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BeHa'alotecha

Moshe Rabbeinu's Humility Achievement

By Shimmy Greengart ('21)

Parashat BeHa'alotecha contains a number of stories, one of which is Miriam's Tzara'at. In it, she and Aharon are complaining about Moshe Rabbeinu's wife, specifically about how they are also prophets. Hashem hears, and then reproaches them about how Moshe's prophecy is on an objectively higher level than theirs. However, before that, the Torah briefly discusses how Moshe was the most humble man on the planet. The question is, what does this mean, and how does this have to do with the incident at hand?

The question can be amplified by factoring in the incident immediately preceding Miriam's Tzara'at. In it, Bnei Yisrael complain that they miss the meat that they had in Mitzrayim, being unsatisfied with the Mann. Moshe then complains to Hashem that he is being overworked, that he is being treated like a nursing maid carrying a crying baby. He exclaims that if this is how Hashem is treating him, He should just kill him now, so that he doesn't have to see what is clearly the result of his own imperfections in Bnei Yisrael.

This lies in stark contrast with the humility by which Moshe is described in the following Perek. Can Moshe's claim of single-handedly bringing the Jewish nation to the promised land co-exist with his professed humility? How about him wanting death "*Veal Ere Bereiati*," "so I should not see my own wickedness?" Moshe is saying that all the problems within Bnei Yisrael are his fault. How is that humble?

Perhaps the answer lies in what humility truly is. Humility is not denying reality. It is acknowledging who you are and what you have done. The reason Moshe is complaining about being treated like Bnei Yisrael's nurse-maid is that he is genuinely overworked, with all the responsibility on his shoulders. With such responsibility, it makes sense why he would feel that all of Bnei Yisrael's failures are his own. Whose else could they be? Moshe has been their sole leader since Yetziat Mitzrayim.

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This returns us to our original question: If humility is not acting like you are less than you really are, what is it? Humility is not mentioning your successes unless it is warranted. Moshe is laying out all his responsibilities not to the people, where it would be bragging and lacking humility, but to God, in what is quite possibly the first recorded labor-management dispute. Moshe list all of his responsibilities for a single reason: He wants fewer of them. He is not bragging, he is on a mission, and stating his responsibilities and achievements is the quickest way to succeed. And Moshe does succeed; Hashem has him appoint a council of seventy elders, who were already accustomed to leadership in the judicial system created by Yitro, to shoulder the burden of leading the people. But in any other circumstance, Moshe never would have brought up his responsibilities at all, because that is what it means to be humble.

This also answers our original question, namely, why Moshe's humility was even brought up. Aharon and Miriam were protesting that they, like Moshe, were Nevi'im. However, shouldn't they have known about Moshe's status as the greatest Navi of all time? After all, he was their brother. Even if they did not know all the details, they should have known that he was at least somewhat better than them. But they did not, and because of that, they thought they could speak Lashon Hara about him. So why didn't they know? That is the question the Torah is answering when discussing Moshe's humility. Moshe never even hinted to them that his level of Nevuah was higher than theirs, even after he came down from Har Sinai with a face glowing so brightly he had to wear a mask. This is the best example of humility: Moshe knows what he has done by carrying the people, and will acknowledge it when necessary, but when unnecessary, his own siblings don't know how high his level of prophecy really is.

Shelach

Have No Fear, Hashem is Here

By Menachem Kravetz ('20)

In the beginning of Parashat Shelach, Moshe sent 12 spies, one from each Sheivet, to go and scout out Eretz Canaan. Their job was to see how many people were there, whether the towns were opened or fortified, whether the soil was rich and poor, and to bring back some fruit of the land.

After 40 days, the spies came back and told Moshe, Aharon, and the rest of Bnei Yisrael that the land was indeed flowing with milk and honey, but that there were very strong giants occupying the land. Only Caleiv and Yehoshua believed that Bnei Yisrael could overcome the giants, telling the nation that if they believed in Hashem, He would bring them to a land

overflowing with milk and honey. "*Ach BaHashem Al Timrodo ... VaHashem Itanu Al Tira'um,*" "Do not rebel against Hashem, if Hashem is with us, there is nothing to fear" (BeMidbar 14:9). This lesson that Yehoshua and Caleiv were teaching Bnei Yisrael was a vital one. Sforno (ibid) explains that when the Canaanites saw the 12 spies they did not attack; if they saw a whole nation they would be all the more afraid to attack.

But, it is not just in the case of war that Hashem is with the Jewish people. Day in and day out, Hashem will always be by our side helping us overcome the many obstacles put in front of us. As the first mitzvah in Sefer HaMitzvot, Rambam states that we are commanded to believe in Hashem, as it says "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*" (Shemot 20:2). At all times we are charged with having faith in Hashem, believing He is overseeing the world and running it the way it should. The optimal *Emunah*, however, is in regard to *Et Tzara*. In times of trouble, we must pray and reach out to Hashem, showing that in our darkest hours, our trust is in Him and not in some other source. We have to recognize that we are His chosen people and He will always be there to help us.

In Parashat Shelach, this was not the reaction of the people. Bnei Yisrael stammered and cried, pleading to Moshe and Aharon to bring them back to Egypt. As a result of this, Hashem appeared angry, saying "*Ad Anah Yena'atzuni Ha'Am HaZeh, Ve'Ad Anah Lo Ya'aminu Bi*" "How long will this Nation spurn Me, and how long will it take them to trust Me?" (BeMidbar 14:11). The most optimal action is to show our belief in Hashem, believing that He will always bring us the best outcome possible. However, even though Hashem became angry with and punished Bnei Yisrael with extra years in the *Midbar*, the following Perek speaks of many different Mitzvot Bnei Yisrael would have when they entered Eretz Canaan. No matter how harshly we act towards Hashem, He will be forgiving, offering us the opportunity to do Teshuva and fix our mistakes.

This is highlighted with the last Mitzvah presented in the Parashah, the Mitzvah of Tzitzit. The Tzitzit are a reminder that we must have belief in Hashem and fulfill his commandments, and not to walk away with our Yetzer Hara to fulfill other urges or go find someone else to believe in. It is a reminder that Hashem brought us out of Egypt in order to be our G-d. He will not abandon us in times of need and He will always be looking out for us. We must believe in Hashem and trust Him. Just as He will remain devoted to us, we remain loyal to Him.

Korach

Korach, The First Equal Rights Advocate?

By Harry Meister ('21)

In the process of chastising Moshe Rabbeinu, citing many inflated and seemingly overblown infractions of the rights of the Bnei Yisrael in this week's Parashah, we see

Korach raise a single valid and logical argument. "*Kol Ha'Edah Kulam Kedoshim UBitocham Hashem UMadu'ah TitNasu Al Kehal Hashem,*" "The entire congregation are all holy, and Hashem is in their midst. So why do you raise yourselves above Hashem's assembly?" (BeMidbar 16:3). The obvious response that we may pose to Korach's barrage upon Moshe Rabbeinu is that he misses the point of Moshe and Aharon's leadership. Of course, the beginning of Korach's statement is logical and holds some truth to it, it is the very nature of Am Yisrael that we are holy. In hindsight, there is no distinction in Kedushah between Moshe and a simpleton. Thus, Korach raises the age-old argument of "Who died and left you in charge?", citing the equality in the Kedushah of Am Yisrael.

We understand, as evidenced by the Parashah and many commentators, that Korach was wrong in his assumptions, using arguments that were half-truths. Rav Hershel Shachter likes to compare Korach to simpletons who are not attuned to the Halachic process and oftentimes complain that the ruling of a Rabbi makes "no sense." (See Rav Schachter on the Parsha, pp. 192-196). Not only did Korach call Moshe out on account of his Kedushah, which was supposedly equal to that of everyone else, but to his Halachic rulings as well. Both Rashi (BeMidbar 16:1 s.v. Vayikach Korach) and the Midrash (BeMidbar Rabbah 18) point out that Korach had brought various trivial Halachic questions to Moshe to hear his ruling, waiting for him to give a ruling that he could use as fuel for his criticism. We see from both our original Pasuk and these two commentaries that Korach was certainly aiming to attack Moshe and Aharon on all fronts, but we still must try to explain why this is the case.

Rav Soloveitchik presents a thorough explanation of this argument, citing our original point made concerning Korach's "everyone is equally holy" argument (Chumash Mesorat HaRav pp. 130-131, See Vision and Leadership pp. 194-196). There is a twofold character of Kedushat Yisrael. The Rav cites a Rashi seen in Parashat Re'eh, questioning the duplication of the Pasuk: "*Ki Am Kadosh Atah LaHashem Elokecha Uvecha Bachar Hashem LiHiyot Lo Li'Am Segulah MiKol Ha'Amim Asher Al Pnei Ha'Adamah,*" "For you are a holy people to Hashem, your G-d, and Hashem has chosen you to be a treasured people for Him" (Devarim 14:2). Rashi (ibid) explains that the statement "*Ki Am Kadosh Atah*" indicates that the holiness of Am Yisrael is an inheritance to us from our forefathers. This is logical, given that upon waking up every morning we say, "*Torah Tzivah Lanu Moshe Morashah Kehillat Ya'akov.*" We are the Kehillat Yaakov who has inherited Torah, and subsequently, we have inherited a sense of Kedushah as well. In addition to this first point by Rashi, he also points out that "*Bachar Hashem LiHiyot Lo*" indicates that Hashem has chosen us all to be a cherished people to Him.

The Rav then explains the two separate aspects of Kedushah which in turn may show from where Korach's misconception emerges. Knesset Yisrael, the community of Israel, is not simply a multitude of people or Neshamot, it is an individual personality. The Kedushah of Knesset Yisrael is inherited through our ancestors, and in order to claim such Kedushah, one is charged with drawing from the available resources of the community to aid oneself in deriving this. While a profound statement and

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where Korach fell short. Korach saw the fact of Am Yisrael's Kedushah as a means of creating social equality, but misinterpreted the meaning of "*Am Kadosh*" in doing so. If Korach had possessed a proper understanding of the individual versus community Kedushah, he would have realized this. Instead, it can be inferred that Korach strove too much for power (Chumash Mesorat HaRav pp. 130-131) or simply misunderstood the meaning of "*Am Kadosh*," making him just another of the misguided simpletons, as suggested by Rav Schachter, leading to the quashing of this rebellion.

By Asher Rauzman ('21)

Rashi (ibid. s.v. Nasu LeKolam) answers this question by saying that “Nasu LeKolam” means they ran *because* of their uproar: they ran away from the exact spot that these events transpired, but only ran with a certain fear due to the voices that they heard of the victims who were getting pulled towards the earth. This is a very logical approach, and I’m sure it is how most readers understood this problem. The Kli Yakar, however, writes a beautiful approach that is very applicable, not only in the times of Moshe Rabbeinu but in our day and age, as well. He cites a Gemara (Sanhedrin 110a) that as the ground was returning to its normal state, Korach and all of his followers exclaimed that “Moshe is true and his Torah is true” and that what they (Korach and his assembly) did was wrong. It was to this emanating voice that all of Bnei Yisrael fled. They thought that Korach and his followers were confessing their sin, and wanted to know what his main sin was, so they would know how to keep away from it and not receive a similar punishment. That was why they stated that “maybe the earth will swallow us as well.”

According to this approach, Bnei Yisrael “fled” to ultimate clarity. It was an extremely rare and unique opportunity that the Jews at the time were given. There were people who, even though their new reality was negative (as getting eaten by the ground usually is), could see their mistakes and what they should have done during their lives. The rest of the nation didn't have that same clarity and immediately understood that these fading cries were going to be as close as

they could ever get in their lives to the ultimate truth: to knowing and understanding, truly, what to do and not to do. It was for that reason that they fled. That they rushed. That they ran. They yearned for the truth and they couldn't waste any time in getting their ears as close to the ground as they could, to hear the voices of everyone who now knew what they should have done in their lifetime.

Another reason why this Kli Yakar is so beautiful is that it applies to us now as well. We are not given the same opportunities as our ancestors. We are given very few chances to understand the true meaning of life, and few people can give that to us. Whether they be Rabbis, role models, our parents, or even our friends, it is our job to "flee," to run, to put our ear to the ground, and just try and listen to what life is about. It doesn't happen often when we can see so clearly about what we were put on this earth to do, but at those critical moments, it is our responsibility to cling to those people, those moments, and those truths.

Chukat-Balak

Defamation of a Famed Nation

By Ephraim Helfgot ('20)

In Parashat Balak, Balak describes Bilam's request that he curse Bnei Yisrael, and then responds to said request, with the words, "*Lecha Arah Li Ya'akov ULecha Zo'amah Yisrael Mah Ekov Lo Kabo Eil UMah Ezom Lo Za'am Hashem,*" "'Go curse for me Ya'akov, and go defame Yisrael.' How can I curse what God has not cursed? How can I defame what God has not defamed?" (*BeMidbar* 23:7-8).

The Midrash expands upon Balak's statement that he cannot curse what God has not cursed. The Midrash (*BeMidbar Rabbah* 20:19) adds, "*BeSha'ah SheHayu Re'uyin LeHitkalleil Lo Nitkallelu KeSheNichnas Ya'akov Litol Et HaBerachah Nichnas BeMirmah... Mi SheMotzi Sheker MiPiv Eino Ra'ui LiKellallah?*" "At the time when they were fit to be cursed, they were not cursed: When Ya'akov entered [Yitzchak's tent] to take the Berachah, he entered with deceit... one who releases a lie from his mouth, is he not fit for a curse?" Yet Hashem did not curse Ya'akov, but rather ratified Yitzchak's mistaken blessing! Thus, Balak concludes, there is no room for him to curse Bnei Yisrael at this point.

It is curious that the Midrash chose to link Balak's opening description of Am Yisrael to the story of Ya'akov taking Eisav's Berachah. Why did Chazal link these two events?

Perhaps the greatest attack on an institution is to say that it was conceived in sin, that its very creation was unforgivable. To make such a claim is to render the entire institution illegitimate, and its subsequent history of the entity irrelevant; nothing can atone for the iniquity of its existence, save for its elimination.

Bnei Yisrael, inasmuch as we are the Banim of the historical Yisrael, are exposed to the charge that our very

existence as the bearers of the Abrahamic legacy was conceived in sin, that Ya'akov's insertion of himself into Yitzchak's tent and treacherous trickery render his selection illegitimate and negate the chosenness of Klal Yisrael. The Torah is adamant, though, that this position cannot be countenanced. Yitzchak's acceptance of Ya'akov's actions and designation of him as his spiritual successor, in which he prays, "*VeYitein Lecha Et Birkat Avraham,*" "And may [Hashem] give you the blessing of Avraham" (*BeReishit* 28:4), along with Ya'akov's reconciliation with Eisav, in which he tells his older brother, "*Kach no Et Birchati Asher Huvat Lach,*" "Please take my blessing which has been brought to you" (*BeReishit* 33:11) and gives him hundreds of animals in a symbolic exchange of a blessing for a blessing, close the chapter on Ya'akov's sin and allow us to turn the page on the injustice perpetrated by our forefather. Henceforward, no attempt to delegitimize us-- whether by Eisav, Bilam, or Khartoum-- holds any merit.

Pinchas

Preserving Hashem's Name With a Spear

By Ezra Luber ('21)

Parashat Pinchas begins with Hashem telling Moshe about how Pinchas has suddenly directed his wrath and anger away from Bnei Yisrael and caused Hashem to save them, as the Pasuk states "*Pinchas Ben Elazar Ben Aharon HaKohen Heishiv Et Chamati Mei'al Bnei Yisrael B'Kano Et Kinati Bitocham V'Lo Kiliti Et Bnei Yisrael BeKinati,*" "Pinchas, son of Elazar, son of Aharon the Kohen, turned my wrath from upon the children of Israel when he zealously avenged My vengeance among them so I did not consume the Children of Israel in my vengeance" (*BeMidbar* 25:11). Pinchas is then named a Kohen, and is the only living person who was not a Kohen by family but was instead exalted to become a Kohen. \

We may ask how Pinchas was able to become a Kohen or a special person, compared to the rest of Bnei Yisrael who had done good things and were not appointed Kohanim. We may ask about Nachshon Ben Aminadav, who went into the Reed Sea first, prompting God to save the Jewish people, or the Levi'im who abstained from the Cheit HaEgel, that even Aharon the Kohen Gadol was forced to participate in. So how specifically did Pinchas get the reward of being appointed a Kohen?

Rashi says that this Brit is showing Hashem's gratitude towards Pinchas, and His gratitude was displayed through his appointment to the Kehunah. This answer could be compared to when someone helps a friend in matters of business, and as a result, the friend takes this person out to dinner as a reward. Just as Pinchas glorified and sanctified the glory of Hashem, by addressing the disgusting actions of Bnei Yisrael, Hashem is returning to honor him. This is a nice answer, however, it does not fully answer our first question about why he was appointed a Kohen? Why not make Pinchas the next leader of Bnei Yisrael, as Moshe asks later in the Parashah, for Hashem to find a new leader?

We may understand this through the words of the pesukim which follow, "*U'LeZaro Acharav Brit Kehunat Olam,*"

“And his offspring after him eternal priesthood” (25:13). The difference shown is that being a Kohen is eternal, a Kohen is something passed down from generation to generation. You can not buy your way into the Kehunah or revolt your way in.

I think this explains why Pinchas was chosen specifically to become a Kohen. Pinchas saved the Jewish people for eternity. He was able to stand up to the peer pressure of Bnei Yisrael's actions, and say enough, that he will not stand for desecrating Hashem's name anymore. And someone who stands for preserving Hashem and His name, their legacy will be eternal for recognizing the eternal greatness of God, and He will keep them and their family part of that greatness.

Sometimes it is hard for us to see Hashem in our lives. Sometimes we choose not to look, or to comment on things we know are wrong. However, we need to stand like Pinchas did and preserve Hashem's name. We should all try to find ways that we could bring good into our lives, whether that is by taking a big stand like Pinchas, or even by just handing out water bottles to random people. And once we do this we will show we are eternally connected to our maker.

Mattot-Masei

A Time For Pleasantness And a Time For War

By Yonasson Rutta ('20)

Near the beginning of this week's double Parashah, Parshiot Mattot and Masei, after Hakadosh Baruch Hu tells Moshe Rabbeinu, "*Nikom Nikmat Bnei Yisrael MeEt HaMidyanim VeAchar Teaseif El Amecha*," "Take revenge on the Midyanites for what they did to Klal Yisrael, and then afterward you (Moshe Rabbeinu) shall be gathered to your people" (BeMidbar 31:2). The rest of the Perek then goes on to describe the battle as well as the subsequent victory and apportioning of the spoils. This is quite a perplexing commandment as it says in the Torah, "*Derachehah Darchei Noam VeChol Netivoteha Shalom*," "Its (the Torah's) ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace" (Mishlei 3:17)? To attack Midyan out of revenge and not out of defense is certainly not "Darchei Noam"! Not only does this command seem to be an act of revenge, but also somewhat similar to the Mitzvah of Mechiyat Amalek, eradication of Amalek. The Torah in our Perek, just as it does by the command to eradicate Amalek, describes Moshe Rabbeinu commanding Klal Yisrael to kill not only the women which they bring back as captives but also the male children, leaving only the female children alive. How do we explain this somewhat disturbing command?

Rashi (BeMidbar 31:2 s.v. MeEt HaMidyanim) explains why Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded Klal Yisrael to war with Midyan, and not Moav, who had previously hired Bilam to curse Klal Yisrael which is the reason the Torah gives for the war in Pasuk Tet Vav. In his first answer, Rashi explains that the Moavim had a justification as they were scared. As the Torah writes, "*Vayagar Moav MiPnei HaAm Meod Ki Rav Hu Vayakatz Moav Mipnei Bnei Yisrael*," "Moab was very afraid of the people, because

they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel" (Bemidbar 22:3). Klal Yisrael was a powerful nation; they had Hashaem on their side! So it was understandable that Midyan did something like hiring Bilaam. Midyan, however, intruded on a conflict that was not theirs and therefore deserved retribution for their actions. But this still does not seem to explain the extent of the Nekama that was commanded upon them.

Rabbeinu Bachya (BeMidbar 31:2 s.v. Achar Teaseif) quotes a Midrash, which asks why Hashem commanded Moshe Rabbeinu to avenge Bnei Yisrael, while Moshe Rabbeinu, when telling the nation, commanded them to avenge Hashem. The Midrash answers that Moshe Rabbeinu had told Hashem that had Klal Yisrael been Areilim or idol worshippers, Midyan would not have hated us, but they hate us because of the Torah and Mitzvot which You gave to us. Therefore, it is Your Nekama, a vengeance for Hashem, for which we act. The Midrash then ends off by saying that therefore, "*HaOmed Neged Yisrael Keilu Omed Neged HaKadosh Baruch Hu*," "Whoever stands against Klal Yisrael is as if he is standing against Hashem" (ibid).

In a similar note, Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch explains that the war against Midyan was due to the fact that Midyan had attacked the two pillars of the Torah, Tzniut and belief in Hashem, during the incident of Shittim, where the Midyanites sent their daughters to commit licentiousness with the Jews and coerce worship of Baal Peor from Klal Yisrael. This is why, Rav Hirsch says, Moshe Rabbeinu addressed the nation and not the leaders. An attack of moral degeneracy and spiritual coercion, to attempt to take Klal Yisrael away from Hashem and His Torah, requires a response on the part of the entire nation. Thus, explains Rav Hirsch, the attack was specifically on Midyan and not Moav. Moav only sought to destroy us physically while Midyan aimed to destroy us spiritually. In the words of Rav Hirsch, "*HaOyev HaAmiti Shel Yisrael Eino Zeh SheMevakesh ET Ovdano HaGufni Elah HaZomem Et Moto HaMusri VeHaRuchni*". "The true enemy is not the one that wishes to destroy us physically, but rather the one that plots our moral and spiritual death".

With both the perspective of Rabbeinu Bachya and Rav Hirsch in mind, it is possible to answer our question. While it is true that the Torah is described as, "*Derachehah Darchei Noam*," "Its ways are those of pleasantness", but that is only when it does not concern an attack on Hashem and His Torah. However, when someone assaults our core, the spirituality and morality of the Jewish people we must respond. Following such an affront, maintaining obedience to "*Derachehah Darchei Noam*" would be a Chillul Hashem. Therefore, when Midyan caused Klal Yisrael to sin to such a high degree in the wake of such great Nissim like the Ananei HaKavod, the Slav, the Mun, and the Be'er, the response had to be similar to that of the Mitzvah of Mechiyat Amalek

Devarim

The Judge's Impact on Society

By Eitan Mermelstein ('21)

Parashat Devarim consists largely of Moshe Rabbeinu's review of Jewish history since leaving Egypt. However, Moshe Rabbeinu takes time to discuss the importance of establishing judges and maintaining a just society. This anecdote is initiated after Moshe discusses the establishment of other judges in the desert, but Moshe's discussion of the laws pertaining to judges is perplexing. He warns them, "*Lo TaKiru Panim BaMishpat... Lo Taguru Mipnei Ish Ki HaMishpat LeiLokim Hu*," "Do not be partial in judgment... Fear no man for judgment is God's matter" (Devarim 1:17). However, perhaps by understanding this Pasuk, its importance and relevance in Moshe Rabbeinu's historical review will become clear.

Ramban, Devarim 1:17 s.v. *Ki HaMishpat LeiLokim Hu*, writes that when a judge judges, they must understand that Hashem is with them in judgment. It is to establish justice and righteousness that God created mankind. Therefore, as the latter part of this Pasuk teaches, when a judge fails to do his job, shows favoritism, and creates violence and robbery, the judge

Rashi, Devarim 1:17 s.v. *Loe Takeeroo Panim BaMishpat*, writes that this mitzvah is not a prohibition against showing favoritism in judgment, but it is instead a prohibition against establishing judges who are inexperienced and do not fully know the laws. Being a hero, relative, or a nice person is not a qualification to become a judge. Additionally, Rashi understands the latter portion of the Pasuk as referring to a prohibition to changing your judgment based on someone involved in the case. Moreover, in changing the verdict based on someone in the court, Hashem will need to rebalance the debt between the two parties so that all is as it is meant to be. Thus, by altering the case, a judge forces HaKadosh Baruch Hu to enact judgment when he should not have needed to.

Rambam, Hilchot Sanhedrin VeHaOnshin HaMesurin Lahem 3:8, continues Rashi's approach with even stronger language. He writes that not only is it a horrible thing for Beit Din to establish an unfit judge, but that if Beit Din were to do so, it is as if they established a monument for Avodah Zara and planted an Asheira tree. Moreover, Rambam, Hilchot Sanhedrin VeHaOnshin HaMesurin Lahem 22:1, writes that this Pasuk teaches that when a judge knows the correct Halacha, he cannot fear for his belongings, his own well-being, or even the well-being of his children; he must give over the correct Halacha regardless.

Thus, these mitzvot are so critical because a violation impacts the entire society. Not simply the judge and the parties involved in the case, but it affects Hashem, Am Yisrael, and mankind at large. Thus, it is fitting that these laws be included here as the Parasha deals with the impact that the few have on the many; from the story of the

Meraglim to the Nachalah of Reuven, Gad, and half of Menasheh, this theme is clear.

VaEtchanan

These are the Mitzvot... More or Less

By, David Gertler

Editors' Note: This article was previously printed in Kol Torah Volume 10

Parshat Vaetchanan states the most important principle of the Torah. The Torah (Devarim 4:2) writes, "You shall not add to the words that I have commanded to you, and shall not subtract anything from it." Why am I calling these the two most important Mitzvot? Additionally what is the reason behind these Mitzvot? And lastly, have we been properly keeping these Mitzvot?

These two Mitzvot lay down the absoluteness of the Torah. These are the most axiomatic Mitzvot of the Torah. If one has a fervent belief that this one Pasuk is given by Hashem, that person has obligated himself to believing the rest of the Mitzvot.

Rabbi Zvi Grumet made an interesting observation regarding Moshe, which helps us to understand the absoluteness of these principles. In the story of Miriam's talking about Moshe (Bemidbar Sinai 12), Miriam comments that there is nothing special about Moshe, as both Miriam and Aharon have spoken to Hashem. This is directly after the story of the Shivim Zekainim, where Hashem gives Nevuah to seventy people. During the story, Yehoshua and Moshe find out that two more than the original seventy are prophesizing. Yehoshua becomes very upset but Moshe expresses a wish that the entire nation should become Neviim. We see that Moshe is not alone in being able to have Nevuah, but the story of Miriam explains to us Moshe's uniqueness. When Hashem is rebuking Aharon and Miriam he tells them that all other Neviim get their Nevuah in dreams, but it is not so with Moshe. Moshe is נאמן in the entire house of Hashem. I am going to translate the word נאמן as trusted, that Moshe is trusted with all of the knowledge of the works of Hashem, and not with riddles but clear and precise visions. The reason that these principles are absolute and complete is because they were given by Moshe, the only one able to receive a vision from Hashem clearly. No other prophet was, or will be, able to do that. And therefore no other Navi can claim that they were given a new Mitzva or that they were instructed to retract a Mitzva, because we are told that even if they get Nevuah it is not on the level to be able to understand such a concept. The Mishna states that in judging if one is a Navi all one must do is watch for these two principles, if they violate either one they are a Navi Sheker.

In recent conversation someone asked me if we can think that we are properly observing these Mitzvot. After all, there is so much of the Torah that is neglected, an example being the laws of Tumah Vetaharah. I responded that there is a difference between Neglect and stating that a certain Mitzva, which should apply,

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Finally, there is an additionally important question as to how many Berachot constitute Birkat HaMazon. The opinion of Tosafot (*Berachot* 48b) seems to be that all three Brachot are DeOrayta. Rambam (*Mitzvah* 19) writes that the Mitzvah is to

bless Him after eating, but does not set a specific number of Berachot. Ramban (*Hasagot to the Sefer Hamitzvot*) comments that there is no set amount of Berachot Min HaTorah, according to the Kesef Mishneh (*Berachot* 2:2). This is similar to Rambam's perception of Tefillah. The Kesef Mishneh (*Berachot* 2:2) understands that Rambam agrees with Ramban that there is no set amount of Berachot Min HaTorah. The Lechem Mishneh (*ibid.*) disagrees and says that Rambam really does hold that more than one Berachah is DeOrayta, he just doesn't usually spell out all of the Halachot in Sefer HaMitzvot.

We have tried to analyze what food necessitates Bentsching, how much, who is obligated, and how many Brachot must be said. Rav Asher Weiss relayed that learning about Birkat HaMazon is important for two reasons: 1. It is the only Berachah that is MiDeOrayta according to everyone and 2. The Sefer HaChinuch (*Mitzvah* 430) writes it is a Segulah for Parnassah, livelihood, and it is the only such Mitzvah in the entirety of the Sefer HaChinuch.

Re'eh

We Are a Part of a Nation

By Daniel Kroopnick ('21)

This week's Parashah, Parashat Re'eh, teaches a lot about Tzedakah and caring for the poor. The Pasuk says "*Ki Yihiyeh Becha Evyon Me'Achad Achecha B'Achad Sh'Arecha BeArtzecha Asher Hashem Elokecha Notein Lecha Lo TeAmeitz Et Levavecha V'Lo Tikpotz Et Yadecha Mei'Achicha HaEvyon*" "If, however, there is a needy person among you, one of your kinsmen in any of your settlements in the land that the Lord, your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman" (*Devarim* 15:7). Rashi comments that the reason why the word "*Sh'Arecha*" is used is to teach us that our communities' necessities, such as Tzedakah, come first before we worry about other communities (Rashi *ibid.*, DH "*Shaarecha*"). The Torah goes on to discuss the importance of giving Tzedakah and looking out for the poor.

Additionally, Rambam states, "Anyone who sees a poor person begging and averts his eyes from him and does not give him Tzedakah transgresses a negative mitzvah" (*Hilchot Matanot Ani'im* 7:2). It is also said that Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk used to say: "Going around the four corners of the city to collect money for the poor atones for severe sins that deserve the four deaths issued by Beit Din."

How could it be that this Mitzvah is seemed to be taken extra seriously? Also, why is there an Aveirah which considers withholding Tzedakah a very bad thing? Let the guy simply worry about himself; is it such a problem that he cared only about himself at this moment in time?

The answer is yes, that is a huge problem. Hashem is trying to teach us a lesson from this Pasuk to care not just for ourselves but rather to love the entire nation equally and

with sincere love. That is the reason why this commandment is taken so seriously, to show the importance of being a part of the nation. We have to realize that we are a part of something greater than ourselves. Additionally, we should realize that everything that we have is because "*Hashem Elokecha Notein Lecha*"

Rav Chaim Shmulevits, in his commentary to Parashat Naso, teaches that when there is a group, Hashem judges the group as one. Even if you are a Tzadik in the group but the group is composed of Resha'im then you will be punished with the group, and vice versa. We can learn from here that we must care about the people who we are around and to make sure that we help the ones around us who need help. We can just keep to ourselves and only worry about ourselves but we must also worry about the Am, the nation. That is also why Rashi comments that the people in your community come first when Tzedakah is to be given, because we must worry about our Am that we are a part of and our community comes first.

We can also learn another lesson being taught to us through this Pasuk. The Torah is relaying what true Emunah in Hashem is. Often we do Mitzvot because of what our parents, Rebbeim, and friends will likely say as a result. That is not true Emunah. What our goal is to do is to realize that everything we do in life is all for the purpose of "*Hashem Elokecha Notein Lecha*" and to realize that everything from Hashem. With that realization, we may understand why it is so severe to disregard the Ani'im, the poor. Hashem gave us land, food, and crops. This is on condition that we look out for those that don't necessarily have it, because otherwise, Hashem can take it all away.

Shofetim

The Uniqueness of a Jewish King

By Harry Meister ('21)

It is interesting to note that among the various institutions that are to be set up upon arriving in Eretz Yisrael, according to this week's Parashah, is the establishment of a king over the nation. However, this is a potential issue, as it is seemingly the antithesis of Kabbalat Ol Malchut Shamayim, for there is no true ruler over man except for HaKadosh Baruch Hu. So how are we to understand such a concept that is both antithetical to the concept of HaKadosh Baruch Hu's rule over the universe, and the concept of a mere mortal being appointed Melech Yisrael? In order to answer this, we must first examine the Pesukim which we will base it upon: "*Ki Tavo El Ha'Aretz Asher Hashem Elokecha Notein Lach ViRishtah VeYashaotah Bah Ve'Amarta Asimah Alai Melech KeChol HaGoyim Asher Sevivotai. Som Tasim Alecha Melech Asher Yivchar Hashem Elokecha Bo MiKerev Achecha Tasim Alecha Melech Lo Tuchal Lateit Alecha Ish Nochri Asher Lo Achicha Hu,*" "When you come to the land Hashem, your God, is giving you, and you possess it and live therein, and you say, 'I will set a king over myself, like all the nations around me.' You shall set a king over you, one whom Hashem, your God, chooses; from among your brothers, you shall set a king over yourself; you shall not appoint a foreigner over yourself, one who is not your brother" (*Devarim* 17:14-15). It is

interesting to point out the parallelism of these two Pesukim, for they re-emphasize the question of how is it possible that a king be appointed over Israel when Hashem is the King of the Universe?

Instead of drawing upon the Machloket of whether or not these Pesukim are a Mitzvah, commandment upon the Jewish people, we will examine instead the rationale of these Pesukim. We may understand these Pesukim through the eyes of a Gemara which will bring the matter to light. Chazal (Sanhedrin 20b) interpret that with our question in mind, it would seem that these Pesukim were potentially not a command so much as a prediction of future events. This can be inferred from the words "*Ve'Amarta Asimah Alai Melech*," "and you say 'I set a king over myself'" (ibid). It is implied from the tone of the wording in this Pasuk, written in the future tense, that it is inevitable that Bnei Yisrael will ask for a king. In going back to the Gemara, Rabbi Nehorai seems to agree with and assert this idea, citing the tone of the Pasuk, to which many commentators seemingly concur. Without further delving into this Gemara, it may be inferred that there is a connection between this Pasuk's tone and future events, which Rav Soloveitchik points out.

We may clearly see from the Pesukim that Bnei Yisrael sought to appoint a king under the guise of looking like every other nation. Another fear that stems from the appointment of a Jewish king is the fear of an inflated ego with unlimited power, as well as a people seeking to rid themselves of the moral influence of Nevi'im. Rav Soloveitchik invokes a commentary of Rambam which does seemingly indicate this. The question is asked by the Rav: Why was Shmuel HaNavi hesitant in anointing Sha'ul as the first Melech Yisrael after Bnei Yisrael fulfilled the Pesukim in our Parasha simply by asking? Rambam (Mishneh Torah Hilchot Melachim 1:2) explains that this request was the people's failure in attempting to rid themselves of Shmuel's moral influence. This is very logical and fitting with the fears of Chazal and many commentators¹, as it would seem that Bnei Yisrael's reasoning in asking this may have been flawed in some way.

However, given the reluctance that Chazal and many have noted (see Chumash Mesorat HaRav Sefer Devarim, pp. 147-149) in compromising with Bnei Yisrael's request, there is a clearly distinct procedure in Judaism of how to appoint a king, as contrasted with the rest of the world. Rav Soloveitchik points out a number of distinct features in the appointment and function of a Jewish king as compared with the secular world. A Jewish king could be appointed only by the people and may not ascend via any method other than democratic appointment. Additionally, the Sanhedrin or a Navi would be required to handle the final conference of his appointment. There are clearly enough safeguards in these methods. Yet there are other distinctions which we may point out in the uniqueness of a Jewish king which set him apart from others, and may answer our original question of whether a Melech Yisrael is antithetical and incompatible with HaKadosh Baruch Hu's Malchiyot. The Rav notes another later incident which occurred during the Malchiyot of Sha'ul HaMelech, after being denounced by Shmuel HaNavi for disobeying

Hashem's command to destroy all of Amalek, including the spoils.⁶ In a lame attempt to justify his actions, Sha'ul replies that it was only an attempt to satisfy the people's lust for them and to submit to their demands. In effect, this painted him as a follower, not a ruler, highlighting one of the original fears surrounding his kingship to begin with. The Rav notes that such an ego is not conducive to effective leadership and presents just one of the many other reasons for strictness in appointing a Jewish king.

In light of Sha'ul's shortfalls, the Rav posits a separate commentary of Rambam (Mishneh Torah Hilchot Melachim 4:10) in defining the true role of a Melech Yisrael, despite Sha'ul and other's shortcomings. The goal of a Jewish king is meant to be heavenly and his entire goal is to fill the world with Tzidkut and enhance the Emunah of everyone he encounters and is charged to rule over. He is additionally charged with destroying all wickedness/heatheness and fighting the wars of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. He is crowned specifically for the purpose of upholding the Torah and Torah values and administering justice on behalf of Hashem based on the Pasuk in Sefer Shmuel, "Let our king judge us and go out before us and fight our wars." The Rav concludes from this comment of Rambam that while monarchy was permitted, it was not to serve as a symbol of national glory or to forge a world power. The Jewish king has a particular objective to fulfill. Sha'ul's appointment as Melech Yisrael served to repulse attacks by the Pelishtim. David HaMelech was appointed for the purpose of unifying the very psychologically and physically distanced Shvatim throughout Eretz Yisrael. Shlomo HaMelech succeeded his father by taking on the mission of building the Beit HaMikdash (Reflections, Vol. I, pp. 127-131). Many Melachim who followed were charged with ridding the nation of Avodah Zara and trying to restore Israel to its status of an Am Kadosh.

This is the sanctity and distinction of the Jewish king. Taking into account that the proposal of appointing a Jewish king presents a heretical paradox between the concepts of HaKadosh Baruch Hu's Malchut and that of the Jewish king's, Hashem, through His proxy Moshe, seemingly details that in anticipation of future events. Bnei Yisrael may need to appoint a king; However, in addressing the other side (ie. the many issues of a supreme power in a nation committed to the King of Kings), the Torah, Chazal, and many Rishonim and Acharonim address these various issues by instituting various safeguards and prerequisites which serve to ensure that the Melech Yisrael be the individual who best serves Bnei Yisrael's needs, physically and spiritually, within the parameters of Torah and Mitzvot, and in times of both peace and peril. Such distinction

¹ An interesting point is made by the Tosefta, Sanhedrin 4:3 which seems to show that it was the manner in which the Jewish people requested a king that

was the issue. This is rejected by commentaries like the Abarbanel, but is nonetheless interesting to see.

of character is what constitutes the Jewish king and sets him apart from his non-Jewish counterparts.²

Shalom Shalom Tirdof

By Ari Mazin ('22)

In Parashat Shofetim, we are instructed about the many Mitzvot surrounding wars. These Mitzvot include dictating who may go to war, if we may go to war, and how we are to act when at war. These Mitzvot seem to be symbolic of how we are to conduct ourselves as Jews and how we should approach Torah and Mitzvot.

We have the declaration of the Kohein to the nation, determining who is exempt and prohibited from military service in a Milchemet Reshut (discretionary war). First among this group is a person who builds a house but has not yet lived in it; they are instructed to turn back lest someone else take it. This is symbolic of the idea that we are against the idea of wasting time, effort, and money. This plays into the idea of Bal Tashchit; the basis of this Issur is actually included in this Parashah. The Torah prohibits wastefulness, and the idea of wasting time and money to build a house which will never be inhabited would certainly run counter to this ideal.

The next person the Kohein describes is a person who has planted a vineyard but not yet redeemed it. This “redeeming” is in reference to the mitzvah of Neta Rivai, that this person has not yet been able to perform the mitzvah of bringing the fruits of his vineyard to Yerushalayim and eating them or exchanging the fruit for money. This shows the importance of never bypassing a Mitzvah opportunity. Rather than causing this man to lose out on his Mitzvah, Hashem prohibits him from going out to war, in order to allow him to perform just one more Mitzvah. Since we are charged with attempting to emulate Hashem, we too should not pass up any Mitzvot, but rather make sure to perform every single Mitzvah we can.

Next comes the man who has become engaged to a woman and not yet married her; he should go back lest someone else marry her. This shows the importance of Rachamim, mercy, upon others. Hashem is trying to demonstrate the mercy we must display upon others, by ensuring that this woman does not become an Almanah or, worse, an Agunah. Why specify a man who has become engaged to a woman? Why is it any worse than if she had been married that he is not be allowed to turn back? We may understand this as being because a married woman would at least receive some comfort through receiving the payment of the Ketubah, whereas an engaged woman receives nothing from the loss of her fiance except for grief.

The last person the Kohein mentions is someone who is afraid, and thus through his fear will lessen the

morale of his comrades. Many Mefarshim interpret this to mean someone who has committed an Aveirah, and is afraid he will be punished for this. He is allowed to leave now with the rest of the troops to hide his embarrassment. This is tied to the idea of Rachamim as well, having mercy on this person so as to spare him from shame. He leaves among the rest of the people exempted from military service so that he will not be embarrassed as a sinner. The Gemara compares publicly shaming a person to murder. We should learn from this the importance of sparing someone from embarrassment.

The Pesukim then discuss that whenever we go out to war, we must make peace overtures to the city first, and if they accept, we are prohibited from killing or destroying anyone or anything. This teaches us the importance of both Rachamim and Shalom, having mercy and being peaceful, as well as the importance of honesty. We are taught to try to avoid violence and destruction, since we do not wish to harm other human beings, and that once we make an agreement, we must uphold it. We cannot try and be deceitful. Rather, we must be honest and uphold our end of the deal.

Finally, we come to the Issur of cutting down fruit trees during a time of war. The reason for this Mitzvah is debated amongst the Mefarshim, but the most commonly accepted reason is that since the tree is not an enemy soldier, we have no reason to destroy it; therefore why should we deprive anyone of their fruit? This Issur is the basis of Bal Tashchit, and once again reflects the idea of avoiding waste, as well as the idea of Shalom.

Shalom does not only refer to peace in the military sense, but also to the general well being of everyone. As Jews, we are charged with maintaining this Shalom, not destroying it. We are meant to emulate Hashem, and just as Hashem brings Shalom, we should as well. Being a Jew is not only about learning, it is applying what we learn to our actions. We apply the fact that we are not supposed to destroy fruit trees to our lives by trying to bring peace. The Mishnah in Avot supports this, saying that people should be like the students of Aharon, an Ohev Shalom and Rodef Shalom, lover and pursuer of peace (Avot 1:12). Similarly, through all these Mitzvot, we may apply the lessons we learn from them to our lives, and in doing so, improve ourselves as people, and bring ourselves closer to Hashem.

Ki Teitzei

Intrinsically Connected

By Rabbi David Einhorn

Both this week's and last week's Parashah discuss different situations when Klal Yisrael go out to war. In Parashat Shofetim specifically, the Pasuk says “*Shema Yisrael Atem Kerovim L'Milchamah*,” “Hear Israel, you are about to go into battle.” Rashi explains that the seemingly strange mention of Shema Yisrael is connected to the Mitzvah of Shema itself. “In the merit of saying

² This topic is also briefly explored by the 18th century writer and philosopher Thomas Paine in *Common Sense*, and can be explored for further reading.

Shema, you will win the war.” The Mitzvah of Shema is the daily obligation of Kabbalat Ol Malchut Shamayim, accepting the kingship of Hashem onto ourselves. What is the connection between this acceptance of Hashem’s malchut and war? Also, these Parshiyot always appear in the time leading up to the holy Yom Tov of Rosh HaShanah. How do these concepts relate to our personal Avodah on Rosh HaShanah?

Even in the non-Jewish world, the concept of kingship is connected to war. The king is constantly preoccupied with sending his citizens out to battle and waging war with his enemies. Why would a king be so obsessed with war, to the point of risking the lives of his own citizens, where he could easily let his people live peacefully and comfortably?

To answer these questions, we need to delve deeper into the Mitzvah of Kriyat Shema. Aside from the aspect of Kabbalat Ol Malchut Shamayim, Kriyat Shema is also an expression of one’s Mesirat Nefesh, one’s willingness to give one’s life for Hashem. “*V’Ahavta Et Hashem Elokecha B’Chol L’Vavecha*,” one must love Hashem with his life, even if one must give up his life for Hashem.

One of the king’s main desires is to make sure that his nation feels that the kingship is something connected to the essence of their life. He doesn’t just want the Malchut to be a part of their life, but something critical to their entire being. The way a king can ensure this is by sending the people to war, a situation where they may have to sacrifice their life for the *Malchut*. This is why a king is constantly preoccupied with war, because he is trying to get his people to be *Moser Nefesh* for him, in order that the Malchut will become something inseparable from their entire being. For this reason, the two elements found in Kriyat Shema are really one: Once one takes upon himself the kingship of Hashem, it should be in a way that is life-consuming – to the point where he is ready to give up his life for Hashem.

The Beit HaMikdash was the focal point of HaKadosh Baruch Hu’s Malchut in this world. The Gemara in Yoma says that only the kings of the House of David were allowed to be sitting. There were constant guards, as protection for the palace, just as kings protect their castle with guards (see Rambam *Peirush Mishnayot on Tamid 1:1*). The primary reason for one coming to the Beit HaMikdash was to bring korbanot. A korban, according to Ramban, is an act of Mesirat Nefesh, where one should look as if he himself is giving up his life. Where did one draw this ability and feeling to sacrifice his own life for Hashem? It was only when entering the king’s palace, where the *malchut* of Hashem was fully revealed, that he felt his life was deeply connected and rooted in the kingship. Once a person feels that his entire chiyus is the Melech Malchei HaMelachim, he could easily give his life for Hashem.

The primary mitzvah of Rosh HaShanah is the blowing of the Shofar. Rav Saadia Gaon explains that one of the reasons for blowing the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is that when kings used to be coronated it used to be preceded by a Tekiah. When Klal Yisrael enter the beginning of the year and coronate Hashem as their King once again, we too blow the Shofar. However, there is a deeper

connection between the blowing of the Shofar and coronating the king.

The blowing of the Shofar comes from a very deep place within a person. Chazal say “*Man D’Nafach Mitocho Nafach*,” that when one blows it is coming from the deepest place inside of you. When the Baal Tokea blows from the Shofar, he needs to give the entirety of who he is, because in order to crown the king one must feel that one’s entire being is connected to Hashem’s Malchut. When one hears these blows, he must think about the revelation of Hashem’s kingship in this world, and how much it truly means to him.

On Rosh HaShanah we repeat over and over Avinu Malkeinu– that Hashem, you are our father and our king. Chazal explain that בְּרָא כְרֵעָא דְאָבִי, that a son is like the leg of his father. The uniqueness of a father-son relationship is that the son is deeply rooted in the soul of the father. There is no way to disconnect them, as they are bonded in their essence. What we are truly asking of Hashem on Rosh HaShanah is, “we are coronating You Hashem as our King, but we aren’t satisfied with a superficial relationship, but we want Your kingship to be so ingrained within us, like a son is connected to his father!” We want our Malkeinu to be Avinu!

When we go out to war with our Yetzer Hara, the battle must be a fight with one’s entire being, with Mesirat Nefesh, because Hashem’s Malchut is so ingrained within us. We cannot be satisfied with anything less than “*VaYomer Kol Asher Neshamah B’Apo*,” that only when the entire Neshamah, the Etzem of one’s being says “*Hashem Elokei Yisrael Melech*”– that Hashem is our king.

Building Compassion Through a Fence

By Eitan Mermelstein (21)

Parashat Ki Teitzei is filled with many Mitzvot that are intentionally juxtaposed. This becomes apparent from the very beginning of the Parashah with the juxtaposition of the Eishet Yefat To’ar, the Ben HaSenu’ah, and the Ben Sorer U’Moreh. Rashi (21:11 s.v. VeLakachta Lecha LeIsha) famously writes that Eishet Yefat To’ar is the Torah’s concession to the Yetzer Hara as it understands the nature of man and wants to ensure that if man capitulates to his desires, it is done correctly. However, Rashi warns, if a person fulfills the Mitzvah of Eishet Yefat To’ar, the Eishet Yefat To’ar will become an Ishah Senu’ah, a hated wife, and her son will become a Ben Sorer U’Moreh. Thus, the Torah’s juxtaposition of these Mitzvot is intentional and crucial to understanding all three. Moreover, there are other mitzvot throughout the Parashah which are clearly juxtaposed. For example, the three different elements of Kilayim are juxtaposed. Additionally, there are Mitzvot such as helping someone whose animal is struggling and Hashavat Aveidah which both clearly have a theme of Achicha, brotherhood, and are therefore juxtaposed. However, one perplexing placement of Mitzvot in this week’s Parasha, is

the juxtaposition of Ma'akeh, the obligation to put up a fence and secure a new house, and Shilu'ach HaKen, sending away the mother bird before taking its eggs. Thus, why are these two Mitzvot placed side by side and what message is the Torah teaching by doing so?

Ramban (Devaim 22:6-7 s.v. Ki Yikarei Kan Tzipor Lifanechah) writes that the purpose of Shilu'ach HaKen is to replace brutality with compassion. Just like the Issur of killing a cow and its son on the same day, we are meant to develop compassion by not taking the eggs while the mother-bird is present. As Rambam writes in Moreh Nevuchim (3:48) we are meant to understand that animals too have emotions, and we must care for animals just as we care for human beings. This is not an understanding of Shilu'ach HaKen that is held strictly by these two Mefarashim. Countless others, such as Chizkuni (Devarim 22:6 s.v. Lo Tikach HaEim Al HaBanim), Rashbam (ibid) and Ibn Ezra (Devarim 22:6 s.v. Efrochim) all understand this mitzvah as a way of ridding brutality from one's heart and, thus, creating compassion.

In regards to the Mitzvah of Ma'akeh, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik writes (Days of Deliverance pages 8-11) that Ma'akeh creates a realization that humanity is a vulnerable species. We are always prone to accidents, and therefore, we create a fence to prevent such accidents. We see this principle in Halacha as the Mishnah writes, "*Asu Seyag LaTorah*," "Make a **Fence** for Torah" (Avot 1:1). This awareness of vulnerability, writes the Rav, makes mankind more ethical including humility.

Thus, the relationship between Shilu'ach HaKen and Ma'akeh is clear. Shilu'ach HaKen forces one to realize the value in other species; that we are not much different than the animals around us. Therefore, we must show compassion to them and not allow the mother-bird to be present when we take the eggs. Similarly, Ma'akeh aims to create humility and forces one to confront their own humanity. We must understand that we are mortal and must protect ourselves. Therefore, we create protections in our house. Ultimately, both Mitzvot aim to create caring and compassion, for ourselves, our neighbors, and those with whom we share this world, as well as confront our humanity.

Ki Tavo

The Present

By Menachem Kravetz ('20)

One of the highlights of a child's year is their birthday. Not only do they turn a year older, but they are also presented with presents to mark this momentous occasion. Generally, children cannot wait to play with their newly acquired toys, often opening them up before their family is done singing 'Happy Birthday'. However, after a couple of months of playing with their birthday presents, there is no longer the excitement of them being 'new toys' and these presents slowly move toward the 'old toy' pile.

In Parshat Ki Tavo, Moshe says, "HaYom Hazeh Hashem Elokecha Mizavecha Laasot et HaChukim HaElah v'et HaMishpatim v'Shamarta Vasita otam b'chol levavecha uv'chol

nafshecha" - Today, Hashem commands you to observe these laws and rules and to observe them faithfully with all your heart and soul" (Deuteronomy 26:16). The question often proposed about this pasuk is why the phrase "HaYom Hazeh" is used. Were all the mitzvot of the Torah commanded on this day? Many Mefarshim address this issue.

Ibn Ezra (ibid) explains that this marks the resumption of Moshe's speech to Bnei Yisrael after being interrupted by many mitzvot such as Bikkurim. Sforno (ibid) explains that the phrase "HaYom Hazeh" symbolizes Bnei Yisrael entering into a covenant with Hashem, promising to keep His mitzvot and observe His, something no nation has done. As these Mefarshim explain this phrase in regard to the context, Rashi finds a deep meaning to "HaYom Hazeh". Rashi (ibid) says that to us it should feel as everyday Hashem is commanding us to perform these mitzvot. These mitzvot should not only be performed with excitement for the first couple of months and then become boring, but it should feel like each day you were commanded these mitzvot for the first time.

When a Bar Mitzvah boy puts on his tefillin or lains from the Torah for the first time, it is a very exciting experience. As the boy grows up, he should not let these mitzvot fall into the 'old toy pile', but he should have the same excitement he did on the first day every single day.

However, this does not only have to apply to mitzvot, but can apply to every day of our lives. Each day Hashem grants us with a new opportunity, a new day. This provides us with a chance to serve Hashem through tefillah and talmud torah, a chance to grow as a human being, and a chance to have a positive influence on others around us. Days should not be seen as something regular, but a new opportunity for us to engage in new action making the world around us a better place.

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