

## SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

RE'EH

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 54:11-55:5

AUGUST 15, 2015 30 AB 5775

Rosh Hodesh Elul will be celebrated on Shabbat & Sunday, August 15 & 16.

**DEDICATIONS:** In memory of Mr. George Schindler, A'H - Yosef ben Fayge Rivka  
In memory of Florence Detusch and in memory of her aunt Frieda Bibi

Minha & Arbit 7:00 PM -Candle Lighting 7:36 PM  
Friends – We need assistance and a commitment for Friday evenings

Shabbat

Class with Rav Aharon 8:00 AM – Latest Shema 8:46AM

Shahrit 8:30 AM, Torah 9:45 and Musaf at 10:30

Kiddush this week is sponsored by Jack and Patti Azizo in memory of  
Jack's mother Lillian (Latifah bat Miriam) Azizo.

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30 with Jennifer

Ages 2-5 - in the Playroom/

Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Children's program at Bach at 5:30PM – We will confirm

Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 5:30

Class with Rav Aharon at 6:30PM

Minha 7:00 PM - Seudat Shelishit 7:30 PM

Rabbi David is scheduled to give the class

Birkat HaMazon 8:20 PM Arbit 8:25 PM – Shabbat Ends at 8:35

SUNDAY MORNING at 8AM

DAILY MINYAN

We begin saying Selihot on Monday morning at 6:20 AM

Monday, Thursday 6:55, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 7:00AM

Mincha and Arbit - Sunday at 7:30PM

LOOKING FORWARD:

Save The Date - August 30th  
Sisterhood's End of Summer BBQ!  
With community blood drive.  
More details to follow!

As the High Holidays are approaching,  
Please take the time to settle your outstanding pledges and obligations

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**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,  
 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us!  
 212-289-2100 – Mincha– The most important  
 tefilah of the day –Give us 11 minutes and we'll  
 give you the World To Come!**

### Editors Notes

My son Moses or better Dr. Moses has spent this summer working as an intern for Dr. Richard Grazi at GENESIS Fertility, whose mission is to help patients realize the dream of parenthood. Dr. Grazi is also the author of *Overcoming Infertility: A Guide For Jewish Couples* which Moses read prior to beginning his internship. I am deeply grateful to Richard for allowing Moses to become his student and giving him a summer he will never forget. Moses was quite moved by Dr. Grazi's example of what it means to be a top doctor who really cares and does what he can for each and every one of his patients. I pray that Moses can follow Richard's example.

Moses is a matter of fact science guy but within the miracle of conception and birth, one easily sees the hand of G-d. Moses continues his education with a sense of empathy for those going through the challenge of infertility. He also firmly believes there is so much that can be done if people take the time to do the research and come to the proper doctors.

Early this year, a book was written and then translated into English. The title is: *To Fill the Earth, 277 Segulos and Advice on Fertility Issues*. The book describes itself as: *277 Segulos and Advice on Fertility Issues in Personal Consultation With Maran Harav Chaim Kanievsky, shlita*. (It is) A treasure trove of segulos and advice on fertility issues, from our Sages and rabbinical authorities throughout the ages

Now I have not seen the book, so obviously I have not read the book. I was made aware of the book by my friend Jack, who forwarded me a post by Rabbi Natan Slifkin and I had to forward it to Moses who was at work in the clinic that morning so he could forward to Dr. Grazi.

The post is as follows: *The Strangest Segulah Ever?*  
 By Rabbi Natan Slifkin  
<http://www.rationalistjudaism.com>

*What's the strangest segulah you've ever heard of? Last week, I picked up a book entitled To Fill The Earth: 277 Segulos and Advice on Fertility Issues, In Personal Consultation with Maran HaRav Chaim*

*Kanievsky, Shlita. Opening it at random, my eye fell upon the following segulah, in a chapter entitled*

*"Segulos Pertaining To Food":*

*"A dried pig's testicle, pulverized and ground up, will help a woman conceive. If the right testicle is used, a male child will be born; if the left testicle is used, a female child will be born (Segulos Yisrael, ma'areches os ayin, from the sefer Mar'eh Yeladim)."*

*Note that there is no kashrus problem here, for reasons that are too complex to get into right now. Still, I highly doubt that pig's testicles, whether the right or the left, are actually directly efficacious at causing a woman to conceive. Of course, they are equally unlikely to cause any harm (unlike one of the other segulos mentioned - carrying mercury in one's pocket).*

*What about the psychological effects? Placebos can be immensely powerful, perhaps even to the point of helping a woman conceive. But I wonder if advising people to run after all kinds of weird segulos has a net psychological benefit. Furthermore, strengthening the segulah mindset may put people who are in a difficult situation, and thus vulnerable, at risk of being financially preyed upon by those who sell charms, witchcraft, blessings, and who psychologically terrify these poor people.*

*On balance, I think that if one is advising people on spiritual acts to do to accompany their medical efforts, the things to recommend are those that are part of classical Judaism: repentance, prayer and charity. The pig's testicles are probably best left with the pig*

For me it is so frustrating to see so many people today pursuing strange segulot.. Now perhaps the rest of the book has others easier to relate to. I know Rabbi Abittan was totally against these things. He would beg people to stick with Torah and Mitzvos. I also find it difficult that Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievsky's name be associated with this book. I am fairly sure that this one with the pigs must have come from some other Rabbis.

Mordechai Tzion posted a note on Segulot that Work. These I'm certain Rabbi Abittan would have recommended.

*Since people today are searching day and night for Segulot, inventing new ones and paying a fortune for them, we decided to collect all of the proven Segulot which we have heard from our Rabbis:*

*Segulah for Shalom Bayit*

*A husband should help his wife or, more precisely, the two of them should take care of the family's needs together since theirs is a shared life. Satmar Chasidim end Shabbat very late due to a long Seudat Shelishit and the Rebbe's talk. Once, on a Saturday night, the Satmar Rebbe saw that one of his Chasidim was the last one in the Beit Midrash and was folding his Talit with great precision. The Rebbe asked him what he was doing. The Chasid said that he saw in various books that care in folding one's Talit is a Segulah for Shalom Bayit. The Rebbe responded: A better Segulah is to go home and help your wife wash dishes (And others say this incident in the name of Ha-Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, Rosh Yeshivat Mir. The book "U-Piryo Matok - Bereshit" of Ha-Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, p. 140).*

*Segulah for the Education of One's Children  
A good education, since for education, one has to work and invest.*

*Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievski related that someone once came to Ha-Griz Soloveitchik – the Brisker Rav – and asked for a blessing that his son should be a Torah scholar and G-d-fearing. The Rav said that he will be a Torah scholar based on how much you learn with him, and he will be G-d-fearing based on how many tears his mother sheds during Davening for him (Minchat Todah p. 89).*

*Segulah for Learning Torah  
Learn consistently and without interruption.  
Ha-Rav Herschel Schachter relates that after he was married, he and his wife did not have children, and they therefore decided to visit Eretz Yisrael. He was told that it is worthwhile to receive a blessing from the Steipler Gaon. The way it worked was that one bought a book from him and at the same time asked for a blessing. The Steipler was hard of hearing, and one would therefore communicate with him by writing on a notepad. The Steipler yelled in Yiddish: What can I do for you? Rav Schachter wrote that he wants to buy Kehilat Yaakov on Kiddushin, the Massechet they were then learning in Yeshiva. He bought it, received the change and said that the Steipler could keep the change as a donation. The Steipler said that he did not need the money, business is business. Then Rav Schachter asked for a blessing for children, and he blessed him. The Steipler asked: What else can I do for you? Rav Schachter said that he was learning in Kolel, and is it possible to receive a blessing for success in learning? The Steipler said: All the blessings in the world will not help. Rather sit and learn and you will succeed.*

*Segulah for Debts*

*If someone has debts, he should spend less than he earns and not rely on the miracle of overcoming the rules of mathematics.*

*The Tur wrote that one should limit his expenses. And the Mishnah Berurah wrote that this is a harsh criticism against those who are enticed to spend money on luxuries without seeing the consequences, which in the end will lead to theft and disgrace (Biur Halachah chap. 529). One should plan well.*

*Segulah for a Long Life*

*"Who is the man that desires life and loves days of seeing good? Let him guard his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking evil." Tehillim 34:13- 14.*

*Segulah against Traffic Accidents*

*Driving carefully and performing kindnesses to those who need a ride.*

*And the Belzer Rebbe – Ha-Rav Aharon Rokeach – also gave the Segulah that if one follows the traffic laws with the strictures of the 10 Commandments, and also gives rides to those who need them, in the merit of these kindnesses which he does on the road, he will be saved from any bad occurrence (Shut Shevet Ha-Kehati 5:241).*

*All of these pieces of advice can be found in Ha-Rav Chaim Kanievsky's answer to the question: How do we know which Segulot are true? - "I only know that which is written in the Shulchan Aruch" (Segulot Raboteinu p. 321). And the Belzer Rebbe said that there is no greater Segulah than "Yirat Hashem" (Fear of Hashem), as it says (Devarim 28:58): "If you do not observe all of the words of the law, which are written in this book, to fear this Glorious and Awesome Name of Hashem, your G-d" (Shut Az Nedbaru 1:79 #179. Beit Baruch 1, 405. Brought in Shalmei Yehudah chap. 10 note #41).*

So there you have. A whole slew of segolot.

Lets close with one more. Seven or eight years ago, I noted in these pages that I had just spoken with my daughter Aryana who was in Israel with Rabbi Diamond for her senior trip at the time. She had returned from Kever Rachel and we were talking about the red string and how we relate it to Rachel Imeynu, protection from the evil eye and a segulah for a barren woman. Although we dismiss the power of a red string sold by Kabbalah centers, Madonna, Target and the internet (yes, Target was really selling red strings back then); there is definitely something in recalling the merit and deeds of our mother Rachel which would could serve as a blessing and a protection.

Whenever I think of the Red String, I am reminded that Beryl Wein once noted that the great hope for the New York Yankees at third base in the mid eighties was a guy named Mike Pagliarulo. But Mike Pagliarulo had bad luck getting injured for the season one year, then again the following year. During spring training of the third year he held a press conference. The reporters asked how concerned he was about getting injured again. He lifted his hand to show the red string bracelet his mother brought back from Italy. "It's a special good luck charm from Sicily to protect me from injury and the evil eye". Did it work? Who knows. It was about the last we heard from Mike Pagliarulo. Neither he, nor the Yankees had any luck during the 80's. He manned the hot corner and they lost games. And I highly doubt that Sicilian Thread came from Rachel's Tomb! And as I wrote a few years ago, if indeed this is a Sicilian custom as Mike Pagliarulo explained, it does help me understand why there are so many red ribbons tied to rear view mirrors in cars parked along 86th Street in Brooklyn. Fuhgeddaboutit!

I remember going to Rachel's Tomb with my wife when we first got married. I remember her circling the tomb seven times with the red string. At the time I figured the red has some connection to European folklore, much like the turquoise relates to middle eastern folklore.

I often discussed this with Rabbi Abittan, z'sl, the red string, the blue beads, the hamsa. If these are customs, do we keep them or discount them as pagan influence creeping in?

String or not, there is definitely something in recalling the merit and deeds of our mother Rachel which could serve as a blessing and a protection. Here was a woman who was willing to give up everything to protect her sister from being hurt. Such self sacrifice and care is the complete opposite of jealousy associated with the evil eye. If we remind ourselves to emulate her behavior, then we will have the true antidote to the evil eye. So if you want to wear the string and recall that it is not the string that offers protection, but our own behavior in trying to emulate the life and deeds of Rachel our mother, than in her merit, it is Hashem who protects us and no one else.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

PS ... We would like to introduce you the Sabra Report put out by Irving Safdieh. The Sabra Report is a weekly newsletter intended to stimulate conversation about Israel by recapping major events

& providing historical context. Our conversation points are meant to encourage discussion amongst friends and family. Visit [sabrareport.com](http://sabrareport.com) to subscribe and learn more. We are attaching this week's PDF version of the newsletter.

### **What Iran's hostile reaction to the Parchin issue means for the nuclear deal**

**By David Albright August 10 at 5:24 PM**

*David Albright is founder and president of the Institute for Science and International Security.*

Chico Marx said: "Who you gonna believe? Me or your own eyes?" Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said over the weekend that my organization, the Institute for Science and International Security, was spreading lies when we published satellite imagery that showed renewed, concerning activity at the Parchin military site near Tehran. This site is linked by Western intelligence and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to past work on nuclear weapons. But like Chico, instead of acknowledging the concern, the Iranians chose to deny the visible evidence in commercial satellite imagery. Iran's comments would be mirthful if the topic were not so serious.

Zarif is also calling U.S. intelligence officials and members of Congress liars. They are the original source of the information both about renewed activity at Parchin and concerns about that activity. All we did was publish satellite imagery showing this activity and restate the obvious concern.

Moreover, this information about renewed activity at Parchin does not come from opponents of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action negotiated between the United States, five other world powers and Iran, as Zarif suggested. We are neutral on whether the agreement should be implemented and have made that position clear for weeks. The U.S. intelligence community is hardly opposed to the deal. Iran's attempts to dismiss this concern as the work of the deal's foes also is just wrong.

Concern about Parchin has become more urgent now that there is a debate raging over whether the IAEA will have adequate access to this site under the terms of its deal with Iran. It would be irresponsible not to worry about reports that suggest that Iran could be again sanitizing the site to thwart environmental sampling that could reveal past nuclear weapons activities there. This concern is further heightened because Iran has demanded to do this sampling itself instead of letting the IAEA do it. Such an arrangement is unprecedented and risky, and will be even more so if Iran continues to sanitize the site. In the cases of the Iranian Kalaye Electric site and the North Korean plutonium separation plant at

Yongbyon, the success of sampling that showed undeclared activities depended on samples being taken at non-obvious locations identified during previous IAEA visits inside buildings. The IAEA will not be able to visit Parchin until after the samples are taken, and it remains doubtful that the inspectors will be able to take additional samples.

Some of this can be written off to Zarif's volatility. At one point during the negotiations, he yelled so loudly at Secretary of State John F. Kerry that those outside the room could hear him. He obviously angers easily. But he is also one of the more reasonable Iranian government officials. I can remember in the late 1990s discussions with Iranian government and nuclear officials in New York where the Iranians vehemently stated, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that they did not have any gas centrifuge programs. I was presenting the evidence that they did, in fact, have a centrifuge program, one in fact aided by Pakistan, and at one of these meetings, Zarif quietly said to me that he had always told me that Iran had the entire fuel cycle — technical language admitting to an enrichment program. His willingness to admit the obvious gave me hope that the crisis over Iran's program could be solved diplomatically. But on Parchin, his words appear to reflect Iranian government intransigence on its past nuclear weapons program. Its action is an assault on the integrity and prospects of the nuclear deal.

Iran's reaction shows that it may be drawing a line at Parchin. Resolving the Parchin issue is central to the IAEA's effort to resolve concerns about Iran's past work on nuclear weapons by the end of the year, but Parchin is not the only site and activity involved in this crucial issue. The IAEA needs to visit other sites and interview a range of scientists and officials. Instead of allowing this needed access, Iran appears to be continuing its policy of total denial, stating that the concerns are merely Western falsifications and fantasies. The United States recently reasserted that it believes Iran had a nuclear weapons program and stated that it knows a considerable amount about it. So, if Iran sticks to its strategy, one can expect an impasse that includes Iran refusing to allow the IAEA the access it needs to sites and scientists within the coming months.

U.S. officials have stated that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action requires Iran to address concerns about its past work on nuclear weapons prior to the lifting of sanctions. However, Iran may argue otherwise, and one could easily conclude that its recent actions are the start of such a reinterpretation of the agreement. The United States and Congress should clearly and publicly confirm, and Congress should support with legislation, that if Iran does not address the IAEA's concerns about the

past military dimensions of its nuclear programs, U.S. sanctions will not be lifted. To do otherwise is to make a mockery of the nuclear deal.

### Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading

While the first 3 parshiot in Sefer Devarim generally dealt with Moshe's rebuke of Benei Israel and advice before they entered Israel the next 3 parshiot generally deal with mitsvot and contain the bulk of the mitsvot found in Sefer Devarim. Parashat Re'eh deals with mitsvot relevant to living in the land of Israel. Parashat Shoftim deals with mitsvot related to establishing a community / society. And Parashat Ki Teseh deals with mitsvot relevant to relationships.

In Perek 12, Pasook 21, Hashem tells Benei Israel "kiy irhak mimecha ha'makon (when you get to Israel and the place to bring korbanot becomes far from where you live), .... ve'zabachta mibkarecha oo'misonecha asher natan Hashem lecha (you may slaughter from the cows and sheep that Hashem has given you) ka'asher siviticha (like I told you), ve'achalta bisharecha be'kol avat nafshecha (and you may eat them in your gates as you desire)". Interestingly, this pasook is the heter to eat meat that is not brought as a korban (this was not permissible in the midbar). But an even more interesting point here is that Hashem says slaughter the animal "like I commanded you". And nowhere in the Torah does Hashem tell us the rules of how to do shechita. So what does it mean ka'asher siviticha? When did Hashem tell us how to do shechita? Rashi explains that the pasook is referring to the Oral Torah which was told to Moshe at har Sinai. Thus this is a foundational pasook as it speaks to the fact that along with the written Torah that Moshe Rabenu received at har Sinai was an oral transmission that accompanied the Torah.

Re'eh - Mitsvot relevant to living in the land of Israel  
 1- Benei Israel again is told they will get beracha if they follow the mitsvot and curses if they do not. The mitsvah to destroy the Gods of the goyim, korbanot in mishkan shilo, laws of bamot before mishkan shilo.  
 2- Korbanot in the Beit Hamikdash. The heter to eat meat that is not brought on the mizbeyach.  
 3- Avodah Zara; a warning not to follow the avodah zara of the goyim in Israel, false prophets, one who entices you to do avodah zara, laws regarding a city of avoda zara.  
 4- Kashroot; the permitted and forbidden animals, fish, and birds, meat & milk  
 5- The halachot of maaser sheni  
 6- Canceling loans in the shemita year. The mitsvah of sedaka. Laws of a Jewish slave.

7- Hekdesh by a bechor animal. Pesach, Shavout and Succoth, the mitsvah to make a pilgrimage to Yerushalayim

Perek 12, Pasook 23, includes the commandment not to eat blood. The next pasook goes on to say "lo to'chelenu (don't eat it) le'maan itav lach oo'lebanecha acharecha (so that it will be good for you and your children after you)". Why is Hashem telling us it will be good for us? Why is Hashem telling us that it will be good for us if we don't eat blood? Rashi addresses this question and notes that the Torah here is teaching us the amazing reward for a mitzvah. If the reward for staying away from eating blood, which a person has no desire for, is le'maan itav lach (that it will be good for us), how much greater will the reward be for staying away from stealing and arayot and other things that our nefesh truly does desire! Every time we hold back from something we desire to do or to look at we have to remember there is a great reward waiting for us in shamayim for this act. If the reward for an easy mitzvah is great how much greater is the reward for a difficult one!!

#### EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

**"Giving, you shall give him and let your heart not feel bad when you give him for because of this matter Hashem your G-d will bless you in all your deeds." (Debarim 15:10)**

A true story illustrates the point of the above verse. Two men were waiting at a bus stop on a steamy hot day. They just missed the bus that comes twice in an hour. They couldn't take the heat and were considering hiring a car service that they couldn't afford. At that moment someone from their neighborhood pulled up in a minivan. He jumped out and rearranged his items in the back and offered them a ride in his air-conditioned minivan. They were so grateful and couldn't stop thanking him. He told them no need to thank, it's his father's car and he gave it to him on condition that he shares it with others. He was not young, and they realized that his "Father" was Hashem!

This driver recognized the truth that all of what we have actually belongs to Hashem and is given to us to use it appropriately. The Apter Rav zt"l says that whenever a person sees that he has more money than he actually needs for his living expenses, he should realize that the extra money isn't his, but that of the poor. That's the meaning of our pasuk above. Give the poor man what is actually his, for it was in order that you should be able to give him that

Hashem blesses you with more than you actually need.

The Hafess Hayim says that when the Sages say that one shouldn't give more than a fifth of his possessions to sedakah they are not speaking to the wealthy. The reason for the rule is that the prospective donor's own life and basic needs come before those of another. "Your life comes first, but not your wealth."

The Ben Ish Hai interprets our pasuk on another level. There are some individuals who give very generous amounts to sedakah and resent what they perceive as the failure of others, including some far wealthier individuals, to give "their fair share." However, the failure of some individuals to pass this difficult test is what makes the actions of those who do rise above so much more praiseworthy. He therefore explains the pasuk above that says, "For because of this matter." The very fact that you are giving while others aren't, "Hashem your G-d will bless you in all your deeds." Rabbi Reuven Semah

**"If your brother entices you saying, 'Let us go and serve gods which you have not known.' (Debarim 13:7)**

The Torah seems to emphasize that these other gods which are forbidden are not known to us. What is the difference or relevance whether the other gods are known or not?

The Hatam Sofer points out something which is especially important in our days. There are always people who will propose ideologies which are considered revolutionary. Each one will make a claim that his way is unique, his way is novel and his way will be the answer to all of man's problems. Even though others tried it and failed, they will say that this is guaranteed success. The Torah predicted this from way back and showed how all these "new gods" are all false, just like the old ones. Just like we see new claims to dieting and other fads which are said to be easy and quick, and yet we know it's impossible to do anything without effort, so too when it comes to Torah. None of the "isms", the non-Torah ideologies have worked in the past and none will work in the future. There is only the true Torah way of life, which involves commitment, effort and perseverance, but ultimately brings with it success, happiness and blessing! Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

#### CLAIMS

The modern consumer is bombarded with claims. Every product is declared to be the best, the cheapest, the strongest, the most effective in its class. After purchasing the "Super, new and

improved" item, the buyer is often disappointed with its good – but not great – performance.

Expectations determine satisfaction. If you anticipate 100%, you will be dissatisfied with 95%, while someone who expects 75% will be elated with 85%. That's the way the human psyche is built. The same result, the same quantity, can be a fulfillment of one person's hopes and dreams, but leave someone else feeling empty. It's all a matter of perspective.

It's fine to say that you can control your reactions by adjusting your personal expectations. But how can you satisfy the expectations of others regarding your own performance?

People can satisfy their teachers, parents, or bosses by under-promising and over-delivering. A customer or client does business with those who deliver what they say they are going to deliver. How close someone comes to delivering what was promised is the yardstick for consumer satisfaction.

We are all very accustomed to people who over-promise and under-deliver. "Trust me," they plead. "You will be satisfied." Then they fall short when it comes time to carry out their exaggerated claims.

If you want to be liked and want to build successful relationships in your business and social circles, learn this simple technique. Do as the Sage Shammai suggested, "say little and do a lot (Pirkei ABot 1:16). If you under-promise and over-deliver, your performance rating in the eyes of others will skyrocket. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

#### **RABBI ELI MANSOUR**

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[MishnaBerura.com](http://MishnaBerura.com), [LearnTorah.com](http://LearnTorah.com)  
The True Reward for Misvot**

In the opening Pesukim of Parashat Re'eh, Moshe Rabbenu explains to Beneh Yisrael that they have the option to choose either "Beracha" (blessing) or "Kelala" (curse). He says that the Beracha comes if they observe the Misvot, while the Kelala results from neglecting the Misvot.

It is worth taking note of Moshe's terminology in presenting these two options. He says, "The blessing – that you heed the commands of Hashem your G-d... And the curse – if you do not heed the commands of Hashem your G-d." Significantly, Moshe says that the Kelala will come "if" the people disobey the Torah's laws, but when it comes to the blessing, he says that the blessing is "that you heed the commands." The implication is that whereas the curse is the result of neglecting the Misvot, the blessing is not the result of observing the Misvot, but

rather the observance itself. Meaning, when we observe the Torah, that itself is the blessing.

This concept becomes clearer in light of the Rambam's comments in Hilchot Teshuva regarding the reward for Misvot. The Rambam writes that the true reward for Misvot is given not here in our world, but rather in the next world. The only reward for Misvot in this world, the Rambam explains, is the ability to perform additional Misvot. The more we observe, the more G-d gives us the ability and wherewithal to observe. He grants us the financial security, health, energy and peace of mind that we need to focus on our religious obligations and pursue Misvot. Quite obviously, a person who is physically frail, who is beset by financial worries, or who is threatened by enemies cannot properly devote himself to Torah. Hashem rewards a person for his Misva observance by creating favorable conditions for his continued observance, by granting him peace, security and prosperity.

This is the meaning of the Pasuk: the blessing we earn by observing the Torah is "that you heed the commands" – our continued ability to devote ourselves to Torah.

Nothing in this world is capable of properly rewarding a person for even a single Misva he performs. G-d cannot reward us in this world because the blessings and joys of this world are insufficient. It is only in the next world, which offers delights and joys which we cannot even imagine, that we can receive our due reward.

It is told that once, during a period of food shortage, a man approached the Hafetz Haim and asked if he could devote his Misva of Tefillin one day as a merit for the shortage to end. The Hafetz Haim responded in the negative. The man figured that perhaps one day's Misva of Tefillin is insufficient, so he asked if he could earmark two days of wearing Tefillin for this purpose. Once again, the Hafetz Haim declined. He explained his response by way of an analogy to a child who enters a candy store and asks to buy a five-cent piece of candy. All the child has is a \$100 bill, so he asks the storekeeper to give him \$99.95 change. Clearly, the storekeeper wouldn't bother. He would rather just give the small piece of candy to the child for free than have to bother to give all that change.

Even a single Misva, the Hafetz Haim explained, is worth far, far more than all the most delicious food in the world. Performing a Misva in exchange for food – even during a time of famine – is like paying \$100 (and much more) for a five-cent piece of candy.

Hashem would not accept that. He is prepared to end the food shortage "for free," and will wait to pay us our rewards for the Misvot we perform until the next world, when we can receive all that we truly deserve.

**Rabbi Wein**  
**FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE**

There is one thing that we can all agree upon and it is that the existence and policies of the State of Israel, no matter which party is in power, makes Jews the world over feel uncomfortable. There always is some untoward incident, bad behavior, foolish governmental policy or controversial and aggressive stance that makes many Jews squirm in their seats.

Because of this discomfort, there are many Jews, representing all shades of religious observance, political belief and personal inclination, who in their heart of hearts just wish that Israel would go away and not perturb them any longer. There are those in the observant Jewish world that simply cannot come to terms with the fact that the state was created in a seemingly rational and ordinary way. Nor can they come to terms with who the leaders of that state were and are.

This is also true for the atheistic and agnostic Left – a powerful and pervasive force in Jewish society here in Israel and throughout the Jewish world – that cannot come to terms with the fact that, in the main, the Jewish state is quite Jewish in outlook, behavior, and values, much to its chagrin and disappointment.

So even aside from the current controversy and fallout regarding Israel's position on the Iranian nuclear situation, there still is plenty of room for discomfort amongst many Jews regarding the State of Israel. And this discomfort expresses itself in many different ways, ranging from outright Israel-bashing in public forums and throughout the media, to subtleties regarding the absence of wholehearted recognition and the acceptance that the State of Israel is worthy of our prayers and support. In short, the State of Israel remains a disturbing presence in the world and Jewish society.

Lest this phenomenon remain completely mysterious and inexplicable to us, I would be bold enough to suggest that to a certain extent this was the case in Second Temple times as well. Most of the Jewish world then did not live in the Land of Israel. Major Jewish communities existed in Babylonia and Egypt as well as in Rome and North Africa.

In Alexandria in Egypt the Jews even built their own Temple to compete with the consecrated one located

in Jerusalem. The Jewish community in Rome cowered in fear and shame while their brethren in the Land of Israel struggled against their Roman oppressors. It was not easy or pleasant to be a Jew in the Roman Empire during the first century of the Common Era.

One need only read the works of Josephus and of Philo centuries later, in order to sense the anguish of these Jews struggling to remain Jewish in a most alien and hostile environment. Being a Jew in the Greek city of Alexandria or in the Roman city of Rome was an uncomfortable experience.

Throughout the exile of the Jewish people the world over, this discomfort has been experienced again and again. It existed before there was a State of Israel, though the founding of the state focused and intensified the problem. Individual Jews always find it difficult to remain loyal to the Torah in a world and society that, in the main, rejects and denigrates it.

As the assimilationists in the Jewish world become farther and farther removed from: Torah knowledge and values, their animosity towards the State of Israel becomes more public and intense. Muslim terrorism against Jews and the State of Israel is almost always given a pass while pietistic handwringing over alleged Jewish wrongdoing receives banner headlines and universal condemnation.

These Jews are ashamed of being Jewish. In their tortured existence they lash out at themselves, all the while proclaiming their noble compassionate values and unique wisdom. They are very uncomfortable with the government and people of Israel.

Herman Wouk in his masterful book, *This Is My God*, described a scene in the lobby of a magnificent Manhattan skyscraper where a completely assimilated Jew suddenly spies a Chasidic Jew, beard, garb and all, about to enter the elevator with him. That combination of horror, surprise, shame, guilt and curiosity so graphically described by Wouk is a true picture of how much of the Jewish world today views the State of Israel. The existence of the State of Israel imposes harsh choices and uncomfortable decisions upon Jews the world over. Apparently, this is what Heaven intended, discomfort and all.

**Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks**  
**The Second Tithe and**  
**the Making of a Strong Society**

Biblical Israel from the time of Joshua until the destruction of the Second Temple was a



predominantly agricultural society. Accordingly, it was through agriculture that the Torah pursued its religious and social programme. It has three fundamental elements.

The first was the alleviation of poverty. For many reasons the Torah accepts the basic principles of what we now call a market economy. But though market economics is good at creating wealth it is less good at distributing it equitably. Thus the Torah's social legislation aimed, in the words of Henry George, "to lay the foundation of a social state in which deep poverty and degrading want should be unknown."

Hence the institutions that left parts of the harvest for the poor: leket, shikchah and peah, fallen ears of grain, the forgotten sheaf and the corners of the field. There was the produce of the seventh year, which belonged to no-one and everyone, and maaser ani, the tithe for the poor given in the third and sixth years of the seven year cycle. Shmittah and yovel, the seventh and fiftieth years with their release of debts, manumission of slaves and the return of ancestral property to its original owners, restored essential elements of the economy to their default position of fairness. So the first principle was: no one should be desperately poor.

The second, which included terumah and maaser rishon, the priestly portion and the first tithe, went to support, respectively, the priests and the Levites. These were a religious elite within the nation in biblical times whose role was to ensure that the service of God, especially in the Temple, continued at the heart of national life. They had other essential functions, among them education and the administration of justice, as teachers and judges.

The third was more personal and spiritual. There were laws such as the bringing of first-fruits to Jerusalem, and the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot, as they marked seasons in the agricultural year, that had to do with driving home the lessons of gratitude and humility. They taught that the land belongs to God and we are merely His tenants and guests. The rain, the sun and the earth itself yield their produce only because of His blessing. Without such regular reminders, societies slowly but inexorably become materialistic and self-satisfied. Rulers and elites forget that their role is to serve the people, and instead they expect the people to serve them. That is how nations at the height of their success begin their decline, unwittingly laying the ground for their defeat.

All this makes one law in our parsha – the law of the

Second Tithe – hard to understand. As we noted above, in the third and sixth year of the septennial cycle, this was given to the poor. However, in the first, second, fourth and fifth years, it was to be taken by the farmer to Jerusalem and eaten there in a state of purity:

You shall eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your God at the place He will choose as a dwelling for His Name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always. (Deut. 14: 23)

If the farmer lived at a great distance from Jerusalem, he was allowed an alternative:

You may exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the Lord your God will choose. Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. (ibid., 25-26)

The problem is obvious. The second tithe did not go to poor, or to the priests and Levites, so it was not part of the first or second principle. It may have been part of the third, to remind the farmer that the land belonged to God, but this too seems unlikely. There was no declaration, as happened in the case of first-fruits, and no specific religious service, as took place on the festivals. Other than being in Jerusalem, the institution of the second tithe seemingly had no cognitive or spiritual content. What then was the logic of the second tithe?

The sages,[1] focussing on the phrase, "so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God" said that it was to encourage people to study. Staying for a while in Jerusalem while they consumed the tithe or the food bought with its monetary substitute, they would be influenced by the mood of the holy city, with its population engaged either in Divine service or sacred study.[2] This would have been much as happens today for synagogue groups that arrange study tours to Israel.

Maimonides, however, gives a completely different explanation.

The second tithe was commanded to be spent on food in Jerusalem: in this way the owner was compelled to give part of it away as charity. As he was not able to use it otherwise than by way of eating and drinking, he must have easily been induced to give it gradually away. This rule brought multitudes together in one place, and strengthened the bond of love and brotherhood among the children of men.[3]

For Maimonides, the second tithe served a social purpose. It strengthened civil society. It created bonds of connectedness and friendship among the people. It encouraged visitors to share the blessings of the harvest with others. Strangers would meet and become friends. There would be an atmosphere of camaraderie among the pilgrims. There would be a sense of shared citizenship, common belonging and collective identity. Indeed Maimonides says something similar about the festivals themselves:

The use of keeping festivals is plain. Man derives benefit from such assemblies: the emotions produced renew the attachment to religion; they lead to friendly and social intercourse among the people. [4]

The atmosphere in Jerusalem, says Maimonides, would encourage public spiritedness. Food would always be plentiful, since the fruit of trees in their fourth year, the tithe of cattle, and the corn, wine and oil of the second tithe would all have been brought there. They could not be sold; they could not be kept for the next year; therefore much would be given away in charity, especially (as the Torah specifies) to "the Levite, the stranger, the orphan and the widow."

Writing about America in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville found that he had to coin a new word for the phenomenon he encountered there and saw as one of the dangers in a democratic society. The word was individualism. He defined it as "a mature and calm feeling which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart with his family and his friends," leaving "society at large to itself." [5] Tocqueville believed that democracy encouraged individualism. As a result, people would leave the business of the common good entirely to the government, which would become ever more powerful, eventually threatening freedom itself.

It was a brilliant insight. Two recent examples illustrate the point. The first was charted by Robert Putnam, the great Harvard sociologist, in his study of Italian towns in the 1990s. [6] During the 1970s all Italian regions were given local government on equal terms, but over the next twenty years, some prospered, others stagnated; some had effective governance and economic growth, while others were mired in corruption and underachievement. The key difference, he found, was the extent to which the regions had an active and public-spirited citizenry.

The other is the experiment, known as the "free rider game," designed to test public spiritedness within a group. There is always a potential conflict between

self interest and the common good. It is tempting to take advantage of public facilities without paying your fair share (for example, travelling on public transport without paying for a ticket: hence the term "free rider"). You then obtain the benefit without bearing a fair share of the costs. When this happens, trust is eroded and public spiritedness declines.

In the game, each of the participants is given \$10 and invited to contribute to a common pot. The money in the pot is then multiplied, say, three times, and the amount is equally divided between the players. If each contributes \$10, each will receive \$30. However, if one player chooses not to contribute anything, then if there are six players, there will be \$50 in the pot and \$150 after multiplication. Each of the players will then receive \$25, but one will now have \$35: the money from the pot plus the \$10 with which he started.

When played over several rounds, the other players soon notice that not everyone is contributing equally. The unfairness makes them all contribute less to the shared pot. The group suffers and no one gains. If, however, the other players are given the chance to punish the suspected cheat by paying a dollar to make him lose three dollars, they tend to do so. The free rider stops free-riding, and everyone benefits.

As I was writing this essay, the Greek economy was in a state of collapse. Years earlier, in 2008, an economist, Benedikt Herrmann, had tested people in different cities throughout the world to see whether there were geographical and cultural variations in the way people played the free rider game. He found that in places like Boston, Copenhagen, Bonn and Seoul, voluntary contributions to the common pot were high. They were much lower in Istanbul, Riyadh and Minsk, where the economy was less developed. But they were lowest of all in Athens, Greece. What is more, when players in Athens penalized the free riders, those penalized did not stop free-riding. Instead they took revenge by punishing their punishers. [7] Where public spiritedness is low, society fails to cohere and the economy fails to grow.

Hence the brilliance of Maimonides' insight that the second tithe existed to create social capital, meaning bonds of trust and reciprocal altruism among the population, which came about through sharing food with strangers in the holy precincts of Jerusalem. Loving God helps make us better citizens and more generous people, thus countering the individualism that eventually makes democracies fail.

[1] Sifrei ad loc. A more extended version of this interpretation can be found in the Sefer ha-Chinnukh,

command 360.

[2] See also Tosafot, Baba Batra 21a, s.v. Ki MiTzion.

[3] The Guide for the Perplexed III: 39.

[4] Ibid, III: 46.

[5] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Book II, ch. 2.

[6] Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Nanetti. Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993.

[7] Herrmann, B., C. Thoni, and S. Gachter. "Antisocial Punishment Across Societies." Science 319.5868 (2008): 1362-367.

#### **AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL**

"And you shall eat there before Hashem your G-d, and you shall rejoice, you and your household" (14:26)

To speak in prayer or praise seems more proper "Before Hashem", but to eat before Hashem seems animalistic and insolent. But this form of service "before Hashem" is repeatedly emphasized.

"You shall eat (the Pesach lamb) in the place that Hashem your G-d shall choose" (16:7).

"And you shall rejoice before Hashem your G-d" (16:11) (which means to eat & drink on the Shavuot festival).

"And you shall rejoice on your festival" (16:14) on Succot. "And you shall rejoice" (26:11) at the Bikurim procedure.

We learn therefrom the Torah lesson that physical pleasure of food and drink can be employed to enhance our emotions of gratitude and love toward Hashem.

"There is no persuasion, except by eating and drinking" (Hullin 4B). We become more receptive and amiable when we are satiated by eating and drinking due to the reaction of enzymes, as planned by Hashem.

Thus the Shabbat meals can be utilized to emphasize the lessons of:

- 1) the Creation of the Universe ex-nihilo/from nothing,
- 2) the Creation of the Universe for Kindliness,
- 3) and the Covenant "'Between Me and the sons of Israel" (Shemot 31:17)

And even our daily food can serve us as a powerful stimulus to love the Giver.

"And you shall eat and be satiated and you bless Hashem your G-d" (8:10).

Without being happy, it is more difficult to be thankful to Hashem.

Quoted from "Fortunate Nation" by Rabbi A. Miller

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# The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

## Shadow of Israel's pullout from Gaza hangs heavy 10 years on

LUKE BAKER, REUTERS, AUGUST 10<sup>TH</sup> 2015

### Recap:

Israel's disengagement from Gaza still stokes intense emotions 10 years later.

### The Context:

- ✧ Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005 in hopes to bring forth peace with the Palestinians.
- ✧ Within four months of the withdrawal Hamas won elections to govern Gaza, beginning ten years of rocket attacks targeting Israel.
- ✧ Israel & Egypt imposed a blockade on Gaza border crossings to stem the flow of weapons into the territory. Despite Hamas hostility, Israel maintains a humanitarian corridor to transfer food, water and electricity into Gaza [1].
- ✧ The withdrawal cost Israel \$3 billion and much internal strife as it uprooted its settlements, expelled its citizens and withdrew its military from Gaza [2]. Palestinians celebrated the withdrawal by burning four synagogues [3].
- ✧ Jewish philanthropists donated 3,000 greenhouses, purchased from the departing Israeli settlers, to the Palestinian Authority [4]. The greenhouses generated \$75 million & employed 4,000 Gazans [5] but within days of the withdrawal the greenhouses were looted. Gaza currently has the world's worst performing economy [6].
- ✧ A Palestinian precondition for peace is Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, which is currently home to 400,000 Jews and 2.3 million Palestinians. Most Israelis oppose any West Bank withdrawals since it will not guarantee greater stability with the Palestinians.

### Conversation Points:

- ✧ Based on what we've learned from the Gaza disengagement, what could be expected if Israel withdraws completely from the West Bank?
- ✧ Would public opinion finally shift in Israel's favor if it withdrew from the West Bank?
- ✧ Why didn't the Palestinian leadership work to ensure a successful implementation of governance in Gaza?
- ✧ Is Israel's Gaza blockade justified?

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## Doctors refusing to treat hunger striker leave us 2 choices: Let him go or let him die

JPOST.COM STAFF, THE JERUSALEM POST, AUGUST 10<sup>TH</sup> 2015

**Recap:**

Mohammad Allan, a Palestinian prisoner & hunger striker, was transferred to an Israeli hospital to be force-fed.

**☆ The Context:**

- ☆ In July, the Israeli parliament passed a law legalizing force-feeding prisoners on hunger strike. The Israeli Medical Association condemned the law but the military deemed it necessary since "hunger strikes of terrorists in prison have become a tool to pressure and threaten the state of Israel to release terrorists". In July, a Palestinian militant was released from prison after a 56-day hunger strike [8].
- ☆ Mohammad Allan is a member of Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian terrorist group [7]. Allan has been transferred to Barzilai Hospital for force-feeding after a 55-day hunger strike.
- ☆ Israeli doctors at Barzilai refuse to comply with force-feeding Allan, leaving the Israeli government with the choice of letting him go free or letting him die.
- ☆ 83-year-old civil rights campaigner, Bapu Surat Singh, is currently on hunger strike in India and has been force-fed multiple times by Indian authorities [9]. A search of Bapu Surat Singh on The New York Times website yielded zero results.

**Conversation Points:**

- ☆ Israeli law does not limit the use of force-feeding to only Palestinians. Would there be a similar global outcry if the prisoner in question were Jewish or Christian?
- ☆ Should Israel free suspected criminals each time they threaten a hunger strike?
- ☆ Why does world opinion show more concern for an Islamic Jihad Militant than an Indian Civil Rights activist?

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## Paris Recreates Tel Aviv Beaches on Banks of Seine; Israel Boycotters Are Having None of It

SHIRLI SITBON, HAARETZ, AUGUST 10<sup>TH</sup> 2015

**Recap:**

Critics of Israel protest a planned cultural exhibition in Paris.

**The Context:**

- ☆ Paris-Plages is an annual summer event that represents different world cities on the banks of the Seine River in Paris.
- ☆ The decision to include Tel Aviv in Paris-Plages raised controversy amongst France's Muslim population and a petition urging authorities to cancel the Tel Aviv day of the event has gathered more than 16,000 signatures [10]. Paris refuses to cancel the Tel Aviv day.

- ✡ Crif, the umbrella organization of French Jewry, claims that opposing Tel Aviv's participation in Paris-Plages is anti-Semitic since critics don't take interest in other world conflicts.
- ✡ Increasing anti-Semitic attacks by Muslim extremists in France has triggered the emigration of 7,200 French Jews to Israel in 2014 alone [11].

### Conversation Points:

- ✡ Critics argue that including Tel Aviv in this year's Paris-Plages is in bad taste since Jewish extremists murdered a Palestinian toddler in the West Bank just a few weeks ago. Is this a valid argument? Is it justified to penalize an entire nation based on random acts of terror?
  - ✡ The Muslim population in Europe is expected to grow to over 10% by 2050 [12]. What effect will this have on European Jewry?
  - ✡ Is criticism of Israel's participation in Paris-Plages thinly veiled anti-Semitism?
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### Notes:

1. embassies.gov.il
  2. The Washington Post, July 17<sup>th</sup> 2014
  3. NPR, September 12<sup>th</sup> 2005
  4. Associated Press, September 13<sup>th</sup> 2005
  5. NPR, August 15<sup>th</sup> 2005
  6. Associated Press, September 13<sup>th</sup> 2005
  7. New York Times, August 11<sup>th</sup> 2015
  8. BBC, July 30<sup>th</sup> 2015
  9. www.expressandstar.com, August 11<sup>th</sup> 2015
  10. The Guardian, August 10<sup>th</sup> 2015
  11. Fox News, July 31<sup>st</sup> 2015
  12. Pew Research The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050
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**The Sabra Report** is a newsletter intended to stimulate conversation about Israel by recapping major events & providing historical context. Our conversation points are meant to encourage discussion amongst friends and family. **The Sabra Report** is written by Irving Safdieh.

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