

ב"ה *Torah* **Tidbits**

ISSUE 1535

כ"ט תשרי תשפ"ד • OCT. 14 2023

פרשת בראשית
PARSHAT BERESHIT
SHABBAT MEVARCHIM



OU Israel Sends
its Love to the Entire
OU Family and Klal Yisrael
with Prayers for Comfort,
Safety and Shalom.



Avinu Malkeinu
Rabbi Moshe Taragin
Page 42

A Message
Concerning
the Matzav



Holy Synagogues of Israel
Rivi Frankel
Page 56

עושה שלום במרומיו הוא יעשה שלום עלינו

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PARSHAT BERESHIT ZMANIM
CANDLES 5:34PM • HAVDALA 6:45PM • RABBEINU TAM 7:26PM



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Please note that the **Zmanim chart** for the coming year will appear in **next week's Edition be"H**, when we hope to have a full distribution.

A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANUCH YERES

Rav, Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

"And the Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden" (2:9)

ועץ החיים בתוך הגן (כ"ט)

The Targum Onkelos (35 C.E.-120 C.E. Rome) in his ancient translation of the Bible, translates the word "in the midst" as "In the CENTER of the Garden" - "במציעות גנתא"

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Kagan, 1838-1933 Raadin) asks why the Tree of Life needs to be centrally located according to Onkelos? He answered that since the tree radiated life, it needed to be at the center of the Garden; like a heart which distributes life sustaining blood throughout the body, it needs to be in a central location of the body.

Similarly, with regards to the role of the Torah in our spiritual lives, it too, must be the center of our lives over all other interests in our lives. Our lives derive its purpose from the Torah and when we face seemingly insurmountable challenges, we lean on our Emunah in G-d and His Torah to help us overcome.

Shabbat Shalom

HELPFUL REMINDERS



Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan is Sun. and Mon. Oct. 15-16

מולד חודש **מרחשון** יהיה במוצאי שבת קודש בשעה 6, 33 דקות וחלק אחד ראש חודש חשון יהיה **ביום ראשון וביום שני** הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה



Kiddush Levana:

3 Days from the Molad: Tues. Night Oct. 17

7 Days from the Molad: Motzei Shabbat Oct. 21

Last time to say Kiddush Levana :Motzei Shabbat Oct. 28

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



	BERESHIT		NOACH	
	CANDLES	HAVDALA	CANDLES	HAVDALA
Yerushalayim / Maale Adumim	5:34	6:45	5:26	6:38
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	5:52	6:48	5:44	6:41
Beit Shemesh / RBS	5:53	6:46	5:45	6:39
Alon Shvut	5:50	6:46	5:42	6:38
Raanana / Tel Mond / Herzliya / K. Saba	5:50	6:47	5:42	6:39
Modiin / Chashmonaim	5:50	6:46	5:42	6:39
Netanya	5:50	6:47	5:42	6:39
Be'er Sheva	5:51	6:47	5:44	6:40
Rehovot	5:51	6:47	5:43	6:39
Petach Tikva	5:34	6:47	5:26	6:39
Ginot Shomron	5:49	6:46	5:41	6:38
Haifa / Zichron	5:40	6:46	5:31	6:38
Gush Shiloh	5:49	6:45	5:41	6:37
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	5:51	6:47	5:43	6:39
Givat Zeev	5:53	6:46	5:46	6:38
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	5:50	6:46	5:42	6:38
Ashkelon	5:52	6:48	5:44	6:41
Yad Binyamin	5:51	6:47	5:43	6:39
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	5:42	6:44	5:34	6:36
Golan	5:47	6:44	5:39	6:36
Nahariya/Maalot	5:48	6:46	5:41	6:38
Afula	5:48	6:45	5:40	6:38

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem) - 7:26PM • Shabbat Parshat Noach - 7:18PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Kidushin 62

JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wed - Shabbat

Oct 11 - 21 / 26 Tishrei - 6 Cheshvan

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin **5:48 - 5:55**

Sunrise **6:39 - 6:46**

Sof Zman Kriat Shema **9:32 - 9:35**

Magen Avraham **8:56 - 8:58**

Sof Zman Tefila **10:30-10:31**

(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya)

Chatzot (Halachic Noon) **12:25 - 12:23**

Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) **12:55 - 12:53**

Plag Mincha **4:59 - 4:50**

Sunset (Including Elevation) **6:16 - 6:05**



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email: office@ouisrael.org

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Headquarters: 40 Rector St. 4th floor, New York, NY 10006 • 212-563-4000 • website: www.ou.org



Editor Emeritus: Phil Chernofsky

Editor: Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider | aaron@ouisrael.org

Advertising: Ita Rochel | 02-5609125 or ttads@ouisrael.org

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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel

I write this message, dear readers, with a heavy heart. I had intended to write about happy times, of celebrations, with uplifting and positive messages. We just finished the holiday of *zman simchateinu*, a time of joy and gladness, and I wanted to write about the beauty and *simcha* of Torah, of enthusiasm for learning, and the Jewish people's deep connection with this book, our life's blood. But traumatic, tragic circumstances have required me to reassess and rewrite. As of now, Monday of *Parshat Bereshit*, there are so many unknowns of our current situation in Israel. Every day, every hour, is a new update - of war, of Jewish casualties, more hostages, more horror. I am sure that we will have greater clarity by the time this message reaches your hands, as much as I am sure that there will remain many unknowns and many questions. Nevertheless, I hope that the words I am going to say in these pages will reach every reader's heart and mind.

I had the great merit of learning in *Yeshivat Ohr Etzion* with *Rosh HaYeshiva* Rav Chaim Drukman, *zt"l*. Unfortunately, during my years in yeshiva there, we knew many people who were murdered or injured in terror attacks at the time. There were times when we were shaken to the core, in pain

and grief. But every time, we could always see Rav Drukman powering forward, continuing to teach and to lead.

I can clearly remember one instance, when Rav Drukman was lecturing in his house, sometime after he had been in a terror attack where he had been shot, and his driver, Ephraim Ayubi, had been killed. Just a week and a half later, Rav Drukman



returned to teaching in his home. I was in his class on *She'elot uTeshuvot*, responsa literature, when a student raised his hand and asked, "How do you continue on? How do you continue when the person you spent countless hours with, your driver,

your assistant, was killed in front of you? When you yourself sit here, injured, how do you keep going?"

I remember Rav Drukman standing up, and I can remember how he responded, with his inflections and all, as if he said it yesterday. He quoted Yirmiyahu 30:7:

עַתָּה צָרָה הִיא לְיַעֲקֹב וּמִמֶּנָּה יוֹשֶׁעַ *"Et tzarah hee l'Yaakov u'mimena yevashe'a"* - It is a time of trouble for Yaakov, but from it he shall be saved." He went on to explain that the verse does not say, "It is a time of trouble for Yaakov and afterwards, he shall be saved." The verse tells us, *"u'mimena yevashe'a,"* "from it he shall be saved."

This means, Rav Drukman declared, that it is precisely from within the trouble, the *tzarah*, that Yaakov is going through, that *Klal Yisrael* is experiencing, that makes us resilient, that makes us stronger. It is what gives us the ability to overcome the challenges that we have to overcome. This is the lesson that gave Rav Drukman the strength to keep going.

Looking at our situation now, there are so many questions. The questions themselves, unfortunately, have a weakening effect on us. And our enemies, these Hamas terrorists, know this. They are trying in every way, shape, or form to weaken our spirit. They know that what has brought *Klal Yisrael* back after 2,000 years, and what has enabled us to be victorious in our battles is our *ruach*, our fierce and tenacious spirit. It is our connection to G-d, our connection to the Torah, and there is no doubt that the Torah's spirit dwells within *Klal Yisrael*. Hamas is continuing to try to weaken us. They are using hacks, fake videos, misinformation, any way they can manipulate and confuse us. The chaos of the attack has meant that information about hostages and who has been murdered, has been slow to come. Nevertheless, it has already become so personal. Many of us know dear friends, and dear friends' children, who are among those murdered or taken hostage. So many of those around us have been drafted to fight. It is becoming more and more personal. How can our spirit stay strong? How

can we stay positive in this painful time?

Our enemies want us to buckle from the pain. They want us to be sad. They want our resolve to break and to be left in a depressed state. It does seem that this would be the appropriate reaction. I walk through my house, my children at home, schools canceled, and I wonder if I should smile. Will it seem as if I do not identify with the tragedy befalling *Klal Yisrael*? However, I can't help but wonder if this is the message we want to give over to each other, to our youth. A child looks up at you on the bus. Can you smile or has Hamas taken that away?



Hamas wants us to be broken. But the reality is, we are stronger than ever. We are more united than ever. Despite all the tragedy, the terrible pain this week has been, we still have so much to be grateful to God for. When you hear that 150%, 50% more than is needed, are answering the call for *miluim*, reserves... When you see cars, in the North and South, abandoned at intersections because the people in them immediately answered the call up to fight and left their car wherever it was... When you get so many people asking me, “Avi, how can we help?”.. When you get phone calls, emails, WhatsApp messages, all of people volunteering, donating, seeking ways to get involved and provide aid and assistance... When you see how many Israelis are trying to fly back from *chutz laaretz* to join the reserves and be ready to fight...It's just unbelievably

inspiring. "מי כעמך ישראל" Who is like Your nation Israel!"

We are not a broken nation. We are united. Strong. Flying higher and higher. "*Umimena yevashe'a*" - from within the pain, we will continue to rise. We will show our enemies that they can never break our spirit. Yes, they have hit us, and hit us hard. But we will overcome. We will grow mightier than ever.

After this is all over, there will be a time for introspection. How could such a thing have happened? But right now, we need to focus on one thing - keeping our spirits high. Yes, we must be there for those who have lost loved ones. But we must also take Rav Drukman's lesson to heart - "*umimena yevashe'a*", to understand that this too can make us stronger, more resilient, more passionate, and, with God's help, to move *Klal Yisrael* forward.

I encourage every Torah Tidbits reader to find ways to help, whether it be by donating blood at the blood drives happening now, packing up food packages being distributed throughout the country, or offering to take in families displaced from their homes. But I also encourage us all to take a step back and look at how much *achdut* (unity) we

have. Focus on these positives. And smile.

It may seem strange, but we should not feel bad to have smiles on our faces during these difficult times. We need the smiles to move forward, to focus on the positive. And we need to communicate to others, through encouraging and warm messages and actions, the need to keep our spirit high. Through this, we will win against our enemies, and we will be victorious.

The OU is embarking on a global campaign to address both the emotional and physical needs of those who rely on us, and we can't do it without you. I encourage those who can to support this campaign at ou.org/israelcrisis. We are also providing ongoing Chizuk programming which you can access via our website and social media channels.



Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

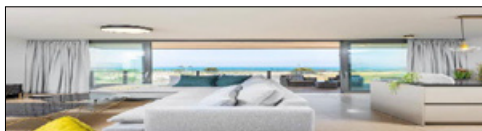
Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
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from this issue of Torah Tidbits be
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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT BERESHIT

The first 2 parshiot of the Torah, Breishit and Noach span 2,000 years. They can be viewed as the dawn of mankind. But in the narrative of the Torah, they must be seen differently.

The Torah has 54 parshiot. The first 2 describe universal man. And 52 describe the Jewish people's covenant with G-d. Clearly, the first 2 parshiot are a prelude, the backstory to the story of the Jewish people. But not the Jewish people. The unique covenant between G-d and a people. That is the story of the Torah. The story of the Torah is the covenant established by G-d with the Jewish people; who is in, how it develops, what are the mutual demands, how is it expressed. The first 2 parshiot must address the most basic question; why was a covenant made with a single people? While Parshat Breishit is rich in myriad lessons as to the nature of man, it is primarily this backstory to the covenant with the Jewish people that is the narrative of our parsha.



1ST ALIYA (GENESIS 1:1-2:3)

In the beginning was chaos; the spirit of G-d hovered over the waters. Day 1, light was created. Day 2, the waters were split up and down, with heavens emerging between. Day 3, the water below was split, with dry land emerging, with vegetation. Day 4, the heavens above were filled with the sun, moon and stars.

Day 5, the seas were filled with fish, the skies with birds, blessed to be fruitful. Day 6, animals were created on the land. And finally, man is created in the image of G-d. Man is blessed to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue the world and to rule over the animals. The world was completed; with no creation on the 7th day, it was endowed with blessing and holiness.

The Creation of the world is depicted as evolving from less sophisticated to the most sophisticated. It begins with inanimate earth, water, heavens, which then are filled with vegetation, then living beings of fish and birds, then land animals. And finally, man.

It is clear that it is not the creation of man that is the pinnacle of this story, but rather the radical being that he is; the image of G-d. While we are quite familiar with the description that man is created in the image of G-d, it is, as Rabbi Sacks coined, "Radical Then, Radical Now". Man created in the image of G-d? That is a shocking depiction of man. As if to say, G-d is Creating a partner, a shadow of Himself. Man is not a fancy ape, a well-developed baboon. While man shares characteristics with animals, a chasm divides; that chasm is the image of G-d.

The rest of this parsha is the development of this unique and radical relationship; G-d and His shadow creation, man. How much is man like G-d? In what ways? And more crucially, in what ways not?



2ND ALIYA (2:4-20)

A more detailed account of the Creation of Man: G-d creates man from dust of the earth and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. He is placed in the Garden of Eden, full of beautiful trees, to work it, surrounded by rivers. G-d commands man to not eat of the tree of knowledge. And declares that it is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a partner.

The language of chapter 2 is in striking contrast to chapter 1. Chapter 1 placed man as the pinnacle of created beings. Chapter 2 describes personality, morality, humility, emotion. Chapter 1 is the creation of mankind – chapter 2 is the creation of a person. Man gets the name Adam as he is created from the *adama*, the earth, a rather humble beginning. He is created alone. The garden will not grow without him. He is to work and preserve the garden. He is given a command punishable by death. It is not good that man be alone; I will make him a partner. The animals are brought to Adam to name.

This description of man is defining the image of G-d. Man, as G-d's image is charged with being His partner. But he is not G-d Himself. He is to rule the world, as G-d Rules. He is to name the animals, as G-d named the day, night, heavens and seas. As He is a Creator, man is to be a creator – a creator of life through children, a creator of vegetation through the garden. On the other hand, it is not good that he is alone – for there is only One who is Alone. Man is to be G-d like, to be creative, to name things as G-d named things in the Creation, to take his place as the guardian of the world. But how far he goes and how far He goes is the topic of the 3rd aliya.

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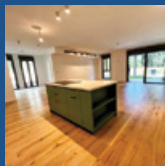
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3RD ALIYA (2:20-3:21)

Woman is created. The serpent convinces Eve that were she to eat of the forbidden fruit, she would be as G-d, knowing good and evil. She and Adam eat of the fruit and their eyes are opened and they cover themselves with fig leaves. They hide from G-d, Who challenges their disobedience. All are punished – the serpent will slither, the woman will birth children with pain, and man's cultivation of the earth will be with sweat.

A richer story of symbolism in Tanach is hard to find. A speaking serpent, the enticement of beauty, hubris, failure, hiding from G-d, blame, consequences. Many and varied are the lessons to be culled from this story.

Man, created in the image of G-d, must aspire to his lofty calling, while remembering he is but the image of, not G-d Himself. Man being alone may deceive him into thinking he is the One and Only. Hence, he needs a partner. The serpent convinced Eve, and then she Adam, that man need not keep the command, for you are in His Image. The serpent convinced them: as G-d cedes to man leadership in this world, He likewise cedes to man the role as legislator of good and evil. If you don't like His rule to not eat, make up your own rule.

In that they err. While G-d like, you must defer in the ways I Require. G-d responds by walking them back a bit specifically in their most creative activities, as if to say that while you are creators, I remain the Creator. Eve, when you create and bear children, the quintessential creative moment of humanity, it will be with labor, a reminder of your earthly origins. And man, when you create from the earth, it

will be with sweat. There is only One who Creates with the uttering of a word, with ease. He is the Creator; you, a creator. And He is the Commander of what is good and evil, while you are the commanded.



4TH ALIYA (3:22 – 4:18)

Man is exiled from the Garden of Eden. Cain and Abel are born. They bring offerings to G-d – Abel's accepted, Cain's not. Cain kills Abel. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain is consigned to wander the earth.

Cain kills his brother. And in so doing, violates another boundary between the one created in His Image and the Creator himself. While man will be a *creator* of life, he will not be a *taker* of life. That he must cede to the Creator.

Sin is met with exile. Adam's sin brings exile from the Garden of Eden. Cain's sin brings wandering, homelessness. The Torah explains the meaning of exile: Cain left from being before G-d. This introduces a pillar concept of man and G-d. Divine disfavor with man results in distance. Adam was sent away from the Garden. Cain sent away from being before G-d. Later, the tower of Babel will bring dispersion. Only Avraham will reverse this and journey not away but toward a specific place.

In memory of our beloved and sorely missed
uncle, parents, aunt and uncle, grandparents and
great-grandparents

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on his 17th Yahrzeit

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5TH ALIYA (4:19 – 4:22)

Lemech and his wives Ada and Tzila bear children. One is the initiator of animal husbandry, one of the music of strings and wind instruments, and one of the fashioning of copper and iron.

A curiously short aliya. Mankind advances marvelously in creatively mastering the world: the mastery of animals, creative artistic expression of music and advanced productivity of copper and iron. Man was commanded in creation to master the world. He is doing a good job. But, while man is masterful in his creative conquest of the world, the brevity of mention is perhaps to highlight that of much greater importance is his mastery of himself. The Torah is far more interested in man's ethical behavior and his relationship with G-d than with his mastery of iron and the creative expression of his music. He is mighty good at mastery of the world. Let's see how good he is at mastering himself.



6TH ALIYA (4:23 – 5:24)

The generations from Adam through Noah.

Enosh is described as beginning to profane the name of G-d. Rashi explains that people and things were ascribed Divine qualities. The beginning of idolatry. It is erroneous to call Avraham the first monotheist. G-d spoke to Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel brought offerings and He spoke to Cain, and Noah will be instructed by G-d.

Rather, man moved away from G-d, failed in his behavior and became distanced. Avraham is not the first monotheist; he is the first to be embraced and to be pulled closer by G-d.

The creation of man in the image of G-d, to be His partner is suffering. Man

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overstepped his place in failing to listen to the command, in murder, and now in failing to maintain G-d's unique being. Early mankind is moving away; Avraham will eventually be brought near.



7TH ALIYA (5:25 – 6:8)

Noah is introduced. G-d is disappointed in man; his lifespan is reduced to 120 years. G-d plans to destroy man, animals, birds. Noah finds favor in His eyes.

In the man/G-d balance, longevity induces in man a feeling of eternal life, blurring again the crucial differences between man and G-d. In calibrating the correct balance for the man/G-d relationship, longevity is counter-productive. Mortality is better. Man will not live forever – only One lives eternally. A shorter lifespan is in fact a gift from G-d, an act of love and generosity. Reducing man's lifespan helps

man to more clearly see that while man is created in G-d's Image, he is not G-d Himself. Only One is eternal.

And so, the pillars of man in His Image are laid. Only He is One; man has a partner. Only He Commands; man obeys. Only He Takes life; while man creates life, he does not take it. Only He is Eternal, man but 120 years.

I SHMUEL 20:18-42

Today's *haftorah* is read on a Shabbat that is immediately followed by Rosh Chodesh. Indeed, the reading opens with the words, "Yonathan said, 'Tomorrow is the [first of the] new month.'"

The story is one of loyalty and devotion. David and Yonathan are dear friends. Yonathan's father, King Shaul, despises David, fearing that he will depose him from the throne. Sensing danger, Yonathan told David to hide in the field rather than attend Shaul's Rosh Chodesh feast. Yonathan then attended the feast and gauged the king's mood. Realizing that Shaul was determined to kill David, Yonathan went out to the field, shot three arrows and called to his assistant, "The arrow is beyond you," a predetermined signal to his friend that it was not safe to return to the king's palace.

Before parting, the two friends kissed and wept, and swore to maintain their mutual affection for generations to come. ■

STATS

1st of the 54 sedras; 1st of 12 in Bereshit.

Written on 241 lines in a Torah, rank 9th.

23 Parshiyot; 10 open, 13 closed, rank: 6.

146 pesukim - rank: 8th (5th in Bereshit), same as Mikeitz; but Miketz is longer in lines, words, letters.

1931 words - ranks 8 (5th in Bereshit).

7235 letters - ranks 11 (5th in Bereshit).

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
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Creation Conversation

Anyone who has ever taught anything can confirm the adage of our Sages: “I have learned from all my teachers, but I have learned most from my pupils.”

It is especially true that one learns a great deal from his students if he does not limit himself to lecturing to them, but rather engages in face-to-face conversation with them. It is in candid and interactive dialogue that one learns most from his students.

The immense value of simple conversation between teacher and student was brought home to me many years ago in a conversation I had with two very different students.

They both attended a series of lectures I gave for individuals with very little prior exposure to the Jewish religion and its teachings. One of them was almost exclusively interested in what he called, “the rules and regulations” of Judaism. The other was far less interested in Jewish law. He was more of the “spiritual” type and had a plethora of questions about the nature of God.

The first individual, let’s call him Rick, was interested in a meaningful way of life. He wanted to be part of a congregation, to celebrate the holidays, and to learn how to live daily life as a Jew.

The other student, let’s call him Seth, was consumed by questions of cosmology and the origins of the universe. He saw God as an almost impersonal force behind nature. He wanted a relationship with God but questioned whether that was at all possible.

Both students had in common an interest in engaging me, their teacher, in conversation after class. Usually, those conversations took place in the local kosher pizza shop.

I vividly recall the evening I gave a lecture on the opening chapter of the book of *Genesis*, which is, of course, the beginning of this week’s Torah portion (*Genesis* 1:1-6:5). Rick and Seth appeared equally eager to corner me in the pizza shop after that lecture.

Rick began the conversation by firmly questioning why the Torah even bothered to give us details about the creation of the world and God’s role in it. “As a Jew,” he maintained, “I just need to know how to live my life. How to celebrate the holidays, what food is kosher and what is not, and what is right and wrong in the spheres of ethics and morality. I can satisfy my curiosity about the origins of the universe by consulting some scientific book on the matter. For me, this has nothing to do with religion.”

Seth, sitting across the table, was absolutely astounded. “What?!” he exclaimed. “This opening chapter of *Genesis* is precisely what I need to know as I begin my exploration of Judaism. I need to know about God, from beginning to end. And this is His beginning.”

I was fascinated by this conversation, because it helped me put into a new perspective the conflicting opinions of two of the greatest rabbinic commentators on the Bible, Rashi and Ramban.

Rashi, in the very first words of his magisterial commentary on the entire *Pentateuch*, asks the same question that was bothering Rick.

Rashi, whose actual name was Solomon the son of Isaac, begins by quoting a Rabbi Isaac, who some have maintained was none other than his own father. He avers that the Torah should have begun with the chapter in the later book of *Exodus*, which outlines the *mitzvot* which Jews were supposed to fulfill. Rashi struggles to find a reason for the Torah’s description of creation and the detailed narratives of early human history.

“Rick,” I was able to say, “your question was anticipated many centuries ago by a great man whom you never heard of.” I continued to introduce him to the man who was Rashi and to his indispensable commentary. Rick was gratified that Rashi too seemed to conceive of the Torah as primarily a book of “rules and regulations,” so that he felt compelled to seek a reason for its beginning with an account of the creation.

Seth was obviously hard put to restrain himself. But before he began to protest

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against Rick, and against Rashi, I attempted to placate him. “There was another great rabbinic commentator on the Bible,” I explained. “His name was Rabbi Moses Ben Nachman. Some call him Nachmanides. Traditionally, we call him Ramban and consider him second only to Rashi as a rabbinic commentator.”

I told Seth, and Rick who was listening reluctantly, that Ramban in his opening paragraph of his commentary on *Genesis* 1:1, contests Rashi’s very question. “Of course,” he asserts, “the Torah had to begin with a description of the creation. That is the root of our faith, so anyone who believes that the world always existed but was not created by the Almighty at one specific moment in time has no share in the Torah at all.”

Rick and Seth were gratified to discover

that their differing views on what was important in Judaism had precedents in the writings of two great medieval rabbis.

I hastened to disappoint them. I told them that it was incorrect to conceive of two mutually exclusive definitions of Judaism. It was not a matter of a “rules-based” religion versus a “God-based” one.

I quoted to them the marvelous passage in the writings of Maimonides in which he speaks of the *mitzvah* to love God, and he explains that there are two ways to achieve this. One way is by studying His Torah and its laws, and the other way is by contemplating His astonishing creation, the world of nature.

I admonished them to carefully avoid reducing our faith to one or the other conception. “Our faith is not a simplistic one,” I argued. “As you proceed in your study of Judaism in general, and of the *Five Books of Moses* in particular, you will come to realize that our religion emphasizes that our God is both Creator and Lawgiver. Any conception of Him as one but not the other is not authentic Judaism.”

I thanked them for once again demonstrating to me the great value of conversation between student and teacher. Before we parted that evening, I shared with them a story of another conversation between a teacher and a student that I had read about in philosopher Samuel Hugo Bergman’s memoirs.

Bergman recounts the story of Hermann Cohen, the German-Jewish philosopher who drew closer to religious Judaism in his later years. The climax of his life’s work was his book, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*. It seems

that the philosopher Cohen once entered into a long conversation with an old and old-fashioned Jew who resided in the university town of Marburg with him. The philosopher attempted to explain to the old Jew his elaborate and highly intellectual theory about the nature of God. The old man listened with the respect due to a university professor. When Cohen was finished with his learned and lengthy discourse, his elderly partner in conversation responded in Yiddish: “I understand everything you said, but something is missing. *Vu iz der Bashefer?* Where is the Creator?”

Cohen heard the old Jew’s response, and “got it.” His eyes welled up with tears, but he remained speechless.

The opening chapter of this week’s Torah portion assures that everyone who reads it will not make the philosopher’s mistake, but will realize, along with the old-fashioned Jew, that whatever else God may be, He is primarily *der Bashefer*, the Creator. ■

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A Meaningful Omission¹

The tragic story of mankind's second generation unfolds as Kayin and Hevel, the sons of Adam and Chava, each bring an offering to God.

God accepts Hevel and his offering but rejects Kayin and his efforts. Unable to accept a divine rejection which he feels is both without reason and unreasonable, a despondent and enraged Kayin lashes out. He murders his brother, forever eliminating his perceived rival. God decrees, in response to this horrific act of fratricide, that Kayin will spend the remainder of his life in exile.

A glaring textual omission emerges, however, at the climactic moment of the Kayin and Hevel story. The Torah states, "And Kayin said to Hevel his brother, and it was when they were in the field, and Kayin rose up upon Hevel his brother and killed him."

What did Kayin say? Why does the Torah introduce a conversation which it then fails to record? [Note: Had the Torah used the word *va'yedaber*, "spoke," as opposed to *va'yomer*, "said," to describe Kayin's communication with his brother, we might have argued that God simply wanted to indicate that a conversation took place. *Va'yomer*, however, always refers to a specific verbal communication, and is invariably followed in the Torah by the

content of that communication.]

Rising to the textual challenge, the rabbis in the Midrash Rabba suggest three possible conversations which might have led to the fateful physical confrontation between Kayin and Hevel.

1. The brothers determined to divide the world. One of them took possession of the land while the other claimed all movable items. As soon as the division took effect, one said to the other, "You are standing upon my land!" while the other replied, "You are wearing my clothes!" A struggle ensued, and Kayin killed Hevel.

2. Their dispute did not center upon material possessions at all but, instead, upon the Beit Hamikdash, the Holy Temple (which would be built by the Jewish nation millennia later). After they divided both the land and the movables equally, Kayin and Hevel both claimed dominion over the Temple, each arguing that it should be built in his domain. A struggle ensued, and Kayin killed Hevel.

3. The battle centered upon neither of the above. Kayin and Hevel actually fought over their mother Chava (or alternatively, one of their sisters). A struggle ensued, and Kayin killed Hevel.

The Midrash, however, seems to raise more questions than answers. Can the rabbis suggest that they know the content of a

1. This article is adapted from a study in my *Unlocking the Torah Text, Gefen Publishing Company, OU Press*

conversation concerning which the biblical text is completely silent? Are we to assume that the Midrash reflects prophetic vision or that the rabbis were somehow personally present at the scene of Hevel's murder?

Further, each of the rabbinic suggestions seems more bizarre than the next. How can we seriously consider, for example, that Kayin and Hevel actually argued about the Temple? The very concept of the Beit Hamikdash would not be introduced into human experience until centuries after their death. Similarly, no clue is found in the biblical text to support the contention that Kayin and Hevel argued either about material wealth or about a woman.

Simply put, how are we to understand the Midrashic approach to the struggle between Kayin and Hevel?

Counterintuitively, this seemingly strange rabbinic passage actually provides us with a perfect entrée into the world of Midrash. There is a vast difference between pshat (straightforward explanation of biblical text) and Midrash (rabbinical exegesis).

When we operate within the world of pshat, we search for the direct meaning of the text before us. In this realm, everything is literal and concrete.

When we enter the world of Midrash, however, the rules change completely. Midrashim are vehicles through which the rabbis, using the Torah text as a point of departure, transmit significant messages and lessons. As such, Midrashim are not necessarily meant to be taken literally; nor are they to be seen as attempts to explain the factual meaning of a specific Torah passage. By using the vehicle of Midrash to convey eternal lessons and values,

the rabbis connect these values to the Torah text itself. They also ensure that the lessons will not be lost and will always be perceived as flowing directly from the Torah.

Our task, therefore, when we enter the world of Midrash, is to determine the global lessons that the rabbis intend to convey.

In the Midrash before us the rabbis are not simply explaining the Kayin and Hevel story. They are, instead, viewing this first violent event in human history as the prototype of physical confrontation across the ages. True to Midrashic style, they express significant global observations in concrete, story-like terms.

Effectively, the rabbis make the following statement in this Midrash: *We were not present when Kayin killed Hevel. Nor can we glean any information directly from the biblical text concerning the source of their dispute. Were you to ask us, however, what these brothers were struggling about, we would be forced to suggest one of three options.*

Over the course of human history, man has killed his brother for material gain, over religion, and because of lust. All bloodshed and warfare can be traced to these three basic primary sources. We are, therefore, certain that one of these issues served as the basis of the confrontation between Kayin and Hevel at the dawn of human history.

This rabbinic commentary serves as a sobering reminder that mankind has not moved one inch off the killing field of Hevel's murder. Despite perceived social progress, nothing has fundamentally changed. The causes of human conflict have remained remarkably constant across the face of time. The Midrash remains sadly relevant, centuries after its authorship.

If the twentieth century gave lie to any assumption at all, it was to the assumption that scientific and technological progress would automatically be accompanied by moral advancement as well. The century that gave us the Holocaust serves to remind us that in many ways we have simply gotten better at killing each other. So far, the twenty-first century isn't looking much better.

As perceptive and as fascinating as the Midrash may be, however, it fails to answer the original textual question that we raised. Once again, why doesn't the Torah tell us what Kayin said to Hevel? Why introduce a conversation and then deliberately leave its content unrecorded?

On one level, we could simply answer that God wants us to fill in the blanks. Sometimes, a portion of the Torah is left unfinished in order to make us partners in the text. God challenges us to read into that text the myriad of possible lessons that are relevant to our lives. Had the Torah told us the content of Kayin's dialogue with Hevel, the questions would not have been asked, the Midrash would not have been written and its fundamental lessons would have never been conveyed.

There may, however, be an even deeper and more powerful reason for the Torah's omission in the text before us. The Torah edits out the content of Kayin's words to Hevel because God wants us to understand that those words, whatever they might have been, were of no ultimate consequence. Sometimes an act is so depraved that its cause and motivation is unimportant; no valid excuse can be offered.

Perhaps Kayin had justifiable grievances against his brother. We, however, will never know. Kayin loses all claims upon our empathy and understanding the

moment he murders his brother. Nothing can explain that heinous act, and certainly nothing can justify it. Once again, the eternal Torah text, this time through omission, delivers a message that is frighteningly applicable to our time. No matter what their cause, acts of terror, mayhem and murder perpetrated against innocent victims are inexcusable.

The perpetrators of these crimes, through their very actions, render their own potential grievances irrelevant. God wants us to know that Kayin said something to Hevel. He also wants us to know, however, that what Kayin said ultimately doesn't matter. The text conveys this lesson in the most powerful way that it can. We are told that a conversation took place, but we are not told the content of that conversation.

When I prepared to submit this article, little did I realize how tragically pertinent it would be. Our enemies have once again shown their true colors, through the brutal murder and abduction of hundreds of innocent civilians and the wounding of thousands.

Nothing can justify such horrific actions, and we can only hope that the world will recognize that truth.

Together we pray for the safety and success of Israel's soldiers during the coming difficult days, and for the safety of its citizen's wherever they may be.

Once again events have shown us that, at times, the Torah teaches, not by what is included in the text, but by what is left out. ■

Rabbi Goldin is the author of the OU Press volumes "Unlocking the Torah Text," and "Unlocking the Haggada."



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לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אייזע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטר ע"ה

The God of Creation and the Land of Israel

There are times when an ancient text seems to speak more directly to where we are now than to the time when it was first written. Rarely has that been truer than in the case of the famous first comment of Rashi to the Torah, to the words: "In the beginning, God created..."¹ Let us listen to it in its entirety:

Rabbi Isaac said: The Torah should have begun with the verse, "This month shall be to you the first of months" (Exodus 12:2) which was the first commandment given to all of Israel. Why then did it begin with, "In the beginning"? It began thus because it wished to convey the idea contained in the verse (Psalm 111:6), "The power of His acts He told to His people, in order to give

them the estate of the nations." So that if the nations of the world will say to Israel, "You are robbers because you took by force the land of the seven nations," Israel might reply to them, "The whole earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He. He created it and gave it to them, and by His will He took it from them and gave it to us." (Rashi Bereishit 1:1)

Rashi might have been speaking directly to us today, in our age of anti-Zionism, boycotts, sanctions, and divestments against Israel (BDS), and even a growing questioning of the State's right to exist.

Rashi (1040-1105) lived in Troyes, Northern France, at a time when the position of Jews under Christian rule was beginning to worsen severely. He lived through the most traumatic event of that period, the massacre of Jewish communities in the Lorraine at the beginning of the First Crusade in 1096. Jews in his day were persecuted and powerless. They had no realistic hope of imminent return to the land.

1. This essay was originally written by Rabbi Sacks in September 2010. Years later when he began his translation of the entire Torah, he offered a radical new translation of the first phrase of the Torah: *Bereishit bara Elokim...* – "When God began creating...". The full translation by Rabbi Sacks is available in the Koren Tanakh: Magerman edition.

As to the logic of Rabbi Isaac's interpretation, it seems strained. Why did the Torah begin with Creation? Because that is a fundamental of Jewish faith. Rabbi Isaac seems to be arguing that since the Torah is primarily a book of commandments, it should begin with the first command – at least the first given to the Israelites as a collective entity. But clearly not everything in the Torah is command. Much of it is narrative. So Rabbi Isaac's question is odd.

So too is his answer. Why relate creation to a challenge to the Israelites' right to the Land? Why, if Rabbi Isaac's interest is solely in commandments, not give the obvious halachic answer: the story of Creation is told to explain the command to keep Shabbat. Considered thus, it is all highly perplexing.

In fact, however, Rabbi Isaac is making a very cogent point indeed. Some years ago a secular scholar, David Clines, wrote a book entitled *The Theme of the Pentateuch*. His conclusion was that the single overarching theme of the Five Books of Moses is the promise of the land. That is surely the case. There are sub-themes, but this dominates all others.

Seven times in Bereishit God promises the land to Abraham, once to Isaac, and three times to Jacob. The rest of the Mosaic books, from the beginning of Exodus when Moses hears about "the land flowing with milk and honey," to the end of Deuteronomy, when he sees it from afar, is about Israel, the destination of the Jewish journey.

There is a fundamental rule of literary form. Chekhov said: if there is a gun on stage in the first act of a play, it must be part of the plot or it should not be there at all. If the central theme of the Mosaic

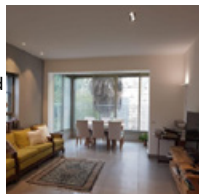


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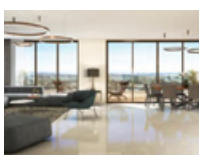
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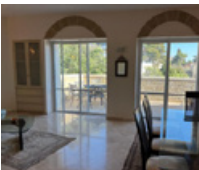
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books is the promise of the Land, the beginning must in some way be related to it. Hence Rabbi Isaac's point: the Creation narrative must have to do with the Land of Israel. What could this be if not to signal that the promise in virtue of which the Jewish people holds title to the land comes from the highest conceivable source, the sovereign of the universe, the Author of all.

No sooner have we said this than an obvious question arises. Why should a religion be tied to a land? It sounds absurd, especially in the context of monotheism. Surely the God of everywhere can be served anywhere.

Here too Rabbi Isaac steers us in the right direction. He reminds us of the first commandment given to the Israelites as a people, as they were about to leave Egypt.

"This month shall be to you the beginning of months; the opening of the year, this month will be for you." (Exodus 12:2)

Judaism is not primarily about personal salvation, the relationship between the individual and God in the inner recesses of the soul. It is about collective redemption, about what it is to create a society that is the opposite of Egypt, where the strong enslave the weak. The Torah is the architectonic of a society in which my freedom is not purchased at the cost of yours, in which justice rules, and each individual is recognised as bearing the image of God. It is about the truths Thomas Jefferson called self-evident, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." It is about what John F Kennedy meant when he spoke of "the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God."

We are social animals. Therefore we find God in society. That is what we discover when we reflect on the basic structure of the Torah's many commands. They include laws about the administration of justice, the conduct of war, ownership of land, employer-employee relationships, the welfare of the poor, the periodic cancellation of debts, in short, an entire legislative structure for the creation of what Rav Aaron Lichtenstein called 'societal beatitude'.

Laws shape a society, and a society needs space. A sacred society needs sacred space, a holy land. Hence Jews and Judaism need their own land.

In four thousand years, for much of which Jews lived in exile, the people of the covenant were scattered over the face of the earth. There is no land in which Jews have never lived. Yet in all those centuries, there was only one land where they were able to do what almost every other nation takes for granted: create their own society in accordance with their own beliefs.

The premise of the Torah is that God must be found somewhere in particular if He is to be found everywhere in general. Just as, in the Creation narrative, Shabbat is holy time, so in the Torah as a whole, Israel is holy space. That is why, in Judaism, religion is tied to a land, and a land is linked to a religion.

But now we come to the most perplexing part of Rabbi Isaac's comment. Recall what he said:

Should anyone call into question the Jewish people's right to the land of Israel, the Jewish people can reply, "God created the universe. He divided earth into many lands, languages, and landscapes. But one

small land He gave to the Jewish people. That is our title to the Land.”

How on earth could Rabbi Isaac think of this as a compelling answer? Almost inevitably, someone who challenges the Jewish people's right to the Land of Israel will not believe in the God of Israel. So how will a reference to Israel's God make Israel's case?

Ironically, we know the answer to that question. Today the overwhelming majority of those who challenge Israel's right to exist believe in Israel's God, that is to say, the God of Abraham. They belong to the large family of faith known as the Abrahamic monotheisms.

To them, we must humbly say: when it comes to political conflict, let us search for a political solution. Let us work together in pursuit of peace. But when it comes to religion, let us not forget that without Judaism, there would be no Christianity and no Islam. Unlike Christianity and Islam, Judaism never sought to convert the world and never created an empire. All it sought was one tiny land, promised to the Children of Israel by the Creator of the universe, in whom Jews, Christians, and Muslims all believe.

Sadly, Rabbi Isaac was right, and Rashi was right to quote him at the beginning of his Torah commentary. The Jewish people would be challenged on their right to the land, by people who claimed to worship the same God. That same God summons us today to the dignity of the human person, the sanctity of human life, and the imperative of peace. And that same God tells us that in a world of 82 Christian nations and 56 Muslim ones, there is room for one small Jewish state.

Questions for Around the Shabbat Table:

1. What can we learn from knowing how God created the world?

2. Do you think there is a difference between Judaism practised in the diaspora compared to Judaism kept by those living in the Land of Israel?

3. Do you think the State of Israel today is “a society that is the opposite of ancient Egypt”? ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks** zt”l are part of his ‘Covenant & Conversation’ series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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The well-known (and often read) haftarah for Erev Rosh Chodesh seems to really have little to do with the beginning of a new month beyond the opening words of Yonatan to David - "Machar Chodesh", that tomorrow will be Rosh Chodesh. The interesting, though rather sad, story of David's flight from the royal palace (accomplished through the aid of Yonatan) has no clear relevance to the start of a new month - certainly not one important enough to have been established as the required reading for every Shabbat Erev Rosh Chodesh.

HaRav Soloveitchik, zt"l, posed that same question - and provided an answer based upon a midrash found in Shemot Rabba.

The Midrash indicates that all of Jewish history is reflected in the lunar cycle and therefore...

- Avraham represented the beginning of Jewish history - symbolized by the first appearance of the new moon. This "moonlight" grew stronger and brighter for fifteen generations, until the reign of....
- Shlomo HaMelech, when Jewish history reached its apex, as the Bet HaMikdash was built and all twelve tribes dwelt in peace and harmony. It was an era symbolized by the full moon. For the next fifteen generations, however, Israel's fate waned, as the moon does after the mid-month, and, with the removal of....

- Tzidkiyahu HaMelech, the destruction of the Bet HaMikdash, the collapse of the Davidic monarchy and the exile of the nation. Everything turned dark - (perhaps represented by King Tzidkiyahu's blindness), which reflects the state of the moon on erev Rosh Chodesh, the day before Rosh Chodesh, when its light is no longer seen.
- wAnd, of course, the cycle begins once more on Rosh Chodesh when the moon's illumination grows stronger and stronger, just as the Kingdom of Israel, her strength and her vibrancy, will be renewed and rejuvenated.

It was this message, the Rav argues, that Yehonatan, taught David. Although things look bleak, although you may be pursued by my father and his men, remember - "Machar Chodesh" - despite the darkness that surrounds you today, it is only because it is the last day of the month and the moon's light has disappeared. But tomorrow, "Machar" there will be "Chodesh", a new month and a new moon that will grow in strength, in illumination and in vitality. Today is black; tomorrow will be bright. This is not hope nor even prophecy; it is, as the Rav puts it, "Jewish Destiny."

And this is the message - the essential message - of which Jewish communities had to be reminded over the generations on each and every Shabbat Erev Rosh Chodesh.

And, in a powerful postscript, Rav Soloveitchik

turns our attention to Masechet Rosh HaShana (25a) where we read of an era when the “occupier” of the land would not allow the Jews to recite the Kiddush Levana, (sanctification of the new moon). The G'mara records that Rabba asked Rav Chiya to observe and report upon the appearance of the new moon. But rather than reporting the event explicitly to the bet din he was asked to use a coded message and to tell the court: “David Melech Yisra'el Chai V'kayam”! It was a message that the ancient scholars understood, that the moon has appeared and, indeed, a brighter future awaits.

The Rav closes his message by commenting that the Jewish people may have seemed to “disappear” over the last 1900 years; we will reappear with the arrival of the Messianic Era.

And, I would add, we have already begun to see the moon getting brighter and brighter.

The new moon has reappeared! ■

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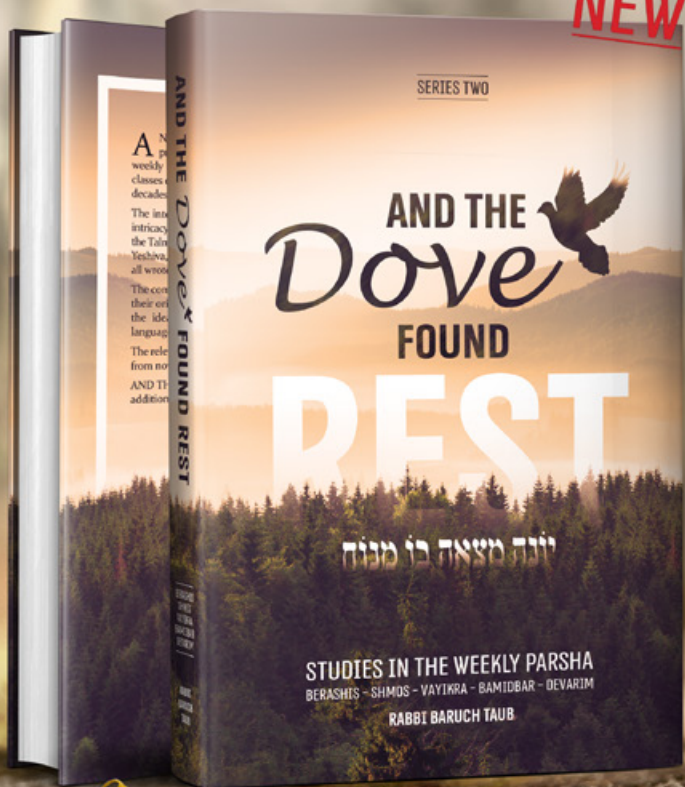
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Allow us to share with you an option for you to consider in directing your giving at this time.

In Israel, the OU is connected to thousands of Israeli teens and their families – many who live near the Southern border, as well as all across the country. While we provide services to this population twelve months a year, at a time of crisis such as this, we need to dramatically ramp up that support for those who have lost family members, who have had parents called to serve, or who have lost the support of our staff who have also been drafted. We must be there for them now, when they need it most.

Towards this end, we are embarking on a crucial campaign to address both the emotional and physical needs of those who rely on us, and we can't do it without you. Please help us reach thousands of Israelis with:

- Vouchers for evacuated families providing for basic necessities such as food, clothing, baby items, and toiletries;
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 - Meals and other essentials delivered to soldiers, families, and volunteers by our JLIC students and teams; and
 - Love and chizuk packages for children to let them know that Klal Yisrael is here for them, always.
- Be the help that our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael – on the frontlines now even as civilians – need in this moment. Please donate generously at ou.org/israelcrisis.

May we soon see days of everlasting peace, שלום בארץ.

Mitchel Aeder
President

Stuart Hershkowitz
President, OU Israel

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Dear OU Israel Family,



OU Israel joins Klal Yisrael in davening for the welfare of our brave chayalim, those injured and in captivity, and all of our brothers and sisters. **We want to take this opportunity to let you know that we are here for each and every one of you and your families.**

OU Israel continues to monitor the security situation which remains fluid. As such, our adjusted schedule is in progress and subject to change. We are providing ongoing *chizuk* programming which you can access via our website and social media channels.

In addition to a series of one-time special virtual events, we are offering two daily *chizuk* Zoom sessions. These daily opportunities to come together virtually feature words of *chizuk* and perspective from OU Israel faculty members as well as the opportunity to recite *Tehilim* together virtually.



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May HaKadosh Baruch Hu watch over and protect our chayalim, all those in harm's way, and all of Am Yisrael.

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President, OU Israel

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בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד: (בראשית ב:כד)

*Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become **one flesh*** (Bereshit 2:24).

The Torah tells us that man and women become one – **והיו לבשר אחד**. How are we to understand that phrase?

RASHI – CHILD

Rashi cites a gemara (Sanhedrin 58) that suggests that the fetus is formed by two individuals, and through the birth of a child their flesh becomes one. The child essentially is conceived through the father and mother and the result is one entity, or individual with characteristics of both parents. This is what is meant by a woman and man becoming one – through the birth of a child.

RAMBAN- CLOSE RELATIONSHIP

The Ramban has an issue with Rashi's explanation. Animals also give birth to offspring and it would seem that the Torah is seeking to distinguish between humans and other species when highlighting that man and women become one. Therefore, the Ramban offers an alternative interpretation of the pasuk. In contrast to animals that mate with any female and establish no long-term attachment to their partner, humans develop a lasting relationship

and cling to each other. The relationship between man and women exceeds a cursory temporary attraction. Between them develops a bond that is much deeper than a mere physical connection. That relationship fuses them into one being. It is the **close relationship** that creates the bond between them.

RAV SOLOVEITCHIK -

CHILD CONNECTS PARENTS

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (Masoret Harav) creatively blends both interpretations to offer his perspective on marriage. To love means to share an identity, a common destiny. In the Rav's words: *If the lover and the beloved are united, then two persons who are in love with a third are also united... the link of hearts is stronger than the link of minds.* The love between a husband and wife is strengthened and deepened with the birth of a child. Two individuals who exhibit unconditional love for a child create a strong bond between each other. Together they focus on creating the proper environment for their child, together they nurture that child and share concerns and aspirations. This establishes a strong emotional connection that unites them. It is important to develop a strong relationship as a husband and wife and not just as a father and mother, but

co-parenting facilitates the strengthening of this bond.


LOVE OF TORAH – UNITES

The Rav extends this idea to Torah. We all aspire to be Bnei Torah. The “children of Torah”. God loves Torah and offered this precious gift to us. Just as a husband and wife strengthen their bond through their love and affection toward their child, so too Am Yisrael as God’s child, strengthen their connection to Hakadosh Baruch Hu through the joint love of Torah.

As we begin the new cycle of Torah reading, may we cherish the messages portrayed in each parsha. May our allegiance, admiration, commitment and love for Hashem continue to grow and flourish through our study of Torah. ■

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Juggling Jealousy

In *Parashat Bereisheet* we learn of the sacrifice Kayin offers to Hashem. His brother Hevel follows suit but becomes despondent when his sacrifice is not accepted and, out of apparent jealousy, kills Kayin. Every story in Torah is multi-dimensional and replete with significant and relevant lessons for our lives. Each incident has nuances that speak volumes to direct our own behaviors and choices. What can we learn here?

“*Ve’raisi ani et kol ha’amal ve’et kol kisharon ha’maaseh ki hi kinat ish mei-re’iehu gam zeh hevel* - And I saw all the toil and all the excellence of work, which is a **man’s envy of his friend; this too is vanity**” (*Kohelet 4:4*). Rabbeinu Bechaya homiletically explains the verse to teach that any type of jealousy, whether of possession, wisdom or anything else, is wrong, such was the sin of Hevel. Jealousy prompted Hevel to bring his offering; this led him to hatred and ultimately his death. *Chazal* learn from the words “*gam hu – he too*” (*Bereisheet 4:4*), that Hevel followed his brother’s initiative and did not bring his offering out of his own desire.

Thus, both brothers were motivated by feelings of jealousy, which escalated to feelings of hatred, and ended in fratricide. In both cases there was potential for spiritual growth and refinement but unfortunately, it went awry.

What is a healthy, positive “*kinat sof-rim*”? Rav Kestenbaum in *Olam Hamidot* teaches that when one wishes to emulate another and not to imitate them, it can be the greatest motivator for spiritual development and elevation. For example, if one sees his friend heavily involved in doing chesed daily, one can contemplate how to realistically add chesed into his day. The world does not need us to clone or duplicate the deeds of others, it needs us to figure out how to capitalize on our uniqueness to improve ourselves and the circumstances of those around us.

What can we do practically to minimize unhealthy jealousy? Rav Tuvya Weiss z”l emphasizes the importance of love. When there is no love, each person feels that the other is taking from him and reducing his assets, breeding feelings of envy. With love, there is always room for another. The *Chatam Sofer* explains how it could be that no one ever said, “it is too crowded to sleep in Yerushalayim [at *aliyah le’regeil*]” (*Avot 5:7*). Even if reality dictated that Yerushalayim was jam-packed and even cramped, the people never complained since feelings of love among brethren created a spirit of expansiveness.

Rav Kestenbaum adds that if someone is jealous of another person, he ought to be jealous of the whole package. While some

people may have areas of their lives or material possessions that may be enviable, we all know that there are likely many other things that they have that we wouldn't wish for ourselves. The key is to deepen our emunah, to know that Hashem has arranged everything to the exact degree and proportion that we need to lead successful lives of meaning and purpose. When we focus on appreciating what we have rather than looking at what others have, we will feel greater love and enhanced fulfillment.

The story of Kayin and Hevel is the story of human existence. Two people who are envious of each other for different reasons are all too familiar. Let us take inspiration from this story to appreciate what we have and use our G-d given gifts to best serve our Creator with sublimity and ennoblement. ■

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RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL

Executive Director, Camp HASC
Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of*
Teshuva (Mosaica 2021)

On Light & Darkness

The beautiful compositions, music and poetry of Naomi Shemer, a”h, Israel’s “first lady of Israeli song” tell the story of a nation’s return to its homeland, replete with emotive metaphor, imagery, and poetic sweetness — even with a touch of the sting of the nation’s need to rebuild. Her compositions gave voice to a collective consciousness of joy and promise, struggle and hope.

Written after the Six Day War, the song *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav* became a prayerful anthem celebrating millenia of yearning and the reunification of the Holy City. Shemer reflected: “I was thinking about the two thousand years of the Destruction in the abstract..., about Rebbe Akiva who promised his dear wife Rachel, who sacrificed so much, a ‘Jerusalem of Gold’.... Through a kind of telescopic lens I saw before me a city in Heaven and the essence which alone I sought to capture.” For decades, Shemer continued to deliver dozens of unforgettable compositions, timeless songs that continue to inspire and uplift.

A daughter of founders of Kibbutz Kvutzat Kinneret on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Shemer spent many of her adult years living in the settlement where she was raised.

A colleague, well known for his own musical talent, visited Shemer in her quaint Galilean home and expressed his

surprise that Israel’s beloved composer had placed her simple piano unobtrusively in a dark corner, off to the side.

“How can you work here, without a window for light and inspiration?” he asked.

“I compose music with my eyes closed,” Shemer responded. “It may be dark in the room surrounding me, אבל השמש היא בפנים, but the sun shines bright from within.”

Each year, as we read Parshas Bereishis, we mark the renewal of Creation.

The starting point, the source of our world, is *אור*, “Let there be light.” *Chazal* reveal how the “light of life” came to be: “God cloaked Himself in a white shawl, and the light of its splendor shone from one end of the world to the other” (*Bereishis Rabbah*, 3:4). The Divine light of Creation was drawn down to create this world, and it serves as the symbol of all that is good, holy and beautiful. Light is a universal symbol associated with emotions of joy and positivity; in Torah, it is a metaphor for life, truth, justice, peace, redemption and even God Himself: *ה' אורי וישועי* “Hashem is my light and my salvation” (*Tehillim*, 27:1).

The original separation between light and darkness assumes a metaphysical significance in Jewish contemplative thought: *יתרון לחכמה מן הסכלות כיתרון האור מן החושך*

Wisdom excels folly as far as light has an advantage over darkness” (*Koheles*, 2:13). A deeper reading of this *pasuk* reveals that darkness actually exists in order to underscore light. Its purpose is to awaken a yearning for light. Indeed, it is in the tension between light and darkness in our lives, in the raw experiences of goodness and evil, and in feeling the biting contrast of right and wrong, that awakens our yearning to *teshuvah*, and initiates us into this path.

This *pasuk* does not literally state that light has an advantage “over” the darkness, rather “from” the darkness: מִן־הַחֹשֶׁךְ. There is an “advantage” in the light that we reach when we turn around and propel ourselves toward God “from” the darkness that we perceive or perpetuate.

There is a tendency to associate spiritual growth with a focus on correcting that which has gone wrong by examining the ‘dark spots’ and investing in the areas where our weakness of character has been exposed. However, the foundation of effective and lasting *teshuvah* is a clear understanding and appreciation of the *light within us*, of our positive *midos* and our extraordinary potential for goodness.

In the shadow of terror and unspeakable suffering, we face a different kind of “*Yamim Nora'im*”, and in revisiting the creation of the world, reflect on the origin of it all. Facing darkness and evil, we renew our *emunah* in the reality of “*vayehi ohr*, and there was light,” that indeed, the world remains filled with goodness, righteousness and beauty.

May the shattered heart of *Am Yisrael* be healed and filled with optimism and faith in

the light that shines from within us, as well as the great light and joy that awaits us.

.....
אור שמבשר את ההשכמה והזריחה...

יותר מזה איני צריכה

*Light that tells of the waking
and the sunrise*

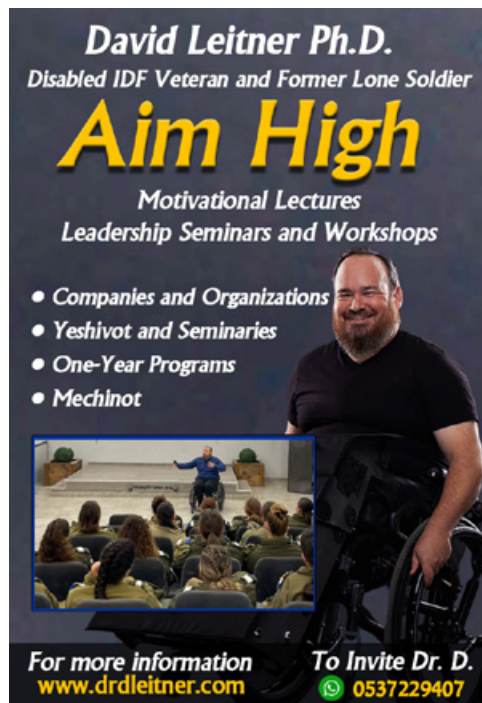
I do not need more than that....

אם שמי מעוננים, עוצמת את עיני
אבל השמש היא בפנים

*With cloudy skies, I close my eyes...
and the light of the sun is inside.*

(Naomi Shemer, “Ohr”)

.....
In honor of the Wedding of our daughter Ayelet Hashachar and Nachshon Vidomlanski... and with gratitude to our dear *mechutanim* and friends, Rav Jake & Barbara, for sharing the song of faith, love and strength, together. ■



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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

Program Director, OU Israel Center

As we return to *Sefer Breisheet* again this *Shabbat*, I feel my heart and thoughts being drawn to the beautiful introduction to *Sefer Breisheet* penned by the *Netziv*, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin zt'l.

The *Netziv* writes that our Sages referred to *Sefer Breisheet* as *Sefer Yescharim*- the book of the ethical ones, the book of the *mentsches*. The *Netziv* explains that our *Avot* and *Imahot* are indeed considered to be *yesharim*- ethical and morally straight individuals.

"This is a great praise for the Avot (and Imahot)-that beyond their righteousness and holiness and devotion and love for Hashem, we could describe them even more so that they were yesharim-they dealt fairly and treated all humanity with love,dignity and respect, as each and every human being is one of Hashem's creations.."

This *hakdama* of the *Netziv* to *Sefer Breisheet*, is in essence the *Netziv's* opening commentary on the entire *Chumash*, as if to instruct us that the essence of the entire *Torah* is to instruct us that a *Torah* centered life requires us to strive to be morally sound,ethical human beings.

Rabbi Yosef Breuer, ztl, the grandson of Rav Shmshon Refael Hirsch zt'l, and Founding Rabbi of the *Khal Adath Jeshurun* in Washington Heights, New York, famously wrote these words about the moral code that a Jew must strive to adhere to:

"Kosher" is intimately related to "Yoshor."

G-d's Torah not only demands the observance of Kashrut and the sanctification of our physical enjoyment; it also insists on the sanctification of our social relationships. This requires the strict application of the tenets of justice and righteousness which avoid even the slightest trace of dishonesty in our business dealings and personal life. G-d's Torah not only demands of us to love our neighbor in that we concern ourselves with his welfare and property, but it insists further on a conduct of uncompromising straightness ("Yoshor") which is inspired not only by the letter of the law but is guided by the ethical principle of honesty which, then, would deserve the honorable title of "Yeshurun."

The *Netivot Shalom*, the *Slonimer Rebbe* zy'a, asks an interesting question. If indeed this entire first book of the *Torah*, is considered to be the book of *Yescharim*- why does it include the very real human stories, and family dynamics and personal struggles of the *Avot* and *Imahot*, what value or message are we meant to gain or glean from these detailed accounts?

The *Slonimer Rebbe* explains that in order for one to truly become a *yashar*- a truly fair, just, ethical human being, we must constantly work to refine our character. This first sefer of the *Torah*, which recalls the earliest giants of humanity and *Am Yisrael*, presents us with the most fundamental blueprint to living a life of *Kedusha*, the refinement of character, growth

and spiritual maturation that each of us must strive for, to emulate our Avot and Imahot and truly become yesharim.

Rav Kook ztvk'l, in his introduction to his work on character development, *Midot HaRiyah* wrote:

The refinement of character intellectually is the prerequisite to that refinement being actualized emotionally and through our deeds and actions. If it is not clear to us what is good and what is bad, how are we to connect with and cling to our inherent good, and distance ourselves from any negativity and hurtful behavior?

Left Rav Kook, each of us needs to work to channel our innate goodness, and be a conduit for good to prevail over evil in this world.

Yehi Ratzon, as we return again to *Sefer Breisheet*, and move forward in the coming year may each of us continue to be

inspired by the legacy of our Avot and Imahot, and may we strive each and every day to emulate their conduct, and live a life of *Yashrut* and *mentschlichkeit*. ■

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Avinu Malkeinu

No words. No breath. Our hearts are dizzyed with shock and trauma and burning tears stream down our cheeks. Our people and our Land suffered their worst day in the 75-year history of our state. More Jews were killed on this one day than on any single day since the Holocaust. The pain and suffering are indescribable, the fear is palpable, and the mourning is overwhelming.

I feel uncomfortable writing anything. There is absolutely nothing to say while so many are still suffering, while so many are being buried, while so many are fighting for their lives, and while so many are in the line of fire. This is not the time for “ideas”, or the time to draw larger conclusions, or to search for meaning. It is a time to cry and cry. For our people and for our Land. For the name of Hashem which was so horribly desecrated.

I only write to provide basic “guidance”, and to recommend a few responses, not that there is any protocol for a catastrophe like this. Most of these “responses” to this disaster are self-evident, but on the slim chance that they aren’t, it is worth repeating them. Larger conversations about the ramifications of this tragedy will have to wait until a more appropriate time.

TEFILLA

Though tefilla is always central to our

relationship with Hashem there is a specific mitzvah to daven during a time of crisis, or an *eit tzarah*. The Torah describes the prototypical *eit tzarah* as

וְיִתְּבֹאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאַרְצְכֶם עַל-הַצָּר הַצָּרֵר אֲתֶכֶם

The most severe form of national crisis occurs not only when we are at war but when the war assaults our country. It has been 50 years since we last experienced war in our own country during the Yom Kippur War. This is far worse. During the Yom Kippur war the battles were waged along empty borders in sparsely populated areas, limiting the amount of civilian casualties. Sadly, we have currently suffered a massive pogrom directed at our own people. There is no other word to describe this vicious premeditated attack designed solely for the purpose to kill and kidnap as many innocent people as possible, including elderly and babies. If there ever were an *eit tzarah*, this is it.

The special mitzvah to daven during an *eit tzarah* can be accomplished by adding tefilot, and some have added *avinu malkeinu*. Though every perek of tehilim is effective, the perakim which most directly petition Hashem for salvation from heartless enemies include: 2, 7, 9, 13, 20, 22, 23, 27, 44, 55, 59, 60, 70, 74, 79, 80, 83, 121, and 130.

Even without adding extra tefilot, the

mandate of *eit tzarah* demands that we invest more deeply in our routine tefilot. This extra commitment can be attained through better minyan attendance or better decorum and discipline while davening. Mere awareness that our tefilot possesses an added dimension can often deepen the experience, even without any inserting additions. There are lives hanging in the balance and a Jew's first response is to daven to the Redeemer of our people to send us redemption.

MOURNING

The scenes are already apocalyptic and will only get worse. Thousands of lives have been shattered by senseless hatred of our people. Hundreds of funerals in the span of a few days is unfathomable. Even for those who haven't been directly impacted by the tragedy, there is a basic human and religious responsibility to sympathize and identify with the suffering of the direct victims. Obviously, with few exceptions, any celebratory events or even enjoyable social events should be canceled. Additionally, until the intensity of our national mourning subsides, recreational media consumption should be curbed. It is unthinkable that while we are burying hundreds of korbanot a Jew is relaxing and watching a sporting event or a movie. Part of living Jewish history is the responsibility to identify with tragedy.

CHESHBON HANEFESH

Whenever a tragedy occurs moral introspection is mandated, and certainly a catastrophe of this magnitude requires self-examination. It is impossible to play G-d and to know what causes such tragedy. It is always easiest to critique others and



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to lay the blame on someone else or something else. Instead, each person should look inward, at themselves and their communities to identify areas for improvement. Hashem is sending us a message. Though we don't exactly know the specifics of the message, it is crucial to personalize the experience and look for individual paths for improvement, and not just harp upon collective issues which are always less manageable. Hashem expects us to respond to a crisis by improving our religious behavior.

EMUNAH

The ways of Hashem elude human comprehension and we certainly can't wrap our minds around this catastrophe. Yet, our *bitachon* assures us that Hashem has some purpose for allowing this to occur. Faith also demands that we have confidence that, in the long run, Hashem has

our best interests in mind and cares for and redeems His people. This is a dark hour in modern Jewish history and is not a time for simple faith. We cannot be afraid to ask genuine questions but also cannot be dispirited when we are thwarted in attempts to uncover answers.

EMUNAH IN REDEMPTION

These horrific events cannot shatter our deep belief that our return to our ancient homeland is part of a larger historical redemption. Our country has seen very dark days before, and though the trauma of this day far surpasses anything we have endured in the past, the wheels of redemption continue to turn.

For some reason over the past few days, witnessing the grotesque and nauseating images, I kept thinking about the pogroms which battered our people about 120 years in 1905. According to some reports we suffered over 600 pogroms in one year. There is one difference though between 1905 and 2023. We have our Land and we have our army and despite whatever shortcomings were exposed, our army, with Hashem's help will punish the murders and continue to protect us.

In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur war my Rebbe, Harav Yehuda Amital cited a midrash which would become a staple of his as he wrestled with demoralizing national events. Commenting on the fact that in Shir Hashirim Hashem is compared to a gazelle, the midrash elaborates:

מה הצבי הזה נגלה וחוזר ונכסה כך...גואל
האחרון...נגלה להם וחוזר ונכסה מהם

A deer is so swift and furtive that almost immediately after it appears, it disappears from view. Its disappearance doesn't mean that it has entirely left the scene.

Redemption can have lags, and lulls, and even terrible setbacks but once the process begins it unfolds with inevitability.

This tragedy tests us to maintain our resolve and our vision that we are part of a larger historical trajectory. Our faith survived the Holocaust and I"yH we hope and daven that with His help our faith will survive this incalculable tragedy. It takes great faith to participate in the final chapters of history. We pray to Him to give us strength and faith to navigate the sorrow and pain of this process.

There is a fabled song with ancient roots, which was sung by many European Ashkenazic communities on Simchat Torah. This song describes Hashem observing us celebrate Simchat Torah and remarking that our love for Him is so impressive "that we even ignore our suffering and celebrate His Torah".

We ask Hashem to allow us to celebrate His Torah without any more suffering.

(written Sunday, October 8) ■

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Tziporah a'h, a true Eishes Chayil, always full of chessed, kindness and laughter, and brought life and strength to so many people, that she touched! She was like Aron, who loved peace and pursued peace.



Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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Machar Chodesh

SHMUEL I: 20: 18-42

This Shabbat we read a special Haftorah, 'Machar Chodesh,' *tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh*, as Sunday is the first day of Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan. The directive to read this portion on the day before Rosh Chodesh is mentioned in the Talmud (Megilah 31a), suggesting a deep-rooted practice rather than a more recent custom.

While the words, machar chodesh, *tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh*, are in the opening verses of the Haftorah, the message of the haftorah itself does not seem in any obvious way related to erev Rosh Chodesh. The story unfolds with the description of the strained dynamic between Shaul and David and the deep friendship of Yonatan and David.

When one faces an upcoming month, there are mixed feelings. How do we garner this new opportunity, a new beginning? We bring into our new month the ups and downs of the last month, our accomplishments and also our failings. Once the month starts, we may feel that it is too late to evaluate and reflect, to process and to plan. It is on the day before Rosh Chodesh that we are given the chance to utilize these tools and tap into our narratives to learn from our past to impact our future.

The challenges of the Shaul and David relationship highlight that life is complicated and

complex while the friendship of David and Yonason demonstrates that loyalty and bonds can serve as a buoy in difficult times. **Each upcoming month gives us a new chance to forge forward, along with the day before which was given to highlight this message.** May we be able to fill this upcoming month of Cheshvan with meaningful moments of growth and achievement. ■

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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS

Disclosing *Kavod Hashem* to All Mankind

“Gather those who hope in You from the four quarters of the earth.”

The root of pure faith which connects the elevated holiness of the endless light with the holiness that is infused in all the worlds and all the creations - is the singular quality of the Jewish people. It is for this reason that we (i.e. the Jewish people) have been scattered throughout the globe, to the four corners of the earth, in order to fulfill the vision that God's glory (Kavod Hashem) be known throughout the world and that knowledge of the true God fills every heart, every soul, every spirit. However, this dispersion was productive merely in preparing the hearts [of man] for this goal, however, following this [stage], the ultimate [and] eternal redemption will be revealed by means of the ingathering of those who hope in the Lord from the four corners of the earth to [return] to the Land of Longing; at that time when the great light of the true knowledge of God will emerge in all its praise and splendor from the Land of Longing [it will spread] throughout the entire earth. (Eretz Cheftetz 7:6)

A MESSAGE FOR THE MULTITUDE

This teaching from Rav Kook appears in his commentary on the prayer book. Early

on in the *shacharit* an often overlooked blessing is recited which states: “Blessed are you Lord, who sanctifies His name among the multitudes.” Following these words we find the following phrase which apparently offers an elucidation of the above blessing: “Gather those who hope in You from the four corners of the earth.” Indeed, we as people have been minimally effective in spreading the wisdom of the Divine and the truth of God's existence to the world population. We have merely been successful in planting seeds in our journey along the long roadway of the exile.

However, suddenly a new dawn is rising, with our return to the Land, which now equips the people of Israel to fulfill their sacred mission, highlighted in this morning blessing - that God's name be sanctified among the multitudes. ‘Multitude’ in this context refers to the world's gentile populations. The very next sentence in the prayer says: “May all mankind recognize and know that You alone are God over all the kingdoms on earth.”

IMITATING HIS WAYS

In this context an inspiring comment from Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik regarding the morning blessings should be noted. We

begin our day by making mention of the attributes of God - He heals the blind, frees the prisoner, lifts up the oppressed- in order to teach us that these attributes must be realized by man himself. "We acknowledge God's all-inclusive morality and announce publicly our commitment to imitate His ways" (Mesorat HaRav Siddur, p. 30). Applying this concept here, we must also be proactive in creating the conditions so that the name of God is known to the multitudes.

It is striking that this daily supplication for return from the four corners of the earth concludes with the stirring prophecy of Zephania: "At that time I will bring you home, and at that time I will gather you, for I will give you renown and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I will bring back your exiles before your eyes, say the Lord" (Zephania 3).

PROPHECY BEING FULFILLED

The prophet cried out with a message that reverberates today with profound meaning. We can readily see how the return of the nation of Israel to its Land is significantly affecting our capacity to influence and inspire the nations of the world.

Rav Shimon Schwab in his commentary on the siddur reads this verse as referring to two stages in the ingathering of the nation. There will be a small-scale return that will be led by the righteous - this is expressed by the opening phrase - *avie etchem* - a smaller gathering. However, the verse immediately describes the ingathering as *kabzti etchem* (I will gather [the rest] of you). "This accounts for the word *kabzti*, meaning a wide ingathering, to describe the second stage of the redemption, as opposed to the word *avie*, I shall bring,

which refers only to the first, limited, stage of the *geulah*. (Rav Shwab on Prayer, p.72)

Rav Kook makes a discerning comment regarding the last phrase in the verse from Zephania above. Why does the verse emphasize that this great homecoming is only "before your eyes"? Rav Kook says that all the people of the earth will take note of this phenomenon of the ingathering of Israel, but their powers of observation are limited to the external event. Only *your eyes*, likened to "doves," gifted with pure vision, with insight, have the ability to behold the beautiful spiritual dimension of the Redemption." (*Olat Reiyah*, vol. 1, p.116, Koren Rav Kook Siddur p.64). ■

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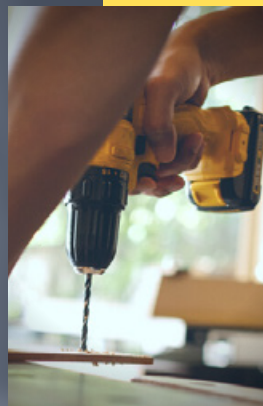


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Starting Over, Again

Shimon was distraught when his wife died after a long illness, leaving him with three small children. They had enjoyed such a wonderful life together, and he never believed that he would find someone as special as she was, who could make him so happy.

That was until he met Yael. Yael had never been married and was delighted to meet such a caring and sensitive man. She was concerned about marrying a widow, especially whether his children would accept her.

It was a complex dating process, but slowly the children started connecting with her more, and Yael was able to see herself marry Shimon and become a family together. Their wedding was beautiful and they started on a new life together.

Since they were both in their early 40s when they got married, they knew that they may well need treatment to have children together. They embarked on a program of in-vitro fertilization quite soon after getting married, and it was successful the first time and they had a baby boy together.

Shimon was delighted, he now had children from his previous marriage, and a son together with Yael. In his eyes his family was complete. But Yael had a different approach; she definitely wanted to have

more children.

When their son was six months old, the couple embarked on another round of treatment, but, unfortunately, it was not successful. Neither was the next round of IVF, the eggs were of a low quality due to Yael's age and the doctors hinted that maybe she should be happy with her son and three step-children, and give up trying.

But Yael was adamant. Shimon was less enthusiastic; the treatments were expensive and he was less driven to have another child.

While they had received continual guidance, supervision and support from PUAH, at this point they scheduled a meeting with one of the PUAH Rabbis. Shimon presented his approach and Yael explained what she wanted. The Rabbi patiently listened to them and tried to find the best path forward for both of them. Eventually the couple both agreed to undergo one more IVF, if it was not successful then they would stop.

Despite the doctor's reservations, the IVF was successful, and, while there were many questions and challenges during the pregnancy, Shimon and Yael had a beautiful and healthy baby girl, Shiri, my song or joy.

Sometimes, even though it is challenging, like in this week's Parsha, we have to start all over again. ■



Real Life Rescues

On the Front Lines: United Hatzalah Volunteer's Perspective From Southern Israel

By Esther Pamensky

In the wake of the horrific Hamas attack in southern Israel, I found myself right in the thick of things as a United Hatzalah volunteer EMT who was volunteered to go from Jerusalem to take part in the medical response down south. The situation was intense, as you can imagine.

We're shadowing a special forces unit of the IDF, working with them to treat the injured as they are brought out to us. We have been responding to an incredible number of injuries. Gunshots ring out, often close to us, and we have to take cover in or behind the ambulance. The heat is also intense.

We are dealing with casualties from the shootout between the IDF and infiltrating terrorists while witnessing terrorists being arrested left and right. It is a full-blown war zone out here.

Amidst all this, there's this vivid image that stuck with me - a young soldier, not a day over 19, navigating the chaos with just one shoe, no sock, and a banged-up foot. I had to check in on him and find out what was going on. Turns out he got injured in the foot and yesterday was just a mad rush with his unit that left him no time to get treated properly. If I hadn't stopped him, he might've ended up in the hospital with a bad infection.

So, we just changed his bandage and one of our ambulance teams prepared to take him to the hospital so he could receive antibiotics before bringing him back to the field. Before being taken by the ambulance, the soldier simply broke out in tears, overwhelmed by the situation. I told him I would hug him if I could, and my male team members hugged him for a long time. The injury was pretty minor compared to everything else we had treated, but the soldier's lack of proper prior treatment and reaction underscored to me the gravity of the situation. He then thanked us before being whisked off to the hospital.

This is just a glimpse of the situation on the ground. We continuously pray that everyone will come back from this nightmare safe and sound.

Esther Pamensky is a United Hatzalah volunteer EMT who lives in Jerusalem.



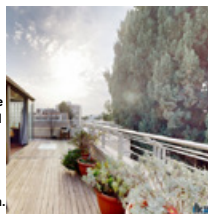
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HOLY SITES IN ISRAEL

RIVI FRANKEL



Holy Synagogues of Israel

Torah Tidbits is proud to present a new series of articles in the coming year about the magnificent and holy sites of Israel. This new addition to Torah Tidbits seeks to connect each of us even more deeply to the profound meaning of our people's return to the Land of Israel and bring us even closer to experiencing the *kedushat ha'aretz* in our daily lives.

The synagogue is a central feature in Jewish communities worldwide, and has been for millennia. As someone who likes to travel, I make it a point to visit the local shul in my destination city, be it active or otherwise. Visiting a shul is one of the best ways there is to get to know a Jewish community, past and present. The details serve as puzzle pieces and help construct an image, telling the story of the local community. Is it large or small? How is it decorated? Where is its location within the city? Is it easily identifiable as a house of worship from the outside? What languages are present on the signage? The answers to these questions can help us gain insight into the Jewish world beyond the shul walls. Were there a lot of Jews in the area? Was the community affluent? Was the host country favorable towards the community?

Baruch Hashem, here in Israel, Jewish life is flourishing. While minyanim are plentiful and can be found almost anywhere, across Israel are some very special and unique buildings used for prayer, some quite grand in size. In Jerusalem alone, the Belz shul impressively greets travelers as they enter the city, the Great Synagogue looms large in the city center, and the newly renovated



Tiferet Yisrael will soon welcome people in the Old City, just down the street from the Churva and the Four Sephardic Synagogues. Another Jerusalem favorite of mine is Ohel Yitzack, also known as “Shomrei HaChomot,” located in the Old

City's Muslim quarter. Other examples exist all around the country. In Shiloh, a modern shul designed to look like the Mishkan, which once stood just below, is a must visit. In Akko, Or Torah, widely known as the "Tunsian shul", is covered from floor to ceiling in mosaic tiles depicting various scenes from Tanach and Jewish History as well as flora and fauna native to Eretz Yisrael. The mosaics were a labor of love by artisan Tzion Badash z'l, and took him over 50 years to create. Not far from there, in Akko, is the Ramchal's shul, a small but worthwhile stop located within the market.

In this series, we will be focusing on some of the dozens of ancient synagogues found around the country; shuls whose remains all hold clues as to what life was like for the Jews that prayed there. We

will visit locations that date back to the Roman and Byzantine periods. Some shuls were even in use while the second Beit Hamikdash still stood in its full glory. Others will help us discover what life was like in the following centuries, as Jews, reeling from the Temple's destruction, learned to adapt to their new reality and pivot to a new, non-Temple-centric religious life. Along the way, as we peel back the layers and share stories of communities and worshippers of the past, we can internalize the messages, allowing them to inspire our own tefillah and avodat Hashem today. ■

Rivi Frankel is a sought after licensed tour guide in Israel for groups, families, and individuals of all ages. She is a Tanach lecturer, has run educational programming around the world, and currently lives in Jerusalem.



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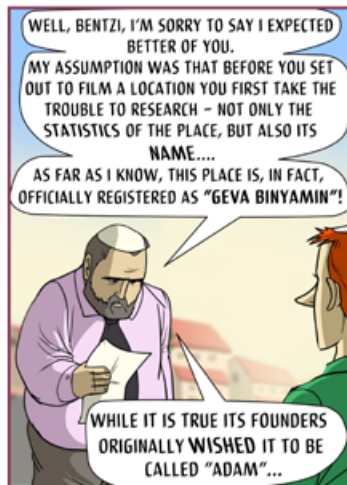
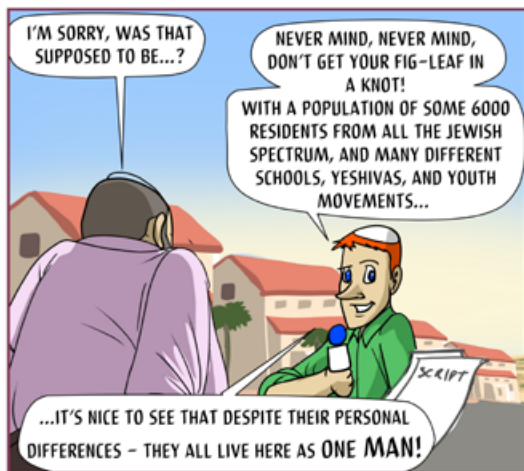
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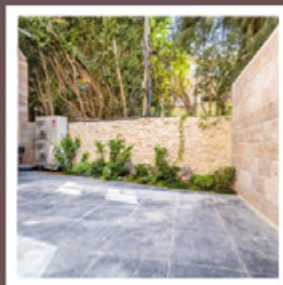
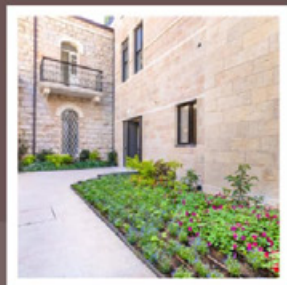
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