

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Weekly Insights on the Parsha and Moadim

by Rabbi Meir Goldwicht

Our parasha deals with, among other things, the Aseret HaDibrot. The fourth of the Aseret HaDibrot states: Sheishet yamim taavod vasita kol melachtecha, Six days shall you toil and do all your work (Devarim 5:12). The Midrash Lekach Tov comments: Sheishet yamim taavod this is the mitzvah of Shabbat. What is the connection between the work we do during the week and the mitzvah of Shabbat? Certainly a person can honor Shabbat during the week if he comes across a nice cake, for example, he saves it for Shabbat, and if he finds a better one, he saves that one for Shabbat. But what does the Midrash Lekach Tov mean that the actual work one performs during the week in his office is the fulfillment of the mitzvah of Shabbat?

The mitzvah of Shabbat appears in the Torah fifteen times. In Parashat Ki Tisa, the Torah says: Vshamru Bnei Yisrael et haShabbat laasot et haShabbat, And Bnei Yisrael shall keep the Shabbat, to make the Shabbat (Shemot 31:16). What does it mean to make Shabbat? Shabbat is not dependent upon any action on our part even if a person does absolutely nothing, at a certain point Shabbat begins automatically and at a certain point Shabbat ends automatically! How do we make Shabbat?

The gemara in Gitin (56a) tells the story of the Churban. The Roman army had laid siege to Yerushalayim, allowing no one into or out of the city. The thugs of Yerushalayim would not let anyone out of the city to attempt to make peace with the Roman army. The situation deteriorating rapidly, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai faked his own death and managed to get out of the city in a coffin. He approached the head of the Roman army and told him that a messenger would soon arrive from Rome informing him that he had been elected Caesar. When the messenger arrived, the head

of the Roman army, overcome with emotion, granted Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai three requests. The first thing he asked for was the city of Yavneh and its sages, because he realized that Yerushalayim would eventually be destroyed if not now, in a few years and that what needed to be done next was to build a bridge between chu rban and geulah. This bridge begins in Yavneh, because, as the gemara in Berachot 17a says, the rabbanim of Yavneh had a favorite teaching: I am a person, and you are a person. I wake up to my job, and you wake up to your job. I am not involved in your work, and you are not involved in mine. Perhaps you might say that I do much and you do little. But this is not true, for we learned: Whether one does much or one does little, as long as the intent is lshem shamayim. This teaching discusses two people one who learns all day and one who works all day. You might think the life of the one who learns all day is worth more than the one who works all day or vice versa, therefore the rabbanim of Yavneh taught that they are equal, as every individual works in his particular field to increase kevod shamayim.

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai understood that this is the key to the geulah. He learned this from Yeshayah haNavi, who says that in the future, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will build Yerushalayim with a stone called kodkod (54:12). The gemara in Bava Batra (75a) explains that this stone is actually a combination of two stones from the choshen shoham (the stone of Yosef) and yashpeh (the stone of Binyamin). Yosef represents the world of business. Binyamin represents those who learn Torah. The future geulah will be the comfortable synthesis of these two worlds.

This is the meaning of the Midrash Lekach Tov as well. Sheishet yamim taavod is the mitzvah of Shabbat going to work is not a bedieved lifestyle. A person whose task in this world is to work in whatever field must understand that his life is equal in value to the life of one who learns Torah, as it is incumbent upon each of us to increase kevod shamayim. In fact, it is the one who works during the week and ceases his work in honor of Shabbat that truly makes Shabbat. One who does not work during the week is shomer Shabbat, but does not make Shabbat. This is what Rabbeinu Bechayei writes in Parashat Yitro: Six days you shall serve Hashem through your work and dedicate the seventh day completely to Hashem, your L-rd. Rashi, commenting on the passuk, Reeh chayim im isha asher ahavta, Enjoy life with the woman you love (Kohellet

This issue of Toras Aish is dedicated
in memory of
Hazzan Abraham B. Shapiro
May his memory be a blessing for all who knew him

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9:9), explains that one must learn a profession to go hand-in-hand with his Torah learning. While certainly anyone with the proper ability to teach Torah or to be a dayan should do so Am Yisrael needs them one who works is not living a bedieved life. The gemara in Chagigah (5b) says that Hashem sheds a tear every day for one who could teach Torah, but doesn't, and for one who is meant to work in a certain field, but instead sits and learns Torah. Therefore, a person who is drawn to a certain profession shouldn't think for a moment that his life is worth less or a double life if he learns Torah; if anything, it is a broad life, as R Yitzchak Hutner, zatzal, Rosh Yeshivat Chaim Berlin, writes in Igeret 94.

This is the first Shabbat after Tisha b'Av we must take this opportunity to lay another stone on the bridge between churban and geulah. If we truly work to increase kevod shamayim through everything we do every person in his field we will bezrat Hashem merit to see the rebuilding of Yerushalayim, the nation, and the land, completely and speedily. © 2005 Rabbi M. Goldwicht and Yeshiva University

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“Be sure to keep the commandments of Hashem your G-d, and His testimonies and His statutes that He commanded you. And you shall do what is correct and what is good in G-d's eyes.” (Devarim 6:17-18) Since the first verse includes all of G-d's commandments, the additional commandment (in the second verse) to "do what is correct and what is good" must be going beyond all of the commandments that are spelled out for us. Indeed, Rashi explains the second verse to be referring to "compromising beyond the letter of the law," i.e. even if there is a legal means to get more, the Torah is commanding us to compromise. This sounds very good and nice, and very appropriate for the Torah reading on Shabbos Nachamu (the first Shabbos after Tisha b'Av), since one of the stated causes for the second Temple's destruction is that they insisted on pursuing their full legal rights (Bava Metziya 30b). Nevertheless, there are some questions that arise from this "requirement" to go beyond what is required.

For one thing, there are two words used in this commandment, "yashar" (straight, or correct) and "tov"

(good). If there are two separate words describing what is required, they must refer to two separate aspects. We have to do both what's "good" and what's "correct." What do these two descriptions mean? Later (12:28), Rashi explains "good" as being things pertaining to our relationship with G-d and "correct" as those between people. However, the context there allows for a breakdown of categories, while in our verses all of the commandments were already referred to (which is why Rashi explained that they refer to going beyond those commandments). But what is the difference between "good" and "correct" in our context? And how can they both refer to the same "compromising beyond the letter of the law?"

Additionally, if going beyond the letter of the law is now required, doesn't that (compromise, or whatever step beyond the previously laid out law is now being included) become the "new" letter of the law? If we are required to go beyond what was required, doesn't it all now fall into the category of "requirements?"

The Radak (Sefer Hasharashim) understands the word "tov" (good) to mean "full" or "beautiful," i.e. indications of being complete. He brings numerous examples to prove this, such as the light G-d created on the first day (Beraishis 1:4), the cows that represented the seven years of plenty in Pharaoh's dream (Shemos 41:26) and Bilam's description of the "tents of [the children of] Yaakov" (Bamidbar 24:5). Our verse would then be commanding us to become more complete. It is not enough to just fulfill the "requirements," but we are required to constantly improve, to be the best we can be. This is consistent with associating "tov" with the mitzvos bein adam lamakom (commandments pertaining to our relationship with G-d), as the purpose of the commandments is to make us better, bringing us closer to G-d, who is the ultimate perfection. We can't affect G-d by performing (or disobeying) His commandments; it is only ourselves that are affected. By following His (required) guidelines we are bringing ourselves closer to perfection.

lyov is referred to (1:1) as "complete and straight" (tam ve'yashar). Even though there is no need to contrast the word "yashar" with "tov" there, the Metzudas Dovid explains this praise as referring to how lyov dealt with others. Rashi points out that from this praise we can infer that his relationship with G-d was less than perfect. Since "yashar" implies treating others properly, our verse can be read as requiring us to not only fulfill all the commandments that pertain to others, but to treat them appropriately even if it has not already been covered by the system of law.

What's an example of going beyond the letter of the law that encompasses both personal growth and treating others well? Compromising even when there are still legal arguments that can be made. We become better for doing it, and have done something beneficial to others at the same time. The requirement isn't to compromise, per se. There is a commandment to

become better, and a commandment to treat others appropriately; going beyond the letter of the law by compromising is just the means to accomplish both.

Jewish law is not meant to set limits on how much we can grow, or how well we can treat others. Although legal rights are included in the system to protect us from those that would otherwise take advantage, we are not required to use them. Granted, it is very difficult to ever feel that the "other" party is not trying to take advantage of us, but they probably feel the same way as well. Capital punishment is part of the system too, yet a court that ever got to that point is considered heavy-handed (see Makos 7a).

By improving ourselves and the way we deal with others, we will be taking the necessary steps towards making sure that this past Sunday was the last Tisha b'Av spent in national mourning. © 2005 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

This week's portion presents a grim forecast of the Jews' fortune. G-d says that following their entry into the land of Israel, the Jews would sin, resulting in their exile. The Torah then states: "And there you shall serve G-ds, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear, nor eat, nor smell." (Deuteronomy 4:28) This sentence may be descriptive of further sins the Jewish people would commit once driven out of Israel. Yet, one could also look at it another way; not as a description of sin, but as part of the initial punishment Am Yisrael would bear.

Abarbanel describes the punishment as follows. Once exiled the Jews would worship idols. Although they would be aware of the false nature of these idols, they would be forced to serve them in order to protect themselves and save their lives. To paraphrase Abarbanel, this is not mentioned as a sin but a punishment. Despite their recognition in their hearts of their true G-d, they would have no choice but to pray to idols and lie about their true belief, a tortuous punishment indeed.

Biur agrees that the sentence is descriptive of punishment, yet sees the punishment differently than Abarbanel. Biur suggests that in exile we would find ourselves in a foreign culture imbued with a value system contrary to Torah. To restate Biur, there is no greater punishment than the soul drowning in the abomination of sin from which one cannot escape. There is no worse soulful pain and punishment than recognizing the evil of one's actions but not being able to withdraw-having become so accustomed to committing this sin (hergel aveirah).

Nehama Leibovitz points out that these two commentators reflect the challenges of their respective generations. Abarbanel lived in Spain in the latter part of the 15th century during the period of the Spanish

Inquisition. It was then that the Catholic Church demanded that Jews worship their man-G-d, otherwise they would be killed. Hence, he sees the punishment here as descriptive of what his generation was experiencing. At the risk of being killed, Jews had no choice but to outwardly leave their faith.

Biur of Devarim was Hertz Hamburg who lived in the 18th century in Western Europe. The challenge of his generation was the enlightenment which ensnared the Jewish people and caused rampant assimilation. The threat was not physical but spiritual. For Biur, our Torah speaks of Jews who leave the faith, not because their lives are threatened, but because they have been swept up in the temper of the times.

In Truth, Abarbanel and Biur speak of the physical and spiritual tasks that we face throughout history. What both of these challenges have in common is the promise which immediately follows in the text that somehow against all odds we would extricate ourselves from that exile and return to G-d-in fulfillment of G-d's covenant with the Jewish people. As the Torah states, "and from there you will seek the Lord your G-d." (Deuteronomy 4:29)

The season of Tisha B'Av not only commemorates our being forced into exile, but it forces us to focus on the low points and tragedies we have experienced as a people in the Diaspora. With this seasonal backdrop, the challenges brought forth in this parsha become frighteningly clear. And so, the Torah gives us a most appropriate reading for Shabbat Nahamu, the Shabbat of comfort-a portion that describes reality, yet emerges with the promise of seeking out G-d and returning to a path of connection and holiness. © 2005 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

RABBI MAYER TWERSKY

L'shaim Shomayim

Acting l'sheim shomayim (for the sake of heaven) is one of the overarching principles if Judasim (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 238). But how do we ascertain that we are acting truly l'sheim shomayim?

On the one hand, it is simple and straight forward. All we have to do is look into our hearts and be honest with ourselves. On the other hand, however, it is somewhat complex. We have a remarkable capacity for self-deception. This capacity is a necessary part of the gift of bechira chofshis (free will). Bechira chofshis includes the freedom to deny truth- even about ourselves. Hence the complexity in ascertaining that we are acting truly l'sheim shomayim. We may think that we are acting l'sheim shomayim, but are we fooling ourselves?

"You shall not place a stumbling block in front of a blind person and you shall have fear of your G-d-I am Hashem." (Vayikra 19:14) "You shall have fear of your G-d-since this matter is not given to people to

know if the intent of the person [who gives the bad advice] is for good or for bad, and he is able to escape blame, and to say, 'I meant well,' therefore it is said about him 'and you shall have fear of your G-d' who recognizes your thoughts. And so, too, anything that is given over to the heart of the person who does it and which other people can't recognize, of it, it is said, 'and you shall have fear of your G-d.'" (Rashi ad loc., Artscroll translation)

When we can deceive others, the Torah exhorts us "you shall have fear of your G-d." Hashem can not be deceived, and we are accountable to Him. Yiras shomayim (fear of heaven) holds in check the yetser harah to deceive others. And, by extension-yiras shomayim can also hold in check the yetser harah to deceive ourselves. Admittedly we have a capacity for self-deception, but, conversely, we also have a matching capacity for self-awareness. Yiras shomayim can be instrumental in activating the latter and suppressing the former.

Yiras shomayim not only counters the impulse to self-deception and fosters self-awareness. It also cultivates the capacity for altruistic l'sheim shomayim conduct. Simply put: one who has deep-seated yiras shomayim and is keenly aware of and preoccupied with Hakadosh Baruch Hu is likely to act genuinely l'sheim shomayim.

An important indicator in assessing the l'sheim shomayim of our actions and beliefs is consistency. Inconsistency invariably exposes deception and/or self-deception. The Beis Halevi (on parshas Vayigash) offers this penetrating insight in explaining the apparent redundancy of the Mishna in Pirkei Avos (3:1).

"Da...lifnei mi attah asid litein din v'cheshbon-Know...before Whom you will give justification (din) and reckoning (cheshbon)." Din, explains the Beis Halevi, refers to each of our actions judged individually. Cheshbon refers to the amalgam of our actions. Cheshbon scrutinizes the internal consistency of our actions. For instance, if we will plead poverty or lack of means as justification for miserly tzedakka habits, the heavenly court will review all of our expenditures. We will be asked to explain why we were wealthy enough to take expensive vacations, live in opulent homes and the like, but too poor to give tzedakka. Inconsistency highlights deception and/or self-deception.

Let us consider a few examples. Anger is a destructive impulse. Inflamed passions lead to impulsive, vindictive speech and conduct. In anger, we say and do regrettable things. And not only are they regrettable, at times, they are also irreversible. Moral outrage, on the other hand, is a noble sentiment. We should be passionate in opposing injustice, falsehood, and evil. "I have hated falsehood and abhorred it." (Tehillim 119:163) "O lovers of hashem, despise evil!" (Tehillim 97:10)

When someone wrongs us, we react passionately. We think-or at any rate, we would like to

think-that we are feeling moral outrage l'sheim shomayim, and not narcissistic anger. But which is it? The test is very simple. Are we consistent-viz., do we react as forcefully and passionately when others are wronged? If so, we are feeling moral outrage. But if not, then we are feeling personal, selfish anger-a destructive impulse that must be avoided.

When a parent strikes a child, is he/she doing so for the child's welfare- convinced that there is no better form of discipline possible? (By no means, am I assuming that, in our day, corporal punishment is desirable even with the purest of motives (see Rav Shlomo Wolbe's *Planting & Building: Raising a Jewish Child*.) My point is that even if one does approve of corporal punishment it must meet the standard of l'sheim shomayim.)

Or is the parent acting out of frustration (for some parents, the frustration quotient in parenting spikes at times) and anger, rationalizing to himself "I'm doing this for the child's best interest. It is a mitzvah"? Consistency test: when the child misbehaves but the parent's nerves are not frazzled is he equally inclined to strike the child? When the parent decides to hit the child, is he/she calm, objective, and dispassionate in making that decision? Or is the parent feeling frustrated and angry, emotions which cloud one's judgment. If the parent is feeling frustrated and angry, it is virtually certain that in part if not in full, he is not acting l'sheim shomayim. He is venting his frustration and anger.

In virtually every case of parents hitting children that I have witnessed, the parent manifested unmistakable signs of anger and/or frustration. Such discipline does not teach children right from wrong. The overriding message children receive in such situations is that parents, instead of controlling anger and developing patience, vent anger by hitting their children.

Another example, of a different variety, of utilizing the consistency test. In contemporary ideological discussion and debate, we often levy charges of revisionism, cataloguing what we consider various instances of revisionism. In doing so, we ostensibly act l'sheim shomayim, as zealots for truth. But are we zealots for truth or simply seeking to discredit ideological opponents? Or perhaps we are pandering to a certain constituency? Consistency test: do we adduce examples from the entire ideological spectrum or only from one side ("left", "right") of the spectrum? If the latter, does this group being assailed have a monopoly on revisionism? Once we recognize our inconsistency, the self-questioning should proceed. How many examples that we cite are really instances of revisionism, and how many are interpretations with which we disagree? The consistency test, honestly administered and uncensored, can be very revealing.

One final example, also drawn from contemporary ideological discussion and debate. Many "hot-button" issues are currently being debated in the public square. Some of these are women's issues-role

of women, aliyas, and so on. There are many other issues as well—for instance, the boundaries of legitimate tolerance and openness. Many people are very opinionated in such matters, passionately advocating a particular point of view. Some go beyond advocacy and introduce change and innovation. And, of course, ostensibly everything is said and done l'sheim shomayim. But is the advocacy truly l'sheim shomayim? Or, perhaps is it self-serving, remaking halachah in our image in concert with our predilections?

Consistency test: do we maintain the same professional standards for the resolution of halachic issues that we insist upon in other contexts? For instance, in complex medical affairs we seek—as we should—the best, most expert medical care and guidance. If need be, we travel the world to seek out an expert. For a laymen or even an undistinguished doctor to make decisions or even advocate in complex medical issues would be reckless. We would not allow it. How many of us—laymen and rabbonim alike—are entitled to even express an opinion, much less advocate, in complex halachic matters? If, lack of qualifications notwithstanding, we persist in advocating on halachic matters, are we truly doing so l'sheim shomayim? The consistency test, honestly administered and uncensored, can be very revealing. © 2005 by Rabbi M. Twersky & TorahWeb.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“**A**nd I (Moses) entreated the Lord at that time, saying, '... let me pass over (the river Jordan) please so that I may see the good land...'” (Deut. 3:23,25) Moses places two entreaties before the Lord at the end of his life, one which is Biblically expressed and the other which is merely suggested between the lines of the Bible. The one which he openly expresses comes at the very beginning of this week's Torah portion, and is his heartfelt request to enter the land of Israel. The other is perceived only by the Rabbis of the Midrash, and is based upon the fact that Moses expresses the need of appointing his successor right after G-d has agreed that the daughters of Tzelaahad can inherit their father (Numbers 21:14 The Midrash teaches).

"What caused Moses to request his replacement after the inheritance of the daughters? Since these daughters inherited their father, Moses declared, 'This is the right moment for me to claim my need. After all, if these women can inherit, my sons should certainly inherit my glory.' The Holy one Blessed Be He said to him: 'The Guardian of the fig tree shall eat of its fruit' (Proverbs 27). Your sons sat idly by themselves and were not occupied in the study of Torah. Joshua, on the other hand, served you well and extended to you much honor. He would arrive at your courthouse early in the morning and leave late at

night.... Appoint Joshua the son of Nun as your successor, to fulfill the verse, 'the guardian of the fig tree shall eat of its fruit.'"

Hence Moses asked G-d to appoint his sons as his successors (although this request is not explicitly stated in the text), and Moses further asked G-d to allow him to enter the Land of Israel.

Tragically, both requests were denied. The first, his children as his successors, is denied because his sons are found wanting; they did not have the necessary Torah qualifications to be religious leaders in their fathers footsteps. Apparently, Moses himself realizes their lack of worthiness and therefore does not specifically make this request verbally; he merely thinks it in his heart and the Bible informs us of it by placing his request for replacement after the inheritance of the daughters of Tzelaahad. Perhaps Moses understands that he himself bears some guilt for the faults of his children. After all, he is so consumed with his relationship with the Divine that he has neither the time nor the patience for family. Does the Bible not record that he was seemingly too busy to even circumcise his son Eliezer, so that his life had to be saved by his wife Tziporah who performed the circumcision herself in order to save Moses from punishment for his neglect? (Exodus 4:24-26)?

Moses apparently is more comfortable about making the second request, that he be allowed to enter the Promised Land. It is this entreaty which opens our portion of Vaetchanan. The entire purpose of the Exodus from Egypt is to enter the Land of Israel, and Moses even slew an Egyptian taskmaster to save a Hebrew slave, thereby making him persona non grata in the very country where he was living as a prince. After all of his sacrifices and all of his difficulties with an unwilling and backsliding Israelite nation, does he not deserve to reach his life's goal and enter Israel?

But here again the request is denied. "And the Lord was angry at me because of you and He did not acquiesce to me...", saying that I may not speak of this anymore (Deut. 3:26). If a parent's legacy is limited or expanded by the quality of his children, a leader must likewise suffer the same destiny as his nation. When G-d originally asked Moses to assume the leadership of the Israelites and take them out of Egypt, the great prophet demurred: "The (Israelites) did not listen to Moses because of impatience and difficult work" (Exodus 6:9) The Rambam explains this to mean that Moses was impatient with his (Moses') people because of his difficult work in making himself intellectually and spiritually close to the Divine. Moses was apparently unwilling or incapable of convincing his people to conquer the Land of Israel; he had no patience for a people who had experienced so many miracles and was still refusing to carry out G-d's will unconditionally. If as a result they were doomed to die in the desert, their leader had to share their punishment.

The story about the famous Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov will explain this idea. The Disciples of Rav Yisrael were very devoted to him-except on the morning of the Sabbath during the Additional Amidah; the great Rabbi and founder of the Hassidic movement would take so long in prayer that his disciples lost patience and yearned for a little Kiddush wine and cake. Since their Holy teacher took almost an hour for this particular prayer, they decided that they would quietly leave the synagogue, go home for Kiddush and return before the Rabbi knew that they had left. You could imagine their astonishment when-just as the last worshiper was leaving the synagogue and only ten minutes after the silent Additional Amidah had begun to be prayed-the Baal Shem Tov took three steps back and concluded his prayer. All the disciples sheepishly returned. The Baal Shem Tov explained: every 7Shabbath morning I literally climb to the heights of Heaven during this particular prayer- but the rungs of the ladder are the souls of my disciples. This morning the ladder crashed to the ground, so I had no other recourse but to conclude my prayer much earlier..." Every leader remains dependent upon his people.

In the final analysis, why were these two prayers denied the greatest leader in Jewish history? Perhaps because the very source of Moses' greatness-his closeness to G-d-was also the very source of his tragedy: he lacked the patience for family or congregants who were far from his level. Perhaps he was refused by G-d in order to teach us that no mortal, not even Moses, leaves this world without at least half of his desires remaining unfulfilled. And perhaps he was refused merely to teach us that no matter how worthy our prayer, sometimes the Almighty answers no and we must accept a negative answer. Faith, first and foremost, implies our faithfulness to G-d even though He may refuse our request. © 2005 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

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This week's parsha contains two of the basic pillars of the Jewish faith - the Shema and the Ten Commandments of Sinai. This parsha also contains Moses' plea for entry into the Land of Israel - an entry that is denied to him - and the explicit warning that the stay of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel is conditional upon the people's loyalty to the G-d of Israel and to the Torah. Thus the Land of Israel is also seen as a supreme value in Jewish life - hence, Moses' prayers and entreaties to be allowed to enter there - but its importance is nevertheless dependent on Israel's worship of G-d and the study and observance of His Torah. This interdependence too is one of the pillars of Judaism established for us in this parsha. The Land of Israel as a Jewish value can only exist and flourish if it is kept in tandem with the other basic values enunciated

in the parsha - the Shema and the Ten Commandments from Sinai. As a singular, isolated value in itself, it will be unable to support the structure of the house of Israel. In these difficult, heart-wrenching days, we here in Israel, are painfully aware of this statement. The Land of Israel is a religious value to Jews, not merely a national one. Cut adrift from its religious moorings, it will eventually, over time merely drift away in the sea of problems, adversities and lost ideals.

This parsha, as is part of every other parsha in the book of Dvarim as well, emphasizes a review of the Jewish past. The past plays a major role in all Jewish life and thought. The past is our reference point for where we are currently. Moshe constantly reviews and recalls the past - Egypt, Sinai, the sojourn in the desert, etc. - in order to instruct and inspire the people for the tasks that lie ahead. When walking uphill here in Jerusalem (and wherever one walks it is always uphill) I often stop and turn around to survey how much of the hill I have already traversed. I gain heart and renewed vigor at seeing how far I have already come going up that hill. I think that the same is true for the Jewish people generally and especially at this time. Seeing how far we have come after the disasters of the past century, knowing our past both distant and near, is a necessary component for continuing to climb our hill. The Torah always emphasizes knowledge of the past. We pray to the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, we constantly recall the Exodus from Egypt and the revelation of Sinai. We are obsessed with our past for this is the only way to assure our future. Moshe's review of the past is timely in all generations. It will continue to strengthen us in our current hour of need. © 2005 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

One of the differences between the Ten Commandments in this week's Torah portion and the earlier text in the portion of Yitro is in the last of the commandments. In both cases, the prohibition is noted twice. In Yitro, it is written, "Do not covet your colleague's house, do not covet your colleague's wife, nor his slave, his maidservant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that your colleague has" [Shemot 20:14]. In this week's portion, the text is, "Do not covet your colleague's wife, and do not desire your colleague's house, his field, his slave, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, or anything your colleague has" [Devarim 5:18]. There are two differences between the verses. First, while in the earlier version the prohibition is described twice by the words "Do not covet"-lo tachmod-in this week's portion, one time the prohibition is modified to

"Do not desire"- lo tit'aveh. In addition, the sequence of the commandment is different in the two portions. In Yitro, the first item is the house, followed by the wife, while in this week's portion the first item is the wife, and this is followed by the house. What is the reason for these differences?

It seems that the two differences noted above are connected to each other. In Yitro, what is emphasized is a general prohibition, not to want something that belongs to somebody else. For this reason, the commandment begins with a general rule: "Do not covet your colleague's house." This is followed by specific details of what the "house" contains-his "wife, his slave, his maidservant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that your colleague has." In this week's portion, on the other hand, there are in essence two separate prohibitions. "Do not covet your colleague's wife" is a specific command, with the emphasis not on harming the colleague but rather on the harmful sexual relationship. The rest of the commandment is concerned with a desire for property that belongs to another person: "do not desire your colleague's house, his field, his slave, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, or anything your colleague has." In this week's portion, the wife is not considered part of the "house" but is an independent entity.

It may well be that the variations in this last command also have an effect on the way the Ten Commandments are categorized. There is a well known disagreement among the sages and the commentators if the first phrase, "I am your G-d," should be considered a separate commandment or not. The Rambam lists this as a single commandment (Sefer Hamitzvot, Mitzva 1), while Rav Bahai Gaon does not count this as a commandment but rather as the basis for all the mitzvot. This difference of opinion may be related to the different approaches in the Torah portions. In Yitro, where the command "Do not covet" is a single prohibition, the two phrases "I am your G-d" and "Do not have other G-ds" can be counted as two separate commandments. In this week's portion, where it is implied that "Do not covet" and "Do not desire" may be separate commands, it might be necessary to combine the first two phrases into one commandment.

In the past we have noted that there is also a difference in the way Shabbat is treated in the two Torah portions. In Yitro, Shabbat is treated as relevant to the relationship between man and G-d ("For in six days G-d made the heaven and the earth" [Shemot 20:11]), but in Va'etchanan the emphasis is on the aspect of one man and another ("... so that your slave and maidservant will rest, as you do" [Devarim 5:14]). Thus, while in Yitro there are an equal number of mitzvot between man and man and between man and G-d (five each), in this week's portion, taking into account the different approach to Shabbat and dividing "Do not covet" into two prohibitions, there are less mitzvot related directly to G-d, with a majority in the

category between man and man. Before the nation enters Eretz Yisrael, Moshe presents a picture of the Ten Commandments that puts a great emphasis on the contact between one man and another.

"And I Prayed to G-d at That Time"

by Mrs. Sarah Meshoreir

Moshe prayed 515 prayers (the numerical value of the word "va'etchanan") in an attempt to cancel the decree against him and to be able to enter Eretz Yisrael. According to the Sifri, he was very upset that Bnei Yisrael did not join him to pray on his behalf. "At the time of the Golden Calf I stood up and prayed for them, and you listened to my prayer and forgave them. I would have thought that they would join me in prayer, but they did not pray for me. But by logical inference it is clear that this would have helped- if the prayer of an individual about a group is answered, so much more so would a prayer by a group about an individual be answered."

But in spite of his disappointment, Moshe continues to give preference to the good of the nation over his own good, and he guards them from any harm. According to the Midrash, in response to his prayer, "Let me cross over and see the good land" [Devarim 3:25], the Almighty replied: "I made two decrees, one about the nation, 'Let me be and I will destroy them' [9:14], and the other about you, 'You will not cross this Jordan' [3:27]. You asked me to cancel the decree about the nation, and I answered, 'I have forgiven them, as you requested' [Bamidbar 14:20]. Do you want to hold the rope by both ends? If you want the request 'Let me cross over,' cancel the request 'Forgive them' [14:19], and I will destroy the nation. But if you want to maintain the request 'Forgive them' cancel the demand, 'Let me cross over.' When Moshe heard this, he said, Master of the Universe, let Moshe and a hundred others like him die, but do not harm the fingernail of a single person in Yisrael."

Why did Moshe make such a great effort to enter the land? "Rabbi Simlai taught: Why did Moshe have such a strong desire to enter Eretz Yisrael, did he need to eat from its fruit or enjoy its bounty? This is what Moshe said: I commanded Bnei Yisrael to do many mitzvot that can only be observed in the land, let me enter so that I can observe all the mitzvot. The Almighty asked him, is what you want to receive the credit for doing the mitzvot? I give you credit as if you had performed them all." Moshe asks to leave the world not only complete in his personal traits but having performed all possible mitzvot as well.

The Yalkut gives another reason why Moshe made such a great effort to enter the land. Moshe knew that he would not be allowed to enter, but he continued praying in order to show the people how important and precious the land was to him. He believed that only in this way would the people learn to love the land and

understand how valuable it is, so that they would not sin and lose the rights to the land, G-d forbid.

We must keep in mind that the key to maintaining our possession of the land is the performance of the mitzvot. In our generation, as in that of Moshe, we must teach and demonstrate to our people the value and the importance of the holy land, the land of our forefathers, for which we waited and prayed for two thousand years. Let us all pray that we will soon be privileged to have full possession of the land in the near future, and that the Almighty will return His Shechina as in the beginning. As we say in our prayers three times every day, "Let our eyes see your return to Zion, with mercy."

RABBI SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

In this week's parashah, we find the mitzvah to love G-d. R' Yaakov Kaminetsky z"l (died 1986) observed in an address that this mitzvah has several components. When one reads the verse "Ve'ahavta / You shall love. .." in Kriat Shema every day, one is called upon to be willing to sacrifice his life for Hashem. This is naturally very difficult. However, there is another aspect to loving G-d. The Gemara says that if a person learns Torah and engages in business with a pleasant demeanor such that people say, "Fortunate is the one who taught him Torah! Look at so-and-so who studied Torah; how pleasant his deeds are!" then one has shown his love of G-d.

R' Kaminetsky added: Students who learn this Gemara think it is mussar and not halachah. However, Rambam quotes this teaching in his Sefer Hamitzvot, his encyclopedia of the 613 commandments. Rambam adds: This mitzvah includes calling all of mankind to serve Him and believe in Him. Just as if you love a person, you speak his praises and you want other people to love him, so one who loves Hashem will speak His praises and want others to love Him.

Thus, concluded R' Kaminetsky, when one reads the verse "Ve'ahavta" in Kriat Shema, he must realize that it is a commandment in the Torah to act in a way that will cause others to love Hashem. This means more than having good manners. One must act in a way that calls attention to the fact that he is a servant of G-d, so that people will say, Look at so-and-so who studied Torah; how pleasant his deeds are!" (Reprinted in B'mechitzat Rabbeinu p. 251)

"You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources." (6:5) R' Moshe Chaim Luzzato z"l (Ramchal; 18th century) writes: Ahavah / love for Hashem means that a person pines for and desires closeness to Hashem. One who has Ahavah for Hashem pursues holiness just as a person would pursue anything that attracts him strongly. Having Ahavah for Hashem means that

mentioning His Name (may It be blessed) and His praises, and studying His Torah, is literally a pleasure. It means feeling the same type of love for Hashem that one feels for the wife of his youth or for his only child; one experiences joy merely from speaking about those relatives. [So, too, one who loves Hashem experiences joy from speaking about Him.]

There are three branches of Ahavah. They are: Deveikut / attachment, Simchah / joy, and Kinah / a combination of jealousy and zealotry. Deveikut means clinging to Him and being unable to separate from Him. One who is attached to another finds pleasure in being involved with the affairs of the subject of his love. [So, too, one who loves Hashem finds pleasure in being involved with His affairs, i.e., Torah study and mitzvah performance.]

Simchah (the second branch of Ahavah) is an important principle in serving Hashem. True simchah means that one's heart rejoices constantly because he merits to serve the Master (may He be blessed, there is no other like Him) and because he merits to occupy himself with His Torah and mitzvot, which are the ultimate perfection and the most valuable possession for all eternity.

Finally, the third branch is Kinah, i.e., that a person is jealous for the sake of His holy Name, hates His enemies, and subdues them in any way he can so that His work will be done and His honor increased. Moreover, a person who loves Hashem cannot bear to see His Name profaned or His mitzvot transgressed. This is what King Shlomo meant when he declared (Mishlei 28:4), "Those who abandon the Torah will praise the wicked, and those who guard the Torah will contend with them."

Of course, one who loves his Creator with real love will not set aside His work for any reason in the world, except for a truly unavoidable reason. Such a person will not need encouragement and incentives to serve Hashem; to the contrary, his heart will draw him to that activity. (Mesilat Yesharim Ch.19)

"Only guard yourself and guard your soul well, lest you forget the things that your eyes have beheld [at Sinai] and lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children and your children's children." (4:9)

Why the seeming repetition: "guard yourself and guard your soul well"? R' Yaakov Kranz z"l (1741-1804; the Dubno Maggid) explains: A person who sins brings about two results—he damages the beautiful world Hashem created and he damages his own soul. And, the latter damage is more difficult to set right. Therefore, "guard yourself." Do not harm your body or your surroundings by sinning. But even more, "guard your soul well," for it is more difficult to repair your soul than to repair your body. (Kol Bochim Al Megillat Eichah 1:9; Voice of Weepers, p. 59) © 2005 Rabbi S. Katz & torah.org