

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**B**uried among the epic passages in Va-etchanan -- among them the Shema and the Ten Commandments -- is a brief passage with large implications for the moral life in Judaism. Here it is together with the preceding verse: "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your G-d, and His testimonies and His statutes, which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers." (Deut. 6:17-18)

The difficulty is obvious. The preceding verse makes reference to commandments, testimonies and statutes. This, on the face of it, is the whole of Judaism as far as conduct is concerned. What then is meant by the phrase "the right and the good" that is not already included within the previous verse?

Rashi says, it refers to "compromise (that is, not strictly insisting on your rights) and action within or beyond the letter of the law (lifnim mi-shurat ha-din)." The law, as it were, lays down a minimum threshold: this we must do. But the moral life aspires to more than simply doing what we must. The people who most impress us with their goodness and rightness are not merely people who keep the law. The saints and heroes of the moral life go beyond. They do more than they are commanded. They go the extra mile. That according to Rashi is what the Torah means by "the right and the good." (See Lon Fuller, *The Morality of Law*, Yale University Press, 1969, and R. Aharon Lichtenstein's much reprinted article, 'Is there an ethic independent of the halakhah?')

Ramban, while citing Rashi and agreeing with him, goes on to say something slightly different: "At first Moses said that you are to keep His statutes and his testimonies which He commanded you, and now he is stating that even where He has not commanded you, give thought as well to do what is good and right in his eyes, for He loves the good and the right."

Now this is a great principle, for it is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man's conduct with his neighbours and friends, all his various transactions and the ordinances of all societies and countries. But since He mentioned many of them, such

as, "You shall not go around as a talebearer," "You shall not take vengeance nor bear a grudge," "You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor," "You shall not curse the deaf," "You shall rise before the hoary head," and the like, He went on to state in a general way that in all matters one should do what is good and right, including even compromise and going beyond the strict requirement of the law... Thus one should behave in every sphere of activity, until he is worthy of being called "good and upright."

Ramban is going beyond Rashi's point, that the right and the good refer to a higher standard than the law strictly requires. It seems as if Ramban is telling us that there are aspects of the moral life that are not caught by the concept of law at all. That is what he means by saying "It is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man's conduct with his neighbours and friends."

Law is about universals, principles that apply in all places and times. Don't murder. Don't rob. Don't steal. Don't lie. Yet there are important features of the moral life that are not universal at all. They have to do with specific circumstances and the way we respond to them. What is it to be a good husband or wife, a good parent, a good teacher, a good friend? What is it to be a great leader, or follower, or member of a team? When is it right to praise, and when is it appropriate to say, "You could have done better"? There are aspects of the moral life that cannot be reduced to rules of conduct, because what matters is not only what we do, but the way in which we do it: with humility or gentleness or sensitivity or tact.

Morality is about persons, and no two persons are alike. When Moses asked G-d to appoint a successor, he began his request with the words, "Lord, G-d of the spirits of all flesh." (Numbers 27:16) On this the rabbis commented: what Moses was saying was that because each person is different, he asked G-d to appoint a leader who would relate to each individual as an individual, knowing that what is helpful to one person may be harmful to another. (Sifre Zuta, Midrash Tanhuma and Rashi to Numbers ad loc.) This ability to judge the right response to the right person at the right time is a feature not only of leadership, but of human goodness in general.

Rashi begins his commentary to Bereishit with the question: If the Torah is a book of law, why does it not start with the first law given to the people of Israel

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as a whole, which does not appear until Exodus 12? Why does it include the narratives about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the patriarchs and matriarchs and their children? Rashi gives an answer that has nothing to do with morality -- he says it has to do with the Jewish people's right to their land. But the Netziv (R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin) writes that the stories of Genesis are there to teach us how the patriarchs were upright in their dealings, even with people who were strangers and idolaters. That, he says, is why Genesis is called by the sages "the book of the upright." (Ha-amek Davar to Genesis, Introduction.)

Morality is not just a set of rules, even a code as elaborate as the 613 commands and their rabbinic extensions. It is also about the way we respond to people as individuals. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is at least in part about what went wrong in their relationship when the man referred to his wife as Ishah, 'woman,' a generic description, a type. Only when he gave her a proper name, Chavah, Eve, did he relate to her as an individual in her individuality, and only then did G-d "make them garments of skin and clothed them."

This too is the difference between the G-d of Aristotle and the G-d of Abraham. Aristotle thought that G-d knew only universals not particulars. This is the G-d of science, of the Enlightenment, of Spinoza. The G-d of Abraham is the G-d who relates to us in our singularity, in what makes us different from others as well as what makes us the same.

This ultimately is the difference between the two great principles of Judaic ethics: justice and love. Justice is universal. It treats all people alike, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, making no distinctions on the basis of colour or class. But love is particular. A parent loves his or her children for what makes them each unique. The moral life is a combination of both. That is why it cannot be reduced solely to universal laws. That is what the Torah means when it speaks of "the right and the good" over and above the commandments, statutes and testimonies.

A good teacher knows what to say to a weak student who, through great effort, has done better than expected, and to a gifted student who has come top of the class but is still performing below his or her

potential. A good employer knows when to praise and when to challenge. We all need to know when to insist on justice and when to exercise forgiveness. The people who have had a decisive influence on our lives are almost always those we feel understood us in our singularity. We were not, for them, a mere face in the crowd. That is why, though morality involves universal rules and cannot exist without them, it also involves interactions that cannot be reduced to rules.

Rabbi Israel of Rizhin once asked a student how many sections there were in the Shulchan Arukh. The student replied, "Four." "What," asked the Rizhiner, "do you know about the fifth section?" "But there is no fifth section," said the student. "There is," said the Rizhiner. "It says: always treat a person like a mensch."

The fifth section of the code of law is the conduct that cannot be reduced to law. That is what it takes to do the right and the good. ©2015 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

**T**he sages of the Talmud teach that the Holy One, Blessed be He, dons tefillin every day (as it were) (BT Brachot 6a); they suggest that in the boxes of G-d's tefillin are verses paralleling the boxes worn by Jews. The first verse in G-d's tefillin is: "Who is like Your nation Israel, a most unique nation on earth?" (I Chron. 17:21).

Let me share with you four vignettes from last year's war in Gaza which confirm the Divine assessment of the uniqueness of our people.

1. One of the first sacred korbanot (victims) of this war was Lt. Yuval Heiman, born in Efrat, whose great-grandfather, along with three other members of the Heiman family, fell in the War of Independence.

Yuval was circumcised and "bar mitzvahed" in Efrat, graduated with distinction from Ohr Torah Stone's Derech Avot School, won many trophies and medals for excellence in sports and volunteerism, and was an outstanding member of the IDF's Officer Training School. Yuval was slated for a shining future as a great Jewish leader, but then....

When I entered the shiva home one year ago, Yuval's grandfather, Yehuda – a silversmith and regular attendee of our Daf Yomi (religious studies) class – greeted me with a warm embrace. We both wept silently. Then Yehuda caught himself. "In this shiva house, we do not weep; of course, we are overcome with grief, but the dominant feeling in our hearts is pride and zechut, the privilege of being able – in our generation – to sacrifice for the Jewish future."

Moshe and Zohara, Yuval's parents, both explained that of course they cry – but privately, at night into their pillows. The profound message they convey is the merit of living in the generation of rebirth, of their ability – which the past generation of

the Shoah could not do – to take Jewish destiny into their own hands and pave the way, albeit with heartbreaking commitment and sacrifice, for Jewish future and redemption.

In effect, they were repeating the words of the brother of Great-Grandfather Heiman, who said – upon establishing Kibbutz Nehalim after losing the four members of his family in the War of Independence – “the place (hamakom), our home in Israel reborn, comforts me among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem...”

2. Also, last year, I went to Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer to visit Elyosef Malkieli, an outstanding commanding officer who suffered a near-fatal wound in his leg. He and two of his young charges were standing by their personnel carrier when a hand-grenade was thrown in their direction. Elyosef instinctively reached out to deflect it away from a large group of his soldiers.

He was struck on his leg, and he and only two of his soldiers were wounded and knocked unconscious.

When the soldiers regained consciousness, their first words were, “How is Elyosef? Please G-d, he’s alive!” And when Elyosef opened his eyes, his first question was, “How are my boys?” An army in which the first thoughts of the commanding officer are for the welfare of his men, and the first thoughts of the men are for the welfare of their commanding officer is bound to be successful.

3. I had been spending time teaching and lecturing in New York when I returned home to Israel for some 12 hours to pay the condolence call and visit the hospital which I just described. When I arrived at Ben-Gurion Airport, it was eerily empty; the Federal Aviation Administration had canceled all American flights to Israel. Suddenly, I heard guitar music and immediately joined some 35 men in a spirited circle of dancing. In the midst of the rockets and missiles, the sirens and scatterings for shelter, these American Jews were making aliya, immigrating to Israel.

They asked me to give them a blessing; I told them how proud I was of them, how their very presence was a blessing for me. One of them said that they all took heart from something they had read in one of my early columns: “If Israel were merely Disneyland, then you only come if there is sun and peace; but if Israel is Motherland, then when your mother needs you, that is especially when she needs you, you must be there.”

And then the spokesperson added, “And for us, Israel is now our homeland. You protect your homeland whenever necessary; you certainly don’t stay away.”

4. The day before my visits, my daughter Elana was in a Judaica shop where a mother and her young son were inquiring about large, crocheted kippot, which would cover the entire head. She explained to the store owner that her son was one of four observant boys in

their Gaza army unit, and the usual small-style crocheted kippot jostled under the large army helmets and made it uncomfortable for them. The owner searched around a bit, and brought out four large kippot.

“I need 40,” smiled the mother. “But you said there were four observant soldiers in the unit, so why would you want 40 kippot?” inquired the storekeeper. The mother explained that when the other members of the unit heard her son’s request for large kippot, they inquired about the reason for wearing a kippa; her son explained that there is a verse in Psalms which avers that the Divine Presence is above each individual, and this Divine Protection is symbolized by the kippa.

All the soldiers then requested large kippot for under their helmets, claiming that they are all desirous of continued Divine Protection, especially in Gaza. The storekeeper managed to find 40 large kippot, for which he refused to take any money.

“Who is like unto Your nation, a most unique nation on earth.” ©2015 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

#### RABBI BEREL WEIN

## Wein Online

In the Torah reading of this week our teacher and leader Moshe prays and begs for a final time, that Heaven revoke its decree preventing him from entering the Land of Israel. His plea is unsuccessful and, in fact, he is told not to raise the subject again during his lifetime.

It is striking to note that Moshe does not complain about the outcome of his entreaty nor is there any note of bitterness in the rest of the book regarding his fate. One would think that on balance he could make a good case for himself. After all, he is seemingly being treated unfairly and the punishment meted out to him does not fit the offense committed.

There are many reasons advanced by the commentators as to the true motives of Heaven in not allowing Moshe entry into the land of Israel. Whatever the explanation that is offered, the final line must be that we are not privy to, nor able to understand the workings and judgments of the Lord.

This idea is encapsulated in the famous verse “that no living human being can see Me.” it is not only that G-d cannot be seen by human eyes, it is also that G-d’s decisions and guidance of the world and of human events lies beyond the pale of our understanding.

Because of this, there always existed attempts to worship G-d in a manner that somehow could be understood in human terms. The basis of paganism was to make the gods human beings - and not very nice ones at that. We can understand Zeus and Apollo. The true G-d of Israel remains far beyond human comprehension. And that is what in essence separated

Judaism and the Jewish people from all other cultures of the ancient world, and perhaps even of our modern world as well.

Our teacher and leader Moshe came closer than any human being to discern G-d's presence. The Lord, so to speak, passed over him and somehow touched him. The face of Moshe radiated with the spark of godliness that was imparted to him. And it is perhaps this intimacy with G-d that Moshe possessed which allows him to accept G-d's judgment without question and bitterness.

This is perhaps the supreme lesson that Moshe himself teaches the Jewish people in recounting these events. It is not so much the personal disappointment and frustration that he wishes to communicate to us in being unable to enter the Land of Israel. It is rather the supreme lesson that man is unable to judge G-d and that the line between the human who is created and G-d Who is his creator cannot be crossed.

The silence of Moshe on this matter throughout the rest of the book of the Torah speaks volumes. It teaches us the lesson of the relationship between G-d and humans and of the great inimitable Jewish idea of the glory of G-d and somehow of our relationship of acceptance and belief in Him. ©2015 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](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

**RABBI AVI WEISS**

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**W**ithout the world, what would G-d be? The answer is simply, G-d. On the other hand, without G-d, the world would cease to exist.

G-d is so powerful that without the world He would not be reduced one iota. In the same breath, G-d's immanence is such that without Him the world would be nothing.

Rashi enhances this idea through his interpretation of the famous sentence found in this week's portion, Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Ehad – "Hear O Israel the Lord is our G-d the Lord is One." (Deuteronomy 6:4)

In the words of Rashi, the verse comes to tell us that "Hashem, the Lord, who is our G-d, now...He will be in the future One Lord, as it is stated... 'in that day shall the Lord be One and His name One.'" (Zachariah 14:9)

The implication is clear: G-d in the world today is not fully One in the sense that he has not been accepted by all of humankind. It is up to us, who know of G-d's greatness, to spread the name of G-d so that He will be received as One throughout the world.

The second paragraph of the well known Aleinu prayer makes this very point. There we yearn for the

time when "the world will be perfected under the reign of the Almighty, le-takein olam be-malkhut Shakai" and all humankind will express allegiance to G-d. "On that day," the paragraph continues, quoting the sentence from Zachariah which Rashi understands as an explanation of Shema, "G-d will be One, and His name One." Note that the whole paragraph is in the future, implying that in the present G-d is not One in the sense that He has not been embraced by all.

This idea is also echoed in the text about Amalek where G-d swears by His name and throne that He will forever war against Amalek. G-d's name and throne are written uniquely as they are incomplete in the text —keis, Kah. (Exodus 17:16) Indeed, Rashi writes: "The Holy One blessed be He swears that His name and throne will not be whole and One until Amalek will be utterly blotted out."

Once again it is up to the human being, with G-d's help, to eradicate Amalek or the forces of Amalek. In this sense, while G-d does not need the human being-- as He is, of course, independent and self existent-- we have a strong and important role in His future. For only through the efforts of humankind will His name be One and His throne be complete.

In one word: while the existence of G-d does not at all depend upon humankind, the manifestation of G-d and the proliferation of the Divine message in this world very much depends on each and every one of us.

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**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## Taking a Closer Look

**"A**nd G-d was angry with me because of you" (D'varim 3:26). Rashi, based on the Sifre (Pinachas 135) elaborates on what Moshe meant when he told the nation that G-d was angry with him because of them: "[it was] on your behalf; you caused it to happen to me," as it says (in T'hillim 106:32), 'and they caused [G-d to become] angry by Mei M'rivah, and it was bad for Moshe because of them.' Saying it was "on your behalf" and then adding "you caused it" indicates that something was done for the benefit of the nation, which led to something bad happening to Moshe. [That the intent of the word "I'ma'anchem" is "on your behalf" is evident from the choice of words in the verses (1:37 and 3:26), as well as from Rashi using another form of the word ("bish'vilchem," a word he himself adds, as it does not appear in the Sifre) before saying that they caused it, and from his commentary on 4:21.] What was done on their behalf, and how did it cause Moshe to be punished? And what was Moshe trying to tell them?

The chain of events at Mei M'rivah (Bamidbar 20:2-13) was the nation arguing with Moshe because

there was no water, G-d telling Moshe to speak to the rock, Moshe hitting the rock, and G-d becoming angry with Moshe. At first glance, it would seem that “on their behalf” therefore refers to alleviating their need for water, which led to Moshe being punished. However, why would the nation be blamed for Moshe's sin, which according to Rashi (20:12) was hitting the rock rather than speaking to it? Since there was no water, it was necessary for some to be provided. Why would Moshe providing it differently than the way G-d had told him to be blamed on their need for water? Were they expected to die of thirst? How could they be considered the “cause” of Moshe's punishment?

One possible answer (see Taz on D'varim 3:26 and Kli Yakar on 1:37) is that the nation needed to be “wowed” by the method the water was provided in order to improve their belief in G-d. Because Moshe hit the rock rather than speaking to it, there was a less impressive display of G-d's abilities, which in turn had less of an impact on the nation. The instructions to speak to the rock were therefore “on their behalf,” i.e. to help them improve their perception of G-d and His abilities, and because Moshe hitting the rock instead of speaking to it minimized this benefit, he was punished. It was their need to believe in G-d more that necessitated speaking to the rock instead of hitting it, so they were considered the cause of Moshe's punishment.

Another possible answer is based on the nation “arguing” with Moshe, rather than just bringing the issue to his attention. Because they were contentious, Moshe became upset with them, and his anger caused him to err, as it had on several other occasions (see Rashi on Bamidbar 31:21; one of the examples is Moshe getting angry at Mei M'rivah, and mistakenly hitting the rock because of it). However, this would not qualify as being “for their benefit,” as it was the way they dealt with Moshe that led to his becoming angry, not their need for water. True, their need for water that started the whole process, but his inability to enter the land was not based on this need, only on how he responded to how they responded to this need, which was not to anyone's benefit. (Besides, there would be no point in saying “and G-d got angry at me because you needed water”).

Several commentators (e.g. Mizrachi) understand Rashi to be saying that the nation caused Moshe to not be able to enter the land because they angered him, and in his anger he called them “rebels” (Bamidbar 20:9), for which he was punished. [Although this is similar to the previously mentioned possibility, it doesn't include the last step (Moshe's anger causing him to hit the rock rather than speaking to it).] And Rashi's commentary on T'hilim (106:33) backs this up. However, Rashi (in Bamidbar) is quite clear that Moshe was punished for hitting the rock instead of speaking to it. How can Rashi here (and on T'hilim) say that Moshe's sin was getting angry at the nation, if

elsewhere he says it was for hitting the rock?

The context of our verse is Moshe's intense (and repeated) supplication to G-d to allow him to enter the land. Therefore, when Moshe tells the nation that because of them he wasn't able to, he wasn't telling them why he was punished, but why his prayers weren't answered (at least not the way he wanted them to be answered). What, you may ask, is the difference? Well, Moshe did call the nation “rebels,” which was problematic. And he did hit the rock, which was also problematic. G-d wasn't happy with either, but one was primarily a sin between Moshe and the nation (getting angry with them), while the other was primarily a sin against G-d (not following His instructions properly). Both were reason enough to prevent Moshe from entering the land (see the commentators there for a discussion about why), but one was more directly connected to his role as a leader (because it meant not helping those he was leading reach a higher level), while the other was more directly connected to his personal growth (getting angry).

G-d could forgive him for not fully obeying His instructions, and could (theoretically) take away his leadership role without having to forbid him from entering the land. Moshe would not request that Y'hoshua should not become the leader if his time to take over had already arrived, as one king's rule cannot extend into that of another (see Shabbos 30a, where Dovid was told he couldn't delay things because it was time for Sh'lomo to take over). Moshe's request was therefore likely only that he be allowed to live a bit longer so that he could “pass over and see the land” (D'varim 3:25), as a civilian. Y'hoshua would be the leader, and Moshe could die shortly afterwards; Moshe just wanted to see the land before he died. If his only sin was hitting the rock, perhaps G-d would have let him do so. However, because he also became angry with the nation, G-d wasn't going to forgive him for having treated His chosen nation that way.

There are numerous explanations given for how G-d not letting Moshe enter the land was “on their behalf.” His burial place being opposite P'or provided constant atonement for their sin. His entering the land would have given the Mishkan/Temple permanence, preventing G-d's wrath against the nation (when they sinned) from being taken out on “wood and stone” by destroying the Temple. His remaining in the desert will allow the generation that died there to eventually enter the land with him. Rashi may be adding another reason why G-d didn't let Moshe enter the land. Even if He forgave him for hitting the rock, He didn't forgive him for getting angry at the nation, teaching all future leaders that they must treat G-d's children with respect and dignity. Moshe was relaying this message to the nation; G-d didn't let me enter the land because of you, as on your behalf, because of how I reacted in your time of need, G-d remained angry with me, and did not let me

enter the land. © 2015 Rabbi D. Kramer

**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

## Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA  
HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN ZT"l

*Summarized by Shaul Barth*

*Translated by Kaeren Fish*

**O**n the Events at Amona (2006) [In light of the recent events in Beit El and Sa-Nar, we turn to Harav Lichtenstein zt"l's sicha in the aftermath of Amona. We can only speculate as to what he would say today. May HaKadosh Barukh Hu have mercy upon His people and upon His land.]

A week ago, the Israeli government carried out the demolition of some of the houses in the settlement outpost of Amona, an event unfortunately accompanied by violence. I was reminded of an episode that occurred in 1970, a year before I made aliya. At Kent State, an enormous crowd participated in stormy demonstration against the Vietnam War, a war that was widely opposed among students. Some members of the National Guard who were present apparently felt threatened, lost their composure and opened fire on the student demonstrators. Four people were killed in this incident, which shocked the entire American nation. I was reminded of those days when I wondered, last week, what would have happened if one of the youths at Amona had, G-d forbid, been killed as a result of the police behavior. Aggression of the sort that we witnessed is an expression of weakness, not strength -- especially when it is carried out by agents of the state, who are meant to maintain restraint and maximum control.

On various occasions, I have mentioned the fact that the prohibition against hitting appears in the Torah specifically in connection with the agent of the court: "Forty lashes he may give him; he shall not exceed" (Devarim 25:3). This seems strange: after all, it is prohibited to strike any person, at any time. Why, then, is the prohibition mentioned specifically as an issue pertaining to the agent of the beit din, who is assigned to carry out a punishment ordered by the court?

The answer is that it is specifically when a person enjoys a special status because of his position that there is a danger that his inner aggressive streak -- the wild animal that exists within each of us -- will burst forth. It is specifically in a situation where a person is performing his actions out of a sense of duty, when he feels that his actions have official sanction, when he feels that he is representing a system -- it is precisely then that there is a need to emphasize the prohibition against "excessive beating." Indeed, it would appear that some of the aggressive feelings that the Torah warns about did find expression on that black and bitter day at Amona. Those actions represent a stain on

Israeli society, and this crisis should shake us profoundly.

What took place is surprising because it is so different from what happened during the summer. During the Disengagement from Gaza, we witnessed how -- regardless of political affiliations -- the process was carried out with understanding on the part of both parties and a certain respect for each other, despite the distance between them. Great efforts were made not to be drawn into violence -- neither on the part of the government nor on the part of the leadership of the public that suffered and was expelled; the latter generally restrained the public, both ideologically and practically. This time, that did not happen -- on either side.

The difference would seem to arise from the fact that this time both parties believed that what was in jeopardy now was much more significant than what had been at stake in the summer. Even those members of the government who believed that the evacuation of Gush Katif was necessary and called-for, understood that the inhabitants of those settlements went there with the purest of motives and intentions, with governmental guidance and support, and were now paying a heavy price because the circumstances had changed -- and the attitude towards them accordingly. The inhabitants of Amona, in contrast, are viewed by the government as violators of the law, engaged in patently illegal behavior, and the concern that this would not be a one-time event but rather a phenomenon spreading over a whole chain of hills triggered its action. On the other hand, the public that opposed with force the demolition of the houses in Amona did not act in the same way in the summer because Gush Katif was considered relatively peripheral, both geographically and existentially, while now we are confronting the evacuation of outposts located in the heart of the Shomron.

Hence, at Amona both sides displayed determination, but abandoned sensitivity in order to gain the upper hand. While the question of which side was in fact victorious is an important one, it seems clear which side lost: the State of Israel and its population as a whole. Thus, the question that arises in light of what we saw is -- G-d in heaven, what are they waiting for? For deaths? Those who dispatch youths and fire them up to the point where they endanger the lives of soldiers and police by throwing cinderblocks at them -- what are they waiting for? And those who send mounted police to suppress those same youth -- what are they waiting for? This problem is a national one; even someone who is altogether cut off from one of the camps -- emotionally, politically, ideologically -- must regard the actions of both sides with concern.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the Religious Zionist public must view the situation with even greater concern, and rightly so: partly because its

institutions and constituency represent the principal injured party in these events, and partly because the vision of the Greater Land of Israel is one that this public holds especially dear. It would appear that it is specifically because we feel so strongly about these issues that our camp and its leaders bear an even greater and more significant responsibility -- to consider their actions and the consequences thereof, and to grapple with the issues.

Therefore, it pains us particularly to hear, from within our camp, expressions that do nothing to heal the rift and schism, but rather aggravate and amplify them. According to the polls, we are currently witnessing the justified disappearance of a party (Shinui) that garnered considerable support in the last elections because its central message was one of hatred. Unfortunately, there are those among us, too, who attract and draw people along using messages of hatred and disengagement. Such trends express not only an inability to understand what is going on from the other side's perspective, but also an unwillingness to do so.

I make this point both with regard to those youth who rove the hilltops and with regard to important rabbis who are certain that what happened in Amona is a heavenly sign that the government means to break the back of the Religious-Zionist camp. Woe to us if we are not able to rise up, despite the difficult times, to gird ourselves, to understand the historical responsibility that we bear -- both young and old -- and to try to bring more insight to bear on our approach to the problems facing us. The problems exist and they will not go away. Along with the insight and restraint that are required, we need to understand not only our own needs and our own wounds, but also those of the other side. Along with our questioning of the measure of force and power mobilized against youngsters -- and these are undoubtedly serious questions -- we must ask ourselves what thoughts and feelings motivated the people who dispatched those youths, those who stoked the flames of violence against the police and the state. These, too, are serious questions. The same passion can be destructive, G-d forbid, or it may be constructive and valuable.

It was, as we have said, a black day, and heaven protect us from any more days like that one. At such times, what is required of all of us is soul-searching, the drawing of conclusions and the learning of lessons. Today, more than ever, we need to bring hearts closer -- and we should start with the hearts of those in our own camp. We must act and pray for better days, when we shall be able to attain peace amongst ourselves; a true peace, a peace of understanding, a peace born of the will and ability to promote our own needs -- along with an appreciation of the debate and of the needs of the other side. The events at Amona undoubtedly represented a stumble; let us act and pray

that they not turn into a downfall. (This sicha was delivered on the 9th of Shevat, 5766 -- Feb. 7, 2006.)  
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#### HARAV SHLOMO WOLBE ZT" L

### Bais Hamussar

**C**hazal tell us that a person must say, "When will my actions rival the actions of my forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov." The source for this obligation, writes Rav Wolbe (Alei Shur vol. II p. 159), can be found in this week's parsha. In the first paragraph of Shema Hashem commands us, "You shall love Hashem with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources" (Devarim 6:5). The Medrash (Yalkut Shemoni 837) cites Rebbi Meir's explanation: "You shall love Hashem with all your heart like Avraham, with all your soul like Yitzchok and with all your resources like Yaakov."

Focusing on the greatness of our forefathers and striving to emulate their love for Hashem, forces every Jew to acknowledge the innate greatness that can be found in each and every individual who is part of our exalted Nation. This idea is extremely important for anyone engaged in bettering himself. Before one begins working on rectifying his negative character traits, it is imperative that he be cognizant of and familiar with his positive character traits. Otherwise, as he learns through a mussar sefer, he will end up concentrating solely on the negative aspects of his own personality. Such behavior is a sure-fire way to bring about depression or to cause him to give up the possibility of curing his spiritual maladies.

Before starting Mesillas Yesharim, one should open to the table of contents and peruse the various different chapters. He must become aware of the fact that, not only do the virtues of zehirus, zerizus, nikius and taharah etc. exist, they are very much within a person's reach. Moreover, it is advisable that the first time he learns through the sefer, he should not stop after each chapter to size up where he stands in relation to what the Mesillas Yesharim writes. Rather, he should simply appreciate the middah being discussed and yearn to achieve it himself.

The Ramchal writes in Derech Eitz Chaim, that merely thinking about the awesome spiritual levels attainable, aids a person in his journey toward perfection. "A person should spend some time free of all distractions and think about what we have mentioned. He should ask himself, 'What did our forefathers do that caused Hashem to cherish them? What did Moshe Rabbeinu do? What did Dovid, the anointed of Hashem, and all the great people who preceded us do? Then He should think how worthy it is for a person to act in a similar fashion so that it will be good for him! He should then contemplate where he stands in relationship to the path followed by the great men of prior generations...The bottom line is that for

one who does not think about this, it is exceedingly difficult to reach perfection, while the person who does think about this is very close to perfection." Even just thinking about the greatness attained by our predecessors helps us achieve the goal for which we strive.

The first step to self improvement is being cognizant of one's ma'alos, because if we would appreciate our innate greatness we wouldn't bother ourselves with the pettiness that brings about most lapses in avodas Hashem. The summer is a time which affords many people some extra time for relaxation. It might be very worthwhile to relax with a book about one of the greats of the past century. Their spiritual stature is something to strive toward, and if they could do it so could we! The purpose of reading these books is not to imitate those portrayed, rather to appreciate what we too can achieve if we would utilize our virtues to the best of our ability! ©2015 Rabbi S. Wolbe zt"l & aishdas.org

#### MACHON ZOMET

## Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Oury Cherki, Machon Mei,  
Rabbi of Beit Yehuda Congregation, Jerusalem

**W**hat is the meaning of the double consolation in the opening verse of the Haftarah, "Be consoled, be consoled, My nation" [Yeshayahu 40:1]? It is true that Zion "has been given double for all her sins" [40:2], and therefore it is due for double consolation. But what does this mean?

It would seem that the answer to this question can be found in the double encouragement of a verse later on: "Climb up to a high mountain, herald of Zion, raise up your voice with strength, herald of Jerusalem. Lift it up, do not be afraid, tell the cities of Yehuda: Behold, here is your G-d." [40:9].

The prophet is teaching us that there are two items of good news -- one by the herald of Zion, and one by the herald of Jerusalem.

The news of Zion, that is, Zionism, requires us to climb a mountain, in order to view history from a perspective that encompasses many generations. Only through an outlook that includes broad horizons is it possible to get a view of the hand of G-d guiding the events from behind the scenes. A superficial outlook, which involves paying attention only to immediate and pressing problems, is liable to generate despair in one's heart. The sages have taught us that the face of the generation of redemption is like the face of a dog. One interpretation of this statement is that when a person hits a dog with a stick it bites the stick and not the man holding it. This shows that it has a limited view, and in order to overcome this shortcoming the prophet tells us to climb a tall mountain.

The second news item, about Jerusalem, demands great strength, as in the verse, "He told His

nation about the power of His deeds, to give them a heritage among the nations" [Tehillim 111:6]. The way to breathe a soul into the enterprise of redemption is to break out of normal limits of awareness, not only to see the hand of G-d but to develop a special brand of hearing, to be able to hear the voice of G-d (which Yeshayahu calls "your voice" -- see above, 40:9). The voice of prophecy demands its rightful place in a world which has become accustomed through thousands of years of neglect to a situation where G-d's voice is no longer heard at all, and where it has been replaced by philosophy.

When the voice of G-d is not heard, moral bewilderment becomes the norm. Self-confidence disappears, and we suffer from a lack of strength, including the strength to fulfill the following command out of a feeling of moral righteousness: "I will pursue my enemies and I will reach them, and I will not return until they have been destroyed" [Tehillim 18:38]. Yeshayahu encourages us in our time of bewilderment. He calls out with all his might: "Raise up your voice with strength... Lift it up, do not be afraid, tell the cities of Yehuda: Behold, here is your G-d!"

The political strength of the nation illustrates the universalist viewpoint of Divine guidance: "Behold, the nations are like a drop in a bucket, and like dust rubbed off of a scale. The islands will be cast away like dust." [Yeshayahu 40:15].

And, from this exalted viewpoint, we are told to observe the greatness of the acts of creation: "Lift up your eyes and see -- Who created these? He who brings out their hosts by number; He calls them by name. By the abundance of His power and by His vigorous strength, not one of them is missing." [40:26]. Behind the events of the hour, we are invited to meet the One who caused the world to be created by speaking, He who guides it from behind the misty curtains of international politics. ©2015 Machon Zomet. Translated by Moshe Goldberg



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