

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Imagine the following scenario. You are 119 years and 11 months old. The end of your life is in sight. Your hopes have received devastating blows. You have been told by God that you will not enter the land to which you have been leading your people for forty years. You have been repeatedly criticised by the people you have led. Your sister and brother, with whom you shared the burdens of leadership, have predeceased you. And you know that neither of your children, Gershom and Eliezer, will succeed you. Your life seems to be coming to a tragic end, your destination unreachd, your aspirations unfulfilled. What do you do?

We can imagine a range of responses. You could sink into sadness, reflecting on the might-have-beens had the past taken a different direction. You could continue to plead with God to change His mind and let you cross the Jordan. You could retreat into memories of the good times: when the people sang a song at the Red Sea, when they gave their assent to the covenant at Sinai, when they built the Tabernacle. These would be the normal human reactions. Moses did none of these things – and what he did instead helped change the course of Jewish history.

For a month Moses convened the people on the far side of the Jordan and addressed them. Those addresses form the substance of the book of Deuteronomy. They are extraordinarily wide-ranging, covering a history of the past, a set of prophecies and warnings about the future, laws, narratives, a song, and a set of blessings. Together they constitute the most comprehensive, profound vision of what it is to be a holy people, dedicated to God, constructing a society that would stand as a role model for humanity in how to combine freedom and order, justice and compassion, individual dignity and collective responsibility.

Over and above what Moses said in the last

month of his life, though, is what Moses did. He changed careers. He shifted his relationship with the people. No longer Moses the liberator, the lawgiver, the worker of miracles, the intermediary between the Israelites and God, he became the figure known to Jewish memory: Moshe Rabbeinu, “Moses, our teacher.” That is how Deuteronomy begins – “Moses began to expound this Law” (Deut. 1:5) – using a verb, *be’er*, that we have not encountered in this sense in the Torah and which appears only one more time towards the end of the book: “And you shall write very clearly [ba’er hetev] all the words of this law on these stones” (27:8). He wanted to explain, expound, make clear. He wanted the people to understand that Judaism is not a religion of mysteries intelligible only to the few. It is – as he would say in his very last speech – an “inheritance of the [entire] congregation of Jacob” (33:4).

Moses became, in the last month of his life, the master educator. In these addresses, he does more than tell the people what the law is. He explains to them why the law is. There is nothing arbitrary about it. The law is as it is because of the people’s experience of slavery and persecution in Egypt, which was their tutorial in why we need freedom and law-governed liberty. Time and again he says: You shall do this because you were once slaves in Egypt. They must remember and never forget – two verbs that appear repeatedly in the book – where they came from and what it felt like to be exiled, persecuted, and powerless. In Lin-Manuel Miranda’s musical *Hamilton*, George Washington tells the young, hot-headed Alexander Hamilton: “Dying is easy, young man; living is harder.” In Deuteronomy, Moses keeps telling the Israelites, in effect: Slavery is easy; freedom is harder.

Throughout Deuteronomy, Moses reaches a new level of authority and wisdom. For the first time we hear him speak extensively in his own voice, rather than merely as the transmitter of God’s words to him. His grasp of vision and detail is faultless. He wants the people to understand that the laws God has commanded them are for their good, not just God’s.

All ancient peoples had gods. All ancient peoples had laws. But their laws were not from a god; they were from the king, pharaoh, or ruler – as in the famous law code of Hammurabi. The gods of the ancient world were seen as a source of power, not justice. Laws were man-made rules for the maintenance of social order. The Israelites were

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לעילוי נשמת

יהודה משה יוסף בן החבר קלונימוס

Joseph M. Katzenstein

ו' אב תשע"ג

by Annette (née Katzenstein) & Victor Schabes and family

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different. Their laws were not made by their kings – monarchy in ancient Israel was unique in endowing the king with no legislative powers. Their laws came directly from God Himself, creator of the universe and liberator of His people. Hence Moses' ringing declaration: "Observe [these laws] carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'" (Deut. 4:6).

At this defining moment of his life, Moses understood that, though he would not be physically with the people when they entered the Promised Land, he could still be with them intellectually and emotionally if he gave them the teachings to take with them into the future. Moses became the pioneer of perhaps the single greatest contribution of Judaism to the concept of leadership: the idea of the teacher as hero.

Heroes are people who demonstrate courage in the field of battle. What Moses knew was that the most important battles are not military. They are spiritual, moral, cultural. A military victory shifts the pieces on the chessboard of history. A spiritual victory changes lives. A military victory is almost always short-lived. Either the enemy attacks again or a new and more dangerous opponent appears. But spiritual victories can – if their lesson is not forgotten – last forever. Even quite ordinary people, Yiftah, for example (Book of Judges, Chapters 11–12), or Samson (Chapters 13–16), can be military heroes. But those who teach people to see, feel, and act differently, who enlarge the moral horizons of humankind, are rare indeed. Of these, Moses was the greatest.

Not only does he become the teacher in Deuteronomy. In words engraved on Jewish hearts ever since, he tells the entire people that they must become a nation of educators: Make known to your children and your children's children, how you once stood before the Lord your God at Horeb. (Deut. 4:9–10)

In the future, when your child asks you, "What is the meaning of the testimonies, decrees, and laws that the Lord our God has commanded you?" tell them, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...." (Deut.

6:20–21)

Teach [these words] to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you travel on the way, when you lie down and when you rise. (Deut. 11:19)

Indeed, the last two commands Moses ever gave the Israelites were explicitly educational in nature: to gather the entire people together in the seventh year to hear the Torah being read, to remind them of their covenant with God (Deut. 31:12–13), and, "Write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the people of Israel" (31:19), understood as the command that each person must write for himself a scroll of the law.

In Deuteronomy, a new word enters the biblical vocabulary: the verb l-m-d, meaning to learn or teach. The verb does not appear even once in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, or Numbers. In Deuteronomy it appears seventeen times. There was nothing like this concern for universal education elsewhere in the ancient world. Jews became the people whose heroes were teachers, whose citadels were schools, and whose passion was study and the life of the mind.

Moses' end-of-life transformation is one of the most inspiring in all of religious history. In that one act, he liberated his career from tragedy. He became a leader not for his time only but for all time. His body did not accompany his people as they entered the land, but his teachings did. His sons did not succeed him, but his disciples did. He may have felt that he had not changed his people in his lifetime, but in the full perspective of history, he changed them more than any leader has ever changed any people, turning them into the people of the book and the nation who built not ziggurats or pyramids but schools and houses of study.

The poet Shelley famously said, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."¹ In truth, though, it is not poets but teachers who shape society, handing on the legacy of the past to those who build the future. That insight sustained Judaism for longer than any other civilisation, and it began with Moses in the last month of his life. *Covenant and Conversation 5779 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l* ©2019 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Many events in the book of Bereishit (Genesis) repeat themselves in Devarim (Deuteronomy) with one major difference. Whereas Genesis is a narrative which focuses on individuals, Devarim focuses on the nations who have emerged from these individuals.

¹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," in *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, ed. Harold Bloom (Toronto: New American Library, 1996), 448.

Consider for example the story in this week's portion of the children of Yaakov (Jacob), Am Yisrael, asking the children of Esav (Esau) for permission to go through their land on their way to Israel. It is a reversal of the story of the confrontation between Esav and Yaakov as found in the Genesis narrative.

In Bereishit Esau comes from the field tired and buys food from Yaakov. (Genesis 25:34) Here in Devarim, it is the Jews weary from years of wandering in the desert, who try to buy food and water from the children of Esav. (Devarim 2:6)

In Bereishit, Yaakov rejects traveling with Esav, but promises to rendezvous with him one day in Seir. That promise is never fulfilled in their lifetime. (Genesis 33:14) Yet, here in Devarim, the Israelites finally connect with the children of Esav in Seir, and are rejected. (Numbers 20:21; Devarim 2:8)

Note also the similarity in language. In preparation for his meeting with Esav, Jacob wrestles with a mysterious stranger and is struck in the hollow (kaf) of his thigh (Genesis 32:26). In Devarim, God tells the Jews not to antagonize the children of Esav, "For I shall not give you of their land, even the right to set foot (kaf) there." (Deuteronomy 2:5) Rabbi Yitzhak Twersky notes that the use of the uncommon term kaf in both places point; the reader to a similarity between these episodes.

Indeed, both stories also intersect in that they deal with fear. In Genesis it is Yaakov who is afraid before meeting Esav. In the words of the Torah, "Yaakov became very frightened." (Bereishit 32:8) Here, in Devarim it's the children of Esav who are frightened as the Israelites draw near. As the Torah states: "The Lord said to me (Moshe)...command the people saying 'you are passing through the boundary of your brothers, the children of Esav, who dwell in Seir; they will fear you.'" (Devarim 2:4, 5)

One can't help but note that the parallel stories in Devarim are often the reverse of the Bereishit narrative. Thus, events in Devarim could be viewed as a corrective to what unfolded in Bereishit. A real appreciation of feeling the pain of another only comes when one feels that very pain. Perhaps Am Yisrael, the children of Yaakov, had to learn this lesson before entering the land of Israel. ©2019 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 BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

This final book of the five books of the Torah is the great oration of Moshe at the conclusion of his 40 years of leadership and service to God and the Jewish people. In it he reviews the events of that period and his observations and comments regarding those

events and the behavior of the people of Israel during those decades of miraculous existence in the desert of Sinai.

The underlying question that this book and this week's reading of the Torah raises is why it's necessary for us to hear the entire story once again. There is no doubt that the Torah, being the word of God so to speak, has accurately portrayed the events and details that occurred during this last 40 years of the lifetime of Moshe. So, why the repetition and expansion of the story and why does the Torah include the comments and descriptions of Moshe that at times seem to be in variance to the original narrative as it appears in the previous books of the Torah?

The predators of biblical criticism have always pounced on these seeming discrepancies in order to prove that somehow our holy Torah was produced by committee and various personages over many generations. The survival of the Jewish people, as outlined in this book of the Torah that we have just begun to read, gives factual denial to such theories. It is inconceivable to think that Moshe himself would not be aware of the differences in the text that he himself is presenting as the word of God to the Jewish people. There is a lesson to be learned here as always from every biblical narrative and statement.

We are all aware that reality with strict accuracy is one thing while the perceptions and understanding of those very events is a completely different matter. The Torah describes the events that occurred before the death of Moshe in accurate real detail. These are the events and facts as they occurred and to which Heaven, so to speak, testifies. But the Torah also teaches us that these were the impressions and understanding of those events by human beings – by the greatest of human beings, our teacher Moshe.

The Torah wishes to make clear to us the difficulty of achieving absolute truth and reality in our world. Everything that we see and believe is always refracted through our own life experiences and personal emotions. That is why no one always shares the same opinion regarding issues, personalities or events in our lives. The Talmud teaches us that if there are two witnesses to an event that come to testify in a Jewish court and agree to every detail as to what they saw, we immediately suspect them to being false witnesses and poor jurors.

So, the Torah allows us a peek into the soul and mind of Moshe and to reflect on how he saw the events of his lifetime and the story of the 40-year sojourn of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai. It is always wise to understand the perception of others when we decide on a course of action no matter how convinced we are that we see it correctly and accurately. ©2019 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

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RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel, on the other side of the Jordan.... And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke unto the children of Israel, according unto all that Hashem had given him in commandment unto them; after he had smitten Sihon the king of the Emorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who dwelt in Ashtaroth, at Edrei; beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses began to elucidate this Torah, saying... “ (Deuteronomy 1:1-5) There are two important issues which must be studied when approaching this week’s Torah portion, the first theological and the second textual.

The theological question strikes us from the moment we open this fifth book of the Bible: Moses is speaking with his voice to the people of Israel. Each of the other four biblical books is written in the third person, in God’s voice, as it were, recording the history, narrating the drama and commanding the laws. This fifth book is written in the first person. Does this mean that the first four books are God’s Bible and the fifth Moses’ Bible?

The fifteenth-century Spanish biblical interpreter and faithful disciple of Maimonides, Don Isaac Abarbanel, queries “whether Deuteronomy was given by God from heaven, containing words from the mouth of the Divine as the rest of the Torah, or whether Moses spoke this book by himself...what he himself understood to be the intent of the Divine in his elucidation of the commandments, as the biblical text states, ‘And Moses began to elucidate this Torah’” (Deut. 1:5).

The Abarbanel concludes that whereas the first four books of the Bible are God’s words written down by Moses, this fifth book of the Bible contains Moses’ words, which God commanded the prophet to write down. In this manner, Deuteronomy has equal sanctity with the rest of the five books, (Abarbanel, Introduction to Deuteronom).

Perhaps the Abarbanel is agreeing with a provocative interpretation of the verse, “Moses will speak, and the Lord will answer him with a voice” (Ex. 19:19), which I once heard in the name of the Kotzker Rebbe, who asked: “What is the difference whether God speaks and Moses answers Amen, or Moses speaks and God answers Amen?!”

The second issue is textual in nature. The book of Deuteronomy is Moses’ long farewell speech. Moses feels compelled to provide personal reflections on the significance of the commandments as well as his personal spin on many of the most tragic desert events.

From the very beginning of Moses’ monologue,

he cites God’s invitation to the Israelites to conquer the Land of Israel. This would be the perfect introduction to a retelling of the Sin of the Scouts whose evil report dissuaded the Israelites from attempting the conquest. Indeed, he does begin to recount, “But you all drew near to me and said, ‘Let us send out men before us, and let them scout out the land and report to us on the matter...’” (Deut. 1:22). But this retelling comes fourteen verses after God’s initial invitation and these intervening fourteen verses are filled with what appears to be recriminations against a nation which Moses “is not able to carry [bear] alone” (1: 9). Only after this excursus from the topic at hand does Moses discuss the failed reconnaissance mission. Why the excursus? How does it explain the failed mission?

From God’s initial approach to Moses at the burning bush, Moses was a reluctant leader. The reason was clear: Moses called himself “heavy of speech.” I have previously explained this on the basis of an interpretation of the Ralbag, to mean that Moses was not given to “light banter”; he was so immersed in the “heavy” issues, that he had neither the patience nor the interest to convince an ungrateful and stiff-necked people to trust in God and conquer the Promised Land. Moses spent so much time in the companionship of the Divine that he lost the will – and ability – to consort with regular humanity, with Mr. Schwartz and Mrs. Goldberg: Moses yearned to speak to God, to convey the “heavy talk of God’s commandments, he had neither the time nor the will for small-talk of a Pastoral Rabbi.

Moses knew himself. The verses leading up to the Sin of the Scouts are hardly an excuse. They explain his failure to give proper direction to the delegation of tribal princes, his inability to censure their report, his unwillingness to convince them of the critical significance of the conquest of the land. He could not bear the burden, the grumblings, of a nation which was too removed from God to be able to follow Him blindly as Moses was more than willing to do!

Back to theology. Maimonides explains that even at Mount Sinai, the entire nation only heard a sound emanating from the Divine, a Kol; each individual understood that sound in accordance with his specific and individual spiritual standing, while Moses was the only one able to “divine” the precise will of God within that sound – the words of the Ten Commandments (Guide to the Perplexed, II:32–33). Moses internalized the will of God and thereby produced the words of the four books of the Bible. God’s words were internalized and written by Moses, the greatest prophet of all. Moses communicated with God. Moses may not always have spoken successfully to his own generation; but he did write, for us and for Jewish eternity.

But Moses also had a legacy to leave and an interpretation to give. In the book of Deuteronomy, he spoke to his people, telling them not God’s words but

his own, Moses's own interpretation of the events and the commandments: God commanded him to write down the words of this book as well for all eternity. God was granting the divine imprimatur of Torah to Moses' book of Deuteronomy – and making it His (God's) book as well. Moses spoke and God answered Amen. ©2019 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI DAVID LEVINE

When to Rebuke

Sefer Devarim is called Mishneh Torah or the Second Torah. The implication of the name is that this Sefer is a repetition of the laws that were taught in the previous four books of the Torah. HaRav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains that this is a misnomer or at least a misunderstanding of the Sefer. "Of the just over one hundred laws which are contained in this book more than seventy are completely new, are not contained at all in the previous ones." Perhaps the term Mishneh Torah should be a "second" Torah, namely a large set of additional laws which were not as yet reported but had been given at Har Sinai. The Ramban disagrees, "Now all of these laws had been declared to Moshe, either on Har Sinai or in the Tent of Meeting within the first year [of the erection of the Tabernacle] before the affair of the spies. Nothing new was revealed to Moshe in the plains of Moav except the words of the covenant, as is expressly stated there." The Ramban does acknowledge that some of these laws appear here for the first time but states that they were given earlier. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin explains that the laws taught here were for the purpose of further explanation as is evidenced by the pasuk, "on the other side of the Jordan in the Land of Moav Moshe began clarifying this Torah saying."

Several meforshim point out that the word used here is "aileh, these are the words", not "v'eileh, and these are the words." The Or Hachayim tells us that eileh separates from what came before and v'eileh connects to what was previously said. He says that the words of Sefer Devarim are primarily Moshe's rebuke of the people and were not directed from Hashem. The laws found within Sefer Devarim are from Hashem, but the rebuke is not.

The Torah tells us, "These are the words which Moshe spoke to all of Yisrael on the other side of the Jordan in the wilderness in the waste opposite Suf, between Paran and Tofel and Lavan and Chatzeirot and Di Zahav. Eleven days from Choreiv (Har Sinai) on the way to Mount Seir until Kadesh Barnea. And it was on the fortieth year in the eleventh month on the first of the month that Moshe spoke to the Children of Israel according to all that Hashem had commanded him for them." Moshe begins his rebuke of the people with a subtle comment that would be missed except by those who read and analyze each phrase. Moshe is reminding the people that they are only a short distance

of eleven days from the place where they received the Torah. Had they not sent the spies into the land of Canaan and turned against Hashem, they could have saved the forty years that they had wandered in the wilderness to come now to an area that was only eleven days from where they had begun. HaRav Sorotzkin asks why the Jews complained when they were so near the border of Eretz Yisrael. "Tomorrow the Jews would enter the land of Yisrael and they would eat meat and they would be satiated by the bread of the land, therefore, why would the Jews now desire meat and degrade the Mon when they were standing at the entrance to Yisrael, yet they did not complain about the Mon which they had already eaten for more than a year when they were dwelling at Choreiv?" He answers that the B'nei Yisrael were under the mistaken notion that conquering the land of Yisrael would be by natural means rather than by a miraculous battle from Hashem. They wanted "real" bread and meat so that they would be strong for battle. They did not want only the taste of meat and bread that the Mon provided. They mistakenly believed that the battles would be fought with strength and with might and courage. Moshe's rebuke criticizes their lack of faith in Hashem and their lack of understanding how He would clear out the other nations in order to provide the land for them as an inheritance. The Ramban explains that they would have conquered the land without "one stroke of the sword" had they fulfilled their responsibilities to Hashem properly and had faith in Him.

Moshe's rebuke of the people began close to his death which was on his one hundred twentieth birthday. Rashi explains that Moshe was following the example that had been set by Ya'akov. Rashi explains that there are four reasons for not rebuking your children until shortly before your death: (1) a person should not rebuke and then rebuke again, (2) so that his friend whom he has rebuked should not see him and be embarrassed in front of him, (3) (the Sifrei adds the last two) that those who are rebuked should not bear a grudge, and (4) so that the final moments will be one of harmony because the receiver of the rebuke will understand how the person held this problem in until this moment.

HaRav Sorotzkin points out that the Torah gives us a specific command: "you shall surely rebuke your people." Our Rabbis tell us that this means even as many as one hundred times until the behavior is changed. Yet we see from Rashi that one should refrain from rebuking until one is close to death. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that the case in which we do not refrain from rebuke is when that admonition is directed towards your people, not your children. He clarifies that a father to his son or a teacher to his student must limit his rebuke. A father and a teacher must be honored and respected by their children and their students. A father and a teacher are both required to teach

children, and a student or a child who is constantly rebuked will stop listening to any words that one tries to teach him. When this happens, there is almost no hope of repairing the situation. It is often better to forego the admonition until the end of one's life or in the case of the teacher until the end of the school year. At that time the student or the child will understand that the rebuke that he deserved was not given in anger but in disapproval at not fulfilling one's true potential.

As we will soon approach Elul and will enter a time of self-assessment, may we begin to understand how we must calmly develop a process towards changing any negative behaviors that we might have. We must seek assistance if assistance is necessary. But we must attempt to change those things which limit our potential and our success. We must also understand that Hashem is there to help us, not rebuke us, especially if we recognize our problem and take the first step to change. May the New Year see us on a path to become closer to Hashem and to becoming better human beings. ©2019 Rabbi D. Levine

RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN

TorahWeb

The Shabbos prior to Tisha B'Av derives its name from the haftorah, whereby Isaiah the prophet castigates Israel for its sins, and prepares us for the national day of mourning, reminding us why we lost the Bais Hamikdash. The Beis Hamikdash unified the Jewish nation. To begin with, the korbanos were for the nation. On a daily basis, the Korban Tamid, the one lamb brought in the morning and the one lamb brought in the afternoon, were on behalf of the entire populace. One Kurban Mussaf, additional offering was brought on behalf of the nation every Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, and Yom Tov. Even the atonement for each individual on Yom Kippur came about through the representative of the people, the Kohein Gadol.

The Ramchal (Daas Tvunos 160) teaches that the kohein officiating at the Korban Tamid had the challenging job of getting into the mindset of representing and reflecting all of Klal Yisrael. Just as they were represented by the kohanim in their avodah (actual performance of the offerings), the leviim with their singing and music, and Israelites with their ma'amad prayers, the kohein channeled the unique requests as per the character traits of the multitudes of the nation and offered them to Hashem.

King David expressed it in Tehillim (122:2) "Built up Jerusalem is like a city that is united together". The mishna (Avos 5:5) teaches that no one complained that the accommodations were stressful and crowded for the three pilgrim festivals in Jerusalem. The Chasam Sofer understands this to mean, that it was most certainly stressful, but the higher cause and privilege of being in close proximity to the Beis Hamikdash, united the people, and thus no one

complained.

Moreover, the Beis Hamikdash was the vehicle whereby the Jewish nation experienced Hashgacha Pratis (Divine providence) on an ongoing basis. The above cited mishna enumerates 10 open miracles that occurred therein regularly showing His presence in their midst. Our observance of Tisha B'Av is a strong reminder of what we are missing today.

This Tisha B'Av is most unique. It is coming during the time of the unification for the Jewish people that we have not felt for a long time. I met two days ago with Mrs. Rachel Frankel, the mother of Naftali H.Y.D. After sharing with her our deepest personal sympathy and expressing condolences on behalf of our congregation and community in New Jersey, I told her of monies that were donated in memory of the three boys to be used at the discretion of the families. Her immediate response was to use the funds to further the feelings of achdus and closeness that presently envelopes the land. Mr. Shaar, the father of Gil'ad H.Y.D hoped that this incredible outpouring of prayer and concern on behalf of world Jewry could help stem the tide of assimilation and intermarriage in the United States.

The unity in Israel today is unfortunately being continued by the war in Gaza. If only the West Bank were being rocketed, one could imagine some responding by asking, "why are they living there?" But when rockets fly towards Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, and the airport, it most certainly unites all Israel in imo anochi b'tzarah, we are all in this together. In addition, approximately a half million Israelis have on their phones an app that apprises them of when a siren goes off anywhere in the country, creating Kol Yisrael areivim zeh l'zeh, an intense feeling of camaraderie and concern one for another. Moreover, we too have witnessed to date incredible Hashgacha pratis.

1. The iron dome was out of commission one day last week for eight hours outside of Ashkelon, and during these eight hours not a single rocket came.
2. Last week, when over 1,400 rockets had been shot into Israel and but one casualty, then the Turkish Prime Minister said "It cannot be true". He doesn't realize (Tehillim 121:4), "Behold, He neither slumbers nor sleeps, the Guardian of Israel".
3. A soldier was shot last night and the bullet was intercepted by the hand grenade he was wearing, which miraculously did not explode, neither damaging him nor his fellow soldiers.

The lists of the miracles that we witness daily are manifold. Tisha B'Av reminds us that unity and Hashgacha pratis is to come from a positive source, the Beis Hamikdash, and not unfortunately from the horror of kidnapping of innocent teenagers and miracles from the battle front. Going into this Tisha B'av we are cognizant of (Tehillim 116:3) "Distress and grief I find, and I invoke the name of Hashem". Our prayers and Kinos are in response to the fifty three families that to

date have made the supreme sacrifice for Am Yisrael. Our war with Gaza is but a continuation of the tragic circumstances that occur in the absence of the Third Beis Hamikdash.

The Gemara (Berachos 8a) teaches that since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, Hashem takes refuge in the study of Torah. I understand this to mean that just as the Beis Hamikdash unified our people, Torah also has ability to unite our people. Case in point, notes the Aruch Ha'Shulchan in his introduction to Choshen Mishpat, Jews all over the world keep the same Shabbos, use the same esrog, keep Kosher, laws of family purity, we are all united through the Torah.

As we prepare to sit low and fast this Tisha B'Av, and pine for the day that our unity will emanate from Tehillim (116:13) "The cup of salvations I will raise, and the name of Hashem I will invoke". I would like to suggest a few ways to perpetuate these remarkable feelings of unity, please G-d soon beyond the war. Firstly, take note: it is not Hillel, but Shamai who teaches (Avos 1:15) to greet everyone favorably, with a cheerful countenance. He does not mean only those in one's circle, who share your character and ideology, rather go out of your way to show kinship, respect and brotherhood to all. The Yerushalmi (Yuma 1) teaches that the destruction of the first Temple was but the roof of the building. The second Beis Hamikdash which was destroyed because of baseless and senseless hatred had its very foundation was destroyed. We need heavy doses of ahavas chinum, to love each and every Jew, because if we have one Father, then we really are brothers and sisters.

Secondly, don't just pray for our soldiers in Gaza, but get the name of a specific soldier, for when you focus on him among the rest, your prayer is more focused. May I suggest you keep Amatzya Chaim ben Chedva Malka who sustained serious injuries to his legs, and doctors hope he will walk in several weeks.

Finally, your acts of chessed, your prayers, your Torah study, are the parcels that we can send from abroad to the soldiers and the rest of Israel. ©2014 Rabbi B. Yudin and The TorahWeb Foundation, Inc.

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Bishul Accum

*Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit
by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

Today there is a Halachic issue when hiring the services of a non-Jewish person in one's house and they cook for them. The issue is "Bishul Accum" (a law forbidding Jewish people from eating food cooked or baked by a Non-Jew). The reason for this law is to prevent social interaction with the non-Jew which could ultimately cause intermarriage. This law is hinted in a sentence in this week's portion when Moses asks Sichon the king of the Amorites to "sell us food, and provide us with water to drink and we will pay you".

Just as water is not prepared by anyone so the food that Moshe requested was not cooked or prepared first by a non-Jew (the nation of Sichon) but would be given to the Jewish people in its raw stage.

This reference in our portion however is not conclusive, for surely the Jewish people would have been able to purchase flour from Sichon, which must first be ground? Hence we must resort to the original reason by our Rabbis- to discourage intermarriage. According to most opinions this prohibition is only when the preparation is done in the house of the Non-Jew, but when done in the house of the Jew it would be permissible.

According to the normative Halacha however, we nevertheless follow the stringent opinion, which appears in the Code of Jewish Law ("Shulchan Aruch") that in all cases we are prohibited to partake of food cooked by a non-Jew, unless there is a Jew standing by and involved in some way in the preparation of the food. ©2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg

Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

"The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: 'I said, And Yisrael dwelt in security, in solitude, like Yaacov' [Devarim 33:28]. Now let them dwell in a place alone." [Sanhedrin 104]. Yisrael is characterized by the trait, "G-d alone will guide them, and there will be no other god with him" [Devarim 32:12]. The Ramban discusses this at length in the Torah portion of Acharei Mot. The Holy One, Blessed be He, divided the various lands among different nations, and appointed an angel who was a governor for each one. And that is why G-d is called "the G-d of gods and the master of the masters," since He rules over all the governors. But with respect to the nation of Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael, "He did not appoint any governor from among the angels," and He leads them himself. As is written, "And I will be a G-d for you" [Yirmiyahu 11:14] -- there will be no other gods at all.

This trait of exclusive Divine guidance continues while we are in exile too, even though it might seem at first glance that when we are in exile G-d does not protect us in His tent of peace, and His guidance is not revealed. But it is still written, "How she sat alone" [Eicha 1:1] -- G-d alone will guide them.

"Who is standing behind our wall, looking from the windows, peeping through the crevices?" [Shir Hashirim 2:9]. It sometimes happens that a child will play outside of the home, while its mother leans on the windowsill and makes sure that nobody interferes with her son. However, at other times she might close the shutters and continue watching through the slits. From the mother's point of view nothing has changed, and she can see everything that she was able to see just as

before, but those who are standing outside have the impression that the mother has left the scene and is no longer watching, and they can therefore take advantage of the situation and bother the child.

In the era of the Temple, the Holy One, Blessed be He, protects us from the open windows, and everybody can see Him. "And all the nations will see that the name of G-d is proclaimed over you, and they will fear you" [Devarim 28:10]. But when the shutters are closed, at a time when G-d is hidden, "And I will hide My face on that day" [31:18], when His face is not visible in the window, they get the impression that He is no longer there. However, in truth nothing has changed for us, and He sees and supervises just like before. Even when we dwell alone, "G-d alone will watch over us."

There is even more to this. Specifically at the time when G-d is hidden, our awareness of His supervision grows stronger. When we look at the miracle of the survival of our nation, a sheep among seventy wolves, we can think of what Rabbi Yaacov Emden wrote in his Siddur: "I swear that when I look at these wonders, they seem more remarkable than all of the miracles and wonders which G-da performed for our forefathers in Egypt, in the desert, and in Eretz Yisrael. And the longer the exile lasts, the more we are convinced by this miracle, and we become more and more aware of the power of His actions and His strength."

The Sefat Emet wrote with respect to Tisha B'Av which is on Shabbat that in general the purpose of Shabbat is to show that the nation of Yisrael is under the protection of the Holy One, Blessed be He. "It is an eternal sign between me and the Children of Yisrael" [Shemot 31:17]. And the unique supervision of Yisrael continues even during a time of exile. Therefore, when the Ninth of Av is on Shabbat we do not fast, because the fast would be a sign of mourning for the Temple, as if to imply that G-d is no longer watching over us. However, on Shabbat we are not alone, and there is no need to fast.

The Clear Vision Of Rav Kook The Day the Sun was Extinguished

by Rabbi Chagai Londin

Hesder Yeshiva in Sdeirot and Machon Meir

The destruction of the Temple was not just a local tragedy, the ruin of a magnificent synagogue. The day of the destruction of the Temple marks for Judaism the day when the world changed. It is the day that the sun was extinguished.

During the time of the First Temple, life and holiness were linked together in a natural way, and a person could "flow" within the physical world without any fear. During the time of King Shlomo, which is considered the "golden age" of the First Temple Era, the Tanach gives us amazing descriptions of a powerful

life: "And behold, Shlomo's bread for one day was made from thirty measures of fine flour and sixty measures of flour" [Melachim I 5:2]. "Silver was not considered valuable at all in the days of Shlomo" [10:21]. The descriptions give a feeling of remarkable powers of life -- an army, the economy, art, and esthetics. Chapter after chapter are devoted to the fine details of the magnificent architectures of the Palace and of the Temple, Shlomo's army, his merchants, and his stables. The characteristic description was the following: "Yehuda and Yisrael were as numerous as the sand at the sea, spending their time eating and drinking... as numerous as the sand at the sea -- eating, drinking, and being happy." [4:20]. Sanctity appears intertwined with the secular, and the secular is an expression of holiness.

However, all of this stopped with the end of the First Temple. During the destruction, "an iron fence was created between Yisrael and their Father in Heaven" [Berachot 32b]. "From the day that the Temple was destroyed there was no day that was not cursed, the dew was not the source of any blessing, and the fruits had no taste" [Sotta 48a]. In other words, when this happened, life lost its vitality. We entered an era where there was a constant war between the secular and the holy, between the physical and the spiritual. This struggle continues to this day. The spiritual world, which in the time of the Temple was tangible and intertwined with the physical one, became nebulous and full of doubts, and physical reality became the only aspect of life which was considered to be a real dimension.

Deep analysis shows us that all the tribulations in the world today -- the struggle between various forces which in the end leads to large-scale wars, tensions, and crises in all dimensions, for both individuals and a community -- stem solely from a lack of balance between the spiritual and the physical worlds. This balance was lost when the Temple was destroyed.

The Ninth of Av is indeed the saddest day of the year. It is a day when we do not eat, we do not drink, and we observe the customs of mourning. The sages even forbid us from studying anything in the Torah that is not directly connected to the subject of the destruction (this is based on the assumption that other subjects in Torah learning can make us feel happy). On the Ninth of Av we even put limits on our regular prayers. This all has a single purpose: to keep in mind and to internalize that the world in which we live is a world that lacks something. As soon as we can understand what is missing, the possibility opens up for us to get on the right track to recover that which we have lost. And indeed quite a bit has been lost. (Summarized by Yisrael Rosenberg) ©2015 Machon Zomet. Translated by Moshe Goldberg

