

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

AHAREI MOT - KEDOSHIM

APRIL 20, 2013

10 IYAR 5773

Dear Friends,

It's good to be back home. Thanks for all of your calls and emails. I have had the pleasure of visiting a number of Synagogues and speaking with many people over the past three weeks. People are concerned with how we are faring and have been very supportive. I look forward to telling you about it.

It's been a tough autumn and winter for us , but springtime is a time of renewal. We've spent the last 6 months working on getting people back into their homes. All our fund raising was geared towards helping individuals. Although there is still work to be done, we need to now focus on the Synagogue. In the coming week's as we analyze the situation looking forward, we'll be reaching out to you for help in various capacities. As a team we have come through this and as a team we'll move forward.

Not being with you last Shabbat, I still got the more emails from the Synagogue last week than at any other time. By overwhelming demand, we will continue to post the schedule and announcements to the newsletter. For additional announcements please see the website BenaiAsher.Org or subscribe to news@sephardicnews.com

Mazal Tov again to Barbara Levy on the birth of a new granddaughter Abigail Shira to her children Ariella and Effraim Herskovic. (I thought we announced this back in March when we got the very cool pictures

Friday Night: Candles: 7:20 PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM –Please say Shemah at home by 8:47 AM

11:00 - 12:00 Orah's will be here with our Shabbat Morning Kids Program upstairs in the Rabbi's study.

Stories, Tefillah, Games, Snacks and more . . . And Leah Colish will be babysitting down in the playroom

KIDDUSH SPONSORS: Eli Sacharow and Sam and Roni Shetrit to commemorate the yahrtzeit of their father Dr Lenny Sacharow. We need sponsors for each weeks Kiddush and Seudah Shelishi

5:30 - Shabbat Afternoon Kids Program with Rabbi Yosef and Leah; Ice Cream, Stories, Basketball, Hoolahoop, Parsha Quiz, Tefillot, Raffles and Fun! Supervised play during Seudat Shelishit.

Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Aharon at 6:00 PM –followed by Minha: 6:30 PM –

Seudah Shelishi and a Class 7:00 – with Rabbi David – sponsored in memory of his great grandmother Farha Evening Service (Arbith): 8:10 PM - Shabbat Ends: 8:20PM

Ladies Torah Class at the Lemberger's each Shabbat afternoon, 5 pm, Guest Speaker, 1 east olive.

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Daily 6:30 AM class – Honest Business Practices

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yanai – 7PM Monday night

Special Series of Classes with Rabbi Colish based on Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University. Many Rabbis have suggested this program for the community. This isn't your typical "money class." Financial Peace University is practical, entertaining and fun! Preview Class Tuesday Night April 30th 8:00 PM
Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach - 161 Lafayette Boulevard Long Beach, NY 11561
(Any questions – please call Rabbi Yosef Colish - 516-589-6102) See Attached Flyer for more Details.

Save the date! May 3rd The Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach will be hosting an NCSY Leadership Shabbaton. If you would like to host out of town advisors, or teenagers, please speak with Rabbi Colish, Riki Waldman Many of you requested that we start a weeknight class at my home out on the deck as we used to have in the past with the Rabbi, z'sl. Let me know if you're interested and if Wednesday night at 8 works and we'll try to schedule it for this summer.

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com

Newsletter archives now at BenaiAsher.Org

Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Editors Notes

Was it looted or saved?

Before you read what I wrote this week, I received the most incredible email. I can't verify it but perhaps one of you can Last week I posted a note regarding the destruction of the Eliyahu HaNavi Synagogue in Damascus. This Shabbat happens to be the Yahrzeit of my father's Grandmother Farha Bibi who came from Damascus to the United States in 1921. In case you didn't see it: The 2,000-year-old Jobar Synagogue in the Syrian capital of Damascus was looted and burned to the ground. The Syrian army loyal to President Bashar Assad and rebel forces are blaming each other for the destruction of the historic synagogue, according to reports on Sunday. The synagogue is said to be built on the site where the prophet Elijah anointed his successor, Elisha, as a prophet. It had been damaged earlier this month by mortars reportedly fired by Syrian government forces. The rebels said the Syrian government looted the synagogue before burning it to the ground, Israel Radio reported Sunday.

I received in response to that post, this amazing note from a friend:

Many of us were heartbroken to hear the sacking and burning and robbing of all of its extremely valuable Artifacts from the oldest Jewish Shul in Syria on this planet.

It was built into a mountain in Damascus dating 750 years before Christ 2759 years approximately. This shul was known as ELIYAHU HANAVI synagogue, Where it is said that Elijah the prophet used to pray and where the prophet Elisha was consecrated, many scrolls and artifacts where of extreme value to our people and dated from ancient times. That synagogue was sealed and closed for protection due to the exit of all the Jewish people from Syria in 1992/1994.

As the war raged in the streets of Damascus and news reached Israel that some shells by accident were hitting these synagogues. A plan was developed to safeguard the contents of this immensely precious old Torah scrolls and artifacts.

We are told that an Israeli commando team made of elite IDF forces of Jews from Arab land, Iraqis, Moroccans, Syrians, Lebanese, and Egyptians landed in Damascus disguised as Syrian army regulars. The plan was coordinated and approved by Jordan and Turkey. The IDF operated as defectors from the Syrian Army and were placed under the protection of the revolutionary people's army that controlled that section. They were allowed to enter into that synagogue 13 days prior to its destruction from both sides waging war in Damascus. They removed the Torah scrolls and other priceless artifacts and split the load in five different lots in order not to be discovered. The commando group was split into five teams. They departed Syria from five different areas and arrived safely in Israel bringing back all these priceless items.

Two weeks later the Syrian army became aware of the event. They entered the Synagogue after taking back control of that area and not finding much, burned and sacked this precious synagogue out of frustration.

Please let me know if you have any more information on this.

When Late is being on Time and the Theory of Relativity

I left the office early on Monday afternoon so that my daughter Aryana could be home in time for an appointment at 6:30. When we passed Kennedy airport, Waze (a mobile navigation app I learned about from every taxi cab I entered in Israel this winter) told me that there was traffic but we should make it home by 6:25. It was 6PM, so Aryana called the lady she was meeting to let her know we would be there a couple of minutes ahead of schedule in case she would be getting there early. You can't imagine our surprise when she told us she was still in the city and leaving now. She was in parked in the middle of Times Square and with the extra security because of the tragedy in Boston earlier in the day, she wouldn't get to the tunnel for an hour and didn't arrive to our house until 8PM. Yet she didn't think to call in advance to let us know she would be late.

Aryana told me that a similar thing happened the night before with someone else. A 6:30 appointment showed up at 8 as if it was perfectly normal.

We are in the midst of counting the Omer towards Shavuot. We count forward in anticipation of the revelation at Sinai. This was undoubtedly the single

greatest moment in human history. G-d would reveal himself and his commandments to an entire nation. One would imagine a sellout crowd of 3,000,000 all clamoring to be the first in line. Yet the Rabbis tell us that when G-d – so to say – arrived, there was no one to greet him. The people were still asleep. If mankind could be late for that meeting, then no one has a chance when expecting people to be on time.

In our Synagogue we know that if we want to pray Mincha at 7:10, we better announce it for 7. We call it Sephardic time and depending on the event; the announced and actual time will vary greatly. A dinner called for 6:30 will never begin before 7. A class called for 7:00 might begin at 7:20. And on Shabbat, when we start at a very late 9AM, we still cannot expect the majority of the crowd before 10:30.

Shaharit begins each morning at 7:00. When we start there are usually a couple of guys there. The rest mosey in sometime before 7:30. In contrast the Atlantic Beach Jewish Center down the road also begins at 7 and by 6:50 there are no parking spaces available. By 7:30 they are done! I was told that they operate on Yekke time (A yekke is a Jew of German-speaking origin. The term carries the connotation that German Jews have an attention to detail and punctuality.)

I wondered when is late called late and when is late called on time?

Einstein told us that time is relative. What we have come to learn is that it's relative to where you grew up or where your family came from. Aryana's Sunday night appointment was with a Spanish lady, her Monday night appointment with an Italian. So we see that Latin Time and Mediterranean Time both fall into the category of late being on time. So is it a climate thing? Colder people are on time and warmer people run late?

Apparently not, as the author Richard Israel writes about Russian time. During the Soviet era, travelling in Russia, he met a Refusenik, Mischa a Jewish mathematician. After returning Richard did a lecture circuit on the Refuseniks and showed a slide show which included Mischa. A member of the audience interrupted to say that Mischa was no longer in Leningrad but is in Boston. Rabbi Israel was able to get in touch with Mischa and invited him with his family to Friday night dinner at 6PM. When Mischa didn't show by 7, the Israel family decided to eat. They cleared the table and a few minutes later Mischa and his family walked in. They offered neither explanation nor apology. The kids reset the table and they all sat down for a meal not even hinting that this

was a second seating. The only tense moment came when Mischa commented that the Israel children all looked so healthy but had such modest appetites.

We all have our times. I remember that even Manhattan at least in my youth had its times. Although hundreds of people stood outside the clubs at 11PM, there was usually no one inside before midnight. And if midnight was when people first entered, you wanted to arrive later. To be cool, you were required to walk into a full house. This was called fashionable late. And when it came to Syrian weddings, I thought that you wrote 3PM on an invitation and meant 6 so that everyone could be fashionably late. Urban Dictionary explains, Arab Time as arriving 1 1/2 to 3 hours late to any event, regardless of its importance when you are from any middle eastern country. Some instances are more severe, specifically in Saudi Arabia, where Arab Time is standard time and arriving 3-4 hours late for an event is expected.

Now when everyone invited shares the same cultural clock and knows the difference between invited time and actual time, there is no problem. The difficulty is when people of various cultures come together.

In my own wedding, almost 30 years ago, we solved that problem by sending out two invitations. The Syrians were invited for 3PM and everyone else received an invitation for 6PM. The only problem was the poor couple who got the wrong invitation and showed up before the caterer, the photographer, the bride or groom. I remember walking in at 4PM to get dressed for pictures and seeing this couple in the lobby. I apologized and tried to explain.

In mixing with other communities, I also learned that Hasidic time is very similar to what we call Sephardic time. Hasidim run just as late if not later.

So I wondered, could there be something more to this? Middle eastern Jews and Hasidic Jews might mean something kabalistic? My friend Malki Gottlieb's father Rabbi Simcha Cohen told about his time as a Rabbi in Los Angeles.

Together with his wife, he went to a bat mitzvah celebration at the home of a prominent Iranian friend. The event was called for 7 p.m. They arrived shortly after 7:00 and were escorted to the backyard of the venue where there were tables and chairs for at least 500 people. Yet, to their shock and amazement, not a single person was there. Thinking that they had come on the wrong date, he informed the person who had escorted them that he had probably made an error and that they were departing. As they were about to

leave, they were told that the party was in fact taking place that evening. Noticed his puzzlement, the host himself came forward to speak with him.

He said that the Satan visits every happy event in order to create an ayin hara and mar the simcha. To counter this, all invitations announce the simcha for at least an hour prior to the time when the event is really scheduled to begin. When the satan arrives at the scheduled time and sees no one there, he figures he is wasting his time – it's a "no-show party" – and leaves. The guests, however, know in advance that the event won't begin until at least an hour after the official time and therefore only arrive after the satan has already departed.

Rabbi Cohen, not wishing to provide the satan with an opportunity to mar the simcha, departed with his wife and returned two hours later – just in time for the beginning of the festivities.

When I searched further I found a source that took us back to the party Abraham and Sarah made after Isaac was weaned. The midrashim tell us that Satan showed up and in all the busyness started so much trouble leading eventually to Abraham's trial of the binding of Isaac. I guess it would have been better if Satan showed up and found nobody there.

So in closing here's the dilemma. Aryana is marrying Steven Ritholtz in June. It's time to print the invitations. Do we send two? Do we send one and call everyone? Do we simply write Chuppah time and hope everyone will believe us?

Fair warning: Give Satan a few minutes to find no one there and leave, but Chuppah time is really when the Chuppah should start. I say should because with all these time zones, who knows.

We were late at Sinai, why didn't we learn our lesson? As cultures merge, conflicts will grow. We are living in a digital age. Why can't we all just share clock time?

I would love to hear if anyone has any other thoughts on coming fashionably late!

Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi David Bibi

Note: No, it's not déjà vu, parts of this were written back in July

When Prohibitions Collide Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

Two sentences after the Torah's mandate of Lifnei iver lo titein michshol (which includes the prohibition

of misleading another, even through the passive withholding of vital information; [Talmud Bavli Moed Katan 5a] see previous study), the text delineates an equally powerful, far-reaching directive: Lo telech rachil b'amecha, "Do not travel as a gossipmonger among your people."

From this commandment and other sources in the Torah the rabbis identify three levels of prohibited interpersonal speech as falling under the general prohibition of rechilut (gossip).

1. Motzi shem ra, slander: The most severe form of prohibited interpersonal speech: the intentional spreading of damaging untruths about another individual.
2. Lashon hara, evil speech: The spreading of damaging information about another individual, even if the information is true.
3. Rechilut, gossip: The sharing of any personal information about another individual outside of that individual's presence, if there is the slightest chance that the information shared will result in the creation of ill will.

Rabbinic literature is replete with references concerning the tragic effects of unfettered speech (see Tazria-Metzora 3, Approaches D, E). The prevalence of this phenomenon (we are almost all guilty of the transgressions of prohibited speech) combines with the terrible damage that can be wrought upon the lives of others to make the ongoing effect of these sins particularly devastating.

What should our posture be, however, when the prohibition against rechilut conflicts with the prohibition of lifnei iver; when information is requested of us, the sharing of which might be damaging to one individual while the withholding of which might be damaging to another?

What if, for example, I am requested to give a job reference concerning an acquaintance and the information to which I am privy will be harmful to the candidate? What if I am asked by a friend concerning a budding romantic relationship and, again, the information that I would share would be less than flattering?

The responses of halacha to these commonly occurring dilemmas are complex and vary on a case-by-case basis, as the law struggles to reconcile the conflicting demands of these two significant mitzvot.

Four commonsense rules, however, can be helpful as a guide in all cases.

1. Explore the motivations: What is the impetus behind our intent to share this information? Are we motivated in any way by jealousy or personal animus? Are we fully aware of the underlying forces that drive us to speak?
2. Study the facts: Are we certain of the veracity of information that we intend to share? What is the nature of our sources? Too often, damaging hearsay is repeated as fact, with devastating consequences.
3. Examine the relevance: Is the information we plan to share relevant to the situation at hand? Are we limiting our response to the necessary information or are we adding and embellishing beyond the essential facts?
4. Seek halachic counsel: Many of us tend to request halachic guidance only in areas of ritual concern such as kashrut and Shabbat. Jewish law, however, is meant to serve as a guide in all arenas of life, particularly when it comes to our ethical and moral behavior.

Seeking appropriate halachic counsel before we speak about others is a sensible, often necessary step. Words, once spoken, can never be fully retracted.

On the other hand, the failure to share warranted information can cause irreparable damage to the unsuspecting. The burden of our intended action or inaction should, therefore, weigh heavily upon us. Decisions should not be made in haste, but only after due deliberation. Consultation with the proper halachic advisor can help grant perspective, allowing the wide-ranging experience of Jewish law to inform those decisions.

Great caution must be exercised when the prohibitions of lifnei iver and rechilus collide. The welfare of others hangs in the balance.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: The service of Yom Kippur that was performed by the Kohain Gadol in the Bais Hamikdash is described. The Kohain Gadol may only enter into the Holy of Holies wearing his plain linen garments requiring that he change his garments five times and immerse in the Mikvah five times. The selection of the he-goats for the primary Teshuva process is described. This portion of the Torah makes up the "Avodah" that is the lengthy Musaf service on Yom Kippur.

2nd Aliya: Following the description of the remaining services for Yom Kippur, the Torah discusses the prohibition of offering a Korban outside of the Mishkan or the Bais Hamikdash. The only offerings

allowed were those that were brought to the Temple. The "Bamah", as an outside altar is called, was among the most prevalent sins for which the Jews were guilty.

3rd Aliya: The prohibition against eating blood is repeated. The end of Acharei Mos is devoted to a presentation of the fifteen prohibited sexual relationships. There is no doubt that G-d considers physical intimacy between a male and female as singularly important. Therefore, it is essential that there be a framework of controls for satisfying the physical.

4th Aliya: Homosexuality and bestiality are prohibited. Verses 18: 24-29 clearly state the unique relationship that the inhabitants of Eretz Yisroel have to the land and the consequences for defiling her sanctity. The beginning of Kedoshim states that holiness is realized through keeping Shabbos, being in awe of one's parents, and not worshipping idols. Laws of charity, honesty, and paying wages on time are stated.

5th Aliya: Showing any deference while administering justice is forbidden as well as our responsibility to properly reprimand each other. The prohibitions against wearing shatnez - any mixture of wool and linen, cutting sideburns (payot) tattooing, premarital sex, and the use of the occult are stated.

6th and 7th Aliya: Proper and equal treatment for the convert, honesty in business, and the prohibition against worshipping the Molech are stated. The remainder of Kedoshim states the specific punishments that Bait Din would administer for engaging in any of the fifteen sexual relationships listed at the end of Acharei Mos.

The very end of Kedoshim (20: 22-26) explains the concept of holiness as the means for being separate from the other nations. Three basic formats for Kedusha exist: Time, place, and person. Acharei Mos began by presenting the ultimate integration of the three in the person of the Kohain Gadol entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. The end of Kedoshim states that Eretz Yisroel (place) the Bnai Yisroel (person) and time in general are intended to reflect the integration of G-dliness into the daily lives of individuals and nations. To the extent that we realize our mission as the kingdom of priests and a holy nation will be the degree to which we retain the right to dwell in the land of Israel.

This week's Haftorah is from Amos chapter 9, and is the Haftorah for Acharei Mos. The basic theme of the two Parshios is the responsibility of the Jews to

maintain a life style of Kedusha - holiness that sets them apart from all the other nations and grants them the right to live in Eretz Yisroel. Amos the Navi began by chastising the Bnai Yisroel for being no better than the Pilishtim or the Arameans. They too were saved from oppression and enslavement but did not cherish the opportunity that G-d had granted to them.

Amos began his prophesies in 3115 - 646 b.c.e. when Yeravam II extended the boundaries of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and under whose reign the kingdom of Israel flourished. Yeravam attempted to banish Amos from the kingdom because of his prophecy that Yeravam's kingdom would not last. Amos criticized the kingdom for persecuting the poor and immersing themselves in materialism and luxury.

Amos told the Jews that primary destruction would be directed against the leaders of the kingdom while the populace would be driven into exile. His presentation painted the exile of Israel as an act of preservation and kindness on G-d's part. Verse 9:11 is the verse that we add to the grace after meals during Succos that prophesies the rebuilding of the Davidic dynasty. The final words of Amos prophesy the coming of Mashiach and the return to Eretz Yisroel.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“Do not go around as a gossip among your people.” (Vayikra 19:16)

A wealthy, learned man came to the Hafess Hayim zt"l and asked to purchase all of his books except for the book Shemirat Halashon (the books that deals with the laws of lashon hara). When the Hafess Hayim asked him to explain his strange request, the man replied that since he constantly dealt with people in business and it was nearly impossible to avoid lashon hara, he felt that he would gain nothing from the book.

The Hafess Hayim responded that when he authored the book, he had presented the question to Hagaon Rabbi Yisrael Salanter zt"l, about what the book would accomplish and Rabbi Salanter replied, “If your book will accomplish nothing more than eliciting a sigh from one Jew who sinned with lashon hara, all of your efforts will have been worthwhile.” (Torah Lada'at). Rabbi Reuven Semah

“Rebuke, you shall rebuke your fellow man” (Vayikra 19:17)

One of the many misvot in this week's perashah is to rebuke our fellow Jew if he is doing something wrong. As important as it is, it is also one of the least properly performed. Often, we don't want to get “involved” so we just don't say anything. Other

times, we will be harsh and sometimes say too much and hurt the other person's feelings, and sometimes even embarrass him in front of others. The key to this misvah is, like everything else, how would we want to be rebuked ourselves?

If we would be driving with a low tire, we would want someone to tell us. When someone is doing something wrong, it's at least as bad as driving dangerously. Yet no one wants to be belittled or humiliated and we must always remember how we would feel.

Rabbi David Feinstein says that the Torah repeats the word *jh`fIT* @jfflv, rebuke you shall rebuke, to teach us that we should rebuke ourselves before we tell others what they're doing wrong. This is the same thought that was just mentioned. In order for our words to be effective, we should be sincere in our trying to improve others, and that is if we are also trying to better ourselves. If we are careful how we rebuke others and do it with sensitivity and concern for their well being, our words will have the right effect and all of us will have improved tremendously. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Paying Workers on Time

One of the many laws presented in Parashat Kedoshim is “Lo Ta'ashok Et Re'acha,” which forbids withholding wages. If somebody owes money to a worker for services that the worker provided, he is obligated by the Torah to pay the worker when the wages are due.

Although this obligation might appear straightforward and intuitive, there are, unfortunately, many people who transgress this Torah law by failing to pay the money due to their employees in a timely fashion. A woman in the community once owed her housekeeper wages just before Pesah, but she decided she would delay payment until after the holiday. She wanted to make sure the housekeeper would continue working through Pesah, and she thus figured she would withhold payment as a guarantee that her housekeeper wouldn't leave her. When the woman mentioned to her Rabbi that she had done this, her Rabbi, insightfully, remarked, “You are so worried about your housekeeper leaving – aren't you worried about G-d leaving you? Withholding wages is a Torah violation, and thus results in driving G-d way. Who would you rather risk losing – your housekeeper, or your Creator?”

The story is told of a certain Sadik in Bneh Brak who passed away, and during the first night of Abelut (mourning) he appeared to his granddaughter in a dream and said, “The belts! What about the belts?” The granddaughter did not know what this was all about, and so she told the family about the dream. Nobody knew why this man would be asking

about belts, until they mentioned the dream to the Sadik's widow. After hearing about the dream, she remembered that shortly before her husband's passing, he was not well and lost some weight. She gave his belts to a tailor and asked him to make new holes in the belts so they would fit the ailing man, whose waistline was now narrower. When he returned the belts, the Sadik wanted to pay him, but he refused, saying it was an honor to do a favor for such a distinguished individual. The Sadik, however, was uneasy about the situation. He was not sure whether this tailor refused to accept money because he would not generally charge for this kind of simple job, or if he normally did charge but was embarrassed to take money from this distinguished person. The Sadik passed away before the issue was resolved, and so he returned to his granddaughter in a dream to ensure that this tailor received his wages.

Remarkably, even though the tailor explicitly waived his right to payment, the Sadik's soul still knew no rest until the wages were paid in full, due to the severity of the sin of withholding wages.

This requirement applies as well to pledges and our other financial responsibilities. Too often, people make handsome pledges to synagogues, for example, over the phone or at an auction, but fail to meet their pledges. It also happens, unfortunately, that people fail to meet their obligations to schools or their other financial responsibilities while spending money on personal luxury items. The Torah strictly warns us in Parashat Kedoshim, "Lo Ta'ashok Et Re'acha" – if we made a commitment, we are bound by Torah law to fulfill it. The Torah's code of honesty and ethics requires that we meet our financial responsibilities and not try to avoid them out of convenience or indifference.

Rabbi Wein ISRAEL AT 65

The Jewish state celebrated its sixty-fifth Independence Day commemorations this week. Though sixty-five years occupies most of the time span allotted to humans on this earth, in the eyes of history it is a relatively short time. Nevertheless, I think that one must marvel at what has occurred here in the Land of Israel over the past sixty-five years.

And, the world has certainly changed dramatically and drastically over this period of time. The British Empire is no longer and the Union Jack does not fly over Government House in Jerusalem. The Soviet Union has also passed from the world scene, a victim of its own cruelties, ineptitude and mistaken ideology. Both England and the Soviet Union did not really wish us well, each in their own way, but the little Jewish state outlived them just as the Jewish people

has outlived every world empire and utopian ideology over our thousands of years of history and existence.

While the rest of the Middle East is in a far greater mess than it was sixty-five years ago – and it was pretty messy then as well, our little country has become the mouse that roars. Almost oblivious to all that surrounds us, we have set about to the tasks of destiny that motivate us and helped create the state.

We have revived our ancient, beautiful, nuanced biblical language, created and witnessed the ingathering of millions of Jews from the four corners of the earth, wreaked an ecological and agricultural revolution in a formerly barren land that now flows with milk and honey, built a mighty defense force to protect ourselves from our still very hostile neighbors, fostered a modern economy, and stand in the forefront of every intellectual, medical and technological field in a world replete with Israeli innovations.

Who would have dreamt that these would have been the realities of the State of Israel, sixty-five years ago? Only the hateful, the alienated and the willfully blind deny Israel's achievements.

Ben Gurion famously said only a few decades ago that when Israel has a population of five million it will be secure and viable. After sixty-five years we are a nation of eight million, six million of whom are Jews. The Peel Commission in 1936 stated, with its characteristic arrogance, that the entire country of then Palestine could not support a population greater than two and a half million.

Well Israel has continually proven the experts to be wrong. Israel is not a perfect state. It has many shortcomings and at sixty-five is still only a work in progress. To paraphrase Winston Churchill it is not yet the beginning of the end but it may certainly be the end of the beginning.

There are still many rough edges in Israeli society, gaps in economic and social equality, and there are major national problems in education, religious institutions and government that need streamlining and await our considered attention. But this is a great place to live. It has good climate, interesting scenery, an enormous diversity of people and ideas, and one can live a Jewish life here to the fullest.

The population is young and rambunctious, Torah study abounds everywhere, and there is a feeling of self-confidence and optimism, of satisfaction in life, of family and community that permeates all sections of Israeli society. It is a great place to visit but it is an even greater place to live and be part of the ongoing

miracle of the ages which is the State of Israel at sixty-five.

The prophets of Israel told us long ago that we would eventually return home to the land promised to our ancestors by God and that we would rebuild ourselves physically and spiritually in that land. This prophecy and dream of the ages is being fulfilled slowly but surely in front of our very eyes in the State of Israel.

The prophets also taught us that those who aid and participate in this endeavor will be richly rewarded. These prophecies are also being fulfilled fully. We live in momentous times of biblical proportions. In our daily lives we tend to sublimate this knowledge and continue with our everyday lives and endure its tests. But every so often we are jolted into recognition that we live in a very special place and in a very special time of the Jewish story.

The sixty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the state is just such a memory jolt and reality check. How fortunate is our generation to celebrate this sixty-fifth anniversary here in Israel and Jerusalem. May we all yet be fortunate enough to witness the full realization of the visions of the prophets of Israel speedily and in our days.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth**

Of Love and Hate

At the centre of the mosaic books is Vayikra. At the centre of Vayikra is the "holiness code" (chapter 19) with its momentous call: "You shall be holy because I, the Lord your G-d, am holy." And at the centre of chapter 19 is a brief paragraph which, by its positioning, is the apex, the high point, of the Torah:

Do not hate your brother in your heart.
You must surely admonish your neighbour and not bear sin because of him.
Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against the children of your people.
Love your neighbour as yourself. I am G-d. (19: 17-18)

I want, in this study, to examine the second of these provisions: "You must surely admonish your neighbour and not bear sin because of him."

Rambam and Ramban agree in seeing two quite different levels of meaning in this sentence. This is how Rambam puts it: When one person sins against another, the latter should not hate him and remain

silent. As it is said about the wicked: "And Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor evil, although Absalom hated Amnon." Rather, he is commanded to speak to him and to say to him, "Why did you do such-and-such to me? Why did you sin against me in such-and-such a matter?" As it is said, "You must surely admonish your neighbour." If he repents and requests forgiveness from him, he must forgive and not be cruel, as it is said, "And Abraham prayed to G-d . . ."

If someone sees his fellow committing a sin or embarking on a path that is not good, it is a commandment to make him return to the good and to make known to him that he is sinning against himself by his evil actions, as it is said, "You must surely admonish your neighbour" . . .

Likewise, Ramban: "You shall surely remonstrate with your neighbour" – this is a separate command, namely that we must teach him the reproof of instruction. "And not bear sin because of him" – for you will bear sin because of his transgression if you do not rebuke him . . . However, it seems to me that the correct interpretation is that the expression "you shall surely remonstrate" is to be understood in the same way as "And Abraham remonstrated with Avimelekh". The verse is thus saying: "Do not hate your brother in your heart when he does something to you against your will, but instead you should remonstrate with him, saying, 'Why did you do this to me?' and you will not bear sin because of him by covering up your hatred in your heart and not telling him, for when you remonstrate with him, he will justify himself before you or he will regret his action and admit his sin, and you will forgive him."

The difference between the two interpretations is that one is social, the other interpersonal. On Rambam's second and Ramban's first reading, the command is about collective responsibility. When we see a fellow Jew about to commit a sin, we must try to persuade him not to do so. We are not allowed to say, "That is a private matter between him and G-d." "All Israel," said the sages, "are sureties for one another." We are each responsible, not only for our own conduct, but for the behaviour of others. That is a major chapter in Jewish law and thought.

However, both Rambam and Ramban are aware that this is not the plain sense of the text. Taken in context, what we have before us is a subtle account of the psychology of interpersonal relations.

Judaism has sometimes been accused by Christianity of being about justice rather than love ("You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love

your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"). This is entirely untrue. There is a wonderful teaching in Avot deRabbi Natan: "Who is the greatest hero? One who turns an enemy into a friend." What sets the Torah apart is its understanding of the psychology of hatred.

If someone has done us harm, it is natural to feel aggrieved. What then are we to do in order to fulfil the command, "Do not hate your brother in your heart"? The Torah's answer is: Speak. Converse. Challenge. Remonstrate. It may be that the other person had a good reason for doing what he did. Or it may be that he was acting out of malice, in which case our remonstrations will give him, if he so chooses, the opportunity to apologise, and we should then forgive him. In either case, talking it through is the best way of restoring a broken relationship. Once again we encounter here one of the leitmotifs of Judaism: the power of speech to create, sustain and mend relationships.

Maimonides cites a key proof-text. The story is told (2 Samuel 13) of how Amnon, one of King David's children, raped his half-sister Tamar. When Absalom, Tamar's brother, hears about the episode, his reaction seems on the face of it irenic, serene:

Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet, now my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart." And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman. When King David heard all this, he was furious. Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad . . ."

Appearances, however, deceive. Absalom is anything but forgiving. He waits for two years, and then invites Amnon to a festive meal at sheep-shearing time. He gives instructions to his men: "Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine and I say to you, 'Strike Amnon down,' then kill him." And so it happened. Absalom's silence was not the silence of forgiveness but of hate – the hate of which Pierre de LaClos spoke in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* when he wrote the famous line: "Revenge is a dish best served cold."

There is another equally powerful example in Bereishith: Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age, and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him (*velo yachlu dabro leshalom*, literally, "they could not speak with him to peace").

On this, R. Jonathan Eybeschutz (c. 1690-1764) comments: "Had they been able to sit together as a group, they would have spoken to one another and remonstrated with each other, and would eventually have made their peace with one another. The tragedy of conflict is that it prevents people from talking together and listening to one another." A failure to communicate is often the prelude to revenge.

The inner logic of the two verses in our sedra is therefore this: "Love your neighbour as yourself. But not all neighbours are loveable. There are those who, out of envy or malice, have done you harm. I do not therefore command you to live as if you were angels, without any of the emotions natural to human beings. I do however forbid you to hate. That is why, when someone does you wrong, you must confront the wrongdoer. You must tell him of your feelings of hurt and distress. It may be that you completely misunderstood his intentions. Or it may be that he genuinely meant to do you harm, but now, faced with the reality of the injury he has done you, he may sincerely repent of what he did. If, however, you fail to talk it through, there is a real possibility that you will bear a grudge and in the fullness of time, come to take revenge – as did Absalom."

What is so impressive about the Torah is that it both articulates the highest of high ideals, and at the same time speaks to us as human beings. If we were angels it would be easy to love one another. But we are not. An ethic that commands us to love our enemies, without any hint as to how we are to achieve this, is simply unliveable. Instead, the Torah sets out a realistic programme. By being honest with one another, talking things through, we may be able to achieve reconciliation – not always, to be sure, but often. How much distress and even bloodshed might be spared if humanity heeded this simple command.