



Parshat Reeh 30 Av, 5776/September 3, 2016 Vol. 8 Num. 2

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Building a National Family Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

"Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai said to them: Go out and see, what is the straight path that a man should follow?... Rabbi Yehoshua said: A good friend. Rabbi Yosi said: A good neighbour... He said to them: Go out and see, what is the evil path that a man should avoid?... Rabbi Yehoshua said: A bad friend. Rabbi Yosi said: A bad neighbour." (Avot 2:9)

In Moshe's final days, his last task is to prepare the Jewish people to enter the Land of Israel and establish a country founded on the Torah and all it represents. Thus, he outlines or reiterates the mitzvot that are most relevant for nationhood (such as the laws of court systems and the army) and inspires the Jews to develop perspectives and attitudes crucial to living full religious lives (such as love and fear of G-d).

Towards these ends, Moshe cautions the Jews that their commitment will be threatened if they surround themselves with the wrong influences. Thus, in Parshat Re'eh, Moshe warns the Jews to:

- Destroy the idols of the native nations (12:2-3).
- Not fall under the sway of the gods of those nations (12:29-31).
- Ignore the words of, and execute, false prophets (13:2-6).
- Have no mercy on those who tempt them to serve idols, even intimate family members (13:7-12).
- Eradicate the *ir hanidachat*, the city that has shifted its allegiance and worshiped idols (13:13-19).

In the following parshah of Shoftim, on the other hand, Moshe demands that

the Jews surround themselves with positive influences. Hence, he discusses the laws of establishing a court system, including the roles of both judges and enforcers. He outlines the place in society of the Kohanim and Leviim, the ritual and educational leaders. Moshe tells the Jews they will have no need for necromancers, because they will have prophets who can convey the word of G-d to them. [For more on these themes, see Rabbi Menachem Leibtag's discussion of them, here: <http://tanach.org/dvarim/reay2.txt>.]

The pivot, between cautioning against exposure to negative influences and pushing to find positive ones, takes place in Devarim 14. "You are children of Hashem your G-d. Do not gash yourselves or shave between your eyes because of the dead. For you are a holy people for Hashem your G-d: Hashem your G-d chose you from among all other peoples on earth to be His treasured people." What about these few words explains the transition between these two aspects of Moshe's exhortation?

The question of who the Jewish people should associate with comes down to the question of who we are, an idea which is at the core of the mitzvah in this passage. As Ibn Ezra writes, the Jews are forbidden from mourning too much because they must know that they are the children of G-d, and He is watching them lovingly, ensuring that things will work out for the best. Ramban notes that this commandment was already given to the Kohanim in Vayikra (25:1). Its repetition here for all Jews highlights that every Jew is holy and must strive to act accordingly; the Jewish people are all kohanim. Taking

Ramban and Ibn Ezra together, this mitzvah reminds the Jews that they are the "family members" of G-d, tasked with a mission. With their destiny in mind, they should naturally avoid all who would hinder their path forward, and seek out those who will aid in the fulfillment of their goals.

Our Sages saw yet another mitzvah embedded in these verses. "*Lo titgodedu - lo ta'asu agudot agudot* - do not make many groups" (Yevamot 13b). The rabbis understood that this verse enjoined Jewish leaders to avoid factionalism, working together to come to agreement and not issue contrary legal positions within single communities. Whether this is because we want to avoid *machloket* (Rambam, Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 12:14), or because we don't want the Torah to look like two *Torot* (Rashi to above), this law requires leaders to speak, as much as possible, with a single voice and present a unified vision.

This is the connective tissue between the messages of Re'eh and Shoftim. It is not enough to avoid those whose negative influence is apparent. If leaders want to inspire their people to realize its purpose, they must be united. Infighting, even for the sake of G-d, can disenchant people and hinder their progress as much as exposure to external temptations. Thus, even if we each contribute in our own ways, we cannot forget that we are a family, together seeking to ensure that our Father's values find proper expression in the world we build.

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When G-d is Near: On the High Holidays**Rabbi Yehudah Amital
Maggid Press, English (2015)****Who is the author of the book?**

While the answer to this question seems to be answered in the title, Rabbi Yoel Amital, son of Rabbi Yehudah Amital zt"l and editor of the book, suggests that his father saw it differently. Rabbi Yehudah Amital consistently related to it as Rabbi Yoel's book, referring to "what *you* wrote...". This remark reveals something deep about my mentor, Rabbi Yehudah Amital - how he understood the power his *sichot* (oral teachings). He realized that the written and spoken words work differently. Therefore, although these are his *sichot*, it is his son's book. Although the written word cannot entirely capture the richness and sincerity of the original speech, the essential ideas and morals of the Rosh Yeshiva come through with strength and clarity in the pages of this book.

What is the goal of the book?

For the casual reader, this book is a continual source of fresh and innovative ideas for Elul and the ensuing holidays. Rabbi Amital, a creative thinker, pushes us to renew and breathe new life into our sometimes worn out perceptions of the Days of Awe.

For example, Rabbi Amital explains why our Sages saw the shofar as linked to the ram in the Akeidah: Avraham, after being stopped from sacrificing his only son, was deeply moved and full of emotions, aching for a way to express his internal devotion to his Creator. At that exact moment, G-d introduced the ram, which immediately became a vehicle for Avraham to say that which could not be put into words. In the same way, concludes Rabbi Amital, we stand before G-d on Rosh Hashanah, unable to speak even the sacred words of prayer - so G-d gives us the shofar, a vehicle to express that which cannot

be said. These types of insights, intellectually rich with deep emotional implications, are abundant throughout the book.

Are there any ideas for Elul?

All of the above is more than enough, in this reviewer's opinion, to justify investing the time to read and learn Rabbi Amital's *sichot*. However, there is other important material. Rabbi Yoel Amital decided to include in the book not only the *sichot* given by his father on the holidays themselves, but also two *sichot* given at the beginning of Elul, which in the Yeshiva also marks the beginning of a new year. Reading the words of Rabbi Amital inviting us to re-enter the world of learning will remind students of this sharp and fresh sense of beginning anew, eager to make ourselves and the world better.

*bweintraub@torontotorah.com***Israel's Rabbis: Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman****Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman
Born in 1886 in Brest-Litovsk (Brisk)
Passed away in 1976 in Jerusalem
Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, 1946-1964
Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, 1964-1972

Biography

In his youth, Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman studied under Rabbi Shimon Shkop and Rabbi Raphael Shapiro; he quickly became known as "the Ilui [prodigy] of Brisk". After receiving ordination, Rabbi Unterman held rabbinic roles in Lithuania from 1910 until 1924. At first, Rabbi Unterman founded a yeshiva and taught advanced students, but throat difficulties forced him to retire from full teaching, in favour of the pulpit.

In 1924, Rabbi Unterman became the Chief Rabbi of Liverpool; he mastered English, and soon unified the various local congregations. Even as many Liverpoolians fled during the air raids of World War II, Rabbi Unterman remained, tending to his population as well as to Jewish refugees. He was also a major figure in England's Zionist movement, and in 1946 he made aliyah and became Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. Rabbi Unterman was awarded the Rav Kook Prize for Torah Literature in 1954, and soon after he joined the Chief Rabbinate Council. In 1964, he was appointed to fill the seat of the late Rabbi Yitzchak HaLevi Herzog as the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel; he served in that role until the conclusion of his term, in 1972.

Legacy

Rabbi Unterman was a moderate voice on the national scene, speaking with both halachic expertise and sensitivity to the many components of Israeli society. Rabbi Unterman was also involved internationally; in 1964, he toured the United States, and met with former US President Harry S. Truman in Kansas City.

Soviet Jewry was particularly close to Rabbi Unterman's heart; in 1967, he authored a prayer to be recited on their

behalf in synagogues before blowing shofar on Rosh HaShanah, and before maariv on Yom Kippur. One of Rabbi Unterman's most controversial leniencies was to accept the conversions of non-Jewish Russians who married Jews, and made aliyah, without fully practicing Judaism.

Following in the footsteps of his predecessor, Rabbi Unterman addressed major issues in medical halachah, taking positions which remain influential today. Rabbi Unterman ruled that saving a patient's vision is the halachic equal of saving a life (Yabia Omer 3:Yoreh Deah 23:30). He opined that a fetus is fully alive even in the earliest stages, such that abortion is prohibited in most cases (Shevet miYehudah 1:9); at the same time, he permitted Bar Ilan University to conduct research on stem cells harvested from aborted fetuses (Sh'vilin 16-17). Creatively, Rabbi Unterman ruled that a transplanted organ becomes "rejuvenated" as part of its new body, and therefore there are no concerns for delaying burial of the formerly-deceased organ, or for impurity. (Shevet miYehudah 1:Miluim)

Rabbi Unterman strongly supported establishing the Tenth of Tevet as a day of memorial for victims of the Holocaust. He ruled that Hallel should be recited without a berachah on Yom ha'Atzmaut, but with a berachah on Yom Yerushalayim. After the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, Rabbi Unterman sided with those who said the text of the *Nachem* blessing of Tishah b'Av should not be changed yet, despite its description of Jerusalem as a desolate city.

Toward the end of Rabbi Unterman's term, he ruled strictly in the Langer case, forbidding a pair of apparent *mamzerim* from marrying non-*mamzerim*. Rabbi Unterman was eligible for re-election, but a majority of the committee voted for Rabbi Shlomo Goren, who had put forth a novel argument to remove the *mamzer* status of the Langer children.

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Biography

Rabbi Moshe Amiel

Adam Friedmann

Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel (1883-1946) was born in Grodno, Lithuania. His talents for learning were recognized at a young age. When he was thirteen, his father sent him to the Telz Yeshiva, and then onwards to study with Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik in Brisk and Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky in Vilna. At the age of eighteen he received ordination, and at twenty three he began his rabbinical career, taking up posts in Lithuania, Russia, and Belgium. In 1936 Rabbi Amiel made aliyah, and he served as the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv until his death.

Rabbi Amiel was known for his incisiveness and broad range of knowledge. A master orator, he was inspiring and unafraid to criticize views he found inappropriate. His published works cover a broad range of topics and showcase his erudition. His multi-volume work *HaMiddot L'Cheker Ha-Halachah* (Axioms in Halachic Analysis) seeks to distill a set of distinctive logical forms which underlie all of Talmud study and work their way through the medieval and modern commentaries. His book *L'Nevu'chei HaTekufah* (For the Perplexed of the Generation) is a philosophical discourse directed towards those confused about the prospect of synthesizing traditional Jewish beliefs and modern thought. He also wrote extensively on the social challenges which faced the Jewish community during his lifetime.

A leading Religious Zionist figure, Rabbi Amiel was one of the first rabbis to publicly join the Mizrahi movement, an affiliation which persisted throughout his career. He also dedicated his time to establishing Jewish educational institutions. During his time in Europe he established large and thriving yeshivot, and networks of elementary schools. In Israel he founded Yeshiva Yishuv HeChadash in Tel Aviv, and it became the exemplar for the Bnei Akiva yeshiva system.

Rabbi Amiel's worldview was unique and complex. He was an outspoken religious Zionist who viewed Israel as the obvious location for Jewish religious revival, and he supported the study of secular subjects in religious schools. At the same time, he maintained a lukewarm stance towards secular Zionism and did not support the establishment of a secular Zionist state. His carefully considered and strongly held positions mark him as a steadfast and original thinker.

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Torah and Translation

The National Character of Shabbat

Rabbi Moshe Amiel, Shabbat Malkita, Chapter 8

Translated by Adam Friedmann

הרבה מהתכונות הלאומיות העיקריות שלנו השתלשלו אלינו על-ידי קדושת-השבת, באופן שאם תתבטל השבת ח"ו, ואפילו אם תשמר לנו בתורת יום מנוחה לבד, תקבל האומה הישראלית לא רק צורה אחרת, אלא גם עצם אחר.

אם אנו ראינו את עצמנו ואף אחרים ראו בנו את "עם הספר" בנגוד להעמים האחרים שהיו בכלל "עמי הארץ", הרי דבר זה באה לנו בעיקר בשל השבת, בשל היום הזה, שהוציא אותנו מכלל עולם המעשה והכניסנו לעולם האצילות, לעולם שכולו שבת, ואם כי במוצאי שבת ירדנו שוב לעולם המעשה, הנה עמד לנו ה"זכור את יום השבת", שהיה חובה עלינו בכל ימות השבוע, שלא נשקע בבוץ החומריות.

ומה יפה היא אגדת חז"ל: אמרה תורה, רבונו של עולם! כשישראל נכנסים לארץ, מה תהא עלי? כל אחד מישראל הולך לחרוש ולזרוע שדהו ואני מה תהא עלי? אמר לה: יש לי זוג אחד שאני נותן לך, זהו יום השבת, שישראל בטלים ממלאכה והם נכנסים לבתי כנסיות ולבתי מדרשות ועוסקים בתורה." (מדרש)

ולא לחנם מדברת התורה על השבת ועל המקדש בנשימה אחת: "את שבתותי תשמרו ומקדשי תראו". באין שבת אין מקדש: רק המקדש בזמן השבת, הביא לנו למקדש המקום, ולולא השבת לא היו לנו אפילו בתי-מקדש מעט. ורק היום הזה גרם לנו, שנהיה לעם הרוח ולעם הספר...

השבת היא שחזקה את רגש הרחמנות שלנו, שמקורה בעיקר השיוון האנושי, שאנו מדגישים, כי "אב אחד לכולנו וקל אחד בראנו". ומי ומה כהשבת מזכיר לנו את העיקרים האלה: אם כל ימי המעשה שמים מחיצה בין מעמד למעמד, בין עשירים ועניים, בין תקיפים וחלשים, הרי השבת, שאין בה אלא מנוחה וקדושה משותפת ומקום משותף, בית מקדש המעט המשותף לכל - שבת זו ביטלה את כל ההבדלים האלה.

Shabbat has strengthened our sense of sympathy whose source is human equality, such that we feel that "we all have one Father, and one G-d created us all". Who and what reminds us of these fundamental beliefs, like Shabbat? During the days of work we place barriers between people of different social standing, between rich and poor, strong and weak. On Shabbat there is only communal rest and sanctity and a communal place, a miniature sanctuary [synagogue] which is common to all. Shabbat cancels all of these differences.

Many of our essential national characteristics derive from the sanctity of Shabbat, such that were Shabbat to cease, G-d forbid, and even if we were to continue observing it as a day of rest alone, the nation of Israel would not only have a different form, it would be essentially altered.

If we have seen ourselves and if others have seen us as "the people of the Book", as opposed to other nations which are "people of the world", this description is primarily because of Shabbat. Because of this day, which removed us from the world of [daily] activity and initiated us into the world of nobility, into a world which is totally Shabbat. And even if, on the morrow of Shabbat, we descended back into the world of [daily] activities, there still stands before us the [mitzvah of] "Remember the day of Shabbat", which is a commandment for us all the days of the week, so that we don't become entrenched in the muck of physicality.

How beautiful is the homily of our Sages: "The Torah said, 'Master of the world! When [the people of] Israel enter the land (of Israel), what will become of me? Each one will go to plough and to plant his field, and what will become of me?' He said to her, 'I have one partner which I will give to you, it is the day of Shabbat, on which Israel rests from work and they enter the synagogues and study halls and toil in the Torah'" (Midrash)

It is not frivolously that the Torah speaks of Shabbat and the Sanctuary in one breath: "Keep my Sabbaths and fear my Sanctuaries. (Vayikra 19:30)" If there is no Shabbat there is no Sanctuary: only the sanctuary of time, Shabbat, brought us to the physical sanctuary. And were it not for Shabbat we would not even have our miniature sanctuaries [synagogues]. This day alone transformed us into a people of spirit and a people of the Book...

Toward the end of Parshat Shoftim, the Torah begins to discuss wartime behaviour; this continues into Parshat Ki Tetze. However, Devarim 21:1-9 interrupts the military framework, presenting a ritual for an Israeli city to perform when a murder victim is found outside its borders.

If the judges are unable to identify the murderer, then the city's elders, as well as its kohanim, lead a ceremony on a site of powerfully flowing water outside the city. They slaughter a calf, and then the elders wash their hands. The elders then declare that they are not guilty of the traveller's murder, and then the kohanim ask G-d to forgive them for any responsibility for the murder victim. This ritual is called *eglah arufah*.

Sefer haChinuch lists two mitzvot here: #530 is the overall ritual, and #531 is the prohibition against ever planting in the space where the ritual was performed. Rambam

describes the procedure, and its relevant laws, in Hilchot Rotzeiach 9-10.

On a simple level, this ritual seems to be an act of atonement for the city's inhabitants; indeed, the Talmud (Sotah 45b-46a) learns from here that the citizens of a society are held responsible if they fail to provide for the needs and safety of wayfarers. However, Sefer haChinuch sees in *eglah arufah* a public message regarding the pursuit of justice. The spectacle of this ritual, and the eternal ban on agriculture on that spot, are sure to catch the eye of the inhabitants, ensuring that they will not be numb to the violence that has taken place. They will understand the importance of justice, and of protecting each life.

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Weekly Highlights: Sept 3 – Sept 9 / 30 Av – 6 Elul

Our classes are returning from summer hiatus; watch for more soon!

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
Sept. 3				
Rosh Chodesh Day 1				
6:10 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah: Unwitting Idolatry	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. Sept. 4				
Rosh Chodesh Day 2				
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	On summer hiatus
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Book of Shemuel	Associated North	Hebrew
9:00 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
Tue. Sept. 6				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Is Voting a Mitzvah?	Adath Israel	Women; there is a fee info@adathisrael.com
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Poetry of Rosh HaShanah	Shaarei Shomayim	Starts Sept. 13
7:00 PM	Mrs. Ora Ziring	Women's Beit Midrash Opening Event: Talmud Torah as Part of Your College Experience	49 Tangreen Circle	University Women
Wed. Sept. 7				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Prophets of Sin & Redemption Week 1: Yonah	Beth Emeth	There is a fee info@torontotorah.com
2:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Narratives of Exodus	Location: Contact carolleser@rogers.com	For women
Thu. Sept. 8				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: Devorah's War	49 Michael Ct. Thornhill	For women
Fri. Sept. 9				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Bava Metzia, Perek 4 Issues in Onaah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

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