

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

KI TESSE

AUGUST 17, 2013

11 ELUL 5773

**DEDICATIONS:** In memory of Rivkah bat Sarah – Rebecca Maslaton Bibi – 12 Elul  
And in memory of George Benson, Gedalya Shlomo Ben Baruch Tzvi z"l 14 Elul

**Candles: 7:35 PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:30 PM – We've moved the time to 7:30 as we've been waiting for guys to show up each week. Please show up by 7:30 sharp so we can have a minyan together. We did this last few weeks and it worked out. Please join us.**

**Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM –Please say Shemah at home by 8:48 AM.  
Tefilah will be preceded by a class at 8:30AM on Hilchot Shabbat with a Sephardic twist.**

**This weeks kiddush by**

**Jack and Patti Azizo in memory of Jack's mother Latifah (Lillian) bat Miriam."**

**And by Elisheva Reinheimer in memory of her husband Steven**

**We also want to thank Elisheva Reinheimer for making a beautiful Seuda Shelishi 2 weeks ago**

**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**

**Children's Shabbat Afternoon Oneg, Age's 6 and up (Under age 6 is welcome with an adult) 6:00 - 7:00**

**We kindly request all parents to pick-up their children or supervise them once Mincha commences**

**6:00 - Shabbat Afternoon Oneg with Rabbi Yosef and Leah; Treats, Stories, Basketball, Hula-hoop, Parsha Quiz, Tefillot, Raffles and Fun! Supervised play during Seudat Shelishit.**

**5:30: Ladies Torah Class at the Lemberger's 1 East Olive.**

**Minha: 7:00 PM –**

**Seudah Shelishi and a Class 7:30with Rabbi Aharon**

**Evening Service (Arbith): 8:25 PM - Shabbat Ends: 8:35PM**

## WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

**Selihot Sunday at 7:15 and Monday through Friday at 6:25 SHARP**

**Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)**

**Daily Hebrew language class follows afterward in the Rabbi's Study**

## WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

**Daily 6:10 AM class – Honest Business Practices**

**Monday Night Class with Rabba Yanai – 7PM**

**Rabbi Yenay drives back and forth from Lakewood, 2 hours each way.**

**If you want to continue this class, please show him your support and be there at 7PM sharp.**

**Men and Women are invited.**

**Tuesday night at 8PM**

**At the home of Chantelle and David Bibi**

**1233 Beech Street in Atlantic Beach**

**We are two weeks away from the High Holidays**

**Please pay your outstanding bills**

**Its crucial at this time that we have your support**

**If you need help with your statement please speak with Hal or Ely**

**We would like to schedule an EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING for Sunday morning at 9AM - August 18<sup>th</sup>**

**At that point we will review and discuss plans for the garden and summarized and then sent to the entire board to review and comment. Board members may wish to discuss this with Synagogue members who have overwhelmingly expressed some concern one way or the other. We want to come to consensus on this as in**

**the 25 years I've been here it's the single issue I have received the most comments on either in favor or against, in appreciation or in anger. Everyone is well intentioned so I am hoping we can work everything out nicely. In addition we must discuss plans for the high Holidays and going forward into 5774.**

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to [ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com)  
 Newsletter archives now at [BenaiAsher.Org](http://BenaiAsher.Org)

Our weekly article is now printed in the Jewish Voice. Please pick up a copy at your local shop or go on line to [JewishVoiceNY.com](http://JewishVoiceNY.com). You can also comment on the articles there and tweet them to your friends.

Follow us on twitter @BenaiAsher for a daily dose of Torah, Israel or something of interest

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

## Editors Notes

### Welcome to the world Baby Ellen Jemal and Baby Chantelle Bibi

#### The Next Link in The Chain

Life comes in stages. First we are children dependent on others and our parents raise us to become first independent with the ability to rely on ourselves and then to become dependable partnering with our spouses in raising our own children. Then it's up to us to realize we raise our children only to at some point sever some of the strings so they too can become self-reliant and they in turn become supportive of others.

Words have great value. But events are so much more powerful.

I have stated before that the first time I think I came to appreciate everything my parents did for my siblings and me was at the moment I held my new born son for the first time.

We have our children and if we are blessed, we form tight bonds with them. We know one day that we'll need to send them out into the world. But until it happens it's just a concept.

Today my life changed for the better. Our daughter in law Lauren gave birth to a beautiful little girl. Our son Jonah became a father. Our children became uncles and aunts and Chantelle and I became grandparents. We sat with Lauren's parents Penny and Morris and shared a moment that is memorialized in time. It was heartwarming listening to Morris while we sat in the waiting room recount the birth of each of his children and grandchildren in exquisite detail, ken yirbu vayaslichu. Whether it was the first or the tenth, it makes no difference. Each is an event that changes our lives.

And what was even more exciting was that my nephew Sammy and his wife Lorraine had their own

beautiful baby girl on Sunday. So baby Jemal and baby Bibi will G-d willing be life long pals separated by only 48 hours and a few city blocks. And the girls will be protected by their cousins, only a few weeks older, my niece Adele and her husband Albert's twin boys, Ruby and David. May Hashem bless and watch over all of them.

As Lauren and Jonah held their baby, one saw such tremendous love between the two of them and this little miracle. This was the next chain in the link that began with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. With the brothers in Egypt and the Exodus. With the conquest of the land. With David, Solomon through Ezra and Nechemiah. From Babylonia through time and place til today.

With less than an hour to go to my dead line and with my head swimming, I went back into my archives as my dad suggested and into my notes for this week's portion.

This week's perasha gives tremendous insight into advising our children as they move towards marriage and then parenthood. As they form the next link in the chain or the next floor in the skyscraper of our ancestors, we are totally dependent on them for any precedence we will have in the future.

This week's Torah portion begins with the Yefat Toar. A soldier brings home a non-Jewish female captive. He must have been attracted only by her external beauty for he certainly has little in common with her and has not taken the time to know her. Even so, he disregards rational and obvious differences and marries her.

The portion continues, "One (wife) beloved and the other hatred." To which Rabbi Shimon comments in the Talmud that, "The Torah is teaching us proper behavior, for in the aftermath of marrying the beautiful captive, he will come to hate her and love another woman."

In his book, Beloved Companions, Rabbi Yisrael Pesach Feinhandler asks the question: Why, if a man marries a woman because of her beauty, will she later come to be despised? Isn't beauty an admirable gift bestowed upon women? We read in, "Charm is false and beauty is empty, but a woman who fears G-d is praiseworthy." Why is charm called false, and beauty empty, and not vice-versa? Why are several famous women such as Rachel, for example, praised for their beauty, if it is not an admirable quality?

He answers: Our Sages tell us "Love that is dependent on something will not last." The meaning

behind this is that love for its own sake is a love based on the desire to give and to share. On the other hand, if one loves for the sake of what the other person has to offer, whether beauty or charm or wealth, this is not true love, and it will not endure. This kind of love is ephemeral, because it is dependent on things which are not always available.

When a person thinks that he found love, he is willing to sacrifice much. He is willing to give up his freedom, his wealth, his reputation, and sometimes all that he has. That is what happens to the soldier who has found a yefat to'ar. Since the beauty of this woman blinds him, he thinks that he has found love and is now willing to marry her despite all the severe consequences involved. His true beloved, whom he left at home when he went out to war, will be angered, his reputation will be stained, and he must witness the disgrace of his new-found love, in having her head shaved and growing her nails. Yet he is willing to suffer all of this because he thinks he is in love.

When he wakes up to reality and sees that it was beauty, and not love, that snared his heart, it will be too late. He is already married and cannot discard her. Her beauty is gone, and he is often left with an unattractive woman with a bad character.

Then comes his hatred for her. He begins to blame her for luring him with her beauty, and he consequently hates her for the predicament in which he now finds himself. That is why our Sages say that in the end he will hate her and love another woman. He will realize the mistake that he made, that his love was "dependent on some external factor," rather than based on the desire to share and give. Then he will regret the aggravation that he caused his original beloved wife, and this will make him love her even more, since her love for survived, despite this ordeal.

We can learn from this how precarious is the beauty of women. It can make a man forget the true purpose of marriage and cause him to marry the wrong woman. There is nothing wrong with beauty when it is accompanied by good character traits.

However, we find that the Torah praises beauty when it describes Rachel: "And Rachel was of beautiful description and of beautiful appearance." When a woman has the proper spiritual qualities, her beauty enhances them. It gives a picture of completeness, and she is described as being without blemish, either inwardly or outwardly. That is what the Torah meant in describing Rachel as beautiful. In describing women of such outstanding character, it is appropriate to praise their beauty.

To return to our earlier question on Mishlei: Why is charm called false, and beauty empty, and not the other way around? We can now understand, according to our previous explanation, why beauty is specifically referred to as empty. When beauty is not accompanied by the proper midot, then it is considered empty, because it has no higher meaning.

How can we understand, "charm is false?" Charm is not necessarily connected to beauty. Charm is something that a person shows others in order to attract people to him. Thus, charm can be a dangerous weapon. It can appear as kindness and helpfulness, whereas in reality it is a cover-up for cheating and treachery. That is why charm is called false, because it can be used to deliberately give people the wrong impression, as if it were telling a lie. The Torah is warning us to beware of charm and not to be fooled by it.

The pasuk "Charm is false" concludes, "A woman who fears G-d is praiseworthy." Any trait that is praiseworthy is one that a person acquires through toil. The fear of G-d requires great effort. Our Sages say, "Everything is in Heaven's hands, except the fear of Heaven." Only through one's own efforts can this spiritual quality be acquired. The woman who works on her midot until she attains fear of Heaven is a woman to be admired, since she has done something with her life. Beauty and charm are not praiseworthy, since they come to a person without any toil, and can sometimes even cause one's downfall.

This is an important lesson to learn in marriage. Sometimes a husband sees that his wife is not as beautiful as she once was. This have very little intrinsic importance in the spiritual scheme of things. As the pasuk tells us, "Beauty is empty." The important thing is that he should appreciate how much his wife loves him and is devoted to him. She is "the help mate for him." Here the Torah is teaching us why a woman was created and why a man needs her. She is his constant support. What good does beauty accomplish? The real traits that a person needs in his wife are devotion and love. If a man can recognize this truth, and his wife offers him devotion and love, he will be the happiest man on earth. If he has moral sensitivity and love for his wife, he will be able to see in her a spiritual beauty, which far outshines any physical beauty.

We should not limit this to beauty, but to any external reasons one uses to marry, be it money, position, or honor.

The soldier who went to war in a milchemet reshut – a non obligatory war – was only a person of the highest quality, a pure and righteous individual. If this person could succumb to what to us is so obviously wrong, what traps lie before us?

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

**Recognize Muslim Brotherhood for the Hate Group it is**  
**By Rabbis Marvin Hier and Abraham Cooper**

From his historic Cairo Speech President Obama sought to empower moderate Muslims, including the 'moderate' Muslim Brotherhood. The election of Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamad Morsi was hailed as a slam-dunk for democracy and earned Washington's backing.

But a year later, 22 million Egyptians saw things differently, returning to Tahrir Square and prompting the military to give Morsi and company the boot.

Secretary of State Kerry is to be commended for declaring that the Egyptian military was "restoring democracy" by deposing Morsi. Now the U.S. should drop its flawed Muslim Brotherhood policy. Never a force for moderation, it should be recognized for what it is: An enemy of freedom and tolerance—a hate group with a long enemies list.

There should be no more grants and no more White House visits for bigots.

Let's rejoin the original Tahrir Square campaigners and never again confuse the Brotherhood's successful leveraging of democratic process with their contempt for democratic values espoused by their Supreme Spiritual Leader Mustapha Mashour in 1981:

"Democracy contradicts and wages war on Islam. Whoever calls for democracy means they are raising banner's contradicting God's plan and fighting Islam."

The world may have acquiesced to President Morsi's escalating authoritarianism— but Egyptians did not. Morsi reneged on appointing a Christian woman as vice president, blocked a constitutional amendment limiting presidential power, and precipitated a walkout from Egypt's Constituent Assembly by barring the Supreme Court from "interfering" while authorizing himself to take any measures "to protect the revolution."

While in power, the Brotherhood proved clueless about running an economy, yet retained boundless hate for its enemies. It's 80- year vendetta against Jews inside and outside the Holy Land ranges from its WWII alliance with Hitler to creating genocidal Hamas.

Brotherhood spiritual guides Mohamed Badi and Sheikh Qaradawi relentlessly stoke the hatred: "[We will] continue to raise the banner of jihad against the Jews, [our] first and foremost enemies . . ." declared Badi, adding, "resistance is the only solution against the Zion-American arrogance and tyranny."

Qaradawi, an al Jazeera favorite spouted, "Throughout history, Allah has imposed upon the [Jews] who would punish them for their corruption. The last punishment was carried out by Hitler... There is no dialogue between us [Muslims and Jews] except by the sword and rifle . . . [We pray Allah] to take this oppressive, Jewish, Zionist band of people . . . kill them down to the very last one."

At a mosque to deliver his first "Unity" speech, President Morsi answered "Amen" to a Sheikh's fervent prayer: "Deal with the Jews and their supporters. Oh Allah, disperse them, rend them asunder. Oh Allah, demonstrate Your might and greatness upon them. Show us Your omnipotence, oh Lord."

On Morsi's watch, Cairo's only synagogue lost its designation as a Jewish House of Worship.

But Jews aren't Egypt's "canary in the coal mine", millions of Christian Copts are. Gatestone Institute, echoed in Christianity Today, reports that: "right at the beginning of the June 30 revolution, anonymous letters addressed to the Copts threatened them not to join the protests, otherwise their 'businesses, cars, homes, schools, and churches' might catch fire. . . ."

Analyst Raymond Abraham wrote about violent post-Morsi attacks targeting Christians: "On July 3rd, in a village in al-Minya in Upper Egypt, the services building of St. George Church was looted and torched. Likewise, the evangelical Saleh Church in Delga was attacked and caught fire. . . According to the pastor . . . 'supporters of former President Morsi are engaged in continuous and unprecedented harassment of Copts. He said that a number of those people broke into the homes of Christians at gunpoint, terrorizing women, children and seizing gold jewelry and furniture'."

Elsewhere, Christians—particularly children—are kidnapped and held for ransom. The Washington Post reported on Islamist websites threatening action against anyone opposing implementation of Sharia law.

A Coptic Christian woman lamented, "This is just the beginning. They won't be happy until they steal everything we own and kill us all. How can anyone be full of so much hate?"

It's true millions of Egyptians continue supporting the Brotherhood, just as millions once supported Stalin and Hitler, but is that how we should gauge when America should remain silent? That was the disastrous mistake Winston Churchill saw repeated in England during the 1930's -- the more powerful the Nazis became, the more accommodating Chamberlain tried to be. America cannot signal the world it is only willing to take on small-time bigots and terrorists.

No one knows what Egypt will look like next month, let alone next year. But if millions of moderate Muslims, Christians and secularists have the courage to stand up to the hateful Muslim Brotherhood, dare we remain shamefully silent?

### Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

In the course of history mankind's most ignoble times have been during war and conflict. It is almost as if we suspend our humanity and regress to our lowest common denominator; that of the wild beast. Murder, rape, and plunder accompany the soldier as he is given license to destroy that which should be most precious. It confirms, as the Torah teaches, that all morals and values rest upon the sanctity of human life. Devalue the pricelessness of life, and you undermine the foundation upon which all values and morals rest. The private domain of person and property then becomes subject to the unleashed amorality of the human animal.

Following the instructions at the end of last weeks Parsha as to how the Jew is to wage war, Moshe, in Parshas Ki Seitsei, presented 74 Mitzvos which highlight the value that the Torah places on the private domain of person and property.

1st Aliya: In an illuminating sequence of emotional and legal circumstances, Moshe forewarned us of the moral and familial dangers of warfare. A soldier brings home a non-Jewish female captive. Disregarding rational and obvious differences, he marries her, has his 1st son with her, and eventually resents the discord he has fostered upon himself, his

"captive wife", and his extended family. Attempting to deny his responsibility in the "resentment turned to hatred" breaking apart his family, he attempts to deny his 1st born son's rights. This is illegal.

This can Produce the "Rebellious Son"; a child who does not value the private rights of person or property and will eventually be executed for his crimes against society. It's a tragedy that begs us to consider the long range consequences of our actions before giving legal license to the wild beast within each of us.

2nd Aliya: The laws regarding: hanging and burial; returning lost articles; the fallen animal; transvestitism; and the birds nest are detailed.

3rd Aliya: The laws regarding: guard rails; mixed agriculture; forbidden combinations; Tzitzit; the defamed wife; if the accusations against the wife are true; the penalty for adultery; the rape of a betrothed or unmarried girl; the prohibition against marrying a father's wife; the Mamzer; and the prohibition against marrying an Ammonite or Moabite are detailed.

4th Aliya: The laws regarding: marriage to Edomites or Egyptians; the sanctity of the army camp; sheltering run away slaves; prostitution; deducted interest; and keeping vows are commanded.

5th and 6th Aliyot: The laws regarding: workers eating while they harvest; divorce and remarriage; military exemptions for a new husband; taking a millstone as security for a loan; the punishment for kidnapping; leprosy; general laws regarding security for loans, are detailed.

7th Aliya: The laws regarding paying wages on time; the testimony of close relatives; concern for the widowed and orphaned; forgotten sheaves of grain; leftover fruit from the harvest; Malkos - flogging; the childless sister-in-law; the assailant and the wife who comes to the rescue; honest weights and measures; and remembering Amalek are commanded.

The Haftarah for this week's Parsha, Ki Sietzei, was taken from chapter 54 1-10 in Yishayuhu. It describes Israel as afflicted barren, and inconsolable in the aftermath of the Temple's destruction. The Navi assured the People that Hashem's kindness and love for them is ever present, protecting and sustaining them at all times.

### EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"He shall strike him forty times – but he may not add [more than forty]." (Debarim 25:3)

If one violates a negative law of the Torah the court will give him lashes. The maximum is forty (actually thirty-nine). Our Sages tell us that if one strikes someone other than when the halachah mandates that he do so, he has violated the law of lo tosof (do not add).

The Vilna Gaon, quoted in Torah Lada'at, said that even a parent who strikes a child in anger has violated the same law of lo tosof. While the verse in Mishlei states that one who spares the rod hates his son, that applies only when the corporal punishment is done with kindness and with the sole intent of improving the child. However, if the parent strikes the child merely to vent his personal frustration and anger, there is no halachic justification for such action and he has violated the Torah prohibition of lo tosof. Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Hashem shouldn't see your nakedness so that He should turn away from you." (Debarim 23:15)

If we wonder why the Divine Presence is so hidden in our times, this verse provides the answer. When G-d sees that the Jewish People are not conducting themselves in a modest way, He turns away from us, leaving us in the dark. Although it says in another place in the Torah that G-d dwells amongst us even if we are impure, this refers to other kinds of improper behavior. When it comes to dressing immodestly, Hashem chooses not to be revealed amongst us. In these days, when the whole society is overwhelmingly encouraging this kind of dress code, everyone who makes an attempt to dress properly will be truly bringing blessings on themselves and on their families. Indeed, we have seen some people accept upon themselves to be more modestly attired, with the merit going to bring a speedy recovery for those who are stricken with difficult illnesses. This is a remarkable zechut. It is written that if a person has a temptation to see someone immodestly dressed and overcomes it, he should, at that very moment, pray to Hashem for whatever he wishes, because he has created such a magnificent zechut by overcoming his temptations. Therefore, it becomes an opportune moment to pray. We see how much Hashem rewards those who make modest dress part of their lives because they are bringing Hashem back to the Jewish People. Let us merit to be those fortunate ones. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**

Visit [DailyHalacha.com](http://DailyHalacha.com), [DailyGemara.com](http://DailyGemara.com),  
[MishnaBerura.com](http://MishnaBerura.com), [LearnTorah.com](http://LearnTorah.com)

Eshet Yefat Toar – Reclaiming the Lost Sparks

Parashat Ki-Teseh begins with the perplexing law known as "Eshet Yefat Toar." This law applies when Beneh Yisrael go out to war and take captives, and one of the soldiers sees and desires an attractive captive. The Torah requires the soldier to take her to his home, shave her head and cut her nails, and then wait one month. If he still desires her after a month, despite her unseemly appearance, then he is allowed to marry her.

This Halacha gives rise to several difficult questions. First, how is it possible that a soldier would experience such a base desire? In last week's Parasha, Parashat Shofetim, we read that certain groups of people were exempt from participating in the nation's wars, including those who were concerned about transgressions which they have committed. The Sages explain that this applies even to those who committed very slight misdeeds, such as speaking in between the laying of the Tefillin Shel Yad and the Tefillin Shel Rosh. And thus after the exemptions were issued, the only soldiers remaining on the battlefield were the righteous Sadikim, who had no sins on their record which they needed to fear. How, then, could the Torah be concerned that a soldier would feel overcome by lust upon seeing a captive woman? How could such righteous men fall to these base desires?

Secondly, why does the Torah require the soldier to go through this entire process of ruining the woman's attractive appearance? And why would the soldier still be interested in marrying her at that point, if to begin with he was drawn to her only because of her beauty?

The Or Ha'haim Ha'kadosh (Rav Haim Ben Attar, 1696-1743) offers a deep explanation of these verses, one which exemplifies the depth with which the Torah must be studied to avoid reaching incorrect conclusions.

Tradition teaches that Adam Ha'rishon, the first human being ever created, possessed an extraordinary soul, one which contained within it all the souls of all people that would ever be created. When he committed the sin of partaking from the forbidden tree, this soul "burst," as it were, into countless "sparks" that were scattered throughout the universe. At that point, the Sitra Ahara ("Other Side," meaning, the Satan and forces of evil) grabbed many of those sparks and held them captive, so-to-speak, with him, in the side of impurity. Ever since, the job of the Jewish nation is to reclaim those sparks and bring them over to our side, the side of purity and sanctity. Some of these sparks exist in the souls of non-Jews, and these sparks are recovered through those non-

Jews' conversion to Judaism. And thus whenever a gentile converts to Judaism, we can rest assured that he or she possesses a sacred spark that was released as a result of Adam's sin, and has now been recovered and rescued through that individual's conversion.

With this in mind, the Or Ha'haim explains, we can begin to unlock the mystery of the "Eshet Yefat To'ar." As mentioned, the soldiers who went out to war were righteous and holy Sadikim, and thus when one of them felt attracted to a captive woman, there was good reason to suspect that this was due not to her physical appearance, but rather because of the spark within her soul. A military confrontation with a gentile nation brought these righteous soldiers into contact with non-Jews, some of whom may have been in possession of a holy spark awaiting its rescue from the clutches of the Sitra Ahara. And if, indeed, the woman in question possessed such a spark, then the soldier was encouraged to have her convert and marry her. Before he did so, however, he was required to first ascertain that his feelings of attraction were indeed spiritual, and not physical. The soldier would therefore bring the woman to her home and spoil her attractive appearance. If he still experienced desire for her, then it could be assumed that he was drawn to the spark within her soul, and he would thus marry her.

This reading explains the shift in the Torah's terminology in describing the soldier's feelings for the woman. First, the Torah writes, "Ve'hashakta Bah" – "You desire her." The word "Hashakta" refers to lust, a purely physical craving. But later, after describing the required procedure of bringing the woman into one's home and having her cut her hair, the Torah says, "Im Lo Hafasta Bah" – "If you do not want her" – then she should be returned to her homeland. Here the Torah employs a different verb – "Hafasta" – which refers to a rational, genuine wish for something. This is not an irrational, physical attraction, but rather a wish borne out of rational understanding. If the soldier feels a genuine liking for the woman after her physical appearance has been tarnished, then we can rest assured that he is drawn to the spark in her soul awaiting its release, and he thus marries the woman. Otherwise, it is clear that he was drawn only to her physical beauty, in which case, the Torah instructs, "Ve'shilhatah Le'nafshah" – he must send her back home, and may not marry her.

### Rabbi Wein

Jewish homiletical tradition has dealt with the "enemy," who is being warred against in the opening verse of the parsha, as being the evil instinct of the

"warrior" itself. In the immortal words of the famous cartoon character Pogo, "we have met the enemy and they are us!" This is in consonance with the words of the Talmud that the opening topic of the parsha – marriage to the attractive woman, a non-Jewish captive – has specific reference to one's own struggle with the basic desires and evil instincts that bedevil us all.

The true struggle in life is therefore not really against others who may not wish us well as much as it is against our own conflict-torn nature. Temptations, both physical and monetary, and power-driven ambitions abound in our everyday existence. Falsehoods, lame excuses, or the feeling that "everyone does it" and that one will never get caught up and publicly exposed in the scam or scandal are the weapons of the enemy that lurk within us, preying on our built-in weaknesses.

Unless one truly realizes how vulnerable each and every one of us is regarding our internal enemy, there is little hope of creating effective defensive strategies to combat it. The haughty arrogance of unwarranted self-righteousness is one of the most serious moral and personal defects that a person may possess.

This is the message that the Talmud delivers to us when it states that one who sins and yet remains confident that one will later be able to repent and cancel the sin, is never able to truly repent of that sin. One should not underestimate the enemy that lies within us.

The month of Elul traditionally was set aside as a particular time when that internal enemy was to be identified and confronted. In our busy and crowded world, our schedules allow precious little time to think about our true selves - our goals and the purpose of our existence. Our enemy confounds and confuses us with all of the myriad details, pettinesses and distractions that our super busy world inflicts upon us.

Rabbi Yisrael of Salant was once asked if one has only ten minutes a day to study Torah, should one study Talmud or Mussar (the ethical teachings of Judaism.) He answered that one should study Mussar for then he would come to realize that he has much more time than just ten minutes in the day to study Torah. By that Rabbi Yisrael outlined his method of confronting the inner enemy that convinces us that we are unable to improve, that we are too weak or habit-stricken or that we are simply too busy and preoccupied with other issues to think about ourselves.

Ignoring the enemy is the surest way of being defeated by it. I think that tradition placed such an emphasis on the month of Elul, for it is the self-confrontation that this month indicates to us that is the strongest weapon in our spiritual arsenal. In preparation for the days of awe and judgment that are soon upon us, let us use this time wisely and efficiently.

**Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**  
**Parsha Parables**  
**Benevolent Association**

In this week's portion, the Torah commands us with quite a tall order. Because of flagrant ingratitude, in which Ammonites and Moabites forgot the kindness of our father Avraham toward their forebear Lot, we are commanded not to allow them to join in marriage into our nation. The directive does not preclude Ammonites and Moabites from converting or marrying other Jewish converts. It also does not prohibit Ammonite women converts from marrying into the fold. It does prohibit the direct descendants of Avraham, who epitomized kindness and gratitude, from marrying Lot's male descendants who were so cruel to the Jewish people.

The Torah tells us in the exact way their ungraciousness manifested itself. "Because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt, and because he hired against you Bilaam son of Beor, of Pethor, Aram Naharaim, to curse you" (Deuteronomy 23:5). But in an atypical deviation from the initial narrative, the Torah inserts the following verse: But Hashem, your God, refused to listen to Balaam, and Hashem, your God, reversed the curse to a blessing for you, because Hashem, your God, loved you" (Ibid v.6).

The Torah then continues to conclude the directive: "You shall not seek their peace or welfare, all your days, forever" (ibid v. 7).

Why does Hashem interject the story of His compassionate intervention into the prohibition? The Torah previously detailed the story of the talking donkey, the interceding angel and Balak's subsequent failure to curse the Jews. Why interject G-d's love in halting Bilaam's plans when the Torah is presenting a reason not to marry Moabites? It has no bearing on the prohibition.

A classic story of a new immigrant's encounter with the American judicial system involved an old Jew who was called to testify.

"Mr. Goldstein," asked the judge, "how old are you?"  
 "Keyn ayin horah, eighty three."

"Just answer the question, Mr. Goldberg. I repeat. How old are you?"

Goldberg did not flinch. "Keyn ayin horah , eighty-three."

"Mr. Goldberg," repeated the judge, "I do not want any prefixes or suffixes. Just answer the question." But Goldberg did not change his response.

Suddenly Goldberg's lawyer jumped up. "Your honor," he interjected. "Please allow me to ask the question. The Judge approved and the lawyer turned to Goldberg.

"Mr. Goldberg. How old are you, Keyn ayin Horah?"  
 Goldberg smiled. "Eighty three."

In what has become a tradition of the Jewish vernacular, perhaps originating with the above verses, no potential calamity is ever mentioned without mentioning or interjecting a preventative utterance of caution.

"I could have slipped and chas v'sholom (mercy and peace) hurt my leg."  
 "They say he is, rachmana nitzlan, (Heaven save us) not well."

"My grandfather tzo langa yohrin (to longevity) is eighty-three years old," of course, suffixed with the ubiquitous "kayn ayin horah!"

An ever present cognizance of Hashem's hand in our lives has become integrated into traditional Jewish speech patterns. Thank G-d, please G-d , and G-d willing pepper the vernacular of every Jew who understands that all his careful plans can change in the millisecond of a heavenly whim. And so, beginning with Biblical times, there are no reference to occurrences of daily life found in a vacuum. They are always surrounded with our sincere wishes for Hashem's perpetual protection and continuous blessing

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

In Deuteronomy 24, we encounter for the first time the explicit statement of a law of far-reaching significance:

"Parents shall not be put to death for children, nor children who put to death for parents: a person shall be put to death only for his own crime. (Deut. 24:16)"



We have strong historical evidence as to what this law was excluding, namely vicarious punishment, the idea that someone else may be punished for my crime:

For example, in the Middle Assyrian Laws, the rape of unbetrothed virgin who lives in her father's house is punished by the ravishing of the rapist's wife, who also remains thereafter with the father of the victim. Hammurabi decrees that if a man struck a pregnant woman, thereby causing her to miscarry and die, it is the assailant's daughter who is put to death. If a builder erected a house which collapsed, killing the owner's son, then the builder's son, not the builder, is put to death. (Nahum Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, p. 176)

We also have inner-biblical evidence of how the Mosaic law was applied. Joash, one of the righteous kings of Judah, attempted to stamp out corruption among the priests, and was assassinated by two of his officials. He was succeeded by his son Amaziah, about whom we read the following:

After the kingdom was firmly in his grasp, he [Amaziah] executed the officials who had murdered his father the king. Yet he did not put the sons of the assassins to death, in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses where the Lord commanded: "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sins." (2 Kings:14: 5-6)

The obvious question, however, is: how is this principle compatible with the idea, enunciated four times in the Mosaic books, that children may suffer for the sins of their parents?" The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." (Ex. 34: 7; see also 20:5; Numbers 14: 18; Deut. 5: 8)

The short answer is simple: It is the difference between human justice and divine justice. We are not God. We can neither look into the hearts of wrongdoers nor assess the full consequences of their deeds. It is not given to us to execute perfect justice, matching the evil a person suffers to the evil he causes. We would not even know where to begin. How do you punish a dictator responsible for the deaths of millions of people? How do you weigh the full extent of a devastating injury caused by drunken driving, where not only the victim but his entire family

are affected for the rest of their lives? How do we assess the degree of culpability of, say, those Germans who knew what was happening during the Holocaust but did or said nothing? Moral guilt is a far more difficult concept to apply than legal guilt.

Human justice must work within the parameters of human understanding and regulation. Hence the straightforward rule: no vicarious punishment. Only the wrongdoer is to suffer, and only after his guilt has been established by fair and impartial judicial procedures. That is the foundational principle set out, for the first time in Deuteronomy 24: 16.

However, the issue did not end there. In two later prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we find an explicit renunciation of the idea that children might suffer for the sins of their parents, even when applied to Divine justice. Here is Jeremiah, speaking in the name of God:

In those days people will no longer say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes-his own teeth will be set on edge. (Jeremiah 31: 29-30)

And this, Ezekiel:

The word of the Lord came to me: "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: 'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son-both alike belong to me. The soul that sins is the one who will die." (Ezekiel 18: 1-3)

The Talmud (Makkot 24a) raises the obvious question. If Ezekiel is correct, what then happens to the idea of children being punished to the third and fourth generation? Its answer is astonishing:

Said R. Jose ben Hanina: Our master Moses pronounced four [adverse] sentences on Israel, but four prophets came and revoked them . . . Moses said, "He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." Ezekiel came and declared: "The soul that sins is the one who will die."

Moses decreed: Ezekiel came and annulled the decree! Clearly the matter cannot be that simple. After all, it was not Moses who decreed this, but God Himself. What do the sages mean?

They mean, I think, this: the concept of perfect justice is beyond human understanding, for the reasons already given. We can never fully know the degree of guilt. Nor can we know the full extent of responsibility. The Mishnah in Sanhedrin (4: 5), says that a witness in capital cases was solemnly warned that if, by false testimony, a person was wrongly sentenced to death, he, the witness, "is held responsible for his [the accused's] blood and the blood of his [potential] descendants until the end of time." Nor, when we speak of Providence, is it always possible to distinguish punishment from natural consequence. A drug-addicted mother gives birth to a drug-addicted child. A violent father is assaulted by his violent son. Is this retribution or genetics or environmental influence? When it comes to Divine, as opposed to human justice, we can never reach beyond the most rudimentary understanding, if that.

Two things are clear from God's words to Moses. First, He is a God of compassion but also of justice – since without justice, there is anarchy, but without compassion, there is neither humanity nor hope. Second, in the tension between these two values, God's compassion vastly exceeds His justice. The former is forever ("to thousands [of generations]"). The latter is confined to the lifetime of the sinner: the "third and fourth generation" (grandchildren and great-grandchildren) are the limits of posterity one can expect to see in a human lifetime.

What Jeremiah and Ezekiel are talking about is something else. They were speaking about the fate of the nation. Both lived and worked at the time of the Babylonian exile. They were fighting a mood of despair among the people. "What can we do? We are being punished for the sins of our forefathers." Not so, said the prophets. Each generation holds its destiny in its own hands. Repent, and you will be forgiven, whatever the sins of the past – yours or those who came before you.

Justice is a complex phenomenon, Divine justice infinitely more so. One thing, however, is clear. When it comes to human justice, Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all agree: children may not be punished for the sins of their parents. Vicarious punishment is simply unjust.

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

"Remember that which Hashem your G-d did to Miriam on the way when you went out from Egypt" (24:9)

This is a command of the Torah.

I cannot tell you how often we are to fulfill this commandment. Some Siddurim say it should be said every day. The Chafetz Chaim based his sefer on this. We are not merely commanded, "Not to go around being tale-bearers amongst our people" (Vayikra 19:16), but to remember what happened to Miriam, and the sin of Miriam was the sin that she was not judging others favorably.

Miriam's sin was really quite small. First, she posed it as a question. "Is it not that we also speak with Hashem?" (Bamidbar 12:2). It was a legitimate question. After all Miriam was a prophetess herself, and received prophecy before Moshe. So why was she punished? Because the closer one is to Hashem, the more one is held accountable, and Miriam was very great. However, she misunderstood the perfection of Moshe and the immensity of the prophecy Moshe received from Hashem.

This event was made part of the Torah with the intention of teaching us the importance of judging others favorably and giving them the benefit of the doubt, and that the evil of lashon hara does not only bring Tzaraat, but a great many other forms of suffering. Much suffering descends upon a person because of speaking lashon hara.

"When a camp goes out to war against your enemies" (Debarim 23:10).

You have no enemies except for yourself, and except for the Yetzer Hara, which everyone ignores. Your enemy is not that other man. Oh, he may want to kill you, but he can only take away your life. The Yetzer Hara wants to take away your Neshama/Soul. He is the real enemy

Quoted from "The Path of Life" by Rabbi Yehoshua Danese