

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

**A**longside the holiness of place and person is the holiness of time, something parshat Emor charts in its deceptively simple list of festivals and holy days (Lev. 23:1-44).

Time plays an enormous part in Judaism. The first thing G-d declared holy was a day: Shabbat, at the conclusion of creation. The first mitzvah given to the Jewish people as a whole, prior to the Exodus, was the command to sanctify time, by determining and applying the Jewish calendar (Ex. 12:1-2).

The prophets were the first people in history to see G-d in history, seeing time itself as the arena of the Divine-human encounter. Virtually every other religion and civilisation before and since has identified G-d, reality and truth with timelessness.

Isaiah Berlin used to quote Alexander Herzen who said about the Slavs that they had no history, only geography. The Jews, he said, had the reverse: a great deal of history but all too little geography. Much time, but little space

So time in Judaism is an essential medium of the spiritual life. But there is one feature of the Jewish approach to time that has received less attention than it should: the duality that runs through its entire temporal structure.

Take, for instance, the calendar as a whole. Christianity uses a solar calendar, Islam a lunar one. Judaism uses both. We count time both by the monthly cycle of the moon and the seasonal cycle of the sun.

Then consider the day. Days normally have one identifiable beginning, whether this is at nightfall or daybreak or – as in the West – somewhere between. For calendar purposes, the Jewish day begins at nightfall (“And it was evening and it was morning, one day”). But if we look at the structure of the prayers – the morning prayer instituted by Abraham, afternoon by Isaac, evening by Jacob – there is a sense in which the worship of the day starts in the morning, not the night

before.

Years, too, usually have one fixed beginning – the “new year”. In Judaism, according to the Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:1), there are no less than four new years. The first of Ellul is the new year for the tithing of animals. The fifteenth of Shevat (the first according to Bet Shammai) is the new year for trees. These are specific and subsidiary dates, but the other two are more fundamental.

According to the Torah, the first month of the year is Nissan. This was the day the earth became dry after the Flood (Gen. 8:13)<sup>1</sup>. It was the day the Israelites received their first command as a people (Ex. 12:2). One year later it was the day the Tabernacle was dedicated and the service of the priests inaugurated (Ex. 40:2). But the festival we call the New Year, Rosh Hashanah, falls six months later.

Holy time itself comes in two forms, as Emor makes clear. There is Shabbat and there are the festivals, and the two are announced separately. Shabbat was sanctified by G-d at the beginning of time for all time. The festivals are sanctified by the Jewish people to whom was given the authority and responsibility for fixing the calendar.

Hence the difference in the blessings we say. On Shabbat we praise G-d who “sanctifies Shabbat”. On the festivals we praise G-d who sanctifies “Israel and the holy times” – meaning, it is G-d who sanctifies Israel but Israel who sanctify the holy times, determining on which days the festivals fall.

Even within the festivals there is a dual cycle. One is formed by the three pilgrimage festivals: Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. These are days that represent the key historic moments at the dawn of Jewish time – the Exodus, the giving of the Torah, and the forty years of desert wandering. They are festivals of history.

The other is formed by the number seven and the concept of holiness: the seventh day, Shabbat; the seventh month, Tishri, with its three festivals of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot; the seventh year, Shemita; and the Jubilee marking the completion of seven seven-year cycles.

These times (with the exception of Sukkot that

<sup>1</sup> Although this is the subject of an argument in Gemara Rosh HaShana 11b (quoted by Rashi Bereishit Chapter 8:13) between Rabbi Yehoshua who says this occurred in Nissan and Rabbi Eliezer who says it happened in Tishrei.



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belongs to both cycles) have less to do with history than with what, for want of a better word, we might call metaphysics and jurisprudence, ultimate truths about the universe, the human condition, and the laws, both natural and moral, under which we live.

Each is about creation (Shabbat, a reminder of it, Rosh Hashanah the anniversary of it), divine sovereignty, justice and judgment, together with the human condition of life, death, mortality. So on Yom Kippur we face justice and judgment. On Sukkot/Shmini Atzeret we pray for rain, celebrate nature (the arba minim, lulav, etrog, hadassim and aravot, are the only mitzvah we do with unprocessed natural objects), and read the book of Kohelet, Tanakh's most profound meditation on mortality.

In the seventh and Jubilee years we acknowledge G-d's ultimate ownership of the land of Israel and the children of Israel. Hence we let slaves go free, release debts, let the land rest, and restore most property to its original owners. All of these have to do not with G-d's interventions into history but with his role as Creator and owner of the universe.

One way of seeing the difference between the first cycle and the second is to compare the prayers on Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot with those of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The Amidah of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot begins with the phrase "You chose us from all the peoples." The emphasis is on Jewish particularity.

By contrast, the Amidah for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur begins by speaking of "all You have made, all You have created". The emphasis is on universality: about the judgment that affects all of creation, everything that lives.

Even Sukkot has a marked universalist thrust with its seventy sacrificial bulls representing the "seventy nations". According to Zechariah 14, it is the festival that will one day be celebrated by all the nations.

Why the duality? Because G-d is both the G-d of nature and of culture. He is the G-d of everyone in general, and of the people of the covenant in particular. He is the Author of both scientific law (cause) and religious-ethical law (command).

We encounter G-d in both cyclical time, which

represents the movement of the planets, and linear-historical time, which represents the events and evolution of the nation of which we are a part. This very duality gives rise to two kinds of religious leader: the prophet and the priest, and the different consciousness of time each represents.

Since the ancient Greeks, people have searched for a single principle that would explain everything, or the single point Archimedes sought at which to move the world, or the unique perspective (what philosophers call "the view from nowhere") from which to see truth in all its objectivity.

Judaism tells us there is no such point. Reality is more complicated than that. There is not even a single concept of time. At the very least we need two perspectives to be able to see reality in three dimensions, and that applies to time as well as space. Jewish time has two rhythms at once.

Judaism is to the spirit what Niels Bohr's complementarity theory is to quantum physics. In physics light is both a wave and a particle. In Judaism time is both historical and natural. Unexpected, counter-intuitive, certainly. But glorious in its refusal to simplify the rich complexity of time: the ticking clock, the growing plant, the ageing body and the ever-deepening mind. *Covenant and Conversation 5777 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* © 2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

"**A**nd you shall count for yourselves from the morrow of [the first day of the Festival of Matzot]..." [Lev. 23:15] Since Judaism teaches that all Jews are responsible for each other, the hemorrhaging of the number of diaspora Jews actively involved in Jewish life – or even identifying as Jews – is a source of grave concern. How might we inspire our Jewish siblings to remain within, or return to, Jewish tradition?

I believe that the very nature of the Hebrew calendar contains the direction toward the solution. Each year after the start of the Passover festival, we count each day toward the festival of Shavuot, a count that begins with our freedom from Egypt and culminates with the revelation at Sinai. The days of our counting, a period of spiritual growth and development, begin with Passover, the first real encounter that G-d has with His nation Israel and its very conception. Our sefira (Hebrew root: s-p-r) count begins with a sippur (Hebrew root: s-p-r), a tale, a story, a re-counting; the very essence of the Passover seder evening experience.

We must remember that the Israelites came into Egypt as a family, the seventy descendants of our grandfather Jacob-Israel. Hence, the recounting of the

story of our enslavement and eventual redemption is transmitted by parents to their children as a familial recounting of family history because the Jewish nation is essentially an extended family. And, as in any family, there are familial memories of origins, of beginnings; in a family, there will always be a commonality, a togetherness that results from the good that flows through the veins of the family members.

Passover is our familial, communal festival, at the very beginning of our calendar, at the very outset of our unique history, at the early steps toward our sefira march, celebrated even before we received our Torah from G-d and before we entered the Promised Land.

The Passover Sacrifice, the source for our Passover seder, represents the celebration of our being part of a special, historic family even before we became a religion at Sinai. It emphasizes our willingness to sacrifice the lamb, a defiant act of rebellion against the bull-god of Egyptian slave-society, an act that attests to our uncompromising belief in human freedom and redemption – a belief that arose from the familial history of the pain of our enslavement and the murder of our children in the Nile River. Hence freedom for every individual became a familial passion for us and even an obsession.

In order to feel truly free, every person must feel that he/she counts (sefira); but that is how it is in families, where each member is called by his/her personal name and is known by his/her unique traits (both positively and negatively). It is for this reason that our Passover sacrificial meal must be subdivided into smaller – and more manageable – familial and extra-familial units, “a lamb for each household” or several households together. Special foods, special stories and special songs define and punctuate the familial nature of the event.

And the only ticket of admission is that you consider yourself a member of the family and wish to be counted in; this alone entitles you to an unconditional embrace of love and acceptance, to inclusion in the family of Israel. The rasha (wicked son) is the one who himself excludes himself from the family – and even he/she is to be invited and sought after!

One of the rousing songs of the seder is Dayenu (“It would have been enough”). One line reads: “Had G-d merely brought us to Sinai and not given us the Torah, it would have been enough.” Our Sages teach that when the Israelites stood at Sinai they were one people with one heart, a united and communal family. The song teaches that even if a Jew feels only a sense of familial oneness – even without the 613 commandments – it would be extremely positive, if not sufficient in itself.

How might we engage Jews estranged from Jewish life? We must embrace them as part of our family, love them because we are part of them and they are part of us, regale them with the stories, songs and

special foods which are expressed in our people’s literature and that emerged from our fate and our unique destiny, share with them our vision and dreams of human freedom and peace, and accept them wholeheartedly, no matter what.

For some of them it may be the first step on their march to Torah and the Land of Israel on Shavuot; for others, it might be all they are interested in. And that, too, must be considered good enough, Dayenu! After all, the very first covenant G-d made with Abraham was the covenant of family and nation.  
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### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

## **Wein Online**

In commenting on the double use of the verb “emor” and “v’amarta,” Rashi states that the lesson to be derived from this grammatical anomaly is that the elder generation is charged with instructing and guiding the younger generation. This apparently simple and very necessary and logical requirement is more difficult to implement than it was to state.

Younger generations are notoriously loath to accept advice from their elders. They feel, and perhaps correctly so, that they are entitled to make their own mistakes on their own terms. But that attitude only increases the level of pain that making fundamental errors in life decisions creates. Raising the next generation has always been a daunting challenge. And every generation feels that its challenge is greater than those of previous times.

A little reflection, a lot of tradition, a ton of patience and a strong family structure are great and usually necessary ingredients for success with the next generation. There are no guarantees, however. The Talmud taught us that there are irrational factors – good fortune or ‘mazel,’ so to speak – that are always present when raising children. Nevertheless, we are also taught that we are not freed from our obligation to attempt to succeed no matter how unlikely complete success might be.

Advice from the older generation may not be desired but it always is influential. And that influence is vital for the continuity of family life, especially traditional Jewish family life. A parent remains a parent throughout his/her lifespan. And this generational connection is the basis for our survival as a people and a civilization.

I have written in previous years that the Torah bids the priestly clan to tell their descendants that they are the sons of Aaron. It is difficult to have a positive self-identity when one has no past to rely upon. One of the great plagues for a large section of Western society is that millions of children do not know their father, let alone any heritage from earlier generations and antecedents.

Crime, violence, psychological and social dysfunction are the products of such generational

interruption. And this is true in Jewish society as well, in much of the Diaspora. The memories of Eastern European immigrants about the "golden country" have faded and in most cases disappeared, as have the hardships and sacrifices of the past. And with the disappearance of this family connection to religious observance, a traditional Jewish lifestyle also waned and many times completely vanished.

To some extent, this factor helps in understanding demographic decline in American Jewry over the past half century. There once was a time that later generations knew traditional parents and grandparents and thus were not completely ignorant of their past and heritage. But that unfortunately is certainly no longer the case. We are in a time empty of a past, mired in a terribly competitive, materialistic present and without any soaring vision for future society. It was and is the imperative of the departing generation to guide and teach the arriving generation. That is a rule of Jewish life. ©2017 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**

In this week's portion, the Torah proclaims the famous dictum "eye for an eye." (Leviticus 24:20) The message seems clear. If one takes out the eye of a neighbor, his punishment is that his eye is taken out.

The oral law, however, explains through logic that "eye for an eye" is monetary compensation as it may be impossible to carry out equal justice through a physical penalty. For example, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai said, if a blind person damaged the sight of another...how would he be able to give an eye for an eye? The school of Hezekiah added that it can sometimes happen that more than an eye could be taken from the perpetrator if in the process of taking an eye, the assailant dies. (Baba Kamma 84a)

The Talmud also uses a textual proof for its thesis. The Torah states "You shall not take a ransom for the life of a man who is condemned to death." (Numbers 35:31) This implies that for the life of a murderer you may take no ransom, but you may take ransom for the major organs of the human body which do not grow back. (Baba Kamma 83b)

One wonders, however, if "eye for an eye" is monetary, why doesn't the Torah spell this out clearly? Perhaps it can be suggested that the written law sets the tone, gives the direction, and presents the teaching. As the Torah is read the listener hears the words "eye for an eye" and concludes that if I remove the eye of another, the crime is so heinous it is deserving of my eye being removed. In the words of

Ha-ketav Ve-ha-Kabalah "the Torah mentions here only what punishment the perpetrator of bodily injuries deserves."

The oral law, however, which is the interpretation of the Torah, tells us how these rules are actually practiced. While one who removes the eye of another may be deserving of physical punishment, in practical terms he receives a monetary penalty.

My Rebbe in Tanakh, Nechama Leibowitz, points out that in the phrase "eye for an eye" (ayin tahat ayin) the term tahat is used. While usually translated as "for" tahat actually means "instead of." In place of the eye something different is substituted – money.

This concept may explain what seems to be a difference between the written and oral law concerning capital punishment. On many occasions, for example for cursing one's parents, the Torah states "He shall die." (Exodus 21:17) Yet, the oral law cites opinions that capital punishment was hardly, if ever, carried out. (Mishna Makkot 1:10)

The Torah once again is telling us about what the perpetrator deserves. Cursing a parent and other such offenses are so horrible that they are deserving of death. However, the oral tradition, through the practical halakhic judicial process, proclaims that capital punishment hardly, if ever, actually occurs.

The written law cannot be understood without the oral law. Together they form one unit. The Zohar claims that written law is the "harsh law" while the oral tradition is the "soft law." The two combine to form what we refer to as Torah whose ways are "ways of pleasantness." (Proverbs 3:17) ©2017 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

#### **RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ**

### **Shabbat Shalom Weekly**

The Torah states: "You shall not desecrate My holy Name, rather I should be sanctified among the Children of Israel" (Leviticus 22:32).

This verse is the source of the mitzvah of kiddush HaShem (sanctification of the G-d's name), which is that a person should accept martyrdom rather than deny G-d. Unfortunately, this mitzvah has too often been fulfilled in Jewish history -- when Jews have given up their lives when put to the ultimate test of their faith -- whether to convert to another religion under threat of death or to die as a Jew.

Although kiddush HaShem is generally thought of as martyrdom, one does not have to give up one's life to fulfill this mitzvah. Anytime that a Jew behaves in a manner that bring honor to G-d, and people can point to him saying, "That is the beauty of obeying the Torah," that is a kiddush HaShem.

We are required to think of kiddush HaShem

every time we recite the Shema. This willingness to give up one's life rather than deny G-d, is required of every Jew. If you know what you are willing to die for, then you know what you should live for.

For any act to have meaning and value, it must have a purpose. For life to have meaning and value, it must be purposeful. Everything a person does consciously has a purpose. Rational people do not do things that have no purpose.

If an act is not part of an ultimate purpose, the act has little meaning. For the Jew, the ultimate purpose should be to do the will of G-d -- this gives great meaning and substance to our every action, our every mitzvah and ultimately our very lives!

*Dvar Torah from Twerski on Chumash by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D. ©2017 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com*

#### ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

## Chadash in the Diaspora

*Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

**T**he Mishna at the end of Misnayot Orlah states emphatically that, "Chadash" is forbidden from the Torah everywhere", which would include not only Israel but the Diaspora as well. This is derived from a sentence in this week's Torah Portion 23;14 " You shall not eat bread or roasted kernels or plump kernels until this very day...in all your dwelling places (b'chol Moshvotchem), which include also the Diaspora. According to this view the prohibition is not attached to the Mitzva of bringing of the Omer sacrifice, since the Omer offering cannot be brought in the Diaspora (as the Talmud states in Tractate Menachot and as the Rambam [Maimonides] brings down as practical law). In any case, wheat grown before the sixteenth of Nissan in the Diaspora is forbidden to eat until the sixteenth of Nissan.

This Mitzva is more difficult to adhere to in the Diaspora since wheat is often processed before the sixteenth of Nissan and is available. Indeed some of the Gedolim (Rabbinic Leaders) would roam from place to place with special utensils to find wheat that is not in the category of "Chadash"

However there is another view which is sited in the Mishna in Kiddushin which states that Biblically the law of "Chadash" only pertains to the land of Israel. Therefore, according to this view, this Mitzvah is integrally connected to the offering of the Omer which is only relevant to the land of Israel. That same Mishna presents an opposing view which would be in consonance with the Mishna in Orlah that was cited above.

The question arises- which Mishna is the deciding one? Shall we say that the Mishna in Orlah was studied last and therefore one would say that the Mishna that was presented earlier (the Mishna in Kiddushin) was updated and in essence nullified by the

later Mishna in Orlah and therefore decided unequivocally that the law follows that Mishna that "Chadash" is prohibited everywhere, or do we say that the Mishna in Kiddushin appeared later which would indicate that there is a controversy? Additionally one could not use the argument that because the Mishna in Orlah appears before the Mishnah in Keddushin in the order of Mishnayot that it was therefore authored first, for we know that there is no chronological order in the presentation of Mishnayot. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

#### RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

## RavFrand

*Transcribed by David Twersky*

*Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman*

**T**he Rambam (1135-1204) in his Sefer HaMitzvos (Negative Commandment #63) defines three components of the commandment regarding Sanctification and Desecration of G-d's Name: "And you shall not profane my Holy Name" [Vayikra 22:32].

This sin is divided into three component parts.

(1) Anyone who is forced to violate one of the commandments for which the requirement is 'Be killed, rather than transgress'; (2) A person commits a sin for which they have no sensual passion and derive no benefit, but their intent is only to be (spiritually) rebellious and to throw off the Yoke of Heaven; (3) A person with a reputation for piety does an action which appears in the eyes of the masses to be a sin. Even if the act is intrinsically permitted, if such a person does this act-it could be a Desecration of G-d's Name (Chilul HaShem).

The third category is speaking of a Rabbi or Talmid Chochom [scholar] or a distinguished individual, who does a perfectly permissible act, but it is an act which people do not expect from such a person. If another person did the same act, no one would bat an eyelash or think twice about it. But for a person of this caliber, it may cause a Chilul HaShem.

In his legal code, the Ramba"m is even more explicit [Mishneh Torah: Yesodei HaTorah 5:11]: "If a person who is a great Torah authority, renowned for his religiosity, does something which causes people to 'talk' (merannenim acharav), even though this is not a sin (per se), it is a Desecration of G-d's Name (which IS a serious sin)".

The Chofetz Chaim once sent his son on a mission. The Chofetz Chaim warned his son to be careful as to how he acts. For if he would act in a fashion which was even slightly inappropriate ("es past nisht") for a Torah scholar, it would be a Desecration of G-d's Name. Rav Pam relates that the Chofetz Chaim's son inquired of his father, "But, I am not a Talmid Chochom? I certainly do not fall into the category regarding which the Ramba"m writes 'a great Torah authority, an individual renowned for his religiosity...' I

am a simple Jew." The Chofetz Chaim responded, "To create a Chilul Hashem, you are enough of a Talmid Chochom".

I would like to pasken a Halacha. Every visibly religious Jew today has the status of a Talmid Chochom vis a vis the Rambam's third category of Chilul HaShem. The people with whom you come into contact-be it in the supermarkets or the gas station attendants, wherever it may be-each of them looks at you as a 'Rabbi', a 'Torah Scholar', a 'Great Individual'. Today every religious Jew may be mistaken as a 'Rabbi' in the eyes of the public.

It is not fun to carry around such a title. It is a tremendous responsibility. In theory, this third category of the Rambam's list of Chilul HaShem components does not apply to every Jew. In the time of the Rambam, people knew that there were people like the Rambam, and then there were ordinary people. Therefore, the Rambam could codify a dichotomy of acceptable behavior for the masses and acceptable behavior for a great personage. Today however, regarding this halacha, everyone falls into the category of great personage. This is not my own idea. This was the ruling of the Chofetz Chaim to his son: "For this you are enough of a Talmid Chochom."

The Chasam Sofer (1762-1839) mentions in his Responsa, the pasuk [verse] "You shall be found innocent before G-d and before Israel" [Bamidbar 32:22]. (This pasuk is mentioned in the context of Moshe's response to the request of the Tribes of Gad and Reuven to receive their inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan River.) The Chasam Sofer questions why Moshe first warned them to be clean before G-d and only later mentioned they should be clean before Israel. One would assume that the easier thing should be mentioned first and then the more difficult thing. The Chasam Sofer infers that we learn from here that it is easier to be deemed 'clean' in G-d's calculations than to be deemed 'clean' in the calculations of other people.

The Chasam Sofer states that this is what is referred to in Shlomo's [Solomon's] teaching "There is no righteous person on earth who does only good and does not sin" [Koheles 7:20]. No one can escape the suspicion and criticism of his fellow man, even for actions that G-d is willing to judge favorably. The Chasam Sofer adds that he suspects that even the Tribes of Gad and Reuven did not totally fulfill Moshe's admonition. They did fulfill the terms of the deal as Moshe specified. They went across the Jordan and led their brethren in battle. They did not return home to their inheritance until after the period of conquest and settlement of the other tribes. However, says the Chasam Sofer, despite all this, people still had complaints about the actions of these two tribes. People said, "Their families are settled already, things are calm over there across the Jordan. We are still living out of suitcases over here. The battles are still

raging over here..." People find what to complain about.

The Chasam Sofer further states that it was for this reason that the Tribes on the East Bank of the Jordan were the first ones to go into Exile. Even though they technically lived up to their part of the deal and as far as G-d was concerned, they did come out 'clean'; the 'people' never forgave them. There were always complaints against them. They did not come out totally 'clean' in the eyes of Israel. And for this reason, they were the first tribes to suffer the punishment of Exile. This is a very scary thought.

I would like to end with the words of Rabbeinu Bachya (1263-1340) on this Parsha. The pasuk says "And you shall not desecrate my Holy Name, and I will be sanctified before the eyes of Israel (22:32)". This seems to be a strange symmetry. The juxtaposition of Chilul HaShem [desecration] with Kiddush Hashem [sanctification] in one breath is very peculiar.

Rabbeinu Bachya notes that the atonement for Desecration of G-d's name is the combination of Yom Kippur, suffering, and death. (Only death brings the final atonement.) He points out (as does Rabbeinu Yona and other Rishonim) that there IS an appropriate repentance for Chilul HaShem: Kiddush HaShem. It is for this reason that the pasuk here places them together. Be certain to never desecrate G-d's Name. But if you ever do it, there is one way out - Sanctification of His Name.

If a person's actions turn people off from Judaism, causing people to say, Heaven forbid, "If this is how a religious Jew acts, we want no part of it", there is still a way out: "...And I will be Sanctified before the eyes of the children of Israel". This refers to that which the Talmud says, "A person whose business dealings with his fellow man are pleasant, about him people say 'Happy is the one who learned Torah; Happy is the one who taught him Torah.' [Yoma 86a]". This demonstration of Torah's true potential, as well as the drawing of people closer to Torah allow G-d to proclaim on such people "You are my servant Yaakov, through whom I obtain Glory" [Isaiah 49:3]. This, in truth, is the only antidote possible for one who has made a Chilul HaShem. ©2001 Rabbi Y. Frand & torah.org

#### **RABBI MEIR GOLDWICHT**

### **Proper Speech**

In parashat Emor, the Torah relates the incident of the mekalel. The mekalel was the son of an Egyptian father and a Jewish mother from the tribe of Dan, and as a result he wished to make his home in the camp of Dan, claiming that he was their fellow tribesman even though his father was Egyptian. The tribe of Dan responded that what determines one's tribe is one's father, as it says, "Ish al diglo l'veit avotam." When they came before Moshe Rabbeinu for a din torah, he ruled that the man had no connection to the tribe of Dan and therefore had no right to live there. Displeased with this

ruling, the mekalel cursed Moshe Rabbeinu; unsure of the punishment for the mekalel, Moshe Rabbeinu had him imprisoned until Hashem would reveal to Moshe the proper punishment, skilah.

Immediately after Hashem reveals the proper punishment, the Torah teaches the laws of damages -- ayin tachat ayin, shen tachat shen -- essentially repeating laws we already know from parashat Mishpatim. At the conclusion of these laws, the Torah repeats, "And Moshe told B'nei Yisrael to remove the mekalel from the camp and to stone him." Why does the Torah interrupt the parasha of the mekalel with the laws of damages, especially considering the fact that we already know these laws from parashat Mishpatim? We never find anything like this -- in the middle of discussing one topic, the Torah "takes a break," only to return several pesukim later to the original topic!

We must also question why the din of the mekalel appears in sefer VaYikra instead of in sefer BaMidbar, like all of the other incidents that took place over the forty years B'nei Yisrael traversed the desert. For example, the mekoshesh eitzim, which took place on the very first Shabbat after B'nei Yisrael left Mitzrayim, belongs in sefer Shemot, but because of the nature of sefer BaMidbar it was placed there instead. Why, then, does the mekalel appear at the end of VaYikra instead of BaMidbar?

To answer these questions, we must enter a very interesting sugya: the sugya of dibbur. Dibbur is not just movement of the lips that facilitates interpersonal communication. Dibbur is a reflection of one's thoughts. The Rambam rules in the third perek of Hilchot Terumot that if a person had intent to say terumah but said ma'aser instead, or olah but said shelamim instead, his words have no validity until his dibbur matches his thoughts.

Shlomo HaMelech, in Shir HaShirim, refers to the dibbur of Knesset Yisrael as "umidbarech naveh," comparing it to a midbar. Through proper speech you can turn a midbar into a yishuv; conversely, through improper speech you can turn a yishuv into a midbar. In Yechezkel (20:35), the galut is referred to as "midbar ha'amim," because this is where HaKadosh Baruch Hu wants to bring us to the brit kerutah bisfatayim, to teach us to use our dibbur properly. The power of dibbur is illustrated further by Chazal, who tell us that it is forbidden to "open one's mouth to the Satan," as we learn from Avraham Avinu -- even though as far as he knew, he would be returning from the Akeidah alone, the Torah tells us that he said to his servants, "And we will bow and we will return," so as not to open his mouth to the Satan. The power of a tzaddik's speech is also demonstrated in the mishnah in Berachot 5:5: A tzaddik can tell who will live and who will die based on whether his tefillah for that person flowed smoothly. The Sefer HaChinuch writes that one who uses his speech improperly is worse than an animal, because it

is the ability to speak and to express one's thoughts through speech that distinguishes us from the animals. The power of dibbur is tremendous in its ability to build and to save, but also to destroy.

Sefer VaYikra deals with all the different types of kedushah that exist: kedushat ha'adam (tumah and taharah); kedushat hazman (the yomim tovim); kedushat ha'aretz (shemittah and yovel). With the parasha of the mekalel, the Torah teaches us that the key to all kedushah is kedushat hapeh, proper dibbur. This is also the reason why the Torah reviews the laws of damages within the parasha of the mekalel, to teach us that the destruction we can wreak with our mouths is no less than that which we can cause with a gun or a rock. As clear as it is that you can murder someone with a gun, it must be just as clear that you can murder someone with your dibbur as well.

How amazing is it, then, that the Torah juxtaposes Moshe's punishment of not being able to enter Eretz Yisrael after hitting the rock instead of speaking to it to Moshe's request to pass through the land of Edom. The king of Edom refuses to let Moshe and B'nei Yisrael pass through his land, even threatening war. Why was he so opposed? Essentially, Moshe Rabbeinu was telling the king of Edom that the two of them represented Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov promised to meet Eisav in Seir (see Bereishit 33:14). Moshe wanted to fulfill the promise of Yaakov to Eisav. The king of Edom's response was that if Moshe really represented Yaakov, he would have used the power of Yaakov, of "hakol kol Yaakov," in dealing with the rock. Instead, Moshe used the power of Eisav, of "hayadayim y'dei Eisav." If so, the king of Edom was prepared to confront them in battle, since his power through Eisav was stronger than their power through Eisav. This is the connection between Moshe's hitting of the rock and the king of Edom's refusal to let B'nei Yisrael pass through his land.

During these special days in which we find ourselves, one of the ways we must improve ourselves is by working on developing proper speech. We must become more conscious of how we speak with our parents, our wives, our children, and our friends. Through proper speech we can create worlds. It is not for no reason that Shlomo HaMelech teaches us, "Mavet v'chayim b'yad lashon" (Mishlei 18:21). ©2007 Rabbi M. Goldwicht & yutorah.org



**RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY**

## Holier than Thou

One of the most disheartening episodes that occurred during the 40-year desert sojourn is recorded in this week's parsha. A man quarreled with a fellow Jew and left the dispute in a rage. He reacted by blaspheming Hashem. This abhorrent behavior was so aberrant that no one even knew what the punishment was!

So Hashem reviewed the grievous penalty for the deplorable act. As in any society, the ultimate act of treason was met with a capital sentence. The Torah declared a death penalty. But curiously enough, Hashem does not leave it at that. When the Torah reveals the penalty for the heinous act of blasphemy, it continues:

"And one who blasphemes the name of Hashem shall be put to death...And if a man inflicts a mortal wound in his fellow man, he shall be put to death. If he inflicts damage then restitution shall be paid. The value of an eye for the loss of an eye, the value of a break for a break the value of a tooth for the loss of a tooth. And one who wounds an animal must be made to pay. (Leviticus 24:15-21)

Shouldn't blasphemy be in a league of its own? Surely the act of affronting G-d Almighty can not be equated with attacking human beings. And surely it has no place next to the laws of injurious action towards animals! Why, then is it

Rabbi Y'honasan Eibenschutz one of Jewry's most influential leaders during the early 1700s, was away from his home for one Yom Kippur and was forced to spend that holy day in a small town. Without revealing his identity as Chief Rabbi of Prague, Hamburg, and Altoona, he entered a synagogue that evening and surveyed the room, looking for a suitable place to sit and pray.

Toward the center of the synagogue, his eyes fell upon a man who was swaying fervently, tears swelling in his eyes. "How encouraging," thought the Rabbi, "I will sit next to him. His prayers will surely inspire me."

It was to be. The man cried softly as he prayed, tears flowed down his face. "I am but dust in my life, Oh Lord," wept the man. "Surely in death!" The sincerity was indisputable. Reb Y'honasan finished the prayers that evening, inspired. The next morning he took his seat next to the man, who, once again, poured out his heart to G-d, declaring his insignificance and vacuity of merit.

During the congregation's reading of the Torah, something amazing happened. A man from the front of the synagogue was called for the third aliyah, one of the most honorable aliyos for an Israelite, and suddenly Rabbi Eibenschutz's neighbor charged the podium!

"Him!" shouted the man. "You give him shlishi?!" The shul went silent. Reb Y'honasan stared in disbelief. "Why I know how to learn three times as much as he! I give more charity than he and I have a more illustrious family! Why on earth would you give him an aliyah over me?"

With that the man stormed back from the bimah toward his seat.

Rabbi Eibenschutz could not believe what he saw and was forced to approach the man. "I don't understand," he began. "Minutes ago you were crying about how insignificant and unworthy you are and now you are clamoring to get the honor of that man's aliyah?"

Disgusted the man snapped back. "What are you talking about? Compared to Hashem I am truly a nothing." Then he pointed to the bimah and sneered, "But not compared to him!"

Perhaps the Torah reiterates the laws of damaging mortal and animals in direct conjunction with His directives toward blasphemy. Often people are very wary of the honor they afford their spiritual guides, mentors and institutions. More so are they indignant about the reverence and esteem afforded their Creator. Mortal feelings, property and possessions are often trampled upon even harmed even by those who seem to have utmost respect for the immortal. This week the Torah, in the portion that declares the enormity of blasphemy, does not forget to mention the iniquity of striking someone less than Omnipotent. It links the anthropomorphic blaspheming of G-d to the crime of physical damage toward those created in His image. It puts them one next to each other. Because all of Hashem's creations deserve respect.

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