



**15TH OF AB 5781
 JULY 24TH, 2021
 CANDLE LIGHTING 7:53PM
 SHABBAT ENDS 8:53PM**



A REASON FOR CONSOLATION DOUBLE SIN, DOUBLE COMFORT THE JEALOUSY ANTIDOTE

PARASHAT VAETHANAN

SHABBAT NAHAMU

Synagogue: 310 - 95th Street, Surfside, FL 33154 *Website:* www.hechalshalom.org *Tel:* (305) 867-6024
Mailing Address: Ness 26 Inc P.O. Box 546632 Surfside, FL 33154 *E-mail:* info@hechalshalom.org | oroziel.bookkeeper@gmail.com

THIS WEEK'S BULLETIN HAS BEEN KINDLY SPONSORED LEILUY NISHMAT
 שלמה בן יעקב ז"ל, BY HIS DEAR FAMILY.



July / August 2021	לילה לרבינו תם R' Tam's Nightfall	לילה Nightfall	שקיעת החמה Sun set	הדלקת נרות Candle Lighting	פגל Mincha	מנחה קטנה Mincha Ketana	מנחה גדולה Earliest Mincha	חצות Mid day	סוף זמן תפילה Latest Shachris	סוף זמן קריאת שמע Latest Shema	הנץ החמה Sun rise	זמן ציצית ותפילין Earliest Tallis	עלות השחר 72 דקות Dawn 72 Minutes	דף היומי Daf Yomi	אב תשפ"א		
10 Sha	9:28	9:34	8:54	8:15	6:50	5:24	2:01	1:25	11:09	10:01	9:25	9:21	6:37	5:50	5:24	5:17	ג שבת
11 Sun	9:28	9:34	8:54	8:15	6:50	5:24	2:01	1:26	11:09	10:01	9:25	9:22	6:37	5:50	5:24	5:18	ד ראשון
12 Mon	9:28	9:34	8:54	8:15	6:49	5:24	2:01	1:26	11:09	10:01	9:25	9:22	6:38	5:51	5:25	5:18	ה שני
13 Tue	9:27	9:33	8:54	8:14	6:49	5:24	2:01	1:26	11:10	10:01	9:25	9:22	6:38	5:51	5:25	5:19	ו שלישי
14 Wed	9:27	9:33	8:53	8:14	6:49	5:24	2:01	1:26	11:10	10:02	9:26	9:23	6:39	5:52	5:26	5:20	ז רביעי
15 Thu	9:27	9:33	8:53	8:14	6:49	5:24	2:01	1:26	11:10	10:02	9:26	9:23	6:39	5:52	5:26	5:20	ח חמישי
16 Fri	9:27	9:32	8:53	8:14	6:49	5:24	2:01	1:26	11:10	10:02	9:26	9:23	6:40	5:53	5:27	5:21	ט ששי
17 Sha	9:26	9:32	8:52	8:13	6:48	5:24	2:01	1:26	11:10	10:03	9:27	9:24	6:40	5:53	5:27	5:21	י שבת
18 Sun	9:26	9:31	8:52	8:13	6:48	5:23	2:01	1:26	11:11	10:03	9:27	9:24	6:41	5:54	5:28	5:22	יא ראשון
19 Mon	9:26	9:31	8:51	8:13	6:48	5:23	2:01	1:26	11:11	10:03	9:27	9:24	6:41	5:54	5:28	5:23	יב שני
20 Tue	9:25	9:30	8:51	8:12	6:48	5:23	2:01	1:26	11:11	10:03	9:27	9:25	6:41	5:55	5:28	5:23	יג שלישי
21 Wed	9:25	9:30	8:50	8:12	6:47	5:23	2:01	1:26	11:11	10:04	9:28	9:25	6:42	5:56	5:29	5:24	יד רביעי
22 Thu	9:24	9:29	8:50	8:11	6:47	5:23	2:01	1:26	11:11	10:04	9:28	9:26	6:42	5:56	5:29	5:25	טו חמישי
23 Fri	9:24	9:28	8:49	8:11	6:47	5:22	2:01	1:26	11:12	10:04	9:28	9:26	6:43	5:57	5:30	5:25	יז ששי
24 Sha	9:23	9:28	8:49	8:10	6:46	5:22	2:01	1:26	11:12	10:04	9:28	9:26	6:43	5:57	5:30	5:26	יח שבת
25 Sun	9:23	9:27	8:48	8:10	6:46	5:22	2:01	1:26	11:12	10:05	9:29	9:27	6:44	5:58	5:31	5:27	יט ראשון
26 Mon	9:22	9:26	8:48	8:09	6:45	5:22	2:01	1:26	11:12	10:05	9:29	9:27	6:44	5:59	5:31	5:27	כ שני
27 Tue	9:22	9:26	8:47	8:09	6:45	5:21	2:01	1:26	11:12	10:05	9:29	9:27	6:45	5:59	5:32	5:28	כא שלישי
28 Wed	9:21	9:25	8:47	8:08	6:45	5:21	2:01	1:26	11:12	10:05	9:29	9:28	6:45	6:00	5:32	5:29	כב רביעי
29 Thu	9:21	9:24	8:46	8:08	6:44	5:21	2:01	1:26	11:13	10:06	9:30	9:28	6:46	6:00	5:33	5:29	כג חמישי
30 Fri	9:20	9:23	8:45	8:07	6:44	5:20	2:01	1:26	11:13	10:06	9:30	9:28	6:46	6:01	5:33	5:30	כד ששי
31 Sha	9:20	9:23	8:45	8:07	6:43	5:20	2:01	1:26	11:13	10:06	9:30	9:28	6:47	6:01	5:34	5:31	כה שבת
1 Sun	9:19	9:22	8:44	8:06	6:43	5:19	2:00	1:26	11:13	10:06	9:30	9:29	6:47	6:02	5:34	5:31	כז ראשון
2 Mon	9:18	9:21	8:43	8:05	6:42	5:19	2:00	1:26	11:13	10:07	9:31	9:29	6:48	6:03	5:35	5:32	כח שני
3 Tue	9:18	9:20	8:42	8:05	6:42	5:19	2:00	1:26	11:13	10:07	9:31	9:29	6:48	6:03	5:35	5:33	כט שלישי
4 Wed	9:17	9:19	8:42	8:04	6:41	5:18	2:00	1:26	11:13	10:07	9:31	9:30	6:49	6:04	5:36	5:33	ל רביעי
5 Thu	9:16	9:18	8:41	8:03	6:40	5:18	2:00	1:26	11:13	10:07	9:31	9:30	6:49	6:04	5:36	5:34	מ חמישי
6 Fri	9:16	9:17	8:40	8:03	6:40	5:17	2:00	1:26	11:13	10:07	9:31	9:30	6:50	6:05	5:37	5:35	מא ששי
7 Sha	9:15	9:17	8:39	8:02	6:39	5:17	2:00	1:26	11:14	10:07	9:31	9:30	6:50	6:06	5:37	5:35	מב שבת
8 Sun	9:14	9:16	8:38	8:01	6:39	5:16	1:59	1:25	11:14	10:08	9:32	9:31	6:51	6:06	5:38	5:36	מג ראשון

Generate shul schedules automatically with a zmanim spreadsheet > <http://sheets.myzmanim.com>
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SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Minha **6:30pm**
 Shir Hashirim: **6:45pm**
 Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat & Arvit

Candle Lighting: 7:53pm
 Shaharit Netz Minyan: **5:45am**
Shaharit: 8:45am
 Zeman Keriat Shema **9:26am**
 2nd Zeman Keriat Shema **10:04am**
Minha: 7:35pm
 Followed by Seudat Shelishit & Arvit

Fast Starts: 8:13pm
Shabbat Ends: 8:53pm
 Rabbenu Tam **9:23pm**

This Friday night July 23rd & Shabbat July 24th is Tu Beav the 15th of Ab. There is no Tahanunim. Look in the Bulletin for articles on the importance of this day.

In the near Future, everyone will start receiving the High Holiday Packages.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE SUNDAY

Shaharit: **6:05am**
 Hodu approx.: **6:20am**
Shaharit #2 Hodu 8:30am
 Minha **6:30pm**
 Followed by Arvit.

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

Shaharit **6:05am**
 Daf Yomi **7:25am**
Shaharit #2 Hodu 8:00am
 Minha **6:30pm**
 Followed by Arvit
 Shiurim **7:00pm**

We would like to remind our Kahal Kadosh to please Donate wholeheartedly towards our Beautiful Kehila. Please contact us if you're interested in donating for any occasion, Avot Ubanim \$120, Kiddush \$350, Seudat Shelishit \$275, Weekly Bulletin \$150, Weekly Daf Yomi \$180, Daf Yomi Masechet \$2500, Yearly Daf Yomi \$5000, Weekly Breakfast \$150, Daily Learning \$180, Weekly Learning \$613, Monthly Rent \$3500, Monthly Learning \$2000, Children's Shabbat Program \$500 & Weekly program \$613. Thanking you in advance for your generous support. Tizke Lemitzvot!

Donors Column

בס"ד

We Sincerely Thank you for your generous contributions this Week! We truly appreciate it! Hashem should Bless you all with Health, Happiness, Parnasah Tova, Success, & All the Berachot of the Torah Amen!

- **Mr. Mordechai Saban**
- **Mr. Isaac Mizrachi**
- **Mr. Abraham Benhayoun**
- **Mr. Yossi Abitbol**
- **Mr. Alain Albergel**

If anyone would like to contact our Synagogue, please feel free to email info@hechalshalom.org

Torah Teasers (AISH)

1. In this parsha, long life is promised as reward for which four actions? Which two other commandments in the Torah promise long life?
2. In what context are fish mentioned in this parsha?
3. In this parsha, where are an ox and a donkey mentioned in the same verse? (2 answers)
4. In this parsha, what two places does the Torah state "with your heart and with all your soul"?
5. In this parsha, who is called "a wise and understanding nation"? Elsewhere in the Torah, who is called "understanding and wise"?
6. In this parsha, where does the word *arafel* (thick cloud) appear?
7. This parsha contains the only verse in the Torah in which two letters are enlarged. Which verse is it?
8. In this parsha, which verse contains all the letters of the *alef-bet*? What is the only other verse in the Torah that contains all the letters of the *alef-bet*?

Answers

- 1) In this parsha, long life is promised for: (1) keeping all of G-d's laws and statutes (Deut. 4:40), (2) keeping all the commandments properly (Deut. 5:29), (3) honoring one's father and mother (Deut. 5:15), and (4) observing the commandments in the Land of Israel (Deut. 6:2).
Elsewhere, long life is promised twice in Parashat Ki Teitzei for: (1) sending away the mother bird before taking its eggs (Deut. 22:7), and (2) having accurate weights and measures (Deut. 25:15).
- 2) The Jews are warned to not make any images of fish (Deut. 4:18).
- 3) In the Ten Commandments, an ox and a donkey are mentioned with regard to (1) keeping Shabbat (Deut. 5:14), and (2) the prohibition of coveting a neighbor's possessions (Deut. 5:18).
- 4) (1) When the Jews will be sent into exile, each person will seek out Hashem and succeed, doing so "with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 4:29). (2) In the first paragraph of the Shema, the Torah states that one must love Hashem "with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 6:5).
- 5) When the Jews are devoted to Torah, other nations will see them as "a wise and understanding nation" (Deut. 4:6). In Parashat Miketz, Pharaoh states that no one is as "understanding and wise" as Yosef (Genesis 41:39).
- 6) Arafel appears in connection to the giving of the Torah (Deut. 5:19, 4:11). It also appears in the same context in Parashat Yitro (Exodus 20).
- 7) In the verse of "Shema Yisrael" (Deut. 6:4), both the ayin of the word shema and the dalet of the word echad are written larger than the other letters.
- 8) Deut. 4:34 contains every letter of the *alef-bet*. The only other verse is in Parashat Beshalach, Exodus 16:16.

Community Announcements

(It is YOUR Community, make the most of it!)

Miscellaneous Announcements:

- **This Week's Congregational Kiddush** has been **Kindly Sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. Alain Albergel** in memory of his Dear Father **Yaakov Albergel Bar Simha z"l** the 16th of Av. Tihye Nishmato Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Amen!
- **This Week's Seudat Shelishit** is still available for Sponsorship!
- **Last Week's Breakfast** has been **Kindly Sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Edderai** in memory of his Dear Cousin **Haniftar Lebet Olamo z"l**. Tihye Nishmato Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Amen.
- **This Week's Breakfast** has been **Kindly Sponsored by our Dear friends in Brazil Mr. & Mrs. Yom Tov Eddy Levi** in memory of his Dear Mother **Zoui Levy Bat Louli z"l** the 17th of Av. Tihye Nishmata Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Amen.
- **Last Week's Daf Yomi** has been **Kindly Sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. Albert Belecen** in memory of his Dear Mother **Estrella Bat Oro z"l** the 15th of Av. Tihye Nishmata Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Amen.
- **This Week's Daf Yomi** is available for Sponsorship!
- We are trying to update our **Congregant's contact information**. We would like to start sending texts about different Events and Shiurim. We would also like to start emailing the weekly bulletin. **We would like to start a list of Nahalot/Azkarot/Yahrzeits**. We would also like to make a **Refuah Shelema list**. Please send your contact information to the Board at info@hechalshalom.org

Important Message!!!

Eruv Update: Surfside: The Eruv in Surfside now includes the walking paths along the beach. Pushing strollers and carrying is permitted on the paths, but not beyond the path or onto the beach.

Bal Harbour: The Eruv in Bal Harbour included the inner (western) walking path only. The pier at Haulover Cut is not included.

- Before hanging up anything anywhere in the Bet Hakeneset, please seek authorization from the Board. This includes flyers etc.
- Please be advised that prior to bringing any food or drinks for any occasion, you must first seek the authorization from the Board.

Special Announcements

- We are pleased to announce that Ness 26 is part of the **Amazon Charity Program**, which would allow our community to collect 0.5% of all the orders made by any of you on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). In order to register you need to log on smile.amazon.com and select Ness 26, Inc as the Charitable Organization you want to support, and from then shop on smile.amazon.com instead of www.amazon.com. It won't cost anything more, and is an easy way to contribute to our budget needs.
- Anyone wishing to receive the **Daily Halacha** please send a whatsapp message to Simon Chocron 786-351-1573

Community Calendar:

- **The program for Teenaged Boys** ages 13-18 Started again with Great Succes with Shiur & Supper every **Evening After Mincha at around at 7:30 pm With Supper**. New Participants Welcome! Anyone wishing to sponsor this Shiur Please contact the Board. Tizke Lemitzvot!
- We have started the **Mishmar Program** Every Thursday evening at 7:30 pm **with Chulent, Beer, & Snacks. Everyone is welcome!**

Refuah Shelema List

Men

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| • Yosef Zvi Ben Sara Yosefia, | • Isaac Ben Mesoda, |
| • Mordechai Ben Brucha Malka Shmalo | • Haim Ben Marcelle, |
| • Yizhak Abraham Ben Sheli, | • Yizhak Ben Simja |
| • Yosef Yizhak Ben Sara Hana, | • Reuben Ben Eta, |
| • Mordechai Ben Miriam, | • Michael Ben Aliza, |
| • Meir Raymond Ben Mathilde | • Avraham Ben Leah |
| • Yaakov Ben Simha Alegria | • Ruben Leib Ben Eta |
| • Aviv Ben Luba Miriam | • Menahem Ben Shira |
| • Mordechai Ben Mercedes | • Moshe Ben Rahel |
| • Yaacov Refael Ben Alegria | • David Ben Freha Rina |
| • Shalom Gibly Ben Fortuna | |

Women

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Simja Bat Esther, | • Sara Leticia Bat Mesoda, |
| • Rachel Bat Sarah, | • Alegria Simha Bat Esther, |
| • Nina Bat Rachel, | • Naomie Bat Rarel Adda, |
| • Gitel Rina Bat Yael, | • Malka Bat Joyce Simja, |
| • Miriam Bat Sofy, | • Sivan Simha Bat Yehudit, |
| • Rahma Bat Simha | • Natalie Rachel Bat Nancy, |
| • Esther Bat Fortuna | • Abigael Haya Bat Esther |
| • Malka Bat Dina | • Madeleine Bat Esther |
| • Raizel Bat Miriam | • Nurit Jacqueline Bat Rahel |
| • Leah Bat Rivka | • Marcelle Mesoda Bat Alegria |
| • Sol Bat Perla | • Eva Bat Yael Khayat |
| • Chana Bat Bilha | • Camouna Bat Fortuna |
| • Yael Bat Rut | |

Hechal Shalom / Or Oziel

שויתי לנגדי תמיד

We Would like to
Wholeheartedly
Thank our Dear Friends

The
Bitton Family

For generously Donating
the Rent of

Av 5781

Leiluy Nishmat Their Dear Father
David Bitton Bar Messoda z"l

We truly appreciate it.

In this Merit,

May Hashem Bless you & your
Wonderful Family with all
the Berachot of the Torah



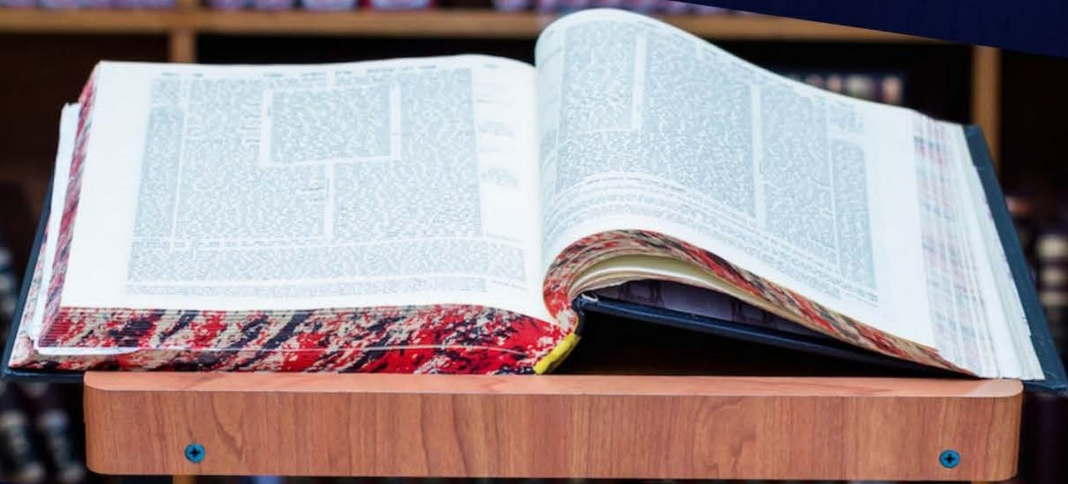
DAF YOMI SPONSORS



THIS YEAR'S LEARNING OF THE DAF YOMI
IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY

THE KAMHAZI FAMILY

IN MEMORY OF THEIR DEAR FATHER
SHELOMO BEN YAAKOV Z"L
& FOR HATZLACHA OF THE WHOLE FAMILY.
HASHEM SHOULD BLESS THEM WITH
HEALTH, HAPPINESS, & LONG LIFE, AMEN.



THIS YEAR'S LEARNING OF DAF YOMI IS
GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY

THE AKKAD FAMILY

LEILUY NISHMAT

אברהם בן גרסי-ה ז"ל, שלמה בן תמם ז"ל, אליהו בן רחל
ז"ל, ותמם בת אורו ז"ל תנצב"ה

HASHEM SHOULD BLESS THEM WITH
HEALTH, HAPPINESS, & LONG LIFE, AMEN.

We would like to Wholeheartedly Thank our Dear Friends,

Mr. & Mrs. Alain Albergel

for generously Donating the TORAH LEARNING of

Av 5781

**Leiluy Nishmat his Dear Father Yaakov Albergel
Bar Simha z"l & Max Maclouf Bar Gracia z"l**

Tihye Nishmatam Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Amen!

We truly appreciate it. In this merit may Hashem Bless you &
your wonderful family with all the Berachot of the Torah. Amen.

Happy Birthday To

- Moshe David Perez – Fri. July 23rd,
- Esther Hannah Nahon – Sun. July 25th,
- Hillel Elmaleh – Mon. July 26th,
- Mrs. Naama Maya – Tue. July 27th,
- Esmeralda Aquinin – Fri. July 30th,
- David Bensabat – Mon. Aug. 2nd,
- Elisheva Otsman – Mon. Aug. 2nd,
- Mrs. Ety Perez – Tue. Aug. 3rd,
- Esmeralda Simja Chocron – Thurs. Aug. 5th,
- Michal Hadasa Benhayoun – Shabb. Aug. 7th,
- Mrs. Tanya Bengio – Shabb. Aug. 7th,
- Mr. Mark Aquinin – Sun. Aug. 8th,
- Refael Nahon – Mon. Aug. 9th,
- Rivka Benhayoun – Tue. Aug. 10th,
- Eitan Tobul – Tue. Aug. 10th,
- Mrs. Sally Benhayoun – Wed. Aug. 11th,
- Marc Aquinin – Thurs. Aug. 12th,
- Shirel Bendahan – Thurs. Aug. 12th,

Happy Anniversary To

Nahalot

- Estrella Belecen Bat Oro z"l the 15th of Av
(Mother of Mr. Albert Belecen)(Shabbat)
- Yaakov Albergel Bar Simcha z"l the 16th of Av.
(Father of Mr. Alain Albergel)
- Zoui Levy Bat Louli z"l the 17th of Av
(Mother of Mr. Eddy Levi)
- Mazal Benbeniste Bat Rivka z"l the 18th of Av
(Mother of Mrs. Lina Guenoun z"l)

Next Shabbat:

- Yechia Benchetrit z"l the 23rd of Av
(Father of Mrs. Muriel Courchia)
- Yehudah Benhayoun Ben Flora z"l the 23rd of Av
(Brother of Mr. Daniel & Meir Benhayoun)
- Shlomo Mamane Bar Sarah z"l the 24th of Av
(Father of Mr. Habib Mamane)
- Piedad Bat Luna z"l the 25th of Av
(Mother of Mrs. Luna Benhayoun)
- Shlomo Bar Yizchak z"l the 27th of Av
(Father of Mrs. Luna Benhayoun)
- Eliyahu Benmergui Bar Sete z"l the 27th of Av
(Uncle of Sr. Moises Benmergui)

WEEKLY INSPIRATION

A Reason for Consolation

(Rabbi Eli Mansour itorah)

The Shabbat after Tisha B'Ab is known as "Shabbat Nahamu," the "Shabbat of consolation." This name is based on the famous prophecy which we read as the Haftara on this Shabbat, which begins with the words, "Nahamu Nahamu Ami" – "Console, console My nation."

But why should we be consoled? What reason is there for comfort? The calamity which we mourned on Tisha B'Ab has yet to be resolved. We are still in exile, and the Bet Ha'mikdash has not yet been rebuilt. Why are we to feel consolation, just because Tisha B'Ab is over?

One answer to this question comes from the beginning of the Parasha which our Sages specifically instituted to be read on the Shabbat after Tisha B'Ab – Parashat Vaet'hanan.

This Parasha begins with Moshe's pleas to G-d that he be allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael. The Sages teach that Moshe recited 515 prayers, at which point G-d told him to stop praying. It seems that G-d wanted Moshe to recite this specific number of prayers. Why?

One of the tragedies that befell our nation as a result of the Temple's destruction is described in the third chapter of Megilat Echa: "Sakota Be'anant Lach Me'abor Tefila" – "You covered Yourself with a cloud, so that prayer cannot pass." At the time of the destruction, G-d made an invisible "cloud" which blocked the heavens from receiving our prayers.

This was, indeed, a terrible tragedy. Prayer is not just a means of attaining that which we need and want. This is far from being the primary purpose of prayer. The primary purpose of prayer is to connect us to the Almighty. The Tefillin that we wear is so named because it is tied and bound to our bodies. The word "Tefila" means "bind." When we pray, we connect to Hashem. We build a relationship with Him. At the time of the destruction, G-d decided He no longer wanted a relationship with us, and so He broke this

connection by blocking our prayers. This marked one of the gravest tragedies of the destruction.

A number of books teach that Moshe Rabbenu prophetically foresaw this calamity, and he acted to help us, to restore for us this ability to connect to G-d through prayer. The Gematria (numerical value) of the word "Tefila" is 515. Moshe prayed 515 prayers for our sake, to reaffirm the power of Tefila when it would be taken from us. It is in his merit, because of his prayers, that we were given anew the opportunity of Tefila which had been taken away at the time of the destruction. Thanks to Moshe's prayers, we are able to maintain our connection to G-d even in the darkest of times. The prayers at the beginning of Parashat Vaet'hanan are the greatest possible source of consolation for us – because they have assured our continued ability to build a relationship with Hashem, under any and all circumstances.

Remarkably, this concept relates to the festive day of Tu B'Ab, the 15th of Ab, which falls less than a week after Tisha B'Ab.

One of the events celebrated on this day, as the Gemara explains, is "Kalu Meteh Midbar" – the demise of the generation of the wilderness was completed. After the sin of the spies, G-d decreed that the entire generation would perish over the course of the next 39 years, and only their children would enter the Land of Israel. It was on the 15th of Ab, 39 years later, that Beneh Yisrael realized that the decree had already been carried out in full, and now everybody who was alive would be proceeding into Eretz Yisrael. This was a joyous day, when the people saw that the punishment had been completed, and this is one of the reasons why we celebrate Tu B'Ab.

The Peneh Yehoshua (Rav Yaakov Yehoshua Falk, 1680-1756) writes that it was on that same day that Moshe Rabbenu recited his 515 prayers. Upon seeing that G-d had completed punishing the people for the sin of the spies, and everyone who remained would be entering the Land of Israel, Moshe saw an opportunity to beg for the privilege of entering the land. G-d denied his request, but, as we have seen, these prayers were inestimably valuable, having the effect of

restoring for us the ability to connect to Hashem through prayer.

Tu B'Ab is thus an exceedingly significant day – celebrating the restoration of Tefila, the elimination of the "cloud" which had blocked our access to G-d in the wake of the Temple's destruction, so that we can once again, even in our state of exile, build and maintain a beautiful and meaningful relationship with Hashem.

May we all seize the precious opportunity we have to connect with Hashem each day through prayer, and may we succeed in building a close relationship with our Creator and in bringing His presence back to Yerushalayim, in the rebuilt Bet Ha'mikdash, speedily and in our times, Amen.

Attitude Matters

(Rabbi Eli Mansour)

Parashat Vaethanan begins with Moshe recalling the impassioned prayer he prayed asking G-d to allow him to cross into Eretz Yisrael. G-d had decreed that Moshe would die across the Jordan River and not enter the Land of Israel together with the rest of the nation. Moshe prayed that the decree be annulled, but G-d declined his request. Our Sages teach that Moshe actually recited 515 prayers begging for permission to enter Eretz Yisrael, and G-d still denied his request. Instead, He told Moshe that he should climb to the mountaintop overlooking Eretz Yisrael and take a good look at the special land which G-d would be giving to Beneh Yisrael.

At first glance, G-d's response to Moshe seems harsh, if not cruel. G-d of course had His reasons for denying Moshe's request, but why did He then instruct Moshe to gaze into the land? Wasn't this just a "tease"? Imagine after fasting an entire day somebody comes along and places a delicious, fresh pastry right in front of our eyes, and tells us we can only look at it. Wouldn't that be cruel? What purpose was there for Moshe to look into the land in which he so desperately wanted to live?

There is a concept in Judaism that a person can be credited for a Misva which he does not

actually perform. If somebody truly wishes to do a certain Misva, but circumstances do not allow him to do so, he receives credit as though he performed that Misva. In light of the practical barrier that prevents him from doing the Misva, his sincere desire to fulfill the Misva suffices, and he is regarded as actually having done it.

The Gemara teaches that Moshe yearned to enter Eretz Yisrael not to enjoy its material benefits, but to fulfill the special Misvot that can be performed only there. And this might explain why G-d told Moshe to look into the land. Gazing into Eretz Yisrael would increase Moshe's desire to go there and fulfill the Misvot. G-d wanted Moshe to feel such a genuine longing for the Misvot of Eretz Yisrael that he would be credited with having done them, even though he would not be entering the land. This was not cruel; to the contrary, it was to Moshe's benefit.

It occasionally happens that a person is about to leave for an important Misva – such as Minyan, a Shiur, to help a friend, or to help out in a community event – and then something unexpected comes up. Maybe the car doesn't start, an urgent problem came up in the office, something breaks at home, etc. A person can nevertheless be credited with the Misva if he or she genuinely feels disappointed. If we truly wish we could do the Misva, then we receive the credit even if practically it does not work out.

When it comes to Misvot, attitude matters at least as much as the bottom-line performance. What's important is not just how much we accomplish, but how much we want and try to accomplish. And this desire comes from an appreciation of the inestimable value of Misvot, a realization of just how precious each and every Misva is. If we bear in mind the worth and significance of every Misva, then we will be sincerely driven to accomplish more – and we will then be credited even for the Misvot we are unable to perform.

Who Serves "I"dols?

(Rabbi Frand from Torah.org)

"Lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image." (4:16)

Sefer Devarim is replete with warnings against idolatry, but perhaps the parashah in which the repetitiveness is most obvious is Parashat Va'ethanan. Dozens of pesukim — including nearly one third of the pesukim in the second rendering of the Ten Commandments — contain numerous admonitions not to serve idols.

Nowadays, these stern exhortations seem entirely superfluous. Almost no sane human being today has any interest in worshipping a graven image of any sort. In fact, it seems strange to us that anyone ever had such a passion.

Truthfully, our utter disinterest in idol worship is not a credit to our advanced, developed intelligence or our purer faith in G-d. The Anshe Knesset HaGedolah, a group of 120 sages, some of the greatest Torah scholars ever, convened during the era of the second Bet HaMikdash and determined that the inclination to serve avodah zara was too strong for mankind to withstand. The Talmud (Yoma 69b) relates how the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah captured the yetzer hara for idolatry and destroyed it.

We can still have an idea of how strong the inclination for idolatry was before they conquered it. The Talmud tells us that the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah were encouraged by their success in conquering one of the two major passions of mankind, so they decided to turn their sights on the other major passion: the inclination for promiscuity.

When the sages succeeded in capturing the passion for promiscuity, however, they came to the realization that if they destroyed this passion people would no longer procreate, so they released it.

We are all aware of how difficult it is to control the inclination for licentiousness. Chazal teach us that people once had an equal passion to serve idols.

Nevertheless, we are left wondering, did Chazal do such a good job of abolishing idolatry that the countless warnings in the Torah not to worship idols no longer apply at all?

Actually, some of us come close to serving idols on a regular basis, says the Radziner Rav.

The Talmud (Shabbat 105b) teaches us that a person who becomes angry and loses control of himself is considered to be serving avodah zara.

Dovid HaMelech wrote, "There shall be no foreign G-d within you" (Tehillim 81:10). The Talmud asks, "Which foreign G-d is within a person? This is referring to the yetzer hara."

To understand this passage, we have to dissect the anatomy of a temper tantrum.

Consider this not uncommon scenario. Mr. Baal HaBayit comes home from shul on Shabbat morning and finds that the table is not set and the food is not ready. He turns to his wife and asks, "Why can't you have everything prepared on time?"

His wife realizes that he is in no mood for explanations, so she silently speeds up the preparations. Then the meal starts, and the children are a little too overactive. "Why are you making so much noise?" Mr. Baal HaBayit shouts.

The children quiet down for a short while, but soon enough, the rowdiness starts once again. This time, Mr. Baal HaBayit decides that enough is enough. "I WANT SILENCE!" he shouts, his face taking on a deep crimson hue. "THE NEXT ONE WHO MAKES NOISE IN HERE IS GOING TO GET IT!" he adds for good measure.

What happened? All the children did was act their age. Why did Mr. Baal HaBayit lose control?

The problem is that Mr. Baal HaBayit considers his will to be the final word, so he cannot handle the impudence of those who don't defer to his supremacy. *In other words, he considers himself G-d.*

Mr. Baal HaBayit does not stop to consider that perhaps Hashem willed that he wait a few minutes for his Shabbat seudah to be ready, or that Hashem ordained that his children should be noisy and boisterous, like all other normal children. HE wants quiet; HE wants his meal on time. HE was probably already insulted when he came home because the gabbai gave him chamishi instead of shishi, and because the guy sitting next to him in shul didn't greet him with the respect that HE deserves. Who is G-d in Mr. Baal HaBayit's mind? HE, himself.

This parable may be exaggerated; not all of us become upset over these sorts of things. But most of us have our own little pet peeves that vex us and cause us to lose control.

We may no longer have any passion to serve little graven images of hand-constructed G-ds, but many of us still engage in "I"olatry.

If "I" am so absolutely important that anyone who challenges my overblown image of myself makes me lose control, then I am serving an "I"dol, not Hashem.

The Jealousy Antidote

(Rabbi Frand from Torah.org)

"And you shall not covet your fellow's wife, you shall not desire your fellow's house, his field, his slave, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that belongs to your fellow" (5:18)

Perhaps one of the hardest commandments to understand — let alone fulfill — is Lo Tachmod, not to be jealous.

As Ibn Ezra asks (Shemot 20:14), how can the Torah command us not to feel an emotion that comes naturally when someone has something that we would like to have? When the neighbor redoes his house and builds a pool, how can a person be expected not to want to have a pool as well?

Ibn Ezra answers this question through a parable.

Imagine a commoner who visits the royal palace. As he is viewing the beautiful grounds, he sees the princess step outside in her royal garments. Though struck by her beauty, does he think for a moment, I want to marry her?

Most people wouldn't entertain that thought for a second. They realize that the king's daughter is out of their league. People desire something that they can conceivably have, not something that is totally out of reach.

The same should hold true for someone else's possessions, says Ibn Ezra. We should train ourselves to realize that since Hashem gave the pool to the neighbor, it is something that He wants the neighbor to have, not us. As such, it should not be within the realm of our desires.

The Ibn Ezra's approach has become the classical answer to this question, but Rav Simchah Zissel Brodie derives another explanation from a Ramban.

The Ramban cites the following Midrash: The Ten Commandments are all repeated in Parashat Kedoshim in some form or another. For instance, the verse, "Ani Hashem Elokechem" (Vayikra 19:3) corresponds to the first commandment, and "Veilokei maseichah lo sa'asu lachem — and molten G-ds shall you not make for yourself" (ibid. v. 4) corresponds to the second commandment.

The parallel to Lo Tachmod, says Ramban cryptically, is "Ve'ahavta lere'acha kamocho — Love your fellow as yourself" (ibid. v. 18).

Rav Simchah Zissel explains the correlation between the two.

Did you ever hear a father or mother wish that their children would have less material possessions just because they had less when they were at the same stage in life? No. Parents are thrilled when their children have more than they did. Why? Because they love their children as much as they love themselves — if not more — so they are happy when their children can afford anything they want.

If we would truly fulfill ve'ahavta lere'acha kamocho and love every Jew as we love ourselves, says Rav Simchah Zissel, we wouldn't feel jealous of them for owning possessions that we cannot afford. We would be happy for them, just as we are happy when our own children have more than we do.

The Easy Commandment

(Rabbi Frand)

Honor your father and mother, as the L-rd your G-d has commanded you, so that you may live long. (Devarim 5:16)

Why should we honor our fathers and mothers? The Torah gives us one reason in Parashat Shemot

(20:12), "So that you may live long." In Parashat Vaet'chanan, however, the Torah gives an additional reason, "As the L-rd your G-d has

commanded you." What is the significance of this additional phrase?

The Meshech Chachmah refers to the Talmud Yerushalmi that considers honoring parents an "easy commandment." Every person understands that debts have to be repaid. If someone lends you \$100,000 when you need it, you would be only too happy to repay the money once you have enough of your own. It would not be a hard thing to do.

By the same token, every person also understands that he has a moral obligation to repay his debt of gratitude to his parents. After all, the cost of raising a child must be at least between \$100,000 and \$200,000. Not to mention the time, effort and energy parents invest in their children. Therefore, the least people can do is honor their parents. It is not a hard thing to make such a small payment on such a large debt.

The Torah tells us here that this is not the proper motivation for honoring parents. It is not the self-evident obligation to make at least a small payment on a debt owed the parents. It is an obligation incumbent on us solely because "the L-rd your G-d has commanded you" to do so.

The Torah waited until Parashat Vaet'chanan to make this point, because it becomes most clear after forty years in the desert. During those years, raising children was easier than it ever was, before or since. They did not have to be fed. There was manna from heaven. They did not need to be given to drink. There was water from Miriam's Well. They did not need new shoes and clothing all the time. Nothing ever wore out. Most likely they didn't need orthodontic braces either, because life in the desert was paradise. And still, the Torah demanded that parents be honored. Clearly, the obligation was to obey Hashem's commandment rather than repay a debt of gratitude. By the time the Jewish people had lived through the era of the desert, they could relate to the mitzvah of honoring parents as an independent obligation.

How far does this go? How much do you have to do for your parents? The Talmud responds (Kiddushin 31a) to this question with the famous story about a non-Jew from Ashkelon by the name of Dama bar Netinah.

The Sages once needed a stone for the Urim v'Tumim, and they heard that Dama had exactly the stone they needed. A delegation came to see him and offer to pay him a princely sum for the stone. The stone was in a strongbox, with the key under his father's pillow. Dama did not disturb him.

"I cannot help you," he told the Sages. "My father is sleeping, and I wouldn't disturb his sleep."

The Sages left.

A year later, a perfect red heifer, suitable for a parah adumah, was born in Dama's herd. The Sages came to purchase it.

"How much do you want for it?"

"I know that you would give me any price I ask," he replied. "But I only want the amount of money I lost by not waking my father last year."

This story establishes the parameters of the mitzvah of honoring parents. The Talmud uses this story to establish the parameters of human nature.

As parents get older, they can become querulous and demanding. They can test the patience of their children. Sometimes, honoring parents under such circumstances can take a lot of patience and forbearance. Is there a limit to such patience? How much patience can be expected of a person? Is there a point where a person is allowed to run out of patience and be exempt from this mitzvah?

This is what the story about Dama bar Netinah teaches us. The Sages were offering him a huge sum of money for the single stone they needed for the Urim v'Tumim. He knew that if he could only get the key, the money would be his. What thoughts must have gone through his mind? Maybe I'll make a little noise and he'll wake up. Maybe I'll slide my hand under the pillow very slowly so that I'll be able to get the key without waking him up. He must have been very tempted. But he didn't give in. He was able to honor his father even under such circumstances. This was the extent of what human nature is capable.

It follows, therefore, that if Dama bar Netinah could have the forbearance to forgo such a huge sum of money and allow his father to sleep, certainly a descendant of Avraham, Yitzchak

and Yaakov can find it in himself to honor his parents under any and all circumstances.

Double Sin, Double Comfort

(Rabbi Zev Leff)

They sinned doubly, as it says, "Yerushalayim has sinned a sin." And they were stricken doubly, as it says, "She has received double for her sins." And she will be comforted doubly, as it says, "Be comforted, be comforted, my people" (Yalkut Eichah 1118).

This Midrash can be understood in light of the comments of Ibn Ezra and Sforno on the concluding verses of our sedrah: "When your son will ask you in the future — What are the testimonies and statues and judgments, which Hashem our G-d has commanded you? — and you shall tell your son we were slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt, and Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand...and Hashem commanded us to do all these statutes for our good all the days, to give us life as this day" (Devarim 6:20-24).

Ibn Ezra explains that the son's question is not what the Mitzvot are, but why we were given a yoke different than all other peoples. The Torah's answer is that we must have trust that the Mitzvot are for our own good because G-d saved us from slavery by taking us out of Egypt. Sforno elaborates that while the benefit of the Mitzvot is predominantly in the World to Come, they also bring us life in this world.

Hashem introduces Himself at the beginning of the Ten Commandments as the G-d Who took us out of Egypt, and not as the G-d Who created heaven and earth. This reminds us that just as the redemption from Egypt was for our benefit, so too, the Mitzvot are for our good, and not for G-d's sake. Though, as Chazal say, Mitzvot were not given to us to enjoy, but rather as a yoke around our necks, the purpose of that yoke is, in the final analysis, our good.

The Haggadah attributes the Torah's question here to the wise son. The answer given to him in the Haggadah is that we do not eat after the Korban Pesach is all that is in our mouths at the moment of redemption. In the end, it is the

benefit from Mitzvot, such as eating the Korban Pesach that remains with us.

The Torah begins with Hashem's loving kindness — His clothing Adam and Chavah — and ends with His loving kindness — burying Moshe. The entire foundation of Torah is chesed — G-d's total giving to those who serve Him. The Torah is, in its entirety, an expression of G-d's desire to do good for us. It is not an imposition on our life but rather a framework within to earn eternal reward for our own good.

Delving deeper, Torah begins with the kindness of covering man's humiliation, his physical body. It gives us the means to utilize that body in G-d's service and thereby purify and elevate it. Moshe was the culmination of this process of elevation to being G-d-like. He transformed his physical body into something so holy that only Hashem could bury it and put it away until the resurrection of the dead. That is the very essence of Torah — to remove the shame of pure physicality by elevating the physical to G-dliness.

When one sins, he actually commits a double crime: the first is rebellion against G-d' the second against himself in his disregard of the benefit from the mitzvah. Hence the punishment is also double. Not only does Hashem punish him for his rebellion, just as a parent punishes a child to discipline him and guide him back to the right path. He also robs himself of the great benefit Hashem so much desired to bestow upon him.

Consequently the comfort will also be double. The ultimate benefit will finally be realized, and, in addition, we will understand that the punishment itself was for our own good to prevent us from losing our eternal reward.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Not All Problems Can be Solved

The key is to learn how to manage them.
(By Emuna Braverman)

When my husband brings groups of American professors to Israel, they bring that American can-do spirit with them (well, they used to anyway). With minimal knowledge of the situation (my apologies to said professors) they come with the attitude that the problems of the Middle East are actually quite simple and could probably be solved before dinner.

They are disabused of this notion by many of their experiences but they are also confronted with a completely different attitude towards life's challenges. "In Israel", they are told, "We don't seek to solve our problems; we seek to manage them."

This flies in the face of a certain national spirit and expectations, but if we can move past that, I think we could see the wisdom in those words and apply them to many situations. I recently read an article by two female professors suggesting that the work-life conflict can't really be solved. This is an extremely freeing idea. We've all experienced what I call the stress versus guilt dilemma. If we're home with our kids, we feel stress (and that was before corona!). If we're away from them (either for work or even for a much-deserved day at the spa), we feel guilty.

That's because we think we should be able to solve this conflict, if only we were better mothers, if only we had more wisdom, more insight, more help in the house... But some problems are just not soluble. They can simply be managed. And this may be the most important insight of all.

Life is full of challenges. We tend to think of them as an obstacle race; I jump over this hurdle and then I'm on to the next. We've solved the first challenge and are ready to confront the ensuing ones. But, like the professors in Israel, if we are open to it, we may discover that many of our challenges can't be solved, they're not going away – and we need to learn to live with them, dare I say, manage them.

The growth opportunity is not in finding the solution but in discovering the courage to live with the situation, day in and day out. If you have a chronic disease, if you have a special needs child, if you have a disabled spouse, to cite a few

obvious examples, there is no end to the struggle. There is no solution, pat or otherwise. The real challenge lies in learning to live with it, in making peace with it, in finding joy in it.

While there are parts of me that certainly admire that American bravado, I think it does us a disservice on a personal level. I think it has led to unrealistic expectations of how our lives should play out. I think it has allowed us to miss the forest for the trees, the end goal for the experience.

Every day we wake up and confront the challenges of our lives. And even if some of them are possibly "solved", new ones arise, some with easy solutions, some with difficult ones and some with none at all. We have high expectations of ourselves, we may feel extremely frustrated when we can't find a solution to our problems.

It's possible we were just looking in the wrong place. But it's also probable that we are facing a situation that has no solution, a challenge that we have to manage rather than solve, an ongoing growth opportunity – a place where, as they say, the gifts just keep coming!

A change of attitude and expectations can give us the strength we need to deal with our seemingly constant tests.

I remember reading a review of a book by a prominent professor of political science with ties to Washington. The tenor of the book was one of constant frustration. Because of her challenges with her children, she couldn't fulfill her career obligations the way she would have liked to. Her solution? Better government-provided child-care. My solution? Give up your unrealistic expectations of "having it all" and recognize that we can't solve this situation - but we can manage it.

I think this is an important key to happiness. I just wish I'd known it when my kids were younger...

Regis Philbin and the Importance of Kindness

A tribute to the celebrity reminds us what really counts in life. (By Emuna Braverman)

I'm sure I'm not alone when I say that my favorite writer for the *Wall Street Journal* is Jason Gay who is responsible for the sports beat. It's not just that he seems to have perspective on the importance (or lack thereof!) of sports. It's not just that he brings a sense of humor to all of his columns. I think it's that he brings real humanity to his pieces.

I was particularly struck by his recent tribute to the late Regis Philbin. "I could go on about his career and accomplishments, as many others have, but I've reached the point in my own life when what I remember most about someone is whether or not they were kind." (His beautiful tribute goes on to mention the kindness of Mr. Philbin.)

I don't know how old Mr. Gay is (probably young enough that he'd rather I'd didn't call him Mister!) but I'm impressed that he's already learned this lesson. It takes many of us a lot longer. And some never learn it at all.

We get caught up in so many other qualities or externalities. We value popularity and fame and who they know. We value the right zip code and high-powered jobs and impressive colleges attended. We may like people who are gregarious or smart or the life of the party or even perhaps those who are quiet and reserved. The latter qualities aren't necessarily bad; they just aren't necessarily good either. They can be used in the service of growth and connecting to G-d – or not.

Kindness stands out. Kindness isn't neutral; it reflects a person who is focused on others as opposed to him or herself; who prefers to give rather than take. And, frankly, it's often not in the first sentence of a celebrity's obituary (or anyone else's for that matter).

But it certainly should be. It reflects a life well-lived and time well-used. It shows appreciation for the gifts received and a desire to share the good. It speaks well of the deceased and of the writer. Both had to appreciate the importance of kindness. Both had to step outside their worlds where kindness is not necessarily the primary virtue focused on, where perhaps a virtue isn't what's focused on at all. Both had to understand the true foundation of human relationships and friendships.

It's hard for all of us. We get caught up in many other goals. We get distracted by material needs or accomplishments. We get caught up in academic advancement and career achievements. We like people who are fun and keep the conversation alive. We get vicarious pleasure in

the company of the rich and famous. We can lose ourselves.

But in all of life, and especially when the chips are down, it's the people who are kind who count the most, it's the people who are kind whose actions reverberate throughout the years. We can still remember the people who were there for us during some of our darkest times – who sent over dinner, who took us out for a drink or a late night run to the pharmacy, who lent us a shoulder to cry on (who realized that we needed a shoulder to cry on). Their kindness lasts forever.

I didn't know Regis Philbin. I'm grateful to Jason Gay for giving me a glimpse beneath the surface, and I'm even more grateful to him for reminding me once again that kindness is what really counts. Perhaps more so now than ever.

How to Give your Kids the Gift of Confidence

If I'm confident that my child can handle a situation, they will confidently deal with it.

When my oldest daughter cheerfully travelled through her first two years of school, I wasn't surprised. After all, she's smart, industrious, beautiful and cute. Her teachers loved her because she was well behaved, and her classmates loved her sweet, giving nature.

But then in third grade, her teacher gravely told me that my daughter has social issues. Though it had seemed that she was happy amongst her classmates, they were now at the age at which they were pairing off as best friends and my daughter was left out of the playing field.

This was sobering information. My daughter had social problems!

Once the teacher pointed out my daughter's problems, I saw its manifestations all over. My daughter *didn't* have a "best friend." She wasn't invited to play at friends very often and she preferred staying at home and reading a book than playing outside with the girls.

I tried everything I could to make her problems go away. I got advice from experts, encouraged her to invite friends over to our house, made sure she gave out the most expensive snacks at class parties, and even suggested how she spend her

recess – she should obviously play whatever the most popular girls were playing.

Third and fourth grade were pretty miserable. My daughter tried inviting friends but was often rejected and she spent recess all alone, wandering around the school. She didn't even know how to go over and say hello when she happened to meet a classmate.

In the summer between fourth and fifth grade, our house hopped with visiting family and friends. At some point, an amazing realization hit me: my daughter was interacting beautifully with all the children. My daughter with a social issue was acting as if she didn't have any problems at all.

Fifth grade started differently that year. I retired from my job as my daughter's social director. I didn't involve myself in almost anything that happened amongst her classmates. Instead, every time I saw her disappointed about a friend who said no or a trip that she wasn't invited to, I imagined her as she was in the summer: socially strong and confident.

She got the message pretty quickly.

She knew, just as if I had told her explicitly, that she was capable of dealing with the girls in her class. She didn't have to worry about her social limitations – because she didn't have any.

My daughter's confidence was hinged on my confidence.

It took a little bit of time, a little bit of trying and failing, until she tried and succeeded in finding the girls that she enjoys spending time with. Today she has found her personal preferred balance of friend time and family time and is a confident, contributing member of her class.

The only thing that changed between fourth and fifth grade was her confidence, and her confidence was hinged on my confidence.

When I was worried about her "issues," I subconsciously told her that she had social problems. Now, if Mommy thinks that she has social problems, she had zero confidence in her ability make friends and so failed at social interactions! But once Mommy told her that she would make a great friend, she was enthusiastic to try.

The experience taught me an invaluable lesson that I have applied to countless situations since then. If I'm confident that my child can handle a situation, they *will* confidently deal with it.

When my son complained that a class study contest was much too hard for the class and was on a level way above anything they were used to, I didn't call the teacher. I didn't involve the principal. I didn't even call other mothers to find out if their sons were doing the contest.

Instead, I smiled at my son and asked him what he was doing to succeed. It took a few days of complaints for my message to seep in – but he eventually got it: Mommy thinks that I can succeed at the contest. My confidence spawned his own confidence and he eventually buckled down to study and shot to the top of the contest.

When my little sons ask for a screwdriver to fix the door handle, I don't laugh. I'm confident that they can fix things, and they do. My five year old is much more adept with a screwdriver than I am. (If I only had more confidence in my own abilities!)

I'm not suggesting that you ignore your children. Sometimes they do have problems that need your intervention (and please make sure they don't try anything dangerous). Sometimes it *is* worthwhile to ask for guidance or speak to the teacher, but even when you're doing so, minimize the problem and focus on your child's ability to overcome it. It's possible that this child needs to learn conversation skills, but you have full confidence that he will learn them and apply them without difficulty.

And of course, as our confident children confront the challenges they face, we're there to give them advice. We do have life experience and wisdom that can help them out. But we help them from the sidelines, because they're fully capable of dealing with the situation on their own.

We watch from the sidelines, but we give them a colossal gift: the knowledge that the most significant people in their lives – their parents – have confidence that they can succeed.

And if they fail at first, this confidence will give them the strength to try again.

This confidence is one of the greatest gifts you can give your children because it's not the smartest, most talented or most beautiful kids who succeed in life. It's the kids who are confident that they can.

DAILY HALACHA

Halachot of Keriat Hatorah

(Daily Halacha)

Where May an Aliya Begin and End?

The text of the Torah is divided into paragraphs, which are called Parashiyot. A Parasha is referred to as either "Petuha" or "Setuma," depending on the size of the empty space separating it from the next paragraph.

Halacha forbids the one reading the Torah from beginning an Aliya within three verses of the beginning of a Parasha, or end an Aliya within three verses of the end of a Parasha. Meaning, if he begins an Aliya in the middle of a Parasha, he must ensure that there are at least three verses in the Parasha before the place where he begins, and if he ends an Aliya in the middle of a Parasha, there must be at least three verses remaining until the end of the Parasha. The Sages enacted this prohibition in order to prevent the misconception that an Aliya may consist of fewer than three verses. If the reader begins an Aliya within three verses of the beginning of a Parasha, somebody who enters the synagogue at that point might think that the previous Aliya consisted of only two verses. He will not realize that the previous Aliya had started before the beginning of this Parasha. Likewise, if the reader ends an Aliya within three verses of the end of a Parasha, somebody who leaves at that point might think that the next Aliya will consist of only two verses, not realizing that the reader will begin the Aliya a verse or several verses earlier than the point at which this Aliya ended. In order to avoid this misconception, it was established that an Aliya cannot begin within three verses of the beginning of a Parasha, or end within three verses of the end of a Parasha.

If, however, the reader made a mistake and began an Aliya within three verses of the beginning of a Parasha, or ended within three verses of the end of the Parasha, the reading is perfectly valid.

This applies even to the Maftir reading, even though it is the last Aliya. Thus, for example, Parashat Ekeb concludes with a paragraph that consists of only four verses, and the reader should read all four verses for Maftir.

The exception to this rule is the first Aliya, the Aliya of Kohen. For example, the custom among Syrian Jewish communities is to end the first Aliya of Parashat Tesaveh with the words "Le'chabod U'l'tifaret," after just two verses after the beginning of that paragraph. (The Aliya begins with two verses in the previous paragraph.) This is permissible, since it is the first Aliya and everybody knows that the reading began at the beginning of Parashat Tesaveh, and not at the beginning of this paragraph.

Every Aliya should both begin and end on a positive note, meaning, with content that is positive and encouraging, and not with something negative. It should be noted that descriptions of enemy nations flourishing are considered "negative" in this regard, and descriptions of enemy nations' downfall are considered "positive."

The division of Aliyot that is printed in Humashim is not binding in any way. This division was not made in the time of Moshe Rabbenu, or even during the time of Hazal, and was introduced later. As such, we are not bound by this system. It is entirely permissible to divide the Aliyot differently, and in some instances it is even preferable to do so. For this reason, it is permissible to begin an Aliya within three verses of the beginning of the Aliya printed in the Humash, and to end an Aliya within three verses of the end of the Aliya printed in the Humash. This is the ruling of Hacham David Yosef, in Halacha Berura. Although the Hafetz Haim (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, 1839-1933), in Sha'ar Ha'siyun (138:1), ruled that this should not be done, because people mistakenly afford Halachic significance to the conventional division of Aliyot, Hacham David notes that Sephardic authorities did not accept this ruling.

Summary: It is forbidden to begin an Aliya within three verses of the beginning of a paragraph, or to end an Aliya within three verses of the end of a paragraph. Nevertheless, if this was mistakenly done, the reading is perfectly valid. Every Aliya should begin and end with content that is positive and encouraging. The division of Aliyot that is printed in Humashim is not Halachically binding

KIDZ CORNER

INTERESTING MIDRASH

(from Torah Tots)

HOMELAND SECURITY – JEWISH STYLE

In this week's *Parsha*, we read about the *mitzva* of teaching our children *Torah*; the *mitzva* of *Tefillin*; and the *mitzva* of *Mezuzah*.

"And these words [the *Torah*], which I command you this day, shall be in your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your children... And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand and... between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the posts of your house and your gates." (Va'etchanan 6:4-9)

On the doorposts of every Jewish home, you will find a little rectangular case. Inside that case is a *Mezuzah*. It's there because the *Torah* commands us to affix a *Mezuzah* on each doorpost in our homes.

What is a *Mezuzah*?

In brief, the *Mezuzah* consists of two passages of the *Torah* written (in Hebrew, of course) on one *klaf* (piece of parchment). The two passages are, "*Shema Yisrael*" and "*Vehaya*" (*Devarim*, [Deuteronomy] 6:4-9 and 11:13-21).

The parchment is then rolled into a scroll, wrapped in paper or plastic, usually inserted into a hard-plastic or metal case, and affixed on a slant to the upper part of the right hand door-post in a Jewish home. A *Mezuzah* must be placed on each door-post of the house (except the bathrooms).

The writing of the *Mezuzah* must be done by a *Sofer* (Scribe) in the same manner and script as a *Torah*. It is important to remember that the *Mezuzah* is not the casing, but the written parchment. It is ironic that some people will buy an expensive case, but overlook the fact that the actual *Mezuzah* is not kosher.

The essence of the *mitzva* of *Mezuzah* is the concept of the Oneness of G-d. The very first verse written on the *Mezuzah* is the *Shema*: "*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokaynu Hashem Echad* - (Hear Yisrael, - *Hashem* is our G-d, - *Hashem* is the One and Only)"

It is customary, upon entering or leaving a residence, to touch the *Mezuzah*. This reverence acknowledges our belief in the "*Shema Yisrael*" the Jewish declaration of faith, which expresses the unity of G-d, the duty of loving and serving Him with our whole being, and our obligation to observe the *Mitzvot* in and out of the home.

Q. What is the meaning of the word *Mezuzah*?

A. "*Mezuzah*" means "door post" for the *Mezuzah* is placed on the doorpost. In olden days, an awl or other tool was used to gouge out a trough in the doorpost of the entryway to one's house. The scroll was inserted into the gouged-out space and plastered over. Today, it is customary to encase the *Mezuzah* scroll in a decorative case.

In addition, the Hebrew word "*Mezuzot*," found in this *Parsha*, is written: *mem, zayen, zayen, vav, tav*. If we rearrange the letters we can spell the two words, "*zaz mave!*" which means "pushing away death."

Thus, a kosher *Mezuzah* acts as protection even to the extent of saving from death! In *Tehillim* (Psalms) *David Hamelech* (King David) says, "*Hashem* shall protect your exit and your entry from now and forever." Our Sages say that this applies to the *Mezuzah*. It acts as a shield and protects people, not only when they are inside the home but also when they go out.

In time, the letters on a *Mezuzah* may fade or crack, which renders the *Mezuzah* not kosher. Thus, it must be checked at least twice in seven years.

Q. Why is the letter "*Shin*" written on the outside of the *Mezuzah* cover?

A. "*Shin*" stands for the word "*Shad-eye*" which is one of *Hashem's* names. The word "*Shad-eye*" is spelled; *shin, daled, yud*. These three letter serves as an acronym for the words, "*Shomer Dalte Yisrael*" - "*Hashem watches over the doors of Israel.*"

The Talmud says that a proper *Mezuza* offers protection of the home and tells the following wonderful story:

A special friendship existed between King Antoninus and Rabbi Yehudah *Hanasi* (known as *Rebbi*). Once King Antoninus sent Rabbi Yehudah *Hanasi* a precious stone as a gift. In return Rabbi Yehudah *Hanasi* sent him a *Mezuza*.

Antoninus was puzzled: "I sent you such an expensive gift and you send me a piece of parchment?"

To which Rabbi Yehudah *Hanasi* replied, "Your gift I will always have to guard to make sure that no one will steal it. But my gift to you, the *Mezuza*, will watch over you and protect you at all times!"

Keeping the Commandments of the *Torah* always brings blessings, and the *Talmud* says that keeping the Commandment of *Mezuza* brings long life and is a protection for the home.

The following true story speaks for itself.

A (*Mezuza*) Case in Point

By Moshe Schapiro (Yated 8/24/00 Reprinted with Permission)

Dr. Yaakov Orlean runs the blood bank in Bnei Brak's Maayanei Hayeshua Hospital. He is originally from the United States, and until not too long ago, he lived and worked in California.

One day he paid a visit to a well-known *sofer Stam* (scribe) in Bnei Brak and ordered three exquisite *Mezuza* parchments. In fact, the source of this story is the *Sofer Stam*, who told it to Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein.

Dr. Orlean mentioned that he had some business to take care of in the United States and that he would be giving the *Mezuzot* as gifts to three former colleagues from California.

A few days later Dr. Orlean came to pick up the three *Mezuzot*. He carefully inserted each into a

tastefully designed *Mezuza* cover and packed all three in his suitcase.

The first thing he did upon his arrival was drive over to his former colleagues homes and catch up on old times. They all lived on the same street, so it was very convenient for him to visit each of them. All three were thrilled to see him again, but their reactions upon receiving his gift were totally different.

The first doctor, Jack, was horrified when he finished unwrapping the gift paper and realized what it was he was holding in his hands.

"Why, thank you very much," Jack said, recovering somewhat from the initial shock. "A *Mezuza*! How unique. Yes, well, I will keep it right here in my desk drawer. Who knows? It may come in handy as a paperweight."

Dr. Orlean was not pleased.

"A paperweight?" He asked in astonishment. "Jack, for crying out loud, this is a *Mezuza*! You're supposed to attach it to a doorpost. You know as in, front door?"

"On my front door?" Jack asked with equal astonishment. "You've got to be kidding. Everyone will know I'm Jewish! No, no, that's out of the question. But thank you so much anyway. It's such a nice gift."

Dr. Orlean said goodbye and then strolled halfway down the block to colleague number two - Steven.

His reaction to the special gift from Israel was less severe.

"Oh, how nice, a *Mezuza*," Steven said after unwrapping the gift. "Just what I always wanted!" And he proceeded to slip it into his desk drawer.

"You know," Dr. Orlean, said in his tactful way, "the purpose of a *Mezuza* is to hang it on a doorframe. Actually, come to think of it, the bronze casing goes very well with the color scheme of your front entrance."

Steven didn't look thrilled. He agreed to post the *Mezuza* on a room in his house, but said he couldn't quite imagine posting it on the front door.

Dr. Orlean, after failing twice, made a third attempt and visited his friend a few houses down the street.

The third doctor, Michael, unwrapped his gift and was very excited to find the *Mezuza* and its beautiful case. He kissed the *Mezuza*, caressed the case and reveled in the fact that his gift came from the Jewish homeland.

Then, without being told to post it, Michael stood up, asked for the *Bracha* (blessing) and affixed the *Mezuza* on his front door.

Dr. Orlean was very proud, and considering his previous experiences, more than a little surprised at the doctor's reaction. But not wanting to undo the good deed that had been done, he decided not to press the issue.

Upon his return home to *Eretz Yisrael*, Dr. Orlean heard about a terrible earthquake that had hit California just days after he left. Numerous homes had sustained damage, and some had been demolished.

Dr. Orlean couldn't help but wonder what had happened to his three friends. When he found out their fate, he was astonished by the news.

Massive winds had ravaged Jack's house, leaving it completely destroyed. Nothing remained standing except the foundation.

Steven's house suffered immense damage, save for one room - the one where the *Mezuza* hung.

And Michael's house, situated along the same street as Dr. Orlean's other two colleague's homes, stood fully intact.

Kid'z Korner (Revach)

Serving G-d With Love (Adapted from *Meshalim Ve-gam Sipurim Le-no'ar ule-kol Beit Yisra'el*, p. 57)

"You shall love the Eternal your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5).

Two Well-Dressed Friends

Two friends, both well-dressed, but what a difference! Jack works in a high-profile position in a prestigious firm. He has a well-stocked wardrobe, yet he does not get very much pleasure from his many suits. Jack would prefer to walk around in a casual shirts and blue jeans, but he knows that if he didn't wear the finest suits

and the sharpest ties, he could end up losing his job.

Charles, on the other, loves the feel and look of elegant clothing. His closet is filled with dozens of fancy suits, ties, fine shirts and dress shoes. Charles loves shopping for new clothes and wearing the latest style.

Both friends wear expensive clothing, but we can see clearly the difference in their attitudes towards clothes if they were to meet a famous clothes designer.

Jack, who wears fancy clothes only because his job, will feel a certain sense of resentment when meeting the designer. If the designer had not invented these clothes, there would be no need to buy them and wear them!

Charles, on the other hand, would be excited and even grateful to have the opportunity to meet the person who designed such wonderful articles of clothing. For Charles, this person enabled him express himself with beautiful suits.

Love and Fear

The difference between Jack and Charles is the difference between a person who serves G-d out of fear and one who serves G-d with love.

Those whose service is based on *Yirah*, fear of Heaven, will feel a certain resentment that they must carry the burden of Torah and mitzvot. Like Jack and his business suits, they keep mitzvot out of a sense of duty and obligation. They want to do the right thing, but they would be a lot happier if there were fewer rules and laws.

Those who serve G-d with love, on the other hand, perform mitzvot with a true feeling of gratitude. They are delighted with the opportunity to fulfill G-d's Will, and are appreciative of each mitzvah. They see the Torah as a way to connect to G-d, a vehicle that enables their inner soul express its love for its Creator.

Rav Huna taught that a scholar who fails to recite a blessing before studying Torah will not merit to have children who are Torah scholars. Why is this?

When we recite a blessing before Torah study, we indicate our appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity to study G-d's Torah and

perform His mitzvot. Only a person with this positive attitude will succeed in passing on these values to the next generation.

Not Exactly a Photo Opportunity - Rav Shlomo Zalman and The Kopichnitzer Rebbe

The Admor Rav Avraham Yeshoshua Heshel of Kopichnitz, z'tl was a peer of many of the Gedolim of the past century. He was close with Rav Moshe Feinstein, z'tl, who lived in his neighborhood - the lower East Side. He also became close with R' Yosef Shlomo Kahanaman when he traveled to America to raise funds for his Torah institutions in Eretz Yisrael. This friendship eventually resulted in Rav Kahanaman matching up Rav Avraham Yeshoshua Heshel's granddaughter with the son of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, z'tl.

When the Admor of Kopichnitz arrived in Eretz Yisrael to attend the wedding, he met Rav Shlomo Zalman for the first time, and developed a warm connection with him. After the wedding, when he was ready to return to America, the Admor went to R' Shlomo Zalman to bid him farewell. When they heard a honk from outside, Rav Shlomo Zalman accompanied the Admor to the street. However, it turned out that it wasn't the car which was taking the Admor to the airport. Meanwhile, Rav Shlomo Zalman sent someone to bring a chair for the Admor, and urged him to sit. However, the Admor refused to sit down.

The Admor explained, "When I was young I once heard a wonderful yesod from my father, my teacher, the Admor R' Yitzchak Meir of Kopichnitz. Before you take any action, imagine that a photographer is standing opposite you, and photographing your every move. Take out the pictures and examine them. If you're satisfied with your appearance- you can carry out what you intended. If not -refrain!"

"I carried out this cheshbon, and said to myself. 'How will I be able to look at a picture of myself sitting, with Rav Shlomo Zalman standing next to me! (Chayim Sheyash Bahem)

Not Your Ordinary Highway Rest Stop

The Admor of Strovkov appeared one day during WWII at the entrance to a bunker in Pressburg, Slovakia, where a group of Jew were in hiding.

He requested to be allowed to join them. The Jews told him that they would give him permission to join them only if he promised them that they would all be saved. The Rebbe promised.

Towards the end of the war, Rav Michael Ber Weissmandel, who was also in that bunker, bribed a German officer to transport all the residents of the bunker to the Swiss border in an army trunk. The successful bribery was in itself an incredible miracle since it would have meant a certain death for the officer if he was caught.

On the way to the Swiss border, the Strovkover Rebbe asked the German officer to stop the truck for a few minutes since he needed to take care of his personal needs. The officer refused, saying that if he would stop the truck on the side of the road they were liable to be caught. Nazis were constantly patrolling the area since it was the known path of escape to Switzerland. The Jews on the truck also tried to convince the Rebbe to retract his request, but the Rebbe stood his ground and insisted on getting off the truck. He informed the other passengers that they were in no way obligated to wait for him, and they should feel free to continue on the way without him.

The German officer finally stopped the truck, and the Rebbe disappeared into the forest. The other passengers waited, tense and frightened, with the life or death fear of being caught at any minute over their heads. When the Rebbe finally emerged from the forest and returned to the truck, he informed the passengers that he needed to wash netilas yadayim, and he could not continue traveling until water was found.

The other passengers already didn't know what to think, and wondered why the Rebbe was not being considerate of them and of the grave danger facing them at every moment. However, they had no choice but to try to fulfill the Rebbe's request, since no even considered leaving the Rebbe and traveling without him. Someone went out to search for water, and after the Rebbe had washed his hands- they continued along the way -after a delay of half an hour.

Eventually, they reached the border safely, and discovered something shocking - something that made them very happy about their half hour

delay. The Swiss soldiers told them that a half hour before they reached the border, there had been a heavy tank attack by the Americans and they had blown up every street leading to the border. Many people had lost their lives in the explosions...

All the Jews who had been in the bunker with the Rebbe survived the war. (Alenu Leshabeah)

POUR LES FRANCOPHONES

(Rav Itshak Nabet)

La Leçon du 15 AV

La paracha de la semaine, Vaétranan, s'ouvre sur les phrases suivantes : " *A cet instant, Moché rabénou implora l'Eternel en disant : Hachem, Tu as permis à ton serviteur de voir Ta grandeur et Ta main puissante, car il n'existe aucune force dans le ciel ou sur la Terre capable d'accomplir des actes comme Toi. Permets- moi s'il Te plait de passer ce Jourdain et de voir ce bon pays... Alors Hachem refusa ma demande et me répondit : Ça suffit, ne rajoute pas de prière à ce sujet.*"

Nos sages enseignent que la valeur numérique de Vaétranane est de 515. La Torah utilisa cette expression afin de nous apprendre que Moché fit 515 prières afin de rentrer en Eretz Israël. Hachem fut forcé de l'arrêter, nous dit le Midrach, car s'il avait effectué une prière de plus, Hachem aurait été obligé de le laisser entrer en terre sainte.

La première question que nous devons poser est la suivante : Pourquoi, lorsqu'Hachem demanda à Aaron Acohen de mourir, celui-ci accepta-t-il sans prier ? Ne désirait-il pas lui aussi accomplir les Mitsvot liées à la Terre d'Israël ?

Ensuite, la Torah nous dit "A cet instant, Moche pria..."Il existe de nombreux commentaires afin d'expliquer de quel instant il s'agit. Le Pné Yéochua explique que Moche Rabenou commença à prier le 15 av. Comme nous le savons, Moché Rabenou mourut le 7 Adar. Du 15 av au 15 Chvat, il y a 6 mois, 3

de 30 jours et 3 de 29 jours. Ce qui nous donne 177 jours. Si on ajoute les 23 jours du 15 inclus au 7 inclus, cela nous donne 200 jours. Si on enlève les 28 chabatot, cela fait 172 jours pendant lesquels Moché Rabénou pria, trois fois par jour. Ce qui nous fait 516 prières. Or Moche Rabenou commença le 15 av au matin, donc cela nous donne les 515 prières pour entrer en Eretz Israël. Si ce calcul paraît séduisant, nous devons comprendre pourquoi Moche Rabenou commença à prier le 15 av...

Enfin, il est écrit dans la dernière Michna du traité Taanit (26, b) au nom de Rabi Chimon ben Gamliel : " Il n'y a pas eu de bons jours pour Israël comme le 15 av et Yom Kippour." A priori, comment comparer le jour de Kippour, le jour le plus saint de l'année, avec le jour du 15 av ?

Nous pouvons trouver les réponses à ces questions dans le livre Imré Chamaï. La guémara, dans ce traité (30, b), demandes-en quoi le 15 av fut un bon jour pour Israël. Une des réponses apportées au nom de Rabi Yohanan fut que ce jour-là, la génération du désert arrêta de mourir. Rappelez-vous : après avoir pleuré le 9 av pour ne pas rentrer en Terre Sainte, Hachem avait juré que cette génération de 20 à 60 ans ne verrait pas Eretz Israël. Ainsi, chaque année, le 9 av, tous les hommes qui avaient failli lors de la faute des explorateurs creusaient un trou. Puis ils disaient aDi-u à leur famille, demandaient pardon à Hachem et allaient se coucher. Au matin, Moché Rabénou disait : " sortez de vos caveaux." Chaque année, 15 000 hommes ne se levaient pas.

Les années passèrent. La quarantième année, il ne restait plus que 15 000 hommes de cette génération. Au matin, Moche Rabénou était sûr de ne plus voir personne se lever. Et pourtant, à la surprise générale, les 15 000 hommes se levèrent. Alors Moche Rabénou déduisit qu'il avait dû se tromper dans le décompte des mois. Ainsi, le soir suivant, chacun redit aDi-u à sa famille...Et encore une fois, les 15000 se levèrent. Toute la semaine, les derniers fautifs de cette génération dormirent dans leur trou. Le 15av, ils virent la pleine lune et comprirent

qu'ils ne s'étaient pas trompés dans leurs calculs. Le décret avait été annulé.

Et pourtant, Hachem avait juré de ne pas laisser entrer un de ces fautifs...

Le R' Rozemblum chlita explique que chaque année, les hommes qui allaient dormir dans ces trous demandaient pardon à Hachem et le suppliaient de ne pas mourir. Mais au fond, ils se disaient : pourquoi est-ce moi qui mourrais cette année, je suis encore jeune et puis je n'ai pas vraiment pleuré. Ou encore il y a une chance sur 20, ou 30 ou 40 que ce soit mon tour...Donc les gens demandaient pardon, suppliaient Hachem, mais pas du fond du cœur.

Cependant la dernière année, il n'y avait plus d'issue possible. Chacun des 15 000 savait qu'il était condamné. Ainsi, tous pleurèrent toute la nuit, firent Téhouva sincèrement, et réussirent alors à annuler la punition. Désormais, nous pouvons répondre aux questions posées. Aaron et Moché ne pensaient pas que l'on pouvait changer ce qu'Hachem avait décidé sans appel. C'est pourquoi Aaron ne pria pas pour entrer en Terre Sainte. Mais le 15 av, lorsqu'il vit la pleine lune, Moché comprit que, par la prière, un homme peut même changer une promesse divine. Alors il se mit à prier tous les jours pour cela... Jusqu'à ce qu'Hachem lui dise : " Je suis prêt à te faire rentrer en Eretz Israël, mais sache que si tu ne meurs pas hors d'Israël, la faute du veau d'Or ne sera pas effacée." Alors Moché répondit : " tue-moi mais ne touche pas à un ongle des bné Israël."

Nous comprenons également pourquoi les sages de la Michna comparaient Yom Kippour au 15 av. Car le jour de Yom Kippour, un homme peut effacer ses fautes grâce à la Téhouva et repartir à zéro. De même le 15 av, les bné Israël apprirent que l'on peut annuler des décrets divins par la prière. Cependant, comme nous l'avons expliqué, il existe une condition pour cela. Nous devons placer notre confiance entièrement en Lui et nous devons prier sincèrement afin de mériter la Délivrance. La semaine prochaine, nous fêterons le 15 av, alors conservons cet enseignement et appliquons-le tous les jours de nos vies.

Attrapons Ce Que Nous Pouvons

Dans la paracha de la semaine Vaét'hanane, Moshe Rabénou, zrouto yagen alénou, implora Hachem afin de rentrer en Terre d'Israël, mais ses prières ne lui donnèrent pas accès à la Terre de nos ancêtres. Alors Moshé construisit de l'autre côté du Jourdain trois villes de refuge. Ces dernières devaient accueillir des hommes qui avaient tué de manière accidentelle. En effet, si un proche de la famille de la victime voulait venger le sang du disparu, le meurtrier trouvait une protection dans ces villes. Or ce dispositif de protection implanté de l'autre côté du Jourdain sur les tribus de Réouven, de Gad et la moitié de Ménaché n'était opérationnel qu'après la construction d'autres villes de refuge en Eretz Israël. Il y a lieu de se demander pourquoi Moshe, à quelques jours de sa mort, trouva bon de commencer cette tâche qui serait inachevée.

« Ce que nous pouvons accomplir, nous devons l'accomplir ». Le Hafetz Haïm, zrouto yagen Alénou, dans son commentaire sur la Torah, amène un enseignement des Avot de Rabbi Nathan qui dit : ne t'abstiens pas de faire une chose que tu ne pourras pas finir. En effet, le mauvais penchant incite les juifs à ne pas faire Téhouva, à ne pas prier, à ne pas étudier Et il dit à chacun : « à quoi sert de prier ? Tu ne fais même pas Chabat, pourquoi veux-tu manger cacher à la maison si tu sais qu'au travail tu ne pourras pas le faire ? Allez, il vaut mieux que tu ne fasses rien, au moins tu seras honnête... »

Le rav compare cela à un homme qui marche sur la plage avant d'embarquer pour son pays. Lorsque soudain son regard se pose sur une chose qui brille dans le sable, il se baisse et découvre un véritable trésor enfoui. Seul petit problème, son bateau s'apprête à lever l'ancre ! Notre bon touriste va-t-il se priver d'emporter le plus de pierres précieuses qu'il peut, sachant qu'avec cela il vivra dans le luxe de longues années ? Voici le sens du verset : « Si tu la demandes comme l'argent et que tu la recherches comme de l'or, alors tu comprendras tu comprendras ce qu'est la crainte de D. ». Nous devons donc nous comporter avec le spirituel comme nous le faisons avec le matériel : attrapons toutes les mitsvots qui sont à notre portée sans en laisser aucune nous échapper...

Voila pourquoi Moshé insista pour commencer la construction des villes de refuge. Il connaissait la valeur de chaque mitsva, si petite soit- elle, et il l'accomplissait avec entrain même s'il ne touchait qu'à son commencement. Nous n'avons aucune connaissance sur le « prix » de chaque mitsva, ce qu'elle peut nous apporter dans ce monde comme dans l'autre. L'exemple de la « chemirat alachone » illustre bien ce principe.

Même si un homme a du mal à respecter la mitsva de garder sa langue, ne sera-t-il pas récompensé de s'être retenu, ne serait-ce qu'une fois ? Bien qu'il se soit habitué à proférer du lachon ara, est-il correct de se désintéresser de cette mitsva sous prétexte qu'on ne peut pas obéir à toutes les règles du langage dans tous leurs détails ?!! « Sois vigilant pour une mitsva légère autant que pour une mitsva importante car tu ne connais pas la récompense accordée pour chaque mitsva » (Avot 2,1)

A l'image de Moche rabbénoù, essayons d'accomplir toutes les mitzvots que nous pouvons car, avec le temps, même ce qui nous paraît impossible peut devenir réalisable. De plus, Hachem aide toujours car « lorsqu'une personne désire se purifier, elle reçoit l'aide d'Hachem » (chabbat 104a)

REFLEXION SEMANAL

(Rav Yonatan Gefen)

Cumplir la Ley más allá del Pie de la Letra

“Y harás lo correcto y bueno a los ojos de Di-s, para que haga bien para ti, y para que vengas y heredes la tierra buena que Di-s les prometió a tus patriarcas” (1).

Los comentaristas escriben que este versículo, que aparece hacia el final de la parashá, es la fuente del principio de ‘cumplir la ley más allá del pie de la letra’ (2). Esto nos enseña la necesidad de evitar ser *medakdek* (exacto) en temas de ley y, en ciertas ocasiones, ser *mevater* (perdonar) en temas o cosas que a veces nos pertenecen por derecho.

Un ejemplo es cuando una persona encuentra un objeto perdido que, *halájicamente*

(legalmente), tiene permitido conservar, pero conoce la identidad del dueño original. En ese caso, los rabinos nos indican que, si bien técnicamente está permitido conservar el objeto, lo correcto es retornarlo (3). Otro ejemplo es cuando una propiedad está a la venta y los compradores potenciales deben darle precedencia a quien vive al lado de esa propiedad, porque ellos se beneficiarán más comprándola (4).

Sin embargo, en realidad, hay muchas ocasiones en las que una persona debería ir más allá del pie de la letra. El Rambán escribe que la Torá no quiso especificarlas todas, sino que uno debería aprender de este versículo que debe esforzarse constantemente para tratar a las personas de manera comprensiva y siempre evitar tratarlas de acuerdo a la ley estricta (5).

La Guemará nos dice que el Templo fue destruido porque las personas eran muy *medakdekim* ‘exactas’ unas con otras, y se trataban de manera muy estricta (6). Esto es difícil de entender, ya que ir más allá del pie de la letra es un acto de devoción, y no hacerlo no debería merecer un castigo tan estricto. ¿Por qué fue el pueblo judío tratado con semejante dureza por ser *medakdekim* unos con otros?

Pareciera entonces, que no tratar a las personas con holgura y tranquilidad refleja un defecto profundo en la actitud de una persona en el servicio divino. Rav Itzjak Bérkovits explica, basado en el Rambán de este versículo, que *veasita hayashar vehatov* es el equivalente, en relaciones interpersonales, a *kedoshim tihú*. El Rambán, en la parashá *Kedoshim*, explica que una persona puede respetar todas las mitzvot e igualmente ser *menuval bereshut HaTorá*, es decir, que puede respetar la Torá y, al mismo tiempo, no interesarse en crecer en áreas que no son intrínsecamente mitzvot o pecados, como comer o dormir.

¿Por qué una persona actuaría de esta manera? Porque como cree que la Torá es cierta, debe

respetarla, pero al no identificarse con la cosmovisión de la Torá, no se interesa en elevarse espiritualmente y tiene objetivos “mundanos”, como satisfacer sus deseos físicos u obtener riqueza. Por este reconocimiento de la verdad de la Torá, nunca pecará deliberadamente, pero sí mostrará desinterés en elevarse en áreas en las que, técnicamente, no está obligado a hacerlo ⁽⁷⁾.

Similarmente, en la esfera de las relaciones interpersonales, una persona puede reconocer la necesidad de seguir las leyes de la Torá, sin desear interiorizar los valores que representan. Así, siempre se apegará a la estricta letra de la ley, pero, siempre que tenga la oportunidad de obtener una ganancia financiera de una forma técnicamente permisible, no dudará en hacerlo.

La Torá le dice a esa persona que comete un serio error, instruyéndole “hacer lo que es recto y bueno”, es decir, cumplir la ley ‘más allá del pie de la letra’ tratando misericordiosamente a las personas, sin ser siempre *medakdek*. La Torá nos instruye que deberíamos desarrollar un amor genuino por nuestro prójimo y, en consecuencia, tratarlo como quisiéramos que nos traten a nosotros: con compasión y misericordia. Así, por ejemplo, cuando alguien pierde un objeto valioso, un judío no debería dudar devolverlo, incluso si no está obligado a hacerlo. Otro ejemplo es cuando una persona pobre debe una gran cantidad de dinero, donde el acreedor debería actuar con cierta flexibilidad y compasión.

Esto ayuda a entender por qué los judíos recibieron un castigo tan duro por haberse tratado con rigidez. No entendieron la enseñanza de *hayashar vehatov*, que está mal tratar al prójimo con dureza e inclemencia, ya que hacerlo no se adhiere al espíritu que propugna la Torá.

Los comentaristas encuentran otra dificultad con la Guemará que dice que el Templo fue destruido porque las personas eran estrictas unas con otras. Otras guemarot dan razones diferentes, como asesinato, idolatría, inmoralidad y odio infundado ⁽⁸⁾. Rav Itzjak de Volozhin respondió esta pregunta cuando atestiguó el siguiente incidente: alguien había calumniado a una persona y vino en la víspera de Iom Kipur a pedir perdón. La víctima se

rehusó a perdonarla, señalando la ley que dice que uno no está obligado a perdonar calumnias. Rav Itzjak le preguntó sobre la contradicción de las guemarot que acabamos de mencionar y explicó que los Templos fueron destruidos por los terribles pecados enumerados en las otras guemarot. Sin embargo, señaló que los rabinos nos dijeron que, cuando las personas se tratan con compasión, Di-s actúa medida por medida y perdona incluso los pecados más serios. Sin embargo, cuando Di-s vio que las personas se trataban estrictamente, actuó de la misma manera y eligió no perdonar los otros pecados. De la misma forma, Rav Itzjak le dijo a quien no quería perdonar, que, si trataba al prójimo siendo tan estricto, debería esperar que Di-s lo tratara de la misma forma. El hombre recibió la enseñanza y perdonó al calumniador.

Que todos ameritemos tratarnos como nos gustaría ser tratados y que Di-s reaccione de manera similar.

NOTAS: 1) *Vaetjanán*, 6:18. 2) Ver Rashi y Rambán. 3) *Baba Metzía*, 30b. 4) *Baba Metzía*, 108a. Esto es conocido como *din debar metzra*. 5) Rambán, *Vaetjanán*, ibíd. 6) *Baba Metzía*, 30b. 7) Ver mi ensayo sobre *Parashat Vaierá*, sobre cómo Lot epitomizó esta dicotomía. 8) No es claro a qué Beit HaMikdash se refiere la Guemará en *Baba Metzía*.

Las Dos Tablas

La parashá contiene una repetición de los Diez Mandamientos, con algunos cambios menores. El Mabit ⁽¹⁾ hace una destacable observación acerca de las dos *lujot* 'tablas' sobre las cuales estaban escritos los Mandamientos. Los rabinos explican que las dos *lujot* se enfocaban en áreas diferentes de las mitzvot: la primera tenía las mitzvot *bein adam leMakom* (correspondientes a la relación entre el hombre y Di-s), como la creencia en Di-s y observar Shabat, mientras que la segunda tenía las mitzvot *bein adam lejaberó* (correspondientes a la relación entre el hombre y su prójimo), como las prohibiciones de matar y envidiar.

El Mabit señala que en la primera tabla hay muchas más palabras que en la segunda, por lo que sus letras deben haber sido mucho más chicas que las de la otra. Esto, continúa el Mabit, lo hizo Di-s a propósito para que las mitzvot entre el hombre y su prójimo sean más

fácilmente advertibles que las mitzvot entre el hombre y Di-s. El Mabit continúa diciendo que la causa es que el *íétzer hará* (inclinación negativa) es mayor en el área entre el hombre y su prójimo. Di-s quería que la gente se enfocara más en las mitzvot entre el hombre y su prójimo porque requieren un mayor esfuerzo para superar el *íétzer hará* ⁽³⁾.

El Talmud, en Baba Batra, da evidencia que sustenta la opinión del Mabit ⁽⁴⁾. Allí, el Talmud discute sobre varios pecados con los que la gente tropieza. Dice que una minoría de personas tropieza en el área de relaciones prohibidas, una mayoría con *guézel* 'robo' ⁽⁵⁾ y todos con *avak lashón hará* ⁽⁶⁾. Las relaciones prohibidas caen, generalmente, en el área de mitzvot entre el hombre y Di-s ⁽⁷⁾, mientras que el robo y el *lashón hará* caen claramente en el ámbito de mitzvot entre el hombre y su prójimo. De esta forma, la Guemará nos está diciendo que las personas son más propensas a pecar en ciertas mitzvot que corresponden a *bein adam lejaberó*.

La siguiente historia también ilustra este punto:

En una ocasión le pidieron a Rav Jaim Soloveitchik que estableciera si un determinado animal era casher o no. Su veredicto fue que no lo era. El carnicero sufrió una pérdida importante, pero de todos modos aceptó la decisión con ecuanimidad. Unos pocos meses después el mismo carnicero estuvo involucrado en una disputa económica con otra persona, por una cantidad de dinero mucho menor. Rav Jaim legisló en su contra y, en esta ocasión, el carnicero estaba furioso e insultó a Rav Jaim. Rav Simja Reeger, quien estaba observando el incidente, le preguntó a Rav Jaim por qué el carnicero había acatado el veredicto tan calmadamente cuando perdió una cantidad de dinero mucho mayor y estaba tan enojado por una suma pequeña. Rav Jaim explicó que en esta ocasión había perdido en contra de otra persona, y que lo que lo había hecho enojar tanto era haber sido derrotado por otra persona.

Ahora bien, seguimos sin responder por qué las personas son más propensas a tropezar con las mitzvot entre el hombre y su prójimo ⁽⁸⁾. He aquí

una posible respuesta: el Gaón de Vilna escribió que toda mitzvá emana de un rasgo personal positivo determinado, mientras que toda *averá* 'pecado' emana de un rasgo negativo ⁽⁹⁾. Sin embargo, es posible que una persona tenga un rasgo personal negativo y que, igualmente, observe muchas mitzvot.

Por ejemplo, una persona que tiene una tendencia a perder los estribos no necesariamente tendrá problemas para cumplir Shabat, cashrut y muchas otras mitzvot en el plano de *bein adam leMakom*. De todos modos, esta persona sí tendrá dificultades muy grandes en el plano de *bein adam lejaberó*. Cada vez que levante la voz de manera inapropiada estará muy cerca de caer en la prohibición de *onaat devarim* (palabras hirientes) y si le grita a una persona frente a otros transgredirá el extremadamente serio pecado de avergonzar a alguien en público. De la misma manera, quien tiene el rasgo negativo de enfocarse en lo malo de las personas no tendrá problemas para rezar tres veces al día y estudiar Torá, aunque es muy probable que tropiece con *lashón hará* y juzgar a los demás desfavorablemente.

Obviamente, hay ciertos rasgos de personalidad que dificultan mucho el cumplimiento de las mitzvot entre el hombre y Di-s; uno de ellos es la pereza. Sin embargo, es importante notar que estos rasgos también dañarán mucho la observancia de las mitzvot entre el hombre y su prójimo.

Por ejemplo, una persona perezosa no querrá ayudar a su pareja con las labores hogareñas, causando problemas en la relación. Incluso el rasgo de *taavá* (lujuria y deseo) puede ser la causa de grandes errores en *bein adam lejaberó*. Por ejemplo, una persona que está demasiado apegada a la comida reaccionará de mala manera cuando su pareja le sirva comida que no le gusta, resultando de nuevo en una transgresión de *onaat devarim*.

La lección obvia que se puede derivar del Mabit es que hace falta un esfuerzo extra en las mitzvot entre el hombre y su prójimo ⁽¹⁰⁾. Más aún, dado que la causa del fracaso en esa área son los rasgos negativos de personalidad, es esencial trabajar en rasgos como el enojo, los celos y la avaricia.

El Maharshá señala que cuando la Guemará dice que todos tropiezan con *avak lashón hará* sólo se refiere a quienes no se esfuerzan para mejorar en esa área ⁽¹¹⁾, pero que quienes se esfuerzan para mejorar estudiando las leyes relacionadas a *lashón hará* y para mejorar sus características personales no están destinados a hablar *avak lashón hará*. Esto aplica a todas las mitzvot entre el hombre y su prójimo; si uno realiza un esfuerzo considerable y consistente para mejorar, vencerá las trampas del *íetzer hará* para hacerlo tropezar.

Notas: 1) El Mabit era uno de los rabinos principales del siglo 16 en Israel. 2) En la versión de los Diez Mandamientos de Vaetjanán hay 162 palabras en la primera tabla y 27 en la segunda. 3) Mabit, Beit Elokim, Sháar Yesodot, Cap. 12. 4) Baba Batra 165a. 5) Ver Rashbam, Baba Batra 165a, quien explica a qué tipo de robo se refiere la Guemará. 6) Traducido literalmente como 'polvo de *lashón hará*.' Es una forma más sutil de habla negativa 7) Con la excepción de tener relaciones con una mujer casada, que obviamente involucra una transgresión entre el hombre y su prójimo. 8) La siguiente respuesta se la sugerí yo a mi rabino, Rav Itzjak Berkovits shlita, quien la aprobó. 9) Even Shlemá, Cap. 1. 10) Por supuesto, esto no significa que uno no deba esforzarse mucho para mejorar sus acciones en las mitzvot entre el hombre y Di-s. También es importante notar que muchas personas pueden sentir una inclinación hacia enfocarse en las mitzvot *bein adam lejaberó* y abandonar sus responsabilidades en las de *bein adam leMakom*. 11) Ver Shmirat Halashón, Cap.15.

NAHALOT

Nahala of Sir Moshe (Chaim) Montefiore Sunday 16th of Av

Sir Moshe (Chaim) Montefiore (1784-1885). Born in Livorno, Italy, of Sephardic descent, he traced his lineage back to the exiles from the Spanish Expulsion. When he was still a young child his family resettled in England. Young Moses became a member of the London Stock Exchange at a time when there were only 12 licensed Jewish brokers in all of England. In a matter of a few years he had amassed great wealth and had become a member of the London Aristocracy. In 1812, he married his wife Judith, whose sister was the wife of Reb Nathan Meyer Rothschild, one of the wealthiest Jews in Europe at the time. Sir Moses eventually became the stockbroker for his brother-in-law and as a result of their partnership they amassed a tremendous fortune. In addition, he was a partner in a large insurance company as well as a gas company that introduced gas lighting to many of the major cities of Europe. Sir Moses also had a hand in building railroads and many other industrial and financial enterprises. As the years passed, Moses and Judith grew together in their Yiddishkeit. In 1837, Montefiore was appointed Sheriff of London. In the same year, Queen Victoria, who had recently ascended the British Throne, awarded him the honorary title of Knighthood, bestowing upon him the title "Sir" Moses. In 1846, he was elevated to the rank of Baron. By the time he was 41 years old, Sir Moses, with his wife's encouragement, decided to retire from business affairs and devote the rest of his life,

time and considerable resources to Jewish affairs. The welfare of the Jewish People became his sole business for the next 60 some years and his list of accomplishments is truly magnificent. When he was appointed as Sheriff of London, he specifically wrote in his contract that he would be absolved from working on Shabbat and yom tov. He also specified that he was to be absolved from entering a Church on non-Jewish holidays. Even when he was traveling, he almost always made sure to travel with an entourage of at least 10 Jews to ensure that he would have a minyan. He also took one of the many sifrei Torah that he owned along with him. In 1840, a monk named Thomas disappeared from his home several weeks before Pesach. The French Counsel in Damascus blamed the Jews for his disappearance and claimed that they killed the monk to use his blood for matzos. Prominent Damascus Jews were imprisoned and tortured. Many died and some, who could not withstand the torture, "confessed" under duress to the crime. Upon learning of it, Sir Moses traveled to Damascus to save the country and the honor of the Jewish people. In 1846, Sir Moses was invited by the Russian government to visit Russia in connection with its Jewish situation. Upon returning to London, he demanded equal rights for the Jews and stressed that it would also be an economic blessing for the country. Montefiore's 100th birthday was celebrated as an official holiday in London and he was accorded great honor by both Jew and non-Jew alike. The Montefiores died childless, but they left behind a legacy of tzedaka and chesed that endures to this very day.

The Meaning of Tu B'Av

Six events occurred on Tu B'Av, the 15th of Av, making it a festive day in the Jewish calendar. (By: Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau)

The Mishnah tells us that: "No days were as festive for Israel as the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur." (Tractate Ta'anit) What is Tu B'Av, the 15th of the Hebrew month of Av? In which way is it equivalent to Yom Kippur?

Our Sages explain: Yom Kippur symbolizes G-d's forgiving Israel for the sin of the Golden Calf in the desert, for it was on that day that He finally accepted Moses' plea for forgiveness of the nation, and on that same day Moses came down from the mountain with the new set of tablets.

Just as Yom Kippur symbolizes the atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf, Tu B'Av signifies the atonement for the sin of the Spies, where ten came bearing such negative reports which reduced the entire nation to panic. As a result of that sin, it was decreed by G-d that the nation would remain in the desert for 40 years, and that no person 20 or older would be allowed to enter Israel. On each Tisha B'Av of those 40 years, those who had reached the age of 60 that year died – 15,000 each Tisha B'Av.

This plague finally ended on Tu B'Av.

Six positive events occurred on Tu B'Av:

Event #1 - As noted above, the plague that had accompanied the Jews in the desert for 40 years ended. That last year, the last 15,000 people got ready to die. G-d, in His mercy, decided not to have that last group die, considering all the troubles they had gone through. Now, when the ninth of Av approached, all the members of the group got ready to die, but nothing happened. They then decided that they might have been wrong about the date, so they waited another day, and another...

Finally on the 15th of Av, when the full moon appeared, they realized definitely that the ninth of Av had come and gone, and that they were still alive. Then it was clear to them that G-d's decree was over, and that He had finally forgiven the people for the sin of the Spies.

This is what was meant by our Sages when they said: "No days were as festive for Israel as the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur," for there is no greater joy than having one's sins forgiven – on Yom Kippur for the sin of the Golden Calf and on Tu B'Av for the sin of the spies. In the Book of Judges, Tu B'Av is referred to as a holiday (Judges 21:19).

In addition to this noteworthy event, five other events occurred on Tu B'Av:

Events #2 and 3 - Following the case of the daughters of Zelophehad (see Numbers, chapter 36), daughters who inherited from their father when there were no sons were forbidden to marry someone from a different tribe, so that land would not pass from one tribe to another. Generations later, after the story of the "Concubine of Giv'ah" (see Judges, chapters 19-21), the Children of Israel swore not to allow their daughters to marry anyone from the tribe of Benjamin. This posed a threat of annihilation to the tribe of Benjamin.

Each of these prohibitions were lifted on Tu B'Av. The people realized that if they kept to their prohibition, one of the 12 tribes might totally disappear. As to the oath that had been sworn, they pointed out that it only affected the generation that had taken the oath, and not subsequent generations. The same was applied to the prohibition of heiresses marrying outside their own tribe: this rule was applied only to the generation that had conquered and divided up the land under Joshua, but not future generations. This was the first expression of the merging of all the tribes, and was a cause for rejoicing. In the Book of Judges it is referred to as "a festival to the Lord."

Over the generations, this day was described in Tractate Ta'anit as a day devoted to betrothals, so that new Jewish families would emerge.

Event #4 - After Jeroboam split off the kingdom of Israel with its ten tribes from the kingdom of Judea, he posted guards along all the roads leading to Jerusalem, to prevent his people from going up to the Holy City for the pilgrimage festivals, for he feared that such pilgrimages might undermine his authority. As a "substitute," he set up places of worship which were purely idolatrous, in Dan and Beth-el. Thus the division

between the two kingdoms became a fait accompli and lasted for generations.

The last king of the kingdom of Israel, Hosea ben Elah, wished to heal the breach, and removed all the guards from the roads leading to Jerusalem, thus allowing his people to make the pilgrimage again. This act took place on Tu B'Av.

Event #5 - At the beginning of the Second Temple period, the Land of Israel lay almost totally waste, and the wood needed to burn the sacrifices and for the eternal flame that had to burn on the altar was almost impossible to obtain. Each year a number of brave people volunteered to bring the wood needed from afar – a trip which was dangerous in the extreme.

Now, not just every wood could be brought. Wood which was wormy was not permitted. And dampness and cold are ideal conditions for the breeding of worms in wood. As a result, all the wood that would be needed until the following summer had to be collected before the cold set in. The last day that wood was brought in for storage over the winter months was Tu B'Av, and it was a festive occasion each year when the quota needed was filled by that day.

Event #6 - Long after the event, the Romans finally permitted the bodies of those who had been killed in the defense of Betar (in the Bar Kochba revolt) to be buried. This was a double miracle, in that, first, the Romans finally gave permission for the burial, and, second, in spite of the long period of time that had elapsed, the bodies had not decomposed. The permission was granted on Tu B'Av.

In gratitude for this double miracle, the fourth and last blessing of the Grace After Meals was added, which thanks G-d as "He Who is good and does good." "He is good" – in that the bodies had not decomposed, "and does good" – in that permission was given for the burial.

To this day, we celebrate Tu B'Av as a minor festival. We do not say Tahanun on that day, nor are eulogies rendered. By the same token, if a couple are getting married on that day (and, as we will see below, it is the custom for the bride and groom to fast on their wedding day), neither fasts.

Beginning with Tu B'Av, we start preparing ourselves spiritually for the month of Elul, the prologue to the coming Days of Awe. The days begin to get shorter, the nights get longer. The weather, too, helps us to take spiritual stock: the hectic days of the harvest are over for the farmer, and the pace has slowed down considerably. Even on a physical level, the heat of the summer makes it hard to sit down and think things out, and now that the days and nights are cooler, it is easier to examine one's actions.

In earlier times, it was the custom already from Tu B'Av to use as one's greeting "May your inscription and seal be for good" (ketiva vahatima tova), the same blessing that we today use on Rosh Hashana. Those who work out the gematria values of different expressions found that phrase adds up to 928 – and so does the words for "15th of Av."

The Bnei Yissaschar says that this day was destined for shidduchim (marriages) from early times. He goes on to explain that because two of the sources for Chamishah-Asar B'Av being chosen as a Yom-Tov are connected with shidduchim [see 1 & 2 above, - on it the shvatim were permitted to intermarry (after entering Eretz Yisrael), and on it, the ban on marrying women from Binyamin (following the episode of the Pilegsh B'Givah) was lifted] that is why Chazal chose this particular day for this sort of celebration rather than pick another existing Yom-Tov for the joyous occasion.

It follows that this day is one of good beginnings and great hope for Klal Yisrael and the individual. This is why these days were festivals and days of great rejoicing for Israel, and so shall they be in the future when celebrations and days of rejoicing will once more return to Israel, as it says, "This is the L-rd. We have waited for Him. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:9)

G-d Winking

Showing up to the imperfect unpredictable mess of life. (By Ilana Rubenstein)

There's a saying "Man plans and G-d laughs". I don't agree. I think it's more "Man plans and G-d winks," only sometimes the wink feels a bit more like an eye twitch. The way your lid flutters when you're overtired. So it makes it a little harder to see the wink. I had one of those moments last week.

It really started months ago when we began to plan our annual family trip to the cottage. And by family I mean me and my daughter, who would be visiting my sisters, brother-in-law and nieces. As a shared custody co-parent, my planning is a bit on steroids. The timing needs to fit with many people's needs, wants and agreements. And not only that, there's a lot of pressure to "make it count". One of the ways I've been able to swallow the (unexpected) reality of days on and days off, is vowing to "make every moment count". If there were going to be times I wasn't going to be there, then I wasn't going to miss a second when I could be present. There was even a day I turned to G-d and said, "Okay, mission accepted: no parenting opportunity will be missed on my watch".

Right. So, like, no pressure.

So the summer vacation stakes were high. As in, this was going to be *the* cottage week of the summer. Pinterest would be put to shame with the crafting we had in store. Menus were mapped out. If planning is the way we try to guarantee success, I was on my A-game. You can see where this is going.

The morning of our departure my daughter complained of a "slightly sore throat". No big deal. This is the stuff of almost every other week over the past 10 years of her life. It's rarely strep. Besides, we had a plan. I checked out walk-in clinics in the cottage area (parental due diligence done) and set out with a car packed to the roof.

Here comes the wink. Picture it, the first night, 2 AM: "Mommy, I don't feel well, my head hurts."

I limp half asleep to find the Tylenol. No fever. Just in pain. "Mommy, I can't sleep."

It was the truth. She couldn't and didn't. Therefore, neither did I. And so cottage dreams

and perfectly-planned moments instantly dissolve. To every "Mommy" uttered, an internal dialogue went something like this: "*Really? Now? Of all weeks? All days? Come on!*"

The next few days were spent shuttling between the beach, the pharmacy and confirming that it was viral. No quick fix. We've all heard the "plenty of rest and fluids" prescription (aka "Mom, you've just got to ride this out with your kid"). Sigh. So the only thing for me to do was be there. *Show up*.

This wasn't about *me* deciding how to make the most of the moment. It was about the moment making the most of *me*.

In all the chaos of cottage plans gone south, the only plans we had consisted of my daughter's basic fluid-rest-and-get-to-bed-needs for the next couple of hours. All the energy we expend to "make it count" is never really the job. This wasn't about *me* deciding how to make the most of the moment. It was about the moment making the most of *me*. It is no small privilege to be present. We spend so much time worrying--thinking--analyzing our kids, our parenting, that we forget to simply *be*. Sometimes it's not about saying the right thing or finding the proper approach, it's simply about being the one who is there.

I'm not backing down from my "make-it-count-commitment". Somewhere between giving birth and signing that separation agreement, I made that promise. But maybe part of it is also to let go so we can simply *be*. With ourselves. With our kids. With G-d. The endless stream of shoulds and coulds, the tally of plans and try-to-get-it-right agendas can be blinding. When we are busy remembering the "10 tips" of the day, it's hard to see the winks. When we try so hard to get it right, we get one thing wrong: it's not about getting it right. Or planning. It's about showing up with all the imperfect unpredictable mess of life.

And that includes missed moments, unexpected sore throats, and certainly hard-to-swallow life events. This is not unique to shared-custody parenting. We all have realities we try to manage; challenges we attempt to contain. And, yet, when we plan, well, things

rarely go as we expect. And if we are willing to show up, we will see G-d winking.

Connecting on Zoom: Life Without the Temple

Living without a Temple is like living your life on Zoom – you're always craving for real connection. (By Rabbi Jonathan Bienenfeld)

I hate Zoom.

As much as I've come to depend on this bit of technology during the pandemic, I dread every upcoming meeting for how impersonal and sterile it will undoubtedly feel. The content of the conversation may well be the same, but the personal connection that comes from sharing the same physical space as another person is sorely lacking.

Zoom just isn't the real thing. And like so many, I crave the real thing.

That yearning gives us an insight into the meaning of Tisha B'Av, the fast day that commemorates the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The mourning period can be hard to relate to. One of the most difficult aspects is in trying to grasp what exactly we are lacking. We do our best to connect to and ruminate over the sorrows and tragedies of the past, reminding ourselves that somehow were it not for the destruction of the Temple, these horrors would never have come to pass.

But these matters, however tragic, are ultimately secondary. They are the byproduct, the result of the loss of the Temple. What of the Temple itself and of its absence? Opportunities for spirituality and connecting to G-d abound, even in the post-Temple world in which we find ourselves. What exactly we are lacking?

The Torah states, "And you shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell in your midst" (Exodus 25:8). The commandment to construct a Temple goes beyond having an edifice in which a host of other commandments can be kept. The Temple is the crucial deciding factor in whether or not G-d will actually dwell in our midst. With or without a physical Sanctuary, G-d is in the driver's seat. The question is whether

or not we're in the car with Him. Do we share the same space, or is our relationship long-distance?

It's hard to fully put into words what is missing when we "get together" from afar rather than actually sitting across from each other. But it is a distinction we feel every time we are forced to use Zoom as the medium that connects us. Even when no physical contact exists, simply being in the same room as another person heightens the experience with greater warmth, connection, and closeness.

This is the difference between the presence and the absence of the Temple. Can we continue to connect to G-d? Absolutely. We have the power of prayer to serve as our voice to G-d, and the power of Torah that allows us to listen to His. Indeed, there are infinite points of contact that allow us to craft a relationship with G-d.

And yet, it's all on Zoom. He does not dwell among us – He is not present in the room – the way that the Temple would allow Him to be. What we mourn on Tisha B'Av and the days leading up to it is not a complete obliteration of a relationship with G-d; we bemoan the chasm that has been inserted between us. Yes, we still connect, but remotely. And, as we know all too well, connecting remotely just isn't the same.

When you next feel that twinge of annoyance at the sight of a class, call, or meeting being held over Zoom, try to lean into that feeling just a bit. The uneasiness and frustration over the continued inability to sit at the same table, to share the same space, and to fully connect, is precisely what we've been missing for the past 2,000 years.

Every Prayer is Effective

(Rabbi Eli Mansour from iTorah)

Parashat Vaethanan begins with Moshe recalling his impassioned prayer to be allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael. Our Sages teach that Moshe recited 515 prayers at this time, alluded to by the word "Vaethanan" ("I pleaded"), which has the numerical value of 515. Finally, after reciting 515 prayers, G-d told Moshe to stop

praying, because he was not being allowed entry into Eretz Yisrael.

The question naturally arises, why didn't G-d stop Moshe earlier? If G-d was determined to forbid Moshe from entering the land, why did He wait until Moshe recited 515 prayers before stopping him? If the prayers were going to be unanswered, would it not have been preferable for Moshe to do something more productive? Didn't he have work to do that was more valuable than prayers which were destined from the outset to be unanswered?

The Gemara speaks of prayer as "something which stands at the height of the world, but people belittle it" ("Omed Be'rumo Shel Olam U'beneh Adam Mezalzelin Bo"). In other words, prayer is underrated. People do not afford it the importance and value that it deserves. Too often we treat prayer as just an obligatory ritual, or as an optional religious activity, without recognizing its immense value and power.

There are several reasons why people belittle the importance of prayer. First, because we do it so often, it becomes routine and monotonous, and we thus fail to invest the time and emotional energy it deserves. Secondly, the daily prayers require a strict, regimented schedule that is difficult for many people to follow, and thus they give it up.

But the main reason why people do not afford prayer the importance and attention it deserves is because they have grown up with a fundamentally flawed perspective on prayer. Many of us are always told that if we want something we should pray for it, and continue praying until our prayers are unanswered. We were thus trained to perceive prayer as nothing more but a means of achieving what we want. And thus when we do not get what we pray for, we give up. This causes us to "belittle" prayer. We see that our prayers don't work, and thus conclude that it's not useful.

But this is not what prayer is about. Prayer is inherently valuable, and every single prayer has some positive effect. It might not be the effect we had in mind, but it is effective. We might compare prayer to rainclouds. There is plenty of moisture in the sky, but we do not know precisely when or where any given drop will fall.

Our prayers enter the heavenly "prayer bank," as it were, and form a "prayer cloud." G-d, in His infinite wisdom, decides when and how each prayer will be used. We do not have access to this information, but we do know that each and every word of prayer that we recite is inherently valuable and will have some effect at some point.

There was once a boy who fervently prayed for an ill patient named Yosef Ben Shimon. He recited his prayers tearfully and with genuine emotion, and was devastated when Yosef Ben Shimon passed away, figuring that his prayers were recited for naught. He did not know that across the country, in California, there was another ill patient named Yosef Ben Shimon. He fully recovered from his illness, and after his recovery he had a daughter. That girl grew up and married the fellow who had recited for the other Yosef Ben Shimon.

His prayers were answered, but not in the way he thought. Because of his prayers, his future wife came into the world.

Prayer is "Omed Be'rumo Shel Olam." Every single prayer hovers in the sky, waiting until the moment when Hashem determines it should have its effect. We must therefore cherish prayer and utilize this great gift, without ever belittling it. We must rest assured that our prayers will have an effect, and this should motivate us to approach Tefilla with the seriousness and emotion that it deserves.