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## BEHA'ALOTECHA

### THE ETERNAL LIGHT

by *Yehuda Koslowe* ('17)

In the beginning of Parashat BeHa'alotecha, we read about the construction of the Menorah and how Aharon was commanded to build it and service it daily (BeMidbar 8:1-9). Rashi (8:1 s.v. *BeHa'alotecha*) asks how this story is connected to the Chanukat HaMishkan, the dedication of the Mishkan, the main topic in the previous Parashah. Rashi explains that when the Mishkan was dedicated, all twelve Shevatim had an appointed leader who dedicated the Mishkan, but Aharon's Sheivet, Sheivet Levi, did not partake in the dedication. Upon hearing that he and his tribe were left out, Aharon became distressed. When Hashem saw how upset Aharon was, He comforted him by giving him the Menorah, which he and his Sheivet would service. Rashi further states that when Hashem comforted Aharon with the Menorah, He told Aharon, "*Chayecha, Shelcha Gedolah MiShelahem*," "I promise, yours (the Menorah) is greater than theirs (the dedication of the Mishkan)."

Although the service of the Menorah is an extremely crucial job in the day-to-day function of the Mishkan, could it possibly be greater than the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to dedicate the Mishkan? Ramban (8:2 s.v. *BeHa'alotecha*) explains that Aharon was not only comforted by his role in lighting the Menorah in the Mishkan, but also by Hashem's promise to him of the eternal lighting emanating from the Menorah. He further explains that although there is no longer an eternal light due to the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, the Menorah we light on Chanukah is a substitute for this. Based on this comment of Ramban, in addition to other sources, Rav Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik explained that we light the Menorah on Chanukah not to commemorate the miracles of Chanukah, but rather to commemorate the lighting of the Menorah in the Beit HaMikdash.

The Rav's unique interpretation of the source for the Mitzvah of lighting the Menorah on Chanukah still does not answer the question as to why the Menorah comforted Aharon over the lack

of his participation in the dedication of the Mishkan. Although it is a source of pride to Aharon that hundreds of generations of Jews would light the Menorah every Chanukah in honor of his Menorah, is this still more amazing than the only opportunity to dedicate of the Mishkan?

Perhaps we can answer this question by using another idea of the Rav. In the text of Yom Kippur davening, we say that Hashem opens the books of the living and dead. The traditional understanding of this phrase is that Hashem decides whether each person will live or die in the upcoming year. However, the Rav interpreted this phrase to mean that on Yom Kippur, Hashem not only judges those who are alive, but He also judges those who are dead. For example, if somebody donated Tzedakah to Torah institutions during his lifetime, then he continues to get reward for all of the Torah that is learnt because of his charity even after his death. Using this logic, even though Aharon died thousands of years ago and is no longer able to physically light the Menorah, he receives reward every Chanukah when the Jewish people light the Menorah in honor of his original Menorah in the Mishkan. It is because of the eternal award Aharon received that his role in lighting the Menorah was greater than dedicating the Mishkan.

Based on the Rav's explanation, we see how important it is to cause or inspire others to do Mitzvot because we can get reward for their actions for thousands of years. For example, imagine how great the reward is for somebody who brings a non-religious Jew closer to Hashem-- this person has now created generations of religious Jews. It is our duty to learn from Aharon how beneficial and worthwhile the eternal award is for keeping Hashem's Mitzvot. While we may feel as if we are missing out sometimes due to our observance of Mitzvot, the Torah is teaching us how much greater Hashem's ultimate reward to us is.

## SHELACH

### WHAT GOD WANTS, NOT WHAT YOU WANT

by *Simcha Wagner* ('16)

In Parashat Shelach, Bnei Yisrael are persuaded by the rebellious spies that it is impossible for them to conquer the Land of Israel. As such, they weep and wail until Hashem decides that He can no longer listen to their complaints and finally punishes them. He declares that no one in this generation above the age of twenty, save for Yehoshua and Caleiv, will enter the land, but will instead wander in the desert until they perish. When Moshe relays this news to the people, they are stricken with remorse, and spend the night doing Teshuvah, repentance. The next day, the incident of the "Ma'apilim" occurs: Bnei Yisrael confess that they have sinned and attempt to march into the Land to conquer it against Moshe's warnings. They are swiftly repelled by the locals and are forced to give up. When reading this, many people wonder why the people failed. They had done Teshuvah, admitted that they had sinned, and took action in an attempt to rectify their previous misdeed. Why did Hashem not support their venture? The answer can be found in a comparison to Parashat Ki Tisa. When the Torah describes the people arising to prepare to enter the land it states, "*VaYashkimu BaBoker VaYa'alu*," "And they arose early in the morning and ascended" (Bamidbar 14:40). Similarly, when discussing the Jews arising to serve the Eigel HaZahav in Parashat Ki Tisa, the Torah states, "*VaYashkimu MiMacharat VaYa'alu*," "The next day they awoke early and arose" (Shemot 32:6). The great similarity between the phrasing in each case is staggering. The purpose of parallel structure in the Torah is often times intended to show us that the events occurring in each scenario are the same. According to the vast majority of commentators, the Eigel HaZahav wasn't created for idolatry, but as a man-made means of serving and connecting with Hashem in the absence of Moshe. Bnei Yisrael thought that they could decide exactly how they wanted to serve Hashem. When Moshe had been around, there had been strict guidelines for this connection, but when Moshe was gone, the people felt lost and came up with an idea that they hoped would fill the spiritual hollow inside of them. The same thing is true in Parashat Shelach. Despite the fact that Hashem never commanded it, the people decided that, in a sudden display of loyalty to Him, they would conquer the Land. They felt that this would be a firm declaration that they were sorry for scorning the land and that they were now ready to make up for their errors. However, both stories present Bnei Yisrael as suffering from a very serious problem. Man cannot choose the method in which he wishes to please God. Hashem gave us the Torah, a set guidelines that tell us exactly what we should do to serve Him, and He gave us prophets to elucidate his will should it ever become unclear. In both of these cases, however, the people decided to ignore both Torah and prophet and serve Hashem in a way that they felt comfortable with. Such acts can scarcely be called pious. They are in fact mere spiritual

indulgence, done to satisfy man's spiritual needs and to allow him to feel as though he is a good, religious person. One can easily see examples of this in some of the religions that exist nowadays. Their practitioners will perform utterly ridiculous rituals, and they will leave feeling that they are deeply spiritual people. What happened to Bnei Yisrael in both cases unequivocally tells us that this is not the proper way to act. When serving Hashem, we must always make sure to serve Him the way that He has instructed us to do, not the way which we deem correct. If we do choose to serve Him in our own way, we, too, fall into the same trap as the worshipers of the Eigel HaZahav and Ma'apilim.

## Think Before You Speak

by Matthew Wexler ('15)

One of the most troubling questions that results from the mission of the spies to Eretz Yisrael in Parashat Shelach is what exactly is the Cheit HaMeraglim? The spies chosen by Moshe were distinguished members of Bnei Yisrael (BeMidbar 23:3; Rashi s.v. Kulam Anashim) and, as such, were expected to carry out their mission as it was given to them. As children, we are taught that the Meraglim are, "*HaAnashim Motzi'ei Dibbat HaAretz Ra'ah*," "The people who spread the evil report about the Land" (BeMidbar 14:37). In fact, such a claim is not far off; this phrase is used as a description of the spies when the Torah discusses their deaths as a result of their sin. Many erroneously interpret this Pasuk, though, to mean that the spies are punished because they spoke negatively about Eretz Yisrael. However, it is clear from the guidelines of their mission to seek out, "*HaAretz...HaTovah Hi Im Ra'ah*," "The Land...is it good or is it bad?" (13:19). Part of their mission was to tell Moshe whether the land, its inhabitants and its cities are good or bad. Neither Hashem nor Moshe were asking for a dishonest report from the spies, asking them to "stretch the truth" in order to excite Bnei Yisrael about the Land. If the spies found the Land to be barren or its inhabitants to be strong, they were required to relay this information to Moshe. When looking later in the Perek, it appears as if the spies did exactly this: they included both positive and negative reports of the Land, just as Hashem had commanded (13:27-29). Clearly, the Dibbat Ra'ah which causes their deaths is not merely negative speech. This only further emphasizes the question of what sin the spies actually committed.

Ramban (13:27-28 *VeGam Zavav Chalav UDevash Hi*) explains that the spies' sin lays in their use of the word, "*Efes*," "But" (13:28) as a bridge between their positive and negative report of the Land. Ramban explains that this one word negated all of the positive things the spies told Bnei Yisrael about the Land. Despite Eretz Yisrael being a Land flowing with milk and honey, the spies told Bnei Yisrael that they would be unable to go there due to the strength of the cities and inhabiting nations. Perhaps Ramban

believes that the root of the spies sin was that they intentionally delivered a hyperbolic report by saying (13:28-29) the cities are "fortified and very great," there was "offspring of the giant" and Amalek, the epitome of evil and baseless anti-Semitism, "dwells in the area of the south." However, a different approach must be considered which analyzes what the Torah states regarding the spies: these men are described as spreading "Dibbat HaAretz Ra'ah." The Torah does not describe them as speaking falsely or exaggerating anything about the Land, but rather the Dibbat Ra'ah itself.

To better understand the Dibbat Ra'ah, we must look at the only other time a similar phrase appears in the Torah. In BeReishit, the Torah states, "*VaYavei Yosef Et Dibbatam Ra'ah El Avihem,*" "And Yosef would bring evil reports about them to their father" (BeReishit 37:2). Rashi (ad loc. s.v. *Et Dibbatam Ra'ah*) explains that Yosef brought negative reports regarding Leah's sons. He explains based on the Midrash Tanchuma that Yosef would report to Ya'akov any wrongdoings he saw Leah's sons do without judging them favorably as we are told to do (Avot 1:6). However, all of these reports were, in fact, false. Nevertheless, we should not think that Yosef HaTzaddik spoke outright Leshon HaRa about his brothers; rather, as Gur Aryeh suggests, he had the purest intentions in telling this information to his father, but misinterpreted their actions.

We can now understand why the Dibbat Ra'ah that the spies spoke led to their ultimate deaths. These spies, the leaders of their Shevatim and role models for all of Bnei Yisrael, clearly had the purest intentions in relaying this negative information to Bnei Yisrael. They may have seen giants and huge, fortified cities. However, the spies, just like Yosef, had misinterpreted their various surroundings and the actions of the Land's inhabitants. Rashi (BeMidbar 13:32 s.v. *Ochelet Yoshvehah*), for example, explains that when the spies say the Land, "devours its inhabitants," (13:32) they incorrectly assumed that this was due to the dangerous atmosphere there. However, the real reason why so many people were dead in the land was really because Hashem had killed them in order to make the spies' mission easier. Just like Yosef, the spies did not lie, and just like Yosef, the spies had the best intentions in mind. It was when the spies misinterpreted the different things they saw in Eretz Yisrael that they made their most flawed conclusion: Hashem would not be able to help Bnei Yisrael conquer the Land. All of their false impressions regarding the Land eventually led to their loss in Emunah in Hashem. Just as Yosef did not judge his brothers favorably, perhaps the Cheit HaMeraglim was that the spies did not judge Hashem favorably. From the Cheit HaMeraglim, it becomes clear that we must look at everything that Hashem does positively, understanding that everything He does has an ultimate purpose, in order to keep our Emunah in Him intact.

## KORACH

### THE KORACH REBELLION, THE DEMISE, AND MA'SEIR RISHON?

by Yitzi Rothchild ('16)

While Judaism is a religion which provides endless opportunities, it is also a religion which limits various aspects within the religion to particular people. Some commandments are universal, others are defined based on our gender, tribe, and marital status, and others are parsed to those with certain skills and character traits.

The main character in the Parashah, Korach, begins a rebellion with Datan and Aviram from Shevet Reuvein. Rashi (BeMidbar 16:1 s.v. *VeDatan VeAviram*) points out that Korach is from the family of Kehat, who encamp adjacent to Shevet Reuvein. He explains how Korach is able to influence them to join the rebellion based on the principle of, "*Oy LaRasha VeOy LiShecheino,*" "Woe to a wicked person, and woe to his neighbor." In addition to this, Datan and Aviram are already notorious figures in the Torah for their combative and rebellious nature towards Moshe: they are the ones who spread the word that Moshe had killed a Mitzri (Shemot 2:13 Rashi s.v. *Shenei Anashim Ivrim*).

Korach's influence on Datan, Aviram and 250 other people, though, sprung from a personal conflict. Korach expected a prominent role as a Nasi, responsible for the Avodah of Mishpachat Kehat in the Mishkan. However, Korach was overlooked and Elitzafan ben Uzziel was appointed as the Nasi. In response, Korach complains about the entire system of leadership. He reasoned that if Bnei Yisrael could stand before Har Sinai as one undivided nation, who was Moshe to instill a system of hierarchy? The Pesukim inform us that Moshe himself did not know how to handle this heated debate as the Torah states, "*VaYipol Al Panav,*" "And he fell on his face" (BeMidbar 16:4). Moshe instead decided to leave the decision in the hands of Hashem which eventually led to the demise of Korach and his followers. It is as if Moshe, in a sense, decided to take an opposite approach to leadership. While Korach was power hungry, believing he deserved more authority than was given to him, Moshe understood that in order to be a successful leader, there are times when leadership had to be relinquished and handed to other authorities.

What strangely follows the story of Korach's rebellion is the commandments of Ma'aser Rishon, Ma'aser Beheimah and Pidyon HaBein, all of which are intended to support the Kohanim and Levi'im. It is very reasonable why these laws are juxtaposed to Korach's rebellion. These laws continue to substantiate the "defined" commandments and roles that



are given out to members of Bnei Yisrael. They further prove that not everyone has different roles, but equal opportunity to connect to Hashem. While people, like Korach, may be distraught by the fact that the Kohanim and Levi'im are receiving gifts from the Yisraelim, the Torah is teaching us that this is the exact mistake that Korach made. We must understand that every Sheivet has defined roles and systems enabling them to properly serve Hashem.

## CHUKAT

### THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR BUT FEAR ITSELF?

*by Rabbi Raphi Mandelstam*

President Franklin Roosevelt's famous quote, "There is nothing to fear but fear itself," has always been puzzling. Is fear really the only thing to fear? I think we all know that there truly is no greater fear than the fear of our own demise. The fear of death is perhaps best expressed in the beginning of Parashat Chukat.

"*Zot Chukat HaTorah*," "This is the statute of the Torah" (BeMidbar 19:2)— the introduction to the laws of Parah Adumah and how it counters Tumat Meit could not be more clear. The Torah is informing us that this will not make sense. As Ramban explains, a Chok is a law that has a reason, but we don't understand the rationale behind it. The idea of a Chok, a law whose rationale is hidden from us, is one of the hardest things to grasp. Keeping the Mitzvot of the Torah is challenging even when we understand them. Why would Hashem make it harder for us by creating a series of laws that are not at all understood? If one looks carefully, it seems that the idea of a Chok is so important that it even preceded the giving of the Torah itself.

When thinking of the first Mitzvot that Hashem commanded us to keep, many of us immediately think of receiving the Aseret HaDibrot at Har Sinai. However, forget the first Mitzvot given to the Jewish nation were actually given in Mitzrayim, and there were even subsequent Mitzvot given between Yetziat Mitzrayim and Matan Torah at Marah. The Torah states, "*Sham Sam Lo Chok UMishpat*," "There He made for them a statute and an ordinance" (Shemot 15:25). Which Mitzvot were actually given at this time? Although there are various answers in the Gemara and Midrashim, many sources say that we were given three Mitzvot: Shabbat, Dinim and Parah Adumah. Why were these Mitzvot given specifically now? Why did Hashem not give these Mitzvot at Har Sinai?

Rav Amital, the former Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivat Har Etzion, explained that the Mitzvot given at Marah were a test to see if the Jewish people could handle all of the Mitzvot that were to follow. The reason that these specific Mitzvot were chosen was because those three Mitzvot together encompass many of the ideals of the Torah, and if Bnei Yisrael could not manage to fulfill these, Hashem could not expect us to follow all of the Mitzvot. Shabbat, as the Torah repeats, is a recognition of Hashem's mastery of the world, a cornerstone of our Emunah, belief in Hashem. Dinim, civil laws, are also understandable since they are the basis of Mitzvot Bein Adam LaChaveiro and ensure that we lead moral and ethical lives. But why did Hashem teach Bnei Yisrael about the Parah Adumah, a Mitzvah which we will never understand? Rav Amital explains that in order to enter into a covenant with Hashem, it is crucial to accept our limited understanding of the wisdom of God and that we will not be able to comprehend His reasoning. Although the majority of Mitzvot are readily understandable, and as the Rambam stresses in the end of Hilchot Milah, we have an obligation to understand them, there are aspects of life that are not meant to be understood.

What do we do when we encounter something that we don't understand? Are we supposed to only commit ourselves to Mitzvot which we understand? To do so would be a great sign of arrogance. As Rav Aharon Kotler points out, Hashem, unlike humans, does not need to limit Himself to the five senses we possess. Why should God be limited to our finite, human minds? It takes humility on our parts to accept that we don't understand everything. It is this message which is so crucial for us to understand that Hashem needed to ensure Bnei Yisrael were willing to accept it before giving them the rest of the Torah.

It's no coincidence that the paradigm of a Chok is the Parah Adumah, which deals with how we react to death. Of all mysteries that the human mind and psyche can never really fathom, the most prominent is the concept of death. To think about it can paralyze us. It is without a doubt the most humbling of realities—because our lives are in Hashem's hands, we don't live forever. It is through the idea of a Chok, which forces us to recognize that Hashem is greater than us and that He has a reason for everything, even if it is beyond our comprehension, that we are able to come to terms with death. Through our mortality we must remember and internalize that as humans we must always be humbled and awed by the greatness of Hashem.

## ROCKING THE CHILLUL HASHEM

*by Eli Ginsberg ('14)*

Parshat Chukat contains the famous story of Moshe striking a rock to get water for Bnei Yisrael. After Moshe hits the rock instead of talking to it, Hashem says, "*Ya'an Lo He'emantem Bi LeHakdisheini LeEinei Bnei Yisrael Lachen Lo Tavi'u Et HaKahal HaZeh El HaAretz Asher Natati LaHem*," "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel,

therefore you will not bring this congregation into the Land that I will give them." (BeMidbar 20:12). What seems strange about Hashem's rebuke to Moshe is His accusation that Moshe created a Chillul Hashem, a desecration of Hashem; what Chillul Hashem did Moshe make when he hit the rock? The fact that the water sprang forth from the rock even though Moshe hit it is still miraculous. The nation now had water, and, according to some opinions, they even bursted into song. While it can be suggested that Moshe talking to the rock would have created a bigger Kiddush Hashem, a sanctification of Hashem, calling Moshe's hitting of the rock a Chillul Hashem seems harsh and inaccurate.

In order to answer this question, we must first understand why Hashem asks Moshe to speak to the rock in front of Bnei Yisrael. The Yalkut Shemoni explains that Moshe was supposed to say to the rock, "So says Hashem, 'bring out water.'" The purpose of speaking to the rock was not only for Bnei Yisrael to have water, but also, as Rashi explains (20:12 s.v. *LaHakdisheini*), in order to make a Kiddush Hashem. If Moshe had spoken to the rock and not used any force on it, the nation would come to understand that if a rock, which doesn't speak or have needs, would listen to the will of Hashem, of course Bnei Yisrael, people who have needs for their continued survival, should willingly listen to Hashem. This sight of the rock's "voluntary submission" to Hashem's will would enable Bnei Yisrael to realize that they should listen to Hashem's words without being forced into it. By Moshe hitting the rock, he in effect gave a message to Bnei Yisrael that we should do Mitzvot because we are forced to. This created a Chillul Hashem as it makes it seem as if Hashem forces us to do His Mitzvot. However, we know quite the contrary is true: Hashem has graciously granted us all the free will to choose whether or not to walk in the paths of a Torah lifestyle.

From Moshe hitting the rock, we learn of the great responsibility we have to voluntarily choose to live by the commandments in the Torah, as well as appreciating how beautiful the Mitzvot are—they are not a set of laws that we are forced to follow, but rather, a set of guidelines to live our lives the proper way.

## Balak

### THE INDECISIVE GOD

by *Binyamin Jachter* ('17)

In Parashat Balak, Bil'am is asked by Balak Melech Mo'av to come to Mo'av and curse Bnei Yisrael. A simple reading of the story poses many questions. At first, Bil'am asks Hashem if he can go and is told, "*Lo Teileich Imahem*," "Do not go with them" (BeMidbar 22:12). However, the next day, after Bil'am was asked once again to go to Mo'av by a new set of messengers, Bil'am again requests permission from Hashem to go. In a complete reversal, Hashem replies, "*Kum Leich Itam*," "Stand up and go

with them" (22:20). Hashem's permission to Bil'am, though, is given on condition that Bil'am speak only the words that Hashem instructs him to say. However, the obvious question is what caused Hashem to change his mind response to Bil'am?

Several insightful answers are given in Rabbi Shmuel Goldin's book, *Unlocking the Torah Text*. He quotes the Or HaChaim (ad loc. s.v. *Im Likro Lecha Ba'u HaAnashim*) who teaches us that Hashem never really changed His mind; rather, He had a different message for each time that Bil'am asked. The first time he asked, Hashem had rejected him, showing Hashem's control over Bil'am. The second time Bil'am asked, although Hashem had already showed His great power to Bil'am, He needed to show His fearlessness. Hashem is trying to convey to Bil'am that He is not afraid of the curses Bil'am will attempt to bestow upon Bnei Yisrael. As a result, Hashem allows Bil'am to go, albeit under special conditions.

Another approach is that of Rambam. In Rabbi Goldin's opinion, Rambam posits that the original problem is not Bil'am going to Mo'av, but rather, Bil'am's reason for going. By taking a closer look at the Pesukim, we can see the grammatical difference. The first night, Hashem uses the word "Imahem," "with them." This word connotes that Bil'am would be going with the messengers with the same mindset as them. Hashem understood that Bil'am would be going to Mo'av for the sole purpose of cursing the Jewish people. On the second night, though, Hashem said Bil'am can go "Itam." This word means that Bil'am would be traveling with them, but for a different purpose. The word "Itam" connotes a second condition, so to speak: Bil'am can go with the messengers, but without the intention of cursing Bnei Yisrael. Bil'am should have realized Hashem's purpose in allowing him travel to Mo'av.

Bil'am's downfall eventually comes when he is influenced by the Mo'avim around him and nevertheless attempts to curse Bnei Yisrael against Hashem's commandment. However, due to Hashem's power, Bil'am was prevented from cursing Bnei Yisrael. Now that we are coming closer to Shiv'ah Asar BeTammuz, we must try and realize that once, long ago, we started to become influenced by the same ideals as the nations around us, but it eventually ended up in turmoil. Bil'am was stopped from being influenced by those around him and cursing the Jews due to Hashem's intervention; similarly, we can be stopped from external pressures by using the Torah as our harness. We must learn from this the importance of continuously using our harness, our Torah, to combat the pressures from the world around us, avoiding the mistake of our ancestors and allowing for the Beit HaMikdash to be built once again.

## PINCHAS

### TWO PERSPECTIVES, ONE Holiday

by Moshe Davis ('17)

In Parashat Pinchas, the Torah discusses the Chagim and their various Korbanot. This section in the Torah is present despite the previous description of the holidays in Parashat Emor. As a rule seen throughout the Mishnah and Gemara, we know that the Torah doesn't repeat anything without a reason. Why does Hashem find it necessary to teach us the holidays once again?

To answer this question, we must look at the differences between the two passages. Parashat Pinchas explains which Korbanot must be brought on all the holidays, while Parashat Emor describes the essence of the holiday, including the Mitzvot connected to each one. In contrast, the particular Mitzvot of each Chag aren't elaborated upon in Parashat Pinchas.

Clearly, these two Parshiyot, though focusing on the Chagim, have two completely separate focuses. While Parashat Emor focuses on the Mitzvot of the holiday, Parashat Pinchas includes the name and date of each holiday. By stating the name and date of each holiday, a connection can be made between the Mitzvot listed for that holiday in Emor.

At the same time, Parashat Emor is lacking the details regarding the Korbanot brought on each holiday. The only reference to the Korbanot in Parashat Emor is, "*ViHikravtem Ishe LaHashem*" "You shall bring an offering to Hashem" (VaYikra 23:8). Parashat Pinchas is coming to teach us the details regarding the offerings of each holiday. In fact, while discussing Sukkot, the Torah states, "*LiHakriv Ishe LaHashem Olah UMincha, Zevach UNesachim Devar Yom BeYomo*," "To offer up an offering to Hashem, burnt offering and meal offering, sacrifice and libations, the requirement of each day on its day" (Vayikra 23:37). Rashi there (s.v. *Devar Yom BeYomo*) comments to look in Parashat Pinchas for more specific details on which offerings to bring. Therefore, these two aspects of a Chag, its Mitzvot and Korbanot, are represented by the different focuses contained in Parshiyot Pinchas and Emor. While these Parshiyot seem to be speaking about similar topics, a look at the main theme discussed in each Parashah proves otherwise.

Another interesting point regarding these Parshiyot is that while Parashat Pinchas includes Rosh Chodesh in its list of the holidays, Parashat Emor omits any mention of it. By analyzing the reason why Rosh Chodesh is absent in Parashat Emor, another answer can be given to our original question.

Every topic in Parashat Emor discusses the holidays of the year, yet Shabbat, which is different than every holiday mentioned, is also present in this section. While by each holiday the phrase "*VeHikeravtem Isheh LaHashem*," "You shall bring a fire-offering to Hashem" (VaYikra 23:8) appears, no such phrase appears by Shabbat. Furthermore, the Torah states, "*Eileh Mo'adei Hashem... Milvad Shabbetot Hashem*" "These are the appointed festivals of Hashem...Aside from Hashem's Sabbaths" (Vayikra 23:37-38), which seems to clearly indicate that Shabbat is excluded from the group. Despite these major differences between Shabbat and the other Chagim, Shabbat is included in this section; why, then, is Rosh Chodesh not included in this section too? Ramban (23:2 s.v. *Dabeir El Bnei Yisrael*) states that there is a different category that Shabbat and all the holidays fall into as they are all referred to as, "*Mikra'ei Kodesh*" because of their elevated status and prohibition against work. Because Rosh Chodesh is not a "*Mikra Kodesh*" due to the permissibility of doing work on it, Rosh Chodesh is absent from Parashat Emor.

Furthermore, one might think that Rosh Chodesh, even more so than Shabbat, should be included in the list of holidays as it is determined by the sighting of the moon and a subsequent testimony in a Beit Din by witnesses. In order to dissolve such an erroneous claim, the Torah makes a clear differentiation between Rosh Chodesh and the other special days when it states, "*UVYom Simchatchem UVEMo'adeichem UVERoshei Chodsheichem*," "And on the day of your joy and on your festivals and on your Rosh Chodashim" (BeMidbar 10:10). Therefore, the list of holidays in Parashat Emor does not contain Rosh Chodesh; it is only when the Torah describes the Korbanot of each holiday in Parashat Pinchas that Rosh Chodesh is included, as Korbanot are brought on Rosh Chodesh just like on the holidays.

### SHINING LEADERSHIP

by Alex Kalb ('15)

In Parashat Pinchas, Hashem tells Moshe to choose a leader to take Bnei Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael, as it says, "*Yifkod Hashem ... Ish Al HaEidah Asher Yeitzei Lifneihem VaAsher Yavo Lifneihem VaAsher Yotzi'eim VaAsher Yevei'eim*," "May Hashem appoint...A man over the assembly, who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall take them out and bring them in" (BeMidbar 27:16-17). Why does the verse repeat what is said in the same phrase—"Who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall take them out and bring them in?" Also, why did Moshe give Semichah to Yehoshua with both of his hands, as it says, "*Yadav*," when he was commanded to lean his hand (singular) upon him?

Rashi explains that, "Who shall go out before them and come in before them" shows the responsibility that a leader has, in that he must lead the nation on a battlefield, and not control the war from safe ground. The words, "who shall take them out and bring them in" displays Moshe's hope that the leader would be able to

do that and bring victory to the nation. Additionally, in terms of the question about Semichah, Rashi explains that Moshe wished to teach more of his wisdom than commanded by Hashem so that Yehoshua would be like a vessel full of and overflowing with wisdom.

The Keli Yakar says that Moshe taught Yehoshua two very valuable lessons: one about Torah and Mitzvot and another about having control over and leading the people properly. The first lesson is represented by, “Who shall take them out and bring them in,” which displays this ideology in a very forceful way. Moshe was instructing Yehoshua that with Torah and Mitzvot, one cannot be lazy and allow himself to compromise—just as Moshe controlled Bnei Yisrael with two strong hands, Yehoshua too has to lead with two strong hands.

However, in having control and leading the people properly, Moshe directed a more lenient method. “Who shall go out before them and come in before them,” is not supposed to drag or push the nation. This is symbolized by the one hand that argues and rebukes, while the other supports and embraces. This is a necessary approach for a nation that is stubborn and rejects its leaders. From this advice, Yehoshua would want to follow Moshe’s legacy.

When Hashem tells Moshe to take Yehoshua, He mentions that Yehoshua is an, “*Ish Asher Ru’ach Bo*,” “A man in whom there is spirit” (BeMidbar 27:18). This overwhelming complement clearly marked Yehoshua as the right leader, as it means that his spirit was strong enough that he would not feel pressured by anyone else to digress and divert from the true path of God.

The Gemara (Bava Batra 75a) states that Moshe did not place “all of it” upon Yehoshua, but just a portion of his majesty. The elders of that generation said, “The face of Moshe is like the sun, whereas the face of Yehoshua is like the moon. Woe for that shame! Woe for that disgrace.” Rashbam explains that the elders, who had seen both Moshe and Yehoshua and were able to evaluate their comparative greatness, were saddened by the fact that in such a short a time, the majesty, Moshe, who was “king and prophet” of Bnei Yisrael, was going to be replaced by Yehoshua, who was inferior to Moshe.

Rav Shlomo Heiman says that the younger generation was also aware that Moshe was greater than Yehoshua, but understood this to be a normal occurrence—that the teacher is always going to be greater than the student. Only the elders who were with Moshe for many years understood that Moshe’s and Yehoshua’s comparative levels were not even close to similar—they were both great, but, like the sun and the moon, they were incomparable in their brilliance and magnificence.

Rav Chaim of Volozhin links a scenario to the Gemara. He brings a situation where a very wealthy man often travels to a poor city where he invites people to come with him on his business trips in order that they have an opportunity to become rich. All of the people decline his offer but one, and after a short time, the dealings of these two men bring them success and great

wealth. After returning to the city, the citizens couldn’t even look at their now wealthy friend out of embarrassment. Puzzled by their behavior, he asked why they were embarrassed in front of him, and not the business man, who was now ten times wealthier than them. They explained that the wealthy man was obviously blessed by Hashem and was destined to be successful, so they had no reason to be jealous of him. They continued, “You, however, were a pauper like us, except you took the opportunity to improve your status, and if we weren’t so weak and lazy, we could have raised ourselves out of poverty and have become prosperous also.”

The elders had no shame in front of Moshe, for who but the choice of Hashem could reach such spiritual heights? He is like the sun with its characteristics of light and warmth, said Rav Chaim. However, Yehoshua merited greatness only by serving through devotion in the tent of Torah, from which he didn’t leave, and by serving Moshe. He is therefore like the moon, which has only the power of reflecting whatever light it gets from the sun. The elders then said “we were also capable of achieving greatness, but we wasted our opportunity. Therefore, woe is to us from that Bushah, our own shame, and woe is to us from the Kelimah, the shame we suffer from you [Yehoshua].” We must realize how lucky we are when we have such great leaders, and we must learn to cherish every second we have with them.

## MATOT

### AN ERRONEOUS ASSUMPTION

by Yehuda Feman (’15)

In the middle of Parashat Matot, we read about the Bnei Yisrael’s success in war against the Midyanim. Amongst the spoils of war, Bnei Yisrael captured vessels which had become ritually impure due to contact with a corpse during the war. The vessels had to be purified in order to avoid violating the prohibition of being in contact with ritually impure vessels (BeMidbar 31:20). However, following Moshe’s commandment to Bnei Yisrael to purify the vessels, Elazar HaKohein explains to the army further details regarding the purification process. Rashi (31:22 s.v. Ach Et HaZahav), though, explains that these details are actually describing the process of making vessels Kosher. Elazar, therefore, is commanding Bnei Yisrael to purge all of the captured vessels which were captured during the war because they had been used to cook non-Kosher food, and the flavor of the food seeped into the vessels. Thus, when



the vessels were placed into the fire and purged, the non-Kosher flavors in the vessels disappeared.

What seems strange from this story is that Elazar, and not Moshe, teaches this Mitzvah to Bnei Yisrael. Why doesn't Moshe teach this Mitzvah as he does with every other Mitzvah in the Torah? Rashi (31:21 s.v. VaYomer Elazar HaKohein) provides an answer to this question based on the context of the Perek. Earlier in the Perek, Moshe became infuriated when he was notified that Bnei Yisrael killed all of the Midianite males, but spared the women. Hashem punished Moshe by concealing certain laws from him, causing him to err. As a result, Elazar was forced to tell over this Halachah to Bnei Yisrael. Rashi continues to explain that this is not the first time that Moshe lost knowledge due to anger—such instances occur in Parshiyot Shemini and Chukat as well.

Rashi's comments seem quite puzzling. Firstly, Rashi explains that Moshe "erred," but this does not seem to be true. Moshe did not err in teaching Bnei Yisrael a law; rather, he perfectly taught one law, and a separate, additional law was concealed from him. Additionally, why did Rashi wait until the third occasion that Moshe forgot something out of anger to explain the principle that Moshe's anger leads to the concealment of the laws? The Lubavitcher Rebbe provides an interesting explanation to the given questions.

The prohibition of using vessels that were used for non-Kosher food is a logical law, and Moshe clearly was aware of it. Thus, when Rashi states that the law regarding the purging of the vessels was hidden from him, it means something entirely different. Moshe knew that they had to be cleaned, he just failed to recall the method of removal. Moshe remembered that the vessels had to be sprinkled with water, and he thought that the sprinkling would remove both the impurity of the non-Kosher food and the impurity of the dead corpses of war. However, the purging of the vessels was necessary too.

Moshe's reasoning is quite logical: since the sprinkling of the water was powerful enough to rid the vessels of the impurity of the dead corpses, it would be able to also rid the vessels of the impurity from the non-Kosher food. However, as Elazar teaches, this is incorrect. When Rashi states that Moshe fell into a state of error, this does not contradict the fact that Moshe merely left out one law. Rather, because Moshe forgot the exact process of making vessels Kosher, he made an erroneous presumption with regards to the sprinkling waters of purification.

To answer the second question, we must analyze the three times when Moshe's anger caused him to forget a law. These three instances are when Moshe hit the rock in order to receive water for Bnei Yisrael (BeMidbar 20:11), when he got into a dispute with Aharon (VaYikra 10:16), and in our case. There is a fundamental difference between these three

cases. When Moshe hit the rock, he made a false presumption that Hashem intended for him to hit the rock based on a previous instance where Hashem commanded him to do so (Shemot 17:6). Furthermore, Moshe and Aharon's argument in Parashat Shemini is over a subtle difference with regards to the Korban Chatat. The underlying theme in both of these cases is that they had a Torah basis. However, in this case, Moshe made a presumption that had no precedent in the Torah, but rather, something which he himself deemed logical.

From this answer, we see that although Judaism requires us to think logically, there are also laws that we cannot understand. We should not try to explain or justify these laws, but we should have faith in Hashem that everything we do has a purpose and is intended to be for our benefit.

## MAKE WINE DIVINE

by *Eli Hyman ('16)*

Parashat Mattot is comprised of 112 Pesukim. Rav Dovid Feinstein brings to our attention that the numerical value of the word "Yekev," wine, is also 112.<sup>1</sup> To explain the connection between wine and our Parashah, Rav Feinstein points to the story of Bnei Reuvein and Gad who ask Moshe for land on the eastern side of the Yardein, the Jordan River (BeMidbar 32). The Torah tells us that both the Sheivet of Gad and Reuvein have, "*Mikneh Rav*," "abundant livestock," and that the land east of the Jordan River, the land of Kings Sichon and Og, is a, "*Mekom Mikneh*," "a place for livestock" (BeMidbar 32:1). Thus, upon seeing this land, Bnei Reuvein and Gad approach Moshe and ask him to let them settle it: "*VaYomru Im Matzanu Chein BeEinecha Yuton Et HaAretz HaZot LaAvadecha LaAchuzah Al Ta'avireinu Et HaYardein*," "And they said, 'If we have found favor in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants as a heritage; do not bring us across the Jordan.'" Rav Feinstein explains that wine is a metaphor for something valuable and tempting. When they saw the lands of Sichon and Og, they were immediately attracted to it because of its economic value to them. They were even willing to give up their share in Eretz Yisrael to be able to settle the land on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Thus, the east bank is similar to wine in that they both appear to be valuable and desirable.

This explanation, though, seems to present wine in a negative manner. By comparing it to the land east of the Jordan River, which is inferior to Eretz Yisrael, Rav Feinstein seems to be suggesting that wine, as tempting and desirable as it may appear, is something that we should remove from our midst.

There are several places in the Torah where we see the destructive nature of wine in a more obvious way. Rabi Meir is of the opinion that the Eitz HaDa'at, the Tree of Knowledge from which Adam and Chavah ate, was a grapevine (Berachot 40a). According to this approach, Adam and Chavah were expelled

<sup>1</sup> Yud (10) + Kuf (100) + Bet (2)=112



## MAS'EI

### WE SUFFER, HE HELPS

by Rabbi Josh Kahn

from Gan Eiden (BeReishit 3:22) as a result of eating the fruit of the vine, from which wine is made. We also see that Noach is disgraced by drinking wine excessively (9:20-23). Also, the consumption of alcohol resulted in Lot sleeping with his two daughters (19:30-35), and, according to one opinion quoted in Rashi, it is what caused the deaths of Nadav and Avihu (VaYikra 10:2 s.v. VaTeitzei Eish). From these instances, we see that wine can be a very destructive and harmful beverage.

If wine is such a ruinous and detrimental drink, why is it described as, "HaMesamei'ach Elokim VaAnashim," "bringing joy to God and man" (Shofetim: 9:13)? How can something so destructive possibly bring joy to us and to God? Furthermore, why does Hashem command us to bring wine, such a crippling substance, with every single Korban? Lastly, why do we sanctify every Shabbat and Yom Tov by reciting Kiddush over a cup of this seemingly harmful beverage?

Rabbi Menachem Posner answers these questions by focusing on the aforementioned opinion of Rabi Meir that the Eitz HaDa'at was a grapevine. Rav Posner points out that the Torah does not just refer to the tree as the Eitz HaDa'at. Rather, it calls it the, "Eitz HaDa'at Tov VaRa" "the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad" (BeReishit: 2:17). Since the Torah refers to the Eitz HaDa'at as both good and bad, we see that the Tree of Knowledge has tremendous potential when utilized properly, but it also has a drawback of the same magnitude should it be abused. When alcohol is drunk excessively, it will cause disgrace, embarrassment and destruction. However, when it is used correctly, such as in the context of Kiddush and Korbanot, wine has the ability to bring great joy to both us and Hashem.

A similar idea is expressed by Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto in his *Mesillat Yesharim*. In the first Perek, when describing man's duty in this world, he writes, "If a person is drawn toward this world and distances himself from his Creator, he will be corrupted and will corrupt the world with him." When a person indulges himself in the physical pleasures of this world purely for the purpose of satisfying his urges, he degrades the physical world, as well as himself. The Ramchal continues to say that if a man, "Can rule over himself, and he cleaves to his Creator, and uses this world solely to aid him in serving his Creator, he will be elevated and the world itself will be uplifted with him." When a person uses the objects in this world to better serve Hashem, in addition to making himself a holier person, he elevates the physical world and makes it holy.

It is important that we always remember that every action we do has the ability to either sanctify or degrade every aspect of this world. We must realize that our actions have a profound effect on this world, and depending on how and why we use its physical objects, we can either elevate the world or degrade it. May we all be constantly aware of this idea and be able to infuse this world with Kedushah by using its physical objects to serve Hashem.

In the depressing time of the Three Weeks, Parashat Masei provides an uplifting message. At the beginning of the Parashah, Rashi (33:1 s.v. *Eileh Mas'ei*) wonders why it is necessary to list each stop made by Bnei Yisrael on their way from Mitzrayim to Eretz Yisrael. The Torah is not a mere history book, and, as such, it obviously intended that we learn a lesson from these seemingly minor details.

Rashi provides two answers to this question. In his first answer, he explains that by counting the number of stopovers, Hashem is showing His love for the Jewish people. Rather than making us travel constantly, He allowed us to remain at each stop for lengthy periods of time. Specifically, Rashi notes that we only set up camp forty-two times during our forty years in the desert, with most of those stopovers coming during the first year of our journey. As a result, we were not constantly on the move. This insight is astonishing because the lengthy time we were forced to spend in the desert was as a punishment due to our sin regarding the spies (BeMidbar 14:33). Yet, even in punishing us, Hashem acts compassionately towards His nation. Quoting a Midrash, Rashi offers a second answer. The Midrash describes a scenario in which a King's son is sick. The king takes his son to the best doctor available, even though he is in a faraway land. After the prince has been healed, on their return journey, the king points to each stop along the way and describes what occurred at each of these places on the way to the doctor.

Rashi's two answers present two different, yet complementary approaches. Initially, Rashi focuses on the love Hashem has for the Jewish people. Hashem cares for us as a nation by providing us with rest during our journey in the desert. Then, in the second answer, Rashi turns his focus to the love Hashem has for each individual member of Bnei Yisrael. Through the analogy, Rashi equates each of us to a child of the King and the description of each stopover and as a father lovingly reminiscing with his child help sharpen that image. Both answers focus on the special relationship we share with Hashem on a national level, as well as on a personal level.

On a deeper level, the point that Rashi is illustrating is that even while we are suffering, Hashem cares for us. This message is evident in the first answer because of the sensitivity Hashem displays, even while punishing us, as well as implicitly in the second answer in which the Midrash equates us with a critically ill child. The scary journey that we make to the doctor is also part of the loving



memories that we cherish with our Father, the King. This message is particularly powerful as we mourn the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. Even as we feel the loss in our national and personal lives, we still remember the love Hashem has for us. On a national level, there is much to still be thankful for, as Hashem continues to guide us, and on a personal level, we are fortunate to experience Hashem's involvement on a continual, daily basis.

It is our deepest prayer that the love Hashem has for us will enable us to experience the speedy rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash where we will have the opportunity to experience an even greater magnitude of Hashem's love.

## AREI MIKLAT: IS IT REALLY THAT SIMPLE?

*by Matan Leff ('16)*

In this week's Parashah, the Torah elaborates on the Arei Miklat, cities of refuge for someone who has murdered inadvertently to flee to. In these cities of refuge, these accidental killers are protected and provided for. These Arei Miklat not only serve as an escape for the accidental killer, they also serve as an example of the Torah's philosophy that it is the community, not just the persons involved, who are responsible for an end to the cycle of bloodshed. To bolster this point, the Mishnah (Makkot 11a) comments that to prevent the killers from praying for the Kohein Gadol's death, which gives them freedom, the Kohein Gadol's mother would provide them with food and clothing. While the primary concern of those women was the protection of their sons, their participation in caring for those captives exemplifies the communal responsibility to stop cycles of violence. Not only does the Torah provide a sanctuary for these people, but it creates a way in which they are clothed and fed so as to prevent further harm or murder because of hunger or desperation of a refugee. In this Mishnah, clothing and feeding the killers plays a role beyond sustenance. It signals that, though exiled, these killers have not been forgotten by mainstream society and are still remembered and cared for by the highest orders of society.

When we look more deeply at the concept of manslaughter and the fact that the Torah divides the blame among the community, and not just on the individuals involved, the question arises of how the society as a whole is responsible for the murder. This responsibility is not just for manslaughter, but many other actions of the individuals in our community as well. Overall, the concept of Arei Miklat, which at the surface seems to be fairly simple, opens a plethora of questions about our communal and ethical responsibilities as Jews to care for our neighbors.

In this week's Parashah, what seems to be a simple Mitzvah to create the Arei Miklat is infinitely more

complicated. It teaches us that we need tolerance, responsibility, and compassion in our dealings with our fellow Jews, as well as our other neighbors. We need to create an atmosphere that can educate them about the dangers of intolerance that has been exhibited. If we do not do so, we lose the spirit of the Torah's commandment to create Arei Miklat, to create a community that we, as a people, can be proud of, in which tolerance and compassion is embedded in its every fiber.

## DEVARIM

### CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

*by Zev Jarashow ('16)*

Sefer Devarim, the final Sefer in the Torah, begins with Moshe's last speech to the Jewish nation. He begins this speech by recounting some of the positive and negative experiences that the nation encountered beginning from the origin of Judaism as we know it—the exodus from Egypt—until the time of his own death. It is of utmost importance that before we delve into the actual text of Sefer Devarim, we first establish its essence and goal.

There are two major themes that Moshe attempts to convey throughout his final speech to Bnei Yisrael. Firstly, as is apparent throughout the Sefer, it is clear that Sefer Devarim is a book of rebuke. Throughout his speech, Moshe tells the Jews what they did wrong in the past in order that they should learn from their mistakes, and be prepared to enter the land of Israel. However, the Sefer actually begins with a lesson in good Middot. Wouldn't it make more sense that Moshe begin his rebuke of Bnei Yisrael with actual rebuke, and not with complements and Berachot, blessings? Moshe is teaching us an invaluable lesson, that when we want to persuade someone to either grant our requests or and adhere to our rebuke, we should always start with a compliment, and then gently ease our way into the rebuke. We apply this idea three times a day in our Shemoneh Esrei by first praising Hashem and only then requesting help from Him.

Rabbi Yaakov Bender's mother founded many of the Beit Ya'akov schools in Poland and Lithuania and taught thousands of young girls in America. Rabbi Ya'akov's mother and her family also had a close relationship with the Rav of Vilna, the Gadol, Rav Chaim Ozer Beranach. Rav Ya'akov recalls that out of all of the lessons that his mother taught him, the one that she stressed most was sensitivity to others. Whether we are requesting something from a friend or simply conversing, we always must remember to

be sensitive toward another's feelings and act in a way that establishes good Middot.

The second idea which is strongly expressed in Sefer Devarim is the concept of constantly doing Chazarah, review, to better understand one's learning, and to prevent one from forgetting that which he has learned. Many of the ideas found in Sefer Devarim are repetitions from previous Sefarim. For example, the Torah repeats the Ten Commandments, the basis for Judaism, multiple times. By Moshe emphasizing and repeating the events leading up to the moments of his final speech, we see the extreme and utter importance of Chazarah. In order to be most successful in our learning, and to ensure that grow fully in our Judaism, we must constantly review that which we have learned.

## Why THE CODE?

by *Avi Finkelstein* ('16)

Parashat Devarim begins with Moshe Rabbeinu listing many of the places that Bnei Yisrael have traveled through on their way to Eretz Yisrael. Rashi explains that Moshe wasn't just reminding Bnei Yisrael of their travels, he was gently rebuking them by alluding to all of these places in the Midbar, the desert, where they have sinned.

A challenge is posed on Rashi's approach. If the goal of this is to avoid embarrassing Bnei Yisrael by harshly reminding them of their mistakes, why within the next few Pesukim do we read of Moshe's direct rebuke towards the people in terms of their desire to return to Egypt, the Eigel HaZahav, the Meraglim, Korach's Rebellion, and their ingratitude towards the Man? Moshe Rabbeinu's original intent to avoid causing any form of discomfort to the Jewish people seems to change, and a very harsh and very critical rebuke is delivered. How can it be that Moshe's plan changes so rapidly?

Rav Twerski offers an answer that is based on Parashat No'ach. When Hashem commanded Noach to bring seven pairs of kosher animals and seven pairs of non-kosher animals into the Teivah, the term used for the latter set is "Lo Tahor" instead of the simple "Tameih." It is a well known concept that the Torah wastes no words, yet here we see that a lengthier phrase is written simply to avoid the negative connotation of "Tameih." Some of the commentaries point out that later in the Torah, in Parashat Shemini, when we are taught the laws of Kashrut, the Torah refers to pig as "Tameih." Why in Parashat Shemini is it ok to use such an explicit description, while previously in Parashat No'ach by the episode of the flood such language was considered offensive and insensitive?

Rav Twerski answers that, "The Torah is teaching us that there are times when euphemisms are in order to be used, and times when they can be misleading." For example, the phrase "Sagi Nahor," which is literally translated to "lacking light," is often used when referring to blindness. It is understandable that

one would want to speak in more of an indirect manner to be more respectful. However, caution must be expressed as throughout history euphemisms have been utilized to mask atrocious and horrific ideologies. The operation known as "The Final Solution" was in truth a genocidal plot by the Nazis against Jews, gypsies, and cripples, hidden behind a name that almost sounds as if it identifies a path of betterment for the world.

What Moshe Rabbeinu said to the Jews in response to their sins is relayed to us as a historical recount; there is no attempt to hide the negative actions of the nation. But when the Torah is simply telling us of Moshe's speech to the people of their journey, there is no justification for us to be reminded of the sins of others and thus the hidden language is fitting.

## VAETCHANAN

### God: MAN'S BEST FRIEND

by *Leiby Deutsch* ('15)

This week's Parashah begins with Moshe Rabbeinu's reminiscing on his famous request to Hashem to grant him entry into Eretz Yisrael. He concludes his narration by saying that he was standing in a valley facing Pe'or. Pe'or was the place where Bnei Yisrael committed one of their greatest national sins when they slept with the Midyanite women. Why is Moshe bringing up Pe'or now? Why would the Moshe remind the people of yet another failure of theirs? Moshe was already disappointed due to Hashem's refusal to accept his request; why would he add to his disappointment by mentioning one of the lowest moments he had as a leader of Bnei Yisrael.

The Kozhnitzer Maggid explains, in his famous work, the Avodat Yisrael, that the mentioning of Pe'or was, surprisingly, actually meant to serve as comfort to Moshe Rabbeinu. The text of the Pasuk reads, "*VaNeishev BaGai Mul Beit Pe'or,*" "and we were sitting in a valley, facing Pe'or" (Devarim 3:29). The Maggid explains that the "we" may not have been between Moshe and Bnei Yisrael, but rather between Moshe and Hashem. The Maggid points out that the letters in the word "BeGai" – Bet, Gimmel, Yud and Aleph-- can be rearranged to become the first four letters of the first of the six letter abbreviation in the famous Kabbalistic prayer, Ana BeKoach. In the first line of this prayer, we ask Hashem to untie us from our sins so that we will be able to come closer to Him. The Maggid further develops this idea by explaining that the word VaNeishev—which contains the letters Nun, Shin and Bet—stands for "Nun Sha'arei Binah," the fifty levels of purity and understanding that allows one to come closer to God. Hashem provided this piece of information to try to comfort Moshe. Hashem was trying to say that while Moshe was always going



to remain in Chutz LaAretz, it will be there that Moshe will have the most intimate of understanding and relationship with Hashem.

Despite our heightened understanding of Moshe's new circumstance, many issues nevertheless arise. It seems that if Hashem really wanted to have such an intimate relationship with Moshe, why would he not allow Moshe entry into the place where His Shechinah, presence, is most prominent? On the one hand, Hashem wants to bring Moshe closer to Him, but on the other hand, He seems to be pushing him away! Furthermore, Moshe's crime doesn't seem to fit the harsh punishment that Hashem exacted upon him; how can Bnei Yisrael still believe Hashem's promise that He will repay them for thousands of generations for keeping his Mitzvot (Exodus 34:7) when Moshe Rabbeinu, their teacher, their leader and the greatest man they will ever know, was banished by Hashem to an eternity of heartache and disappointment? Lastly, based on this, we must ask what Moshe's motivation was for telling Bnei Yisrael to keep believing in Hashem's system of reward and punishment, and what was Bnei Yisrael's reason for still listening to Moshe?

In order to answer these questions, we must further explore the discussion between Moshe and Hashem. The Maharil quotes the Zohar (Pinchas 227:1) to explain a Gemara (Pesachim 50a) that describes Moshe's conversation with Hashem. The Gemara states that in this world, Hashem's name (YKVK) is pronounced differently than the way it appears in written form. In the World to Come, though, Hashem's name will be pronounced and written the same way. The Zohar explains that the oral version of Hashem's name, coming from the word Adon, master, is intended to manifest His Middah of judgement and rulership; the oral form of His name is said in Olam HaZeh, where the goodness of Hashem can be hidden to us. However, when YKVK is pronounced as it is written, as it is in Olam HaBa, it is representative of the goodness which is clear and apparent to us. The Torah ambiguously states that Moshe prayed to, "*YKVK BaEit HaHi Leimor,*" "Hashem in that time" (Devarim 4:23); what time was "that time"? It was the time, the Maharil explains, when YKVK would be pronounced the way it is written, when there will be no duplicity and when all good will be revealed for all to see. Moshe Rabbeinu thought that in order for Hashem's greatness to be totally clear, the first step had to be to travel to Eretz Yisrael. In the end, though, Hashem rejected Moshe's request. Hashem informs Moshe that, effectively, YKVK has to be pronounced differently than it is written; Hashem's Middat HaDin took precedence and Moshe stayed exactly where he was. Almost intuitively, many of us ask what kind of God is this? Is this a God that humankind even wants to serve? At first, the idea of Hashem's prevailing

judgement controlling the day seems frightening. However, there could be a monumental significance to this: the use of judgement is reliant upon the recognition that the world can still function even when people are not perfect. Moshe Rabbeinu had a huge failure in his life, the story of Mei Merivah, the story which the Torah says that Moshe desecrated Hashem's name. Even after the greatest setback of Moshe's life, Hashem still comes and listens to Moshe. After everything they go through, Hashem is still there for him. Hashem tells Moshe when he tries Davening to change his fate: Moshe, why do you think you need an environment like Eretz Yisrael to have a relationship with Me? Hashem is trying to tell Moshe that regardless of where Moshe is and the sins he has done, it is possible to have a relationship with Him. Moshe was trying to communicate to the Jewish people that Hashem does not push people away. Granted, Hashem might not answer us as we would like. However, Hashem recognizes that we are not perfect and we must recognize, in return, that Hashem doesn't have to grant us our every request. Everyone has their flaws, but no matter what, Hashem has the desire to be with us. How could Moshe have said with certainty (4: 29), "*UBikashtem Misham Et Hashem Elockecha UMatzatah, Ki Tidreshenu BeChol Levavecha UVeChol Nafshecha,*" "And you will request for Hashem your God and you will find him, since you will search for him with all of your heart and all of your soul?" The answer is because Hashem will not leave us in the first place. Hashem is always going to be there to say, "Nachamu Nachamu Ami" before we even have to ask for comfort. No matter what, Hashem will always want a relationship with us, but the question is do we want to have one with Him?

## JEWISH PRIDE

by Zach Greenberg ('16)

The opening Pesukim of Parashat VaEtchanan describe how Moshe Rabbeinu begged Hashem to reverse His decision to not allow Moshe into Israel. Why now? With the help of Hashem, Moshe and Bnei Yisrael had just beaten Sichon Melech HaEmori and Og Melech HaBashan in battle, and he had hoped that because of this, Hashem would deem him worthy enough to enter Israel. Moshe says to Hashem (Devarim 3:25), "*Ebrah Na VeEreh Et HaAretz HaTovah Asher BeEiver HaYardein HaHar HaTov HaZeh VeHaLevanon,*" "Let me go over, I beseech you, and see the good land that is on the other side of the Jordan, this good mountain and the Lebanon." Chazal teach us that Moshe Davened 512 times for Hashem to let him enter the land with Bnei Yisrael. Moshe was even willing to relinquish his leadership position in order to enter the land. In the next Pasuk, Hashem tells Moshe to stop his Tefillot because His decision is final. Hashem responds to Moshe's plea by telling him (Devarim 3:26), "*Rav Lach Al Tosef Dabeir Eilai Od BaDavar HaZeh,*" "Let it be enough for you, do not speak of this matter to me again."



rewarded for a few good deeds, and therefore prosper in this world, only to receive the full measure of punishment in the next world—where it truly counts. This formula can only work for individuals, whose reward and punishment are ultimately in Olam HaBa. There is, however, no concept of reward and punishment in Olam HaBa when it comes to the nation as a whole. Therefore, explains Rav Wasserman, when dealing with the community, everything happens in this world; in essence, “what you see is what you get.” If a community is good, it merits tremendous reward immediately. When it comes to the individual, this is not always the case. A person’s success or failure in this world may bear no correlation to his level of Mitzvah performance. For this reason, the Torah only makes promises reward in the second Parashah, where it speaks to the nation as a whole. These promises are omitted in the first Parashah, when the individual is being spoken to.

We have to commit ourselves to serving Hashem no matter how things seem to be turning out. The lesson of this Parashah is that we can’t tell how a person is doing merely based on their circumstances. All we can do is have faith in Hashem and continue to do the best that we can.

## THE PRICE OF PRIDE

by Aryeh Krischer (14)

The first Beit HaMikdash, built by Shlomo HaMelech, stood for approximately 410 years, between 832 and 422 BCE. During most of that time, the Jews inhabited the land, and—at least, in the kingdom of Judah—were free to worship as they pleased. Korbanot were brought on a daily basis, unremittingly, until Nevuchadnetzar destroyed the Beit HaMikdash and brought about Galut Bavel, the Babylonian Exile. According to Chazal, (Yoma 9b) the first Beit HaMikdash was destroyed due to the “Big Three” sins of Avodah Zarah (idol worship), Giluy Arayot (forbidden sexual relationships), and Shefichut Damim (bloodshed). The second Beit HaMikdash, on the other hand, was destroyed purely because of Sinat Chinam, baseless hatred for one another. By combining aspects of this week’s Parashah, Haftarah, and an insight from Avraham Avinu, perhaps we can understand how these two destructive behaviors are really not that different from each other.

Towards the end of Parashat Eikev, the Torah records nine Pesukim that have become part of one of the most iconic Jewish Tefillot: the second paragraph of Shema. The Pesukim describe a simple reward and punishment system—observe Hashem’s commandments and the land will flourish; fail to do so, and the land will be desolate, and Bnei Yisrael will be removed. Bnei Yisrael are told that if they worship idols “*VeCharah Af Hashem Bachem... VaAvadetem Meheirah MeiAl HaAretz HaTovah Asher Hashem Notein Lachem,*” “And Hashem’s anger will be kindled against you... and you shall be removed speedily from the good land that Hashem has given you” (Devarim 11:17). Sadly, this

pattern has been repeated countless times throughout history. Almost the entirety of Sefer Shofetim follows the same pattern: a long period of quiet is followed by degeneration into Avodah Zarah, resulting in oppression and subjugation, until a Shofeit comes along to usher in the next period of relative peace. Of course, the most extreme example of this pattern is the aforementioned Galut Bavel, the cause of which the Rabbis ascribe to—among other things—Avodah Zarah.

This week’s Haftarah comes from Yishayahu, who prophesied before and after the end of Galut Bavel. Additionally, this Haftarah is the second in the series of seven “comforting” Haftarot between Tish’ah BeAv and Rosh HaShanah. The general theme of these Haftarot is the ultimate redemption: though things may seem bad now, Mashiach will ultimately come and bring about redemption. Yishayahu, prophesying in Galut, does not hesitate to include some elements of criticism, but he spins his critiques to include hopeful elements as well. Even so, two Pesukim at the end of the Haftarah seem out of place: “*Shimu Eilay... MiVakshei Hashem, Habitu El Tzur Chutzaotem VeEl Makevet Bor NuKartem. Habitu El Avraham Avichem...*,” “Hear me... those who seek out Hashem, look to the rock from which you were hewn, look to the pit from which you were dug. Look to Avraham your forefather...” (Yishayahu 51:1-2). If Yishayahu wanted to bring these people back to Hashem, people exiled for Avodah Zarah, why would a refutation of foreign gods not be more appropriate? Furthermore, how is the first Pasuk related to Avraham Avinu?

The Gemara in Avodah Zarah (14b) teaches that Avraham Avinu composed a four-hundred chapter treatise refuting Avodah Zarah. This treatise does not spend time discussing idols, but rather devotes its pages to combating arrogance and pride—the true sources of Avodah Zarah. Perhaps, with this in hand, we can identify the connection between Yishayahu and the two Churbanot. Yishayahu enjoins those who seek Hashem to look to the “rock from which they were hewn,” and the “pit from which they were dug.” When man forgets his humble past, he is doomed to fall prey to arrogance and pride. Only once he remembers that he comes from the dust of the earth can man escape these horrid traits. This is why Yishayahu follows his plea with a reference to Avraham. Avraham Avinu spent four-hundred chapters combating Avodah Zarah by targeting pride and arrogance. It is this pride and arrogance, the sources of Avodah Zarah, that Yeshayahu wishes to combat when he rallies Bnei Yisrael for the soon to be redemption. Unfortunately, Bnei Yisrael ultimately fall prey to the same mistake. Like idol worship, arrogance and pride—the belief that oneself is inherently more worthy than one’s fellow—is the source of Sinat Chinam, baseless hatred. If people respect one another and do not hold lofty opinions of themselves, truly baseless hatred cannot exist. This week, let us combat any arrogance and pride we may hold, and thus begin to reverse the mistakes of our ancestors.

Only then can we rally around Hashem, as Yeshayahu called for, and bring about redemption.

## RE'EIH

### MERCIFUL MURDER?

by Simcha Lev Abrahams ('15)

In this week's Parashah, the Torah teaches us that if a Jewish community serves Avodah Zarah, we are commanded to kill them. This idea is so shocking that most people miss the end of the Pasuk "VeNatan Lecha Rachamim," "He (God) will grant you to be merciful" (Devarim 13:18). What is mercy doing here in the middle of such cruelty? Aren't we talking about being cruel and trying to put mercy off to the side? This passage is extremely confusing as it seems to switch from annihilation to mercy in a split second.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin mentions that Rabi Akiva says that we can learn from the Pasuk in Devarim that being merciful means that we will not kill the children, and they will be allowed to live. Why do we learn all of this from a Pasuk talking about idolatry and destruction? The Or HaChaim explains that normally when people kill, it leads to them getting sick and being revolted. As a person continues killing, he becomes more and more desensitized, to the point where it eventually has virtually no effect on him at all. By including the verse about being merciful, God is saying that this will not happen to the Jews, they will not be changed by violence and won't become cruel like other nations.

Avraham Avinu fits this role of a "merciful warrior" very well as he was willing to risk his life for what he thought was right by defeating multiple armies (BeReishit 14)—yet he is one of the most compassionate and caring people in the Torah. He never closed the door to his tent and always enjoyed allowing all weary travelers to rest, eat, and be on their way. As the Jewish people, we must act like this as well; we must be willing to do the hard work and stick up for what we believe is right, yet we must always remember to be kind and compassionate. Every day in Israel, we see the relevance of the Or HaChaim's interpretation of the Pasuk. In the constant ongoing war between Israel and terrorism we see a manifestation of this every day. We must do these violent actions in order to protect our people and let them live in peace. God's promise to us is that when we do these necessary but seemingly violent deeds in order to allow others to sleep at night, we will not become desensitized, and we will still be merciful. A great example of this would be Gilad Shalit. Even though he was only one soldier who was captured, Israel was willing to trade more than 1,000 prisoners, many of them known terrorists, just to ensure the safe return of one soldier. This shows how the

prophecy came true and that even though Israel must do some things that are gruesome, it is still a country that will never become complacent to killing. Even in the midst of all the violence, "God will grant you to be merciful."

### THE ALLUREMENT OF VAMPİRISM?

by Gavriel Epstein ('15)

Included in the several laws and prohibitions that Moshe delivers to Bnei Yisrael in Parashat Re'eih is the prohibition against drinking blood. Moshe commands Bnei Yisrael, "Chazak LeVilti Achol HaDam," "be strong not to eat the blood" (Devarim 12:23). In this commandment, strength is the ability to resist the temptation of eating blood. This would seem to suggest that drinking or eating blood, unlike many other Mitzvot which do not require such an active resistance, is a difficult prohibition to resist. However, blood is not usually considered to be a difficult temptation. Why then would the prohibition against eating blood seemingly earn a more prestigious seat on the hierarchy of temptation than that of theft, violating Shabbat, or illicit sexual relations?

It seems that there are two possible ways to answer this question: either the temptation was much stronger when Moshe delivered his speech, or the amount of resistance that is required to avoid this sin does not necessarily elevate the difficulty of the Mitzvah above other Mitzvot. The former approach, adopted by Rabi Yehudah, essentially establishes eating blood as a prohibition similar to Avodah Zarah; both were once the strongest of temptations and neither are particularly alluring today.

However, using the latter approach, as adopted by Rabi Shimon Ben Azzai, we can understand this resistance differently. Eating blood is used as an example, not because it is amongst the hardest of temptations, but because it is amongst the easiest of them. The Torah is making the point that while it is understandable that many of the Mitzvot may not be easy, we are nonetheless obligated to unilaterally channel our efforts towards fulfilling them. If eating blood is an easy temptation to avoid, yet we are required to apply effort to avoid it, it goes without saying that Mitzvot with greater temptations demand extreme effort to resist. This idea highlights the value of the struggle to fulfill the Mitzvot beyond the basic requirements themselves.

The positive impact of successfully resisting temptation is highlighted by the idea that, "Yashav VeLo Avar Aveirah Notnim Lo Sechar," "[one who] sits and does not violate a prohibition receives reward" (Kiddushin 39b). Ironically, struggling with the fulfillment of Mitzvot is an essential component in performing them successfully. The ease of resisting a temptation such as that of eating blood somehow strengthens our internal willpower, which consequently not

only earns us Sechar, but also augments our ability to resist future temptations.

## SHOFETIM

### A NAVI'S NEUTRALITY

by Moshe Pahmer ('15)

Parashat Shofetim contains the laws pertaining to the establishment of a Navi as trustworthy. Interestingly, the Torah remains vague in its presentation of how a Navi should go about establishing himself as trustworthy. The Torah is conscious of the fact that Bnei Yisrael will be skeptical of a new Navi at first as it states, *"VeChi Tomar BiLvavecha Eichah Neida Et HaDavar Asher Lo Dibro Hashem,"* "When you say in your heart, 'How can we know the word that Hashem has not spoken?'" (Devarim 18:21). The Torah then proceeds to explain that, (18:22) *"Asher Yedabeir HaNavi BeSheim Hashem VeLo Yihiyeh HaDavar VeLo Yavo Hu HaDavar Asher Lo Dibro Hashem,"* "If the prophet will speak in the name of Hashem and that thing will not happen and it will not come, that is thing which Hashem has not spoken." The potential Navi will be asked to predict something that will happen in the future, with the outcome of this prediction being the deciding factor in his status as a Navi Sheker, a false prophet, or a Navi Emet, a trustworthy prophet.

Rambam explains that the only way a Navi can prove that he is trustworthy is by predicting a Nevu'ah Tovah, a prophecy that predicts a good event in the future, and not a Navu'ah Ra'ah, a prophecy depicting a catastrophe. This is based on the teaching of Chazal that Hashem will break evil decrees, but he will never break good decrees. If a Navi were to predict a bad event, he can always claim that the decree was nullified; however, if he predicts a good event, it will be apparent that the event not happening is as a result of the Navi's false prophecy. Therefore, Rambam understands the Pasuk to be teaching that in order to be trusted as a Navi Emet, one must predict an undisputable future.

Ralbag, as quoted by Abarbanel, (18:21) supports the Rambam in that the issue is whether Hashem will nullify the decree after the Navi predicts it. He adds onto Rambam, though, and further delineates Tov and Ra. He claims that there is a difference between good that occurs naturally and good that is given as a reward for something that we earn. God can always take away a reward if we do an action that angers him; however, nothing we can do will cause Hashem to break the laws of nature and remove good that occurs naturally. Therefore, according to Ralbag, it is not enough for the Navi to predict a Nevu'ah Tovah, but it must be a Navu'ah Tovah that occurs naturally.

Rav Chasdai Crescas, also quoted by Abarbanel, argues that nothing from the text of the Pesukim teach that the issue is about Tov or Ra. He suggests that there is no reason to be concerned that Hashem will nullify a decree following a Navi's prediction.

Hashem is obviously not attempting to cause a Navi to look like a liar. Therefore, the Torah just states that the Navi must make a prediction, with the assumption being that if he is a true Navi, his prediction will come true, and, if he is a false Navi, the prediction will not come true. Whether the Nevu'ah is good or bad, he can still be considered a Navi Emet.

Abarbanel disagrees with all of these opinions. He feels that these Rishonim are basing their opinions on speculation and not on the Pesukim themselves. Abarbanel predicates his opinion on the fact that there are three main types of Nevu'ah. The first type is Ottot UMofetim, signs and wonders, which is the way Moshe Rabbeinu initially proved to Bnei Yisrael that he was a Navi Emet (Shemot 4: 1-9); the second type is a neutral prediction of any event that will occur in the future; the third is one that predicts a good or bad event that will befall a person or group of people. The Nevu'ah being issued as the test is neither positive nor negative—it is neutral. The Navi is not predicting that a great blessing will be bestowed on the Jewish people, and he is not predicting that a great calamity will befall the Jewish people.

The reason why Abarbanel demands that the prophecy be neutral may be based on the phraseology of the Pesukim. The Torah phrases one's concern as to the legitimacy of a Navi as a question of, "How can we know if he is lying," while it could have instead phrased the Pasuk as, "How do we know he is telling the truth?" Why did the Torah choose the seemingly more critical and suspicious question over the more neutral and poised question?

This question can be answered with an analogy: If a man were to tell someone that he was a Navi and that he was having a Nevu'ah that everyone must do Mitzvot and serve God, there would be no reason to challenge him or ask for proof. One is required to do Mitzvot, regardless of what the Navi says to do. However, once the Navi tells people to do something against the Torah, or against the words of another Navi, he must then prove his credibility and trustworthiness. It is for this reason that the Pasuk poses the question as, "How do we know if he is lying," and not, "How do we know if he is telling the truth." The Torah is telling us that we should not be suspicious of a Navi until he gives us a reason to be suspicious of him by allowing us go against the words of the Torah. Abarbanel requires that the Navi, as his "Rite of Passage," predict a completely neutral prophecy because he does not want the Navi to begin his role as a "representative of Hashem" by either predicting a horrible future or by predicting a good future. Abarbanel is teaching us that the Navi's premier Nevu'ah should be one that is predicated on the world Hashem created—a neutral world—rather than by the merits or demerits of His people.



## ONE MAN'S TREASURE IS ANOTHER MAN'S DEGREDAION

by Hillel Koslowe ('16)

Parashat Shofetim discusses the two very serious consequences of inadvertent murder and testifying falsely. In between these two topics, though, there is a seemingly less-severe prohibition. The Torah states, "*Lo Tasig Gevul Rei'echa*," "You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark" (Devarim 19:14). What does Nesigat Gevulim, extension of boundaries into your neighbor's property, have to do with the topics of accidental murder and false witnesses?

While looking at the case of inadvertent murder, it seems as if the murder isn't such a grievous sin. The murderer must flee to an Ir Miklat, a city of refuge, so that the deceased's relatives do not attempt to exact revenge against the murder. Despite this reality, murder, even accidentally, is an extremely serious offense. The fact that this murder causes anguish to the family members to the extent that the murderer must run away is proof of the gravity of this sin. The subsequent topic of false witnesses is also a very serious offense. On top of commanding us to execute this person, the Torah states, "*VeLo Tachos Einecha*," "And your eye shall not pity" (Devarim 19:21). The connection between these cases is the severe effects it has on the people of Am Yisrael: A person who has to flee to one of the Arei Miklat has killed someone and has caused sorrow amongst the victim's family, and a person who is a false witness obstructs justice and causes a disintegration of the communal court system. We can now understand exactly why extending our property's border appears in between these two cases. The Torah is teaching us that we must realize that by extending our property's border, we are not only stealing from our neighbor, but we are also causing them to lose money, and we are preventing that person from fulfilling Mitzvot Taluyot BaAretz, commandments which are bound to Eretz Yisrael.

Within the topic of Arei Miklat, the Torah states that an intentional murderer who tries to flee to one of the Arei Miklat must be killed and should not be pitied. Why does the Torah need to state that we shouldn't pity them? The reason is that not only is this person an intentional murderer, but they are also acting deceitfully. This echoes the overall theme of Nesigat Gevulim because when a person extends their boundaries into their neighbor's land, they generally do so at night when no one is looking. When we do Aveirot in a sneaky manner, it shows that we fear people over Hashem. It is for this reason that this Aveirah appears in between two sections that are clearly very serious Aveirot.

Another validation of the seriousness of the prohibition of Nesigat Gevulim being is the fact that the Torah later states, "*Arur Masig Gevul Rei'eihu*," "Cursed be he who removes his neighbor's landmark" (Devarim 27:17). Why is this specific prohibition deserving of being cursed? There are many other seemingly worse prohibitions whose violators are not cursed! The Lubavitcher Rebbe answers this by explaining, "If you want to make yourself greater than someone else, don't put that person into a hole; rather, you should stand on a chair." We see from this that there is nothing wrong with making yourself better. However, we cannot do this at the expense of others. By encroaching on the land of our neighbors, we are not only bettering ourselves, but we are also degrading our neighbor.

Therefore, the prohibition of Nesigat Gevulim should not only be taken in its literal meaning, but in its looser meaning as well. Based on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's explanation, it is clear that it also applies to stifling other people's opportunities. When we are in group situations, we should be careful to allot equal time and opportunity to everybody. Although it might be tempting to call out in class or not pass the ball in basketball, by doing so, we are preventing our peers from excelling. This prohibition is situated between the prohibitions of Arei Miklat and Eid Sheker to highlight its importance and severity. Just as a person would never justify a murderer's actions or a false witness's actions, we should not justify the actions of somebody who deceitfully and degradingly extends their border into their neighbor's land. Both in the literal and broad sense, when we violate this Mitzvah, we suppress our fellow's potential. We must learn from the Torah's placement of this Mitzvah that we should try our best not to "extend our borders into our neighbor's land."

### Ki Teitzei

## REMEMBER OR FORGET?

by Yoni Laub ('17)

Every year on the Shabbat before Purim, we read Parashat Zachor, an excerpt from Ki Teitzei teaching us of the commandment to constantly remember what Amaleik did to us. An oft asked question as this Parashah draws near is whether or not one is Yotzei the Mitzvah of, "*Zachor Eit Asher Asah Amaleik*," "Remember what Amaleik did to you" (Devarim 25:17) by simply hearing Parashat Zachor, or is he actually required to erase all traces of their existence from the face of the earth? It seems to be contradictory that there is a Mitzvah to destroy all traces of Amaleik, yet we are also commanded to remember Amaleik. How do we understand this contradiction between the Mitzvah of remembering Amaleik and the Mitzvah of erasing their memory?

In order to answer these questions, we need to fully understand the nature of Amaleik and their horrid characteristics. When Amaleik first attacked Bnei Yisrael following Yetzi'at Mitzrayim in Refidim, the attack was completely unprovoked and unnecessary. Bnei Yisrael were extremely vulnerable and clearly posed minimal threat to the mighty Amaleik. This notion of "kicking someone when they're down" is one that Amaleik strongly exemplified in their attack. In the second Pasuk of Parashat Zachor, it is noted that Amaleik did not "fear God" as the Torah states: "*Asheir Karcha BaDerech VaYezaneiv BeCha Kol HaNecheshalim Acharecha VeAtah Ayeif VeYagei'a VeLo Yarei Elokim,*" "How they met you on your journey and struck the weak and unable, when you were all weary, but they did not fear God" (Devarim 25:18). While some say that this is understandable because Amaleik were not Jewish, the Netziv takes a different approach. The Netziv says that when "fearing God" is mentioned throughout the Torah, it is not mentioned in a sense of religiosity, rather in a sense of basic human morality to fear and revere that which is superior to us. Thus, according to the Netziv's interpretation, Amaleik were a people devoid of any morality.

Another example of Amaleik's wicked qualities is the juxtaposition of Parashat Zachor to the Torah's previous discussion of financial honesty: being uncorrupt and not cheating in economic transactions. This juxtaposition leads many Meforashim to think that this is something which Amaleik is known for.

The Torah's description of Amaleik's malicious qualities is the key to answering the above questions. While we are supposed to remember all of the terrible things Amaleik did to us, we must simultaneously forget their terrible qualities, such as taking advantage of the vulnerable, lacking rudimentary ethics and decency, and operating businesses in untrustworthy and duplicitous fashions, that they tried to impose on Bnei Yisrael when they attacked them. We need to clear our minds of such destructive ideas and instead focus on wiping out the harbingers of those ideas.

For that reason, Rav Moshe Shternbach, in the Mo'adim UZemanim (Cheilek 2: Simanim 165, 167), argues that one must fully understand the Pesukim he is hearing in order to fulfill his obligation. If one does not truly comprehend the magnitude of Amaleik's actions and terrible personality traits, how will he recognize how important it is that he forget such attributes and ensure that they have no place in his life? Therefore, in order to forget those qualities and guarantee they are not incorporated into Jewish life, our only option is to remember the people of Amaleik and the atrocities that they dared to perform.

## THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF ZECHIRAT AMALEIK

*by Azi Fine ('15)*

When looking at the makeup of Parashat Zechirat Amaleik (Devarim: 25:17-19), it is clear that it is divided into two sections. The first contains the first two Pesukim (25:17-18), and the second includes the third Pasuk (25:19). The first section deals with the actions of Amaleik when we were leaving Egypt and how we must remember these actions, while the second discusses the Mitzvah to avenge their actions. The Torah connects these two statements by using the word, "*VeHayah,*" "And it shall be." Another interesting point in the structure of these Pesukim is their repetition of the words in the beginning and conclusion. In the beginning, it states, "*Zachor,*" "Remember," while in the end it says, "*Lo Tishkach,*" "Do not forget," in both cases dictating remembrance of what Amaleik did to us. We might have thought that each of the phrases was discussing merely the words immediately near it – what Amaleik did and to erase its memory, respectively – however, the Sifri explains that both are more universal commandments: To "Remember" means to verbally remember and, "Do not forget" means to not forget in one's heart. A third interesting observation in this section is the contrast between the description of the time that Amalek attacked us and that of the time when we will avenge their deed. The setting that is given for Amaleik's attack is said to be, "*BaDerech BeTzeitechem MiMitzrayim*" "on our way from Egypt" (25:17). In contrast, the vengeance is said to take place, "*BaAretz Asher Hashem Elokecha Notein LeCha Nachalah LeRishtah,*" "In the land that Hashem, your God, gives you as an inheritance, to possess it" (25:19). When we look at these descriptions together, we see the flow of events: Amaleik attacked us as we were on the road; however, once we settle in Eretz Yisrael, the time for retribution will come. This also sheds light on the type of people that Amaleik were. They would attack us only when we were weak, on our road away from slavery. We, however, would persevere, and at full strength, in the land of our forefathers, we would look to exact revenge.

## RECITING NACHEIM ON TISH'AH BEAV IN 2014

*by Rabbi Chaim Jachter*

In the Shemonah Esrei on Tish'ah BeAv, we add a prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple which starts with the word "Nacheim." While Ashkenzic Jews recite this only at Minchah, Sephardic Jews recite this prayer during each of the Tefillot on Tish'ah BeAv. We describe Yerushalayim as, "the mournful, destroyed city, degraded, desolate without inhabitants." After our recapture and reunification of Jerusalem in 1967, the question arose whether the language of Nacheim needed to be adjusted for the new reality. As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the reunification of Yerushalayim, we need to reexamine this issue based on the realities in Yerushalayim.

### *Rav Chaim David HaLeivi—Change the Text*

Rav Chaim David HaLeivi, the Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Tel Aviv, felt that while it was too soon to change the prayer, it is dishonest to say in our Tefillot to Hashem that Jerusalem is in a state of destruction and denigration. The Gemara (Yoma 69b) teaches that we cannot be dishonest in our prayers to Hashem! Therefore, he advocated adding the word, “*Shehaytah*,” “that was,” before words of destruction, indicating that the city had been destroyed, but no longer is (Teshuvot *Aseh Lecha Rav* 1:14, 2:36-39, 7:35).

Indeed, the reality of Yerushalayim seems to accord with this approach. More than a half a million Jews reside in Yerushalayim, most of them observant and thousands of them devoted to full time Torah study. The Jewish Quarter of Yerushalayim is pulsating with Jewish life. The synagogues destroyed by Arabs during the years of Jordanian occupation between 1948 and 1967 have almost all been restored, with even more glory than before. The Kotel HaMa’aravi has more than ten million visitors per year. Even though fifty years have passed since the Kotel has been restored to Jewish control, the Jewish attachment to the Kotel grows in intensity as each year passes. Thus, Rav HaLeivi argues, how can we describe Yerushalayim as destroyed and desolate based on the prevalent conditions of 2014?

### *Rav Soloveitchik – Retain the Text, Change the Kavannah*

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (cited in *Nefesh HaRav*, p. 79) was opposed to any change in liturgy that was instituted by sages of the past. He noted the Gemara (Berachot 28b) which addresses how the Tana’im addressed the need to compose a nineteenth Berachah for the Amidah (Birkat HaMinim – to combat the early Christians). The Gemara records that Rabban Gamliel declared to the assembled Chachamim, “is there anyone amongst us who can compose this Tefillah?” One must ask—was Rabban Gamliel and the other great Tana’im assembled incapable of composing a brief Berachah? Why did Shmuel HaKatan emerge as the sole sage eligible to compose this Berachah? Rav Soloveitchik uses this to explain the awesome responsibility resting upon the shoulders of those who compose a Tefillah. Only one who has scaled and reached the ultimate heights of spirituality is qualified to write a Tefillah. Indeed, the Gemara (Megillah 17b) states that “120 elders (the Anshei Keneset HaGedolah), amongst them prophets,” composed the eighteen Berachot of the Amidah. Rav Soloveitchik noted the Gemara’s inclusion of the fact that some of the composers were prophets to show that people on or very near the level of prophets are needed to compose to Tefillot. Rav Soloveitchik questioned how we can possibly consider tampering with the Tefillot written by the great prophets and sages of the past.

Additionally, Rav Soloveitchik was of the view that, fundamentally, Jerusalem constitutes an extension of the Temple and, as long as the Beit HaMikdash is destroyed, the city is not considered to be rebuilt. Thus, according to Rav Soloveitchik,

when reciting Nacheim in our times, we should bear in mind the Beit HaMikdash being in ruins and not Yerushalayim per se.<sup>2</sup> In other words, when we state Yerushalayim, we mean Yerushalayim as an extension of the Beit Hamikdash. Yoma 69b, in fact, presents a similar approach to adjusting our Kavanah, intentions, based on changing historical circumstances rather than amending the text.

Though he is the student par excellence of the Rav, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein parts company with his revered father-in-law on this issue. Rav Lichtenstein omits a number of the phrases at the beginning of the text of Nacheim such as, “HaShomeimah MiBli Banehah,” “Desolate without its children,” which are not factually correct today and fall, in his opinion, in the category of speaking falsely to Hashem.

### *Rav Ovadia Yosef – Yerushalayim Remains Mostly in Ruins*

Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Teshuvot *Yechaveh Da’at* 1:43) opposed any change in the text. He also states that since the text of the prayer was established by the men of the Great Assembly, we lack the mandate and authority to change it. Interestingly, he grapples with the question of how the Anshei Keneset HaGedolah, who lived at the beginning of the Second Temple, could have composed a Tefillah mourning the destruction of Yerushalayim and the Beit HaMikdash. He answers by marshaling sources that these prophets and sages knew that Bayit Sheini was destined to be destroyed and thus composed a Tefillah for that eventuality. We should note that the Malbim, in his introduction to *Sefer Tehillim*, suggests that David HaMelech also composed the Tehillim that mourn the Babylonian Exile and the subsequent Return to Zion (*Tehillim* 137 and 126), despite happening after David’s lifetime.

In addition, Rav Ovadia Yosef points out that despite the incredible positive aspects of Jewish Jerusalem, the Churban remains very prevalent and dominant there. The presence of a shrine of another faith on our most holy location remains a profound expression of the Destruction. My brother-in-law Rav Etan Tokayer made the following comparison—imagine a synagogue in your local area that was destroyed by anti-Semites, and, subsequently, a house of worship of another faith was built on the exact location of the Beit Keneset. Moreover, as much as we correctly adore the Kotel, it remains a symbol of the Churban Beit HaMikdash. Refraining from adjusting the text of Nacheim serves to remind us of this sobering fact.

Rav Ovadia Yosef suggests further signs of Churban. He notes the presence of a cemetery of another faith that was built just to the east of Har HaBayit which was created to

<sup>2</sup> Rav Soloveitchik similarly rules that the obligation to perform Keriyah upon seeing Yerushalayim remains in full force even in the post-1967 reality of Jerusalem. See *Gray Matter* 2: pp. 67-76 for a full discussion of this issue.



prevent the arrival of Mashiach who would be repelled by the Tumat Meit. Moreover, he states that part of the ritual of the other faith is to bring dignitaries to the Temple Mount prior to their burial, as part of their funeral procession, a profound deviation from the Tumat Meit that we make every effort to distance from the Makom HaMikdash.

Most of the Old City of Yerushalayim remains populated by Nochrin. Furthermore, Israeli governments have even been willing to relinquish sovereignty over the areas that are predominantly Arab (see Dennis Ross' "The Missing Peace" for the maps which detail precisely the areas Israel was willing to forego). Moreover, almost all foreign governments (including that of the United States) do not recognize Israel's sovereignty over Yerushalayim. For instance, American citizens born in Jerusalem are not listed on their American passports as having been born in Israel.

Rav Ovadia also notes the prevalence of Avodah Zarah in the Old City of Yerushalayim as evidenced by the sound of clinging bells that is heard if one visits the Kotel for Shacharit on a Sunday morning. These realities cannot be altered in current circumstances, underscoring the limitations on Israeli control over the area, despite having sovereignty. All of the aforementioned limitations remain a major expression of the prevailing Churban.

Rav Ovadia also correctly notes that the primary area of Jewish residence during the Temple Era was to the South of Har HaBayit, which is called "Ir David." He says that this area

remains completely inhabited by Arabs. While much progress has been made to reestablish a Jewish presence in Ir David, the presence remains very limited in size and scope. Thus, the Yerushalayim referred to by Chazal in Nacheim remains, until this day, desolate and without Jewish inhabitants for the most part. According to this approach, one should think of Ir David and not sections of Yerushalayim such as Bakah or Givat Mordechai when reciting Nacheim on Tish'ah BeAv.

Finally, argues Rav Ovadia, not only is the political sovereignty over the city of limited scope, but the religious level of the Yerushalayim is severely lacking. He bemoans the lack of modesty, the prevalence of desecration of Shabbat and the vast amount non-kosher restaurants. However, we can very happily report that the situation has changed dramatically since Rav Yosef penned this responsum some forty years ago. While some Chillul Shabbat remains, it is clear that over the past few decades, the amount of people openly desecrating Shabbat has decreased. Moreover, truly non-kosher restaurants (i.e. that serve non-kosher food; not that there is no formal rabbinic supervision) in Jewish sections of Jerusalem are in the vast minority.

#### Conclusion

Some Kehillot and individuals have adopted a modified version of Nacheim, but most retain the traditional text. We fervently pray that Hashem rectify the situation by completely rebuilding Yerushalayim, rendering this dispute as moot.

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Questions, comments? Contact us at:

*Kol Torah*

*c/o Torah Academy of Bergen County*

*1600 Queen Anne Road*

*Teaneck, NJ 07666*

*Phone: (201) 837-7696*

*koltorah@koltorah.org*

To subscribe to Kol Torah via email, message [webmaster@koltorah.org](mailto:webmaster@koltorah.org)

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