to count (32:13) ואתה אמרת היטב איטיב עמך. ושמתני את זרעך כחול הים אשר לא יספר מרב. Yaakov makes a mistake here because what Hashem actually promised him was that his children would be counted, not that they would be too many to count. However, Yaakov is in a desperate time – he is about to reunite with his brother and is scared he is going to die. He is not confident in Hashem's promise because he is not sure at this point in time if Hashem still loves him. Therefore, he cries out to Hashem in honesty and shares his feelings, but he davens that his worries are false and that he and his children will be saved.

The previous pasuk (32:12) gives us some proof to this thought. קטנתי מכל החסדים ומכל האמת אשר עשית את עבדך כי במקלי עברתי את הירדן הזה ועתה הייתי לשני מחנות. Yaakov says to Hashem that he is unworthy of the kindness that Hashem has done for him. Rashi comments that perhaps after all of Hashem's kindness, Yaakov's merits have been diminished. Maybe since the time when these promises have been made, Yaakov has become unworthy of

them, and this may cause him to be delivered into the hand of his brother Eisav. That is what Yaakov was truly worried about.

In conclusion, we see that Hashem loves each and every one of us. We must have faith that Hashem has endless power, and everything He does is out of the abundant love He has for us. Even in the most challenging moments of life, when we are sitting in a dark pit of despair, we must remember that Hashem is holding on. Bnei Yisrael are His children, His beloved, and we must not forget to feel His hand and return the sentiment.

Making Up for Lost Time

A Galut and Geula Perspective

One thing you cannot get back in life is time. The stories of the lives of Yaakov, Rachel, Yosef and Binyamin contain this theme in a profound way. Their lives seem to revolve around the members of the families longing for each other, and it is obvious from the parshiyot that they never get to live together in tranquility. It is as if their story is left incomplete, as if their timeline is too short and has gaps. The pesukim which describe their pinnacle moments of anguish and sadness always involve one another and their yearning to be together. The perfect word for this emotion is *ga'agua*.

What fundamental truth is being expressed through this emotion in the story? Why is it important to know that these figures experienced *ga'agua* in such an overwhelming way? This article will argue that *ga'agua* is the pain of *galut* and that through Yaakov, Rachel, Yosef and Binyamin's experiences of this feeling, crucial lessons about *galut* are being conveyed.

The storyline of *galut* begins with the first expression of sadness from Yaakov, right after he meets Rachel. Yaakov kisses Rachel, raises his voice and cries (Bereishit 29:11). At first glance, this seems like an odd reaction to meeting his future wife. Rashi explains that Yaakov perceived through *ruach hakodesh* that Rachel wouldn't be buried with him, so he cried. Yaakov sensed immediately that Rachel was special, which is why the knowledge that their fate would not be together was the greatest anguish for him. He felt *ga'agua*, he missed the presence of Rachel, which was an abstract kind of longing because their relationship had not yet begun.

The next example of this is with respect to Rachel's barrenness which causes jealousy for her sister Leah and brings her to demand children from Yaakov (Bereishit 30:1). Rachel is feeling such strong longing for children that she claims she would rather die than live

childless. This is a true example of *ga'agua*; she missed and longed for her children on such a deep level even though these children were not even in existence yet.

After Leah had many children, Hashem remembers Rachel and she becomes pregnant, giving birth to a son. One might think that after birthing the child she has been longing for for so long, Rachel might finally feel content and relieved. However, Rachel's name choice for her baby shows quite the opposite. Rachel already began yearning for the next child, and she asks Hashem 'to add', to give her another son, because she feels like she is lacking.

Rachel's wish indeed comes true, but not in the circumstances that she hoped for, as the pasuk states (Bereishit 35:18):

וַיְהִי בְצֵאת נַפְשָׁהּ כִּי מָתָה וְתִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶן אוֹנִי וְאָבִיו קָרָא לוֹ בְּנִימִין.

Tragically, Rachel passes away during the childbirth of her second son. Her last words declare her great suffering, her chosen name "*ben oni*" – son of my suffering (or mourning), shows the tremendous pain she feels. In a literal sense, this could mean "son of my suffering in childbirth", but one could interpret it as "son of my emotional suffering," as in, "*I prayed for you dear son... but you will never know me.*" A mother dying as her son is born is a paradigm for longing. She misses the future together that she knows cannot exist.

Time passes since this tragic day, and Rachel's sons grow up. The pasuk describes Yaakov's love for Yosef (Bereishit 37:3):

וְיִשְׂרָאֵל אָהַב אֶת יוֹסֵף מִכָּל בְּנָיו כִּי בֶן זָקִנִים הוּא לוֹ וְעָשָׂה לוֹ כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים.

Though Binyamin was technically the son born to Yaakov in his old age, Yosef was still his favorite son, his real "*ben zekunim*." Chizkuni offers a fascinating insight into why Yaakov and Binyamin's relationship was so. Yaakov could never love Binyamin as much as he loved Yosef, because there would always be an association between Binyamin and the death of Rachel. The cloud of deep longing, *ga'agua*, for his late wife hung over him whenever he saw this reminder of her.

When Yosef appears to have been killed. Yaakov's pain is unimaginable (Bereishit 37:33-35). Before him is the bloody tunic of his dear favorite son, who he now assumes has been killed by a wild animal. Yaakov goes into a deep mourning that is irreversible, and he says that he will die mourning and crying for his son. None of his other children could replace what he had with Yosef and their consoling words fall on deaf ears.

Years go by, and in the midst of a famine, Yaakov's sons find themselves searching for food in *Mitzrayim*. The second in command of *Mitzrayim*, who, unbeknown to them is their own brother, demands that they bring him their younger brother Binyamin. The brothers ask Yaakov and Yaakov refuses, saying that if something happens to Binyamin on the way to *Mitzrayim*, he will die from grief. Yosef is dead, and all he has left from his family with Rachel is Binyamin. If Binyamin dies as well, there will be no reason for Yaakov to live. He wants to keep Binyamin close, and does not want to risk losing another loved one on the *derech*, (like Rachel, who died on the *derech* to Efrat).

Eventually, the brothers, including Binyamin, return to *Mitzrayim*, and Yosef repeatedly asks his brothers if Yaakov is still alive. Though it has been years and years since Yosef was separated from his family, he still actively missed his father. He refers to Yaakov as "your elderly father", because he is conscious of all their lost time together and recognizes that Yaakov has grown old in the meantime.

Yosef then raises his eyes and notices Binyamin (43:29-30):

וישא עיניו וירא את בנימין אחיו בן אמו ויאמר הוה אחיכם הקטן אשר
אמרתם אלי ויאמר אלקים יתנך בני. וימהר יוסף כי נכמרו רחמיו אל
אחיו ויבקש לבכות ויבא החדרה ויבך שמה.

Until now, we have seen little emotion or vulnerability in Yosef. He was thrown in a pit, sold into slavery, falsely accused of a crime, sat in jail, and still does not shed a tear. But the moment he lays eyes on the son of his mother, his brother Binyamin, he breaks down. He can't even face his brother and he runs out to a different room to cry. Though they are now physically reunited, too much has

transpired and changed for them to reunite properly. It is as if Yosef's years of anguish come crashing down on him suddenly. He has missed out on his younger brother's whole life. The strongest connection to his late mother is staring at him and does not recognize his face. One can interpret this pasuk as mourning, an expression of longing for what could have been, what has been lost.

Later, Yosef can't hold back anymore, and breaks down in front of his brothers, revealing his identity (Bereishit 45:2-3):

ויתן את קלו בבכי וישמעו מצרים וישמע בית פרעה. ויאמר יוסף אל אחיו אני יוסף העוד אבי חי ולא יכלו אחיו לענות אתו כי נבהלו מפניו.

His cries are so loud that the Egyptians all around heard him. Through his wails, he asks his brothers again, "is my father still alive?" The pain he feels for missing out on all the years with his family overtakes him. His greatest fear is to miss out on seeing his father once more. Just as we find tears regarding his father Yaakov when he met Rachel (וישא את קלו ויבך) and we find tears associated with his mother, Rachel (מנעי קולך מבכי), Yirmiyahu 31:15), Yosef as well experiences an overwhelming feeling of loss and longing for his family.

After revealing his identity, Yosef and Binyamin embrace, and Binyamin cries on Yosef's neck (Bereishit 45:14):

ויפל על צוארי בנימן אחיו ויבך ובנימן בכה על צואריו.

This pasuk shows us a unique window into his emotions. Binyamin cries too. He may have only been a child when his older brother was sold, but he feels the loss as well.

According to Rashi, Binyamin and Yosef were not just crying over the loss of time with each other. They were actually crying over the future *galut*, the loss of the two *Batei Mikdash*.

The years that Yosef and Binyamin spent apart, and the sadness they felt over this, is symbolic of the years that Bnei Yisrael will spend apart from their two *Batei Mikdash*. The pain of *galut* stems from feelings of *ga'agua*.

The sons of Yaakov are finally reunited with each other. But one reunion has yet to take place. The brothers return to Eretz Yisrael, and inform Yaakov that Yosef is still alive (Bereishit 45:27):

וידברו אליו את כל דברי יוסף אשר דבר אלהם וירא את העגלות אשר
שלח יוסף לשאת אתו ותחי רוח יעקב אביהם. ויאמר ישראל רב עוד
יוסף בני חי אלקה ואראנו בטרם אמות.

For years, Yaakov's life had been lacking vitality. It is as if he is experiencing what Rachel first experienced without sons, "*meitah anochi*". When he heard, and believed, that his son Yosef is alive, he was revitalized. For so long, he yearned for Yosef, and this was his last chance to see Yosef before he died. There was a sense of urgency in his response, this reunion must take place, to gain back some of their lost time, even if just for a moment.

Yosef goes to Goshen to meet Yaakov and the pasuk describes the extremely emotional reunion (Bereishit 46:29):

ויאסר יוסף מרכבתו ויעל לקראת ישראל אביו גשנה וירא אליו ויפל
על צוואריו ויבך על צוואריו עוד.

Yosef falls onto Yaakov's neck in an embrace, and cries. One can interpret the word "*od*", to mean more, in addition to all the tears he already cried. Yosef was just a teenager when he was ripped away from his father. That kind of pain, the pain of missed time together, is not something that is overcome quickly.

In the next pasuk, Yaakov responded, saying: "I can die now, after seeing your face, (knowing) that you are still alive." Yaakov felt like he can pass away peacefully. Spending this moment with Yosef gave him the feeling that his life is finally complete.

Years later, Yaakov addressed his children and then passed away. Yosef fell onto his father's face, cried and kissed him. The period of time that Yosef and Yaakov were reunited had ended. Yosef then returned to the state of lacking, and the pain of missing his father once more. Yosef felt orphaned.

As demonstrated above, the stories of Yaakov, Rachel, Yosef and Binyamin are clearly interwoven with the theme of *galut*. Their greatest moments of pain, their powerful wails, and sorrowful tears

all relate to yearning for and missing each other. Their yearning was not always logical, sometimes they never actually expected to reunite, but the feeling was too strong to control. This is the pain of *galut*; this is *ga'agua*. It's the sorrow that comes with the knowledge of what could have been, it's the loss of potential and it is the feeling of not being whole.

Galut is the pain of finding out that the past seven years have been for naught, and Rachel is still not yours. *Galut* is the pain of barrenness, when children are withheld from you. *Galut* is the pain of seeing the innocent and pure face of a newborn child but knowing that he will never know yours. *Galut* is the pain of a wife dying too early, too young. *Galut* is the pain of the knowledge that a favorite, dearest son, is lost forever. *Galut* is the pain of seeing a younger brother and knowing that you can never get back those years that were lost. *Galut* is the reunion that is too short.

However, we are not to despair, because Hakadosh Baruch Hu did not just create the force of *galut*. The beautiful, miraculous, incredible antidote to *galut* is *geula*. In Sefer Yirmiyahu, when Rachel Imeinu cries for Bnei Yisrael who are in exile, Hashem tells her to wipe her eyes from the tears of *galut* (Yirmiyahu 31:15-17):

כה אמר ה' קול ברמה נשמע נהי בכי תמרורים רחל מבכה על בניה
מאנה להנחם על בניה כי איננו. כה אמר ה' מגעי קולך מבכי ועיניך
מדמועה כי יש שכר לפעלתך נאם ה' ושבנו מארץ אויב. ויש תקוה
לאחריתך נאם ה' ושבנו בנים לגבולם.

Hashem tells Rachel that the lost time with her sons will be made up. The lost potential will be reached. Rachel's family will be reunited because her sons will come back home. There is hope. The antidote to lost time, to *ga'agua*, to the pains of *galut*, is the time of *Mashiach*. All the pain that Yaakov, Rachel, Yosef, Binyamin, and all of Am Yisrael have experienced for thousands of years will be reversed.

The question may be asked: How is *Mashiach* the antidote? What is it about the inherent nature of the coming of *Mashiach* that reverses the pain of *galut*?

Mashiach is about *techiyat hameitim* and the return to our homeland.

Though the two main views of the Rambam and the Ramban differ about the lasting nature of *techiyat hameitim*¹, they both agree about the idea of living eternally.

The pains of *galut* are inherently time based, because our universe is bound by time. When Mashiach comes, there may not be boundaries of time allowing for endless opportunities to make peace with others and live in tranquility. Rachel and Yaakov can become whole, without their story being cut short. They can spend time with their children, Yosef and Binyamin, enjoying each other's company for eternity. Yosef can spend time with all his brothers, they can form the relationship that they could have had all those years. Slowly, but surely, the pain, the anguish of loss, and yearning, and missing will be reversed.

There is a concept that Hashem creates the *refuah* before the *maka*, the cure before the disease. In my opinion, a closer look at these parshiyot in Bereishit demonstrates just this. Though the stories of Yaakov, Rachel, Yosef, and Binyamin represent the force of *galut* and the future *galut*, the story is laced with promises and hints to *geula*. Though the force of *galut* is part of our reality, Hashem has also created the *refuah – geula*, redemption.

Right after Yosef is born, the pasuk states (Bereishit 30:24-25), ויהי כאשר ילדה רחל את יוסף ויאמר יעקב אל לבן שלחני ואלכה אל מקומי ולארצי. Yosef's birth is associated with the will to return to Eretz Yisrael.

Right before Yosef's death, the pasuk states (Bereishit 50:25), וישבע יוסף את בני ישראל לאמר פקד יפקד אלקים אתכם והעלתם את עצמותי מזה. Yosef's last words before his death show his will to return to Eretz Yisrael, even if it is after his death. The words "*pakod yifkod*" are a

¹ See for further reference:

chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1128675/jewish/Is-the-Resurrection-Era-the-Ultimate-Reward.htm

code for the time of *Mashiach*, *geula*, when Bnei Yisrael will be remembered. Yosef's whole life symbolizes *galut* and *geula*.

Chazal view Yosef as very tied to the idea of *geula*. In fact, the sources tell us that *Mashiach* will come in two stages, first *Mashiach ben Yosef* and then *Mashiach Ben David*.

In Sefer Kol HaTor², which analyzes the Vilna Gaon's approach to *Mashiach* (p. 463), it is indicated that *Mashiach Ben Yosef* will be the driving spiritual force behind the physical stages of the coming of *Mashiach*. It will be the power behind the start of *geula* in natural forces. *Mashiach Ben David* on the other hand, will be the Heavenly force of *Mashiach* coming.

Later in the sefer (p. 477), we find that *Mashiach Ben Yosef* is present in many members of Am Yisrael – in people of action, who physically work towards the ingathering of the exiles.

Mashiach ben Yosef is the preparatory stage to the full *Mashiach*. Unlike the spectacular, obvious, Heavenly time of *Mashiach Ben David*, *Mashiach ben Yosef* is hidden, a process that takes time. This fits perfectly with the stories in Bereishit that we have been analyzing. Yosef's life, and the life of his parents and brother, are ridden with the pains of *galut*. But, hidden beneath the layers of suffering, a new reality is being born and shaped for the future. Underneath the obvious storyline of suffering, a storyline of redemption is hiding, waiting to be revealed.

In life, all we can see is what is in front of us. We suffer, and we cry; we long for what we cannot have. We mourn the potential that we lost; we wail over “what could have been.” But we cannot perceive the forces that exist beneath the surface. We cannot see the power of redemption, the story of a future free of pain, because it is hidden. Lovingly, Hashem infuses our suffering with its *refuah* – the *geula*.

Hashem's response to Rachel in Yirmiyahu can perhaps be interpreted as follows. ויש תקוה לאחרייתך נאם ה' ושבו בנים לגבולם. Rachel,

² yutorah.org/_cdn/_materials/Mashiach-Ben-Yosef-544755.pdf

don't despair, don't give in to the galut pains that you see in front of you, don't let the ga'agua destroy you. Trust me, dear Rachel, and have hope. Through your children, the Mashiach will come, through Mashiach ben Yosef, your pain will be reversed. Yes, it will not be obvious to you, but it will lead to the full Mashiach. You will have endless time with your children, in their land. Don't have depressive feelings of longing, have positive feelings of hope.

This truly is the challenge of *galut*. It is the constant battle to convert our *ga'agua* into *tikvah*. For in every moment of darkness, light exists. Hidden beneath each painful challenge in life is the G-d given promise of a future free of pain. We just need to hope, and trust Hashem with all our strength. Our lost time, our lost land, will all be returned.

A Space for Geula

Most people do not generally spend much time looking inside a sefer Torah. However, taking a closer look at the text and format of the Torah scroll brings to light many interesting ideas. Throughout the Torah, there are spaces in the text which indicate a break. This essay is an exploration of some of the meanings behind these spaces, or lack thereof.

There are two types of breaks in the Torah. The first is called “*ptucha*,” which means open. This means that there is a blank space that continues onto the end of that same line, and the text resumes in the line right underneath it. The second is called “*stuma*,” which means closed. With this break, there is a short open space and then within that same line, the text resumes.

These two types of breaks can imply different things (Artscroll Rashi Vayikra 1:1 n. 7). For example: the first time a break is seen is right in the beginning of Bereishit. Each of the days of creation ends with a break that is “*ptucha*”. Each day has its own paragraph. This might indicate that each day of creation is its own unique and distinct phenomenon.

There is a fascinating comment of Rashi at the beginning of Sefer Vayikra (1:1). Rashi is puzzled by the need for the spaces in the Torah. He writes that they were inserted in order to give Moshe Rabbeinu time to think, contemplate, and absorb that which he was just presented.

Moshe needed time and space to appreciate the significance and importance of the events that were being given to him straight from Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Each word in the Written Torah was carefully chosen and carries with it weight and significance. Therefore, Moshe needed the space to hold that responsibility and reflect upon the words that he was writing.

Generally, in between two parshiyot, there is a break indicating that a new parsha is beginning. Between Parshat Vayigash and Parshat Vayechi, however, there is no break whatsoever; It is totally sealed. Vayechi begins right after Vayigash ends. Rashi explains that “after Yaakov Avinu was niftar, the eyes and hearts of Klal Yisrael were sealed” because the difficulties of *galut Mitzrayim* began.

Later on, the opposite phenomenon is found. At the end of Yetziat Mitzrayim, Bnei Yisrael sing to Hashem the *shira* of Az Yashir, and there is an abundance of space. The structure of Az Yashir is wide bricks on top of narrow bricks on top of wide bricks. Why does *galut* begin with absolutely no spacing at all, and end with what seems like an abundance of spacing?

The aforementioned commentary of Rashi (Vayikra 1:1) furthers his original point and says that if Hashem put spaces in the Torah for Moshe Rabbenu to have space to contemplate, how much more so does an ordinary person learning from an ordinary person require plenty of time to absorb and think.

The Mizrachi, a commentator on Rashi, elaborates. Moshe Rabbenu was learning from the mouth of Hashem, Master and Creator of the whole word. Hashem has the ability to make His words so clear that there is absolutely no confusion, and can make it so the one who hears His words requires no time to absorb or think about what is said. Yet, throughout the Torah, there are spaces upon spaces, leaving enormous amounts of time for contemplation and reflection. How much more so, if someone is learning from or speaking to another person. It is necessary and vital to leave space for the other person to properly hear, understand, and reflect on what is said. Human capabilities do not allow for complete clarity and are, therefore, need time to reflect, not only for the other person, but for the one giving over the idea as well.

In the beginning of Sefer Shemot, Moshe came to Bnei Yisrael and told them of their imminent *geula*. Their positive response was filled with emunah on their upcoming redemption. Yet, a couple perakim later, Moshe returns to Bnei Yisrael and informs them of

the next step in the *geula* process, and Bnei Yisrael are practically indifferent.

Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz notes this interesting phenomena and questions what changed for Klal Yisrael between those *perakim*. Imagine if Klal Yisrael had the opportunity to take a step back and think about their situation. They would have recognized their situation for what it was and immediately joined Moshe.

However, Pharaoh recognized this from the start. He knew exactly what to do. After Moshe initially came, Pharaoh's reaction was to take away their space. He doubled their work and took away any opportunity or spare moment that would have allowed them to consciously view their situation. Without that space to breathe and think, they could not even begin to contemplate how to get out of their situation. They didn't have the space to recognize any kind of bright future.

Finally, Klal Yisrael got to the point of redemption and crossed the *yam suf*. It is at this point that the Torah suddenly has spaces upon spaces. The nation finally had time, had space, to think clearly and absorb everything that had happened. They had seen and gone through two hundred and ten years of exile, slavery, ten plagues, and now the splitting of the sea. The story was building up from Vayechi, where there was no space, and culminates with Az Yashir, where there seems to be more space than there are words. It is almost as if a deep breath is being taken and, all of a sudden, there is a release; a release of shira, of song and praise to Hashem.

When Yaakov was preparing to meet Eisav, he told his servants to place "*revach*," space, between the groups of people. Generally, this is looked upon as a military strategy or a way to impress Eisav. However, the Bereishit Rabbah (75:13) has another fascinating approach. It claims that Yaakov was actually projecting to the future. He pleaded with Hashem asking that when struggle falls upon his children in the future, when the Eisavs of their generations are running towards them, Hashem should place *revach*, space, between one conflict and the next.

As Yaakov looked up and saw Eisav coming towards him, he raised his eyes to the Heavens and cried out to Hashem to look out for his children. Yaakov Avinu asks Hashem to have *rachamim* on His children and not send them *galut* after *galut*, but rather give them space between their *tzarot*. Space to breathe, absorb, reconnect, and grow closer to Hashem.

Gog U'Magog

On the Verge of Mashiach

In Judaism, there is a constant focus of working towards *Mashiach* and what the days of *Mashiach* will look like. One of the most well known descriptions for the coming of *Mashiach* is found in the Navi Yechezkel (chapters 38-39), where Yechezkel describes *Mashiach* coming through a war with *Gog* from the land of *Magog*.

The *nevuot* that are described in Sefer Yechezkel were compiled by the *Anshei Knesset Hagedolah* (*Bava Batra* 15a). This *nevuah*, received outside of Eretz Yisrael, was an exception to the generally accepted principle that *nevuah* typically only occurs when the *navi* is inside Eretz Yisrael. The *Mechilta* (beginning of Bo) talks of the rarity of *nevuah* to happen outside of Eretz Yisrael, saying that *nevuah* is only given to the *navi* in *Chutz La'aretz* due to *zechut avot* and if the *navi* is by water of purity. This concept can be seen at the beginning of Sefer Yechezkel, where it describes how Yechezkel prophesized *maaseh merkava* on the shores of a river.

Yechezkel was exiled with the important leaders before the *Beit Hamikdash* was destroyed, and there he received most of his *nevuah*. His prophecies are therefore viewed as the *nevuot* of *galut*, teaching Am Yisrael how to orient their lives in a state of exile.

Sefer Yechezkel is broken down into two parts, with the first half of the *sefer* focusing on the *churban* of the *Beit Hamikdash* and the second half focusing on the *nechama*, comfort that Yechezkel is giving to the people (*Bava Batra* 14b). The *haftarah* for *Shabbat Chol Hamoed* of *Sukkot* is found in the second half, with the focus of *nechama* and the hope that the future will bring for the Jews who were just exiled (*Megillah* 31).

Rav Yaakovson (*Chazon HaMikra* p. 408) separates the *haftarah* into four different sections. In the first section (38:18-23), Yechezkel describes the earthquake that will occur in Eretz Yisrael

and the judgment that *Gog* will face. The next section (39:1-8) outlines how the fall of *Gog* will be a *kiddush Hashem*. The third section (39:9-10) details how Am Yisrael will use the weapons of *Gog* as fuel for seven years following the war. The final section (39:11-16) discusses how Am Yisrael will bury *Gog* and his followers and the land will then become pure.

The beginning of the *haftarah* talks about the immense destruction that will occur in Eretz Yisrael when *Gog* enters the land. The pesukim describe an earthquake that will strike the land of Eretz Yisrael, which will cause mountains to fall and all the inhabitants of the land to tremble in the presence of Hashem. Radak (38:19-20) describes how this earthquake will impact Eretz Yisrael and connects the destruction to Zechariah's *nevuah* of *Har Hazetim* splitting in half.

After the pesukim outline the destruction that will take place in Eretz Yisrael, there is a description how Hashem will summon the sword against the people of *Gog* and how Hashem will punish *Gog* with diseases and destruction. Radak (38:21) explains that Hashem will cause the people of *Gog* to kill each other.

The Malbim (38:22) describes the significance of the order of the punishments that Hashem will impose upon *Gog*. The first diseases will be pestilence and blood, because those are the most natural, and would occur typically during a war. Only afterwards will more supernatural punishments take place, in the form of torrential rains, hailstones, and sulfurous fire, While at the beginning, the people of *Gog* will be able to relegate the punishments to be viewed as natural events, in the end it will be clear that it all came from Hashem. The ultimate purpose of this destruction of *Gog* is really to sanctify Hashem's name which will fulfill the purpose of the creation of the world (Yechezkel, The Artscroll Tanach Series, 38:23).

The second grouping of pesukim opens up with Yechezkel prophesying on how Hashem will lead the people of *Gog* astray and cause them to advance into Eretz Yisrael from the north. The Malbim draws a distinction between this perek's *nevuah* and that of

the previous perek. In the previous perek, it describes how Hashem will strike *Gog* immediately when they enter Eretz Yisrael. In this perek though, it is only once they advance into Eretz Yisrael and reach the mountains in the north that they will be struck by Hashem. The Malbim interprets this to mean that there will be a series of three different wars.

In the first war, *Gog* will be overcome right when they step into Eretz Yisrael, while in the second they will be overcome when they reach the mountains. The third and final war is the one described in Sefer Zechariah, where *Gog* will make it all the way to Yerushalayim before they are overcome (Malbim 39:1). From there, the pasuk goes on to tell of how Hashem will strike down the bow and arrows of *Gog*, and that the people of *Gog* will fall not only on the mountains of Eretz Yisrael, but also on the open fields. Hashem will also dispatch a fire against them, and in doing so, Hashem's name will become awesome and known. Radak (39:6) says that this fire could be the fire described earlier in the previous chapter, or it could be that the people of *Gog* and those from the islands will be eaten like food by the animals in the way that a fire consumes. The Meztudat David adds that not only will the people of *Gog* be struck by this fire but also all the people from the islands who came along with them to conquer Eretz Yisrael.

The pasuk then repeats this message that Hashem's name will no longer be desecrated, because the other nations will know Hashem's strength from seeing how Hashem acted with *Gog*. This downfall of *Gog* will come right when it is meant to happen, and Hashem will not lengthen the waiting time, even by one hour. When Hashem makes a promise to Am Yisrael that something will happen, He acts with a sense of haste, to keep His promise (Mahari Kra 39:6-7).

The next section of pesukim describes how Am Yisrael will take the weapons of *Gog* and they will use the weapons to fuel their fires. This message can be taken in both a literal and metaphorical sense. The Malbim (39:9) takes an approach that satisfies both sides, saying that once Hashem fights for Am Yisrael, they will no longer

need any weapons. The only positive purpose to these weapons will be the idea that they can be used as fuel for fires for cooking. Only after Am Yisrael gets rid of all of these weapons will the *nevuah* from Yeshayahu be able to come true: *לא ישא גוי אל גוי חרב*, that nations will no longer fight each other with swords.

The seven years following *Gog Umagog* will be the ultimate time period of peace, and Am Yisrael will have an overwhelming sense of euphoria. The Yerushalmi (Shevi'it 4:8) says that one who dies during the seven years of *Gog* will not merit a share in *Olam Habah*. The Matanot Kehunah (Vayikra Rabbah, *Shemini* 2), writes how the joy in those seven years will be a reward in themselves. This shows truly how great the days following *Gog Umagog* will be, and how the euphoria that will be felt in Eretz Yisrael will adequately supplement *Olam Habah* (Yechezkel, The Artscroll Tanach Series, 39:9-10).

The *haftarah* closes off with the obligation for Am Yisrael to bury the people of *Gog*. There will be a specific valley set aside for their burial called "*Gai Hamon Gog*", and it will take seven months for Am Yisrael to bury all the bodies. Rashi (39:11) writes that the people of *Gog* will have the merit to get a proper burial all in one location, from their forefather Yefat. When Noach became drunk in his vineyard, Shem and Yefat took a cloth to cover his nakedness, rather than make a mockery out of their father (Bereishit 9). In doing this simple act of respecting his father in a difficult time, Yefat merited that his descendants get a proper burial, despite the evil behind their actions.

The Metzudat David (39:13) gives an opposing view to that of Rashi, and he says that the burial will not be in their merit, but rather for the singular purpose of purifying the land.

While both of these mefarshim take opposing views, they agree on a common thread, that the people of *Gog* will not merit burial on their own, but will be dependent on an outside factor, whether that be an ancestor or the purification of the land.

Radak (39:12-13) draws a parallel between the burial of the people of *Gog* here and Yehoshua's responsibility to bury the five kings when he was conquering Eretz Yisrael (Yehoshua chapter 6).

In both cases, after the war, there is an obligation to respect both the land as well as the dead bodies, and bury those who died. For both of these situations, while Am Yisrael's purpose for the burial will be to purify the land, the other nations will view it as an act of magnanimity for the fallen, causing a *kiddush Hashem*.

This *haftarah* is read on *Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot*. The reason is that Zechariah's *nevuah* on *Gog Umagog*, takes place on Sukkot. In Zechariah (chapter 14), there is another description of what *Gog Umagog* will look like, mentioning Chag HaSukkot. The Malbim (14:15) as well as the Metzudat David comment that *Gog Umagog* will take place over Sukkot, and the singling out of Sukkot is due to the fact that in following years, Sukkot is the chag when people will commemorate the victory of *Gog Umagog*. Sukkot is also a time when we commemorate the *Ananei Hakavod*, which protected us in the desert (Sukkah 11b).

In both of these situations, we were at the mercy of our surroundings whether that be our enemies or nature, and Hashem stepped in, doing a clear miracle. While there aren't many outward miracles nowadays as great and wondrous as Hashem clearly fighting our wars for us or the *Ananei Hakavod*, there are still hidden miracles that occur daily. Hashem plays an active role in this world, and every Jewish individual is required to search for Him in their day to day lives.

הלכה

Can Women Become Rabbis?

With the rise of feminism and society evolving to expand the role of women, major questions within Judaism have arisen. To what extent should *halacha* recognize society's new expectations for women? Can *halacha* accept the modern view of gender equality? There are women who want greater roles in the community for Torah learning and leadership, but there is still a need to preserve the *mesorah*. Specifically, female ordination has become a point of contention. This article will explore the intricacies behind this debate and the arguments for and against the appointment of women rabbis.

In response¹ to the Orthodox Union's question about a woman in a clergy function, a panel of rabbanim including Rav Herschel Schachter, Rav Gedaliah Dov Schwartz, Rav Yaakov Neuberger and others, detail both the *halachic* and philosophical arguments involved. Before getting into the sources and issues involving women rabbis specifically, the rabbanim frame their response by explaining all of the components that lead them to make their decision. They explain that not only *halacha* and Torah sources comprise their opinions, but also the "*halachic* ethos" and *mesorah*, which are equally, if not more, important.

The "*halachic* ethos" refers to the Torah values that can be found within the *halachot* of the Torah. The *halachot* in the Torah serve not only to instruct behavior, but to provide underlying values for how to live life as a G-d-fearing Jew. *Mesorah* refers to the need to always preserve the traditions of Judaism and not compromising the Torah's foundation. When making *halachic* decisions, it is essential to consider, in addition to the sources, the potential

¹ ou.org/assets/Responses-of-Rabbinic-Panel.pdf

long-lasting effects they might cause. A balance needs to be struck between adapting Judaism to changing times and preserving the fragile and necessary tradition. The rabbanim then go through in detail, the sources and *halachic* issues involving women rabbis, the “*halachic* ethos” involved and the application of *mesorah*, eventually coming to their unanimous conclusion.

The *halachic* issues with women in clergy positions begin with a pasuk in Devarim (17:15): שׁוֹם תְּשִׂים עֲלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ, place a king to rule over you. The Sifri (קנז) elaborates: מֶלֶךְ וְלֹא מַלְכָּה, place a king, *but not a queen* to rule over you. The Rambam (Hilchot Melachim 1:5), based on a Gemara in Yevamot (45b) discussing the double language of שׁוֹם תְּשִׂים in the pasuk, explains that this restriction of the kingship to only men also applies to all other forms of *serarah*, communal leadership positions. Based on this, women would not be allowed to serve as rabbis because it is considered *serarah*. The Rama (Yoreh Deah 1:1) prohibits a woman from becoming a community *shochet*. The Rama’s decision, explained Rav Soloveitchik, is based on the position that a woman cannot serve in any communal leadership position, which would include serving as a rabbi.

Additionally, as briefly mentioned in this article, but expanded upon by Rav Schachter in an article titled “Women Rabbis?”², there is an issue if women would even qualify for *semicha*. There is a *halacha* (Nidah 49b) that anyone who is not allowed to serve as a witness in a *din Torah*, is also not allowed to serve as a *dayan*. Because women are not allowed to serve as witnesses in a *din Torah* (Shevuot 30a), most agree, besides for a minority opinion of Tosafot, that they are also not allowed to serve as a *dayan*. Since originally, *semicha* was conferred in order to become a *dayan*, and a woman cannot be a *dayan*, it can be inferred that women would never qualify for *semicha*. Even though the current *semicha* institution is not the actual original process, merely a modified version, it is still

² hakirah.org/vol%2011%20schachter.pdf

an extension of the original *semicha*, and women would still be excluded.

The last *halachic* issue discussed is *tzniut*, modesty. As Rav Schachter elaborates in “Women Rabbis?”, there is a great emphasis placed on emulating G-d’s modesty. Just as Hashem hides his *shechina* most of the time, so too people should strive to always maintain their privacy. People should take on public roles, like king or rabbi, only when it is absolutely necessary.

Women, especially, are encouraged to always maintain their privacy, so on the rare occasions when a person needs to be in a public position, it should be a man. Also, the issue of *tzniut* comes into play even more so in this case, because there is an increased need for modesty in a *shul*. A female rabbi crossing to the men’s side of the *mechitza* would be halachically inappropriate. Based on these various sources and *halachic* issues, these rabbanim conclude that there is a legal preclusion to the appointment of women clergy.

The response continues with delving into the “*halachic* ethos” and *mesorah* components behind permitting or allowing women rabbis. First, the rabbanim discuss whether or not there are precedents for women rabbis in the Torah and Jewish history. The rabbanim acknowledge that there were many women who were Torah scholars and guided their communities, however these women never did so as official members of the clergy. There is absolutely no precedent for women rabbis, and it would go against the *mesorah* to suddenly start allowing female ordination.

In addition, the rabbanim bring proof from the works of Rav Soloveitchik (Family Redeemed) that *halacha* shows that women and men have different roles. Although both genders have the same potential for spiritual achievement, women and men have completely different purposes and natures. While men and women both have the goal of becoming devoted *avdei* Hashem, men are encouraged to do so through a more structured and public system than women. Although there is plenty of flexibility for women in their private lives, in the public sphere, the roles, as *halacha* dictates, should

belong to the men. It would be contrary to the values framed by *halacha* to allow women to become rabbis, and it would go against the *mesorah* of the different roles of men and women.

Based on the “*halachic* ethos” and Judaism’s *mesorah*, the rabbanim conclude that only men should hold rabbinic positions, while women should not serve in clergy positions. Not only can a woman not be given the title “rabbi,” she also cannot do any jobs that would normally be done by a clergy member, such as regularly making *halachic* decisions or delivering sermons from the pulpit during davening.

Despite women being prohibited from becoming rabbis, there are plenty of roles within the community that women are allowed to hold. For example, women can give *shiurim*, serve in administrative positions and as visiting scholars in residence. The rabbanim acknowledge that times are changing and that there should be an expanding role for women in *shul* and the Torah world, but they caution that Torah values and the *mesorah* should never be forgotten.

In a response to a question posed by Rabbi Avi Weiss (founding Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale) about a woman in a clergy function, Rav Yoel Bin-Nun³, has a significantly different opinion. Rav Bin-Nun explains⁴ that he is answering the question about whether or not a woman who is knowledgeable in Torah and devotes her life to Torah is able to serve as the rabbi of a congregation or do the jobs of a rabbi. The question involves whether a woman can teach Torah and *halacha* to a congregation, if a woman can make *halachic* decisions, and the issues of *serarah* and *tzniut* in a congregation that is mostly men.

Rav Bin-Nun brings numerous examples of women throughout Jewish history who were recognized for their spiritual greatness, Torah scholarship and/or served in leadership positions. He cites

³ A prominent Israeli educator especially in the area of Tanach.

⁴ sefaria.org/sheets/454965?lang=bi

Sarah, who was a greater *neviah* than Avraham; Miriam, Devorah, and Chana who created songs and *tefillah*; Shlomtzion Hamalka, during the reign of the Chashmonaim, who was more fit than her husband; Baila, the wife of the Sefer Meirat Einayim (SM⁹A), who made new *halachic* decisions that were accepted by later rabbanim; Chava Bacharach, the granddaughter of the Maharal, who learned Tanach, Gemara, Midrash and Halacha and debated halachic matters with the male students. By mentioning these women, Rav Bin-Nun attempts to establish precedents for women making *halachic* decisions and serving in public positions.

Regarding the role of Devorah as a *shofetet*, Rav Bin-Nun cites three possible explanations offered by the *Baalei Tosafot* (Gittin 88b, Bava Kama 15a, Nidah 50a). First, even though a woman is not allowed to be a witness in a *din Torah*, she is still allowed to be a *dayan*. The idea that all those disqualified from being a witness are also disqualified from being a *dayan* only applies to men. (This suggestion, however, is not accepted l'halacha.) Second, Devorah did not make laws or judge, but merely taught the laws. This source implies that there is no reason why a woman who is learned in Torah cannot teach like a man can. Third, as long as the people voluntarily accept a person as their *dayan*, the person can serve as a judge.⁵

Based on the examples of women throughout Jewish history and the reasoning behind permitting Devorah to be a *shofetet*, Rav Bin-Nun says that a smart and learned woman should definitely be allowed to teach and advise *halacha*. Amazingly, he goes even further and suggests that a congregation is allowed to accept a woman as their teacher and to function in the role as the rabbi of a community. He dismisses the issue of *serarah*, because she was accepted by the community and the issue of *tzniut* should not be a concern, because there are plenty of modest women who are able to serve in leadership roles.

⁵ See however Sefer Hachinuch (mitzvah 77) where we find that this applies to monetary matters.

Rav Bin-Nun concludes by giving his full blessing to the smart and special women who are fit to teach and advise and celebrates anyone who helps them. He opines that if a woman is found to be worthy to teach and to lead, a congregation is definitely allowed to accept her and appoint her as their leader.

Ultimately, the debate regarding women rabbis is another manifestation of one of the biggest questions facing Judaism nowadays: to what extent can *halacha* recognize changing times and yet remain loyal to our *mesorah*? In practice, it is the *psak* of the rabbanim from the Orthodox Union that has been accepted by mainstream Modern Orthodoxy.

צידת צבי

Throughout Shas, in reference to the melachot of Shabbat, one finds the status of a given “category of work” to be either *mutar* (permitted by Torah law), *patur aval assur* (exempt from punishment by Torah law but prohibited by Rabbinic law), or *chayav* (prohibited by Torah law). However, Shmuel (the Amora) clarifies that there are three unique cases in which *patur* does not mean *patur aval assur*, but rather *patur u'mutar*, that the action is exempt from punishment by Torah law, and permitted by rabbinic law (Shabbat 3a).¹

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

These cases are in short: trapping deer, trapping snakes, and draining an abscess on Shabbat. The obvious question is why. What is different about these actions that one does not violate the halachot of Shabbat? This article will explore in specific the case of trapping deer to see precisely what action Shmuel is referring to, and how this action is permitted within the laws of Shabbat.

The melacha in question is *tzad*; the forcible confinement of any animal or living creature by either conventional or non-conventional means. The two main principles behind the prohibited action of trapping are the principle of confinement, and the principle of species (The 39 Melachot by Rabbi Dovid Ribiat). Any degree of confinement is prohibited, but the trapping is only prohibited by Torah law if the area is small enough to be considered restricting. Similarly, it is prohibited to trap all types of animal² (even those

¹ The gemara goes on to say that there are actually more than the three melachot outlined by Shmuel that are *patur u'mutar*, but that Shmuel only lists these three as they have defined actions.

² This does not get extended however to species that are not usually trapped and can inflict pain or discomfort.

not usually trapped (אינו מינו ניצוד), but only those species usually trapped (מינו ניצוד) are prohibited by Torah law.³ The mishnayot and beraitot (Shabbat 106b) present many cases of trapping deer in which one is *chayav*.⁴ What characteristics of the deer trapping highlighted by Shmuel are different from the ones on daf 106b, and therefore ultimately make the action *mutar*?

There are three possible options for what Shmuel's "Tzeidat Tzvi" is referring to: one in a Mishna (Bavli Shabbat 106b-107a), one in the Tosefta (Shabbat 13:6), and one in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Shabbat 13:6). The mishna cites the case as follows:

ישב האחד על הפתח ולא מילאהו ישב השני ומילאהו השני חייב. ישב הראשון על הפתח ומילאהו ובא השני וישב בצידו אף על פי שעמד הראשון והלך לו – הראשון חייב והשני פטור. הא למה זה דומה – לנועל את ביתו לשומרו ונמצא צבי שמור בתוכו.

If on Shabbat one is sitting, filling the entrance to a courtyard in which there is a deer, and another person comes and also sits down, the first person is liable for trapping the deer, while the second person is exempt (even if the first person gets up and leaves). The mishna compares the action of the second person who sits in the entrance way to that of a person who locks his house on Shabbat in order to secure it, and finds out afterwards that a deer was inside his house. The gemara expounds on the mishna, as follows:

מאי לאו, פטור אבל אסור? לא, פטור ומותר הכי נמי מסתברא מדקתני סיפא: למה זה דומה, לנועל את ביתו לשומרו ונמצא צבי שמור בתוכו מכלל דפטור ומותר שמע מינה.

The mishna explains that by inference we learn that the first case in the mishna is *patur u'mutar*. Since the case in the *seifa*, the second

³ It is permissible to trap even species that are generally trapped if they pose a real threat or serious danger.

⁴ These cases include: One who traps a deer in a house, garden, courtyard, or adequate enclosure. One who traps a blind or sleeping deer, one who locks the door on a deer that ran into his house (take note of the specific wording (צבי שנכנס לבית ונעל אחד בפניו, חייב), one who comes and fills in the entrance in which another person is already sitting, but not fully blocking off, thereby finishing the action of trapping the deer within.

half of the mishna, is undoubtedly *patur u'mutar*, the first case in the mishna must be *mutar* as well.

The Tosefta understands the case of “Tzeidat Tzvi” differently, but uses the same inference to prove that it is *patur u'mutar*. The Tosefta reads:

ישב אחד על הפתח ונמצא צבי בתוכו, אע"פ שמתכוין לישב עד שתחשך פטור, מפני שקדמה צידה למחשבה [אין לך שיהא חייב אלא המתכוון לצוד אבל קדמה צידה למחשבה פטור] למה זה דומה לנועל את [המגדל] ונמצא צבי בתוכו.

As opposed to understanding the Bavli's description of this case (a second person coming to sit next to someone else who already fully blocked the entrance and trapped the deer on their own), the Tosefta understands Shmuel's case as one who comes to sit in his doorway, only to realize after that a deer is trapped in his house. Even if the person has the intention to sit and block the entrance until after Shabbat (in order to take the deer), this is *patur* (meaning *patur u'mutar*) since the action of trapping preceded the intention of trapping.

Lastly, the Yerushalmi also presents a possible understanding of the trapping described by Shmuel, which seems to be the outlier. The Yerushalmi writes: **היה צבי רץ כדרכו ונתכוון לנעול בעדו**: ונעל בעדו ובעד הצבי מותר. In this explanation, a deer runs into a person's house. The person has the intention to close his door for his own sake (i.e. for security purposes), however he ends up closing the door both for the sake of securing his house and for the deer. This act of trapping is *mutar*.

Now that we understand all the possibilities of what Shmuel is referring to by *Tzeidat Tzvi*, we can start to analyze why these formulations of trapping are permissible within Hilchot Shabbat with the help of many Rishonim and Acharonim.⁵

⁵ Based on the principle of *psik reisha d'lo nicha lei*, or maybe more accurately *psik reisha d'lo ichpat lei* (when a person does an action which will inevitably result in doing a melacha from which one does not derive benefit), most poskim beside the Aruch should hold that closing the door to your house and thereby

Before delving into these various interpretations, it is important to note that the commentators each employ one of two approaches when explaining why *Tzeidat Tzvi* is *mutar*. One approach is within the world of הלכות שבת כללי, within the general rules of Hilchot Shabbat. There are principles that can be applied universally throughout cases of Hilchot Shabbat, regardless of the specific melacha in question. For example, the status of an action (*patur* instead of *chayav* or *mutar* instead of *patur*) changes if it is a דבר שאינו מתכוון, it is lacking in intention, or a מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה, it is done for a different purpose than its original form in the mishkan.⁶ Some of the *meforshim* utilize these principles to explain why the status of Shmuel's action of trapping deer deviates from the standard *chayav* action.

The other approach is within the world of צורת מלאכת צד, within the halachot governing the melacha of *tzad* itself. As mentioned above, there are numerous rules and details that apply specifically to the action of trapping on Shabbat. For example, the size of the area in which the animal was trapped or the type of animal that was trapped. According to some opinions, *kavana*, intention, would also be categorized as a rule that applies specifically to *tzad*. The *meforshim* use the halachot unique to *tzad* to determine why Shmuel's *Tzeidat Tzvi* would not be considered a violation of the melacha of trapping on Shabbat.

Since we now have the ability to understand the two different approaches to *Tzeidat Tzvi*, we can begin to analyze the explanation

traps the deer, would be *patur aval assur*, even if one does not intent to trap the deer, but rather to protect their house, since the deer will inevitably be trapped by this action.

⁶ A *melacha she'einah tzrichah le'gufah* is an action that results in a melacha, however the action is done for a different purpose than the melacha. There is a debate between Rashi and Tosafot about how the forty nine melachot are derived. Tosafot holds that the forty nine melachot correspond to different actions done in the mishkan. Therefore, according to Tosafot, a *melacha she'einah tzrichah le'gufah* is an action that is done for a different purpose than its original form in the mishkan.

of the Rashba. The Rashba (Shabbat 106b-107a) presents all three possibilities for Shmuel's *Tzeidat Tzvi*, discussing why each one of them would be *patur u'mutar*. He explains that the case described by the Bavli⁷ is permissible because once the first person sits in the doorway, the deer is already considered halachically⁸ trapped. Similarly, once the door to the person's house is closed (even though it is unlocked), the deer is already considered trapped in the house. Therefore, when the second person sits in the doorway or the person locks his door, there is no melacha being done at all. The Rashba writes: אף על פי שגורם שמירה על שמירתו מותר. The person adds an extra layer of protection to the house, and, consequently, to the trapped deer as well, however this action is permissible on Shabbat.

The Rashba continues by explaining that the case detailed in the Tosefta⁹ is *patur u'mutar* because a key qualification for being *chayav* in צד מלאכת is missing; that of intention. The Tosefta itself provides this reasoning: מפני שקדמה צידה למהשבה אין לך שיהא חייב אלא המתכוון לצוד. A person must have *kavana* to be *chayav* in *tzad*. In this situation, the trapping occurs before the person realizes there is a deer in the house, so he clearly does not have intention for the melacha. Moreover, once the person becomes aware of the deer, he does not add an extra layer of entrapment (אינו מוסיף עכשיו בצידתו). Therefore, in the case of the Tosefta, there is no melacha being done at all and the action is *mutar*.

Lastly, the Rashba presents his interpretation of the *patur u'mutar* case in the Yerushalmi.¹⁰ The Rashba reads the language of

⁷ The case of a second person coming and sitting in the doorway of a house after a first person has already done so (which is then compared to the case of someone who locks his door and then finds a deer trapped inside).

⁸ See note 4 listing examples of when a deer is considered halachically trapped.

⁹ The case of a person coming and blocking the doorway to his house, only realizing afterwards that there was a deer inside.

¹⁰ The case of a deer that runs into a person's house and the person has the intention to close his door to secure his house. However, he ultimately closes the door both to secure his house and to trap the deer.

the Yerushalmi literally. Although the person's initial intention is only to secure his house, once he becomes aware of the deer, his intention when closing the door is both to secure his house and trap the deer. Based on the classic cases of trapping deer for which one would be *chayav*,¹¹ the Rashba's interpretation of this case would seemingly be *chayav* as well. The Rashba defends his reading of the Yerushalmi and explains why his case would indeed be *patur u'mutar*. He says: אע"פ שעל ידי כך נצוד הצבי ממילא מותר ובלבד שלא יתכון דכיון שהוא צורך ביתו ללכוד הצבי בלבד. If the person closes the door with the intention of securing his house, even though he also has the intention of trapping the deer, the action is *mutar*. Closing the door would only be problematic if the person's singular intention is to trap the deer.

This principle is the Rashba's dramatic *chiddush* in determining Shmuel's case of *Tzeidat Tzvi*. The Rashba is utilizing the first approach discussed above, arguing within the world of כללי הלכות שבת to explain why Shmuel's case, the case in the Yerushalmi, is *patur u'mutar*. However, the Rashba not only works within the general rules of Hilchot Shabbat, but also redefines them. We will now analyze the שלטי גיבורים to understand the Rashba's *chiddush* in כללי הלכות שבת.

At first glance, the Rashba's interpretation of the case in the Yerushalmi should be considered a *psik reisha*,¹² a category of melacha that is undoubtedly prohibited across the board. The שלטי גיבורים (Shabbat Alfasi 38a) argues that the Rashba's interpretation of the Yerushalmi redefines the category of *psik reisha* altogether. If one has a dual intention¹³ for an action that would generally be rendered *chayav* under the rule of *psik reisha*, the action becomes

¹¹ See note 4.

¹² A *psik reisha* is an action that will definitely result in a melacha. The phrase *psik reisha* will usually refer to a *psik reisha d'nicha lei*, a *psik reisha* from which a person does derive benefit. See note 5 regarding another type of *psik reisha*, a *psik reisha d'lo nicha lei*.

¹³ Intending to do the action both for the outcome of the melacha itself, and for a secondary permitted purpose.

mutar and is no longer a melacha at all! He writes: אם באותו הפסיק רישיה שעושה עושה ג"כ דבר היתר עמו ויתכוין גם לדבר היתר אז אפי' עביד שרי פסיק רישיה ומכוין גם לו שרי. In summary, the person in the Yerushalmi's case has a dual intention behind his action. Even though he does a psik reisha when he closes the door intending to trap the deer inside, his secondary intention to secure his house (an action permissible on Shabbat) makes the whole action *mutar*.

The Sefer Kovetz (Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 1:6) has an alternative approach to the Rashba's interpretation of *Tzeidat Tzvi*. He writes: ואפשר לומר דסברת רשב"א הגם דקיימ"ל פ"ר אסור היינו משום דהוי דומיא דמלאכת המשכן ושם כל המלאכות לא היה צורך אחר בהדה. The Rashba holds that an action is a *psik reisha* once it is similar to a melacha in the mishkan because it is being done for the same purpose.¹⁴ When an action is done for a different purpose than it was done in the mishkan, it is not a *psik reisha* and *mutar*. The melacha of trapping was done in the mishkan for the purpose of using the animal. Therefore, in the case of *Tzeidat Tzvi*, when the action of trapping is done for the purpose of protecting one's house, the action would not be considered a *psik reisha* and would be *mutar*.

The Rashba's approach of redefining the principle of psik reisha to explain why Shmuel's case of *Tzeidat Tzvi* is *patur u'mutar* becomes very controversial. Many of the other Rishonim and Acharonim argue on the Rashba's interpretation of Shmuel and the case in the Yerushalmi. Additionally, some disagree with the שלטי גיבורים's understanding of the Rashba.¹⁵ Next, we will explore the Ran's response to the Rashba and his own explanation of *Tzeidat Tzvi*.

¹⁴ The Kovetz is working on two assumptions. One, that an action is considered a melacha because it is similar to a melacha done in the mishkan. See note 6 for elaboration on this. Two, that an action is no longer melacha once it is done for a different purpose than its classical form. Some hold that even if an action is done for a different purpose, as long as the action itself or the object being acted upon is the same, it would still be considered melacha.

¹⁵ However, the שלטי גיבורים is the most accepted understanding of the Rashba.

The Ran (Shabbat Alfasi 38a) begins by explaining the case in the Bavli¹⁶ like the Rashba. He writes: בשעה שישב בהיתר ישב. This case of trapping deer would be *patur u'mutar* because at the time the second person sits in the doorway, the deer is already considered halachically trapped. The Ran continues by rejecting the Rashba's interpretation of the Yerushalmi. His response is clear: הרבה דבריו תמוהים בעיני הרבה. How is it *mutar* for one to trap a deer intentionally, a *psik reisha*, simply because he also has the intention to secure his house? Furthermore, the Ran writes: כל שהוא ידוע. השצבי בתוכו ושאי אפשר לו שלא יהא הצבי ניצוד בתוכו אסור. Even if the person's intention is exclusively to secure his house, closing the door would still be halachically problematic! Once the person knows the deer is inside, and that the deer will definitely be trapped by his action, closing the door would be *assur*.

Instead, the Ran reads the Yerushalmi differently. He explains that the Yerushalmi is not illustrating a case in which a person is permitted to close his door to secure his house and trap a deer. Rather, it is illustrating a case similar to the Tosefta in which the person's sole intention is to secure his house because he is unaware that there is a deer inside. The Ran writes: שאם נתכוון לנעול את ביתו ולא נתכוון לצבי כלל אע"פ שאח"כ מצא הצבי שמור בתוכו מותר. The person finds out only after closing his door that a deer is trapped as a result of his action. At the time he closes the door, he only has *kavana* to secure his house, an action that is *mutar* on Shabbat.

Although the Ran rejects the Rashba's new criteria for a *psik reisha*, he too employs the first approach discussed above to explain why Shmuel's case of *Tzeidat Tzvi* is *patur u'mutar*. He works within הלכות שבת, the general rules of Hilchot Shabbat, arguing that it must be a case in which the person is unaware of the deer's existence. Therefore, the person closing the door can only have the intention to secure his house, an action that is not a *psik reisha* and *mutar*.

¹⁶ See note 7.

The Ramban (Shabbat 106b) also rejects the Rashba's reading of the Yerushalmi, and interprets the case similarly to the Ran. The Ramban argues that the Bavli, Tosefta and the Yerushalmi are all referring to one specific situation of *Tzeidat Tzvi* that would be *patur u'mutar*. Regarding the case in the Bavli, he writes: שנתכוון לנעול את ביתו לשומרו ולא נודע לו כלל שיהיה שם צבי צבי. According to the Ramban, the Bavli is also describing a situation in which the person does not realize there is a deer inside his house, closing the door with the singular intention to secure his home. He concludes: ומסקנא שהכל מותר. הואיל וקדמה צידה למחשבה. All three possibilities for Shmuel's "Tzeidat Tzvi" are *patur u'mutar* because the person closes his door before he is aware of the deer's existence and could have *kavana* for a melacha.

The Ramban, like the Rashba and the Ran, takes the first approach in explaining why Shmuel's case of *Tzeidat Tzvi* is *mutar*. He uses the principle of אנוס, a general rule of Hilchot Shabbat, to clarify why closing the door becomes permissible once the person is unaware of the deer. He writes: דבשעת צידה ודאי דומה לנתכוין להגביה: תלוש וחתך מחובר הוא ואנוס נמי הוא. At the time the person closes his door, thus trapping the deer, he is comparable to one who intends to lift a detached plant from the ground, not realizing that this plant is still attached. He is an אנוס,¹⁷ someone who intends to do an action that is permissible on Shabbat, however due to a situation beyond his control, ultimately violates a melacha. When the person is unaware of the deer, he intends to do a permissible action of closing his door. However, due to a situation beyond his control (i.e. a deer coming into his house), he violates מלאכת צד. He would be considered an אנוס and his action would be *patur u'mutar*.

¹⁷ One who is an אנוס is considered to be a level lower than one who does a דבר שאינו מתכוון. One who does a דבר שאינו מתכוון does not have intention to do a melacha, but ultimately does violate one. An אנוס also does not have intention to do a melacha, but the only reason he ultimately does violate one is because of a situation beyond his control. Therefore, he is considered a level below one who does a דבר שאינו מתכוון and his action would be *mutar*.

We can also use an insight of Rav Chaim Soloveichik (Chiddu-shei Rabbeinu Chaim HaLevi Hilchot Shabbat 10:17) to explain our case within the realm of כללי הלכות שבת. Rav Chaim explains that the halachot of Shabbat have an additional rule than other halachot. For other halachot, only a person's intention, is relevant. However, for Hilchot Shabbat, a person's knowledge that he is violating a melacha, is relevant as well.¹⁸ If we use the Ran and Ramban's reading of *Tzeidat Tzvi* that the person is unaware of the deer, Rav Chaim adds another layer of depth. Because this person is lacking the knowledge that he is violating *tzad* by closing his door, he cannot be *chayav* in the world of Hilchot Shabbat and his action is *patur u'mutar*.

Now that we have analyzed the Rishonim who utilize כללי הלכות שבת to explain why Shmuel's case of "Tzeidat Tzvi" would be *patur u'mutar*, we will begin to explore the Rishonim who take the second approach discussed above, using the halachot of מצד מלאכת צד itself to explain Shmuel's statement.

The Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 10:23, 25) identifies *kavana* as a requirement to be *chayav* in *tzad*. He writes: חיב הואיל ונתכון לצוד וצד. A person violates מצד מלאכת צד when he has intention to trap an animal. Therefore, when discussing the case in the Bavli,¹⁹ the Rambam holds that the second person who sits in the doorway, and the person who closes his door, have not done any melacha at all. He writes: לא עשה כלום. Because they do not have intention to trap an animal, their actions do not meet the requirements to be *chayav*

¹⁸ Within Hilchot Shabbat specifically, there is a principle of *melecheth machshevet*. The melacha done in the mishkan is referred to as *melecheth machshevet*, meaning purposeful or productive melacha. Because the melachot on Shabbat are derived from the melachot in the mishkan (at least according to Tosafot – see note 6), the melachot of Shabbat would also have the principle of *melecheth machshevet*. Rav Chaim uses this principle to explain why regarding Hilchot Shabbat, a person would need ידיעה, the knowledge that he is violating a melacha, in order to be *chayav*. On Shabbat, a person is only *chayav* if he is doing purposeful melacha (i.e. with awareness that he is violating a melacha).

¹⁹ See note 7.

in *tzad*. The Rambam uses a component lacking within the the action itself²⁰ to explain why this case is not a violation of **מלאכת צד**.

Rashi makes a distinction similar to the Rambam. When commenting on the person who locks his door in order to protect his house and then realizes there is a deer inside, Rashi says: **דכל אדם כן עושין כן** (Shabbat 107a). In the *mutar* case of *Tzeidat Tzvi* illustrated by the Bavli,²¹ the person who locks his house is doing a normal human action of locking his house for security and protection. Therefore, he is lacking the *kavana* to trap the deer (that he doesn't even know is in his house!) which is part and parcel to doing the melacha of *tzad*.

The Even Haezel (Hilchot Maaseh Hakorbanot 2:1) is also of this opinion, stating: **דזידה לא שייך אלא אם רוצה לצוד הבע"ה**. דוה עיקר דין צידה. A fundamental component of *tzad* is intention! He proves his interpretation of Shmuel's case of *Tzeidat Tzvi* with the case of **זומר וצריך לעצים**, a person who prunes a tree with the intention of using the discarded branches as wood.²² This person is *chayav* for both *zomer* (pruning) and *kotzer* (harvesting). The gemara has to specify that the person's intention is **צריך לעצים**, to use the branches, because intention is a fundamental component of

²⁰ The Rambam also concludes that the case of the Bavli is lacking another requirement of *tzad*, that the animal was previously free. Adding on additional security measures, or further trapping a trapped animal, is not considered a violation of *tzad*.

²¹ See note 7.

²² The Even Haezel is following Tosafot's explanation of the case of **זומר וצריך לעצים** on Shabbat 73b. Tosafot writes that the gemara should only have to specify the person's intention of **צריך לעצים**, using the branches, for the opinion of R' Shimon that a **מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה** is *patur aval assur*. For the opinion of R' Yehuda, that one is *chayav* for a **מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה**, the person's intention should not matter. Tosafot explains that the person's intention needs to be specified even according to R' Yehuda's opinion because a person must have intention in order to be *chayav* in *kotzer*. Without having the intention of using the branches, the person's action would not fall into the category of **מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה**, but would not be melacha at all. See note 6 for further elaboration on **מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה**.

kotzer. Just as one is only *chayav* in kotzer when he has the intention to use the branches, so too one is only *chayav* in *tzad* when he has the intention to trap an animal. Therefore, since the person is only closing his door to protect his house (and not to trap the deer), he is lacking intention for *tzad* and his action is *mutar*.

The Merkevet Hamishna (Hilchot Shabbat 10:23) tries to be very precise with the wording of the Rambam regarding Shmuel's case of *Tzedat Tzvi*. He writes: **דכל עיקר מלאכת צידה איננה מלאכה בידיים**. מצד העצם...אלא מצד המקרה המכריח. *Tzad* is a unique melacha because the action the person does to trap the animal (i.e. blocking the opening to an enclosure) is not a melacha itself. Rather, the melacha is the event that results from the action (i.e. the deer is trapped as a result of the person closing the door to his house). Therefore, intention is the only way to transform the action of blocking an enclosure from a universal human action to an action of melacha. The Merkevet Hamishna argues that this is the correct way to understand the Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 10:23). When the Rambam writes that a person is only *chayav* in *tzad* when he has intention, he is teaching that intention is the only factor that can cause a person to violate **מלאכת צד**. When the person does the action of closing his door, even though he ultimately traps the deer, his action cannot be considered melacha without the intention to trap the deer.

Now that we have summed up many of the major Rishonim and Acharonim who lend their logic to explain our case within the world of either **שבת הלכות שבת** or **שבת הלכות צד**, let's try to push our understanding one step farther. If we use the logic which permits our case within **שבת הלכות שבת**, the resulting principle is not limited to the situation of *Tzeidat Tzvi* alone. It can be applied broadly to other cases in Hilchot Shabbat as well. However, if the logic is within **שבת הלכות צד**, it can then only be utilized in **שבת הלכות צד**. But what drives a commentary to choose one logic over the other?

We would like to propose a theory; the logic each Rishon and Achron uses depends on their interpretation of the nature of *tzad* itself. Rav Moshe Taragin writes, "Unlike classic melachot, which

create a discernible change upon an item, tzeida doesn't create any change." Potentially, those who use כללי הלכות שבת to understand these cases believe that *tzad*, like other melachot, has a *maaseh melacha*. The *maaseh melacha*, the *chayav* action, is trapping the deer, stripping it of its freedom. However, those who use the logic of מלאכה צורת hold that *tzad* does not have a *maaseh melacha* (in a sense the *kavana* is the *maaseh melacha*). Instead, the prohibition is on an "action" that does not effect a change upon the animal itself, but enables human access to the animal.

מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה

In analyzing Hilchot Shabbat, there are two major categories: *klalei hilchot shabbat* and *tzurat hamelacha*. *כללי הלכות שבת* refers to the general principles of Hilchot Shabbat. A principle under this category applies to all melachot of Shabbat. *צורת המלאכה* is the form of the melacha, based on how that specific melacha typically manifests itself.

One category of *klalei hilchot shabbat* is *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה*, roughly translated as “a melacha not needed for itself”. Tosafot (Shabbat 94b) defines a *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה* as a melacha done for an alternative purpose than it was done for in the mishkan, since the root of every melacha is the purpose that it served in the Mishkan:

The fundamental case that the Gemara brings to demonstrate a *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה* is if one carries a corpse out of his house on Shabbat into a public domain. R’ Shimon says he is *פטור* because all he wants is to not have the corpse in his house (Shabbat 93b).

Since this person is not doing the melacha (carrying) for the melacha itself (carrying for the sake of transporting an object between domains), but for an unrelated purpose (to remove the corpse from his house), R’ Shimon rules that this person is *[אבל אסור]* *פטור*, meaning he violated an *issur d’rabbanan*.

We learn elsewhere that R’ Yehuda disagrees, and rules that a *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה* is *חייב*, meaning one violated an *issur d’oraita* (Shabbat 41a). R’ Yehuda believes that if one does a melacha, there is no difference whether he did so for the sake of the melacha or for a different purpose; either way he is *חייב*. Conversely, R’ Shimon believes that a melacha must be *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה* for one to be *חייב* on a *d’oraita* level, otherwise he is only *חייב מדרבנן*.

The Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 10:21) rules according R' Yehuda that a מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה is חייב:

אחד שמונה שרצים האמורין בתורה, ואחד שאר שקצים ורמשים שיש למינן צידה – הצד אחד מכלן, בין לצורך בין שלא לצורך ... חייב... שמלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה, חייב עליה.¹

However, there are apparent contradictory rulings within the Rambam in two other cases of a מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה (10:25,17):

[הלכה כה] רמשים המזיקין, כגון נחשים ועקרבים וכיוצא בהן – אף על פי שאינן ממיתין – הואיל ונושכין, מותר לצוד אותם בשבת: והוא, שיתכון להנצל מנשיכתן.²

[הלכה יז] המפּיס שחין בשבת, כדי להרחיב פי המכה, כדרך שהרופאין עושים, שהן מתכוונין ברפואה להרחיב פי המכה – הרי זה חייב משום מכה בפטיש, שזו היא מלאכת הרופא; ואם הפיסה להוציא ממנה הלחה שבה, הרי זה מותר.³

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 316:8) disagrees with the psak of the Rambam regarding מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה:

ושאר שרצים אינו חייב החובל בהם אא"כ יצא מהם דם והצדן לצורך חייב שלא לצורך או סתם פטור אבל אסור ולהרמב"ם חייב.

However, seems to rule permissively in the previous halacha (316:7) regarding מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה:

הצד נחשים ועקרבים בשבת או שאר רמשים המזיקים אם לרפואה חייב ואם בשביל שלא ישכנו מותר.⁴

We will return to these apparent contradictions shortly.

¹ If a person traps a living creature that is typically trapped, he is חייב regardless of whether he needed the creature or not, since a מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה is חייב.

² A person is permitted to trap dangerous creatures because he only wants to protect himself (not for the sake of trapping).

³ If a person pops a boil on Shabbat by expanding the wound, he is חייב because he did so in a medical way (this is a מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה case). But if one popped a boil just to extract pus, it is מותר.

⁴ It is permissible to trap a harmful creature solely for the sake of protecting himself from harm.

In the Gemara (Shabbat 73b), there is an interesting case revolving around the concept of *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה*: One who prunes trees and needs the wood, according to Rav Kahana is liable for two *korbanot* (if done *בשוגג*), one for harvesting and one for planting; pruning also contributes to the future growth of the tree. Seemingly, this is a *מלאכה שצריכה לגופה* case, and follows R' Shimon that one is also liable for *קוצר* only if it is also for the sake of the wood meaning if it is *צריכה לגופה*.

However, when commenting on this case, Tosafot says that even R' Yehuda, who holds that a *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה* is *חייב* would agree that he is not liable for harvesting if he has no interest in using the wood. He compares this to the case of *קורע שלא על מנת מוחק שלא על מנת לכתוב* and to *לתפור*.

It must be that Tosafot does not view *לעצים* *צריך* *ואינו צריך לעצים* as a *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה*, but rather as a matter of lacking *כוונה*, or intention. In terms of the broader context of *Hilchot Shabbat*, while a *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה* falls under the category of *klalei hilchot shabbat*, intention on the other hand, falls under the category of *tzurat hamelacha*, and if there is no intention to use the wood, it would not be the *melacha* of *kotzeir* at all.

He brings a proof for this concept of intention from the *melacha* of tearing, which must be done with the intention of resewing that which was torn; and erasing, which must be done with the intention of writing in place of that which was erased. If these *melachot* are not done with the needed intention, one has not violated the *melacha*. Unlike a *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה* which is still a form of the *melacha* but lacks a certain aspect, this case is no longer the *melacha* at all, because it lacks the essential element necessary to be considered *קוצר*. Therefore, even R' Yehuda who holds that a *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה* is *חייב*, would say that *זומר* when not *צריך לעצים* is not liable because it lacks the essential intention.

Using the framework of *כוונה* as a *tzurat hamelacha*, we can now understand the contradictions in both the Rambam and the

Shulchan Aruch. In the second Rambam (10:25), a person's כיוונה in trapping the dangerous creature is just to protect himself, and lacks the necessary intention of trapping. In the third Rambam (10:17), he rules מותר because by squeezing the pus, it lacks the intention and typical action of popping a boil in the medical way. In the second Shulchan Aruch quoted above (316:7), he rules מותר in a case where one is trapping to escape harm because the action lacks the necessary כיוונה of trapping.

The Gilyon Hashas comments on the aforementioned Tosafot (Shabbat 73b) and makes reference to the Rambam in Hilchot Shabbat (10:10) and the commentary of the Kesef Mishna, regarding the case of *pote'ach beit hatzavar* on Shabbat.

The case of *pote'ach beit hatzavar* (opening a shirt's neckhole) is found in the Gemara (Shabbat 48a and Makot 3b). The background information is as follows. It used to be that when making shirts, repairing shirts, laundering shirts, etc., one would sew a strong thread through the top of the neck hole of the shirt in order to keep the article of clothing intact. When one would put the shirt on for the first time since the insertion of the thread, the thread would break, and the shirt would then be 'opened'. The Gemara says that doing so violates a Torah prohibition of Shabbat, but does not state which melacha is violated.

According to Rashi, this action is a case of *makeh b'patish*; the person completed the garment (תיקון כלי). Evidently, according to Rashi, the person does not violate the melacha of *kore'ah*. Why not? In the Mishna's listing of the 39 melachot, *kore'ah* is violated only when it is על מנת לתפור, a condition missing from our scenario.

However, the Rambam (Shabbat 10:10) discusses the halacha in the context of the melacha of *kore'ah*. What about the missing element of על מנת לתפור? It seems that according to the Rambam, it is sufficient that the action is not considered במקלקל, and therefore, as long as it is על מנת לתקן (any *tikkun*, not necessarily לתפור), he is liable for *kore'ah*.

The Nishmat Adam's analysis of this disagreement (Hilchot Shabbat, Klal 29) offers some key insights. He attributes the different explanations of the prohibition to the machloket between R' Shimon and R' Yehuda regarding *מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה*. According to R' Shimon, that one is *פטור*, there is a Torah prohibition only if he is *קורע על מנת לתפור*. However, according to R' Yehuda, as long as it is *על מנת לתקן* and he is not *מקלקל*, he violates a Torah prohibition even if it isn't *על מנת לתפור*. Rashi paskens like R' Shimon, and therefore the prohibition in *בית הצואר* cannot be *kore'ah*. The Rambam's view is like R' Yehuda and therefore the melacha involved is *kore'ah*.

The opinion of the Shulchan Aruch, however, seems contradictory. On the one hand, the Shulchan Aruch (317:3) writes that *פוחת בית הצואר* is liable because of *תיקון כלי*, not because of *kore'ah*. Yet later on (340:14), he rules that *קורע על מנת לתקן* violates a Torah prohibition, even though it is not *על מנת לתפור*.

The Biur Halacha (340:14) has a lengthy discussion on the issue. Firstly, he disagrees with the Nishmat Adam. Even according to R' Shimon, *kore'ah* does not need to be specifically *על מנת לתפור* in order to violate a Torah prohibition. Any *קורע על מנת לתקן* is considered a *מלאכה שצריכה לגופה*.

If so, why according to R' Shimon is a person *פטור* if he is *קורע מתוך על מנת* or *kore'ah* to instill fear on family members? After all, from his perspective there is a positive outcome to his tearing of the garment! The Biur Halacha explains that the necessary *תיקון* has to be a *tikkun* in the garment itself and not just serve some sort of outside positive result.

However, we still remain with the question why the Shulchan Aruch chooses to explain the sugya of *פוחת בית הצואר* like Rashi, that the prohibition is *תיקון כלי*, and not like the Rambam that the prohibition is *kore'ah*. After all, according to the Biur Halacha, even R' Shimon does not require *על מנת לתפור* as long as there is a *תיקון* in the garment, which is the situation in *פוחת בית הצואר*.

The Bei'ur Halacha suggests a novel approach to the prohibition of *korei'ah*. The melacha of *קורע על מנת לתקן* is limited to a two stage situation. There is a tearing of a garment, which appears to be destructive, but eventually serves a positive use. The classic case, of course, is *קורע על מנת לתפור*. However, in *בית הצואר פותח* the tearing itself is a constructive action (and a destructive one which has subsequent constructive results). That is not part of the *tzurat hamelacha* of *korei'ah*, and therefore there is no liability for that melacha. However, the person will be liable for *תיקון כלי*.

Defining the Relationship Between Avot and Toladot of Shabbat

In Sefer Shemot (20:8-11), Hashems commands Bnei Yisrael to cultivate a positive state of sanctity on Shabbat and focus on the Creator, retreating from all creative activity, paralleling *ma'aseh Bereishit*. However, the Torah does not explicitly qualify creative labor. How do we understand the structure of *hilchot Shabbat*?

The mishna (Shabbat 7:2) lists 39 categories of productive labor. Interestingly, the mishna entitles this list of actions “avot melachot”, primary actions. If the mishna uses the term ‘avot’ to describe the categories of labor, then we must deduce that the avot produce a sub-categorical realm of creative labor. Indeed, the gemara in Bava Kamma affirms this inference, naming this other category “toladot”. We learn that there are two layers of the halachic structure of Shabbat: avot and toladot, related yet distinct. What is the nature of the relationship between these two realms?

The gemara (Bava Kamma 2a) explains that if in an isolated act you violate either an av or a tolda, the resulting punishments are identical. Why, then, do we distinguish between these two categories? The gemara proceeds to identify the difference. If one were to transgress two distinct av melachot simultaneously or two distinct toladot melachot simultaneously, he’d be liable for each individual transgression. But, if he did an av melacha and its tolda at the same time, he would only generate one *chiyuv*. How does this shed light on the halachic structure of Shabbat?

In his commentary, Rashi identifies that the source for the singular *chiyuv* is the transgression of the av, rather than the tolda. Despite having violated both, only the av is empowered to generate halachic consequences. Why does the tolda incur a loss of status when paired with its av? One might suggest that when violated together, the av represents the most essential violation of a particu-

lar melacha, whereas the tolda is a more diluted extension of that same melacha. Therefore, only the av registers halachically.

Rashi sharpens this point later on (Shabbat 68). When someone violates a tolda in tandem with its av, he is כעושה והוור ועושה. It is as if he acts then repeats the same action. How can this be? Aren't avot and tolados distinct? Rashi is suggesting that when violating an av, you have fulfilled one essential concept of constructive work. A tolda contains this essential concept, or *shem melacha*, but its inessential qualities are modified, rendering it distinct. While avot and tolados are different forms of actions, they are not different actions. *Chiluk melachot*, like Rashi points out, requires distinctive *shem aveirot*. But in the case described by the gemara, where the two actions are defined by the same *shem issur*, the scenario can only generate one *chiyuv*.

Consistent with the gemara, the Rambam (Shegagot 7:5) concludes that if one transgresses an av and its tolda together, he is liable for only one sin-offering. The same applies to a case where a person did multiple tolados of one av. Interestingly, though, the Rambam uses the phrase ואין צריך לומר in referring to the latter halacha. What does this indicate? Why does the Rambam say something that he claims is quite obvious?

One might suggest that tolados are unique expressions of their av. It's true that they are a degraded melacha, but each tolda has components that are not identical to the other. It therefore would be conceivable that he would be liable twice for two tolados of one av. Therefore, the Rambam tells us that each tolda does not have a particular character that registers halachically. The nature of the violation is not changed by the particularities of the tolda. It is still, in its essence, a violation of the av.

Another noteworthy aspect of the Rambam's language is his use of the phrase יראה לי (ibid. 7:6). The Rambam typically uses this phrase when there is no precise explicit basis for his halachic conclusion. However, the aforementioned gemara (Bava Kamma 2a) specifically relates that when a person commits a violation of two

toladot of different avot he has double liability. Why does the Rambam communicate this halacha with seeming reservation?

The Kessef Mishna explains the wording of the Rambam, quoting Rabbeinu Avraham ben Harambam. Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam suggests that according to the Rambam, we could understand *אִי נִמְי שְׁתֵי תוֹלְדוֹת בְּהֵדִי הֵדִי מֵחֵיִב אֶכֶל חֲדָא וְחֲדָא* as a ruling that all toladot are equated with each other halachically, regardless of which av they are derived from. The gemara doesn't distinguish between a situation in which the toladot are being derived from one av or two distinctive avot. The Rambam is negating the possibility that if one transgresses two toladot from two separate avot, you'd be liable only once.

Perhaps the Rambam is suggesting, despite concluding otherwise, that the *tolda* has its own identity that comes to rival the av Melacha itself. In this case, if one were to do two toladot from two separate av melachot, the *mechayev* lies in the *shem tolda* itself, and would generate only one *chiyuv*. The Rambam writes *לִי יִרְאֶה* to indicate that although both halachic structures are conceptually feasible, the generally accepted reading of the gemara is correct. Ultimately, the source of liability is the av melacha itself, and toladot do not have their own *shem issur*.

The Gemara (Shabbat 73) presents a case in which the status of melachot and the framework of *shem issur* explicitly express themselves. The Gemara quotes a braita that establishes that *zorei'a* (sowing seeds), *zomer* (pruning), *notei'a* (planting saplings), *mavrich* (bending a tree branch into the ground so as to facilitate the rooting process), and *markiv* (grafting a piece of a tree onto another tree) are all considered one melacha. From this grouping, *zorei'a* is the only av melacha. Since they are all the same melacha, it follows that if you transgress these melachot at one time, you would be liable only once. What is the status of each respective action in the Gemara's list? The Gemara explains that *zomer's shem issur* is derived from *notei'a*, but assigns *notei'a*, *mavrich*, and *markiv* to *zorei'a*. The gemara presents an obvious difficulty:

In what sense is *notei'a* a category that is capable of producing subcategories? Isn't *zorei'a* the true av in the gemara's list?

To account for this inconsistency, Rashi (Shabbat 73b) establishes a hierarchy within the grouping of the Gemara. *Zorei'a* is the av provided by the mishna. *Notei'a* is the same productive action as *zorei'a*, but applied to a different object. *Notei'a*, therefore, according to Rashi, is also an av. The same follows for *mavrich* and *markiv*. *Zomer*, however, is a tolda.

Tosfot asks an obvious question on Rashi's organization: how is it that *zomer* – a toldah – is exclusively related to *notei'a*? Didn't the gemara explicitly establish that they're all one melacha? Doesn't that imply that if you do *zomer* and *zorei'a* together, you'd be liable twice?

The Ritva (Shabbat 73:), in defense of Rashi, explains that *notei'a* functions as a bridge for both melachot by conjoining them by the same conceptual thread of melacha. *Zomer* is *notei'a*'s tolda, and *notei'a* and *zorei'a* are the same av. *Zomer* and *zorei'a* are conceptually unrelated, but when you introduce the action of *notei'a*, the two become subsumed under one *shem issur*. The object that the action is being done to, according to Rashi, is an essential aspect in identifying the origins of the toldah. *Zomer* is exclusively tied to *notei'a* because they both deal with trees as opposed to seeds.

This definition allows for a practical expression that, on its surface, seems inconceivable: in some cases. Violations of more melachot result in less punishments than violation of less melachot. But, when we investigate and understand the theoretical basis for the melachot, this ostensibly counterintuitive halacha begins to make sense.

The *mei'ein ha'av* status represents a categorical relationship in which the essential action is identical, but the object being acted upon is different. The tolda, according to this understanding, is an action that has a different expression from its av, but maintains the same goal and is affecting the same object.

The Rambam, Hilchot Shabbat (7:2-3,5), formulates the relationship between av melachot and toladot. He disagrees with Rashi on the status of *zomer*. He classifies *zomer*, or tree pruning, as an av Melacha. The Rambam defines *mei'ein ha'av* as a group of actions that are expressions of the same *inyan*. The components of the essential actions are all identical. The Rambam defines toladot as actions that are *domeh*, or similar, to the av. "*Domeh*", then, is something that is lacking in one of those components but nonetheless shares in the essence of the av.

The precision with which we define the relationship between avot and toladot greatly impacts the halachic system of Shabbat.

אף הן היו באותו הנס¹

In the Aseret HaDibrot in Parshat Yitro (Shemot 20:8), we were given the mitzvah of Shabbat in the form of a positive commandment זכור את יום השבת לקדשו. The prohibition to perform melacha is encapsulated in Devarim (5:12) as שמור את יום השבת לקדשו. Women are certainly obligated in the negative commandment prohibiting melacha. The question is whether they are obligated in the positive commandments associated with Shabbat. After all, the general rule is that women are exempt from time bound positive commandments.

The Gemara (Brachot 20b) states: כל שישנו בשמירה ישנו בזכירה, or all who are commanded in the מצות of *shmira* are also commanded in keeping the מצות עשה of *zechira*. The Gemara (Pesachim 106a) understands that the mitzvah of זכור את יום השבת לקדשו refers to the recitation of kiddush on Friday night. Consequently, women are obligated by Torah law to recite kiddush. But is kiddush the only exception obligating women, or are women obligated in all the positive mitzvot associated with Shabbat?

This matter is a *machloket* between Rabbeinu Tam and the Ran. The Ran (Alfasi Shabbat 44a) quotes Rabbeinu Tam who says that woman are required to eat three meals on Shabbat and say the bracha on *lechem mishneh* הנס היו באותו הנס; they too were involved in the miracle (of the *mann* during the forty-year sojourn in the desert). The Ran agrees with the ruling, but disagrees with the reasoning. According to the Ran, the Gemara's *limmud* of זכור and שמור applies to all the positive mitzvot of Shabbat, not just to kiddush.

There may be instances, however, where this disagreement affects not only the reasoning, but the ruling itself. There is a positive commandment to allow one's animal to rest on Shabbat;

¹ The author expresses appreciation to Ahuva Becker, Channi Goldin, and Atarah Mandel for their assistance.

למען ינוח שורך וחמורך (Shemot 23:12). R' Akiva Eiger (Chiddushim, Shabbat 51b) suggests that women are exempt from this mitzvah. The *shamor-zachor* analogy applies only to kiddush, not to any of the other Shabbat positive mitzvot. However, he also cites the Ran's opinion, and therefore refrains from issuing a definitive psak.

Regarding havdalah, the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 296:8) says that women are obligated, just as they are required to say kiddush, ויש מי שחולק. This dissenting opinion is found in the Orchot Chaim, who says that the mitzvah of havdalah is a rabbinic enactment, independent of *shemirat Shabbat*. One way of understanding the Orchot Chaim is that havdalah is not a Shabbat mitzvah, but rather a post-Shabbat mitzvah. It is possible that women are obligated in all Shabbat mitzvot, but this wouldn't include havdalah. Alternatively, the Orchot Chaim is suggesting that even if we would consider havdalah to be one of the Shabbat mitzvot, nevertheless it is not connected to *shemirat Shabbat* because, unlike kiddush, it is not part of the mitzvah of *zechirah*.

Let's take a look at the three exceptions mentioned explicitly in the Gemara where women are obligated in מצוה עשה שהומן גרמא because אף הן היו באותו הנס, to find a common thread: in Megillah reading (Megillah 4b), drinking the four cups of wine on Pesach (Pesachim 108b), and lighting Chanukah candles (Shabbat 23a). A case study in each historic situation may give us a deeper understanding when we apply the concept of אף הן היו באותו הנס and obligate women in מצוות עשה שהומן גרמא.

According to the Rashbam (Pesachim 108b and Tosafot ad.loc.), in all of these cases, women were not only involved in the miracle but they went above and beyond to contribute to the cause. Take the example of lighting Chanukah candles: Yehudit went on a suicide mission to seduce the Syrian-Greek general in order to give the Maccabees the upper hand, and it played a decisive role in winning the war. Esther also went on a life-threatening endeavor by approaching King Achashverosh without being summoned, and in revealing her identity in front of the very person who was out to kill her whole nation. Additionally in Egypt, each woman used

her mirror to beautify herself and encourage her husband after a long day of slave labor, to continue having children and populating the nation. The Gemara (Sota 11b) credits the women for the reason Bnei Yisrael were redeemed: **דרש רב עזרא בשכר נשים צדקניות**: שהיו באותו הדור נגאלו ישראל ממצרים. Perhaps, we can take all these sources to mean that in cases where women have gone above and beyond the norm to create the space for the miracle to take place, they are obligated in the laws of the holidays attached.

On the other hand, Tosfot understands that women are obligated, not because they were the catalyst for the miracle, but rather because they were beneficiaries of the miracle. If we accept the Rashbam's interpretation, it is possible that the miracle of the *mahn* would not obligate women. Rabbeinu Tam, on the other hand, would agree with the other Baalei HaTosfot, and therefore obligates women in eating three meals on Shabbat **הנס היו באותו הנס**. שאף הן היו באותו הנס.

If the concept of **הנס היו באותו הנס** can obligate women in a מצוה, why does the Gemara (Pesachim 43b) need a special *limmud* to obligate women in the mitzvah of eating matzah on the night of Pesach? Similarly, why are women exempt from the mitzvah of sukkah? After all, **אף הן היו באותו הנס**! Tosafot (Pesachim 108b; see also Megilla 4a) responds: The concept of **הנס היו באותו הנס** can obligate women only in מצוות מדרבנן but not in מצוות מדאורייתא.

The Maharal (Gevurot Hashem 48) suggests that there is a fundamental difference between Torah commandments and rabbinic enactments. In the former, there might be an underlying reason for the mitzvah, but the rules and regulations that define its parameters are separate from that reason. Hashem's commands are independent of the **טעם המצוה**. But Chazal established rabbinic mitzvot for a specific reason, and therefore that reason will affect the parameters of the mitzvah.

In looking at the exceptions to the rule **גרמא שהומן עשה שהומן גרמא**, we were able to gain a profound respect for our women ancestors who went above and beyond to serve Hashem with their full hearts as we hope to continue to emulate and carry on the legacy of our **נשים צדקניות**!

מחשבה

The Song of Our People

The Significance of Music in Judaism

Music is something very prevalent in Jewish life. From *Kabbalat Shabbat* on Friday night, to *Shir Shel Yom*, to reciting *Shirat HaYam* in *Shacharit*, music is something that permeates many aspects of Judaism. Yet what is so special and transformative about music that qualifies it to be so incorporated into our everyday lives?

The gemara (Megillah 32a) writes,

ואמר רבי שפטיה אמר רבי יוחנן: כל הקורא בלא נעימה ושונה בלא זמרה, עליו הכתוב אומר: "וגם אני נתתי להם חוקים לא טובים וגו'."

And Rabbi Shefatya said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Concerning anyone who reads from the Torah without a melody or studies the Mishna without a song, the verse states: "So too I gave them statutes that were not good."

The Gemara teaches that when we are studying Torah, we are supposed to study through the lens of *shira*. For example, *leining* is done with a tune and a unique melody. Without *shira*, our Torah learning would not be the same.

However, what is so powerful about music that we need to study Torah through song? The answer can be found in the different instances throughout Tanach where music plays an integral role. These examples each show us an aspect of *shira* that relates to and enhances our *avodat Hashem*.

For example, after witnessing the incredible miracles of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, Moshe immediately begins singing with Bnei Yisrael as a means to praise Hashem (Shemot 15:1),

או ישיר משה ובני ישראל את השירה הזאת לה' ויאמרו לאמר אשירה לה כי גאה גאה.

Rashi comments on this pasuk saying,

או כשראה הגס עלה בלבו שישיר שירה.

Moshe sees the miracles that Hashem performs for Bnei Yisrael, and his emotional response is to break out into *shira* to Hashem in order to praise Him for this miraculous occurrence! *Shirat HaYam* is an expression of joy and gratitude to Hashem that can only be expressed through song.

After the pesukim of *Shirat HaYam*, the Torah goes on to tell us that Miriam leads the women in dance as well (Shemot 15:20),

ותקח מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן את התף בידה ותצאן כל הנשים אחריה
בתפים ובמחלת.

Rav Hirsch comments that “her position among the women resembled Aharon’s position among the men. Just as Aharon spread among the men the words that were communicated to Moshe, so did Miriam among the women”. Miriam uses the medium of music to publicize the greatness of Hashem. From here, we see that music isn’t just an expression of joy and gratitude, but it is also a means of *pirsumei nisa*.

Another famous instance of song in Tanach is found in Devarim, before Moshe gives his final message to the Jewish people. When Hashem commands Moshe to give over this Divine message, He specifies that it be given through the medium of song (Devarim 31:19),

ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת ולמדוה את בני ישראל שימה בפיהם
למען תהיה לי השירה הזאת לעד בבני ישראל.

Therefore, write down this song and teach it to the people of Israel; put it in their mouths, in order that this song may be My witness against the people of Israel.

The pesukim immediately following this contain the commandment to write a *Sefer Torah*, and immediately following that is what is known as *Shirat HaAzinu* (Devarim 32:1-43). The purpose of *Shirat HaAzinu* is to have Bnei Yisrael internalize the messages that had been instilled in them, to praise Hashem, and to remind them to stay on a path that is *yashar*.

Rabbeinu Bachaye comments on the juxtaposition of the commandment to give over this message via song and the com-

mandment to write a *Sefer Torah*. He posits that the reason that *shira* is such an appropriate framework for the messages contained in a *Sefer Torah* and *Shirat HaAzinu* is because music is something generational. Rabbeinu Bachaye tells us, גדולה שירה שיש בה עכשיו ויש בה לשעבר, ויש בה לעוה"ז ויש בה לעוה"ה "the greatness of a *shira* is that it deals not only with the past and the present but also deals with aspects of the future, the world to come." *Shira* is beyond time; it spans this world and the next.

The messages given over to us through song deal with the present, but contain messages for future generations to internalize and relate to. Rabbi Sacks writes, "And why call the Torah a Song? Because if we are to hand over our faith and way of life to the next generation, it must sing. Torah must be effective, not just cognitive. It must speak to our emotions."¹ Rabbi Sacks is telling us that the Torah itself gives over its eternal messages specifically through song because music at times arouses emotions in a way far better than speech. The greatest leaders employ this method as well. For example, Devorah, in her *shira*, does exactly this (Shoftim 5:1-31). Clearly, this aspect of song is extremely compelling as it is a trait of our finest leaders.

Music is also used as a way to celebrate happy occasions even in difficult times. In Nechemia (12:27), despite the intermarriage and corruption, Nechemia spearheads the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash*. After the completion of the rebuilding, the pasuk states,

ובחנכת חומת ירושלם בקשו את הלויים מכל מקומתם להביאם לירושלם
לעשת חנכה ושמחה ובתודות ובשיר מצלתיים ונבלים ובכנרות.

At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the *Levites*, wherever they lived, were sought out and brought to Jerusalem to celebrate a joyful dedication with thanksgiving and with song, accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres.

In this instance, music is used as an expression of joy and celebration, as a method to bring happiness in times of darkness. When

¹ rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/vayelech/torah-as-song/

Shaul is struggling with the evil spirit, the only thing that brings him a sense of peace and calm is David playing the harp for him (Shmuel 1 16:23). The only way that Elisha is able to receive prophecy is when he was happy. The way he becomes happy is by listening to music (Metzudat David, Melachim II 3:15). Music is used in all of these instances as a way to make people happy and calm in times of severe distress.

Clearly, music serves many purposes and has many unique powers that constitute why it is so vital to our *avodat Hashem*. As with Moshe's *shira* after *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, it serves as a way for us to praise Hashem for the miraculous things He does. Music can even be utilized as a way to publicize His greatness, as Miriam and the women show with their singing and dancing. As *Shirat HaAzinu* highlights, song conveys generational messages. *Shira* can also bring joy and calm in the darkest times as seen with the *shira* at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, David's harp calming Shaul, and music being used as a medium to calm Elisha and prepare him for prophecy.

All of these aspects of *shira* perhaps explain why it has such a strong pull in the spiritual realm. We find in the Zohar (Tikunei HaZohar 11, Daf 26: 71),

כל הברואים בעולמות של הקדוש ברוך אומרים שירה בין למעלה בין למטה ויש היכל שאינו נפתח אלא בניגון.

All the creations in the worlds of the Holy One, blessed be He, sing above and below, and there is a chamber that doesn't open, but with a song.

Music is so powerful and transformative; there is a certain gate in *shamayim* that only opens with song.

Rabbi Sacks, commenting on *parshat Beshalach* writes, "Music is the language of the soul. Faith is more like music than science. Science analyzes; music integrates."² Evidently, music is spiritually powerful. It allows a connection to Hashem in a way that other mediums don't. Perhaps it's so prevalent in Jewish life because of

² rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/beshalach/music-language-of-the-soul/

this power. Every time a song is sung, it has the power to impact our souls and spiritually uplift us.

Abie Rotenberg in *We've Got the Music II* puts it perfectly: "It simply cannot be foretold how music's future will unfold. Though some would see it stay the same, its nature is to grow and change. But one thing we must keep in mind, a Jewish song of any kind is only precious if and when it brings us closer to Hashem".

‘Brisker Method’ in Machshava

A Case Study

Within the world of *halacha*, there is a connection between *shitot* and *sugyot*. Nothing exists in a vacuum, and broader understanding and context offered by varying *sugyot* and *shitot* offer a more dynamic and intimate understanding of the *sugya* at hand. Using the *machshava* of Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik as a case study, one sees that the world of *machshava* is deeply inter-twined and dynamic in a similar way.

The Lonely Man of Faith is considered to be a work that is foundational to Rav Soloveitchik’s *machshava* and general outlook, and uses the story of creation as a springboard to explain the human condition via man’s relationship and association with Hashem. Within the world of Rav Soloveitchik, humanity experiences internal dualism, a multifaceted personality, and hence a multifaceted relationship with, and knowledge of, G-d. This dichotomy is rooted in the two different accounts of creation in Sefer Bereishit. While the elements of humanity that are brought about by the different stories vary, what remains consistent is the discovery of different aspects of humankind through its comparison to, and relationship with, the angle and expression of G-d that relates to mankind in a given perek, and vice versa.

There are four key differences between the first and second perakim of Bereishit that Rav Soloveitchik points out and thoroughly expands on, ultimately culminating in the creation of two different narratives of mankind and their subsequent relationship with Hashem. These two narratives describe two different versions of Adam: Adam I and Adam II (as labeled by Rav Soloveitchik). The first difference is the different ways in which G-d is referred to. In the first perek, the word *Elokim* is exclusively used to refer

to G-d, and in the second perek, the phrase *Hashem Elokim* is used.¹

The second difference is the order of creation itself. In the first *perek*, the world and nature is created, and man is the last thing to be created. In the second *perek*, man is higher up in the order of creation. The third difference is the way that man is created, vis-à-vis the actual method of creation, and the creation of woman vis-à-vis man. The fourth difference is the initial commandment given to man. In the first perek, man is commanded *פרו ורבו ומלאו את הארץ וכבשה* (Bereishit 1:28), whereas in the second perek, man is commanded *לעבדה ולשמרה* (Bereishit 2:15).

The first perek creates the narrative for the character known as Adam I. The way in which G-d is referred, i.e. *Elokim*, sets the theme for the perek to follow. Rav Soloveitchik explains that this title portrays G-d in His universal glory, as opposed to the recipient of a personal relationship. This expression of G-d is manifested in the experience of creation in the first perek. Nature is created first, because that is how man can relate to G-d, through the natural and the powerful. Further expressing this point is the command to man to *פרו ורבו ומלאו את הארץ וכבשה* (Bereshit 1:28), which follows the acknowledgement of man as a *tzelem Elokim* (בצלם אלקים ברא אתו) (Bereshit 1:28). How man relates to G-d sends a message about how man himself will function, and the way in which humans are called to experience the world implies something about the relationship with G-d.

The above concept is crystallized by the fact that man and woman were created simultaneously. In the Adam I relationship with the world and people, all elements necessitate a utilitarian partner. Adam I is interested in endeavor, as endeavor brings

¹ While it is true that the first three pesukim of the second perek refer to G-d as *Elokim*, this can be attributed to faulty division of the perakim, considering the three pesukim are about Shabbat, which is part of the narrative of the first perek, as well as the fact that Torah has a parshah break after these three pesukim.

honor, and both endeavor and honor require partners – endeavor for practicality's sake and honor for acknowledgment's sake. *Kavod* is dependent on whether there are those to both offer and receive *kavod*. More explicitly, the initial command given to man in the first perek implies a rulership over nature as a whole, and that rulership heavily relates to the *kavod* that Adam I experiences in his worldly endeavors.

This directly relates to Rav Soloveitchik's view on what *tzelem Elokim* implies for man. In the context of perek 1, Rav Soloveitchik feels that *tzelem Elokim* is a comment on man's ability and call to be a creator. The way in which we utilize our *tzelem Elokim* and how we accept the first commandment heavily dovetail. The creation that we are called to perform involves our subduing nature and progressing through those means, which, as mentioned above, is part of the human strive for *kavod*. What's implicit in this goal is that it is a major aspect of embodying *tzelem Elokim*, which implies that Adam I views G-d in a similar light. G-d is the ultimate creator of nature and therefore the ultimate holder of *kavod*. Adam I being called to accomplish glory and leadership implies that he primarily relates to G-d in that way.

The same equation is applied by Rav Soloveitchik when analyzing the second perek of Bereishit, however, the perspective of G-d that is achieved is very different.

The way in which the Torah addresses G-d in the second perek, like in the first perek, has a thematic effect on the broader understanding of the perek. In the second perek, G-d is referred to as *Hashem Elokim*, as opposed to just *Elokim*, which implies a far more personal aspect to the relationship with G-d than was implied in the first perek. Relationships will become one of the main themes in the second perek, and the process of creation in the second perek lends itself to this thematic development.

In the second perek, Adam II (as Rav Soloveitchik refers to him) is made from the dust of the ground, he is created from the earth processing an inherent quality of lowliness. This is in contrast

to Adam I who seeks G-d in great glory. This Adam is more interested in being overtaken by G-d. In terms of his relationship with people, Adam II is created at first as an individual on his own. He has no partner, and no person with which to share his experiences.² Adam II experiences existential loneliness, which leads to the pasuk that thematically encapsulates the trajectory of Adam II, ויאמר ה' אלקים לא טוב היות האדם לבדו אעשה לו עזר כנגדו (Bereshit 2:18). This is followed by Hashem sending Adam II into a deep sleep, removing one of his bones, and creating Chava. This experience expresses both the willingness of Adam II to sacrifice for his partner (Chava), as well as his ability to allow G-d to overtake and redeem him at his lowest point. The intense struggle of Adam II facilitates space for growth within his relationship with both man and G-d.

The ins and outs of the relationship between Adam and Chava create a framework for the relationship between man and G-d on multiple levels. On a more symbolic plane, the ability and desire of Adam II to sacrifice for Chava gives insight into the nature of G-d's sacrifice for mankind. Rav Soloveitchik goes to great lengths to express how sacrifice is the basis of a relationship. Creating space for others creates a foundation for connection and trust. Just as Adam II sacrifices his body for Chava, G-d performed *tzimtzum*, loosely translated as divine contraction/withdrawal, during creation, in order to create space for the world.

The creation of a state of reality where infinite and finite can both exist shows the ultimate sacrifice of the Infinite. Adam II, i.e. the finite, reciprocates this call for a relationship by addressing and relating to G-d in his life in an intense, personal way, which is in part made possible by the secondary way in which the relationship between Adam and Chava relates to man's relationship with G-d.

² This is the way Adam II experiences a likeness to G-d. Adam II is individual and unique, just as G-d is (in whatever sense we can understand that) the most unique Being in existence.

As opposed to a theoretical parallel G-dly relationship, on a deeper level, G-d is intimately involved in the relationship between Adam and Chava. Rav Soloveitchik maps out the golden triangle, so to speak, of the I-Thou-G-d relationship that emerges post Chava's creation. While Adam II and Chava are created to be partners, they are still wholly unique beings, and can't relate on the deepest level. The most intimate parts of themselves can't be expressed through mere words. Communal service of, and commitment to service of G-d (labeled by Rav Soloveitchik as the 'Covenantal Community'), allows Adam and Chava to connect through their shared faith, as it is both an intimate part of their being, and something that facilitates expression in a way that words limit them.

On the flipside, the commitment to a community of other people is what allows man to relate to G-d in a more intense and deep way. Rav Soloveitchik explains that when one prays, it is faulty to fill their mind and heart with personal interest, rather the interests of their community.

In short, Rav Soloveitchik's read of creation gives us insight into the human condition and knowledge of G-d, and our connection to Him on multiple planes. The world of *machshava*, however, is broad, and there are many commentaries on the story of creation.

The Rambam (*Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 1:1), discusses creation and its philosophical intricacies. He writes that G-d is the Original Force, Creator of everything, and that G-d is the only potential Creator. What's conveniently missing is the answer to the question of "Why?". Why did G-d, the original force, the only potential Creator of everything, feel the need to create anything at all?

In *Guide to the Perplexed* (3:13), the Rambam posits that we don't understand why G-d created the world. We don't know, and we can't know. Earlier in *Guide to the Perplexed* (1:58), the Rambam explains that we can't fully understand G-d, and therefore any language we use to describe G-d can't really capture the essence of G-d Himself, i.e. if we understand the meaning of the word, then G-d isn't it (by defining, G-d we would be limiting Him, and

G-d is infinite and limitless). Because we can't understand Him, we can't understand the motivation behind His actions.³ It is important to note, however, that the Rambam (Yesodei HaTorah 1:10)⁴ does feel that gaining knowledge and understanding of G-d, in whatever way a human is capable, is an extremely worthwhile religious endeavor. According to the Rambam, while humans are limited in their ability to comprehend the motivations behind G-d's action, we are still called upon to connect to G-d through knowledge and understanding of G-d (however limited it may be).

Not everyone agrees with the Rambam on his limitations of man's potential for understanding, and posit their own theories regarding G-d's motivation in creation. Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer posits that a king can't rule without subjects, and therefore G-d as a ruler needs subjects to rule over. Our existence facilitates G-d's *kavod* in the world. The Ramban expands on this by saying that the mitzvot that G-d gave us are means to acknowledge Him.

The Ramchal (Derech Hashem 1:2) says that G-d created the world in order to be benevolent, because being benevolent necessitates recipients of benevolence. The greatest benevolence that G-d could possibly offer is a connection with Him, which the world facilitates, because the best way to connect to G-d is to work for it. This is because the process of working itself also facilitates connection to G-d, as G-d is not perfect randomly, and when we work for our growth, we are not improving randomly either. In essence, G-d wants a relationship with us.

While the views above vary, some more drastically than others, it seems that these ideas are intertwined within the *peirush* of Rav Soloveitchik. The first perek lays out a relationship with G-d built on *kavod* and G-d as a powerful figure. The second perek facilitates a deep, personal relationship with G-d for which man has to

³ The Meshech Chachma illustrates this point by positing that G-d is not like man but more, rather, G-d is fundamentally different.

⁴ The Rambam, here, considers Moshe's request to know and understand G-d to be worthwhile and pious.

sacrifice and strive. Throughout his analysis, however, Rav Soloveitchik does not attribute these elements to be explanations for why G-d created the world, rather, what examining the world, creation, and humanity can teach us about G-d and His relationship with us. Rav Soloveitchik explores the ideas of R' Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and the Ramchal through the ideological lens of the Rambam.

A Spiritual Friendship

Friendship is a crucial aspect of the human experience. People create friendships at different points in their lives, each under different circumstances – childhood friends, school friends, camp friends etc. Different friends have different roles in our lives, but all of them make a very deep impact on the people we become. This paper explores the Torah perspective on the value of friendship, by revealing how friendships are cultivated, what the goals of a friendship are, and how that translates into living a life founded on the values of Judaism.

In Pirkei Avot (1:6), it says,

יהושע בן פרוחיה אומר, עשה לך רב, וקנה לך חבר, והוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות.

Focusing on the beginning phrases, a few questions arise when reading into this mishna. First, what is the deeper meaning of the word קנה, aside from its literal translation “acquire”? Secondly, in practicality, what are the actual differences between a Rav and a *chaver*, if, as seen later on, both are relationships centered around Torah?

The first step to appreciating this mishna more deeply is understanding the true meaning of the word קנה, which will shed light on the essence of the command of “*keneih lecha chaver*”. This can be done by looking where the word קנה first shows up in Tanach. In Bereishit 4:1, it says והאדם ידע את חוה אשתו ותהר ותלד את קין ותאמר קניתי איש את ה' קניתי איש את ה'. The Chizkuni says that the word קנה means “to partner”. Chava felt that when she gave birth, she was a partner with Hashem in creating the child. This idea helps to start explaining the ideal version of a true Torah based friendship.

In the Bartenura's explanation of the mishnah, he says that the word קנה comes to show that one has to use his own resources to acquire a friend, even if he has to spend money. Although this may not be taken as a literal translation of the mishna, the Bartenura's commentary strengthens the point that a friendship is something which needs to come about through something active—by actually investing in the relationship.

Before answering the second question posed, which will explore the value of learning Torah with a peer, some context must be given regarding the overall value of a friendship. The Rambam's commentary on this mishna helps clarify the Torah's perspective on the goal of having friends. In Judaism, a person's life is seen within the context of a greater objective. An *eved Hashem* is supposed to be goal oriented, and therefore, when creating relationships, those relationships must be goal oriented as well. As the Rambam writes, a friend is someone who all of his deeds and all of his matters are refined through him (the friend). Furthermore, he goes on to explain that there are three different types of friends- a friend for benefit, a friend for enjoyment, and lastly, the most ideal form, a friend for virtue. This, the Rambam explains, is when both of their desires and intentions are for one thing.

Rabbeinu Yonah on the mishnah, further supporting this theme, writes that there are three main areas where a person enhances his spirituality by having a friend: furthering mitzvah observance, seeking advice from one another, and learning Torah from one another.

In Hilchot Teshuva (4:5), the Rambam writes five things that are difficult for a person to do *teshuva* for. One of them is becoming friends with a *rasha*. A person who befriends the wicked is automatically affected by their actions, making it very difficult to separate from them. Rav Sacks writes that “friends matter. They shape our lives. The Sages believed that good friends tend to make us good, and bad friends bad... It matters to have friends who have honesty, integrity, generosity of spirit, and loyalty. It helps to make friends with people who embody the virtues to which you aspire.”

The Rambam (Hilchot Deot 6:1) writes that the lifestyle and habits of the people we surround ourselves with inevitably affect the way that we act. To live a life committed to mitzvot, it is crucial that the people one surrounds oneself with are committed as well. When surrounded by friends who also value growing in their *avodat Hashem*, a person will be more successful in doing the same.

In Sefer Vayikra (19:18), on the famous phrase of *ואהבת לרעך כמוך*, the Ramban writes that a person should want for his friend whatever he would want for himself if he were in his place. The Mishna in Pirkei Avot (2:10) echoes a similar idea that the honor of your friend should be as dear to you as your own. In Judaism, people are constantly growing and working to reach their potential. Along the way, there are always different areas that will be difficult, and it's crucial that one has people in their lives who are there to assist in that journey. However, true advice can only be given and received when both parties respect the other, and look out for their best interest, which is why *Chazal* put so much emphasis on the idea of mutual respect.

Furthermore, there are many teachings regarding the right way to give advice, specifically constructive criticism – *tochacha*. Although we are instructed to rebuke our fellow man (Vayikra 19:17), there are specific protocols that one must follow in order to ensure that this is done in the correct way. For example, the Gemara (Yevamot 65b) instructs that a person should not rebuke another who will not be receptive to his words. Clearly, although it is a value to help a friend with their spiritual growth, it must be done with proper respect and in a proper way.

We find in Mishlei (27:17): *ברזל בברזל יחד ואיש יחד פני רעהו* – as iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the wit of his friend. The word *rei'eihu* is translated in this context, as in others, as “friend.” In Taanit 7a, this quote is explained: “just as with these iron implements, one sharpens the other when they are rubbed against each other, so too, when Torah scholars study together, they sharpen one another in halacha.” This highlights the integral role that Torah study has in cultivating a friendship.

Elsewhere in Taanit, the Gemara says: “I have learned much from my teachers and more from my friends than from my teachers.” This, as explained by the Maharsha, is because friends are more likely to ask questions throughout their learning, and that is the best way for a person to delve deeper into their Torah studies. It’s made clear that Torah is not only a means to creating a friendship, but friendship is incredibly necessary to learning Torah to its greatest extent.

With a greater understanding of Chazal’s perspective on friendship, the second question regarding the difference between a friend and a Rav can be explained.

As seen earlier, the word קנה is representative of an action through which one puts legitimate effort into attaining a relationship. This is seen in Chava’s wording when thanking Hashem for making her a partner in creation, and the Bartenura’s commentary on the mishnah, explaining the resources that must be put into acquiring a friendship. The root of the word *chaver* means to connect. As seen in the different areas of Chazal, a friendship is supposed to boost both parties’ connection to Torah. In some cases, the word for friends and Torah partners are used interchangeably; the word *chaver* and *chavruta* come from the same root. Learning helps create a bond between two people, and that bond helps maximize the Torah that is learned.

The reason that Rav Yehoshua instructs us to have both Rabbeim and friends is because the nature of the relationship is different. When learning with another person, and putting active involvement into it, the learning takes on a unique element, as reflected by the Gemara in Taanit. The concept of acquiring Torah, described with the word קנה, is found in many places throughout Chazal. One example is in Pirkei Avot (6:10) which discusses Hashem’s “five possessions.” It writes: חמשה קנינים קנה לו הקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו ... תורה קנין אחד One, set aside as His own in this world ... The Torah [is] one possession.” The idea of Torah as acquisition is also echoed again in

Pirkei Avot (2:7) where it writes קנה לו דברי תורה, קנה לו חיי העולם הבא – “If one acquires for himself knowledge of Torah, he has acquired life in the world to come.”

Just as a friend must be acquired, so too must the Torah that we learn. It is something that, like a friend, needs time and commitment, in order to create the best relationship possible. It is not simply enough to learn the Torah as one would any other information. Rather, it’s something that a person must find their own connection to. This is why the word קנה is used in the context of acquiring a friend and, as reflected above, the Torah that we learn. By learning with another person, questioning, and delving deeper into the information, the Torah is actively acquired. This is the beauty that is gained through the learning done in a Beit Midrash, where *chavrutot* learn together and discover new elements of Torah through that process.

As discussed earlier, a friend is important for many reasons, but three in specific: Torah, mitzvot and advice. These three aspects are directly correlated to the way that a year focused on learning is structured. Torah: learning in the classrooms and the Beit Midrash. Mitzvot: taking all of the values that are learned in school and applying them to the way that we act outside of school. Advice: when there are any difficulties throughout the year, ensuring that there are people to lean on for help and ask advice from. Ideally, this should be the model for a person’s entire life. These three components are the essence to not only true friendships with our peers, but they are also what lead to deep and strong relationships with Hashem.

Koach HaMoach

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot (2:4) states: עשה רצונו כרצונך, כדי שיעשה כדי שיבטל רצון אחרים מפני רצונך. Essentially this means that you should align your own will with Hashem's, and in return, He will do your will as though it were His. Nullify your will in the face of His will, so that he may set aside the will of others for the sake of your will.

What does it mean to align your will with Hashem's? Following the Torah and mitzvot is one thing, but being internally content and always *wanting* to fulfill all the commandments is another. Life is about self-improvement and refinement, and the effort to go against your urges will eventually be accredited.

For example, though it may be hard at times not to answer back to one's parents, overcoming the urge to respond is considered a success in adhering to the commandment of *kibud av v'am*. However, can this be called *יעשה רצונך כרצונו*, making your will to be like Hashem's will? How can we be expected to change our will, something which is part of our nature, to make it align with the will of Hashem? Do we have control over our emotions, feelings, urges, and nature?

When you withhold the urge to answer back to your parents, you change something. You feel drawn to your inclination, but you withdraw yourself from fulfilling that action. Hashem has to make your will initially misaligned with His will, otherwise if the urge was never there, what would you be accomplishing? It seems that we are capable of altering ourselves.

Per today's usage of technology-based analogies, the brain can be interpreted as a piece of "hardware" dependent on the "software" at play. While genetic makeup and inherited traits are what fabricate our "hardware," our experiences, environment, values,

preferences, and habits are the determinants of our “software” by constantly forcing our brains to adapt like an expertly crafted algorithm. What is most exciting is that, regardless of our survival's dependence on the brain's involuntary behaviors, humans alone can reset or change the dynamic and buildup of our minds.

This concept is called neuroplasticity; it's in our own power to heal, change, build new neural pathways, and create and redefine ourselves in any way we want. Through continuous work and self improvement, at some point we stop *fighting* our nature and start *rewiring* it.

In Parshat Shemot, we are given many rules that come with the commandment of the *korban Pesach* such as eating the offering without breaking any bones. The Sefer Hachinuch (Parshat Bo, mitzvah 16), asks why Hashem commands us to have so many regulations to commemorate this miracle; would the offering itself not be enough.

The Sefer Hachinuch answers:

You must know, that a man is acted upon according to his actions; and his heart and all his thoughts always follow after the actions that he does - whether good or bad. And even he who in his heart is a complete sinner and all the desires of his heart are only for evil; if his spirit shall be enlightened and he will put his efforts and actions to persist in Torah and commandments - even if not for the sake of Heaven - he shall immediately incline towards the good. And from that which is not for its own sake comes that which is for its own sake [as opposed to being for personal gain]; for the hearts are drawn after the actions.

Even before all of the modern developments we have, and knowledge of the brain we've gained, our Sages understood the power of our actions. Repetitive actions lead to habits and habits lead to new behaviors which ultimately become like second nature. Stories of someone turning his life around, like Reish Lakish, prove that nature and circumstances are not things that can be used to blame our decisions and actions, because our *cheilek elokah mima'al* makes us limitless.

We are not bound by our character traits, innate urges, or habits. Part of our *avodah* in this world is working on deficiencies through exercising our *bechirah chofshit*, and now, even scientifically, we understand that Hashem designed our brains to cope by rewiring around areas of weakness. It takes repetitive manners and incessant restraint, but a brain can be and was meant to be trained, transformed, and elevated. When we are tested by Hashem, and manage to overcome a difficult *nisayon*, we succeed.

Another crucial way we rewire our brain is *teshuva*. The Rambam proposes three steps: *charata*, *viduy*, and *kabalah al he'atid*. Similarly, to strengthen a neural pathway and transform it into a habit, it requires the repetition of thinking, feeling, and acting. This is the same with respect to *teshuva*. You *feel* regret, then *think* about your mistake and verbalize it to fully grasp an understanding on what was specifically done wrong, and then *act* by making a purposeful effort to avoid repeating your mistake. We ought to continually do this self-work in an effort to recreate ourselves into someone Hashem intended us to become.

With this newfound awareness of how powerful and infinitely adaptable Hashem created our minds, we can look at Torah and the mitzvot through a new lens, of everything being possible and open to us.

Going Against the Grain

Adam's Sin and the Duality of Bread

The story of Adam and Chava sinning when they ate from the *etz hadaat*, is a central narrative related to the beginning of human-kind. The first humans were banished from *Gan Eden* because they violated the one commandment that Hashem gave them.

What fruit did this tree have that had such devastating consequences? The *Tannaim* (Berachot 40a) debate this question:

דתניא: אילן שאכל ממנו אדם הראשון, רבי מאיר אומר: גפן היה, שאין לך דבר שמביא יללה על האדם אלא יין, שנאמר: "וישת מן היין וישכר". רבי נחמיה אומר: תאנה היתה, שבדבר שנתקלקלו בו נתקנו, שנאמר: "ויתפרו עלה תאנה". רבי יהודה אומר: חטה היתה, שאין התינוק יודע לקרות "אבא" ו"אמא" עד שיטעום טעם דגן.

The surprising suggestion that stands out among these three is Rabbi Yehuda's. He explains that the fruit Adam and Chava were told not to eat was wheat. Most depictions and descriptions of this story do not portray the "*pri etz hadaat*," as wheat, perhaps because wheat is not typically considered a fruit that grows on a tree. However, Rabbi Yehuda's explanation makes a lot of sense when considering the punishment that Adam received for eating from the tree.

The *pasuk* says (Bereishit 3:19), בזעת אפך תאכל לחם עד שובך, אל האדמה כי ממנה לקחת כי עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב. The Torah tells us that Adam will have to endure hard labor in order to eat bread, the quintessential product created from wheat. According to Rabbi Yehuda's opinion, what is so special about wheat that it warranted being the most central plant in all of *Gan Eden*? The following sources describe the special transformation that creates bread and the different impacts of bread on man in the world: emotional, physical, and spiritual.

Tehillim (104:15) describes bread as the sustenance of man's heart: ולחם לבב אנוש יסעד. In his commentary on masechet Berachot (40a) Ben Yehoyada comments on Rabbi Yehuda's opinion, distinguishing between wheat and all other fruits/vegetables as follows:

נראה לי בס"ד לומר טעם דלכך תמצא שהחיטה אשתנית למעליותא,
שכל הפירות הן של עץ הן של אדמה אם נשתנו גריעי שתהיה ברכתם
שהכל, ורק החיטה בשינוי שלה תהיה למעליותא, שבעודם חטים מברך
פרי האדמה, ואם נשתנו שטחנם ואפאם מברך המוציא לחם מן הארץ.

He describes that all raw produce carries the *bracha* of *ha'etz* or *ha'adamah*, but when cooked the *bracha* can become *shehakol*. Wheat is unique because when cooked, its *bracha* becomes *hamotzi*. He reasons that this is because wheat is actually improved when baked.

Another unique property of wheat is that the Torah twice forbids any wheat that has become chametz from being used in burnt offerings (Vayikra 2:11, 6:10):

כל המנחה אשר תקריבו לה' לא תעשה חמץ כי כל שאר וכל דבש לא
תקטירו ממנו אשה לה'.
לא תאפה חמץ חלקם נתתי אתה מאשי קדש קדשים הוא כחטאת
וכאשם.

In addition to these properties of bread, Rabbi Yehuda also taught that bread inherently contains knowledge, which is why it adorned the Tree of Knowledge. When Adam and Chava ate from the tree, they brought to the world the knowledge of good and bad (which explains the full name of this tree, "*eitz hadaat tov vara*", "the tree of knowledge of good and bad"). Adam's punishment is a direct consequence of his sin because the only way to experience the good and bad of the world is to be forced to work and produce sustenance for oneself. Adam and Chava brought good and bad to the world, and there are both positive and negative implications to this new reality. In particular, this applies to Adam's new task of having to work the land.

As proof of the notion that the exile from *Gan Eden* contains both positive and negative elements, Tehillim (128:2) expresses that

people who eat the toil of their hands are praiseworthy, and that this experience is emotionally positive: יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (32:6) introduces a healthy practice of engaging in physical activity before eating:

כלל גדול בדרכי הרפואה, שקדם האכילה יגיע בהליכה או בעבודה עד שיתחמם גופו אחר כך יאכל. וזה שנאמר, בועת אפיך תאכל לחם. ונאמר, ולחם עצלות לא תאכל. ויתיר חגורתו קדם אכילה. (וסימנא, ואקחה פת לחם, אקחה ראשי תבות למפרע, התר חגורה קדם אכילה. פת לחם ראשי תבות, פן תבא לידי חלי מעיים.)

Citing Adam's punishment as proof, he explains that there is a physical benefit to exercising prior to meals, rather than eating "bread of laziness" (Mishlei 31:27), providing further evidence of the unique nature of bread in the physical world.

In *The Lonely Man of Faith* (Chapter 1), Rav Soloveitchik writes that Adam's new reality allows him to fulfill Hashem's commandment of "*v'kivshuha*" (Bereishit 1:28):

Adam the first is trying to carry out the mandate entrusted to him by his Maker who, at the dawn of the sixth mysterious day of creation, addressed Himself to man and summoned him to 'fill the earth and subdue it'.

Adam's new position in the physical world enables him to acquire knowledge of his environment and improve it, thus fulfilling a commandment he received directly from Hashem.

Dignity of man expressing itself in the awareness of being responsible and of being capable of discharging his responsibility cannot be realized as long as he has not gained mastery over his environment. For life in bondage to insensate elemental forces is a non-responsible and hence an undignified affair.

Man cannot assume dignity and mastery of his environment if he is limited to the world of *Gan Eden*. The isolation and perfection of life in the Garden prevented man from conquering his surroundings. Only after being banished from *Gan Eden*, man is able to take on the spiritual role of being responsible for the earth that Hashem created. Through working the field, man gains knowledge of the world, enabling him to grow closer to Hashem.

Despite these emotional, physical, and spiritual benefits of toiling for food, the Peninei Halacha (Festivals 3:1) cautions man about becoming too involved in physical pursuits:

שבת ותג הם ימים קדושים שאטורים בעשיית מלאכה, מפני שבהם אנו מתעלים אל מעבר למגבלות של העולם הזה, על חטאיו וקללותיו, שגורמים לאדם לעבוד קשה לצורך קיומו ופרנסתו ... בעקבות העבודה הקשה, האדם עלול לשקוע בעולם החומר ולשכוח שיש לו נשמה גבוהה. ועל כן נתן לנו ה' ימים קדושים, שבהם אנו מתעלים אל מעבר לחטא ולקללה שמחייבים אותנו לעבוד לצורך פרנסתנו.

In order to prevent this from happening, Hashem gave us Shabbat and Yom Tov which balances any excess physicality in our lives. Therefore people have to specifically refrain from physical labor on those days.

בשבת אנו עולים למדרגה גבוהה מאוד של אמונה, ומתוך ההבנה שהכל בידי ה', אנו מתבטלים לגמרי להנהגה האלוהית ושובתים מכל מלאכה, כדי שכל כוחותינו יעסקו אך ורק בקליטת הטוב שה' משפיע לנו. הנשמה עוסקת בתורה ותפילה, והגוף בסעודות ושינה. לעומת זאת החג במדרגה קרובה יותר אלינו, ומבטא את התפקיד שלנו בתיקון העולם.

As such, Shabbat and Yom Tov are elevated days on which one's soul is exalted through Torah, Tefillah, and connection to Hashem. These days mimic life in *Gan Eden*, where Adam and Chavah were closer to Hashem and did not have to engage in physical labor. In fact, Shabbat is referred to as "*me'ein olam haba*", a kind of the world to come.

Another time period in the Torah reminiscent of the *Gan Eden* lifestyle is the 40 years that Bnei Yisrael were in the desert after leaving Egypt. The nation lived off *mann*, a diet which they did not have to toil for because it was provided by Hashem each day. On *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*, through the *shtei halechem*, we remind ourselves that we are trying to achieve this *Gan Eden* or *midbar* state of mind (Shabbat 117b). One has two loaves of bread with each meal as a representation of the two portions of *mann* that Bnei Yisrael received on Friday so that they would not have to work for the food they ate on Shabbat. It is fitting to specifically use bread as

a reminder of *mann*, as bread epitomizes toil for sustenance and the excess physicality which one is trying to balance on *Shabbat*.

While bread carries the sin of Adam and Chavah, as discussed, it also provides true sustenance, knowledge, and completeness. Bread is a complex constant in human life. We eat it every *Shabbat*, but rid our houses of it on Pesach. We toil to produce it through a multi-step process of agriculture and baking, but can convene a seudah with it and, over it, praise Hashem in a *zimun*.

As noted, bread is the only food that carries the special bracha of hamotzi. Perhaps this is to give us an opportunity to bring more spirituality into our lives. When we are ready to consume bread, we can be reminded to return to the spiritual realm by taking time to wash our hands, sit down, bless Hashem, enjoy the fruits of our labor, and thank Him. If bread has this power, then we don't have to wait until Shabbat or Yom Tov to bring spirituality back into our lives. We can start by utilizing our daily bread to remind us of Hashem's presence and elevate all of the activities we perform in this world.

Pulling Hashem Out from Behind the Curtain

Many people are familiar with the children's song, "Hashem is here, Hashem is there, Hashem is truly everywhere." Often, children's songs tend to stick in one's mind forever. However, when it comes to the song, "Hashem is here, Hashem is there, Hashem is truly everywhere" it seems that, as adults, we have all inherited a collective amnesia. We no longer recognize the impact these lyrics should have on how we find Hashem in our everyday lives.

Hashem created the world meticulously, with nothing out of place. When Hashem created Adam and, later, Chava, He did not impose many rules onto them; the one guideline that Hashem gave to them was not to eat from the *etz hadaat*. When the *nachash* came to Chava and asked her about this rule, Chava added a new aspect of the commandment: not only was she not allowed to eat from the tree, but she was not even allowed to touch the tree. Therefore, when the *nachash* "pushed" her up against the tree and nothing happened, Chava inevitably became confused. The *nachash* was then slowly able to convince her that it was permissible to eat from the tree as well.

Chava convinced Adam to follow suit, and once they ate from the *etz hadaat*, they hid from Hashem, realizing their nakedness. This created a certain distance between themselves and Hashem. However, upon closer inspection of the text, it seems that even before Adam and Chava ate from the *etz hadaat*, there already existed a separation between the two humans and Hashem.

Hashem gave Adam and Chava one rule to follow, and even then, even with only a single commandment to bear in mind, they were not able to follow His will. They were already at a distance

from Hashem by not following His decree, but they distanced themselves even more when they hid from Him. Granted, they were naked and embarrassed, so their first reaction was to hide and be ashamed of their nakedness. However, this one act set the tone for our relationship with Hashem.

Adam and Chava set the example of hiding from Hashem and pushing away from Him after doing something wrong, something against His will. This feels like a natural reaction to us, because we are so used to it, but if one were to think about it, most people would prefer to seek out love and be embraced. By being showered with compassion, people would be able to change their behavior for the better when they stumble. This is a much more logical reaction than to hide, as humans tend to do. And who better to seek that love from, than Hashem, our Creator and Father who understands us more than anyone.

In Parshat Vayeitzei, Yaakov Avinu fell asleep and Hashem appeared to him in a dream. In this dream, Hashem promises Yaakov that he will have many descendants and that they will inherit *Eretz Yisrael*. In his dream, Yaakov sees *השמימה מגיע וראשו* *סלם מצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה*, the ladder up to *Shamayim* with angels ascending and descending. Following this, Hashem promises Yaakov that He will be with him and protect him. Once Yaakov wakes up completely, he says (28:18-19) *אכן יש ה' במקום הזה ואנכי לא ידעתי, ויירא ויאמר מה נורא* (28:18-19) *המקום הזה אין זה כי אם בית אלקים וזה שער השמים*, “Surely Hashem is in this place and I did not know it!”

But how could Yaakov not know that Hashem was there? Hashem is everywhere; Hashem is always with him. Today, many people have adapted the same attitude as Yaakov. We often do not realize that we are with Hashem, and He is with us, 24/7, always watching over us. The Sforno expands on this saying *ואנכי לא ידעתי* *שאלו ידעתי הייתי מכין עצמי לנבואה ולא כן עשיתי*. The Sforno adds that had Yaakov known that he was in the presence of Hashem, he would have prepared himself mentally to receive Hashem's

Divine presence, but before the dream, evidently he was unaware that Hashem was there.

He wished he had the opportunity to prepare so that he could better receive it and appreciate it more. As it states, 'אכן יש ה' במקום הזה ואנכי לא ידעתי, it seems that our relationship with Hashem has been one created as an afterthought. For example, one might say: "I was a mess and running late this morning, but *Baruch Hashem*, because of that, I missed the accident on the way to work." While this thought is amazing, as it shows one recognizing Hashem in life, what about *while* they were running late; were they looking for Hashem then? Did they realize that this moment was planned for their ultimate good?

It is hard to look for Hashem in every circumstance, especially the tough ones. When bad things happen in life, the easiest thing to do is to drown in self pity and dwell on the difficulties of life. This is not an appropriate response, and to rectify it, we must engage in self improvement, introspection, and recognition of Who this moment and circumstance in your life was sent from.

When Moshe saw the burning bush, he was in awe. How could a bush be on fire and not be burning up and consumed by the fire? Intrigued, Moshe approached the bush. וירא ה' כי סר לראות ויקרא אליו. (Shemot 3:4), Hashem called "Moshe! Moshe!" to which Moshe responded "*Hineini*: Here I am." Later in the perek, in pasuk 7, it says ויאמר ה' ראה ראיתי את עמי אשר במצרים ואת צעקתם שמעתי מפני נגשיו כי ידעתי את מכאביו, "And Hashem continued, 'I have marked well the plight of My people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry because of their taskmasters; yes, I am mindful of their sufferings.'"

When Bnei Yisrael were in Egypt, they initially did not reach out to Hashem because they did not believe. It was not until they cried and began reaching out, no matter how little Hashem seemed to listen to them, that Hashem reached out to Moshe as a vessel to facilitate bringing Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. It only took one cry,

for Bnei Yisrael to begin to reach out to Hashem, and for Hashem, in turn, to “swoop in” and rescue them. Hashem is always right there next to and with everyone. One simply has to open a vessel, with even the smallest of holes, and allow Hashem in, so He can perform, and you will recognize, wonderful things for you in life.

Megillat Esther does not mention Hashem’s name once. It is composed of constant miraculous events that do not mention Hashem at all. Rabbi Benzion Klatzo points out that it would be so easy for Hashem to get everyone to believe in Him by doing a big miracle. However, Rabbi Klatzko explains that the goal is not for Hashem to just make a big revealed miracle; rather, it is for us to seek out *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* in everything; this will ultimately lead us to *Mashiach*.

The revelation of Hashem needs to be done in steps and stages. If Hashem continues sending us miracle after miracle, it will not help us build our *emunah* in Him. Rabbi Klatzo states, “We need Purim to tell us that even when we do not see Hashem, Hashem is there”; it is our job to pull Hashem out of the day to day and find Him ourselves.

Everyone has personal likes and dislikes, and things they care about. One may daven for things as significant as health and safety for themselves, their family, and *klal Yisrael*, or even things that seem small and insignificant. When these *tefillot* are answered, some may take a second and recognize that it all came from Hashem; unfortunately however, many do not. The only way to begin to do so, is by taking one step at a time. For instance, upon waking up in the morning and looking at the shining sun, you can thank Hashem for allowing you to feel the sun. Or, when you come home and find your favorite snack in the fridge, thank Hashem. Do not wait for a moment to pass before you reach out to thank Hashem. Hashem wants to hear from us.

Even if it seems small and insignificant, each acknowledgement, *tefillah*, and expression of *hakarat hatov* to Hashem helps open up more lines of communication and strengthens our relation-

ship to Him. Hashem, the Creator of the universe and everything in it, Who knows all and has infinite power, cares about us, and wants to have a relationship with us. He is truly everywhere in our lives. It is *our* job to pull Hashem out from behind the curtain and be ready to see Him as an active participant in our lives.

Exile: A Deep Dive

There have been no shortage of moments when the howling wilderness of exile has encircled the Jewish people. In times of ruin and darkness, a powerful and ageless longing for the ultimate redemption surges up and we raise our grief-stricken voices in a plea for salvation. “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem...”, we are always reminded again. Such is the pattern of history. At first glance, the process of Jewish exile and redemption seems relatively straightforward: the Jewish people sin, we are scattered among the nations and oppressed, and one day we shall be brought back to the Land of Israel to again fully serve Hashem. Indeed, this is a narrative we know well from our daily prayers, as we face the Temple Mount and pray for the ultimate redemption (may it come speedily in our days!)

But how, precisely, does this process operate? What is the function of exile? What is it meant to accomplish? What is the role of the Jewish people in bringing about, and conversely, alleviating it? Is it a passive or an active role? What is the relationship between the Jewish people and the nations among whom we are scattered? What are the challenges posed by the different *galuyot*, and how are they crucial for the development of Am Yisrael? It is more complex than we may think. Examining in depth, the operation, objective, and global vision of this process are quite nuanced, and there are various ways it is understood in Jewish thought.

First, let us begin with the mechanics of *galut*. How does the exile “work”? What must occur for us to be redeemed? The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh (Devarim 4:29) says that while redemption is inevitable, the manner of our return is conditional. If we are stirred to self-reflection and genuine remorse for our wickedness and duly repent, we will achieve redemption without pain. If, however, we do not recognize our mistakes, then we will be violently persecuted and

cry out in anguish to return to Hashem. This on its own will cleanse us of sin, and we will be redeemed.

However, this view is not shared by everyone. Kli Yakar (Devarim 4:25) does not present the agonies of exile as a conditional alternative to sincere repentance, but rather as the final stages of a process. Hashem will not punish us every time we sin in exile. Our wickedness will accumulate over long stretches, and we will live in regularity, sometimes even prosperity. Then, at the very end, the floodgates of wrath will be opened and catastrophe, which is an integral part of the redemption process, will occur in rapid succession¹. In this model, we cannot avoid retribution through repentance. Punishment is the inevitable consequence to our rejection of the covenant. This is reminiscent of the *כור הברזל* analogy: just as an iron furnace purifies gold (Rashi Devarim 4:20), so too suffering purges us of evil.

In the Kuzari (4:23), R' Yehudah HaLevi offers an alternate approach. His suggestion neither creates a dialectic between “willing” and “coerced” repentance, nor does it isolate pain as redemptive on its own. Instead, suffering is a means of opening our eyes. The Jewish people’s experience of pain in exile is what is supposed to awaken us to correct our ways and thus redeem the entire world. In *Eim HaBanim Semeicha*, HaRav Yisachar Shlomo Teichtal also discusses how the suffering of exile is meant to open our eyes and even takes it a step further. In Rav Teichtal’s view, the novelty of the redemption is that we become inspired to lift ourselves out of the darkness of exile – it is what Hashem hopes we will do both physically and metaphysically.

The sole purpose of all the afflictions that smite us in our exile is to arouse us to return to our Holy Land... The essential point is that Hashem is waiting for us to take the initiative, to desire and long for the return to Eretz Yisrael. He does not want us to wait for Him to bring us there.²

¹ Also see Yeshayahu 60:22.

² *Eim HaBanim Semeicha*, Second Introduction, Section II.

We have now widened the scope of what the redemptive process might involve. But whether the suffering of exile is an alternative to peaceful recognition of our mistakes, or if the agonies themselves act to purify and elevate us for redemption, or if it is a joint process through which the pain of exile awakens us to return to the Land of Israel – we should take our desolate condition and miraculous survival as a lesson to inspire us to return to Hashem. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch's "The Nineteen Letters" (1836) phrases it beautifully.

The collapse of the state, then, served in its way to educate Yisrael just as much as its former prosperity had done... All around it, other states, high and mighty in their human power, have disappeared from the earth, while Yisrael, devoid of might and majesty, has lived on through its loyalty to G-d and His Law. Could Yisrael fail, then, forever to venerate this one G-d as the only G-d in its life and to accept His Torah as its sole duty?³

Let us now consider this globally. What is the involvement of the nations of the world in this process? In Parshat Va'etchanan, it seems from the pasuk (Devarim 4:25) that the fundamental sin of Bnei Yisrael is idolatry; they become corrupt and create images for themselves. The adoption of foreign customs and ideologies is their undoing. They become corrupt and worship foreign gods.

However, while the Ohr HaChaim and Kli Yakar see this process of change as chiefly between G-d and the Jews, Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato places a great emphasis on the Jews as conduit of redemption for all of humanity. In Derech Hashem (Israel and the Nations), he presents the entirety of history as the process of correcting the sin of the *Etz HaDaat*. He describes how the sin is a universal condition, the rectification of which is a responsibility now borne by the Jews. This approach, of a shattered, 'post-*Etz HaDaat*' world, is quintessential Ramchal. But while other Jewish thinkers don't see history from that particular vantage point, the notion of universality of the Jewish destiny is held by many.

³ Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters*, the Ninth Letter: Exile.

In the Kuzari, R' Yehuda HaLevi compares the Jewish people to the heart. It is a highly sensitive organ – it can both benefit from or fall quite ill from the other organs (the nations of the world). We have polluted ourselves with foreign ideologies, but our sins are none but our own. Through the experience of exile and the correction of those sins, we bring salvation to the world:

At first glance, the seed seems to change and decompose into the surrounding soil, water, and manure. To the onlooker, there seems to be nothing tangible left of it. But in reality it is the seed that changes the earth and water to its nature — it converts them step by step, until it refines the elements and transforms them into its own form (Kuzari, 4:23).

It is from a long line of such thinkers that Rav Hirsch draws inspiration when writing his exposition of this topic in *The Nineteen Letters* (1836):

Therefore there would be introduced into the ranks of the nations one people which would demonstrate by its history and way of life that the sole foundation of life is G-d alone; that life's only purpose is the fulfillment of His Will...To all appearances being at the mercy of nations armed with self-reliant might, it was to be directly sustained by G-d Himself so that, in manifestly overcoming all opposing forces, G-d would stand revealed as the sole Creator, Judge and Master of history and nature... Is it conceivable that these nations learned nothing from all this? Could they fail to recognize that the higher power preserving Yisrael throughout its experiences is the One Alone, and that the loyalty to Him demonstrated by Yisrael is the task of all humanity?⁴

What a venerable, glorified picture of the Jewish people in the context of the nations! We, by aligning ourselves with the Divine Will, are the bringers of universal salvation in spite of homelessness and oppression. This, however, is not the only picture we have of the Jews and the nations. In a retelling of the Exodus, Yechezkel (20:7-9) explains that the Am Yisrael deserve to be completely

⁴ *The Nineteen Letters*, The Seventh Letter: Yisrael Among the Nations.

annihilated in Egypt, and were it not for the covenant with the *Avot*, we would not be redeemed. It is purely for the sake of Hashem's name that He saved us in Egypt, lest the observing nations scoff that Hashem does not keep His word! It appears that the nations of the world are not accidental to our condition, or even the external reason for our 'fall from grace'. We hang on to our existence by a thread, and their watching eyes are part and parcel of our destiny.

However, if we take a look at the original covenant with Avraham, at the *Brit Bein HaBetarim*, (Bereishit 15:13-14), something is conspicuously absent.

ויאמר לאברהם ידע תדע כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם ועבדום וענו
אתם ארבע מאות שנה. וגם את הגוי אשר יעבדו דן אנכי ואחרי כן
יצאו ברכש גדול.

In this first prophecy of exile and redemption, there is no mention of the Jews becoming influenced by the nations, nor in any way deserving their enslavement or liberation. The language of the *Brit* is unconditional, the Egyptians are neutral vehicles of oppression, and there is no discernible lesson to be learned either for the Jews or the Egyptians. The Radak asks, "How could Hashem punish the Egyptians if He wanted the Jews to be enslaved? Aren't they fulfilling His Will?" He answers that the Egyptians were excessively cruel to the Jews; they oppressed them with a vengeance far harsher than what Hashem decreed. That is why they deserved to be punished.

Egypt was a vehicle of the Divine destiny and yet maintained its ability to be held accountable for her evil. But does Yechezkel not teach us that the Jewish people actually deserve far worse – complete eradication – and are only spared because of the covenant? This complaint is founded on a mistaken premise. Hashem's metric for dealing with the Egyptians had nothing to do whatsoever with the merits of the Jewish people. Nothing could be further from the truth. Hashem kept His covenant with Avraham unconditionally, and therefore, He decreed that the Jews be oppressed *not* according to the severity of their sins, but instead the prescribed

amount set by Him. The Jews are not to be destroyed, nor harmed 'excessively': excessive according to the allowance of G-d, not the waywardness of the Jews. This is because the covenant is eternally binding. The Egyptians violated this parameter and grossly overstepped their bounds. This was more than simple viciousness; this was a sneer against Hashem as the Giver of the Covenant.

Now, it is possible that Egypt was a unique case, and its covenantal and global implications were not to be applied so roundly to future exiles. However, the Ramban comments on the words *והנה אימה חשכה גדלה נפלת עליו* (Bereishit 15:12) that this prophecy of the *Brit Bein HaBetarim* was embedded with references to the four future *galuyot*. *אימה* corresponds to Babylonia, *חשכה* is Persia/Media, *גדלה* is Greece, *נפלת עליו* is Rome. Just because the *Brit Bein HaBetarim* does not explicate their role, it does not mean the nations are irrelevant to the Jewish condition – it merely means that the Covenant will never hinge on prominence of those nations. Just as the covenant with Avraham is eternal, so too this prophecy see us through all four *galuyot*. If so, what is to be learned from such a relationship, which is noncontingent and everlasting? What does the mere existence of the Jews do, whether we are living up to our beliefs or not? What space do we fill? The answer to that changes in every generation, every new location, and every variant of society.

Up until now we have been discussing exile from a bird's eye view, through the broad strokes of our ultimate destiny. If we are to understand what exile is, though, we ought to look into what each of them specifically means for us as a people. Each exile was distinct and speaks to a different challenge the Jewish people face throughout history. The Midrash Rabbah (Bereishit 1:2) indicates that each of the descriptions of the primordial, unformed world is a hint to each of the exiles. This is highly symbolic, suggesting that Creation itself is a process of redemption. In the beginning of Creation, there are four conditions unsuited to support life. Then, Hashem created a world that is good, ordered, habitable, and ultimately infused with the breath of life and the advent of rest. Human history is a grand retelling of that Creation story (Bereishit 1:2).

והארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על פני תהום ורוח אלקים מרחפת על פני המים.

תהו (unformed) is Babylonia. ובהו (void) is Persia/Media. וחשך (darkness) is Greece, and על פני תהום (over the surface of the deep) is Rome/our current exile. Let us look thematically at what each of these exiles mean for the Jewish people.

Babylonia is the first exile; the Jews were thrust into a foreign land for the first time. It is this period in history which initiated our struggle to maintain our distinct Jewish identity in exile. To not dissolve into the surrounding people was a challenge exacerbated due to the relative mildness of the conditions in Bavel. No longer did we have a Beit HaMikdash to concretize our relationship with Hashem. The very language we spoke became muddled and confused; we landed there unformed and intermarried with the surrounding gentiles. Additionally, after Bavel, the transition from prophecy to prayer occurred.

Upon our return for the building of the second Temple, Ezra HaSofer established a number of *takkanot* to reassert Jewish distinctness, and particularly took a firm stance against intermarriage. An official codified text for *tefillah* was established, and the power of the written word became something which continues to distinguish and sustain the Jewish people long after, even to this very day. Babylonia is the as-sumption of a more active role in sustaining a relationship with Hashem.

תהו ובהו means void, emptiness. During the Persian exile, a terrifying prospect loomed before us – physical annihilation. The truth is that this was already taking shape spiritually by the time Haman arrived on the scene⁵. The culture of Shushan was hedonistic, shortsighted,

⁵ We are told in the Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a that had the Jews not accepted the Torah, Hashem would have returned the world to its state of primordial chaos, תהו ובהו. While we are forced to accept it at Har Sinai, it was at the story of Purim that we accepted it without coercion. I found this worth noting, because it juxtaposes our acceptance of the Torah with our eternal confrontation with Amalek, thus highlighting the utter irreconcilability of Shushan/Haman with the acceptance of Torah. Amalek is antagonistic to everything the Torah holds dear, and a world without the Jews truly is a return to

and nihilistic. The impulsive tyranny of Achashveirosh represented a culture steeped in randomness and flamboyance, where the only worthy goal was the debaucheries attainable in the present moment. Many people participated, embraced the emptiness, the *בהו*, of *Shushan*. The succumbing to this way of life effectively signs away Jewish survival. This became glaringly clear with the decree for our complete obliteration. Against all odds, we make it through the second challenge; in a time of *hester panim*, when the world seems empty of G-d, we remain true. We are still living, breathing, and infusing the empty pleasures of life with purpose.

Greece is *חשך*, darkness. What is darkness? Darkness is intangible and innocuous. You cannot crush darkness with brute force; you can only dispel it with light. This appropriately corresponds to the Hellenistic period, the exile where the Jews were still in their land, by and large running their own state. Then, the hostile Greek philosophy and culture began to seep into the Jewish world. Torah was scorned and our lifestyle was banned. The morally and intellectually idealistic Greeks embracing the Jews, so long as we shed our Jewishness. After the threat of genocide, it was easy to write off the Greeks as harmless. After experiencing Persia's low culture, lascivious and crass, blunt in its antagonism and crude in its methods, Greece's high culture was sophisticated and contemplative, something highly alluring to the Jewish intellectual appetite. So, when the ragtag *Maccabean* army stands up against the colossal Greek forces, it was more than a mere battle for dominance. The story of Chanukah was when the Jewish notion of heroism challenges the mighty Greek hero – the few against the many, a “leap into the absurd”⁶. The light of the menorah remains the greatest symbol of Jewish continuity to this day.

the void. Perhaps this is why it is said that, of all of the Jewish holidays, Purim will be the sole festival that will still be celebrated during the Days of Mashiach. (Midrash Mishlei 9)

⁶ For elaboration on the Jewish idea of heroism, see Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik's 1978 essay *Catharsis*.

The final stage of exile is our current one. In Midrash Rabbah, the Roman/present day corresponds to the very cryptic, very mysterious phrase **על פני תהום**, “over the surface of the deep”. This is a very appropriate description, especially when compared to the description of the final *galut* found in chapter 2 of Daniel. When Daniel interpreted Nevuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue, and explained that it represents different kingdoms which will rise and dominate the earth, he described the fourth empire thusly (2:40-43):

ומלכו (רביעיה) [רביעאה] תהוא תקיפה כפרולא כל קבל די פרולא מהדק וחשל כלא וכפרולא די מרעע כל אלן תדק ותרע.

But the fourth kingdom will be as strong as iron; just as iron crushes and shatters everything – and like iron that smashes – so will it crush and smash all these (previous kingdoms).

ודי חזיתה רגליא ואצבעתא (מנהון) [מנהון] חסף די פחר (ומנהון) [ומנהון] פרול מלכו פליגה תהוא ומן נצבתא די פרולא להוא בה כל קבל די חזיתה פרולא מערב בחסף טינא.

You saw the feet and the toes, part potter’s clay and part iron; that means it will be a divided kingdom; it will have only some of the stability of iron, inasmuch as you saw iron mixed with common clay.

ואצבעת רגליא (מנהון) [מנהון] פרול (ומנהון) [ומנהון] חסף מן קצת מלכותא תהוא תקיפה ומנה תהוא תבירה.

And the toes were part iron and part clay; that [means] the kingdom will be in part strong and in part brittle.

(די) [ודי] חזית פרולא מערב בחסף טינא מתערבין להון בזרע אנשא ולא להון דבקין דנה עם דנה הא כדי פרולא לא מתערב עם חספא.

You saw iron mixed with common clay; that means: they shall intermingle with the offspring of men, but shall not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay.

We can clearly see the words from Sefer Daniel manifesting themselves in our days. The past empires were consigned to oblivion and in the wake of Rome have been followed with a tidal wave of political regimes, social movements, and a shuffling, blurring, and breakdown of nationalities. There is iron, and there is clay. From the Crusades to the Ottoman Empire to the Enlightenment, to the American Revolution to the World Wars to Darwinism and

Postmodernism, the world has been in a process of rapid change which is only speeding up. There is incredible technological advancement, but there are also countries without resources or education. The lines between high culture and low culture are nearly indiscernible; we are more geographically united than ever before, but for all the mixing and matching of cultures, hatred seethes appallingly between different groups.

The question of covenant-exile-redemption is a puzzle I don't think anyone has quite figured out. What are we lamenting on Tisha B'av? Our spiritual downfall which landed us in this state of calamity or the agony of the Jews throughout the ages? The two are reconciled by speaking to the same point – the unconditional Brit is the bedrock of our faith. Egypt served as the forerunner to all the successive attempts to uproot the Brit, and we have safeguarded our commitment to the Torah on a thousand different fronts as history has progressed. Even when we fail to do so, our existence as a people still represents that ideal. It is the indissolubility of that bond to which *churban* itself stands witness.

This one is a murky exile, a bewildering one, vast and unpredictable. It is a mix of everything we have faced before as a people: uncertainty about Jewish identity, political upheaval, genocide, ideological hostility to the Torah, assimilation, bouts of terror, slander within and without, and much more. But for all of its towering fearsomeness, it is nothing we have not faced before. As the prophecy about the destruction came to pass, so too shall the prophecy about our redemption!⁷

⁷ See Makkot (24b).

Judaism and Nationalism

Do They Go Together?

In discussing Judaism's relationship to nationalism, it is important to start with a question. What is nationalism? The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy brings two definitions of nationalism: "(One) the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their identity as members of that nation and (Two) the actions that the members of a nation take in seeking to achieve (or sustain) some form of political sovereignty." The first idea is that nationalism is the feeling individual people who care about being part of their nation have. The second is essentially the way that the first idea manifests – nationalism is the steps taken by members of that nation to gain political sovereignty.

Before discussing the Jewish perspective on these definitions, the term "nation" must also be defined to clarify if Judaism meets the threshold of a nation (according to its secular definition). According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "the nation is a somewhat mixed category, both ethno-cultural and civic, but still closer to the purely ethno-cultural than to the purely civic extreme." The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy does not give solid prerequisites of nationhood, but says that it is a mixed definition, and that a nation can be united by ethnicity, culture, and civics. However, the Encyclopedia points out that a nation is more often closer to ethno-cultural than civic.

Judaism is clearly a nation rooted in ethnicity, as evidenced by the fact that one's Jewish status is determined by who his or her mother is, with the exception of converts. What separates the ethnicity of the Jewish nation from that of other nations is that our ethnicity is determined by the status of the mother. There is also no such thing as half Jews or pure Jews; there is only "Jewish" and "non-Jewish". This elimination of questionable statuses eliminates the potential problem that other ethnicities have experienced, in

terms of disappearance of the ethnicity, confusion over who is considered part of that ethnicity, etc.

Judaism also has its distinct culture. In fact, culture is what ties together many Reform, Conservative, and secular Jews with their Orthodox brothers and sisters. Culture is codified from a religious perspective by *minhagim*, the traditions passed down through generations. Culture, unlike ethnicity, does not unite all Jews. There are Jews that reject or are unaware of, not only their religion, but their culture as well. Despite this, they are still *halachically* considered part of the Jewish nation. In this way, the Jewish definition of nationhood differs vastly from the secular philosophical definition of nationhood; in Judaism, all determination of nationhood is placed upon ethnicity, and culture is not as much of a factor as ethnicity is.

Finally, the Jewish nation is united by the *Brit Avot* and the *Brit Sinai*, the covenant made between Avraham and Hashem and the covenant between all of Bnei Yisrael and Hashem.

If Bnei Yisrael were living up to the ideals that the Torah envisions for them of maintaining Judaism as an ethnicity by not intermarrying, and sustaining their covenant made with Hashem, it would fall perfectly into the current philosophical definition of a nation. Now that the term “nation” has been defined, and it has been established that Judaism is considered a nation by the current definition, Judaism’s relation to nationalism can be more comprehensively explored.

The first definition of nationalism, according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, is “the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their identity as members of that nation.” This definition raises questions regarding how much one should care about one’s nation. According to the Encyclopedia, nationalists often demand a high level of care for one’s nation, to the extent that the nation should come before other things that demand a person’s loyalty. This view is paradoxically, very clearly both in line and not in line with Jewish values.

Loyalty to the nation is an important value as long as it is in line with loyalty to Hashem. The *Aseret HaDibrot* contain both *mitzvot bein adam lamakom* and *mitzvot bein adam lachaveiro*. The second Beit HaMikdash was destroyed because of *sinat chinam*. Loyalty towards the nation is clearly a value of Judaism within the context of loyalty to Hashem.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook was known to champion the value and power of Am Yisrael as a *klal*. He writes, “The Torah of Eretz Yisrael is distinguished by this emphasis on the *klal*, and on the understanding that the greatest sanctification of Hashem in the world comes through Klal Yisrael – and not through the individual Jew in his private worship of Hashem” (Orot HaTorah 13:7). While this is a beautiful idea, from a nationalist perspective, how does this idea manifest as an attitude? The book *Torat Eretz Yisrael* quotes his son, Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook:

Occasionally, people ask what is the meaning of ‘the *klal*?’ They claim that the *klal* is the sum total of individual components, or a gathering of all the individual parts of the whole. There aren’t proper words to reject this conception. This is a materialistic viewpoint, which lacks intellectual depth... The understanding of the *klal* is not the gathering together of the individual parts of the nation. Rather, the *klal* is a Divine creation, a fundamental Divine formation which reveals itself, superficially, in its physical aspect, in a multiplication of parts. This understanding is vitally connected to the foundations of *emunah*, and to its most essential principles.

Rav Tzvi Yehuda gives guidance here on how to relate to the *klal* as an idea, which can reveal how Jews are supposed to, according to the Encyclopedia’s definition, “care about their identities as members of that [the Jewish] nation.” This idea of how to relate to one’s identity as part of the Jewish nation is far removed from secular nationalism. Rav Tzvi says that it is important to relate to the *klal*, and to one’s identity as part of the *klal*, as something much more grounded in divinity than simply separate parts united as a whole. A contrast to Rav Tzvi’s *kabbalistic* approach is Rav Soloveitchik’s approach as told through Rav Aharon Lichtenstein.

Rav Lichtenstein writes in his essay on the Rav's approach to Zionism,

How central is Klal Yisrael in the Rav's philosophy? If we compare the importance the Rav assigned to national considerations with that assigned to them by other Religious Zionist thinkers – certainly those of the Rav Kook school – then the Rav lags behind them, and in several respects. But if we ask ourselves whether the Rav's thinking was individualistic, viewing man atomistically as being removed from an organic social context, then this is certainly not the case. His essay 'The Community' makes this clear, although someone who approaches his works seeking political Zionism in its encompassing and demanding sense will not find it there.¹

Rav Lichtenstein acknowledges that the Rav's approach towards the importance of *Klal Yisrael* is moderate, especially when compared to Rav Kook's philosophy. However, he says that the Rav still placed importance on the idea that Bnei Yisrael should not see themselves as an individualistic society.

The second definition of nationalism is, "the actions that the members of a nation take in seeking to achieve (or sustain) some form of political sovereignty." Is there a halachic obligation to establish Jewish sovereignty? And, if not, is Jewish sovereignty even still considered an ideal? These questions are especially poignant in this day and age with the prevalence and controversy of political Zionism.

Belief in Jewish sovereignty as a value can be split into three schools of thought. Some believe that Jewish sovereignty has inherent value, regardless of the time period. Some believe that Jewish sovereignty will have inherent value only at the time of *Mashiach*, but can be used as a means to an end until then. Some believe that Jewish sovereignty may have inherent value at the time of *Mashiach*, but nowadays is something dangerous, and a breaking of the *shvuah* mentioned in the Gemara (Ketubot 111a):

¹ etzion.org.il/en/philosophy/great-thinkers/rav-soloveitchik/rav-soloveitchik%E2%80%99s-approach-zionism.

ורבי זירא, ההוא מיבעי ליה לכדרבי יוסי ברבי חנינא, דאמר: שלש שבועות הללו למה? אחת שלא יעלו ישראל בחומה, ואחת שהשביע הקדוש ברוך הוא את ישראל שלא ימרדו באומות העולם, ואחת שהשביע הקדוש ברוך הוא את הגוים שלא ישתעבדו בהן בישראל יותר מדאי.

Although there is no halachic requirement nowadays to establish Jewish sovereignty, there are halachot surrounding the Jewish sovereign, the *melech*. Rabbi Judah Goldberg, in discussing Jewish sovereignty as a value of Judaism, brings Rav Amital's view on Jewish sovereignty. Rav Amital believed strongly in Jewish sovereignty as an ideal not only for *Mashiach* but for any era of Jewish history. He would quote the Mishnah Torah (Hilchot Megillah veChannukah 3:1) to back up his claim:

בבית שני כשמלכי יון גזרו גזרות על ישראל ובטלו דתם ולא הניחו אותם לעסק בתורה ובמצות. ופשטו ידם בממונם ובבנותיהם ונכנסו להיכל ופרצו בו פרצות וטמאו הטהרות. וצר להם לישראל מאד מפניהם ולחצום לחץ גדול עד שרחם עליהם אלקי אבותינו והושיעם מידם והצילם וגברו בני השמונאי הכהנים הגדולים והרגום והושיעו ישראל מידם והעמידו מלך מן הכהנים וחזרה מלכות לישראל יתר על מאתים שנה עד החרבן השני.

Rav Amital noted how the Rambam viewed the return of Jewish sovereignty in the era of the second Beit Hamikdash as a cause for celebration, despite the problematic *yichus* of the ruling family. Rabbi Dr. Judah Goldberg writes, "I vividly remember him [Rav Amital] declaring that in 1948, in the wake of the Holocaust, he would have been happy with a Jewish state in Uganda!"² Rav Amital's declaration is an extreme but impactful statement. Despite how radical the idea may seem to some, it serves to drive home Rav Amital's point – Jewish sovereignty is something to strive for regardless of the time period or location.

Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook was a strong believer in the importance of pre-messianic Jewish sovereignty as well. Regarding Jewish Sovereignty, Rav Tzvi Yehuda says,

² etzion.org.il/en/halakha/studies-halakha/philosophy-halakha/jewish-peoplehood-10-covenantal-zionism.

The intrinsic value of the State is not dependent on the number of observant Jews who live here. Of course, our aspiration is that all of our people will embrace the Torah and the *mitzvot*. However, the Statehood of Israel is *Kadosh*, whatever religious level it has... *Yom Haatzmaut* is the celebration of the existence of our State. This State, which was proclaimed in the Tel Aviv Museum, has its share of problems, and, certainly, there are matters which demand correction. However, it does not start from the proclamation in the Tel Aviv Museum. Rather, it evolves from the holy words of the Rambam that we are commanded by the Torah to possess and dwell in this land.³

Rav Tzvi Yehuda places Jewish sovereignty on a very high pedestal, calling it *kadosh*.

Rav Soloveitchik did not seem to view Jewish sovereignty as a value that applied to pre-messianic times. He did not take an explicit stance on it, but it is clear from Rav Lichtenstein's essay on Rav Soloveitchik's approach to Zionism that the Rav did not share Rav Kook's approach. He may not have outright rejected pre-messianic Jewish sovereignty as a value, but Rav Lichtenstein's essay clearly shows that the Rav was not fond of the idea.

The Rav recognized the importance of the State, both in terms of itself and in terms of its capabilities. He was also very attached to Eretz Yisrael, and attentive to what was happening in it. Yet in his view, Zionism was not merely equivalent to the State. He saw the building of the State as part of a greater project.⁴

The Rav viewed the state of Israel as not just a sovereign power, but as an extremely significant stepping stone. This view sharply contrasts that of many religious Zionists that follow the Rav Kook school of thought.

Rabbi Judah Goldberg, in his course on Jewish values, brings a beautiful third idea to the table, a fusion of Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Kook's approaches. In his course, Rabbi Goldberg discusses the differences between Jewish values derived from *Brit Avot* and

³ See *Torat Eretz Yisrael*.

⁴ Rav Soloveitchik's Approach to Zionism.

Jewish values derived from *Brit Sinai*. Rabbi Goldberg proposes that *Brit Avot* and *Brit Sinai* bring slightly different values to the table, and writes about Jewish sovereignty through this lens. He says,

Inspired by R. Amital, I cautiously suggest my own 'third way' regarding Jewish sovereignty in Israel, a sort of fusion of R. Soloveitchik's and R. Kook's ideologies. Perhaps we can say that a sovereign Jewish state is indeed significant in its own right — not for *Brit Sinai*, but for *Brit Avot*. Regarding the spiritual destiny of the Jewish people, encapsulated by the covenant of Sinai, the State may indeed simply be a means to an end, and we need not interpret its founding in messianic or specifically spiritual terms. Regarding our national identity and ability to flourish as a people, however, political independence is critical to the ultimate vision of 'I shall make you a great nation' and 'I will make your name great' (Bereishit 12:2). Following R. Amital, we can assert that the return of sovereignty marks a milestone in the unfolding history of the Jewish nation, regardless of the relationship between this sovereign entity and values derived from Sinai.⁵

Rabbi Goldberg finds a way for the two schools of thought to co-exist instead of contradict. He essentially argues that both approaches have their own place in Judaism, based on the idea that there are two different yet synchronized value sets stemming from *Brit Avot* and *Brit Sinai*.

While Rabbi Goldberg's proposal combines two schools of thought on how Jewish sovereignty is approached, he does not raise the third school of thought that is more often (although not always) seen in the religious non-Zionist sects of Judaism. This is the idea that pre-messianic Jewish sovereignty has no inherent value, and should also not be used as a means to an end.

Interestingly, most present-day and older religious anti-Zionists do not base their anti-Zionism on the third approach. The Satmar Rebbe, Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, is well known for his *halachic* anti-Zionist approach. One of his anti-Zionist works, *VaYoel-Moshe*, is an incredibly complex *halachic* discussion of various sources to

⁵ Jewish Peoplehood: Covenantal Zionism.

bring proofs on why he was so opposed to Zionism. In his work, he writes about how it may be problematic to move to Eretz Yisrael, and even if it is not problematic, it is not a value in the time of the diaspora: we cannot have a majority of Jews living in Eretz Yisrael before the time of *Mashiach*, Jews cannot take action before the right time, and the three oaths in Ketubot 111a are binding and may even qualify as *halacha*. The Satmar Rebbe writes:

And the same is clear from all the Midrashim: the Midrash Rabbah, the Tanchuma, the Mechilta, the Yalkut and the rest of the Midrashim, which say that the oaths [the three *shvuot*] were violated by the Bnei Ephraim, Ben Koziva and others who took actions to redeem themselves and take for themselves a kingdom before the right time. These groups were severely and very bitterly punished for this violation, may Hashem *Yisborach* spare us and protect us.⁶

On the other hand, Rav Zelig Reuven Bengis, who at one point headed the *Eidah HaChareidit*, seemed to show support for limited Jewish sovereignty and also made a distinction which explains the general *Chareidi* philosophy when it comes to government. He stated during the United Nations' hearings prior to the establishment of the State:

According to our Holy Law any Jewish community organization must satisfy all religious requirements since otherwise decisions of such Council carry no weight or binding force... For the people of Israel and the Law of Israel are one. And as a people or as a public community Israel is but considered in relation to its Torah. The basic conditions for all arrangements in Jewish public affairs is the recognition of the Holy Law in such affairs by electing as its representatives the Religious Heads of the community who are loyal to the Traditions of our Law. That is the reason why orthodox Jews can never recognize the Jewish Agency as the representative body of the entire Jewish people as envisaged by the Mandate.⁷

⁶ truetorahjews.org/translation-vayoel-moshe

⁷ UNSCOP 33rd Meeting, UN doc A/AC.13/PV.33 (16 July 1947)

Rav Bengis submits to the idea that there must be some sort of Jewish authority in the Holy Land not just in regards to rabbinical issues, but as he says, “concerning the management of Jewish public affairs.” In this same quote, the root of *chareidi* anti-government sentiment can be found. As mentioned above, it is not rooted in the rejection of pre-messianic Jewish sovereignty. Rav Bengis is appealing to the U.N. Committee to help the Orthodox Jews establish a religious governing board in Israel saying “any Jewish community organization must satisfy all religious requirements since otherwise decisions of such Council carry no weight or binding force.” His rejection of the present governing body is based on its not being religious, not on the basis of pre-messianic Jewish sovereignty being problematic. One can see that the absolute rejection of pre-messianic sovereignty is by far not the universal opinion of the *chareidi* world.

It is time to return to the original question – is Jewish sovereignty something that Jews should take actions to pursue? It seems that the answer is a resounding yes from most voices and opinions when done within a Torah framework.

