

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

RE'EH

AUGUST 18, 2012

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Rosh Hodesh Elul will be celebrated on Shabbat & Sunday, August 18 & 19.
Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach Schedule and Announcements

Friday Night: Candles: 7:30 PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM –Please say Shemah at home by 8:40 AM

11:00 - 12:00 Shabbat Morning Kids Program for girls ages 4-8 - Stories, Tefillah, Games, Snacks and more . . .

11:30 - 12:00 Rethinking Your Judaism “Teenage Prayer Study Group” with Leah. Delicious Fruit Smoothies, iTunes card giveaway (after Shabbat), and open forum discussion, upstairs in the Rabbi's study.

KIDDUSH sponsored by Elisheva Reinheimer in memory of her husband Steven Reinheimer

4:30 - 5:00 Learn to Read from the Torah with Rabbi Yosef - nusach Yerushalmi - Men and Boys -all ages invited.

5:00 - Shabbat Afternoon Kids Program with Rabbi Yosef and Leah; Ice Cream, Stories, Basketball, Hoolahoop, Parsha Quiz, Tefillot and Raffles - Join us for Shabbat Charades during Seudat Shelishit!

Ladies Shabbat Class at the home of Tina Lemberger – each Shabbat at 5:30

Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Aharon at 6:00 PM –followed by Minha: 7:40 PM –

Seudah Shelishi and a Class 7:15 – with David –

Evening Service (Arbith): 8:20 PM - Shabbat Ends: 8:30PM

Weekday Tefilla Schedule

NEW MINCHA AND ARBIT SUNDAY – 7:20 PM – Let's see if we can make a minyan each Sunday

Selichot Begin Monday - 6:15 Mondays and Thursdays, 6:20 All other days

Weekday Torah Class Schedule

Monday Night Class with Rabbi Yanai – 8PM Monday night

Congratulations to the Graduates of the Hebrew Reading Crash Course I. Stay tuned for the schedule in the coming months of level II.

Tuesday Night 7:45- Gitta J. Neufeld, Director of Education at The Allegra Franco School of Educational Leadership who was so well received on Tisha BeAv when teaching Megilat Eicha will be teaching the book of Jonah over four Tuesdays beginning August 21st. Continuing on the 28th and the September 4 and 11 at 7:45. Men and Women

Tuesday Night 9pm David and Michael's Halacha Class will be pushed to 9PM and we will explore practical Halachot relating to the Yamim Noraim – Elul, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. Please plan on joining from 9-10:30

Registration is underway for the continuation of our Kosher Kitchen Class series with Rabbi Yosef. Classes will resume in September. Details to follow . . .

Community Events

Volley Ball with Daniel Wagner – Sunday mornings at the beach at 10AM All summer long.

Cub Scout Registration is under way! If you'd like to sign up or know somebody who might, please contact Rabbi Yosef. Meetings will take place every other Sunday at 6pm starting after Sukkot. Boys ages 6-11. Thanks so much to the dedicated adults who made this happen; Barry Pinto, David Pinto, Sam Pinto, Penny Waldman, and Rabbi Eli Goodman. Registration is underway for Sunday Funday Hoolahoop in for girls ages 5 and up in the Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach. Sunday mornings from 10:00-11:00. Only 7 spots left. \$15 per session, or \$10 per session with payment in advance for 10 sessions. Please contact Leah Colish to sign up.

The Long Beach Art Beat presents The GOLDEN Artist Colors Free Lecture/Demo with Roy Kinzer. Experience the vast potential and versatility of acrylics! Roy has exhibited extensively, including the Slater Museum in Connecticut and the Montclair Art Museum in New Jersey. Join us for a two-hour presentation on acrylic paints, gels and mediums. Learn how gels and mediums can extend paint and create unique textural surfaces. Explore Grounds that create surfaces for watercolors, graphite, charcoal, pencil, pastels and silverpoint. Free packet of literature and paint samples. When: Sunday August 19th from 12:30-2:30pm / Location: Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach / 161 Lafayette Boulevard, Long Beach, NY 11561 / Babysitting available at \$10 per family

please reply to
ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com

Take a peek into Kosher Culinary Arts School in Jerusalem with my daughter Mikhayla who is going through a rigorous 6 month program. bitemebymik.blogspot.com

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

Editors Notes

Moses has a performance tomorrow night in Manhattan so I figured we would try to get the newsletter out a day early this week.

I spent last Shabbat in Deal and one subject came up a number of times and that was bad publicity. Unfortunately too many people are for all the wrong reasons getting their name out in public. A foolish incident with a New York officer on a Manhattan side street gets a million hits on UTube. Two young men in the community get into a disagreement over an employment contract and instead of settling it within the community; it finds itself on page 6. A young lady gets herself in trouble and it finds its way to the front page of a section in the times.

Children are doing stupid things and then bragging about it. What happened to a sense of privacy, modesty or even shame?

Why don't we learn that any personal publicity is bad?

Where are the parents? Have they forgotten their responsibility? Are they too busy partying?

We need to reign these kids in! We need to remind them to lay low.

Our forefathers, our leaders and our rabbis have reminded us for thousands of years to stay out of the limelight.

As Raymond Beyda writes, the Torah tells us, And Yaakov said to his sons: "Why do you make yourselves conspicuous?" (Beresheet 42:1)

When Yaakov's sons were about to leave to purchase food in Egypt he offered his sage advice, "Enter Egypt through separate gates. Do not all enter together because you will be noticed." The Gemara (Taaneet 10a) elaborates. "Don't show yourselves as satisfied and healthy in front of Esav and Yishmael for they will become envious" Rashi adds that Yaakov was fearful of the evil eye that may fall upon them if they were seen together as an impressive group of strong healthy men entering the city together.

Yaakov taught us the destructive power of jealousy from personal experience. He had given some special amenities to Yosef his son from Rachel and it created jealousies amongst the brothers that lead to the sale of Yosef to a caravan to Egypt. The Gemara says: A person should never treat one child different from another and describes the chain of events that followed Yaakov's special favors to Yosef. (Shabbat 10b) The Rabbis went further and say that one should avoid any behavior that will create jealousy between two people. For example: One should not praise a person in front of another who dislikes him.

A man was fortunate to be blessed with twin boys. He invited Rav Shach zt'l –Rosh Yeshivat Ponovetz - to serve as Sandak (The one upon whose lap an infant is placed for the circumcision ceremony). When

twins are circumcised each gets his own berit milah ceremony. Tradition has it that the sandak for each should be a different person. After the first was done Rav Shach remained in his seat and sat for the second boy as well – not in keeping with the custom to have someone else sit for the second child. After the circumcision Rav Shach explained his break with tradition. "I imagined these boys 15 or 20 years from now and thought perhaps one may taunt the other saying, "My sandak was Rav Shach – who held you? I did not want to be the vehicle to create jealousy between the brothers."

A person should try to blend in with the scenery as Yaakov Avinu a'h suggested. In our times too many strive to out do others in dress, automobiles, homes and parties. This competitive spirit can breed envy which can result in being subjected to the dangers of the evil eye.

One of the greats of the last generation was Rav Yaakov Kanievsky zt'l – known as the Steipler. His vast Torah knowledge and his uncanny ability to see beyond what the eye can see are legendary. In his old age he fell ill. A colleague visited and told the Rav, "Tomorrow is Rosh Hodesh – I intend to go to the graves of tzadikim – the righteous – and pray on behalf of your recovery."

"Don't bother going" replied the weak patient, "I know why I am ill. You see there is a Rabbi in America who has written several books and he praises me in them. I told him it is better not to write about me but he insists that it will encourage others to go in the ways of our Torah. Even though his intentions are pure –THE PUBLICITY IS NOT HEALTHY FOR ME"

The lesson Yaakov Avinu taught his sons is a timeless one that all should heed. Don't try to stand out and impress. In fact, the opposite is recommended. Keep a low profile in all that you do. "Why make yourself conspicuous?" Jealousy is a powerful negative force that can cause great harm. The less publicity – the better. In Pirkei Avot we read, "And see to it that your name be not known to the government." According to some, the word Rashuth means not the government but publicity, and the passage is to be construed thus: If one's friends say publicly in the market: "May God protect so and so; to-day he brought into his house many measures of wheat and barley," etc., etc., robbers may hear of it and come in the night, surround the house, and take away all he possesses, and in the morning he has nothing left. Of him it is said in Scripture: "When one saluteth his friend with a loud voice," etc.

Finally Rabbi Pinchas Winston quotes King David in Psalms, "The entire glory of the daughter of the king lies on the inside". This is a message of modesty.

The prophet Micha wrote: He has told you, "O man, what is good! What does G-d require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and walk modestly with your G-d." (Michah 6:8)
When it comes to working on important matters for the Jewish people, it is important to avoid unwanted publicity. As much as our egos crave attention and appreciation, if we are truly committed to redemption and being a part of it, then we want to avoid attention, for it is such attention that lands the Sitra Achra on our heads and who makes it his business to interfere with those involved in the tasks of geulah. Receiving public attention

means getting his attention as well.

What a scary thought. Any attention we attract gets the attention of Satan as well. If great Rabbis feared this attention, if our forefather Jacob who was as much like an angel as he was a man feared it, shouldn't we. And if not for ourselves then at least for our kids.

Maybe if we gave our own children more attention, not lip service, but real time and effort, they wouldn't need to be looking for it outside. And the scary part is when we consider that perhaps all this trouble they are getting into is not to get the public's attention. Perhaps the cause is to get the real attention they crave, the attention of us, their families. Below you'll find a story by Joe Velarde – see what he felt and then ask, where are we going wrong?

As we enter the holiday season, with Elul beginning this weekend, let us remember to begin the fixing at home.

Shabbat Shalom,
David Bibi

PS... I added a few extra articles this week. The first follows my discussion today with Rabbi Dr. Asher Abittan on his father, my Rabbi's z'sl thoughts on learning Daf Yomi which I mentioned a couple of weeks back. It is titled Studying Talmud in English and was lightly edited and annotated by Yerachmiel Tilles from the article "Purim, Prayer & Pulling Together" by master storyteller Rabbi Pesach Krohn, in Zman Magazine, March 2012.

The second is titled, "I was the Shabbos Goy of Sterling Place and Utica Ave. by Joe Velarde (Joe Velarde was a war hero – he became the fencing coach of

Columbia University in the 1940's-50s and was an early advocate of civil rights in sports, eventually retiring to California.) The story may remind many of the old timers of their neighborhoods when we "all" were neighbors in the true sense of the word. Of various ethnicities, we shared the same space, the same fears, the same joys....a world long gone with memory dissolving into the veils of time. It was brought to my attention by Mr. David Dweck

Studying Talmud in English

Rabbi Moshe Plutchok is a teacher in Derech Chaim Yeshivah of Brooklyn. Like many who live in New York City throughout the year, he and his family spend the summer in the mountains in the Monticello area, in central New York State.

There, he attends what is known as a "learning camp," located in Camp Morris. He and other rabbis, who teach in the various camps for Jewish youth in the area, have a kollel [advanced Talmudic study for married men] where they study together in the afternoons. It is known as Kollel Mechanchim ["The Educators' Kollel"].

One day a number of summers ago, Rabbi Plutchok saw a businessman walk into the beis medrash carrying a bi-lingual ArtScroll Gemara, the most popular of the translations of the Talmud into English. As a beginner, and studying in English instead of in the original Aramaic-Hebrew, he was a little out of place, but nevertheless made to feel certainly welcome by the Rabbi regulars. The man sat down and learned with great enthusiasm. When he had a question he would go and ask others, even if they were younger than him, until he got an answer.

Rabbi Plutchok eventually got to talking with the man. The man told him that, unfortunately, he had an advanced stage of liver cancer. Rabbi Plutchok was amazed, because this man came to the Study Hall every day in such an upbeat manner and always learned with incredible diligence.

"It's amazing to me," Rabbi Plutchok told him. "You have this terrible illness, yet you come here every day and are so upbeat about the learning."

"Rabbi", the man said, "I'll tell you the truth. The ArtScroll Gemara is carrying me. You see, I never went to a yeshivah. Now that the Gemara is in English, I am finally able to understand it. And if I don't understand something I ask the rabbis here. It makes me feel very special. It enables me to feel I can make a connection to the legacy of Torah and the Jewish people. That's what's carrying me."

One day, near the end of the summer, Rabbi Plutchok walked in and saw this man sitting on the side of the room, looking sad. "Is everything ok?" he asked. "No, rabbi not really," he replied. "The illness is progressing and I was thinking, What difference does it make if I learn? Who cares? You and the others are all accomplished Torah scholars. Your Talmudic studies make a difference. As for me, I don't understand everything it says even in English translation. When I ask my questions to the rabbis, I understand most of what they say, but not all. I'm not on your level, rabbi. What's the difference if I learn? Who cares? "

Rabbi Plutchok felt terrible for the man, but, incredibly, just the night before he had heard an amazing

story on a Jewish radio station.

He decided to share it:

A century ago lived a great symphony conductor, an Italian maestro named Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957), who led concerts all over the world. He was known as an absolute perfectionist and had few peers.

Toscanini had a biographer who would interview him periodically over the years as a part of a major book he was writing. One evening, he called Toscanini and told him that he would be in town the next night, and asked if he could come to the house to interview him.

Toscanini answered that he could not because he would be doing something special that would require absolute concentration; he could not be interrupted.

"Maestro," the biographer said, "what are you doing that's so special?"

"There is a concert being played overseas. I used to be the conductor of that symphony orchestra, but I could not be there this year. So I'm going to listen on a shortwave radio and hear how the other conductor leads the orchestra. I don't want any interruptions whatsoever."

"Maestro, it would be my greatest pleasure to watch how you listen to a concert played by an orchestra that you used to lead. I promise I won't say anything. I'll sit on the other side of the room, quietly."

"You promise to be perfectly quiet?" Toscanini asked.

"Yes."

"Then you can come." The next night, the biographer came and sat quietly while Toscanini listened to the concert, which lasted almost an hour. Finally, when it ended, the biographer

remarked, "Wow, wasn't that magnificent?"

Toscanini said "Not really."

"Why not?"

"They were supposed to be 120 musicians, including 15 violinists. Only 14 of them played."

The biographer thought he was joking. How could he know from 6000 miles away, over shortwave radio, that one of the violinists was missing? The biographer had his doubts but didn't want to say anything and went home.

The next morning, though, he had to find out for himself, so he called the concert hall overseas, asked for the music director and inquired as to how many musicians were supposed to have been playing the night before versus how many had actually shown up.

The concert hall director told him that there were supposed to have 120 musicians, including 15 violinists, but only 14 had shown up!

The biographer was amazed. He returned to Toscanini and said, "Sir, I owe you an apology. I thought you were just making it up the other night. But please, tell me, how could you know that one violinist was missing?"

"There is a great difference between you and me", Toscanini answered." You're a part of the audience and to the audience everything sounds wonderful. But I'm the conductor, and the conductor has to know every note of music that has to be played. When I realized that certain notes were not being played, I knew without a doubt that one of the violists was missing."

Rabbi Plutchok now turned to the man and said, "Maybe to regular people it doesn't make a difference if you learn, but to the Conductor of the World Symphony – Who knows every note of music that is supposed to be played, Who knows every word of Torah that is supposed to be learned, every line of tefillah that is supposed to be prayed – to Him it makes a difference!"

The man embraced Rabbi Plutchok and could not thank him enough.

That winter, Rabbi Plutchok happened to meet the son of this man and asked how his father was doing. The son told him that his father has passed away. However, he added, "Ever since my father returned from the bungalow colony, every time he opened his Gemara he would say, "I am performing for the Conductor of the World Symphony!"

That is why we are on this world. We each have our own potential to fulfill. You do not have to be like me and I do not have to be like you. We are all different, but each Jew is part of a great symphony called klal Yisrael, and if we don't perform the music that we can perform –The Torah that we can learn, the kind deeds that we can do, the tefillah that we can pray – it makes a difference to the Conductor of the World Symphony, because He knows our potential and He notices everything.

**I was the Shabbos Goy of Sterling Place and Utica Ave.
by Joe Velarde**

Snow came early in the winter of 1933 when our extended Cuban family moved into the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn . I was ten years old. We were the first Spanish speakers to arrive,

yet we fit more or less easily into that crowded, multicultural neighborhood. Soon we began learning a little Italian, a few Greek and Polish words, lots of Yiddish and some heavily accented English.

I first heard the expression 'Shabbos is falling' when Mr. Rosenthal refused to open the door of his dry goods store on Bedford Avenue . My mother had sent me with a dime to buy a pair of black socks for my father. In those days, men wore mostly black and Navy blue. Brown and gray were somehow special and cost more. Mr. Rosenthal stood inside the locked door, arms folded, glaring at me through the thick glass while a heavy snow and darkness began to fall on a Friday evening. "We're closed, already", Mr. Rosenthal had said, shaking his head, "can't you see that Shabbos is falling? Don't be a nudnik! Go home." I could feel the cold wetness covering my head and thought that Shabbos was the Jewish word for snow.

My misperception of Shabbos didn't last long, however, as the area's dominant culture soon became apparent; Gentiles were the minority. From then on, as Shabbos fell with its immutable regularity and Jewish lore took over the life of the neighborhood, I came to realize that so many human activities, ordinarily mundane at any other time, ceased, and a palpable silence, a pleasant tranquility, fell over all of us. It was then that a family with an urgent need would dispatch a youngster to "get the Spanish boy, and hurry."

That was me. In time, I stopped being nameless and became Yussel, sometimes Yuss or Yusseleh. And so began my life as a Shabbos Goy, voluntarily doing chores for my neighbors on Friday nights and Saturdays:

lighting stoves, running errands, getting a prescription for an old tante, stoking coal furnaces, putting lights on or out, clearing snow and ice from slippery sidewalks and stoops. Doing just about anything that was forbidden to the devout by their religious code.

Friday afternoons were special. I'd walk home from school assailed by the rich aroma emanating from Jewish kitchens preparing that evening's special menu. By now, I had developed a list of steady "clients," Jewish families who depended on me. Furnaces, in particular, demanded frequent tending during Brooklyn 's many freezing winters. I shudder remembering brutally cold winds blowing off the East River . Anticipation ran high as I thought of the warm home-baked treats I'd bring home that night after my Shabbos rounds were over. Thanks to me, my entire family had become Jewish pastry junkies. Moi? I'm still addicted to checkerboard cake, halvah and Egg Creams (made only with Fox's Ubet chocolate syrup).

I remember as if it were yesterday how I discovered that Jews were the smartest people in the world. You see, in our Cuban household we all loved the ends of bread loaves and, to keep peace, my father always decided who would get them. One harsh winter night I was rewarded for my Shabbos ministrations with a loaf of warm challah (we pronounced it "holly") and I knew I was witnessing genius! Who else could have invented a bread that had wonderfully crusted ends all over it -- enough for everyone in a large family?

There was an "International" aspect to my teen years in Williamsburg . The Sternberg family had two sons who had

fought with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain . Whenever we kids could get their attention, they'd spellbind us with tales also introduced us to a novel way of thinking, one that embraced such humane ideas as 'From each according to his means and to each according to his needs'. In retrospect, this innocent exposure to a different philosophy was the starting point of a journey that would also incorporate the concept of Tzedakah in my personal guide to the world.

In what historians would later call The Great Depression, a nickel was a lot of mazuma and its economic power could buy a brand new Spaldeen, our local name for the pink-colored rubber ball then produced by the Spalding Company. The famous Spaldeen was central to our endless street games: stickball and punchball or the simpler stoop ball. One balmy summer evenings our youthful fantasies converted South Tenth Street into Ebbets Field with the Dodgers' Dolph Camilli swinging a broom handle at a viciously curving Spaldeen thrown by the Giants' great lefty, Carl Hubbell. We really thought it curved, I swear.

Our neighbors, magically transformed into spectators kibitzing from their brownstone stoops and windows, were treated to a unique version of major league baseball. My tenure as the resident Shabbos Goy came to an abrupt end after Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941. I withdrew from Brooklyn College the following day and joined the U.S. Army. In June of 1944, the Army Air Corps shipped me home after flying sixty combat missions over Italy and the Balkans. I was overwhelmed to find that several of my Jewish friends and neighbors had set a place for me at their supper tables every Shabbos throughout my

absence, including me in their prayers. What mitzvot! My homecoming was highlighted by wonderful invitations to dinner. Can you imagine the effect after twenty-two months of Army field rations?

As my post-World War II life developed, the nature of the association I'd had with Jewish families during my formative years became clearer. I had learned the meaning of friendship, of loyalty, and of honor and respect. I discovered obedience without subservience. And caring about all living things had become as natural as breathing. The worth of a strong work ethic and of purposeful dedication was manifest. Love of learning blossomed and I began to set higher standards for my developing skills, and loftier goals for future activities and dreams. Mind, none of this was the result of any sort of formal instruction; my yeshiva had been the neighborhood. I learned these things, absorbed them actually says it better, by association and role modeling, by pursuing curious inquiry, and by what educators called "incidental learning" in the crucible that was pre-World War II Williamsburg. It seems many of life's most elemental lessons are learned this way.

While my parents' Cuban home sheltered me with warm, intimate affection and provided for my well-being and self esteem, the group of Jewish families I came to know and help in the Williamsburg of the 1930s was a surrogate tribe that abetted my teenage rite of passage to adulthood. One might even say we had experienced a special kind of Bar Mitzvah. I couldn't explain then the concept of tikkun olam, but I realized as I matured how well I had been oriented by the Jewish experience to live it

and to apply it. What a truly uplifting outlook on life it is to be genuinely motivated "to repair the world."

In these twilight years when my good wife is occasionally told, "Your husband is a funny man," I'm aware that my humor has its roots in the shticks of Second Avenue Yiddish Theater, entertainers at Catskill summer resorts, and their many imitators. And, when I argue issues of human or civil rights and am cautioned about showing too much zeal, I recall how chutzpah first flourished on Williamsburg sidewalks, competing for filberts (hazelnuts) with tough kids wearing payess and yarmulkes. Along the way I played chess and one-wall handball, learned to fence, listened to Rimsky-Korsakov, ate roasted chestnuts, and read Maimonides .

I am ever grateful for having had the opportunity to be a Shabbos Goy.

Did you know that Mario Cuomo, Colin Powell & Pete Hamill were also shabbos goyim

The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st and 2nd Aliyot: Moshe instructs the Chosen People to eradicate any remnant of idolatry and strengthen all aspects of service to G-d. All offerings must be brought to the "Chosen" place, the Bais Hamikdash, so that worship is an act of humility and selflessness, rather than a self-indulging "need". An even greater danger to our uniqueness is the innate desire to compromise and assimilate Torah values with other forms of worship. (the Chanukah bush syndrome)

3rd and 4th Aliyot: Moshe forewarned the Jews against incorporating any pagan practices, and against the false

prophet, idolatrous missionaries, and the Ir Hanidachas - the Apostate City. These must be destroyed along with their material belongings. When using the world in accordance with the wishes of the Creator, we declare the existence of a Creator who has a divine purpose for creating the material world. When we misuse the physical in the service of "gods who are not G-d", we negate the Creator's purpose for creating the universe. Therefore, they and all their belongings must be destroyed.

5th, 6th, and 7th Aliyot: The remainder of the Parsha, details those Mitzvos that set us apart from all other nations: Kashrus; Maasros - Tithes; the Shmitah - sabbatical year; the laws regarding lending money; the Eved Ivri - a Jew who is a slave; the consecration of the first born animal, and a review of the main Yomim Tovim - holidays: Pesach, Shavouth, and Succoth.

Rav S.R. Hirsch points out that Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are not reviewed in Sefer Divarim because there were no changes in the practices of those Yomim Tovim when living in the desert or living in Eretz Yisroel. (Intro. to Divarim)

This week's Haftorah is from Yishayah Chap. 66 and reflects the fact that today is also Rosh Chodesh. Yishayah describes the ultimate downfall of all our enemies during the war of Gog and Magog. The Navi explains that this world is the manifestation of g-d's presence and glory. Yet, we are incapable and sometimes unwilling to properly recognize G-d's manifest presence. Even when the Bais Hamikdash stood the Bnai Yisroel did not appreciate their opportunity to be close to G-d and serve Him. The Navi forewarns that insincere expressions of devotion are

tantamount to offering blemished sacrifices and G-d will punish those who lack sincerity and devotion.

Nevertheless, the institution of the Bais Hamikdash and prayer are our only means for communication love and devotion. Therefore, those who truly mourn for the absence of the Bais Hamikdash and the Temple services will also merit to rejoice in her redemption and reconstruction. When the Bais Hamikdash will be rebuilt the nation will again be able to witness the Rosh Chodesh offering and service, and fully participate in expressing their commitment

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"The blessing that you listen to the commandments of Hashem." (Debarim 11:27)

When the Torah speaks about rewarding us, the Torah merely says "that you listen." However, by the curses, the Torah adds to the words, "If you don't listen," also, "and you stray from the path." Why is this? Because we have a rule: Good thoughts to do a misvah, Hashem counts these thoughts as if the misvah was done. Therefore, when the Torah mentions the blessings we get for the observance of misvot, all we need is to want and desire to do the misvah and it's like it's done. However, when it comes to sins, Hashem doesn't count the bad thoughts to sin as sins. Therefore, the Torah adds, "And you stray from the path," which means actual actions of sin, in order to get a curse.

Because of this explanation, the Maggid of Mezrich (quoted by Hameir) resolves an apparent contradiction in halachah. The Shulhan Aruch (Orah Hayim

104:6) states that if one is in the middle of the Amidah, that person should not answer Kaddish, one should only listen to what the Hazan is saying and it counts like he answered. However, there is a strong question on this. If thoughts are not like the spoken word, what does it help to listen to Kaddish if the thoughts don't count like words? And if listening and thinking are like spoken words, granted it helps as far as answering Kaddish, but it's like talking in the middle of the Amidah which is forbidden!

The answer is beautiful. Hashem counts a good thought as a deed for doing a misvah. Therefore, for the misvah of answering Kaddish the thought counts as an action and it's like answering. But, for a sin Hashem doesn't count the thought like a deed. Talking in the middle of the Amidah is a sin. Therefore, the thought of answering does not count like a deed and it's not considered like he spoke in the middle of the Amidah. From this little discussion we see how kind Hashem is to us. May He always bring us blessings and hold back the curses. Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

"[If your Hebrew slave] says to you, 'I shall not go out from you' because he loves you and your house because he fares well with you" (Debarim 15:16)

The Gemara teaches that the owner of a Hebrew slave must treat him and view him as an equal in every respect, and he sometimes even has to treat him as a superior! However, the Gemara also teaches that if two Jews are in dire need of water, and only one of them has a jug of water, his own life takes precedence, and he is not obligated to give the water to the other person. Why is this case different than the case of the

slave who must be treated at least as an equal, if not better?

A poor man and a rich man can live in harmony with one another, even though the poor man can't satisfy his physical needs like the rich man. Still yet, he does not feel inferior in any way to his friend as a human being. The slave, on the other hand, is always reminded of his bitter status as a mere servant of another man. Therefore the Torah goes out of its way to demand special treatment for him.

There is a very important lesson to be learned from this. We must understand that different people have different sensitivities. We must recognize each person's uniqueness, and treat him in a way that we will not hurt his feelings or make him self-conscious of his station in life. Let's take it upon ourselves now, as we approach the selihot season, to treat our fellow man with the proper respect, and to make amends with those to whom we may have shown disservice to in the past. Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

REMEMBER THE SOURCE

See, I present before you today, a blessing and a curse." (Debarim 11:26)

The Ben Ish Hai, offers a practical exposition of this pasuk which is especially relevant to those who are experiencing what they interpret as berachah or kelalah. Life has its challenges - both good and bad. How does one address the issues? How does one confront the challenges? The Ben Ish Hai comments that the answer is in the pasuk: Hayom, "Today." It is all about today. One must acknowledge and absorb that all we really have before us is "today." Do not worry about the future. Do not concern yourself

with: What if? What will be? Address the "here" and "now." All we really have is the hayom, "today," which is before us.

This perspective on life is vital. At times, when a person is the recipient of Hashem's beneficence, blessed with wealth, health, mazal and berachah, the yeser hara has a field day. It convinces him that it is all here to stay; he has got it made. He is revered, admired, envied and sought out. The yeser hara wants all of this good fortune to go to his head, so that it can convince him to act foolishly, arrogantly, contemptuously, and to rebel against the Almighty: Prosperity brings about dissolution. People are prone to indulge themselves, satisfying all of their lusts, when they have the wherewithal to carry out their fantasies. This is not a hypothesis. It is a lamentable reality. How does one prevent himself from falling into the challenges that accompany "good fortune"?

Hayom, "Today." Get it through your mind that one is assured only of today. Tomorrow, it might be all gone, or even worse, the person might be gone. How many of the high and mighty fell prey to the economic crisis that reverberates until this very day? Upon encountering the obstacles surreptitiously laid before us by the yeser hara, we should focus on hayom, remembering that we must live wisely today, because we are not assured of a tomorrow.

Likewise, when one is confronted with life's vicissitudes, the pain and misery of illness, financial crisis, issues with children or even parents, one should apply the word hayom as a source of encouragement. Why worry about tomorrow when one knows not what will be today? In the Talmud Sanhedrin 100b,

Hazal say, "Do not be distressed by tomorrow's troubles, for you do not know what will occur today. Perhaps by tomorrow one will not be alive, and it turns out he was grieving over a world that was not his." He worried about tomorrow's troubles, when, in fact, he never lived to see that day. It is all about acknowledging hayom. Hashem tells us that Re'eh, "See, I present before you, hayom, today." That is all you have to concern yourself with - today. This concept will serve as a beacon of light to illuminate your lives, both in times of blessing and during periods of curse.

Perhaps we must focus on another word of this pasuk, Anochi, "I," Hashem, as the underlying source of reassurance and inspiration.

In the course of life, one invariably experiences berachah and kelalah. The doses and frequencies vary, but no one escapes kelalah, and everyone, in one way or another, encounters berachah. We often forget the Source of these Heavenly communiqués. Everything has its purpose. Everything has its reason. They all come to us from Anochi

- I/Hashem. If we remember the Source of the berachah, it is much easier to deal with the challenges it engenders. When we acknowledge that the kelalah is Hashem's way of sending us a message, it becomes much more palatable. Re'eh Anochi - remember the Source! (Peninim on the Torah)

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal

In the beginning of Parashat Re'eh, Moshe Rabbenu instructs Beneh Yisrael that after they enter Eretz Yisrael, they must go to the site of two adjacent mountains – Mount Gerizim and

Mount Ebal. While facing Mount Gerizim, they must declare a blessing upon those who observe the Misvot, and while facing Mount Ebal they must declare a curse upon those who disobey God's commands.

Our Rabbis teach that there are two kinds of angels – those who defend us before God (“Sanegor”), and those who prosecute against us (“Kategor”). Furthermore, different places in Eretz Yisrael have different spiritual powers. There are some places that are dominated by the quality of strict justice, where the prosecuting angels have greater power, and other places that are characterized by the quality of mercy, where the defending angels are stronger. Mount Gerizim is a site of divine mercy, whereas Mount Ebal is a site of divine judgment. Therefore, Beneh Yisrael proclaimed a curse upon those who violate the Misvot on Mount Ebal, the site of the prosecuting angels, and a blessing upon those who uphold the Misvot on Mount Gerizim, the site of the defending angels.

The strategy we must employ in trying to restrain the prosecuting angels is to draw them to our side. Imagine a court convening to try a defendant who is accused of various crimes, and the prosecutor begins by standing up and proclaiming that he believes the defendant is innocent. Quite obviously, the moment this happens the case is closed. If the prosecutor does not bring any charges against the defendant, then there is no case. And this is true in the Heavenly Tribunal, as well. If the prosecuting angels come to our defense, or if we can have them silenced, then there is no case brought against us.

This is what we seek to accomplish when we approach a Sadik for a Beracha. His job is to

restrain the Kategor, and to bring him to our side so there will no harsh judgment issued against us.

In order for the Sadik to do this, two things have to happen. First, we need to bolster our faith in God as the One who determines our fate. We often forget that our lives and wellbeing are in God's hands, and believe instead that we are in full control over what happens in our lives. We cannot receive Beracha from God until we reinforce our belief in providence, that our fate is in His hands. This belief is referred to as “Yihud” – belief in the Oneness of the Creator. Secondly, we need to cultivate Kedusha. Great Rabbis ensure before going anywhere that the people there are dressed according to proper standards of Kedusha, because they do not want to be somewhere impure. This is true of the Almighty, too; He will not be present in places where there is no Kedusha. Once we have achieved these two goals – strengthening our faith in “Yihud,” and establishing proper standards of Kedusha – then we can receive Beracha, God's unlimited blessing.

The first letters of these three words – “Yihud,” “Kedusha,” “Beracha” – are “Yod,” “Kof” and “Bet,” which have a combined numerical value of 112 – which is the same numerical value as the word “Ebal.” Through this process, of reaffirming our faith in divine providence and raising our standards of Kedusha, we are able to take “Ebal,” the prosecuting angels and forces of judgment, and bring them to our side. This is the secret to avoiding “prosecution,” to ensuring that God looks favorably upon us and grants abundant Beracha for us, our families and all Am Yisrael.

Rabbi Wein

In this week's parsha the Torah continues with the theme that runs through the previous parshiyot of Dvarim, that we are always faced with stark choices in life – either blessings or curses, good or evil. The words of the Torah seemingly offer little option for middle ground on these basic issues of belief and behavior. Yet, we are all aware that the events in life are rarely, if ever, all or nothing, one hundred percent blessing or curse. In fact, Jewish tradition and teachings instruct us that hidden in tragedy there is always a glimmer of hope and goodness, and that all joy and happiness contains within it the taste of the bittersweet.

Jewish philosophy and theology has taught us that evil somehow has a place in God's good and benign world. We are faced with the problem of why the Torah addresses these matters without nuance, in such a harsh way which seemingly brooks no compromise, without a hint of a middle ground. After all, the Torah is not a debating society where one is forced to take an extreme uncompromising stand in order to focus the issue being discussed more sharply and definitively.

Many rabbinic scholars of previous generations have maintained that it is only in our imperfect, post Temple period that we are to search for good in evil and temper our joy with feelings of seriousness and even sadness. But in the ideal and idyllic world, where the Divine Spirit is a palpable entity, the choices are really stark and the divisions are 100 percent to zero.

Far be it from me to not accept the opinion of these great scholars of Israel. However I wish to interject a somewhat different thought into this matter. This parsha begins with the word

re'eih – see. As all of us are well aware, there are stages in life that we can see well only with the aid of corrective lenses. Without that correction, we can easily make grave mistakes trying to read and see what appears before us.

If we have to read small print, such as looking up a number in the Jerusalem telephone directly – it is almost impossible without the aid of corrective lenses. Well, this situation is not limited to the physical world, of just our actual eyesight, but it applies equally to our spiritual world of Torah observance and personal morality.

Many times we think we are behaving righteously when we are in fact behaving badly because we are not seeing the matter correctly. We are not wearing our corrective lenses, with the benefit of halacha, history, good common sense and a Jewish value system that should govern our lives. Without this advantage, we see blessings and curses, good and evil, all blurry and undefined before our eyes.

The Torah wishes us to see clearly - to instinctively be able to recognize what is the blessing in our life and what is not. The Torah itself has been kind enough to provide us with the necessary corrective lenses to see clearly and accurately. These lenses consist of observance of Torah and its commandments and loyalty to Jewish values and traditions.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United
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The Politics of Freedom

Having set out the broad principles of the covenant, Moses

now turns to the details, which extend over many chapters and several parshiyot. The long review of the laws that will govern Israel in its land begin and end with Moses posing a momentous choice. Here is how he frames it in this week's parsha:

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse — the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. (Deut. 11: 26-28)

And here is how he puts it at the end:

“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil ... I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live. (Deut. 30: 15, 19)

Maimonides takes these two passages as proof of our belief in freewill (Hilkhos Teshuvah 5: 3), which indeed they are. But they are more than that. They are also a political statement. The connection between individual freedom (which Maimonides is talking about) and collective choice (which Moses is talking about) is this: If humans are free then they need a free society within which to exercise that freedom. The book of Devarim represents the first attempt in history to create a free society.

Moses' vision is deeply political but in a unique way. It is not politics as the pursuit of power or the defence of interests or the preservation of class and caste. It is not politics as an expression of

national glory and renown. There is no desire in Moses' words for fame, honour, expansion, empire. There is not a word of nationalism in the conventional sense. Moses does not tell the people that they are great. He tells them that they have been rebellious, they have sinned, and that their failure of faith during the episode of the spies cost them forty extra years of delay before entering the land. Moses would not have won an election. He was not that kind of leader.

Instead he summons the people to humility and responsibility. We are the nation, he says in effect, that has been chosen by God for a great experiment. Can we create a society that is not Egypt, not empire, not divided into rulers and ruled? Can we stay faithful to the more-than-human hand that has guided our destinies since I first stood before Pharaoh and asked for our freedom? For if we truly believe in God – not God as a philosophical abstraction but God in whose handwriting our history has been written, God to whom we pledged allegiance at Mount Sinai, God who is our only sovereign – then we can do great things.

Not great in conventional terms, but great in moral terms. For if all power, all wealth, all might belong to God, then none of these things can rightfully set us apart one from another. We are all equally precious in His sight. We have been charged by Him to feed the poor and bring the orphan and widow, the landless Levite and non-Israelite stranger, into our midst, sharing our celebrations and days of rest. We have been commanded to create a just society that honours human dignity and freedom.

Moses insists on three things. First we are free. The choice is ours. Blessing or curse? Good or

evil? Faithfulness or faithlessness? You decide, says Moses. Never has freedom been so starkly defined, not just for an individual but for a nation as a whole. We do not find it hard to understand that as individuals we are confronted by moral choices. Adam and Eve were. So was Cain. Choice is written into the human condition.

But to be told this as a nation – this is something new. There is no defence, says Moses, in protestations of powerlessness, saying, We could not help it. We were outnumbered. We were defeated. It was the fault of our leaders or our enemies. No, says Moses, your fate is in your hands. The sovereignty of God does not take away human responsibility. To the contrary, it places it centre-stage. If you are faithful to God, says Moses, you will prevail over empires. If you are not, nothing else – not military strength nor political alliances – will help you.

If you betray your unique destiny, if you worship the gods of the surrounding nations, then you will become like them. You will suffer the fate of all small nations in an age of superpowers. Don't blame others or chance or ill-fortune for your defeat. The choice is yours; the responsibility is yours alone.

Second, we are collectively responsible. The phrase "All Israel are sureties for one another" is rabbinic but the idea is already present in the Torah. This too is radical. There is no "great man" theory of history in Judaism, nothing of what Carlyle called "heroes and hero-worship." The fate of Israel depends on the response of Israel, all Israel, from "the heads of your tribes, your elders and officers" to your "hewers of wood and drawers of water." This is the origin of the American phrase (which has no

counterpart in the vocabulary of British politics), "We, the people."

Unlike all other nations in the ancient world and most today, the people of the covenant did not believe that their destiny was determined by kings, emperors, a royal court or a governing elite. It is determined by each of us as moral agents, conjointly responsible for the common good. This is what Michael Walzer means when in his recent book *In God's Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible* he calls biblical Israel an "almost democracy."

Third, it is a God-centred politics. There was no word for this in the ancient world so Josephus had to coin one. He called it "theocracy." However, this word has been much abused and taken to mean what it does not, namely rule by clerics, priests. That is not what Israel was. Again an American phrase comes to mind. Israel was "one nation under God." If any single word does justice to the vision of Deuteronomy it is not theocracy but nomocracy, "the rule of laws, not men."

Biblical Israel is the first example in history of an attempt to create a free society. Not free in the modern sense of liberty of conscience. That concept was born in the seventeenth century in a Europe that had been scarred for a century by religious wars between Catholics and Protestants. Liberty of conscience is the attempt to solve the problem of how people with markedly different religious beliefs (all of them Christians, as it happened) can live peaceably with one another. That is not the problem to which biblical Israel is an answer.

Instead it was an answer to the question: how can freedom and responsibility be shared equally by all? How can limits be placed

on the power of rulers to turn the mass of people into slaves – not necessarily literally slaves but as a labour force to be used to build monumental buildings or engage in empire-building wars? It was the great nineteenth century historian Lord Acton who rightly saw that freedom in this sense was born in biblical Israel:

The government of the Israelites was a Federation, held together by no political authority, but by the unity of race and faith, and founded, not on physical force, but on a voluntary covenant ... The throne was erected on a compact, and the king was deprived of the right of legislation among the people that recognised no lawgiver but God ... The inspired men who rose in unflinching succession to prophesy against the usurper and the tyrant, constantly proclaimed that the laws, which were divine, were paramount over sinful rulers ... Thus the example of the Hebrew nation laid down the parallel lines on which all freedom has been won. (Lord Acton, *Essays in the History of Liberty*, Indianapolis, Liberty Classics, 1985, 7-8)

It is a beautiful, powerful, challenging idea. If God is our only sovereign, then all human power is delegated, limited, subject to moral constraints. Jews were the first to believe that an entire nation could govern itself in freedom and equal dignity. This has nothing to do with political structures (monarchy, oligarchy, democracy – Jews have tried them all), and everything to do with collective moral responsibility.

Jews never quite achieved the vision, but never ceased to be inspired by it. Moses' words still challenge us today. God has given us freedom. Let us use it to create a just, generous, gracious society. God does not do it for us but He has taught us how it is

done. As Moses said: the choice is ours.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z"TL

Idolatry of any sort is an affront to Hashem, so much so that the mere presence of an engraved figure is simply unbearable. As such, Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt"l, explained that Bnai Yisrael were commanded to shatter every graven image they encountered in Israel. In addition to this, the multitude of idols contradicted the centrality of the Bais HaMikdash. The place of service to Hashem must be singular and special.

"You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you inherit served there their gods" (12:2).

This is the first obligation upon entering the new land: to remove all vestiges of idolatry. All laws of Torah and all practices of virtue are possible only when no power is recognized in the world other than Hashem alone. This is in itself the most important statute and judgment: to fix in our minds that Hashem is One, that He created the Universe, and that He alone conducts all the processes and events.

Similarly, at Sinai the first words of the Giving of the Torah were "I am Hashem your G-d. You shall have no other gods before [i.e. in addition to] Me" (5:2, and Shemos 20:3). By thinking of this, we thereby fulfill not only the First Commandment - "I am Hashem your G-d" (which Rambam explains as a mitzvah "to know and to believe") - but we also fulfill the mitzvah of thinking divrei Torah, for this is the first teaching of the Torah heard by our nation.

"...and the sculptured images of their gods you shall hew down" (12:3).

The nations of the world, though they no longer believe in the idols, are rapturous in their admiration of the exquisite craftsmanship of the ancient sculptors who were able to shape the marble into the most beautiful figurines. Every statue is highly prized, and a new find is cause for excitement and admiration. But here we are taught that every hewn marble image should without delay be overthrown and chopped into unrecognizable pieces.

Art, beauty and craftsmanship are meaningless when employed in the service of evil. And even when there seems to be no danger in the existence of images of dead gods in which no one believes, any symbol of evil needs to be utterly destroyed. We must not make peace even with abandoned and long-forgotten tools of wickedness, despite their exquisite beauty or monetary value.

"You shall not do so to Hashem your G-d" (12:4). Hashem insists on the principle of centrality. In contrast to the idolaters who made shrines everywhere (12:2), the service of the true G-d is to be limited to the one "place which Hashem your G-d shall choose from all your tribes to put His name there" (12:5).

Certainly the Israelites should always pray to Hashem for aid and thank Him and declare His greatness, wherever they are. But the special service of sacrifice and offerings is to be limited to one central place, chosen by Hashem, where all Israel should come to demonstrate the principle that Hashem is One.

The fact that only one Sanctuary existed in Israel, in the Mishkan or in Shiloh or in Jerusalem, brought

great benefits. The nation remained united even after large communities resided in Bavel and elsewhere, even as far as Rome, because the Sanctuary still stood in Jerusalem and the heart of the nation was situated there. The Oral Torah was most perfectly preserved as long as the Sanctuary persisted, for the kohanim were a self-perpetuating body that continued without change, and all the Holy Scriptures and traditions were maintained in their original form.

This centralization produced the sensation that Hashem actually "dwelt in Zion" (Yoel 4:21), for no other location was credited with His presence. The nation actually experienced the feeling that He was there. The benefit of centralization was foreseen and intended: "And you shall do according to the word which they shall tell you from that place which Hashem shall choose. you shall not turn away from the word that they shall tell you, to the right or to the left" (17:10-11).