

Kol

קול

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מבשרת

A Compilation of
Insights and Analyses
of Torah Topics

by the students of
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**DEDICATED TO THE
VICTIMS OF THE IRANIAN WAR**

**MAY THE TORAH LEARNED
FROM THIS JOURNAL
BE A BLESSING FOR THEIR MEMORY**

**MAY HASHEM COMFORT THE
FAMILIES WHO HAVE LOST
THEIR LOVED ONES
IN THE RECENT TRAGEDIES**

המקום ינחם אותם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

**MAY THEIR SACRIFICES
NEVER BE FORGOTTEN
AND MAY WE BE INSPIRED
BY THEIR MEMORY
TO DEEPEN OUR COMMITMENT TO TORAH
SHEMIRAT HAMITZVOT
AND AHAVAT YISRAEL**

יהי זכרם ברוך

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear MMY family,

After a year in MMY, we have all learned, been inspired, and grown in Torah through the incredible guidance and education of the MMY faculty. Now, as this year ends, we have newfound opportunities to listen to our friends and hear their analyses on Torah, learning from them, being inspired, and growing with their Torah. The Mishna in Avot (1:6) states: **יהושע בן פרחיה אומר, עשה לך רב, וקנה לך חבר, והוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות**. Following Yehoshua Ben Prachia's edict, it is crucial that one acquires a friend.

The Magen Avot, referring to the words **וקנה לך חבר**, defines a "friend" as not just a confidante, but someone to learn Torah with. Furthermore, he says, **וגם זה לענין קיום התורה**, just as finding a teacher is crucial to fulfilling the mitzvah of learning Torah, so too, one needs to have fellow students with whom to learn Torah. The Gemara (Taanit 7a) states that one who studies alone is not only a fool, but is actually committing a sin, since **מתקיימין ביחידי**. Torah is meant to be comprehended in chavruta, and therefore, one must acquire a chaver before one can achieve a *kinyan* in Torah.

Following the ideals of Yehoshua Ben Prachia, each talmida leaves MMY with a full Shana Alef of chavairot. The articles in Kol Mevaseret are written by the students of MMY, highlighting how much we gain from listening to our peers. R' Chanina says (Taanit 7a): **הרבה למדתי מרבותי, ומחברי יותר מרבותי**. There is a greater level of mastery in Torah that we gain when we learn with and from our friends. Beyond what any scholar can give to his students, the insights of our companions sharpen our knowledge and ignite our neshamot.

To our Rebbeim and Mechanchot: your teaching inside and outside the classroom has allowed us to become true chavairot for each other. You have given us the ability and motivation to continue our learning beyond the walls of MMY. The emphasis you place on

Torah in your own lives encourages us to surround ourselves with people of the same mindset; to learn from them as we have from you.

To Rabbi Lerner: each year you put in an incredible amount of effort so that Kol Mevaseret is published. The hours of work that you pour into this publication ensures that we can fulfill the ordinance of Yehoshua Ben Prachia. Your focus on the students in MMY, and what each student has to say, demonstrates to us truly how much we can learn from one another.

To our editorial staff: each and every one of you worked so hard, attended countless meetings, read endless texts, and spent hours working on articles, all so that your friends' voices could be heard. You dedicated your spare time to read the Torah of your peers, and to learn from it. Your contributions were vital to this unique publication and allowed every reader the ability to hear Torah from a chaver.

To our writers: the amount of time that each of you spent researching and writing your articles is unmistakable. You have given to the readers of Kol Mevaseret the special opportunity to learn from your insights in Torah.

To the year of MMY 5786: every one of us spent many hours daily in the Beit Midrash, with our chavairot, learning together. The Torah that we have learned is what has shaped us through this year, and hopefully for a lifetime to come. It was truly an honor and a privilege to be inspired by your Kol Torah.

Sincerely,

Reema Gampel, Deena Lesnoy, and Eliana Prero
Editors-in-Chief of Kol Mevaseret 5786

INTRODUCTION

As another great year in MMY comes to a close, I can't help but reflect on my own emotions as a young eighteen-year old leaving yeshiva. On the one hand, I had high expectations for what awaited me in Yeshiva University and the thought of being able to contribute to the world outside of the four walls of the Beit Midrash. But I also had a deep desire to prolong the experience. People loved to quote from Dr. Seuss: "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened," but somehow that wasn't enough to settle my conflicting feelings. I assume many of our past talmidot have felt similar on their way out, our future talmidot will feel similar when their turn comes, and our current talmidot, our beloved class of 5786, feel the same as I did, way back when.

In Parshat Shemini, we read of the final day of the **הנוכת המשכן** after many months of construction. Emotions are high as Hashem's presence is about to return to the camp as part of the final forgiveness for *Chet HaEgel*.

In **ויקרא ט:ג-ד**, the people are told which sacrifices to bring and that G-d's presence will appear: **ואל בני ישראל תדבר לאמר קחו שעיר עזים לחטאת ועגל וכבש בני שנה תמימים לעלה. ושור ואיל לשלמים לזבח לפני ה' ומנחה בלולה בשמן כי היום ה' נראה אליכם**.

In **פסוק ה**, we read that the people do as they are told, and then in **פסוק ו** Moshe seems to command the people once again to do something: **ויאמר משה זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' תעשו וירא אליכם כבוד ה'**.

Besides being unclear as to the additional "thing" Bnei Yisrael are being commanded, **פסוק ו** is telling us what seemingly could have been told to us as part of the list that was already stated in **פסוק ד**. Is there something new or different being referred to in **פסוק ו**?

Many *Parshanei HaMikra* explain that the pasuk is telling us that Hashem's presence will manifest itself. The Ramban, for example, writes: **אבל אחר שהזכיר להם הקרבנות, ויקחו את אשר צוה משה ...**

חזר ואמר להם זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' תעשו, שיקריבו הקרבנות על הסדר שיצום, ואחר כך יראה להם הכבוד.

The Seforno, however, sees deep significance in what, from his perspective, is not a repetition at all. In G-d's presence was נראה אליכם, which he reads as past tense and referring to something that has already taken place in the past.

כבר נראה במעשי ידיכם כאמרו (שמות מ:לד) וכבוד ה' מלא את המשכן, וראוי שתכבדוהו בקרבן זה על גילוי שכינתו.

On the other hand, in G-d's presence is וירא, will commence once you do this next step. מלבד גלוי השכינה שהיה במשכן. כאמור (ויקרא ט:כג) וירא כבוד ה' אל כל העם.

Rav Menachem Copperman explained that according to the Seforno's reading of the Pesukim, G-d's presence is already in the Mishkan, as recorded at the end of Sefer Shemot. The Chidush of the Yom HaShmini is that Hashem's presence also needs to spread out now, moving forward beyond the four walls of the Mishkan אל כל העם. As great as our Mishkan is, the Shechinah cannot be confined just there, כי האמנם ישב אלקים על הארץ הנה השמים ושמי השמים. לא יכלכלוך אף כי הבית הזה אשר בניתי (מלכים א ח:כז).

G-d's presence is, of course, everywhere – מלא כל הארץ כבודו. However, feeling that presence is always going to be easier in the Mishkan/Mikdash. When we leave that Mishkan and move to איה מקום כבודו כבודו, it is natural to have times of wondering כל הארץ.

The articles in this Torah journal began with endless hours of study and research in our מקדש מעט, the MMY Beit Midrash, and hopefully our students felt a miniature נראה אליכם that is ראו. We have tremendous HaKarat Hatov to HKB"Y for all that He has done for us, every step of the way. As we now present this publication to the masses, we pray that in some small way, וירא כבוד ה' אל כל העם.

My prayer for each of you, talmidot of our wonderful and special MMY 5786 class, is that as you leave the walls of our איה מקום כבודו כבודו, you don't cry because it's over and don't feel מקדש מעט.

but rather, smile because it happened. May you always feel, in a very tangible way, ברוך כבוד ה' ממקומו.

May you all continue to inspire others around you and merit, וירא כבוד ה' אל כל העם, through you.

Rabbi David Katz

תנ"ך

The True Meaning of Sefer Bereishit

Sefer Bereishit is often referred to as a book of stories, but as Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (*Covenant and Conversation*) explains, these stories are not merely historical accounts. Rather, Bereishit is the Torah's foundational work, presenting a philosophy of the human condition lived under the sovereignty of Hashem. The focus of the sefer is not abstract belief, but human beings' moral struggles and their relationship with G-d expressed, through narrative. Only stories can capture such depth and complexity.

This purpose is revealed through the way the pesukim and the commentators portray recurring conflicts throughout the sefer, including the deeper conflict beneath the sibling relationship of Kayin and Hevel, the struggle between humanity and Hashem in the story of the Dor HaMabul, the inner battle of man versus himself seen in Yosef's life in Egypt, and the tension for leadership between Yosef and Yehuda. Through these conflicts, Bereishit emerges as the foundation for understanding personal responsibility, leadership, and spiritual growth.

The conflict between humanity and Hashem is introduced early in Sefer Bereishit through the story of the Dor HaMabul, raising a fundamental question about the nature of the Divine and human relationship: If Hashem knows that human beings will fail, how can there be genuine give and take? Furthermore, what does it mean for Hashem to "regret" creating man? The pasuk states: 'וירא ה' כי רבה רעת האדם בארץ וכל יצר מחשבת לבו רק רע כל היום' (Bereishit 6:5). Seferno explains that Hashem saw not only the evil past of the generation, but also their future evil behavior.

The Beit HaLevi deepens this idea, explaining that Hashem judged the generation on two planes: their actions and their inner

intentions. The phrase **כל היום** describes a sustained corruption of the heart over time. Drawing on the Gemara (Avodah Zara 17a), the Beit HaLevi shows how sin gradually reshapes desire itself, until the act becomes the goal, illustrating how repeated choices erode inner freedom.

The emotional language of the pesukim, **ויתעצב אל לבו**, does not suggest Divine instability. Rashi explains that just as a parent rejoices in a child despite knowing they might experience future loss, Hashem's grief reflects the reality of the relationship rather than a lack of foreknowledge. The Seforno adds that Hashem did not desire the destruction of the wicked, and the Alshich emphasizes that Hashem ultimately rejoices in His creations even when human beings fail. This tension captures the core conflict of Bereishit: a world governed by a perfect God, yet entrusted to imperfect humans whose choices truly matter. In line with Rabbi Sacks' approach, this story shows how the Torah uses conflict not to present abstract ideas, but to explore the deepest questions of responsibility, freedom, and relationship through human experience.

The conflict between Kayin and Hevel appears to be a simple case of sibling rivalry, but Chazal and the commentators reveal a far deeper struggle rooted in spiritual misunderstanding and unchecked inner emotion. Rav Chaim Shmuelovitz (Sichot Mussar) explains that the conflict began legitimately, yet deteriorated into murder when jealousy was allowed to grow without restraint. At its core, Kayin viewed the world as a zero-sum reality, where another's spiritual success meant his own failure, while in truth, Avodah Hashem is a win-win world in which multiple paths can coexist.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Likutei Sichot, vol. 15, pp. 20-26) explains that Kayin and Hevel disagreed on what constituted the ideal korban. Kayin believed the offering should be the best of the species he personally worked with, while Hevel believed the offering should be the finest available, regardless of category. Both perspectives were initially valid, and neither brother was faulted for his reasoning. Kayin's failure emerged only after Hashem favored Hevel's

offering, when he refused to accept correction and instead responded with anger and blame.

The Ramban suggests that Kayin was concerned for the future of humanity, fearing that the world would be built primarily through Hevel, a threat to his own destiny. Rabbi Shaya First (*Finding a Motive for the First Murder*¹) drawing on the Malbim, explains that the Torah intentionally omits the brothers' dialogue (Bereishit 4:8) because the true cause of the murder was not ideological debate but Kayin's internal collapse. וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל הָבֶל אָחִיו refers to Kayin's thoughts, not his words. He misdirected Hashem's warning about self-control, toward resentment of his brother. The story teaches that conflict becomes destructive not when differences exist, but when emotion overwhelms self-reflection. This episode establishes one of Bereishit's central lessons: human greatness or failure is determined less by belief than by how one responds to challenge.

The conflict between Yosef and Yehuda represents not merely sibling tension, but a profound philosophical disagreement over the nature of leadership and spiritual survival. Yosef and Yehuda embody two fundamentally different models. Yehuda's leadership arises through responsibility, humility, and engagement with others, while Yosef's leadership is forged through isolation, moral discipline, and inner strength.

Rav Yissachar Frand (*The Profound Struggle Between Yehudah and Yosef*²) notes that the confrontation of Yosef with the brothers in Parshat Vayigash marks a turning point, as Yehuda's approach shifts the entire dynamic, despite resembling arguments already presented earlier. Rashi's description of Yehuda (Bereishit 44:33), as superior in *gevurah*, *milchamah*, and *shimush* reflects not physical dominance, but self-control, humility, and the willingness to serve.

¹ koltorah.org/articles/finding-a-motive-for-the-first-murder-by-rabbi-shaya-first (Breishis%204:8).

² torah.org/torah-portion/profound-struggle-yehudah-yosef.

The Tosefta's teaching (Brachot 4:18) that Yehuda merited kingship because of his modesty highlights the ability to restrain ego and surrender personal vision for the sake of others. The Sefat Emet on Vayigash frames this conflict as one between kedushah through separation and kedushah through engagement: Yosef represents inward sanctity and survival through withdrawal, *nazir echav*, a necessity in the moral darkness of Egypt, while Yehuda represents outward leadership and unity, ואל עמו תביאנו.

This debate reappears throughout Jewish history (e.g. Kotzk and Ger Chassiduyot), reflecting the enduring tension between elite spiritual intensity and inclusive communal leadership. The resolution of this conflict defines what it means to become a nation. Unity in Judaism does not demand uniformity, but mutual recognition of differing paths in Avodat Hashem. This unity emerges at the beginning of Vayigash, when Yehuda offers to become a slave in place of Binyamin, demonstrating true *gevurah*: the willingness to relinquish even deeply held convictions for the sake of another. In response, Yosef recognizes the legitimacy of his brothers' approach, allowing the family to reunite. Through this reconciliation, Bereishit teaches that a nation is built not by erasing differences, but by sanctifying it within a shared covenant.

The most internal and demanding conflict in Sefer Bereishit is the struggle of man against himself, embodied in Yosef's resistance to temptation in Egypt. The Torah describes the persistence of the test (Bereishit 39:10): ויהי כדברה אל יוסף יום יום ולא שמע אליה, emphasizing that Yosef's challenge was not momentary but constant. Rashi explains that Yosef's refusal עמה להיות refers not only to the physical act, but to its spiritual consequences. Yosef envisioned the outcome of sin and refused to be bound to her even in the World to Come.

Bereishit Rabbah (87:8) highlights the magnitude of this achievement by contrasting Yosef with Yehuda and Reuven, who struggled with their desires as adults, while Yosef, at the height of youthful temptation and isolated in a foreign land, exercised complete self-control. His restraint extended beyond the forbidden

act itself. Yosef refused even casual association, avoiding any situation that could weaken his resolve. The Gemara (Sotah 36b) records a debate over the meaning of *ויבא הביתה לעשות מלאכתו*, with one opinion understanding it literally and another suggesting that Yosef nearly gave in, only to be stopped by the vision of Yaakov's face. This moment captures the depth of Yosef's inner conflict, revealing that true greatness lies not in the absence of desire, but in the ability to overcome it.

The Torah states, *ותתפשהו בבגדו ... וינס ויצא החוצה*, (Bereishit 39:12). Chazal notes that the word "וינס" appears again at Kriyat Yam Suf. Just as Yosef overcame his natural instincts, the sea overcame its own nature and split for Bnei Yisrael. This parallel teaches that personal moral victory has cosmic consequences. Yosef's internal struggle completes the arc of conflict in Bereishit, showing that before a nation can overcome external enemies, an individual must first conquer himself – a theme fully aligned with Rabbi Sacks' understanding of Bereishit as the Torah's foundational study of human responsibility and moral freedom.

The recurring conflicts of Sefer Bereishit are not confined to the lives of its characters, but continue to shape the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people in every generation. From Kayin and Hevel to Yosef in Egypt, the Torah repeatedly returns to similar inner and outer struggles: the yetzer hara operating in moments of isolation, the danger of unchecked emotion, and the challenge of choosing responsibility over resentment. Kayin's inability to confront his inner conflict turns brotherhood into destruction, showing that a family built on jealousy cannot become a nation.

By contrast, the conflict between Yehuda and Yosef matures into mutual recognition and self-sacrifice, demonstrating that true brotherhood is one that allows for different paths in Avodat Hashem and can lead to a nation and a unified people. Yosef's personal victory over his own desires further teaches that national redemption begins with individual moral strength, especially in environments that test identity and emunah. This pattern reflects

Rabbi Sacks' understanding of Bereishit as the Torah's foundational philosophy of human freedom and responsibility, expressed through story rather than philosophical conflict. Through the lens of conflict, Bereishit teaches that a relationship with Hashem is forged not in the absence of struggle, but in how struggle is met, transforming conflict into growth, and difference into a relationship.

Haftarah for the First Day of Rosh Hashanah

The opening of *Sefer Shmuel* describes a fragile and transitional moment in Jewish history. The period is the end of *Shoftim*, a time marked by significant religious instability, inconsistent leadership, and repeated cycles of decline and recovery. The famous last words of *Shoftim*, בימים ההם אין מלך בישראל איש הישר בעיניו יעשה, describing a time of anarchy, form the backdrop of the haftarah for the first day of Rosh Hashanah. There was no centralized authority. There was a Mishkan in Shiloh and religious life existed, but there was no strong leadership. This is the uncertain and unstable background that begins Channah's story.

The setting is *Ramataim-Tzofim* in the territory of Ephraim, and the central figure is Elkana, a man who regularly goes up to Shiloh to serve Hashem – suggesting that sincere *Avodat Hashem* existed at this time despite the instability. Channah herself stands out as a quiet and spiritually intense personality, in sharp contrast to the external chaos of the time.

Her struggle with infertility was not just personal; in Tanach, barrenness often signals a moment before historical turning points. Channah's pain, tefillah, and inner strength became the vehicle through which a new era began. Her son, Shmuel, would grow to bridge the worlds. He was born at the end of the *Shoftim*, the first of the great *Neviim*, and the one who would prepare the way for the *Malchut*. Understanding this context shows that Channah's story was not just a side narrative. Rather, it was the start of the nation renewing itself and growing into something great.

According to the Pesikta Rabati (44), Channah was the wife of Elkana's youth. They had been married for a long time, but once they realized that Channah was barren, he took a second wife, Penina. This detail helps frame Channah's suffering not as a short-

term disappointment, but as the pain of prolonged barrenness, intensified by Penina's presence and ability to have children with Elkana.

Chana's emotional turning point in the story began after her encounter with Eli in the Mishkan. The Metzudat David notes (Shmuel I 1:18) that it specifically mentions that Channah ate after speaking with Eli. She no longer felt the anger and depression that had overtaken her for so long and from then on was mentally able to eat more than the bare minimum to survive. She had full trust in Eli's prayer for her, and wholeheartedly believed that she would finally be able to have children. Channah's tefillah itself brought healing even before her request was fulfilled.

When Channah finally gave birth, the naming of her son reflects the essence of her tefillah. The Malbim explains (1:20) that the name "Shmuel" has two phrases in it: **שֹׁאֵל** and **מֵאֵל**, as the pasuk says **מֵה' שֹׁאֵלְתִי**. Channah is showing that she didn't ask through intermediaries, but from Hashem Himself. She saw her son not simply as a long-awaited child, but as a response to her direct, personal relationship with Hashem that she cultivated through her tefillah. The name itself became a permanent reminder that Shmuel's existence was rooted in the power of tefillah and Hashem's response.

Channah's promise regarding Shmuel's future introduces an important distinction between parental intention and a child's own spiritual agency. The Metzudat David explains (1:23) that when Elkana said to Channah, **אֲךָ יִקָּם ה' אֶת דְּבָרִי**, he indicated that the power to promise Shmuel's lifelong devotion to Hashem was out of her hands. Elkana specified, **אֲךָ יִקָּם הַשֵּׁם**, that Hashem should fulfill the words that Chana said regarding Shmuel, and place it in Shmuel's heart to want to dedicate himself to be in Hashem's presence forever. This highlights that Shmuel's future holiness needed to be chosen by him, not imposed.

Once Shmuel is brought to the Mishkan, Radak clarifies (1:25) that Channah and Elkana left there under Eli's supervision to study Torah and mitzvot. They wanted Shmuel to have a concrete

upbringing in a Torah environment to facilitate his spiritual destiny as a leader of the nation.

The Metzudat David explains (2:1) that when Channah says *רְמָה קָרַנִּי בַּה' רַחֵם פִּי עַל אוֹיְבֵי*, the enemy that she is referring to is Penina and her sons. Now that she has a son, Penina and her children will no longer be able to torment her and cause her pain like before. Her joy is not expressed as revenge, but as relief that her pain no longer defines her place in the family.

The Metzudat David notes (2:10) that Chana concludes her prayer by talking about her concern for her son's future. She specifically asks Hashem for the bracha that those who fight against Shmuel should be shattered, because she saw through *ruach hakodesh* that the Plishtim would fight against Shmuel later on in his life. Even in her moment of triumph, Channah's focus in her tefillah extends beyond herself in the current moment to the future protection of her child.

Channah is a woman whose inner strength, trust, and clarity of purpose transform her suffering into the foundation for one of the greatest leaders in Jewish history. Her story is not only about her tefillah that was answered, but about how faith can reshape a person even before the external outcome actually arrives.

This haftarah connects on several levels to the themes of Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah is known as Yom Hazikaron, the day of Remembrance and Reckoning. It is a day when Hashem reviews the deeds of every individual and determines everyone's future. This idea of Hashem's remembrance appears repeatedly throughout the Rosh Hashanah tefillot, and stands at the center of Channah's story as well. After years of barrenness and prayer, the pasuk says *וַיִּזְכְּרָה ה'* (1:19). Chana's personal transformation demonstrates the Rosh Hashanah belief that being "remembered" by Hashem leads to renewal, life, and change.

Rav Yissachar Yaakovson (*Chazon Mikrah*) points out a striking structural parallel between Chana's tefillah and the tefillot of Rosh Hashanah. In Channah's tefillah, the name of Hashem appears nine times, which Chazal refer to as the "nine remembrances"

of Channah. Correspondingly, the special *Musaf Amidah* of Rosh Hashanah contains nine brachot. The Gemara (Brachot 29a) teaches that this structure was modeled directly after Channah's tefillah. This connection highlights that Channah did not just pray for herself, but also laid the foundation for how the Jewish people would approach Hashem on the Day of Judgment and ask for remembrance, just like she did.

Rav Meir Goldwicht writes (*M'toch Ha'ohel*) that in *Echad Mi Yodea*, recited at the Pesach Seder, the number nine refers to the nine ירחי לידה, the nine months of pregnancy. The number nine reflects rebirth and new beginnings: just as nine months of pregnancy lead to new life, Channah's nine remembrances of Hashem gave rise to Shmuel and a turning point in Jewish history, both a literal and figurative rebirth. Similarly, Rosh Hashanah is a moment of spiritual rebirth, when we renew ourselves before Hashem. The nine brachot, modeled after Channah's tefillah, represent the spiritual "pregnancy" of the coming year. Through remembrance and sincere tefillah, Rosh Hashanah becomes the moment when a new and "reborn" version of ourselves starts to take shape.

Beyond structure, Channah serves as the prototype for authentic tefillah. Rosh Hashanah, as one of the *Yamim Noraim*, is a day centered on tefillah, introspection, and humility before Hashem. Channah's silent, heartfelt tefillah, said by only moving her lips, became the model from which Chazal derive the laws and spirit of Shemoneh Esrei. Rav Yaakovson emphasizes that Channah gave a powerful expression to humanity's role before Hashem: to stand honestly, pour out one's heart, and recognize Hashem's power and justice. Her tefillah teaches a view of reward, judgment, and Hashem's absolute control over the world and our fate, ideas that are central to Rosh Hashanah.

One can detect in Channah's tefillah the themes of *Malchuyot*, *Zichronot*, and *Shofarot*. She proclaims Hashem's kingship, describes how He remembers and reverses human fortunes, and speaks about Hashem strengthening His anointed king. This aligns directly

with Rosh Hashanah's focus on crowning Hashem as king and trusting His control over everything.

This haftarah reflects Rosh Hashanah's deepest themes of Hashem's remembrance, the power of sincere and transformative tefillah, and recognition of Hashem's sovereignty. Channah's story reflects new beginnings, which is a central theme on Rosh Hashanah. Just as the day marks the creation of humanity and the possibility of renewal, Channah's life is transformed from despair to hope. Her personal redemption becomes the seed for national redemption through her son Shmuel, who will later anoint Bnei Yisrael's kings. In this way, the haftarah shows how individual tefillah on Rosh Hashanah can shape the future of Am Yisrael.

Galut and Geulah: Past, Present, and Future¹

The Haftarah read on Parshat Shemot is from Yeshayahu (27:6-13, 28:1-13, 29:22-23) and can be divided into six sections. The first section, 27:6-13, is Hashem's promise to the Jewish people that they will achieve forgiveness and geulah. These pesukim describe how, in the future, there will be destruction, but Hashem will still bring the Jews back to Eretz Yisrael from galut with the blowing of the shofar. The next section, 28:1-4, is rebuke for Malchut Yisrael, referred to by the name of the most prominent *shevet*, Ephraim, who are compared to drunkards and told that they will be destroyed.

The following section, 28:5-6, is a promise of good things to come for the survivors of Bnei Yisrael after the destruction. These pesukim of comfort describe the crown of glory that will go on Bnei Yisrael. There will be justice and strength in Bnei Yisrael. The fourth section, 28:7-8, is rebuke for the priests and prophets who also behaved in an inebriated fashion, causing them to sin. The fifth section, 28:9-13, is rebuke that is given to the Jews who refuse to listen to the words of the Neviim. They, Hashem says, will ultimately be destroyed. The final section is made up of the two pesukim (22-23) taken from perek 29. Yeshayahu tells the Jews that they shouldn't be embarrassed of their heritage. Hashem's name, along with the name of Bnei Yisrael, will be sanctified, and Hashem will be served.

This Haftarah spans Jewish history, starting with the first galut of Mitzrayim, and ending with the final geulah of Mashiach. The haftarah begins:

¹ Many ideas found in this article are based on the commentary of עמוד חכם printed in Daat Mikra

הבאים ישרש יעקב יציץ ופרח ישראל ומלאו פני תבל תבואה ... והיה
 ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול ובאו האובדים בארץ אשור והנידחים
 בארץ מצרים והשתחוו לה' בהר הקודש בירושלים

Rashi notes that the different phrases in the text are references to the Jewish exile in Mitzrayim. **הבאים ישרש יעקב**, references Yaakov and his sons coming down to Mitzrayim and the beginning of the exile. **הכחו מכהו** alludes to how the Egyptians killed Jews with water by drowning the baby boys in the Nile, so the Egyptians were killed with water in the Yam Suf. **אם כהרג הרגיו הרג** refers to the *midah knegged midah*: since Bnei Yisrael were killed by Pharaoh, Pharaoh and his nation were killed. Yetziat Mitzrayim is alluded to with the phrases **ביום קדים** and **בשלחה תריבנה**.

Mitzrayim was the first national exile for the Jewish people, and Mashiach will be the final geulah, painting the entire story of the Jews as a nation. Just as different phrases in these first pesukim of the Haftorah take readers through the journey of exile and the redemption in Mitzrayim, the journey across the Haftorah takes readers through the exile and redemption of Bnei Yisrael across all of Jewish history following Yetziat Mitzrayim.

The next event referenced in this text (27:10) is Churban Bayit Rishon. **כי עיר בצורה בדד נוה משולח ונעזב כמדבר שם ירעה עגל ושם ירבץ** describes how the city will be desolate like a desert, and cows will graze on the land that used to be the cities. The language of **עיר בצורה בדד** is a similar language to the first pasuk of Eicha. There, Yirmiyahu asks about Yerushalayim, **איכה ישה בדד העיר רבתי**. **עם היתה כאלמנה רבתי בגוים שרתי במדינות היתה למס**. In both pesukim, the word **בדד** appears, immediately drawing a comparison between the two.

Unlike Yirmiyahu, where the pasuk is talking about Yerushalayim, the pasuk in Yeshayahu is talking about the cities of enemies of the Jews that Hashem will destroy out of His love for His people. The analysis of these two pesukim provides a powerful message giving the Jewish nation hope through galut: although in some moments it seems like the Jews are surrounded by complete

destruction, as is described in Yirmiyahu, there will come a time that Hashem will save the Jews, and destroy their enemies; Hashem has never stopped loving the Jewish people.

Churban Bayit Rishon leads into what is traditionally called Galut Bavel, but might be considered the galut that the Jews are still experiencing today. Although Galut Bavel was only supposed to last for seventy years, the Jews have not had a full national geulah since the times of Bayit Rishon. The Jewish people were not only missing all of Malchut Yisrael during Bayit Sheini, but many people from Malchut Yehudah who were in Bavel chose to stay there, ensuring that a national redemption was not completed.

Not only was Bayit Sheini lacking in numbers, but it was also lacking in spirituality. The Gemara (Yoma 21b) tells that there were five things that were present in Bayit Rishon that were absent during Bayit Sheini: the Aron Kodesh, the Heavenly fire, Ruach HaKodesh, the Shechinah, and the Urim VTumim, all of which were incredibly important and impactful. Another aspect of Bayit Sheini not being a national geulah was that for most of the time, the Jews lacked political autonomy. Of course, the galut that followed Churban Bayit Sheini is definitely what we are still experiencing.

Although the Jewish people are still in galut, this Haftorah is one of many places in Tanach that offers comfort to them. It describes (28:5-6) the good that will come to the remnants of the Jewish nation following the destruction, returning to true greatness and glory. They won't boast about their wealth and riches, but will instead boast about Hashem and surrender to His worship. Yeshayahu tells us that for those who live with judgement, Hashem will provide them with the spirit of judgment, and imbue upon them the knowledge to judge righteously and correctly.

The idea of living a life of justice is the mission statement of the Jews that Avraham was given in Bereishit (18:19). Avraham was told to carry out צדקה ומשפט. This perek of Yeshayahu reinforces that those who live with such values and carry out the mission statement of the Jewish people will receive good judgement and benefits from Hashem.

Both the start and end of this Haftarah talk of Kibbutz Galiyot and the sanctification of Hashem's name in the times of Mashiach. This will bring the unification of all of Bnei Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael, culminating with Bayit Shlishi – where the Jewish nation will finally experience a complete geulah. This Haftarah weaves a beautiful tapestry of rebuke and comfort that is both applicable for the people it was given to as well as being applicable to the Jewish people of today.

Echoes of Exile

The stories of Yosef in Sefer Bereishit and Daniel in Sefer Daniel are among the earliest and most significant accounts of Jewish life in exile. Yosef's narrative unfolds as part of the family story of Yaakov and his sons, describing how Yosef is sold by his brothers and brought alone to Egypt. There he rises from slavery and imprisonment to become second-in-command to Pharaoh. Throughout his time in Egypt, Yosef navigates life within a foreign culture while remaining faithful to his moral and religious values, ultimately playing a central role in sustaining both Egypt and his family during a time of famine.

Generations later, the book of Daniel opens in the context of the Babylonian exile following the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash. Daniel is taken as a young boy to the court of Nevuchadnezzar, where he, along with other Jewish youths, is trained to serve the Babylonian empire. Despite his immersion in the royal environment, Daniel maintains his commitment to G-d and to his identity as a Jew. His story records his spiritual resilience, refusal to assimilate into Babylonian culture and his eventual rise to prominence through divine wisdom and integrity.

Together, these narratives introduce two individuals who confront the challenges of exile under vastly different historical circumstances, yet both serve as foundational figures in shaping Jewish existence beyond the land of Israel.

The Tanach presents Yosef and Daniel as strikingly parallel figures. Though separated by centuries and empires, their lives unfold in remarkably similar patterns. Both are Jews living in exile, rising to power in foreign courts through divine wisdom, particularly through dream interpretation, while remaining humble servants of G-d. The following categories highlight the major similarities between Yosef and Daniel in which the Tanach signals parallels not

only through plot, but through repeated language, uncommon phrases, and mirrored narrative structures.

Yosef and Daniel both come from distinguished families and are quickly chosen from among their brothers or companions. This is due to lineage, ability, and potential. Yosef is singled out and chosen over his brothers by his father as he comes from Yaakov's most beloved wife, Rachel (Bereishit 37:3). Daniel is handpicked from the royalty of the kingship of Yehuda (Daniel 1:3-4).

They both have prophetic dreams and visions that foretell future events. Yosef dreamed that his siblings would all bow down to him, which came true when the brothers descended to Egypt in search of food for their family during the famine (Bereishit 37:5). Daniel had a vision describing king Nevuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning relating to the end of days (Daniel 2:19).

Yosef is sold into slavery after his brothers throw him into a pit out of anger and jealousy over their father's outright favoritism towards Yosef (Bereishit 37:28). Daniel is taken captive by Nevuchadnezzar after he lays siege to Yerushalayim during the reign of King Yehoyakim of Yehuda (Daniel 1:1). Both Yosef and Daniel are forcibly removed from their homes into foreign control.

Yosef and Daniel both experienced immediate success in their masters' houses and quickly gained their trust due to divine assistance. Yosef is successful in Potiphar's house and G-d blesses everything that he does, causing his master to appoint him as officer over the house (Bereishit 39:3). Daniel, with the help of G-d, finds favor with the Sar Hasarisim. Later, he enters the king's service as he and his companions were found to be ten times wiser than all the king's magicians (Daniel 1:9, 1:19-20).

Another comparison can be found in the description of Yosef's and Daniel's diet and appearance. The verse states that Potiphar gave Yosef control over everything except the bread **כִּי אִם** יֵפֶה תֹאֵר וַיִּפֶּה מְרֹאֶה, and Yosef is described as **יֵפֶה תֹאֵר וַיִּפֶּה מְרֹאֶה** (Bereishit 39:6). The Mefarshim explain this bread in different ways. The Ibn Ezra writes that Yosef was excluded from Potiphar's bread because he was a Hebrew, and Egyptians would not eat

bread with Hebrews (Bereishit 43:32). The Kli Yakar, however, emphasizes that Yosef chose restraint, eating only simple bread and salt despite having access to luxury. He still remained physically beautiful, just like Daniel and his companions who had appeared healthier than the other youths despite refusing the king's food (Daniel 1:15). In both stories, physical well-being signals divine favor and spiritual strength in exile.

While imprisoned or put in mortal danger due to anger and punished due to jealousy, both remain loyal to G-d. Yosef is imprisoned by Potifar after Eshet Potifar falsely accuses him of trying to sleep with her (Bereishit 39:20); Daniel is condemned to the lion's den after he disobeyed the decree of the king by praying to his G-d (Daniel 6:17).

Pharaoh and Nevuchadnezzar both had their dreams in the "second year" of their timelines. Pharaoh's dream is after a two year jump in the narrative¹, and Nevuchadnezzar's dream is in his second year of kingship (Bereishit 41:1, Daniel 2:1)². Despite the similarity of these situations, the two kings respond very differently. Nevuchadnezzar threatens to kill the elders of his court if they cannot both describe and interpret his dream, whereas Pharaoh merely asks his Chartumim to provide an interpretation, without issuing any threat.

One fascinating insight³ is that perhaps Nevuchadnezzar only knew that it was possible for someone to retell his dream, in addition to interpreting it, from the story of Yosef who was able to accomplish both tasks. This is why the king demanded that someone retell his dream with the interpretation, which only Daniel was able to do.

¹ Two years after Yosef asked the Sar HaMashkim to intervene on his behalf

² See Rashi, quoting Seder Olam Raba, that the reference is to the second year since Churban HaBayit

³ Heard from Rav Eliyahu Silverman (MMY faculty). See Midrash Tanchuma (Miketz) that Yosef was aware of the precise details of Pharaoh's dreams without Pharaoh telling him.

Both kings awaken after their dream. Pharaoh has a dream, wakes up, and falls back to sleep to have a second dream (Bereishit 41:4-5). Nevuchadnezzar also awakens after his dream, though further sleep eludes him (Daniel 2:1).

Yosef and Daniel each have great humility and attribute their greatness to G-d. Yosef tells Pharaoh that G-d will answer him and proceeds to interpret the dream (Bereishit 41:16). Daniel praises G-d for giving him the wisdom and power to know what concerns the king and says that G-d will reveal the interpretation of the king's dream (Daniel 2:28).

Yosef and Daniel are both elevated dramatically after interpreting the dreams, leading directly to political authority. Yosef becomes second-in-command, is given Pharaoh's signet ring, royal garments, and a chariot meant for his high status (Bereishit 41:37-45). Daniel becomes governor of Babylon, chief of sages, and is rewarded with many presents (Daniel 2:48).

Both are renamed by their respective foreign authorities, symbolizing their absorption into gentile courts. Yosef is renamed Tzefnat Paneach by Pharaoh, and Daniel is renamed Belteshatzar by the Sar Hasarisim (Bereishit 41:45, Daniel 1:7).

In addition to the similarities in the details, there are also many comparisons between words and phrases used in both the Yosef and Daniel stories, some of which only appear in these two contexts.

The phrase זעפֿים appears in both narratives, which Rashi explains to mean sadness or distress. Yosef uses this phrase when he checks on Pharaoh's imprisoned officers the morning after their dreams (Bereishit 40:7). Similarly, the king's officer uses this word when he notifies Daniel about his fear that the king will notice if Daniel does not eat the portion of food allotted to him (Daniel 1:10).

In both stories, physical health is used as a sign of divine favor and spiritual alignment. In Pharaoh's dream, the seven cows are described as beautiful, good-looking, and healthy, representing the seven years of abundance that G-d will provide for Egypt (Bereishit 41:2). Daniel is described as good-looking and healthier than all the

other children taken by Nevuchadnezzar, as he is more connected to G-d (Daniel 1:15).

The phrase *ותתפעם רוחו* or *ותפעם רוחו* is used to describe both Pharaoh and Nevuchadnezzar after their respective dreams (Bereishit 41:8, Daniel 2:1,3). This phrase can be interpreted in multiple ways. Rashi understands it to mean internal agitation. Radak writes that it's a spirit broken by anxiety, and Rashbam explains the phrase as an urgent psychological disturbance.⁴

The many comparisons between these two stories lead one to question: why is this so? Why was Daniel written in a way that seems to intentionally echo the story of Yosef in Egypt? Sefer Daniel was written by the Anshei Knesset Hagedolah (Bava Batra 15a), which included Daniel as a member (Introduction to Mishneh Torah). One possibility is that Daniel looked back at Yosef's story as inspiration and proof that it is possible to live as a Jew in a foreign land. Through writing the sefer, he wanted to relay the message that when one is going through a difficult time, it can be helpful to look back at those who experienced similar situations and get strength and motivation from them.

This textual parallel sets the stage for examining Yosef not only as part of a larger pattern, but also as an individual confronting a profound inner trial. While Yosef's story emphasizes moral restraint and loyalty, Chazal discover a deeper dimension to his test in Egypt.

The Gemara (Sotah 36b) discusses how the names of the 12 tribes were written on the *ephod*. Rav Hana bar Bizna said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Hasida that Yosef had one letter of the name of G-d, the letter *heh*, added to his name to become (יהוסף), because he sanctified the name of Heaven in private. After repeated enticements from Eshet Potiphar, Yosef went into Potifar's house intending to sin, as there were no other men in the house (Bereishit 39:7-12). She caught Yosef by his garment to lie with him, and in that moment Yosef's father's image appeared to him in the window

⁴ See Rashi (Bereishit 41:8) who distinguishes between *ותתפעם* and *ותפעם*

saying that if Yosef does this improper act, his name will forever be erased from among his brothers on the *ephod*, and he will lose his honor. Immediately, Yosef was strengthened, overcame his desire, and fled outside, leaving his garment in her hand. Through this act of withdrawing, not out of fear of sin alone, but out of identity, he merited a *heh* added to his name, as G-d was with him.

The Gemara, presents Yosef's test as the fear of forgetting his father's home and assimilating into Egyptian culture. Yet this does not seem to be based on the *pshat* of the story. Where does this idea of Yaakov appearing to Yosef come from?

The basic explanation of Yosef's tests was whether he would maintain his morals and not give in to Eshet Potifar's repeated pressure to lie with her. Would Yosef betray Potifar's trust and also sin against G-d? (See Rashi and Ramban) Why did the Gemara bring a different interpretation of the test? What is it based on? Does it not make more sense that Yosef refrained based on the fact that it's an immoral act, and not because he would lose his place among his brothers? What justifies this reading of the text?

To answer this question, it's necessary to take a step back and look at Tanach not as a collection of isolated stories, but as a woven narrative in which later books deliberately echo earlier ones. If one learns a story in Tanach as a standalone topic, he or she will fail to uncover the deeper layers of interpretation within the stories. Throughout Tanach, many repeated words, phrases, themes, and story structures are found that are Tanach's way of telling the reader that these stories are somehow connected.

This idea must be applied to the stories of Yosef in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon. The linguistic parallels between the two narratives are too numerous and precise to be coincidental. The Tanach is signaling that Daniel represents a later manifestation of the Yosef story, following the same template for Jewish survival in exile. On the surface, the tests faced by Yosef and Daniel appear fundamentally different; Yosef's initial challenge revolves around facing immorality, while Daniel's focuses on food and drink. However, Daniel's refusal of the king's food is not presented in the text as just a

response to a clear issue of *kashrut*. Daniel's abstinence is also motivated by a desire to avoid the cultural absorption of Bavel, and draw a firm boundary between himself and the surrounding Babylonian society.

When each story is read in isolation, the tests seem like narrow personal challenges; when read together, a broader theme emerges – the pervasive danger of assimilation in exile. Although Yosef and Daniel confronted different forms of temptation, both challenges stemmed from the same underlying threat: the erosion of Jewish identity through integration into foreign culture.

Chazal decreed that Jews are prohibited from eating the bread, oil, and wine of gentiles because it leads to familiarity and intimacy; Jews will come to marry their daughters (Shabbat 17b). The process of assimilation happens slowly, from eating to intimacy to intermarriage to idolatry. Eventually one completely forgets his or her identity and assimilates into the new culture.

Yosef and Daniel each faced the same ultimate test: they were forced to work in a new alien culture and struggled to maintain their Jewish identity. Since they were at different levels and ages, their tests manifested in new ways. Yosef's was the test of immorality with a foreign woman and Daniel's was the test of foreign food, each representative of distinct stages on the path to assimilation. They faced the same threat and both succeeded in maintaining their identity and not giving in to assimilation.

When we understand the many connections between these two stories and what the tests of Yosef and Daniel really were, a test of assimilation, the Gemara now fits with the story. On a *pshat* level, Yosef's test is one of adultery and *hakarat hatov*. The deeper test, however, is what those will lead to – assimilation and a loss of one's identity, which is what the Gemara is alluding to. When he sees the image of his father, the representation of his Jewish identity, Yosef is reminded before sinning that despite being thrown into a pit by his brothers and sold down to Egypt as a slave, he is still a Hebrew and his actions will affect the future of the nation, not only himself. The Gemara explains that the reason he held back from sinning

was Yaakov's warning that he would not have a place among his brothers on the *ephod*. Losing his place on the *ephod* represents Yosef losing his identity, and if he committed this sin, he would no longer be considered a part of the twelve tribes. Yosef passed the test by refusing to sin and running out of the house, thus meriting not only having his name on the *ephod*, but also having a letter of the name of Hashem added to his name, since he sanctified the name of Heaven in private.

Yosef's test in Egypt was not merely a personal moral challenge, but a moment with far-reaching national consequences. As the first Hebrew to live alone in exile, Yosef's choices established a spiritual precedent that shaped the destiny of the Jewish people. His refusal to succumb to assimilation ensured that when his family later descended to Egypt, they did so as Hebrews rather than as Egyptians. Daniel occupies a parallel role generations later, during the Babylonian exile. Daniel confronted the pressures of foreign culture and imperial power, and through personal restraint and unwavering commitment to Jewish identity, he modeled how Jewish life could endure outside the Land of Israel.

Tanach teaches that the behavior of the first exiles determines the spiritual survival of the many. Jewish continuity in exile is not secured through political influence or material success, rather through the ability to draw clear boundaries and to remain faithful when no external support exists. Yosef's refusal of Eshet Potiphar and Daniel's rejection of the king's food appear, on the surface, as small, private acts. Yet these moments of restraint ultimately led to their rise to positions of power and influence, enabling them to preserve the Jewish people through periods of vulnerability and transition.

Through repeated language, parallel trials, and mirrored outcomes, the Tanach intentionally links the narratives of Yosef and Daniel, urging the reader to interpret each story in light of the other. In doing so, it conveys that the greatest danger of exile is not persecution, but assimilation, and that Jewish continuity depends

upon individuals who choose identity over comfort, even when they stand alone.

The parallels between Yosef and Daniel point to a recurring biblical model of Jewish survival and leadership in exile, a model that appears yet again with Mordechai in Megillat Esther. Like Yosef and Daniel, Mordechai rises to prominence in a gentile royal court, and plays a central role in ensuring Jewish survival during exile.

Chazal point out strong linguistic and thematic connections between Yosef and Mordechai. Esther Rabbah (7:8) highlights the identical wording used to describe their resistance to constant pressure. Yosef refuses Eshet Potiphar אליה שמע יום ולא שום (Bereishit 39:10), while Mordechai similarly refuses to bow to Haman יום שום ולא שום אליהם (Esther 3:4). In both stories, the challenge is not a single dramatic moment, but a repeated and ongoing test that reflects pressure to conform to the surrounding culture.

Some additional minor parallels can also be found between the stories of Yosef and Mordechai. Both play a major role in saving the leader, Yosef through setting up the economy for a famine and Mordechai through foiling an assassination plot. Yosef and Mordechai's good deeds are forgotten for some time: Yosef's interpretation of the Sar HaMashkim's dream and Mordechai's warning to Achashverosh of the plan of assassination.

One link between the Daniel and Mordechai narratives is their shared reference to Nevuchadnezzar as the initiator of exile. Daniel's story unfolds in the court of Nevuchadnezzar himself, who conquered Jerusalem and brought Jewish youths to Babylon: בא נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל ירושלים ויצר עליה (Daniel 1:1). Mordechai, by contrast, belongs to the generation exiled by Nevuchadnezzar, as the Megillah traces his presence in Persia back to that deportation: אשר הגלה מירושלים ... אשר הגלה נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל (Esther 2:6). Together, these verses present Nevuchadnezzar as the common historical root of both narratives: Daniel serving within the empire he established and Mordechai living with the long-term consequences of that exile.

All three rulers, Pharaoh, Nevuchadnezzar, and Achashverosh, experience sleepless nights, forming a common motif across the three narratives. In the Yosef and Daniel stories, the kings' unrest is caused by troubling dreams that demand interpretation and ultimately lead to the elevation of a Jewish exile within the royal court. In Megillat Esther, Achashverosh likewise suffers a disturbed night: בלילה ההוא נדדה שנת המלך (Esther 6:1). Although no dream is recorded, his sleeplessness functions in the same way, prompting the reading of the Sefer Hazichronot and initiating the sequence of events that results in Mordechai's recognition and the salvation of the Jewish people. This recurring pattern highlights how moments of royal vulnerability become the vehicle for divine intervention in exile. Yosef and Mordechai are both granted authority through the transfer of the king's signet ring, symbolizing delegated power. These elements suggest a recurring biblical pattern in which Jewish survival in exile is made possible through positions of influence within foreign governments, even while such positions remain spiritually risky.

In the Targum on Megillat Esther there is another connection explained between Mordechai and Daniel. The pasuk explains that Esther called to Hatach to deliver a message to Mordechai who was outside the palace, ותקרא אסתר להתך מסריסי המלך (Esther 4:5). The Targum explains that Hatach is really Daniel, stemming from the word חתך, to cut, because by his mouth final matters would be decided and cut. It continues to explain how when it says ויגידו למרדכי את דברי אסתר it is in plural because Haman had discovered who Hatach was and killed him, resulting in the end of the story of Daniel (Esther 4:12). Hashem sent two Melachim to take his place and deliver the message from Esther to Mordechai. Mordechai continues in Daniel's legacy, even after his death.

An additional advantage in comparing these stories is to learn more about one story from the other. We are told that the vessels used at Achashverosh's feast came from the Beit Hamikdash (Targum, Esther 1:7). This is a common idea, yet does not seem to be based in the pesukim of the Megillah. Through looking at Daniel we learn that the cups that were used by the kings in those times

were specifically taken from the Beit Hamikdash by Nevuchadnezzar, בלשאצר צוה בטעם היין להביא כלי הזהב והכסף, אשר הוציא נבוכדנצר אביו מן ההיכל אשר בירושלים (Daniel 5:2).

When viewed alongside Yosef and Daniel, Mordechai can be seen as a third example of the same exilic model. All three stories take a turn on a disturbed night of a gentile ruler – Pharaoh’s dreams, Nevuchadnezzar’s visions, and Achashverosh’s sleeplessness. In each case, the disruption of royal power creates an opening for hidden divine guidance. In Megillat Esther, the lack of dreams is replaced by the reading of the Sefer Zichronot, which serves a similar function by uncovering the divine knowledge and setting redemption in motion.

Taken together, Yosef, Daniel, and Mordechai form a sequence of Jewish leadership across three major exiles: Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia. Each faces the same core challenge: how to live and lead within a foreign empire without losing their Jewish identity. Although their specific tests differ, whether involving morality, food and boundaries, or public acts of loyalty, the underlying danger remains the same: assimilation.

The narratives of Yosef, Daniel, and Mordechai collectively form a powerful trilogy of Jewish survival in exile. Each figure is a Jew living within a gentile court, rising to prominence through divine assistance and using his position to protect the Jewish people during a distinct historical exile. In each case, each respective ruler’s troubled sleep becomes the catalyst for redemption, and the Jewish protagonist emerges as the solution to the crisis. The inclusion of Mordechai completes the pattern: although he does not interpret a dream, his intervention during Achashverosh’s sleepless night fulfills the same role of salvation, demonstrating that Hashem’s deliverance can occur through different forms of revelation. Together, these stories teach that Jewish continuity in exile relies on individuals who remain faithful, maintain identity, and act courageously when their people are most vulnerable. Further study of this threefold pattern may deepen one’s understanding of Tanach’s view of exile and its vision for future Jewish continuity outside the Land of Israel.

Shiluach HaKein and Kibud Av V'Em

Imagine the Torah placing two mitzvot side by side – one that takes seconds and costs nothing, and another that can take a lifetime of emotional strength – and declaring that they are equal. One involves a bird. The other involves one's parents. And somehow, they are promised the same reward.

Both Shiluach HaKein, sending away the mother bird before taking her eggs, and Kibud Av V'Em, honoring one's parents, are followed by similar words: למען ייטב לך והארכת ימים (Devarim 22:7) and למען יאריך ימך ולמען ייטב לך על האדמה אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לך (Devarim 5:16). These are the only two mitzvot in the entire Torah for which this reward is stated explicitly. That alone demands attention. Why these two mitzvot? And why are they placed on equal footing?

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Peah 1:1) highlights this striking parallel. The Torah intentionally equates the easiest mitzvah with the hardest mitzvah. Shiluach HaKein is described as the simplest mitzvah imaginable. It requires no money, no preparation, and almost no time. One frightens away the mother bird and walks away, having fulfilled a positive commandment. Kibud Av V'Em, by contrast, is widely regarded as one of the most difficult mitzvot in the Torah. And yet the Torah reveals that the rewards of these two mitzvot are equal to teach us to perform all mitzvot with great faith, since one never knows the “worth” of any given mitzvah.

Honoring one's parents is not confined to a single moment or gesture. It is a lifelong responsibility embedded in the most emotionally complex relationship a person will ever have. Parents and children share history, expectation, love, frustration, and vulnerability. The mitzvah demands patience when it is scarce, respect

when disagreement is sharp, and gratitude even when it is inconvenient. Unlike many mitzvot, Kibud Av V'Em is lived not in ideal conditions, but in the reality of everyday life.

At the same time, there is something profoundly natural about this mitzvah. Love for parents often comes easily. Gratitude flows instinctively. Parents are the people who give life, nurture, guide, and stand beside their children long before they can ever repay them. For many, honoring parents feels less like an obligation and more like an extension of love itself. In this sense, Kibud Av V'Em can feel emotionally “easy,” even when it is practically demanding. The Torah reminds that even when love is present, mitzvot are not fulfilled by feelings alone. They require conscious choice. This is precisely why the Torah pairs Kibud Av V'Em with Shiluach HaKein.

At first glance, both mitzvot appear to share a common theme of compassion. Many commentators, including the Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim III:48) and the Ramban (Devarim 22:6), explain that Shiluach HaKein sensitizes a person to mercy, cultivating a refined sense of compassion shaping how one treats all living beings. Kibud Av V'Em, particularly with aging parents that require care, is also an act of compassion, an expression of gratitude, responsibility, and human decency. According to this approach, the two mitzvot receive the same reward because they cultivate the same moral trait.

The Zohar Chadash (Megillat Rut 94b), however, offers a startlingly different perspective. Shiluach HaKein is not a mitzvah of compassion at all. It is a mitzvah of restraint against compassion. Sending away a mother bird violates the most instinctive bond between parent and child. The bird experiences distress, and it is precisely that cry which arouses Divine mercy in Heaven towards Bnei Yisrael. The act is purposeful, but it is emotionally difficult. It requires a person to suppress instinct and submit instead to the will of Hashem.

The Vilna Gaon (Mishlei 30:17) explains that this contrast reveals the Torah's deeper message about the nature of Avodat Hashem. The goal of mitzvot is not merely to act when the command aligns with one's personality or emotional comfort. The true

measure of service lies in the ability to fulfill Hashem's will whether or not it suits a person or challenges them. Some mitzvot call upon compassion; others demand restraint. Both are necessary. Both refine the human soul.

This framework transforms the understanding of Kibud Av V'Em. For the naturally compassionate, honoring parents may feel intuitive. But their real test lies elsewhere: in mitzvot that require emotional discipline rather than warmth. For others, patience and empathy do not come easily, and Kibud Av V'Em becomes their arena of growth. In either case, the Torah does not measure the mitzvah by how it feels, but by whether it is done because Hashem commanded it.

This idea resonates powerfully in a generation that values authenticity and emotional alignment. Sincerity is often equated with acting in accordance to one's instincts. The Torah challenges that assumption. Authentic service of Hashem is not diminished when a mitzvah feels difficult; it is elevated. Growth occurs precisely at the point of resistance.

This principle finds its most dramatic expression during *Akei-dat Yitzchak*. Avraham Avinu was defined by kindness, hospitality, and compassion. One could argue that acts of chessed came naturally to him. But when commanded to sacrifice his own son, to set aside compassion itself, Avraham demonstrated that his devotion was rooted not in temperament, but in *Yirat Shamayim*. Only then does Hashem declare, **כִּי עָתָה יֵדְעָתִי כִּי יִרָא אֱלֹקִים אֹתָהּ** (Bereishit 22:12).

Shiluach HaKein and Kibud Av V'Em together embody this same truth. One mitzvah draws upon compassion; the other demands its restraint. Together, they teach that a person becomes an *Eved Hashem* by acting faithfully across the full emotional spectrum, doing what is required whether it feels natural or uncomfortable, easy or demanding.

In a world that often struggles with generational disconnect and diminishing respect for elders, this lesson feels especially urgent. The Torah insists that honoring parents is not merely

social courtesy or emotional preference; it is sacred responsibility. It anchors the family, sustains tradition, and affirms gratitude as a moral value. When one honors their parents not only because they love them, but because Hashem commanded them to, they affirm that relationships grounded in respect are central to a meaningful life.

That is why the Torah promises such extraordinary reward. When a person serves Hashem, whether the mitzvah feels easy or difficult, aligned or challenging, the Torah assures them: **למען ייטב לך** **והארכת ימים**.

Scattered by Design

The Torah is somewhat vague about the sin of the Dor HaPlaga, the generation that built the Tower of Babel. Although Chazal and the classic commentaries advance a number of interpretations, I would like to suggest a somewhat novel perspective.

In Gan Eden there is a single river that divides into four (Bereshit 2:10): ונהר יצא מעדן להשקות את הגן ומשם יפרד והיה לארבעה ראשים: G-d created a prototype that once all of the creations have been created, they must spread in their own directions and develop differently. This is represented by the one river which is then subsequently separated into four different streams. Additionally, when G-d gave the commandment of פרו ורבו to Adam in Bereshit 1:28, He specifically mentioned the action of ומלאו את הארץ. The same is seen with Noah in Bereshit 9:1, ויברך אלקים את נח ואת בניו ויאמר להם פרו ורבו ומלאו את הארץ. Hashem wanted man to spread out. He wanted each person to develop into his own individual with his own personality. In this way Hashem will find Avraham, who chose to become a great individual, and allow and instruct him to form the Jewish nation.

Initially, man fulfilled this prototype (Bereshit 10:30-32)

Their settlements extended from Mesha as far as Sephar, the hill country to the east. The Children of Shem lived according to their families, their languages, by their lands, according to their nations. These were the families of Noah's descendants, according to their origin, by their nations, and from these descendants, the nations branched out over the earth after the Flood.

This dispersal shows that humans were separating and developing into unique individuals. They didn't all group together, rather, they spread out and created their own languages and nations.

Dor HaPlaga is introduced, and the first point that the text reveals about them is ויהי כל הארץ שפה אחת ודברים אחדים (Bereishit 11:1). All of the land was of one language, using the same words.

This pasuk immediately introduces the ultimate goal and motivation of this generation. However, the Torah has already mentioned that the children of Shem were each of their own לשון, yet here the pasuk relays that all the land was of one שפה!

It is crucial to analyze the difference between these two words. לשון refers to the tongue while שפה, or rather the plural שפתים, refers to lips. Therefore, לשון is referring to their internals, just as the tongue is contained within the mouth. This represents that their internal thoughts were individual to who they were.

However, this generation arises and disagrees with the model that G-d intentionally created for each individual to develop differently. They, as opposed to Hashem's will, all wanted to be the same. They didn't value their differences; they seemed to appreciate homogeneity. This motivated them to all be of one שפה, just as the lips are on the outside of the mouth which represents the external. The people of the generation begin their mission of eliminating their external differences.

Further, the pasuk says ודברים אחדים. The word דבר literally means thing, the ultimate expression of physicality and external. Through analyzing the way these two similar words that mean language are used throughout Tanach, it can be recognized that לשון always refers to one's tongue or speech, while שפה has an additional meaning that is outside of the realm of lips or speech. That meaning is binding.

As the Torah describes the special garments used for the Kohanim, the pasuk says, ופי המעיל בתוכו כפי תחרא שפה לפיו סביב לא יקרע (Shemot 39:23). The middle of the robe had an opening like that of a coat of chainmail, with a binding around the opening, to prevent tearing. The Torah describes that binding as a שפה. The word שפה here is shown as something holding together two physical parts of the garment. The שפה is not the robe itself, but the outer edge that protects it and keeps it intact. This definition supports the idea that שפה represents the external.

In their attempt for pure homogeneity, the Dor HaPlaga eliminated the individual. Furthermore, almost all of their actions are recorded in the plural, by a group of people. They viewed themselves as one collective entity. As they searched for a place to settle, they embarked on their journey of proving to G-d that they can create a society based on the collective rather than the individual, and it can be just as successful if not better.

ויהי בנסעם מקדם וימצאו בקעה בארץ שנער וישבו שם (Bereishit 11:2). The word מקדם holds great significance throughout Tanach. It is used to represent moving away from the center point. Immediately after Adam and Chava are banished from the Garden of Eden, the Torah states, ויגרש את האדם וישכן מקדם לגן עדן את הכרבים ואת להט החרב המהפכת (Bereishit 3:26). The fact that G-d places the Keruvim on the eastern side implies that man was exiled to the east of Eden and the Keruvim served as guards for that entrance.

In Bereshit 4:16, the Torah says ויצא קין מלפני ה' וישב בארץ נוד. קדמת עדן. After Kayin murdered his brother, and G-d marked him as a wanderer for life, it says that Kayin settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Again, this mention of east is associated with a sinner being sent far from the center. In Bereshit 25:6, it says ולבני הפילגשים אשר לאברהם נתן אברהם מתנת וישלחם מעל יצחק בנו בעודנו חי קדמה אל ארץ קדם. Avraham sent these children east to the Land of East, away from Yitzchak, the son that will continue his legacy. He knew that these children would not continue his legacy, and therefore sent them away from his dwelling with Yitzchak. The "center" does not necessarily refer to the largest or most developed city, but rather to the place where the future of a people or mission is being established.

For this reason, the generation of the Tower of Babel is described as moving east to show that they were deliberately moving away from the center – the place where G-d expected them to develop as individuals and as a society. They rejected dispersion and personal growth and opted for uniformity, rejecting the role G-d intended for humanity, by settling in Shinar. Their movement

east was not only geographical, but also symbolic of their decision to move further away from the path of development and responsibility set by G-d before them.

Their first goal as a group was to create bricks. Bricks had never existed before this point. They created a new piece of technology. They attempted to prove that being an individual is not necessary in order to contribute to society, rather life is better as a collective group and more can be achieved. Only after creating bricks did they realize that they can put their new technology to use and create a city with a tower. Part of what they believed will ultimately unite them is a collective project. It will cause each and every person to work on the same task and will lead each person to abandoning their individual goals. They believed it will eliminate any remaining internal individuality, as they are already all identical externally (as seen in the first pasuk).

There is a similarity in the language used in our story and the story of the beginning of the enslavement in Mitzrayim. In Bereshit 11:4 it is written הבה נבנה לנו עיר ומגדל וראשו בשמים ונעשה לנו שם פן נפוצ על פני כל הארץ. In Shemot 1:10, Pharaoh says, הבה נתחכמה לו פן נפוצ על פני כל הארץ. In Shemot 1:1, begins by specifically stating the names of each individual son of Yaakov that came down to Egypt. Names are the ultimate expression of individuality. In Shemot 1:7, the Torah says ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד מאד ותמלא הארץ אתם. The Jews are seen multiplying exceedingly and filling the land. This pasuk clearly mimics the commandment given to Adam and Noach about multiplying and filling the land. Pharaoh and the Egyptians recognized this. They too, like the generation of the Tower of Babel, hated individuality. Therefore they put the Jews to work, forcing them into slavery and hoping the Jews would lose their individuality. Just as the Dor HaPlaga tried to impose uniformity and resist dispersion because they were against G-d's model of spreading out to develop into individuals, Pharaoh sought to crush the Israelites' individuality and growth.

It is crucial to recognize that their original goal was not to build a tower. They only suggested the idea of building a tower and city after they have created bricks. The fact that they settled in a valley supports this concept. People looking to create a tower would not make the foundation of the tower rest in a valley, but rather on flat land or on a hill, showing their true goal was not the tower. They created the tower because they needed a collective project to work on that would unite the people in a way that no external features could. The tower represented a symbol of their unity. It wasn't about reaching the heavens, but rather polishing their communal identity and purpose.

They believed that through this city, they could make a name for themselves. This name represented them having ultimately proven that a collective group is better than developing into individuals. G-d's prototype is inferior. The name would belong to all of them since there was no longer a need for each individual to have their own. Their collective identity takes precedence.

Then, G-d "came down" and saw the tower. He saw how the people progressed from creating bricks to creating the tower. He understood that once they completed the tower, they would believe that their collective identity was superior and complete, and this model of life would spread. He knew this model prevented any individuals from existing and the Jewish nation from beginning. Without individuality, Avraham would not have come into existence.

Therefore, G-d had no choice but to scatter them. He must enforce the model of separation so that humanity developed into individuals. For the Jewish nation, individuality is especially crucial because the covenant Avraham has with God is based on a unique personal relationship with Him. Avraham's faith, questions, and decisions set the foundation for a people defined not just by collective identity, but by personal commitment.

G-d not only dispersed them across the world, but He also scrambled their languages. It has been established that שפה represents the externals. Therefore, G-d does this because the people believed their externals would be enough to keep them united, but

Hashem showed them this was false. True unity cannot rely solely on outward qualities – those are temporary and fragile. To restore His intended order, G-d sent them across the earth. By confusing their languages, He demonstrated that the external unity they thought was so strong, completely disappeared and became meaningless.

This message of G-d protecting His ideal model of man after this generation attempted to reject it is supported by the immediate aftermath of the dispersion. In Bereshit 11:10-26, the pesukim go straight to speaking about the children of Shem having children at different ages and dying at different ages. This is the ultimate expression of individuality. They are not all on the same timeline. They develop into individuals just as Hashem wanted them to. But this is only the aftermath of G-d manually distributing the people after the generation of the Tower of Babel tried to abandon His model.

The fact that the Torah immediately begins listing the genealogy leading to Avraham right after the scatter shows just how intentional this sequence is. It clearly demonstrates that the diffusion was not a punishment, but a necessary step to restore proper order. By breaking their external unity, G-d made way for individuality to develop as it should according to His original model developed during creation. The people in Babel tried to reject this divine model by relying solely on collective identity, but through dispersion, God ensured that unique individuals can form a true, personal relationship with Him, like Avraham. Without destroying the model of the generation of the flood, such individuality and connection would have been impossible. Ultimately, the Jewish nation would not have been able to form and flourish into what it is today.

אחרי הפעולות נמשכים הלבבות

The Torah is often referred to by the name *Torat Chaim*, an eternal manual for how to lead a meaningful life connected to Hashem across all times and places. Yet, there are also mitzvot that are classified as only being applicable during the times of the Beit Hamikdash and therefore are not presently relevant in our daily lives. If the Torah truly is a *Torat Chaim*, then we must still have something to learn from these mitzvot. Let us examine three mitzvot connected to the Beit Hamikdash.

First, the mitzvah of **וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וּשְׁכֵנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם** (Shemot 25:8). The more common drasha on this pasuk is the famous interpretation of **בְּתוֹכְכֶם** to mean within each and every person. The question is, what does the **וַעֲשׂוּ לִי** part mean? How is one meant to “make” a Mikdash for Hashem?

The next mitzvah is **וְעֵצֶם לֹא תִשְׁבְּרוּ בּוֹ** – don’t break the bone [of the Korban Pesach] (Shemot 12:46). This is a hard mitzvah to intuitively understand. What was the purpose of this mitzvah? Why does it matter whether or not the bones of an already dead animal are broken?

Lastly, the mitzvah of the korban *Tamid*. Many people recite these pesukim daily as part of their tefillah. What is the present relevance of this mitzvah, that it is part of the daily davening just like it was part of the daily *Avodah* in the Beit Hamikdash?

The Gemara (Ta’anit 27b) relates a story of Avraham asking Hashem how his future descendants will be able to atone for their sins when there is no Beit Hamikdash. Hashem responds, saying that Am Yisrael will be able to say the pesukim of the korbanot, and it will count in Hashem’s eyes as if the korbanot themselves were brought. Why is this the case? What is so impactful about these pesukim that they can have the same effect as korbanot? Reading the pesukim of *Kibud Av V’em* doesn’t count as fulfilling the

mitzvah; what idea is so inherent within these pesukim that the mitzvah can be performed from just reading the pesukim?

To truly begin to understand these mitzvot, we must start by looking into the sefer that most adequately describes each mitzvah and its respective roots, the Sefer Hachinuch. When discussing the mitzva of *ועשו לי מקדש*, the Sefer Hachinuch (#95) writes that the commandment is to create an environment that is pure and holy. *צונו לקבע מקום שיהיה טהור ונקי בתכלית הנקיות לטהר שם מחשבות בני איש ולתקן לבבם אליו בו*. You must make for yourself a place which is completely clean in order to purify your thoughts and refine your heart towards Hashem.

Regarding *לא תשברו*, he writes (#16) that bones of the Korban Pesach can not be broken because it is not the way of honorable people to break the bones of their food. This mitzvah was given to Bnei Yisrael on their way out of Egypt to help refine them so they could begin acting like the holy nation that they were about to become. It is not honorable for the sons of kings and the advisers of the land to drag the bones and break them like dogs. This is an action done only by the poorest of the nations, not by those who are lofty and powerful. Therefore, as Am Yisrael began to become the chosen of all nations, a kingdom of priests and a holy people, acting the part leads to feeling the part.

Lastly, he writes (#401) that the Korban Tamid was given twice a day in order to arouse the people to serve Hashem with their entire hearts: *שנצטוינו בעבודה זו התמידית שהיא פעמים ביום בורחת השמש, ובנטותו לערב, למען נתעורר מתוך המעשה הזה, ונשים כל לבנו וכל מחשבותינו לדבקה בשם ברוך הוא*.

The Sefer Hachinuch offers a similar explanation for the root of all three mitzvot. For the root of *ועשו לי מקדש*, the Sefer Hachinuch writes, *כי הגופות יכשרו על ידי הפעלות וברבות הפעלות הטובות ורב התמדותן* – as bodies are refined by actions; and by the multiplication of good actions and their great constancy, the thoughts of the heart become purified, cleansed, and sanitized.

The root of this mitzvah is to place yourself in a positive environment. Actions guide thoughts, so careful consideration must be placed on choosing an environment that will lead to good actions.

A similar idea is mentioned for the mitzvah of **ועצם לא תשברו** ב' when he writes,

ראוי לנו לעשות מעשים המראים בנו המעלה הגדולה שעלינו בה באותה שעה. ומתוך המעשה והדמיון שאנחנו עושין, נקבע בנפשותינו הדבר לעולם ... כי האדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו, וליבו וכל מחשבותיו תמיד אחר מעשיו שהוא עוסק בהם אם טוב ואם רע.

It is fitting to do acts that show the great stature achieved at that time. And from the action and imagination done, this thing is placed in our souls for eternity ... a man acts according to his deeds; and his heart and all his thoughts always follow after the actions that he does – whether good or bad.

As in the previous mitzvah, the Sefer Hachinuch notes that hearts follow after actions. People must act in accordance with how they want their thoughts to be. He explains that this mitzvah comes as a reminder to act like kings and become Hashem's Am Segula in our hearts as well.

A similar idea appears regarding the mitzvah of korban *Tamid*. He writes,

שהאדם נפעל וטבעו מתעורר לפי עסק מעשהו ... וכל זה למה? כדי לעורר רוחו וחפצו תמיד לזכר את בוראו, ובכך ישכיר מעשיו ויתברך ממנו.

A person is moved, and his nature is aroused according to his actions ... and what is the reason for bringing this [korban twice a day]? To regularly arouse his spirit and his desire to remember his Creator, and through this to make his actions proper and be blessed from Hashem.

The Sefer Hachinuch seems to be drawing out a fascinating parallel between these three mitzvot. He is saying that the intentions behind each of these mitzvot, while not the action itself, is supremely relevant to how it impacts the person completing the mitzvah. Each mitzvah is for the purpose of leading our thoughts towards good and to purify our minds. However, each mitzvah does

this in its own unique way. For *ועשו לי מקדש*, the mitzvah seems to be a command to make an environment for yourself that will lead to good actions and therefore to good thoughts. *ועצם לא תשברו* teaches the importance of acting the ideal so the internal can follow. And lastly, korban *Tamid* comes to tell us to make habits out of good actions so that the good thoughts never leave.

The core of *ועשו לי מקדש*, the commandment to make for yourself a good environment, is an idea that we hear often in Judaism. It is written in Pirkei Avot (1:3), *נְתַאי הָאֲרֵבֶלִי אוֹמֵר, הָרַחֵק מִשְׁכַּן רָע, וְאֵל נְתַאי הָפְרַעְנוֹת תִּתְחַבֵּר לְרָשָׁע, וְאֵל תִּתְיַאֵשׁ מִן הַפְרַעְנוֹת*. Rabbeinu Ovadia miBartenura, commenting on these words, warns of living amongst bad people, because even if one doesn't follow in their actions, they will be punished with the others. He compares it to a man who enters the house of a tanner. The visitor may not have touched anything or joined in on the tanning, but he will walk out at the end of the day smelling just as bad.

Similarly, countless warnings are given by the Chafetz Chaim in his sefer on *lashon hara*, warning to stay away from people who are gossipers, as it will lead to joining them in their talebearing. Being around gossipers, leads to gossip. Being around *ba'alei chesed*, will lead towards a path of chesed. Environments matter. In modern psychology, there is a term for this – Behavior Settings. Psychologist Roger Barker studied the impacts of a person's surroundings on his behavior and found that specific times, locations, and social activities dictate one's behavior more strongly than individual personality traits. A person's environment often has a bigger impact on his actions than his inherent disposition. This is why Hashem gives a direct mitzvah to create a positive environment for oneself – so He can be served properly.

Once a positive environment is made, acting the part is the next step. Upon coming out of Egypt, Bnei Yisrael didn't know how to live life as free people. They could not comprehend the idea of freedom after having spent their entire lives as slaves. With that mentality, Hashem needed to give them a commandment

to place them into the Am Segula mentality. Hence, the mitzvah of **ועצם לא תשברו** – behave with a sense of personal importance. With this mitzvah, Bnei Yisrael could start building the tools to realize that not only are they important, but that their actions are crucial.

As the Sefer Hachinuch writes so aptly, **אחרי הפעולות נמשכים הלבבות** – your heart follows your actions. Once given this commandment to do, Bnei Yisrael would evolve into people who can be proper *Ovdei Hashem*. This, too, has been echoed by psychologists as a way to change oneself. In the book *The As If Principle*, Richard Wiseman proves the theory stated years before by psychologist Williams James: If you want a quality, act as if you already have it. Wiseman states that, contrary to popular belief, our actions guide our emotions. Want to become happier? Smile more. Want to love someone? Act as if you already do. Want more confidence? Walk with a confident stride. Your actions don't just define you, they change you.

After those first two mitzvot, one must then make it a habit. The difficulty of truly being a good person is to do it consistently. So Hashem gave the mitzvah of the korban *Tamid*. There is a Midrash quoted in the Ayn Yaakov's introduction to his sefer that relates a Tannaitic debate regarding which pasuk in the Torah is most important. It is the opinion of R' Shimon Ben Pazzi quoting the pasuk, **ואת הכבש אחד תעשה בבוקר ואת הכבש השני תעשה בין הערבים** that wins the debate.

The classic explanation given for this seemingly arbitrary conclusion is simple: the korban *Tamid* teaches the importance of habits. It teaches to complete Hashem's mitzvot in the hard times, the inspired times, and the mundane times. This is why Hashem told Avraham that his descendants would be able to atone for their sins by reading the pesukim of the korban *Tamid*.

As Rav Hirsch writes, the purpose of the korban *Tamid* is to be a reminder that it is necessary each day to overcome challenges that serve as a hindrance to serving Hashem. This korban was a practical symbol of sacrificing one's animalistic side so that he can create within himself a new drive towards kedusha. Saying korba-

not in davening each day, is an announcement to Hashem that today effort will be placed into doing the right thing. The importance of good habits is not a foreign concept to most. The books *Atomic Habits* or *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* both discuss the influence of a habit on the person. By repeating the pesukim of the korban *Tamid*, the mitzvah of habits, a daily commitment takes place.

This isn't coming to say that these explanations are the entirety of each mitzvah. Complete understanding of the complete essence of any mitzvah is impossible, as no person can have the insight of Hashem. That being said, living in a world without the Beit Hamikdash, what can be done is to attempt to understand at least the basics of these mitzvot in order to implement them into our daily lives.

These three mitzvot, the mitzvot of performing actions in order to directly shift the internal, are a fundamental core of Judaism. They remind of the free will possessed by all people. ועשו לי מקדש – choose a good environment. ועצם לא תשברו בו – choose good actions. Korban *Tamid* – choose to make these changes permanent. Through these active choices to be better people, may there be a zechut to perform these mitzvot in their full form by the Beit Hamikdash, all together, *bimheira biyameinu*.

Bnot Tzlophchad

The Tanach mentions Bnot Tzlofchad on three separate occasions, dedicating a total of 27 pesukim. Each time, all five of their names are meticulously recorded and their full lineage traced. Why does the Torah, which is typically concise, linger over these women? Who were the daughters of Tzlofchad, what did they stand for, and what is the Torah trying to teach us through their story?

Initially (Bamidbar, 27:1-7), the five daughters of Tzlofchad – Machlah, Noa, Chagla, Milkah, and Tirtzah – approach Moshe claiming they deserve an inheritance in the Land of Israel, even though their father sinned and died without having sons. Moshe brings their case before Hashem. He answers that their claim is just, instructing Moshe to assign them the inheritance. Later (Bamidbar 36:1-12), the members of their *shevet*, Menashe, come to Moshe and raise the following concern: since the daughters of Tzlofchad are inheriting land, if they marry into another tribe, the land will transfer and no longer be part of Menashe. Moshe instructs the daughters to marry within the shevet.¹ Lastly (Yehoshua 17:3-4), the daughters actually receive their portions in Eretz Yisrael, representing the fulfillment of this story.

Each time Bnot Tzlofchad are referenced, the Torah records all of their names. The order in which they're written is consistent for both Bamidbar chapter 27 and Sefer Yehoshua, but is different in the second instance (Bamidbar chapter 36). Rashi (27:1), based on the Gemara (Bava Batra 120a) comments that the reason for this change is to tell us that all five daughters had equal intellectual worth and none was greater than the other.

¹ See Bava Batra 120a that although the daughters of Tzlofchod were allowed to marry outside their tribe, Moshe advised them to choose appropriate husbands

Furthermore the daughters brought a halachic question that even Moshe, the leader of Bnei Yisrael, had no response to. After inquiring from Hashem, He responds to Moshe using the term כן. Rashi explains that Hashem was affirming to Moshe that the daughters spoke correctly, possessing incredible ability to see what Moshe wasn't able to see, demonstrating their exceptional intellectual and spiritual qualities.

Additionally, the Gemara (Bava Batra 119b) states that the daughters were righteous and remained single until at least they were 40, before they found suitable husbands to marry. Similarly, Moshe separated himself from his wife for 40 years to remain pure to be in Hashem's presence. A key difference is that the daughters of Tzlofchad willingly chose to stay unmarried and prioritized spiritual integrity without being commanded (Bamidbar Rabbah 21:11). The above sources clearly highlight the righteousness and intellectual capacity of the daughters of Tzlofchad, but clearly there's another layer to their story.²

Each time the daughters are mentioned, their entire lineage is traced all the way back to Yosef (a seemingly unnecessary addition as we know Menashe is the son of Yosef). Rashi (Bamidbar 27:1) explains that when the Torah traces lineage back to someone praiseworthy, it indicates that the person himself is worthy. Yosef is mentioned to show the righteousness of his descendants. Furthermore, the mention of Yosef draws a deliberate parallel between his values and the values of Bnot Tzlofchad.

At the end of Sefer Bereishit (50:25), Yosef stresses the importance of his bones being brought up to be buried in Eretz Yisrael. Similarly the daughters of Tzlofchad could not accept a reality where they had no portion of the land. They both possessed a deep and passionate love for the Land of Israel, that it was impossible for them to comprehend not having a connection to it. It seems appropriate that Yosef, whose life and death embodied this incredible attachment

² בנות צלפחד חכמניות הן דרשניות הן צדקניות הן (בבא בתרא קיט:)²

to Israel, would merit for his descendants to fight for their own portion of the land.

It's clear that the daughters encompassed this core love of Israel dating all the way back to Yosef, but when examining their father it is clear he too was an essential source of their value of Eretz Yisrael. The daughters mention that their father died due to his own sin, specifying that he was not part of the assembly of Korach (Bamidbar 27:3). The meforshim debate what his sin was, and why they decided to state that he was not part of the congregation of Korach. The Ramban explains that the daughters stressed their father was not part of Korach's assembly because those who sinned with him lost their rights to the land; they wanted to find favor in Moshe's eyes. They made it clear Tzlophchad had no connection to Korach, and therefore their claim to the land was legitimate.

The Gemara (Shabbat 96b) suggests that Tzlophchad was the **מקושש עצים** who gathered wood on Shabbat in order to prove the seriousness of desecrating Shabbat to Bnei Yisrael. Although his actions were wrong, his intentions, according to the Midrash, were solely for the benefit of Bnei Yisrael.³

Alternatively, the Gemara suggests that he was among those who tried to enter Eretz Yisrael immediately after the sin of the miraglim, even though they were explicitly told that Hashem wasn't with them. In either case, although their father was misguided, Bnot Tzlophchad inherited a desire to act for the sake of Heaven and a passion for Eretz Yisrael. One can see how Yosef's burning love for the Land was transmitted all the way to Tzlophchad and was ultimately embodied by his daughters as well.

There's one more piece to understanding the daughters of Tzlophchad, and it's the unique connection the women in the *midbar* had to Eretz Yisrael. In Bamidbar 13:2, Hashem tells Moshe to send out *miraglim*: **שלח לך אנשים**. The Kli Yakar says something fascinating. Hashem thought it would be more fitting to send women to

³ עיין בבא בתרא קיט: תד"ה אפילו

check out the land. The men hated the Land of Israel and wanted to go back to Mitzrayim, but the women loved it. Hashem was telling Moshe it would be better to send women, but since you want to send men, send them.⁴ This raises an interesting thought that maybe the whole sin of the *miraglim* would've been avoided if the women (the same women who refused to sin with the *egel*) were the ones who went to see the land, like Hashem had intended.

Overall Bnot Tzlofchad are highly righteous and intelligent women with a family history of an intense desire and profound love for Eretz Yisrael. They fought for their rights to inherit the Land, with tenacity coupled with humility. Their story isn't just a narrative that belongs to them, it belongs to Jews through the centuries. As Rabbi Sacks so eloquently put in his article *The Religious Significance of Israel*⁵, when describing the high stakes required for the Jews to inhabit Israel, "Jews knew that the risk was worth taking. For only in Israel is God so close that you can feel Him in the sun and wind, sense Him just beyond the hills, hear Him in the inflections of everyday speech, breathe His presence in the early morning air and live, dangerously but confidently, under the shadow of His wings."

⁴ שלח לך, לדעתך, אנשים, אבל לדעתי היה יותר טוב לשלוח נשים

⁵ blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-religious-significance-of-israel-masei-5779/

Devorah and Devorah – Coincidence or Connection?

There are two women named Devorah within Tanach. One, is a prominent figure within the Jewish nation. She has perakim dedicated to her story, highlighting her importance within the timeline of Bnei Yisrael. The other's name is mentioned once. What is the connection between these two, seemingly polar opposite, women?

Devorah, *Meineket* Rivka, the nursemaid of Rivka, is only mentioned once by name in the entirety of the Torah – when she dies (Bereishit 35:8). What is so significant about her that the Torah allocates a whole pasuk to her death? Furthermore, Yaakov renames her burial place Alon Bachut, the Oak of Weeping, displaying his immense pain and sorrow because of her passing. What was his connection to her?

The *Meineket* of Rivka is mentioned once before her death, although not by name, in Bereishit 24:59. The Midrash states that this nursemaid is, in fact, the very same Devorah who is mentioned in Bereishit 35:8 (Sechel Tov and Lekach Tov, Bereishit 24:59)¹. She stayed by Rivka's side, even when she left home to marry Yitzchak.

Devorah remained with Rivka, even as she grew into adulthood, as a mentor and close ally. Devorah sustained her, not only physically, but spiritually as well. Neither Rivka's brother Lavan nor her father Betuel were known for their sterling character traits. She grew up in a home filled with guile and deceit. If these were the middot that surrounded Rivka during her childhood, how did she grow into such a thoughtful and caring woman, with an exceptional character and spiritual aspirations?

¹ See Ramban (Bereishit 35:8) for an alternate opinion

The answer is Devorah, her nursemaid. She was the role model for Rivka throughout her life, acting as her spiritual mother. She helped Rivka tune out her surroundings and taught her how to be a good person. This guidance is why Yaakov felt such a strong connection to her and why he was so distraught when she died. She imparted to his mother, and subsequently to him, their strong connection to Hashem.

According to Rashi (Bereishit 35:8), Rivka had sent Devorah as the messenger to Yaakov informing him that Esav was no longer set out to kill him, fulfilling a promise that Rivka had made years earlier (Bereishit 27:45). The Ramban states that Devorah had returned much earlier and helped raise Yaakov's children, continuing the legacy that she began with Rivka. In either case, Devorah died while Yaakov was on his journey to return home.

According to the Midrash (Bereishit Rabba 81:5), the mourning that took place at this time was not limited to the death of Devorah. It was at this juncture that Yaakov was informed of the death of his beloved mother, Rivka. Why doesn't the Torah tell us explicitly of the death of our second Matriarch? The Midrash Tanchuma (Devarim Ki Taitzai 4) says that Rivka was buried hastily at night under the cover of darkness. Had she been buried in a public ceremony, the only family member attending would have been Esav. (Yitzchak was infirm and Yaakov was still in exile.) There was great concern that this would lead people to curse Rivka for bearing Esav, and would have been extremely disrespectful to her on the day of her death. The Torah, therefore, only hints at Rivka's death, camouflaging it with the death of her mentor, Devorah. Yaakov's double mourning was genuine. If not for Rivka's education through Devorah, neither she nor Yaakov would have become the forebearers of the Jewish nation.

The other significant woman named Devorah in Tanach is Devorah the Shofetet and Neviah. It is no coincidence that both of these women have the same name. There are clear parallels between these women that portray the true power and influence they possessed over the Jewish people.

Devorah the Shofetet was known to have sat under a tree near Beit El (Shoftim 4:5). The Abarbanel says that this is the same location where Devorah, *Meineket* Rivka, was buried centuries earlier. That is why it is referred to as תמור דבורה. He also comments that Devorah the Judge sat there in the open, in order to avoid any questions of yichud.

Furthermore, Devorah the Judge was described as אשת לפידות, which can be translated as zealous and fiery (see Metzudat David). She had a passion for Torah and helping the Jewish people. Devorah's sincere attention to the detail of halacha, and caution in her middot is connected to that of Devorah, *Meineket* Rivka. They both used their spirituality to guide the nation through hard times, one on a more public level, and the other on a more personal and private level.

Devorah the Judge took over at a low point in Bnei Yisrael's connection to Hashem. They had strayed away, but she successfully rebuked them, leading them back in the right direction and bringing them closer to Hashem (Ralbag 4:4). She helped Barak defeat Sisera, ultimately saving Bnei Yisrael during her time as judge. This salvation has similarities to Devorah the nursemaid, who helped Rivka and Yaakov in harsh environments.

The name Devorah means "bee," symbolizing might, despite a miniature size. Bees produce honey, the purest natural form of sweetness. The Torah is compared to honey in Shir Hashirim (4:11) דבש וחלב תחת לשוניך (see Devarim Rabbah 7:3). Both Devorahs spread Torah values to Bnei Yisrael, serving as a symbol of continuity and spirituality in challenging times.

The parallels between Devorah, *Meineket* Rivka, and Devorah the Shofetet display that they both were spiritual mothers over the nation and stepped in during periods of crisis, exhibiting how one person can create a change that lasts for generations.

Siblinghood in the Torah

To learn more about any topic, it is essential to explore where it is first seen in Tanach. The first instance of siblinghood is obviously the story of Kayin and Hevel. The Torah devotes seven pesukim from the birth of Kayin until the murder of Hevel. Clearly, they aren't the best example of siblings to learn from. Who is?

Every Friday night, or Erev Yom Kippur, depending on the family minhag, parents bless their sons to be like Ephraim and Menashe. This is based on a pasuk (Bereishit 48:20) ויברכם ביום ההוא לאמור בך יברך ישראל לאמר ישמך אלקים כאפרים וכמנשה. When giving his grandsons brachot before he passed away, Yaakov declared that all of Bnei Yisrael should bless their sons to be like Ephraim and Menashe. However, nowhere in the Tanach do we find an explicit list of their accomplishments, or even the interactions they had with each other. Wouldn't it have made more sense for Bnei Yisrael to bless their sons to be like Moshe and Aharon – siblings who accomplished so much together?

To understand why Menashe and Ephraim are the best example of siblings, it's essential to examine the descriptions in the Torah of the births of the more well known siblings, and what the stories of their births can teach us about them. (It is important to note that this analysis is only regarding siblings born as a story, and not born as part of a list.)

The Malbim in Ayelet Hashachar, the introduction to his Midrashic commentary, highlights how the Torah uses precise vocabulary to avoid being redundant. Furthermore, a core idea in this work is that every change in wording is deliberate and meaningful. The Malbim also assigns weight to the order the words of the Torah appear in – what comes first versus second is intentional and significant. Therefore, examining the exact wording of the birth of each sibling, will provide insights into what the Torah wants to teach us.

The first siblings are Kayin, Hevel, and Shet. Kayin is introduced with the phrase *ותהר ותלד את קין* (Bereishit 4:1). Hevel is next (4:2), *ותספ ללדת את אחיו את הבל*. Much later in the perek (4:25) is the birth of Shet, *ותלד בן ותקרא את שמו שת*. A pattern that will soon emerge is the repetition of *ותלד בן*, which is how Shet is introduced.

However, Kayin and Hevel, the first two children born, don't adhere to this pattern. They are introduced with their names when they are born, not as *ben*, a son. We know that names are inherent to who a person is, so it seems that immediately, as Kayin and Hevel are introduced, their individual character traits are emphasized. Perhaps, since the rest of the siblings mentioned below are descendants of Shet, they typically continue to follow the emerging pattern as a *ben*.

The next pair of siblings to examine are Yitzchak and Yishmael. Yishmael's birth seems to follow within the confines of the pattern set with Shet, *ותלד הגר לאברהם בן* (Bereishit 16:15). Yitzchak, too, is similarly introduced (21:2), *ותהר ותלד שרה לאברהם בן*. Both Yishmael and Yitzchak follow the pattern of *ותלד בן*. What's interesting about these brothers is that their names were given to them by Hashem, not by their parents. Similar to Kayin and Hevel, it seems that the individual traits of Yishmael and Yitzchak are immediately a focus.

Following Yitzchak and Yishmael are an iconic pair in the Torah, Yaakov and Esav. Different from most of the other siblings, the earlier pattern is not found at all when their birth is discussed. A simple reason for this inconsistency is, since Yaakov and Esav aren't born in a typical way, their birth isn't going to follow the typical pattern.

However, what is similar to the siblings mentioned above is the emphasis on their individuality. As Yaakov and Esav are born, their traits, especially Esav's, are stated clearly in the pesukim. Again, immediately following their births, who they are as individuals is what is at the center.

Looking at the births of the Shevatim, several abnormalities jump out. While the pasuk for every child includes the phrase

בן ותלד,¹ the structure of each child's pasuk not only expounds further than those two words and their names, but their births are described differently, except for Shimon, Levi, and Yehuda². If the reason for differentiating between the births of the Shevatim is to draw attention to their individual differences, rather than their shared traits, it's strange that the births of three of the brothers are described in the same way. Perhaps, since all three of these brothers are distinguished in the future, the Torah didn't feel the need to distinguish them now. Yehuda is distinguished by having the kingship, Levi has the priesthood, and Shimon doesn't receive his own independent portion of Eretz Yisrael³.

The next story of siblings is Er, Onen, and Shelah. All three births follow the בן ותלד structure. However, while the pesukim that detail the births of Er and Onen are similar, the pasuk for Shelah has a one word difference; the word ותהר is replaced with ותסוף, highlighting his uniqueness as Yehuda's only son (until that point) that does not die from sinning with Tamar.

Finally, the Torah relates the story of Ephraim and Menashe. Noticeably, these pesukim differ from the usual pattern. When it describes Yosef becoming a father, the pasuk says, וליוסף ילד שני (Bereishit 41:50) This story clearly does not fit within the typical framework that described the births of other siblings. Perhaps the clearest and most obvious difference is that the children aren't separated. The pasuk says two sons were born, not differentiating between each son. It's one of the only times the Torah describes two sons together, as part of a story and not a list.

Yaakov and Esav are similarly described as being together while Rivka was pregnant. However, their unity is short-lived. Even before they're born, Yaakov and Esav "crush" each other, and have

¹ Excluding the tragic circumstances of Binyamin's birth. See Bereishit 35:16-18

² The births of these three brothers are introduced with the exact same phrase: ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר

³ See Yehoshua 19:1

separate phrases for their individual births. Ephraim and Menashe, in contrast, never disunite. From the time they're born, there is no competition between them, no fighting, and one is never pitted against the other, even when Yaakov seems to favor Ephraim, the younger sibling.

The last siblings to look at are Moshe and Aharon; however, only the story of Moshe's birth is recorded. On the one hand, the description of his birth (Shemot 2:2) follows the typical pattern, (ותלד בן) but his individuality is emphasized as soon as he is born (ותרא אתו כי טוב הוא).

There is a second pattern that highlights the uniqueness of Ephraim and Menashe. As the children of Yaakov depart to Mitzrayim, they are listed and numbered (Bereishit 46:8-27). Each Shevet is listed with his children, before moving onto the next. Furthermore, each set of Shevatim is finished off with mentioning the mother for that group. For the children of Rachel, however, the formula is different. First, the pasuk names Rachel as a wife of Yaakov, and then it lists her two sons. The pasuk then names Yosef's wife, and then his sons, Menashe and Ephraim. From there, the typical pattern of the list resumes.

Rachel is the only wife who's mentioned before her children. Yosef is the only one whose wife is mentioned. And Menashe and Ephraim both have את before their names, different from anyone else on the list. Clearly, there is something that distinguishes Rachel from the other wives, a trait possibly passed down to her oldest son and grandchildren, differentiating them as well.

The Gemara Megilla (13b) relates the famous story of how Rachel shared her wedding signs with Leah. Before Yaakov and Rachel were supposed to get married, Yaakov was suspicious that Lavan would substitute Leah in Rachel's stead. Yaakov and Rachel, therefore, made secret signs with each other so that Yaakov would know that it was truly Rachel at the wedding. However, Rachel realized how shamed her sister Leah would feel if the fraud was discovered at the wedding. To protect her sister from such embarrassment, Rachel conveyed to Leah the secret signs.

In theory, Rachel Imeinu could have been the mother of all twelve Shevatim, the mother of the entire Jewish nation. Instead, she gave up that lofty personal role for the sake of her sister. Rachel prioritized her values over her individual role. This is the trait that was passed on to Yosef and his sons.

From the beginning of his life, Yosef appeared to be the most individual of the Shevatim. He spoke of dreams where his brothers' stalks of grain bowed to his, and where metaphorical stars bowed to him. He became the second in command to Pharaoh at a time of major success in Egypt. However, he was also the one who brought all of the Shevatim back together.

When the brothers went down to Mitzrayim to collect food during the famine, Yosef demanded that they return with the youngest brother as well: **בואת תבחנו חי פרעה אם תצאו מזה כי אם בבווא אחיכם הקטן הנה** (Bereishit 42:15). Yosef was the first in so many years to finally reunite the family, even after the pain that his brothers had caused him. Once all of the brothers were back together, Yosef revealed himself. The very first thing Yosef asked is about the one person who connected all of the brothers together, their father. He then told them to come close, almost like a unifying group hug.

This trait of prioritizing family unity, of bringing people together, is the trait Yosef received from his mother, Rachel. This is the trait that he subsequently passed on to Ephraim and Menashe, distinguishing them amongst all other siblings in Sefer Bereishit. Ephraim and Menashe are the two who are never separated by their individual roles. They have a stronger connection than dissonance. And perhaps that's why they are the brothers who exemplify the epitome of siblinghood.

Perhaps this is why parents don't bless their sons to be like Moshe and Aharon. Moshe and Aharon, who were so vital as leaders of Bnei Yisrael, were required to focus on their individual roles. They needed to lead the nation. Ephraim and Menashe didn't have such a requirement, so they were able to put aside their few differences and be the picture of unity.

The Secret of the *Livyatan*

The *Livyatan* seems to be depicted in Tanach with intentional ambiguity. It is mentioned a number of times, indicating its relevance, but never in a way that clearly states what it is. Certain aspects of its purpose, its relationship to Hashem, and how it is perceived by people are discussed. However, a cohesive narrative of the creature is never laid down. Is it an animal, a force of nature, or something else entirely? The fact that Tanach never clearly answers these questions is not a gap of information, but rather deliberate ambiguity. The *Livyatan* is designed to live at the edge of the natural and the metaphysical realms.

The longest and most intense description of the *Livyatan* appears in Sefer Iyov. When Hashem finally responds to Iyov, He does not explain suffering or explain His actions. Instead, He asks Iyov an overwhelming number of questions about the structure of the world, including his dominion over the *Livyatan*. The *Livyatan* enters this dialogue as something Iyov cannot touch, control, or even approach, **לשנו תשקיע ובחכה** (Iyov 40:25). The description that follows explains the *Livyatan* as invulnerable and completely immune to human intrusion.

What stands out the most, however, is that Hashem never explains the *Livyatan*, He only vaguely describes it. He asks Iyov these questions, not searching for an answer, but to highlight Iyov's incapacibilities within the larger world. Iyov's perspective is limited; not because he is foolish, but because the world is larger and more complex than his limited human brain can comprehend.

This evidence alone might suggest that the *Livyatan* is meant to be terrifying, but Tehillim further complicates the narrative. In one place, the *Livyatan* is described as playful, **זה יצרת לשחק בו** (Tehillim 104:26). Here, the *Livyatan* is not a threat at all, but a seemingly regular part of nature. However, elsewhere, Tehillim (74:14)

describes Hashem crushing the *Livyatan's* heads, *אתה רצצת ראשי לויתן*, implying the violent nature of the creature. Yeshayahu (27:1), on the other hand, talks about the *Livyatan* in the context of the future in a time of Divine confrontation *ביום ההוא יפקד ה' ... על לויתן נחש בריח*. The *Livyatan* is clearly threatening, but the Torah also makes it clear that Hashem is the one wielding the power.

Within the conflicting depictions, there are key points that remain constant. The *Livyatan* is a sea creature. The sea in Tanach symbolizes more than water; it is a huge entity, wild, and impossible to control. As the water is described in Tehillim(104:25) *זה הים גדול ורחב ידיים שם רמש ואין מספר חיות קטנות עם גדלות*. This pasuk maintains the sea's characterization as a place of mystery and danger simply due to its enormity. These traits can be transferred unto the *Livyatan* itself, because of its constant association with the water.

Chazal push this idea even further. The Gemara (Bava Batra 74b) teaches that the *Livyatans* were created as male and female. Hashem, however, killed the female because together they would have destroyed the world, *ואלמלא נוקקין זה לזה מחריבין כל העולם כולו*. Why is the *Livyatan* dangerous? Not because it is corrupt or violent, rather, because it has so much concentrated intensity. The world was not built to sustain such power within an entire species, so Hashem limited it to one creature.

The Gemara continues, *אמר רב יהודה אמר רב כל מה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו זכר ונקבה בראם אף לויתן נחש בריח ונחש עקלתון זכר ונקבה*. Rashi explains, *שהיה להן ולדות הרבה גדולים שמחריבין את העולם*, the female was killed so they could not multiply and destroy the world. The Gemara states that the female was the one killed off, because the *Livyatan's* purpose was for sport; it would be improper for the female to be left for sport purposes.

Chazal expand the image of this creature, describing the *Livyatan* in exaggerated physical terms. They then shift to the future, saying that its flesh will one day be eaten by the righteous and its skin used as a sukkah. These images are strange and almost

jarring. This seems to connote that the *Livyatan* will be conquered in the times of Mashiach.

The Ramban furthers the idea that the *Livyatan* is the physical embodiment of sheer power in this world. On the words, *תמשוך לויתן*, *בַּחֲכָה*, Ramban writes that the pasuk (Iyov 40:25) is asking whether a human could ever draw the *Livyatan* with a hook like an ordinary fish. The detailed anatomical description of the *Livyatan* is therefore meant to show how completely beyond human control it is. It acts in accordance to the power it wields, and does not tremble even at the mightiest men.

The description of the *Livyatan* in Iyov specifically mentions it within the context of the senses, highlighting the human inability to even maintain contact with such a creature. Vision is discussed first. The *Livyatan*'s eyes are described as *עיניו כעפעפי שחר* (Iyov 41:10). They are so incredibly bright, too powerful for people to look at directly. Smell is next. The pasuk says, *מנחיריו יצא עשן כדור נפוח*, *ואגמוזן* (Iyov 41:12). This is not a familiar or comforting breath, but one associated with heat, pressure, and danger, suggesting an environment humans cannot safely inhabit. Touch, the final sense mentioned, is blocked entirely by the *Livyatan*'s body itself, *גאותו*, *אפיקי מגנים סגור חותם צר: אחד באחד יגשו ורוח לא יבוא ביניהם* (Iyov 41:7-8). The image depicted shows a being impervious to physical contact of any kind.

Even with all the information given, these descriptions do not provide a clear picture of the *Livyatan*, and they're not meant to. They show that every sense fails to help make it understandable within a human mind. The *Livyatan* overwhelms sight, smell, and touch, leaving humans without any stable way to perceive, approach, or control it.

The *Livyatan* is also unique in the fact that it is never commanded. Throughout Tanach, creation is defined through command: humans are instructed, animals are directed, and even natural forces are given roles. The *Livyatan*, however, receives no command. This lack of command makes it part of creation that is

beyond human control, but not beyond Divine purpose. A directive would limit the *Livyatan* into a role that had to be understood by people, so, the lack of one keeps it under Hashem's realm while removing it from the human one. The fact that the *Livyatan* has no currently defined role, suggests it represents power that the world cannot yet use. There will be a place for it in the future, when its flesh will feed the righteous and its skin provides shelter. What is too much today will become part of a complete and perfect world.

The *Livyatan's* eventual integration shows that original creation includes aspects that people cannot yet manage or fully understand. In the times of Mashiach, the immense qualities of the *Livyatan* will develop into perfection, function, and order. Senses that are overloaded by the *Livyatan* now, will be able to handle it. What cannot be looked at now will be seen clearly, touch will find a place in its skin, taste will savor its flesh, smell won't be lent to destruction, and hearing will no longer be deafened by its roar. The *Livyatan* will become a part of creation that can exist within human contexts.

Chazal explain the delay of the *Livyatan's* role. The Midrash (Tanchuma, Shemini) teaches that certain creations are reserved for the future, to a time when it can be better comprehended. This idea appears in the statement that G-d has prepared great creations, **כִּי לַעֲתִיד לִבָּא**. Even creations that do not fit into the current world, remain in it – waiting for a time when the world itself will be capable of receiving it.

Seen this way, the *Livyatan* is not a contradiction within creation, but a reminder of its limits. It shows that the world contains forces that are real and purposeful, even if that objective is not yet revealed. The *Livyatan's* lack of command, its confinement to the sea, and its postponed role all point to a creation that is incomplete by design. Tanach presents the *Livyatan* not as chaos, but as potential held in reserve; waiting for a future in which sheer power can exist in the world.

Izevel

After the death of Omri, king of Malchut Yisrael, his son Achav took over the leadership of the kingdom. The Navi immediately informs us: הרע בעיני ה' מכל אשר לפניו ויעש (Melachim I 16:30). Achav married Izevel, the daughter of the king of *Tzidon*. This union may have had political and economic benefits, but opened the door for devastating influences on the spiritual and religious life in Israel. Izevel brought with her the culture of idolatry which soon spread all over the land, leading Achav to create an altar for Baal in the capital of Israel. The priests of Baal and Asheira were welcome at her table for meals. Anyone who opposed Izevel and her beliefs was killed.

When Izevel heard about the confrontation on Har HaCarmel between Eliyahu and the prophets of Baal who were subsequently killed, she was incensed. She sent a message to Eliyahu, threatening to kill him: כה יעשון אלהים וכה יוספון כי כעת מחר אשים את נפשך כנפש כה יעשון אלהים וכה יוספון כי כעת מחר אשים את נפשך כנפש (Malachim I 19:2). The Abarbanel explains that her threat was not an “oath” like it sounds, but rather “justice” that will be served from the gods to punish Eliyahu for this “atrocious.” Either way, Eliyahu did not wait around for this sentence to play out and he fled to the south.

Why did Eliyahu, a Navi of Hashem, fear Izevel, a wicked person with false prophets, and flee for his life? The Chomat Anach explains that Eliyahu saw that Izevel’s messenger was sent from Hashem. It was His will for him to flee, indicating that his running away was not a sign of weakness, but hidden strength.

The Malbim asks: Why didn’t Izevel just kill Eliyahu right away? Why threaten him, giving him the chance to escape? He explains that Izevel saw that Achav’s heart was “inclined” towards Eliyahu; he subconsciously sided with him, so she did not dare make a move at that moment. She was hoping that overnight Achav would change his mind, and his wickedness and hatred for Eliyahu would return.

The story of Navot (Melachim I, chapter 21) further exemplifies Izevel's wickedness, cruelty, and her tendency to influence the moral character of people. Navot owned a vineyard adjacent to Achav's palace, that Achav desired. Achav offered to exchange it for another vineyard or for money, but Navot rejected the proposal in order to keep his family inheritance. Achav, angry and depressed, returned home, laying in bed and refusing to eat. When Izevel heard what was troubling him, she chastised his timid behavior which was unworthy of anyone aspiring to be a successful monarch¹ and assured him that she would solve the issue. She sent letters with Achav's seal to the elders of the city instructing them to find two unscrupulous individuals who would testify that they heard Navot blaspheming G-d and the king.

The Malbim explains that Izevel understood that Navot intended to demean their pagan deities and that his manner of response to Achav's offers was not sufficiently respectful. This information, attested to by Achav, was sent to the elders. The fact that there were no independent witnesses who could corroborate this, was a "minor" problem that could be easily solved.

The elders of the city did as Izevel commanded, and the two "witnesses" came and testified against Navot. They carried him out of the city and stoned him to death. Achav received this news right away and was instructed by Izevel to get up and take the vineyard for himself.

After this great act of injustice, Hashem sent Eliyahu to tell Achav of his and Izevel's punishments. His silence regarding Izevel's conspiracy, the killing of Navot, and his inheritance of Navot's property made him an equal partner in the murder of Navot.

After Achav heard the horrible punishments he and his future generations would receive – after their death, the dogs (and birds) would devour their flesh and lick their blood – he immediately did teshuva. He ripped his clothes, donned a sackcloth, fasted and walked about subdued (21:27).

¹ See commentaries of Abarbanel and Chomat Anach

The Abarbanel relates that Achav took Eliyahu's words to heart, and behaved anxiously, like a mourner. Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer (43) says that Achav would even send for Yehoshafat, the king of Yehuda, to give him lashes. Through fasting, self-affliction, and davening to Hashem, Hashem tells Eliyahu: **הראית כי נכנע אחאב מלפני י'ען כי נכנע מפני לא אבי הרעה בימיו בימי בנו אביא הרעה על ביתו**. Approximately 3 years later, Achav dies in battle.

After Achav's death in the war, Izevel ruled over Israel through her sons Achaziah and Yehoram. Her influence even reached Yehuda through her daughter Atalya, who married Yehoram, king of Yehuda.

Yehu, son of Yehoshafat received prophetic instructions from Elisha to avenge the deaths of the righteous murdered by Achav and Izevel, and strike down the house of Achav. After killing the two kings, (Yehoram the son of Achav, and Achaziah king of Yehuda, Achav's grandson), Yehu arrived at the palace near Navot's vineyard. Izevel heard of his arrival, and in an attempt to find favor in Yehu's eyes, she "painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out the window" (Malachim II: 9:30). However, she was pushed out of the window and fell to her death. A short time later, the only things left to bury were her skull, feet and palms of her hands. The dogs had devoured the rest.

Izevel held tremendous influence over her husband. She had the ability to use it for the best, but instead led Achav further astray, leading to their joint bitter downfall. He chose to make him an accomplice to murder, rather than encouraging him to ignore the lack of the vineyard.

One can learn from Izevel how impactful the woman is on the household. In many circumstances, the decisions were made by Izevel, causing Achav to also behave inhumanely. Instead of instigating evil actions, women can take situations and use their power to change them for the better.

Sukkot Haftarah – a Sukkot Mission

Ask children what Chanukah is about, and they can quickly explain that it commemorates the victory of the Jews over the *Yevanim* and the lighting of the Menorah. If you ask about Pesach, they will immediately know that it is about Hashem taking us out of the slavery in Mitzrayim. The same is true for almost every holiday in the Jewish calendar, except Sukkot. Sukkot does not seem to come with a grand story. Though it is known that Sukkot commemorates Hashem's protection of Bnei Yisrael in the desert, what does that really mean? How does that impact the theme and significance of Sukkot? Perhaps the Haftarah chosen by Chazal for the first day of Sukkot, Zecharia 14, can bring to light the deep meaning of Sukkot.

This Haftarah addresses one of the most compelling and mysterious topics in Judaism: Acharit Hayamim. By studying this Haftarah, one can begin to uncover what Sukkot is truly about. The Haftarah begins with the words **הִנֵּה יוֹם בָּא לָהּ**. Radak and Malbim explain that it is referring to the war of Gog U'Magog that will happen during Acharit Hayamim. The pesukim describe a massively destructive war of all the nations in Yerushalayim and the supernatural miracles that Hashem will perform. These miracles will lead to a universal recognition of Hashem's sovereignty, as well as the ultimate security and elevation of Yerushalayim.

The nations that fought against Yerushalayim will be punished with a devastating skin-rotting plague, while the remaining nations will recognize Hashem's sovereignty. Every year all the nations will come to celebrate Sukkot and worship Hashem. Those that fail to do so will be punished with no rain. It specifically mentions that Mitzrayim will receive this punishment if they do not go up to Yerushalayim. The Haftarah concludes by describing the holiness that will be in Yerushalayim, stating that everything in the city will be dedicated to Hashem.

The Haftara's connection to Sukkot is obvious. Sukkot is described in the pesukim as a central aspect of the surviving nations' recognition of Hashem's oneness after Gog U'Magog. However, the question is inescapable, why does this recognition happen on Sukkot of all holidays? Rav Avraham Rivlin¹ explains (based on the Malbim and Metzudat David) that they will specifically celebrate Sukkot because of all the miracles witnessed in the war. They will recognize that since this war took place on Sukkot, they should come then to thank Hashem for their survival. Sukkot will become the day that these nations realize Hashem's sovereignty, and celebrate Hashem's redemption.

This Sukkot of universal recognition that is described in this chapter is very different from the Sukkot that is celebrated every year. The reason Sefer Vayikra provides for the Sukkah is to recognize the Sukkot that Hashem made in the desert למען ידעו דרתיכם כי בסכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים אני ה' אלֵיכם (Vayikra 23:43). This was an act performed for Bnei Yisrael only. However, the miracles that will happen on Sukkot on the day of the war of Gog U'Magog, as described in the Haftarah, will affect all the nations.

Perhaps Chazal chose this Haftarah as a reminder of what Sukkot is really about, what it really means to be chosen, and how Jews are supposed to relate to other nations. Rav Rivlin explains that the Jewish people were chosen by Hashem and have a unique relationship with Him through the receiving of the Torah. However, Hashem is the Creator of the entire world. The very purpose of having a chosen nation and receiving the Torah is to bring the entire world to a recognition of Hashem's greatness. The Haftarah answers the question of what Sukkot at its core is really about: recognizing Hashem as the Source and Provider of everything, the very essence of what it means to have protection in the middle of the wilderness. This Haftarah teaches that even though Hashem protected Bnei Yisrael in the desert, Sukkot is still about Hashem's eternal power.

¹ *Iyunei Haftarah* (Volume II) pg. 584-591

This understanding of Sukkot offers an explanation of why the punishment of the nations who do not keep Sukkot is to not have rain. Rav Rivlin² points out how in the portrayal of Sukkot in Zecharia, the war of Gog U'Magog will have caused everyone to recognize Hashem as the one who is the source of life – which is represented by rain. It is therefore fitting that the nations that do not celebrate Sukkot, will not have rain because they did not recognize Hashem as the source of life. Perhaps this is why Mitzrayim is specifically mentioned in this context. As Rashi explains (14:18), Mitzrayim does not rely on rain for water, since the Nile is its source. However, if they fail to recognize Hashem as the true source, they too will suffer from the plague. This is the lesson of Sukkot: everything we receive in this world is from Hashem. The Haftarah is telling us that in the future, Sukkot will be a day when everyone will realize that Hashem is the source for everything, even the things that seem as though they are part of the natural processes.

This aspect of Sukkot that Zecharia tells us about universal recognition of Hashem's sovereignty, is maybe why out of all of the *Shalosh Regalim*, Sukkot is described as *Zman Simchateinu*. Perhaps ultimate simcha, is not when just Bnei Yisrael recognize Hashem, but when everyone recognizes Hashem.³

Chazal, in their wisdom of choosing this Haftarah, teach that the significance of Sukkot lies in recognizing Hashem as the Creator and Provider of all. This can only be fully achieved when there is universal recognition. The Haftarah reminds us that helping to bring the world to this realization is the purpose of Bnei Yisrael's chosenness. Sukkot is more than how one experiences it in the present. It will only be celebrated at its fullest in the future when all the nations come together to recognize and praise Hashem. Sukkot does not have a grand story tied to it, because that story has not yet happened. Hopefully the realization of this story and nevuah will be seen, *bimheira biyameinu*.

² Iyunei Haftarah (Volume II) pg. 587-589

³ Idea adapted from *From Within the Tent: The Haftarah* (Volume II) pg. 557

הלכה

An Obscure Definition of *Psik Reisha*

The classical definition of *psik reisha* is an unintended but inevitable result of an action on Shabbat. The action itself is *mutar*, yet it directly and definitely causes an *asur* outcome, making the entirety of the action *asur*. This understanding of *psik reisha* is elucidated by the Rashash (Ketubot 6a), who carefully distinguishes between the foundational concepts of *klalei hilchot Shabbat*. Accordingly, a *melacha she'ena tzricha l'gufa* refers to an action that was performed a certain way in the Mishkan but is now carried out for a different purpose. A *davar she'eno mitkaven* is a *mutar* action that will possibly lead to an unintentional *issur*. Actions that will certainly trigger an *asur* result are considered a *psik reisha* and are *asur*.

Rashi, however, does not seem to explain *psik reisha* in the same way. The Gemara (Zevachim 91b) discusses the proper method of pouring wine on the Mizbeach when offering a korban on Shabbat. According to Shmuel, the wine is poured directly onto the fire, while a subsequent *baraita* explicitly rules that it is *asur* to pour the wine onto the fire as it will inevitably cause *kibuy*. This prohibition is based on the command of **אֵשׁ תמיד תוקד על המזבח לא תכבה** (Vayikra 6:6).

The Gemara explains that this is a situation of *davar she'eno mitkaven*, which accounts for the apparent contradiction, and reflects the machloket between R' Yehuda and R' Shimon regarding *davar she'eno mitkaven*. According to R' Yehuda the din is *patur aval assur*, while R' Shimon says *mutar*.

Rashi (Zevachim 91b) explains that the Gemara does not classify this case as *psik reisha*, which even R' Shimon would prohibit, because the scenario does not meet the criteria of *psik reisha*. According to Rashi, since one has the ability to pour the wine

in *tipot dakot*, small drops, without extinguishing the fire, the same action is not considered a *psik reisha* even when using *tipot gasot*, large drops, which will inevitably cause *kibuy*. According to one interpretation, Rashi is implying that a case can only be defined as *psik reisha* when there is no alternative way to accomplish the same goal without violating a *melacha*. As long as a permitted method exists to perform the action, even if one chooses to act in a way that will definitely cause a prohibited outcome, the resulting *melacha* is categorized as *davar she'eno mitkaven* rather than *psik reisha*.

The Mirkevet Hamishneh (Hilchot Shabbat 1:1) develops this idea further and cites the Gemara Avodah Zara 12a. The Gemara discusses a case in which a person gathers scattered money that happens to be located in front of avodah zara. If the person appears to be bowing to the idol, then it is *asur*, but only because of *marit ayin*. Why? The Gemara says that if the money can be retrieved in a manner that doesn't resemble bowing, it is permissible. The Mirkevet Hamishneh understands that because there is an alternative, bowing isn't considered a case of *psik reisha*.

He further explains that the Shiltei Giborim adopts this alternate definition of *psik reisha*. The Shiltei Giborim (Alfasi Shabbat 38a) elucidates his approach to *psik reisha* through the case of closing the door to one's house when a deer is inside. He explains that although one is effectively trapping the deer, one has not violated the prohibition of *Melecheth Tzad*. Closing the door to one's house is not an act associated with *tzeida*, and in the vast majority of cases does not result in trapping a deer. Since the action is not inherently connected to *Tzad*, and one has no intention to trap the deer, but rather intends to protect the house from bandits, the act is classified as *davar she'eno mitkaven* rather than *psik reisha*. While the Mirkevet Hamishneh defines the opinions of Rashi and the Shiltei Giborim as identical, the example cited by the Shiltei Giborim suggests that their understandings are not entirely the same.

The Shevet Halevi (4:181)¹ is sensitive to this distinction and therefore draws a distinction between Rashi and the Shiltei Giborim. He explains that according to Rashi, any action for which there exists a permissible method to achieve the goal cannot be classified as a *psik reisha*. The Shiltei Giborim, however, maintains that as long as the action itself is not inherently bound to the definition of *psik reisha*, it is not considered *psik reisha* even if no alternative method exists to perform that action. This explains why, in the case of trapping the deer, closing a door is not definitionally a *psik reisha* of *tzeida* and therefore is not a violation of *Melechet Tzad*. Rashi by contrast, would argue that in that specific moment there is no permissible way to close the door, and thus the act would constitute a *psik reisha*.

The Shevet Halevi challenges Rashi's position by invoking the case of *terumat hadeshen*, removing ashes every morning from the Mizbeach, discussed in the Gemara (Zevachim 91b). On Shabbat it is *asur* to remove the ashes while the fire is still burning since doing so would inevitably cause *kibuy*, rendering the act a *psik reisha*. The Shevet Halevi argues that this case contradicts Rashi's definition of *psik reisha*, since one could theoretically wait to remove the ashes later, thereby avoiding *kibuy*. The existence of this alternative should render the act permissible according to Rashi, contradicting the conclusion of the Gemara.

Rashi, however, would likely respond that at the moment the ashes are being removed, no valid alternative method exists to accomplish that specific action at that time. Accordingly, Rashi would agree that *terumat hadeshen* is *asur* on Shabbat, but would still permit dripping large drops on the Mizbeach. In the case of *tippin gasot*, at that very moment one could instead pour *tippin dakot* to make it permissible, and this distinction accounts for Rashi's difference in halacha between the two cases.

¹ This teshuva is actually written by Rav Vosner's grandson-in-law, Rav Mordechai Gelber

The approach of the Kovetz Shiurim (Ketubot 18) to understand the disagreement between Tosafot and the *Aruch* (Ketubot 6a) regarding *psik reisha d'lo nicha lei* parallels the distinction drawn by the Shevet Halevi between Rashi and the Shiltei Giborim. Rav Elchanan explains that Tosafot and the *Aruch* fundamentally disagree about how to conceptualize *psik reisha*. According to the *Aruch*, a *psik reisha* consists of an action that produces a separate subsequent prohibited consequence. While the act and the result are causally linked, they remain conceptually distinct. Therefore, if the secondary result is not to his liking, we can view it as אינו מתכוין and is permissible. Tosafot, however, understands *psik reisha* as a single, indivisible unit in which the action and its outcome are intrinsically bound and cannot be separated. Therefore, if he has intention for the primary action, we cannot view the secondary action as unintentional, and it is prohibited.

This framework can be applied to the machloket between Rashi and the Shiltei Giborim. The Shiltei Giborim, like Tosafot, understands *psik reisha* as requiring an inherent connection between the action and its outcome. Therefore, in a case such as closing a door when a deer happens to be inside, the absence of that intrinsic connection prevents the act from being defined as a *psik reisha*. Rashi, however, aligns with the model of the *Aruch*. He views the act and the resulting *melacha* as distinct events connected through causation. Accordingly, in the case of extinguishing through *tippin gasot*, the act of pouring and the resulting *kibuy* are separate. Since there exists a plausible reality in which the same act could have been performed using *tippin gasot* without extinguishing the fire, and given the conceptual separation between the action and its consequence, the act is treated as though it were performed permissibly. As such, one is not held responsible for the *kibuy* that ensued.

The Rambam (Hilchot Lulav 8:5) explains a case of a *hadas* branch with different colored berries on it. If the berries are green, the *hadas* is kosher, but if they are red, it is *pasul*. On Yom Tov, it is *assur* to remove red berries because it is considered *metaken kli*.

However, taking the berries off to eat one by one is *mutar*. The Ohr Sameach suggests that the Rambam's psak aligns with Rashi's unique definition of *psik reisha*. Therefore, if one has another *hadas* branch and simply wants to remove the berries to eat them, it is *mutar* because there is no intention to perform the *melacha* of *metaken kli*. Similarly, even in a case where one does not have another *hadas* branch, it is still *mutar* because one is technically able to do it in a *mutar* way.

While many poskim read Rashi on Zevachim 91b to be discussing a novel definition of *psik reisha*, many Acharonim provide alternative, more creative interpretations of Rashi's opinion.

The Kli Chemda in Chemdat Yisrael (Kuntres Derech Hachayim Chelek Bet, 9:4) explains that Rashi is not redefining *psik reisha* at all and is consistent with the widely accepted definition. He explains that Rashi does not permit intentional *tippin gasot*. The Gemara's case involves pouring intentionally with *tippin dakot*, with a few *tippin gasot* falling accidentally. Since the intention is not for the large drops to fall on the Mizbeach, the act is *mutar* and is a textbook case of *davar she'eno mitkaven*. He stresses that commentators are overreading Rashi and that no *psik reisha* issue exists here.

In addition, the Even Ha'ezer (Hilchot Maaseh Korbanot 2:1) offers an alternative reading of Rashi on Zevachim that avoids the novel approach of the Mirkevet Hamishneh. He explains that the Gemara is addressing a case of *safek psik reisha l'sheavar*. Generally, when liquid is thrown forcefully from a distance, the droplets disperse and become *tippin dakot*, whereas when poured gently from close range, they remain *tippin gasot*. In the case in the Gemara, however, it is unclear which outcome will occur. Although all of the physical variables that determine the result are already in place prior to the act, the individual lacks knowledge of how the droplets will ultimately fall.

The Rambam (Maaseh Hakorbanot 2:1) rules in accordance with *baraita* quoted in Zevachim 91b, in which R' Akiva states that one may not pour wine directly onto the fire. At first glance, this is

difficult, since the Rambam generally rules in accordance with R' Shimon regarding *davar she'eno mitkaven*, whereas R' Akiva is concerned with the opinion of R' Yehuda. According to R' Shimon, there should be no prohibition in pouring the wine directly onto the fire. Why then does the Rambam prohibit pouring the wine directly on the fire?

The Even Ha'ezer explains: When one uses a wide vessel and throws the wine with force, there exists a genuine possibility that the droplets will be *dakot*, and therefore even the presence of *tippin gasot* would not constitute *psik reisha*. However, *ziluf hayayin* requires the use of *sefalim* which have narrow openings, which solely produce droplets that are *gasot*. In such a case, there is no feasible way to achieve the desired result without an *asur* consequence. Therefore, in this particular instance, the Rambam rules that performing *ziluf hayayin* directly onto the fire would constitute *psik reisha* with respect to *kibuy*.

The above approaches stem from a singular discrepancy in Zevachim 91b. In the context of *ziluf hayayin*, the Gemara mentions *davar she'eno mitkaven* without considering that the case is seemingly an overt *psik reisha*. Rashi's commentary resolves the Gemara's tension and simultaneously opens the door to potentially redefining the boundaries of *psik reisha*.

Sechita on Shabbat

When discussing the halachot of *sechita* (squeezing) on Shabbat, it's important to differentiate between two types of squeezing, related to two different melachot. The Gemara (Ketubot 6a) discusses the prohibition to use a rag as a stopper for a barrel filled with wine, due to concerns of *sechita* (see Rashi).

Tosafot explains that there are actually two types of *sechita*. There is a prohibition of squeezing, a derivative of the melacha of *libun*. It applies only to squeezing water out of the object, and the individual has no interest in using the liquid that was squeezed. The other type of *sechita* is *mefarek*, a derivative of *dosh*, threshing. *Mefarek* includes all liquids, and applies when the individual wants to use the squeezed liquid.

The Gemara (Shabbat 143a) discusses the use of a sponge on Shabbat. If it has a leather handle, it can be used for wiping things, but if there is no handle, it cannot be used. The reason for this is that even if the person has no intention of squeezing, it is inevitable (*psik reisha*) that liquid will be squeezed from the sponge.

Why is it permissible if the sponge has a handle? The Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 22:15) seems to indicate that if there is a handle, squeezing is not only unintentional, it is not inevitable. *דבר שאינו מתכוין* is permissible on Shabbat. The Raavad disagrees. Even if squeezing is inevitable, it is permissible to use a sponge with a handle. He compares it to pouring out water from a bowl.

The Chazon Ish (O.C. 56:5) explains that squeezing a liquid out of a sponge with a handle is comparable to opening and closing a door on Shabbat. A door is designed to be opened and closed. That is its recognized function, and therefore doing so on Shabbat does not violate the melachot of *soter* (demolishing) and *boneh* (building). Similarly, when a sponge has a handle, it becomes recognizable as a device whose purpose is to absorb and remove water. When it

serves that purpose it does not violate *sechita* because that is the recognized function of the sponge.

The Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 9:10) identifies the minimum *shiur* of material that an individual would need to squeeze liquid from, to be liable for violating *libun*. The measurement is a string that is the length of four tefachim. This contains a very small amount of liquid; therefore, whenever any article of clothing or fabric gets wet it usually contains this amount of liquid.

The Gemara (Yoma 78a) discusses an interesting custom that R' Yehoshua ben Levi had on Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av. On Erev Yom Kippur he would soak a piece of cloth and then squeeze it out. The next day he would place it on his arms, legs, and face in order to cool himself down during the fast. On Erev Tisha B'Av, he would similarly soak cloth in water, and the next day he would place it on his eyes. Why did he differentiate between the two fast days? The Gemara explains that there may be an issue of squeezing the damp cloth when using it to cool down on Yom Kippur.

Rashi quotes an alternate version of R' Yehoshua's practices. On Erev Tisha B'Av he would soak the cloth and then squeeze out most of the liquid. On Erev Yom Kippur, he wouldn't even soak the cloth, out of concern that even if he squeezed out the liquid before the fast, a small amount of liquid would remain on the cloth, and using it on Yom Kippur might cause him to violate *sechita*. Instead, he would use the cloth on Erev Yom Kippur to wipe his hands. On Yom Kippur the very minimum amount of moisture that remained would help cool him down.¹ The Rama (O.C. 613:9) and Mishna Berurah concur with this version.

Rav Asher Weiss (Minchat Asher 1:14; 2:33) discusses a related issue of using baby wipes on Shabbat. Although one might initially assume their use should be prohibited due to the concern that one may come to squeeze out liquid, Rav Asher explains that baby wipes are in fact *mutar l'chatchila*. After consulting with manufacturers, he found that baby wipes are specifically designed

¹ See Rif and Ran, Yoma, Alfasi 2a

to contain only a minimal amount of moisture, which remains on the surface of the wipe rather than being absorbed within it. This is done to prevent excess liquid from remaining on a baby's skin, which could cause irritation. Consequently, when pressure is applied to the wipe, no liquid is squeezed out, since there is no absorbed liquid to extract in the first place.

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 302:12) writes that it is forbidden on Shabbat to dry a cup that had water or wine in it, lest in the process one squeezes out the absorbed liquid from the cloth. This psak, at first glance, seems problematic. If we are dealing with *sechita* of *libun*, then it should apply only to water, not wine. If we are dealing with *sechita* of *dosh*, it should only apply if the person was planning to use the wine squeezed out of the cloth, which is highly unlikely.

The Magen Avraham (together with the commentary of the *Ma-chatzit Hashekel*) raises this question and suggests a possible answer: the wine in this case may specifically be white wine. Since white wine would not stain the cloth, the squeezing involved could still be classified as *libun*. This explanation works for some poskim, such as the *Gra*, who holds that both water and other liquids qualify for the squeezing of *libun*. However, it does not align with the Shulchan Aruch, who holds that *libun* applies only to water.

Alternatively, he suggests that the case here refers specifically to a *kos tzar*, a very narrow cup. Unlike wiping up wine from a wide surface, where squeezing is not inevitable, when one twists a cloth inside a *kos tzar* the narrow walls of the cup will inevitably squeeze the cloth. Since squeezing is unavoidable in this situation, it is prohibited even when dealing with wine.

This reasoning suggests that according to the Shulchan Aruch, squeezing water constitutes *libun d'oraita*, while squeezing wine constitutes *libun d'rabbanan*. A case in which there is doubt whether one would violate a *d'rabbanan* – such as wiping wine with a cloth off a wide surface – would be permitted, whereas a case in which one would certainly violate a *d'rabbanan* – such as wiping wine from a *kos tzar* – would be prohibited.

Korai'a D'oraita: **An Issue of Sewing** **or of Benefitting?**

The halachot regarding forbidden actions on Shabbat are extremely extensive and complex. To focus on one subject, this article explores the parameters of the *issur d'oraita* of the *melacha* of *Korai'a*.

The Mishna (Shabbat 73a) lists the 39 *Avot Melachot*. Included in this list is *Korai'a Al Menat L'tfor Shteit Tefirot*, tearing in order to sew two stitches. This description of the *melacha* of *Korai'a* is very vague; is the *issur* present only when the tearing is done in order to sew two stitches, or is tearing for any *tikkun* included in the Torah level of this *issur* as well?¹

The Gemara (Shabbat 74b-75a) explains that the case of *Korai'a Al Menat L'tfor* in the Mishkan occurred when a worm bit a hole in a curtain, requiring them to rip above and below the hole in order to sew it neatly and evenly. However, a later Gemara (Shabbat 105a-b) states that the case that's prohibited on a Torah level is when one rips a folded-over section of a garment in order to resew it properly (according to Rashi's understanding of the case in the Gemara).

Tosafot (Shabbat 75a) poses the question of how to reconcile these two contradicting interpretations of the Torah prohibition of tearing in order to sew. The *Ri* answers that the case in 74b-75a

¹ This ambiguity can be seen within Rashi on those words in the Mishna. Rashi states that *Korai'a Al Menat L'tfor* is the *Melacha* that was done in the Mishkan, however Rashi doesn't clarify whether only that form of *Melechet Korai'a* is prohibited, or if the *issur d'oraita* of *Korai'a* includes more than *Korai'a Al Menat L'tfor* despite the fact that only *Korai'a Al Menat L'tfor* was done in the Mishkan.

is specific to the Mishkan while the case in 105a-b is a general scenario. In the Mishkan, the professional seamstresses would sew perfectly and carefully, so they would fix a small hole by tearing above and below to sew it neatly. However, typically a layperson's sewing would often not be so professional, and folded garments needed further adjusting. Accordingly, both Gemaras ask the same question yet provide different answers based on what's more common in that circumstance.

Tosafot then posits a second interpretation that the two passages from the Gemara are in fact asking two different questions entirely: the Gemara in Shabbat 74b-75a asks what the case of *Korai'a* in the Mishkan is, and answers with the case of ripping a hole in a curtain to fix it, while Shabbat 105a-b asks what the *shiur* for *Korai'a* is and answers that tearing enough to sew two stitches, such as in the case of a folded over garment, is the required *shiur*.

Based on the sources thus far, it appears that *Korai'a* is only *chayav* if it's done with intention to sew. However, this idea is challenged by a later *sugya* (Shabbat 105b). The Mishna states that one is *patur* for tearing on Shabbat in response to anger or out of mourning for a dead person. The Gemara, on the other hand, quotes a contradicting *baraita* that states that one who tears out of anger or mourning on Shabbat would be *chayav*. To resolve the contradiction regarding tearing out of mourning, the Gemara explains the respective cases of the Mishna and the *baraita*. In the case of tearing for a dead person, the *baraita* refers to a scenario where the dead person is an immediate relative. Since there's a mitzvah for the person to tear their clothing for the death of an immediate relative, the tear is a violation of *Korai'a Al Menat L'taken*; as Rashi explains that doing a mitzvah is inherently a *tikkun*. Meanwhile, the Mishna refers to a case where the dead person isn't one of the seven relatives a person must tear *kriah* for. Since the person has no mitzvah to tear their clothing, there's no *tikkun*, and he is *patur*.

To understand the contradiction between the Mishna and *baraita* regarding tearing out of anger, the Gemara explains that the

two Tanaitic statements reflect an existing machloket between R' Yehuda and R' Shimon; R' Yehuda is of the opinion that a *melacha she'ena tzricha l'gufa* (a melacha done for a different purpose than the melacha is generally performed) is *chayav*, while R' Shimon says that a *melacha she'ena tzricha l'gufa* is *patur*. Assuming that tearing out of anger is a *melacha she'ena tzricha l'gufa*, the Mishna is according to R' Shimon while the *baraita* follows R' Yehuda. This discussion in the Gemara about a person tearing for mourning or anger, where there's no intention to re sew the tear, implies that if any *tikkun* is gained as a result of *Korai'a*, the person is *chayav* for *Korai'a Al Menat L'taken*.

However, this approach seems to contradict a different passage in the Gemara (Shabbat 48a). The Gemara says that one who tears open the neckhole of a shirt on Shabbat is *chayav*. Rashi explains that the case described is opening the neckhole of a shirt for the first time. He explains that this action would be *chayav* due to *Makeh B'patish*, finishing a vessel. This action resembles the *melacha* of *Korai'a*, so what is Rashi's reasoning that it is *Makeh Bepatish* and not *Korai'a*?

The Rambam has a different approach. In Hilchot Shabbat (1:17-18) he writes that all destructive acts on Shabbat are *patur*, as long as the sole intention is to be destructive. However, if one intends to be *mitaken* through the destructive act, he is *chayav*. Since *Korai'a* is a destructive act, it appears that the Rambam would hold that tearing for any *tikkun* would be considered a *chiyuv d'oraita* of *Melechet Korai'a*. Later (10:10), the Rambam lists examples of being *chayav* for *Korai'a* including tearing out of anger or mourning (as the action will ease the mind and bring comfort) and ripping open the neckhole of a shirt. Notably, the Rambam places the *chiyuv* of opening a neckhole within *Korai'a*, disagreeing with Rashi.

Additionally, in the following halacha, the Rambam writes that if one tears apart two pieces of leather or paper that were glued together, he is *chayav* for *Korai'a*, if he has an intention of *tikkun*. Interestingly, in a later ruling (23:6), the Rambam writes that one

is not allowed to tear paper on Shabbat because it is similar to *Metaken Kli*. This seems like a contradiction within the Rambam – why is tearing paper problematic because of *Korai'a* in one place and forbidden because of *Metaken Kli* in another?

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 340:13-14) quotes the Rambam's rulings regarding tearing paper and separating glued papers, but writes (317:3) that ripping open a neckhole of a shirt on Shabbat would be *chayav* for *Makeh B'patish*, not *Korai'a*, following Rashi's understanding. The Mishna Berura (340:44) explains that it's not necessary for *Korai'a* to be *Al Menat L'tfor* in order for a person to be *chayav*. Rather, as long as the person has some form of *tikkun* when ripping, he's *chayav* for *Korai'a*.

Why, then, do the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch say it's *asur* to tear paper because of *Metaken Kli* in one case, yet say *Korai'a* in a different scenario? And why do Rashi and the Shulchan Aruch say that when a person rips the neckhole they're *chayav* because of *Metaken Kli*, while the Rambam implies that the *chiyuv* is because of *Korai'a*?

To answer these questions, the Biur Halacha (O.C. 340:13-14) redefines the parameters of *Korai'a* on a *d'oraita* level. He states that *Korai'a* is ripping an object into pieces in order to use every single piece created by the ripping. This approach fits with the way tearing was used in the Mishkan. There, a hole in the curtain would be torn down the middle to resew both halves together. Since all torn pieces were subsequently used for a purpose, it would be *chayav* for *Korai'a*. This definition of *Korai'a* distinguishes it from *Metaken Kli*, which is when a person tears off a piece of a garment to discard the ripped piece.

The case in the Rambam (23:6) and quoted by the Shulchan Aruch about tearing paper is referring to a person who tears off a piece of paper to get rid of it and improve the remaining paper – this is considered *Metaken Kli* and not *Korai'a* since the person is not using both pieces. Meanwhile, if a person tears apart two papers stuck together with intention to use both papers, that would be considered *Korai'a*. This approach also explains why one is *chayav*

for tearing out of anger and for a dead relative. In both cases, the object being torn has an inherent purpose; either to calm the person or to fulfill a mitzvah. Therefore, there is a form of *tikkun* accomplished by tearing, and the torn object is used.

Furthermore, the Biur Halacha explains that according to Rashi (and the Shulchan Aruch), if the *tikkun* is done to the garment at the time of tearing, it isn't considered *Melechet Korai'a* at all. Rather, part of the *tzurat melacha* of *Korai'a* is that there must be a two step process: the act of tearing, and the *tikkun* as a result of the tear. The first action is *Mikalkel*/destructive and second is *Mitaken*/constructive. However, when tearing open the neck of a shirt the *tikkun* is immediate. Rashi would not consider that to be *Korai'a*, as it doesn't fit into the definition of the *melacha* that it must be a two step process. If the very action of tearing is an actual *tikkun*, the prohibition is *Makeh b'patish*.

In commenting on the Rambam (10:10), the Kesef Mishneh explains that the case of opening the neck of a shirt is when the neck was already completed and usable before Shabbat. However, it was subsequently sewn closed (something often done before laundering). Re-opening the neck hole could not be considered a case of *Makeh B'patish*, as no object was completed from this action, but is rather a case of *Korai'a*. Accordingly, the Rambam understood that the case referred to a neck that was closed after the shirt was already usable, while Rashi and the Shulchan Aruch are dealing with a case of opening the neck of a shirt for the first time. Thus, it makes sense that the Rambam holds that this case is *chayav* because of *Korai'a*, while Rashi and the Shulchan Aruch hold one is *chayav* for *Makeh B'patish*.

The Biur Halacha continues and states that the approach that *Korai'a Al Menat L'taken* is *chayav* (even if it is not *Al Menat L'tfor*) is agreed upon by majority of Rishonim; the only Rishon who disagrees is the Ritva. Therefore, this approach seems to be the widely accepted approach to understand the *issur d'oraita* of *Korai'a*. (The Magen Avraham (317:10), however, states that the reason one can't open the neck of a shirt on Shabbat due to *Makeh B'patish* and not

because of *Korai'a* is that *Korai'a* is only *chayav* if it's *Al Menat L'tfor*, which doesn't apply to opening the neck of a shirt since there's no sewing necessary after ripping it open to be able to use the shirt.)

While these distinctions about the definition of *Korai'a* and whether its *chiyuv* extends to *Al Menat L'taken* in addition to *Al Menat L'tfor* are interesting, are there any practical differences between the two approaches? The Biur Halacha (340:14) suggests the following: Although the Mishna refers to a shiur of two stitches in order to be *chayav*, that might apply only if it is a case of *Korai'a Al Menat L'tfor*. However, if it is a case of *Korai'a Al Menat L'taken*, the shiur might be greater or lesser, depending on the type of *tikkun*.

Tzaidat Tzvi

The Gemara (Shabbat 3a) establishes that whenever the term *patur* appears in the Mishna regarding the halachot of Shabbat, it generally means *patur aval asur* – a Rabbinic *issur* instead of a *d'oraita* one. Shmuel, however, identifies three exceptions in which *patur* means *patur u'mutar* – completely permissible. The first one Shmuel lists is *Tzaidat Tzvi*. To further understand this *sugya*, one must look at the end of the thirteenth chapter of Shabbat where *Tzaidat Tzvi* is discussed at length, and notes that an action that seems to constitute trapping may be *chayav* in one instance, *patur* in another, and *mutar* in the next.

The Mishna (Shabbat 106a-b) quotes a machloket between R' Yehudah and the Sages. According to R' Yehuda, trapping a deer in a house is *chayav*, while the *Chachamim* rule that trapping a deer even in a garden, courtyard, or a large enclosure is *chayav*. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel qualifies the last case, depending how easy it would be to grab ahold of the animal once it is “trapped” in the enclosure. Some are so large that trapping within them lacks the full character of *Tzad* and it is therefore *patur aval asur*, while in smaller ones he is *chayav*.

According to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel there are two components of *Tzad*: the first is the physical act of catching or confining the animal, while the other is the change in reality, namely transforming the animal from free to trapped. When both elements are present someone is *chayav*, when there is only one then it is *patur aval asur*, and when neither component exists, it is permissible. If the enclosure is so large that even if a person exerts himself to trap a deer within it, the deer would still have the status of a free animal, only the first part of the *Tzurat Melacha* would be fulfilled, and would constitute a ruling of *patur aval asur*.

Later, the Gemara quotes a *baraita* that rules that trapping a blind or sleeping deer is *chayav*, whereas trapping a lame, old, or sick deer is *patur aval asur*. Rashi explains that a blind or sleeping deer would run away at the touch of danger, so successfully trapping it requires both the physical act from the person and a real change in the animal's freedom. By contrast, a lame, old, or sick deer is effectively immobilized. Therefore, when the act of trapping occurs (the animal is now possessed by a person where it wasn't before), the reality for the animal has not meaningfully changed, as the animal was already "trapped" in place.

The following Mishna then applies this logic to cases involving multiple people. If a deer enters a house and one person locks the door, that person is *chayav*. If two people lock it together, they are both *patur aval asur*, since neither individual has fully performed the action. However, if one person cannot trap the deer alone and both are required to close and lock the door, then both are *chayav*, as the complete action is achieved only through their joint effort.

Up to this point, all of the cases the Mishna and Gemara have brought fall within the framework of either *chayav* or *patur aval asur*. Even when liability is reduced, some element of the *melacha* of *Tzad* remains present, whether in the action or in the outcome. This highlights an important point: despite Shmuel's statement that *Tzaidat Tzvi* can be *patur u'mutar*, such cases are not the norm. Rather, *patur u'mutar* emerges only in a narrow set of situations, when neither component of *Tzad* is violated. It is this limited and exceptional case that the final Mishna of the thirteenth perek discusses.

The Mishna (106b) begins with the case of a deer that was already inside a house with an open door. If one person sits and blocks a portion of the doorway and then a second person joins him and fills out the rest of the door, only the second person has completely violated the *melacha* of *Tzad*, while the first has not violated either part of the *issur*. The Mishna continues. A deer is inside a house with an open door. If one person sits and blocks the full doorway, he is *chayav* for his action. If a second person sits

next to him, even if the original person leaves, not only is he *patur*; it is *mutar*¹. When he sat down he neither performed an act of trapping nor did he change the freedom status of the deer.

The Mishna compares it to a case where a person locks the door of a house that already contains a trapped deer. The Ritva explains that this is not an act of trapping the deer, but rather it is *Shemirah* on all the possessions of the house, which happens to include the deer. Furthermore, locking the door is not a physical exertion of trapping on the person's part, nor is it changing the reality for the deer, as it was already contained within the house. Therefore, this act of *Shemira* is completely independent of any *melacha*, and is totally *mutar* on Shabbat. Once the act of *Tzad* has been completed, any more *Shemira* added on top is *mutar*.

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 316:1-2) rules that if one traps a deer in a house or another enclosure, they are only *chayav* if that deer is truly trapped within it. If the enclosure is so big that one does not have the ability to take personal possession of a deer within it in one exertion, then the deer is not halachically defined as a trapped animal and it is *patur aval asur*. Regarding the aforementioned distinction between a blind or sleeping deer vs. a lame, old or sick deer, the Mishna Berurah explains explicitly that the lame, old, and sleeping deer are all considered to be already trapped. Therefore, when a person traps them, he is not changing the deer to a trapped animal because it wasn't a free one beforehand.

Later, the Shulchan Aruch (316:12) extends this *chiddush* of the *Tzurat Melacha* of *Tzad* to tame animals already owned by a person. These animals tend to return to the person's property on their own volition, without the need of human encouragement or interference. The Shulchan Aruch paskens that it is permissible to "trap" the animal, because it requires no exertion from the person and the animal is already "trapped." There is no change of its freedom reality by entering an enclosed space. However, if the

¹ Based on the Gemara's clarification (107a)

animal is rebellious, it is *patur aval asur* to trap it, as the person would have to exert himself, overriding the first element of *Melechet Tzad* in the process.

The *sugya* of *Tzaidat Tzvi* is one that is grappled with by the Rishonim, due to its wide variation of halachic conclusions for nearly identical cases. Additionally the usage of the rare concept of *patur u'mutar* adds another layer to the complexity of this *melacha*. However, breaking down the *Tzurat Melacha* into its two components clarifies the differences in *psak* within the *melacha* of *Tzad*. When the *d'oraita melacha* is looked at as the action done by the person along with the outcome of the deer having a shifted reality, it aligns the rulings within the Gemara.

How Far Can One Go to Save Someone from Sinning?

Can someone transgress an *issur d'rabanan* to save someone else from violating an *issur d'oraita*? What about the person himself? Can he violate a Rabbinical prohibition, to save himself from a more serious transgression? The Gemara (Shabbat 4a) discusses the following case: הדביק פת בתנור התירו לו לרדותה קודם שיבוא לידי חיוב. חטאת, או לא התירו. A person stuck bread dough to the oven on Shabbat. If left there, it will bake, and the person would violate the *issur melacha* of *Ofeh*, a Torah prohibition. Can he or someone else remove the bread from the oven on Shabbat prior to its being baked, even though doing so violates a Rabbinic prohibition¹, to save the “sinner” from doing a more serious *aveira*?

The Gemara offers two explanations of the case. According to Rav Shila, the person placing the dough in the oven did not realize that he was violating Shabbat. It was a case of *shogeg*. If the dough were to bake, the person would be required to bring a *korban chatat*. The question is whether another person could remove the dough before it bakes (a Rabbinic prohibition) in order to save a fellow Jew from a Torah prohibition.

Rav Sheshet challenges this analysis. Since when do we tell a person to do an *aveirah* in order to enhance someone else's mitzvah observance? Therefore, Rav Ashi suggests an alternate explanation. The person placed the dough in the oven knowing that it is a transgression of Shabbat and is punishable by death. Before the dough was baked, he felt remorse about his action, and now wants

¹ See Rambam, Hilchot Shabbat 22:1

to remove the bread. The Gemara concludes that it is permissible for him to do so.

The Rishonim challenge Rav Sheshet's assumption that a person cannot violate an *issur* to help someone else's mitzvah observance. The Rashba (Shabbat 4a) asks about the following Gemara (Gittin 41b). There is an *עבד כנעני* who is jointly owned by two people. One of the owners grants freedom to the slave. This half-slave, half-free person is in limbo now, and cannot fulfill the mitzvah of *פרו ורבו*. The Gemara says that we pressure the partner to grant his share of freedom, despite Rav Yehuda's psak that one cannot free an *עבד כנעני* since the Torah says *לעולם בהם תעבדו*. The Rashba offers two answers. The mitzvah of *פרו ורבו* is of overwhelming importance, and is an exception to the rule. This is similar to the case (Brachot 47b) where R' Eliezer freed his slave in order to complete the quorum for a minyan. The Gemara says that the mitzvah needs of the tsibur have a special status. Alternatively, the prohibition of *תעבדו בהם לעולם* does not apply to one who is already half free.

A number of Rishonim ask about a case in Eiruvim (32a). A *chaver* (i.e. a person who is meticulous about his mitzvah observance) instructs an *am ha'aretz* (who is not meticulous) to gather figs on his behalf. Rebbe allows the gatherer to eat from the figs under the assumption that the *chaver* tithed the figs using fruit in a different location, even though this would violate a Rabbinic prohibition of tithing *שלא מן המוקף*. The Meiri explains that if the gatherer were to eat untithed fruit, the *chaver* himself would bear responsibility for the transgression, since it was his instructions that placed a stumbling block in front of the *am ha'aretz*. The Tosafot HaRosh goes one step further. He suggests that if the *am ha'aretz* were to eat the untithed fruit, it is as if the *chaver* fed it to him.

The Ramban suggests that the case of the bread dough is different. Since it was done *b'shogeg*, the person could achieve atonement by offering a *korban chatot*. Therefore, there is less of a

need for an outsider to intervene. The Chidushai HaRan offers another distinction. In the case of the bread dough, the person already did the action leading to the issur. In the case of the figs, early intervention will prevent any forbidden action.

While modern-day Poskim don't necessarily focus on this specific case, they often deal with similar cases. The Tzitz Eliezer (11:55) was asked the following: Can the Rabbanut grant kosher certification to a hotel that accepts upon itself to keep a kosher kitchen, but will serve guests who want to have cold dairy products with their meat meal. On the one hand the guests will not be violating Torah prohibitions of kashrut, but the hotel would in theory be willing to assist them in Rabbinic violations. The Tzitz Eliezer was adamant: No! From every perspective it is forbidden for the Rabbanut to grant any form of certification or endorsement to such a hotel. Rather, it must publicly warn people not to eat there.

Rav Ovadia Yosef was asked the same question (Yabia Omer vol. 4 Y.D. #7). Although his initial thoughts were to prohibit the Rabbanut from granting kashrut supervision, upon further reflection, he allowed them to do so. Without supervision and certification, restaurant owners would openly serve non-kosher food, unfortunately leading many Jews to eat forbidden food on a *d'oraita* level. The kashrut certificate simply says that the kitchen is kosher and supervised by a mashgiach. Those who intentionally choose to eat dairy after meat are causing their own sins.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igrot Moshe Y.D. 1:52) was asked a similar question in 1955 about a restaurant in a sports center in Mexico. The restaurant was totally non kosher, but the owner was willing to make it kosher under the supervision of the local Rabbinate (a *fleishig* restaurant), on condition that he could serve cold milk or ice cream to any customer who wanted. Rav Feinstein points out the supervision certificate testifies to the kashrut of the food being offered and not about the righteousness of the owners. He therefore permitted the local Rabbinate to grant kashrut supervision, thereby saving thousands of people from violating severe issurim (even if they were willing to do so intentionally).

In conclusion, like everything in Halacha, every case must be studied for its nuances and judged on its merits, with our Poskim guiding Klal Yisroel (with siyata d'Shmaya) in the best possible way.

Women's Zimmun

A *zimmun* is commonly known as something done with a minimum of three men. But what about women making a *zimmun* together? Is this allowed? And if so, would it be optional or mandatory (as it is for men)?

The Mishna (Brachot 45a) states נשים עבדים וקטנים אין מזמנין – women, slaves, and children do not make a *zimmun*. In theory, this Mishna can be interpreted to mean that they are not able to join one another in forming a *zimmun* or that each group may not form a *zimmun* even among themselves.

The Gemara raises the question whether two men are permitted to have a *zimmun*, even though there is no requirement for less than three men. A *baraita* is quoted: נשים מזמנות לעצמן ועבדים מזמנים לעצמם – women make a *zimmun* with one another, and slaves make a *zimmun* with one another. In halachic matters, multiple women are equal to two men. According to this *baraita* that allows women to make a *zimmun* among themselves, two men would be allowed to have a *zimmun* as well.

The Gemara refutes this proposition and says that women are considered as individuals, which has a minimum requirement of three for *zimmun*. Similarly, a minimum of three men would be needed to make a *zimmun*. In any case, the *baraita* clearly allows women to have a *zimmun*. What the Mishna forbade was creating a *zimmun* by combining women and slaves together (out of concerns for promiscuity).

The question remains as to whether a women's *zimmun* of three is merely optional or mandatory. Tosafot (45b) agrees that women can make a *zimmun* and mentions that the daughters of Rabbeinu Avraham were known to do so. However, Tosafot notes that they were the exception. The widespread custom is that women do not make a *zimmun*. Consequently, Tosafot chooses to read the *baraita* that women can choose to do a *zimmun* if they desire, but it's not obligatory.

Two proofs are brought: Firstly, the end of the *baraita* mentions a scenario of women **wanting** to make a *zimmun*. Even though this is regarding a mixed *zimmun* of slaves and women, and not just women alone, the concept of them wanting to make a *zimmun* applies to the beginning of the *baraita* as well. That means that women making a *zimmun* is something they are halachically able to do if they want to, but they are not obligated. Secondly, the Gemara compares many women to two men, attempting to prove that a two-man *zimmun* is optional, implying that a woman's *zimmun* would be optional.

However, the Gemara (Arachin 3a) states: הכל חייבין בזימון including women, implying an obligation. Tosafot suggests that the term חייבין should not be understood in its literal sense, but rather that all are allowed to form a *zimmun*.

The Mishnah Berurah (199:16) and Shaar HaTziyun (6) bring two possible reasons why Chazal did not mandate a women's *zimmun*. One reason is that women were often not knowledgeable in the laws of *zimmun*. Another reason is that it is preferable to do *zimmun* on a cup of wine, and Chazal did not want to encourage women to drink wine.

The Sefer Mitzvot Gadol (mitzvot aseh 27), understands that the Gemara Arachin is obligating women to join a *zimmun* when they eat together with three men (who are obligated to have a *zimmun*). In this case, the above concerns would not apply. However, when they eat a meal alone with no men present, they have the option to make a *zimmun* amongst themselves, but it is not halachically mandatory.

The Pnei Yehoshua (Brachot 45b) says that the mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon for women is *d'rabanan*. If *zimmun* is added for the women's mitzvah, it will look like the mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon is *d'oraita*, the same for both men and women. In this confusion, one might think that it is permissible for women to say Birkat Hamazon on behalf of men.

The Rosh (Brachot 7:4) disagrees with the approach of the Tosafot. The Gemara Arachin should be understood literally. If three women ate together, they are obligated to form a *zimmun*. Furthermore, if women have an obligation to say Birkat Hamazon, why

wouldn't they also have an obligation for *zimmun*? Regarding the *baraita* which states that women and slaves can't make a *zimmun* together if they want to, the Rosh explains that three women are obligated, but women together with slaves is not only not obligatory, it isn't permitted even if they wish to do so.

Regarding Tosafot's proof about many women being comparable to two men, the Rosh notes that the Gemara rejected the comparison, and therefore the conclusion would be that three women are equal to three men.

Another distinction that can clarify the *sugya* is the question of where the mitzvah of *zimmun* is learned from. According to the Ohr Sameach (Brachot 5:3), if the source of *zimmun* comes from the pasuk וברכת את ה' אלוֹקֶיךָ (Devarim 8:10), then *zimmun* would be an obligation for everyone because the pasuk teaches us about the mitzvah of Birkat Hamazon. If *zimmun* is learned from the pasuk כִּי שֶׁחִינָה שֶׁמֶה ה' אֱקָרָא הֵבו גּוֹדֵל אֱלֵקִינוּ (Devarim 32:3) then *zimmun* would only be an obligation only for men, since the pasuk is also teaching the obligation of saying Birkat Ha'torah. Only men are obligated directly in the mitzvah of Talmud Torah.

The Ha'amek She'eila (146:2) says the opposite of the Ohr Sameach. If we learn *zimmun* from the pasuk of וברכת את ה' אלוֹקֶיךָ it would imply that *zimmun* is only an obligation for men. The pasuk is understood to mean that the shechina is resting in the place of the meal. Pirkei Avot tells us that the shechina will rest among three men (Bnei Torah) who eat together and presumably shared divrei Torah. However, if *zimmun* is learned from the pasuk גִּדְּלוּ לִה' אֶתִי (Tehillim 34:4), then both men and women would be obligated.

What is the halachic conclusion? The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 199:7) *paskens* that women making a *zimmun* between themselves is optional. Although the Biur Halacha quotes the opinion of the Vilna Gaon that the halacha is according to the Rosh, he concludes that that is not the accepted custom.

Amira L'nochri

The interaction between Jews and non-Jews on Shabbat is a fascinating halachic question. Non-Jews are not obligated to observe Shabbat, and yet there is a prohibition of *amira l'nochri*, telling a non-Jew to perform melacha on my behalf. The reason for this Rabbinic prohibition is a matter of dispute among the Rishonim, and not surprisingly, there are exceptions to this rule. A closer look at the *sugyot* in the Gemara will hopefully shed light on the nature of *amira l'nochri*.

The prohibition of *amira l'nochri* is outlined in the Gemara Shabbat 122a-b. The Mishnah states that a Jew cannot ask a non-Jew to do melacha for him on Shabbat. Furthermore, a Jew may not benefit from melacha that a non-Jew did for the sake of a Jew, even if the Jew did not ask him.

For example, in the case of a non-Jew lighting a lamp, a Jew is only able to benefit from the light if the non-Jew lit it for himself or for other non-Jews, but not if he lit it for a Jew. The Gemara extends this idea further. In a public gathering where the majority of the people are Jewish, it is assumed that any melacha done, is on behalf of the majority of the population.

There are a number of reasons suggested by the Rishonim why Chazal prohibited *amira l'nochri*. The Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 6:1) explains that the issur was promulgated in order to prevent Jews from viewing Shabbat with flippancy (שלא תהיה שבת קלה בעיניהן) and end up doing *melacha* themselves.

Rashi (Shabbat 153a) writes that by asking a non-Jew to do melacha for your benefit, it is as if you are appointing him to be your *shaliach*, and the actions of your *shaliach* are considered to be your actions. R' Akiva Eiger (hagahot on Shulchan Aruch O.C. 307:21) points out that even though a non-Jew cannot (on a Torah level) have the status of a *shaliach*, nevertheless, on a d'Rabbanan

level, this arrangement is similar to real *shlichut* and is therefore prohibited.

Elsewhere (Avoda Zara 15a), Rashi offers a different explanation. Yeshayahu haNavi describes the uniqueness of proper Shabbat behavior, including *v'dabair davar*. Our speech on Shabbat should not resemble our weekday speech (Shabbat 113b). Asking a non-Jew on Shabbat to perform a *melacha*, would be in violation of this principle.

While the *issur of amira l'nochri* is extremely serious, there are a number of situations when this prohibition is not applicable. The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 307:5) mentions three specific scenarios where a Jew is allowed to explicitly ask a non-Jew on Shabbat to perform an action, that for a Jew would be an *issur d'Rabbanan*: for the sake of a person who is sick, for a “great need,” or for the needs of a mitzvah (e.g. to climb a tree on Rosh Hashana – a Rabbinic prohibition – and retrieve a shofar to be able to fulfill the mitzvah of *tekiat shofar*).

If a person has a life threatening illness, even a Jew would be able to do a *melacha d'oraita*, because *pikuach nefesh* overrides all Shabbat prohibitions. In the case where a person is sick but not deathly ill, Jews are not able to violate Shabbat themselves but are allowed to ask a non-Jew to do a *melacha d'Rabbanan (shvut)* to help the sick person. *Amira l'nochri* is an *issur d'Rabbanan*, and therefore asking him to do something that itself is only *assur d'Rabbanan* is considered a *shvut d'shvut* and was permitted by the Sages in exceptional cases (see Mishna Brurah 20).

What qualifies as a “great need” that would override the prohibition of *amira l'nochri*? The Magen Avraham writes that a large financial loss would qualify as a great need. However, the matter is not so simple. The Mishna (Shabbat 121a) says that one cannot directly ask a non-Jew to extinguish a fire, even though there would seem to be a serious financial loss. The Magen Avraham explains (quoting the Ran) that sometimes extinguishing a fire involves a *melacha* that is *assur d'oraita* which one cannot ask a non-Jew to do. Even though in this case it is *assur* only *d'Rabbanan* (since it is

a (מלאכה שאינה צריכה לגופה), nevertheless it is prohibited since not everyone is aware of the differences.

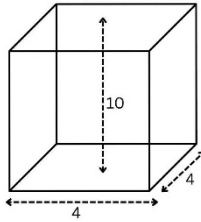
On the other hand, the Mishna later on (Shabbat 153a) discusses a situation where a Jew is travelling on the road and Shabbat is approaching. He can ask a non-Jew to carry his money for him, even though carrying in *reshut harabim* would be an *issur d'oraita* for a Jew! The Gemara explains that Chazal were very concerned that if they wouldn't allow *amira l'nochri* in this situation, the person would not be willing to throw away his money, and would end up carrying it himself in violation of a Torah prohibition. But if that is the case, why didn't they permit asking a non-Jew to extinguish a fire that is threatening his property?

The Ramban explains that in our case the money is in his hand and he would have to throw it away. This might be too much to expect of the average person (when an alternative exists) since *ein adam ma'amid atzmo al mamono*. In the previous case, the fire is approaching on its own and it isn't necessary for him to destroy his property to prevent a violation of Shabbat. Even so, in the case of the fire, the Gemara (Shabbat 121a) permits the Jew to hint to a non-Jew that he would be very grateful if someone would extinguish the blaze. As the Mishna Brurah explains (334:69), if even this would be prohibited, there is a great concern that the Jew on his own would put out the fire.

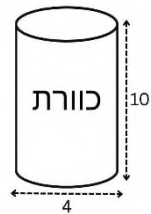
The Rama (O.C. 334:26), however, writes that in almost all cases nowadays, the halacha regarding extinguishing fires is different. An unrestrained fire can spread quickly to other areas endangering lives, and therefore it is permissible even for a Jew to extinguish a fire if there is the slightest concern of *pikuach nefesh*. The Mishnah Berurah adds that it is a mitzvah to inform the public about this.

The Halachic Ramifications of Throwing a Beehive on Shabbat

The core concept of *Hotza'ah m'reshut l'reshut* seems simple: one may not carry from a *Reshut Ha'yachid* to a *Reshut Ha'rabim*, and vice versa. But what exactly classifies a *reshut*? The Rambam (Shabbat 14:1) categorizes four different types of *reshuyot*: *Reshut Ha'rabim*, *Reshut Ha'yachid*, *Carmelit*, and *Makom Patur*. A *Reshut Harabim* is a public domain while a *Reshut Hayachid* is a private domain (more specifically defined as a space of at least 4 by 4 tefachim wide, and at least 10 tefachim high). Since the last two domains are *d'rabbanan*, this discussion will focus on the first two.



The Rambam (14:2) rules that even an item that is normally considered an object (e.g. a ship, a wooden tower, or a *kaveret*) can itself qualify as its own *Reshut Ha'yachid*, provided it meets the required dimensions. This raises an immediate question: if the item being transferred on Shabbat is itself a domain, rather than an object, does the *issur d'oraita* of *Hotza'ah* apply?



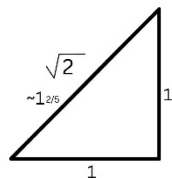
The Gemara (Shabbat 8a) discusses a *kaveret*¹. The case presented is that a beehive, that meets the height requirement of a *Reshut Ha'yachid* (10 tefachim), is thrown from a *Reshut Ha'yachid* into a *Reshut Ha'rabim*. Abaye rules that if the *kaveret* is 6 tefachim wide (i.e. the diameter), one is *patur* if he throws it, whereas if it is narrower than 6 tefachim, one is *chayav*. At first glance, this seems difficult to understand. The act appears to be a textbook case of *Hotza'ah m'reshut l'reshut*. Why should the width of the *kaveret* make any difference?

Rashi and Tosafot offer different explanations. Rashi maintains that the *tzurat melacha* of *Hotza'ah* is the transfer of an object between domains. If the *kaveret* itself meets the criteria of a *Reshut Ha'yachid*, it is no longer halachically classified as an object at all. One, therefore, cannot be *chayav* for throwing it.

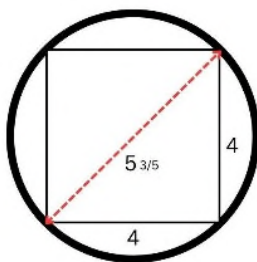
Tosafot disagrees. In his view, the *kaveret* remains an object; it does not become a *Reshut Ha'yachid* in its own right. Rather, it only creates a *Reshut Ha'yachid* around itself when and where it lands. According to this approach, the *kaveret* effectively travels from a private domain, through a public domain, and comes to rest in a private domain of its own making. Rashi sees the *kaveret* as inherently a *reshut*, while Tosafot sees it as an object that generates a *reshut* upon landing.

However, the width requirement of 6 tefachim posited by Abaye still remains confusing. Since a valid *Reshut Ha'yachid* must measure 4 by 4 tefachim, it seems strange that Abaye rules that one would be *chayav* for throwing a *kaveret* less than 6 tefachim wide. Rashi explains that the default Shabbat shiurim assume a square shape, whereas the *kaveret* has a circular base. In order for a full 4 by 4 square to fit inside the circle, the circle's diameter must equal

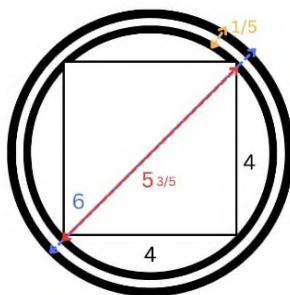
¹ In Chazal's terminology, a *kaveret* could be referring to an actual beehive, or to a basket shaped like a beehive.



the diagonal of that square – approximately $5 \frac{3}{5}$ tefachim. The requirement of 6 tefachim includes an additional $\frac{2}{5}$ of a tefach, which Rashi understands as a safeguard to avoid an *issur d'oraita*. Since no *issur d'oraita* occurs if one throws a *kaveret* $5 \frac{3}{5}$ tefachim wide, no Korban Chatat would be required according to Rashi.

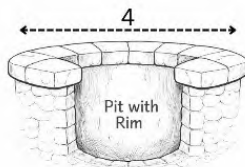


The Rif accepts Rashi's geometric calculation, but interprets the remaining width of $\frac{2}{5}$ of a tefach very differently. Like Tosafot, he holds that the *kaveret* is not a domain in its own right, but an object that creates a *reshut* when it comes to rest. According to the Rif, Abaye's 6 tefach requirement is not imprecise at all. Rather, it accounts for the thickness of the walls, in this case $\frac{1}{5}$ tefach on each side. Accordingly, the 4 by 4 requirement must be satisfied entirely by the usable interior airspace of the *kaveret*; the walls themselves cannot be included.



Rabbeinu Chananel agrees with this approach, adding only the terminology ‘an *etzbah*’ – $\frac{1}{5}$ of a tefach. Therefore it is the extra 2 *etzba’ot* which Abaye includes to highlight that the walls can not be used to complete the 4 by 4 tefachim of airspace, and that measurement must be satisfied internally. Both conclude that without a full 4 by 4 interior space, the enclosure cannot qualify as a *Reshut Ha’yachid*.

While analyzing Rabbenu Chananel’s opinion, Tosafot distinguishes between the width and the height. The latter according to Rabbenu Chananel needs to be four by four tefachim of interior space, but the 10 tefachim height does not need to be completely interior space. The Gemara (Eiruvim 93b) concludes that a small mound that is 5 tefachim tall and topped by a 5 tefachim tall partition creates a *Reshut Ha’Yachid*, even though there aren’t 10 tefachim of interior space.



However, even regarding the width, Tosafot argues with Rabbenu Chananel, claiming that it isn’t necessary to have 4x4 tefachim of inner space. The Gemara (Eiruvim 78a) says that the width of the space of a pit can be combined with the width of the rim around the top to create the four tefachim width. Consequently, Tosafot accepts Rashi’s explanation that Abaye’s measurement was not meant to be exact, and that a *kaveret* need not contain a full 4 by 4 interior to qualify as a private domain.

The language of the Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 14:1) indicates that he agrees with Rabbenu Chananel and the Rif that a *Reshut Ha’Yachid* requires four by four tefachim of inner space. If so,

how does the Rambam deal with Tosafot's proof against Rabbenu Chananel? The matter is discussed in חידושי רבנו חיים הלוי.

Rav Chaim distinguishes between an area that itself is a *Reshut Ha'Yachid* versus an area where the status above it is a *Reshut Ha'yachid*. In the first case, the area would need to have interior space of 4x4 tefachim. In the second case, even if the 4x4 area includes the walls, the inside area would not be considered a private domain, but the area above it (via the principle of גור אסיק (מחיצות)) would be considered a *Reshut Ha'Yachid*. The sugya regarding *kaveret* is treating the beehive itself as an independent reshut. Tosafot's proof from the sugya in Eiruvim is discussing the status above the pit.

מחשבה

The Divine Promise Behind Jewish Survival

If one steps back and looks at world history, a striking pattern emerges. Empires rise and fall; nations expand, dominate, and then disappear. As is seen with Babylonia, Persia, Greece and Rome, each civilization has its golden age, and each one eventually fades into history. Every nation, including the Jewish people, has experienced moments of greatness, and yet there is one anomaly that history cannot explain on its own: every ancient nation has vanished, except for the Jews.

This raises two profound questions: Why is it that the Jews endure, and how can Jews live with an inner faith that they will never be destroyed?

From the moment Am Yisrael became a nation, they faced opposition. Their first encounter after leaving Egypt was not one of peace, but a war with Amalek. Amalek did not attack for land or power – they attacked to destroy other nations' fear of the Jewish people and their G-d. After Amalek's attempted persecution, Hashem commands Moshe: **כתב זאת זכרון בספר ושים באזני יהושע כי** (Shemot 17:14). **מחה אמחה את זכר עמלק מתחת השמים**

Rashi explains that Hashem is explicitly saying **לכך אני מזהירך** **כן כי חפץ אני למחותו**. This language is harsh. Hashem is saying a nation that seeks to erase the Jewish people forfeits its right to exist. Hashem has no tolerance for those who seek to destroy His nation. Amalek's attempted erasure of Bnei Yisrael becomes the very reason they themselves are to be erased. This concept connects to a broader idea. Throughout Tanach, when nations rise against Israel, Hashem shows no mercy.

Throughout Sefer Yirmiyahu, both Israel and the surrounding nations are rebuked for their sins. Yet the tone, the outcome, and

the punishments they receive could not be more different. Yirmiyahu HaNavi (chapter 46) describes the coming destruction of Egypt at the hands of Nevuchadnezzar. Their downfall will be brutal as they will be swept off their feet, left helpless and destroyed.

The end of that chapter (27-28) is unusual. Instead of ending with rebuke to the Jews for the sins they have committed, as would seem logical after rebuking other nations for their sins, Hashem twice comforts Bnei Yisrael: **ואתה אל תירא עבדי יעקב ... אתה אל תירא**. Hashem is reassuring the Jews not to fear. They will suffer, they will be scattered and punished, but, **ונקה לא אנקך** – Hashem will not fully destroy them.

As of now, exile is where the Jews are meant to be, but the Jews will be redeemed. Hashem's punishment isn't as harsh to the Jews as it was to the Egyptians. He shows mercy even at times when His people least deserve it.

It is not a coincidence that Am Yisrael is still around. The Jews have a covenant binding them to Hashem. Derech Hashem (1:2) explains that originally, all of humanity was meant to achieve closeness to Hashem. After Adam's sin, humanity fell, but the possibility for greatness remained. Only after Dor Haplaga did spiritual potential begin to be concentrated, passed through a specific lineage, beginning with Avraham Avinu.

Through Yitzchak and Yaakov, this mission was refined and preserved until, at Matan Torah, that family became a nation. This does not mean that other nations were rejected or stripped of value. Rather, it means that the Jewish people were entrusted with a unique responsibility: to safeguard the Torah, to model a life of kedushah, and to serve as a light unto the nations. Hashem would not abandon the very nation through which His presence is meant to be revealed in the world.

Sefer Tehillim (137) describes the heart-rending scene of the exile after the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash: **על נהרות בבל שם ישבנו גם בכינו בזכרנו את ציון**. The Midrash (Pesikta Rabba) is bothered by the phrase **גם בכינו**. What is meant by the the word **גם**?

The Midrash explains why Bnei Yisrael burst into tears on the banks of the Euphrates River. But they were not the only ones crying. Their tears rose to the Heavens, and in response, Hashem כביכול started crying with them.

In Michtav M'eliyahu¹, Rav Dessler explains that Hashem's mercy stems from *zechut Avot*, not as a credit system, but as potential. As long as the qualities of the Avot: faith, kindness, and loyalty, still exist within the Jewish nation, and the Jews refuse to be misled by their Yetzer Hara, Hashem extends mercy. The Jews will always remain linked to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.

Hashem promised the Avot that through their descendants, the purpose of creation would endure. That promise was sealed in the Brit Bein HaBetarim. This is why Jews can live with an inner safety even when history is brutal, even when exile is long, and even when suffering feels endless. The Jews cry out, as they did in Egypt, and Hashem hears. As it says בשוב ה' את שיבת ציון היינו כחולמים (Tehillim 126). The love Hashem holds for His people is unmatched. The Jewish nation is blessed to have been chosen by an all merciful G-d who is there to help them in the times they need Him most.

¹ See volume 1, page 14

Man's Capabilities and a Jew's Responsibility

Man has phenomenal potential, a thing that no other creature has. The *Nefesh HaChaim* (Sha'ar 1) notes that what separates humans from animals is that only humans were created *B'tzelem Elokim*. Just as Hashem created when He made the world, so too can a person be a *yotzer*. Throughout a person's day, he makes hundreds of choices, some big, many small, and these choices dictate the future of his experience. These actions of choosing are constantly creating new experiences, ideas, and events that would not have otherwise come into fruition. This power of *bechira* is the definition of what it means to a *yotzer*, a gift received only by mankind.

Furthermore, he explains that a person's *bechira* has the ability to influence the *ratzon* Hashem. This can be applied to davening. When one davens for specific things, for someone to be healed or for a conflict to cease, Hashem will sometimes listen and "change" His *ratzon*. This is an incredible power that only people have. A person can impact the most Supreme and Powerful Being's will, an incredible power that must not be taken for granted.

The very nature of man's creation resembles a human striving for growth. In explaining the contrast between animals and humans, the *Sefer Haikarim* (Ma'amar 1:6) writes that a person may look at the world and think that animals are more progressive than humans; bears have fur, and humans have to spend money on clothes and wash them; a lion can just eat the animals, and humans need to *shecht*, salt, and cook them. On face value, it seems as though animals are superior to humans in every way; the qualities that they have from birth, mankind must toil to attain. However, the *Sefer Haikarim* disputes this assumption.

The process of creation represents striving for *shleimut*, wholeness. As creation progressed, the structures became more complex,

each attaining its highest potential. Within the process of creation itself, the latter three days mirror the first three. This highlights the idea in the Sefer Haikarim (2:4), that as creation progressed, defined creations were made more complex. For instance, on day one of creation, Hashem created light, and on day four He created the sun, moon, and stars, each of which is a vessel to contain the light. On day two, He separated the sky from the waters, and on day five, He created seas which hold the water. Lastly, on day three, He created vegetation, and on day six, He created animals, and man to benefit from this vegetation. The process of creation shows that the later form is more intricate than its original state, meaning the later ones attain a higher level of *shleimut*.

There are two aspects of *shleimut*: the physical form and the actualization. Animals contain both features as one, meaning that their physical form is the actualization of their completion; once they're born, there's little to no growth (a baby cub and a grown bear have a similar level of intellect and physical accomplishments). However, humans' physical form and their actualization are separate. A human baby needs to have intensive care at their disposal at all times to be physically and emotionally safe, while an adult does not.

We see that people have the ability to strive for *shleimut* and infinitely improve themselves, a power that no other being in the world possesses. The Jewish people have an extra bracha, to attain growth and *shleimut* through *bechira*. However, it is up to the Jewish people to decide if they achieve this goal or not; they must decide wisely, not only because their choices affect their personal growth and *shleimut*, but also the *ratzon* Hashem. The Jewish people's decisions, however, have a greater purpose – they impact humanity, and they have a great responsibility in helping the world achieve *shleimut*.

Since time immemorial, Jews have been a point of discussion. They are a group that is disproportionately focused on, compared to their nation's size. This is because Jews are the very center of humanity. The Kuzari (2:36) uses a *mashal* to illustrate the responsibility Jews have to the rest of humanity. Jews are like the heart of

the world and the non-Jews are like the limbs; just as the heart pumps energy to the rest of the body, so too the Jews have the responsibility of sustaining the world.

Moreover, the heart is more susceptible to getting sick. However, since the heart is so crucial to the body's well-being, as soon as the heart gets sick, intensive care is applied to rectify any damage. Similarly, the Jewish people have more opportunities to sin, but since they are so crucial to the world's survival, Hashem forgives them easily, to keep the heart of the world healthy.

Through this *mashal*, the Kuzari emphasizes an important message to the Jews: they have an incredibly crucial role to play in the world. The Jewish people are tasked with bringing spirituality and Hashem's *Shechina* into a world that would otherwise be vacant of any *ruchniut*. As outlined above, humans have the ability through their *bechira* to attain *shleimut*. In addition, Jews have the responsibility to spiritually uplift and sustain the entire world. This task is not easy, but they must strive each day to accomplish it.

Rav Hirsch (*Igrot Tzaphon* 9) elucidates what this responsibility actually looks like. Jews were destined to live among the nations to make the world aware of Hashem's rulership of the world. Hashem saw that humanity was driven by materialistic desires, and that physical wants had become the pinnacle of human existence. Many believed that nature was dictated by a multitude of gods. To amend this, humanity needed a people that even when completely devoid of materialistic wealth and power, clung to Hashem steadfastly. Upon these people could the rest of the world build its greatness and structure of life. They would be able to make known to the world who the true Creator is.

Hashem appointed the Jewish people with this great responsibility. Everything that comes into their possession comes from Hashem and, as such, is to be used to fulfill the purpose that He has destined for the Jewish nation to fulfill. Additionally, in order not to succumb to the physicality of the other nations, Jews must separate themselves so as not to lose sight of the immense goal they are tasked with. This separation does not alienate the rest of the

world, but instead highlights the Jews as an example to strive towards. The Jewish people must recognize their purpose in this world and strive every day to accomplish it.

Mankind has been gifted with immense powers to choose. With such a gift comes the ability to strive for *shleimut* and to attain one's highest potential. Jews have the responsibility to use their *bechira* to make the world aware of Hashem, and to bring society the spirituality it is lacking. With such knowledge, one should feel empowered, because Hashem enabled them with many tools to achieve the task He has destined them to fulfill. He has given the Jewish nation everything needed to carry out His will; now it is up to Am Israel, if they will step up to the challenge and use their capabilities to fulfill their responsibility.

והלכת בדרכיו

One Command: But How Should We Walk?

There are many avenues and components to achieving growth in Avodat Hashem. The stories in Tanach present more than one authentic model of religious development, demonstrating that genuine commitment to Hashem does not emerge from a single, uniform path. Rather, the Torah offers multiple legitimate frameworks through which a person can grow spiritually.

Two such models are Avraham Avinu and Rut HaMoaviyah. Although their journeys toward Avodat Hashem originate from different mechanisms and perspectives, a close analysis of their stories reveals that they ultimately share the same foundational principles necessary for a life of authentic religious commitment.

Avraham approaches Avodat Hashem from a place of commitment to *dvar Hashem*. The Torah (Bereishit 12:4) describes Avraham's immediate obedience, 'וילך אברהם כאשר דיבר אליו ה', emphasizing that he follows Hashem's word without hesitation. This adherence is first introduced through the command of 'לך לך מארצך' (Bereishit 12:1).

Radak explains that Avraham neither questioned nor tested Hashem, but trusted fully that His promise would be fulfilled. The Ohr HaChaim further clarifies that Avraham's motivation was not the promised reward, but the command itself, 'לא הלך בשביל הטובה'. Rav Hirsch sharpens this idea even further, explaining that "Avraham did not follow the promise, but the word of G-d." Avraham thus models a form of Avodat Hashem rooted in uncompromising commitment to *ratzon Hashem*, independent of emotional incentive, personal benefit, or guaranteed outcome.

Rut, in contrast, represents a more internal and relational path toward Avodat Hashem. Her entry into Judaism is not prompted by a divine command, but by personal choice and emotional attachment. When Rut declares to Naomi, ... **כי אל אשר תלכי אלך** (Rut 1:16), she frames her commitment as one of identity and belonging rather than obligation alone. The Gemara explains that Rut willingly accepts both minor and major mitzvot upon herself. Her acceptance is voluntary and self-driven, rendering her devotion deeply authentic.

The Midrash (Rut Rabbah) highlights how beloved this choice is before Hashem, noting that once Rut commits fully, she is regarded as equal to Naomi. Likutei Moharan further characterizes Rut as a spiritual figure through whom prayer and song emerge, underscoring the emotional and soulful dimension of her faith. Rut's path reflects an inwardly motivated, relational approach to Avodat Hashem, built on love, attachment, and choice.

While, at first glance, Avraham's rational obedience and Rut's emotional commitment may appear contradictory, Rav Soloveitchik explains that authentic faith requires both dimensions. In *The Lonely Man of Faith*, he writes that commitment to God encompasses the entirety of the human personality – both the rational and the irrational. This idea is echoed in *The Rebbetzin of Talne*, where the Rav distinguishes between Torat Avicha and Torat Imecha: a father teaches structure, discipline, and obligation, while a mother teaches warmth, flavor, and emotional connection to mitzvot. Within this framework, Avraham embodies Torat Avicha, while Rut represents Torat Imecha. Together, they form a complete and balanced model of Jewish commitment.

Avraham and Rut also model contrasting but complementary approaches to creating a life of kedushah. Avraham sanctifies himself through separation. The Malbim explains that the sequence of **ומבית אביך ... מארץך** reflects not merely physical departure, but ideological separation from corrupt influences. According to Avraham's model, spiritual growth requires distancing oneself from environments that impede development.

Rut, however, achieves sanctity through attachment. The text does not emphasize what Rut leaves behind, but rather what she chooses to join. The Gemara describes her relationship to Naomi using the language of *דבקה בה*, highlighting closeness, loyalty, and emotional devotion rather than withdrawal.

Despite their differing starting points, Avraham and Rut share several core characteristics of spiritual growth. Both act without full clarity, embracing the true essence of *na'aseh v'nishma*. Radak explains that Hashem deliberately withheld details about the land promised to Avraham so that his journey would be rooted in trust rather than certainty. The Ohr HaChaim adds that Avraham did not delay even a moment.

Rut mirrors this same readiness; despite Naomi's repeated attempts to dissuade her, Rut reaffirms her commitment without hesitation. The Gemara interprets each phrase of Rut's declaration as acceptance of a different dimension of Jewish law and responsibility. Rav Soloveitchik captures this shared posture as the "leap into the absurd" – a paradoxical act of surrender and courage that lies at the heart of authentic faith.

Finally, both Avraham and Rut demonstrate that genuine spiritual growth is gradual rather than instantaneous. The Torah (Bereishit 12:9) describes Avraham's journey using progressive language: *ויסע אברם הלוך ונסע*, indicating movement through stages. Rashi explains that Avraham continually advanced step by step, rather than all at once. Similarly, the Gemara portrays Rut's growth through repeated effort and persistence.

Spiritual development in Judaism is depicted as slow, rooted, and sustainable, as expressed in the verse *ואורה צדיקים כאור נגה הלוך* (Mishlei 4:18). The Meiri explains that the growth of the righteous unfolds gradually and continuously, while Metzudat David notes that strength deepens over time. Pitchei Chachma further describes spiritual illumination as emerging little by little, reinforcing the necessity of patience in *Avodat Hashem*.

Avraham initiates faith through obedience and separation; Rut completes it through loyalty, action, and relationship. Together,

they model a balanced and holistic vision of Avodat Hashem, teaching that walking in His ways does not require a single path, but rather the courage to move forward – even without knowing exactly where the road will lead.

Sheidim

In order to gain a real, in-depth understanding of *Sheidim*, it is useful to first take a look at the concept of *Malachim*. There are many sources referring to *Malachim*, but this article will focus only on a few of them, both those that mention *Malachim* explicitly and those that refer to angels as *Ish*.

Where does a *Malach* appear for the first time in the Torah? When Hagar runs away from Sarah, she encounters a *Malach*: וימצאה (Bereishit 16:7). This *Malach* sends Hagar back to Sarah, and informs her of the subsequent birth of Yishmael. Later (19:1), *Malachim* go to Sedom to destroy the city and save Lot: ויבאו שני המלאכים סדמה בערב ולוט ישב בשער סדם וירא לוט: ויקם לקראתם וישתחו אפים ארצה. A *Malach* calls out to Avraham during Akeidat Yitzchak instructing him to refrain from killing Yitzchak: ויקרא (Bereishit 22:11-12). And a *Malach* appears to Moshe at the *Sneh*: וירא מלאך ה' אליו בלבת אש (Shemot 3:2). מתוך הסנה וירא והנה הסנה בער באש והסנה איננו אבל

There are also stories in Tanach where *Malachim* are referred to as *Ish* or *Anashim*. Avraham is sitting at the entrance to his tent. וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל (Bereishit 18:2). Rashi explains that they are *Malachim*, identifying Raphael as the *Malach* who healed Avraham. When Yosef went searching for his brothers (37:15): וימצאם וישא והנה תעה בשדה. Rashi identifies the *Ish* as the angel Gavriel. Like Raphael's visit to Avraham, this scenario is describing a specific *Malach* with a specific mission. Another example can be found in Sefer Yehoshua (5:13) as Yehoshua is preparing for the conquest of Yericho: ויהי בהיות יהושע ביריחו וישא עיניו וירא והנה איש עומד. לנגדו וחרבו שלופה בידו וילך יהושע אליו ויאמר לו הלנו אתה אם לצרינו. Here, too, the *Ish* is identified as a *Malach* (Rashi, Radak).

In Moreh Nevuchim (2:6), the Rambam writes that angel means messenger, and therefore, every one that is entrusted with a certain mission is an angel. In fact, all forces that reside in a body are angels: *כל כח מן הכוחות הגופניות מלאך*. *Malachim* are a “force” that helps advance the world. Similarly, we find in the Midrash (Bereishit Rabba 10:6): *אמר רבי סימון אין לך כל עשב ועשב שאין לו מזל*: *ברקיע שמכה אותו ואומר לו גדל*, every single blade of grass has a heavenly force telling it to grow.

After gaining somewhat of a grasp on *Malachim*, the concept of *Sheidim* can be explored. The term *Sheidim* appears twice in Tanach. In Devarim (32:17), Moshe rebukes Bnei Yisrael about their future actions, including worshipping other gods: *יזבחו לשדים לא אלוך*. Similarly in Tehillim (106:37): *ויזבחו את בניהם ואת בנותיהם לשדים*.

The Gemara (Chagiga 16a) elaborates on the differences between *Malachim*, *Sheidim*, and humans: *ששה דברים נאמרו בשדים*: *שלשה כמלאכי השרת ושלשה כבני אדם*. The character traits of *Sheidim* are a mix of those of *Malachim* and humans. Like *Malachim*: *יש להם כנפיים כמלאכי השרת, וטסין מסוף העולם ועד סופו כמלאכי השרת, ויודעין מה – שעתיד להיות כמלאכי השרת* – the *Sheidim* have wings, can fly around the world, and know the future. On the other hand, just like humans: *אוכלין ושותין כבני אדם, פרין ורבין כבני אדם, ומתים כבני אדם* – the *Sheidim* eat and drink, procreate, and die.

The Gemara (Gittin 68a-68b) relates a lengthy story about Shlomo HaMelech and Ashmadai, king of the *Sheidim*. In order to acquire the *shamir*, a special worm that could cut through any stone and was needed to build the Beit Hamikdash, Shlomo captured Ashmadai. After the Beit Hamikdash was completed, Ashmadai tricked Shlomo into freeing him, threw Shlomo a distance of 400 *parsaot*, impersonated Shlomo and took over the kingdom. After some time, Shlomo returned and Ashmadai fled.

The Gemara (Pesachim 109b-110b) discusses the potential danger involved with *Zugot*, eating or drinking items in pairs, including the four cups of wine at the Seder. Rabbeinu Bachye

(Kitvavim, p. 487) explains that there was a common pagan belief that the world was controlled by two gods. Avoiding doing things in “pairs” was meant as a powerful statement negating such foreign beliefs, granting Divine protection. If, however, a person engaged in *Zugot* he allowed himself to be exposed to demonic forces. The night of the Seder, however, is a *Leil Shimurim*: ליל המשומר ובא מן המזיקין.

Although it seems quite clear that *Sheidim* do exist, the Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:29; Mishnaic Commentary, Avodah Zara 4:7) famously negates their existence. He refers to the absurdities of idolatrous people who believe in witchcraft, spirits and demons. The Rambam was criticized for this approach¹ and remains a minority opinion²

It appears that *Sheidim* are other-worldly creatures whose general mission is to cause harm. The Midrash (Devarim Rabba 4:4) says regarding the multitude of demons in this world, that veils are placed over their faces, preventing them from seeing people and causing them harm. If, however, a person sins, the veil is lifted allowing the demon to bring harm to the person. The Gemara (Brachot 6a) attributes a number of harmful results to the actions of *Sheidim*: the claustrophobic feeling at large public Torah lectures, tired knees, worn out garments, and wounds on the feet.

Should we continue to be concerned about *Sheidim*? Regarding the harmful effects of *Zugot*, the Gemara (Pesachim 110b) states: כל דקפיד קפדי בהדיה, ודלא קפיד לא קפדי בהדיה, ומיהו למיחש מיבעי – if we do not concern ourselves with these matters than they will not concern themselves with us, but nonetheless it is good to show a modicum of concern. Tosafot (Chullin 107b) comments that we are no longer worried about *Zugot*, but does not elaborate.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Emet L'Yaakov, Shemot 7:22) offers the following suggestion. In order for a person to have בחירה חפשית, there must be some degree of balance in the world. If Hashem's

¹ See, for example, Biur HaGra Y.D. 179:13

² See, for example, Ramban Vayikra 17:7; Shu"t HaRashba 1:413

supernatural miracles are somewhat commonplace, then Hashem will allow sorcerers to harness the power of real witchcraft. The existence of righteous human miracle workers needs to be offset by the harmful activities of *Sheidim*. But if the former is no longer, there is no need for the latter. Rav Kaminetsky suggests that this might even explain the aforementioned position of the Rambam. By the time of the Rambam, there was already a serious diminishing of the appearances of positive other-worldly phenomena. Any continued belief in the power of sorcery or demons was now considered foolish.

The Gemara (Brachot 6a) has the following statement regarding one who seeks to actually see *Sheidim*: If you want to see them, bring the tail of a first born black cat, that is the daughter of a first born black cat. Burn it in fire, grind it up, fill your eyes with the ashes and then you will see them.

Rav Yitzchak Blau quotes Rav Kook's metaphorical explanation of this *aggadata*. Blackness is a ubiquitous symbol for the darker and more problematic aspects of life. In terms of the choice of animal, a cat often shows indifference to its master. If so, the cat symbolizes the ability to forget our Maker. Rav Kook argues that the damaging and demonic aspects of our existence stem from humanity forgetting the *Ribbono Shel Olam*.

Perhaps there are additional ideas that one can learn from the topic of *Sheidim*. Often individuals have personal "demons" that haunt them and restrict them from being the best versions of themselves. How can we minimize the harmful effects of these "demons?" A parent who is overly critical of her child can cause the child immense pain, to the point that she will one day need therapy for this "demon" the parent created. Alternatively, a smile and kind word can help neutralize a haunting "demon." Paying close attention to our actions, focusing on improving our Middot *Bein Adam L'Chaveiro* may be the most important step towards creating more forces of good in this world, and minimizing those of evil.

Schar V'Onesh

When defining *schar v'onesh*, there are two main realms of what it could be referring to: reward in this world, or reward in the next world. The Gemara (Kiddushin 39b) says: שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא. The ultimate reward for performance of mitzvot is given only in Olam Haba. As the Ramchal, writes in the first perek of *Mesilat Yesharim*: כללו של דבר, האדם לא נברא בעבור מצבו בעולם הזה אלא בעבור מצבו בעולם הבא.

Working with this premise that *schar v'onesh* is entirely spiritual helps solve the eternal paradox of *tzadik v'ra lo* and *rasha v'tov lo*. Why do bad things happen to good people? Because the “bad” experience from a human perspective is just pseudo-bad! In the next world, *tzaddikim* will get their real reward and *resha'im* will get their real punishment. However, the Torah never explicitly mentions Olam Haba, but on the contrary, refers to *schar v'onesh* in Olam Haze.

On the more physical side of things, the Ramban offers the following explanation. In Shemot (6:2) the Torah says: וידבר אלקים אל אני ה' Rashi comments that the language of 'אני ה' means that Hashem is acting with *schar v'onesh*. Ramban explains that physical *schar v'onesh* is a *neis nistar*. There is no logical connection between a person living a proper Torah lifestyle and being blessed in a “natural” way. This is essentially how Hashem acts towards us through natural means. In response to a person's actions, Hashem involves Himself in his life through nature.

What is the Rambam's position on *schar v'onesh*? In his commentary on the tenth perek of the Mishnah in Sanhedrin, the Rambam lists his thirteen foundations of faith. The eleventh is to believe in *schar v'onesh*. He brings proof from Moshe's conversation with Hashem after *Cheit Ha'egel* (Shemot 32:33). Moshe asks Hashem to erase his name from the Torah if he won't forgive Bnei

Yisrael. Hashem responds that He knows who has and has not sinned, and it is only those that have sinned that will get erased from the Torah.

The Rambam uses this conversation to prove that Hashem knows who does mitzvot and who sins, rewarding and punishing accordingly. The only thing the Rambam really defines here is **השכר** *ha'schar* as reward reserved for Olam Haba and **העונש החזק** *ha'onesh ha'chazak* as *kareit*. Seemingly, these are the extremes of *schar v'onesh*, but what does he have to say about everything in between?

In the Mishneh Torah (Hilchot Teshuva 8:1-2), the Rambam explains what it means for *Ha'schar Ha'gadol* to be the rewards in Olam Haba, bringing proof from the *schar* associated with *Shiluach HaKan*. The Torah states explicitly that the reward for this mitzvah is a long life, a seemingly purely physical reward. The Rambam interprets a good and long life beyond the simple definition; he extends it to mean good and long days in Olam Haba.

What is this goodness that tzaddikim will get in Olam Haba? The Rambam says it is knowing Hashem. As he discusses at length in the Moreh Nevuchim (3:51), the Rambam believes that the purpose of life is to build knowledge of Hashem. Therefore, the reward is inherent – in Olam Haba they will bask in their knowledge of Hashem that they have built throughout life. According to the Rambam, reward and punishment are spiritual consequences of the natural action of completing G-d's will.

But what does the Torah mean when it promises physical reward and punishment? How does that fit into the picture? The Rambam explains, **לחיים טובים בעולם הזה המביאים לחיי העולם הבא**, by receiving physical reward, one is given the ability and opportunity to work on knowing G-d, which will merit Olam Haba (Hilchot Teshuva 9:1). Physical *schar* is not the true reward, but rather a means to an end of receiving the true reward in Olam Haba.

In Vayikra Rabba (19:2), the Midrash relates a *mashal* of someone who hired workers to fill a bucket with holes, with water. The fool doesn't bother, thinking that the work is meaningless. The

wise person, on the other hand, reasoned that he is getting paid to fill it up, so it is irrelevant whether the water remains in the bucket or not.

The *nimshal*: one should invest time to learn Torah, even if he will forget it, as he gets *schar* for the action. Rav Soloveitchik explains¹ that the reward gained from filling an emptying bucket is that the bucket itself gets cleansed by the water in the process. So too, when we learn Torah, the reward is the natural consequence of becoming better through the learning process.

One of the most foundational statements about *schar v'onesh* is found in Pirkei Avot (4:2): שֶׁשָּׂכָר מִצְוָה מִצְוָה וְשָׂכָר עֲבִירָה עֲבִירָה. What does this mean? How can the reward for something be the thing itself? One possibility is that the Mishna is teaching us that there is a “natural” consequence (i.e. reward) for the performance of a mitzvah.

The Kedushat Levi (Parshat Ekev) explains: והשכר הוא המצוה גופא. מה שאדם עושה נחת רוח ליוצרו ועושה רצונו ומקיים מצותו. The reward is the knowledge that you're fulfilling G-d's will and making Him happy. ומה שהקדוש ברוך הוא הוא משלם השכר לעולם הבא הוא פחות. שבתענוגים, אבל עיקר התענוג הוא המצוה גופא מה שאדם עושה רצון הבורא. The main *schar* is not in Olam Haba, it is in this world, and it is simply the knowledge that a person is doing what he can, to please G-d.

Rabbeinu Yonah comments on this Mishna: ר"ל שפרי מצוה מצוה ואוכל פרותיה בעולם הזה שמסייעת אותו לעשות מצוות אחרות ונמצא הקרן מתרבה וקיים לעולם הבא. The actual *schar* for a mitzvah is received in Olam Haba, but, the reward in this world for doing a mitzvah is that it leads to another mitzvah. This, will in turn, provide a person with a more spiritual reward because he has done more mitzvot. (One might compare this to a stock investment where the dividends are reinvested providing even greater dividends in the long run.)

¹ הררי קדם בעניני מועדים חלק א' עמ' שמג

One might detect a similar idea in Rav Dessler's *Kuntras haBechira*. The primary *schar* is given for decisions made at the point of *bechira*: challenging, but still within a person's ability to overcome. However, the goal is to always be pushing that point forward, winning those battles at the point of *bechira*. When the point of *bechira* is pushed forward, one gains access to being challenged in a whole new realm of mitzvot. In a way, the reward for doing mitzvot is access to more mitzvot, which would be an understanding of "*schar mitzvah mitzvah*."

Rashi, in his commentary on Breishit (15:1; 32:11), raises the issue of losing one's already acquired *schar*. After Avraham is victorious in his battle against the mighty four kings, he expresses his concern that he has already used up his accumulated reward. Hashem assures him: **אל תירא ... שכרך הרבה מאד**. Later, Yaakov is concerned that despite Hashem's assurances that He will protect Yaakov, this may no longer be the case. Maybe all of his merits were "used up" already in receiving Hashem's multifaceted beneficence: **קטנתי מכל החסדים ומכל האמת אשר עשית את עבדך**. This idea of "using up *schar*" implies that *schar v'onesh* is somewhat transactional. One only possesses the *schar* he earns in this world; when spent, it is only replenished by earning more.

When weighing how much motivation a given definition of *schar v'onesh* should give someone, it's hard to arrive at a conclusion. But maybe motivation is not the point of *schar* at all. As it is taught in Pirkei Avot (1:3), **אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס, אלא הו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב שלא על מנת לקבל פרס**. One should desire to serve Hashem, irrelevant of any additional reward.

The Yetzer Hara

The *yetzer hara* is often translated as the evil inclination meant to feed on our deepest, darkest desires. Yet, how could something created by Hashem be bad? In other religions, the *yetzer hara* is sometimes referred to as the “Devil,” an angel that rebelled against G-d; but in Judaism, angelic beings are Hashem’s messengers, not rebellious foes.

Hashem created every being, and everything in this world, for a purpose, and that purpose is to help attain closeness with Hashem. It holds to reason that the *yetzer hara* was also designed this way. It is our job to learn how to hone in on this tool and utilize what Hashem has given us to reach our ultimate selves.

Hashem made man with both good and bad impulses, but, pre-sin, the bad inclination took form in the shape of an external extremity, represented by the נחש הקדמון. It wasn’t until after Adam and Chava sinned, that man was punished with the *yetzer hara* becoming an internal voice and struggle. And yet, a life without ups and downs is a stagnant one.

This is portrayed in the classic mashal: a heart monitor with many ups and downs is a sign of a healthy life, while a straight, stagnant line means death. While it is true that if it weren’t for the sin of the *etz hada’at*, there wouldn’t be overwhelming struggles or desires to sin in the first place, it also means we would lose the connection to G-d that a person attains through these hardships. When the situation gets tough, davening and emunah strengthen. Failures lead to lessons and growth along the way.

Hashem created the *yetzer hara* as a way to grow closer to Him, for when the powerful *yetzer hara* is overcome, it results in making a stronger connection to Hashem. The Gemara (Kiddushin 30b) states: בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין. When Hashem created the *yetzer hara*, He also created its antidote – Torah!

When learning Torah, the connection to Hashem grows, and the only way to ward off the *yetzer hara* is to grow in Avodat Hashem. This makes the *yetzer hara*'s purpose *kirvat Elokim*, if one learns how to combat it correctly.

After each day of the creation (aside from the second day), Hashem looked back at his creations and proclaimed “טוב.” In Bereshit Raba 9:7, it says that when Hashem created the *yetzer hara*, he proclaimed טוב מאד. But later (8:21), Hashem vows never to destroy living beings again מנערי רע. These two pesukim seem to contradict each other. How can the *yetzer hara* be very good and then be accused of being the cause of mankind's destruction?

If one looks throughout Tanach, the words יצר and הרע are never found together. The word יצר is defined as shaping and forming, and הרע can be defined as displeasure or adversity. In Emunot V'deot 5:3, Rav Saadya Gaon gives three reasons why a person is subjected to harsh decrees: as a punishment, as a *nisayon*, or *yessurin shel ahava*. Great tzadikim like Avraham and David underwent *nisyonot*, to form them as great people and display their greatness.

The *yetzer hara* is our *nisayon*. These “bad” inclinations hoping to lead us astray are simply adversities sent by Hashem, meant to form us into the best versions of ourselves. Hashem puts struggles in people's lives in order for them to learn and grow from them.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that to grow as a person, one needs to first break the ego; that is the purpose of the *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer hara* is meant to break us down, so that we can then build ourselves back up in a bigger and better way than before.

Throughout Torah literature, we make mention of the *yetzer hara*, *Satan*, and *Malach Ha'mavet*. The Gemara (Bava Batra 16a) claims that, in fact, all three are really one entity. We see in Iyov that the *Satan* must first come and ask Hashem's permission before acting against one of Hashem's creations. Without Hashem's blessing, the *Satan* wasn't able to do any real harm to Iyov. It wasn't until Hashem permitted him, that he gained "power."

It holds to reason that if the *Satan* and *yetzer hara* are the same, even the *yetzer hara* must always follow the will of Hashem. The *yetzer hara* is referred to in Avot D'Rabbi Natan 16 as iron – tough and hard, but at the whim of the smith when put into fire. When faced with something hard (like iron), one must light a fire to wield it as one's own tool and use it to one's will. The only way to create this fire is with Torah.

Rav Asi (Gemara Sukka 52a) explains that the *yetzer hara* is only as strong as one lets it be. It starts off weak as a spider web. Only when you give in to it does it strengthen like a rope that pulls a wagon. Hashem does not want us to cruise through life. Rather, He created the *yetzer hara* for one to light the fire within and overcome it.

In 2010, Yeshiva World News published an article titled "A Letter from the Yetzer Hara." The goal was to highlight the usefulness of the *yetzer hara*. When one overcomes his personal weaknesses, and combats the *yetzer hara*, he is learning how to be the most capable *Eved Hashem* possible. The article describes the *yetzer hara* as a training tool.

When used properly one struggles when fighting the *yetzer hara*, but is left stronger for the experience. Hashem is watching how hard His people fight their own personal challenges, and how they are made better for it.

When 825,000 pounds per square inch of pressure is applied to a rock, it turns into a diamond, but if it is hit with an ordinary hammer, the diamond will shatter. This shows that this precious stone can withstand extreme conditions, but only when applied in the right way does it turn into something beautiful.

Every Jew starts as a lowly rock, but Hashem knows the perfect amount of pressure needed to reach the next stage and become a diamond. The *yetzer hara* is His messenger to apply this pressure. Even when it feels like it will cause one to break, know that it is all from Hashem and it is His *ratzon*.

Hashem sees everyone's true potential, and His *ratzon* will never harm. The *yetzer hara* actually wants us to succeed. When a child cries out to his parents, his parents cannot handle seeing him in such pain, and despite knowing what is best for him, the parent falls prey to the child's tears.

Hashem only gives a person what they can handle, but when we are in pain and cry out to Hashem through tefillah, his *rachamim* can be overwhelming. Even though He knows we have the power to overcome the challenge, He submits and pulls us out.

Each new day the *yetzer hara* is born again, but it is every individual person's choice to decide how it will affect his life. Life isn't about winning or losing, but about learning.

Shift the translation and perspective and use the *yetzer hara* as a tool to propel forward in middot and connection to Hashem, instead of using it as the excuse for all the downfalls.

It is meant to shape us to become our best selves through these adversities, not hold us back.

FACULTY

Yetziat Mitzrayim

One may wonder why it took so long to take the Jews out of Egypt. After a clear decision to redeem them, numerous warnings and plagues, the Jews finally exited, only to be chased by Paroh and the Egyptian army, who regretted their decision to allow Bnei Yisrael to leave and hoped to recapture their freed slaves.

Why did Hashem not expedite the entire Exodus process? Certainly, Hashem was capable of freeing them more quickly. Moreover, since Hashem was clearly interested in performing miracles, as seen by the many he performed, as well as His informing Moshe of his plan to redeem the Jews via great miracles (Shemot 6:6-9), why not miraculously redeem them instantaneously? Why drag it out for so long?

A clear indication that there was no rush to take the Jews out, is that Hashem hardened Paroh's heart, ensuring a longer enslavement and greater amount of time spent in Egypt. Hashem was clearly interested in the Jews remaining there until the end of plagues. Why?

Apparently there was an additional agenda besides redeeming the Jews, but what was it?

Perhaps we can offer two suggestions. Firstly, the Rambam (Teshuva 6:3) explains that the Egyptians treated the Jews so harshly that justice demanded that they receive extra punishment. Hashem removed Paroh's free-will, ensuring a slower Exodus in order to properly punish Paroh.

However, there seems to have been a second divine agenda. Hashem wanted the Egyptians to recognize His uniqueness and divinity (See Ramban, Shemot 10:1).

There are several supports for this theory. Firstly, there was the tension between Moshe and Paroh regarding the obligation to

listen to Hashem's word. After being asked to free the Jewish slaves, Paroh replies, "I do not know Hashem and also, I will not send them out" (Shemot 5:2). Paroh does not recognize Hashem, but even if he would, he does not view Hashem's word as binding. The Torah records Paroh's attitude precisely because it is the attitude that needs to be corrected.

Additionally, Moshe instructs Paroh to "Send my people" (Shemot 7:16, 8:16, 9:2, 9:13) not "Let them go." Having Paroh send the Jews, as opposed to simply allowing them to leave, further reflects this second aim, Paroh admitting to Hashem's role as the Divine Being to whom all must listen.

Furthermore, and perhaps clearest, the Torah itself testifies numerous times (8:6, 8:18, 9:29-30, 10:1, 11:7) that the goal of the Makkot was to educate the Egyptians.

This theory can also explain why so many (if not all) of the Makkot undermined the authority of the Egyptian gods, plus the commandment regarding the Korban Pesach, killing the lamb, an Egyptian god (Shemot Rabbah 16:2 and Ramban, Shemot 12:3).

Although there have been signs of Egypt slowly progressing to accept Hashem's divine rule (Shemot 8:15, 9:27, 10:16, 11:3 and Ramban there), it is at the Yam Suf that the Egyptians actually realize who Hashem is and declare that "Hashem is fighting for them!" If this theory is correct, and prolonging the Exodus was designed to facilitate the educational process for the Egyptians, a major question needs to be asked. Why kill the Egyptians immediately after they genuinely recognize who Hashem is? Does that not undermine the entire educational process?

Perhaps the Egyptians' understanding and accepting Hashem's uniqueness is not the goal in and of itself, but rather a means towards a greater end. Having witnessed the aristocratic culture and kingship accept Hashem, sets the foundation for the Jews to build their own faith. After the Jews witness the Egyptians accept Hashem and then lose to Him, the Torah testifies about Bnei Yisrael, "And they accepted Hashem and Moshe his servant"

(Shemot 14:31). After having seen the Yam Suf events, the Egyptians have served their purpose and there is no longer a need to prolong the Exodus. It is precisely then that Hashem gives them their final punishment.

Moreover, the goal may not have been to convince just the Egyptians and even the Jews of that generation. The Torah uses the Exodus as a paradigm of Hashem's involvement (Ramban, Shemot 13:16), as a story to tell and retell for generations (Shemot 10:2).

